The August 2025

NARA Newsletter

President's Message - Randy VE7FAA

NARA had a very hectic few days starting with Field Day over the weekend of June 28-29. We then had one day off and the diehards were back in contest mode for the Canada Day contest. Celebrating Canada Day this year seemed to be somewhat special and we had a really good crowd.

I want to thank Sunnus Farm for letting us hold Field Day at their spectacular location beside the sea in Cedar. A truly excellent location for this event with the high trees for our wire dipole antennas for 80 and 40m, plus the super low noise level which allows us to make those longer distance contacts. Also thank you to David and Rosemary for hosting NARA's Canada Day event from their home near Ladysmith. Their 5 acres, antennas and hospitality offer NARA a great location for this event. Canada Day gives us all a chance to chat and relax in the sunshine, rather than a contest as such. Radio-wise, NARA did well in Field Day and on Canada Day.

There are reports and pictures from NARA's Field Day and Canada Day in this newsletter. The Bathtub race held just a few days ago was a success for NARA. The Bathtub race report will appear in the September NARA Newsletter. Thanks to all those who organized and took part in all of these NARA events.

While there was no general meeting in July, executive member Darryl VE7DDU provided a Tech Talk on the Meshtastic system on July 10. The Meshtastic system is relatively new to NARA members. It presently allows short text messages to be sent across the mesh on the 902-928 MHz band. This is a shared band with ISM users who can use a maximum ERP of 1 Watt.

There is no general meeting in August. However, in September, October and November, NARA will continue the in-person meetings at 808 Wing, which will also include coffee, a snack and a presentation. Please note that these meetings are on a Wednesday because the Air Cadets use the 808 Wing building on Thursdays. Our meetings in January, February and March 2026 will revert to being on-line.

Island Events	Date	By
NIARS Campout	August 16-24	*NIARS*
NARA General Meeting (808 Wing)	September 10	*NARA*
Victoria Swapmeet	September 13	*WARA*
NARA General Meeting (808 Wing)	October 8	*NARA*
NARA General Meeting (808 Wing)	November 12	*NARA*
Canada Winter Contest	December	NARA

We also have some hopeful news from Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC) regarding remote operation as outlined in this newsletter. If you have an advanced certification, you can immediately operate our club station, VE7NA, remotely. If you want to join the remote group please email Mason VE7PMD at radioroom_admin@ve7na.ca. NARA is hopeful that in the future all those who have 'Basic with Honors' certification will be able to operate remote HF stations. And those with 'Basic' certification would be allowed to remote a VHF station. While on the topic of remote operation, thank you to all those who continue to work on NARA's VE7NA club station.

Remote Operation in Canada Encouraging Feedback from RAC

The present rules for remote operation in Canada only allow amateurs with an advanced qualification to operate stations remotely. As NARA members will remember, NARA raised the issue of remote operation by non-Advanced amateurs with the Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC), our national radio organization, back in 2024. RAC considered NARA's proposal that both Basic and Basic with honors radio amateurs in Canada should also be permitted to

operate remote stations (HF for 'Basic with Honors' and VHF for 'Basic'). RAC agreed with NARA's viewpoint and then raised the issue with ISED.

We received some encouraging news in the latest issue of the RAC magazine, *The Canadian Amateur*. The text in TCA reads, '*Radio Amateurs of Canada is hopeful that our request for changes to allow broader access to remotely controlled stations will be added to the new RIC-3, but we have no confirmation yet that this will happen. RAC made this proposal to ISED at the Canadian Amateur Radio Advisory Board (CARAB) meeting in September 2024.'* Having first raised this issue with RAC, NARA can only hope for a positive outcome.

The 47th "Hamfair" - Tokyo, Japan August 23-24

If, by chance, you happen to be in Tokyo around the end of August then you won't want to miss Japan's 'Hamfair.' While some amateurs in the USA often claim that the Dayton, Ohio, 'Hamvention' is the largest gathering of radio amateurs in the world, in actual fact Tokyo's 'Hamfair' attracts more attendees. According to the published numbers, in 2024 the Tokyo "Hamfair' attracted some 45,000 people, whereas the official number of attendees in Dayton in 2025 was 36,814. As we all know, amateur radio is alive and well in Japan with its national society being JARL (Japanese Amateur Radio League). Below are some pictures from last year's Hamfair. And, how many NARA members don't have Japanese radios in their shack?

The history of Japan's big three is interesting.

ICOM was originally founded in 1954 by Tokuzo Inoue who had developed a passion for radio in his youth. The company was originally called Inoue Electronic but was renamed ICOM in 1964 with ICOM America established in 1979 in Bellevue, Washington, as part of its international expansion.

Kenwood started life as the Kasuga Radio Company Ltd. in 1946 by a group of young entrepreneurs in Komagane City, Japan. Some will remember that the company later became the Trio Corporation with Kenwood being adopted as a brand name for the US market in 1960 by the Lafayette Radio Company. The Kenwood USA Corporation was established in California in 1963 and then in 1986 Trio-Kenwood changed its name to the Kenwood Corporation.

