



Expedition Log **North Spitsbergen**

29th June – 06th July 2007

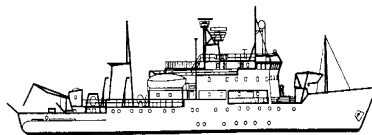
aboard the

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 – Valeska Seifert (Austria)
Guide/Lecturer – Philipp Schaudy (Austria)
Purser – Charly Gores (Germany/South Africa)
Chef – Jocelyn Wilson (New Zealand)
Sous Chef – Richi Arokiasamy (Malaysia)
Doctor – Dr. Matthias Roux (Germany)
Wildwings group leader – Tony Marr (UK)
Unique Destinations group leader – Leo van Heukelum (South Africa)

29th June 2007 – Longyearbyen

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

Air temperature: 7° C, light easterly winds, overcast



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 Philipp Schaudy and Valeska Seifert (both from Austria) completed the team together with the two chefs Jocelyn Wilson (New Zealand) and Richi Arokiasamy (Malaysia).

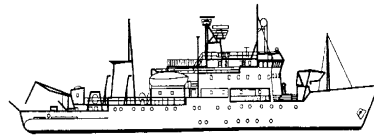
After departure, we gathered once again to get a compulsory introduction to safety and lifeboat procedures on board, and some minutes later we found ourselves in the lifeboats, with warm clothes and life jackets. Finally, it was time for a first, good and well-deserved *Multanovskiy*-dinner, prepared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

30th June 2007 – Blomstrandhalvøya, Ny Ålesund

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

Air temperature: 6° C, cloud cover, good visibility, light winds

During the night we travelled north along Prins Karls Forland and entered Kongsfjord (Kings Fjord) in the morning. It was still overcast but the clouds were much higher than the evening before and we could see many snowpatches on the slopes of the mountains. 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 the Blomstrand Peninsula, which actually is an island. In former times, when the glaciers in the fjord were larger it was partly covered by a glaciertongue and therefore 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 build up the quarry from 1911-1920 but only sent one load of marble back to Britain. When



it arrived it had all but crumpled due to minute cracks and change in temperature from the frozen arctic to the more temperate England. Despite Mansfield's eccentricity local hunters liked him well, because they were often hired and paid well and they could always rely on his help if they needed anything.

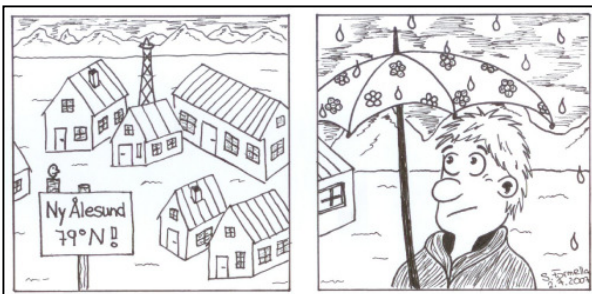
After an introduction to Mansfield and the historic site we split up in three groups. Some of us went with Valeska to the mountains nearby. The birdwatchers stayed with Tony and Rolf, observing the long-tailed skuas around Ny London, then heading towards the little lakes to see some red-throated divers. Philipp was with the third group, going to explore the tundra. Besides birds like the red-throated divers and some snow buntings, we spotted barnacle- and pink-footed-geese, ptarmigans and reindeers. Lots of beautiful flowers were seen, like the woolly-lousewort, purple saxifrage, mountain avens and moss campion. We got back to the *Professor Multanovskiy* just in time for the well-earned lunch.



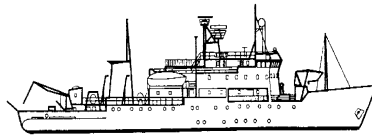
The afternoon excursion brought us to Ny Ålesund, the northernmost settlement in the world: at 78° 56' N. While we shuttled ashore, the dizzying rain changed into light snowfall, which became somewhat stronger during our stay in the settlement. Is there anything more refreshing than snowfall on the last day of June at sea level? 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 explored the settlement and tried to get some shots of arctic terns, snow buntings and the ivory-gulls around the dogyard. The uncomfortable weather conditions made us get cold soon, and many of us took an early zodiac back to the *Professor Multanovskiy*.



But some of us were staying on shore for another while, heading 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, this time led by Nobile. 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 unexpected polar bear encounter. A bit later we all were finally back on the ship and warmed up with a cup of hot coffee or tea. While dinner we sailed out of Kongsfjord and headed north. Our *Professor Multanovskiy* started to move with the waves while we fell asleep.



