

Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

April-May-June 2024

Amy-KC7JNU, Guy-N7UN, Jeff-WJ7V on W7O/CN-086

Upcoming Events – Saturday, April 13 for W7O/Willamette Valley Summit to Summit Party! [Contact Tim-N7KOM](#) to sign up and get on the list for details. Be QRV by 10:45am and listen for instructions from the Net Control Station.

[Pan American SOTA Weekend 2024](#)

From April, 13th 00:00 UTC to April, 14th 23:59 UTC we will have a lot of activations all over the Americas.

Upcoming Events – May 31-June 2 – [SeaPac Ham Convention](#), Seaside, Oregon. This includes the annual PNW SOTA gathering on **Friday, May 31 – PNW SOTA Gathering, 5pm, Pizza Harbor, Seaside...** meet fellow SOTateers!

Upcoming Events – June 8-9. Try the [ARRL June VHF Contest](#) – SOTA-style!

Basic equipment is a 2m/70cm roll-up j-pole and a two-band HT. Besides that, plan to make yourself comfortable for a few hours from the AZ of a SOTA summit. If you want to submit a log for the contest, it's important to read the Contest Rules and select an operating category in advance. The exchange for VHF Contests is callsign and Four Digit Grid Square. You should limit chatting so more stations have a chance at working you and others – it can be busy! You can make it more complex and fun by operating SSB on 6m, 2m and 70cm with a small yagi for the high bands and perhaps a simple dipole on 6m.

Getting Started with Summits on the Air

Here are some great resources for starting off on the right path to Summits on the Air. First is an excellent outline of each step, prepared by Tim-N7KOM, followed by four “how to” videos by James-WA7JNJ:

- SOTA Outline - <https://www.n7kom.com/SOTA.html>
- Getting Started - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYesJzGTy6M>
- Choosing a Summit - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrWYeS6rV-k>
- SOTA Rules - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSGGjjhL1I>
- VHF Activations - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SxNHChLX-I>

FREE ARRL Membership for Students

For decades, ARRL has offered a reduced dues rate for young hams, currently priced at \$30 per year. There is now a new option for a no-cost Associate membership for full-time students of age 21 and younger. I'm [not finding this rate on the ARRL website](#), but I imagine they'll get around to it sometime.

Listen, Listen and Listen Again – [DX Code of Conduct](#)

1. I will listen, and listen, and then listen again before calling.
2. I will only call if I can copy the DX station properly.
3. I will not trust the DX cluster and will be sure of the DX station's call sign before calling.
4. I will not interfere with the DX station nor anyone calling and will never tune up on the DX frequency.
5. I will wait for the DX station to end a contact before I call.
6. I will always send my full call sign.
7. I will call and then listen for a reasonable interval. I will not call continuously.
8. I will not transmit when the DX operator calls another call sign, not mine.
9. I will not transmit when the DX operator queries a call sign not like mine.
10. I will not transmit when the DX station requests geographic areas other than mine.
11. When the DX operator calls me, I will not repeat my call sign unless I think he has copied it incorrectly.
12. I will be thankful if and when I do make a contact.
13. I will respect my fellow hams and conduct myself so as to earn their respect.



WHAT does this mean for SOTA Activators and Chasers?

Activators – Send your callsign often enough so that Chasers know for sure whom they are working.

Activators – Be consistent in how you end QSOs so Chasers know when to send their call.

Activators & Chasers – Don't use the SOTA spotter for messages like "Now hiking", "setting up", "pse do 40m".

Chasers – Send your callsign just once. Please, just once. And don't wait for everyone else before sending your callsign.

Chasers – If you hear Summit-to-Summit, stop and give priority to S2S QSOs.

Chasers – If you are QRP, just wait a few minutes – most Activators will call until the well is dry...you'll eventually get a turn when things are quieter and it will reduce unnecessary QRM.

Activators & Chasers – Following these guidelines will make our pileups more efficient, improving QSO rates for everyone.

The Origin of Transmission Line Theory – Actually, it was for Telegraphy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASNQ8rNzcLc>

“Diet SOTA Radio” - Episode 1 - Interview with, Rob Kingery, AE7AP by Allen-KH7AL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQ0L4jZsiSs>

SOTA is a Volunteer-supported RadioSport –

The SOTA Management Team are volunteers.

Those writing the code for SOTAWatch, summit updates, and for RBN, are volunteers.

Those restarting SOTAData and SOTAWatch servers in the middle of the night...volunteers.

Those writing newsletters, doing admin duty on reflectors, groups and elsewhere, are volunteers.

