

Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

September-October 2016

Scapegoat Plateau by Rob-AE7AP

Welcome to Autumn and the Pacific Northwest SOTA! The story contribution in this newsletter is from Montana-W7M, including the banner image above from a SOTA backpacking trip into the Scapegoat Plateau by Rob-AE7AP and Barbara-AE7AQ, activating four summits. Read about their adventures below.

Upcoming Event – September VHF Contest September 10 & 11 – Here's another chance this year to take your FT-817 up to a summit and use those VHF bands for a good purpose. 50.125, 144.2 and even 432.1 MHz SSB should have some action – especially from a summit. Submit a log – those in ID, BC or MT (or perhaps even OR or WA) could be #1 Portable in their section with just a few contacts. <http://www.arrl.org/september-vhf>

Half Goats – Activators on their way to 1000 activation points – There have been a lot of radio waves emanating from summits around the Pacific Northwest recently, and that has led some to the noteworthy score of 500 points – or One Half Goat. Those PNW folks that have made it to this point in August 2016 are **Mark-K7MAS, Tim-KG7EJT, Bren-NU7A, Rob-AE7AP, John-KC7DM, Roger-ND7PA and Rachel-K7NIT.**

Passes – can you even see out the windscreen? For Oregon and Washington, use of public lands has been somewhat “commoditized” to have hikers and climbers pay for use. There are permits for climbing of course – Mount Rainier, Mt. Saint Helens and Mount Adams require them. Our neighbors in British Columbia, Idaho and Montana have fewer requirements for passes and permits – but those in W7O and W7W, have more to deal with in passes required for trail access. The **Washington Discover Pass** to access state public lands and for state parks is about \$30/year. Then, for National Forests, there's the **Northwest Forest Pass** – it seems to be required at the more popular sites and is also about \$30/year. The **America the Beautiful Pass** takes care of national parks and monuments like Crater Lake, Mount Rainier, Olympic National Park, Craters of the Moon, etc., **PLUS** all BLM and National Forest trailheads where the Northwest Forest Pass is required – it goes for \$80/year. And there's the **Oregon State Park Pass** too, but I rarely use that for SOTA. In the winter each state has its own **Sno-Park Parking Permits** – typically around \$25/year – these pay for plowing out the parking lots that we use for skiing and snowshoeing. The Bureau of Land Management also has a permit system that doesn't use the Northwest Forest Pass, but they do accept the America the Beautiful Pass. All of these have day use fees if you don't want to go for an annual pass, but the day rates are up to \$10 – so if you want to come back just a couple times the annual pass might make more sense. And then there are some private forest lands that have their own permit system for access. Whew! And why does all this matter? The SOTA General Rules 3.7 say, “All Expeditions must use legitimate access routes and comply with any local rules regarding use of the land.” Trip reports hopefully note any permit or pass required for those that follow.

Welcome new SOTA Activators – It's been nice to see more folks giving SOTA a try – summer in the PNW is a great time to be out hiking – why not take a radio along! Don't think you need to activate some significant mountain the first time – tried summits with trip reports from www.pnwsota.org are a great way to start.

Report on the Western North America S2S Weekend

On August 6th and 7th we saw an increase in activity on summits with the Colorado 14er event, the UHF Contest and the Western North America Summit-to-Summit Weekend. Those that we could see take part were N2GBR, W6AT, W6PNG, N0TA, K6YOA, K5RHD, KX0R, N6JFD, W6PZA, N0MTN, KG7FOP, NA6MG, KX0R, K7ATN, KF7SEY, N06E, K7TVA, WC6J, K7VK, and K6HPX (and others). Look at what is possible with the weekend activity of Phil-NS7P, logging 45 S2S contacts and 300 S2S points over the weekend! That shows what a world-class Chaser can do from a summit! Remember that S2S contacts need to be logged as Activator Contracts AND ALSO as Chaser Contacts with the S2S box checked and your summit reference entered.

Photo Gallery – Besides the great photos in this issue from Rob-AE7AP, there were some nice contributions from others from their recent SOTA activations. Anti-clockwise from the top, Matt-KF7PXT sent a photo of his crew Lily, Kimber and Brookelyn with Brookelyn at the mic below. Then we have Mark-K7MAS and Tim-KG7EJT on Attenuator Peak with Mount Rainier behind and Todd-W7TAO's photo of Mason-K7MWT on Sauk Mountain. This is reminding me to fly my SOTA flag on the next activation.



