

Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

October-November-December 2020

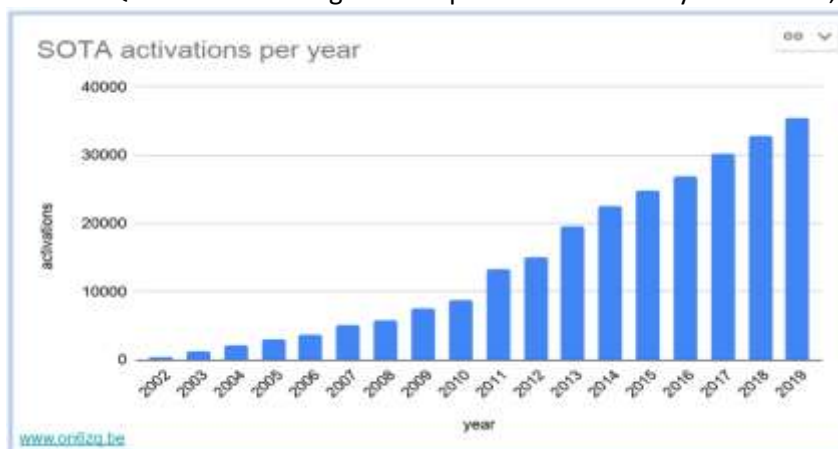
Estes Butte Lookout, Washington by Bren-NU7A

Things to SOTA Remember – The following are described in the [SOTA General Rules](#), which we might review from time to time. For a quick review, let's remember that for SOTA:

- Activations are from a designated SOTA summit
- Equipment is carried some distance
- Equipment to be battery or solar powered
- No operation in the vicinity of a motor vehicle
- Only activate summits with permission and any required permits
- When activating, abide by any local regulations (like in national parks)
- Operate [within the Activation Zone](#) (25m or ~80 feet vertical)
- Operate *under our own license privileges* (whether an Activator or Chaser)
- For points, make at least four QSOs *with different stations*
- Make those minimum four QSOs *on the same UTC day*
- No QSOs with other expedition members in the AZ
- Not use a repeater *or a relay from another station* (satellites excepted)
- No annoying of other hikers or arguing with rangers

SOTA is just a game, a wonderful, all-consuming game for many of us. Above are some of the Rules that we use so that we all play the same game. Sometimes you'll hike and find you can't get to the AZ – no SOTA that day. Sometimes you'll work only three stations – no points that day. Sometimes you'll find a gate and a no trespassing sign – not that one. SOTA rules are different than many contests and many questions about SOTA can be resolved by reading the [SOTA General Rules](#) and the [Association Reference Manual](#) for your locality.

SOTA Marching Through Time – Christophe-ON6ZQ has [prepared a set of charts showing some interesting aspects](#) of SOTA. It looks like the number of QSOs over time might correspond to the Solar Cycle? Thanks, Christophe!



Solar Cycle 25 – The news is that [Solar Cycle 25 has started in December 2019](#). That means that propagation will only get better over the next five years or so – something to really look forward to!

Here's a story that may reflect on having permission to operate (we don't know if this was SOTA...)

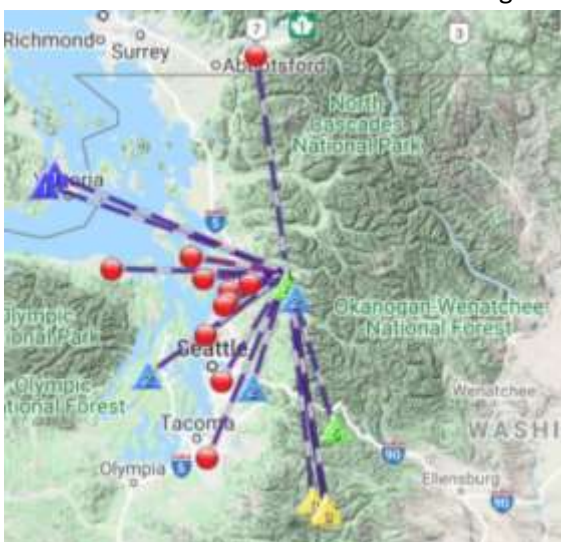
<http://www.southgatearc.org/news/2020/august/german-radio-amateur-falsely-accused-in-greece.htm#.X0BFUuplBdY>



I am GOAT Calendar – perhaps a possible gift for your favorite MG? The idea of goat philosophers is intriguing for sure...

