

ZL8X News

News #1 - 24.11.2009

Received ZL8X license

We received our amateur radio license with the callsign ZL8X.

News #2 - 15.02.2010

Final approval from DoC. Today we got the final approval from the DoC (Department of Conservation) in New Zealand to land on Raoul Island and stay there for about 18 days. Together with this permission we also fixed our boat charter. The well-known Braveheart with his captain Nigel Jolly will bring us and our equipment to the island and will support us with general logistics.

News #3 - 04.04.2010 10:08

Notebooks for ZL8X

As we did it for VK9DWX we also bought a set of equal notebooks this time. In contrast to a setup where every team member brings his own computer you are not facing problems like different operating systems, different processing power, this computer doesn't work with that equipment, and so on. Because we are also using equal transceivers and interfaces, we only have to setup one station and "copy" the parameters to the others. Also, the substitution of components is very easy. This will save us much time when we are arriving on the island and setting up the stations to get as fast as possible on air.

News #4 - 15.04.2010

Changes in the team

We must announce a change in our team list. Due to business commitments Joerg (DL8WPX) had to cancel his participation. Much to our regret we accepted his decision. He was one of the main organization team members for VK9DWX (and would have been one of course for ZL8X). But he already assured to help us in preparation as much as he can. We will miss his knowledge, skills and his companionship!

The new team member we want to welcome is Andree DL8LAS. His experience he got with his last DXpeditions (VP6DX, VK9XW or VK9CD) as well as his contest activities from Germany (DR1A, DR5X or DF0HQ) will contribute to an efficient handling of the pileups. Of course, in past activities he showed his ability to work in the team.

News # 5 - 10.05.2010

Sailing with MV Claymore II

We finally signed the charter contract to sail with the MV Claymore II to Raoul Island in November 2010. Nigel Jolly, owner of the well-known Braveheart, purchased this ship in 2009. Originally built in 1966 in Wilhelmshaven, Germany, she mainly serves now the route between Mangareva and Pitcairn Island to deliver cargo supplies to Pitcairn Island and to carry passengers between the islands.

While the Braveheart will carry out another DXpedition at nearly the same time we are proud to be the first DXpedition to use the MV Claymore II. Though the ship isn't used to the special needs and habits of amateur radio expeditions the crew knows what they are doing. Nigel and his son Matt have access to several experienced seamen which all took part in demanding expeditions (of course also DXpeditions like ZL8R, ZL9CI, FT5XO, VP8GEO/THU or VP6DX).

We want to calm our sponsors that this change to a bigger boat doesn't change the initial calculations. Nevertheless, the costs for the ship charter (NZD 170,000 or around EUR 90,000) is quite high. Please consider supporting us in advance.

News #6 - 20.06.2010

Preparations go on. We have worked out an antenna layout to produce decent signals on all bands from 160m to 10m as well as to listen loud. Except 160m we can run two stations on each band. And we will do where necessary.

On the low bands (160m-30m) we use only vertical antennas. On 80m, 40m and 30m we even have 4-squares to beam with some gain to desired directions. For receiving on the lowbands we plan set up two two-wire beverages into the directions NE-SW (North Amerika vs VK/ZS) and NW-SE (Europe vs. South America).

For the high bands (20m-10m) we will mix horizontal and vertical polarized antennas. Compared to VK9DWX our QTH isn't located directly at the beach anymore but on a plateau about 40m above sea level. But the antennas can still see the saltwater (distance to the cliff is about 20m to 50m). Because it is hardly possible to simulate the antennas with this terrain, we decided to use the vertical dipole arrays which performed so well at VK9DWX as well as monoband yagis at about 10m height.

With an idea where to put all the antennas we could of course assemble all necessary coax and control cables. For the additional vertical antennas, we made some more radials out of 2.5km wire. Many many thanks to the team of DF0SAX! In the next days the monoband yagis will be assembled with the great support of Spiderbeam.

