



## President's Message – Randy VE7FAA

Despite the clear blue sky and cold January weather, there was a good NARA turnout for Winter Field Day, Jan. 25. This is a positive start to 2025 with thanks to all those who attended and operated. The actual number of contacts made and the score is not that important; it was fun and different. And who knows when any of us might have to set up a station in an emergency situation in such conditions.

Likewise, there was a good turnout for the Parks-2-Parks POTA activity day for Vancouver Island on Jan. 18, again despite the cold winter weather. I should not say this because it is coming, but what seems somewhat unusual this winter is that, well, we have gone so far without any snow.

I know that I keep pushing the NARA coffee klatches, but they really are important to the social side of NARA, especially until we organize some in-person general meetings and presentations. I encourage you to attend one of the coffee klatches during February and get together with other NARA members.

It is expected that VE7NA will be active on SSB during the BC QSO Party on Feb. 1-2. Please contact Mason VE7PMD ([ve7pmd@gmail.com](mailto:ve7pmd@gmail.com)) if you are interested to operate the VE7NA station at 808 Wing.

## BC QSO Party – Feb. 1-2

This is not really a contest, but a chance to get on the air and advertise our marvelous province. This activity period is a total of 20 hours: Saturday, Feb 1, from 8 am to 7:59 pm (Pacific); and Sunday, Feb. 2, from 8 am to 3:59 pm (Pacific).

## 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
BC QSO Party	Feb 1—2	VE7NA
Nanaimo Science Fair	Feb. 23	NARA
Merville Swap Meet	April 27	Comox
Field Day (ARRL)	June 28-29	NARA
Canada Day Contest	July 1	NARA
Nanaimo Bathtub Race	July	RNBS
NIARS Campout	August	NIARS
Bike Race	August	MIVA
Canada Winter Contest	December	NARA

Suggested QRG's for operation (+/- 5 kHz or so) are: CW - 1815, 3535, 7035, 14035, 21035, 28035 kHz. Phone - 1845, 3850, 7230, 14250, 21300, 28490 kHz. (check for US General). Note that Nanaimo stations send 59(9) plus the electoral district 'NAL.'

Full details can be found at [www.orcadxcc.org/bcqp.html](http://www.orcadxcc.org/bcqp.html). Weather permitting, NARA's club station, VE7NA, may well be activated. Check with Mason VE7PMD ([ve7pmd@gmail.com](mailto:ve7pmd@gmail.com)) ASAP if you wish to operate VE7NA at 808 Wing.

## VA7ITS Island Trunk Repeater - Off Air

The VA7ITS repeater on 444.725 MHz, a part of the Island Trunk System (ITS), is off the air. Until repairs can be made, an alternative site is being looked at ASAP to re-establish ITS linking.

## Remote Operation Update

As club members will know, NARA wrote to RAC (Radio Amateurs of Canada) last year regarding the rules for remote operation. Most countries already permit remote operation for any amateur who already has access to the HF spectrum. To NARA it seemed unusual that someone who could operate

on the HF bands could not operate remotely on these same HF bands. An amateur with Basic, Basic with Honors or Basic with CW cannot use a remote station because current ISED regulations limit remote operation to those with Advanced certification. NARA made the case that these regulations need to be reviewed and updated given recent advances in remote operating technology. In the November-December issue of RAC's publication, *The Canadian Amateur*, we were advised of some progress.

To quote from *The Canadian Amateur*. "RAC presented a request for change to 'RIC-3 information on the Amateur Radio Service' to allow amateurs with a Basic, Basic with Honours or Basic with Morse Code qualification to use remotely-controlled stations established by Amateurs with an Advanced qualification. Such operation would be limited to the frequency and power privileges conferred by the operator's certificate. This is a request for a change in ISED policy. ISED had several questions and will consider the proposal carefully."

The next meeting between RAC and ISED was tentatively agreed for September 2025.

