NCDXF newsletter

ncdxf.org

Spring 2026

3YØK – Bouvet Island
The Impossible Mission

Ken Opskar, LA7GIA

On the afternoon of 28 February 2026, a small reconnaissance team of three loaded their survival gear into an AS350 helicopter aboard the vessel *Argus* on the northeast side of Bouvet Island. Our mission was to scout the landing area and determine the best location for a ham radio camp.

After three years of preparation, the moment had finally arrived. We walked across the helideck area, and we all felt the same excitement as we stepped into the cabin and locked our seat belts. We had carefully measured and loaded essential supplies so we could survive on the island in case we would be stranded there unexpectedly. We had undergone training on how to handle emergencies if it was necessary to evacuate the helicopter. During the voyage from Cape Town, we had prepared the team and ourselves for this mission. We had discussed the risks associated with the flight, the camp build up and the landing. All the talks had made us confident the pilots were up for the task to take us ashore from the vessel safely. We had the supplies needed, the experience of staying there before and the necessary mental strength. As the rotors spun up, the pilots gave us thumbs-up, and we lifted off while teammates on deck cheered. Returning to Bouvet filled me with excitement. A narrow weather window had opened, and our experience in 2023 had taught us to seize such opportunities without hesitation.

Changes

As we approached Cape Fie, it was clear how the island had changed since our last visit — the glacier had receded significantly and wildlife had taken over the area. Thousands of seals occupied Cape Fie, with some reaching all the way up to the former camp location and beyond! I directed the pilots to fly slowly towards the area that had been designated the "upper area" or NA camp. We knew that this location would be *continued on page 3*

Fog and rain came from the glacier into our camp, making it very wet!

In This Issue

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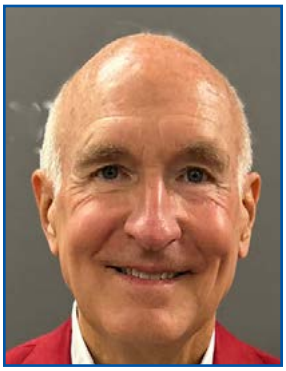
From the President's desk



Hello everyone! This is my first message as president of NCDXF following our annual meeting, and I am honored to serve the Foundation and our global DX community. First, I want to congratulate Kevin Rowett, K6TD, for serving the NCDXF and the greater DX community for the last five years as president. He has done an excellent job serving everyone, and you can be confident that he took an active interest in every DXpedition we supported.

Some organizational changes to the board have also occurred. George Wallner, AA7JV, resigned to allow him more time for a new nautical venture that he started. We owe him a deep debt as the original Radio-in-a-Box (RiB) designer and user. He stepped up the possibilities for all DXpeditions by his innovative work that many others are now using.

We invited Gregg Marco, W6IZT, to the board to fill the vacancy and he accepted. He was elected at a special board meeting following our annual meeting. Gregg has led many DXpeditions, strongly embraces youth involvement, and developed a successful iteration of the RiB concept. He is currently working on a new software interface to further enhance remote operation.

The board has been keen on involving youth in the DX aspect of our hobby. The board purposefully expanded its size at our special meeting to allow us to add two talented young DXers. At our special meeting we elected Violetta, KN2P, and Max, N4ML, to the NCDXF board. You may know of them already from their own DXpedition adventures. We look forward to the new ideas we know they will bring to the board.

Neil Rapp, WB9VPG, Youth on the Air-Americas Camp Director has incorporated more DX education in their annual YOTA summer camp curriculum. Because of that enhancement, NCDXF has granted $10,000 to support their camp. Many of the young DXpeditioners have been involved with YOTA and we feel this is a good program to support for the future of DXing.

As this sunspot cycle winds down, we are still seeing good DX activity. Participation in the DX Marathon has grown, and many are actively chasing DX every day to see how many entities and zones they can work each year. NCDXF has received a continuous stream of applications for DXpedition funding this year. That includes Peter I, one of the Top 10 most wanted, now in the planning stages for 2027.

We all realize how difficult it is to make the ARRL DXCC Honor Roll. The NCDXF wants to encourage any DXpedition leader to get permission to activate a Top 20 entity on the current Club Log Most Wanted List. Please note our "*Make DX Happen*" Incentive Award on the *NCDXF website*.

See you in the pileups!
73, Craig, K9CT

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.

Safety training on our way to Bouvet.

favorable compared to staying further down. After being dropped off, Peter, our guide, Dennis, KT8X, and I began scouting. Within minutes we found an ideal site with a reasonably flat area for tents and flanked by small, elevated hills, perfect for the Yagi antennas. These natural rises would give our monobanders excellent takeoff angles from this side of the island.

After discussion with Norwegian Polar Institute, we concluded that Cape Fie was the only location on the island that provided a safe place to set up our camp. The area presented no risk of rockfall or icefall, and no danger of crevasses — the camp would be positioned on solid rock. Safety was, and remained, our foremost priority.

Off loading

Meanwhile, the helideck team had already prepared the next sling loads. The operation had been meticulously planned; every item weighed and measured. Knowing that Bob, W9AP, was running the deck gave me complete confidence. The first sling loads arrived within minutes, and after several rotations and a refueling, four more team members were dropped off that Saturday afternoon.

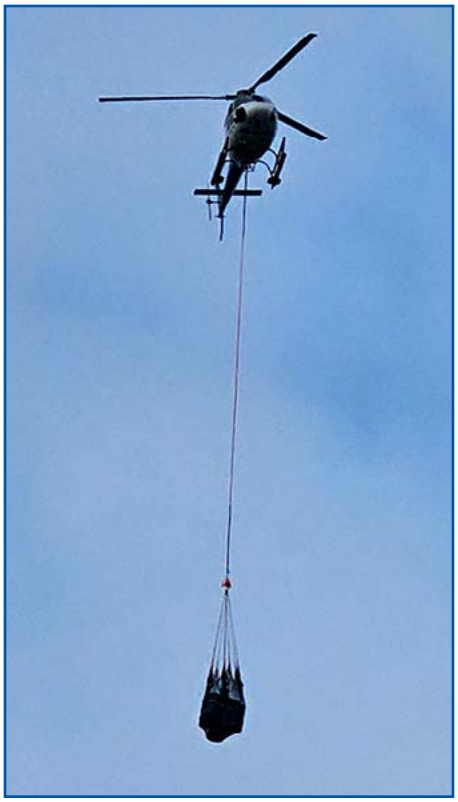
With seven of us ashore, we focused on erecting the main tent before sunset — a critical task given our experience three years earlier when a tent frame snapped in high winds. This time, the team executed flawlessly. The focus was to build the infrastructure by bringing sufficient essential supplies to accommodate a team on the island. And we focused on having the infrastructure ready before bringing in more people. At sunset we completed the first tent, and we settled down to eat our first MRE meals. MRE meals keep you alive!

Mother Nature

The first night was a wet affair and the morning sunrise came with a strong wind — giving me flashbacks to 2023. The rain and strong wind caused the tent to leak, and everything inside started to get wet. It was cold, wet and two-thirds of the team was not yet on the island. It was miserable and we just had to wait for the weather to calm down. We had the determination and patience, and we kept our spirits up as the pilots predicted a weather opening the following day.

The pilots assessed the weather based on many factors: visibility, precipitation and risk for icing, temperature, wind and wind gust/speed, the risk of fog, the ship's rolling +/- 3°, and the sun. All factors we could not control! We had integrated the pilots and vessel crew into our team; they were all an essential part of the DXpedition. They understood the task, the priorities, and really wanted us to succeed. Our success was their success, at the same time always making safe decisions, with contingency, no hazardous operations. All the team-building and meetings had paid off! I particularly liked how they were on deck to get a feel for the wind and wind gust, stretching their arms out — talking while evaluating the risks.

Our planning had evolved through several phases as we refined how to establish a camp and how to move people and equipment safely on and off the island. This was a complex operation, and we would rather leave some equipment behind in order to get all the guys ashore.



Helicopter sling load going to Bouvet.

Monday morning arrived and the weather was good! We started slinging more loads and got eight more people on the island, then we made the decision to stop transporting people and equipment in order to build the infrastructure to accommodate the team we had in case of severe weather. It was good to have experienced guides on the island who focused on our safety.

The Argus docked in Cape Town, South Africa, before our departure.

