



# SIERA BEACON



Carson Valley, NV

February 2021

***"HAM radio is not a hobby. It's a way of life." - Carlos Beltran, XE1MW***

## **Your Dues Maintain Our SIERA NV7CV Repeater**



Back in 1987, SIERA formed its amateur radio club from members of TARA who lived in Carson Valley. One of the first projects was to erect a repeater. They chose Leviathan Peak in Alpine County, snagging a space on the County's governmental antenna attached to a decommissioned fire watch tower.

Over the past three decades, NV7CV has served critical rescue and communications needs in an area that covers remote regions as far eastward as Simpson Pass near Fallon to the Sierra Nevada wilderness in the west. Recreationists as well as annual events, like the Death Ride and Pony Express Re-Ride, have used NV7CV to support

rescue efforts. Many a stranded motorist has been able to reach a willing ham monitoring the frequency who will contact 911 for help. NV7CV saves lives as well as helping people have fun in our beautiful deserts and mountains. Even travelers along Highway 395 have enjoyed a good rag chew with local hams as they pass through Carson Valley.

But it takes money to maintain NV7CV. In the photo above, SIERA members are replacing a broken antenna element a few years ago. SIERA is also awaiting word from the State of California about paying "rent" on that tower configuration, which would include expensive installations of new equipment and the labor of a certified tower climber to do the installation. So far, that project has been put off indefinitely, but its specter hangs over our treasury.

NV7CV has also sustained SIERA through the COVID pandemic by hosting its monthly Board and General meetings in lieu of in-person meetings. The Watering Hole and VHF net bring hams together every week to keep in touch. And the repeater is used to assist the Douglas County Amateur Radio Team in serving the Douglas County 911 Dispatch Center in times of emergency. All of these services expand SIERA's outreach to our communities and are free of charge to everyone.

But someone has to pay the bills and that's where SIERA membership dues come into play. Depending on the nature and duration of your membership, dues range from \$30 for a one-year individual membership to \$84 for a household for three years. Please go to the SIERA website, [www.cvhams.com](http://www.cvhams.com) to print out the revised form to send in with your check. You will be contributing to your community's amenities and safety and giving yourself the gift of a well-maintained repeater. (By the way, thank you Jim Marshall K6LR for your expertise and dedication in keeping NV7CV on the air.)



### **Was It All Just Because of a Little Snow?**

Well, it was more than "just a little snow." Some SIERA hams got as much as two feet while others got only an inch or two. Our "Storm of 2020" brought out the rag chews on NV7CV last week, all reporting snow levels, road conditions, and just how much effort hams were willing to exert to clear their driveways. (Okay, the photo was taken in Truckee, but it felt that way here.)

### **Net Controls Wanted**

Every Tuesday, SIERA hosts a VHF and an HF net to check on local hams. These nets help hams test their signals and concerns us when an elderly ham doesn't check in as usual.

At present, we only have seven erstwhile folks serving as net controls, however, and it would help to add more to our list. Being net control builds communications skills and helps hams lose that dread of the mic. Contact Sheila Clement KA7AJQ or Don McRoberts W7DRM if you want to be put on the list.



**The General meeting is at 1 p.m. February 6th on NV7CV 147.330/240. Board meeting at noon. General meeting at 1 p.m. Topic for discussion TBA.**

### **Chuck Gervie now officially K7PGI, vis-a-vis KI7PGI.**

Chuck recently tweaked his call sign because, like some of us (the Beacon editor for example), he can't always discern that pesky preface. He didn't take the usual route through the FCC, though. Here's his story:

"I took the easy road since the FCC forms confused me. They referred to some cryptic ULS password I never heard of and other red herring data. I paid \$30 and filled in a form. The form was simple, had clear directions, and other than an email confirmation that they had received my application, never heard from them again.

The only bureaucratic confusion I had was when trying to complete the FCC forms was their requirement for my FRN. Huh? So I went through the FCC Search engines using my call sign to find my FRN [Fed Registration Number], only to discover each of us has it shown on our official License certificate in the lower section of the License. They also stipulated to enter "UNKNOWN" in answer to some cryptic need for a ULS Password, which I had no idea of. Anyway, the *W5YI online application* did not even ask for it because, they too know it is part of our license info."

Here is the W5YI website URL if you're interested in getting a vanity call sign: <http://www.w5yi-vec.org/page.php?id=298>. This is not a secure site, as noted in the search window, but Chuck has tested the waters and apparently is satisfied with his results. Keep us posted if you have any problems with this later, Chuck. And thanks for the information.



