

Alpha Ridge Test of Appurtenance (ARTA)

Newsletter #14

April 9 (Wednesday) was a slow day for us at the camp. The Twin Otter and the Skyvan worked at hauling fuel and explosives, and two helicopters did bathymetry for Jon Biggar, but the seismic crew had to wait on explosives before they could start the cross track. (See plot to the right.) Helicopter CFPHO was back at Eureka getting a 300-hour inspection, and CFARE (the 407) was still waiting on a part to cure its oil-leak problem.

Today, the 10th, has been unproductive for us also – but not for the lack of trying. Gerard, with the freshly inspected helicopter CFPHO, arrived back at camp at about 11:30, and after a quick bite to eat we (Gerard, Alain and I) headed off toward the western end of the cross-leg, where there is a cache of fuel and explosives. We didn't get out more than about five miles or so before we were driven back by fog. Gerard tried to go under the low cloud, but it came right down to the ground. Then he went high to see whether he could see over it. He said that this morning's satellite picture showed only a narrow band of fog. However, it had obviously developed in the interim since Gerard couldn't get high enough to see its far side. After trying for about half an hour, he accepted defeat and returned to the Icecamp.

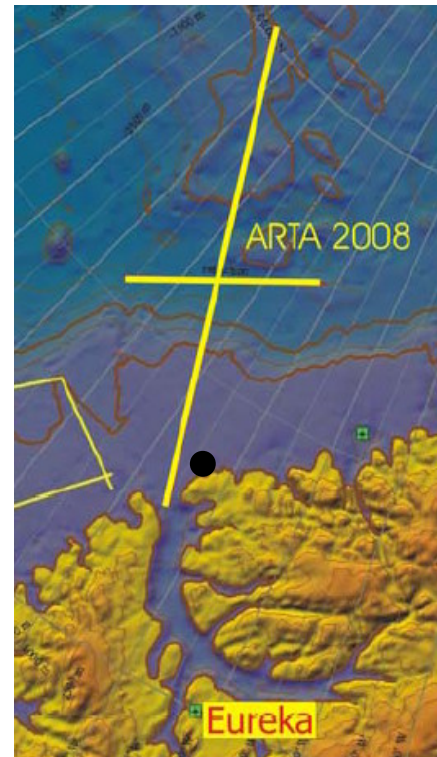
The camp, itself, is still in sunlight, but the fog is quite evident to the north and the west, and it comes and goes in the south. I have been told that the satellite pictures are indicating enormous open leads to the north and east. These, of course, will boil off lots of water vapour, which will then condense back to ice-fog. It is this ice-fog that makes flying so difficult.

Jon Biggar had two helicopters working in the north. They went out before the fog developed, and much of their work was north of the fog bank. However, they had to pick their way home rather carefully, being careful not to let the blades ice-up too much.

The satellite pictures indicate open water for a hundred miles north and east of Alert, and they show no ice in Robeson Channel at all. (Robeson is the strait between Ellesmere Island (Canada) and Greenland. See the map in Newsletter 1.) Usually this strait gets blocked by ice (the blockage is called an 'icebridge'), and this keeps all the ice north of Alert from being flushed south down into Baffin Bay. Last year the ice bridge never developed, and it looks as if it won't develop this year either. I guess global-warming still has the upper hand. We may have to wait a few more years for the ice-age to begin.

On roughly the same subject, the weather here has been extremely nice for the last couple of days. It is amazing how warm minus 25 seems when you have become used to minus 38, especially when the warmer weather is accompanied by calm winds.

The Rangers passed by yesterday on their way back to Eureka. We are less than 10 km offshore, and for a time we thought that they were going to come out and visit us and perhaps camp overnight. However, they decided not to. We heard rumours that they thought the sea-ice was too rough. In any case, they stayed close to shore where the travelling was easier.



The little black circle gives a rough position of the camp.

Best Wishes, Ron Verrall

We'd like to hear from you. Send your comments to:

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One of these days I'll get back to Eureka to answer them.