



(March 22nd to 23rd)

Sunday, March 22nd

Location: Eureka – Environment Canada Weather Station

Outside Temperature: -38°C

Party travelling to Ice Camp at Ward Hunt Island via Ottawa-Iqaluit-Resolute-Alert-and finally Eureka:

Alain Belzile (NRCAN – Canadian Centre for Remote Sensing)

John Mercuri (DFO - CHS C&A)

George Schlagintweit (DFO - CHS Pacific and author of this Update)

Christian Marcussen (Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland))

Henriette Skourup (National Space Institute - Denmark)

Morten Solvsten (Danish Hydrographic Service)

Uni Bull (Danish Hydrographic Service)

Henrik Anger (Danish Hydrographic Service)

Christian Marcussen and I had a brief discussion via the satellite phone with Jon Biggar¹ this morning, to learn that the ice camp at Ward Hunt Island was experiencing a blizzard and that there would be no flights into camp at least until tomorrow. We will continue to ‘hurry up and wait’.

Al Gaudet, Manager at the Eureka Weather Station was a fantastic host who made us feel right at home. The facility is very modern. Fortunately, we had a fairly good idea what we were getting into, so we made sure to enjoy our last hockey game on the large, flat-screen TV as well as the modern bathroom amenities (flushing toilets, hot showers, running water). One of the residents took us for a drive up to the airstrip in order to acquaint us with the local wildlife; a pack of approximately 16 wolves that were in no hurry to take their leave.



¹ Hydrographer in Charge, CHS Central & Arctic Region



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Part of the local wolf pack, often seen in the Eureka vicinity

Monday, March 23rd

Outside Temperature: -43°C (with Wind Chill: -56°C)

It had never really occurred to me before, but life in the Arctic in the winter must be similar to life in a pressurized chamber under the sea. If you want to go ‘out’, you need to get suited up. You will not last very long if you don’t. One difference - I am certain - is that Arctic winter clothing is a lot heavier than SCUBA gear. And unlike with SCUBA gear, it is advisable to go to the washroom *before* you get suited up.

At 09:15 we got the call to get ready for our flight to the ice camp at Ward Hunt Island. John M., Alain B., Henriette S. and I were to make the trip in a DC3² on skis, along with about 14 barrels of Jet-B aircraft fuel. (There was a mix-up with the shipment of Arctic weather gear for the remaining Danes, so they were forced to remain in Eureka to endure a few more hot showers before their parkas arrive on a flight up from Resolute Bay.) To get to your seat aboard the plane, you must clamber over several barrels of fuel and other cargo; a procedure that is difficult to do with any grace. Included in our freight were three propane-fired incinerating toilets – more to follow on this subject once we know what we are dealing with. Not sure I *want* to know. As the engines were beginning to sputter and then roar, the burly ‘flight attendant’ went through the usual safety briefing regarding emergency exits, and other such matters that we all eagerly paid attention to. I had to chuckle to myself when he added that this was a non-smoking flight. Considering the amount of Jet-B on board, I cannot imagine a craving for a cigarette being so intense, that one would ... *risk it* ... by lighting a match on that plane. ‘Smoking is not good for you’ would take on a whole new meaning.



² All fixed-wing aircraft servicing the camp are with Kenn Borek Air



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The flight from Eureka to Ward Hunt Island took about an hour and a half. The rugged terrain in this northern portion of Ellesmere Island is absolutely spectacular. Jagged, wind-swept peaks rise above numerous winding glaciers, both which cascade into the frozen sea. After circling over our future residence, we landed on a temporary ‘ski-way’ that will remain in use until our actual airstrip is completed. The DC3 then powered its way across the hard packed snow for about a mile before shutting down.

When we landed in Alert on Saturday, we were formally greeted as we disembarked the plane by the CO of the military base; when we disembarked the plane at the ice camp, we received the same courtesy by Rudy Cutillo³. Nice touch. I didn’t know it was Rudy at the time however, because when the temperature is -40°C or colder, you never know who anybody is. Just frost-covered figures in big bulky parkas. And just to confuse you a little more, almost all of the parkas are exactly the same.

Both John Mercuri and I were relieved to learn that we would be sharing a tent with the camp’s two Inuit Wildlife Monitors Tom Kiguktak and Randy Pigamini. Apparently, they don’t snore either, which is very good news. After dumping our gear in our tent, we were immediately immersed in the all-consuming chores that come with getting the camp operational. With the addition of us four, the camp now has 17 occupants. By the end of the day, the four contractors from Discovery Mines (hired for camp set-up) finished setting-up the last tent – to become the workshop for the helicopter engineers. The toilet installations were also a priority, as one can probably imagine.



Evening at the Ward Hunt Ice Camp (latitude: 83° 05’ 50” longitude: 74° 09’ 25”

³ CHS Central & Arctic Region