

County Hunter News OnLine

January 2025
Volume 21 Issue 1

Welcome to the On-Line County Hunter News, a monthly publication for those interested in ham radio county hunting, with an orientation toward CW operation. We also cover some park chasing activities these days. Contributions of articles, stories, letters, and pictures to the editor are welcomed, and may be included in future issues at the editor's discretion.

The County Hunter News will provide you with interesting, thought provoking articles, articles of county hunting history, or about county hunters or events, ham radio or electronics history, general ham radio interest, and provide news of upcoming operating events.

We hope you will enjoy the County Hunter News. Feel free to forward, or provide links. Permission is given for copying or quoting in part or all provided credit is given to the CHNews and to the author of article.

CW County Hunter Frequencies are 14.0565, 10.124.5, and 7056.5, with activity occasionally on 3556.5 KHz. There is SSB activity now occasionally on 7188, 14336., 18136, 21336, 28336 . The CW folks are now pioneering 17M operation on 18.0915. (21.0565, 24.9155, and 28.0565). Look around 18136 or for occasional 17M SSB runs usually after the run on 20M SSB . (21.336 and 28.336)

You can see live spots of county hunter activity at ch.W6RK.com

For information on county hunting, check out the following resources:

The USACA award is sponsored by CQ Magazine. Rules and information are here:

<http://countyhunter.com/cq.htm>

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out:

<http://countyhunter.com/whatis.htm>

MARAC sponsors an award program for many other county hunting awards. You can

find information on these awards and the rules at:

<http://marac.org/awards.pdf>

There is a lot more information at www.countyhunter.com . Please check it out.

Back issues of the County Hunter News are available at www.CHNewsonline.com

De N4CD, Bob Voss, Editor (email: telegraphy@verizon.net)

Notes from the Editor

1) Sunspots – Lots of them. We are likely at the peak of cycle 25. Enjoy it. 10M has been great most days. If you're on the coasts, you've got good coverage of half the country. If you live in the middle, not so much fun working US stations but they show up on E-skip and backscatter if you've got power and a beam. Lots of DX being worked and FT-8 really busy on 10M. Same for 12M with many getting DXCC plus there.

2) Weather – Winter is here. The snow is flying in the northern tiers, and NY and parts of PA have been clobbered by 'lake effect' snow. While temps have often been above average for large parts of the country, winter is coming, with snow/ice down to Washington DC, VA in late December. Lots of rain out in the west with the Pineapple Express bringing in storm after storm. County hunters were out and running before the winter weather hit. .

Jack, K0MAF USACA #1276

Jack, K0MAF, after 16 years, has earned confirmed USACA #1276.

ARRL 10M Contest

This was the year to participate. Excellent conditions with thousand and thousands of stations on the air including lots of rare DX. Hope you were able to get on. Big contest stations made 1500 plus QSOs in the weekend.

N4CD went mobile over the local park and put 100+ stations in the log in a few hours on cw. Lots of QRM on 10M SSB with folks packed in.

The CW WW DX contest saw entries with 5000-6000 QSOs for the weekend – with many making thousands of contacts on 10M along with thousands on 20 and 15m.

Mobile Activity in December

At the beginning of the month:

W8MP was busy headed down in FL. He then ran a bunch there, then to GA and SC. Next spotted in WV

K8II put out a few in WV, then NC

KB6UF was out in CA. Later he headed east through AZ then back to CA.

N4RKK spotted many POTA parks/counties during days of zero mobile activity

N0KV headed out and ran some NE Colorado and into NE counties.

K8II headed out, ran some MD and DE counties. Then into NJ running most of NJ.

K2HVN noted running parks in DE

End date 12/25

Note: On any given day, there are probably 100 different parks being run – from 160m through 445 MHz, but most on 20M SSB, a good number on 40, 20 and 15m cw. Some activity on 30m. You can catch some nice counties on 15 and 10M, including AK and HI. Yes, despite zero degree or colder weather, AK parks are being run. Heck, why not fire up the snow machine, and go camping? In the northern tier, park activation has slowed down, especially for those setting up on picnic tables to operate. Mobiles are still out there, but in some cases, parks are shut down for the winter with no access.

