

APE

Paynetown State Recreation Area



A friend of mine Brian KB9BVN mentioned the PODXS club and PSK and I thought why not sign up and play with some PSK. It had been some time. After signing up and participating in a few events I saw a notice about the PODXS APE event. APE is August PSK31 Expedition, it is a program to promote amateurs using PSK31 in the wild and hunters to chase after them. I mostly ignored the email about APE because I have

been very busy with kids, life and so I went on with my life and then August came I noticed I had a camping trip scheduled in August and it would qualify for the APE event, so I threw my hat into the ring and here we are.

Before I get starting to my expedition, I figure should tell you a little bit about myself. I started with Amateur radio in 2013 and I have explored many aspects of the hobby including digital modes, ARES, running a Laurel VE team and recently picked up morse code as a skill.

My professional life is as a software developer for a small company in Indianapolis Indiana. I enjoy my work and I am very good with many levels of computer technology including network, databases, software development and even building hardware, although that has been some years.

I have a family that is larger than many but right now I have 2 children who are under 18 living at home and one who is moving out in the coming weeks. The other adult children have moved out and are living on their own. Two of my adult children have become licensed but neither are active amateurs. I suspect that could change as they get older.

Now onto my adventure.

I very much believe QRP is a fun and exciting part of amateur radio and I mostly run QRP in the parks or at home. This adventure started out with QRP intentions but in the end the band conditions where not that great and more power was given so this will not be another QRP story.

My adventure begins days before the APE activation time frame when I pickup the camper from the place it is stored. I am lucky enough to have my camper stored at an amateur friend's house who lives about 45 minutes away.

Packing for camping is much like going on any vacation. You make check lists, you double check everything twice and make sure your food is packed, you make sure you have extras of all things.

We have been camping for about two years now and we are in no way experts in the art of camping or preparing.

For amateur gear packing, I cheat. I bring much more gear than needed and I have the radio in my truck ready as a backup radio for portable operations.

I took many radios and other operating gear, but the scope of this story includes:

Camper Gear	
Gear	Description
IC7100	HF Radio
Eagle One Antenna	HF Antenna (31 ft vertical)
MFJ Manual tuner	Antenna Tuner
RG213U Coax (50 feet)	RF Pipe
30 Watt generic power supply	PSU
Vibroplex Key	For CW – Not for my APE
Lenovo YOGO Laptop	Run FLDIGI and FLRIG

Truck Gear	
Gear	Purpose
IC7100	HF Radio
102" CB Whip Antenna	HF Antenna
IT-100 Tuner	Make my whip snap out HF signals
Shared laptop from above	Make the radio sing PSK
Random chopped up and used COAX from over a year ago	RF Pipe

After arriving onsite and going through the marriage destroying experience of backing up your travel trailer (yes, it is stressful, but we survive it each time) we spend some time getting setup.

Every trip has new experiences with setting up your camper. This trip was no different. Our camp site was not level. It was uneven enough to notice but not so bad I would wake up with everyone piled on-top of me (sleep pile?). We have stabilizers on our camper but not levelers. This is something I need to plan for in the future. Other trips have included getting fully setup find that the power box was bad and having to take it all down and move it. We have also come to a campsite that you just cannot back into. Other buildings near it are too close for our camper size. This requires visiting the office and getting your site swapped. This camping trip that would not have been an option since our campground was full.

After getting setup my wife informed me that we forgot supplies that included the dog food, dog snacks, Diner, lunch, snacks, and plates... So off to town we went to find diner and buy the needed supplies we left over an hour and ½ away at home.

Luckily this park is close to Bloomington Indiana, and they have food.

Now onto the radio stuff.

I had no idea what I was getting into with the APE program for the PODXS program. Not exactly 100% true, since I have been active with activation of parks for the World Wide Flora and Fauna (WWFF) program and the Parks on the air (POTA) program, but this is different and a different audience or group of hunters.

