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## NORTH POLE 2015: NO SPRINT FOR MARATHONERS



RUSSIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY



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North Pole expeditioners and support staff at the Barneo ice camp, right, unload a plane Saturday after it makes an emergency landing due to bad weather. At top left, a helicopter helps transport the plane's passengers to the ice camp. Among the first to arrive at Barneo were Russian troops, middle left, who are participating in numerous drills. At bottom left, a skier sets out on the jagged terrain as part of the HeadNorth expedition, one of several this year raising funds for charity.

# CRASH COURSE

*Barneo gets rough start as plane damaged in emergency landing, bad weather delays other flights*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

Less-than-ideal ice floes for the base camp, a crash landing by one of the first planes, days of delays for subsequent flights due to bad weather and a guy running up hills with tires tied to a rope behind him.

In other words, just another ordinary opening week at the Barneo ice camp – which exists in every real-world sense despite Russia's official decree it doesn't – at 89 degrees north.

This year's camp for expeditioners and researchers is on three floes moving in concert with each other because a single floe of sufficient size couldn't be found due to an increasing breakup of the pack ice, according to the camp's blog ([barneo-polus.livejournal.com](http://barneo-polus.livejournal.com)). A

See BUMPY, page 3

# 'Flu' hits dogs

*Kennel cough epidemic cripples dogsledders at peak season; most local dogs likely to be ill*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

An epidemic of a respiratory infection known as kennel cough has spread to a large percentage of Longyearbyen's dog population during the past couple of weeks – and is expected to infect nearly all canines before subsiding during the next several weeks – resulting in drastic reductions of dogsledding tours and other related activities during the height of the spring tourism season.

"We have been reducing our capacity with our dogs to half of what we normally do," said Robert Nilsen, owner of Svalbard Husky. His company has 50 dogs and "we have a list of 20 we can't use right now. I will guess before this is over all of them will get sick."

Nilsen said he noticed dogs getting sick shortly before Easter. Kennel cough – named that because it can spread quickly among dogs in close quarters – has incubation period of about five to seven days, with infected dogs suffering from symptoms including dry coughing, sneezing, gagging and vomiting.

"What is special here in Longyearbyen is most of the dogs here have never suffered from this infection before so they might be more

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### Yearning for yetis



Polar bears match up w/ space aliens

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### Official garbage



Per-person reduction claim is rubbish

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### Armchair peak bagger



'Flyover' map of Svalbard is Norway's best

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### Binge blogging



Is 'Fortitude' magical or an icy curse?

icepeople.net

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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## Copyright stuff

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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.

## 'God's house' at Easter isn't necessarily church



DIANA SNIBSØER

Worshippers gather at "the world's most beautiful cathedral," above, for a Good Friday Mass at Tempelfjorden. "It's always great to celebrate Easter worship there," wrote Svalbard Church Priest Leif Magne Helgesen in a Facebook message. "Today it was warm at only around -12C." At right, a sparse congregation of locals not spending the holiday weekend at cabins and elsewhere outdoors gather for Easter Mass at the church Sunday.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

## Icesheet

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

We never thought one day we'd be yearning yet more insistence from scientists that Svalbard's polar bears are kin to the Abominable Snowmen roaming the Himalayas, but it seems like teaming the furry kinsfolk up may be a good idea to ward off an invasive species threat a certain boffin says we may face. **Fergus Simpson, in an actual journal article at the Cornell University Library, calculates the minimum size for extraterrestrial life to exist, based on the laws of conservation of energy seen on Earth, is about 300 kilograms – or the median weight of a polar bear.** "Most inhabited planets are likely to be closer in size to Mars than the Earth," he writes in the synopsis of the study (available at [arxiv.org/abs/1503.07804](http://arxiv.org/abs/1503.07804)). "Furthermore, since population density is widely observed to decline with increasing body mass, we conclude that most intelligent species are expected to exceed 300 kilograms." While his findings set off some amused media speculation ("I think the average size calculation is reasonable," a University of St Andrews scientist told *Newsweek*), it was the polar bear comparison that left some fellow beakers baffled. "Polar bears are large but do not write great literature and build radio towers and a lot of that is probably because they are walking around on all fours," Seth Shostak, a researcher at the Search For Extra-Terrestrial



LA CUCARACHA

**Santa is a fat-out bust in this battle:** Which may explain why the Russians are doing all that training near the North Pole these days.

Intelligence Institute told the magazine. But the animals also were savvy enough not to fall for the Mars One scheme, so maybe their mass would fare better on the red planet than us ... Meanwhile, doomcriers are sounding the alarm about another great red worshipper of war, as a spattering of articles about Russia parking its ships at what was once a secret Norwegian naval base near Tromsø is this week's contribution to the hot air surrounding the New Cold War. Among the comments at an article at [tinyurl.com/lbhkqkn](http://tinyurl.com/lbhkqkn): "Nothing wrong with learning Russian. Far better than having to learn Arabic or American Ebonics."



RUSSIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

Support staff and paratroopers at the Barneo ice camp prepare to set up one of many shelters where expeditioners and scientific researchers will sleep, eat and meet during the next few weeks.

## Barneo short on flights, borscht

**BUMPY, from page 1**

second camp is being established by Russia this year for military troops scheduled to participate in various cold-weather exercises.

The bumpy start continued Saturday as one of the first flights carrying expeditioners failed to reach the base camp.

"Due to poor visibility en route from Svalbard to Ice Camp Barneo, where the trek will begin, the team's plane had to make an emergency landing earlier today," an entry in the HeadNorth Polar Expedition blog ([headnorth.org/blog](http://headnorth.org/blog)) notes. "All the team are safe and well, although the plane's undercarriage suffered some damage."

Passengers were transported to Barneo by helicopter and the HeadNorth expedition, one of several using the high-profile trip to the top of the world as a charity fundraiser, departed on its estimated 100-kilometer ski trip Sunday.

Barneo officials, in the camp's blog, said the plane lost its landing gear, and it's not yet known how repairs will be made or whether the aircraft will be moved via other means.

Sending a replacement plane is resulting in further delays of flights to the ice camp that are already behind schedule due to weather. While Barneo staff note the delays mean there's less borscht and corned beef than they'd like, visitors are getting more days than they'd like to sample Longyearbyen's expanded fare.

Among the groups affected is the North Pole Marathon, which this year has 45 participants from 22 countries who were scheduled to

race Thursday. Instead, the runners will tackle the grueling 42-kilometer course that circles Barneo after a physically draining journey to the start line.

"The flights to the Pole will be on April 10th at 01:00 and 08:00 hrs," an announcement at the race's Facebook page informed participants Tuesday. "The marathon is now scheduled to occur on April 10th at about 14:00 hrs GMT."

But preparing for hardships has been part of the training for many participants (and "the race doctor will scare the life out of them" at an advance briefing, the official webpage notes). Gary Seery, a Dublin resident, trained for the race by running on a treadmill in a cold storage unit, while fellow Irishman Tony Mangan ran 50,000 kilometers in a four-year, around-the-world journey.

Taking on a far tougher challenge and training regimen is Thomas Ulrich, a longtime Swiss polar explorer who is running up mountains in his hometown with car tires attached to him to prepare for one of this year's ultra-long attempts to reach the top of the world from well beyond the relatively safe haven of Barneo. He is attempting to be the first to make a solo trek Siberia to Canada via the North Pole.

"Constantly getting stuck is exactly what happens in the Arctic on the ice, that's what trains your body for the work," he told the website SwissInfo.

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

### HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

#### Longyearbyen collects less trash, recycles 91% in 2014

The amount of household waste in Longyearbyen declined sharply in 2014, with 95 kilograms collected per capita compared to 177 kilograms the previous year, but the figure may be misleading, according to official figures from the Longyearbyen Community Council. The amount of total waste in the city declined 3.1 percent in 2014, with industrial waste increasing nearly the same amount as the household decline. A report by the council called the difference in classification a concern that would be investigated further. A total of 1,699 tons of waste was collected in 2014, 55 tons fewer than 2013, with 1,542 tons sent down to the mainland for recycling. The report noted the percentage of recycled trash has increased significantly in recent years.

#### Paraglider rescued after hurting shoulder in Reindalen

A paraglider was rescued Sunday after dislocating his shoulder in Reindalen, according to The Governor of Svalbard. "We received notification from a private person, who had received an SMS from an Inreach system," said Arild Lyssand, a police chief lieutenant for the governor. "It said 'we have had a serious accident and need transportation. Could you call the governor?'" The Inreach system, which can send GPS locations in addition to SOS messages, showed the injured man was at the Red Cross hut in the valley. Details of his hospitalization and treatment were not available.

#### Snowmobiles scoot through sobriety checkpoint smoothly

The Governor of Svalbard conducted 51 sobriety checks of snowmobile drivers Thursday at Grøndalen, one of the main routes in and out of Longyearbyen, with none testing positive for alcohol consumption. "We are very pleased. The goal is not to 'get' someone, but to have a preventive effect through our presence," said Trond Olsen, a police chief lieutenant for the governor. A handful of riders received verbal warnings because of missing documents.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Mostly clear. NW winds to 18 km/h. High -5C (-9C wind chill), low -7C (-11C wind chill).	Cloudy. S winds to 29 km/h. High -6C (-11C wind chill), low -7C (-13C wind chill).	Cloudy. W winds to 29 km/h. High -4C (-9C wind chill), low -9C (-14C wind chill).	Cloudy. NW winds to 29 km/h. High -5C (-9C wind chill), low -9C (-14C wind chill).
Sunrise: 4:03a, sunset: 9:54p	Sunrise: 3:53a, sunset: 10:04p	Sunrise: 3:42a, sunset: 10:15p	Sunrise: 3:30a, sunset: 10:26p
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, p. cloudy, -6C (-11C), -9 (-14C), light 19:19h; Monday, p. cloudy, -5C (-9C), -10C (-15C), light 19:45h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -7C (-12C), -8C (-14C), light 20:14h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -6C (-12C), -8C (-14C), light 20:46h			

