NCDXF newsletter

ncdxf.org

Spring 2025

S9Z — My First DXpedition

Angus Alexander, KJ7KOJ

I BECAME INTERESTED IN WORKING DX during COVID when there was nothing else for a then 13-year-old to do. That sparked my interest in geography and the world. Since then, I have worked most of the major DXpeditions and had fun learning about the countries and the stories behind them. As a result, I became curious about how to go on one of these DXpeditions myself.

After talking with my dad, we decided to reach out to members of our local Western Washington DX Club that has a number of experienced DXpeditioners in their ranks. Through those connections, I was invited to be a remote operator on the 2024 DXpedition to Jarvis Island (N5J). That was just the beginning!

Through contacts at another local club, the opportunity presented itself for an in-person DXpedition experience to the small West African nation of São Tomé and Principe (S9). Due to my successful participation in N5J, the folks at NCDXF offered to support me on this adventure under their new Youth Program. It was an opportunity I could not pass up!

Angus Alexander, KJ7KOJ , excited to be on his first DXpedition.

S9Z

The S9Z DXpedition was set for November 2024. One challenge that my age group faces is how to balance schoolwork and extracurricular activities, like ham radio. After lengthy discussions with my parents and school staff, it was determined that this opportunity would provide enrichment and experiences that were too good to miss. I built a schedule with my teachers on how I would make up missed work over the approximately three-week-long DXpedition. Fortunately, it fell just before the Thanksgiving holiday, so catching up would be a little easier.

The DXpedition included 15 operators from around the world; two of whom I knew, my dad, Robin Alexander, W7YED, and Mike Mraz, N6MZ. I was a little intimidated reading the remaining team member bios, as they were some of the most experienced DXpeditioners in the world!

We flew from Seattle to Lisbon, via London, where we met the team for the first time over dinner the evening before our 0900 departure to São Tomé & Príncipe on Saturday, 9 November.

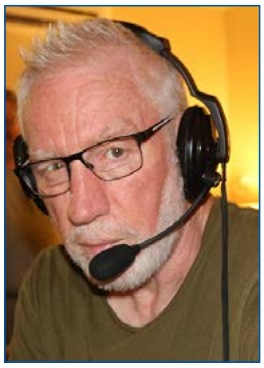
continued on page 3

Angus Alexander (left), with Mike Mraz, N6MZ, and dad Robin, W7YED.

In This Issue

NCDXF
P.O. Box 2012
Cupertino, CA
95015-2012
USA
ncdxf.org

From the President's desk



This is our annual newsletter for the Visalia International DX Convention (IDXC 2025). The Visalia convention has struggled a bit after the global shutdown due to the COVID pandemic; however, the convention remains a key gathering place for DXers to connect, discuss potential DXpeditions, learn about new equipment, attend subject-matter talks, and maybe even win a prize or two. (It's still convention food, though!) I hope attending the convention this year is in your plans.

This year, Ned Sterns, AA7A, has coordinated a series of talks about the next generation of DXing and DXpeditions. Additionally, the DX Academy and the Contest Academy will be featured. Various themed dinners will also return. The full program is available at *dxconvention.com/program-2025*.

A number of vendors will be exhibiting this year, so be sure to allocate time to visit the Exhibition Hall.

DXpedition activity has mostly returned to pre-2020 levels; however, securing permission to visit certain restricted locations has become more challenging. George Wallner, AA7JV, and his team have successfully navigated these challenges for some locations by collaborating with agencies to get operating permission after explaining and demonstrating his Radio-in-a-Box (RiB) concept.

A new RiB concept, NexGenRiB, developed by Gregg Marco, W6IZT, aims to increase youth participation in DXpeditions. Gregg will have a demonstration unit available for examination at Visalia. The hardware and development of the NexGenRiB is funded by NCDXF. One or more of these units will be available for DXpeditions to carry along on a staffed trip — a great way to introduce young operators to DXpeditions.

NCDXF also provides funding for youth traveling as part of a DXpedition, whether or not that DXpedition is officially sponsored by NCDXF. This program started slowly but has seen significant growth. We have provided funding to the Youth on the Air (YOTA) program, as well as a group of youth traveling to PJ2T (Curaçao). Supporting youth involvement helps ensure the next generation of DX operators.

2025 has already brought lots of DX activity and we are looking forward to what 2026 will bring. Solar Cycle 25 continues to provide excellent DX propagation. Some scientists predict that the cycle has already peaked and is beginning to decline.

In this issue, we feature an article written by a youth operator who traveled to São Tomé & Principe as a member of the S9Z team, as well as other stories about NCDXF-funded DXpeditions to Sierra Leone (9L5A) and Nauru (C21MM). Additionally, Gregg shares a report on his DXpedition to Rotuma (3D2Y), covering both the trip and how using his NexGenRiB facilitated youth participation.

Our editor, Lee, KY7M, has also provided a NCDXF Director's Profile. I won't spoil the surprise, but you'll certainly enjoy the read.

We sincerely appreciate your financial support and thank all of you for making this year's Visalia convention possible.

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.

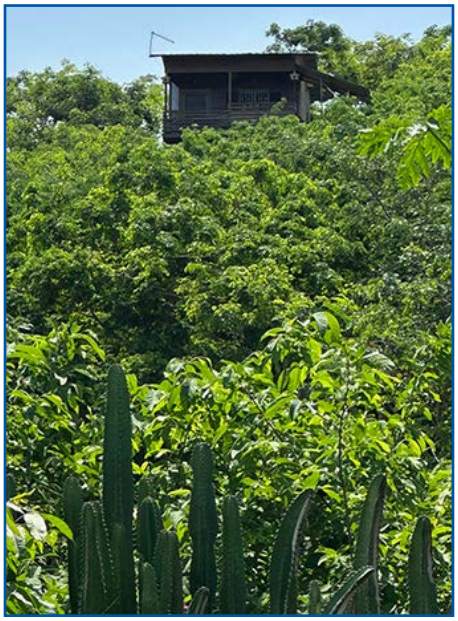
The lush view from our hilltop cabin.

Afterwards, we went back to the hotel for a team meeting to plan the days to come.

We weren't able to ship the equipment to São Tomé ahead of the DXpedition, so with 39 bags (many overweight and oversized) and 18 people, check-in at the airport was a challenge, but arriving three hours early allowed us to get to our gate on time.

São Tomé and Príncipe

The two-island republic of São Tomé and Príncipe is situated off the west coast of Africa in the Gulf of Guinea, which is almost exactly on the equator — beneficial for propagation to all parts of the world. After gaining independence from Portugal in 1975, it now has a stable democratic government.



Our "home" at the top of Heart Attack Hill for the duration of the DXpedition.

The long, uneventful flight offered beautiful views of the enormous Sahara Desert before we put wheels down in São Tomé at about 1700 local time. Being on the equator, sunset is at 1700 with sunrise at 0500; the transitions are so fast that, by the time we emerged from the airport, it was already dark.

Everyone got through Customs and Immigration without an issue (which I later learned is never guaranteed when travelling to Africa), and we loaded up into three awaiting vans for the 45-minute drive to the hotel. Even in the dark, it was clear to see that we were in a very different world!

Arriving at the hotel, the main building had a big, open room adjacent to the kitchen and the dining area — this would be where we would set up our operation. A smaller building nearby contained several rooms where most of the operators would stay, and then there was the HILL, or "Heart Attack Hill" as it would become known.

The hill was behind the main building and rose over 150 feet. Perched at the top was a newly built cabin — home for dad and me for the duration. Connected to the main building by 100 steps made from concrete-filled tires, we got a workout every time we went to our room. Adding to the degree of difficulty was the heat and humidity, for which you can't really prepare for. I had experienced extreme heat on family RV trips, but not heat and humidity combined. Sweating 24-7 with only fans for cooling took some getting used to.

Dad and I still believe that even with the steps, we had the best accommodation. The views of the coast from our cabin veranda were spectacular and we could see lots of fishing boats scattered upon the horizon.

