

NARA Newsletter



President's Message – Randy VE7FAA

Welcome to 2025. I hope that you all had a great Christmas and New Year's with family and friends with this rainy but mild weather. But as the saying goes, 'winter is coming.'

As you can see from the list of events, NARA continues to be an active and dynamic radio club starting with Winter Field Day on Jan. 25, with further details in this newsletter. I am looking forward to some of the other annual NARA events which will include Field Day, the Canada Day Contest and the Bathtub race. We always have fun at these events and I encourage all members to come along and take part. I also encourage members to put forward their own ideas at club meetings for activities and events. The NARA executive is here to listen and respond.

While future NARA general meetings this winter will likely continue to use Google Meet, I hope that once better weather arrives there will be more in-person meetings. In the meantime, please don't forget the regular coffee klatches which give us all a chance to meet in person.

I am pleased to say that in December the NARA Training Group was able to assist five students to pass the Basic exam and obtain their amateur radio callsigns. Thank you to the four members of the training group who give up a lot of their spare time to prepare courses and train these new radio amateurs. New amateurs are essential for the future of our hobby/service. I also want to thank the Newsletter team for their work in reporting all the activities of NARA and more. I note that the type size of this and future Newsletters has been increased slightly starting this month.

NARA Coffee Klatches

Day	Frequency	Time	Location
Tuesday	Weekly	10:30 am	South end Smitty's: #50 10 the Street
Thursday	3rd Thursday of the month	7:00 pm	Tim Hortons: 2320 Northfield Road
Saturday	Weekly	9:00 am	North end Smitty's: 2980 North Island Hwy, the Rock City Centre

Island Events	Date	By
Winter Field Day	Jan. 25	NARA
Nanaimo Science Fair	Feb. 23	NARA
Flea Market (Victoria)	April	
Field Day (ARRL)	June 28-29	NARA
Canada Day Contest	July 1	NARA
Nanaimo Bathtub Race	July	
NIARS Campout	August	NIARS
Bike Race	August	
Canada Winter Contest	December	NARA

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank Mason VE7PMD for his work in getting the internet upgrade at the air cadets building for the VE7NA club station remote operation. Also, a special thanks to Linda VE7JLO and her team for such an impressive NARA Christmas dinner, enjoyed by many NARA members and friends. Thank you Linda and a Happy New Year to all NARA members.



Winter Field Day

Meadow Community Park is again this year's venue for NARA's Winter Field Day on Jan. 25, but we hope without the bitterly cold weather we had last year! Last year Kevin VE7KGV supplied some very effective heaters for the tents so those that attended could be warm. But be advised, bring a hot beverage. NARA plans to set up its Winter Field Day station in the morning but will close down late afternoon. There will be no operation on the Sunday. This is a club event so NARA will be providing all the equipment, tents, antennas, etc. Meadow Community Park is off Jingle Pot Road at 3021 Meadow Drive, Nanaimo, as shown on the map on the next page. We hope to see you there.

NARA Winter Field Day Site Map



NARA's Winter Field Day site is at the Meadow Community Park, 3021 Meadow Drive, Nanaimo.

Vancouver Island POTA Activity



A number of amateur radio clubs on Vancouver Island are looking at POTA activations on Jan. 18. This activity is being coordinated by Mike Shoesmith, VA7FC, in Victoria. He can be contacted at va7fc@proton.me. NARA may well participate but for further details watch your email.



Watch your email for more details of this Vancouver Island Parks on the Air activity.

NARA Basic Courses



The latest NARA fall Basic course was completed in early December. Five NARA students took the exam on Dec. 16 and all five passed. Three from the course were unable to attend the exam session and plan to take the Basic exam in the new year. Those who passed in December were Hailly VE7HAM (a reissue of her grandfather's callsign), Juergen VE7YGI, Jill VE7VGN, Mark VA7VLC, and Kathryn who has yet to get her callsign.

Historic Day for VE7NA

On Monday, Dec. 16, Telus installed a new fiber cable to the VE7NA radio room at the Air Cadets building on Nanaimo Lakes Road. The fiber allows for a better internet speed, but it also means that remote operation of the VE7NA station will soon be available to anyone with Advanced certification. This project has been managed by Mason VE7PMD, who was in attendance during the recent upgrade. A few hours later Mason was able to log on remotely and tested the system. It all works. Still, more testing and set up needs to be done so that remote operation can be initiated. Another step is to finalize some training notes and for NARA to find out which members would like to operate the VE7NA remote station. If you have any questions about the station or station training, please contact Mason VE7PMD at ve7pmd@gmail.com.



