



COURTESY OF ERIK TUNSTAD

Fearsome predators of the prehistoric Arctic seas rest on a rock in Isfjorden after being collected in their fossilized form, with plastic miniatures depicting the creatures during their livelier days.

'SEA MONSTERS OF THE NORTH'

PART IX: THE FINAL ENCOUNTER

Jørn Hurum leads last annual Isfjorden quest for dinosaur fossils

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

A match for the mightiness of the Midgard the sea serpent, who was big enough to circle Earth and strong enough to battle Thor. As vicious as Fenrir, the wolf who devoured the sun and moon...

Look, if such proclamations can be made by *National Geographic* – which admittedly has evolved from "topless tribal women" to "Inside New Orleans' Vampires" – then surely those depictions about the last of these annual dinosaur digs are worthy of tawdry tabloids.

See **FINALE**, page 3

A slick N. Pole voyage

First-ever attempt by hovercraft collects sea and ice data for mission funded by oil agency

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

So is this a cruise or a road trip? A scientific expedition or attempt to plunder the Arctic's vast oil resources?

As the vehicle involved in the journey suggests, there aren't single correct answers.

The first-ever attempt to reach the North Pole by hovercraft is being made by the Norwegian *Sabvabaa* vehicle. Participants in the

See **AMPHIBIOUS**, page 4



NORWEGIAN PETROLEUM DIRECTORATE

The *Sabvabaa* hovercraft climbs onto an ice floe during its attempted journey to the North Pole.

Now blow money *really* fast



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Romina Nagahata, left, and Patricia Lie help Marcela Gomez wire money to her home country of Chile on Saturday at Bajaz Barneklær & Ustyr.

Store makes wire transfers for Svalbard's foreigners child's play with Western Union branch

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

People come to Svalbard to make a of money. Unlike most places, spending it in a desired way isn't always as easy as earning it.

A children's store is now offering to rapidly relieve folks of some of that financial largess – without the burden actually having kids, although families are often involved.

See **WIRED**, page 4

Inside

- Male walrus finally getting lucky?** Page 2
- Headlines from *Svalbardposten***
 - Ancient graves rise to surface in Ny-Ålesund
 - Boat seized, owner fined for fishing violations
 - Five men needed to free buck trapped in wire
- Weather forecast** Page 3
- Events calendar** Page 4

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

Three down, ~3,000 to go



HÅKON MOSVOLD LARSEN / SCANPIX

A trio of walrus rest on a beach in Spitsbergen, where Norwegian Polar Institute researchers are planning to visit this month to conduct a count of what they believe is a growing population. There were about 3,000 walrus, almost all male, tallied during the last count in 2006, but observers have seen many calves in the area since. "There is much to suggest that there are many more walrus in Svalbard than six years ago," said Christian Lydersen, an NPI researcher, in an interview with *Svalbardposten*. While data is scant, it is believed there were about 100,000 walrus in Svalbard before hunting began 350 years ago. Research during the 1980s suggests there were only a few hundred left when they were declared a protected species in 1952.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

You gotta love how local ties to the Olympics keep popping up, especially in that Bumbling Brits way that's bound to be a big part of London's legacy. This week's victim is Helen Angelsen, 22, who was shocked to learn **an airline sent the Norwegian high jumper's luggage to Longyearbyen instead London.** "It's clothes in there, but I have the most important thing here," she said. "My spiked shoes were, in fact, in my hand luggage." *Dagbladet* speculates the error may be due to both cities starting with "Lon," neglecting to mention Longyearbyen's airport code is "LYR." Angelsen, ranked seventh in the world before the Games started, begins her Olympic quest Thursday ... One other potentially local item from London Lunacy 2012: If Canada ends up opposing Norway and the U.S. in The Global War for the Arctic (Oil), remember **that bizarre call by a Norwegian ref during the U.S.-Canada women's football match Monday may determine the fate of World War III.** We'll still take the U.S. defending our frigid island since, insane political and social scene aside, they do tend to be particularly fierce when money and exploiting the environment are involved ... Since we're updating the Arctic Cold War, just a few fun tidbits from the past couple of weeks: **Danish scientists are on an expedition that departed from Svalbard attempting to prove a large North Pole area is theirs, not Russia's. Meanwhile, Russia's Vladimir Putin, at a ceremony, unveiled new state-of-the-art Arctic nuclear subs** he says will patrol our waters and are specially designed to carry new intercontinental missiles capable of reaching targets worldwide ... OK,



INGE BAKKELAND / SVALBARDBIRDS.COM

time to play Ornithology For Dummies: What's the main difference in the two Svalbard birds in picture above? Now a question for the pros: **Which goose is the odd bird out in the flock of thousands currently in Adventdalen?** The answer, which may surprise non-locals whose knowledge about geese is mostly from PETA's foie gras propaganda videos, is the white bird. The white goose has been seen mingling with the darker barnacle geese for the past five years, according to the Svalbard Science Foundation. True to our lazy habits, we'll let their news release provide the scientific specifics: "The bird is in fact a leucistic barnacle goose. Leucistic birds lack all or some pigmentation in the feathers...the white geese are believed to have the same breeding and survival potential as the normal barnacle geese. However their lifespan is estimated at only two to three years (compared to eight to ten years for barnacle geese in general) as their unusual color makes them more attractive to hunters and possibly also predators." But they have been known to live at least 18 years.



