



Apr 27 – May 13, 2025

Prince Edward & Marion Isl.

<https://lral.lv/zs8w/>

Hi radio friends! This is a short story of the latest LRSF DX-pedition ZS8W to Prince Edward & Marion Isl.

I have been fighting for this opportunity since 2018. Through these years the department directors changed and the requirements changed as well and it always ended up that there was no place for me on the ship. In 2025, I decided to try for one last time and in January and March I flew to South Africa for personal meetings with the new department leadership. On 1st of April, I received a message from Environmental Affairs Department of the Republic of South Africa that I have been included in the team going to Marion Island as a communications engineer.

Ship was scheduled to depart from Cape Town port on April 17. My South African visa was about to expire on April



Starting DXpedition from Riga airport

5 and to acquire new visa it's necessary to visit Stockholm and the processing takes 15 working days, so it wasn't possible to get new visa in time for the departure and I had no other options than to travel to South Africa early before my current visa expires.

I bought a Turkish Airlines ticket: Riga – Istanbul – Cape Town. On April 4, my XYL Zigrida took me to Riga airport where the journey and adventures begun. My two checked bags were accepted and the weight limit was fine. Then for the first time I was asked to show my carry-on luggage that consisted of two items: an SPE Expert (12 kg) and a backpack with laptops and a transceiver (8 kg). The airport check-in personnel refused to let me on board with two carry-ons even though I was willing to pay for the second item. The shift supervisor was called and also denied it. I had no other choice than to buy a Business Class ticket from the airline operating that flight and then I boarded the plane as the last passenger.



Operating as ZS1/YL7A from hotel while passing time in Cape Town and testing antennas

In Istanbul, I went to the transit passenger desk to get the ticket for the second leg of the flight: Istanbul – Cape Town and I was denied the ticket, with the reasoning that I didn't fly the first leg Riga – Istanbul with a Turkish Airlines ticket. The only solution offered was to buy a new ticket to Cape Town for \$860. I had no other option because I needed to be in Cape Town the next day.

After landing in Cape Town and going through immigration the officer smiled and said: "Last day of your visa!" and I kindly replied: "Yes, but now I can stay here for 90



With my friend Tjerk ZS1J in Cape Town

days." After airport formalities I rented a car and drove to the hotel, located about 40 km from the airport. In South Africa, driving is on the left side of the road, unlike in Europe, so I had to be cautious and get used to it.

The hotel was located approximately 40 km from the city center and 800 meters from the ocean. The next day, I went to see Tjerk ZS1J and picked up my antenna bags which had been in Cape Town since 2018. There wasn't much open space at the hotel, so I could only set up a 6m Yagi and a DX Commander vertical antenna. I worked a few days with the call sign ZS1/YL7A. I also tested the other antennas and packed the two antenna bags.



Ship mv S. A. Agulhas II to depart from Cape Town to Marion Island

Later I got informed that I need to pass a medical examination to be included in the island visitor team. Over the next two days I visited doctors and received all necessary clearances.

The ship was scheduled to depart on April 17. However, I was allowed to board it a day earlier. On Wednesday, I brought the bags to the dock, returned the rental car at the airport, and boarded the ship. I was the only passenger that day and others arrived next day around noon. We waited for departure but



Leaving Cape Town



Marion Island

were served three times daily. Coffee and snacks were available at any time. After 8 PM the bar was open for a glass of wine and socializing.

On Friday after breakfast, when the weather conditions improved, the flight lists were created. Each flight could carry eight passengers and ten flights were scheduled that day, with the last three intended for personnel luggage. The first to fly were key personnel and team members with essential tasks at the station, such as generator replacements and equipment repairs.

it didn't start. For some reason, departure was postponed to the next day. Loading of containers and cargo continued late into the evening. The ship finally left the port on Friday at 3 PM.

On Tuesday, April 22 at 5 PM, we saw Marion Island on the starboard side and Prince Edward Island on the port side. Unfortunately, due to bad weather the helicopter couldn't fly and we had to spend two more days on the ship, hoping for better weather conditions. Life on board was like an all-inclusive five-star hotel. Generous and delicious meals



Equipment and luggage transportation from ship to shore

As I didn't have the approved permit to disembark on the island yet, I wasn't included in the flight schedule that day. I was cleared to disembark the next day, however, thick fog kept the helicopters grounded for some more time.

