



**THE LAST DEGREE, PART 4: FINAL EXAM**



MICHAEL MARTIN / OUSLAND EXPEDITIONS

Naomi Zimba Davis, a native of Zambia now living in London, celebrates being the first black woman to reach the North Pole on April 15 after a four-day Last Degree ski expedition. "For being totally new to this, the craziest of all environments, she was doing great," wrote Lars Ebbesen, a guide leading the four-guest expedition, in a blog of the trip.

## No time to chill

Scientists work hard, sleep little in rush before Barneo closes

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

Antonio Lounenco spent five years planning and looking forward to the trip. When he got there, about all he had time to do was drop a few things off.

The Paris engineer didn't get to sightsee in one of the world's most rarely inhabited areas, much less take a shot at reaching the North Pole less than 60 kilometers away. He was a small player in a large-scale and long-term international project, assigned the duty of dropping buoys he helped design into the polar sea so they can monitor the thickness of the sea ice as they drift.

"I unloaded the equipment, was shown my tent, brought the instruments in and checked them, and left the buoys out overnight," Lounenco said, describing his arrival at the Barneo ice camp late at night on April 11.

Before his departure two days later "I prepared the buoys, measured the ice and snow thickness, and took ice core samples back for analysis in Paris." He said he only went about 250 meters from Camp Barneo to do the work and some of his scarce time was consumed struggling to find suitable ice for analysis.

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COURTESY OF CAMP BARNEO

Russian scientists, above left, drill for ice cores April 21 near Camp Barneo as part of an international effort to monitor changes in sea ice thickness, water temperatures and marine life. Above right, Andy Heiberg prepares a work tent at the camp April 23 for dispatch duties.

## 24h light a holy terror?

'Worse than bin Laden' Islamic theologian to determine prayer times in polar regions of Norway

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

The Islamic prayer known as *salah* is prescribed at five periods of the day: near dawn, just after noon, in the afternoon, just after sunset and around nightfall.

With the arrival of the four-month polar summer last week, obviously this is a major problem for any devout in Svalbard.

Fortunately, a globally known Islamic theologian is planning to live in Norway to determine prayer times for the polar regions. Alas, it seems he's not being welcomed entirely with open arms as he has been described previously in the Norwegian press as someone more dangerous than Osama bin Laden.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian scholar and author, is known for numerous controversial teachings such as stating the Holocaust was a divine punishment against the Jews, and the age of consent for marriage should be nine years old if the girl is a virgin and voluntary participant. He is

See AL-QARADAWI, page 3



**Polar summer begins: April 18**



**Next sunset: Aug. 25**

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

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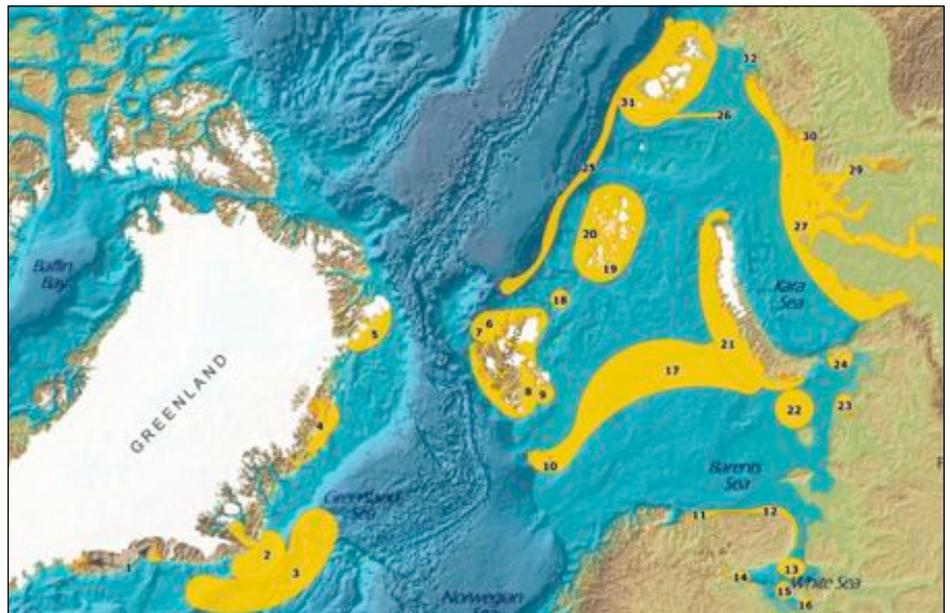
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## Corrections policy

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.



NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

All of Svalbard's coastlines, shown as numbers six through nine in this map, are among the Arctic areas considered most vulnerable due to shrinking ice and increasing commercial activity.

# Yet more threats to polar life

*Five of 13 most vulnerable Arctic coasts in or near Svalbard due to ice melt and growing industry*

By MARK SABBATINI

### Editor

As if global warming and ocean acidification isn't enough, a group of researchers decided to do a first-ever study of other things posing a critical threat to wildlife along Earth's Arctic coastlines.

Their findings, published today, suggest all of Svalbard and some other places nearby represent about 40 percent of the world's most vulnerable locations.

