
Owl VHF

High performance radio transceiver
Manual for firmware 0.4.4
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 Skagmo
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1 Getting started

The board layout is shown below. The minimum connections are a 50 ohm antenna to the ANT connector, 9-16 VDC power supply between V+ and G on the MAIN connector, as well as RS-232 communication (38400 baud 8N1 as default) on MAIN connector (Port 0). See chapter 6.4 on page 22 for details on how to build a basic cable.

Two additional serial ports are available on the EXPANSION connector, but these operate at 3.3 V and not +/- 12 V as the RS-232-level port 0.

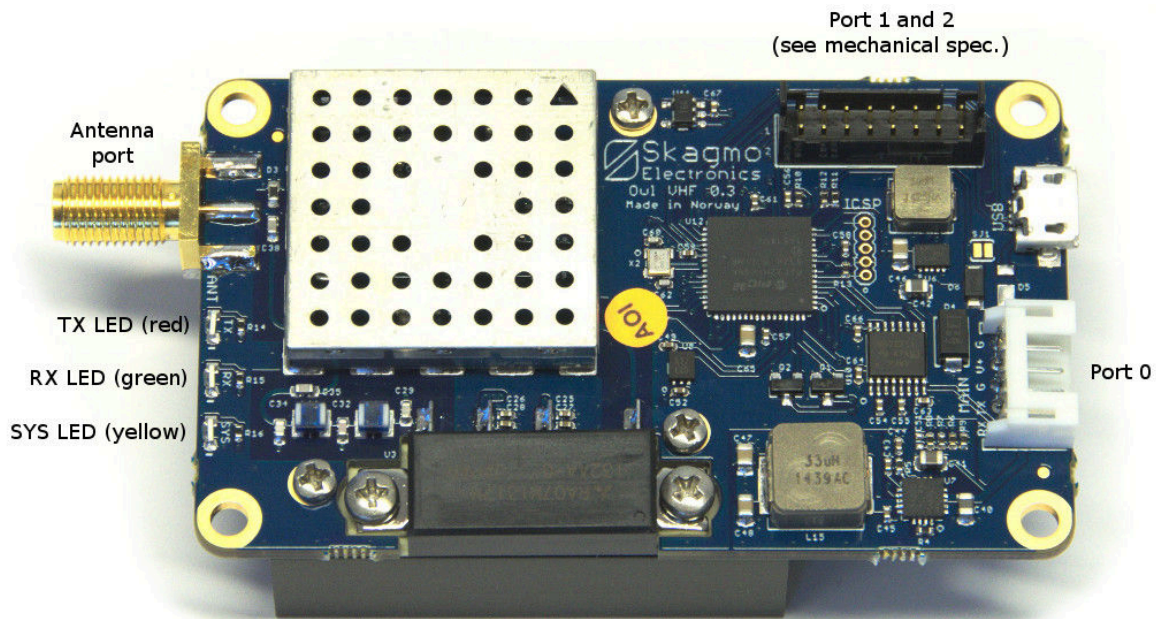


Figure 1: Board layout

When you start the Owl, its SYS LED will light solid for 3 seconds then typically start blinking patterns, indicating a successful startup.

Table 1: SYS LED pattern description (yellow LED)

Blinking pattern	Description
No light	Standby (receiver off, but radio is ready to transmit)
One 0.1s blink	Receiver on
Two 0.1s blinks	Local time valid (TDMA can be used)
Three 0.1s blinks	Connected GPS/GNSS has valid time fix
Continuously on	Bootloader waiting for connection
0.5s on, 0.5s off	Bootloader failed to start application

1.1 Configuration example

After startup, a command line interface is available on port 0 as default. You will need a computer running a serial terminal at this point. In Windows, try PuTTY. For full details, see the separate chapter regarding the menu system, but for now let's try some commands to send some FM-modulated voice samples:

Please note the following conventions:

Text	Command sent to radio
Text	Command from radio
[enter]	Carriage return, line feed or both
[crlf]	Carriage return and line feed
[tab]	Tabulator character
[space]	Space character
[ctrl]+C	Hold Control and press C

freq 14550000[enter]	Set frequency to 145.5 MHz
freq 145550000 ok[crlf]	Radio confirms new frequency
mode voice[enter]	Set radio mode to voice
mode voice ok[crlf]	
access csma[enter]	Make the radio consider the channel as free when RSSI is low
access csma ok[crlf]	
port0 text[enter]	Set serial port packet protocol on port 0 to text
port0 text ok[crlf]	
set[enter]	Apply port settings (serial port will now accept text data)
123[enter]	FM voice is now transmitted at 145.5 MHz (TX LED is lighting up)
[ctrl]+C	Exit text packer and go back to command input

2 Bootloader (firmware upgrade and factory reset)

The Owl comes with a built in bootloader for upgrading the firmware through port 0. Software can be downloaded from skagmoelectronics.com to load new firmware. This comes in three variants as described in table 2.

After connecting power to the Owl, the yellow SYS LED is constantly lit. This means the Owl is ready to connect to the bootloader on port 0. If no bootloader connects within three seconds, the Owl will do a self check and boot the radio firmware. To do a firmware upgrade, start the GUI-uploader, select a firmware file (.bin-extension) and serial port. Click Connect, then apply power to the Owl. The program should immediately connect and make the Owl ready to receive an update within the three second timeout. Click Flash to start the upgrade process, and finally click Run app. to start the new application. If you somehow lock yourself out from the command system on the Owl, you can restore the factory settings by sending a simple command. You will not use the bootloader application for this. This is done by sending exactly three plus-characters (“+++”) to the bootloader at 115200 baud within the three second timeout after powering on the Owl. A message will be sent back to the terminal acknowledging the reset.

