

VK5MAV/9, Cato Reef, IOTA OC-265, April 2018

Andy hat uns hier einen Riesenbericht geliefert, mit 64 Seiten. Wegen der vielen Bilder trotzdem gut zu lesen, aber zum Bearbeiten auf den „GDXF Stil“ zu umfangreich.



Es folgt Andys Originalbericht. Viel Vergnügen beim Lesen.

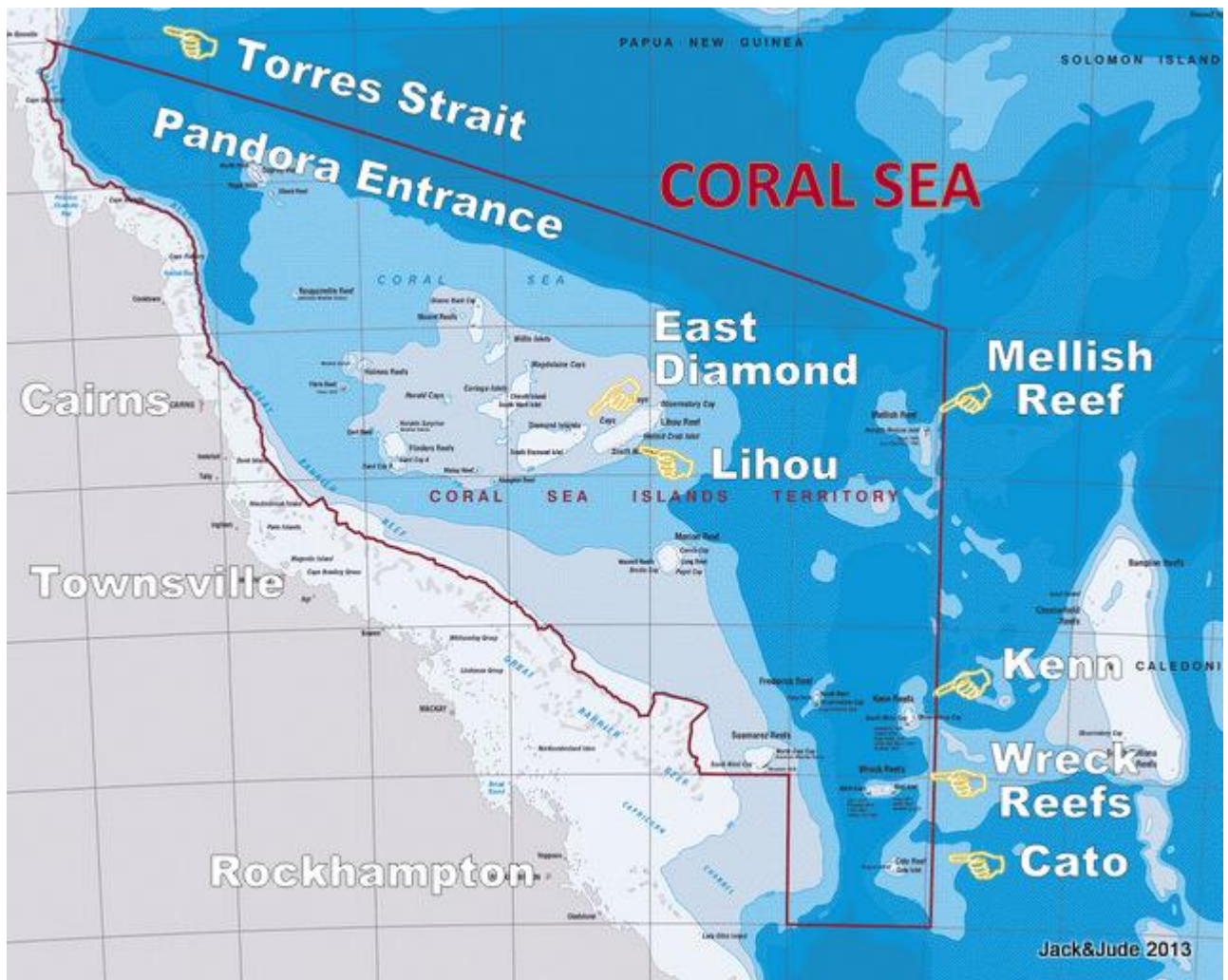
Beautiful tropics with terrible winds

Part 1. We went out into the open sea...

December and January 2018 were spent in preparation for a double expedition to OC-183 Favorite and OC-211 Houtman Abrolhos islands. There were no special problems, it was necessary only to combine all the dates. Both islands are in the state of Western Australia, between them about 150 km by land, and it would be tempting to activate both in one trip. At the end of February just few days left before the date that was set for the purchase of air tickets to Western Australia. And at that moment ...

As usual, at the same time, I was negotiating a couple of other islands for the future, trying to figure out if it was possible to get a permission, how to do it and how to get there.

Suddenly, in the middle of February, to my request for the Cato Island OC-265, along with a positive response, I received discouraging information - that at present the draft of changes to access to the Cato area lies on the minister's desk, containing suggestions for toughening access, including a complete ban on camping. It will most likely be adopted on July 1, 2018, and thus make virtually no sense of any attempt to activate the island - after all, propagation on HF during the day simply does not exist in this phase of the solar cycle.



At that moment I realized that it was necessary to run very quickly. Formal request for permission has been sent out immediately and I frantically began to update information on how to get there. Preparatory work was done a year ago. A website of Big Cat Reality was found here <http://www.bigcatreality.com/>, the only boat that conducts 9-day tours to Cato for fishermen several times a year. Even then, I called their office. Consent to my journey with a landing on Cato then did not follow - only uncertain answers, a promise to call back - that's all. This is understandable; they have not met such crazy people yet. I did not want to force, because there was not any sense to plan something - it's too expensive for me.

Now I had no way to retreat, as there were no other options. A multiple phone calls began, as a result of that I received an approval for my participation. For sure, copy of the camping permit has been sent through because I've got it already from the Marine Resources Department.

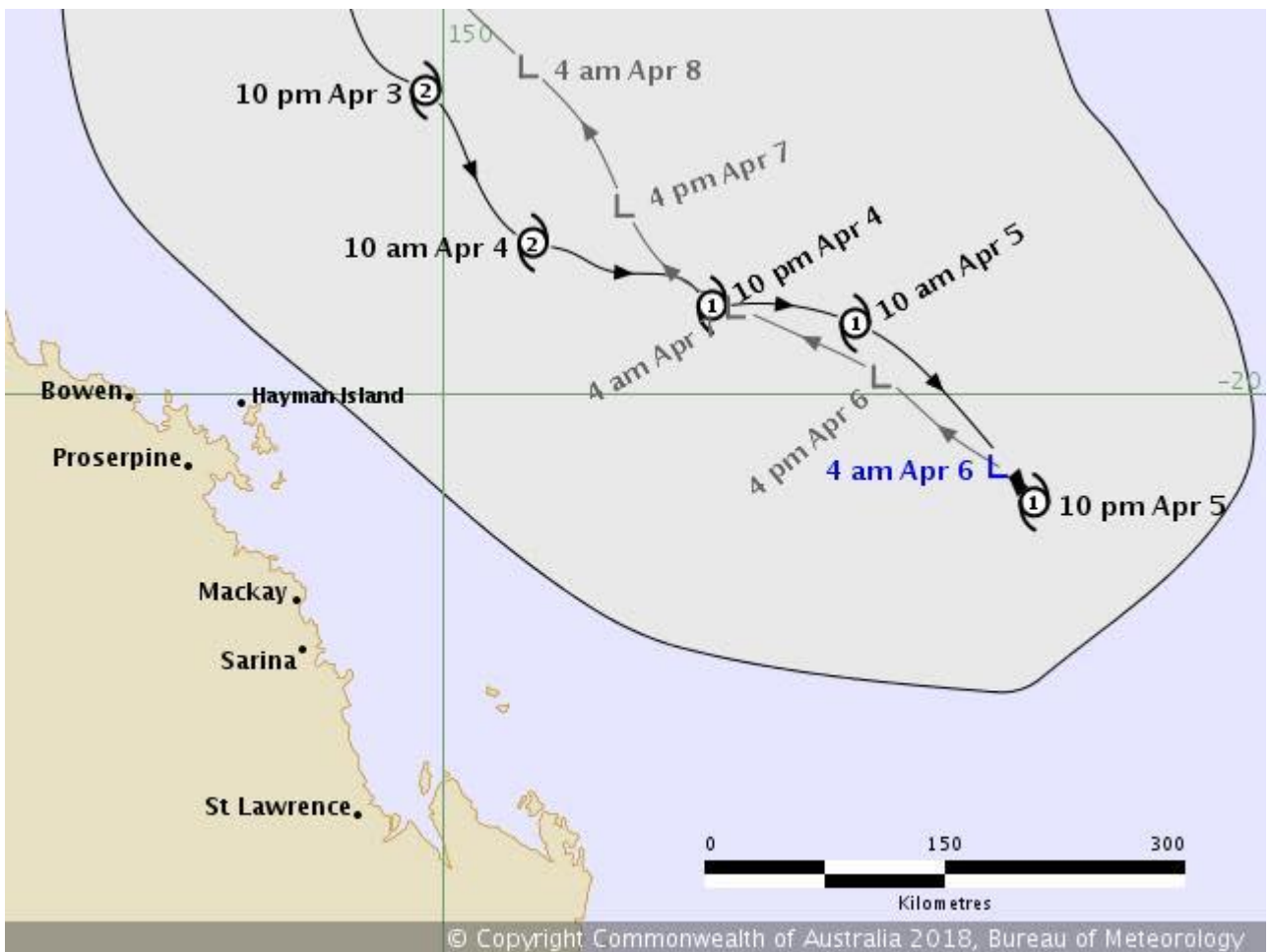
The nearest tour was from 9 to 18 April, the next - in May, and that's it. I had to book tickets urgently, to resolve issues with annual leave at work, to send pieces of baggage (generator, tent, etc.) to Bundaberg, where Big Cat's moored.

At the same time, I actively communicated with the captain of Big Cat, hammering his head with my luggage, asking him to prepare 60 litres of petrol for me and other nonsense. It was uncomfortable to do this, because at that time Big Cat was being completely repaired at the shipyard and James was busy day and night.



At the same time, the situation around the trip was tense with a strong cyclone, which came from the north and was hanging out just in the Cato area. The forecasts were disappointing and very unpleasant. Strengthen to Cyclone Category 4 was possible, several opposite scenarios of development were on the stage at the same time because of very weak uncertain stampings in almost the same place.

