



Just more hot air

UN issues grimmest climate report yet, but dissent means few minds likely to be changed

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Consider this a great week for climate change skeptics.

They'll probably be able to spend years debunking the "junk science" of global warming by pointing to the latest major UN climate change report scheduled for official release Monday.

Drafts have been widely leaked to media organizations, who are dutifully noting the dire economic and security consequences researchers say are already happening. But much of the coverage is focusing on dissent, including an author of the report who disavowed himself from the study this week because "the drafts became too alarmist."

Add to that the fact many skeptics say 97 percent of scientists agreeing climate change is man-made isn't a consensus and claims the last UN report in 2007 report was "riddled

See **HEAT**, page 4



SILJE-KRISTIN JENSEN / NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

Reindeer forage for food through the snow on a plateau in Svalbard. The animals have had difficulty feeding at times this winter due to high temperatures that resulted in ice covering the terrain.

Shooting for progress

Hunters aiding scientists in study of Svalbard's reindeer population

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

To say hunters have spent the past 30 years helping reindeer live longer, healthier lives may seem rather contradictory.

But scientists are using the carcasses, along with more traditional observation methods, to compile a first-ever study about how climate change, herd density and hunting affect the reindeer population in Svalbard.

The key finding: warmer weather adverse-

View from above: Online topography database adds satellite photos

Page 3

ly affects herds during winter and helps them during summer.

"The long biological time series has given us useful information about both natural and anthropogenic factors affecting reindeer

See **STUDY**, page 3

Inside

Telenor uses old geek as PR; we bite
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- Store Norske finalizing sale of gold subsidiary
- LNS company going ruby hunting Greenland
- Two rescued from Svea in separate incidents
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

Criminal bust out at city hall

Sculpture of Robert Hermansen finally finds new, if temporary, home at Svalbard Museum

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Robert has left the building.

In what will not go down as Longyearbyen's finest moment of government efficiency, a bust of disgraced former Store Norske leader Robert Hermansen was finally removed from the lobby of the city's main municipal building this week after nearly two years of bureaucratic

See **SCULPTURE**, page 4



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Take one last look: A bust of former Store Norske leader Robert Hermansen is finally gone from Longyearbyen's main municipal building.

Don't be the guy who forgets and misses his flight: Set your clocks ahead one hour at 2 a.m. Sunday.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

No water or toilet, but check out that view



SILJE BIRKELID / TELENOR

Svein Nordahl guides a virtual plane in for a landing on a giant-screen flight simulator at his rustic cabin in Bjørndalen, eight kilometers from Longyearbyen. The 50-year-old cottage doesn't have running water or plumbing, but does have internet access at a speed of more than 50 Mbps thanks to a fiber optic cabin Telenor Svalbard extended to the area at Nordahl's urging. He approached the company about the hookup during the summer of 2011 and was told he'd need at least 15 to 17 people for the idea to be seriously considered, according to *Nordlys*. He located 58 cabins in the area, with the owners of 41 saying they'd be interested. As a result, the per-cabin cost for installation was only 3,000 kroner. Nordahl, a former pilot who's lived in Svalbard for 25 years, supplements his simulated plane with an "in-flight" entertainment system allowing him to operate four computers, watch dozens of TV channels and play with various other technical gadgets at the same time. "I am the oldest boy," he told the newspaper. Journalists were at the cabin while Telenor filed a video of Nordahl to showcase the capability of the world's northernmost 4G network, which was launched on a pilot basis in May of 2011 and became more widely available after a lengthy delay. The company says only seven small business customers in Longyearbyen are still using the old copper network.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

The bust of Robert Hermansen might make for the best stories if you're with locals, but for most visiting Svalbard Museum a far more interesting conversation piece will be a **crude guitar apparently built by two hunters at a remote cabin in 1947, both of whom died after discovering a 200-liter barrel of 196-proof alcohol (a.k.a. 96 percent pure) on the shore.** The guitar, discovered at Camp Bell in Bellsund in 1965, is described by the museum as featuring a tin can as a sound board, driftwood and cardboard for the body, and fishing line serving as a guitar strap. It appears "hunting buddies" Erling Nordby and Martin Strømsnes came up during the summer to do some winter hunting, but found the barrel of booze on Sept. 27 and "tasted the contents," accord-



SVALBARD MUSEUM

Wood is good for the soul, not the stomach: Two hunting buddies found out it makes a mean guitar, but an even meaner cocktail.

ing to the narrative by Museum Director Tora Hultgreen. Strømsnes woke up the next morning groaning in pain and died a few hours later. Nordby tried to get back to civilization to seek help, but died before he got far. A doctor determined the men died because the barrel contained methane alcohol, which generally causes blindness or death if consumed ... And in other intoxicating music news of the week, **the locals who spent a record amount of time (up to 18 months) preparing for last month's performance of "Messiah" got to make more than a one-hit wonder of their efforts** by staging an encore at in Bøler Kirke in Oslo last weekend. A video of the "Hallelujah Chorus" is at tinyurl.com/ptbmkvg.



