

Diary 18 - 28 October 2013

Every season has an end

The Zackenberg season 2013 is coming to an end. We are three people left at the station. Monday, last week, the musk ox team left and chief GeoBasis consultant Mikkel Tamstorf arrived. In this last week of the season, we are busy shutting down different stations and preparing other stations for the winter. We have just installed a brand new windmill on the MM2 hut. The windmill will hopefully produce enough energy so the flux system at MM2 can run through the three dark months to come. In February when the sun returns solar panels are ready to complement the windmill. We have shut down the auto-chamber site and installed the extensions, so the chambers are ready for new measurements as soon as possible next spring. Shutting down the auto-chamber site lasted all hours of Sunday with reasonable daylight and I experienced a completely new level of freezing cold hands. It is really hard to put on small screws and nuts with gloves on, so whether you like it or not at wind chills below -25 °C, you have to take your big gloves off. Luckily, Henrik was so kind to offer his help, so we took turns in this freezing job.

The shutting down of the GeoBasis programme has been almost smooth. Somehow, there is always a problem with one or two things just when you think you are home safe. We have managed to solve all the problems so far except for a power problem with one of our soil met stations. We may have to leave that problem to be solved next year.

We really cannot complain about the weather. For the last four days, we have had clear sky and almost no wind. The temperature is around -18 °C and sometimes even lower so not only us but also the local occupants of the valley is starting to feel the cold. When Henrik took the water off House 9 today, Mikkel saw about 15 ptarmigan sitting around the hot water that was running out from the snow melting system. They were apparently enjoying a hot bath in the cold weather. The only ones that do not look like they are freezing are all the muskoxen. They are still roaming the valley in big numbers and look very comfortable. Arctic hares are also running around in very big numbers. I have several times seen up to 20 Arctic hares in one flock. There have not been any polar bears visiting this fall. The neighbours at Daneborg have seen one bear out on the ice but personally, I am OK with not seeing any bears this fall. However, Mikkel is almost traumatised by not having seen a polar bear yet so hopefully we get the chance before we fly out tomorrow.

Now there is only the last packing to do before the Zackenberg season 2013 is over. It is going to be exciting to see, if the Twin Otter will pick us up tomorrow (Tuesday) or we will be delayed for six days like last year. One thing is sure. Winter is coming!

Out Zackenberg

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