



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Patrick Spence, left, Simon Donald and Katie Draper talk with Erik Nygaard, head of Svalbard's police, about Arctic rescue operations and other crime-related procedures this week at the governor's office.

Bears, crazy foxes & idiots

Bear sighting near town, attack by apparently rabid fox means you don't want to be this guy

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

OK, for noobs and scatterbrains, let's re-view the basics:

This is the Arctic. There are dangerous things outside. Try not to be an idiot about it.

A polar bear was spotted a few kilometers from Longyearbyen on Sunday and a fox exhibiting signs of rabies attacked a woman this afternoon in Nybyen. But those and a few other recent hazards didn't make much impression on an Israeli tourist described as "arrogant," who got stuck late today trying to snowmobile through a high-avalanche area to Fardalen without any form of polar bear protection.

The attitude he showed while renting the snowscooter and when two local boys helped him get unstuck didn't go away when police responded in a rescue helicopter and shortly after explained responsible habits at the station.

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Hit men out to ice someone

Trio visiting Longyearbyen to see how suitable it is for murder, – as a surreal serial affair on TV

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

For those worried about the murderer settling here, relax. For one thing, Longyearbyen doesn't really have any donuts.

A trio of strangers is visiting town this week this week with twisted visions of death in their heads and apparently plan to make a serial habit of it, even if things aren't entirely ideal for their scheme.

"This place frankly feels a little too big for us," said Patrick Spence, who one might call a

lead hit man for the Tiger Aspect family.

OK, it's actually a British independent production company and Spence heads its drama label. But he's just as deadly focused on the mission, which is to learn how a fictional Arctic community much like Longyearbyen can serve as the setting for a crime TV series with a healthy dose of surreality.

"Something like 'Twin Peaks' without the most extreme elements," said Simon Donald, who is writing the proposed show, which has a working title of "Glimmer."

So while the protagonist might have a fetish for donuts – or more precisely, those blandly stale plastic-wrapped *multringers* –

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Birds, wind the savior of plants?

Seeds distributed over large area are better able to survive climate change, new study finds

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Remember the Monty Python joke about coconuts possibly "migrating" to an unusually cold area courtesy of a swallow? The theory might have some real-world truth, as a new study finds plants most able to survive climate

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BJØRN ERIK SANDBAKK / SVALBARDFLORA
Inger Greve Alsos, an associate professor in Tromsø, performs fieldwork in Kongsfjorden.

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Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

Returning to the scene of the crime



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Bård Wormdal, left, talks with those attending his presentation of his recently published book, "Satellitkrigen," at Longyearbyen Library on Saturday. He reiterated the book's theme that the Svalbard Satellite Station and similar polar facilities are illegally being used for military purposes by multiple nations, and detailed his ongoing efforts to make his case with Norwegian lawmakers and audiences in other countries. His claims are denied by Norwegian and SvalSat officials, who say any military use consists of accessing climate and terrain data available to the public, but there were no confrontations by the estimated dozen people attending Saturday's presentation.

Briefly

Svalbard history course at UNIS starts Monday

Apparently those who succeed at history are also doomed to repeat it, as a free two-week overview of Svalbard's past is being offered by a Trondheim instructor.

The examination of the region since it was settled in 1596 begins Monday and continues weeknights from 5:15 to 6 p.m. at The University Centre in Svalbard. It is being taught by Thor Arlov, a visiting professor from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology

in Trondheim, who has presented it for several years.

Major aspects of economics, politics, culture and science will be featured, with some comparisons to other Arctic areas.

UNIS students can enroll in the course for credit, which requires completing exercises, essays and a final exam. The public is allowed to sit in on a space-available basis, which has not been an issue previously.

A link to the course, which also features extensive material from previous years such as lectures and sample exam essays, is available at www.unis.no.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Education and research are seen as the biggest areas of future growth in Svalbard, but it seems the outside world doesn't think much of the opportunities for academia in a deep freeze. A new study of the most worthless university majors is topped by agriculture, specifically referring to things like crop management and disease. So it's always possible the real conspiracy with our Doomsday Seed Vault is it's here just because nobody else wanted it. Coming in fourth and fifth, respectively, are animal science and horticulture, so those studying how increasingly desperate polar bears and invasive species are evidence of our suicidal festish to destroy the planet are held in

slightly better esteem than fashion design and theater. Ranking most useful by a huge margin is business, no doubt delighting climate skeptics everywhere ... The good news is you don't always have to pay to get indoctrinated in "junk science." Besides the free UNIS classes mentioned in this issue, there's now a free online "Open Climate 101" course being taught by David Archer, a prolific researcher whose Arctic studies include some Svalbard stuff, being offered through the University of Chicago at <http://forecast.uchicago.edu/moodle>. We've found a bounty of similar offerings and um, maybe instead of sending you to Google we'll update in the near future something we wrote a year ago at this time on the subject.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A capacity crowd of several hundred people listen to a presentation about polar bear habitation and safety today at The University Centre in Svalbard. The lecture by Per Andreassen, at podium, and Margrethe Keyser is the first in the 2012 Svalbard Seminar series, which continues through Jan. 31.

