

OVMRC Club Activation for the Parks On The Air Plaque Event 2023 – VE3JW Activator's Guide

Written by: Rob Haddow, VE3RXH.

OBJECTIVE

To contact as many stations as possible on the amateur radio bands as a Parks on the Air activator using the OVMRC Club callsign VE3JW.

An “activator” is a licensed amateur radio operator who operates within a park that is listed on the Parks on the Air designated park list and who contacts other licensed amateur radio operators.

(Hunters can also take part in the event, but not the use of the Club callsign. Look out for our VE3JW activators on the bands and at [POTA Spots](#) and give us a call on HF or VHF/UHF simplex.)

WHO CAN TAKE PART?

Any licensed ham that contacts me to let me know their activation plan can take part. You do not need to be a member of the OVMRC.

(‘Licensed ham’ means any person holding a valid Amateur Radio Operator Certificate or equivalent.)

DATES/TIMES

The 48-hour Parks on the Air Plaque Event 2023 begins at 0000 UTC June 3rd and runs through 2359 UTC June 4th 2023.

In local Ottawa time that is 8pm Friday 2nd June to 8pm Sunday 4th June. However, remember that the POTA day is a UTC day, so if you activate a park on Friday evening after 8pm and then activate the same park on Saturday before 8pm EDT that is the same UTC day and contact with the same callsign on the same band and mode will be a dupe (no points).

You can operate for as long or as little time as you want. Even one QSO from a park will add to our Club total! Feel free to plan your activation around other commitments.

BANDS

Any amateur radio band is allowed except for the WARC bands of 60m, 30m, 17m, and 12m. Don't forget VHF (6m and 2m) and UHF, you can log additional QSOs with a station if you change band or mode (CW, digital, phone). You must operate within your own licence conditions (eg Basic allows VHF/UHF only) unless you are being **directly supervised** by a licence holder with higher privileges eg a Basic with Honours supervising a Basic operator on HF within the power restriction of the Basic with Honours licence holder.

MODES

All modes are allowed for this event, CW, phone (SSB/AM/FM) and all of the digital data modes (eg FT4, FT8, PSK, Olivia, RTTY etc). What's more each different digital data mode counts as an additional QSO with the same station, for example you could work a station on 10m CW, SSB, AM, FM, FT4, FT8, RTTY and PSK for a total of eight points!

FT4 and FT8 will be a specific challenge, since each tx period can only send 13 characters including spaces. When we have multiple stations identifying as VE3JW, this will undoubtedly cause some confusion. See notes below for suggestions on setting up WSJT-X.

SUGGESTED FREQUENCIES

HF Bands: Since most of our HF QSOs are likely to be with US stations, take a look at the [US Band Plan](#) and select a frequency that is available to all licence classes.

2m Band: Call on the national calling frequencies (146.520 MHz for FM, 144.200 MHz for SSB and CW) and QSY to a nearby simplex frequency eg for FM 15 KHz down to 146.505 MHz or up to 146.535 MHz. See [RAC 2m Band Plan](#).

70cm Band: Call on the national calling frequencies (446.000 MHz for FM, 432.200 MHz for SSB and 432.100 MHz for CW) and QSY to a nearby simplex frequency eg for FM within the FM sub-band 446.000 – 446.175 MHz.

TX POWER

There are no categories for different power levels, nor any restrictions on power. Many of us will run QRP since our batteries will last longer.

ELECTRICAL POWER

There are no restrictions on how you power your rig (mains/battery/solar etc) or how you charge your battery.

CALLING CQ AND EXCHANGE

When calling CQ give your park number, so that hunters can quickly identify if they have already QSO'd with a JW station in that park in the same UTC Day.

For example: "CQ POTA this is VE3JW at park VE 1349". Give callsign and park prefix phonetically eg 'Victor Echo three Juliet Whisky' and numbers individually eg one, three, four, nine.

There really is no set exchange outside of each other's callsigns, but it would be normal to exchange signal reports and park number. Since we are running several activator stations with the same callsign, it would be good to give your park number during the exchange and tell the other operator that we are a multi-operator activation (if using phone) and ask them to look out for our other activators.

