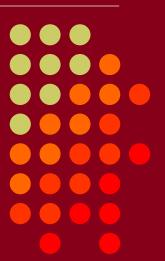
# CW Skimmers, DX Cluster, and the Reverse Beacon Network

Presented by N6TV n6tv@arrl.net







#### **Overview**

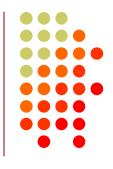


- What is CW Skimmer?
- What is the Reverse Beacon Network?
- How does it work?
- What can the RBN do for me?
- How can I help?
- What's new?

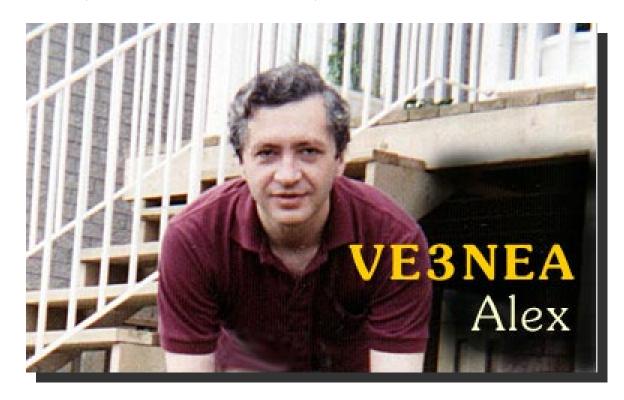




### It all starts with one developer



Alex Shovkoplyas, VE3NEA
 (b. 1965, ex-UR5EMI, in Canada since 1998)







#### What is CW Skimmer?



1. Hardware: PC + Software Defined Radio (SDR)

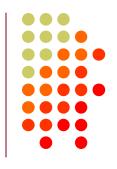








#### **SDR Antenna**



2. Wideband RX Antenna, 1.8-30 MHz

Pixel Tech. Loop RF Pro-1B:



DX Engineering Active Horizontal ARAH3-1PE:



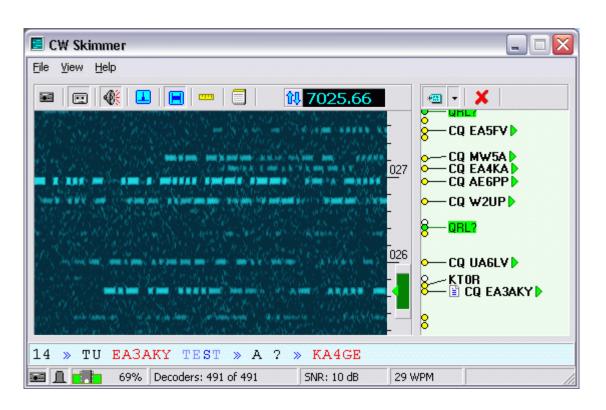




#### **Software**



#### 3. CW Skimmer or Skimmer Server



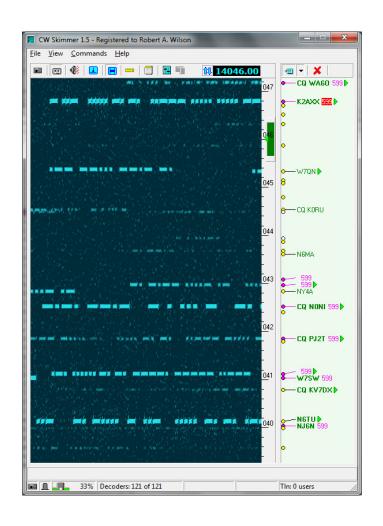






### **CW Skimmer by VE3NEA**





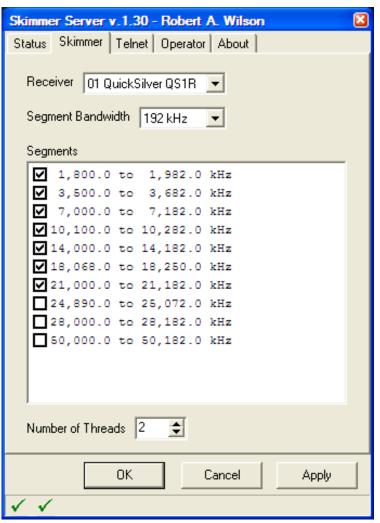
- Works with many SDRs
- Decodes multiple CW signals in real time
- Can monitor entire CW band
- Waterfall Display
- Uses MASTER.DTA
- Telnet Server (emulates a DX Cluster)