The 3YØK Team — (standing, from left): Vadym, UT6UD; Gudmi, TF3SG; Laci, HAØNAR; Dennis, KT8X; Max, N4ML; Alex, DL2ALY; Ken, LA7GIA; Bob, W9AP, and James, W7EY. (Kneeling, from left): Stig, LB5SH; Adrian, KO8SCA; Cezar, VE3LYC; Regin, OY1R, and Don, IK2EGL.

We rapidly installed more tents and several hours later we were in a good position to receive more people and the last of the equipment. By Monday afternoon the team and all equipment were ashore. I could not believe the sight of 10 generators, 10 radios, 10 amplifiers and a 500 kg load of antennas on the island! Until then I had not allowed myself to think we would succeed, but instead stayed focused on the work tasks. Seeing all the gear and all the people, I realized we were in position to make a good effort. I greeted all the operators as they came out of the helicopter — there were a lot of smiling faces!

Setting up

It took five days from our initial landing to complete the camp setup: seven stations, five Yagis, verticals for 160M-40M, and five large tents, including three smaller emergency sleeping tents for the guides and private group, a social tent and a radio tent. During those first days, we focused on building the camp and facilities, erecting simpler antennas to get on the air as we battled the windy conditions. Then we added the powerful Yagis!

The wind on Bouvet is relentless — typically around 30 knots (rarely below 20) and often reaching 40-50 knots with 60-knot gusts. Every time you stepped outside a tent, a 30-knot gust would hit you. At times it was difficult even to stand upright. Imagine installing antennas!

For many guys, it was a cold, wet and windy "vacation" — yet no one complained! It was a real team effort behind the small village on Bouvet.

Finally on the air

We started the operation and, as imagined, the pileups were fierce. Our monoband Yagis from WIMO (3 to 5 elements on 20M, 15M and 10M) were a major strength. With ACOM amplifiers running around 1kW, we produced strong signals across much of the world.

The Spiderbeam fibrepoles performed impressively, bending heavily in the wind but returning to normal once conditions eased. We used an 18-meter top-loaded vertical for 160M and full-size verticals for 80M and 40M. Our main radios were ICOM 7610s, which performed flawlessly as we had six stations in one tent. In the social tent we later added the 500W Flex Aurora radios mainly for FT8 operation. At peak we would typically operate six to seven radios, but after midnight the propagation would be worse, and we would be down usually to two to three radios and fewer operators. We ran 6-hour shifts and rotated through the day and the bands so everyone could have the opportunity to experience different conditions. It wasn't a strict schedule where each person was assigned a band and antenna; instead it was set up as a team effort. The six guys on duty would handle the radios together and swap seats as needed to make the

In heavy wind gusts, the guys could hardly stand upright and the 80M full-size vertical bent against the winds.

WIMO 20M monobander Yagi.

The 3YØK camp consisted of three large sleeping tents, one social tent and one radio tent. The smaller private tents were for non-hams.

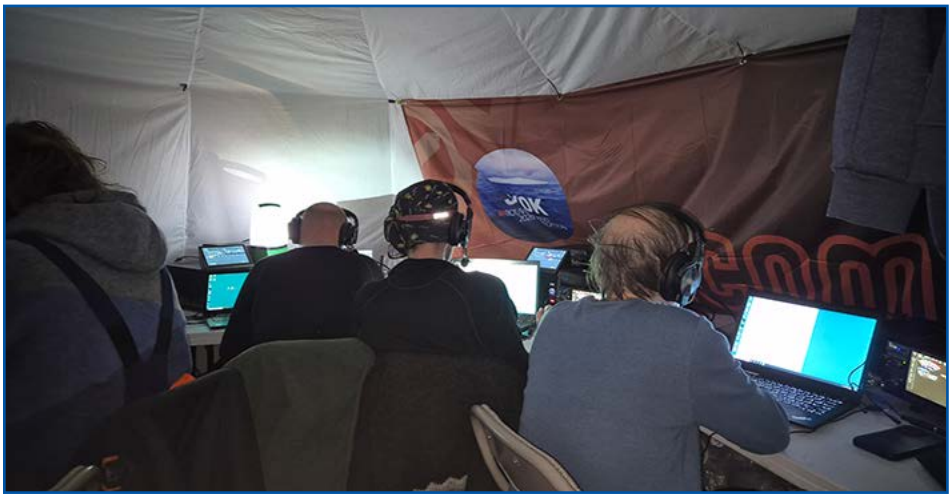
most of it. Instead of muscling their way to the radio, we emphasized sharing the hot antennas and hot bands as a team. Some guys prefer SSB and some CW, so by giving people the opportunity to enjoy the mode they preferred we also made sure each person was a happy operator. The 10M monobander was a winner and, not surprisingly, everyone wanted to operate it. With five elements and a great take-off, it performed really well! We received signals so strong that the S-meter often peaked well over S9. We believe the strong signals took away some of the DQRM. Compared to last time, in general, we were not affected by DQRM. As long as we could keep our QSO rate up, we weren't bothered.

The propagation was mostly good, although we experienced a solar storm the last few days of the operation. We ran in-band operation mostly on 40M, 20M, 17M, 15M and 12M, which allowed us to increase the number of contacts. We did have some interstation interference — expected in a QRO setup — but overall we managed this well with a combination of frequency adjustments, filters and fine-tuning antenna locations and separation. Having a few radios in the social tent was also a success, as there were radios everyone could play with.

Highlights

After a week, antennas started to suffer under the relentless gale-force winds and elements began falling off, some had high SWR due to loose connections, and some of the Spiderpoles were bending like a fishing pole. One Yagi fell down, but that was due to the guy anchor not being properly installed for 60-knot winds. We made an effort to raise the antenna, but it was a losing battle against the wind. The wind was so strong we had trouble standing on our feet, and it was just unsafe to re-install it. At times, we would find ourselves outside at 0300 to fix an antenna SWR problem. Those were the moments — when we battled the wind just to give the DXers a chance to work us — that stood out as we asked ourselves, "Why are we doing this?" Knowing that we kept adding contacts to the log, working friends and people who had donated to make this DXpedition a success, gave us the spirit we needed in this environment.

Another moment that stood out was pizza delivery by Ultimate Aviation — they delivered pizza to the



In total, there were six stations in the main tent, and two Flex FT8 stations in the social tent.

Ken, LA7GIA, returned to the vessel after 15 days on the island.

island with their helicopter express service — it was the most expensive pizza we ever ordered! The MREs kept us alive, but the pizza gave us some added energy.

On one exceptional weather day, we seized the opportunity to go sightseeing via helicopter — it was a real adventure to view the peak of Olavtoppen and the glacier from above.

Extraction day

As the end of the DXpedition neared, we began planning our extraction from the island. We studied the parameters for a weather window, but it was constantly changing. However, on Saturday, 14 March, we got the thumbs up and we started our extraction.

The sling loads were carefully measured and lined up, and it went really fast. The first 15 people were extracted, then we did another five sling loads — and then only the tents and some smaller antennas and radios remained. We decided to go QRT as we had to tear down the camp.

Seven people remained. Their mission: tear down the camp, remove all waste and go over the camp, making sure the area was clean. That took five hours of hard work, going until sunset. We awoke at 0600 the following morning and worked another three hours before the helicopter came, taking the last sling loads from the island.

At the end, three operators remained, with the recon equipment, food, water and supplies to stay — IF the helicopter could not return. We had an emergency plan for that also.

Seeing the helicopter return to pick us up stood out as an unreal moment — the whole team was gathered on deck as all equipment and people were back. We had succeeded!

Success

The success of this DXpedition was only possible due to the great teamwork by everyone involved. We achieved our goals: we made more than 100,000 QSOs, we experienced no injuries and it was a happy team that returned to the welcome ceremony hosted by the South African Radio League (SARL) in Cape Town the following weekend.

The 3YØK budget was approximately $1.7 million, making it the most expensive DXpedition ever undertaken. Without the collaboration of a small private group, this DXpedition would not have been possible. Their financial contribution was significant, and we, and the DX community, are grateful for that.

In addition, NCDXF provided the largest grant ever ($168,000), which also included the operator fees for two young operators. This contribution stood out and we thank NCDXF for their gracious support. Without this, we would not have been able to execute the Bouvet DXpedition.

We also want to acknowledge our corporate sponsors DX Engineering, ICOM and ACOM along with the support team, medical personnel, polar guides, helicopter pilots and vessel crew that were all essential to the success of our mission.

We extend our deepest thanks to all supporters who believed in us and made the Bouvet Island DXpedition possible.

On behalf of the entire 3YØK team —thank you!