Yaesu was originally called the Yaesu Musen Company Ltd. and was established by Sago Hasegawa JA1MP in Tokyo in 1959. From the start the company aimed to produce amateur radio equipment. The equipment gained prominence in the American market, especially in amateur radio circles with the well known FT101 transceiver. In Europe the equipment was sold under the Yaesu and Sommerkamp brand (a Swiss Company). In 1998 Yaesu Musen acquired the Standard radio equipment brand from Marantz of Japan and subsequently changed its name to Vertex Standard Company Ltd.

Defense of the 902-928 MHz Band in the USA.

In the USA, the FCC is considering a petition by NextNav Inc. to reconfigure the 902-928 MHz band which is shared with radio amateurs.

The proposed reconfiguration would lead to NextNav obtaining additional spectrum and replacing its Location and Monitoring Services (LMS) with high power 5G cellular and related facilities.

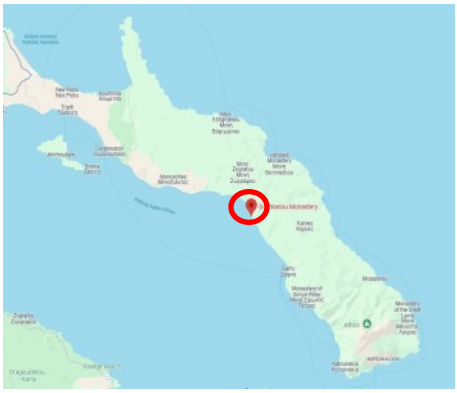
The ARRL initially responded opposing NextNav's proposal in September 2024. In May 2025, ARRL made an additional response. Both ARRL responses and a more in-depth account of what is happening can be obtained from the ARRL's website.

How is DX – David VA7DXX

The 70th Annual Pacific Northwest DX Convention will be held August 15-17, 2025, in Portland, Oregon. The convention is sponsored by the Willamette Valley DX Club and features many interesting speakers, DXCC card checking in person, lots of prizes, and overall a fun weekend. For more details go to www.pnwdxconvention.com.

Mt. Athos is number 9 on the most wanted list from the west coast of North America. For those still looking for Mt. Athos there is some good news. There is apparently a new Monk at Mt. Athos, whose name is Monk Pausolipios, located at the Docheiariou Monastery. He is newly licensed as SV2TOW and is a retired Greek police officer. Monk Pausolipios will use the radio equipment previously used by Monk Apollo who died in 2019. SV2TOW/A must also apply to the Mt. Athos Council for permission to use amateur radio, which it is reported has now been received. Monk Pausolipios will use the callsign SV2TOW/A. The /A, in this instance, standing for Athos.

The Docheiariou Monastery is the home of Monk Pausolipios, the newest amateur radio operator at Mt. Athos.



Fortunately for north America, the monastery is located on the west side of the Mt. Athos peninsular, which means that in our direction SV2TOW/A has a clear take off.

One of the very active Dxpeditions during July was C93RRC. This was a Russian group operating from Chiloane Island (AF-098) off the coast of Mozambique. The first day I listened for them their CW signals on 15m and then 17m were peaking around S4. The following day their CW signal on 17m peaked at S6, but they were working European stations, and I just could not break the European pile-up. They were fully readable but were working 99% European stations who, in Mozambique, would have been far stronger than any signal that I could have provided. I did try but, as I expected, was unsuccessful. Then suddenly their 17m CW signal stopped and they moved to 17m FT8. I quickly changed mode and almost immediately worked them. My quick changeover obviously helped as soon after they were swamped with calls. Fortunately, later in the day, I did manage to make contact with C93RRC on 17m CW.

C93RRC operating from Chiloane Island off Mozambique.

Another island DXpedition that I was looking for in July was RI0CR operating from Ustrichnyy Island (AS-114). The island is located in Chikhachev Bay in the Sea of Okhotsk. This is in Russia some 950 kilometers almost due north of the city of Sapporo, on Japan's most northerly island of Hokkaido. In the evening of July 18, I did finally work RI0CR on 20m FT4 with their signal in and out of the noise. I had hoped for a CW contact, but it was not to be!

Further news from the 3YØK DXpedition to Bouvet Island now planned for February-March 2026. The team has signed a vessel contract with 'Icetugs' and a helicopter contract with 'Ultimate Aviation'. Equipment sponsors for this major DXpedition include DX Engineering, ACOM, ICOM, RF Power, Spiderpole and RigExpert. The group will depart from Cape Town on February 1, 2026, and the DXpedition is scheduled for 36 days which includes travel to and from Bouvet Island.

DXpeditions to look out for in August include Ogasawara (JD1BRC), Mayotte (TO3K), South Cook Islands (E51KEE), St Kitts & Nevis (V47JA), British Virgin Islands (VP2V), Greenland (OX), Guatemala (TG4), Dodecanese (SV5), Palau (T8) and Chile (3G1P).

Fumi JH7CSU will be operational from the island of Ogasawara as JD1BRC from Aug. 2-8. He will mainly use CW. The island of Ogasawara is located about 1000 kilometers south of Tokyo. A ferry, taking about 24 hours, runs from the mainland to provide access.

