

Diary 8 – 18 June 2014

Sapaatip akunneranut allagarsiassat

Two weeks ago I came to Zackenberg for the third time having had an all too long break from 2008 until now. This time I am working for the ClimateBasis program, one of the monitoring lines that build the core of ZERO. Our main purpose was to establish a brand-new hydrometric station, which we placed on the bridge. Things went as planned because the workshop was well prepared and timing was just perfect. The day we landed the river started to flow and ever since it is just exploding. There were a few days in the beginning where manual discharge measurements were not possible because it was full of slush and ice but all in all, we finally got 20 discharge measurements done. This sounds maybe a bit as overkill but in the beginning of the season it is very tricky to scale the discharge from a stage-discharge relation that is established during summer, because the waterlevel is still influenced by ice on the bottom. Anyway, we think we got interesting data and have a good head-start into a new season with a new set-up. As a backup, we serviced the old hydrometric station that will be taken down next year if the new setup proves reliable. A 'Kempeflood' this summer would thus have the unique chance to wash away two hydrometric stations, but we cross our fingers that this will not happen. Then of course, there were our two climate masts that needed a spring brush-up with some new sensors and calibration.

Weather has been fantastic with hardly any clouds and negligible wind. Snow is therefore disappearing at a stunning pace as water flow is increasing. When we came, there were still reasonable skiing conditions which I unfortunately couldn't use and Zackenberg river was as said a tiny brook, while now flowers are in blossom and I am looking at a wild river transporting estimated 10 m³/s or more. This high-arctic rapid switch of seasons is something incredibly fascinating and it is just a fantastic opportunity to witness that with one's own eyes.

Zackenberg received me as well as my memories from six years ago have been and actually, I was amazed by how vivid they are. The lack of everyday life distraction up here apparently allows experiences to sink deeper and become more intense. Zackenberg is still the well-run research station where simply nothing is missing and I cannot help being impressed by the efficiency of the logistical framework allowing personal and scientific freedom while applying reasonable rules.

The natural beauty is of course also still the same. The roaming musk-oxen and the explosive onset of a growing season are unsurpassed and although having been very lucky these past 6 years moving through different exciting places, this diversity and pristineness I have not encountered anywhere else. Long working days get just an extra bonus when sitting, like now, in the midnight sun and watching the light getting prettier every second.

Then there is this selection of outstanding people who make the great stay even greater. We are a comfortable size of a football team just before the busy summer season will start. Geobasis Kirstine is working impressively hard day-round and nevertheless always helpful and supportive. She is getting the last snow-surveys of the year while preparing for a CO₂ and Methane-flux season. BioBasis Lars is integrative (no, I do not mean interimistic) as one can be, would accompany every story with an analogue from the animal world with vivid gestures and broad know-how. He is excited about every Musk-ox carcass he can find and is capturing the private life of fox-dens with his automated cameras. Jannik is after birds, always in a good mood and recently started the Papageno-business of bird-catching together with Jannie, who is after a specific bird whose name I can recall neither in Danish nor in English. They have not been successful yet but if it were all too easy, it would be boring I guess. The two Finns are here for pollination studies with Tomas, throwing in some pleasant Swedish-Finnish (or the other way round) dry humour while Mikko is not missing any component of the wildlife. Asiaq, the Zackenberg host-institution is represented by us three, Jonathan who keeps his hands on

and solves all problems together with Ari/Rasmus, who never stops joking and myself who is passing this last evening on the station pleasantly on the terrace writing these lines. And of course the station's 'parents' with Spanggård who makes things possible and doesn't get tired of giving us lifts on his Argo when our equipment gets too heavy while magic Dina is doing miracles in the kitchen. All the cakes and varied dishes will make the next weeks at home make me feel like during a tough expedition, while it should be the other way round. When she offered me to prepare Germknoedel, in case I could get her a recipe, she won my soul and Dina, yes, next time I will bring it and we will try it. I almost forgot team member No. 12, Jannik's famous 'uncle Ib'. He is providing us every night remotely with a summary of the day's soccer world cup results throwing in a blend of facts with the perfect note of his subjective opinion. Honestly, uncle Ib, I find it more inspiring and entertaining to read your summary than to watch several times 90 minute-matches...

Besides all the hard work each of us has been doing, we are having a good time, spending one or another evening with a Whiskey on the terrace or a Rommeekup. I cannot say more than that I feel privileged to work here in this context and I find it hard to leave tomorrow.

Jakob Abermann, Asiaq, ClimateBasis manager

P.S.: If you have troubles understanding the headline of the newsletter you should think about refreshing your Greenlandic. I cannot check if Google Translate does the job but wish you luck.