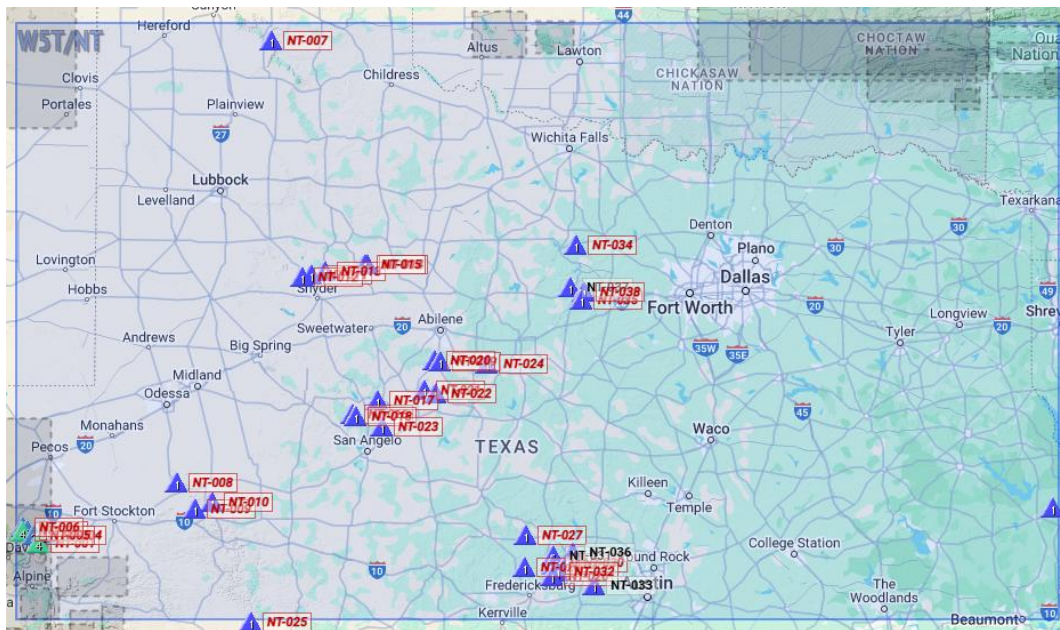


POTA / SOTA Adventure in North Texas

Jim Edmondson, N5JGE

In last month's article, I said that I thought I found a new goal for 2025, a SOTA activation – well I tried – here is the story. To review, there are multiple SOTA peaks west and south of Fort Worth (see map below). I set my sites on SOTA summit W5T/NT-037, known as Johnson Peak (see SOTA reference page below the map).



W5T/NT-037, Johnson Peak - 412m, 1 point

[Association List](#) | [Back to W5T Association](#) | [Back to NT Region](#)

[+ Add Spot](#) [+ Add Alert](#)

Association: USA - Texas, **Region:** North Texas

Latitude: 32.8809, **Longitude:** -98.4787

QTH Locator: EM02sv

Valid From: 31 Mar 2014

Bonus Period: 3 points between 1 June and 30 September

ARRL WAS: Texas

CQ Zone: 4

[KML](#) [CalTopo \(NA\)](#) [Google Maps](#) [OpenStreetMap](#) [OpenTopoMap](#) [GaiaGPS](#) [SOTA Maps](#) [SOTI.as](#) [aprs.fi](#)

[View ALL Summit Activity](#)

33 Activations

Latest

- 14 Jul 2024 by N4VV/P
- 11 Apr 2024 by KC6ARY
- 08 Apr 2024 by NE7ET
- 08 Apr 2024 by K7HY
- 07 Apr 2024 by N0MTN

First activation

- 05 Apr 2014 by KC5CW

Often activated with:

- [W6/NC-191 - El Sereno](#)

