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Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 14: Drifting

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In the summer of 2000, when conducting research into ocean circulation aboard the *Louis St. S. Laurent*, Dr. Eddy Carmack (Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada) decided to toss a few biodegradable bottles over the side just for fun. He was curious to see where these low tech and low cost messengers might drift based on the influence of prevailing winds and currents. The Drift Bottle Project is now an annual event.

This year there are 4 drift bottle projects underway. The East Coast and Canadian Basin regions are being covered by Bonita LeBlanc, a grade 8 student from Halifax. Hudson Bay and the Southern portion of Baffin Bay will be the target for the group Students on Ice. The science team and crew aboard the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) *Sir Wilfred Laurier* will look after the Pacific NW section and Dr. Bill Williams, Chief Scientist for the CCG *Nahidik*, will be dropping a few bottles near the outflow of the mighty Mackenzie River. This year 2 elementary schools in Victoria also participated. Their young students wrote personal messages that we added to the bottles that are being dropped in both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Hopefully this participation from elementary schools will also become a tradition. Peter King, a crew member aboard the LSSL, is going to see if the school his child attends in Halifax would like to get involved next year.

Labatt, Sleeman and Vancouver Island Breweries generously donated the empty bottles for these projects. The breweries shipped the bottles to the Institute of Ocean Sciences (except Sleeman who sent theirs directly to Bonita in Halifax). We number each bottle, add the message that describes the project and asks for a reply from the finder. The bottles are then corked and sealed with wax.

To date about 4% of the bottles dropped have made it to shore and their locations reported back to the Institute of Ocean Science in British Columbia, part of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. There are many great stories of people finding these bottles - we might describe some bottle journeys and the people who found them later in the cruise!

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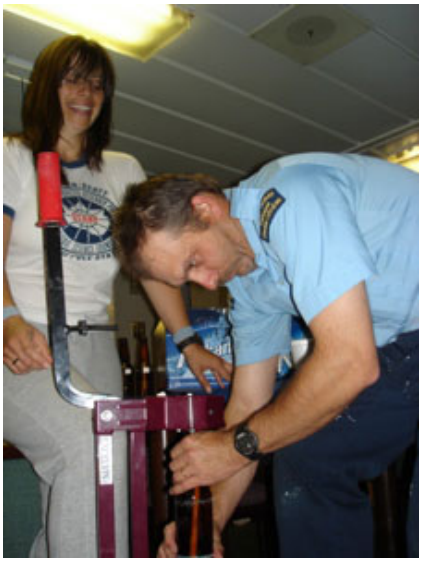
Eddy Carmack (DFO) tossing a drift bottle a few years ago. Eddy was on the Louis earlier this summer during the transit through the Canadian Archipelago. (Photo by Bon van Hardenberg).

A couple of surface current tracking devices, before being sealed with a cork and wax. (Photo by Alice Orlich).



Alice Orlich, a student at U. of Alaska, Fairbanks, is taking a break from her ice observations to help seaman Dan Dunlap cork a few drifting bottles. (Photo by Helen Drost).

Alice is sealing the bottles by dipping them in hot wax. (Photo by Helen Drost).

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