Data provided by [storm.no](http://storm.no)

## Yet another great way to trip out in Svalbard



NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

A navigable 3D map of Svalbard by Norwegian Polar institute topographer Anders Skoglund received both the industry and audience choice awards for best map at this year's Geomatics Week in Norway. The map (at [toposvalbard.npolar.no](http://toposvalbard.npolar.no)) offers numerous viewing options including traditional overhead and "experimental" 3D views, GPS plotting and notation. The map will automatically be entered into the international map exhibition in Rio de Janeiro in August.

## Dog 'flu' widespread, but not severe

### ILLNESS, from page 1

troubled by it," said Astrid Vikaune, a veterinarian who became Longyearbyen's first full-time practitioner in 2013.

"It's very contagious," she said. "I think it's safe to say this is all over town."

However, Vikaune said "this virus this year is not a very angry form," and advised dog owners to simply care for and comfort their animals unless more severe symptoms develop.

"They should be very careful with their dogs because their general health conditions might be weaker than normal," she said. "That can lead to acute inflammation or heart trouble."

At the same time, "I tell people if they don't suspect their dogs have a secondary problem don't bring them to the vet because I can't help, and they will bring the disease into the clinic and that's not good," Vikaune said.

Infected dogs are likely to be troubled by intense coughing for about 24 hours, after which it will diminish while other symptoms persist for three to four days, she said.

Local dogs received vaccinations for the virus last year but, as with the flu in humans, the shots aren't 100 percent effective, especially against evolving strains, Nilsen said.

Although such outbreaks haven't been a problem in Longyearbyen in the past, Vikaune said she will be surprised if a reoccurrence of the illness doesn't happen next year.

"This is a problem with Longyearbyen being closer to world than it used to be, because a lot of people are traveling here with dogs" and therefore increasing the risk of bringing the virus here, she said.

Organizers of the annual Trappers Trail



VERONICA ANDERSEN

Gunn Beate Paasche tends to her dogs at the Kapp Laila checkpoint during the 2014 Trappers Trail dogsledding race. Organizers considered canceling this year's two-day race from Longyearbyen to the checkpoint due to a widespread outbreak of kennel cough, but announced this week the dogs on most of the registered teams appear to be healthy.

sleddog race, scheduled this weekend, considered canceling the event due to the epidemic. But Elise Strømseng, head of the Longyearbyen Hundeklubb, said it appears most of the dogs in the 22 teams that had signed up as of Wednesday afternoon appeared to be healthy and there will be health checks before the race starts at noon Saturday outside of The University Centre in Svalbard.

"The special thing we are doing this year is to have mandatory health checks at the start and finish, and this means that all participants will have their dogs checked," she said. "Most of the entrance fee for Trappers Trail is therefore used to make sure we have the competence from vets available during the race."

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

## What's up

### April 8

6 p.m.: Movie: "Asterix: Le Domaine Des Dieux," French animated, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### April 10

Camp Svalbard winter session for youths 13-16. Registration and more details at [ingeborg.runde@lokalstyre.no](mailto:ingeborg.runde@lokalstyre.no).

### April 11

Noon: Trappers Trail dogsledding race from Longyearbyen to Kapp Laila. Participating teams will depart every five minutes from the start line next to The University Centre in Svalbard. Racers are expected to reach the finish line at Huset starting at about 1:30 p.m. Sunday.

### April 12

5 p.m.: Movie: "The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," U.S. comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

7:30 p.m.: Movie: "The Gunman," Spanish/French/British action/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### April 13

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

### April 15

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Gunman." Kulturhuset.

### April 19

9 p.m.: Movie: "Chappie," U.S. comedy/sci-fi, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### April 20

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

### April 22

6 p.m.: Movie: "Avengers: Age of Ultron" (3D), U.S. action/fantasy, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

### April 26

5 p.m.: Movie: "The DUFF," U.S. romance/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Pride," British comedy/drama, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

### April 27

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

## 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:

- *Dream/nightmare of Arctic Norway rail*
- *U.S. bombers taunt Russia in Arctic*
- *Russia's tundra exploding; who's next?*
- *Nutritionists: Vegan diet best for planet*

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