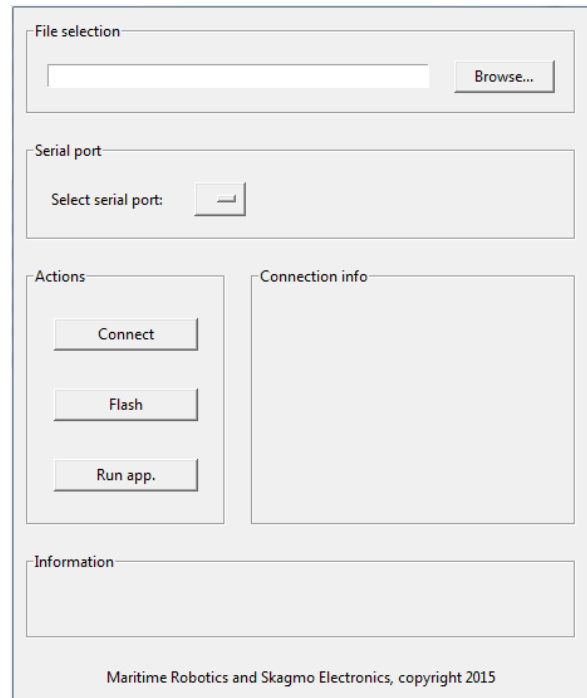


Figure 2: Bootloader

Table 2: Bootloader uploader variants

Variant	Description
uploader.py	Command line utility for firmware upgrade. Install dependencies with "sudo apt-get install python-serial python-crcmod".
gui-uploader.py	Easy to use GUI version of the uploader.
gui-uploader.exe (found in gui_uploader_executable.zip)	GUI version for Windows (binary executable) with dependencies included.

3 Command line menu system

The Owl features a comprehensive CLI (command line interface) for setting and reading parameters. It supports autocompleting in a known fashion. A single press on the tabulator button autocompletes the command as much as possible, and a double press lists all possible options. The special "help"-command will list all possible input if run alone, and will list all possible input for a given command if you type "help" followed by a command name. To see all possible commands, "[tab][tab]" and "help[enter]" does the same:

```
[tab][tab]
[crLf]access, baud0, baud1, baud2, ...[crLf]
```

To see possible parameters for a given command, autocompletion and help behaves a little different. First let's see what autocompletion will do:

```
mo[tab]
mode
[space][tab][tab]
[crLf]ais, ax25-1k2, ax25-9k6, cw, ngham, test, voice[crLf]
>mode[space]
n[tab]
>mode ngham
[enter]
[crLf]mode ngham ok[crLf]
>
```

Then using help and no autocompletion:

```
help mode[enter]
[crLf]help mode enum (ais, ax25-1k2, ax25-9k6, cw, ngham, test, voice)[crLf]
mode ngham[enter]
[crLf]mode ngham ok[crLf]
```

3.1 Serial port settings (menu items "portN", "baudN" and "set")

To set the type of serial port protocol, used the command "portN", where N is the port number. See the table below for a list of options for the "portN"-command. "baudN" is used to set the serial port baud rate. All changes to "portN" and "baudN" must be followed by the command "set" to apply. This to make it possible to change the configuration and save it before the command line interface becomes unaccessible.

Name	Description	Syntax
none	Disable this port. Always set an unused port to this mode to prevent noise from being interpreted as commands or data.	
aivdm	Used with Automatic Identification System. Encoded VDM NMEA-message.	<code>\$AIVDM...[crlf]</code>
cmd	Use port for command line menu system.	<code>freq 144800000[enter]</code> <code>freq 144800000 ok[crlf]</code>
kiss	Widely used transparent amateur radio host protocol.	<code>http://www.ax25.net/kiss.aspx</code>
ngham-spp	Structured protocol to allow both commands and data without escaping/states. See separate NGHAm protocol description document on https://github.com/skagmo/ngham/tree/master/documentation .	<code>[start][crc0][crc1]</code> <code>[type][length]Hello</code>
mavlink	For use with Ardupilot, Pixhawk or other Mavlink-enabled autopilots. For full description, see chapter 4.4 on page 11.	
nmea	Use this port as an input for a GPS capable of sending GPRMC or GPGGA NMEA messages. Remember to set correct baud rate as well.	<code>\$GPGGA...[crlf]</code>
piccolo	For use with Cloud Cap Piccolo autopilot. Aligns Piccolo packets with NGHAm RF packets and will reconfigure autopilot for 1/3 Hz low-res telemetry on the connected serial port if the Owl TX buffer is filled over 50%.	
tnc2	The well known TNC2 style formatting of AX25-packets.	<code>LA3JPA>LA1K:Hello</code> <code>[crlf]</code>
text	Simply type in any data and terminate the string with "[enter]". Data received is terminated with "[crlf]". Somewhat like TNC2, but without the AX25 header. The text-packer can also parse certain escape sequences. "\t" = temperature, "\v" = voltage, "\h" = GPS HDOP.	<code>Hello[enter]</code> <code>Hi there[crlf]</code>
transp	Transparent mode: Data received on the serial port of the transmitting radio is buffered until a timeout (specified with "transp-time") or maximum packet size is reached, then it is packed and sent. The exact same data is sent out on the serial port of the receiving radio.	

3.2 Radio operating modes (menu item "mode")

The menu item "mode" defines the RF physical layer (modulation, forward error correction etc.) to the layer just below the serial port protocol (with some exceptions). By typing "help mode[enter]" the radio will return a list of possible modes. A quick description of the modes are shown below.

