

# Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation

---

Volume 9

Issue 4 *Rapa Nui Journal* 9#4, December 1995

Article 3

---

1995

## The 1995 Cordell Expeditions

Robert W. Schmieder

Carlos Nascimento

Follow this and additional works at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj>

 Part of the [History of the Pacific Islands Commons](#), and the [Pacific Islands Languages and Societies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Schmieder, Robert W. and Nascimento, Carlos (1995) "The 1995 Cordell Expeditions," *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 4 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj/vol9/iss4/3>

This Research Report is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Hawai'i Press at Kahualike. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation* by an authorized editor of Kahualike. For more information, please contact [sheila.yeh@hawaii.edu](mailto:sheila.yeh@hawaii.edu).

## The 1995 Cordell Expeditions

*Robert W. Schmieder, Ph.D. and Carlos Nascimento, Ph.D.  
Cordell Expeditions, Walnut Creek, CA 94596*

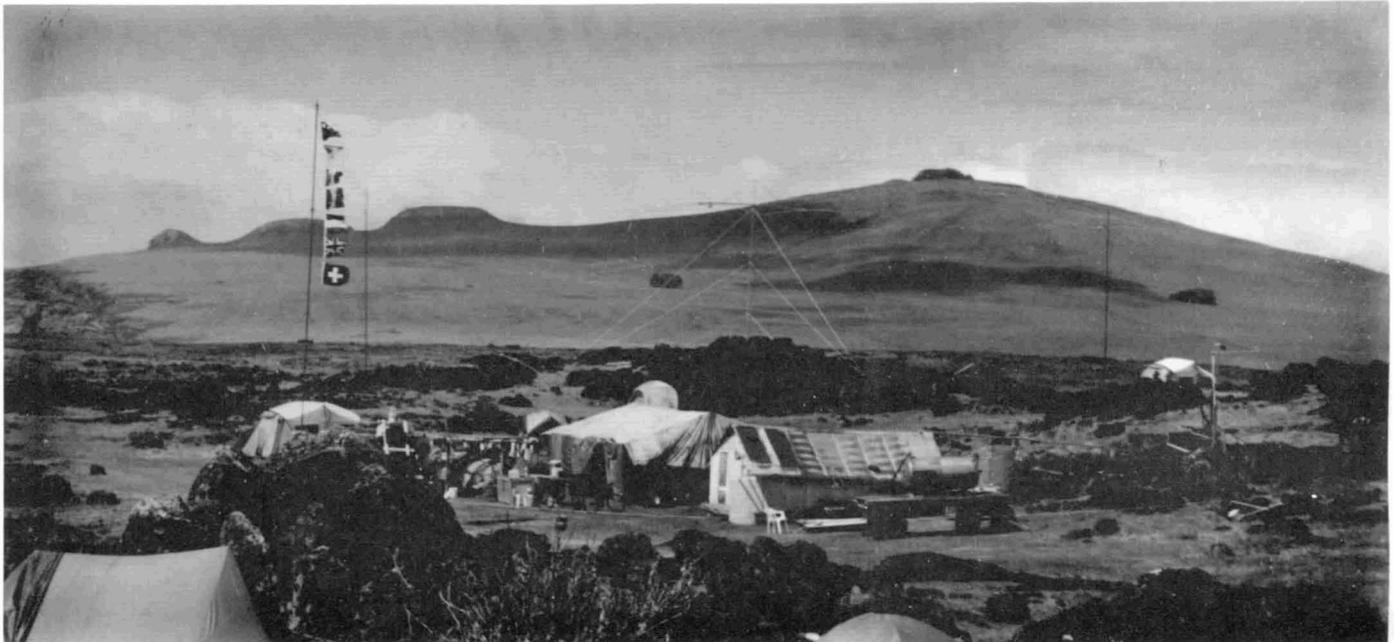
The 1995 Cordell Expeditions to Easter Island and Sálas y Gomez were successfully carried out during 1-22 September 1995. The project was described in previous editions of the *Rapa Nui Journal*.

Two separate teams totaling 32 persons carried out an extensive list of activities focused on radio science, marine biology, and computer-based communications. A major goal was to develop new techniques for using available high technology (primarily Internet) to communicate with remote sites. Another goal was to explore and document the marine environment around the Poike peninsula. The goals for radio science included contacting tens of thousands of radio amateurs, and implementing a series of innovations for advancing the state of the art of radio communications. The expeditions achieved all these goals, and there were no significant problems.

The team shipped 18 large crates of gear to Easter Island, which were stored in a warehouse until the team's arrival. The team set up camp at La Pérouse, where they erected 6

The group at La Pérouse set up four radio stations that operated around the clock, logging 40,000 contacts with radio amateurs in more than 100 countries. More than a dozen radio antennas, most on temporary masts, were erected. One antenna was a wire that ran more than 1000 ft and ended in the ocean. An automatic radio beacon was installed at the hotel and operated continuously during the entire three weeks. The radio operators used Morse code, voice, and digital modes like RTTY. One of the contacts was made by moon bounce, certainly a first for Easter Island!