Setting up

The initial plan had called for putting some hexbeams atop the hill, but when the rest of the team made the trek, that plan was quickly abandoned! With the change in location for the hexbeams,

Just a few of the 100 steps required to get to our cabin.

(Left) Robin Alexander, W7YED, operating the QO-100 satellite station. (Right) The "big room" where we set up our stations.

the hill became a perfect location to set up the EME station, with a clear 360-degree view of the horizon.

The modified antenna plan was to quickly put up one hexbeam to get us on the air while we scouted the area to locate where the other two could go. The group split into four teams: hexbeams, 80/160 vertical, station setup and 6M/QO-100.

The first to go up was the QO-100 station, which was making Qs by lunchtime on 10 November. I made the first contact on HF at about 1300 using FT8. From there, we had at least two HF stations on the air for the next nine days around the clock with seven total stations at the peak (4xHF, 6M, Q-100, EME/RS-44).

On Monday, the second hexbeam, the 30-meter and 6-meter antennas went up, and on Tuesday, the third hexbeam and the 40-meter half square concluded the antenna-building phase.

Angus at the satellite antenna and operating position.

Not included in our original plan was an antenna for 60 Meters, but after requests from the DX community we put up a dipole and made 700+ QSOs.

Operations

After the first couple of days, my schedule took on a natural flow of waking up early for breakfast and talking with team members who operated the night before to understand how the bands were behaving. I would then go into the shack to operate on FT8 or SSB for a couple of hours. In the afternoon, I would take an SSB shift depending on the conditions of the bands and the other operators' schedules. Rather than a fixed schedule, we decided to try and balance the bands/modes as conditions allowed. FT8 could be utilized when band conditions were not favorable for CW or SSB. Conditions tended to favor the low bands right after sunset as expected. Most days there was little time for lunch.

Even though I had some experience running a pileup in the large contests, nothing prepared me for the wall of voices after my first CQ. I was lucky enough to have some of the most experienced SSB operators to learn from and after an hour or so finally started to become more comfortable. I was particularly proud when one of the ops sat down to listen in on my EU pileup and at the end of my shift turned to me and exclaimed, "That was amazing!!" It was a little unnerving to have so many cameras from the other ops in my face; you'd think a youth operator on a DXpedition was a rarity! I was also amazed that the wall of voices did not stop, even when it appeared that the band was dead — a couple of CQ calls were enough to start another pileup. It was a lot of fun!

As a native of the Pacific Northwest in the US and therefore a "Suffering 7," it was a lot of fun to see 6 Meters, "The magic band," in action. In 7-land, we are lucky to get an opening to the US once or twice a year; it's even rarer to get a DX opening. While 6 Meters from S9Z turned out to be a continuing challenge to the US, we made over 1,400 QSOs outside the US, just shy of our 1,500 goal. We were able to give this new one to a lot of happy 6-meter operators.

EME and satellite

When I heard that there was going to be EME activity on the DXpedition, there was added excitement for the adventure. I started in ham radio working the FM satellites AO-91 and AO-92. What intrigued me was that you could also contact people by bouncing signals off the moon.

Max Mucci, I8NHJ/N5NHJ, was

(Left) Motorcycles dominate the local transporation. (Right) Some of the group after sightseeing: (from left) Robin, W7YED; Carlos, CT1END; Kimo, KH7U; Max, N8NHJ/I8NHJ; Roman, 5B4AQN; Beth (XYL of WB4JTT); Angus, KJ7KOJ; Saundy (XYL of KØIR); Ralph, KØIR, and Al, K3VN.

instrumental in adding EME to the DXpedition, and we managed to make 15 EME contacts despite the failure of the 70cm amplifier on the second night.

With the EME activity cut short, Dad and I entertained the idea of using that station on a couple of RS-44 passes. Fortunately, we brought our modified Arrow antenna, allowing us to use the 70cm EME setup as the downlink and the Arrow 3-element handheld antenna as the 2M uplink. RS-44 was the only satellite with a good enough footprint to reach Europe.

We had time for only three passes, but were able to make 18 Qs with stations in Europe. We also had a surprise contact with our "neighbor" to the southwest in St. Helena — Shinji Chuma, ZD7G, who had been trained on LEO satellites just one week earlier! These contacts were one of the highlights of the DXpedition for me.

Island exploration

Although operating was our primary activity, there were opportunities for R&R. One of the YLs offered to drive my dad and me to *Lagoa Azul*, or Blue Lagoon, on the coast and part of the Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé; it's a shallow bay with the bluest water I have ever seen. Although it was only five miles from our hotel, it took us over 30 minutes to get there over the rough and bumpy rural roads.

The parking lot was a small, muddy area ringed with baobab trees, which have huge trunks and small crowns, unlike any trees that I had seen before. Local vendors lined the shore selling carvings and souvenirs to the tourists who visit the picturesque spot.

The island's primary mode of transportation was either via yellow van or motorcycle taxis. Using a motorcycle taxi was a rather precarious endeavor, where the passenger rides on the seat behind the driver carrying whatever they have to transport. This made for some interesting sights on the roads!

We also took a 3-hour bus tour arranged by our Portuguese friends, which was comprised of a former coffee plantation (now a national museum) and the largest former chocolate plantation, ending with a visit to the botanical gardens, where I sampled cinnamon from the bark of a tree.

Taking it all down

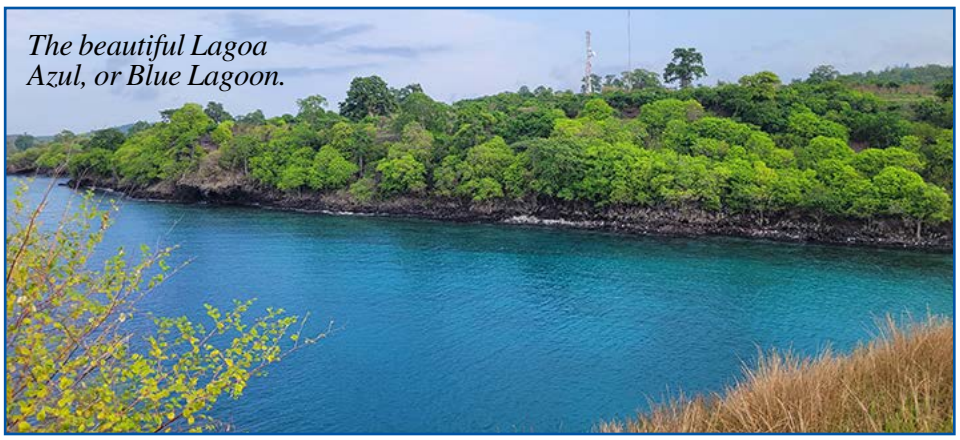
All too soon it was time to wind down the DXpedition. The team assembled for a teardown meeting and put a plan in place to maximize the operating time on SSB and CW, while leaving enough time to get everything taken down and packed.

We knew it was time to leave when the night before the final hexbeam was to be taken down, the hotel manager clipped a guy line with her vehicle in the dark, bringing the antenna crashing to the ground. Fortunately, nobody was injured but it made taking that antenna down a lot easier.

In total, we made 52,242 QSOs (and a lot of new friends) with 15,150 unique callers — 30,000 Qs were FT8, 10,000 SSB, and almost 12,000 CW. We tried to maximize the number of CW and SSB contacts in the latter stages of the DXpedition, but the demand for FT8 contacts remained strong. European stations comprised 60% of the contacts, and were always loud, no matter the time of day. The openings to JA and NA were narrow.

Takeaways

This was a very cool experience and one I will remember for years to come. I learned a lot about building antennas and radio setups. I learned how to make friends with people from



The beautiful Lagoa Azul, or Blue Lagoon.

