



# Climate again? Phbbbt!

*Environmental minister's visit, more dire warming warnings, not swaying skeptics and speculators*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

A visit to Svalbard this week by Norway's environmental minister is highlighting yet another volume increase about the dangers of accelerating climate change ranging from global food shortages to military threats to freak storms wreaking massive damage. And, oh, that pesky environmental chaos thing.

But, also keeping pace with the shriller tones are skeptics too busy celebrating or scoffing at the fraudulent notion of global warming – many of them right here in the neighborhood.

Minister Bård Vegard Solhjell took an open-water tour with researchers in Ny-Ålesund, who said snowmobiles would have been used for the trip a decade ago.

"There should have been ice and on the ice there would have been many newborn ringed seal pups," said Christian Lydersen, a senior researcher for the Norwegian Polar Institute, according to *Nordlys*. "Both the ice and ringed seal pups are gone."

The loss of snow to make dens made pups vulnerable to prey such as gulls, he said, but the

**See WARMING, page 4**



About 350 racers, above, start the competitive portion of the 21st annual Svalbard Skimarathon near Mine 6 Saturday. The group represented about half of the record 725 people participating in timed, untimed and half-marathon divisions. At right, Eldar Rønning, a six-time World Cup Racing champion who easily won the marathon, puts a medal around one of about 140 youths participating Sunday in the Children's Skifestival in the valley above Nybyen. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.



## Eldar respects younger

*Ski champ sets record at record-size race, but kids out-medal him*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Eldar Rønning sounded like any other first-time Svalbard Skimarathon participant. It's more a fun race than a competitive one. Organizers do a great job with race preparations and the party afterward. It's a chance to

get in a snowmobile trip or two and hopefully see a polar bear.

His time, not surprisingly, was anything but ordinary.

The six-time World Cup Racing champion achieved the first sub two-hour finish in

**See SKIING, page 3**

### Inside

- Svalbard's only kids' store closes** Page 2
- Headlines from Svalbardposten**
  - Restructuring of city's gov't moving quickly
  - Put snowmobiles, gas cans away from homes
  - Svalbard's Russian population at five-year high
 Page 3
- Weather forecast** Page 3
- Events calendar** Page 4

## Odds for this bear patrol job: scat

*Common temp duty request gets uncommon global response as governor looks beyond locals*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Oh, great. The odds of getting this stare-death-in-the-face job just went way up.

Svalbard's governor is looking for a temporary polar bear guard. Not unusual, except this time the vacancy listing has gone viral. Something about the words "must be able to yell loud" apparently attracts headline writers.

**See PATROL, page 4**



**IRENE SKAUEN SANDODDEN / SYSSELMANNEN**

A polar bear guard stands watch for a cultural heritage project by Svalbard's governor in 2011.

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

### Editor

Mark Sabbatini

### Copy Editor

Brennan Purtzer

### Principal of principles

Kristan Hutchison

### Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

### Mailing address

*Icepeople*  
Vei 210 -2- 13  
Longyearbyen, Svalbard  
9170  
Norway

### Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38  
U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

### E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

### Web site

www.icepeople.net

*Icepeople* is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

## Copyright stuff

Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if *Icepeople* is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

## 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.

## No kidding around anymore



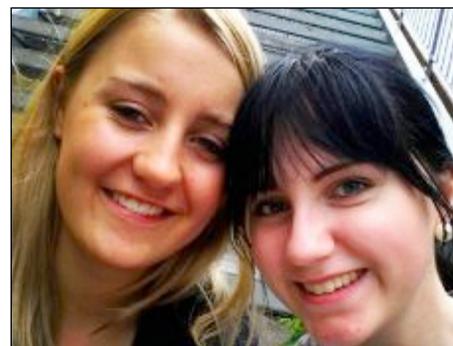
MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The last remnants of Bajaz Barneklær & Utstyr await removal as Longyearbyen's only children's clothing and toy store closes this week after five years in Lompensentret. The owners, who also opened the world's northernmost Western Union office at the location last summer, unsuccessfully tried to sell the business for several months before announcing the closing earlier this month.

## Icesheet

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

We're starting off with a silver screen salute to two local masters of visual art, even if unfortunately we can't do them right by visual or art. **Ragnhild Beate Engan and Emilie Ulsnes Sommervold, both 18, are heading the national UKM competition in Larvik as their documentary "Two Girls One Boat" was among the six projects prevailing at the regional event in Tromsø during the past week.** The image-and-music documentary, filmed during the girls' expedition cruise in Antarctica aboard the *Fram* last fall, is predictably heavy on penguins, but is still in the ballpark of commercial projects not calling themselves "Frozen Planet" or "March of the Penguins." Alas, we can't show you any stills of the film because none exist that we know about. Furthermore, we can't even show you a picture of Engan and Sommervold at the regionals because they were the sole winning project not present at the judging. They apparently also aren't sure if they'll actually be at the national competition when their film is judged ... **Ski marathoners got a break this past weekend with just enough fresh snow to make a decent course, but that meant a few rough moments for the much-praised logistics folks.** The few inches of snow was enough to trap a Pole Position cargo truck after the night-before registration and waxing gathering at Svalbardhallen, and there were snapped tow cables (and probably a few profanities we couldn't translate) from the drivers of the two