Three Italian operators, Luca IV3JVJ, Ivan IK3ZAQ and Alessandro IZ3NYS, will operate from Mayotte Island (AF-027) as TO3K from Aug. 2-7 on all modes.

Finally, the 3G1P DXpedition to the Island group of Ilotes Pajaaros (SA-100) off the coast of Chile is also worth looking for if you are an aficionado of Islands on the Air. This is a brand-new island for IOTA and will be on the air from Aug. 18-23. Cezar VE3LYC leads this island DXpedition, for a brand new IOTA.

Accessing the island of Ilotes Pajaaros, shown in the picture above, is no easy task. Cezar has already been in contact with a local fisherman who has visited the main island and who has attached ropes to assist the landing.

NARA's Field DAY 2025

The weather on the Friday before Field Day was overcast and cool, but fortunately the Saturday and Sunday weather was perfect; sunny but not too hot.

A really good turnout which for some reason peaked just before breakfast was served on Sunday morning by Randy VE7FAA and Linda.

Everyone enjoyed themselves at the lovely Sunnus Farm location, right on the coast. Certainly, a big thank you to Sunnus Farm for hosting NARA's Field Day. The setting is just great for radio with the tall pine trees and low noise levels. And the excellent take-off across the water towards the majority of Field Day stations in the USA.

This year NARA made just a couple of contacts short of 500 with a good mix of CW and SSB contacts. There were three stations active, one covering 80/40m run by Jack VE7GDE/David VA7DXX, the second just 20m run by Devan VE7LSE and the third on 15/10m run by Mason VE7PMD. The additional station covering 6m and 2m was organized by Greg VE7GGK. All stations used NARA Panasonic Toughbooks which were networked together via a NARA server to maintain the contest log.

No report of this year's Field Day would be complete without mention of newly licensed David Ye. David took the NARA Basic course and passed his exam in June. David's callsign is VA7ZYE. To learn more about operating, David and his father Luke (previously licensed in China) attended both days of Field Day. NARA member, Chris VA7PK, who now lives in Victoria, but who was with NARA on Field Day, took David VA7ZYE under his wing, mentoring David about HF contest operating. After a while David was operating in the contest entirely on his own. NARA expects great things from David who is now one of the youngest members of the Association. The sad news, for NARA, is that David will be moving to Lethbridge, Alberta, this month. NARA can only wish this young enthusiastic radio amateur all the best for a bright future in amateur radio; every success David.

The rest of this year's NARA Field Day can best be illustrated in pictures. Thanks to all those who organized the event and took part.

Newly licensed David Ye VA7ZYE (left) being mentored by Chris VA7PK on 20m contest operation.

Gerry VE7BGP and Richard VE7AA on 40m SSB.

The VE7NA main operating tent and beam.

The line up for Sunday morning breakfast by Randy & Linda.

The 40m station.

The main 20/15/10m tent .

Visit to the VE7RVR ITS Site

Over the weekend of July 5-6, NARA and NIARS members visited the newly acquired Island Trunk System VE7RVR site located in the mountains to the west of Campbell River. Newly acquired in as much as the site equipment had been previously owned and operated as part of the Island Trunk System by John VE7DAY. John decided to retire from this position in 2024 and sold the equipment, the repeater, tower, solar panels and antennas to the North Island Amateur Radio Society.

The site is located at some 1120m above sea level. While it is primarily intended to cover the Campbell River area it has great all-round coverage. At that height the unobstructed range of the repeater to sea level is some 120 Km, so the site has considerable potential! The cabin is primarily used by a snowmobile club, but they recognize the advantage of the site for a repeater.

The purpose of the weekend visit by NARA and NIARS members - VE7PMD, VE7LSE, VE7KGV, VE7UY, VE7FAA, VE7HDR & VE7HBI - was to carry out some basic maintenance and consider future site enhancements.

VE7RVR is on 146.820 MHz with a negative shift. The repeater presently runs 5 Watts using solar power.

Picturesque, almost alpine, setting for the VE7RVR 2m repeater in the mountains to the west of Campbell River.

NARA's Website:

https://ve7na.ca

NARA's In-Person General Meetings

The dates of NARA's next in-person meetings, all on a Wednesday (please note) are: September 10, October 8 and November 12.

Meshtastic Tech Talk – July 10

The talk by Darryl VE7DDU explained how to get started with Meshtastic and how to start building a local mesh in the 902-928 MHz band. The presentation covered what Meshtastic is, how to get started with it and the hardware required to build your own node. Also, how to build out a reliable mesh in Nanaimo and expand it outwards up and down Vancouver Island. Darryl's Meshtastic talk is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/shorts/ZooVxL7q1dk

NARA is doing a group build for Meshtastic nodes. Although the July 25 deadline for the group build has passed you might be able to join in by contacting either Mason VE7PMD (ve7pmd@gmail.com) or Darryl VE7DDU (darryldowney@gmail.com).

One of the more popular Meshtastic 915 MHz boards in the RAK 4630. This board can be powered by the 5 Volt USB connector or by 3.7 Volts, which is intended for a battery. In addition, there is an input connector for solar power. A GPS unit can also be added.