3YØK – Bouvet Island
A Youth's Perspective

Max Freedman, N4ML

In 2016, at the age of 12, I got my Amateur Radio license. For myriad reasons, I never got involved with the greater Amateur Radio community, just the other kids at school who were part of my school club and the local clubs in Charleston, SC, where I grew up.

Fast forward a few years — the sunspot cycle was better, I was living in Huntsville, AL, and I took a dive back into the hobby. Four years after that, I ended up on Bouvet Island on the most expensive DXpedition ever.

Left to purely my own devices, this never would have happened. There were a few key instruments that enabled me to not only get invited to a DXpedition like Bouvet, but to actually go and be ready for the experience, and this lays a good footprint for youth operators who want to get involved in this aspect of the hobby.

Being active

In retrospect, the most important thing I did was the simplest: being active both on the bands and in person at DX conventions and hamfests. You can send as many emails as you want and, oftentimes, that can be very effective. But it's hard to beat going to a place like Visalia and talking to people who have done exactly what you want to do. And, talking to a fledgling operator is a much better way to get a read on what they actually want to do.

For me, going to Visalia gave me the opportunity to have extended chats with Adrian, KO8SCA, and that was how I even learned that going to Bouvet was a possibility. It was at this same 2025 Visalia International DX Convention that NCDXF formally announced their youth grant program, effectively formalizing what had been going on for a few years. Even with that announcement, I never would have thought that Bouvet was possible because it would be my first DXpedition. However, Adrian assured me that, if it's something I wanted to do, we can make it happen. It also helped that I was active on the bands, so my call sign wasn't entirely unfamiliar to people, especially those who contest.

Going to Bouvet when I did means that everything I learned on that DXpedition will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Outside of building a ham radio network, it was the NCDXF Youth Grant Program that enabled me to go on the DXpedition. I am lucky enough to be in a stable career at the ARRL, so taking time off for a DXpedition was possible, and I make enough money that I can afford costs related to gear, work trips, and travel. What deeply concerned me, however, was the operator fee for 3YØK, which was over a quarter of my annual salary. After giving NCDXF a ham radio resumé and being officially invited to the team, I received a youth operator grant from NCDXF which covered 100% of this operator fee.

Preparations

After the shock wore off, I got to work.

A month later, I was in Norway taking part in a team workshop, testing gear, packing the container, and actually getting to know the rest

of the people I'd be with on a remote island for a month. Then I got to work building out my gear — all items that I will continue to use on future projects. What was really important to me was that I would actually add value to the team, and not just be some kid who got invited along for the ride.

Thankfully, the leadership team had the exact same view, and I became a valued contributor to the DXpedition plans, and co-led the task of putting together our DXpedition manual. The other youth grant recipient Alex, DL2ALY, received similar treatment throughout the DXpedition.

By now, everyone knows that 3YØK was a successful DXpedition, and, for me, it checked off a few boxes: my first time in Africa, first time in the Southern Ocean, and, most importantly, my first DXpedition. It was the trip of a lifetime, all because of a series of small decisions that came together to make it happen.

Lessons

Here are some of the lessons I learned as a young operator doing this for the first time.

Although it was very nervy of me to choose a Top 10 entity for my first DXpedition, I have learned that it is more common than you might think. So, future hams who want to go on a DXpedition can successfully take that same deep dive, especially youth operators. Take advantage of our age, as we oftentimes can adapt quicker to inclement conditions, get into the right shape for a DXpedition, and handle more difficult operating conditions. Heck, most 18- to 25-year-olds I know already run on less than six hours of sleep in their daily lives.

For young hams, the best thing you can do if you want to go on a DXpedition is just to let someone know. Amateur Radio is a very tight knit and supportive group, so once people know what you want to do, you might just get into a position to do it.

Looking to the future

For those planning future DXpeditions, planning for youth involvement is a key to success. Just like in industry, a team of people with different backgrounds often leads to the best product. You'll be pleasantly surprised by the excitement and talent they'll bring.

As I look into the future of DXpeditioning, it is of utmost importance that we see continuity. Going to Bouvet when I did means that everything I learned on that DXpedition will stay with me for the rest of my life; so even 40-50 years from now someone can reach out, ask why we did what we did, and be better equipped for their own attempt.

I deeply thank NCDXF for giving me the grant. My advice to other foundations is that programs like NCDXF's Youth Grant Program are very effective at meeting the needs of young people today. I hope other young hams look at my experience and follow my lead.

YOUTH GRANT APPLICATION NCDXF will cover the entire share of an operator's expenses for up to three youth under the age of 26 on any DXpedition in the top 100 on Club Log's Most Wanted List. This is above and beyond our grant, if any, for the DXpedition. This is meant to encourage DXpeditions to take along young DXers and encourage young people to go regardless of the financial cost. (Note: Youth under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.) Click the link for the *application*.

Opening the Door for All
Desecheo KP5/NP3VI & Remote DXpeditioning

Eric M. Guzman, NP3A

A few years ago, Otis, NP4G, called to say he was working on permits for a DXpedition to KP5, Desecheo Island. There are only a handful of people with the energy, connections, and know-how to make a Desecheo activation happen, and Otis is unquestionably one of them. When he calls, you listen.

I've known Otis since we were both much younger, back when we still had hair on our heads. To this day, he accuses me of administering his CW exam back in the mid-1990s. Whenever he tells that story in public, I strongly deny it, just in case someone decides to blame me for him becoming a ham!

Join the team

Then came the words every DXer dreams of hearing: "I want you to join the team." It was music to my ears, but it also created a knot in my stomach.

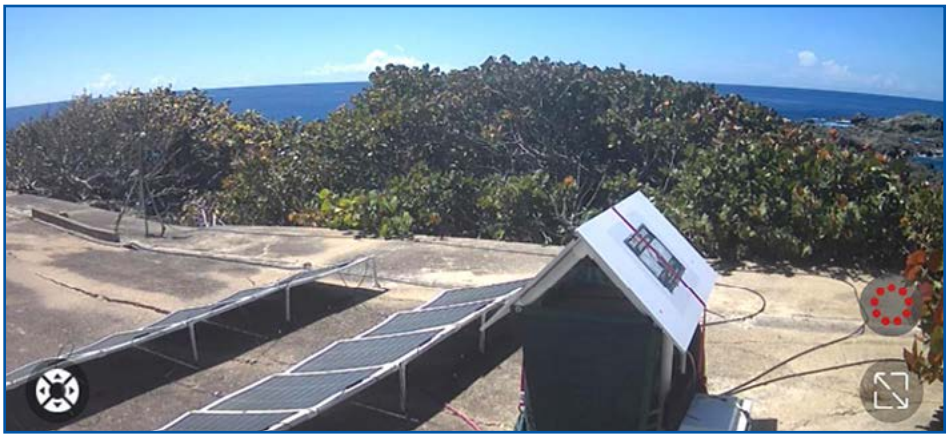
I don't consider myself a hardcore DXer. I don't chase totals or obsess over confirmations. What truly excites me about amateur radio is CW contesting: the rhythm, the speed, the intensity. Close behind are field operations such as POTA and Field Day. The idea of facing massive CW pileups from a rare island, combined with the raw adventure of a remote island setup, was irresistible. But reality has a way of grounding even the most exciting dreams.

A medical condition would make a two- or three-week stay on a remote island, with no running water and only the most basic facilities, extremely challenging. On top of that, the physical demands of such a DXpedition require a level of fitness I simply did not have at the time. So, I gave Otis an answer that did not come easily: "Count on me for anything… except going there."

He pushed back, as expected. But once I explained the details, he understood. Instead, he asked for recommendations, and I gave him a couple of names I trusted who could carry the torch. Then, silence …

It opens doors for operators who, because of medical or physical challenges, would otherwise never have the opportunity to participate in such demanding DXpeditions.

Eric, NP3A, operating remotely.



The RDU Unit in its own house with two 2 arrays of solar panels for power.

The wait

Months passed. More than a year, in fact. Like many ambitious Desecheo efforts before it, I assumed the project had fallen victim to the long and uncertain permitting process. But in September/October 2025, my phone rang again. After a few minutes of catching up, Otis asked the question that would change everything: "If you didn't have to travel to Desecheo, would you operate the DXpedition?"

