



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The sun, which officially rose for the first time in nearly four months Feb. 15, still isn't reaching most of Longyearbyen this week. The annual ceremony to see it peek over the hills near Svalbard Church is at noon March 8, the second-to-last day of the week-long Solfestuka festival.

Closer, closer...

Annual Solfestuka welcoming sun back begins Friday. Sort of...

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

There's the official sunrise nobody sees followed a few weeks later by the unofficial sunrise that frequently goes unseen. So a couple of false dawns in a week-long celebration of the sun seems like a bright idea.

This year's Solfestuka begins Sunday, except it really doesn't since a couple of youth-oriented events begin Friday. It officially ends a week from Saturday, except that's not true either since the last event begins at midnight

Sunday and will stretch into the wee hours toward dawn.

The festival also breaks some tradition, adds new events and wraps up with a concert by Åge Aleksandersen, one of Norway's biggest music legends. And it appears Store Norske's struggles may again be the theme of the past-year-as-satire variety show, this year titled "All That Glitters is Not Coal." (of course, that's a guess, since performers keep details a tight secret).

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Bears? Pepper up, but...

Experts recommending spray in Svalbard as less-deadly deterrent, but guns and awareness still vital

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The rifle requirement isn't going anywhere, but experts gathering for a conference this week in Tromsø now agree pepper spray should be used to try to ward off Svalbard polar bears in a less deadly manner.

The three-day conference, organized by the World Wildlife Fund and the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund, is focusing on reducing and coping with bear/human encounters as the polar ice that is the bears' habitat vanishes due to climate change. A study of pepper spray's use in Canada and Alaska suggested the substance is useful and less deadly than firearms in many cases.

"In 13 of the 14 documented cases of where they used pepper spray, also called bear spray, it was very effective," said Nils Harley Boisen, a WWF advisor, according to NRK. "It seemed deterring and no one was injured. There are also cases in Norway and Alaska where pepper spray could save both people's lives and bears' lives."

Svalbard officials have stated pepper spray is a supplement, not replacement for a firearm. But they and conferenced officials also emphasize awareness and not seeking encounters is vital.

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So there's lots of seeds. Next is...

Fifth birthday of Svalbard seed vault gets chilly celebration, hot debate about policy and future

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It's great – in the minds of some, at least – there's all those seeds in the vault in case of a global catastrophe. What's the plan when that happens and farmers in Africa need seeds locked up in the most northern part of the Arctic?

After the celebratory tours and gatherings on the eve of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault's

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NORDIC GENETIC RESOURCES CENTER

Dignitaries and media exit the -18C Svalbard seed vault into even more frigid conditions Monday during the vault's fifth birthday celebration.

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.

Not to go all negative, but...



LINDA BAKKEN / STORE NORSKE

The Svea coal mine welcomes back the daylight at temperatures well below minus 30 degrees Celsius on Sunday, the coldest recorded in Svalbard during an ongoing cold spell. Temperatures have been below average for the past week in Longyearbyen –for the first time in two years – with a low of minus 21 Celsius on Feb. 21. Other low readings include minus 33.9 at Kongsøya, minus 33.3 at Kvitøya, minus 30.2 at Edgeøya and minus 27.5 at Adventdalen.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

We expect a certain amount of paranoia (not that they aren't out to get you) and zaniness every time something happens at the seed vault, so we really didn't do much more than blink when a **blog search on Google for "Svalbard Seed Vault" turned up this two-minute video of a UFO in our skies among the top results.** Naturally, this raises questions, mostly "why would you stop filming if the UFO is still there," as the lone anonymous commenter wrote. **Also high in the rankings is a discourse on G.I. Joe's accurate prediction of Frankengod assimilating its way into our bloodstreams.** There's more – plenty more – about Bill Gates, et. al using the vault to become the Evil Rulers of Earth, but that's getting passé. The UFO video is at www.ufo-blogger.com/2013/02/norway-ufo-ufo-filmed-through-binocular.html and the Wisdom of Joe is at [www.conspirazzi.com/g-i-joe-predicts-monsanto-frankenfood ...](http://www.conspirazzi.com/g-i-joe-predicts-monsanto-frankenfood...) Last week we ran a brief about a French man being exiled because he didn't have money or a job. Now a **second person, an 18-year-old from Belgium, has been kicked off the island and the**



