

THE SIGNAL



Newsletter of the

Bella Vista area Radio Club

ARKANSAS' LARGEST AMATEUR RADIO CLUB



- MEMBERSHIP DUES –
FINAL REMINDER
- ANNOUNCING BVRC POTA 101 DAY
- GETTING STARTED WITH
ACTIVATING POTA PARKS
- EXPERIMENTER'S CORNER –
A 2-METER GROUND PLANE ANTENNA
- HAM RADIO REFLECTIONS –
NPOTA 2016
- DXCC DEN –
BAKER & HOWLAND ISLANDS

MARCH 2026

Monthly Meetings: 1st Thursdays @ 7 p.m.

Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETA)

3424 S. Downum Road, Springdale AR

(HAM 101 Workshop for Newcomers @ 6pm preceding meeting)

Club Calls: N5BVA / W5NX

(Repeater Nets)

(Contesting, Operating, Special Events)

BVRC Twin Linked Repeaters:

Bella Vista: 147.255 +600 khz offset, pl 162.2

Springdale: 444.100 + 5 MHz offset, pl 162.2

Website: www.bellavistaradioclub.org



*The Largest Amateur Radio Club
In Arkansas!*

**Serving members in northwest Arkansas,
southwest Missouri, & northeast Oklahoma**



WEEKLY BVRC NETS

HAM 101 NET

*Mondays @ 7 pm on the
WX5NAS Skywarn Link System*

Bentonville – 146.865, -offset, pl 103.5
Springdale – 147.315, +offset, pl 97.4
Fayetteville – 147.315, +offset, pl 110.9
Huntsville – 443.625, +5 MHz, pl 97.4
Green Forest – 145.310, -offset, pl

LEGACY NET

*Wednesdays @ 7 pm on the
BVRC Dual Linked Repeaters*

N5BVA/Bella Vista
147.255, +offset, pl 162.2

N5BVA/Springdale
444.100, +5 MHz, pl 162.2

3830 ROUNDTABLE

*Sunday Afternoons
4:00 pm during CST
4:30 pm during CDT*

3.830 MHz

SOCIAL JUNCTION NET

*Sundays @ 7 pm on the
WX5NAS Skywarn Link System*

Bentonville – 146.865, -offset, pl 103.5
Springdale – 147.315, +offset, pl 97.4
Fayetteville – 147.315, +offset, pl 110.9
Huntsville – 443.625, +5 MHz, pl 97.4
Green Forest – 145.310, -offset, pl

SLOW SCAN TV NET

*(“The Slow Scan Show”)
Fridays @ 7 pm on the
BVRC Dual Linked Repeaters*

N5BVA/Bella Vista
147.255, +offset, pl 162.2

N5BVA/Springdale
444.100, +5 MHz, pl 162.2



NEXT BVRC MONTHLY MEETING



THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026 @ 7PM
ARKANSAS LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING ACADEMY
3424 S. DOWNUM ROAD
SPRINGDALE, AR

March Meeting Information

HAM 101 Workshop, 6pm preceding monthly meeting – Newcomers are in for another hands-on treat as this month's Workshop features a reprise of "Ohm's Law – 2" with BVRC's Hospitality Director and Signal *Experimenter's Corner* author, Dr. Bill Durham – KG5ZCI. The first Ohm's Law workshop enabled attendees to learn how to measure resistances using multi-meters. This will be an advanced follow-up and will be very educational and fun. Back by popular demand, don't miss out on this workshop!

BVRC March meeting, 7pm – Also back by popular demand, this month's meeting will be especially beneficial for BVRC newcomers. Be sure and join us for "Ask The Elmer". This meeting will be entirely devoted to a Q & A session with a very experienced panel of BVRC operators on hand, each operator being one of the club's foremost authorities in a given area of the hobby. – Do you have ham radio questions? Antennas and feedlines, radios and equipment, technical, grounding, operating, POTA, mobile installations, shack set-up, DXing, digital modes, logging,contesting, and more..... Here's your chance to glean info from the collective mind of BVRC as our panel of Elmers/Mentors field, and render great answers to, your questions.

Newcomers – bring your questions!

SEE YOU THEN!

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From the Desk of the President

Elmer? Who is that?

With our many newly licensed amateur radio operators in BVRC, the term “Elmer” might seem a little mysterious or confusing. Well, we’re about to clear that up just in time for our special March club presentation, “Ask The Elmer.”

Although there are a few versions of how the term Elmer came about, one of the most prevailing is that the term was coined in a 1971 magazine article by Rod Newkirk, who wrote about his own mentor, Elmer P. Frohardt Jr. of Madison, Wisconsin.

An AI Overview from Google gives us a pretty decent description of what an Elmer is and what an Elmer does:

An "Elmer" in ham radio is an experienced, knowledgeable operator who acts as a personal mentor to a newcomer or someone looking to advance their skills. Coined in 1971, the term refers to someone who provides guidance, technical advice, and encouragement to help beginners navigate the hobby, from getting licensed to setting up stations.

Key aspects of an Elmer include:

- Mentorship: Providing one-on-one help, answering questions, and explaining complex radio concepts.*

- Support: Offering hands-on assistance with assembling antennas, operating radios, and troubleshooting equipment.*

- Origin: The term originated in the March 1971 QST "How's DX" column by Rod Newkirk (W9BRD) to describe the "unsung fathers of Amateur Radio".*

- "Elmering": This is the active process of teaching or assisting someone, often described as a crucial, traditional part of the amateur radio community.*

For our March club meeting at ALETA we will see “Elmering” in action as several of our club’s Elmers will be serving on a panel to answer questions from our members. No question will be too simple or, for that matter, too complex as our members are all on different points along their amateur radio journey.

We hope to see you there!

BVRC 2025 FIELD DAY HIGHLIGHTS FEBRUARY MEETING



It was yet another packed meeting room for BVRC's February meeting, this month featuring our annual presentation and review of Field Day 2025, which was held last June at BVRC's traditional operating location of Metfield Skills Park in Bella Vista.

BVRC Field Day Coordinator and past president, gave an outstanding presentation complete with statistics and video of BVRC's great (as always) FD operation.

For the newcomers to the club, Tom shared as to what Field Day is and does: ARRL Field Day is basically ham radio's "Open House". Every 4th weekend in June, more than 40,000 hams throughout North America set up temporary transmitting stations in public places to demonstrate ham radio's science, skill, and service to our communities and to our nation. It combines public service, emergency preparedness, community outreach, and technical skills all in a single event. Field Day has been an annual event since 1933 and remains the most popular event in amateur radio.



