

Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

January–February–March 2020 Photo by Tim-KG7EJT from Snoqualmie Mountain

Upcoming Events –

Bonus Season has started for PNW Associations – look to the Association Reference Manual to see where and when bonus points will apply - - and then get out in the snow!

ARRL January VHF Contest is a chance to help your fellow hams make a few contacts on bands 6m and up, and allow activators to use just a HT from many summits. 2-meter FM can work of course (146.52 & 146.58) and be prepared to give out contacts on 70cm as well (446.00). The exchange is grid square. January 18th and 19th, starting at 1900Z: <http://www.arrl.org/january-vhf>.

!! SOTA Online Service Changes for 2020 !! – Andy-MMØFMF reminds us that 2020 will be a big year for SOTA as we will finally be closing down the old database. What this means for everyone is pretty simple: you have to be able to login and use SSO. This is pretty much standard for most people now anyway. However, there will be people still using SOTAwatch2 and the old database who have not tried their SSO logins yet.

If you can login in to SOTAwatch3 (<https://sotawatch.sota.org.uk/>) then you are sorted, your SSO login is working. The same login is used for the new database (<https://newsotadata.sota.org.uk/14>). You have nothing else to do here and can relax. <https://reflector.sota.org.uk/t/sota-online-service-changes-for-2020/21818>

New Activators for 2019 – In 2019 in the Pacific Northwest there was a huge crop of new activators – those that just got started on all the SOTA fun since January 2019. In this case “a bunch” is 70 new Northwest activators that got a signal out from 425 summits. (In 2018 the total was 52 activators from 159 summits – wow, what a change.)

	Association	2019 New Activators	Total Activations
VE7	British Columbia	4	30
W7I	Idaho	11	21
W7M	Montana	1	1
W7O	Oregon	27	227
W7W	Washington	27	156

If you look at things on a *per capita basis*, it's W7O this year that won out as the PNW SOTA Association with the most activity, followed closely by W7I. And I would have liked to recognize new CHASERS in 2019 – but there are so many and the database is clunky for looking up those that started at a particular time. If you'd like to compile new Chasers for the next newsletter, please let me know.

Below are the top new activators from each PNW Association. If you have a chance to reach out to, work one on (or from) a summit or hear them chatting on 146.52 or .58 – encourage them...and help them make four contacts!

VE7	W7I	W7M	W7O	W7W
VE7EA	KT7WW	N7JNN	K7AHR	KL0NP
VE7VRD	K7TAA		AG7GP	KJ7EHA
VE7HI	W8DOX		KJ7DMI	KJ7DDK
VA7NTN	KJ7JBM		WJ7WJ	KJ7ARG

New Activators Getting Out for the First Points – Chris-KG7VLX writes this about inviting some new folks to try Summits on the Air. And then a note from Gregg-W7GRM to describe his experience as the newbie...

I posted on the Idaho Ham Radio Operators page on Facebook that I was going to activate Lucky Peak (Idaho) and had room and equipment for people to tag along. I gave out my email and got about 5 people that were "interested." It ended up being myself, Gregg-W7GRM, Vince-KD7TWW and Scott-KJ7CZY. This ended up being beneficial since the day we went up was also a FM simplex contest put on by the Southwest Idaho ARC. We had plenty of simplex chasers available for the hams with Tech. licenses, and it was a good thing because HF was dead.

We met at a local coffee shop and I started with a five-minute show and tell. I covered posting alerts and spots, the basic SOTA exchange and gave out summit info. I always print off a map from the SOTA mapping web site with all the summit info and use it as my log sheet.

The walk up is about a 1/3 mile with maybe 300 feet of elevation gain. We took it nice and slow. On the summit we



spread out and everyone got started with HT's while I set up my FT817 and a homemade VHF ground plane antenna on a SOTA pole.

Gregg had some experience and a yagi so he was off and running with no problems (see the photo). Scott and Vince worked for about 20 minutes and were having some trouble with the stock HT antennas for distant contacts. We ended up gathering around my FT-817 and just passing the mic back and forth. With the next set of rain clouds headed our way; we called it a day before we got soaked.