COURTESY OF ROGER ØDEGÅRD

What's it to ya? For extra fun, try identifying which of the Impressionist faces are your neighbors while listening to the music.



ØYTEIN ØVVERREIN / NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

Observers work to collect the "slaughter weight" of a reindeer carcass in Svalbard as part of a study assessing how populations are affected by climate and hunters. The measurement – not required to be reported as it is on the mainland – is the animal's weight without internal organs, skin, head and claws.

Hunters offer reindeer herd clues

STUDY, from page 1

growth and body condition," said Åshild Ønvik Pedersen, a terrestrial ecologist with the Norwegian Polar Institute, in a prepared statement released with the study this week.

Pedersen, working with researchers from the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA) and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), compared reindeer body growth in different hunting areas using hunters' statistics and reindeer jawbones.

"The jaws are a good starting point to look for climate signals since they reflect the animals' growth is closely related to livelihood on the tundra," Pedersen said. "Rain on snow turns to ice on the ground, forming an armor against vegetation that deer feed on. Past studies show that mortality increases and decreases

reproduction under such conditions."

But while the growth of calves and juveniles is negatively affected by rain in winter, the youths thrive due to more favorable feeding conditions during warm summers, according to the report.

Researchers are also using the study to make hunting quota recommendations, stating the expanded range of population, age and health data can provide a more accurate way to set quotas "so that the population's natural gender and age composition is maintained." Previous research has found hunting does not significantly affect the overall reindeer population.

The report, in Norwegian, is available at tinyurl.com/o4vtcj5.

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

Topography site adds satellite photos

When it comes to virtually navigating around Svalbard, it's tough to top this view.

The Norwegian Polar Institute has added a collection of new satellite photos to its online topography map portal (toposvalbard.npolar.no), boosting a database that already offers landscape photos and 3D maps. The topography maps themselves are customizable

at various zoom levels, and can display data such as coordinate readings and distances between points. They are also updated continuously with newly collected data.

Most of the high-resolution satellite photos were taken last summer, but the institute is updating the collection with other images taken since 2008

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Store Norske in final stages of selling gold subsidiary

Store Norske is in the final stages of negotiations to sell its gold subsidiary company, Store Norske Gull AS (SNG), although it intends to retain its exploration rights in Svalbard. Three companies are considered potential buyers, one of which is now in the due diligence process. Store Norske officials decided last fall to sell the subsidiary, citing the unpredictability of profitability, costs, currently tied-up assets and on ongoing downsizing process. The company also just invested 1.2 billion kroner in the new coal mine in Lunckefjell. SNG has 74 active exploration permits in Troms and Finnmark. Store Norske will retain 12 mining claims and 15 other discovery sites in Svalbard.

LNS joins new company to hunt for rubies in Greenland

LNS is going ruby hunting on the southwest coast of Greenland by forming a joint-venture company with True North Gems of Canada. The new company, TNG Greenland, plans to extract the gems from an open pit mine, with LNS constructing infrastructure such as the pier, roads, buildings and a sorting facility. LNS Spitsbergen leader Frank Jakobsen said he doesn't have an estimate for the potential value of the mine, but its ruby deposits are estimated at 400 million carats. An initial 60 tons of ore mined at the site produced about 240,000 kroner worth of rubies.

Ice climbing tower and club planned, with free use by kids

A nine-meter-high ice climbing tower at Sjømrådet is being proposed by Steve Lewis, who moved from Oxford to Longyearbyen four years ago, along with plans to start an ice climbing club that will offer free participating for youths. Lewis said he got the idea after seeing a similar tower while skiing in Austria during New Year's. He is now seeking help and a permit from Longyearbyen's Municipal Council, with discussions also focusing on a possible alternative site near the ice rink at Polarflokken kindergarten. He said the ice climbing club would charge a fee for tourists, with local residents above "a certain age" receiving discounted memberships.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. SE winds to 29 km/h. High -11C (-18C wind chill), low -17C (-22C wind chill). Sunrise 5:05a; sunset 7:06p	Snow. SE winds to 42 km/h. High 1C (-4C wind chill), low -15C (-20C wind chill). Sunrise 4:57a; sunset 7:13p	Cloudy. W winds to 55 km/h. High 2C (-5C wind chill), low -11C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 4:49a; sunset 7:21p	Partly cloudy. NW winds to 52 km/h. High -11C (-19C wind chill), low -13C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 4:41a; sunset 7:29p
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -11C (-17C), -15C (-21C), light 15:04h; Monday, p. cloudy, -11C (-17C), -16C (-22C), light 15:21h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -10C (-14C), -15C (-21C), light 15:37h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -12C (-16C), -13C (-18C), light 15:54h			
Data provided by storm.no			

Lots of snow at last, but that's not all good...