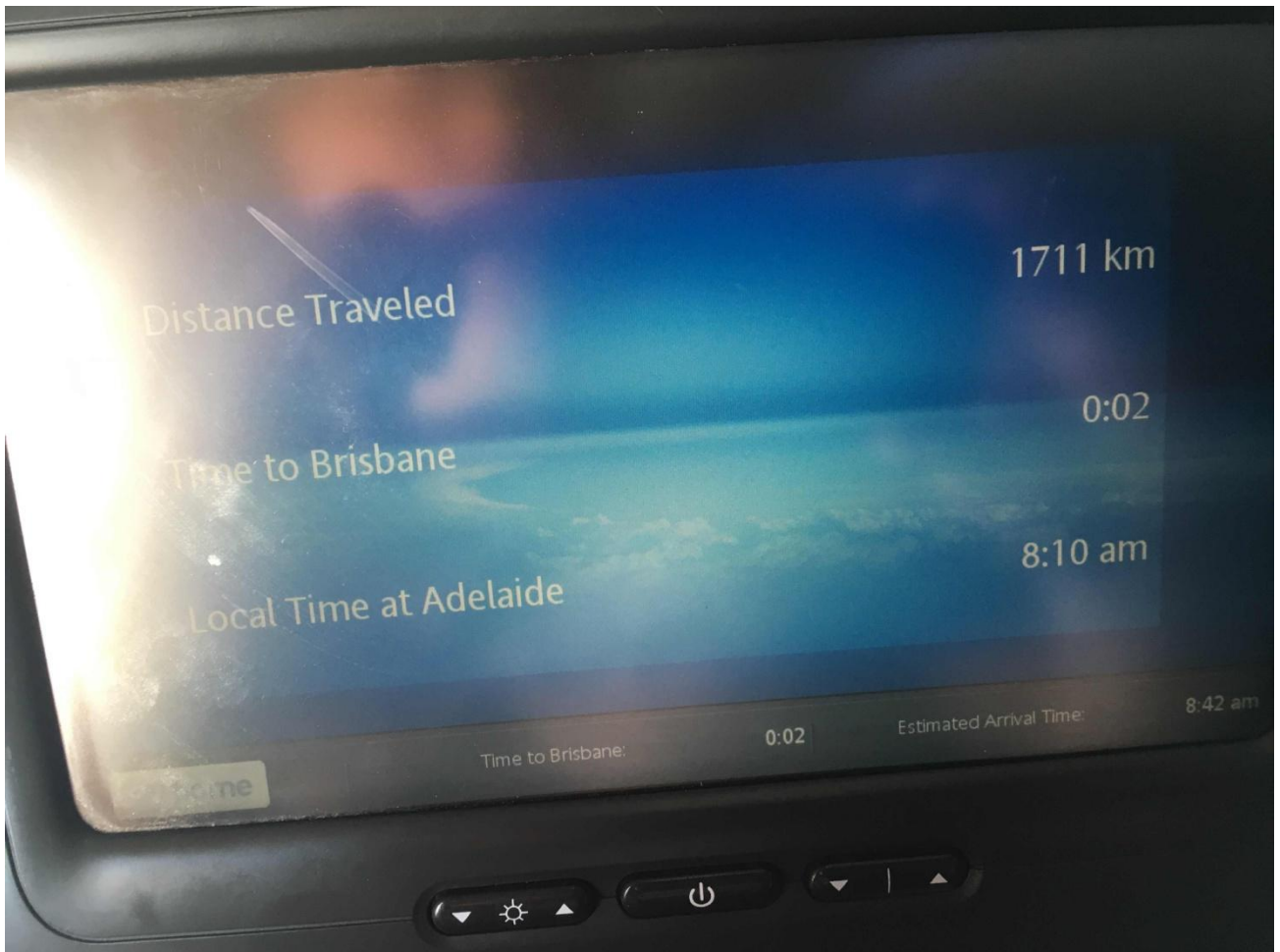
For several days the cyclone practically did not move at all, and hanging over Cato Reef.



But slowly everything fell into place - a few days before the start the cyclone was exhausted by torrential rains over the coast; fresh, repaired Big Cat returned to Bundaberg from the shipyard and took the usual place at the pier, ready to receive fishermen and one crazy ham radio operator.



I went on annual leave on Friday, April 6th, to complete all the forgotten preparations, medications and all sorts of trivia. From arrival to loading on the ship, I will have only 4 hours, and to run to unknown places, trying to buy everything, wasn't reasonable idea. Therefore, I had to take everything with me from Adelaide (except water). At 4 am on April 9th, a taxi came after me. After a hot farewell to Larisa and half an hour in the night city, Qantas picked me up with 4 pieces of luggage weighing about 80 kg at 6 am and carried to the Brisbane direction, where I expected a transfer to the flight to Bundaberg.



The flight and 2 hours of waiting passed quickly enough. The local airline's plane to Bundaberg did not look radiant, but did its job perfectly well.

This time I preferred to stay inside and not leave "clean zone" to smoke outside of the airport. Just remembered how it was last year, when I was traveling to OC-267. I was carefully checked in Brisbane after such an exit. Although check-in baggage did not leave the airport, but the hand luggage, in which there was a transceiver, the key and wires aroused close interest of security officers.

Local airline's planes to Bundaberg did not look radiant - such a working horse. In addition, it was turboprop airplane. I have not seen turboprop airplanes for a long time - probably because I rarely fly to the remote places. There they serve with might and main. However the its job has been done perfectly well. Service, cleanliness and convenience were the same as at the Boeing fled from Adelaide. There was only one thing

missing: there were no displays in the armchairs, but they are not needed for a 40-minute flight, you do not have time to get bored.



40 minutes - and I came out to Bundaberg.



The minibus booked in advance was already waiting at the airport, and we set off, simultaneously picking up 2 more people who - surprise, surprise - were fishermen and went on a tour with me.

In just half an hour, after driving through the streets of a one-story city (population 14 thousand), we arrived to Bundaberg Port marina.



The marina met us a little gloomy, reminding that the sea does not like jokes and never forgive mistakes..



“FV Cassandra. Tragically lost in the sea on 4th of April 2016.”

There was still 4 hours left before loading and it was necessary to buy water (the fact that my boxes with the generator and tent have been delivered, and 60 litres of petrol were waiting onboard I checked right away).

Although a few small shops are in the port, buying of bottled water was a problem. To buy 20 litres, I had to run through all the shops and several restaurants. The water was everywhere, but in 0.5 l bottles and without packaging. But zeal is rewarded, and at the last restaurant somewhere from the depths of the freezer I got two boxes.



Taking them to the pier, where the arriving anglers dropped off their belongings, I decided to have a bite. Huge size Fishburger with fresh fish and hill of chips - what else I needed? And even on fresh air. But it was a mistake - when I sat down on a bench, a gust of wind just snatched a box of things from my hands - and I had to be content only with a fishburger, since it was wrapped separately. All the rest had to be collected from the ground and discarded. At that moment I did not think that it was for the best, and that the weather warned me. Well-fed, but slightly displeased I returned to the pier, where a strange action unfolded.

A videographer was walking along the pier, making footage, a tripod with another camera was standing on the pier, and someone was snorkeling in the water under the pier.



It turned out that in the turmoil, an anti-glare filter was dropped into the water and it was actively searched by the crew member. The search ended successfully.



As it turns out, we are accompanied by a group of professionals headed by Al McGlashan, who has his own regular TV show on Channel 10 named Fishing with Mates, entirely devoted to fishing in Australia and other countries. I am very glad that they came with us, especially Al - a wonderful, energetic person with enormous charisma as well as whole team.



If you have even a bit of interest in fishing - I advise you to do a search for Al's name – you won't be disappointed. On the photo - he stands.

Well, it was 6 pm and we were all invited to load. My things were stored on the upper deck - to not make a mess with anglers preparing their equipment.

Each of 10 people, including the video crew, brought not one or two fishing rods. As far as I could see, some brought in 5-6 different shapes and sizes. Plus a large number of sinkers, floats, hooks, lures and the rest . I must say that I, with my luggage, looked poor.

But this is understandable - the Coral Sea, and especially Cato Reef area, is famous for its huge variety of fish species and their size. If something has been left at home – no way to get it in the sea. Different ways of fishing planned - trolling, from the beach, from the boats - all possible types and combinations (perhaps, except ice fishing, but I wasn't very sure). By the way, this tour is so-called "sport fishing", when specially prepared hooks only are in use. They allow to release the fish without damage.



By the end of the loading, the cook surprised us by a pleasant smell - large dishes with fresh shrimps and delicious fish pies were served.

When the process of acquaintance, destruction of tasty food and beer was completed, a serious and obligatory part began.

Captain James talked about the area where we go, the restrictions and exact plans, how everything will be organized. He also talked about the weather forecast in the Cato Reef area.

Training on safety and emergency procedures was held - how to use mandatory lifejacket when in the boat , VHF radio, GPS tracker, and also how to react to any abnormal situations on board.

It took about 40 minutes. After that, another briefing began, not for me - how to catch, what to catch, restrictions and requirements. Instead, I went to the ship, getting to know Big Cat from the inside.

It was interesting and unexpected - the ship was beautifully repaired and equipped - but I will touch it in the next part of the story.



Well - everything has been loaded on the boat, Big Cat took full tanks of fuel and water - and unnoticed by the noise of conversations at the stern - we went to Coral sea.



Captain James – on the left.



The night began, swell was not strong, the stomach was pleasantly burdened with everything that had been eaten-an hour after dinner was offered a large piece of tender beef with garnish. As usual, the Australian portions are huge and virtually do not leave any space inside to breath.

There were more than 25 hours to Cato Reef ahead and the night was just beginning ...

Beautiful tropics with terrible winds

Part 2. Oh, where I was yesterday - I will not find, even if you kill me ...

So, the night began, swell was not strong, the stomach was pleasantly burdened with everything that was eaten ... There were more than 25 hours of advance before Cato Reef and the night was just beginning ...

After listening to all the necessary briefings, drinking beer and once again having gone fishing gadgets almost all went to sleep. The crew also went to sleep, only someone on the bridge was carrying a watch.

Although it was already shaking, I decided to walk along the hushed ship, to see what and where.

At the stern of the main deck all space was occupied by fishing gadgets and video equipment. Behind the pillar in the air an inflatable boat was hung, which was later used as a "bring, take, fuck off do not interfere".