## VE7NA Update

More progress at the VE7NA station at the air cadet building.

- Randy and Jack put up a dual band antenna on Saturday, Jan. 4. NARA's Yaesu FTM400 has been assigned to the VE7NA station for VHF/UHF use.
- Mason and Brandon installed UniFi Express as the VE7NA station network controller, which incorporates a 48-Port switch which will give room to grow and remotely manage the system. Also, guest Wi-Fi is now available for members who come to VE7NA.
- An AREDN super node is now installed. It is connected with a station in Alberta. The AREDN network will be separate from the NARA local LAN.

As always, if a member with an Advanced certificate wants to experiment or is interested in beta testing, they can contact Mason VE7PMD ([ve7pmd@gmail.com](mailto:ve7pmd@gmail.com)) who can get them set up to use the Flex equipment.

## Winter Field Day

This year's Winter Field Day took place at Meadow Community Park and as expected it was cold, though bright and sunny, reaching a maximum temperature of around 6C. Many of the 20m SSB contacts were made by Jack VE7GDE with Devan VE7LSE, Kevin VE7KGV, Lanaya VE7NAY and Sanjith VE7JAI assisting. All of the 20m CW contacts were made by Gerry VE7BGP bar one. David VA7DXX brought along his battery-operated KX3 transceiver and just for fun made one 20m CW contact with North Dakota running just 2 watts. The 20m antenna was a low inverted V dipole. Greg VE7GGH ran 2m FM plus 15m and 10m SSB from his vehicle using an end-fed wire antenna for HF.

While this year's Winter Field Day was a smaller group of NARA enthusiasts, it was nevertheless fun. NARA made just under 130 contacts using CW, SSB and FM.



**Sanjith, VE7JAI operating the 20m station on SSB.**



**Gerry VE7BGP operating CW on 20m.**

## Winter Field Day continued ...



Greg VE7GGH operating VE7NA from his vehicle on 2m FM as well as on 15m and 10m SSB.

## Vancouver Island POTA Activity

It came as no surprise that doing a POTA (Parks on the Air) session in mid-winter was cold! A group of NARA members and friends set up a POTA session on Saturday, Nov. 18, at Rath Trevor Park in Parksville. For those who braved the cold it was a fun day indeed with some 20 radio hams, including some new members of NARA, attending.

The P2P (Parks to Parks) event on Vancouver island was instigated by Mike VA7FC of the Black Sheep Radio Club in Victoria. For NARA the prime mover was Devan VE7LSE, with Mason VE7PMD providing most of the food and Kevin VE7KGV, as usual, cooking the hotdogs.



Rath Trevor Park in mid-January with no snow!

NARA's Website:

<https://ve7na.ca/>

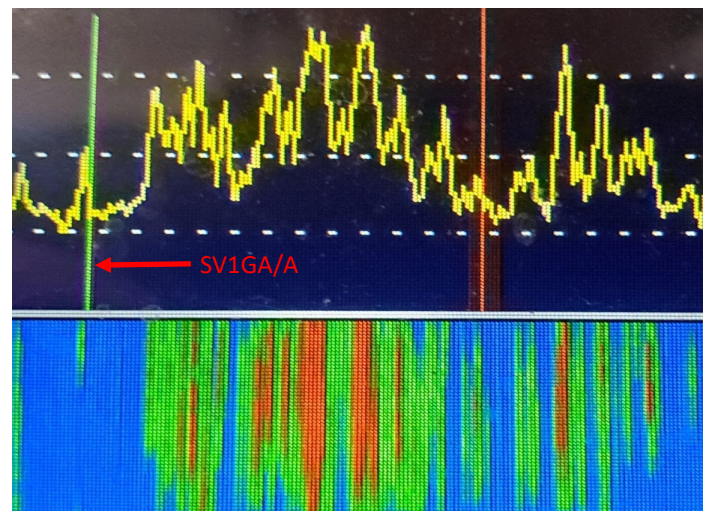


## How is DX – David VA7DXX



If there is such a thing as 'Breaking News' in amateur radio, then read on ... On Saturday, Jan. 25, the Worldwide DX community was taken by surprise when it was announced that Mt. Athos in north eastern Greece was on the air. The SV1GA/A DXpedition was kept under very good raps indeed, not a word had leaked out.

