



OCEANWIDE
EXPEDITIONS

Expedition Log North Spitsbergen

22nd – 29th June 2007

aboard

M/V Professor Multanovskiy



The *Professor Multanovskiy* is an ex-research vessel from the Arctic and Antarctic Institute in St. Petersburg, Russia. She was built in 1983 in Finland, and was designed as an ice-strengthened ship. She measures 71.6 metres (236 ft) in length and 12.8 metres (42 ft) across the beam. She draws 4.5 metres (15 ft) which enables her to move through relatively shallow waters. Her tonnage is 2140 metric tonnes. Oceanwide Expeditions is fully responsible for the management and operation of the *Professor Multanovskiy*.

Professor Boris Pompeevich Multanovskiy was born in the Russia in 1876. He was a famous long-range weather forecaster. Not only did he have a ship named after him, but also a beautiful mountain on the Kamchatka Peninsula. He died in 1938.

With

Captain: Igor Stetsun, Russia
and his crew of 19 from St. Petersburg, Russia

and

Expedition Leader – Rolf Stange (Germany)
Guide/Lecturer – Elke Lindner (Germany)
Guide/Lecturer – Rico Behlke (Germany/Svalbard)
Purser – Charly Gores (Germany/South Africa)
Chef – Jocelyn Wilson (New Zealand)
Sous Chef – Richi Arokiasamy (Malaysia)
Doctor – Dr. Klaus Schuur (Germany)

**And 50 of us from Belgium, Bermuda, Germany, Ireland, Italy,
The Netherlands, Spain, UK, USA.**

22nd June 2007 – Longyearbyen

Position at 5 p.m.: 78° 14' N/15° 39' E

Air temperature: 8° C, light westerly, light cloud

Most of us had arrived today afternoon in Longyearbyen, some had already spent a night in this high Arctic metropolis. At 4 pm, it was time to board the Professor Multanovskiy, our home for the next 7 days to come.

Before we left the pier, we were welcomed and introduced to ship and staff by Rolf Stange, our expedition leader from Germany, and our hotel manager Charly Gores who was from South Africa and a number of other countries. Our guides Rico Behlke (Germany/Longyearbyen) and Elke Lindner (Germany) completed the team together with the two chefs Jocelyn Wilson (New Zealand) and Richi Arokiasamy (Malaysia).

After departure, we gathered once again to get a compulsory introduction to safety and lifeboat procedures on board, and some minutes later we found ourselves in the lifeboats, with warm clothes and life jackets. Finally, it was time for a first, good and well-deserved Multanovskiy-dinner, prepared by our two chefs Jocelyn and Richi.

23rd June 2007 – Blomstrandhalvøya, Ny Ålesund, Kongsvegen-Glacier

Position at 7 a.m.: 78° 57' N/11° 57' E

Air temperature: 7° C, cloud cover, good visibility, mostly calm

During the night we had left Isfjord (Ice Fjord), travelled north along Prins Karls Forland and entered Kongsfjord (Kings Fjord) in the morning. The sun was breaking through the clouds here and there. The slopes of the mountains were still covered by quite a bit of snow. After breakfast it was time for another safety briefing, this time about Zodiac procedures and how to behave in polar bear country. Shortly afterwards we entered our water-cabs and went ashore at Blomstrandhalvøya (Blomstrand Peninsula), which actually is an island. In former times, when the glaciers in the fjord were larger it was covered by one of these and by mistake called 'Peninsula'.



Well ashore we visited Camp Mansfield an old mining place, which is also known as Ny London (New London), where the English entrepreneur Ernest Mansfield once tried to mine marble. He managed to raise a great sum of money from wealthy investors in Britain by convincing them that he had found an entire island of marble of the highest quality. He established the quarry and related infrastructure and machinery from 1911-1920 but only sent one load of marble to Britain. When it arrived it had all fallen into pieces due to minute cracks. Mansfield was never again seen in England and hence was never made responsible for the failure. Despite his eccentricity, Mansfield was very



popular amongst local hunters who could always rely on his help if they needed supplies or something else.

