

HEARD ISLAND

The 2016 Cordell Expedition

VKØEK

Discovering life and innovative communications on the most extreme subAntarctic island

COMPARING VKØEK WITH PREVIOUS DXPEDITIONS

After a hiatus of almost two decades, Heard Island will once again be on the air, this time as VKØEK. How will this operation compare with past DXpeditions to Heard Island?

The first amateur radio operation was done in 1948 by A. Campbell Drury, using his callsign VK3ACD. Since then, operations have occurred about once every ten years, often associated with scientific expeditions. Major DXpeditions were carried out in 1983 (two groups) and 1997. The DXpeditions occur during Feb-April, because of weather. Typically, the operation lasts 2-3 weeks.

The table at right gives some of the basic information about these four operations. Some of the information is estimated; for VKØEK it is projected or defined. In spite of the uncertainties, interesting facts emerge:

Clearly, the 1997 and 2016 expeditions involve much larger teams of operators, and correspondingly higher number of Operator*Days and QSOs/Day. Very roughly, each operator makes 300-900 QSOs in a day. This is perhaps surprising, because the equipment, computer logging, camp support, and operating skills have all increased. One might think *a priori* that the development of technology,

including hardware, software, and planning, would have enhanced the output of the operators, i.e., higher QSO/(Operator*Day), but apparently this is not the case.

Typically the Cost/QSO is a few U. S. dollars. The low cost of the VKØHI operation was due to the fact that they paid for passage on a ship that was chartered by the climbing team.

Transportation has always been by far the greatest portion of the cost of getting to Heard Island, and the dramatic rise in cost is predominantly due to increased transportation cost. Increasingly this is straining the abil-

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It would, of course, be interesting to compare these numbers with other DXpeditions, particularly those to other subAntarctic islands. Statistics on major DXpeditions have been compiled by Don N1DG and others,

and are available from ClubLog and elsewhere. From these you could compare the Heard Island DXpeditions with other large operations.

For most DXers, the bottom line is a confirmed QSO in the log. This is the main

theme of this issue, namely to help you get that confirmed QSO. In the following pages, you will find some hints for increasing your chances of getting your callsign in the VKØEK log. Statistics like those shown in the table are fun and interesting, but to see how you can shift the luck more in your favor, turn the page...

Callsign	VKØJS, VKØNL	VKØHI	VKØIR	VKØEK
Year	1983	1983	1997	2016
Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	April
Sunspots	130	130	10	50
Operators	2	2	20	12
Days	8	24	13	18
QSOs	14000	30000	80673	120000
Cost	\$50,000	\$40,000	\$310,000	\$550,000
Transportation	\$40,000	\$30,000	\$200,000	\$350,000
Operator*Days	16	48	260	216
QSOs/Day	1750	1250	6200	6700
QSOs/Operator	7000	15000	4000	10000
QSOs/(Operator*Day)	875	625	310	556
Cost/QSO	\$3.57	\$1.33	\$3.84	\$4.58
QSOs/(Operator*Day*Sunspots)	7	5	31	11

ity to find funding. If this trend continues, it may prove impossible to fund such pure radio DXpeditions.

The last line in the table is a kind of performance figure that includes the sunspot number. This parameter might be of some value in planning future DXpeditions.

HOW WE WILL REDUCE DUPS, PIRATES, AND DQRM

For a DXpedition, getting to the destination, setting up camp, and carrying on life support are among the significant challenges. However, once these are in place, there are still other challenges to logging contacts with as many different stations as possible. Among these are the problems of DXers making duplicate contacts, of rogue stations pirating contacts, and of deliberate interference (DQRM). There is a wide variety of these behaviors: tuning up on the operating frequency, policing, working without listening, etc.

Most DXpeditions, even those with the best plans, equipment, and operators, have to deal with these regrettable problems. But here is how we look at them: Mostly, they result from anxiety about whether a successful QSO will be correctly logged by the DX station. If the DXer had more confidence that he or she would get in the log, there would be fewer of these incidents, and a correspondingly larger number of happy (=“I’m in the log!”) DXers. That’s what we want, too, and we have a few ideas of how we can help you to get yourself, and others, in the log.

