

Even so, we still slipped through the ice eight times, although we were prepared for this as we had checked the ice beforehand. After being unceremoniously ducked into the sea, the water soaking our clothes froze stiff and solid on contact with the air.

At the end of one harrowing day, with 14 gruelling hours behind us, we set up camp at 88° 19' N, when we were suddenly surprised by a polar bear. We had just finished changing into warm clothes, when the bear suddenly appeared at a distance of 30 metres. It took its "bearings", sniffing the air and inspecting us. Then it began to approach us. It failed to heed our warning shot. When it had come to within 8 metres of our tent, we were forced to kill it. We shot it three times in the chest with a 44 magnum calibre revolver.

Some people would claim that it would have been cheating to eat an animal shot during the expedition. The expedition would no longer be operating "unsupported", as the extra rations had not been part of the overall plan. Therefore, we refused to eat any of the bear meat that day, but carved several steaks out of the animal to eat as part of our celebration on reaching the North Pole a little later.

In fact, wild life is rare at these high latitudes. The day after meeting the bear, a seal popped its head up out of the gap that we were crossing. We saw fox tracks on several

occasions, as far north as 89°N. Close to the North Pole, we observed a small pile of pale shrimps.

The day after arriving at the North Pole, we crawled out of our tent and celebrated our victory by eating the polar bear steaks. It was then time to prepare a landing strip for the Twin Otter. All of a sudden, a large aeroplane roared above us. It was the U.S. Navy on a routine patrol, monitoring any submarine activity. We managed to contact them via our VHF radio.

"Do you need any food and reading material?" they asked. "Yes", we cried in chorus.

Sure enough, little by little, small parcels of food dropped down from the heavens. That was truly a fine ending to an exhausting, yet very successful journey.

Due to adverse weather conditions at our tent site, and at the two fuelling stations on the ten hour flight route to Resolute Bay, we were forced to wait until 9th May before being fetched. However, we had emergency supplies for 12 days, fuel reserves for 20 days, plus the supplies dropped by the U.S. Navy. We were able to manage comfortably. All the same, it was a great relief, when the plane arrived to collect us. None other than the unfortunate Geir himself jumped out to greet us. A better reception could never have been anticipated!

Udvalgte bøger om Cook, Peary og Nordpolen

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