Monthly Update

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May 2025

May Meeting

Our May member meeting is on Wednesday May 21, 2025 at 8:05 pm. See "From the President" column for further meeting details.

From the President

As we still do not have a Presentation Coordinator, I arranged that our club could attend another presentation from the ACS-GH group this Wednesday May 21st from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The topic of this presentation is Go Kits & Preparedness presented by Jason Tremblay VE3JXT, RAC Community Services Officer. This is not a club presentation so if you would like to attend this presentation send an email to Rosemarie Upfield at reupva3rie@gmail.com to get the link. This presentation will be on the Microsoft Teams platform.

We will start the club business meeting after this presentation at 8:05 pm.

Our May member meeting will be held on Zoom. Yes, I said Zoom. Nick advised that Zoom also supports Not For Profit corporations. I contacted Zoom to see if we could get approved and what the cost would be.

The reason for this change is a number of members are having issues connecting to the new Google Meet and the one's that can get connected have been suffering with the lack of some features that we previously had with Zoom. The big one was the noise cancelling of microphones.

I then received an email from Zoom advising that we qualify for a 50% discount off the regular price of the Zoom Pro version. I will be discussing this further at our May member meeting.

Well, the 46th Annual Durham Hamfest is in the bag!

After several months of planning, and countless hours of behind-the-scenes work, I think we can officially say that this years hamfest was another good success. As always, it is a nail-biter coming down to the last couple weeks as most vendors usually commit in the last two or three weeks. On top of that, one can never know what the attendance will be like on the day of the event. Fortunately, everything fell into place and a huge sigh of relief was jubilantly released.

Everything was up this year. Tables sold was up. Attendance was up. Net income was up. Even the number of free coffees, hot chocolates and teas that the snack bar team handed out was up! The many exhausting hours of work, and the hectic 5 hours on the day of the event, paid off nicely.

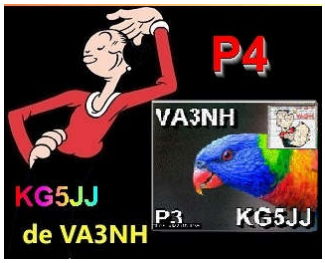
An event like this requires a cadre of volunteers and our members did not disappoint when the request went out. We always give those, who have helped out previously, the first right of refusal. There were only a few that could not commit and equally talented replacements were soon brought on board. We held monthly meetings, starting in January, and then a final one the weekend before the event to keep everyone up to date and to tackle any prospective issues. On the day of the event everyone showed up on time and quickly dove into their respective responsibilities. This is the nice thing about having so many repeat volunteers - everyone knows exactly what is expected and they just do it.

Now, I really hope I don't miss anyone, but here is the team that made this all happen so smoothly. **Vendor Liaison** - ***Lead - Thomas VE3PDK*** with Baron VE3LVE. **Treasurer** - ***Lead - Bob VE3HIX*** with Derek VE3TKE. Derek also helped the organizing team, in the months leading up to the event, by notifying us of the vendor payments as they showed up in the club's treasury. **Vendor Parking** - ***Lead - Joe VE3VGJ*** with Doug VA3DCE and Alex VA3AMP. **Snack Bar** - ***Lead - Neil VA3NH*** with John SWL, Jackie VA3BTQ and Louise VA3LLF. **Security** - ***Lead - Stave VA3TPS*** with Lex VE3LEX, Aldo VA3AG, Vic VE3JAR and Grant VA3KJI. **Admissions** - ***Lead - Cam VE3IGX*** with Peter VA3PKM, Jean Paul VE3JPT and Sam VA3YYC. We did have a last-minute illness but was surprised with a last-minute walk-on for this team as Greta SWL drove all the way from Nova Scotia to help out. So, in the end it all worked out. **Float** - ***Robert VE3IRB*** and the **Club Table** was handled by ***Nick VA3NPW*** and Payton VA3PYN. In the months leading up to the day of the event I have to give special thanks to our **Vendor Liaison** lead Thomas VE3PDK and our **Table Sales** ***lead Ken VE3RMK*** as they logged many more hours than I can probably count and know about. If I were to say that they logged 50 hours each I would probably be grossly understating their efforts. Me? I simply had to herd all the cats and attempt to ensure that the choreography of the event flowed smoothly. So, as chair of the Durham Hamfest, I give a huge round of applause to all these gracious volunteers who gave so willingly of their time. I would encourage the club members, that were not a part of this team, to make sure you give these members a big pat on the back, and maybe even a coffee and fritter, when you see or chat with them as the funds raised with their sweat help to make YOUR club better.