Welcome to new NARA Members

NARA welcomes the following new members: David VA7ZYE, James VE7GLJ, and Jiayi Li VE7XKM. These new members passed their Basic exam following the NARA course. Also, to Johaan, who took the NARA online course and ISED Basic exam with NARA and became VE7IPC during July. NARA also welcomes Tamara VA7ETR and congratulates YL Saanvi, one of the air cadets, who also passed her Basic exam with NARA during July.

Balloon Success

Thanks to Adrian VE7NZ and Scott VA7SL for the following report on their latest pico balloon success.

After 14 attempts we have made our first circumnavigation of the globe with a pico balloon. Most amazingly, the balloon crossed directly over its launch site in Maple Ridge, BC, on July 16, 2025, 42 days later.

It was a strange route around the globe with many days of almost no travel or school-zone observing speeds of under 30 km/h, heading in the wrong direction, and going in loops over the oceans. Then the jet stream picked up and since July 12 the balloon travelled from the west coast of BC to the west coast of Spain and is trying to make a second trip around the Earth.

The balloon has been having some technical difficulties. We believe either one of the circuits is intermittent or, more likely, the solar panels have drooped a bit so that for several days at a time they aren't pointing towards the Sun and so we don't get a location.

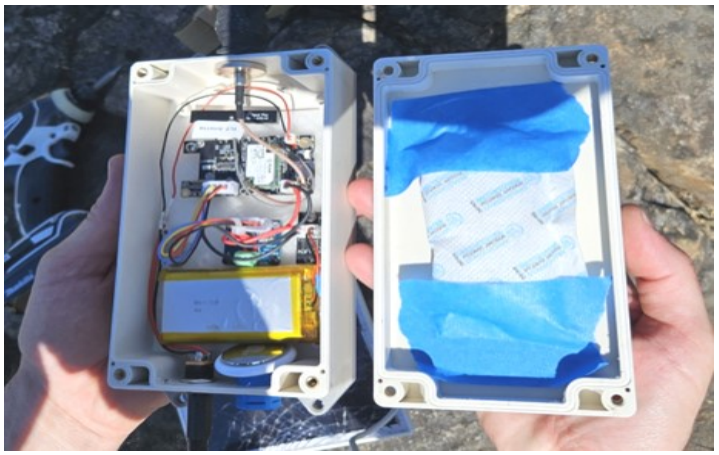
Some of the websites we were using to report the location have gone down as well, but we still recommend this one which will report any observations in the last 7 days: https://amateur.sondehub.org/#!mt=Mapnik&mz=7&qm=7d&mc=43.11301,-9.65149&q=VE7NFR-11. (Note that the route shown interpolates between observation data so is not the exact flight path).

In related news, the North Fraser Amateur Radio Club did extremely well at this year's Floaty Awards - the prestigious awards given for excellence in pico and high-altitude ballooning. A 15 minute condensed version of the show that was broadcast worldwide and to outer space can be seen at https://ve7nfr.com/thedipole/the-73rd-annual-floatie-awards-july-2025-the-pinnacle-of-amateur-radio-ballooning-achievement.

Thanks again to everyone for your support. We will continue to track the balloon and plan other launches, but our next focus is for a high-altitude balloon (HAB) launch this summer.

Cottle Hill – Meshtastic

On Sunday July 20, Mason VE7PMD took his Meshtastic node up to Cottle Hill in Nanaimo for testing. Cottle Hill is a high point in Nanaimo and great results were achieved.

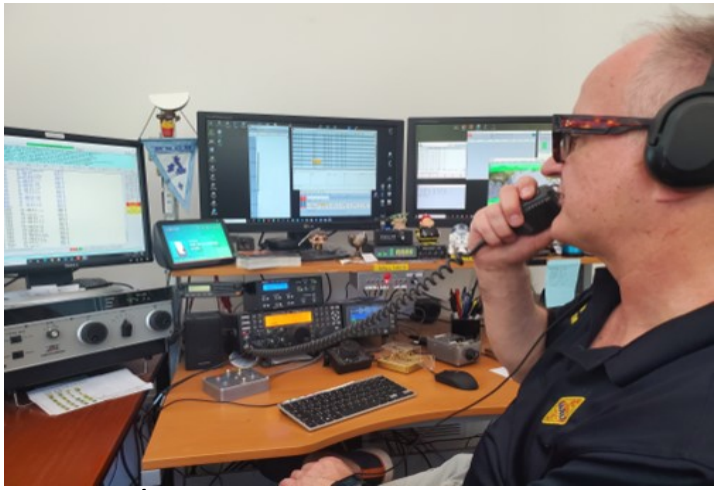


Meshtastic 915 MHz node used by Mason at Cottle Hill.

IARU Contest – July 12

Tim VE6SH, who also has a home in Cedar, operated from David's QTH (VA7DXX) during the Saturday of the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) contest as VE6SH/7. As President of the International Amateur Radio Union and as a member of the IARU Administrative Council, Tim gives away extra points in this contest using 'AC' as a multiplier.

