



OCEANWIDE
EXPEDITIONS

Expedition Log North Spitsbergen

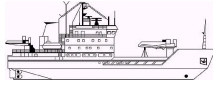
28th June – 5th July 2006

M/V Grigoriy Mikheev

ГРИГОРИЙ МИХЕЕВ



The *Grigoriy Mikheev* was built in 1990 in Finland and was designed as an ice strengthened hydrographical vessel. Of steel construction, measuring 65,3m (210 ft) long, 12.7m (42 ft) wide, with a displacement of 2,000 tons, she is ideal for the Polar Regions. This former research vessel of the Hydrographical Department of Russia in St. Petersburg is manned by an enthusiastic Russian crew so we know that we are in extremely capable hands. During the northern winter she cruises the water of the Antarctic Peninsula.



With

**Captain – Aleksandr Pruss
and his Russian Crew of 18**

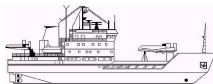
including

1st Mate - Zodiac Driver: Andrey Postnikov
2nd Mate - Zodiac Driver: Valeriy Kovalev
3rd Mate - Zodiac Driver: Andrey Ivanov
Radio Engineer - Zodiac Driver: Roman Aleksakhin
Able Seaman - Zodiac Driver: Ruslan Kuzmenko
Able Seaman - Zodiac Driver: Igor Voyko
Cabin Stewardess: Alina Zurikhina
Cabin Stewardess: Marina Tattar
Dining Room Stewardess: Lyudmila Santimova
Dining Room Stewardess: Nataliya Dudinskaya

and

Expedition Leader: Rolf Stange (Germany)
Guide/Lecturer: Delphine Aurès (France)
Guide/Lecturer: Troels Jacobsen (Denmark)
Hotel Manager: Jan de Ceuster (Belgium)
Head Chef: Nathan Russ (New Zealand)
Sous Chef: Beverley Howlett (UK)
Ship's Physician: Dr. Andi Howes (New Zealand)
Wildwings escort: Tony Marr (UK)
Kontiki Tours escort: Markku Lappalainen (Finland)

**And 46 of us from Australia, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, New Zealand,
South Africa, Sweden, UK, and USA**



28th June 2006 – Longyearbyen

Position at 17.00: 78°14' N / 15°39' E

Air temperature: 8°C, light westerly, cloudy.

Most of us arrived in Svalbard by plane in the afternoon. Our expedition staff picked us all up in the airport and took us by bus to downtown Longyearbyen for a couple of hours of exploration of this high arctic metropolis. The birdwatchers wasted no time pondering around town but went straight out on their first hours of bird watching of the day.

The ship was lying alongside the pier when we arrived for boarding at 16.00 and everybody acquainted themselves with their new home for the next seven days. We also met our fellow travellers and our Expedition Leader, Rolf Stange, for an introduction to the rest of the staff. The ship set sail at 19.00 and most were on deck to see the departure and most also got a nice look at the beautiful white Ivory Gull that circled the ship a few times. Just after leaving we underwent the compulsory and important lifeboat drill; warm clothes, bright orange life jackets and then up to the lifeboats. Our officers and guides explained the procedure. We decided right then that we would better never have to use those life-boats in earnest. Having successfully completed the drill we settled down for dinner. Many of us enjoyed the views in the early evening as we headed out of the massive Isfjord and north on the west side of mountainous Prins Karls Forland.

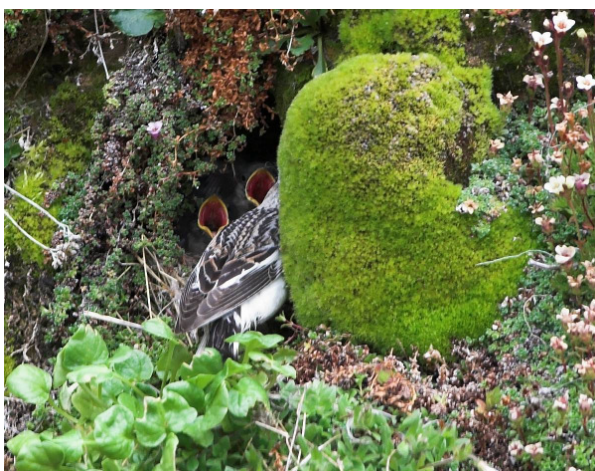
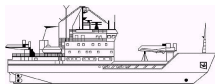


29th June 2006 – Krossfjord: Fjortende Julibukta, Kongsfjord: Ny Ålesund and Kongsvegen glacier

Position at 06.45: 78°58' N / 10°35' E

Air temperature: 8°C, calm, overcast.

