

Diary 11 - 20 August 2013

In many ways, the past week here at Zackenberg Research Station has been a week of change. First of all, the weather suddenly shifted from being relatively summery (yes that is a word!) to being cold, more windy, and with a considerable amount of precipitation. Around us, all elevated areas are now covered with a fine layer of snow, a clear, horizontal line marking the transition to bare soil or vegetation further down where the temperature is above 0 °C. I just talked to Lau from GeoBasis who, understandably, wished to capture and eternalize this scenery with a photo - as a simple and beautiful illustration of the phenomenon that "temperatures drop, as one goes up!"

I knew that the Arctic summer would be short and intense but cannot help feeling a little bit surprised that the weather is like this in the mid-August. Other noticeable changes have taken place during the past week, such as from a state where certain things in life can be taken for granted to one where nothing, at all, is for sure.

The annual beach party, a social event that so many people in this remote part of the world consider as sure as fate, was suddenly cancelled - then postponed - due to bad weather that made sailing to Daneborg irresponsible. Personally, which cannot surprise anyone at the station, I had especially looked forward to the grilled sausages and sodas, but the social event that we managed to arrange here instead certainly lived up to all expectations - food- and games-wise. Well done, folks!

Another change that the past week has brought about, and that deserves a little mentioning, has to do with the difficulty of catching Arctic char (*Salvelinus alpinus*) in Young Sound. Whereas we previously experienced good rod-fishing, when, on a rare occasion, we had the time, a short trip this week indicated that the abundant part of the season is now over. Tidings from Sirius and MarineBasis (who use nets) suggest the same. I assume that the fish, instead of roaming the coastal areas, now seek towards their respective streams where they will ascend in search for an appropriate location to spawn and secure future generations. At the end of the day, it might as well be so, as we are still kept busy by a wide range of scientific tasks despite the fading summer.

However, not everything concerning the past week has been about change from one state to another. We have also seen sudden incidents of a stochastic and totally unpredictable character. As when Paw, energetic as he is, climbed Dombjerg after only few hours of sleep, went back to the station, and decided to bake approximately 200 pancakes. It is fair to say that Paw has become the little "energy darling" of the entire station, and to me, the 200 pancakes were the final straw that made me realize how indispensable his contributions are.

During the past week, however, Paw and the rest of the stone carrier crew have also taken on more serious tasks. In collaboration with GeoBasis, they assisted Anders in the transport of equipment to the top of Zackenberg Mountain for the installation of a transmitter - and made sure to bring him back home safe. This is also what the Arctic is about - perhaps more than anything: always being ready to help each other and searching for solutions. In return, one could say, Anders and Birger made an interesting and entertaining discovery of a number of items in the field close to M4. I will leave it for Birger to elaborate on the details and the circumstances under which these items might have wound up there, as I trust that his imagination is as fit for the job as mine. In a bit more than one week, I will be leaving this

amazing place. Going back to civilization will certainly represent an abrupt change in many fundamental aspects of life. As much as I will be looking forward to going home after seven weeks in the Arctic, the professional and personal yield from my stay and scientific work here at Zackenberg Research Station will be with me forever. I hope to see you all again!

Jakob Humaidan, BioBasis