May-June 2014

"Ohio's First DXCC Field Checking Club"

The NODXA RAG

Poolside/Mudside Chat With KB8NW

Fellow DXers,

The Dayton HamVention was "OK" this year. Turnout was good, but the weather was not the best. It rained and hailed which sort of put a damper on the flea market, so I spent most of my time in the main arena area. The night time activities with the club's hospitality suite were great as always. NODXA's suite had many visitors during all three evenings. I did not get to bed all three evenings until about 2:00 AM. The latest I hear on the attendance of the convention was just under 25,000 (about the same as last year). Let's hope that next year's weather will be better. It is still a great place to visit if your are ham, especially if you are in the market for a new radio.

Well, June is here and it is now time to start thinking about "Field Day". The dates are June 28-29th. The Field Day suite is the same as in the past several years. Come out and visit the FD crew. It is not mandatory to operate, but we could use operators for an hour or two to relieve the main operators, especially during the evenings. There should be complete details somewhere in this newsletter on how to get to the Field Day suite. I hope you can attend, even it is just to visit.

As far as DX goes, there is nothing big coming up until the October- November FT4TA Tromelin Island DXpedition. Here is what to expect in June and July:

June 13-20th -- SU8N; Egypt
June 14-15th -- ET3AA; Ethiopia
June 21-22nd -- AH0CI; Mariana Islands
June 21-23rd -- ET3AA; Ethiopia
July 15-18th -- E51AND; South Cook IOTAs

As always, I hope to see you in the coming weeks/months, possibly at NODXA's general membership meetings. As a reminder, if you have a topic to discuss about DXing or contesting, bring it up at the meeting. Also, if you would like to put on a program of some interest for the club in the coming months, let us know so we can schedule you in for a meeting. We are always looking for a program.

73 and Good DX, de Tedd KB8NW

P.S. Reminder -- Dues are due for 2014-2015.....

"The Mission of the Northern Ohio DX Association is to promote and support Amateur Radio and the DX Community around the world."

Minutes of the April 7th, 2014 NODXA Meeting

The meeting was opened at 7:31 p.m. by Tedd, KB8NW, with 19 members and guests present. After the round of introductions the minutes for the meeting of March 3 were read by Glenn, AF8C.

A motion by Dave, WD8IOU, seconded by Ron, K8VJG to accept the minutes was passed on the vote. Mary, N8DMM, reported the treasury balance was $Ka-Ching! We have a new member, John Bastin, K8AJS, who paid dues at the DX Lunch on March 28. A motion by Bruce, N8DJX, seconded by Gary, NI8Z, to accept the treasurer's report was passed on a vote. Dues are due this month.

Tedd asked for reports on the repeater. John, K8YSE, described how the repeater, purchased in 1999, had been performing continuously for years until the recent complaints of noise bursts begged for a review of the repeater's status. But on the day they tested it, the usual control codes would not program the repeater. John had to interface the old Windows 95 cable to a computer and get cable communications working again. Thereafter the controller was rebooted and the repeater seemed fine, so evidently something had happened to the controller's memory that was cleared by the reboot. Meanwhile Denny, WB8K, looked up the tower with binoculars. Per FCC regulations the tower is detuned with special shorting wires. There seemed to be a problem with the tower detuning wires so Denny has turned in a trouble ticket to the tower owner.

Per Dave, WD8IOU, he is starting the newsletter out. He always needs your articles, photographs, documentary evidence and so forth. Per Ron, K8VJG, since the ARRL Field Day is coming in late June, he called the site owner to reserve the field. Now it seems Ron will have to call back and correct the date of the reservation. Field Day is June 28-29, 2014.

Old/New Business:

Our motion for donating to Sri Lanka was to be removed from the table. But with hardly anyone at the meeting confessing to working that station, the donation motion was set aside. Per Tedd, the DX Luncheon was fun. He sent around a list of the 20 or so attendees for that event. The speaker had a good talk.

W8BG, Bill, telling his medical story, was saved by a doctor in attendance at the luncheon. Tedd has his book on tribanders if anyone wants to view it. N8TR discussed the speaker on mobile antennas. Tedd reminded us that the Dayton Hamvention is coming. John, K8YSE, moved, and Carl, K8AV, seconded, that for a $250.00 allocation for the funding for the hospitality suite refreshments. The motion passed on a vote. Per John, K8YSE, the club has an MLA2500 that needs work but which could be repaired for sale at Dayton. The amplifier came with two new 8875 tubes from Eimac. Those tubes are not available anymore. John, K8YSE, moved, and Ron, K8VJG, seconded to authorize up to $150.00 for repair of the amplifier. The amplifier may also need a new capacitor board. The club also has a TH3 beam to sell.

Per Tedd, there is the Android smartphone app for the ARRL Repeater Directory. However, you have to pay a fee to enable the 2m/70cm section. For the annual officers elections, Pete, N8TR, moved, and Ron, K8VJG, seconded to elect the slate of officers as nominated at the March 3 meeting. The motion passed.

