

## Diary 9 - 8 August, 2010.

### The regime of Horror

After the last newsletter focused on the lemmings and their fascinating life, this newsletter is again about the crooked and weird personalities running around Zackenberg Research Station during the last two weeks.

Starting in week 30, Claus was leaving after 2 month well spent here, with a catch well above the 700 insects. Impressive, not least considering his first 10 days spend here, where he didn't catch a single insect. Of course it helped, when I (the trusted member of the team pollinator-X) arrived, and we started catching around 50 insects per day. Unfortunately I wasn't up to my good start, and the catches started dropping, until we reached 6 insects per day again. But then Claus' time was up, and after a very turbulent trip to Ella Ø and Holms Bugt, where he left the airplane with two paperbacks as souvenirs, he headed home to Denmark. Just after Claus left us, the weather suddenly turned very great, leaving us with temperatures above the 10 °C and almost no wind. My catches of insects rose to 25 insect per day. Niels Martin "Niller baby" Schmidt was quick to see this and declared "It must be because the Claus-effect has been lifted".

On the same plane that took Claus from us, the two new logistics workers, Henrik Spanggård and Søren Kyed arrived ready to work and build the new and much needed storage-building. Michael and Uncle Jan then went to Daneborg, where they should unload the cargo ship that arrived from Denmark with building materials. When it arrived in Daneborg, it was greeted with an 11 kg bomb showing a 200 m high wall of fire. The captain though didn't seem impressed, and he greeted Daneborg with the message on the radio; "That was standard".

Ever since the ship arrived in Daneborg it has been like living in Kastrup Airport. Almost every day there are 4 cargo flights between Daneborg and Zackenberg with the materials needed for the new building.

In this week we said goodbye to a lot of people. After finishing building their exclosures, Niels Martin "Niller baby or Baby Niels" Schmidt and his assistant Professor Mads Forchhammer were leaving along with the botanist-team Christian Bay and Ditte Kristensen and also our Salix-team Claudia Baittinger and Noémie "The false Canadian" Boulanger-Lapointe. In exchange we got the veteran Henrik "Philip" Philipsen, returning to Zackenberg for his 14<sup>th</sup> season. Although educated as a ship's cook, he is here to help the logistics building the storage facility. Already on his first evening here he impressed all of us, with some impressive shooting, where he hit the "bear" on the shooting track four times in the head. Yes we all feel a little safer now, especially because none of us (only Michelle and Kirstine hit it one time) hit the "bear", where we should. Perhaps we all should take some more shooting lessons, because in the last couple of weeks there have been seen two polar bears up close out by the coast (40 km from here).

Although Philip is a ship's cook, he is not intervening in the kitchen, where our Chef Lone Riis is making one delicious dish after the other. I have especially been enjoying the last week, where in my opinion we have got a lot of Italian dishes. Perhaps it is because of Matteo Campioli who arrived together with Spanggård and Søren. He is here to study the seasonal growth of the woody shrubs of *Cassiope* (kantlyng) and *Salix* (pil). Although we haven't seen much of him, as he is working in the laboratory into the late hours, we have noticed that he was a very capable defender in our football match. But having in mind that he is from the area around Milano and having the AC Milan defender Alessandro Nesta as his favourite, perhaps it shouldn't have been so surprising. But having spent so much time in the laboratory is not good for him, because we could hear at one dinner that he is learning Danish in the laboratory, which he is sharing with the GeoBasis worker Kirstine Skov. He has been learning some Danish swear words, especially the word "Lort" (shit), is a word that has obviously been said many times in that specific laboratory. Well no wonder, when considering the reason: Kirstine has been working untiringly the last many weeks with almost none of the very expensive GeoBasis equipment working properly. And in the last week the "yellow submarine" to the small price of 150.000 DKK also gave problems, which

perhaps could have provoked all the "lort" words. Also having quite some problems with her equipment in the beginning of this season, Julie Falk's project have now been running smoothly after receiving new equipment from home. With only one week left of this 2.5 month long season I asked her about her thoughts of this season; "A good trial season, and now I'm looking forward to get data next year". This was her first season working on her Ph.D. project so she is going to return back to Zackenberg the following years, where she already now have spend almost 1 year in total.

The last two weeks has also been used to climb Aucellabjerg, Pernille Lærkedal Sørensen, Ditte and Christian made a scientific expedition where they followed the Zero Line. Likewise, Kirstine climbed the peak together with Michael; they had to go to the GeoBasis station halfway up anyway. Noémie and Mads got jealous and did also climb the peak during the following days. Noémie even put up a tent, so she could sleep up there, and working with her *Salix* the days after. Last but not least, Matteo also climbed Aucella, and to show the rest of us, he did it twice in one day. When he came down to receive our applause he told us that it was because he had forgotten his jacket on the top.

After so many people had climbed the Aucella peak, Michelle Skovgaard and I decided to try climbing the toughest of them all: Dombjerget. Leaving early in the morning and after crossing rivers and fighting the heat we reached the peak after 6.5 long hours, leaving us with despair of how to get home again. Luckily for us, the snow panels on the mountain where not entirely melted, so we could save us some time and energy by sliding down the snow panel. We returned again 23.00 after a long and tiring day. After climbing the peak of Dombjerget, Michelle have been back in the field almost every day measuring gas fluxes side by side with Pernille and musk oxen. But Michelle isn't finish climbing peaks, already now she is planning to climb both Aucella and Zackenberg.

Claus' descriptions of the Geobasis workers have been true so far. Almost every day we see Kirstine and Julie walk around with their backpacks. One of their longest walks was into Store Sødal, where they brought Jannik Hansen along. Apparently Jannik needed all the long walks he has been doing lately, because now he can fit the trousers he brought with him when he came. In near future he perhaps needs to wear a belt. But as he hates to wear a belt, Jannik is now trying to stop the weight loss and he is frequently seen in the kitchen looking for cake or jam. Thomas Berg has finished his lemming project and work for Biobasis and left us Friday, leaving Jannik as the new scientific leader. Soon after realizing, in the beginning of the week, that he would become our new respected leader, Jannik declared that this era in the future should be remembered as the "horror of Zackenberg". He also declared that all the pictures on the walls would be taken down and replaced by pictures of him. We now also have to hear the message on the radio "Love and respect our great leader" every hour of the day. He has also taking control of all the media up here, so the phone lines are being tapped, mails are being read and radios' controlled. But fortunately he hasn't been able to stop me writing this letter, stating how things really are up here. So if people are reading this please help us, and if no one hears from me again after this letter, please tell my family and girlfriend that I loved them.

Jesper Mosbacher

The only remaining member of Team Pollinator-X