COORDINATION OF PARK, BAND AND MODE

Coordination of park, band and mode will be essential to avoid QRM (ie interfering with each others signals) and to avoid callsign confusion (since all stations are using the VE3JW callsign).

We must therefore plan our park, band and mode prior to the event and follow the published coordination matrix.

Send your activation plan to me by Sunday 28th May, see contact details below and I will publish the plan by Thursday 1st June.

The plan will be published on the OVMRC Groups.io and on the public internet site: <https://newhamsottawa.ca/index.php/Main/PPW>

ACTIVATION COORDINATOR CONTACT DETAILS

VE3RXH will issue station differentiators and coordinate our parks, bands and modes. See table in this document.

Send your plan and any request for change or deviation from the plan during the event to:

Contact: VE3RXH, Rob Haddow

Email: ve3rxh@myrac.ca (note I will reply from my personal email address)

Cell Phone (call or text): 613-663-5302

Coordinating repeater: VE2CRA (note that I may not have repeater access while mobile or from some parks)

DUPES

“Dupes” or duplicates are where you contact the same station from the same park on the same band and mode within the same UTC day and you only get credit for one QSO. Note that there is no penalty for a dupe so if you make one, keep it in your log and move on. Note also that if the station that you contact is a POTA activator and he moves to a new park, he will get credit for the two QSOs but you will not.

INVALID QSOs

VE3JW stations are not allowed to contact each other whether within the same park or in different parks.

SCORING

A Parks on the Air contact QSO counts as one (1) point towards each applicable award category.

A contact within a multiple reference park (“N-fer” park) will count only as a single contact and single park. There are no multipliers for the Parks on the Air Plaque Event.

EVENT LOGGING

All activators will need to log their QSOs with the minimum information being callsign, band, mode, time and date, and park number. Do NOT submit that log to POTA! All VE3JW logs must be consolidated and uploaded by me.

The Club log is due by 2359 UTC on June 18th, 2023, so you must get your log to me by 15th June to give me time to consolidate and submit them. ADIF format and by email is preferred to ve3rxh@myrac.ca but I will take anything!

OTHER CONTESTS TAKING PLACE

There contests taking part over the weekend (<https://www.contestcalendar.com/>), so by being aware of these you can either avoid the QRM or use the contest stations to grow your number of QSOs. The main ones are:

10-10 Int. Open Season PSK Contest: 0000Z, Jun 3 to 2400Z, Jun 4

Kentucky QSO Party: 1300Z, June 3 to 0100Z, Jun 4

IARU Region 1 Field Day, CW: 1500Z, Jun 3 to 1459Z, Jun 4

RSGB National Field Day: 1500Z, Jun 3 to 1500Z, Jun 4

ARRL Inter. Digital Contest: 1800Z, Jun 3 to 2400Z, Jun 4

Research the details of those if you want to use them to grow your QSO count.

POTA SPOTTING COORDINATION – STATION DIFFERENTIATOR

The POTA website and apps allow you to spot yourself and be spotted, so that hunter stations know where and how to find you (frequency and mode). If we all spot ourselves using only the Club callsign, VE3JW, each time we or another POTA user spots us it will over-write all previous spots. So, to avoid that we will each be allocated and use an “R number” or station differentiator. This is used for spotting ONLY, and NOT used on the air. Use only the station callsign VE3JW on the air.

Spotting on the <https://pota.app/#/> website will look like this:

Add Spot

Activator Callsign: VE3JW/R01
 Spotter Callsign: VE3RXH

Frequency (kHz): 14305
 Park Reference: VE-1349
 Remic Rapids and Bate Island Conservation Park

Comments: Pse spot with /R# QRP SSB Club call multi op

This spot's mode will be set to SSB

Wrong mode? Mention a mode in the Comments field to change the mode for this spot (e.g. "QSY CW", "RTTY" or "Switching to FT8").

Mention QRT if this activator is no longer on the air to mark this spot as finished. This spot will be **marked hunted** for this band and mode.

