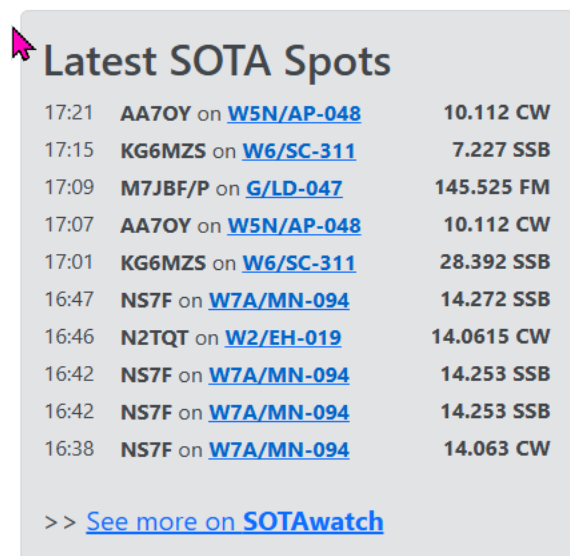


# SOTA – It’s Like POTA With an Altitude

Jim Edmondson, N5JGE

SOTA – Summits on the Air – is a program that encourages amateur radio operators that enjoy the outdoors to take their radios with them. SOTA is active in over 100 countries around the world and there are award programs for both activators and chasers (same as hunters in POTA-speak). SOTA tends to be more Euro-centric than POTA, however, an increasing number of US hams are participating. Recently, several SOTA contacts that I made both SOTA and POTA activations. I have become re-interested in chasing SOTA activations because [hunterlog](#), which I use for POTA hunting, now includes both SOTA and POTA spots. Please see the May 2024 NARC Newsletter for [my hunterlog article](#). The link above is for the current version (v0.0.8, March 2025).

The main SOTA website is operated from the UK at [SOTA Main](#). The main page has a brief description of the program, a list of latest spots (see screenshot below), a link to the main spotting page ([SOTAwatch](#)), summit listings, activator / chaser leaderboards, etc. The “[Joining In](#)” web page explains how to get started. Basically, you register a free account to allow you to upload your activator or chaser logs, alerts and spots. There is a separate registration for the [SOTA Reflector](#) that allows to post in the user discussion groups. You can read the posts without registering.



Time	Call Sign	Summit Reference	Frequency/Mode
17:21	AA7OY	<a href="#">W5N/AP-048</a>	10.112 CW
17:15	KG6MZS	<a href="#">W6/SC-311</a>	7.227 SSB
17:09	M7JBF/P	<a href="#">G/LD-047</a>	145.525 FM
17:07	AA7OY	<a href="#">W5N/AP-048</a>	10.112 CW
17:01	KG6MZS	<a href="#">W6/SC-311</a>	28.392 SSB
16:47	NS7F	<a href="#">W7A/MN-094</a>	14.272 SSB
16:46	N2TQT	<a href="#">W2/EH-019</a>	14.0615 CW
16:42	NS7F	<a href="#">W7A/MN-094</a>	14.253 SSB
16:42	NS7F	<a href="#">W7A/MN-094</a>	14.253 SSB
16:38	NS7F	<a href="#">W7A/MN-094</a>	14.063 CW

>> [See more on SOTAwatch](#)

The Latest SOTA Spots table (above) includes the time, call sign, summit reference, frequency and mode. As you can see, the summit references (the blue hyperlink text) are somewhat complicated. The first summit reference, W5N/AP-048, means that the SOTA “association” is USA – New Mexico (W5N), the “region” is Apache National Forest (AP) and the summit is

number 048 in that region. [SOTAwatch](#), the full spots page, provides more information, alerts (scheduled activations), reflector posts and display options. A small snippet is shown below.

Time	Callsign	Freq	Mode	Band	Power	Location	Status
18:29	MM0CBC/P	7.005	CW	GM/ES-002	10		TEST ONLY
18:27	MM0CBC/P	7.005	CW	GM/ES-001	10		TEST ONLY
18:25	KO6EQN	14.039	CW	W6/CC-062	2	[RBNHole] at W6YX 17 WPM 36 dB SNR	RBNHOLE

Chasing is pretty straightforward and much like POTA. You look for spots and make the contact. One difference is that chasers also upload logs to the SOTA website. The website automatically assigns chaser awards as you make QSOs (screenshot below). It also has a nice set of statistical graphs that shows your activity by year, band, mode as well as the activators and summits which you have contacted most.