The morning wake up call came late in the morning at 7.00. Our good ship *Grigoriy Mikheev* was heading into Kongsfjorden (Kings Bay) where we were to visit the northern most town in the world: Ny Ålesund at 78°56' N. In the morning however, we made our first landing in the adjacent Krossfjord in a bay called Fjortende Julibukta (14th of July Bay), named in honour of the French National Day by an Expedition by the Duke of Monaco in the early 20th Century. Here we started out with a bit of zodiac cruising along a small but very nice cliff inhabited by a small bird colony. There are much larger bird colonies in Svalbard than here, but it is one of the very few places this far north where one can find the Razorbill nesting. Also on the upper part of the cliffs, we saw puffins, which are also not very numerous so far to the north. Plenty of Brünnichs Guillemots, Barnacle Geese and Glaucous Gulls were also to be seen here. Further into the bay we landed below a much larger and higher bird cliff (mostly Brünnichs Guillemot and Kittiwakes), which had given nutrition enough for a multitude of flora to grow here. For Svalbard standards this is like a tropical



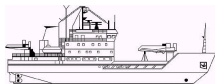
rainforest! Several Snow Buntings were curiously following every move we made among the great many species of mosses, lichens, grasses, etc. They also nested in “The Hanging Gardens” as our expedition team called a small vertical rock with fascinating flora. At least four small chicks were constantly hungry and both parents worked overtime to keep them fed. That was great for us as we could stand a relatively short distance and watch the spectacle. Up the hill eight Svalbard Reindeer were milling around and high up close to the bird colony an Arctic Fox on the prowl was spotted. Boarding the zodiacs again our guides had already spotted a few Bearded Seals on ice floes in the bay.

That was to be a great close encounter with this the second largest seal in the Arctic. Amazingly enough they did not seem to want to leave their floes and carefully we managed to get very close to two of them. We also zodiac cruised along Fjortende Julibreen (bre=glacier) which despite the rain was very impressive. This was not the last great glacier of the day, but first we paid Ny Ålesund a visit.

Ny Ålesund is a small community consisting of scientists from all over the world who conduct a variety of research in the fields of atmospheric studies, glaciology, biology etc. A short walk took us into the centre of this historic village passing several Barnacle Geese. The birders went on a short tour around town and took particular interest in the small pond near the small harbour. Here they saw one of the great prizes of the high arctic: The Grey Phalarope female in full breeding plumage. Also numerous



Common Eiders with small chicks was seen in and around the pond along with a few Long Tailed Ducks. There was also an interesting little museum about the early days of Ny Ålesund, when coal mining determined everything here. Life must have been hard for the miners in these harsh conditions; work was usually carried out in a kneeling position deep under the surface. The museum also explained all the modern research conducted from this place. We headed for the lattice mast erected in the early part of the 20th century by the intrepid explorers Amundsen and Nobile, who tried to reach the North Pole by a dirigible airship in 1926 and 1928. The mast is only a few hundred meters from the settlement but our expedition staff insisted that everybody stayed close to the rifle in case of an unwanted Polar Bear encounter. Luckily there were no polar bears around and we could enjoy the stunning scenery and Rolfs in depth talk about the historic perspectives of polar exploration involving Ny Ålesund. After the first history lecture of the trip we took a round trip along the tundra before heading back to town. Ny Ålesund also has a nice little shop along with the northern most post office in the world (so they claim). We more or less invaded the shop surprising



the shopkeeper with the unbelievable numbers of socks that we purchased. Well – they are really fantastic socks so why not!