Finally, on Sunday April 27, the sky cleared and sun came out and I was brought to the island base on the second flight. I was assigned a radio room in the helicopter hangar about 200 meters from the main building, that houses a canteen, control rooms, and technical labs. As always, I try to



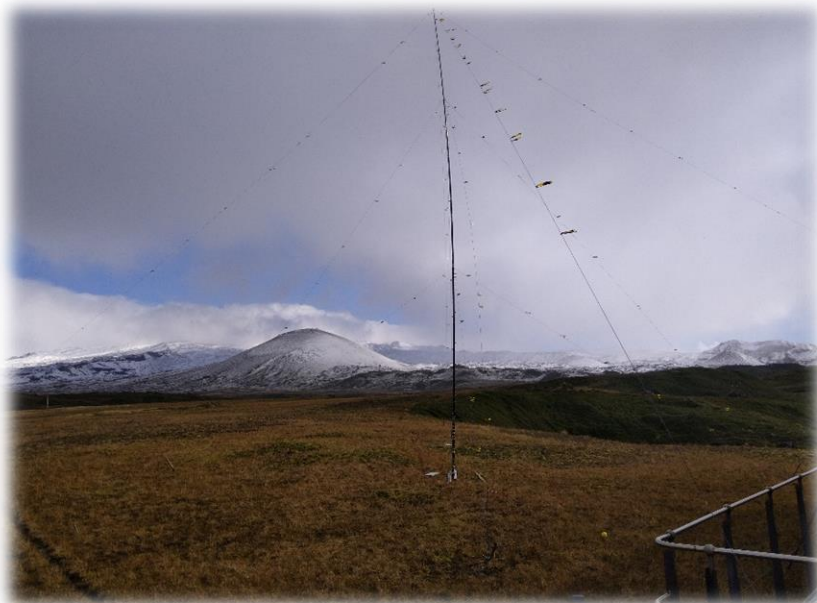
Shack in the helicopter hangar and vertical antenna

bring one radio setup and a simple antenna in my hand luggage and it came in handy this time as well. After lunch, I managed to set up an EFHW antenna and made the first contact from the island with AD8FD. The helicopter pilots kept working until evening, delivering equipment and containers to the island. In the evening, the container with my antenna bags also arrived. The next day I set up the DX Commander vertical and operated two stations.

On May 1, I had to shut down my equipment for three days. A group of scientists in the expedition were



Shack



LBS vertical antenna and beautiful sight

conducting ultra-low-level radiation measurements and they had come to Marion Island specifically due to its low RF interference. I planned to use the downtime to set up more antennas and explore the island. The first antenna was LBS vertical – 14 meters high for the 160m–30m bands. Then I planned to install a Spiderbeam. The antenna locations had been agreed upon and the environmental protection requirements were discussed.

weather – daily rain, snow and winds of 20–30 m/s. The Spiderbeam wouldn't survive that so I had to operate with the vertical only. I went on a short island tour and took some photos. Due to continued bad weather the scientists also suspended their work so I could resume my transmitting.

Unfortunately, I couldn't erect the Spiderbeam due to constantly changing

The following days passed in a routine. At the base the food was prepared by professional chefs. Meals were served buffet-style and the food was delicious.



With friends on Marion Island



Sightseeing Marion Island and Agulhas II in background

On Friday May 9, a ceremonial event was held. The overwintering team handed over their duties to the new team. Official part was continued by a festive dinner.

I operated on 80 and 160 meters for two nights, but then problems began – the wind changed the SWR, and the amplifier's protection system shut it down. I tried retuning often, but it didn't help. The antenna controller was damaged and could no longer tune the antenna for the necessary bands. As a result, only 477 QSOs on 160m and 1200 on 80m were made. Many correspondents – especially from NA couldn't make contact.

The expedition leadership informed me that by May 12 my antennas had to be packed into the container and I started packing the antenna bags in the morning. Only the EFHW antenna and an FT-891 transceiver remained.

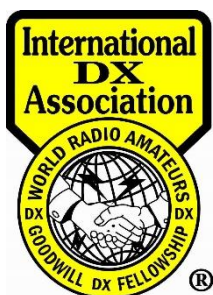
The next day, after breakfast I cleaned up the room and packed my hand luggage. After lunch, we waited for a helicopter flight to the ship. Once again, weather conditions were not favorable but the weather improved shortly before sunset. That day the helicopter took the first 40 expedition members to the ship and the rest stayed overnight at the base, awaiting the next day when the rest of the expedition members and the remaining cargo containers were transported to the ship. On Wednesday evening, May 14, the ship departed. We spent five days at sea and I had a comfortable single cabin. After 8 PM, it was possible to go to the bar and enjoy a glass of wine and chat with friends. The ship was scheduled to reach Durban on May 20, where it would be open to the public – students and locals – to learn about the research vessel SA Agulhas II.