## N5JGE

**Activator Stats** | **Chaser Stats**

**Chases**

- 113 points
- 25 unique summits
- 11 associations  
19 regions
- 26 QSOs  
Top Activator: AA1F (2)  
Unique Activators: 24
- Chasing since  
25 Dec 2020
- 0 S2S points  
0 total S2S QSOs

**Recent chases**

Date	Time	Other Callsign	Summit	Band	Mode	Map
13-Mar-2025	21:31	W7DLZ	<a href="#">W7N/AWC-090 (Juniper Ridge)</a>	14MHz	CW	
08-Mar-2025	22:40	NM5S	<a href="#">W7A/MN-087 (First Water Creek Overlook)</a>	14MHz	CW	
07-Jan-2025	19:42	WC1N	<a href="#">W4G/HC-045 (Heath Mountain)</a>	14MHz	CW	
22-Dec-2024	22:50	K6TW	<a href="#">W6/CT-052 (Timber Mountain)</a>	14MHz	CW	
22-Dec-2024	22:41	N6ARA	<a href="#">W6/CT-226 (Cerro Negro Benchmark)</a>	21MHz	CW	

[Add Chase](#) | [More...](#)

**Chaser Badges**

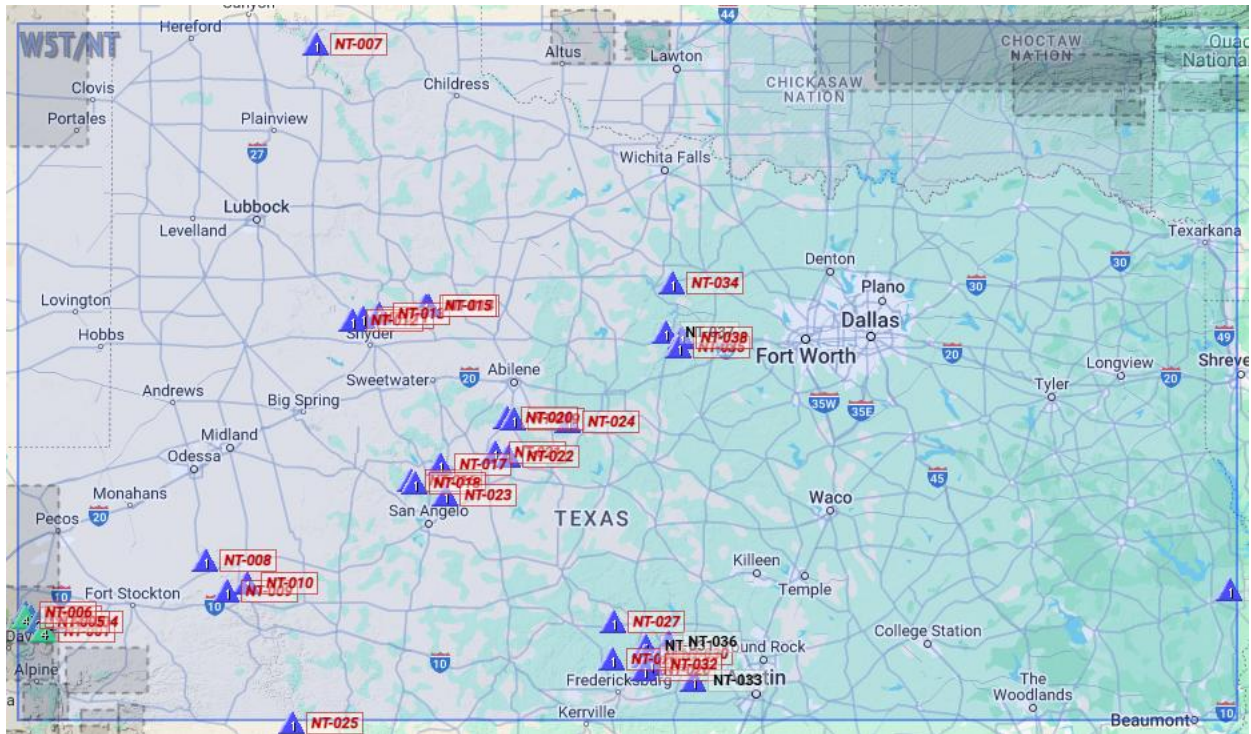
- HF** 26 Dec 2020
- Chased NA** 26 Dec 2020
- SSB** 26 Dec 2020
- Kilometer Up** 26 Dec 2020
- CW** 30 Jul 2022
- DATA** 26 Dec 2022
- Two Kilometers Up** 30 Sep 2024
- Three Kilometers Up** 07 Oct 2024
- Frood** 27 Oct 2024
- Chaser 100** 22 Dec 2024

