



JERZY STRZELECKI

A traveler captures an aerial view of Barentsburg at the inlet of Gronfjorden, one of the sites in Svalbard where 17 test wells for oil have been drilled since 1963, none of which contained economically viable deposits. Seismic tests in land and sea areas also showed little promise.

Wikileaks: Drill, baby, drill

U.S. asks what its oil firms can expect from Norway for rigs in Svalbard, worries about conflict

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

An oil-drilling boom in Svalbard isn't envisioned by many any time soon, but Wikileaks documents made public today show the United States sees potential for its rigs and those of other countries to decorate the area – with some nasty fights along the way.

Conflicts between Norway and Russia are "the greatest around Svalbard," according to the documents. The U.S. also sought answers about the kind of operating conditions

its oil companies and others could expect off the continental shelf, and suggested Norwegian officials might have a conflict of interest in setting such policies due to Norway's heavy dependence on oil income.

Svalbard's strict environmental protections and a lack of productive results from test wells drilled since 1963 have petroleum entities focusing most of their efforts elsewhere in the Arctic, with a quarter of the world's untapped oil potentially in the north.

The U.S. documents, published by Wikileaks and *Aftenposten*, question circumstances if Svalbard is opened to oil and gas drilling, and if Norway's claims to the area are as legitimate as its leaders believe.

See WIKILEAKS, page 3

Drop in the coal bucket

Stagnant markets, drop of more than half in production, add to Store Norske's other problems

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Store Norske, already having one of the most tumultuous years in its history, is seeing similar disorder in coal markets add economic uncertainties to its continuing steep decline in production.

The company's mines in Longyearbyen and Svea produced 1.9 million tons of coal in 2010, down from 2.6 million in 2009 and a record 4.1 million in 2007.

The totals, reported last week by *Finansavisen* and matching those of the company's annual report published in May, also show earnings of 349 million kroner in 2010, compared to 432 million in 2009 and nearly 1.1 billion when coal prices skyrocketed to record highs in 2008.

Prices dropped from a record \$175 (U.S) a ton in 2008 to \$128 in 2009 and rebounded slightly to \$131 in 2010. But short-term demand in Europe now appears stagnant, and long-term forecasts vary greatly as manufacturing and politics – heavily influenced by the global recession and other major events – make both rosy and dismal outcomes possible.

See MINING, page 3

Inside

Tiny bugs play big role in Svalbard
Page 2

Headlines from *Svalbardposten*

- LNSS workers at Svea facing tough decision
 - Annual Svalbard film festival again put on hold
 - More time, funds sought for book about school
- Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

Chick-lit in its highest milieu

Review: 'Whispers of Scandal' romance novel brings – wait for it – hot passion to icy Svalbard

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A perspective of the early polar explorers largely unknown to scholars is now being revealed to those open-minded enough to do some of their book shopping at supermarkets and airports.

An Arctic where revered heroes are rogues and love – maybe – offers more warmth than
See REVIEW, page 4



COURTESY OF NICOLA CORNICK

Nicola Cornick appears at a book signing for her Svalbard-based romance "Whispers of Scandal."

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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STEVE COULSON / UNIS



PÅL HERMANSEN / UNIS

Researchers with The University Centre in Svalbard, top, conduct Invertebrate field work at Edgeøya in July 2009 as part of a project to determine the history of springtails based on their geographical distribution throughout the Arctic region. Below, a springtail known as *megaphorura arctica* is characterized, as are the other 62 species found in Svalbard, by little antennas, three pairs of legs, and a jumping organ known as a *furcula* that allow it to leap long and high distances when its habitat is disturbed. Studies suggest the east coast of Svalbard is the arrival point for invertebrates colonizing from Siberia via ocean currents and west coast species mostly arrive from mainland Norway. The soil-based insects can survive more than two weeks floating at sea. Future observations will determine if climate change is affecting those patterns.

Tiny bugs big on history, travel

Springtails play key role in Arctic soil after long ocean journeys from abroad, UNIS studies find

"They are no bigger than 2mm and yet their total biomass in Svalbard is probably bigger than the biomass of all Svalbard polar bears together."