COURTESY OF JØRN HURUM

Excavators sift and analyze sites where fossilized prehistoric plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs are buried. Daily trips to the excavation camp are being offered until Aug. 15 by Spitsbergen Travel.

Dino digs ending, but not work

FINALE, from page 1

Strip away the marquees and what's left is a few folks sifting through cold dirt looking for lumps that are a bit different from the nearly infinite thousands of rocks.

Successfully capturing the fearsome sea predators is more about plastering and writing than firepower, although rifles are nearby in case something inclined to eat them (a.k.a. a polar bear) approaches. Also, if there's going to be an award for cinematography, it's going to be the view from the adventurers' pit toilet.

But for the participants who started Friday, it's unquestionably a blockbuster experience.

"It's a bit nerve wrecking to be excavating marine reptile fossils for the first time," wrote Erik Tunstad, a member of this year's dig, in an online journal at *National Geographic's* website. "It is after all the real thing, what museums are based on. Not like the rocks I used to fill the kitchen cupboards with as a kid."

"What I am digging out now, on the other hand, is to be preserved for all time. Maybe even a whole skeleton, or at least contribute to scientific work? Or at the very least, equipped with a catalogue number."

This is the ninth year Oslo paleontologist

Jørn Hurum has led fossil excavations in Isfjorden. Participants have uncovered dozens of plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs, including new species such as the much-hyped "Predator X," potentially the largest marine carnivore ever.

The final trip is lower profile than some past expeditions, including one broadcast live via multiple webcams. His work was also featured in a *National Geographic Explorer's* documentary that played up the "sea monsters" angle with fancy graphics and an ominous soundtrack. The magazine, keeping the "sea monsters of the north" headline in promoting this year's expedition, states the quest is "excavating the remains of ancient marine reptiles worthy of the most fantastic Norse legends."

Although the field work is ending, there will be a spinoff, although "40 Skeletons Under the Microscope" may not have the mass audience appeal.

"We have at least ten years ahead of us in the lab," Hurm told *Svalbardposten*.

The journal for this year's expedition is at <http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/blog/explorers-journal>.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS



ANDRINE KYLLING / KINGS BAY

Ancient graves exposed by permafrost in Ny-Ålesund

Graves from what are believed to be the 1600s have been pushed up by permafrost to the surface at Hollendarhaugen in Ny-Ålesund, according to officials residing in the research community. An old cemetery was moved during the 1950s to make room for new buildings, but this summer the Svalbard governor's office was told wood from the site had come into view. Two archaeologists sent to the site say two graves and many bones have been discovered, but it is not known if the latter are human. Officials say the graves may have been overlooked or the bodies may have been moved, but not their coffins.

Boat seized overnight, owner fined for fishing violations

A company has been fined 250,000 kroner for loading a transfer boat with too much cod and failing to report the catch, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The *Frio Arkhangelsk* was seized overnight by the Norwegian Coast Guard after an Aug. 1 inspection near Bjørnøya. Officials held the boat to ensure the fine would be paid by the boat's owner, Rederiet Rainbow, which provided an immediate guarantee for the amount.

Five men needed to rescue reindeer snagged in wire

Five men from the Svalbard governor's office were needed to save a reindeer that got stuck in wire Sunday at the old dog farm on Longyearbreen. The buck's antlers and one leg were snared in several meters of wire, said Lt. Thomas Ulvestad. He said the men spent 30 minutes holding the reindeer down, cutting it loose and making sure it was not injured.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. W winds at 15 km/h. High 9C (6C wind chill), low 5C (1C wind chill).	Rain. S winds at 15 km/h. High 9C (7C wind chill), low 7C (4C wind chill).	Rain. S winds to 11 km/h. High 8C (5C wind chill), low 6C (4C wind chill).	Cloudy. W winds to 15 km/h. High 6C (3C wind chill), low 4C (0C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, 7C (4C), 3C (0C), light 24:00h; Monday, cloudy, 5C (0C), 3C (-3C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, 5C (1C), 3C (-1C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, 6C (2C), 3C (0C), light 24:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			



NORWEGIAN PETROLEUM DIRECTORATE

Participants in the *Sabvabaa* hovercraft's voyage to the North Pole take a break and measure the thickness of the polar ice. Researchers are also collecting seismic data and taking geological samples.

