



Treasuring town trash toil



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Halvor Olsen, a Store Norske employee, unloads Christmas trees and other trash from collection sites around Longyearbyen at the Bydrift waste-processing plant Saturday.

City cleanup allows bed on skis, dogsleds, other Arctic 'dirty laundry' to be aired in one spot

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The town dump probably isn't the first place locals are sending tourists hoping to savor the pristine Arctic environment.

But those looking to go "off the beaten path" might find trash indeed worth treasuring – if only for the mental keepsakes rather than take-home souvenirs.

A bed mounted on skis, a pile of dogsleds in various states of disrepair and lots of Christmas trees finally reappearing from underneath the melting snow were among the many discards of everyday life at the end of a community-wide cleanup Friday and Saturday.

Neighborly: Governor lends helping hand to large-scale cleanup by Russia in Pyramiden
Page 4

See RUBBISH, page 4

Warming brings new bird

Northern Gannet discovered nesting in Bjørnøya, seen as evidence of changing climate

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Yet another species to keep track of among the millions of birds migrating to Svalbard every year? Just great ... um, really, it is.

Bird fans might initially be enthusiastic

about a new arrival, but this one is typically found in warmer climates and may be a bad sign for species already here.

Two pairs of the Northern Gannet were discovered nesting at Alkeholmen, the far southern area of Bjørnøya. Researchers have seen individuals of gannets in flight around the island for the past five years, but the birds have never been observed breeding in Svalbard.

"When new and more southerly species

See DISCOVERY, page 2



ROB BARRETT / SEAPOP

Northern Gannets are relatively new in Norway, with about one percent breeding in the country.

For a day, Svalbard is pagan heaven



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The midnight sun, already high in the sky, begins another continuous loop above Longyearbyen during the summer solstice.

Longyearbyen called best place to be for solstice, even if it's not really the 'longest day' for sun

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It's official: Longyearbyen is the best place in the world to be today.

The city is first on a list of "Best Places to Celebrate the Solstice" – also referred to as "awe-inspiring spots (to) help you embrace your inner pagan" – published this week by the online magazine *Salon*. It's not like the length of sunlight is different than the four months

See PAGANS, page 3

Inside

World leaders in town on climate trip
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- Labor Party vows cut in youth fees for election
- Svalbard to get second big helicopter by 2014
- Store Norske still working on new support plan
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

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

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.



GEIR WING GABRIELSEN / NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

Northern Gannets nest in the Nordkapp area of Finnmark. The most common breeding areas for the large white birds with black wingtips are North Atlantic areas such as the British Isles and Iceland.

New breed of bird a warm omen

DISCOVERY, from page 1

observed are breeding on Bjørnøya, while we also see that many of the Arctic bird species go back, it is a signal of a milder climate," said Harold Steen, an assistant research director for the Norwegian Polar Institute who is doing fieldwork on the island, in a statement today. "A milder climate is unfavorable to the Arctic specialists."

The gannet is a relatively new species in

Norway, with the first colony established at Runde in 1946, according to the institute. The total Norwegian population is estimated at 4,500 pairs of the 390,000 worldwide, with about one percent breeding in Norway. They are among the few true seabirds in Norway who live their entire lives on the open sea except during the breeding season.

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

Briefly

World leaders here this week on U.N. climate trip

A dozen world leaders including former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland will study Arctic climate change Friday and Saturday in Svalbard as part of a United Nations Foundation trip to Norway.

The visit, occurring during the board of directors' semi-annual meeting, is to meet "with government, corporate and nonprofit leaders to

build support for U.N. efforts to improve global health, catalyze innovations in international development and call for global action on climate change," according to a statement by the foundation. "The board's discussions focus on ways to help new partners connect with the lifesaving work of the United Nations."

They are scheduled to meet Thursday with researchers during a tour aboard the *Nordsyssel* in Isfjorden and visit the Svalbard Global Seed Vault on Friday.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Most of the time it seems like an anti-marketing expert is titling those Brown Bag Seminars at The University Centre in Svalbard (we know – this is serious academics, not Brainiac Idol). But Kim Senger's lecture at 12:15 p.m. July 7, "UFOs on Svalbard?," has us comparison shopping for disposable lunch sacks (ideally the leftover ones are suited for making popcorn in the microwave). We won't give away the plot, but Senger's bio entry for "education and outreach is 'the world famous 'Who let the dog out' movie, filmed during the 2007 Svalbard double-crossing on skis.'" The link to that

