



BIRGIT HANSEID BENDIKSEN

A face composed of sandstone covered with green algae, metal wire hair, a wood nose and a coal mouth gazes out from the pages of "Sjarmerende Bakkekontakt," a new book by Birgit Hanseid Bendiksen whose collection of unnamed faces offer an artistic look at Longyearbyen's geography.

'Facebook' stoned

Rocks-for-brains heads offer heavyweight charm, insight about area in new photo book

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Now this is a rock-solid group that's easy to like, with no worries about defriending or invading privacy.

Their profiles may be familiar to locals,

yet not, as artist Birgit Hanseid Bendiksen uses the natural elements of Longyearbyen to compose dozens of faces for a new book she calls "my little 'Facebook of Nature.'"

"Sjarmerende Bakkekontakt" ("Charming Sense of Reality") is the result of "countless trips out and about" during the past two years, she said. The book, subtitled "Nature, Faces and Voices of Svalbard," combines pictures of her faces with detailed descriptions of the

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Temps up 2C? Try 5.3

First ice-free North Pole in 13M years also coming soon as more nations heat up Svalbard plans

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It's not really about limiting global warming anymore, but dealing with the impacts. And more nations are rushing here to do just that – or at least cash in – even if they're not necessarily willing to do much back home.

A new analysis showing Earth's temperatures increasing up to 5.3 degrees Celsius with current man-made impacts, rather than the two degrees hoped for, comes at the same time India and China became the latest countries to declare plans to expand their presence in Svalbard.

"What happens here has a direct bearing on the monsoon and countries like India," said Manish Tewari, a lead scientist working at the country's research station in Ny-Ålesund, in an interview with NDTV. "The Arctic is changing, ice melt is happening faster than anyone had anticipated, and that means higher sea levels across the world."

While officials are emphasizing the need for cooperation in researching adverse impacts

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Bad trip here still better than most

First passenger from large ship has rough landing, but nothing but good cheer about being back

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The third time isn't entirely the charm for Ilse Rudek, but a subpar holiday here still brings warmer feelings than most "hot" spots.

The resident of Bremen, Germany, suffered an undignified entrance as the first passenger disembarking from a large cruise ship this year, stumbling and falling after she

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Ilse Rudek, the first passenger to disembark from the first large cruise ship in Longyearbyen this year, greets information guides at the dock.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

Looking at the man in the mirrors



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A moviegoer examines a newly installed art project consisting of 75,000 tiny mirrors on the wall next to the theater entrance at Kulturhuset. Stefan Törner, 39, of Bergen, installed his work, titled "Sol," last week after being selected as one of three artists among 73 applicants whose projects will be displayed at the performing arts center. Other projects by Jenny Alnæs and Svein Flygari Johansen are scheduled to be displayed by the end of the year.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Longyearbyen celebrated its 107th birthday Monday and, in honor of that totally undistinguished number, we're skipping the official celebration stuff in favor of obscurely weird facts about the city as it exists today. For instance, the most recent edit on Wikipedia states we now merely have "an Arctic climate" rather than "a cold Arctic climate" (curse you, global warming!). That infallible resource also recently noted "the town probably has the paved roads nearest to the pole" and has a population of "2,040 Vikings." Those got scrubbed, but there's still lots of fun tidbits such as "about 40,000 tourists flew into Longyearbyen" in 2008 (and, ugh, did the splats from non-winged klutzes cause a mess; so much for the decree that nobody is allowed to die here). Speaking of facts from that year, an actually reliable one from the local government (cough) notes we bought 10 percent less booze last year than 2008. Apparently we're no longer as traumatized by all those rotting bodies and don't need as much insulation from our no-longer cold weather ... Which isn't to say we're not buzzed about booze-related indul-



SVALBARDPOSTEN

The world's biggest, weakest daiquiri: But you'd probably still spend much of the next morning hovering over the toilet if you finished it.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

If you were there, you'd be educated: But instead you're stuck here getting what we consider noteworthy "facts" about Longyearbyen.

gences on a massive scale as **it's time again for the annual contest to guess when the "stem" will break on the snow champaign glass at Operafjellet.** The two people picking the correct date or closest to it (with earliest entries winning in case of a tie) each win an inscribed brandy glass. The stem usually breaks in late July, but stayed intact until Aug. 31 last year due to weird weather (we may need to start accepting "weird" as the new normal - see item one of this rant). Submit guesses by July 1 to stetten@svalbardposten.no ... Throwing out our own guessing game (no prizes, sorry), **what is Svalbard's "metal ratio" (as in the music)?** According to Nils Ivar Martila of the Claymords, which threw the world's northernmost metal album release party at Svalbar a couple weekends ago, it's "less than 20 percent." But he said the others showed the love as well for the "Scum of the Earth" (the album) and promised/threatened to return this year ... Completing the concert exchange, **the folk/blues trio Longyear earlier this month at a music and poetry festival in Haugesund, which can be heard at www.radio102.no/2013/06/svalbard-oslo-haugesund-13m-04s.**