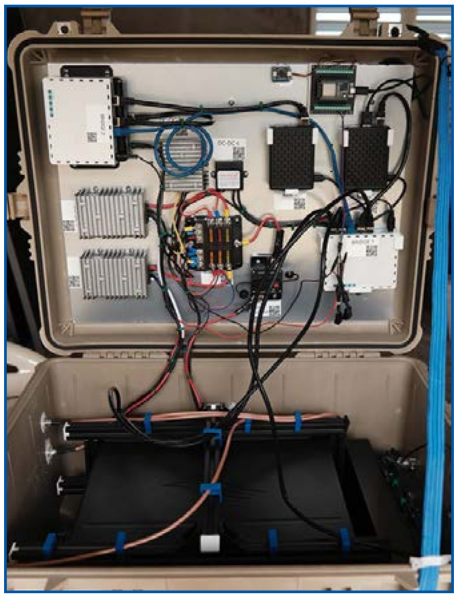
Otis is not known for wild ideas, or for questionable habits, so I cautiously replied, "Yyyyyeeeahhhh… but how?"

What followed felt like stepping into the future. He explained the concept of Remote Deployed Units, developed by Ezequiel, HI3R/NK4DX. Operators from around the world would be able to control real stations on Desecheo, live. It took me about 25 microseconds to answer: "I'm in."

Remote operations

Within weeks, I was behind the controls of KP5/NP3VI, sharing operating time with an incredible international team. It included local KP4 operators like me, colleagues from Italy, Australia, and the Philippines, first-time DXpeditioners, and veterans of some of the most demanding operations on the planet, including past Desecheo operators.

What followed was, without question, the most exhilarating experience of my amateur radio journey. The pileups were immense — relentless walls of signals calling from every corner of the globe. They were the kind of pileups you don't just work; you survive. And I was right there, in the middle of it, living the dream, without ever setting foot on the island. That is the true power of remote DXpeditioning.



The brain inside the RDU is a dedicated Raspberry PI for each radio, Backup PC, router and peripherals. In the bottom are the two Flex 6300 radios.

This approach is more than innovation. It is inclusion. It opens doors for operators who, because of medical or physical challenges, would otherwise never have the opportunity to participate in such demanding DXpeditions. It transforms what was once an exclusive and physically intense endeavor into something more accessible, without diminishing the thrill, the responsibility, or the achievement.

I also live streamed most of my operating shifts, POV-style, on my YouTube channel. It was the other side of the pileup, the DXpedition side, in real time. If you contacted KP5/NP3VI during one of my shifts, there is a good chance your QSO was recorded. My

Band/Mode Breakdown

Band	SSB	CW	FT8	FT4	FM	Total	Total %
160	16	40	123	0	0	179	.2%
80	505	1,951	3,046	524	0	6,026	5.5%
60	0	0	1,128	0	0	1,128	1.0%
40	999	3,460	4,420	368	0	9,247	8.5%
30	0	4,252	6,840	385	0	11,507	10.5%
20	3,708	6,634	7,368	549	0	18,259	16.7%
17	1,955	3,282	5,296	352	0	10,885	10.0%
15	3,998	5,028	5,469	354	0	14,849	13.6%
12	3,150	4,397	8,632	463	0	16,642	15.2%
10	5,762	6,166	7,553	310	0	19,791	18.1%
6	5	31	710	1	0	747	.7%
2	0	1	0	0	31	32	.0%
Totals	20,098	35,242	50,615	3,306	31	109,292	

Breakdown by Continent

Continent	Total QSOs	Total %
Africa	584	.5
Asia	7,783	7.1
Europe	47,402	43.4
North America	49,723	45.5
Oceania	945	.9
South America	2,844	2.6
Totals	109,292	100

Working on equipment for the DXpedition: Otis, NP4G; Kenny, KP4AA; Osvaldo, KP3N, and Manu, WP4TZ.

Desecheo 2026 playlist can be found here: *NP3A YouTube playlists*.

We also participated in the 2026 ARRL DX CW Contest, making more than 1,600 QSOs and breaking the Multi-Single Low Power (M/S LP) record for Desecheo. I suspect that record may stand for many years!

One thing that helped tremendously was the standardized Remote Ham Radio (RHR) platform. Before the actual DXpedition, Otis scheduled practice time using KP4ES so we could become familiar with the interface. It was my first time using RHR, and I found it very intuitive. In very little time, I felt comfortable operating through it.

The console performed flawlessly throughout the DXpedition. It was stable, robust, and gave us exactly what we needed to operate effectively from a distance. The only thing I really missed was having my own paddles available for manual sending. Everything else was there.

For me, this DXpedition was nothing short of life changing. I am deeply grateful to Otis and the entire leadership team for believing in this vision and for giving me the opportunity to be part of an experience I will never forget.

Aerial view of Desecheo Island, you can see the station location on the bare square at the bottom of the island.

2026 Hamvention

NCDXF Presents $10,000 donation and banner to Youth On The Air (YOTA).

Pictured (from left): Jack, W9RFT (YOTA); Glenn, WØGJ; Don, N1DG; Neil, WB9VPG (YOTA).

CYØS Running Wild on Sable Island

Patrick Dolan, N2IEN

Sable Island is a 26-mile (42 km) necklace of sand dangling in the brutal North Atlantic, 130 miles (290 km) southeast of Halifax and about 100 miles from the closest point on shore. There are no trees, only immense beaches, straw-covered hills and towering dunes carved into ghostly shapes by the relentless winds. Grey seals huddle in thick packs on the shores, and the island's own breed of wild horses roam freely.

It is also a coveted DX entity. On a chilly early spring morning at the Halifax airport, eight hams donned survival suits and boarded a Sikorsky helicopter on a 14-day mission to add CYØ to the logs of as many anxious DX chasers as possible.

It is not a journey to be taken lightly. The only way to the island is by chopper or a twin-engine puddle jumper that lands on a flat stretch of beach… when it's not covered by water. Sable is one of the foggiest places on the planet. Weather is quickly changing and treacherous.

Challenges

One of the first challenges the team faced was how to fit eight guys and a complement of radios, antennas, food and supplies into an aircraft with limited capacity. Every piece of gear was vetted for its weight and importance to the mission. Additionally, team members had to trim themselves with months of dieting in order to slip in under the load restrictions. In the end, we cleared the 2,900-pound limit by less than five pounds.

Our group was no stranger to rugged DXpeditions in daunting places. It featured some heavy hitters in the DX world. Glenn Johnson, WØGJ, and Ralph Fedor, KØIR, are both members of the DX Hall of Fame. Mike Tessmer, K9NW; Jay Slough, K4ZLE, and Scott Jasper, NE9U, are veterans of major DXpeditions to multiple corners of the globe. Lee Imber, WW2DX, has made a big splash in the EME and 6 Meter world as well as competing at WRTC. Team leader Murray Adams, WA4DAN, has been to Navassa, Desecheo, St. Paul and Mellish Reef. But his first love is Sable. This trip marked his seventh outing to CYØ. "It's so unique and it's so special… and it never gets old!" he says.

The journey to Sable requires difficult-to-get permission from Parks Canada, which administers the island as a national park reserve for the Canadian government. We stayed at the main base, a cluster of weather-beaten buildings that includes a no-frills, 6-bedroom visitors' quarters used mostly by contractors and researchers. In the back is a bright orange survival pod for use in case of a tsunami… something we tried not to think about.

En route to Sable Island in their survival suits: Glenn, WØGJ; Ralph, KØIR, and Murray, WA4DAN.

Setting up

Job one a couple of hours after touchdown was to get the antennas up, and Sable's famed frigid winds made that an interesting challenge. The near gale-force gusts caused the Spiderbeam poles to bend and gyrate as if possessed, while we tried frantically to tie down the guys with frozen hands. But after an exhausting afternoon the view out our front window displayed inverted Vs on 160, 80, 60 and 30 Meters, with multi-band Yagis, one for 10, 15 and 20 Meters and the other for 12 and 17 Meters. We also hoisted a 3-element LFA Yagi for 6 Meters.

Six Flex Aurora AU 520M radios served as the backbone of our setup. It was an easy choice because of their compactness and the fact each included an integrated 500W amplifier, antenna tuner and power supply. "We picked them because, number one, it's just AC in and power out; you don't have to have power supplies or cables for amplifiers," said Glenn. "The radio box weighs only 17 pounds."

Each of the Auroras was connected via a CAT 5 cable to a laptop running N1MM. We were able to track QSO totals in real time by band, mode and country.

Cue the pileups

The pileups popped up almost immediately, turning our operating frequencies into a buzz saw spread out over as much as 10 kHz.

"If everyone's calling in the same zone, 2 or 3 kHz above the CQ frequency, it's just like a beehive of call signs such that you can't pick anybody out," said Scott, NE9U.