UFO-BLOGGER.COM

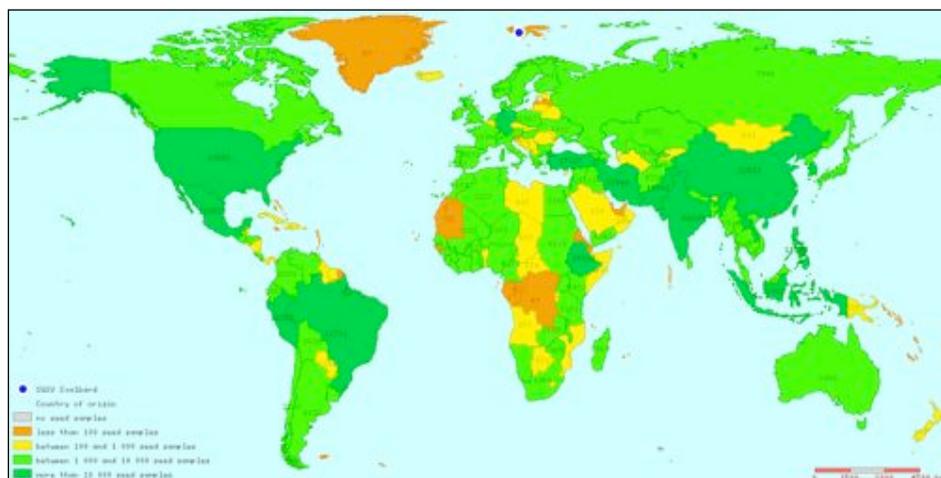
Look! In the sky...oh, never mind: Since we already have zombies and mad scientists in the seed vault, a few aliens will fit right in.



MARVEL COMICS

Mutant food...it's massive! Why, with so much world hunger, is that a bad thing?

governor's office is feeling the need to explain Svalbard is a really, really stupid place to be a transient. "Since we do not have any social support here, we have to ask the people who can not fend for themselves, to take a trip," said Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim, putting it more politely. He goes on to explain jobs are hard to find – and massively expensive housing even harder since employers usually provide it – and, no, the governor isn't a job search agency. The Belgian, by the way, had more modest aims, planning to go on an expedition. But he didn't have proper gear for the outdoors or enough money to stay behind in a hotel ... Most locals are probably aware of the Domsday Vault's fifth birthday on Feb. 26, thanks to global media coverage. But how many can guess what rip-roaring occasion is on the following day? Answer: **International Polar Bear Day, where organizers ask people to reduce their carbon footprint by lowering their thermostats.** Given the deep freeze we've been in this week, we're not surprised we



NORDIC GENETIC RESOURCES CENTER

A map shows the number of seed samples deposited at Svalbard Global Seed Vault by country of collecting or source. The classification is the country where the source germplasm originally comes from, not the country depositing the seeds. The map is part of the vault's Seed Portal (www.nordgen.org/sgsv), where species can be viewed by name, depositor, deposit date and other criteria.

Vault at 5: If doomsday hits...

FARMERS, from page 1

fifth birthday, the occasion itself was spent discussing somber and often controversial issues surrounding the vault's policies and future. While the tours of dignitaries praising the "New Noah's Ark" for international camera crews are seen as key for building public awareness and support, hashing out differences on things such as the "Standard Deposit Agreement" are more vital in terms of the facility's practical use.

Still, just getting into the vault required some bureaucratic maneuvering after the facility was declared off limits to visitors last March due to fire safety concerns. An analysis by Statsbygg of steps taken to reduce the danger was sufficient to get Longyearbyen Fire Department officials to relent for the occasion.

Among the visitors were Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food Trygve Slagsvold Vedum and Åslaug Haga, newly appointed executive director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, which helps manage the vault. New seed species from Canada, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and the organization Seed Savers Exchange were deposited, with the total collection now totaling about 770,000 species. The collection is about one third of all the unique seed samples found in gene banks all over the world.

The vault's birthday was spent in the confines of the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel for a meeting of the International Advisory Council (IAC). An ABS-CBN article stated agenda items included the status of seed deposits, future strat-

egy for deposits and reviewing a controversial revision of the Standard Deposit Agreement.

"In 2011, non-government organizations (NGOs) worldwide lobbied for a change in the Depositor agreement to make prevention of biopiracy explicit in the contract," the article noted. "They fear that the present revision in the text still does not address this concern and is being muddled in legal jargons.