Plans have already started for the 47th annual event and we are working on the room booking. As soon as that is available, we will be publishing that info. In the mean time you should head over to https://ve3osh.com/portfolio/46th-durham-hamfest/ to see all the pics that have come in from the event. As well, you may also want to take a virtual jaunt over to https://durhamhamfest.com/sponsors/ to check out our sponsors and seriously consider these businesses when you need items. These sponsors graciously donate door prizes which helps us get attendees in the doors so they deserve our consideration.

Well, I think I have probably rambled on long enough for this article so I will just say 73 to all...and get ready to hit the road running in January 26!

73 de **Laird**, Durham Hamfest Chair



FUN WITH SSTV

by Neil McAlister, VA3NH

Sometimes it's amusing to escape our routines by trying something different in ham radio. What about sending and receiving pictures over the air?

Pictures? SSTV (Slow Scan Television) was invented by Copthorne Macdonald (WA2BCW, VY2CM) way back in the 1950s, and it is easy to use. But surprisingly, this is a tried and true mode that many Amateurs have never explored.

That it is called Slow Scan "TV" seems a bit odd. There are no moving pictures at the slow rates achievable with SSTV. A more accurate name might be "Slow Scan Colour Fax." That being said, ham radio with pictures is fun.

What Do You Need?

Getting started with SSTV is straightforward. It uses a computer and the SSB mode on any HF transceiver. A rig's data port can be used if it has one; or get an external sound card such as a SignaLink. Some kind of antenna for 20m is mandatory because the overwhelming majority of SSTV QSOs are made on the call frequency of 14.230 MHz. Depending on band conditions, 10m and 40m call frequencies sometimes host a lonely SSTV operator looking for a QSO.

There is limited choice in software to decode received images and to create and encode pictures for transmission. Most operators seem to prefer the now aged MMSSTV YONIQ freeware, downloaded from a reliable source. Warning: get the older version 1.13A because some tech savvy users report that the most recent, updated version makes suspicious attempts to connect to unauthorized network addresses.

A safe, solid alternative for newcomers to the mode is Black Cat SSTV. Compared to MMSSTV this software may be a little more sensitive for decoding faint signals. It is more simple and intuitive to operate, but therefore not as versatile for making customized templates and images. Black Cat offers a brief, free trial, after which one must purchase it for continued use.

If you already use Ham Radio Deluxe, it has SSTV capability.

Making Contacts

As with most Amateur Radio contacts, working SSTV is like fishing. How often do we cast a CQ into the ether with no bites? Patience is therefore a virtue while monitoring the SSTV call frequency in hopes of hearing a piercing VIS (Vertical Interval Signaling) screech announcing the start of an incoming image.

Late afternoon to mid evening seems to work best in our part of the world. At VA3NH, SSTV contacts with North American stations are the rule, while transoceanic DX is very unusual. Pictures from Europe and South America are seen occasionally, but the quality of images from such distances is usually poor.

Watching a few exchanges when both stations are visible will show a newcomer how to conduct a basic QSO on SSTV. Then they can make their own images for transmission from simple templates for beginners; or they can create more sophisticated, personal designs as their skill and experience grows.