Name	Description	Technical details
ais	Automatic Identification System, RX only. Use with packer "AIVDM" and on frequencies 161.975 MHz and 162.025 MHz.	9600 sym/s 2-GMSK, bt=0.5, HDLC-coding.
ax25-1k2	1200 baud AX.25. A popular amateur radio mode used for APRS (144.800 MHz in Europe, 144.390 MHz in USA) and much more.	1200 sym/s 2-AFSK (FM-modulated FSK), HDLC-coding.
ax25-9k6	9600 baud AX.25. Not so widely used – mostly for satellite operation and some ground based packet nodes.	9600 sym/s 2-GFSK, 3 KHz deviation, K9NG scrambler polynomial, HDLC-coding.
cw	Morse code generator, TX only. Input ASCII text, for example with the text-packer.	
ngham	High performance FEC-protocol, suggested for amateur radio as well as other use. See separate NGHAm protocol description document on https://github.com/skagmo/ngham/tree/master/documentation .	9600 sym/s (default), GMSK, bt=0.5, short preamble, sync word correlator, lexicode size tag, Reed Solomon FEC code block. Max. 220 byte payload. Sensitivity below -120 dBm. See details in appendix A.
test	Generates a PN9 test sequence (pseudo-random number generator), and measures bit error rate in reception. Not finished.	
voice	Some pre-recorded voice samples played back in narrow band FM. TX only. Input ASCII text, for example with the text-packer.	

3.3 Channel access (menu items "access", "tdma-*")

The channel access method determines how the radio will enter transmission when it has data to send. In other words, it is the method used to determine if the channel is busy or free. A proper channel access method is crucial to avoid collisions between multiple radio nodes, and the Owl has three different methods which can be selected with the "access"-command.

Name	Description	Technical details
none	Never allow access / receive only	
always	Always allow immediate access	
csma	Carrier Sense Multiple Access	The channel is considered free when receiver is not busy decoding a packet.
tdma	Time Division Multiple Access	Transmission is purely based on time. Each node will transmit in it's own dedicated time slot, which theoretically eliminates collisions and gives a completely predictable throughput for each node. For many nodes and short packets, this will allow much better channel utilization than CSMA.

The TDMA method requires a common synchronized clock between all radios. This can be done by connecting a GNSS-/GPS-receiver with a PPS (pulse-per-second) output to all radios, or radios can inherit time from each other. For example, one radio can be connected to a GPS, and set up to transmit time-of-hour packets ("tx-toh") at regular intervals. Alternatively, no GPS is needed at all if the radio is set up to use local uptime as time-of-hour ("tdma-master 1") rather than actual time of hour from GNSS. If "tdma-master" is used, it must only be enabled on a single radio. If multiple radios tries to use their own local uptime as timing reference the timing will fail completely. The TDMA method has quite a few dedicated commands:

Name	Description	Technical details
tdma-frame	Time in milliseconds for the whole TDMA frame.	
tdma-guard	Guard time after transmission, in milliseconds.	Some "dead-time" is needed between time slots to deal with non-perfect time synchronization, signal propagation time, and to allow a node to ramp down it's transmitter before the next node will access the channel.
tdma-offset	Selects time slot relative to the start of the period.	An offset of 0 means the node is using the first time slot in the frame. An offset of $\text{tdma-slots} - 1$ means the node is using the last slot.
tdma-slots	Number of slots in a whole frame.	
tdma-stretch	Allows "stretching" transmission over multiple time slots.	A stretch value of 2 means the radio will occupy two successive time slots.
tdma-master	Time reference for TDMA will be based on local node uptime rather than GPS-referenced time of hour.	In the case where no radios are equipped with a GNSS-receiver, this command allows one node to provide a common time reference based on local uptime rather than absolute time of hour. If a node with a GNSS-receiver (and actual time of hour) enters the same network, all nodes will choose to adjust their timeframe to actual time of hour, including the one originally configured to use its local uptime as timing reference.
tdma-toh-tune	For fine tuning the time value in the time-of-hour NGHAm extension packets.	This value should correspond to the delay in microseconds between timeslot start and synchronization word detection.

See the following figure for some examples on how to configure the TDMA system:

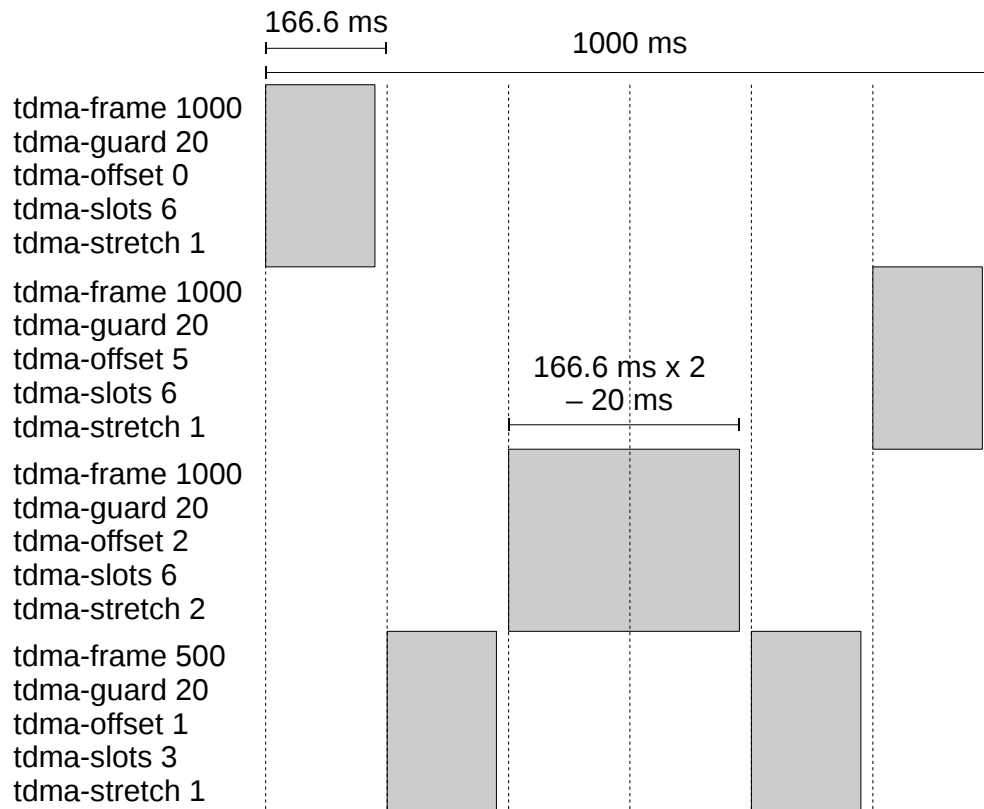


Figure 3: TDMA configuration examples

4 Advanced configuration examples

4.1 APRS

APRS is a popular positioning system used by amateur radio operators. A typical configuration will be like shown below. All commands should be succeeded by [enter].

```
freq 144800000
mode ax25-1k2
access csma
port0 tnc2
set
```

Packets should now be printed on the TNC2-format as they are received.