is at www.cipr.uni.no/person.aspx?person=1070, along with the usual advanced scientific mumbo-jumbo ... We're supposed to provide information, not soliciting it, but since we slacked off: Does anyone know what those fliers featuring '80s He-Diva Lionel Richie posted around town last week are all about? Other than the "Hello" headline paying tribute to the famous ballad, the only thing on the few tear-off strips remaining was snippets of the lyrics. Others had phone numbers, but they were snagged with a frenzy not seen on other fliers offering things for sale. If it was a buzz marketing scheme, our hats off to the creators.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Jim Nicolson, right, examines wildflowers he's photographing while Lillian Mikolajczak observes under bleak skies today near The University Centre in Svalbard. The northern Scotland residents said they timed their trip to see the midnight sun, although they get continuous twilight back home.

'Longest day' good; night better

PAGANS, from page 1

surrounding it. However, *Salon's* honor is also bestowed for a reason that may surprise outsiders – but certainly not local residents: the enticement of what the area will experience in six months.

"The sun is up 24/7 mid-April to mid-August," Ann-Sophie Redisch writes in the article. "Even more exciting is the long polar night: no sun at all between mid-November and late January."

The article also mentions some of Longyearbyen's many northernmost icons, wildlife and recreational activities, and notes "crime is practically nonexistent but polar bears roam the neighborhood."

Many tourists visiting the city today said they timed their visit to see the midnight sun, although not necessarily to coincide with the summer solstice. Staying awake longer is common, but few said they were disturbed enough by the change for it to prevent them from sleeping.

"You have no idea about the time and that's a problem," said Ralph van der Vecht, visiting from The Netherlands.

Also, some said their experience is probably less disturbing than what a kid raised in Svalbard may feel in Paris during the summer.

"If you've never experienced it before it would get frightening if the sun suddenly went down," said Pontus Westman, a Swedish visitor.

The prospect of returning for the winter solstice didn't generate nearly the same enthusiasm, with van der Vecht saying he might consider it "for the weekend."

Longyearbyen residents frequently express a preference for the dark season, saying the smaller community is more close-knit and there's an abundance of activities.

"Even when it's dark you have warm people and friends, and during the light season it's beautiful," said Soo Storø, an employee at Svea who calls both solstices a highlight.

Prospects of seeing the midnight sun during solstice were initially bleak due to cloudy skies and cool temperatures. But sky started clearing in the evening and by midnight the sun was making its endless loop with virtually no impeding clouds.

Among the other locations chosen as *Salon's* 12 best is Skansen Park on Sweden's Djurgården Island, where a festival includes "barbaric quantities" of food and alcohol, and "dancing the little frog."

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Labor makes 25 percent cut in youth prices its first vow

Making movies, athletic activities and exhibitions cheaper for youths are the first promises being made by Labor Party members in Longyearbyen for this fall's municipal council election. Party members on the ballot said they want to introduce a culture card offering a 25 percent discount to middle and high school students for Svalbardhallen, Galleri Svalbard, movies and concerts booked by the city. Youth Labor members said the proposal is appreciated since few students have jobs. "For me it might mean I go to the swimming pool more often," said Astrid Sylte, leader of the Workers' Youth League chapter in Longyearbyen. The city is among those participating in an trial election where 16- and 17-year-olds are eligible to vote.

Svalbard to get second large rescue helicopter by 2014

Svalbard will have two large helicopters by 2014 instead of the current one large and one small, the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police announced Friday. "This is a significant strengthening of emergency preparedness," said Terje Moland Pedersen, the ministry's state secretary. The smaller helicopter now in use has less cabin space, a shorter flight range and cannot fly in conditions where icing may occur. The new model will be similar to the Super Puma in use, whose missions include a dramatic rescue of two researchers from the north tip of Greenland. "This is something we have wanted for a long time and we are glad that it is in place," said Svalbard Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø.