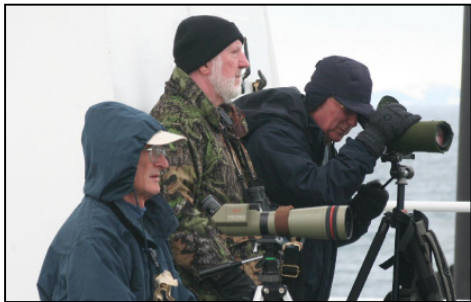
Cartoon: Sabine Formella



1st July 2007 – Moffen, Liefdefjord, Bockfjord

Position at 6:47 a.m.: 79° 58' N/14° 25' E

Air temperature: 5° C, strong southeasterly breeze



Rolf's "good-morning" woke us up pretty early this morning at 6:47. Our *Professor Multanovskiy* had set course to Moffen Island where we wanted to cross the magic line of 80° North and hoped to see our first walrus. Shortly after 7 am we arrived there. Moffen Island lay in the near distance. Although landings are not permitted here because it serves as a walrus sanctuary and because the waters are rather shallow, ships can approach, and from that distance one can see the walrus hauled out on the beach. Besides three groups of walrus we saw a whitish spot which had the right size and colour

for being a polar bear. When we were already on our way to the next destination, it moved and could thus be confirmed as a polar bear. We wished it would get up and move more, but before long we had dipped back below the 80th parallel and were en route to this morning's destination – Bockfjord. Strong head winds delayed our journey. Suitable to the weather conditions (snow yesterday, stormy weather today) Valeska and Philipp invited us to the lecture room and talked about the harsh weather conditions and life on Svalbard during wintertime and the polar night. Still before lunch we were able to do a short landing on the western side of Bockfjord. We had almost an hour for exploring the site: different (flowering) plants, the moraine on the top of the slope, a small waterfall, some polar bear poo, drift wood and bird life. Collecting some garbage on the beach was our contribution to a cleaner Svalbard. During

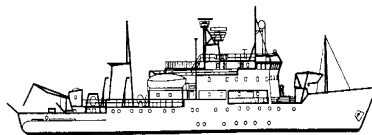


lunch time the ship moved again northwards towards Andøyane (Duck Islands). Luckily the wind decreased and the light conditions improved when we entered Liefdefjord and soon we could go on our afternoon excursion. The zodiacs were launched and we started to approach the islands. As we got closer to the tiny archipelago we saw eider ducks, kittiwakes and some grey phalaropes. We circumnavigated the biggest island to locate more wildlife. After a while we went ashore in a small bay, which was inhabited by arctic terns, eider ducks and grey phalaropes. There was plenty of time to go for a stroll and have a closer look at the nature. The flowers of purple saxifrage were gleaming in the few sunrays that got through the clouds. We split up into two groups and went at different pace through the terrain. Were as the bird watchers stayed closer to the beach by the Grey Phalaropes in the beginning, the other group went further "inland" and sighted



many arctic terns, eider ducks and an empty eider duck egg. Finally some King Eiders were spotted. The ride back with our Zodiacs was one of a special, since the wind had picked up again creating big waves. So some of us got their evening shower earlier than expected.

Right at the time of our return dinner was served. Meanwhile the ship slowly moved further into the inner parts of Liefdefjord. Immediately after we had finished dinner Tony spotted the first "real" polar bear on a small island. It was wonderful to see – its yellowish-white colour sticking out against the background of black rock. Already satisfied with all the impressions of the day there was even more to come. We came closer and closer towards the end of the fjord with its mighty glacier Monacobreen calving into the sea. The 5 km wide ice cliff looked impressive. Although the mountains were covered in clouds this weather caused the ice cliff and the ice blocks swimming in front of it looking very blueish and mystic in a way. The boat



was stopped in a good distance from the glacier – on the one hand just right to see the up to 40 m high cliff of ice but on the other hand also safe enough not to enter the uncharted waters in front of the glacier which are due to glacier retreat. After we had enjoyed this beautiful scenery of glaciers and snow-covered mountains for a while, the captain set course north again and during the night we steamed towards the ice edge far northeast of our present position.