Pete, N8TR, still has two more NODXA caps for sale. John, K8YSE, discussed his auto license plate renewal. The Ohio bureau wanted a copy of his FCC license. George, K8KR, reviewed the answer to last month's ARRL trivia question. George noted that the original 1923 ARRL Handbook sold for $1.00. John, K8YSE, told the amazing story of finding in the surf a lost GOPRO camera and of his returning it to the original owner. Pete, N8TR, noted that the W8WWB video of the drone tower video was done with a GOPRO camera. Glenn, AF8C, noted that modern baby monitor cameras may

have uses in amateur radio.

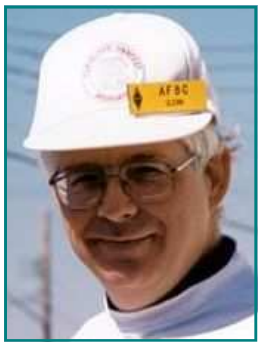
Wrapup:

Pete, N8TR moved and Ron K8VJG, seconded, for the meeting to be adjourned. The motion passed. The next meeting will be on May 5. Mary, N8DMM, won the raffle and donated her half ($17.00) back to the club. The meeting closed at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully, Glenn, AF8C, Secretary

Minutes of the May 5th, 2014 NODXA Meeting

The meeting was opened at 7:31 p.m. by Tedd, KB8NW, with 21 members and guests present. After the round of introductions and the Pledge of Allegiance, the minutes for the meeting of April 7 were read by Glenn, AF8C. A motion by Bruce, N8DJX, seconded by Gary, NI8Z, to accept the minutes was passed on the vote. Mary, N8DMM, reported the treasury balance was $Ka-Ching! The treasurer's report includes the cost of the Dayton hospitality suite but not any dues collected this evening. The fiscal year is May to May, so any dues not paid are still invited for payment.



A motion by Denny, WB8K, seconded by Dwaine, K8ME, to accept the minutes was passed on the vote. Ron, K8VJG, reported having called to reserve the Field Day site for 2014. Tedd asked for reports on the repeater. Denny, WB8K, reported that the repeater controller glitched again and had to be power cycled again in order to restore the use of the PL tone. With regard to the pole's detuning wires, a turnbuckle holding a detuning wire came loose and the wire touches a pole stub. A climber will come soon. The repeater itself is an older Yaesu Vertex unit.

Per Dave, WD8IOU, the newsletter is tardy but he plans for the new edition to be out by Dayton. He needs the usual support from people who can supply material for the newsletter.

Old/New Business:

Per Denny, WB8K, the club's MLA2500 amplifier that was intended to be repaired for sale at Dayton needs so much work (soft start, power switch, modifications for the time delay module, a grid protection circuit, an apparently bad power supply) that the entire $150.00 allocated for repair would be exhausted without even providing good tubes. Unfortunately the new tubes would cost $900.00 for a pair and the amplifier was not built to handle the WARC bands. Denny recommends the amplifier be sold as is at Dayton for spare parts. Brian, K3USC, volunteered to take it to Dayton. The existing tubes should be sold on eBay. We will ask John, K8YSE, to handle the eBay sale.

Per Pete, N8TR, he has more NODXA logo caps for sale for $6.00 each. George, K8KR, reported having a 45 minute QSO on 60m, his first, and he wondered if anyone else works 60m. Brian, K3USC, reported having many QSOs on that band. George asked about a trivia question that was on the CARS net. At the beginning of WWII, amateurs were asked to turn in (a) copper wire, (b) aluminum chassis, (c) gold and silver on hand, or (d) vacuum tubes. The answer was vacuum tubes.

Per Pete, N8TR, amateurs in Great Britain are rebuilding a Colossus computer (first computer ever) and they need donations of vacuum tubes per their website. Pete said Rick, K8ZH, is going to visit their site. George, K8KR, reported that the new MFJ 259C can tune even on the VLF bands. AES is offering a better price than from MFJ.

Dave, WD8IOU, asked about the reported need for supplying a copy of your license when renewing car tags. Dwaine, K8ME, said that happened to him also. George, K8KR, reported that the Pioneer ARC bus to Dayton will cost $45.00. Tedd's reports included that Gabor, HA3JB, plans to operate as

a YB9 in the fall and is looking for donations. (No members expressed interest in such a donation.) Also, Lee Wical, KH6BZF, is a recent Silent Key. The Hospitality suite at the hotel will be the usual room 1011.

The Aves Island Dxpedition has been delayed. Another operation from Laos starts tomorrow. 9Q7VW will run May 6-21. Tromelin is coming in October. The Heard Island team has a new Web site.

Wrapup:

Next month we will discuss plans for Field day. After discussion the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be on June 2. Tedd, KB8NW won half the raffle basket of $38.00 and of course he donated his half back to the club. The meeting closed at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully, Glenn, AF8C, Secretary

New Hams Are Different by Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

This is going to be a bit of a ramble, but I need to get some thoughts down about new hams, and maybe get some feedback on these ideas from both new hams and guys that have been around for a while.

