NCDXF newsletter

ncdxf.org Summer 2025

Prince Edward & Marion Islands, ZS8W

Yuris Petersons, YL2GM

My latest LRSF DXpedition was ZS8W to Prince Edward & Marion Islands, from 27 April to 13 May 2025, an opportunity I had been fighting for since 2018.

Through the years the department directors changed, as well as the requirements, and it always ended up that there was no place for me on the ship. In 2025, I decided to try one more time and I flew to South Africa in January and March for meetings with the new department leadership. At last, on 1 April, I received a message from the Environmental Affairs Department of the Republic of South Africa that I had been included in the team going to Marion Island as a communications engineer.

The ship was scheduled to depart Cape Town, South Africa, on 17 April,

Yuris Petersons, YL2GM, departing from Riga, Latvia.

but my South African visa expired on 5 April! To acquire a new visa, I needed to travel to Stockholm, but processing took 15 working days, so it wasn't possible to get a new visa in time. The only option was to travel before my current visa expired. So I purchased airfare aboard Turkish Airlines from Riga, Latvia, to Cape Town via Istanbul, departing on 4 April.

Airline adventures

My adventure began at the Riga Airport where my two checked bags were accepted and were within the weight limit. Then, for the first time ever, I was asked to reveal the contents of my two carry-ons, which consisted of a SPE Expert (12kg) and a backpack with laptops and a transceiver (8kg). Airport personnel refused to let me board with two carry-ons, even though I was willing to pay for the second item.

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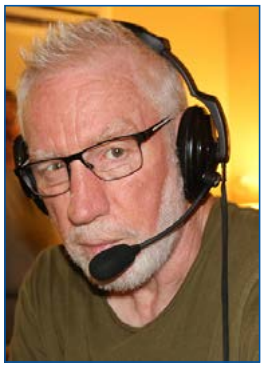
From the President's desk



Visalia 2025 is over. Attendance was much lower than before the pandemic. The program committee did a great job though and some very interesting talks were given.

There were unfounded rumors this would be the last IDXC convention. However, there will be a different style convention in 2026 to be held in Santa Maria, California (see *socalcontestclub.org/SantaMaria2026* for details). Jim Niger, N6JT, is the chairman for that event. Additionally, NCDXC is already making the preparations to hold the IDXC in Visalia in 2027. Because of the reduced attendance and increased costs, the NCDXC will move the convention back to the Wyndham Hotel (formerly the Holiday Inn).

George Wallner, AA7JV, had planned a trip this year to PYØS, Saint Peter and Paul Rocks. Unfortunately, it won't happen due to permit issues. George commented: "It will take a new government in Brazil before a permit will be issued for PYØS." This illustrates what makes some DX entities rare – they are either very hard to reach, or very hard to get a permit to operate, or both.

The team that landed on 3YØ/B, Bouvet, in 2023 learned many lessons from the challenges they encountered with their approach to that trip. They have a new plan, with a much more capable boat and a helicopter and are scheduled to operate using the call sign 3YØK in February 2026. Thanks to your support, NCDXF has granted major funding to this project. One of the elements of the funding is matching other donations, so please ask your club to make a donation to this team and make your own personal donation as well. Max, N4ML, will be on the team as a youth operator.

Gregg, W6IZT, continues to develop his NexGEN2 RiB design, with sponsorship from Elecraft, and a grant of funds from NCDXF. Again, thanks for your support. He will take a group of nine first-time young operators to PJ6Y, Saba, in October 2025. Additionally, 30-40 young hams will operate remotely using the NexGEN2 RiBs. This DXpedition will include operating during the CQWW SSB Contest. Their website is *pj6y2025.com*.

George, AA7JV, is developing a much smaller and lighter RiB, based on Flex Radio's Aurora product. This will create opportunities to use this smaller RiB for other future DXpedition projects.

The articles in this newsletter about recent NCDXF-funded projects include ZS8W by Juris, YL2GM; V73WW by youth team leader Philipp, DK6SP; VK9CU/VK9XU by Alan, VK6CQ, and VU4AX by Marc, ON6CC.

Our editor, Lee, KY7M, has included a Director's Profile. This one hit close to home for me!

We sincerely appreciate your financial support and thank all of you for that ongoing support.

73,

Kevin J. Rowett

The mission of NCDXF is to provide necessary support for well-organized DXpeditions to desirable DXCC entities and to support advances in DXpeditioning skills, technology and infrastructure.

My first view of Marion Island from the S.A. Agulhas II.

The shift supervisor also denied my boarding. The only option I had was to purchase a Business Class ticket from the airline operating that flight, subsequently boarding as the last passenger.

Arriving in Istanbul, I went to the transit passenger desk to get the ticket for the second leg: Istanbul to Cape Town, but was denied the ticket because I didn't fly the first leg with a Turkish Airlines ticket. Again, the only option was to buy another ticket for $860. I needed to be in Cape Town the next day.

After landing in Cape Town and going through Immigration, the officer smiled and said, "Last day of your visa!" To which I kindly replied, "Yes, but now I can stay here for 90 days."

Operating adventures

After airport formalities, I rented a car and drove the 40km to the hotel where I planned to stay until the ship's departure date. The hotel was located about 800 meters from the ocean.

The next day, I went to see Tjerk Lammers, ZS1J, to pick up my antenna bags, which he had been holding for me since 2018. There wasn't much open space at the hotel, so I could only set up a 6-meter Yagi and a DX Commander vertical antenna. I worked a few days with the call sign ZS1/YL7A, and tested the other antennas and packed two antenna bags.

Then I learned that I needed to pass a medical examination to be included in the island visitor team, so over the next two days I visited doctors and received the necessary clearances.

Although the *S.A. Agulhas II* was scheduled to depart on 17 April, I was allowed to board a day earlier, so I took my bags to the dock, returned the rental car, and embarked. I was the only passenger; the others arrived around noon the following day as we awaited departure. Departure was postponed to the next day as the loading of containers and cargo continued late into the evening. We finally left port on Friday at 3 p.m.

The S.A. Agulhas II departed from Cape Town, South Africa, for Marion Island.

Sea adventures

On Tuesday, 22 April at 5 p.m., we saw Marion Island on the starboard side and Prince Edward Island on the port side. Unfortunately, bad weather grounded the helicopter, and we spent two more days aboard ship, waiting for better weather conditions.

Life on board was like an all-inclusive 5-star hotel with generous and delicious meals served three times daily; coffee and snacks were available at all hours, and the bar was open for a glass of wine and socializing after 8 p.m.

The flight lists were created after breakfast on Friday, when weather conditions improved. Each flight could carry eight passengers, and 10 flights were scheduled that day, with the last three intended for personnel luggage. The first to fly out were key personnel and team members with essential tasks at the station, such as generator replacements and equipment repairs.

Equipment and luggage was transported from ship to shore by helicopter.

Because I didn't have an approved permit to disembark on the island yet, I wasn't included in the flight schedule that day. And though I was cleared to disembark the next day, thick fog kept the helicopters grounded.

Island adventures

Finally, on Sunday, 27 April, the sky cleared, the sun came out and I was delivered to the island base on the second flight of the day. I was assigned a radio room in the helicopter hangar, located about 200 meters from the main building, where the canteen, control rooms and technical labs were housed.

I always try to bring one radio setup and a simple antenna in my hand luggage, and it came in handy this time, since the container with my antenna bags hadn't been brought over from the ship yet. After lunch, I managed to set up an EFHW antenna and made the first contact from the island with AD8FD, while the helicopter pilots continued to work, delivering equipment and containers to the island — including the one that contained by antenna bags.

The next day, I set up the DX Commander vertical and operated two stations, but on 1 May, I had to shut down my equipment for three days while a group of scientists conducted ultra-low-level radiation measurements, and they had come to Marion Island specifically due to its low RF interference.

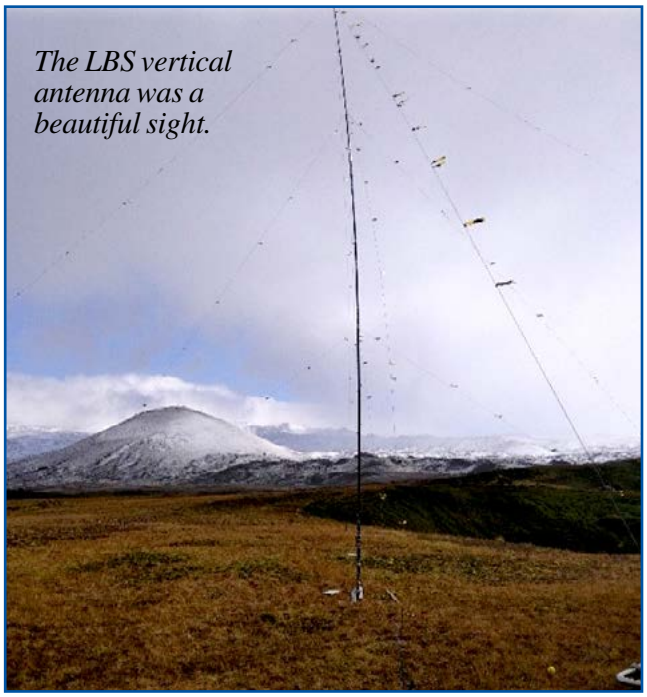
I planned to use the downtime to set up more antennas and explore the island and take some photos. The first antenna was a 14-meter LBS vertical for the 160M-30M bands; then I planned to install a Spiderbeam. The antenna locations had been agreed upon and the environmental protection requirements were discussed.