The São Tomé team (from left): Roman, 5B4AQN; Carlos, CT1END; Jose, CT1DSV; Bill, W2WB; Jorge, CT1BOL; Al, K3VN; Mike, N6MZ; Jose, CT1EEB; Robin, W7YED; Ralph, KØIR; Angus, KJ7KOJ; Kimo, KH7U; Max, N8NHJ/I8NHJ; Dave, WB4JTT, and Rigo, HI8R.

different cultures and nationalities in a very different environment.

Few people are prepared to run a DXpedition pileup, and this was a baptism by fire. I believe my operating skills improved dramatically as a result, and I can't wait for the next one! Where do we go next?

Acknowledgements

As a youth still in school, it would have been impossible for me to go on this adventure without the help and support of many. I thank NCDXF for their generous sponsorship under their youth program. Also, the North Fulton Amateur Radio League, as well as several personal sponsors from the Seattle area: KB2S, W7TMT, AA7UJ and KE7ARH. I also thank my fellow operators and their partners, whom had never met or, in many cases, talked to me but embraced me with open arms. Tom Harrell, N4XP; Roman Thomas, 5B4AQN; Rigo Gonzalez, HI8R; Max Mucci, N5NHJ/I8NHJ; Kimo Chun, KH7U; Ralph Fedor, KØIR; Al Hernandez, K3VN; Mike, Mraz, N6MZ; Dave Johnson, WB4JTT; Bill Beyer, N2WB; Jose Araujo, CT1DSV; Carlos Nora, CT1END; José, CT1EEB; Jorge Lopes, CT1BOL, Beth, Annie and Saundy.

I would also like to thank my dad, Robin, W7YED, for accompanying me on this adventure and to the rest of my family (Mum, W7IHJ; Ewan, KK7EXT, and Kirsty, KK7KMA) for putting up with my endless planning, packing and fundraising. Also, Don Greenbaum, N1DG; Rusty Epps, W6OAT; Rob Fanfant, N7QT; Mike, N6MZ, and Brian Stucker, KB2S, deserve special thanks.

In addition to my personal sponsors and supporters there were many who donated to the S9Z DXpedition and several companies that supported us as well, these are acknowledged on our website *s9z.org*.

The truck laden with our luggage for departure to the airport.

Angus, KJ7KOJ, was first licensed in 2019 at age 12. He earned his General license a year later and it was then that his love of DXing started. He upgraded to Extra at age 16 and has broadened his experience making contacts on satellite, EME and with the ISS crew.

Angus is a highly competent operator and veteran of several SSB and FT8 contests, often placing in the Top 10 in the youth category. He has activated over 70 parks for the POTA program across four countries (VE, TF, GM).

Now 17 and a junior in high school, his current DXCC totals are 287/257 with DXCC on five bands. Most recently he has been a remote operator on the N5J (Jarvis) and 3D2Y (Rotuma) DXpeditions and holds a 3D2KOJ call sign. S9Z was his first in-person DXpedition.

3D2Y – Rotuma Island

Gregg Marco, W6IZT

It was 8:45 p.m. on Saturday, 23 November 2024. It had been an uneventful day so far. We were operating in the CQWW contest and making good rate. Jamie Williams, MØSDV, was on shift and alone in our operating shelter along the beach on the north side of Rotuma. The remainder of the team was resting about 75 meters away in the home of our hosts. Without notice, I heard the wind pick up and a driving rain set in. Wind and rain are normal on Rotuma, but these were gale-force winds! I jumped out of bed and grabbed my shoes.

At that moment my phone rang.

On the other end of the line was Jamie, with panic in his voice screaming, "The roof is blowing off of the shelter, HELP!"

The team arrived at the shelter within a minute or two. Jaime and Lukas Bartkus, LY7J, fought valiantly in the driving wind and cold rain to hold the remaining tin roofing material in place. The other team members covered our gear with tarps. Within 10 minutes, the fast-moving storm had passed, most of our gear was wet, and the shack was a wreck.

We decided to pack our gear for the evening and wait until morning to rebuild the station.

Now, for the rest of the story.

About Rotuma

Described as "one of the most beautiful, attractive, and romantic islands in the Pacific," Rotuma is located approximately 300 miles north of Fiji on the western fringe of Polynesia. The volcanic island comprises a land area of approximately 43 square kilometers, with the highest craters rising to heights of 850 feet. Its geographical location places it very near the intersection of the conventional boundaries of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, and traces of influence from each of these areas can be found in the physical composition, language, and culture of the island's inhabitants.

The first DXpedition to Rotuma took place in October 1988, operating from the village of Fapufa. The team consisted of Eric, K3NA; Toni, KN3T; Joe, VK8XX, and Eric, W6SZN, and they made 34,000 QSOs. Other DXpeditions to Rotuma include 3D2AG/p, 3D2R (2011); 3D2EU (2018); 3D2RRR (2022), and 3D22, 3D2V, and 3D2Y (2024).

3D2Y team (from left): Vama Atalifo, host; Nathan, K4NHW; Gregg, W6IZT; Dean, W2FQ; Connor, KD9LSV; Jamie, MØSDV; Lillian Atalifo, hostess, and Lukas, LY7J.

Our objective

Planning for our trip began in early 2024. We knew that we wanted to do something quite different by getting as many young hams as possible involved in our project.

In May 2024, at the Dayton Hamvention, I met with Neil Rapp, WB9VPG, YOTA Camp Director. We had a brief, but detailed discussion around collaborating with Youth on the Air for our upcoming trip to Rotuma, and a press release announcing our partnership went out on Tuesday following the Hamvention.

Over the next few months, we recruited about 40 young hams to participate as remote ops, most of whom would be experiencing the thrill of a DX pileup for the first time.

The on-island team was comprised of Gregg, W6IZT; Dean Chapman, W2FQ; Nathan Wood, K4NHW, and three young hams: Jamie, MØSDV; Lukas, LY7J, and Connor Dickey, KD9LSV.

Planning and logistics

By June 2024, planning efforts were underway, our equipment inventory was being defined, and we were working through packaging and shipping options. The preferred shipping option at the time was air freight.

The first shipping quote that we received for all 600+ kg of our equipment came in at about $8,500, about what we had initially forecasted. Organizing and packing our equipment took place at the QTH of Gregg, W6IZT, with the assistance of Nathan, K4NHW; George Nicholson, N4GRN, and Wes Lamboley, W3WL.

Our shipment date was rapidly approaching, and our gear was packed, staged, and ready for delivery to the freight forwarder.

Could we really pull this off with a minimum of carry-on and extra checked baggage?

NOT SO FAST!

We requested revised quotes to validate the quote that we had previously received. The new quotes came in significantly higher, forcing us to reevaluate our logistics options. It was determined that we needed to reduce the overall size and weight of our equipment and reduce the size of the air freight shipment by more than 50%.

As a result, each team member would have to check two or three additional bags to make this work.

The allowable baggage size and weight on the international flight was twice the size and weight allowed on the flight from Fiji to Rotuma. The weight constraints were strictly enforced. Bags could not be overweight! We would need to repack all our gear upon arrival in Fiji and again prior to departure from Fiji. Fortunately, we had planned overnight layovers in Fiji.

The team arrived in Fiji at about 5:30 a.m. local time on 14 November, after long and uneventful flights from the US. We began to repack our equipment after breakfast, from 30 kg suitcases into 15 kg duffel bags for the trip from Fiji to Rotuma.

While the math seems simple, the effort to repackage our gear took the entire day. We were limited to the number of checked bags on the flight to Rotuma, and we did not have any extra baggage capacity to waste. Each duffel bag weighed between 14.5 and 15 kg.

With the suitcases in storage at our hotel, we were ready for a nice meal and a good night's sleep before our early morning departure to Rotuma.

Aerial view of Rotuma Island.

On to Rotuma

Our host, Vama, greeted us at the Rotuma Airport, with two trucks serving as our transport, and several friends to help us with our gear. Our operating location was about 10 minutes away.