Directly from the stern a ladder led to the upper deck, where 6 motor boats for fishermen were unfastened, my cargo, boat radio stations were loaded, wires stretched along the sides for drying washed or simply wet clothes. Most important for me, it was equipped with a place for smoking with a commonly used model of ashtrays.



Such ashtrays are widely used in Australia outside, especially near offices. They provide good security and ease of maintenance.

They are plastic, light enough devices, vandal-resistant and at the same time very inconvenient for abduction.

But they look, I must say, scary. For the first time it was difficult for me to understand what it is and how to use them. I saw them only in Australia.

On the stern of the upper deck six motor boats for fishermen were fixed. Each boat was neatly removed and hoisted to the water in the morning every day to be brought back on board in the evening. Before that each boat was cleaned and washed from the fish and the consequences of the use at the day. At the stern there is a powerful winch, with the help of it the crew very quickly performed all operations.



The bridge. Well, there's nothing to say, I was extremely careful not to be like an elephant in a china shop. There are too many levers, buttons, switches and various gadgets. Behind the seats is the tiny captain's cabin, also used for rest by those who are preparing for the watch. During the trip the crew members stood watch for 4 hours, driving the ship.



And, finally, two cabins with bunks for passengers and crew. They are located at the very bottom of the Big Cat, in the gondolas, to minimize swell's impact. Suddenly, in contrast to the open deck, it turned out to be very cold there - the air conditioner worked at full speed. But to sleep it was very comfortable - that I understood only on the way back.



back.

The staircase was practically vertical and it played a role in my decision not to use the bunk allocated to me, but to sit/lie on one of the sofas in the lounge. First, I wanted to be closer to the sea. Second, when walking along the ladder back and forth to smoke, I would inevitably interfere with the sleeper. Well, third, I began to observe some relaxation and easy instability in my body. "Apparently, the fishburger I ate at the marina before departure was not as good as it seemed." This thought grew more and more in my head, displacing all other thoughts and the joy of the fact that we are going to a new island for me.

The swell intensified, wandering around the ship and dreaming about how I would work on the air, I wanted less and less. Shrouding everything, a large fishburger was growing around me. My mouth was full of it's taste and everything around me smell like it.

Sitting in the cabin did calm everything little a bit, especially if I look at the objects around and do not see the fast-flying up and down strips between the water and the sky in the porthole.

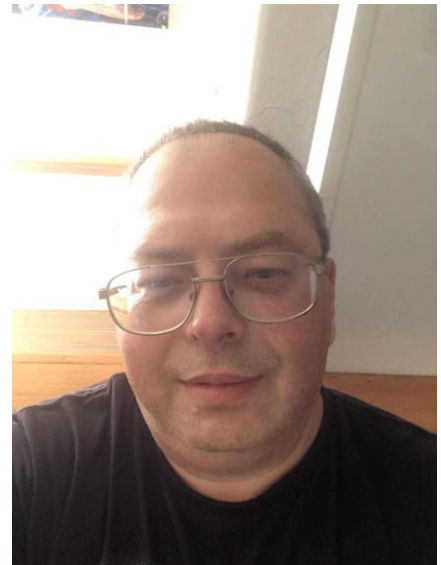
At this moment on the run (it was close, as the exit from the cabin to the board was next door), I suddenly realized how right the decision to not to go down was - and then, during next 24 hours, I do not remember much.

Except for one thing - that I'm a good person and care about fish. Fish has been fed well and repeatedly. However - I was not the only one who liked The Nature. Periodically, I had a company of other fishermen, together watching the darkness overboard.

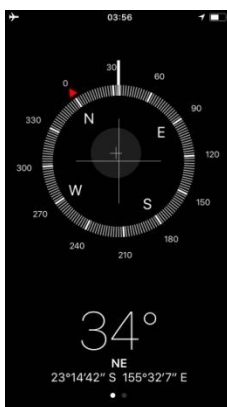
Seasickness medicine did not help anyone. Waves up to 3 meters in height - not the easiest test for the overland "chair driver," as IT stuff at work repeatedly been called by people working in the field.

From April 9th evening to the very early morning of April 11th fell out completely from my memory. During this time, nothing was eaten, but a lot of water was drunk.

That's about the way I looked in the afternoon of April 10th, in one of the enlightenments, when this photo was taken, as well as couple of video clips showing the bump. "Pale, but well-groomed ..."



At about 3 am on April 11th, I suddenly woke up in good condition - empty from inside and ringing. The ship was anchored calmly, slightly rocking. The main engine was silent. All around was deserted, light and quiet, only the auxiliary generator rumbled softly, giving light. The first thought that came to mind was the memory of the situation with the expedition to Bouvet Island, but it left immediately. Quickly taking a shower (it's not a problem on Big Cat, there are 4 shower cabins for everyone), I started to look around.



It was a dark, cold night, everyone was asleep, and only the GPS at the stern showed something fascinatingly colored. A look at the screen, a look at the coordinates in the phone - it became clear that the days passed were not for nothing - we were at the Cato Reef!



And now we are just waiting for the dawn, because to land on the island, after going through the reefs in darkness, only the madman would try. This is confirmed by the remains of several ships around the reef. As I already knew earlier from the info on the Internet, it was possible to get to the island only by two winding passes, and only with an average or high tide.

High tide was expected in 5 hours, so there was nothing to hurry.

However, the ship's calm woke not only me. A couple of the most impatient anglers decided to try their luck. I cannot say that the first cast and hard work with a fishing rod gave excellent results - the first catch turned out to be a piece of coral. But the next cast in 1-2 minutes confirmed - the fish is there.



Next the cook came in, preparing everything for an early breakfast - several kinds of flakes, different bread for toasts, butter, marmalade, honey and, of course, Wedgemate. You're in Australia, son.

Tea, coffee, milk, each one poured to himself. Simultaneously, a large dish with cut fruit cubes appeared on the table - melon, watermelon, pineapple.

But the main breakfast waited for us later - somewhere in an hour. As usual, it was a Great Ozzi brecky, the main purpose of which is to give a balanced enough food for an adult man, which should be enough for hard work for the whole day. And it's enough. Actual dish was bigger than the photo.



Surprisingly, the early breakfast, like the late one, was greeted by the body with a bang, and after it only thing I could do – to wait. My landing was planned after all the motor boats were on the water and the fishermen would leave the ship.



It was hard to wait, impatience grew. Little by little it was brighter outside and the island was already visible – in the beginning it was weak and smeared, but then everything was clearer and clearer.

It was cold, windy and rainy.

But it was necessary to wait. It was both difficult and, at the same time, easy. My condition was normal, we were near the island.

There was customs visit in the form of a seagull, crouched to rest on the Big Cat. The rain almost stopped and a rainbow appeared. I thought it was a good sign, but I was wrong. It was just a rainbow. I call Larysa by satphone, to rejoice her that we came without issues and she can finally go to bed. Surprisingly, the phone works well, unlike the previous expedition to the OC-267, when only SMS passed through. Although for a stable connection it is necessary that the antenna look strictly to the north, where a satellite hangs over Singapore.



So, all the fishermen are already at sea, boat number 7 is launched for me. We drag from the top deck to the boat all cargo, marine VHF radio station for communication with Big Cat, three cans of gasoline.

Long drive along the island, looming behind the reefs, as the ship moored at a spot with sufficient depth, which is quite far from the passage. Almost from the first seconds, I thanked myself for packing the camera before boarding the motorboat. Waves rinse us from head to foot. By landing on the shore, I'm already wet through. Therefore there are no photos of disembarkation.

Visually finding the most suitable place for disembarkation on a long beach, one of the crew members jumps into the water. Up to the waist in the very salt water of the Coral Sea, we begin to transfer all goods to the sand. The main difficulty is not to lower the generator and suitcases into water, but this is not easy, with the weight of each box about 20 kilograms or more. For equipment and antennas I didn't worry - Pelican suitcases are tight, and they have a considerable buoyancy. But bathing the generator will almost

certainly be fatal - it's in a box of thick cardboard. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find a lightweight and durable plastic box for it before the trip.

I recall Larysa's opinion with appreciation. She discouraged me from using the beautiful, large hermetic ex-Army box that I had in my hands, into which I planned to place a generator, a tent and a lot of junk. It was planned to move it with help of attached removable wheels. At a weight of 40 kg I would be buried at Cato trying to move it. Such weight can neither be dragged nor rolled on very loose coral sand, alas. The sand very easily passes a foot through with any pressure.

All boatmen waved me and the boat left. I was left alone. The weather was not very cheerful. Alas, the photo does not show strong wind. The time was approximately 11-11.30 am at that moment.



The first thing is to revise what I have with me.

Radio stuff - a suitcase with Elecraft KX3, amplifier, wires and a laptop; a suitcase with an old Icom IC-7200; a suitcase with a power supply for the IC-7200, an ATU and wires for it; a suitcase with 10 m and 12 m masts, antennas and coaxial cables 50 meters each. Antennas - 3 el VDA for 20 m from RZ3FW, 40 m wire GP with counterpoises and a multiband dipole from Spiderbeam, taken just in case; Honda 2 KVA generator with spare spark plug, oil and tools; 3 jerry cans of petrol, 60 liters. Plus a tent, 2 boxes of bottled water - 21 litres, clothes (including a warm winter jacket, taken solely to calm Larysa. As it turned out later, not for nothing).

In addition, a bag with food - 3 large dark chocolate bars, energy bars, 1 kg of dried meat. At first I was going to buy only Beef Jerky, but then I was told and half of it was Biltong. It's homeland is South Africa. The same dried meat, but made with spices. The delight of my soul on Cato ...

Then, as planned, I started to put up the tent. It's a simple thing, I used the same tent on OC-267 last year, and at home I put it a couple of times in the back yard for training.

As in an anecdote - "It would seem ...". With a constant wind of 30 knots with stronger gusts, this task turned out to be a very difficult one. When I tried to raise one side - the other immediately ruined everything done, inflated with a bubble. Just dragging all the heavy boxes inside the tent helped. In addition - taken good pegs were useful here no more than toothpicks. At a length of about 30 cm they went into seeming hard soil from pressing with one finger - and popped out just as easily with any effort. Coral sand, only slightly caked. Somehow, using a 50 cm peg, supposed to install antenna poles, I did it finally. It took about 4 hours ...