4.2 End-to-end NGHam text messaging

This is a simple example of sending text messages end-to-end with two Owl radios. Do this configuration on both radios. In case the radios are not configured similarly in regards of modulation

etc., run "cfg-def" before doing further configuration to reset configuration. All commands should be succeeded by [enter].

```
freq 144900000    Feel free to choose another frequency
mode nham
access csma
port0 text        Assuming you are connected to serial port 0
set
```

Write some text and press enter. The text should now show up on the other Owl.

4.3 NGHam with TDMA and packer "transp"

This is an advanced example for a robust and completely transparent link with injected statistics packets (contains a time stamp used for TDMA synchronization between nodes), but with a delay up to one second due to the use of TDMA. All commands should be succeeded by [enter].

```
mode nham
access tdma
port0 transp
tx-toh 4          Inject time of hour packet to sent data every fourth TDMA frame
tdma-frame 1000   TDMA frame time 1000 ms
tdma-guard 20     Guard time between time slots is 20 ms
tdma-offset 0     Select first slot in frame
tdma-slots 2
tdma-stretch 1
tdma-master 1     Select this as the timing reference in the network – must send stat packets
set
```

Before the "set"-command, "cfg-save" could have been used to make the settings permanent and load immediately after a power cycle. Be careful though, as the transparent packer has no escape sequence. This means you are effectively locked out from the menu system unless you connect to one of the other ports on the Owl or do a factory reset on port 0. This procedure is described in the bootloader-chapter.

The next node in the same system should be configured similarly, but with "tdma-offset 1", to use slot 2/2 in this TDMA-network, and not "tdma-master 1", as this will cause confusion when two nodes try to be the time reference in the network.

4.4 Using with Pixhawk

As of firmware 0.4.0, the Owl supports MAVLink port protocol. A cable to connect the devices is shown in section 7.1 on page 27. This includes a flow control signal to the Pixhawk to limit

data rate, but always take care that the Pixhawk telemetry rates (parameter SR2_* if using port Telemetry 2) are low enough. Typically around 1 Hz for each field, but up to 20 Hz for parameters (SRx_PARAMS).

The MAVLink support includes the following features:

- Aligns MAVLink packet start to NGHAm packet start
- Splits long MAVLink packets into multiple NGHAm packets
- Merges small MAVLink packets to a single NGHAm packet within timeout defined in command "transp-time"
- Sends the following messages with same system ID as autopilot and component ID 150 every 5 second:
 - RADIO_STATUS. Aircraft device sends this message over RF.
 - STATUSTEXT warning, but only if buffer load is high. Aircraft device sends this message over RF, and the ground device sends directly to port.
- Filters messages with the following rules in the following order:
 - Always allow HEARTBEAT, RADIO_STATUS and STATUSTEXT
 - Block all messages when buffer load is over 80
 - Block all messages from 3DR radio (system ID '3' and component ID 'D')
 - Block deprecated type REQUEST_DATA_STREAM from ground station. Telemetry rates are set with parameters.
 - Block other messages than PARAM_VALUE if PARAM_VALUE has been received in the last second. Will dramatically speed up parameter transfer.

A few different ground control applications have been tested, and APM Planner is the recommended software to use as of today.

For this example, connect port 2 (3.3 V UART) on the Owl's black expansion connector to the Pixhawk telemetry port 2, and configure Pixhawk with SERIAL2_BAUD as 38. It is now assumed that the command line interface is available on port 0 ("port0 cmd"). Use port 0 (RS-232) on the Owl's white main connector to connect a terminal and set the following settings:

Enter this on the plane-side:

freq 144925000	For use on amateur radio frequency 144.925 MHz
power mid	
modulation 4-9600	For increased throughput, but 2-9600 is the most robust
transp-time 50	
access tdma	
tdma-frame 1000	TDMA frame time 1000 ms
tdma-guard 20	Guard time between time slots is 20 ms
tdma-slots 3	Three slots in total
tdma-offset 0	Use two consecutive slots as more data goes from plane to ground than the other way
tdma-stretch 2	
tdma-master 0	
port2 mavlink	
baud2 38400	
cfg-save	
set	Set/apply port settings (done automatically on reboot)

On the ground side, the RS-232 port (port 0) is typically used for GCS communication. A separate serial port can be used for the command line interface as done on the airplane side, but it is also possible to configure the port and then switch to transparent mode.

Enter the common settings first, then the settings shown below:

freq 144925000	For use on amateur radio frequency 144.925 MHz
power mid	
modulation 4-9600	For increased throughput, but 2-9600 is the most robust
transp-time 50	
tx-toh 8	Inject time of hour to sent data
access tdma	
tdma-frame 1000	TDMA frame time 1000 ms
tdma-guard 20	Guard time between time slots is 20 ms
tdma-slots 3	Three slots in total
tdma-offset 2	Use two consecutive slots as more data goes from plane to ground than the other way
tdma-stretch 1	
tdma-master 1	Use this device as timing reference in this network
port0 mavlink	
baud0 38400	
cfg-save	
set	Set/apply port settings (done automatically on reboot)

If another port is not configured for CMD interface, a configuration reset will be necessary as explained in the separate bootloader chapter.