Those maintaining regional and local resources for SOTA are volunteers.

That guy that's providing and hosting the amazing worldwide resource of the SOTA Atlas, is a volunteer.

Those writing blogs, trip reports, sharing their knowledge, Elmering new SOTA folks, are volunteers.

It really is --- **Amateur Radio. SOTA is 22 Years Old in 2024**, please make a donation to Summits on the Air to support the costs of servers, high speed internet connections, SMS numbers, etc. here: <https://sota-shop.co.uk/donations.php>.

Time-lapse of Solar Cycle 25 displays increasing activity on the Sun

Sun<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71we0DQSPjA>

Many Mount Rainier National Park visitors will need reservations in summer 2024

<https://www.nps.gov/mora/learn/news/many-mount-rainier-national-park-visitors-will-need-reservations-in-summer-2024.htm>

Parks on the Air – The Other Portable RadioSport

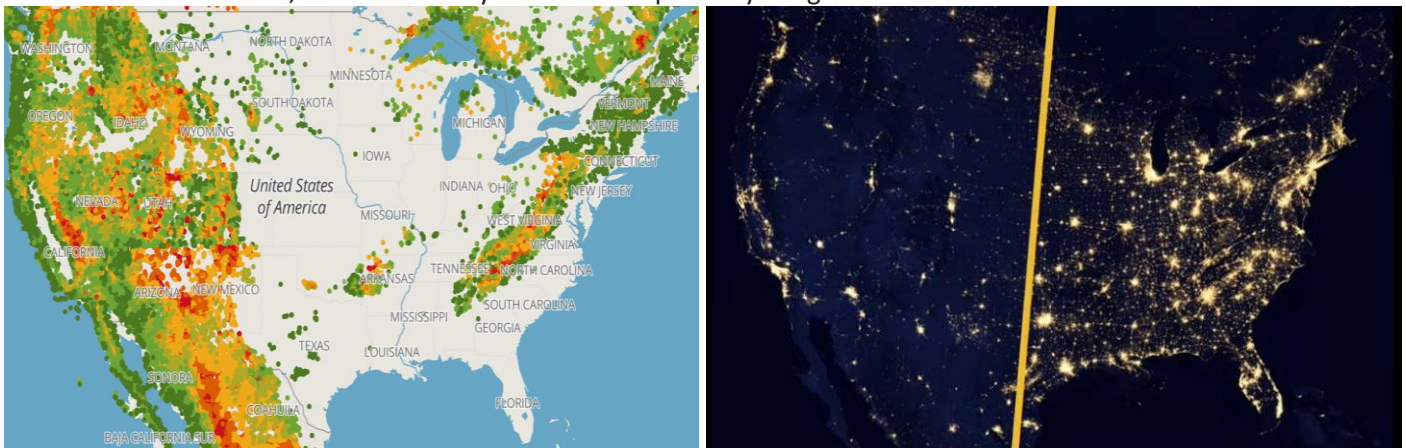
Portable operations are being embraced for a number of reasons – HOA rules prohibiting antennas, urban RFI noise, and...let's be sure and include...the adventure of enjoying radio with beautiful scenery. Many portable ops mention that seeing new places, hikes and vistas that they would never have visited but for POTA and SOTA.

A number of SOTA ops have dipped their toes into activating and “hunting” Parks on the Air. Some ops combine their POTA and SOTA activities; for example, when a designated SOTA summit is within a POTA entity. Or when activating for POTA, focusing on chasing SOTA.

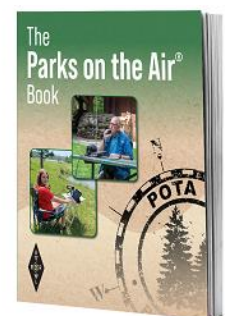
Parks are uniformly accessible by nearly everyone with an automobile. Park are MADE to be accessible and most are paved from the highway to the parking lot. Parks are uniformly distributed with entities in every state. Parks are often easily activated with much gear used directly from the home shack. Besides operating from a vehicle, many POTA activators enjoy being comfortable operating from a picnic table – an amenity often found in parks, but not on summits. A successful POTA activation requires a minimum of 10 QSOs from a park in the designated list.

