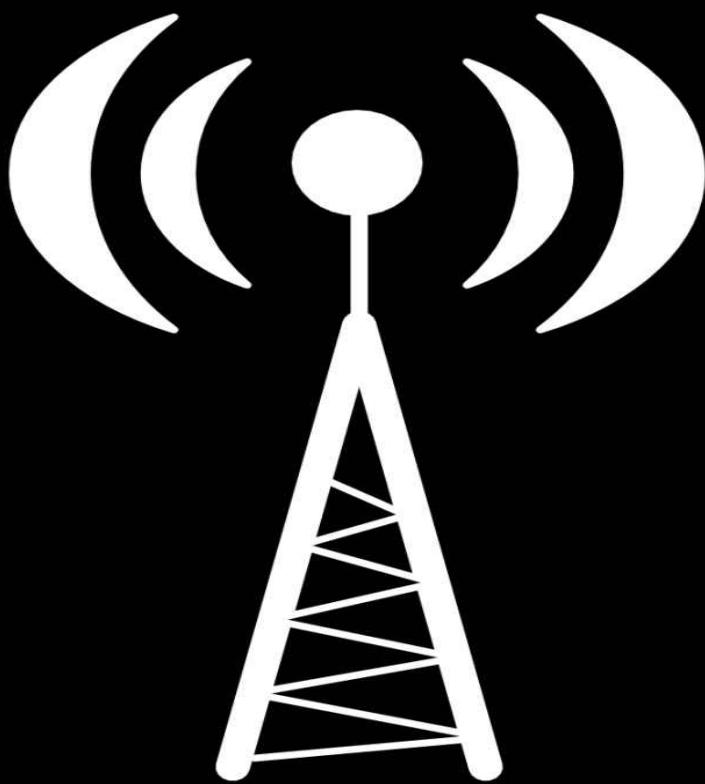


The Hobbyist's Guide to RTL-SDR



Really Cheap
Software Defined Radio

**THE HOBBYIST'S GUIDE TO RTL-SDR:
REALLY CHEAP SOFTWARE DEFINED
RADIO**

**A GUIDE TO RTL-SDR AND CHEAP
SOFTWARE DEFINED RADIO BY THE
AUTHORS OF THE RTL-SDR.COM BLOG**

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PREFACE

In February 2012 the first FM radio signal was received with an RTL2832U RTL-SDR dongle using custom SDR drivers. Since then tens of thousands of hams, security researchers, hackers, makers, tinkerers, students and electronics enthusiasts have purchased RTL-SDR dongles to use as a very cheap software defined radio.

This book is intended to be a comprehensive guide for hobbyists on the use of the RTL-SDR dongle. The book consists mainly of tips to get the best out of your RTL-SDR and tutorials for the various interesting projects that can be done using the dongle.

The information and tutorials in this book are up to date at the time of writing. Because SDR technology and its supporting software is evolving at such a fast pace, we cannot guarantee that they will work without the need for some tweaking in the future. We will do our best to keep this book updated.

If you discover any mistakes, missing information or just have any feedback on the book please feel free to contact me at rtlsdrblog@gmail.com.

Tips for reading on Kindle: Be sure to adjust the font size settings to your preference as the default font size can be very large. All Kindle readers have this setting in their options or toolbars. The free Calibre software is another good alternative for reading this book.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS SOFTWARE DEFINED RADIO (SDR)?

In traditional hardware radios, the mathematical operations required to decode and process radio signals are performed using analogue circuitry.

Recently, computers have become powerful enough to perform the required mathematical calculations in software, hence the term software defined radio.

This has led to advanced radios that previously required complicated analogue hardware now being able to be implemented easily in software. This has reduced the cost of advanced radio capabilities such as wideband tuning and waterfall displays.

WHAT IS THE RTL-SDR?

The RTL-SDR is an extremely cheap software defined radio which is based on DVB-T TV (Digital HD

TV) USB receiver dongles that have the RTL2832U chip in them. It was discovered by hardware hacker Eric Fry, Linux driver developer Antti Palosaari and the Osmocom team who were developing their own SDR that the RTL2832U chip had a mode which enabled SDR.

Today, by using custom software drivers, a commonly used cheap TV dongle (under \$30 USD) can then be turned into a sophisticated SDR with features that would have until recently cost in the hundreds to thousands of dollars.

Of course, the performance of these dongles will not match a dedicated SDR, but they perform extremely well for the price, and almost all hobbyist projects that can be done with expensive radios or SDRs can also be done with the rtl-sdr.

A wideband SDR opens up many interesting possible projects and avenues to explore. Some applications of the RTL-SDR include the following, some of which will be discussed in more depth in the project tutorials chapter.

- Listening to unencrypted Police/Ambulance/Fire/EMS conversations.
- Listening to aircraft traffic control conversations.
- Tracking aircraft positions like a radar with ADS-B decoding.
- Decoding aircraft ACARS short messages.
- Scanning trunking radio conversations.
- Decoding unencrypted digital voice transmissions.
- Tracking maritime boat positions like a radar with AIS decoding.
- Decoding POCSAG/FLEX pager traffic.
- Scanning for cordless phones and baby monitors.
- Tracking and receiving meteorological agency launched weather balloon data.
- Tracking your own self launched high altitude balloon for payload recovery.
- Receiving wireless temperature sensors and wireless power meter sensors.
- Listening to VHF amateur radio.
- Decoding ham radio APRS packets.
- Watching analogue broadcast TV.
- Sniffing GSM signals.
- Using rtl-sdr on your Android device as a portable radio scanner.
- Receiving GPS signals and decoding them.
- Using rtl-sdr as a spectrum analyzer.
- Receiving NOAA weather satellite images.
- Listening to satellites and the ISS.
- Listening to unencrypted military communications.
- Radio astronomy.
- Monitoring meteor scatter.
- Listening to FM radio, and decoding RDS information.

- Listening to DAB broadcast radio.
- Use rtl-sdr as a panadapter for your traditional hardware radio.
- Decoding taxi mobile data terminal signals.
- Use rtl-sdr as a true random number generator.
- Listening to amateur radio hams on SSB with LSB/USB modulation.
- Decoding digital amateur radio ham communications such as CW/PSK/RTTY/SSTV.
- Receiving HF weatherfax.
- Receiving digital radio mondiale shortwave radio (DRM).
- Listening to international shortwave radio.
- Looking for RADAR signals like over the horizon (OTH) radar, and HAARP signals.

WHAT EQUIPMENT DO I NEED TO GET INTO RTL-SDR?

All one really needs is the following

- An RTL-SDR dongle
- An antenna for your project (purchased or home built)
- Some coax cable and an adapter to connect the RTL-SDR to the antenna
- A computer
- RTL-SDR software (most of which is free)

Furthermore, you can get more advanced with some extras

- An upconverter to receive the HF bands (0 - 30 MHz)
- A low noise amplifier (LNA) to improve reception.
- Preselector filters to filter noise.

Places to buy these products can be found at <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/>.

RTL-SDR TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- 22-2200 MHz Tunable Range (Approx. depends on tuner model)
- 3.2 MHz max bandwidth (~2.8 MHz stable)
- 8-bit ADC giving ~50 dB dynamic range

- < 4.5dB noise figure LNA
- 75 Ohm input impedance

RTL-SDR ADC

ADC is an acronym for “Analogue to Digital Converter”. It is a microchip that reads in an analogue signal and then digitizes it. The more bits an ADC has, the more accurate the digitization can be. For example an 8-bit ADC can scale the analogue input into values between -127 and +127, whereas a 12 bit ADC can scale values from -2047 to +2047.

So with a low bit ADC certain small details in the analogue input, such as weak signals may be lost during digitization. **The RTL-SDR has an 8-bit ADC**, which is fairly low, but large enough to give decent performance. The dynamic range of an ADC can be calculated approximately with: $\text{number_of_bits} * 6 \text{ dB}$. This gives the RTL-SDR approximately 50 dB of dynamic range. However, the dynamic range is usually slightly larger (~60 dB) due to the oversampling trick that can be performed in software.

Dynamic range is the range between the largest and smallest possible values.

RTL-SDR BANDWIDTH

The maximum bandwidth of the RTL-SDR is 3.2 MHz, though the largest stable bandwidth is either 2.4 MHz or 2.8 MHz depending on your PC. Setting the bandwidth too large can cause samples to be lost on slow PCs giving choppy audio.

Most RTL-SDR compatible software will let you choose your bandwidth which is sometimes referred to as sample rate as well. Although sample rate and bandwidth are not the same thing, in the RTL-SDR setting the sample rate to 2 Msps (Mega Samples per second) will give you 2 MHz of bandwidth. Setting it to 2.8 Msps will give you 2.8 MHz of bandwidth. (If you are familiar with Nyquist you might wonder how 2 Msps can give 2 MHz, this is because the RTL-SDR uses I/Q sampling with two ADCs).

The bandwidth is the size of the frequency spectrum that you can see at any one time.

INPUT IMPEDANCE

As RTL2832U dongles are intended for use with TV, they all have an **input impedance of 75 Ohms**. Most amateur and professional radio equipment runs on 50 Ohm cabling, connectors and adapters.

You might think this mismatch will be a problem, however the loss due to the mismatch is minimal, equating to less than 0.2 dB.

RTL-SDR CURRENT USAGE

The R820T uses approximately 300 mA of current whilst the E4000 needs approximately 170 mA.

Source: <http://superkuh.com/rtlsdr.html#tuners>

RTL-SDR MINIMUM PC SPECIFICATIONS

For SDR# any modern PC with a dual core processor, at least 1 GB of memory and Windows XP or newer should be sufficient. The PC must also have a USB 2.0 or newer port.

Slower PCs and embedded microcontroller based computers like the Raspberry Pi can be used with efficient command line software.

RTL-SDR COMPATIBLE DONGLES

Almost any DVB-T dongle with the RTL2832U chip can be used with the RTL-SDR drivers. However, one must pay attention to the tuner chip used in the dongle. The tuner chip defines the frequency range of the dongle.

There are two commonly used tuners. These are the **R820T** and **E4000** chips. There are also the less common FC0013 and FC0012. Recently there is also the R828D and FC2580, however these are even less common.

Tuner	Min Freq (MHz)	Max Freq (MHz)
R820T	24	1766
E4000	52	2200
FC0012	22	948.6
FC0013	22	1100
R828D	24	1766
FCI	146/308	438/924
FC2580		

The R820T is the most commonly purchased RTL-SDR. The E4000 used to be more popular but Elonics, the manufacturer has closed down making these chips rare and expensive. Other tuners are less commonly found.

For these reasons, currently RTL-SDR.com recommends the R820T tuner, unless you require the higher frequencies that the E4000 tuner gives.

TIPS FOR BUYING RTL-SDR DONGLES

There are several online places to buy RTL-SDRs. The one place that RTL-SDR.com recommends the most is from the Nooelec Amazon store. Nooelec is a company that knows their products and can

provide installation support should you need it. When buying from Amazon you also get the extra Amazon buyers protection. If you are a first time buyer, we highly recommend the Nooelec Amazon store. See our Buy RTL-SDR Dongles page online for information on obtaining dongles <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/>.

Dongles are also available on Ebay. However, you must be careful when buying on Ebay as sometimes sellers misrepresent their product. This is especially the case with the E4000 tuner dongles. Some sellers advertise E4000 dongles cheaply, when in fact they are actually R820T dongles.

Aliexpress.com is also another place to purchase these dongles. However, the same warnings as with EBay apply here, plus shipping times are much slower.

R820T PACKAGES

The commonly bought R820T dongle comes in many packages. The most common and fit for most purposes is the black dongle with MCX connector.



There is also the ‘nano’ package available now which is very tiny.



There are also these white dongles which have PAL (Belling-Lee) connectors.



While they all have similar performance, we recommend the ones with the MCX connectors such as the standard and nano packages. MCX connectors have less insertion loss at GHz frequencies which is important for applications like ADS-B. Note that it has also been reported that the ‘nano’ models get hotter causing greater frequency instability.

OTHER SDRS WORTH MENTIONING

Freq	Bandwidth	ADC (Bits)	Comments	Price
------	-----------	------------	----------	-------

	Range (MHz)	(MHz)		(USD)	
Funcube	0.150 - 260 410 - 2050	0.192	16	RX, Filters	200
HackRF	30 - 6000	20	8	RX/TX	300
BladeRF	300 - 3800	40	12	RX/TX	400, 650
USRP B210	70 - 6000	56	16	RX/TX	1100
SockRock Ensemble II	0.180 - 3	0.192	Soundcard	RX/TX	67 (TX) 89 (RX/TX)
AirSpy	24 - 1750	10	12	RX	~100
Mirics (Msi3101)	64 - 108 162 - 240 470 - 960	5	12	RX	85

In the cheaper end of the SDR spectrum is the AirSpy dongle which promises to have improved performance over the RTL-SDR. At the time of writing this book AirSpy has not yet been released. The Funcube dongle is another device similar to the RTL-SDR, but with improved RF design and some front end filters. The Softrock Ensemble II is a dedicated HF receiver which comes as a kitset. You will need good soldering and construction skills to complete the kit. It has excellent shortwave reception performance.

In the higher priced end of the SDR spectrum we have the HackRF/BladeRF and USRPs which are all capable of receive and transmit.

There is also the online WebSDR <http://websdr.ewi.utwente.nl:8901/> which is a great receiver for those wanting to just look at what might be in the HF bands.

SOFTWARE DEFINED RADIO BASIC THEORY

An SDR simply works by receiving an analogue radio signal and then using an Analogue to Digital Converter (ADC) to digitize the signal. The digitized signal can then be worked on in digital signal processing software.

In practice an ADC will only work up to a certain frequency. The RTL2832U is a type of ADC which works up till 28.8 MHz. To digitize higher frequency signals we need an IF mixer stage to convert all received frequencies down to the frequencies that the ADC can use. This is the job of the tuner chip (e.g R820T/E4000).

Advanced: The RTL-SDR uses I/Q sampling, where two ADCs are used, one for the minus part from the DC offset and one part for the positive part of the DC offset. This is how we can get 3.2 MHz of bandwidth from a 3.2 Msps ADC sampling rate despite the Nyquist limit. (If an ADC can sample at

3.2 Msps, then the maximum bandwidth it can digitize is $3.2/2 = 1.6$ MHz due to Nyquist.)

If you are interested in a more in depth treatment of SDR theory, the ARRL has a good article at

<http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Technology/tis/info/pdf/020708qex013.pdf>

SETTING UP AND USING YOUR RTL-SDR

SDR# SETUP GUIDE (TESTED ON WINDOWS VISTA/7 + XP)

1. Purchase an RTL-SDR dongle. The cheapest and best for most applications is the R820T dongle, which can be purchased from Nooelec <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/>.
2. SDRSharp is the easiest and most commonly used software defined radio software receiver for the RTL-SDR. Go to www.sdrsharp.com and head to the download page. Note that you must have the Microsoft .NET redistributable installed to use SDRSharp. Modern Windows PCs have this installed by default, but older PCs running XP may need this to be installed. It can be downloaded from <http://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/download/details.aspx?id=21>.
3. Ignore the downloads on the top of the page. Scroll down to where it says “Important note for RTL-SDR users”. Download sdr_install.zip from that link. **NOTE: At the time of writing this book the SDR# downloads page has recently changed. The sdr_install.zip file download is currently available from the main page at [sdrsharp.com](http://www.sdrsharp.com) but it's location may change in the future.**

SUPPORT

If you like this software, please support it by donating money, hardware (preferred) or simply write a good documentation and spread the word.

[Donate](#)

RECENT POSTS

- [ADSB# – A simple and cheap ADS-B receiver using RTL-SDR](#)
- [Contributors](#)
- [Automatic IQ Correction Algorithm](#)
- [Source code](#)

RECENT COMMENTS

- JohnM on [Downloads](#)
- OldSaxon on [ADSB# – A simple and cheap ADS-B receiver using RTL-SDR](#)
- michelinok on [Welcome](#)
- ADSB Aircraft RADAR with RTL-SDR | [rtl-sdr.com](#)
- [ADSB# – A simple and cheap ADS-B receiver using RTL-SDR](#)
- Tekla on [Welcome](#)

META

- [Register](#)
- [Log in](#)

LINKS

- [ARRAM](#)
- [Basic DSP page](#)
- [CN8VO's Page](#)

Downloads

This page is updated every time a version is available. So, stay tuned!

- [SDR# Stable \(Revision 1000, Stable\)](#)
- [SDR# Dev \(Continuous Integration, Last Changed Rev: 1134 \)](#)
- [SDR# RTLSR Plugin \(Continuous Integration, Last Changed Rev: 1134 \)](#)
- [ADSB# v1.0.11.1, a SDR ADS-B Receiver in C# and its documentation](#)
- [Source code \(SVN\)](#)
- [Changesets](#)

Licensing

SDR# (SDRSharp) is released under the MIT license for the GUI and the plugin parts, and under the MS-RSL for the DSP.

As such, **you can**:

- Create, Modify and Redistribute plugins
- Create, Modify and Redistribute the GUI in both its binary and source code forms under a different name (it's no longer SDR#!) preserving the original copyrights and licenses

But **you cannot**:

Use This Link

- Modify or Redistribute the DSP (SDRSharp.Radio.dll and its corresponding code)

Important note for RTL-SDR users

You can use this quick installation script to test the latest development version:

<http://sdrsharp.com/downloads/sdr-install.zip>

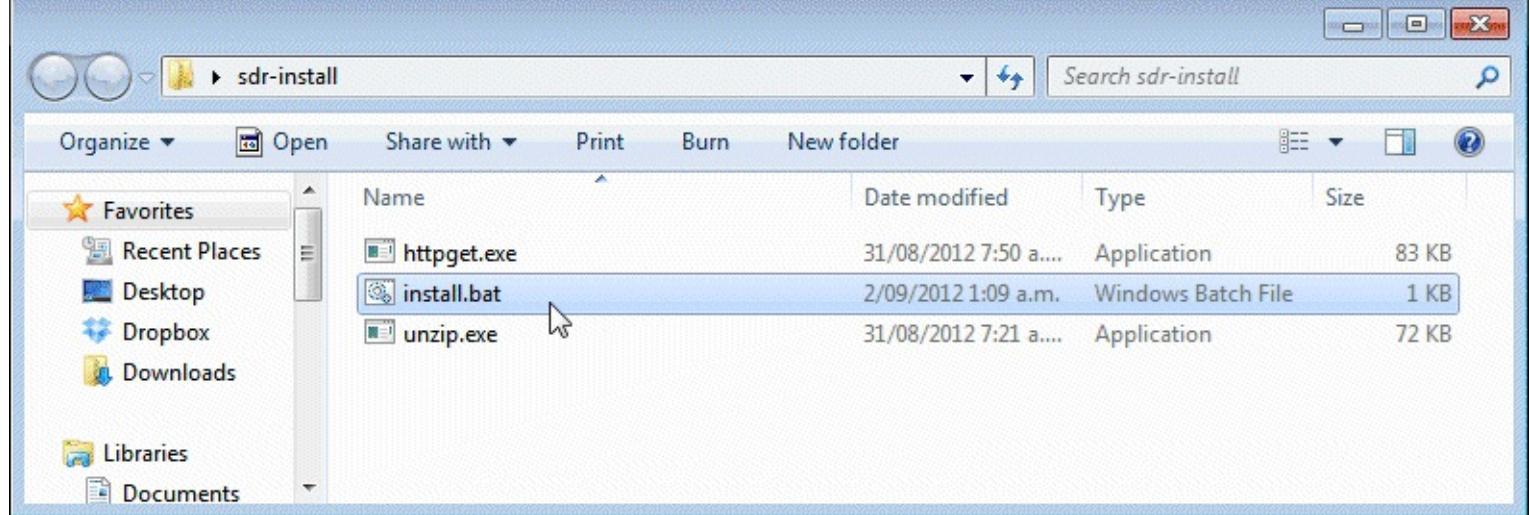
A step by step installation instructions <http://rtlsdr.org/softwarewindows> community website:

<http://rtlsdr.org/softwarelinux>

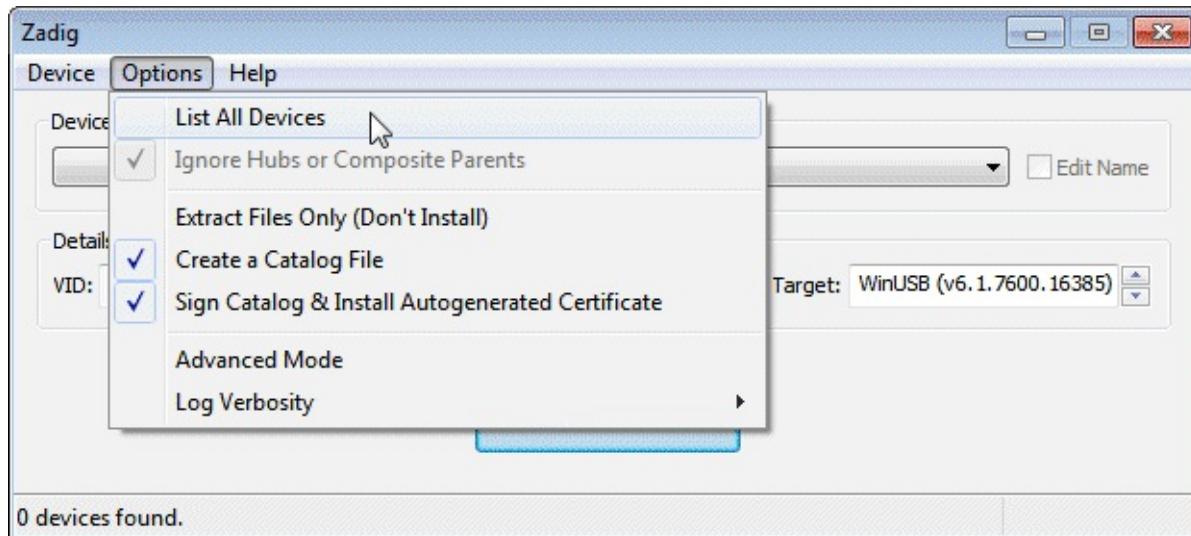
To get started with SDR# you may be interested by the excellent document from Henry (N2VFL) :

<http://www.atouk.com/wordpress/?p=153>

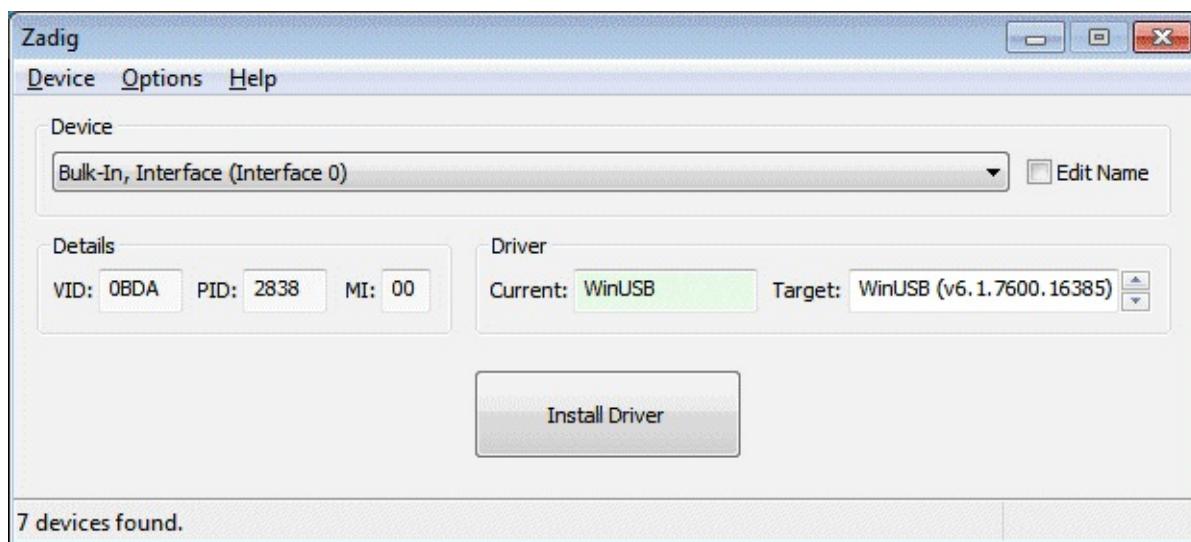
4. Extract the sdr-install folder from the zip file to a place on your computer.
5. Double click on install.bat from within the extracted folder. This will start a command prompt that will download SDRSharp and all the files required to make SDRSharp work with RTL-SDR. Everything will be placed into a new folder within the sdr-install folder called “sdrsharp”. The command prompt will automatically close when it is done.



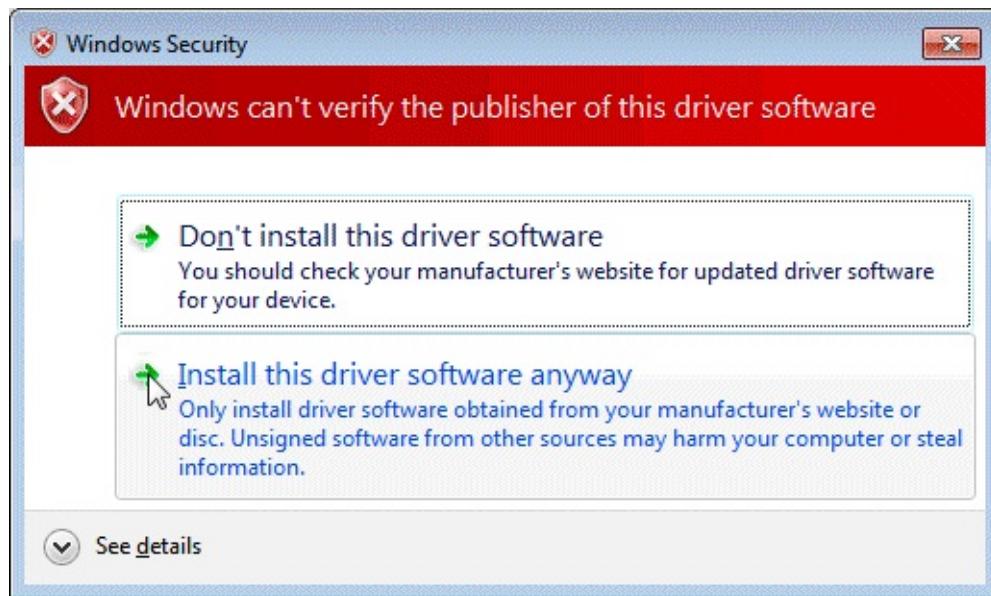
6. Plug in your dongle and do not install any of the software that it came with, but ensure you let plug and play finish trying to install it. If necessary, uninstall any DVB-T software drivers you've installed from the CD that some dongles come with.
7. Open the newly created sdrsharp folder. Find the file zadig.exe. Right click this file and select “Run as administrator” if using Windows Vista/7. If you are using Windows XP, download the XP version from <http://zadig.akeo.ie/>. If you are on Windows 8 you may get unsigned driver issues when using zadig. To get around this use the newer version (v2.1+) of zadig from <http://zadig.akeo.ie/>.
8. In Zadig, go to **Options -> List All Devices** and make sure this option is checked.



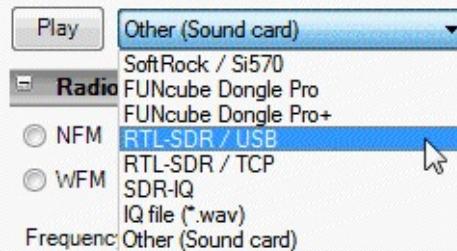
9. Select **“Bulk-In, Interface (Interface 0)”** from the drop down list. Ensure that WinUSB is selected in the box next to where it says Target. (Note on some PCs you may see something like RTL2832UHIDIR instead of the bulk in interface. This is also a valid selection).



10. Click Install Driver. You might get a warning that the publisher cannot be verified, but just accept it by clicking on Install this driver software anyway. This will install the drivers necessary to run the dongle as a software defined radio. Note that you *may* need to run zadig.exe again if you move the dongle to another USB port, or want to use two or more dongles together.

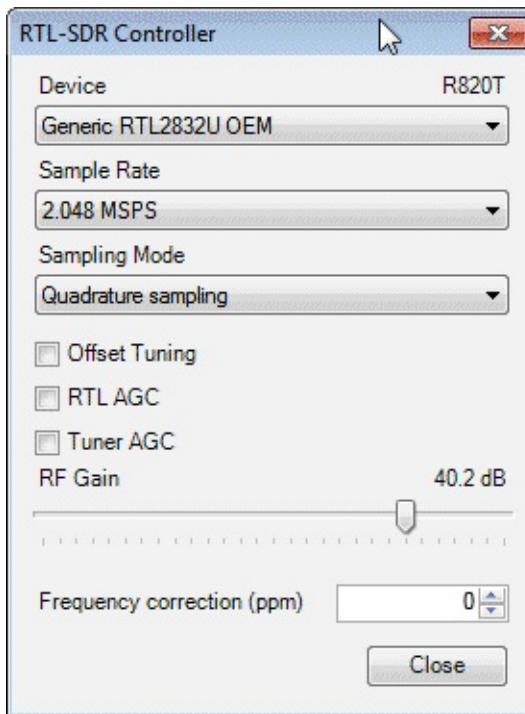


11. Open SDRSharp.exe. Set the drop down box at the top next to the Play button to 'RTLSDR / USB'. Press Play. Your rtl-sdr software radio should now be playing some static and showing an RF spectrum and waterfall! If everything has worked you should be able to start tuning to frequencies using the numbers at the top of the program.



12. Click on the Configure button to bring up the configure menu.

13. By default the RTL-SDR's gain is set to zero. Increase this gain by moving the RF Gain slider up, or by turning on Tuner AGC.



TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

ZADIG TAKES A LONG TIME TO INSTALL THE DRIVER, THEN FAILS

You have probably not run zadig in administrator mode. Make sure to right click zadig, and select “Run as Administrator”

I DON'T SEE BULK-IN, INTERFACE (INTERFACE 0)

Ensure **Options->List All Devices** is checked. Some people report seeing something else other than the bulk in interface. It may also show up as the brand of your dongle or something prefixed with “rtl”. This option should work too.

I DON'T SEE RTL-SDR/USB IN SDRSHARP

You may have downloaded a version without rtl-sdr support. Check that you followed the instructions in step 3 and downloaded the version under the heading “Important note for RTL-SDR users”.

ZADIG GIVES “SYSTEM POLICY HAS BEEN MODIFIED TO REJECT UNSIGNED DRIVERS“ ERROR IN WINDOWS 8

Windows 8 can cause signed driver issues with zadig. Some users report getting the error: “System policy has been modified to reject unsigned drivers”. To solve this download the newer Zadig 2.1+ drivers from <http://zadig.akeo.ie/>.

RECEPTION IN SDR# SEEMS VERY POOR/RECEIVER IS INSENSITIVE

Make sure you have increased the gain slider which can be accessed by clicking on the configure button. Also, in poor reception areas using the stock antenna indoors may not be sufficient. Though rare, another cause of insensitivity is a dongle blown by electrostatic discharge.

SDR# GIVES ERROR “APPLICATION FAILED TO INITIALIZE PROPERLY (0XC0000135). CLICK OK TO TERMINATE.”

This might mean that you do not have the .NET 3.5 Framework installed. Download it from <http://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/download/details.aspx?id=21>.

SDR# GIVES ERROR “CANNOT ACCESS RTL DEVICE”

You may have tuned to a frequency that is out of range of the RTL-SDR. Tune back to a known supported frequency like 000.100.000.000 and press play.

WHAT IS BULK IN INTERFACE-1?

This is the IR interface for the remote control which is not required for SDR.

ZADIG WON’T RUN

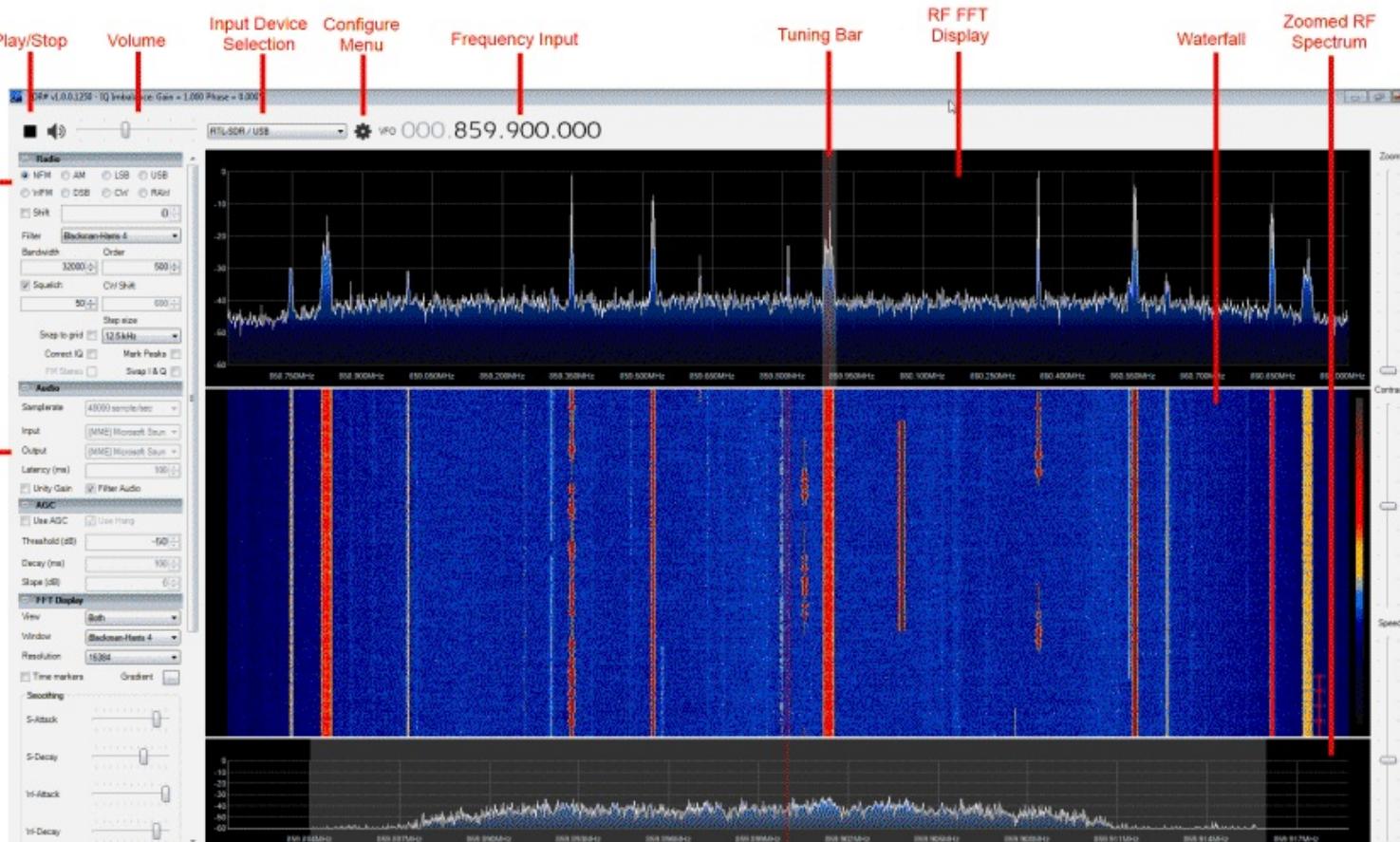
Some users report that Zadig crashes upon opening. An alternative driver installer can be found at <http://visualgdb.com/UsbDriverTool/>. Use this tool to install the libUSB - WinUSB drivers.

SDR SHARP USERS GUIDE

SDR# is currently the most popular SDR program used with the RTL-SDR. It is easy to setup and simple to use. To install SDR#, go through the RTL-SDR setup guide first.

Upon starting SDR#, we suggest you reduce the Range setting and increase the FFT resolution to 16384. See below for more information.

Open SDR#. You will be greeted with this screen shown below. Here we have highlighted the main parts of SDR#.



MAIN SETTINGS

PLAY BUTTON

This button is used to start and stop the SDR.

INPUT DEVICE SELECTION

This is a drop down menu which is used to select the SDR input device being used. If you are using an RTL-SDR, select RTL-SDR/USB. Be sure to NOT select RTL-SDR/TCP unless you are using a remote server with rtl_tcp.

CONFIGURE MENU

Clicking this button opens up the configure menu. In here you can change settings like the sample rate (bandwidth) and RF gain.

FREQUENCY INPUT

Use the mouse to set the desired frequency in MHz you wish to listen to here. You can either click on the tops and bottoms of each individual number to increase or decrease the value, or simply hover over the number you want to change and use the mouse wheel to alter the value.

MODE SELECTION

Here you can choose what type of demodulation mode the signal at your currently tuned frequency uses.

NFM - Narrowband Frequency Modulation. Common mode used by walkie talkie radios and digital signals.

WFM - Wide Band Frequency Modulation. Is the mode that broadcast FM stations use (eg the radio you listen to in your car).

AM - Amplitude Modulation. Used by broadcast AM stations that are receivable by normal radios and air band voice frequencies used by aircraft and air traffic control.

LSB/USB - Lower Side Band/Upper Sideband. Use in the HF band by ham radio to transmit voice efficiently.

CW - Continuous Wave. Used for listening to Morse Code.

DSB - Double Side Band. Not commonly used.

RAW - Raw signal. Almost never used.

VOLUME / AF GAIN

Set the volume level of your output speakers or audio piping device here.

RF FFT SPECTRUM

This part of the window shows the RF FFT spectrum as a graph in real time visually. Active signals will appear as peaks on this graph.

RF FFT WATERFALL

This part of the window shows the RF spectrum graph spread over time with new data at the top, and old data at the bottom, just like a waterfall.

TUNING BAR

The vertical red line shows where on the RF spectrum the RTL-SDR is currently tuned to. The tuning can be altered by simply using the mouse to click and drag the red line.

The shaded rectangular area around the red line shows the bandwidth of the tuned area. (don't confuse this with the bandwidth/sample rate set in the configure menu). The bandwidth should be set so that it covers the area of the signal that is tuned. The bandwidth can be adjusted by using the mouse by simply dragging the edges of the shaded area in or out.

OTHER SETTINGS

Other options which you may find useful are described below.

RADIO TAB

OFFSET

This box offsets the tuned frequency by the amount entered. This is useful if you are using an upconverter. For example if you have an upconverter with a 100 MHz oscillator, you would set the offset to be -100,000,000 (don't forget the minus sign). Without the offset, to tune to a signal at 9 MHz you would need to actually tune to $100 + 9 = 109$ MHz. With the offset set, you can tune to 9 MHz as normal. If you have an upconverter with a 125 MHz oscillator you would tune to $125 + 9 = 134$ MHz, or set the offset to -125,000,000.

FILTER BANDWIDTH

This is the width of the shaded part of the tunable area. You can set it manually here, or by dragging with the mouse as described above.

FILTER TYPE

Changes the filter type used. Different filters have different shapes. The filter is used to select the highlighted signal in the RF window. A good filter will select only the selected signal. Blackman-Harris is usually the best filter to choose.

FILTER ORDER

You may notice that with low filter orders signals outside of the tuned bandwidth can still be heard. Larger filter orders “tighten” or “sharpen” the band pass filter used in the tuned bandwidth preventing signals outside of the tuned bandwidth from being heard.

You will want to increase the filter order when there are strong signals near to your tuned area.

SQUELCH

Mutes the audio when the signal level is below the specified value. Useful for when listening to speech as the static when no one is talking will be muted.

CW SHIFT

Mainly useful for when transmitting CW as it specifies the offset between CW transmit and receive frequencies.

SNAP TO GRID

In many bands signals are spaced a fixed distance apart. For instance in most countries air band signals are spaced 25 kHz apart (or 8.33 kHz in some countries). This setting can help with tuning by snapping directly to a signal. However, to use this with the RTL-SDR the PPM frequency offset correction must be set correctly, otherwise the frequencies may not line up.

CORRECT IQ

Should usually be selected as ON. This setting uses an algorithm to remove unwanted images (ghosts of strong signals) from showing up in the spectrum.

SWAP I & Q

If you are using SDR# as a panadapter, some hardware radios may have the I & Q signals swapped.

FM STEREO

Will enable stereo output for broadcast radio WFM signals.

MARK PEAKS

Simply marks any peak in the RF spectrum with a circle.

AUDIO TAB

OUTPUT

Sets the audio output device. By default it is set to your speakers. If you are passing the audio to a decoder program here you would choose your virtual audio cable to send the audio to.

AGC (AUTOMATIC GAIN CONTROL):

The AGC tab will only be activated in the AM, DSB, LSB, USB and CW demodulation modes.

USE AGC

Turns on the automatic gain control. The AGC will attempt control the volume level so that loud sounds are not too loud and quiet sounds are not too quiet. The default settings work well for audio signals.

FFT DISPLAY

VIEW

Set it to view both the RF spectrum and the waterfall, or only one of them, or none at all. Removing the waterfall may be useful on older PCs with slow processing hardware.

RESOLUTION

Increasing the resolution will increase the quality of how the signal looks in the RF display and waterfall. Using a higher resolution may be useful when fine tuning, as high resolutions will allow you to see the peaks and structure of a signal much more clearly. Beware that high resolutions can slow your PC down.

RANGE

Modifies the dB level range shown on the left axis of the RF spectrum window. You should adjust this so that the noise floor sits near the bottom of the RF spectrum window. As the RTL-SDR has a dynamic range of approximately 50 dB (plus a little more after oversampling), you will not need a

range much higher than 70 dB.

DIGITAL NOISE REDUCTION

It is useful to turn this on when listening to noisy analogue voice signals. This setting will attempt to reduce the background ‘hiss’ sound. It is usually more useful to use the IF digital noise reduction.

NOISE BLANKER

The noise blanker is an algorithm that can be turned on to help reduce impulsive noise from sources like spark gaps. Examples of this type of noise may come from motors and electricity lines.

SETTING THE RF GAIN

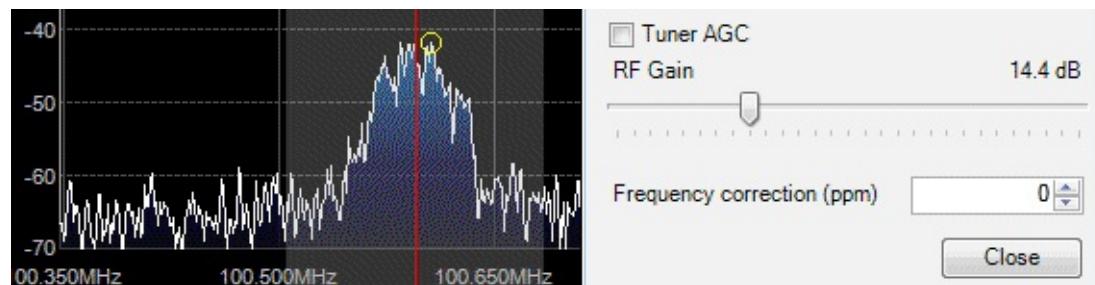
There are three RF gain settings that can be found by clicking on the Configure button. RTL AGC turns on the internal dongle automatic gain control algorithm. Tuner AGC uses the RTL-SDR drivers AGC settings and finally, the gain slider can be used to manually set the gain.

For casual browsing, Tuner AGC will likely suffice most of the time. When trying to optimize the gain of a signal, manual tuning will be required. RTL AGC is almost never used as it tends to introduce a lot of unwanted noise.

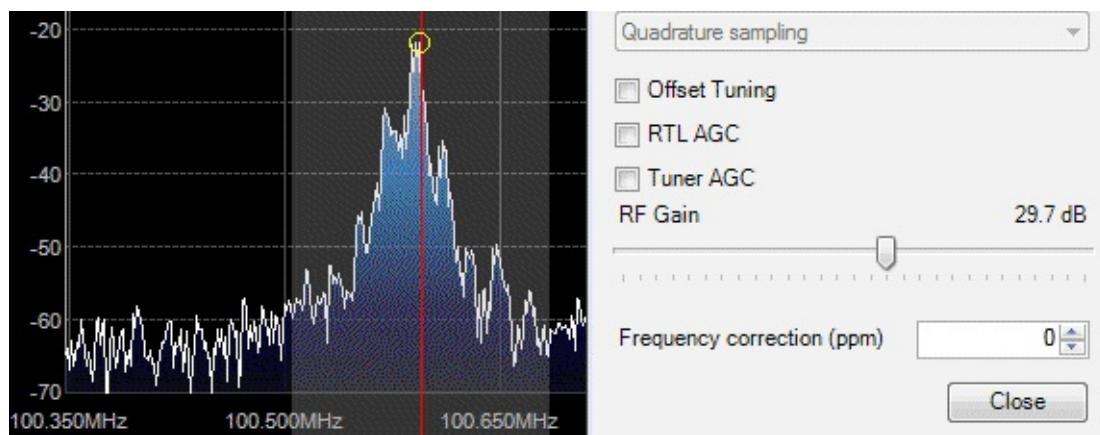
The goal when setting the gain is to try and get the signal to noise ratio as high as possible. This means that the maximum signal strength should be high, but the noise floor should also be as low as possible.

When increasing the gain, there will come a point at which the noise floor begins to rise faster than the signal strength rises. This is the point at which you should stop increasing the gain.

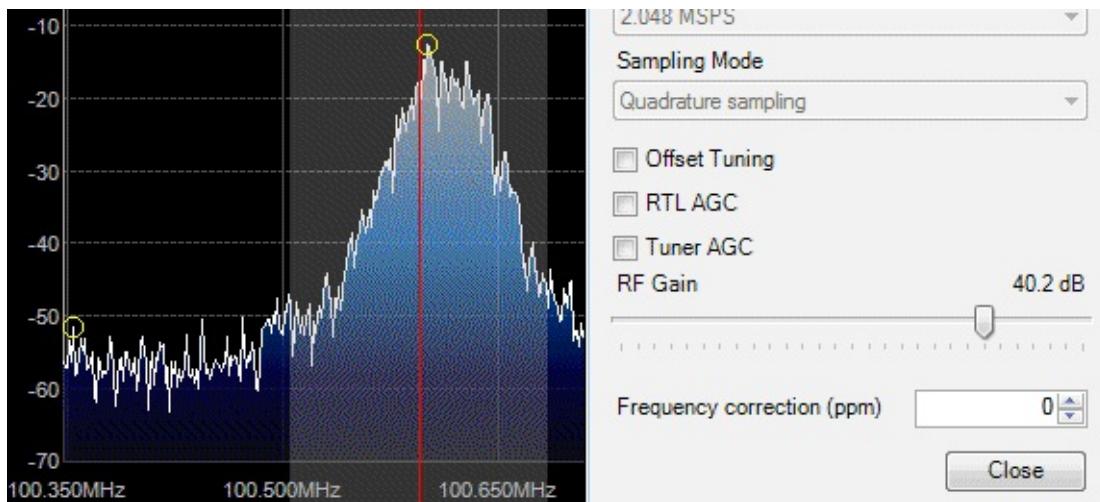
You can calculate the signal to noise ratio (SNR) by subtracting the peak signal height from the height of the noise floor.



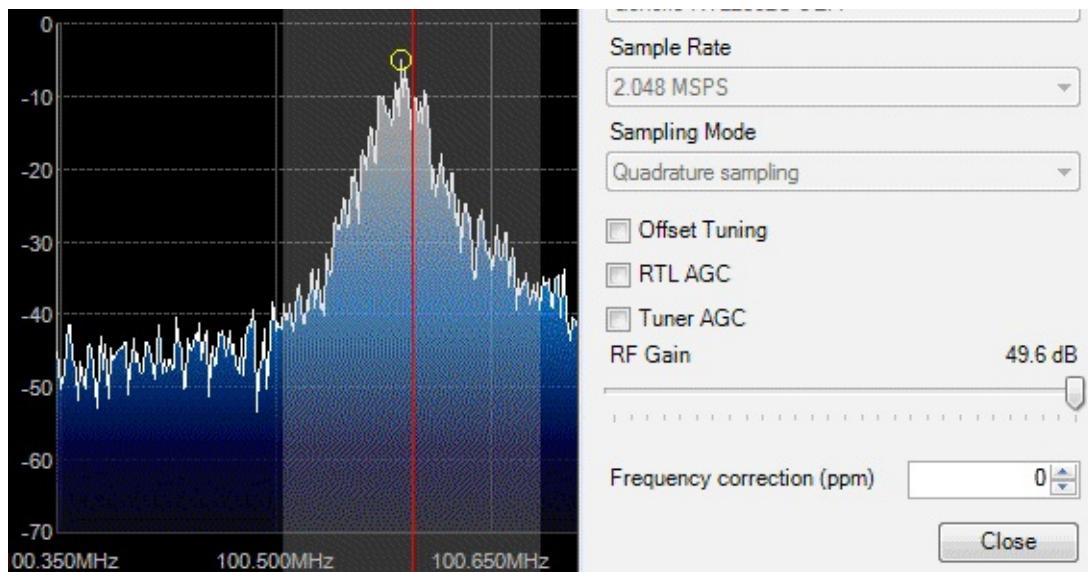
$$\text{SNR: } -41 - -65 = 24$$



SNR: -21 - -65 = 44



SNR: -12 - -57 = 45



SNR: -5 - -45 = 40

From the above images we see that as we raise the gain the SNR increases, but if we raise it too much the SNR actually begins to decrease. For this signal that gain was optimal at around 40.2 dB.

SETTING THE PPM CORRECTION

PPM is a measurement which stands for parts per million. High quality oscillators have a low PPM

value.

As the RTL-SDR dongles are mass produced with low quality 28.8 MHz crystal oscillators, the tuned frequency can be out by approximately +/-100 PPM.

A large tolerance can mean that a known frequency you tune to may not be exactly at the frequency that you expect it to be at. You may find that the frequency will always be off by a few kilohertz which can be very frustrating for narrow band signals.

Fortunately, SDR# has an option to correct the frequency offset that you may encounter. To set the PPM offset, you will first need to know the true frequency of a known radio signal, preferably a constant narrow band signal such as a trunking channel, or something like a strong ATIS signal. To find such signals, you can look them up online in your countries national frequency database or on a website such as radioreference.com.

Tune to the known frequency in SDR#. You will probably find that the actual tuned frequency is slightly offset from the known signal. Click the Configure button. Now adjust the PPM offset value box accordingly so that the signal lines up exactly with the red tuning line.

Another way to get an accurate PPM offset value is to use a Linux program called Kalibrate. This command line program uses mobile phone GSM signals to accurately detect the dongles offset. Obviously you will need GSM signals in your area and an antenna which can receive them for this to work. A tutorial on this can be found in the [Calibrating the RTL-SDR section](#) of this book.

SDR SHARP PLUGINS

There are many plugins available for SDR# that extend its functionality. We recommend visiting <http://www rtl-sdr com/sdrsharp-plugins/> for a list and brief overview of these plugins.

To install plugins you will most often need to copy a .dll file to the SDR# directory and add an entry to the SDRSharp.exe.Config text file. This file is in the SDR# directory. You will need to open this file in Notepad or another text editor to read it.

The readme file that usually comes in the plugin zip file will usually tell you what line to add. The line should be added between the <sharpPlugins> </sharpPlugins> tags in the SDRSharp.exe.Config file.

```
<add key="RTL-SDR / TCP" value="SDRSharp.RTLTCP.RtlTcpIO,SDRSharp.RTLTCP" />
<add key="RFSPACE SDR-IQ" value="SDRSharp.SdrIqIO,SDRSharp.SdrIQ" />
<add key="RFSPACE SDR-IP/NetSDR" value="SDRSharp.SDRIP.SdrIpIO,SDRSharp.SDRIP" />
<add key="HackRF" value="SDRSharp.HackRF.HackRFIO,SDRSharp.HackRF" />
<!-- <add key="AIRSPY One" value="SDRSharp.AirSpy.AirSpyIO,SDRSharp.AirSpy" /> -->
</frontendPlugins>
<sharpPlugins>
<add key="Noise Blanker" value="SDRSharp.NoiseBlanker.NoiseBlankerPlugin,SDRSharp.NoiseBlanker" />
<add key="Digital Noise Reduction" value="SDRSharp.DNR.DNRPPlugin,SDRSharp.DNR" />
<add key="Wave Recorder" value="SDRSharp.WavRecorder.WavRecorderPlugin,SDRSharp.WavRecorder" />
<add key="Frequency Manager" value="SDRSharp.FrequencyManager.FrequencyManagerPlugin,SDRSharp.FrequencyManager" />
<add key="SatelliteTracker" value="SDRSharp.SatelliteTracker.SatelliteTrackerPlugin,SDRSharp.SatelliteTracker" />
<add key="Scanner Metrics" value="SDRSharp.ScannerMetrics.ScannerMetricsPlugin,SDRSharp.ScannerMetrics" />
<add key="Freq Mgr" value="SDRSharp.FreqMgr.FreqMgrPlugin,SDRSharp.FreqMgr" />
<add key="Freq Entry" value="SDRSharp.FreqEntry.FreqEntryPlugin,SDRSharp.FreqEntry" />
<add key="Frequency Scanner" value="SDRSharp.FrequencyScanner.FrequencyScannerPlugin,SDRSharp.FrequencyScanner" />
</sharpPlugins>
<system.net>
<authenticationModules />
<connectionManagement />
<defaultProxy />
<requestCaching />
```

SDRSHARP MINOUTPUT SAMPLE RATE

The maximum bandwidth of the tuned area for NFM in SDR# is restricted to 32 kHz. However, for many applications that bandwidth is too small. The maximum bandwidth for an NFM/USB/LSB signal can be adjusted by changing a setting in the SDRSharp.exe.Config file. Open this file in a text editor and find the following line.

```
<add key="minOutputSampleRate" value="32000" />
```

Change this line to the following to increase the maximum bandwidth.

```
<add key="minOutputSampleRate" value="100000" />
```

COMPILING SDR# ON LINUX WITH MONO

Note: At this time this tutorial cannot be used as the SDR# subversion repositories are down. They may come up again in the future.

First install RTL-SDR on Linux as shown in the [Installing RTL-SDR Drivers on Linux section](#) below.

Next install Mono and the Mono Develop environment using the following

```
sudo apt-get install mono-complete
sudo apt-get install monodevelop
```

Also you will need to install libportaudio for sound

```
sudo apt-get install libportaudio-dev
sudo apt-get install libportaudio2
```

Next use svn to checkout the current SDRSharp trunk. If you don't have svn installed use sudo apt-get install subversion to install subversion.

```
svn co https://subversion.assembla.com/svn/sdrsharp/trunk sdrsharp
cd sdrsharp
```

We first need to replace a version string in the SDR# solution file as Monodevelop currently does not recognize solution files created by Visual Studio 2012.

```
sed -i 's/Format Version 12\.\d/Format Version 11\.\d/' SDRSharp.sln
```

Open the solution file with monodevelop

```
monodevelop SDRSharp.sln
```

In Monodevelop set the build to Release|x86, then go to Build->Build All

Now we need to first symbolically link libportaudio to the Release folder where SDR# was just built.

```
cd Release
```

First we need to find out if you are running a 32-bit (x86/i686) OS or a 64-bit (x64/x86_64) OS. To do this type

```
uname -m
```

If you see the result as i686, you are running a 32-bit Linux so type in

```
ln -s /usr/lib/i386-linux-gnu/libportaudio.so.2 libportaudio.so
```

If you see the result as x86_64 you are running a 64-bit kernel so type

```
ln -s /usr/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/libportaudio.so.2
```

Add RTL-SDR support to the SDRSharp.exe.config file by using the command

```
sed -i 's/<!-- <add key="RTL-SDR \ USB" value="SDRSharp.RTLSDR.RtlSdrIO,SDRSharp.RTLSDR" \> -->/<add key="RTL-SDR \ USB" value="SDRSharp.RTLSDR.RtlSdrIO,SDRSharp.RTLSDR" \>/' SDRSharp.exe.config
```

Now you can run SDRSharp by typing

```
mono SDRSharp.exe
```

You may get an error about SDRIQ, but this can be safely ignored.

If you are interested in running SDR# on MacOS, it is possible, but requires a little work. A useful tutorial on this can be found at <http://jasiek.me/2014/02/22/running-sdrsharp-on-mac-os-x.html>.

OTHER GENERAL PURPOSE SCANNING SOFTWARE

Once you've gotten the hang of the simple and easy to use SDR#, you may want to try other more advanced programs as well.

HDSDR SETUP GUIDE

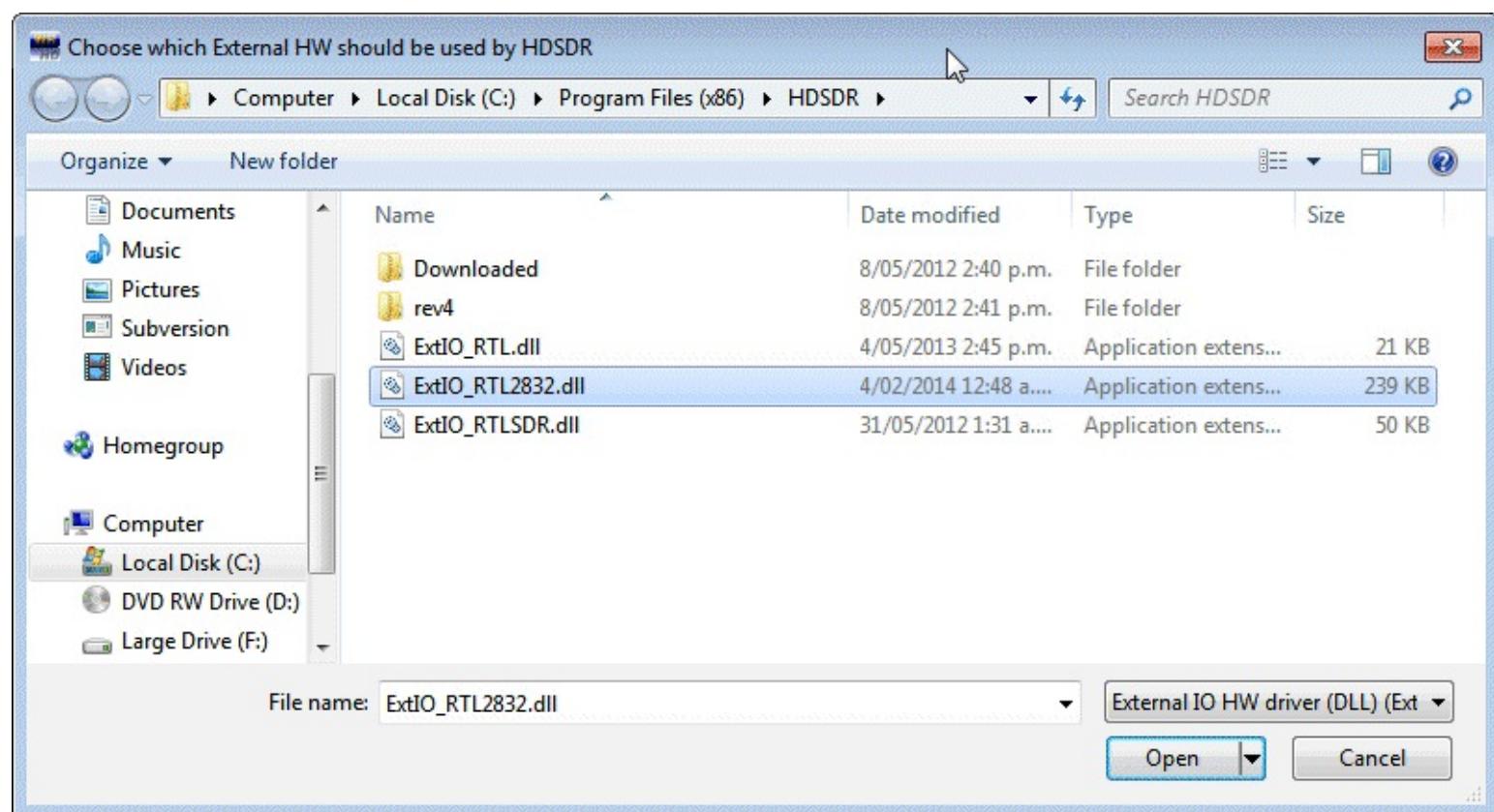
HDSDR is an advanced SDR GUI similar to SDR#. It is based on the old WinRAD SDR program that was popular in the past with older SDRs.

Along with a FFT display and waterfall, HDSDR has some extra advanced features. Users will also find an Audio FFT and waterfall display on the bottom of the screen. The output audio can also be bandpass filtered by dragging the filter borders on the display. Bandpass filtering the audio can really

help clean up a noisy signal. The audio processing also supports placing of notch filters either manually or automatically. There are also noise reduction and noise blanker features and an automatic frequency centring algorithm which will automatically centre the signal, so you don't need to click exactly in the centre of a signal. Traditional ham radio users will also enjoy the S-units signal strength meter and the built in frequency manager.

We recommend installing HDSDR after going through the quickstart guide and installing the drivers and SDR#. Then to install HDSDR on Windows follow the instructions below

1. If you have not already, download and install zadig from <http://zadig.akeo.ie/> and install the WinUSB drivers for RTL-SDR using the instructions in the SDR# setup guide above.
2. Download HDSDR from <http://hdsdr.de/>, using the download button at the bottom of the page.
3. Use the installer you just downloaded to install HDSDR.
4. Download the ExtIO_RTL2832U.dll dll file from <https://app.box.com/s/7tpiy8r6qo2bbhdxtt4k>.
5. Copy the ExtIO_RTL2832U.dll file into the HDSDR install folder which is by default set to C:\Program Files (x86)\HDSDR.
6. Open HDSDR. You might be asked to select a .dll file. If you are choose the ExtIO_RTL2832U.dll file you just copied over and then click Open.



7. Choose your output sound card by clicking on the Soundcard button **Soundcard [F5]** in the bottom left

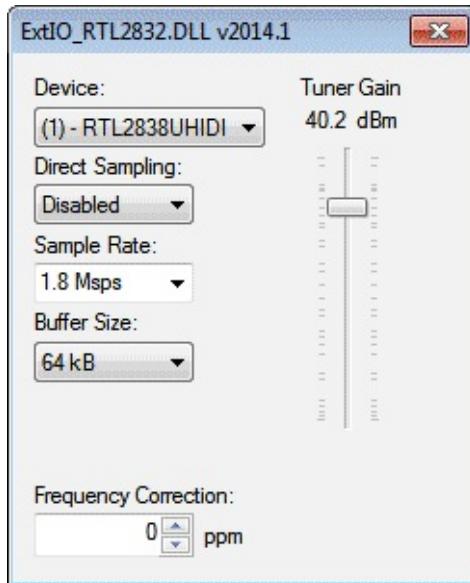
corner, or alternatively by pressing F5. The only important setting here is the “RX Output (to Speaker)” setting which you should set to your speakers, or desired audio piping software.



8. Click on the Bandwidth button **Bandwidth [F6]** or alternatively press F6. Choose an output Sampling Rate of 48000 Hz for general use, or 192000 for wideband FM radio.

Sampling Rate [Hz] X	
Input	Output
12000	12000
24000	24000
48000	48000
96000	96000
192000	192000
11025	11025
22050	22050
44100	44100
88200	
176400	
8000	4000
16000	8000
32000	
1800000 ▾	

9. Press Start or alternatively press F2. This will start the SDR.
10. To set the RTL-SDR sample rate, gain and frequency correction click on the ExtIO button **ExtIO**.



11. To tune to a station, change the Local Oscillator (LO) frequency to a frequency near the frequency you are interested in. Then tune to the desired frequency either by clicking in the RF spectrum, or using the numbers next to the red word Tune.

LO A 0145.635.908
Tune 0144.925.500

12. You can zoom in and out of the spectrum by using the Zoom slider which is to the left of the word zoom.



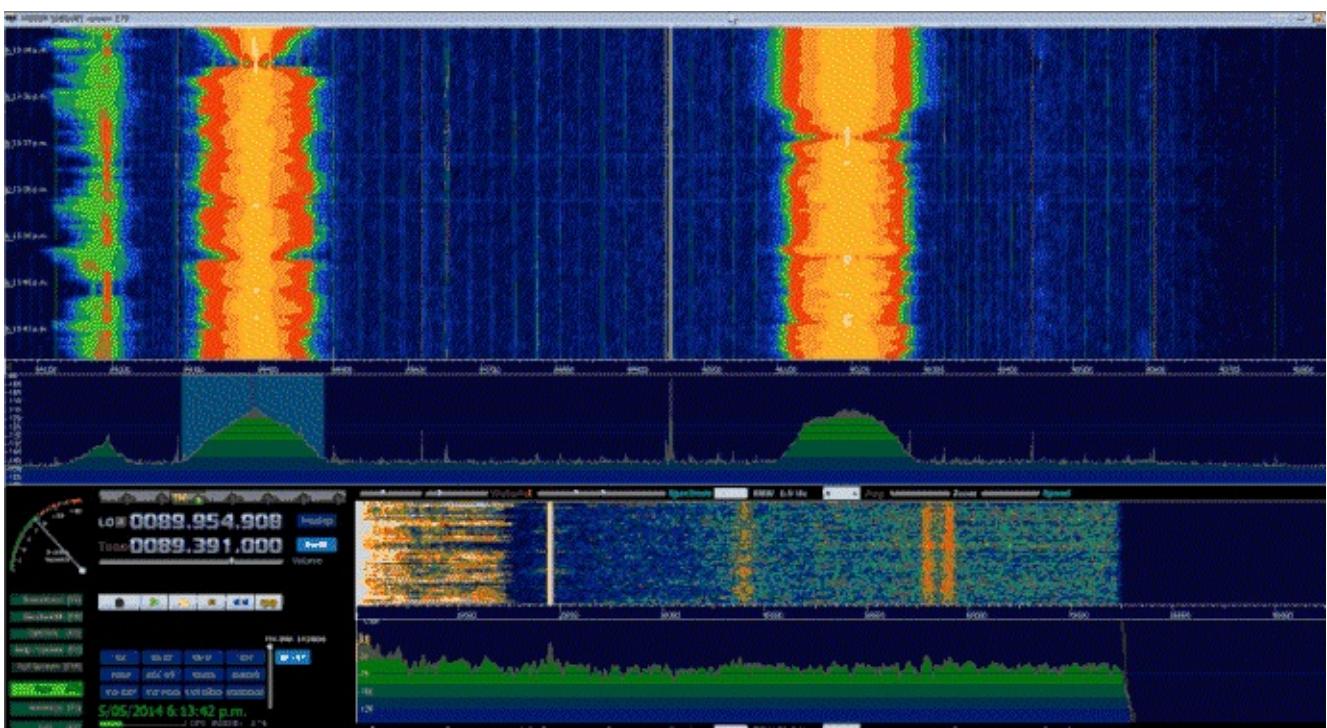
13. The mode can be altered by clicking on the mode buttons.



14. After clicking on the FM mode button, the FM bandwidth can be modified with the FM-BW slider. If this slider is missing you may need to click on the FM mode button again.



15. To listen to a typical wideband broadcast FM station, you will need to change the audio sampling rate to 192000 Hz. Do this by clicking on the Bandwidth button [Bandwidth F6] or alternatively pressing F6, and the selecting the output sampling rate as 192000 Hz and then using the FM-BW slider to increase the bandwidth.



On the top of HDSDR is the RF waterfall and RF spectrum. On the bottom left we have the controls. On the bottom right is the audio waterfall and audio spectrum. The audio bandwidth can be bandpass filtered by dragging the red filter edges on the audio RF spectrum (the bottom graph).

SDR-RADIO.COM V2 SETUP GUIDE

SDR-RADIO.COM V2 is a popular SDR program with many advanced features. As such it is a fair amount more difficult to learn and use compared to SDR# and HDSDR. Be sure you install version 2 and not V1.5 as only V2 has RTL-SDR support.

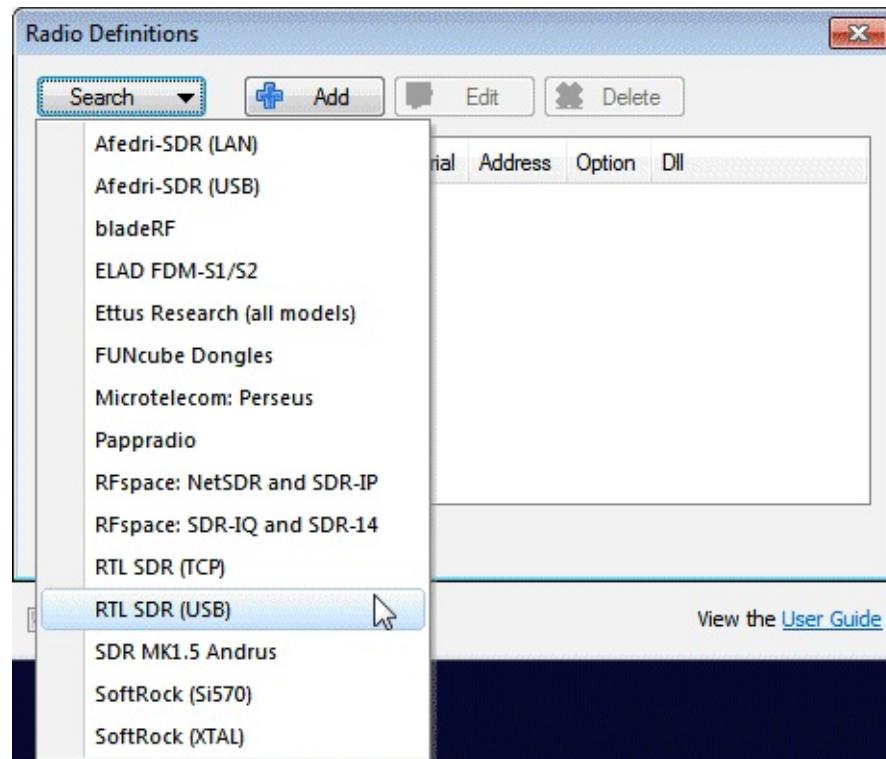
Like HDSDR, not only does sdr-radio have a RF FFT signal and waterfall display, but also an optional audio spectrum FFT and waterfall display. Built in are also several DSP features like a noise blanker, noise reduction filter, notch filter and squelch options. The EMNS noise reduction filter is particularly good at automatically cleaning up and clarifying voice signals.

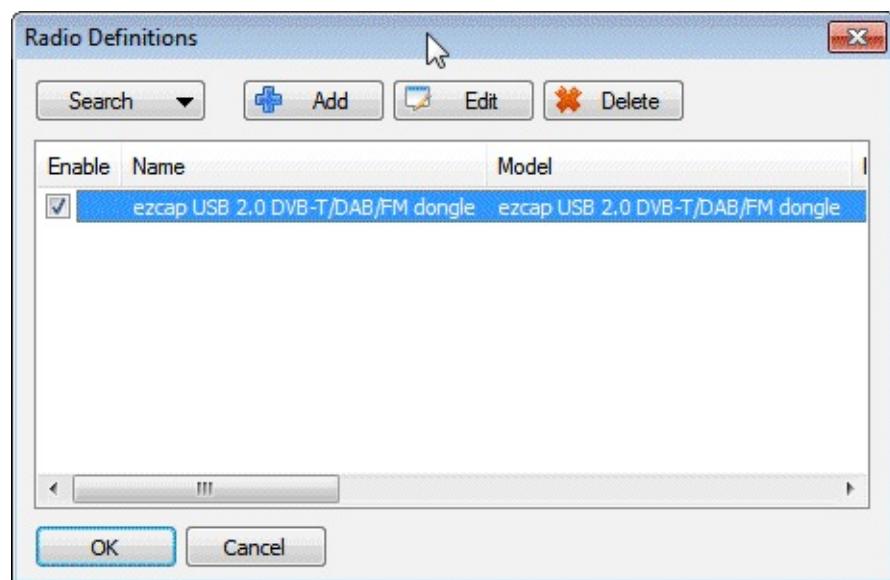
To add to the feature list, sdr-radio also has built in PSK, RTTY and RDS decoders, and also comes with a satellite tracker. Furthermore, sdr-radio has an excellent remote server application which will allow you to easily set up and connect to a remote RTL-SDR server over a network or the internet. Finally, sdr-radio is capable of listening to up to six signals in the same chunk of visible spectrum at a time, or in other words can have six VFO's.

To install SDR-RADIO for the RTL-SDR follow the steps below

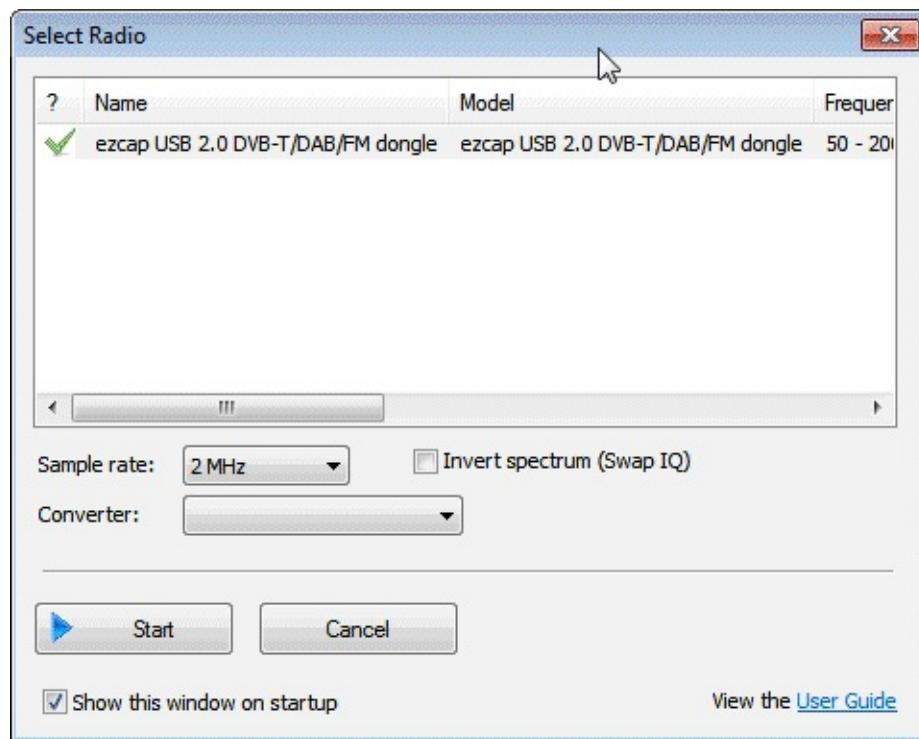
1. If you have not already, download and install zadig from <http://zadig.akeo.ie/> and install the WinUSB drivers for RTL-SDR using the instructions in the SDR# setup guide above.
2. Download the SDR-RADIO installer from <http://v2.sdr-radio.com/>.

3. Use the installer to install SDR-RADIO.
4. Either compile yourself using the instructions from <http://sdrnuke.wces.net/Support/RTLSDRs/BuildingDlls.aspx>, or download from the bottom of http://www.aa5sh.com/?page_id=65 the SDRSourceRTL2832U.dll, rtlcdr.dll and libusb-1.0.dll dll files. Copy them into either the C:\Program Files\SDR-RADIO-PRO.com (64 bit), or C:\Program Files (x86)\SDR-RADIO-PRO.com (32 bit) folder depending on what version of Windows you have.
5. Open SDR-RADIO. Upon opening it you will be greeted with the Select Radio screen and a prompt saying “List is empty - add radio definition now?” Click Yes. If this prompt does not display, click the + Definitions button.
6. In the new window open the Search drop down menu and select RTL SDR (USB). After clicking it the RTL-SDR will be added to the Radio Definitions list. Click OK.

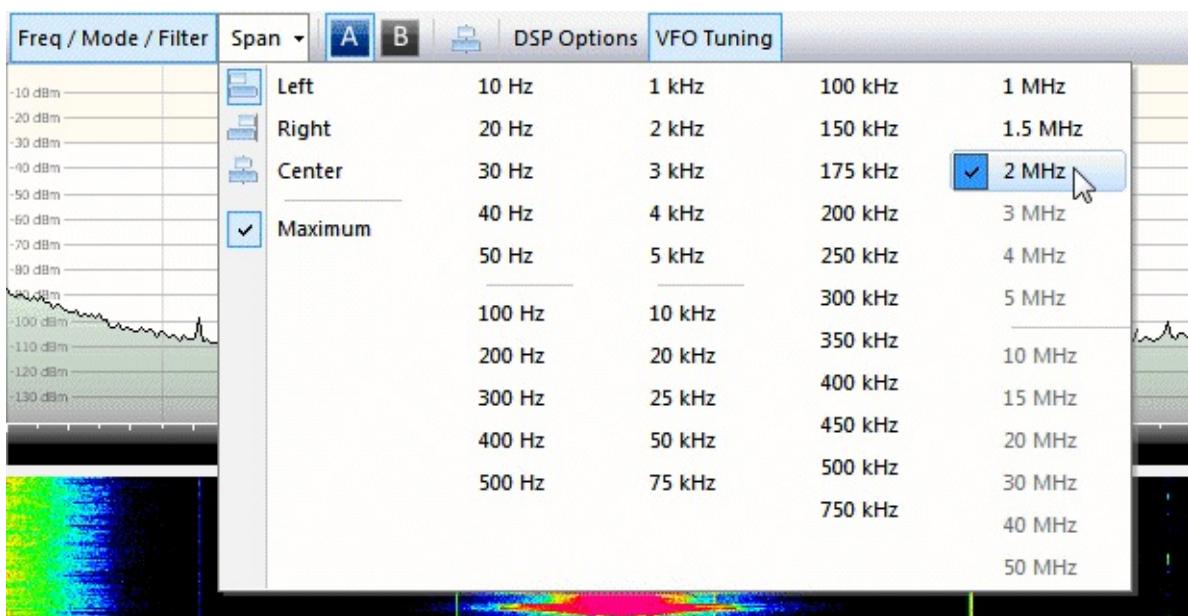




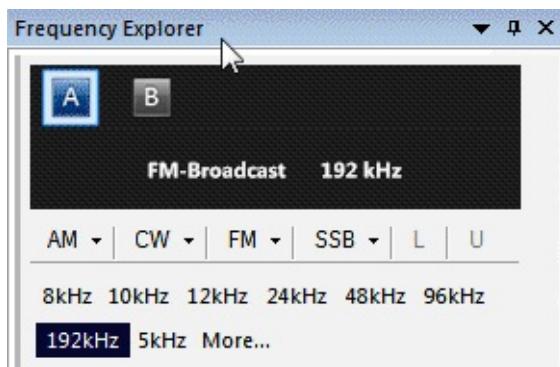
7. Click on the RTL-SDR click to select it, choose your desired sample rate then click Start.



8. Click on the Span button and adjust the span to the sample rate bandwidth you chose in the last step. This will let you see the whole spectrum.



9. To change the receive mode use the left menu under the frequency tab.



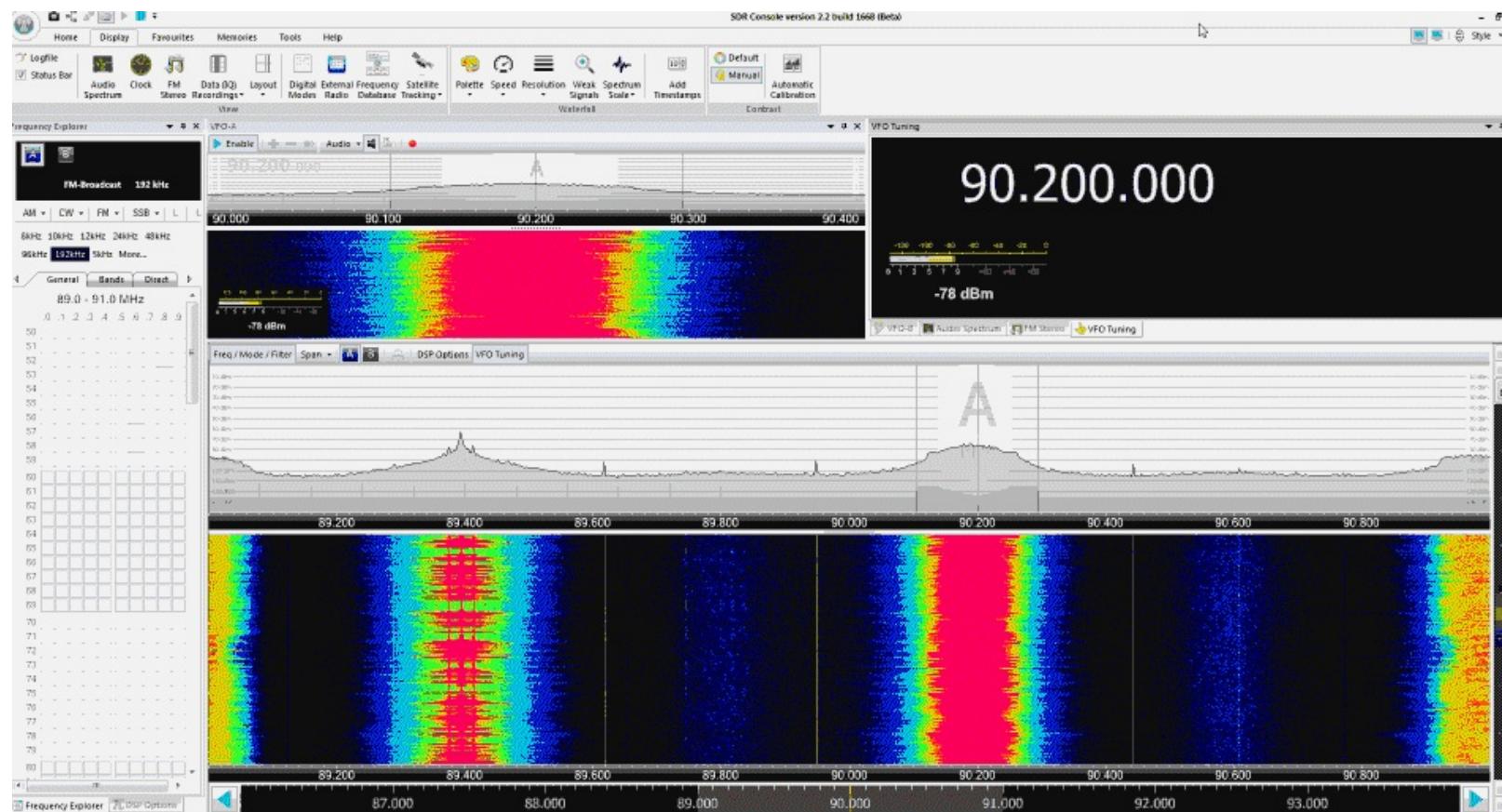
10. To adjust the frequency, use the VFO tuning box on the right side. If you don't see any numbers you may need to increase the size of the VFO tuning box or maximise the program.



11. Be sure to adjust the gain settings using the RF gain button  in the top which is under the Home tab. By default it is set to automatic.
12. Also to adjust the waterfall colors so that signals are more clearly seen go to the Display tab up



the top and then click on the Automatic Calibration button on the very top right.



SDR-RADIO has its main wideband waterfall on the bottom of the screen and directly above it is the RF spectrum. Above that is another smaller waterfall and RF spectrum which is simply the tuned frequency zoomed in.

GQRX

GQRX is a software defined radio received GUI for OSX and Linux. It is similar to SDR# in terms of usability and features. To install GQRX follow these instructions:

To install GQRX on Linux you will need to have GNU Radio 3.7 and the RTL-SDR drivers from libosmocore installed first. See the Github page for a list of all required dependencies <https://github.com/csete/gqrx>. After installing all the dependencies it is a simple matter of running the following.

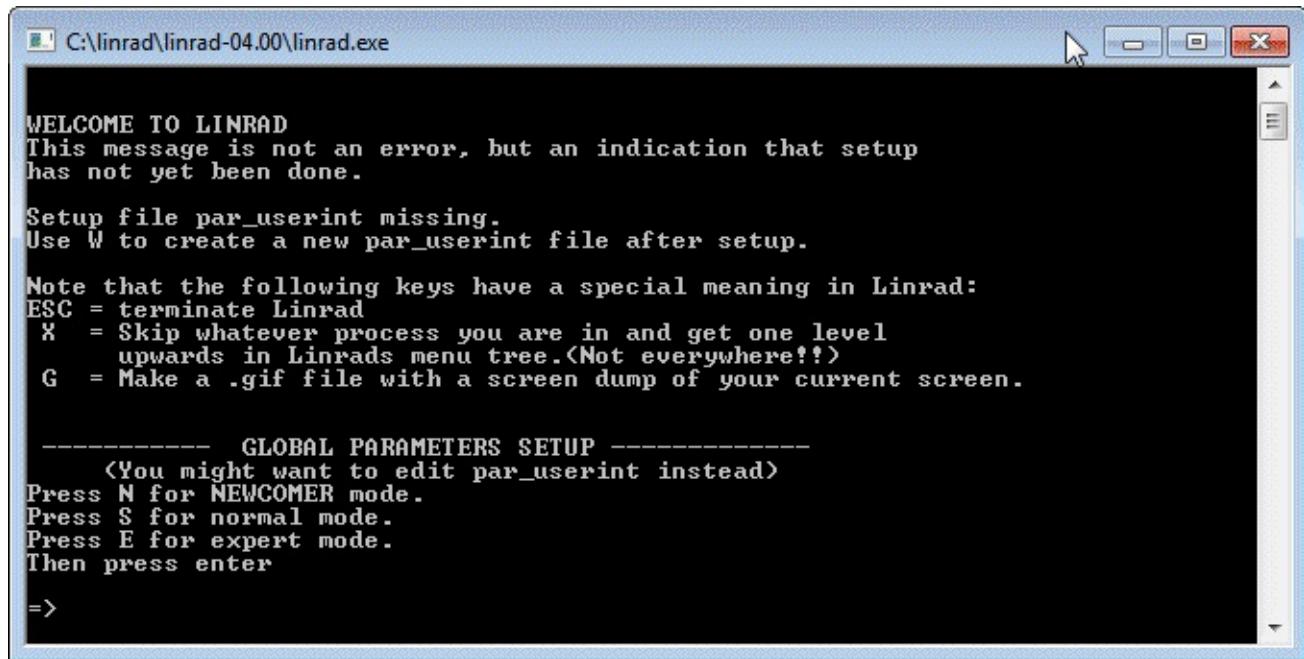
```
git clone https://github.com/csete/gqrx.git gqrx.git
cd gqrx.git
mkdir build
cd build
qmake ..
make
```

LINRAD

Linrad is an SDR receiver program that has some very advanced features that can run on older PCs

(Pentium 4's). While Linrad has advanced features it also has a very difficult learning curve and is for advanced users only. This tutorial will show you how to set up Linrad and test it on Wideband FM radio. More advanced features require I/Q and filter calibration which requires a pulse generator. A good tutorial on setting up these calibrations can be found on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPQARPt6r_8, which is a tutorial video by the programmer of Linrad.

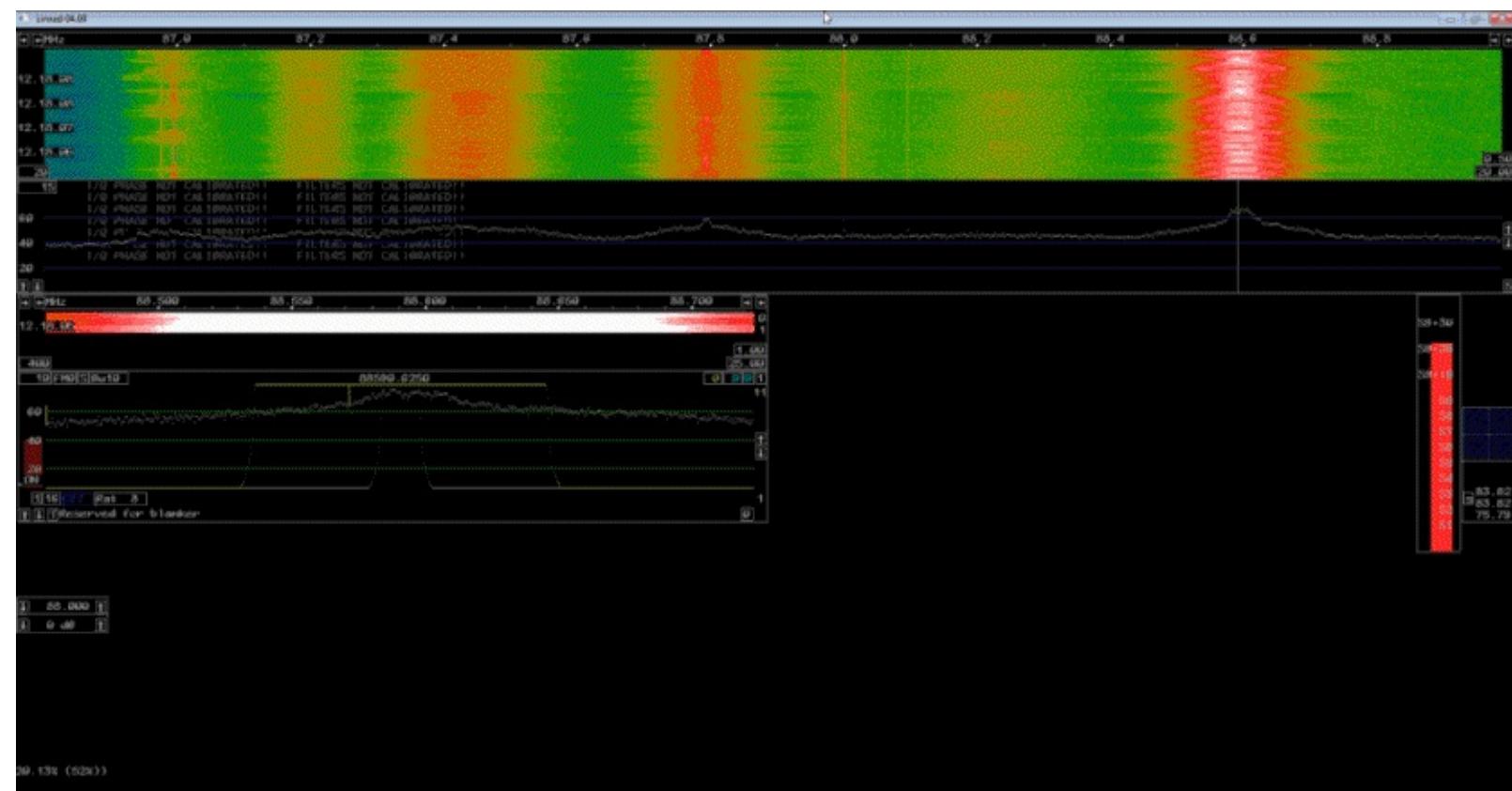
1. If you have not already, download and install zadig from <http://zadig.akeo.ie/> and install the WinUSB drivers for RTL-SDR using the instructions in the SDR# setup guide above.
2. Go to <http://www.sm5bsz.com/linuxdsp/linrad.htm> and download and run the Linrad DLL installer for Windows (setup-linrad-dll-package-03.exe (804985 bytes)).
3. Then download and run the setup program for Windows setup-linrad-04.00.exe (843728 bytes).
4. Open Linrad. You will be greeted with the following command prompt window.



5. Type in S, then press enter to open Linrad in normal mode.
6. Next you will be asked to enter the font scaling (size). Choose lower numbers for smaller screens and larger numbers for larger screens.
7. Next choose the process priority as 0 for NORMAL priority.
8. Next choose N to specify the window size in percentage. Then choose 100% width and around 90% for the height.
9. Now the Linrad screen will open. Press the W key to save the options you've chosen so far.
10. Press the U key to configure the input device, then press A to get to the RF input device select screen. Press H to set the input device as the RTL2832. (The RTL-SDR must be connected for

Linrad to detect it).

11. Choose 2400000 as the sampling speed. Select 0 for normal I/Q tuner operation and then select 0 for Auto gain mode. If you know your frequency error in PPB (parts per billion) enter it now, otherwise just enter 0.
12. Now press B to set up the output soundcard. Type N to not select PortAudio as the output. Now look on the list you are presented with and find your speakers, or virtual audio cable you'd like to use.
13. Press X to get to the main menu and then press W to save your settings.
14. Now press E to get to the FM demodulation screen. Select the default values in the next few screens by pressing Enter.
15. In the new receiver screen that shows, first click on the very top bar showing the frequency range. On the left of the bar, enter a value of 0 and on the right enter an arbitrarily large value (eg 1000). Click Apply. This will select the maximum bandwidth frequency range for the waterfall.
16. To increase the waterfall speed, change the value in the bottom left of the waterfall to a lower value, such as 9.
17. Press X then P to get to the parameters screen. Click on the First FFT Amplitude text and set the new amplitude to 20. This will lower the noise floor.
18. If your PC is struggling, go press X then P and change the First FFT Bandwidth setting to 1 kHz.
19. To tune to a station, click on it's peak in the top wide RF spectrum. Alter it's bandwidth by dragging the yellow bar in the lower RF spectrum. Drag to the right to increase the bandwidth for wideband FM.



INSTALLING THE RTL-SDR DRIVERS ON LINUX

First update your distribution

```
sudo apt-get update
```

Now install git, cmake and libusb, the USB drivers required for RTL-SDR

```
sudo apt-get install git
sudo apt-get install cmake
sudo apt-get install libusb-1.0-0-dev
sudo apt-get install build-essential
```

Now download, compile and install the RTL2832U Osmocom drivers

```
git clone git://git.osmocom.org/rtl-sdr.git
cd rtl-sdr/
mkdir build
cd build
cmake .. -DINSTALL_UDEV_RULES=ON
make
sudo make install
sudo ldconfig
cp ./rtl-sdr.rules /etc/udev/rules.d/
```

Restart Linux.

Plug in the dongle and then run `sudo rtl_test -t` to test the dongle installation. If you get errors like

Kernel driver is active, or device is claimed by second instance of librtlsdr.
 In the first case, please either detach or blacklist the kernel module
 (dvb_usb rtl28xxu), or enable automatic detaching at compile time.
 usb_claim_interface error -6

Failed to open rtlsdr device #0.

This means that the RTL2832U DVB-T drivers are currently active. Disable them by running

```
sudo rmmod dvb_usb rtl28xxu rtl2832
```

Running this command will only stop the DVB-T drivers once. When you remove and plug in the dongle again or restart, the DVB-T drivers will be reloaded, and you'll need to run this line again.

For a more permanent solution create a text file “Blacklist-rtl.conf” in /etc/modprobe.d. In that file put the text `blacklist dvb_usb rtl28xxu`. Unplug and plug back in the dongle and it should now default to using the rtl-sdr drivers.

If you get strange characters showing up when you run `rtl_test`, it probably indicates that you did not properly install the .rules file with `cp ./rtl-sdr.rules /etc/udev/rules.d/`.

RTL_FM

RTL_FM is a lightweight command line based WBFM/AM/FM/SSB audio receiver for the RTL-SDR which runs on both Windows and Linux. It is provided as part of the official RTL-SDR release from <http://sdr.osmocom.org/trac/wiki/rtl-sdr>. For Windows download the pre-compiled reldeb.zip release from the above link. For Linux follow the [Installing RTL-SDR Drivers on Linux](#) guide above.

To use the play command used in the examples below you will need to install sox. Sox can be obtained on Debian Linux with `sudo apt-get install sox`. On Windows it can be downloaded from <http://sourceforge.net/projects/sox/>. You may need to add the folder sox is installed to to the Windows PATH, so it can be accessed from anywhere in the command prompt. You may wish to add the folder with `rtl_fm` in it to the PATH as well. Here is a tutorial showing how to add directories to the PATH <http://geekswithblogs.net/renso/archive/2009/10/21/how-to-set-the-windows-path-in-windows-7.aspx>. On Windows you will need to add a `-d` flag at the end of the ouput sox command too in order to select the default audio device.

EXAMPLES OF RTL_FM USE

RTL_FM needs to be piped into an audio player that can play raw audio such as sox or aplay. First we list all the possible RTL_FM flags and then show some examples.

RTL_FM FLAGS

```
-M set the receive mode (wbfm, fm, am, lsb, usb, raw)
-s bandwidth/sample rate
-g gain
-l squelch level
-t squelch delay
-p ppm offset
-d choose between multiple dongles attached to a PC
```

- F use better filters
- r output sample rate (very low quality resampling)
- d dongle number (for use with multiple dongles)
- A arctan computation (std, fast, lut)
- E special modes (dc, deemp, direct, offset)

RECEIVING WBFM EXAMPLE

RTL_FM in wbfm mode uses an audio output sample rate of 32k.

```
rtl_fm -M wbfm -f 88.6M | play -r 32k -t raw -e s -b 16 -c 1 -V1 -
```

NARROW BAND FM EXAMPLE

```
rtl_fm -M fm -f 161.649M -s 12k -g 50 -l 70 | play -r 12k -t raw -e s -b 16 -c 1 -V1 -
```

AM EXAMPLE

```
rtl_fm -M am -f 127.7M -s 12k -g 50 | play -r 12k -t raw -e s -b 16 -c 1 -V1 -
```

You can increase the quality of the received signal by using the -F option at the expense of increased computation time. Use a number between 0-9 after -F, where higher numbers are higher quality downsampling filters. Even using a value of -F0 will improve audio quality.

Rtl_fm can also be used as a scanner. Simply add multiple -f frequencies of the channels that you wish to scan. Rtl_fm will scan until it finds an active signal.

CHANGING THE AUDIO SAMPLE RATE WITH SOX

Rtl_fm has the -r flag for adjusting the output sample rate. However, it is a poor quality conversion and cannot upsample. If you need to change the sample rate of the output of rtl_fm, you can use sox as follows.

```
rtl_fm -M fm -f 161.649M -s 12k -g 50 -l 0 | sox -r 12k -t raw -e s -b 16 - -traw -r 48k -e s -b 16 -c 1 - | play -r 48k -t raw -e s -b 16 -c 1 -V1 -
```

The full documentation on rtl_fm can be found at <http://kmkeen.com/rtl-demod-guide/index.html>.

LINUX WITH PREINSTALLED RTL-SDR AND LIVE DVDS

There are several Linux distributions available now that contain the rtl-sdr drivers preinstalled and some are even bootable as a Live DVD. A live DVD will allow you to boot Linux from a DVD or USB drive without the need to install it. Most also come with a wide range of amateur radio and other RF tools.

KB1OIQ - ANDY'S HAM RADIO LINUX

Andy's Ham Radio Linux is an amateur radio centric distribution. It contains Fldigi, NBEMS, Gpredict, earthtrack, xcwcp and qrq, XLog and cqrlog, flrig and grig, xnec2c, fl_moxgen, aa-analyzer,

owx, VOACAP, glfer, Xastir, gqrx, gEDA, GNU Radio Companion, quisk, direwolf, linamc, FreeDV, wsjt-x, Micro-Fox 15 Config, and a TinyTrak3 configuration program.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/kb1oiq-andysham/>

KALI LINUX

Kali Linux is a security and penetration testing centric distribution. Of note Kali Linux comes with GNU Radio 3.6 (note 3.7 is the latest version).

<http://www.kali.org/>

PORTEUS

Portedus is a very light weight distribution optimized for small size, speed and efficiency.

<http://www.porteus.org/>

GNU RADIO LIVE DVD

A Linux distribution base on GNU Radio programs. Contains GNU Radio release 3.7.3, gqrx, Mode-S/ADSB aircraft transponder receiver, GrOsmoSDR GNU Radio blocks, GNSS-SDR.

<http://gnuradio.org/redmine/projects/gnuradio/wiki/GNURadioLiveDVD>

RTL-SDR MISC. INFORMATION

RTL-SDR CRYSTAL TOLERANCE

The RTL-SDR is a mass Chinese manufactured device with poor crystal tolerances. The crystal oscillator in the RTL-SDR is its clock source (the heartbeat of the circuit). The RTL-SDR uses a 28.8 MHz oscillator which may be out by a few kilohertz. The end effect is that known frequencies may not be exactly where you expect them to be. See the [Calibrating the RTL-SDR section](#) for information on how to calibrate the RTL-SDR to remove the frequency offset.

RTL-SDR DC SPIKE

The E4000 dongle (and FC0012/13) will have a large spike in the centre of the spectrum no matter where it is tuned. This is expected as it due to the way the E4000 is designed. To remove the DC spike with the E4000 dongle, the “Offset Tuning” option in the SDR# configure menu can be used. Offset tuning will do nothing for the R280T.

The R820T may also have a smaller spike at the centre, but usually clicking Correct IQ in SDR# is enough to completely remove this.

RTL-SDR SPURS

Due to the design of the dongle there will always be spurious (unwanted) signal noise spikes at multiples of 28.8 MHz, the frequency of the internal oscillator.

You may also see strong spurs at multiples of the USB clock frequencies (48 MHz).

There is unfortunately not much that can be done about this other to know where they are and ignore them. A spur looks like a signal thin solid line on the RF spectrum or waterfall. It will also likely sound like a single audio tone on the LSB/USB modes.

RTL-SDR IMAGES

At a bandwidth of 0.25 MHz there will be images of strong signals at every 250 kHz. At a bandwidth of 1 MHz, there will be images of strong signals at every 1 MHz intervals. And so on.