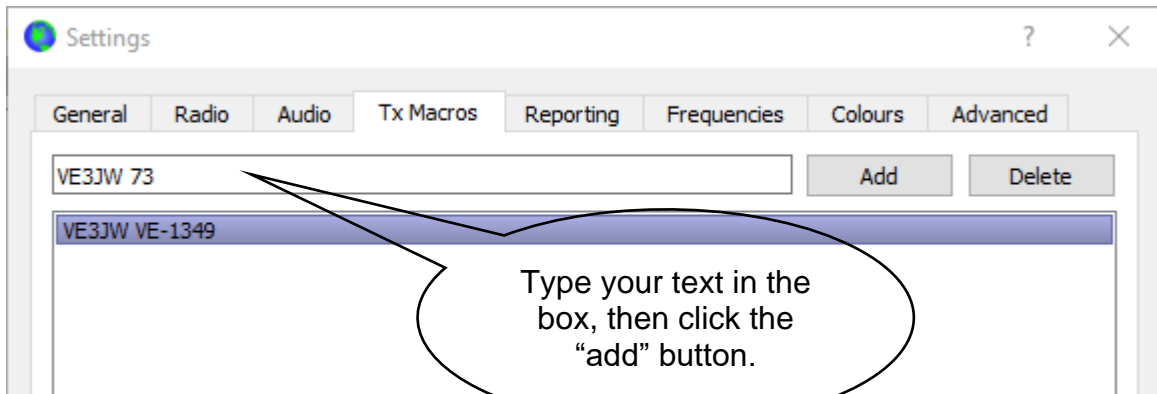
CANCEL SPOT

Figure 1 - example POTA spot

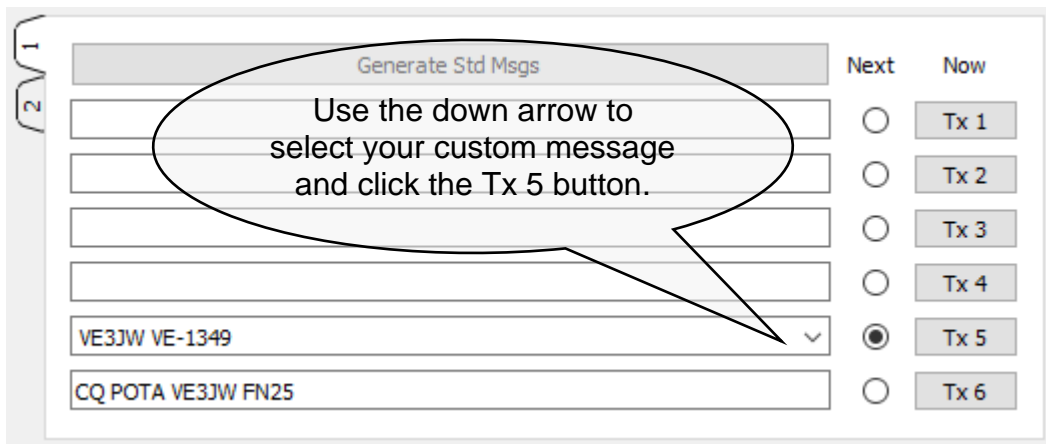
SETTING UP WSJT-X

FT4 and FT8 will be a particular challenge due to the limited number of characters that can be sent with each Tx period. To reduce the chance of confusion here are my suggestions:

1. Create a new configuration for the event by selecting "Configurations" from the WSJT-X menu bar. Scroll your mouse over one of your current configurations to open the popup menu and select "Clone". A new copy of your configuration will be created. Scroll your mouse over the new configuration and click "Switch to" to change to that new configuration. Select "Configurations" again and mouse over the name to change it to something like VE3JW and maybe the name of your radio eg 'VE3JW FT-991A'. Set all the configuration settings for that new configuration, including changing your callsign to 'VE3JW' and set the grid of the park that you are operating at. (Remember to update the grid if you move to a park outside of your current grid square.
2. Add two (or more) custom Tx Macros that will send 'VE3JW and your park number' in one message and 'VE3JW and 73' in another. It may also help to use the custom message with VE3JW and your park number after every CQ message to identify which VE3JW station/park that you are at.
 - a. On the WSJT-X menu select File>Settings ...>Tx Macros. Type VE3JW and your park number in the box and click "add"
 - b. Type "VE3JW 73" in the box and click add again, then OK.



