

## Diary 23 – 30 September 2012

### Chilly at ZERO...

The ice that formed on the ponds and lakes in early September has now returned as it has become cold again after a warm period. Even Young Sund is beginning to freeze up, helped by calm winds. We witnessed this first hand last week as we all went to Daneborg to store one of the boats in the boat house there. It was good to say hello to the neighbours at the headquarters of the Sirius Patrol and they seemed to enjoy the bakery that we brought them. They told us that the small polar bear we had visiting a few weeks ago had stopped by there a few times on the night and day after it was here. None of us has seen it since. Also, it seems that the young Gyr falcons have taken off to the south as have most of the young snow buntings. We no longer see the big flocks numbering hundreds. On the other hand, the musk oxen are increasing in numbers in the valley and on the mountain slopes. It looks like the large amount of snow during last winter has taken its toll as the numbers of calves on 1-year-olds are low. We have had one musk ox bull walk up to the buildings - probably attracted by the extra lush and nutritious grass outside house 5. Yesterday it broke one of the traps used for catching flying insects in the nearby pond. There was only one mosquito in total in the 4 traps after 1 week, so it is probably time to pack it up.

We have had no signs of arctic hares near the buildings as has otherwise been common this time of season. Perhaps they will show up if we get some snow. Even without snow, the landscape is rather white in many places as the huge crystals of rime do not disappear during the day due to the low angle of the sun. The Zackenberg River is freezing up and yesterday it could be crossed without getting wet feet for the first time at the old river crossing although it will still be flowing beneath the ice for a considerable time. Only a week ago, fish was still trying to go up to the big lake Store Sø.



**Julie Maria Falk fitting snow extensions to her measuring chamber bases at the musk oxen enclosures. Photo: Lars Holst Hansen**

Plants are packing up for winter too but can still do a bit of photosynthesis as observed in recent gas flux measurements of the BioBasis programme. Spiders are still very active as seen in the pit fall traps – now with extra added salt to keep them from freezing. Julie Maria Falk is preparing for snow at the musk oxen exclosures by fitting extensions to her measuring chambers bases. Maria Rask Pedersen reports that all GeoBasis installations are running according to plans and Jørgen Skafte has been busy keeping the station running and clean and preparing it for the winter besides assisting the scientific staff.

Our northern lights observations has been somewhat obstructed by the bright light of the full moon! After several days of clear or almost clear skies, today, low clouds are approaching from the west - perhaps bringing snow. Now we better get the skis and pulkas ready.

That 's all for now!  
Over and out, Zac!

/Lars Holst Hansen, BioBasis & Deputy Scientific Leader