After dinner we headed deeper inside Kongsfjorden in order to explore the impressive Kongsvegen glacier. Our captain took the ship very close the southern glacier front giving us the best possible view. Several larger icebergs, which had recently calved from the glacier, could be seen. Normally quite unusual phenomena here in Svalbard as there are no great iceberg producing glaciers here. Beautiful blue “bergy-bits” were shining as the sun just broke the ever present rain clouds. Just as the captain had brought the ship about and started sailing out a large piece of ice calved just next to the ship. The noise, splash, and waves gave an impressive hint of the enormous forces nature works with. After this great experience the ship headed towards the fjord entrance and to the north.

30th June 2006 – Møffen, Liefdefjord: Andøyan, Texas Bar, Monacobreen

Position at 06.30: 80°00' N / 14°29' E

Air temperature: 7°C, calm, cloudy.

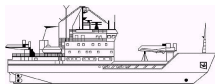
The morning wake-up call came relatively early at 6.00 o'clock as we were approaching Møffen island at 80°N. Møffen is a very famous island, possibly named after the Dutch term of disapproving Germans!? Now it is a natural reserve with a substantial number of Walrus hauled out throughout the ice free season and access is restricted to the winter time between 15 May and 15 September. However, we are allowed to move into 300 meters distance and our captain skilfully did so. We got a really good overview of the southern part of the island and saw up towards 150 Walrus in groups here and there along with quite a few in the water near the beach. On top of that, two Polar Bears could be seen slightly inland; one sleeping throughout our stay and one just briefly standing up and noting our presence before it also went back to sleep. One lucky bird watcher also

got a quick look at an otherwise illusive Sabine's Gull. What a great way to start the day!

During breakfast the *Mikheev* continued south into the Woodfjord/Liefdefjord and here things again started to heat up. First, what turned out to be a phantom bear (dirty snow) was pursued on the great tundra of Rensdyrflya (Reindeer Plain) on the western side of the Fjord. Reindeers were also seen there. The second Polar Bear call came shortly after and this time it was a true living bear walking towards the coastline. While watching the bear on land a Minke Whale appeared close to the ship.

Rolf then made a quick decision and had the zodiac launched for the morning excursion now as there was a bear on shore. We carefully proceeded towards the point where we last saw the bear from the ship but as soon as we got there a fourth bear of the day was spotted on a close by small





island. We managed to get within 100 meters of the bear while it was scavenging the shoreline for birds nests. Indeed, it suddenly stopped and went down to the waters edge and just then a female Eider Duck flew away. The nest was immediately raided and the bear walked on.

We also decided it was time to leave it alone and especially after we saw it swimming south towards another small island. We continued the zodiac cruise towards the small group of islands called Andøyane only a few miles away in our search for more wildlife and a place to land. Yet again we were really lucky as two King Eiders were spotted. We even managed to get relatively close. Grey Phalaropes were also spotted all around the islands. Eventually we came to a suitable island which was not inhabited by any white furry creatures. Here we made a landing on the reddish rocks of the approx. 350 mio. years old (Devonian) "Old Red" sediment layers, which can also be found at other places around the world such as East Greenland and Scotland. The Duck Islands are named appropriately as we saw several Common Eiders around the island along with some already looted nests. The sun had come out and with the very calm weather the walk on the tundra was almost warm. Tony and Markky, together with Rolf who had the compulsory rifle, took the birders around the beach whereas Delphine took the leisurely botany interested around as well. Troels' group managed to climb the summit of the island with a height of at least 10 meters above water level. Then the trekking had to stop as we suddenly realised that there were Common Eiders and Arctic terns nesting on the tundra. Troels decided that any further progress would be avoided when so many birds apparently were nesting here.

The plant life was also thriving on this small island. Beside the numerous lichens and mosses of different colours, flowering species were in full bloom and included Spider Plants, Bog Saxifrage, Arctic Poppy and Woolly Lousewort. We all had a great landing at the lush tundra enjoying all that nature can offer here in the high arctic.