## **Skimmer Server by VE3NEA**





- Only supports QS1R SDR
- Decodes multiple CW signals in real time
- Monitors multiple bands with single SDR
- No Waterfall Display
- No MASTER.DTA
- Telnet Server





# Telnet server (localhost port 7300)



Emulates a DX Cluster Node

DX de N6TU-#:	14058.7	WR7HE	24 dB	31 WPM	CQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14029.6	NM7D	29 dB	25 WPM	CQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14059.5	YW4D	35 dB	31 WPM	ĊQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14022.6	J39BS	11 dB	25 WPM	ĊQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14066.8	NF6A	38 dB	30 WPM	ĊQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14054.4	N5UM	26 dB	28 WPM	ĊQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14021.2	NN5J	35 dB	31 WPM	ĊQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14061.4	WX58	12 dB	28 WPM	ĊQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14064.2	WQ5L	15 dB	28 WPM	CQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14032.2	ÜÉ7XF	18 dB	27 WPM		2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14042.9	NT5C	45 dB	31 WPM		2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14032.2	VE7XF	18 dB	27 WPM	CQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14039.2	EA3FP	15 dB	31 WPM	CQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14052.5	WØYR	20 dB	28 WPM	CQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14022.9	AB7E	32 dB	25 WPM	CQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14028.4	WH6R	7 dB	29 WPM		2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14065.6	KH7B	25 dB	29 WPM	CQ	2350
To ALL de SKIMMI		: Clicked on		at 14032		2000
DX de N6TU-#:	14069.6	KF6T	13 dB	28 WPM	CQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14069.1	NKØM	25 dB	28 WPM	CQ	2350
To ALL de SKIMMI		: Clicked on		1031.4		2000
DX de N6TU-#:	14035.5	KF8GE	12 dB	26 WPM		2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14028.4	WH6R	7 dB	29 WPM	CQ	2350
DX de N6TU-#:	14036.1	NZ1U	16 dB	28 WPM	ČQ	2350
DX de N6TV-#:	14062.7	N4QS	11 dB	29 WPM	ČQ	2350
DX de N6TV-#:	14045.1	YU1FM	20 40	22 LIDM	ČQ	2350
DX de N6TV-#:	14059.6	YW4D	35 dB	31 WPM		2350
2 00 11027 11-	_ 100110		00 ab	J		2000

Reports Signal to Noise ratio, CW Speed, CQers





# What is the Reverse Beacon Network (RBN)?



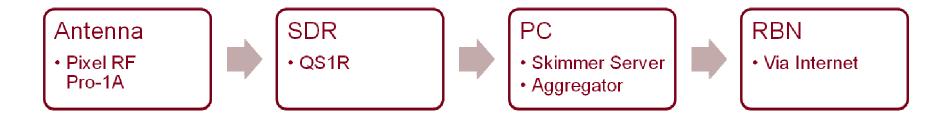
- Uses any CW signal as a beacon
- Multiple CW Skimmers world-wide record signal strength (S/N ratio in dB) and CW speed (WPM)
- A free "Aggregator" program forwards CW Skimmer spots to a central server
- Central server distributes spots via web page and public telnet servers
- You don't need to have an SDR to use it





# How do spots get to the RBN server?









### Acknowledgements

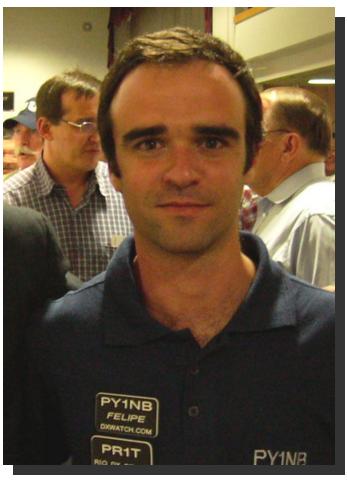


- RBN web site and first aggregator originated by PY1NB (similar to his other web site, www.dxwatch.com). Felipe pays all the bills.
- Lots of code by W3OA (aggregator), F5VIH (Spots analysis tool)
- CW Skimmer evangelized and tested by N4ZR (also publishes <u>RBN blog</u>) – "RBN Chief Propagandist"
- Telnet server support by K5TR, W2QO, KM3T