A lot of attention was actually caught by a pair of Long-tailed skuas that seemed not at all bothered by our presence.

After an introduction to Mansfield and the historic site we split up in three groups. Some of us went with Rolf up the slopes of the mountain nearby. The others either stayed to watch the breeding long-tailed skuas on their nest or went for a little walk with

explanations on the arctic tundra. Behind the skua-hill some reindeer rested. While males mainly were lying on the ground female with calves strolled around. A few times a curious ptarmigan stag passed us in a close distance.

All non-mountaineers finally met between two ponds, where we expected to find some rare bird life. We were successful at the lower pond, where we spotted a pair of red-throated divers, which we could approach quite closely. As a little bonus, a polar fox showed up behind the pond. It hungrily watched the divers and was chased away by some arctic terns. We slowly returned to the landing site. On our way we found some beautiful patches of flowering mountain avens, but also some flowering whitlow-grass and purple saxifrage. We got back to the *Multanovskiy* just in time for the well-earned lunch.



The afternoon excursion brought us to Ny Ålesund, the northernmost settlement in the world at 78° 56' N. The mountains around us were still covered by snow and the scenery presented rather a black and white picture. Ny Ålesund (a former coal mine) is a small community of scientists from all over the world who conduct a variety of research in the fields of atmospheric studies, glaciology, biology and related subjects. A short walk took us into the centre of this historic village. On the way we passed the local polar fox with six cubs between the buildings, which did not seem to care about the number of people pointing their lenses at them. Another highlight was the visit to the local souvenir shop and the northernmost post office. After the stop at the shop, most of us were explored the settlement and tried to get some good shots of arctic terns, snow buntings, reindeer and other local wildlife.



Later, some of us also headed for the iron tower erected in the early part of the 20th century by the intrepid explorers Amundsen and Nobile, who reached the North Pole by dirigible airship in 1926. The



tower was used again during a second expedition in 1928, also led by Nobile. The mast is only a few hundred meters from the settlement but everybody stayed close to the rifle in case of an unexpected polar bear encounter. During the short walk, we stopped repeatedly to listen to the various chapters of a talk about the history of north-polar exploration given on the tundra by Rolf.

We were accompanied by common eider ducks; sometimes a pair long-tailed ducks flew along the

shoreline.

After dinner we went further into Kongsfjord for a closer look at the majestic front of the Kongsvegen (King's way) glacier. Bathing fulmars were scattered all around the *Multanovskiy* and a few seals could be spotted on ice floes just in front of the glacier front.

24th June 2007 – Liefdefjord, Bockfjord

Position at 7:30 a.m.: 79° 41' N/13° 49' E (entrance of Woodfjord near Worsleyneset)

Air temperature: 6° C, mostly clear, partly cloudy, calm



Rolf's good-morning-announcement got those of us that still were in their beds in this beautiful weather. Our ship soon arrived at its anchoring position near the Andøyane (Duck Islands). The weather was really promising; some dark fog banks drifting from the north into the

Woodfjord caught the attention of very few eyes only – luckily also those of our expedition staff who duly saved the GPS-position of the anchoring site. All the snow-covered mountains nearby were glittering in the sunshine. Soon our Zodiacs were launched and we started our morning excursion towards the islands. As we got closer fog also covered the tiny archipelago. Eider ducks, kittiwakes and red-throated divers appeared sometimes only as black and white silhouettes. We circumnavigated some of the islands to locate more wildlife. After a while we went ashore on a small island, which was



inhabited by a pair of breeding arctic skua, but also eider ducks and grey phalaropes. There was

plenty of time to observe everything of interest. The flowers of purple saxifrage were gleaming in the few sunrays that cut through the fog. Three different groups went through the terrain. Those who remained close to the landing site was rewarded with close views of a pair of Arctic skua, the other two groups went further 'inland' and sighted some 'funny' Grey Phalaropes. Also a King Eider was spotted. The landing concluded with a keen garbage collection that resulted in several bags of plastic rubbish. The ride back with our Zodiacs was one of a special, since fog banks reduced the visibility to less than



a hundred meters, so the *Multanovskiy* had to be found by GPS.