Tom - W5XNA



BVRC has done an excellent job in the FD standings the past three years, placing 1st in the nation in the 3AC category in 2023 and 2024. The club came in 2nd in the nation in 2025 with the CW station scoring 1,458 QSOs, the Phone station with 345 QSOs, and the Digital doing a fine job with 304 QSOs.

Mark your calendar now for Field Day 2026, June 27-28, when BVRC will once again return with call sign W5NX, along with the fun and excitement of station setup and operating, a great evening meal, and of course, great ham fellowship.



The HAM 101 Workshop for February featured BVRC member Michael Kemper – W5KMK, with his topic, “Things You’ve Always Wanted to Know About FT-8 But Were Afraid to Ask Your Parents”.

Since acquiring his Technician, General, and Amateur Extra license in the past 3 years, Michael became interested in FT8 operation shortly after upgrading to General and Amateur Extra and has had very rewarding experiences with the mode. He will be sharing some of those experiences along with tips on how to be a successful FT8 operator.

Michael covered several handy tips on what type of software is needed to operate the modes of FT8 and FT4, along with a brief synopsis on how to download the basic software needed, and the basic layout and meanings of what the software appears like on your computer monitor.

As Micheal conducted his presentation, he used BVRC’s new club station, W5NX, operating in real time to show the basic operational principles of FT8.

Michael plans on a follow-up Workshop later this year with “Working the Dark Side 2.0” where he will illustrate, with a live demonstration using the club station, some of the more advanced settings on the FT8 software, how to use them, and how they can be beneficial in FT8 operation.



THANKS FOR A GREAT FEBRUARY WORKSHOP, MICHAEL.....WE APPRECIATE YOU!



A reminder for everyone wanting to keep their BVRC memberships current for the coming year and have not yet done so, **the deadline for dues is March 31**. The dues are \$15.00 per year (\$1.25 a month). If you have any immediate licensed family members living with you at your home domicile, you can include them as a Family Membership *at no extra charge*. You can renew your membership using any of these options:

- Personal check or money order to the BVRC Treasurer, Marc – WØKYZ via regular mail, payable to:

Marc Whittlesey
1 Radcliffe Drive
Bella Vista, AR 72714

- Via the BVRC website: <https://bellavistaradioclub.org/membership-renewal/>
- Via Venmo:



- Pay in person at a BVRC monthly meeting

Also note: *If you are 73 years of age or older you now qualify for BVRC's Lifetime Membership. Contact Marc at the above e-mail address and advise him that you have reached your 73rd birthday. From that time forward, your membership in BVRC is FREE. You will also receive a handsome BVRC Lifetime Member certificate suitable for framing.*

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

**BVRC VE REPORT
FROM DON BANTA - K5DB
BVRC VE COORDINATOR
FEBRUARY 2026**



Congratulations!

**John McWilliams - AJ5AH - New Amateur Extra!
Justin Redman - KJ5NVW - New General!
Hank Barron - KJ5OJO - New Technician!
Mike Neimeyer - KJ5OHV - New Technician!
Christian Crandell - KJ5OIK - New Technician!
Michael Crandell - KJ5OIR - New Technician!
Brent Hedrick - KJ5OIL - New Technician!
Brock Hessing - KJ5OJC - New Technician!
Viviana Johnson - KJ5OJB - New Technician!
Jase Rogers - KJ5OJE - New Technician!
Keilie Ross - KJ5OIV - New Technician!
Bob Wade - KJ5OLM - New Technician!**

Next month's exam sessions:

- **March 14, 10 am - Shiloh Museum, 118 W. Johnson Ave, Springdale**
- **March 14, 2 pm - Bella Vista Public Library, 11 Dickens Place, Bella Vista**

**If you wish to test, you must register for an exam session.
To register, and for additional instructions,
go to the TESTING tab on the BVRC website:**

<https://bellavistaradioclub.org/testing/>



The first major Bella Vista area Radio Club event of 2026 is drawing near – BVRC POTA 101 Day. *The event will take place from Friday, April 10 – Sunday, April 12.*

Operation will be on the HF bands. All club members are invited to participate. If you have General or higher license privileges, you can

make contacts using your personal call on Friday and Sunday.

On Saturday, April 11, from 12:00 pm – 6:00 pm, BVRC will operate solely as club station W5NX and any club member, regardless of license class, will be able to make contacts as there will be a control operator present (similar to Field Day operation). We will be activating Beaver Lake Wildlife Management Area, POTA # US-7262.

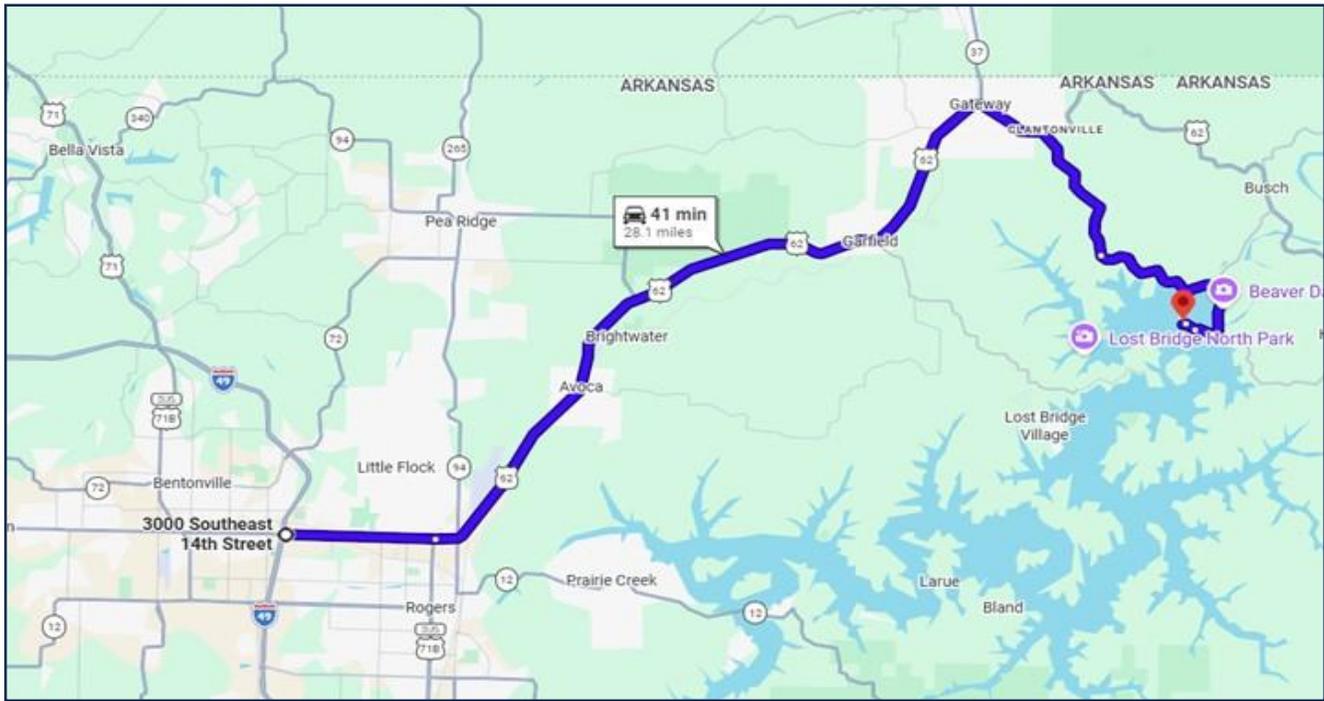
Here is the main event information:

When: Friday, April 10 - Sunday, April 12, 2026
(BVRC Membership POTA 101 Day, Saturday, April 11th)

Where: Beaver Dam Site Lake Campground:

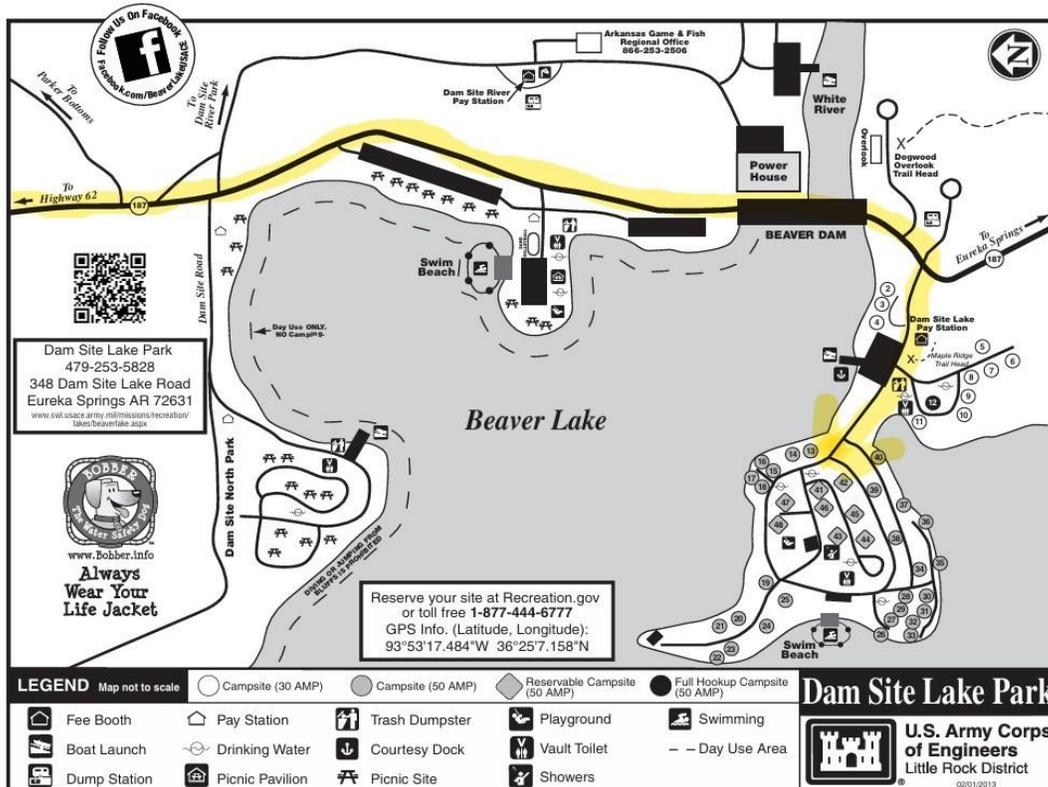
Check In: For those wishing to camp, check in is at 4:00 pm on Friday at the campground Kiosk. You must first reserve a site at: <https://www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/234651>. Reservations are still available for the event dates.

BVRC Membership POTA 101 Day: Saturday, April 11, from Noon to 6:00 pm, featuring a Potluck meal at 4:00 pm.



Directions to the Campground:

- 1) From I-49 take exit 86 for US 62 E/Arkansas 102/SE 14th St head EAST 3.1 mi.
- 2) Turn left to stay on US-62 E for 24.3 mi.
- 3) Turn right onto Hwy 187 for 3.2 mi
- 4) After crossing the Beaver Dam, turn right onto Beaver Park Rd
- 5) Check in at Kiosk and bear right to access the island campsites



BVRC Club POTA Activation and Potluck Dinner at the Beaver Dam Site Lake Island Campground Saturday, April 11, 2026 – Noon to 6:00 pm



Join us for BVRC Club POTA (Parks On The Air) Activation Day and a great potluck dinner on Saturday, April 11th between noon and 6:00 pm.

This event is designed for club members who want to learn more about POTA activations. It is specially designed as a HAM 101 event for new amateurs with Technician licenses who want to learn more about HF operations from our POTA Elmers. We will be using our club event call, W5NX. Propagation is incredible from this small island campground as you might expect so we will have plenty of "POTA Hunters" calling us.

It is also designed for members who want to join in the fun, food, and fellowship of a club gathering on Beaver Lake!

If you are interested, please RSVP to participate and to help us plan the Potluck Dinner

- You can RSVP your attendance by sending an email to WBSJAN@arrl.net before April 2, 2026.
- Those who RSVP will be sent a confirmation email with driving directions to the event.

If you RSVP to attend and to join in the fun, bring:

- 1) A Potluck dish to pass to add to the Angus cheeseburger main entrée (warm entrée, side dish or dessert)
- 2) Warm clothes for a cool spring day and evening.
- 3) Folding lawn or camping chairs and a small TV tray or table for dinner

We hope to see you on the island!



Getting Started With Activating POTA Parks

Activating POTA (Parks On The Air) parks is widely described as highly fun and rewarding, combining outdoor enjoyment with amateur radio operation. Many first-time activators report an exhilarating experience and having “an absolute blast”. The combination of being in nature, setting up a portable station, and connecting with fellow hams across the globe creates a unique sense of adventure. POTA activations have become ultra numerous and large scale worldwide.