On Thursday evening, I visited the All Hands Active (AHA) makerspace here in Ann Arbor. Many of them have recently gotten their ham licenses—most of them in one of my one-day Tech classes. I was down there trying to get them interested in attending Field Day, and in particular, in operating the GOTA station.

AHA is one of Ann Arbor's cool makerspaces.

There were four of us sitting around, talking about amateur radio, the projects they were working on, Field Day, and other stuff. They have expressed an interest in doing something with WA2HOM, our station at the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum. While it was a great discussion, it was apparent to me that selling them on Field Day was going to be a stretch.

It dawned on me that these new radio amateurs were just not interested in the "old" amateur radio. Sitting in front of shortwave radios and exchanging fake signal reports with other guys sitting in front of shortwave radios is just not their idea of a good time. I think that if you take a step back and try to look at it through their eyes, you'll see where they're coming from.

What are they interested in? Well, one guy is having a blast playing around with RTL SDR dongles. He's also trying to figure out a way to rig up wireless link to light a light at bus stops around his house when a bus is approaching.

Another is working on a Hinternet-type project. I helped him out a little bit last summer setting up a wireless node at his house.

This is perhaps one reason why there are so many more licensed radio amateurs these days, but yet there seems to be less activity on the HF bands these days. HF is just not where it's at for these new guys.

One consequence of this is that the old amateur radio clubs don't have much to offer the new guys. In fact, one of them told me that the one time that he attended the local club meeting, he got such a hostile response that he decided not to return.

I'm finding this all quite interesting. I do intend to pursue some kind of joint activities between AHA and WA2HOM and see where that goes. They may not be interested in working DX on 20m, but they did seem to be interested in the IRLP node that we're in the process of installing there.

I'm not sure where this is all headed, but what I do know is that these folks have a lot of energy and creativity. If we can couple that with our knowledge and experience, then I think that we'll be a good fit for one another. It's going to take open minds all around, though.

Field Day 2014 by David Autry, WD8IOU

It's Field Day time again! June 28 and 29 to be exact. John, K8YSE, is the field day chairman this year and has decided that we will do a low-key, just for fun, operation. As a result, we will not have a GOTA station this year because of all the extra work required to set it up; the club will participate in the 2A class using two stations: SSB, and CW/RTTY.

The NODXA site is the same as last year, the Mount Augustine Training Center located on 5232 Broadview Road in Richfield. A map to the Field Day site is below.

Everybody is encouraged to attended this 24-hour marathon, and, most of all, to operate! We especially need CW operators to keep that station running for the full 24 hours.

Field Day is a great way to introduce young people to ham radio. So bring your grandkids, nephews/nieces, etc.

Pete, N8TR, is planning an early setup of tents and antennas Friday evening around 6 PM. Everybody is encourage to stop by and help out; this will decrease the amount of work required on Saturday morning.

The contest starts at 2 PM Saturday and ends at 2 PM Sunday. Operators are real scarce during the "3rd shift" (12 AM to 8 PM) so it would be a great help for our club's score if we could have a couple more operators during those hours.

The club has allocated some money for food and drink so there should be plenty to eat. But we will need some cooks so, even if you don't want to operate, stop on out and flip some burgers!

Remember to bring the bug spray, folding chairs, sun screen, and 807's!

See you there!

VK9MT—Mellish Reef 2014 by Gene Spinelli K5GS

Mellish Reef Location

Messish Reef is an uninhabited coral atoll in the Coral Sea located approximately 1,150 kilometers north-northeast of Brisbane, Australia. The reef itself is approximately 10km long by 3km wide. However, the only useable land mass is "Herald's Beacon", a small sand cay which stands two meters above the high water line.

The surface is composed of crushed coral and pumice stone to a depth of about 12 inches (30 cm) over a coral base. The reef is home to thousands of surface nesting seabirds including boobies and petrels with an active population of hermit crabs. Surrounding the island are submerged coral heads which make navigation hazardous. The beauty of the white sand against the blue water and submerged coral is stunning. The sun reflecting off the water and coral produces some of the most beautiful colors in the spectrum. The coral heads required our boat to anchor about 500 meters offshore, we used a Zodiac to transit to and from the island, carefully navigating around the coral.