Soon after our return it was time for lunch. During that time the ship slowly moved further into the inner parts of Liefdefjord, waiting for the fog to lift. First at the edge of the still remaining fast-ice our Captain turned back out of the fjord. Within all the fog and ice we spotted two ivory gulls quite close to the vessel. But otherwise there was not much more to see, as the famous scenery, culminating in the large Monacobreen, remained hidden in the polar mist. Some of us took a rest, while others attended a lecture by Elke about the reindeer we had seen yesterday. At the daily briefing we got to know, that there was still more to explore tonight. Dinner was ready up a bit earlier than originally planned and shortly afterwards we made a landing close to the warm springs in the Bockfjord.

Again we had two groups walking in different directions. One went with Rico to the sinter terraces of the warm springs, which appeared as a light-brown patch within the black and white coloured slopes. We had to pass large fields of boulders and snow before we reached our aim for tonight. We were rewarded with a marvellous view from the top of the sinter hill. The *Multanovskiy* anchored right in front of the bright red mountains. Their colour gave the geological formation also its name: 'Old Red'. Due to the similarity to Martian environments, the American space agency NASA is actually testing their roboters which eventually will be sent to Mars in this area. But also the ground below our feet



was coloured brightly. The recent spring sediments around were tinted in yellow, orange and green. Algae covered the ground of the small ponds on top of the hill, which might have had a temperature of approximately 20°C. Suddenly two reindeer showed up out of nowhere during the hike. All of us were very surprised about this close encounter, because nobody had seen them before. Good that this was no polar bear!



The other group took a walk across the tundra, soon meeting a pair of Svalbard ptarmigan. It was very interesting to watch them walking across the tundra. Soon all the big lenses had taken their position again. So Rolf decided to split up the group further and the walkers went off to move a little bit. There was lots of beautiful scenery to look at, but also a little 'waterfall' and some new flowering plant species, we have not had seen so far. Some non-flowering individuals of woolly lousewort were posing in excellent light conditions. Now we could clearly see the difference between the hairy and woolly specimens, which we hardly could think about yesterday.

After the walks we gathered again on the beach. The tide had risen in the meanwhile and boarding was not longer necessary from the rocky beach, but from the snowfield. Well back on board the Captain set course north

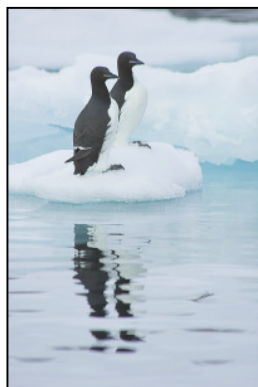
again and during the night we steamed towards our new destination, the Hinlopen Strait.

25th June 2007 – Hinlopen Strait: Alkefjellet, drift ice. Sorgfjord: Eolusneset

Position at 6:45 a.m.: 79° 43' N/18° 06' E (10 nautical miles north of Alkefjellet)

Air temperature: 7° C, calm, some fog banks, drift ice

This morning found us in an area, which is usually blocked by ice at this time of the year. The coastline, consisting of wide, plateau-shaped mountains, was covered with a thick layer of glacial ice. There was still a lot of snow everywhere. After breakfast, we boarded our Zodiacs. Soon, we were captivated by the breathtaking sight of thousands of Brünnich's guillemots that had gathered in the areas of open water between the ice floes. Tenthousands more of these birds filled the sky near the nesting cliffs. Here and there, guillemots were perched on ice floes, resembling little penguins. In fact, these birds are similar to penguins in several ways, including sounding and smelling like them. We continued towards the