We again want to emphasize that the finances of the DXpedition are still in more or less good shape. But we also want to mention that the price for the boat charter increased from EUR 85,000 to EUR 96,000 (increase by nearly 13% !!!) only due to the exchange rate Euro to New Zealand Dollar (compared the beginning of the planning to now). This amount must be payed additional by each team member. Nevertheless, we count on your support!

News #7 - 29.08.2010

Some time has gone since the last news. But meanwhile we were not inactive, a lot of things happened.

Of course, last activities concentrated around packing our equipment for shipment by sea cargo. Over half of the team met on the last weekend in July at the QTH of DR1A where we collected all the material. Even our last-minute action, the 5 monobanders for 20m to 10m, arrived just in time to get

packed. The Spiderbeam team (Con, DF4SA and Andy, DL9USA) and our team member Andy, DL5CW, did a great job to complete 5 sets of monobanders including new designed boom segments and wire elements. The two Andy's spent at least two weekends to cut all the wires, to prepare the segments and to assemble all antennas to check for VSWR and radiation pattern. Thank you very much for your efforts!

Before everything could be packed into dedicated boxes it had to be checked. Some cables were prepared, new boxes for the GFK mast, aluminum tubes and monobander accessories were made, amplifiers were tested. And every piece of stuff found its place in the boxes. Heavy cables and antenna accessories went into Big Boxes, GFK mast and aluminum tubes were put into orange drainpipes and electronic equipment and coax cable were packed safely into the watertight and robust Peli cases. Of course, most of the equipment was available from our last DXpedition to Willis Island (VK9DWX) but nevertheless we nearly doubled the weight of cargo this time! At the end of the weekend we had 2.5 tons of material packed and ready to be shipped to New Zealand.

Besides packing we also had a small BBQ on Saturday evening. Robert (SP5XVY) has proved to be an excellent BBQ king. We will come back on his abilities when we will be on the island! A lot of discussions about the upcoming DXpedition had taken place during these necessary rest periods.

The other event in the last weeks was another operator change. Markus, DJ7EO, had to cancel his participation due to private and business reasons. After the resignation of Joe, DL8WPX, in April we must do the DXpedition without another great mate and superb technician and operator. At least Markus took care of the sea cargo shipment and the necessary paperwork. Markus, we will miss you!

The new member in our team is Vicky, SV2KBS. Licensed since 2005 she is very active in contests as well from her home club at J42T as well as at the German super station DR1A where she not only managed the huge 40m SSB pile-ups but she also started to learn CW and becomes now a smart all-rounder. When on tour you could hear her from places like Svalbard, Lord Howe or Easter Island. And now from Kermadec Island. Welcome Vicky!

News #8 - 04.11.2010

In about two weeks we expect to be QRV from Raoul Island with the callsign ZL8X. All team members are highly motivated and can't await the start of the DXpedition. The first guys are already on their way to New Zealand. Though we have transported over 2.5 tons of equipment to New Zealand (which is already waiting for us there) the advance party still must organize this or that and take care of loading our equipment onboard the Ship. Because the Jarvis DXpedition was postponed by one year the vessel Braveheart was again available and we will go now with this well-known ship.

In the last weeks we decided to take some 6m equipment with us which will be organized by ZL hams. The spare station will serve from the beginning as the 6m station. Besides a K3 and an ACOM 1000 it will contain a 5 element yagi and a rotator being put on a 10m mast. We are not sure what we can expect on the magic band but we will run the station as a beacon whenever possible, we will put the station near the cafeteria where there is always someone available and we will watch the DX cluster network for possible openings. Equipped with a BGAN modem for Inmarsat we have the possibility to be online in the DX cluster 24/7 to get an immediate feedback of our operation from our audience.

Due to the world economic crisis last year and the interrelated effects on several sectors of our life we still must suffer from the higher costs. For example, a higher exchange rate EUR-NZD or higher transportation costs makes the DXpedition nearly EUR 10,000 more expensive than originally planned without any benefit. Because of this fact we are very proud that the German DX Foundation (GDXF) and the European DX Foundation (EUDXF) increased their sponsorship as a sign of standing behind our ideas and trusting our capabilities. So, our appeal to you: Please also support the DX clubs and foundations. They are not just clubs. A great deal of the support comes from them. And they also have very interesting services for their members like regular magazines with compiled DXpedition articles and news or offer a QSL service like GDXF or EUDXF.