Tiny invertebrate known springtails play a key role in Arctic terrestrial ecosystems with functions such as nitrogen fixation and nutrients recycling. Their history and questions such as their ability to survive in the Arctic during glacial periods is largely unknown, but researchers at The University Center in

Svalbard are beginning to learn the answers.

Malu Ávila-Jiménez and Steve Coulson, in a recent article in journal *Insects*, state colonies found in glacial refugia in Svalbard don't appear to have survived the Last Glacial Maximum that ended about 10,000 years ago. But two distinct migration patterns were found for differing species, with those in west Svalbard arriving from Greenland and mainland Norway, and those on the east coast arriving from mid-Siberia.

The study can be downloaded free at www.mdpi.com/2075-4450/2/3/273.

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

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Maybe we just secretly hate competition even in goodwill events we're guaranteed to lose, but we've neglected to mention the real newspaper in town is doing its annual "guess when the champagne glass breaks" contest and appears to still be accepting entries as "the moment" rapidly approaches. The "glass," of course, is the snow formation on the west side of Operafjellet in Adventdalen, easily seen from town (and pictured at top as of earlier this week). Last year it "broke" July 18, ten days earlier than the previous two years. Predictions can be sent to stetten@svalbardposten.no, with the winner receiving a supposedly appropriate prize ... Since we're on a snow bender, just for the record we noticed a few stray flakes of snow fall while plagued with insomnia at around 5 a.m. Sunday, so regardless of



what the official weather gurus say (temperature hasn't been below 2.4 degrees Celsius since June 18) we're maintaining there's a decent chance of another year where it snows every month ... We know it's hard to see in the itty-bitty picture (bottom), but Svalbard is getting quite the impressive treatment in the interactive art exhibit "High Arctic" now featured at London's National Maritime Museum. There's 3,000 columns for each of Svalbard's glaciers, five light/sound areas for themes such as polar exploration and climate change, UV torches that reveal various secret elements and more. It's produced by United Visual Artists, which also does stage shows

for music acts such as Massive Attack and The Chemical Brothers, after project director Matt Clark took a trip here last September. See it in all its virtual glory at www.nmm.ac.uk/visit/exhibitions/on-display/high-arctic.

A truck dumps a load of coal onto a mountain of that already mined at Kapp Amsterdam. Production at Store Norske's mines in Svea and Longyearbyen dropped by more than half between 2007 and 2010, but the company is now facing a number of other difficulties such as a corruption scandal that may have cost hundreds of millions of kroner in above-market payments to subcontractors.



STORE NORSKE

Coal industry faces hazy forecast

MINING, from page 1

"European utilities have ample stockpiles to last through the summer and autumn and have been more active sellers than buyers during the past month," states an analysis by Reuters this week. Demand in other areas such as Asia is also weak, although prices appear to be remaining relatively stable.

An upward surge in prices and demand is seen as a strong longer-term possibility by Citigroup Inc. analysts, who state an expected economic recovery will trigger a boom – albeit with rapid price fluctuations – in manufacturing and other industries relying on coal.

Furthermore, the toll caused by the recession has some European countries rethinking "green" power policies. Also, the earthquake-

triggered nuclear power crisis in Fukushima, Japan, caused Germany to immediately close eight of its nuclear plants and leaders are planning a complete phase-out by 2022.

Negative influences include ongoing debt and banking crises in countries such as Greece that are threatening to spread, plus the possible expansion of coal exports from places such as Australia, China and South Africa as their mining industries and technologies expand.

Store Norske has long expected a gradual decline in production, but expects coal mining to remain viable for many years at existing sites and new ones such as the Lunckefjell mine it hopes to open in 2014.