CW Stats

Each year, the 'cw stats' – counties worked on cw toward your next level award are collected and published.

Mike, NF0N, will be doing it this year.

From the County Hunter Web Forum:

I will be doing the Annual CW Statistics for 2024, please send to me after the first of 2025. I will publish them on countyhunter.com in early February 2025. To get your numbers, in Road Runner Logger go to the Tools tab, then click on "Annual CW Statistics' tab, this will give you the CW numbers for 2024 2023 2022 and 2021. Just send those numbers to me. Thanks and Happy New Year Mike, NF0N

email yours to NF0N at ARRL dot net

2024 Year End Summary

It was a good year – in many ways. One the other hand, we lost quite a few active county hunters who are now SK. Good news! Lots of events happened and were well attended.

We had the MI Mini in April – lots of folks showed up- great weather. Next one scheduled for April 2025?

In May, the Dayton Hamvention saw over 33,000 hams descend upon Greene County Fairgrounds for days of excitement, new rig announcements, great bargains, and a load of fun. At least a dozen county hunters were there and MARAC had a booth setup. Many CH and many inactive former CH about.

QSO Parties were great with lots of participation and mobiles/county expeditions. Conditions were very good for most of them. Every state was included – some within the 7 land QP and New England QP. NY was very good this year with half a dozen mobiles participating. ND, SD, NE, IA, WY, ID, TX, LA, AR, KY, could use a few more mobiles. No Kalawao, too...but likely over 2500 counties on the air. More counties than ever it seems.

In October, the MARAC convention was held in WV with many dozens in attendance. Great weather, great location/hotel, and lots of story telling took place. Next MARAC convention planned for 2026.

SOLAR WISE

The year started out nicely with every increasing sunspot numbers. In April, there was a total eclipsed visible from much of the USA – with 4 minutes of totality.

May saw some amazing aurora visible down to 'down south' including parts of TX and FL – from a G5 tremendous solar storm. This would occur again in October. With high sunspot activity, there were a dozen or more days with spectacular auroras seen up north. Naturally, there were some nasty radio blackouts and drop outs, but for the most part, conditions were good during the month.

In October, NASA announced we had hit 'sunspot max' for cycle 25. Conditions are likely to stay about the same for another year, then slowly decline.

County Hunting Wise

There were dozens and dozens of trips with entire states being run by various ops around the country. Trips to AK, far reaches of the northwest and New England, all of WV and many nearby surrounding states, Mid Atlantic, FL, TX, etc. Half a dozen county hunters are working on running all the 3077 counties so they are busy running entire states.

They still have some of the US to go, so keep helping them out with contacts and spots.

CQ Magazine stopped publishing the magazine. No more bi-monthly column for county hunting. CQ Magazine and county hunting go back to 1965 when they first created the USA-CA Award. The Awards program is in limbo – but the USACA Awards Custodian NX0X, Brian, will still issue awards for confirmed USACA but only for 'all' counties. No more levels. That will continue until he runs out of the large certificates (a few years at current USA-CA awards being issued).

MARAC announced the new USA-CA awards – effective Nov 2024. These are 'unconfirmed" awards. Folks have already been applying for the various levels from 500 up in 500 county increments, including many DX stations (likely on FT-8) Only log data is required.

The start date for the US-SSB Award was eliminated. Originally, it was intended to spur folks working SSB mobiles and encourage new ones to keep putting out the counties on SSB. This has always been an unconfirmed award. Thus, a start date was initiated. After many years, folks worked enough SSB mobiles to finish up. This year, the start date was eliminated so contacts going back to the 1930s were able to be used. A dozen or so applied immediately for the award. Now, folks are looking at US-SSB Second and Nth time awards. Over the years, there were probably ten times as many SSB county hunters compared to cw. In the 1990s, other than state QSO Parties, there were only a handful of cw mobiles. That slowly changed to now a dozen or more cw mobiles plus a majority of the activity in QSO parties is cw.

