

Ugebrev 10 - den 9. august 2009

You have never seen a blue sky if you haven't seen the sky over Zackenberg! Only the buildings constituting Zackenberg Research Station are bluer. May be we are too enthusiastic about the blue and may be we exaggerate a little, but we simply are so happy finally to have enjoyed days with neither rain nor fog. The Nysius Team (Jens and Gösta) are looking for *Nysius groenlandicus*, a small seed bug which is active only when the sun shines, so without sunshine, no bugs! Fortunately, we have been able to exploit the scattered periods of tolerable weather we have had during our first 10 days at Zackenberg, but Friday and Saturday this week were definitely the best. Until now we have collected bugs at 20 different sites and found a surprising pattern: Samples from sites close to the coastline consisted of both males and females in approximately equal numbers, whereas samples taken inland comprised only, or almost only, females. Up to now we have sexed more than 652 specimens from the inland sites, and only found four males! The preliminary conclusion of this finding is that *Nysius* has succeeded to do what feminists have been dreaming of, namely to render males superfluous. Males are not needed and therefore not produced. This applies to *Nysius* and might soon also apply to mankind, if we men do not find alternative ways of proving our usefulness.

Meanwhile, the logistic staffs at Zackenberg are still dominated by males. Thursday new supplies were flown in with the twin otter, allowing Spanggård and Tower an opportunity to demonstrate that moving around with heavy cargo still is a job for real men (though it was noted that Lone (our highly respected cook) was asked to assist, which she did). Lone took advantage of the new provisions by serving excellent Icelandic lamb.

Tuesday was the usual come-and-leave day. Six left (Jannik from the BioBasis programme, Thomas and Gergely from the Finnish parasitoid/host project, Clemens from the Austrian Gloria project, and Phillip from the logistics) while five arrived (Anders and Sebrina from a project monitoring the effects of climatic changes on primary production, Harald from the Gloria project, and the glaciologists Michele and Signe). The latter two continued the following day by helicopter to be dropped on the A.P. Olsen glacier. After a hard night's work in wet snow, the helicopter brought them back to Zackenberg where they spent most of the day sleeping.

Crossing of Zackenbergelven has now been forbidden due to the danger. The last heroic ones to cross were Sonja and Lars. Both survived miraculously. In the future, trafficking between East and West Zackenberg will take place via the "Ferry". Apart from recording biological sightings, Lars is the station's eye to the surroundings, preventing unauthorized trespassing into forbidden sectors – a task performed with great authority.

Anders and his girls (Sara and Sebrina) are doing field work using sophisticated equipment. They are now three to do the same work as Sara managed alone before. The Austrian team, which now consists of Siegrun, Christian and Harald, demonstrates that they are real Austrians by climbing all mountains that incidentally block the way to their field plots. Friday they persuaded Signe to follow them to the summit of Aucellabjerg though Jens and Gösta had given her a much better offer, namely to remain in the valley where Danes are much better adapted to move around. Saturday Julie and Tower repeated the deed of climbing Aucellabjerg, but at the time of this newsletter we don't know whether they actually reached the summit.

We are very impressed by the high standard of the research station and the excellent comfort offered to the scientists in terms of heated buildings and warm showers. However, we wonder why the energy supply is not based on sustainable energy, at least partly. Taking the cost of flying in fuel, it would be obvious to fit the station with sun panels. Hydroelectricity might also be an option.

This finishes our weekly newsletter from Zackenberg. At the moment the sky is blue, the sun is shining behind Zackenbergfjeldet, the weather forecast is optimistic and the Greenlandic and Danish flags are blowing together in the wind as a good illustration of the friendship between our two nations.

Jens and Gösta (The *Nysius* Team)