

Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 26: Midnight Mooring

Chris Linder
August 26, 2005

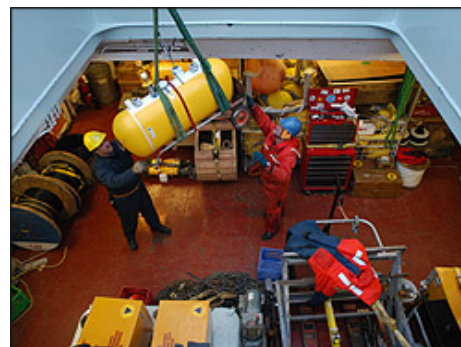
Back to our cliffhanger... It was 11PM when I stopped typing last night and emailed the dispatch to Woods Hole. I put my hard hat back on and stepped out into the foggy cold twilight. The mooring line was stopped, and a crowd was gathered around the Lebus, the WHOI mooring group winch that reels in the line. About a thousand meters of line, the moored profiling instrument, and top float were somewhere out there in the cold dark water and multi-year ice chunks. I caught Rick's attention. He told me quickly-- "blown fuse or something, we hope we can bring it back soon." Only a few tense minutes of electrician Phil Seaboyer's magic touch and the Lebus was happily reeling in more wire. Another hurdle jumped in the Mooring C saga.

The next hurdle was the moored profiler, a small 150-pound instrument that makes temperature, salinity, and current measurements as it travels up and down a 2000 meter wire twice a day. The instrument contains a year's worth of data; it is an expensive instrument in itself, but with that data it is now priceless. When about half of the 2000 meter line was on deck, the profiler appeared at the surface. John Kemp quickly jumped in the man basket and was lowered down to the waterline to attach a line to the instrument. It was quickly hauled aboard and stowed safely in the hold. Now all that remained was the top float, which contains an upward-looking sonar for measuring the ice draft (amount of ice below the surface). More importantly, though, is the float itself, because without the float, we can't redeploy Mooring C. As we approached the end of the line, there was still no sign of the float. Suddenly, the line went taut in a line arcing out from the ship. "Hold that!" yelled John, stopping the operation. "We have to be very careful here" John explained "if we cut the line on the ice, we may never find that float. Now we need to follow the leash." If an icebreaker can be described as moving daintily, that was how Captain Potts maneuvered the *Louis* in a chase after the line. John slowly hauled in, until the buoy suddenly popped out from under a jumble of multi-year ice just off the starboard bow. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. In a few minutes the saga of our toughest mooring recovery was over. By the time the deck was cleaned up the time was 1AM.

Just after breakfast, the deck department and the mooring team were back on deck with fresh instruments, ready to send Mooring C back down to collect more data. Unlike last night's epic recovery, the deployment went as smoothly as all of the other deployments. By early afternoon, an exhausted John Kemp pulled the quick release and dropped the mooring straight down into the midnight blue water.

Now we are southward bound, bashing through the pack ice along 140W longitude. As beautiful as the tall pressure ridges and blue multi-year ice are, we are eager to leave them behind for smoother sailing and easier science stations.

Last updated: September 23, 2014



12:30AM. A year's worth of temperature, salinity, and current data from Mooring C is lowered safely into the hold.



A twenty foot high pressure ridge. These jumbled masses form when floes collide, pushing ice both upwards (called a "pressure ridge") and downwards (called an "ice keel.")



Kris Newhall prepares the top float for redeployment.



Rick Krishfield takes notes as the instruments go over the side.

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