



Exploring the Airwaves and Southern Arizona: A POTA Adventure

By Trevor Hansen (W7TJH)

As the sun set on a typical Arizona evening, three enthusiasts, myself (W7TJH), Manti Galbraith (W7MOG), and Steve Thompson (N7TX), embarked on an extraordinary journey that would not only test our amateur radio skills but also deepen our appreciation for the natural beauty and history of southern Arizona. Our mission was to activate ten Parks on the Air (POTA) locations in a single, adventurous day. This story isn't just about the radios and contacts we made; it's about friendship, discovery, and the unexpected lessons learned along the way.

The adventure began on a Friday in February, as we departed Phoenix for Sierra Vista. The camaraderie was immediate, a bond forged through a shared passion for amateur radio and the great outdoors. Manti and I have shared this bond since we were 11, meeting Steve, a seasoned ham with a wealth of knowledge, through the AZ POTA Facebook group. This trip would mark our first rove together, an endeavor that promised to be as challenging as it was exciting.

Our first activations were at the Arizona Trail National Scenic Trail (K-4557) and Coronado National Memorial (K-0771). These initial stops

were a test of patience and skill, as we navigated the challenges of band pass filters to prevent interference between our stations. Steve, primarily on 20M using CW, and Manti on 15M SSB and I on 10M SSB, we quickly found our rhythm.

The journey to San Pedro Riparian BLM National Conservation Area (K-10514) brought us face to face with band conditions that were less than ideal and a grumpy park ranger who, fortunately, warmed up to our mission. The excitement of Tombstone and its reenactment of the shootout at the OK Corral greeted us next, with the Tombstone Court House State Historical Park (K-10518) providing a vibrant backdrop to our activation.

As we progressed through the parks, each presented its unique challenges and rewards. From the quick and easy activations at Kartchner Caverns State Park (K-1059) and Coronado National Forest (K-4429) to the challenging conditions at Patagonia Lake State Park (K-1064), we adapted and overcame. Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (K-7381) offered great band conditions, allowing for swift contacts, while the hustle to activate Tumacácori

National Historical Park (K-0760) and Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (K-4571) before sunset tested our efficiency and resolve.

Throughout the day, we made contacts across the globe, from Alaska to Australia, France to Columbia, each QSO adding to the richness of our adventure. Yet, the day was as much about the journey as the destinations. Southern Arizona, with its snow-capped mountains, wide valleys, and rich history, unfolded before us in all its glory, offering vistas and experiences that many, including myself, had previously overlooked.



This adventure taught us valuable lessons. Preparation is key; practice your setup to avoid on-site issues. Innovative solutions, like Steve's steering wheel tray for easy logging, can significantly enhance the experience. Most importantly, the spirit of amateur radio is not just about making contacts; it's about exploring, learning, and sharing experiences.

Our POTA rove was more than just an activation spree; it was a reminder of the value of good friends, a lesson in preparedness, and a testament to the beauty that surrounds us that is too often overlooked. Consider our adventure a

warm invitation to step outside your home and explore the wonders that lie just beyond your doorstep through the lens of amateur radio. It's an open call to blend your curiosity for the world around you with the thrilling pursuit of making connections across the airwaves.

Lessons Learned and Tips for Future Activators:

- **Preparation is Crucial:** Practice your setup before hitting the field. Knowing your equipment and how to troubleshoot on the go can save precious time and frustration.
- **Embrace Flexibility:** Conditions can change rapidly, both on the air and in the environment. Be ready to adapt, whether it means changing bands or modifying your setup to deal with unexpected challenges.
- **Community is Key:** The friendships and connections within the amateur radio community are invaluable. Sharing knowledge and experiences enriches the hobby for everyone involved.
- **Never Stop Exploring:** Each activation is an opportunity to discover something new about the world and yourself. The journey is as important as the destination.

As we returned home, while tired, our spirits were high, fueled not only by the successful complete of our activations but also by the bond we'd strengthened and a new view of the state we call home. Uploading our logs and receiving the Rhino POTA Rover award for activating 10 POTA entities within a single UTC day was the icing on the cake, a tangible reminder of our adventure through Southern Arizona. This journey underscored the boundless opportunities that lie at the intersection of amateur radio and a deep appreciation for the world around us.