

Diary 2 - 12 June 2010

The shortest two weeks

I have to keep the visit short this year. Two weeks, not more. This means a hectic schedule. While there, make the most of it. Squeeze every minute. I rush through Iceland, check in at hotel Akureyri. The next day, the long-expected flight to Greenland. Spanggård greets us at breakfast.

- *Ladies and gentlemen. I have two pieces of good news for you. The first one is for Dina: no need to make dinner at Zackenberg tonight. The second is for all of you: we will have a new chance to get there tomorrow. The Twin Otter will return from an ambulance flight to Svalbard.*

The audience stiffens, disappointment is written on every face. Six pints of Gull beer go half-way to relaxing them.

The next morning is all sunshine. We leave for the Pynt at eleven. Then the fog descends on us. We will be staying the night at Hilton. To vent out the disappointment, I stroll around the heath. Look for caterpillars; check the stage of the summer. There are rumours about a polar bear. I peer through the fog with suspicion. After half an hour, I do hear a shout

- *Ooo ... aaa!*

Is that "polaaar"? That bear?? I take two strides in one. Then I hear it more clearly. It is

- *Tooomaaas!*

The plane has been called back to Iceland. We should all leave at once. Ten minutes later, we are in the air. That was my shortest visit to Greenland.

Third morning, new try. Spanggård enters with an update.

- *Ladies and gentlemen. Unfortunately, we will not be able to fly today. But maybe tomorrow.*

Now beer offers no solution – the hour is hardly past midday. At the tourist office, we are given the choice between Santa Claus and a bird colony. Unanimously, we go for the latter. The island proves fantastic. We climb 120 metres to its top. We spot a gyrfalcon and two zillion sea birds. The landscape is out of this world.

Fourth morning, Spanggård looks tense.

- *Ladies and gentlemen...* [You guess the rest.]

Three hours later, Kisser and I are standing on a mountain peak outside Akureyri. The view is spectacular; the descent through snow proves a joyride. When we return to the hotel, the receptionist greets us like old friends. The teenagers cruising the city square wave at us. Jannik, Julie and Dina get dragged to a disco. Iceland starts feeling like home.

Fifth morning, heads are heavy. We will all have a nap once Spanggård gets it over with.

- *Ladies and gentlemen. We will leave in two hours.*

Is he joking? Can this be true? Expressions are sceptic. Only when the wheels touch Zackenberg ground do the smiles erupt. The pilots take off with relief. Never had a cargo so hard to get rid of.

Sunday morning I jump-start my field work. Head out for our sites on snow shoes. The snow proves deceptive. I fall through, crawl, roll over and swear. The river has left its bed. Now it enters my boots. I make a mental note on sticking to the less-snowy areas.

On Monday, fine visitors call at the station. Three pintails bathe with two phalaropes. A pectoral sandpiper is seen at the beach front. We enjoy the diversity – or try to. The sandpiper evades me for days.

Now summer advances in leaps. The snow melts in streams and in puddles. Claus has found five sorts of flowers. That number expands by the day. So does the insect diversity. Now the springtails are mixed with the flies. Spiders eat both groups con gusto. Our diet is more varied. From the kitchen, a plain stream of miracles. Had I a choice, I would sleep by that table. The airstrip is equally splendid: Jon and Spanggård had it polished to mirror the sky. Lars masquerades as a seal. We all hope that the bears spot the difference. Julie relentlessly tunes her devices. The mosquitoes are still asleep. Claus is the only to miss them.

On Tuesday, it is time to go home. Behind me the two shortest weeks in history. Would not have swapped them for anything.

Tomas Roslin