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In the Shack

I was recently appointed the NZART contest manager. If you are interested in contests, I encourage you to give me feedback on what is going well with contests in New Zealand and what might be done better.

I have received the feedback that the contests are not promoted enough. I intended promoting contests in the following places

- Facebook groups such as "ZL1AB Branch 29 (Auckland North Shore)" and "ZL contesting".
- NZART's *InfoLine*
- NZART's *Break-In*
- The AOTA newsletter

If you think there are other places I should promote contests, please let me know.

It is good to see portable activators have adapted to the poor conditions on 40m.

On November 1, a senior statesman of New Zealand portable operations, Rick ZL3RIK, posted on the "The Potaholics Crew" FB group " that "I'm really hooked on these evening activations."

Another adaptation is to activate when radio clubs and groups are having their weekly or monthly meeting. The idea is to have contacts with the members at the meeting and the club station.

In Auckland, Br 02 (Auckland) is usually open on Saturday from 11am to noon. Br 29 (North Shore) is usually open from 10am to 2pm on Saturday and from 10am to 3:30pm on Sunday. There will be more ops at Br 29 on Sunday than Saturday. The Musick Point Radio Group is often open on Sunday.

Towers on the Air

Congratulations to Rob ZL1ACK for being the first person to activate a New Zealand tower under the auspices of the Towers on the Air award program [1].

Rob activated the tower ZLR-0211 (Maungawhau / Mt Eden).

TOTA towers can be activated on VHF or HF. An activation on VHF and HF requires three and 13 QSOs respectively. There are separate awards for VHF and HF.

Rob did his activation on VHF (2m FM). A few minutes after Rob finished, I completed an activation on 2m FM of the towers ZLR-220 (Slip Track) and ZLR-0202 (Arataki Visitors Centre). I continued on 2m for a few minutes and then switched to 40m SSB and 20m SSB. I was able to complete an activation of both towers on HF.

The first photograph below shows my shack beside tower ZLR-0220. The second photograph shows part of the view from the tower.





For a VHF activation, each QSO in the activation must have a unique combination of chaser / activator / tower / band. If you contact two stations on 2m and one of the two on 70cm, you have completed your VHF activation.

For an HF activation, each QSO in the activation must have a unique combination of chaser / activator / tower.

If during a mixed VHF - HF activation, the same station is contacted once on VHF and once on HF, both QSOs will count, one for VHF and the other for HF.

The awards for activators for both VHF and HF are

1. Sprint – awards for 50, 100, 200, 500 points from tower activations in a calendar year. Each QSO is worth one point.

2. Alltime – awards without time limit for reaching 100, 200, 300, 500 points

3. Special – awards without time limit for activating 100, 200, 300, 500 towers. New Zealand currently has just 20 towers.

The awards for hunters have a similar form.

New Zealand TOTA is in its infancy. An important development will be adding more towers. The Skytower is one such tower.

[1] Towers On The Air

JOTA & JOTI

The annual JOTA and JOTI event was held October 16 to 18. The WIA had the following to say about the event [1]

"One of amateur radio's biggest opportunities to introduce young people to radio returns from 16 to 18 October 2026, when Scouts and Guides around the world take part in Jamboree on the Air and Jamboree on the Internet, JOTA-JOTI. World Scouting describes JOTA-JOTI as the world's largest digital and radio Scout event, bringing together more than two million young people from over 170 countries each year. "

This large number of scouts and guides, together with their parents and caregivers, provides an excellent opportunity to promote the hobby.

A Br 29 member told me they heard several JOTA stations on the JOTA weekend. While I was activating Mutukāroa / Hamlins Hill Regional Park in Mt Wellington on October 17, I heard a VK3 JOTA station on 20m. They could not hear me.

Timothy Fidler from the Whangarei Amateur Radio Club (Br 28) sent me the following report on that club's JOTA activity.