02nd July 2007 – Pack Ice, Northernmost position

Position at 7:30 a.m.: 80° 38' N/17° 55' E

Air temperature: 6° C, overcast, good visibility

When we woke up this morning, our ship already was already far away from the northern coast of Spitsbergen. We saw Nordaustland and the Sjuøyane (Seven Islands) east and south of us. During breakfast we sailed further north to get closer to the ice edge that we could soon see in the far distance. We reached the ice and continued along its edge. Fulmars were flying around the ship and a Harp Seal was playing in front of the vessel. The waves were high and it was interesting to watch the floating ice move with them. After some time captain Igor Stetsun turned our *Professor Multanovskiy*



towards the North Pole and soon we were surrounded by dense pack ice. Slowly our ship was proceeding northwards. It was exciting to see how the ice floes were pushed and cracked in peaches while we were sailing. At lunchtime we had reached our northernmost position of 80° 57.9' N/20° 13' E. From here it was only 542 Nautic Miles (or 1003.8 Kilometers, or 623.8 British Miles) to the Pole. No wonder it was only 4°C outside. The engines were stopped for a while and we enjoyed our lunch. The weather had improved since the morning and the sun came out more and more, giving the scenery a new glittering look. We broke out of the drift ice and continued along the ice edge for a while. Another Harp Seal played in front of the *Professor Multanovskiy* and made us all grab our binoculars and watch it play in the cold water. Sometime later an



Ivory Gull was spotted ahead and made the birdwatchers busy. Charly and his crew had prepared some Hot Chocolate and we were served out on the front deck to warm up. Later in the day the swell got down a bit and the ice looked somewhat more loose, so our captain turned the *Professor Multanovskiy* deep into the drift ice again. For dinner we had to „dress warmly“ since a BBQ was planned on deck. It started with Charly serving „Glühwein“ and we could enjoy the food prepared by Jocelyn, Ritchie and our crew chef Dima with the sight of the Sjuøyane (Seven Islands) in the distance in the middle of the drifting ice.

03rd July 2007

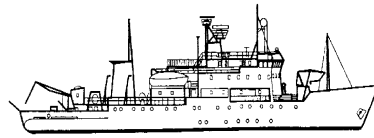
Raudfjord: Hamiltonbukta, Amsterdamøya: Smeerenburg, Magdalenefjord: Alkekongen

Position at 7:30 a.m.: 79° 56' N/12° 55' E

Air temperature: 7° C, calm, sunny

Finally the weather gods were on our side: a beautiful sunny day was waiting for us. We enjoyed the sun on the outer decks during we sailed to our morning's destination. The captain turned our Prof. Multanovskiy towards Raudfjord, where we jumped into the zodiacs. Getting into the rubber boats was an adventure in itself, as we were encountering big waves by the gangway. But after a while five zodiacs were on their way to explore Hamiltonbukta (Hamilton bay). Suddenly we heard Tony's voice





shouting “polar bear”. And there he was – walking over big boulders by the shoreline – a well-nourished polar bear. Our hearts were beating faster as we approached the shoreline to get a closer view. The bear continued to walk along the coast, sometimes posing for a picture. Photographer’s heaven! He disappeared behind a ridge, but we could bring our zodiacs around that hill and approach the polar bear again from the other side. What a lovely sight when his head appeared behind the snowy ridge. Shortly after a front leg and a hind leg were swung into the air – he was rolling in the

snow. More pictures were taken – of course. After we had observed the bear long enough we continued on our zodiac cruise through Hamiltonbukta and looked at Hamiltonbreen (Hamilton glacier). This beautiful glacier, 3 km wide and 5 km long, is named after a Swedish Captain who sailed into these waters in 1899 on a joint Swedish-Russian expedition. Besides the spectacular steep ice front there was a lot of bird life to see: kittiwakes posing on rocks, eider ducks swimming and flying past us, black guillemot sitting on small floes of glacier ice and brünnich’s guillemot showing up in several groups. Curious brünnich’s and black guillemots came close to the zodiacs, providing good photography possibilities. The motors were cut and we just floated, listening to the sounds of the trickling glacial melt-off and the groaning and popping of the mass of blue ice in front of us. Frequent ,tiny’ calvings (and rock falls) held our attention from our seats in the zodiacs.

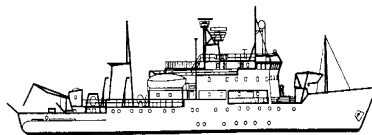


Back on board we sat down to another delicious lunch prepared by our chefs. There was time for a short nap, before Valeska invited us to the lecture room to talk about the whaling history of Svalbard. Well informed about the whaling activities, which took place in this corner of the world, we were approaching our afternoon landing destination in Smeerenburgfjorden. Still under sunny weather conditions, although the wind had picked up again, we went ashore at Smeerenburg (“Blubber Town”) on Amsterdamøya. Two groups focused on different interest. One group explored the lagoon and the bird life around it, which proved to be a very rewarding enterprise: next to species one could expect such as Ringed Plovers and Arctic terns, a male Steller’s eider was sitting among common eiders on one of the lagoons - a very rare vagrant up here in the high Arctic! – and a pair of Eurasian Golden Plover were also present. This species is known to be a rare and occasional breeding bird in Svalbard.

