

The
DX
Magazine
The Bi-monthly Magazine for DXers

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"Sable Island or Bust"

2010 Most Wanted Survey Results

IOTA AS-100 - 4X5A

When Murphy's Law Strikes DXpeditions

DXing is ... A Different Kind of Game



Sable Island 2011



When Murphy's Law Strikes DXpeditions

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Cover:

*CYØ - A view of the "beach runway" - only accessible when the weather is right.
"If at first you don't succeed ... keep trying !! The third time was successful - See page 6*

*The chartered plane that crashed while landing on Palmyra Island almost ended the
K6LPL/KH5 DXpedition in 1980, before it began. See "Dee" Logan's article on several
DXpedition mishaps ... beginning on page 34*

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Editorial

by Carl Smith, N4AA

I am pleased to bring this issue of The DX Magazine to you with the results of the 2011 Most Wanted Survey, along with several articles from DXpeditioners.

In the midst of the contest season we have some interesting possibilities coming up which will add to our DXCC totals. One of those is going on as I write this.... an operation from Ethiopia by a small group of Americans. At the end of December three adventurous souls are going to attempt to get to Sable Island. I say attempt because it is not the easiest place to get to... see the story in this issue from Randy, NØTG on his efforts. On the third try his group finally got there. In the middle of winter it could be even more difficult so I wish this group good luck. Later in January a large international group will be going to one of those "rare" places... MALPELO ISLAND (HKØ). Malpelo has been ranked in the top 15 for several years. Hopefully this group, which will be well financed, well equipped and manned by well experienced DXpeditioners, can reduce the "need" for Maleplo, and on all modes as well. I'll have the story of that operation later for your reading enjoyment. With propagation finally getting back to "normal" (whatever that might be) those huge signals on 10 & 12 meters are making it enjoyable to chase DX again. It's been a LONG "dry spell" and I for one am having a ball working all the DX I can these days. Contesting is fun when you can hear those signals without having to abuse your ears listening to all the noise trying to hear an S1 or S2 signal.

I will let John, K1XN tell you about a project he is reviving for 2012. Do you have a favorite QSL Manager? Well, here's your chance to recognize that person. I am pleased to support John in this project by donating the plaque and also providing a venue for it to be presented to the ultimate "winner" in the selection process. Please involve your local DX or Contest Club by bringing the project to their attention and nominate those you feel deserve to be recognized.

QSL MANAGER OF THE YEAR

The Golist QSL Manager Data Service is reviving its QSL Manager of the Year Award.

The purpose of this award is to recognize the service of QSL Managers world wide for the service they provide to the World Wide DX Community

Nominations for this award will be accepted by the Golist from DX and Contest clubs, world wide, for the year of 2012.

Each DX club and Contest club is encouraged to poll their members for their nominations for the Top 5 QSL Managers for 2012.

The definition of a QSL Manager for this award is any person who confirms contacts via printed QSL Card for any station other than their Primary Call Sign.

Each club should tabulate the votes of their members and submit to the Golist the Top 5 vote getters, as voted by members of their club.

Votes should be tabulated and sent to the Golist by August 1, 2012, to be eligible for the QSL Manager of the Year award.

Each club world wide may only send one submission for voting purposes. Records of submission will be maintained by the Golist

A plaque, donated by DX Publishing, Inc., publisher of QRZ-DX and THE DX MAGAZINE, will be awarded to the QSL Manager of the Year selected, at the W4DXCC Convention held in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee in September 2012.

The recognized format for your clubs submission is as follows: Club Name; Club Officer (Name, Call Sign, club office and email address); Top 5 QSL Manager Nominees (list name and callsign).

In the subject line of your official email: *QSL Manager of the Year-2012*

Send to: <golist@gmail.com>

Ending Date: August 1, 2012

Until next time, enjoy the chase, but HAVE FUN !!!

73,
Carl, N4AA

DX

“Sable Island or Bust”

**NØTG/CYØ, K8LEE/CYØ, N1SNB/CYØ
5 - 15 March 2011**

by Randy Rowe, NØTG

It is early Thursday morning and I am enjoying the day and casually making final preparations for the flight in a couple of days to Halifax, Canada on Saturday, then onward to Sable Island on Monday, 8 March 2011.