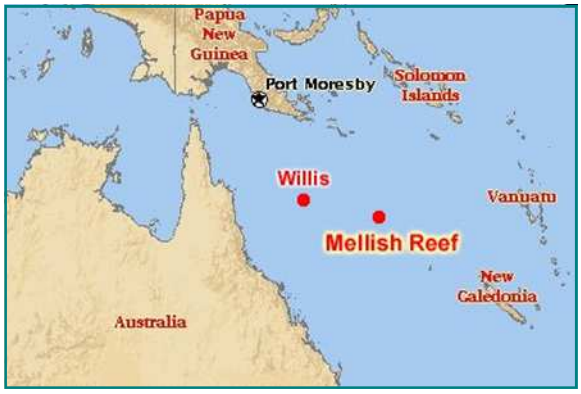


Figure 1 The Coral Sea

Why Mellish Reef

The idea to activate Mellish Reef was born in June, 2013 while Pista HA5AO, Les W2LK, Gene K5GS and George HA5UK were having dinner in Budapest, Hungary. After further discussions with Dave K3EL at the German Ham Radio event at Friedrichshafen the wheels started to turn. Being high on the most wanted list we knew there would be much interest across the global DX community. We contacted the Australian government to learn their requirements to land on the island. After about a month of question and answer e-mails we were cleared to land on the reef for a DX-pedition.

During the exchange of e-mails we answered questions about antennas, tents, materials of the tents, fires, camping, bird strike mitigation, etc. I wrote a paper explaining DXCC and IOTA and included pictures of the 2009 DX-pedition to Mellish Reef. Shortly afterwards we received an e-mail saying we were good to go to Mellish Reef as long as we were off the reef by May 31st. After that date a permit will be required to land on Mellish Reef. The Australian Coral Sea reefs will then fall under a new strict Coral Sea environmental protection program. Even before this new program was implemented, any boat we used was required to have a permit for conducting commercial operations in the Coral Sea and a minimum of $10,000,000(AUD) liability insurance. Throughout this process the agency personnel were helpful and worked with us to get to a positive conclusion.

Next item of business was the radio license. Since I already held an Australian call sign we were initially told the process to get a VK9 call would be fast. As it turned out because I don't live in Australia the process wasn't as smooth as we expected. In the end, with cooperation from the "Oceania DX Group" (ODXG) in Australia the call sign VK9MT was issued. Several of the VK9MT team members are life members of ODXG; we received a letter from the organization authorizing us to use the call sign while on Mellish Reef.

The Team

We formed the team of: Pista HA5AO, Les W2LK, George HA5UK, Gene K5GS, Dave K3EL, Glenn KE4KY, Norbert DJ7JC, Heye DJ9RR, Luke VK3HJ, Mike WA6O and Luigi IV3YER; 5 Americans, 2 Hungarians, 2 Germans, 1 Australian and 1 Italian. Some team members knew one another from previous

DX-pedition projects, while others met for the first time. Over the course of the project members of the team worked well together, having fun, coming together as a team and helping one another, as required. The prior DX-pedition experience and creativity of the team members was evident. Since all team members except Luigi had been on other DX-peditions, the decisions came easily and reasonable solutions were quickly reached.

You can think of a DX-pedition as an extended "Field Day" and contest. The team is 100% self sufficient, everything must be planned, inventoried and brought to the island and later returned to the boat. Physical labor is required and everyone must participate. On islands like Mellish Reef the heat and humidity become important considerations so we brought over four hundred liters of drinking water to the reef, some even brought a supply of beer. We also had a supply of sunscreen and encouraged everyone to protect themselves from the sun with hats, long sleeve shirts and sunscreen on exposed areas. The Northern California DX Foundation supplied tropical shirts that were perfect for this protection; everyone carried a personal water container.

Figure 2 - L-R Pista HA5AO, Luke VK3HJ, Gene K5GS, Norbert DJ7JC, Heye DJ9RR, George HA5UK, Mike WA6O, Glenn KE4KY, Les W2LK, Luigi IV3YER, Dave K3EL , Bird unknown (photo K3EL)

As a safety precaution, team members were required to have emergency evacuation and medical insurance. Each member provided his medical history summarizing any serious medical conditions, medications used, where the medications were kept, and emergency contact names / telephone numbers, including the member's personal physician's name and contact information. Physical limitations could preclude a person from joining the team. Boarding or leaving the Zodiac, climbing into a bunk, even using the boat's toilets can be a physically challenging task in rough seas and we needed to be sure each team member could be self sufficient.

<u>The Boat</u>

Project requirements were sent to charter firms seeking a boat with the proper survey and operating permits. We selected the expedition yacht Evohe from Dunedin, New Zealand. Evohe is a no frills "working boat" licensed to carry 12 passengers and a crew of 8. We had used Evohe for a previous DX-pedition and were comfortable with her owner / skipper, Steve Kafka, and, his pricing was competitive. Steve applied for the operating permit and provided his insurance information.

We selected Mackay as our departure point to minimize the number of days at sea. The Evohe is a six sail sailing ketch with two Ford engines. With a top speed of 10 knots we allowed 3.5 days to reach the reef; we arrived in 3 days.

Figure 3 - Expedition Sailing Vessel Evohe (photo K3EL)

The Evohe arrived from New Zealand on March 17th. The skipper had a crew of four: Paul (Ireland), Allison and Shaun (New Zealand) and Joanna (England).The crew had never heard of Mellish Reef, they signed on for the adventure.