The report by the Natural Resources Defense Council and the International Union for Conservation of Nature offers the first "identification of areas most important to Arctic marine life and vulnerable to additional stress on top of global warming, loss of sea ice and ocean acidification," according to a prepared statement by the agencies.

Instead, the emphasis was on areas most in need of protection as industrial activity increases due to summer sea ice decreasing.

"The Arctic is the last ocean frontier," said Lisa Speer, director of NRDC's International Oceans Program. "We have a short win-

dow of opportunity to plan for industrial development in a way that respects and protects important and fragile ocean habitats, wildlife and communities."

Factors such as uniqueness, history and diversity of wildlife are considered in the areas studied. Svalbard's islands ranked high for their vulnerability and breeding productivity.

"It is a key area for the endangered Spitsbergen stock of bowhead whale, the northern stock of the East-Atlantic meta-population of Atlantic walrus and most of the world's breeding population of the threatened Ivory gull," the study notes. "The waters around Franz Josef Land support diverse seabird species, ice-associated marine mammals, productive benthic communities, walrus, and bowhead whales. Finally, the marine area around Northeast Svalbard is a highly productive area for fishes, seabirds, marine mammals, zooplankton, benthos, and is an important summer feeding area for blue, beluga and humpback whales as well as narwhal."

Other nearby coastlines in Russia, Greenland are also considered vulnerable.

The study is available at [www.nrdc.org/media/2011/110427.asp](http://www.nrdc.org/media/2011/110427.asp).

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

## Icesheet

*Random bits of the week's weirdness:*

So much for making our fortune by selling dirt to the British tabloids. With the royal wedding apparently overwhelming all other news of note, one of the big stories making the rounds goes something like: "The question all the minds of all the world's single women is: 'Is Prince Harry single?'" Apparently his trip here made him quite the macho hero. Anyhow, we spent a few lunches with or near the

wounded soldiers whose "Walking With the Wounded" cause Harry was helping promote, so we put the question to them. Basically, they said they wouldn't comment if they knew. Assuming they're being completely forthcoming with the annoying gossip media, the question we're now wondering: If a bunch of guys sitting around a desolate polar camp after a hard day of skiing aren't talking about women, what the hell are they talking about?



GETTY IMAGES

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian theologian, is encountering resistance to his plan to live in Norway temporarily to determine Muslim prayer times in polar areas.

## Some say Arctic prayer times exist

**AL-QARADAWI, from page 1**

banned from entering the United States, United Kingdom and Israel.

The Turkish Newspaper *Today's Zaman* reported this week al-Qaradawi plans to live in Norway "for a short time" to determine polar prayer times.

The dates and location were not specified, although Svalbard's less stringent entry requirements for foreigners may allow a longer stay than on the mainland.

Officials with Svalbard Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø's office said they were not aware of al-Qaradawi's visit or know if he would be allowed to enter the archipelago, and any public comments on the matter will be made directly by Ingerø. He was not available for comment at press time.

Some Muslims in Norway say prayer times are not a matter needing resolution. And if it does, al-Qaradawi isn't the person who should provide it.

"If someone will do it, it will be experts," said Basim Ghozlan, head of the Islamic Association in Norway, in an interview with the newspaper *VG*. "Qaradawi is not an expert on prayer times."

Ghozlan said the association has invited

al-Qaradawi to participate in a conference, but not to live here for his planned study.

Walid al-Kubaisi, a Norwegian-Iraqi author, suggested al-Qaradawi is "more dangerous than Osama bin-Laden" for Norway in a 2006 *Aftenposten* column. His criticism was spurred by Mohammed Hamdan of the Islamic Council and Olav Dag Hauge of the Oslo Cathedral traveling to Qatar to meet al-Qaradawi and describing him as a moderate.

Many Muslims – scholars and laypersons – suggest guidance already exists for those needing prayer times in polar areas. Practically, it's suggested times in either Mecca or the nearest suitable geographical location be observed.

Theologically, some say there's a reason for the unusual day/night cycles in the region.

"Allah has balanced this whole universe," wrote Kayote in a forum discussion at [turntoislam.com](http://turntoislam.com). "Just like we cannot survive in the desert, similarly we cannot survive in the North and South poles ... Why inhabit the Poles ... if a more comfortable place is available where we can pay more attention to Allah and take care of our worldly duties?"

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



Yusuf al-Qaradawi is attacked in the British press for an attempted U.K. visit in 2008.

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Decades of historic photos from Svalbardposten online

Pictures hidden away for decades in drawers and cabinets at *Svalbardposten* are now digitalized and viewable at a new Web site. About 600 of the 15,000 digitalized negatives are initially available, with more to be released as they are ready for publication. The scanned images are being enhanced and cleaned of blemishes such as dust. "Finally, information is added to each image, which is very demanding," according to Editor Birger Amundsen. It was 21 years after *Svalbardposten* began publishing in 1948 that the first photo was published due to a lack of the necessary technical equipment. The digitalization project is possible in part due to a 150,000-kroner grant in 2009 from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund. The archive is at <http://bildearkiv.svalbardposten.no>.