By this time, clouds became bit easier and the sun came out. But the wind remained the same. Apparently, one of the stakes was fixed badly, and soon a gust of wind broke it completely. It was a quality "steel" tube made from shit. I had to use the spare parts of the masts, taken with me "just in case". The construction turned out crooked, ugly, but more or less reliable. The top cover, designed to cover the mesh in the dome from the rain, could not be installed. It has to be installed when the tent is flat on the ground but I didn't take a risk redo everything from scratch. Only couple of days later, a decision came out of my had that allowed me not to watch birds that mucked "on the head" and not turn off every time with rain and hail, covering the table with the equipment with a separate coverlet.



The time was already around 4 pm and I took a short rest, 20 minutes later continuing with the installation of the first 10 m pole. It was supposed to be 40 m GP.

The places for pegs selected, pegs fixed in the “ground” with great difficulty, but I don’t trust them.

The pole had been pulled out, wire attached, and I began to put it up. Let me remind you - a strong wind. It was very difficult. I tried to put it up in both directions – to the wind and opposite the wind. The result was nil. At the same time, the lowest and thickest segment cracked. With the help of a spare segment and black insulation tape it was repaired. But there was no way out, to raise the mast alone this time, unlike all the previous ones, I couldn’t. What to do was unclear.

Spitting on pride, I turned on the VHF station. After contacting Big Cat, I did ask guys if there were long stakes on the ship. Yes, they do have them. Then I asked if there would be an opportunity and someone will fish near me, delivering them to me today or tomorrow and help. I explained why.

In less than an hour, the motorboat appeared. There was Captain James with Corey, the youngest member of the crew, as well as 3 pegs 1 m each, 100 meters of thin sea rope, boat anchor and sledge hammer.

My braces of 2 mm fishing line were not even discussed. 10 m mast was stretched to 3 sides in 3 tiers (usually 1 tier was enough) and resembled a Christmas tree. I considered absolutely suicidal to undertake installation of second pole with 3 el VDA at such wind today. Saying goodbye, James and Corey went back to the ship, and I began to arrange the equipment on the table in the tent. The generator worked behind the tent’s wall, SWR was 1.3. The tent was shaking, but under the weight of all the boxes inside and my weight I was sure that it would not fly away.



I ran across the band and began to wait for a propagation of 40 m. It was about 7 pm and everything seemed to be ready...



Beautiful tropics with terrible winds

Part 3. We built, built, and finally built!

I ran through the bands and began to wait for a propagation on 40 m. It was about 7 pm and everything seemed ready ... And even an attempt to install 3 el VDA at 20 m was planned for tomorrow.



A small explanation. I was asked several times why I did not put a tent and an antenna near the weather station. Protection from the wind, and some ropes could be secured more reliably. It would seem quite right. Even on Big Cat I was advised the same. However, plans and reality often do not approach each other as close as we would like.

So, about the reasons. Agreeing with the advisers prior to disembarkation, I kept on mind that there may be an incomprehensible electromagnetic situation near the weather station and that it is in the center of the island, so the antennas will be further away from the water.

After the landing it turned out that although the island is surrounded by a beach along the perimeter, it is possible to land without major problems only in one place. In other places under water, very close to the surface - a reef protruding in all directions. As such a boat cannot come close to the beach and have to unload all over the chest in the water, walking along the reef. And it, alas, is very uneven and cuts feet easily. From the place of disembarkation, I would have to drag all the cargo myself. Walk on the beach with a 30 degrees slope and sand easily submerged under the foot is hard even without any cargo. There remains only one way - directly, through the island, which is much easier. It can be seen in the photo - just a large space covered with sand and rare grass bunches. Yes, 400 meters. Well, I would go 8-10 times, quite easy.

Yes, at first it seemed to me the same way.



And I even made an attempt to go directly. And tried on other day, but alas ...

Such a good surface turned out to be insidious. Unlike the place where I landed, when I walk out for 30-40 meters away, the unpleasant thing began. At every third or fourth step the leg fell to the knee, or even to the groin. The island is made up of coral sand, guano and garbage. Therefore, where there is no permanent "ramming", just below the grass is full of voids. The real opportunity to be on the island alone with a stretch or even a dislocated leg did not appeal to me. So after assessing the risks "pro" and "contra" I decided to stay where I landed - on a blown lawn with loosely fastened ropes, but with soil giving at least some opportunity to walk without fear and ease of disembarkation.

But back to the radio.

Everything is ready, I'm just waiting for the beginning of the propagation on 40 m. For a while everything is as usual - broadcasts, incomprehensible whistles, buzzers and fishermen. But slowly the air was clearing and

the first timid, at the level of noise, signals begin to come up.



April 11 07.59 UTC - first QSO with R0XA. After him 3 minutes later – bloody mixture of calls from Europe, North America, Oceania, Asia. The tempo reached 4 QSO per minute. I stopped few times to look out of the tent and observe what was happening outside. The headphones were periodically pierced by a roar, very similar to a strong peal of thunder. I even several times tried to turn off the transceiver and disconnect all the cables. But there was no rustling, there was no static. And nothing shone in the sky. Just the wind and very heavy waves were so strong that I got a full feeling of a very strong thunderstorm outside.

In the beginning there was no rain, although I was constantly afraid of this, since the roof of the tent was just a mesh. A large cloth was prepared to cover the desk with the equipment, and it was needed that night. Approximately at midnight on UTC from 11 to 12 April it was a heavy rain, and even with hail. I had to turn off for few hours, covering the equipment. Similarly, I had to take care of the generator - my only source of energy on the island. For a while I even seriously thought about dragging it into the tent, but I did not dare.



It was very cold. I would never have believed if someone had told me before that I would be dressed like this in the tropics. But - many thanks to Larysa, who insisted on the jacket.



The wind howled very loudly, the walls of the tent moved in all directions simultaneously, the water in the lagoon roared. But all this did not drown out the constant bird screams. I set up a tent very close to one of the few bushes where they live to somehow protect myself from the wind.



Then the pileup continued, with interruptions to sleep and a walk along the shore. Alas, the idea to put up 20 m VDA had to be postponed to the next day. The wind kept me from lifting the mast even 30-40 degrees. But I did not have to miss. Everything went more or less smoothly till 10.25 UTC on April 12, when something happened that could become the end of the expedition just a day after the start.

At that moment I happily gave a report to Tony W4FOA, always appearing in the log of all my expeditions. Farewell TU ... QRZ up ... and the amplifier turned on all the LEDs like a Christmas tree, display showed VSWR 3.2, the generator roared and fell silent. It lasted a second, but it was very long ... As Tony wrote later, the signal was S6, instantly fell to S1 - and I disappeared.

Then the generator started up again automatically. The amplifier had been turned on - there seems to be no indication of an error, but VSWR was moving from 2.6 to 3.2. I tried to transmit - again full illumination.

It became clear - a problem with the amplifier, or with the antenna. The amplifier had nothing to try, it is impossible to understand what did happen to the antenna in complete darkness. I must wait until morning. That's when I was proud to think that I was not wasting money to bring second transceiver.

Slightly recovering, decided to have a little sleep, waiting for morning. The sleeping place was comfortable - just between the chair and the desk I was laying a rubberized blanket, on it a thin sleeping bag. A pillow - a bag with clothes. Well, and the jacket on top. Sleep wasn't too not bad.



The morning did not bring any joy. Even at the first glance to the antenna it became clear that everything looks somehow wrong. On the left photo - as it was, on the right - as it is than. It was obvious that the upper section had broken off and was hanging on the wire. Given that the lowest section is broken at the beginning of the installation, the possibility of fixing this mast was unreal.





After woeful meditations, it became clear that from now on I have only one 12 m mast from Spiderbeam. There were only four possible antenna solutions (provided that the wind subsides and the mast can be raised by myself) - use the same 40 m GP, install 3 el VDA for 20 m, use a VDA vibrator as a 20 m sloper and finally , use a multiband 40-20-15-10 m dipole from Spiderbeam.

Since the first 3 decisions left me with only one band, it was decided to hang a multiband dipole. It's limitation of 100 watts power no longer played any role - the amplifier may have died, and I did not want to disturb its ashes till come back home.



Well, the day was happy with colors ... But it was necessary to continue. The broken mast was tumbled down, the 12 m mast was deployed on the ground and prepared for installation.

I tried to raise it up several times, but the wind did not let it go, threatening to take me along with the mast into the bushes on the next attempt, or to break it. The mast anticipated this and behaved as if alive, wriggling in my arms and almost screaming "Oh, leave me, disgusting! I'm not

like that, you do not know me at all ..."

And locals, fully accustomed to my arrival, looked inhospitably at an incomprehensible person, trampling their native lawn, cluttering it with all sorts of garbage. And they calmly won it back.



Birds walked and flew around very close, no more than a meter from me.



But as I approached they started whistling, and then barking like dogs, especially the couple in the picture below. Most likely, they performed watchdog functions. One of the cool guys from this pair attacked me

decisively when I approached too close. I had to retreat - the beak was open wide and seemed very large and deep.



In one of the aimless walks along the beach something caught my eye in the sea. Looked closely - and for sure, Big Cat is behind the reefs. I knew that it was spinning around somewhere, not more than 15-20 miles away from the reef. But it seems that the team had no plans to return to the end of the trip.

As it turned out, I was lucky again. Since on this day fishing was useless because of very strong swell, the video team decided to land on the Cato and takes some footage.

It was just a gift of the gods!

Captain James came with them as well as few the other members of the crew. Seeing all the destruction and briefly listening to the situation, James took matters into his own hands. All participated. And an hour later the mast with the antenna was already standing, for the reliability not three, but four tiers of rope have been used.

That's what the common work for my benefit means ! 😊





After my brief, heartfelt gratitude speech, the participants clapped their hands proudly. Not knowing how to show my appreciation, I asked James to have a drink for everyone at my expense tonight. To which he politely shortened the program to two shouts each, of course, not including crew members. It turns out that Big Cat has an iron law for the crew - 0 ppm from the time of going to sea and till coming back. And it was carried out rigorously.



After about an hour wandering along the shore, trying to fish from the beach and operating a drone, all guests in 4 boats went back – low tide started to move water out of the lagoon.

The photo was taken shortly after the departure of the boats.

And further - further quiet work on air began again, mainly at night, with walks on the shore during the day, watching the local inhabitants and trying to sleep sitting. It was too hot to touch the body with anything else at day except for a chair, despite the strong wind. And of course, with falling into the water and dousing from the bottle with sea water every half hour.

So you can easily say that all the days on the island I did not dry up 😊

So, the antenna is in place, the new setup with the IC-7200 is on the table. Again - on the air!



Beautiful tropics with terrible winds

Part 4. Ordinaryities and differences of the island

For all these antenna tasks, I forgot to write that after the first night I attended to pulling the roof - to break in the rain and wrap everything up I did not want anymore.