ROYAL NORWEGIAN NAVY

No, this isn't the newly arrived Russian spy ship: It's their Norwegian counterparts, as the Royal Norwegian Navy blows up a decommissioned frigate off the Arctic coast of Andøy to demonstrate a new long-range stealth missile. The exercise was anything but stealth, however, as the Navy posted a video of the detonation on YouTube, resulting in extensive global media coverage at a time when nations are eyeing the Arctic as an increasingly important economic and military region.

Hopes sink as temps increase

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of warming such as large-scale ice melting in the north, there's also enormous interest in the commercial prospects of a North Pole that may be ice-free as soon as this summer for the first time in 13 million years.

China, for instance, is showing a willingness to set aside some of its recent hostility toward Norway, which last month sponsored the Asian nation's entry as an observing member of the Arctic Council. But many analysts believe China's motives are less about science than they are about economics and the Arctic's potential strategic military importance.

Those contrasts – and the likely political reality that commerce will prevail over conservation in most countries – making preparing for future climate-related disasters a priority for many officials and organizations rather than trying to prevent them.

"Climate change has quite frankly slipped to the back burner of policy priorities," said Maria van der Hoeven, executive director of the International Energy Agency, which last week released a report predicting the potential 5.3C-degree temperature increase.

Her remarks, made in London at a gathering unveiling the report, also noted the energy sector accounts for about two-thirds of global greenhouse-gas emissions. Contrary to limiting production, one of the main reasons countries are eyeing the far north is because it may contain up to 25 percent of the world's remaining

oil reserves.

The IEA isn't officially giving up on a temperature increase of two degrees, listing a set of actions required by 2020 to achieve that mark, but there is increasing agreement the goal is impractical and insufficient.

"This report shows that the path we are currently on is more likely to result in a temperature increase of between 3.6 degrees Celsius and 5.3 degrees Celsius," van der Hoeven said "but also finds that much more can be done to tackle energy-sector emissions without jeopardizing economic growth, an important concern for many governments."

Suggested remedies include reductions in the construction and use of lower-efficiency coal power plants, partially phasing out fossil fuel subsidies to discourage their use, and making significant investments in buildings and transportation to reduce their emissions.

But the political difficulty of enacting preventative measures is evident in the reaction to specific proposals now being made, including New York City where Mayor Michael Bloomberg last week announced plans to make significant investments in such projects. Scientists are forecasting the city will have an average of 57 days above 90 degrees Fahrenheit by 2050, compared to 18 now, and sea level may rise by as much as 11 inches between 2009 and 2020.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Ministry formally endorses Svalbard alcohol production

Allowing alcohol production in Svalbard is being formally proposed by Norway's Ministry of Health, bringing one Longyearbyen resident closer to a three-year dream of opening a local brewery. The ministry's proposal, now accepting comments until August, states the ban is outdated and would establish a licensing system where the government can set a number of requirements for any breweries and distilleries in Svalbard. The proposal would likely be a temporary solution since the ministry has stated it wants a full review of alcohol laws on Svalbard. Robert Johansen, who hopes to brew 100,000 liters of beer a year in Longyearbyen, said he expects it will take one to two years before the new policy to be enacted.

Dogs going to mainland can get exams via Skype, for now

Svalbard dog owners hoping to bring their dogs to the mainland are being allowed to use Skype to get a now-mandatory veterinary exam while the Norwegian Food Safety Authority considers a permanent solution. The ministry and the Svalbard governor's office have long sought a way to bring a permanent veterinarian to the archipelago, but are unable to agree on who will pay for one. That has posed a problem for dog owners needing the tapeworm exam mandated by the EU, but Harald Os, a veterinarian for the ministry, said animals can temporarily be examined visually via Skype and then given a confirmation certificate during a subsequent in-person visit on the mainland.

Do you have what it takes to be the first Svalbard Girl?

