



WEEKLY REPORT – from December 7th

Thursday December 7: The elements are fighting against *Polarstern*

The Antarctic biological expedition of the Alfred Wegener Institut icebreaker, *Polarstern*, that carries onboard nearly fifty international scientists, started on November 23, 2006 in Cape Town. 12 days were necessary to cover the 4 400 km separating the Southern tip of Africa and the Antarctic continent. Here is the latest news onboard the icebreaker, provided by Dr Gauthier Chapelle, biologist of the International Polar Foundation,.

The first research programs have started and many scientists on board are actively preparing, some their experiments, others, their sampling schemes. Two have already had a heavy week of work behind them: Jan-Hendrik Lott, from the Alfred Wegener Institute in Bremerhaven, Germany, and Elena Pugacheva from the Institute of Geography in Moscow, Russia, the bathymetric team. Both of them have committed to their 8 hour shift every day behind their depth measuring device's screens. This allowed Jan-Hendrik, at 3 am today, to follow the rapid rise of the bottom, from the abyssal plains at more than 3 000 meters depth to the 300 meters of the Antarctic continental shelf. The future hunting grounds of the biologists onboard...

The icebreaker encountered difficult conditions of navigation on its way to the Neumayer station. The closer it gets from the coast, the thicker the ice. Less than 2 nautical miles away from the destination, the *Polarstern* stopped, stuck in the ice. Here is a clear reminder of the power of Mother Nature: even with 15,000 horse power under the hood, the icebreaker is powerless against her. The only hope is a storm, coming from the south if possible, which could quickly modify ice conditions.

This event is not without reminding Calypso caught in the ice, during the first expedition of Captain Cousteau to Antarctica. The ship barely escaped the onslaught of ice and storm she encountered. This adventure is recalled in *Voyage to the edge of the world*. Footages can be viewed on the Google webpage dedicated to the expedition.

Join the adventure and watch the daily videos and log coming from the *Polarstern* on www.cousteau.org/caml.html

[Link to previous news releases from the *Polarstern*](#)