4.5 Using with Cloud Cap Piccolo

The Owl is very well suited for the Cloud Cap Piccolo. The Owl has a custom packer for Piccolo which aligns RF packets with the Piccolo packets, and will automatically reconfigure the connected port on the Piccolo to 1/3 Hz low-resolution telemetry if the TX-buffer is filling up uncontrollably. Of course this can be used with more than one plane by configuring more TDMA-slots and a longer TDMA-frame.

Make sure the Piccolo does not send out unnecessary data, for example by sampling IO state often. In Piccolo Command Center, go to "Window", "Preflight", "Payload IO Settings". Set "Input Sample Time" to 5 seconds or more if you can. Setting this to eg. 1 second injects a lot of data to radio stream.

Common settings:

<code>freq 144925000</code>	For use on amateur radio frequency 144.925 MHz
<code>power mid</code>	
<code>access tdma</code>	
<code>modulation 2-9600</code>	
<code>tx-stat 8</code>	Inject statistics packet to sent data
<code>tx-src 8</code>	Inject callsign packet to sent data
<code>mycall CALL</code>	Change CALL to desired callsign
<code>tdma-frame 1000</code>	TDMA frame time 1000 ms
<code>tdma-guard 20</code>	Guard time between time slots is 20 ms
<code>tdma-slots 3</code>	Three slots in total
<code>port0 piccolo</code>	

Plane specific:

<code>tdma-stretch 2</code>
<code>tdma-offset 1</code>
<code>tdma-master 0</code>
<code>cfg-save</code>
<code>set</code>

Ground station specific:

```
tdma-stretch 1
tdma-offset 0
tdma-master 1
tx-toh 4
cfg-save
set
```

4.6 Using with IP in Linux

The Owl can communicate IP traffic by using the linux tool "slattach", which generates a network interface for a serial SLIP device. From firmware 0.4.1, the SLIP protocol is supported, and IP packets can therefore be aligned with NGHAm packets, which in turn allows multiple nodes (not just point-to-point). This works absolutely best with TDMA channel access. The following assumes a separate port used for CMD, and port2 used for SLIP frames.

Configure the following on both Owl's:

```
modulation 4-9600
baud2 115200
port2 kiss
kiss-mode slip
set
tdma-frame 500
tdma-slots 2
tdma-stretch 1
tdma-guard 15
```

Configure end 1 as follows:

```
tdma-offset 0
tdma-master 0
```

Configure end 2 as follows:

```
tx-toh 16
tdma-offset 1
tdma-master 1
```

On the first computer running Linux, and assuming port2 is connected to /dev/ttyUSB0, enter the following. Make sure MTU is 220 byte, as this is the maximum NGHAm packet size.

```
sudo apt-get install net-tools
sudo slattach -dvL -p slip -s 115200 /dev/ttyUSB0
sudo ifconfig sl0 44.0.0.1/8 mtu 220
```

For the second computer, set the IP to 44.0.0.2/8 instead.

Then try some services from the first computer:

```
ping 44.0.0.2
```

```
ssh 44.0.0.2 -v
```

Tips:

- The buffer might overflow, and TCP will resend frames resulting in even more overflow and poor speed. For best results, use hardware flow control.
- TCP window size can be adjusted, and timeslots can be further reduced. Just make sure there is space for a single packet in the timeslot.
- The networking utility Wireshark is a really handy tool when experimenting with IP traffic.

5 Full command list

Name	Description	Example
access	Select channel access method (how the radio goes into transmission on a shared channel). See separate chapter.	<code>access csma[enter]</code>
baudN (0-2)	Set baud rate of serial port N.	<code>baud0 9600[enter]</code>
bias-rx	Keep the power supply for the PA drain active during RX to get slightly faster RX to TX turnaround time on expense of higher RX power consumption. (PA gate will not be biased in RX, so the difference is small).	<code>bias-rx 1[enter]</code>
cfg-def	Load default "factory configuration" immediately. Will not overwrite saved configuration in flash and will only last until next power cycle.	<code>cfg-def[enter]</code>
cfg-save	Save current configuration to flash to make it load after power loss or a forced reboot.	<code>cfg-save[enter]</code>
cw-wpm	Set the keying speed for mode cw in words per minute.	<code>cw-wpm 15[enter]</code>
dest	Destination field for protocols TNC2 and MIC-E. Was "tnc2-dest" in previous firmware.	<code>dest APRS[enter]</code>
echo	Enable local echo and auto completion on the command line interface.	<code>echo 1[enter]</code>
fm-emphasis	Enable pre-emphasis on FM-modulated modes (AX25_1K2 and VOICE).	<code>fm-emphasis 1[enter]</code>
freq	Set operating frequency in hertz.	<code>freq 144800000[enter]</code>
help	Display available parameters and parameter type for one of the other command items.	<code>help freq[enter]</code>
info	Show a large list of software/hardware parameters.	<code>info[enter]</code>
kiss-mode	Type of KISS-protocol used. Can be "normal", "slip" or "smack" (Stuttgart Modified Amateurradio-CRC-KISS)	<code>kiss-mode slip[enter]</code>
mice-cmt	Comment field for the MIC-E protocol. Escape sequences such as used with the text-packer are valid.	<code>mice-cmt Testing Owl VHF. VOLT- age=\v.[enter]</code>
mice-cmtint	Comment interval in number of MIC-E-packets. For example, a value of 3 will send a comment with each third MIC-E-packet.	<code>mice-cmtint 3[enter]</code>
mice-int	Transmission interval in seconds for MIC-E protocol.	<code>mice-int 120[enter]</code>
mice-msg	Specifies the MIC-E message, from 0-7. These are Off duty, En route, In service, Returning, Committed, Special, Priority, Emergency.	<code>mice-msg 0[enter]</code>

