

August PSK31 Expedition

PODXS 070 Event

August 3-7, 2020

I had been planning to do an APE this year as I try to do one every year since about 2015 or so. I have not been successful in the past with getting enough contacts to make it count, though. Those days are over! Got my 20 and then some. It was not without some challenges and maybe you can learn from my experience to do (or not do) as I did for your own APE next year.

I operate from home with essentially the same station that I take on the road in my Roadtrek Class B campervan. A Yaesu FT857, Signalink USB Integrated Sound Card, MFJ 822 SWR meter, and a solar powered battery (various panels and batteries depending on the operation.) At home I use a HP desktop and travel with a HP 2000 laptop loaded with Fldigi latest version.

I use a homebrew dipole antenna cut to the PSK31 frequencies for the bands I'm working. I check the swr with a RigExpert AA-230 Zoom antenna analyzer. And I carry coax and connectors with spares. My antenna is supported with a 16 ft Buddipole mast with a baseplate and guying system.



Figure 1 Base plate made of plywood with floor flange for Buddipole 16 ft mast

For this trip, which was planned several months ago, I loaded the campervan on Sunday Aug 2nd with the radio station gear as Tropical Storm then Hurricane Isaias was heading north. It was predicted to be near my home close to the Chesapeake Bay on Tuesday midday. I battened down the hatches Monday morning and loaded the food and last minute camping essentials. Stopped at the grocery and gas station on the way out of town to top up the gas tank and fridge.

Arrived at my campsite in Green Ridge State Forest around 1600 on 3 Aug 2020. The 20 meter dipole was up by 1645 and I started assembling the station. Found the laptop battery was dead. I have an 400 watt inverter so plugged it in and started charging the laptop back up. I know from previous operations that the inverter is noisy so did not try to operate with it hooked up to the inverter. Spent some time with camp setup. I also checked the swr of the 20 meter antenna: 1.10 @ 14.3 for the lowest dip and 1.41 at 14.070. That looked good but the swr meter is blinking SWR all throughout the reading. That's worrisome but the dip looks good.



Figure 2 Erecting antenna in the rain. Too close to RV.

After about an hour I started calling CQ APE on 20. KC3EF immediately comes back. Whoopee, But my laptop freezes up each time I try to transmit. Restart Fldigi several times with no success. After many tries, decide to switch to 40 meters as the day is getting on. Hoist the 40 antenna as the rain starts. Same results on 40. It's now 1930 and it's time to make some dinner and think things over. Hamburgers, baked beans and melon indoors tonight.

Lesson learned this day: Turn off laptop completely after charging. It might be the battery is going bad but putting it to sleep didn't help.

4 August 2020: Day 1 of ops

0745 Rain has stopped. Check radio settings and find I'm transmitting at 100 watts as I was using for Field Day recently and hadn't changed. Turned down power to 25 watts. SWR check on 40 meter dipole same as on the 20. Great dip and the analyzer is still flashing SWR at me. Set up IMD meter and note -34. But computer is still locking up. It's time to move the antenna to the

maximum distance with the 100 ft coax. After a late breakfast, I start making contacts on 40 meters. W8NA is the first contact. Then my friend Stan W9SMR on 40. I changed over to 20 meter antenna and worked Stan again. Ended up making 24 contacts during the day with 4 40 meter contacts at the beginning and end of ops for the day. I rained on and off all day so operations were from inside the campervan.



Figure 3 Antenna position too close to the RV.

Lessons learned this day: Check all radio settings to be sure you're on the right freq, mode, power level and such before starting ops. Antenna siting is important. Distance and orientation to the campervan need to be considered if stray rf is a problem. On a side note, the same antenna at home is closer than it was in the campsite and works just fine. It may have to do with the metal van as an operating point. The flashing SWR light on the analyzer is normal operation during the sweep; bring the operation manual next time for all gear used.



Figure 4 Trifold 80 watt portable solar panel with controller.

My battery charging while camping is done 2 ways: One is the Lensun Solar Energy 80 watt folding panel which is okay for light duty operations. I also have an Onan 2800 generator to really top things up and I ran it about an hour each day to replenish the camper battery, the laptop battery and my LiFePO4 batteries that I run the radio from.



Figure 5 40 meter dipole at edge of campsite

5 August 2020 Day 2 of operations

Just a slow day

Propagation just wasn't working well. Made only 5 contacts all day. 4 on the 40 meter dipole and one on my 20 meter hamstick mounted to the van. Did have time to take a walk and found out where the mooing was coming from. Dairy farm over the hill with a great view into PA. Had a campfire and played some music and relaxed a lot today.

6 August 2020 Day 3 of operations.

All 11 of the contacts today were on 20 meters. Interesting pattern of contacts: FL, LA, TN, OK, QC, WA and NB. The contact to WA was weak and just enough to log it. When I got done for the day I packed up the antenna and gear so I could head home in the morning.

It was a great expedition. Members contacted that I got numbers from were W9SMR Stan 1611, KA5VZG Alan 1509, N7WE Rick 1602, VA3TPS Steve 526, KC9UR Robert 1620, KG5OIB John 2592, KC3FL John 2566, N9AVY Jerry 454, VA2YZX Sylvain 2789, K4VBM Bob 2727, N5SLY Lee 2241, W8VIJ Greg 993, K5SP JIM 483/58, W2DEN Dennis 1725, AG4QX Bill 398/51, NO8R Delos 777, VEXDB Doug 2787. KC4OBB Don 1609, WJ4HCP Charles 2267, KZ1O Dave 2710, and KE5IRK Geary 1787. A couple were doubles on both bands and I got 2 POTA stations. 23 of my 40 contacts were identified PODXS070 members. I registered for POTA while on this trip and will send a log to them with my contacts. There were 8 40 meter contacts and 32 on 20.