The others investigated the ruins of Smeerenburg (blubber ovens, wooden houses, graves). At first sight,



Smeerenburg presented itself as a rather unassuming beach with a brackish lagoon lying below bleak granite peaks. The site came alive, however, when we strolled through the historic site and thought of what Valeska had told us about the whaling history. Rolf pointed out some whale bones and the hut of the archeologists who revealed this important piece of history: The Chambers of Commerce of eight Dutch cities had set up shop here, working independently from one another but seeking strength in numbers by sharing the same beach as a means of protecting themselves from



raiding British whalers. We could picture a small community of 200 hard-working whalers who roughed it up here in the solitude of the High Arctic summer but enjoyed tremendous respect and admiration in their home towns during the winter. The indentations where the huge copper boilers once sat were outlined by a hardened slag of sand, beach pebbles, and coagulated whale oil. Enormous quantities of oil had once been rendered from strips of flensed whale blubber in these great cauldrons. It is estimated that 60,000 whales were processed in a similar fashion over the centuries from the waters around Spitsbergen. Hearing the stories of bad clothing, lack of vitamins and cold summers up here, we did not envy the whalers, but appreciated the vitamin-rich dinner in the well-heated restaurant of our *Professor Multanovskiy* even more! From our warm and cosy cabins or from the bridge we enjoyed the view to the west coast of Spitsbergen: steep mountains separated by glaciers and the tops covered in grey clouds. Head wind slowed us down and waves made the ship roll again.

In the evening we reached Magdalenafjord where we encountered calmer weather. We sailed all the way into the fjord, enjoying the view to steep mountains and calving glaciers. One more time the zodiacs were put on the water today, and most of us joined a late evening trip to a colony of Little auks. On the slopes of the mountain Alkekongen (= Little auk) mountain hundreds of little auks were waiting for us. We walked over a field of



rounded boulders before we could climb up the slope to the colony. The sporty ones and the keen photographers went far up, but most of us sat down and enjoyed the beautiful scenery as soon as there was a splendid view down to the shoreline and the fjord. Groups of Little auks were flying over our heads, landing on the rocks, where these 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. What a unique spectacle! Late but satisfied with today's adventures we went back to the

ship. The last zodiac returned just after midnight. Finally the crew weighed anchor and set our course southwards again.

04th July 2007 – Forlandsundet

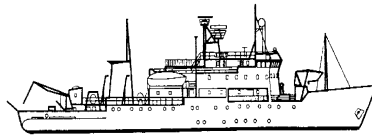
Position at 8:00 a.m.: 78° 13' N/11° 11' E (40 nautical miles from Poolepynten)

Air temperature: 6-7° C, overcast, good view, very gentle wind

This morning Rolf's wakeup call was a bit later than usual at 08:00 a.m. We were still sailing southwards, west of Prins Karls Forland. Due to the late return to the ship last night and the long distances, time did not allow a morning excursion, so Rolf moved lunch a bit forward and we planned to go out in the early afternoon. During the morning, Philipp gave an interesting lecture on Polar Bears and Rolf on Walrus. It was a good recap and further information to yesterday and a good introduction to our oncoming excursion.

While we had lunch the *Professor Multanovskiy* cruised into the calm Forlandsundet and anchored close to Poolepynten, where walrus were





hauled out. The landing operation brought us ashore at a good distance from the walrus' resting site. After some instructions about good behaviour near walrus ashore, we made a very slow approach towards these giants and got good views of them. When we came to our closest distance we could count more than 40 animals. The birdwatchers also spotted some Great Skuas, Barnacle Geese, Grey Phalaropes and Purple Sandpipers. As a bonus we could observe a breathing humpback whale not far from the shore. After a great afternoon out on Prins Karls Forland we shuttled back to our vessel and warmed up with a hot cup of coffee.



In the evening we sailed into St. Jonsfjord. Again a spectacles landscape, with huge glaciertongues calving into the sea, steep mountains and bearded seals drifting on ice-floats. Our guides invited us to an evening-landing at Gjertsenodden. A beautiful spot with flowering tundra, some reindeers in the background and an small old trappers cabin on the beach. Some of us were keen on taking a swim in the high-arctic and jumped into the cold water. What a special way to round-up an exciting expedition day.