In the first hour with Tim operating and David logging, Tim made one hundred SSB contacts. Then the skip changed, and the contact rate slowed down. There was a good mix of SSB and CW contacts with both David and Tim operating. Conditions were generally poor. The final score was some 400 contacts.



Tim VE6SH/7 operating during the IARU Contest on July 12.

NARA's Canada Day

With only a one day's rest between this year's Field Day and Canada Day, there was again a good crowd at NARA's Canada Day event. This year's Canada Day was more about celebrating Canada than a contest, but the dedicated operators did make some 400 contacts. Only the 40m and 20m bands were used on Canada Day, a 3-element full sized beam on 20m and a dipole on the 40m band.

In a very last-minute decision, Jack VE7GDE operated on 20m SSB on the Monday evening just after the Canada Day contest started, with Gerry operating on 40m CW. They both operated from Ladysmith until around 10 pm.

Paul VE7PDQ, as you see from the pictures, took the prize for the best dressed Canadian and NARA's newly licensed David VA7ZYE took the prize for his solo contest operating, having only had his licence for a few weeks.

Also, a very special 'thank you' to Mike VA7WPM for treating NARA members to his Canada Day bagpipe performance of the traditional Welsh lullaby called *Suo Gan*. Again, the pictures really tell the story.

Mike VA7WPM on the bagpipes playing Suo Gan.

Overview of the three Canada Day contest stations.

David VA7ZYE on 2m FM & SSB.

Paul VE7PDQ, best Canadian.

BBQ Master Kevin VE7KGV cooking the hot dogs.

Julia, Annika and Devan with Devan's birthday cake.

Gerry VE7BGP and Jack VE7GDE (in the background) on HF.

Mayday or Pan-Pan?

If there is an emergency situation on the amateur radio bands, then the accepted cry is “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday.” The use of the word Mayday, spoken three times, is shared in Canada with both the Marine and the Aeronautical services. It is a part of the accepted Canada-wide plain language voice procedures. Actually, the word Mayday is adopted and used on an international basis.

So what in fact is the meaning of Mayday? It is used as an international distress signal which is a life-threatening emergency requiring immediate assistance.

The Phrase “Pan-Pan, Pan-Pan, Pan-Pan” is not the same as a Mayday call. In the Aeronautical and Marine services the use of the word “Pan-Pan”, spoken three times, is used as a means of stating a possible emergency in the future. It is not an immediate threat to life or a matter of grave or imminent danger. So, if you are stuck in the back country on Vancouver Island the phrase to use, in most cases, would be “Pan-Pan, Pan-Pan, Pan-Pan”. I certainly need help, but I am not in immediate danger.

So what is the history of the word Mayday? It was actually a word put forward by Englishman Frederic Mockford who was the senior radio officer at Croydon Airport, south of London, in the 1920’s. He chose the word Mayday because of its similarity to the French phrase “m’aider” from the longer phrase “venez m’ader” which means “come and help me.” In 1927, the word Mayday was adopted as a voice distress call by the International Radio Convention as the spoken equivalent of the Morse code distress signal SOS.

Incidentally, the 1927 International Radio Conference in Washington, DC, also established the first international table of frequency allocations which aimed to minimize interference between different radio services. Our basic HF amateur bands were established at that conference, thanks to the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU), founded in 1925. The IARU is still the organization which protects the amateur bands. The 1927 Conference also established the International Radio Consultative Committee (CCIR) which is a most important aspect of the work of today’s International Telecommunications Union (ITU), a part of the United Nations (UN), responsible for today’s frequency allocations and radio technical standards.

NEW ISED Basic Question Bank

As of July 15, ISED issued a new Basic exam question bank on which future exams will be based. The new Basic exam question bank follows the review undertaken between the Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC) and ISED. Over the summer months, NARA Training Group members David VA7DXX and Mike VA7WPM will be updating the NARA course material and example questions to comply with the new Basic exam question bank.

VE7NA Club Station Update

Progress continues at the VE7NA radio room at 808 Wing. The IT team of Mason VE7PMD, Brandon VE7TZB and Greg VE7GGH, hosted a presentation at the June general meeting. After the presentation, the group took a well-deserved break. However, they are now working again in the background to make further improvements. If anyone is interested in becoming a VE7NA station remote radio user, please contact Mason at radioroom_admin@ve7na.ca. The VE7NA station is also available to members to operate in-person.

NARA’s VE7NA station which can be operated in-person or by remote access.

USA House Reconciliation Bill

As reported in *QST*, ARRL's monthly magazine, there is potentially more pressure on some of the microwave amateur bands in the USA. Summarizing the House Bill:

- Within 2 years, not less than 600 MHz of spectrum in the USA, between 1.3 and 10 GHz must be identified for reallocation to commercial broadband services
- The identified spectrum must be auctioned by the FCC
- Not less than 200 MHz of spectrum must be identified by mid-2028, and the remaining 400 MHz no later than mid-2031
- Excluded spectrum from any reallocation is 3.1-3.45 GHz, which includes the temporary secondary amateur band at 3.4-3.45 GHz, and also exempt from the reallocation is 5.925-7.125 GHz.

