

Day 7 Off King William Island

- Posted by [Kristy](#) on August 18, 2008 at 11:00pm

It's cold!! I've loved having my porthole window open, but last night I had to break down at 4 in the morning, close the window, and get an extra blanket. Today dawned sunny and clear, the water has been calm, it's been beautiful....but still cold! Tomorrow it could go down as low as -4.

I stayed on ship today. The hydrographers considered taking me out to the tundra with them, but they needed someone to be on bear watch - with a gun. That ruled me out!! I was happy to stay on board - as always, I learned, and learned some more. Plus, the crew is just a really neat group of people to hang out with! So far, they haven't kicked me off the bridge.

I spent some time with Johnathon, as he continued to share his expertise on Franklin with me. It really is thrilling to look out at King William Island and know that many in Franklin's expedition trudged the barren coastline that I'm looking out on. Johnathon has shared some literature with me, and Bruce has added some links on Franklin on the Breaking the Ice webpage - we'll be adding more, so keep an eye out. Later this week we'll be exploring an area southwest of King William Island, some of it uncharted, looking for the Terror and the Erebus, Franklin's ships lost around 1848.

I watched the crew set a new buoy in the water, and re-locate a few others, putting them in the correct position. Over the winter as the buoys get iced in, the ice can heave them great distances - one had moved ¼ mile from where it's supposed to be according to the chart. One has been heaved up on a beach and will have to be retrieved and re-set on the way back. It was a fascinating process to watch - huge concrete blocks, even bigger buoys, chain meant for giants, steel cables, and the ship derrick, which is a crane. The weight of the bouys and cement actually causes the ship to lean - and it's a mighty splash when they're dropped overboard, after careful and precise measuring, checking, and re-checking, and expert maneuvering by the bo'sun, winchman, captain and crew.

This afternoon Jean-Christophe taught me how to take the water temperature manually...which is sort of like fishing. I enjoyed dangling the thermometer in its case over the side of the ship into the icy water. I also prepared for going into the school at Gjoa Haven tomorrow, on the southeast side of King William Island, which is where we'll anchor off of sometime tonight. I'm told it's a very small community and it seems to be a favourite with many of the crew. I should get a chance to walk out on to the tundra tomorrow, which I'm really looking forward to.

I also learned today that the crew has a wicked sense of humour. I was enjoying the peace of the helicopter deck early in the evening, and actually filming it in an attempt to convey to all of you when I return home, just how unique this arctic desert is (I'm having to work hard at staying hydrated!). The First Mate, Rich, who is a gentle, soft-spoken, professional First Officer that I don't think you'd ever want to mess with, lay in wait as I happily filmed away, believing myself to be all alone in this part of the world, or at least ship, then said "boo!", about an inch from my ear....the results are intact on my camera. I've since learned from a number of crew that Rich is full of surprises....which is a bit worrisome for me! Later in the evening, I was startled to hear my name paged on the PA system to contact the bridge right away. Heart pounding...did I do something wrong? Was someone trying to reach me from home?...I dialed the bridge and was told there was a wildlife photo opportunity. I jumped to yet more conclusions....Bow whales? Polar bears? Bow whales and polar bears at the same time? Well, I appreciated the call, and did my best to get a good picture of the...jellyfish.

I spent many hours outside today and this evening. We are in Simpson Strait, and the land is low in the water. It's completely desolate, and extraordinarily beautiful. We had another fiery orange sunset, and this time, with a clear sky, watched an almost full, silvery moon rise up in the reflection of the sunset. Under the moon, I

noticed what looked like some kind of white tower that didn't appear to be on land and wondered what it might be. Two hours later, a small sailboat glided by - my tower. It was the second sailboat spotted today (Captain Hull tells me there are 8 pleasure craft sailing in the Northwest Passage this summer). I watched the sailboat for a long time as it literally sailed into the sunset. I'm sure the mast was visible long after the cold had seeped into my bones and finally chased me inside.