Some of the key reasons for POTA activations being so fun and enjoyable are:

- Nature and outdoor experience: Operating from scenic parks allows you to enjoy the outdoors, hike to your site, and appreciate the environment.
- Social and interactive: You’ll engage with other hams through quick exchanges, pileups, and even casual chats—especially satisfying when you’re spotted and contacts start flowing in.
- Skill-building and challenge: Setting up antennas, tuning equipment, and adapting to band conditions offers hands-on learning and problem-solving.



- Flexibility and personal pace: You can operate as fast or slow as you like—some focus on maximizing contacts, while others prefer quiet, relaxed operation or even just enjoying the scenery.
- Community and camaraderie: Many activators enjoy sharing their experiences online, and hunters often appreciate the effort, making it a fun, shared hobby.



As one POTA activator put it: “Don’t overthink it. It’s honestly a ton of fun; you can take things at your own pace and just have a good time.” The activity is also noted for being addictive—many activators find themselves planning trips just to activate new parks.

To activate a POTA (Parks on the Air) park, follow these key steps:

1. Choose a Park: Use the POTA map to find a park within your area. Confirm the park’s boundaries and any restrictions (e.g., no tree antennas or ground stakes) using official park websites or Google Maps.
2. Prepare Your Gear: Bring a portable radio (HF preferred, but VHF/UHF allowed), power source (e.g., LiFePO4 battery), coaxial cable, and a simple, easy-to-deploy antenna (e.g., dipole, end-fed wire). Ensure all equipment and you are inside the park boundary during operation.
3. Set Up and Spot: Once in the park, set up your station (e.g., at a picnic table or bench), choose a quiet frequency (avoid even-numbered frequencies), and call CQ POTA using SSB or CW. Then, spot yourself on POTA.app by clicking the “+” button under “Spots” to announce your location, frequency, and mode.
4. Make 10 QSOs: You must complete at least 10 valid contacts (QSOs) on the same UTC day to successfully activate the park. Use simple exchanges (callsign and signal report) and consider saying your park number every few contacts to help hunters.
5. Log and Submit: After your activation, log all QSOs in a valid ADIF format. You can use paper, a notebook, or apps like HAMRS, Smart Logger, or World Radio League. Upload your ADIF file to pota.app under “My Log Uploads” using your call sign and park number in the filename (e.g., K5ABC@US-0000-20260205.adif).
6. Follow the Rules:

Follow the law and the Golden Rule.

Leave no trace — remove all gear, lines, and trash.

Be courteous to park visitors and staff.

Do not use repeaters — only simplex modes count.

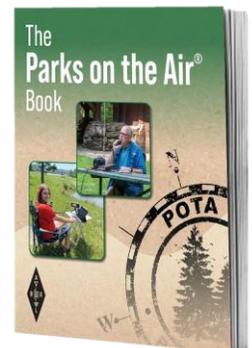
Avoid operating during restricted times (e.g., hunting season, night closures).

Pro Tips:

Use social media (Facebook, Slack) or schedule your activation in advance to attract more hunters, along with the POTA planned activation page.

Consider operating QRP (low power) on your first activation to reduce pileups.

Check the [POTA Activator Guide](#) for detailed setup and safety tips.



For a wealth of additional information, purchase the brand new ARRL Parks on the Air book:

<https://home.arrl.org/action/Store/Product-Details/productId/2013464221>



Welcome

New BVRC Members!

Matt Harwell – K5NTT – Magnolia, AR
Mark Hoffman – W7GCY – Rogers
Mike Cole – W5TMC – Sallisaw, OK
Van Allen – W5VAN – Rogers
Kenny Williamson – Siloam Springs
Bradley Hoetger – Rogers
Brent Hedrick – Fayetteville
Christian Crandell – KJ5OIK – Farmington
Michael Crandell – KJ5OIR – Farmington
Brent Hedrick – KJ5OIL – Fayetteville
Mike Neimeyer – KJ5OHV – Rogers
Brock Hessing – KJ5OJC – Bella Vista
Viviana Johnson – KJ5OJB – Bentonville
Jase Rogers – KJ5OJE – Pea Ridge
Keilie Ross – KJ5OIV – Fayetteville
Hank Barron – KJ5OJO – Bella Vista
Bob Wade – KJ5OLM - Gravette
Mark Graff – AF6V - Fayetteville

ARV Hamfest
Home · Flea Market · Dealers · Activities · Prizes · Travel Info



**Arkansas River Valley
Hamfest**
March 7, 2026

Arkansas River Valley Hamfest

Dardanelle Community Center
Saturday March 7, 2026





Dardanelle Community Center
2059-2099 State Highway 22
Dardanelle, Arkansas

GPS coordinates 35.23566 N -093.17514 W

Doors open at 8:00 AM
Admission \$10.00

Hamfest website: <https://sites.google.com/view/arv-hamfest/home>

EXPERIMENTER'S CORNER



By Dr. Bill Durham – KG5ZCI

A 2-Meter Ground Plane Antenna

My ham radio experience started with FT8. This was a comfortable place to begin since the script is essentially written for you and you don't actually have to talk to anyone. After a while I began to realize that I should work on the actual talking part. It's no secret that the BVRC club nets are the easiest place to get over the apprehension of getting on the air with real people. One of our local 2-meter nets was my first choice, but I needed an antenna among other things. I searched the web for some antenna designs and put together what looked like a good design.



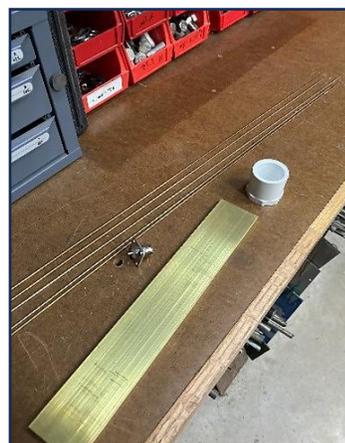
Well, it resulted in *not* a good design, and it fell apart when I tried to raise it up on my antenna pole. 2-meter ground plane antennas are rather simple and do not require much in the way of materials, but some mechanical stability is required. At the time my shop was fairly well equipped, and it did not take long to fabricate a solid antenna. It worked very well and it still works although it got replaced by a dual band antenna and now hangs in the shop as a decoration. (photo at left)

The target of this article is to show how to build a similar and sturdy antenna but using only a drill press and ordinary hand-tools. The antenna is shown in the picture at upper left, along with its predecessor. I built the new one using the dimensions of the predecessor. (photo at right)



As I fore mentioned, the bill of materials for a 2-meter antenna is very small. All that is required is:

- 1 – 2 x 2 x 1/4" piece of brass, available from Amazon
- Some 3/32' brazing rod
- A SO239 socket and
- few pieces of PVC pipe



Brazing rod (not welding rod) is a copper alloy and typically is sold in 3 ft pieces. It is available in local welding supply stores like Welsco near Sams in Fayetteville. I did not try Harbor Freight. The PVC components are only needed if you plan to leave the antennas outside.