This activation was different for many reasons. The first was the requirement to activate with PSK a mode that I have rarely used in

years aside from a PODXS event I participated in recently. That event was fun, I plan to try to participate more in the months to come.

I purchased a mount for the eagle one to be attached to the Travel Trailer or camper instead of having to rely on my trucks trailer hitch.

Relying on the trucks trailer hitch is not the end of the world but anytime we do things that require using the truck I found that it was painful to take my antenna down and put it back up.

The eagle one antenna is a push up pole antenna system and is not a big deal to setup and take down but to do it multiple times a day does get old.



The hitch mount was a cheap mount from amazon that mounted with 4 bolts to the bumper much like our bicycle mount. It took minutes to install and was very helpful to have and will continue to operate in the parks this way.

Some parks in Indiana have trees and some lots for the camper are large enough to run antennas up the trees and use them and some parks lots are not large, and the trees are either very tall and no low branches. At times you cannot get the antenna up or have it very low on trees that are very useless. Indiana does not have any rules against using Trees to hang antennas on. I do not damage or hurt the trees in this process.

The Eagle One antenna is a great solution to this problem. I have an Alpha S9 antenna at home I use that is very similar in design and would work great too, however the eagle one sells with the hitch mounting gear and that makes it easy to unbox and go play radio. I am sure MFJ also sells a pushup style pole that would do just fine too.

Moving onto the computer. I was lucky enough to be given this Lenova YOGO laptop. It is an older laptop but a very swift and quick laptop that works well for my amateur radio work.

I installed FLDIGI and FLRIG prior to leaving the house just in case internet was an issue. I have been to several parks where your internet will not work and some where even phone service will not work. I had never camped at this park, so I was unsure what I was getting into. I came prepared to operate without any spotting capabilities, but I am grateful that I was able to use email and the POTA spotting page to get the message out that I was running PSK and ready to workstations.

I am not unfamiliar with FLDIGI but I do not use it as often as I should. I was able to setup Friday night and start operating. I ended up using FLRIG for CAT control

The setup of the IC7100 is very simple (especially if you read the manual) and takes a few minutes the first time but then after that should be the matter of selecting the "DATA" mode in the touch screen.

The behind the screens stuff that must be done before you can use it with digital modes over the USB cable is to tell it to use the USB port for those functions. This in the menu and the default is the accessory port if I recall correctly.

After getting the radio setup and the computer connected, I went to my camper bedroom and started calling CQ on 40 meters. I was able to make about 4-6 contacts (I cannot recall) and the next thing I knew it was time for bed.