"Communications was mostly with a Marahau, Nelson branch of NZART. This was on the 40 mtr band on SSB only. Signal strengths were fine. As far as I know there were no other areas of NZ contacted. Equipment was the IC 7300 so operators would have been able to see any other stations on 7090 kHz easily. We had about 25 scouts through the morning. Many did not understand that they were being too quiet on the microphone but some sort of communication was established in most cases. Paul Salter ZL1XUT was operating from a van near the entry point to the park. He was using 2m."

[1] JOTA-JOTI 2026: Get Your Club Involved and Put Amateur Radio in Young Hands

Future OTA programs

Over the last two years or so, people including me have suggested other outdoor features that might be activated and chased. Here I briefly describe some of these suggestions and their status.

Bunkers on the Air. There is an international program. There is good support for a NZ program and there has been an activity day. So far no one has offered to start the program.

Campgrounds on the Air. I suggested this in 2024 for the campgrounds in Auckland regional parks. An activation could easily be worked into a family vacation at a campground. And if the campground was busy, an activation would be a very good opportunity to promote the hobby, especially if the activation was around grayline and there was good DXing.

Cemeteries on the Air. An overseas program exists. Very recently there was a well publicised activation of a cemetery in New Zealand. There is a QRZ.com thread at CEMOTA (Cemeteries on the Air) - come try it | QRZ Forums that contains contrasting opinions about a CEMOTA program.

Castles on the Air. Castles on the Air is a well established international award program. Last year I did initial work on introducing the program to New Zealand but there were not enough castles. However, New Zealand has many historic buildings and it could be possible to combine these with New Zealand castles, in much the same way stately homes were combined with castles to give the CASHOTA award program.

DOC Campsites on the Air. I suggested this program several years ago because there are many, currently 320, DOC campsites, they are accessible except in rare circumstances and the activation of DOC campsites is required for NZART's DOClands award.

The Opportunities Contests Provide

Contests are competitions and many, perhaps most, hams who enter them treat them as such.

Hams who prefer non-competitive on-the-air activities, can gain a lot from participating in contests. This gain occurs because contests provide opportunities that occur less frequently elsewhere.

Awards. Opportunities to make contacts that can be claimed towards operating awards. These include ARRL's DXCC and WAS awards, WIA's DXCC and Grid awards and the many awards offered by the JARL.

Activating. Opportunities to make contacts to successfully complete an activation of a reference such as a POTA park.

Testing. A good opportunity to test how

a) effective recent improvements to a station are,
b) far a station can be heard when using QRP,

c) well a station handles high power.

Operating skills. Contests give many opportunities for a ham to improve their operating skills.

Basic skills. Contests can be used to improve basic skills as part of the preparation for future contests. The basic skills include understanding the contest rules, the submission of a log, and interpreting the information in a log checking report if it is provided.

If you do participate in a contest, please submit a log.

New POTA parks

Over the last three weeks, new parks have been added to the list of New Zealand POTA parks. This update to the list was done by New Zealand's POTA coordinator Roly ZL1BQD.

As of 29 October 2027, the 13 parks listed below have been added to POTA's Auckland Region. All but one of the 13 parks is a marine reserve.

NZ-0878 Kiripaka Wildlife Reserve
NZ-0885 Tiritiri Matangi Recreation Park (?)
NZ-0886 Rangitoto and Motutapu High Protection Area
NZ-0889 Pakatoa and Tarahiki Shag Island High Protection Area
NZ-0892 Cape Rodney-Okakari Point Extension Marine Reserve

NZ-0900 Cape Colville High Protection Area
NZ-0905 Kawau Bay High Protection Area
NZ-0906 Tiritiri Matangi Seafloor Protection Area
NZ-0907 The Noises High Protection Area
NZ-0911 Mokohinau Islands High Protection Area

NZ-0915 Cradock Channel Seafloor Protection Area
NZ-0917 Kawau Bay Seafloor Protected Area
NZ-0920 Te Hauturu-O-Toi / The Little Barrier Island High Protected Area

You can find the boundaries of the new parks by going to ontheair.nz, selecting "Places" in the menu at the top of the page, and typing the name of the park in "Find" box.