towering basalt cliffs of the coast. At some places the glacier on top of the cliffs was looking down on the birds and us as if it was observing the scenery. Soon we got very close to the first breeding birds, where they were crouching close together on thin stony shelves, protecting their eggs and taking very little notice of us. We used the opportunity to fill the capacity of our memory cards and use up our rolls of film, snapping shots of guillemots swimming, flying, resting, diving, landing and taking off; single birds, birds in groups; on guano-stained ice and rock. The basalt cliffs are a perfect place for guillemots to breed, but there are also other inhabitants: geese, snow buntings, kittiwakes and glaucous gulls, the latter being the main predator of guillemot eggs and chicks. Before we returned to the ship, we visited an impressive glacier descending between the gorgeous basalt cliffs. A few of us were lucky to see a walrus on the way back to the *Multanovskiy*.



Back on board, we continued along the Hinlopen Strait southwards until we reached the Fosterøyane, where we enjoyed the drift ice one last time before we returned back north – to the only entrance and exit the strait offered today. As we were cruising through the ice, a bearded seal and a ringed seal could be spotted, and later we passed two individual Minke whales at a rather short distance.

Guillemots gathered around the ship and fulmars were gliding pass the bow. It was a wonderful place to enjoy the arctic scenery with the glittering ice in the sunshine and its silence out on deck.



We were reminded that this was an expedition in the High Arctic, since several potential landing sites for the afternoon at the western side of Nordauslandet (Northeast Land) were blocked by drift ice. So we took dinner a bit earlier than originally planned and went ashore in Sorgfjord (Fjord of Sorrow) on the northeastern corner of Spitsbergen instead. The name of the fjord reminds of the sorrows that whale hunters had due to the ice and the competition by other whalers. In addition, the place is famous for the northernmost battle at sea, which was fought 1693 between three French warships and 40 Dutch whaling ships.

We landed at Eolusneset, named after the ship *Æolus*, which was chartered by Torell and Nordenskiöld for the expedition in 1861. We split our group into two. Those of us interested in listening to Rolf's stories about the history of this place went to a little, cross-marked hill (Krosshaugen – Cross Hill). Nearby some graves from the whaling period were still in good shape. The other group went in the opposite direction, where some reindeer were spotted earlier. The attention of the most was taken by a group of sanderlings on the shoreline that was either covered by driftwood or by snow, ice and water. Some few but very keen hikers still wanted to find a way through melt-water channels and snowfields, to get some exercise.



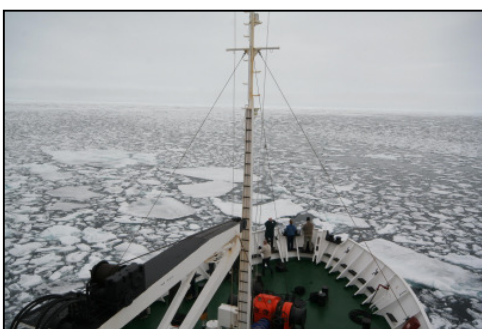
On the way back to the landing spot, we collected plastic rubbish on the beach, which filled two big garbage bags. Well back on the ship, the *Multanoskiy* 'set sail' to the north as we planned to spend the next in and close to the pack ice edge.



26th June 2007 – Pack Ice, Northernmost position

Position at 7:30 a.m.: 80° 45' N/17° 04' E

Air temperature: 8° C, calm, good visibility, cloudy



Today our ship already was far away from the northern coast of Spitsbergen, when we woke up. During breakfast we sailed further north to get closer to the ice edge that we already could see in the far distance. Soon we were in the middle of the pack ice. Suddenly some of us spotted a creamy, moving dot on the horizon. No doubt, a polar bear! The captain and his crew tried to manoeuvre the *Multanovski* closer to the Bear. This was no easy procedure. A lot of larger ice floes blocked our way. However, we certainly came closer and got our first photographs, to show our friends and families at home, that we have seen the king of the Arctic. Unfortunately a huge fog bank came closer and the bear disappeared in it. We also had to return to the open water area, because manoeuvring is getting to difficult within ice floes and low visibility.



