

Diary 1: 23 April 4 May 2013

People: Jørgen Skafte, Aarhus University; Maria Rask, University of Copenhagen; Michele Citterio, GEUS; Daniel Binder, University of Vienna; Geo Boffi, ETH Zurich; Marek Stibal, GEUS (guest editor).

Purpose: Work, work, work, work, work, work.

Hello,

This is the first newsletter from Zackenberg station in the year 2013. I am the guest editor of this issue, apparently because this is my first time here and I have no preconceptions and prejudices. Well, we will see about that.

We arrived at Zackenberg on April 23. My first impression of the station: blue. My second impression of the station: cold.

I am here as field assistant to Michele. He is a glaciologist, you know, and I can only admire his expertise: it took him just a couple of minutes to notice that there was very little snow around here. This may be good for the local fauna (we can distinctly hear the muskoxen purr), but not so good for snowmobile use. Snowmobiles are only mobile on snow (so the theory goes).

We did not give up, though, and after only two days of rough snowmobiling we found our way to the front of the South-East outlet glacier of the A. P. Olsen Ice Cap on which the four of us (DB, GB, MC, MS) had work to do. Unfortunately, that was it for the snowmobiles. The moraines could not be crossed. (I should probably mention this minor event as a warning for the future generations: an unnamed Austrian member of our group was sitting on an immobile snowmobile when a large invisible rock came up to him and deliberately broke one of the runner beams!)

So, after some careful and some less careful planning we called on Jørgen and bribed him into driving the Argo from the station onto the glacier. He did, and so we were able to do some work after all. Yay. (Hence, everything is now called after the Argo.) This also meant we could camp at the beautiful glacier instead of returning to the disgustingly comfortable station. Description of work follows.

DB and GB serviced their passive seismic and GPS stations and installed a pressure sensor at the bottom of Lake Argo and an automatic camera at the Argo glacier terminus in order to monitor the Argo glacier lake outburst floods.

MC measured and re-drilled all the stakes on Argo glacier and performed maintenance on the weather stations that also grow on the glacier. We also drilled a shallow ice core at the summit of the ice cap. I managed to collect samples of surface ice for my microbiological analyses.

Maria has been running around the tundra with a rifle. We do not really know what she has been up to, but she says that the flux station on the heath is now up and running while the one in the fen has been running all winter except of the dark period. It is going to be an incredible year for the GeoBasis monitoring program (i.e., no one will believe it.)

The Sirius Patrol guys dropped by the other day and brought a delicious chocolate cake. Apparently, one of them is a vampire and has to be transported in a coffin. Well, I have no problem with that as long as they bring cake. How does he shave though? Maybe he does not. His beard was a bit on the long side...

Even Justin Bieber showed up one day, but was accidentally shot dead during our shooting practice. Ah, well.

Otherwise, everything works very smoothly at the station, the generator is generating, the heater is heating, and the water is watering. We take turns in cooking dinner and no one has died of food poisoning yet, with an exception of Geo, but that was the freeze-dried chilli con carne stuff so it does not really count. And I have to say, Jørgen is the most competent and hardworking station manager I have ever met, he gets up at 4 am and never goes to bed and his overalls are very clean all the time. Anything else you wanted me to say Jørgen? (Thanks for the Argo.)



The Argo on A. P. Olsen Ice Cap. Photo: Jørgen Skafte.