I will do this again. It was fun, worth the effort and rewarding to see all of the interest from club members and other stations contacted. I will do it in conjunction with POTA and choose a park listed with them. I encourage others to get out there even for a day trip to a local park, nature preserve or whatever and operate from you car, RV, campsite or backpack. Preparation for emergency operations or for periods where you don't have mains power or a permanent antenna is good for disaster preparedness. Besides, it's just fun to get out and play radio somewhere besides home.

Thanks and looking for other reports,

Dave H

KB3RAN

1692/381

PODXS070 APE Event Mgr.

8/6/2020	17:27	VE9UN	20m	14.07	PSK31	FN65QW	Canada	Wilfred George LeBlanc	Fred		
8/6/2020	17:12	KO4DNM	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL88TB	United States	JEREMY LARATRO			
8/6/2020	17:00	W7PFB	20m	14.07	PSK31	CN97bq	United States	Paul F Butzi			
8/6/2020	16:43	VA2GW	20m	14.07	PSK31	FN35fi	Canada	Georges Whelan			
8/6/2020	16:21	KE5IRK	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM04so	United States	GEARY L MCDOWELL	1787		
8/6/2020	16:11	KZ1O	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL88wq	United States	DAVID B BUSHONG	2710 Dave		
8/6/2020	15:36	W5JAC	20m	14.07	PSK31	KM50EI	United States	John A	Tony		
8/6/2020	15:22	NR4A	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL88rl	United States	SAMUEL D DAVIS			
8/6/2020	15:07	WJ4HCP	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM75ja	United States	Charles C White Jr	2267		
8/6/2020	14:16	K5NQ	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM40va	United States	DALE F BUDENSKI SR			
8/6/2020	14:12	KC3FL	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL88uv	United States	JOHN F MARKS			
8/5/2020	14:39	KC4OBB	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM95ih	United States	DON R GRANT	1609		
8/5/2020	13:31	N7WE	40m	7.07	PSK31	EL98bp	United States	Richard L Butz	1602		
8/5/2020	13:21	ND9Y	40m	7.07	PSK31	EN61JO	United States	Glenn E Yerby			
8/5/2020	13:11	VE3XDB	40m	7.07	PSK31	EN93RK	Canada	Douglas Paul Behl	2787		
8/5/2020	12:59	KA5FDX	40m	7.07	PSK31	EM34qt	United States	JAMES N EDGE			
8/4/2020	23:27	YV4DHS	40m	7.07	PSK31	FJ69CC	Venezuela	Homero Chique S.			
8/4/2020	23:20	VA2YZX	40m	7.07	PSK31	FN35sv	Canada	Sylvain Coulombe	POTA VE-1028		
8/4/2020	19:58	NO8R	20m	14.07	PSK31	EN73hg	United States	DELOS R BYRNE	777		
8/4/2020	19:53	AG4QX	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL87sv	United States	William A Williams	398/51Bill		
8/4/2020	19:44	N2DEN	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL87sd	United States	DENNIS E SPIESS	1725 Den		
8/4/2020	19:37	K5SP	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM13ko	United States	JAMES A INNIS	483		
8/4/2020	19:30	K1CGI	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL87sm	United States	J VICTOR OUELLETTE JR	993		
8/4/2020	19:26	W8VIJ	20m	14.07	PSK31	EN82ho	United States	Gregory S Siemasz	Greg		
8/4/2020	19:16	N5SLY	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM13rq	United States	Leland D Sly	2241 Lee		
8/4/2020	19:11	K4VBM	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM73vx	United States	ROBERT G HENSEY JR	2727 Bob		
8/4/2020	19:00	VA2YZX	20m	14.07	PSK31	FN35sv	Canada	Sylvain Coulombe	VE-1029 POTA		
8/4/2020	18:52	N9AVY	20m	14.07	PSK31	EN52QF	United States	JERRY HEIEN	454		
8/4/2020	18:46	VA3SB	20m	14.07	PSK31	FN03do	Canada	Sergio Mario Bertuzzo	Serge		
8/4/2020	18:39	KC3FL	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL88uv	United States	JOHN F MARKS	2566		
8/4/2020	17:01	KG5OIB	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM12ow	United States	John M Hendry	2592		
8/4/2020	16:48	N8GND	20m	14.07	PSK31	EN72gu	United States	KEN NANZER			
8/4/2020	16:00	W8VYM	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM82JE	United States	JOHN M FICKLER			
8/4/2020	15:50	KC9UR	20m	14.07	PSK31	EN71mf	United States	ROBERT E BILLINGSLEY	1620		
8/4/2020	15:42	VA3TPS	20m	14.07	PSK31	FN04pn	Canada	Steve McEdwards	526		
8/4/2020	15:23	N7WE	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL98bp	United States	Richard L Butz	1602		
8/4/2020	15:17	KA5VZG	20m	14.07	PSK31	EM56tj	United States	ALAN D SCHRIVER	1509		
8/4/2020	15:11	W9SMR	20m	14.07	PSK31	EL87sf	United States	STANLEY M ROBINSON			
8/4/2020	14:58	W9SMR	40m	7.07	PSK31	EL87sf	United States	STANLEY M ROBINSON			
8/4/2020	14:41	WN8A	40m	7.07	PSK31	EN82hi	United States	JAMES C LE FEVRE			