Suddenly, the computer beeps alerting me that an urgent email has arrived. This will be our third trip to Halifax and attempt to access Sable; our previous two efforts to fly to Sable were aborted after traveling to Halifax due to adverse weather and aircraft equipment problems. My heart sank as I opened the email to read that weather conditions were not looking favorable for the scheduled flight to Sable on Monday or for the remainder of the week. The email was from Gerry Forbes, the Officer in Charge on Sable. As I continued to read the email, Mr. Forbes stated, “However, if you can get to Halifax tomorrow (Friday), we think we can get you out to Sable prior to the storms.” Whew . . . tomorrow! It was 10 AM in Texas. I got up from the computer and started pacing; my mind was running 100 mph. What should we do? The thought of instantly getting packed was one thing, but to change flights on short notice would likely be quiet expensive, plus finding available seats could be another matter. And what about K8LEE, Wayne, and N1SNB, Jeff? Would they be available to fly tomorrow?

Up to this point, I was determined to keep trying to make the DXpedition a reality. To be very honest, however, early on I had made up my mind that if we didn’t succeed on the third attempt, we should cancel the DXpedition. It was becoming too much of a financial liability, emotional stress, and unfair to the DX community by keeping up the expectations and then having to reschedule. I was beginning to lose confidence.

I called the airline, and yes, as long as I no longer required an aisle seat they could get me to New York’s JFK airport with a transfer on a flight to Halifax for a 9:00 PM arrival tomorrow (Friday). Next I called Wayne, K8LEE, and caught him on his tractor, mowing. Wayne, always compliant and positive, immedi-



ately started working on his travel arrangements. He was able to make the change, although at an expected substantial increase in cost. Wayne and I planned to meet in New York and take the same flight from JFK to Halifax. Next, though, how about our other team member, Jeff, N1SNB (home QTH near Boston)? I called Jeff on his cell phone and found him on a business trip in Miami. “Hello, Jeff”, I said. “We need to be in Halifax tomorrow night; can you make it?” Another positive fellow; his response was that he’d do whatever it took. He cut his business short and flew back to his home Thursday night. Jeff decided to make the 12-hour drive from his home to Halifax on Friday.

Everyone arrived in Halifax about 9 PM Friday, having traveled since early morning. The day for us was already long, but not yet complete. There were additional matters to take care of prior to the scheduled flight the next morning to Sable. About 9:30 PM Friday we drove to the home of our contact and logistics liaison, Gary, VE1RGB, to pick up equipment and antennas that we had previously shipped to his QTH. From Gary’s home we headed for the supermarket to purchase groceries for our needs on Sable. By this time, after traveling all day, we were getting very tired. We checked out with our three large shopping carts filled with groceries as the clock struck 12 midnight. Next, back to the hotel, unpack the car, and secure every-

thing in the hotel. Finally, we could begin to relax a bit, as we now were ready to fly to Sable in a few hours. The few hours of sleep that followed were the most restful we would have for the next ten days. “Sable Island or Bust” was clearly understood by each of us.



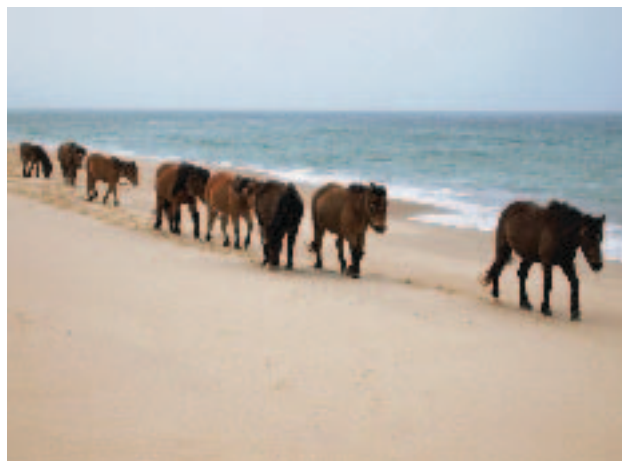
Gary, VE1RGB and Rick, AI5P discuss details of the first attempt to access Sable.