Our basic principle is to reduce uncertainty by providing information about the DXpedition in real-time. Ideally, the information should flow both FROM the DXpedition and TO the DXpedition. You would like to not only know more about what the DXpedition is doing, but you’d like to offer your suggestions as well. We believe that the introduction of real-time into DXing will ultimately be a major tool to help the DXer get that prized QSO.

In 2005, we introduced the first real-time radio log server: DXA. It proved to be enormously popular, and we’ll use it again on VKØEK. You need do nothing more than point your browser at the URL, which will be well-publicised. No downloads, no installations, no login. Just watch it.

So how will DXA reduce or eliminate some of the traditional problems described above? Here’s how it works...

DUPS. For decades a common habit has been to make a duplicate contact (“insurance”). But every dup takes the same time as a first-time QSO, hence it is obvious that every dup means that someone else has lost a valid contact with the DX. If you knew “instantly” that your QSO was successfully (and correctly) logged, there would be no need for a dup. So our first advice is: Watch DXA. If you get confirmation, don’t call again. If you don’t get confirmation, call again (please!).

PIRATES. Pirate stations use the DXpedition callsign to make a QSO with a DXer, who thinks he has worked the DXpedition. Alas, this contact will be “not in the log.” However, if you see your QSO come up on DXA, you can be absolutely certain that you didn’t work a pirate. If you inadvertently did work a pirate, you are still have a chance to make a valid QSO while the propagation (and the team) is still there.

DQRM. We believe that reducing frustration of individual DXers will be the most effective means for reducing DQRM, and the key to this is enabling you to communicate with the VKØEK. To this end, we have implemented sev-

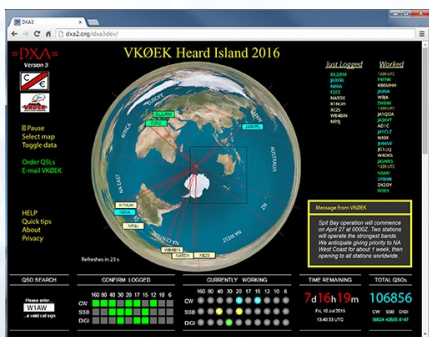
eral tools for helping you *during the pileup*. One tool you probably will like the ability to **send an e-mail message to the team**. We implement this through a link on the DXA page, which will open up a standard e-mail dialog box using your default e-mail client. The local team will process messages and forward them to the team. While we cannot guarantee a personal response to every message, we do guarantee that every message will be read and will receive appropriate action. We will ask two things: (1) That you keep it brief and to the point; and (2) That your comments be constructive.

Another help you will appreciate is the link to **request QSL cards** (the DXA OQRS). This is equivalent to other OQRS services, but you can get it without taking your eyes off DXA. If you’re really good, you can work VKØEK, get confirmation, and order QSLs on several band-modes simultaneously!

Finally, watch the **Message Box** on the far right. That’s where we’ll put short messages that will help you plan your QSOs. You might even see a note of congratulations for working VKØEK!

Our goal is to get you in the VKØEK log. Watching DXA is probably the most effective tool for increasing your chance of success. We welcome additional suggestions to make DXA even more useful to you. However, it’s not an archival online log; it’s an aid to actually making the QSO, by providing information (both ways) in real time. We hope you’ll give us your feedback on it, but mostly, we hope you’ll use it!

2



The short answer: By using real-time interaction between the DXpedition and the DXers. For VKØEK, we will use DXA3. To see how you can use it to enhance your chances of a successful QSO in the log, look at the next page ...



=DXA=

The real-time aid for working VKØEK

Click here to request QSLs cards. You can do this anytime (after you make your contact!). However, you can order cards only for yourself, not for another person.

Watch the map and/or the lists for your callsign. It appears for only 1 minute after your QSO is logged. Don't look away! If you see it, you're in the log!