An image is essentially an unwanted duplication of a real signal appearing at a frequency multiple.

RTL-SDR FREQUENCY DRIFT

As the dongle warms up the crystal oscillator will so too causing the received frequency of signals to drift over time before stabilizing on a single offset value. Usually this is not a problem for most applications. The final frequency offset can be adjusted by setting the PPM offset value.

USING MULTIPLE DONGLES WITH THE SAME SERIAL NUMBER

Some dongles such as the hama nano may all have the same serial number. This means that you can only plug in one dongle at a time into your PC. You can adjust the serial number by using `rtl_eeprom` which is an EEPROM programming tool for RTL2832 based DVB-T receivers. Instructions for using `rtl_eeprom` can be found at http://manpages.ubuntu.com/manpages/trusty/man1/rtl_eeprom.1.html.

MAX NUMBER OF DONGLES PER USB PORT

The theoretical limit of a USB 2.0 bus controller with a *device* throughput of 256 Mbit/s would be about 5 dongles. In practice, the maximum limit will likely be 3 to 4. If you want to connect more dongles you can buy a PCIe USB card to add more USB 2.0 controllers.

RTL-SDR IMPROVEMENTS AND MODIFICATIONS

LOW NOISE AMPLIFICATION

The amplifier used in the dongle is ‘low noise’ enough for most applications. However there are third party external LNAs (Low Noise Amplifiers) that can be used to improve the signal quality. A poor amplifier like the one in the RTL-SDR with a noise figure of <4.5dB will introduce noise causing the signal to be degraded, especially as the gain is increased. The term noise figure is used to measure the amount of noise an LNA will introduce into the signal. By using a high quality LNA with a noise figure <1dB this noise can be reduced.

One good LNA that RTL-SDR.com recommends is the LNA4ALL. It’s link can be found on our Buy RTL-SDR Dongles page <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/>. There are also LNA kits available on Ebay, however these tend to require good surface mount soldering skills. Surface mount components are used because they produce the least amount of noise. A DIY LNA design for the RTL-SDR can be found here <https://github.com/loxodes/rtl-sdr-lna>.

When placing the LNA, you want it to be as close to the antenna as possible. The main goal of the LNA is to amplify the signal at the antenna, to help reduce the effects of noise that can enter through the coax transmission cable and attenuation over long cable runs. In other words, it makes the desired signals bigger at the antenna so that any noise or losses introduced by the coax cable will be negligible.

An LNA will be of most use at frequencies above 50 MHz. At HF frequencies (<50 MHz) the ambient RF noise is so high that an LNA won’t make much difference compared to a more ordinary linear amplifier. The manufacturer of the LNA4ALL also makes the LNA4HF which uses a more linear amplifier and is designed for HF operation.

Don’t be tempted to buy standard TV amps as these will perform no where near as well as a proper modern broadband LNA like the LNA4ALL.

RECEIVING LF/MF/HF (0 - 30 MHZ)

No RTL-SDR dongle will tune to the entire LF/MF/HF band (0-30 MHz) without modifications or extensions. There are two methods that will allow your RTL-SDR to receive LF/MF/HF frequencies.

1. The direct sampling mode modification

2. An upconverter circuit

1) DIRECT SAMPLING MODE

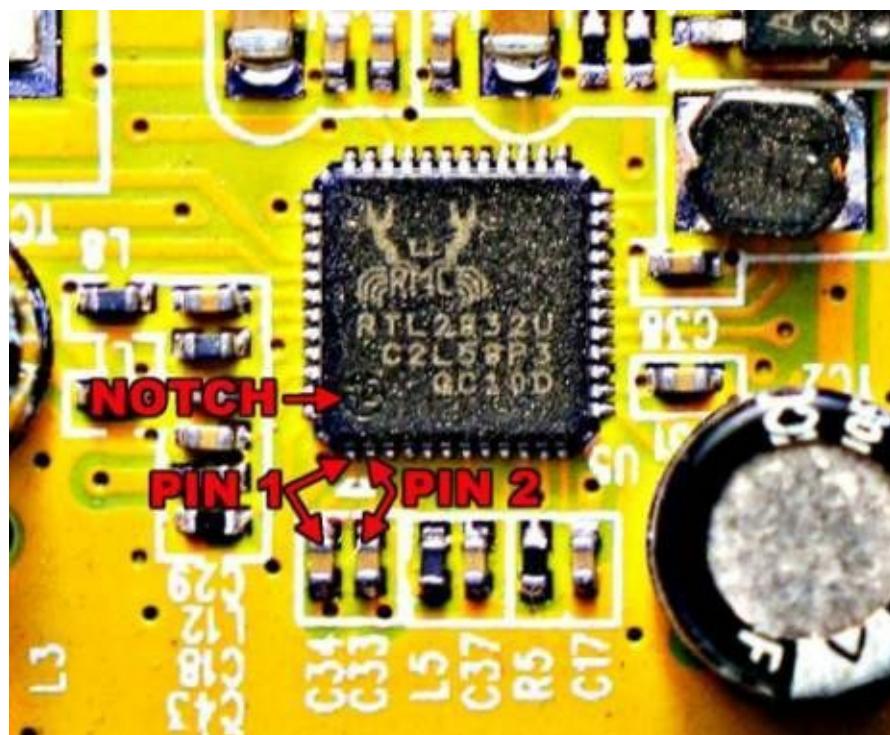
The rtl-sdr can be told to run in a mode called “direct sampling mode”, which with a small hardware mod allows the dongle to tune to the LF/MF/HF frequencies where ham radio and many other interesting signals are found. No upconverter circuit is required with this mod.

The difficulty with direct sampling is that a hardware modification to the dongle is required. Performance with the direct sampling mod can be the same as, or even better than with an upconverter. This is because an upconverter introduces some conversion losses.

This mod essentially bypasses the tuner chip, and allows RF signals to directly enter the RTL2832U chip by directly attaching an antenna to the RTL2832U microchip pins. Care must be taken with this mod as it bypassing any electrostatic protection the dongle has. However, in practice damaging the chip through static discharge is a rare occurrence if care is taken.

To do this mod, you will need decent soldering skills. It involves opening the dongle casing, and soldering a “random wire” or “long wire antenna” to pin one/two or pin four/five of the RTL2832U chip. Even a short wire a few meters long will be sufficient for picking up broadcast AM stations. Some people report that even pressing a damp finger onto the pin will pick up signals. However, for most amateur radio signals, a longer wire is probably required.

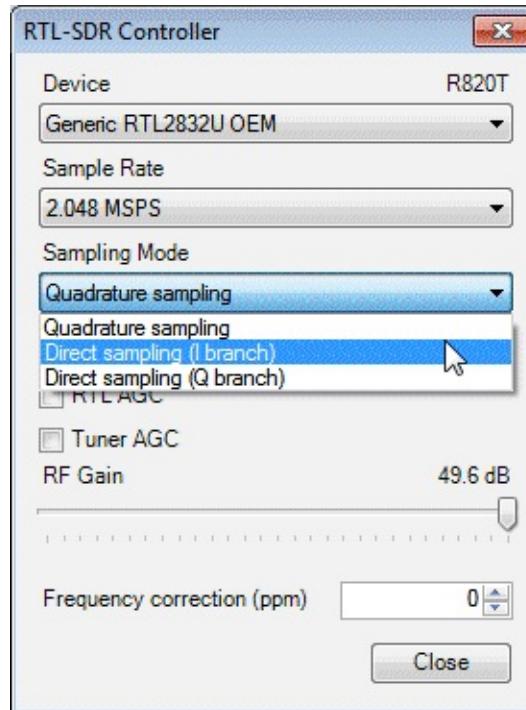
Pins one and two are located below the circle indentation on the RTL2832U chip. It might be easier to solder the wire to one of the two capacitors which are connected directly to pin one and two.



If you are using an R820T it may be best to use pins 4 or 5 for this mod, as due to its architecture these pins are actually unused. This will allow you to use normal Quadrature sampling for VHF/UHF and direct sampling as well for HF on the same dongle. The problem with these pins is that they do not have a capacitor connection, thus making them very hard to solder to.

To activate the mod, you will need to change some software settings. SDRSharp has this adjustment as a built in option. In SDRSharp, go to configure, and change the sampling mode to “Direct sampling (I branch)”, or “Direct sampling (Q branch)”. The I branch corresponds to pin one/pin two, and the Q branch corresponds to pin four/pin five which can also be used. Pin three is not connected to anything.

If a wire antenna is connected to one of these pins and the correct direct sampling branch is selected, you will be able to receive signals between 0 - 14.4 MHz. Above this you will see images of the 0 - 14.4 MHz range. However, frequencies between 14.4 and 28.8 MHz can be received with a band pass filter.



The mod described above can be improved on further. Since the RTL2832U uses two pins to create a differential input, a balun can be used to connect both pins one/two or four/five to an antenna. Essentially this mod involves finding or winding your own balun, and connecting the balun to the two pins and the other end of the balun to your antenna.

As the RTL2832U input impedance is unknown, it is difficult to match impedance with the antenna. In Dekars mod (<http://mikikg.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/rtl2832u-dc-mods.pdf>) , he assumed a 1:2 impedance conversion would help, but it actually made the signal worse. A 1:4 impedance conversion seems to be the accepted value though.

Most experimenters of this mod find that FM interference can be a problem and thus extra low pass

filters might be necessary.

Some users also report that adding in a low noise amplifier (LNA) can vastly help improve reception. This is because the tuner chip is bypassed in direct sampling. Under normal operation is the tuner chip gives amplification to the received signals through its internal amplifier.

These days there are modified rtl-sdr dongles being sold with the direct sampling mod having been already applied and with things like filters and amplifiers added. One good one is the one by KN0CK which can be found at <http://www.easy-kits.com/>.

DIRECT SAMPLING WITH NO HARDWARE MOD DISCOVERY

There is also a discovery found by Reddit user Anonofish. Anonofish found that when tuning to frequencies between 3686.6MHz - 3730MHz, the E4000 rtl-sdr dongle acted as if it was in direct sampling mode, passing the radio signal directly past the tuner and into the RTL2832U chip. Unfortunately this was patched in the newer rtlsdr drivers.

However, there is still a way to test this. An RTL-SDR developer, tejeez has merged code into another developer, Keenerds experimental rtlsdr branch available at <https://github.com/keenerd/rtl-sdr>. This can be compiled on Windows or Linux. To compile RTL-SDR on Windows we have instructions in the next chapter.

If you don't want to compile this, there is a precompiled replacement rtlsdr.dll file for SDR# available here <http://www.bit.ly/1iNu8Vb> (Mirror: https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/43061070/rtlsdr_NOHARDWAREMOD_VC.dll). To use this file, download it, rename it to rtlsdr.dll, then copy it into the SDR# folder overwriting the old one. Now in SDR#, enable the RTL AGC. For this dll file the RTL AGC function has been replaced with the direct sampling hack. After enabling this, tune to an HF frequency. Try the AM bands first which will be around 0.5-2 MHz. You will be able to tune up till around 14.4 MHz. Make sure you have a HF antenna plugged into the dongle in the normal antenna port. This hack appears to work best with the R820T tuner. This mode is no where near as sensitive as the true direct sampling hardware mod or with an upconverter, but it may be useful for those who just want to listen to AM.

2) UPCONVERTERS

Upconverters convert LF/MF/HF frequencies ‘up’ into the receivable range of the RTL-SDR. An upconverter is connected to your antenna before the RTL-SDR dongle and simply increases the frequency of all signals by about 100 MHz. Good upconverters for HF use will have a low pass filter included helping reduce interference from signals above 30 MHz.

The amount that an upconverter upconverts can matter. Most upconverters use a local oscillator at around 100 MHz to add 100 MHz to all frequencies. However, some users have complained that the

100 MHz puts some popular ham bands directly on top of broadcast FM stations. Although these FM stations shouldn't appear after the upconversion, faint images can still show up. Theoretically, the low pass filter should prevent any interference from FM bands, but some very strong stations can overcome the filter. Most upconverters now use a frequency of 125 MHz, which avoids FM broadcast stations.

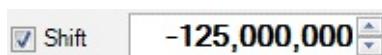
There are now several commercial upconverters available. One that we recommend is the Nooelec Ham-it-up upconverter. This upconverter is based on an opensource design and is of very high quality production and decent price. It increases the frequency of all signals by 125 MHz, and has a low pass filter installed. See [www.rtl-sdr.com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/](http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/) for information on purchasing an upconverter.

There are also modified RTL-SDR dongles with built in upconverters. One can be found at <http://janielectronics.com/> and another at <http://www.easy-kits.com/>.

HOW TO USE AN SDR RECEIVER WITH AN UPCONVERTER

To use an SDR receiver like SDR# with an upconverter you will need to tune to your desired signal + the upconverters local oscillator frequency. For example, the ham-it-up upconverter has a local oscillator frequency of 125 MHz, so to see a signal at 6 MHz you would tune to $125\text{ MHz} + 6\text{ MHz} = 131\text{ MHz}$.

If you don't want to always have to do the math, you can set an offset setting in the receiver. The offset setting will allow you to tune directly to your desired frequency. In SDR# you can set the Offset value to -125,000,000 for the ham-it-up (don't forget the minus sign).



POSITIONING YOUR RTL-SDR DONGLE

Traditionally, scanner radios are situated next to the user - in the house, or in the ham radio shack. The antenna is then usually situated a fair distance away, usually on the roof of the house or up a mast. This type of setup can require long runs of coaxial cable to connect the radio to the antenna. This can be a problem, as the longer the coaxial cable run between the antenna and radio is, the more signal you will lose due to attenuation and noise.

With the RTL-SDR, the radio hardware is the dongle itself. The dongle converts the analogue signal from the antenna into a digital signal which is sent to a PC over USB. USB cables transmit digital data and digital data does not degrade signal quality. Therefore the rtl-sdr dongle should be situated right next to the antenna, replacing the lossy coaxial cable in favour of non-lossy digital USB cable instead.

However, there is a problem with USB cables. For USB 2.0 the maximum length of USB cable that will work is about 5 meters (16 feet), and for USB 3.0 about 3 meters. This limitation is due to timing (although poor quality cable may also not work due to voltage drops). USB expects a sent data packet to be received within a certain time frame. If the cable is too long, the data will not be received within the expected time as the data packet takes time to travel through the cable.

A 5 or 3 meter cable may not be long enough to reach between your PC and antenna. Fortunately, there are two solutions around this problem.

1. Use an active USB repeater cable or hub.
2. Use an embedded computer like the Raspberry Pi or a remote computer to transmit the signal wirelessly to your PC.

1) USE AN ACTIVE USB REPEATER CABLE OR HUB

An active USB repeater cable works by using a repeater circuit every few meters on a USB cable. The repeater circuit will receive a USB data packet, reset the timing and then send it further down the line once again at full speed. The maximum length using repeaters is recommended to be 30m for USB 2.0 and about 18m for USB 3.0.

If you have a USB hub, you can also use it as a repeater with non-active cables. Just place 5 meters of cable from the PC to the hub, and then another 5 from the hub to dongle.

Active USB cables or hubs can be found cheaply on Amazon or Ebay, see our Buy RTL-SDR dongles page <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/>.

Note: Do not use USB to Ethernet extenders. These extenders simply convert the USB cable into Ethernet cable, which is capable of long runs of cable at **USB 1.1** speeds only. USB 1.1 speeds are too slow for the RTL-SDR dongle, which requires at least USB 2.0.

2) USE A MINI EMBEDDED OR REMOTE COMPUTER TO TRANSMIT THE SIGNAL WIRELESSLY TO YOUR PC

This is an interesting solution where a small embedded PC running a Linux server is placed next to the dongle. The embedded PC is plugged into the rtl-sdr dongle, which then can be used to transmit the radio data via TCP/IP (the internet or your network). Transmission can be done wirelessly over WiFi, or over wired Ethernet using a program developed for the rtl-sdr called *rtl_tcp*.

One thing to be concerned about with this solution is the bandwidth of your TCP network connection. Since *rtl_tcp* uses quite a large amount of data depending on the bandwidth you have chosen, you will need a fast network connection. For 2 MS/s of data, the commonly used 100Mbit wired connection

will usually suffice. For WiFi, an N rated connection is probably required. In practice you will probably find that you will need to drop the sample rate to around 1 MS/s.

To do this you will need a little Linux and networking experience. But if you are good with computers it will be easy to figure out. Embedded computers such as the Raspberry Pi and Beaglebone have been reported to work well with this solution.

Refer to the [RTL_TCP projects section](#) below for information on how to set up rtl_tcp.

RTL-SDR ON A RASPBERRY PI/BEAGLEBONE OR OTHER EMBEDDED COMPUTER

Note that there appears to be a bug in newer Linux kernels that can cause stuttering problems due to power saving features. This can be fixed by reverting to an older kernel or by running a process that will use 100% CPU time such as running “top -d .01”. To install RTL-SDR on a Raspberry Pi or other Embedded PC follow these instructions.

```
sudo apt-get install git  
sudo apt-get install cmake  
sudo apt-get install libusb-1.0-0-dev  
sudo apt-get install build-essential
```

```
git clone git://git.osmocom.org/rtl-sdr.git  
cd rtl-sdr/  
mkdir build  
cd build  
cmake ../  
make  
sudo make install  
sudo ldconfig
```

Embedded computers make great RTL-SDR servers as they can be placed in remote locations near an antenna and be used to broadcast a signal over a network or internet to a receiving station. To use as a server your embedded computer will need to have some form of Linux installed. Installing RTL-SDR on an embedded computer uses the same method as installing it on a regular Linux PC.

Note for Raspberry Pi users: Since the Rpi uses a USB based Ethernet controller, its Ethernet speed may not be sufficient to keep up with the data rate of rtl_tcp. We recommend using the [streaming fm guide](#) in the tutorials section to stream FM.

It may also be wise to use the modified “rtl_fm_python” from https://github.com/th0ma5w/rtl_fm_python. This software is a modified rtl_fm which allows the frequency and modulation tuned in rtl_fm to be modified remotely via a simple web interface. This is very useful for remote embedded servers.

See the section [Using RTL_TCP](#) for information on remotely transmitting I/Q data from the Raspberry Pi RTL-SDR server to a remote PC.

DONGLE SHIELDING AND NOISE REDUCTION

The rtl-sdr dongles have a problem in which they are susceptible to receiving interfering signals that enter via some way other than through the antenna. The solution to this problem is to simply enclose the dongle in a metal box which acts as an RF shield. If enclosing the RTL-SDR in a box together with other components such as an LNA or upconverter, be sure to shield the RTL-SDR separately from these other components. It has been shown that the RTL-SDR dongle itself emits RFI which can enter the other components.

Avoid using the rtl-sdr dongle near power supplies for devices such as laptops and mobile phones. These power supplies typically use something called a ‘switch mode’ power supply which is prone to introducing lots of RF noise into the nearby vicinity. If you are running the dongle on a laptop, ensure you are running on the battery and not power supply. Desktop PCs also use switch mode. The best PC to use the RTL-SDR on is a laptop running on battery. Switch mode RFI will usually look like multiple solid thin lines on a waterfall.

It is a good idea to use a standard or active USB cable to get the dongle as far away from the PC as possible, to reduce PC RF noise interference. See the [Positioning Your RTL-SDR Dongle](#) section for more information.

Noise Reduction Tip: *Never plug the dongle directly into the PC. Always use an USB extension cord with multiple ferrite beads.*

COMMON SOURCES OF NOISE

- Power lines. A faulty power line which is arcing electricity can create huge amounts of white noise which can drown out signals.
- Switch mode power supplies.
- Most electrical devices, such as monitors, TVs, appliances etc.
- Ethernet cables. Unshielded Ethernet cables can output huge amounts of RFI.
- Car alternators.
- The dongle itself. You will see spikes at integer multiple of 28.8 MHz (e.g 28.8 MHz, 2 x 28.8, 3x28.8 and so on). These spikes come from the local oscillator used in the dongle.
- Universal Serial Bus (USB). USB typically uses a 48 MHz clock, and you may see spikes at multiples of these frequencies.
- Ethernet over power.

DONGLE USB CABLE GROUNDING IMPROVEMENT

The rtl-sdr dongle has an electrical grounding design flaw. In USB devices the USB cable shielding is usually not meant to be connected to the electrical ground on the device, but rather to a separate ground. However, in the rtl-sdr, the USB cable shield connection *is* connected to the electrical ground. This connection can cause the USB cable to act as an antenna, allowing unwanted RF signals to enter through the cable into the ground of the dongle.

Fortunately, there is an easy fix for this design flaw. The fix is to simply remove the shield connection from either the USB cable, or the dongle itself and then create a secondary ground as a bunch of foil wrapped around the dongle with the USB cable ground connected to the foil and not connected to the dongle ground. Or, if you are enclosing the rtl-sdr into a metal case, connect the USB cable ground to the metal case instead.

This simple fix can make a huge difference especially if you are having front end overload problems with signals that are too strong, such as local broadcast FM stations.

References:

<http://sinnet3000.blogspot.com.br/2013/03/reducing-emi-in-rtl-sdr.html>

USB CABLE FERRITES

Another simple improvement to the USB extension cable is to add clip on USB ferrites to the cable. These ferrites are specifically designed to remove interfering signals from USB cables. Make sure you get the clip on ferrite's that are intended for USB cables. Other wrongly sized ferrite's or wrap around toroid ferrite's may actually harm performance by filtering the desired digital USB signals out.

Clip on ferrite's can be bought cheaply from Amazon. See <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/> for a link.

PRESELECTOR FILTERS

The RTL-SDR like most wideband SDR radios has no preselector at the front end. A preselector is an electronic hardware circuit which filters out any frequency that is not in the filters passband. It may also be called a bandpass/lowpass/highpass filter. A bandpass filter will only allow signals to pass through within a certain designed band, for example between 1 GHz and 1.1 GHz for ADS-B. A low pass filter will only allow signals below a certain frequency and a high pass filter will only allow signals above a certain frequency.

Using a preselector on a wide band device like the RTL-SDR would mean that only a small area of the 22-2200 MHz receivable range would be usable.

However, preselectors will drastically reduce interference in the tuned frequencies. Most analogue radios have built in preselectors. It is difficult to have preselectors in wideband radios like the RTL-SDR as you would need to have multiple hardware circuits for each chunk of frequencies you'd want to look at. This is because you would need different values for the analogue components depending on the frequencies you are interested in.

But still, if you are building a system for a single purpose, like only for receiving at ADS-B signals for instance, you will want to use a bandpass preselector to drastically reduce radio interference and improve your signal to noise ratio. In this YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcr-PX662Go> the experimenter went from 800 ADS-B messages/second to 1200 messages/second with a bandpass preselector enabled. Most good upconverters will also use a lowpass preselector filter to filter out interfering signals above 30 MHz.

An alternative to a band pass filter for the preselector is a band stop filter. Instead of just passing a specific band, a band stop filter will block or “stop” a certain range of frequencies. Typically, you’d want a band stop filter to block the broadcast FM and/or pager bands, as these strong local signals are what cause most interference. These FM bandstop filters are sometimes referred to as “FM Traps”.

You can buy good band stop FM filters from Miniciruits, search for the NSBP-108+. Miniciruits also has the BHP-400 which is a high pass filter which will block all frequencies below 395 MHz. These filters are unfortunately very expensive. Cheaper alternatives can be found on Amazon see our Buy RTL-SDR dongles page online for links. <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/>.

Surface mount and some inline bandpass/bandstop filters can be purchased from Minicircuits <http://www minicircuits com/products/Filters shtml>. Most surface mount filters can also be purchased from minicircuits with a evaluation board containing female SMA connectors. Without the evaluation board you will need good soldering skills to connect the band pass filter to a breakout board.

We note that more expensive SDR’s like the Funcube Dongle Pro+ have built in preselectors which greatly increase the cost, but also improve performance.

COAX STUB FILTER

One easy alternative to a using a hardware preselector is to use a “coax stub filter”. A coax stub filter is a type of notch filter. A notch filter is just a band stop filter with a very small “stop” area.

To make a coax stub filter you will need a “T” junction connector. The coax will enter the T junction from the bottom of the T and exit out one of the sides. On the remaining side there will be a length of coax cable, called a “stub”. The length of the stub will determine the frequency of the notch.

To calculate the stub length use this formula:

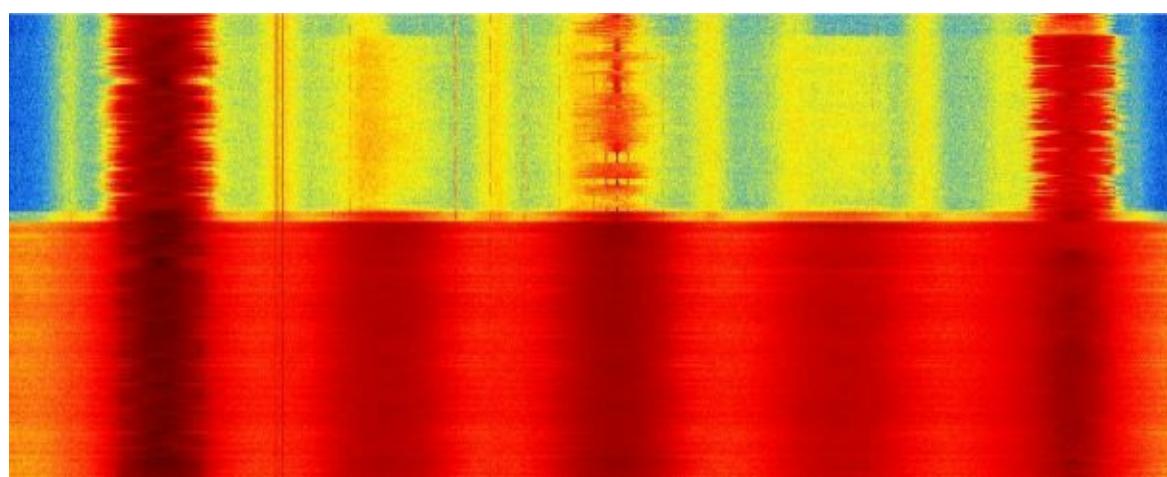
stub length = 300/band stop freq * coax velocity factor * $\frac{1}{4}$.

The formula converts the band stop frequency into a wavelength by dividing by the speed of light, then adjusts for coaxial cable velocity factor which will slow down the speed of light in the cable and then multiplies by $\frac{1}{4}$ to get the $\frac{1}{4}$ wavelength.

IMPROVING THE STOCK ANTENNA

The performance of the stock antenna that comes with many RTL-SDR units can be improved simply by placing it on a metallic surface that has a radius similar to the length of the whip, which for the standard antenna is around 12 cm.

Placing it on a metallic surface completes the antenna as a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave ground plane. Below we show an image comparing the antenna without (bottom) and with (top) a metallic ground plane. The noise floor is drastically reduced with the ground plane.



CALIBRATING THE RTL-SDR

The easiest way to calibrate the RTL-SDR is by tuning to a known frequency and then adjusting the PPM offset until the signal is centred. Make sure to do this after the dongle has been running for a while as the dongles are known to have a “warm up” time, where the PPM offset will change as the temperature slowly increases. In SDR# the PPM offset can be adjusted from the “Configure” menu.

It is also possible to calibrate the RTL-SDR automatically using a Linux command line program called Kalibrate. Kalibrate requires that there are local GSM signals receivable by your antenna to do the calibration. GSM signals are used because they transmit frequency correction data which Kalibrate can use to determine the clock offset. Kalibrate can be downloaded from <https://github.com/steve-m/kalibrate-rtl>. A pre-built Windows version can be found at <http://rtlsdr.org/files/kalibrate-win-release.zip> - note that you may need to copy in the newer rtlsdr.dll and libusb-1.0.dll files from the official RTL-SDR release to get it to work. To compile and install on Linux use kalibrate use the following instructions.

1. Download the kalibrate-rtl repository from the GitHub either by using clone or downloading and extracting the zip file from the page.
2. In a terminal navigate to the kalibrate folder. Type the following into the terminal.

```
./bootstrap && CXXFLAGS='-W -Wall -O3'  
./configure  
make  
make install
```

3. Now kal is ready to use by typing the following where GSM900 can be replaced by GSM850, GSM-R, GSM900, EGSM, DCS, PCS depending what GSM systems are in use in your particular country. Kalibrate will run for a while searching for GSM stations.

```
./kal -s GSM900
```

4. Once it has found some GSM channels, choose a channel from the output displayed in the terminal and then run the following to determine the frequency offset in PPM.

```
./kal -c channel
```

```
user@ubuntu:~/kalibrate-rtl/src
File Edit Tabs Help
user@ubuntu:~/kalibrate-rtl/src$ ./kal -v -s GSM900 -g 50
Found 1 device(s):
 0: Generic RTL2832U OEM

Using device 0: Generic RTL2832U OEM
Found Rafael Micro R820T tuner
Exact sample rate is: 270833.002142 Hz
Setting gain: 50.0 dB
kal: Scanning for GSM-900 base stations.
channel detect threshold: 133091.785781
GSM-900:
    chan: 15 (938.0MHz + 20.739kHz) power: 1538501.68
    chan: 19 (938.8MHz + 21.054kHz) power: 620841.38
    chan: 22 (939.4MHz + 19.853kHz) power: 1389063.62
user@ubuntu:~/kalibrate-rtl/src$ ./kal -c 15
Found 1 device(s):
 0: Generic RTL2832U OEM

Using device 0: Generic RTL2832U OEM
Found Rafael Micro R820T tuner
Exact sample rate is: 270833.002142 Hz
kal: Calculating clock frequency offset.
Using GSM-900 channel 15 (938.0MHz)
average          [min, max]      (range, stddev)
+ 22.930kHz           [22904, 22956]   (52, 14.309061)
overruns: 0
not found: 0
average absolute error: -24.446 ppm
user@ubuntu:~/kalibrate-rtl/src$
```

RTL-SDR PROJECT TUTORIALS

These tutorials are written with the RTL-SDR in mind but will also be valid for other SDRs and even some hardware radios.

AUDIO PIPING

Most of these tutorials performed in Windows require that something called an audio pipe be set up. An audio pipe is simply a program which routes the audio from your SDR receiver (e.g SDR#, SDR-Console) to the decoding program. See the [Audio Piping Appendix](#) for information on how to set up audio piping methods like stereo mix, VB Cable or Virtual Audio Cable.

GENERAL FREQUENCY GUIDE

Here we list some common international radio signals and the frequencies they can be likely be found at. However, note that some of these frequencies could be different for other countries.

Signal	Frequency (MHz)	Type	Description
AM Broadcast Radio	0.535 - 1.605	AM Voice	
Amateur Radio	0 - 30	SSB/Digital Data	Ham radio users use voice and digital data signals.
Shortwave Radio	3 - 30	AM Voice/DRM	International radio broadcasts.
Walkie Talkies & Cordless Phones	40 - 49	NFM Voice	
CB Radio	26.965 - 27.405	AM Voice	Radio usually used by truckers.
Analogue TV	54 - 88	PAL/NTSC	
Radio Controlled Toys	72 - 76	Digital Data	
Broadcast FM	88 - 108	WFM Voice	
Air Traffic Control	108 - 136	AM Voice	
ATIS	110 - 129	AM Voice	Voice that repeats weather and other information to pilots.
ACARS	131.550	AM Data	System for sending and receiving short messages from aircraft.
VDL2	136.975	USB Data	Eventual Replacement of ACARS.
NOAA Satellites	136 - 138	NFM Data	Transmits weather satellite images.
VHF Amateur Radio	144 - 148	NFM Voice/NFM Data	Band dedicated for Ham radio.
NOAA Weather	~162.4	NFM Voice	Voice weather report.
Rail	159-162	NFM Voice/NFM Data	
Maritime	156 - 162	NFM Voice	
Automatic Identification System (AIS)	161.9175 162.025	NFM Data	Used to track ships like a radar.
Pagers	157	NFM Data	Messaging System.

Analogue TV	174 - 216	Data	PAL or NTSC TV.
Digital Audio Broadcast (DAB)	~174 - 239	DAB Data	Digital Radio.
Military Communications (USA)	225 - 380	Voice/Data	
Trunking Radio	~400	NFM Voice/Data	Commercial walkie talkies.
Weather Balloons (Radiosondes)	~400	NFM Data	Meteorological agency launched weather balloons.
Amateur Radio	420 - 450	NFM Voice/Data	
ISM Band	~433	Digital Data	Licence free low power band. Mainly weather stations/power meters etc.
Trunking Radios	~860	NFM Voice/Data	
GSM	850 900 1800 1900	Digital Data	Cell Phones.
Cordless Phones	900	Digital Voice	
ADS-B	1090	Digital Data	Used to track aircraft like a radar.
GPS	1575	Digital Data	Global Positioning System.

ACARS RECEIVING GUIDE

INTRODUCTION TO ACARS

ACARS is an acronym for Aircraft Communications Addressing and Reporting System. It is a digital communications system that commercial aircraft use to send and receive short messages to and from ground stations. Some messages you might hear on ACARS are OOOI events (messages reporting changes in major flight phases such as **O**ut of the gate, **O**ff the ground, **O**n the ground and **I**nto the gate), digital information sent to the aircraft avionics and text messages to flight crew. Some ACARS messages will also contain aircraft GPS coordinates, but if your goal is aircraft radar, the ADS-B project will be of more interest to you. Each ACARS message also contains the aircraft registration and flight identification number.

Standard ACARS transmits at a VHF frequency of 131.550 MHz, but there are various other frequencies also in use depending on your location. There are also ACARS messages transmitted via the Inmarsat Satellite network, and on the HF bands, but these bands are not as commonly used as the VHF band.

With the RTL-SDR and some decoding software, the ACARS messages around you can be received and displayed live on your PC. As ACARS transmits in the VHF band, reception is very nearly line of sight. But as aircraft fly high in the sky, with a good antenna you should be able to receive messages from high altitude aircraft that are up to 200 miles away. ACARS uses vertically polarized signals. We recommend a discone, collinear, $\frac{1}{4}$ wave ground plane or J pole antenna. See the [antenna guide](#) for more information on these antennas. An LNA and bandpass filter may also help but are not necessary, see the [LNA section](#) and [preselector section](#) for more information.

So why receive ACARS? Well apart from watching the messages that come through, most decoder software will also look up the received aircraft registration number on the internet and display information and a photograph of the airplane transmitting. This is a great aid to aircraft spotters and anyone who just wants to see what is flying in the air around them.

Here are some common ACARS frequencies.

Freq (MHz)	REGION / COUNTRY
131.550	Primary worldwide
129.125	USA and Canada Additional
130.025	USA and Canada Secondary
130.425	USA Additional
130.450	USA and Canada Additional
131.125	USA Additional
131.450	Japan/China Primary

131.475	Air Canada Company
131.525	European Secondary
131.725	European Primary
136.700	USA Additional
136.750	USA Additional
136.800	USA Additional
136.900	European Secondary
136.850	SITA North America
136.750	European New
131.580	European New

ACARS TUTORIAL (WINDOWS)

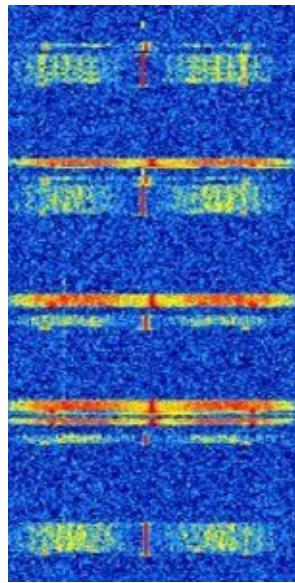
For this tutorial we will assume that you have an RTL-SDR dongle installed and working on a Windows PC. If not, please follow the Quickstart Guide.

You will also need to have installed a Windows audio piping program. See [Appendix A](#) for more information.

The first steps are listed below.

1. Open a general SDR program such as SDR# or SDR-RADIO and tune to an ACARS frequency such as 131.500 MHz. Note that we highly recommend using SDR-RADIO as you can output up to 6 potential ACARS channels to the same sound device. For SDR-RADIO set up as many VFO's as ACARS channels you have transmitting and tune to all of them.
2. Adjust the bandwidth of your receiver to around 5-10 kHz, so that the bandwidth just covers the entire ACARS signal.
3. Set the receiver mode to **AM**, turn off squelch and turn off any noise reduction filters. Using audio AGC may or may not work well, you will need to experiment with what works best. If you are looking to combine multiple ACARS channels on the same audio channel with multiple VFO's it may be best to enable the squelch.

At this point you should be able to see some ACARS signals appearing in the spectrum. ACARS signals come in bursts, and will look something like the waterfall image shown below. If you are outputting the audio to speakers you will also hear a sort of screeching sound when a ACARS packet is received.

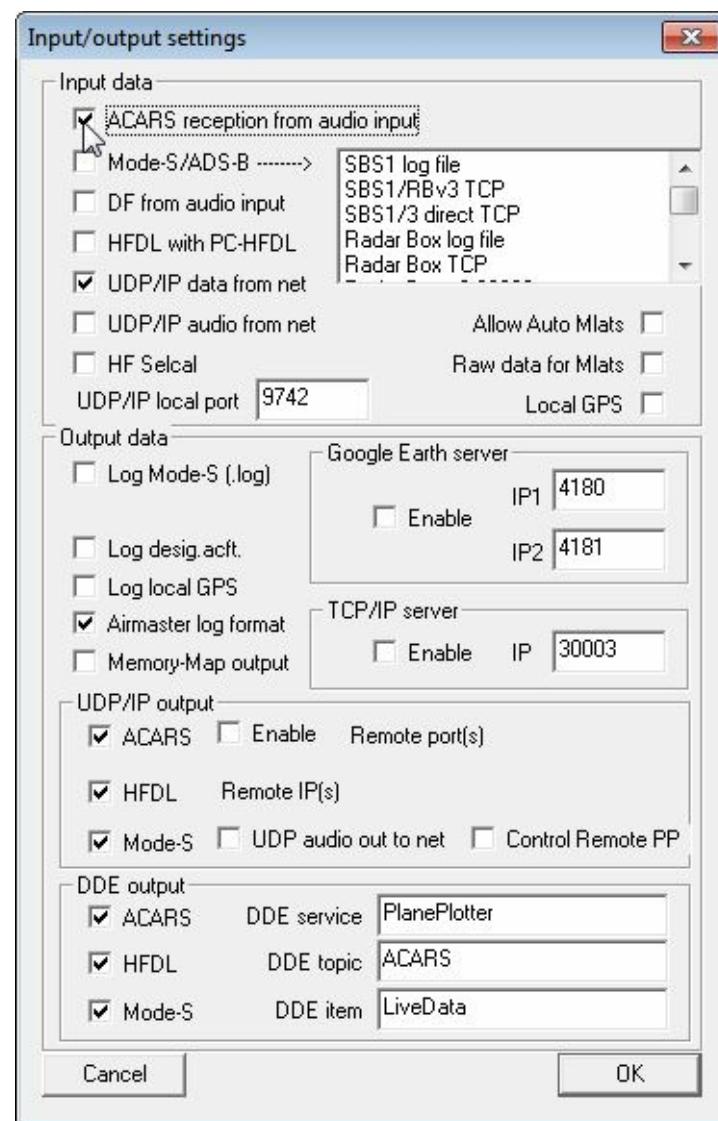


There are four commonly used ACARS decoder software programs, PlanePlotter, AirNav ACARS 2, ACARSD and KG-ACARS. Below we present tutorials on each software.

PLANEPLOTTER

The first one is PlanePlotter, which is a paid software package that costs 25 Euros. However, there is also a 21-day trial version available. PlanePlotter also has the advantage that it can be used for ADS-B plotting in a later project. To use PlanePlotter for ACARS, follow the instructions below.

1. Download and install PlanePlotter from <http://www.coaa.co.uk/planeplotter.htm>.
2. In your SDR receiver, set the audio piping method you want to use as the audio output.
3. Open PlanePlotter. Click on the “I/O Settings” button .
4. Ensure that the option “ACARS reception from audio input is checked”. Push OK.

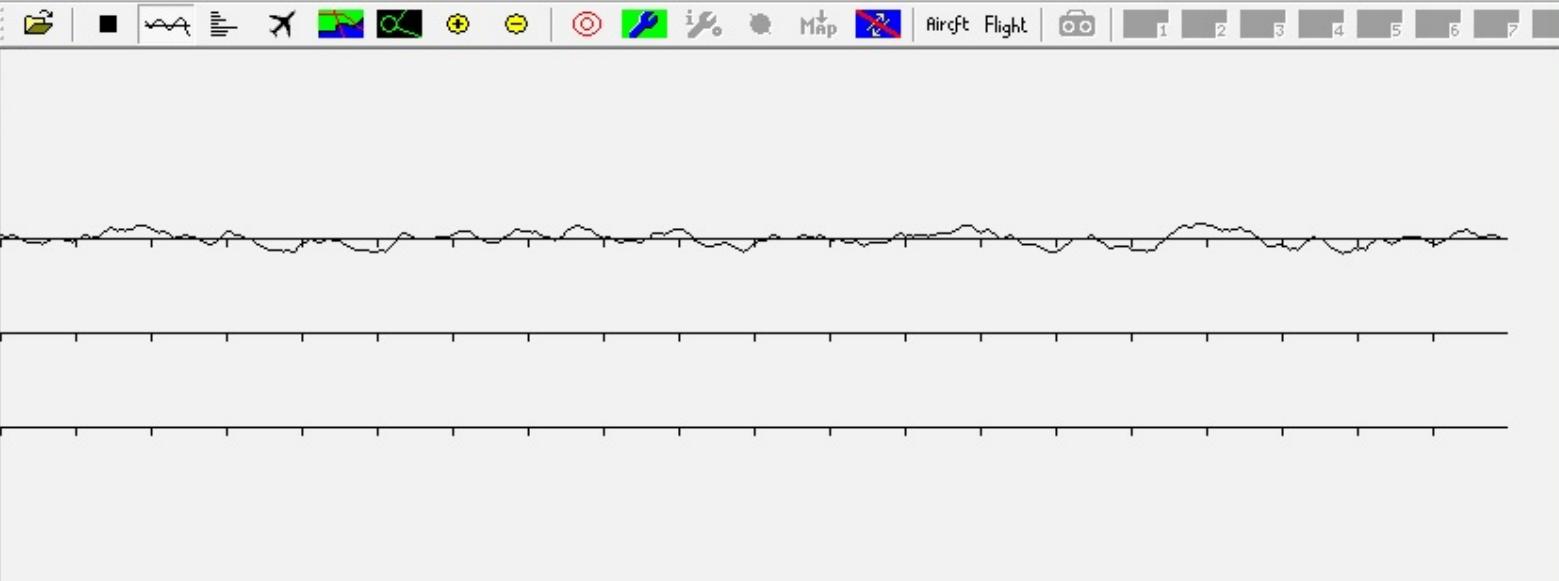


5. Go to **Options->Audio->ACARS** and select the audio pipe you are using in your SDR receiver.
6. Click on the “Start” icon ●.
7. Press the “Signal” icon ≈. This shows a graph of signal volume. Ensure the signal is not too loud. You will know the volume is too loud if the graph begins clipping/saturating when ACARS packets are received (signal will look squarish if it is saturating).

Here is an example of an ideal idle volume.

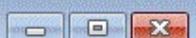


File View Process Options Review Tools Help

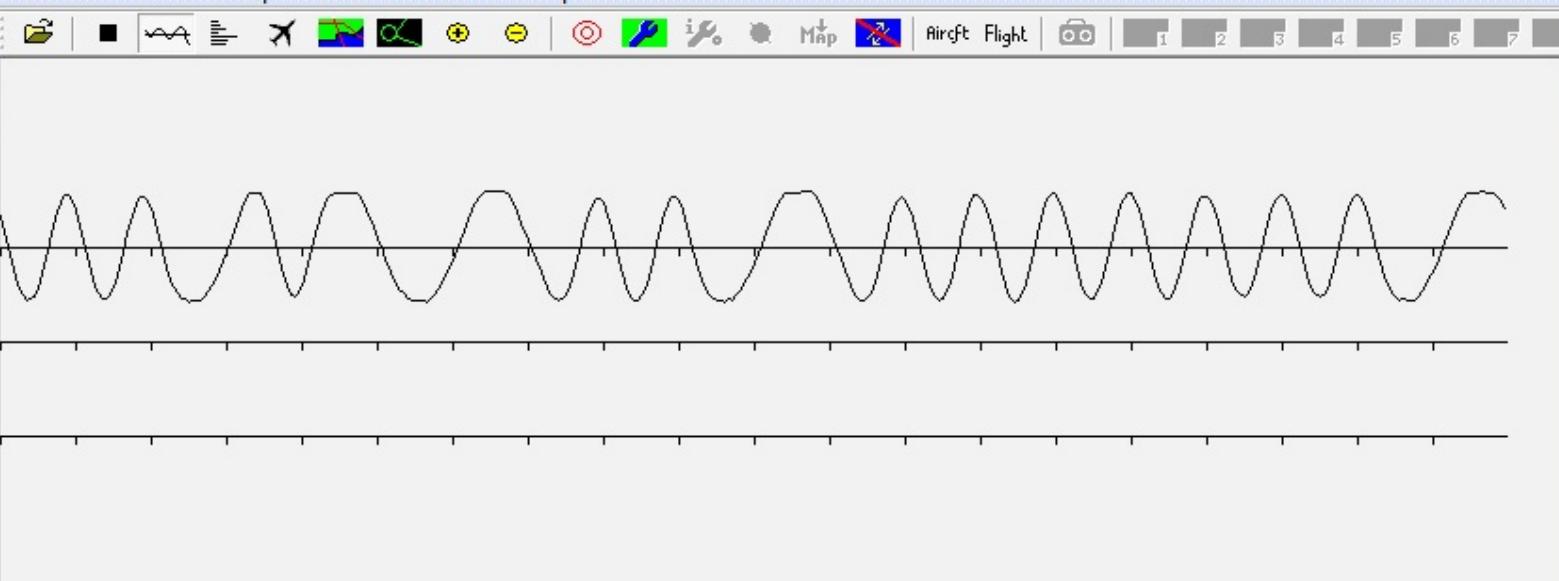


For Help, press F1

Here is an example of ideal volume when an ACARS packet is sounding.

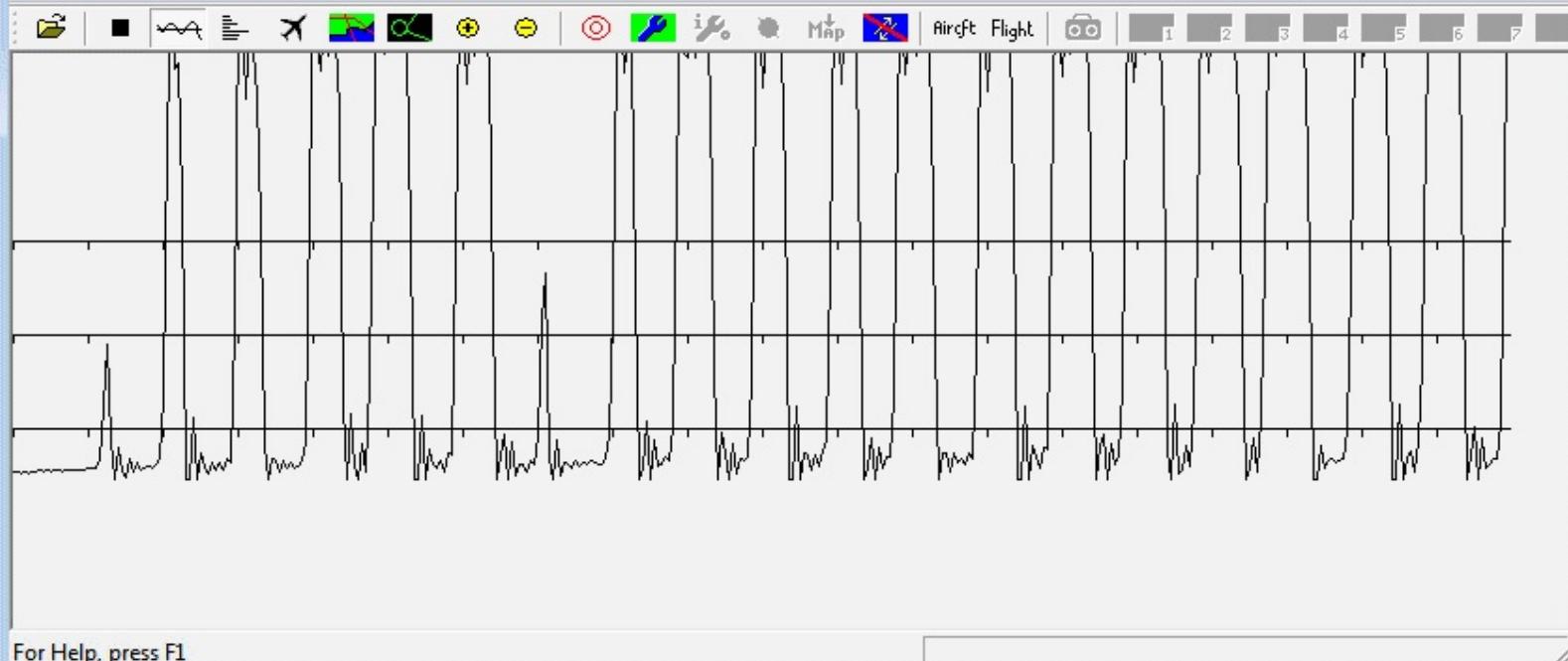


File View Process Options Review Tools Help



For Help, press F1

Here is an example of an ACARS packet that has its volume too loud.



At this point ACARS messages should be successfully decoding in PlanePlotter. Right clicking on an entry in the Aircraft View window will bring up an internet browser with information about that particular aircraft.

The screenshot shows the PlanePlotter interface with decoded ACARS messages in the main window:

ICAO	Reg.	Flight	Lat.	Long.	Alt.	Course	Speed	Type	Route	Squawk	Time	Rep Sh.	Int	U-tag	Sharers	Cat	Sig
?	N538AS	AS0476	0.00000	0.00000	0'	0.0°	0.0kts			0000	12:58:56UTC	-1	*	-			
?	ZK-OKM	NZ0006	0.00000	0.00000	0'	0.0°	0.0kts			0000	13:04:52UTC	-1	*	-			

Below the messages, a message states: "Failed to connect: 10061. Start server (BS/ANRB/etc) check details and try again." To the right, a browser window shows the Airframes.org database entry for ZK-OKM, featuring a Boeing 777-319ER with registration NZ0006, operated by Air New Zealand.

AIRNAV ACARS

Another commercially available ACARS decoder is the one by AirNav, known as AirNav ACARS decoder 2. This product comes with a 30 day trial but costs \$39.95 USD every six months, which makes this the priciest option available. It is available at <http://www.airnavsystems.com/ACARS/>. The

advantage with this decoder is that it is very easy to set up, and has good decoding capabilities on par with PlanePlotter. To use AirNav ACARS all that is required is to

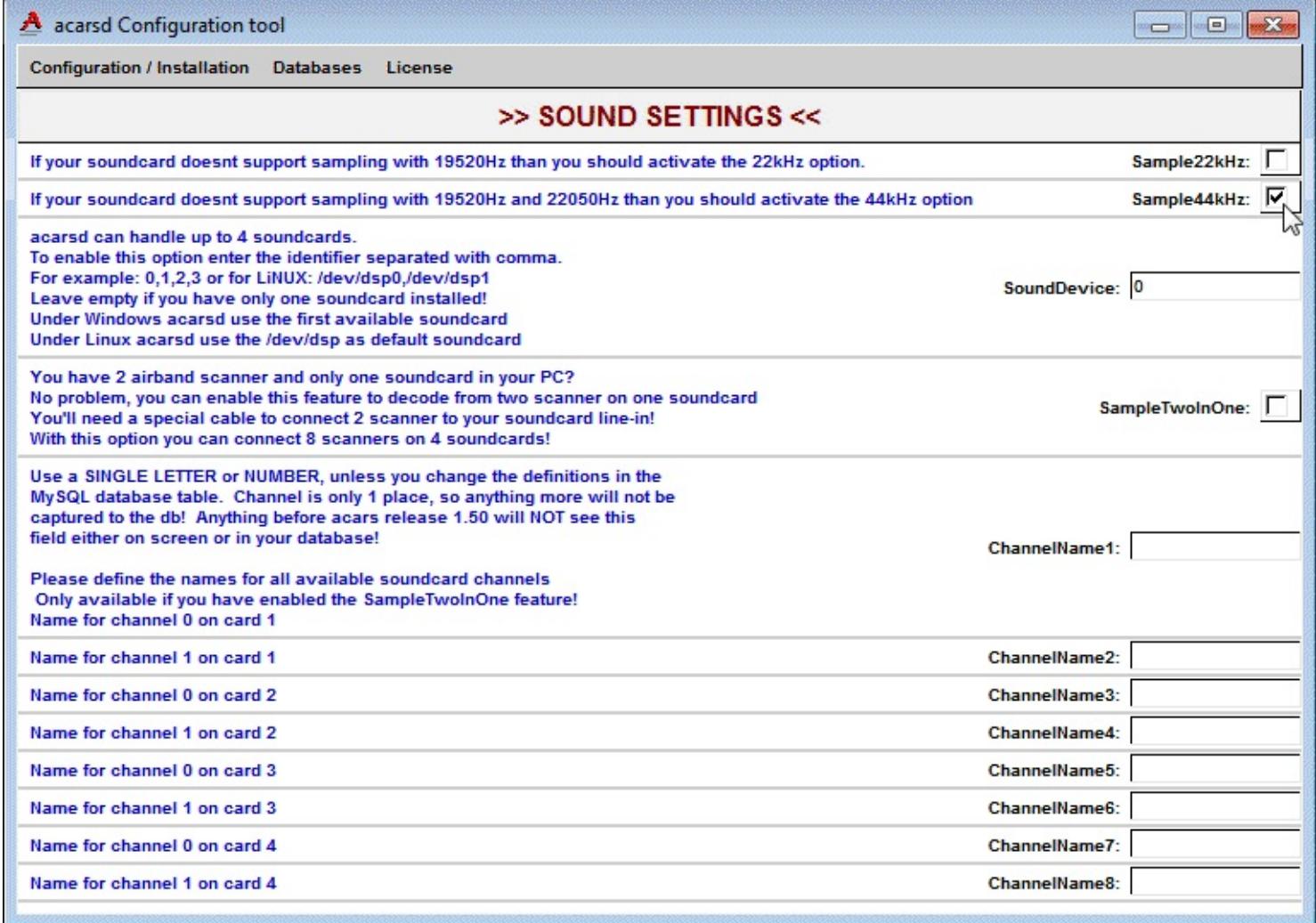
1. Download and install the AirNav ACARS Decoder 2 program.
2. Ensure your default audio device is set correctly in Windows sound recording properties. Acarsd will use the first default audio device found.
3. In your SDR receiver, set the audio piping method you want to use as the audio output.
4. Open the program. AirNav will select the default audio device.
5. Adjust the volume in your SDR receiver or Windows such that the volume meter in the bottom right corner is green and does not enter the red when an ACARS packet is heard.

ACARSD

Another program for decoding ACARS signals is Acarsd. Acarsd has the advantage of being completely free and also being available for Linux. Acarsd can be downloaded from www.acarsd.com.

We find that the performance of Acarsd is not as good as the two paid options, but some other users have reported that Acarsd works just as well if not better than the paid options. Acarsd works best when the audio sample rate of the audio piping device is set to 44.1 kHz. See the [setting the sample rate section](#) for information on how to change this. To use acarsd follow these instructions.

1. Go to the acarsd website and download and install acarsd. Make sure to follow the instructions on the website for installing as it is an unconventional install procedure.
2. Ensure your default audio device is set correctly in Windows sound recording properties. Acarsd will use the first default audio device found. Also ensure the Playback and Recording sample rates are set to the same value of 44100 Hz.
3. In the acarsd folder run setup.exe.
4. Under Configuration / Installation enable the 44 kHz option.



5. Go to **Configuration / Installation->Write new acarsd.ini file.** Then exit the configuration tool.
6. In your SDR receiver, set it to output to the audio piping method you have set as your default audio device.
7. Run acarsd.exe in your acarsd folder to open it.
8. Adjust the volume in your SDR receiver or in Windows so that the volume reading in the bottom right corner of the acarsd window is at around 0-10 for when there is no signal. Acarsd is very picky with the volume levels being too loud so make sure you set this correctly.
9. Decoded ACARS packets should begin to show up.

The number of decoder passes can be changed in **Windows->acarsdgui settings**. Setting it higher may improve decode performance.

The screenshot shows the acarsd 1.70RC3 software interface. At the top, there's a toolbar with icons for acarsd, Windows, Search, Map, News, Translation, Database, DDE, and Server. The status bar indicates "Mon, 05 May 2014 - 19:19".

Flight Data for N517AS:

- ACARS mode: 2 Aircraft reg: N517AS [Boeing B737-890(WL)]
- Message label: H1 [Message to/from terminal] Block id: 4 Msg no: D11A
- Flight id: AS0764 [Alaska Airlines]
- Message content:
#DFB
00#
517#.210214.17495600000764.KPDX.KDCA.TO.3500.27204.8603#
N45.5718.W122.5049.211749.#01444.002.5.296.016.TO#
N45.5707.W122.4960.211750.#01604.002.5.298.016.TO#N45.5695.W122.4869.211750.#01859.002
- [05/05/2014 19:18] - First contact with this aircraft

Flight Data for N86CW:

- ACARS mode: 2 Aircraft reg: N86CW [Boeing B737-890(WL)]
- Message label: H1 [Message to/from terminal] Block id: 6 Msg no: D12A
- Flight id: AS0764 [Alaska Airlines]
- Route: [Portland, International, USA-Washington, National/Ronald Reagan National, USA]
- Message content:
#DFB
00#
517#.210214.17515700000764.KPDX.KDCA.CL.3600.27335.8603#
N45.5676.W122.4733.211750.#02233.001.0.298.017.CL#
N45.5623.W122.4415.211750.#03033.-00.7.297.019.CL#N45.5563.W122.4091.211750.#04094.-02
- Flight: PDX-DCA Distance: appr. 2038 miles Flight time: appr. 4:40 h
- [05/05/2014 19:19] - 1 contacts with this aircraft. First contact: 05/05/2014 19:18 as flight AS0764

Flight Data for N279AY:

- ACARS mode: 2 Aircraft reg: N279AY [Boeing B737-890(WL)]
- Message label: H1 [Message to/from terminal] Block id: 1 Msg no: F26A
- Flight id: AS0407 [Alaska Airlines]
- Message content:
#M1BPOSN45381W122540,VANTZ,175221,30,POWLZ,175340,RW10R,P0,299018,105,172,175K,17
1K,73A3A2
North: 45.381000 West: 122.540000
- [05/05/2014 19:19] - First contact with this aircraft

Flight Data for N517AS:

- ACARS mode: 2 Aircraft reg: N517AS [Boeing B737-890(WL)]
- Message label: H1 [Message to/from terminal] Block id: 1 Msg no: F26A
- Flight id: AS0407 [Alaska Airlines]
- Message content:
#M1BPOSN45381W122540,VANTZ,175221,30,POWLZ,175340,RW10R,P0,299018,105,172,175K,17
1K,73A3A2
North: 45.381000 West: 122.540000
- [05/05/2014 19:19] - First contact with this aircraft

Log Window:

```
05 May 2014 - 19:19:18 Aircraft 'N570AS' was added to your database
05 May 2014 - 19:19:18 Fetching informations for 'AS0407' from db.acarsd.org
05 May 2014 - 19:19:19 Fetching flight informations for 'AS0407' from amadeus.net (In Queue 1)
05 May 2014 - 19:19:20 Fetching flight informations for 'AS0407' from flytecomm (In Queue 1)
05 May 2014 - 19:19:23 Fetching informations for 'N570AS' from db.acarsd.org
```

[1 Good: 10, Upf: 0, Parity: 0, block: 0, crc: 0, Mags: 10, Imported: 0, SkySpy: 0] [Vol: 0|0|0 | Ext: ON | CRC: OFF | 4 - 62 Unique flights] NO SERVER | DDE

LINUX ACARS DECODERS

There are various free open source terminal based ACARS decoders available for Linux. The two best are rtl_acars_ng and acarsed. Both have a significant advantage over the Windows based ACARS solutions as these programs will connect directly to the RTL-SDR and so do not require any audio piping. Furthermore, they will both also listen to more than one ACARS channel. They should both have similar performance as they are based on the same code base. However, I was personally unable to get these Linux ACARS program to decode as well as the Windows programs.

To run acarsdec, download and extract tar package from <http://sourceforge.net/projects/acarsdec/>.

Install the following dependencies as well as the librtlsdr libraries if you haven't already. See the Installing [RTL-SDR Drivers on Linux](#) section.

```
apt-get install libsndfile1-dev
apt-get install libasound2
```

Then run `make` in the acarsdec folder.

To run `rtl_acars_ng` simply download the zip file from https://github.com/gat3way/rtl_acars_ng, extract it then run `make`. To get help run `./rtl_acars_ng -h`. To start decoding type

```
./new_rtl_acars -f 131550000
```

ADS-B RECEIVING GUIDE

ADS-B INTRODUCTION

Modern planes carry on board something called an Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) Mode-S transponder. This transponder periodically broadcasts location and altitude information to air traffic controllers and other aircraft. The system was put into place to replace traditional RADAR systems which work by bouncing a radio signal off the plane and listening for the echo. Traditional RADAR is not always reliable and so ADS-B was devised. ADS-B reads an onboard GPS and then broadcasts the data via radio giving more accurate and stable data.

Currently, ADS-B data is completely unencrypted so the RTL-SDR can be used to listen to these ADS-B signals, which can then be used to create your very own home aircraft radar system. Compared to dedicated commercial ADS-B receivers which can go for between \$200 and \$1000, the \$20 RTL-SDR is very attractive for the hobbyist in terms of price. However, note that the RTL-SDR probably shouldn't be relied on for ADS-B navigation in a real aircraft for safety reasons. Also, if you are using a transmit capable SDR, please do not ever transmit your own ADS-B signals.

ADS-B is based on something called Mode S which provides location data for ADS-B. There is also Mode A which provides an identification code and Mode C which provides the aircraft's pressure altitude. These are also receivable by some decoders.

ADS-B signals can be found at a frequency of 1090 MHz or less commonly in some places at 978 MHz. It has been discovered by the RTL-SDR community, that the R820T tuner has the best sensitivity out of all the tuners at this frequency. The E4000 and other tuners do not perform as well in comparison. It is recommended that you obtain an R820T tuner if you want to set up ADS-B decoding with the RTL-SDR.

There are public websites like flightradar24.com which display ADS-B data through the internet as well. They receive ADS-B data through volunteers who have bought dedicated ADS-B receiver hardware, or are using an RTL-SDR and special software.

ADS-B TUTORIAL

For this tutorial we will assume that you have an RTL-SDR dongle installed and working on a Windows PC. If not, please follow the Quickstart Guide. Aside from this you will need

- A vertically polarized antenna tuned to 1090 MHz.
- Software for receiving and decoding ADS-B.
- Software for displaying ADS-B location data.

ADS-B ANTENNAS

With a good antenna the RTL-SDR could be capable of receiving aircraft from over 250nm away, that is about 460km or 290 miles away.

Many people have found that in most cases the stock antenna that comes with the dongle is already fairly good at picking up ADS-B signals. This will depend on how far away you are from the aircraft and what your local RF interference is like. However, if you want to increase your ADS-B radars range, you will need a properly tuned antenna placed up high. There are of course commercial ADS-B antennas you can buy, but the best option for keeping in the cheap spirit of RTL-SDR is to build your own.

ADS-B operates with vertical polarization at 1090 MHz which is a line of sight frequency meaning that you need to have a clear unobstructed path between the antenna and transmitter. Since ADS-B signals are generally quite strong and come from aircraft up high, most vertically polarized antennas tuned for 1090MHz will work well. Using a poorly tuned or poorly made antenna will result in a lack of range for your air radar.

You should also ensure that your coax feed line (the length of coaxial cable between the antenna and dongle) is high quality and as short as possible. At gigahertz frequencies long runs of cheap coax tend to reduce signal strength significantly. Use coax cable intended for satellite installations, such as RG-6 or RG-8, as these cables are designed for gigahertz frequencies. See the [Coaxial Cable Guide](#) section for more information.

Also ensure you are using connectors on your coax cable that can handle GHz frequencies. See the [Antenna Adapter Guide](#) in the antennas section for information about connectors. We recommend BNC, N or SMA connectors. Poor connectors at GHz frequencies could net up to 1-3 dB of loss per connector.

A low noise amplifier (LNA) placed at the antenna such as the LNA4ALL may help with signal loss particularly if you have a long run of feed line. See the [LNA section](#) for more information. Using an active USB extension cable and placing the dongle close to the antenna may be a better option to consider. Some people have even placed a Raspberry Pi running RTL-SDR at the antenna and then used WiFi or an Ethernet cable to send decoded data to a PC.

For ADS-B we recommend either a ¼ Wave Ground Plane, J-Pole, Dipole or Collinear antenna. See the [Antenna Guide](#) for more information about these antennas.

If you have strong broadcast stations near by, or have other sources of interference, we recommend using a preselector bandpass filter for 1090 MHz. A good commonly used and easy to build filter is a hairpin filter on a PCB board <http://www rtl-sdr com/homemade-ads-b-filter/>. It is also easy to use a

1090 MHz SAW filter component which can be cheaply purchased from Ebay for around \$10. <http://www.ebay.com/item/B1602-SAW-filters-Epcos-1090MHz-ADS-B-AirNav-SBS-/110619017914>. These components are small and require decent soldering skills. See https://steve-m.de/pics/ads-b_saw_filter.jpg for an example of one wired up. Minicircuits also sells an 1090 MHz surface mount bandpass filter at <http://www.minicircuits.com/MCLStore/ModelInfoDisplay?13979749855620.039050499120180104>. See the [preselector section](#) for more information.

In this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcr-PX662Go>, the uploader noticed an increase from 800 frames/s to 1200 frames/s when a preselector for 1090 MHz was used.

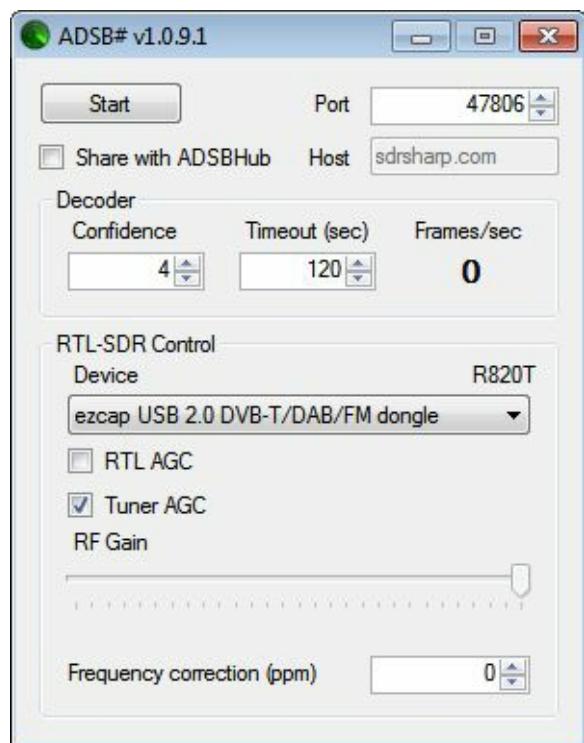
SOFTWARE GUIDE

Currently, there are multiple software options available for listening and decoding ADS-B signals with the RTL-SDR. Almost all software is free. Note for the Windows based software you will need to have installed the RTL-SDR drivers via zadig first. See the [Quickstart guide](#) if you have not done this.

The most commonly used ADS-B decoders are ASDB#, RTL1090 and dump1090.

ADSB# (WINDOWS)

ADSB# is a Windows based 1090 MHz ADS-B decoder developed by the programmer of SDR Sharp. It has a simple graphic user interface and is probably the easiest decoder to use overall. To use ADSB#, download it from <http://sdrsharp.com/downloads/adsbsharp.zip>.



To install and run ADSB#, all you need to do is extract the zip file into a folder, and then double click on adsbsharp.exe. If your RTL-SDR dongle is plugged into your PC, you should be able to select it under the Device drop down menu. You can then click the start button to begin decoding ADS-B data.

Be sure to also set the gain. Tuner AGC works well for first time testing, but manual gain settings work best after tweaking. Maximum gain with no AGC is usually the best choice.

If you have a good antenna set up, you should begin to see numbers other than zero showing up under Frames/sec. This indicates that you are receiving ADS-B data.

ADSB# decodes the ADS-B data and then sends location data via TCP/IP. Another program such as Virtual Radar Server, ADSBScope or PlanePlotter (explained later) is needed to visualize the data. If you have several antennas in different locations, you can combine your data in this way using the adsbhub.exe program which is part of the ADSB# zip file download.

The frequency correction (ppm) setting is the same as the setting in SDRSharp which is used to correct for the RTL-SDR dongles frequency inaccuracy. Since ADS-B signals are not particularly sensitive to frequency accuracy, this setting won't make much difference even if you set it correctly.

When ADS-B data is received from an aircraft a confidence counter is incremented. The confidence counter rises as more packets from the same aircraft are received. Once the confidence is greater than the confidence set in the GUI, the aircraft location data will be sent over TCP/IP. Confidence is used to prevent false aircraft locations showing up from noise which was accidentally decoded as a valid ADS-B signal. Higher confidence levels may be necessary in noisy environments. The timeout setting defines how long the decoder will wait before checking the confidence of the aircraft again.

RTL1090 (WINDOWS)

Another Windows 1090 MHz ADS-B decoder with graphical user interface is RTL1090 which can be downloaded from <http://rtl1090.web99.de>. The easiest way to download and install RTL1090 is to use the IMU (Installer and Maintenance Utility), which will automatically download all the required files. The IMU saves the work of having to copy over several dll files and guides you through installing the drivers through zadig. Note if you've already installed the drivers through zadig via the Quickstart guide, you can ignore the zadig installation shown in the IMU.



RTL1090 has some special features. It can decode MODE A/C as well as MODE S. Mode A sends an aircraft identification number and Mode C sends the aircraft altitude, MODE S is the one that has the location information. RTL1090 also has a built in spectrum viewer which can be activated by flipping the SISEX switch. Finally, RTL1090 also has a 1-bit checksum error checker built in. The error checker can be activated in the Config menu. It is disabled by default because it can be taxing on older slower PCs. You can access the options screen by clicking the OPEN button in the top left corner of the program GUI. Most people report that RTL1090 has better receive performance compared to ADSB#.

The recent beta 3 version of RTL1090 also comes with a built in graphical radar display.

As with ADSB#, we recommend playing with the manual gain settings or running with Tuner AGC checked and RTL AGC unchecked. Maximum gain with no AGC is usually the best choice.

The authors of RTL1090 also have an experimental version of their software called RTL-DUO, which utilizes two RTL-SDR dongles for improved reception. It can also be downloaded from <http://rtl1090.web99.de>.

DUMP1090 (LINUX/MAC/WINDOWS)

This is a Linux/OSX/Windows compatible command line ADS-B decoder. Very useful for Linux based devices such as the Raspberry Pi. With dump1090 you could set up a Raspberry Pi decoder that feeds data to a web server. Most people report that Dump1090 has the best decoding performance out of all the ADS-B decoders.

The latest and most up to date branch of dump1090 can be downloaded from its git repository at <https://github.com/MalcolmRobb/dump1090>.

Dump1090 also has a hub mode, which will allow multiple dump1090 instances in different physical locations to connect together and combine data streams. This might be an option if you are not interested in sharing your data publically such as with adsbhub or flightradar24.

Dump1090 also has a graphical display web interface that uses Google maps built into the code. It can be accessed through a web browser.

To install dump1090 on Linux, simply download the zip file from the git repository and unzip the files into a folder or do a git clone on <https://github.com/MalcolmRobb/dump1090>. Then assuming you have the librtlsdr libraries preinstalled, run ‘make’ at a terminal in that folder. This can also be compiled on OSX, but you will need to ensure that you have a compiler and make-tools installed with access to the dev environment and Xcode. Once compiled you can run the following.

```
./dump1090 --interactive --net
```

This will start a Google Maps web server that can display received aircraft. In a web browser go to <http://localhost:8080> to see the map.

You may wish to also enable the `--aggressive` and `--fix` flags which will be able to decode more ADS-B packets at the expense of increased CPU usage. The aggressive mode is mainly useful for low traffic areas as it may cause many false positives under high traffic conditions. More options can be found by typing `./dump1090 -h` at the terminal. Note that dump1090 automatically chooses the maximum gain setting if no gain is set, which is usually the best choice.

Dump1090 can also receive Mode AC messages together with Mode S by using the flag `--modeac`

To install dump1090 on Windows follow these steps:

1. Download the dump1090 zip file from the GitHub download link.
2. Download the official RTL-SDR Windows release from <http://sdr.osmocom.org/trac/attachment/wiki/rtl-sdr/RelWithDebInfo.zip>.
3. Copy the libusb-1.0.dll, rtlsdr.dll and pthreadVC2-w32.dll files from the official RTL-SDR Windows release zip file to the dump1090 folder.
4. Rename pthreadVC2-w32.dll to pthreadVC2.dll.
5. Double click on dump1090.bat.

The dump1090 Windows batch file contains the line `dump1090.exe --interactive --net --net-ro-port`

30002 --net-beast --mlat which starts an interactive web server and beast mode output which will allow programs like Virtual Radar Server (described below) to connect to it using port 30002. You may also wish to experiment with adding the --aggressive and/or --fix flags to the batch file which can be edited with a text editor like Notepad.

Hex	Flight	Altitude	Speed	Lat	Lon	Track	Messages	Seen	.
ad57bb		11800	0	0.000	0.000	0	34	1 sec	
ada521		9825	283	0.000	0.000	265	6	9 sec	
a77a4f HAL15		36000	379	34.199	-119.240	275	81	14 sec	
a9bb70		28625	0	0.000	0.000	0	37	3 sec	
a8bcf0		0	0	0.000	0.000	0	43	2 sec	
a8c45e		0	0	0.000	0.000	0	3	24 sec	
a70b4d		6825	0	0.000	0.000	0	22	27 sec	
a8b939		0	0	0.000	0.000	0	295	1 sec	
aa4199		19525	0	0.000	0.000	0	14	23 sec	
a4ce21 456		7300	254	34.012	-118.444	83	923	0 sec	
71bc18 AAR202		9825	273	34.030	-118.647	95	395	0 sec	
a8da40		0	0	0.000	0.000	0	71	34 sec	
a3dbe7		5425	0	0.000	0.000	0	41	1 sec	
a379af		0	0	0.000	0.000	0	61	0 sec	
a89216		36000	0	0.000	0.000	0	64	3 sec	

MODESDECO

ModesDeco is a Windows/Linux/OSX/Rpi command line based decoder. It can receive Mode S and Mode A/C data simultaneously. Download the latest version from the last page on the forum post at <http://radarspotting.com/forum/index.php/topic,2978.0.html>. Note that you may need to install the Visual C++ 2012 Redistributable from <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/details.aspx?id=30679>, make sure you download the x86 version of the redistributable and not the x64 version.

To start decoding with modesdeco, open a command line prompt from windows, navigate to the directory you've extracted modesdeco to and type the following.

```
modesdeco2.exe --gain 49.6 --net 10001 --sbs10001 --location lat:lon
```

This mode outputs in the base station format. To output in other formats such as AVR usable by other graphical radar displays use

```
./modesdeco2 --gain 49.6 --freq-correction 68 --sbs10001 10001 --avr 44044 --msg 30003 --location 43.25:39.33 --filter-nocountry -rbs --verbose
```

COCOA1090 (MAC OSX)

This is a ADS-B decoder written for Mac OS X. It can be downloaded from <http://www.blackcatsystems.com/software/cocoa1090.html>. It requires use of rtl_tcp.

ICAO	TAIL	FLIGHT	ALTITUDE	SPEED	LAT	LON	TRACK	MESSAGES	SEEN	PLANE
a0dd92	N155JH		0	0	0	0	0	1	28	560 Citation Encore\
a32bfe	N303RR		0	0	0	0	0	1	42	B350
ad3064	N949UW		0	0	0	0	0	2	44	ERJ-190-100IGW
a76535	N576FE	FDX39	36025	350	0	0	239	80	11	MD-11F
896173	A6-EWA	UAE231	9925	283	39.757	-77.2708	200	105	3	B777-21H (LR)
ac4f84	N8923A		0	0	0	0	0	1	166	CRJ2
a362a5	N317US		38000	0	0	0	0	39	4	A320-211
a99d81	N719AE		0	0	0	0	0	9	93	ERJ-135LR
a31984	N29917		0	0	0	0	0	4	125	ERJ-145LR
a3dbd0	N348JB		34000	0	0	0	0	11	93	E190
a28c23	N263WN		15400	0	0	0	0	33	87	B737-7H4/W
a0f73c	N161UW		36000	0	0	0	0	226	8	A321-211
aa0aab	N746LW		38075	0	0	0	0	31	37	A319-112
a9d626	N73291		32000	0	0	0	0	655	0	B738
a70523	N551WN		40000	0	0	0	0	737	0	B737-76Q
a224fa	N23708		30000	0	0	0	0	490	0	B737-524
a78546	N584FE	FDX604	34000	356	39.5658	-77.4738	239	583	2	MD-11F
aced7c	N932EA		36000	0	0	0	0	667	0	BE40
ad38b4	N951DL		35000	0	0	0	0	440	0	MD-88
a04f75	N119US		19175	0	0	0	0	17	202	A320-214
ae0327	74-1668	RCH2415	0	0	0	0	0	622	0	C-130H Hercules
a3ea54	N351UP	UPS2111	36000	336	39.5434	-77.3733	247	824	0	B763

GR-AIR-MODES (GNU RADIO)

GR-air-Modes is a GNU Radio program for decoding ADS-B. The gr-air-modes project website is at <https://www.cgran.org/wiki/gr-air-modes>. Gr-air-modes can output to a .kml file, and then the aircraft can be viewed in real time 3D in Google Earth.

GRAPHICAL RADAR DISPLAY SOFTWARE FOR WINDOWS

The Windows decoders mentioned above all send the decoded ADS-B data through a local (or public if desired) network connection. There are a few software options available for receiving this network data and displaying it. Here we show four of the most popular, three are free, and one is paid with a trial option. To use these programs you will need to be running your ADS-B decoder at the same time as these programs.

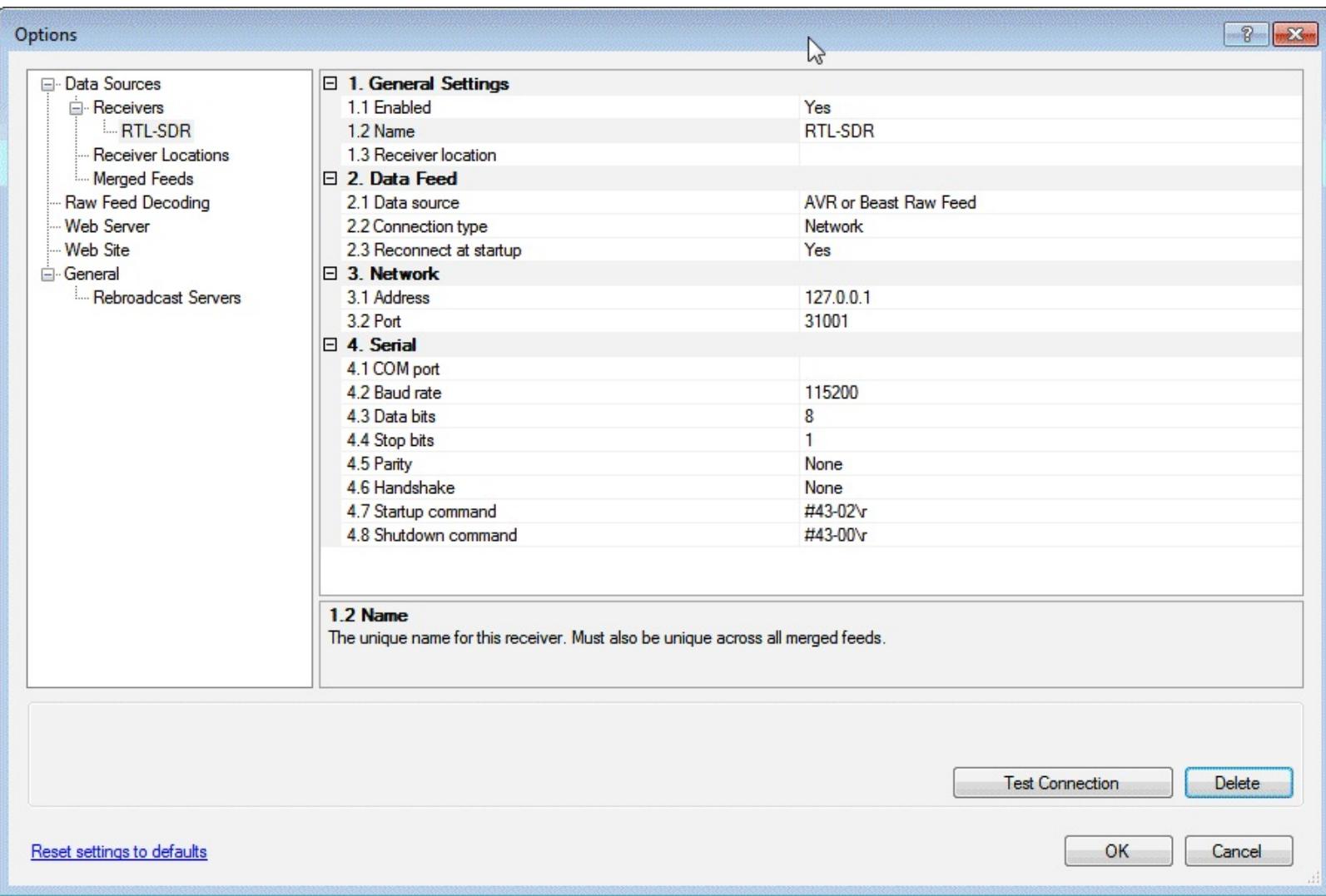
VIRTUAL RADAR SERVER (WINDOWS)

Virtual Radar Server (VRS) is Windows and Linux Mono compatible based free software which displays plane positions in a browser window using Google maps. The map can then be shared with other people over the internet if desired. Virtual Radar Server can be downloaded from <http://www.virtualradarserver.co.uk/>.

If you want to view other public Virtual Radar Servers, search in Google using the string inurl:"VirtualRadar/GoogleMap.htm" to find many public Virtual Radar Servers.

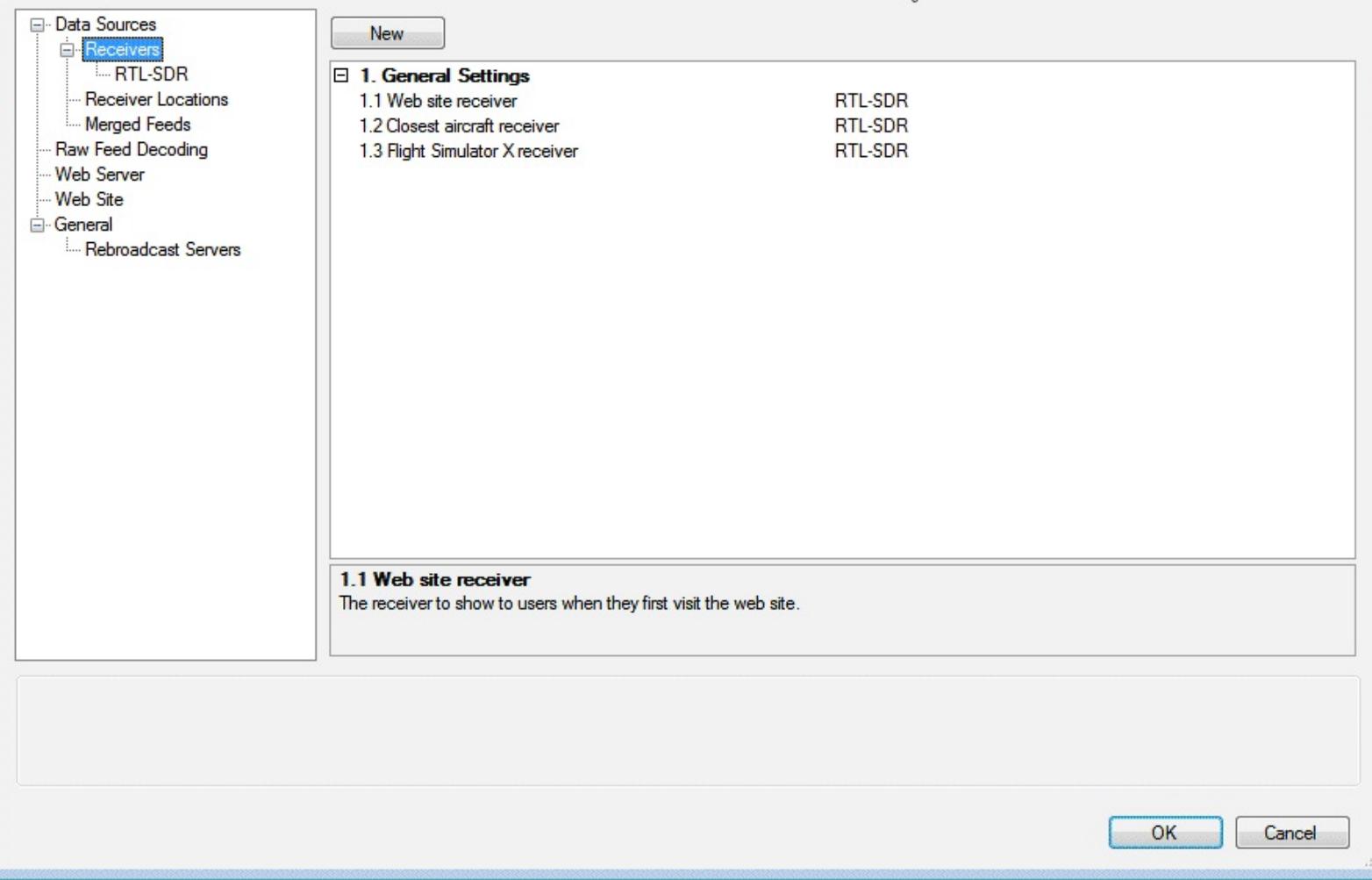
1. First download and install VRS from its website. Then open VRS from the start menu.
2. Go to **Tools->Options**.
3. Click on Receivers, then New. The properties of this receiver will show.
4. Name your Receiver RTL-SDR under General Settings.
5. Change the data source to "**AVR or Beast Raw Feed**".
6. Keep the IP Address at 127.0.0.1 (unless you are using a remote server), but change the port

number to 47806 if using ADSB#, or 31001 if using RTL1090. (Or set the port to a custom value in ADSB#). The following picture shows the settings you should be using with port 31001 used.



7. Click on Receivers and set the “Web site receiver”, “Closest aircraft receiver” and “Flight Simulator X receiver” to the RTL-SDR receiver you’ve created. Press OK.

Options



8. Now click on the link to <http://127.0.0.1:1025/VirtualRadar> in the middle of the VRS main window to be taken to a web browser with Google maps and VRS.

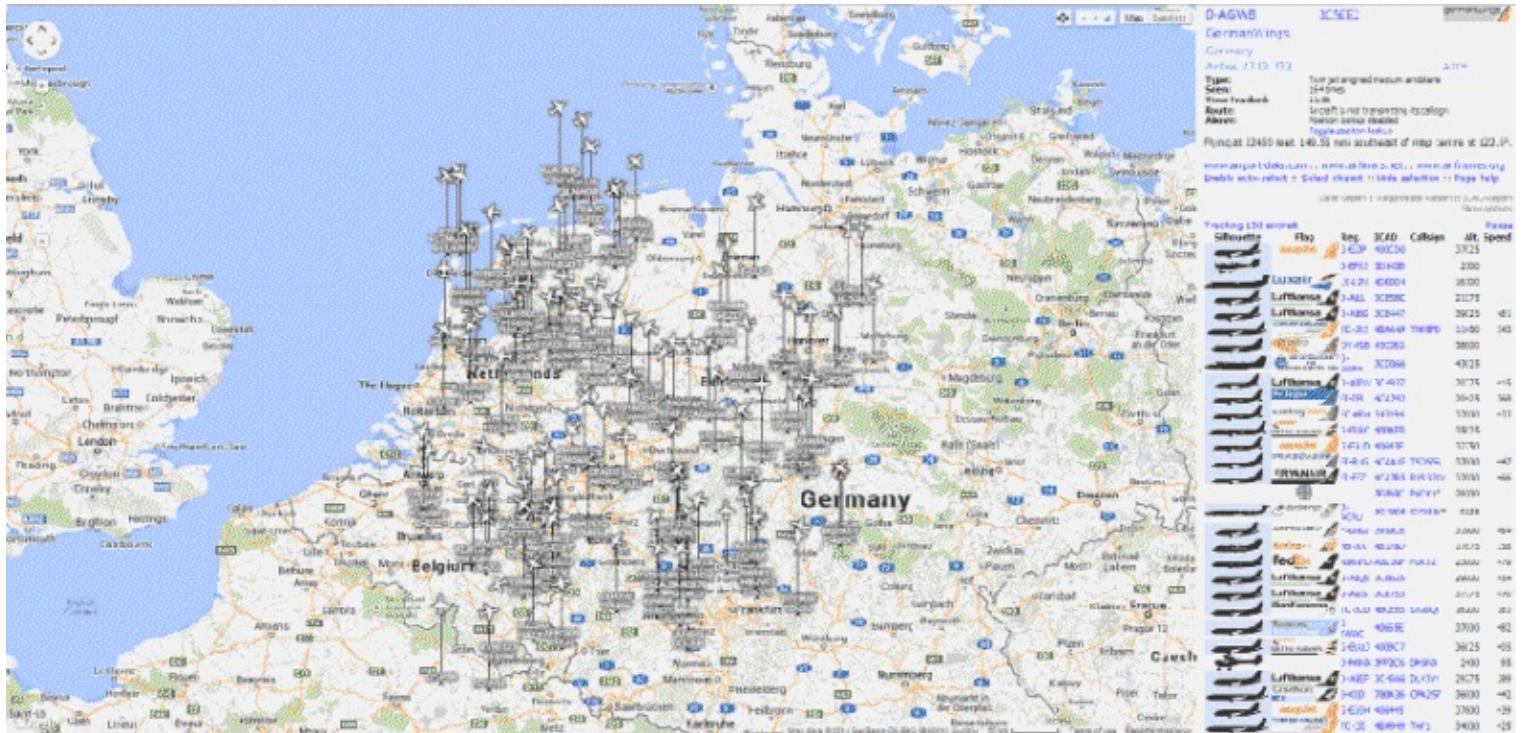
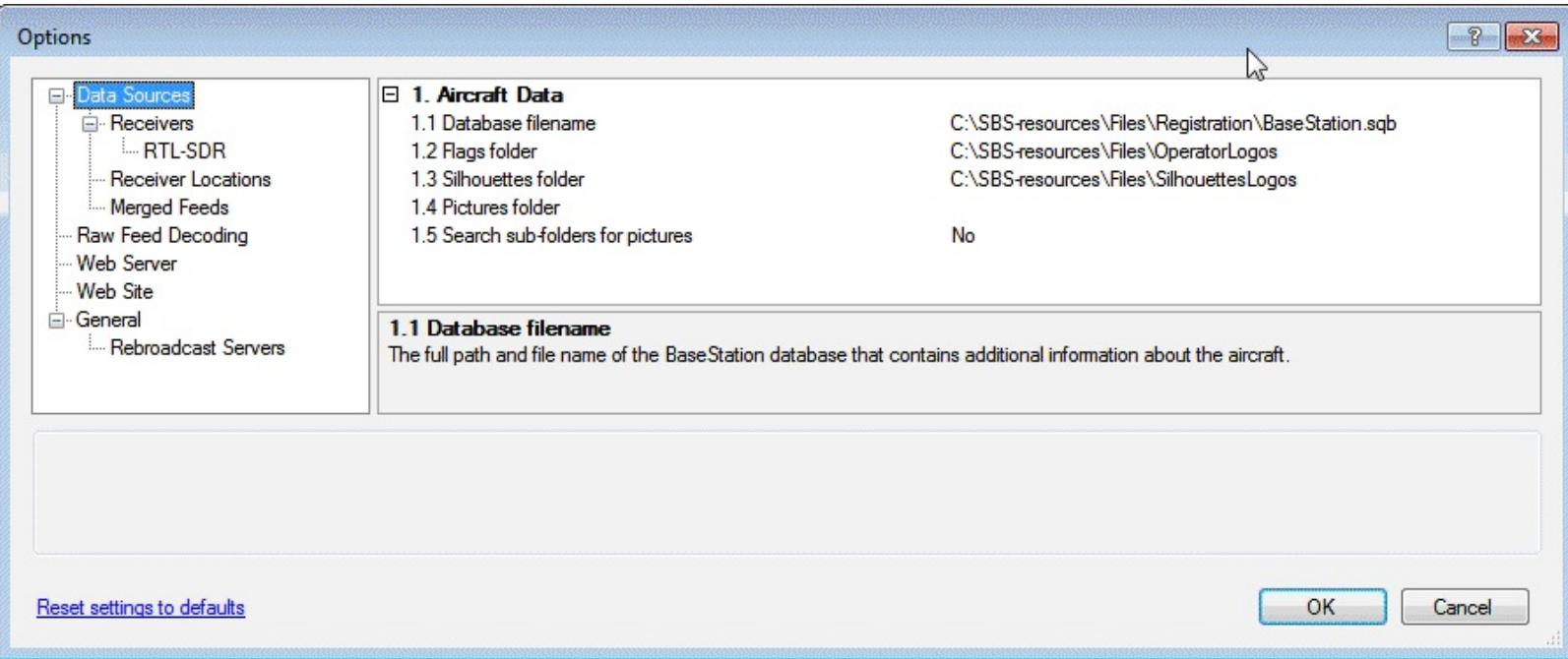
The screenshot shows the Virtual Radar Server application window. At the top, there's a menu bar with File, Tools, Help. Below it is a "Web server status" section indicating the web server is online and UPnP support is not enabled. There are buttons for Take Offline and Put onto Internet. A table lists network activity: IP Address (127.0.0.1), Last Request (6/05/2014 1:21:46 ...), Bytes Sent (842,586), and Last URL (/AircraftList.json). Below this are dropdown menus for Show local address and Default Version, and a URL field with http://127.0.0.1:1025/VirtualRadar. The Feed status section shows a single entry: Name (RTL-SDR), Connection Status (Connected), Total Messages (0), Bad Messages (0), and Aircraft Tracked (0). The Rebroadcast server status section shows Configuration set to None. A message at the bottom says "There is a later version of this program available".

9. You should now be seeing a map. Zoom out and scroll to your location, you should see planes appear on the map if you are getting ADS-B frame decodes from your ADS-B decoder program.

Now if you want to be able to see the aircraft registration number, operator, manufacturer, model, flag and silhouette information you will need to install a pre-made lookup database called basestation.sqb. To do this follow these instructions.

1. Go to <http://www.sbs-resources.com/download/index.html> and download and install the setup file. This will install the required files to a folder in C:\SBS-resources by default. (An alternative basestation.sqb can be found here <http://pp-sqb.mantma.co.uk/>)
2. Now in Virtual Radar Server go to **Tools->Options** and click on the Data Sources tab.
3. Set the Database file name to C:\SBS-resources\Files\Registration\BaseStation.sqb.
4. Set the Flags Folder to C:\SBS-resources\Files\OperatorLogos.
5. Set the Silhouettes folder to C:\SBS-resources\Files\SilhouettesLogos

6. Click OK. The database is now set up.



Virtual Radar Server also has various plugins available on the website.

PLANE PLOTTER

PlanePlotter is sophisticated commercial software that has a free 21 day trial period. After the trial period a licence can be purchased for 25 Euros. PlanePlotter is also able to combine ACARS and ADS-B information together if you have two RTL-SDR sticks and can also be used to share data with the popular online ADS-B aggregator flightradar24.com. PlanePlotter can be downloaded from <http://www.coaa.co.uk/planeplotter.htm>.

One big advantage to using PlanePlotter is that it has a multilateration option which can be unlocked

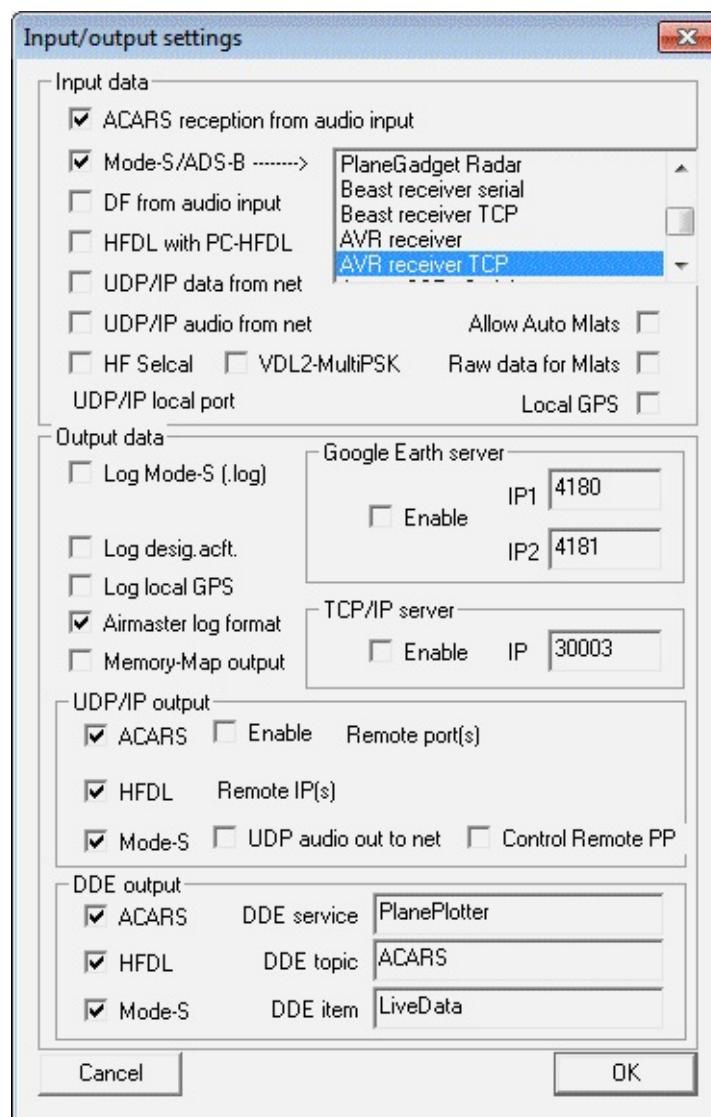
either by regularly contributing ADS-B data to their servers, or by paying 12 euros a year. Multilateration is a method which is used to estimate positions of planes that are broadcasting ADS-B signals without position data. It works by using data contributed from multiple locations and users to essentially triangulate plane positions.

PlanePlotter is easy to set up with the RTL-SDR.

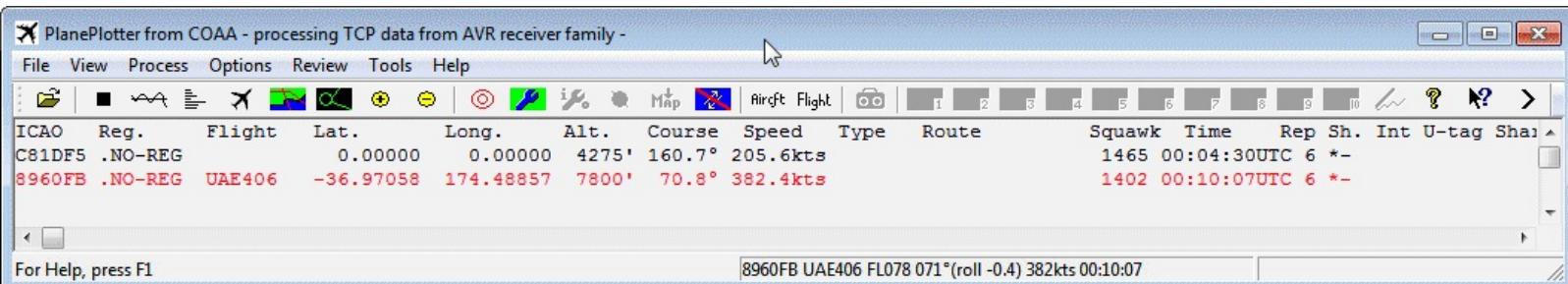
1. Open PlanePlotter
2. Go to **Options->Mode-S receiver -> AVR Receiver -> TCP/IP Client**. Set the address and port to 127.0.0.1:31001.



