

Parks on the Air® (POTA)

Thanks to W3AAX and KB3CMT for their content

Updated February 2023
Pete Carpenter, KC3MVS

Agenda

- Overview of POTA
- Creating a POTA Account
- Activators
 - - Activating a Park
 - - Logging the QSOs
- Hunters
- Related Websites
- Questions

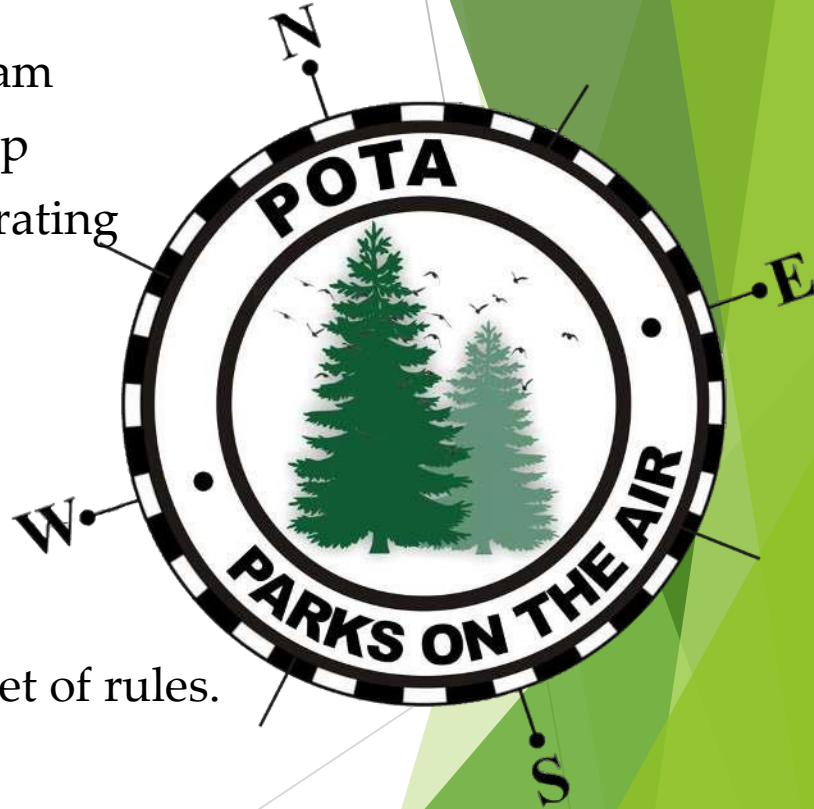


What is POTA?

Parks on the Air® (POTA) is an ongoing program encouraging amateur radio operators to develop their skills, fostering community, and demonstrating the hobby to the public.

POTA is a 501(c)3 radiosport program that encourages communications and portable operations to and from state, provincial, and nationally managed public lands.

POTA has a large set of references and a short set of rules.



Who is POTA?

POTA started as a small group of USA based volunteers who created the rules, infrastructure, and database following the 2016 initial ARRL NPOTA event.

Now, POTA has over 2700 registered users from over 27 countries and it's growing every day,

Join as an activator, a hunter, or both.



Reasons people enjoy POTA

- POTA is accessible. There are references near most populated areas, and many you can drive right into.
- Activators can run rapid-deployment contest-style activations or ragchew from a favorite campground all weekend.
- POTA accepts logs from any time, in fact if you chased NPOTA in 2016 you may already have confirmed contacts.
- The POTA stats pages and maps are under continuous development with many more features planned.

All modes are welcome.



POTA Quotes

"POTA combines everything we love to do!"

"This is great! I have several state parks near the QTH!"

"I didn't spend much time outdoors until POTA"

"I enjoy researching & learning about the places I contact."

Why would you enjoy portable activation?