Construction is simple and starts with making the 2' plate. (I bought a 12" long piece because I will use the excess in other projects.) It cuts easily with a hacksaw with a coarse blade. I cleaned up the plate with a file and sandpaper. Next, several holes in the brass plate are needed. The first hole, centered on the brass plate, needs to be large enough for the SO239 socket to fit through. SO239 sockets are standard and the hole required is slightly (~0.01") larger than 9/16". 9/16" drill bits are available with turned-down shanks to fit into typical home-shop drill presses or hand drills. I highly recommend holding the plate in a vice of some type while drilling. Brass, although normally fairly easy to work, can grab in the hole when drilling. A rat-tail file is the tool of choice to increase the hole diameter to fit the socket. ►



The socket is designed to be held in place with 4 machine screws. I chose 4-40 size screws, round head. Drilling the holes can be a bit tricky because of the tolerances required. My solution is very simple and I use it often. Place the socket in the plate and use a small clamp to hold it in place. Get a drill bit that fits through the mounting holes on the socket snugly but not over size. Drill one hole and use a screw and nut to hold the socket in place along with the clamp. Drill a second hole opposite the first and add another screw and nut. Tighten both screws, remove the clamp and drill the two remaining holes.

Four additional holes are required for the radials. The brazing rod is 3/32 and the holes need to be the same. The holes are centered on each side of the plate. This is not critical but will improve the looks of the finished product if all four are well centered. The holes are 1/2" deep.

The radials are 18.5" long and four are required. The antenna is 19" long. You can cut the rod with ordinary wire cutters. The rods should fit easily into the four holes, but burrs and other imperfections can make the fit tight. I used sandpaper on the ends (1/2") to get an easy sliding fit.

The radials can be soldered into the plate with ordinary solder. You may need to use a Benzomatic torch to get the plate hot enough for the solder to flow. Don't forget to use a good flux and to remove the SO239. Keep the heat to a minimum because heating the rods can soften them. Solder one rod in place and then cool the plate, otherwise the other rods may fall out because the solder melts. I chose to use silver solder because it is stronger and I always keep a supply in the shop. You can get it on Amazon or possibly Hobby Lobby. I also held the plate by one corner in a large vice to serve as a heat sink as I moved from one rod to the next.

The antenna rod will not fit into the hole in the SO239 center pin. I cut a small piece of brass tubing (1/2" long) available in Hobby Lobby that was about 1/8" in diameter, in order to make a coupler. I slit the piece lengthwise with a model makers saw and then stretched it open to fit onto the SO239 center pin. The brass antenna piece fit snugly inside the far end of the tubing, and the assembly readily accepted the solder with some flux. Be careful not to use too much pressure on the pin because it will back off into the socket. ►





Reassemble, bend the radials down at about a 45o angle and the antenna is finished. You can simply hang the antenna from the ceiling and attach a piece of 50-ohm coax as the transmission line. If the distance is short any 50-ohm coax will work.

If you want to use the antenna outside you need to add a 1 1/8" PVC cap and coupler (gray in photo below) in order to keep it waterproof and provide a means of mounting the antenna to a mast. The first picture shows the cap on the antenna. The cap is drilled much like the brass plate but no holes for the radials. 1 x 1/2" screws are used to hold the cap and the SO239 to the brass plate. The screw tops are at the top and the nuts are attached inside the cap. Getting the nuts on the screws is a bit challenging but doable. I used a slide-on PL259 connector on the feedline but with patience a screw-on version will go on.

To go a step further, you can add a plastic lid from a can of mixed nuts or coffee. It is slid over the antenna rod through a hole just large enough to allow the brass rod to pass. The lip on the lid provides a nice drip edge to direct the water well away from the antenna connections. Some RTV or silicone caulk can also be applied to the groove between the brass plate and PVC cap, but this might be overkill.

The antenna showed a SWR of 1.2 over the 2 M band.

If you want to get a bit fancy with the inside design, you could drill the holes for the SO239 with a #43 drill and tap the holes for 4-40 screws. Then use short flat head screws that match the tapered holes in the flange of the SO239, no nuts required.



◀ A "baby cousin" of this antenna, same design, for use on the 440 MH band.

Ham Radio Reflections:

NPOTA – 2016

By Don – K5DB

For me, this year marks the 10th anniversary of what was the most fun and rewarding year I've ever experienced in amateur radio. Ten years ago in 2016, the ARRL collaborated with the National Park Service during the NPS's 100th centennial celebration and created the year-long event from 0000 UTC on January 1 to 2359 UTC on December 31: National Parks On The Air (NPOTA).

2016 National Parks
ON THE AIR
www.arrl.org/NPOTA

During this one-year event, amateur radio operators were encouraged to activate over 400 official National Park Service (NPS) administrative units and affiliated areas across the United States. Each NPS unit was given a park designation # that was used in the QSO exchanges.

This event included all National Park Service units which were: National Parks, National Battlefields, National Military Parks, National Historic Parks, National Historic Sites, National Lakeshores, National Memorials, National Monuments, National Parkways, National Preserves, National Reserves, National Recreation Areas, National Rivers, National Wild and Scenic Rivers and Riverways, National Historic and Scenic Trails, and National Seashores.



Arkansas has 8 NPS units in the state: Buffalo National River, Pea Ridge National Military Park, Fort Smith National Historic Site, Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace National Historic Site, Arkansas Post National Memorial, Cherokee Trail of Tears National Trail, and Hot Springs National Park.

It was my pleasure and privilege to activate 7 of the 8 Arkansas units. I did not activate Hot Springs National Park as it was already being heavily activated. I also had opportunities to activate NPS units in Missouri and Kansas. In total, I activated 13 NPS units that year. This was a fairly modest number of activations compared to other stations, but it was still ultra-rewarding and a blast. Had I been retired then as I am now, I would have tried for the Honor Roll Award. Some of my activations were solo and some included me being a part of groups with some of my dearest ham friends, some who are now unfortunately Silent Keys. – They are memories I will cherish forever. Some of the activations were portable stations and some I activated solo from my mobile HF station in my (at that time) trusty little Chevy S-10 pickup.

