To believe that the governor can rescue people out, regardless of circumstances, is wrong. There is no guarantee for that.

- Per Andreassen, police lieutenant

**Bearly aware:**

Polar bear destroys two tents at poorly chosen campsite; group also had trouble with weapon

**Geese grub:**

Record flock a threat to tundra

**HOR**

The world’s northernmost alternative newspaper

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**Strike stops flyers**

Walkout by pilots at Norwegian Air casts pall over Svalbard due to peak tourist season, eclipse

By MARK SABBATINI

A pilots’ strike at Norwegian Air that resulted in the cancellation of nearly all Scandinavian flights this Wednesday, affecting about 35,000 people, could have major consequences for Svalbard beginning Friday.

The discount airline’s resumption of flights between Oslo and Longyearbyen in March of 2013 is widely credited for a large rise in visitors, beginning with a 25 percent increase during its first month. The strike is occurring at the beginning of what are Svalbard’s two busiest months of the year for overnight tourism – and this year is an exceptional case due to the March 20 total solar eclipse that is expected to bring what will be by far a record number of people to the archipelago.

The next Norwegian flight to Longyearbyen is scheduled Friday, with flights on Mon-

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**Bear joins *Lance* research team**

Curious creature damages instruments set up near research vessel frozen into the sea ice

By MARK SABBATINI

Now that they’re finally back on solid ice, that other great natural menace in Svalbard is giving the *Lance* crew a hassle.

A polar bear vandalized equipment set up near the research ship that is frozen into the sea ice north of Spitsbegern, according to an entry this week in the expedition’s official

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Titanic meets Terminator in Svalbard

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My heart will go on infrared

A giant cruise ship lowers lifeboats after striking an iceberg in icy waters in a special-effects-filled film targeted at Svalbard audiences that bears absolutely no resemblance to "Titanic." No, really, other than the boat and iceberg thing, "Arctic Mayday," subtitled "A Future Scenario For Search and Rescue in the High North," follows the fate of the Arctic Viking after it begins sinking in northeast Spitsbergen. Unlike "Titanic," the film by SARNOR (acronym for the latter part of the title, for those needing subtitles) envisions a sufficient number of rugged covered lifeboats that can be picked up by helicopter and dropped on land or an ice floe. All passengers would be fitted with signal-transmitting wristbands, lower left, so swimmers could be detected by radar, lower right. A multitude of responding agencies would also be able to rapid-build medical facilities and other shelters. But, like "Titanic," the film also requires some suspension of belief. Winter cruises under the northern lights northeast Svalbard aren't exactly a thing. Also, the English narration notes "the film describes an ideal operation so it could be implemented if all resources are at the right time." But local rescue -- in only two helicopters -- would be the first to arrive after 90 minutes (less than an hour before the Titanic sank in real life). Also, the film notes full-scale operations could rescue 150 people every 15 minutes -- not ideal for those in the water. The film can be seen at vimeo.com/121125997.

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Oooo... a Longyearbyen politician got ensnared in a "wide stance" scandal this week, which makes folks like us get to write biting headlines and commenters get to rage at length about whether the media or the politician is the villain (OK, how many of you raised your hand for both?). It seems our esteemed Mayor Christin Kristoffersen parked her black Mercedes in the traffic lane at the entrance to Svalbard Airport, causing snarls for other vehicles trying to get through for about half an hour, according to The Local Paper of Re-ciprocity. Like a certain "family values" politician who got caught intimately encroaching on a cop occupying the adjacent restroom stall, Kristoffersen's hijinks were particularly ill-timed. The paper ran an article two weeks ago about how taxi drivers and others are furious at our esteemed Mayor Jeff Newsom, who took "public figure" and "newsworthy issue" side. Kristoffersen, who certainly would have no reason to mislead us, claims "everybody seems to be on my side" (yeah, she apologized as well, but that's less fun to point out).
It's a show; we can't reveal more

COALHEN, from page 1

mean the performers won’t find a way to inject some.

The absurdly long title is essentially the result of a political compromise, said Kristin Furu Grotting, a member of the Longyearbyen Community Council who also happens to be among those who will be on stage.

“We couldn’t decide which one to use, it was a 50-50 split, so we combined them,” she said.

Like a hen, just being on stage makes a person vulnerable, said Kari Renate Nilsen, a Vega resident who is spending a week in town to direct the performances.

“It’s almost like they’re jumping off a cliff without security and hoping they’ll get wings before they land,” she said.

Nilsen, who directs a variety of professional and community performances nationwide, said a show with eccentric themes like coal hens means the actors have to be bigger than life.

“I get them to act more dramatic, more gestures,” she said. “Every actor has an instrument, which is their body, and shapes characters.”

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

Solfestuka schedule

Friday
6 p.m.: Solfest carnival for juniors. Longyearbyen Youth Club.
7:30 p.m.: Performance "Wow - A New Coal Age," spoofing the year’s past events. Huset.
9 p.m.: Solfest carnival for juniors. Longyearbyen Youth Club.
10 p.m.: Live music at Huset.

Saturday
2 p.m.: Outdoor sun activities including sledding, skiing and live performances. Skiing hill across from Longyearbyen School.
4 p.m.: Cafe hosted by local cultural students. Kulturhuset cafe.
7:30 p.m.: Performance "Wow - A New Coal Age," spoofing the year’s past events. Huset.
10 p.m.: Concert by D.D.E. Kulturhuset. Free bus from Huset will be available.
10 p.m.: Solfest party on two floors. Huset.