- Typically, there's a lower noise floor and very often beautiful views and opportunities for observing wildlife.
- Every activation has different challenges: terrain, space constraints, weather, accessibility.
- It's an opportunity to perfect your portable radio kit, always evolving it to suit your operating style.
- It makes you a better operator and keeps your skills sharp.
- You will make friends all over the world.

And Hearing

"Thanks for the new one!"

"Thanks for activating!"

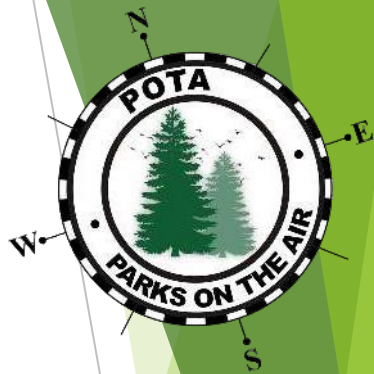
"Thanks for the park to park!"

"Have fun out there!"



What do I need to activate a POTA reference (park)?

- Amateur radio license
- Any radio
- Any portable antenna
- Portable power or access to AC power
- A notepad and any logger e.g., HAMRS or FLE (Fast Log Entry) that will export an *Active@ Disk Image File (ADIF)* in the POTA format
- A desire to have fun



How to join the POTA fun?

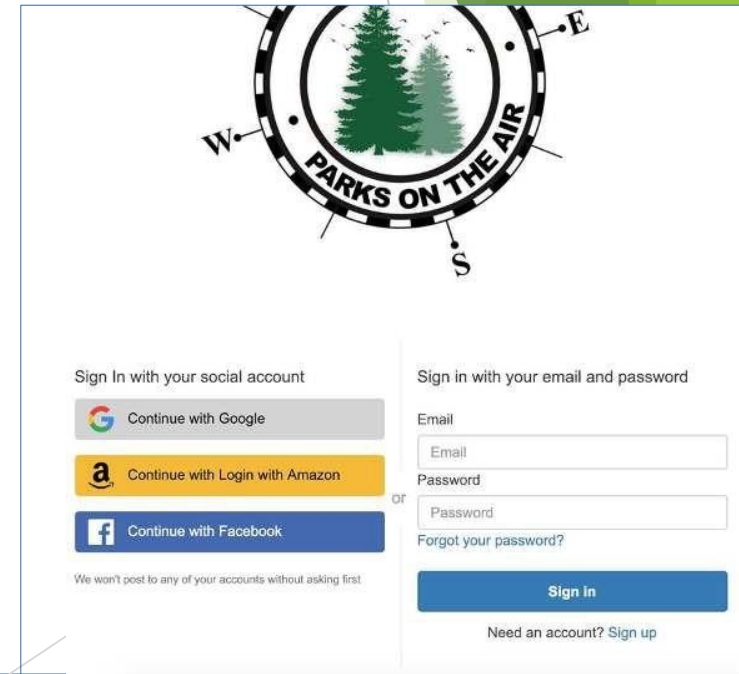
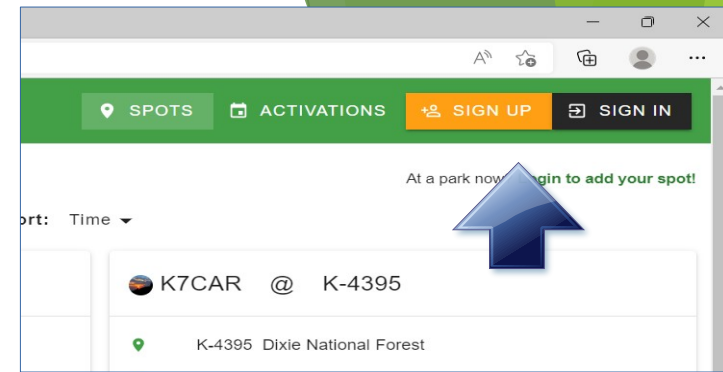
Creating an account is fast and easy.

<http://parksontheair.com/wp-content/uploads/How-to-Register.pdf>

POTA stores no passwords, they authenticate against accounts you already have.