News #9 - 07.11.2010

There is a webcam on Raoul Island. It is a permanent installation of the GeoNet, a monitoring system in New Zealand to watch hazards like earthquakes, volcanic activities or tsunamis. On our website we have installed a link where you can go directly to the [GeoNet site](http://www.geonet.org.nz/volcano/activity/kermadec-islands/cameras/raoul-latest.html).

News #10 - 12.11.2010

General

The main team is about to leave Germany. Our flight will go at 2140 MEZ from Munich airport via Dubai and Sydney to Auckland. We will arrive on Sunday November 14th. Our expected departure from Tauranga harbor will be around Monday evening. If weather permits, we will be at Raoul Island on Thursday morning. Now used to the European autumn the whole team will be expected in New Zealand by warm spring weather with temperatures well above 20 °C. Weather forecast predicts similar weather on Raoul Island.

Our advance party (DJ5IW, DK1II, DL8OH and SP5XVY) are already working hard to get the last details cleared and stuff organized. Our equipment we sent by sea freight will be loaded on Saturday and Sunday. But before loading a very careful inspection through DOC officials has to be carried out to ensure that no organic material (seeds, soil,...) or animals will be taken with us. As Raoul Island is a very sensitive region, we do everything to keep the impact on this unique nature reserve as minimal as possible.

QSL

We are very happy that Mario (DJ2MX) is again our QSL manager! His reliable and accurate work is already well known and will also help us this time. To help us you may use our Online QSL Request System (OQRS) which will be activated AFTER our radio operations. If it is possible please use our service to minimize the workload for us! If for any reason you are not able to use our OQRS you may also send your card normally by post (address via QRZ.COM) or via the bureau.

Sponsoring

To all sponsors so far: THANK YOU VERY MUCH! You contributed your part that this DXpedition will happen! For those who will donate later: We will not update the sponsor list while we are on the island. The first update after the DXpedition is expected when we are back home in mid-December.

The next regular news are planned to be sent from Raoul Island.

News #11 - 24.11.2010

ZL8X is on the air!

Today is Wednesday and it is the 4th day of operation. All stations are manned and pouring out signals around the clock. Radios, amplifiers, computers and antennas are working fine and smoothly.

The Braveheart took us from Tauranga in New Zealand to Raoul Island, which is the main island of the Kermadec group. Matt Jolly and his crew made it a nice and easy voyage.

The Southern Pacific turned out to be calm and friendly and allowed some homecall/mm operation for those of us who fought successfully seasickness.

Arriving at Raoul Island early in the morning enabled us to bring all radio and camp equipment to the island in one day. We received a warm welcome from Jessica and her DoC staff on Raoul Island. They helped us a lot in landing all equipment safely and carrying it to the operation site, which is 2 km west of the landing point. The next two days were full of work and efforts and everyone was heavily engaged to set up the camp, stations and antennas.

The first evening we enjoyed a perfect BBQ of the DoC and spend a couple of hours with interesting talks with the DOC-people and the Braveheart crew.

Erecting 8 stations and 20 antennas was not an easy job. At the end of the day there were:

- 160m: V160E 27m high vertical
- 80m: 4square and inv. V
- 40m and 30m: two 4squares each
- 10m to 20m: five Spiderbeams (monobanders) and five VDAs (Vertical Dipole Arrays)
- 6m: 5 el Yagi

The first QSO was made on November 19th on 0702z with JA8ECS, another 2799 followed. On the next day, we still had to do a lot of work, so it was November 21st as the first day of full operation: Tremendous pileups and almost 16.000 QSOs on this day! Nights and hours around sunrise and sunset are the busiest ones. Pileups during daytime are somewhat less heavy but most stations are manned anyway.

Part of the Braveheart crew with Broughton, Karl and Richard erected the two camps with tents, generators and kitchen and is keeping us well motivated now with fine meals 3 times a day, showers and all support we need. DoC people are very supportive too. They show up from time to time for a chat and offer their help.