Svalbard Seminars back at UNIS

Nuggets from all aspects of Arctic life, from past tragedies to future societies, will be presented during this year's annual Svalbard Seminar series beginning today from 8 to 10 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at The University Centre in Svalbard.

The free seminars are open to the public, but arriving early is advised since the first presentation today about polar bears drew a beyond-capacity crowd that spilled out into the aisles and back of the room.

The other seminars scheduled include:

- Jan. 19: An overview of the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund and tips for grant applications will be presented by Ann Kristin Olsen, the fund's chairwoman.

- Jan. 24: The 50th anniversary of a mine explosion in Ny-Ålesund that killed 26 people will be discussed by Jon Aage Ødegaard, who was there at the time, and Thor Bjørn Arlov, who examines the political and social impacts.

- Jan. 26: The shifting sea ice situation and how ice cores are helping analyze climate patterns will be discussed by researchers Frank Nilsen and Kim Holmén.

- Jan. 31: The future of industry in the Arctic will be discussed by Terje Aunevik, followed by a presentation of Longyearbyen's future as a sustainable family community by Municipal Council Chairwoman Christin Kristoffersen.

Birds, wind help flora cope with climate

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change include those whose seeds are carried by wind or birds.

The study of about 10,000 samples from 27 Arctic plant species show those with wide dispersement lose less of their genetic diversity in a warmer climate than those with limited dispersal. The species' growth form is also important, with taller trees and shrubs having a longer lifespan than many herb species.

"If a species with limited seed dispersal

perish from an area, it means that this species as a whole will experience an irrevocable loss of genetic diversity," said Inger Greve Alsos, an associate professor from Tromsø who led the study, in a prepared statement.

The study finds a high percentage of the species analyzed will be vulnerable or threatened by 2080, making priorities for conservation difficult.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Report on emergency drill at faulty power plant censored

A report about an unannounced emergency preparedness drill at Longyearbyen's power plant is being partially blacked out by the city for containing what it calls secret internal matters. *Svalbardposten* has twice sought the report under Norway's Freedom of Information Act, arguing the drill last November was by the external consulting company Arctic Safety, not the city, and the public has the right to full disclose due to numerous power outages and other problems at the plant in recent years. Bydrift has taken steps to remedy deficiencies, but has not brought the plant into full compliance, and the inspection was to test the current state of readiness. Marianne Aasen, managing director of the city's utility agency, said the partial secrecy is necessary so employees at the plant can express themselves freely as part of the report. She said the report focuses on the exercise, but does not provide an overall analysis of the plant's readiness.

Can an incomplete rib bone solve mystery of expedition?

Researchers are hoping part of a rib will help solve the mystery of the ill-fated Andrée Expedition to Kvitøya in 1897, where the remains of three Swedish explorers were discovered in 1930. The partial rib arrived at the Polar Museum in Tromsø two years ago and permission is being sought to examine it, although "it is in a vault ... and basically not available for research" due to strict rules regarding human remains, said Director Marit Anne Hauan. Salomon August Andrée, Knut Frænkel and Nils Strindberg crashed their balloon onto the ice of northern Svalbard, with their remains found on Kvitøya. One of the current-day researchers said the explorer's apparent death during the fall season is unusual and suspects suicide may have played a role.

Man sleeps through room fire

Firefighters put out a small fire caused by burning food in an oven Saturday morning at Svalbard Lodge, with a man in the room sleeping through the entire event. Officials said he will likely have to pay for the firefighters, a police fine and repairs to the hotel.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. E winds to 36 km/h. High -4C (-12C wind chill), low -10C (-14C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Partly cloudy. E winds to 39 km/h. High -2C (-11C wind chill), low -3C (-10C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Cloudy. E winds at 7 km/h. High -7C (-11C wind chill), low -10C (-14C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Cloudy. SE winds to 11 km/h. High -10C (-15C wind chill), low -11C (-16C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -11C (-16C), -14C (-20C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, -14C (-20C), -16C (-22C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, -15C (-22C), -16C (-23C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -16C (-22C), -16C (-23C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by yr.no			



BBC WALES

Goran Visnjic examines the body of a crew member whose death aboard an Arctic research submarine raises tensions on the 2010 "dramatized science" series "The Deep" on BBC One. The series was written by Simon Donald, who is part of a three-person team visiting Longyearbyen this week to research another dramatized murder series set in a small, fictional High Arctic community.