Upon our arrival at their home, we participated in a Mamasa ceremony, a Rotuman custom welcoming visitors and returnees, followed by a mid-day meal.

After the meal we began assembling stations and antennas. The NexGen-RiBs and multiband antennas are designed for rapid deployment, and within 90 minutes the RiBs were on the air and the remote team was racking up Qs, allowing the on-island team to focus on antenna and station installation. By the end of the afternoon, the antennas for 10-20 Meters were in place and both of the local stations were on the air.

So far, so good.

Rotuma was like stepping back in time. There are no hotels, and only a few small storefronts, which are operated by local residents; Rotumans live off the land and sea. There are a couple of homestays operated by families who open their homes to visitors, and finding one in a desirable location that could accommodate our team left us with only one option: Lillian's Homestay, operated by Lillian and Vama Atalifo.

Miss Lillian prepared three meals per day. She is a great cook, and we ate well. Meals consisted of chicken, pork, lobster, fish, local vegetables, and fruit. On Thanksgiving, we pre-

The NexGen RiB

Over the previous 18 months, Gregg, W6IZT; Warren Merkel, KD4Z, and John Norris, AA4AN, have been developing what has come to be referred to as the NexGenRiB. The NexGen Rib is a self-contained, lightweight, and compact remote-controlled station, first based upon the Elecraft K3, and now the K4D. It can fit into an aircraft overhead compartment and can be carried by a single person. After successful outings in 2024 to CEØZ, FS, and PJ7 we decided to include three NexGenRiBs in our plans. Connected to the Internet using Starlink, the NexGenRiB is the solution that will enable and support remote operations going forward.

pared the meal for our hosts and the team: roasted stuffed chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, and green beans were welcomed by all.

Commercial power (so to speak) is available on Rotuma for 16 hours per day with two 4-hour outage periods. During these times we would operate with a generator. Upon arrival, we were informed that the generator we planned to use had failed. But it gets better. The 240 VAC commercial power would routinely sag as low as 145 VAC, and our power supplies did not perform well under these conditions. Complicating matters, we tried a total of five generators before finding a suitable solution. More run time on the generators resulted in more fuel being burned, and the extra fuel costs quickly depleted our reserve funds.

The heat was unrelenting, and by late morning the temperature and humidity made it difficult to perform outdoor tasks. As the heat increased, our productivity declined. Maintaining hydration required focus, as we needed to consume plenty of fluids and electrolytes.

Two team members required IV fluids to rehydrate, and due to the unrelenting heat, recovery from dehydration took longer than expected.

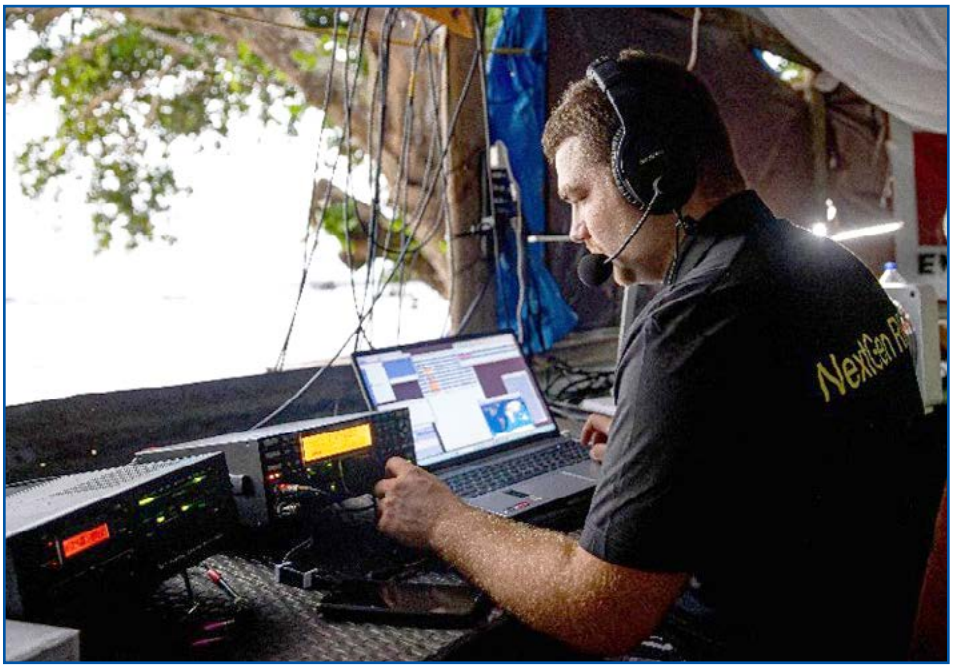
Any undressed wounds immediately attracted flies and other insects. Four of us experienced infected lacerations that required medical treatment during or after the DXpedition. Nathan, K4NHW, our EMT, proved to be invaluable.

Our Thanksgiving meal of roasted stuffed chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy and green beans.

Station configuration

The on-island stations consisted of two Elecraft K3S radios and KPA500 amplifiers. The antenna complement was vertical dipoles for 10-20 Meters, verticals for 30 and 40 Meters, an Inverted-L for 80 and 160 Meters, and a 5-element Yagi for 6 Meters. All of the antennas performed well.

The off-island team utilized three NexGen RiBs. These stations were paired with multiband verticals, each equipped with an automatic remote tuner located at the base of the antenna.



Typical station configuration.

The generator we relied on for power when commercial power was off.

This configuration simplifies band changes and was proven to work well at VP6A, E51D and N5J. We utilized Club Log for real-time uploads and its leaderboard.

A live podcast with Tim Duffy, K3LR, of DX Engineering enabled us to share our experiences in real time.

Visit with Tony 3D2AG/p.

Gregg, W6IZT, and Jamie, MØSDV, grabbed a ride to the village of Fapufa to meet with Tony a day before his departure. We shared stories of the history of ham radio on Rotuma while at the site of the 3D2XX operation in 1988. We spent a couple of hours helping Tony disassemble and store his antennas, masts and coax. He was not feeling too well as he too had a laceration that had become seriously infected. We later learned that he was hospitalized upon his return to Fiji. Thankfully, he has made a full recovery.

In conclusion

Our QSO count fell short of our goal, but our trip was a resounding success. This team came together as a cohesive unit, and we overcame every challenge with which we were presented. The three young members of the on-island team are excited about their next DXpedition adventure.

Next up we are going to Saba (PJ6) in October. Not an exceedingly rare DXCC entity, but the economics are compelling, and one where we can support a larger multinational team with eight young first-time DXpeditioners. Three members of the team will be YLs, and five of the ops are coming

from the 3D2Y off-island team.

The process of advancing off-island ops to an on-island team is working!

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all of those who supported our efforts including the following:

Clubs, DX organizations, vendors and individuals who provided financial support and/or equipment.

Neil, WB9VPG, and the young hams at YOTA who contributed to the success of this endeavor. Warren, KD4Z, and John, AA4AN, for their contributions to the NexGenRiB development. George, N4GRN, for his assistance with logistics, Wes, W3WL, for his guidance and encouragement. Jim, W4UCK, for his review and updating of our participant documents.

Kees, WØAAE, for recruiting and supporting the young ops on the off-island team. All of the Elmers on the off-island team. Wendy my YL, as she provided encouragement and support of our collaboration with YOTA.

None of this is possible without support from the Northern California DX Foundation. Thank you for your contributions, and your investment in the future of DXpeditioning.

Dedicated to the memory of Bob Allphin, K4UEE, SK 10 Feb 24.

On-Island Team Bios

Gregg, W6IZT — First licensed in 1968, Gregg is an avid DXer, DXpeditioner and occasional contester. A veteran of numerous DXpeditions, he is #1 DXCC Honor Roll with 349 DXCC entities confirmed and achieved 10 band DXCC and WAZ on 160-10 Meters. Over the past 30 years Gregg has operated as BV/W6IZT, TI/W6IZT, K5D, FS/W6IZT, HKØNA, PJ2T, C6AGU, C6AZT, KH6/W6IZT, PJ6A, PJ6/W6IZT, PJ7/W6IZT, K1N, VP6R, VP6A, JWØA, and 9X4X. Gregg has been on four teams that have received the prestigious SWODXA DXpedition of the Year award. Gregg is the designer of the NexGenRiB, a compact remote HF station, and recently received a grant from NCDXF to construct two new NexGeNRiB2s based upon Elecraft K4Ds.