A successful conclusion to the internet upgrade for the Cadets building which will allow VE7NA remote operation.



A Telus technician connects the new fiber modem and puts the final touches to the new system.

NARA's Christmas Dinner

This is the second time that NARA has prepared its own Christmas dinner at the Air Cadets building on Nanaimo Lakes Road, and for the second time it was a big hit and great social occasion. Special thanks to Linda VE7JLO (and her helpers).

The main menu items were turkey, ham, potatoes (roast and mashed), and mixed vegetables including Christmas favorites Brussel sprouts and parsnips. There were also two types of stuffing, both traditional Canadian and some British style sage and onion. At least one member who does not like the Canadian stuffing considered the British stuffing a hit! For dessert there was Christmas cake and other options. Some 40 people had signed up for the Christmas dinner but eight were unable to attend. Regrettably, the Banman family of four had to cancel after Devan VE7LSE, NARA's executive secretary, had an minor accident on the Saturday afternoon. He is now beginning to recover well from his arm injury after a slip and fall.

At the end of the dinner everyone got a door prize. Some NARA Training Group members somehow magically received a few amateur radio T-shirts, pictured opposite, an early present from Santa.



As if by some sort of Christmas magic, members of the NARA training group received this T-shirt as an after Christmas dinner prize. A coincidence or by design?

Beaches on the Air David VA7DXX



NARA executive secretary, Devan VE7LSE, recently drew my attention to an activity program called Beaches On The Air (BOTA). Apart from its own Website at beachesontheair.com this on-air activity is also on Facebook.

Beaches On The Air is an award scheme for radio amateurs that promotes portable operation from beaches. It has rolls of honour and awards for beach activators, for chasers, and sponsors (those who sponsor the activations in which activators and chasers participate). You can participate from any beach around the world. The programme currently lists more than 30,000 beaches, but new beaches are added to the list once they are activated. You can activate the same beach as many times as you wish and you can always earn additional points, and there is no restriction on how you get to the activation point or on the power source you use for your station.

These On The Air activity programs are in place to encourage amateur radio activity all over the world and some are really popular. Other On the Air activity programs also include:

- [SOTA](#) (Summits On The Air)
- [POTA](#) (Parks On The Air)
- [CPOTA](#) (Canadian Parks On The Air)
- [IOTA](#) (Islands On The Air)
- [LHOTA](#) (Light Houses On The Air)
- [MSOTA](#) (Museum Ships On The Air)
- [WMPLOTA](#) (Walmart Parking Lots On The Air)
- [RaDAR](#) (Rapid Deployment Amateur Radio)
- [AOTA](#) (Airfields On The Air)
- [CASHOTA](#) (Castles and Stately Homes On The Air)
- [MOTA](#) (Mills On The Air)
- [MOTA](#) (Mines On The Air)

Shelly Repeater ITS Update

On Saturday, Dec. 28, a small team travelled to the Island Trunk System VE7RMI repeater site at Shelly Mountain, near Port McNeil. As reported previously, the batteries were in urgent need of replacement, so 12 new batteries were installed and some appropriate rewiring done. The team, who travelled in one vehicle, were Mason VE7PMD, Jordan VE7HBI, Kevin VE7KGV, Randy VE7FAA, and Stewart VE7HDR. The new batteries will aid VE7RMI to stay on the air during the winter with its shorter hours of daylight.



The Shelly Mountain Island Trunk System repeater site, also showing the brand new batteries in position.



The battery installation team on Dec. 28. Left to right, Kevin, Jordan, Stuart, Mason and Randy.

How is DX – David VA7DXX



Last month I made a note that I would be looking for AU2K from the uninhabited Island of Kanika (IOTA AS-179) off the northeast coast of India. I got into the shack at 8:10 am after a friend in the UK had texted me that Cezar VE3LYC was on the air from Kanika and gave me the frequency. I switched everything on, swung the beam to 330 degrees and there he was, AU2K on CW, a super strong signal at 589 on this normally difficult path. I recognized Cezar's distinctive keying style. The propagation gods were being kind. I quickly checked and there was no long path signal. I set the frequency split on my radio, the pile up was horrendous and I started to call, listening each time after sending my callsign. Having worked Cezar before I knew that he likes to keep the splits under a few KHz. Much to my complete surprise and amazement, I heard Cezar reply to me after the fourth time I sent my callsign. AU2K was in my log before breakfast on Dec. 2, an early Christmas gift indeed and a new island for me. I sat there for several minutes in a sort of shock; I had expected weaker signals and a longer session for this never-before activated Island.