Scapegoat Plateau Backpack Trip by Rob-AE7AP

The Scapegoat Plateau is a limestone massif located in the center of the Scapegoat Wilderness. The plateau is remarkable. It is a huge limestone expanse with snowfields, flowery meadows, copses of fir, fissured limestone plains – all at 8,000 feet and ringed by four SOTA summits ranging in height from 8,553' (W7M/CL-023, "8553") to 9,202' (W7M/CL-002, "Scapegoat Mtn"), encompassing nearly 10 square miles. The plateau is protected by 800+ foot cliffs on all sides. Melting snow feeds a labyrinth of caverns within the plateau resulting in spectacular waterfalls that issue from the cliff walls into the valleys below. Having activated Scapegoat Mountain in 2015 using a northern approach, Barbara-AE7AQ and I decided to attempt the remaining three summits with an approach from the south.



Photo: Rob-AE7AP

On the morning of July 2, we began hiking up the "Hobnail Tom" trail, named for outfitter Tom Edwards, who advocated for this first "citizen initiated" wilderness area. We reached our first camp in the lower reaches of Dobrota Creek, 15-miles up the trail later that afternoon. The second day was an adventure as we left our well-defined trail for the backcountry. There are no designated trails to the plateau, so we planned an off-trail route through the cliffs leading over the continental divide. I was a bit worried about traversing this segment, but it turned out to be a reasonable approach – despite some steep off-trail travel through scattered blow-down and deadfall.



Photo: Rob-AE7AP

Soon after crossing the divide and beginning our trek across the plateau, we spooked up a couple of Grizzly bears at about 400 yards. We have a practice of yelling "Hello!" at periodic intervals while hiking (to alert Grizzlies that we are in the area), and after our greeting the bears took off at a terrific speed for shelter in a copse of trees. A few more "hellos" later, they fled to a distant part of the plateau, allowing us to resume our hike. Soon thereafter, we found a sheltered spot for our tent and set up camp. After a short rest, we then climbed W7M/CL-014 for an afternoon activation. We were definitely on "bear alert" due to the recent sighting and the evidence of intense foraging around the base of the summit.



Photo: Rob-AE7AP

The next day – July 4, we had a very enjoyable activation of Flint Mountain (W7M/CL-003). The climb is an unusually pleasant stroll up a long grassy ramp to a summit that drops off dramatically on two sides with 1,000 vertical cliffs. After descending Flint Mountain, we headed north across the plateau and climbed W7M/CL-023 for our final summit. The winds on the summit were exceptionally strong, requiring me to remove my glasses and forcing Barbara to crawl at times as we made the final approach. We didn't linger in this gale and sought shelter in the lee of a rock outcropping for our activation.



Photo: Rob-AE7AP

It was with sadness that we broke camp on July 5, and began our hike back to civilization. As we crossed the plateau, we sighted a Grizzly sow and cub in the distance, and startled two more Grizzly bears (likely the same two from two days before) shortly thereafter. These final two bears ran with remarkable speed over the only passage through the cliffs – exactly where we needed to go! We followed them with trepidation, but never saw them again. The remainder of the day was uneventful as we descended Dobrota Creek and the North Fork of the Blackfoot. We made good time on the way out and finished the entire 21-mile journey to our car that day.

I used a KX1 with a SOTABeams link-dipole for all of the activations, and carried an MTR-V2 as backup. I was able to self-spot on all summits using APRS2SOTA. I made a few 2m QSOs – most notably to old friends in Helena (from Flint Mtn. only) and to K7PTL, 80-miles away in Stevensville! This outing was one of the first times that I actually enjoyed CW. I don't know if my skills are improving, or if I am just learning how to not "stress out" - the CW seemed to go more smoothly than it has in the past. I found myself wishing I could linger longer on each summit to make just a few more QSOs! Thank you everyone for being there and making our hike and activations such a pleasure – it is so nice to hear your familiar calls.

Your editor says, "Thanks for sending the photos!" but also, "What else can we share to make our radiosport fun? Send me ideas!" Subscribe or unsubscribe by email to climb2ski@gmail.com. This newsletter is brought to you by the SOTA W7O Association Manager, Etienne-K7ATN. Back issues: www.pnwsota.org/content/pacific-northwest-sota-newsletters.
