

# “CQ VK3 National Parks”

(Or: “I Want to Talk to Somebody in a Victorian National Park”)

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*The writer enjoys the outdoors and amateur radio, preferably together. He has won the Keith Roget Memorial National Parks Award which he describes. Callsign is VK3AJU.*

You've possibly seen them in action without knowing what they are doing – radio amateurs operating in Victorian National Parks.

It might be somebody who is obviously not a ranger chatting into what looks like a walkie-talkie. Or maybe somebody, microphone in hand, in a car which sprouts not one aerial, but two, three or even four – and strange-looking aerials at that. Or possibly you noticed a long wire running from a tree top to a group of people clustered around a mysterious black box on the tailgate of a car.

The odds are that you've seen radio amateurs working to qualify for the coveted Keith Roget Memorial National Parks Award of the Wireless Institute of Australia.

The award is a certificate given to licenced amateurs who can show that they have conducted two-way radio communication with or from sixteen Victorian National Parks. This can be done by going into a National Park and establishing contact by radio with a fellow amateur outside

the park. Or you can operate from your home station and call “CQVK3 National Parks” [amateur language for “I want to talk to a station inside a National Park”]. “VK” signifies an Australian station, while the “3” in the callsign means it is in Victoria. So “VK3” means Victoria.

Most amateurs who have qualified for the award have used a combination of park visits and radio calls from home to establish the contacts with sixteen parks needed. However, some have motored to the necessary sixteen parks and subsequently published articles in radio hobbyist magazines describing access routes, park features, and the best spots from which to operate low-powered radio apparatus.

Amateurs living in other Australian states, New Zealand and Papua/New Guinea need only make five two-way contacts to qualify for the award certificate. Those in others parts of the world need make only two contacts with NPs.

The Wireless Institute of Australia, which issues the certificates, has lost count of how many have been granted since the award was initiated in 1967. Probably some hundreds, some of which have gone to overseas amateurs.

The original certificate [see illustration] listed the twenty Victorian NPs of 1967. By 1986, there had been name changes to some NPs and the total had increased to thirty-one, with more promised. A new certificate based on a colour photograph of Cape Nelson was designed and is now being issued.

No other Australian state has an award for amateur wireless achievements based on its National Parks and the Keith Roget Award obviously helps to publicise Victoria's natural attractions, both within Australia and further afield.

It also helps to maintain and develop amateur radio skills in working with low-powered portable equipment in surroundings where the operator may have had no previous experience. Many amateurs are members of the Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network [WICEN] which can be called on by the authorities to help in disaster situations where normal communications have been disrupted. One example was during the Ash Wednesday bushfires when WICEN members in Victoria and South Australia were called upon for help by the two states' emergency services.

WICEN members must be ready to move into unfamiliar areas at short notice to establish communications links. They need to have transmitting and receiving equipment, masts, aerials, and power supplies [e.g. large storage batteries and/or generators] which can be quickly assembled to make a two-way radio station. Plus, of course, tents and other camping amenities.

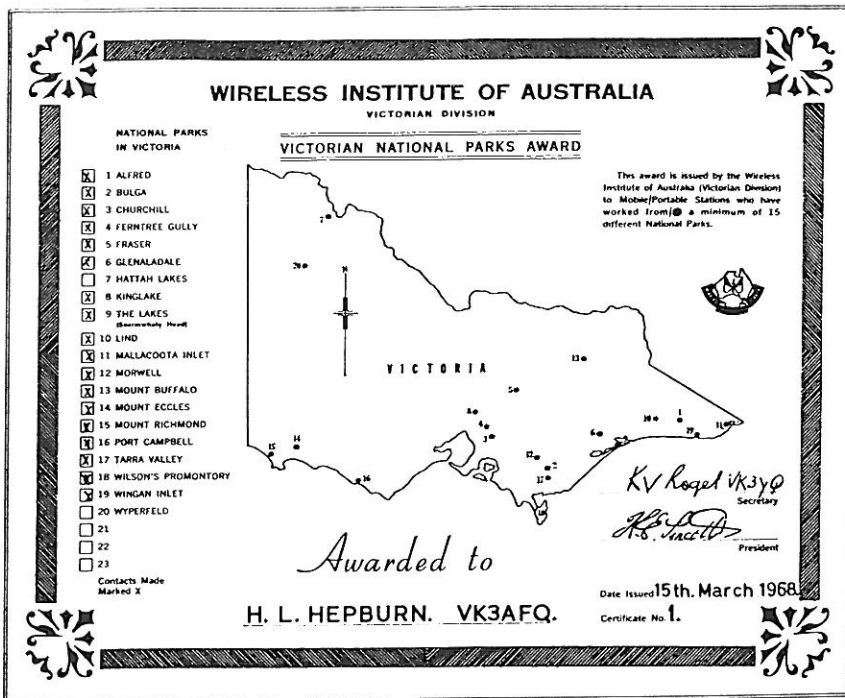
Operations in connection with the Keith Roget Memorial Award give WICEN members opportunities to test their portable equipment under working conditions – but in relaxed circumstances.