The amateur bands in the USA at potential risk are the 13cm and 5cm bands.

Dave Court EI3IO (SK) by David VA7DXX

Not many amateurs in Nanaimo would have known Dave Court, but back in the days when I was volunteering with IARU and RSGB I knew Dave and of his true dedication to Amateur Radio. Dave was originally licensed as G3SDL in the UK and I remember him working with Ingmarsat, a UK based marine satellite company. He later moved to Ireland (EI) to become involved in telecommunication management with the Irish Government where he obtained his EI3IO callsign. I recall that Dave was especially fond of the 6m band. Professionally, Dave was a powerhouse and highly respected for his 40 plus years of working in the field of spectrum management. He chaired spectrum management forums in CEPT, ITU and NATO.

From IARU Region 1 – "*It is with great sadness that the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) marks the passing of David Court, EI3IO, in July 2025. David was a leading figure in international spectrum management on behalf of the amateur service, bringing decades of technical and regulatory experience to his volunteer work at the highest levels of global telecommunications governance.*

David Court's IARU obituary can be found at *https://www.iaru-r1.org/2025/dave-court-ei3io-sk/*

The Satellite Downlink Northern Europe Rover With My Ultra-Portable Satellite Rig Bruce VE7PTN

During June, we took a family trip to Germany and visited my wife Andrea's parents. We also went on a 12-day bus tour through Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway. As I have discussed in previous articles, I took an FM satellite rig consisting of an ICOM IC-V86 for VHF uplink and ID-52 for UHF downlink and QSO recording, and an Arrow II antenna. For the air travel part of the trip, I took the radios in my carry-on luggage as is required due to their high-capacity batteries. The antenna was disassembled (duh!) and packed in my checked luggage. The travel went smoothly, and all the gear arrived intact. I had zero questions from the screeners about the radios on my way through security.

Our first stop on this trip was to the city of Celle in northern Germany where my father-in-law lives. We stayed at his home (Maidenhead grid JO52) for six days beginning June 5. On June 6, still jetlagged but keen to activate, I unpacked and assembled my rig and prepared to wave it at the sky in the backyard. I, of course, had my CEPT Operating Permit issued by RAC that authorized me to operate in Europe. Even though, I was nervous to transmit for the first time. Perhaps expecting diligent German radio authority staff to immediately locate my signal and storm the house to check the validity of my permit. This did not happen. The first satellite pass that I worked was SO-124 for two QSOs. My first contact as DL/VE7PTN was the German operator Flo DF2ET and the second was the French operator Emmanuel F0GOW. I have worked Flo from Canada via the digital packet satellite Greencube, and I have communicated with him on X (Twitter); but this was my first time hearing his voice. (A story that I would repeat for several more operators during the trip.) As I had been warned, the FM satellite passes were very busy for Europe; but, not much different from what I experience on satellites over the US when I am in Canada.

The exception might be the International Space Station (ISS) repeater; it was so busy with poor operating etiquette that I eventually skipped working it as a waste of time.

Bruce VE7PTN with dual handheld radio satellite rig consisting of ICOM IC-V86 and ICOM ID-52, at the JO52 operating location in Celle, Germany.

I would work another 12 passes from Celle for a total of 36 QSOs over the six days we spent there. It was a time of frequent rain showers; however the relatively flat terrain made for good operating conditions. I did use the excellent website https://hams.at to advertise my activations which helped to generate interest. I worked stations from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, England, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Ukraine. My father-in-law's house is only a 10-minute car ride from the JO42/JO52 grid line. So, one afternoon we drove there, and I stood on the side of the road waving my antenna at a couple of passing satellites. Though this did generate some curious looks from passing motorists, I still managed to evade any inspection by radio authorities. JO42 is a somewhat rare grid I found out, and I was able to hand out a new grid to several operators on the two passes that I worked.

On June 11, we traveled even farther north in Germany to Hagen im Bremischen where my mother-in-law lives (grid JO43), about 30 km from the coast. Northern Germany is quite flat and experiences almost constant breeze from the North Sea making it great territory for power generating wind turbines. With power generation comes power transmission so high tension lines are never far away. My operating location at my mother-in-law's place was only about 500m from a double set of these powerlines. Thankfully, most of the satellites use VHF up and UHF down. The UHF audio was quite good there despite the proximity to the power lines. This was not the case for the couple UHF up / VHF down satellites that I tried; the VHF receive was quite noisy. Over the next couple of days I worked four satellite passes for eight QSOs while we prepared for our Scandinavia bus tour.

On June 14, we started our Scandinavia bus tour. It was even much more fast paced than I had expected. We would be traveling 500 to 700 km per day. This meant that our actual stopping time, when I could potentially operate, was very brief. With the long travel days, operating in the evenings when we stopped was often not practical due to lateness and the upcoming early start the next day. Having an available satellite pass line up with the 15-minute to 30-minute stops during the daily travel time was rare. There were only two or three different satellites that were active and practical to operate on any given day. Sadly, the constellation of the new TEVEL2 satellites was not activated as I had hoped they would be.

