



COURTESY OF GREENPEACE

Greenpeace activists rope themselves to a Statoil oil rig Tuesday in the Barents Sea to protest the company's plans to begin drilling about 175 kilometers from Bjørnøya this summer. They delayed the rig's northward sea journey until being removed by police two days later. The organization staged a similar effort at Svea in 2009 by using a ship to block a shipment of coal, believed to be Svalbard's first-ever political protest.

# Stalemate rivalry

**Vigilance now:** Greenpeace protesters halt work on oil rig near Bjørnøya, then get arrested

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

At least maybe this time they didn't overload their ship with illegal beer.

Greenpeace activists once again managed to briefly halt resource extraction work they say is threatens Svalbard's pristine environment. And, as with their protest at Svea in 2009, it ended unglamorously with members and their ship in the hands of authorities.

Fifteen activists with the environmental organization boarded Statoil's Transocean Spitsbergen oil rig Tuesday in the Barents Sea  
See **PROTEST**, page 4



COURTESY OF CICERO

Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, calls for an end to coal mining in Svalbard during the Ny-Ålesund Symposium this week.

**Long-term diplomacy:** Lots of ideas – for others – from leaders at Ny-Ålesund climate meeting

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

Breaking the "climate stalemate" is urgent, agreed world leaders converging this week at the Ny-Ålesund Symposium, although the first challenge may be convincing some of the advocates to follow the recommendations for achieving that goal.

The symposium, now in its ninth year, brought together about 50 international experts and political leaders for discussions focusing largely on ways of reducing activities related to climate change. The primary goal this year, See **SUMMIT**, page 4

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# A trillion little pieces

*Huge release of microplastics from vanishing Arctic ice likely within 10 years, study claims*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

It's a tiny bit of plastic less than five millimeters long. Seems utterly harmless, until you're a bird that's swallowed a few dozen of them. Or a chunk of melting ice containing more than trillion of them.

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JOE DOWLING / SUSTAINABLE COASTLINES

A researcher scoops up microplastic fragments, that have washed ashore, where they are frequently eaten by birds and other animals.

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

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*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.

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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.

## Probably not the original equipment



TELENOR SVALBARD



TELEMUSSET

Telenor CEO Jon Fredrik Baksaa, left, sends the first official telegram Monday at the newly refurbished telegraph office in Ny-Ålesund to Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg. The station, shown at left when it opened in 1918, was hailed during a re-opening ceremony featuring Baksaa and other Telenor officials for playing a key role in Svalbard's exploration and political history. "If Norway had not invested in a telegraph connection, it is far from certain that Svalbard would have been part of Norwegian territory today," Baksaa said. The restored station now features internet access and the ability for visitors to send "digital" telegraphs.

## Icesheet

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

We can't show you the original picture since it's copyrighted by a real newspaper and we can't afford the rights fee, but we still wanted to show you the good stuff (no, not the Santa porn). So the image to the right is a photo we took of a portion of a photo taken at the airport in Tromsø by Morten Rydland Høyning for *Nordlys* (we think that's legal and beseechingly appeal to Høyning for mercy since we essentially have to pay people to read our fishwrapper). Anyhow, it's so **those in the audience can play "what's wrong with this picture?"** And since we're sticking our necks out you **bloody well better look, dammit.** The rest of the photo is basically more photos of Mary Ann's Polarrigg, so the first hint is the images probably aren't the problem. The second and final hint is: what's missing (remember where people are reading this)? Yup, there's no clue Santa and his helpers are getting drunk and naked in Longyearbyen. Owner Mary-Ann Dahle took it reasonably well when notified by the newspaper, saying with a laugh she should have done a better job of proofreading the new sign she had to order because the old one was destroyed. Then again, travelers disappointed after trying to make a reservation may have only themselves to blame since one of the photos is of a polar bear enjoying a beer in the restaurant. While the beer part hasn't been disproven yet by the Norwegian Polar Institute, their distribution map of polar bears show none are living anywhere close to Tromsø ... Since



NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

**Beer-related research** coming soon to this location near you (compared to, say, Mars).



### WE'RE NOT SURE HOW TO CREDIT THIS

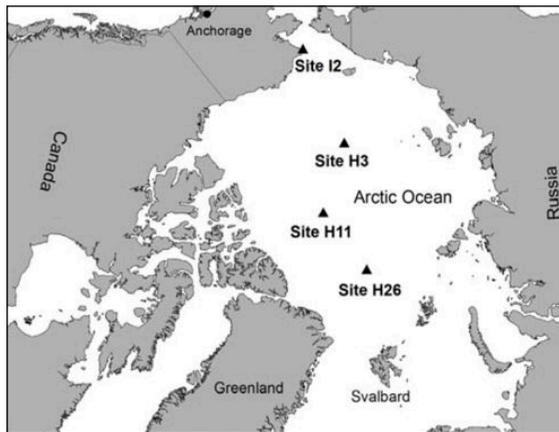
**Too lazy to read the first 266 words to the left?** Sigh...OK, just try to figure out what's wrong with this sign at the Tromsø airport.