Unfortunately, I couldn't erect the Spiderbeam due to constantly changing weather — rain or snow and winds of 20 to 30 m/s. The Spiderbeam wouldn't survive that, so I had to operate with the vertical only. The bad weather also forced the scientists to suspend their work, which allowed me to resume transmitting.

The following days passed in a routine. At the base, delicious meals were prepared by professional chefs and served buffet style.

I operated on 80M and 160M for two nights, but then problems began as the wind changed the SWR, and the amplifier's protection system shut it down. I tried retuning often, but it didn't help. The antenna controller was damaged and could no longer tune the antenna for the necessary bands. As a result, only 477 QSOs were made on 160M and 1,200 on 80M. Many callers, especially from NA, could not make a QSO.

The expedition leadership informed me that my antennas had to be packed



The LBS vertical antenna was a beautiful sight.

Below: My operating shack on Marion Island was located inside the massive helicopter hangar.

Radio operations from Marion Island.

Left: Taking time to explore Marion Island as the S.A. Agulhas II sits offshore in the background.

into the container by 12 May. Only the EFHW antenna and an FT-891 transceiver remained.

After breakfast the following day, I cleaned up the room and packed my hand luggage and once again, weather conditions were not favorable for the planned afternoon departure. The weather did improve shortly before sunset, and the first 40 expedition members were flown to the ship while the remainder stayed overnight at the base. The next day, the rest of the expedition members and the remaining cargo containers were transported to the ship, and on the evening of 14 May, the ship departed.

After five days at sea, we disembarked in Durban, South Africa, on 20 May, after which *S.A. Agulhas II* would be open to the public to learn about the polar research vessel.

For more information about the DXpedition, including a listing of my supporters, visit *ral.lv/zs8w*.

BAND/MODE BREAKDOWN

Band	FT8	CW	SSB	Total	Total %
160	477	0	0	477	1.5%
80	1,206	0	0	1,206	3.8%
40	4,609	1,226	0	5,875	18.5%
30	5,219	1	0	5,220	16.5%
20	4,360	955	2	5,317	16.8%
17	3,441	0	0	3,441	10.9%
15	2,895	1,276	49	4,220	13.3%
12	1,686	0	0	1,686	5.3%
10	3,486	744	0	4,230	13.4%
Totals	27,379	4,242	51	31,672	

CONTINENT BY BAND

Continent	160	80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	Total	%
Africa	6	17	56	30	56	28	43	19	51	306	1.0
Antarctica	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0.0
Asia	105	162	1,030	946	2,047	1,977	2,237	908	1,507	10,919	34.5
Europe	336	631	1,918	2,779	2,183	972	1,479	648	2,155	13,101	41.4
N. America	21	332	2,633	1,397	765	288	199	47	325	6,007	19.0
Oceania	4	18	81	35	190	98	167	28	78	699	2.2
S. America	5	45	157	33	75	78	94	36	114	637	2.0
Totals	477	1,206	5,875	5,220	5,317	3,441	4,220	1,686	4,230	31,672	

The Next Generation

V73WW – Marshall Islands 2025

Philipp Springer, DK6SP

The team (from left) Emir Braco Memić, E77DX; Sven Lovrić, DJ4MX; Philipp Springer, DK6SP; Tomi Varrò, HA8RT; Jamie Williams, MØSDV, and Yannick Hariga, DK1YH.

The Marshall Islands DXpedition (V73WW) took place in February 2025 where six ambitious operators spent 14 days on island and made 103,864 QSOs on CW, SSB, RTTY and FT8.

Marshall Islands

This small island nation is located in the Pacific Ocean, roughly halfway between Hawaii and Australia. Consisting of over 1,000 islands and atolls spread across a vast area, and just 7° north of the equator, Marshall Islands enjoy a tropical climate year-round. They are one of the rarer DXCC entities, with very few resident Amateur Radio operators, and were ranked No. 96 on the Club Log Most-Wanted List.

The Marshall Islands first caught our team's interest after discussions between Philipp (DK6SP), Sven (DJ4MX), and local radio friends following the success of 8R7X, the Guyana 2024 DXpedition. Looking to continue their DX journey, the team checked Club Log's Most-Wanted List and quickly noticed V7 ranking among one of the rarer entities.

With rising solar activity and promising propagation into the Pacific, the timing felt right. Though remote, the Marshall Islands are relatively reachable with connections via the USA. The team met in Honolulu, Hawaii, before flying into the capital city of Majuro, and taking a short boat ride to their private island QTH. Marshall Islands offered our team a comfortable home for two weeks while we enjoyed our shared passion — putting this remote Pacific entity on the map for thousands of radio amateurs worldwide.

Our operating team consisted of six young hams from four European countries who possess a love for Amateur Radio and traveling. With a combined

Left: V73WW Team Lead Philippe Springer, DK6SP with NCDXF Vice President Craig Thompson, K9CT, at Dayton Hamvention 2023.

average age of 28, we have shared various experiences through the hobby, and have all been fortunate enough to participate with experienced DXpedition teams or have organized our own trips, giving us a huge advantage in taking on this challenge. The team consisted of Philipp Springer, DK6SP; Sven Lovrić, DJ4MX; Tomi Varrò, HA8RT; Jamie Williams, MØSDV; Yannick Hariga, DK1YH, and Emir Braco Memić, E77DX.

Planning

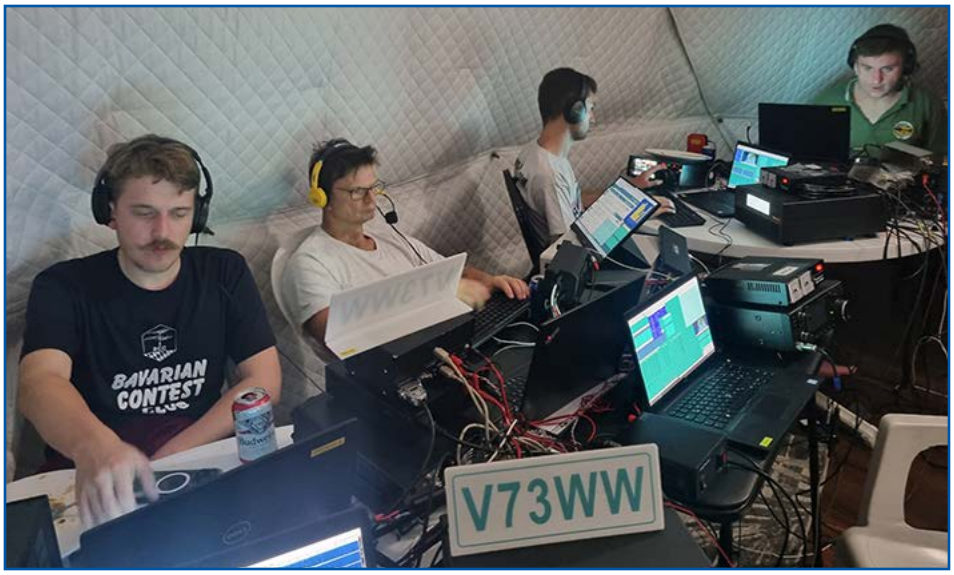
As with any major DXpedition, the planning and execution of V73WW required substantial financial resources. Recognizing the high cost of traveling to and operating from the Marshall Islands, the team reached out to various DX foundations, clubs, and commercial sponsors for support. Once again, the Northern California DX Foundation (NCDXF) stepped forward as the largest and most significant contributor to our project. Their trust in our team was evident from the start. They not only provided early funding that allowed us to prepay a large portion of the upfront costs, but also generously covered the flight costs for the three youngest team members. Their continued commitment, after already supporting us during 8R7X, was vital in making V73WW a reality.

Beyond NCDXF, several other DX foundations, Amateur Radio clubs, and individual donors supported our efforts with grants and personal contributions. On the commercial side, we were fortunate to be backed by generous sponsors who helped equip our expedition with top-tier gear. Among the biggest contributors were SSB-Electronic, DX-Engineering, Spiderbeam, HamParts.shop, ACOM and Mastrant, alongside others who provided equipment, accessories, or technical support. Their contributions significantly enhanced our operational capabilities while reducing financial pressure.

Locally, Sherwood Tibon and his family played a key role in supporting the team. From helping us navigate infrastructure challenges to serving as our local connection to the telecommunications authorities, their efforts were invaluable to our success on Majuro Atoll.

With funding secured and logistics in place, the team began assembling everything needed for the trip: masts, poles, wire, ropes, antennas, and radios. A good portion of the equip-

The V73WW QTH, Bokanbotin Island, Majuro Atoll, Marshall Islands.



V73WW running the tremendous pileups 24/7 for two weeks straight.

ment came from the team's own inventory; missing or specialized items were sourced through sponsorships, loans, or new purchases. The spirit of collaboration across foundations, individuals, and sponsors once again showcased the best of the global Amateur Radio community — without whom this DXpedition would not have been possible.

Detailed preparations

Preparations took place primarily at the logistics headquarters provided by DG8MG and DJ2UR (SK), who supported the team with space, infrastructure, and experience. Two main team preparation weekends were held at this location, where most of the heavy lifting took place — testing radios and amplifiers, assembling antennas, and organizing the complete station layout. Beyond those weekends, countless individual days were spent preparing smaller, but equally important, parts of the setup: cutting and labeling cables, updating logging software, prepping headset adapters, sorting power distribution systems, and packing backup items. At some point, we stopped counting the man-hours, because when you love what you do, it doesn't really matter!

