

Diary 2: 26 May 2011

Spring is here!

I have now been in Northeast Greenland for about week, and a lot have already happened. Here is a brief update from a BioBasis perspective!

The station has been frequented by three different arctic foxes. We can recognise them by their varying degree of having shed their winter fur. Two of them have been exhibiting some sort of territorial quarrel a few times barking a lot of each other and urine marking. I suspect they are the juveniles that hung around last fall. One of them seemed quite inexperienced, one day it tried to catch the Barnacle geese that used Teltdammen for swimming. The geese took off and flew over the fox. Then the fox tried to jump up and get at the geese. There is already indication of fox pups in at least two dens. I look forward to put up our new time lapse cameras to help us count the young. The ice-free ponds are used by the first waders and the Gyr falcon has been spotted near the station, probably taking advantage of the big flocks of snow buntings. We have also had a couple of arctic hares hanging around and I actually managed to photograph one with a radio controlled camera as it took a drink by Teltdammen. The weather has been a bit mixed as it often is up here but it is rather warm and the snow is quickly melting away. Many of the arthropod traps are installed and the first flower buds in the monitoring plots are showing. It is still not very wet and soft as it will soon be though and the river has not burst for earnest but water is flowing between layers of ice. One day, when I was off to check on our furthest located fox den, I was caught in strong winds and snow. I decided to wait it out and spend the night in the little trapping hut "Pashuset". It was really cosy to be inside in the relative warmth and study the rather varied literature there while listening to the wind blowing outside.

The musk oxen are slowly coming into the valley and a couple of them are now enjoying the grass around Gadekæret. The musk oxen enclosure and snow control fences have been pushed over a bit but there is no indication that the animals have been trespassing.

Logistics leader Jørgen Skafte is busy looking after the logistical matters and making practical stuff for the scientific staff. Professor Kirsten Christoffersen is drilling holes in the lake ice and is making new discoveries regarding winter ecology of the lakes. Old-timer Maria Rask Pedersen is back taking care of the GeoBasis monitoring programme assisted by Herbert Njuabe from Cameroun. Herbert is about to start a Ph.D. study on arctic CO₂ emission. Talking of emission; we get frequent updates on the Icelandic volcano situation and we hope to be able to farewell Jørgen and Kirsten in a week's time and say hello to the new people coming up.

That's all for now!
Out ZAC!

Lars Holst Hansen, BioBasis & Deputy Scientific Leader.