Select the Dashboard / Login link at **parksontheair.com**

info@parksontheair.com is available if you want assistance

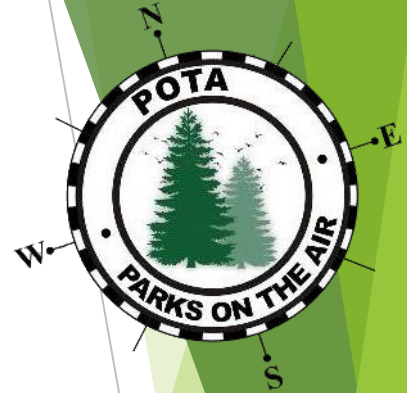


How does it work for Activators?

Choose a reference (park number) where you will be to put it on the air.

Find a list by visiting the POTA website <https://pota.us/#/map> and then select the find *my location link* in the upper left corner of the map or use the form to search by state or entity.

Although they are awesome, *county and municipal parks do not count for POTA*



POTA Website Local Map and Sample References

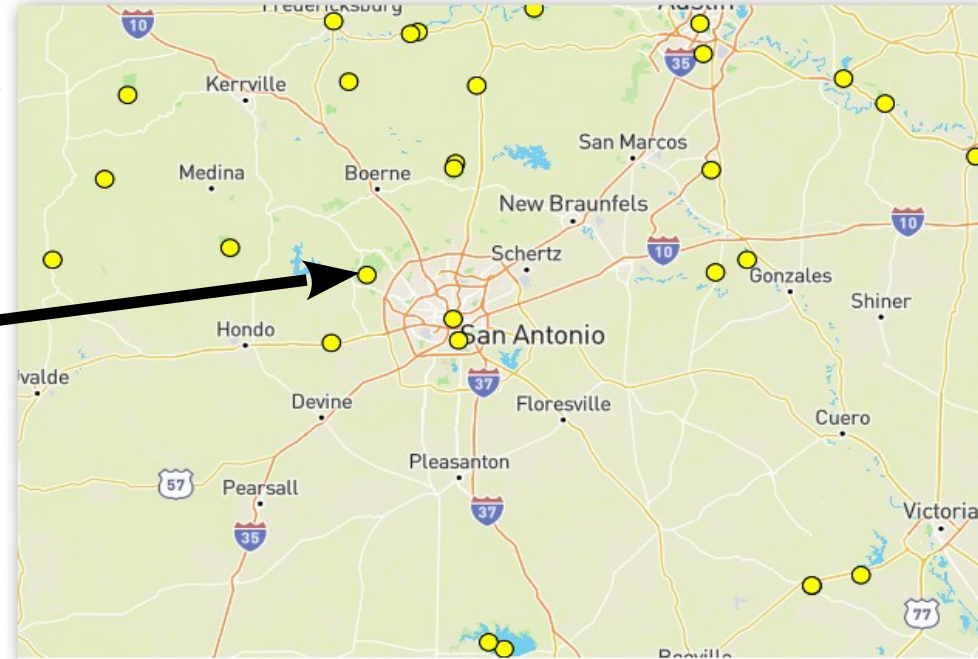


K-3503 Government Canyon Natural State Conservation Area, TX
K-3045 Palmetto State Park, TX
K-3033 Lockhart State Park, TX
K-1740 Killens Pond State Park, DE
VE-0510 Monts-Valin National Park, Quebec

Government Canyon Natural State Conservation Area

K-3503

[MORE INFO](#)



POTA Website Active Spots



Active Spots *Data will refresh in 38 seconds.* ||

At a park now? [Login to add your spot!](#)

Band: All **10** Mode: SSB **3** Program: **10** QRT: Show **10** Hunted: Show **10** Sort: Time