After returning to the ship we headed deeper into the Liefdefjord where we landed at the relatively recent trappers hut "*Texas Bar*"! For reasons not meant for lesser men to understand, it is named after the US state of Texas by the Norwegian trapper who built it. Here we enjoyed a really good walk up the hills to see the fantastic view over the fjord and the close by glacier tongue. Some took



it to the extreme joining Rolf on a true mountain climb with a spectacular view and great exercise as a result. Here, a ptarmigan was spotted at only seven meters distance. The leisurely lot went in moderate pace up the low hills and enjoyed the scenery and wildlife from there. Here an Arctic Fox was spotted high on the mountain side. Initially, the last we saw of it was when it was chased to the other side of a ridge by an Arctic Skua, but as the last lot were about to return to the beach it came back

with a mouthful of something. Apparently it was successful in its venture to the other side.

During the fox-spotting Tony came upon a strange looking Purple Sandpiper that may in fact have been a very rare Rock Sandpiper which normally nest in the Far East. Some of the most dedicated birders went back to the "crime scene" to look for it again but to no avail.



All back on board, the captain rammed the fast ice and went a few hundred meters closer to the magnificent Monaco Glacier than the open water allowed. What a spectacle when the ship cut its way through the 40-50 cm thick ice cover! Fast ice normally also means seals and we were not to be disappointed. Several seals, including one Ringed Seal, were spotted on the fast ice along with Polar Bear number five and six of the day! Also, several Ivory Gulls were flying around the ship presenting themselves from their best side. Dinner was scheduled as a “surprise dinner” and consisted of a BBQ on the front deck with complementary entertainment from two of our Russian friends. Belly dancing and Elvis impressions in the high artic!

The ship left the ice again in the evening heading north and the party continued in the bar to the early morning hours. What a fantastic day it had been!

1st July 2006 – Hinlopen Strait: Alkefjellet, Wilhelmøya and Bråsvellbreen

Position at 06.45: 79°45' N / 18°04' E

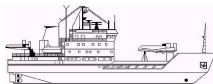
Air temperature: 2°C, light breeze, cloudy.



In the morning the ship was still steaming south through the Hinlopen Strait in order to reach the famous bird cliff Alkefjellet south of the Lomfjorden. Here, some 100.000 Brünnichs Guillemots nest among the towering basalt pillars.

Overnight the weather had turned a bit to the worse and the morning offered low cloud. This did, however, not deter us from a zodiac cruise along this magnificent bird cliff. It is indeed a fantastic place to zodiac cruise as the water is deep right up to the sheer cliff face and the birds in places nest only a few meters above sea level. Not only Brünnichs Guillemots nest here. The Glaucous Gulls and Kittywakes are also plentiful here, although obviously not in such great numbers. The Glaucous Gull is one of the largest predatory/scavenging birds in the arctic, and here they live the good life with plenty of prey around. Alkefjellet however, has more than wildlife to offer. The spectacular basalt columns upon which the birds nest is part of an intrusion of basalt in the otherwise

limestone rock. This intrusion occurred 150-100 million of years ago and has now left the interface between the two rock types almost knife sharp as a text book example of the incredible forces of



nature. After about 1½ hours cruising we headed back to the ship wet and somewhat cold but none of the less content with the morning's experience.

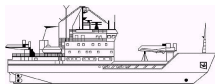
We came back to the ship relatively early and before lunch Troels gave a lecture entitled *The Polar Bear*.



During lunch we steamed southwest towards Wilhelmøya in the south western part of Hinlopen Strait in the hope of finding some of the otherwise scarce pack ice. A quite thick fog came upon us when leaving Alkefjellet and not until we reached Wilhelmøya the fog lifted somewhat. Here we also found what we were looking for: a bit of ice, seals and Polar Bears! Once again our captain carefully took the *Mikheev* close to a Bearded Seal on the ice before reaching some fast ice in the small Binnebukta on the west side of Wilhelmøya. Close to the