The Planning Process

Regularly scheduled Skype conference calls were conducted for months to plan every aspect of the project. Responsibilities were assigned, fund raising began and soon various documents began to take shape. Since many of the team members owned Elecraft equipment we agreed to use personally owned Elecraft K3 transceivers and owned and borrowed Elecraft KPA-500 linear amplifiers. We had 3 Tokyo HyPower amplifiers to round out the 6 stations, 3 CW, 3 SSB/RTTY, including several back-up transceivers, amplifiers and power supplies. The Elecraft equipment performed flawlessly. We had failures with several no-name 12 volt power supplies; however the Astron switching supplies all worked perfectly.

Antennas consisted of SteppIR CrankIRs, BigIRs and verticals using Spiderpoles / SGC automatic tuners and a 40 meter four square, with a Pennant for low-band rx. The 80 meter antenna and 160 inverted L towered over the antenna farm. We also had 2 folding hex beams from foldingantennas.com. The combination of vertical and horizontally-polarized antennas helped to reduce inter-station interference when simultaneously operating SSB and CW on the same band. We used a combination of commercial shipping from EU / USA and hand carrying equipment to our departure point, the Queensland city of Mackay.

Arrival at Mackay

During the planning conference calls we created detailed shopping lists of items we would need. The decision was made to purchase as much as possible in Australia to reduce the cost of shipping to and from America and Europe. The advance team arrived in Mackay on March 18th to begin the task of buying equipment. We spent four full days at various Mackay shops buying tents, tools, electrical grid, office supplies, tables / chairs and supermarket items.

Figure 4 - Les W2LK shopping at Bunnings (photo K5GS)

All meals would be provided by the boat so all we needed, food-wise, were snacks and drinks not supplied by the boat, i.e. beer. At almost every business we visited the staff and customers asked why we were in Australia and what our plans for the equipment were. Some had heard of Mellish Reef, others not, but very few knew about amateur radio DX-peditions. In any event, everyone was very helpful and we were able to find everything we needed without any trouble. At one shop the salesperson directed us to another firm that had a no frills item for $153 that would work just as well for our purposes as his $600 item, he was right!

In the spirit of giving something back to the community at the conclusion of the DX-pedition we donated many of these items to the Mackay Girl / Boy Scout Council which were greatly appreciated by them, the generators were sold. On the reef itself, we cleaned up all the discarded plastic bottles and trash we found washed up there (although the amount of plastic trash was very low compared to some Pacific islands).

We had developed detailed antenna plans, coax requirements, tent / antenna layouts, power grids, fuel usage, etc. After communicating with several generator hire firms we learned they don't rent generators for off-shore use. We ordered 4kW inverter generators branded as "Tradetested" in New Zea-

land / Australia. The units were shipped from Sydney and arrived well before we needed them. They too worked flawlessly.

Two of the team members rented a cabin at the local RV (caravan) park. This turned out to be an excellent place to consolidate equipment to and from the boat, to test radios / antennas, and for the team to enjoy some downtime.

Since the boat had arrived early, the skipper said we could load the boat well in advance of departure. We made many trips to the boat loading equipment in small groups over several days vs. spending the better part of a day loading. The weather at Mackay was very hot and humid, the boat was docked about as far from the car park as a boat could get and the entrance to the dock was via a long, steep ramp which made the work even harder and the occasional heavy rains added another level of difficulty to the job. Everything was brought to the boat using borrowed carts. The boat crew helped us to carry the equipment to the boat and then handled the task of lifting everything to the deck and stowing it in the boat's various storage holds.

Figure 5 - Pista HA5AO loading boat (photo K5GS)

Figure 6 - Crewmember Paul with Tuna (photo K3EL)

Departure Day

On the afternoon of March 25th we set sail for Mellish Reef. Prior to sailing, the boat was visited by three Australian Customs Officers to complete the departure formalities. The winds were not in our favor, we used engines the entire journey. The seas were rough and the ride very difficult.

During the sea voyage the crew caught a tuna which provided excellent steaks for two meals. The skipper, Paul and Shaun brought in the tuna although the energetic fish had other ideas about boarding the boat; Shaun expertly prepared the fish for later meals. A professional fisherman we met at the marina explained to me that humans should not eat certain fish caught at the reef. These "reef fish" contain a toxin that causes the illness "Ciguatera" which produces serious gastrointestinal and neurological effects which can last weeks, months and in extreme cases up to twenty years.

Arrival Day

We arrived at the reef in the afternoon of the 28th (local time) and began bringing some equipment ashore in a Zodiac and setting up the operating tents. Early on the morning of March 29th we began taking radio equipment ashore and establishing the operating camps. The wind was our constant companion, blowing at a steady twenty knots. Erecting the tents and antennas in the strong wind was an early indication of what was to come. The wind made the trips in the Zodiac "interesting". Sea water was showering us as the Zodiac drove into the wind on the way to the reef, the skipper asked us to get under a tarp so we wouldn't get drenched.