<div> W6PZA @ K-2845</div> <div><div> K-2845 Nehalem Bay State Park</div><div> US-OR</div><div> 7182 kHz</div><div> VE6CLE</div><div> 55 AB</div><div> Last heard 37 sec ago at 02:38 UTC</div></div> <div><div>RE-SPOT </div><div> 38</div></div>	<div> VA6MWA @ VE-1193</div> <div><div> VE-1193 Strathcona Science Provincial Park</div><div> CA-AB</div><div> 7267 kHz</div><div> VE6CLE</div><div> 59 AB</div><div> Last heard 5 mins ago at 02:33 UTC</div></div> <div><div>RE-SPOT </div><div> 38</div></div>	<div> KB2FMH @ K-8088</div> <div><div> K-8088 Miller Field State Recreation Area</div><div> US-NY</div><div> 7210.5 kHz</div><div> WY0R</div><div> 51 Snn CO</div><div> Last heard 22 mins ago at 02:16 UTC</div></div> <div><div>RE-SPOT </div><div> 44</div></div>
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At a park now? [Login to add your spot!](#)

How do I activate a POTA Reference?

- Make at least **10 QSOs on the same UTC day** while inside the boundaries of the park on any band that your privileges allow. Most activators give priority to QRP and other park contacts.
- Utilize any simplex mode, including satellite. No terrestrial repeaters are allowed.
- POTA recommends operating in the General bands but has no specific calling Frequencies. Before calling CQ, find a clear frequency and ask **"IS THIS FREQUENCY IN USE?"**
- There is no specific exchange for POTA beyond the call sign, although the traditional RSTs are usually given. "QSL" to confirm. Activators set the pace. Thank Hunters for contacting you!
- Log the date, UTC time, and band in your favorite logging program and export as an **ADIF**.
- Submit this **ADIF** directly to the POTA website.
- A good filename example is: **KC3MVS@K-1740-20221119.adif**

How do I Call CQ?

SSB any variation of CQ, below is an example of my normal SSB CQ:

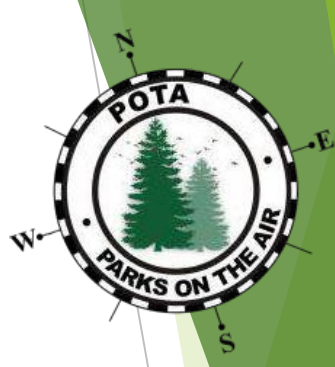
“CQ POTA, CQ POTA, this is KC3MVS
at Park K-1740, QRZ”

For CW operations we often hear:

“CQ POTA N2CX N2CX K0710 K”

If you have internet access via your phone or a wifi Hotspot, then try to spot yourself on the POTA website at <https://pota.app/#/> and you will be hunted!

If you don't have Internet access and haven't scheduled an Activation, you can ask another ham to “spot” you.



Add Spot

KC3MVS

Activator

KC3MVS

Spotter

14261

Frequency

Park K-1740

Reference

SSB (FT8, CW, etc; and QRT when done)

Comments

*indicates required field

CLOSE

SAVE

Logging

HAMRS Log app to create ADIF

<https://hamrs.app/>

Paper Log

4/16 K-0156 st. Mark
Lyn Chase

74,318

2103 W3AVP 59 59

WB3HJD 59 57

W3SCA 59 59 Jaly

K8TE 59 44

W8ZST 59 59

205 W9ALK 59 59

1W2BWA 57 53

VE3LDT 59 59

VE2AW 59 59

NDSCSK 59 57

AC8KW 59 59

KA1DR 59 59

K15WA 59 59

VE3ZM 59 59

KE SCUM 59 59

KC1WK 57 59

KA6LGL 59 59

HAMRS Logbooks Profile ▾ Help ▾ Enter Callsign Lookup

Fall River - K2338

QSOs: 41

THEIR CALLSIGN	RST SENT	RST RCVD	THEIR PARK
<input type="text"/>	59	59	<input type="text"/>
COMMENTS	TIME	DATE	
<input type="text"/>	16:07	Mar 29, 2021	
		Clear	Save