### **Ham Exams Still Available**

Interested in getting your amateur radio license? Now is your opportunity. Testing is on Feb. 20th at the REOC (Reno Emergency Operations Center), 5195 Spectrum Blvd, Reno, NV. No walk-ins, you MUST RSVP at ***KrystalR2@yahoo.com***. She will provide all details and what you must bring with you. This is not a ham-cram class, just testing. There are many free and pay web sites for you to take practice tests and get ready ahead of time. Once you practice test at at least 80% you are ready. Good luck! These testing opportunities do not come along very often.

### **K3SK Facebook blog:**

This guy's page is fun to peruse. Lots of projects and a rant or two. He has been a ham for about forty years. Check him out if you're into Facebook. Also, there are other pages on FB where hams share photos and information.

[https://www.facebook.com/K3SK-2114626498616049/?notif\\_id=1611928051157719&notif\\_t=page\\_post\\_liker\\_invite&ref=notif](https://www.facebook.com/K3SK-2114626498616049/?notif_id=1611928051157719&notif_t=page_post_liker_invite&ref=notif)



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### **Ham Radio and Criminal Activity**

How many of you hams out there got a similar message from the FCC or ARRL as the one in this YouTube video? While licensed hams should know better than to use their radios for criminal activities, there are those who use HTs and mobile radios without licenses, mostly for recreation. This may become a problem that will blow back on licensed hams. Here's a link to a YouTube video about this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHloZckhbKA&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0XnHWmHvXY10ZaGITy3fkQfUg4Vzi4YMkCZTKG93BUxWMqXd8E3oaxL5g>

## **Was That a Dropped Call From ET?**

Dennis Overbye

Thu, December 31, 2020, 11:34 AM PST

Proxima Centauri, the closest known star to our sun. (ESA/Hubble & NASA via The New York Times).

Nobody believes it was ET phoning, but radio astronomers admit they do not have an explanation yet for a beam of radio waves that apparently came from the direction of the star Proxima Centauri.

“It’s some sort of technological signal. The question is whether it’s Earth technology or technology from somewhere out yonder,” said Sofia Sheikh, a graduate student at Pennsylvania State University leading a team studying the signal and trying to decipher its origin. She is part of Breakthrough Listen, a \$100 million effort funded by Yuri Milner, a Russian billionaire investor, to find alien radio waves. The project has now stumbled on its most intriguing pay dirt yet.



It is the closest known star to the sun, only 4.24 light-years from Earth, part of a triple-star system known as Alpha Centauri. Proxima has at least two planets, one of which is a rocky world only slightly more massive than Earth that occupies the star’s so-called habitable zone, where temperatures should be conducive to water, the stuff of life, on its surface.

The radio signal itself, detected in spring 2019 and reported on earlier in The Guardian, is in many ways the stuff of dreams for alien hunters. It was a narrow-band signal with a frequency of 982.02 megahertz as recorded at the Parkes Observatory in Australia. Nature, whether an exploding star or a geomagnetic storm, tends to broadcast on a wide range of frequencies.

“The signal appears to only show up in our data when we’re looking in the direction of Proxima Centauri, which is exciting,” Sheikh said. “That’s a threshold that’s never been passed by any signal that we’ve seen previously, but there are a lot of caveats.” Practitioners of the hopeful field of the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, also known as SETI, say they have seen it all before.

“We’ve seen these types of signal before, and it’s always turned out to be RFI — radio frequency interference,” Dan Werthimer, chief technologist at the Berkeley SETI Research Center, who is not part of the Proxima Centauri study, wrote in an email.

That thought was echoed by his Berkeley colleague Andrew Siemion, who is the principal investigator for Breakthrough Listen. “Our experiment exists in a sea of interfering signals,” he said.

“My instinct in the end is that it will be anthropogenic in origin,” he added. “But so far we can’t yet fully explain it.”

So there’s nothing to see here, folks. Until there is. Notwithstanding claims of biosignature gases on Venus and tales of UFO sightings collected by the Pentagon, the discovery of life — let alone intelligence — out there would be a psychological thunderclap of cosmic and historic proportions.

False alarms have been part of SETI since the very beginning, when Frank Drake, then at Cornell and now retired from the University of California, Santa Cruz, pointed a radio telescope in Green Bank, West Virginia, in 1960 at a pair of stars, hoping to hear aliens' radio waves. He detected what seemed to be a signal. Could it be this easy to discover we are not alone? It turned out to be a secret military experiment.

Sixty years later we are still officially alone, and SETI as an enterprise has been through the wars economically and politically, even as technology has enhanced humanity's ability to comb the nearly infinite haystack of planets, stars and "magical frequencies" on which *They* might be broadcasting.

Breakthrough Listen was announced with much fanfare by Milner and Stephen Hawking in 2015, sparking what Siemion called a renaissance. "This is the best time to be doing SETI," he said.