Here's the experience from Gregg's point of view:

I had a really nice experience on my first activation with Chris-KG7VLX. Chris had offered to take any interested hams up to the summit of Lucky Peak in Boise, Idaho to experience a SOTA activation. I had been meaning to try SOTA and this was the perfect opportunity to see how it is done. This was an easy peak to access (if you have a capable vehicle) and

Chris's Volvo was more than capable of taking our small group up the rough dirt road (nearly to the summit) with only a short hike to get to the actual top. It was a semi-cloudy day at the summit, but still beautiful for May in Boise, Idaho. I had planned to operate VHF Simplex, with 5 Watts and a 6 element yagi that I had recently made, but had not hiked with. It worked great with my Icom HT! I had so much fun trying it out (even more so, because it worked so well and I could really test the directionality of it on top of the summit).

A great time was had by all, and a big thanks to Chris for organizing it all and showing us how it was done!

Photo of the Season – Bill-WJ7WJ was out in the Oregon Coast Range and saw these barefoot prints in the snow. Or should I say, bear foot prints...



More on HT Antennas – What's on Your Handie?

<https://www.hamradio.me/antennas/ht-antenna-comparisons.html?fbclid=IwAR3BCiGlpIqrIWHXTrPlyUgr0rc72UbkgbrjGdcacz-MmGq8iVDR3MUBPI>

Invalid Activation with Great Integrity – Keith-KR7RK writes up his experience in missing the Activation Zone:

<https://reflector.sota.org.uk/t/invalid-activation-w4c-em-085-pilot-mountain/21788>

Perhaps checking the SOTA summit database would have revealed a [“No Access” message](#) from 2012.

This is a reminder to check all available resources when you are researching your next summit...

Things to do this Winter – Write Up Some Trip Reports

Most folks will be activating a bit less – so why not write up a trip report or two to help your fellow activator find their way to that favorite peak of yours? We are fortunate here in the PNW to have one of the best places to post a trip report – pnwsota.org.

"Blogs" are for summit activations – or something you know about a particular summit, even if it's just that it's posted "No Trespassing." A title with clarity for summit name and state/province is a useful way to start, as is the month and year of activation. There are many summits with the same name, and the state can help ease confusion, and the month indicates the season and the year would tell folks if this is recent information or something that may not be current. A descriptive trip report title might be, "**Larch Mtn, WA | October 2019.**"

The content of a trip report should help others activate the peak. Directions to the trailhead, condition of the road, necessary permits are a great start. Then information about the trail distance and elevation gain, any issues with following the trail, and what one will find in the activation zone for antennas, views, etc.

You'll want to link your report with the new SOTA summit pages. Copy the URL of your trip report blog to the clipboard, then click on the summit reference in your blog – it will take you to the summit page. You'll need to log into <https://summits.sota.org.uk/> and then you can select an external link with your trip report URL.

Things to do this Winter – Learn CW

A few years back Rich-N4EX looked at the eham.net product review section for CW training and based on the number of reviews and their ratings, the following could be possible candidates for aids to learn CW:

- Code Quick 2000
- G4FON Morse Tutor
- Gordon West W5YI
- Koch Method CW Trainer for Windows
- Learn CW Online

[CW Academy](http://CWAcademy) is another option, offering "on the air" skeds with a mentor; this may work for some folks with home stations. SOTA Chasers are renowned for slowing down for new CW operators – go with a buddy for your first few CW activations to have someone help you copy those tough callsigns.

Things to do this Winter – Build a Kit

A complete transceiver or maybe just a dummy load/Wattmeter to see what your rig puts out? There's nothing more ham-like than assembling your own gear – and more SOTA-like to then use it in the field. Here are some ideas for kits:

- <https://www.qrpkits.com/>
- <https://qrpguys.com/>
- <https://www.qrp-labs.com/>
- <https://www.sotabeams.co.uk/>

Things to do this Winter – Make a New Antenna

End-fed half-wave, trapped dipole, loaded vertical, 2m yagi? See the kit references above, or use Google to find the design you'd like to try from scratch. An antenna analyzer or SWR meter will help you get it to resonance.

Things to do this Winter – Fix Something

I am almost caught up on repairing fiberglass poles (I always buy two) but there are two antennas to be fixed and a few power cables to assemble. Oh, I've also got two unfinished kits – I think that would be in the "fix something" category.

Things to do this Winter – LOG YER CONTACTS!

Some of you log only "aged" contacts – after they've sat in your log for months (or longer!). Let's try to get caught up this winter and do better in 2020 to have our SOTA log reflect our SOTA activity – use the new SSO database at <https://sotawatch.sota.org.uk/>. This goes for CHASERS also – show us who you've worked!

