



PER JOHAN BRANDVIK / SINTEF

DOGS SNIFFING OIL...



UNIS

'WATER BEARS' IN SPACE...

A researcher points a dog, left, toward a pool of oil buried under ice in Spitsbergen as part of a study to see if dogs can detect the substance by smell from afar. Above, a new species of tardigrade, similar to those surviving exposure in outer space, has been named after a Svalbard researcher. At right, two penguins find their first-class seats on a flight to New York City for the premier there of "Frozen Planet."



YOUTUBE

PENGUINS FLY FIRST CLASS...

IT'S OUR BLATANT RIPOFF OF



(Note all-important use of trademark symbol to fend off lawsuits)

Shell game: Oil giant hopes dogs can smell out Arctic spills

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

When it comes to oil giants like Shell wanting to drill pristine areas of the Arctic, there's just too many jokes to be made about things going to the dogs.

See **SNIFF**, page 3

To boldly go: New species of tiny 'bear' named for UNIS prof

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Forget the polar variety. Steve Coulson is the name to know when it comes to discovering Svalbard's *really* tough bear.

We're talking creatures that can hibernate
See **COULSON**, page 4

Posh penguins: 'Frozen Planet' fowl get five-star NYC welcome

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Um, not to be rude, but is that herring on your breath?

First-class flight passengers who might normally complain about disruptive little
See **WADDLE**, page 3

Inside

The Libyans are coming!

Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten

- Seadrill gets 1.5B NOK bill for tax evasion
- Rent hike for city workers sparks controversy
- New forecasts may resemble actual weather

Page 3

Weather forecast

Page 3

Events calendar

Page 4

World to Svalbard: Attack! Run away!

Contrasts continue in 'Cold War' for Arctic as some nations look for opportunities as others flee

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The European Union, China and a lot of other countries see a world of potential here. The United States, meanwhile, is literally on another planet.

If the "be bold or go home" cliché of reality TV applies here, the EU is among the former as Catherine Ashton, foreign policy chief
See **GLOBAL**, page 2



EU | NORGE

Catherine Ashton, the EU's foreign policy chief, meets the media Thursday in Longyearbyen.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

S.S. invade Svalbard



SWEDISH FILM INSTITUTE

A German Nazi ship passes through Svalbard waters at the beginning of World War II in the Swedish movie "En Fiende att Dö För" ("An Enemy to Die For"), which premieres Friday (a screening in Longyearbyen is not yet scheduled). The thriller focuses on a research expedition to Svalbard in 1939 just before the outbreak of the war. The purpose is to prove scientist Alfred Wegener's theory that all continents were once connected. Among those on the ship are German geologist Friedrich, his assistant Leni, the Swede Gustav de Geer and two Englishmen. When war breaks out the ship becomes a universe in miniature as participants must choose sides – which of course becomes more complex as Leni and Gustav fall in love. Director Peter Dalle said inspiration for the film, also shot in Sweden and Germany, came during a holiday trip to Svalbard.

Worlds of hope – or not – in Svalbard

GLOBAL, from page 1

for the entity, visited Svalbard and other parts of the region last week to discuss the EU's application for permanent observer status in the Arctic Council.

While some member countries such as France and Germany are active in research here, Ashton said the area's vast economic potential and environmental challenges deserve far greater attention from the organization.

"I believe all 27 EU countries can help with things like research and funding," she said during a meeting with journalists in Longyearbyen. "The EU should, and can, support what is happening in this region."

Many forward-looking projects are already underway, with China announcing the latest pioneering effort as it will try in April to bring a

research team aboard an icebreaker to Svalbard through what's known as the Northern Sea Route. The passage through the Arctic ocean is seen as having enormous commercial shipping potential as the ice sheet cover shrinks due to climate change.

But while the cooperation/competition saga thrives in perhaps the world's hottest spot for natural resource development, one powerful nation is taking a giant leap back for mankind as the U.S. space agency NASA announced it is abandoning its long-running Mars Rover project for budgetary reasons. Researchers have long used Svalbard's unique geography and climate to test equipment built to study the Martian surface

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

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Actual news we couldn't squeeze in elsewhere: We weren't expecting this, but turns out the Libyans will be invading Svalbard after all. The governor rejected a plan by a delegation to stop here in late March/early April to refuel on their way to the North Pole, stating the law prohibits flights for purely sightseeing reasons in Svalbard. The Belgium company bringing them here, Prepare2go, said they were proceeding with their plans anyhow and their bravado paid off. Norway's Directorate of Nature Management has ruled that stopping merely for fuel is OK, although the existing law's vague wording (i.e. "sightseeing of Svalbard")

should be revisited to establish more clarity. The trip is being hailed by organizers, who claim to represent Libya's new government, as a goodwill flag-planting trip that also recognizes the assistance from NATO-member nations who are sending dignitaries as part of the delegation. The governor's office, in a press release, basically said they're cool with the final verdict, but agree the issue needs more study ... It seems Svalbard's distinctiveness as the place you're forbidden to die has been diluted a bit, as the Italian village of Falciano del Massico enacted a similar law this month since it lacks a cemetery. Alas, it seems two elderly residents have already disobeyed.