Seals on Marion Island (photos by friend from SANAP)



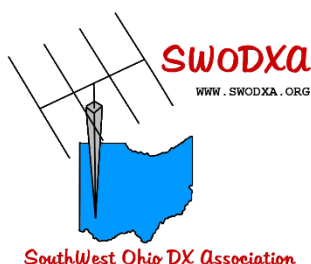
Main DXpedition supporters

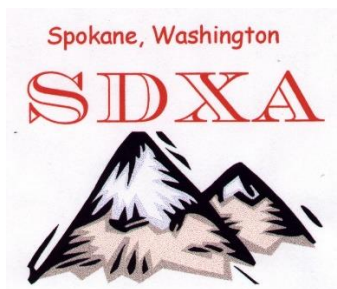


Minnesota

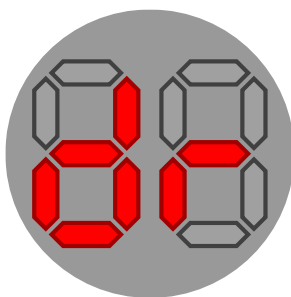


Willamette Valley





N5DD, VK5MAV, JR7HAN, W9EWZ, OG2M, MD0CCE, W0VTT, W6RS, SP6JIU, N9PN, AK5Q, W3FE, JE2HCJ, K6NR, KD0PO, VK0LD, DL8YHR, KM4AF, W1FC, KL7TS, F5VHJ, KA3S, JI1WMI, JA1ANR, JE6HGL, WQ6Q, EY8MM, N0FW, W2RA, W8QZA, WS7L, LY2BAW, N7NR, JA1CYV
and other supporters...