shore on the ice we found a mother bear with two small cubs sleeping. They were quite difficult to see at first, and doubt was whether there were one or two cubs. The bay is very shallow which meant that the ship could go not further and hence we launched the zodiacs once again for a gamble on the bears. Indeed we got somewhat closer and got a pretty good look but it was not until two Reindeer came and disturbed the sleeping family that they bothered getting up and about. The Reindeer fled and the mother took her cubs back to land and sat in the snow where she suckled her two cubs. What an outstanding experience! We stayed for a bit and then headed down the coast to make a very short landing for those interested. Here, we saw some really nice tracks of the little family in the mud and did ours to keep Svalbard clean as we recovered a big part of an old fishing trawl from the beach.

During the late afternoon we sailed eastwards through the few remaining bits of pack ice towards the southern parts of Nordaustlandet, the second largest island in the archipelago. Most of the island of Nordaustlandet is covered by the largest glacier in Europe (~8400 km²) and the entire southern part is one large glacier front terminating in the sea (~180 km). It is also one of the only glaciers in Svalbard with a positive mass balance, which means that in later years it has grown slightly in size (despite a slowly retreating position of the glacier front as it is becoming thicker). Our captain once again showed his great skill as he approached the front to within only 1 m (!) or so of the ice. Melt water waterfalls where everywhere and at once stage we could touch the water of the fall from the bow of the ship; a sensational experience for all!



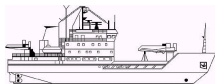
2nd July 2006 – Storøya and Kvitøya

Position at 07.30: 80°10' N / 28°40' E

Air temperature: 1°C, fresh breeze, fog.



Pure adventure! The day started in the fog in the far north east corner of the archipelago near Storøya (Large Island). Rolf had presented his daring and adventurous plan the day before to everybody's delight. Getting this far to the north east is extremely unusual for this time of year and we may well have been the first ever expedition cruise ship to venture out here that early in the season. A stiff breeze from the southeast on top of the fog had us worry slightly for the day ahead but exactly as the day before, the fog lifted and blue sky appeared right when we boarded the zodiacs. Storøya, which is not very large at all, is an almost completely barren high arctic island known for its high occurrence of Polar Bears and a chance to see Walrus hauled out on land. We were certainly not to be disappointed as we dressed up in all the gear we had and headed out. From the ship one bear had already been spotted and shortly after leaving another two were spotted; one of which was quite close to the waters edge. While looking at the bear on the beach we suddenly spotted Walrus hauled out on a small rock just off shore. It is rather unusual to see them on a rock like that, but it did make a lot of sense from a Walrus' perspective. First of all, the island itself was infested with bears and secondly there were at least two Walrus mothers with small calves on the tiny island. While Polar Bears normally cannot deal with adult Walrus, they do hunt and kill calves whenever they can. Hauling out just off shore at least gave a bit of natural protection. Just as we looked at the Walrus, Tony Marr saw a swimming mother bear with two cubs approaching a point not far away. The mother made it to shore and headed slowly up the beach disturbing endless numbers of nesting Arctic Terns. We slowly followed her and the cubs around the point and eventually got a pretty good look at them. Unwilling to disturb them too much, we headed a bit down the coast to find a suitable landing site. No long hike was planned due to the many bears here, but none of the less Rolf thought it nice to be able to set foot on the island. Rolf found a nice beach to land on and headed in first leaving everybody in the zodiac while going up the low dike to check for bears. Already before the landing a large number of terns had suddenly taken off simultaneously making it quite likely that one of the white furry ones was in there somewhere. This was also the case. Rolf came back and reported that a bear was only about 800 meters from the beach but those



who wanted to could just step on the island for a few minutes. The bear did not show itself on the beach and we could return to the ship after a very eventful morning.

