

Diary 25 - 22 October 2012

The season is coming to an end. Next week, we say goodbye to Julie Maria Falk and hello to Mikkel Tamstorf, who is coming to help on the GeoBasis programme.

The landscape is really quiet now. There are only two or three snow buntings left they don't seem to want to leave. We have had really nice weather for a long time. For days and days there has been sunshine and almost no wind. This has also resulted in that it's starting to get really cold. It has been a challenge to keep my feet warm if I stand still for too long and the temperature is -15 degrees. Luckily I have been on some longer walks, where I had to offload climate stations and check the cameras on Nansenblokken. Most of the GeoBasis programme is closed for the winter. I took the last water sample from the river 17 October but now the river has completely frozen. In the coming days I'm going to offload the automatic climate stations for the last time. When Mikkel has arrived we will start to set up the EFOY (fuel) cells to the MM1 and MM2 stations, so they can run during the winter time.

Julie is packing up all her stuff and is ready to leave 24 October. She has finished her measurements in the fen and is happy that she finally reached zero in methane emission. Lars is checking his plots for snow and it's an easy task since the snow cover has been stable for a long time. We haven't had snow in the air since 9 October. The lack of snow has resulted in a bit off a water crisis so Jørgen has started to chip off ice from the river, so we still can get water and our weekly shower. The musk oxen number in the valley is very stable approximately 130. And Lars has got a haircut. The other day I finally got a look at the lemming that's moved in under house 9. It has changed its coat to a nice stylish silver fur for the winter and keeps warm under the house for the time being. That was the news from the station area.

I am very proud to say, that Julie and I did a very rare and spectacular sighting when we were going down from Nansenblokken last Sunday. We saw two Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulous* - in Danish: Silkehale) sitting on a rock and singing their tune. We quickly agreed that we haven't seen those birds here before.



The two waxwings/Silkehaler. Photo: Maria Rask Pedersen

The birds looked a bit like a punker and have a heavy eye makeup like Ozzy Osbourne on a bad day. When we met Lars at the trapper station and described the bird to him, he couldn't give us an answer right away. When we got back to the station we discovered that we might have seen a rare thing. We wrote to Jannik Hansen, BioBasis bird expert, and he has confirmed that it is only the fifth sighting of waxwings in Greenland ever. We are looking forward to come home and get the sighting registered on an official record.

There have been a lot of northern lights on the sky in the evenings. It's almost every night and it's amazing to look at. Now we'll wait and see if there's going to be any snow before we leave or if this fall is going to be one of the most poor in snow ever.

Maria Rask Pedersen, GeoBasis.