# Felipe Ceglia, PY1NB

- Created and maintains the Reverse Beacon Network
- Hosts dxwatch.com and reversebeacon.net







### Dick Williams, W3OA

 Created the newest RBN Aggregator software







### Nick Sinanis, F5VIH

Wrote the RBN
 Spots Analysis Tool







#### Pete Smith, N4ZR

- RBN Chief Evangelist
- Skimmertalk Reflector: <u>http://dayton.contesting.com/</u> mailman/listinfo/skimmertalk





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#### What can the RBN do for me?



- It can improve your score
  - Fills spots in band map (SOA, Multi-op)
  - Spots you very often, if you CQ "properly"
- Entering a contest?
  - Before: Check antenna F/B, signal strength
  - During: See where you are being heard
  - After: Compare signal strength with the competition





# How can I use RBN to improve my score?

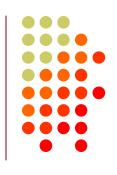


- Make sure the Skimmers find you
- When permitted, use RBN as DX Cluster for CW and RTTY contests
  - Far more spots, with smaller pileups than humanposted Cluster spots
  - Quickly fills up your logging software band map
  - Helps you find clear spots (between stations you can't hear)
  - Shows where you are being heard
    - E.g. at K3LR on 15m: "Spotted by S50ARX-#"
       (First EU answered our 15m CQs 25 minutes later)





### How do I CQ "properly"?



- Send everything at the same consistent speed
  - Never use >/< or +++/--- to change speed in messages
- Call CQ or TEST and send your call twice
  - CQ N6TV N6TV
  - TEST N6TV N6TV
  - CQ N6TV N6TV TEST
- Use proper spacing (let computer send)
  - Don't send with paddles and rusheverythingtogether
- Change your freq. slightly to get spotted again

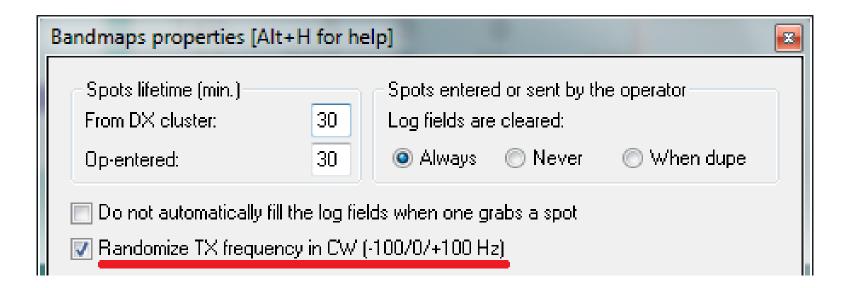




# How to improve your chances in a Skimmer-generated pileup



 Use XIT or the "randomize TX" feature of your logging program to call a bit off frequency.







# How do I use the RBN to Check My Antennas?

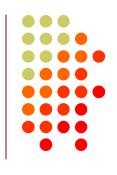


- To test performance, just call CQ on CW, check RBN web site (turn beam, repeat)
- Use RBN web site's "Spots Analysis Tool" to compare your signal to the competition
- Download raw data files for deeper analysis
  - Every RBN spot posted since February, 2009 is archived on the site





#### **Accessing the RBN (SOA, Multi)**



- telnet.reversebeacon.net port 7000 (DX Spider software)
- arcluster.reversebeacon.net port 7000 (V6 AR-Cluster software)
- dxc.ve7cc.net port 23(CC Cluster software removes bad spots!)
- Some clusters combine RBN and human spots (VE7CC, W9ZRX, N7TR)
- 5. <a href="http://www.reversebeacon.net">http://www.reversebeacon.net</a>





