FIELD EXPEDITION TO THE COAST BEGINS!



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Scientists from the Universtié Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and 2014 InBev-Baillet Latour Fellowship laureate Jan Lenaerts left for the coast on Thursday evening, eager to get to work on their research projects.

On the road again

The five ULB scientists form the IceCon project and Jan Lenaerts from the BENEMELT project have left the Princess Elisabeth station to start the 20-hour journey to the King Baudoin Ice Shelf at the coast, where they will conduct research over the next two to three weeks. Accompanying them will be field guides and mechanics to assist them and ensure their safety while they are on the ice shelf.

On Thursday Novebemr 27th at 9:15 pm, a convoy of two Prinoth tractors hauling a field container each behind them drove away from the Princess Elisabeth station. They carried with them all the equipment the scientists had been testing over the past week. Soon the scientists will put all their fancy new equipment to work!

With an average speed of 10-20 km/h, the journey to the ice shelf is expected to take about 20 hours. The convoy had to drive through the “night”. But as the sun is above the horizon 24 hours this time of year, it shouldn’t be too much of a problem staying awake for the long drive. One person will drive each Prinoth for

a few hours while the others rest, before it’s someone else’s turn to drive. This will allow them to make good time, even if they have to take a slow vehicle.

The team is expected to arrive on Friday evening and set up their first camp on the Derwael Ice Rise, where the scientists will take radar soundings and ice cores for the IceCon project over the next several days.

Better safe than sorry!

The departure had originally been planned for Tuesday or Wednesday. However certain mechanical problems with the skidoos had to be fixed before the research team could leave.

It’s very important to have all equipment in top working condition before heading out into the field, considering the implications of running into mechanical problems in the middle of nowhere. It’s much easier to fix a skidoo at the station, where there is a garage with plenty of parts and tools, rather than out on an ice shelf.

The scientists had planned several extra days in their schedules to deal with unforeseen events, so there is still more than enough time to accomplish what they came to do in Antarctica before they leave.

We'll have an update from them in the coming days!