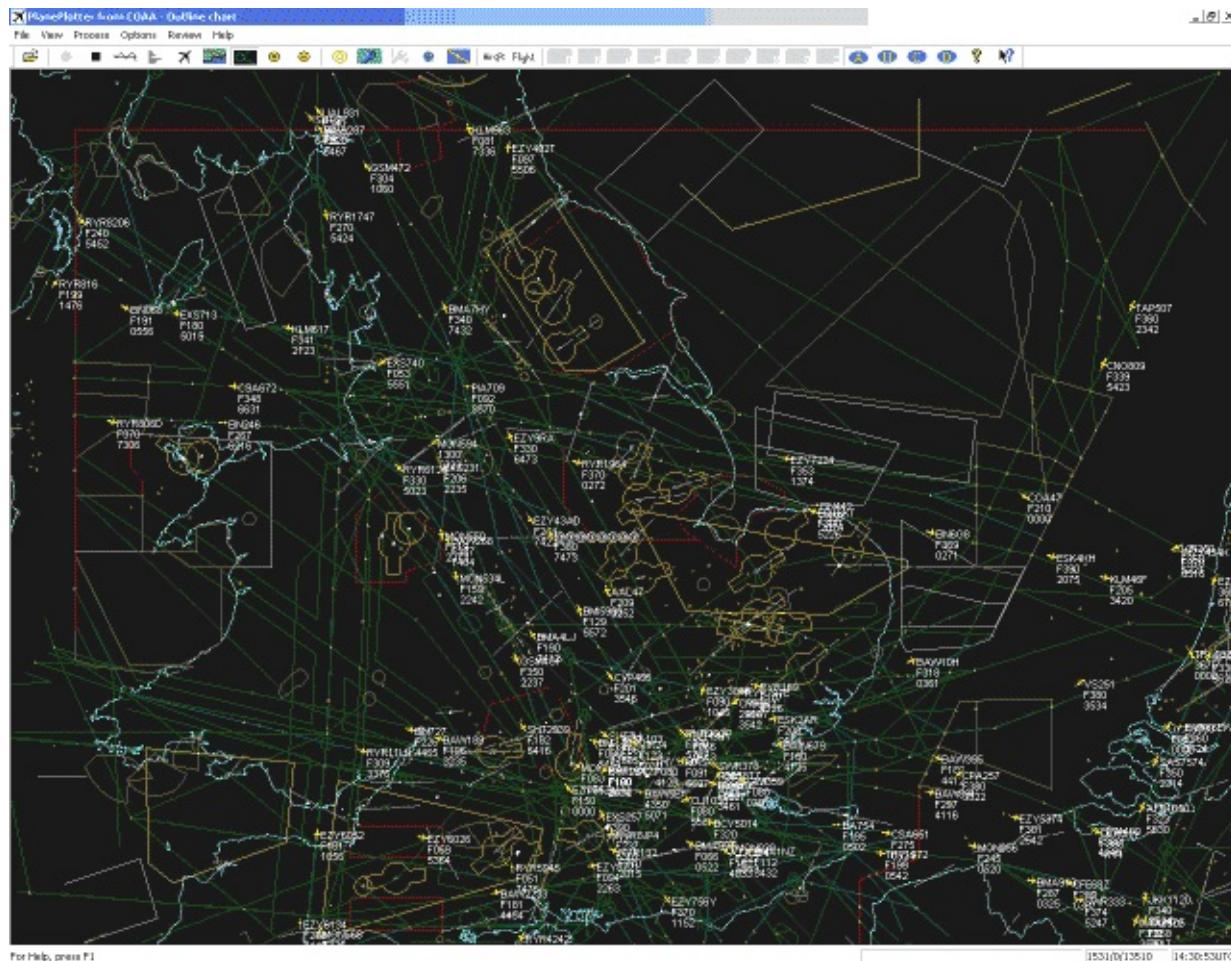
3. Go to **Options-> I/O Settings** and click the checkbox next to MODE-S/ADS-B and then select AVR receiver TCP in the box.



4. Set the port number in ADSB# to 31001, or use RTL1090 which has the default TCP/IP port set at 31001. Turn on ADSB# or RTL1090.
5. Click the green start button ●.
6. You can now switch to the Aircraft view ✈ to see a list of detected aircraft.



7. Switch to Chart View 🛫, and use the mouse wheel to zoom in and out. Scroll to where some aircraft are showing and then click on the Download Map Button Map to download a Google Maps map. Every time you move or zoom click this button again to re-download a new map. You can also click the satellite button 🌎 to download a satellite view.



Using PlanePlotter it is also possible to view aircraft in three dimensions using Google Earth. To view the aircraft in Google Earth, you will need to enable the Google Earth Server and have Google Earth Installed.

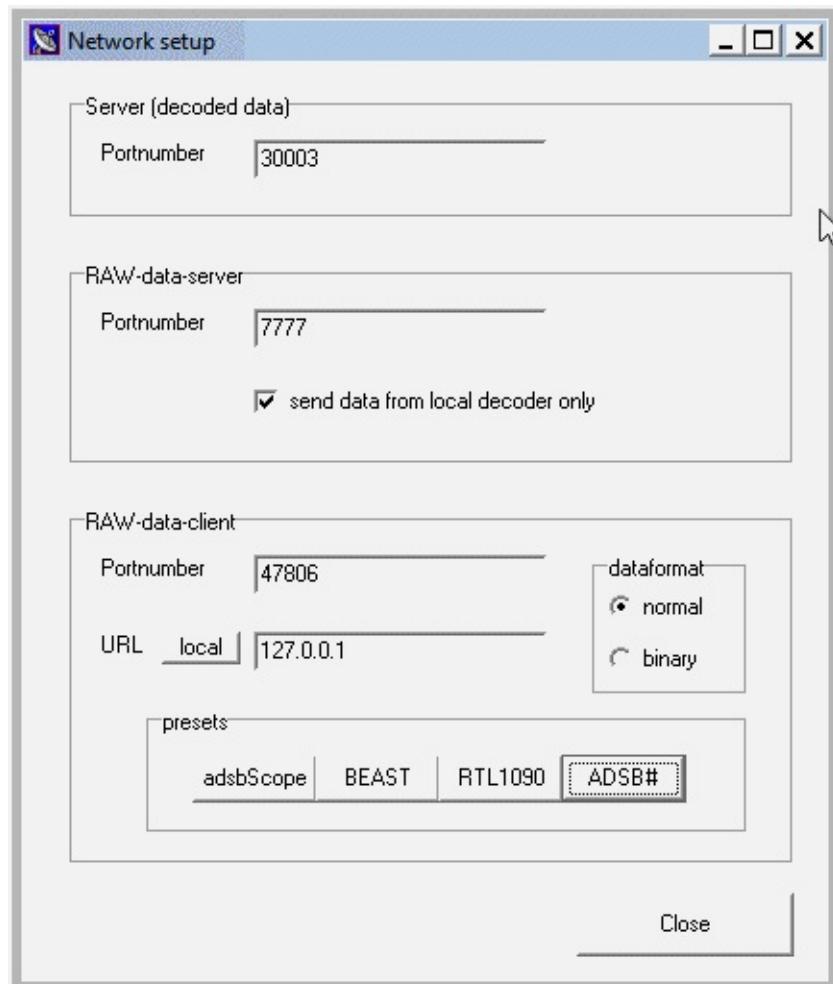
1. Go to **Options->I/O Settings** and click the Enable checkbox under the Google Earth Server, and press OK. Note to access I/O settings you'll need to stop PlanePlotter decoding first by pressing the stop button ■ if it is running.
2. Restart ADS-B reception by pressing the green start button ● once again.
3. Now navigate using Windows Explorer to the folder that you installed PlanePlotter to. The default installation path is C:\Program Files (x86)\COAA\PlanePlotter. In this folder locate the google_aircraft.kml, and double click it. This file should open automatically with Google Earth and display a top down view of aircraft. You can also open google_cockpit.kml for simulated cockpit views of the aircraft.

To install the basestation.sqb database like with Virtual Radar Server follow the instructions outlined at <http://planeplotter.pbworks.com/w/page/17117301/Databases>.

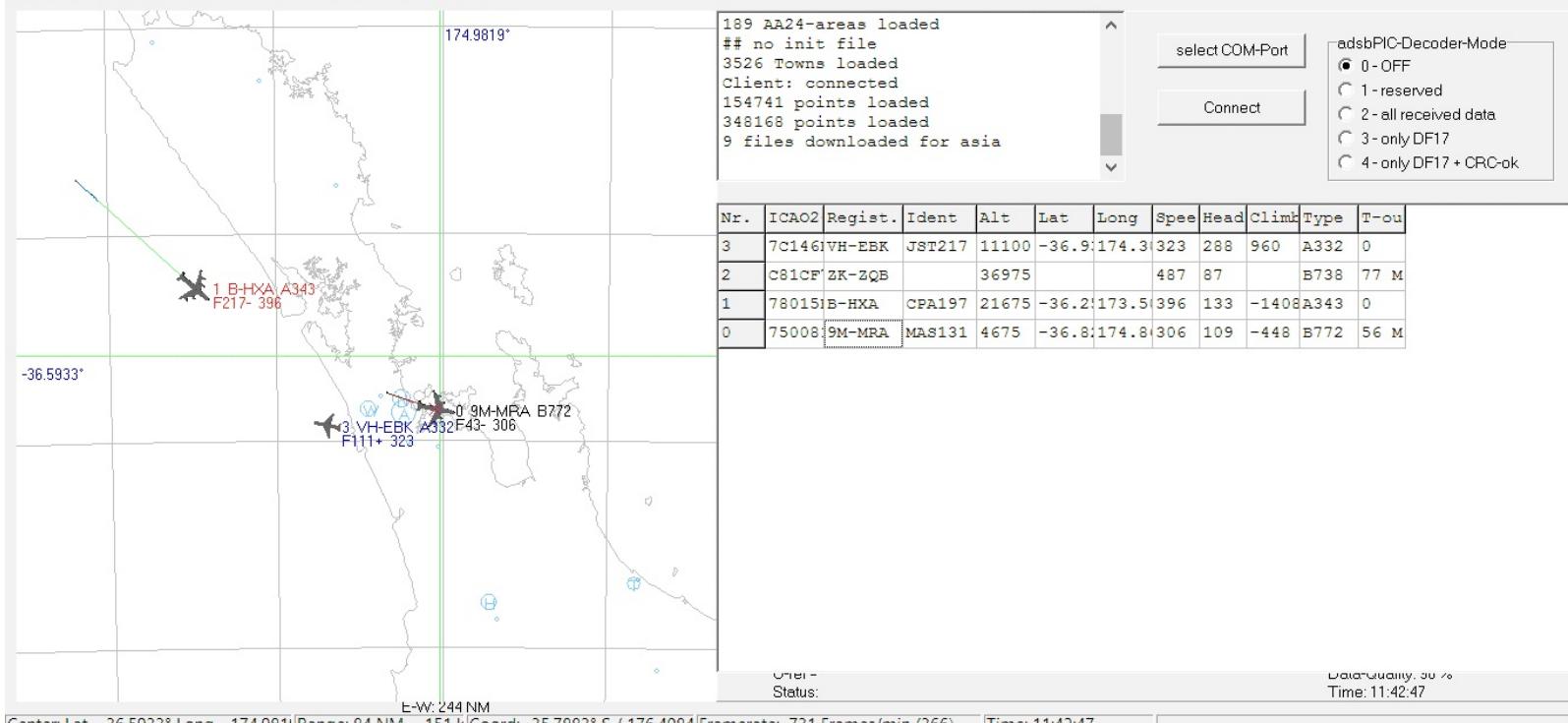
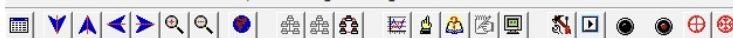
ADSBSCOPE

adsbSCOPE is a free ADS-B radar program. adsbSCOPE can be downloaded from http://www.sprut.de/electronic/pic/projekte/adsb/adsb_en.html#downloads under the link that says “ZIP-File with all relevant data (13 MB)”. Some people might prefer adsbSCOPE over the other options as it is free and not web browser based. The latest version of adsbSCOPE also has easy setup options for both ADSB# and RTL1090. To install and use adsbSCOPE following the instructions below.

1. Download and unzip adsbSCOPE to a folder. Then navigate to the pc_software/adsbscope/26 folder. Run adsbscope26_16384.exe to open the program.
2. Go to **other->Network->Network setup**.
3. The following screen will be shown. Under presets click either on ADSB# or RTL1090 depending on which decoder you have chosen to use. Click on the local button as well, unless you are using a shared server, in which case enter the URL of the server. If you have altered the ports on either decoder set the Portnumber in the RAW-data-client boxed area to be the same.



4. Now turn on RTL1090 or ADSB#.
5. In adsbSCOPE click the start RAW-data CLIENT button . After pressing it the button will become coloured. ADS-B data should now be shown in adsbSCOPE.
6. You can use the mouse to pan around the map, and the zoom buttons to zoom in and out. You can also click the map button to download a map of the area currently shown in the screen.
7. Use the mouse and zoom tools to centre the cross hairs on the location of your receiver.
8. Go to **Navigation->set Receiver Location.**



ADSBScope can also create a max range plot which can over a period of time show how well your antenna is working. This will draw a line to each of the furthest aircraft seen over time. To turn it on simply follow these steps.

1. Go to **Config->Maximum Range** and enable ‘show all altitudes’.
2. Ensure that **View->Maximum Range** is checked.

GLOBE-S

A lightweight radar viewer intended to be used with RTL1090. A version of Globe S is built into the beta 3 version of RTL1090. It can be downloaded from <http://rtl1090.web99.de/homepage/index.php?way=1&site=READOUT&DERNAME=Globe-S%20RTL1090&dm=rtl1090&USER=rtl1090&goto=1&XURL=&WB=1&EXTRAX=X&PIDX=10424>

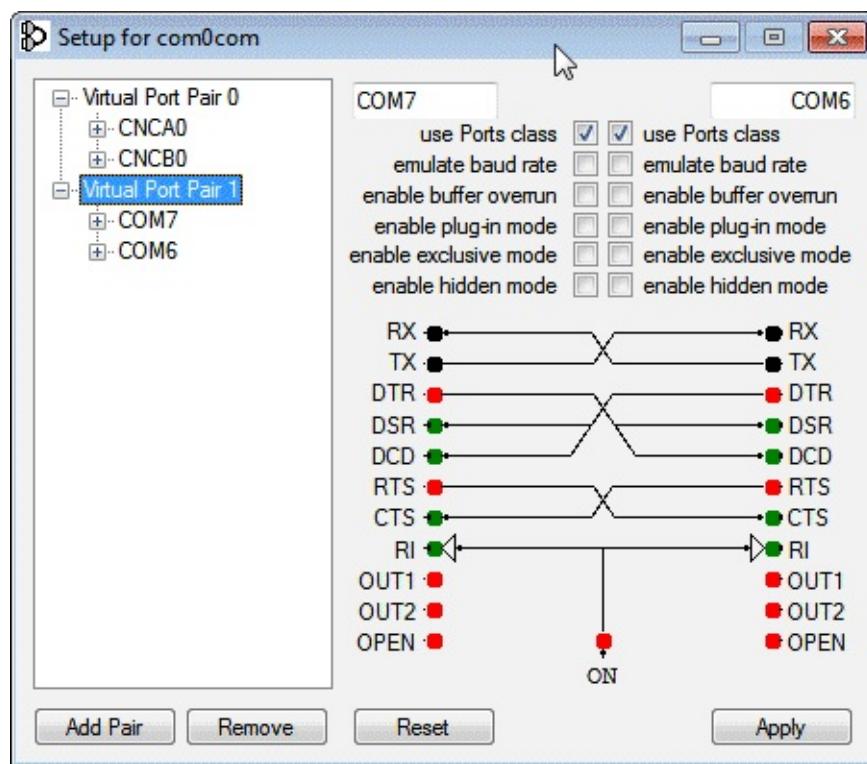


BASESTATION

BaseStation is one of the original ADS-B display software packages. It was around when there were only dedicated ADS-B hardware receivers available. It has a professional radar-like display.

To get basestation to work with RTL1090 or ADSB#, follow these instructions. To get it to work with Modesdeco you can skip to step 4 where Basestation is opened.

1. Download and install the com-port emulator com0com <http://sourceforge.net/projects/com0com/>. During installation you may have some problems with unsigned driver issues. To get around this you will need to disable signed driver checks for your particular OS after installing com0com and then restart your PC. After launching com0com for the first time take note of the numbers of the COM ports under Virtual Port Pair 1. They will be different depending on your PC setup. Here we have COM6 and COM7.

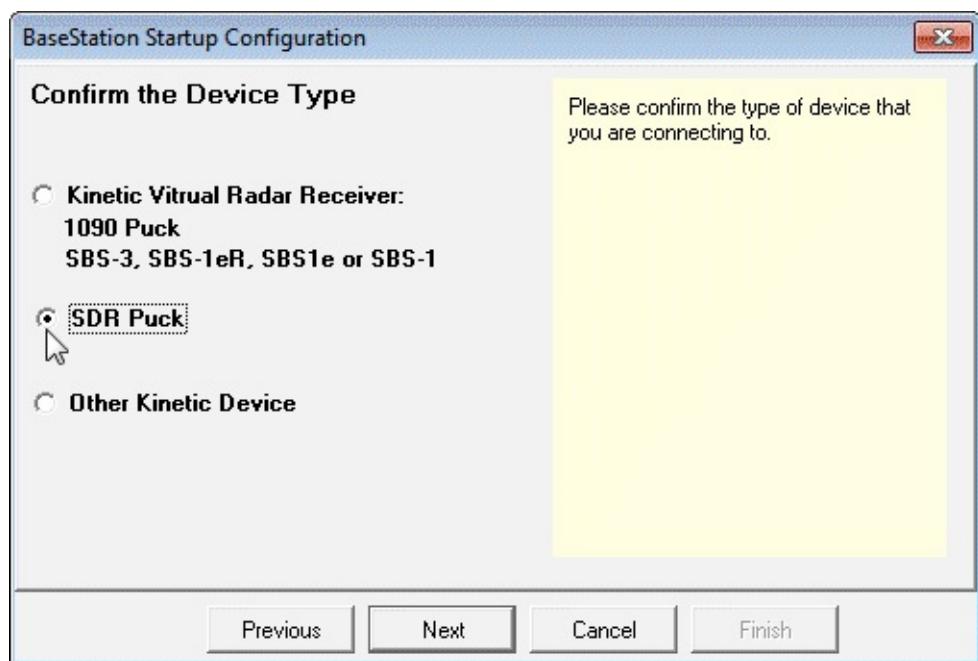


- Download com2tcp from <http://mode-s.66ghz.com/> and extract the exe file into a folder. In that folder create a batch file (To create a batch file simply create a .txt file, copy the command into the text file, then in Windows explorer rename the batch_file.txt to batch_file.bat). One batch file should contain the command in the following line and another containing the command in the second line. These commands are for RTL1090. If you want to use ADSB# instead of RTL1090 change the port 31001 to the ADSB# default port of 47806, and change the --sbsbin flag to --sbs.

```
com2tcp --baud 3000000 --parity o \\.\COM6 127.0.0.1 31001
```

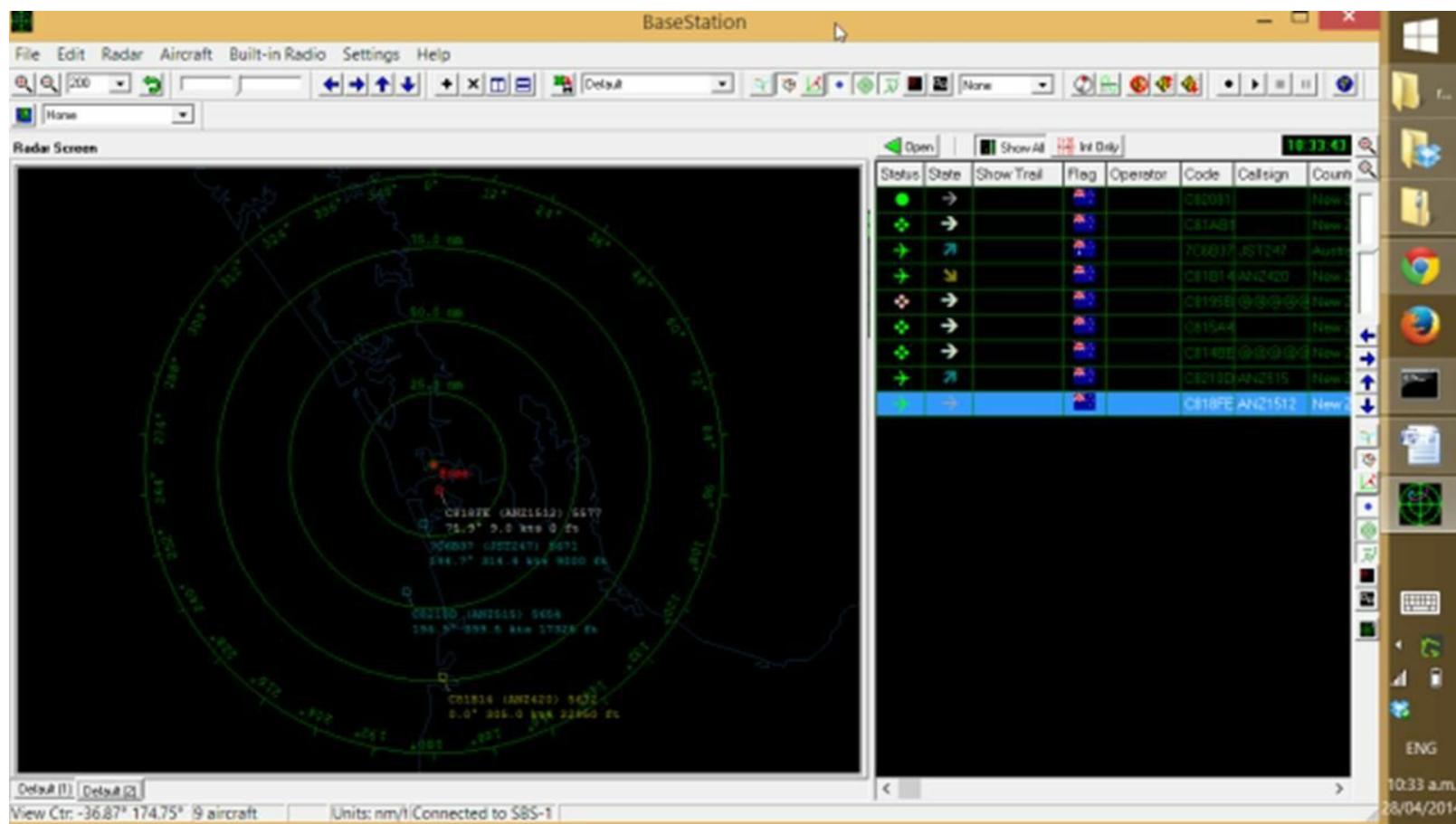
```
com2tcp --baud 3000000 --ignore-dsr --sbsbin \\.\COM7 10001
```

- Now, run both batch files and then open RTL1090. RTL1090 should detect the TCP connection and the TCP light will turn green.
- Open BaseStation.
- An initial popup wizard will show. Follow the wizard and set your location and then your network address to 127.0.0.1 port 10001. When you get to the “Confirm the Device Type” screen first ensure you have RTL1090/ADSB# with com2tcp or Modesdeco running on port 10001 with ADS-B frames being received. Then choose SDR Puck and then next.



6. The Wizard will check to see if it can receive ADS-B packets so ensure your decoder is up and running and is seeing ADS-B data. If it is successful Basestation will open.

Now Basestation should be set up and received aircraft should be showing on the screen.



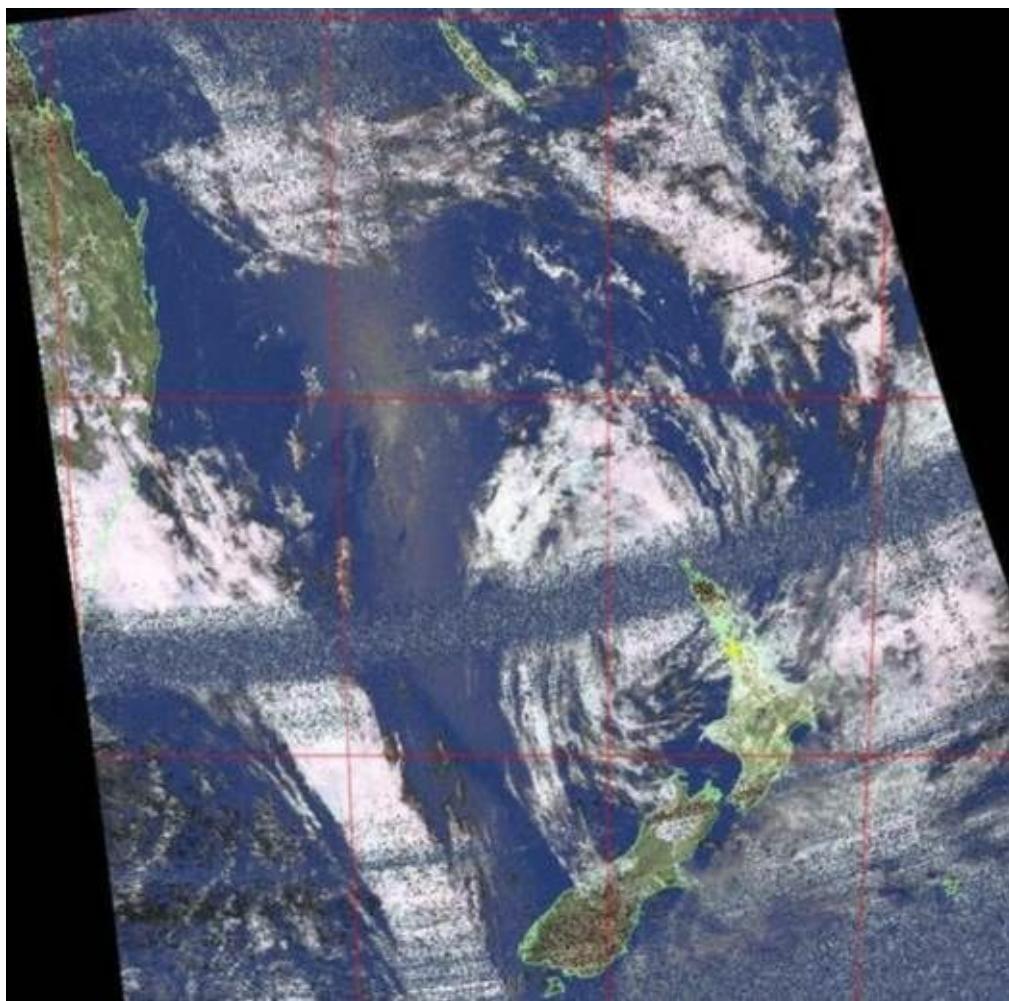
FEEDING DATA TO FLIGHTRADAR24.COM

flightradar24.com is a service which collects ADS-B flight information from numerous sources around the world and shares the aggregated data on their website. You can use your RTL-SDR ADS-B radar set up to contribute to this service by either using PlanePlotter, or downloading the

software from their website. If you are a contributor, you will be rewarded with access to flightradar24's premium features.

Instructions on setting this up can be found at <http://www.flightradar24.com/dvbt-stick>.

NOAA WEATHER SATELLITE (APT) GUIDE



INTRODUCTION TO NOAA WEATHER SATELLITES

Everyday the American NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) weather satellites pass over your location multiple times a day. As it passes over each NOAA weather satellite broadcasts an Automatic Picture Transmission (APT) signal which contains a live weather image of your area. The RTL-SDR dongle combined with a good antenna, an SDR program like SDRSharp and a decoding program can be used to download and display these live images.

There are currently three active NOAA satellites, NOAA 15, NOAA 18 and NOAA 19. Each NOAA satellite transmits at around 137 MHz with a right hand circularly polarized (RHCP) signal. This means that a right hand circularly polarized antenna is required for good reception. The signal is circularly polarized because the NOAA satellite spins as it transmits, causing the signal to ‘spin’ in a circle as well.

The NOAA weather satellites use a transmission protocol known as Automatic Picture Transmission (APT) which was developed specifically for use on weather satellites. It is an analogue transmission that is somewhat similar to the HF Fax mode used on the HF bands. APT is transmitted in grayscale, but software can colorize the image using an infrared image also obtained from the transmission.

This tutorial will show you how to set up a NOAA weather satellite receiving station, which will allow you to gather several live weather satellite images each day. Other SDR's and even some hardware radio scanners can also work with this tutorial, provided the radio has a large IF bandwidth (30 kHz +) and a discriminator tap.

NOAA WEATHER SATELLITE RECEIVE TUTORIAL

To set up a NOAA weather satellite receive station you will need

- An audio piping method.
- A right hand circularly polarized antenna tuned to 137 MHz.
- Software such as WXtoImg for decoding the APT signal.

NOAA WEATHER SATELLITE ANTENNAS

NOAA weather satellites transmit a right hand circularly polarized signal at around 137 MHz. For satellite reception it is desirable to have a circularly polarized antenna with gain directed towards the sky. The two most common antennas that are used for this type of signal are the turnstile and quadrafilal helix antennas.

A turnstile antenna is simply two dipoles aligned at right angles to each other and connected in a way so that their signals are 90 degrees out of phase, giving the circular polarization. The turnstile is also sometimes known as a cross dipole. If you are searching for turnstile build tutorials, beware that there are two types of turnstiles. There are normal and axial mode turnstiles. For APT satellite reception we want the axial mode turnstile.

A Quadrifilar Helix (QFH) is a circularly polarized antenna that can be constructed out of PVC pipe and coax cable. Most people report that the QFH antenna has slightly superior reception compared to the turnstile, but a few people have reported better reception with the turnstile. It may pay to experiment with both if you find your first choice does not work so well.

Another antenna that works well with the NOAA APT satellites is the double cross antenna (DCA). It is basically four dipoles arranged in a certain way to produce circular polarization.

See the [antenna guide](#) for more information about these antennas.

Many people have reported that an LNA preamp at the antenna and a broadcast FM bandstop filter can significantly help improve reception. See the [LNA section](#) and [preselector section](#) for more information.

The NOAA satellites only pass overhead at certain times of the day, broadcasting a signal. These signals appear at around ~137 MHz, and only when a satellite is passing overhead. Each satellite uses

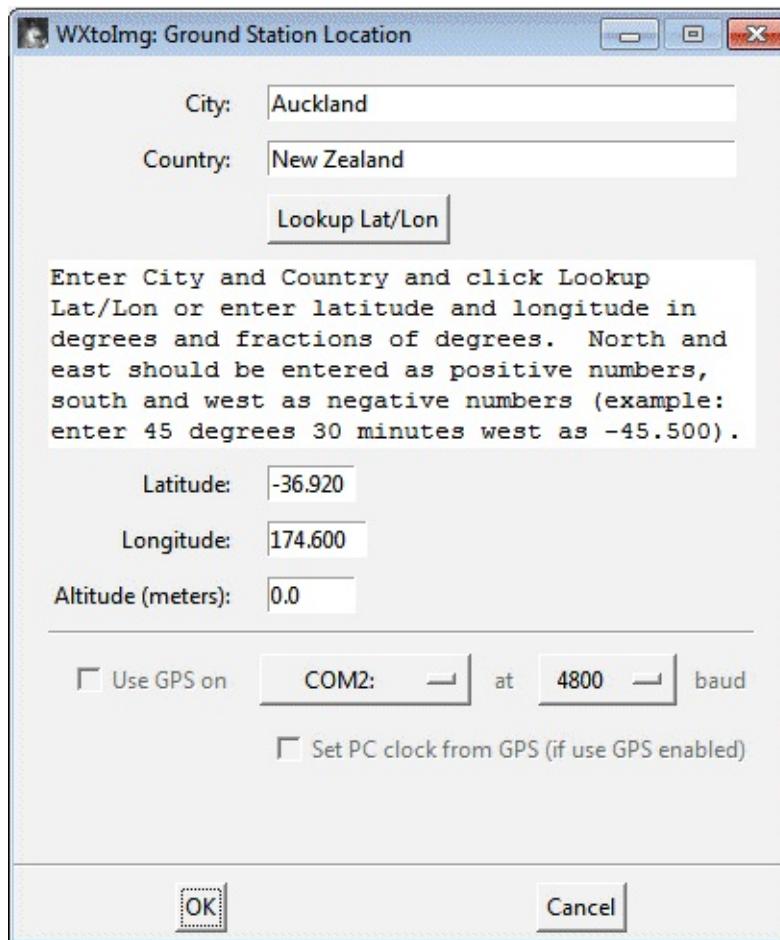
a different frequency. Their frequencies are shown below.

- NOAA 15 - 137.6200 MHz
- NOAA 18 - 137.9125 MHz
- NOAA 19 - 137.1000 MHz

WXTOIMG SOFTWARE TUTORIAL

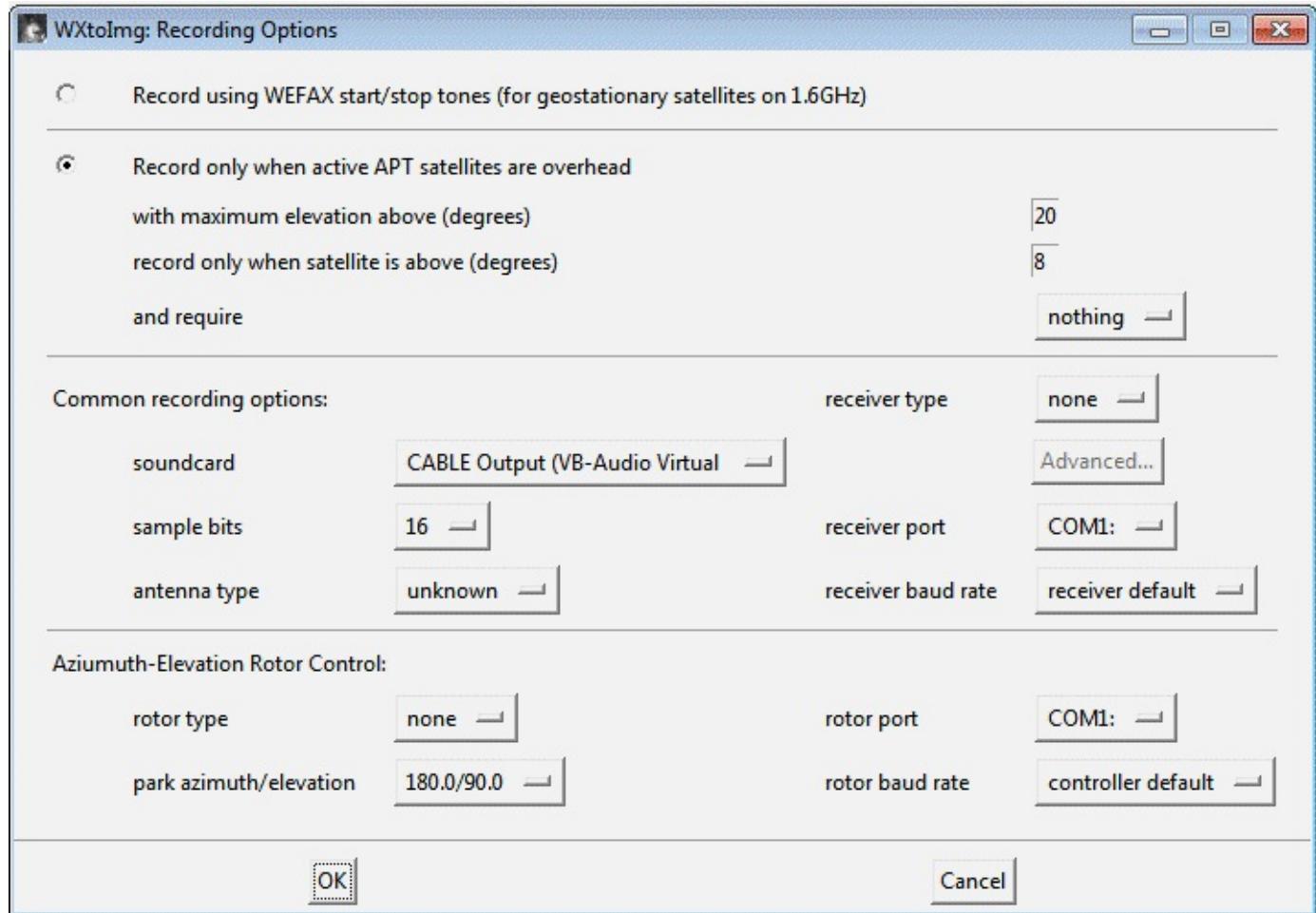
WXtoImg is a free weather satellite decoding program, which can decode the APT signal, and also tell you the frequencies and times of the satellite passes. There is also a paid version of WXtoImg which can unlock more features, however it is not required for basic usage use with rtl-sdr. To use WXtoImg and SDRSharp together follow the instructions below.

1. First, download and install WXtoImg from <http://www.wxtoimg.com/>.
2. Open WXtoImg, and then set your Ground Station Location, (which is the coordinates of your antenna) by going to **Options -> Ground Station Location**. The city you are in should suffice, but you can be more accurate by entering in an exact latitude, longitude and height if you want.



3. Set the audio piping method that you are using in WXtoImg. Go to **Options -> Recording Options**, and ensure the correct device is selected under the soundcard option.

4. Also, here you can adjust the “Record only when active APT satellites are overhead” “with maximum elevation above (degrees)” and “record only when satellite is above (degrees)” settings. You may want to reduce the default values if you have an antenna with a good view of the sky and find that WXtoImg stops recording or doesn’t start fast enough even though the APT signal is present in SDRSharp.



5. Now you will need to update your Kepler file. This file contains the information about satellite locations which need to be periodically updated because satellites drift in their orbit over time. Go to **File -> Update Keplers** to do this. Make sure you have an internet connection for the update.
6. Now you can go to **File -> Satellite Pass List**, and find a time when a satellite will be passing overhead. Take note of the frequency of the pass as well.

WXtoImg: Satellite Pass List

Look ahead 1 week

Satellite passes for Auckland, New Zealand (36°55'S 174°35'E)
while above 8.0 degrees with a maximum elevation (MEL) over 20.0 degrees
from 2013-05-12 16:28:41 New Zealand Standard Time (2013-05-12 04:28:41 UTC).

2013-05-12 UTC

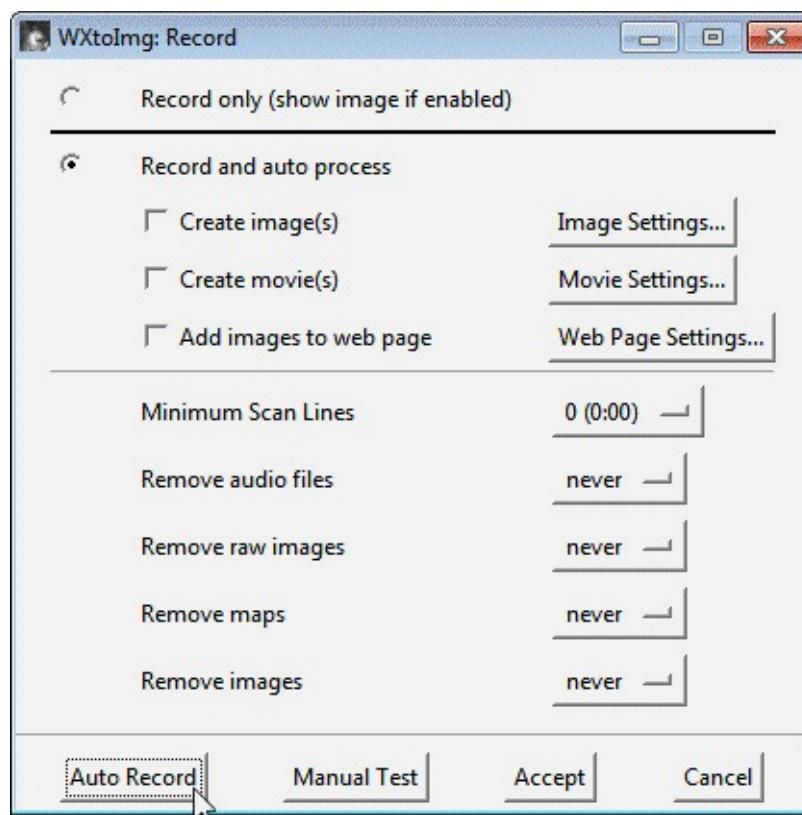
Satellite	Dir	MEL	Long	Local Time	UTC Time	Duration	Freq
NOAA 18	N	43W	166E	05-12 16:37:46	04:37:46	11:11	137.9125
NOAA 15	N	49W	168E	05-12 18:00:14	06:00:14	11:03	137.6200
NOAA 19	S	47E	178W	05-13 00:55:06	12:55:06	11:22	137.1000
NOAA 18	S	35E	175W	05-13 02:21:50	14:21:50	10:51	137.9125
NOAA 19	S	21W	158E	05-13 02:37:06	14:37:06	9:12	137.1000
NOAA 15	S	24E	171W	05-13 03:39:35	15:39:35	9:22	137.6200
NOAA 18	S	28W	161E	05-13 04:02:44	16:02:44	10:26	137.9125
NOAA 15	S	38W	165E	05-13 05:18:31	17:18:31	10:39	137.6200

2013-05-13 UTC

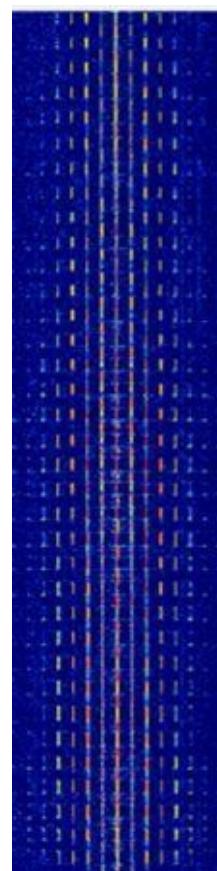
Satellite	Dir	MEL	Long	Local Time	UTC Time	Duration	Freq
NOAA 19	N	25E	171W	05-13 13:20:13	01:20:13	10:07	137.1000
NOAA 19	N	40W	165E	05-13 15:00:29	03:00:29	11:14	137.1000
NOAA 18	N	55W	169E	05-13 16:26:33	04:26:33	11:31	137.9125
NOAA 15	N	84W	174E	05-13 17:35:43	05:35:43	11:29	137.6200
NOAA 19	S	37E	175W	05-14 00:44:34	12:44:34	10:58	137.1000
NOAA 18	S	28E	172W	05-14 02:11:08	14:11:08	10:13	137.9125
NOAA 19	S	26W	160E	05-14 02:25:47	14:25:47	10:06	137.1000
NOAA 18	S	36W	164E	05-14 03:51:14	15:51:14	11:02	137.9125

Print **Close**

- When the time comes for the satellite to appear, open WXtoImg, and then go to **File->Record**, and click on Auto Record. The recording and decoding will begin automatically when it is time for the satellite to appear on the horizon. It will automatically stop when it goes out of view according to the times in the satellite pass list. If for some reason the recording doesn't start in time, you can click on the Manual Test button to immediately begin decoding.



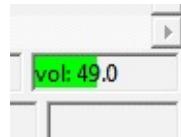
8. Open SDRSharp select the audio piping method you are using under the Audio Output drop down box, and then tune to the frequency that the satellite will be broadcasting at. Adjust the gain settings in SDRSharp under the Configure button so that you get good reception of the signal. Set the receive mode to WFM, filter bandwidth to 34 kHz and Filter Audio set to OFF. It may also be useful to ensure Snap to Grid is unchecked.



9. As the RTL-SDR is not frequency accurate and also due to the Doppler effect, the signal may not

be at the exact frequency it should be at. Just adjust the frequency in SDRSharp until it is centred on the satellite signal.

10. Adjust the AF Gain in SDRSharp, and/or Windows volume settings so that the volume bar in the bottom right hand corner of WXtoImg shows a green colour.



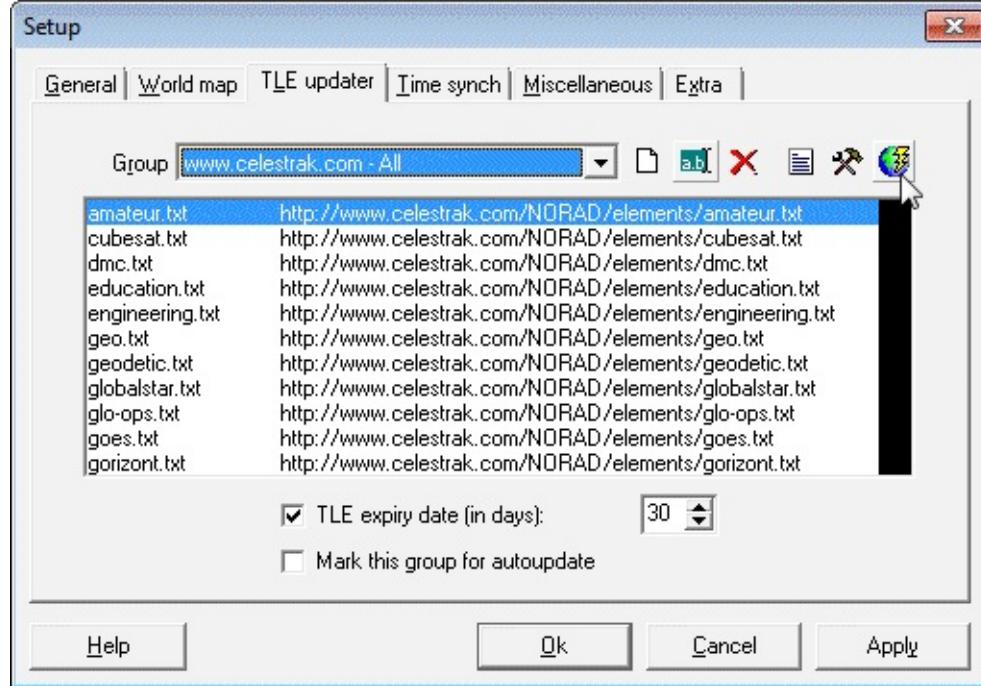
11. WXtoImg should now be decoding and showing the weather satellite image as it is received. You may need to periodically adjust the frequency to centre the signal as the Doppler effect will cause it to move. However, with RTL-SDR adjusting for the Doppler shift is not critical as the filter bandwidth can be simply set larger than 34 kHz (try 36 - 40 kHz) so that it is large enough to receive the entire signal even as it shifts.
12. Once the image has been fully received, you can play with the options under the Enhancements and Projection menu in order to add false colour and enhance the received image.

ORBITRON TUTORIAL

Using a program called Orbitron, SDR# can be made to automatically tune to NOAA satellites as they appear on your horizon. Also, although not entirely necessary for the RTL-SDR Orbitron will help to compensate for satellite frequency drift due to the doppler effect.

1. Download and install Orbitron from <http://www.stoff.pl/>.
2. Download the Orbitron DDE drivers from <http://www.stoff.pl/orbitron/files/mydde.zip>. Extract the files to the Orbitron installation directory (likely in Program Files (x86)/Orbitron)
3. Download the SDRSharp Orbitron plugin from <http://public-xrp.s3.amazonaws.com/SatelliteTracker2.zip>. The readme file comes with installation instructions, but some of the instructions did not work for me. You can try follow their instructions or the ones below.
4. Extract the SDRSharp orbitron plugin files to the SDRSharp directory. With notepad or another text editor open SDRSharp.exe.config. Scroll down to the section where it says <sharpPlugins>. Add the line `<add key="SatelliteTracker" value="SDRSharp.SatelliteTracker.SatelliteTrackerPlugin,SDRSharp.SatelliteTracker" />` just below it.
5. Open Orbitron in Administrator Mode (if in Windows Vista/7/8), by right clicking it and selecting Run as Administrator. Orbitron may open in full screen mode. Press Alt+Enter to exit

full screen if you wish. You will probably also be initially presented with a TLE file update screen. You can leave all the boxes as default. Click on the update button, which is the icon with a globe and lightning bolt. Orbitron will download the new TLE files. The TLE files contain the satellite orbit information, and will need to be periodically updated every few days. Running Orbitron in Administrator mode is important, as otherwise the TLE files will not be able to be written to.



6. Close Orbiton. Now open Notepad in Administrator mode, by right clicking it's shortcut in the Start Menu, and clicking on Run as Administrator.
7. In Notepad, go to **File->Open**, and browse to your Orbitron\Config folder. Orbitron is probably installed in “Program Files (x86)\Orbitron”. Open Setup.cfg.
8. At the bottom of the Setup.cfg text file, add these two lines.

```
[Drivers]
SDRSharp=SDRSharp.exe
```

Setup.cfg - Notepad

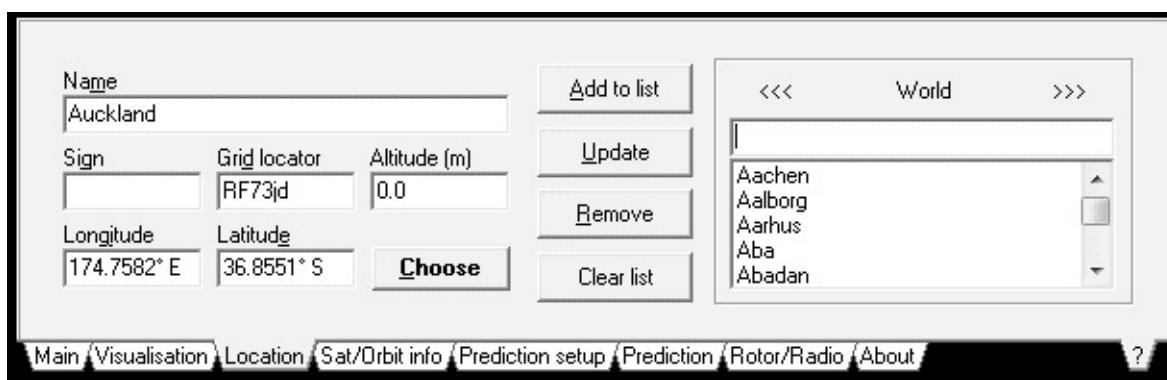
File Edit Format View Help

```
E1v=0
On=1
Snd=1
Wav=Data\Snd_01.wav

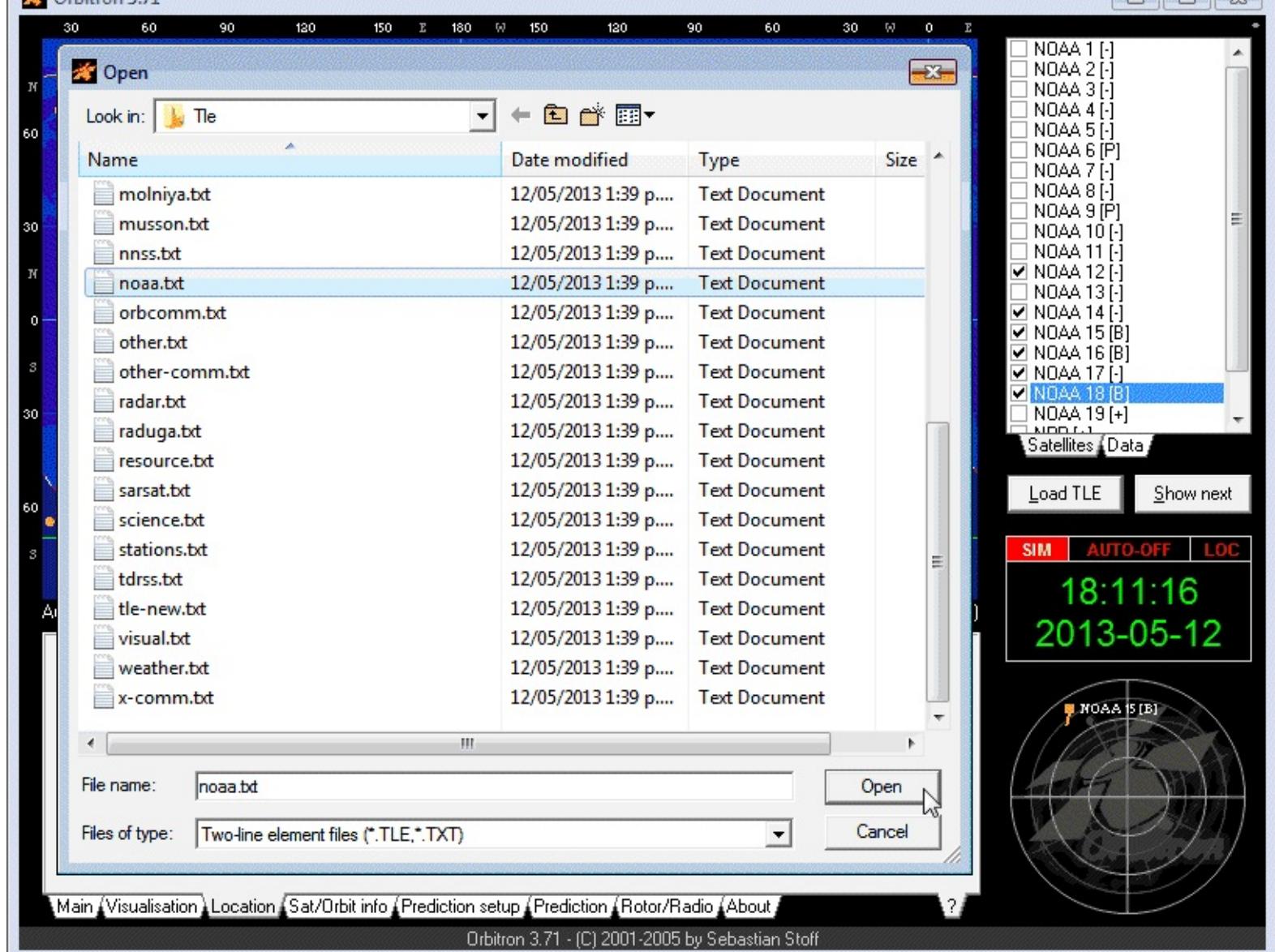
[Passes]
PeriodM=3
PeriodK=2
SatIllum=1
MaxSunX=1
MaxSun=-5
MinSat=10
IrFlareMag=30
Brief=0
MinMagX=0
MinMagnitude=30
IgnoreMagIfUnknown=0
Calculation=1
Mode=0

[Drivers]
SDRSharp=SDRSharp.exe
```

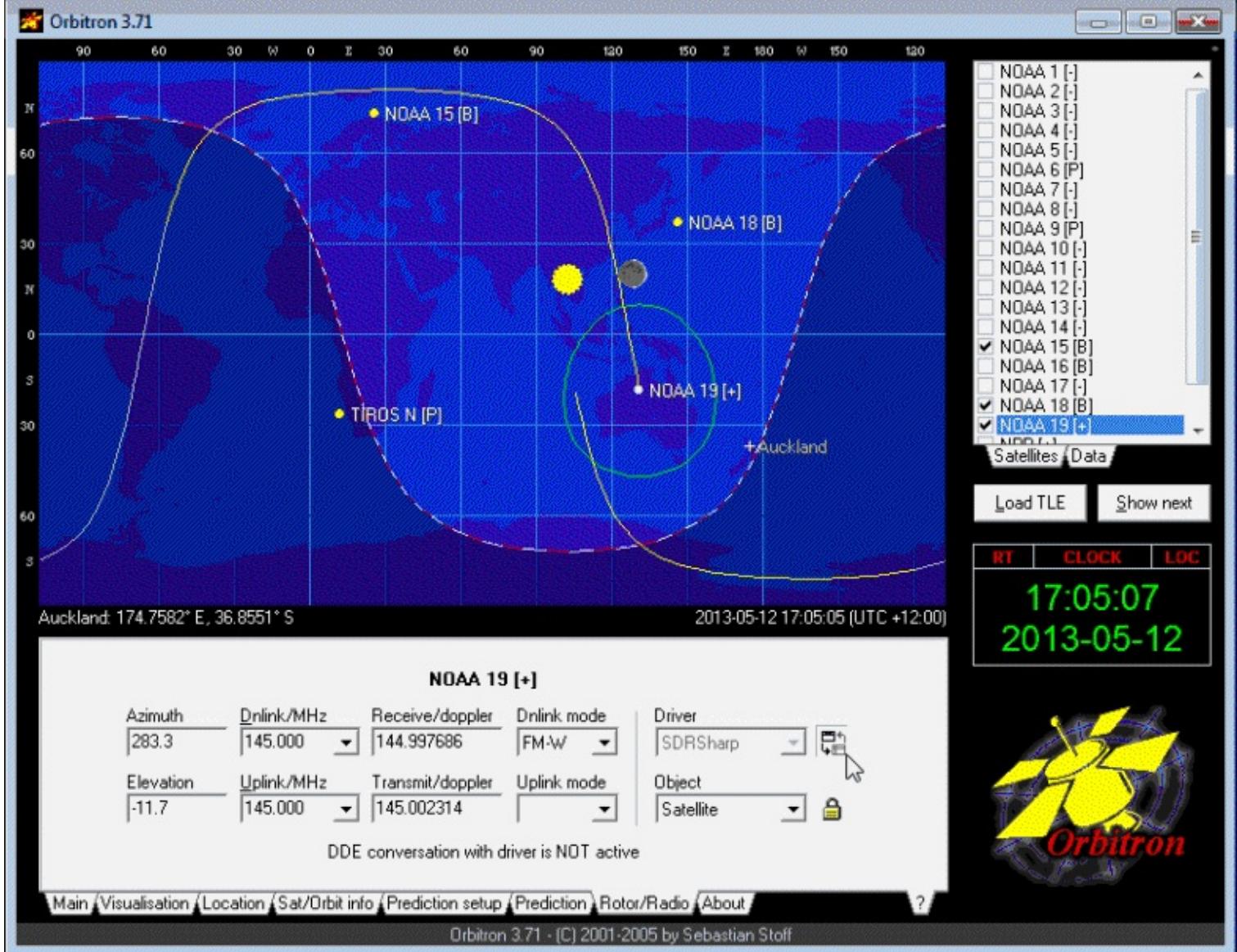
9. Now open Orbitron, and set your home location, by clicking the location tab on the bottom. You can select your city on the right side if you don't know your exact longitude and latitude.



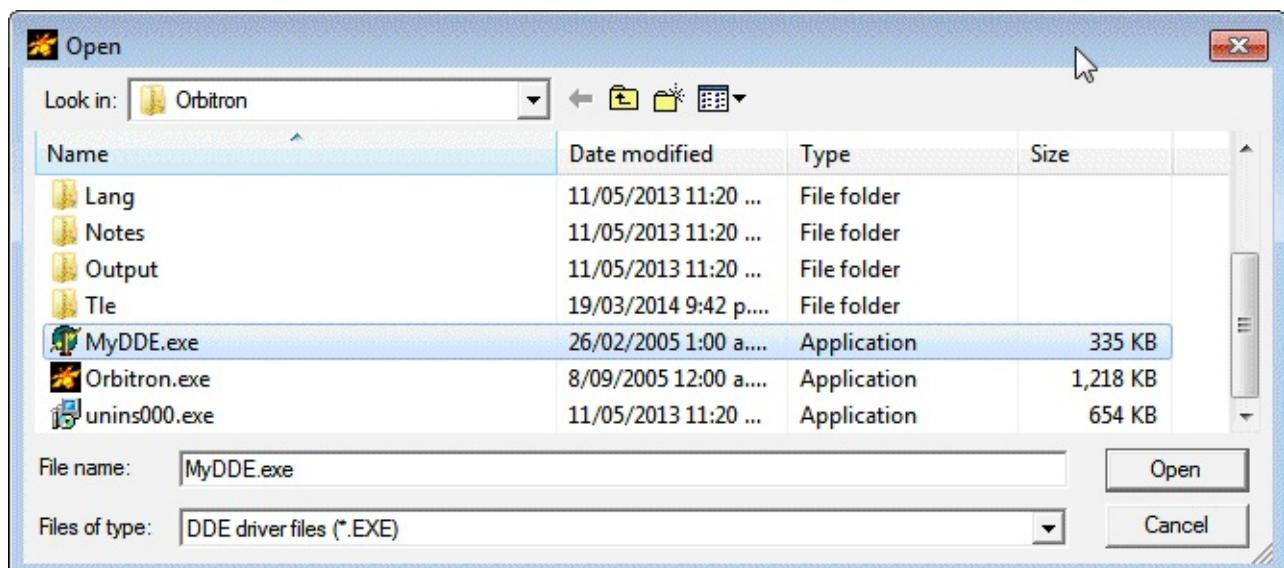
10. Next click on Load TLE, and load the noaa.txt file.



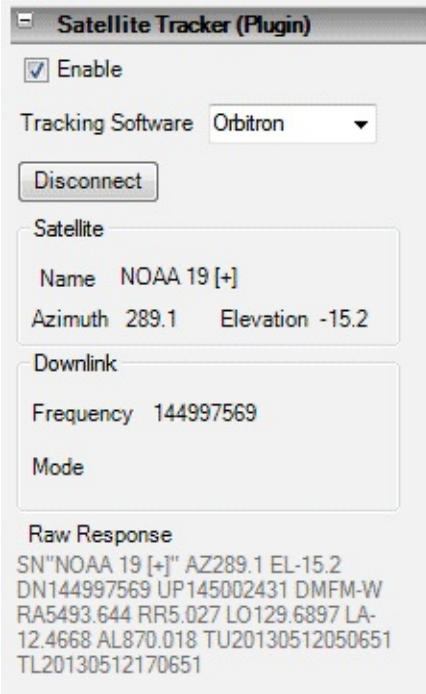
- We are interested in NOAA satellites 15, 18 and 19, as they are the only ones working, so place a check next to those. Double clicking on a satellite name will select it and show it in the map window.



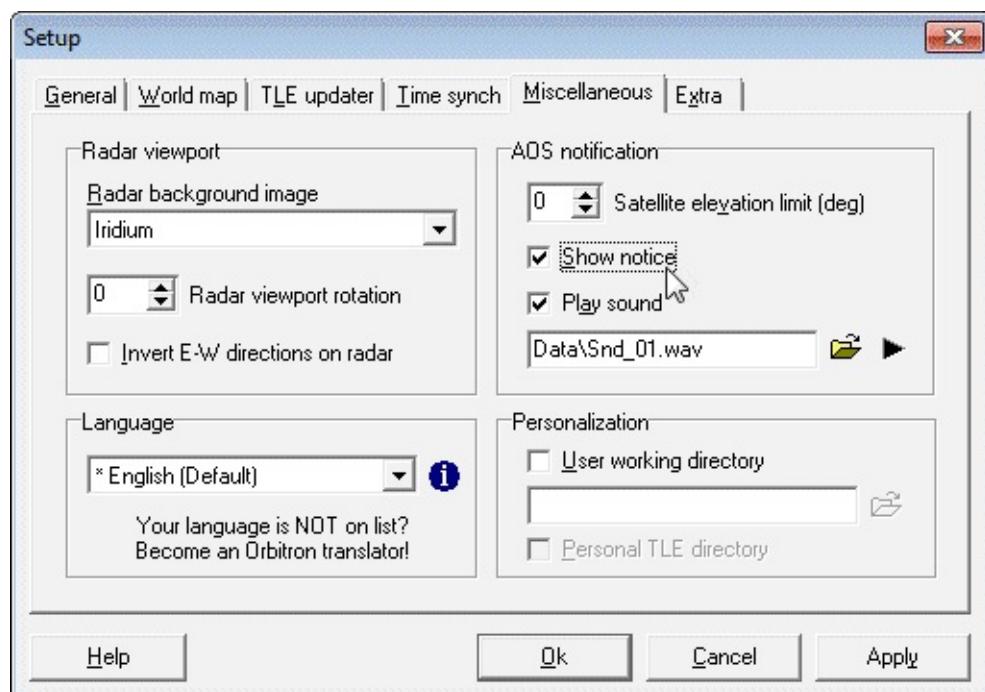
12. Now go to the Rotor/Radio tab, and set the “Dnlink” mode to FM-W, and the Driver to SDRSharp. Click the icon with two windows next to the Driver drop down box and make sure it is pressed in. Upon pressing this button for the first time you may be asked to install a Driver. Click Yes, and then browse to the Orbitron folder and select the MyDDE.exe file you copied over earlier.



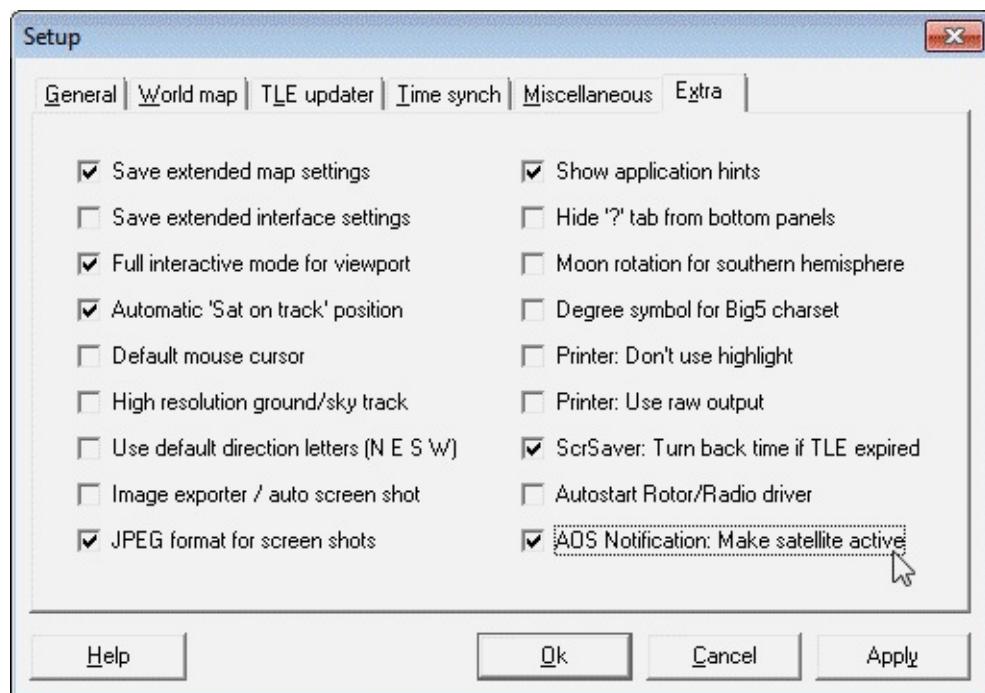
13. Open SDRSharp, press Play and then head to the Orbitron Plugin. Put a check next to Enable, set the Tracking Software to Orbitron and then click connect. Now double clicking on a satellite name in Orbitron should set the correct Doppler corrected frequency in SDRSharp.



14. SDRSharp should now snap to the correct frequency and adjust for the Doppler effect automatically. You will still need to manually set the correct filter bandwidth and mode to WFM. Also, since the RTL-SDR is not frequency accurate, you will need to adjust the PPM correction in the SDRSharp configure box to ensure the signal is centred.
15. If you want Orbitron to make SDR# automatically tune to a satellite as soon as it comes into range, go to the Main Tab in Orbitron and click on the Setup button (looks like a crossed hammer and spanner).
16. Go to the Miscellaneous tab and ensure that AOS Notification: Show Notice is selected, with the elevation set to 0. (Increase the elevation if you only want to start tuning to the frequency when the satellite is higher in the sky and thus gives you better reception).



17. Go to the Extra tab and ensure that AOS Notification: Make satellite active is checked.



18. Finally, if desired WXtoImg can be made to automatically output a live webpage of the latest weather satellite images. This option can be found in WXtoImg under **Options->Auto Processing Options->Web Page Settings**.

WEATHER BALLOON (RADIOSONDE) GUIDE

Around the world meteorological weather balloons are launched twice daily, and continuously transmit weather telemetry to a ground station using something called a radiosonde. The RTL-SDR combined with a decoding program can be used to intercept this telemetry and display the weather data on your own computer. You will be able to see real time graphs and data of air temperature, humidity, pressure as well as the location and height of the balloon as it makes its ascent.

Note that currently, this won't work in many places in the USA, as there are no decoding programs available for use with the telemetry protocol used in the states. The USA uses the Mark II Sippican radiosondes. Most of the rest of the world use Graw, Vaisala, Meteomodem or Meteolabor radiosondes, all of which are decodable. However, it seems that the USA is undergoing a Radiosonde Replacement System (RRS), where they are switching to Vaisala RS92SGP radiosondes which are decodable. Unfortunately, they appear to be using the more difficult to receive frequency of 1680 MHz. See <http://www.ua.nws.noaa.gov/RRS.htm> for more information. SondeMonitor is able to decode Digital RS92SGP, Analogue RS92AGP, Analogue RS80, Analogue 92KL, Graw DFM-06, MeteoModem M2K2/M10 and Meteolabor SRS-C34.

This tutorial is also applicable to other software defined radios such as the Funcube dongle, HackRF, BladeRF or even hardware radios with discriminator taps, but the RTL-SDR is the cheapest option that will work.

RADIOSONDE RECEIVING TUTORIAL

RADIOSONDE ANTENNA TUTORIAL

Most radiosondes transmit at a frequency between 403 to 406 MHz, so you will need an antenna capable of receiving these frequencies. Antennas good for this purpose can be a quarter wave groundplane, dipole, j-pole, turnstile or QFH antenna. A Yagi can work if you require more gain from a weak signal and are willing to track the radiosonde by hand. See the [antenna guide](#) for more information about these antennas. Some countries use radiosondes that transmit at 1680 MHz. For this frequency you will likely need a directional Yagi antenna pointed by hand or other means in the direction of the radiosonde.

An LNA and preselector for the 403-406 MHz frequencies may also aid reception. See the [LNA section](#) and [preselector section](#) for more information.

SOFTWARE TUTORIAL

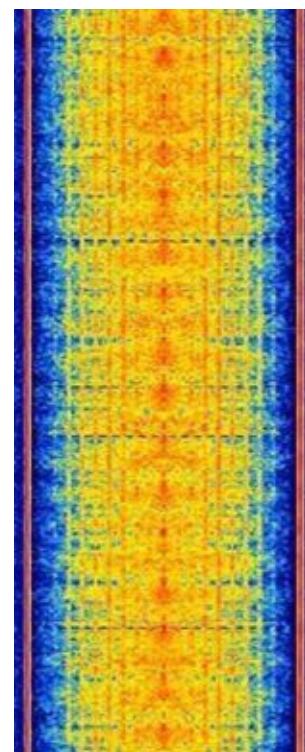
In order to receive and decode weather balloon radiosondes you will need four things.

- An antenna capable of picking up signals near 403 to 406 MHz (or 1680 MHz).

- A decoding program called SondeMonitor which is able to decode radiosonde telemetry.
- The knowledge of when and optionally where weather balloon radiosondes are launched in your area.
- The knowledge of what type of radiosonde is used in your area (can be guessed with trial and error).

Weather balloons most commonly transmit at around 403 MHz and are usually launched 45 minutes before the official observation time of 0000 UTC and 1200 UTC, though times may be different in some countries. You will need to either Google or check with your local meteorological agency for a more exact time of when they are launched in your area. You will also need to check with your local meteorological agency on the type of radiosonde that they are using. They are often happy to oblige this information.

One of the most commonly used radiosonde signals is the Vaisala RS92SGP digital signal. A waterfall example of this signal is shown below. It has a bandwidth of around 5 kHz.

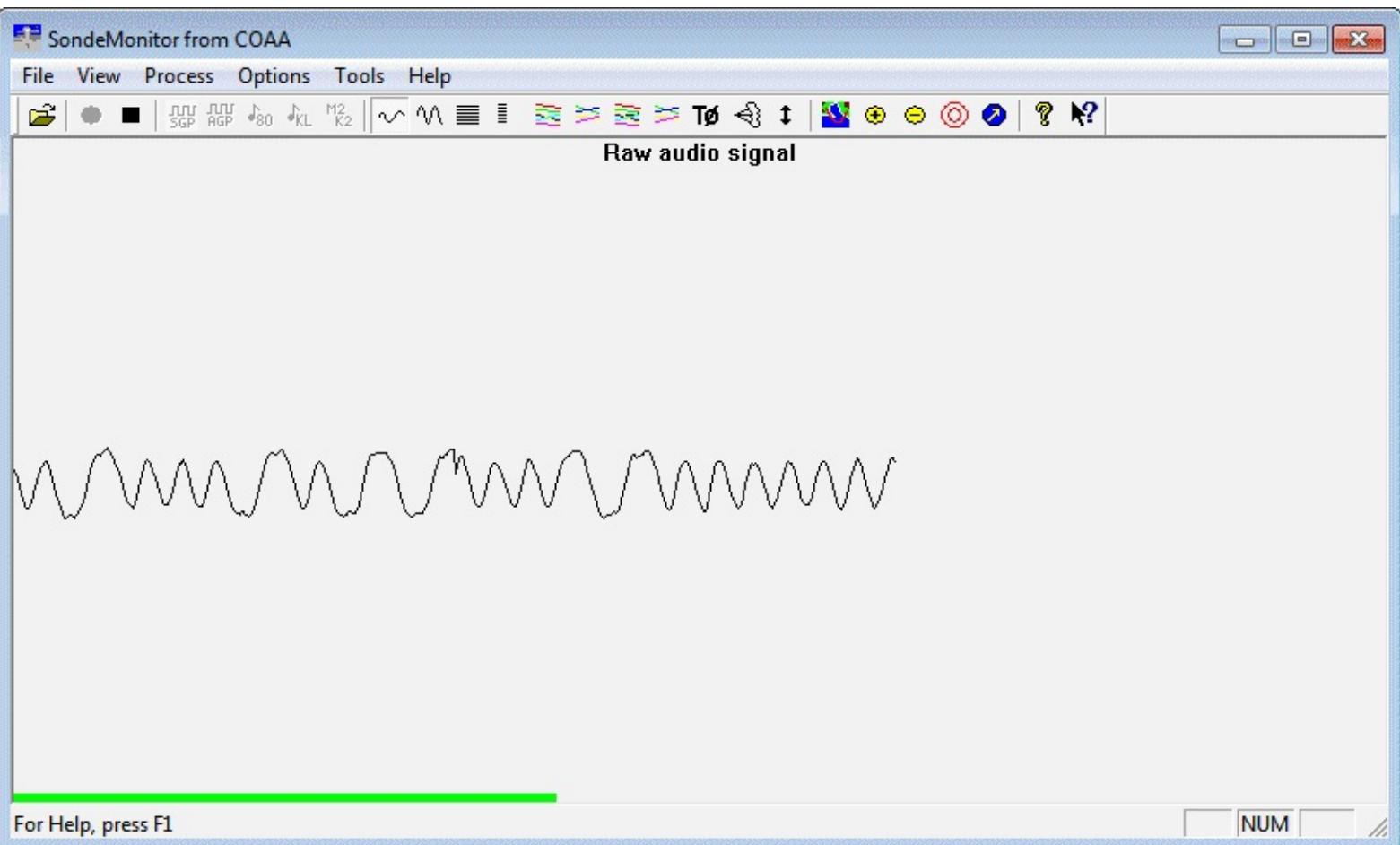


To decode weather balloon radiosondes follow these steps

1. Download and install SondeMonitor. SondeMonitor is paid software with a 25 euro price tag, but comes with a 21 day trial. Download SondeMonitor from <http://www.coaa.co.uk/sondemonitor.htm>.
2. When a weather balloon is due to be launched, open SDRSharp, set your audio piping method under the Audio Output drop down box and tune to a frequency between 403 and 406 MHz. Scan

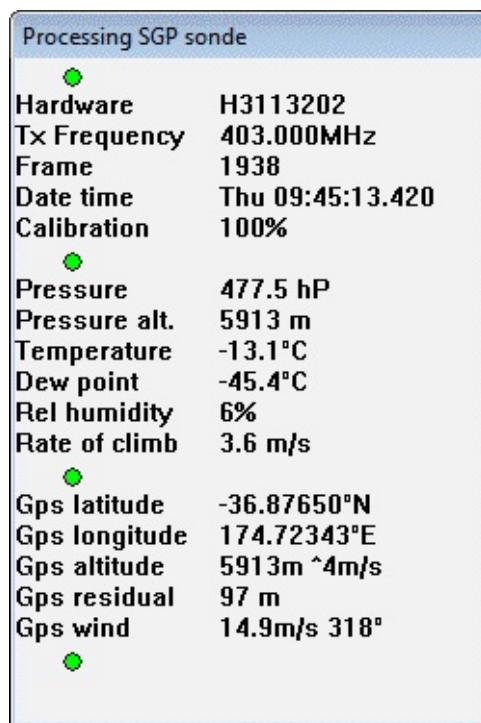
around and look for a radiosonde signal, tune to it and adjust the RF gain settings for best performance. Set the receive mode to NFM, filter order to 10, filter audio to OFF. Adjust the filter bandwidth so that it just covers the signal.

3. Open SondeMonitor. Go to **Options -> Audio -> Audio Source** and choose the audio piping method you are using.
4. Select the radiosonde decoding protocol used in your area. These can be selected with these icons  which are to the right of the start and stop icons. Hovering over the icons will show which protocol they represent.
5. Now start the decoding by clicking the green circle  . A telemetry data window will pop up. Next, click on the raw signal icon  . Adjust the audio volume using the audio gain in SDRSharp or Windows volume settings so that the audio graph is loud enough to be visible, but not too loud as to cause clipping. Clipping is when the signal is too loud and the waveform begins to look squarish. An ideal volume is shown below.

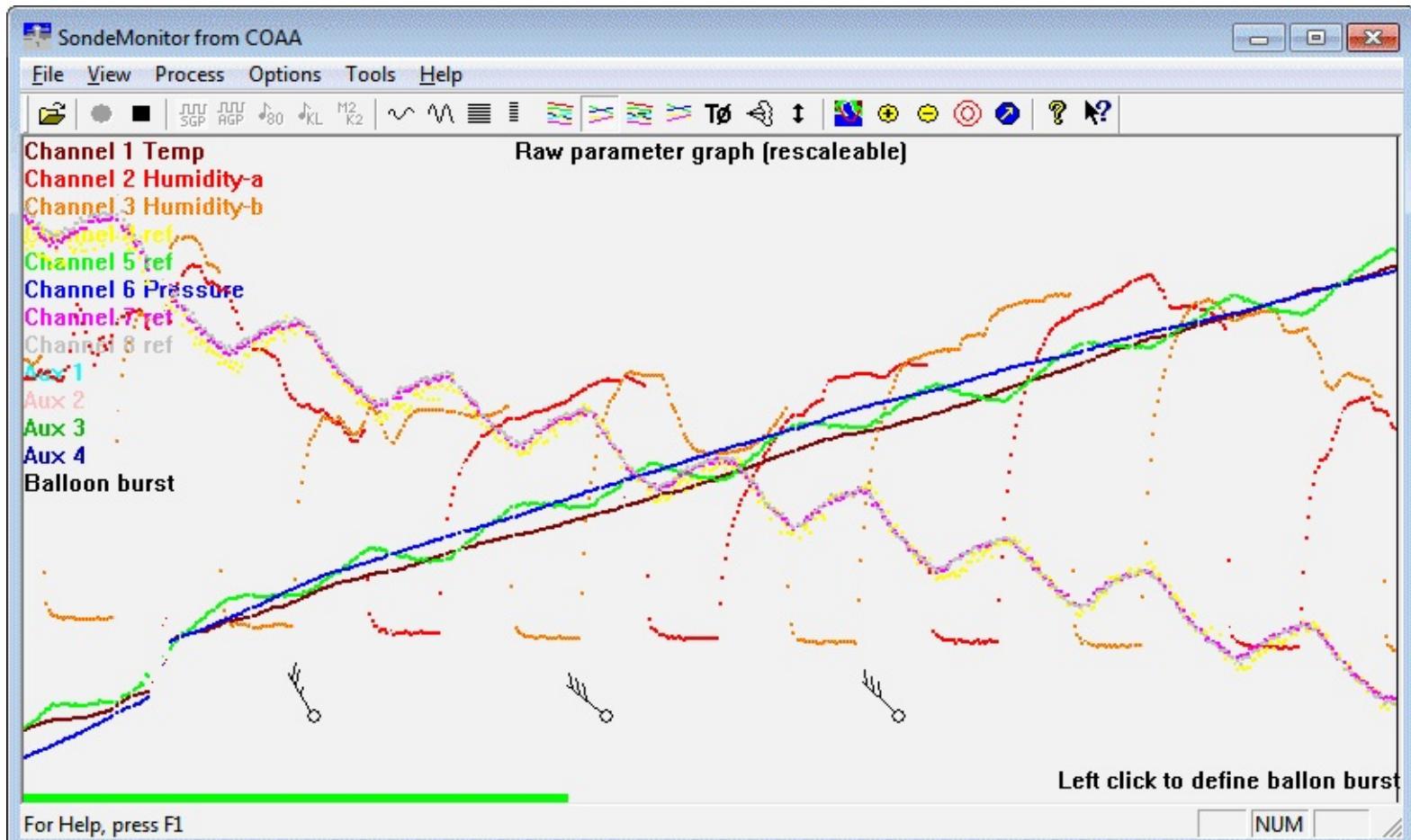


6. At this point, if your signal reception is good and you have selected the correct decoding method, the telemetry window will show data and have four green circles. Note, that SondeMonitor requires some initial time to calibrate. The completed amount of the calibration process can be seen in the red bar in the lower left corner of the main window, which will slowly turn green as calibration completes. The calibration status can also be tracked in the telemetry window. If

calibration does not complete, or takes a very long time, it means your signal strength is not good enough.



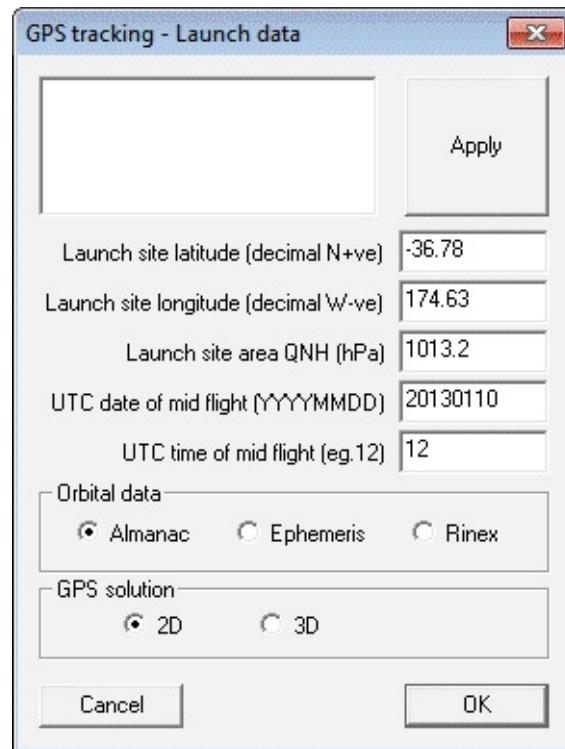
7. Click on the Graph 2 icon to see telemetry graphs. You can click the Autoscale icon to ensure that all the data is displayed on the screen.



For most launches, the weather balloon's location and altitude can be tracked live in Google Earth. However, some radiosonde protocols such as the RS92SGP do not transmit latitude and longitude GPS data directly. Instead, they transmit raw GPS data which must be converted into longitude and latitude on the receiving end (your computer). To do this, the radiosonde's starting coordinates, UTC launch date and UTC time and an up to date GPS almanac are required. The almanac is a data file that stores information about the GPS satellite locations.

The MeteoModem M2K2/M10, Graw DFM-06 and Meteolabor SRS-C34 are radiosondes which transmit already decoded GPS location data. The following steps are for the other radiosondes which transmit raw GPS data, such as the RS92SGP.

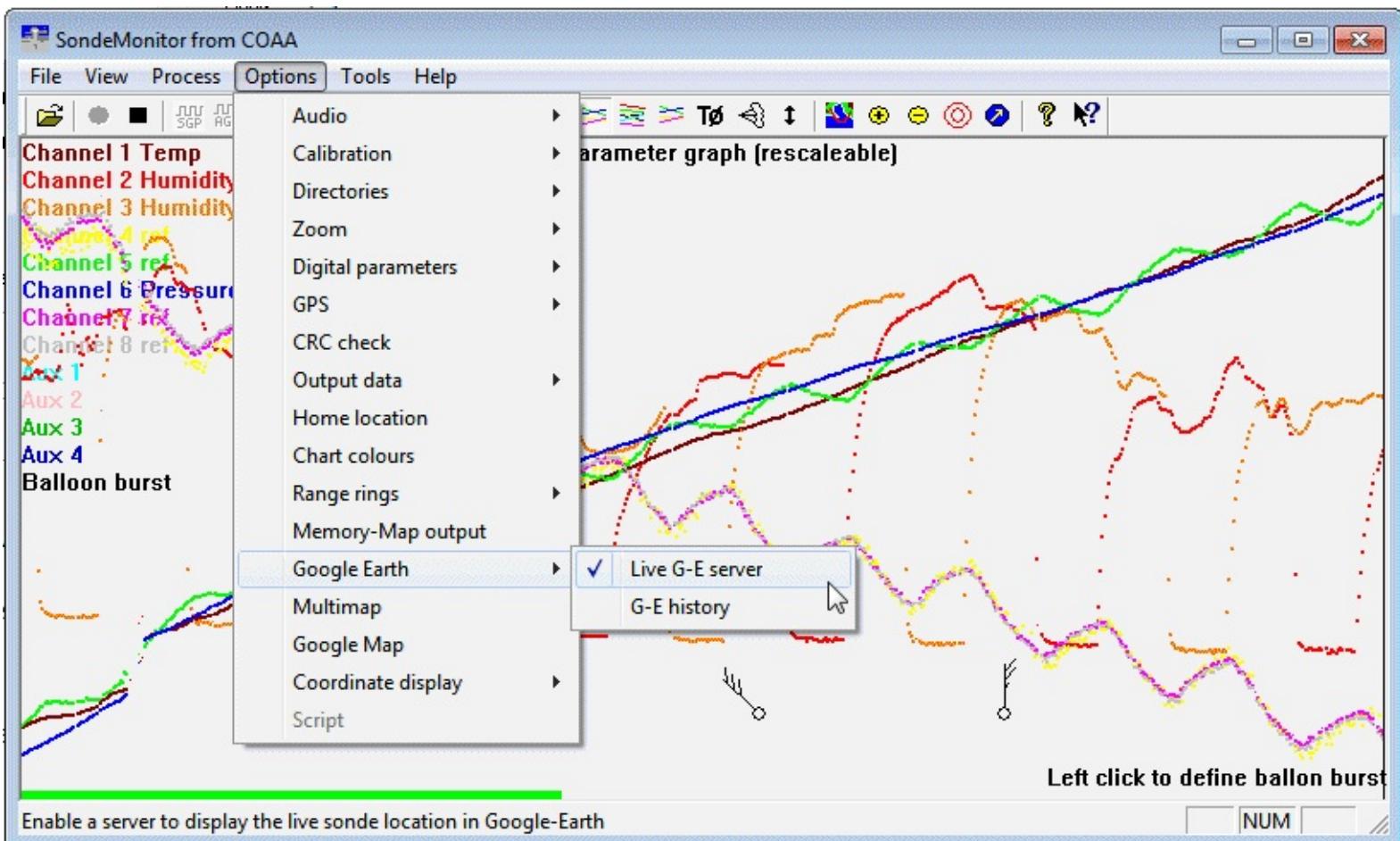
1. Download an up to date Almanac from the US Coast Guard Nav Centre at <http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=gpsAlmanacs>. You will want to get the current SEM Almanac with the .al3 extension.
2. In SondeMonitor, go to **Tools -> GPS Arm**. Enter the Latitude and Longitude of the weather balloon's launch location. You will also need to enter the UTC date of the flight, and the approximate UTC time at mid flight. Make sure the date and time is in UTC time. Weather balloons last about 2 to 4 hours, so just estimate a mid flight time. Select Almanac as your Orbital data. The other options can be left as default.



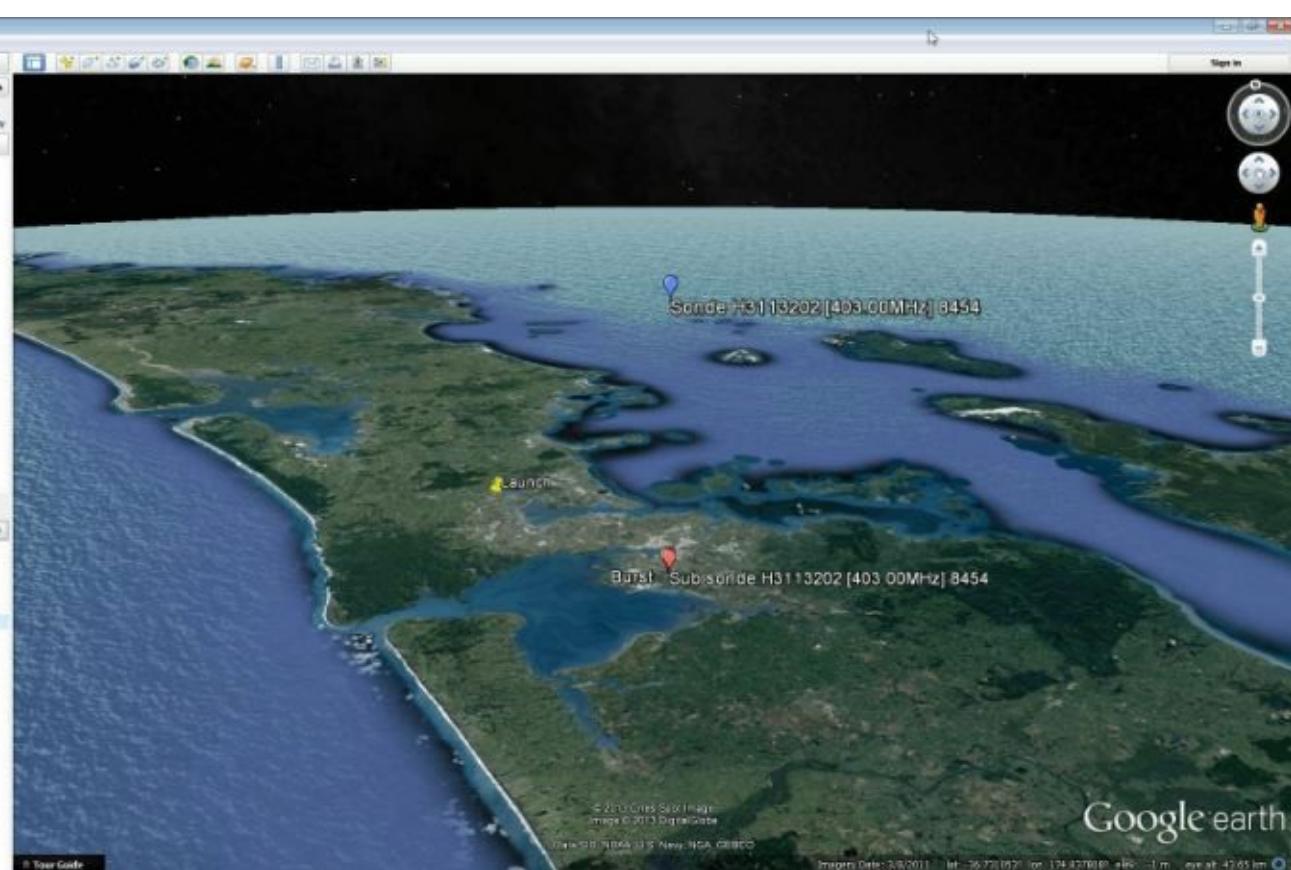
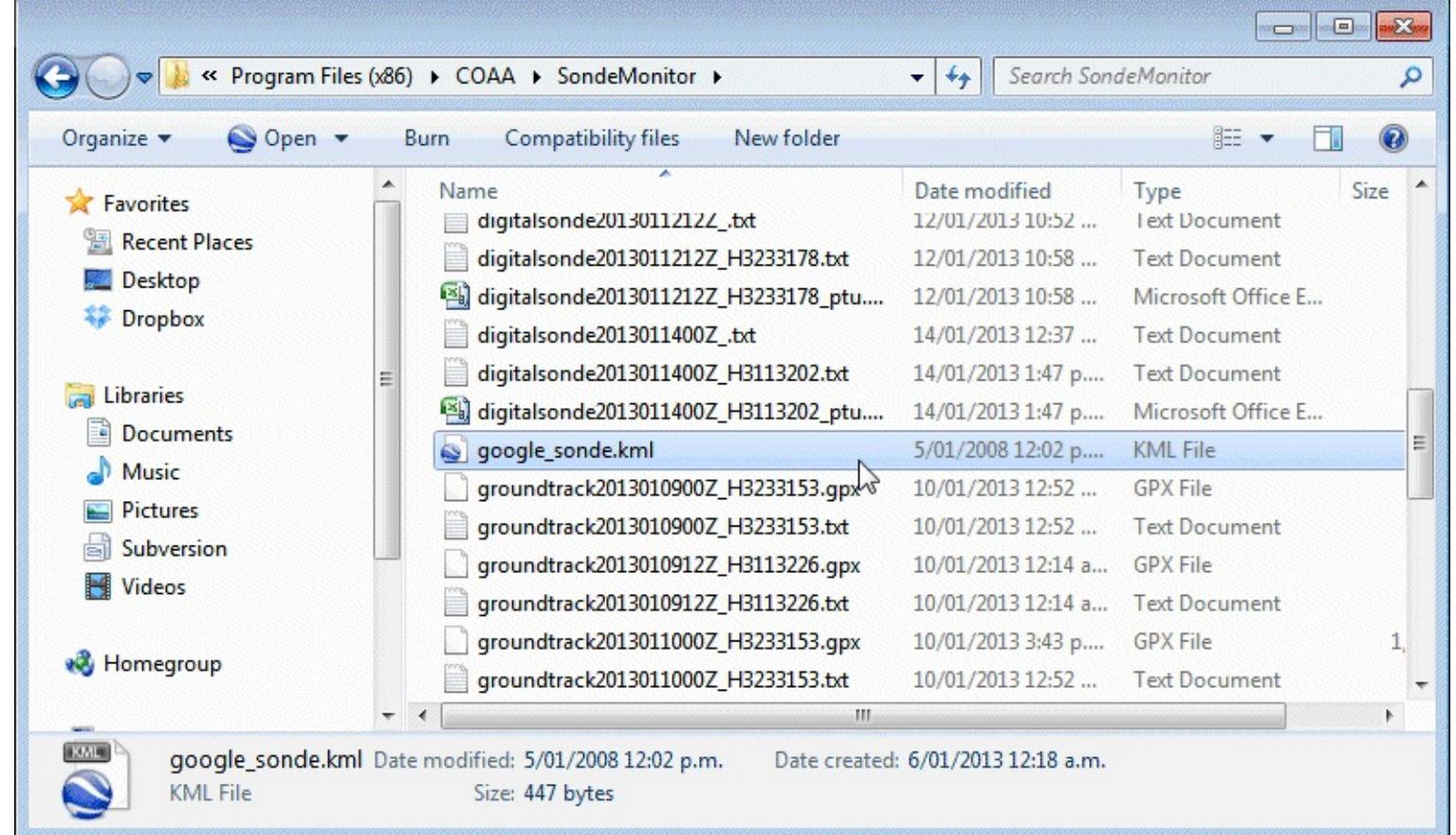
3. Once you press OK, a file selection dialog box will pop up. Browse to the folder your current .al3 Almanac file is stored in, and open it. Now, if you have set the Almanac, start coordinates, and date and time up correctly, the GPS Residual in the SondeMonitor telemetry status window will be to within a couple of hundred meters. The smaller the residual, the more accurate the weather

balloon location is. If you have gotten any parameters wrong, the residual will be very large.

4. To see the balloon in Google Earth, go to **Options -> Google Earth** and ensure that Live G-E Server has a check next to it by clicking it if it does not.



5. Now open your SondeMonitor folder in Windows Explorer. Find the file google_sonde.kml, and open this file with Google Earth. You should now be able to see the weather balloon's launch location and current live location in Google Earth.



ADDITIONAL LINKS AND REFERENCES:

Video Demo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mz2id1cBmjs>

MARINE AUTOMATIC IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (AIS) GUIDE

Large ships and passenger boats are required to broadcast an identification signal containing GPS position, course, speed, destination and vessel dimension information. This signal is used to help prevent collisions between boats as it acts as a sort of boat radar system, similar to ADS-B used for aircraft. The system is known as the “Automatic Identification System” or AIS for short.

There are dedicated AIS receivers intended to be used on boats, or by hobbyists, but they can be expensive. A radio scanner or the cheap rtl-sdr can be used to receive these signals and with the help of decoding software, ship positions can be plotted on a map.

This tutorial will show you how to set up an AIS receiver with the rtl-sdr. Most parts of this tutorial are also applicable to other software radios, such as the funcube dongle and HackRF, or even regular hardware scanners if a discriminator tap is used, but the rtl-sdr is the cheapest option.

Safety Warning: This probably should not be used a navigational aid on a boat as the field reliability of the rtl-sdr or other software radios is not proven. This guide is intended for land based scanner hobbyists.

AIS TUTORIAL

To set up an AIS ship radar on a windows system you will need:

- An audio piping method.
- A vertically polarized antenna tuned to 162MHz.
- Software for decoding the AIS signals.

We will assume you have the rtl-sdr dongle set up and working already. If you have not bought a dongle yet, see our Buy RTL-SDR page at [www.rtl-sdr.com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/](http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/) for information and check out the quickstart guide for an easy setup routine with SDRSharp. You will also need to have an audio piping method installed and set up. Audio piping will allow the audio from SDRSharp to be passed to a decoding program. See [Appendix A: Audio Piping](#) for information about audio piping methods.

AIS ANTENNA GUIDE

AIS signals are broadcast at both 161.975 MHz and 162.025 MHz and have a maximum range of approximately 74 kilometres. So if your radio setup is more than 74 kilometres away from any boats, you will probably not be able to receive AIS signals. AIS is also a line of sight signal, meaning that

AIS signals could be blocked if there are large buildings or mountains between your antenna and the boats. Because of this reason it is important to put your antenna as high up as possible.

A good antenna for AIS is a collinear antenna. The collinear antenna has very high omnidirectional gain directed towards the horizon. This means it will receive signals best from sources that are near the horizon, which is where ships will be.

If the majority of ships in your area are focused in one direction only, a Yagi antenna may be a good choice. A Yagi is a very directional antenna - it will only pick up signals in the direction it is pointed. The advantage is that with directionality we can get a large signal gain. A Yagi is also usually only sensitive to a small frequency range, so a properly tuned Yagi will also help to keep interfering signals out.

A bandpass filter with a centre frequency near 162 MHz such as a surface mount one from http://www.minicircuits.com/products/filters_sm_bandpass.shtml may also be useful. Alternatively, a bandstop filter to filter out the FM broadcast band and pagers may help. A pager bandstop filter may be particularly useful as pager frequencies in some countries tend to be at around 157 MHz, near AIS frequencies. A coax stub filter may be a cheap solution to pager interference.

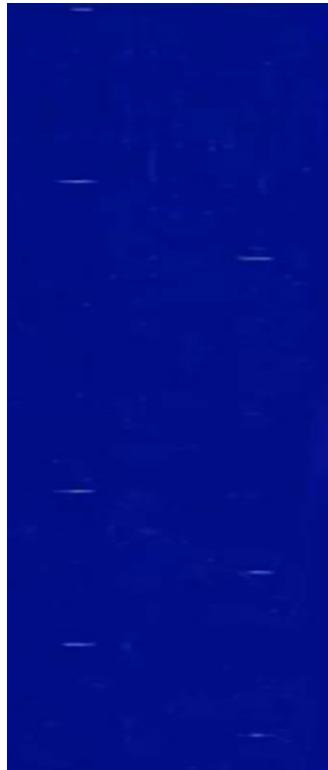
An LNA such as the LNA4ALL at the antenna may also help receive weak signals. See the [LNA section](#) and [preselector section](#) for more information.

SOFTWARE TUTORIALS

1. Set up two audio pipes using either Virtual Audio Cable or VBCable. Ensure that the sample rates are set to 48 kHz. See the [setting the sample rate section](#) for information on how to change this.
2. Use a SDR receiver such as SDRSharp or SDR-CONSOLE to tune to an AIS signal. In your SDR receiver set your audio piping method in the Audio output drop down box and tune to an AIS frequency (161.975 MHz or 162.025 MHz). The signals may not appear exactly on the AIS frequencies, since the rtl-sdr is not frequency accurate. Just tune manually until the signals are properly centred, or correctly set your PPM offset.
3. For AIS we highly recommend using SDR-CONSOLE as it will allow us to listen to both AIS channels simultaneously. If using SDR-CONSOLE, set two VFOs to listen to both AIS channels. Ensure that each one outputs to a separate audio piping device.
4. Adjust the RF gain until you get good reception of the AIS signals. You want to adjust the RF gain such that the signal is strong, but the noise floor is low.
5. Set the receive mode to NFM and expand the bandwidth so that it just covers the AIS blips on

the waterfall. The bandwidth will be either around 12.5 kHz or 25 kHz (there are two AIS standards with different bandwidths). Turn off the squelch and any DSP algorithms. If using SDR# set the Filter Order to 10 and Filter Audio to OFF. Setting IF digital noise reduction could possibly help.