NASA on Cycle 25

NASA, NOAA: Sun Reaches Maximum Phase in 11-Year Solar Cycle

In a teleconference with reporters on Tuesday, representatives from NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the international Solar Cycle Prediction Panel announced that the Sun has reached its solar maximum period, which could continue for the next year.

The solar cycle is a natural cycle the Sun goes through as it transitions between low and high magnetic activity. Roughly every 11 years, at the height of the solar cycle, the

Sun's magnetic poles flip — on Earth, that'd be like the North and South poles swapping places every decade — and the Sun transitions from being calm to an active and stormy state.

NASA and NOAA track sunspots to determine and predict the progress of the solar cycle — and ultimately, solar activity. Sunspots are cooler regions on the Sun caused by a concentration of magnetic field lines. Sunspots are the visible component of active regions, areas of intense and complex magnetic fields on the Sun that are the source of solar eruptions.

“During solar maximum, the number of sunspots, and therefore, the amount of solar activity, increases,” said Jamie Favors, director, Space Weather Program at NASA Headquarters in Washington. “This increase in activity provides an exciting opportunity to learn about our closest star — but also causes real effects at Earth and throughout our solar system.”

Solar activity strongly influences conditions in space known as space weather. This can affect satellites and astronauts in space, as well as communications and navigation systems — such as radio and GPS — and power grids on Earth. When the Sun is most active, space weather events become more frequent. Solar activity has led to increased aurora visibility and impacts on satellites and infrastructure in recent months.

During May 2024, a barrage of large solar flares and coronal mass ejections (CMEs) launched clouds of charged particles and magnetic fields toward Earth, creating the strongest geomagnetic storm at Earth in two decades — and possibly among the strongest displays of auroras on record in the past 500 years.

“This announcement doesn't mean that this is the peak of solar activity we'll see this solar cycle,” said Elsayed Talaat, director of space weather operations at NOAA. “While the Sun has reached the solar maximum period, the month that solar activity peaks on the Sun will not be identified for months or years.”

Scientists will not be able to determine the exact peak of this solar maximum period for many months because it's only identifiable after they've tracked a consistent decline in solar activity after that peak. However, scientists have identified that the last two years on the Sun have been part of this active phase of the solar cycle, due to the consistently high number of sunspots during this period. Scientists anticipate that the maximum phase will last another year or so before the Sun enters the declining phase, which leads back to solar minimum. Since 1989, the Solar Cycle Prediction Panel — an international panel of experts sponsored by NASA and NOAA — has worked together to make their

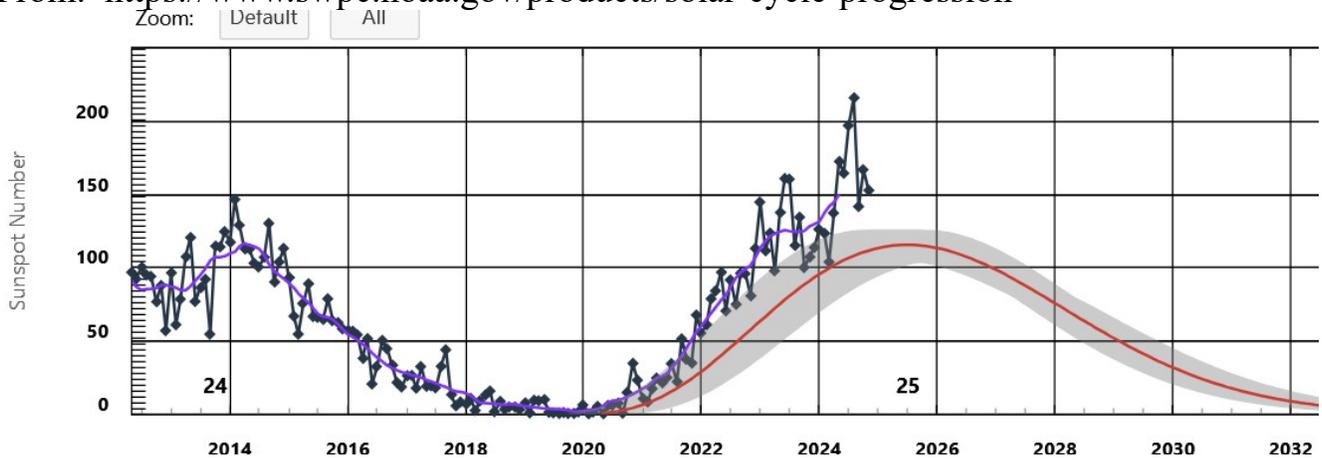
prediction for the next solar cycle.