When all is ready, it's time to answer a CQ, or to send out a CQ call. But before hitting "transmit" one must always remember that SSTV has a 100 percent duty cycle and that SSTV is really slow! Some high resolution encoding software modes will "key down" for nearly two minutes to transmit a single picture. To avoid overheating and damaging a typical 100 Watt transceiver, cautious operators keep their rig well ventilated and use modest power levels between 30 and 40 Watts.

The station receiving an image grades it from P1 (illegible) to P4 (picture perfect), and returns a signal report to the other station -- assuming its call sign can be read. With a successful exchange of reports, both operators typically sign off with "73" unless they have time, inclination and sufficiently readable image quality to swap more detailed information. And that's about all there is to it.

For a refreshing change of pace from the repetitious sequence of FT8 or the cacophony of desperate call signs and perfunctory "59"s in contest pileups, an occasional dose of the leisurely, polite and playful nature of SSTV may be just the ticket. Enjoy!

73 de **Neil - VA3NH**

ILLUSTRATIONS

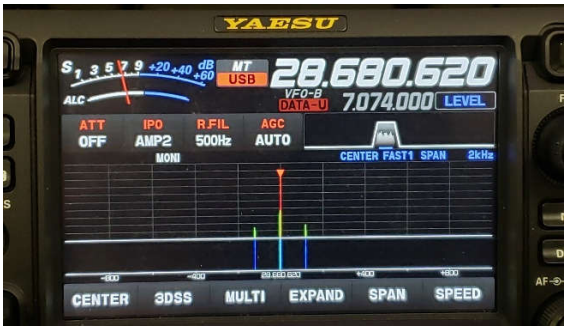
Several cartoon friends sometimes help VA3NH with QSOs on SSTV.

Fig. 1. Popeye calls CQ.

Fig. 2. Olive Oyl reports that a perfect quality P4 image was received giving us a good P3 report; and she sends the other station a P4 signal report.

Fig. 3. Bluto signs off with a hearty "73".

Fig. 4. The Sea Hag and her pet vulture get peeved by a fuzzy, unreadable P1 image.



RFI BEGINS AT HOME

by **Neil McAlister, VA3NH**

Speed Bumps.

One morning some new and most unwelcome radio frequency interference (RFI) was seen and heard on the 20 meter band, interrupting a fishing expedition on which I had just embarked in hopes of catching a few QSOs on SSTV.

The QRN sounded like a washing machine -- a loud, regular, pulsating "whoosh" every second or so. The transceiver's display showed the interfering signal as a series of evenly spaced "speed bumps," not moving across the screen like waves, but rising and falling on the spot, covering a wide swath of several hundred kHz. This show lasted for a few minutes, then disappeared.

The same thing happened repeatedly, at unpredictable times of day, over the course of several weeks, affecting 10, 20, and 40m bands.

Oh no! Was this a reincarnation of the notorious "Russian Woodpecker" that plagued Amateur Radio bands from 1976 to 1989? Over The Horizon Radar (OTHR) did seem like a strong possibility, although one can never know for certain because RFI from OTHR is a question that no government will ever answer honestly. Although a couple KiwiSDR websites for SWL seemed to confirm occasional interference on these frequencies, it looked nothing like the remarkable, strange apparition on my own rig's display.

Other hams in our area said they were not bothered by any similar interference. Because the RFI seemed to be quite local, therefore, LED and fluorescent lights were turned off, wall warts and small appliances unplugged -- but to no effect. Whether the washer and dryer were in use, the heat pump was functioning, or the fridge compressor in operation made no difference either.

Was any new equipment brought into the shack recently? No, but there had been a small housekeeping rearrangement a few weeks before. To move the station's power supply to a more convenient location on the desk, I had connected it to the wall with a short extension cord -- one with a little, built-in LED to show when the other end of the cord was plugged into a live wall socket. The formerly steady orange glow of that LED was now intermittently wonky, sometimes flashing slightly irregularly, about once a second.

Oh duh. Replacing that old cord with a heavy duty air conditioner extension cord -- without an LED -- solved the problem.