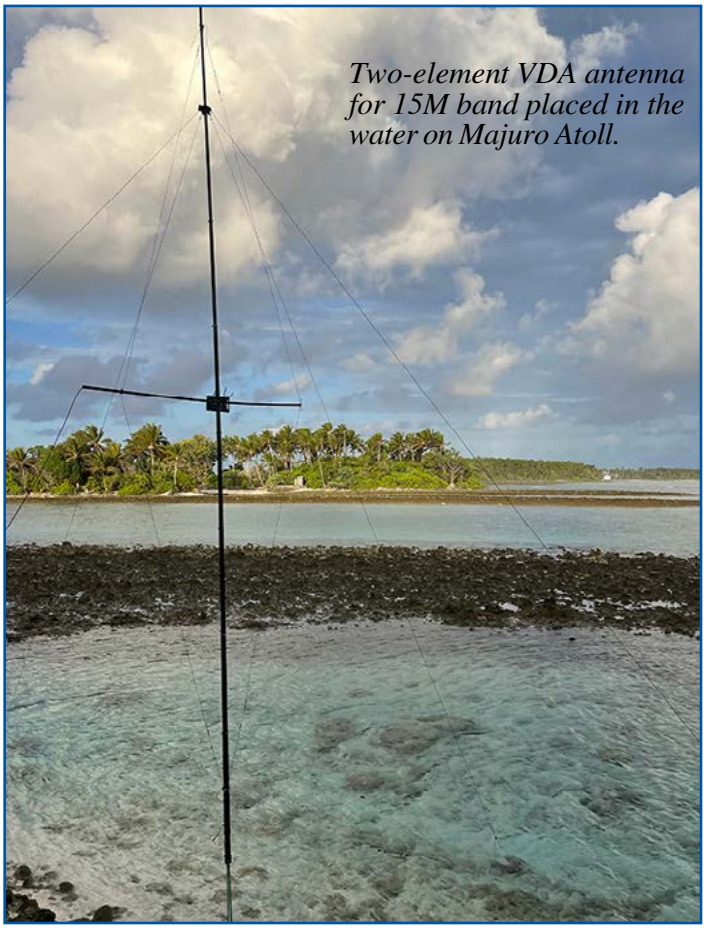
No aluminum towers with multiband Yagi setups were used this time. Instead, the team focused on a lightweight and ocean-friendly approach. Several monoband two-element VDAs (vertical dipole arrays) for 10M through 20M wwere designed, built, and tuned for maximum efficiency over saltwater. In addition, dedicated vertical antennas for 30M and 40M as well as a multiband vertical for 10M through 40M were tested. For the low bands, a full-size quarter-wave vertical for 80M and a T-antenna for 160M were calculated, modeled, and field-tested. To further improve our receive capabilities on the low bands, RX systems generously donated by *HamParts.shop* were set-up and deployed on the island.

With our antennas designed for oceanfront deployment, a new system using heavy-duty sandbags was introduced, serving as guying anchors and stabilizers against waves and tides. These were evaluated for holding capacity, ease of transport, and reliability under salt-heavy, remote island conditions.

The shack setup was also thoroughly tested and refined. Existing laptops were updated and tested with the latest logging software. Amplifier and radio combinations were adjusted and reconfigured for reliable 110 V, which matched the on-island power system. CAT control, footswitch setups, headset adapters, and power distribution across all stations were tested in full-station simulations to ensure seamless field operation.

Every piece of gear — from coax and guying kits to chargers, switches, and backup accessories — was checked, weighed, and packed into reinforced hardshell Samsonite cases. Bubble wrap, foam, and strategic packing reduced the risk of transport damage. In total, roughly 400kg of gear was sorted and prepared for long distance air travel. Customs paperwork was completed in Germany for smooth temporary export and re-import.

In parallel with the equipment side, ongoing communications with our local host Sherwood Tibon helped with general logistics, access planning, and local coordination. Thanks to his support, we were able to plan around the 110 V/60 Hz grid, and prepare mul-


Two-element VDA antenna for 15M band placed in the water on Majuro Atoll.

From left: Philipp, DK6SP; Yannick, DK1YH; Tomi, HA8RT; Sven, DJ4MX; Braco, E77DX, and local host Sherwood Tibon.

tiple protected circuits, one for each station, well in advance.

By the time of departure, every antenna had been tested, every connector sealed, and every detail checked.

Targets

The team aimed to achieve over 60,000 QSOs across modes such as CW, SSB, RTTY and FT8, with a specific goal of making more than 2,000 of these in RTTY. The focus was on addressing the latest Club Log Most-Wanted List ranking, ensuring various parts of the world would benefit from the operation. Priority was also given to low band operations, taking advantage of the expected lower noise level at the rural QTH. Additionally, we planned to participate in the ARRL CW 2025 contest as a Multi-Operator/Two Transmitter (M/2). The team intended to upload QSOs to Club Log and LOTW as frequently as possible, and use of the Club Log Live Streams option was anticipated, provided the Internet connection was stable enough.

Travel

Traveling to Marshall Islands from Europe is long and complex with multiple transfers. The main group of DK6SP, DJ4MX, HA8RT, DK1YH and E77DX departed from Munich, Germany, on 9 Feb 2025, to Honolulu. Hawaii. Jamie traveled from London and arrived in Hawaii on 8 February. The full team reunited in Honolulu on 10 February for the final leg to Majuro. In total, the group traveled with 14 checked bags, six carry-on items, and six personal items, amounting to over 400kg of equipment. Managing this volume of equipment through several airport transfers was a logistical challenge, particularly in the U.S., where the luggage had to be collected and rechecked. Thankfully, all baggage arrived intact and on time.

The team landed in Majuro on 11 February where Customs clearance was quick and efficient. After a stop to stock up on food, water, and other supplies, the team loaded onto a boat for the a 15-minute ride to Bokanbotin Island, arriving around 1600 local time, ready to begin setup and launch the V73WW operation.

Location and setup

The V73WW QTH was located in grid locator RJ57pc, and only a few meters from the shoreline. We received warm and enthusiastic support from the local hosts, who welcomed our antenna plans and provided us with access to their property and resources without hesitation. This cooperative environment played a vital role in the smooth execution of our operation, especially in a remote Pacific context where logistics can be complex and time-consuming. Power-wise, the location offered a 65kVA generator on site, which was more than enough to handle our planned station setup. This local support and infrastructure readiness were critical to our success, allowing us to focus on the radio operation without major technical or logistical setbacks.

Once the team arrived at the QTH, some members immediately scouted the area, compared the antenna deployment plans to the actual available space, and made necessary adjustments. Meanwhile, others began unpacking and preparing the first antennas, as well as building and wiring the shack, which included using European Schuko connectors to directly wire the available circuit to our needs. This allowed the entire station to operate using the European Schuko standard without relying on unnecessary US-to-EU adapters.

The V73WW DXpedition station was designed to deliver strong performance across all HF bands under the constraints of a remote island environment. Our goal was to maximize efficiency, reliability, and coverage while adapting to the limited physical footprint available at our seaside QTH. The radio lineup included three Yaesu FT-DX10 transceivers, an Elecraft K3S, an ICOM IC-7300, and an ICOM IC-705. The amplifiers were two Expert 1.3K-FA units, one Expert 1.5K-FA, one Juma PA1000, and one ACOM 500S, delivering consistent signal strength.

Antennas were strategically deployed as close to the saltwater as possible to ensure effective take-off angles toward the major DX regions. For the high bands, we used monoband two-element VDAs for 20, 17, 15, 12 and 10 Meters, complemented by a lightweight four-element Yagi for 10 Meters at about wavelength above ground. To maximize the effectiveness of our 10 Meter operations, we used a StackMatch to switch between or combine the Yagi and VDA. This configuration allowed direct comparison during openings, and interestingly, the VDA consistently outperformed the Yagi under the conditions we experienced. Additionally, a DX Commander vertical covering 10 through 40 Meters was also available.

The low-band setup included a vertical dipole for 30 Meters, a vertical with elevated radials for 40 Meters, a quarter-wave vertical for 80 Meters,

and a T-antenna for 160 Meters. All antennas benefited from the location's proximity to the ocean, which significantly enhanced performance. To improve reception on the low bands, we experimented with several dedicated receive antennas, a nearly 170-meter-long Beverage, two triangle loop antennas and a DHDL.

Logging was managed using networked laptops running DXLog, which worked flawlessly during the entire DXpedition.

Operations

The first QSOs were logged only a few hours after the arrival on the island, and by the next day all antennas except 80M and 160M were standing. In total, set up took around three days, but from day one we ensured having at least two operators on the radios, while the others built the antennas. The first QSO was made immediately after arrival on Tuesday, 11 February, at 2153 UTC.

Operating took place 24/7 whenever radios were available, with operators always alert for openings to maximize band conditions. To fulfill our goal of emphasizing the low bands, we made sure to be active on 80M and 160M every night. All operators were proficient in all modes, allowing us maximum flexibility to switch bands and modes as needed. This adaptability ensured efficient use of propagation and smooth operation, with shifts only interrupted by essential daily chores like cooking, station maintenance, and antenna upkeep.

We anticipated that there would be big pileups, but nothing can prepare you for being behind the radio when the calls start rolling in. Being in the Pacific, the pileups were not always loud, but always big and from all parts of the world. We were running pileups in multiple modes at a very fast rate, putting over 13,000 QSOs in the log within the first two days.