One of the major innovations was the use of the internet connection at the NASA tracking site. The group used this to upload their radio logs and other data. The radio logs were distributed to several computers in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, providing local access to the data. For the first time, it was possible to confirm a radio communication using e-mail, to send a printed confirmation (QSL) card within a day of the contact, to provide the logs on a queryable server, and to present photographs of the expedition on the Internet while



*The campsite of the Cordell Expedition at La Perouse Bay, 1-22 September 1995, with Poike peak in the background.. Photo: Luis Chartarifsky*

sleeping tents, 2 radio operating tents, a computer tent, and the large galley tent used by the Rapa Nui film crew. The small building in front of the light was vacated temporarily and used as a warehouse. The team rented several jeeps and motorcycles, and brought 2 bicycles for transportation. They used the O'tai Hotel as headquarters, and the Haoa family, specially Nico Jr, Nico Sr., and Rosita, provided local logistics. Several islanders were hired in various capacities.

the expedition was still on site. Another innovation was the first use of a barcode on the QSL card to facilitate automatic processing by agencies that give awards for radio activities. The team made a valiant attempt to establish a direct radio link from the NASA site to La Pérouse, but this was unsuccessful due to the terrain.

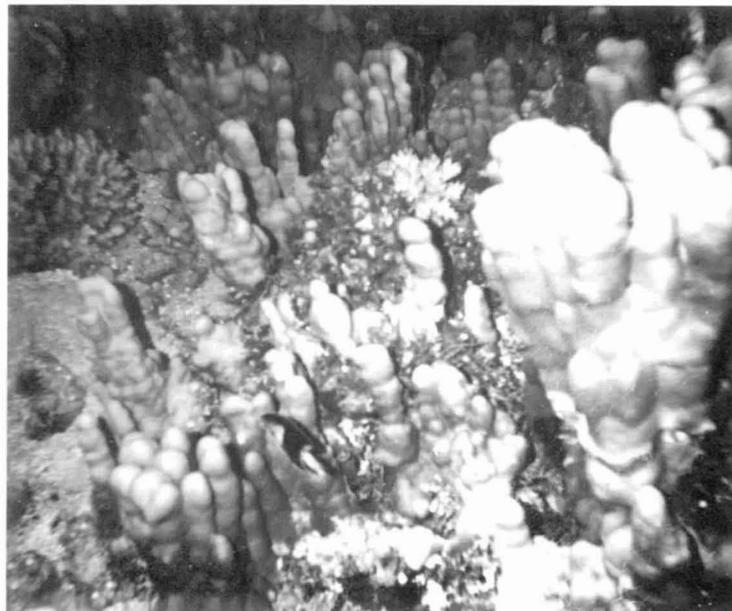
The dive team on Easter Island succeeded in examining a series of sites around Poike, taking thousands of photographs

and making representative collections of biological specimens. The area was found to be coralline, with large exquisitely beautiful colonies emerging from a fine gray sediment. The invertebrate community was sparse. The specimens will be distributed among specialists for identification, and possible deposition of a collection in the museum on Easter Island.

An unusual project was the use of a radio-controlled model airplane to acquire aerial photographs. A large number of striking photographs of La Pérouse, Tongariki, and other sites were obtained, at very small cost compared with helicopter use.

The group has also prepared a proposal to use infrared imaging to search for buried objects. While on Easter Island they interacted with Claudio Christino, a chief archaeologist on the island, who indicated that this project would be of great interest to the University of Chile, which might provide partial funding. The Sálas y Gomez team carried out a completely separate, but simultaneous, operation, due to transportation logistics. The team of four left Valparaiso aboard a Chilean Naval vessel a few days before the team arrived on Easter Island. After

almost a week of sailing, they arrived at Sálas y Gomez and were helicoptered on the tiny islet (700 m across). Once on the island, they set up two radio stations, and began to document the wildlife. During their stay, the vessel proceeded to Easter Island. Over four days, they logged almost 3000 contacts from Sálas y Gomez.



An example of a typical underwater scene off the coast below Poike. Photo: Albert Boosman.

Documentation of the project is in progress. A book, video, and various articles are in preparation, scheduled for release in early 1996. A World Wide Web site <http://ve7tcp.ampr.org/DX/easter> is available for details about the expedition and the team. Cordell Expeditions can be reached through its e-mail address: [cordell@ccnet.com](mailto:cordell@ccnet.com). One of the participants maintains an internet reflector: [easter-island@the-courtyard.com](mailto:easter-island@the-courtyard.com) (send 0147 "subscribe" in the SUBJECT line to subscribe).

The \$80,000 expedition was financed mainly by the participants' contributions.

Motorola was the major donor, with a contribution of \$10,000. Many equipment manufacturers supplied gear either donated or on loan. Souvenir coffee mugs and tee-shirts are available (\$15 plus postage) and help offset costs.

The team is grateful to Georgia Lee for introductions and orientation on Easter Island; to Ricardo Menzel for interface with the Chilean Navy and support while on the island; to Nico Haoa Jr. for extraordinary logistical support; and to the people of Rapa Nui who were warm and helpful hosts during the expedition.

Postscript: The Cordell Expedition Team is very distressed at proposals for a deep water port and second airport at La Pérouse. Having become intimately familiar with the site, and the existing facilities on Easter Island, the team agrees that his proposal is misguided. The correct use of this area is to leave it as a prime archaeological site and open land, maintaining it as a symbol of enlightened management of a world cultural resource.



Dr Schmieder, head of Cordell Expeditions, flanked by two familiar Rapanui faces—Rosita Cardinale and Nico Haoa, proprietors of the famed Hotel O'tai. The event was a dinner in their honor held at the La Perouse camp. Photo by Enno Korma.

Editor's note: Dr Schmieder's book will be titled "DX-Aku: Messages from the Easter Island Expedition". Watch RNJ for further announcements on this publication.