Loggers for All Seasons and Reasons, Part 2

Jim Edmondson, N5JGE

This month, I highlight two great logging apps for POTA operators – one for hunting (hunterlog) and one for activating (PoLo) as well as the premier contest logger, N1MM.

hunterlog was the subject of an article in the May NARC Newsletter, so you can see that for more details. Since May, the app has been updated three times, fixing bugs and adding functionality. hunterlog is free and runs on the PC desktop as a browser app. It pulls spots from the POTA.app website and presents them in a filterable table. Clicking on the spot's frequency will use CAT control to tune your rig and set the correct mode. Modes specific for your rig (for example: CW / CW-R for iCOM or CW-L / CW-U for Yaesu) can be entered in the configuration window. flrig (or RIGCTLD) is used for CAT control. flrig can control almost all rigs out there, but must be setup for your specific rig and COM port. I have not used RIGCTLD which is TCP-based rig controller. It can be used to control multiple rigs or multiple apps can control one rig.

The hunterlog app will display info about the park and the activator above the spots table including a small map image, bearing, distance, etc. If the spot includes multiple operators, hunterlog will create a QSO for each one and send to your logging program. hunterlog also maintains statistics regarding the number of contacts with specific activators and parks. This is helpful to build your total number of entities contacted. The filterable table allows you to select specific bands, modes, regions (DXCC entities) or location (states for the US). You hide spots that have gone QRT or those that you hunted in the current session. You can also only show new parks in the table. After you make the QSO, hunterlog will send the QSO information to ACLog, Log4OM, or logger32.

Polo is short for Ham2K Portable Logger. This a portable device-only app. It can run on Android or iOS, including phones and tablets. This app is under active development with an active user community on Discord. It is a great alternative to the HAMRS portable app with more features. PoLo is designed to allow easy and efficient logging for POTA and SOTA activators or operators during ARRL or Winter Field Day. PoLo is free and the logging features will always be maintained in a free version. There may be paid versions in the future with enhancements. Cloud storage of your logs has been mentioned as a possible future enhancement.

PoLo refers to your activations as “operations”. When you initiate a new operation, you choose your activity: POTA, SOTA, a field day or custom. I will choose POTA. PoLo uses your device’s location feature to determine your grid square and list the closest POTA parks for you to choose from. For me at home, that is US-4417, Davy Crockett National Forest. It does not show SOTA since there are no SOTA summits near me.

Once you choose the park, you are ready to log after setting your frequency and mode. The main logging window has four tabs: QSOS, SPOTS, MAP and OPERATION. OPERATION is where you edit your grid, park, etc. MAP shows a world map with your QSOS marked by map pins. Hovering over the pins shows QSO data. SPOTS is pulled from the POTA spots webpage. You can directly tap a spot listing to enter it into the QSO list. Doing this strikes-through the text indicating that you have hunted that P2P. This is a great feature if you are in a park and trying to increase your P2P QSO count. Polo is also capable of handling multiple parks or multiple operators easily.

After you complete an activation, PoLo will export your log files ready to upload to your POTA logs. There is an excellent online manual that uses captured app screen video, so Read The Fine Manual (RTFM).

N1MM is a beast of an application, it is free and it is entirely written by volunteers. N1MM is updated at quite often, fixing bugs, tweaking performance and adding features. It has so many capabilities and features, it would require many, many pages to describe it all. If you think that I am exaggerating, the manual download is 757-page pdf file of almost 14MB! The primary use case for N1MM is contesting, however, operators also use it as their general logger or for specialized uses, like POTA or chasing DX. The flexibility of N1MM is mainly due to the fact that it has about 300 “contest definition files” used to change all features of operation for a given contest: bands of operation, the exchange, hours of operations, macros, etc. Users have also created “UDC” (or User Defined Contest) files for specific uses such as POTA.

N1MM can work with many plugins (CWGet, MMTTY, 2TONE, fldigi, WSJT-X, etc.) to facilitate operation. CW and various digital mode (mainly RTTY, PSK31, FT8 for contests) plugins provide decoders and tuning aids. There is a band map and selectable spotting services to find specific contacts. Spots can be filtered for band, mode and location of contact or spotter. Clicking on a callsign in any of these windows, populates the QSO callsign window. You can call that operator using macros for any mode. If you are using a check file, the callsign is checked for validity. If the contact would be a duplicate, you are warned. Usually when you complete the QSO, the exchange info is automatically

filled-in or you can click in the decoder window to enter the exchange items into the QSO window.

In addition to these basic features, N1MM has many tools to help the serious contester. Windows that track you QSO rate, time on / time off, specific entities contacted (DXCC, prefixes, states, whatever the contest rules include), multipliers are tracked, etc. N1MM can select antennas and rotate beams automatically based on the callsign and frequency. Most contest logs are submitted electronically using a specific file format, known as a Cabrillo file. You can have N1MM generate this file when complete the contest. You can also export your contacts in adif format to import into your general logger if different from N1MM.

In my experience, N1MM has a pretty steep learning curve to get the rig interface setup initially. I have successfully interfaced my IC-7300, IC-7100 and FTdx10. The N1MM manual is helpful for general rig setup concepts, but there are many web resources for specific rigs (IC-7300, FTdx10, Flex 6xxx, IC-7100) that are more helpful. If you are interested in contesting, then, N1MM is a must have logger. If contesting does not interest you, it is definitely optional