Because of the sand depth, guy and tent stakes required a different technique vs. the traditional driving them into the ground. We bought seventy five pieces of pre-cut rebar and as many pieces of landscape stakes. A dead-man arrangement had to be used to set the guys and tent ropes.

George, HA5UK, donned his swimwear and snorkel and swam out to a coral head that he used to guy two 18 meter Spiderpoles and one of the Big-IRs.

Figure 7 - First view of Mellish Reef (photo KE4KY)

Due to the risks from the barely-submerged coral heads, it was determined that it was not possible to travel safely to and from the reef between sunset and sunrise. We created a shift schedule that required one team to remain on the reef 6PM to 6AM every other day. Although twenty four hour radio operations were allowed, the off duty team went back to the boat for sleeping.

<u>On the Air</u>

All six stations went on the air March 30, with Dave, K3EL, making the first contact with ZL4PW. The pile-ups remained heavy and energetic throughout the DX-pedition! We adopted an operating routine and kept as close to the routine as possible. However, day by day we noticed the wind was gradually increasing and we were beginning to experience heavy rains.

Propagation was excellent on the HF bands with openings to all parts of the world. The HF bands were on fire, with 10m – 20m providing 88% of the QSOs. Despite the cracking conditions on the high bands, we spent some time on 40m / 80m, and were rewarded with remarkable conditions one night on 80 m, with the US and EU coming in as if it were 20 m. The 160 antenna went up last, and because of weather events described later, we were able to operate only one night. The combination of variable propagation and the shortened operating time impacted mostly the low bands.

Figure 8 - Luke VK3HJ setting a dead-man (photo K5GS)

On April 1st the skipper said he was monitoring a tropical depression north of Mellish Reef. Eventually this weather event caused death and destruction in the Solomon Islands and would later be officially named Cyclone Ita, a very late-in-the-season cyclone .

We continued operating for five full days but it was becoming evident that the weather was getting worse. The skipper was closely monitoring the situation and keeping us updated. He wasn't in panic mode yet, but did express concern that the storm was growing. In case we had to make a fast departure we removed all non-essential equipment from the island shortly after the formation of the storm, dismantled some antennas and scratched deployment of others.

During the night shift of April 4th the wind and rain became a real concern. While the operating tents were holding up reasonably well, the break tent was severely damaged the day before. The antennas were

taking a beating and required constant attention; resetting guy ropes and reattaching broken wires became a daily maintenance activity.

Figure 9 - George HA5UK setting guy on submerged coral head (photo K5GS)

QRT

On April 5th at about 0200(local) the decision was made to go QRT. The tents were shaking violently in the now 35 - 40 knot winds and torrential downpours threatened the safety of the operators. The tropical storm to our north continued to strengthen day after day, and would soon be declared a named cyclone. Although at the time we were only on the edge of the disturbance caused by Cyclone Ita, the forecast storm track took it towards Mellish Reef. In previous discussions with the skipper, he indicated that it was critical that we leave before the storm could overtake us in order to be able to make it safely back to Australia. We began to pack the radios and amps in their Pelican cases. When the morning shift arrived we spent the next 5 – 6 hours removing equipment from the reef and preparing to set sail for Australia.

Return to Mackay

The winds were strong and in our favor, we were under sail the entire way back, no engine noise, just the sound of the sea against the hull. The ride was as smooth as could be expected. We arrived at the Mackay marina at 0230(local) on April 8th. The skipper skillfully navigated the channel and easily brought Evohe to the wharf.

Figure 10 - Operating Site (photo KE4KY)

That morning we hired two vehicles and began offloading the boat, bringing all our gear to a cabin we rented at the nearby RV (caravan) park. Over the next two days we sorted equipment, repacked it for shipment back to the USA and Europe, rebooked flights and identified the equipment to be sold and donated.

Dail Challenges

Of course, the weather presented the biggest challenge. Prior plans had to be changed to account for the weather. While we did experience some antenna damage we had additional antennas and spares that were not deployed due to the early QRT decision.

We had challenges from the sound of the wind blowing across / through the tents which, at times, made it difficult or impossible to hear the radios, even when wearing headphones. At the last minute before leaving Mackay we bought an additional two small tents to use for resting. These tents were light backpacking types and were destroyed by the wind within hours of being erected. The operating

tents were much sturdier, with metal frames, and withstood the constant beating of the wind without issue.

Guy and tent ropes needed constant attention, primarily due to the sand base and lack of a solid footing. The vertical wire antennas required daily attention as wires snapped and the antennas leaned over from the wind. The folding hex beams performed very well but after five days of withstanding the moisture laden strong wind we noticed they were losing their shape. They both continued to work but on the last night of operation, right about the time we went QRT, we lost a guy rope on one of them and it came down. Not that it was funny at the time, but Pista HA5AO and I didn't see the antenna in the night and went looking for it with torches (flashlights). We couldn't find it and wondered if it was taken by aliens or swept into the sea. In the next morning's daylight we found the antenna on the sand.

