



# A bunch of bear encounters

*Dog killed, two injured in most recent of several sightings at settlements during past week*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Warnings about numerous polar bear encounters at various settlements are being issued by the Svalbard governor's office, with one dog killed and two others injured today in the most recent incident.

"In recent days there have been several polar bears near Longyearbyen," a statement by the governor's office today notes, adding "the governor is asking people to show due care when they go outdoors."

**Japan wants polar bear:** Svalbard not sending one

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"The governor also reminds people that, according to the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act, they are forbidden to seek out and disturb polar bears. Obvious violations of this provision are punishable by fines or imprisonment."

Sightings can be reported to the governor by calling 4140 3165.

The most recent encounter occurred at



MATEUSZ BARAN

A polar bear attack dogs outside the Hornsund research station today. One of the dogs was killed.

Poland's Hornsund research station, where a bear has roamed for the past four or five days and attacked dogs several times, said Rune Jensen, a police supervisor for the governor.

He said they didn't report previous sightings, chasing the animal away using a shotgun and fireworks, but the fight early today resulted in

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# Lights leaving Svalbard in the dark

*Sun returns after multi-month absence, yet doesn't; major auroral show may be a bit dim in archipelago*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

OK, so everyone celebrates the return of the sun nearly three weeks after it actually happens. That's how it is in a town surrounded by too many mountains for residents to catch

some rays for a while.

But this year the sun is also apparently leaving Svalbard somewhat in the dark for what's supposed to be a spectacular Northern Lights show due to the largest solar flareup since 2006.

The first official sunrise in Longyearbyen since Oct. 26 occurs at 11:23 a.m. Wednesday, with sunset at 1:02 p.m. Large gains will follow daily, resulting in more than five hours of daylight in less than a week – officially, that is.

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# Honoring good art, bad cheerleading



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Torje Hanssen performs one of three songs he wrote for the UKM Svalbard show Saturday.

*Music, video, gymnastics and even quirky hosting earn youths trip to regional UKM competition*

By **MARK SABBATINI**

Editor

The multimedia portrait of Svalbard to live music was a big hit. The cheerleading in drag ... not so much.

But Longyearbyen students participating in both during the local stage of the UKM competition Saturday earned a trip to the regional stage in Tromsø in April. A total of 14 youths out of the 54 competing were selected

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## 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.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The first rays of sunlight in months nearly touch the peaks of the mountains south of Longyearbyen today, one day before the first official sunrise of the year.

# Sunrise, auroral show sheltered

## DARK, from page 1

But residents will celebrate the sun's return at 11 a.m. March 6, gathering at the step of a war-destroyed hospital building outside Svalbard Church that is supposedly the first place sunlight actually shines in town. The event marks the start of Solfestuka, a weeklong festival with more than 20 events that locals call their favorite bash of the year.

The sun will also officially be lighting up the night skies this week, but those living here

may be a bit sheltered.

A huge solar flareup is expected to result in spectacular Northern Light displays in the United Kingdom, Canada and parts of Norway from Tromsø to Oslo. But auroral activity forecasts for Longyearbyen on Thursday and Friday are between one and three on a scale of 10 (not to mention cloudy skies and possible snow). Tromsø's forecast is four for both days.

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

## Briefly

### Remake of 'Orions Belte' will feature new scenes

A remake of "Orions Belte," one of the most notable movies featuring Svalbard, is underway as "an expensive film with international ambitions," according to *Bergensavisen*.

The movie, based on a book written in 1977, focuses on three Norwegian adventurers exposed to international politics and the Cold

War's most brutal aspects in Svalbard. The original movie was released in 1985 and is considered a national classic, the newspaper stated in an article this week.

The updated screenplay is written by Stein Leikanger, who said he is including portions of the book not in the original movie, and the film will be directed by Peder Norlund. It is being produced by Tomas Backström, who is also responsible for "Insomnia."