Solar cycles have been tracked by astronomers since Galileo first observed sunspots in the 1600s. Each solar cycle is different — some cycles peak for larger and shorter amounts of time, and others have smaller peaks that last longer.

Source: <https://science.nasa.gov/science-research/heliophysics/nasa-noaa-sun-reaches-maximum-phase-in-11-year-solar-cycle/>

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From: <https://www.swpc.noaa.gov/products/solar-cycle-progression>



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There may be more – or maybe not more of Cycle 25 sunspot number increases. We won't know when the peak occurs...until 2 years after – Predictions were peak in 2025 but there are indications we may be at peak now. We could stay at 'peak conditions' for a year or more....before the descent over the next 11 years.

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The sun's next solar cycle has begun, 'starquakes' suggest

The current 11-year solar cycle hasn't even finished yet, and the next is beginning!

Solar scientists have spotted indications that the next solar cycle is beginning. That is despite the fact that it isn't due for another six years, and the current solar cycle (Cycle

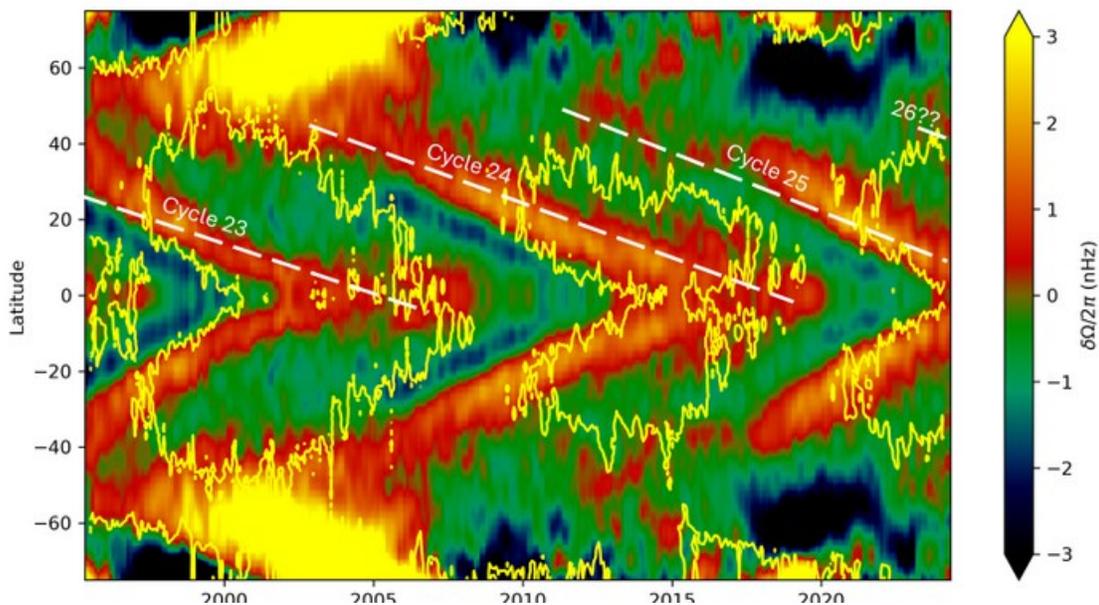
25) is still in progress.

The current solar cycle is expected to reach its peak or "solar maximum" midway through 2025 when the magnetic field of our star will flip and its poles will switch. Leading up to this solar activity has been ramping up with an increase in sunspots, solar flares and eruptions of stellar plasma called coronal mass ejections (CMEs).