The main rules for NPOTA were:

There were 2 participation categories:

- Activators: Hams who set up portable stations at NPS units to make contacts.
- Chasers: Hams who attempt to contact as many activated NPS units as possible.

Eligibility: NPOTA was open to all licensed amateur radio operators. QSOs had to be made on amateur bands (excluding 60 meters), with no cross-band or repeater QSOs counting—except for satellite and ISS contacts.

There were 2 types of NPOTA Award certificates:

- Activator Award: For at least one valid activation.
- Chaser Award: For contacting at least one activated unit.
- National Parks Honor Roll: For working 75% of the 59 National Parks with accredited operations in 2016.
- Five-Star Activator: Special recognition for exceptional outreach (e.g., media publicity, youth involvement, green power use).

Validation Requirements:

- Activators had to be physically present on NPS property (e.g., park grounds, visitor centers), make at least 10 QSOs, and upload logs to Logbook of The World (LoTW).
- Documentation like NPS Passport stamps, GPS coordinates, or photos could be requested for verification.

One of the greatest “gifts” NPOTA gave to the amateur radio hobby occurred shortly after the conclusion of NPOTA 2016. – Thousands of hams did not want to see park activating and park chasing (hunting) come to an end. Because of the huge success of the National Parks On The Air event, it inspired the creation of Parks on the Air (POTA) as a permanent, global program.



In early 2017 shortly after the conclusion of National Parks On The Air, a group of volunteers, inspired by the work of the ARRL NPOTA program, formally launched Parks on the Air (POTA) as a separate, permanent international program. It evolved from the U.S.-based NPOTA and the earlier World Wide Flora and Fauna (WWFF) program, particularly its U.S. branch, KFF (K for USA). The split from WWFF-KFF became official after park designations diverged, starting at KFF-4447, marking POTA's emergence as an independent entity.

A nonprofit organization was founded in 2018 to sustain POTA permanently. The program expanded rapidly, growing to over 49,000 active hunters and 29,000 activators by June 2025. In early 2024, POTA updated its reference codes to align with ISO standards, such as changing K-0001 to US-0001 and K-0110 (Guam) to GU-0001, improving global consistency.

POTA now includes national, state, and provincial parks, forests, wildlife areas, and trails across over 100 countries, from the Caribbean to India and Europe. It promotes portable amateur radio operations, outdoor exploration, and community engagement, with participants known as activators (those operating from parks) and hunters (those contacting the activators).

My first 2016 NPOTA activation was easy – Cherokee Trail of Tears National Trail. It passes right through much of NW Arkansas and, of course, through Springdale. I only had to drive about 4 miles to old Fitzgerald Station just off AR-265 going north out of town to park on the trail for a mobile activation. This was late January, so the trail had not been activated that much as yet, and the pileup was huge. It was during this activation that I told myself, “You need to have some REAL fun and get involved with this program, activating as many NPS units during 2016 as is feasible for you.” I did.

The toughest activation for me that year was William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace National Historic Site in Hope, AR. This park was a solo activation. After receiving permission to setup on the site grounds, I raised my 80-meter Windom on my trusty military surplus mast along with my screen tent and station. This took about 2 hours and cut into my operating time, but you have to accept these type scenarios and keep on keepin' on. I had a pileup most of the day, several of the stations laughing at hearing the semi-constant train horns during many of my transmissions. The lot that Clinton's birthplace home sets on was right beside a major train track freight lane.

A group of us also activated Buffalo National River twice, the first time from Pruitt, AR.

The weather for the first activation wasn't very hospitable. Drizzle and temp in the 50s made it semi-miserable, but we did make a lot of QSOs. Pruitt is only about a 20-minute drive south of Harrison (my old stomping grounds where I was born and raised) and I was elated that my ham cousins came down and joined us. The two NPS rangers were also very congenial (shown in the photo above with myself and Vic – N5CS) and thought our operation very educational and interesting. One of them made a couple of QSOs which added excitement to her day. As with all my activations whether solo or with a group, we always ran phone and CW (FT8 did not exist at this time).



Another fun activation was at Fort Smith NHS. Billy-AE5CP, Paul-K5YH, Vic-N5CS, Scott-K5SAA, and several other including myself had a great time and the pileups were large. Fort Smith NHS is a beautiful facility with excellently kept grounds and a great overlook of the

Arkansas River, looking across to the west from Belle Point. Fort Smith was a Union stronghold during the latter part of the Civil War.

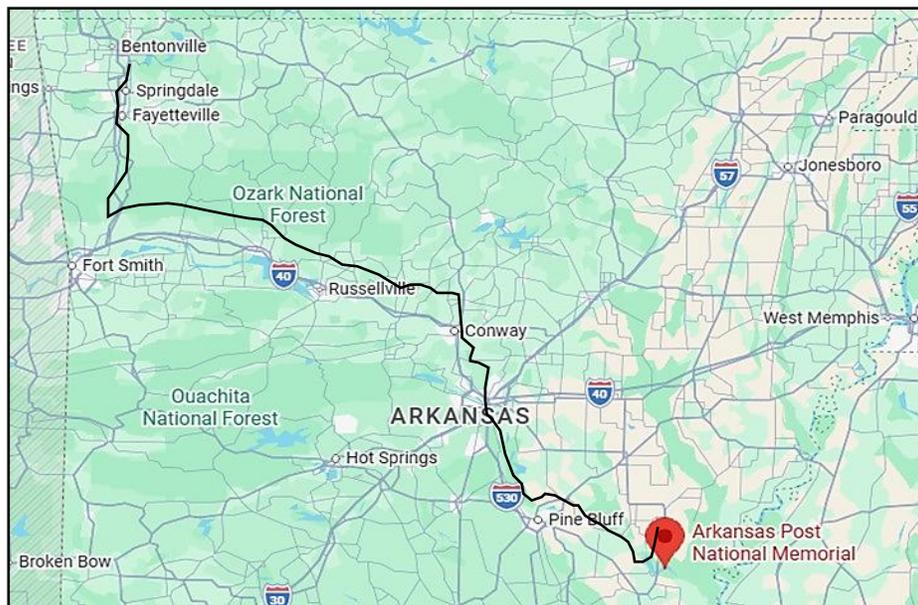


**Left to Right: Paul Dixon – K5YH (SK),
Vic Rozeboom – N5CS, and Scott
Anderson – K5SAA
at Fort Smith National Historic Site**



By the spring of 1865, the Civil War in the area around Fort Smith had become a bitter guerrilla conflict that would actually continue for years to come as outlaw bands roamed the mountains of both Arkansas and the Indian Nations of what is now Oklahoma, preying on innocents and battling against the law. It would take “Hanging Judge” Isaac Parker and a brave force of deputy marshals to finally bring this phase of history to an end.