It was 50 years ago that Mt. Athos first took to the amateur radio airwaves, and to celebrate this occasion a team of six led by well-known DXer and country activator, Martti OH2BH, started operations on the morning of Jan. 25 (Pacific time). The other members of the team were Niko OH2GEK, Daniel YO8BCA, Gabi YO8WW, Adrian KO8SCA and Aris SV1GA. Initial activity was on 40m CW and soon after on 17m CW. Having worked Mt. Athos previously I did not need this very rare country, but I certainly was interested in any new bands. On Saturday evening their 40m FT8 signal was in and out of the noise. They did respond to me, but the QSO was not completed. On Sunday morning, Jan. 26, SV1GA/P appeared on 17m CW with their signal peaking S9. The pile up was horrendous but after about 40 minutes I luckily managed to complete a QSO. Contacts on 30m and 40m followed.



The huge, 15 KHz wide, CW pileup for SV2GA/A (Mt Athos) on 17m on Sunday, Jan. 26.

But stand by, this Mt Athos DX story might not have a happy ending. On Monday, Jan. 27, a rumour started that this Dxpediton did not appear to have the necessary permissions from the Monastic Community of Mt. Athos to operate from what is known as the Holy Mountain. At around the same

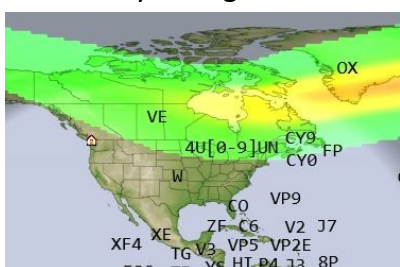
time on Monday morning operations from Mt. Athos suddenly stopped. There was also a rumour that the Dxpeditio team had been detained. The rumour continued that while the Dxpeditio had received a written permit to operate from near one of the monasteries, it appeared that perhaps the Monastic Community (the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople) also needed to agree the operation. Indeed, without proper authorization the DXCC desk would not give the Dxpeditio credit for DXCC awards.

Monday and Tuesday came and went with no communication at all from the Mt. Athos group. Then on Wednesday morning (Jan. 29) a message was received from the Mt. Athos Dxpeditio saying that they were safe. They were waiting for a decision on further activities from 'different entities' within the Holy Community regarding the future of their SV1GA/A operation. (For any update on this story, please see the last page of this Newsletter).



**The team on Mt. Athos pictured at one of the monasteries. As of Jan. 29, the group was waiting to see if they can continue their SV1GA/A DXpedition.**

The new year started with much enhanced auroral activity following two CMEs directed at the Earth. On Jan. 1 my regular morning sked with Boston, presently on 20m CW, was barely workable. Our normal S9 signals were down to around S3 with rough sounding auroral notes. Obviously a considerable amount of auroral attenuation on the path. There was more auroral attenuation on Jan. 4, but this time signals were stronger on the path but with heavy fading and auroral notes.



**Auroral activity on the morning of Jan. 1.**

In the last two weeks of December and in early January, there appeared to be a dearth of new DX around, at least as far as I was concerned, and this generally coincided with a period of poor conditions. However, a week into the new year things picked up and I had a couple of surprisingly good contacts on 10m with 7Q2T from Malawi and a contact with 6W1RD in Senegal, West Africa, on 20m was also in my log in mid-January. For Beaches on the Air fans I also worked 7B1BOTA – a beach operation – from Indonesia. I also made a contact



with Dale CE2SV who is also licensed as VE7SV with his super ('big gun' as DXers call it), contesting/ DX station in Chilliwack. (The picture is of one of his towers).