mode	Radio operating mode / physical layer. See separate chapter.	mode ngham[enter]
modulation	NGHam modulation format. On the form "x-y", where "x" is bits per symbol and "y" is the symbol rate	modulation 2-9600[enter]
mycall	Source field for protocols TNC2, MIC-E and NGHam extensions. Was "tnc2-src" in previous firmware.	mycall LA3JPA-9[enter]
portN (0-2)	Set packer / serial port protocol. See separate chapter.	port0 text[enter]
path	Path field for protocols TNC2 and MIC-E. Was "tnc2-path" in previous firmware.	path WIDE2-2[enter]
port-src	Send NGHam extension callsign packet to serial ports configured for NGHam-SPP at an interval in units of the value specified in "tdma-period". If "tdma-period" is 1000 ms, a value of 5 will inject a packet each 5000 ms. Interval 0 is off.	tx-stat 5[enter]
port-pos	Same as above, but for the NGHam extension position packet.	tx-pos 5[enter]
port-stat	Same as above, but for the NGHam extension statistics packet.	tx-stat 5[enter]
port-toh	Same as above, but for the NGHam extension time of hour packet.	tx-toh 5[enter]
power	Set power level in one of three steps. "lo" (0.2 W), "mid" (1 W) or "hi" (5 W).	power mid[enter]
preamb	Set length of preamble in bytes. Only valid for AX.25-modes.	preamb 50[enter]
remote-cmd	Enable/disable remote commands (configuration through radio) with NGHam extension.	remote-cmd open[enter]
restart	Make the radio do a restart immediately.	restart[enter]
set	Apply serial port settings (pacX and baudX). Not running this command after setting packer will allow configuration to be saved. Also serves the same purpose as the "CONVERSE" command in TNC2-modems. See separate chapter.	set[enter]
tdma-*	TDMA-related settings. See channel access chapter.	
transp-time	Timeout before data will be sent using the transparent packer.	transp-time 100[enter]
tx-src	Transmit NGHam extension callsign packet over the air at an interval in units of the value specified in "tdma-period". If "tdma-period" is 1000 ms, a value of 5 will inject a packet each 5000 ms. Interval 0 is off.	tx-stat 5[enter]

tx-pos	Same as above, but for the NGHam extension position packet.	tx-pos 5[enter]
tx-stat	Same as above, but for the NGHam extension statistics packet.	tx-stat 5[enter]
tx-toh	Same as above, but for the NGHam extension time of hour packet.	tx-toh 5[enter]
verbose	Verbose level for messages printed on ports configured for cmd packer.	verbose 5[enter]

6 Connectors and pinout

6.1 Pinout

Table 4: Expansion connector (mates with Hirose DF11-16DS-2C)

GND	2	1	Port 1 RX, 3.3 V
(GPIO)	4	3	Port 1 TX, 3.3 V
(GPIO)	6 (RTS)	5	(reserved UART RX or SDA)
Port 2 RX, 5 V tolerant	8	7	(reserved UART TX or SCL)
Port 2 TX, 3.3 V	10	9	(GPIO)
3.3 V out	12	11	(GPIO)
DC in	14	13	DC in
GND	16	15	GND

Table 5: Main connector (mates with JST PHR-5)

1	Port 0 RX, RS-232 level
2	Port 0 TX, RS-232 level
3	GND
4	DC in
5	GND

Table 6: Professional version connector (mates with male DE-9 connector)

Port 2 TX	1	6	DC in
Port 0 TX, RS-232 level	2	7	(reserved)
Port 0 RX, RS-232 level	3	8	(reserved)
Port 2 RX, 5 V tolerant	4	9	GND
GND	5		

6.2 Connector part list

The connectors used on the different versions of Owl is widely available:

Table 7: Main connector

Component	Vendor	Vendor PN	Mfg.	Mfg. PN
Connector housing	Digi-Key	455-1163-ND	JST	PHR-5
JST-PH crimp pins	Digi-Key	455-1127-1-ND	JST	SPH-002T-P0.5S
Crimp tool	Digi-Key	455-1128-ND	JST	WC-240
Pre-terminated wires	Farnell	2320543	JST	01SPHSPH-26001L300

Table 8: Expansion connector

Component	Vendor	Vendor PN	Mfg.	Mfg. PN
Connector housing	Digi-Key	H2025-ND	Hirose	DF11-16DS-2C
Crimp pins (gold)	Digi-Key	H1505-ND	Hirose	DF11-2428SCA
Crimp pins (tin)	Digi-Key	H1504-ND	Hirose	DF11-2428SC
Crimp tool	Digi-Key	H9995-ND	Hirose	DF11-TA2428HC
Pre-terminated wires	Digi-Key	Search for "H3AXG"	-	-

Table 9: Pro version D-sub

Component	Vendor	Vendor PN	Mfg.	Mfg. PN
Solder cup connector	Digi-Key	AE10972-ND	Assmann	A-DS-09-LL/Z
Backshell	Digi-Key	609-1424-ND	FCI	86303637BLF

The antenna connector uses a standard SMA connector. As for antennas, radio amateurs probably know a lot of alternatives for 2-meter antennas. For professional use, the AC Marine CX4-5 can be recommended. This is a very robust and well performing antenna with a wide useable frequency range.

6.3 Flow control

Pin 6 on H_EXP acts as an RTS output. In TDMA channel access, it will go high (3.3 V) when there is more data in the TX buffer than a single timeslot can hold (but there will still be free space in buffer). In other access modes, it will activate when buffer is filled more than 10 %.