The furthest from the house that my NPOTA travels took me in 2016, was activating Arkansas Post National Memorial, east-southeast of Pine Bluff, near the confluence of the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers. Joining me on this activation was Billy Hyatt – AE5CP.



Arkansas Post National Memorial, marks the first European settlement located along the Mississippi River, in the Mississippi Alluvial Plain, and in present-day Arkansas County, Arkansas. In 1686, Henri de Tonti (Tontitown is named after him.) established it on behalf of Louis XIV of France for the purpose of trading with the Quapaw Nation.

The facility is beautiful and kept in tip-top shape. The visitor center is outstanding along with the exhibits. Although the original buildings of

340 years ago are long gone, you can still see some of the foundations where they stood. Billy and I made around 600 QSOs that day and had a great time with the activation. An interesting point for this activation was that we were in the park shortly after Canada goose hatching season. There were hundreds of baby goslings all over the place, still with downy feathers, waddling after their mothers.

On a funny note, as Billy and I setup the stations, I kept hearing what sounded like several big motorcycles in the distance. Later the park superintendent came by to observe our operation. He told us he once had a Technician license but had let it expire. But, after seeing our fun and excitement in making QSOs, he said he would seriously think about getting back in the hobby. While he was there I asked him if there was a motorcycle racetrack nearby. He asked why I was posing that question, and when I told him about hearing the motorcycles, his grin was big:

“Those aren’t motorcycles...they’re male alligators and this is the mating season.” I told him I sincerely hoped they stayed where they were.

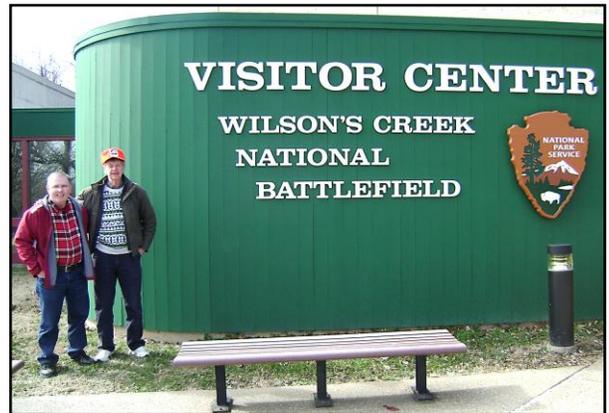
Now, you may laugh at me about this, but if you’ve never heard an alligator roar in real life, you’d think it was anything but that. When I’ve seen nature programs on TV that contained alligators, the sound of their voice coming through the TV speaker is nothing like hearing it in person (or should I say “in alligator”).



**AE5CP and K5DB at
Arkansas Post NM**

Earlier I stated I traveled outside Arkansas to activate other NPS units. One of those locations was when I swung through Harrison, AR to pick up John – W5OX. John was my original Elmer/Mentor, the “big brother” I never had, and a cracker-jack contest and special event phone operator. When he got his license in 1969, I followed about 3 months later. John’s son-in-law and XYL hold General licenses, and his two daughters and two grandsons are all Amateur Extras. He and his brother were the owners of Jones Brothers Jeep in Harrison for over 40 years. He and I have accumulated many first-place awards in various ARRL contests over the decades. I had to say goodbye to him just recently. He passed away on January 31, and I had the honor of pallbearer at his funeral a week later. My world will now never be the same.

Anyway, I picked him up, and we headed for Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield in Springfield, MO. We took along some lunch and drinks for the all-day activation, as we were operating mobile in the parking lot and wished to be there all day without driving somewhere for lunch. John had a great time as he operated about 80% of the time with me logging for him. That day we made over 800 QSOs in about 9 hours. What a blast. (Great memories for me.)



K5DB and W5OX at Wilson’s Creek NB

Another outside Arkansas National Park unit activation presented itself that year, when the XYL asked if we could go up to Emporia, KS to visit her sister. In checking the park locator map, I saw Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve about half an hour west of Emporia. I told her, “You and your sister can visit all day and have a great time...I’m going to have a great time with an activation.” The bands were great that day, with Europe booming into the pickup on 20 meters CW. I also activated Fort Scott National Historic Site on the way back home.



For my efforts in 2016 of activating 13 NPS parks (only 13 because of time and distance limitations due to work), I acquired the ARRL NPOTA Activator Award (below left).



I was so very thankful that the POTA program was born from the NPOTA 2016 event. I have continued to activate Federal – and now state – park units and still enjoy this fun and rewarding part of our hobby, as several other BVRC members also do.

You can have this much fun yourself! See the article in this month’s Signal on page 16 for tips on how to get started. I have utterly enjoyed my adventures activating parks with lifetime memories. Personally, I’m more of an Activator than a Hunter, but if both roles end up appealing to you, go for it! Go work ‘em!



This month's featured country: Baker and Howland Islands



Primary Call Sign Prefix: KH1

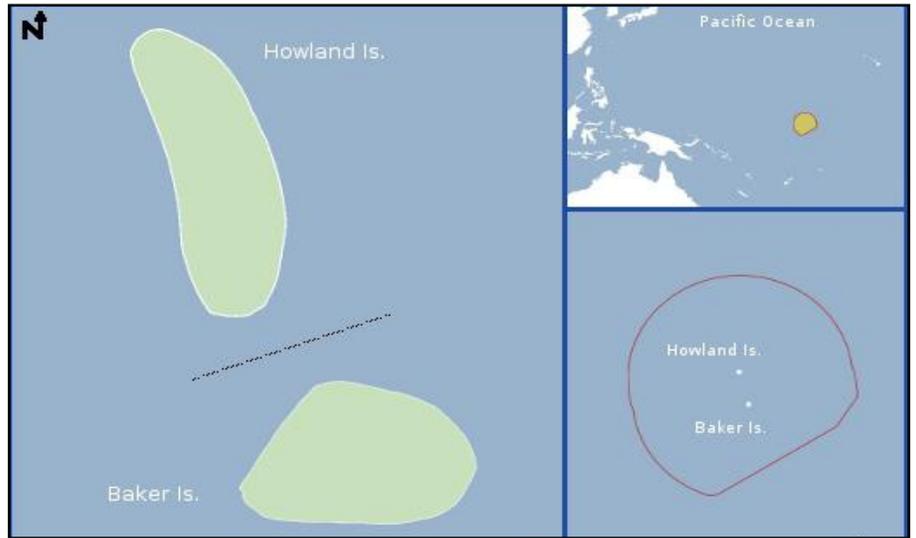
After featuring two informational DXing articles for January and February, we now return to visiting remote, out of the ordinary DXCC entities to more well acquaint our readers with the locales they may come across when on the air. Our last featured entity was Navassa Island-KP1 in the December 2025 issue. We have featured several United States scientific and wildlife refuges - of which Navassa is one - so we thought we would continue this trend for the March 2026 issue with yet another wildlife conservation entity: Baker and Howland Islands.

