



Second Century

Amateur Radio On The Air

Jason Johnston, KC5HWB, recently featured “30 Days of Ham Radio” on his YouTube channel, Ham Radio 2.0. I have always felt that ham radio is a hobby of hobbies. There’s plenty to learn and use within amateur radio, and not everything is for everybody. But Jason did a great job of taking viewers from working 2-meter simplex, to using APRS along with fellow YouTuber Jason Oleham, KM4ACK, for something I had never heard of before — Beaches On The Air!

It has become abundantly clear that amateur radio operators love operating from portable locations, most of which are outdoors. These operations have moved far from the annual planning and operation of a Field Day station. Some of the getting-on-the-air programs include Beaches On The Air, Islands On The Air, Get On The Air (ARRL Field Day), Lighthouses on the Air, Parks on the Air® (POTA), Summits on the Air, and even Walmart Parking Lots On The Air (WMPLOTA). I accidentally stumbled into the WMPLOTA event one year when the stations were making contacts via satellite and received bonus points for building their antennas entirely from parts purchased at the Walmart they were operating from.

We are very proud of the work that the team at POTA has done with their program. You will remember that, in 2016, ARRL created and conducted the popular National Parks on the Air program. Little did anyone at ARRL know how big the POTA program could potentially become. POTA is supported by an outstanding website (parksontheair.com), and we were proud to partner with them on ARRL’s *The Parks on the Air® Book*. POTA has become an international program with activity all over the world.

POTA has also created a resurgence of interest in using Morse code! A typical POTA station consists of a low-power transceiver running off a battery. Stations use temporary antennas that are typically simple vertical or end-fed wires that are lightweight and easy to deploy. Running a modest station can make voice contacts difficult to achieve, whereas CW contacts are more likely to complete. At an activation at nearby Windsor Locks Canal State Park Trail (US-7544) in Connecticut, we were having poor results on 10-meter

phone. We tuned down to the beacons segment and copied stations from Europe, to South Africa, South America, Central America, and Western Canada. Moving farther down the band and getting on CW rewarded us with a pileup from Europe.

Going portable doesn’t have to be complicated. Another YouTube phenom, “Salty” Walt Hudson, K4OGO, has shown on his channel, Coastal Waves & Wires, that vertical push-up masts with various lengths of wires can lead to differing multi-band results. We partnered with Walt on his ARRL book, *Salty Walt’s Portable Antenna Sketchbook*, to illustrate the many configurations he’s deployed by working DX from beach locations. We also introduced an End-Fed Half-Wave Antenna Kit some 4 years ago, to inspire hams to build an antenna that they could use for Field Day or for portable operation. Putting together some simple-to-deploy antennas and having them ready to go is a fun and easy project.

Whether or not operating portable — activating locations like parks, summits, islands, or beaches — appeals to you, you should know that’s where the action is on the bands these days. Be radio active! You can be an activator or a hunter! Be a connector! Inspire others in your club to activate local entities to build up excitement and experience. And look for me on the air from SA-006 or BQ-0001.

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