CW contest

A critical component of our trip was the ARRL CW contest, primarily because it served as a platform for WRTC qualification and an opportunity to set new records. After the contest, the publication of claimed scores suggested promising results that could potentially enhance our standings. Operating in the M/2 High Power category, we demonstrated excellent team performance, effectively managing pileups and maximizing our score.

Exploring local culture

The team made regular trips back to Majuro throughout the stay — mainly for grocery runs, as there were no food supplies on the island itself. Those shopping trips were an essential part of the logistics, with team members rotating in and out to restock fresh produce, drinking water and other necessities.

Each visit to Majuro also provided a welcome opportunity to explore beyond the radios, and thanks to local guides, we were able to discover more of the island's character. Toward the end of the DXpedition, the entire team made a final trip into Majuro for a group dinner at a local restaurant.

Returning home

Jamie, MØSDV, left early due to work obligations and was already home when the team concluded operations on 25 February at 0938 UTC, marking the successful end of a demanding yet rewarding operation. Dismantling and packing the station took approximately 1½ days, as most antennas had been installed directly on sharp, wet coral stone banks that were only reachable during low tide. The weather also changed, with the final two days marked by heavy rain, strong winds, and overall wet conditions. Despite these challenges, all equipment was carefully organized and repacked into 14 pieces of checked luggage in full compliance with airline restrictions.

The team traveled back to Honolulu where we spent a few days recovering and relaxing at the home of Alex, KH6YY — a welcome break after the intense operating schedule — before continuing on to Munich via San Francisco, finally arriving home on 5 March, officially concluding the V73WW DXpedition.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the success of the

Sunset at the V73WW QTH on Bokanbotin Island. All photos courtesy 2025 Team V73WW.

BAND/MODE BREAKDOWN

Band	CW	FT8	SSB	RTTY	Total	Total %
160	393	1,172	0	0	1,565	1.5%
80	723	2,931	9	0	3,663	3.5%
40	2,940	3,917	796	109	7,762	7.5%
30	3,651	6,384	0	157	10,192	9.8%
20	6,266	6,183	6,202	325	18,976	18.3%
17	4,159	6,774	3,879	427	15,239	14.7%
15	6,175	7,425	5,079	555	19,234	18.5%
12	3,501	5,300	2,501	215	11,517	11.1%
10	4,728	6,165	3,972	336	15,201	14.6%
6	45	444	26	0	515	0.5%
Totals	32,581	46,695	22,464	2,124	103,864	

BREAKDOWN BY CONTINENT

Continent	Total QSOs	%
	14	0.0
Africa	368	0.4
Antarctica	7	0.0
Asia	28,529	27.5
Europe	49,550	47.7
N. America	22,240	21.4
Oceania	2,205	2.1
S. America	951	0.9
Totals	103,864	

V73WW DXpedition, we do so with immense satisfaction and gratitude. This operation was not only a significant technical achievement, but also a fulfilling experience for the entire team, as we provided valuable contacts to operators from around the world. It was incredibly rewarding to assist stations worldwide securing an ATNO (All Time New One) and new band slots, helping extend the reach of the Marshall Islands on the Amateur Radio bands.

Operating across 6M through 160M (excluding 60M due to licensing restrictions), the team closely monitored band openings and used each one to make as many contacts as possible. The conditions throughout our stay were very favorable, with the bands often calm and clear, making for excellent operating conditions. We experienced only a few days with poor weather, which brought a slight increase in noise levels but, on the whole, the bands were quiet and free from significant interference. Even during these brief challenges, we continued to make successful contacts.

One of the highlights of the operation was the short but exciting 6-Meter openings which provided opportunities for QSOs with VK, ZL, JA, BY, VR, VK9N, HL, and BV. These openings were a pleasant surprise and added to the success of the DXpedition.

A significant accomplishment of this DXpedition was the smooth operation despite the challenges we faced. There were no power issues, and we did not require backup generators. The equipment and power setup worked flawlessly, ensuring uninterrupted operations. However, operating in such a remote location was not without its difficulties. The weather posed a particular challenge, especially when it came to building, maintaining, and dismantling antennas in harsh conditions.

Another aspect that contributed to the success of the operation was the team's daily commitment to logistics. We cooked all our meals, managed inventory, and kept everything organized, from cleaning to ensuring all equipment was in top condition. These tasks may have been demanding, but they were all part of ensuring the DXpedition ran smoothly and efficiently.

Our team handled challenges, such as limited Internet access and the complexities of managing the live log and daily LoTW uploads, professionally and promptly. Having a backup is not always a guarantee of success — Internet availability on the island had been confirmed by our host, which led us to decide against bringing a Starlink device in order to save space and weight. Unfortunately, Internet was only available at the sleeping quarters area. We attempted to obtain local SIM cards to use with our backup router, but none were available. In the end, we relied on a Starlink device stationed on Majuro Atoll to establish a working Internet connection.

Acknowledgements

Many fellow radio Amateurs and friends supported our team, and while it's impossible to name every individual, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to a few key contributors. Most notably, we thank Sherwood Tibon and his family who served as our generous hosts on the island. Their unwavering support, warm hospitality, and vital help with local infrastructure and communications with the telecommunications authority were instrumental in making this DXpedition a success.

We would also like to recognize the significant contributions of Uschi Schindler, DJ2UR (SK), and her partner, Markus Grundner, DG8MG. Uschi and Markus generously provided their home and land as the main preparation location and logistics HQ for our team. Uschi's unwavering support of our projects over the years, including this endeavor to the Pacific, meant the world to us. Sadly, Uschi passed away just weeks before our departure, and her absence was deeply felt. We will always carry her name and memory with us as we continue our work.

We are also sincerely thankful to Gerrit Herzig, DH8GHH, for creating the distinctive V73WW logo, and to Martina Kašpárková, OK2YLQ, for designing our beautiful QSL card. Their creative talents gave our project a strong and professional visual identity that reflects the spirit of the team.

Lastly, we want to thank all the local helpers who contributed to the preparation of this project, whether through hands-on work during setup or behind-the-scenes in planning and logistics. This DXpedition wouldn't have been possible without the collective effort of this incredible support network.

Our success wouldn't have been possible without the tremendous support we received from our sponsors, helpers, and local supporters in the Marshall Islands. Their hospitality, assistance, and contributions made the DXpedition a success. We also owe a huge thank you to all those who trusted us with their time and energy, as well as those who provided vital logistical support.

We also express our gratitude to our many sponsors, supporters, and volunteers. This project would not have been possible or as successful without their participation. A complete list of the supporting clubs, foundations, corporate sponsors and individual donors is available at *next-generation-dx.com/#sponsors.*

Hope for the future

In addition to achieving our goals, one of the most fulfilling aspects of the V73WW DXpedition was our ability to inspire the next generation of DXpeditioners. We are on a great path to share our knowledge with the global DX community, and it was a privilege to mentor and pass on our experiences to both young and seasoned operators alike. By doing so, we hope to inspire more people worldwide — young and old — to take part in future DXpeditions and continue the spirit of exploration and collaboration within the Amateur Radio community.

This DXpedition was a true celebration of the spirit of Amateur Radio, demonstrating the power of collaboration and global connections. It was an honor to help operators from around the world work a rare DXCC entity and strengthen their connections with the community.

We look forward to the future, and we are already thinking about our next adventure. For more photos and updates from the DXpedition, visit our website *next-generation-dx.com*. And of course, the question remains: "Where do we go next?"

From left: Braco, E77DX, Tomi, HA8RT; Philipp, DK6SP; Sven, DJ4MX; Yannick, DK1YH (not pictured, Jamie Williams, MØSDV).

Emir Braco Memić, E77DX – Team Member (aged 50) is an experienced contester and DXer originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina, now living in Vienna, Austria, where he runs his Amateur Radio business EMS. He has operated from numerous DXCC entities over the years and is well known for his strong presence in major contests and DXpeditions. As part of the V73WW team, Braco brought calm expertise, operating skill and valuable technical insight to the project.

Tomi Varrò, HA8RT – Website + Team Member (26), is from Szeged, Hungary, where he studied IT engineering, but is currently living in Helsinki, Finland. Tomi was first licensed at age 14 and is now a seasoned Amateur Radio contester as part of the HG6N team. Tomi has operated in many places around the world such as 8R7X, OH5Z, K3LR, ES9C, 9A1A and C4HQ. Tomi is proficient in CW as his preferred mode and has participated in HST (High-Speed Telegraphy) events on multiple occasions.

Philipp Springer, DK6SP – Team Lead (27) from Erding, Germany, developed an interest in Amateur Radio in 2008 after attending a soldering course at his local radio club with some friends. Through this club he was introduced to the world of radio and began making QSOs as DN5KID. Philipp received his novice class license, DO6PS, in 2011 and gained full privileges in 2013 with the call sign DK6SP. During those formative years, Philipp rapidly advanced his operating skills, learning Morse Code (CW) and how to manage pileups. He has participated in numerous DXpeditions and competed in many contests, twice representing a youth team at the World Radiosport Team Championship (WRTC).

Sven Lovrić, DJ4MX – Co-Lead + QSL Manager (22) from Munich, Germany, was introduced to Amateur Radio through his father, Mario, DJ2MX. Sven first started operating under the training call sign DN5MX in 2015. Most of the time he operates CW, SSB, or RTTY contests from his small home station in Munich, but has also operated from stations like E7DX, M6T, ED1R, NP4Z, 8R7X, etc.