Besides leaning on pure adrenaline, experienced DXpeditioners have methods to deal with massive pileups… often by listening above or below the main crush of callers.

What does it take to get through? "Just persistence," says Mike, K9NW "… and take a peek at the pile to get an idea of how it is spread out. Sometimes there are gaps that last for several minutes and if you find one — drop your call in there."

CYØ is especially sought after in Asia. JAs and other Pacific Rim countries swarmed us. "We've been doing very well getting Asians logged, particularly on the low bands," said Murray. "On 80, 40 and 30 Meters, a lot of JAs get in the log at our sunrise."

"The greyline has been really productive in Europe, really gives them some strong signals, and just at our sunrise, the greyline, we have almost a pipeline to Japan," added Glenn.

Two days into the mission, with all antennas set up and good band conditions, the team notched 17,558 QSOs in a single 24-hour period — a high for the DXpedition.

Stormy weather

Unfortunately, the sun threw us a curveball.

On Sunday, 22 March — four days into the DXpedition — the first of several geomagnetic storms hit. It was a G2. The K number leaped to seven. A row of monitors with empty FT8 windows told the glum story. Dismal solar conditions would affect us off and on throughout the trip.

"They've been very severe. But we work around it. We work through it. We choose our frequencies a little bit differently, and you know, just go with the flow," said Murray.

And it wasn't all about what was brewing in the ionosphere and on the surface of our home star. Lee, WW2DX, sitting at his EME operating position next to a large panel window that reveals a fresh coat of snow on the base's bristly, windswept yard pointed to the waterfall display on his laptop, which was running the digital mode Q65 as he snagged a station in eastern Europe on 1296 MHz (23cm) — off the surface of the moon.

"So, you can see these sparkles with this vertical line, and in about five seconds we're going get a decode in this window right here. We're calling a station in the Czech Republic right now. And right now… yup, there it is. So, we

3YØS Team (back row, standing): Glenn, WØGJ; Scott, NE9U; Pat, N2IEN; Ralph, KØIR; Murray, WA4DAN; (front row, kneeling): Lee, WW2DX; Jay, K4ZLE, and Mike, K9NW.

Left: The powerful Sikorsky helicopter that carried the team to Sable. Above: The emergency escape pod for use if a tsunami hits the island.

just made a successful contact with the Czech Republic from Sable Island."

Not far away is the homebrewed 1296 MHz EME dish that Lee improvised from a solar cooker (you read that right). Directly next to it he placed a suitcase with an ICOM IC-905, a 200W amp and power supply, controlling it all with an ethernet cable to the laptop at his operating table. The result: plenty of portability, and no lossy run of coax from the rig.

"So, think about it if we had to run 100 feet of coax cable at 1.2 gigahertz, we'd lose probably 80% of our power before we got to the dish. There's so much loss at this frequency. So, placing the radio, the actual RF unit at the dish, eliminates all of that loss both on transmit and receive. It is a huge win!"

Will this concept make moonbounce a bigger presence in the DXpedition world? Stay tuned. What we do know:

Homebrewed 1296 MHz EME dish that Lee, WW2DX, made using a solar cooker.

Lee's EME operation was a first for CYØ on 23cm.

By the numbers

In the end, the months of exhaustive preparations paid off big time. CYØS ran up a total of 103,191 contacts with 169 countries. The achievement included DXCC on all HF bands except 60 and 160 Meters. WW2DX burned the moon for 145 EME QSOs with 36 countries.

Good numbers? "I would say it's beyond successful," says Murray.

Shipwrecks, seals and wild horses

CYØS ran 24/7 with 3-man teams covering 4-hour shifts, with time in between to chill, snooze and savor a bag of freeze-dried food. On a couple of nights, we hit the bunks with horizontal rain or sleet pelting the windows and the entire building shuddering from vicious wind gusts. But there was enough good weather between shifts to get out and explore one of the most extraordinary spots on the planet.

Sable sights

Sable Island is historically a shipwreck magnet, a nautical death trap lying near fishing grounds and shipping lanes… the dangers worsened by the warring Gulfstream and Labrador currents. Around 350 wrecks have been recorded. The skeletal remains of some of the more recent ones can still be seen protruding from the rapidly shifting sands.

After a couple of days, the very helpful Parks Canada staff offered us a guided tour of the island in a pair of 4-wheel vehicles, and they quickly got some takers.

Fauna

Zipping along the endless, vast beaches of Sable is like driving through a National Geographic documentary. You can't go more than a couple of minutes without encountering one of the many large pods of grey seals with their dark puppy-like eyes. Sable is home to the world's largest breeding colony of grey seals. Hundreds of thousands come ashore to birth their pups and to take long peaceful snoozes on the sand, safe from predators like sharks and Orcas.

"They are the coziest-looking sleepers. I've never seen an animal that's asleep that gets as cozy as these guys look on the beach," said Parks Canada staffer John Linihan. "Look at this guy scratching his chin! Their own little paradise."

But as cute as the seals are, it's Sable's renowned wild horses that steal the show. They are sturdy and graceful; many with long curly locks that help protect them from the island's ferocious winter weather. They can be seen grazing serenely, alone or in small bands, everywhere on the island. Often, they wandered right up to the

Taming the pile-ups (left to right) are Scott, NE9U; Mike, K9NW; Lee, WW2DX, and Jay, K4ZLE.

The Flex Aurora radios were the backbone of our setup.

fence of the main station, thrilling us as we gazed through the windows of the visitors' quarters.

Introduced in the 18th century, they were bred as livestock and, for a while, served with lifesaving crews to rescue shipwrecked mariners. The Canadian government formally protected the horses in 1961, and they are completely free to roam without any form of interference, or assistance, from humans.

"They are an unmanaged population; we don't do any hands-on care of the horses," says Sarah Medill, Sable Island Operations Coordinator. "We don't make any active management decisions on the population, so it's a naturally occurring cycle. They are on their own; wild and free."

Sable is also home to a number of rare, endangered creatures, such as the Ipswich sparrow and Roseate tern; and six different species of insects are found nowhere else in the world. The island also boasts a unique lab that documents the litter and pollutants that threaten the world's oceans.

Signals from the seas

Zoe Lucas, a perky, elfish, white-haired scientist wearing a blue windbreaker, emptied a bucket of Crocs and sandals on the floor of her cramped work hut. Lucas, Director of the Sable Island Institute, has spent the last five decades conducting research on Sable Island. The floor and walls around her are packed with plastic bottles, sandals, buckets, oil containers, netting, pieces of machinery, shreds of packaging, bags, toys — all found along the shores of Sable. One item, a child's soft beach chair with a picture of Olaf from Disney's "Frozen," is filled with thousands of styrene beads — "Every single one of them is the perfect size for a feeding bird to ingest."

Lucas looks for labels and carefully documents each piece of waste. The goal is to gather info on the sources,

Zoe Lucas, Director of the Sable Island Institute, has spent the last five decades conducting research on Sable Island.

Murray, WA4DAN, and Ralph, KØIR, prepare to raise another Spiderbeam pole for dipole antennas.

Band/Mode Breakdown

Band	SSB	CW	FT8	PSK	RTTY	MSK 144	MFSK	Total	Total %
160	110	943	1,870	0	0	0	0	2,933	2.8%
80	798	1,734	5,016	0	0	0	0	7,548	7.3%
60	0	904	3,599	0	0	0	0	4,503	4.4%
40	2,222	4,173	6,658	2	6	0	0	13,061	12.7%
30	0	2,863	9,825	0	0	0	0	12,691	12.3%
20	2,872	5,903	9,006	0	3	0	0	17,784	12.2%
17	2,483	6,793	6,328	0	0	0	0	15,604	15.1%
15	3,446	4,791	5,867	0	0	0	0	14,104	13.7%
12	715	3,012	4,562	0	0	0	0	8,289	8.0%
10	1,606	1,558	3,270	0	0	0	0	6,434	6.2%
6	0	0	78	0	0	17	0	95	.1%
23	0	3	0	0	0	0	142	145	.1%
Totals	14,252	32,687	56,082	2	9	17	142	103,191	

Breakdown by Continent

Continent	Total QSOs	Total %
	13	0
Africa	595	.6
Asia	6,333	6.1
Europe	54,213	52.5
North America	38,781	37.6
Oceania	773	.7
South America	2,483	2.4
Totals	103,191	100

and to send a message that the cheap things we throw away, even miles from the beach, eventually find their way to the sea.

Lucas opines, "If your kid loses all the plastic beach shovels at the beach, and we have a huge collection of those, it's okay, it didn't cost much, we can replace it at the dollar store for a dollar, right? But the environmental cost is huge."