AU2K, Kanika Island off the north east coast of India.



The AU2K operation by Cezar VE3LYC and friends from the uninhabited and never before activated Island of Kanika.

We normally associate the 80m band with local and semi-local distances, but this band is also capable of worldwide DX communication. On Dec. 1, just after sunset, I worked the Sierra Leone DXpedition, 9L5A, on 80m CW at a distance of 10,700 kilometers. The 9L5A DXpedition, largely a group of operators from France, was very active indeed and especially so on CW. At the time the 9L5A CW signal on 80m was peaking S3. It was actually Eric ON7RN who pulled my signal through on 80m CW. So, being such a narrow bandwidth, CW really can be effective. More so the FT digital modes — if that is your thing. I ended up working the 9L5A DXpedition on nine bands, 80-10m including 60m. That was seven bands on CW, one on FT8 (60m) and SSB on 12m.



The largely French team 9L5A operating from Sierra Leone.

The T40W DXpedition to the Cuban Island of Santa Maria (IOTA NA-204), which was also a POTA activation, used largely SSB. I managed to work them on 10m for a new island.

Other active DXpeditions worked during December included V31CN (Manta island, Belize, by Mikhail VE7ACN from Port Coquitlam) on CW on 20-12m, 3D2Y (Rotuma), A35GC (Tonga), VU4A (Andaman & Nicobar Islands), KH7AL/KH9 on Wake Island on 20m and 17m SSB, and a surprise contact with 7X4AN (Algeria) on 10m CW.

V73WE on Majuro Atoll (IOTA OC-029) in the Marshall Islands was 599 on 10m CW. The TL8ES (Central African Republic) DXpedition by (YL) Elvira IV3FSG was a bit different as it was largely an educational exercise to train local radio amateurs.



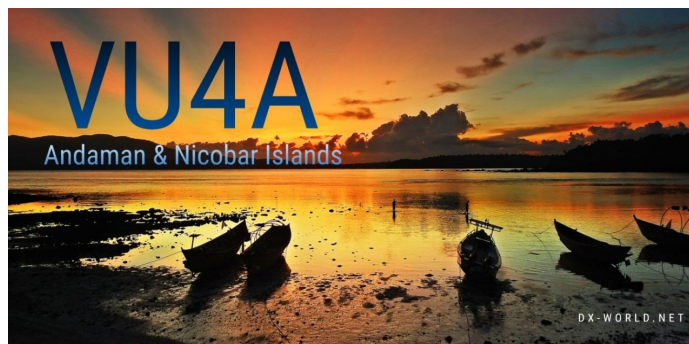
Training local radio amateurs in the Central African Republic was the mission of Elvira IV3FSG operating as TL8ES.



Some of the operators at T40WA from the Cuban Island of Santa Maria (IOTA NA-204).



Mikhail VE7ACN operating as V31CN from Manta Island.



Krish W4VKU was operating as VU4A.



Janusz SP9FIH was operating as V73WE from the Marshall Islands.

If you are in a DX mood, the expeditions to look out for in January include Gambia (C5RK), Palau (T8), Benin (TY5C), Senegal (6W1RD), Marquesas (TX7N) and Mozambique (C8K).

Thanks to Tom VE7TOM who sent in the following:

2024 has been a great year with the solar cycle growing towards its peak in the next year or so. Finally worked my last two needed states, Rhode Island and Delaware, during a major 6 metre opening during the US Thanksgiving weekend.

Six meters has been good this year with a high number of openings. There have been multiple great 6-meter openings to Delaware and Rhode Island but the operators weren't at their radios until the US Thanksgiving weekend. Many operators, especially on 10 and 6 meters, leave their radios on all the time automatically reporting propagation to the PSK Reporter website. Great to know the band is open but need an operator at the other end to make a contact.

