

purposes, do not crop up often, and when they do, are usually small in size. And flashing before our eyes again are the ice floes, the endless fissures, openings and canals.

We patrol the waters between Vize and Uyedineniya Islands and Mys [Cape] Zhelaniya, beyond the 78th parallel, in a region that is of exceptional interest to science. We seek an ice floe suitable for landing. Without tearing himself away from the window, aircraft commander A. Rybakov peers below. He must visually determine the thickness of the ice and, after selecting his site, make a landing.

"There's our landing spot!," advises N. Dmitriyev, air navigator. "Look to the right."

The plane makes two passes over the ice field. It then descends, carefully touching down on the deserted and homeless ice floe, on which no-one has set foot before us.

A heated tent is set up on the ice floe and hydrological work commences. At the 351-m mark, the final load falls to the bottom. Readings are taken of the water temperature between the surface and bottom of the sea; water is tested for salinity, content of silicon, oxygen and other chemical elements.

The group takes off again. It's a 15-minute flight to the next destination. Once again equipment is unloaded, a station is set up, new samples are taken.

Several hours later, the detachment chief gives a command: "Let's pack it up and head for base."