DXA3
Version 3

VKØEK Heard Island 2016

Pause
Select map
Toggle data

Order QSLs
E-mail VKØEK

HELP
Quick tips
About
Privacy

Refreshes in 23 s

Just Logged

- DL2JRM
- JA9XRL
- NBXA
- F2FZ
- NA5DX
- K1NUH
- XE2S
- WB4BIN
- NR9J

Worked

- 1339 UTC
- F4ENK
- KB0MHH
- JA9RA
- W9JA
- DK6IM
- 1339 UTC
- JATQOA
- JA3KVT
- AD1C
- JATCLZ
- NX0X
- JH9KVF
- JG1ULJ
- W4DKS
- JASNNIS
- 1339 UTC
- NGAKI
- DF8AN
- DK2OY
- W5EK

Message from VKØEK

Spit Bay operation will commence on March 27 at 0000Z. Two stations will operate the strongest bands. We anticipate giving priority to NA West Coast for about 1 week, then opening to all stations worldwide.

QSO SEARCH: Please enter... **W1AW** ...a valid call sign

	CONFIRM	LOGGED	CURRENTLY	WORKING	TIME REMAINING	TOTAL QSOs
	160 80 40 30 20 17 15 12 10 6	160 80 40 30 20 17 15 12 10 6	160 80 40 30 20 17 15 12 10 6	160 80 40 30 20 17 15 12 10 6	7d16h19m	106856
CW	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Fri, 10 Jul 2015	CW SSB DIGI
SSB	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	13:40:33 UTC	56024 42685 8147
DIGI	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●		

Click here to send a message to the team on the island.

Watch this space for messages giving you heads up on the current status and anticipated operations

Enter your callsign (or any else's!) to see which band-modes are in the log for that person in the table. A "greenie" means "safely in the log," i.e., no need for a dup.

This matrix shows the band-modes that are currently active. Listen near our announced frequencies for the pileup.

THE HEARD ISLAND PROJECT

The Heard Island Project is centered around an expedition to Heard Island, lying at 53°S 73°E in the Southern Ocean. The island is extremely isolated, and very seldom visited.

The project will include an ambitious amateur radio operation using the callsign VKØEK, and a variety of scientific investigations under the title “Discovering Life and Innovative Communications in the Extremes.”

The expedition team of 14 will sail on or around March 8, 2016, from Cape Town, South Africa, spend up to 21 days on Heard Island, and end the voyage at Fremantle, Western Australia.



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DXING BUDDIES – A PROPOSAL

This issue of the Newsletter is mostly about how you can enhance your chances of making a successful logged contact with VKØEK. On the previous two pages we tell you about the benefits of watching DXA during the operation. Here I want to propose a whole new idea: **The DXing Buddy System.**

This idea emerges naturally from the traditional concept of the ham radio Elmer: an experienced person who voluntarily helps a relative newcomer to learn and experience ham radio. Most of us have had one or more Elmers, and we're forever grateful to these mentors. Given the challenges of breaking a pileup on a rare DXCC entity, it seems sensible that the concept of an Elmer would be great. But instead of defining it as one experienced DXer helping an inexperienced one, let's generalize it to one DXer helping *any other* DXer achieve a valid QSO with the DX, in this case VKØEK.



Obviously the first step would be to get a buddy. I suggest formalizing it: the two of you agree that you're going to be “VKØEK DX buddies.” You could work together to be best prepared for the DX operation—helping install new antennas, assembling propagation aids, agreeing on the schedule. With two people working together, the chances of missing an unexpected opening will be much less. When your buddy's QSO appears on DXA, you could do a screen capture as a much appreciated favor.

Let me know how it worked! —KK6EK

THE VKØEK BLOGSITE

Co-organizer Rich KY6R maintains a vital and very exciting blogsite:

<http://www.vk0ek.org>

There you will see the latest news and activities about the radio operations being prepared for VKØEK. Rich adds items every few days, so come often to see what's happenin'. Rich provides a lot of information about propagation, the team, the schedule, QSLing, and much more. An extensive FAQ is there, too. Almost everything that happens concerning the radio operation is there, or will be soon!



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