Within this weather conditions Rolf offered us some more insight to the ecology of polar bear in form of a lecture and a longer following discussion. Still sailing along the foggy ice edge, some of us spotted a second bear in front of the ship soon after lunch. Surprisingly it kept course towards our ship. Entering and crossing an ice floe between us it kept on swimming towards the ship's bow, until it was not longer visible from the bridge before he retreated. This was really a close and amazing encounter! The bear changed direction and soon he got only a small and moving dot for our bare eyes, as the third bear of this eventful day was discovered on the ice. We turned our vessel and approached slowly a big ice floe. From here we easily could observe the bear in a respectful distance.



As the fog had cleared, it was decided to spend the rest of the afternoon doing a Zodiac cruise in the drift ice. Curious Brünnich's and black guillemots came close to the Zodiacs, providing good photography possibilities. We also sometimes stopped the engines of the Zodiacs and let us float with the ice, taking in the sounds and light around us. Back on the Multanovskiy, dinner was already in preparation and tonight the theme was 'Dress warmly' since a BBQ was planned. It started with Charly serving 'Glühwein' and we could enjoy the food with the sight of the Sjuøyane (Seven Islands) in the distance.

27th June 2007 – Moffen, Hamiltonbukta, Fuglesangen

Position at 6:45 a.m.: 79° 58' N/14° 26' E (two nautical miles from Moffen)

Air temperature: 6° C, light breeze from NE, fog

During the morning the entire sea was covered with fog. The visibility was so low, that Moffen Island was only visible on the radar. We thought to get at least a glimpse of the famous island but we had to turn around and hoped for better conditions at our next scheduled destination. Still in the course-



changing manoeuvre suddenly two walrus appeared close to the ship. For a short while they were swimming alongside and their white tusks were shining in the grey and fog-covered scenery. Heading south in the fog

some of us met with Elke in the lecture room for a lecture about sea ice and the many tiny, but important, creatures that are dependant on it.

A few hours later we arrived in the sunny Raudfjorden (Red Fjord). Very happy about the weather we entered our Zodiacs for an early noon cruise in Hamilton Bukta. The slightly cold breeze from the south did not bother us. Now all of us were already experienced how to dress in the Arctic. We passed steep, snow covered slopes. High in the cliffs kittiwakes were nesting. The lower, vegetated and snow free slopes were occupied by some breeding barnacle geese. We continued towards the inner part of the beautiful bay, where huge glacier fronts met the sea. Lots of tracks could be spotted on the otherwise clean and white snow surface. It might have been some lonely reindeer but also polar bear that have been crossing the glaciers here. Our Zodiac drivers took us to a tiny archipelago of rocky islands close to the main glacier-front. The light conditions were gorgeous. A larger flock of kittiwakes settled at one of these islands and poses in front of our cameras. Suddenly some pieces of ice broke off the icy wall in the background and ended in a huge splash and a gentle wave. However, it was good to keep some distance from the glacier, since a couple of crevasses in the front seemed to be quite deep and could easily release larger ice blocks to the shallow water.



We continued our cruise towards a range of scattered ice. Turning of the noisy engines we could enjoy the sound of the crackling pieces of ice around us. The scenery was extraordinary. Unfortunately it already was time to turn back to the ship where our chefs were waiting us with another delicious meal for lunch.