Last call

All too quickly, after two weeks of explosive pileups, solar events, electrifying views, and endless freeze-dried meals, it was time to think about packing up. But CYØS had one last act: the WPX contest. The team rocked it, placing 9th in the world multi-multi category and 1st in North America, despite operating with only two transmitters.

It was so hard to quit! On departure day several of the HF antennas were left standing until the final hour so Mike and Scott could squeeze in a few last pileups while the rest of the gear was hauled off to the helipad.

Meanwhile, Sable almost pulled one last piece of weather mischief. Fog and low ceilings nearly cancelled the outbound flights. But the Sikorsky helicopter managed to churn its way through, scooping up half the team at the base helipad. And before long, a twin-engine Britten Norman Islander settled lightly onto the improvised beach runway.

As the lonely strip of dunes and whitecaps slipped away underneath the plane, I couldn't help feel the pull of this enchanted place, and the sense that someday it will draw us back for another adventure.

Thank you

CYØS wouldn't have happened without all of our sponsors and supporters! Heartfelt thanks to NCDXF, DX Engineering, Flex Radio, RHR Remote Ham Radio, INDEXA, Tennadyne, CUBEX Quads, Oklahoma DX Association, Twin City DX Association, Arkansas DX Association, LA DX Group Norway, Southeastern DX Club, Kansas City DX Club, The Daily DX, German DX Foundation, Eastern Iowa DX Association, NIDXA, Swiss DX Foundation, JAØ DX Gang, Northern Ohio DX Association, Southwest Ohio DX Association, and all of the individual donors.

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(12-24)

S21WD – Bangladesh 2026

Philipp Springer, DK6SP

AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM organized by the Next Generation DX Club e.V. (NGDXC) activated Bangladesh as S21WD from Char Kukri Mukri Island, IOTA AS-140 from 20 March-2 April 2026. The DXpedition focused on providing Bangladesh on all HF bands from 160M through 10M as well as on the QO-100 geostationary satellite. Operations were carried out using CW, SSB, RTTY and FT8 with a strong focus on worldwide coverage, especially toward highly requested regions such as North America.

The operator team consisted of Philipp Springer, DK6SP; Sven Lovrić, DJ4MX; Jamie Williams, MØSDV, and Leon Hellmich, DL3ON, together with local operators and coordinators Rudranil Sarker Apon, S21ABO, and Anup Kumar Bhowmick, S21TV. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the Amateur Radio Association of Bangladesh (ARAB), the Ministry of Environment and Forest of Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh Police all supported the project.

Planning and preparation

Preparation for S21WD started many months before departure. From the very beginning, the project was designed as a technically serious multi-station DXpedition with strong redundancy concepts, extensive testing and careful logistical planning. Nearly 400 kilograms of radio equipment, antennas, tools, spare parts, cabling and operational supplies had to be transported from Europe to a remote island location in southern Bangladesh.

Several large-scale testing weekends were organized in Germany before departure. During these tests, the team assembled and measured all antennas exactly as they would later be deployed on-site. This proved extremely valuable during setup in Bangladesh and significantly reduced deployment time. Great effort was also invested into multi-station filtering concepts, triplexer integration, grounding systems and power distribution to avoid RF interference between stations once on-site.

A large support team remained in Europe throughout the preparation and operation phases and contributed heavily behind the scenes. Support included equipment testing, packing logistics, transport organization, website maintenance, financial administration and many additional operational tasks required for a project of this size.

One major advantage throughout the planning phase was the excellent support from ARAB. Members of ARAB had visited the QTH three times before the European operators arrived in Bangladesh, and they shared detailed videos and information from the location, allowing the team to know what conditions to expect upon arrival.

Medical support for the DXpedition was additionally provided by Dr. med.

The S21WD Team (from left): Jamie Williams, MØSDV/S21ZDD; Sven Lovrić, DJ4MX/S21ZBB; Anup Kumar Bhowmick, S21TV; Rudranil Sarker Apon, S21ABO; Leon Hellmich, DL3ON/S21ZCC, Philipp Springer, DK6SP/S21ZAA.

Part of the equipment transportation chain on Char Kukri Mukri.

Ulf Müller, who remained reachable from Europe around the clock as a medical advisor for the team throughout the entire operation.

The final station setup consisted of four ICOM IC-7300 transceivers, two Yaesu FTDX-10 transceivers, two ACOM 1200S amplifiers, one ACOM 500S amplifier and one Expert 1K3 amplifier. Satellite operation was carried out using a DXPatrol Groundstation V2 together with a 60cm dish and helix feed system. The deployed antenna systems included a Spiderbeam 5-band beam for 20M through 10M; a Spiderbeam WARC beam for 30M, 17M and 12M; dedicated vertical antennas for 40M, 60M and 80M, as well as a T-antenna for 160M operation. Low-band receive systems included a 200-meter Beverage antenna, an RX triangle antenna and a 60-meter Beverage-on-Ground system.

Two of the IC-7300 transceivers were kindly sponsored by DXEngineering and remained in Bangladesh for further amateur radio youth development.

Travel to Bangladesh

The complete trip from Germany to Char Kukri Mukri Island took approximately two days, door-to-door. The European operators traveled via Istanbul to Dhaka before continuing toward the remote operating location in southern Bangladesh.

Transporting the large amount of luggage and oversized radio equipment went surprisingly smooth, and Turkish Airlines provided excellent support regarding additional and oversized luggage handling. Once in Bangladesh, ARAB members had prearranged the transportation chain to the island, via ferry, vehicle and boat, plus handling the heavy cargo — and thanks to the preparation work by the local team, this phase proceeded without any significant losses, delays or damage.

Once the team arrived at the island, they recognized that the preparation work by ARAB had been extremely valuable. The QTH looked almost exactly as expected from the videos and scouting information. However, shortly after the first radios became operational, it became clear that local noise conditions were, unfortunately, worse than anticipated.

Station setup

Despite the physically demanding tropical conditions, with temperatures around 30°C and extremely high humidity, the team moved quickly to get the first stations operational.

The initial deployment strategy worked exactly as planned, and about three hours after their arrival, the Spiderbeam 5-band antenna and a 40M vertical were already operational and S21WD appeared on the air for the first time.

Full station deployment including all antennas, amplifiers, low-band systems and networking infrastructure required approximately three full days.

The most difficult antenna to deploy proved to be the QO-100 satellite dish. Multiple attempts were required before an optimal setup was achieved. Fortunately, enough feed cable had been brought from Europe, allowing flexibility in selecting a better antenna position. Once fully aligned, the station produced excellent satellite performance and was received extremely well across the QO-100 footprint.

One unexpected challenge involved the originally planned low-band antenna area. The team had been promised additional space outside the main facility to accommodate part of the low-band antenna infrastructure,

The port of Char Kukri Mukri.

S21WD operating: Top photos (from left): Leon Hellmich, DL3ON/S21ZCC and Anup Kumar Bhowmick, S21TV; Rudranil Sarker Apon, S21ABO; and Sven Lovrić, DJ4MX/S21ZBB. Bottom photo: Teamwork

but that space was no longer available, requiring rapid redesign and adaptation of the antenna layout. Fortunately, the modified antenna concept still worked very well overall.

Ground conditions turned out to be excellent for transmitting antennas, especially on the low bands. The conductive soil provided very good transmission performance on 160M and 80M. Receive performance, however, became one of the major operational challenges of the DXpedition.

Thanks to the extensive testing carried out before departure, RF interference between stations was almost completely eliminated from the very beginning. Multi-station coexistence worked exceptionally well throughout the operation.

Low-band operation and noise challenges

Low-band operation became one of the technically most demanding aspects of the entire DXpedition. Shortly after the first radios became operational, the team realized that local man-made noise levels were significantly higher than expected.

After extensive troubleshooting, several noise sources were identified. Some faulty power supplies in the surrounding area generated substantial interference, while multiple damaged and partially open electrical cables created sparking noise once humidity or rain affected them. While some of these issues could be temporarily repaired or mitigated by the team, new noise sources regularly appeared overnight, creating a constant challenge throughout the operation.

The low bands suffered most heavily from the noise situation. To improve reception capability, multiple receive antenna systems were deployed including the 200-meter Beverage antenna, the RX triangle antenna and the Beverage-on-Ground system. Considerable time was invested daily on receive optimization and maintenance work.