The other challenge has been getting confirmation QSL reports, especially on 40 meters. Over 120 countries worked on 40 meters, but my log was stuck at 99 confirmed until Christmas week. Antenna theory and take-off angles are well proven and supported by my 40 meter vertical which is better for DX contacts and the dipole, which is better for North America.

Logbook of the World (LoTW ARRL) is the most used log. I also have eQSL and the QRZ logbooks integrated into my logging N3FJP logging program for automatic updating. Additionally, there are batches of QSL cards every few months from the QSL Bureau and some directly by postal mail. The current stats are:

- *80 to 6 meters: Nine band Worked All States (WAS), all states confirmed per band*
- *40 to 10 meters: Seven band DXCC, 100+ countries confirmed per band*
- *Total countries worked 230*

Thanks Tom.

Speaking of DX, do you remember what equipment you were using 47 years ago? The Voyager 1 spacecraft, launched in 1977, unexpectedly turned off its X-band radio transmitter in November, cutting comms. with NASA's Deep Space Radio Network. However, the weaker signal S-band transmitter and receiver — which had not been used for 42 years — kicked in thus allowing NASA to reactivate the more powerful X-band equipment. At a range of some 15.4 billion miles from Earth (great DX), the Voyager 1 signals take just over 24 hours to reach the Earth.

Canada Winter Contest



The RAC Canada Winter Contest always takes place sometime between Christmas Day and New Year's Day, which is always a busy time of year. But since only one member expressed interest in operating from the NARA club station at the Air Cadets building on Nanaimo Lakes Road, NARA decided not to open the station for the contest.

But at the last minute Jack VE7GDE asked David VA7DXX if he could operate from the cabin on David's property south of Nanaimo. The idea was to use the VE7TUB callsign, but again at the last minute it was agreed that Jack would use VE7NA callsign since the club station was not activated. Another last-minute decision was, in order to save hours of set up time to be able to transmit from the cabin, to instead use David's home station as a single-transmitter station.

Though this turned out to be largely an SSB operation by Jack, David filled in on CW while Jack took breaks. The results are respectable: VE7NA made 810 contacts in about 12 hours of operating. All SSB contacts were made by Jack, and David made 162 contacts on CW. The claimed score, with 65 multipliers, was 292,890 points which could be a NARA record for this contest.

Apart from Canadian and American stations, the following countries replied to CQ calls from VE7NA: Brazil, Finland, France, Japan, Peru, Puerto Rico, Romania, Scotland, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela. Conditions were generally good during the contest.



Jack VE7GDE operating SSB as VE7NA from VA7DXX's QTH.

The Satellite Downlink: EME First Attempt and December/ January ARISS SSTV - Bruce VE7PTN



During December I made my first attempt at 70cm Earth-Moon-Earth (EME) reception. In this mode operators send a digital signal at the Moon and allow its natural reflective properties to redirect some portion of their signal back to Earth for reception by other operators. As you would expect, very little of the transmitted signal is reflected back.

The WSJT-X software has a couple of very weak signal modes for EME: JT65 and Q65. JT65 has been around since the early 2000s; but JT65 is the more recent and recommended mode. I tried both modes in early December when the Moon was visible, using my IC-9700 and M2 LEO Pack antenna system. Sadly, I heard no signals and had no decodes over a few days. At this point I am not sure what the issue is, though I suspect it is insufficient gain with my antenna system.

There is a lot of information available online about EME and most of it is very technical. All the successful 70cm examples that I read about used specific EME antenna systems with very large gain. So my default satellite setup may not be up to the task. My next step is to reach out to some experienced EME operators to discuss my options.

As I write this article, there is another Slow Scan Television (SSTV) event being broadcast from the International Space Station (ISS), "Series 23". There have been SSTV events in October and November, so I was a bit surprised at the December announcement. The event started on Christmas Day and will go until Jan. 5. So there is still time for you to give it a shot. A series of 12 images is being transmitted, including some Canada-themed ones. I made a submission of a received image to the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) organization as proof of contact and received a digital award diploma.