There are several major differences between SOTA and POTA for activators. First is that only 1 contact is required for a valid SOTA activation, but 4 (with different stations) are required to earn the summit points that count towards activator awards. Contacts must be made in the “activation zone” which generally less than 25 vertical meters below the actual summit. Activations cannot be made from or near a vehicle and all equipment must be transported to the activation zone by the activator(s) using “people power” – hiking or biking. All equipment must be operated using portable power, generally batteries or solar cells.

As implied above, SOTA summits provide different amounts of points toward activator and chaser awards. In POTA, all parks are equal for earning activator and hunter awards. Points for each SOTA summit depend primarily on the elevation of the peak. There may also be “seasonal bonuses” if difficulty changes greatly with the seasons – think Texas in August or a fourteener in January!

As you might expect, most of the US SOTA activity is in the eastern and western mountain ranges. However, there are a surprising number of summits in Texas with 39 summits in the poorly-named North Texas region. “North Texas” includes most of the state and all of the summits are west of I-35. See the SOTA map below. Other Texas regions in the mountainous areas (Guadalupe, Davis Mountains, etc.) are much smaller. Each peak has its own webpage with details and links to other map sources (Google, OpenStreet, OpenTopo, etc.). If a peak has been activated, the activators frequently add commentaries on access, hike details, photos, etc. One such page for an interesting summit at Possum Kingdom Lake is shown below.

I think that I just made a new goal for 2025 – at least one SOTA activation!



# W5T/NT-037, Johnson Peak - 412m, 1 point

[Association List](#) | [Back to W5T Association](#) | [Back to NT Region](#)

[+ Add Spot](#) [+ Add Alert](#)

**Association:** USA - Texas, **Region:** North Texas  
**Latitude:** 32.8809, **Longitude:** -98.4787  
**QTH Locator:** EM02sv  
**Valid From:** 31 Mar 2014  
**Bonus Period:** 3 points between 1 June and 30 September  
**ARRL WAS:** Texas  
**CQ Zone:** 4

[KML](#) [CalTopo \(NA\)](#) [Google Maps](#) [OpenStreetMap](#) [OpenTopoMap](#) [GaiaGPS](#) [SOTA Maps](#) [SOTLas](#) [aprs.fi](#)

## Upcoming Activations

2025-Mar-17 10:45 -  
KD8EQA (Raymond)

2025-Apr-08 11:00 - N4TU (Andy)

## Resources

Feel free to add External Links [🔗](#) and Articles [📄](#) relating to this summit that activators and chasers may find useful or interesting. Please read the disclaimer notice at the bottom of the page.

- [N4VV alias DL1MP](#) (submitted by DL1MP on Jul 15, 2024)
- [Bicycling and as good as it gets for DFW](#) (submitted by KG5AUU on Jan 9, 2021)
- [Pleasant Hike and SOTA Summit](#) (submitted by KONR on Apr 14, 2019)
- [12/10 Activation](#) (submitted by KB1KXL on Dec 12, 2018)
- [Parking and trail map](#) (submitted by AF4B on Apr 5, 2018)
- [Update on public access](#) (submitted by AF4B on Apr 1, 2018)
- [Trail info](#) (submitted by W6BJB on Sep 24, 2017)
- [Summit access info and 1st activation log](#) (submitted by KC5CW on Apr 5, 2014)

## View ALL Summit Activity

33 Activations

### Latest

- 14 Jul 2024 by N4VV/P
- 11 Apr 2024 by KC6ARY
- 08 Apr 2024 by NE7ET
- 08 Apr 2024 by K7HY
- 07 Apr 2024 by N0MTN

### First activation

- 05 Apr 2014 by KC5CW

### Often activated with:

- [W6/NC-191 - El Sereno](#)