Dean, W2FQ — Dean started his Amateur Radio operator career in 1972 as WN2KFE, with a strong passion for Morse code. After five decades as WA2KFE, he switched to W2FQ, much more efficient on CW. Dean's interests in ham radio include ARRL ARES activities, traffic handling, rag chewing and DXing. After a Heathkit DX6ØB/Hammarlund HQ140X set up, his pride and joy was a Drake C Line which he used before entering the Army. He chose the Drake C Line instead of buying a car! Dean reestablished his station in Massachusetts after active-duty service and built a state-of-the-art station that he wished he had in the 1970s. The mint Drake C Line is still the centerpiece of his station.

Nathan, K4NHW — Licensed in 2012 as a first-generation ham, Nathan's most recent DXpeditions include 3D2Y, PJ2T, PJ4G, JWØA and single op in HH2, 9Y4, 6Y5 and SM. He has served as a remote operator for 9G4X, VP6A, E51D, and he is also the Georgia state manager for the 13 Colonies Special Event. Nathan is a member of SEDXC, NFARL, INDEXA and NCDXF and currently serves as the Vice President of the Southeastern DX Club. After 24 years of service, he is currently a semi-retired Critical Care Paramedic working with the Atlanta Braves and other high-profile clients.

Jaime, MØSDV — From Staffordshire, England, 24-year-old Jaime has an extensive history in Amateur Radio dating back to 2015 where he has been involved in contesting and DXpeditioning including with some world-renowned teams. Jamie started traveling in 2017 where he 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, and M6T. Jamie was also part of Youth Team #2 at WRTC 2022 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.

Lukas, LY7J — The 22-year-old Amateur Radio enthusiast hails from Lithuania, and has been active in the hobby for seven years. He is particularly interested in contesting and DXing, focusing on making long-distance contacts with stations around the world. Lukas continues to actively participate in the amateur radio community, aiming to expand his experience and knowledge by taking part in more contests.

Connor, KD9LSV — An extra class license operator, Connor recently graduated from Bradley University (BSEE 2022) and is currently working as an engineer at a large aviation company. Some of his favorite things to do are contesting and FT8, as well as RTTY, and he actively contributes to various ham radio open-source projects. Connor is a member of Society of Midwest Contesters, St. Louis Suburban Amateur Radio Club and E-layer Contest Club.

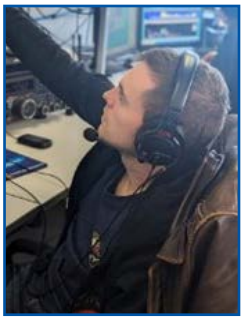
3D2Y Off-Island Team


Kees, WØAAE


Marhazk, 9M8HAZ


Pia, DL7PIA


Hojoong, DS1TUW

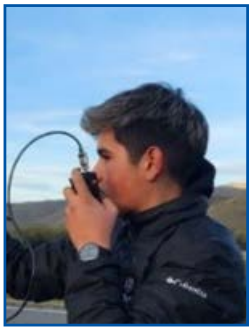

Jules, F4IEY


Brennan, K6BFL


Jacob, KA4JAM


Blake, KN4VKY


Alex, KO4ZMC


Theo, LU1XOP


Emiliano, LW6EGE


Mike, N4XTT


Isaiah, NB3I


Daniel, NC8R


Matúš, OM8ATE


Mert, TA3CEP

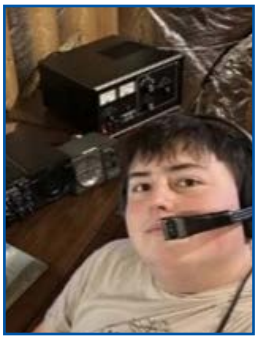

Tuğçe, TA3TGC


Furkan, TA7H


Yunus, TA1YEP


Merzuke, TA7YLY


Justin, VA3AQZ


Connor, W4IPC


William, WT5A


Emilia, YO8YL

George, YO9LIG

NCDXF Director Profile

Glenn, WØGJ, & Vivien, KL7YL, 50th Anniversary, December 2024.

Name & Call Signs: Glenn Johnson, WØGJ, VO2GJ, A51B

Past calls: WAØPUJ, A52GJ, FT5XM, JI1XQK, VP2EZ, VP5H, VU3RYJ, ZF2RT

Current QTH Location: Calmar, IA (extreme northeast corner of Iowa)

What were your previous QTHs? Iowa, Israel, Washington, Minnesota, Alaska, Kingdom of Bhutan

What is (was) your professional career? Retired orthopedic surgeon, specializing in adult reconstruction

What college degree(s) did you earn and where did you earn them? B.S. Forestry, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa; M.D., University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

Married? Kids? Grandkids? 50 trips around the sun with Vivien, KL7YL (an assigned call, not vanity!); daughter Melissa, N1MJ, married to Rolly, KOØLRH; son Mark, NØMJ, married to Emily, K4ON; son Paul, WØPJ, and daughter Carrie, NØCMJ.

NCDXF Leadership Positions? Current Secretary (6 years), past Vice President (3 years). Most senior board member in years on the board.

Other Leadership Positions? Ham club president once upon a time

Current DXCC status? Top of Honor Roll (355/340); Less than 20 to go for DX Challenge 3000 level; Closing in on 6-meter FFMA

Describe your shack and antenna system: Flex ecosystem: 6700/PGXL/TGXL/AGx2, four 30" 4K monitors (glass cockpit); 170' rotating tower: stacked SteppIRs, 4-el 40, stacked 6M7s (6M); 120' rotating tower: SteppIR, 3-el 30M, 40M rotating dipole; 80M: 4-Square array & dipole 120'; 160M: full-size phased verticals (Rohn 25) with elevated radials; Receive: 8 Beverages (every 45°); Satellite 2M/70cm arrays

DXpedition Experience? VKØIR Heard Island; A52A Bhutan; FT5XM Kerguelen; V59T Namibia; HKØNA Malpelo; K5D Desecheo; K1N Navassa; K5P Palmyra; VU4AN Andaman; VU7RG Lakshadweep; VP6R Pitcairn; CYØS Sable; CY9C St. Paul, and 3YØZ Bouvet… almost!

Contesting from home: A5, HC8, KP4, V5, VO, VP2E, VP5, & ZF; VP5H: 16 First Place World or First Place North America plaques ARRL

DX Contest; WØGJ: 10 First Place World 160M ARRL Contest, QRP category

WØGJ/KL7YL Shack

Pedal plane made from scratch to match Grandpa's plane.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING ABOUT CONTRIBUTING TO NCDXF? Don't THINK about it. Just DO it! Every little bit helps and it adds up! DXpeditions are well-vetted and you can be assured that your contribution will have its maximum effect.

AS AN AVID DXER WHAT SORTS OF TRENDS DO YOU SEE? Everything is more expensive and access is becoming more restricted. Like warfare is evolving into drone warfare, remote operation is evolving, allowing remote operating from your armchair. Remote operation is already helping to obtain permission from entities concerned about human infrastructure. We'll see much more in the future.

Wind powered CW machine.

(Left) 120' Rohn 25 rotating tower. (Above)170' Rohn 55G rotating tower.

ANY TIPS FOR DXERS? Get on the air. Listen, listen, listen. Join at least one DX club. Polish your skills by contesting. Fuel the fire! Contribute both financially and operationally to DXpeditions. Offer to help with logistics. Most people never know how much WORK is involved in organizing DXpeditions.

