

## Diary 11 – 27 June 2012

### Zackenberg

What is a duty to write a weekly letter! Especially for a flux-measurement person, whose target is not moving from one place to another, not discharging, not nesting, and not breeding, at last! When every day is like another, walking on skies in mud and water, or walking in rubber boots on snow and slash or in snowshoes put upon rubber boots – whatever you invent looks silly in this environment! Trying to access your chambers without disturbing too much the snow cover, and next morning discover that this snow cover totally disappeared, flooded away by powerful streams of melted water, running through the fen and looking for its new way almost every day. Trying to start up the chambers with snow extensions, that make possible to measure fluxes at 50 cm snow, as soon as each of them stick enough out of snow – and when the last one is in operation, the first one is already free of snow, so can be dismantled and turned to the “summer” mode. Looks like everything here is turning to this summer mode as soon as it gets from below the snow. Little but magnificent arctic flowers bloom instantly where only few days ago was snow. Little and cute lemmings rush to make their life until a bit bigger but still cute foxes will discover them. It is quite painful to have sympathies to these creatures, which are just little pieces of meat for anyone. One day we noted couple of lemmings at the end of the runway, sneaking around and trying to hide under skies left over night. Few days they were our companions, and then at once disappeared. Traces of a fox digging under a runway-marking pole give a sorrowful idea of their end. Another couple lived for some time near the autochamber hut, being nice neighbours and becoming almost friends. Now they disappeared as well.

However, I am not biologist. I should not think of animals, even if they are small and cute. Methane fluxes also may be interesting! Even if they are small as well. In addition, as everything else in this land, they start right out of snow, challenging the researchers once again. Who knows how many surprises are waiting?

That is everyday work. One is catching skuas, another is polishing runway and the third one is mounting chambers. However, one day last week was different. That was last Saturday – mid-Summer day, and Saint Hans day (I am still not sure is it the same thing or two different, but here at the station they are always celebrated together), and Kirstine’s birthday. So many reasons to get together and have a nice time! Barbeque in front of house 9, with delicious (as always) Dina’s cookery and reasonable (as always) amount of drinks, under blinding midnight sun. Boot-throwing competition, water-carrier competition, dog-sledge training (with a beer can instead of a dog), and driving course with Lars’ camera-robo-vehicle (with a shoe instead of a camera)... Traditional fire, though without traditional songs this year (I am not a bird specialist, but I know how important the songs are...for birds ;)

In addition, this year we did not have shooting competition. Generally, shooting is taken much more seriously now. Though no polar bears were spot around the station this year, we carry that damn heavy rifles back and force every day (yes, with snow shoes put on rubber boots, with a hood over sunglasses, with sun cream mixed with mosquito repellent – the rifle is the final stroke for a polar hero!), loading and unloading them every time. Hard to invent something different, but still...

One more innovation at the station, not mentioned in previous letters, is washing machine at the kitchen. As I remember, something was standing there even before, but never really working. Now this smart device is a part of our everyday life, letting us to avoid both team-building dishwashing and team-breaking discussions about acceptability of wiping the dishes out of detergent without rinsing first (just for a reference, the machine does actually rinse!). Therefore, the station is more and more alike a resort for old and lazy scientists. Can we just have a mosquito-repelled device, with a couple of kilometres working radius?!

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