MY PARK	MY CALLSIGN
K-2338	KBOICT
FREQUENCY	
14.270	MHz
BAND	MODE
20m	SSB

TIME ON	CALLSIGN	RST ↑	RST ↓	FREQUENCY	MODE	THEIR PARK
18:44	KC7U	55	57	14.270	SSB	
18:44	K4CAQ	44	53	14.270	SSB	
18:43	KK4VU	57	57	14.270	SSB	
18:42	W4JFA	57	57	14.270	SSB	
18:41	KA1ANW	57	55	14.270	SSB	

Top Activator Challenges

- Terrestrial weather & Solar conditions
- Gear failure – have a field repair kit and back-ups
- Local QRM or QRN - work through it or choose another frequency or location as appropriate
- Difficult Park Staff - while rare, it does happen. Always be respectful and follow staff instructions.
- Unable to self spot – Schedule yourself in advance on the POTA website. You may also check in on Facebook or Slack with an ETA and frequency if you will have no network/cellular coverage.
- Pile-ups if you are operating QRP, low power or in an unusual location.



Activator Tips



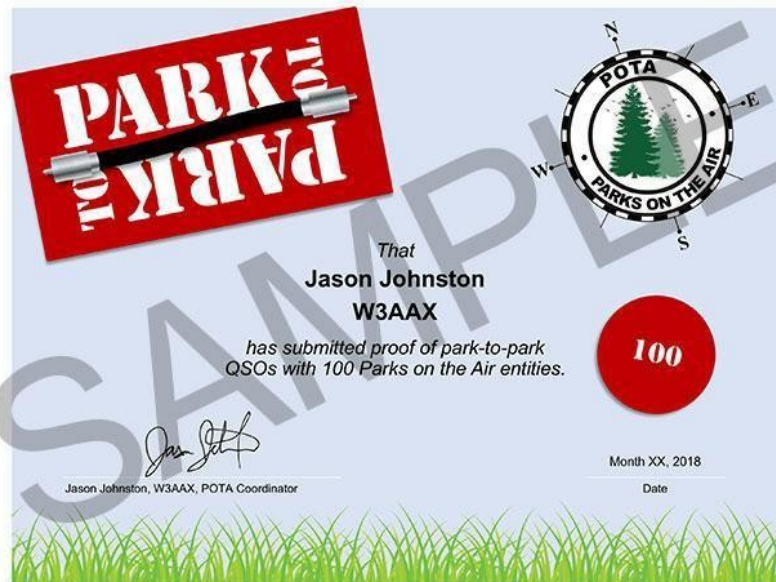
- Safety first! - flag anything that could be a tripping hazard.
- Have a checklist that you keep updated as your portable setup evolves
- Monitor a wx radio if you are in a location where wx can change rapidly
- Keep data you need handy - POTA reference, county, grid square
- Allow time to tour the park and choose the best operating position.
- Consider band conditions, your battery, TX power and length of activation.
- Be clear on the rules. Consider park rules, state laws, band plans, and other events than may take place during your activation.
- Be persistent but flexible!

Activator Awards

Incremental awards for each level of unique parks activated



Park to Park awards for communications between operations at POTA references.



My POTA Gear in a Harbor Freight Case:

- Yaesu FT-891 transceiver and ground rod
- 12Ah Bioenno LiFePo4 battery
- Comet HFJ-350M tiny vertical and 16' measuring tape counterpoise
- LDG Z-11 Pro Antenna Tuner
- Magnetic antenna mount with 17 ft of coax
- Notebook, pen, watch or clock with Zulu/UTC time and flashlight
- Laptop or tablet and cell phone (hotspot to access POTA website)
- Powerwerx watt & volt meter
- Earphones
- ARRL Band Chart
- Optional
 - 65-Watt Solar Panel
 - Alpha Full Metal Jacket portable vertical, Chameleon EMCOMM III, Hamsticks, SWR meter...
 - POTA tri-fold brochure