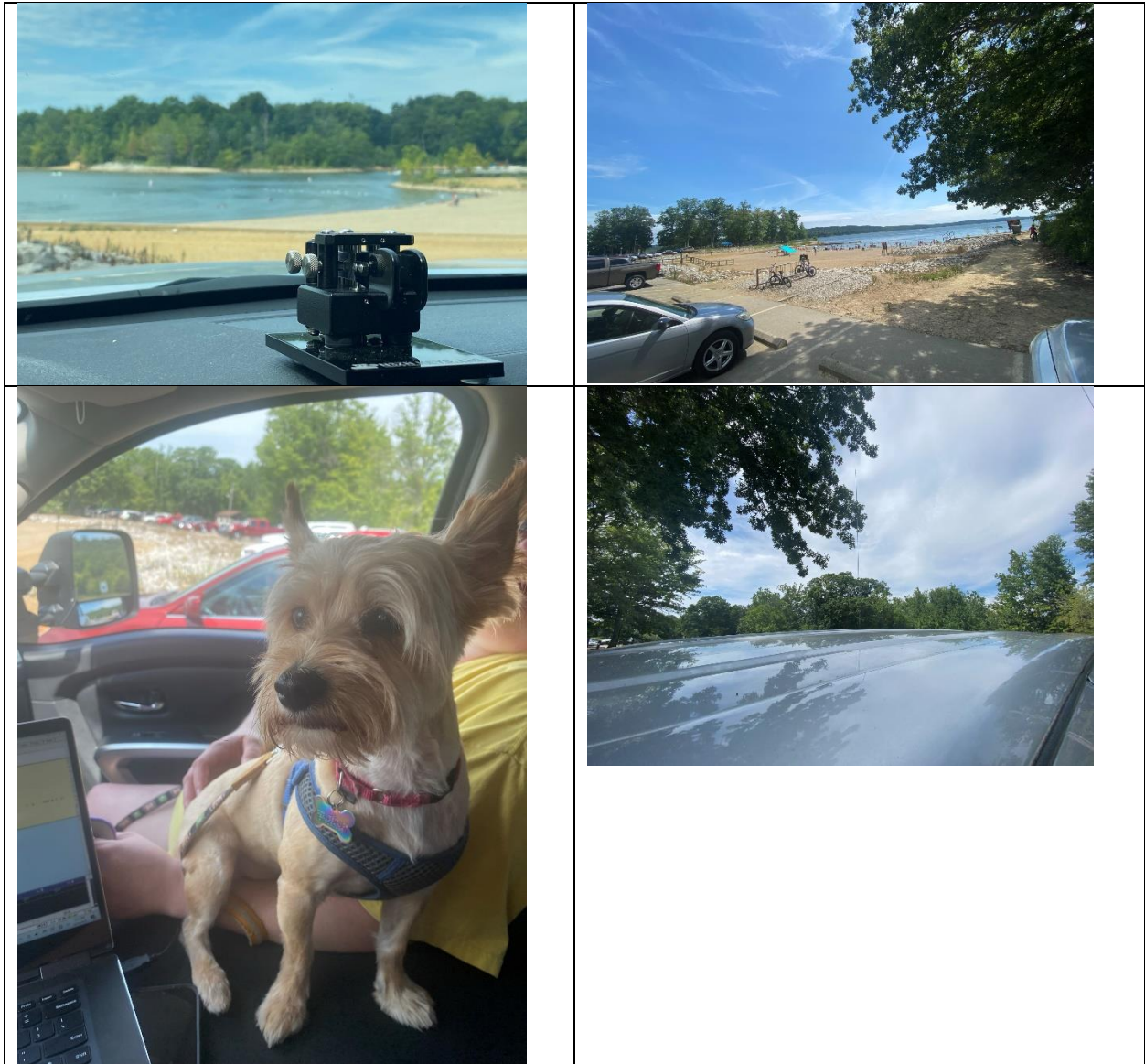
My trip to this park included other activities besides activating as an APE. Being an active member of POTA and being near some rare parks in the POTA program I was asked to help activate some other parks near Paynetown State Recreation Area. This included park K-5682 Moores Creek SRA and park K-5690 Crooked Creek SRA. I did not register these parks as APE activations, so I did not take my PSK capabilities with me to these parks. I am not sure if it would have counted so I just did not do it.

The next morning prior to the family waking up I took 30 minutes to drive to park K-5682 and activated this park. I used CW and only made about 12 contacts total at this park. The internet was sparse, but I was able to get self-spotting done and it was a success.



After getting back to the campsite at park I found that the kids were going to head to beach to swim. I packed up the laptop and radio and drove the kids to the beach and even took the dog.