Getting our Equipment there and Liaison in Halifax, Canada.

Early on the team faced many questions with regard to logistics and necessary coordination from our take-off point in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. There were many concerns as to shipping methods, customs regulations, timing, equipment storage, etc.—that is, until we became acquainted with the Halifax Amateur Radio Club (HARC).

The HARC, via VE1MMD, president at the time, offered to assist us with these matters. Scott, VE1QD, was assigned to coordinate and provide oversight on behalf of the club’s support to meet our planning and day-to-day needs. Scott requested Gary, VE1RGB, as our go-to guy to handle the nitty-gritty details. What a wonderful friendship developed. Gary, retired engineer, contester, and DXer, attended to every detail we requested and more. Gary built the coax cables, received and stored equipment/materials we shipped, and guided us through bureaucratic processes, as well as the many other needs. Others in the club were involved behind the scenes as well, and without these fine folks, I am not sure how we could have managed. Our team appreciates Gary and those who assisted him, as well as HARC’s encouragement, more than we can express. We truly experienced international goodwill in every way. Gracious hospitality was expressed to us by so many: Gary, VE1RGB’s XYL Bev, treated us with a homemade seafood chowder dinner (best ever); we were invited to visits in several homes;

we were pleased to always experience helpful service from personnel at hotels and stores; our pilot’s expertise and friendliness; assistance by Sable personnel, a tour of the Halifax area sights by Gary; and more. It truly was an exceptional experience for us to be so welcomed. Our needs were attended to by these special new Canadian friends in a first-class manner.

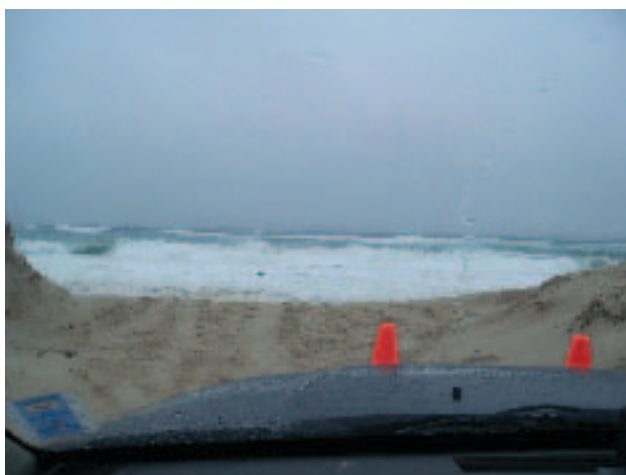


The horses on Sable Island

Without going into a lot of detail, the team flew to Halifax, our take-off point. The first attempt was October 2009. We were turned back after several days due to extensive aircraft problems. Then, in December 2009, we traveled to Halifax once again, and again due to violent storms and long-term adverse weather forecasts, we returned home. We regrouped with lots of consultation as to the calendar time that would provide us the best odds of getting onto Sable. We chose early March 2011 as our third effort. Even though we experienced discouragement with multiply delays, we were not going to give up. We stayed determined to assure that this DXpedition was going to happen. DX bulletins and various club’s newsletters updated those interested as to the progress and changes to the DXpedition plans. Carl, N4AA, with his QRZ DX weekly bulletin; The DX Magazine, and CQ DX column; Tedd, KB8NW publisher of the weekly OPDX Bulletin; Bernie, W3UR, with his “Daily DX” publication and write-ups in QST magazine “How’s DX” column, helped keep everyone up to date concerning the rescheduling details of the DXpedition; plus the webmaster for WWW.CY0dxpedition.com, AA4VK, Ron. The design and functionality of the web site was very helpful to communicate information relating to the DXpedition. Thanks, fellows.