LONGYEABYEN LOKALSTYRE

**This is Antarctica?!** Um, no (duh). It's a handout photo of Ragnhild Beate Engan and Emilie Ulsnes Sommervold, since their prize-winning polar picture isn't on The Pirate Bay yet.

vehicles that eventually hauled it out. Seems worth mentioning since the polar bear guards are usually the help who get most of the glory ... Finally, we're not sure if we're disappointed or not **the National Review's annual cruise of ultra-conservatives is coming to Norway this August, but only as far north as Flåm.** Given the predicability of politicians and writers visiting Svalbard and then lamenting about the impacts of climate change they've witnessed (the most recent of which we dutifully report as our lead story), we can only imagine the endless possibilities of a ship full of folks living in a parallel universe. Would the local researcher and tour guides adjust their lectures to ensure their guests are happy, or stand by their "junk science" and incur the wrath of the world's loudest and most obstinate names on the talk show and teabagger circuit? We actually know a few intelligent locals with extensive field experience who are climate change skeptics, but they won't be quoted because they don't want to deal with the reaction from their peers. Maybe an infusion of like-minded thinkers would warm them up to coming out, so to speak.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

**Marathon ordeal:** It's more like 42 centimeters than 42K and they have motors, but we'd call this a challenge on par with the ski race itself.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Hilmar Steinget Levensen, 11, vacuums wax shavings Friday at Svalbardhallen as racers prepare for the Svalbard Skimarathon. The hall also hosted the awards dinner and live music after the race.

## Rønning breaks two-hour mark at race

**SKIING, from page 1**

the Svalbard Skimarathon, dominating a record-size field during the 21st annual race Saturday. His time of one hour, 59 minutes and 35 seconds, about eight minutes faster than the next racer, came seemingly effortlessly on a course organizers worried would be in poor shape due to mild weather.

"The course was good," Rønning said. "It was a fun race."

Finishing second was Bjarne Valås with a time of 2:07:50, with Øyvind S. Pettersen finishing third at 2:07:50. Ellen Grepperud won the women's division with a time of 2:25:54, followed by Torun Ø. Aarvik in 2:29:54 and Monica B. Dahlen in 2:35:59.

The best finish by a Svalbard resident was Trond Espen Haug with a time of 2:15:37.

The skimarathon has attracted a significant increase in participants in recent years and organizers paid an undisclosed sum to Rønning, 30, in the hopes he would lure even more. The 725 people racing this year – lured by the publicity about his participation or other factors – surpasses the previous record of 599 in 2012.

About half of the participants competed in the timed category – with the rest taking part in untimed and half-marathon divisions – but nobody interviewed said they expected or even wanted to try to be competitive with Rønning.

"It's fun to see him, but we don't try to keep up," said Tobias Thorsson, 30, of Göteborg, who finished in 2:43:11.

He signed up for the race for probably the most commonly voiced reason ("because it's in Svalbard"). Also like many others, he didn't train as intensely as for other races during the winter, resorting to running instead of skiing.

"This is quite late in the season so we're not skiing skiing so much," he said. "There is no snow where we live."

Racers offered near-universal praise for organizers although, as is often the case, there were on-the-fly adjustments. Start times for the competitive and non-competitive divisions were switched the day before, giving the competitive racers an hour's head start in case snow conditions worsened due to mild weather during the day. At the last second the race was delayed 30 minutes until 10:30 a.m. and the start line moved 400 meters farther into the valley so groomers could finish improving the trail.

Although Rønning achieved a champion time, he departed significantly lighter in the medal category as he presented about 140 of them to all of the youths participating in the Children's Skifestival in Nybyen on Sunday.

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

### HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

#### City leaders working quickly on government restructuring

Longyearbyen's municipal council is moving ahead quickly with a drastic overhaul of the city's government, seeking to eliminate the three "municipal corporations" separate from the council and consolidate all operations into a single entity by next January. "It's an ambitious schedule, but we will manage it," said Sissel Hultgren, part of a consulting firm hired by the city to recommend changes. Eliminated would be the "corporations" now providing infrastructure, education and recreation services, with proponents saying the agencies' separate governance undermines the council's authority and can make input from residents more difficult. Among the tasks required by the reorganization are new delegation regulations, logos, job descriptions and ensuring the moves are legally implemented. City Manager Lars Ole Saugnes said Longyearbyen's high turnover means layoffs will probably not be necessary, but "but management must assess all new recruitments. Do we need people now or can it wait?"

#### Fire chief: snowmobiles, gas cans can't be near homes

Do you know that gasoline cans and snowmobiles must be at least ten feet from the walls of a house? If not, you're not alone, said Longyearbyen Fire Dept. Chief Jan Olav Sæter after a tour of neighborhoods. Both objects were constantly found close to buildings, which Sæter said may be because the city's high population turnover means people are unaware of the rule. Besides being a fire hazard, snowmobiles and gas cans can also block emergency vehicles and firefighters if a fire ignites. Sæter posted fliers on homes reminding occupants of the rule and noted officials can remove misplaced cans and snowmobiles at the owner's expense.