It came in handy a large nylon 3x3 meter tarp, which I took to make a canopy over the generator and myself like a terrace in front of the tent - but it did not work out.



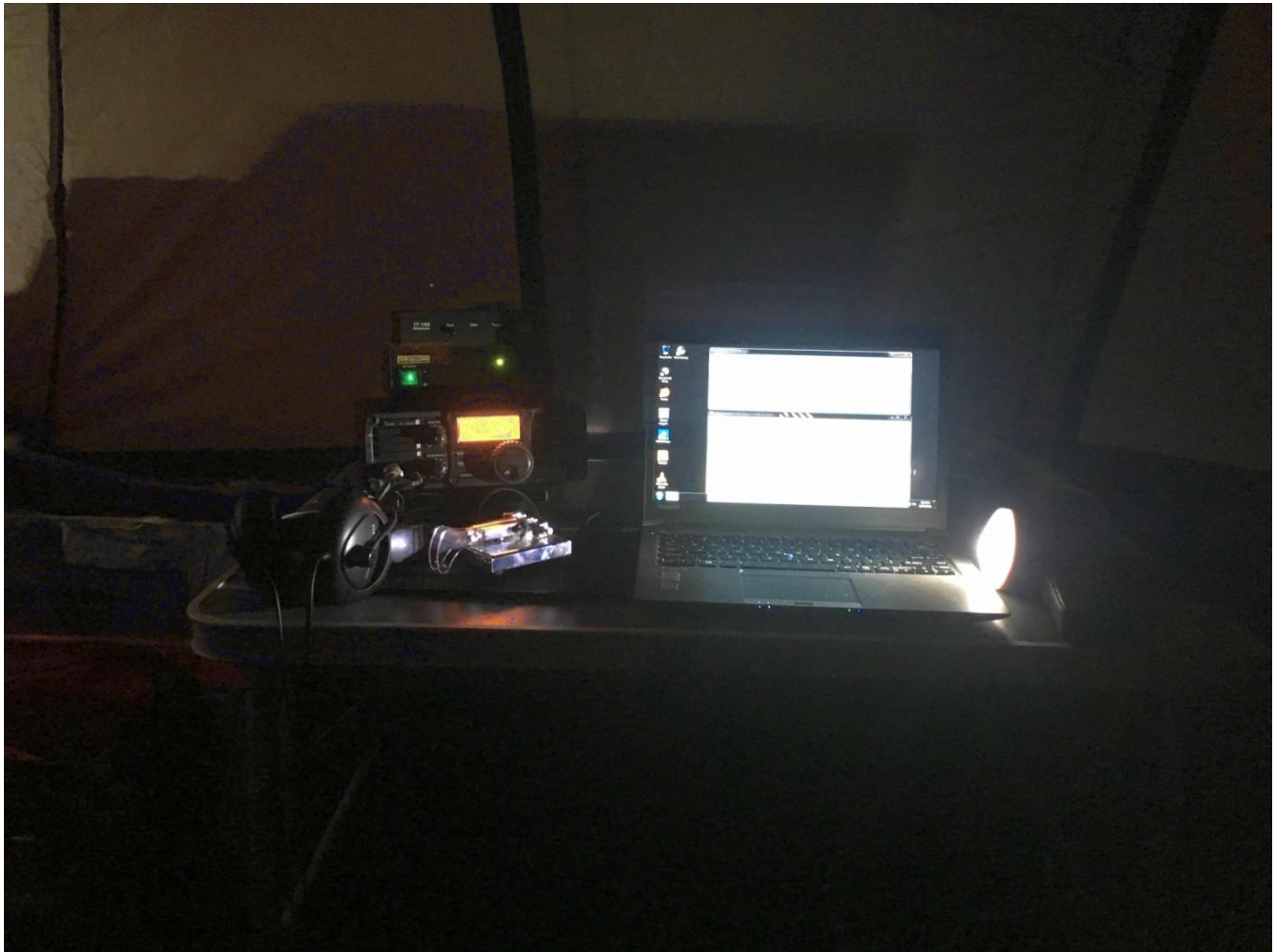
The design turned out to be ugly, but effective. In addition, in the following days there was no more rain - but there was a sun, and the cover did help really.

It must be said that the next days, from April 13 to 16, the weather spoiled me. The wind fell to acceptable values of 20-25 knots, there was no more rain, at daytime the sun did hide in clouds - but not for long. On the one hand, it was hot - and on the other process of killing time at the day, when there was no propagation, became more pleasant.

I cannot say much about the nights and work on the air, and especially there is no need - this side of our hobby is familiar to everyone.

As always - furious repulsion of each other with kilowatts, endless loud calls in a row, without any attempt to listen.

But there were strange moments - so, some had contacts with me, when I should no longer have been heard or or well before the forecasted time. And I'm not talking about lovers of using remote TX in the other hemisphere. Both the reputation of hams made a QSO and the signal's characteristics, the delay in response (you know) and other symptoms showed that the person uses his setup faithfully. In addition, again, apparently, the effect of salt water worked - my signal was louder than I could expect, and much louder.



Surprisingly, there were practically no locomotives (or chain QSOs) - and they are recognizable easily. And unexpectedly, I repeatedly made a CQ for hours in the void, especially at 40 m, trying to give an opportunity to stations in North America. At the same time, I was periodically called by those who had worked me before, just to see what was happening, maybe I did not hear anyone and someone just got up?

But I answered immediately, got a real report 579, and my correspondent in amazement I finished the QSO. Alas, there was practically no propagation to Canada and the North of the USA - even Cezar, VE3LYC been heard accidentally, on the verge, outside of the pile-up, like the rest of the Canadian stations. There were not many of them. Unfortunately, it was not possible to make a QSO with VE7ACN/VE2. I need NA-084, and Mike needs OC-265 ... But alas - the grateful crowd never parted, no matter how I and volunteers asked.

At the same time, HC2AO and a couple of stations from South America made their way without difficulty.

But all this did happen at night. At daytime, surprisingly, I made many contacts with Japan and Asia on 15 m. Although the propagation was like a wave behind the walls of the tent - rolls, louder, more stations calling and very loudly - and just smoothly rolls back.

Or not very smoothly - the station calls very loudly, I answer - and no response. The station just disappeared in e sec. After 5-10 minutes, the same thing is repeated. Again, suddenly, almost at 579 A65CA called - and no one else from the area. But however, enough about the radio, I believe.

What was happening at daytime was equally interesting.

The daily routine was as follows: on air at night until it stops, while I'm still can recognize callers (except for the last night, but about this later.) I started from 40 meters, at about 6 UTC, capturing the propagation to Japan/Asia, Asian part of Russia, then smoothly North America, Europe. After about 2-3 hours I left for 20 m - where I tried to rake Europe for 2-3 hours, then again returned to 40 m. After that, at about 17 UTC, I went to bed, looking at 20 m (almost meaningless). In the afternoon of 15 m - Japan, Asia, Europe and who will hear me. And then - in a loop again.

After night spent on air, I felt asleep wrapped in a sleeping bag, turned off almost instantly. But the alarm clock was not required. Around 8-9 in the morning the air warmed up and to laying, especially in the sleeping bag, became too hot.

It was time for washing. Everything was simple - you leave the tent, walk 15 m and fall into the water. But - you must walk without hurrying, looking under your feet and to that place in the water, where you are going to fall. It is clear that in a sleepy state, you can fall to where there was water previously, but now a just sand at low tide. Or that under the water - a rock.



But it wasn't that worried me more. All the Coral Sea, and the Cato Island lagoon as its part, is inhabited by sea snakes. Very curious, coming very close to explore everything new - and very venomous. One of their cute habits is the love of warmth in the sand, especially at low tide.



Here's one I somehow almost stepped on, returning to the tent after washing.

There are traces of my panic jumps with instant awareness, where I just was going to put my foot.

A harmless, but not very pleasant impression was also left if one accidentally stepped on one of the sea cucumber lying under the water.

They are safe, edible and even a delicacy in Southeast Asia. Australia annually intercepts and punishes a lot of vessels that have entered Australia's waters for poaching. Perhaps they are even tasty - but under the foot are unpleasant.



What they look like - you may guess yourself. Sensation of touch - I believe, corresponds to the shape 😊



Naturally, the bathing took place in the clothes - to keep the feeling of coolness for at least a little while longer. In addition, going swimming, I dragged a couple of empty plastic water bottles .

In the heat, it was so reluctant to get out of the shadow, and watering myself with water brought relief for at least half an hour, until the clothes dries. Well, then - all gain from the beginning.

Walking back under the tent, I was like this - wet to the skin, but extremely happy.



Another danger on the Cato are ... hermit crabs. But the danger of another kind - you can watch for hours their purposeful movements, forgetting about everything. They are quite easy to find - as in the pits in the sand, where they hide for the night, and by the characteristic traces left during the movement.



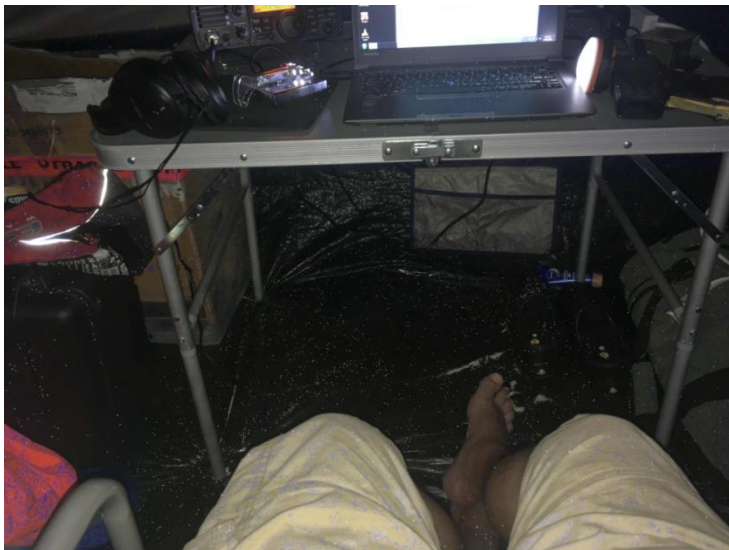
I was surprised to find that they all aspire to the beach in the morning, and not just ashore, but in the bushes, where they spend the hot time of the day.



When a shell, worn on its back, can no longer hide the body of a crab, it dumps it and looks for another, while remaining practically defenseless at this time. There are many such empty shells on the island. No crab when collecting shells in the photo was hurt.