The 200-meter Beverage antenna, in particular, required constant attention. The antenna was repeatedly cut or damaged, forcing operators to walk the entire antenna path for inspections and repairs before sunset to ensure the best possible receive performance during the night shifts. Multiple additional antenna maintenance walks were carried out randomly throughout the day whenever receive performance changed unexpectedly.

Despite all optimization efforts, low-band receive conditions ultimately remained worse than originally expected. Nevertheless, the team managed to achieve solid low-band activity levels by continuously adapting and improving the receive systems.

Power infrastructure and technical failures

One of the largest operational challenges was the unstable power infrastructure — we experienced random outages every few hours throughout the DXpedition. To maintain continuous operation, the team relied heavily on generators.

Both a 12 kVA diesel generator and a 12 kVA fuel generator were avail-

able on-site. Due to fuel shortages, the diesel generator eventually became the primary power source for most of the operation. Fortunately, the generator systems themselves proved highly reliable and stable and handled the station load without major issues.

A particularly serious incident occurred during one of the island-wide blackouts. When commercial power unexpectedly returned, the operators did not disconnect the shack from the mains via the fuse box fast enough. That resulted in approximately 420 V reaching the station and causing significant equipment damage — an amplifier and a power supply failed during the event.

Fortunately, the team had brought sufficient measuring equipment and spare parts, and after some troubleshooting, the amplifier was successfully repaired and returned into active operation. Additionally, the power supply was also repaired. The incident clearly demonstrated how important preparation, spare parts and technical troubleshooting capability are during remote operations.

Despite these technical setbacks, S21WD remained continuously active on the air throughout the entire DXpedition.

Weather, solar conditions and environment

Environmental conditions on the island proved physically demanding for both operators and equipment. Temperatures around 30°C combined with extremely high humidity created difficult working conditions.

The situation became especially challenging during power outages when no fans or cooling systems were available inside the shack. Several team members suffered from heat-related exhaustion during the DXpedition, but continued operating whenever possible.

Humidity also affected the technical equipment. During cleanup after the DXpedition, various signs of condensation and corrosion were visible on parts of the equipment and had to be cleaned and repaired afterward.

Fortunately, environmental conditions outside the shack were often helped by a constant light sea breeze.

Members of the S21WD team, together with ARAB, held a lecture at North South University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The team posed with students, officials from BTRC, police, fire service and government organizations.

Mosquitoes and insects became problematic during sunrise and sunset periods, but remained manageable overall.

In addition to local environmental challenges, the DXpedition also suffered from four separate solar storms, which caused major distortions across the bands and significantly degraded propagation conditions. Several times, conditions became so difficult that the temporary suspension of operations was considered. Nevertheless, the team fought through the difficult propagation periods and managed to remain continuously active without losing operating time.

WARC beam failure and recovery

Another major challenge occurred during strong nighttime winds when the Spiderbeam WARC antenna suffered structural damage. One fiberglass element snapped during a storm and caused the beam to partially collapse.

The antenna was immediately lowered to ground level during the night and inspected. To maintain activity on 30 Meters during the upcoming night hours, the team rapidly rearranged the 30M driven element into a temporary dipole configuration while repair plans for the beam itself were prepared.

At sunrise the following morning, repair work started immediately under already hot and humid conditions, and within approximately two hours, the Spiderbeam WARC antenna was repaired and restored into operation. The implemented fixes proved reliable and the antenna remained operational until the end of the DXpedition.

Despite the significant antenna

Drone image of our QTH at Char Kukri Mukri.

failure, no actual operating time was lost because operators remained active continuously using alternate antenna configurations.

QO-100 operation

QO-100 operation became one of the highlights of the DXpedition. During European afternoon and evening hours in particular, activity levels via the geostationary satellite became extremely high. Many stations specifically searched for S21WD on QO-100 and appreciated the opportunity to work Bangladesh through the satellite path.

Although the satellite system required several installation attempts initially due to positioning and infrastructure challenges, the final setup performed extremely well and provided strong signals across the footprint. In total, nearly 1,800 QSOs were completed via QO-100.

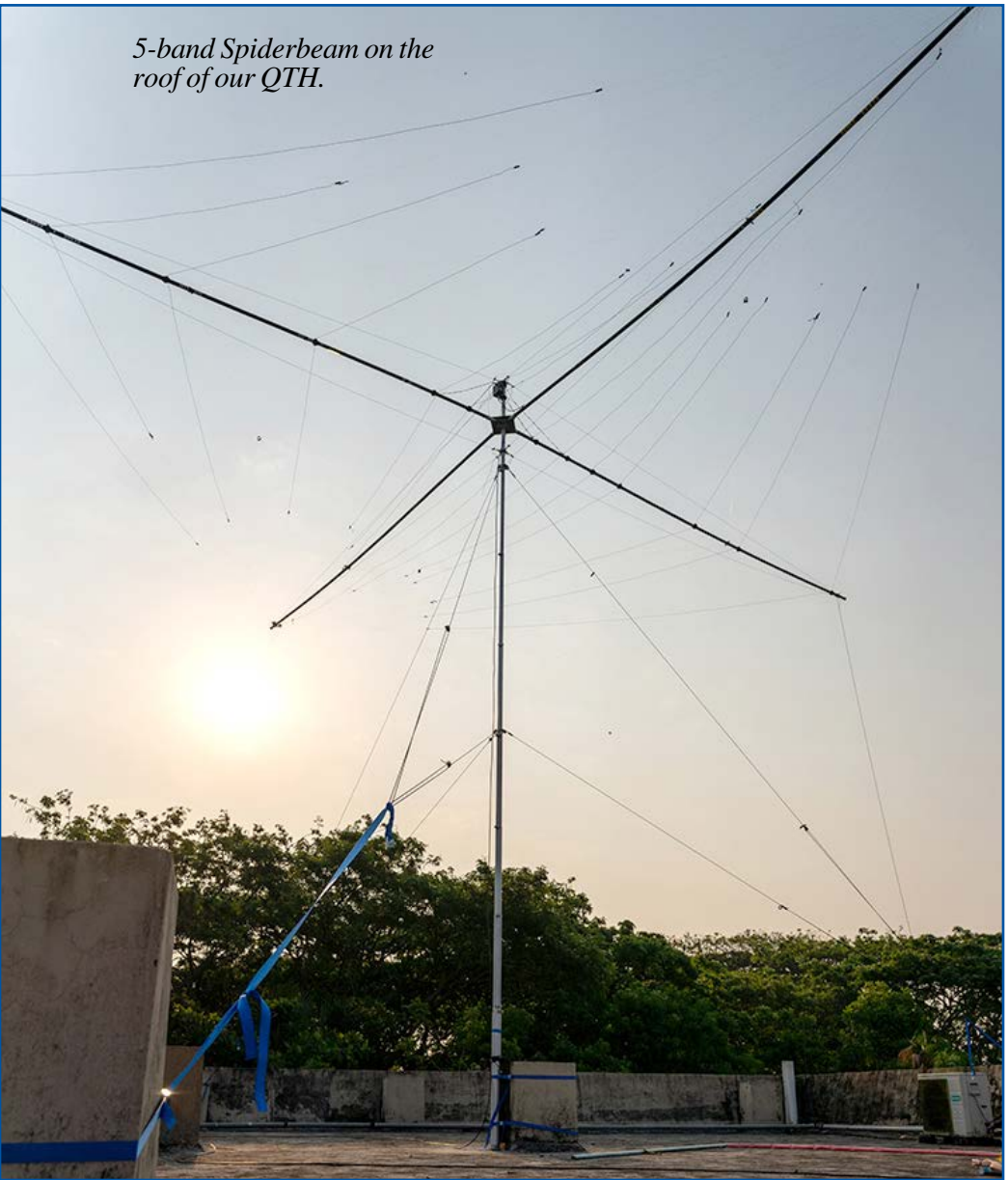
Teamwork and daily operations

S21WD operated continuously around the clock throughout the entire DXpedition. Rather than implementing strictly fixed operating schedules, operators remained in the shack as much as possible and dynamically adapted according to propagation conditions and operating demand.

Whenever major openings or high-rate periods developed, the entire team gathered in the shack to maximize operational efficiency. Particular attention was always given to predicted openings toward North America on nearly all bands, as Bangladesh remained highly requested there according to the Club Log Most Wanted statistics. Operators consistently prepared for sunrise and sunset propagation windows and ensured that stations were fully staffed during those periods. However, due to difficult solar conditions and repeated solar storms throughout most of the DXpedition, North American signals often remained significantly weaker than expected or not even present. Only during the final two to three days of the operation did propagation toward North America improve noticeably and produce consistently strong signals and larger pileups.