Despite the gearing up of Cycle 25 to its peak, it looks like Cycle 26 just can't wait to tag in. The rumblings of the onset of the next 11-year-long solar cycle came in the form of "starquakes," sound waves ricocheting through the interior of the sun detected by researchers from the University of Birmingham.

To spot signs of this overeager solar cycle, Howe and colleagues used a scientific technique called "helioseismology," which measures starquakes on our star.

Just as seismologists can use seismic waves on Earth to determine the interior of our planet, including its structure and composition, helioseismologists can do the same with sound waves and the sun.



The University of Birmingham team saw a faint indication that Cycle 26 is starting to manifest in the rotational band data they have been analyzing.

"If you go back one solar cycle - 11 years - on the plot, you can see something similar that seems to join up with the shape that we saw in 2017. It went on to be a feature of the present solar cycle, Cycle 25," said Howe. "We're likely seeing the first traces of Cycle 26, which won't officially start until about 2030."

NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory (SDO) has been observing the sun since 2010, collecting helioseismic data using its onboard Helioseismic and Magnetic Imager (HMI) to help scientists like Howe study solar torsional oscillation signals.

In addition to this, researchers have similar data stretching all the way back to 1995, thanks to the Michelson Doppler Imager (MDI) onboard Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO).

This means that Howe and colleagues have a picture of the rising phases of Cycles 23, 24, and 25. In fact, Howe has been following the changes in the sun's rotation for around 25 years, beginning her investigation when scientists only had a portion of data from Cycle 23.

This revealed fast-moving material and sunspots moving to the sun's equator, a pattern that has repeated in similar ways during Cycle 24 and during the growth of Cycle 25. Now, Howe has hints the same pattern is happening again ahead of Cycle 26.

"With more data, I hope we can understand more about the part these flows play in the intricate dance of plasma and magnetic fields that form the solar cycle," she concluded.

The team's research was presented at the Royal Astronomical Society's National Astronomy Meeting 2024 (NAM 24) in Hull.

Source: <https://www.space.com/sun-next-solar-cycle-beginning>

Awards Issued

USACA Award:

USACA #1276

Jack, K0MAF

MARAC USA-CA Awards

JA1NLX: Level 2000 - #1484

N1EN: Level 2000 - #1485

R6YY: Level 2000 - #1486

N2SO: Level 1500 - #1622

JE2UFF: Level 1000 - #1976

IK0IXI: Level 1000 - #1977

KX1W: Level 1000 - #1978

JA3ADB level 500 #3879

Roadrunner Award:

K4YT attained 1000 Last Counties. He received #16

W0GXQ attained 1650 Last Counties. He received #4

W0GXQ attained 1675 Last counties. He received #4

N0KV attained 1000 Last counties. He received #17

Single Band Award:

W0GXQ attained level 1000 on 12 meters. He received #3

W4SIG completed all 40 meters and received #9

NM1G attained level 2000 on 30 meters. He received #7

USA SSB Award:

WQ7A completed USA-SSB and received #29

Ran all State Award:

WY0A ran all Iowa. He received #38

WY0A ran all North Dakota. He received #38

WY0A ran all Minnesota. He received #31

WY0A ran all South Dakota and received #38

Combo Callsigns:

NM1G attained level 3000 with combo 2X3. He received #1

USA Digital Award:

NM1G Attained level 1000 and received #23

County Challenge Award:

K0DEQ is at level 21000 and he received #11

Bingo Award:

W8TZA_completed Bingo II and received #110

Events for County Hunters

Not yet.. Watch the mobile spots on CH.W6RK.com and the POTA spot page for parks. Will be another month until activity resumes with QSO Parties.

Winter will bring the January VHF contest and "Winter Field Day" for operating events. There's the usual Monday MST 'test' and Wednesday CWT sessions for cw ops. Monday the speeds are about 20 wpm, and Wednesday 25+ wpm (with some at 35 wpm). On Monday, the exchange is your name and QSO number. On Wednesday, it is your name and CW Ops number, or if you have none, your state abbreviation. All are welcome to participate.

You can check out the smaller and DX contests at The ARRL monthly contest corral or WA7BNM page.

That's all folks