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Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 25: A Mooring View from Above

Rick Krishfield
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After several previous dispatches on mooring deployments and recoveries from the viewpoint of those on deck, this dispatch gives a view of the deck operations to recover the last BGOS Mooring D (74° N, 140° W) from above.

As we rapidly run out of time on this cruise, the Arctic becomes more stubborn. The thin ice conditions up north where we were able to steam at 10-12 knots gave way last night to heavier ice conditions on the trek south (go figure) to this mooring location, reducing the cruising time so that we arrived a few hours later than we would have liked. Furthermore, significant ice covers the region, so that more time must be spent breaking up the ice before the mooring can be released.

Once the operation finally begins, it proceeds smoothly until we arrive at the last segment of wire before the 50 yellow backup floats. This clump of floats never surfaced in open water, but instead arrived under the ice. In order to retrieve them from under the ice, the Captain must carefully direct the ship into the ice floe while we maintain a grip on the mooring wire. Under the direction from the bridge, when the ship backs up we pay out wire to reduce tension, and then haul in when the ship heads forward. Skillful ship handling brings the irksome floats to the surface after a half hour, although it seems much longer as darkness and falling temperatures arrived during the operation.

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Mail: Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, 266 Woods Hole Road, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA.
E-Contact: info@whoi.edu; press relations: media@whoi.edu, tel. (508) 457-2000
Problems or questions about the site, please contact webdev@whoi.edu