Resources

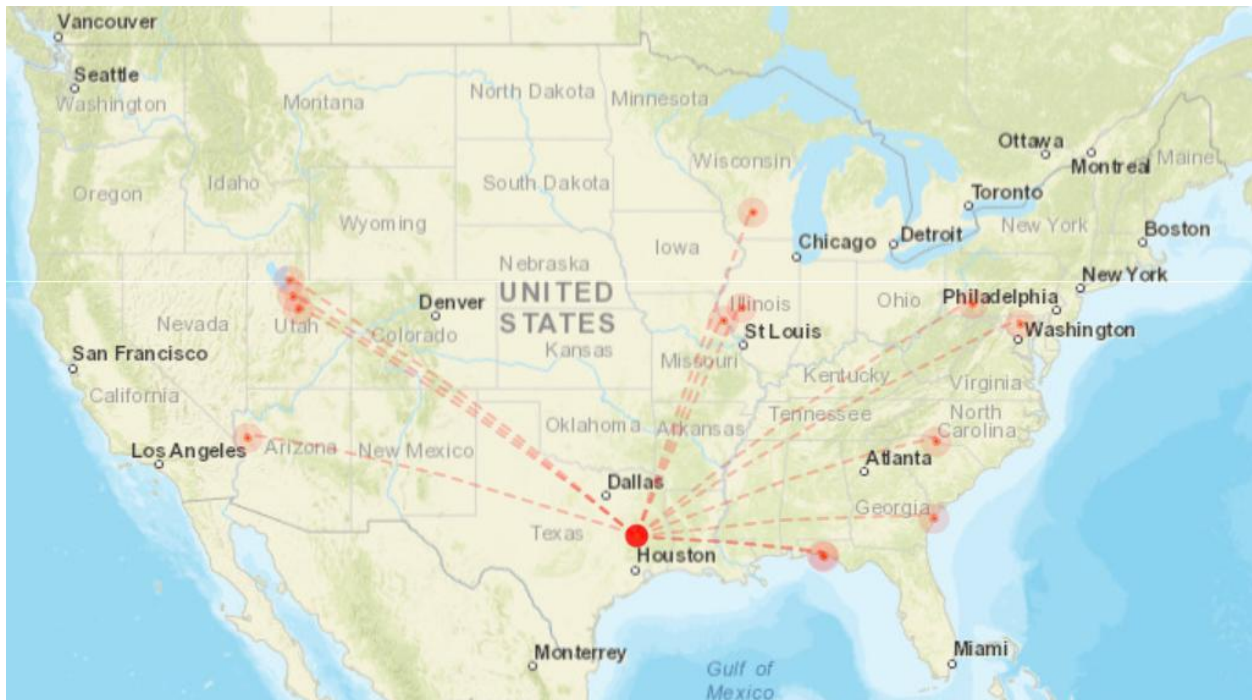
Feel free to add External Links [🔗](#) and Articles [📄](#) relating to this summit that activators and chasers may find useful or interesting. Please read the disclaimer notice at the bottom of the page.

- [N4VV alias DL1MP](#) (submitted by DL1MP on Jul 15, 2024)
- [Bicycling and as good as it gets for DFV](#) (submitted by KG5AUU on Jan 9, 2021)
- [Pleasant Hike and SOTA Summit](#) (submitted by K0NR on Apr 14, 2019)
- [12/10 Activation](#) (submitted by KB1KXL on Dec 12, 2018)
- [Parking and trail map](#) (submitted by AF4B on Apr 5, 2018)
- [Update on public access](#) (submitted by AF4B on Apr 1, 2018)
- [Trail info](#) (submitted by W6BIB on Sep 24, 2017)
- [Summit access info and 1st activation log](#) (submitted by KC5CW on Apr 5, 2014)

In looking at potential bases of operation, I selected a B&B, The Magpie Inn, in Mineral Wells, TX. While the house (which was built in in 1907) could use some sprucing up, the bed and the breakfasts were awesome. Mineral Wells had a population of almost 15,000 in the 2020 census. It is famous for its "Crazy Water" and was a health destination in the early 1900's known for its several mineral water springs. The city is trying to renew their status as a health destination. The 14-story Baker Hotel in downtown is currently under renovation true to its historical design but with modern amenities. It is scheduled to re-open in 2028. Mineral Wells also hosted several Major League Baseball spring training camps in the 1910's and 1920's including the infamous 1919 Chicago White Sox.