Store Norske still working on new plan for mining support

Store Norske is still determining how it will staff its mining support operations at Svea after terminating its contract with LNS Spitsbergen due to contracts found to be improper. Store Norske initially said it hoped to transfer LNS employees to similar positions and gave them until June 5 to reply, although Administrative Director Bjørn Arnestad declined to say how many did so. The company is advertising some positions as available.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

| Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|--|
| Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 22 km/h. High 7C (5C wind chill), low 6C (2C wind chill). | Mostly cloudy. SE winds to 18 km/h. High 6C (4C wind chill), low 3C (-1C wind chill). | Partly cloudy. E winds at 15 km/h. High 5C (3C wind chill), low 2C (0C wind chill). | Partly cloudy. NW winds at 11 km/h. High 1C (-2C wind chill), low 0C (-3C 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, 1C (-1C), 0C (-2C), light 24:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, 1C (-1C), 0C (-2C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, 2C (-0C), 0C (-2C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, 2C (-0C), 0C (-2C), light 24:00h. | | | |
| Data provided by yr.no | | | |



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A Sandmo & Svenkerud worker cleans up roadside debris at the UNIS Guest House construction site Saturday during Longyearbyen's two-day community-wide cleanup.

City cleanup returns in full force

RUBBISH, from page 1

Most of the high piles of rubbish, generally sorted by various substance classifications, are typical nose-wrinkling fodder. But Halvor Olsen, an employee of Store Norske participating in the company's co-sponsorship of the cleanup, said items such as the bed sled do stand out.

"I think it's from the Ta Sjansen" exotic sled race during the Solfestuka celebration in March, he said. As for why it took locals six months to get rid of their Christmas trees, "they were probably under the snow."

Plenty of residents responded to prodding from the city, Svalbard governor's office and Store Norske to tidy up. Workers at the Bydrift waste-processing plant estimated they received about twice as much trash as usual during the two-day period.

"I did the cleaning 14 days ago and my husband drove over here today with a big

truck," said Marit Skjei, a Longyearbyen resident for 11 years, dropping off a small amount of toxic material separated from the larger pile.

Residents could also leave garbage in containers along roadsides for collection by Store Norske and LNS Spitsbergen workers. In addition, some volunteer groups picked up trash in open-space locations, including a cleanup of the shoreline organized by the Svalbard Sailing Club.

Bydrift workers said the volume of trash collected was less than when the cleanup was initiated in 2007, likely in part because the project didn't happen in 2009 and last year's effort consisted solely of collecting from pickup spots around town. Also, Store Norske is becoming more stringent about enforcing tidiness for those residing on property owned by the company.

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

Norway assists Pyramiden restoration

Carpenters will help preserve cultural sites as Russia begins large-scale cleanup project

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Russia's efforts to restore the abandoned mining town of Pyramiden are getting a boost from Norway, which is providing specialized carpenters to help repair cultural structures.

The settlement, once a thriving home for more than 1,000 Russians and Ukrainians dating back to the Soviet era after World War II, has been abandoned for a dozen years. Most of the buildings are highly decayed or in ruins, with everything from toxic chemicals to giant piles of film strips from movie reels among the debris.

Russia this month announced a 36 million

kroner cleanup of Pyramiden and Barentsburg in an attempt to revive tourism, research and mining operations. The Svalbard governor's office said Monday they are providing the carpenters to assist the effort.

"We think it is very important ... that we have a common goal of preserving cultural heritage of Svalbard with the owners," said Guri Tveito, the governor's chief environmental officer, in an interview with NRK.

"The carpenters who come from us have special skills to repair sites. There are four buildings which are of priority to begin with."

The work is starting this summer, but a completion date is uncertain, Tveito said. Limited restoration has been occurring for several years.

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

What's up

June 22

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

June 23

6 p.m.: Beach bonfire and barbecue. Svalbard Sailing Club.

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.: Discussion about Fridtjov Nansen featuring author Kristine Brøndum Aase. Svalbard Church. Rescheduled from June 21.

June 29

8 p.m.: Movie: "Midnight in Paris," British/Spanish/U.S. comedy/romance, age limit not specified. Kulturhuset.

June 30

Power meter reading for Q2.

Sept. 22-24

Beer festival. Radisson SAS Polar Hotel Spitsbergen.

Sept. 29-Oct. 2

Svalbard CinemArctic 2011. Russian/Norwegian film festival in Longyearbyen and Barentsburg. For more information contact christin.kristoffersen@unis.no.

Sept. 30

Power meter reading for Q3.

Oct. 13-15

Celebration of Huset's 60th anniversary.

Oct. 20-23

Dark Season Blues festival. More details as available at www.svalbardblues.com.

Oct. 31

7:30 p.m.: Concert by tenThing brass ensemble. Kulturhuset.

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:

- *Ocean life on brink of mass extinction*
- *Sea level rising faster than ever seen*
- *Record ratings for Hurtigruten trip on TV*
- *When you gotta go, check for polar bears*