

# Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

March-April 2017

Young's Peak – VE7/CP-048 – photo by John-VA7JBE

**2017 SOTA Calendar of Events** – Guy-N7UN has updated the major SOTA events for 2017. This also sets a stake in the ground for the North America SOTA Spring Activity Weekend and the Western North America S2S Party. The SOTA Gathering at SeaPac is a great way to meet up with other SOTA aficionados, and note a unique, once in a SOTA-lifetime, operating event for the August 21<sup>st</sup> Great American Total Solar Eclipse.

- April 22-23: North America SOTA Spring Activity Weekend + QRPTTF Spring Event (Apr 22)
- June 2: SOTA Gathering at SeaPac – 6pm at Pizza Harbor, Seaside, Oregon
- June 10-11: NA SOTA Summer Activity Weekend + ARRL June VHF Contest
- July 16-17: SOTA optional date + CQ WW VHF Contest
- August 5-6: SOTA Rocky Mtn Rendezvous + Colorado 14er Event + Western North America S2S Party + ARRL UHF (222MHz+) Contest
- August 21: SOTA and the Great American Total Solar Eclipse of 2017  
(See [http://www.eclipse2017.org/2017/path\\_through\\_the\\_US.htm](http://www.eclipse2017.org/2017/path_through_the_US.htm) for details)
- September 9-10: North American SOTA Fall Activity Weekend + ARRL Sept VHF Contest

**Bonus Season Ends March 31** – There is a bunch of snow throughout the west, and it's likely that snowshoes or skis or even a ski lift might help you get into the activation zone for those three extra points. Each association has their own criteria for bonus points – so check your Association Reference Manual for details.

**QRP School** – Cliff-N4CCB has a YouTube Channel with a nice range of articles on QRP. Two in particular talk about QRP transceivers – if you were wondering about available QRP radios, you can hear his opinions here: [Some QRP Radios](#) and here: [Some More QRP Radios](#).

**Everyone can be a Chaser** – Most SOTA QSO's are on HF, leading to working folks that are hundreds or thousands of miles away. If you'll be around the shack or driving on a weekend, look to <http://sotawatch.org/alerts.php> to see if anyone is on locally, and see if you can work them. Many activators take time for a few calls on 146.52-fm and you may catch someone you wouldn't expect. For example, the summit of Mt. Adams has Line of Sight into much of Portland – even if you don't notice it on the horizon.

**W7O SOTA "Meet-up"** – In February Oregon Summits on the Air held a no-host gathering of twelve activators and SOTA "wanna-bees." We met for several



hours on a Tuesday evening and had some relaxed conversations about hiking, activating, radios, and all the things we enjoy about Summits on the Air. The following weekend we offered up some "introductory" activations for anyone that wanted to turn out. We had great weather on five summits for this event (in Oregon "great" means not raining.) The peaks activated were Bells Mountain (WA with Scott-K3BYU and Guy-N7UN, Cooper Mountain (OR by Benton-KF7QLP), Mount Sylvania (OR by Mark-

KE7MSU), Mount Scott (OR by Roland-KG7FOP) and Bald Peak (OR with Kevin-K7KAD and Etienne-K7ATN, Rachel-K7NIT, Dan-KG7VAK, with guest op James, son of VAK – last three pictured above). Other SOTA folks heard chasing included: Brian-AC7MD, Rusty-K7RMO and Dave-N7DB. We hope to try this again in a few months – on another dry day!

**SOTA Builds Good Operating Practices** – SOTA could be considered a bit like contesting, but where you compete with mostly with yourself on your own schedule. Clear exchanges under challenging conditions, knowing your equipment, and portable operations with flexibility the key – like QRP Field Day every weekend you head out. For SOTA, practicing good phonetics and giving realistic reports is also part of what we try to do. For those that want to be ready to provide communications in an emergency, SOTA, like contesting, gives one a chance to practice what the skills that would be needed "When all else fails." Here are three articles that support the idea that contesting (and SOTA) are just the thing to prepare for emcomm:

- [ARRL January VHF Contest - Perfect for ARES Practice, Too](#)
- [Putting Contesting to Work for Your Public Service Team](#)
- [Why Public Service-Oriented Hams Should Participate in Contests](#)

Maybe your club, ham service group, local ARES chapter (Amateur Radio Emergency Service), or Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) would consider SOTA a means to practice using their "Go-Kits" under some "real" conditions on a local hill or mountaintop.