Figure 11 - Pista HA5AO on CW (photo K5GS)

DX-peditions will test your ability to handle stress and adapt to the unplanned. Meeting people, maybe for the first time, living on a small boat in rough seas, building a tent / radio city in high temperatures, wind and humidity will challenge anyone's ability to cope with physical and emotional stress. Add to this the isolation of being on an island and 24 hour radio operations and it's not surprising you might need a vacation when you return home. Additionally, the human side of a DX-pedition is a real consideration. The Team Leaders are not only in charge of the project but they must ensure the well being of each team member. People react differently to these challenges; the team leaders must handle all situations and they did just that on Mellish Reef.

We had to be careful not to disturb the ground nesting birds. Many had eggs on the ground and would become agitated if we got too close. We marked the nests with sticks so we could see them at night. We also marked any rebar and wooden stakes that were above the ground to prevent tripping. Other than a cut finger we had no injuries or accidents on the reef. Neither birds nor eggs were injured.

Results

Our goal was to work 80,000 QSOs and concentrate on RTTY. Unfortunately, the weather has a nasty habit of changing the best made plans. We were on track for 80K but closed the log on 4 April, 1353z after 40K QSOs including about 3,400 RTTY Qs. We were unable to spend as much time on the low bands as we had planned. However, we enjoyed excellent openings on the high frequency bands 10 – 30 meters.

In general, the DX community cooperated nicely during the pile-ups, with the usual suspects causing much of the chaos typically experienced by DX-peditions. Sometimes I think they will never learn that by continually calling in the blind they ruin their own chances of getting in the log, and many did lose their contact with VK9MT.

We appreciated those operators that followed the DX Code of Conduct and wish those that didn't would recognize the problems they cause themselves and everyone else.

VK9MT Statistics

Operating Time:

First QSO: 2014-03-30 04:34:00
Last QSO: 2014-04-04 13:53:00

Number of QSOs
Total QSOs 40,114

Continent:

- **Europe 36.1%**
- **North America 29.1%**
- **Asia 29.8%**
- **Oceania 3.4%**

Mode:

- **CW 61%**
- **SSB 30.5%**
- **RTTY 8.6%**

All Time New One:

- **All modes 26.1%**

Unique Calls:

- **12,831 32%**

The leader board was not used for this DX-pedition.

Figure 12 - L-R George HA5UK, Mike WA6O, Dave K3EL on CW (photo W2LK)

Cyclone Ita

Cyclone Ita eventually intensified to become a Category 5 storm with maximum winds of 130 mph. By the time it hit the north Queensland coast it had weakened to Category 4, but still caused an estimated one billion dollars (AUD) in damage. While there was no loss of life or serious injury in Australia, the storm flattened sugar cane fields, ruined banana crops, cut the state's main highway and left a mammoth cleanup task in her wake. Most of the team was away from Australia by the time the storm arrived, however intrepid travelers Dave K3EL and Glenn KE4KY did experience some of the storm's fury. Cyclone Ita also created havoc in Auckland, New Zealand where I was staying on the way home from Australia. We found ourselves trapped in the house for a day when a tree fell across the driveway to the main road.

Figure 13 - Courier Mail Headline (photo K5GS)

Wrap Up

While we were disappointed with our early departure there are some things we can't control. No one was injured; we thought it prudent to not take any risks with the building storm. We had greatest confidence in the skipper's judgment and his crew.

We very much appreciate the support from the global DX foundations, clubs and individuals who helped make this project a reality; our corporate sponsors were equally important to the project. The global pilot team did a wonderful job as does our QSL Manager Tim Beaumont, M0URX. We met many fine people in Mackay who assisted us before and after the project.

We especially want to thank Jenny McGrath, owner of Mackay Pack and Send (a shipping business) who worked tirelessly before and after the DX-pedition. The staff at Pack and Send was invaluable to the project. We arranged for our shipments to be received by Jenny. She asked where we planned to store the equipment; I told her we'll hire a self storage unit. She said that wouldn't be necessary, we could leave the equipment in her storeroom and also any luggage not needed on the boat during our trip to the reef. Before we left Australia she invited the team to her home for a BBQ the night before we began leaving Mackay.

It seems that Jenny is a fan of American baseball and she jokingly mentioned to Glenn KE4KY that she'd like to have a Louisville Slugger baseball bat. What Jenny didn't know is Glenn has a friend at the factory and he arranged for Jenny to receive an original Louisville Slugger. The bat arrived while we were in Mackay.

The highlights of the project were many, including giving ATNOs, putting people on the Honor Roll and Top of the Honor Roll, and supporting the local Mackay Scouting Council with our equipment donation.

I'd be remiss by not mentioning the camaraderie, cooperation and friendship of the VK9MT team, the global pilots and all those who helped us throughout the project. And thanks to Dave K3EL, Pista HA5AO and Les W2LK for editing this article.