POTA parks that are marine reserve can be activated from

a) vessels within the reserve,
b) the seaward side of the mean high tide mark,
c) a wharf, jetty or structure that extends into the reserve,
d) public land that is in the reserve.

If people activate one of the new marine parks using b), c) or d) above, I would be interested in knowing where their activation point was.

An Important Asset

An asset I believe clubs could use more is the club's call sign.

The callsign can be used to generate club spirit and teamwork, and to help with the promotion of the club.

Club spirit and teamwork

Clubs can use their callsigns during special events such as the ILLW and contests such as the Jock White Memorial Field Day and the Memorial Contest. These events will help generate club spirit and teamwork. The benefits of this include the following.

1. Improved communication between club members, leading to increased coordination and collaboration during club activities. This increase will lead to a greater sharing of knowledge, greater skill development and greater enjoyment people get from being a club member.
2. More engagement in club activities by members. This will increase the success of the club and the enjoyment members get from belonging to it.

Promotion

The club callsign can be used to promote the club in several ways.

At club events that are away from the clubrooms and are open to the public, the club's name and callsign could be displayed prominently on a large sign. Possible events include the Jock White Memorial Field Day and the ILLW.

A similar sign could be used outside the clubrooms. Several copies of a small version of the sign can be placed inside the clubrooms at strategic places.

The photograph below, taken from google streetview shows the sign outside Br 02 (Auckland). I use this sign to avoid driving past the entrance to the club.



If the club has earnt certificates from participating and placing in recent contests, the certificates, suitably framed, could be hung in the clubrooms. Recent is a key word. Old certificates will date the club.

WWFF

A program for parks that gets less attention in New Zealand than POTA is World Wide Flora and Fauna (WWFF) [1]. WWFF started five years before POTA.

New Zealand currently has 234 WWFF parks. This is about one quarter of the number of POTA parks in New Zealand. The two closest WWFF parks to Auckland are the Pouto Wildlife Refuge and the Coromandel Forest Park. There are many more POTA parks that are closer to Auckland than the above two WWFF parks.

Under the WWFF rules, a successful activation requires 44 contacts. For the following reasons, contacting 44 stations is not as difficult as it might first seem.

a) The 44 contacts can be over two or more UTC days.
b) Contacts with the same op using different callsigns count as separate QSOs.
c) Contacts on the same UTC day with the same op on different bands or using different modes count as separate QSOs.
d) Contacts with the same station on different days count as separate QSOs.
e) A contact with a chaser who was portable and is now mobile counts towards the 44 QSOs.

There are awards for activators and chasers, although not as many awards as for POTA.

In addition to the awards program described above, many countries have a program that uses just the WWFF in the country. These national programs have much in common with the worldwide program. The main differences are that fewer contacts are needed for an activation and the awards that are available.

The New Zealand national program is known as ZLFF [2]. Ten contacts instead of 44 are required for an activation. There are awards for activating or chasing specific numbers of WWFF parks in New Zealand.

[1] https://wwff.co/
[2] https://www.wwffnewzealand.com/

Interacting with the public

When I activated the towers ZLR-0220 and ZLR-0202, a member of the public asked me what I was doing. I gave an initial explanation without using the phrase “amateur radio”. The person asked me more questions and I asked them some questions. We spoke for about five minutes. At the end of the five minutes I told the person of the two clubs nearest to where they lived.

On over half of my activations I have had people ask me what I am doing. I always take the time to answer their questions because I see such interactions as very good opportunities to promote the hobby in a soft sell way.

Author and Contact

Unless stated otherwise, all content in this issue was written by Philip ZL1PSH zululima1psh@gmail.com. I welcome feedback, corrections and articles. The opinions expressed in this issue are those of the author(s).