#### Filtering Spots (old way)

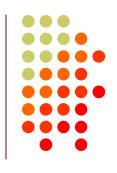


- telnet.reversebeacon.net port 7000
  - accept/spots by\_zone 1,3,4,6,7,31 and not by WZ7I or call N6TV
  - http://www.dxcluster.org/main/filtering en.html#toc1
- arcluster.reversebeacon.net port 7000
  - set dx filter call=N6TV or (unique>1 and (spotterstate=CA or spotterstate=NV or spotterstate=UT))
  - http://www.ab5k.net/ArcDocsVer6/UserManual/ArcDx.htm





#### Filtering Spots (new way)

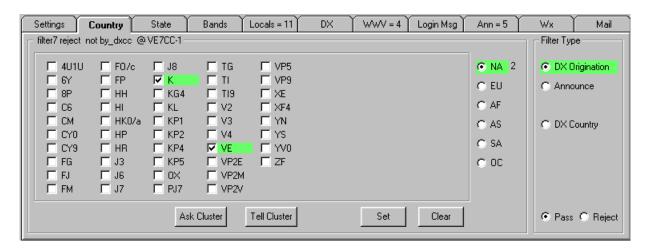


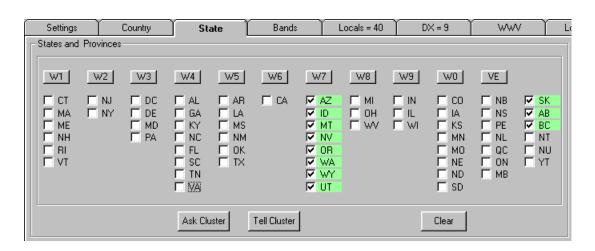
- Use CC User software by VE7CC to log in to dxc.ve7cc.net and program filters with a fullfeature Graphical User Interface
- CC Cluster nodes automatically reject "unique" (busted) spots
- Tutorial:
  - http://reversebeacon.blogspot.com/2010/11/using-rbntelnet-server-brief-tutorial.html
- Reference:
  - http://www.bcdxc.org/ve7cc/default.htm#download





## **CC User Filter Dialogs**









# Some nodes combine RBN and "legacy" (human) spots



- dxc.ve7cc.net port 23 (CC Cluster, many filtering options, use CC User to set them)
- dxc.w9zrx.net port 7373 (AR Cluster)
- dxc.n7tr.com port 7373 (AR Cluster, but pre-filters to show only spots from Zones 3 and 4)





## Using www.reversebeacon.net



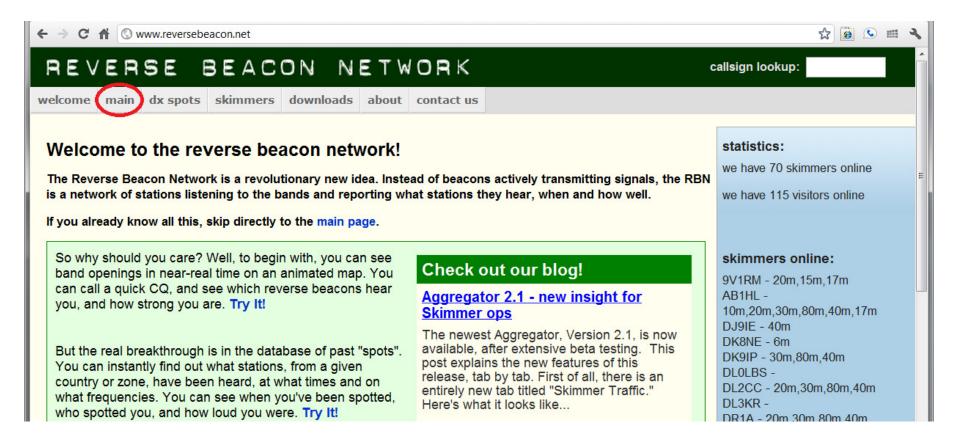
- Great for post-contest analysis
- Plot signal strengths
- Raw data files can be downloaded / analyzed
  - Millions of spots archived





