



# A year of mixed blessings

*Rescues and crimes up, listless economy in 2010, but promising times ahead, governor reports*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
**Editor**

There were more rescues and crimes, fewer new vehicles, and the Russians seem ready

to reverse a string of troublesome years, according to the annual report for 2010 released this week by Svalbard Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø.

Increased mining, research and infrastructure continues to make environmental monitoring and cleanup a significant part of the administration. Tourism appears to be stabilizing. And the governor says he needs more personnel and space for new facilities.

The 28-page report largely outlines the responsibilities of the governor's office, with updates and statistics for specific areas provided where relevant. But due to Svalbard's unique setting, the statistics – while not lying – don't always reveal the full truth.

Crime in Svalbard increased 46 percent, for example, an eye-popping figure by almost

**See REPORT, page 3**



Svalbard Church Priest Leif Magne Helgesen, top right, accompanied by fur-winged angels, performs Wednesday at Radisson Blu Polar Hotel during this year's Polarjazz. Above, Cowabunga, performs modern jazz at the hotel Thursday. At bottom right, an ensemble performs the premier of the audio/visual suite "Arctic Mood" at Kulturhuset on Saturday. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.



## Mixing hot and cool

*Review: Lots of variety in music and crowds at Polarjazz festival*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
**Editor**

There was inspiration for every kid who's lugged a tuba to school, a cafe hosting its first concert on five minutes' notice (with the

drummer making do with a trash can) and the revelation Cubans can't match Norwegians in the Arctic when it comes to eating fish.

The 13th annual Polarjazz festival saw a  
**See FESTIVAL, page 4**



## Store Norske's gold hopes tarnished



**STORE NORSKE**

Store Norske calls gold found during test drills in St. Johns fjorden "promising," but Svalbard's governor is expressing concern about excessive mining activity and possible impacts.

*Governor cites environmental, excess flight concerns; 2011 plans put on hold by company*  
**By MARK SABBATINI**  
**Editor**

There's little glitter in Store Norske's gold prospects this year, with the company stating it will not be able to continue exploration in Svalbard due to environmental impact concerns raised by the governor.

Store Norske found traces of gold during test drills last year in St. Johns fjorden, midway between Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund.

**See HALT, page 3**

### Inside

**Free ice cave tour for youths Feb. 17**  
Page 2

**Headlines from Svalbardposten**  
- Mayor gets support from local board members  
- Mapping of safe eastern sea corridors sought  
- Promising season for snowscooters underway  
Page 3

**Weather forecast**  
Page 3

**Events calendar**  
Page 4

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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## Corrections policy

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.

## Like 'Svalbard Idol,' minus the annoying judges



UKM SVALBARD

Longyearbyen students rehearse today at Kulturhuset for the national UKM competition, with the local show of music, dance, film, photography and art scheduled at 4 p.m. Saturday at the theater. Tickets are 100 kroner for adults, free for youths 19 and under. Winners will compete districtwide in Tromsø, with the national competition scheduled June 24-28 in Trondheim.

## Briefly

### Russia to build research center in Barentsburg

Russia is planning to build an environmental monitoring station in Barentsburg that would open in 2013, according to *RIA Novosti*.

The station modernizes already existing buildings, said Valeriy Martyshchenko from the Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring, in an interview with the newspaper. It will feature geophysical, hydrologic and geologic facilities, plus a station for reception of satellite data and rooms for science conferences.

### Free youth ice cave tour

A free ice cave tour for youths in grades eight through the age of 18 is being offered Feb. 17. Vehicles will depart from the

Longyearbyen youth club at 5 and 6 p.m., with the tour expected to take three to four hours.

Wool, snowscooter suits and head flashlights are recommended. Helmets will be provided. To register sign up at the youth club or e-mail Kristine Hansen at kristineh@lokalstyre.no.

### Seeds sent after floods

Australia is making its first deposit in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault following weeks of "super flooding" that wiped out crops, killed 35 people and saw some area hit with a year's worth of rain in a day.

The 343 seed samples are from the Hershman seed bank in Victoria. They include field peas collected from China and chickpeas from Lebanon. The majority of the seed samples don't exist anywhere else in the world.