Puget Sound S2S Party by James-WA7JNJ – On 8 August Puget Sound had **ELEVEN** Activators gather on the airwaves for a Summit to Summit Party! Here's the story from James, operating from [Mount Pilchuck](#):

Thank you for all activators who participated in the Puget Sound S2S party on Saturday August 8th! While the weather wasn't as nice with rain on a few summits, there were eleven activators including KV7DX, VE7JH, KF7ZYF, WW7D, WU7H, VE7KPM, WX7EMT, KF7NYC, K17E, WA7JNJ, and K3OG. K7ATN and K7IMA were also able to make contact with a few summits from way down on W7W/LC-056! For two activators KF7ZYF and K17E, it was their second activation...and KF7NYC is a newer activator as well! Was great to have them, and everyone made it a great event! 73, James WA7JNJ



You can Contribute! Newsletter Reviews of Newish Transceivers and Antenna Offerings – There are BUNCHES of new radios out there. Advances in micro-electronics, SDR and small-scale manufacturing has led to a boom in new radios, antennas, analyzers, etc. I'm looking for a few paragraphs on your personal experience with one of the more recently introduced rigs. People would like to know its innovation and price point, and suitability for activations in the PNW. Photos in use on a summit would be fabulous...reply to the newsletter announcement.

On Recent Northwest Fires – Some insights from Matt-KF7HIZ.

It's been a particularly bad fire season here in Oregon and across the Pacific Northwest. I was asked to share my thoughts on the recent wildfires from my perspective as a volunteer trail worker. I started volunteering with the Pacific Crest Trail Association and the Trail Keepers of Oregon shortly after the Eagle Creek Fire in 2017 and have put in a couple hundred hours clearing trails, mostly in the Columbia River Gorge burn area. I'm not an expert and the following are just my thoughts, not any official statement from any organization I've worked with.



Based on what I've seen with the much smaller Eagle Creek Fire recovery, I think the areas in and around the many fires in the PNW are likely to be closed to the public for years. Yes, for years. Long after the fires are contained, there are many hazards within burn areas that make this necessary:

Fire - Hotspots and flare ups can occur months after the fire is thought to be out due to smoldering logs and roots ([see this video](#)).

Falling trees and branches – even a 5-10 mph breeze can bring down a hollowed-out tree. This can persist for years as more trees die and rot. Just to put things in perspective, [ODOT is estimating hundreds of thousands of trees need to be removed along 60 miles of Oregon Highway 22 because they pose an immediate danger to traffic](#). Now, multiply that by the tens of thousands of miles of forest roads and trails impacted by fires and you can start to see the difficulty in reopening the backcountry any time soon.

Landslides – without vegetation to hold slopes together, expect tumbling rocks even when it's dry. This also can persist for years. [Here's a video of a slide encountered by a trail crew on the Eagle Creek Trail, nearly two years after the fire](#).

Sink holes – burnt out roots, leave a spider web of trenches one to three feet deep. What looks like solid ground, can give way and be a real ankle twister or even a leg breaker.

Vanishing trails – blown down trees, erosion, and the lack of vegetation on either side of the trail can make it difficult to see that a trail is there at all.

All of that is to say, if a wilderness area is closed after a fire, you would be wise to abide by the closure, and in fact, it's required to abide closures to do SOTA.

The repair of the trails many of us use to get to SOTA activations might start next year, but it is going to take a long time for some trails to open. If you're able, consider contributing to or volunteering with one of these organizations:

Idaho Trail Association
<https://www.idahotrailassociation.org>

Washington Trail Association
<https://www.wta.org>

Volunteers - BC Parks - Province of British Columbia
<http://www.elp.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/volunteers/>

Montana Wilderness Association
<https://wildmontana.org>

Trail Keepers of Oregon
<https://www.trailkeepersoforegon.org>

"When you think you are in the AZ...but you're not." WE usually think of our GPS as keeping from getting lost, giving us a chance to find where the car is parked, and navigating on unlabeled back roads. However, finding the true summit and getting us into the AZ is another contribution of the GPS – here are some summits that may otherwise fool you...



←Bandera Mountain [W7W/KG-073](#): The 1 km from the false summit of Little Bandera Mountain where the trail seems to 'end' some consider downright fun, with only a "little" bushwhacking required.

Tolmie Peak [W7W/RS-035](#): This very popular hike "ends" at a lookout. However, SOTA activators still have a 10 minute 100m easy scramble to the true summit at the east end of the ridge.

Easton Ridge [W7W/CW-077](#): Darryl-WW7D recalls that he was initially fooled by a high spot that looked like the true summit, but a quick check against a map forced him to soldier on.

Amabilis Mountain [W7W/CW-076](#) has two peaks. The main road leads to the forested false summit (and a beacon). There is a 4x4 track that covers the approximate one-mile distance over to the true summit. The saddle between the two is at least 25m below the true summit and probably more like 30m. The true summit is a distinct rocky outcrop. One can drive close to the true summit. About half way up the mountain, there is a very sharp left-hand turn. That road goes up to near the true summit.