In other news, I have started studying CW in earnest, following the advice from David VA7DXX contained in his PowerPoint presentation distributed during the summer CW course. I am using the "Koch Trainer" software for Mac (available on the Mac App Store). It is not as full featured as the G4FON CW Trainer for PC; but it has all the

SSTV Series 23 - Update 1

Additional notes for Expedition 72 / Series 23
Event from Wed. 25-Dec-24 to Sun. 05-Jan-25

• Experiment Notes

ISS Radio: Service Module Call: RS0ISS
Frequency: 145.800 MHz Mode: PD120
[Expect Doppler Shift of +/- 3 KHz]

Theme: Celebrating ARISS 2024
Number of images planned: 12

• Times (subject to change)

Start: Wednesday 25-December
no earlier than 14:55 UTC | 9:55 AM ET
End: Sunday 05-January
around 14:20 UTC | 9:20 AM ET

• ARISS Image Gallery & Awards

https://ariss-usa.org/ARISS_SSTV
Look for the "Series 23 Holidays 2024 Mission"

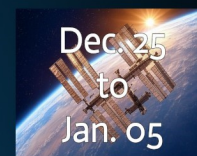


Image from November 2023's Series 22 SSTV Event



The Series 23 ISS SSTV experiment announcement. Image from the "ARISS - Amateur Radio on the International Space Station" Facebook page.

2024 Highlights: ARISS-Canada



An SSTV image decoded by Bruce VE7PTN during the Series 23 ISS SSTV experiment.

necessary features like Farnsworth mode. It is not as restrictive though, e.g., you can pick any lesson you like without having to run a previous lesson like you do in G4FON. For me though it is mainly the convenience of having the software on my main computer, which is a Mac. I have found it a little buggy with the post-lesson display of the transmitted test: it tends to display the previous lesson's test until I move the mouse cursor to the text area – weird. I expect that at my current pace it will take me a few months to get proficient. However, I have already tried listening to CW on an RS-44 satellite pass and was able to copy some characters. RS-44,

like most linear satellites, has a CW beacon that transmits a repeating identity signal. I have tuned it in many times before because it is helpful as a known frequency signal for setting the Receiver Incremental Tuning (RIT) for the satellite on a particular pass. On a recent pass when I did this, instead of just hearing some repeating meaningless tones, this time I heard CW characters that I could understand, "RS44". This was my first time hearing and understanding over-the-air CW; I was pleased and encouraged. I am already looking forward to my first satellite CW QSO!

That's all for this month. Happy New Year and 73.

ITS - Campbell River Fundraising



During December, the North Island Amateur Radio Society, which manages several of the Island Trunk System sites, issued a flyer for fundraising.

John Adams VE7DAY, who has successfully managed the ITS Campbell River repeater, VE7RVR (146.820 MHz) for a number of years, was looking to retire from that role. He was willing to place the VE7RVR site and all associated equipment into the hands of NIARS. John had set a deadline of Jan. 21, 2025 for NIARS to raise some additional funds of around \$1,000 to secure the Campbell River ITS repeater site and equipment.

NIARS naturally needed to fundraise quickly and fortunately the fundraising was successful. In the last few days of 2024 the funds have been raised and the sale of the equipment and necessary site access for VE7RVR has been completed.



The Campbell River repeater site showing the building, solar panels, tower and antennas.

Since NIARS now owns the Campbell River ITS site equipment and has permanent access to the site, it is committed to carrying out all of the necessary upgrades required. NIARS will incorporate VE7RVR into the annual summer north island repeater maintenance work done by club members.

Despite the fact that NIARS has raised the funds necessary, there is always a need for ongoing maintenance and equipment replacement for the NIARS ITS repeater sites. As such, any donations are welcome in order to ensure that the Island Trunk System remains on the air as an important communications system for Vancouver Island amateurs.

If you want to make a donation to NIARS you can do so at any time. The preferred way to donate is by using e-Transfer as this avoids PayPal fees. You can e-Transfer to niars8594@gmail.com.

PayPal donations can be made via <https://niars.ca/donations>. All VE7RVR donations will be recognized by NIARS on their website and acknowledged on a plaque at the Campbell River site.

NARA Meetings for January

January 6 :NARA Exec. Meeting — Google Meet

January 9 : NARA General Meeting — Google Meet

NARA's Website:

<https://ve7na.ca/>



The volunteer group of NARA members producing this newsletter would like to wish all readers a Happy new year. We thank all those who provided material for this month's issue.

The deadline for the **February 2025** issue of the NARA Newsletter is noon on Tuesday Jan. 28 with an intended publication date of Jan. 31.

News items and comments should be mailed to:

news@ve7na.ca