As a bonus there are two POTA parks nearby. The first, Lake Mineral Wells State Park and Trailway (US-3029) is actually within the city limits. It is known for rappelling and rock-climbing in the section known as Penitentiary Hollow. This rock-outcropping has straight-walled fissures that are like miniature slot canyons – very cool! There are many trails and equestrian camping as well.

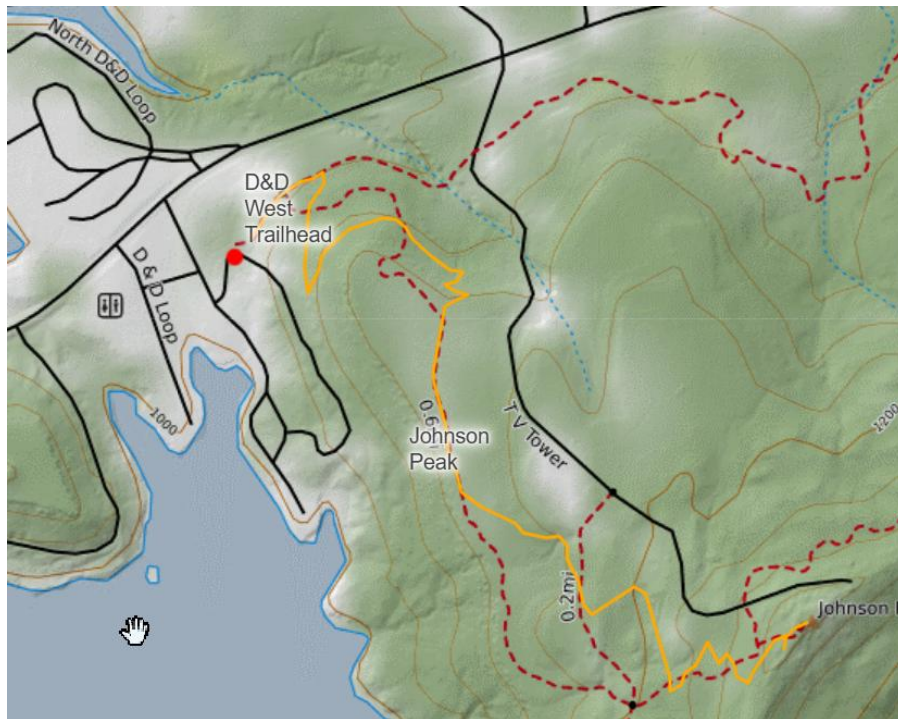
We got into town Wednesday afternoon, checked into the B&B and headed for Lake Mineral Wells State Park. This was Barbara's inaugural POTA activation! We setup the Wolf River coil and FT-891 to use SSB. As I typically do on an activation, we used PoLo (Portable Logger) on my phone to see POTA / SOTA spots and hunted P2P (Park-2-Park) and SOTA contacts. Conditions were not very good and in 30 minutes, we only got 4 contacts, so we decided to call CQ. We increased our QSO rate by almost 5 times by calling CQ and got 9 contacts in 14 minutes. It was getting late, so we packed up after our successful 13 QSO activations. All contacts were on 20M and fairly short distances in lower 48 as shown on the map below.