ANY ADVICE FOR NCDXF? Keep encouraging DXpeditions to seek funding. Continue encouraging and supporting youth participation, as they are the future. Continue to support technology such as the use of remote operations

WHAT MIGHT SOMEONE BE SURPRISED TO KNOW ABOUT YOU? "Wabush" (rabbit never stops running) is my Objibwe Indian name. I'm a pilot (ratings for hot air balloon, land plane, seaplane & helicopter) and I fly every day I can, and am finishing my commercial helicopter rating; I'm a firearms instructor, participate in pistol competitions and enjoy gunsmithing. Other interests include woodworking (furniture and "crafty stuff"); beekeeping; gardening and managing our orchard with 70+ fruit trees on our 100-acre farm which is off-grid and powered by solar and batteries; horses (currently retired to pasture/ornament status, but they still want attention!), and camping & 6 meter grid roving. I am also very active in our local church.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS? If you want to have friends, you've got to be a friend. Not to decide is to decide. In other words, set goals and strive for them! The future is NOW. Don't put things off.

C21MM — Nauru
Activating the 'Pleasant Island'

Werner Hasemann, DJ9KH

The C21MM team on Nauru Island.

HAVING COMPLETED TWO VERY successful DXpeditions to Papua New Guinea (P29RO) in 2022 and Tuvalu (T2C) in 2023, we thought that Nauru (C21) could be a similarly good spot for another "lightweight" DXpedition. Its ranking on the most wanted lists was okay, especially for SSB. Early research revealed regular, but expensive, flight connections from Australia; a handful of hotels and restaurants, and no problem obtaining a license.

Planning stages

With that information, in May 2024 we determined that adequate requirements were met to support the decision to activate Nauru. There was enough time left for teambuilding, to collect the necessary documents and to contact local authorities and the helpers on the island — or so we thought. However, the weeks ran away, and we became a little bit nervous, having obtained neither a license nor hotel reservations.

Fortunately, the necessary visas for Australia and Nauru came in time without any problems.

A few weeks before our planned departure and after all flights and hotels were booked, Nauru Airlines informed us that there were changes in their flight schedule, which resulted in the cancellation of our connecting flights, as well as hotels in Brisbane and Nauru. It was very time-consuming to rebook the affected arrangements, and we lost a lot of money as a result.

By late September, we had fixed timetables for two groups; the first, with six operators, was intended to arrive on Nauru on 10 October for the purpose of installing the beam antenna and make the necessary installations for the shack. The second group, with eight operators, would arrive five days later and would be responsible for the low-band antennas and the second operating site.

Our plan was to operate from the hotel where we would be housed. Situated close to the shore, it would have been ideal for us. Management didn't agree with our plan, even though there were no other tourists in the hotel.

Searching for an alternative, we located an Airbnb a few hundred meters away. Although it was equipped with a solid electrical power supply and fast internet, the rest was suboptimal — the area around the house was not suitable for more than one antenna, it was close to the main road and streetlights, and a 30-meter-high hill behind the house blocked the direction of our main interest (North America and Europe).

We continued to look for a second QTH for our planned low-band activities, settling on the grounds of the Catholic church, a few kilometers away.

Situated almost at the beach overlooking the ocean from west to east, there was space enough for the planned five antennas.

The disadvantage of having two QTHs was that it required daily taxi transfers for the operators at an extra expense.

Andre, DL8LAS; Axel, DL6KVA, and Frank, DL1KWK, operating from C21MM.

Operating from two locations

The pre-team with Frank Milatz, DL1KWK; Norbert Strauch, DL2RNS; Georg Tretow, DL4SVA; Axel Schernikau, DL6KVA; Rolf Thieme, DL7VEE, and Andre Schanko, DL8LAS, built DXpedition-proven 5-element LZ wire beam on a six-meter mast. Combined with our Pentaplexer, we were able to use that antenna to operate on three bands simultaneously. We had three K3S radios, which were equipped with cascaded band-pass filters to protect their front ends from being overloaded. This combination was proven successful on earlier DXpeditions as well as the logging software UCX-Log, which allowed us to interconnect the transceivers and transfer the logs to Club Log in seconds.

The first five days of operation ended with almost 30,000 QSOs and gave us a bullish mood. Radio conditions were excellent most of the time and the DX community was hungry to work us.

The second group, with Ronny Jerke, DG2RON; Gerd Richter, DJ5IW; Olaf Taesch, DJ7TO; Werner, DJ9KH; Rudolf Scheiber, DK3CG; Joe Pick, DK5WL; Christian Buenger, DL6KAC, and Olaf Matthaei, DL7JOM, landed on 15 October. They brought with them the remaining equipment, including almost 80 meters of mast material, which was to be used for the low-band antennas at our second operating site.

The first impression of the second group was awesome. They had direct shots to Europe and North America, and were only a few meters to the ocean. They were sure that the pre-team had chosen the best possible QTH for low-band DXing. That impression also gave them extra motivation for the necessary antenna work, as temperatures rose to well above 35°C and humidity near 100%.

One of the two 22-meter fiberglass masts was used for an 80-meter vertical and a 40-meter loop antenna, the other for a 160-meter vertical. Besides those, we had a delta loop for 30 Meters and a vertical for 60 Meters. The verticals were equipped with elevated radials. A few days later, we completed the installations with loop antennas for 12 and 17 Meters to use during the daylight hours. Another loop antenna was used for 6 Meters — simple but effective.

With all men on board and all antennas installed, the real shift operations began!

On the air

Having two operating sites, 14 operators with different preferences, six-hour shifts, and the uncertainty of the taxi system, made planning a little complicated — but at least we could plan for the changed circumstances. Our goal was 100,000 QSOs, focusing on the low bands with a good mix of modes and continents.

We dealt with frustrations the first few days. A K3S and one of the amplifiers failed on the second day and could not be substituted. Four times we had problems with damaged antennas; causes unknown. Having two 24-hour operating sites made it necessary to adjust our antenna and filter planning; we simply needed a greater choice of antennas for both sites. Fortunately, we had enough material to construct additional loop antennas, which were reasonable alternatives.

Father Robati and team.

Most frustrating were the very intensive magnetic storms with high A and K indices. They had a big impact on our operation and prevented good pileups into Europe and more. Shifts with only two QSOs per hour are really boring!

Our past DXpeditions (Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea) taught us that we had to take a high level of atmospheric and man-made noise into account when we were dreaming of being successful on the low bands near the equator. With that in mind, we were prepared with several types of low-band receiving antennas.

We tried a Double-Half-Delta-Loop-Antenna, a Beverage on ground (BOG) and an end-fed half-wave antenna (EFHW), but none were very effective. We also tried changing power supplies, switching off unnecessary LED bulbs and improving the grounding system. Good ideas all, but none provided a solution for our receiving problems.

It was annoying and frustrating to read comments online that our signals in Europe and North America were readable on 160M and 80M, yet we were unable to improve our receiving situation to hear more callers. Nevertheless, we left 160M and 80M with 3,100 QSOs, which was far below our expectations.

Looking back on the 19 days of our DXpedition, it can be said that we did our best under the circumstances with sometimes marginal band conditions as a result of heavy ionospheric disturbances.

We finished with around 94,000 QSOs — 16% on SSB, 36% on CW, 4% on RTTY and 44% on FT8. So, we had a good mix of the "classic modes" and FT8, although some of the team members thought we could have done more on the classic modes.

Having a look at the distribution of QSOs per continent, we are proud about working more than 38% of the total QSOs with stations in Europe and 25% with stations in North America. The stations from Asia (mostly Japan), more or less adjacent to us, filled the log with 32%.

A pleasant surprise was 6-meter propagation with almost daily openings into Japan. With one of our K3S radios and a simple four-meter-tall rhombic loop we had more than 1,600 QSOs in all modes, including some with Europe and Alaska.