ASTRID STAWIARZ / GETTY IMAGES

SeaWorld penguins Pete and Penny take in the scene after Thursday's gala premier of the BBC series "Frozen Planet" at Lincoln Center in New York City. The seven-part TV series by Svalbard filmmaker Jason Roberts explores the natural and political elements of the Arctic and Antarctic.

'Planet' penguins party in first class

WADDLE, from page 1

tykes got a fowl (but fun) surprise on their trip Wednesday from Atlanta to New York City.

"Is anyone here allergic to penguins?" the captain asked, according to journalist Dylan Stableford of Yahoo!, who happened to be aboard. "No? Alright, we have a surprise for you."

"How would we even know if we were?" Stableford asked the passenger next to him.

They got a chance to find out when, after reaching cruising altitude of 30,000 feet, two of the (naturally) flightless waterfowl waddled down the aisle from first class, prompting

many of the passengers to capture the moment on phone cameras for the shrine of YouTube.

The penguins, Pete and Penny, were on their way to a gala premier screening of the seven-part BBC series "Frozen Planet" at New York City's Lincoln Center. The showing was followed by a polar-themed party, hosted by stars including Alec Baldwin, Dustin Hoffman and Glenn Close.

No, humans involved in the series didn't get such royal treatment, said Jason Roberts, a Svalbard filmmaker behind the project.

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

Critics: Shell's oil project for the dogs

SNIFF, from page 1

Of course, the jokes aren't all that funny when talking about oil spills. So Shell is experiencing something more like widespread ridicule for a study aiming to put canines to serious use to help with serious situations.

Researchers hired by Shell say a dachshund and two border collies were able to detect pools of oil up to five kilometers away during a study in Svalbard paid for by the oil company. The dogs also withstood harsh

weather conditions and didn't try to impose on wildlife such as polar bears, according to the study by Sintef.

But while other oil companies are keeping an eye on the results, since there are no existing proven methods for detecting oil spills under ice and snow, numerous environmental groups and other critics are calling the study an embarrassment to the oil industry.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Seadrill gets 1.5B NOK bill for tax haven biz in Svalbard

Seadrill Svalbard, an oil drilling company essentially using the archipelago as a tax shelter, is being charged nearly 1.5 billion kroner in back payments. The company reported the largest corporate income in Svalbard in 2009 – nearly 720 million kroner compared to 557 million for Store Norske – despite having a maximum of two local employees. One of the workers conducted accounting work and sent a monthly invoice for two oil rigs the company operated elsewhere. The company was dissolved last summer. Majority shareholder John Fredriksen has stated he will appeal the assessment by tax authorities in court.

Rent hike for city employees seen as upsetting, necessary

An increase in rent for Longyearbyen municipal government employees has local politicians bracing for numerous complaints, but they say there is no choice after two years of delays and a huge maintenance backlog. Rent-controlled housing for employees was 28.41 kroner per square meter, but the Administration Committee last week voted to raise the rate to 45 kroner, which is still well below market rates. The local council is expected to decide at its March 20 meeting if the increase should be phased in over a three-year period or take full effect in November.