Ny-Ålesund is big in the news this week, it seems like a good time to mention the new Research in Svalbard database from the Svalbard Science Forum ([www.researchinsvalbard.no](http://www.researchinsvalbard.no)), which sort of fell off our map for a while when they got slack about updating their old website. That's definitely not a problem with the new one so far, with 2,315 projects in the database as we write this, along with the ability to do stuff like make reservations in Ny-Ålesund and apply for permits from the governor. It's not exactly the most user-friendly thing for a non-scientist to navigate, however, so we recommend using the search function to look up topics of interest. Naturally **we did a search of the research portal for "beer" and got only one project titled "Hypersub@Cosyna."** The first line of the summary states "we aim to monitor an Arctic coastal ecosystem over a whole season cycle to assess how hydrodynamics control its primary productivity, the influence of glacial input/sea-ice on the benthic-pelagic coupling and the transport of photosynthetic biomass from a region." We have no idea what that means, but it sounds very impressive. As for how beer plays a role, even someone who's had a few too many can probably figure it out by skimming the rest.



CHRIS JORDAN / MIDWAY

A bird carcass, above, reveals a stomach full of microplastics, which scientists say are posing hazards to numerous species throughout the food chain. A new study based on ice core drilling at the four sites in the Arctic, shown on the map at right, indicates there are more than one trillion microplastics that are likely to be released from ice melt during the next decade. The study notes nearly 300 million tons of plastic were produced in 2012, large amounts of which end up in oceans. Microplastics are tiny particles that break off from the larger pieces of debris.



COURTESY OF RACHEL OBBARD / DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

## A trillion microplastics in the ice?

### PARTICLES, from page 1

Those trillion bits of debris known as microplastics are likely to be released from melting Arctic ice during the next decade, according to a study published this month in *Earth's Future*. The particles come mostly from debris that has broken apart, as well as from cosmetics and fibers released from washing clothes, and typically have been found in surface waters and along shorelines

"It was such a surprise to me to find them in such a remote region," Rachel Obbard, an assistant professor of engineering at Dartmouth College and lead researcher on the study, in an interview with *Science Magazine*. "These particles have come a long way."

The researchers' claims are based on an analysis of ice cores drilled at four sites be-

tween Svalbard and Alaska between 2005 and 2010. The concentration of plastic debris is 1,000 times greater than that floating in the so-called Great Pacific Garbage Patch, whose uncertain size estimates range from 700,000 to more than 15,000,000 square kilometers.

The most common microplastic material found in the study was rayon, accounting for 54 percent of the particles. Rayon is manufactured from wood, but was included "because it is a manmade semi-synthetic that makes up a significant proportion of synthetic microparticles found in the marine environment," according to the study. The substance is commonly used in the manufacture of cigarette filters, clothing and personal hygiene products.

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

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### 'Amnesty' grant allows free disposal of junked vehicles

Free removal of junked cars and snowmobiles is being offered by the city of Longyearbyen, which also is using a "detective" to search for vehicles from owners who have moved away or are otherwise unlikely to arrange for their disposal. Ove Jensen said he's found 71 snowmobiles and 15 vehicles apparently no longer in use, and expects a total of about 100 by the time he finishes his scouting. It typically costs 722 kroner to dispose of a snowmobile, 2,023 kroner for a vehicle registered on the mainland and 4,334 kroner for a vehicle registered in Svalbard. But the city received 250,000 kroner from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund for the "amnesty" program, which will be in effect until the funds are depleted.

### Equipment, production woes plaguing Lunckefjellet mine

Store Norske is engaging in crisis meetings as equipment breakdowns and slow production has the company operating about a month behind schedule at its new Lunckefjellet mine. A new stope is supposed to be in place by next March, but the delay and thin profit margins means "2015 is going to be a very tough year if we do not make that date," said Martin Östling, Store Norske's production chief. He said equipment problems from the United States company Joy, hired as a new supplier, are experiencing frequent breakdowns, and numerous repair workers from the U.S. are at the mine trying to resolve the issue. The mine's geology is also proving troublesome, as equipment has been able to cut through layers of charcoal, but is being damaged when hitting rock.

### Underwater fiber-optic cable to Ny-Ålesund a monster job

A monster ship will be used to connect a monster fiber-optic cable that's 26 nautical miles long and weighs 980 tons between Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund this summer. The specialized English-registered ship *Cable Innovator*, which is 146 meters long and weighs 14,277 tons, is expected to spend about three weeks laying out the cable that will be buried in 20-meter-deep waters.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. SW winds to 42 km/h. High 4C (0C wind chill), low 3C (-2C wind chill).	Cloudy. SW winds to 29 km/h. High 4C (0C wind chill), low 2C (-1C wind chill).	Rain/snow. SW winds to 25 km/h. High 3C (0C wind chill), low 2C (-1C wind chill).	Cloudy. Variable winds to 15 km/h. High 3C (0C wind chill), low 2C (-1C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, p. cloudy, 2C (-1C), 1C (-4C), light 24:00h; Monday, rain/snow, 3C (0C), 1C (-3C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, clear, 3C (0C), 1C (-2C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, clear, 3C (0C), 1C (-2C), light 24:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			



Greenpeace protesters, above, board a Statoil oil rig in the Barents Sea on Tuesday to prevent it from being transported to a drilling site about 175 kilometers from Bjørnøya. At right, Norwegian Coast Guard officials detain a protester at the drilling site after Greenpeace parked a ship there to further hinder Statoil's efforts to put the rig at the location. Photos courtesy of Greenpeace.