## Icesheet

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

We weren't worthy this year's "41 Places To Go," according to *The New York Times*, but at least Svalbard is among "14 new cruises for 2011" in their annual cruise guide published Sunday. Svalbard is listed third, after West Africa and the Mekong River in Vietnam/Cambodia. The newspaper notes "new ground" will be covered during Hurtigruten's eight-day Climate Pilgrimage, offered by the ferry the past two years, including its first-ever stop at Jan Mayen. The interaction with scientists at various research stations is hailed, as are the scenery and wildlife. The starting fare of \$3,763 is in the upper tier – especially since Hurtigruten doesn't offer a level of comfort most people associate with cruises – but it's nothing compared to the \$14,549 for the

Northwest Passage cruise (that price does include a parka). That 19-day journey by Hapag-Lloyd Cruises retraces part of Roald Amundsen's 1906 voyage from Norway to the Yukon, with the modern trip traveling from Greenland to Canada before doubling back to Iceland ... The *Times'* piece is one of numerous travel articles hyping Svalbard cruises (often by writers who took trips "hosted" by a cruise company) now making the familiar annual rounds. But a different tone comes from Dave Walsh, a media spokesman on last year's Greenpeace expedition, in "97 Minutes in Barentsburg." He writes "I did see a metal sunflower, a homemade spaceship, an awful lot of kittiwakes and two men walking out of a painting of a forest." The essay is at <http://davewalshphoto.com/2011/02/14/97-minutes-barentsburg>.



UKM SVALBARD

Liza Marchenko, left, displays a painting and Erle Haldorsen shows photos on canvas for the UKM Svalbard competition. Both were selected Saturday for the regional stage in Tromsø in April.

## 14 youths go to UKM regionals

### COMPETITION, from page 1

for artistic endeavors including music, video, circus gymnastics, visual art and emcee hosting. A panel of judges selected the seven entries among the 18 participating in Saturday's show at Kulturhuset before a mostly capacity crowd armed with cameras.

One of the biggest projects was "Team Arctic," a video portrait of Svalbard featuring a live original song performed by Inger-Johanne Mørk and Simen Henriksen. Also working on the

project were Mikhail Stepankiy, Ragnhild Engan and Emilie Ulsnes.

Erlend Telstø, the emcee, "tried in cheerleading, without success," according to UKM Svalbard's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/ukmsvalbard](http://www.facebook.com/ukmsvalbard)). The judges voted to send him out of town – presumably for an otherwise quality performance.

The finals are in June in Trondheim.

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



UKM SVALBARD

Erlend Telstø, left, attempts cheerleading in drag during the UKM Svalbard competition. Inger-Johanne Mørk and Simen Henriksen, center, perform the original song "Apart" for the student film "Team Arctic." Ida Sigernes and Marianne Bøe, right, present circus gymnastics during the show. All are among the 14 local students selected for the regional competition.

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Crackdown on businesses using Svalbard as tax haven

Tax officials in Longyearbyen continue to get inquiries from companies seeking to lower their taxes by being officially based in Svalbard, but aren't always succeeding as four businesses were expelled and two were refused entry last year. Terje Kaastad, director of the local tax office, said they are giving increased scrutiny to a situation that is not new, generally involving companies relocating management or offices from the archipelago to the mainland. Seadrill Norge, for instance, was officially based in Svalbard in 2007, but in 2009 – with only one employee here – earned more than Store Norske with 700 million kroner in revenue and a tax obligation of 115 million kroner. "After that we got more requests than before, but it did not lead to that we took in more companies," Kaastad said. The tax rate in Svalbard is 16 percent, compared to 28 percent on the mainland.

### Log of field conditions back online; use with discretion

A field log offering information about landslides, ice cover and other conditions is online again after being out of operation for about eight months. The site, established 11 years ago, contains entries submitted by observers in the field, but officials note the information is not officially evaluated for accuracy and the validity of the posts must be evaluated by the reader. "We expect that the information from that report is reliable," said Stein Tore Pedersen, tourism consultant for the Svalbard governor's office. "In 99.9 percent of the cases we rely on the report." The field log, in Norwegian and English, is at <http://feltlogg.blogspot.com>.

### Backström wins sled dog race

Tomas Backström won Svalbard's first sled dog race this year, completing the Hilmar Nøis' Trail course in 2 hours and 22 minutes. The race, in its second year, featured 10 teams making the trip from the old Northern Lights station in Adventdalen to the Passhytta at Eskerdalen. The results will be factored into the starting positions for the Trapper's Trail sled dog race scheduled April 9-10.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Fair. S winds at 7 km/h. High -22C (-28C wind chill), low -24C (-30C wind chill).	Snow late. SE winds to 18 km/h. High -15C (-24C wind chill), low -21C (-29C wind chill).	Cloudy, then snow. ESE winds at 11 km/h. High -14C (-20C wind chill), low -20C (-28C wind chill).	Snow. S winds to 15 km/h. High -11C (-17C wind chill), low -13C (-18C wind chill).
Sunrise: 11:23a Sunset 1:02p	Sunrise: 10:57a Sunset 1:28p	Sunrise: 10:38a Sunset 1:47p	Sunrise: 10:21a Sunset 2:03p
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, snow, -10C (-16C), -11C (-18C), light 4:10h; Monday, snow, -10C (-17C), -23C (-31C), light 4:36h; Tuesday, cloudy, -22C (-30C), -23C (-31C), light 5:01h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -22C (-28C), -22C (-30C), light 5:24h.			
<b>Data provided by yr.no</b>			