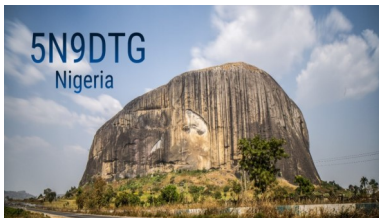
In tuning around the bands in early January, I came across many stations using the WWA suffix, for example GB3WWA, GB1WWA, CR6WWA, EG7WWA, etc. This is all part of the WWA (Worldwide) Award for 2025. There are about 75 stations across the world in this program, most using the suffix WWA. On its website [hamaward.cloud/wwa](http://hamaward.cloud/wwa) it is noted that WWA aims to be the most followed radio event in the world over time.

Speaking of awards, the French national society REF (Réseau des Émetteurs Français) celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. REF is issuing a challenge to work a minimum of 25 contacts with at least 15 French REF-suffix stations on almost any band between Apr. 1 and Jun. 30 this year. So be on the lookout for French stations using the suffix REF.



The Belgium IARU Society the UBA (the Royal Union of Belgian Radio Amateurs) is also celebrating. During March it will celebrate the centenary anniversary of the IARU by operating some 30 special event stations from March 15 to May 15. The special stations will all use the number 100 as part of their prefix. These include ON100, OO100, OP100, OQ100, OR100, OS100 and OT100. Each station will have a single letter suffix. Also be on the lookout for ON0IARU and OR0IARU.

Looking into February we can expect Dxpeditions from Ghana (9G5IK & 5N9DTG), Senegal (6W7), Anguilla (VP2ECV), Cape Verde Is. (D44OA), St Helena (ZD7KYD), Cocos Keeling (VK9), Marshall Is. (V7), Bahamas (C6ADA), Togo (5V0DX), Sint Martin (PJ7), St Pierre & Miquelon (FP), St Martin (FS) and Christmas Is (VK9XU). Although worked before, I shall especially be on the lookout for Ghana, Senegal, Cocos Keeling and Christmas Island. The 9N1DTG Dxpediton to Ghana is by the Rebel DX

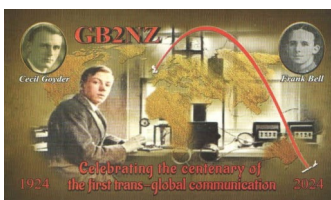


Group, who after their DXpediton will travel to South Africa to meet a vessel, hinting at a Dxpediton to 3Y0K, Bouvet Island!

Actually more than a hint because around Jan. 30 the Bouvet team paid a \$450,000 (that's correct, a hefty six-figure sum) deposit for their vessel and helicopter permits which clearly shows a major commitment by the Bouvet team. If you want to support this team you can go to their website at [www.3y0k.com](http://www.3y0k.com).

Also in February the ARRL International DX Contest on CW takes place on Feb. 15-16. I enjoy operating in contests, but don't normally send in an entry. In last year's ARRL DX CW contest I made just over 900 contacts in 17 hours of operating. This year I may try to beat that record! The great thing about the ARRL DX contests is that almost every amateur on the planet has a beam turned towards North America, making contacts just that little bit easier than normal. The SSB version takes place on March 1-2 and both are 48-hour contests.

Finally, as mentioned in the October 2024 *NARA Newsletter*, that historic DX contact between the UK and New Zealand took place in October 1924. That contact, which really marked the start of serious amateur radio DXing, took place between Cecil Goyder, operating as '2SZ' from Mill Hill in London, and Frank Bell, operating as 4AA at Shag Valley Station on New Zealand's south island. Several special event stations in the UK and NZ were on the air last October and I managed to work one of them signing GB2NZ. I just received their QSL card.