And by the way - this kind of crab-hermit – is endemic. That is, he meets only here - on Cato Reef.

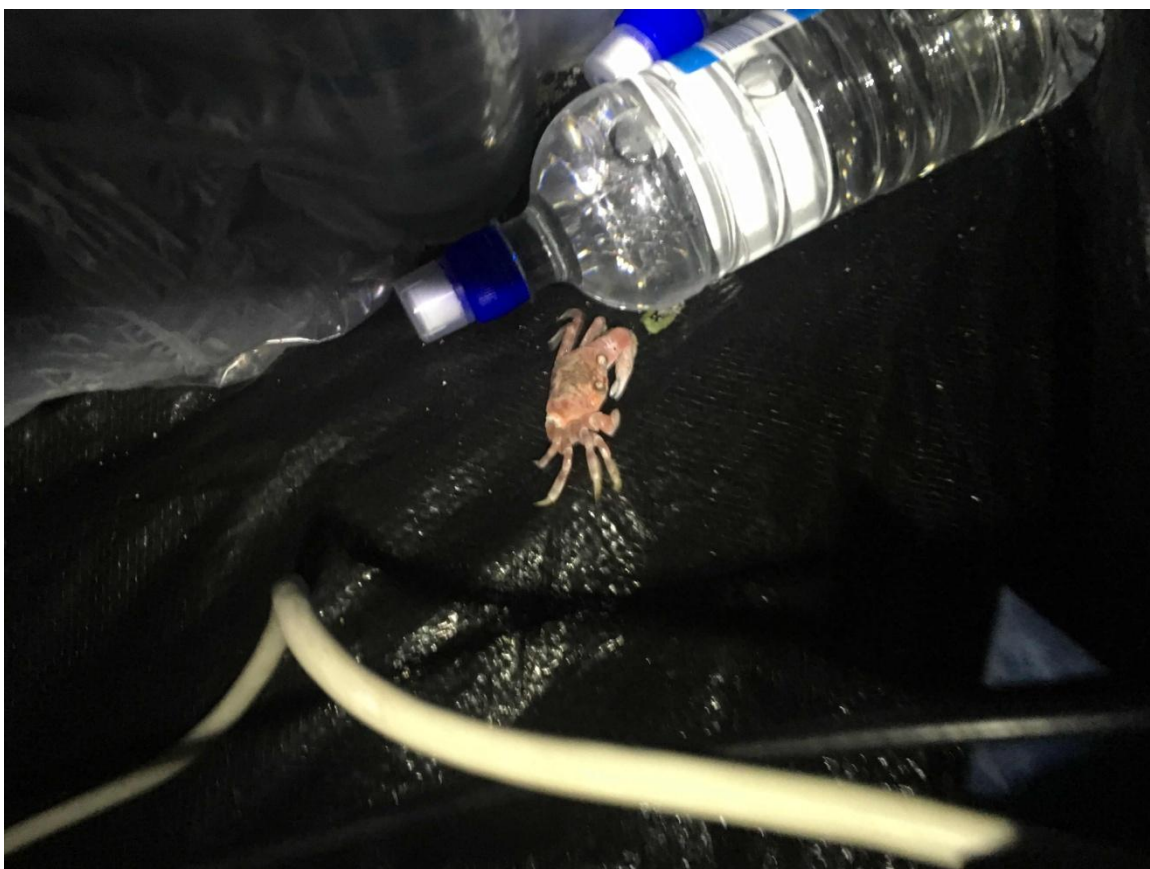
But not only hermit crabs have lived here. Their distant relatives scared me one night...



So - 40 m, deep night, European pileup is roaring ... And suddenly in the darkness, someone runs over my barefoot legs. By lateral glance I notice a small moving shadow. The first thought is a mouse, but I remember right away that there are no mice here. Basically. What then? Giant ants, robots, the March Hare and creations of Jonathan Swift are swept away at once. Well. .. QRX.

One-two-three-four-five - I'm going to look! Ready or not, here I come !

Two or three movements of the lantern - and something stopped in the beam. Small crab! But it's not a hermit. And the way of its appearance is clear - I did not fully close the canopy of the tent, and at the very ground - an open hole.



A minute later I found a second one, also frozen in a ray of light, closing his eyes. Both crabs were duly expelled from the tent, the curtain was buttoned and checked, and I continued...



Turtles are visiting the island periodically as well to lay eggs, but alas - I could not see any, although the furrows in the sand on the beach are very noticeable. Turtles usually come from the sea at night - and I was busy on the air at the time.

And, of course, the main inhabitants are birds. Noisy, curious, but quite clean company (I do not count a tattered tent and a huge white plume on a suitcase with antennas that appeared in the first 5 minutes after the landing).

Birds are living here using strict organization of observation and protection, with nests and living places in cramped surroundings, but without offense or fights.

During my stay on the island there was a period of hatching eggs and breeding chicks, what I observed. Some nests contain an egg – only one in each. Other nests contain obviously newly hatched chicks. Surprisingly, the nests are built on bushes that have an almost circular shape. Perhaps the extra branches plucked by the birds in building a nest. And perhaps - the nature itself is adjusted to the needs of birds. Perhaps the bushes receive fertilizers from birds and protect the nests from the wind.

Hostesses of nests easily fly away and return by themselves, without any threat. The fact is that they have no natural enemies on the island. And people are so rare ...





This pair below is clearly observers and guards. They began to move at the approach of 1.5 - 2 meters, while issuing sharp short whistles. If the uninvited guest did not leave, a bark was heard, it was the dog's barking. Well, if the visitor was not only stupid, but also deaf - the wings spread wide, the beak was very wide and the attack began.



I didn't heat the situation to the attack level and we parted. But since then they looked at me suspiciously every time.



Birds nest and sleep on land, in bushes, in large crowding. However, the inconveniences do not seem to be experienced.





The bird's hubbub is heard almost always, except for 3-4 hours in the early morning, when the birds fly away for fish. Children are waiting, wives are waiting, and there is not much fish, it would be better to have few beers instead ... What am I talking about?



And except for living inhabitants, small shreds and slices of someone's lives are met - often, I think, remote from Cato on thousands kilometers.

Empty bottles (I carefully checked each one - there were no messages), a couple of coconuts, a pair of tennis balls. And even weird - absolutely unbroken light bulb !

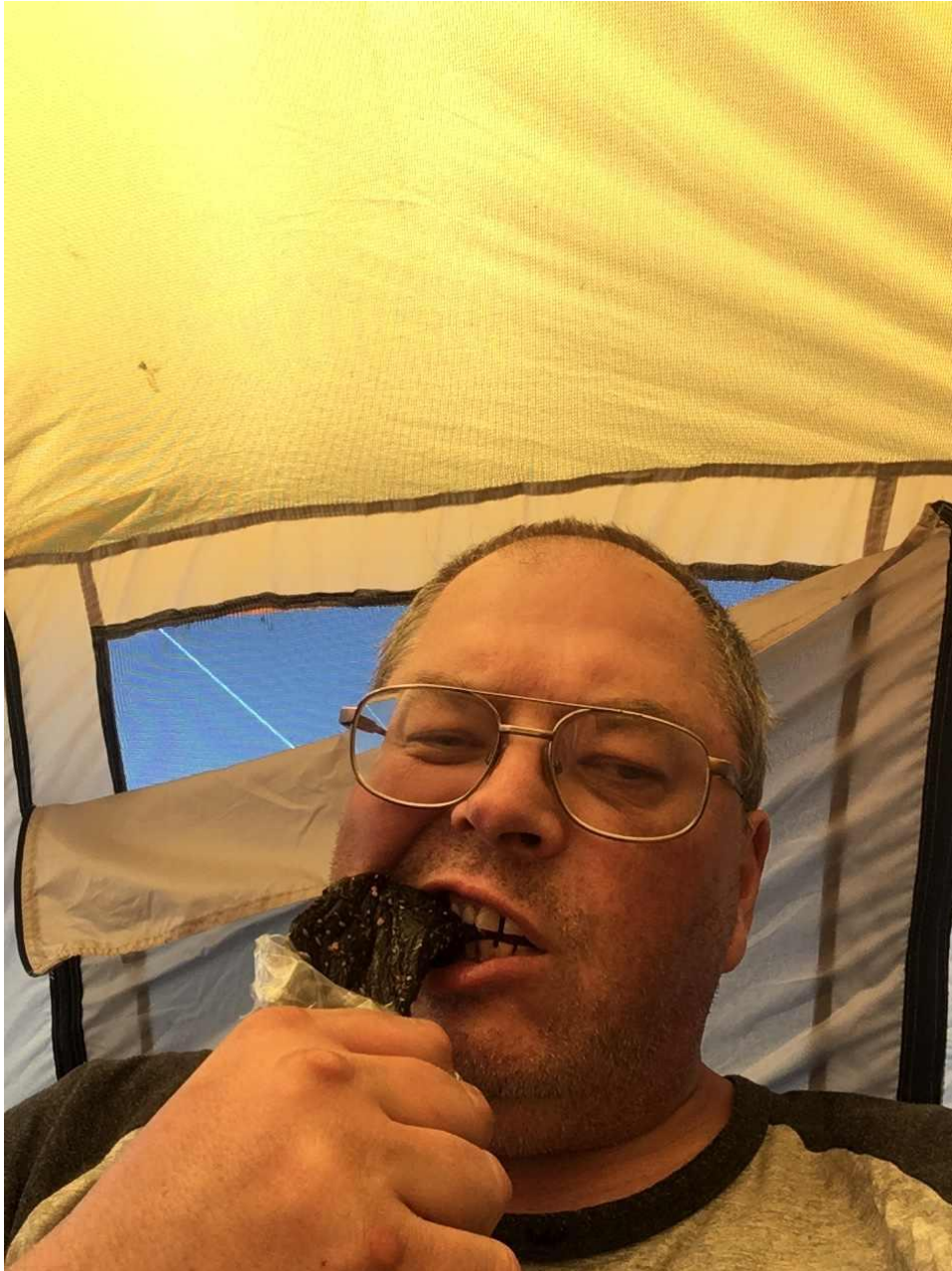


Also I found a couple of incomprehensible metal debris - possibly, the storm-thrown parts from the numerous ships that sink around for last nearly 200 years, found the last mooring here on reefs around the Cato Reef. Although, it is quite possible that these parts left after construction of an automatic weather station on the island, which has been regularly transmitting data to the mainland for many years.

In between beach walks around the island, I had to devote a some time to food. As I wrote earlier, the main meal at my place was bitter chocolate at night, and twice a day - gorgeous, aromatic, with spices, dried meat.

