

Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 1: Delayed Start

Rick Krishfield
August 5-6, 2004

The second cruise of the BGFE experiment on the Canadian Coast Guard Icebreaker Louis S. St. Laurent (LSL) got off to a delayed start due to unusually heavy ice conditions in the Northwest Passage. Most of the science party was scheduled to meet the ship on July 29th, but it wasn't until August 4th that the ship finally arrived in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut (Canada) after stopping for a crew change. The largest icebreaker in the Canadian government fleet (overall length 120 m), the LSL is equipped with 5 diesel generators driving 3 DC motors capable of producing 27,000 maximum shaft horsepower. Even with that amount of power, the LSL was slowed to a crawl at times while breaking through the congested ice clogging the passage between Resolute and points west.

Several members of the science party were already on board the ship (including the Chief Scientist, Sarah Zimmermann, from the Institute of Ocean Sciences (IOS) in British Columbia), but the remainder were retrieved from Cambridge Bay by the ship's helicopter and transported to the vessel which lay waiting several miles offshore. Those who had never flown in a helicopter before were excited by this adventure, including WHOI Engineering Assistant II, Kris Newhall.

After a safety briefing by First Officer Rod Strowbridge, most scientists spend their first night on the LSL moving into their cabins and meeting the officers and crew. On the following day, the first science meeting takes place in the board room. In addition, the Commanding Officer of the LSL, Andrew McNeill formally welcomes the scientists, and Third Officer Wayne Pelley provides a familiarization briefing. Later there is the mandatory Fire and Boat drill, where everyone onboard dons their lifejackets and heads to their respective stations, as practice in case of an emergency.

Altogether there are 64 people on this cruise: 48 officers and crew, and 16 scientists. This expedition is the third JWACS cruise for scientists from Canada and Japan, as well as the second cruise of the NSF funded BGFE experiment. Everyone onboard is excited to participate on this voyage of scientific exploration, and can't wait to get started. According to the ship's ice observer, Dan Crosbie, the ice conditions in the Beaufort Sea are still very extensive, so it won't be long until we reach the main icepack.

Last updated: October 19, 2015



Cambridge Bay waterfront.



Kris Newhall enjoying his first helicopter ride.



The CCGS Louis St. Laurent in Cambridge Bay.



First science meeting in the board room. From left: Doug Seiberg (IOS), Sarah Zimmermann (IOS), Waldeck Walczowski (IOS), and John Kemp (WHOI).