CQWW SSB Contest

After having been very successful in the CQWW SSB Contest from Tuvalu, we decided to participate in that contest from Nauru. We saw a chance to do well in the Multi-Two category with seven operators at two operating sites. Conditions in the contest were excellent, especially on 10 Meters, and we were happy with 2,937 QSOs and a score of 2,963,895 points, which earned us 2nd Place in Oceania.

Humanitarian project

The electrical power supply system on Nauru is in a good shape, with much of the electricity produced by a central diesel-powered power station. Our hotel had a huge solar plant, which supplied the hotel and its seawater desalination plant. After the first power shutdown however, we realized that electricity in local households was sold on a prepaid basis. Buying our first prepaid card, we were shocked by the high price for electricity, so to save energy we switched off the air conditioners whenever it was possible, but not the amplifiers.

Father Robati, head of the Catholic community, allowed us to use some rooms as our operating site and the area around the church to install antennas. There, we were well equipped, with electricity and fast Internet. In conversations with Father Robati, we talked about the high cost of electricity and ways to get out of this dilemma.

We were surprised to learn that he and his community already discussed the necessity and their desire to become independent from the local energy supplier, and contribute to the island's environmental protection. Their plans included a solar power plant with storage, which would be sufficient to supply the church, the schools and the kindergarten with electricity as the first step. The second step could be a solar-powered seawater desalination plant.

We found this project worthy of our support, and are grateful for the extra $1,000 donation from INDEXA for this humanitarian project.

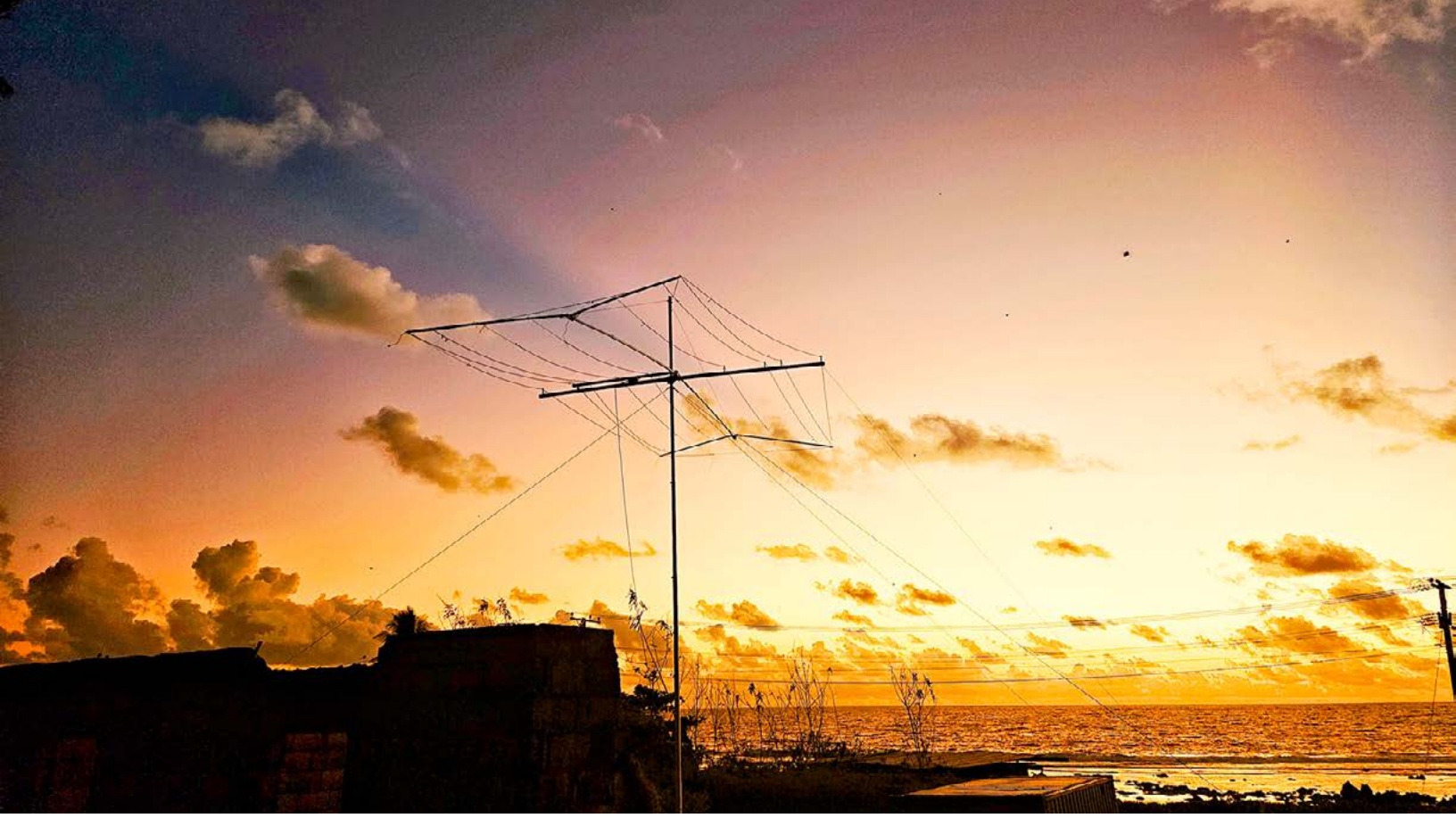
C21MM in the news

On a small island, it only takes a few hours before the public knows who is new to the island and the purpose of their visit. The locals rely on Nauru MediaNews-NTV and the FM radio for their information, so we were not too surprised when a reporter knocked on our door asking for an interview.

The following morning, they came fully equipped and prepared with a camera team. Ronny, DG2RON, our youngster, explained what Amateur Radio means, the technical background and what our job was on their island, and why tens of thousands radio amateurs were interested to make contact with us from Nauru.

Werner, DJ9KH, took over the practical part and demonstrated Amateur Radio with some SSB and CW QSOs. It seemed that the Morse code was the

The Menen Hotel — our base for operations.



The LZ Beam antenna against a beautiful sunset.

most impressive feature for them, and the camera operator was very interested in learning.

The interview was broadcast on the local news and can also be seen on the NTV Facebook page.

Final remarks

Although we did not reach our QSO goal, we performed quite well under the given circumstances.

We are grateful for the positive responses we received from the Amateur Radio community for this DXpedition and for the financial support from our sponsors. Thanks to Phil, C21TS, and all our supporters on the island. For further information, visit our homepage at *c21mm.mydx.de*.

50 Years Ago
A Blast From the Past

West Coast DX Bulletin
published every week by the Marin County DX Group
April 8, 1975

A couple of the local QRPers came by last week and we sat in the sun and looked across the canyon to the far hillside green with Spring grass. "You know something," one of the QRPers said, "I remember those good days when we were all in school, and that was a long time ago. But why is it that things are not the same any more and we don't have the fun we used to have? Whatever happened to those good times?"

None of us had an answer to this one for there are times when we wonder what happened to those good days. And we thought of those half-remembered songs with their memory of the golden days. And we know they will never come again and sometimes there are things we remember and wonder if they might have gone differently. Nostalgia catches us all sooner or later and finally one of the QRPers spoke up. "I think that these are the good days," he said, "for we are all here together, the winds are warm and it is another Spring. What more could we want?''

For a while we thought about some sunspots but we said nothing. For it is sometimes sad to think of the days that will never come again and the friends we may never see again. But each day is a day for a new memory and some day the sunspots will rise again. ''Live each day well," one of the QRPers commented and we agreed. Meanwhile, look for the sunspots in each morning sky and the reports on the sad years of DXing comes your way by First Class mail for $13.00 a year.... $15.00 by airmail etc…

9L5A — Sierra Leone 2024

Patrick Bittiger, F2DX

The 9L5A team sporting the latest in NCDXF fashion wear.