Yannick Hariga, DK1YH – Team Member (21) hails from Mettmann, Germany. Passionate about CW, SSB, FT8 and RTTY, he brings strong all-mode skills to the team. As the youngest team member, Yannick proudly represents the next generation of DXpeditioners. V73WW is his first major DXpedition, where he supported planning and logistics while gaining valuable experience and learning from the rest of the team.

Jamie Williams, MØSDV – Team Member (24) is from Staffordshire, England, and has an extensive Amateur Radio history dating back to 2015 where he was involved in contesting and DXpeditioning, with some being world-renowned teams. Jamie started traveling in 2017, and met Philipp, DK6SP, in Munich with whom he would travel the world for many years to come. Jamie has been QRV with such call signs as PJ2/MØSDV, PJ4V, 5V7EI, 3B8M, 8R7X and M6T. Jamie was also part of Youth Team #2 at WRTC 2023 in Bologna, Italy, where he operated as I47B with teammate DK6SP. Jamie is a proficient SSB and CW operator with good experience in pileup management. His favorite mode to operate is CW.

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NCDXF offers several ways for you to show your love for DXing! Impress your friends with a gold-toned lapel pin at a DX convention. Show up at your next hamfest sporting a NCDXF ball cap, don a NCDXF T-shirt or keep warm wearing the new NCDXF 50th Anniversary hooded sweatshirt or knit beanie to set up your Yagi on Field Day. We've also added wicking long-sleeved tech shirts to keep you looking *and* feeling cool on your tropical DXpedition. And when you return from that rare DX entity, you can send out your QSLs affixed with an NCDXF label. To place your order, fill out and mail in the form below or visit ***www.ncdxf.org*** to place your order online through our secure website. *Please note, due to drastic increases in mailing costs, shipping (included) is only available to US addresses.*

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Navy blue long-sleeve hooded sweatshirt with full-length front zipper and pockets (sizes: S, M, L, XL, 2X & 3X)

White, long-sleeve tech shirt (sizes: M, L, XL, 2X & 3X)

Navy blue short-sleeve t-shirt, (sizes: M, L, XL, 2X, 3X)

Gold-toned lapel pin

Navy blue ball cap (one size, fits most)

Navy blue knit beanie (one size)

Roll of 500 labels

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Long sleeve tech shirt (circle size M / L / XL / 2X / 3X)	$30		$
Ball cap	$17		$
Knit beanie	$30		$
Lapel pin	$15		$
Roll of 500 labels	$15		$
TOTAL ENCLOSED			$

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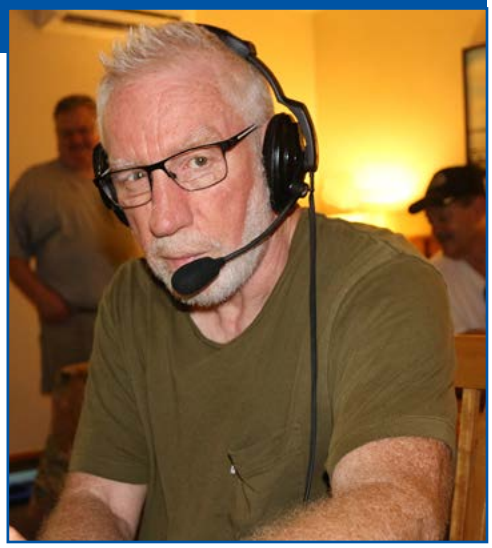
NCDXF Director Profile



NAME & CALL SIGNS: Kevin Rowett, K6TD

PAST CALLS: N6RCE

CURRENT QTH LOCATION: Cupertino, CA

WHAT WERE YOUR PREVIOUS QTHS? Vandenberg AFB, and Great Falls, MT

WHAT IS (WAS) YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER? Electrical Engineer and often VP of Engineering. Presently, VP of Systems Engineering for a Silicon Valley chip startup

WHAT COLLEGE DEGREE(S) DID YOU EARN AND WHERE DID YOU EARN THEM? BS, Mathematics, University of Oklahoma

MARRIED? KIDS? GRANDKIDS? Two kids, four grandkids – no hams in the batch.

NCDXF LEADERSHIP POSITIONS? Director, President.

OTHER LEADERSHIP POSITIONS? None

CURRENT DXCC STATUS? 279 confirmed, Mixed

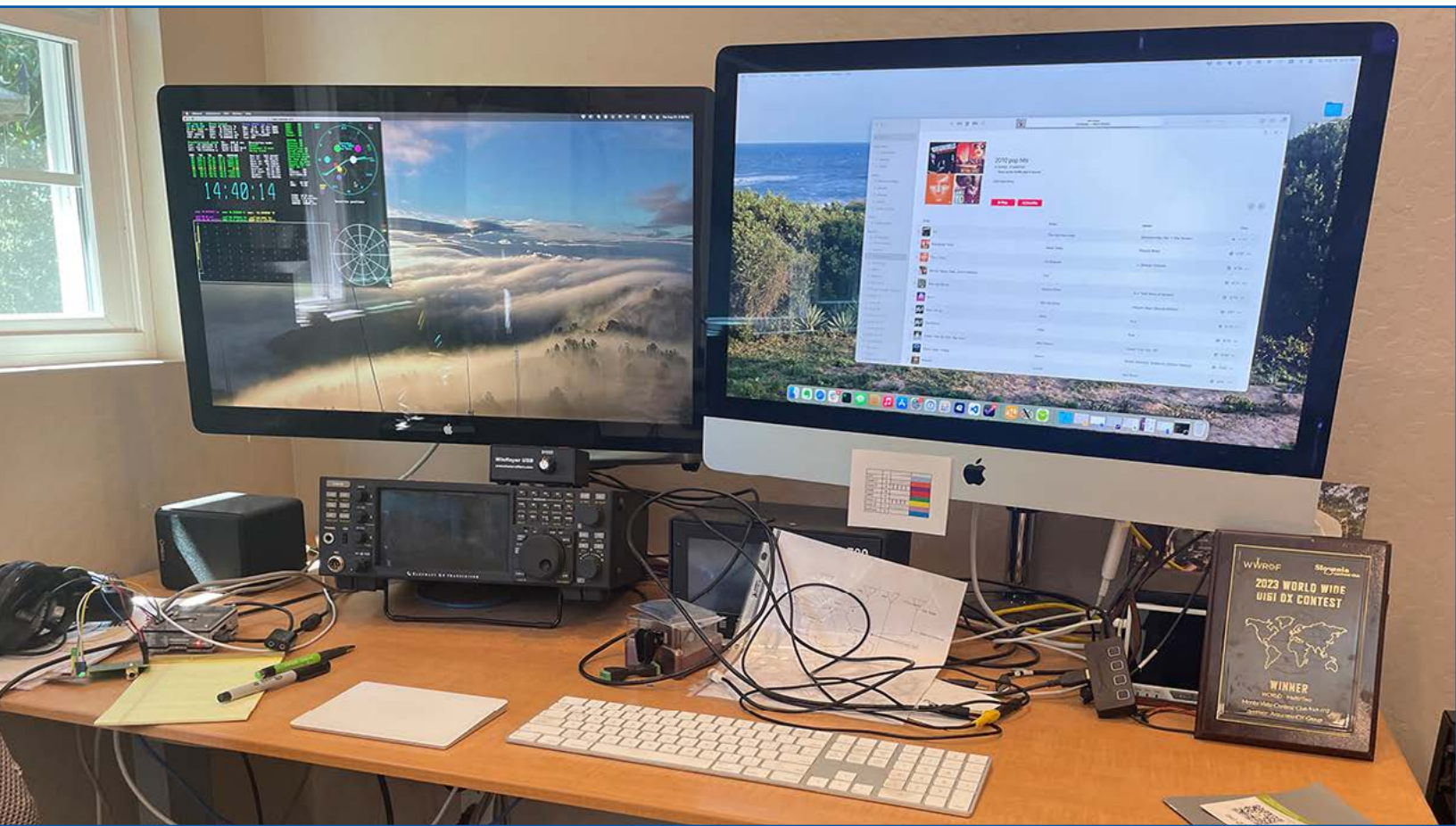
DESCRIBE YOUR SHACK AND ANTENNA SYSTEM: I have two shacks: My home station has a pair of Elecraft K4 radios, a 55-foot tower with a 3-element SteppIR and a 2-element 40M beam.
My other station is one that I share located on Mt. Umunhum in San Jose (K6MTU). The radios are a pair of FLEX 6700s and an Elecraft K4. There is a 100 ft. tower with HF antennas at 43 and 95 feet, a 4-element 40M beam at 110 feet and an 80M 4-square.

DXPEDITION EXPERIENCE? Baker Island (Co-leader), KH1/KH7Z; Chesterfield Islands, TX3X; Mozambique, C82DX; Midway Island, K4M; American Samoa, KH8; Fiji, 3D2

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING ABOUT CONTRIBUTING TO NCDXF? NCDXF will be good stewards of your contribution and you will help put DXpeditions to rare locations on the air.

AS AN AVID DXER WHAT SORTS OF TRENDS DO YOU SEE? It's becoming hard for newer DXers to get to the top of the DXCC Honor Roll due to some entities never being on the air.

The home station.



ANY TIPS FOR DXERS? Be there. You have to be ready to work 'em when they are on the air.

ANY ADVICE FOR NCDXF? Become a stronger influence in how entities are counted for DXCC.