Things to do this Winter – READ THE MANUAL

For all those times when you can't find the right menu setting in your transceiver, or can't turn off "LOCK" on your HT, or want to change your CW transmit speed – maybe you (and I) will sit down with the radio manual and practice a few things that I wish I could remember.

Doing the New Year – A few PNW activators were out bridging the New Year with contacts before UTC midnight (4pm local) and more contacts after midnight UTC. Chasers and Activators get double points for this – if you don't mind the slashing rain and wind that we had in Oregon. Darryl-WW7D and Josh-WU7H were out in W7W, and four summits were



covered in W7O with Etienne-K7ATN (pictured on the playground equipment of Skyline Ridge), Bill-WJ7WJ, Jason-KJ7DMI (with a photo of his j-pole on Bunker Hill) and Mark-KE7MSU. And Rob-AE7AP, Vick-K7VK, and Bill-N7MSI were out in Montana. Make your plans for next year with an easy to access summit you can get down after dark – and maybe arrange for some dry and pleasant weather in advance...



New W7W Mountain Goat – Chris-WX7EMT by Chuck-KE7JWP.

Chris completed his quest for MG on Sugarloaf Peak (W7W/CH-195) in August 2019. Chris was one of my students on a Mountaineer scramble field trip. When we reached the summit of Mt. Earl, most of us took a break and ate lunch, but Chris took out his radio and was making contacts. As a ham operator, this was my introduction to SOTA. We became good friends and enjoyed activation of various summits together.



Chris likes to do what he calls SOTA marathons, where the goal is to activate 4-6 summits in one day; he always has a detailed plan (routes to summit, time of arrival, etc.). Many times, it involves driving some very bad roads and brush bashing, and it always amazed me how often we arrived very close to his planned time!

Josh-WU7H passed this on to me about Chris: One time when activating Elk Mountain, we were visited by some mountain goats. Chris just calmly walked down from the summit while the goats were glaring at us. They must have sensed that he would soon be a part of the herd.



Josh-WU7H becomes the second W7W MG in 2019! by Darryl, WW7D

In early December Josh-WU7H became the fifth mountain goat in the W7W association, and the second of 2019. I had the privilege of joining Josh for his MG activation. It was an excellent adventure that almost didn't happen.

The weekend weather looked terrible: rainy and cold almost everywhere. At the higher altitudes, the weather called for snow. We were thinking about shorter, lower hikes. But Josh needed 9 points to complete his mountain goat. That meant doing a 6 pointer with the 3-point winter bonus. I suggested to Josh, "...that Frost Mountain might be a quick and accessible 6-pointer for tomorrow." His reply, "Were you serious about that?" We concluded that there was chance we could drive the 15 miles of Forest Service road to the trail-head. There would be snow, but possibly only a few inches.

Our research paid off. We encountered some snow on the Forest Service road, but there were only a few inches at the trail head. Furthermore, as we prepared for the 1.3-mile, 1000' gain hike to the summit, we were bathed in sunshine. It was shaping up to be a glorious day.

When we arrived at the former lookout site the first thing we noticed was the spectacular views to the south and east. Then we noticed that clouds were moving in from the west pretty quickly. By the time Josh had his KX2 ready to operate, a few flakes of snow started falling.

Josh soon had a big pile-up going on 20m CW with chasers congratulated him and sending goat noises in CW. During his activation, the falling snow turned into something of a blizzard. After 20m was done, Josh turned to 40m CW for a bit. Then he turned to 2m FM to work a few locals, while I activated on 30m.

By now it was an hour after we had first arrived, the blizzard was over and the sun was shining again. We decided to try nearby Quartz Mountain (W7W/CW-33). We had already activated this one in April, 2019 via Snowmobile, so we were just going back for the 3-point winter bonus and the challenge of trying to get close to that summit.

We drove to about 6,000 feet within 1/2 mile of the summit before the snow started looking ominously deep. So we parked and hiked 20 minutes to the summit and did an easy second activation. It was great fun in a winter playground.

The day and the two activations greatly exceeded our expectations for fun and adventure. Josh had great runs on HF and the Chasers celebrated his achievement. On our return to civilization our buddy John-K7JRO joined us in Redmond for celebratory beers—a fitting end for a terrific day!



Your ideas for this newsletter are welcome – Chuck-KE7JWP, Darryl-WW7D, Chris-KG7VLX and Gregg-W7GRM contributed to this newsletter and I appreciate every word. Share the newsletter with others or subscribe or unsubscribe by email to climb2ski@gmail.com. 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.