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Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 9: Back to Tuk

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September 23, 2010

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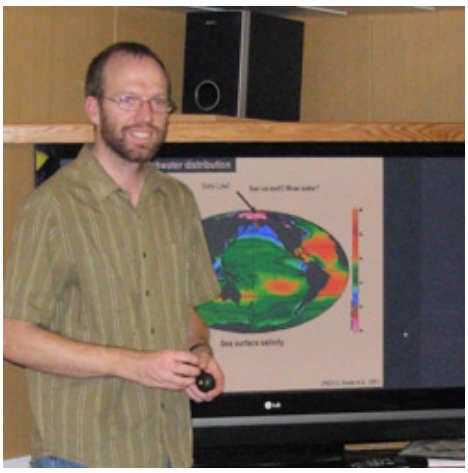

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A polar bear! During the CTD/Rosette cast this morning, a polar bear was sighted from the bridge. It took an interest in the ship: first walking along the ice edge about half a kilometer away and then getting into the water and swimming towards us. It was pretty easy to spot this bear while it was on the ice as it was off-white in comparison to the snow and easy to see it move. Once it was in the water, only the nose, eyes and ears showed above the water line and it was hard to spot. Polar bears are good swimmers and are able to swim up to 300km (though will need to sleep for several days if they swim that far). They are also surprising good at drying off after a swim: a shake and a roll snow is all it takes to dry off.

After the CTD/Rosette, in the early afternoon, we started steaming south out of the ice pack and towards Tuktoyaktuk for our appointment with NTCL to refuel. This gave us a break from collecting data and the science team turned to quality control and processing of the data collected so far. In the evening, I gave a presentation to introduce the various aspects of the science program on board. I focused on the water samples that are drawn from the Niskin bottles on the Rosette - there are 14 different kinds of water samples with 14 different kinds of bottles to put them in. The photograph below shows a line-up of 11 of the bottles: the smallest being for sampling bacteria and the largest for sampling chlorophyll. Some of the samples, such as for dissolved oxygen, salinity and nutrients are analyzed on board, but most are put into cool or frozen storage for analysis onshore. Using these water samples we can investigate ocean acidification, determine whether the fresh surface waters of the Beaufort Gyre are from ice melt, Eurasian Rivers or North American Rivers, and track the deeper Pacific and Atlantic origin waters as they flow around the Canada Basin.

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