Raoul Island is a beautiful spot in the South Pacific with a moderate climate, a flamboyant vegetation with exotic, plants and flowers. Especially the Pohutekawa-tree (the NZ christmas tree!!) is in its bright red flowers now. There is also a special kind of small green parrot, which can only be found on this Island. The coastline shows steep cliffs and vivid white surfs, which grow in heavy winds. Raoul Island is considered an active volcano, although it is supposed to sleep right now. Some 8 rangers from DoC (Department of Conservation) are working hard to bring the island back to its pristine state

with eliminating all kinds of animals and plants that came to the island by man and do not belong to it originally (i.e. rats, mice, cats, goats etc). They have already achieved a lot and are still working very hard on this program.

We are in our operating routine now, i.e. we are either on the radio or in the camp for sleeping. Shifts of 8 to 16 hours a day do not leave much room for personal pleasure. Fun and motivation come from fighting the pileups and those rare contacts over long path or uncommon times. And it comes from y o u r positive feedback in QSOs, mails and packet talks. Please keep doing so all the time !!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Yesterday we had the pleasure to congratulate one of our team members. It was his 40th birthday. Prost Felix!

Pictures

We uploaded some of pictures into the gallery to show you some impressions of our trip so far. Just enjoy!

QSLing

Of course, some questions about our QSL routes came up during the last days. We are very proud that Mario DJ2MX is again our QSL manager. And he surely also handles direct post which will be sent. But mainly we want to bring you to our OQRS (Online QSL Request System) which will save you time and money and us a lot of extra work. After the DXpedition the OQRS will be opened on our website. So please QRX...

News #12 - 29.11.2010

Contest Operation

When we planned this operation, we just thought that we will take part for making QSOs and giving out the ZL8 multiplier to as much stations as possible. After some discussions we came to the decision that we could also run the contest as a serious Multi-/Multi effort to get the QSOs and get a good score. And we were not disappointed! Under normal circumstances the old Oceania record set by KH0AM in 1992 is history!

100.000 QSOs

On Sunday evening we had a short celebration of reaching the 100.000 QSO mark. Due to the contest operation we had not really time to do extended celebrations.

6m operation

On November 25th on around 0400z we had our first contact on 6m! We just put up the antenna, connected the radio and started with CQing when ZL1RS popped in with a solid 579. But so far it was the only contact on the magic band. The station is CQing on 50.110 in CW and the antenna is beaming to ZL (alternating with VK4). If you can hear us please call in or if nobody is answering on 6m please give us a shout on the HF bands or the DX cluster.

Further schedule

Of course, we are already planning the next week and the end of our operations. From now on we plan to be QRV until Sunday December 5th to get advantage of the full weekend. On the Monday after we would take down all antennas and stations and pack all the material. On Tuesday we would load the gear back to the Braveheart. With an estimated time of departure on Tuesday evening local time we expect to be back in Tauranga New Zealand on Friday morning. This will give us enough time to buy some souvenirs and get ready for the flight back home.

Our operations in the last days will concentrate on special openings to Europe via long path on different bands as well as more SSB and RTTY (already expanded to other bands like 12m or 10m) operation. We also hope to get some more South America into our log!

News #13 - 03.12.2010

160m operation update

With over 3,500 QSOs already in our log one might think that pile-ups are getting smaller on Top Band. But there are still a lot of stations who want to get their chance to make it in our 160m log. In the last days we observed bad behaviours of cluster users which makes our and the caller's life very hard. We have following advice for all of you:

- Do not spot our split frequency! Those who hear us also can copy our split frequency, those who do not hear us should also not call us!
- Do not spot us if we are already spotted! It just produces more QRM!
- Do not spot us if we have to move our TX frequency to avoid additional QRM!
- Tell us in the cluster when we are jammed on our TX frequency! We will read the cluster spots and can move immediately to another frequency.
- We will only work SSB when there is no pile-up on CW. So please do not ask for SSB when there is a CW pile-up!