WHAT MIGHT SOMEONE BE SURPRISED TO KNOW ABOUT YOU? I helped W6JKV build his station in Los Altos Hills and served as radio liaison for him while he was away on 6M DXpeditions.
I was the design engineer for several ham radios.
I also rock climb (indoor top rope).

ANY OTHER COMMENTS? Ham radio is the greatest hobby in the world! Keep your CW speed up.

Ned Sterns, AA7A (left) and Kevin Rowett, K6TD on Baker Island.

The shared station and antennas located on Mt. Umunhum.

Dual Destinations

Christmas Island, VK9XU, and Cocos (Keeling) Islands, VK9CU

Alan Cheshire, VK6CQ

OUR THREE-WEEK DXPEDITION was conducted in dual locations: Christmas Island, VK9XU, from 18 Feb - 4 March 2025 and Cocos (Keeling) Islands, VK9CU, from 4-11 March 2025.

Christmas Island

On the morning of 18 Feb 25, I — along with Steve Kennedy, VK6SJ,

Group picture (from left): Heye Harms, DJ9RR; Steve Kennedy, VK6SJ; Alan Cheshire, VK6CQ; Günter Gassler, DL2AWG; Rainer Schinkmann, DL2AMD, and Elmar Compans, DF4GV, from our QTH on Christmas Island.

Our guest operator, Zelkio, VK6DX, took over some shifts, allowing for an occasional break.

VK9XU in action (from left): Elmar, DF4GV; Rainer, DL2AMD, and Steve VK6SJ.

and his XYL, Julie — was pushing trolleys of heavy baggage through the hustle and bustle of Australia's Perth International Airport. Soon, we were joined by DXpedition leader Günter Gassler, DL2AWG, team members Elmar Compans, DF4GV; Heye Harms, DJ9RR; Rainer Schinkmann, DL2AMD, and XYLs Rosie, Uta and Eleonora, as one by one, they each appeared out of the international arrivals hall pushing even bigger piles of baggage in front of them to be checked in for the 4½ hour flight to Christmas Island.

The German contingent had just arrived from Bangkok; unfortunately, not all their baggage arrived with them. We were missing the telescopic "squid" poles and hardware for Elmar's low-band antennas as well as the mast for the Hexbeam. Inquiries at the Thai Airways desk confirmed the missing baggage was still in Thailand, which meant it would be at least another week before there was any chance of us seeing it at Christmas Island. Fortunately, Steve was able to make a quick dash home for some extra squid poles to tide us over. In addition, one of the SPE amplifiers had been badly damaged in transit and the owner was not at all happy.

First stop

We arrived on Christmas Island around 4:30 p.m. local time, and it took a while to get all our bags through local quarantine inspection, sort out the car rental, and make the several trips needed to ferry everyone and everything to Divers Villa — our QTH for the next fortnight (14 days). By the time we had finished, it was well past 6 p.m. and already getting dark. The Divers Villa is a traditional wooden "stilt house" with a large living room/dining room, full kitchen and bedrooms that slept 10. Recently renovated, it even included an espresso machine that saw constant service for the next 14 days.

VK9XU was quickly on the air using Alan's rapid-deploy FT8 station (Icom IC-7000 and Terlin multi-tap HF whip antenna) while everyone else had an early night. It had been a very long day, especially for the Germans who had been travelling close to 48 hours by this time. Come sunrise and Alan had several hundred stations in the log already and was close to achieving DXCC. He then continued operating FT8 on 10, 12 and 15M while the rest of the team got the DX Commander, 30M J-pole and 17M/12M vertical rhombic antennas erected and the three sets of main station equipment set up on a very heavy-duty wooden table in the living room.

By 9 a.m., there were two complete high-power Flex stations and a Yaesu FT-DX10 plus a Juma PA1000+ amplifier up and running. We were now operating three stations 24/7 using a variety of antennas: the Yaesu station was dedicated mostly to CW while the two Flex stations shared SSB and FT8 duties. The rapid deploy Icom station then went QRT and Alan wandered off bleary-eyed for a shower and a few hours' sleep.

Steve had kindly lent the DXpedition a large amount of Flex equipment which had been transported to Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands by ship several weeks earlier, so it was already there ready and waiting for us to simply "plug and play." Most of us had no prior hands-on experience using Flex gear, so it was a very steep learning curve and good that Steve was very patient! Flex is very different from operating more conventional radios, but once you know your way around them, they are a dream to operate, almost akin to driving a Rolls-Royce!

As well as being leader of our group, Günter was also "Herr Log-Meister" and kept an eagle eye on the German UCX-Log logging and CW keying software that we were using, as well as our Internet connection to Club Log Live Streams. It proved to be a very impressive and reliable software, certainly equal to the well-known N1MM logging program.

Six operators meant a very full schedule and the agreed operating plan was a rotating system of five hours on/

five hours off. That was okay for a few days, but after a while the circadian rhythms started to get all confused. Fortunately, a few days later we were joined by Zeljko Krestelica, VK6VY, as he and his XYL, Dragana, also happened to be holidaying on the island. Zeljko, a well-respected SSB contest operator, took over one of the shifts each day as a sorely-needed guest operator, enabling one of the other operators to enjoy a full 10 hours away from the radios to catch up on sleep or to go for a bit of a hike.

Island mishap

After Elmar and Rainer got the 30M J-Pole operational, Steve was able to use his local business contacts to borrow a couple of sturdy 3-meter sections of lattice mast for mounting the Hexbeam. So, with a bit of a team effort, we had that up and running quickly as well, which also gave us 6-meter capability.

Having been on a few prior DXpeditions, it seems that one of those unwritten laws of DXpeditions is that someone almost always suffers some kind of accident. In our case it was Elmar who had a nocturnal disagreement with the DX Commander guy wires one night, resulting in a sprained wrist and a bad scrape to one of his knees. Fortunately, a visit to the local pharmacy for antiseptic ointment and large adhesive bandages were all that was necessary — although he suffered from a painful looking limp for a few days.

After seven days, the missing baggage showed up on the next Tuesday flight from Perth, so Elmar was finally able to test out the 160/80M vertical he had designed and built. This was a base-fed 18-meter squid pole with a 2-meter steel rod extension and capacity hat arrangement at the top, plus two raised ground radials that had been designed to be an exact quarter-wave at the CW end of 80 Meters. A homebrew loading coil and capacitor arrangement that Elmar had also designed could be quickly switched in for 160 Meters, making band changes a breeze. It resonated and performed very well on both bands and gave out quite a few 80M and 160M ATNOs over several grey lines and late night/early morning shifts – certainly a testament to some impressive antenna design skills. Elmar had specifically designed his low-band antenna to be lightweight and portable, so it might prove popular with future DXpeditions and will no doubt need a name – the "Elmar-Vert" maybe, or simply the "Elvert"?

Endemic to Christmas Island, we came across this injured juvenile Abbott's booby, and delivered it to the bird sanctuary.

The monster-sized robber crabs looked like they could snap a finger off.

The Cocos Beachcomber Cottage was our QTH while on Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Island life

One thing we noticed quickly were the feral chickens — locally called "chooks." Never mind the island's famous little red crabs, there were wild chooks everywhere! Not only the chooks, but robber crabs lurked in the rainforest that covers most of the island. Some looked like they could easily double-up as cable-cutters or remove one of your fingers!

The second weekend, a group of us went on a tour of the island's interior with a local guide. We learned about

VK9CU antennas – 30M J-Pole and DX Commander

the local phosphate mine, visited the blowholes on the south coast, saw the giant robber crabs in the jungle, etc.

On the way back, we happened across an Abbott's booby in some distress by the roadside. This very rare bird species has a wingspan of about two meters, and is endemic to Christmas Island. They roost in the tree canopy and are unable to take-off from the ground. This one appeared to be a juvenile that had become exhausted during a trial flight, opting for a crash-landing on the road.

We carefully coaxed it into the back of the minibus and headed to the local bird sanctuary, where a wildlife ranger gave it the once over. He said it was good we found it when we did, as there are still a few feral cats that roam the island and the bird most likely would have been supper! The young booby made a full recovery and was back in the air a few days later — so it seems DXpeditions are not always a danger to local birdlife after all!

Speaking of food, our meal options had been largely self-catering at the Divers Villa, with the women, Steve and myself taking turns cooking various soups, pasta dishes, curries and "special" cottage pies, but on one evening a group of us ventured out to find a restaurant open for business. We failed dismally. Yes, there were plenty of restaurants, but they were all closed! Christmas Island was definitely not geared up to cater to tourists, though we did find an open-air cinema with a very prosperous-looking Chinese temple next door.

Moving day

Tuesday, 4 March, was moving day. All the antennas had to be taken down and everything packed ready for the late afternoon flight to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, about 1,000km to the west. The Icom rapid-deploy rig was hooked up to the DX Commander and continued logging FT8 QSOs until the last minute, as everything else was carefully dismantled, weighed and packed for ferrying to the airport.

Virgin Airlines runs the twice-weekly Perth-Christmas-Cocos service and are notoriously strict on baggage allowances, so particular attention was paid to how much each bag weighed. Even so, we still ended up having to reserve several lots of excess baggage in order to get everything we needed over to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Our accommodation for the third and final week of our DXpedition was the Cocos Beachcombers Cottage on West Island, just a short walk from the airport terminal, but it was past sunset by the time we actually got all our bags past the quarantine inspection.

