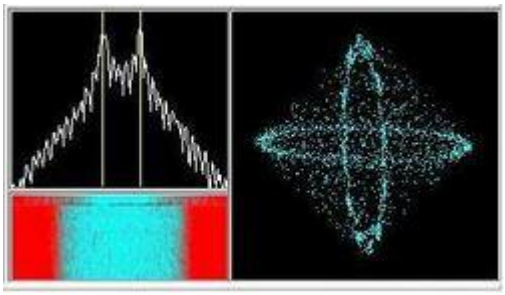
RTTY and FT8 Successfully Coexist in 2019 ARRL RTTY Roundup

Based on informal exit polling and log-submission trends, it appears that RTTY and FT8 successfully shared spectrum during the ARRL RTTY Roundup over the January 5 - 6 weekend. The event is seeing a dramatic uptick from last year in the number of logs submitted, with more than 2,400 and counting received by midweek, as opposed to 1,622 in the 2018 running. ARRL Contest Branch Manager Bart Jahnke, W9JJ, is urging everyone who participated in the 2019 RTTY Roundup to turn in a log -- no matter the number of contacts made. Logs for the 2019 RTTY Roundup are due by Sunday, January 13, at 2359 UTC, and may be uploaded via the ARRL website (or see mailing instructions for paper logs).



"The 30th running of the ARRL RTTY Roundup is now in the books," Jahnke said. "All indications are that the event -- in both RTTY and other digital categories -- gained significant additional attention and increased popularity with the inclusion of FT8 in the digital lineup." Jahnke said digital operating experience gained through the RTTY Roundup should benefit participants in the upcoming ARRL January VHF Contest and in future VHF contests, where *WSJT-X* protocols such as JT*x*, MSK144, and FT8 continue to gain popularity as a means to work hard-to-reach grids beyond the usual 400-mile tropo-scatter range, and for slower activity periods.

Jahnke reminds those submitting RTTY Roundup logs to make sure they're entering in the correct category. All entries that made contacts in FT8 or PSK*xx* (with their multi-channel decoder technology) must enter in one of the Unlimited categories, unless they're Multioperator entries. Contact the ARRL Contest Branch with any questions.

The inclusion of FT8 for the first time in the RTTY Roundup had generated considerable pre-contest debate, but when all was said and done, many stations tended to operate one mode or the other, although some took advantage of both (and perhaps of other digital modes), judging from logs posted on the 3830scores website. The RTTY Roundup came close on the heels of the inaugural FT8 Roundup over the first weekend in December, which was deemed a success (it was the first-ever contest for the winner -- only licensed for 2 years -- and for one other Top 10 finisher).

Alex Panoiu, YO9HP, in Romania, said he was initially hesitant about the idea of mixing RTTY and FT8, but he set up for both modes anyway. "Definitely in the first hours, the rates were three times higher in RTTY compared to FT8," he said in his 3830scores comments. "But later, when less 'fresh meat' was available in RTTY and propagation became marginal, FT8 became interesting. I noticed that most of the calls worked in FT8 never appeared in my RTTY log." He logged 369 digital contacts and 639 RTTY contacts.

The WW4LL Multi-Single, High Power team made about one-third of its contacts using digital modes. J42L, operating Multi-Single, Low Power from SV2DCD, avoided RTTY altogether, logging 535 digital contacts.

FT8 co-developer Joe Taylor, K1JT, operating Single Operator Unlimited, Low Power used only FT8, logging 585 contacts. He noted "close to zero" inter-mode interference between RTTY and FT8 signals.

NCJ Digital Contesting Editor Ed Muns, W0YK, said he was very impressed with how the first RTTY Roundup to permit FT8 worked out.

"FT8 has significant advantages for a much larger group of contest participants who are constrained by geography, housing limitations, solar conditions, power, and noise," Muns said. "The amazing explosive growth of FT8 activity since its introduction in mid-2017 also means that there are many more participants for all of us to work in contests."

Muns said he initially didn't believe that RTTY and FT8 could coexist in the same contest. "Of course, like many things we can debate *ad infinitum*, a little bit of actual experience goes a long way to inform our [preconceived notions]," he added. "I'm very impressed with how it all worked out."