Like Jarvis and Palmyra Islands, Baker and Howland are grouped together as one entity due to DXCC List Criteria rule #2b, sub parts i and ii - "A new entity results in the case of an island under any of the following conditions: i) The island is separated from its Parent, and any other islands that make up the DXCC entity that contains the Parent, by 350 kilometers (217 miles) or more. Measurement of islands in a group begins with measurement from the island containing the capital city. Only one entity of this type may be attached to any Parent. ii) The island is separated from its Parent by 350 kilometers (217 miles) or more, and from any other island attached to that Parent in the same or a different island group by 800 kilometers (497 miles) or more."

The distance between Baker Island and Howland Island is approximately 70 kilometers (43 miles). Therefore, they are too close together to be counted as separate entities.

Despite being separate islands, they are closely linked historically and operationally:

- They were both the focus of a failed 1937 attempt by aviator Amelia Earhart to circumnavigate the globe.
- In the 1930s, the U.S. government sent young colonists to both islands to establish settlements.
- The U.S. military bombed both islands shortly after Pearl Harbor in 1941.



Location of Baker & Howland Islands



▲ Remnants of settlements and light house ▼



Thus, the shared callsign (KH1), geographical relation to each other, historical significance, and unified U.S. federal management are the primary reasons they are treated as one DXCC entity.

Baker Island and Howland Island are two reserved U.S. atolls in the Equatorial Pacific. Both islands are strict wildlife refuges, general public not allowed, the larger of which is Howland Island. They are both part of the larger political territory of the United States Minor Outlying Islands and they are also both part of the larger geographic grouping of the Phoenix Islands. Each is a National Wildlife Refuge managed by a division of Interior, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

As was pointed out earlier, Howland Island was the area that Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan were trying to reach in 1937 when they disappeared.

They lie approximately 1900 miles southwest of Hawaii.

Based on nautical time, the Howland and Baker islands are the last part of the U.S. to bring in the New Year, being the only territory of the U.S. in the UTC−12 time zone, the last zone before crossing the International Date Line. They are 24 hours behind the Wake Island Time Zone which is in the UTC+12 time zone, the first zone after crossing the International Date Line.

The colonization of Jarvis, Howland, and Baker islands by a few Hawaiians and military personnel in 1935 was followed a year later by the claim of possession by Franklin D. Roosevelt in May 1936.

As is the case with each U.S. wildlife refuge we have featured in this column in past Signal issues, Baker and Howland Island are under the administration of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Admittance to either island is highly restricted and requires authorization from the USFWS. Acquiring that authorization is extremely difficult and complex.

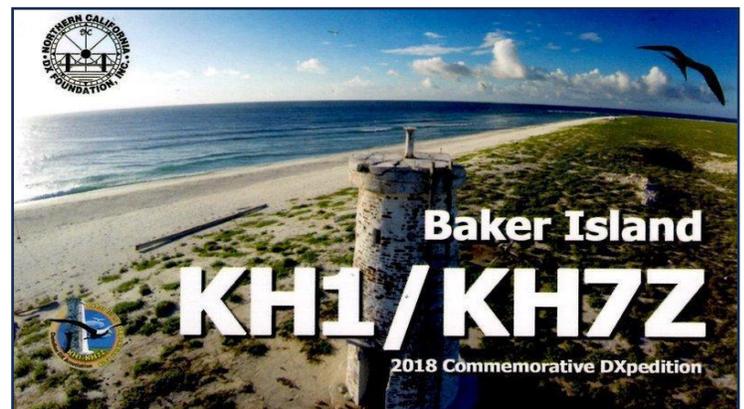
In the past 50-60 years, there have been informal solo operations granted by the USFWS, but full DXpedition team operations have been scarce: 1969, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2002, and 2018.

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The most recent DXpedition to Baker and Howland Islands (KH1) took place in June-July 2018, led by the Dateline DX Association (DDXA). The team, operating with call sign KH1/KH7Z, successfully activated Baker Island from June 27 to July 5, 2018, making over 16,000 unique contacts and logging more than 60,000 QSOs. The expedition was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under strict environmental conditions, including biosecurity protocols, zero-impact operations, and a 14-day total mission window with only 10 days dedicated to radio operation.

They put 8 stations on the air.



My Baker Island QSL card

KH1/KH7Z Operation site photos:



Howland Island (KH7Z) is part of the same DXCC entity (KH1) and was visited during the 2018 expedition, though the primary focus was on Baker Island. No separate activation of Howland Island has occurred since the 2018 mission. The island remains highly restricted due to its status as part of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM), with all access requiring special permits and environmental compliance.

As of 2026, no new DXpedition to Howland Island is currently active or confirmed. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has imposed a 10-year moratorium on DXpeditions to Baker and Howland Islands following the 2018 activation, meaning the next possible attempt would not be before 2028.

So, keep your headphones on and be watching for the next Baker/Howland Island DXpedition. Hopefully, it will be shortly after the end of the moratorium!



The KH1/KH7Z DXpedition team

DX ALERT!!!

Probably the biggest and most important DXpedition of 2026 is scheduled to begin around February 26, as an international team of operators will be operating from Bouvet Island with the call sign **3YØK**. Bouvet is a remote, uninhabited, volcanic ice-covered island, which is a territory of Norway in the South Atlantic Ocean. This will be a major DXpedition aiming to activate one of the most remote, challenging, and coveted DXCC entities in the world. The budget for this DXpedition is \$1.65 million. Bouvet is currently #10 on the Most Wanted List. For full information, go to their website: <https://3y0k.com/>. Get in there and work 'em!

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