Mystery "Beacon" on 10m.

One problem was solved; but the next one has proved to be a little more perplexing. When propagation was especially good one afternoon, I tried SSTV on the 10 meter band. An annoying mystery beacon was heard and seen precisely on 28.680.62 MHz, almost on top of the SSTV calling frequency. The transceiver's display showed a very narrow signal like a spike, flanked by two shorter spikes, one on each side. There was an audible hum.

This was an AM signal with two sidebands, constant and unchanging. (Fig. 1)

Who would plant a 10 meter beacon on the SSTV call frequency? And why? VA7TSL and I started a preliminary search for the nature and general source of this RFI. Using web based KiwiSDR stations in various cities around the world, he saw a lot of activity on 10m SSTV in Asia, most prominently in Japan. There was much SSTV on the call frequency. He decoded several images of reasonable quality with an SDR app on a smartphone. Weak, undecodable narrowband beacons were sometimes seen nearby, on various frequencies slightly different from the strong, steady signal on my own rig's display.

I asked an SSTV contact in Arizona, whose powerful station has a much better range than mine, whether he saw "my" mystery beacon. His answer: Negative.

Further experiments showed the supposed beacon always on the same frequency, with the same strength, very clearly and cleanly on my transceiver's display, whichever of two antennas was connected. It didn't change if the antenna tuner was turned on or bypassed; if the transceiver's preamp was on or off; if the RF gain was set to full or to zero!

Ergo, the strong "beacon" seen on my rig had nothing to do with any signal being received by the transceiver. The narrow AM signal that I saw and heard on the 10 meter SSTV call frequency appeared to be a spurious signal originating within the Yaesu FTDX10 transceiver itself. In a hybrid SDR rig with an intermediate frequency (IF) stage before the sampler, it might plausibly be leakage from the local oscillator. According to Internet search engines and AI query apps, this particular Yaesu model is known for this minor glitch, although a spurious signal occurring near the 10m SSTV call frequency has never been specifically documented.

Moral of these stories? When chasing down radio frequency interference, a definitive diagnosis, let alone a cure, often remains elusive. Still, it is worthwhile to remember that a successful hunt for RFI always begins at home.

73 de Neil, VA3NH

Acknowledgement: Thanks to Brad Grigor VA7TSL for practical collaboration and editorial advice.

Fig. 1. Watch the birdie! The mystery "beacon" almost on top of the SSTV 10m call frequency.

White Feather Fun!

Some of the club members meet up on Saturday morning at **White Feather Country Store.** So, if you need your fix of a steamy hot beverage, as well as a hot fritter, pop up to **White Feather Country Store**, which opens at 8:30 am, and join the gang in the south east corner of the parking lot. Make sure to bring a lawn chair as we sit outside in the parking lot even when it's cold or raining. Just give a shout on the repeater between 8:00 and 8:20 to see if anyone is heading up that way and come and join us. **White Feather Country Store** is located at the corner of Simcoe St and Raglan Rd in Raglan, just south of our repeater site.

Alternate Location During Winter Months

During the winter months, when it is colder, some of our members meet Saturday morning at the Coffee Time in Courtice, Courtice Rd and Hwy 2 at 8:30 am. Here is a photo from April 5, 2025 with a large group attending White Feather South!

Swap Shop

We are looking for items for sale!

If you have items for sale or if you have items that are free for the pick-up, feel free to list them here in the club swap shop.

Station of the Month

If you would like to share your setup, send your pictures and info to Steve VA3TPS at va3tps@outlook.com

Editor's Note

Thank you to **Neil VA3NH** and Laird VE3LKS for their articles.

Don't forget I am looking for articles for the bulletin or any special events or information Ham Radio related.

We haven't had any members shack or mobile setup pics in a while. There must be some out there so send them to me with a short description of your station and setup.

Upcoming Events

May Monthly meeting – May 21, 2025

Will be on the Zoom platform at 8:05 pm on Wednesday May 21, 2025.