6. AIS signals look like small horizontal lines on the waterfall, as is shown on the image below. If you are listening to the AIS signals through your speakers, they will just sound like blips of noise. The two AIS frequencies broadcast the same information and are used in commercial AIS receivers for redundancy.



Once you have AIS reception set up you can then use a program for AIS decoding. There are several programs useful for decoding and displaying AIS information. ShipPlotter is a commercial program with a 21-day trial. AISMon + OpenCPN or AISDispatcher are free programs, but are a little harder to set up.

OPENCPN + AISMON TUTORIAL

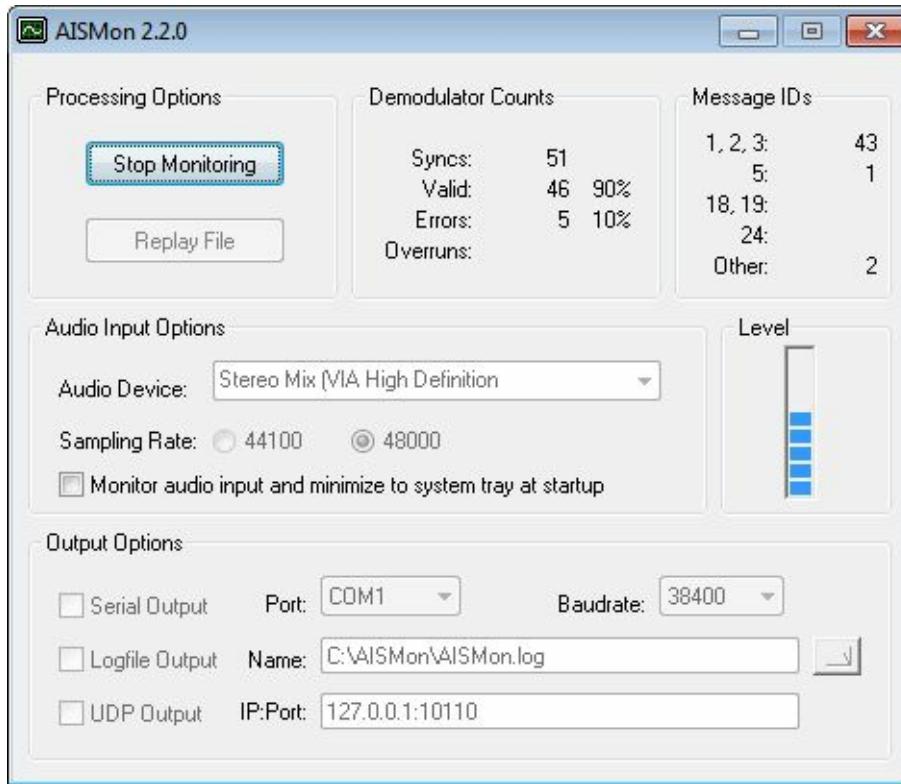
AISMon is a free AIS decoding program. It can be downloaded from the AISMon Yahoo group files section at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aismon/>. You may need to first join this group using a Yahoo account to access the files section. The Yahoo group also contains a sample AIS .wav file, which when used with stereo mix, can be used to test both AISMon and ShipPlotter.

One advantage to AISMon over ShipPlotter is that we can open two instances of the program and use them to decode the two AIS channels simultaneously.

1. Open AISMon, set the audio piping device to the one you have chosen and set the sampling rate

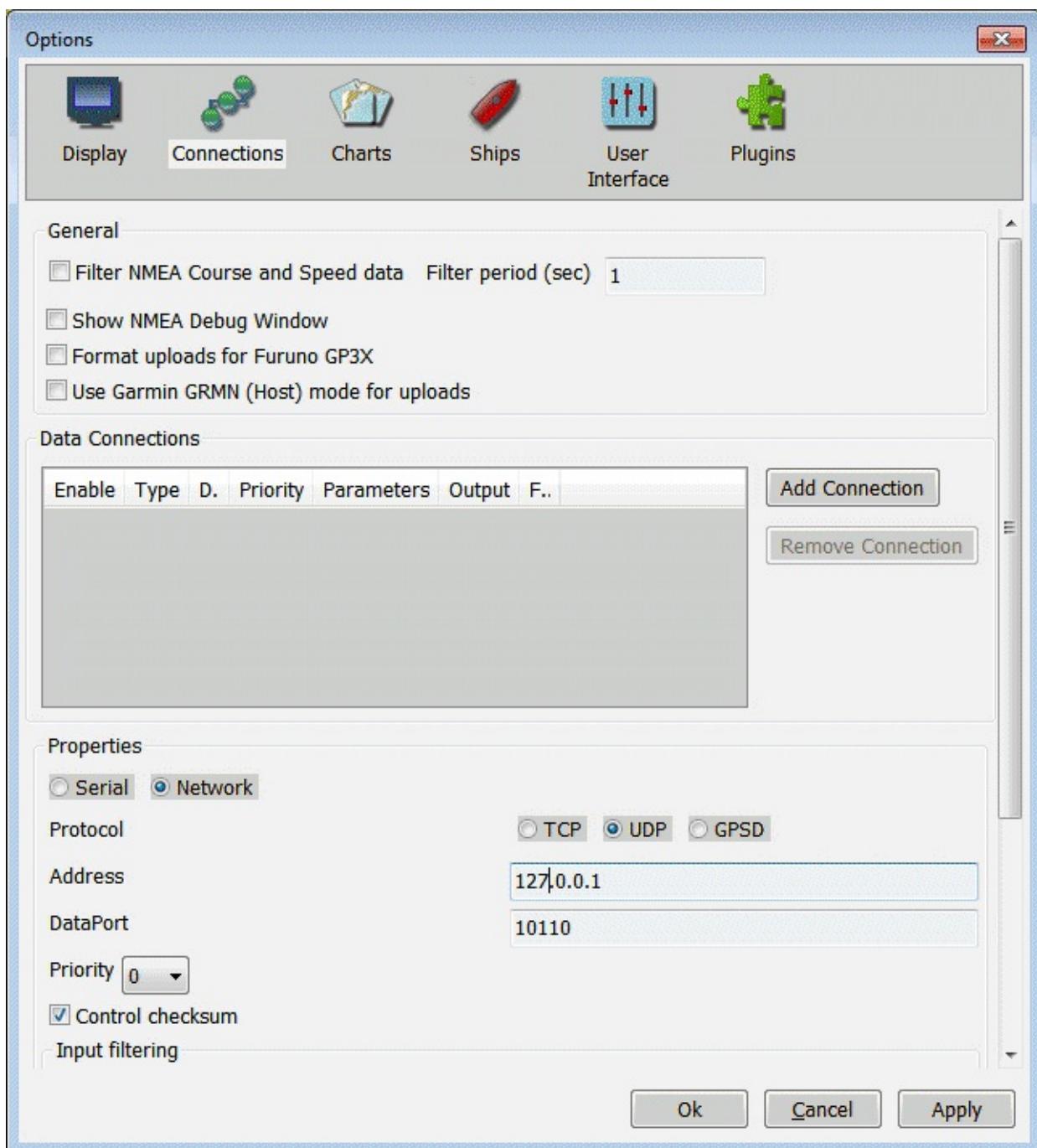
to 48000 (assuming you've set your audio piping device to use a sample rate of 48000 as well, see the [setting the sample rate section](#) for more information). Press start monitoring.

2. Adjust the volume in your SDR receiver and/or the Windows volume settings until the level meter in AISMon reads at about halfway.
3. If everything is working you should begin to see numbers appear in the “Demodulator Counts” section of AISMon.
4. Open a second instance of AISMon and repeat steps 1-3 for the second audio pipe if you are using SDR-CONSOLE.

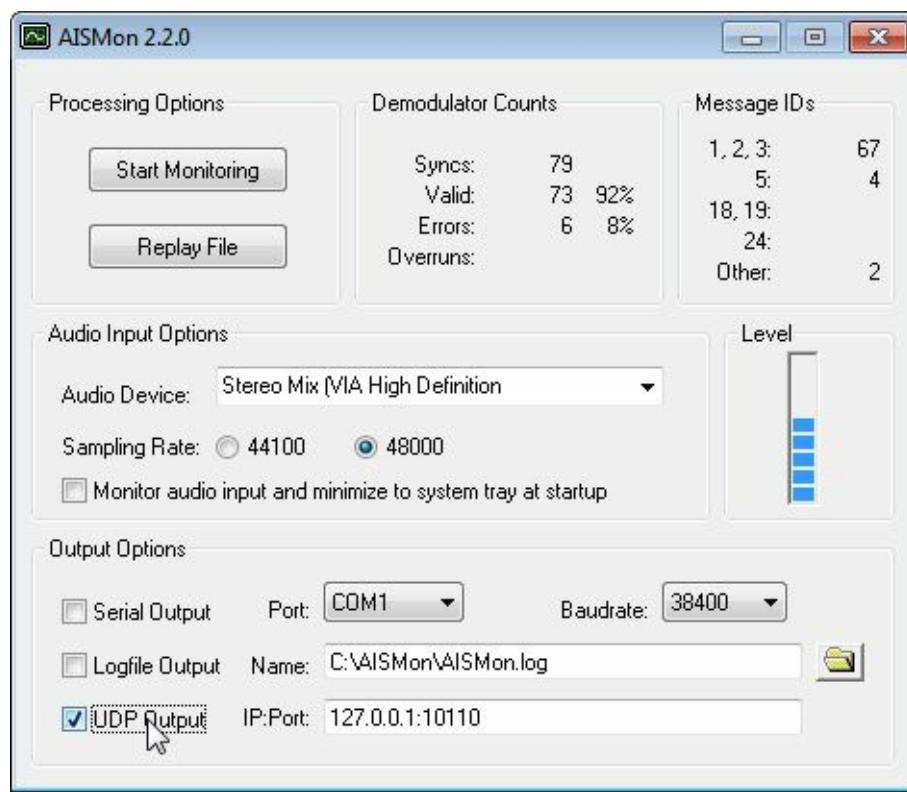


By itself, AISMon does not display any ship information. To view ship information you will need another free opensource program called OpenCPN which can be downloaded from <http://opencpn.org/ocpn/>. OpenCPN is a chart plotting and navigation software which can read the NMEA information that is output by AISMon, and plot the ship positions on a map.

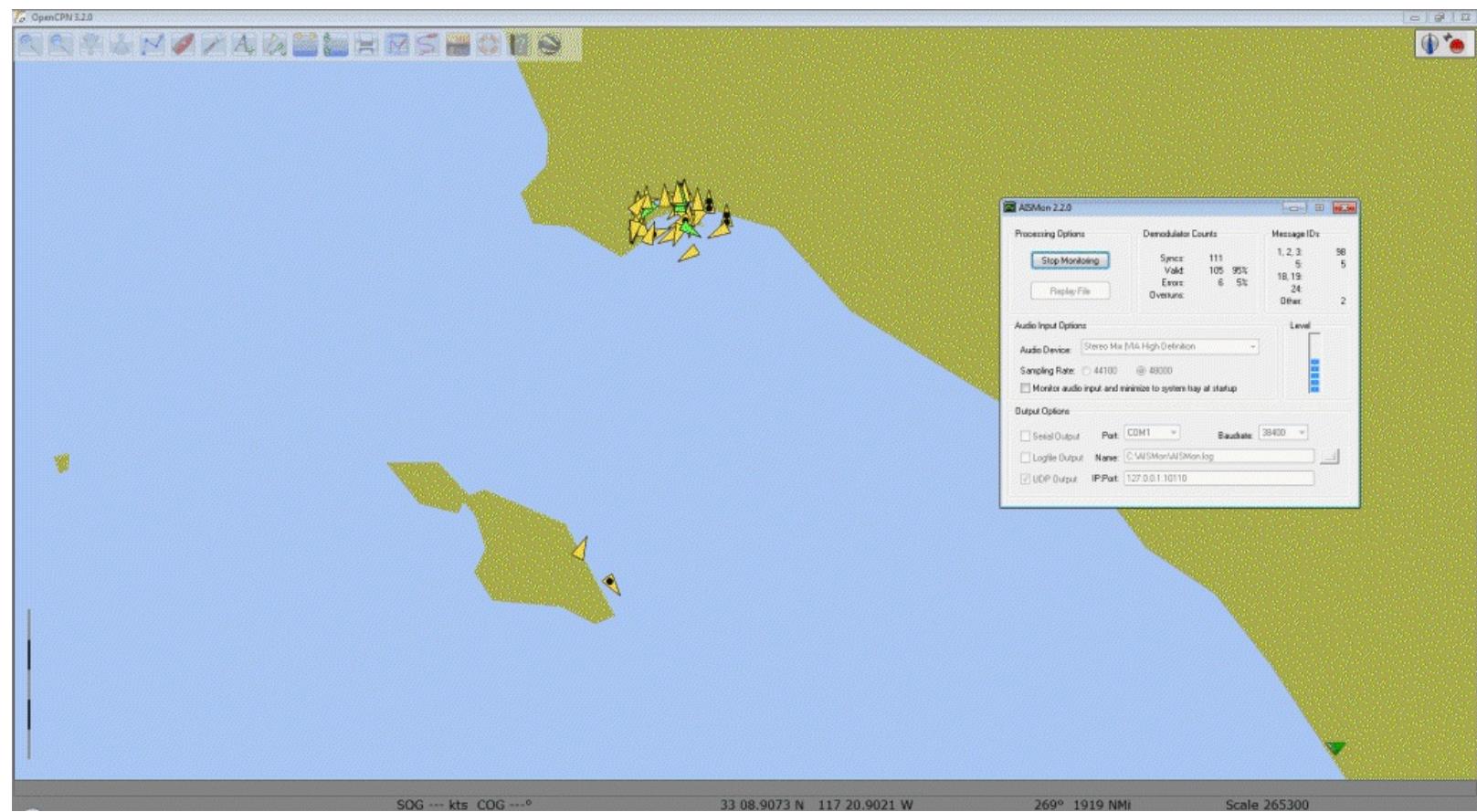
1. Download and install OpenCPN.
2. Click on the Options button in OpenCPN and go to the Connections tab.
3. Under Data Connections, click on Add Connection and add a Network UDP connection. Use an address of 127.0.0.1 and a port of 10110. Click Apply and OK. If you are using SDR-CONSOLE and are using two audio outputs, add a second UDP connection identical to the first one, but with a port number of 10120.



4. Now back in AISMon under Output Options, check UDP Output, and enter 127.0.0.1:10110 into the IP:Port box. (You will need to stop monitoring first if monitoring is currently active).
5. If you are running SDR-CONSOLE and have two audio outputs for each AIS channel, you can open two AISMon instances where each one uses a separate audio device. Set the UDP output port of the second AISMon instance to 10120.



6. You can now click Start Monitoring again. If everything has been set up correctly, ships will begin to appear in the OpenCPN map.

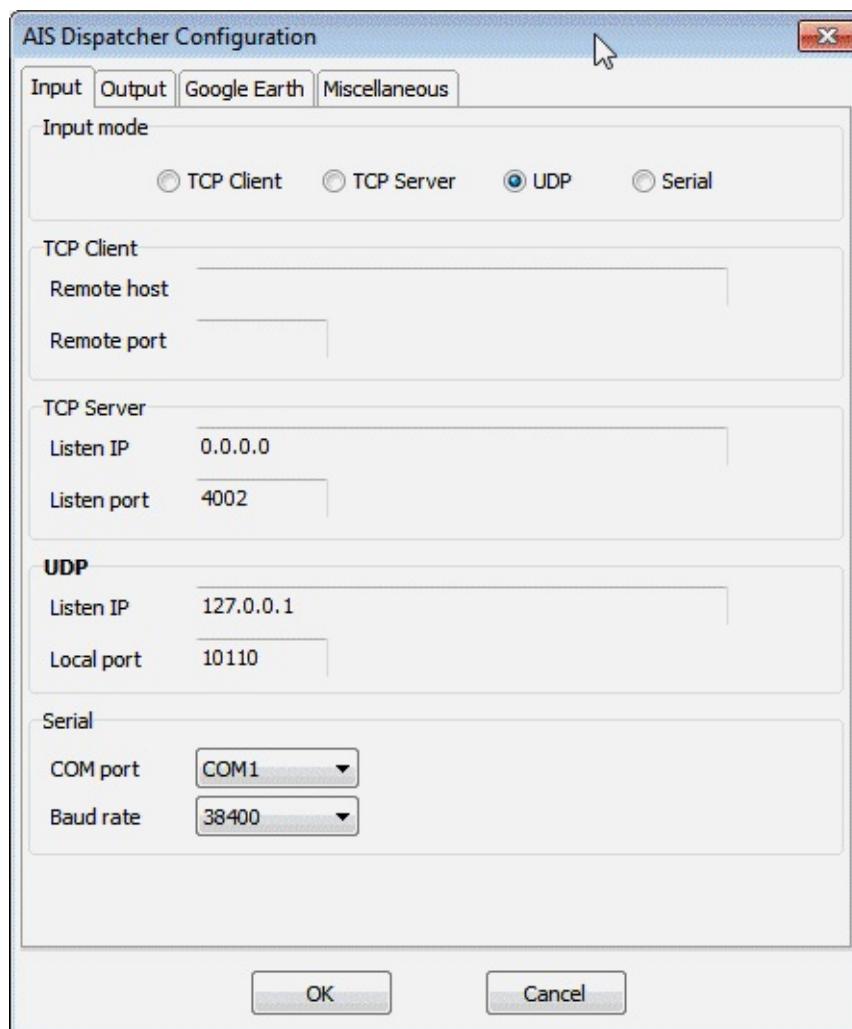


If you want more accurate maps or charts you will need to follow the instructions on the OpenCPN website for downloading charts for your particular location.

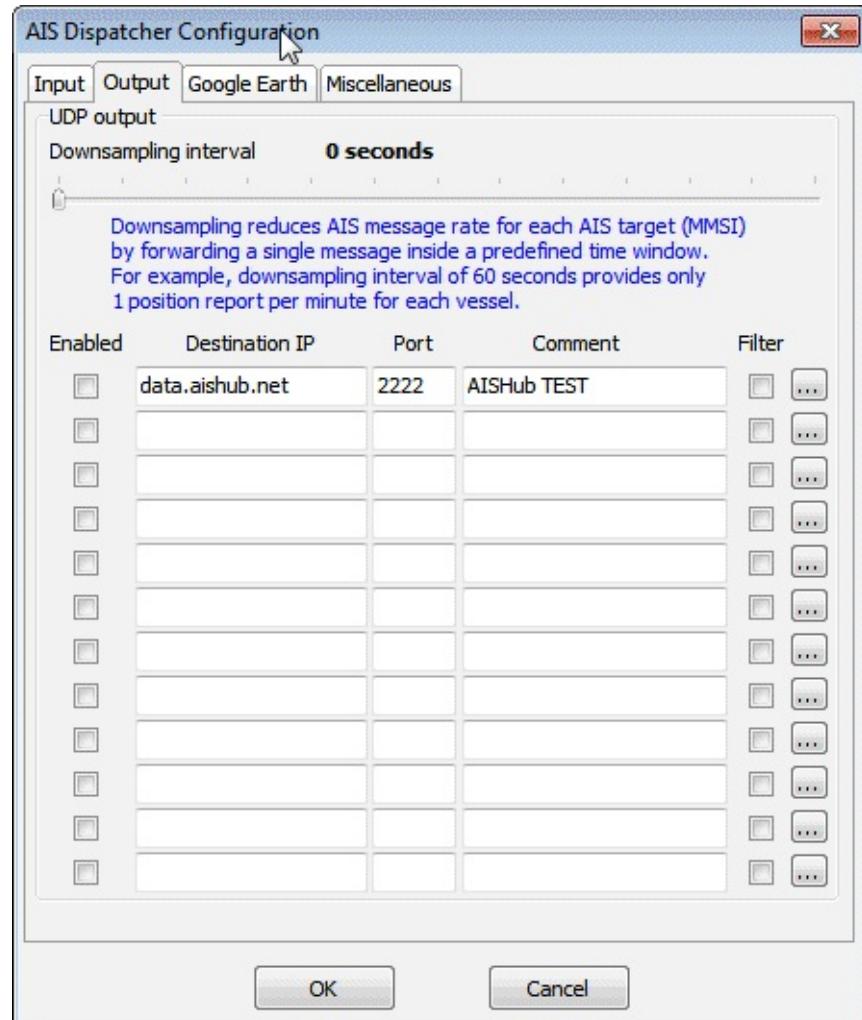
AIS DISPATCHER + AISMON TUTORIAL

A simple but easy to use free program for plotting ships with AISMon is AIS Dispatcher. Download it from <http://www.aishub.net/aisdispatcher-description.html>. It is available for Windows, Linux and MacOS. After downloading and extracting the AIS Dispatcher zip file to a folder, follow these instructions to set it up.

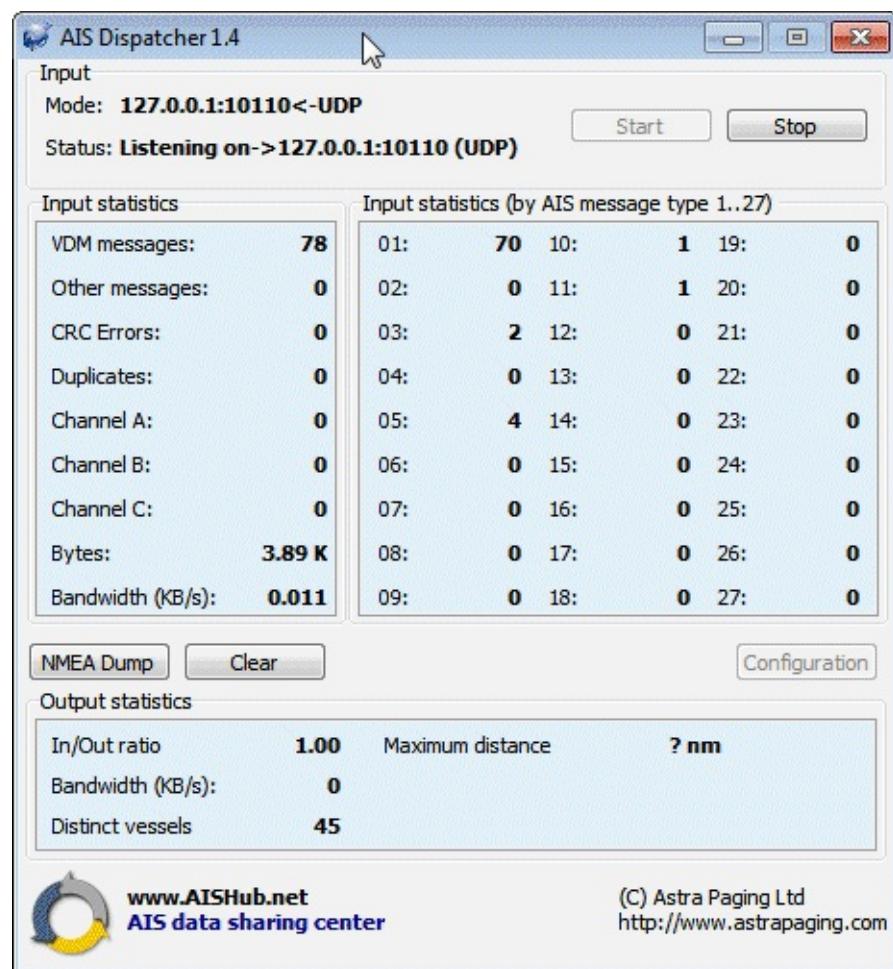
1. Open and start AISMon and your favourite SDR Receiver and tune to an AIS channel as explained in the above OpenCPN + AISMon tutorial.
2. Open AIS Dispatcher by double clicking on AISDispatcher.exe in the extracted folder. Click on the Configuration button.
3. In the Input tab set the UDP Listen IP to 127.0.0.1 and the Local Port to 10110, or to whatever port you have chosen to use in AISMon.



4. In the Output tab disable any UDP outputs if you don't want to share your data. Press OK.



5. In the main AIS Dispatcher window click the Start button to begin listening to the decoded AISMon messages.

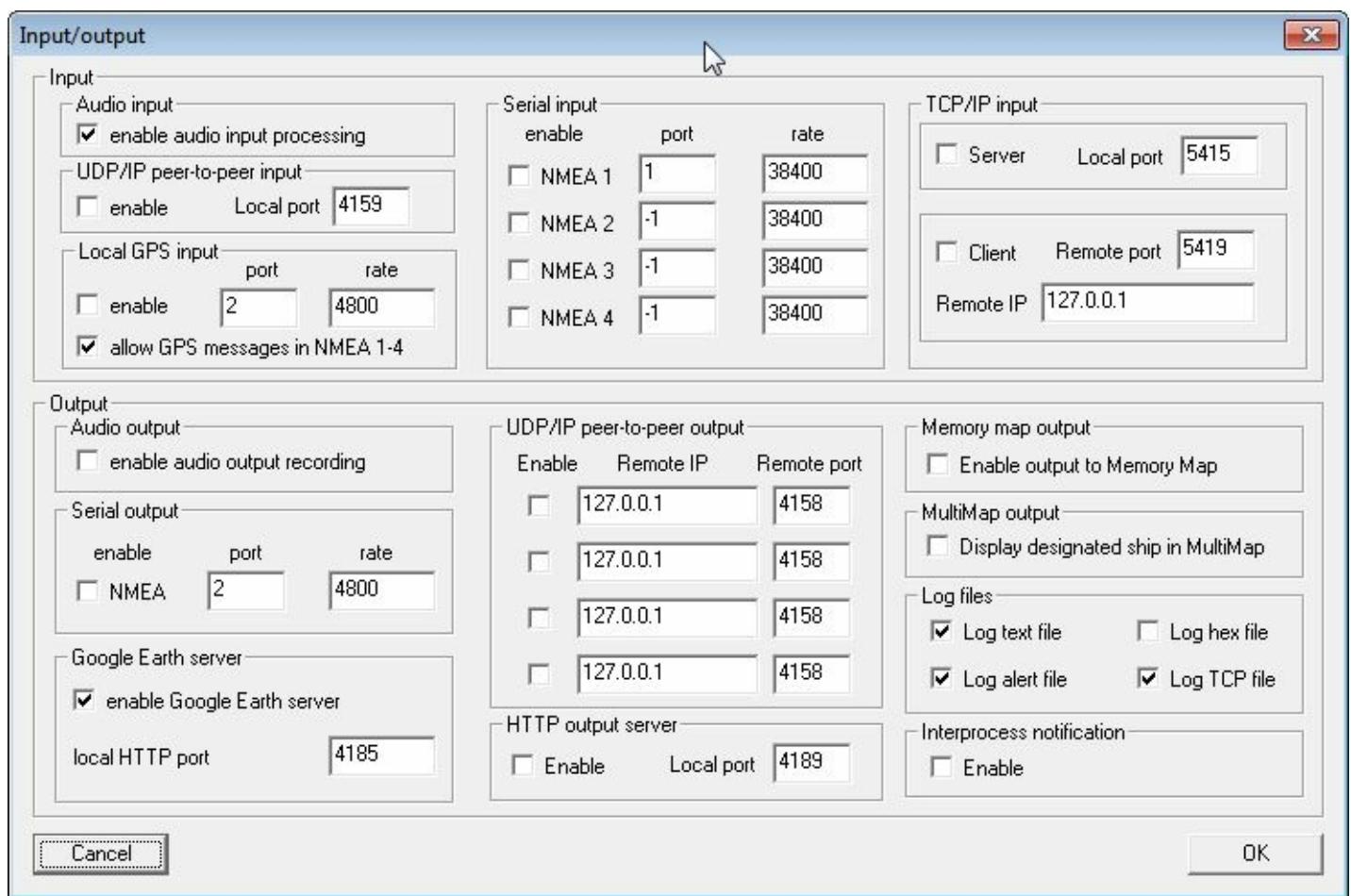


- Back in the AISDispatcher folder open the AISDispatcher.kml file in Google Earth to view the ships on the globe.

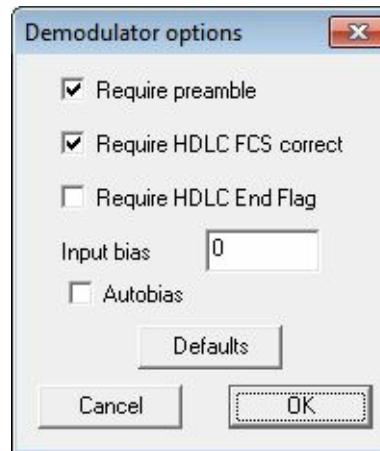
SHIPPLOTTER TUTORIAL

ShipPlotter is a software tool that can decode and plot the location data stored in AIS signals. ShipPlotter is commercial software and costs 25 euros for personal use, but has a 21-day trial. ShipPlotter is only capable of listening to one AIS channel at a time. Instructions on using ShipPlotter are shown below.

- Download and install ShipPlotter from <http://www.coaa.co.uk/shipplotter.htm>.
- Open ShipPlotter. Go to **Options->Audio->SoundCard** and select your audio piping method.
- Under **Options->I/O Settings**, ensure that enable audio input processing is checked.



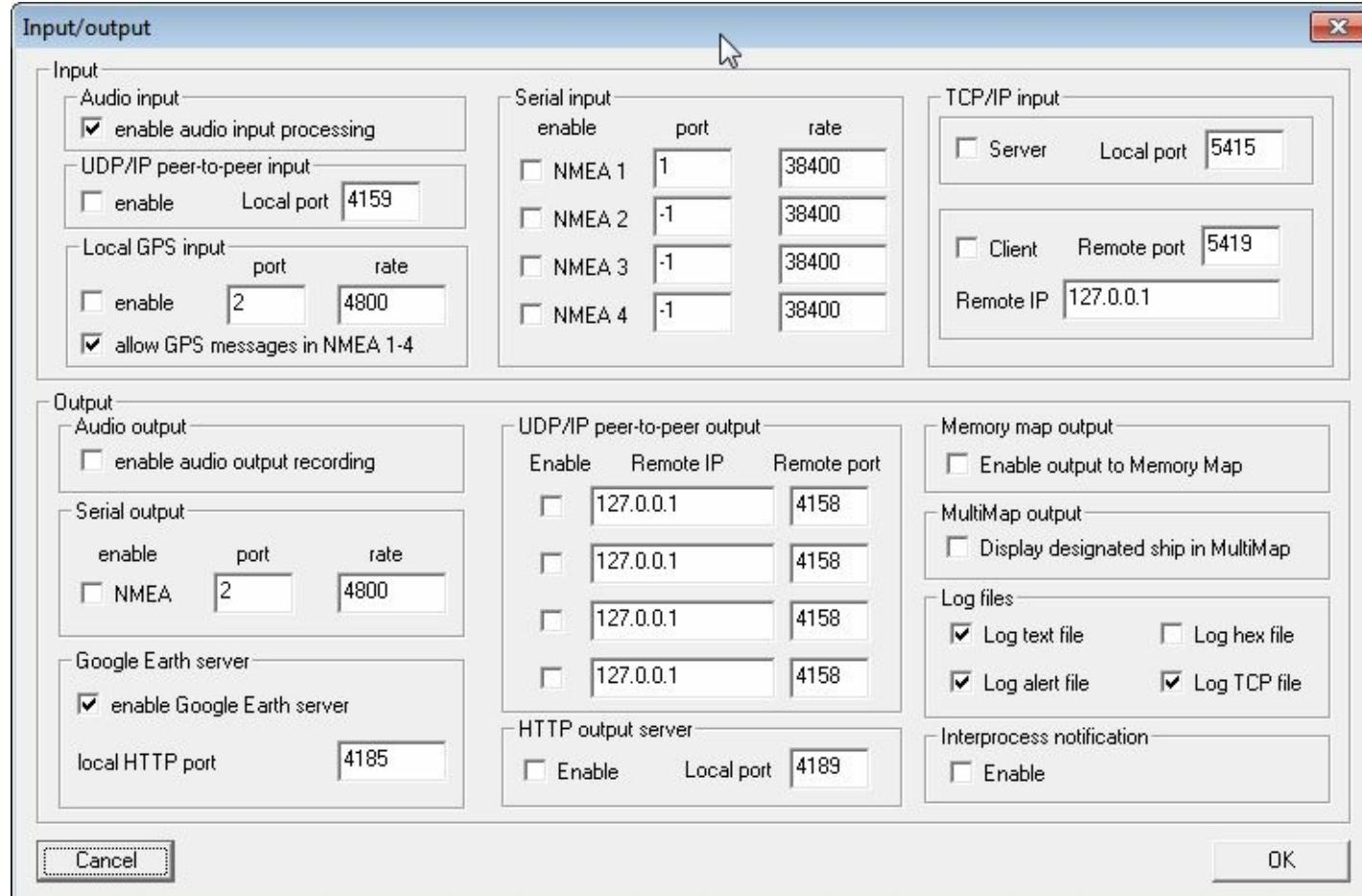
4. Ensure the Demodulator options in **Options->Demodulator** are set to the default values, with ‘Require Preamble’ and ‘Require HDLC FCS correct’ both checked.



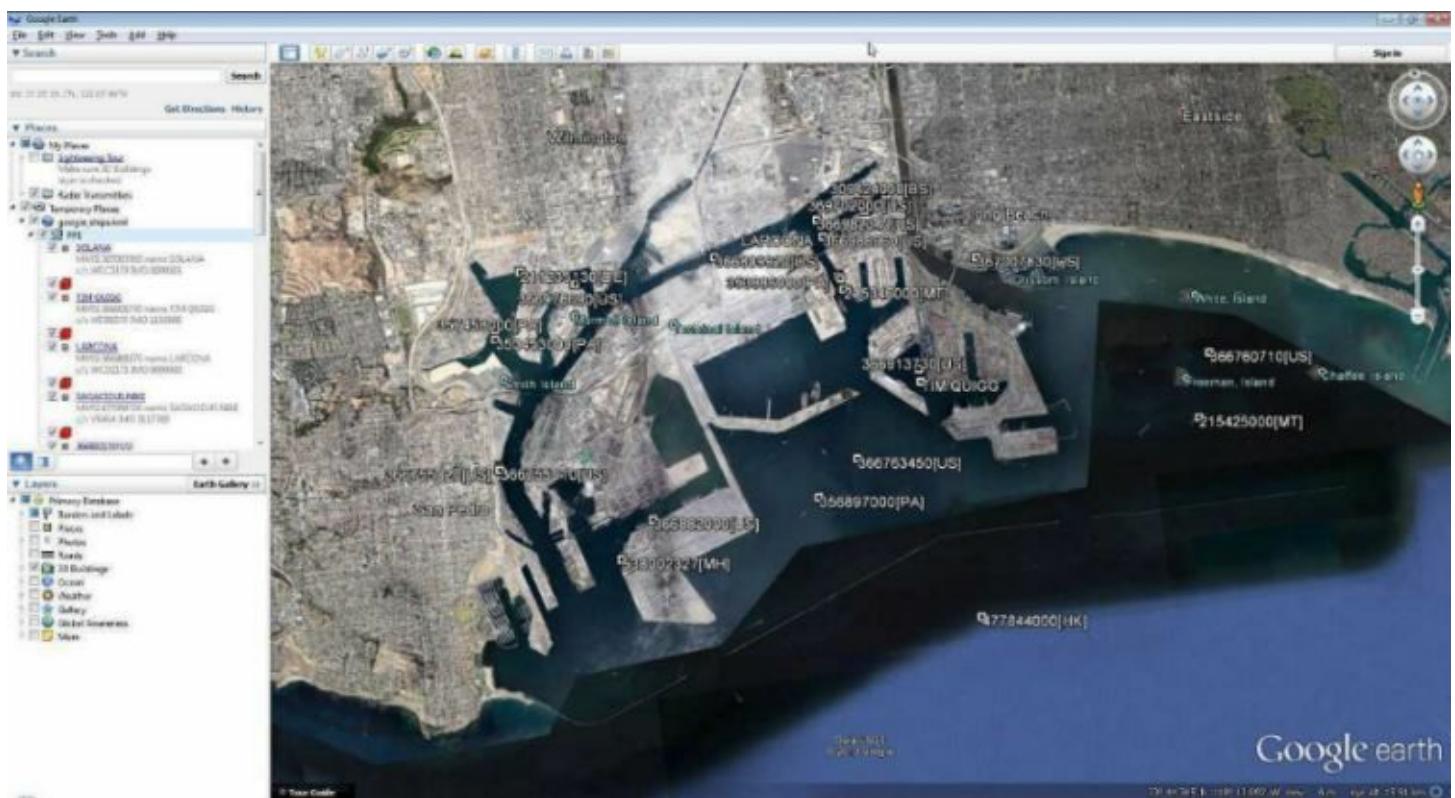
5. Push the green ‘Start’ button ●, and then click on the ‘Raw’ icon ≈ which looks like a horizontal line with a squiggle (sine wave) going through it. This will show a waveform of the input audio. Ensure the audio levels are adequate and not clipping, by making sure the waveform peaks at about halfway on the graph by adjusting the AF gain volume settings in SDRSharp, or the windows volume settings.
6. Now you should be able to click on the ‘Ships’ and ‘Messages’ icons on the toolbar to see the decoded AIS information. To see ships visually, you will need to follow the ShipPlotter instructions for downloading charts.

Ship mmsi	name	callsign	IMO no	latitude	longitude	status	destination	course	speed	dimensions	ship type	[message time]	range org
367003560	SOLANA	WDC3179	0000001	33°46.026N	118°13.027W	unknown	> HOME	0.0°	0.kt	26x 8x 3.5m Tug	[20130428 054831]	0.0 *0	
366988970	LARCONA	WCD2171	0000000	33°46.029N	118°13.221W	under way	> LOS ANGELES	0.0°	0.kt	26x 8x 9.0m Vessel:towg	[20130428 054828]	0.0 *0	
47799700	SAGACIOUS NIKE	VRAV4	9117789	33°45.725N	118°15.500W	sailing	> LOS ANGELES	172.1°	0.kt	186x30x 9.3m Cargo ship	[20130428 054821]	0.0 *0	
366892150	366892150 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°46.256N	118°12.801W	under way	> unknown	0.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054824]	0.0 *0	
357458000	357458000 [PA]	unknown	0000000	33°45.547N	118°16.604W	under way	> unknown	70.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054805]	0.0 *0	
367017440	367017440 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°46.245N	118°12.734W	under way	> unknown	0.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054826]	0.0 *0	
211235130	211235130 [DE]	unknown	0000000	33°46.006N	118°16.294W	under way	> unknown	358.5°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054829]	0.0 *0	
367014480	367014480 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°46.036N	118°13.223W	under way	> unknown	174.1°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054830]	0.0 *0	
366760650	366760650 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°46.410N	118°16.680W	under way	> unknown	315.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054830]	0.0 *0	
353886000	353886000 [PA]	unknown	0000000	33°45.655N	118°13.099W	under way	> unknown	179.6°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054833]	0.0 *0	
366809920	366809920 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°45.954N	118°14.341W	under way	> unknown	155.1°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054833]	0.0 *0	
366978690	366978690 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°45.857N	118°15.760W	under way	> unknown	173.8°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054833]	0.0 *0	
367007830	367007830 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°45.705N	118°11.690W	unknown	> unknown	0.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054834]	0.0 *0	
215425000	215425000 [MT]	unknown	0000000	33°44.125N	118°9.620W	under way	> unknown	0.1°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054815]	0.0 *0	
366925920	366925920 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°46.062N	118°13.021W	no command	> unknown	0.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054835]	0.0 *0	
309424000	309424000 [BS]	unknown	0000000	33°46.330N	118°12.530W	under way	> unknown	66.8°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054815]	0.0 *0	
366938510	366938510 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°46.044N	118°13.052W	under way	> unknown	197.6°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054835]	0.0 *0	
366982330	366982330 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°45.679N	118°13.124W	under way	> unknown	0.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054816]	0.0 *0	
366760710	366760710 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°44.667N	118°9.420W	no command	> unknown	0.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054818]	0.0 *0	
366755020	366755020 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°44.380N	118°16.680W	under way	> unknown	119.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054820]	0.0 *0	
538002327	538002327 [MH]	unknown	0000000	33°43.530N	118°15.600W	under way	> unknown	119.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054820]	0.0 *0	
366982340	366982340 [US]	unknown	0000000	33°46.174N	118°13.271W	under way	> unknown	0.0°	0.kt	0x 0x 0.0m unspecified	[20130428 054820]	0.0 *0	

7. An easier method than downloading charts is to display the ships in Google Earth. To get ShipPlotter to work with Google Earth, you must first enable the Google Earth server in **Options->I/O Settings** by ensuring the checkbox next to “enable Google Earth server” is checked. The HTTP port can be left as default.



8. Then you can go to the folder ShipPlotter was installed to (most likely in ‘Program Files (x86)/COAA/ShipPlotter’) and open the google_ships.kml file in Google Earth. Note that you will need to open ShipPlotter and begin decoding AIS signals by pressing the green start button BEFORE opening the google_ships.kml file, otherwise ships will not show up.



GR-AIS

GR-AIS is a GNU Radio based AIS decoder which can be downloaded from <https://github.com/bistromath/gr-ais>.

AISDECODER

AISDecoder is a Linux based AIS decoder which can output NMEA positions for use in OpenCPN. Download AISDecoder from <http://forum.aishub.net/ais-decoder/ais-decoder-beta-release/>.

Compile the program with

```
tar zxvf aisdecoder.tar.gz
cd aisdecoder
mkdir build
cd build
cmake .. -DCMAKE_BUILD_TYPE=Release
make
```

Now open two terminal windows. In one terminal window create a FIFO buffer with the following command.

```
mkfifo /tmp/aisdata
```

In the same terminal window use the following which will tune to an AIS channel and use sox to convert the sample rate into 48 kHz which is required by aisdecoder. It then outputs the raw audio to the FIFO. Remember to set any PPM offset required for rtl_fm by using the -p flag and you may need to fine tune the gain setting with -g.

```
rtl_fm -M fm -f161.975M -s12k -p48 -g50 | sox -r12k -traw -es -b16 - -traw -r48k -es -b16 /tmp/aisdata
```

In the second terminal window run the command

```
./aisdecoder -h 127.0.0.1 -p 10110 -a file -c mono -d -l -f /tmp/aisdata
```

Now in OpenCPN you can add a UDP receiver with port 10110.

To test an AIS example wav file use the following.

```
sox LALBSnippet.wav -t wav - | sox -twav - -traw -r48k -eunsigned-integer -b16 /tmp/aisdata
```

As an alternative to using a FIFO buffer you can also directly output the audio to the speakers and make aisdecoder listen to that.

```
rtl_fm -M fm -f 161.975M -s 12k -g 50 -l 0 | sox -r12k -traw -es -b16 - -traw -r48k -es -b16 -c1 - | play -r 48k -t raw -e s -b 16 -c 1 -  
V1 -
```

And then run the following to make aisdecoder listen to the audio.

```
./aisdecoder -h 127.0.0.1 -p 10110 -apulse -c mono -d -l
```

Aisdecoder can be compiled on Windows using MingW. Brief instructions follow. First extract the tar file to a folder on Windows, for example C:\aisdecoder. Open cmake-gui and then set the source code path to C:\aisdecoder. Set the build folder to something like C:\aisdecoder\build. Press Configure, and select MingW32 as the compiler. Once configuring is complete press Generate. Now open a cmd prompt and then browse to C:\aisdecoder\build. Type mingw32-make to compile the program to an exe.

See the steps for [building rtl_sdr drivers](#) for a similar more instructive tutorial on compiling with cmake-gui and Mingw.

MARINETRAFFIC.COM

Another possible method for displaying AISMon data is to share your UDP data to the marinetraffic.com website and view the ships on their shared map. You can do this by simply using the marinetraffic.com IP address to send the UDP traffic to. Further instructions can be found at <http://www.marinetraffic.com/ais/addyourarea.aspx?level1=150#6>. Note, be careful that you do not send delayed AIS data to marinetraffic.com, such as with the sample AIS file from the AISMon Yahoo group.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL LINKS

Hak5 Tutorial Video on AIS: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZznkOfVivo&feature=youtube_gdata

DECODING VHF DATA LINK MODE 2 (VDL2)

INTRODUCTION TO VDL2

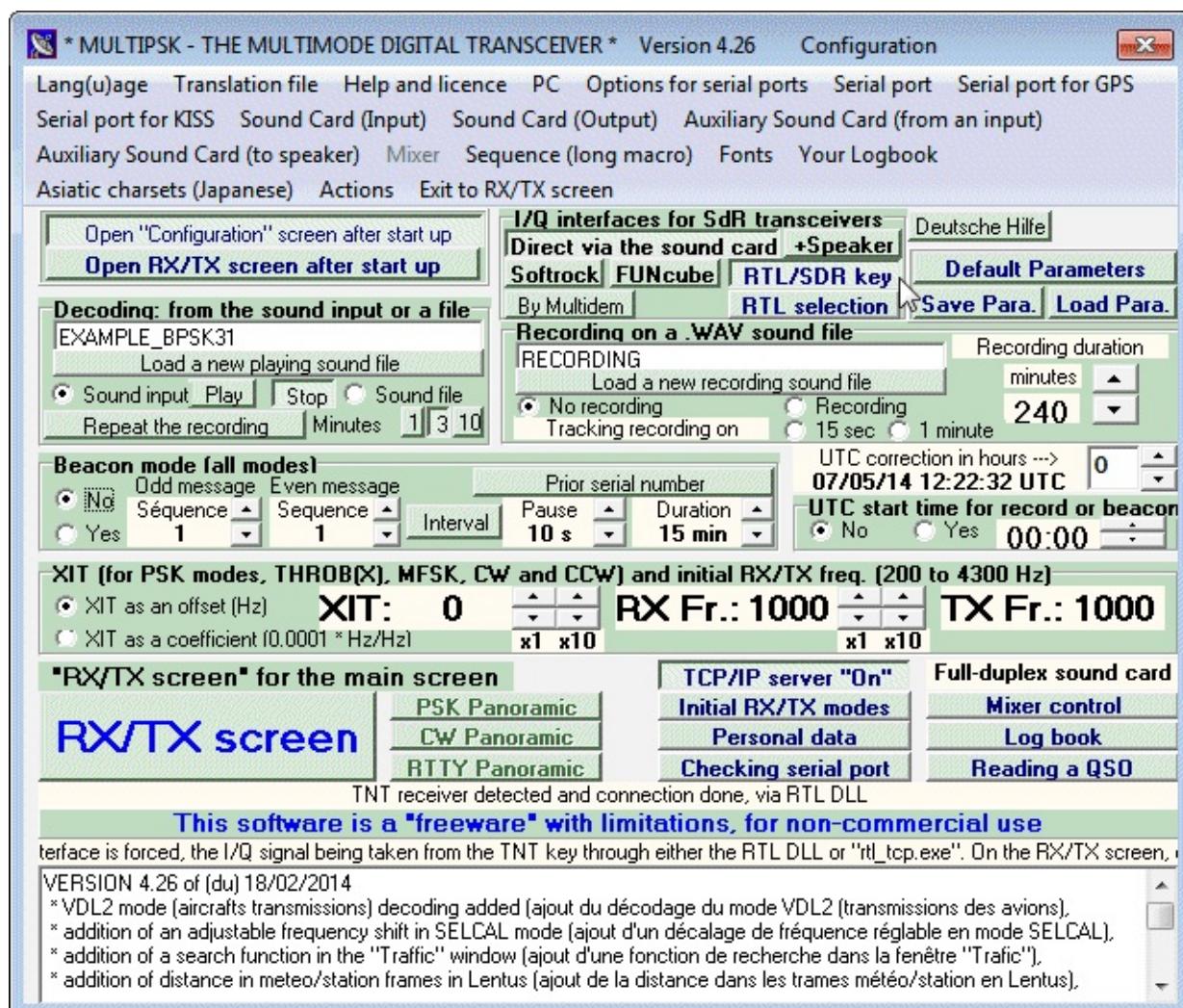
The VHF Data Link mode 2 (VDL2) is a new transmission mode used on aircraft for sending short messages, position data (similar to ADS-B) and also for allowing traffic controllers to communicate to pilots via text and data. VDL2 is intended to eventually replace ACARS. It is found at a worldwide frequency of 136.975 MHz.

MultiPSK can be used to decode VDL2 and then its data can be sent to PlanePlotter for plotting plane positions if GPS data is sent.

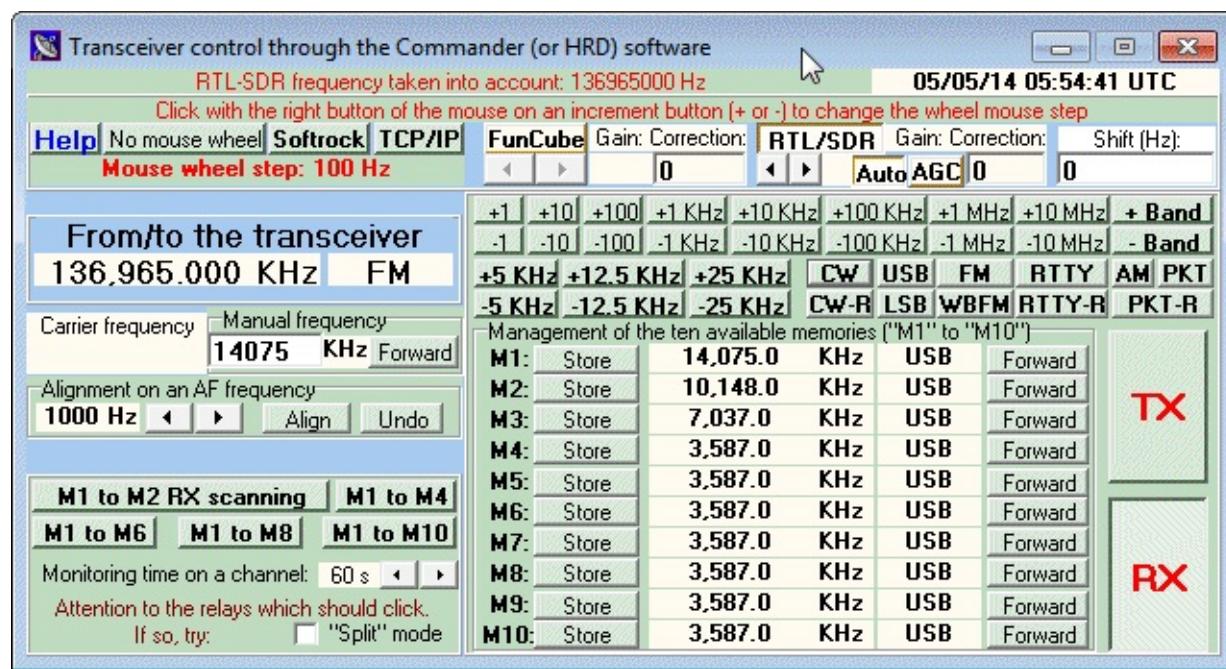
DECODING VDL2 WITH MULTIPSK

MultiPSK is a sophisticated multi mode decoder that can connect directly to the RTL-SDR and is capable of decoding VDL2 signals. It is free, but to decode “professional” modes such as VDL2 the paid version is required. However, MultiPSK provides 5 minutes of VDL2 use per opening of the program for testing. To use MultiPSK follow these steps

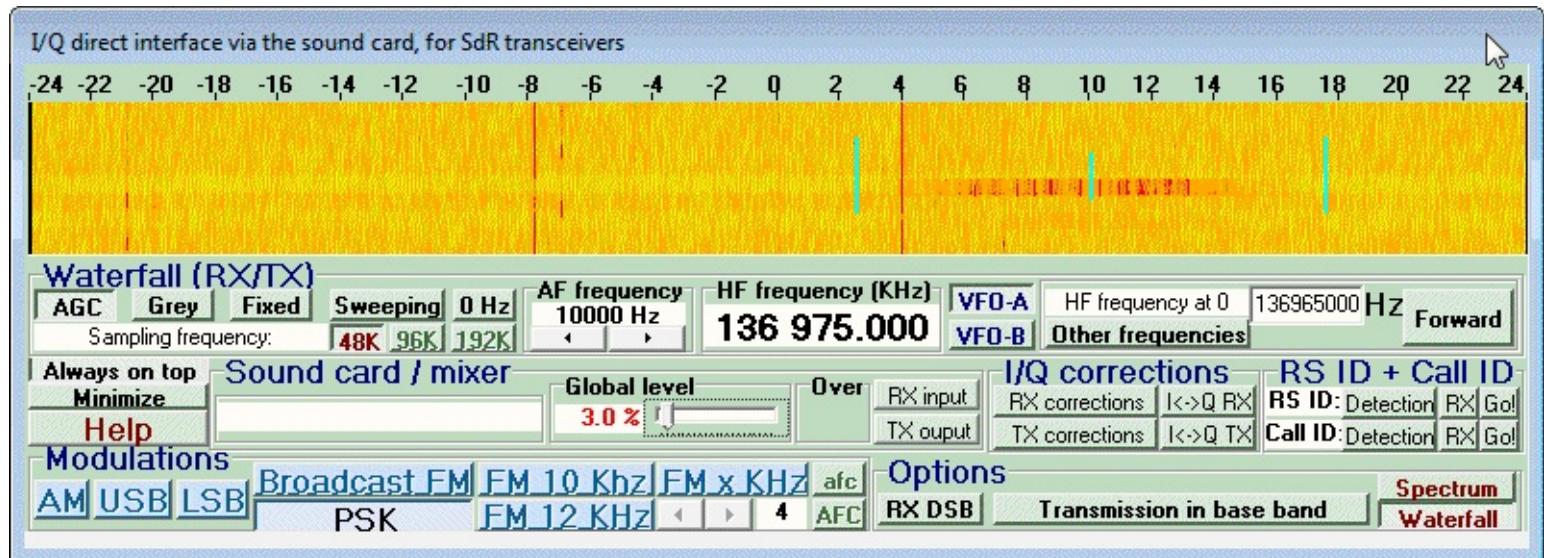
1. Download and extract the multiPSK zip file to a folder.
2. Open MULTIPSK.exe
3. You will be greeted with a complicated looking screen. On this screen we need to ensure the RTL/SDR key button (near the top middle) is pressed in.



4. Click on the RX/TX screen button in the bottom left. This will start the RTL-SDR and a waterfall and RF spectrum should show.
5. Click on the Transceiver button **Transceiver** in the top left area of the main screen. This will bring up the transceiver control screen. Here you can adjust the RTL-SDR gain and set the PPM correction which is shown near the in the top right of the transceiver screen. If you are unsure as to what to set the gain, use the Auto Gain by ensuring the Auto button is pressed. You can enter a PPM correction in the text box under the word “correction”. Close the transceiver screen.



6. In the floating window with the waterfall/spectrum change the HF frequency at 0 to 136965000 Hz and then press the “Forward Button”.
7. Set the “AF frequency” to 10000 Hz. Do this by first clicking under the number 10 in the waterfall and then fine tuning it using the left and right buttons under the AF frequency controls.

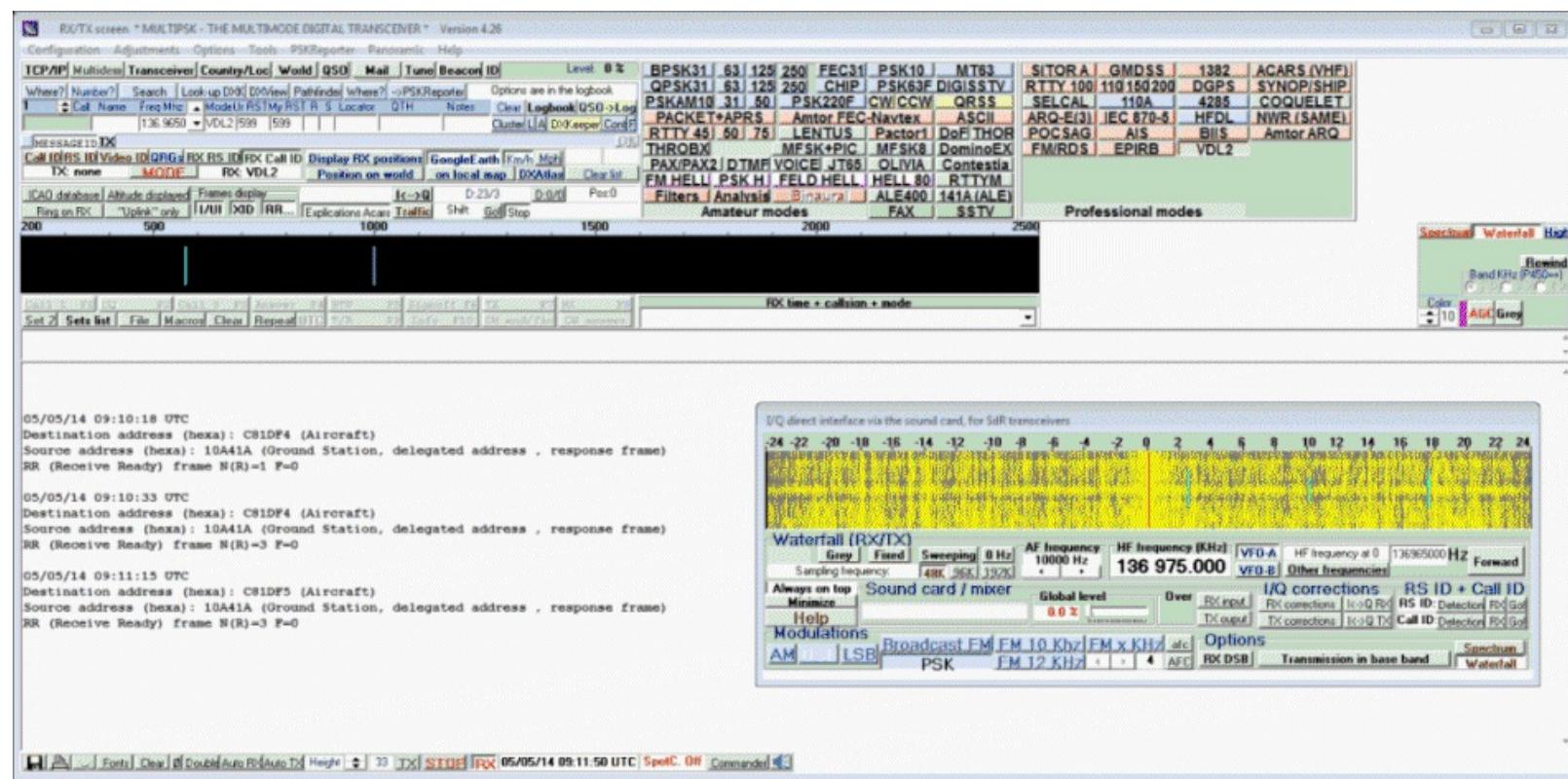


8. Now click on the VDL2 button on the very right of the main window, where it says Professional modes. If you can't see this you might need to maximise the main window.

SITOR A	GMDSS	1382	ACARS (VHF)
RTTY 100	110 150 200	DGPS	SYNOP/SHIP
SELCAL	110A	4285	COQUELET
ARQ-E(3)	IEC 870-5	HFDL	NWR (SAME)
POCSAG	AIS	BIIS	Amtor ARQ
FM/RDS	EPIRB	VDL2	

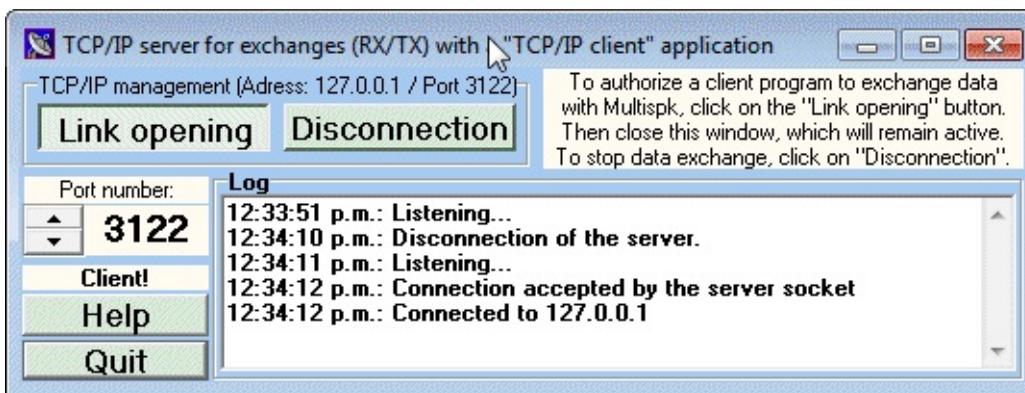
Professional modes

9. Now VDL2 decoding will begin, and you will see VDL2 messages in the main window.

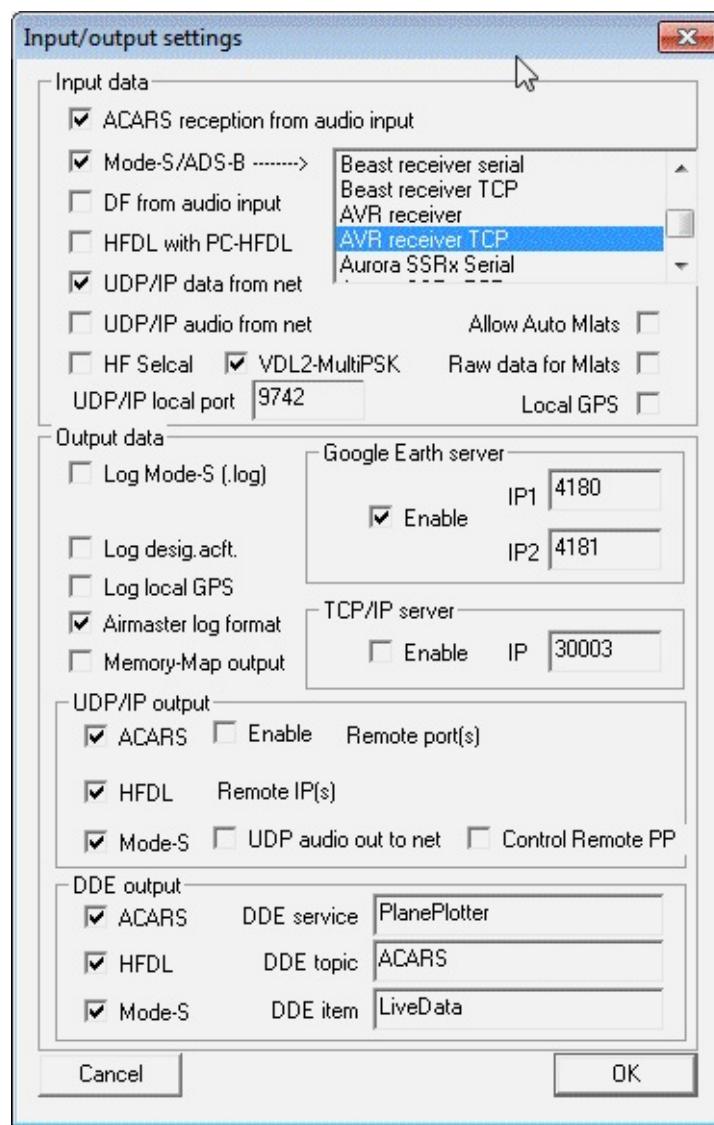


MultiPSK can also interface with PlanePlotter in order to plot VDL2 data on a map. To do this follow these instructions.

1. In the main MultiPSK window click the TCP/IP button **TCP/IP** in the top left corner. Make sure the port number is set to 3122.



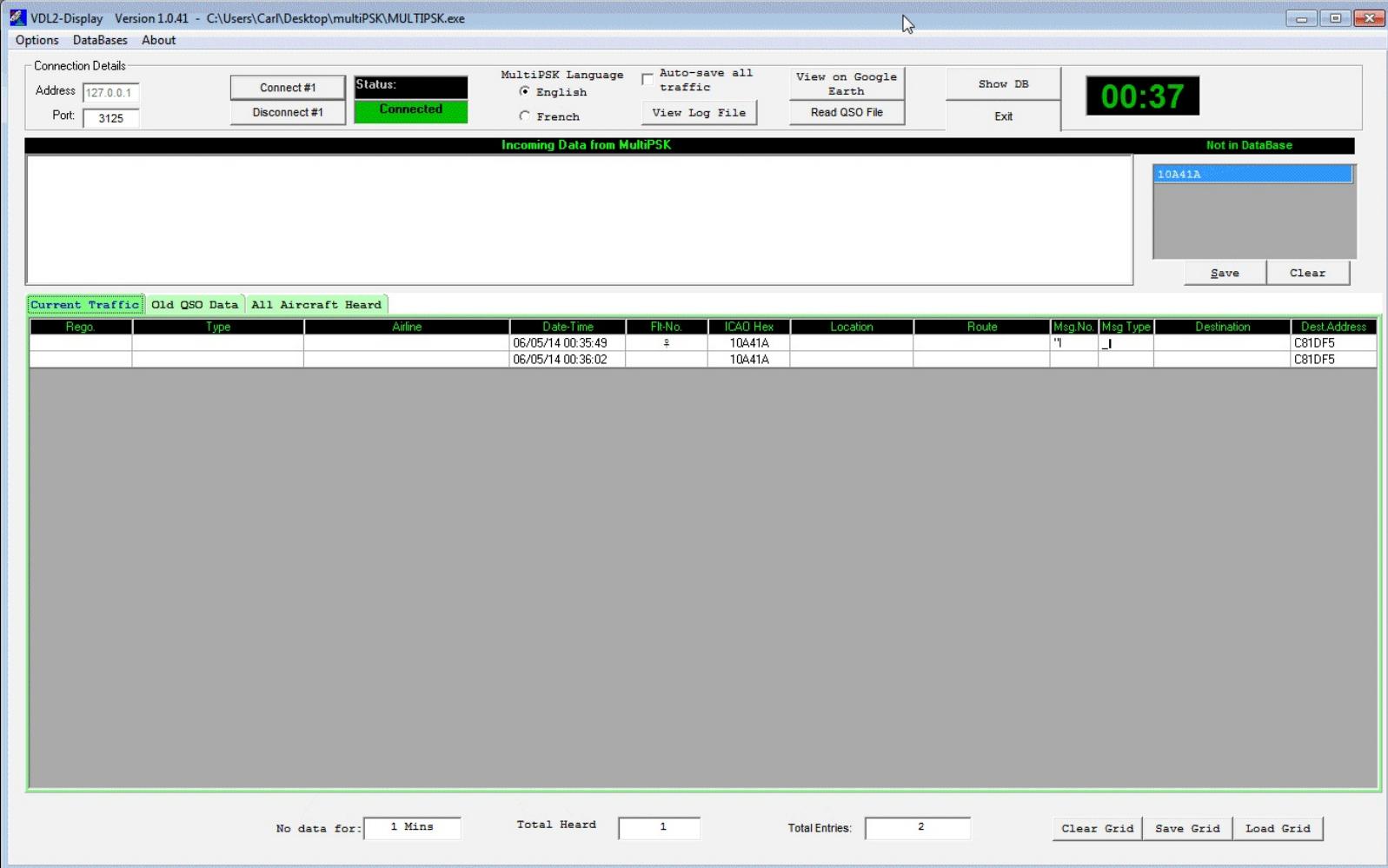
2. Now in PlanePlotter go to I/O options and ensure that the checkbox VDL2-MultiPSK is checked.



3. Start PlanePlotter by pressing the green start button. Now any messages received by MultiPSK will appear in PlanePlotter as well.

You can also use the free program VDL2-Display available from <http://www.rstools.info/downloads-2.html> which will display the received VDL2 information in a more clear format. To use VDL2-Display follow the instructions below.

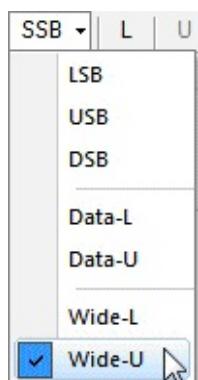
1. In MultiPSK click on the TCP/IP button **TCP/IP** in the top left corner of the receive screen. Change the port number to 3125. Disconnect and then reconnect the port.
2. Open Display-Launcher.exe then open VDL2 Display.
3. Click the connect the Connect #1 button in VDL2 Display to connect to MultiPSK. Now received VDL2 messages and aircraft will show in VDL2 Display.



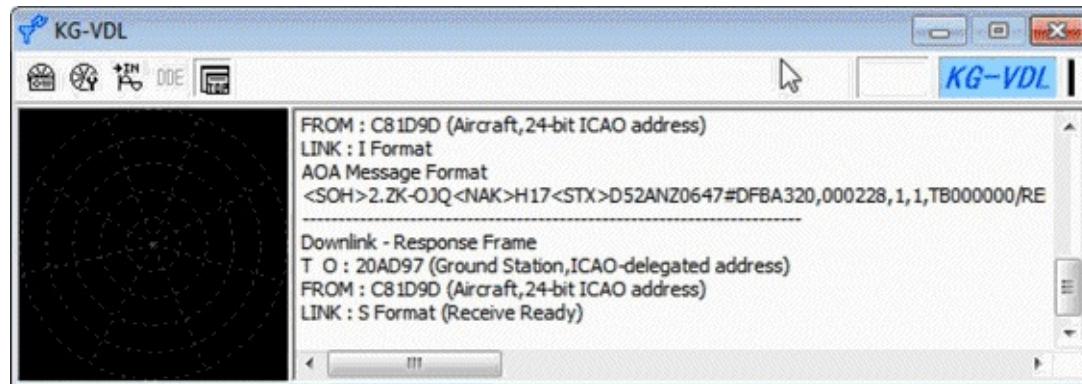
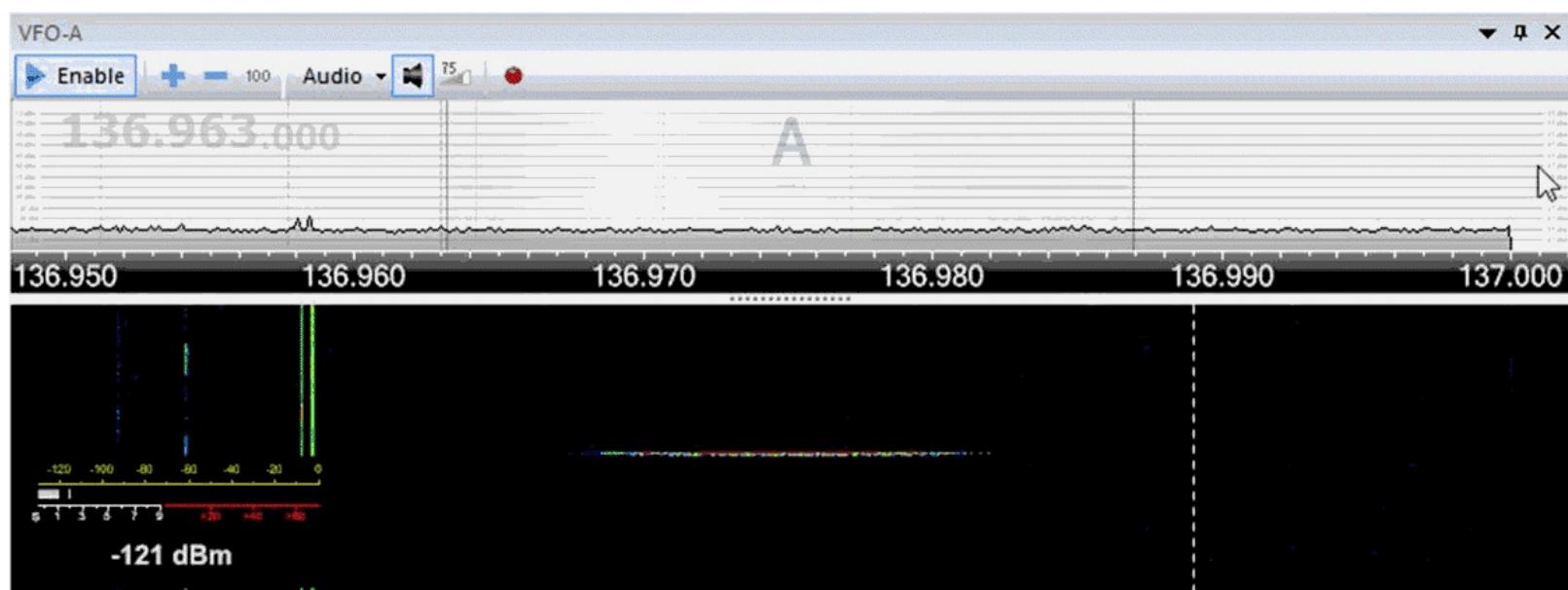
KG-VDL

KG-VDL is a VDL2 decoder by a Japanese developer. It is a paid product, but has a 10 minute trial which can be used for testing. It can be downloaded from <http://www2.plala.or.jp/hikokibiyori/soft/kgvdls/>. Unfortunately, it seems that KG-VDL cannot be purchased anymore and only the trial version is available. To use KG-VDL you must use SDR-RADIO v2 as the audio source as it is the only SDR receiver with a wide USB setting. To decode VDL2 using KG-VDL follow these steps

1. Open KG-VDL and set the input audio device by clicking the in-button to select the audio piping method you prefer.
2. Now open SDR-CONSOLE, and select the audio piping method you are using for the output audio.
3. Tune to 136.963 MHz.
4. Choose Wide-U as the receive type.



5. Drag the bandwidth to be as large as possible. When a VDL packet is received, the window should look like this.



REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL LINKS

PlanePlotter MultiPSK VDL2 Tutorial:

<http://planeplotter.pbworks.com/w/page/75894179/VDL%20mode%202>

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SCANNER GUIDE

Air traffic control can be easily scanned using the RTL-SDR and a scanner plugin for SDR#. A scanner plugin rapidly switches between frequencies looking for an active signal. When an active signal is found it stays on that signal until the transmission is over. This tutorial can be adapted to any system that requires scanning.

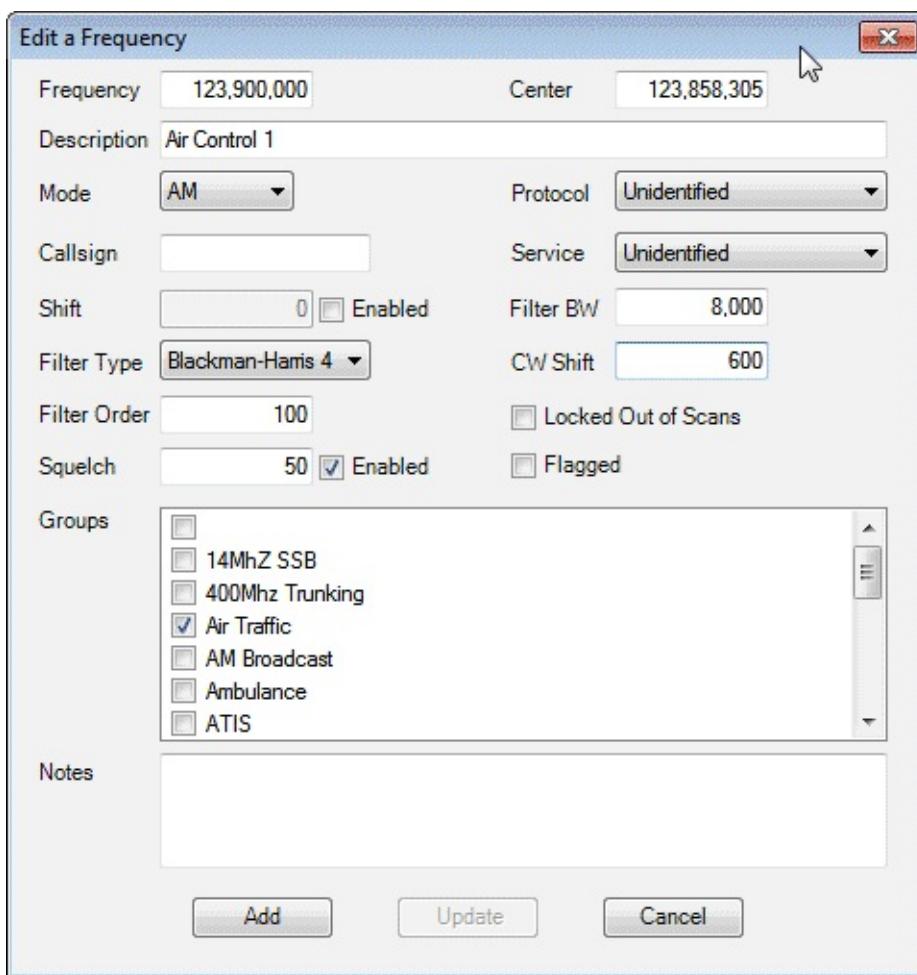
SDR# FREQUENCY SCANNER

The SDR# frequency scanner plugin we will use can be downloaded from www.sdrsharpplugins.com. It has an automatic installer so there is no need to edit any config files. Simply extract the zip file to a folder and then run PluginsSetup.exe following the on screen instructions.

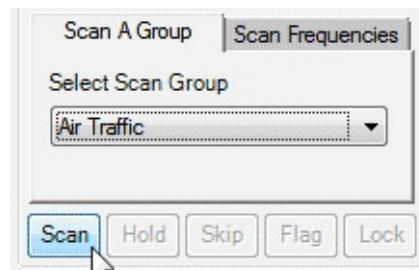
KNOWN FREQUENCY SCANNING

This will quickly scan a list of known frequencies for an active signal. You will need to find a list of frequencies used by Air Traffic control in your area. You can also manually record active frequencies you see in the spectrum. Another way may be to create a heatmap or use the scanner metrics plugin to find active frequencies. See the [heatmap tutorial](#) in a later section.

1. In the frequency manager plugin tab, go to **Manage -> Groups** and create a group called Air Traffic.
2. Now to add your frequencies first tune to that frequency, then click the Edit button. In the window that pops up make sure to set the Mode to AM for air traffic and the Filter BW to 8000. Put a checkmark next to the Air Traffic group box. Finally, click Add.



3. To scan a group, first select that group in the Scan A Group tab. Then click the Scan button. The “minimum signal strength” slider should be set higher than the noise floor, but not too high to miss weak signals. Remember that a value of 0 indicates a very strong signal and a value of -130 indicates a very weak signal. You may need to tweak the signal strength slider until only valid signals and not noise is recognised.



You can edit the scan speed by clicking on the spanner icon and then adjusting the “Radio Settle Time in Milliseconds” slider under the Performance tab.

GENERAL FREQUENCY SCANNING

General frequency scanning is when you want to scan very quickly over a range of frequencies to find unknown active signals. While the frequency scanner plugin used above can do this, for this type of scanning we prefer to use the “Fast Scanner Plugin”, from <http://rtl-sdr.ru/page/skaner-poisk-novyh-chastot> which we find to work better. Note that this page is in Russian, but the download link is placed

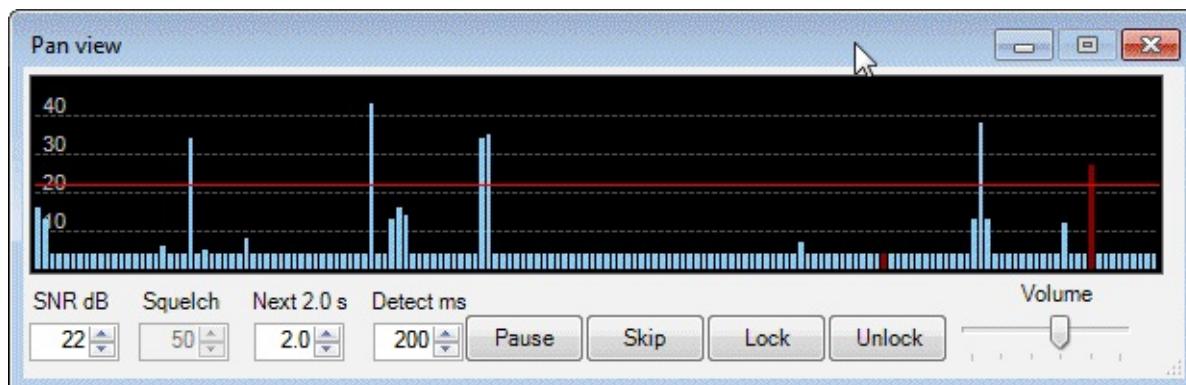
near the bottom of the article and the plugin is in English. Install the plugin according to the [plugin install procedure](#).

To use the fast scanner plugin follow these steps

1. Before starting to scan you will need to know the spacing of frequencies in the band you want to scan. For example, air band signals are spaced at 25 kHz (or 8.33 kHz in some countries) apart. You will need to set this spacing as your step size using the setting in the Radio Tab which is the tab containing the AM/FM/SSB mode selections. The scanner will increment the frequency using this signal spacing.



2. Go to the fast scanner frequency plugin window. Choose either “screen” or “manual” mode in the drop down menu. Screen mode will scan for active frequencies that are currently displayed on the screen and manual mode will let you scan between an arbitrary minimum and maximum frequency.
3. Press Scan. A “Pan View” scanner window will pop up. This window shows a frequency spectrum of signals.
4. The horizontal red line indicates the power threshold a signal needs to cross to be classed as an active signal that the scanner will stop at. The height of the line can be adjusted using the SNR dB setting box.
5. You can press the “Skip” button to skip to the next active signal when scanning.
6. You can ignore certain signals such as noise spikes or data channels by clicking on them with your mouse in the scanner frequency spectrum, or by dragging the mouse in the scanner frequency spectrum and using the Lock and Unlock buttons. When a frequency in the frequency spectrum is coloured red it is ‘locked’ and will be ignored by the scanner.



While scanning the fast scanner will also create a table of active signals that it has found in the plugin window. It shows the time that they have been active and the frequency they are at.

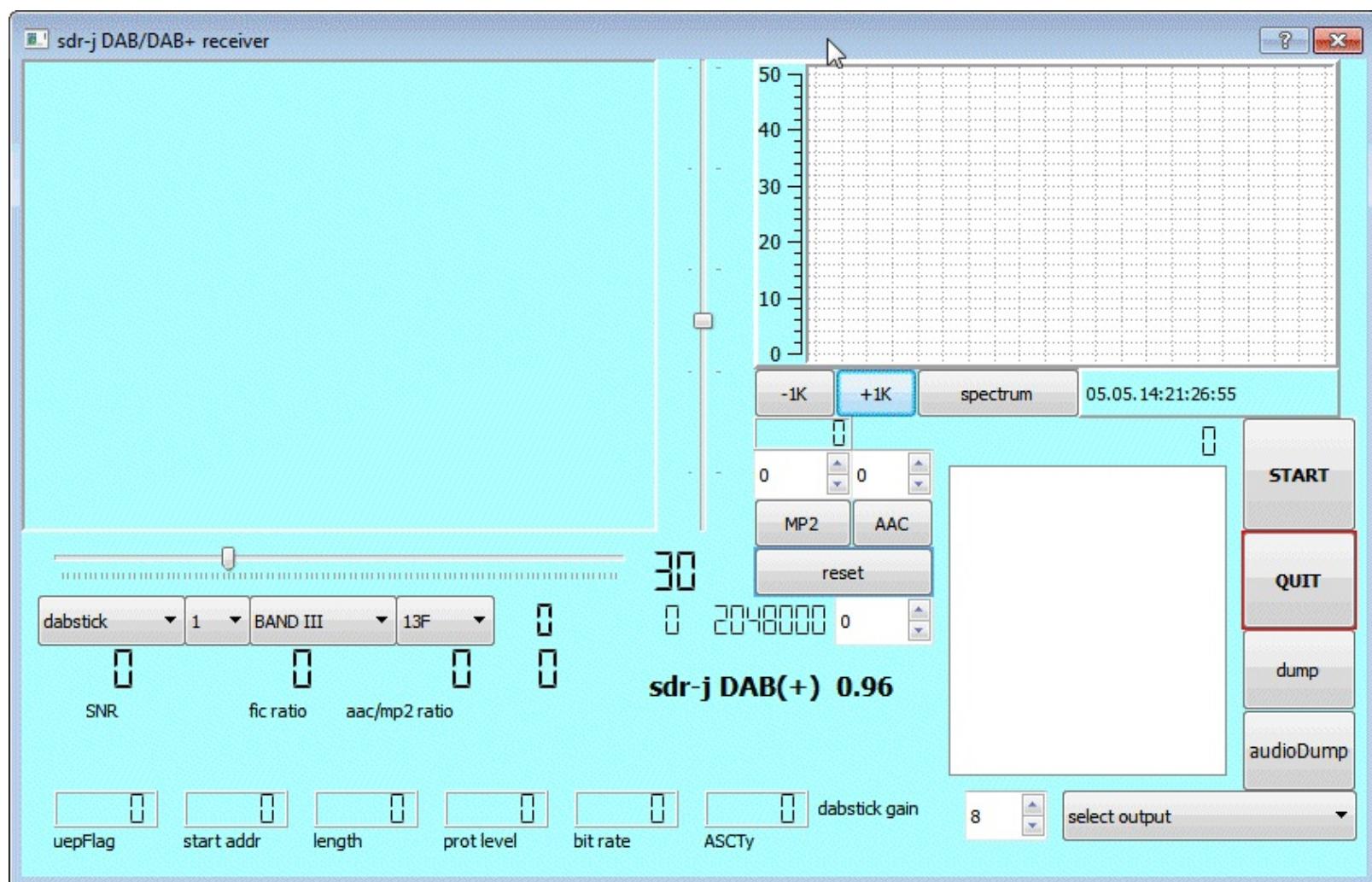
DAB RADIO GUIDE

Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) is a digital radio technology used to broadcast commercial radio stations. It is an alternative to broadcast wideband FM stations in many countries, especially Europe. The DVB-T TV software from the CD provided with some dongles actually has DAB decoding software, however this software requires the installation of the official drivers which would prevent any general SDR use.

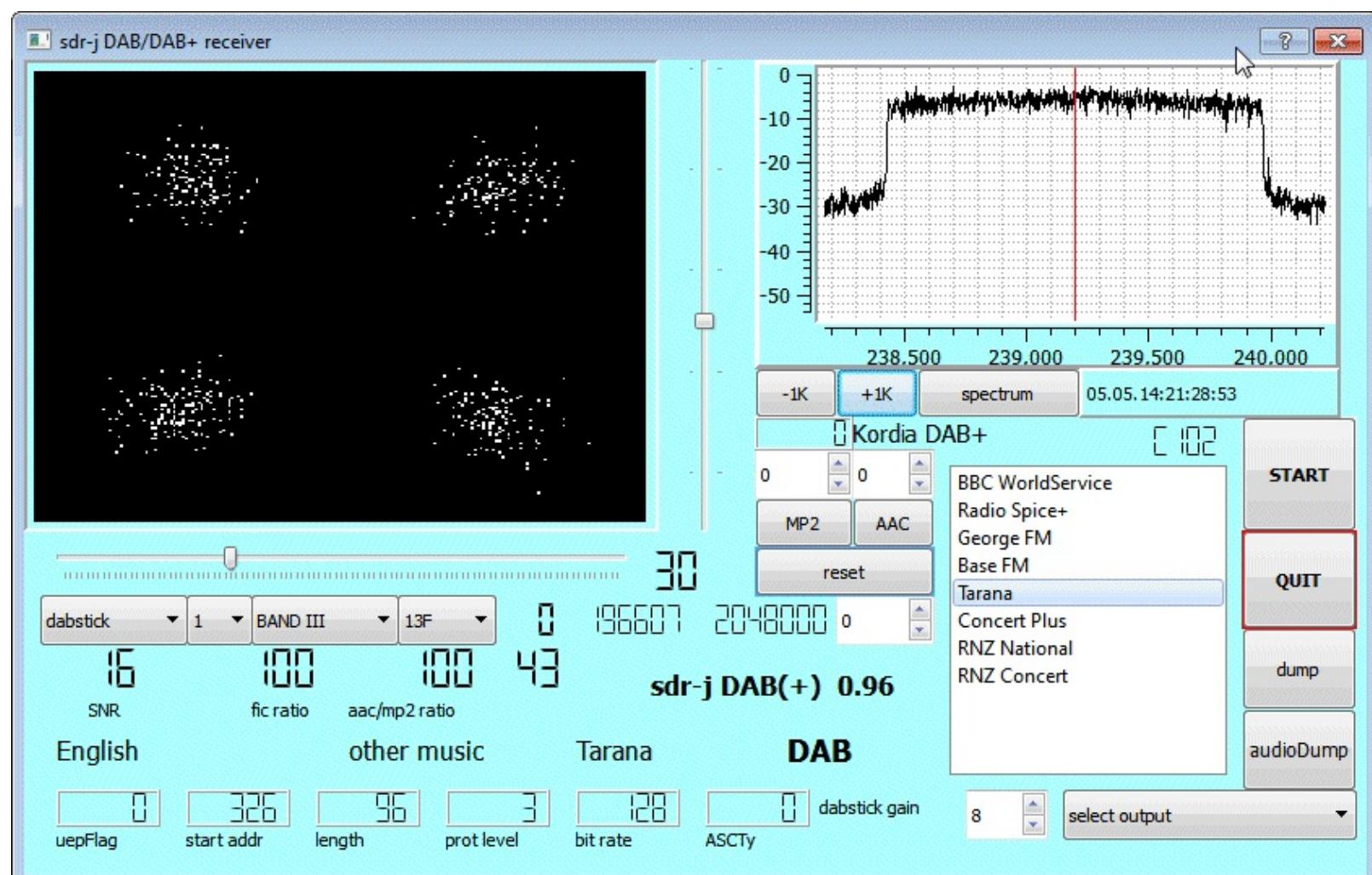
DAB RECEIVE TUTORIAL

Instead, to listen to DAB radio with the SDR drivers installed, a program called SDR-J can be used. SDR-J is a Windows and Linux program that is capable of receiving DAB and DAB+. It also comes with an FM receiver; however this won't be used in our tutorial. It can be downloaded from <http://www.sdr-j.tk/> making sure to download the dabstick-radio zip file.

1. Download SDR-J and extract the zip file to a folder.
2. Open the dabreceiver.exe file.
3. If your RTL-SDR dongle is plugged in and properly set up the SDR-J DAB screen will show.



4. Make sure that “dabstick” is selected on the left-most pull down menu.
5. Choose the BAND and DAB spectrum block designator in the two right-most pull down boxes on the left of the screen. In the screenshot above we used BAND III and the spectrum 13F. These settings will be different for each country. Check out <http://www.wohnort.org/dab/> for information on block designations in your country.
6. In the bottom right select the audio output you wish to use, which will usually be your speakers.
7. Click Start.
8. Adjust the gain in the bottom right corner so that the DAB RF signal in the top right is strong and high above the noise floor. You can use the vertical slider to the left of the RF signal to adjust the left axis range.
9. At this point if you have chosen a DAB block which is broadcasting, the white box on the right side will begin to populate with radio stations.
10. Click on a radio station to begin playing it. Note that sometimes changing the number box above the AAC button works better to select radio stations.



An alternative DAB player that uses the official RTL-SDR drivers can be downloaded from

<http://www.ukwtv.de/cms/downloads-aside/281-dab-player-von-andreas-gsinn.html>. Note that the language of this program is in German. To use this program you will need to install the provided drivers first (for the R820T download Treiber2.zip) which are different to the SDR drivers.

RECEIVING ANALOGUE TV (PAL/NTSC) GUIDE

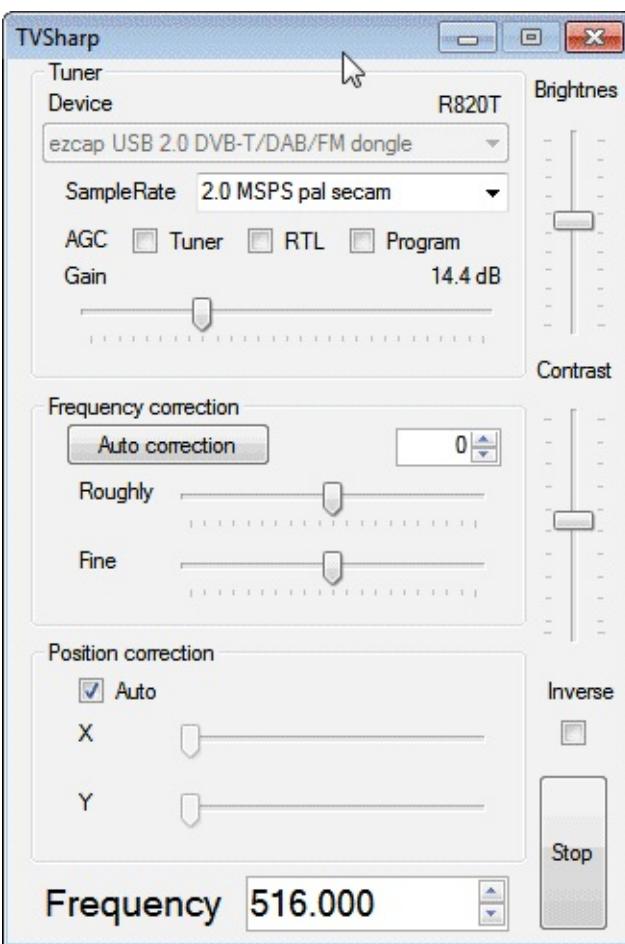
Most countries have begun phasing out transmission of Analogue TV instead favouring the switch to Digital transmission standards like ATSC (USA) or DVB-T (most of world). In the countries that still transmit Analogue TV the RTL-SDR can be used to receive it.

In SDR mode the RTL-SDR is incapable of receiving the entire PAL or NTSC video bandwidth, which is 5 MHz for PAL systems and 4.2 MHz for NTSC. However, it is still capable of receiving part of the luminance (black and white) part of PAL or NTSC.

A program which does this is TVSharp. The latest version of TVSharp can be downloaded from <http://rtl-sdr.ru/page/tvsharp-analogovoe-tv-na-rtl-tjunere/tvsharp-updated-version-1-2/> This page is in Russian, so use Google translate or just click on the link at the bottom to download the zip. (Mirror 1: <http://sdrts.amoti.ru/download/view.download/4/8>) (Mirror 2: <http://bit.ly/1hMBZmy>).

To use TVSharp simply open it and then click the start button with your RTL-SDR dongle plugged in. Under sample rate choose either the NTSC or PAL option depending on the TV broadcast standard in your country. Then tune to a Analogue TV frequency. Using a higher sample rate will increase the bandwidth sampled, improving picture quality. But setting it too high can seems to cause reception problems. You can then use the frequency text box to tune to a known TV station.

The program also has automatic frequency and position correction options built in which will help to prevent image scrolling and non centred images.



GUIDE TO LISTENING TO TRUNKED RADIO: ANALOGUE AND DIGITAL P25

In an inefficient radio system, one company (or talkgroup) might use a single frequency for radio communications. However, this is very inefficient as the frequency may not be in use for the majority of the time. In a trunked radio system, a small set number of frequencies are shared between a large number of talkgroups. Each radio receives a special computer controlled control channel. The control channel determines a vacant frequency that a particular talkgroup should use on the fly. This helps to make radio frequency allocations more efficient.

Because a talkgroup might switch between various frequencies often, it can make listening to a conversation difficult for radio scanners that cannot decode the control channel. The program Unitrunker can be used to decode the control channel and follow a voice conversation as it hops across various frequencies. With two RTL-SDR dongles you can set up a trunking receiver station with just Unitrunker. What follows below is a tutorial on how to set this up.

UNITRUNKER VOICE TRUNKING FOLLOWING TUTORIAL

To set up a trunking station we will assume that you have been through the [Quickstart guide](#) in this book and thus have a working RTL-SDR setup. In addition you will need

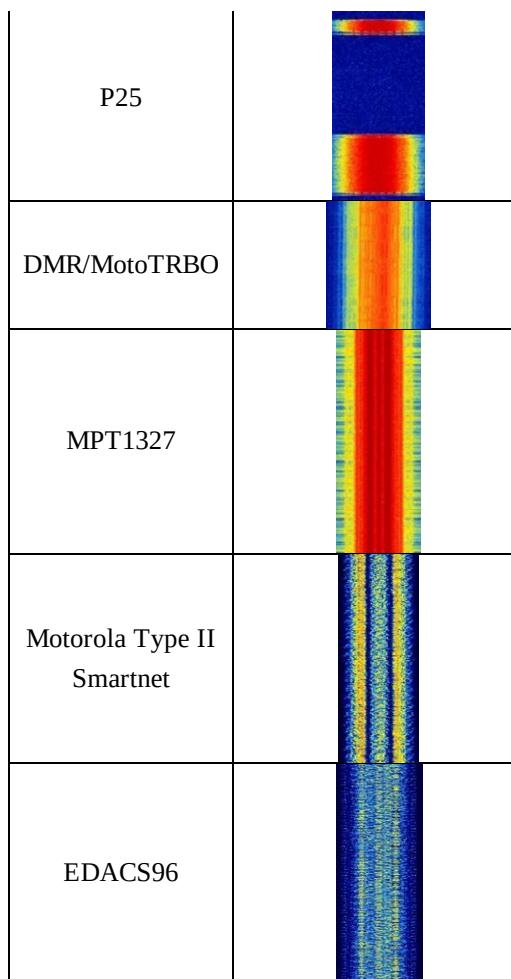
- 2x R820T RTL2832U RTL-SDR dongles. See the Buy RTL-SDR page at <http://www rtl-sdr.com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/> if you don't already have two. You will need one dongle to receive the control channel and one dongle to receive the voice channel. Only the R820T appears to be supported at the moment.
- The Unitrunker software (Download the latest version from <http://www.unitrunker.com/download>)
- One antenna that splits into two connections for the two dongles, or two antennas that can receive the trunking frequencies you are interested in.

Now follow these steps to set up Unitrunker with the RTL2832U.

SETTING UP THE SIGNAL (CONTROL CHANNEL) RECEIVER

First determine the frequency of a trunking control channel that you are interested in monitoring. You can use SDR# or a similar program to search for these first. They will be signals that are continuously transmitting with no breaks. Here are some examples of some common trunking modes. These are commonly found in the 400 and 800 MHz bands.

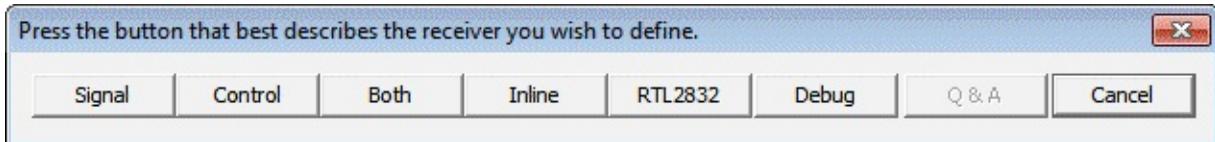
Protocol	Waterfall Image



To use Unitrunker follow these instructions

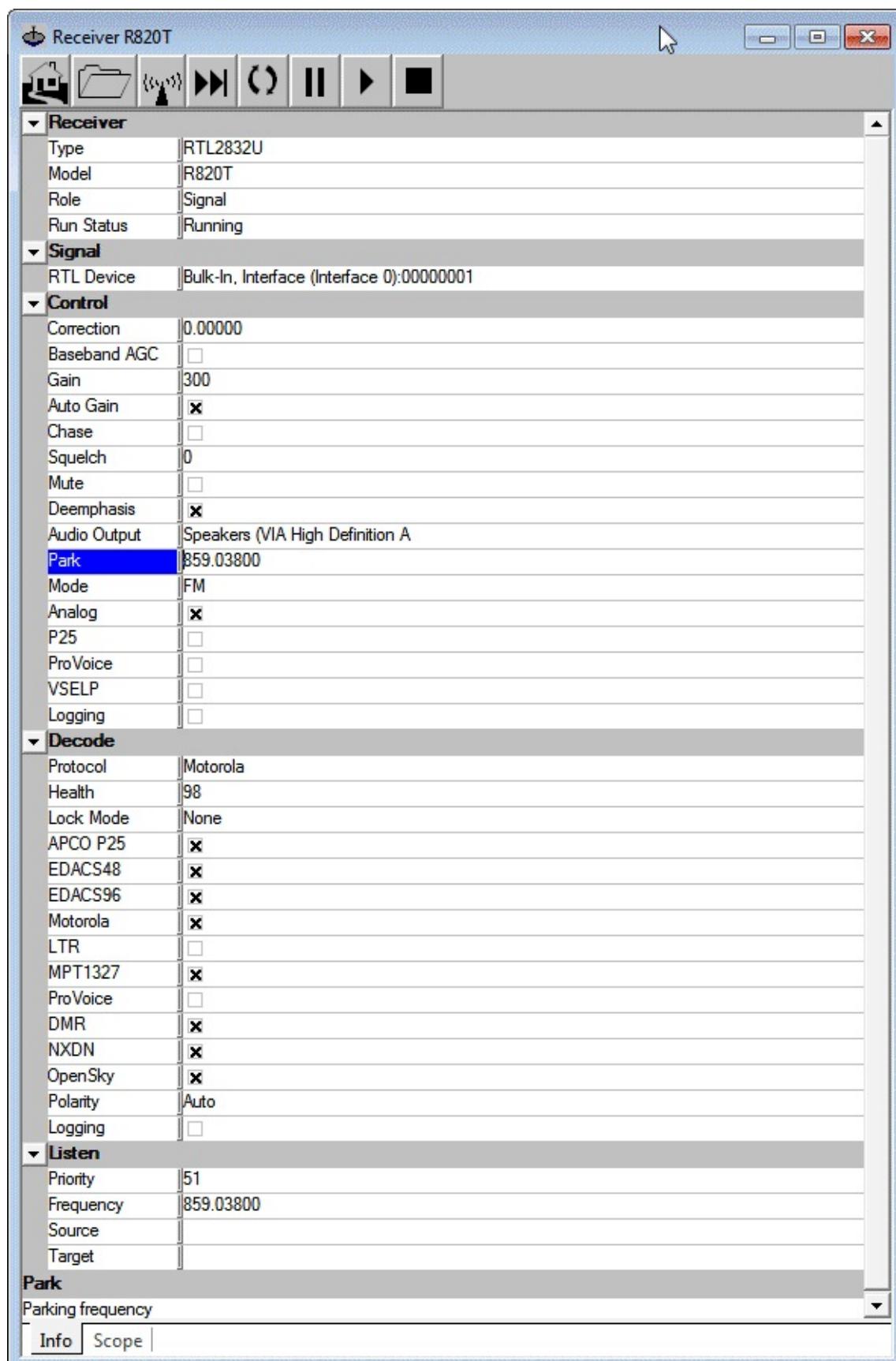
1. Plug in both dongles and then open Unitrunker.