"Fears of biopiracy and issues of access and control for farmers are some of the thorny issues that continue to plague the Norwegian prestige project."

The Nordic Research Center (NorGen), in a statement, emphasized the political neutrality of a bank box principle in the deposit agreement. It's "the alpha and omega" for convincing other countries to make deposits.

A major concern, skeptics have long said, is simply storing seeds isn't a strategy for using them after a catastrophe. Wilhelmina Pelegrina, a Filipina IAC member at the meeting, invoked the message of the late Tatay Gipo, a farmer who spoke at vault's official opening.

"As a simple farmer, he has yet to understand why the Global Seed Vault has to be built in the first place, and that he cannot understand why the seeds for farmers like him had to be taken so far away from them and brought all the way to Norway," Pelegrina said, according to ABS-CBN.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Avinor: Oil, other toxic leaks in ground at Svalbard Airport

Oil and other hazardous substances are leaking into the ground at Svalbard Airport, possibly spreading to the lagoon between Longyearbyen's public campground and Adventfjorden, according to Avinor. The agency, after arranging tests at most of Norway's airports, released a consultant's report stating the toxin levels aren't dangerous to life and health. Per-Erik Schulze of the Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature called the leaks "unacceptable" because the food chain can be affected by toxins at very low levels. Morten Ulsnes, the airport's manager, said cleanup options are being evaluated.

Night Ravens sought to roam streets monitoring youths

A group of parents is seeking night owls to roam neighborhoods between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays during the school year to monitor and offer assistance to youths. Night Ravens, a nationwide volunteer effort, was formed due to concerns such as heavy underage drinking in some communities. Longyearbyen organizers said they are hoping to recruit 60 to 80 people before Easter to volunteer for at least one shift, meaning some adults who don't have children will need to be among them. Most of the patrolling will be in the center of Longyearbyen, plus coastal areas during longer periods of daylight. There will be some training, but most of the patrolling is common sense. Those interested in volunteering can contact Nan Sårheim at 4827 6185 or nan.sarheim@snsk.no.

Kennel fined 8,000 kr. after two dogs escape, kill reindeer

A commercial dog kennel has been fined 8,000 kroner after two dogs escaped from a cage and attacked a reindeer, injuring it so severely it had to be euthanized. The dogs escaped the morning of Feb. 19 and ran after two reindeer, reaching one. A person at the site eventually separated the animals, but too late to save the reindeer. The fine from the Svalbard governor's office is due to a violation of the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act regarding the securing of dogs.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. E winds to 55 km/h. High -18C (-27C wind chill), low -19C (-28C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 49 km/h. High -19C (-27C wind chill), low -22C (-27C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 35 km/h. High -21C (-27C wind chill), low -21C (-29C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. E winds to 32 km/h. High -21C (-25C wind chill), low -21C (-28C wind chill).
Sunrise 8:44a; sunset 3:39p	Sunrise 8:34a; sunset 3:48p	Sunrise 8:25a; sunset 3:57p	Sunrise 8:16a; sunset 4:05p
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -18C (-23C), -21C (-26C), light 8:06h; Monday, p. cloudy, -18C (-24C), -21C (-27C), light 8:23h; Tuesday, sunny, -18C (-24C), -19C (-25C), light 8:40h; Wednesday, cloudy, -17C (-23C), -18C (-24C), light 8:56h			
Data provided by storm.no			



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

They chose...poorly. Almost anything goes at the annual Take A Chance sledding contest – and this three-person team's attempt to ride a single ski last year ended shortly past the starting line.

Solfestuka starts Sunday...or Friday

SUNNY, from page 1

Events begin at 10:30 a.m. Friday with the debut of a mosaic art exhibit on the walls of Kulturhuset's cafe, with artist Stefan Törner working with local to produce the works. The other "early" event is an all-night LAN party for youths at Kulturhuset beginning at 5 p.m. Saturday.

"We do not want more than a one-week 'official' Solfestuka 2013, so therefore we call it a 'false start,'" wrote Roger Ødegård Zahl, the city's cultural advisor, in an e-mail interview. "No big deal."

A new event before the official opening reception Sunday is an outdoor Mass at noon below the television antenna at Hiorthfjellet. The reception, featuring a music performance and art exhibition debut, is at 6 p.m. at Galleri Svalbard.