Activate from a paddle boat



Pete, KC3MVS, Maritime, at K-1740
Killens Pond State Park,
Felton, Delaware

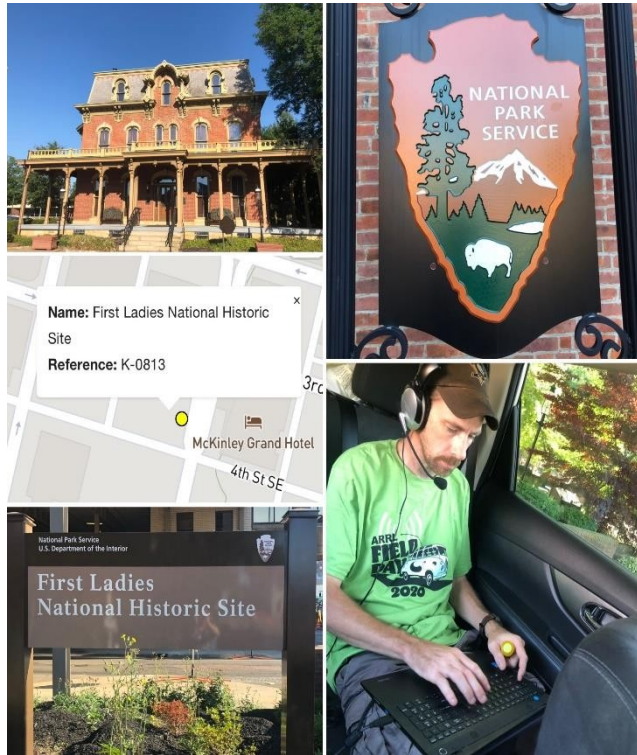
Activate a beach, using a chair as a table



Pat, AA0O, at K-0256
St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge
St Marks Lighthouse, Florida



Activate from your vehicle!



KB3CMT

At K-0813, First Ladies
National Historic Site



KB3CMT

At K-7256
Midwin National Grasslands, Illinois



Activate as a group!
(first, second, third, fourth operator...)



W4E special event station
(N1COR, AA0O, W4MMY, WU2F)
Florida State Parks on the Air

K-1863
Egmont Key State Park
Florida

How does it work for Hunters?

- Create an account at parksontheair.com if you want awards
- Find activated spots (parks and sites) on the POTA website
- Make the QSOs with park activators
- *No log submission is necessary.* Logs are submitted by the activators
- Check your dashboard for stats at parksontheair.com



stats.parksontheair.com/reports/myhuntedqsos.php

Parks On The Air Find Parks Leaderboards Activity Park Stats My Stats Join us on Slack KB3CMT Help