Sunday
11 a.m.: Family Mass w/ performance by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.
12:30 p.m.: Ceremony welcoming the return of the sun. Old hospital steps at Skjæringa.
1 p.m.: Solfest social. Svalbard Church.
7 p.m.: "Soltoner" concert featuring local trumpet/piano duo and a vocal quartet. Svalbard Church.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

High reindeer fatality rate feared due to harsh winter

An icy winter has researchers fearing there will be “mass deaths” of reindeer and possibly other animals this year. The ice is making traditional grazing areas impenetrable, forcing animals to higher and more mountainous terrain, with The Governor of Svalbard receiving numerous reports of animals injured or killed by falls as a result. Eigil Movil, the governor’s nature advisor, said officials have euthanized two injured reindeer in recent days. Last year’s reindeer census set a record with nearly 1,500 individuals and Norwegian Polar Institute officials suggest that may contribute to a high fatality count this year.

Galleri Svalbard may replace library at Lompensenteret

Relocating Galleri Svalbard and the city government’s information center into the space in Lompensenteret now occupied by the Longyearbyen Library is being evaluated by local officials. Jan Martin Berg, the gallery’s manager, said the relocation would be more convenient for visitors than the current site in Nybyen two kilometers from the town center. The idea was suggested during a Longyearbyen Community Council strategic conference last summer. No formal details exist, the council is expected to begin discussing the matter this month. Elin Anita Olsrud, the library’s manager, said she is amenable to relocating due to the high rent at Lompensenteret, and that a new site might offer more visibility.

Digital subscribers account for Svalbardposten rise in ’14

Svalbardposten ended 2014 with 2,636 subscribers, an increase from 2,561 in 2013, but a nationwide change in calculations that factors in digital subscribers means the figures aren’t directly comparable. But Editor Eirik Palm said the numbers, especially an 18.2 percent increase in registered web users and a 3.6 percent jump in hits to 2.37 million, are encouraging. “We also see that more and more people are choosing digital solutions, whether through a purely digital subscription, a total product with both online and on paper, or day passes,” he said.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Forecast</th>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Partly cloudy. NW winds to 11 km/h, High -5C (-10C wind chill), low -6C (-12C wind chill).</td>
<td>7:57a</td>
<td>4:21p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Cloudy. NW winds to 15 km/h, High -4C (-8C wind chill), low -6C (-12C wind chill).</td>
<td>7:48a</td>
<td>4:29p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Rain/snow. Variable winds to 25 km/h, High 2C (-4C wind chill), low -6C (-11C wind chill).</td>
<td>7:40a</td>
<td>4:37p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Rain/snow. Variable winds to 25 km/h, High -2C (-4C wind chill), low -3C (-8C wind chill).</td>
<td>7:31a</td>
<td>4:45p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -2C (-7C), -6C (-10C), light 9:29h; Monday, p. cloudy, -6C (-10C), -10C (-18C), light 9:45h; Tuesday, cloudy, -9C (-15C), -10C (-18C), light 10:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -8C (-15C), -10C (-15C), light 10:16h.
Union expects short strike

WALKOUT, from page 1
days, Wednesdays and Fridays during the following weeks.

Norwegian Air, in a press statement, said "we will do everything we can to protect our passengers the best possible way," including SMS updates about specific flights to all passengers with registered mobile phone numbers. The airline also plans to bring in planes and staff to provide service for some European routes.

Calls to Norwegian Air officials about whether contingency plans will be considered for exceptional circumstance such as the eclipse were not returned by press time.

The strike by the Norwegian Pilot Union, occurring after three months of unsuccessful negotiations with management, centers around concerns working conditions in Norway, Denmark and Sweden will deteriorate as the airlines pushes to trim costs. Norwegian reported its first annual loss in eight years in 2014 due to an aggressive expansion plan emphasizing long-haul flights.

Einar Lundereng, a spokesman for the pilots' union, told Adresseavisen "the pilots are prepared to strike as long as they need to," but "I do not think this will take a long time."

"We have a strike fund which means that we can hold out for quite a while," he said. "But we do not think this will take long. It is expensive to let the planes be grounded. We think there will be a solution in a matter of days."

Norwegian resumed service to Svalbard five years after dropping flights it had started only a year earlier. It was the second time in a short span the discount airline abandoned service to the archipelago after a year, raising questions about the company's long-term commitment to Svalbard.

The airline's original plan in 2013 was to offer flights during peak tourism months, but strong booking figures resulted in the company providing year-round service.

Local business owners have generally said they are pleased with the additional visitors since tourism is seen as vital to the economy due to coal mining's descent into crisis. But some tour operators and government officials have expressed concerns many of the budget-minded passengers arrive without proper licent for exceptional circumstance such as the eclipse were not returned by press time.

Polar bear catches research fever

VANDAL, from page 1

Lana Cohen, a researcher conducting atmospheric observations during the Norwegian Polar Institute project, noted the animal has been spotted near the ship during the past few days. But a day after researchers spent considerable time setting up an instrument on the ice, it became obvious more than humans were monitoring it.

"We were looking at an instrument, mounted on an arm that was supposed to be parallel to the ground, but which was now dipping down towards the snow at a perilous angle," she wrote.

But while some expedition participants "were starting to make vows of vengeance (only mostly joking)," the bear was only guilty of what the researchers are doing.

"I envisioned the bear wondering what the heck is all this stuff and what is it doing here?" Cohen wrote.

The Lancet, which is spending six months studying the sea ice "from cradle to grave," was forced to relocate last week after being pushed southward out of the ice.

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