In the afternoon we reached the north-western most corner of Spitsbergen with some little islands. One of these is called Fuglesangen (Bird Song) and inhabits thousands of little auks. Here we went ashore, but also had to balance over a larger field of rounded boulders before our way to the colony got more comfortable. Larger boulders were scattered across the area and we had to be aware of to meet a 'polar bear at any place at any time' as Rolf used to say. So we rather went in a large group towards the warm and sunny slopes, where thousands of the funny black and white guys have found their home. Their noise was everywhere in the air. It seemed to be a special symphony of laughter when a larger group took off towards the sea. Sometimes they got disturbed by a passing glaucous gull, and segment for segment of the slopes was emptied of little auks at once. All of us found a good spot on the rocks to enjoy this unique spectacle. Late but satisfied with today's sightings we went back to the ship. Finally our Captain weighed anchor and set our course southwards again. After dinner most of us enjoyed the nice scenery of the West-Spitsbergen coastline in the midnight sun.

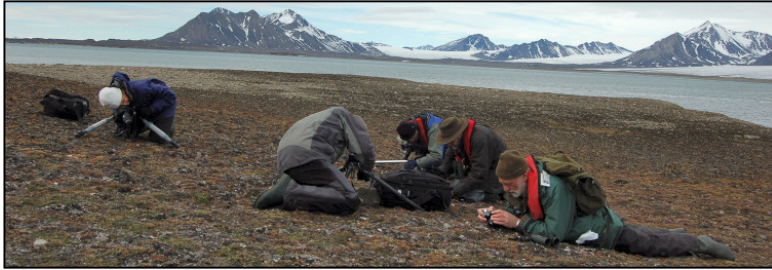
28th June 2007 – Prins Karls Forland: Poolepynten. Eidembukta

Position at 7:30 a.m.: 78° 13' N/12° 16' E

Air temperature: 8° C, light breeze, clear

The excursion for this morning was planned at Poolepynten, a walrus hole-out. The landing operations brought us ashore at a good distance from the walruses' resting site. As a 'little' bonus we could observe a breaching humpback whale not far from the shore. After detailed instructions about how to approach walruses ashore without disturbing them, we made a very slow approach towards these giants. We had good views of the walruses. When we came to our closest distance we could count more than thirty animals. But also we were observed; a few walruses circled around us in the water and studied the colourful group of human beings ashore. Blue sky, sunshine and the glittering mountains provided a great backdrop for our photographs.





After lunch and a short afternoon rest, we landed on the other side of Forlandssundet in Eidembukta (Eidem Bay) at Hægstadpynten. We splitted up in three groups. One group stayed close to the landing site and explored the local flora. The other groups explored the surroundings during one shorter and one longer walk.

Back on the ship, it was time for the farewell dinner and, of course, Charly reminded everybody of the late nights in the bar by presenting the final bar bill. The *Multanovskiy* was already on its way to Longyearbyen, since a few of us are going the leave Svalbard with the early morning flight.

29th June 2007 – Longyearbyen

Position at 7:30 a.m.: 78°07'N/ 13°32'E

Air temperature: not too warm

Some of us had already left in the very early morning. Most woke up once again to Rolf's usual wake up call and started the day with our last good *Multanovskiy*-style breakfast, before finally left this good ship and then went to Longyearbyen. Here, we still had another couple of hours to do our own explorations or shopping, before most of us went to the airport at 1 p.m. It was hard to believe that our high-arctic adventure had come to an end!

We all hope to see you again soon somewhere near the poles!

Total length of this trip
901 nm / 1450 km / 901 statute miles

Text and photos by Elke, Rico and Rolf
Species list by Elke
Address list by Rico
Map by Rolf

This triplog can be downloaded with colour images from www.spitzbergen.de

For further information, please visit www.oceanwide-expeditions.com

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1. Blomstrandhalvøya
2. Ny Ålesund
3. Kongsvegen
4. Liefdefjord: Andøyane
5. Monacobreen
6. Bockfjord
7. Alkefjellet
8. Ice Hinlopen Strait
9. Sorgfjord: Eolusneset
10. Ice/Furthest North
11. Moffen
12. Hamiltonbukta
13. Fuglesangen
14. Prins Karls Forland: Poolepynten
15. Eidembukta