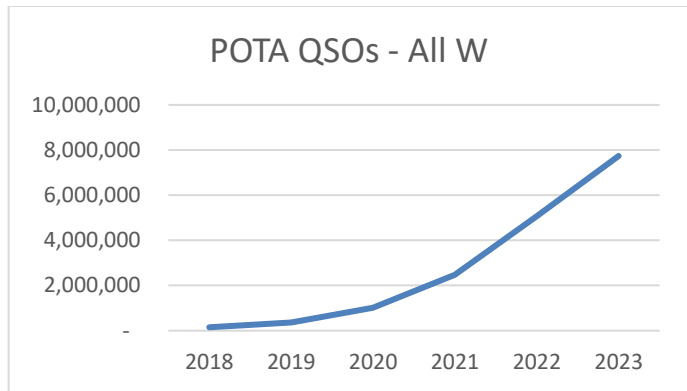
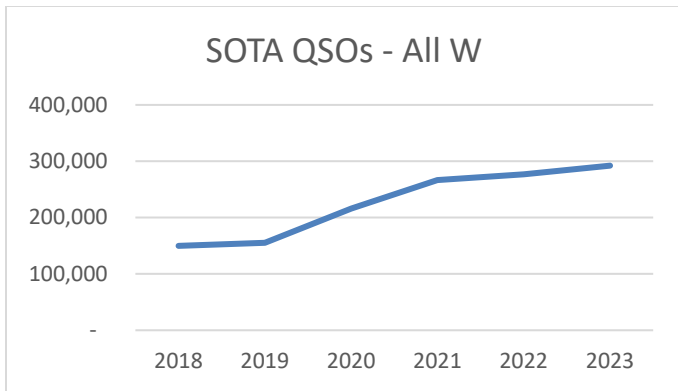
Summits on the Air uses a special definition of portable – SOTA summits require that final access to the Summit must be non-motorised, battery-powered and not in the vicinity of a motor vehicle – see the [SOTA Rules](#). Access to many summits often requires significant personal effort, perhaps off-trail navigation, bushwacking and sometimes specialized equipment and skills, as for alpine climbs. A good number of summits are formally inaccessible due to ownership or closed because of military, tribal land or watersheds restrictions. SOTA activations benefit greatly from specialized radio gear that is small, and lightweight, with low power consumption. For SOTA, one QSO counts as an activation and four qualifies for summit points.

We may not be so aware of POTA on the west coast due to the inequal distribution of population and summits: US population distribution is about 35% west of the 100th meridian and 65% to the east, while SOTA summits are 85% in the west vs. 15% in the east, as illustrated by a SOTL.as map and by a night view of the US.



For more information about POTA, please read [their rules and FAQ here](#). The ARRL Parks on the Air Book is a compilation of stories from experienced ops, and might be considered entertaining rather than organized to provide success in the field. (Where do I find the “Summits on the Air Book??”)





If any of you think you are hearing more POTA activity lately, you would be right. SOTA has had a good amount of growth in the past six years, with QSO totals in W-land around 300,000 in 2023, while POTA QSO activity last year was nearly 8 million. Compare these annual figures to a weekend of ARRL Sweepstakes phone at about 370,000 total QSOs.

Other reasons we may not be aware of POTA are that much of their activity is on 20m with a rough breakdown of modes being 20% CW and 20% FT8, with the majority of ops using SSB, many of them QRO. SOTA modes are about 60% CW, 40% SSB, and less than 1% FT8, mostly QRP.

POTA by Greg-K7AGL

My wife and I were visiting our friends who recently moved to Shelton, WA. They recently bought a boat and I realized that there was a nearby island that was a state park. POTA K-3200, Hope Island Marine State Park. It had been activated only once before.

I threw out the idea of a boat-access activation and my friend thought it would be fun. We towed a small rowboat and when we got close, I threw my SOTA bag into the rowboat, hopped in and rowed to shore. I ended up getting 15 QSOs. I rowed back out into the channel and was picked up by my friend – a great way to spend the Fourth of July.

POTA by Brent-KJ7RPL

The decision to move from SOTA to POTA involved several elements. In the past 10 years I've backpacked a lot in the Pacific Northwest – the Pacific Crest Trail in Oregon and Washington, the Timberline Trail, Steens Mountain, the Deschutes River from the mouth on the Columbia to Maupin, etc.

As I re-entered the ham radio hobby a few years ago, I thought SOTA would be the perfect companion to keep me busy as we slowed down hiking and had more flexibility. Little did I realize that my non-ham hiking friends have little interest in watching me set up antennas and make QSO on mountain peaks. I had several very frustrating moments with my fellow hikers, the last being on Silver Star when I finally had my gear set up, and they were ready to head back down the mountain before I could get my first QSO. SOTA didn't work out as I had hoped. My interest in radio has elevated and interest in hiking is diminishing.