2. Press the 'Add new receiver' button , and then on the bar that pops up click on the RTL2832 button.

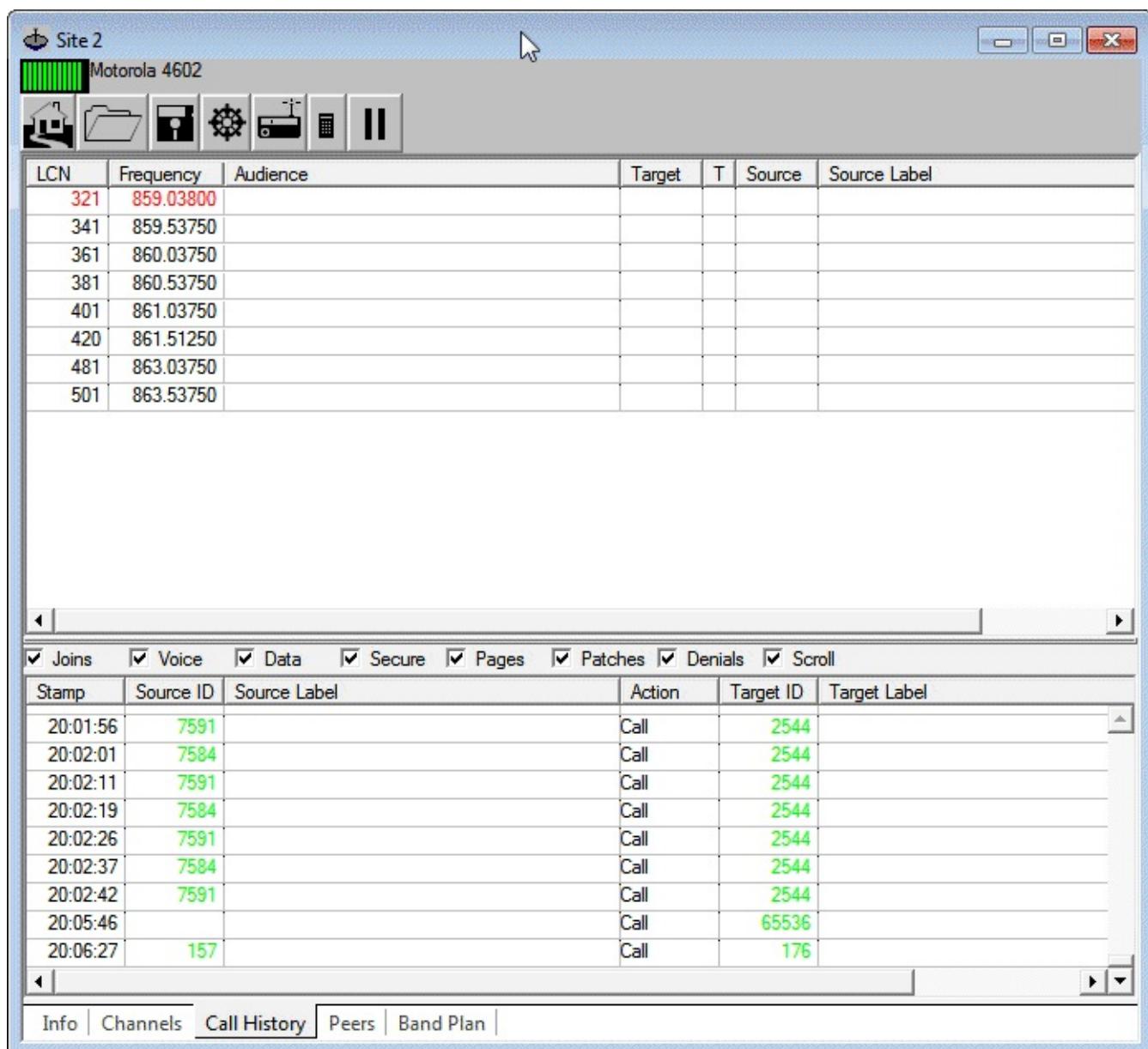


3. In the new window that pops up change the Role to Signal.
4. Under the Signal heading change the RTL Device to the stick that will be used for the control channel.
5. Type in your dongles frequency offset in PPM in Correction.
6. Make sure that Mute is checked.
7. Change the Park value to the frequency of the trunking channel that you wish to monitor.
8. Under Decode check all the trunking protocols that you are interested in listening to.

9. Now at the top of this window press the Play button . A new window should soon pop up and the value of the Protocol setting under the Decode heading should change to the trunking protocol detected.
10. If the window does not pop up, either increase the Gain value or turn on the Auto Gain setting. If no window still pops up, set the Audio Output setting to your speakers and uncheck the mute button. Listen to see if the trunking channel is being correctly played through your speakers. If not, you may need to fine tune the frequency.



11. If the signal is strong enough, a new window should pop up. This new window shows the frequencies in use, and logs each call. If the frequencies are not showing, click the 'Wizard' button whose icon looks like a calculator. Then choose the system used in your country. If unsure, try 'Standard' first.

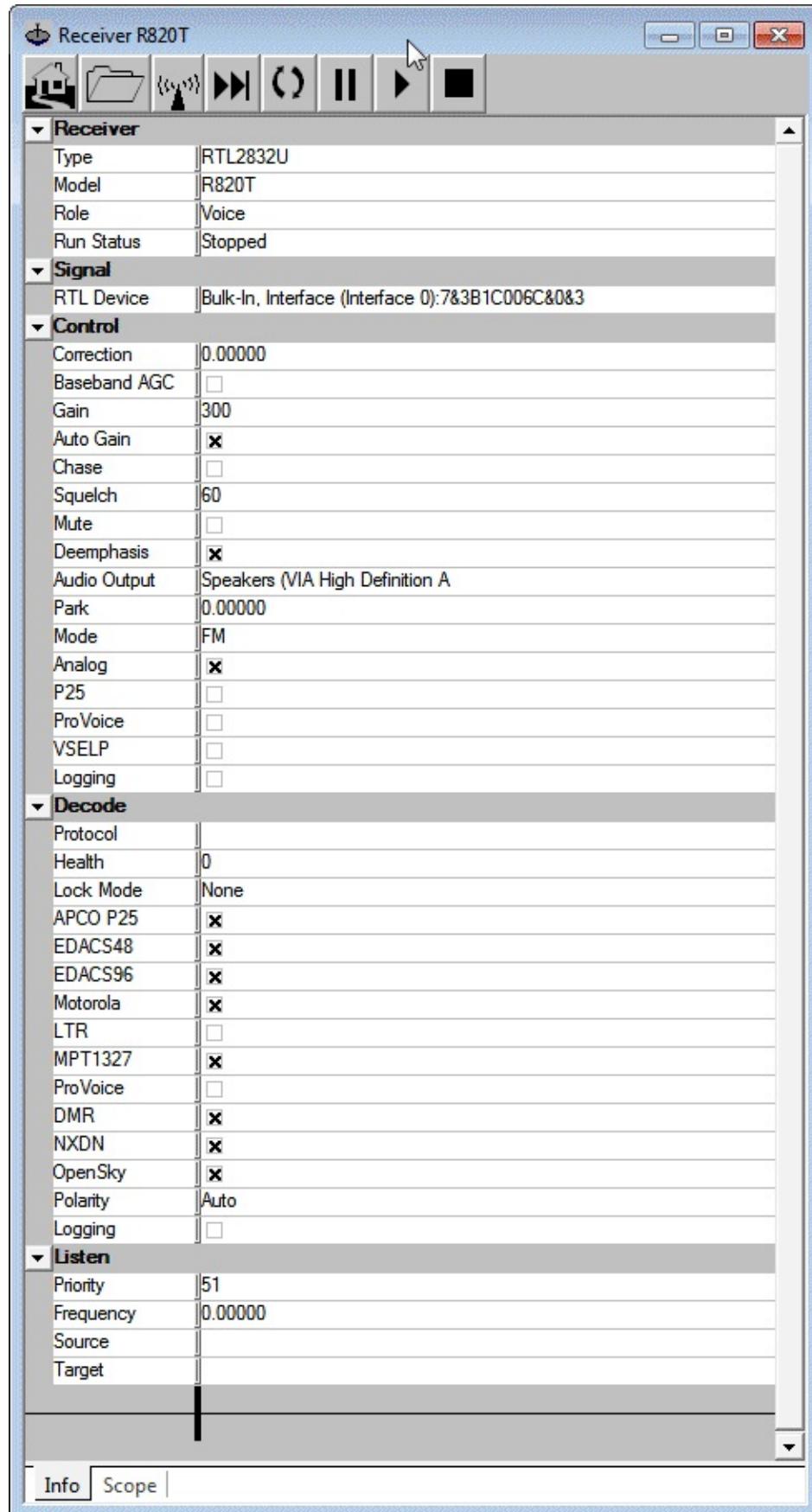


12. Close the Receiver R820T options window for the signal channel and go back to the main Unitrunker Window.

SETTING UP THE VOICE CHANNEL RECEIVER

1. Now that we have added the signal receiver and decoder we will add the voice receiver.
2. Press the 'Add new receiver' button once again and then on the bar that pops up click on the RTL2832 button.
3. This time for the role choose 'Voice'.
4. For the RTL Device, choose your second RTL-SDR dongle.
5. Set the gain and PPM offset for this dongle appropriately.
6. Choose the Audio Output as your speakers and make sure that Mute is *not* checked.
7. Set the 'Park' frequency to zero.

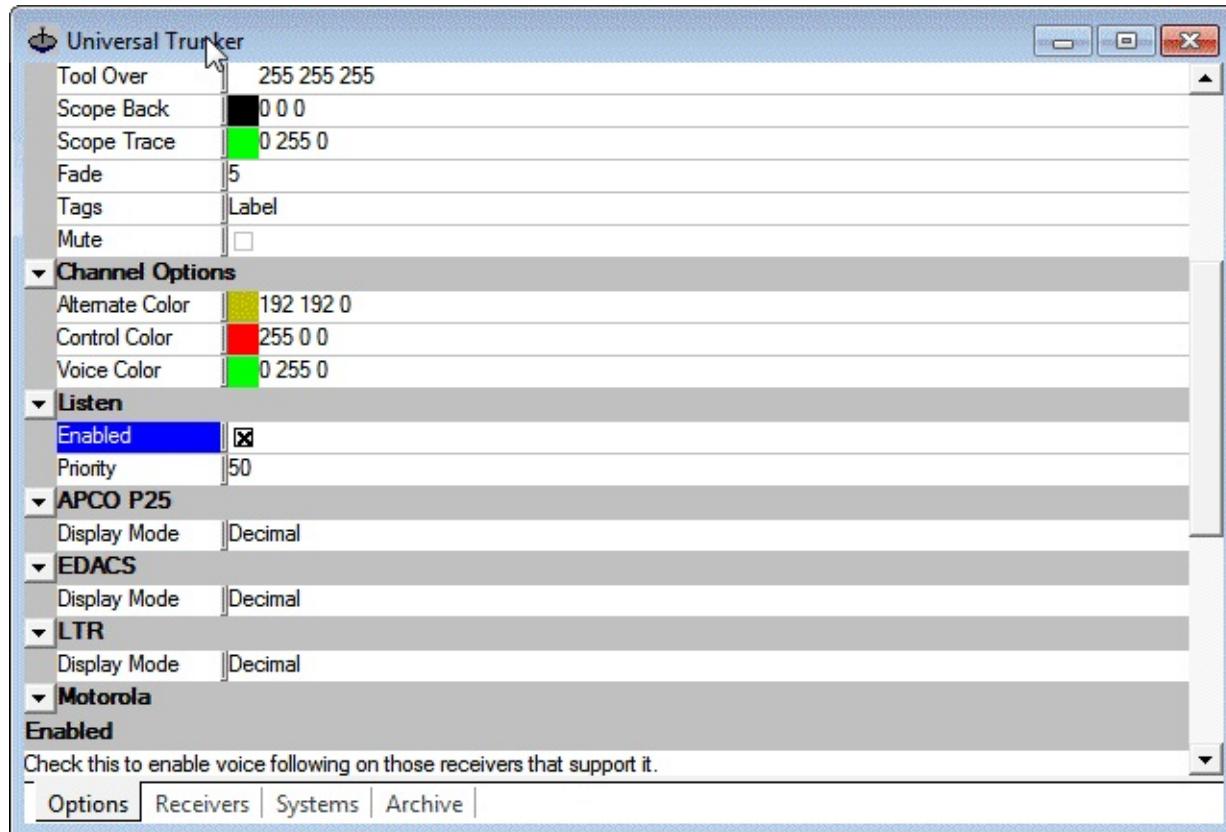
8. If desired, set the squelch to a value that is similar to what you might use in SDR#. The squelch will stop static from playing when there is no voice signal. You may wish to leave this at zero for now, and then tune it with trial and error later when you have everything going. If you are using trial and error try a value around or try somewhere around 40 - 60 first.



9. Press the Play button ▶.

ENABLING UNITRUNKER FOLLOWING

1. Now we will make sure that Unitrunker is set to allow the voice receiver to follow calls from the signal channel.
2. Go back to the main Unitrunker window and click on the “Options” tab at the bottom of the window.
3. Make sure that “Enabled” is checked under Listen. This will allow the voice channel to follow the trunking information from the control signal.



At this point your trunking receiver should now be up and running!

DECODING DIGITAL VOICE (P25/DMR/MOTOTRBO/NXDN/PROVOICE)

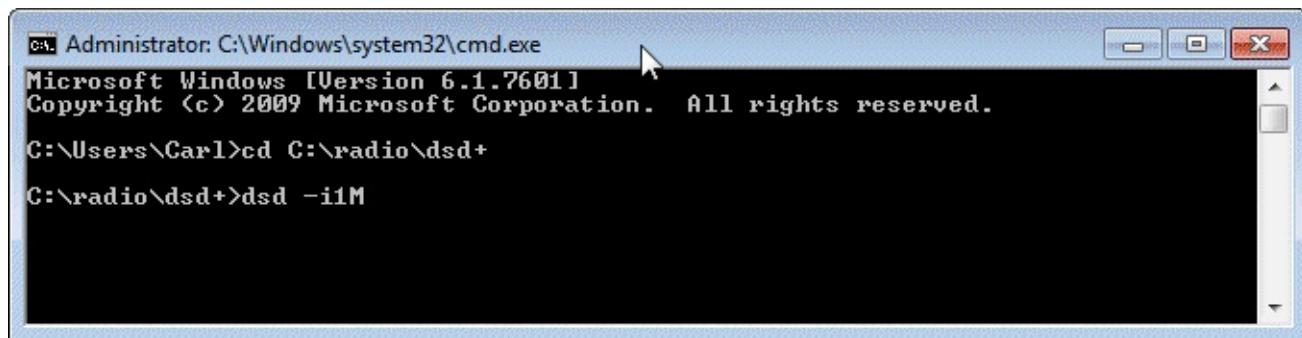
Decoding of unencrypted digital voice signals like P25/DMR/Mototrbo can be set up in the same way as the analogue system shown above. However, instead of outputting audio to the speakers, audio should be output to a virtual audio pipe such as VAC or VB Cable. Then DSD+ should be used to listen to the audio pipe. See information in [Appendix A: Audio Piping](#) for more information if you don't have any audio pipes set up.

DSD+ is a program that is capable of decoding digital voice protocols such as P25, DMR/Mototrbo, NXDN and ProVoice. It is not capable of decoding encrypted digital voice channels. DSD+ is similar to DSD version 1.6, but it has vastly improved decoding in terms of voice quality. You can find the download for DSD+ here <http://www rtl-sdr com/improved-digital-voice-p25-decoding-dsd/>.

To run DSD+. you will need to place an MP3 encoder file lame_enc.dll into the same folder as the dsd.exe executable. This file is not included with DSD+ due to licensing. For Windows, lame_enc.dll can be downloaded from <http://lame1.buanzo.com.ar/#lamewindl> (Mirror: <http://bit.ly/1subqre>). Download the ZIP option, and then copy the lame_enc.dll file into the same folder as DSD+.

To run DSD+ open a command prompt from **Start->All Programs->Accessories->Command Prompt**, and navigate to the folder where DSD+ is located. For those who are not familiar with the command prompt, use the change directory ‘cd’ command to change directories within command prompt. For example, if your DSD+ folder is located in c:\Radio\dsd+, you would type in command prompt ‘cd c:\Radio\dsd+’.

Type ‘dir’ to see a list of all files in the current directory. Next in command prompt type ‘dsd -i1M’, where the number after the -i is the number of your audio pipe. If your audio pipe is set as your default sound device in the Windows audio recording properties it will be device 1, otherwise it may be device 2 or higher. You can use ‘dsd -h’ to see more options for DSD+.



A screenshot of a Windows Command Prompt window titled 'Administrator: C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe'. The window shows the following text:
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
C:\Users\Carl>cd C:\radio\dsd+
C:\radio\dsd+>dsd -i1M

Make sure that the Deemphasis option in Unitrunker is turned **OFF** (no x in the checkbox) for the voice receiver to make it work with DSD+. There seems to currently be a bug where sometimes the deemphasis filter needs to be turned off then on again to truly turn it off, so just be aware of this issue.

When DSD+ is running correctly you will see a bunch of text scrolling when a digital voice signal is active. The text ‘voice’ will show on the right when a voice signal is playing. To see the help screen and get more options for DSD+, type ‘dsd -h’ into terminal. Some signals may require you to set the decoder options described in the help.

To stop dsd running at any time press “Ctrl + C”.

SOME TIPS

- For digital voice you may need to play with the Windows volume settings of your audio pipe to improve decoding.
- You will require a decent antenna that is capable of receiving the trunking frequencies you are interested in.

- Unitrunker can be coupled with a radioreference.com account to get trunk group names.
- Stereo mix can be used, but you will be hearing both the digital signal as well as the decoded voice at the same time. Also, the decoded voice audio will be pumped back into DSD causing a detrimental feedback loop.

TUNING DSD+

DSD+ contains many tunable options that are shown in the help screen ‘dsd -h’. These options are for improving vocal quality which can be tuned automatically with a special program called DSDTuner. DSDTuner simply iterates through all possible options and values for those options and then selects the best.

DSDTune must be built from source from <https://github.com/dreinhold/dsdtune>. We have also uploaded a Windows binary at <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/43061070/dsdtune.exe> for ease, but you will probably need MingW installed with the path correctly set to run it. To compile this program you must have MingW with gcc installed.

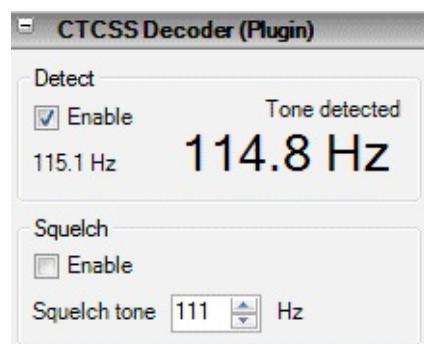
To compile DSDTune, download or git clone it from <https://github.com/dreinhold/dsdtune>. In command prompt run `gcc -Wall -o dsdtune.exe utils.c dsdtune.c` assuming you have MingW installed. This will generate dsdtune.exe.

To use DSDTune first open DSD+ and listen to a digital voice channel. Whilst decoding press the ‘r’ key on your keyboard to begin logging a raw discriminator audio file. Press ‘r’ again after about one minute to stop recording. Next copy the dsdtune.exe file to the DSD+ folder. Then run `dsdtune -i DSDPlus-Raw-Input_2013-12-28@140307.wav`, where the wav file is the file you just recorded. Also be sure to pass the decoder options to dsdtune if you use any in DSD+ (e.g. -f, -fn, -fN, -fr).

CTCSS TRUNKED RADIO

CTCSS is an acronym for **C**ontinuous **T**one-**C**oded **S**quelch **S**ystem and is a system that is used in shared two way radio systems (walkie-talkies). It is common for a single voice radio channel to be shared over a number of user groups for frequency use efficiency. CTCSS uses a special tone to identify each group of users, and this tone is used to prevent a group hearing radio chatter from another group sharing the same channel.

A SDR# plugin by the name of CTCSS decoder can be used to detect and use CTCSS tones. It can be downloaded from <http://rtl-sdr.ru/page/ctcss-detektor-shumopodavitel> (Mirror 1: http://sdrts.amoti.ru/ctcss_detektor_shumopodavitel) (Mirror 2: <http://bit.ly/1iV44Me>).



LTR TRUNKED RADIO

Logic trunked radio is a type of trunked radio system that does not use a control channel. Instead each repeater has its own controller whose control signal is modulated into the voice signal. LTR is known as a distributed trunking system as opposed to a dedicated trunking system which uses a signal control channel.

LTR can be decoded using a Windows command line program known as LTR Analyzer which can be downloaded here <http://home.ica.net/~phoenix/wap/LTR/>. Download LTR-Analyzer.zip and extract the files to a folder. The program will not do much more than showing information about the LTR signal however.

To use LTR analyzer simply set your audio pipe as the default device in Windows recording settings, set the audio pipe output in your favourite SDR receiver and then tune to an LTR signal. Open LTR analyzer by double clicking on LTR-Analyzer.exe in the folder. Upon opening it you'll be asked to select the audio input device. Choose your audio piping method. Now increase the volume settings on your SDR receiver until the MODULATION: NO AUDIO changes to a percentage. When listening to LTR audio, the output will be similar to the example screenshot shown below.

A screenshot of a Windows application window titled "LTR Analyzer". The main area is a text console displaying a series of decoded LTR signal frames. Each frame consists of a prefix "- OSW:", followed by a sequence of bytes (e.g., 0 19 10 075 03 76), a mode indicator (e.g., COMM), a call sign (e.g., ID=10-75), a status (e.g., on), a channel (e.g., Ch19), and a free time value (e.g., FREE=3). At the bottom of the window, there is a status bar with the text "Avg sampling rate: 22072 Hz Modulation: 28%" and "LTR Modulation: 7%".

```
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 03 76 COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=3
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 06 38 COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=6
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 11 6F COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=11
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 03 76 COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=3
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 05 7C COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=5
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 06 38 COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=6
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 07 7B COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=7
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 11 6F COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=11
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 03 76 COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=3
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 05 7C COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=5
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 06 38 COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=6
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 07 7B COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=7
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 11 6F COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=11
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 05 7C COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=5
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 06 38 COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=6
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 11 6F COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=11
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 03 76 COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=3
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 05 7C COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=5
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 06 38 COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=6
- OSW: 0 19 10 075 07 7B COMM ID=10-75 on Ch19 FREE=7
/ Avg sampling rate: 22072 Hz Modulation: 28% LTR Modulation: 7%
```

PAGER DECODING GUIDE

The rtl-sdr combined with SDRSharp and a POCSAG/Flex capable decoding application can be used to decode pager messages. With this setup you can receive pager messages from all pager users on the system.

If you don't know what a pager is, since they are now uncommon, here is a brief explanation from Wikipedia:

A pager is a wireless telecommunications device that receives and displays numeric or text messages, or receives and announces voice messages.

Not many people use pagers these days with mobile phone text messaging being used more, but pagers are still popular with doctors, some fire and ambulance agencies and various service companies. Pagers tend to be more reliable and have greater coverage.

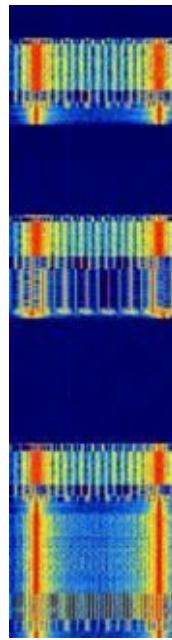
In most countries it is perfectly legal to receive messages from pagers, as they are plain text unencrypted. BUT it is illegal to act on the information received. Please respect your local laws.

TUTORIAL

While directed at the rtl-sdr, this tutorial may also be useful for use with other software defined radios such as the Funcube dongle and HackRF, or even traditional hardware radios with a discriminator tap.

Since pager signals are usually transmitted at a very strong power, usually almost any antenna will work to receive them, even the stock antenna that comes with the dongle. Pager frequencies differ among different countries. Usually they will be anywhere from 137 - 160 MHz, around ~450 MHz, or around 900 MHz. Most commonly they are found at around 150 MHz. Check radioreference.com or Google for pager frequencies in your area.

Pagers typically use POCSAG or Flex encoding and the signals waterfall will look something like the signal shown below. They also have a distinctive sound on NFM. For a sound example see the signal identification guide on rtl-sdr.com.

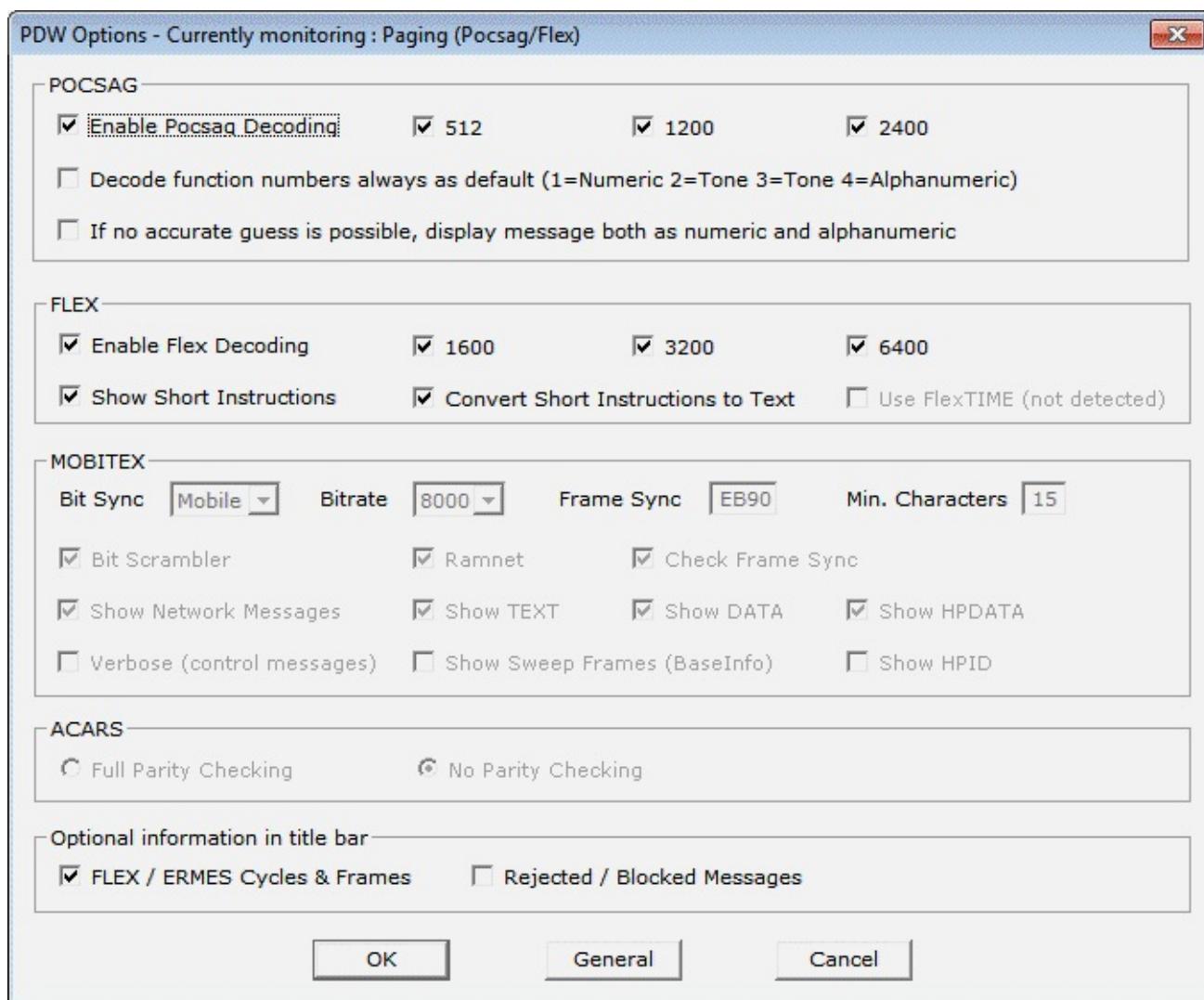


For this tutorial, you will need to have an rtl-sdr dongle set up and working with SDRSharp or another SDR receiver program. We will assume you have this much done already. If you do not, visit the Buy RTL-SDR dongles page at <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/> and follow the [Quickstart Guide](#) at the beginning of this book.

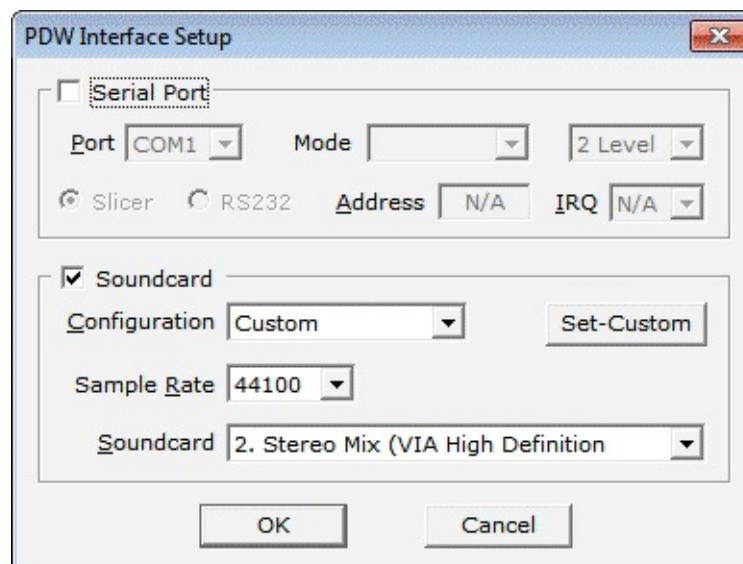
You will also need to have an audio piping method installed and set up. Audio piping will allow the audio from SDRSharp to be passed to a decoding program. Either stereo mix, or Virtual Audio Cable, or VBCable may can be used. See [Appendix A: Audio Piping](#) if you need more information. Also before starting ensure you audio piping method is set to a sample rate of 44100 Hz. See the [setting the sample rate section](#) if you need help doing this.

To decode the POCSAG or Flex signals, you need need to download and install a free program called PDW. PDW can be downloaded from <http://www.discriminator.nl/pdw/index-en.html>. After downloading and installing PDW follow these steps.

1. Open your favourite SDR receiver and set the audio piping method to the one you will use and then start the radio.
2. Tune to a pager POCSAG/Flex signal. Set the receive mode to NFM, filter bandwidth to 12500 Hz, turn squelch OFF, turn OFF any DSP or noise reduction algorithms and if in SDR# set filter audio to OFF. Adjust the RF gain settings until good reception is achieved.
3. Open PDW. You may initially receive some errors, but they can be safely ignored. Go to **Options -> Options**, and Click Enable Pocsag Decoding. Ensure the 512, 1200 and 2400 boxes are all checked. Also, ensure Enable Flex Decoding is enabled and that the 1600, 3200 and 6400 boxes are all checked. Press OK.



4. Go to **Interface -> Setup**. Enable the Soundcard checkbox, set the Configuration to Custom, and choose your audio piping method in the Soundcard drop down box. If you only have one audio piping method enabled in the Windows recording properties, it will automatically choose that method. Press OK.

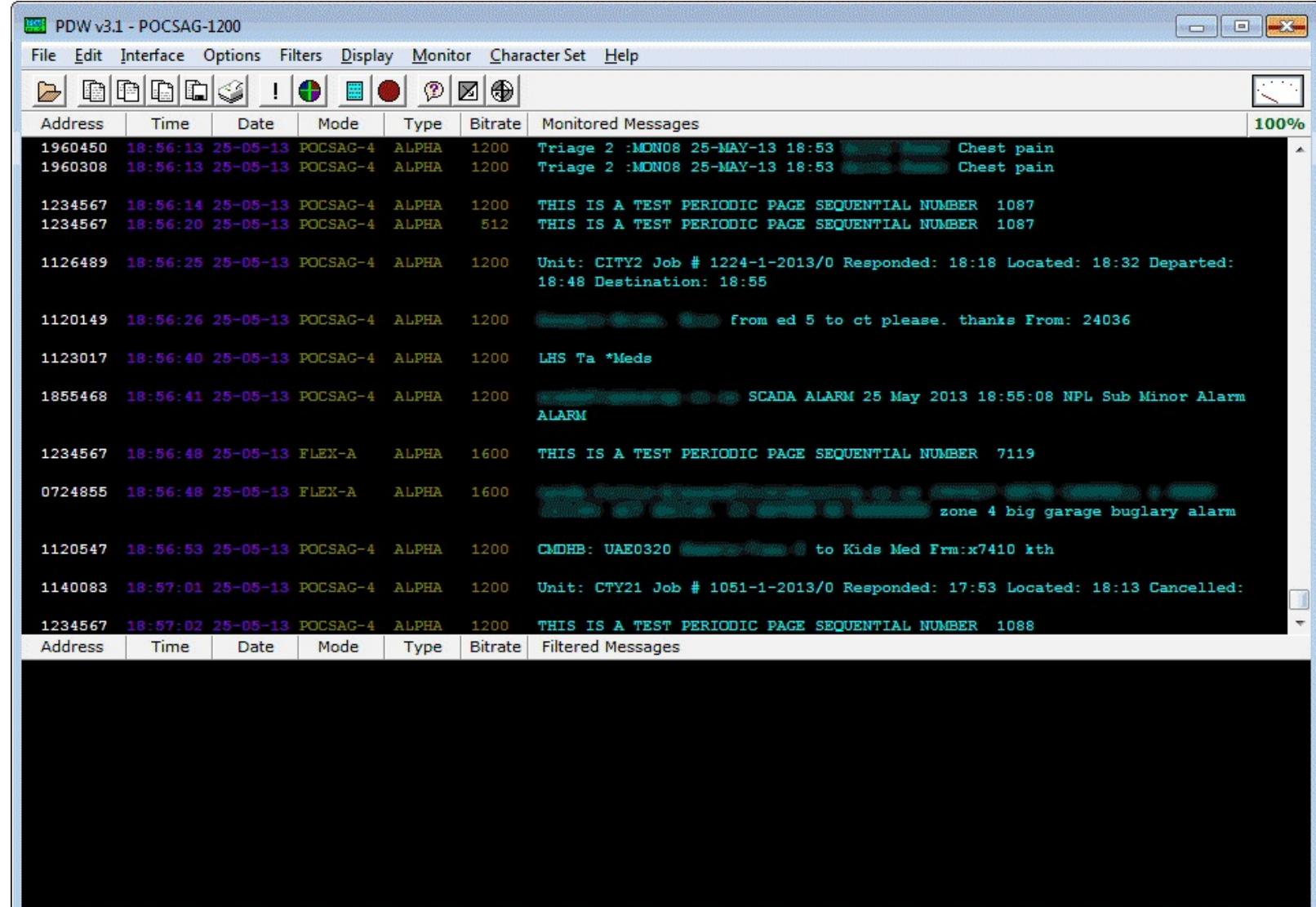


5. Go to Monitor, and ensure POCSAG/FLEX is ticked.

Now, if everything is set up correctly, the pager audio from SDRSharp should be being sent to PDW.

In the top right hand corner of PDW, there should be a volume gauge. You will need to adjust the AF gain volume settings in SDRSharp, and/or the Windows volume settings so that the volume meter goes up when a pager signal is sent.

The percentage sign under the meter shows the percentage ratio of good to bad decodes. 100% means all the received messages were decoded properly.



OTHER DECODERS

MultimonNG is also capable of decoding POCSAG and can also be run on Windows, Linux and even on an embedded device running Linux. At the command line in Linux use rtl_fm piped into multimon-ng to decode POCSAG and display it to the terminal. In the example code below replace the frequency of 158.1M and the ppm offset with the pager frequency in your area.

See the [rtl_fm guide](#) if you need more information.

```
./rtl_fm -f 158.1M -s 22050 -p 49 | multimon-ng -t raw -a POCSAG512 -a POCSAG1200 -a POCSAG2400 -f alpha /dev/stdin
```

RADIO ASTRONOMY GUIDE

Combined with a suitable antenna and LNAs the RTL-SDR has been used as a astronomical tool to

- Observe the hydrogen line and galactic plane
- Detect meteors entering the atmosphere

OBSERVING THE HYDROGEN LINE AND GALACTIC PLANE

The Hydrogen line can be observed at 1420 MHz (21cm) by pointing a directional antenna at the interstellar medium. The interstellar medium is the matter that exists in between stars. It is made up of a large amount of neutral hydrogen which emits electromagnetic radiation at 1420.40575177 MHz. Although this emission is rare for a single hydrogen atom, the interstellar medium is made up of a huge amount of neutral hydrogen which makes this emission easy to detect with an appropriate radio and antenna.

Items you will need to observe the hydrogen line:

- Large dish (>1m) or high gain Yagi antenna or Helical antenna or Horn antenna.
- 1-2 LNA Preamps.
- 1420 MHz bandpass filter.

Marcus Leech was one of the first people to experiment with Radio Astronomy and the RTL-SDR, he has an excellent writeup here http://www.sbrac.org/files/budget_radio_telescope.pdf. He writes that to observe the hydrogen line with the RTL-SDR you will need at least a 1 meter large dish. However, another experimenter has had success with a 22 element Yagi <http://www.y1pwe.co.uk/RAProgs/HLRrtl.pdf> which may be cheaper and easier to build. Other directional antennas such as helical and horn antennas can also work. An example of a horn antenna used with the RTL-SDR for radio astronomy can be found here <http://rishi-patel.blogspot.com/2013/10/summary-of-horn-antenna-project.html>.

By observing the hydrogen line over a moving sky it is possible to detect the galactic plane. This is because there is more hydrogen in the plane of our galaxy than there is in empty space. When the antenna points towards the centre of the galaxy, the intensity of the signal at the hydrogen line frequency will rise.

The Hydrogen line is observed by pointing the antenna to the sky and tuning the radio to 1420 MHz. Then you need software that can average the FFT spectrum over a period of time. The RAFFT.exe software from <http://y1pwe.co.uk/RAProgs/index.html> can be used to do this. There is also the Linux GNU Radio based simple_ra software from https://www.cgran.org/wiki/simple_ra. Useful instructions

on the use of simple_ra can be found at http://superkuh.com/rtl_sdr.html#simple_ra.

The result will be a frequency spectrum graph showing a distinct peak in power at the 1420 MHz frequency.

Some more technical papers:

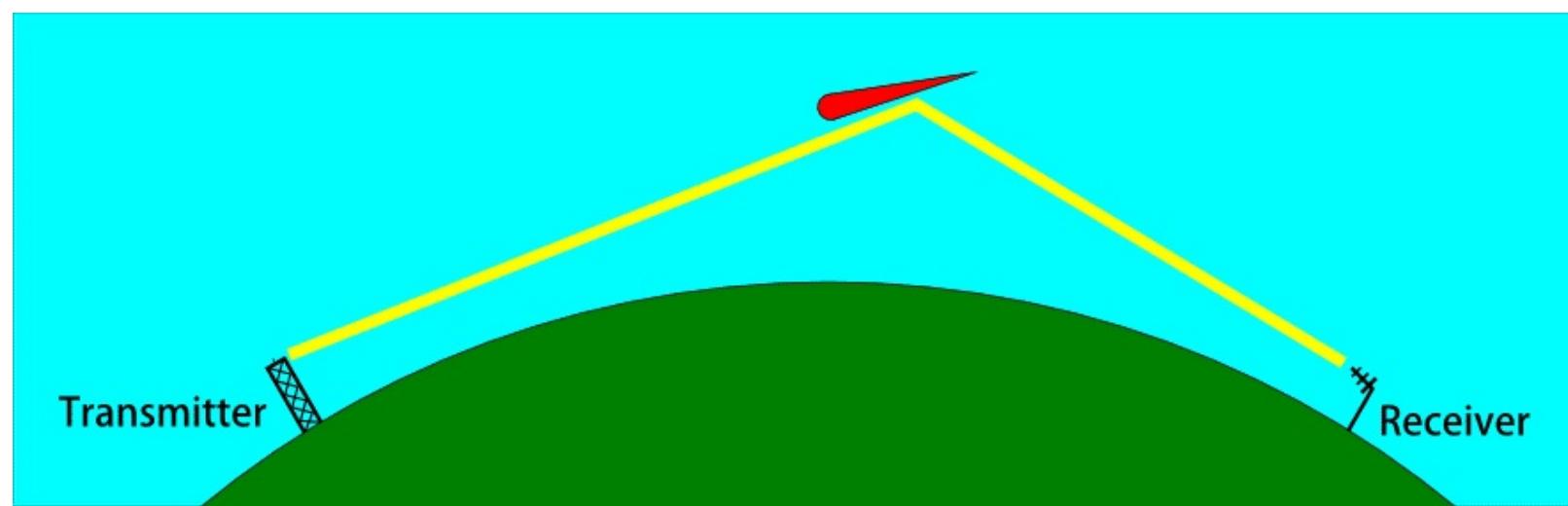
http://www.haystack.mit.edu/edu/undergrad/VSRT/VSRT_Memos/071.pdf

http://www.haystack.mit.edu/edu/undergrad/srt/pdf%20files/2013_HigginsonRollinsPaper.pdf

METEOR SCATTER DETECTION

Meteor scatter detection works by detecting signals from strong but distant broadcast radio stations using signal reflections from meteors as they enter the atmosphere. As a meteor enters the atmosphere, it ionizes the air behind it leaving a trail of RF reflective ionized air. Frequencies in the analogue TV spectrum at 50-80 MHz are the best to use for meteor scatter. However as analogue TV transmitters are being reduced due to digital TV switch overs the FM band at 88 - 108 MHz can also be used as an alternative.

To do meteor detection there needs to be a strong broadcasting station that is between 300 to 1200 km away from your receiving antenna. This is far enough so that you cannot receive the signal directly, but close enough so that a meteor in the sky can reflect the signal down to your receiver.

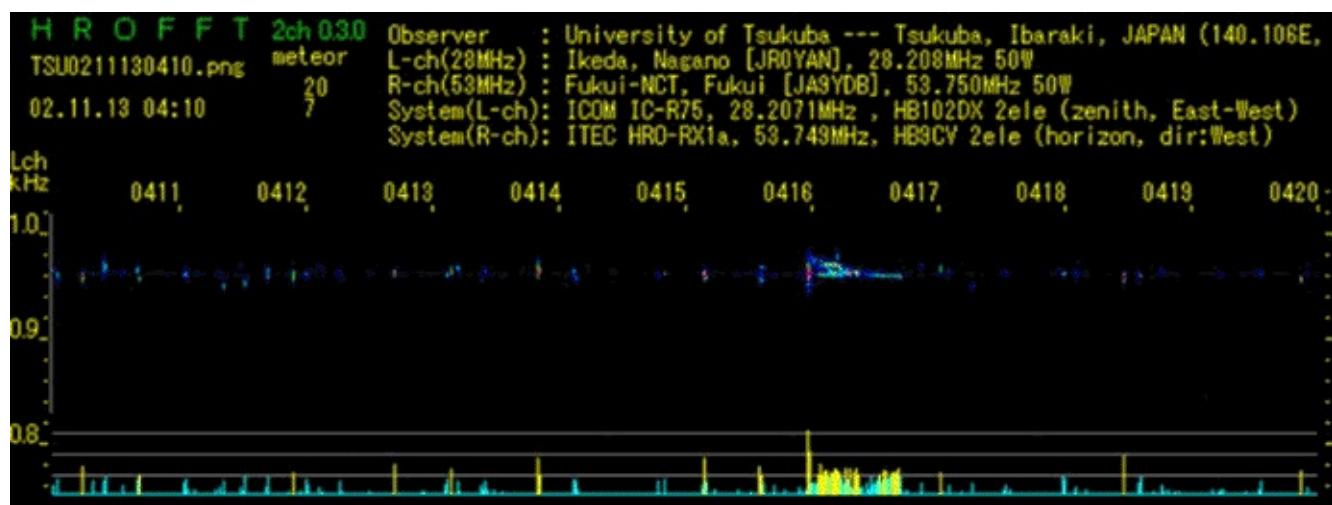


As meteor scatter signals can be weak you will also need a high gain Yagi-Uda antenna tuned to the band you are monitoring with it pointed towards the sky in the direction of the broadcasting station. Non directional antennas can work, but may not have enough gain for good performance. Some people have reported success with magnetic loop antennas. An optional LNA is also desirable.

A good paper describing meteor scatter detection with the RTL-SDR can be found here
http://www.sbrac.org/files/meteor_forward_scatter.pdf.

To monitor meteor scatter, a Windows program called HROFFT can be used with the RTL-SDR. HROFFT will monitor the audio spectrum of your tuned frequency and output colorgrams (audio FFT images) every 10 minutes. HROFFT can be downloaded from <http://www.bcmeteors.net/index.php/radio-methods/87-radio-detection-basics?showall=&start=4>. To use HROFFT follow the instructions below.

1. Download and unzip HROFFT to a folder.
2. Open the header.txt file and enter the information it asks for.
3. Open your favourite SDR receiver like SDR# and set your preferred audio piping method as the output.
4. Tune to the centre frequency of your distant transmitter station. Set the received mode to USB and increase its bandwidth to the maximum.
5. Open HROFFT.
6. Adjust the volume in SDR# and the signal level in HROFFT so that the blue signal levels shown at the bottom of the graph sit below the first line. A meteor will be counted as detected if the blue signal becomes stronger than the first horizontal bar so you may wish to adjust the volume and signal level settings accordingly so that only actual meteor reflections trigger this bar.
7. After seeing a few meteor echoes, you may wish to adjust the audio bandwidth so that it covers just the bandwidth of the signals you are detecting. The grey bar on the left vertical axis shows the bandwidth, which is adjustable by the f1 and f2 settings. This will help detect meteors better as the signal strength is taken from the sum of signals from this bandwidth.

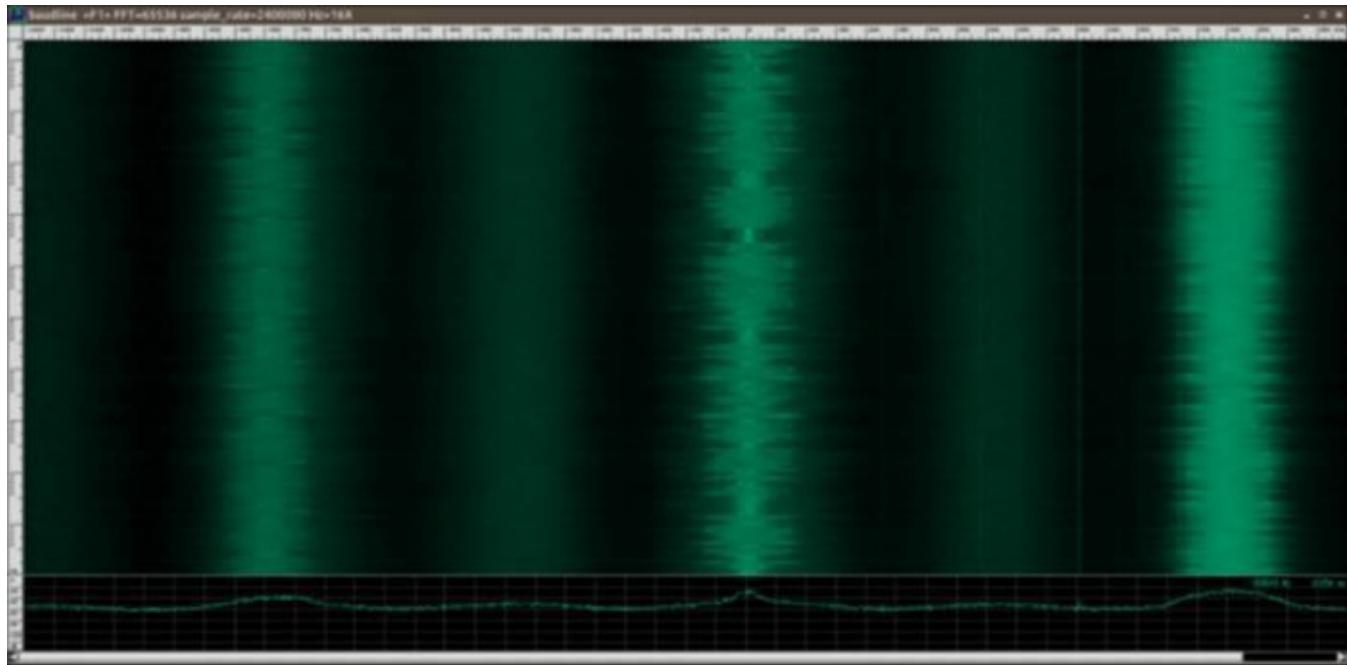


Meteors will usually appear as short blips, but larger echoes can occur from big meteors. Long trails may indicate radio reflections from aircraft. More information about analyzing HROFFT images can be found here <http://www.amro-net.jp/about-hro/analyze-hrofft.htm>.

BAUDLINE

On Linux the frequency domain FFT baudline can also be used for recording meteor scatter activity. Use it to search for blips in the waterfall. Download Baudline from <http://www.baudline.com/download.html>. Baudline can be started using the following example.

```
rtl_sdr -f 91M -s 2400000 -g 50 - | ./baudline -reset -samplerate 2400000 -channels 2 -format u8 -quadrature -stdin
```



OTHER SIMPLE RADIO ASTRONOMY EXPERIMENTS

More simple radio experiments can be performed using a simple 18 inch directv satellite dish with LNB and an RTL-SDR. These components can be used to make something that has been termed the Itty Bitty Radio Telescope. A low noise block (LNB) amplifies and converts GHz high frequencies down to lower frequencies which the RTL-SDR can receive. For example, an LNB might convert a 12 GHz signal down to 1.2 GHz.

Using such a simple system the difference in the noise floor between the empty sky, the sun, or a persons body can be detected. Experiments can be found here <http://www.setileague.org/articles/lbt.pdf>.

A link to an Itty Bitty Radio Telescope based on the RTL-SDR can be found here http://www.stargazing.net/david/radio/itty_bitty_radio_telescope.html.

HF MODES DECODING GUIDE

To receive HF signals you will need an RTL-SDR dongle with an upconverter or direct sampling mode enabled. Or, you will need a HF capable SDR radio such as the Funcube Dongle or SoftRock SDR.

SHORTWAVE BROADCAST RADIO

Shortwave broadcast radio is simply international AM radio that is sent over HF. All you need to receive this is an upconverter a decent HF antenna and an RTL-SDR. Sometimes the hobby of searching for and listening to new shortwave radio stations is called SWLing (short wave listening). A list of common shortwave radio stations can be found here http://support.radioshack.com/support_tutorials/communications/swave-6.htm.

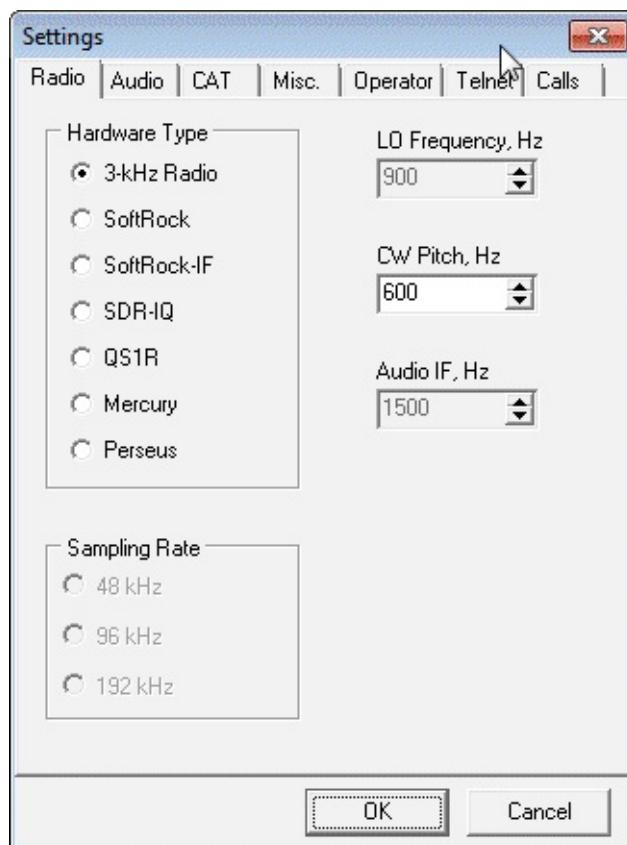
CW (MORSE CODE)

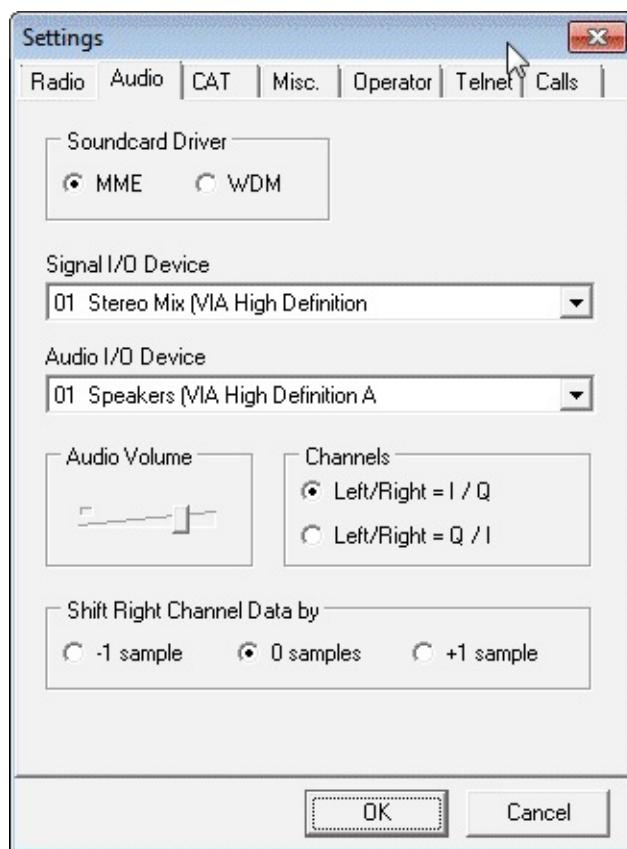
CW is an acronym for Continuous Wave and is a communications method more commonly known as Morse Code. It is often used by ham radio hobbyists. Morse code is easy for humans who have learnt it to decode, but it actually quite difficult for computers to decode accurately. Nevertheless, there are several CW decoders available.

All decoders require the CW audio to be piped into them from a general purpose SDR receiver. Most SDR receiver programs will have a CW mode, but if they don't USB mode is also okay.

The best CW decoder is called CWSkimmer. CWSkimmer costs \$75 but comes with a free 30 day trial.

CW Skimmer can be downloaded from <http://www.dxatlas.com/cwskimmer/>. To use CW Skimmer set the hardware type to 3-kHz Radio or SoftRock IF in the settings menu. Set the signal I/O Device to your audio piping method. Also ensure the Audio output button  in the main window is set to off (not pressed in).





Free alternatives with good decoders are CW Decoder from <http://www.hotamateurprograms.com/downloads.htm>, CWGet from <http://www.dxsoft.com/en/products/cwget/> and also MultiPSK. Pipe audio from SDR# or another SDR receiver into these programs to get CW decoding.

Fldigi and MultimonNG are also capable of decoding CW, however their decoders are not as good as CW Skimmer or the ones mentioned above.

A list of CW frequencies can be found at <http://www.arrl.org/band-plan>.

RTTY

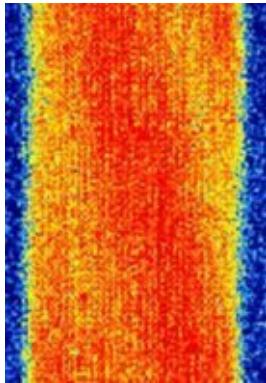
RTTY is an acronym for Radioteletype and is a way for radio amateurs to send text messages over radio, similar to CW. A list of RTTY frequencies can be found at <http://www.arrl.org/band-plan>.

RTTY can be transmitted at various baud speeds and it is up to the receiver to choose the correct speed. The most common baud rate used by amateur radio hobbyists is 45 baud. Weather services and other commercial services also transmit information using RTTY but they most commonly use 50 baud. NATO military services prefer transmission at 75 or 100 baud. Note that military transmissions are usually encrypted.

A good program for RTTY is TrueTTY <http://www.dxsoft.com/en/products/truetty/>. Be sure to set the baud rate under the Speed menu.

STANAG 4285

STANAG 4285 is a HF digital text data link mode used mostly by military naval services. The most common transmitter of STANAG 4285 signals is the French Navy who continuously transmit a test signal that repeats the French equivalent of the quick brown fox “VOYEZ VOUS LE BRICK GEANT QUE J EXAMINE PRES DU GRAND WHARF”. These signals can be found all over the HF spectrum and have a bandwidth of 2500 Hz. A list of STANAG 4285 frequencies can be found at <http://qrg.globaltuners.com/?q=STANAG+4285&s=1>. The image below shows what a Stanag 4285 signal looks like zoomed in.



Tips: To test the software mentioned below go to the RTL-SDR.com signal identification guide page and play the example STANAG 4285 signal using Windows stereo mix as your default audio piping method. The programs should be able to decode from this example audio.

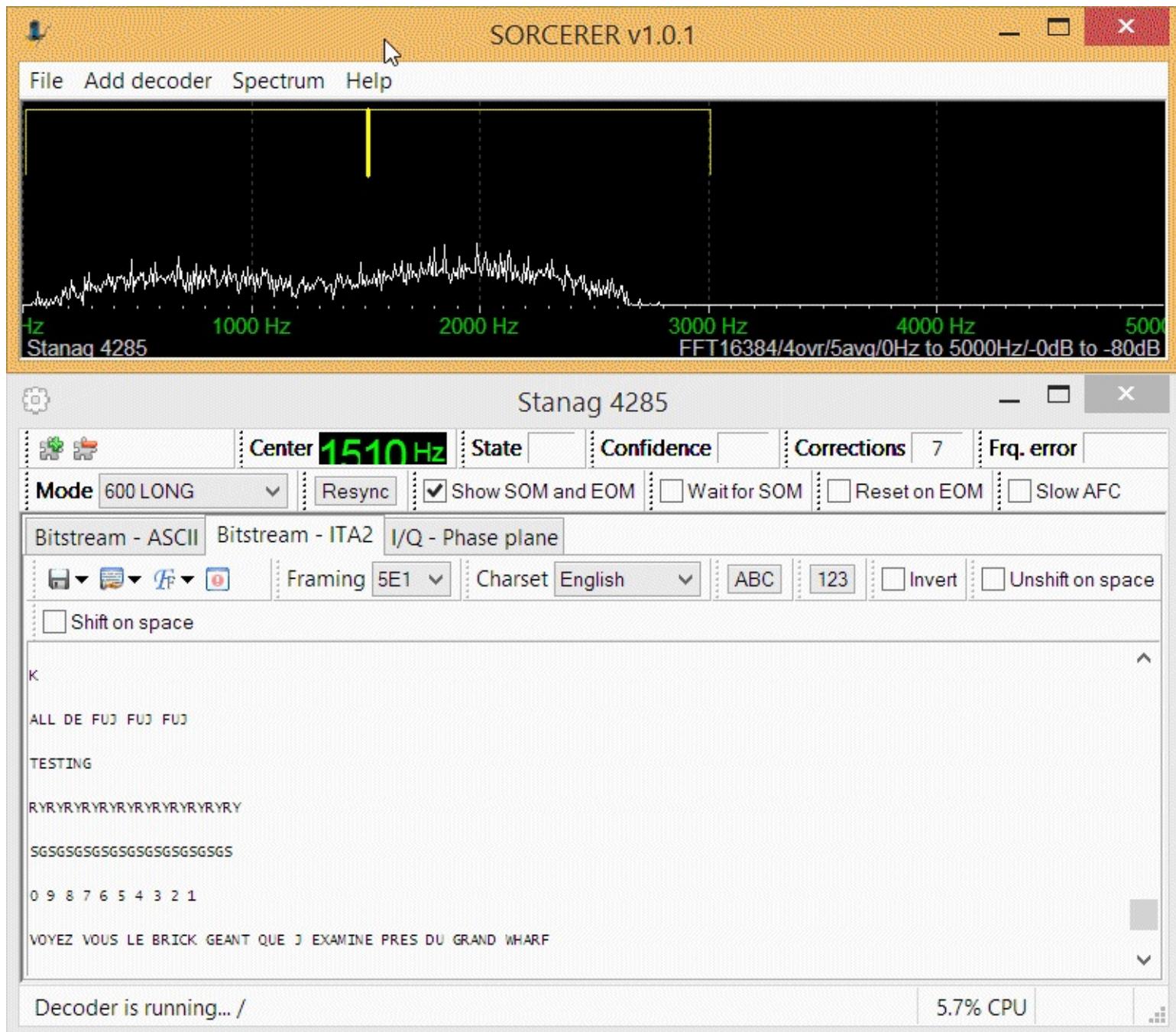
SORCERER

Sorcerer is a decoder program that used to be commercial software, but is now abandonware that can be freely downloaded from <http://www.radioaficion.com/HamNews/archivo/vagabundos-del-dial/5814-sorcerer-decoder.html>.

1. Tune to a STANAG 4285 signal in your favourite general SDR program using USB with a bandwidth of around 2500 Hz. Output the audio to the audio piping method used.
2. To use Sorcerer, download the zip file from the above link and extract the single exe file to a folder.
3. Open Sorcerer by double clicking on the exe file. Go to **File->Options** and choose your audio piping method in the Soundcard pull down box.
4. Go to **Add Decoder ->PSK->Stanag 4285**. Double click on Stanag 4285 to start that decoder.
5. Centre the yellow bar by clicking in the middle of the signal. The right edge of the yellow bar should be at of near 3000 Hz. You may need to experiment with the tuning of the yellow bar to start getting decodes.
6. For the most common STANAG 4285 signals choose the Mode as 600 LONG, and the Framing

as 5N1. Go to the Bitstream - ITA2 tab to see the decoded output after a few seconds.

Some signals are sent using 5E1 framing. If you continuously receive gibberish text, try 5E1 framing.



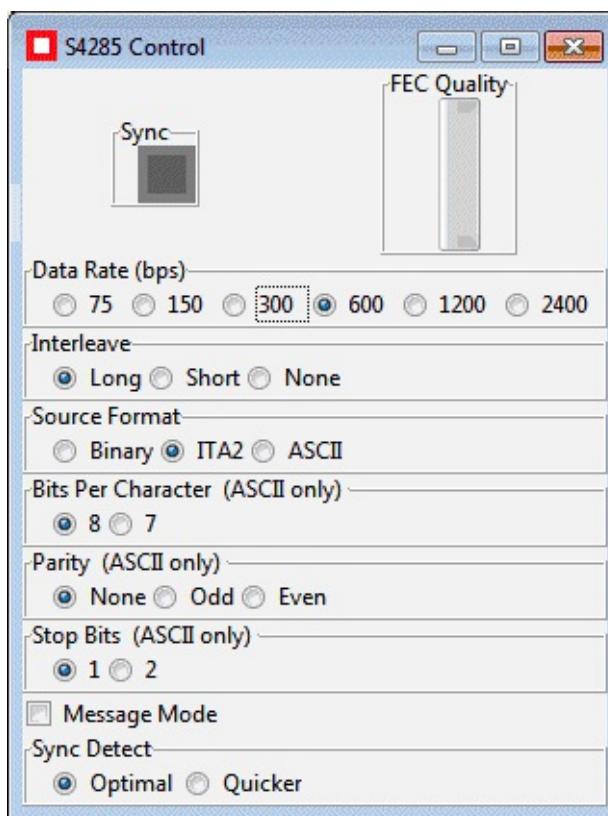
SIGMIRA

Another program called Sigmira can also be used to decode STANAG 4285. Sigmira can be downloaded from <http://www.saharlow.com/technology/sigmira/> in both Windows and Linux versions. After installing Sigmira you will need to download the updated features.dat file from the website and place it in the folder described also on the website. If this isn't done Sigmira will fail to open. If Sigmira later fails to open, you may need to redownload and replace the features.dat file.

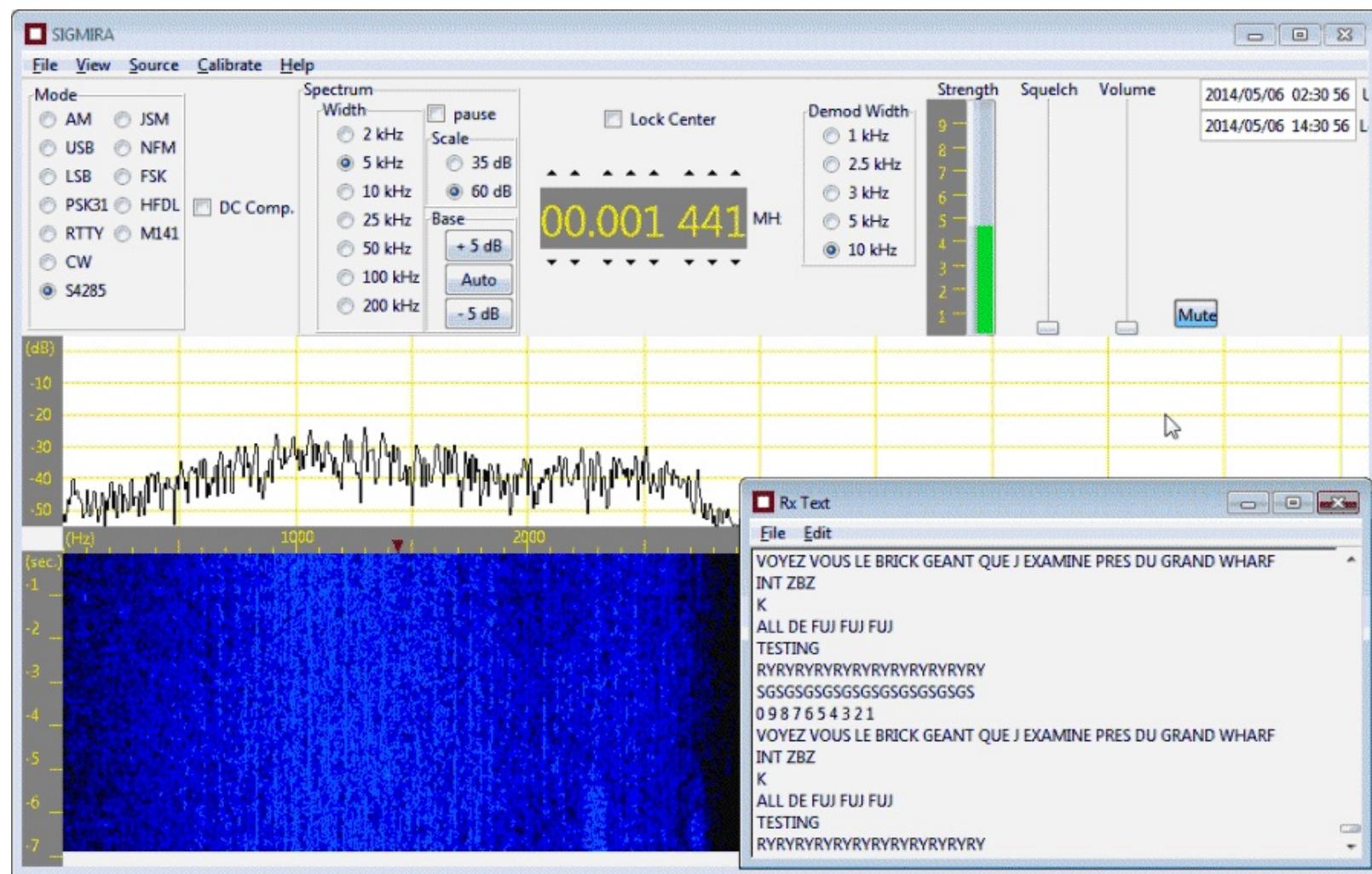
1. To use Sigmira, open it and go to **Source -> Soundcard**. Sigmira is now listening to your default audio piping method set in your Windows recording options. Note that there appears to be a bug in Sigmira which mutes the audio piping method for some reason. You will need to go into your

Windows sound properties for the audio pipe to unmute it if this happens.

2. Under Mode, select S4825.
3. Tune to a STANAG 4285 signal in your favourite general SDR program using USB with a bandwidth of around 2500 Hz. Output the audio to the audio piping method used.
4. If the STANAG 4285 control panel is not visible go to **View->S4285 Control** and click it. Also ensure the Rx Text window is showing under **View->Rx Text**.
5. In the S4285 control panel, for the French Navy signal select the “Data Rate” as 600 bps, the “Interleave” to Long and the “Source Format” as ITA2 as shown in the screenshot below.



6. Now in the main SIGMIRA window set the spectrum width to 5 kHz and the Demod Width to 3 kHz or higher.
7. Click in the centre of the signal shown in the audio spectrum and waterfall display to place a red arrow in the middle of the signal. If centred correctly the Sync box in the S4285 control panel will light green, the FEC quality bar will turn green and messages will show in the Rx Text window shortly. It may take some trial and error to correctly centre the red arrow.



OTHER DECODERS

MultiPSK can also be used to decode STANAG 4285, however its decoding performance is not as good as Sigmira or Sorcerer.

SSTV

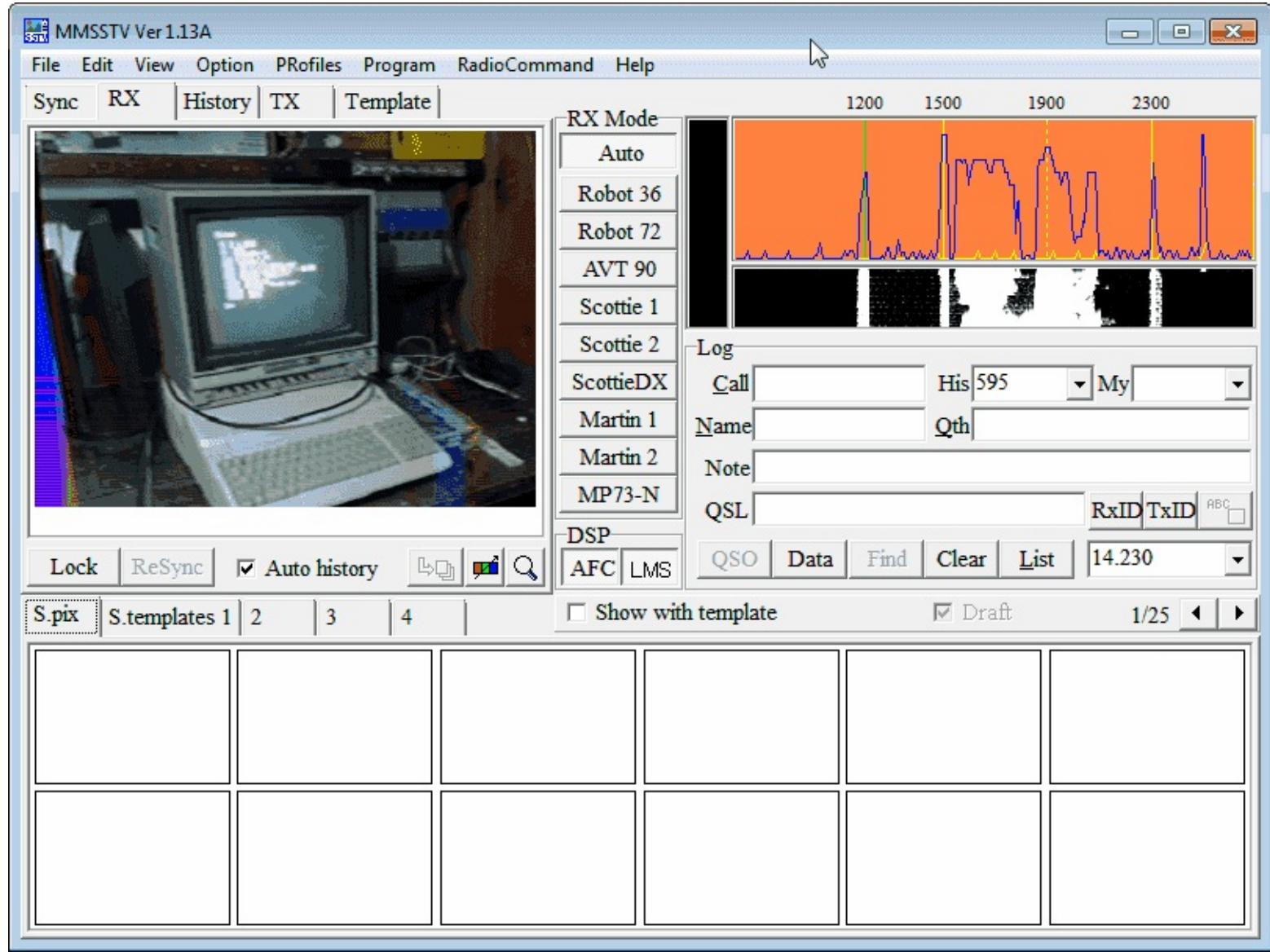
SSTV is an acronym for Slow Scan TV and is a mode used by amateur radio hobbyists to send small calling card images mainly on HF. There are several SSTV formats available, with Scottie S1 and Martin S1 being the most common. SSTV is most commonly found on or near the following frequencies in MHz.

- 3.730
- 7.171
- 14.230 (most popular freq)
- 21.340
- 28.680
- 145.5

SSTV can also be found transmitting in some countries at around 245.800 to 294.075 MHz from military satellites by Brazilian and Mexican radio pirates. The pirates hijack a military satellite transponder to transmit SSTV images and other signals. More information [here](#)

A good SSTV decoder is MMSSTV from <http://hamsoft.ca/pages/mmsstv.php>. MMSSTV will automatically detect the SSTV mode used. Simply pipe the audio from a general SDR receiver such as SDR#.

Some SSTV audio samples can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ke5UB2HLaZ4>.

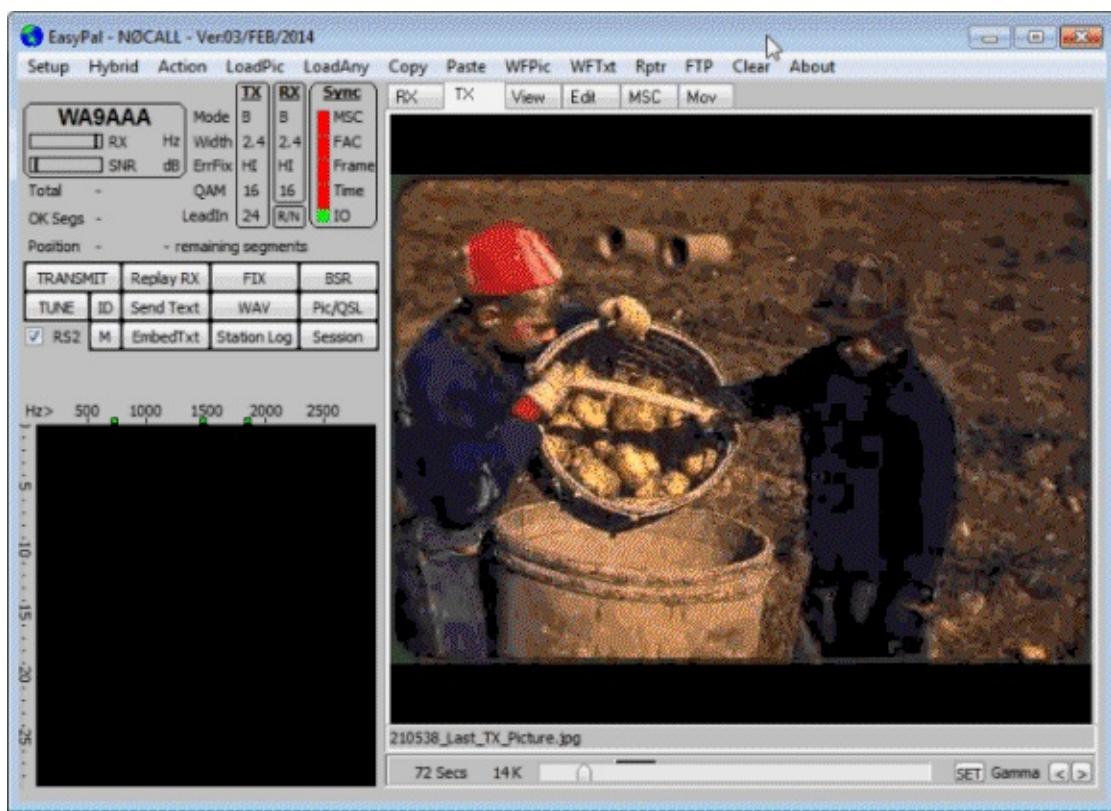


DIGITAL SSTV

Digital SSTV is a modern SSTV mode which uses a digital signal to transmit high quality images on HF. Digital SSTV is most commonly found on or near the following frequencies in MHz.

- 3.733
- 7.058 (Europe)
- 14.233 (most popular freq)
- 21.337

A good digital SSTV decoder is EasyPal which can be downloaded from <http://www.kc1cs.com/>.



WSPR

WSPR (pronounced as ‘whisper’) is an acronym for weak signal propagation report. It is a type of signal that is used for sending and receiving very weak signals on HF between amateur radio operators.

An excellent WSPR tutorial for the Funcube Dongle (but also applicable to the RTL-SDR with upconverter/direct sampling mod) can be found here

<http://www.nerdsville.blogspot.com/2013/03/wspr-using-funcube-dongle-pro.html>.

MARINE HF MODES

WEATHERFAX (HFFAX) DECODING GUIDE

WeatherFax is also known as HFFAX and is a HF mode used to transmit pictures of weather information charts. It is mainly used by mariners at sea. There is also a Japanese newspaper known as “Kyodo News” which transmits entire pages of its newspapers via HFFAX. There is a large document of radio fax frequencies for many countries that can be found from NOAA here

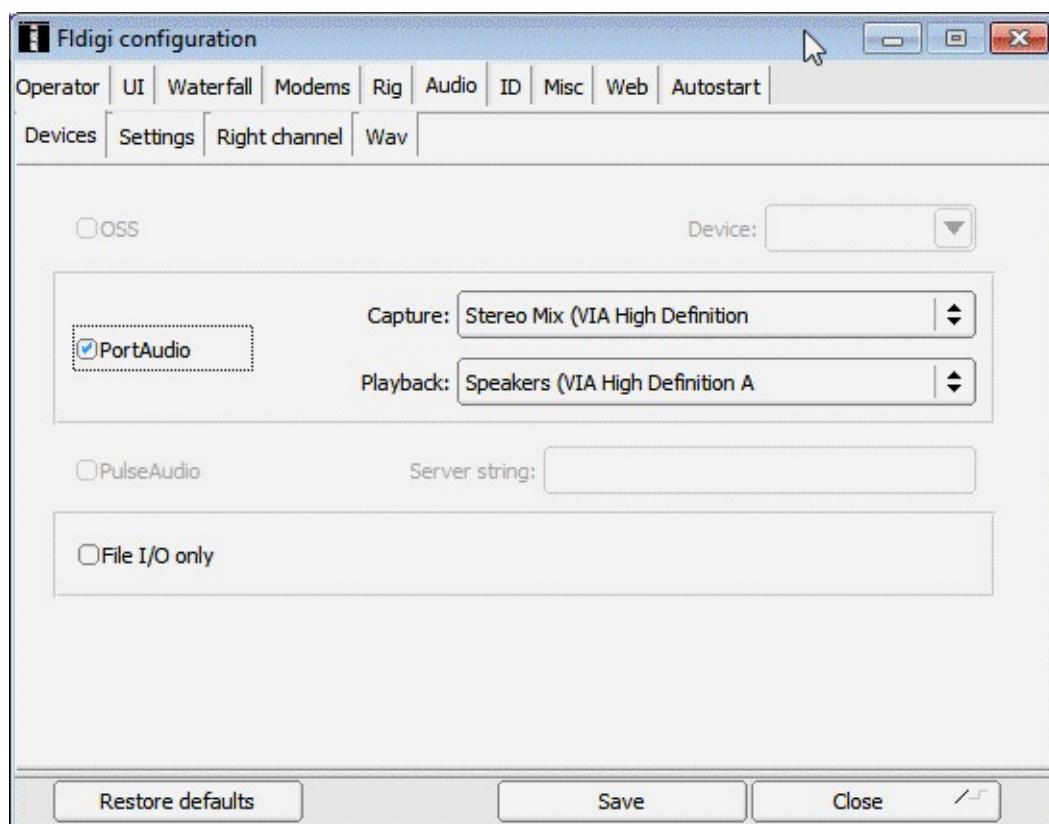
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/marine/rfax.pdf>.

To receive HFFAX with the RTL-SDR you will need an upconverter or a dongle modified with the direct sampling mode.

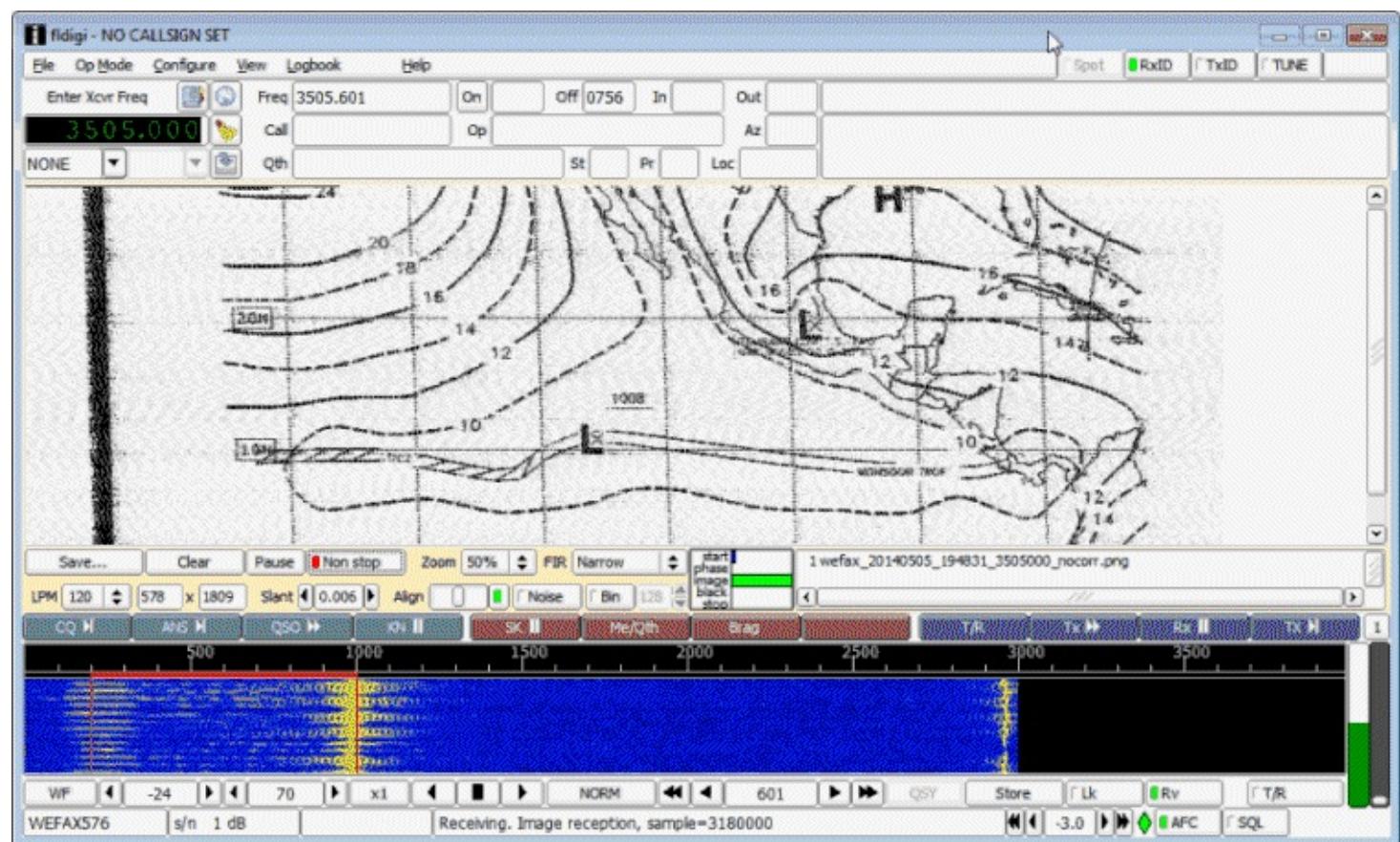
To decode HF was use a general SDR receiver like SDRSharp or SDR-RADIO, and pipe the audio to a decoder program called Fldigi which is capable of decoding and displaying HFFAX images. Fldigi can be downloaded from <http://www.w1hkj.com/download.html>. To receive weather fax follow these

instructions

1. Open your SDR receiver and set the audio output method to your preferred audio piping method.
2. Tune to a weather fax signal in your SDR receiver. Use Upper Side Band (USB) mode and set the bandwidth to about 1900 Hz.
3. Open fldigi and go to **Configure -> Sound Card**.
4. Change the Capture audio device to the audio piping method you have chosen.



5. Now go to **Op Mode -> WEFAX -> WEFAX-IOC576**.
6. Click the Automatic Frequency Control (AFC) button in the bottom right corner so that the light is green.
7. When a WEFAX signal starts to play Fldigi will automatically start decoding.



8. You may want to adjust the Slant option if you find that the image is slanted to one side or another.

If for some reason fldigi failed to automatically start, you can click the ‘Non-stop’ button to manually start decoding.

FOR THE REMAINING MODES WE WILL INTRODUCE THEM FIRST AND THEN SHOW HOW TO DECODE THEM IN MULTIPSK IN A LATER SECTION.

SYNOP

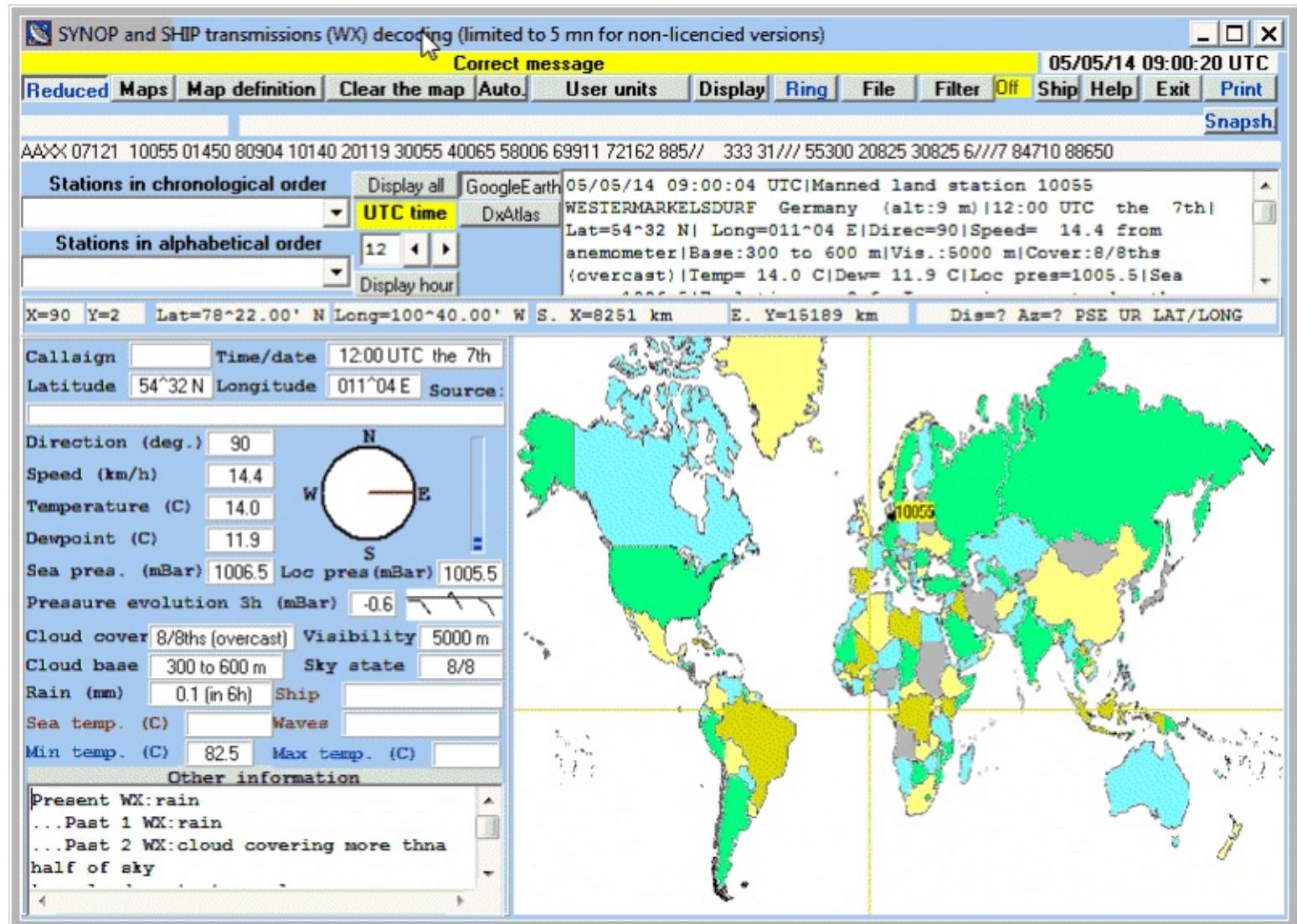
Synop (Surface Synoptic Observations) is a type of RTTY signal used on HF by the German meteorological service Deutscher Wetterdienst for sending out weather reports. The reports are generally intended for ships at sea. SYNOP messages use 5 digit codes to encode a set number of weather parameters. Synop uses LSB mode. It can usually be received around Europe. Some SYNOP frequencies and transmission times are shown below.

FREQ (kHz)	Station	Time (UTC)
147.300	DDH 47	0500 - 2200
4583.000	DDK 2	0000 - 2400
7646.000	DDH 7	0000 - 2400
10100.800	DDK 9	0000 - 2400
11039.000	DDH 9	0500 - 2200
14467.300	DDH 8	0500 - 2200

A typical raw SYNOP message might look like

09/04/14 11:44:04 UTC|Manned land station 06180 EKCH KOEBENHAVN\KASTRUP Denmark (alt:5 m)|18:00 UTC the 7th|Lat=55°38 N| Long=012°40 E|Dir=130|Speed= 11.1 from anemometer|Base:600 to 1000 m|Vis.:30 km|Cover:3/8ths|Temp= 15.0 C|Dew= 9.1 C|Loc pres=1006.4| Message:AAXX 07184 06180 02580 31306 10150 20091 30064 41|

Here is an example of a SYNOP message displayed in the MultiPSK GUI.



GMDSS DSC

GMDSS DSC (Global Maritime Distress and Safety System Digital Selective Calling) is a system used on HF for ships to send out a distress or safety alert. Listen to it in USB mode. GMDSS DSC can be found at the following frequencies in kHz.

- 2187.5 (main)
- 4207.5
- 6312.0
- 8414.5 (main)
- 12577.0
- 16804.5

An example GMDSS DSC message might look like

<Selective call to a particular individual station>
Called MMSI station address: 371371000 [Ship] (Panama)
Category: Safety
MMSI self-identifier: 005030001 [Coast station: Charleville/Wiluna RCC Australia] (Australia)
Telecommand 1: Test
Telecommand 2: No information
No control by check sum.
Date and time of decoding: 09/04/2014 10:29:32

NAVTEX

Navtex (Navigational Telex) is a system used by mariners on HF for sending text messages that are directly printed on a Navtex machine. The messages usually contain information about maritime weather. Uses USB mode. Navtex is typically transmitted at 518 kHz and 490 kHz. An example Navtex message might look like

...PLEASE REFER TO COASTAL WATERS FORECASTS (CWF) AVAILABLE
THRU NOAA WX RADIO AND OTHER MEANS FOR DETAILED
COASTAL WATERS FORECASTS...
.SYNOPSIS FOR MID ATLC WATERS...A LOW PRES AREA WILL DEVELOP
AND
PASS JUST N OF THE WATERS TONIGHT AND THEN MOVE NE LATER MON
AND
MON NIGHT WHILE STRENGTHENING. STRONG HIGH PRES WILL BUILD E
ACROSS THE NRN WATERS MON NIGHT THRU TUE NIGHT...AND PASS NE
OF THE AREA WED. A COASTAL FRONT WILL FORM OFF THE CAROLINA
COAST TUE NIGHT. LOW PRES WILL DEVELOP AND MOVE NE ALONG THE
CAROLINA COAST LATE WED.

SITOR

SITOR (Simplex Teletype Over Radio) is a system used by mariners for sending text messages over HF radio. There is SITOR-A and SITOR-B. SITOR-A is used for point to point communications and SITOR-B is used for broadcasting. The difference between the two is that SITOR-A will request a repeat of the message if it contains errors, whereas SITOR-B uses error correction to correct errors. SITOR-B is also known as Navtex.

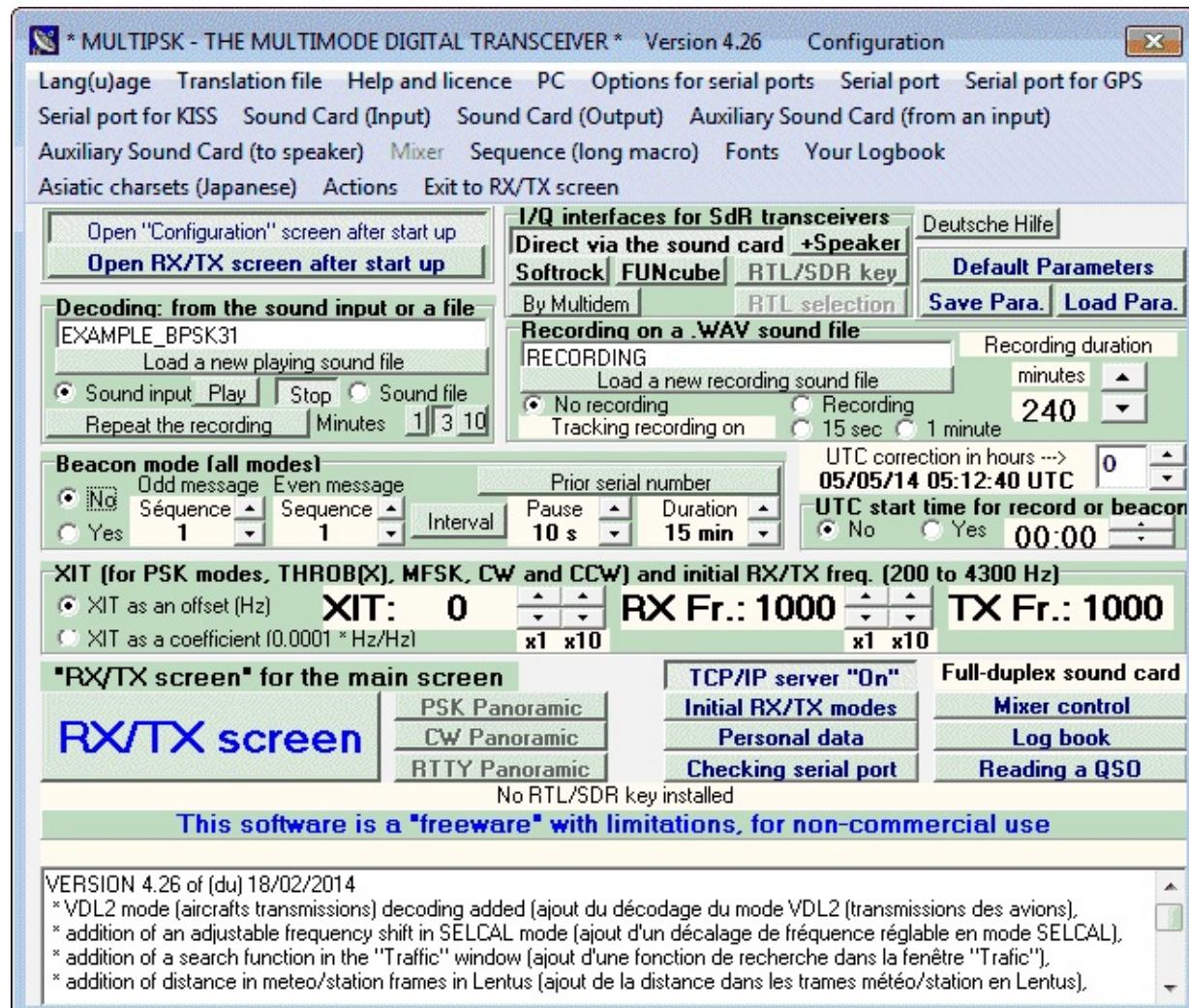
DECODING MARINE MODES WITH MULTIPSK

MultiPSK is capable of decoding Synop, GMDSS DSC, SITOR-A and Navtex. MultiPSK can be downloaded from http://f6cte.free.fr/index_anglais.htm. To decode Synop, GMDSS DSC and SITOR-A you will need to purchase the professional version of MultiPSK. However, each professional mode has a 5 minute trial limitation for testing. Navtex can be decoded indefinitely on the free version.

To decode using MultiPSK you can either use MultiPSK to connect to the RTL-SDR directly, or use MultiPSK to listen to the output of the sound card or a virtual audio cable. Here we will show the soundcard/virtual audio cable method. If you want to know how to connect directly to the RTL-SDR in

MultiPSK see the [VDL2 tutorial section](#).

1. Open your favourite SDR receiver program like SDR# or SDR-Console.
2. Set the SDR receiver to use your favourite audio piping method.
3. Open MultiPSK. You'll first be greeted with the following screen.



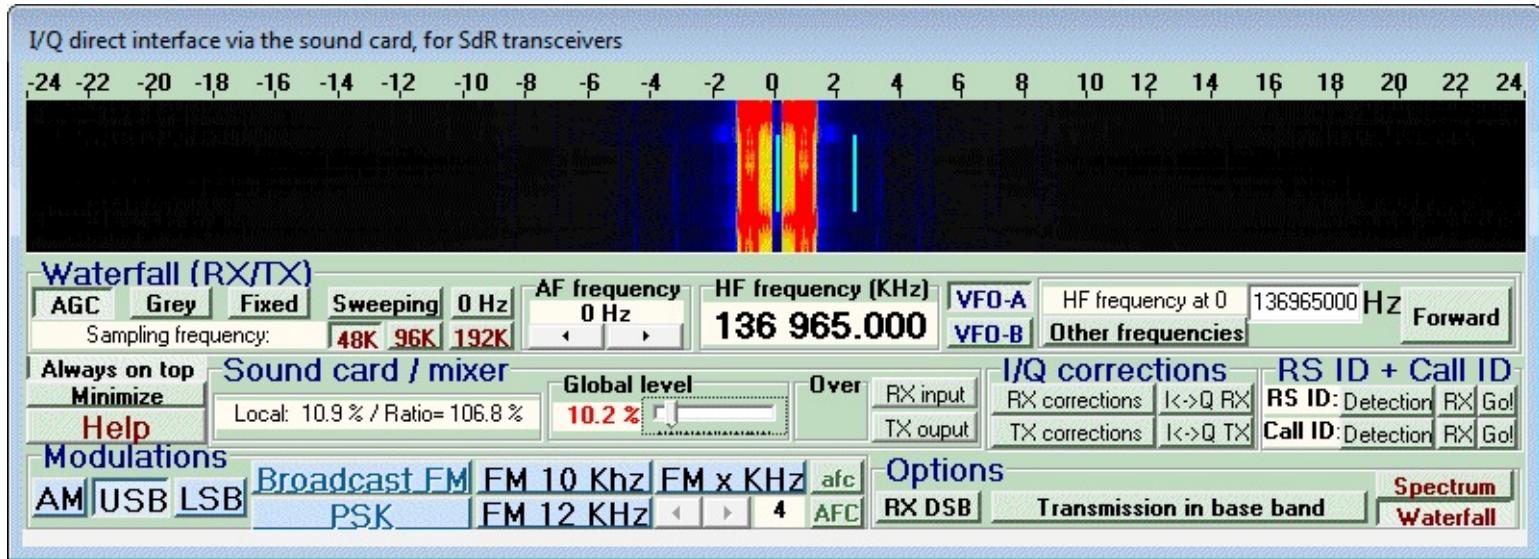
4. Go to the Sound Card (Input) menu and select your audio piping method.
5. Make sure that the “Direct via the sound card” button is pressed in.
6. Click on the big RX/TX screen button in the bottom left.

