

Diary 15 – 18 September 2013

Weather report

A very important thing for life at Zackenberg Research Station is the weather. It is the first thing you notice in the morning, either running to breakfast, covering your face from the wind, or strolling slowly, enjoying the view of the mountains and the sun in your face. It is what people talk about when considering the plane schedule, when deciding with what to spend their day, and which clothes to wear while doing it. At these latitudes, September is a month of large changes, where all kinds of weather can be expected. The last week, we have indeed had all kinds of weather and temperatures to go with it. Here are, therefore, some of the consequences following different kinds of weather from the view of a GeoBasis assistant.

Cold: When things start to freeze up, the water level of the river decreases. This means an easier crossing for bridge builders, when bringing stuff from one side to another, and for Aart and Mette, when they follow the coastline, the river or a cliff with the DGPS. It means water discharge measurements for GeoBasis, trying to keep instruments under water, and saving them from freezing. Cold also means frozen soil; no active layer measurements, but good grip for the Argo on its many trips to the bridge. It means ice on lakes hindering lake sampling from the rubber boat, and it means that people's noses go red and their fingers go white.

Wind: Windy weather means trouble for the autochambers. The motor pushes the lids up against the wind, which pushes back, and the battle is not healthy for a chamber motor or lid, so sometimes they have to be disconnected to spare the instruments. On windy days, everything takes a bit longer. And people's noses go red and their fingers go white.

Rain: One of the more recently introduced phenomena, rain (in combination with wind), can have rather severe consequences. Instruments, which are not used to rainstorms, can take in water through different intakes (usually meant to be air intakes, not water intakes), which means bringing instruments around trying to dry, clean and reboot them. The water level in the river increases, meaning more difficult crossing for various reasons, and Lars' insect traps fill up so he has to empty them to not lose the insect. And, of course, people's noses go red and their fingers go white.

Snow: The snow has not been severe yet, but in combination with light thaw because of a warm, southern wind, and then frost, it can cause some trouble for chamber lids. They get snow on the inside of the lids and the top of the frames, so they don't close properly, and one has to fix the problem. Also, reaching the Nansen boulder without stepping into deep snow means walking along ridges, zigzagging up the mountain.

Sunshine: A combination of snow and then sunshine means mud. The Argo gets stuck and makes large holes in the road, one's boots suddenly weigh twice the load, and House 4 floors are suddenly even dirtier. Sunshine also means extra energy and coffee outside, happy field- and bridge workers, even taking a swim.

An increasingly important, perhaps not strictly weather-related phenomenon is also darkness. This has the effect that most people now go to bed before 9.30.

Now they say that we have snow coming. Thus warned, we will be ready.

Laura Helene Rasmussen, GeoBasis assistant