F6KOP Radio Club de Provins (France) had organized a DXpedition to Sierra Leone (Banana Island) in 2019 with the call sign 9LY1JM. With limited human and material resources, we made 50,000 QSOs. No big DXpedition had taken place in Sierra Leone for five years and the DXCC country was 77th on the Club Log Most Wanted List. So, we decided to go back.

Preparations

The team was composed of 15 operators, most of whom are regulars; however, we wanted to give a chance to a few new operators who had never traveled with F6KOP or who had never done a group DXpedition.

The team members were: Patrick, F2DX (CW and leader); Olivier Tymkiw, HB9GWJ (SSB and leader); Jean-Luc Missler, F1ULQ (SSB); Fleury Thierry, F1DHX (SSB/RTTY); Damien Weiland, F4AZF (SSB); Guillaume Sauvage, F4FET (SSB/RTTY); Diégo Thobie, F4HAU (SSB); Johan Barre, F4HHL (SSB); Gildas Roussel, F4HRG (SSB/RTTY); Bruno Marchi, F5AGB (CW); Xavier Egurrola, F5NTZ (CW); David Albert, F8AAN (CW); Philippe Schlegel, F8EFU (CW); Misho Radibratovic, F8GGV (CW), and Eric Vancraenbroeck, ON7RN (CW).

Our equipment was prepared, tested and weighed at F6KOP over several weeks. This work of major importance is managed by operators, but also by a few members of the radio club who don't go on DXpeditions but undoubtedly contribute to their success. Each participant receives a document of around 30 pages constantly updated by F2DX. Everyone therefore has the same information, down to the smallest details.

On the evening of 26 November, we all met at a hotel in Roissy as our departure took place early the next morning. This was the opportunity to greet each other, some for the first time, and to have a nice evening together.

A long travel day

Before sunrise the next morning, we were all at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris where F5PBM and F5GSJ joined us to bring the DXpedition equipment. Everything had been prepared and everyone knew exactly what luggage he had to take during the outward and return journeys. We checked 30 pieces of luggage, including four oversized bags for the masts and antennas. The transceivers, ACOM 500S amps and PCs were with us in the airplane cabin.

This was our first time traveling on Brussels Airlines, but we did not have a good experience.

The check-in was very long and poorly organized; some luggage we paid for was not listed on their documents and we had to pay for it again; some luggage was refused for excess weight of only 1 kg, while others weighed significantly less than the 23 kg limit.

We felt that for a group of 15 passengers, having paid a significant amount

(Left) Midnight bus repairs in the middle of nowhere. (Right) Adding oil to the generator — it worked!

of airfare, everything possible was done to charge us extra fees. It should also be noted that the weight for our carry-on bags was limited to 8 kg (instead of the usual 12 kg), forcing us to review the packaging of sensitive equipment.

We landed at Sierra Leone's Freetown International Airport on 27 November at 8:15 p.m. Baggage claim was slow, and it took two hours before we left the airport. Fortunately, everything was planned and organized by our host Zuzu and our police escort patiently awaited us. Unfortunately, due to a two-hour flight delay, we missed the last ferry and had to drive the much-longer land route.

With 45 pieces of luggage and about 20 people, our bus was almost bursting. The atmosphere was good, especially as Zuzu and our escort sang very lively welcome songs. We were looking forward to checking into our hotel, but were again delayed — this time by an aging clutch that died in the middle of nowhere. The local people were magicians! They managed a clutch repair with nothing and we were back on the road 1½ hours later.

It was 4 a.m. when we arrived at Lumthubul Gardens in Bureh Town, and the hotel staff was awake and ready to serve us a hearty meal. We even pushed through the briefing, initially planned for the next day, and went to bed at 5 a.m.

Getting situated

After a very short night, our plan was still to install everything that day, starting with our 10.5 kVA diesel generator, before pulling two large-gauge power lines to the stations. The hotel was surrounded by vegetation and the tide limited the installation of our antennas, but by 9 p.m. the equipment was ready — except for a few antennas, which would be erected the next day — and we began to operate.

We had six stations equipped with ACOM 1010 or 500S amplifiers (kindly loaned by ACOM and the French company PROSIC). The pileups were huge and quickly made us forget about our fatigue.

We had planned to balance the operating to prioritize as much as possible the "human" modes, even if it meant making fewer QSOs. It was inconceivable to have so many operators and let our stations run automated FT8 while we enjoyed the beach and long nights of sleep. We were there to enjoy ourselves

(Left and Right) Building antennas on the beach.

The 9L5A team working their stations.

while also satisfying as many people as possible, especially in the classic modes of CW, SSB and RTTY.

One of our six stations was reserved for 6M during the day and 60M at night. Those two bands were particularly productive, logging 3,836 QSOs on 6M and 6,678 on 60M. A QO-100 station was also installed to satisfy satellite enthusiasts.

Daily routine

The days followed one another and were similar: fill up and drain the generator; sunshine; heat and humidity; excellent atmosphere, and good meals prepared by the hotel staff. The pileups were often very intense and even complicated, due to good propagation and lack of discipline, which was difficult to enforce.

We did not go out much. The only excursions were to go into the village where we delivered much-needed school supplies. The locals we met were very kind and welcoming.

We did however award a "red card" to the village mayor who did not seek to meet us, but sent a battalion of police to visit us instead. Our license being in order, the police encounter finished positively after a few hours.

Wrapping up

With an average of 13,000 QSOs per day, we reached the symbolic milestone of 100,000 QSOs after eight days and finished with almost 115,000 contacts in the log (53% on CW and SSB) after nine days of operating.

It was rather sad that local villagers lacked certain basic comforts due to not being connected to the power grid. On the other hand, it certainly limited the RFI to our receivers. We did not experience any equipment failures, other than having bad contacts on a transceiver and some bad band filters. The small ACOM 500S amplifiers that we had never used before were very reliable without overheating.

On 8 December, we departed for the airport, this time taking the ferry and saving us considerable time. However, we could not leave differently than we arrived — and experienced another breakdown on the same bus! A few welds later and the African magic worked once again.

One of the attributes of F6KOP DX-peditions is to offer free confirmations by LoTW as soon as the log is corrected (two or three weeks after our return). So, you never have to wait six months or pay for a confirmation, which costs us nothing.

(Left) The recipients of some much-needed school supplies in the village. (Right) After they verified that our license was in order, the police were happy to pose with us for a photo.

A bird's eye view of our operation headquarters.

Acknowledgements

We would especially like to thank the following for their support:

NatCA (National Communications Authority) qui a été à notre écoute pour l'attribution de notre licence 9L5A (who granted our request for the 9L5A license).

Christine, owner of Lumthubul Gardens, who made things much easier in all areas of our visit.

The hotel staff, all of whom were very kind and helpful.

Our Zuzu liaison, who was clearly the man for the job by facilitating all the needed checks and remained with us throughout the stay to help guarantee our safety,

Our sponsors who have been particularly generous and without whom we would certainly never have been able to post such QSO numbers.

The numerous individual donors listed on our website.

ACOM and PROSIC for the loan of the three ACOM 500S amplifiers.

The members of F6KOP who prepared the equipment and the administrators who kept our information up to date.

A video is available on our website, *9l5a.wordpress.com*.

9L5A will be remembered as one of the best DXpeditions ever made by F6KOP. We hope to see you in 2025 for a new radio club adventure.

Show your support for NCDXF

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.*

Click HERE to order securely through our website.

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

Send me the following supplies (shipping included):

ITEM	UNIT COST	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Join NCDXF with your Contribution / Renewal (circle one)			$
50th Anniversary Sweatshirt (circle size S / M / L / XL / 2X / 3X)	$70		$
Short sleeve T-shirt (circle size M / L / XL / 2X / 3X)	$25		$
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			$

Name & callsign _____

Mailing address _____

Email _____

Check enclosed or Charge to Visa / MC / AmEx (circle one)

Card number _____ Expiry _____ Signature _____

Mail your completed order form to NCDXF, PO Box 2012, Cupertino, CA 95015-2012

(12-24)

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 70½ 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.