We'll close with a fun photo titled: "Masked Boobies Queuing up for the Loo".

The team is already discussing their next project.

Please visit our website at: www.vk9mt.com

Figure 14 - Masked Boobies Queuing up for the Loo (photo HA5UK)

Interesting Stuff on the Internet by Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

G8MNY Technical Bulletins <http://www.theskywaves.net/technical.html> G8MNY has been providing these technical bulletins over the packet network in Europe for many years. They were written by many different authors and cover many different topics including aerials, baluns, filters, microphones, and more.

Tubebooks.org. <http://www.tubebooks.org/technical_books_online.htm> This site has PDFs of many older electronics books. Among them: *Audels Radiomans Guide*, Edwin P. Anderson, 1945, 880 pages. An odd book, about 4-1/2" x 6-1/2" and a whopping 880 pages, "covering theory, construction, and servicing including television electronics". It covers everything from sounds waves through basic electronics, PA systems (including a little info on a WE theatre amp), transmitters, car and aircraft radio, trouble-shooting – you name it, it's in here. Not a college text, this looks like it could be a handbook for the radio technician or advanced hobbyist of the 1940's. Lots of good vintage info!

Slim Jim antenna calculator & Slim Jim information. <http://www.m0ukd.com/Calculators/Slim_Jim/index.php> I always thought that "Slim Jim" was just another term for J-pole. I was wrong. This site not only explains the difference, but has a calculator that lets you design your own. Now, I'm going to have to build one of these!

Man Found in Hara Arena, Days After Hamvention Ends via hamhijinks.com

By K5KVN, on the scene

DAYTON, Ohio — A Vermont amateur radio operator was found today in a remote hallway within the Hara Arena complex, three days after the end of Hamvention. Officials at a news conference identified the man as Gerry Mapleshire and described him as being found "disoriented, hungry, and with three days of beard growth."

After medical technicians on the scene revived his blood sugar by providing him a leftover $6 Hamvention Hotdog, Mapleshire recalled what happened.

"It was shoulder-to-shoulder on the arena floor. I remember a nice-looking lady handing me a free Kenwood cloth bag full of brochures and a lapel pin, then the crowd shifted and I was pushed into the MFJ booth," said Mapleshire.

He says that's when his "survival instincts" kicked in.

"I got on my hands and knees and crawled out of the MFJ booth. I got to the arena floor ramp but the crowd was so thick. I somehow ended up in a hall by the loading docks, without my Kenwood bag," he said.

He wandered through dark hallways trying to find his way out of the vast complex for three days before a maintenance worker found him. "I called for help on 146.520 but no one answered," said Mapleshire.

Hamvention information deputy Ned Doubtman investigated why his radio call went unanswered. "Turns out he was transmitting WITHOUT a PL tone. Everyone here blocks out QRM by using a PL tone on transmit and receive. It's no wonder he wasn't heard," said Doubtman.

Mapleshire says he's still recovering from the traumatic experience, but would like to get in touch with someone from Kenwood so he can get his lapel pin.

Meeting Information

NODXA Meetings are held the first Monday of each month at the *Gourme Family Restaurant* at 15315 Pearl Road (Rt. 42) just west of Interstate 71 and south of Rt. 82 in Strongsville at 7:30 PM. Come early and have dinner and meet your fellow DXers and enter the 50/50 raffle.

NODXA Information

NO8DX: Special Event Callsign
W8DXA: NODXA Repeater 147.360

Web-site: http://www.papays.com/nodxa.html
Newsletter Submission: wd8iou@adelphia.net

NODXA Club Officials for 2014-2015

President:	Tedd Mirgliotta, KB8NW	(440-237-2816)
V. President:	Denny Jakubisin, WB8K	(440-237-3248)
Secretary:	Glenn Williams, AF8C	(440-835-4897)
Treasurer:	Mary Michaelis, N8DMM	(440-236-5426)
Newsletter:	David Autry, WD8IOU	(440-238-0417)

DXCC Info

As of February 2012, the current DXCC Entities total is: 340.

Newsletter Contributors

Thanks to the following for their contribution to this months edition: N8TR, N8DMM, KB8NW, K8YSE, AF8C, KB6NU, K5GS, K5KVN, and www.hamhijinks.com.

NODXA Application and Renewal Form

The Northern Ohio DX Association is a non-profit organization with a primary interest in DXing. We encourage all DXers to join our group and share the interest and fun of DXing.

Please complete the application below and send along your appropriate dues or renewal to:

NODXA, P.O. Box 361624 , Strongsville, Ohio 44136

First Time Membership/Renewal (U.S. and DX) $20.00

Name_____ Callsign_____
Address _____
City _____ State/Prov. _____
Country _____ ZIP _____
E-mail _____
Telephone _____
ARRL Member? _____ Exp. Date _____ DXCC Member?_____
Special Interest _____