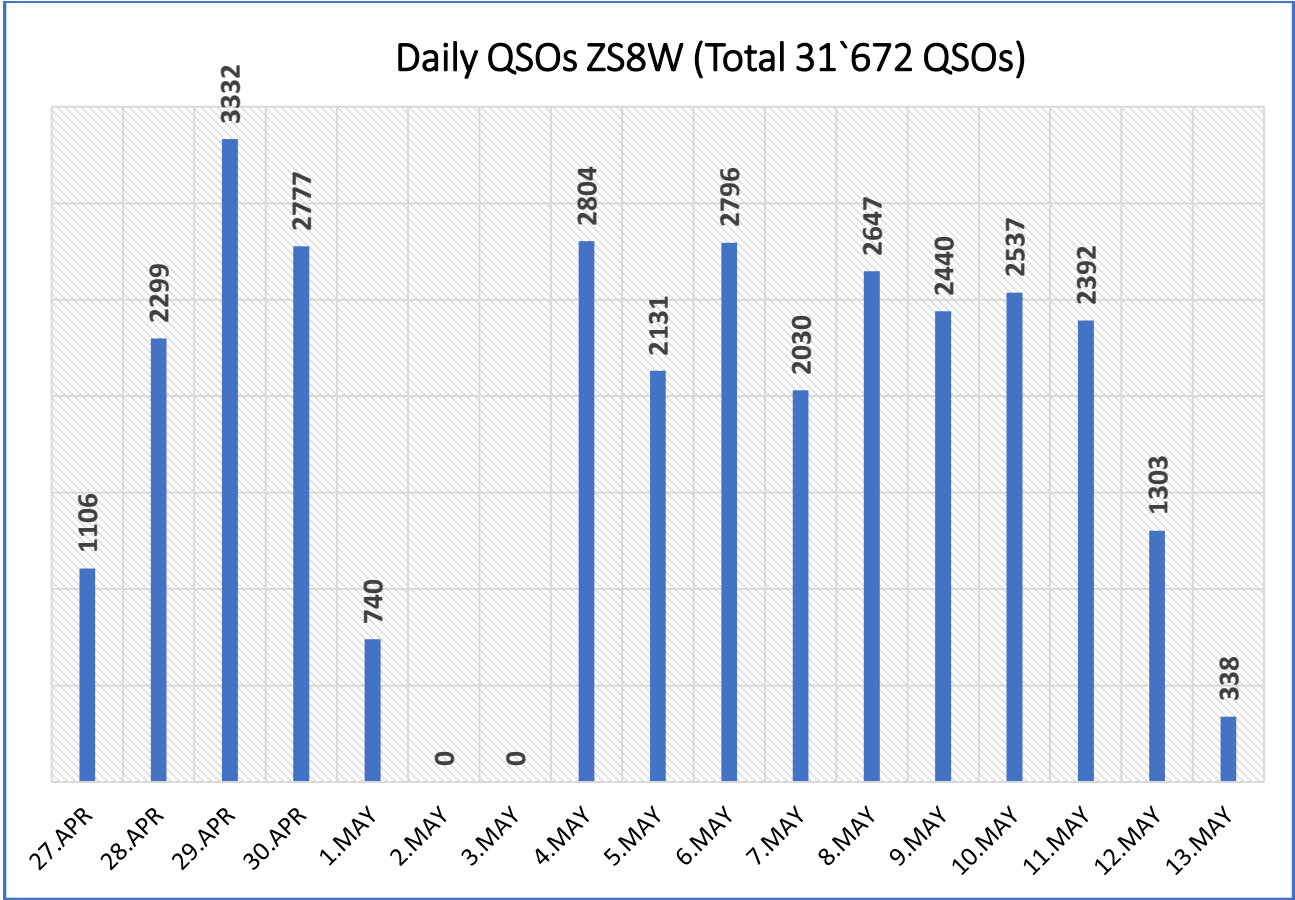


QSL card



STATISTICS

Statistics from clublog.org



Operating Time

First QSO: 2025-04-27 12:52:00
Last QSO: 2025-05-13 09:42:00
Number of days: 15.87

Number of QSOs

Total QSOs: 31,672
Unique Calls: 9,840
Duplicate QSOs: 2,600 (8.21%)

Band/Mode breakdown

Band	FT8	CW	SSB	Total	Total %
160	477	0	0	477	1.5%
80	1206	0	0	1206	3.8%
40	4609	1266	0	5875	18.5%
30	5219	1	0	5220	16.5%
20	4360	955	2	5317	16.8%
17	3441	0	0	3441	10.9%
15	2895	1276	49	4220	13.3%
12	1686	0	0	1686	5.3%
10	3486	744	0	4230	13.4%
Totals	27379	4242	51	31672	

DXCC by Band/Mode breakdown

	FT8	CW	SSB	Total
160	48	0	0	48
80	65	0	0	65
40	97	60	0	98
30	86	1	0	86
20	92	60	2	97
17	87	0	0	87
15	83	71	15	93
12	67	0	0	67
10	88	61	0	92
Totals	126	91	17	130

Continent By Mode

Band	SSB	CW	FT8	Total	Total %
AF	1	57	248	306	1.0%
AN	0	0	3	3	0.0%
AS	27	1106	9786	10919	34.5%
EU	21	2019	11061	13101	41.4%
NA	0	910	5097	6007	19.0%
OC	0	75	624	699	2.2%
SA	2	75	560	637	2.0%
Totals	51	4242	27379	31672	

Continent By Band

Band	160	80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	Total	Total %
AF	6	17	56	30	56	28	43	19	51	306	1.0%
AN	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0.0%
AS	105	162	1030	946	2047	1977	2237	908	1507	10919	34.5%
EU	336	631	1918	2779	2183	972	1479	648	2155	13101	41.4%
NA	21	332	2633	1397	765	288	199	47	325	6007	19.0%
OC	4	18	81	35	190	98	167	28	78	699	2.2%
SA	5	45	157	33	75	78	94	36	114	637	2.0%
Totals	477	1206	5875	5220	5317	3441	4220	1686	4230	31672	

Expedition Impact On Users' Totals *(info)*

Band	160	80	60	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	6	Total	Total %
New Band	203	524	0	1209	1523	487	1370	926	681	1104	0	8027	53.5%
New Mode	0	0	0	212	1	305	0	278	2	138	0	936	6.2%
New Band + New Mode	6	9	0	272	194	395	21	120	15	76	0	1108	7.4%
New Slot	1	2	0	209	2	195	21	368	85	458	0	1341	8.9%
New DXCC	8	41	0	745	628	1254	157	420	28	324	0	3605	24.0%
Totals	218	576	0	2647	2348	2636	1569	2112	811	2100	0	15017	