Then, a new discovery! My wife (non-hiker) loves to go camping in our little trailer. I soon figured out that if I book our camping season around state and national parks, I have tons of time playing POTA radio while trailer camping, while all the time having lots of quality time with my wife. It's a perfect fit. Now I don't disappear for long days on SOTA activations, but am with her on POTA activations. I get to have my cake and eat it too!

POTA by Dan-N7CQR

Last fall I did seven days in a row of POTA activating starting near Astoria and ending in Yachats. My minimum activations were two parks a day and a few times I activated four parks. It's been a long time since I did anything like this, but it really gives you a sense of propagation on a daily basis and presented a great opportunity to become familiar with my radio (a KX2). Plus, I discovered a bunch of smaller (and larger) cool parks that I had always just sort of ignored. It was good research for next summer for SOTA hikes and POTA parks using an Elecraft KH1.

Some "park" entities on my list last fall were the Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge (featuring tons of birds), Ecola State Park, Oswald West (a huge area), Cape Meares and Cape Lookout, and Yachats Ocean Road State Natural Area. I was able to qualify all but one park with the minimum of 10 QSOs. There were a good 20 to 30 other spots along my route that I missed or skipped. I was using QRP CW and a simple antenna, and I had a blast!

When You Need to Stack Another Log Periodic Antenna...Or >100,000 More (sadly, not very portable)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXcsFWw2qd8>



Rent a SOTA Summit Fire Lookout – by Scott-K7PET



Are you sick of staring at the same four walls, daydreaming about operating from mountain vistas instead of working on [TPS reports](#)? Ever woken up to the sunrise, fresh coffee, and working an F4 station? Have you stayed overnight on a summit with... gasp, electric lights?

Imagine this: you're perched atop a mountain peak in a window-sided cabin filled with the morning sun with breathtaking panoramas of endless evergreens, shimmering lakes, and snow-capped peaks that would thrill

even the most jaded SOTA activator. Every morning, you're greeted by a symphony of birdsong and a sunrise that puts any alarm clock to shame. Your new neighbors will be curious birds wondering which language all the dit-dahs are.

This isn't just about the views, you brought a top-secret weapon, your favorite rig and antenna, of course! Become a modern-day mountaintop Marconi, connecting with fellow hams across the vast wilderness. Who needs social media when you can chat about the weather (or the latest bear sightings) with someone on another peak a hundred miles away on 2m QRP? The chasers will pile up as you forget who you were talking to as you gaze across the forest for miles and wonder what is on the other side of the horizon. You'll witness breathtaking sunrises and sunsets, breathe in the freshest air imaginable, and become a communication rockstar of the mountains.

Speaking of antennas, let's talk about getting creative. The lookout towers weren't exactly designed for ham radio setups — but we are amateurs and creativity is in our bones. Can you string that end fed from the deck to the towering tree above? What about strapping the fishing pole to the railing for a vertical? Or, golly, could you load up the metal tower as an “antenna?”

The takeaway: more than just a view – lookout life isn't just about the breathtaking scenery, it's about the peace, the solitude, and the chance to connect with the world in unique ways by radio. Whether it's brewing the perfect cup of

coffee with a mountain view, having a cross-continental chat on CW or phone, or rigging up a high-wire antenna, there's always an adventure waiting for you atop a Forest Service lookout.

In doing some research and connecting the dots with USFS lookouts for rent and SOTA entities, I can suggest the following W7O highlights.

Devils Peak Lookout: [W7O/CN-033](#)

Although this lookout is formally closed by the Forest Service, this "rustic" mountaintop lookout is unlocked, clean, stocked with firewood, and has some supplies and tools. The two beds are still there with blankets. Apparently, there is a group of volunteers maintaining the lookout and it's available for overnight visitors on a first-come, first-served basis.



Bald Knob Lookout: [W7O/SC-108](#)

Nestled in SW Oregon's Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Bald Knob Lookout offers a rustic escape at 3,630 feet. This historic lookout features a one-room cabin with basic amenities like a propane stove, refrigerator, and lights. While there's no running water, the panoramic views of Eden Valley, the Rogue River, and endless forests are enough to leave you breathless. Link to reserve from May to October:

<https://www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/234155>.

Hager Mtn Lookout: [W7O/CE-028](#)

Perched at an impressive 7,195 feet in South Central Oregon's Fremont-Winema National Forest, Hager Mountain Lookout boasts unmatched solitude in the Oregon Outback. This

winterized lookout offers a cozy cabin with a small bed, bunks, a propane heater, and even a refrigerator for your creature comforts. While access may require a challenging hike or snowshoe trek, the panoramic vistas stretching all the way to Mount Hood and Mount Shasta on a clear day are more than worth the effort. Cowboy Dinner Tree is close by, a must do for the real Oregon Outback experience.

