

Diary 13 - 12 June 2012

Kim Il Sung was a woman

This week has been warm – at least at times. Sweaty field workers have downed litres upon litres of water from their bottles; filling up at the research station or at nice, cool clear watered streams on the mountains.

Once back at the station, black currant squash and a somewhat dubious, orange squash (Caroline likes it!) is available, as well as tea, coffee etc. In addition, cakes, lots of cakes.

Exactly a week ago, Jan (NL) from the Sanderling project, Mikhail (RU) from the Lund University methane project, Tomas (FIN) from the insect food web project and Henrik (DK), our chief logistician flew out. In came Magnus Lund (S) og Lau Gede Petersen (DK) from GeoBasis, Stefan Sand (NL) from the Sanderling project and Kenny Madsen (DK) our new chief logistician.

With new blood on the station, it seems the mosquitoes have regained their appetites.

Gender can be a hard thing to judge in some cases. Jeroen and his sanderling appreciation team have certainly noticed that during the week.

A sanderling was caught, colour ringed and named Kim Il Sung, but when the team went back to check the nest, another bird was incubating – undisputedly a male! So it turned out that Kim Il Sung was a female. But now the *real* Kim Il Sung has been caught and colour ringed. And the confusion has been brought to an end: The pair consists of Kim Il Sung (the female) and The Real Kim Il Sung (the male). No one will be confused any longer.

Later in the week, my uncle, Ib, was to be honoured with a sanderling named after him (since he has sent us football match reports and news by email; thanks!). A new nest was found, and it was decided, the male would be Ib, and the female would be named after my aunt, Noëlla. When caught, it was difficult to tell by the plumage which sex it was. Since the nest was later eaten (likely by a fox), the other bird was never caught, and we will have to wait until the autumn, when Jeroen has been in the lab, before we find out whether the birds was Noëlla or Ib. Gender is difficult...

Magnus is here for a week, which for Zackenberg is a very short time. Magnus is no stranger to Zackenberg, though, having been here several times before in spring and autumn. In the short time here during summer, he has actually managed to get all his stuff done. Dedicated man, who also seems to enjoy the long underwear I lend him. ... No, do not worry, Magnus, I need to wash woolwear next week anyway... you are welcome.

Julie has been out in the fen measuring methane fluxes, with Caroline, who will be running the project the rest of the summer. Julie is on a, for her, unusually short stay of only two weeks. But she will be back! In the autumn, she will get lots of weeks. Caroline, meanwhile, has shown to be very good in the field (Julie says so!), and she seems to really enjoy it here (see last diary). Even beginning to recognize the beautiful nuances of the Danish language, I believe.

Stefan is Jeroen's new slave. Stefan has walked and walked, caught birds with Jeroen, and has it all on video! Long hours in the field followed by long hours editing the material. Little sleep, but worthwhile. At least the sneak preview we got this evening (Wednesday 11 July), was excellent. The Dutch BirdLife partner, Vogelbescherming, hosts a video blog that Stefan and Jeroen post to as regularly as conditions permit. On the flight out of here tomorrow (12 July), the first two episodes will be mailed out. They should be viewable on www.vogelbescherming.nl/beleef_de_lente_op_groenland. Although all in Dutch, even non-Dutch speakers can enjoy the videos. At least I did. We got to see a few extra bits, that you

folks cannot get – but that is part of the privilege of being here. (Tough luck, Jesper Mosbacher! (Good luck with the master's project!))

Michelle is waiting for her plots to progress far enough for her measurements to take place, and in the meantime has helped others. She helped me catch and ring a dunlin, check nests and generally look out for stuff on Monday, very helpful. Today, she spent a full day in the field with Jeroen. Luckily for her, on one of the few days were the sanderling team actually made it home for dinner in time! Well, almost ...we had moved on to the main course by then.

Yeah, that is right... We had a starter today! We are – as always – spoiled with delicious food at all meals, lots of goodies for coffee breaks etc. Tonight, for instance, starter and main course (very good!) and even pancakes for our photo night. Dina, our wonderful cook, even compliments our appearances in the morning. Well, I get that, anyway. Not sure about the others. Appreciated nonetheless!

Kenny and Tonni have been working hard, aided by mosquito repellent, keeping the station running, and are getting the boats ready, as Young Sund is opening up. Kenny's first week has run smoothly, as far as I can see, even if he says he is still trying to remember how to do it all. False modesty? The place is running nicely.

Tonni also went on a hike up Zackenberg on Sunday – the mountain – with Caroline, Michelle and Riikka. Lau and Kirstine also had business on the other side of the river that day and later also climbed the mountain. Coming back, the river had risen, and wading across had become an entirely different affair. It all went very well in the end, but we were all reminded of the true nature of true nature: You never know what can happen, and forces are huge! Things can change like this SNAP!

Otherwise, things are going well, Riikka is collecting interesting caterpillars and an exciting beetle that I struggle to remember the name of. GeoBasis, Kirstine and Lau, are on top of everything that has to do with water, gasses, sediment, mercury, soil moisture, earth water and all sorts of other things, that are obviously important. Amazingly, it seems that pretty much every machine or apparatus worked this week.

In BioBasis, we have had a tough week – not least Lars and Palle. Weather was bad at the end of last week, which meant our first musk ox count was postponed again and again. Lars and Palle went across the delta to the other side of the river, collecting samples from two lakes. Due to the tide, they only returned late at night. Next morning was glorious sunshine, and we could finally do the long musk ox count transect. We split it up. Lars and Palle went south and east, I went north and west. Those two, with their little sleep, were amazingly fast, and it all went very well. It has been hectic though. We have also been searching hard for dunlin nests, which has meant lots of dragging ropes across the wettest parts of the tundra (in clouds of mosquitoes), so far with little luck. We do have a number of nests, but we still need to find quite a few.

With Lars flying out tomorrow, we not only will be without a good colleague, but also a solid work force. Big shoes to fill for us (size 47, at least!).

But all is well, and we get new people flying in the coming week. It can only be good! We have an amazing bunch as it is, but we have got room for more! (Not many more – but for the next ones, no problem!)

And finally, three cheers for our newest "Zackenberg Doctor", Guisella Gacítua, who defended her Ph.D. thesis on Tuesday. Muy bien!

Jannik Hansen, 40, right back, Leica Ultravid 10x42, BioBasis, Aarhus University, Denmark @ Zackenberg, NE Greenland.