Also new will be two presentations by local residents about a polar region beginning to make its multi-month decent into darkness. Sigrí Sandberg Meloy will discuss her expedition last winter to Antarctica next Wednesday at Svalbard Museum, then join Stein Aasheim at Kulturhuset on Thursday as he talks about his 2011 journey to the South Pole.

Traditional events include the "Stars in Sight" youth talent show Monday at Kulturhuset, a Solcafe dinner and group sing-along Tuesday at Huset and sledding for kids ages 3-6 Wednesday on the hill behind the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel.

The main tradition, of course, is welcoming the sun when it first shines on the main part of town – skies permitting – at noon next Friday on the steps of the old hospital at Skjæringa. Longyearbyen Municipal Council Chairwoman Christin Kristoffersen will host the ceremony, with student Branislav Pavlovic fulfilling the duty of declaring when the sun is back.

Another major tradition is the Take A Chance sledding contest, which will be in Nybyen at Sarkofagen for the second year in a row. It was moved from its usual location at Hiorthamn last year due to lack of snow and Zahl said the new location proved favorable.

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

Solfestuka schedule

March 1

10:30 a.m.: Opening of mosaic art exhibit, created by artist Stefan Törner in collaboration with local kindergartners. Kulturhuset Cafe.

March 2

5 p.m.: LAN party for youths 8-20, in age increments until 11 a.m. Sunday. Kulturhuset.

March 3

Noon: Outdoor Mass. Hiorthfjellet.

6 p.m.: Official opening with music by Liv Mari Schei and Sigrí Sandberg Meloy, and exhibit of art about Arctic research by Helene Sommer, Christian Bermudez and Sigbjørn Bratlie. Galleri Svalbard.

March 4

5 p.m.: "Stars in Sight" children's talent show. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Solquiz. Barentz Pub.

March 5

10 a.m.: Solar activities for kids 1-3. Longyearbyen Library.

7 p.m.: Mass by Father Michalski and Bishop Grgic. Svalbard Church.

7:30 p.m.: Solcafe w/ group singing. Huset.

March 6

10 a.m.: Sledding for kids 3-6. Behind Radisson.

7:30 p.m.: Presentation about 2012 winter expedition in Antarctica by Sigrí Sandberg Meloy. Svalbard Museum.

March 7

7:30 p.m.: Presentation by Stein Aasheim about his 2011 South Pole expedition, plus discussion with Sigrí Sandberg Meloy. Kulturhuset.

11 p.m.: Concert by El Caco. Kroa.

March 8

Noon: Welcoming of sun ceremony. Skjæringa.

12:30: SolFest. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m., 9 p.m.: SolFest for youths. Juniors at 6 p.m., seniors at 9 p.m. Longyearbyen Ungdomsklubb.

7:30 p.m.: "All That Glitters is Not Coal" variety show. Huset.

9 p.m.: Tropical SolFest w/ DJ. Svalbar.

March 9

1 p.m. Take A Chance sledding contest. Upper Nybyen at Sarkofagen.

3 p.m.: Children's singing concert. Kulturhuset cafe.

7:30 p.m.: "All That Glitters is Not Coal." Huset.

10 p.m.: Concert by Åge Aleksandersen and Sambandet. Kulturhuset.

Midnight: Dual-floor dance party. Huset.

What's up

Feb. 27

6 p.m.: Movie: "Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters" (3D), U.S./German action/adventure, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 3-9

Solfestuka. See schedule at left.

March 3

5:30 p.m.: Movie: "Beautiful Creatures," U.S. drama dubbed in Norwegian, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Lincoln," U.S. biography/drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 6

6 p.m.: Movie: "Beautiful Creatures," U.S. drama dubbed in Norwegian, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 7

6 p.m.: Presentation about polar bear biology and behavior, and safety and conduct rules for people in the field. UNIS.

March 10

6 p.m.: Movie: "Rive-Rolf," U.S. animated film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Victoria," Norwegian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 11

7:30 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

March 12

1 p.m.: Environmental and Industrial Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

7 p.m.: Longyearbyen Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

March 13

6 p.m.: Movie: "Django Unchained," U.S. drama/western, ages 18 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 15-16

100-year commemoration of women's right to vote. Historical and cultural presentations from 3:15-6:30 p.m.

March 15 and 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. March 16. 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:

- *Norway ups Barents Sea oil forecast 31%*
- *Shell cancels Arctic drilling for 2013*
- *Alaska fails; polar bears still endangered*
- *Fight melt w/ plastic ice for polar bears?*