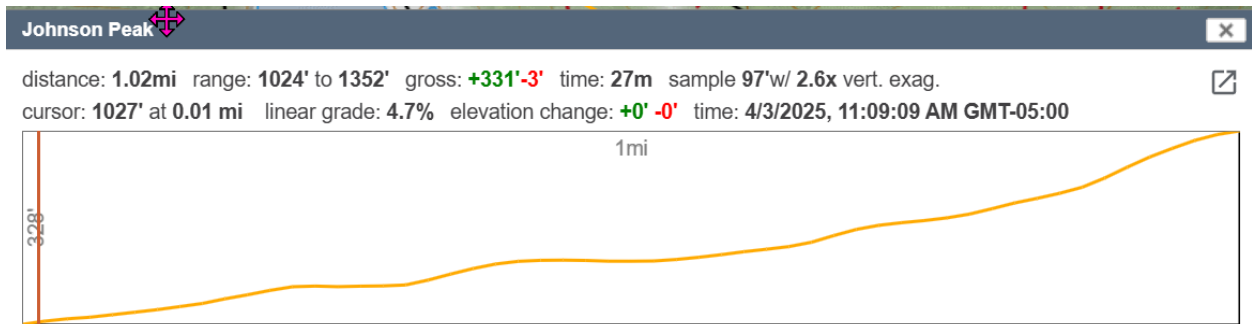


The next morning after a delicious breakfast, we headed to Possum Kingdom State Park (US-3049). This park is on the lake and about 40 miles west of Mineral Wells. We were not impressed with the condition of this park, probably one of the most rundown Texas state parks we have visited. The day use areas had virtually no trees and the picnic sites were uncovered. Fortunately, it was cool and cloudy. We put the ATAS antenna on the Breedlove mount at the front of the pickup bed and used the mobile rig (IC-7100) to work SSB. We again started by hunting POTA and SOTA spots. This time conditions were better and we were able to complete the entire 13 QSO activation by hunting. We started on 10M and got a park in WA, then on 15M we contacted a park activator in Puerto Rico. The most interesting contact was a husband-and-wife 2-operator contact on a summit in GA. While propagation was better, contacts were slow and it took 54 minutes to complete the 13 QSOs.

Now for the sad SOTA story. We easily found the trailhead at the D&D South day use area, one of several amenities on the lake managed by the Brazos River Authority. This one is a very well-maintained boat ramp, picnic area and hike / bike trail system. My plan was to use FT-8 at the summit for the activation. Primary equipment included the 5W QMX transceiver by QRP Labs, the KM4ACK EFHW antenna (40M-20M-15M-10M), a 6A-hr LiFePO4 battery and an arborist throw weight and line. I also had a CW "paddle" made using pressure-sensitive touch pads ([VK3IL Paddle](#)) for hunting POTA or S2S (Summit-2-Summit) CW contacts.

The track of the hike is shown below using CALTOPO, a really good on-line (and on phone) mapping tool for outdoor activities. Details of the hike are shown in the CALTOPO profile screen below the track map. The 1-mile hike climbed ~330' and took about 27 minutes. There were some steep sections and tall step-ups, but not too bad even for a 70-year-old!





Made it to the top! The 360-degree view of the lake and surrounding hills / cliffs were awesome (see photo above)! I quickly got the antenna into a tree, stretched it out and got coax / PC connected to the radio. When I opened wsjt-x Improved, I needed to adjust some settings. I made the changes, but the "OK" button to save them was off the bottom of the screen. For the life of me, I could not get the window to re-size and move the button onto the screen. At home, I use wsjt-x on a dual monitor system and this is not a problem on the bigger screen. My second mistake was not bringing earbuds or headphones to hear CW! After a frustrating 30 minutes, I packed it up and hiked back down disappointed.

Lesson learned to be better prepared. Practice with the exact setup you will use on the summit before hiking up. SOTA is much different than POTA. For POTA, my truck full of gear is usually only a few feet away. Later that evening at the B&B, I figured out what I should have done to get the button on the screen. If you know the answer (I was using a Windows 10 PC), email it to me and I will let you know if you are correct. 😊