During lunch we continued Rolfs great plan of circumnavigating Nordaustlandet and headed to the most remote and desolate island of all Svalbard: Kvitøya (White Island). The fog was still all around us the entire afternoon but a bit of resting was appreciated after such eventful past days. Arriving at Kvitøya it was still quite foggy but we could see the island and make out Polar Bear no. 17 of the trip. This island is some 400 meters high and covers app. 700 km² and the vast majority of it is covered by a huge icecap. It was not entirely easy to find a landing site for the zodiacs and Rolf



decided to take a short scout trip to find a good place to land and take a careful look after our furry friends. Kvitøya is indeed a place really far away from absolutely everything. The impressions are difficult to describe as everything is so alien to just about anything else on planet earth. It turned out that we unfortunately had not been the first to land here indicated by very recent footprints at the landing site. We had to cross a few snowfields loaded with melt water before reaching the memorial for the Andrée expedition just next to their camp

site and the former grave of Strindberg, who is now buried with the two other members in Stockholm. In what was once their make shift hut, there now was a few recent remains of a dead Polar Bear including a large skull. Most of their campsite was still covered in snow but the bundle of rock making out Strindbergs grave was just visible and the monument itself was free of snow. The island seems to be void of life but in fact it is not so at all. Several species of birds nest here: Arctic terns in particular, and we saw both Red Throated Diver, Purple Sandpiper, Ivory Gull, Kittywakes, Arctic-, and Pomarine Skua and to the astonishment of all, two Arctic Foxes running around the island. Amazing how they can find anything to eat out here!

While ashore we could hardly make out the great icecap that covers almost the entire island. The fog had the same colour as the ice and presented us with a “white out” where contours are completely washed out and impossible to distinguish. However, we did get a look at the impressive front of the northern parts of the island in the evening after dinner as the ship cruised past dramatic scenery of the glacier front partly covered in cloud and fog and partly in sunshine. Several Walrus was also spotted in the water on the way. Finally arriving at the northern most tip of Kvitøya, our captain turned the ship towards the northwest and headed for the ice, which we planned to see the following day.

The day was not yet over as Troels had a late night lecture on *The History and Exploration* of Svalbard with emphasis on the Andrée expedition.

3rd June 2006 – The Polar pack ice

Position at 08.00: 81°25' N / 24°39' E

Air temperature: 2°C, strong breeze, overcast.

During the night the *Mikheev* headed northwest in search of the Polar pack ice, this was expected to be quite far to the north. Not until after breakfast at around 9.15 and a position of 81°25'N / 24°39'E we entered a nice line of ice packed together by the rather strong southerly wind. Ice is



always a fascinating adventure to go through and our captain headed straight into it. At 10.00 o'clock Rolf made an interesting announcement as we headed north of 81°35'N, which is the northern most point of the ships printed charts. Only a few minutes later we ventures across the 200 meter depth curve and out of the ships electronic charts indicating the end of the European continent and the beginning of the Polar Basin. Yes – we were truly far out in nowhere!



An hour or so before lunch we finally realized that 82°N was a realistic possibility. We still had surprisingly open water with only loose pack ice in between. Among the few Harp Seals and Ringed Seals we had a couple of notable sightings of birds worth mentioning here: Puffins at 81°48'N and a Long Tailed Skua at 81°53'N. Northern Fulmar followed us all the way as well as the Black Guillemots and Kittywakes.

Just before 13.00 hrs we arrived at the solid Polar pack ice at precisely 82°00.333'N only 893 km from the North Pole. Here the ship could go no further. Our most excellent hotel manager

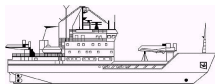


Jan had provided hot chocolate with rum on the front deck for a little toast. The captain joined in and received a proper applause for his and his great crew's hard work to get us there. Suddenly a bit of commotion stirred the deck at the gangway as Rolf and the captain had stepped on to the ice. To our great surprise the otherwise very sane Rolf took of his clothes and jumped in a small lead in the ice! He didn't even look particularly cold as he got back on the ship although trustworthy sources reportedly saw him rush to the sauna.

During lunch we once again headed south after this very extraordinary feat. It is not very often that a ship of this type can reach this sort of latitude.