New forecasts may resemble actual weather, agency says

Forecast: -15C. Actual temperature: -3C. Such inaccuracies, which Svalbard residents are familiar and frustrated with, will hopefully be a thing of the past with a new method for calculating forecasts, according to the Norwegian Meteorological Department. The inaccurate readings result from computational points on Spitsbergen that are far apart and don't factor in things such as the city's "warm" fjord waters, the agency said in a prepared statement. The new method of forecasting includes measurements from new stations, plus existing ones not previously accessed. The agency said forecasts are now inaccurate by more than three degrees Celsius less than 10 percent of the time, compared to 50 percent before.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. N winds to 18 km/h. High -14C (-20C wind chill), low -14C (-22C wind chill).	Snow late. SE winds to 29 km/h. High -16C (-27C wind chill), low -17C (-22C wind chill).	Snow. NE winds to 29 km/h. High -6C (-14C wind chill), low -12C (-21C wind chill).	Snow. NE winds to 29 km/h. High -5C (-13C wind chill), low -6C (-14C wind chill).
Sunrise 6:36a; sunset 5:41p	Sunrise 6:28a; sunset 5:48p	Sunrise 6:20a; sunset 5:55p	Sunrise 6:12a; sunset 6:03p
Extended forecast: Sunday, snow ending, -6C (-13C), -10C (-17C), light 12:06h; Monday, cloudy, -12C (-16C), -14C (-19C), light 12:21h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -12C (-18C), -14C (-21C), light 12:36h; Wednesday, cloudy, -13C (-19C), -15C (-22C), light 12:51h			
Data provided by yr.no			

Flaming festivities



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Less-than-ideal weather didn't keep the flames and heat away from the annual Solfestuka celebration last week. The sledding trio of Kjetil Slettnes, Anders Kristiansen and Knut Ødegaard, above, cruise past the finish line in their sled that won the Ta Sjansen! competition Saturday at the base of Larsbreen. At left, Simen Henriksen, Torgeir Mørk and Lars Aspen do a "Queer Guy for the Store Norske Guy" makeover so the miners' outfits will match the pink coal processing machine the company purchased last year during a variety show spoofing the year's events Saturday at Huset.

'Water bears' survive ultimate test

COULSON, from page 1

like Rip Van Winkle and survive in open space. They also stalk their prey on eight legs, but don't fret – at about a millimeter long their domain is mostly lichens and mosses.

One of two newly discovered species of "water bears" has been named after Coulson, an associate professor of terrestrial ecology at The University Centre in Svalbard. He assisted a team of Polish researchers who found the creatures, known as tardigrades, during a 2010 field expedition to Revdalen, north of Hornsund.

The lead researcher "asked me last year if he could name the species after me, but I did not take it seriously until the paper was published in January," Coulson said in a prepared statement issued by UNIS.

His namesake species, *Isohypsibius coulsoni*, is one of 84 known tardigrade species in Svalbard. Researchers a century ago discovered the creatures – whose name means "slow walker," with the bear reference due to a gait resembling their bigger brethren – but knowledge about them is limited. Coulson said there are likely many more species to be found.

"We have no idea, but we could perhaps

double this number," he wrote in an e-mail interview. "No one has any good estimate of how many species of animal exist."

When it comes to resilience, tardigrades are nature's equivalent of squeezing those Magic Sponge bath toys back into tiny capsules.

"When encountering hard times, they can completely dry out their body moisture and they can survive up to 20 years in this desiccated state," Coulson said. "But as soon as you add water, they will wake up and go on with their business."

But that's nothing compared to surviving maybe the toughest climate change test of all. A team of Swedish scientists sent tardigrade species previously discovered in Svalbard into space, putting them in an open box outside the space shuttle for ten days as it orbited Earth every 90 minutes. Most survived the extreme vacuum, radiation and temperatures.

The full study of *Isohypsibius coulsoni* in PDF and HTML formats is available at www.springerlink.com/content/y85441384572153g.

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



STEVE COULSON

What's up

March 18

11 a.m.: Family Mass featuring concert by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

1 p.m.: Annual meeting, Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Hamilton - I Nasjonens Tjeneste," Swedish action/drama/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 19

6 p.m.: Presentation: Transit of Venus, which will occur June 5-6 with Svalbard among Earth's best observation points. The next transit will be in 2117. Hosted by Knut Jørgen Røed Ødegård. Svalbard Museum.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Kompani Orheim," Norwegian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 20

Noon: Presentation: Children and nutrition, by nurse Reidun Holte. Longyearbyen Library.

5 p.m.: NCA Lent campaign and collection. Svalbard Church.

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace gathering. Svalbard Church.

March 25

Noon: Outdoor Mass at Fredheim.

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Lorax" (3D), U.S. animated dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Devil Inside," U.S. thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 27

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace gathering. Svalbard Church.

March 31

Meter reading Q1 due.

April 10

7 p.m.: Concert: Neva-Volga, a capella ensemble from St. Petersburg, featuring works from Russian monastic tradition and Russian classical composers. Svalbard Church.

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:

- *Greenland ice sheet 1.6C from melting*
- *Norway wants Amundsen's ship back*
- *25-year-old is youngest Iditarod victor*
- *Nazis, Russians in seed bank tussle*