*The recently received GB2NZ QSL card*

## First 10 GHz Beacon in BC

The well-known callsign of the Surrey Amateur Radio Communications (club), VE7SAR, is now being transmitted from a newly established beacon. The beacon is on the 10 GHz band located on top of the 38 story Concord Tower in Surrey at Maidenhead grid locator CN89ne. The beacon runs 150 mW to a slot design antenna with 10 dB gain, giving just over 1.2 W effective radiated power (ERP), providing omni-directional coverage with horizontal polarization. The exact frequency of the beacon is 10,368.225 MHz.

As far as we are aware, this is the first 10 GHz beacon in BC and probably the first to use a club callsign in Canada. The keying sequence is 'VE7SAR CN89ne followed by a short tone.' The instigator and builder of this beacon was Dino VE7NX, who worked in collaboration with Scott VE7SC. Congratulations Dino and Scott for this state-of-the-art project. It is intended that additional beacons will be set up on 24 and 47 GHz. A 6m beacon is presently being constructed for VE7SCC in Coquitlam with the hope that it will be in the air by the spring of 2025. The proposed 6m beacon will run several watts and will be ideal for testing equipment.

The 10 GHz beacon has already been received on Vancouver Island from a good location in the Victoria area by Kirk VA7RKM, and of course the new 10 GHz beacon can be received over much of the Lower Mainland. This new beacon comes at a time when 10 GHz narrow band (CW and SSB) activity is increasing in the Vancouver area.



*The new 10 GHz beacon located in Surrey, BC (QTHL CN89ne)*

## 10 GHz continued ...



*The 10 GHz beacon builder VE7NX with VA7SC and VA7XB, plus visitors VA3ELE & VA3TO inspecting the 10 GHz beacon.*

As if to further demonstrate the increasing narrow band activity on 10 GHz, here is the commentary from the recent ARRL 10 GHz contests from August and September 2024. It is great to see Canada scoring so well in these contests with the overall winner, Hugh VA3TO, from Toronto. Also good to see Peter VA3ELE and Neil VE3SST doing so well. Thanks ARRL for the following:

*The 2024 ARRL 10 GHz and Up Contest grew, with log submissions up from 141 to 156! Of these, 96 are in the 10 GHz category, and 60 fall into the 10 GHz and Up category. That's an increase of 12 logs in the 10 GHz and Up category from 2023. Entries were distributed across all regions, with more than 20 entries each in the W6, W2, and W1 call areas, followed by more than 10 entries each in the W8, WØ, VE, and W5 areas.*

*Entrants from the upper Midwest dominated the top ten scores for the 10 GHz category, but the winner, Hugh Duff, VA3TO, hails from the Toronto area. Hugh's 274 contacts on 10 GHz were the highest single-band QSO count of any entrant in any category. In the 10 GHz and Up category, Peter Prabucki, VA3ELE, climbed to the top of the standings with an astounding 325 contacts and a score of more than 76,000. Kevin Hobbs, VE3KH, came in second place from his home station with 276 contacts and 99 unique call signs. Both are remarkable achievements from any home station. In third place, Neil Macklem, VE3SST, was the only other operator whose score broke 70,000, and he completed a sweep for Canadian stations in the 10 GHz and Up category.*

*It took about 100 QSOs to make the top ten QSOs list in the 10 GHz category, while it took 200 QSOs to make the top ten QSOs list in the 10 GHz and Up category. These numbers speak to the growth in activity across the bands. Unique call sign leaders were closely aligned for the top ten scores lists. For the first time, in this year's contest, four operators broke the 100 unique call sign barrier, with each operator obtaining 101 to 105 unique call signs. This speaks to the number of available stations on the higher bands*

## NARA Basic Courses

NARA is presently running a new type of course aimed specifically at young people; mainly air, army and navy cadets in the Nanaimo area. This course is a little different and recognizes that young students at school already have their hands full with their own schoolwork. This new and somewhat experimental course allows students to study each of the 10 NARA modules over a two-week period, rather than the normal one week. The hope is that students will be able to find time to study each module over a lengthened time period.