The recent excitement began April 29, 2019, when Breakthrough Listen scientists turned the Parkes radio telescope on Proxima Centauri to monitor the star for violent flares. It is a small star known as a red dwarf. These stars are prone to such outbursts, which could strip the atmosphere from a planet and render it unlivable.

In all they recorded 26 hours of data. The Parkes radio telescope, however, was equipped with a new receiver capable of resolving narrow-band signals of the type SETI researchers seek. So in fall 2020, the team decided to search the data for such signals, a job that fell to Shane Smith, an undergraduate at Hillsdale College in Michigan and an intern with Breakthrough.

The signal that surprised the team appeared five times April 29 during a series of 30-minute windows in which the telescope was pointed in the direction of Proxima Centauri. It has not appeared since. It was a pure unmodulated tone, meaning it appeared to carry no message except the fact of its own existence.

The signal also showed a tendency to drift slightly in frequency during the 30-minute intervals, a sign that whatever the signal came from is not on the surface of Earth but often correlates with a rotating or orbiting object.

But the drift does not match the motions of any known planets in Proxima Centauri. And, in fact, the signal — if it is real — might be coming from someplace beyond the Alpha Centauri system. Who knows?

The subsequent nonappearance of the signal has prompted comparisons to a famous detection known as the "Wow! Signal" that appeared on a printout from the Big Ear radio telescope, operated by Ohio State University in 1977. Jerry Ehman, a now retired astronomer, wrote "Wow!" on the side of the printout when he saw it after that fact. The signal never appeared again, nor was it satisfactorily explained, and some people still wonder if it was a missed call from Out There.

Of the Proxima signal, Siemion said, "There have been some exclamations, but 'wow' hasn't been one of them."

Asked what they were, he laughed.

"Initially there were perplexed reactions from folks, but it settled down quickly," he said. Over a period of 24 to 48 hours at the end of this October, he said, the mood shifted from inquisitive and curious to "very serious scientific detective work."

Sheikh, who expects to get her doctorate this coming summer, is leading the detective work. She got her bachelor's degree at the University of California, Berkeley, intending to go into particle physics, but found herself drifting into astronomy instead. She first heard about the Breakthrough Listen project and SETI on Reddit while she was looking for a new undergraduate research project.

"I would say we were extremely skeptical at first, and I remain skeptical," she said about the putative signal. But she added that it was "the most interesting signal to come through the Breakthrough Listen program." The team hopes to publish its results early in 2021.

The Parkes telescope — which once relayed communications to the Apollo astronauts — is notorious for false alarms, Werthimer said. In one recent example, he said, astronomers thought they had discovered a new astrophysical phenomenon.

"It was very exciting until somebody noticed the signals only appeared at the lunch hour," he said. They were coming from a microwave oven.

Over the years SETI astronomers have prided themselves on their ability to chase down the source of suspicious signals and eliminate them before word leaked out to the public.

This time their work was reported by The Guardian. "The public wants to know; we get that," Siemion said. But, as he and Sheikh emphasize, they are not nearly done yet. "Frankly, there's still a lot of analysis that we have to do to be confident that this thing is not interference," Sheikh said.

Part of the problem, she explained, is that the original observations were not done according to the standard SETI protocol. Normally, a radio telescope would point at a star or other target for five minutes and then "nod" slightly away from it for five minutes to see if the signal persisted.

In the Proxima observations, however, the telescope pointed for 30 minutes and then moved far across the sky (30 degrees or so) for five minutes to a quasar the astronomers were using to calibrate the brightness of the star's flares. Such a large swing might have taken the telescope away from whatever the source of the radio interference was. If all else fails, Sheikh said, they will try to reproduce the results by replicating the exact movements of the Parkes telescope again on April 29, 2021.

"Because," she said, "if it's actually coming from Proxima, then maybe they would like send a hello once a year or something like that. But it's more likely that there's some sort of yearly event that happens at the visitor center, or something like that, that causes an environmental effect that doesn't happen the rest of the year."

The Proxima signal could be destined to pass into legend like the Ohio State Wow! Signal, but in SETI, there is always another day, another star.

It's been fun, Sheikh said, even if the Proxima signal ends up being interference. "This is extremely exciting, no matter what comes out of it."

This article originally appeared in [The New York Times](#).  
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# **The Watering Hole, Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.330/240mh. Questions and Answers pertaining to Amateur Radio.**

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## **DCART - Douglas County Amateur Radio Team**

2021 DCART January ARES report comment

Our Douglas County Amateur Radio Team members continue to train virtually and with our own radio stations. The ARRL members only section has a wealth of recorded videos. One can register for the ICS classes, 100, 200, 700 and 800 through FEMA. Having these basic ICS classes is the standard for ARES members affiliated with their governmental agency. When FEMA reimburses a county after a disaster, records can be reviewed for responders' training credentials. Funds can be withheld if the training cannot be documented. DCART members are reminded to get those classes if you have not already done so.

