

Diary 5 – 31 March 2012

Packing down – How did it go?

Daneborg

We are packing down all equipment and cleaning up the station. Yesterday we got all moorings out of the sea ice where they have been logging data for the last weeks. Some will be left and retrieved later this summer.

It can be a hard work to get the different equipment out of the sea ice that has reformed around the instruments. The polynya site at the mouth of the fjord it was relatively easy, as sea ice had only grown to a thickness of 20 cm. However, at the innermost stations more than a meter sea ice was formed above the instruments and several holes had to be drilled around each instruments and sea-ice had to be removed after being cut into smaller pieces by our 2 m ice saw. This makes people sweat even though temperatures are below -20 °C. In fact one soon get to know that when working with sea ice you either freeze or sweat – the “in-between-temperature” is an art to find.

It is a good team. During the last weeks people have got to know each other and found the best working routines and there is no need to discuss things as each one knows what to do. Some are downloading the last data, others are taking instruments apart. Another team is rinsing all equipment in freshwater and drying it off before packing. Saltwater and freezing conditions are challenges for all kind of instrumentations. But people have prepared well. We got what we came for. A wealth of data has been collected from the atmosphere, snow, ice and ocean.

Scientists are exchanging data and photos and the final backup is made. It is important to have data stored on different hard-drives, memory sticks and computers in case something should happen on the way back. Data are expensive. Due to the remoteness of this field site, logistic challenges are extensive and data are also collected for other laboratories around the world.

Beside the scientific work, we are in a very remote place and have to take care of everything ourselves. The space is limited and one soon gets to know each other well. Apart from the work, we have to maintain snowmobiles, airboats, water supply, cooking, repair of equipment etc. As water supply comes from melting snow, use of water is limited to the most important. This has caused most males to grow a beard and everyone looks forward to a shower when getting back to civilization. In fact it can be difficult in the daily work to distinguish males from females due to all the clothing, balaclava and snow goggles. But no female has yet grown a beard, though.

We have been very fortunate with the individual skills of the participants. Everyone supplement each other well. A lot of different things, not directly linked to science also have to work when you are doing fieldwork on thin ice during winter in NE Greenland. Several engines (skidoos, generators, airboats) give problems when temperatures drop below -30 °C. However, they all seem to obey our mechanic genius “Ivali” that,

among many other things, took an airboat engines apart in atoms and put it back with several homemade parts and got it up running within a day. It still works!

In a station such as this, it is also important that you can find what you need and especially when you discover you need a tool or a spare part because some equipment suddenly broke apart. Here "Egon" comes in handy, as he knows where everything is. He has numbered all hundreds of boxes and knows the whereabouts of each bolt and electronic device at the station the last 15 years.

On the ice, Kunuk is in his right element. He has been a great help and knows all the tricks that make things work, when travelling and working on thin ice. There are a lot of things one cannot study in a book, but are natural when you have grown up in Greenland spending a lot of time on sea ice.

Finally, great thanks go to Jørgen Skafte and Henrik Spanggård for opening up and closing down the station in Daneborg.

I feel very lucky – ones more – to have had the pleasure working with a great team in the north.

Søren Rysgaard

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