While the kids swam and played on the beach, I was able to operate mobile from the beach in the park and make many more contacts. Sometime near the end of this my laptop stopped hearing my radio

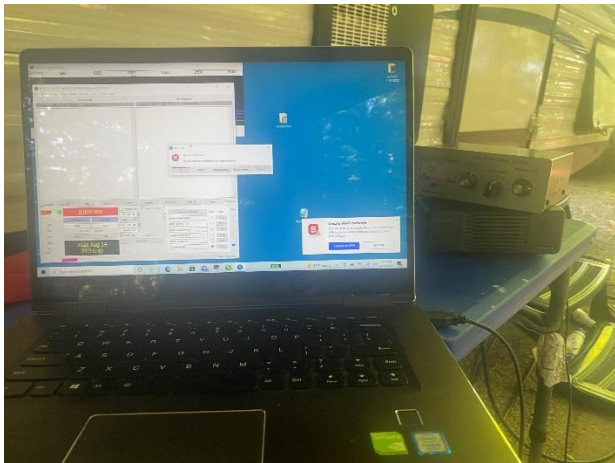


The kids finished up and we headed back to the camp site. Debugging the issue with my laptop took longer than I thought it might. I moved the laptop to the other 7100 to rule out if it was a software issue or radio issue. The issue followed the laptop. This was a good indication I did not blow up my radio (the fear is real).

Further debugging of the laptop included rebooting, running updates, removing drivers, and getting ready to toss the laptop into the beach.

At the end of the day somehow the laptop had muted the MIC of the audio connections (USB cable for the 7100) to the radio. I found this in the control panel and once I saw it, I was back in business.

This is when I noticed my log was not complete. All the contacts I had made the day before were gone. I am not 100% sure what happened to the log file in FLDIGI but I know for sure that data is lost. I was able to rebuild two of those contacts and I do not cry much about the lost contacts. I hope the people who worked me and are not credit can forgive me for this.



The kids where working towards a pin and patch program and the requirements included a hike. We went to the trail and took a hike that lasted about an hour. I am not 20 anymore and this felt it was going to kill me, walking up and down hills with the kids running ahead like it was nothing. The trip was not eventful.

During our visit to the park, the kids had to complete 5 activities to get the pins. This also included picking up up trash for an hour. This activity sounded more fun than it was.



We came back to the campsite for dinner, and I operated more PSK31 for a few hours and then I was done.

After operating PSK on many bands I finally gave up with 27 contacts using PSK31 on 15M, 17M, 20M, 40M and 30M bands.

QSO MAP:



Being that I was at a WWFF park I wanted to make sure I had my 44 contacts for the activation of the WWFF park. The PSK contacts already had me fully activated for the POTA program and I was a successful APE station as I understand the rules.

I started operating indoors with CW at this time again and I noticed how hot the camper was. Remember I do not usually use any sort of power with radio and now I had mounted the antenna to the camper.