I took about a kilogram of dried meat cooked on 2 different recipes with me - Beef Jerky, quite common in Australia, and beef, too, but cooked in South African recipes - Biltong. I was told about it by my work colleagues who came from the Republic of South Africa many times. Words have been accompanied with

rolling eyes from admiration and smacking. What can I say - now I understand why. Henceforth, the biltong will be my indispensable companion in next expeditions. It's really yummy !



Life flowed calmly. Although not always. On April 15 in the morning, at a time of huge Japanese pileup at 15 meters, I noticed that the power of the transceiver fell down. In any case, the indicator showed no more than 20 watts. "What a hell of a thing," thought I at once. A few minutes ago everything was fine. I started ATU - the green indicator would light up, but it took too long. And the power is the same - 20 watts.

Immediately I did jump out of the tent - the mast is in place, the shoulders of the dipole like here they are ... no, I see one - and where is the second? The second shoulder hangs lifeless, wrapped around the mast a couple of times. Well, someone was too presumptuous and badly tied the insulator at the end of the dipole to the fishing line.

I swear myself, untangle the dipole – oops, there is no insulator at the end of the wire, and plastic surface is well chewed and the wire is bitten. I check - exactly, the short tip of the dipole with the insulator, tied to the line, is lying on the ground.

And I understand - it seems, it's time to leave. Locals started unleashed guerrilla war against me. Don't know who it was – birds, crabs, turtles... whoever. I hastily splice the wire, explaining to the two guards that terror is not our method and I will soon leave anyway. Pileup continues, but the soul isn't restless.

Yes, and the sunset does not give a good mood.



Well - the night from April 15th to April 16th passed away. Alas, it was not particularly successful. My work on the air ended at night - not because of technical problems, but because of a nervous breakdown. This time Europe has surpassed itself. It took 3-4 minutes for each coneφce, no one listened at all, and after midnight I turned off, breaking down. And as a obvious result for such pileup - 600 QSOS I was able to make 200 only.

It was necessary to get enough sleep - as was negotiated earlier, the Big Cat team had to pick me up from the island in the early morning of Monday 16th of April.

I woke up early - around 7 am. While everything was packing, packed with garbage and all things - it was 10am. It remains only to knock down the mast and collect a tent.

I woke up early - around 7 am. While everything was packing, packed with garbage and all things - it was 10am. It remains only to knock down the mast and dismantle the tent.



By all means, it wasn't early in the morning anymore, given that breakfast on the ship and start of fishing takes place at about 6 am. But alas - nowhere near the reefs native red and white Big Cat body was not visible.

Approximately by noon bad thoughts began to creep in. Something happened. And that the food at me has ended this morning, and in a stock only 10 broth cubes left, third of a bar of chocolate and 1,5 litres of water ...

It became somewhat uncomfortable, and the island didn't give me happiness anymore...

Beautiful tropics with terrible winds

Part 5 Final. Back home – and comfortable

Approximately by noon bad thoughts began to creep in. Something happened. And that the food at me has ended this morning, and in a stock only 10 broth cubes, third of a bar of chocolate and 1.5 liters of water ...

It became somewhat uncomfortable, and the island was no longer happy me...

The look increasingly fell on the life jacket and marine transceiver given to me for communication with the ship, but I just did not want to pull people like that.



To somehow entertain, I began to recall funny stories from the already-completed (I hope) activation.

As during of Japanese Contest on the weekend, I was chased by bands. At first everything was decent - sometimes asked, or even demanded to provide a control number. NO TEST - and no problems. But then it started - on 14.039 I was asked to do QSY - because of JIDX. Moved above and below - it seems the same restless person with a loud signal set his goal to push me out. It was difficult for me to compete with him, and there's nothing for it. I had to go to the DX-window.

But then everything happened again, and I had to jump on frequencies on 40 m as a hare. I do not know - the same pursuer or not - but again I had to go to the DX-window in the beginning of the band.

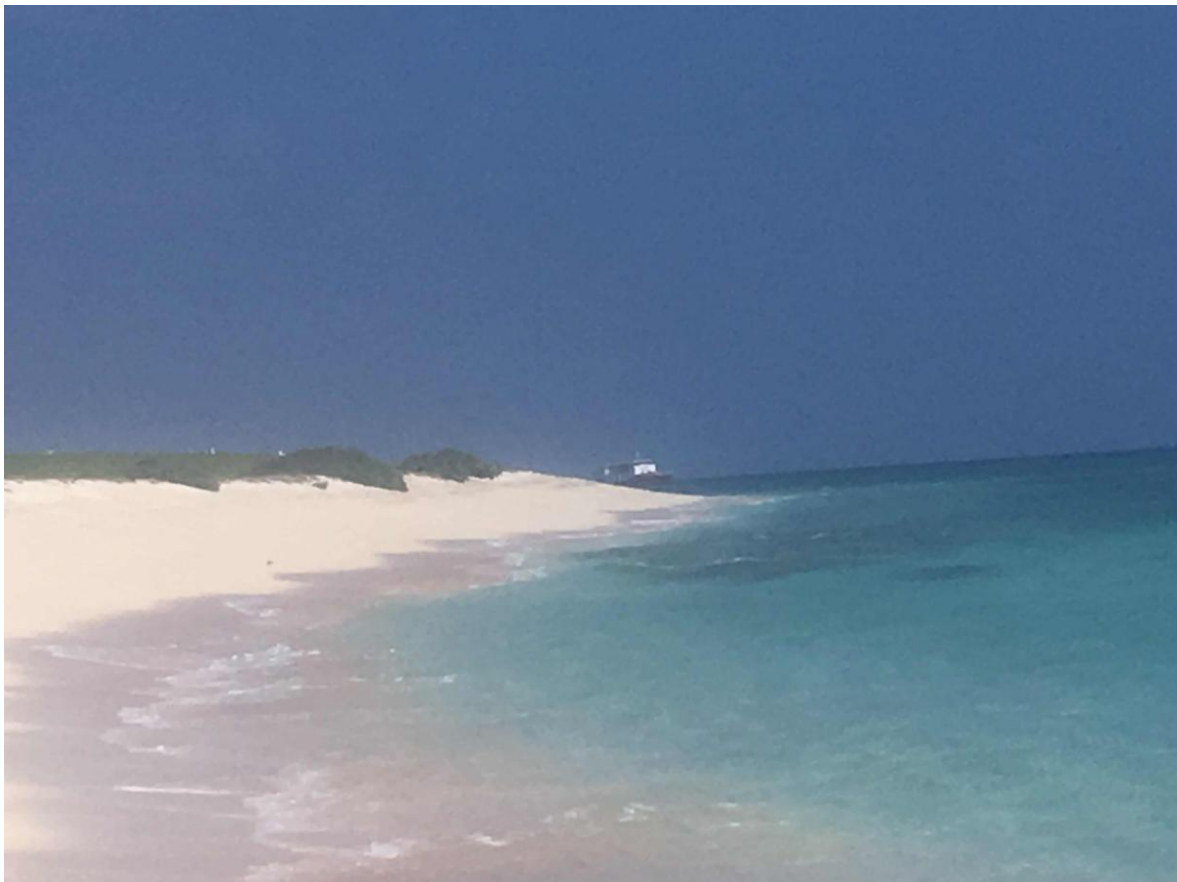
I remembered how several stations on different days were called non-stop, without letting themselves listen to anything at all. And what is most interesting - they continued to call in the same regime even after the exchange of reports and the farewell "73" did happen.

I remembered trying to put a mast under the wind, watering the entire neighborhood around with a loud and refined (I hope) verbal flow - which helped little, but maintained fury.

I remembered how I talked to the birds that had bitten the shoulder of the dipole - expressively, explaining how, when, in what order and what exactly I would do to them...

From boredom I tried to bite a dry bouillon cube. The experience, of course, is interesting and useful. But I'm not likely to repeat it again.

Everything ever ends, and falling into the water once again about 1 pm - I saw the much-anticipated Big Cat behind the reefs.



It became somehow easier, and a desire appeared for the last time to walk around the island, to which I hardly would get again. Life went on as usual, hundreds of years before me, and how it will be after my departure.



Birds were conducted their endless conversations, the chicks hatch and grow.



Without haste, they followed me suspiciously with glances, saying: "Well, when will you leave already?"



Even the tiny hermit crab had the same attitude - "Well, how are you already fed up with your fun". He no longer wanted to play and laugh, and he waited humbly.



At about 2 pm, an inflatable boat passed through the ring of reefs and buried itself in the beach. I imagined how all my belongings and I will be taken out on it and shuddered. This will require 3-4 trips.

But everything turned out to be easier - they just decided to warn me that the time of departure is 3 pm and they will come to pick up by bigger boat. Short jogging of 2 crew members around the island, fast picking up souvenirs - and I'm alone again. But now almost winged and quiet.

Slowly knocked down the mast, collected all the ropes and stakes, but did not touch the tent until the last - I really did not want to get burnt, and it was just hot.

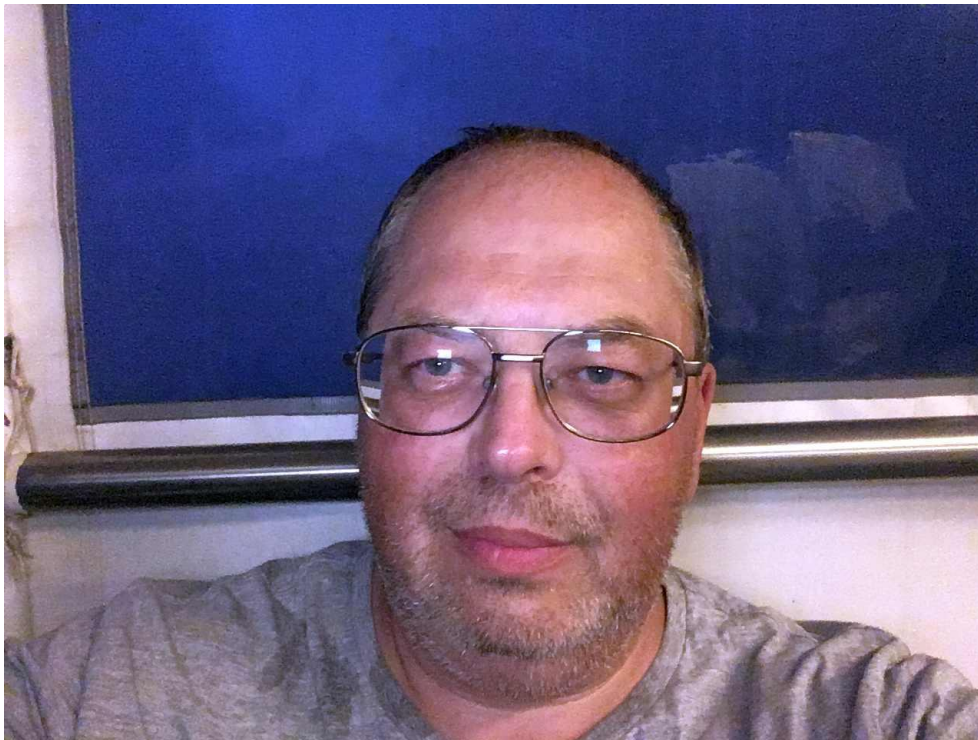
Already 3 pm, there is no boat, and the very low tide is coming - the water has gone so far that a strip of the bottom has been barely exposed at a distance of 40-50 meters from the shore. But the ship's crew knows their business, and at 4 pm, when the water again began to arrive, 2 big motorboats appeared.