## Angair Wildflower Show 26/27 September 1987

ANGAIR (Anglesea and Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Flora and Fauna) will hold its Annual Wildflower Show on Saturday 26th September from 10a.m. to 5.30p.m., and Sunday 27th from 10a.m. to 5p.m. at the Anglesea Hall in McMillan Street.

Admission is \$2.00 for adults, \$1.00 for pensioners and 20c for children.

This year a special feature will be excursions to selected wildflower (including orchid) locations in Anglesea's renowned heathland and woodlands. Paintings by Australian artists, displays of local and interstate flowers, and art and craft sales are among other features.



The first Victorian National Parks Award for amateur radio was issued in 1968 to Harold Hepburn VK3AFQ, now living in Brighton. It listed twenty NPs, some of which have had name changes over the years.

However, to a great number of amateurs the award is a chance to indulge in two interests at the same time – wireless communication and enjoyment of natural beauty.

Keith Roget, who played a major role in establishing the award, was an example. He held amateur callsign VK3YQ and gave his time generously to the Wireless Institute as Victorian president, secretary and treasurer, as well as holding federal offices. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of the National Parks system and always anxious to use his equipment in radio field days and in WICEN exercises. After his death in 1981 his widow gave the WIA permission to rename the National Parks Award in his memory.

In order to give “stay-at-home” amateurs an opportunity to win the certificate, amateur radio clubs and individuals make a concerted effort at least once a year to “activate” as many NPs as possible – that is, set up stations in them to provide contacts with the stay-at-homes. This is usually done over the Labor Day Weekend.

In parks where camping is not permitted, you are likely to find amateurs

operating in car park areas – particularly if they are using HF [high frequency] equipment which can achieve communication across Australia – and even to other continents.

However, operators on very high frequency [VHF] might be found anywhere, even on the most remote wilderness trails as their equipment can often be carried in a pocket and will work without external aerials.

Many nature lovers see radio as something “artificial” and an antithesis to their own interests. This is far from the truth. There are complex inter-relations between radio propagation and seasons, weather, topography, vegetation cover, soil quality and a host of other natural phenomena. Perhaps the closest linkages between radio and nature, however, are made by the operators who go into the National Parks and other nature reserves, not with batteries, but with solar panels and wind generators.

With the twentieth anniversary of the Keith Roget Award drawing close, Victorian amateur radio operators will be making special efforts to put as many NPs as possible “on the air” next summer. There’s a good chance you’ll come across them.

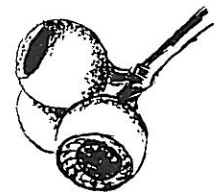
## Amateur and CB Radio Diplomatic Advice

The main difference between amateur and citizen band (CB) operators is in their respective qualifications. Amateurs obtain their licences by passing examinations in radio theory, laws and regulations, and Morse code. CB operators buy their licences over the counter as easily as a kilo of sugar, no examinations or qualifications being required.

CB operators are limited to two bands. Amateurs have many more bands open to them and can use a greater variety of communication modes, including TV, facsimile and radio teletype.

Both are licenced by the Department of Communications and many amateurs are former CB operators.

If you are in doubt about a particular operator or station it is better to ask: “Are you an amateur?”, rather than “are you a CBer?” In most cases it may not matter which way you phrase the question, but there are some amateurs who are far from flattered by being confused with CBers and they may show their exasperation. Since some have gone to night study courses for up to six months to earn their qualifications, who can blame them?



**ARE YOU A MEMBER?**  
If you are not already a member and would like to join the Association, see page 2 for subscription rates. Members receive Parkwatch each quarter and a monthly newsletter which gives details of all activities.