All operators were capable of operating every mode and every station configuration, creating a very flexible operating environment.

Although the operation proved physically exhausting for everyone involved, the team shared a strong common motivation and spirit throughout the entire project. Despite technical failures, tropical heat, solar storms and difficult noise conditions, the teamwork remained excellent throughout the operation.



5-band Spiderbeam on the roof of our QTH.

Local cooperation and community interaction

The cooperation with ARAB, S21ABO and S21TV was one of the key success factors of S21WD. Their support extended far beyond licensing assistance. They participated directly in station setup and dismantling, helped with station maintenance, participated in operating shifts and provided essential support during troubleshooting and local coordination.

Their local language skills also proved extremely valuable in solving infrastructure and logistical issues quickly whenever unexpected problems occurred.

ARAB played a particularly important role in obtaining both the personal operator licenses and the team license through close cooperation with BTRC.

Interaction with the local community around the QTH remained extremely positive throughout the DXpedition. Local residents reacted very warmly toward the operators and showed great interest in the antennas and radio operation. Visitors arrived at the station almost daily and local interactions became one of the most memorable aspects of the entire project.

Following completion of the DXpedition, members of the S21WD

team, together with ARAB, held a lecture at North South University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The seminar titled "Amateur Radio – From Ground to Orbit" was presented in front of students as well as officials from BTRC, police, fire service, government organizations and additional invited guests. The presentation focused on amateur radio communication, international cooperation, satellite communication and the experiences gathered during the S21WD DXpedition.

Food, supplies and practical logistics

The team arrived well-prepared regarding food and operational supplies. Large quantities of drinking water, food, kitchen equipment and cooking supplies were sourced locally and prepared for shipment by S21ABO prior to the arrival of the European operators. All these items then traveled together with the team to the south of Bangladesh in order to ensure reliable self-sufficient operation even under difficult local conditions.

One unexpectedly important item turned out to be electrolyte tablets — essential for dealing with the tropical heat and humidity during physically demanding setup and maintenance work.

After completion of the DXpedition, the remaining kitchen and supply equipment was donated to a local orphanage.

Results and conclusion

After more than 12 days of operation, S21WD concluded successfully with a final result of 73,479 QSOs and 17,882 unique call signs worked worldwide. The DXpedition successfully exceeded its original target of 70,000 QSOs despite severe noise issues, repeated power outages, solar storms, antenna failures and difficult environmental conditions.

The project demonstrated the value of extensive preparation, strong international teamwork and excellent local cooperation. While many technical and environmental challenges had to be overcome during the operation, the flexibility and determination of the team allowed continuous operation throughout the DXpedition.

The S21WD team sincerely thanks all the organizations, sponsors and individual supporters who made the project possible. Special thanks go to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the Amateur Radio Association of Bangladesh (ARAB), S21ABO and S21TV for their outstanding support and coordination, as well as NCDXF for serving, once again, as the main sponsor of the DXpedition and additionally supporting travel costs for the three youngest European operators. Additional thanks go to DXEngineering and all the other clubs, foundations and individual donors supporting the project.

QSL management for S21WD is handled by DJ4MX. LoTW uploads were provided free of charge and Online QSL requests are available via Club Log OQRS.

Further information about the DXpedition is available via Next Generation DX Club – *S21WD Project Page*.

50 Years Ago
A Blast From the Past

West Coast DX Bulletin
published every week by the Marin County DX Group
May 18, 1976

One of the local QRPers came by last week and the signals were up.

"Look," he said, getting right down to things important, like DX, "with that P29 changes I lose two and gain one. In a couple of months the Seychelles go independent and there goes three or four more. Tell me something! Am I gaining, or losing? And how will I ever gain my rightful place on the Honor Roll with all the deletions. The way things are going they probably will delete countries before they are even credited, won't they?"

Son of a Gun, this was a fresh QRPer and what could one say to something like that?

"You think that maybe they might?" we said cautiously and the QRPer snorted, "I sure do. And I guess it has not happened yet because they have not thought about it. But they will. They sure will!"

We were silent for a bit and then we pulled QST for September 1960 off the shelf. From page 91 of that issue we read: "Wrangel Island. This deletion is made in view of the fact Wrangel Island meets none of the published criteria for separate status. Since no one ever received credit for Wrangel Island, its deletion will affect no one's total. This deletion is effective immediately."

The QRPer was stunned. "Incredible," was all he could say. "Incredible!"

But there it was in black and white. For there are a lot of rocks in the path of a DXer headed for the Honor Roll and $10 will bring a full year of weekly DX charts by second-class mail. $14.50 flaps it in by first-class mail in the US and VE areas. $17 will fly it to Mexico and to all the DX areas, to all the rocks and reefs and tidal pools where DX lives. There are tides in the life of every DXer and to learn them is to learn the Inevitable Truths!

AU7RS – Agatti Island, Lakshadweep DXpedition

Sarath Rayaprollu, VU2RS

The DX India Foundation is proud to announce the successful activation of AU7RS from Agatti Island, Lakshadweep (AS-011) that took place 10-19 February 2026. While the radio operations were a triumph, the lead-up was defined by a significant administrative struggle.

For over two years, our team has been at the forefront of a campaign to simplify the Foreigner Reciprocal Licensing process in India. Our original vision featured an international "dream team" of operators; however, persistent delays meant foreign colleagues could not secure licenses in time to participate.

Technical setup

Operating in a harsh maritime environment required hardware that could withstand high-duty cycles and salt spray. Our "beach-side" station featured 3x Icom IC-7300 transceivers. We owe a massive thank you to VU2OBR for the loan of critical equipment. Signals were pushed through an RM Italy Fureno 2500 high-power amplifier. The antenna farm relied heavily on Spiderbeam systems and DX Commander fiberglass poles.

Loss of material

During the transit from Agatti Island back to Hyderabad, the team suffered a devastating loss of equipment. Due to handling errors and transportation issues, we lost our entire inventory of coaxial cables, receive antennas, and wire antennas. Most significantly, the Spiderbeam antenna systems were also lost. This represented a major financial and material blow to the DX India Foundation.

We extend a special thanks to the NCDXF for their rapid response in providing SuperFox capability on such short notice. While this technology significantly boosted our signal efficiency and rate, we recognize that the lack of prior announcement created a challenge for the DX community. Because we were unable to provide an early heads-up, many operators were caught off-guard and were unable to switch to SuperFox mode in time to make the contact. We appreciate the patience of all the chasers who scrambled to update their software mid-operation, and we take this as a valuable lesson in balancing cutting-edge technology with the communication needs of the global ham community for our future activations."

QO-100 satellite contacts

Over 300 contacts with good pileups were made using the QO-100 satellite. The team worked more than 40 countries on QO-100 from AU7RS.

Gratitude

The successful activation of AU7RS from Agatti Island, Lakshadweep, stands as a testament to the incredible synergy between the DX India Foundation and the global amateur radio community. The team extends its deepest gratitude to the prominent foundations across North America and Europe, including NCDXF, EUDXF, RSGB, CDXC, and IOTA Ltd, whose financial backing and belief in our mission were instrumental in overcoming the logistical hurdles of this rare DXCC entity. Furthermore, we are profoundly moved

The AU7RS team, from left: VU2RS, VU3DXA, VU29AR, VU24DX.

by the generosity of individual donors from across the Atlantic; your personal contributions provided the critical resources needed to deploy a robust five-station setup and maintain a dedicated focus on the challenging paths to North America and Europe. This collective support not only enabled over 20,000 QSOs but also reinforced the spirit of international ham fellowship, laying the groundwork for our ongoing efforts to activate rare Indian IOTAs like the upcoming AU2M Arnala reactivation.

Future outlook

Team DX India Foundation is now gearing up for the 49th SEANET Annual Convention in Port Blair and a unique VU4 Andaman DXpedition. We are actively inviting international hams to join the VU4 team. Contact Team Leader Sarath (VU2RS) at *sara@vu2rs.com*.

Expedition Summary

Total QSOs: 18,992
Unique Calls: 6,688
DXCC: 121
Modes: CW, SSB, FT8

Operating Results

Band	CW	SSB	FT8	Total
80	5	2	766	773
40	144	193	1,681	2,018
30	66	1	1,624	1,691
20	0	128	1,366	1,494
17	0	1	2,641	2,642
15	514	4	3,411	3,929
12	0	249	2,063	2,312
10	3	195	3,643	3,841

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 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.