The Owl has large buffers (4 KB TX and RX buffer). It will transmit for several seconds to empty the whole buffer. If TDMA is used, it is recommended to send data chunks less than a time slot at a time to keep delay down. To see how many bytes can be transferred in a single time slot, run "info" and check the field "slot_b". Remember that this includes preamble etc. A 220 byte payload (maximum size) uses 262 bytes in the TX buffer.

When sending large amounts of data, it is generally suggested to implement a higher level protocol which sends a reasonable amount of data at a time (way less than the buffer size), and waits for an ACK before transmitting the next block of data. This will effectively keep the data transfer at "maximum speed". Small data blocks will make sure other real-time data can pass with minimal latency, and large data blocks will increase throughput because less time is used for acking.

6.4 Simple cable example

This example is the most basic cable for direct connection to the main port of the Owl. It will power the Owl and allow RS-232 communication on port 0. For the 5-pin JST PH connector you can buy the pins and use a crimp tool as seen in the previous chapter, or simply buy some terminated wires.

Table 10: Bill of materials with vendor example

Component	Qty.	Vendor	Vendor PN	Mfg.	Mfg. PN
9-pin female DE9	1	Farnell	1084678	Multicomp	5501-09SA-02-F1
Wires w/ JST-PH pins	5	Farnell	2320543	JST	01SPHSPH-26001L300
5-pin JST-PH housing	1	Farnell	3616216	JST	PHR-5

Table 11: Connections

From	To	Function
JST-PH pin 1	D-sub pin 3	RS-232 data to Owl
JST-PH pin 2	D-sub pin 2	RS-232 data from Owl
JST-PH pin 3	D-sub pin 5	Ground
JST-PH pin 4		Power V+
JST-PH pin 5		Power ground

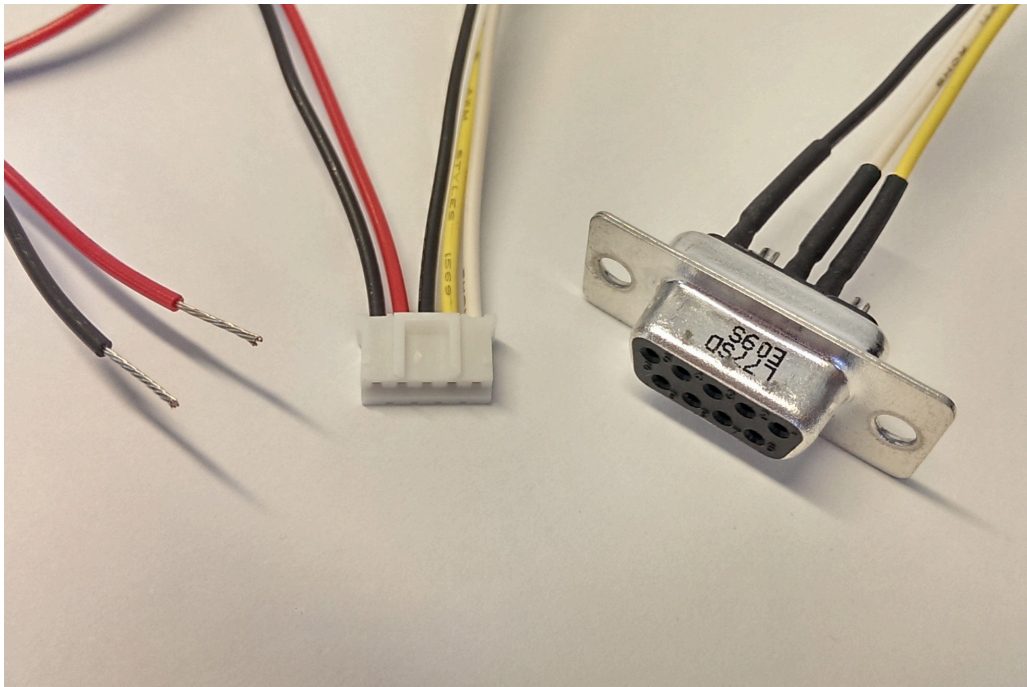


Figure 4: Simple RS-232 and power cable

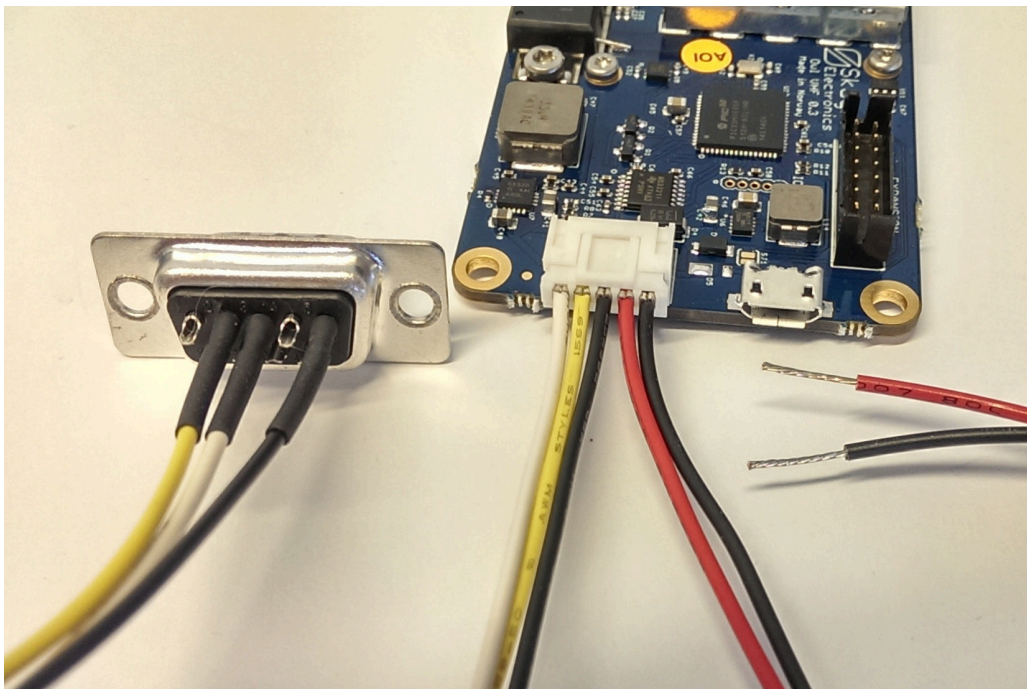


Figure 5: Simple RS-232 and power cable

6.5 USB cable for Owl professional

This is a cable example for the Owl professional, with two FTDI USB to serial adapters. One with RS-232 levels connected to port 0 on the Owl, and one with 3.3 V logic levels connected to port 2 on the Owl. This allows, for example, one port to be used for CLI / configuration, while the other is used for transparent data connection.