PER ANDREASSEN / SVALBARD GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

A polar bear spotted Saturday morning, above, near the dog kennels just outside Longyearbyen heads toward Revneset after rescue officials participating in avalanche drill were redirected to chase the animal away with helicopters, snowmobiles and cars. At right, what may be the same bear comes near a cabin at Vestpynten west of town before departing in that direction. Officials say it wandered out into Adventfjorden, but are concerned it may return to the city.



ROGER ØDEGÅRD

## Warning issued after bear sightings

### ENCOUNTERS, from page 1

the death of one of the station's four dogs.

"It's their responsibility to handle the attack," he said. "If a bear is attacking a dog they can take the dog inside or they can release all of the dogs and they can fight the bear."

One researcher had what may have been polar bear blood on his skin after treating the injured dogs, resulting in all of the residents at the station receiving rabies vaccinations from a Longyearbyen Hospital doctor who responded with governor's officials to the incident. The researchers said they plan to keep the remaining dogs inside in case the bear returns.

Jensen said he doesn't know if there's anything unusual about the bear, such as injuries or malnutrition, since officials only have photos taken by residents at the station.

Multiple sightings of another bear in the vicinity of Longyearbyen were reported beginning Saturday morning near the dog kennels just outside the city limits. Rescue officials with various agencies who were participating

in an avalanche emergency drill on Longyearbyen cut short their training so they could chase the bear away using helicopters, snowmobiles and cars.

What may have been the same bear was spotted Sunday morning by Roger Ødegård, the city's cultural advisor, at his cabin at Vestpynten, 10 kilometers west of Longyearbyen. He told NRK it is the first bear he has seen in the seven years he has owned the cabin.

"The first thing I did was almost look for the camera," he said. "When I saw that the bear was headed towards the city, I contacted the governor. I had originally planned to photograph it while it was quite close to the cabin, but I decided quickly to think safety first."

The bear apparently wandered past town into Adventfjorden, according to the governor's office. Officials also said they have received multiple reports from cabin owners at Hiorthamn and Advent City.

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

## Japan wants bear, Svalbard says no

*Companion sought for male at zoo and a symbol of friendship, but officials here say it's illegal*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

Polar bears are causing some trouble these days, but Svalbard's governor isn't thinking of getting rid of any of them.

A request for a Svalbard bear by the Nihondaira Zoo in Shizuoka, Japan, is being met with a firm rejection from the governor's office. Zoo officials stated in a letter they have a three-year-old male bear and want to provide

it with a two-year-old female companion, according to NRK. The zoo states polar bears are especially loved by children, and the new bear would be an important symbol of friendship between Norway and Japan.

But Guri Tveito, chief environmental officer for the governor, said the request is not possible under regulations for Svalbard.

"It is a protected species and the law says that it is not allowed to hunt or capture bears," she said, adding exceptions are possible in special cases, but "I can not see that this is such a case."

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

## What's up

### 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.

6 p.m.: Board of City Operation Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### Feb. 18

9 a.m.: Board of Growing Enterprises Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

8 p.m.: Movie: "True Grit," U.S. drama/western, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 19-20

10 a.m.: Oriental dance course. Until 3 p.m. Feb. 19 and 2 p.m. Feb. 20. Longyearbyen Skole. More information at [www.svetlanasdans.no](http://www.svetlanasdans.no).

### Feb. 20

11 a.m. Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Tangled," U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Varg Veum – Svart Far," Norwegian crime, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 22

6 p.m.: "Trash People" art exhibition presentation by HA Schult. Project features 500 "people" made of trash that will be displayed on the polar ice as part of a worldwide tour. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 23

6 p.m.: Movie: "Love and Other Drugs," U.S. romance/comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Winter's Bone," U.S. drama/thriller, ages 15 and up. 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:

- *Magnetic Pole shifts cause superstorms*
- *Russia embraces risky Arctic drilling*
- *Japan suspends Antarctic whaling*
- *Drive to the North Pole and back begins*