Reserve for dates between November to May: <https://www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/234187>.

Fall Mountain Lookout: [W7O/NE-096](#)

Fall Mountain Lookout in Eastern Oregon's Malheur National Forest offers a touch of luxury at 6,200 feet. This historic lookout features a one-room cabin with electricity, providing lighting, a heater, and a cookstove for a comfortable stay. Throw in a refrigerator for keeping your drinks and snacks chilled, and you have a surprisingly well-equipped perch for soaking in the panoramic views of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness below. Reservable May through October:

<https://www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/234125>.



Clear Lake Butte Lookout: [W7O/CN-059](#)

Available from December through April, the lookout can only be accessed by skiing, snowmobiling or snowshoeing 3.5 miles one way from the Skyline Sno-park. Winter driving conditions can occur in early fall and persist late into the spring. An ODOT Sno-Park permit is required to park at Skyline Sno-park and the trek can take three hours or longer. Guests are responsible for their own travel arrangements and safety, and must bring several of their own amenities. <https://www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/234247>.

More reservable (and first-come, first-served) lookouts will be featured in future newsletters. Find more Oregon lookouts here:

https://www.oregonlive.com/travel/2016/11/17_fire_lookouts_you_can_rent.html

CW Practice Perfection for QRQ (faster sending) by Darryl-WW7D

SO...you are doing CW SOTA activations, and are interested in improving your code sending speed and quality. There are, of course, many well-known practice techniques that will help with this. But how about using your time doing SOTA to improve your CW speed and accuracy?

A SOTA activation involves intensive sending with a lot of repetition, so it can be fruitfully put to work for improving your CW sending skills. Done wrong, however, it can also hinder your ability to improve. Learning CW is not unlike learning a musical instrument. A fundamental principle in mastering a musical instrument is to slow down, practice perfection, and speed up only when you can do so without mistakes. This same technique can help you improve your CW.



Here is how you can turn an activation into a productive practice session:

1. Start out with your CW speed set to something very comfortable
2. Make a few QSOs
3. Did you make any mistakes at all?
Yes? Slow down 1 WPM
No? Speed up 1 WPM
4. Go back to step 2

After a few iterations, you will find the highest speed at which you can flawlessly send CW. Spend some time at that speed sending perfect CW. This might especially be true for sending a Summit Reference during a S2S QSO...that's always a challenge. Pay attention to character and word spacing. But most importantly, don't make mistakes. If you do, slow down 1 WPM. When you have a long run of no mistakes it's time to move up 1 WPM and do a no-mistakes run at that speed. If you make a mistake, slow down again.

You will, of course, occasionally QRS for slower chasers, and then return to your fastest "perfect" speed. The idea here is to build positive "muscle memory" with every character, word, and phrase of CW you send. This is good, when you do so flawlessly. Every time you make a mistake, you build muscle memory...for making that mistake. That is, you train yourself to not send flawlessly at that speed.

The expression "Go slow to go fast" is used in many contexts. For activities requiring motor skills, it means mastering a task slowly with perfection before increasing speed. If you find yourself making frequent CW mistakes the likely reason is that you have been practicing making mistakes...and succeeding! Put the brakes on and achieve slow perfection. Then you will be prepared to make progress toward fast, flawless CW.

ARTS PAGE

CW FOREVER AND EVER

by Jim Hatherley, WA1TBY

You must have at times thought into the past,
Where some things go out while others last,
What comes to my mind is the old morse code,
That has weathered the storms from any abode,
To talk with one's fingers is surely an art,
Of any info you care to impart,
In most conditions the signals get through,
While the same about phone is simply not true,
Those dits and dahs cut through the trash,
Of nearby noise or lightning's crash,
To the sensitive ears of the ham's receiver,
Who records this data with ardent fever,
He knows he's doing something unique,

(In such poor conditions that's quite a feat),
To roger the message that came off the air,
These brass pounders sure do have that flair,
They say Morse ops are a dying breed,
But don't despair there's always that need,
That when conditions get rough for the new automation,
Be rest assured there'll be need for your station,
CW is dying? Believe it never,
This mode will be 'round forever and ever,
But one thing is sure what we really need,
Is to relay out knowledge to the younger breed,
To carry the torch long after we're gone,
To send Morse code through the air like a song,
When at last silent keys pull that lever,
We can rest in peace,
It's CW forever.



["VHF Guy" by Pom-DG7AC](#)