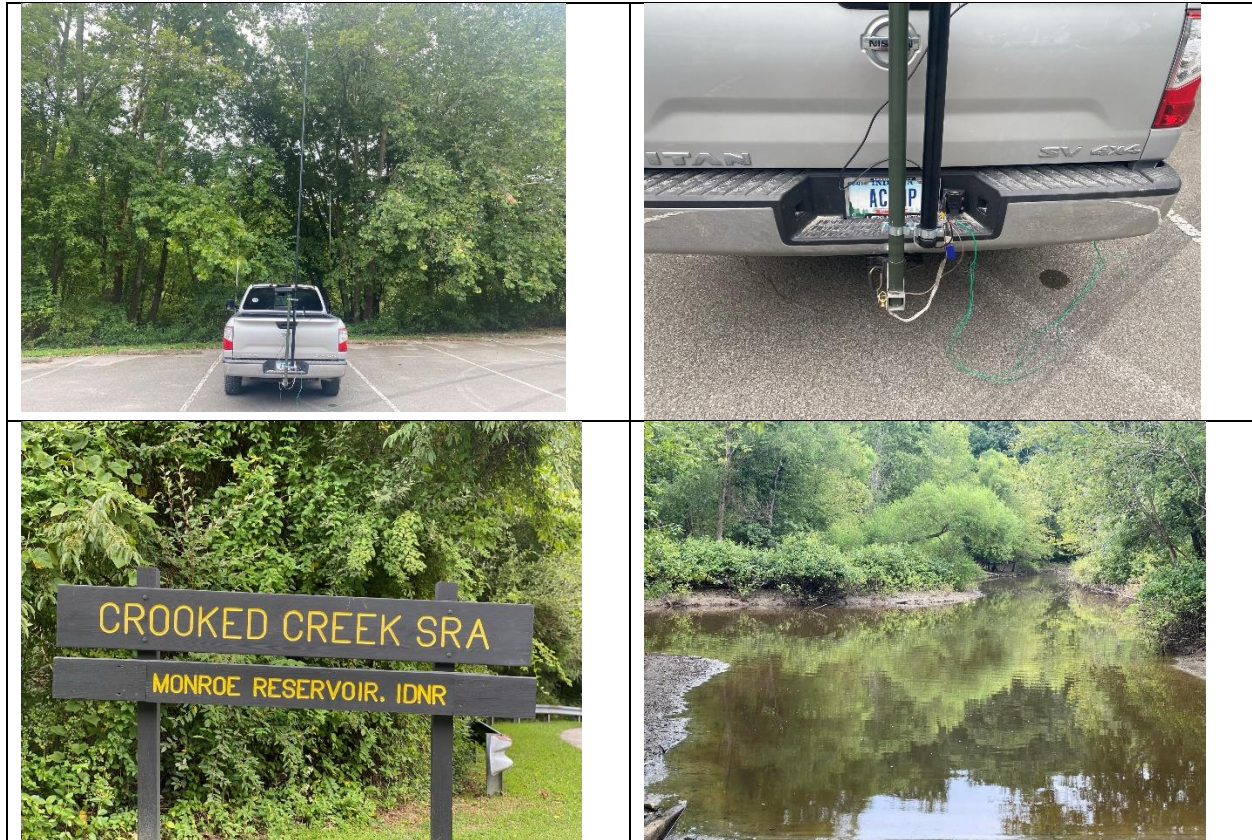
The thermostat had set itself to 90 degrees. I reset the temperature and the AC came on and my wife was happy.

I started operating CW again at higher power than I normally do because I forgot I had increased it to work PSK and a bit later the AC was off again, and the thermostat was now 90 again.

I knew what happened the RF was getting into the thermostat and causing issues. I lowered the power down and turned the AC back on and the issue went away. I never did tell my wife this was my fault.

By time I was tired of CW, I was tired in general and went to bed.

In the morning I woke up and went to park K-5690. I took the eagle one antenna with me and thus ended the PSK adventure. By time I got back from park K-5690 Crooked Creek the day was ½ over and the time to pack up the camper and head home had come.



It did not take long to pack our camper and we hooked up and went home. On the way out of the park you get to use something called a dump station. If you have never had a RV or travel trailer, then you may not know but the water used while camping is put into tanks and when you leave you dump this stuff into the sewer or dump tanks at the park. This reduces the weight of the trailer. It also stops people from doing what Uncle Eddies does with his wastewater in the movie National Lampoons Christmas Vacation. Why do I include this? Because some people may not know the whole experience and I don't want to leave any false impressions. I will also include that Indian State

campsites you have to fill your water tank prior to getting setup. You do not want to run out. The result of running out would mean having to take the camper down, dumping your tanks and then filling the water tank again.

This would not be the end of the world, but it would create unneeded work.

Conservation is a must when camping.

Once back home we unloaded the camper, cleaned the camper and then hauled it back to storage. Leaving the campsite at 2 pm, driving home and then taking the camper to storage put us home after 6pm.

Overall spending time with the family camping, playing on the radio and enjoying nature makes the adventure fun and that is what it is all about.

Will I operate as an APE next year? Maybe, it really depends on what our camping trip schedule looks like. My guess is that we will still be camping, and I will volunteer again. If I do not, I will give hunting a shot and see who I can work as the hunter.

I hope you enjoyed this write and I hope to work you soon 73 de ac9hp