

## Second Century



# Bouvet — A Very Tough Teacher

*DXpeditions are a part of amateur radio and its history. ARRL's annual Colvin Award, funded by an endowment established by Lloyd D. Colvin, W6KG (SK), commemorates the legacy of Lloyd, W6KG, and Iris, W6QL, Colvin in celebration of their achievement of operating from more than 200 DXCC entities. These grants help underwrite some of the costs — often extraordinary costs — of running a DXpedition. I am a casual — yet committed — DXer, with 300 countries confirmed, but I focus more on the chase to fill my DXCC Challenge total! These expeditions catch my attention with the hope that I'll work them from my modest station. Just look at the post-COVID flurry of activity, from Benin, to Andaman, to Crozet, and the excitement it has generated. But the subject of the most attention, excitement, anticipation, and investment has to be the recent expeditions to Bouvet.*

ARRL is proud to have backed this group of daring risk-takers as they took on likely the most formidable place on Earth, just so that we could add one more to our DXCC totals. Was the operation successful? If getting there, operating, and getting back safely is a measure of success, then yes. Did it achieve for all of us the ability to be one of the more than 100,000 contacts they planned and hoped to make? Then regrettably, no, it was not a success. But we need to look beyond that by taking in the lessons learned and benefiting from them.

The three major lessons for me are:


First, deliberate QRMers and pirate imitators are despicable at best and troubled at worst. We need to use our technological skills to root them out and get them out of the hobby. If that is not realistic, then we may need to completely rethink how the fox jumps about and how the hunters can be spread across the entire band so that jamming is no longer practical. I spoke with a very active ham located in the Caribbean who heard the DQRM from both the US and Europe. His comments were not flattering. It is so easy to follow the simple recommendations put forth in the DX Code of Conduct. If you're not familiar with them, you can find them at [www.dx-code.com](http://www.dx-code.com).

Second, in the future we need to recalibrate the measures of success and align the requirements for success according to the difficulty of each DXpedition. Bouvet represented the toughest conditions on Earth. At a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, two Bouvet expeditions in 4 years led to only 20,000 contacts. It is the DX community, through its clubs and organizations, who will ultimately need to decide what level of scrutiny they will use to measure the risks and the likelihood of success. This will require each DXpedition team to build out a robust plan, with potentially extensive contingencies, and the addition of extensive non-ham resources, as a prerequisite for funding. The detail and rigor, after what has happened trying to tackle Bouvet, should be more aggressive not as a punitive act, but as a collaborative act to help reduce the risks and elevate the possibility of a level of success that we can all agree on.

Third, and the most controversial of all, are we taking ourselves just a little too seriously with how we view where a DXpedition must be in order to work it? Think about this: you take a boat to a tiny island that is a rare DXCC entity. If you're on the island, your expedition counts. If you're tied to a dock on the island, it doesn't count. If you're 300 feet off shore but within the territorial waters of the island, it definitely does not count. Why not? The reason is, the DXCC rules say so. But aren't these man-made rules? Can they not be reviewed and changed? Is it so unreasonable to think that an antenna hanging from a mast on a sailboat is the same as that same antenna, 300 feet away, hanging from a palm tree? The challenges of working that expedition from around the world do not change. But the safety factor is improved, as is the likelihood of success. If it were up to me — *and it isn't* — that's a DXCC rule I'd want to see changed for the betterment of amateur radio and radiosport, despite the inevitable cries that it goes against what has "always been done this way."

There have been those who have questioned the validity of the Bouvet operation. Rest assured that the DXCC Desk received documentation before and after the expedition, confirming that all aspects of the operation meet the regulations and policies of Norway and their Polar Institute. All evidence points to a dangerous, yet successful, undertaking — and it counts for DXCC!

There are many resources online that allow you to see which DXpeditions will be coming up for you to chase. Consider supporting them with a donation, definitely try to make contact with them, and, as we do each year with the legacy of the Colvins in mind, celebrate their interest and effort in giving all of us the chance to work them! Be radio active, be a connector and help a new ham learn to chase DX, and see you in the pileups!

  
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