Mount Hebo [W7O/NC-006](#): Sadly, the RF site is not the summit or in the AZ for this near drive-up – it's about 5km further along the ridge and you need to get out and walk several hundred meters.

Tom Dick Harry Mtn [W7O/CN-032](#): It's about 1km on a rough and vanishing trail from where most folks stop to get to the AZ.

Sisi Butte [W7O/CN-015](#): This is a tough one – although only about 500 meters from the lookout and a road, a rough bushwhack is required to get into the AZ for this summit (pictured at right→).

Crane Mountain [W7O/CE-001](#): Another peak with a saddle where the road goes to a lower peak and the lookout site but the true summit is about 1km to the south.



Huckleberry Mountain [W7O/WV-050](#): Another summit where the peak is about 1km past where most folks stop to have their lunch and enjoy the view. Thankfully there's a good view from the AZ too.

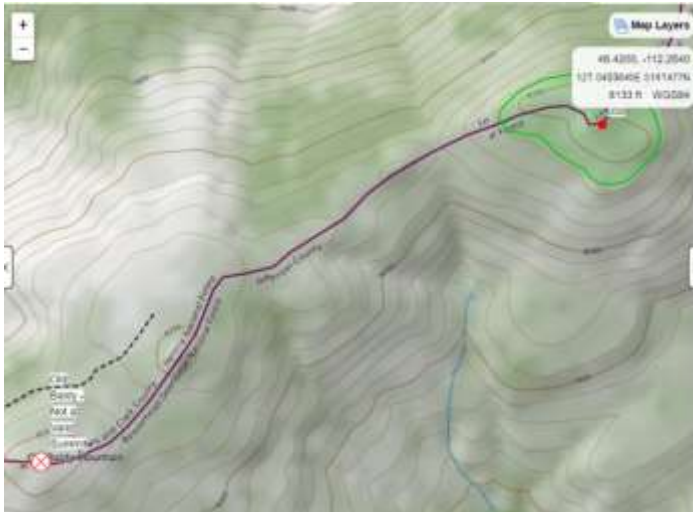
←Tidbits Mountain [W7O/CM-089](#): Pictured to the left is the actual summit for Tidbits – you'd be right to think that the trail leads to the adjacent and easily reached lookout that's only a bit lower than this rock pinnacle. It still needs to be activated by a SOTA rock climber.



Squaw Butte - [W7I/SR-126](#): The road goes to an RF site which overlooks the valley. However, the true summit is about 2.5km north – requiring a bushwhack hike down and back up to the true summit.

Granite Mountain - [W7I/SR-038](#): This has a popular hiking trail near McCall up to a lookout, but you'll pass the (non-descript) actual summit on the right about 1km before the lookout.

Brundage Mountain - [W7I/SR-056](#): The ski area of the same name near McCall Idaho goes to what seems like a summit, but the true Brundage Mountain is about a mile away along the ridge line.



←Peak 8251 [W7M/HB-058](#): Per Rob-AE7AP, this one used to be called “Old Baldy” in the ARM, but he removed the name in the ARM revision since it could be confusing and lead one to the incorrect summit (the one that the USGS calls “Old Baldy”). Rob first climbed the USGS summit, then realized that he was in the wrong place and went to the less obvious SOTA summit further on (AZ colored in green).

Active Activators Through Time – It’s interesting to look back at historic SOTA Data and see who and how many Activators were involved sometime during a particular calendar year. Here’s a table of the number of Activators by Association from 2011 when PNW SOTA started through September 2020. The trend is roughly linear and it looks like activity is proportional to total population. I expect a few more to get on the air before this year comes to a close.

	W7I	W7M	W7O	W7W	VE7
2011	3	0	13	9	0
2012	6	0	20	21	2
2013	4	4	22	33	4
2014	9	7	25	31	4
2015	15	7	27	34	9
2016	11	9	26	47	10
2017	6	9	42	52	15
2018	10	15	39	60	14
2019	20	11	59	75	14
2020	22	14	43	71	13

Eight Tips For successful Low Power Radio Contacts – This video by Julian-OH8STN has some good information for HF QRP – that’s us! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGimPtrkJtM>



A few thoughts on making Mountain Goat from Bren-NU7A

I have had no theme or timeline for this process, except to just have fun on the summits.

Few pictures taken [see the banner for this newsletter], and all my activations were done solo. This wasn't a theme for me, but after climbing with several alpine climbing clubs I decided to forgo all the drama and scheduling conflicts and go solo some time ago.

A few tidbits of interest:

- 1] All summits done solo in W7W with a few in W7O.
- 2] A majority of activations done with a MTR-3b, using multiple bands the last few seasons due to poor propagation.