The KP20 truck stop operating location in Lohja, Finland. The tour bus is in the background.

That said, sometimes the stars (or satellites?) aligned, and I was able to work several passes during the trip. We did pass through Denmark at the beginning and the end of the trip; but being a small country, we were through it within a few hours, and I never did find a suitable satellite pass. But in the other three countries I managed to work passes. My first opportunity was in Finland when we pulled into a truck stop on the side of the highway for a 20-minute break (grid KP20). It was not a spectacular pass, but I did manage to work Erwin PA3GAN in the

Netherlands and activate the grid and use the callsign OH/VE7PTN. At just over 60°N latitude, this location was far enough north that only northern Europe was within the satellite footprint.

The bus stops would be announced by the tour guide about half an hour in advance. This gave me time to check the satellite tracking app on my phone (https://issdetector.com) for a workable pass and to advertise it on https://hams.at. (Cell coverage in Finland, Norway and Sweden is great, with all roads we traveled having great service even though they were just as remote as northern Canada.) If a pass was likely, I could even start the assembly of my rig while still traveling. With my wife's assistance, we got pretty good at half assembling my Arrow II antenna before the bus stopped. More times than not, the stops would be a minute or two before the satellite came over the horizon for a 10-minute pass. So, I needed to move quickly to setup the rest of the rig and get ready to operate.

After Finland we traveled to the very northern tip of Europe to the Nordkapp (North Cape) at over 71°N latitude, well within the Arctic Circle. Again, as we approached the Nordkapp stop at the visitor centre, I could see that a satellite pass would start as soon as we arrived. Being so far north, the satellite pass would have not much of the continent within the footprint. I advertised the planned pass on https://hams.at and on X saying that I hoped to find another operator in the footprint. Peter 2M0SQL in Scotland saw my post and confirmed that my challenge was accepted. As the bus pulled to a stop, I jumped out ahead of the other passengers (they got to expect my hurry and would accommodate my quick exits). I quickly assembled my gear and started calling CQ while walking across the parking lot to get a better horizon. Andrea was carrying my phone with the tracking app open and showing me where to aim the antenna while we strode across the parking lot. My mother-in-law was taking pictures to document the adventure. The Nordkapp visitor centre is a stunning location, on a cliff 300m high above the Barents Sea. What's more, the weather was unusually sunny and dry, if chilly at about 8°C. The horizon to Scotland in the southwest was great. Just a minute before my loss of signal as the satellite traveled west, I heard Peter answering and we completed our QSO as LA/VE7PTN. It was a great accomplishment. The Nordkapp is within a Parks On The Air (POTA) entity, the Nordkapp-fjellet og Hornvika Flora and Fauna Reserve, which has never been activated or even attempted, according to the POTA website (https://pota.app/#/park/NO-2628). Even though the one QSO did not meet the threshold of 10 QSOs for a "successful" activation, it still counts as an attempt. And Peter and I are now the top Hunter and Activator, respectively, for this entity.

Bruce VE7PTN with his mother-in-law, Hanne, and his wife, Andrea, at the Nordkapp monument, located at 71°10'21"N, overlooking the Barents Sea.

After the Nordkapp, the trip continued to the southwest through coastal Norway and then across Sweden to return to Germany via Denmark. I managed another two grid activations in Norway (three and four QSOs) and one in Sweden (six QSOs) as SM/VE7PTN. For most of the bus trip, whenever I looked at my satellite tracking app, it would display a status warning that there were no ISS passes for more than two weeks. I have never seen this notification

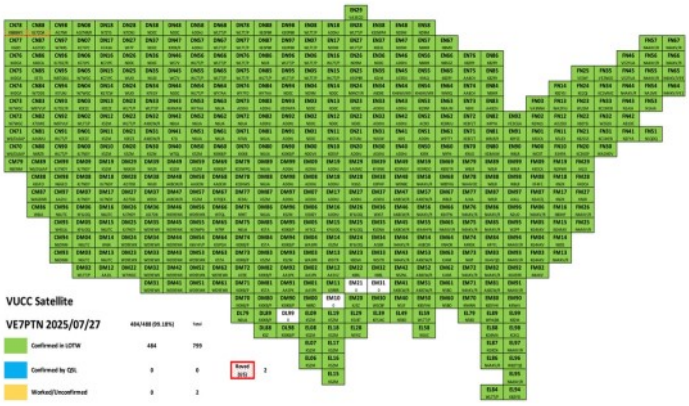
before and initially thought that it was some data bug that would get fixed by the data provider. Then I remembered something that I had heard about before. The ISS orbits relatively close to the equator and does not pass close to the poles. Since I had traveled so far north, there would be no visible passes until I returned south. Sure enough, after we left the Arctic through Sweden, ISS passes again appeared in the app and the notification went away.