Now you are ready to begin decoding signals. But first for modes like Synop, we need to set up the maps.

1. Download maps.zip from the multiPSK webpage (http://f6cte.free.fr/index_anglais.htm). Make a folder named “maps” within the multipsk folder and then extract the contents of the maps.zip file into it.

USING MULTIPSK

- Choose a decoder by clicking on the buttons up in the top right of the Window. **SYNOP/SHIP**
- In the “I/Q direct Interface via the sound card, for SdR transceivers” window set the AF frequency to zero.



- In the RF spectrum or waterfall in the main MultiPSK window, click on the right peak of the signal. You can switch between RF spectrum and waterfall using the buttons on the right.

Spectrum **Waterfall**



- If you don't see the right peak, you may need to increase the frequency range of the RF spectrum/waterfall. On the right of the RF spectrum/waterfall click the 4.3 radio button in the Band KHz box.



DIFFERENTIAL GPS (DGPS)

GPS accuracy used to be purposely degraded by the US military to prevent enemies using it against them. Differential GPS (DGPS) was used by GPS users who needed the greater accuracy, such as maritime users. It works by measuring the difference between the GPS location and a known location and then broadcasting the differences to the receivers. DGPS is still used these days to further increase GPS accuracy. The accuracy of regular GPS is about 15m, with DGPS it can be as good as 10cm. DGPS is usually transmitted at 283.5 - 325.0 kHz around waterways and can be decoded using MultiPSK.

An example of a typical DGPS reception on MultiPSK is as follows.

09/04/2014 12:55:26

Message type : 9 (GPS partial correction set)
Station number : 741 (Dziwnow POL 283.5 KHz TXID 481 100bps/Chejin Dan Lt KOR 292.0 KHz TXID 670 200bps)
Z-count : 5973 (59 mn 43.8 s)
Sequence count : 5
Number of words : 5
Health : 6 (Transmission not monitored)
Sat. ID|SF|UDRE|Pseudorange corr. |Range rate corr.|IOD|CRC
22 |0 |<=1m| -14.58 m | -0.006 m/s |25 |OK
31 |0 |<=1m| -14.20 m | -0.006 m/s |30 |OK
27 |0 |<=1m| -33.34 m | 0.020 m/s |41 |OK

DIGITAL RADIO MONDIALE (DRM) GUIDE

INTRODUCTION TO DRM

Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) radio is a type of digital shortwave radio signal that is used by international shortwave radio broadcasters. It provides superior audio quality compared to AM signals by using digital audio encoding. With an upconverter (or direct sampling mod), good antenna and decoding software the RTL-SDR can receive and decode DRM signals.

This tutorial is also applicable to other software defined radios that can receive HF, such as the softrock and funcube dongle.

TUTORIAL: HOW TO RECEIVE AND DECODE DRM SIGNALS

To receive DRM with rtl-sdr, you will need four things

- An HF upconverter or dongle modified with the direct sampling mod.
- The DREAM DRM decoding software with AAC decoder.
- An audio piping method (Virtual Audio Cable/VBCable). See [Appendix A: Audio Pipes](#).

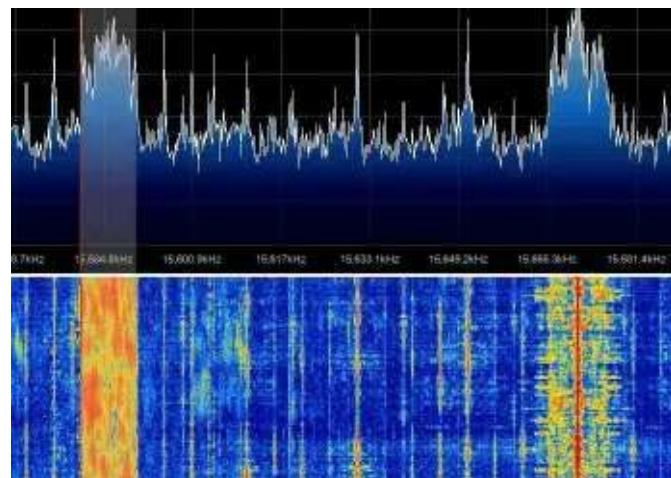
DREAM is a free opensource DRM decoder. Head to the DREAM download page which can be found at http://sourceforge.net/apps/mediawiki/drm/index.php?title=Main_Page.

Before you start you will need to ensure your preferred audio piping method is set to use 48 kHz as the sample rate. See the [Setting the Sample Rate section](#) for more information.

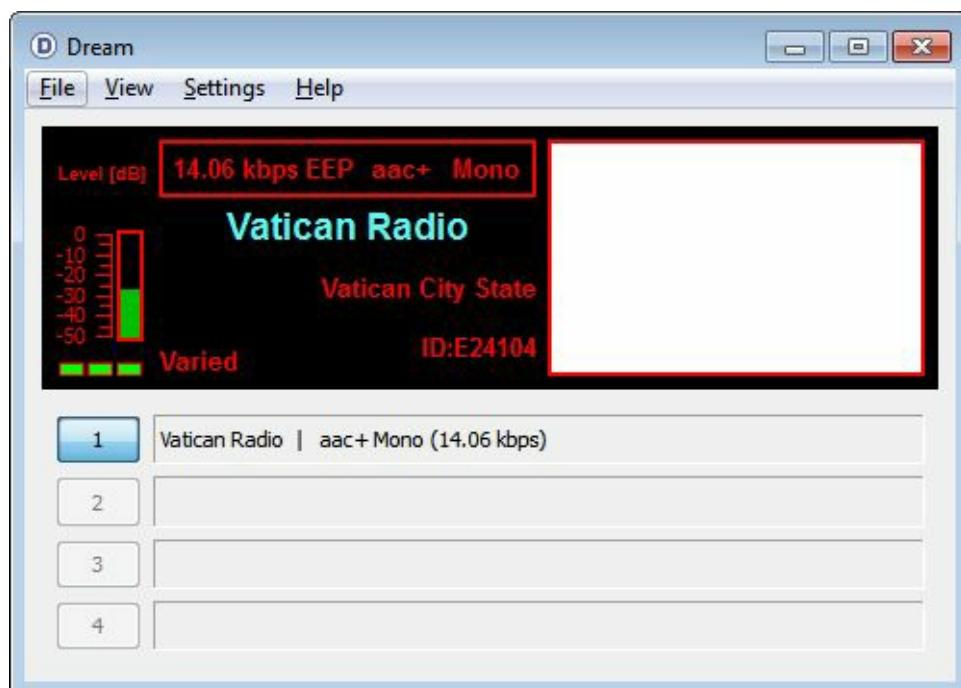
1. Download DREAM and extract the zip file into a folder.
3. Due to software licence reasons the required AAC audio decoder can not be shipped with the DREAM binary file. You can follow the instructions on the DREAM download page to compile your own faad2_drm.dll decoder. But as not everyone has compiling experience, a precompiled faad2_drm.dll download for windows can be found at this megaupload link <http://bit.ly/1mZivhY> (Mirror: https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/43061070/faad2_drm.dll). Note that using this file in some countries may not be legal due to patent laws. Place the

faad2_drm.dll file into your DREAM folder.

3. Now you can open SDRSharp or your favourite SDR receiver software and set your desired audio pipe as the output audio device.
4. Tune to a DRM signal. DRM signals use upper side band (USB), and have a bandwidth of 10 kHz, so apply these settings as well. AGC can be left on, but it may need to be experimented with in order to get the best decoding performance.
5. You should also experiment with the filter order. Usually a large filter order of 100+ works well especially if there are strong signals nearby.
6. A DRM signal looks like this (left) on the waterfall, placed next to a normal shortwave AM signal (right).

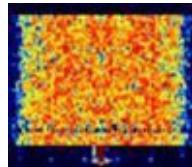


7. Now, open DREAM and then go to **Settings->Sound Card->Signal Input->Device** and set your audio pipe as the input device. Also, ensure that **Settings->Sound Card->Signal Input->Sample Rate** is set to 48000Hz.
8. Try to get the green “Level [dB]” bar in DREAM to be near the centre by adjusting the volume settings in your SDR receiver program. If everything is set up correctly, you should see three green bars underneath the volume meter and start seeing information about the DRM radio station you are tuned to in the window, and also begin to hear some audio.



HFDL DECODING GUIDE

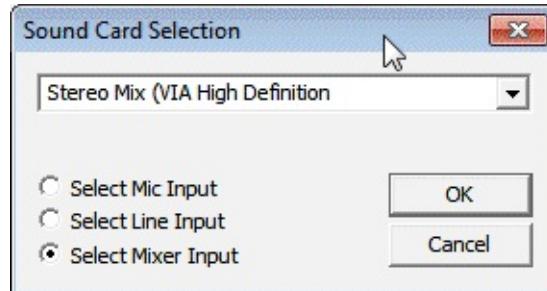
HFDL is an acronym for High Frequency Data Link. It is essentially ACARS sent over HF frequencies. A list of HFDL frequencies can be found at <http://qrg.globaltuners.com/?q=hfdl>. To decode HFDL, the SDR receiver must be set to USB mode and tuned to be 1440 Hz below the centre of the HFDL packet. The bandwidth should be set as 2800 Hz. If you are unfamiliar with what an HFDL signal looks like, check out the waterfall image to the below.



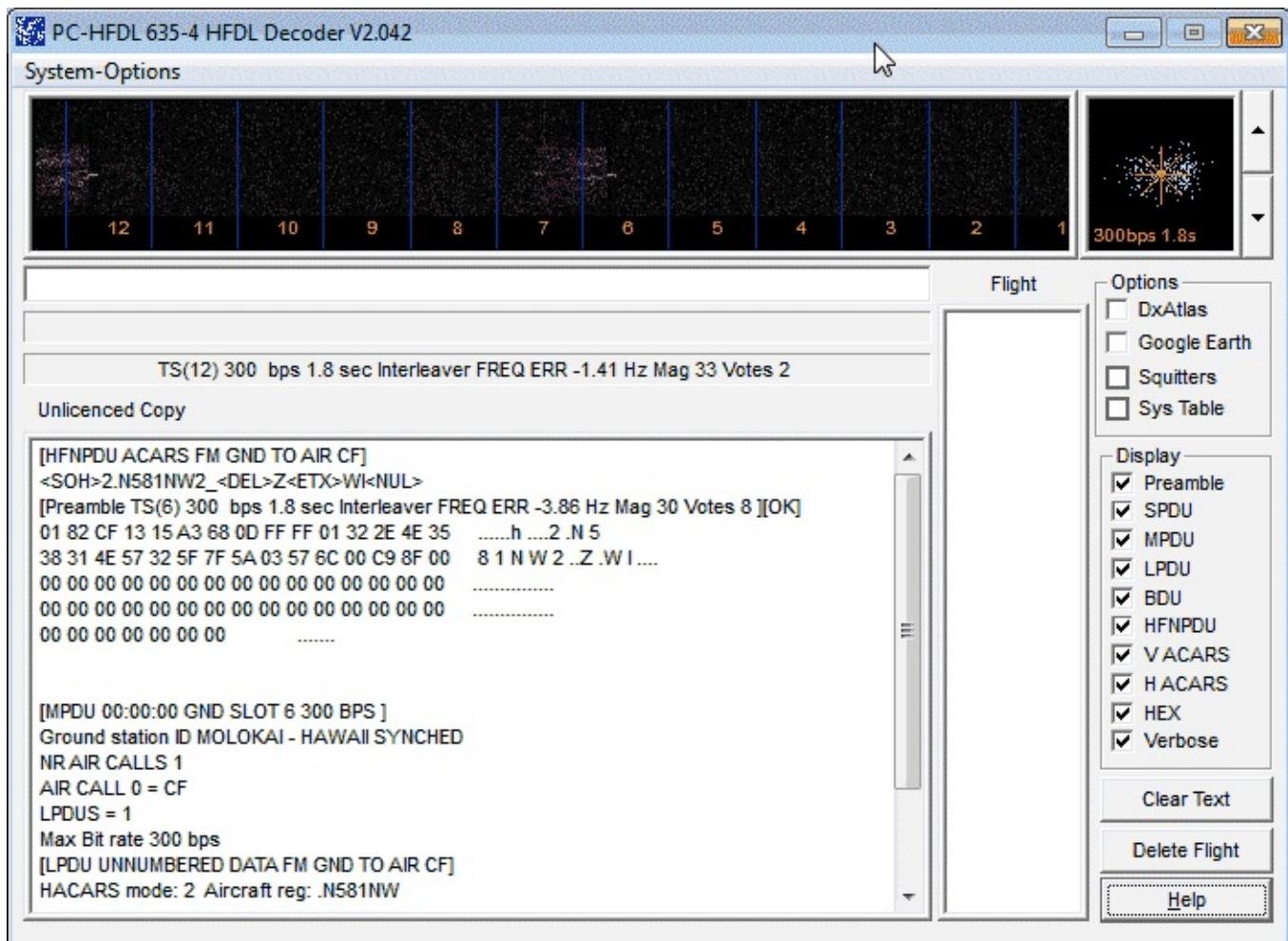
To decode HFDL we can use a program known as PC-HFDL. PC-HFDL is not free software as it costs \$35 USD, but it comes with a free 10 minute trial per opening. It is probably the best HFDL decoder available at the moment. PC-HFDL can be downloaded from <http://www.chbrain.dircon.co.uk/>. To use PC-HFDL with the RTL-SDR follow these steps

1. Open SDR# or your favourite general purpose SDR receiver and set the audio output to your preferred audio piping method.
2. Tune to a HFDL station using Upper Side Band (USB) mode.
3. Ensure that the signal is tuned to 1440Hz below the centre of the HFDL packets. This is important.
4. Set the bandwidth to 2800 Hz.
5. Open PC-HFDL.

6. Go to System-Options -> Soundcard Configuration.
7. Choose the audio piping method you are using in your SDR receiver and click on Select Mixer Input.



8. When an HF-DL packet is received, PC-HF-DL will decode it and display it in its main window.



You can further extend the information received by PC-HF-DL by using a second program called PC-HF-DL-Display. This program has a large database of aircraft and will resolve aircraft registration numbers and show you the aircraft type and airline they fly for.

1. Download PC-HF-DL-Display from <http://www.rstools.info/downloads-2.html>.
2. Extract the zip file for a folder.
3. To set up PC-HF-DL-Display, first in PC-HF-DL go to **System-Options->Logfile Configuration**.

4. Then in PC-HFDL enable HFDL Logging to Disk by checking the box.



5. Now open PC-HFDL-Display by opening Display-Launcher.exe and then clicking on the PC-HFDL-Display button. Note that the first time you run Display-Launcher.exe you may need to run it as administrator.
6. Click 'Use this Data' on the screen that pops up. You may also get a warning about not having a log path setup, you can ignore this for now.

ICAO	Reg	HFDL Reg	Type	ICAO Type	c/n	Operator	Active	Test A/C	Anomaly	Normaly Not	O/S Query	Remarks
30077A	F-WWBL		Airbus Test I	A330	VAR	Airbus Indus	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	Noted using	FALSE	
380000	F-WWBA		Airbus A320	A320	0001	Airbus Indus	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE		FALSE	
381000	F-WWDC		Airbus Test I	A330	VAR	Airbus Indus	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	Noted using	FALSE	
38123C	D-AVXP		Airbus Test I	A320	VAR	Airbus Indus	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	Noted using	FALSE	
394A73	F-GSTD		Airbus A300	A35T	0776	Airbus Indus	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	Incorrect he	FALSE	
3C127B	D-AVZX		Airbus Test I	A320	VAR	Airbus Indus	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	Noted using	FALSE	
3C6400	D-AICY		Airbus Test I	A319	VAR	Airbus Indus	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	Noted using	FALSE	
43C04E	ZZ175		MCD C-17A	C17	F185	Royal Air Fo	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration unknown
43C208	ZZ178		Boeing C17	C17	UK8	Royal Air Fo	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
498400	3085		Airbus A319	A319	3085	Czech Air Fc	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	Generic OK-	FALSE	
498B00	2801		Airbus A319	A319	2801	Czech Air Fc	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	Generic OK-	FALSE	
71025B	473		Lockheed C	C130	5235	Royal Saudi	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
710205	1604		Lockheed C	C130	4633	Royal Saudi	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
7102E1	474		Lockheed C	C130	5252	Royal Saudi	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
7102E2	475		Lockheed C	C130	5253	Royal Saudi	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
7102E4	1626		Lockheed C	C130	5270	Royal Saudi	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
71038B	485		Lockheed V	C130	4845	Royal Saudi	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
80046A	VT-INP		Airbus A320	A320	3357	Indigo	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	Noted using	FALSE	
A27347	N257UP		MCD MD-11	MD11	48451	UPS	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	Noted using	FALSE	
AAAAAA	N787BK		Algo Sequer				TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	Used by a v	FALSE	
70C07B	.554		Airbus A320	A320	3723	Royal Airfor	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
70C07C	.555		Airbus A320	A320	4117	Royal Airfor	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
70C07E	.556		Airbus A320	A320	4795	Royal Airfor	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
AE0816	00-0180	000180	MCD C-17 E	C17	80	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
AE0816	00-0180	00180A	MCD C-17 E	C17	80	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
AE0818	00-0182	00182A	MCD C-17 E	C17	P86	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00182A
AE4D67	10-0214	00214A	Boeing C-17	C17	P214	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
AE4D68	10-0215	00215A	Boeing C17	C17	P-215	Royal Saudi	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
AE4F13	10-0219	00219A	Boeing C17	C17	P-219	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	
AE0683	60-0313	00313S	Boeing KC-1	K35R	18088	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00313S
AE0599	60-0315	00315S	Boeing KC-1	K35R	18090	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00315S
AE0858	60-0316	00316S	Boeing KC-1	K35R	18091	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00316S
AE059A	60-0319	00319S	Boeing KC-1	K35R	18094	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00319S
AE065D	60-0320	00320S	Boeing KC-1	K35R	18095	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00320S
AE0684	60-0321	00321S	Boeing KC-1	K35R	18096	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00321S
AE0480	60-0324	00324S	Boeing KC-1	K35R	18099	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00324S
AE0686	60-0328	00328S	Boeing KC-1	K35R	18103	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00328S
AE07AB	60-0331	00331S	Boeing KC-1	K35R	18106	US Air Force	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE		FALSE	HFDL registration 00331S

7. Go to Options->PC_HFDL Log Path 1.
8. Navigate to the folder where you PC-HFDL is installed to and enter the logfiles folder.
9. Choose the date of the current logfile that you wish to monitor. Note that PC-HFDL must have decode at least one HFDL packet first before a logfile will be written.

10. Ensure that Log 1 is checked under connection details and then click the Start button.

The screenshot shows the PC-HFDL-Display Version 1.0.73 application window. The top menu bar includes Options, Database, and About. The main interface has several buttons: Log 1 (checked), Log 2, Start, Plot on Google Earth, Read Log File, Clear Grid, Display Data-Base, Try resolve No-Reg, Save Grid, Load Grid, Clear Grid, Status: Connected, and Quit. A digital clock displays 01:16. The status bar shows Total Entries 12.

Incoming Data from PC-HFDL:

```
[MPDU 12:57:55 GND SLOT 1 300 BPS ]
Ground station ID MOLOKAI - HAWAII SYNCHED
NR AIR CALLS 2
AIR CALL 0 = D2
LPDUS = 1
Max Bit rate 300 bps
AIR CALL 1 = CF
LPDUS = 1
Max Bit rate 300 bps
[MPDU UNNUMBERED DATA FM GND TO AIR D2]
HACARS mode: 2 Aircraft reg: RPC8399
Message label: _ Block id: C [Uplink]
Message content:-
```

[27/03/2014 13:14]

[HFNPDU ACARS FM GND TO AIR D2]
<SOH>2RPC8399 C<ETX>U<ACK><NUL>

Not in DataBase:

Location	AC	GS	Freq
SAN FRANCISCO	7	8	
MOLOKAI	4	9	11
REYKJAVIK	1	3	4
RIVERHEAD	3	5	
AUCKLAND	2	6	
HAT YAI	1	3	
SHANNON	1	3	
JOHANNESBURG	2		
BARROW	5	10	
ALBROOK	4		
SANTA CRUZ	1	3	
KRASNOYARSK	2	4	
AL MUHARRAQ	1	2	
AGANA	4	7	
CANARIAS	1	3	

Frequencies currently in use:

Rego	Type	Airline	Date Time	Flt No	ICAO Hex	Location	Route	AC	GS	Freq
N581NW	B753	Delta Air Lines	201403270000		A77AE0			CF	2	0
JA21MC	A320	Star Flyer	201403271254		848982				2	0
B-6533	A332	Air China International	201403271254		780783			BF	2	0
RPC8399	A320	AirPhil Express	201403271255		7582A0				2	0
JA21MC	A320	Star Flyer	201403271255		848982				2	0
C-FRAM	B773	Air Canada	201403271257		C02CF1				2	0
RPC8399	A320	AirPhil Express	201403271257		7582A0			D2	2	0
JA08MC	A320	Star Flyer	201403271257		841EFE				2	0
VP-BUK	A319	Aeroflot	201403271257		4240DC				2	0
N581NW	B753	Delta Air Lines	201403271257		A77AE0			CF	2	0
RPC8399	A320	AirPhil Express	201403271257		7582A0			D2	2	0
N581NW	B753	Delta Air Lines	201403271257		A77AE0			CF	2	0

Flight Logs:

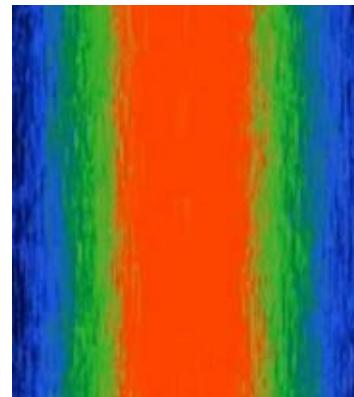
GS 1: MOLOKAI - HAWAII	No data for: 2 Mins	GS 2: Freq: _____	No data for: _____	GS 3: Freq: _____	No data for: _____
------------------------	---------------------	-------------------	--------------------	-------------------	--------------------

MULTIPSK

MultiPSK is another decoder that can decode HF-DL messages. HF-DL decoding requires the paid version of MultiPSK. The Display Launcher used for PC-HFDL can also be used with MultiPSK. Just use the HF-DL-Display button instead and connect to MultiPSK via TCP/IP as shown in other MultiPSK tutorials above.

D-STAR

D-STAR is a VHF digital amateur radio mode that is usually heard around 145.670 MHz with a bandwidth of 6.25 kHz. D-STAR uses repeaters that go through the internet which allow for global communications. A zoomed in D-STAR waterfall image looks like the image shown below.



DSD Version 1.7 (or newer) can be used to decode D-STAR audio. A precompiled DSD 1.7 for Windows can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/1nPU87E> (Mirror 1: <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/43061070/dsd-1.7.rar>) (Mirror 2: <http://bit.ly/RF0yLw>). Download the zip file and extract the files to a folder.

To use DSD 1.7 for D-Star use the following steps.

1. Set your audio piping device to be the default Windows recording device in the Windows sound recording properties. We recommend using either VBCable or Virtual Audio Cable for D-STAR.
2. Open your favourite SDR receiver software like SDR# or SDR-Console and set your audio piping device. Tune to the D-STAR frequency 145.670 MHz and set the mode to NFM and the bandwidth to 6.25 kHz.
3. Open a Command Prompt by going to **Start->All Programs->Accessories->Command Prompt**, or by simply typing cmd into the start menu search bar.
4. In command prompt navigate to the folder that you have extracted DSD1.7 to. For example if you extracted to c:\radio\dsd17 you would type “cd c:\radio\dsd17”.
5. Run DSD1.7 with the command `dsd -I /dev/dsp -o /dev/dsp -fd`
6. DSD will begin to decode the D-STAR audio and play the voice audio through your speakers.

```
C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe - dsd -i /dev/dsp -o /dev/dsp -fd
=====R=====R=====R=====R=====Missed sync on framecount = 84, value
= 84/a4/69
=====R=====R=====R=====R=====Missed sync on framecount = 10
5, value = 88/b4/79

Sync: no sync
Sync: -D-STAR mod: GPSK invlv: 52x e:=====Missed sync on framecount = 21,
value = aa/bc/68
=====Missed sync on framecount = 42, value = ae/b4/69
=====Missed sync on framecount = 63, value = 6a/b4/68

Sync: no sync
Sync: -D-STAR mod: C4FM invlv: 54x e:=====R=====R=====
=====R=Missed sync on framecount = 21, value = a/a4/68
=====R=====R=====Missed sync on framecount = 42, value = 2/b4/6
9
Tone volume: 2; index: 42, Single tone hz: 1312.500000
=====RT=====R=====RMissed sync on framecount = 63, value = c
8/a4/69

Sync: no sync
Sync: -D-STAR mod: C4FM invlv: 53x e:=====Missed sync on framecount =
21, value = a0/b4/68
=====Missed sync on framecount = 63, value = 2a/b4/78
=====Missed sync on framecount = 84, value = 2a/b4/68
=====Missed sync on framecount = 105, value = 2/bc/68

Sync: no sync
Tone volume: 24; index: 211, was >163, invalid!
Sync: -D-STAR mod: C4FM invlv: 51x e:=====R=====R=====
==R=====R=====R==T==R==Missed sync on framecount = 42, value = 57/75/5
?
=====R=====R=====R=====Missed sync on framecount
= 63, value = b/79/b1
Tone volume: 70; index: 0, was <5, invalid!
=====R=====R=====R=====R=====R=====R==TMissed sync on
framecount = 84, value = 50/79/5?

Sync: no sync
Sync: -D-STAR mod: C4FM invlv: 53x e:=====Missed sync on framecount =
21, value = 2a/b4/78
=====R=====Missed sync on framecount = 42, value = 2/b4/68
=====R=====R=====R=====R=====Missed sync o
n framecount = 84, value = a/b4/78
=====R=====R=====R=====R=====Missed sync on framecount = 105, va
lue = 2/a4/48
=====R=====R=====R=====R=====Missed sync on framecount = 126, value = 9/b
4/f8

Sync: no sync
```

RTL-SDR FOR ANDROID

At the time of writing this book there are currently four Android RTL-SDR apps available on the Google Play marketplace.

To use RTL-SDR on Android, you need a fairly powerful device that runs at least Android 4.0. You also need a special USB OTG (on-the-go) cable adapter. See the Buy RTL-SDR dongles page for a link to places where you can buy OTG cables <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/>. Note that some mobile devices do not have enough power to run the RTL-SDR dongle by themselves. If this is the case you will need to buy a USB OTG cable that can be powered externally. You may want to consider a powered USB OTG cable regardless because running the RTL-SDR on a mobile device can quickly drain the battery. It may pay to use an external battery pack connected to the powered USB OTG cable if using RTL-SDR on Android away from a power source.

SDR TOUCH

SDR Touch was the first RTL-SDR app for Android released. It is a general purpose SDR GUI similar in function to programs like SDR#. It works very well and has an RF spectrum and waterfall display. SDR Touch can be downloaded from the Google Play store by searching for “SDR Touch”. There is a trial version and a paid version. More information can be found at <http://www.sdrtouch.com/>.

SDR Touch can tune in WFM, NFM, AM, SSB (USB/LSB) and CW signals. It cannot decode digital signals like DRM or DAB/DAB+.

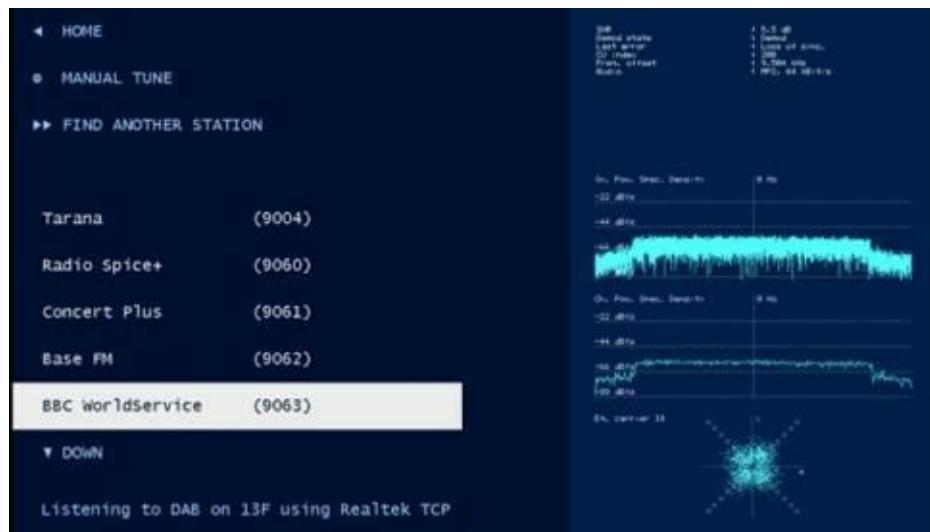
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=marto.androsdr2>



WAVESINK

Wavesink is an Android program similar to SDR Touch, but it is restricted to decoding Broadcast FM, DRM and DAB/DAB+ audio only. Audio quality on either mode is excellent.

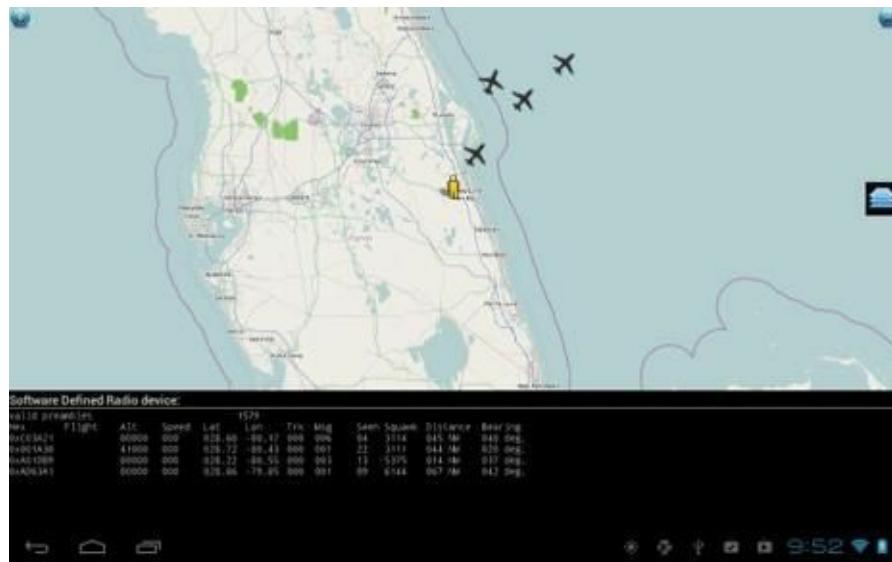
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=de.ses.wavesink>



USB ADSB RTL-SDR

USB ADSB RTL-SDR is a program which is capable of receiving ADS-B signals and plotting them on a map. See the ADS-B tutorial for more information on receiving ADS-B.

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.wilsonae.android.usbserial>



SDR WEATHER

This app receives weather radio and Emergency Alert System (EAS) alerts using the RTL-SDR.

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.thecongers.sdrweather>

RECEIVING 10 GHZ BEACONS

A 3 cm or 10 GHz band is used by amateur radio operators usually for simple beacons and communications.

To receive beacons at such high frequencies a Ku band “low noise block downconverter” (LNB) is required. Fortunately these can be had for very cheap on Amazon. See the rtl-sdr.com products page at <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/> for more information.

The LNB will receive the 10 GHz signal and then convert it down to a frequency that is receivable by the RTL-SDR. Often you will need to combine a LNB with a satellite dish to get good performance.

There are several amateur radio beacons at 10 GHz that can be received by doing this. Also, there is the communications technique known as “rain scatter” which allows 10 GHz signals to be received by bouncing a signal off a precipitation cloud.

GNU RADIO INTRODUCTION

GNU Radio is an advanced graphical programming tool for digital signal processing (DSP). It can interface to the RTL-SDR and perform real time decoding.

This guide is intended to teach the basics of GNU Radio by helping you install GNU Radio and create your first GNU Radio RTL-SDR program. Note that the RTL-SDR Linux drivers need to be installed for GNU Radio to work with the RTL-SDR. See [Installing RTL-SDR Drivers on Linux](#). There are several Linux distributions and Live DVDs that now have GNU Radio preinstalled. See the [GNU Radio Live DVDs section](#) for more information. To install GNU Radio on a version of Linux that does not have it preinstalled follow these instructions.

```
sudo apt-get update  
sudo apt-get install git  
sudo apt-get install libasound2-dev  
git clone git://github.com/pybombs/pybombs  
cd pybombs  
sudo ./pybombs install gnuradio  
sudo ./pybombs install gr-osmosdr  
sudo ldconfig
```

After the install gnuradio line you will be presented with a few pre-installation options. Unless you know what you are doing you can use the default options for all the options except the prefix, which we highly recommend setting as `Prefix=/usr/local`. To use the default options simply press enter at each line.

The installation process will take a while (1-2 hours) to install depending on your PC and internet connection speeds. Important Note: Do not run this installation process on an embedded device running Linux on an SDCard. The amount of writes GNU Radio does during the installation process can destroy the card.

Start GNU Radio Companion by typing `gnuradio-companion` at a terminal window.

If for some reason you just can't get compilation from source to work, you can always use "apt-get install gnuradio", however this will usually install a very old version of GNU Radio which may not be compatible with some newer GNU Radio programs.

If you happen to be running GNU Radio in a virtual machine, you may need to adjust some settings found in `/usr/local/etc/gnuradio/conf.d/gr-audio-alsa.conf`. You may need to alter these values to `period_time = 0.10` and `nperiods = 32` if you experience choppy audio.

GNU RADIO PROGRAM: FFT DISPLAY

The first program we'll make is a simple FFT RF spectrum display using GNU Radio.

1. First open GNU-Radio Companion by typing into a terminal

```
gnuradio-companion
```

2. On the right side of the GNURadio Companion you'll see a list of GNU Radio blocks that can be added. Locate the Sources menu and expand it. Click and drag the 'RTL-SDR Source' into the main GNU Radio window.
3. Next double click the Variable box with the ID: samp_rate. Change the samp_rate (sampling rate) to 2 MHz by typing in a value of 2e6.

Math Tip: The number 2e6 is equivalent to 2×10^6 or 2M or 2000000.

File Edit View Build Help

The screenshot shows the GNU Radio Companion (GRC) application window. The main area displays a flow graph with a single block, an **RTL-SDR Source**. A context menu is open over this block, listing its configuration parameters:

- Sample Rate (sps):** 2M
- Ch0: Frequency (Hz):** 100M
- Ch0: Freq. Corr. (ppm):** 0
- Ch0: DC Offset Mode:** Off
- Ch0: IQ Balance Mode:** Off
- Ch0: Gain Mode:** Manual
- Ch0: RF Gain (dB):** 10
- Ch0: IF Gain (dB):** 20
- Ch0: BB Gain (dB):** 20

To the left of the graph, there are two floating windows:

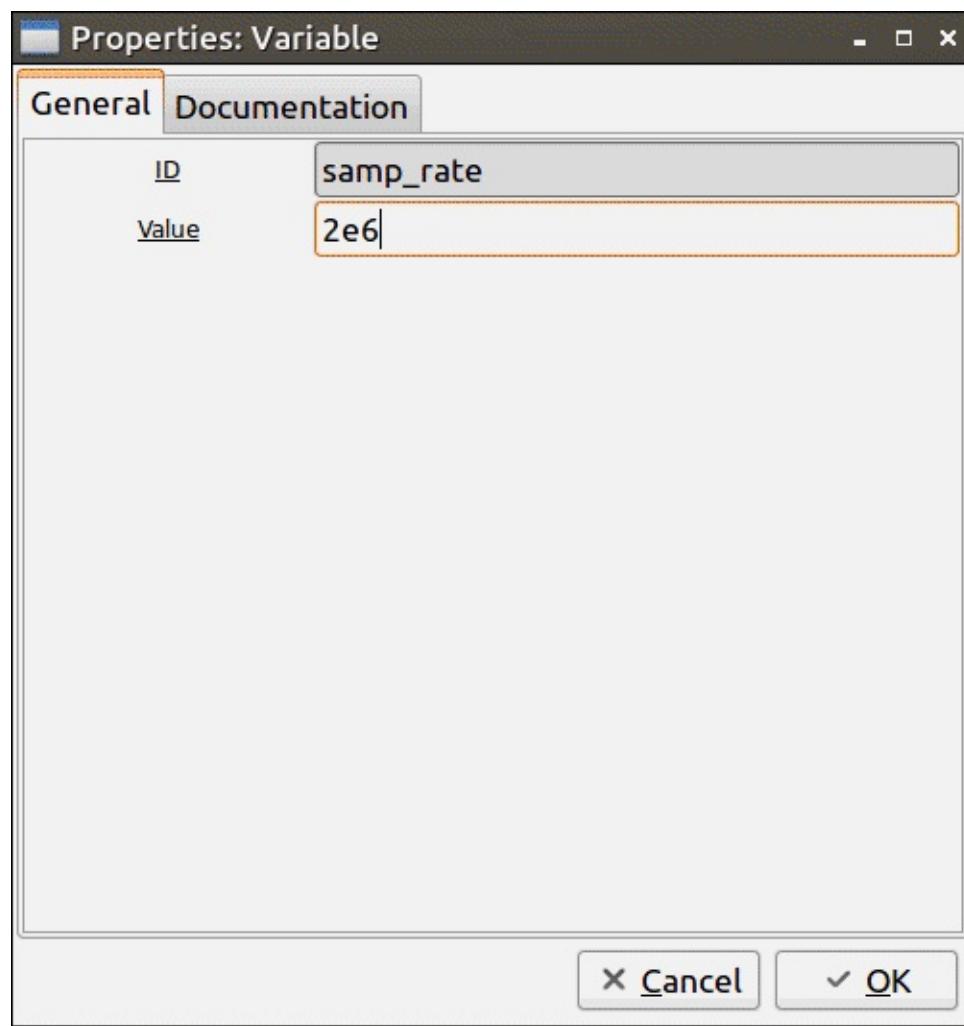
- Options**: Shows the block's ID as **top_block** and the generate options as **WX GUI**.
- Variable**: Shows a variable **samp_rate** with an ID of **top_block** and a value of **2M**.

The right side of the screen features a vertical tree view of available blocks, organized into categories:

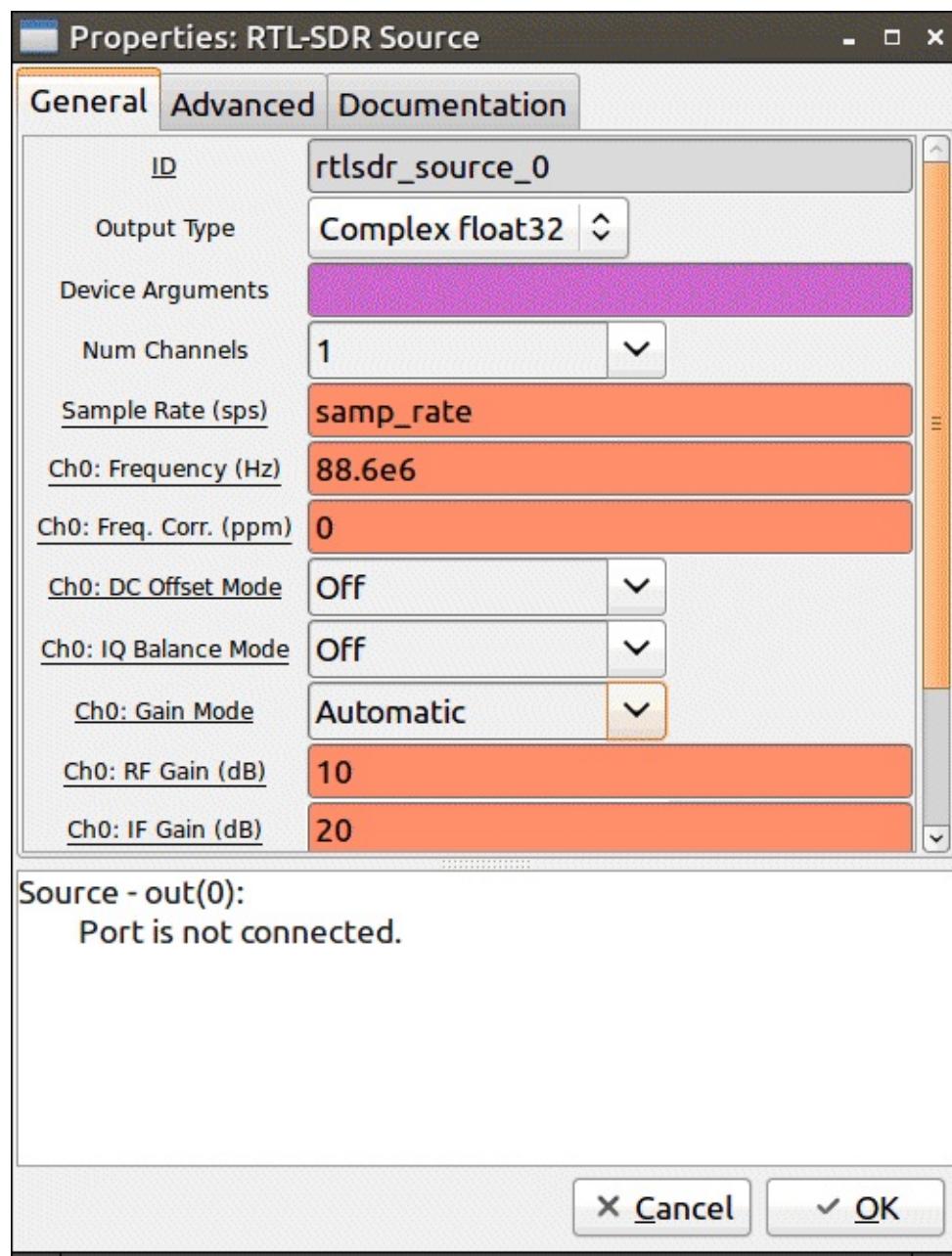
- [Level Controllers]
- [Math Operators]
- [Measurement Tools]
- [Message Tools]
- [Misc]
- [Modulators]
- [Networking Tools]
- [NOAA]
- [OFDM]
- [Packet Operators]
- [Pager]
- [Peak Detectors]
- [RDS]
- [Resamplers]
- [Sinks]
- [Sources]
 - osmocom Source
 - RTL-SDR Source** (highlighted in orange)
- [Stream Operators]
- [Stream Tag Tools]
- [Symbol Coding]
- [Synchronizers]
- [Trellis Coding]
- [Type Converters]
- [UHD]
- [Variables]
- [Waveform Generators]

At the bottom of the screen, a terminal-like window displays the following messages:

- Showing: "/home/user/GNURadio/example_instructables.grc"
- Showing: "/home/user/GNURadio/FFTsink+audio.grc"
- Showing: "/home/user/GNURadio/example_instructables.grc"
- Showing: ""

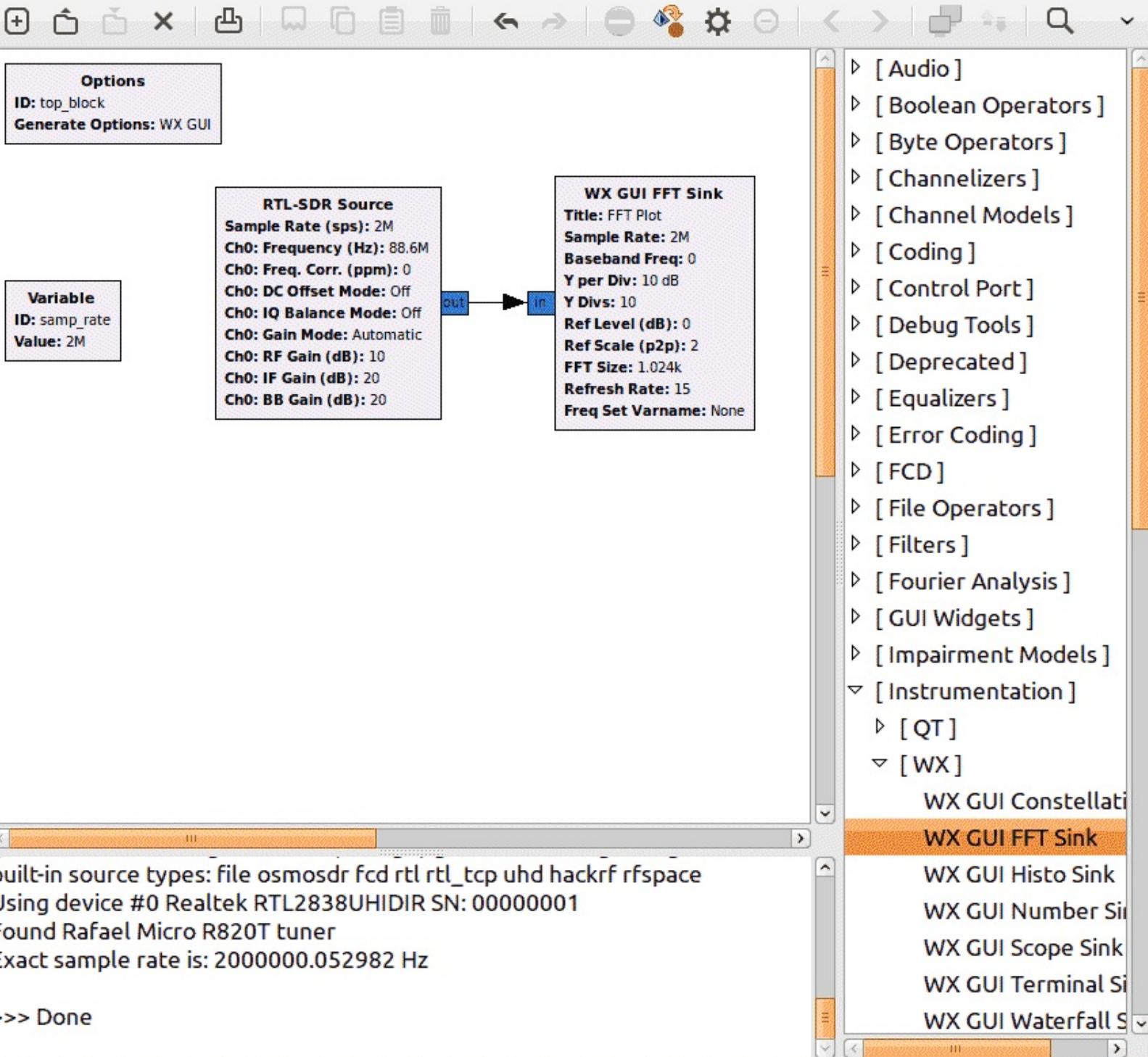


4. Next double click on the RTL-SDR source block you've just added. Change the Ch0: Frequency (Hz) value to the frequency of a local broadcast FM station. For example here it is set to 88.6 MHz by using the value 88.6e6. Also set the Gain Mode to Automatic. Finally, set the PPM offset under Ch0: Freq. Corr. (ppm) if required.



5. Next in the block selection window pane go to **Instrumentation -> WX -> WX GUI FFT Sink** and drag this into the main Window. Place this block to the right of the RTL-SDR Source block.
6. Connect the two blocks together by first clicking on the blue out node of the RTL-SDR Source and then clicking on the blue in node of the WX GUI FFT Sink block.

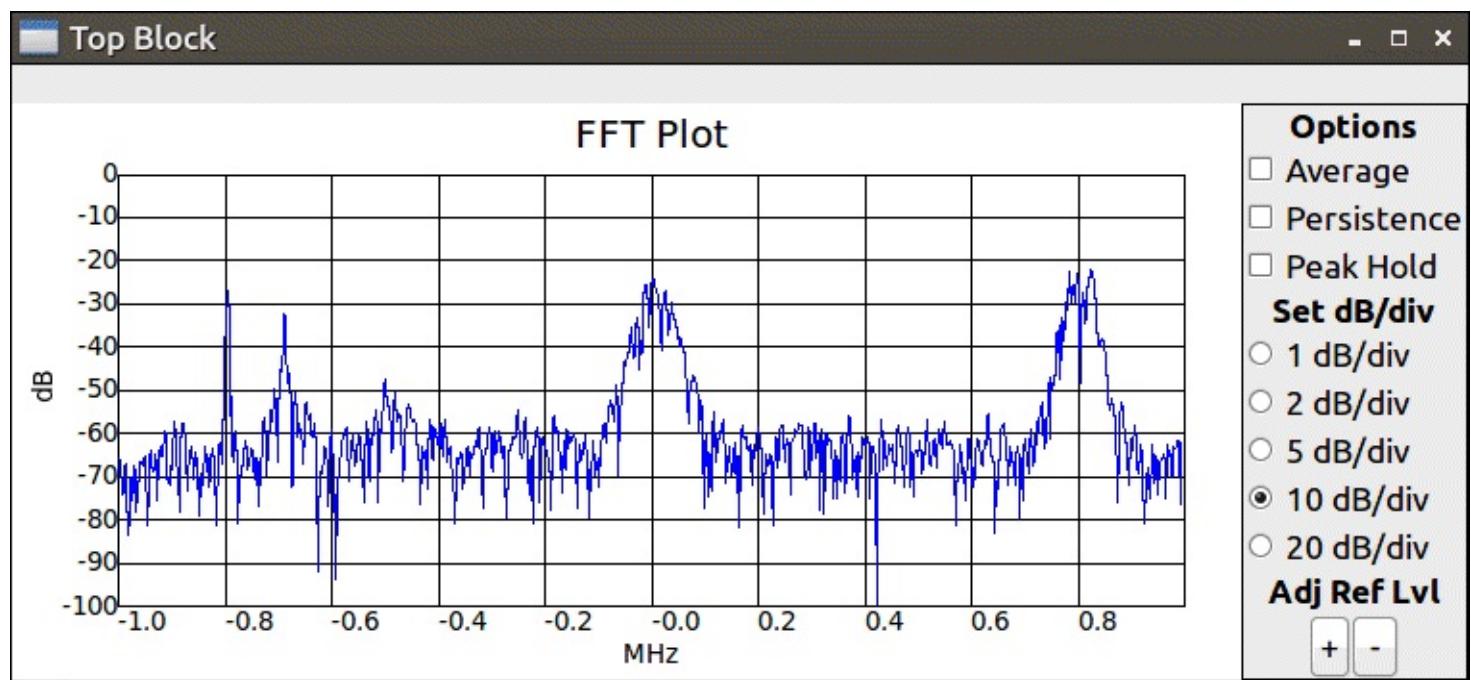
File Edit View Build Help



7. Now click on the Generate Flowgraph button . First you will be prompted to save. Call this

project FFTSink.grc. Then click the execute flowgraph button .

The result will be a live RF spectrum plot with your chosen frequency in the centre.



GNU RADIO PROGRAM: WBFM RECEIVER

Now we will extend the FFT display we just made to also play Wide Band FM (WBFM) audio. First a GNU Radio tip: To easily find blocks go to **View->Find Blocks**. A search bar will appear on the top right side which will make finding blocks much easier.

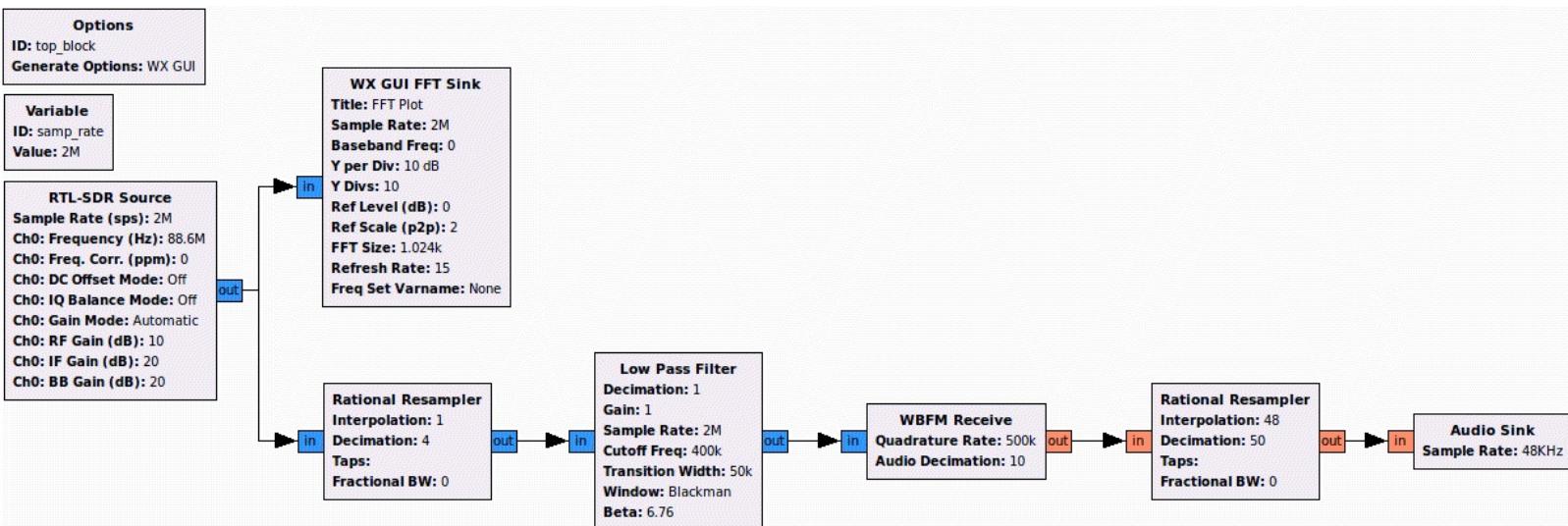
1. Go to file save as and save the new file as FFTsink+audio.grc.
2. Add in a ‘Rational Resampler’ Block and connect it to the RTL-SDR Source. Double click it and set the parameters as follows.
 - Interpolation = 1
 - Decimation = 4.
3. Add in a ‘Low Pass Filter’ block and connect it to the Rational Resampler. Set the parameters as follows.
 - Cutoff Freq = 400e3
 - Transition Width = 50e3
4. Add in a ‘WBFM Receive’ Block. Connect it to the Low Pass Filter. Set the parameters as follows.
 - Quadrature Rate = 500e6
 - Audio Decimation = 10
5. Add in a second ‘Rational Resampler’ block. Connect it to the WBFM Receiver. Set the parameters as follows.
 - Type = Float->Float (Real Taps)
 - Interpolation = 48

- Decimation = 50

6. Add an ‘Audio Sink’ block. Connect it to the Rational Resampler. Set the parameters as follows.

- Sample Rate = 48e3

7. Press the Execute Button. You should now hear audio playing.



EXPLANATION OF WBFM FLOW GRAPH

The first thing that happens in the flow graph is that the signal from the RTL-SDR is decimated by four times. Decimation is a way to get more bits out of an ADC. Essentially, by decimating by four, we reduce our 2 Msps sample rate to 0.5 Msps, but gain one extra bit on our ADC. We need to be careful of the amount we decimate by, as decimating by a wrong value could cause neighbouring signals to overlap onto the signal of interest. For a tutorial on decimation see <http://www.atmel.com/images/doc8003.pdf>.

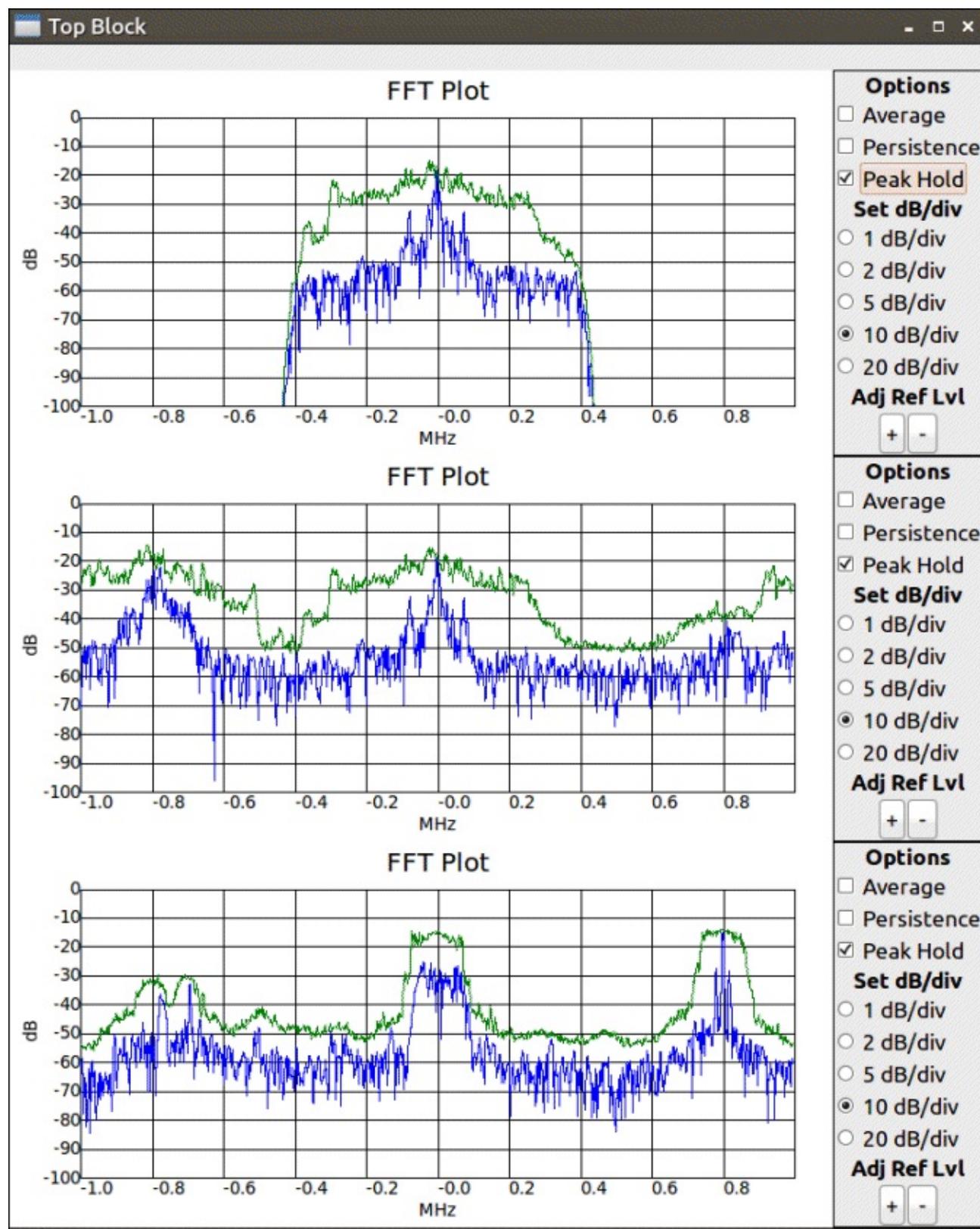
After decimation we use a low pass filter to select only the WBFM signal that we are interested in, which is the centre frequency. This is needed as nearby WBFM frequencies are received in the same bandwidth, but we want to listen to only one. The bandwidth of a typical WBFM radio station is about 200 kHz. After decimating by four, the bandwidth of our WBFM signal is multiplied by four to 800 kHz. The lowpass filter cutoff frequency is measured for only one side of the bandwidth, so here we set it to 400 kHz. The lowpass filter transition width defines how ‘sharp’ our filter is. The smaller the transition width, the more square the low pass filter becomes. However, the smaller the transition width, the greater the number of calculations required and thus the greater CPU time required. With a transition width of 100e3 GNU Radio uses approximately 33% CPU, a transition width of 10e3 uses 45% CPU and a transition width of 1e6 tries to use over 100% of the CPU.

Next comes the WBFM Receiver block which handles the WBFM to audio decoding. We set the Quadrature Rate at 500e6 because 0.5 Msps is our sample rate after decimation. We also set the audio decimation as 10, as this will bring the 0.5 Msps decimated signal down to a 50 kHz output audio

signal. This can then easily be converted to the 48 kHz sample rate that our soundcard needs. Decimation could also be done in the next rational resampler block, but the resampling in the WBFM block is of higher quality.

As the soundcard needs 48 kHz audio we need to convert our 50 kHz audio signal down to 48 kHz. We do this by first taking the signal down to 1000 Hz by decimating by 50. Then by interpolating by 48 we get a final sample rate of $48 \times 1000 = 48$ kHz. This is exactly the amount our sound card needs.

To learn more we recommend connecting FFT sinks to the output of the first rational resampler and to the output of the low pass filter to see how they affect the signal as shown in the graphs below. The top graph is the low pass filtered signal, the middle graph is the decimated signal and the bottom graph is the raw signal.



GNU RADIO PROGRAM: COMPILING A WBFM-RDS RECEIVER

For this tutorial we will show you how to download, build and run a ready made GNU Radio program. We will download the GR-RDS program, which allows you to not only listen to WFM broadcast radio, but to also decode the RDS signals inside of them. To get started follow the instructions below.

Clone the gr-rds GitHub using

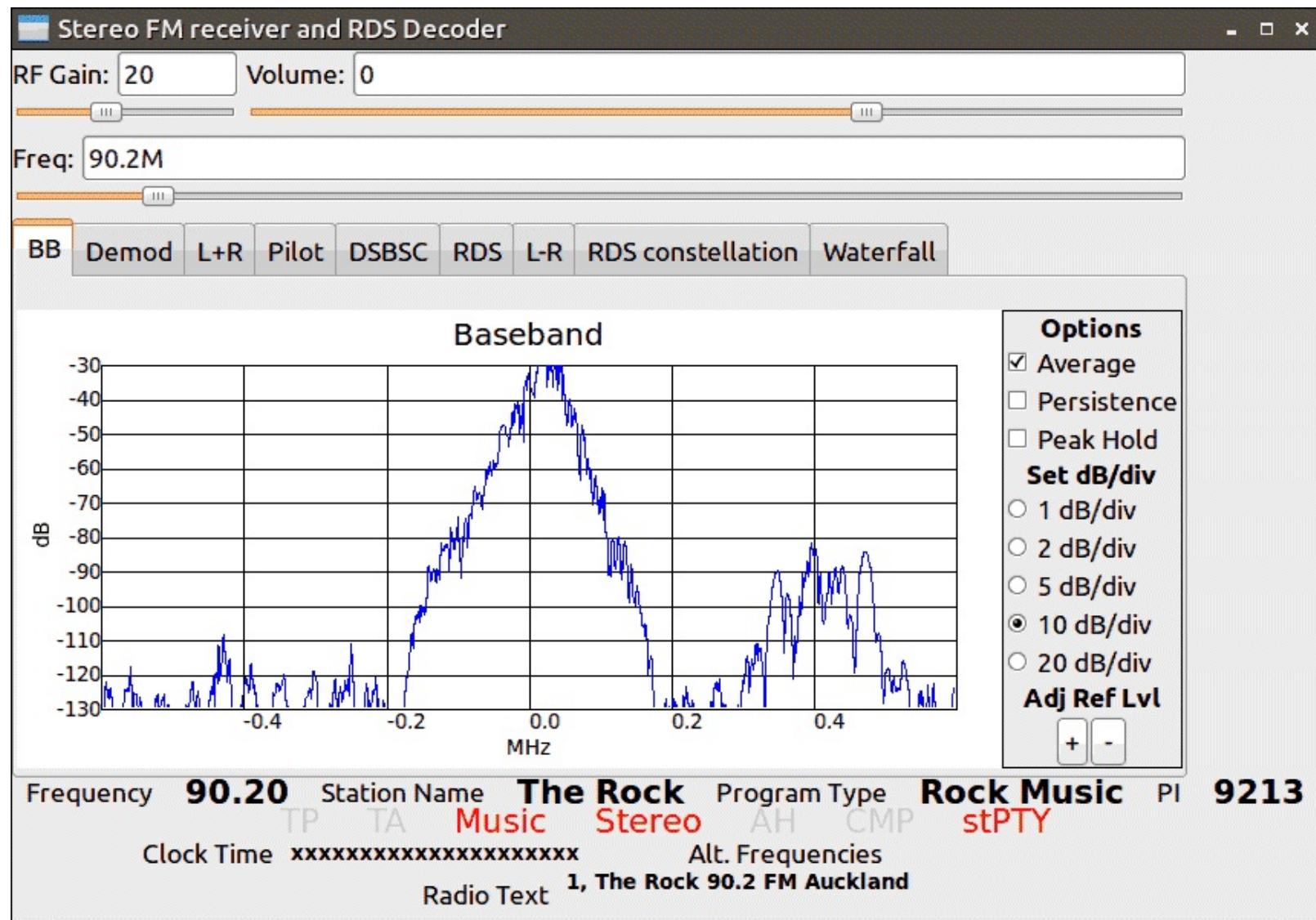
```
git clone git://git.github.com/bastibl/gr-rds
```

Now build gr-rds with the following.

```
cd gr-rds  
mkdir build  
cd build  
cmake ..  
make  
sudo make install  
sudo ldconfig
```

Now you can run gr-rds by opening or running one of the following files

```
cd ..  
cd apps  
gnuradio-companion rds_rx.grc --OR-- python rds_rx.py
```



REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL LINKS:

More GNU Radio Tutorials <http://files.ettus.com/tutorials/>

GNU Radio Video Tutorial Series: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL618122BD66C8B3C4>

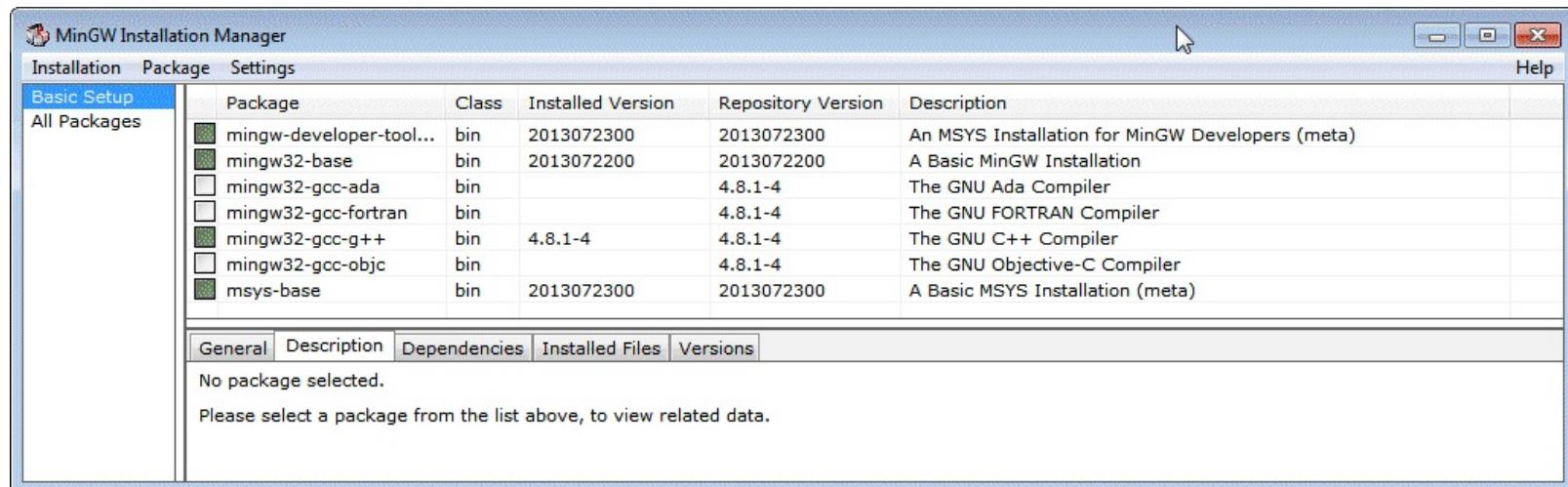
COMPILING RTL-SDR DRIVERS FROM SOURCE ON WINDOWS

Compiling the RTL-SDR drivers is a useful skill to have as it allows you to test the latest updates to the driver or to try out various experimental RTL-SDR branches if you desire. If you simply want to use the RTL-SDR, compiling the drivers is not necessary. Just follow the Quickstart guide from the first section. Compiling the drivers on Linux is simple and instructions are provided on the GitHub page. Here is a short tutorial on compiling the RTL-SDR drivers on Windows.

COMPILING WITH MINGW

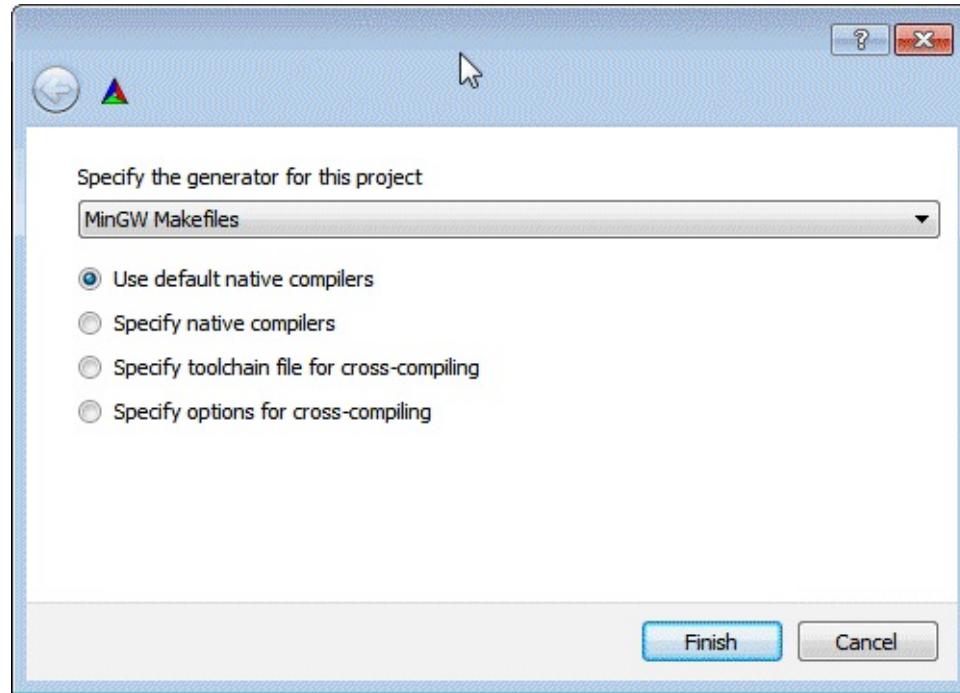
This tutorial shows how to compile from source using MingW, a tool for compiling Linux programs on Windows. For other users to use the compiled files they will need to have MingW set up on their system as well. MingW can be downloaded from <http://www.mingw.org/>. Make sure you set the MingW path correctly if it does not set automatically.

1. Install MingW making sure to install the developer tools, base and g++ compilers.

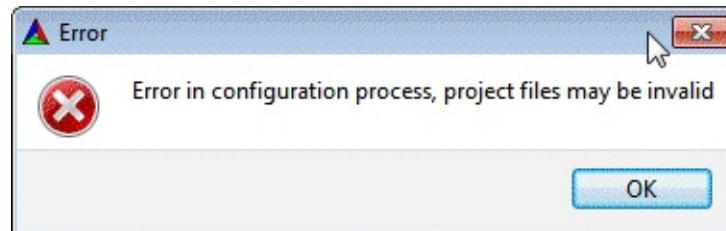


2. Download and install CMake and be sure to check add to path during the installation process. <http://www.cmake.org/>.
3. Download libusb1.0 <http://sourceforge.net/projects/libusbx/files/releases/>.
4. Download pthreads <ftp://sourceware.org/pub/pthreads-win32/pthreads-w32-2-9-1-release.zip>.
5. Extract the libusb1.0 zip file to a folder like c:\libraries\libusb/include and pthreads to c:\libraries\pthreads/include.
6. Download the rtl-sdr source from git at git://git.osmocom.org/rtl-sdr or <https://github.com/steve-m/librtlsdr> either by downloading the zip file or doing a git clone. Extract to a directory like C:\rtl-sdr.

7. Open cmake-gui from the start menu.
8. Set the source code folder as c:\rtl-sdr
9. Set the binary build folder as C:\rtl-sdr\build. Press Configure, you will be asked to create the build directory. Click yes.
10. Choose “MinGW Makefiles” as the compiler for this project and “Use default native compilers” and then click Finish.



11. You may receive an error, but don't worry about it yet.



12. Now make sure the advanced check box is checked. Scroll to the bottom of the window. You should see 5 library names that say that their directory was not found.

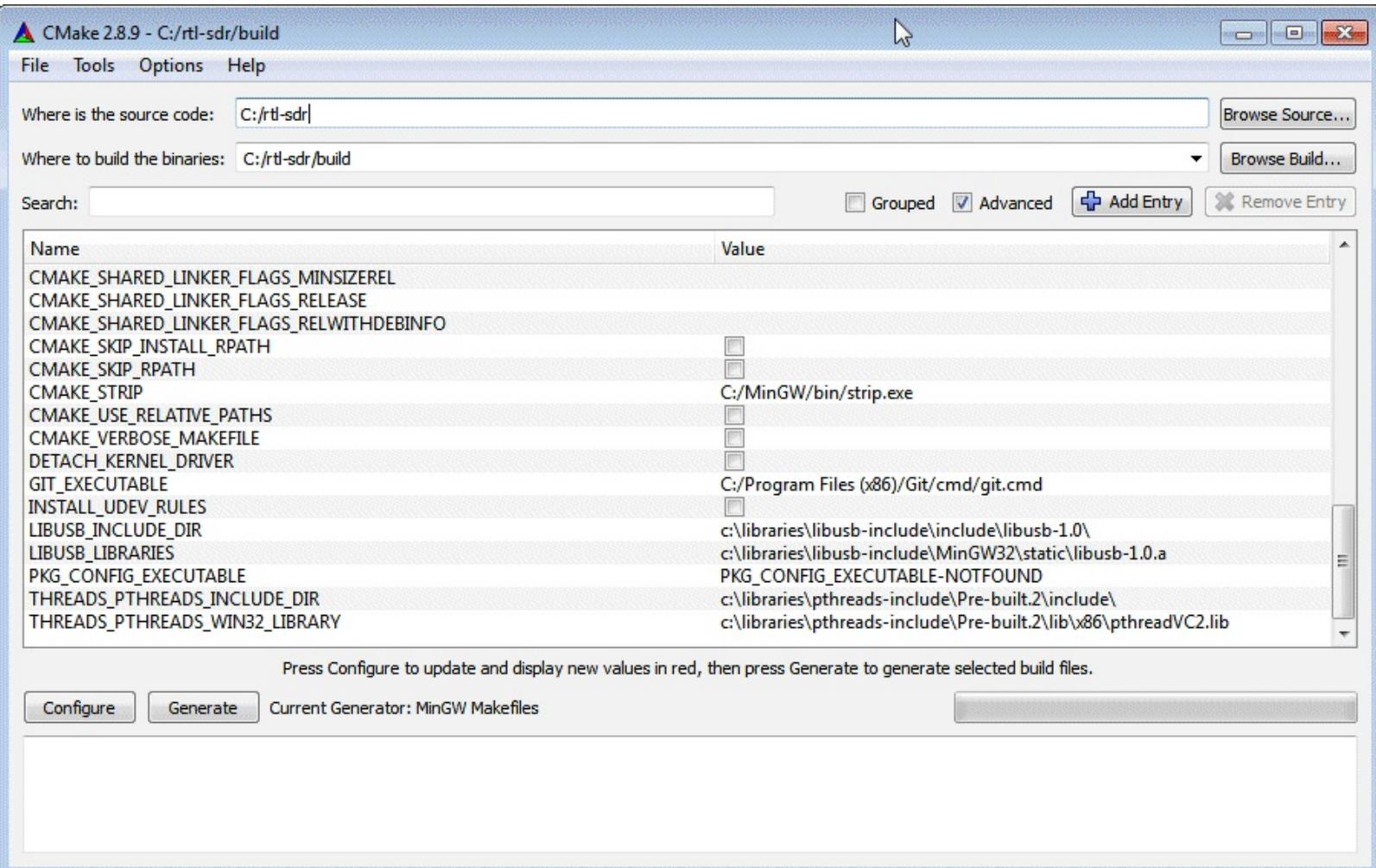
GIT_EXECUTABLE LIBUSB_INCLUDE_DIR LIBUSB_LIBRARIES PKG_CONFIG_EXECUTABLE THREADS_PTHREADS_INCLUDE_DIR THREADS_PTHREADS_WIN32_LIBRARY	C:/Program Files (x86)/Git/cmd/git.cmd LIBUSB_INCLUDE_DIR-NOTFOUND LIBUSB_LIBRARIES-NOTFOUND PKG_CONFIG_EXECUTABLE-NOTFOUND THREADS_PTHREADS_INCLUDE_DIR-NOTFOUND THREADS_PTHREADS_WIN32_LIBRARY-NOTFOUND
---	--

13. Set LIBUSB_INCLUDE_DIR to c:\libraries\libusb/include\include\libusb-1.0\
14. Set LIBUSB_LIBRARIES to c:\libraries\libusb/include\MinGW32\static\libusb-1.0.a
15. Set THREADS_PTHREADS_INCLUDE_DIR to c:\libraries\pthreads/include\Pre-

built.2\include\

16. Set THREADS_PTHREADS_WIN32_LIBRARY to c:\libraries\pthreads-include\Pre-built.2\lib\x86\pthreadVC2.lib

LIBUSB_INCLUDE_DIR	C:/libraries/libusb-include/include/libusb-1.0
LIBUSB_LIBRARIES	C:/libraries/libusb-include/MinGW32/static/libusb-1.0.a
PKG_CONFIG_EXECUTABLE	PKG_CONFIG_EXECUTABLE-NOTFOUND
THREADS_PTHREADS_INCLUDE_DIR	C:/libraries/pthreads-include/Pre-built.2/include
THREADS_PTHREADS_WIN32_LIBRARY	C:/libraries/pthreads-include/Pre-built.2/lib/x86/pthreadVC2.lib



17. Press Configure. After configuring is successfully completed press build.

18. Now in CMD prompt, go to the c:\rtl-sdr\build directory. Type “mingw32-make” to compile.

```
Administrator: C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe
C:\rtl-sdr\build>mingw32-make
Scanning dependencies of target rtlsdr_shared
[ 4%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_shared.dir/librtlsdr.c.obj
[ 9%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_shared.dir/tuner_e4k.c.obj
[14%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_shared.dir/tuner_fc0012.c.obj
[19%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_shared.dir/tuner_fc0013.c.obj
[23%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_shared.dir/tuner_fc2580.c.obj
[28%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_shared.dir/tuner_r82xx.c.obj
Linking C shared library librtlsdr.dll
[28%] Built target rtlsdr_shared
Scanning dependencies of target convenience_static
[33%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/convenience_static.dir/convenience/convenience.c.obj
Linking C static library libconvenience_static.a
[33%] Built target convenience_static
Scanning dependencies of target lib getopt_static
[38%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/lib getopt_static.dir/getopt/getopt.c.obj
Linking C static library liblib getopt_static.a
[38%] Built target lib getopt_static
Scanning dependencies of target rtl_adsb
[42%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtl_adsb.dir/rtl_adsb.c.obj
Linking C executable rtl_adsb.exe
[42%] Built target rtl_adsb
Scanning dependencies of target rtl_eeprom
[47%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtl_eeprom.dir/rtl_eeprom.c.obj
Linking C executable rtl_eeprom.exe
[47%] Built target rtl_eeprom
Scanning dependencies of target rtl_fm
[52%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtl_fm.dir/rtl_fm.c.obj
Linking C executable rtl_fm.exe
[52%] Built target rtl_fm
Scanning dependencies of target rtl_power
[57%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtl_power.dir/rtl_power.c.obj
Linking C executable rtl_power.exe
[57%] Built target rtl_power
Scanning dependencies of target rtl_sdr
[61%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtl_sdr.dir/rtl_sdr.c.obj
Linking C executable rtl_sdr.exe
[61%] Built target rtl_sdr
Scanning dependencies of target rtl_tcp
[66%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtl_tcp.dir/rtl_tcp.c.obj
Linking C executable rtl_tcp.exe
[66%] Built target rtl_tcp
Scanning dependencies of target rtl_test
[71%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtl_test.dir/rtl_test.c.obj
Linking C executable rtl_test.exe
[71%] Built target rtl_test
Scanning dependencies of target rtlsdr_static
[76%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_static.dir/librtlsdr.c.obj
[80%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_static.dir/tuner_e4k.c.obj
[85%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_static.dir/tuner_fc0012.c.obj
[90%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_static.dir/tuner_fc0013.c.obj
[95%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_static.dir/tuner_fc2580.c.obj
[100%] Building C object src/CMakeFiles/rtlsdr_static.dir/tuner_r82xx.c.obj
Linking C static library librtlsdr_static.a
[100%] Built target rtlsdr_static
C:\rtl-sdr\build>
```

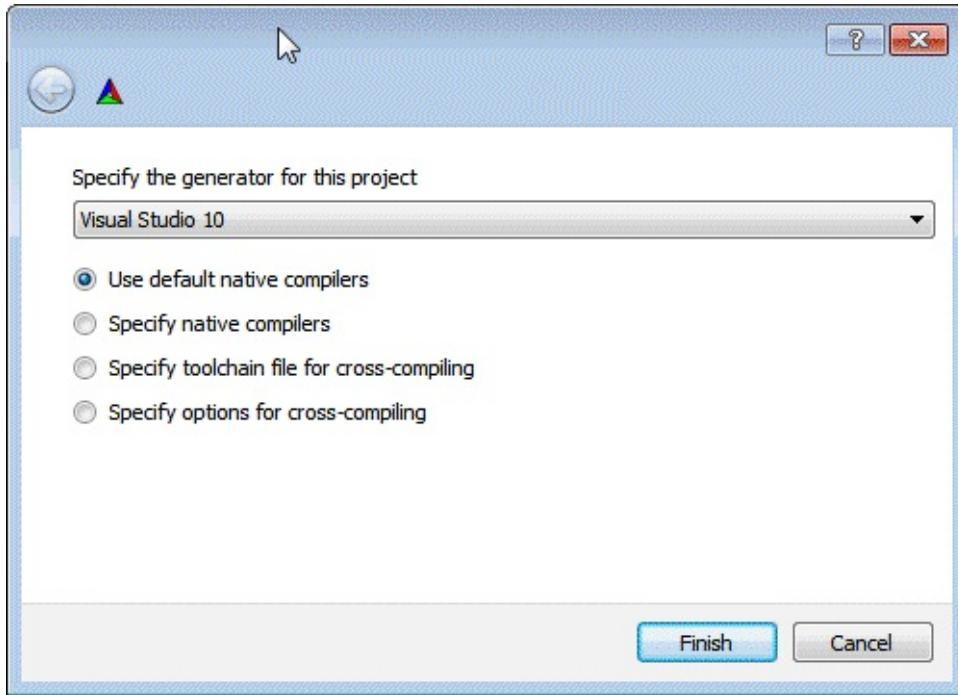
librtlsdr.dll will be found in C:\rtl-sdr\build\src

COMPILING USING VISUAL C++ 2010

The RTL-SDR drivers can also be compiled using Visual Studio. Compiling this way is more portable as more people will be likely to have the required runtimes as they are usually included with windows.

1. Install Windows SDK. Here is the download link for Windows 7 <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/details.aspx?id=8279>.
2. Install Visual C++ 2010. Compilation should also work on newer Visual C++ versions. <http://www.visualstudio.com/en-us/downloads#d-2010-express>.

3. You may also need to install service pack 1 for Visual C++ 2010 <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/details.aspx?id=4422>.
4. Follow the same steps for CMAKE as when combining for MingW as shown in the above section, but instead choose Visual Studio 10 when specifying the generator.



5. Add the same libraries as with the MingW compile but instead for LIBUSB_LIBRARIES use C:\libraries\libusb/include\MS32\static\libusb-1.0.lib instead.
6. Press Configure then Generate.
7. Now go to C:\rtl-sdr\build\ in Windows explorer and open the rtl_sdr.sln file with Visual C++ Express 2010.
8. Change the Build from Debug to Release in the top menu of Visual Studio, then press F7 to build the files.

The rtl_sdr.dll and other built files can be found in C:\rtl-sdr\build\src\Debug

PANADAPTER GUIDE

A panadapter is a device that connects to a traditional analogue hardware radio and displays a visualization of the spectrum through an RF spectrum and waterfall display. Most RTL-SDR GUI receivers show the RF spectrum and waterfall by default so the RTL-SDR can be used as a super cheap panadapter. This can give you the great performance of a dedicated radio and the visual RF display common to software defined radios.

Creating an RTL-SDR panadapter is hardware dependant as you will need to discover a way to connect the RTL-SDR antenna input into the first IF of your hardware radio. Once the IF output is connected to the antenna input, you simply tune to the IF frequency using the RTL-SDR to visualize the signals on the waterfall.

Some older or cheaper radios may need a little hardware hacking to access this output and some will have it as an available out port. Most radios will also allow you to control it via GUI software like Omnidrig HDSDR using a control cable.

Here is an excellent tutorial showing the steps needed to set up a RTL-SDR panadapter for the ICOM IC-7600 radio http://www.ab4oj.com/icom/ic7600/we1x_rtl_sdr3_0.pdf. The tutorial should also be valid for other radios with an easy IF output.

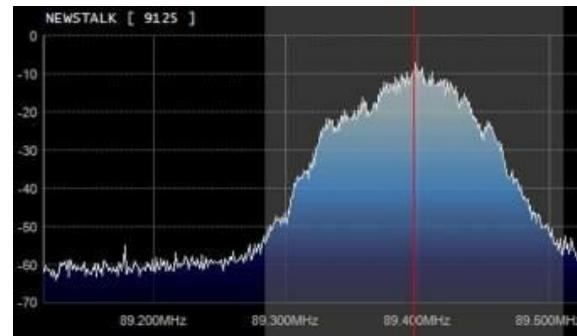
A good tutorial on doing this for the Yaesu FT-857 can be found on this YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tshlXgarnBQ#t=164>. Another video showing the performance of the FT-857 with RTL-SDR panadapter can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqcGACGPtrM>. An excellent pdf showing the modifications required for many Yaesu radios is here <http://www.radioamatoripeligni.it/i6ibe/pdf/panadapter.pdf> (note in Italian).

Here is a tutorial for the Heathkit HR-10 which does not have an easy IF output <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRVAT9jG4kg>.

RDS RECEIVING GUIDE

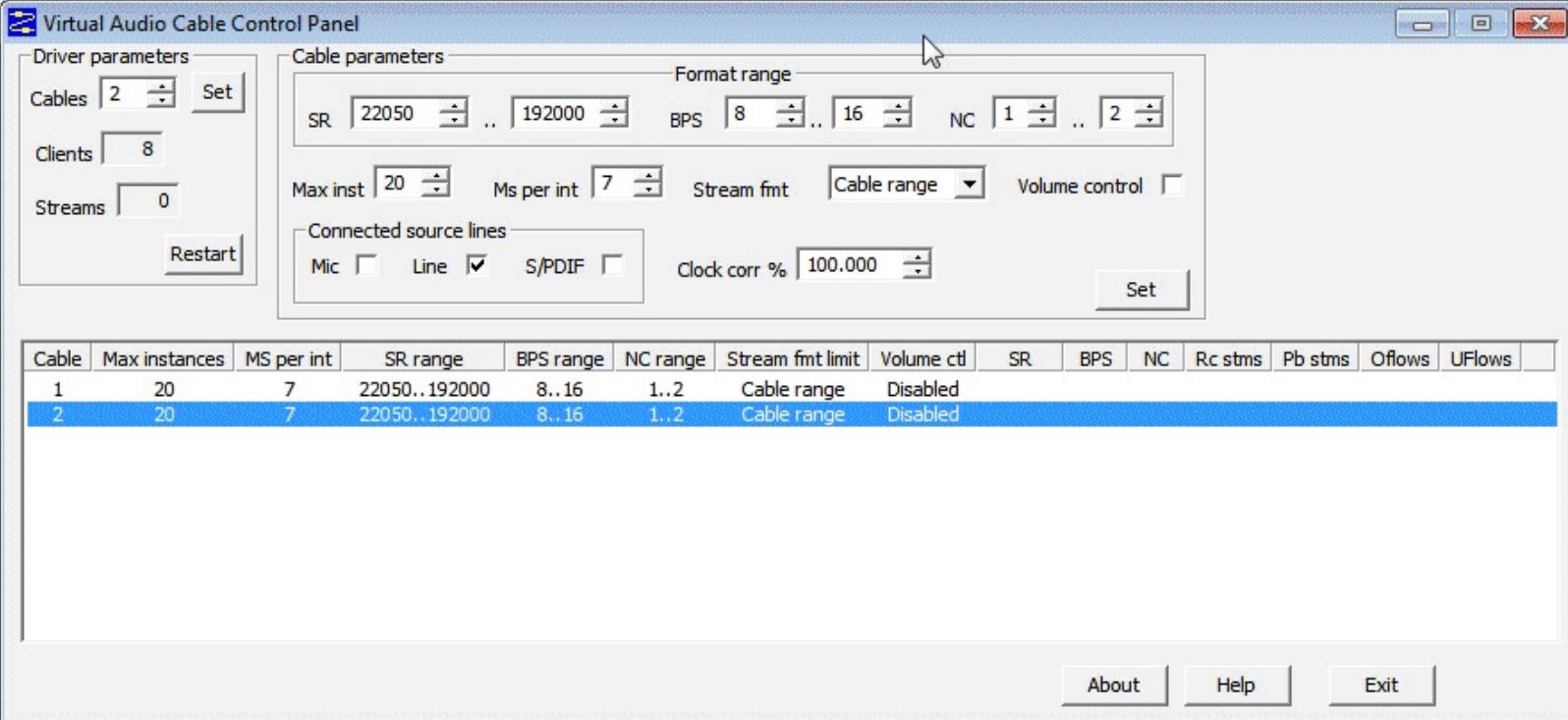
RDS stands for Radio Data System and is a digital signal embedded into broadcast FM signals. It is used by radio stations to display the name of the radio station and/or current song playing on an LCD screen.

SDR# automatically decodes RDS data in the top left of the RF spectrum when tuned to a broadcast radio station with the WFM mode set.

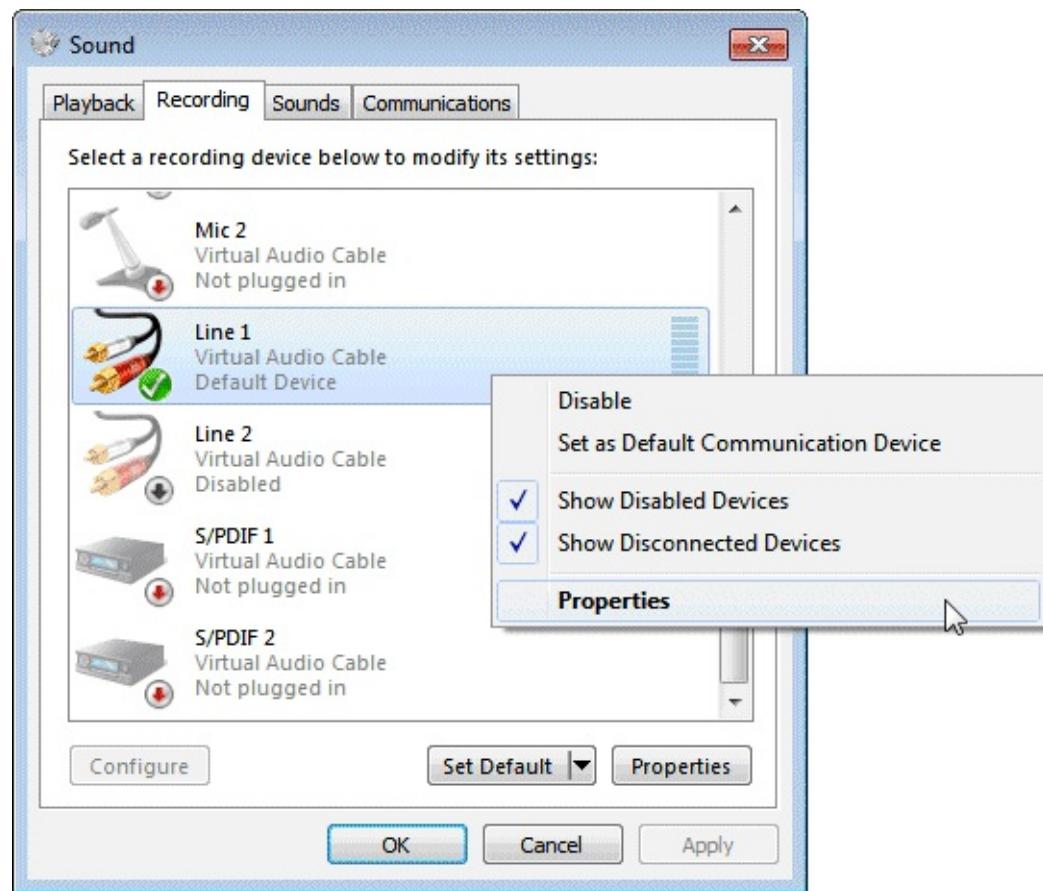


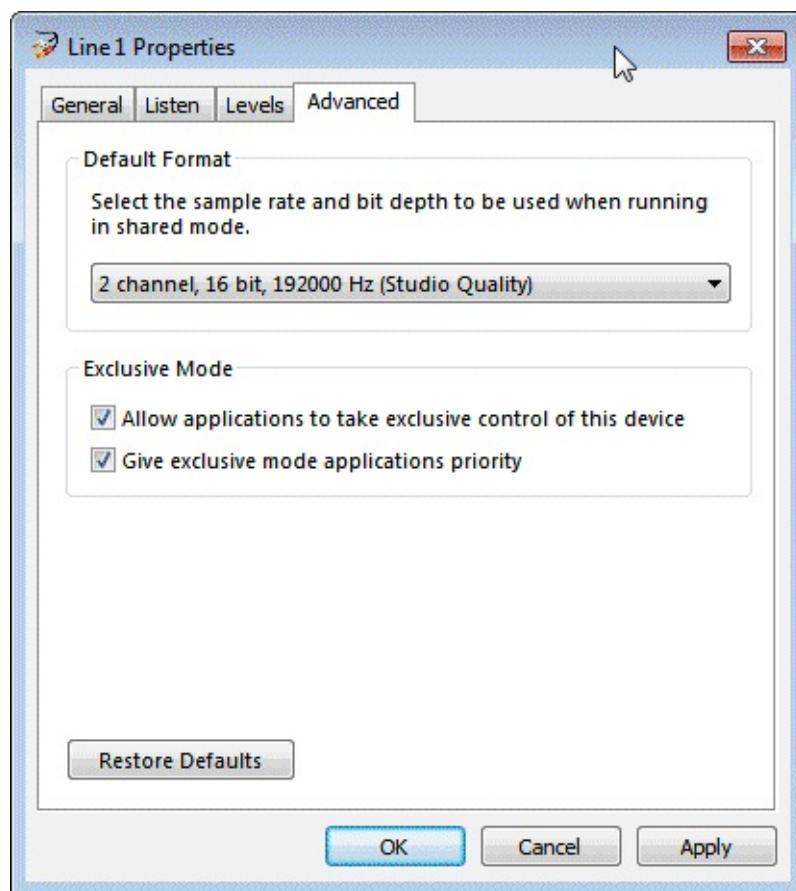
Another program often used for RDS decoding is RDS Spy. RDS Spy has better sensitivity and analysis options so it is better for dxing (distance receiving - very long range reception). RDS Spy can be downloaded from <http://rdsspy.com/>. Unfortunately RDS Spy will not work with SDR# due to SDR#'s implementation. To use RDS Spy, it must be used with HDSDR and you must use the Virtual Audio Cable audio pipe, not VB Cable. The setup process is also a little involved and is shown below.

1. You will need to have downloaded and installed Virtual Audio Cable first. Since the trial version supports up to three cables it will be sufficient for this task. The watermark audio played will not pose a major problem. You will also need to have installed HDSDR and have set it up working with the RTL-SDR.
2. Create two virtual audio cables. Go to **Start Menu -> Virtual Audio Cable -> Control Panel**. Note you may need to open the virtual audio cable control panel as administrator.
3. Create two audio cables which have a maximum sample rate of 192000 as shown in the screenshot below. Be sure to click on the Set button after changing the options sample rate to make it permanent.



4. In the Windows recording and playback options set each virtual audio cable device to a sample rate of 192000 Hz in the advanced options. You can access the advanced options by right clicking on the virtual audio cable device and clicking properties and then going to the Advanced tab. Set the default format to a setting with 192000 Hz in it. Do this for **ALL** virtual audio cable devices in the Recording **AND** Playback tabs.





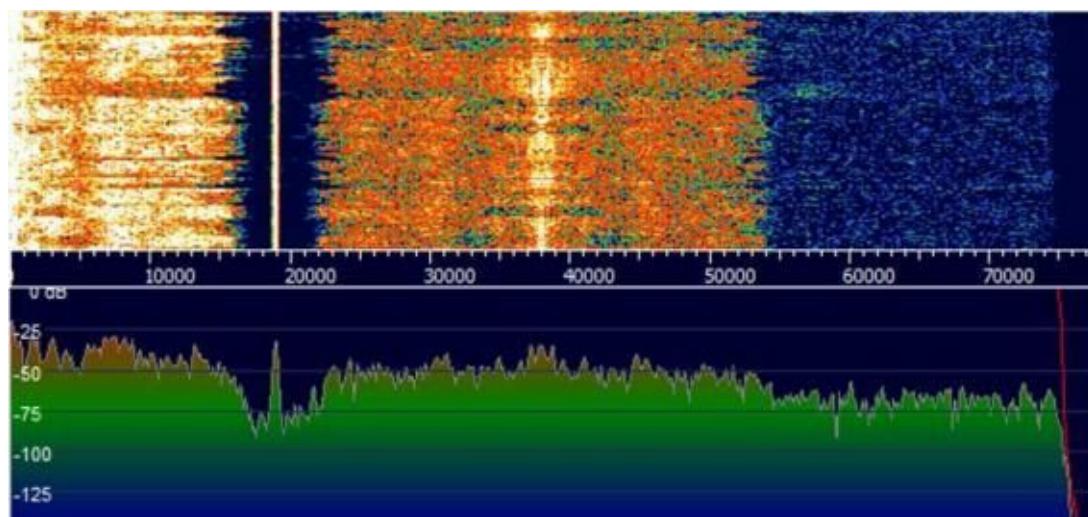
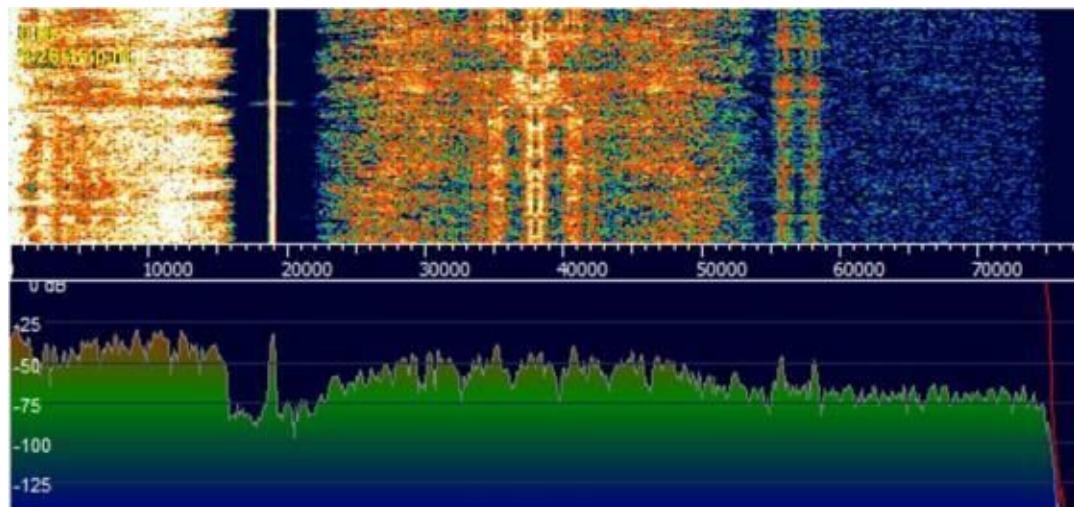
5. Open HDSDR.
6. Click the Soundcard button in the lower left corner and then select the first virtual audio cable device under RX Output (to Speaker).