JAN OLAV SÆTHER / LONGYEARBYEN FIRE DEPARTMENT

Longyearbyen firefighters prepare to tow a vehicle that slid off the road during a snowstorm this week. The driver was not injured and the vehicle was not seriously damaged. Officials are warning people to be cautious on roads and in the backcountry due to hazardous conditions resulting from high snowfall and winds. Svalbard Snøscooterutleie, Basecamp Spitsbergen and Spitsbergen Travel cancelled expeditions to Barentsburg early this week due to the conditions.

UN: Arctic has passed 'tipping point'

HEAT, from page 1

with errors" and its unlikely many minds will be changed no matter how extensive and ominous the latest data is.

It is "all to tell us what we know already, plus/minus numerous details and nuances," notes a commentary in *The Foreigner*. "That takes time and effort away from new, original, innovative science. That creates a self-perpetuating bureaucracy. Discussions swirl around the high level of politicization of the science."

The headline finding of the new study is climate change has already left its mark "on all

continents and across the oceans" by damaging food crops, spreading disease and melting glaciers. It notes some regions, including the Arctic, have already passed the "tipping point" of irreversible ecosystem changes and the situation will almost inevitably get worse quickly.

At the same time, warming conditions could have positive impacts in regions like Svalbard as increased access results in a boom in cruise ship tourism and resource exploration, according to the report.

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

Bust of Hermansen going to museum

SCULPTURE, from page 1

wrangling. City leaders generally agreed it was unwise hosting a sculpture of a man jailed as part of a massive corruption scandal, but the protocol of proper channels meant a prolonged and oft-stalled process.

"The question of a more permanent location of the bust has been raised several times without there being a final clarification," City Manager Lars Ole Saugnes wrote in a summary of the case presented to the Municipal Council at its March 18 meeting where it finally took action.

The council voted to allow Svalbard Museum to display the bust, possibly temporarily if Store Norske follows through on plans to open a mining museum where it would be housed permanently.

"Svalbard Museum wants to secure the bust because we believe that it has an important story to tell," wrote Tora Hulgren, the museum's director, in a letter to the city. "Central to us is the history of the modern coal mining on Svalbard cannot be told without getting into community builder Robert Hermansen."

The museum is planning a future exhibit of Norwegian industrial activity in Svalbard, possibly coinciding with Store Norske's 100th anniversary in 2016, Hulgren added.

Hermansen's legacy in Svalbard is hotly debated among locals, as his efforts during the early 2000s are credited for major production and technical advances by the company. But he fell into disgrace after his tenure ended in 2008 as audits revealed he negotiated a series of shady deals that resulted in the company losing hundreds of millions of kroner and fighting bitter lawsuits.

Karlsberger Pub AS and Elvesletta Nord also offered a home for the bust, but Saugnes recommended the museum as a more appropriate setting. City officials approached Store Norske multiple times during the lengthy process, suggesting the company store the bust until its museum opened, but company officials expressed reluctance, saying there's no certainty of raising enough funds to make the museum a reality.

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

What's up

March 26

5 p.m.: Movie: "Doktor Proktors Prompepulver," Norwegian comedy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 29

1 p.m.: Outdoor Mass and open day at Fredheim.

March 30

11 a.m.: Family Mass w/ performances by Polarknøttene and Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "The Pirate Fairy" (3D), U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Permafrost," Norwegian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 31

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

April 2

6 p.m.: Movie: "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" (3D), U.S. action/sci-fi, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 3

7:30 p.m.: Unconventional classical concert by violinist Alexander Rybak and pianist Stefan Zlatanos. Kulturhuset.

April 5-6

Trappers Trail sleddog race to Bikkjebu and back. Begins at noon at UNIS, concluded April 6 at Huset. Registration, race and volunteering details at longyearbyenhundeklubb.no.

April 6

5 p.m.: Movie: "Natt til 17," Norwegian youth/drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Glassdukkene," Norwegian thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 7

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

April 8

1 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen 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:

- *Russia, Norway vow Arctic cooperation*
- *Putin orders Arctic army deployment*
- *Russia imports less fish from Norway*
- *Oslo gives Murmansk cold welcome*