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

U.S. questions oil policy in Svalbard

WIKILEAKS, from page 1

The questions were raised in 2007 by U.S. officials visiting Norway and in 2008 by Kurt Volker, the U.S. ambassador to NATO. They mirror broader issues revealed last year in documents obtained by a University of Tromsø scholar, where more dramatic language such as the U.S. "supporting a final solution" to the dispute and those making Svalbard policy possibly being "brought before the Hague tribunal" becoming part of the discussion.

Some circumstances have changed since then, including the signing of what Norway

and Russia call a landmark treaty resolving issues about continental shelf areas in the High North by dividing them roughly equally.

But numerous uncertainties remain between countries making Arctic territorial claims. Contrasting headlines about military escalation to preserve rights and the need for international cooperation appear almost daily.

Noway, in its responses to U.S. inquires, insisted "will threat everyone equally" if Svalbard oil drilling ever becomes a reality.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

LNSS workers meet new boss at Svea, present demands

LNS Spitsbergen employees must decide by Friday if they want to continue working at Svea by changing employers to a new company hired by Store Norske. LNSS workers met representatives of the new company, AF Gruppen, for the first time last Tuesday, presenting a list of 18 demands, although no negotiations took place. Store Norske is terminating the contract for LNSS to provide infrastructure and other support services, which was supposed to expire in 2020, as of Sept. 1 due to a corruption scandal involving leaders of both companies. The result has been uncertainty and frustration for LNSS workers despite reassurances from Store Norske and AF Gruppen that efforts will be made to keep existing employees and work conditions. LNSS, which was cleared of criminal charges in the matter, is also suing to regain its contract.

Film fest delayed, downsized

Plans for an annual film festival in Svalbard are on hold until at least next year, when organizers will try to present a smaller event. The idea surfaced after a Russian traveling film festival came to Barentsburg in 2008, but efforts the past two years have stalled. A local board is now determining if an October event organized in cooperation with the Tromsø International Film Festival is possible. The preliminary conclusion is a stronger local presence must be established, but "I think people are really ready for this," wrote TIFF Director Martha Otte in an e-mail.

Book about school on hold

A book about Longyearbyen School, originally scheduled to take a year to write, still isn't complete after two years and the author is uncertain if when it will be completed due to a lack of funds. The book by Kjersti Strømmen, a journalist with NRK, had an initial budget of 1.1 million kroner that has been depleted because "work is more extensive than we had expected," said Anne Ellingsen, head of Longyearbyen's youth enterprises board. Ellingsen said she is working with Mayor Kjell Mork to find additional funding, but is not certain how much is needed or what the book's fate will be if it is not obtained.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. Variable winds to 7 km/h. High 7C (7C wind chill), low 4C (2C wind chill).	Rain. N winds to 15 km/h. High 6C (4C wind chill), low 2C (-2C wind chill).	Rain ending. N winds to 15 km/h. High 3C (0C wind chill), low 2C (-2C wind chill).	Cloudy. NE winds to 11 km/h. High 3C (1C wind chill), low 2C (-1C 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, cloudy, 2C (-1C), 2C (-2C), light 24:00h; Monday, cloudy, 2C (0C), 1C (-1C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, 2C (2C), 1C (1C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, 2C (0C), 1C (-1C), light 24:00h.			

Data provided by yr.no



COURTESY OF NICOLA CORNICK

A wooden ship used by early Arctic explorers, above, is the setting for a voyage to Bellsund, depicted at right in the 1890s by a known painter, in a new romance novel.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

'Scandal' probes icy land, hearts

REVIEW, from page 1

furs is portrayed in the new novel "Whispers of Scandal" by Nicola Cornick, a British author whose written about 30 romance novels since 1988. Her decision to debut a six-book "Scandalous Women" series with a story in Svalbard was inspired by a cruise she took around Spitsbergen in 2007.

"I knew I wanted to set a book there but it was hardly the most likely background for a Regency historical," she writes at her website (www.nicolacornick.co.uk). "And yet I think it must have been meant, for as soon as I started to research the rich history of Spitsbergen I realized that it was exactly the right setting."