Are you a woman between 18 and 23 years old with purpose and meaning? If so, maybe you can be the first "Svalbard Girl" during the miner's harvest festival Aug. 23-24. "This is an idea I've gone a long time and when I found the old song 'Svalbardpiken' I decided that it was time to make the idea a reality," said Mary-Ann Dahle, lead organizer of the festival. It's not a beauty contest, but participants should be Svalbard residents willing to share their "plans and visions." Nominations can be sent to post@polarriggen.com.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. NW winds to 35 km/h. High 2C (-1C wind chill), low 1C (-4C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. W winds to 39 km/h. High 1C (-3C wind chill), low 2C (-4C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. W winds to 39 km/h. High 2C (-4C wind chill), low 0C (-6C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 32 km/h. High 2C (-2C wind chill), low 0C (-5C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, 2C (-3C), 0C (-3C), light 24:00h; Monday, cloudy, 3C (-1C), 1C (-3C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, rain/snow, 4C (21C), 3C (-1C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, 3C (1C), 3C (0C), light 24:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Longyearbyen Harbor workers, using a boat borrowed from Store Norske, help set the mooring lines for the cruise ship *Astor* as it became the first large cruise ship to arrive in the city Friday. The borrowed boat became necessary after the city's *Longyear II* was swamped due to an engine compartment breach. Repairs to the *Longyear II* in Tromsø are expected to be lengthy, prompting city officials on Friday to approve 600,000 kroner for a new support boat, expected to arrive June 16.

Big growth in big ships ahead

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stepped off the gangway. She was unhurt and able to get to her feet unassisted, which was all the more fortunate since her husband, Klaus, was forced to remain on board due to illness.

But despite the rough start, chilly temperatures and strong winds, Rudek was nothing but cheery about the few hours ahead for what she said will be her final trip to Longyearbyen.

"I'm very interested in the nature," she said, and the weather isn't a problem since "I'm coming from Germany where it's cold this time of year."

As for her husband, "he enjoys the ship. It's the best time to be here."

The 578-passenger *Astor*, which arrived Friday, is a relative dinky compared to the megaships that begin arriving this week, starting with the 1,200-passenger *Artania*.

About 37,000 cruise ship passengers arrived in Svalbard in 2012, an all-time high and doubled the total in 2011. Tourism officials are

expecting another increase – albeit far less drastic – this year.

The rebound comes after several years of general decline from the estimated 32,000 passengers in 2007, due largely to the global recession. The increase also comes despite warnings from cruise industry officials that various new laws and regulations – including requiring an on-board navigator with Arctic experience, plus likely future limits on areas of access and banning less-expensive heavy oil – will make voyages here more costly and less appealing.

Cruise growth in the area is likely to far outpace other destinations such as Rome and Barcelona because travelers are increasingly looking for a unique experience, said Daniel Skjeldam, chief executive officer for Hurtigruten, during a presentation at a cruise industry convention where he announced plans to expand sailings to Svalbard.

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

Stony faces, but lots of character

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local geological and natural features that make their composition possible.

"These little 'photo faces' in the present book that speak to you and me might have something in common with the real faces in our everyday life on the island – perhaps just the fact that a little breeze could change these faces, destroy them or add something to them," she writes in the book's introduction. "In just that instant both yours and my expression could change too, but for very different reasons."

Each face is titled with a motto (i.e. "a small crack can open new opportunities") and includes a description of its elements, with bits



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of vegetation, animal fur, debris and other objects adding expressions to the rocks serving as the canvas. Creating them presented more than just an artistic challenge.

"Nothing has been picked, removed or taken out of its context (which the strict laws on Svalbard demand)," Bendiksen notes.

The book – in Norwegian, English and German – offers more than pretty faces. Most rocks, for instance, "are probably autochthonous," she notes in a section detailing Svalbard's geology.

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

What's up

June 12

6 p.m.: Movie: "Broken," British comedy/drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 14

7 p.m.: Midnight Blues Cruise to Barentsburg, featuring Joakim Tinderholdt & The Rhythm Three. Tickets 950 kr. at Radisson Blu Polar Hotel.

June 15-16

Evening performances by Joakim Tinderholdt & The Rhythm Three. Barentz Pub.

June 16

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "After Earth," U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Only God Forgives," Danish/French action/drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 18

7 p.m.: Longyearbyen municipal council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and social gathering. Svalbard Church.

June 19

6 p.m.: Movie: "After Earth," U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

June 22

6 p.m.: Summer solstice beach party, bonfire and barbecue. Svalbard Sailing Club.

June 23

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Man of Steel," Canadian/U.S. action/adventure, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 25

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and social gathering. Svalbard Church.

June 30

11 a.m.: Mass by visiting priest Ragnar Aase. 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:

- *Statoil delays Barents plans, cites taxes*
- *Less ice, but more bears in Canada*
- *China, U.S. make greenhouse gas deal*
- *Architect's big umbrellas restore Arctic ice*