Table 12: Bill of materials with vendor example

Component	Qty.	Vendor	Vendor PN	Mfg.	Mfg. PN
9-pin male DE9 D-sub	1	Digi-Key	AE10972-ND	Assmann	A-DS-09-LL/Z
Backshell	1	Digi-Key	609-1424-ND	FCI	86303637BLF
USB-to-serial converter, 3.3 V level	1	Digi-Key	768-1016-ND	FTDI	TTL-232R-3V3-WE
USB-to-serial converter, RS-232 (Power wires)	1	Digi-Key	768-1065-ND	FTDI	USB-RS232-WE-1800-BT_0.0

Table 13: Connections

From	To	Function
D-sub pin 1	USB-TTL yellow	Port 2 TX
D-sub pin 2	USB-RS232 yellow	Port 0 TX
D-sub pin 3	USB-RS232 orange	Port 0 RX
D-sub pin 4	USB-TTL orange	Port 2 RX
D-sub pin 5	USB-TTL and USB-RS232 black	Ground
D-sub pin 6		Power V+
D-sub pin 9		Power ground

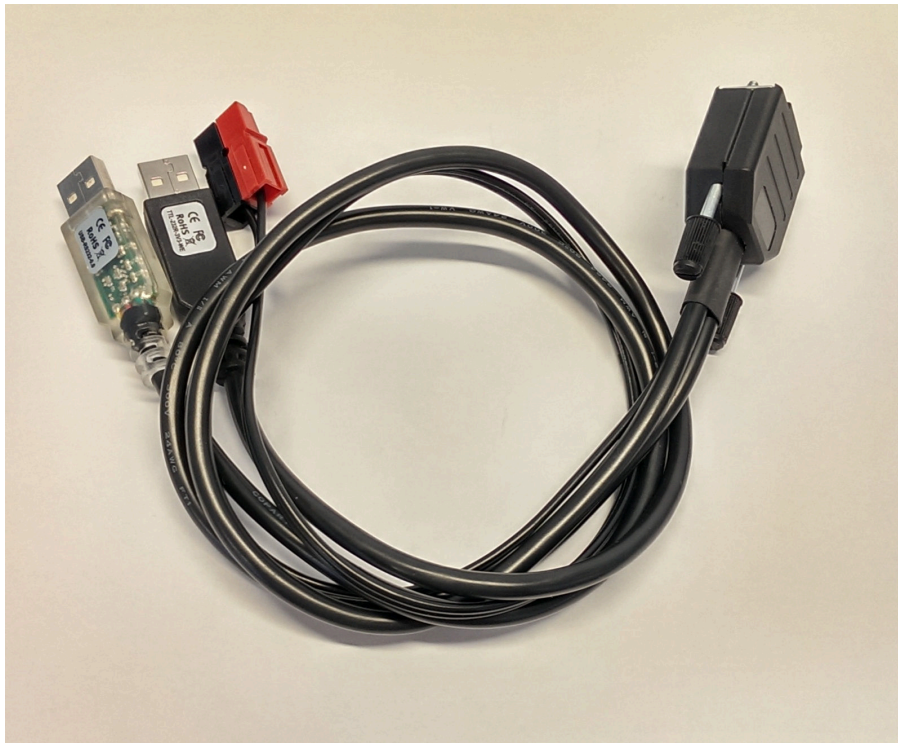


Figure 6: Dual USB and power cable



Figure 7: Dual USB and power cable

7 GPS connection

In many cases it is necessary to connect a GPS with a PPS output to the Owl:

- The Owl will be used as a standalone position tracker
- Multiple nodes are used in a large TDMA network where many nodes does not have a direct signal path
- Nodes are often out of range for longer periods and drifts out of sync
- Best timing accuracy is needed

The GPS must output NMEA 0183 data. TX and RX can be 3.3 V TTL, 5 V TTL or RS-232 levels, depending on which port you connect it to. The PPS output must be 3.3 V or 5 V level, and connected to expansion connector pin 9. Power to the GPS can be taken from the expansion header - either the 3.3 V output or the raw supply voltage. Up to 100 mA current on 3.3 V is fine.

Table 14: Example GPS connection on expansion connector

GND	2	1	Port 1 RX, 3.3 V (GPS TX)
	4	3	Port 1 TX, 3.3 V (GPS RX)
	6	5	
	8	7	
	10	9	GPIO (GPS PPS out)
3.3 V out (GPS power)	12	11	
DC in	14	13	DC in
GND	16	15	GND

Enable GPS input on port 1 with this command: `port1 nmea[enter]`

7.1 Pixhawk cable

This describes a cable to connect the Pixhawk to the Owl Amateur port 2, with flow control. See picture below.



Figure 8: Owl (DF11) to Pixhawk (DF13) cable

8 F.A.Q.

Is there any known birdies in the receiver stage? The noise floor on the Owl is generally very low, but the internal 40 MHz oscillator is present in the received signal at multiples of 40 MHz. In other words there exists a birdie at 160 MHz in the reception range of the Owl VHF which has a power level of approximately -105 dBm.