

Volunteer Programme

23-28 July 2006

Report compiled by

Robin Ballard
Edward Barlow
Tom Cherry
Geraldine Creaven
Claire Foot
Malcolm Wallis
Nina Ezra

Natutal History Institute report overview by

Dr. Thorleifur Eiríksson
Böðvar Thórisson

Introduction

The aim of this field work is to continue a baseline for the fauna and microorganisms of streams, lakes, shorelines and sea beds of the Western Fjords.

This programme is a continuation pilot project between The Natural History Institute of Iceland and volunteers from Anotherwaytravel.

Field work

Day 1 – 23rd July

The group were introduced to the Institute and its staff including a tour of the museum.

Training was given on site with equipment in: electrofishing, stone sampling, kick sampling, drawing transects and habitat description. This training took place at River Trollagilsa.

Electrofishing involves sweeping across the sample area with electric rod, fishing net and bucket for collection. Notes were taken of numbers caught and missed. Fish caught were weighed and fork length measured. A sub sample was taken for further study in the laboratory.



Stone sampling involves taking a large stone from five places across a transect. These stones were then scrubbed in water in a bucket. The water was then sieved through either a 125 or 250 micron sieve. The remaining material was then stored in labelled containers in 70% alcohol solution in order to preserve the sample. The labels detailed the date, site, type of sample, size of sieve used.

The stones were drawn around, measured and described for surface roughness. Notes were taken of location of samples.



Kick (spark) sampling involves collecting, in a 250 micron net, a sample by kicking the bed of the stream into the net. This material was then collected in a container and sieved as for stone samples. The remaining material was collected in a labelled container in 70% alcohol solution.

Describing the habitat transects involves measuring the width of the stream, and then taking depth samples at regular spaces across the transect. At each point the following descriptions were noted: percentage of bottom material (mud, 0-1cm, 1-7cm, 7-20cm, > 20cm), moss, algae and rock. A note was also taken of the GPS position and elevation. The pH, temperature and conductivity of the water was also taken.

Samples of insects were caught using butterfly nets and beating net. These were preserved and recorded.

We also explored further up the river in order to assess possible further sampling sites. From up here we had great views back towards Bolungarvik and out across the fjord. We observed the hydro power station near the top of the hill that was built in the 1950s. It was mentioned that the area was used by "outlaws" in the past who stole the local sheep.

Day 2 – 24th July

Five sites were sampled along River Tröllagilsá up to the snow line.

The samples taken were the same as before, including stone samples kick samples and river measurements as well as descriptions of sites used.



Samples of insects were caught using butterfly nets and beating net. These samples were preserved using alcohol as before and recorded.

The aquarium net was used to catch water beetles at Brunnklukka.

At the upper most sample site no kick were taken as the river had insufficient current at this point.

The road to the sites was very rough and steep so 4 wheel drive vehicles were needed to take volunteers and kit to the site. Once at the top we enjoyed amazing scenery, snow, beautiful rivers and flowers and the only other animals around were a few Icelandic sheep. The rivers were very clean and the area has not been

spoilt by people.

Day 3 – 25th July



The morning was spent preparing equipment to take across to Grunnavik. In the afternoon the group sailed to Jokulfirdir fjord. Here grab samples were taken from 2 sites. Station A was 15-20 fathoms and station B was up to 29 fathoms. For sampling the Ven Vein grabber was used. Five attempts were made with the Shibek grabber but only one produced samples. The samples were stored in formaldehyde neutralised with borax.

GPS, depth and time was recorded for each sample. Whilst sampling we had our first sightings of the Drangajökull glacier from the boat. Puffins, Arctic Terns and other sea birds were flying around us as we travelled to the surveying sites, great fun to watch.

Day 4 – 26th July

4 sites were surveyed along the Rangalli river which flowed into the Lónafjörður. Measurements and samples were taken.

Steep climbing amongst rocks and vegetation. Banks were lush with Angelica and sweet Cicely. Along the shoreline were large amounts of seaweeds of various types.

Temperature and pH was also collected from each sample site.

Final station 300ft.

Several of our sampling stations were near waterfalls and the current was very fast flowing resulting in one member of the group losing their balance whilst sampling in the river.

Day 5 – 27th July

To group was taken by boat from Grunnavik and taken to the Nature Reserve. Stations were run from the river Sléttuá and lake Sléttuvatn further up the mountain at an altitude of 140m.

The area around lake was flat with grass, moss and some flowering plants.

2 Whooper Swans with Sygnets were sighted along the shoreline of lake and a Great Northern Diver was seen diving in and out of the lake.

Stone and kick samples were used and Zoo plankton net was used to collect plankton from the river. First and third stations on the lake a Kayak sampler was used to collect lake bed material, to be sieved as stored as river samples had been.

Butterfly nets and K nets were used to collect insects from around the shoreline of the lake and at the two river stations.

The group drew a rough sketch of the lakes, noting the widths using a laser range finder

Temperature and pH was also collected from each sample site.

After landing on the beautiful black sanded beach we started the walk to Sléttuvatn, this involved navigating both hidden river channels and an Angellica "forest". The lake was spectacular, very still and hidden away near the top of the hill.

Day 6 – 28th July



The week's work was recorded in a report and samples that had been collected through the week were observed through stereoscopes. Further investigation of the samples are carried out by the Institute during rest of the year.

The whole group went to the arctic tern colony at Bolungarvik and assisted in ringing 63 young chicks.

Volunteer Email Contact List

Robin Ballard – rpb299@ticali.co.uk

Geraldine Creaven - G.creaven@forumforthefuture.org.uk

Ed Barlow – in_bedders_with_edders@hotmail.com

Thomas Cherry swashlush@yahoo.co.uk

Nina Ezra - nina.ezra@crisis.org.uk

Claire Foot – clairefoot@hotmail.com

Malcolm Wallis (Another Way Travel) malcolm@anotherwaytravel.com