Oil's well on hovercraft Pole trip

AMPHIBIOUS, from page 1

Participants are collecting marine and geological data in addition to learning how to navigate a tricky course across sea and ice.

The 12-meter-long, six-meter-wide hovercraft was deployed July 18 from the *Norbjorn* freight vessel in Svalbard at about 80 degrees north on July 18, according to the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (NPD), a financial sponsor of the expedition.

"It's a very special feeling to fly over the ice on a hovercraft, over bumps and through openings in pressure ridges," wrote Yngve Kristoffersen, a professor emeritus at the University of Bergen, in an e-mail to the NPD. "Effective progress north is six to seven knots when ice conditions are good, and four to five knots when the ice is broken up by multiple pressure ridges. Our progress is about one degree of latitude per day."

The researchers are measuring the thickness of the sea ice, plus collecting seismic data and geological samples of the seabed.

The expedition's preliminary goal is reaching 85 degrees north, where a network of listening buoys designed to record earthquakes will be deployed, according to the NPD. The hovercraft will remain there for about two weeks listening for earthquakes until the *Oden* icebreaker arrives. The vessels will then con-

tinue north together to the work area for seabed surveys beyond the North Pole.

The NPD, which reports to the Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, defines its purpose as "creating the greatest possible values for society from the oil and gas activities by means of prudent resource management based on safety, emergency preparedness and safeguarding of the external environment."

The *Sabvabaa* has spent four summers collecting data near the ice edge north of Svalbard. But progressing farther is not easy.

"This has been a tough day," the expedition's online log noted Sunday, the most recent update. "Stopped last night at the edge of a large field of broken-up ice, one to two meters thick. Today, we have spent all the time, permitted by sufficient visibility (10 hours) to move east and west to search for a pathway in a northerly direction with no luck. We have only been able to proceed three miles to the north relative to last night's position."

"The melt season is over and freezing has started," the log adds. Overall, however, "all is well."

The expedition's log, featuring a map tracking their progress, is at <http://ccom.unh.edu/rh-sabvabaa>.

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

Mall merchant becomes money mover

WIRED, from page 1

Bajaz Barneklær & Ustyr officially opened the world's northernmost Western Union branch Saturday in Lompensenteret, where funds can be sent and received to about 400,000 other locations globally. For Longyearbyen's many foreign residents sending money to loved ones in their home countries it's a quicker and more convenient, if not necessarily cheaper, process than going through the bank or other alternatives.

"We've used it many times ourselves sending money to Peru," said Tommy Lie, the store's co-owner. "Why not offer it to others?"

It's possible to transfer money via Western Union's website, but the physical branch allows more options and doesn't have certain restrictions on where funds can be sent, he said.

While use of Western Union has declined in technically advanced countries due to multi-

tudes of other options, it's still widely used in developing nations, where non-urban areas in particular don't necessarily have ATMs, accept major credit cards from other countries or perhaps even recognize a traveler's check.

The ability to receive money nearly instantly may also be vital for those in Svalbard who find themselves, intentionally or not, without the means to support themselves. Such funds are required for residency and lacking them likely means a hasty eviction.

But if any thugs are thinking of the children's shop as an easy mark for collecting lots of cash employees are waiting to pay out, it doesn't quite work that way when customers arrange for a large incoming transfer, Lie said.

"They give us a little time and we fix it with the bank," he said.

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

What's up

Aug. 12

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Amazing Spider-Man" (3D), U.S. action/drama, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 15

Deadline for comments on draft of master plan for Longyearbyen's water supply from 2012-2022. Details at www.lokalstyre.no/delplaner-paa-hoering.253159.no.html.

Aug. 19

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Dark Knight Rises," U.S./British action, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 26

6 p.m.: Movie: "Madagascar 3," U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Kon-Tiki," Norwegian dram, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 28

6-8 p.m.: Activity fair. Demonstrations and signups for Longyearbyen's recreational clubs. Svalbardhallen. More information at svalbardturn.no.

Aug. 29

6 p.m.: Movie: "Ice Age: Continental Drift" (3D), U.S. animated/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 31

6 p.m.: Movie: "Til Ungdommen," Norwegian documentary about youth activism in the summer of 2011, premier screening, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 2

6 p.m.: Movie: "Til Ungdommen," Norwegian documentary about youth activism in the summer of 2011, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Albert Nobbs," U.S. drama/romance, no age limit specified. 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:

- *Shocker: More studies confirm warming*
- *August: Yet another low for Arctic sea ice*
- *Dreaming of men on Mars in Antarctica*
- *Reindeer milk a new Arctic tourist boom?*