We are very sorry but last night our beverage to North America was broken. So, it was very hard to copy NA stations in the S9 noise of the ground plane. We will repair it during daytime today.

RTTY operation update

You already might observed that we extended our RTTY operation to more bands than originally planned. This is due to the decreasing pileups on the bands. So, if the pile-Ups in CW or in SSB are not too high we also offer RTTY operation on that band. Because the demand for a CW QSO on 80m is still high we will definitely not offer RTTY operation there.

News #14 - 06.12.2010

ZL8X finally went QRT this morning at around 1700z after a last operation on 160m. The day before we already used for the disassembling of the stations and antennas and packing the gear into boxes.

The final log is not still merged but the number we reached was around 148,500 QSOs. The onlinelog will be uploaded when we merged the logs from all station computers.

QSLing

We opened our Online QSL Request System (OQRS). You may enter your QSOs to request for a QSL card online. You will get some information about the process itself on this site and you will be guided through the the process.

News #15 - 10.12.2010

Unfortunately, a little bug made the script only working with the Firefox browser. Now the OQRS page should work again. Sorry for this inconvenience.

News #16 - 20.12.2010

Only one week back home and at work and it seems ZL8X happened some years ago. We are still overwhelmed by this huge amount of guest book entries and its compliments. Thank you very much!

Thank you also very much for the donations so far. These really help to minimize the enormous costs of the DXpedition. Thank you very much so far! An update of the donors on our website will be done after the christmas holidays before the new year. NOTE: We will not accept any cheques (as always stated on our [donation page](http://kermadec.de/sponsoring/how_to_help/index.php)) which will be sent directly to us in Germany. These will be sent back. This does NOT affect the cheques which can be sent via the NCDXF. Thanks for your understanding.

For our German hams: Wir akzeptieren keine Einschreiben! Diese werden wieder zurückgeschickt. Entweder bitte einen normalen Brief schicken oder einfach eine Überweisung tätigen. Herzlichen Dank für das Verständnis.

During the christmas holidays we will finish the QSL card design to give the data to the printer after the holidays. Meanwhile we will start to upload the QSO data for all our donors into LOTW. This will be also done after the christmas holidays but before the new year. All donations done until December 30th will get a LOTW confirmation this year.

We apologize if we don't answer every email within 24 hours. We have families, it is only a few days to christmas and we also have to work. During the holidays we will have time to work on the emails, QSL requests, donations and all other "paper" work. Meanwhile the whole ZL8X team wants to wish you all a merry christmas and a happy new year!

News #17 - 26.12.2010

Onlinelog

After processing our CQWW contest log the log checker now concentrate to merge the main DXpedition log files. This is still a delicate task as some computers managed to have different times. As soon as we have this log available, we will put it online on our website.

Donations

Wow! We were really overwhelmed about the donations we already received together with the compliments sent via mail or the guestbook. THANK YOU VERY VERY MUCH!

QSLs / LOTW

We already started with the design of the QSL cards. Stan SQ8X again volunteered to turn our mass of pictures into a colorful QSL card.

For those who didn't get the message: We will upload our log to LOTW. All donors who are donating until December 30th, 2010 will receive their LOTW credit this year (still depending if we get the certificate from ARRL). All others in the course of the next year.

News #18 - 27.01.2011

QSL cards

Some of you already start getting impatient and asking for QSL cards. That's your right but unfortunately, we had some delay in preparing the design. But we hope to get QSL cards to be sent by beginning of March. As we will have a special QSL card the design also takes a little bit more time than usual. Please be patient, it is worth waiting!

LOTW

Some questions came up last weeks about our LOTW policy. As we already wrote in some news earlier, we have following procedure to confirm QSOs after the DXpedition:

- LOTW upload for individual donors; after a certain period for ALL others
- QSL cards for participants of DX club QSL services
- Direct QSL requests received via OQRS
- Direct QSL requests received via mail
- Bureau QSL requests received via OQRS
- Bureau QSL requests received via the bureau

This procedure allows us to compensate some of the high costs of the DXpedition. At a total budget of nearly 150,000 EUR you must watch your finances! Due to the high significance of LOTW in the DX community we handle LOTW equal to the normal paper QSL card.

