

## Diary 19 – 30 August 2012

### When people turn into wolves and polar bears fall over you know that summer has come to an end

Some of you might remember me from the beginning of the season, arriving to Zackenberg as 'the newbie to the station' (big troubles with Danish and mosquitoes). Summer 2012 is now coming to an end, and I do not feel like a newbie at this station anymore. Apparently, I have been here SO long that I have become "a part of the furniture" (Gergely Várkonyi, pers. com. 2012).

When you are at this station for SO long time (nine weeks to be exact), you get to experience a great amount of things, both natural and unnatural (the unnatural will hereby remain unmentioned with respect to family and friends back home).

Natural are of course the changes of the seasons. When I first arrived in June, snow still covered the mountains and most of the valley, and barely anything grew. As the weeks moved on, the snow melted and was replaced by green grass and large beds of flowers. The sky was blue and the sun fried us stationers for almost six weeks straight; giving us the famous 'Greenlandic tan' (hands and face brown, the rest pale as snow). Both people and musk ox were sweating (yes you could tell). As August approached, the sun still grilled us alive, but you could start to see small signs of autumn. Slowly the grass turned yellow and the mountain slopes red. The flocks of birds left us one after the other, and the evenings got darker. My plots in the fen already have the same colour as they had when I first arrived just over two months ago. Life in the tundra is hard, but to see nature's adjustment to the harsh climate is nothing but amazing.

Natural in Zackenberg is also that people come and go throughout the season. In addition, when you are here for SO long, you will be the one experiencing this the most. First, I thought it was a slight pain in the ass, and to be honest a bit scary, to have to be nice to new people every week. The 'hellos' were worse than the 'good byes'. Of course, it was because I did not know the people who were arriving, nor the ones who were leaving. At that time, I did not know that the people arriving would become like my family and as dear to me as any other close friends. Therefore, I did not expect the 'good byes' to become harder than the 'hellos'. You probably think (I did too in the beginning), that when you spend so much time with the same people, you would get sick of them eventually. However, even though we eat three meals a day together, sit on top of each other (there are only two couches), wake up by each other's snoring, and the ratio of people: shower is approximately 10:1; it never occurred. Having that said, I have actually no evidence that we have not turned mad during our stay here. Because as someone said the other day none of us knew each other before we got here...

Anyhow, when oldies such as Station Manager Kenny Madsen, GeoBasis Kirstine Skov and Insect Man Gergely Várkonyi left the station last Thursday, things just could not turn out well. First, the polar bear fell over, and then we almost ran out of red wine (!!). And as if that was not enough, I almost got a heart attack the other day when I was working in the fen and suddenly heard a wolf/mountain spirit/lost Inuit barking and jodding laud as \*...\* in the high slopes of Aucella. Turned out it was Birger Ulf Hansen singing. Well.

Luckily, we got a new station manager (welcome Jørgen) and 2 ½ Swedes to the station. Frida and Mats have done their outermost to try to get me back from the dark, Danish, side this week. As the summer has moved on, I have slowly but certain begin to lose the war of 'who speaks the real language', but these two brave knights (=scientists) have helped me back on track, and I finally start to feel secure in my nationality again. Sorry Sweden if I was lost for a while.

Speaking of changes the moment the Twin Otter took off with the oldies the other week, the weather changed as from the push on a button. The temperature dropped several degrees and rain started pouring down in the valley; occurring as snow in the mountains. A freezing cold wind blowing from the north has been giving us a rough time ever since. It is exciting and it is beautiful. For the people who arrive this week and the following: I'm sure you will have a great fall and somehow I wish I could stay to continue to be amazed of the shifting of the landscape as the weather turns colder. However, the arrival of this cold wind and harsh weather is somehow nature's way of saying good-bye to us summer stationers, telling us that it is time for us to leave it alone for its winter rest.

So; 1296 CH<sub>4</sub> flux measurements, 648 water samples, a handful of 'Doom and Destruction' and way too many 'Sweet Sweet Zeros' later, I'm checking out from ZERO. Hope to see you again!

/Caroline Jonsson, field assistant, Lund University