05th July 2007 – Isfjord: De Geerdalen/Diabasodden, Skansbukta

Position at 7:00 a.m.: 78° 21' N/15° 38' E

Air temperature: 9° C, overcast, calm, good view

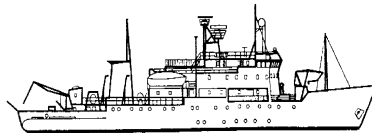


On our last day of this expedition cruise we were exploring the Isfjord, the largest of Spitsbergen's many fjords with its diverse and beautiful scenery and rich flora and fauna. After breakfast two different excursions started from two different landing sites. Rolf took a group of hiking people to De Geerdalen, a wide open valley with beautiful tundra. First many tiny flowers were admired and two groups of curious reindeer observed while we were heading towards a waterfall. From there we walked several kilometers westwards up to a saddle behind a big mountain. A ptarmigan was spotted on the way in addition to more reindeer. Up on the pass the view was wonderful! Now it

was downhill hiking back to the beach. As we were early we could still walk along the shore towards some birdcliffs and look up to the rocks full of different birds breeding. These birdcliffs at Diabasodden were the main aim of the second group of people. The majority of us joined Valeska and Philipp on the easier walk. The first half an hour we spent also admiring the wonderful flowers (spider plant, chick-weed, svalbard poppy, mountain avens), then we climbed a small hill and walked parallel to the coastline until we reached the edge of the birdcliff. Arctic puffins, Brunnich's Guillemot, a Barnacle geese nesting and a few Black Guillemots were posing for us. On our way back we saw some curious and playful reindeer in the valley and could not get our eyes off these pretty flowers which were growing everywhere!

Skansbukta is a small bay with high mountains all around. Once gypsium was mined here and the old remains of railway and other mining equipment were still to be seen. The railway was build on the debris of the mine itself and ran from the old mine shaft in the hill side to the coast. Now of course everything was in decay and the mine shaft has been sealed off to prevent accidents. The mine was located in the middle of the beach and on the southern side was a relatively modern private hut and on the northern side an old shipwreck high on the beach. High on the mountain side a seabird colony would surely keep visitors to the hut awake at night. On the





hillside there was an Arctic Fox running. But it was probably the vegetation which caught most of the attention: an amazing richness of species, well-grown individuals made for a colourful carpet and we filled many rolls of film or flashcards, respectively.

It was a really nice and relaxing last landing as everybody could do their own thing at their own pace. The rifles were spread out so that there was plenty of time to botanise, enjoy the scenery and explore the historical remains in between them.

Back on the ship, we had our final recap in the bar. Soon 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.

It was a pleasure to travel with you and we hope to see you again, anywhere between the poles!

Total length of this trip

837 nm / 1550 km / 963 statute miles

Text, Maps and Pictures by Valeska, Philipp and Rolf

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

Lectures and talks

30 June – Ny Alesund and the history of the North Pole (Rolf)

01 July – Svalbard during winter and the polar night (Valeska, Philipp)

03 July – Whaling in the 17th and 16th century (Valeska)

04 July – Polar bears (Philipp)

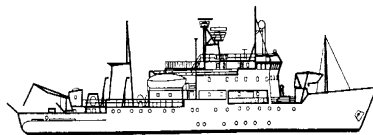
04 July – Walrus (Rolf)

Daily recaps and briefings (Rolf)

Daily bird- and wildlife list and discussion (Tony)

Red-throated Diver
Northern Fulmar
Pink-footed Goose
Barnacle Goose
Common Teal
Common Eider
Steller's Eider
King Eider
Long-tailed Duck
Rock Ptarmigan
Eurasian Golden Plover
Ringed Plover
Red Knot
Purple Sandpiper
Dunlin
Ruddy Turnstone
Grey Phalarope
Panarine Skua
Arctic Skua
Long-tailed Skua
Great Skua

Glaucous Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Black-legged Kittiwake
Ivory Gull
Arctic Tern
Brunnich's Guillemot
Black Guillemot
Little Auk
Atlantic Puffin
Red-throated Pipit
Snow Bunting



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| 1. Blomstrandhalvøya | 9. Amsterdamøya: Smeerenburg |
| 2. Ny Ålesund | 10. Magdalenefjord: Alkekongen |
| 3. Moffen | 11. Prins Karls Forland: Poolepynten |
| 4. Bockfjord | 12. St Jonsfjord, Gjertsenodden |
| 5. Liefdefjord: Andøyane | 13. De Geerdalen/Diabasodden |
| 6. Liefdefjord: Monacobreen | |
| 7. Ice/Furthest North (80°57'N) | |
| 8. Raudfjord: Hamiltonbukta | |