Beach runway BEFORE the December 2010 storms



Beach runway AFTER those December 2010 storms

The Team

Given that the DXpedition was delayed several times, it became difficult to hold together the same team over time. Business and personal needs resulted in a turnover of the team members. The final makeup was: NØTG, Randy; K8LEE, Wayne; and N1SNB, Jeff. All of the fellows who once were planning to go contributed greatly to the final success, however. Their ideas and contributions in the planning phase, personal funds, hardware, and encouragement were exceptional and a foundation of the activation of Sable Island. Thanks to WA4DAN and AA4VK (both original organizers), AI5P, and VE1RGB, all who at one time were scheduled to make the trip.

Getting There

Getting to Sable can be a challenge in several ways. First of all, there is only one way to Sable Island; and that is to fly by chartered airplane. The plane lands on the beach, as there is no traditional landing strip. Thus, in addition to the weather condi-



Wayne, K8LEE



Jeff, N1SNB



Randy, NØTG

tions, the flight schedule can also be affected by the beach sand, which can be too wet or not compacted just right for landing on any given day. In advance, we were told by others that it is not uncommon for delays getting there, and likewise, leaving the island.

This was a small team operation by necessity, transported by the only aircraft available and currently approved for flights to Sable Island, the Britten-Norman Islander, BN2. We were constrained to a total weight limit of 1400 pounds, which included the body weight for the three of us, personal items, food, radio equipment, antennas, coax . . . everything. Determining exactly what to take with us necessitated careful planning, requiring us to assess the need for items and the impact on the total weight permitted. As a matter of fact, during weigh-in at flight time, we were 150 pounds overweight. Before takeoff we had to decide which items to off-load and leave behind.

About one hour prior to take-off from Halifax, the OIC (Officer in Charge) on Sable made a final check of the beach conditions and determined whether the flight was a “go” or “no-go,” and relayed the decision to the pilot in Halifax. Conditions can change rapidly and there have been situations in which the flight took off from Halifax, was in the air over Sable, and had to return without landing.

Permits

Two permits are required to access Sable Island. Acquiring these was straight-forward. Permission to access Sable was formally granted by the Canadian Coast Guard. In addition, visiting Sable must also be approved and scheduled by the Officer-In-Charge stationed on Sable. We cannot fully express our appreciation for the cooperation and manner in which these folks worked with us and the multiply rescheduling due to delays. A very special thank you is extended by our team to the Canadian Coast Guard, and the Sable Island Officer-in-Charge, Gerry Forbes, and also to Al Wilson.

Antennas and Equipment

Antennas were single-band vertical dipoles, one for each band, 40m through 10m. On 80m and 160m we used inverted-V dipoles with the center at 38 feet. Also, we used a ladder-fed dipole cut for 80m for all bands, designed and fabricated for the dxpedition by VE1RGB. We had planned early on for higher performance antennas for the low bands, but weight and logistic matters became issues.

Dealing with setting up the antennas on Sable was a challenge due to the wind and cold temperatures. The weight limitation issue was a major factor in the type and number of antennas that we could take with us. For this “Texas” resident, I considered the weather “brutally cold” and difficult. My fellow teammates from Indiana and Massachusetts appeared to take the weather much better than me. Each antenna seemed to performed quiet, well based on the non-

ending pileups. Radio equipment consisted of three 100 watt transceivers and amplifiers for each station.



The antennas weren't all that pretty but they worked

Operation

The pileups were quite large and never let up. Sable ranked No. 50 overall in the 2010 DX Magazine “Most Wanted” Survey. A three-man team, with more than three bands open most of the time, created quite a challenge to satisfy the demand. We tried the best we could to work all the bands to the maximum extent possible. We gave priority to the 12 and 10m bands when they were open. Shown below is the summary by band and mode for the 24,117 contacts logged. We intended to operate more SSB than logged, but several days into the operation Wayne, K8LEE, and I (NØTG) developed severe coughs and were limited to CW for the most part.

Given that Asia had CYØ ranked No.14 according to The DX Magazine “Most Wanted Survey,” we were committed to do all we could to give priority to JA and all of Asia when the paths were open. Thanks to K9LA and K1FK, propagation forecasts were prepared to help us plan for band openings to JA and other areas as well. It appeared that the best opportunity would be for 17m and 20m bands for the JA's. We were hopeful for 12m, but we worked only two JA's on 12m and none on 10m. JA's were worked mostly on 20 and 17. Also, we had daily openings for JA's and VK/ZL on 40m and 30m. Prior to the devastating Japan earthquake we worked 550 JA stations. Understandably so, after the earthquake we worked only 15 JA's. We had strong band openings for JA on most days, but they were always short in duration. Of course, we wish we could have worked more, but it is known that this is a difficult path.

