

Diary 3: 27 May – 2 June 2013

A week of cleaning, moving in and out

This week began – according to Palle and Maria – with hard work and cleaning. Wednesday, some of us waited in Akureyri, Iceland, to be told whether to fly to Greenland or to spend another night in town. Meanwhile, Mikkel, 'Tower' and Jørgen were getting ready to leave Zackenberg for this time. As it turned out, we – Dina Laursen (cook), Henrik Spanggård Munch (station manager), Kenny Madsen (logistics), Jonathan N.K. Petersen (Asiaq), Malik Naamansen (Asiaq) and yours truly (birdman) – flew from Akureyri late afternoon on Wednesday.

Landing in Zackenberg we said our hellos and goodbyes, goods were put in place, and it was discovered that the front plate of the new oven had broken during transport. So no new oven yet! The old one will have to do a little longer, although the air current facility is broken.

Over Thursday and Friday the rest of the houses were opened and taken into use. Water was installed in house 1 (kitchen/mess hall) and house 2 (lab). Everything went more or less smooth. Henrik and Kenny had everything in place.

Maria continued her busy work for GeoBasis and set up the methane chambers in the fen. Palle is busy collecting BioBasis data, and setting up ITEX chambers etc. as the little snow that is left is melting away. Asiaq crew, Jonathan and Malik, were working on the weather masts over some very long first two days, but on Saturday could celebrate completing the task. From now on, they can concentrate on their work along the river.

Dina is cooking meals and baking cakes to the high standard we have been accustomed to, and personally the fish (starter) and roast on Saturday was a high point! The dessert, 'æblekage', was sublime. We are spoiled, definitely!

Personally, I have been surprised of the few birds around. The last couple of days we have seen more and more arriving. Snow buntings were settled when I arrived. Dunlins, red knots and ringed plovers are beginning to sing, the long-tailed skuas and turnstones are beginning to defend their territories, while ravens and glaucous gulls are patrolling their patches. Still missing are sanderlings, which we only have had a few observations. Yesterday, Palle photographed a golden plover, which Maria and I thought we heard on Friday. Golden plovers have been recorded in most years, but rarely more than a few days. On my reconnaissance yesterday, I saw a single Arctic redpoll, but other than that, there is little to do for the birdman. I have been helping Palle and Maria with odd jobs while keeping watching the bird situation.

Thursday, we went to the site of the anchoring points for the coming bridge, and tried to secure the thread on the rods, that were drilled into the ground earlier. We hope our tightly wrapped cloth, protected by PVC tubing can take the worst of the wear and tear of a surge flooding should it arise. We do not expect one, though, as we have so little snow. More snow has gathered since Saturday evening, though, and most mountains have a thin powdery layer from 450 m up – on Cardiocerasbjerg even down to a few hundred meters. Clouds are still low, and it looks like the peaks of Zackenberg, Dombjerg, Palnatokebjerg, Aucellabjerg and Cardiocerasbjerg are still being covered with more snow. To which this new snow will have much of an impact will probably depend on the weather in the coming days.

Work is ongoing, and we look ahead to the new week with anticipation, excitement and enthusiasm! Bring it on!

Out Zackenberg

Jannik Hansen, BioBasis – on behalf of all of us here at Zackenberg this week.