The DX Commander was quickly deployed in the backyard next to the beach and the rapid-deploy rig was pressed back into service, again calling CQ on 15M FT8 to let everyone know that VK9CU was already QRV. In the meantime, everyone else headed the 200 meters back to the airport bar as Tuesday night was "pizza night" on Cocos (Keeling) and we all had enough of the Christmas Island "self-catering experience."

The VK9CU QTH was in stark contrast to the old-world charm of the Divers Villa that had served us so well on Christmas Island — this was a modern family home, similar to what you would find in any of Perth's more affluent suburbs. It also had a large front lawn and, conveniently, backed onto a large, grassy area that overlooked the beach so there was plenty of room for all the antennas to go up with a decent amount of spacing between them.

Operations resume

All the antennas went up early the following morning. Life on Cocos (Keeling) is laid back to the extent

that even the next door neighbor was perfectly happy with Elmar's 160/80M vertical being installed on his front lawn, just so long as the guy wires were decorated with fluorescent safety tape as a hazard warning to anyone walking back home from the pub late at night.

We soon established a rhythm again with the five hours on/five hours off shift routine and, again, with the coffee machine working overtime. The tail end of a cyclone was passing nearby, resulting in a couple of very heavy downpours and instances in the early morning hours when antennas had to be disconnected due to nearby lightning. Apart from that, everything ran like clockwork.

Statistics

It seems DXpeditions are largely judged by performance statistics: how many bands, how many QSOs, how many dupes, how many ATNOs and so on. In that respect, both VK9XU and VK9CU performed well above average and well beyond what we were expecting to achieve.

We were active on all bands, 160M to 6M, and averaged well over three QSOs per minute over the 500-odd hours that our three stations were on the air. Maybe we didn't keep everybody happy, but we kept many DXers around the world happy for much of the time, which is about all any DXpeditioner can reasonably expect to do.

A total of 92,955 QSOs. Another day or so, or slightly better propagation conditions and we could easily have passed the 100,000 mark. That's a pretty good showing in anyone's book; however, I prefer to judge a DXpedi-

VK9XU QSOs per BAND and CONTINENT

	Total	1.8	3.5	7	10	14	18	21	24	28	50
Europe	27,798	111	1101	2213	2718	4326	3516	4646	3837	5330	
Asia	19,636	424	603	1147	171	1964	3167	3604	3519	3380	121
N. America	8,365	3	99	269	716	1163	1813	1629	1549	1124	
Oceania	1,616	25	79	206	136	172	225	306	201	257	9
S. America	505		2	46	46	87	81	84	86	73	
Africa	193		2	9	18	29	38	31	30	36	

VK9XU QSOs per BAND and MODE

	Total	1.8	3.5	7	10	14	18	21	24	28	50
CW	17,090	87	1,042	794	1,652	1,984	1,917	3,619	2,833	3,165	
SSB	8,658			589		1,012	2,217	1,486	1,401	1,953	
digi	32,381	479	844	2,507	3,694	4,748	4,708	5,199	4,989	5,083	130
Total	58,129	563	1,886	3,890	5,349	7,744	8,842	10,304	9,223	10,201	130

VK9CU QSOs per BAND and CONTINENT

	Total	1.8	3.5	7	10	14	18	21	24	28	50
Europe	17,072	29	620	1,075	1,328	2,585	1,485	3,300	4,007	2,613	
Asia	12,275	204	439	628	851	1,264	1,513	2,614	2,197	2,559	6
N. America	4,116	13	116	472	517	774	595	847	421	361	
Oceania	974	24	70	60	64	100	106	212	185	152	1
S. America	338		18	53	70	81	34	37	26	19	
Africa	81	2	3	10	8	10	11	17	13	7	

VK9CU QSOs per BAND and MODE

	Total	1.8	3.5	7	10	14	18	21	24	28	50
CW	9,983		230	549	863	1,245	950	2,047	2,028	2,071	
SSB	2,980					480	403	986	619	564	
digi	21,863	272	1,036	1,749	1,975	3,161	2,391	3,994	4,202	3,076	7
Total	34,826	272	1,266	2,298	2,838	4,814	3,744	7,027	6,849	5,711	7

VK9XU and VK9CU (combined) QSOs per BAND and CONTINENT

	Total	1.8	3.5	7	10	14	18	21	24	28	50
Europe	44,840	140	1,721	3,288	4,046	6,911	5,001	7,946	7,844	7,943	0
Asia	31,914	628	1,042	1,775	2,561	3,228	4,680	6,218	5,716	5,939	127
N. America	12,481	16	215	741	1,233	1,937	2,408	2,476	1,970	1,485	0
Oceania	2,590	49	149	266	200	272	331	518	386	409	10
S. America	843	0	20	99	116	168	115	121	112	92	0
Africa	274	2	5	19	26	39	49	48	43	43	0

VK9XU and VK9CU (combined) QSOs per BAND and MODE

	Total	1.8	3.5	7	10	14	18	21	24	28	50
CW	27,073	84	1,272	1,343	2,515	3,229	2,867	5,666	4,861	5,236	0
SSB	11,638	0	0	589	0	1,420	2,620	2,472	2,020	2,517	0
digi	54,244	751	1,880	4,256	5,669	7,909	7,099	9,193	9,191	8,159	137
Total	92,955	835	3,152	6,188	8,184	12,558	12,586	17,331	16,072	15,912	137

tion's performance or success in more human terms: whom I made friends with, what we did, what we learned and most importantly, how much fun we had.

Günter, Elmar, Heye and Rainer are all very experienced, disciplined and seasoned DXpeditioners who were well-organized and knew how to focus and work together to achieve a common goal — they were really great guys to go play radios with. Sure, it was hard work at times, especially those 2 a.m. shift changes, but it was *viel spass* (great fun) and we also got to see lots of chooks, crabs and the occasional Chinese temple!

Appreciation

Many thanks to all our sponsors who contributed equipment and/or donated to the DXpedition to help make it happen; thanks to Steve for all the logistics work he did in the background, his practical solutions to missing items as well as his enduring sense of humor and patience in sorting out all of our various finger troubles with the Flex radios.

Thanks to Julie for her friendly support, and *vielen dank* (many thanks) to Eleonora, Rosie and Uta for all keeping a straight face and not laughing too much whenever they heard me practicing my high-school German!

50 Years Ago
A Blast From the Past

West Coast DX Bulletin
published every week by the Marin County DX Group
August 26, 1975

The Old Timer was by last week and one of the Legion of Hand-Wringers cornered him.

"Tell me," this one said to the Old Timer, "what possible pleasure is there in working DX? Why I listened to some DXers a couple of weeks back and it was absolute bedlam. Absolutely!"

The Wringer paused in anticipation of a comment and when none came, proceeded onwards on the paths of righteousness.

"Why, it seemed that there was hardly a gentleman in the whole group and if there was one, he certainly was submerged. Tell me! Tell me why supposedly mature and rational people would engage in such tumultuous battles just to work a new country. There must be a reason that you can explain to me. Just why do they do it?"

The Old Timer was silent for a bit and when the Wringer showed signs of starting again, he raised his hand to forestall further questioning. "Maybe they enjoy it," he said and that was it.

For there will always be questions when one applies their own standards of behavior to others and one of the eternal truths is that only a true-blue DXer can understand another DXer. $13.00 will bring you the scenes of the Great DX Battles for a full year… $15.00 flings it far beyond the seas to the DX lands, airmail all the way. For there is joy in battle and pride in the scars of battles past but best of all is to get through that pile-up and work that station. Rollerball all the way!! You betcha!!

("Rollerball" is a reference to the 1975 sci-fi movie about a violent futuristic game.)

Andaman Islands, VU4AX

Marc Cosemans, ON6CC

AFTER OUR SUCCESSFUL 2022 trip to Svalbard (JWØX), the DX-Adventure group (founded in 2021) was hungry for more pileups. We had all the necessary experience to embark on a new adventure. The members who had already committed were Jelmer Vos, DJ5MO; Marc Michiels, ON4AMX; Patrick Godderie, ON4HIL; Max Van Rymenant, ON5UR; Pascal Lierman, ON5RA; Marc Cosemans, ON6CC; Jonas Coekelberghs, ON7FT; Franky Beuselinck, ON7RU; Geert Cottyn, ON7USB; Francis Balcaen, ON8AZ; Ronald Stuy, PA3EWP, and Marcel Bos, PA9M. Karel Moerman, ON5TN, joined the team later.

Under the leadership of Max, ON5UR, and Francis, ON8AZ, we decided to travel to the Andaman Islands (IOTA AS-001). At that time in 2022, VU4 had been activated with 23,000 QSOs. We believed we could do better.

Preliminary planning

Our first group meeting took place in March 2023 and our first step was to obtain our license for the DXpedi-

The Team: (front row, from left) Marc Cosemans, ON6CC, and Francis Balcaen, ON8AZ. (middle row, right behind banner) Franky Beuselinck, ON7RU; Marc Michiels, ON4AMX, and Pascal Lierman, ON5RA. (back row) Ronald Stuy, PA3EWP; Jonas Coekelberghs, ON7FT; Patrick Godderie, ON4HIL; Geert Cottyn, ON7USB; Karel Moerman, ON5TN; Marcel Bos, PA9M, and Max Van Rymenant, ON5UR.

The team and its baggage in Port Blair.

tion. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) had changed their administrative procedures, allowing licenses to be requested electronically. Additionally, each operator had to obtain a personal license before we could request the VU4 group license; however the website was only accessible inside India so it had to be done via a VPN connection within India. Four weeks before our departure we finally received all our licenses.