7. Click the Bandwidth button in the lower left corner and then set the Output to 192000.

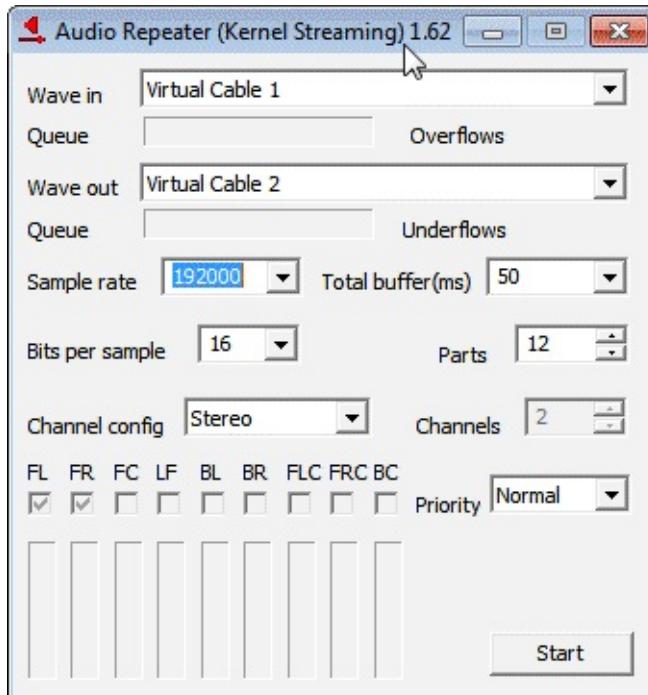


8. Now click Start in HDSDR and tune to a broadcast FM station that has RDS. You can check visually in HDSDR's audio spectrum to see if the station you are tuned to has an RDS signal. In the example screenshot below there is a thin signal on the right of the spectrum, this is the RDS signal. An example of an FM station without RDS is shown below it.



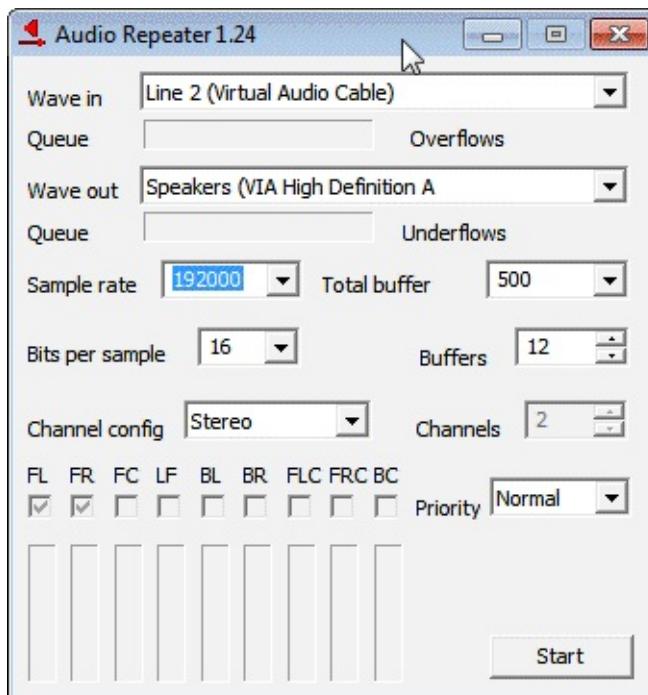
9. Go to **Start Menu -> Virtual Audio Cable -> Audio Repeater (Kernel Streaming)**.

10. Set the Wave in to the first virtual audio cable and the Wave out to the second virtual audio cable. Also set the sample rate to 192000. Click Start. If you start getting overflows (increasing numbers next to the word 'Overflows', stop the audio repeater and increase the Total buffer(ms) setting until the overflows stop.



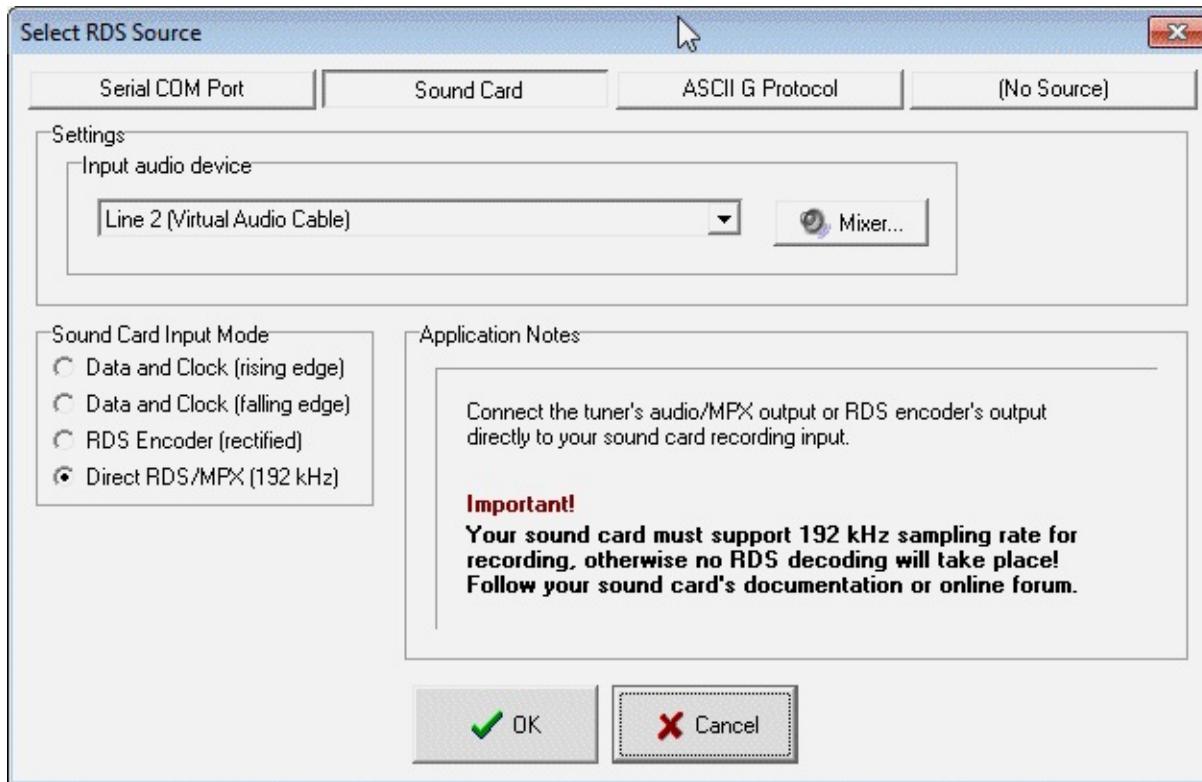
11. OPTIONAL: Go to **Start Menu -> Virtual Audio Cable -> Audio Repeater (MME)**.

12. OPTIONAL CONTINUED: Set the Wave in to the second virtual audio cable and set the Wave out to your speakers. This will allow you to listen to the FM station audio.

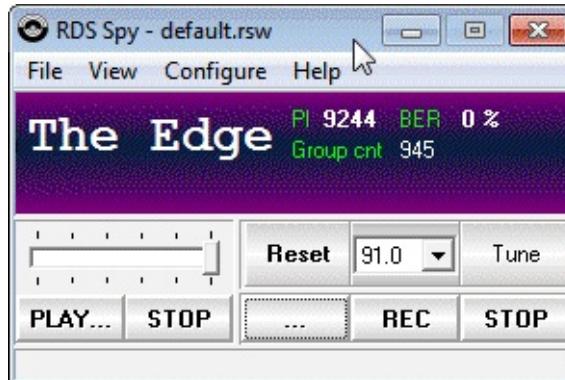


13. Open RDS Spy and go to **Configure -> Select RDS Source**.

14. Select the Sound Card tab and then under Input audio device select the second virtual audio cable device and select the Sound Card Input Mode as “Direct RDS/MPX (192 kHz). Press OK.



15. RDS Spy should now be decoding RDS signals.



For those interested there is also a GNU Radio RDS decoder implementation which is also extremely useful for learning how RDS is decoded. <https://www.cgran.org/wiki/RDS>.

APRS GUIDE

APRS is an acronym for Automatic Position Reporting System and is a packet based system used by Amateur radio hobbyists. APRS is used to transmit data like messages, announcements weather station data and also to report GPS coordinates of things like transmitters and moving vehicles.

APRS data is often collected internationally on an internet server through an IGate. Some IGates also selectively retransmit internet APRS data to the local RF network. Using the internet and Igate transceivers APRS messages can be transmitted overseas.

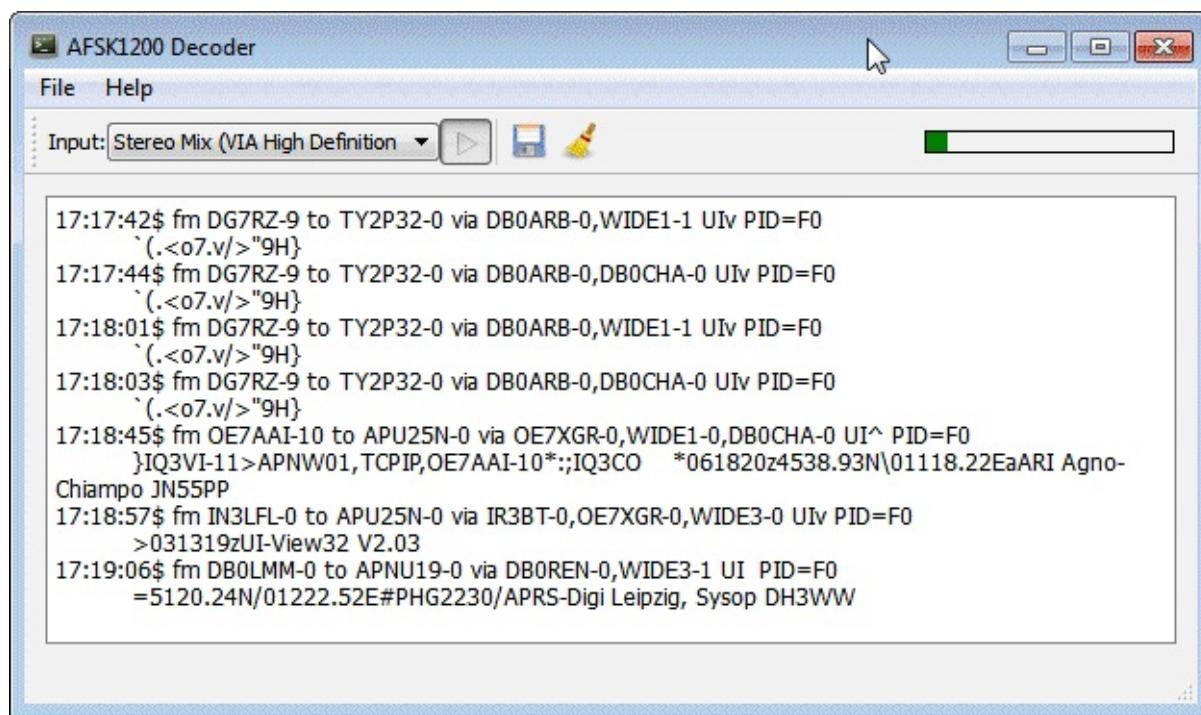
APRS is assigned to different frequencies around the world, but is usually around the region of 144 MHz. A table showing common APRS frequencies is shown below.

FREQ	REGION / COUNTRY
144.390	Colombia, Chile, Indonesia, North America
144.575	New Zealand
144.660	Japan
144.800	South Africa, Europe, Russia
144.930	Argentina, Uruguay
145.175	Australia
145.570	Brazil
145.525	Thailand

Since APRS is transmitted using Asynchronous Frequency Shift Keying (AFSK) at 1200 bits/s the software program QTMM AFSK1200 can be used to decode the messages. AFSK1200 can be downloaded from <http://sourceforge.net/projects/qtmm/>. To use AFSK1200 follow the instructions below

1. Open SDR# or your favourite general purpose SDR receiver and set the audio output to your preferred audio piping method.
2. Tune to a local APRS frequency at set the mode to NFM. Set the bandwidth large enough to cover the packet width.
3. Open AFSK1200 and under Input select the audio piping method you are using.
4. Press the Play button  to begin listening.

Decoded message will show up in the main window.



MultimonNG can also be used to decode AFSK1200. Use the command `multimonng -A`. This will only decode APRS messages and not APRS pings. If you want to see everything use `multimonng -a` AFSK1200.

```

EI PZWEI EEA EIA CCIR MORSE_CW DUMPCSU
Enabled demodulators: AFSK1200
APRS: DG7RZ-9>TY2P32,DB0ARB*,WIDE1-1:`(<o7~v/>"9H}
APRS: DG7RZ-9>TY2P32,DB0ARB*,DB0CHA*:`(<o7~v/>"9H}
APRS: DG7RZ-9>TY2P32,DB0ARB*,WIDE1-1:`(<o7~v/>"9H}
APRS: DG7RZ-9>TY2P32,DB0ARB*,DB0CHA*:`(<o7~v/>"9H}
APRS: DG7RZ-9>TY2P32,DB0ARB*,WIDE1-1:`(<o7~v/>"9H}
APRS: DG7RZ-9>TY2P32,DB0ARB*,DB0CHA*:`(<o7~v/>"9H}
APRS: OE7AAI-10>APU25N,OE7XGR*,WIDE1*,DB0CHA*:}IQ3VI-11>APNW01,TCPIP,OE7AAI-10*:
;IQ3CO *061820z4538.93N\01118.22EaARI Agno-Chiampo JN55PP
APRS: IN3LFL>APU25N,IR3BT*,OE7XGR*,WIDE3:>031319zUI-View32 V2.03
APRS: DB0WOS>APRS,WIDE3:4847.53N/01332.23E#APRS DIGI U16 800m ueber NN
APRS: DB0CHA>APNU19,WIDE1-1,WIDE2-2:Neuer Standort 734m/JN69IH 70cm, 23cm, APRS,
Echolink
APRS: DB0CHA>APNU19,DB0LP*,WIDE1*,WIDE2-1:Neuer Standort 734m/JN69IH 70cm, 23cm,
APRS, Echolink
APRS: DB0CHA>APNU19,DB0LP*,WIDE1*,DB0YQ*,WIDE2*:Neuer Standort 734m/JN69IH 70cm,
23cm, APRS, Echolink

```

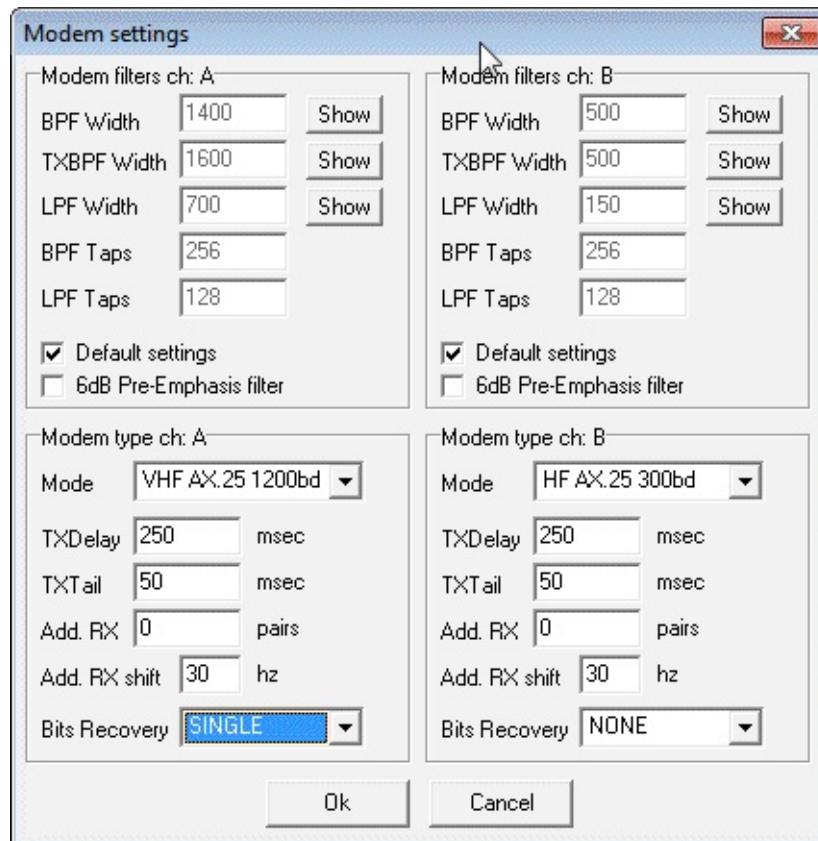
For amateur radio hobbyists, the RTL-SDR can also be set up as an iGate by using the command line python software `pymultimonaprs` which can be downloaded from <https://github.com/asdil12/pymultimonaprs>. A good tutorial showing how to do this (in Polish but can be Google Translated) can be found here <http://sq7mru.blogspot.com/2013/08/aprs-igate-rx-z-tunera-dvb-t.html>.

APRSISCE/32

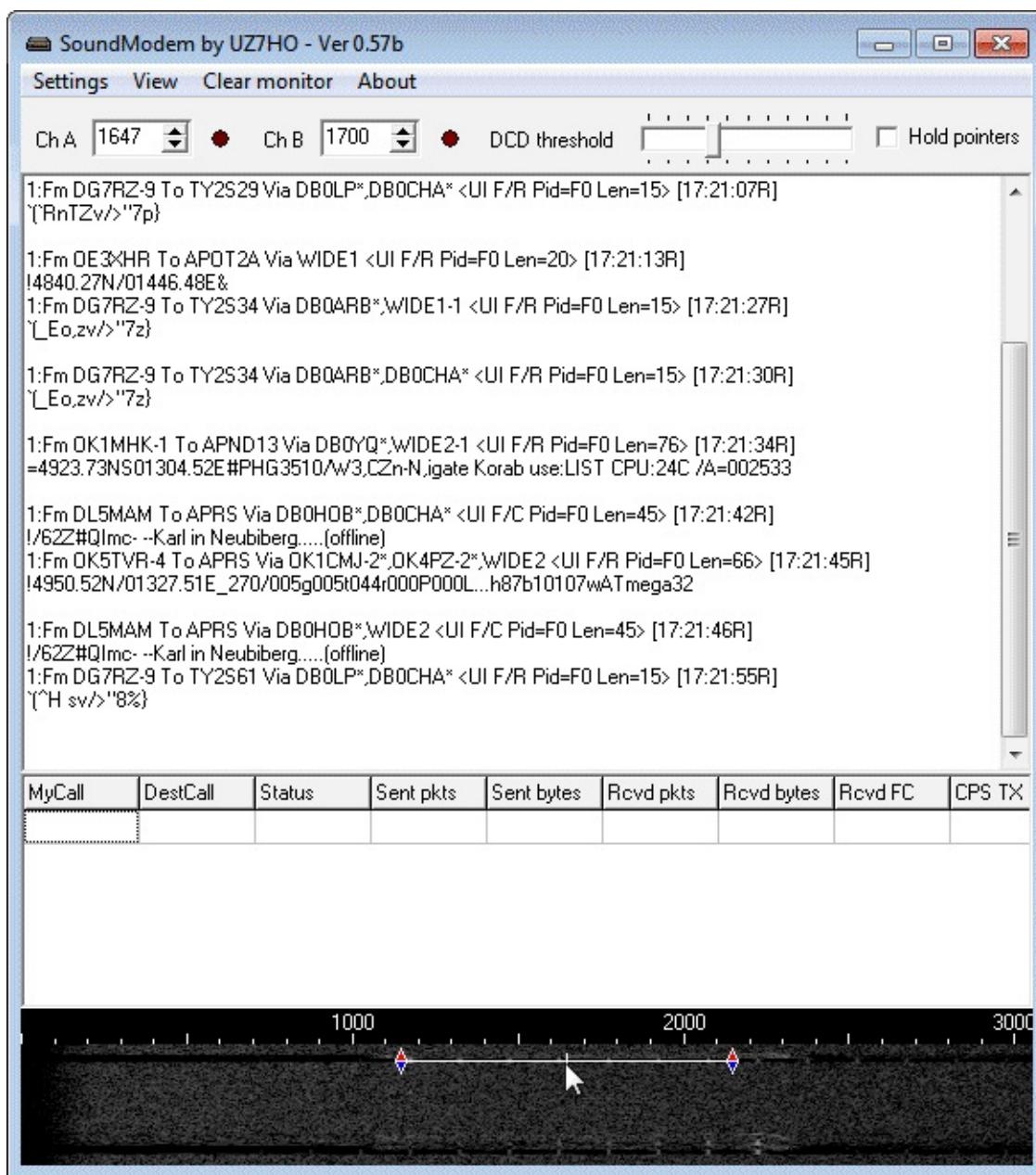
APRSISCE/32 is an advanced APRS program that is capable of iGate functionality and plotting received APRS GPS coordinates on a map. APRSISCE/32 can be downloaded from the downloads section at <http://aprisce.wikitdot.com/>. To get APRS working with APRSISCE/32 you will need to download the UH7HO soundmodem software from <http://uz7.ho.ua/packetradio.htm>. Download the

sm2ch57.zip file and extract it to a folder.

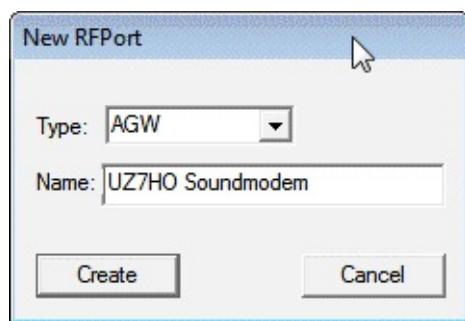
1. Open SDR# or your favourite general purpose SDR receiver and set the audio output to your preferred audio piping method. Tune to an APRS frequency.
2. In Soundmodem go to **settings->Modem**
3. Change the Modem type ch:A to VHF AX.25 1200bd.



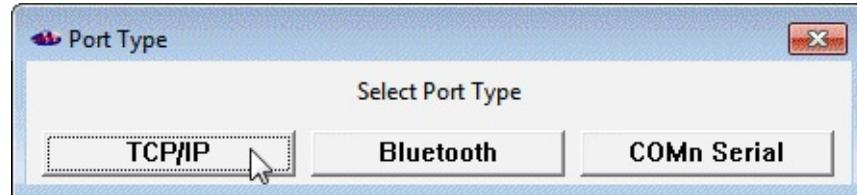
4. Set the input audio device by going to **Settings->Devices** and the choose your audio piping device next to “Input Device”.
5. Centre the tuning bar at the bottom of the screen on the APRS signal.



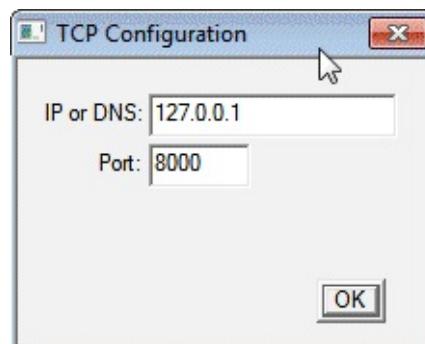
6. When you open APRSISCE32 for the first time it will ask you for your call sign. If you simply wish to use APRSISCE32 as a map for received APRS packets, type something random into the MyCall-ssid box.
7. If you just want to see which messages you are receiving via your antenna you will want to disable ARPS-IS, in order to stop APRS messages being received via the internet. Go to **Enables->ARPS-IS Enabled**, and uncheck this setting.
8. In APRSISCE32 go to **Configure->Ports->New Port**.
9. Change the type to AGW, set the name as UZ7HO soundmodem.



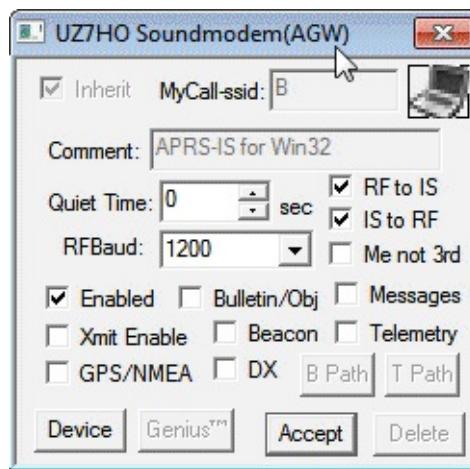
10. For port type choose TCP/IP.



11. Set the IP to 127.0.0.1 and the port to 8000.



12. Uncheck RF to IS and IS to RF, unless you are a ham who understands and wants to use these options.



13. Go to **View->ALL**, and make sure that this is checked.

14. APRSISCE32 will now be listening to the UZ7HO soundmodem.

In APRSISCE32 you can move around with the mouse and zoom in and out with the mouse wheel. There is also a zoom bar on the left of the map.

Note that it is also possible to use the AGWPE packet engine program explained below to send APRS

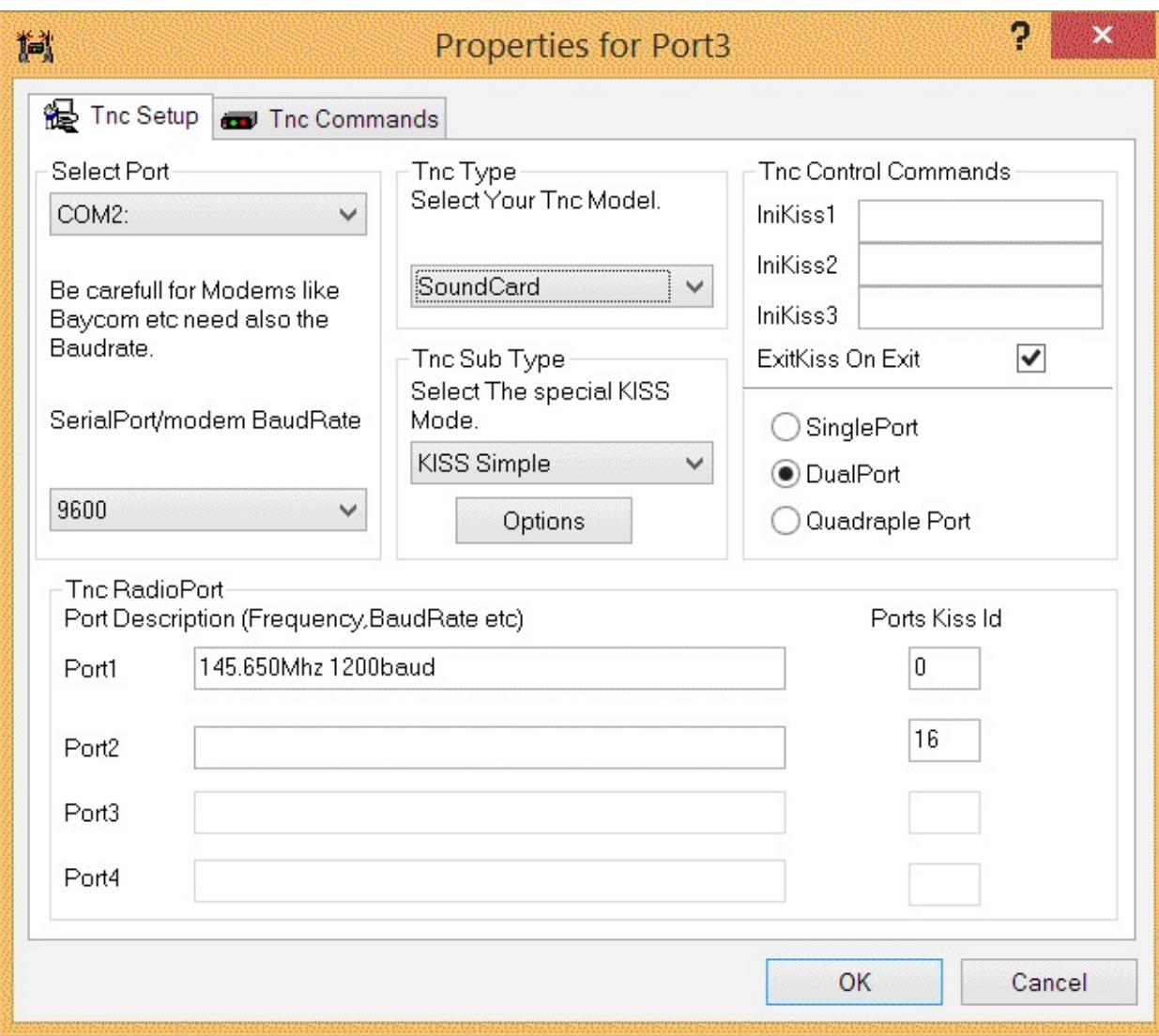
data to APRSISCE/32 using the same setup.

AGW PACKET ENGINE AND TRACKER

Another good set of programs for decoding and displaying APRS positions on a map is the AGW Packet Engine and AGW Tracker. The packet engine is what decodes the APRS packets received by the RTL-SDR and AGW tracker is what displays them on a map.

Download AGW Packet Engine and AGW Tracker from <http://www.sv2agw.com/downloads/default.htm>. AGW Packet Engine comes with a Hamware licence, essentially meaning it's free. AGW Tracker is licensed as Shareware with an unlimited trial time which means it is completely free but you can pay for it if you want. To set these programs up follow these instructions

1. Open SDR# or your favourite general purpose SDR receiver and set the audio output to your preferred audio piping method. Tune to an APRS frequency.
2. Open the AGW Packet Engine exe file. Note you may need to open it as an administrator to be able to set the audio pipe.
3. Right click on the AGE Packet Engine icon in the taskbar and go to Properties.
4. Click on New Port.
5. In the new window that pops up choose the Tnc Setup tab, and under Tnc Type select 'SoundCard'.



6. Now another window will pop up. In this window choose your audio piping method.

SoundCard Modem/TNC Setup



The PTT lines for Serial Ports are for Left Channel the RTS line and for Right Channel the DTR line.

Printer Port can be used for PTT . Pins 2 or 3 are for Left channel and pins 8or 9 for right channel.

Tnc Setup

Single Port Tnc uses only the Left Channel. For Dual Port Check from Previous Dialog The Dual Port RadioButton.

If you encounter problems while TX.Disable Fullduplex

FullDuplex Driver

Left Channel

OnAir BaudRate

1200

Adjust The Soundcard Clock. DefaultValue is 4.

4

Right Channel

OnAir BaudRate

1200

Adjust The Soundcard Clock. DefaultValue is 4.

4

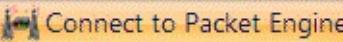
SoundCard Selection

If you Have more than a SoundCard Select the Card to Use for Packet. The other card Will be used as usual.

Stereo Mix (Realtek High Defini)

OK

Cancel

7. After making these changes you will need to restart the program.
8. Open AGWETracker. You can ignore the startup options, but if you're a ham who wants to use this as an iGate you might want to set them up.
9. Go to the actions tab and ensure that the Connect to packet engine button  is pressed in. Also ensure Connect to APRS Server is not pressed in if you don't want to receive APRS packets via the internet.
10. As APRS packets are received by AGW Packet Engine the decoded messages will show up in the monitor tab. Note that you may need to adjust your volume settings so that packets are clearly received.

ACWTracker (Unregistered Version)

Home Actions Messages Tools

TX TX Weather All Weather Internet Ping a Query A Gateways Station Station APRS Queries

Clear Alarms Log Connect to Packet Engine Connect To APRS Server Other

Monitor Stations DxCluster Msg Alarms

```

Neuer Standort 734m/JM691H 70cm, 23cm, APRS, Echolink
1:Fm 0K2ZDL-2 To AP0T21 Via 0E3XRR,WIDE1,0K4PZ-2*,WIDE2,CZ3-3 <UI pid=F0 Len=43 >[17:39:26]
1#925..39N101535..47E#PHG434B/W1 Jihlava 012n
2:Fm 0K2ZDL-2 To AP0T21 Via 0E3XRR,WIDE1,0K4PZ-2*,WIDE2,CZ3-3 <UI pid=F0 Len=43 >[17:39:26]
1#925..39N101535..47E#PHG434B/W1 Jihlava 012n
1:Fm 0E5U6C0-9 To IX1S19 Via WIDE1*,WIDE2-1 <UI pid=F0 Len=46 >[17:39:31]
`)\Cn+n>/"8()145.412MHz QRU Yaesu FTH-350_
2:Fm 0E5U6C0-9 To IX1S19 Via WIDE1*,WIDE2-1 <UI pid=F0 Len=46 >[17:39:31]
`)\Cn+n>/"8()145.412MHz QRU Yaesu FTH-350_
1:Fm 0E5U6C0-9 To IX1S19 Via WIDE1,D88VQ,WIDE2* <UI pid=F0 Len=46 >[17:39:32]
`)\Cn+n>/"8()145.412MHz QRU Yaesu FTH-350_
2:Fm 0E5U6C0-9 To IX1S19 Via WIDE1,D88VQ,WIDE2* <UI pid=F0 Len=46 >[17:39:32]
`)\Cn+n>/"8()145.412MHz QRU Yaesu FTH-350_
1:Fm 0B08KH To APNU19 Via WIDE3 <UI pid=F0 Len=68 >[17:39:42]
1#818..43N/01246..53E#APRS-Digi Eschiberg, Relais 439,0125 - EL 501817
2:Fm 0B08KH To APNU19 Via WIDE3 <UI pid=F0 Len=68 >[17:39:42]
1#818..43N/01246..53E#APRS-Digi Eschiberg, Relais 439,0125 - EL 501817
1:Fm 0E7AAI-18 To AP0U25M Via 0E7XGR,WIDE1,D88VQ,WIDE2* <UI pid=F0 Len=76 >[17:39:45]
;051.915-a#191316z2714.58W/01110.87Er_T077 R30K Innsbruck -600kHz Crossband
2:Fm 0E7AAI-18 To AP0U25M Via 0E7XGR,WIDE1,D88VQ,WIDE2* <UI pid=F0 Len=76 >[17:39:45]
;051.915-a#191316z2714.58W/01110.87Er_T077 R30K Innsbruck -600kHz Crossband
1:Fm IQ4SC-11 To APRSW Via IR3UXB,0E7XGR*,WIDE3 <UI pid=F0 Len=53 >[17:39:52]
1#435..68N/01841..41E# DIGI RELAY ONLY iq4sc@amsat.org
2:Fm IQ4SC-11 To APRSW Via IR3UXB,0E7XGR*,WIDE3 <UI pid=F0 Len=53 >[17:39:52]
1#435..68N/01841..41E# DIGI RELAY ONLY iq4sc@amsat.org

```

To Path RadioPort

BEACON

Unproto Text

Internet Stations Display Filter 14 Stations Out of Range

Ready

11. To view received stations on a map, go to the Stations Tab, then right click on a station and select locate and show on map. In the window that pops up choose your preferred map (Google, Bing or Yahoo! Maps). You can then zoom out to see all the other stations.

ACWTracker (Unregistered Version)

Home Actions Messages Tools

TX TX Weather All Weather Internet Ping a Query A Gateways Station Station APRS Queries

Clear Alarms Log Connect to Packet Engine Connect To APRS Server Other

Monitor Stations DxCluster Msg Alarms GoogleMaps

Distance 630.51Km Azimuth 67° 52' 16.10N , 017° 23.40E / QSOID: 10

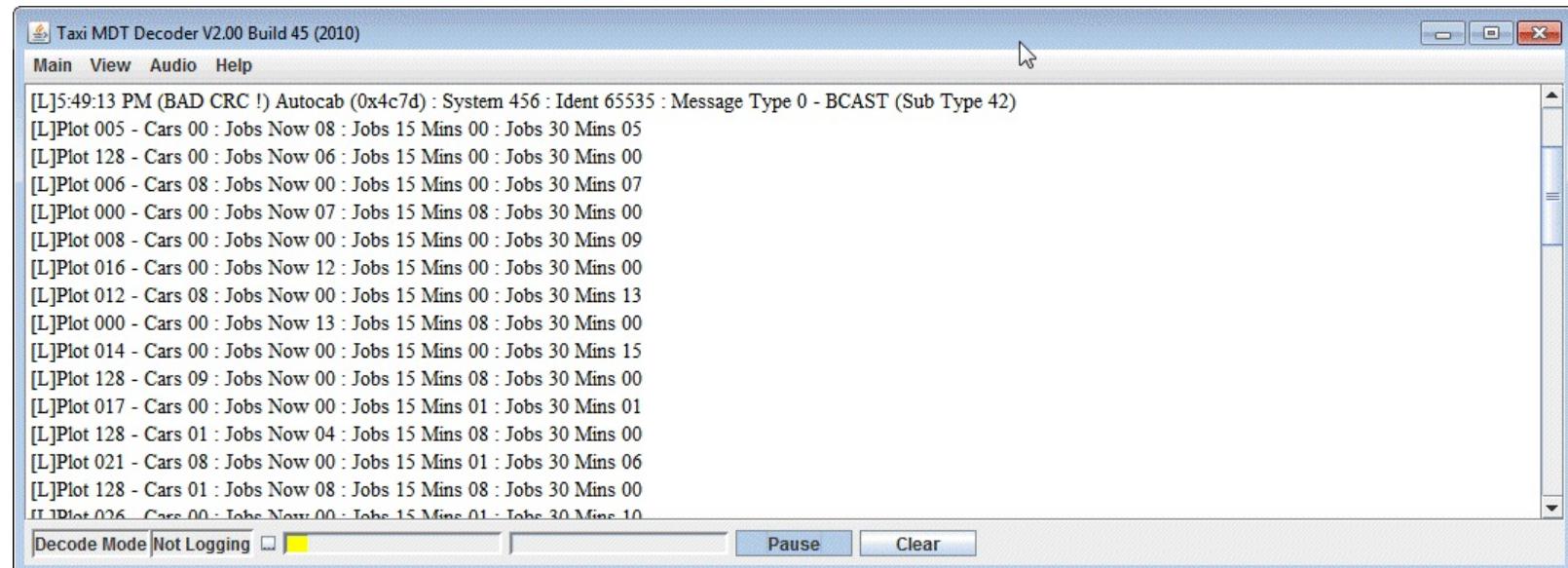
Internet Stations Display Filter 14 Stations Distance 630.51Km Azimuth 67° 52' 16.10N , 017° 23.40E / QSOID: 10

Ready

MDT DECODING GUIDE

MDT's are Mobile Data Terminals and are often used by Ambulances and Taxi's to display real time information about jobs, which the drivers can then accept notifying the dispatchers. There is a Java based MDT Decoder that can be downloaded from <http://sourceforge.net/projects/taxidecoder/>. It is capable of decoding Auriga and Autocab MDT's which are commonly used in the UK.

To use taxi decoder simply tune to a MDT radio signal and pipe the audio into taxi decoder. Go to **Audio->Audio Devices** and choose your audio piping method. Adjust the volume settings in your SDR receiver and in Windows so that the audio level shows a green bar at the bottom of the Window when a signal is playing.



MORE INFORMATION AND REFERENCES:

<http://www rtl-sdr com/decoding-taxi-mobile-data-terminal-signals-with-rtl-sdr/>

USING MULTIMONNG ON LINUX AND WINDOWS

MultimonNG is a command line program available on both Windows and Linux. It is capable of decoding a wide range of protocols such as the following.

```
POCSAG512 POCSAG1200 POCSAG2400  
EAS  
UFSK1200 CLIPFSK AFSK1200 AFSK2400 AFSK2400_2 AFSK2400_3  
HAPN4800  
FSK9600  
DTMF  
ZVEI1 ZVEI2 ZVEI3 DZVEI PZVEI  
EEA EIA CCIR  
MORSE CW
```

MultimonNG can be obtained from <https://github.com/EliasOenal/multimon-ng/>. The Linux compile instructions can also be found at the above link. To run MultimonNG on Windows download a precompiled version here: <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/43061070/multimonNG.exe> (Mirror: <http://bit.ly/1iNvmQf>). To run MultimonNG first download and extract the zip file to a folder on your computer. Then follow these instructions for Windows.

1. Open your favourite SDR receiver such as SDR#.
2. Set your audio output to your favourite audio pipe.
3. Open a Windows command prompt. Go to **Start->All Programs>Accessories->Command Prompt**.
4. Change directory using the ‘cd’ command to where MultimonNG is installed. E.g. cd C:/tools/multimonng
5. You can now run multimon-ng using the command multimonng -a XXX where XXX should be replaced with the protocol you’d like to decode. You can specify multiple decoders if you wish. On Windows multimonng will by default listen to your default audio piping method set in Windows sound recording properties.

On Linux you will need to pipe in FM audio with a sample rate of 22050 into multimonNG. You can use rtl_fm to do this referring to the example below.

```
rtl_fm -f 158.1M -s 22050 -p 49 | multimon-ng -t raw -a POCSAG512 -a POCSAG1200 -a POCSAG2400 -f alpha /dev/stdin
```

Or alternatively if you want to use a different sample rate, use sox for resampling and use any sample rate desired.

```
rtl_fm -M fm -f 157.918M -s 12k -g 30 -l 0 -p 49 | sox -traw -r12k -es -b16 -c1 -V1 - -traw -es -b16 -c1 -r22k - | multimon-ng -t raw -a POCSAG512 -a POCSAG1200 -a POCSAG2400 -f alpha /dev/stdin
```

USING RTL_TCP

RTL_TCP is a command line program that works on both Windows and Linux. It is used to send an I/Q stream from a remote RTL-SDR server over TCP/IP. In other words it allows you to connect to a remote RTL-SDR dongle over a network. SDR# is one such program that can connect to a RTL_TCP server.

In most cases you will need a fast network connection to use RTL_TCP as it can use a significant amount of bandwidth. To calculate the bandwidth required we need to multiply the chosen sample rate by the number of bits per sample. The number of bits in the raw IQ stream is 8 bits for the I stream and 8 bits for the Q stream. So we can use the following calculation.

$$\text{Bandwidth (MBit/s)} = \text{Sample Rate (Ms/s)} \times (8+8)\text{bits}$$

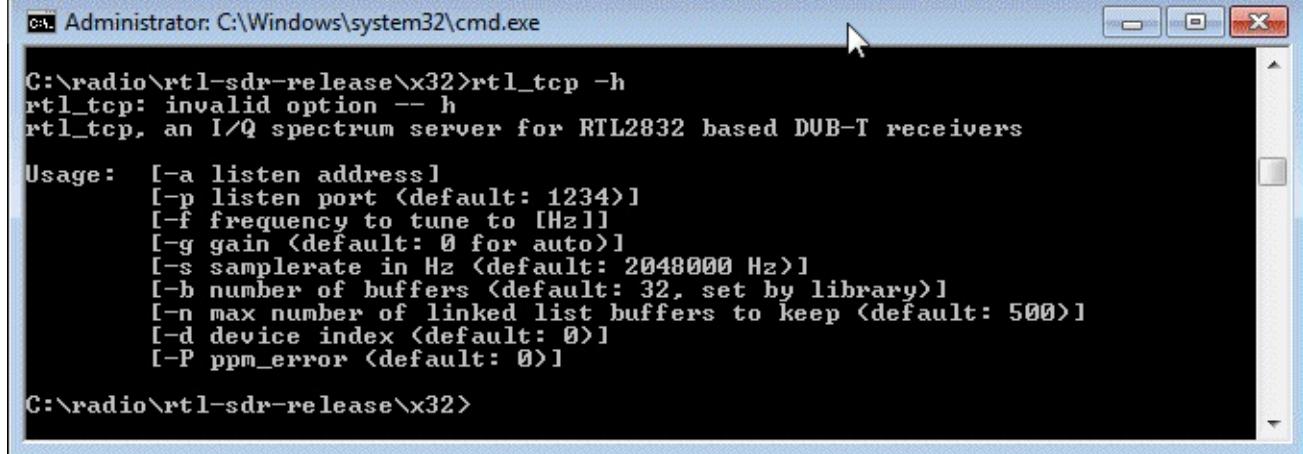
So for example, running at the maximum sample rate of 3.2 Msps we need $3.2 \times 16 = 51.2$ MBit/s. For a more conservative 2 Msps we need $2 \times 16 = 32$ Mbit/s.

Standard ethernet networks run at 100 Mbit/s so they are sufficient (assuming the network is not heavily used by other applications and overheads are taken into account). For comparison USB 2.0 runs at 480 Mbit/s. Wireless 802.11a and 802.11g networks run at up to 54 Mbit/s, however this is the theoretical maximum and they never usually run this fast. The newer 802.11n wireless standard can run at up to 300 Mbit/s and should be sufficient for the maximum sample rate.

Note that other factors like network congestion, ethernet cabling length, WiFi connection quality and device speed might affect your performance. To test your network speed on Windows try the LAN Speed test software <http://www.totusoft.com/downloads.html>. Realistically, you should expect to use a lower sampling rate such as 1Msps, especially if you are using an embedded device like the Raspberry Pi.

To use rtl_tcp on Windows follow the instructions below.

1. Download the rtl_sdr precompiled binaries for Windows from <http://sdr.osmocom.org/trac/attachment/wiki/rtl-sdr/RelWithDebInfo.zip>.
2. Extract the RelWithDebInfo.zip zip file to a folder.
3. Using the Windows command prompt navigate to the folder you have extracted the zip file to.
4. Navigate to the x32 folder.
5. Run rtl_tcp -h for a list of available commands.



```
C:\Administrator:C:\Windows\system32\cmd.exe
C:\radio\rtl-sdr-release\x32>rtl_tcp -h
rtl_tcp: invalid option -- h
rtl_tcp, an I/Q spectrum server for RTL2832 based DVB-T receivers

Usage: [-a listen address]
      [-p listen port <default: 1234>]
      [-f frequency to tune to [Hz]]
      [-g gain <default: 0 for auto>]
      [-s samplerate in Hz <default: 2048000 Hz>]
      [-b number of buffers <default: 32, set by library>]
      [-n max number of linked list buffers to keep <default: 500>]
      [-d device index <default: 0>]
      [-P ppm_error <default: 0>]

C:\radio\rtl-sdr-release\x32>
```

To use SDR# with RTL_TCP

1. At the command prompt use the following where IP_ADDRESS should be the IP address of the computer you are running rtl_tcp on.

```
rtl_tcp -a IP_ADDRESS
```

2. In SDR#, select RTL-SDR/TCP and in the configure menu enter the IP Address of the server. The sample rate and gain controls can be adjusted from SDR#.
3. Press Play.

To use SDR Touch with RTL_TCP

1. At the command prompt use the following (where -s sets the sample rate)

```
rtl_tcp -a IP_ADDRESS -s 1024000
```

2. Open SDR Touch.
3. Scroll down on the menu to the Remote button. Touch this button.
4. Enter the IP address and port as ip_address:port and then touch connect.

STREAMING MP3 FM WITH LINUX: RTL_FM

If you just want to stream a FM audio station over the network, you can use rtl_fm and pipe the output into sox to convert it into a mp3 file, and then use socat to output it to the network. On the receiving end, netcat can be used to connect to the TCP/IP stream.

The bandwidth required for this is far less than with RTL_TCP only needing about 8kb/s at most which almost any network including the internet can handle.

On Ubuntu sox, socat and netcat can be installed with

```
sudo apt-get install sox  
sudo apt-get install socat  
sudo apt-get install netcat
```

The commands to encode to mp3 and to play the received audio come from sox, so you will need to install sox on the server and listener computers. You may also need to install the sox mp3 libraries on the listener side with `sudo apt-get install libsox-fmt-mp3` if you hear no sound output.

You can test if sox is working first on a sample signal with a command that will play the mp3 compressed audio from the RTL_SDR to your speakers. If you hear the audio with this command, the mp3 compression is working.

```
rtl_fm -M fm -f 161.649M -s 12k -g 50 -l 70 | sox -traw -r12k -es -b16 -c1 -V1 - -tmp3 - | play -t mp3 -
```

To send the audio over TCP/IP use the following socat command

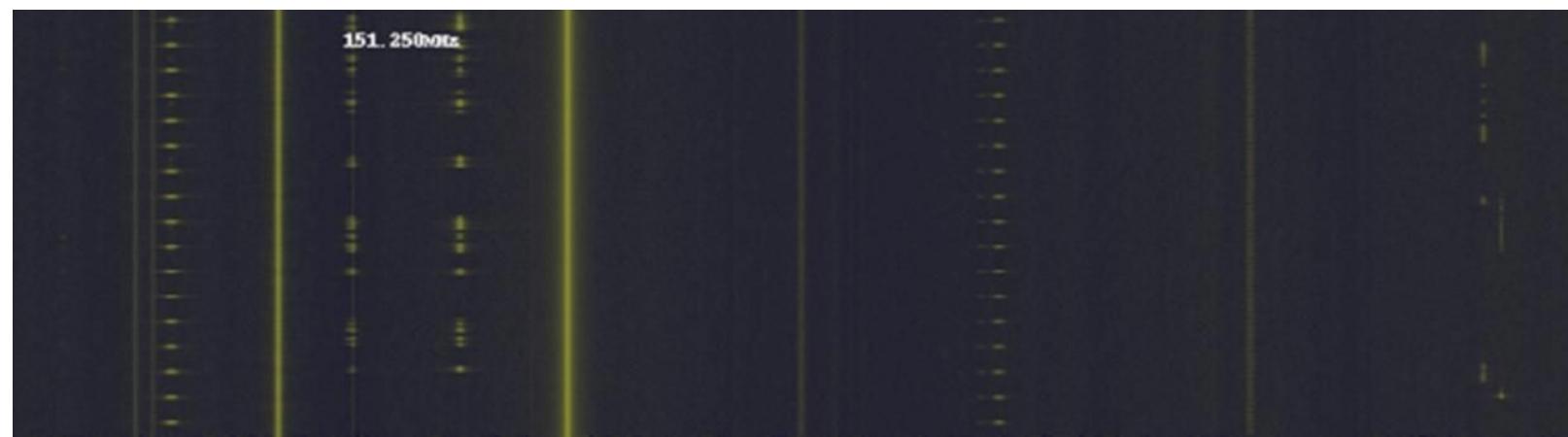
```
rtl_fm -M fm -f 161.649M -s 12k -g 50 -l 70 | sox -traw -r12k -es -b16 -c1 -V1 - -tmp3 - | socat -u - tcp-listen:8080
```

On the listener side use the command

```
netcat IP_ADDRESS 8080 | play -t mp3 -
```

Where you should change the IP_ADDRESS to the ip address of your sending server. You should change the frequencies, bandwidths and other appropriate RTL_FM flags to those required by the signal you are listening to.

HEAT MAP BAND SCAN



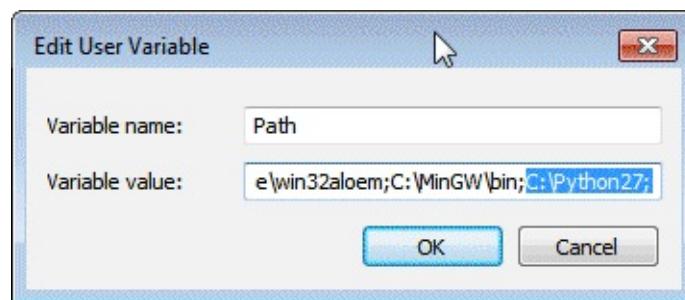
A heatmap can help you discover where in the frequency spectrum signals are being received over a long period of time. To do this, the Linux and Windows software program rtl_power which is included with the official RTL-SDR package (<http://sdr.osmocom.org/trac/attachment/wiki/rtl-sdr/RelWithDebInfo.zip>) can be used. This tutorial will be based on Windows, but it can easily be adapted to work on Linux.

To create a heatmap we need to use a tool called rtl_power. This tool logs average frequency power over a wide bandwidth using binning. To explain binning we use an example. Let's say we are logging 1 MHz of bandwidth and choose to use a bin size of 2 kHz. Then each pixel in the heatmap would represent the average power over the 2 kHz bin size. Therefore, the heatmap image would be 500 pixels wide.

To create a heatmap in Windows follow the instructions below. The instructions can also be adapted for use in Linux.

1. Download the official RTL-SDR release for Windows (<http://sdr.osmocom.org/trac/attachment/wiki/rtl-sdr/RelWithDebInfo.zip>) and unzip it to a folder.
2. Download heatmap.py from <https://github.com/keenerd/rtl-sdr-misc/blob/master/heatmap/heatmap.py> (Older Mirror: <http://kmkeen.com/tmp/heatmap.py.txt>), and save it to a text file with a .py extension in the same folder as rtl_power in the x32 folder.
3. Install Python 2.7 x32 from <http://www.python.org/download/>. You must be careful to download the older 2.7 version and also ensure that it is the x32 version as well. This is because the PIL (Python Imaging Library) needs this version. Also take note of the path that you install Python to.
4. In Windows right click on Computer in your start menu and go to Properties. Select Advanced System Settings and then click on Environment Variables. In the top window where it says User

Environment Variables locate the “Path” variable. Add the path to your newly installed Python directory.



5. Install Python Image Libraries from <http://www.pythonware.com/products/pil/>. Make sure you download the Python Imaging Library 1.1.7 for Python 2.7 for Windows.
6. Using the Windows command prompt navigate into the directory where you have extracted the official RTL-SDR release, and navigate to the x32 folder.
7. Run rtl_power. As an example here is a line that will log 50 MHz of bandwidth with 2000 Hz sized bins over the frequencies 150 MHz to 200 MHz.

```
rtl_power -f 150M:200M:2k -g 20.7 logfile.csv
```

8. When you want to finish running rtl_power, press CTRL+C to quit.
9. To generate the heatmap type the following.

```
python heatmap.py logfile.csv image.png
```

Note that there appears to be a bug with current rtl_power versions which causes a value of -1.#J to be sometimes written to the CSV file. If you get an error related to this when running heatmap.py, simply open the CSV file in a text editing program and do a find and replace of -1.#J and replace it with -1.00, making sure to keep the one decimal place.

RTL_POWER FLAGS

More flags can be found by using `rtl_power -h` at the command line, but here we list and explain the most important flags.

-f lower:upper:bin_size specifies the frequency range to log over. bin_size specifies the width in Hz that each pixel will represent.
-i integration_interval The time that the average power for each bin will be summed over
-g tuner gain Gain of the RTL-SDR
-e exit_timer The length of time that the program should run

RTLSDR SCANNER

RTLSDR scanner is a Windows tool that can generate a FFT plot over a wide bandwidth. It can be downloaded from <http://eartoearoak.com/software/rtlsdr-scanner>.

After installing RTLSDR Scanner, simply enter a range in the Start and Stop boxes at the bottom of the window and set the desired gain. Press Start to begin scanning.

The Mode can be set to either Continuous or Single. In continuous mode the scanner will continuously refresh the spectrum every time it finishes one pass.

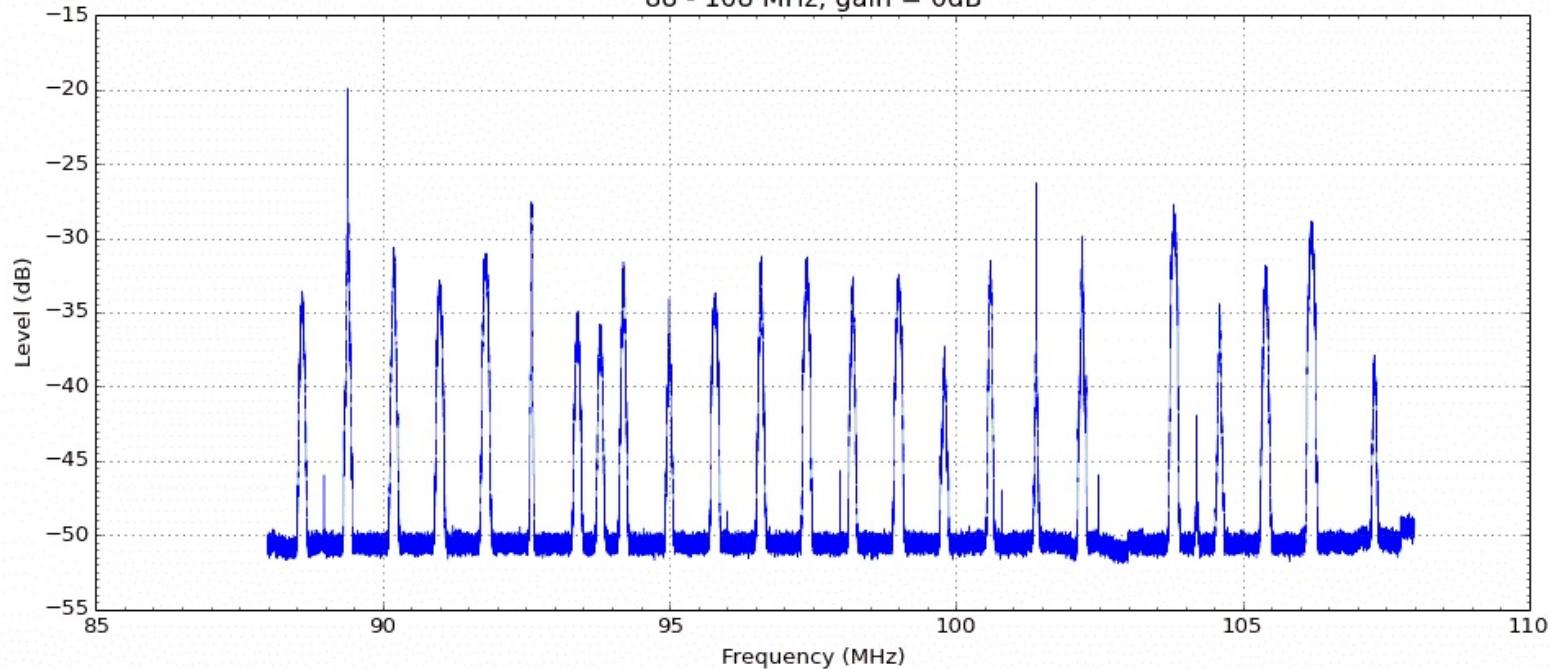
The Dwell time indicates how long the scanner will average over a range before recording the power values. Setting it larger will help clean up noisy graphs.

The FFT size indicates the FFT resolution used during scanning. Higher values will give higher resolutions graphs which can see the structure of signals more clearly.

RTLSDR Scanner can also display the band scan as a spectrogram or 3D spectrograph by changing the settings in the Display pull down box.

The latest version of RTLSDR Scanner can also connect to an external GPS receiver and be used to create radio strength heatmaps by driving around with the RTL-SDR and GPS logging data.

File Edit Scan Tools Help

Frequency Spectrogram
88 - 108 MHz, gain = 0dB

House icon + icon Stop icon Scan icon File icon Range (MHz) Gain (dB) Mode Dwell FFT size Display

Start Stop Start 88 Stop 108 19.7 Single 1 s 16384 Plot

Finished f = 96.111084MHz, p = -50.51dB

TRAIN TELEMETRY DATA DECODING

Freq (MHz)	Signal Type
452.9375	Head of Train (HOT)
457.9375	End of Train (EOT)
457.9250	Distributed Power Unit (DPU)

Head of Train (HOT) and End of Train (EOT) signals are used on trains to transmit telemetry data such as brake line pressure and monitor accidental separation of the train. An End of Train device is used to send the EOT signal which the HOT unit in the head locomotive will pick up.

Distributed Power Unit (DPU) signals are control signals that are used to control remote DPU's on long trains. DPU's are locomotives which are placed in the middle or rear of a train to help more evenly distribute pushing and pulling power over the entire train.

HOT, EOT and DPU signals can be decoded and monitored using the RTL-SDR, a general purpose receiver, audio piping and some special decoding software. The decoding software goes by the names of softEOT and softDPU and can only be downloaded after registering for a Yahoo! Group at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/SoftEOT/>. Registering may take a few hours as you must wait for a moderator to approve your application.

You will probably only be able to receive these signals if you live near a train yard or busy train route. To use softEOT or softDPU follow the instructions below.

1. Download the softEOT and/or softDPU zip files from the files section of the Yahoo! Group and extract them to a folder.
2. Ensure you have set a default audio device for audio piping in the Windows sound recording settings.
3. Open your favourite general purpose SDR GUI such as SDR# or SDR-Console.
4. Set the audio output to the audio piping method you are using.
5. Tune to either a HOT, EOT or DPU frequency.
6. Open softEOT or softDPU.
7. To begin monitoring go to **Monitor -> Start Monitoring**.
8. Go to **Monitor -> Audio Level Meter** and then adjust the volume in your SDR program or

Windows such that the audio level is at around 5-10%, however the exact level isn't critical.

Decoded messages will begin to show.

SoftEOT - Stereo Mix (VIA High Definition - Mono)															
Time Received	SIG	SRC	ID	RR	SYMB	BP	MOT	MRK	BATST	BATCU	TRB	CMD	TYP	VLV	CNF
2014/05/06 18...	12.1	HOT	470...									SRQ	NML		
2014/05/06 18...	5.6	HOT	1663									SRQ	NML		
2014/05/06 18...	14.7	HOT	470...									SRQ	NML		
2014/05/06 18...	15.8	HOT	432...									SRQ	NML		
2014/05/06 18...	8.5	EOT	470...			77	0	0	OK	0	1		NML	1	1
2014/05/06 18...	6.0	EOT	460...			0	0	1	OK	0	0		NML	1	1
2014/05/06 18...	7.4	EOT	477...			89	0	0	OK	0	1		NML	1	0

Monitoring Not Logging Not Serving Sel: 0 E:3 H:9 V:12 I:4 T:16 Err:25.00%

SoftDPU - Stereo Mix (VIA High Definition - Mono)																														
Time Received	SIG	ADDR	TRID	RR	SYMB	T...	OR	R...	SEQ	NRM	RMID	Power	REV	MTR	BVIN	Sand	PRK	TRE	BPRED	BP	ER	AF	MR	IB	BC	LOWN	LLOC	ROWN	RLOC	MISC
2014/03/18 00:10:45	11.3	15638	122		ST RM DI	26			1	IDLE	CT	0	1	0	0	0			68.0	69.5	0	136		79.5						
2014/03/18 00:11:06	9.6	15638	122		ST RM DI	27			1	IDLE	CT	0	1	0	0	0			68.0	69.5	0	136		79.0						
2014/03/18 00:11:27	12.9	16680	122		C... LD R...	28	1			IDLE	CT	0	1	0	0	0		20.5				FULL								
2014/03/18 00:11:27	13.9	15638	122		ST RM DI	28			1	IDLE	CT	0	1	0	0	0			68.0	69.5	0	136		79.0						
2014/03/18 00:11:47	10.6	16680	122		C... LD R...	29	1			IDLE	CT	0	1	0	0	0		20.5				FULL								
2014/03/18 00:11:48	12.4	15638	122		ST RM DI	29			1	IDLE	CT	0	1	0	0	0			68.0	69.5	0	136		79.5						

Monitoring Not Logging Sel: 0 C:2 S:4 O:0 V:6 I:1 T:7 Err:14.29%

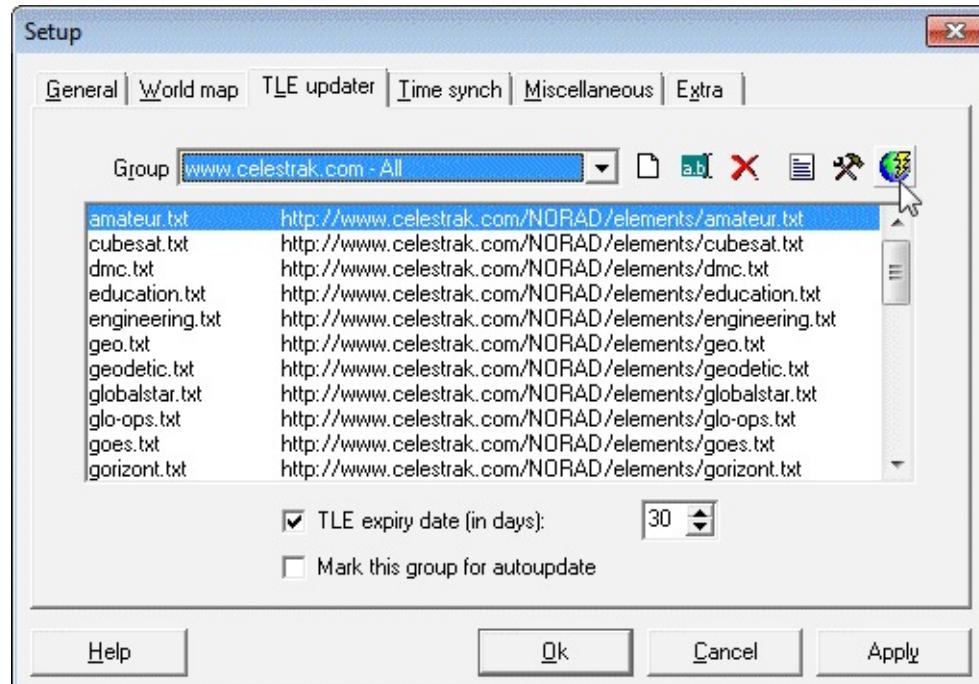
If you live in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands or Spain another train decoder that can work for trains in those countries is COAA's TrainPlotter which can be downloaded from <https://www.coaa.co.uk/trainplotter.htm>. TrainPlotter is not free but comes with a 21 day free trial. TrainPlotter decodes train telemetry signals which are sent at frequencies around 460 MHz using NFM. Use the same process of receiving the signal in a general purpose SDR receiver like SDR# using NFM mode and piping the audio into TrainPlotter.

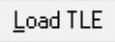
DECODING FUNCUBE SATELLITE TELEMETRY

The Funcube-1 (a.k.a AO-78) is an educational amateur radio “cubesat” satellite. It’s signal is fairly easy to receive, as it passes by almost every location on earth three times in the morning and three times at night. With an RTL-SDR, decent satellite antenna and the Funcube Telemetry software you can decode the Funcube-1’s telemetry data. For antennas we recommend a turnstile or QFH antenna tuned to 145 MHz, but a simple dipole antenna can also work.

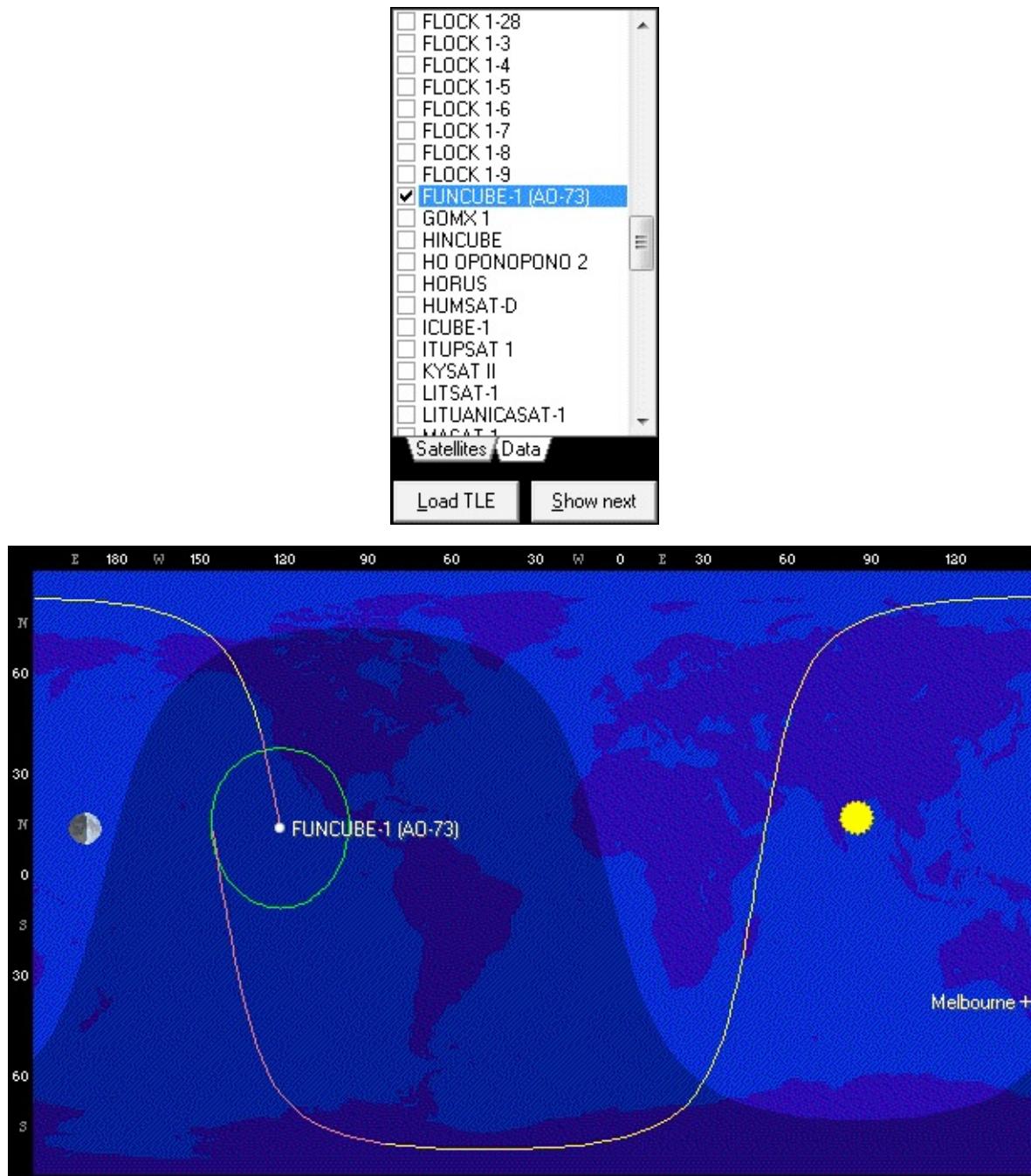
To determine when the Funcube-1 will pass over at your location, use the free Orbitron software. It can be downloaded from <http://www.stoff.pl/>. Once installed follow these instructions to set up Funcube-1 tracking.

1. Open Orbitron in Administrator Mode (if in Windows Vista/7/8), by right clicking it, and selecting Run as Administrator. Orbitron may open in full screen mode. Press Alt+Enter to exit full screen if you wish.
2. You will probably also be initially presented with a TLE file update screen. You can leave all the boxes as default. Click on the update button . Orbitron will download the new TLE files. The TLE files contain the satellite orbit information, and will need to be periodically updated every few days. Running Orbitron in Administrator mode is important, as otherwise the TLE files will not be able to be written to.

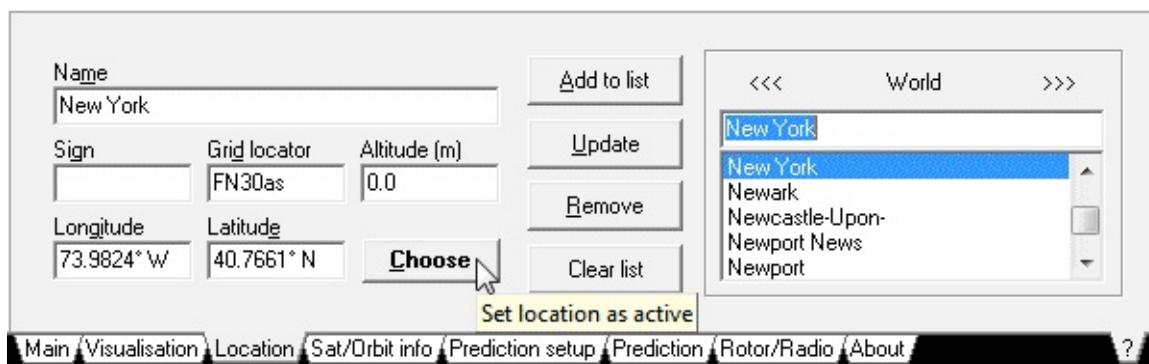


3. Now click the Load TLE button  on the right of the Orbitron window.
4. Open Cubesat.txt.
5. There will now be a list of satellites in the top right of the Orbitron window. Scroll down and

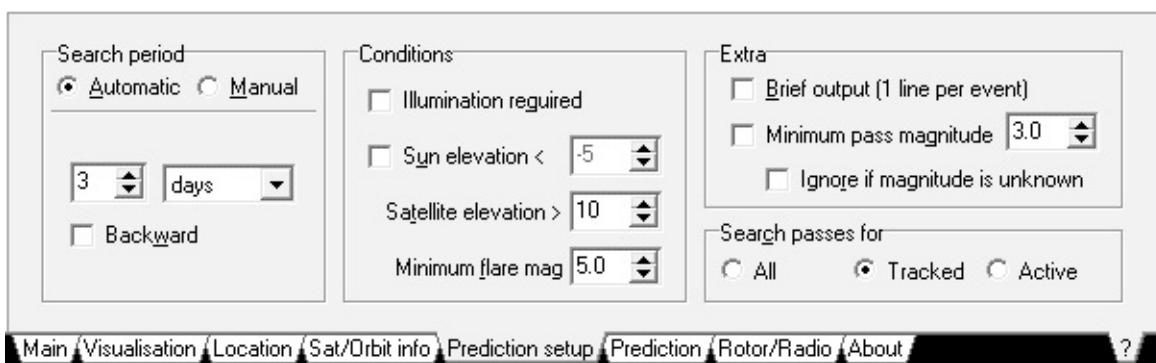
place a check next to Funcube-1 (AO-73). The current position of the satellite will show in the Orbitron map.



6. To predict when the satellite will be overhead, first set your location by clicking on the location tab at the bottom of the Orbitron window. Either enter your lat/long coordinates, or find your city in the countries list on the right. Click the Choose button when done.



7. Now click on the Prediction setup tab and uncheck “Illumination Required”.



8. Go to the Prediction tab and then click on the Predict button. Now you will see the local times at which the Funcube will pass overhead.

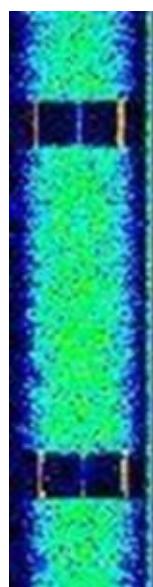
Time - LOC	Satellite	Azm	Elv	Mag	Range	S.Azm	S.Elv	Passes
2014-05-07 02:52:35	FUNCUBE-1 (AO-73)	34.0	10.1	?	2063	124.2	54.6	Flares
2014-05-07 02:56:35	FUNCUBE-1 (AO-73)	96.4	30.6	?	1164	125.4	55.3	
2014-05-07 03:00:38	FUNCUBE-1 (AO-73)	158.8	10.1	?	2092	126.8	55.9	
2014-05-07 04:29:11	FUNCUBE-1 (AO-73)	346.6	10.1	?	2059	166.5	65.4	
2014-05-07 04:32:52	FUNCUBE-1 (AO-73)	291.6	25.4	?	1313	168.6	65.5	
2014-05-07 04:36:26	FUNCUBE-1 (AO-73)	200.0	10.1	?	2000	170.7	65.6	

Main / Visualisation / Location / Sat/Orbit info / Prediction setup / **Prediction** / Rotor/Radio / About / ?

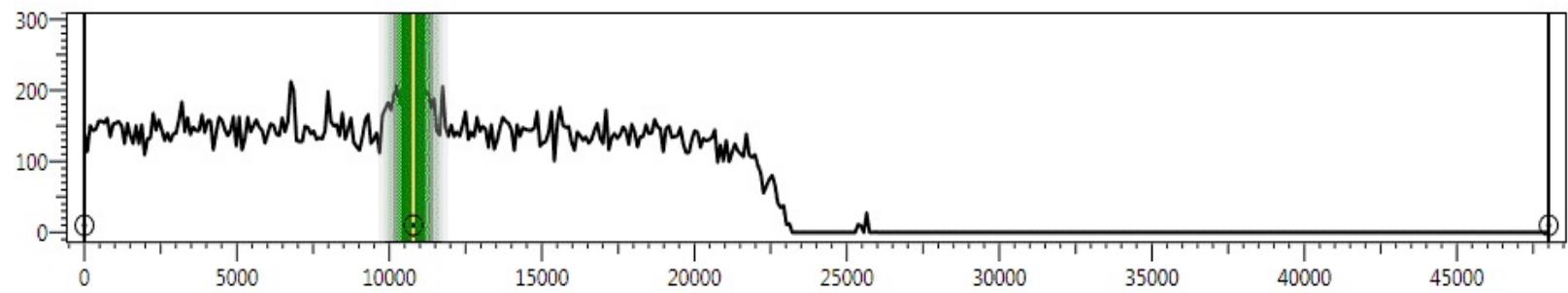
You may also want to look at the [NOAA satellite Orbitron guide](#) which can show you how to interface Orbitron with SDR# to automatically tune to the Funcube signal.

To decode the Funcube-1 telemetry follow these instructions

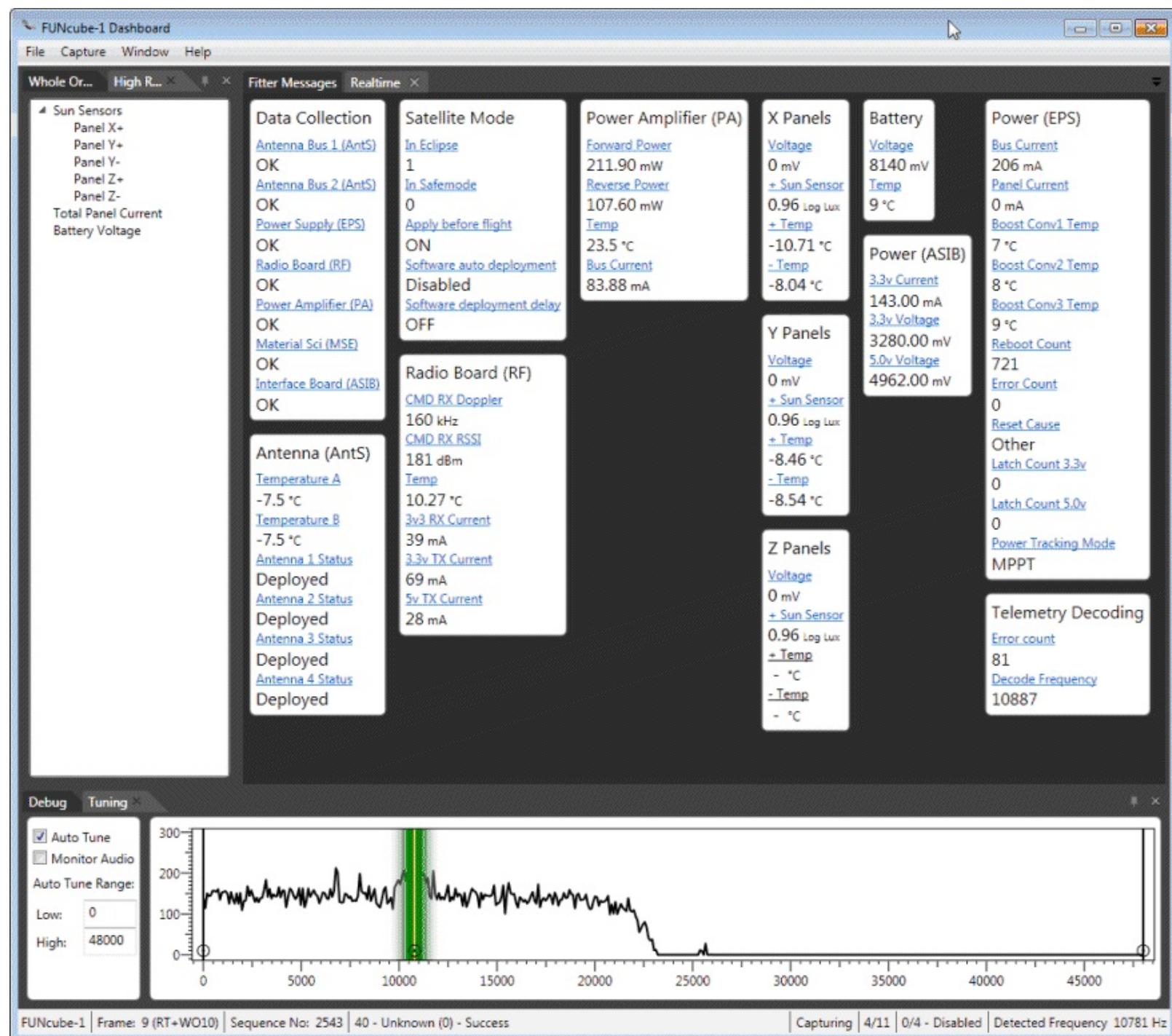
1. Open your favourite general purpose SDR receiver, set your default audio piping method as the output and start the SDR.
2. Set the receive mode to USB, with a largish bandwidth of around 10-20 kHz if possible. Tip: SDR-Console is the best for this as it defaultly allows large USB bandwidths. Otherwise SDR# can be used with a [modified minoutput sample rate](#).
3. Tune to a frequency around 145.950 - 145.970 MHz and look for the Funcube signal. Funcube telemetry data looks like this on the waterfall.



4. Open the Funcube Telemetry Dashboard software which can be downloaded from <http://funcube.org.uk/working-documents/funcube-telemetry-dashboard/>.
5. Go to **Capture -> Capture from soundcard** to begin capturing the data.
6. If it is working correctly, the audio graph at the bottom of the window will start showing audio.



7. Ensure that “Auto Tune” is selected.
8. At this point if you are receiving strong Funcube-1 telemetry signals the dashboard should begin to show decoded telemetry.



DECODING ORBCOMM SATELLITES

Orbcomm satellites are low earth orbit communications satellites that can provide two way data services and also global positioning services to portable terminals. They transmit data at 137 to 138 MHz making them easy for scanners to receive with a good antenna. They are also easy to receive as there are many orbcomm satellites in the sky positioned such that there will almost always be one available to receive.

While Orbcomm signals can be received with a standard whip antenna tuned to the 137-138 MHz frequencies, a dedicated satellite antenna such as a turnstile or QFH antenna will provide much improved reception.

Although you cannot decode actual Orbcomm data with a radio scanner like the RTL-SDR, you can still decode Orbcomm Telemetry which will let you find out satellite positions and uplink/download frequencies. To do this a program called OrbcommPlotter can be used which can be obtained from <http://www.coaa.co.uk/orbcommplotter.htm>. Orbcomm plotter is not free, but there is a 21 day trial which can be used before paying 24 euros.

To use OrbcommPlotter follow the steps below

1. Open your favourite SDR receiver such as SDR# or SDR-Console.
2. Set your audio piping method.
3. Tune to an Orbcomm Frequency and set the receiver to NFM mode.
4. Open OrbcommPlotter.
5. Go to **Options->Audio->Source** and choose your audio piping method used in your SDR receiver.
6. Go to the signal screen by pressing the signal button  . Ensure the signal level is loud enough, but not clipping.
7. Go to the Messages screen by pressing the messages button  . Orbcomm telemetry should be displayed in this window.

The screenshot shows a window titled "OrbcommPlotter from COAA - processing live signals". The menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Process, Options, and Help. Below the menu is a toolbar with icons for zooming, saving, and other functions. The main area displays a log of received packets:

```
Fill packet 5884E5FE8DEFD2C12D
Spacecraft FM-19 137.2500MHz frame 05
Fill packet C14CE533F241C243DD
Message (pt. 2 of 2) 00000 86B98 04D28 00000
Fill packet F0A75EA9AE31032602
Fill packet B3489015957F14F39C
Fill packet 2DAF89852278C41BA2
Fill packet 5BC7B2637BF1598432
Fill packet 5BCFFC07B64820CBB1
Message (pt. 1 of 1) 00000 00000 2A5C6 00002
Message (pt. 1 of 1) 00000 00000 00DF5 00001
Fill packet 60E43784840896BF93
Fill packet 5884E57E8DEFD2C12D
Fill packet 483E6B7349E174F69B
Fill packet 34921BE10C6FD924A5
Fill packet D9B2B6A2EB952C9A23
Message (pt. 2 of 4) 82189 036F8 011BA 00003
Message (pt. 1 of 1) 00000 38B01 3474B 00001
Fill packet 199F6BF20EEAC99574
Fill packet 6FE4A5F1DDC8B12CAD
Fill packet 60E43784848896BF93
Fill packet F0A75EA9AE31032602
```

At the bottom left is the text "For Help, press F1" and at the bottom right is a "Signal upright" icon.

You may also wish to use Orbitron to automatically make SDR# tune to visible Orbcomm satellite frequencies. See the [Orbitron tutorial](#) in the NOAA weather satellite guide, but use Orbcomm satellites instead of NOAA weather satellites.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL LINKS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-5MOMuH4v0>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XA5OzTH_dDA

ISS SATELLITE RECEPTION

The International Space Station sometimes transmits using plain NFM audio transmissions during spacewalks. These can be found at around 121 MHz and 130 MHz. The signal is usually quite strong so any antenna built for around 143 MHz should work.

The ISS astronauts also sometimes communicate to schools using ham radio at a downlink frequency of around 145 MHz.

The ISS also has an APRS packet radio repeater on 145.825 MHz which can be received when the satellite is overhead. See the [APRS tutorial](#) for more information on decoding APRS.

You may also wish to use Orbitron to automatically make SDR# tune to the ISS satellite frequency as soon as it is available. See the [Orbitron tutorial](#) in the NOAA weather satellite guide but use the ISS instead of the NOAA satellites.

WEATHER/TEMPERATURE SENSOR DECODING GUIDE

Many weather and temperature sensors transmit on the 433 MHz ISM band. A Linux command line program known as rtl_433 can be used to decode some of these transmissions. RtL_433 can be downloaded from https://github.com/merbanan/rtl_433. Build instructions are on the git hub page.

If there is a sensor transmitting on a format that rtl_433 understands you will be able to see sensor output data. Currently on a few sensors are supported.

There are also alternative rtl_433 decoders which are able to decode different sensors. There is a decoder for Oregon Scientific v1 sensors available at <https://github.com/kevinmehall/rtlsdr-433m-sensor> and one for v2.1 sensors at https://github.com/jaycedowell/rtl_osv21.

DECODING SMART POWER METERS

Smart Meters are RF enabled electricity meters which allow electricity meter reader personnel to collect consumption data simply by standing outside the house. Typically, this information is broadcast in the 900 MHz ISM band.

A Windows and Linux program called rtl_amr can be used to decode and monitor this information being sent. Rtl_amr can be obtained as a source file from <https://github.com/bemasher/rtlamr>. It will require installation of the Go language first.

If you have an Efergy Energy Meter the following Linux program can be used to decode it <https://github.com/jdesbonnet/rtl-sdr-efergy>. Energy Count 3000 meters can be decoded with the Linux program at https://github.com/EmbedME/ec3k_decoder.

NRF24L01+ DECODING

NRF24L01+ is a wireless 2.4 GHz protocol used by many consumer devices such as keyboards, mice, remote controls, toys and appliances.

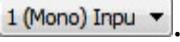
In order to receive NRF24L01+ signals you will need to first purchase a downconverter. A downconverter will move the 2.4 GHz signal down towards a frequency that is receivable by the RTL-SDR. Downconverters can be found cheaply from China on aliexpress.com. Search for “MMDS down converter”. You will want to purchase one for the 2.2-2.4 GHz range, with a local oscillator (LO) or 19998 MHz. Here is an example of one that has been successfully used with the RTL-SDR before <http://www.aliexpress.com/item/2012-best-selling-L-O1998MHZ-MMDS-down-converter/670265064.html>.

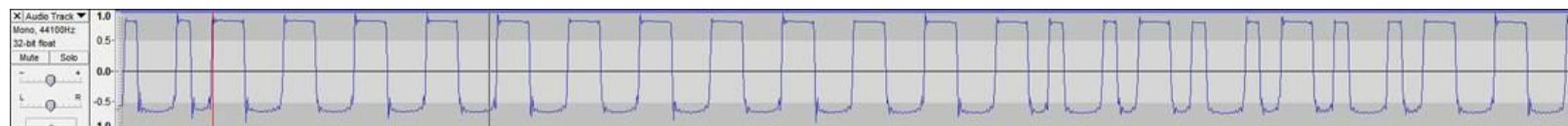
For decoding the packets use the Linux based command line program nrf24-btle-decoder whose download and compile instructions can be found at <https://github.com/omriiluz/NRF24-BTLE-Decoder>. You will need to pipe the audio from rtl_fm. Further instructions can be found at <http://blog.cyberexplorer.me/2014/01/sniffing-and-decoding-nrf24l01-and.html>.

ANALYZING UNKNOWN SIGNALS

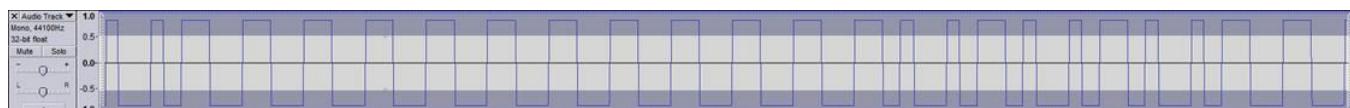
AUDACITY

Simple signal analysis can be performed with SDR# and an audio editor such as Audacity. Audacity is a free open source audio editor which can be downloaded from <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>. The most important feature of audacity for signal analysis is that it can record and display audio waveforms. To use audacity to analyze simple signals follow these instructions.

1. Start SDR# and tune to a simple waveform you'd like to analyze. Here we tune to a binary packet from a electricity energy logger on 433.94 MHz.
2. Open audacity, and set your input device, which should be your stereo mix or preferred audio piping method.  Stereo Mix (VIA High De ▾
3. Set the input channels to Mono  1 (Mono) Inpu ▾.
4. Click the record button  to begin recording audio. You may need to adjust the volume to get good audio levels.
5. Wait for a packet to play or let your signal play for a few seconds and then click the stop button in audacity.
6. Now delete all the static in front and after the signal by using the mouse to select the noise part of the waveform and then pressing the delete key.
7. Zoom in on the captured waveform by holding the Ctrl key whilst scrolling the mouse wheel up.
8. To increase the signal amplitude go to **Effect -> Amplify**.
9. Now you should be clearly able to see the waveform and the bits that they represent.



10. To clean up the noise from a square wave signal go to **Effect -> Leveller**. Set the degree of levelling to Heaviest and press OK. Run this leveller a few times using Ctrl+R to get a clean looking digital signal.



MINIMODEM

Minimodem is a Linux command line program capable of generating and demodulating Frequency Shift Keying (FSK) signals. MiniModem and install instructions can be found at <http://www.whence.com/minimodem/>.

RECEIVING AND TRACKING GPS WITH THE RTL-SDR

The RTL-SDR can be used to receive and track GPS constellations in real time completely in software. To do this the RTL-SDR must be connected to a GPS antenna tuned at 1.57542 GHz. Most GPS antennas require power so you will need a bias-t to connect them to the RTL-SDR. Note that it is not possible to determine if the GPS signal is being receiving simply by looking at a waterfall. The reason is because GPS signals are spread spectrum and their strength is below the noise floor. Proper signal processing software is required to detect GPS such as the GNSS-SDR Linux software.

Note: I and several other people have never been able to get the GPS to get good locks using GNSS-SDR and the RTL-SDR. The only thing that has worked is the calibration tool. It may or may not work for you. This tutorial is included for future purposes when the locking problem may be fixed and/or overcome.

To install this software use the following instructions.

Install GNU Radio 3.7. Follow the GNU Radio tutorial if you need to install it. Then install the remaining dependencies as follows

```
sudo apt-get install libblas-dev liblapack-dev gfortran
```

```
wget http://sourceforge.net/projects/arma/files/armadillo-4.000.0.tar.gz
tar xvfz armadillo-4.000.0.tar.gz
cd armadillo-4.000.0
cmake .
make
sudo make install
```

```
wget http://gflags.googlecode.com/files/gflags-2.0.zip
unzip gflags-2.0.zip
cd gflags-2.0
./configure
make
sudo make install
```

```
wget http://google-glog.googlecode.com/files/glog-0.3.3.tar.gz
tar xvfz glog-0.3.3.tar.gz
cd glog-0.3.3
./configure
make
sudo make install
```

```
wget http://gperftools.googlecode.com/files/gperftools-2.1.tar.gz
tar xvfz gperftools-2.1.tar.gz
cd gperftools-2.1
./configure --enable-frame-pointers
make
sudo make install
```

```
wget http://googletest.googlecode.com/files/gtest-1.7.0.zip
```

```
unzip gtest-1.7.0.zip  
cd gtest-1.7.0  
.configure  
make
```

In your \$HOME/.bashrc file add the following making sure to change /home/username/gtest-1.7.0 by the actual directory where you downloaded gtest.

```
export GTEST_DIR=/home/username/gtest-1.7.0
```

Now install libosmosdr and gr-osmosdr

```
sudo apt-get install libssl-dev subversion
```

```
git clone git://git.osmocom.org/osmo-sdr.git  
cd osmo-sdr/software/libosmosdr  
mkdir build  
cd build/  
cmake ../  
make  
sudo make install  
sudo ldconfig  
cd ../../  
git clone git://git.osmocom.org/gr-osmosdr  
cd gr-osmosdr  
mkdir build  
cd build  
cmake .. -Wno-dev  
make  
sudo make install  
sudo ldconfig
```

We are now ready to install GNSS-SDR. Before we do though we need to set some variables to tell it to install RTL-SDR support. Export the following variable with

```
export RTLSR_DRIVER=1
```

Now also provide the path to your gr-osmosdr install using

```
export OSMOSDR_ROOT=/path/to/gr-osmosdr
```

Now install and build the GNSS software

```
svn co http://svn.code.sf.net/p/gnss-sdr/code/trunk gnss-sdr  
cd gnss-sdr/build  
cmake ..  
make  
make install
```

Before we can use the RTL-SDR with GNSS-SDR we need to run a calibration program to get around it's crystal inaccuracies.

Now we need to modify some configuration files to tell GNSS-SDR to use the RTL-SDR.

```
cd gnss-sdr/conf
```

Edit front-end-cal.conf and input your GPS receive latitude, longitude and elevation.

```
GNSS-SDR.init_latitude_deg=40.74846557442795  
GNSS-SDR.init_longitude_deg=-73.98593961814200  
GNSS-SDR.init_altitude_m=329.11968943169342
```

Ensure that supplemental GPS is turned on

```
GNSS-SDR.SUPL_gps_enabled=true
```

Set the gains as follows (May require tweaking if you have bad reception)

```
SignalSource.AGC_enabled=true  
SignalSource.gain=60  
SignalSource.rf_gain=40  
SignalSource.if_gain=30
```

You might also need to adjust the acquisition threshold if you have bad reception. By default the threshold is at 0.015, but it can be reduced slightly.

```
Acquisition.threshold=0.010
```

Now run the front end calibration tool by first navigating to the gnss-sdr/install folder and then running

```
./front-end-rcvr
```

A successful run will detect a few satellites and calculate the sample rate offset. An example of a successful output is shown below.

```
Initializing... Please wait.  
Logging will be done at /tmp  
Use front-end-cal --log_dir=/path/to/log to change that.  
Trying to read ephemeris from SUPL server...  
SUPL data received OK!  
gr-osmosdr v0.1.0-44-g0d10f5e9 (0.1.1git) gnuradio 3.7.2git-57-g1aa07b36  
built-in source types: file osmosdr fcd rtl rtl_tcp uhd hackrf netsdr  
Using device #0 Realtek RTL2838UHIDIR SN: 00000001  
Found Rafael Micro R820T tuner  
Exact sample rate is: 2000000.052982 Hz  
Actual RX Rate: 2000000.000000 [SPS]...  
Actual RX Freq: 1575420000.000000 [Hz]...  
PLL Frequency tune error 0.000000 [Hz]...Actual RX Gain: 40.200000 dB...  
Front-end RAW samples captured  
Using Volk machine: avx_32_mmx_orc  
Searching for GPS Satellites in L1 band...  
[ . . . . . . . . . . 14 . . . 18 . . 21 22 .  
 . . . . . ]  
Total signal acquisition run time 6.03541 [seconds]  
Reference Time:  
GPS Week: 747  
GPS TOW: 208705 16696.400000  
~ UTC: Tue Dec 17 14:58:26 2013  
Current TOW obtained from SUPL assistance = 208705  
Reference location (defined in config file):  
Latitude=33.5166 []  
Longitude=73.1665 []  
Altitude=518 [m]  
Doppler analysis results:  
SV ID Measured [Hz] Predicted [Hz]  
14 -74500.00 832.28
```

18 -76500.00 -1141.35
21 -78000.00 -2679.26
22 -75000.00 219.07

Parameters estimation for Elonics E4000 Front-End:

Sampling frequency =2000095.73 [Hz]

IF bias present in baseband=-75410.22 [Hz]

Reference oscillator error =47.87 [ppm]

Corrected Doppler vs. Predicted

SV ID Corrected [Hz] Predicted [Hz]

14 910.22 832.28

18 -1089.78 -1141.35

21 -2589.78 -2679.26

22 410.22 219.07

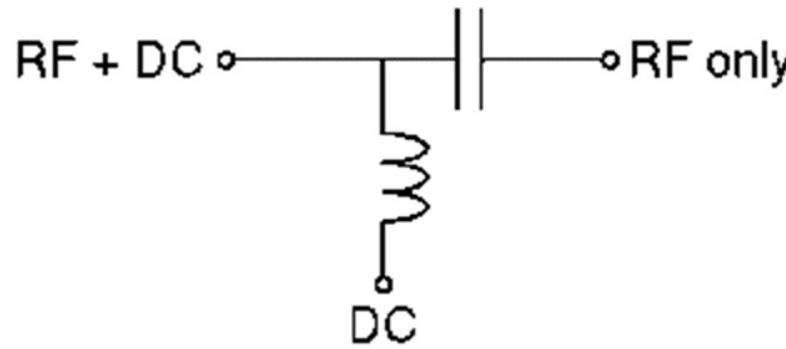
GNSS-SDR Front-end calibration program ended.

Now record the sample rate and IF bias present in baseband and put it into the gnss-
sdr_rtlsdr_realtime.conf file under the headings where it says to place the calibrated sample rates.

ACTIVE GPS ANTENNAS AND BIAS-T'S

Most GPS antennas are ‘active’ and require 5 volts of DC power to be sent down the coax cable. Unfortunately, we cannot connect a DC power source to the RTL-SDR antenna input as this would fry it.

To connect an active GPS antenna to the RTL-SDR you will need a simple circuit called a bias-t. The bias-t sits between the dongle and active GPS antenna, allowing DC power to travel down the coax to the antenna whilst blocking the DC power from entering the dongle. A simple bias-t consists of a capacitor and an inductor. They can be bought relatively cheaply on Ebay, or easily constructed. A sample circuit diagram is shown below.



Attribution: [Bias T](#) by Matthias Buchmeier / [CC 3.0](#)

The capacitor value must have a small enough impedance ($<<50\text{ ohm}$) to allow 1.5 GHz to easily pass through and the inductor must have a high impedance ($>>50\text{ohm}$) to prevent the received GPS signal from shunting to ground through the battery.

To calculate bias-t values use the impedance formulas for capacitors and inductors. A good calculator can be found here <http://www.qsl.net/pa2ohh/jslcimp.htm>.

Impedance of a capacitor is calculated with the following equation.

$$X_c = 1 / (2 * \pi * f * C)$$

And the impedance of an inductor can be calculated with the following equation.

$$X_L = 2 * \pi * f * L$$

Where f is the frequency we are interested in (in this case ~ 1500 MHz), C is the capacitance value and L is the inductance value.

We need large capacitor and large inductor values. For example a 100 pF capacitor at 1.5 GHz (1500 MHz) has an impedance of about 1 Ohm, so it should be okay. Don't use too large capacitors as they can have parasitic impedance.

An inductor with a value of 0.1 uH has an impedance of about 940 Ohms at 1.5 GHz and should be okay. A homemade inductor can be wound using enamelled copper wire and a cylindrical object or a ferrite bar. To calculate windings for a home made air core inductor use this calculator http://www.66pacific.com/calculators/coil_calc.aspx. Using a ferrite core can increase inductance further.

PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE AND BETTER SDR'S

Here we will talk about some applications that will work on current or future higher end devices.

HRPT

HRPT is an acronym for High Resolution Picture Transmission. It is similar to APT used in NOAA weather satellites except that the images are much higher in resolution. HRPT is also transmitted by NOAA weather satellites but at a frequency of around 1700 MHz. To receive this signal you will need a fairly advanced setup. It requires a high gain tracking satellite dish. That is a computerized satellite dish which automatically follows the satellite in the sky. You can see the type of antenna required <http://pjm.uhf-satcom.com/twtr/antenna.jpg>.

HRPT requires a bandwidth of about 3 MHz, which is just outside the RTL-SDRs stable maximum bandwidth. Newer SDRs like Airspy or the HackRF/BladeRF should be able to receive this no problem.

<http://www.satsignal.eu/software/hrpt.htm>

SOFTWARE DVB-T DECODING

The RTL-SDR doesn't provide enough bandwidth for decoding DVB-T signals when in SDR mode. Future dongles with larger bandwidths may be able to decode DVB-T TV completely in software.