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

It's another North Pole first and you can be one of the pioneers for a mere 420,000 kroner. The first-ever "above and below" Pole expedition, arriving by skydiving and followed by a scuba dive, is scheduled to leave Kirkenes for Longyearbyen on April 9. The 15-day expedition for up to 16 people includes three days at the North Pole Base Camp in Barneo. As with many expeditions it's for a cause, with British adventurer Nigel Gifford publicizing environmental issues and raising money for servicemen "mentally scarred" by combat. The expedition's site is [www.nigelgifford.co.uk](http://www.nigelgifford.co.uk) ... A mostly unremarkable article about Svalbard tourism in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* notes that while car thefts are rare since getaways aren't possible, people might

"borrow" them while their owners are away. But Martin Kiel said he didn't mind, since his Volvo was washed and there was a bottle of cognac in the glove compartment after arriving on his return flight ... One of the great things about running a newspaper is we can bestow immortality (in cyberspace, at least) on whomever we please. So we're bestowing the Eternally Amazingly Cool Guy Award upon Urban Forsberg, whose car we backed into in a moment of stupidity, resulting in a deeply dented and barely working driver's door. Not only did he take it well, but he's planning to fix it using a few hours of his spare time and a bit of our spare change. Considering the incident might have cost more than our annual budget, a few column inches here that nobody will ever read seems like (truly) the least we can do.

A polar bear shot after attacking two kayakers on a Nordaustlandet beach last summer is inspected by a member of the Svalbard governor's office. The governor's annual report for 2010 calls the incident one of the biggest police and international media events of the past year.



TROND AAGESEN / SVALBARD GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

## Crime, rescues increase in 2010

REPORT, from page 1

any measure. But the governor reports it's because there's so few crimes even a few can significantly affect percentages. In this instance, the number of reported crimes was 57, up from 39 in 2009.

"Crime in Svalbard is still low," the report notes. "Although there are variations from year to year, it's only a matter of minor numerical changes."

"The increase is essentially due to the number of crimes for profit increasing by nine cases and there were four violent crimes registered compared to zero cases in the same period of 2009. In addition, police uncovered three drug-related crimes against none last year."

A total of 44 percent of crimes were resolved, lower than 57 percent in 2009, due to only four of 21 thefts resolved.

The two biggest incidents handled by police officials involved polar bears. One in-

involved a researcher being fined for fatally shooting an attacking polar bear at Hornsund and failing to report it. The other was the rescue and investigation after a bear attacked two kayakers in their tent on the northern coast of Nordaustlandet, severely injuring one it dragged across the beach.

It was "a relatively busy year in relation to rescues," the report notes. There were 82 rescues in 2010, only one more than 2009, but a continuation of increases dating back to 2006 when about 50 rescues were performed.

Better education about expeditions has been recommended previously for tour groups and researchers. The governor's office, in conducting more checks of snowscooter drivers, also notes in its report organized tours should be monitored more closely because many participants failed alcohol consumption tests.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Gold project impact raises concerns

HALT, from page 1

The company called the find "promising" at a time when cutbacks are underway in coal operations due to an expected long-term production decline.

But the company was planning further activity in the area between March and August for the next three years, far more than the company previously suggested, according to NRK.

"The scope of the planned activity is so great that we have demanded that an environmental impact assessment be prepared," said Guri Tveito, head of the governor's environmental division.

As a result, "we can not continue explo-

ration in 2011," said Dag Ivar Brekke, Store Norske's deputy administrative director.

The governor is also reprimanding Store Norske for excessive helicopter landings at the gold site, according to *Svalbardposten*.

There were 429 times from March to September of last year, including 231 during the drilling period – four times what the company sought. The company also said most landings would be in March, but 388 occurred between April and September.

Brekke said the discrepancy is due to differing interpretations of what a landing is.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

### HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

#### Fellow board members reject Sandmo's criticism of mayor

Longyearbyen Mayor Kjell Mork is receiving support from the municipal council's conservative and nonpartisan party members, who say they do not share distrust voiced by Svalbardlista member Jon Sandmo. Sandmo, after reviewing the city's management of cultural and leisure activities, wrote a letter telling Mork "I have absolutely no confidence in you as a local chairman of the board, not just because of this issue, but also because of the arrogant, condescending attitude and constant reprimands you have shown to me." Sandmo said separately he feels other council members also have a negative attitude toward him. Håvar Fjerdingsøy, leader of the bipartisan members, said he has confidence in Mork and "I have great respect for Sandmo, both personally and politically. We disagree in some cases, but it has nothing to do with respect. I think he is a breath of fresh air in local government. We need that."