I immediately began to collect the last thing that still remained unpacked - a table and a chair in the tent.

The tent itself was dismantled without much pity. Unfortunately, it was already garbage, unsuitable for further use. But it was necessary to take everything from the island – it has enough garbage already, that is brought by the waves.

Fast loading - again to the waist in the water - and, clinging to the side of the boat with both hands, I take a look at my temporary shelter, saying goodbye. First we go slowly, neatly making our way through the narrow passage in the reefs, then a short transition to the ship - that's all.

I was greeted with joyful shouts from the boat - and now the return to civilization took place, I'm on board the Big Cat.



Faster to the shower - what a bloody pleasant invention - a shower with hot water! Fragrant with shampoo and feeling extraordinary lightness, I have time just for the next snack - mmm the cook just surpassed himself, offering croutons with fresh fish, fish in batter and shrimp ... and even cold beer ...

After that till darkness set I sat on the upper deck, watching the preparations for the departure. All the boats were washed, raised on board and fixed.

We had to start on the way back from the minute to the minute ... but somehow stood still.



At that moment, one of the crew members found me in my hiding place and said sternly: "Andy, I have a job for you." It was not like a joke and we went to Big Cat's bow.

There were already crowded by all - one of the anglers was kneeling and evenly twirled something. Actually, no one explained anything to me, but judging by what I saw, the engine pulling out the anchor rope was out of order and the only way to raise the anchor was bare hands.



Gambly, in turn each in the best of his power helped this. My turn also came. I will not say that I was better than everyone else, or at least in the middle - but helped than I could. It was not very easy after a week's sitting without moving.

As in a joke -

"The wife asks her husband to kill a mosquito flying around the kitchen.

The husband goes to the kitchen. From there you can hear the sound of broken dishes, the crunch of broken furniture. After a while, a husband appears, wiping sweat from his forehead.

"Well, did you kill him, darling ?"

- Kill, kill... No, I didn't , but his health is not the same anymore... "

All this was accompanied by competition, jokes and only then I suspected something was amiss. The achievements of each in terms of the number of turns and the length of the rope were recorded in a table, drawn in a notebook, which was clearly not used for the first time.

Finally, there were 3 meters left for chanting ... 2 meters ... meter ... and the anchor was raised from a depth of 60 meters. Noting this event with good sips of beer, everyone went to dinner. I did not ask - but I still have the impression that it was just a tradition. A good sea tradition finalizing the tour ...

Dinner - well, as usual. Delicious. A lot of. And as cherry on the cake - a surprise from the chef - delicious ice cream with fruit, syrup and biscuit.



Then - in any case, for me - a very deep sleep until the morning ... Now it's not at all on the couch in the cabin, but right where in the right gondola of the Big Cat catamaran, below the water level. Coolness, comfort, comfort ...



And the morning continued to please with the utter calm ... and a fresh hot big croissant with cheese, ham and tomato.

Of course, this kind of weather could not just be missed by the anglers onboard, and they started trolling - that is, as far as I understand, fishing on the go. I, as a spectator, took the feasible part.



After a short photo session, the fish was released into the sea. And so it lasted almost all day.

By the evening I almost returned to civilization - both physically and morally.



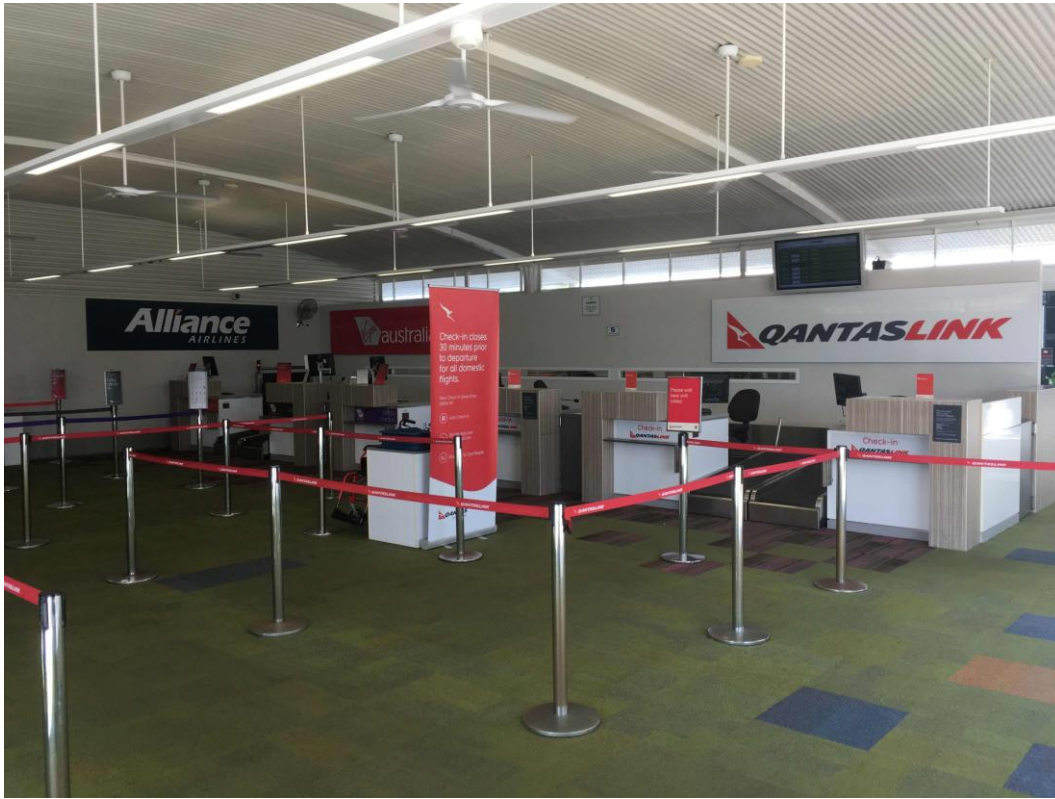
Late at night - around 1 am, noticeably earlier than my calculations - the lights of Bundaberg appeared. As it turned out, we spent about 27 hours to get from Bundaberg to Cato Reef, and only 20 on the way back. Blame - headwind, high swells and counter current (yes!) on the way there, and the calm and passing current on the way back.

Farewell party at the stern, coincided with the birthday of one of the crew members, the exchange of fishing and life stories - and everyone went to sleep. In the morning the anglers were waiting for the way home, for some are even longer than mine. And the crew was waiting for cleaning, cleaning and bringing each corner of the vessel clean and tidy. I could not sleep, and I wandered alone through the nocturnal pier.

At 8.30 am a pre-booked minibus came in, all the boxes were loaded. This was followed by a throw to a local courier company, where a box with a generator and a box with heavy things were left for delivery to Adelaide - and again, Bundaberg airport.

3 hours of waiting in an empty hall when I talked to the video team operator, returning - surprise - also to Adelaide by the same flight. He even on the tour pleased me with a greeting in Russian.

But more than that - as I already mentioned, he also lives in Adelaide. He has a wife from Ukraine, like me. And moreover - she is also from Odessa! But the names did not match ... 😊



It was hot, we wanted to drink heavily, but there was nowhere to buy water (as it turned out, we both were not looking there). As a free option it was here such a drinking fountain, carefully made for children and adults.



But the adventure did not let me go until the end. The flight from Bundaberg to Brisbane was delayed; just the plane from Brisbane did not arrive. The reason is a very strong thunderstorm there. I had 40 minutes to change the flight to Adelaide. But this time rapidly declined, threatening to pour into the problem.

The plane came soon. After 40 minutes of flight, we landed in Brisbane, before flying off to Adelaide in 15 minutes. Already having reconciled to the fact that I will have to come back to airport next day to pick up my luggage, we run through some service doors (thank you so much for the airport staff!) And succeed the last. I sat down in a chair - and the plane started to take off.

In Adelaide, just in case, I went to the luggage conveyor and got my bags! Incredible! How ?

Well and further - a taxi, joyful meeting with Larissa, I'm at home finally.

Another page is turned upside down, I hope, not the last one. New pages are waiting. It remains only to move a finger - and "Islands, islands, where the green grass ..."

And as a conclusion.

I am very, wholeheartedly grateful to those who helped to come true to what has come true.

Renee Bowling, Senior Marine Parks Officer, Parks Australia - for help in obtaining permission and information about the soon-changing status of Cato Reef.

Big Cat Reality crew and personally **James McVeigh, The Captain** - for support, hospitality, help and security. I have not felt so comfortable in any of the previous adventures.

German DX Foundation (GDXF) - for generous financial support, and personally **Frank Rosenkranz DL4KQ** for help in resolving some issues.

RSGB DX Fund - for generous financial support

Island Radio Expedition Foundation (IREF) - for generous financial support, and personally **Mike Crownover AD5A** for help in resolving some issues.

CDXC, The UK DX Foundation - for generous financial support, and personally **Chris Duckling G3SVL** for help in resolving some issues.

And of course, what I would do without your help - those who helped me restore the setup after OC-267, who helped financially before the expedition and after it. Often - even knowing that there is practically no chance for SSB QSO. Unfortunately, I cannot list here everyone – it would take whole page. But here is <http://vk5mav.wixsite.com/dxpedition/sponsorship> - all those who supported the expedition are listed. I take off my hat. All of you were members of the team and I proud of it.

And of course – to Larysa, with all my love and gratitude, who wasn't just tolerant, but wholeheartedly supporting this madness. Thank you, my love, my darling !