



Bear doesn't scare

27 people flee glacier camp after menace tactics fail; officials say bears getting more aggressive

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

A group of 27 students and instructors were forced to abandon a glacier camp Monday after it was invaded multiple times by a polar bear that refused to be intimidated despite more than 50 signal pistol shots being fired at it, according to the Governor of Svalbard.

The bear was first seen Sunday by the Arctic Nature Guide group while it was on Nordenskiöldbreen, but the animal was not there when the group returned to the tents on the moraine. It returned at about 2 a.m. Monday, however, when it was spotted a person guarding the camp.

"After firing about 30 signal pistol shots without the bear disappearing, they retreated to a cabin," a statement by the governor's office notes.

From the cabin about 600 meters from their
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PER ANDREASSEN / SYSSERMANNEN

A campsite at Nordenskiöldbreen is packed up Monday after multiple visits by a polar bear.



TROND VIKEN / NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES

Monica Mæland, left, Norway's minister of trade, industry and fisheries, greets engineering students Kim Robert Sommerset and Maren Wiger during a ceremony this week in Mine 3 celebrating the debut of a preparatory course that started Aug. 29. Twenty students are in the inaugural class.

A town out to launch

Debut of engineering program seen as step toward expanding Longyearbyen's economic base

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

For their final exam, maybe the students in Longyearbyen's new engineering program can get the rocket to actually launch.

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Revved up about research

Is new science center designed to 'ensure' or 'increase' Russia's strategic presence in Svalbard?

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Russia's been expressing a desire to expand its research activities in Svalbard for a while, but a decree this week officially approving the establishment of a science center is being greeted by some with a slightly wary eye.

The center and other planned facilities are
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COURTESY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Barentsburg is the planned site for the main facility of a new science center designed to boost Russian research activities in Svalbard.

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.

The 'music of kings' (not necessarily by them)



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE



NATALIA SHMATOVA / TRUST ARCTICUGOL

The Drolls, at top, perform Russian folk music from the 13th and 14th centuries Monday night at Kulturhuset on the final day of the five-day Grumant festival. At bottom left, audience members dance to a preview performance before the five-band gala. At bottom right, the group Zhivaya Zemlya performs in Pyramiden. The first-time festival, featuring music from northern Russia, also strove for uniqueness by staging nearly all of its concerts in Barentsburg and Pyramiden.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

We keep hearing doomsday is approaching twice as fast here compared to the rest of the planet due to climate change, but preppers tempted to load up the rifles and head for hills of Idaho or the WikiLeaks nuclear shelter in Stockholm might want to pay heed to a new book that detailing a far quick and more drastic end-of-the-world scenario. **It seems Longyearbyen is one of the best place in the world to be if Earth suddenly stops spinning**, according to Randall Munroe, creator of the science webcomic XKCD and author of "What If?: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions," which is debuting this week. Not that we'd necessarily be ready to break into the Doomsday Vault and celebrate with a harvest fest since in the rest of the world "nearly everyone would die. Then things would get interesting." Basically it'd be as a result of winds topping 1,600 km/h at the equator, the same speed the Earth is rotating there (Munroe is assuming that Earth stops and the atmosphere doesn't). Also working against us, while the scientists at the South Pole would be spared the winds, "no human cities are far enough from the equator to escape devastation. Longyearbyen...the highest-latitude city on the planet –



RANDALL MUNROE / XKCD.COM

Our lives suck less! So what if it looks like Katrina hit? At least we're alive. So there.

would be devastated by winds equal to those in the planet's strongest tropical cyclones." Still, a good many of us would probably survive that and we'd just be facing a small adjustment in our light/dark cycle with six continuous months of each. Of course, since the rest of the planet would also be in a similar cycle the heat/cold thing would be a bit skewed as well. But, hey, our worries about greenhouse gas would look pretty silly at that point.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Monica Mæland, center right, seeks an explanation after a rocket designed to celebrate the launch of a new engineering program in Longyearbyen fails to ignite during a ceremony this week in Mine 3.

Engineering program has intense focus

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The celebratory device – not built by the university-level students – failed to ignite during a ceremony this week in Mine 3 celebrating the debut of the preparatory course. But that was the only hitch in what officials and students called a promising addition to Longyearbyen as the city seeks to further diversify its economic and research activities.

"Today we know that coal mining is still incredibly important," said Monica Mæland, Norway's minister of trade, industry and fisheries. "At the same time, society in Svalbard is gaining more legs to stand on."

Mæland's appearance at the ceremony – including her aborted effort to launch the rocket – came at the end of a three-day visit to the archipelago. During the trip she toured research facilities in Ny-Ålesund and the new Lunckefjell coal mine, and received an overview of the Longyearbyen Community Council's new strategic plan for the next few decades.

In several media interviews, Mæland reaffirmed her support for continuing coal mining as Svalbard's primary economic activity for some years to come, and noted the engineering program can assist with that while helping broaden Svalbard's prospects in other areas.

