



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Ole Edvard Torland works on the trap he uses to catch and tag Glaucous Gulls near the Longyearbyen Field Biology Society observatory this week.

LULL OF THE GULL

Ways of tracking Svalbard's birds varies widely – as does knowledge of similar species

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

They're all in the family, but you can track the every move of some in real time while others vanish to places unknown for months at a time.

Bird lovers are again out in force keeping watch on the millions of winged wanderers migrating annually to Svalbard each summer. But just a couple of the roughly 30 types nesting here – gulls and geese – reveals human observation methods as diverse as the habitat and travel patterns of the birds themselves.

Some are full-time pros working in state-of-the-art labs thousands of miles away, some are scholars aboard ships along the rugged coastlines and some are hobbyists watching the birds feed at municipal trash dumps.

Not surprisingly, this variance plays a large role in how much is known about different types of birds by the humans who tag and monitor them.

Among the higher-tech efforts is the Brenttags project, which anyone with an internet connection can follow live at <http://brentgoose.blogspot.com>. Researchers mounted satellite senders on eight Svalbard Brent Geese, which are "the smallest and northernmost breeding goose in the world, and the one that also undertakes some of the

See MIGRATE, page 4

Cruddy grinders no more

City begins clearing foul stench of faulty food waste disposals installed in hundreds of homes

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A citywide mandate intended to clear the muck has instead generated a lot of it, but officials are hoping to get things unclogged beginning this summer.

Faulty food grinders installed under the sinks in hundreds of Longyearbyen homes last year are being replaced and a new model selected for residences still needing disposals, said Håkan Eriksson, head of technical infrastructure for Bydrift.

A limited number of replacement grinders have already been installed in homes experiencing significant problems such as leaks, food waste coming up again in sinks and smoke that prompted warnings from fire officials about using the units.

"Nobody should have a problem today," Eriksson said.

That doesn't necessarily mean original units still installed are functioning properly, he said.

See CLOGGED, page 3

Get trashed: Citywide cleanup Friday and Saturday. See What's Up on page 4 for details

Inside

New ways of spreading the 'Eufori'
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- Store Norske gets OK to store 4M tons of rock
- New Web portal to combine N. Norwegian data
- Habits, threats of local seabirds in new book
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

'Most important animal' is...this?

Threatened zooplankton may be shrimpy, but are main fare for species from birds to whales

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

If a species main usefulness is to be eaten, is it strange to say they're facing a threat to the habitat they thrive in?

Fewer of them means less for the predators to eat, of course, and right now that's a problem for what researchers call "the most important animal in the Arctic." Zooplankton, a relative to the centerpiece of the shrimp cocktail,

See ZOOPLANKTON, page 3



SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION FOR MARINE SCIENCE

An Arctic zooplankton plays a key role in the food chain under the spring ice in Svalbard.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Staff writer/photographer

Karla Paz

Copy editor

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

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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.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Longyearbyen students perform "Young Polar Eufori" at Kulturhuset on Friday during the city's 105th birthday celebration. They also presented the recycled-art exhibit "People Protect What They Love."

A birthday wish for more 'Eufori'

Longyearbyen Day features student performance of show artists hope to put on CD/DVD

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

There's ample opportunity in town for euphoria, but things are in a deep freeze for those hoping to share the experience elsewhere.

The most recent performance of the music/film production "Polar Eufori" was Friday as part of the 105th anniversary of the founding of Longyearbyen. The new "young" arrange-

ment at Kulturhuset featured about 30 students performing various parts to composer Liv Mari Schei's piano accompaniment.

The original show paying tribute to the natural and human elements of Svalbard has been performed several times, in whole or part, since its debut in December. But the artists developing the project say they need additional funds to release the project on CD and DVD, hopefully in time for Christmas. About 900,000 kroner of "Polar Eufori's" more than 1.3 million kroner budget has been raised.

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

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Sigh...another "environmental journalist" is sounding the alarm bells on the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and the SPECTRE-like collection of Evil People sending us to our doom under the pretense of safeguarding Earth's food sources against catastrophe. Theodora Filis, writing for *UK Progressive*, basically kicks off her skepticism by asking "what future do the seed bank's sponsors foresee that would threaten the global availability of current seeds?" She goes on to list various investors and interested parties (Bill Gates, et. al) along with the evil things they've done (she failed to note the Microsoft Man just pledged \$1 billion for vaccinations for children in the world's poorest countries and, as the swine flu made clear, those shots are all about mind control and poisoning us). There's certainly reasonable (if against consensus) arguments about problems with the seed vault, but Filis' piece is one of the more comically absurd we've seen (hence the quotes around her job title). We won't get into all the specifics, other than noting plenty of existing and predicted large-scale crop problems due to climate change, or wonder why taking precautions against the unknown is bad. But she could have at least read the plethora of