Every two weeks both Mike VA7WPM and David VA7DXX get together with the students on Google Meet to provide a 15-minute introduction and a short review of the material in the session to be studied over the next two weeks. In their own time the students will be able to view the NARA course video for the appropriate module and then study the associated slides and exam bank questions. At the end of the two-week period students have a chance to ask questions before moving onto the next module.

There are presently 10 young cadets actively taking part in this experimental course, and on this occasion several adults who are family members of the students.



*NARA's new experimental Basic course is via Google Meet.*

## Los Angeles Fires

Canadian pilots and their CL-415 water bombers are helping to fight the horrific fires in the Los Angeles area. Eight pilots, with two water bombers, have been flying in shifts to dump water on the fires.

Estimates vary, but some 12,000 residences, community facilities, shopping centers, schools, communications facilities, businesses, and churches have been lost. While the loss of life and destruction caused by the fires cannot be measured in human terms, commentators have estimated that the insurance losses to be over \$250B US. This is truly staggering and many are saying that this has to be a wake-up call for the effects of climate change.

The fires have been made far worse by the dry Santa Ana winds from the north east blowing at up to 100 miles per hour.

The ARRL reports the following: *As the firestorms across Southern California continue to threaten millions of residents, trained amateur radio operators are serving critical volunteer roles to help officials spot fires before they get out of control. Dry conditions and wind gusts of 100 miles per hour have fueled days of devastating wildfires. Entire neighborhoods have been leveled by infernos.*

*The Eaton fire burned to the top of Mount Wilson, a critical logistical post for broadcast radio and television stations, as well as communications across the Southland. Federal agencies, air traffic control, local emergency responders, radio amateurs, and others all share tower space on the mountain.*

*While the main fires have been burning north and northwest of the central section of Los Angeles, just to the south, hams are standing watch. Orange County Fire Watch (OCFW) is a program locally organized by the Orange County Parks Department and the Irvine Conservancy.*

*During severe fire weather, volunteers go to preassigned locations within parks and open spaces to report conditions. Many of them are hams, using the amateur radio bands to fill in mobile network weak zones.*

### NARA Meetings for January via Google Meet

February 3: NARA Executive Meeting

February 13: NARA General Meeting



Map showing the Los Angeles fires.

## Merville Swap Meet

The Comox Valley ARC has announced its annual Swap Meet which they say is the most western hamfest in Canada. The event will take place on Sunday, Apr. 27, and will be open to the public from 9 am. The venue, as previously, is the Merville Hall at 1245 Fenwick Road, Merville, which is about 15 minutes north of Courtney on Highway 19A. If you intend to book a table, contact Brian VE7RD at [sells794@telus.net](mailto:sells794@telus.net)

## Maple Ridge Swap Meet

For those who may be travelling to the Lower Mainland in early May, note that the Maple Ridge Amateur Radio Club (MRARC) Spring Ham Radio Swap Meet takes place on May 4. The venue is the Pitt Meadows Heritage Hall, 12460 Harris Rd. The event is open from 9 am to 1 pm following a pancake breakfast starting at 8 am. The pancake breakfast is \$7 and the entry fee to the swap meet is \$10. Contact [swapmeet@mrarc.ne](mailto:swapmeet@mrarc.ne) if you intend to book a table at this event.

## Mt Athos DXpedition - Update

As of Thursday Jan. 30, the SV1GA/A operators have left Mt. Athos and are on their way home.

## The Satellite Downlink - Bruce VE7PTN

Bruce has taken a break this month. His regular column will resume in March.

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

The deadline for the **March 2025** issue of the NARA Newsletter is noon on Tuesday Feb. 25 with an intended publication date of Feb. 28.

News items and comments should be mailed to:

**news@ve7na.ca**