After lunch we headed southwest again in an attempt to find some more pack ice slightly closer to our next destination. In the meantime Rolf held a lecture on *Ice* in all its shapes and forms. Just as we left the ice and headed into a gale force wind with a rather heavy swell two of our fellow travellers Susan and Tim saw a last minute Polar Bear in a dense ice-field about half a mile distant. The ship turned once again into the ice and we approached the bear slowly. It appeared to be eating something and was not particularly timid about presence. We closed in to less than 100 m and got an





excellent look. Ivory Gulls were also flying about taking part in the strange looking meal. Just as the bear started walking off a dense fog encircled us once again. *Mikheev* ventured out into the swell once again and set course southwest. In the afternoon Jan opened his “ship shop” and many took a deserved rest feeling perhaps the effects of the movement.

4th June 2006 – Northwest Spitsbergen: Fuglesangen and Amsterdamøya

Position at 07.30: 80°10' N / 13°00' E

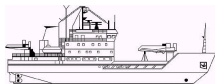
Air temperature: 7°C, breeze, scattered cloud



We had ventured very far to the north the previous day and hence it was not until 9.45 that we arrived to the northwest corner of Spitsbergen, where the first landing of the day was planned. The previous day's rather bad weather had been exchanged with radiant sunshine. The island of Fuglsangen (Birdsong Island) is inhabited by a quite large colony of Little Auks that are relatively easy to approach. The landing is somewhat tricky with large slippery rocks and boulders but just off the beach large

boulders with mosses and lichens were predominant making walking easier. We crossed the southeast corner of the island and came to a scree slope where the birds nest in small crevasses among the rocks. The Little Auk (or Dove Kie) is the most numerous species of bird in the Arctic and it has been suggested that it is one of the most numerous in the world. Here, among the boulders in the sunshine they flew all around hesitating to settle down. The first part of the colony can be accessed from both sides by climbing carefully up each side of the well define colony. Staying very quite just at the edge the birds usually settle down quickly and quite close. We needed a bit more patience this time as they seemed to hesitate settling down. Another part of the colony behind us also had circling birds all around without them settling quickly, which had our guides believe that it had little to do with our presence. After a while sunbathing and enjoying the view the patient birdwatchers (most of us in fact) finally got a good look at the Little Auks. Quite a number of birds landed near their nests close to us on both sides of the colony. The rest of us just had a great couple of hours of wonderful sunshine with a brilliant view of the northwest islands, and Fuglefjord (Bird Fjord) with its great glacier in the back. One or two even took a bit of a snooze.

During a well-deserved lunch the *Mikheev* proceeded further to the southwest for our afternoon landing. Amsterdamøya is a very famous place in Svalbard history as it was the home of the largest whaling stations of the arctic in the 17th century. The Dutch blubber ovens now surrounded by lots of drift wood originating from Siberia allowed only a vague idea about what life might have been like here in the early days. The principal quarry of the whalers was the Greenland or Bowhead Whale, which was hunted to the verge of extinction and has not since recovered in numbers. It is in the family of the Right Whales, as they were the right one to pursue, being a slow-moving animal,



which could be approached closely. Whalers worked from quite small sailing ships and made voyages of several years. The actual pursuit and capture of the whales was accomplished from rowing boats carrying about six men. Once the boat had managed to approach within a few meters of a gentle giant hand harpoons were thrown into its body, and when the whale was finally exhausted it was killed with hand lances. The Bowhead whales were towed back to camp, where the oil and the baleen were extracted. Now only the few remains of this once important economic society remains. We pondered around the site trying to imagine how the place must have been like almost 400 years ago as Rolf told the story of the whalers. After the history class we split into three groups for the last time of the trip. Rolf went walking a bit inland taking a last look at the now familiar tundra, and Delphine took the keen birders around a small melt water lagoon to look for waders and other birds to add to the list. A few species such as Sanderling, Dunlin, Turnstone, and Great Skuas were all seen on that walk. Troels took a few leisurely walkers around the beach enjoying the sunshine. All groups returned to the zodiacs with rather large quantities of garbage found on the beach and on the tundra. We cannot save the world from garbage thrown in the sea many thousands of miles away, but we can try and make the place a bit cleaner for the good of the wildlife.