Hoping to make a killing in Arctic town

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he or she probably won't be encountering any doppelgängers or seed vault zombies.

"That's the opposite of what I do," Donald said. "I like to represent things from that world authentically."

At the same time, "I'm very aware I'm fictionalizing because the community I'm looking for doesn't exist," he said.

Spence and Donald both have numerous shows and awards to their credit, with the 2010 drama series "The Deep" on BBC One featuring another fictionalization of Arctic science by Donald. The five-show series features the crew of a research submarine encountering death and mysterious conditions, with ghost ships, nuclear hazards and clashes with Russians factoring into the plot.

"I wanted to get back to doing a bold, original ideas thriller," Donald said of the new series. "I was casting around for a world, a community that gave me elements I feel comfortable with."

He sees the setting as a community largely closed off from the world, with tense resulting situations. He also emphasizes a "permafrost"

concept: "I have to have a thaw in a place that is unprecedented in human history."

Characters might resolve around a patriarch in an ancient-but-dying profession, such as whaling, with modern-day descendants feeling the depravity of possessing little but the family name, Donald said. Some of that element is clearly evident in Longyearbyen.

"Coal brought people in, but other elements are now moving in and that's really fun to play with," he said.

But just using Longyearbyen or another small real-world town won't do.

"It it turns out to be the dentist we're (expletive)" because it will involve a specific well-known person, Donald said. "That happens to be true for every profession in town."

Simon said they intend to make several return scouting trips beginning in spring, with visits to other small Arctic towns in places like Russia possible. But he said it's a long brainstorming process and it could be two to six years before the show is aired, if indeed the project happens.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Man won't face penalties for arrogance

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But the visitor, who apparently has no field experience, won't face penalties for his not-so-excellent adventure. While fines are imposed for certain police actions and the governor's office intends to be more aggressive billing ill-prepared parties for emergency rescues, Police Chief Erik Nygaard said neither is applicable in this instance.

"It was not an ordinary rescue operation," he said. "It was a police action."

While airlifting the man out of Longyearbyen requires money and manpower, "if we have a helicopter available for police duties we are going to use it," Nygaard said.

The polar bear spotted Saturday in Adventdalen – a rarity at this time of the year – is a reminder why people traveling outside the

city are required to carry some form of protection such as a rifle, flare gun or spray. A tourist guide told officials the bear was moving away from town, although it may have been seen by another person in the area a few days earlier.

The latest incident in Svalbard's most serious rabies outbreak in 30 years occurred today when a fox tried to attack a passing car and then a group of students walking on the road. It tried to bite one woman in the group, but "she used her mitten to ward it off," Nygaard said.

Police shot the fox, which Nygaard said had "obvious" signs of rabies, and sent it to the mainland for analysis. More than a dozen infected foxes and reindeer have been discovered since last fall.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Jan. 18

6 p.m.: Movie: "Jodaeiye Nader az Simin" ("A Separation"), Iranian drama, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 19

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar about applying for grants from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund. UNIS.

9 p.m.: Annual Svalbard Riding Club meeting for horse enthusiasts. The club is also seeking assistants. Kroa.

Jan. 22

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Lion King" (3D), U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "My Week With Marilyn," British drama, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 24

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Jan. 26

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Jan. 28

3 p.m.: Presentation about the 1876-78 Norwegian North Sea Expedition by Per Kyrre Reymert. Longyearbyen Library.

7:30 p.m.: Performance: "Carmina Burana" by Den Norske Opera & Ballett w/ Jan Helge Trøen, plus Longyearbyen choirs. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 29

8 p.m.: Movie: "Mission Impossible – Ghost Protocol," U.S. action, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 31

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Feb. 1-5

PolarJazz festival. Details at polarjazz.no and in Jan. 31 issue of *Icepeople*.

Feb. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Varg Veum – De Døde Har Det Gode," Danish/Norwegian crime/thriller, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Warming alters area's economy, society?*
- *1.8B kr./yr. for green power from Norway*
- *Nome gets fuel after hard icebreaker trip*
- *'Doomsday' year looks bright for N. Lights*