TX4A Matthew Island OC218 September 2014

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Matthew Is. is part of a stratovolcano in the New Hebrides Trench, 500 km east of Noumea, the capital of New Caledonia. The island, 600 m in diameter, is comprised of two volcanic cones linked by a rocky isthmus about 500 m long and 100 m wide. The smaller East Matthew is inactive and made up of basalts rising to a height of 142 m. The larger West Matthew was formed by a series of volcanic eruptions between 1949 and 1976, and remains active with sulfuric fumaroles; it is composed of lavas and slag, and tops 177 m.

The two volcanic cones on Matthew Is.

Cezar (VE3LYC) and Bob (KD1CT) sailed to Matthew on the 50 ft yacht Listrac, captained by Stephane Goldfarb. With a northeast wind, the decision was made to land at the southern end of the isthmus.

Departing Noumea

Given the deep ocean bottom, the boat was unable to anchor, leaving the two hams to attempt a landing using an inflatable dinghy. Avoiding dangerous rocks, they canoed to the shore, which was made up of large boulders continuously shifting with the pounding of the waves. It was challenging to hold onto the boat and pull the heavy sealed drums with equipment and supplies from the water, while the lines got constantly stuck under the heaving boulders. They made three exhausting transports, which took their toll in the form of scratches and contusions.

Holding the dinghy until the sealed drum is unloaded

Big rocks at the south end

TX4A camp

With a wind change to the southeast in the forecast, the skipper indicated that departure would be from the northern side of the isthmus. About 400 m north of the landing location, the team found an abandoned cabin in poor condition, but were able to fix a couple of its fallen windows, and leaned the broken door against a tarp to close the entrance from the elements. By the time the rig and antenna were setup under headlamps, the rain set in and continued to pour, heavily at times, for most of the following two days. Nearby thunder prompted a stop to transmitting from time to time. On the second day, with recovered forces, Cezar and Bob transported the dinghy to the northern shore.

Rig setup

Raising the antenna after a band change

The team logged 2076 QSOs with 1603 stations in 56 DXCC on 6 continents. About 62% of the contacts were in SSB, and 38% in CW. Half of the stations logged were from EU, 31% from AS, 16% from NA, 3% from OC, and a few from AF and SA. Stations belonging to the top 10 DXCC in the log represent 78% of the total QSOs, 78% of the total number of stations logged, and 91% of the total number of duplicate QSOs. Details are shown in the table below:

#	DXCC	QSO	STN	DUPE
1	JA	536	432	8
2	K	264	222	4
3	UA	210	145	14
4	I	164	122	6
5	DL	162	113	7
6	UR	73	57	5
7	UA0	64	48	3
8	SM	54	37	1
9	SP	50	40	
10	OH	48	36	1

Strong southern waves forced the team to leave the island from its northern shore. Only 10 m off shore, a hot water current reminded us of the nature at work beneath us.

Departing from south is impossible

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