#### www.reversebeacon.net



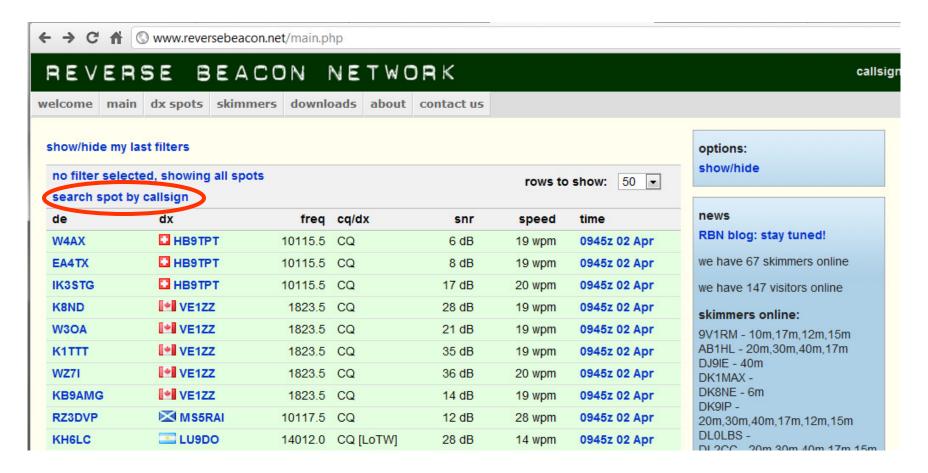






#### www.reversebeacon.net main



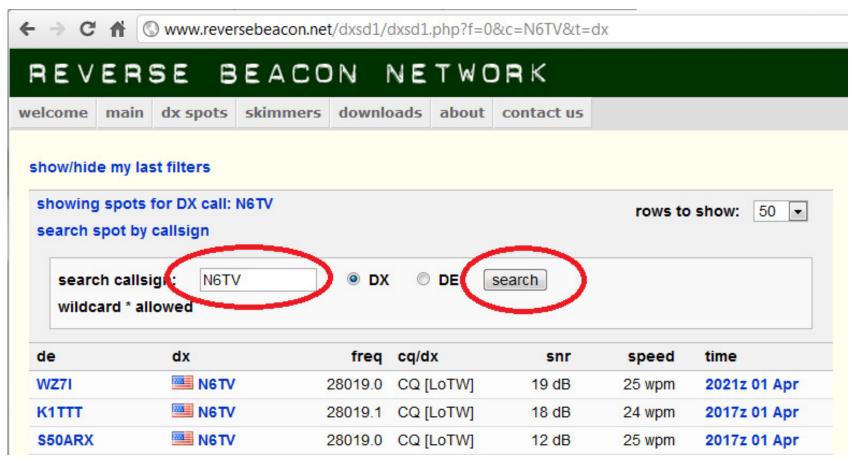






#### Where was I heard?









### Plot spots on a map



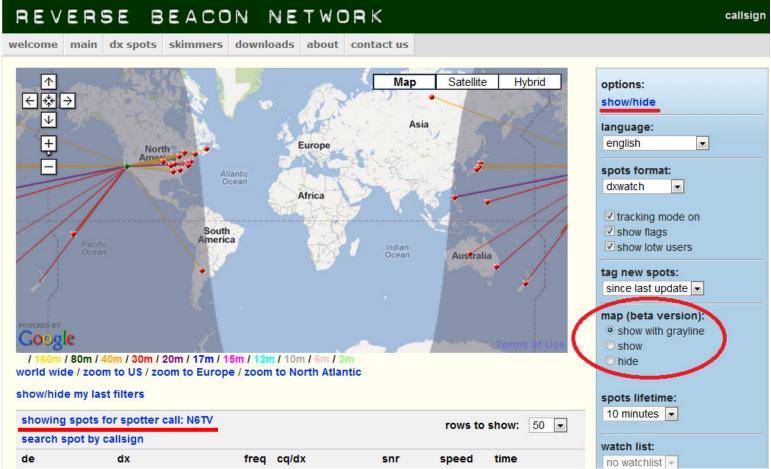
elcome	main dx spots	skimmers downlo	oads about	contact us			
how/hid	e my last filters						options:
	selected, showing	all spots			rows to	show: 50 🔻	show/hide
de	dx	freq	cq/dx	snr	speed	time	news
W4AX	□ нвэтг	PT 10115.5	CQ	6 dB	19 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	RBN blog: stay tuned!
EA4TX	□ нвэтг	PT 10115.5	CQ	8 dB	19 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	we have 67 skimmers online
IK3STG	□ нвэтг	PT 10115.5	CQ	17 dB	20 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	we have 147 visitors online
K8ND	<b>I</b> ◆I VE1Z	Z 1823.5	CQ	28 dB	19 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	skimmers online:
W3OA	<b>I</b> ◆I VE1Z	z 1823.5	CQ	21 dB	19 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	9V1RM - 10m,17m,12m,15m
К1ТТТ	<b>I</b> ◆I VE1Z	Z 1823.5	CQ	35 dB	19 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	AB1HL - 20m,30m,40m,17m
WZ7I	<b>I</b> ◆ <b>I</b> VE1Z	z 1823.5	CQ	36 dB	20 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	DJ9IE - 40m DK1MAX -
КВ9АМС	¥ VE1Z	Z 1823.5	CQ	14 dB	19 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	DK8NE - 6m
RZ3DVP	<b>⊠</b> MS5F	RAI 10117.5	CQ	12 dB	28 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	DK9IP - 20m,30m,40m,17m,12m,15m
KH6LC	□ LU9D	14012.0	CQ [LoTW]	28 dB	14 wpm	0945z 02 Apr	DL0LBS -