My Hunted QSOs

You have 698 hunter QSOs

Reference	Park Name	Location	QSO Date/Time	Band	Mode	Activator (Operator)	Processed
K-0012	Carlsbad Caverns National Park	New Mexico (US-NM)	2021-01-13 18:16:00	20M	PHONE (SSB)	WA7BAM (WA7BAM)	2021-01-14 02:11:38
K-0015	Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park	Maryland (US-MD)	2021-01-13 22:13:00	40M	PHONE (SSB)	KB3WAV (KB3WAV)	2021-01-16 16:50:12
K-0017	Congaree National Park	South Carolina (US-SC)	2021-01-10 15:35:00	40M	PHONE (SSB)	AA4JW (AA4JW)	2021-01-10 23:38:57
K-0034	Great Smoky Mountains National Park	Tennessee (US-TN)	2019-01-09 17:29:14	40M	PHONE (SSB)	W4CDK (W4CDK)	2019-01-09 20:58:01
K-0034	Great Smoky Mountains National Park	Tennessee (US-TN)	2019-01-09 17:29:39	40M	PHONE (SSB)	AB4DK (AB4DK)	2019-01-09 20:57:56
K-0034	Great Smoky Mountains National Park	North Carolina (US-NC)	2020-09-07 19:05:00	40M	PHONE (SSB)	KN4DLS (KN4DLS)	2020-09-10 01:22:22
K-0050	Mammoth Cave National Park	Kentucky (US-KY)	2019-10-20 17:08:00	40M	PHONE (SSB)	KD9KEG (KD9KEG)	2019-12-12 11:55:03
K-0060	Saguaro National Park	Arizona (US-AZ)	2020-12-21 18:57:00	20M	PHONE (SSB)	KG6T (KG6T)	2020-12-22 00:54:56
K-0062	Saratoga National Historical Park	New York (US-NY)	2020-02-16 20:02:00	40M	PHONE (SSB)	WB2SMK (WB2SMK)	2020-02-18 09:54:41
K-0062	Saratoga National Historical Park	New York (US-NY)	2020-02-16 21:01:00	40M	PHONE (SSB)	WB2SMK (WB2SMK)	2020-02-18 09:54:41
K-0067	Voyageurs National Park	Minnesota (US-MN)	2020-07-28 17:22:00	20M	PHONE (SSB)	K9DP (K9DP)	2020-08-05 13:03:51
K-0141	Key Cave National Wildlife Refuge	Alabama (US-AL)	2020-09-06 21:48:00	40M	PHONE (SSB)	KX4BI (KX4BI)	2020-09-06 23:40:54
K-0161	Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge	Alabama (US-AL)	2020-09-06	40M	PHONE (SSB)	KV4PC (KV4PC)	2020-11-12 03:33:45

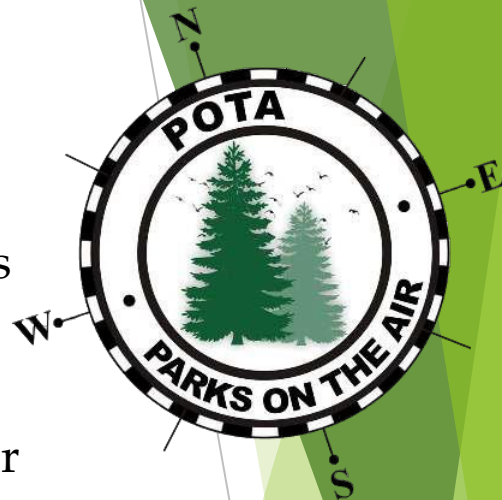
Why would you enjoy hunting POTA activators?

- You are helping another amateur to reach their goals
- It's an easy, short contact - great for new HF operators.
- Enjoy the comprehensive stats and awards POTA provides.
- It requires no log submissions
- It makes you a better operator and keeps your skills sharp.
- You will make friends from all over world
- You can hunt as much or as little as you want, you do not even have to register to play.
- You can help the activators by relaying things like “you have a Park to Park calling” or by spotting for them when they QSY



Tips for Hunting

- Check the POTA Scheduler for any planned activations
- Follow social media for pop-up activations
- Watch the POTA spotter at <https://pota.app/#/>
- Sign up for Slack to receive instant POTA spots on your phone or desktop
- Use ITU phonetics and/or QRS (send slowly) if necessary
- Observe the DX Code of Conduct
- Assist activators by spotting (submitting their activation information) for them if they don't have Internet access.



Hunter Awards

There are many awards available including incremental awards for each level of unique parks hunted,



or hunting all POTA references in a state or province.

Other Groups

WWFF— World Wide Flora & Fauna. <https://wwff.co/>

SOTA-Summits on the Air - <https://www.sota.org.uk/>

LOTA-Lighthouses on the Air - <https://www.wlota.com/>

BOTA-Beaches on the Air - <https://www.beachesontheair.com/>

Join the fun!

<https://parksontheair.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/parksontheair>

<https://parksontheair.slack.com/>

Questions?