other conspiracy rants circulating the Web, many of them using long scientific words and complex-sounding theories, and added something new. Maybe those "temperature problems" the vault had last year (send us your precious seeds so we can kill them and force you to eat GMOs – bwa-ha-ha) ... Here's one of those mothers of mixed blessings: scientists are predicting sunspots may disappear for decades beginning around 2020. It happens – the last time was a couple of centuries ago – and the researchers say the absence of solar storms may mean slightly less global warming. On the other hand, one has to think the Northern Lights viewing is going to be awful. Virtually all of the internet commenters are citing the forecast as further proof man-made climate change is a hoax. No surprise, except for taking these scientists seriously while denouncing "experts" predicting climate change (especially since some of the sunspot folks are – surprise – climate researchers) ... Drinking game for the weekend: Surf the 'net and down a shot/beer/whatever every time "Arctic" appears in an article about the mediocre new Jim Carrey movie "Mr. Popper's Penguins" (do we really need to explain why this commonly held idiocy turns logic completely upside-down?).



JANNE SØREIDE / UNIS

A researcher, above left, examines the underside of sea ice at Rijpfjorden this spring, where algae boom and serve as a food source for the Arctic zooplankton species *Calanus glacialis*. At right, scientists studying the crustaceans gather outside a field hut serving as the base for the project.

Shrimpy species faces food crisis

ZOOPLANKTON, from page 1

are ideally suited for toughing things out in the extreme marine environment. But changes in sea ice conditions may threaten algae that are critical to the crustaceans before they themselves are devoured by species ranging from small birds to bowhead whales. Some of those, in turn, are crucial for other wildlife in the food chain.

Those conclusions were reached by a team of researchers spending nearly a year at Rijpfjorden analyzing the relationship between Arctic zooplankton and sea ice. The project, "Climate effects on planktonic food quality and trophic transfer in Arctic Marginal Ice Zones" – nicknamed Cleopatra – published its findings earlier this month.

"We are the first to have documented how (these zooplankton are) able to exploit the unique conditions of this part of the Arctic," said Jørgen Berge, a professor of biology at The University Centre in Svalbard and manager of the Cleopatra project, in an article published by The Research Council of Norway.

Zooplankton graze on algae on the underside of sea ice, with females using it for sex development and egg production. The crustaceans are specially adapted to melting sea ice and the blooming of a few small algal species, but "changes in the melting of Arctic sea ice could well disrupt its cycle," the article notes.

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

New food grinders sought by year's end

CLOGGED, from page 1

The city will continue replacing grinders when problems are reported with the 110 alternate disposals ordered.

"I can't say if people are using them today, but we are going to change all of them," he said.

A more extensive replacement grinder process is scheduled to begin this summer, with the city taking bids for new units intended for all homes without one.

"At the of the end of year we're going to have new ones," Eriksson said.

The city originally mandated all residences must have food grinders by July 1 of last year, but delayed the deadline when the units ordered were late to arrive. An initial installment

in 365 homes resulted in a barrage of complaints as sludge – and therefore sinks – failed to drain properly.

Experts elsewhere were critical of the units, which a Bydrift official said at the time were "the most economically advantageous" bid. Acon Klimavent, the company installing the units, said they were confident the grinders worked as specified in its contract.

Store Norske Boliger, developer of the residences affected, withheld a 400,000-kroner payment for the grinders and said homeowners won't be charged until the problems with the vendor are resolved. Eriksson said the matter remains in dispute.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Store Norske gets OK to store 4 million tons of stone

Store Norske is being allowed to store four million tons of rock resulting from coal processing at Svea, which the company calls essential as the ratio of rock to coal is rising as production in the core areas of the mine declines. Magne Larsen, manager of the project for Store Norske, estimates 100,000 tons of untreated coal piled up around the plant is now ready for processing, with stone accounting for about a quarter of the weight. The Svalbard governor's office, after evaluating two storage sites proposed by Store Norske, approved a moraine at Høganäsreen for use through 2028. The area is considered to have medium landscape value and little value to wildlife.

New Web portal will combine northern Norwegian entities

A new website combining northern Norwegian government and private entities into a central resource is scheduled to debut next May. "This portal is an exciting opportunity to gather knowledge and services that are currently spread across many participants," said Gro Kibsgaard-Petersen, communications director for BarentsWatch, which met with participating agencies this week in Longyearbyen. The University Centre in Svalbard, Store Norske, Svalbard governor's office and Svalbard Tourism are among the local entities scheduled to be included.