## Antics, not issues, earn headlines

### PROTEST, from page 1

to protest the company's plans to drill at a site about 175 kilometers from Bjørnøya, which would be the world's northernmost well.

Police removed protesters who refused to voluntarily leave two days later, but Statoil remained unable to move the drill to its planned site after Greenpeace parked their *Esperanza* ship there. The Norwegian Coast Guard towed the ship Friday night (dates reflect a delayed presstime).

Greenpeace, in a prepared statement, protested the coast guard boarding the ship "outside of the country's territorial waters to end a high profile and perfectly legal protest against Arctic oil drilling," but expressed satisfaction at delaying Statoil's plans for "at least 89 hours."

The organization stated the protest was motivated by a decision Monday night by Norway's Ministry of Climate and Environment reversing their intention to re-examine drilling permissions in the area. A study commissioned by Greenpeace and conducted by the Norwegian Meteorological Institute indicates oil from

a spill there could reach Bjørnøya in 30 days, linger for months and "be almost impossible to clean up."

But such concerns were overshadowed in media coverage that focused largely on the protesters' antics, which Statoil officials called "dangerous and irresponsible." The company also rejects the study's findings, stating the risk of a spill is very low, as are the chances of any spillage reaching Bjørnøya.

Greenpeace attracted similar attention five years ago when they used their ship to block a load of coal from being shipped from Svea and climbed onto cranes at the mine.

The protesters were forced to leave two days later by police from the governor's office, which had to cancel a charity fundraiser to deal with the situation. Greenpeace's ship was subsequently detained by customs officials in Tromsø for carrying a large amount of undeclared beer and, perhaps not coincidentally, fined the exact amount the governor expected to raise during the charity event.

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

## Breaking stalemate starts with the believers

### SUMMIT, from page 1

according to a statement at the symposium's website ([www.ny-aalesundsymposium.no](http://www.ny-aalesundsymposium.no)), was further developing ideas that can be presented next year during the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris.

But the challenge of coming up with ways of breaking a stalemate that's lasted for decades was illustrated by two of the first three speakers as the symposium began Tuesday.

A proposal to end coal mining in Svalbard was voiced by Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in an interview with NRK.

Norway has played a leading role for many years and has really challenged other countries" about limiting climate impacts, she said. "If the government can figure out how to get the coal mines closed here, it will strengthen Norway's position."

But Tine Sundtoft, Norway's minister of climate and environment, told *Svalbardposten* that while coal must be phased out eventually she has no plans to start the process now. She noted the new Lunckefjell just began operating "and it means a lot to Norwegian sovereignty over Svalbard."

Lunckefjell's opening, along with potential future projects that may extend mining in Svalbard for decades, has been ridiculed as hypocritical by national and international observers, especially after Norway's Parliament voted early this year to rid the country's oil wealth fund of coal holdings.

Meanwhile, that dispute doesn't even begin to address the issue of reaching policymakers who are skeptical about climate change and denouncing the symposium's "uninformed rumbblings."

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

## What's up

### May 28

6 p.m.: Movie: "X-Men: Days of Future Past," U.S. action/fantasy, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

### May 31

6 p.m.: Cultural exchange show featuring performers from Barentsburg. Kulturhuset.

### June 1

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

7 p.m.: Movie: "Violette," French drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### June 2

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

June 7

10 a.m.: Spitsbergen Marathon, also featuring half-marathon, 10K and 3K races. Svalbardhallen. Registration and other details at <http://svalbardturn.no/index.php?id=4>.

### June 10

Longyearbyen Day, with special activities and free admission to Svalbard Museum and Gallery Svalbard.

### June 11

6 p.m.: Movie: "Edge of Tomorrow" (3D), U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

### June 15

5 p.m.: Movie: "A Million Ways To Die In The West," U.S. comedy/western, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Transcendence," U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

### June 17

7 p.m.: Municipal Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### June 23

6 p.m.: Polar "Summer Boot Camp," offering "very tough and fun training activities." Begins at Svalbardhallen. Contact [polarpuls.lyb@gmail.com](mailto:polarpuls.lyb@gmail.com) for details.

## 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:

- *Study: Earth near 'sixth great extinction'*
- *Obama orders crackdown on coal plants*
- *Syria's climate-fueled war, in a comic*
- *Seeking a 'cool' name for climate change*