#### Experts seek better mapping of waters in East Svalbard

Seven experts with years of experience sailing in East Svalbard are recommending mapping of safe sea corridors in areas now poorly charted. An analysis for ship types ranging from tankers to small pleasure boats is vital to reducing the danger of accidents in the area, said the group, which also recommends labeling the area's biggest tourist attractions. There were 17 reported ship incidents between 1981 and 2010. Fishing vessels represent the largest vessel presence with 65 percent of all traffic, followed by cruise ships with 20 percent.

#### Snow tours outlook promising

Tourism industry officials are expressing optimism about this year's snowscooter season now underway.

Basecamp got a record early start to its *Noorderlicht* tours two weeks ago and has been offering sled dog excursions since November. Polarjazz also helped Spitsbergen Travel and Svalbard Huskies start on a promising note, as prolonged winter cold and clear skies are creating ideal conditions.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Fair. N winds at 4 km/h. High -27C (-34C wind chill), low -30C (-30C wind chill).	Snow late. SE winds at 7 km/h. High -23C (-29C wind chill), low -32 (-32C wind chill).	Snow. ESE winds at 11 km/h. High -20C (-28C wind chill), low -22C (-30C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds at 11 km/h. High -16C (-23C wind chill), low -19C (-26C wind chill).
Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, cloudy, -17C (-24C), -18C (-25C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy -18C (-25C), -19C (-26C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, -19C (-26C), -20C (-27C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -18C (-25C), -20C (-27C), light 1:39h.			
<b>Data provided by yr.no</b>			



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The Danish band Klezmofobia performs klezmer fusion Saturday at Fruene. It was the first concert at the espresso cafe, taking place with about five minutes' advance notice when the band – scheduled to perform somewhere in Lompensenteret – asked permission to set up there.

## Party or 'names?' Listeners want both

### FESTIVAL, from page 1

possible record crowd one night and somewhat disappointing turnout on a few others, but fans of almost anything but opera and hard rock would be hard pressed to say something wasn't offered during the five-day event.

"We wanted to have a wide range of artists for the festival in total, a bit more jazz than last year, and trying out having what I consider high-quality artists that has not been played on the radio," wrote Lasse Hansen, director of the festival, in an e-mail interview.

Organizers didn't select any performers matching the notoriety of some headliners in past years, saying it was to determine if the "party" experience or big-name musicians was what attracted ticket buyers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, audience members want both.

"It's clear people want a party, and famous and well-known artists," Hansen wrote. "Ticket sales for Saturday was over the edge, and ticket sales for Thursday and Friday was lower than (the) budget."



The eclectic trio Lyriaka, above left, performs a children's concert Saturday at Kulturhuset's cafe. Above right, singer/humorist Halvdan Sivertsen and his band don white sweatshirts and gold chains to perform an out-of-character hip-hop song Saturday at the Radisson.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

## What's up

### Feb. 9

6 p.m.: Movie: "Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang," British fantasy/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Green Hornet" (3D), U.S. action/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 10-14

Longyearbyen Library closed for installation of a new computer system.

### Feb. 12

4 p.m.: UKM Svalbard youth performing arts competition. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 13

11 a.m.: Hilmar Nøis Trail sled dog race from the Northern Light Station to Passhytta. No entrance fee and dog teams can be of any size. Deadline to register at trappers.trail@gmail.com is midnight Feb. 12.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Easy-A," U.S. comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Tomme Tønner 2 – Det Brune Gullett," Norwegian gangster comedy, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 14

7:30 p.m.: Concert by pianist Joanna MacGregor. First half features central European classical composers; the second half will highlight gospel, blues, jazz and tango music from the Americas. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 15

7 p.m.: Local Board meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### Feb. 16

6 p.m.: Movie: "Yogi Bear" (3D), U.S. family film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Another Year," British drama/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 17

2 p.m.: Board of Culture and Leisure Business Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

## 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:

- *Magnetic Pole shifts cause superstorms*
- *Warming = global Egypt-like protests?*
- *Climate change boosts oil production*
- *Wanted: Polar bear patrols in Svalbard*