Canoe the Nonquon - June 7, 2025

Details on this event and the locations are being worked on and more details will be available soon from **Neil VA3NH**.

NSARC Summer Kick off BBQ – June 18, 2025

More information will be available soon from **Louise VA3LLF .**

ARRL Field Day – June 28 to June 29

More information available soon from **Nick VA3NPW**.

Aquino Tank Weekend – July 25 to July 27

More information available soon from **Laird VE3LKS**.

NSARC Fall Return BBQ – September 17, 2025

More information will be available soon from **Louise VA3LLF**

Hike or Bike – September 21, 2025

More information available soon from **Derek VE3TKE**

The Static Section

This section of the Newsletter will be for information and will not change.

Club Executive

President – **Derek VE3TKE**
Vice President: **Peter VA3PKM**
Secretary: **Neil VA3NH**
Treasurer: **Nick VA3NPW**
Membership Secretary: **Thomas VE3PDK**

Committee's

Repeater & Technical -Trustee: **Daren VE3NMD**
Website: **Laird VE3LKS**
Club Examiner**:** **Aldo VA3AG**
Newsletter: **Steve VA3TPS**
Net Manager: **Steve VA3TPS**
Presentation Coordinator: **Dylan VE3KXY**
RAC Representative: **Ken VE3RMK**

Repeaters

2m VHF FM Repeater – VE3OSH

Frequency: 147.120 MHz
Input Tone: 156.7 Hz
Input Offset: +600 kHz

70cm UHF Fusion/FM Repeater – VE3NAA

Frequency: 443.000 MHz
Input Tone: 136.5
Input Offset: +5 MHz

70cm UHF DMR Repeater – VE3LBN

Frequency: 443.9875 MHz
Colour Code: 3
Input Offset: +5 MHz
DMR ID: 302340

APRS iGate – VE3OSH

Frequency: 144.390 MHz

Tuesday Night Rag Chew

The club's weekly Tuesday Night Rag Chew starts at 7:00 pm. Our current net controllers are: **Aldo VA3AG**, **Grant VA3KJI**, **Derek VE3TKE**, Neil **VA3NH** and **Steve VA3TPS.**

This is not a formal net but rather a lively round table. Some can only stick around for a few minutes while others are there from start to finish. We never know what the topic de jour will be but someone always comes up with something interesting. So, if you are available between 1900 and 2000 hrs on Tuesday's pop onto VE3OSH and join the conversation.

A big thank you to all our Net control operators for stepping up!!

If anyone would like to give Net control a try one week, let me know and we will fit you in as a guest net control.

Just a reminder to everyone that our Net Controllers are doing a great job volunteering and are there for us every Tuesday at 7:00pm so that we have a Net, so how about dropping by and checking in and say hello. It only takes a few minutes and the Net Control operators will appreciate it.

Wednesday Night Virtual Parking Lot

The club has a weekly Virtual Parking Lot (VPL) meeting on the Zoom platform starting Wednesday night at 7:00 pm for members and guests. Everyone is welcome to attend. On the third Wednesday night the club has its member meeting on Zoom and after the meeting is finished, we have our virtual parking lot for those who are still on-line.

If you would like to attend our weekly VPL send an email to **Derek VE3TKE** at president@ve3osh.com. Our club Secretary **Neil VA3NH** will be sending out the Zoom link prior to the Wednesday meeting time. It has actually has been quite a success as more people can show up, due to distance or schedules, and yet we can still do show & tells by simply sharing our screens. It is not uncommon to have 20 to 25 participants but we can easily handle more. So, quit complaining about being bored and hop on the Virtual Parking Lot also remember that you can also ask questions of the group as well.

At our Zoom meetings, we have Amateurs from around the globe.

So, try to remember Wednesday nights and drop by our Zoom VPL and say hello and see who is visiting from around the globe. It starts around 7:00 pm and lasts until the last die-hard leaves but you can pop in anytime and say hello and stay as long or short as you want.