Propagation was kind to us overall. The solar flux index was on the upward move prior our arrival and continued throughout our stay on Sable. The SFI peaked at 155.

We found 10 and 12m open from time to time. On 10m most contacts were with North America, but with a limited number of South America and Europe as well. The most surprising contacts on 12m were with JA1BK, JA1DSY, and ZL1BYZ. No JA's were worked on 10m; we worked one Africa station, ZS6EZ. Our best DX on 160 was ZL3IX; no other ZL's, VK's, or Oceania stations were worked. 160m stations worked primarily were with Europe and North America for a total on the Top Band of 1,845 contacts.

It was frustrating at times to know that many fellow hams desired us to be on a particular band/mode at specific times. However, we could not be everywhere and tried our best to balance the operation. For the week we were there, we each operated over 100 hours. There was little time for sleep or being away from the radio. The operation quickly turned into "work." We slept only a couple of hours at a time. It was kind of amusing during the middle of the night; we'd pass each other in the hall on the way to bed and the other person would be headed for the radio and we would just "grunt" at each other. One never knew who was up and about, but there was activity all night. However, we are all thrilled to have had the opportunity to visit Sable and thankful to the many who encouraged us and also for those who assisted financially, with planning, promotion, or technical assistance.

SUMMARY – Total Contacts

<u>BAND</u>	<u>CW</u>	<u>SSB</u>	<u>RTTY</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
10	543	89		632
12	1,598	247		1,845
15	1,838	680		2,518
17	3,394	539		3,933
20	3,871	1,488		5,359
30	2,659			2,659
40	2,619	450		3,069
80	1,519	54		1,573
160	1,826			1,826
RTTY			703	24,117

We were fortunate this third time to beat the adverse weather conditions for arrival. For departure, it was a matter of the right timing as well. With one day remaining for our scheduled departure, Gerry Forbes advised that weather conditions were moving in and if we wanted to get off the island that week we should consider leaving the next day. This would shorten the scheduled stay, however, we arrived earlier than planned, so the DXpedition duration had met its time on the island goal. So we planned to depart the next day.

"Sable Island or Bust," Indeed!

We made it. It was a very unique and rewarding experience for all of us. To those who helped us—a special thank you; to all who worked us—thank you for making it fun for us.

The following generously provided various types of assistance, promotion, consulting service, transport, facilities, logistics support: VE1RGB, VE1QD, VE1MMD, VE1ZAC, VE1AWW, K1FK, AA4VK, WA4DAN, AI5P, K9LA, SQ8X, W3UR, N4AA, KB8NW, W8GEX, JA1ELY, Gerry Forbes (OIC – Sable Island).

Thank you clubs and organizations for your support: NCDXF, IDEXA, TOKYO 610 GROUP, SEDCO, SWODXA, CDXC, HARC, GDXF, JLBAA, EHIIME DX GROUP, SEDXC, TCDXA, DANISH DX GROUP, LSDXA, SDXF, MDXA, MILE-HI DX ASSOCIATION, CLIPPERTON DX CLUB, GMDX GROUP, CANADIAN DX GROUP, NODXA, MVDXCC, THE PJ7E TEAM, FIVE NINE (JA), GAP, DUNESTAR, and also for the financial support and encouragement by individual hams.

Also, a big thank you to Maritime Air Charter Ltd.; Debbie and Ted Brekelmans for their hospitality and safe transport to Sable Island.

Finally, we had the privilege of encouraging Al Wilson to get his ham license. Al is a Canadian Government worker who rotates on/off Sable every three months. His call is VE1AWW and when operating from Sable he signs CYØ/VE1AWW. He is currently studying to upgrade his license and increase his operating privileges. Al can be found on the air during his off-work hours, and indeed he was "On Island" in October through December.

DX

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