

The wildlife in the distant past

This glorious summer day in July 2012, the boat trip goes to the coast of Akia north of Nuuk. The trip has two purposes: First, we have planned to search for the wildlife of the distant past in the coastal cliffs of fine clay and sand. Later, we will pick berries on the moor-like landscape behind the coast. This summer abounds the slopes towards the fiord with crowberry and blueberry. The berries are large and filled with sugar after having had optimal conditions during the short Arctic

summer.

Over the past 10,000 years, the country has risen on the west coast of Greenland, after a kilometre-thick ice sheet with a heavy weight has drawn back to the size of the ice sheet as we know it today. This means that in many places we are able to find older shorelines with remnants of shells, driftwood and other debris from the old coast up to one hundred meters above the current sea level.

Inside the Godthåbsfiord we

handle the boat quite slowly between the islets and the skerries in the giant archipelago that is scattered on both the west and the east coast of the peninsula Akia. In front of us comes a steep slope of gray fine clay and sand into sight – this is the goal of our trip.

The slope of clay and sand now forms the existing coast, but the materials in the slope and the landscape behind the coast are large seabed sediment, which can be seen everywhere in the small bays of the fiord. The

deposits of the seabed consist of sand and clay, and they contain a rich fauna of seashells and fossils of fish.

This day the clay is wet after the recent high tide, and we have to be careful not to fall into this wet muddy. If you are lucky, you can find fossils of the fish angmassat, also called capelin (*Mallotus villosus*). These fossils are typically ten to fifteen centimetres long, and the fish skeleton appears clearly in the gray stone.



A fossil of angmassat found in the Godthåbsfiord



The coast of Akia, July 2012