<p>We also want to remember all of you that the donations of the DX clubs and foundations are normally NOT there to pay for the direct QSL cards for each member. Some of you do think so but that's not true. The purpose of club donations (some of them already paid before the DXpedition takes place because that is the time when most of the payments must be done) is to make the DXpedition come true! There is no automatic right for a QSL service for the members of donating DX clubs. It is only true for those clubs we have a special agreement with to deliver QSL cards for their members through their special QSL services. Herewith we want to say thanks again to all DX clubs and foundations and of course to all the individual donors for their help! At the end of the day this kind of confidence gives us the motivation to continue; the next one is already in our heads.

If anybody does not agree with our policy and wants to get rid of his frustration about no matter what she/he should write directly to us instead of instigating the world with the half-truth. Thank you very much!

News #19 - 10.03.2011

QSLs

We got our first boxes with QSL cards from the printer. Thanks to the QSL-Shop in Berlin for their fast and professional service and the excellent quality of the QSL cards! We already started to send the first QSL cards. DX clubs with a special QSL service for their members (GDXF, SDXF and DDXG) were the first who got them. Followed by another 1000 letters last week we continue working on the over 4000 direct request which came through OQRS.

LOTW

On the day we received the QSL cards from the printer we uploaded ALL QSOs to LOTW. Please check your LOTW account before asking us when we will upload LOTW! Nevertheless, it can happen due to wrong dates/times that this or that QSO does not show up in LOTW. You may contact us, and we can have a look at it.

Lost QSO data

One word about lost QSO data (of course not on our side): We get emails on a regular basis every two days from hams asking us to give them QSO data because they have lost their QSO data by throwing away a piece of paper or having a computer crash just after the DXpedition. We are not responsible for your QSO data! Please take care that you don't lose them! We will not tell you the QSO data. If you lose them it's not our fault, sorry!

Sea freight back at home

In February we received our 2.5 tons of material back from New Zealand after a 2-month journey. Last weekend half of the team met at the club station of DR1A where all equipment was unpacked, cleaned and properly stowed away to be ready for the next trip. Thanks to the team for the hard work for two full days. And special thanks to Heike and Markus for the excellent diner on Saturday evening!

News #20 - 04.04.2011

Nearly 4,000 letters are out now. All direct OQRS requests until end of February were sent. Mario will continue now with the direct mail he received.

IMPORTANT: Please don't send any emails concerning "Did you receive my QSL card?" "When will I get my card?" We will not answer those emails. It is just waste of time for you and for us. Please be patient until we sent out ALL QSL cards. We keep informing you about the status of the QSL shipment. Thanks for your patience!

News #21 - 07.06.2011

QSL cards

We (nearly) made it! The last 1,000 letters were sent to their destinations all over the world. All direct requests (through OQRS or via mail) were answered now. So, if you don't have your QSL card in your mail in 10 to 15 days please contact us via our contact form on our website.

We already started with processing all bureau requests which were received through our Online QSL Request System. They will be sent via bureau around end of June.

Thanks to our QSL manager Mario DJ2MX for his work and patience with all the not so easy "customer requests".

DXpedition Of The Year

We are very proud to announce that we received special honors when we were awarded as the DXpedition Of The Year presented by the SouthWest Ohio DX Association during the DX Dinner on Hamvention Friday which was well organized by SWODXA in the Marriott Hotel in Dayton, OH. Together with the guys from VP8ORK we had received this well-known and prestigious award. Thank you!!!</p>

Presentation in Friedrichshafen

For those who want to get a deeper insight into our DXpedition and have a chance to visit the Ham Radio exhibition in Friedrichshafen (Germany) at the end of June please make a note of these two dates:

- Saturday (25.06.2011) 12.00 MESZ: CQWW CW as Multi/Multi from ZL8
- Saturday (25.06.2011) 15.00 MESZ: ZL8X - The Presentation

We hope to meet you in Friedrichshafen. We are open to a talk (and a beer) at any time.