These two custom Tx messages now appear in the drop down box when you click the small down arrow to the right end of the Tx5 text box in the “Generate Std Msgs” box:



An example of how a full FT8 exchange might look like:

Tx period	VE3JW Msg	QSO Partner Msg
1	CQ POTA VE3JW FN25	
2		
3	VE3JW VE-1349	
4		
5	CQ POTA VE3JW FN25	
6		VE3JW K1JT EM91
7	K1JT VE3JW -11	
8		VE3JW K1JT R-16
9	VE3JW VE-1349 *	
10		VE3JW K1JT R-16 or RR73
11	VE3JW 73 *	
12		VE3JW K1JT 73

* = custom Tx msg selected from the Tx5 box.

PARKS

There are over 30 POTA parks in the Ottawa/Gatineau area alone and hundreds more across Ontario/Quebec. A list of some recommended parks is below. Check the POTA Parks map at <https://pota.app/#/map>.

Note: “the activator and all equipment must be within the park’s boundary and on public property.” Also for linear parks, like the Great Trail and Rideau Canal: “If a trail system or a river is designated as a POTA entity by itself (not as parts of a land park having a defined boundary), the activator and the station equipment must be on public property within 30.5 meters (100 feet) from the edge of the trail or river.”

One of our favourites, Champlain Bridge and Lemieux Islands has been renamed as Remic Rapids and Bate Island Conservation Park, VE-1349. Even if you are an experienced POTA activator it is therefore worthwhile rechecking park numbers, names and boundaries.

To find the location of the parks, click the park ref link or copy and paste the park ref into the <https://pota.app/#/map> website.

Table of Suggested Parks

Index	Park Ref	Name	Notes
1	VE-5082	The Great Trail of Canada National Scenic Trail	https://tctrail.ca/ . The Great Trail or Trans-Canada Trail runs through Ottawa/Gatineau including many POTA parks, but remember 2fers don't count for the Plaque Weekend.
2	VE-1349	Remic Rapids and Bate Island Conservation Park	Bate Island: Free parking. Space for HF antenna. Picnic tables. Remic Rapids Park: Free parking. Space for HF antenna. On the Great Trail.
3	VE-0503	Jacques-Cartier Gatineau Historic Site	Free parking. Space for HF antenna. On the Great Trail.
4	VE-4882	Rideau Canal National Historic Site	Anywhere along the canal, within 100 feet. Free parking and lots of space.
5	VE-1596	Hog's Back Conservation Reserve	Free parking. Space for HF antenna.
6	VE-1597	Rockcliffe Park and the Rockeries Natural Area	Free parking. Space for HF antenna.
7	VE-5004	Centre de plein air du Lac-Leamy Regional Park	Free parking on north side of Lac Leamy. Space for HF antenna. On the Great Trail.
8	VE-1294	Aviation Museum Woods Conservation Reserve	Free parking. Space for HF antenna.
9	VE-1425	Green's Creek Conservation Reserve	Free parking at the toboggan hill off Bearbrook Rd at P26 . Space for HF antenna.
10	VE-1515	Mer Bleue Bog Conservation Reserve	Free parking. Space for HF antenna. Picnic tables and pavilion.
11	VE-1385	Chapman Mills Conservation Area	Free parking. Space for HF antenna. Benches and pavilion

TABLE OF STATION DIFFERENTIATORS

R#	Op Callsign	Op Name	Notes
R01	VE3RXH	Rob Haddow	
R02			
R03			
R04			
R05			
R06			
R07			
R08			
R09			
R10			
R11			
R12			
R13			
R14			
R15			

PARK COORDINATION BAND AND MODE MATRIX

All dates and times are in local EDT time and 24 hour clock.

Friday 2 May 20.00 hrs – midnight EDT

Time	Park No	Park Name	Band	Mode	Op Call	Notes
20.00 – 21.00	VE-1349	Remic Rapids and Bate Island Conservation Park	20m	SSB	VE3RXH	

Saturday 3rd June 04.00 to 20.00 EDT

Time	Park No	Park Name	Band	Mode	Op Call	Notes
20.00 – 21.00	VE-		20m			

Saturday 4th June 04.00 to 20.00 EDT

Time	Park No	Park Name	Band	Mode	Op Call	Notes
12.00 – 15.00	VE-5542	Foley Mountain Conservation Area	20m	SSB		