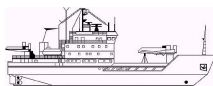


Leaving Amsterdamøya through the very narrow Dansk Gattet (Danish Strait) the birders got a last extraordinary sighting for their list. A Northern Gannet must have taken a wrong turn somewhere and ended up here in the far north. Nothing is normal this year....

5th July 2006 – Loneyarbyen

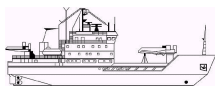
Position at 09.00: 78°14' N / 15°39' E

Everybody left the ship at 9 am and headed to town to do the last shopping before the afternoon flight. The last impressions of this great experience had yet to be really comprehended for most. It is always sad to leave after a good experience but the memories will live on.



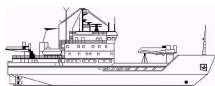
1. Fjortende Julibukta
2. Ny Ålesund
3. Kongsvegen
4. Moffen
5. Andøyane
6. Texas Bar
7. Monacobreen
8. Alkefjellet

9. Bjørnsund/Wilhelmøya
10. Bråsvellbreen
11. Storøya
12. Kvitøya
13. Ice / 82°N/23°W
14. Fuglesangen
15. Smeerenburg



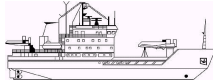
Species list for North Spitsbergen aboard Grigoriy Mikheev 28 June – 5 July 2006

Common English Name	Latin name
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>
Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Great Skua	<i>Catharacta skua</i>
Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
Long-tailed Skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudis</i>
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
Ivory Gull	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>
Sabine's Gull	<i>Larus sabini</i>
Black-legged kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Brunnich's Guillemot	<i>Uria lomvia</i>
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>
Svalbard Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus mutus hyperboreus</i>
Minke whale	<i>Balaenoptera acurostrata</i>
Walrus	<i>Odobenus rosmarus</i>
Bearded Seal	<i>Erignathus barbatus</i>
Ringed Seal	<i>Phoca hispida</i>
Harp Seal	<i>Phoca groenlandica</i>
Polar Bear	<i>Ursus maritimus</i>
Arctic Fox	<i>Alopex lagopus</i>
Svalbard Reindeer	<i>Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus</i>



Some of the flowering plants species observed during the trip

Common name	Latin name
Polar Willow	<i>Salix polaris</i>
Net-leaved willow	<i>Salix reticulata</i>
Snow Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus nivalis</i>
Arctic Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus hyperboreus</i>
Sulphur-coloured Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus sulphureus</i>
Lobe leaved buttercup	<i>Ranunculus affinis</i>
Mountain Avens	<i>Dryas octopetala</i>
Hawkweed-leaved Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga hieracifolia</i>
Purple Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga oppositifolia</i>
Alpine Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga nivalis</i>
Bog Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>
Drooping Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga cernua</i>
Tufted Saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga cespitosa</i>
Polar stoloniferous saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga platysepala</i>
Svalbard Poppy	<i>Papaver dahlianum</i>
Viviparous Knotweed	<i>Polygonum viviparum</i>
Mountain Sorrel	<i>Oxyria digyna</i>
Alpine Sandwore	<i>Minuartia rubella</i>
Moss Campion	<i>Silene acaulis</i>
White Arctic Bell-heather	<i>Cassiope tetragona</i>
Polar Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum arcticum</i>
Hairy Lousewort	<i>Pedicularis hirsute</i>
Wolly Lousewort	<i>Pedicularis dasyantha</i>
Arctic Cotton-grass	<i>Eriophorum scheuchzeri</i>
Nodding Lychnis	<i>Silene wahlbergella</i>
Scurvy-Grass	<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>
Arctic Mouse-Ear Chickweed	<i>Cerastium arcticum</i>
Golden Whitlow-grass	<i>Draba alpina</i>
White withlow-grass	<i>Draba fladnizensis</i>
Arctic Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla hyparctica</i>



Total length of this trip
1158,1 nm / 2144,8 km / 1324 statute miles

Text by Troels and Rolf
Photos by Troels and Rolf
Map by Rolf
Species list and e-mail list by Delphine
Staff hero pics by various

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