DECT CORDLESS PHONES

Modern cordless phones transmit in the 1.9 GHz band and higher using a protocol called DECT or Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications. There is currently a GNU Radio decoder under development which may allow decoding of this protocol in the future.

https://www.cgran.org/wiki/GR_DECT

OTHER INTERESTING PROJECTS PEOPLE HAVE DONE WITH THE RTL-SDR

- Received the Chinese Yutu moon rover telemetry.
 - <http://www rtl-sdr com/receiving-chinese-yutu-moon-rover-rtl-sdr/>
- Tracking of LEO satellites with an Inmarsat dish.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktnQ7nBCuqU>
- Detected leaking FM radio from an HP laptop mic.
 - <http://www rtl-sdr com/potential-major-security-flaw-hp-laptop-discovered-rtl-sdr/>
- Attempted to reconstruct an LCD monitor image from RFI.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5N1C3WB8c0o>
- Built a passive radar system.
 - <http://kaira.sgo.fi/2013/10/dual-antenna-passive-radar.html>,
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9gRjK2ZlzE#t=15>,
 - <http://www rtl-sdr com/passive-radar-dual-coherent-channel-rtl-sdr/>
- Decoding burger pager data.
 - <http://www.windytan.com/2013/09/the-burger-pager.html>
- Decoding tire pressure monitors.
 - <http://www rtl-sdr com/receiving-decoding-tire-pressure-monitor-systems-using-rtl-sdr/>
- ADS-B Augmented Reality on a AR-Drone.
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeyCdk-OqG0>
- RTL-SDR for radio direction finding - Finding an interfering beacon.
 - <http://www rtl-sdr com/locating-interfering-signal-radio-direction-finding-rtl-sdr/>
- Using the RTL-SDR to measure a filters frequency response.
 - <http://www rtl-sdr com/measuring-frequency-response-bandpass-filter-rtl-sdr/>

DVB-T HDTV ON LINUX

The RTL-SDR can still be used for its original purpose: DVB-T TV watching. Note that DVB-T TV does not exist in the USA.

DRIVERS

On Linux there are free open source drivers and software programs which can make DVB-T TV work. The easiest way to get it to work is to use a newer version of the Linux Kernel (3.6+), such as the one used by Ubuntu 13.10 or newer. On older versions you will need to install or update Video 4 Linux, or update your kernel.

UPDATING VIDEO4LINUX

The Video4Linux can be updated by using the following commands in terminal. Note that this update may not work on all Linux versions and kernels.

```
sudo apt-get install git linux-headers-$(uname -r) build-essential patchutils libproc-processtable-perl  
git clone git://linuxtv.org/media_build.git  
cd media_build  
.build  
sudo make install
```

More info here [https://help.ubuntu.com/community/DVB-T_\(USB\)](https://help.ubuntu.com/community/DVB-T_(USB))

UPDATING THE KERNEL

An alternative to updating the Video4Linux drivers is to update the kernel on your Linux distribution to a newer version which includes the DVB-T drivers. This can be done by first running the following.

```
sudo apt-get update  
apt-cache search linux-image
```

Look at the output to find a newer kernel version for your system. Once you've found a newer kernel type the following where linux-image-newer_version should be replaced with the newer linux kernel.

```
sudo apt-get install linux-image-newer_version
```

File Edit Tabs Help

el image and headers.

linux-image-extra-3.2.0-24-virtual - Linux kernel image for version 3.2.0 on 64 bit x86 Virtual Guests

linux-image-generic-lts-quantal - Generic Linux kernel image

linux-image-generic-lts-raring - Generic Linux kernel image

linux-image-generic-lts-saucy - Generic Linux kernel image

linux-image-hwe-generic - Depends on the generic hardware enablement kernel image and headers.

linux-image-3.11.0-13-generic - Linux kernel image for version 3.11.0 on 32 bit x86 SMP

linux-image-3.11.0-14-generic - Linux kernel image for version 3.11.0 on 32 bit x86 SMP

linux-image-3.11.0-15-generic - Linux kernel image for version 3.11.0 on 32 bit x86 SMP

linux-image-3.11.0-17-generic - Linux kernel image for version 3.11.0 on 32 bit x86 SMP

linux-image-3.11.0-18-generic - Linux kernel image for version 3.11.0 on 32 bit x86 SMP

linux-image-3.11.0-19-generic - Linux kernel image for version 3.11.0 on 32 bit x86 SMP

linux-image-3.2.0-24-generic-pae - Linux kernel image for version 3.2.0 on 64 bit x86 SMP

linux-image-3.2.0-25-generic - Linux kernel image for version 3.2.0 on 32 bit x86 SMP

For example according to the terminal output in this image you could type the following to update you to kernel 3.11 and automatically get the DVB-T drivers.

```
sudo apt-get install linux-image-3.11.0-19-generic
```

DVB-T TV WATCHING SOFTWARE

A program called Me-TV can be used to watch DVB-T TV and can be downloaded with

```
sudo apt-get update  
sudo apt-get install me-tv
```

Once installed Me TV can be found in Ubuntu's start menu under Sound & Video.

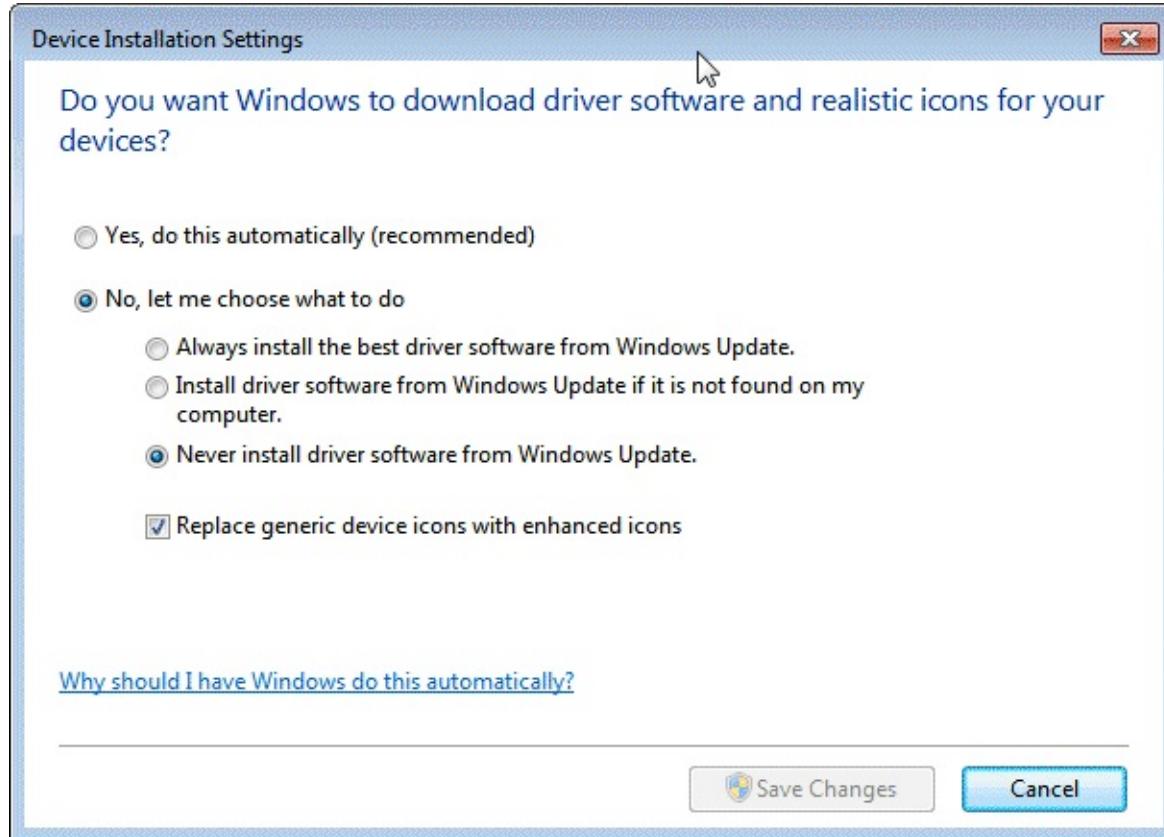


Other software like MythTv can also be used.

DVB-T ON WINDOWS

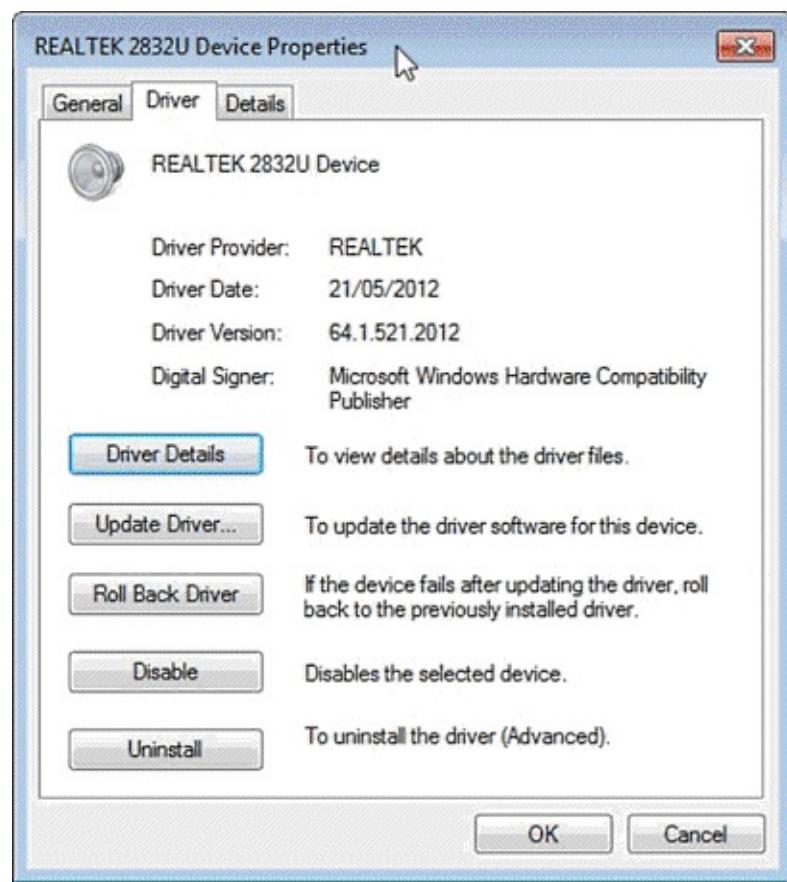
Note that DVB-T TV does not exist in the USA. On Windows watching DVB-T TV is usually a simple matter of installing the CD software that comes with many dongles. However, this software is often pirated by the Chinese manufacturer and can sometimes stop working due to the software's anti piracy features.

There are also some issues with driver installation on newer versions of Windows. First for Windows 7 & 8 (perhaps vista too) you will need to turn off automatic driver installation otherwise Windows will continually replace the DVB-T driver with an older version which will not work. To do this go to the start menu and type in "Device Installation Settings" into the search bar. Click on "Change device installation settings". Change the settings to "No, let me choose what to do" and "Never install driver software from Windows Update".

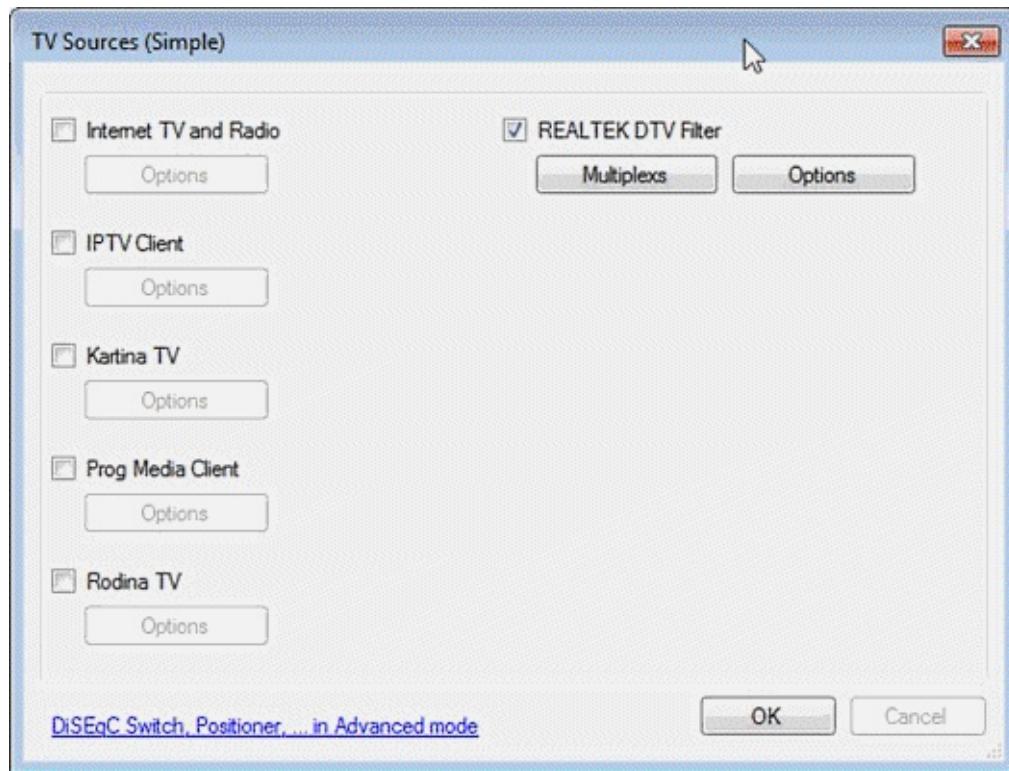


Now you can install the DVB-T drivers from the CD. If you're dongle did not come with the DVB-T CD, the DVB-T drivers can be downloaded from <http://download.buytra.com/driver/SPC-0155-Driver.zip>. After unzipping the file, open the Drivers folder and run setup.exe to install the drivers. If Windows has already installed its own drivers (or you have the SDR drivers installed), you will need to uninstall those first and then reinstall them using the new drivers.

The correct drivers will have a Driver Version 64.1.521.2012. If an older version is shown, it probably won't work and you should reinstall the drivers. The older windows drivers will recognize the dongle, but when searching for TV stations the dongle will simply never find any.



After you have installed the drivers, download the free version of Prog DVB from www.progdvb.com. After installing Prog DVB, open Prog DVB 7. Go to **Settings -> TV Sources** and check the box next to REALTEK DTV Filter.

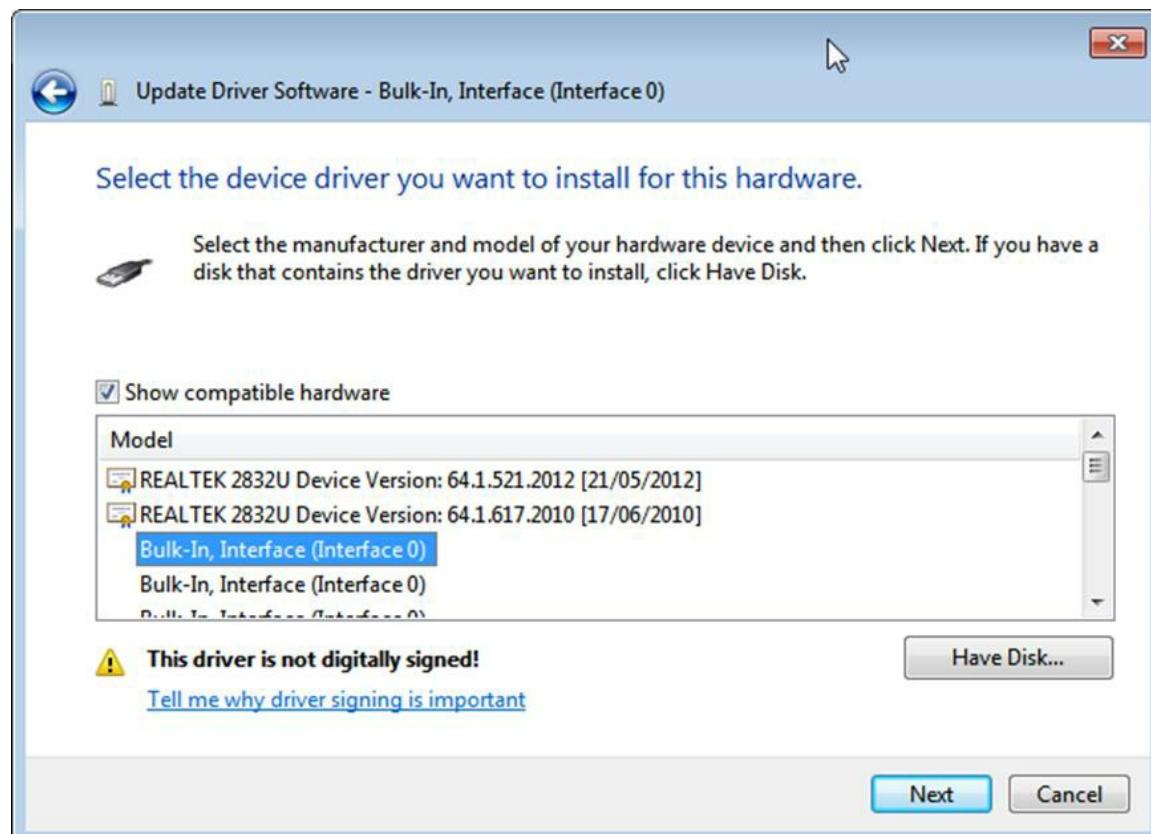


Now go click on Multiplexes and choose what Country you'd like to search for frequencies in. Press OK. Now go to **Channel List -> Channel Search -> Realtek DTV Filter**. From this point channels will be searched for and found if you have good enough reception.

QUICK WAY TO CHANGE BETWEEN DVB-T AND SDR DRIVERS ON WINDOWS VISTA/7/8

Once you have installed and uninstalled both drivers there is an easy way to switch between the DVB-T and SDR drivers within seconds. In device manager right click the RTL-SDR device and choose “Update Driver Software”. (If currently installed as a DVB-T source the RTL-SDR will be under “**Sound, Video and Game Controllers -> REALTEK 2832U Device**”, and if currently installed as an SDR it will be under “**libusb (WinUSB) devices ->Bulk-In, Interface (Interface 0)**”

Click **Browse my computer for driver software->Let me pick from a list of device drivers on my computer**. Here you can see the SDR Driver as “Bulk-In, Interface (Interface 0)” and the DVB-T driver as REALTEK 2832U Device Version 64.1.521.2012 [21/05/2012]. Choose the driver you want to change to then click next.



ANTENNA GUIDE

In this section we will discuss antennas, cables and connectors. This section will not go in depth into antenna theory and will only provide a brief overview of some of the most common types of antenna. We try to provide a starting point for further antenna research.

ANTENNA ESD SAFETY

Note that any antenna will pick up electrostatic charges over time. Large electrostatic discharges into the RTL-SDR dongle can damage it, even if it has an ESD diode in place. Be sure to properly ground your antennas and discharge any potential ESD build up by shorting the antenna before using it.

For extra safety we recommend not using an outdoor antenna during a thunder storm and to disconnect the antenna from your RTL-SDR when not in use.

ANTENNA ADAPTER GUIDE

The most common RTL-SDR models use the relatively uncommon micro-coax (MCX) connectors on the dongles. These connectors are actually quite good as they work without much signal loss over a wide range of frequencies. We recommend buying dongles with the MCX connector due to their better passband. These will work better at higher frequencies for things like ADS-B. However, most connectors that fit onto coax cables will not be MCX so you will need an adapter.

It is important to choose a good connector and adapter. Poor connectors will have a small pass band which won't work well at VHF and higher frequencies. Using an adapter to another good connector such as SMA/BNC/N should introduce negligible losses.

Dongles using the PAL connector will have poorer performance at high frequencies. Insertion loss expected at the ADS-B frequency (1090 MHz) is estimated to be about 1-3 dB (1.25x - 2x loss), but it can add up to more if you use PAL on both ends of the cable and start using adapters.

There is always the option of desoldering the MCX connector on the dongle and replacing it with a better one like SMA.

We also prefer the use of 'straight' adapters over 'pigtail' adapters. Pigtail adapters are the ones with a short length of coax between each end of the adapter. Pigtail adapters can be noisy if poorly constructed. However, pigtail adapters tend to be more common and are easier to use if mounting in a box for instance. See below for an example of an MCX->SMA Pigtail Adapter (left) and MCX->SMA Straight Adapter (Right).



Below we show a table containing common RF connectors and their respective passbands. The table is arranged from worst to best.

Connector	Photo	Pass Band
PAL (a.k.a Belling Lee) (IEC 169-2)	A photograph showing two silver-colored PAL connectors attached to black cables, angled towards each other.	0 - 100 MHz
UHF (SO-239/PL259)	A photograph of a silver-colored UHF connector attached to a black cable, showing its threaded design.	0 - 300 MHz
F Type	A close-up photograph of a gold-plated F-Type connector attached to a black cable.	0 - 1 GHz Possibly up to 2 GHz on newer compression connectors.
BNC	A photograph of a silver-colored BNC connector attached to a black cable.	0 - 4 GHz
MCX		0 - 6 GHz

Attribution: [PAL Connector](#) by Swift.Hg / CC 3.0

Attribution: [UHF Connector](#) by Peter Schwint / CC 2.0

Attribution: [F-Type Connector](#) by Colin / CC 3.0

Attribution: [BNC Connector](#) by Swift.Hg / CC 3.0



Attribution: [MCX Connector](#) by Afrank99 / CC 2.5

Type N



Attribution: [Type N Connector](#) by Swift.Hg / CC 3.0

SMA



Attribution: [SMA Connector](#) by Swift.Hg / CC 3.0

0 - 11 GHz.

Possibly up to 18 GHz.

0 - 18 GHz

Possibly up to 26.5 GHz

COAXIAL CABLE GUIDE

There exist various types of coaxial cable available for purchase. Different types of cables will have different losses, levels of shielding and impedances. Since the RTL-SDR can go into the GHz range, we recommend using at least RG6 coax cable. RG6 is a 75 Ohm cable which matches the 75 Ohm input on the RTL-SDR. 50 Ohm cabling will work just as well however, as the mismatch loss between 75 and 50 ohms is negligible. Most electrical stores will stock RG6 cable as it is commonly used for satellite TV installations.

It is also recommended to try and reduce the length of coax runs. Instead try to get the RTL-SDR dongle as close to the radio as possible using USB extension cables or remote computers. See the [positioning your RTL-SDR dongle section](#) for more information.

In the following table we show estimated losses in dB (lower is better) for a range of common coaxial cable types over a length of 1 meter.

MHz	RG 58 (50 Ω)	RG59 (75 Ω)	RG6 (75 Ω)	RG 213 (50 Ω)	RG-8 (50 Ω)	LMR-400 (50 Ω)
1	0.009	0.03	0.006	0.006	0.004	0.004
10	0.038	0.031	0.0196	0.02	0.013	0.013
100	0.133	0.102	0.056	0.069	0.042	0.04
500	0.346	0.241	0.162	0.175	0.099	0.093
1000	0.539	0.356	0.2	0.268	0.147	0.135

ANTENNA GAIN/DIRECTIVITY

Antennas do not actually have ‘gain’ in the sense of an amplifier, however they can be more sensitive in certain directions (directivity). Antenna gain is measured relative to the ‘isotropic’ antenna which is a theoretical antenna that has exactly a gain of 0 dBi in a sphere around the antenna. This means that it is not more sensitive in any direction to another.

The unit dBi means decibels over the isotropic. The isotropic antenna can be said to have no directivity. All antenna gain is measured relative to this isotropic antenna. The measure of decibels is a measure of the ‘gain’ strength. Larger dB numbers mean that your signal will be received stronger.

As with most things, there are tradeoffs when choosing an antenna. You can either have a highly directional high gain antenna for a specific frequency or an omni-directional but low gain antenna for a wide band of frequencies.

When choosing an antenna for a project, you need to think about where the signal is coming from. For example, if your signals are coming from the horizon in many directions, you may want to consider an antenna with large directivity directed towards the horizon like a collinear or J-pole. If you want to receive a weak signal coming from one direction only, choose an antenna like a Yagi which has high gain in the direction it is pointing. If you want to receive signals from all directions for general scanning of all frequencies, you will need an omnidirectional antenna like a Discone or Scantenna.

RADIATION PATTERNS

Radiation patterns show in what directions the antenna will receive best. In the example antennas shown below in the [Example Antennas section](#) we show 3D total power radiation patterns. The more red/pink the colour, the more gain in that particular direction. Remember that radio waves basically travel in straight lines from the source (ignoring reflections). Imagine straight lines coming from the signal source heading towards the antenna centre to see where on the radiation pattern the signal will hit.

ANTENNA DESIGN FREQUENCY

You also need to think about what frequency you are interested in receiving. Most antennas will receive well at the design frequency and near it, but poorly at any other frequency. An exception is wideband antennas like the Discone or Scantenna, but they of course have less gain.

For most antennas the length of the elements determines the design frequency. Radio travels in waves

that have lengths measured in meters. Low radio frequencies such as the HF bands (0 - 30 MHz) have long wave lengths. High frequencies such as VHF/UHF (50 MHz+) have shorter wavelengths.

The size of the elements on an antenna are proportional to the wavelength. Therefore, HF antennas need to be large, and VHF/UHF antennas can be much smaller.

STANDING WAVE RATIO (SWR)

The SWR of an antenna is a measure that says how well matched the antenna impedance and coax impedance is for a particular frequency. Typically coax cable and radio inputs are standardized at 50 or 75 Ohms. The antenna impedance should be the same to get a good SWR. If an antenna has an impedance of say 450 Ohms, a matching 9:1 transformer should be used.

A poor impedance match and thus bad SWR means that most of the received signal by the antenna will not make it through the coax. Instead the signal will be reflected back causing interference to the signal, kind of like an echo. For instance speaking in a room with an echo can make your voice harder to understand. The same thing happens with mismatched impedances.

A good SWR means that most of the signal makes it through the cable. A perfect SWR ratio is 1:1, a really bad ratio might be 100:1 or higher. Fortunately, SWR does not matter that badly when receiving, but it can still make a noticeable difference.

SWR can vary wildly with frequency. Non-broadband antennas will only likely have a small range of frequencies that can receive with a good SWR.

Note that SWR says nothing about the gain. The SWR may be good at a frequency, but the gain of the antenna may be poor at that frequency.

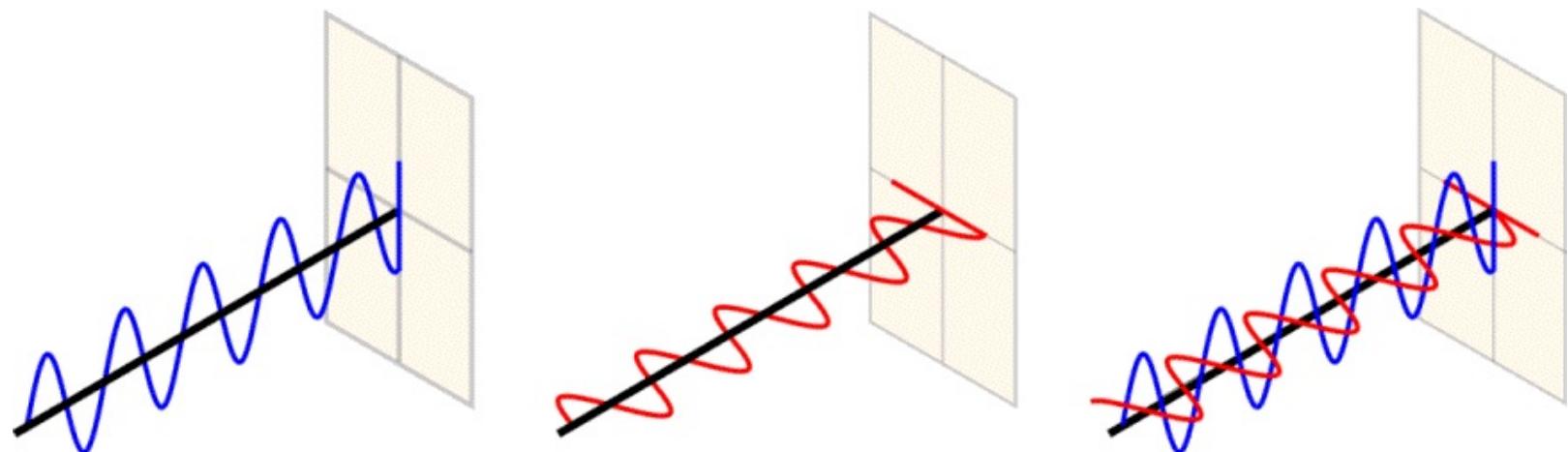
ANTENNA POLARIZATION

Radio signals can be transmit at different polarization orientations. A vertically polarized signal must be received with a vertically polarized antenna and a horizontally polarized signal must be received with a horizontally polarized antenna.

Polarization refers to the orientation of the signal. Below we show an image illustrating vertically, horizontally and circular polarized signals from left to right.

Notice how a circularly polarized signal is a vertically and horizontally polarized signal that are out of phase added together. Depending on the phase of the signal, a circularly polarized signal can be Right Hand Circularly Polarized (RHCP) or Left Hand Circularly Polarized (LHCP). Circularly polarized antennas can receive both horizontal and vertically polarized signals.

A great tutorial on antenna polarization can be found here <http://sv1bsx.50webs.com/antenna-pol/polarization.html>.



ANTENNA POSITIONING

Antennas work best when they are placed up as high as possible without obstructions. If an antenna is obstructed by for example a house, tree or hill, its reception from that direction will be greatly reduced. The usual place to mount an antenna is on the roof of your house using a mount. When mounting on the roof you must be weary of weatherproofing and grounding in case of lightning strikes.

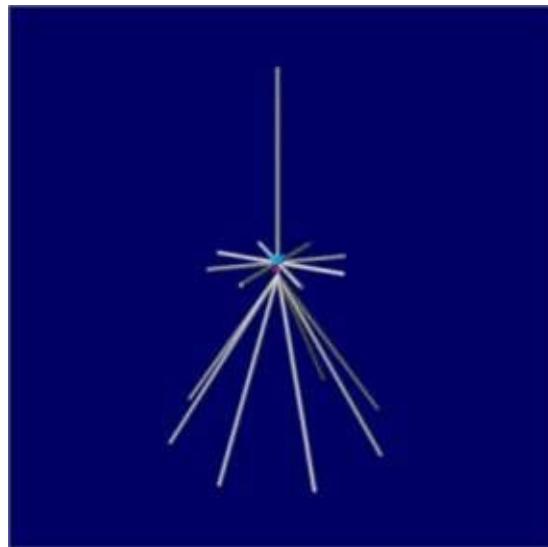
Antennas can also be mounted in the attic or roof space of many houses without significant reception degradation. Mounting in the attic also has the advantage of weatherproofing and negating lightning strike risks. The commonly used roof material asphalt shingles won't block RF signals significantly. However, metal roofs or roofs with concrete tiles with metal rebar or grids in them can degrade signals much more.

VHF/UHF EXAMPLE ANTENNAS

Here is an excellent guide on the construction of some of the antennas mentioned in this section http://files.radioscanner.ru/files/download/file311/practical_antenna_design.pdf.

The radiation pattern and VSWR images used below were created in the free software 4NEC2 which can be downloaded from <http://www.qsl.net/4nec2/>.

DISCONE (BROADBAND ANTENNA)

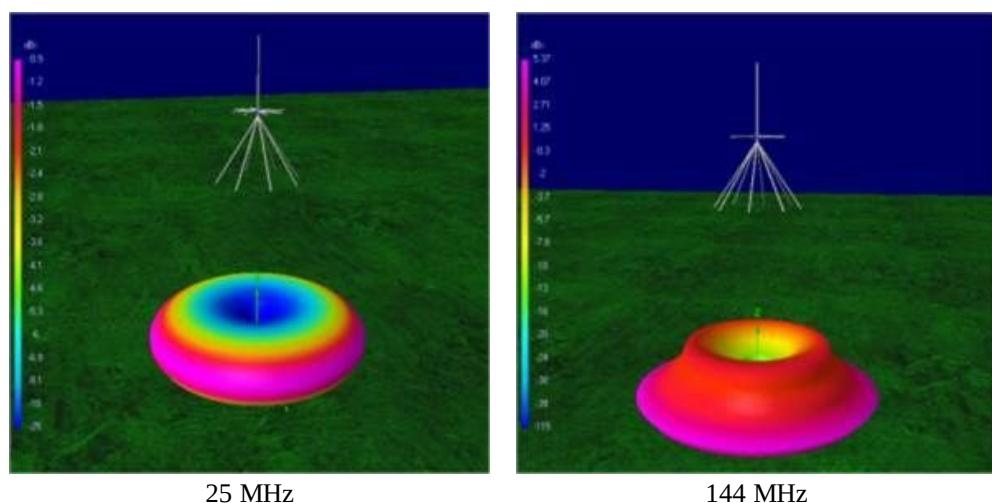


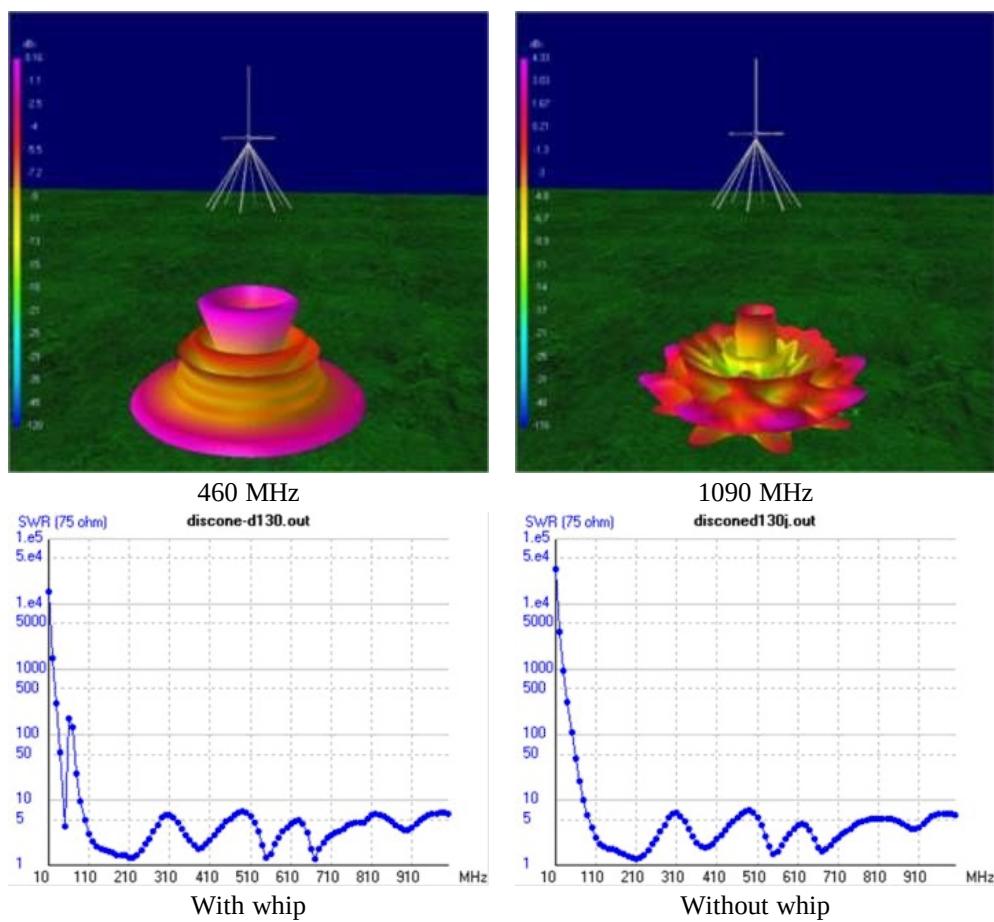
The Discone is typically recommended as the overall most useful antenna for the RTL-SDR. This is because a Discone has a very wide receivable bandwidth and can receive signals from almost all directions with directivity towards the horizon.

Commercially constructed discones can be found cheaply on Amazon (see our Buy RTL-SDR page at <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/>) for around \$50 USD.

In the 3D radiation pattern images below we show the patterns for a discone rated from 125 - 1300 MHz over various frequencies. The results show that the radiation pattern can vary significantly over different frequencies. At 1090 MHz there is significant ‘lobeing’, which just means that the radiation pattern becomes spiky or non smooth.

The VSWR also varies quite wildly, but remains usually below 10.





Here is an example of a home made discone <http://helix.air.net.au/index.php/d-i-y-discone-for-rtlsdr/> and here is a homemade build tutorial <http://www.instructables.com/id/Discone/>.

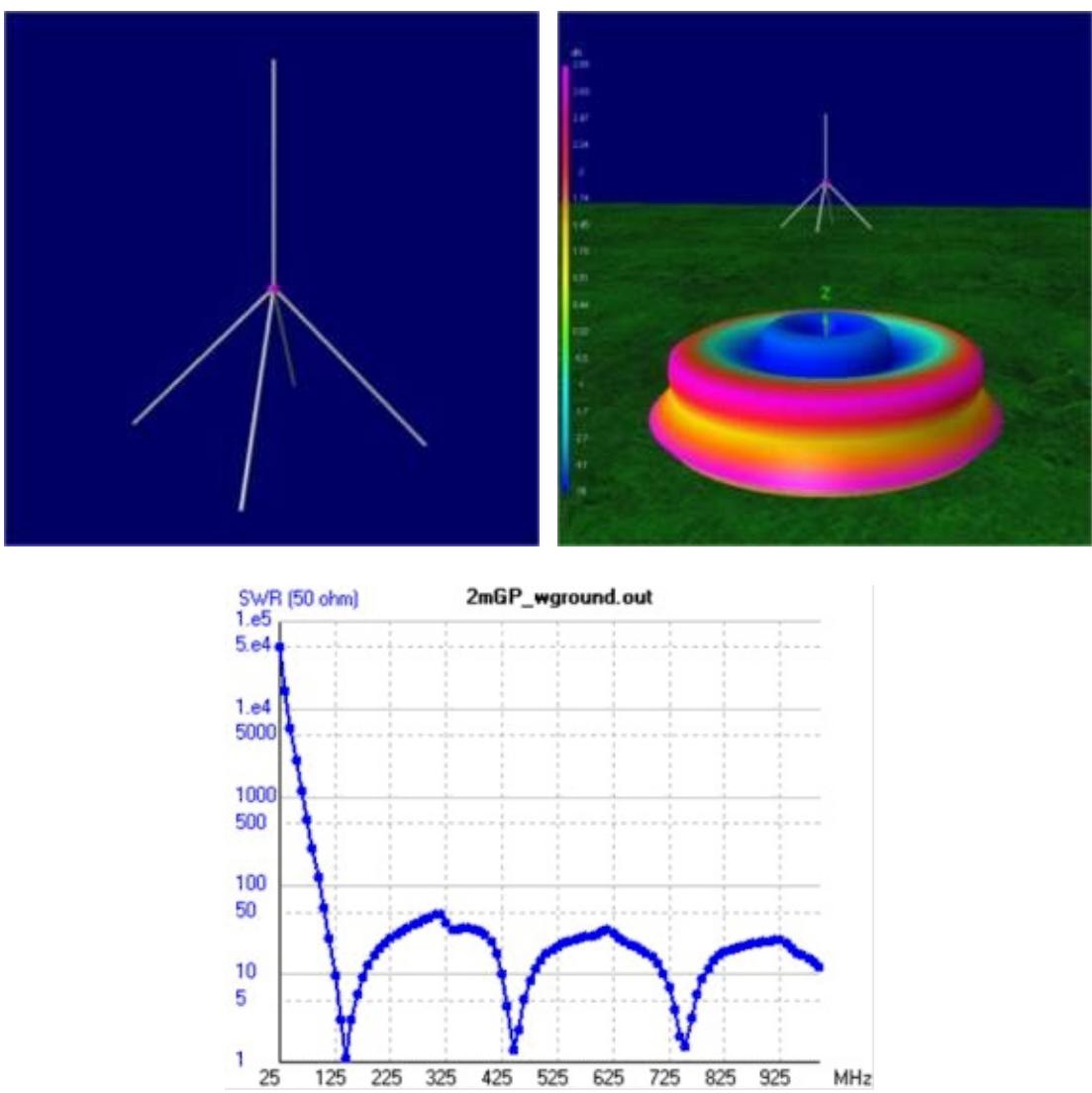
SCANTELLA (BROADBAND ANTENNA)

The scantenna is an antenna similar to the discone in that it has a very wide receivable bandwidth. Many people often state that the scantenna performs better than a discone. This is probably because the scantenna has greater gain out towards the horizon and is thus a better receiver for most common signal sources.

The most commonly bought scantenna has a frequency range of 30 - 1300 MHz. Beware that the scantenna is quite large measuring in at 144 x 19.5 x 8.6cm (56.8 x 7.7 x 3.4 inches).

See the RTL-SDR.com buy page <http://www rtl-sdr com/buy-rtl-sdr-dvb-t-dongles/> to buy a Scantenna.

¼ WAVE MONOPOLE GROUND PLANE



The $\frac{1}{4}$ wave ground plane is essentially a straight wire cut to $\frac{1}{4}$ wave length of the design frequency with several spokes coming out the bottom. The straight wire forms the antenna and the spokes are the ground plane. It is a vertically polarized antenna. Theoretically, a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave groundplane with good ground (enough radials) is equivalent to a dipole.

The radiation pattern directs most of it's gain out towards the horizon.

The VSWR of a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave ground plane is good at it's design frequency and at a few other higher frequencies. In our example antenna with design frequency of 145 MHz, the VSWR is minimum at 145 MHz and also at 445 MHz and 755 MHz.

Information on construction of an ADS-B $\frac{1}{4}$ wave ground plane antenna can be found at <http://www.atouk.com/wordpress/?wpdmact=process&did=Ni5ob3RsaW5r>.

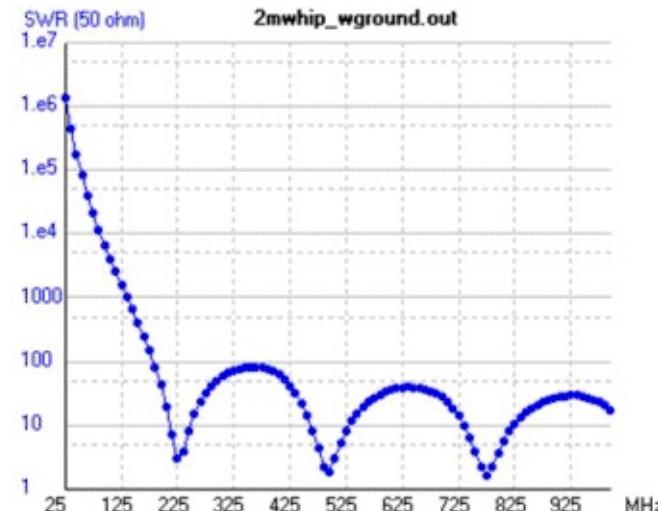
Here is another page showing the design of this antenna. http://ketil.com/la2dna/antennner/PMR446_ground_plane_antenna.htm

A calculator for calculating $\frac{1}{4}$ wave ground plane element lengths for specific frequencies can be found at <http://www.csgnetwork.com/antennagpcalc.html>.

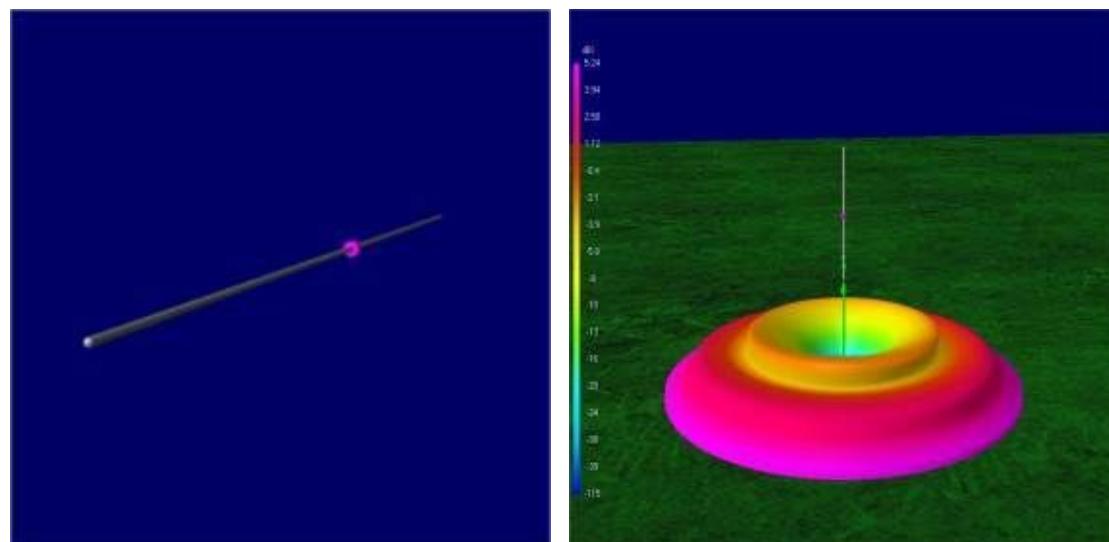
WHIP

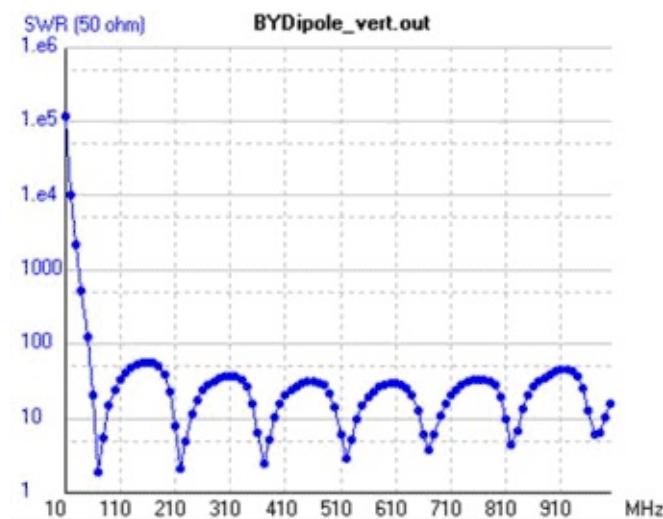
A whip antenna is simply a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave ground plane antenna without a proper ground plane. It is then just a wire that is $\frac{1}{4}$ the length of the design wavelength. A whip antenna will change the VSWR design frequency and cause the VSWR to not be as low as with a proper ground plane.

Whip antennas (such as the one shipped with the standard RTL-SDR) are usually designed with a magnetic base so that they can be placed on metallic objects such as car roofs to act as a ground plane.



DIPOLE





A dipole is essentially two wire elements pointing away from each other. The wires are not connected at the centre. One element connects to the centre coax and the other connects to the shield.

The dipole can be made horizontally or vertically polarized by placing it in the horizontal and vertical orientations respectively. The radiation pattern is in the direction perpendicular to the elements. A commonly found VHF dipole in everyday life is the bunny ears antennas which are common on some older TVs.

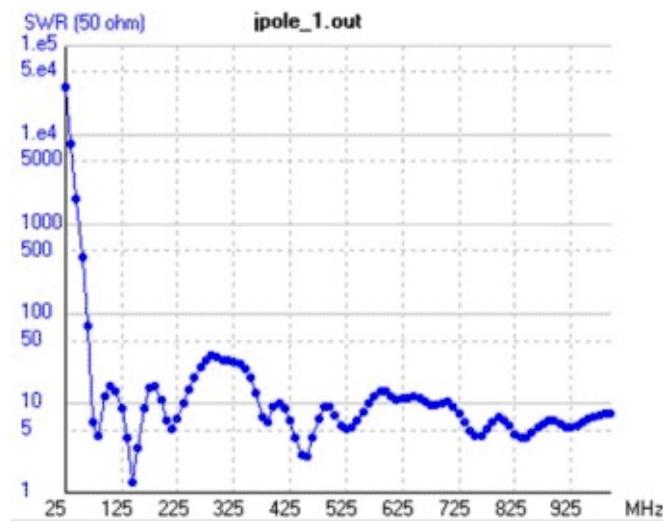
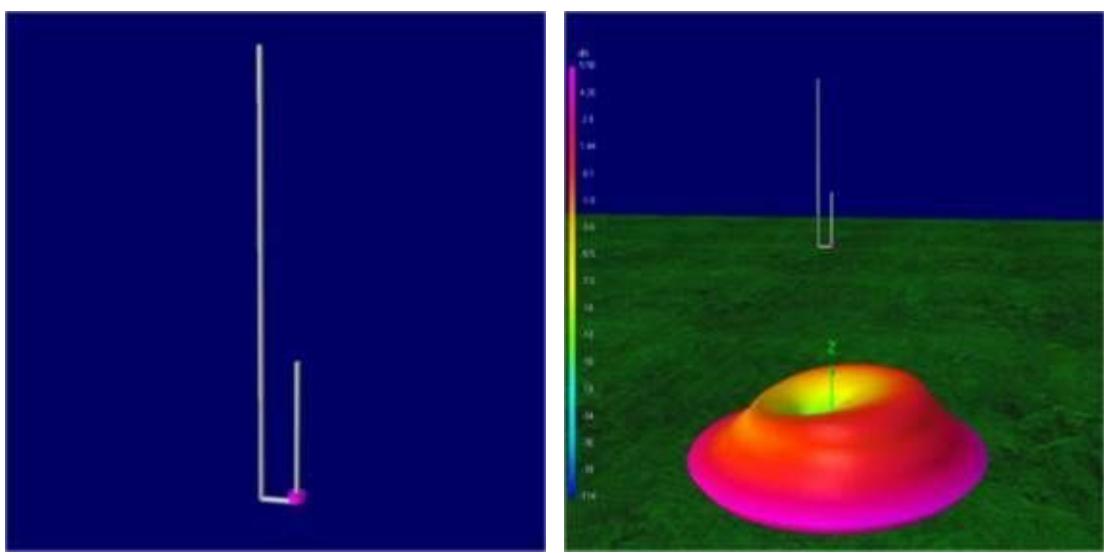
Compared to the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave groundplane the dipole has the exact same radiation pattern and gain. However, the disadvantage to a dipole is that it needs to be larger and it is more difficult to mount the feedline if using it vertically polarized. The feedline should run perpendicularly away from the dipole to avoid altering the radiation pattern.

More information about dipoles can be found at <http://www.radio-electronics.com/info/antennas/dipole/dipole.php>.

Here is a dipole length calculator <http://www.angelfire.com/mb/amandx/dipole.html>.

Information on a very simple ADS-B dipole can be found at <http://antirez.com/news/46>.

J-POLE / SLIM JIM



The J-pole antenna is named as such as it looks like the letter 'J'. These antennas usually have good gain at their intended frequency. An advantage to J-poles is that their impedance can be matched to the coaxial cable easily by moving the connection points up and down. A J-pole can give 6.5 dBi gain or more.

The J-pole in the example images shown above is designed for 145 MHz.

A J-Pole schematic and calculator can be found at <http://www.hamuniverse.com/jpole.html>.

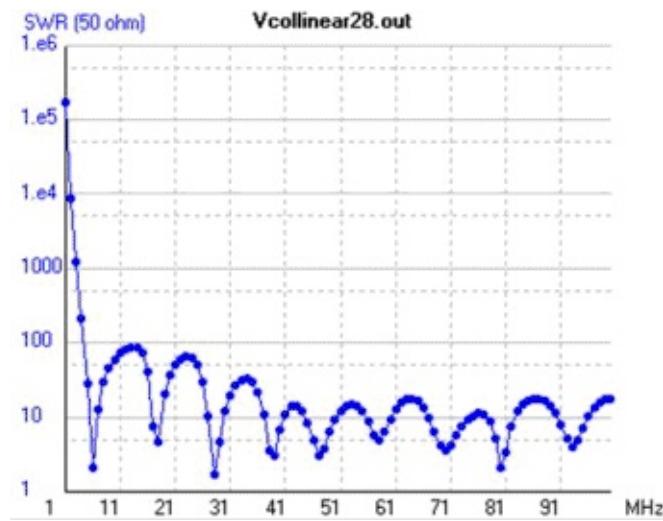
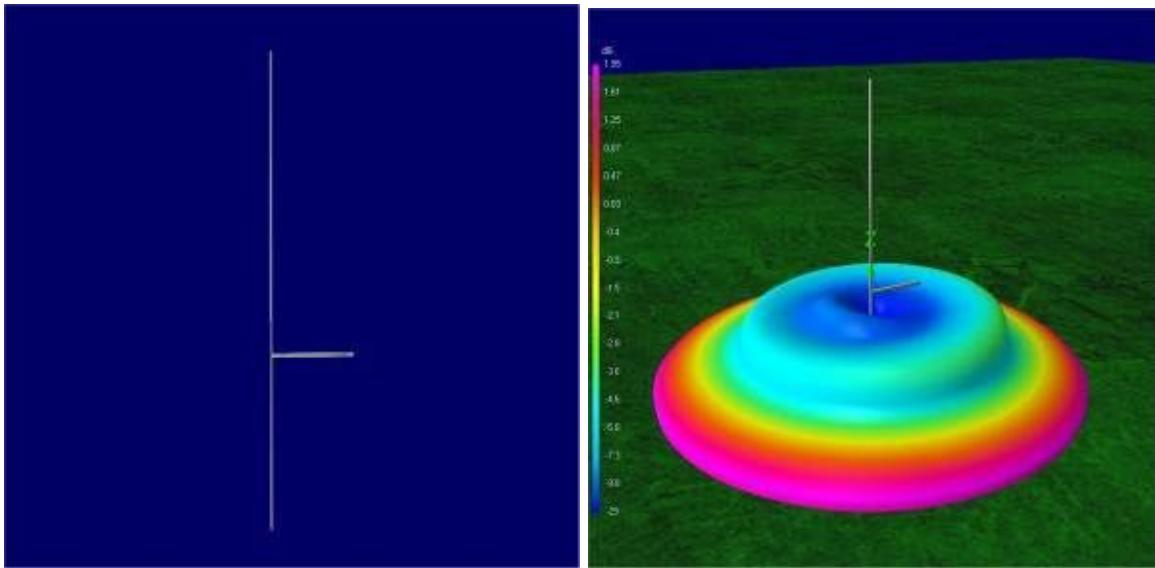
The slimjim is an antenna that is very similar to the J-Pole. Slim jims have a radiation pattern that favours signals coming from the horizon a little more and so are usually a better choice for most applications.

Slim jims can easily be constructed out of twin lead wire. Here is a tutorial example <http://www.g4aym.org.uk/projects/project3/page0.htm>

Here is a slim jim calculator http://www.m0ukd.com/Calculators/Slim_Jim/

And here an example of a Slim Jim cut for AIS <http://nmearouter.com/docs/ais/slimjim.jpg>

COLLINEAR



Collinear antennas can have very high gain directed towards the horizon. They are easily built out of coax cable, or copper wire. As they have high gain they also tend to have a theoretical narrow frequency range, though in practice they will receive well at most frequencies in the gain area. The more elements added to a collinear, the greater the gain will be and the flatter the radiation pattern will be. With enough elements the radiation pattern becomes disc like.

For ADS-B and most applications a collinear antenna with too many elements will likely yield poorer performance compared to one with less. This is because the radiation pattern will become far too flat.

Collinear antennas can easily be built out of coaxial cable. Coaxial collinears are sometimes referred to as CoCo antennas. For CoCo antennas we recommend around 4 to 6 elements as the maximum for ADS-B.

Collinear antennas work very well for ADS-B and AIS reception as well as terrestrial voice communications frequencies.

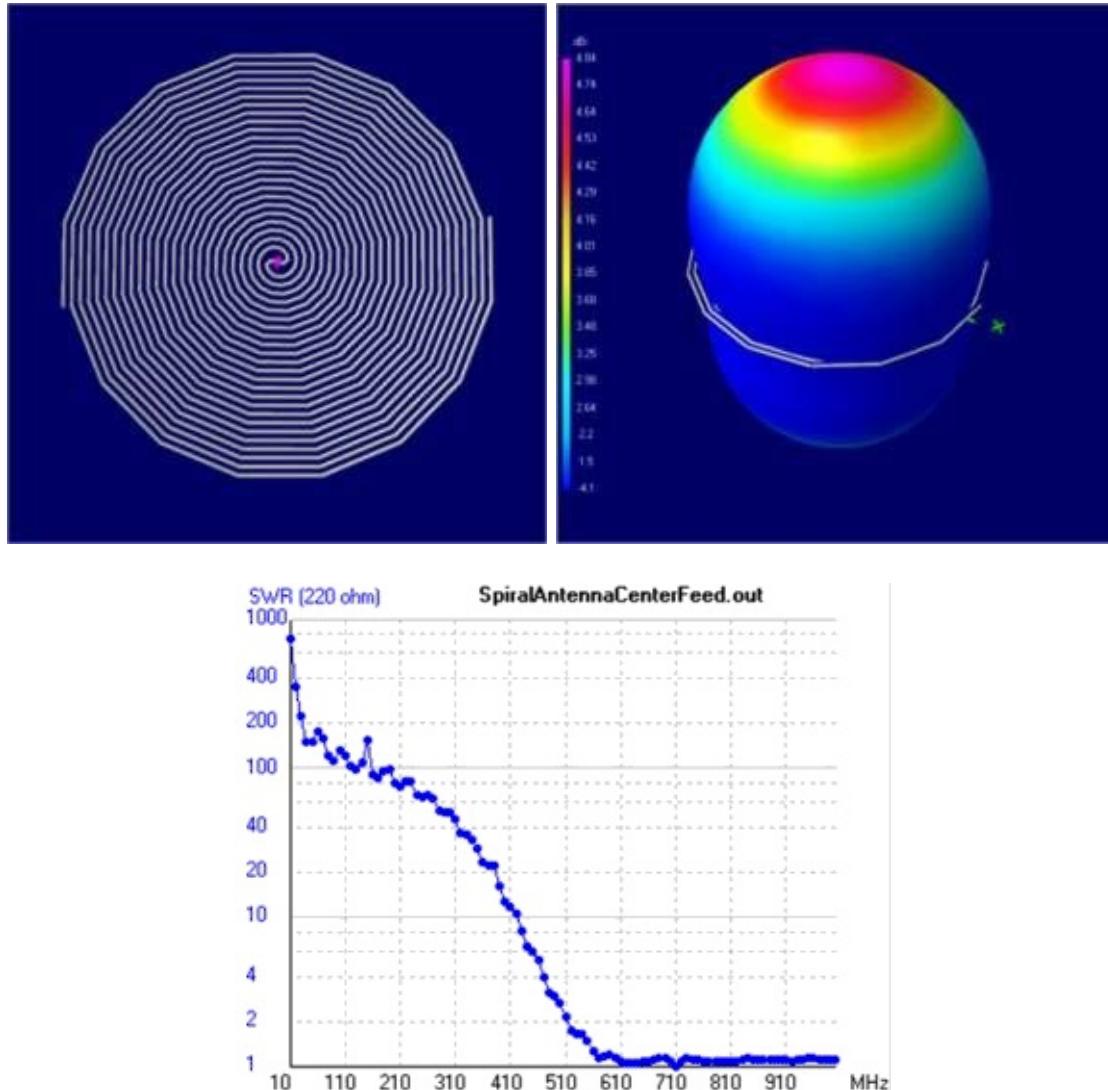
The antenna in the images shown above is designed for 28.8 MHz.

See here for information on constructing an ADS-B coaxial collinear <http://www.balarad.net/>. Here is a video showing the construction process of that antenna <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkUYdCPFXXs>.

See here for information on constructing a coaxial collinear for AIS
<http://nmearouter.com/docs/ais/aerial.html>

Here is a wire collinear for WiFi, but it's length's could be adapted for other frequencies
<http://martybugs.net/wireless/collinear.cgi> using the calculation they specify.

SPIRAL



Spiral antennas are extremely wideband antennas that are particularly suited for satellite reception such as for GPS. They are circularly polarized and the direction of polarization can be altered by turning the spiral over.

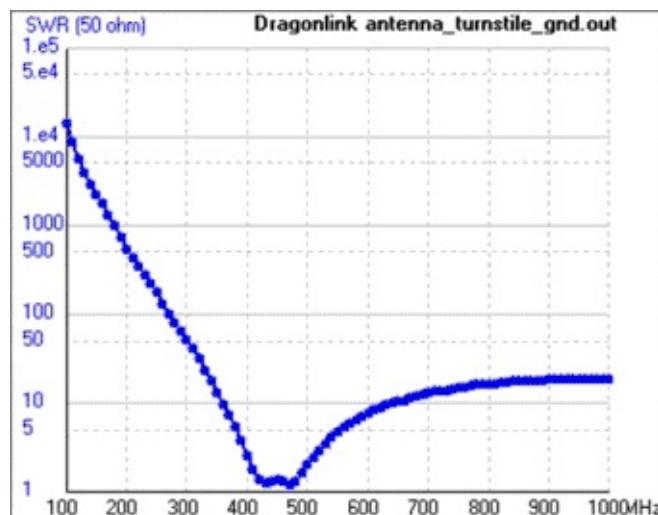
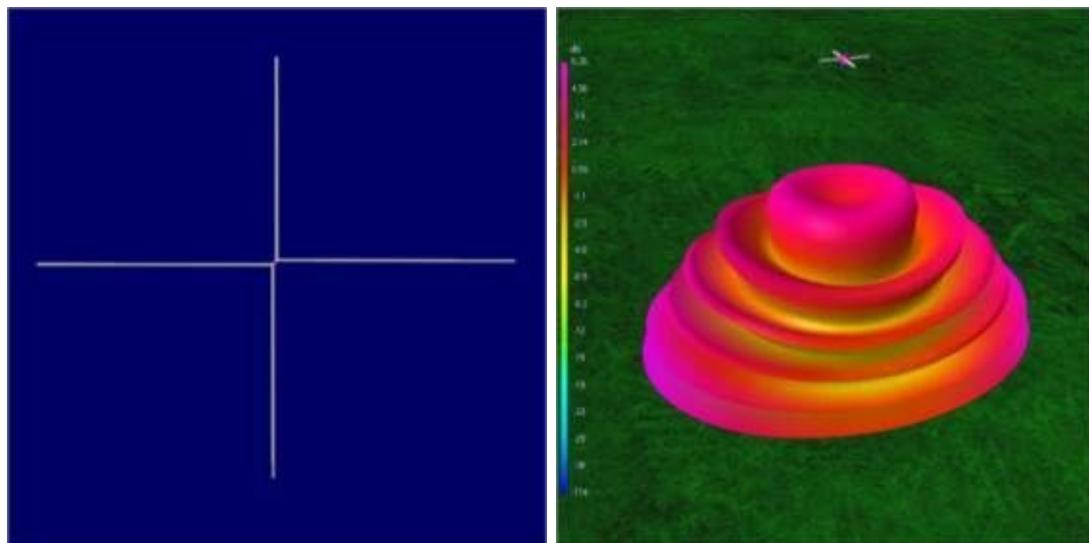
As these antennas are very wideband, their gain isn't that great.

These antennas can easily be built out of coaxial cable.

The antenna in the example images shown above is designed for 500 MHz and above.

More information about this type of antenna can be found at <http://www.antenna-theory.com/antennas/travelling/spiral.php>.

TURNSTILE / CROSS DIPOLE



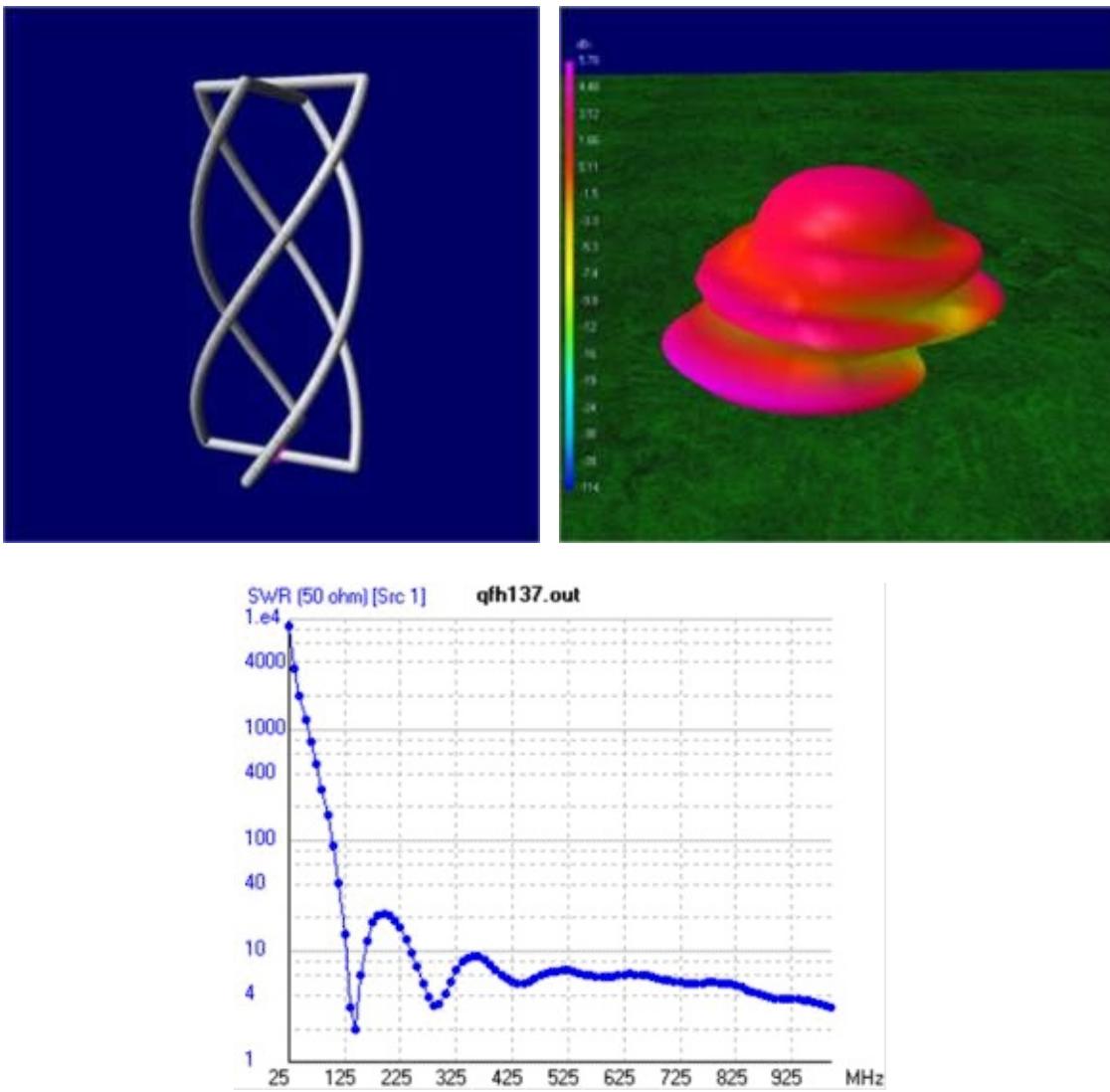
Turnstile antennas are circularly polarized antennas that are often used for FM reception, but can also be used for satellites due to their circular polarization. Turnstiles can operate in two modes, normal or axial. Normal mode creates a horizontally non-directional (omnidirectional) radiation pattern directed towards the horizon. In axial mode the turnstile gain is directed towards the sky. The radiation pattern shows the turnstile in axial mode. For satellites the axial mode turnstile is required.

This turnstile in the above example images has a design frequency of 450 MHz and is an axial mode design. The VSWR is near 1 at this frequency and quickly ramps up to high ratios at other frequencies.

Here is a turnstile build for NOAA satellites <http://umarca.blogspot.co.nz/2013/05/project-8-turnstile-antenna-for-weather.html>.

Here is a video tutorial showing how to build a simple turnstile out of wire for 433 MHz <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCypz0ZeDdo#t=201>.

QUADRIFILAR HELIX (QFH)



Quadrangular antennas are circularly polarized antennas that are best used for satellite reception. They tend to work better than turnstile antennas for this purpose especially with NOAA satellites. From the radiation pattern we can see that they have fewer null areas compared to a turnstile.

This QFH has a design frequency of 145 MHz. At this frequency it has good VSWR, but the VSWR remains decent at higher frequencies as well.

Here is a link which compares the Turnstile vs the QFH antenna. His results show that the QFH is slightly better. <http://www.satsignal.eu/wxsat/antennas/>

Here is a link for a QFH antenna for NOAA satellites:
http://forum.allaboutcircuits.com/blog_attachment.php?attachmentid=325&d=1389045274

A simple tutorial on creating a coax cable QFH can be found here:
<http://sdrformariners.blogspot.com/2013/08/weather-satellites-antennas.html>.

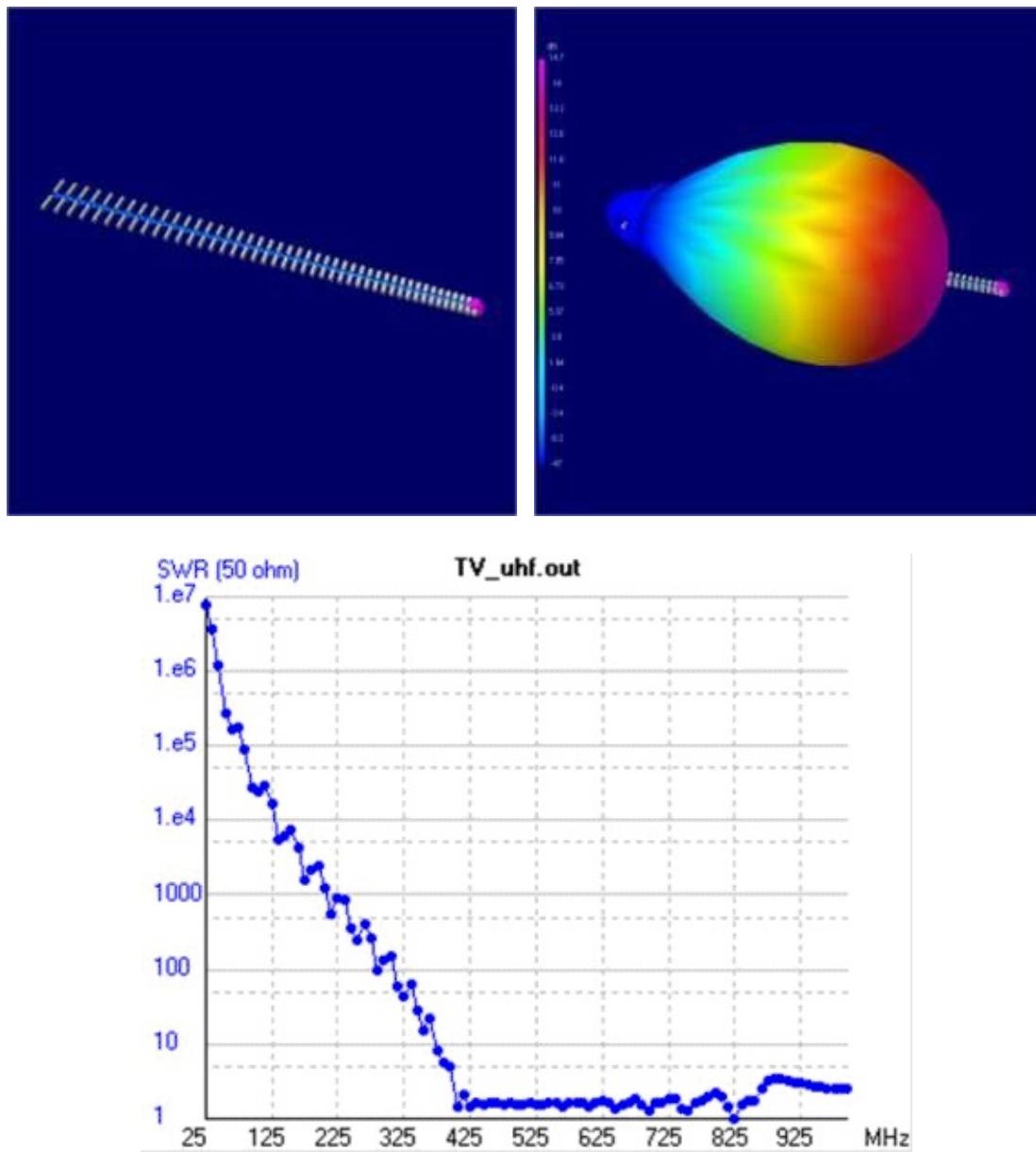
Here is another interesting build with copper pipe <http://abdallah.hiof.no/QFH/>.

ACTIVE GPS PATCH

Most active GPS antennas require DC power to be sent down the centre conductor of the coax. Be careful with this, DO NOT let DC power enter the RTL-SDR dongle or it will break.

To connect an active GPS antenna that needs in-line power, you will need to use a circuit called a Bias-T. See the [GPS tutorial section](#) above for information about bias-t's.

YAGI UDA



Yagi antennas are highly directional over a small bandwidth with very large potential gain. Their signal polarization is oriented in the same direction the orientation of the elements.

The example antenna in the above images is designed for 475 MHz.

Yagi's make good antennas for weak AIS signals. Here are some links to examples and tutorials for creating Yagi's for AIS. Remember that AIS signals are vertically polarized, so the Yagi must be oriented vertically. Here are some AIS Yagi construction webpages.

It is also possible to build circularly polarized Yagi's for satellite reception. Since Yagi's are so directional, you will need to either track the satellite by hand as it passes over head or build an automated tracking system. It is usually not too difficult to track a ~137 MHz satellite by hand. Circularly polarized antennas are also called Crossed-Yagi antennas.

PCB ADS-B ANTENNA

There have been some ADS-B antennas designed on PCB boards with LNA's built into the PCB.

For example see

<http://f5ann.pagesperso-orange.fr/PCBAntenna/index.html>

http://oshpark.com/shared_projects/5cOpKPP6.

These antennas can actually be purchased premade and nicely packaged from

<http://h2204566.stratoserver.net/SmartStore.NET/de/diapason-antenna-series-for-1090-mhz>.

HF ANTENNAS

LONG WIRE/RANDOM WIRE

A long wire antenna is simply a wire that is at least one wavelength long of the frequency you want to receive. For most HF frequencies, an antenna this long would be impossible practically as it would require too much space. The Random Wire antenna is an alternative and is quite literally a random length of insulated wire strung up as high and as long as you can physically get it. This is the simplest antenna and is can be quite effective for what it is.

The radiation pattern of a random wire antenna is quite unpredictable. Therefore this antenna may require a bit of experimentation with location and lengths to get the best performance.

To make this antenna simply connect a coax cable to the antenna input of your upconverter or direct sampling modded RTL-SDR. Run the coax to the location at which your random wire antenna will start. Now connect the random wire antenna to the centre wire of the coaxial cable.

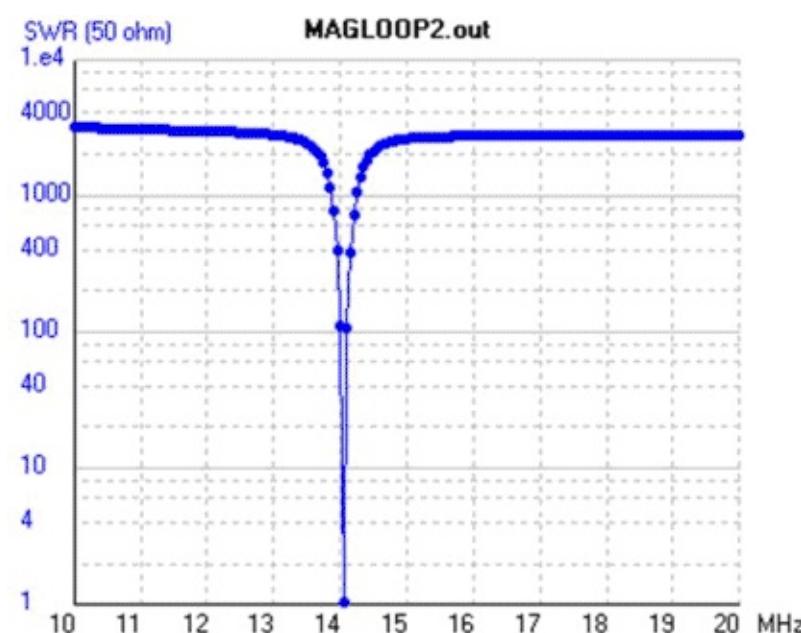
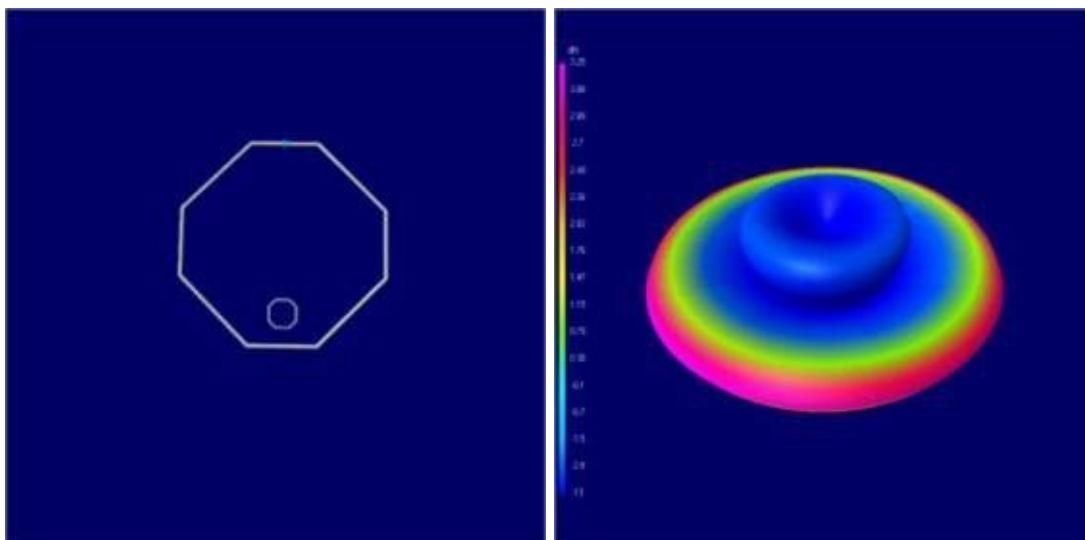
To significantly decrease the amount of noise, connect the shield part of the coaxial cable to a ground. A good ground is a cold water pipe. Avoid using the electrical ground as it 1) could be dangerous and 2) is not the best ground due to electrical interference. If you don't have a good ground accessible, an alternative is to use a counterpoise, which is essentially just a long wire thrown on the ground.

To further improve performance you will need to make a 9:1 "unun" impedance transformer. This is because the impedance of a long wire antenna is 450 Ohms (note the impedance actually varies across

different frequencies and 450 ohms is just an overall average). So to match it with the coax cable and RTL-SDRs antenna input impedance of 75 Ohms, the impedance of the long wire antenna need to be reduced by a factor of about 9, which will take it down to 50 Ohms. A 50 and 75 ohm mismatch is insignificant.

This website shows a good tutorial on creating a 9:1 unun http://www.m0ukd.com/Magnetic_Long_Wire_UnUn/ and this PDF file shows detailed construction information for a similar 9:1 unun http://www.earchi.org/92011endfedfiles/Endfed6_40.pdf. Here is another PDF that comprehensively discusses ununs <http://setxac.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/9-to-1-Balun-for-End-Fed-Antenna.pdf>. An even better improvement is to connect an antenna tuner after the 9:1 unun to accurately tune the antenna for the interested frequency, however this will be costly if you do not already own an antenna tuner.

MAGNETIC LOOP



The magnetic loop antenna is probably the best antenna for HF that can be used with the RTL-SDR.

This is because the magnetic loop is not only an antenna, but it also acts as a preselector. This means that the magnetic loop can be very hard to tune as you need to tune to the frequency you want to listen to on the computer and then tune a variable capacitor on the antenna itself to tune it to the correct frequency as well.

The advantage is that the magnetic loop will filter out any interference on signals you aren't tuned to. The disadvantage is that the loop will only work for a small band of frequencies depending on your variable capacitor and loop size. Also, the lower the frequency you are interested in, the larger and more unwieldy the loop will become.

In the radiation pattern pictures above the magnetic loop is tuned for 14 MHz. Notice how the SWR is very narrow around 14 MHz.

When constructing a magnetic loop antenna for receiving only, large copper pipes are not required. Most internet tutorials for magnetic loops focus on transmitting loops which need thick pipe and large variable air gap capacitors to support the high transmit voltages. Building a receive only magnetic loop is the same as building one that transmits, but a receive only loop can be built out of thinner material such as coaxial cable and smaller cheaper variable capacitors.

Here is a useful magnetic loop calculator
http://www.66pacific.com/calculators/small_tx_loop_calc.aspx.

Here is a tutorial for magnetic loop construction http://www.cvarc.org/new-wp/download/technical/magnetic_loop_antenna.pdf.

Here is an example of a very simply magnetic loop built out of coaxial cable. This one does not even require a tuning capacitor.

<http://www.carc.org.uk/downloads/A%20Coaxial%20Magnetic%20Loop%20for%207MHz.pdf>.

APPENDIX A: AUDIO PIPING

Many applications of the RTL-SDR require that the audio from an SDR receiver such as SDR# be “piped” into decoding software. Piping is simply a way to allow the decoding program to hear the output audio produced by the SDR receiver.

There are several methods to pipe audio in Windows, below we show how to enable the Stereo Mix, VB Cable and Virtual Audio Cable options.

STEREO MIX

The simplest method is to use the Windows Stereo Mix option. With stereo mix, the decoding program will simply take the audio that is being sent to your speakers.

1. Right click the speaker icon in your task bar and click on “Recording devices”.



2. Right click anywhere in the window that pops up and ensure that “Show Disabled Devices” and “Show Disconnected Devices” are both checked.



3. Find the “Stereo Mix” option, right click it and select Enable.



4. If you have more than one recording device, such as a microphone, or you have also installed virtual audio cable or VB Cable make sure to set stereo mix to the default device. Many programs will select the default device only when looking for an audio source. Note that if you

want to use virtual audio cable as the default device again, you will need to set it back to the default device.



Now stereo mix is enabled and ready to use! Any audio coming through your speakers will also be piped to stereo mix which can be selected as an audio piping source in most programs that require one.

If stereo mix is not showing up in the recording properties window, try updating your sound card drivers.

VB CABLE

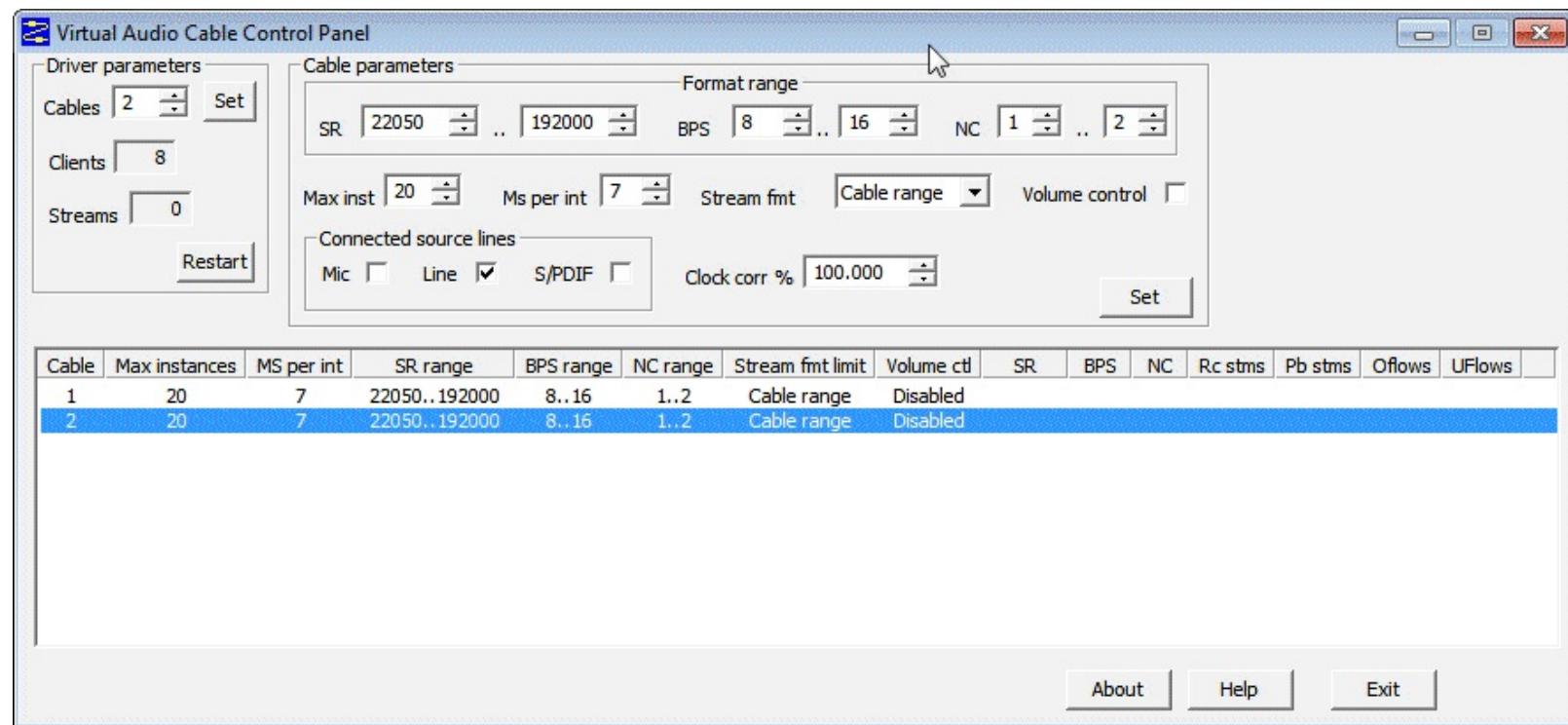
VB Cable is free software that can be downloaded from <http://vb-audio.pagesperso-orange.fr/Cable/>. VB Cable installs a new audio device that acts in a similar way to stereo mix. The advantage with a program like VB Cable over stereo mix is that the audio will not play through your speakers. This is desired and required in applications like digital voice decoding, where it is desired to listen to only the decoded voice and not the noise of the digital signal. Additionally, if stereo mix were used, the decoded voice would be piped back into the decoder, causing interference to the digital signal.

The disadvantage to VB Cable is that unlike VAC (Below), there is no options screen or ability to create cable repeaters.

Note that when installing VB Cable you may need to run the installer as administrator.

VIRTUAL AUDIO CABLE

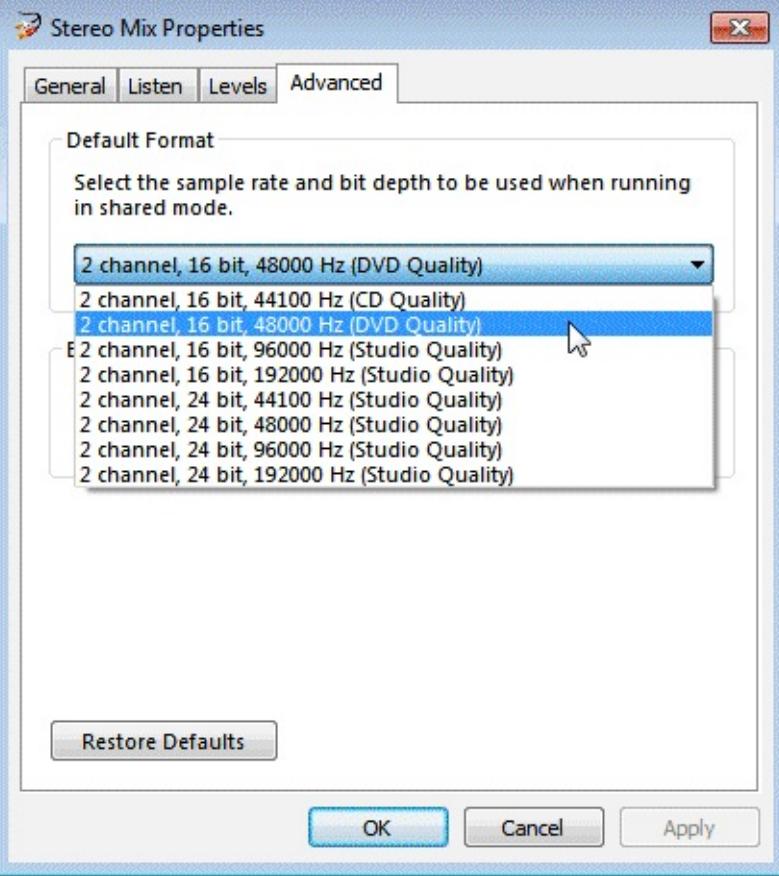
Virtual Audio Cable is another tool similar to VB Cable but has a cost of \$25-\$50. It can be downloaded from <http://software.muzychenko.net/eng/vac.htm>. They have a trial version which supports up to three cables, but it also introduces a watermark voice that periodically says “Trial Version” which might corrupt some signals. However, most digital signals are tolerant to this kind of interference and should work fine with the watermark.



SETTING THE SAMPLE RATE

For some applications and decoding programs it is essential to correctly set the audio sample rate. To do this use the following steps.

1. Right click the speaker icon in your task bar and click on “Recording devices”.
2. Right click on your audio piping device (eg stereo mix, VB Cable, VAC) and select properties.
3. Go to the Advanced Tab.
4. Choose the sample rate your decoding software requires. Do this for both the Playback and Recording devices if necessary.



APPENDIX B: RADIO BASICS

This section will give a brief overview of radio for those just getting into the hobby with no scientific or engineering background in the subject.

In a simple form, radio waves can be thought of as a form of invisible light. An analogy is as follows. Ships in the old days used to use signal lights to send messages to and from the land and other ships. Radio can be thought of as using an invisible light to do the same thing.

Various frequencies can correspond to different colours. For example, we could have two people using a signal light sending a message with a green colour and one sending a message with a red colour. Because the colors are different we would be able to tell that they are two different messages from two different people. Radio waves work in the same way. One station will transmit on one frequency and another will transmit on a different frequency.

Frequencies are measured in Hertz (Hz). Radio waves start in the kilohertz (kHz), and go up to the Megahertz (MHz) and Gigahertz (GHz) frequencies. The frequency ranges are divided up into groups known as low frequency (LF), medium frequency (MF), high frequency (HF), very high frequency (VHF) and ultra high frequency (UHF). Their ranges are shown below.

- LF: 0 kHz - 300 kHz
- MF: 300 kHz—3 MHz
- HF: 3 MHz—30 MHz
- VHF: 30 MHz—300 MHz
- UHF: 300 MHz—3 GHz

The RTL-SDR receives mainly on the VHF and UHF frequencies, but some tuners like the R820T can receive the upper end of the HF spectrum. Amateur radio occurs on the HF frequencies and AM broadcast radio is on the MF frequencies.

PROPAGATION

Radio waves travel in a straight line, just like light does. However, note that light does bounce around. A light shone at a single wall will still illuminate an entire room. Radio waves also bounce and tend to bounce around a lot more than light. This allows signals to be received indirectly.

The LF/MF and HF band radio waves tend to bounce around quite a lot and can even bounce off the atmosphere itself. This allows these frequencies to travel very long distances allowing them to be received even across the globe. Sometimes ham radio enthusiasts talk about the radio propagation

conditions. Depending on the state of the atmosphere and factors such as solar activity, HF frequencies can propagate better or worse.

VHF signals tend to bounce a lot less and they are known as ‘line of sight’ frequencies. This means the receiving antenna must have a good unobstructed straight line between the transmitter and antenna. UHF signals are even more ‘line of sight’.

BANDWIDTH

When we talk about signal bandwidth we are talking about the size of the chunk of frequency the signal takes up. For example, an AM broadcast signal takes up 12.5 kHz of bandwidth. So an AM signal at a frequency of 500 kHz would span between 493.75 kHz and 506.25 kHz.

The larger the bandwidth, the more information that can be transmitted. For digital signals this means faster more robust data transmissions and for analogue voice this means higher quality voice.

MODES

There are several methods that can be used to transmit information over radio. The simplest is Amplitude Modulation (AM). In this mode information is encoded into the amplitude of the signal itself. In Frequency Modulation (FM) the information is encoded into a varying frequency within the bandwidth. Broadcast radio uses Wideband FM (WFM), which is simply FM with a big bandwidth of about 200 kHz. Walkie talkies and other similar voice communications use narrowband FM (NFM), which is FM with a small bandwidth of about 12.5 kHz.

Single side band modes such as Lower Sideband (LSB) and Upper Sideband (USB) are modes like AM, but only use half the bandwidth of a corresponding AM signal. Transmitting on SSB requires less bandwidth and less transmission power. The disadvantage is that it requires finer tuning to get a signal that sounds right. Data modes on HF are often transmitted with USB signals.

DECIBELS (DB) TO TIMES

Decibels can be a little confusing for those unaccustomed to it. Decibels (dB) are used to measure the intensity of a signal. The higher the dB value, the stronger the signal. Sometimes we say things like “the LNA amplifies the signal by 20 dB”, or “the coax cable attenuates the signal by 3 dB”. A 20 dB increase in signal means that the signal is increased by 100x. A 3 dB loss means that the signal is decreased by 2x.

Engineers like to use decibels instead of times because it allows them to represent massive ranges in numbers that are much more manageable.

The formula to convert decibels to times is as follows, where X is the value in decibels.

$$\text{ratio} = 10 ^ {(X / 10)}$$

To convert to decibels from a ratio or unit use

$$\text{power (dB)} = 10 * \log(\text{ratio})$$

Here is a table converting decibels to ‘times’.

Decibels (dB)	Ratio
30	1000
20	100
10	10
9	8
8	6.31
7	5.01
6	4
5	3.16
4	2.51
3	2
2	1.58
1	1.26
0	1
-3	0.5
-10	0.1
-20	0.01
-30	0.001
-40	0.0001
-50	0.00001

Decibels must be measured with respect to a unit. It is useful to measure it with respect to power in watts (dBW) or milliwatts (dBm). As an example, we might have a signal that has a power of 0.000001mW just before the antenna. This corresponds to -90 dBW or -60 dBm. Our example antenna has a 3 dBi gain in the direction that the signal came from. Then we pass it through an 20dB LNA, loose 5 dB in the coax and then amplify again at the dongle by a further 20dB. Our total signal strength is then given by.

$$-60 \text{ dBm} + 3 \text{ dBi} + 20 \text{ dB} - 5 \text{ dB} + 20 \text{ dB} = -22 \text{ dBm}$$

In amateur radio a signal said to be at S9 (good reception) is a signal that is -73 dBm strong.

A good video for learning more about decibels can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?>

[v=1mulRI-EZ80.](#)

APPENDIX C: MULTIMODE DECODERS

LIST

Sorcerer: CW, ACARS, ARQ-E, ASYNC FSK, AX.25 HF, AX.25 VHF, AX.25 9600Bd, CIS-11, Cosmos Navdata, EFR, GTOR, GlobeWireless FSK, IRA-ARQ, ITA2 FSK, IVSU, LINEA SITOR-A, LINEA SITOR-B, M823 Differential GPS, MD-674 ASYNC, Pactor I, Sitor-A, Sitor-B, STANAG 4481, SYNC FSK, CIS MFSK-16, CIS MFSK-20, Coquelet 8, Coquelet 13, Oivia, Piccolo MK6, ARINC 635, GlobeWireless PSK, HAM BPSK/QPSK Modes, MIL-STD 188-110A, MIL-STD 188-110A App. A, MIL-STD 188-110B, Pactor-II, Pactor-III, Stanag 4285, Stanag 4529, ALIS, BARRETT Selcall, Codan CALM ChirpCall, CODAN Selcall, CV-786, Datron S3, GMDSS HF DSC, GMDSS VHF DSC, HARRIS RF-3560, JENAL/SCHUEMPERLIN SC2 BARRETT, JENAL/SCHUEMPERLIN SC2 CODAN, JENAL/SCHUEMPERLIN SC3 BARRETT, JENAL/SCHUEMPERLIN SC3 CODAN, MIL-STD 188-141A ALE, Motorola MDC-1200, NECODE 321ARX Selcall, NECODE 322ARX Selcall, QMAC, RSX.25, SGC BARRETT, SGC CODAN, SPECTRATEK SR-3 BARRETT, THALES HF950, VERTEX, WA2 Selcall, Tone SELCALLS (EIA, EEA, ZVEI1, ZVEI2, ZVEI3, PZVEI, DZVEI, PDZVEI, PDZVEI, NATEL, EURO, MODAT, CCITT, VDEW, CCIR1, CCIR7, PCCIR, CTCSS, DTMF, ICAO), WeFax.

Rivet: CCIR493-4, CIS36-50 (BEE), CROWD36 Burst, CROWD36 Message, FSK200/500 Null Message, FSK200/500 with Message, FSK200/1000, GW FSK (100 Baud) Ship Transmission, GW FSK (100 Baud) Shore Side Transmission, FSK (75 baud 850 Hz shift) KG84, XPA, XPA2.

MultimonNG: POCSAG512, POCSAG1200, POSCAG2400, EAS, UFSK1200, CLIPFSK, AFSK1200, AFSK2400, AFSK2400_2, AFK2400_3, HAPN4800, FSK9600, DTMF, ZVEI1, ZVEI2, ZVEI3, DZVEI, PZVEI, EEA, EIA, CCIR, MORSE_CW.

Flldigi: Contestia, CW, DominoEX, Hellschreiber, MFSK, MT63, NAVTEX, SITOR-B, Olivia, PSK - BPSK, BPSKR, QPSK, Multi-Channel Modems, RTTY, Thor, Throb, TUNE, WEFAK.

MultiPSK: BPSK, QPSK, PSKAM, Packet + APRS, RTTY, ThrobX, Throb, PAX/PAX2, DTMF, FM HELL, PSK H, FEC31, CHIP, PSK220F, Amtor FEC-Navtex, LENTUS, MFSK + PIC, JT65, FELD HELL, PSK10, PSK63F, CW, CCW, Pactor1, MFSK8, OLIVIA, HELL 80, ALE400, FAX, MT63, DIGISSTV, QRSS, ASCII, DoF, THOR, DominoEX, Contestia, RTTYM, 141A (ALE), SSTV, SITORA, SELCAL. ARQ-E(3), POCSAG, FM/RDS, GMDSS, 110A, IEC 870-5, AIS, EPIRB, 1382, DGPS, 4285, HFDL, BIIS, VDL2, ACARS (VHF), SYNOP/SHIP, COQUELET, NWR (SAME), Amtor ARQ.

MixW: BPSK31, QPSK31, FSK31, RTTY, Packet, Pactor, Amtor, MFSK, Throb, MT63, Hellschreiber, Fax, SSTV.

Sigmira: HFDL, PSK31, FSK, SITOR-B, CW, STANAG 4285, Japanese Navy Slot Machine (JSM).

PDW: POCSAG/FLEX, ACARS, MOBITEX, ERMES

SondeMonitor: RS92SGP, Digital RS92AGP, Analog RS80, Analog 92KL, Meteomodem M2K2, Graw DFM-06, Meteolabor SRS-C32.

LAST WORDS

WHERE TO GET MORE HELP

The RTL-SDR community is growing larger every day and there are many people who are willing to help you out online. The largest community of general RTL-SDR users is over on www.reddit.com/r/rtlsdr. There are also good communities on facebook, check out our RTL-SDR Blog page and the RTL-SDR (Closed Group) group.

Our RTL-SDR.com Forum: <http://www rtl-sdr com/forum/>

For discussion about SDR# there is an SDR# Yahoo!mailing list forum over on <https://uk.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/SDRSharp/info>.

The most active RTL-SDR Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rtlsdrdongle/>

RTL-SDR Google Group: <https://plus.google.com/communities/115515752664095602088>

SDR# Wiki: <http://sdrsharp.pbworks.com/w/page/62589136/FrontPage>

SDR Hak5 Forum: <https://forums.hak5.org/index.php?/forum/81-sdr-software-defined-radio/>

RadioReference.com SDR Forum: <http://forums.radioreference.com/software-defined-radio/>

There is an active RTL-SDR chat channel on IRC: <http://webchat.freenode.net/?channels=##rtlsdr>

RTL-SDR Forum for ADS-B: <http://radarspotting.com/forum/index.php/board,51.0.html>

ERRATA UPDATES

Edition 1.1 - 20 May 2014

- Added Errata Updates section.
- Fixed typo in the [SDR# Setup Guide Radio Tab](#). 9 kHz should be 9 MHz. Thanks David!
- Fixed CB Radio Frequency Range in [General Frequency Guide](#). Thanks Daivd!
- Fixed ATIS Frequency Range in [General Frequency Guide](#).
- Fixed grammar in title.

Edition 1 - 16 May 2014

- Release

LEGAL STUFF

The contents of this book are intended for educational purposes only. In some countries and regions reception of signals mentioned in this book may not be legal. We take no responsibility for any illegal actions performed using the instructions in this book. Please respect your local laws.

Furthermore, we do not condone transmission of any radio signal with a transmit capable radio unless you are licenced to do so.