## Ski Mountaineering Expedition to Young's Peak – VE7/CP-048 –John-VA7JBE

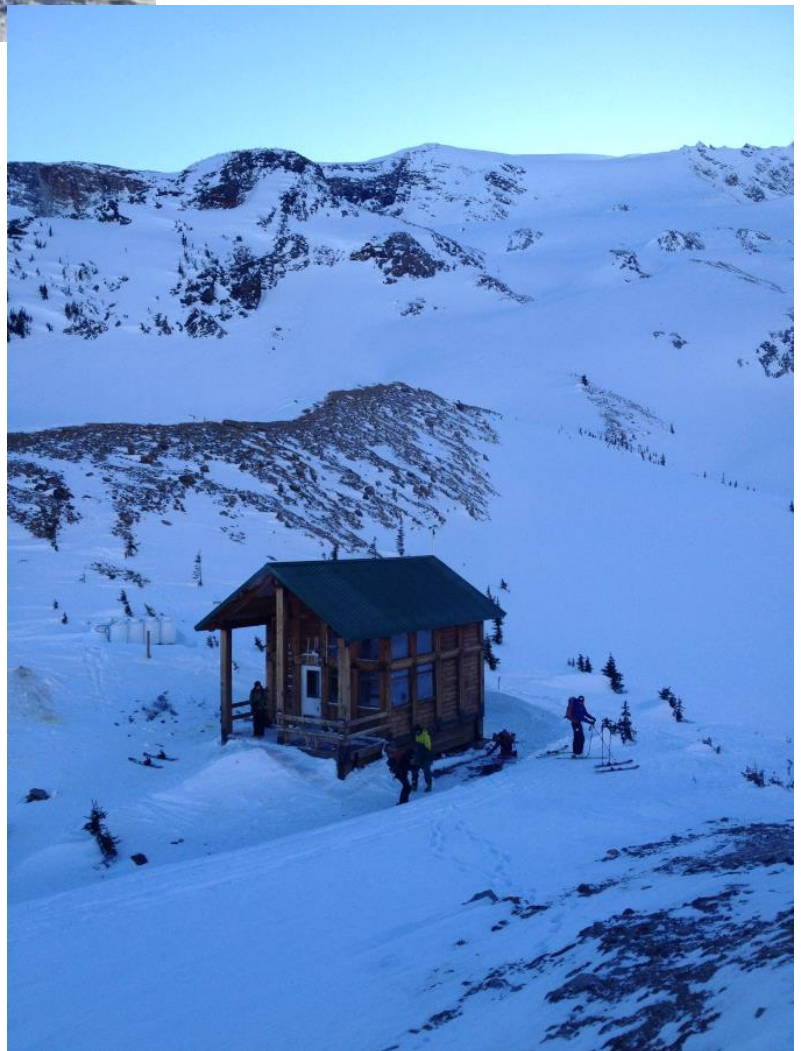
A two-night trip to the Asulkan Hut presented a perfect opportunity to try another summit in the Rogers Pass area. The Columbia-Shuswap region of VE7 had recently seen its first activation (Mt. Mackenzie VE7/CP-073) and I was keen to try one of the classic summits of the Canadian Selkirk range. There are no 'easy' SOTA qualified summits in Rogers Pass and it felt good to have activated at least one of them and put this National Park on the air.



The trip began with a slog up the Asulkan Valley from the parking lot on Highway 1. It took us about two hours to make it this far, even on skis, before reaching the headwall at the end of the valley where it begins to gain some real elevation through a forested area known as the Tree Triangle. The Asulkan Hut sits at the top of the tree line at 2100m and has terrific views in nearly all directions, particularly North towards Mt. Rogers and the Hermit Group. After stashing our food and bedding in the hut, we set out to explore some of the surrounding area and gather a bit of information about the snowpack.

The Asulkan Hut is maintained and operated by the Alpine Club of Canada and offers a spectacular view of Rogers Pass. It is one of my favorite backcountry huts and, for better or worse, this is not a minority opinion. Securing one of the ten beds can require booking more than 6 months in advance. Fortunately, our group of six had the foresight to reserve the hut last August. From the picture below you can see Young's Peak in the background, and the headwall above the glacier leading up to it.

Activation day arrived and we set off just after 8AM. The ascent to Young's Peak is relatively straightforward. After navigating through the moraines above the hut, we arrived on the Asulkan Glacier and the northwest headwall below the summit. From 2600m to the summit at 2815m, we strapped our skis to our packs and began the long boot pack to the top. The wind crust proved supportive for only the lightest members of our party and the heavier among us, me included, were left postholing our way up. Sadly, my only picture from the summit has a good chunk of my thumb in the way.





The temperature at the top was -20C before the wind chill, which meant lingering for radio contacts was not an option. My climbing partners allowed me 20 minutes to operate and, given the cold, I didn't argue. There's cellular coverage at the summit so I could self-spot and the contacts soon came rolling in. Temperatures were cold enough that my radio shut off several times and I wound up stuffing it in my jacket to keep the batteries warm enough to finish.

Instead of descending back down the headwall to the hut we decided to traverse the ridge to the North towards Forever Young and The Ravens, two ski descents of note in the area. Moving along the ridge required more boot packing as well as some rough skiing on wind-blasted snow.

Forever Young is a 400m couloir with pitch angle exceeding 50 degrees in places. The day we arrived at the top it was just as wind blasted as the rest of the ridge. After sneaking a peak over the lip we decided it would be wiser to continue to The Ravens near and descend to the valley bottom there.

An hour of skiing brought us back up to the hut and a hot meal before bed. We spent the next day playing around below the headwall of Young's Peak on a descent known as the Seven Steps of Paradise before I had to run back down the valley for work. There are no 'easy' SOTA qualified summits in Rogers Pass and it felt good to have activated at least one of them.




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