New book examines threats, habits of Svalbard's seabirds

A new book examining the habits of and threats to seabirds in Svalbard is being released by the Norwegian Polar Institute this week. "Sjøfugler i Arktis" ("Seabirds in the Arctic"), by NPI researcher Geir Wing Gabrielsen and longtime author Kirsti Blom, is based on years of research Gabrielsen has conducted in the area. The book details how birds are able to survive predators such as polar foxes and the extreme Arctic conditions, but are vulnerable to human activities such as pollution and overfishing. It finds the seabirds are representative of circumstances affecting the planet as a whole.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Mostly cloudy. NW winds to 7 km/h. High 4C (2C wind chill), low 2C (0C wind chill).	Mostly cloudy. N winds to 7 km/h. High 5C (3C wind chill), low 3C (1C wind chill).	Cloudy. W winds at 4 km/h. High 1C (1C wind chill), low 0C (0C wind chill).	Cloudy. W winds at 4 km/h. High 1C (1C wind chill), low 0C (0C wind chill).
Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, 0C (-0C), -1C (-1C), light 24:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, 0C (0C), 0C (-2C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, 1C (-1C), 0C (0C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, 1C (-1C), 0C (-2C), light 24:00h.			
Data provided by yr.no			

Avoiding that sinking feeling



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Betty Souther, left, of Vancouver, Canada, and Linda Crane, a resident of the United Kingdom living near Oxford, wave to crew members of the *Expedition* participating in a lifeboat drill Monday while docked in Longyearbyen as the cruise ship season gets underway.

Tracking birds a flighty endeavor

MIGRATE, from page 1

longest non-stop journeys of any goose species in the world," according to the Svalbard Science Forum.

Satellite transmitters with GPS tracking and solar panels were put on the eight brent geese caught in Denmark in May in an effort to learn more about their habits from spring through fall, according to the SSF. The transmitters also record altitude, allowing researchers to study how the geese respond to the wind conditions along the migration route.

An entry in the blog Monday notes "Steve obviously can not decide where to reside" along Greenland's coast, while today's states "Caretaker is furthest north of all." The project, funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management, also charts the daily movement of each goose on a map.

At the other end of the observation scale is Ole Edvard Torland, an airport security worker who did little observation of birds before moving to Longyearbyen in 2009. He is also tagging birds and maintaining a blog about his efforts (<http://thearticbirder.blogspot.com>), but is focusing on a different species that has notably less collective knowledge.

"Nobody knows where they go in the winter," he said this week near the Longyearbyen Field Biology Society observatory, one of two places he has permission to set up the trap he built. The other is Longyearbyen's waste disposal facility.

Torland's species of interest is the Glaucous Gull, a powerful large bird that breeds along sea cliffs and eats everything from seeds to fish. He said he has caught and tagged 16 gulls so far this year, but because it's a solitary



TROND HAUGSKOTT

A map of the Greenland coast, top, shows the location Monday of eight Svalbard Brent Geese being tracked in real time by satellite. Beneath, two geese, including one with a tag, are observed in May in Adventdalen. Maps of the birds' trip are at <http://brentgoose.blogspot.com>.

and self-funded effort he can't afford fancy extras like GPS transmitters.

Instead he relies on winter observations from bird researchers elsewhere – it's possible the gulls migrate to places like northern Norway or Greenland – and continuing to watch for them during upcoming summers to determine which ones survive.

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

What's up

June 15

8 p.m.: Movie: "Hangover 2," U.S. comedy, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 16

6 p.m.: Board of City Operation Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

June 17

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

June 17 and 18

Community cleanup, with free residential dropoff from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Bydrift waste facility and volunteers collecting trash from containers placed along roads. Hazardous waste such as oil must be brought to Bydrift. Beach and other volunteer projects also scheduled.

June 19

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Kung Fu Panda 2" (3D), U.S. animation w/ Norwegian voices, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "X-Men: First Class," U.S. action, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 21

7 p.m.: Discussion about Fridtjov Nansen featuring author Kristine Brøndum Aase. Svalbard Church.

June 22

8 p.m.: Movie: "Paul," U.S. comedy/sci-fi, age limit not specified. Kulturhuset.

June 26

11 a.m.: Mass with substitute priest Ragnar Aase.

7 p.m.: Organ concert "Music From Moscow," a collaboration with residents from Barentsburg. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Limitless," U.S. thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 28

7 p.m.: Fireplace 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:

- *130+ study Svalbard at sea all summer*
- *Are seals Svalbard sharks' main prey?*
- *Man running Pole to Pole for charity*
- *Diving naked in the Arctic to tame belugas*