# Which bands are open at my QTH?









## **Spots analysis tool**



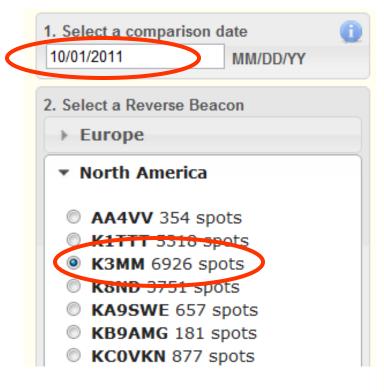
REVERS	SE BEACO	N NE	TWC	PK		
welcome main	dx spots skinmers	downloads	about	contact us		
	download raw data					
Welcome to	spots analisys tool	ı netwo	ork!			
The Reverse Beathe RBN is a network well.	- I allalize allu				ons actively transmitting si stations they hear, when a	
If you already kn	HF >	e main pag	ge.			
So why should y	VHF+ >	ou can see				
band openings in can call a quick you, and how str	HE	I map. You	•	Check out our blog!		
		acons near		Aggregator 2 Skimmer ops	2.1 - new insight for	
Dut the and have	HF/CW	!!			gregator, Version 2.1, is now	

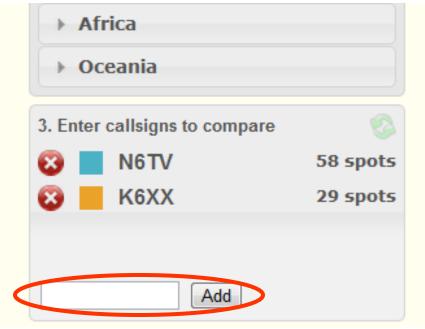




# Pick a Date, a Skimmer, add callsigns to compare





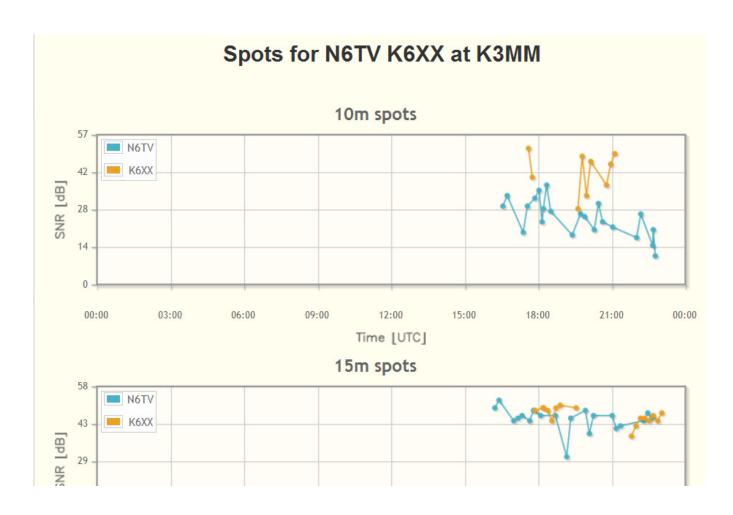






#### And the winner is ... K6XX!









#### Raw data downloads



REVERS	SE BEACO	N NETWORK				
welcome nain	dx spots skimmers	downloads about contact us				
	download raw data					
Raw data do	spots <del>analis</del> ys tool					
Data from the RBN	spot search	d analysis.				
	create your filter!	tracts you want. The zipped files can be downloaded by a single clic				
on the filename.	HF >					
The data files then amount of data wil		y viewed by opening in Excel. Note, however, that on busy days the mit. For example, on Saturday, during the 2010 ARRL DX CW contest				
the RBN produced full daily data set, of		e Microsoft Access or other data tools to examine and manipulate that hks.				
The only thing that		that you share your ideas for analyzing them, as well as any result:				
with the RBN comr publication. Please		it on our RBN blog. Of course, you will retain full rights for any other keep in touch with us.  ee available data. You can also use the controls below.				
Click on the year, a						
collapse all month						
2012	VHF+/SSB					
January	1.8/3.5/7MHz					
February 01 Wedne	14/21/28MHz	20120201.zip				
	10/18/24MHz	20120201.zip 20120202.zip				