On June 24, we returned to Germany, again staying at my mother-in-law's place in JO43. Over the next six days I worked 17 passes for another 38 QSOs. One of my goals for this trip was to activate as many different grids as I could. The six grids on the bus trip would add to the three grids from Germany for a total of nine grids activated. This represents a substantial increase to the 22 grids roved previously, all of which were in Canada. There is a website that tracks the satellite rover standings (https://gridmaster.fr/roversrank). With my Canadian satellite roving activity over the last few years, I have been on the "top 100 rovers" leaderboard for a while. There are some very active rovers out there, so I am usually near the bottom of the list – but, on the list! Before the trip, I had fallen to the #100 position in the overall ranking. This trip would be a good opportunity to climb back up the rankings. The rank calculation considers how far one travels from their home grid to activate a distant one. So going to Europe represented a great opportunity to score well. The rankings are based on Logbook of the World data and only confirmed QSOs count. My current standing at this writing is position #76. That should keep me on the top 100 list for a while!

My European rove was a great experience. It was wonderful to make so many on-air friends and to hear new voices. My gear worked well throughout the trip, the only issue being a failed audio recording on one pass. I never did figure out what caused the failure. The recording was active, but the files contained only dead air. Helpfully, Peter 2M0SQL in Scotland was on the pass and shared his recording with me so I could get my QSOs correctly logged. I did a full reboot of the radio by removing the battery and the issue never happened again. The FM satellite gear did have limitations, and it would have been nice to have my dual ICOM 705 rig so that I could work linear satellites. However, traveling with that rig is less comfortable due to the weight and size I would be packing through airports. Next time maybe.

I continue to make good progress towards my Contiguous US Satellite GridMaster award. As I mentioned in an earlier article, I was concerned about getting grid EL58 which is rarely activated and only accessible by boat. I had heard a rumour that Tyler N5UC (formerly WL7T) would return there sometime in July. He was the last person to activate the grid back in 2022, and I had missed him then. Since we would return from Europe on July 2, this should work out OK if true. While I was in Germany, I got confirmation of the activation. Tyler would work one pass from the grid on July 1, the day before we returned. Dang! I toyed with the idea of a remote operation via another station in my home grid but was unable to find one that would work. I tried to get my home station working remotely with some help from my house-sitter, but also no luck. So it looked like I would miss out yet again. July 1st came and went. I heard via X that although Tyler was active as planned, conditions were poor and only a couple of stations could make contact. That was sad for those that tried but it gave me some hope that Tyler might return to EL58 sooner than later. Sure enough, the morning after we returned home, still jetlagged, I checked https://hams.at just after I got up. There was another pass announcement for satellite RS-44 in 13 minutes! I ran to my radio room and quickly setup my

rig that I had partly disassembled to make room for our house-sitter. This pass of RS-44 was from north to south meaning that I could get on and tune up before most of the US operators. It also meant that the satellite would be directly overhead when Tyler was just getting visibility so my signal would be strong into the satellite. As RS-44 started its pass, I got tuned up and waited for Tyler. He, like most of us, is a creature of habit and I guessed that he would be on his favorite frequency in the RS-44 passband. I tuned that frequency and waited. I heard Tyler getting tuned up himself, a voice I recognize well as he is a frequent rover. As soon as he was tuned and gave his first "CQ", I pounced with my callsign. He heard me right away and gave me an enthusiastic QSL. Yes!!! EL58 was in the bag. During the rest of July, I picked up another four grids taking me to 484 of 488 grids. Only four to go. Of those, two have rovers planned over the next month!



That's all for this month. It is camping season, and I have been active on POTA in July. We are planning a boat trip with friends in August and of course I will take radio gear. So, I should have plenty to report next time. 73.

Victoria Swap & Shop

An early announcement for the tri-annual Victoria swap meet. It takes place this year on Saturday Sept. 13, with doors opening at 9 am. The address is Gordon United Church, 935 Goldstream Avenue, Langford, which has easy access from the Island Highway. General admission will be $5. Potential vendors should contact Jim VE7MHJ at WARA_Swap_2025@proton.me for table information.

Nanaimo Bathtub Weekend

As members of NARA, we tend to think mainly about the annual Bathtub race. NARA has provided much needed safety communication for the Bathtub race for a long time. But there is more to the Loyal Nanaimo Bathtub Society weekend than just the annual Bathtub race.

The Bathtub weekend events, this year, kicked off with vendors, food trucks and a kids zone in the Maffeo Sutton park on Friday, July 25 at 1 pm. The vendors included a number of organizations and there is a thought that maybe NARA should have its own stand in the park, provided of course that there are volunteers to support this operation. On the Friday evening there was a 5 hour long open-air concert in the park featuring two groups. The Doobie Brothers Experience and Eagle Eyes.

Vancouver Island's own Eagle Eyes group, performing at the recent Bathtub weekend. Note the large NARA logo on the right side of the stage, ringed in the picture.

The fun continued on the Saturday with a parage along Commercial street. Chris VE7TOP and Devan VE7LSE had vehicles in the parade to represent NARA.

There will be a full report on the radio side of Sunday's Bathtub race in the September issue of the *NARA Newsletter*.

The volunteer group of NARA members producing this newsletter would like to thank all those that provided material for this month's issue.

The deadline for the September 2025 issue of the NARA Newsletter is noon on Thursday August 28 with an intended publication date of August 31.

News items, comments or articles for publication should be mailed to:

news@ve7na.ca