### Coal museum gets record Environmental Fund grant

Nineteen projects are receiving spring grants totaling 3.8 million kroner from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund. The largest grant is 1.5 million kroner to Store Norske for a new coal mining museum the company hopes to open at Mine 3 by 2016. "It is the largest sum we've ever given," said Ann-Kristin Olsen, the fund's chairperson. "It's exciting to contribute to a project that shows a vital part of Svalbard's and Longyearbyen's history." Among the other grants are support for restoring a locomotive in Ny-Ålesund, a children's sled dog trail and three By-drift energy conservation projects.

### Murdoch Hole peril mystifies

The cause of a mysterious opening in the ice at Tempelfjorden known as Murdoch Hole is being investigated by officials with the Svalbard governor's office. Two snowmobiles fell through the ice at Tempelfjorden last week and there have been numerous inquiries about whether it was the Murdoch Hole or not. "We do not know exactly where the hole is," said Police Chief Per Andreassen. "A hole like that will never be in quite the same place because the water is moving. But anyway, this is an area where one should exercise caution."

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. W winds to 11 km/h. High -1C (-5C wind chill), low -3C (-3C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. W winds to 15 km/h. High -2C (-6C wind chill), low -4C (-8C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. W winds to 15 km/h. High -1C (-4C wind chill), low -4C (-9C wind chill).	Late snow. S winds to 15 km/h. High 0C (-4C wind chill), low -6C (-9C wind chill).
Sunrise/sunset 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset 24-hour light
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, snow, -0C (-4C), -2C (-6C), light 24:00h; Monday, snow, 0C (-4C), -1C (-5C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, snow, -2C (-6C), -2C (-7C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -3C (-7C), -5C (-8C), light 24:00h.			

Data provided by yr.no



MICHAEL MARTIN / OUSLAND EXPEDITIONS

Researchers and expedition members take shelter this month in the sleeping tents at Camp Barneo. The Russian-supported ice camp ended its tenth anniversary season today.

## Barneo ends season of struggle, success

### EXIT, from page 1

It may seem like a long time to plan and travel to do a quick errand for a project others at the camp are already working on. But things didn't go so well during his organization's first deployment of buoys last year when, short on funds, the task was given to Japanese researchers going to the camp.

"Last year there was a transmission failure after 10 days," said Frédéric Viver, a research scientist working with Lounenco on the project for Laboratoire d'Océanographie et du Climat. "You just can't get the data (if that happens) unless you can get the buoys back, which is unlikely."

Viver, in an interview with Lounenco in Longyearbyen after the latter's trip to Barneo, said this year's buoys also were resigned to make them lighter and more adaptable to the Arctic conditions.

A mad rush also took place among other scientists – who slept little and frequently helped each other out – during the three weeks

the ice camp at 89 degrees north was open to researchers, ski expeditions to the Pole and other visitors. Barneo workers – who put in six weeks of intense daily labor to make the short season happen – said in the camp's blog there were many struggles, but "almost everything that was planned we managed to realize."

A bicycle race and an automobile expedition, for instance, both failed to happen due to problems such as weather and impassible open water. But they cited work by Russian and U.S. scientists are highly productive, and numerous Pole expeditions with unique causes – including Britain's Prince Harry accompanying a group of disabled soldiers – reached their goal, sometimes in near-record time.

"For ten years we have learned to work together seamlessly and without any panic in extreme situations, which are abundant in a drifting life camp," the blog notes.

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

**About the series:** *'The Last Degree' follows workers, researchers and expeditions at Camp Barneo during the 10th anniversary of the ice community.*

Sergei Pisarev, left, a senior fellow of the RAN Oceanology Institute, plays with a large ice block during his April 21 birthday at Camo Barneo. At top right, a tourist on an "express" flight trip to the North Pole takes a polar dip in the relatively balmy -10C conditions at Barneo on April 23. A snow sign, bottom right, greets arriving and departing visitors to the camp.



COURTESY OF CAMP BARNEO

## What's up

### April 27

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Adjustment Bureau," U.S. romance/sci-fi, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

### April 28

2 p.m.: Board of Culture and Leisure Business Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

### April 30

10 a.m.: Svalbard Skimarathon. 42K and 21K races starting at Mine 6. Non-timed marathon starts at 10 a.m., other racers at 11 a.m.

### May 1

May Day holiday. All major businesses closed.

### May 4

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Way Back," U.S. drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### May 8

6 p.m.: Movie: "Jørgen + Anne = Sant," Norwegian children's film, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Scream 4," U.S. horror/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### May 9

10:15 a.m.: Environmental and Economic Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### May 10

10 a.m.: Administration Committee meeting, Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### May 11

8 p.m.: Movie: "Essential killing," Norwegian/Polish thriller/crime, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### May 12

9 a.m.: Board of Growing Enterprises Authority meeting, Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

3 p.m.: Board of City Operation Authority 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:

- Oldest Arctic ice to drop from 5K to 5 yrs.
- Soot's impact on Arctic melt scrutinized
- Record no. of whales, krill in Antarctica
- Comedian becomes mayor of Reykjavik