We still are allowed only one person at a time at our 911 ham station. Thanks to Jim, K6LR, and others who are checking our radio equipment and planning with us. Email, texts, phone calls, and our nets help us keep in touch and current.

Many thanks to SIERA, TARA, CARS, and NDEM organizations for their repeaters and support planning. Of course our Nevada county ARES Emergency Coordinators and ARES leadership are all closely connected.

Sheila Clement, KA7AJQ  
ARES Emergency Coordinator  
Douglas and Alpine Counties

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**Don't forget to check out the SIERA website on [www.cvhams.com](http://www.cvhams.com) for lots of information and reference material.**

## **Nets Available in Carson Valley and Beyond:**

**The SNARS Noon Net** daily on 147.150.

**Daily Carson & Eagle Valley net**, 6 p.m. on 28.435 MHz USB

**BARC Nightly Net**, 8 pm on 146.655 pl 131.8, ragchew and pre-check-in at 7:30 p.m.

**DCART Net**, Mondays at 6:30 p.m. on the following schedule: The first two Mondays on 147.330 linked with 147.240. The third Monday is Tahoe Basin ARES on 147.240 to be linked with 147.330. The fourth (and fifth) Monday(s) on 147.270 to be linked with 147.240

**TARA Net**, Mondays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.240.

**SIERA VHF Net**, Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.330.

**SIERA HF Net**, Tuesdays at 8 p.m. on 3982kHz.

**Plumas County Net**, Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m., on 145.470.

**W7DEM Net**, Wednesdays at 9 a.m., various frequencies: Eagle Ridge 442.225 T156.7, Carson DEM 442.900 T156.7, Lake Tahoe 442.300 T156.7, and Smith Valley 440.050 T 94.8. (Refer to Nov. 2020 Beacon for details.)

**Carson ARES Net**: 9-10 a.m., check in anytime in that hour on 147.270mh PL156.7. Includes VHF

**CARS Fusion Net**, Wednesdays at 7 p.m. The local FUSION repeater is at 442.300.

**Brad Smith's (WT6B) Watering Hole**, Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.330,  
"questions and answers pertaining to amateur radio."

**SKYWARN** at 7 p.m. Wednesdays.

**NV ARES Net** Thursdays at 7 p.m. Echolink conf server NV-GATE 152566 IRLP Western Reflector Ch8:9258

**SNARS Hospital Net**, Fridays at 10:00 a.m. on 147.030 or 147.150  
(SNARS Linked Repeaters: <https://snars.org>)

**RARA Rural Amateur Radio Assn.**, Fridays at 8 p.m. on 147.180 pl 123

**ARES HF Net**, Saturdays at 7 a.m. on 3965kHz (+or - QRM).

**RARA**, Rural Amateur Radio Association, Saturdays 7:30 a.m. on 3965kHz

**New Hams Net**, Sundays at 1 p.m. 146.760 pl 123

**National Traffic Service Net**, Sundays at 6:15 p.m. on 3945kHz

**Don McRoberts, our SIERA webmaster for CVhams.com, has a more comprehensive chart with more nets than anyone has time for: <https://www.cvhams.com/nets.php>**

## **SIERA General Meeting January, 2021**

*Due to the COVID-19 Virus outbreak, and exercising an abundance of caution, and following recommendations from the CDC and the State of Nevada, the Board meeting was held utilizing the NV7CV, SIERA 2-meter repeater.*

**Call to order** 1:00PM

**Attendance:** 13 checked in

### **Last month's minutes**

*The December minutes were published in the January issue of The Beacon. Copies are available on the SIERA webpage.*

### **Treasurer's Report for December 2020**

*The detailed Treasurer's report was presented to the Board and approved by email.*

### **Business:**

Jim, AG6IF reminded everyone that the Watering Hole Net is conducted on the repeater on Wednesday nights at 7:30PM.

Jim mentioned his latest project to install a solar powered CC Security Camera system at his home to monitor his property for roving wildlife predators.

The next club project will involve constructing “tape measure” 2 Meter Yagis.

Prospective hams with questions are encouraged to send in questions via email to be addressed during The Watering Hole or during our club meetings.

**New Business:**

Bob, K7VOC mentioned that the club is still in need of a new Secretary, and encouraged members to volunteer.

For the purposes of planning, he also suggested that we start to brainstorm alternate meeting locations since post-COVID regulations might be too restrictive.

Jim AG6IF also suggested that we consider doing more ZOOM meetings.

Jim also encouraged members to volunteer to take a turn at being Net Control for the regular Tuesday night nets.

**Adjournment:** 12:18

**Remember to send your photos and news for the Beacon and the SIERA Facebook page to [scauhape2020@protonmail.com](mailto:scauhape2020@protonmail.com)**