The female protagonist of the plot set in 1811 is Lady Joanna Ware, widow of "the daring and dashing" explorer David Ware, who she knew as an abusive and deceitful lout. Companion explorer Alex, Lord Grant, gets an earful about the Lady being a self-absorbed and fashion-obsessed twit. Fittingly, hubby dies and bequeaths to his wife and Lord Grant an illegitimate child stashed in a Svalbard monastery.

So, after initial scenes of angry accusations and possible underlying lust, the Lord

and Lady are off in a rickety ship to a land where affairs of nature and the human heart present many chilling perils.

The mass-market paperback is getting mostly positive feedback from chick-lit reviews. Those accustomed to more snooty literature may discover pronounced similarities to authors like Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy who, in the always-delicate words of Mario Puzo, "took forty pages to let out a fart" to fill space for a captive audience. Certainly anyone hoity-toity to continue insisting "Anna Karenina" is the greatest novel ever could do worse than evaluate how the pennings of their favored author might compare if dropped off on the coast of Bellsund to spend the winter.

Cornick states one historical influence in the novel is the account by John Constantine Phipps of his voyage in 1773, when his ship and another exploring trade routes around the North Pole became trapped in the ice. So are the accounts of other "hair-raising" voyages in primitive wooden ships, with Naval officers proving themselves "efficient and daring with polish, dash and determination."

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

Excerpt: Shelter from the storm

The following is an excerpt from Nicola Cornick's romance novel "Whispers of Scandal."

"He stopped, frustrated, trying to think what she would do, where she would go, if she felt so raw and despairing that she wanted to hide from the world. Certainly she would seek out solitude and in Spitsbergen there were plenty of spaces she might find it. But she was on foot and in her second-best pair of boots at that, so she could not have walked far. For once he blessed the utter inadequacy of her fashion wardrobe..."

"A hundred yards along the beach he found her. She was standing staring out to sea ... The snow was swirling about her. Her long dark hair tangled in the wind."

"'Joanna.' Alex stopped a few feet away from her and she turned to look at him and his heart stuttered when he saw her face. Her blue eyes were terrifyingly blank ... her gown clung to her body, soaked through already by the snow..."

"Already it was too late to return to the monastery ... If they did not reach a trappers' hut soon they would probably lose their way in the white wilderness and very probably freeze to death even though they were so close to the village."

"Alex put an arm about her, wrapping them both in his cloak, guiding her along the shore toward the nearest dwelling. She felt stiff, but she came with him docilely enough and he had no difficulty drawing her in the though door of the meager shelter within ..."

"'You have to get out of those wet clothes.' The words came out more roughly than Alex had intended. "Come on. I cannot have you taking a fever."

"She allowed him to undress her, passive between beneath his ministering hands and it was only when she was sitting there in her shift that suddenly she looked up and her eyes met his..."

"'Alex,'" she said. Her arms went about him in desperate need..."

What's up

July 17

11 a.m.: Mass w/ substitute preist Ragnar Aase. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Elle S'appelait Sarah," French/British drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

July 19

7 p.m.: Fireplace gathering. Svalbard Church.

July 24

11 a.m.: Mass w/ substitute preist Ragnar Aase. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Submarine" (3D), British drama/comedy, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

July 26

7 p.m.: Fireplace gathering. Svalbard Church.

July 31

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

8 p.m.: Movie: "Priest" (3D), U.S. action/horror/sci-fi, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 7

8 p.m.: Movie: "Hanna," U.S./British/German action/drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 14

8 p.m.: Movie: "Bridesmaid," U.S. comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 21

8 p.m.: Movie "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2," U.S./British adventure/family. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 28

6 p.m.: Movie: "Cars 2" (3D), U.S. animated dubbed in Norwegian, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Captain America: The First Avenger," U.S. action/adventure, age limit not determined. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 31

8 p.m.: Movie: "Oslo, 31," Norwegian drama, ages 15 and up. 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:

- 1M-kr. dumping fine for French trawler
- Off-limit polar bears hurt hunters' wallets
- Testing a 4WD built for Arctic's worst
- Navy to guard climatologists from pirates