#### Russian settlements reach five-year population high

Svalbard's Russian settlements had 471 residents as of Jan. 1, the highest in five years, according to Statistics Norway. The combined population of Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund increased by 40 to 2,158.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

### Wednesday

Cloudy. E winds to 45 km/h. High 0C (-7C wind chill), low -5C (-11C wind chill).

24-hour daylight

### Thursday

Cloudy. Variable winds to 29 km/h. High -3C (-7C wind chill), low -5C (-10C wind chill).

24-hour daylight

### Friday

Cloudy. Variable winds to 15 km/h. High -4C (-8C wind chill), low -6C (-9C wind chill).

24-hour daylight

### Saturday

Cloudy. N winds to 22 km/h. High -4C (-9C wind chill), low -6C (-11C wind chill).

24-hour daylight

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, p. cloudy, -5C (-11C), -7C (-11C), light 24:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, -3C (-7C), -6C (-11C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -3C (-6C), -5C (-8C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, clear, -3C (-7C), -6C (-11C), light 24:00h

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



ARLID LYSSAND / SYSSELMANNEN



MATEUSZ BARAN / HORNSUND



SVEIN OLAV GRINI / SYSSELMANNEN

**Not that common...really:** Officials with the governor's office said they don't necessarily expect polar bears encounters during a cultural heritage project at Hornsund this summer, although one bear, at top, was shot there a few weeks ago while trying to break into a cabin. Other recent incidents include a bear, at bottom left, which pestered occupants at the meteorological station before attacking their dogs during the winter of 2011, plus another, at bottom right, found shot dead during the summer of 2010.

## 'Loud voice' guard ad goes global

**PATROL, from page 1**

"Wondering what to do about that cranky neighbor who yells at the poor folk who step on his lawn?" a *New York Daily News* story begins. "Send him to Norway!"

A guard is being sought at Hornsund for three weeks beginning July 8 as the governor's office evaluates cultural heritage sites there.

The governor's office doesn't usually look beyond Svalbard when advertising such openings, but "it was decided to be the best way this time," said Helge Solli, a cultural heritage consultant for the governor. "I'm not sure why."

Plenty of people have already applied and most don't appear to be locals, Solli said, although he hasn't tallied the totals to date.

"I hadn't expected that," he said.

An article in *Nordlys*, republished throughout Norway, merely states applicants should have field experience with polar bears, safety training and firearms proficiency. But a quote from Solli published by The Associated

Press seems to be what attracted the worldwide applicants – and scoffers – as he asserted the successful candidate likely won't have to use a gun "just as long as they have a loud voice" to scare off any bears.

"Note (the) fine print...must wear bear bells.....helps to identify you in the scat," responded a reader identified as Kim Hallock in the comments section of a *Live Science* article.

"Sounds like a great gig – if you want your life to turn into a combination of *Jaws* and *The Shining*," quips an article in *The Providence of Vancouver, Canada*.

For those needing a good question at the interview, a reader at Yahoo! – where the vacancy was a lead story – posting as "Gloria" asks "Do you get fired if the bear gets the workers?"

The application is at <http://tinyurl.com/cuzehbp>. The deadline to apply is May 27.

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

## Conflicting gov't tones on climate

**WARMING, from page 1**

depletion of the seal population is now causing a wider disruption of the food chain as polar bears have lost a key food source.

Solhjell praised the NPI for helping Norway address climate change. But his comments came days after government approved 200 million kroner for a new port in Longyearbyen in

anticipation of growing commercial shipping due to warming. The ruling Labor Party also endorsed oil drilling above the Arctic Circle.

Not to mention all seven initial reader responses to article about Solhjell's visit were filled with scorn and ridicule.

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

## What's up

### May 1

5 p.m.: May Day Mass by interim priest Stein Karstensen in cooperation with LO Svalbard and AUF. Svalbard Church.

5:45: May Day procession from Svalbard Church to city center.

7 p.m.: May Day stories and music by various performers. Kulturhuset.

### May 3

Noon: Board of Youth Activities meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### May 4

10 p.m.: Claymords album release concert. Svalbar.

### May 5

11 a.m.: Family Mass. Svalbard Church.

### May 6

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

### May 7

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

7 p.m.: Evening gathering with communion and lighting of candles. Svalbard Church.

### May 8

6 p.m.: Movie: "Pelle Politibil på Sporet," Norwegian children's animated film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### May 12

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Pelle Politibil på Sporet," Norwegian children's animated film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Rebel," Canadian drama/crime, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### May 13

Noon: Board of Youth Activities meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

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

### May 14

7 p.m.: Evening gathering. 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 cap crossing turns fatal*
- *Worries as Canada heads Arctic Council*
- *Javlin hurlers measure Antarctic ice melt*
- *Soviet scientist: Melt Arctic w/ 55-mile dam*