03 Friday	1089KBytes	20120203.zip				
VERSITY -		Dayton 2013				

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# Raw data is text file, Comma Separated Values



```
callsign,de_pfx,de_cont,freq,band,dx,dx_pfx,dx_cont,mode,db,date
VK6IA,VK,OC,28028.4,10m,W6YI,K,NA,CQ,14,2011-11-26 00:00:00
ON5KQ,ON,EU,7005.5,40m,K2QMF,K,NA,CQ,40,2011-11-26 00:00:00
ON5KQ,ON,EU,7005.5,40m,K2QMF,K,NA,CQ,40,2011-11-26 00:00:00
N4ZR,K,NA,7011.7,40m,OM5NS,OM,EU,CQ,22,2011-11-26 00:00:00
N4ZR,K,NA,7020.6,40m,S50R,S5,EU,CQ,40,2011-11-26 00:00:00
N4ZR,K,NA,7023,40m,NQ4I,K,NA,CQ,56,2011-11-26 00:00:00
WA7LNW,K,NA,7051.5,40m,YR1C,Y0,EU,CQ,15,2011-11-26 00:00:00
```

# Total World-Wide RBN spots, 2012 CQ WW CW:

3,163,126 (18.3 spots per *second*)

#### 2013 ARRL DX CW:

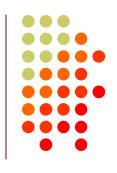
3,937,108 by all Skimmers (82,023 spots per hour)

2,013,282 by DX Skimmers outside **USA** 





### How can I help?



- Set up an SDR, feed Skimmer Spots to the RBN, using the Aggregator program
  - More skimmers needed in Asia/Africa/South America
- Call a bit off frequency





#### What's New?

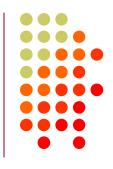


- DL4RCK RCKSkimmer automatically adds RTTY spots into RBN network (but doesn't use wideband SDR)
- VE3NEA is attempting:
  - RTTY/PSK Skimmer
  - SSTV Skimmer
  - But he says "Not close to completion"
- Not attempted:
  - SSB Skimmer





#### For more information



- http://www.reversebeacon.net
- http://www.bcdxc.org/ve7cc/default.htm#download
- http://www.dxatlas.com/CwSkimmer
- http://www.dxatlas.com/SkimServer
- http://www.srl-llc.com/ (QS1R)
- http://microtelecom.it/perseus/
- http://www.pixelsatradio.com/product/shortwavemagnetic-loop-antenna/ (RF Pro-1B loop antenna)
- http://www.dxengineering.com/parts/dxe-arah3-1pe (ARAH3-1PE horizontal antenna)





#### For more information



- http://www.pvrc.org/n4zr/rbn.pdf
- http://reversebeacon.blogspot.com
- http://www.ve7cc.net/
- http://www.qrz.com/db/n6tv





### **Questions?**