3] Most unique was a 15 meter CW QSO kayak mobile while floating the American River in California.

4] Close encounters include, besides bears, four-legged mountain goats getting too close for comfort during activations and two-legged MG KXØR, popping up on 60m from Colorado looking for a clear frequency, while I paused in calling CQ.
73 Bren [nu7a]

On the De-evolution of Antenna Erection – by Kevin-K4KPK [from the SOTA Reflector]

When I began activating, I would carefully guy my mast, sufficient to withstand a gale. The mast was fiberglass, not carbon fiber, to ensure an RF-pure support. Or I would use a slingshot to get a line over the highest possible tree branch. Eventually, I decided to always use a mast, because sameness is goodness. And sameness helps me not to forget critical items (such as walking off the summit and leaving my antenna in the tree!) The mast is about 10 meters long, so it's good for holding a half-wave for 20m. It's carbon fiber, and definitely not RF-pure because the wire tunes shorter than in free space. It was much less effort than hauling a heavy, long, Jackite mast.

I began using bungee cord to hold the mast to a tree/fencepost/sign, because it was quicker than guying. I securely bound the mast to the support at multiple points, to prevent it pivoting around a single support point and falling to the ground. Securely fastened.

At one point the situation prevented a perfect setup, and I found myself saying, "What the heck...it only has to stand for an hour," and I began to get much more slapdash about it. Nowadays, if the wind is mild, I often fix a wire to the mast while it is on the ground and raise it until it gets wedged in some branches. "Yep. That ought to last for about an hour." On my second summit the other day, I used a 'stuck-in-the-branches' about 20-30 degrees off vertical. To the objective observer, it was pathetic. I prefer to think of it as a perfect fitting of limited resources (I was tired!) to the solution of a problem (getting a wire somewhat off the ground).

The radio waves don't seem to mind.

73 DE K4KPK / Kevin

Here's another Contest to Clutter Up the Airwaves...

The [new Portable Operations Challenge](#) is October 3 and 4, 2020. The operator may choose to operate any 8-hour contiguous period during the 48 hours of the event. Contest scores are based on

a kilometers-per-watt metric, and operation is to take place on 80, 40, 20, 15, and 10 meters. While non-portable stations can compete, the [contest rules](#) are biased towards portable operating. See the rules for the score calculation, exchange, restrictions, and the special rule requiring a "Data security and handling conditions text statement" to be submitted with your log.



New Contest!

October 3 & 4, 2020

foxmikehotel.com/challenge/

Portable Operations Challenge

What Bands do Activators Use? – It's always good to remember that the Activator is in charge of what bands operated. But making Chasers happy is always good – those near and far are happy to work you for the adventure and the points. <https://reflector.sota.org.uk/t/how-does-the-activator-chooses-the-band-he-works-on/23775/16>

IF you have an FT-817 and would like to move away from the coaxial power connector with a PowerPole adapter as pictured here →
contact Etienne-K7ATN.



W7O Stealth Chaser Rusty-K7RMO

Rusty has been chasing SOTA for four years – but we just thought he was a thoughtful guy that monitored 146.52-FM once in a while. He has often been there for the new folks starting out in the Portland metro area giving them 25 percent of what they need for that one point. Little did we know that his friendly questions about “Summit References?” were carefully written down. Fast-forward to the present day – Rusty finally uploaded his SOTA chaser log and he's accumulated over 700 points towards his Shack Sloth – all on VHF! And he did that without following SOTAWatch Spots or Alerts (he's now clued in). Thanks, Rusty!

This IS FUN! by Vick-KI7MMZ, Puget Sound Chaser.
I achieved Shack Sloth in April 2017 with over 300 chases – all on VHF. Some call Chasers SHACK SLOTHS, although I'm not sure why. I live below a ridgeline and need to navigate hills as many Activators do on summits. I use a HT and have brick and mortar obstructions from my QTH and get my exercise by climbing up to the Snohomish County Courthouse and then walking back and forth depending on where the Activator is. A barrel of fun and I get to share our activities with the public.
Vick-KI7MMZ



Your ideas for this newsletter are welcome. Thanks to the following for their contributions to this newsletter: Josh-WU7H, Darryl-WW7D, Matt-KF7HIZ, Rob-AE7AP, Jim-K7MK, Victor-KI7MMZ, Rusty-K7RMO, Kevin-K4KPK and Bren-NU7A for his banner photo from of Estes Butte Lookout. Subscribe for notification by registering on <http://www.pnwsota.org/> and checking the box for the PNW SOTA Newsletter. This newsletter is brought to you by the W7O Association Manager, Etienne-K7ATN. Find back issues here: www.pnwsota.org/content/pacific-northwest-sota-newsletters.