While awaiting our licenses, we searched for an ideal location near Port Blair and the airport that also had a clear radio path toward North America, as that is the most challenging continent to reach.

At the June 2023 International Amateur Radio Exhibition in Friedrichshafen, Germany, we connected with potential sponsors for commitments to provide the essential equipment for our DXpedition.

It begins

After two years, we finally began our journey from Kortrijk, Belgium, leaving with 54 suitcases, flying to New Delhi, India, via Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport. Upon arrival, local authorities stopped us to confirm whether our equipment was for sale or if we were returning with it. After showing the proper documents, we had no further issues.

The following morning, after a 5-hour flight and a bumpy 45-minute ride, we arrived at the resort in Port Blair, which was surrounded by tall palm trees. We quickly decided where to install the antennas and, luckily, everything matched our plans. Due to the exhausting travel and extreme 40°C heat and 90% humidity, we decided to rest and begin again early the next morning.

One of our two operation shacks on Andaman.


This jumbled mess was our functional patch panel, filters, stubs and stops.

Getting on the air

Our setup consisted of two air-conditioned shacks, each with separate Spiderbeams for the higher bands. For the lower bands, we had 80M, 60M, and 30M verticals, each with four elevated radials, located on the beach. A 4-square was installed further inland for 40M. The top section of our 160M vertical broke during setup, so we used an inverted-L hung from a 30-meter-tall palm tree by a local guy who climbed the palm tree for us. A 200-meter Beverage antenna was stretched through dense forest toward Europe and North America. Additionally, four K9AY loops in different directions were installed, with three stations capable of switching between them simultaneously.

We had six Elecraft K3 stations with six SPE Expert 1.3K amplifiers.

VU4AX operators in action.

Each radio was operated via a Microham DXP interface. All coax cables entered Shack 1. They were connected to a patch panel, which also served Shack 2, to prevent mistakes when changing bands. Spiderbeam 1 used a pentaplexer and Spiderbeam 2 used a triplexer, allowing all six stations to operate simultaneously. Low-power filters were placed between the radios and amplifiers. High-power filters with in-band stubs were installed behind the amplifiers for additional harmonic suppression.

Because the resort only had 3G coverage, we used a router for the Internet from a MiFi (mobile hotspot) device. We couldn't obtain a SIM card without assistance from locals, but the following day we had Internet access thanks to a resort staff member. With that completed, we were able to upload logs via Club Log and it worked flawlessly most of the time. Tim, MØURX, our QSL manager, received daily log updates, sometimes corrected due to incorrect band logging when a radio CAT connection failed.

Operations

The first QSO was made with Jelmer, DJ5MO, on 11 March on 20M SSB and then all hell broke loose! The pileups were enormous from the start.

After only four hours, Murphy visited us: the 40M amplifier died with a loud bang and a burning smell. From that time on, one station had to operate without an amplifier.

On the second day our final antenna – a 15-meter VDA – was installed on the beach directed at North America via the long path. Keeping the European pileups quiet was not easy. We rarely had strong runs into the USA, mostly battling weak signals and Arctic flutter that arrived via the short path instead of the expected long path. Most signals came from the Midwest and East Coast. In the mornings, we worked Japan and the USA West Coast, and in the early afternoons we had openings to Eastern Europe.

We noticed noise levels of S3-S4 on most bands, and even up to S7-S9 on 40M. Although the 40M antennas were far from buildings, we suspected atmospheric noise combined with generator noise. We asked the staff to switch off all outdoor lighting to minimize interference, but we never found the cause of the high noise level.

Two generators supplied power, but the smaller one had wild voltage fluctuations from 80 V to 260 V, making high-power operation impossible. After a few days we switched to the larger generator, which was more stable but required a one-hour maintenance break daily.

Ronald's station had a GPS-synchronized clock, but it wasn't flawless either. Occasionally time discrepancies exceeded a few seconds. On our next DXpedition, we'll ensure all computers are connected via a stable wired UTP network.

At one point we were hit by a massive solar flare that limited us to FT8 operations on all six stations due to the resulting impact on propagation. Even during those challenging hours, a few QSOs continued to be logged. That was frustrating for all the operators; we did not travel all that way just to do FT8.

On another day, the shacks lost power due to a missing 220 V phase. After some investigating, we found a faulty main switch on the generator. Luckily, we had a few team members with sufficient knowledge to solve it and it was fixed within an hour.

Island life

Our meals in the restaurant consisted mainly of chicken with rice, or rice with chicken, and there was fresh fruit at lunch.

Our sleeping bungalows had no air conditioning and showering facilities were minimal.

We split into two groups for a trip to the capital city where we visited a colonial-era prison from British rule.

All good things

The plan was to dismantle the low-band antennas and one Spiderbeam after our last sunrise, leaving only

During our stay, Karel, ON5TN, celebrated his 50th birthday.

high band antennas. The final QSO was logged on 20 March on 10M. After that, everything was rapidly disassembled, and the suitcases were packed for departure. We left early the next morning with mixed feelings. Our goal was 100,000 QSOs, but we ended with only 65,000 QSOs. The dedication and skills of the operators and our equipment were not to blame.

We returned home a few days later, exhausted, but satisfied already working on new projects. You will hear from us again from another country.

Thank yous

We thank all our sponsors (DX clubs, individuals, companies and foundations) for their help to make this DXpedition a success. We especially thank our main sponsors – NCDXF and INDEXA – as well as our invaluable support crew in Belgium. For more information about our sponsors, visit *dx-adventure.com/en/home-eng/*

QSL cards can be requested via OQRS from Tim, MØURX. In addition, the DX-Adventure team published a 56-page VU4AX DX-Adventure book full of stories and beautiful photos. All profits go towards future DX-Adventure DXpeditions. For info, visit *dx-adventure.com/vu4ax-book*.

Local interaction

Max received a friendly call from local authorities inquiring about our activities, and they asked if a group of schoolchildren could visit. A few days later, a busload of kids arrived. Ronald, PA3EWP, was the perfect person to explain what all those "crazy old men" were doing. We ended with demonstration QSOs with stations in Japan and Australia. Their visit was even mentioned in a local newspaper.

Cycle 25 Fund & Cycle 25 Society

To help supplement NCDXF's mission to provide necessary financial support for well-organized DXpeditions to rare and financially demanding DXCC entities, NCDXF established the Cycle 25 Fund in 2016. The goal of the Cycle 25 Fund is to double NCDXF's endowment through significant estate gifts from current DXers, which will allow NCDXF to continue its mission throughout sunspot Cycle 25 and beyond.

Since the announcement of the Fund, the following individuals have made estate-planning commitments:

Ned Stearns, AA7A
John Grimm, KØYQ
Ross Forbes, K6GFJ (sk)
Al Burnham, K6RIM
Alan Rovner, K7AR
Craig Thompson, K9CT
Rich Seifert, KE1B
Bob Schmieder, KK6EK
Hardy Landskov, N7RT (sk)
Tom Berson, ND2T
Udo Heinze, NIØG
Glenn Johnson, WØGJ
Ed Muns, WØYK
Rich Haendel, W3ACO
Dan White, W5DNT
Charles, Spetnagel, W6KK
Rusty Epps, W6OAT
Bruce Butler, W6OSP (sk)
Randy Stegemeyer, W7HR

NCDXF Vice President, Craig Thompson, K9CT, who oversees the Cycle 25 Fund, has established a Cycle 25 Society for those who participate. Thompson said, "The Cycle 25 Society is for honoring those special individuals who commit to estate giving before the next sunspot maximum. When you let us know your plans, we will honor you on our website and send you a special Cycle 25 Society pin as a memento of your thoughtfulness."

Craig invites DXers interested in the Cycle 25 Society to visit the NCDXF website *ncdxf.org/pages/estate.html* for more information.

You can also contact Craig to discuss Cycle 25 Fund funding options, including specific bequests, designation of IRA beneficiaries and purchase of an annuity or life insurance.

The mission of NCDXF is to provide necessary support for well-organized DXpeditions to desirable DXCC entities and to support advances in DXpeditioning skills, technology and infrastructure.

Contributions

NCDXF relies heavily upon the generosity of its contributors to fund various projects. We ask you to consider making an annual contribution of US$50 or its equivalent in foreign currency. However, we do not wish to exclude anyone from the **Foundation** for financial reasons. If $50 is not within your budget, then please give what other amount you can. Naturally, we welcome contributions in excess of $50! **NCDXF** is an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and all contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law for U.S. taxpayers. Send your contribution to: **NCDXF**, P.O. Box 2012, Cupertino, CA 95015-2012, USA. You may also contribute and order supplies online via our secure server, visit *ncdxf.org/donate*.

Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

Are you 73 years old or older? If you donate to charities, then you can save on your taxes.

The IRS issued a press release in November 2022 stating that you can use a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA to save on taxes.

All of us at this age can or must take a distribution each year from our IRA or 401(k) plans. Take a look at the distribution form from your plan trustee and you will see that there is a way to have your plan trustee send the distribution to selected charities or 501(c)(3) entities. If you meet the age where a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) must be taken each year, this election qualifies as your RMD and, because you are sending the money directly to the charity, no taxes are withheld! Check with your tax advisor about which method is best for you.

NCDXF is a qualified 501(c)(3) organization and you can send money directly to NCDXF without any taxes being withheld. Please let NCDXF know that you are sending this from your plan trustee so that we can give appropriate documentation to you recognizing your donation.

The *IRS website* has more information about qualified charitable distributions.