The program is a collaboration between a Narvik University College, the Norwegian Society of Engineers and Technologists, LNS Spitsbergen, Store Norske and the Longyearbyen Community Council. The inaugural program received 750,000 kroner in funding from the Norwegian government.

The 20 inaugural students began classes Aug. 29 and will meet in Longyearbyen roughly monthly for concentrated sessions over several days, with online and home study sessions during interim periods.

"It's a lot of information to take in," said Mikael Bremseth, 30, a Trondheim resident. "It's been 10 years since I've been to school."

There's no chance of slacking off away from the classroom since "we have to work with it every day for two years now," he said.

Bremseth said he enrolled in the course because it allows him to continue his regular job, making it a more practical option than a traditional program since he has a family to support.

Classes met for 10 hours a day during the first four-day session, with instructors focusing on mathematics and Norwegian engineering terminology. The next session is scheduled to include more math and delve into physics.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Battle for Operafjellet's coal rights likely going to court

A battle for the rights to Svalbard's last-known untapped large coal deposit appears headed for court as Austre Adventfjord AS says it will file a lawsuit challenging a decision awarding the rights to Store Norske. Seven claims totaling 61.1 square kilometers located almost exclusively on Operafjellet were allocated to Store Norske last Tuesday by the Norwegian Directorate of Mining with the Commissioner of Mines at Svalbard following more than a year of disputes and failed discussions between the two companies. Austre Adventfjord was awarded ten adjacent claims, but an attorney for the company said it cannot undertake its planned mining project without the other seven. The company's legal challenge is based in part on a belief Store Norske will ultimately not mine the claims, and it is contrary to the mining code to take action "intended to keep others away and earmark areas." The disputed area contains an estimated 10 million tons of recoverable coal, enough for several years of production at current levels.

After struggles, part of Mine 3 museum may open next year

The first part of a museum in the abandoned Mine 3 may be open to visitors as early as next year after work that has progressed in fits and starts since 2009, according to Store Norske officials. The goal is to fully open the museum in time for the company's 100th anniversary in 2016, but struggles including financing questions made that prospect uncertain. But new allocations, including a two-million-kroner grant from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund, now has officials more optimistic. "I think we have achieved a lot with relatively limited resources," said Terje Carlsen, the company's chief spokesman.

Greenpeace comes up dry on booze purchase request

A request by Greenpeace to be allowed to purchase alcohol for the crew of its ship *Esperanza* during a voyage this month has been rejected by The Governor of Svalbard. Regulations prohibit such purchases for employees and passengers aboard ships.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. E winds to 45 km/h. High 4C (-2C wind chill), low 1C (-5C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. E winds to 35 km/h. High 3C (-2C wind chill), low 2C (-2C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 22 km/h. High 4C (1C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill).	Rain/snow. W winds to 22 km/h. High 3C (0C wind chill), low 2C (-1C wind chill).
Sunrise 4:02a; sunset 9:50p	Sunrise 4:12a; sunset 9:40p	Sunrise 4:21a; sunset 9:30p	Sunrise 4:30a; sunset 9:21p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, 4C (1C), 2C (0C), light 16:33h; Monday, cloudy, 2C (-2C), -2C (-6C), light 16:15h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -1C (-5C), -3C (-6C), light 15:58h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -2C (-5C), -5C (-9C), light 15:41h			

Data provided by storm.no

A little snow tells a savage tale



TOM ARNBORN / WWF-CANON

Researchers with WWF and the Norwegian Polar Institute examine a trail of footprints left by a female polar bear in Svalbard in April before collecting snow from ten of the footprints that was later melted and analyzed for DNA. The analysis – the first time DNA has been extracted from a polar bear track – revealed skin cells from the bear, a seal and a gull. Blood in the tracks indicates the bear apparently was eating the seal, with the gull also feeding on the carcass at some point. Project members said the analysis will allow the habits of polar bears to be observed in a less disruptive manner. More details about the project are available at tinyurl.com/prhrsdy.

New Russian science center coming

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intended to "ensure the Russian presence in Svalbard," according to a government press release. The center will be located in Barentsburg, with a secondary facility in Pyramiden.

Headlines from Norwegian news organizations portrayed the move as more aggressive, calling it an effort to establish a "stronger foothold" or "increased presence" in Svalbard. Russia has for decades disputed what it calls discriminatory Norwegian policies in Svalbard and is increasingly eyeing the Arctic as a future economic and strategic foundation. Tensions have heightened in recent months due to

the crisis in the Ukraine and resulting sanctions.

But Rune Bjåstad, a spokesperson for Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated in an e-mail to ABC News the announcement about the new center isn't surprising and research by all nationalities is subject to strict regulations.

"Together with researchers from Norway and a number of other countries, Russian scientists also contribute important knowledge about the environment and climate change in the Arctic and globally," he wrote.

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

Bears getting harder to scare away

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campsite, the group contacted governor's office and a duty officer at The University Centre in Svalbard. The trawler *Stålbas* was sent from Billefjorden to retrieve the group, which first returned to the campsite to collect its equipment after determining the bear had departed.

"But the bear came back and was not intimidated by 20 new signal shots," the governor's statement notes.

One of the governor's rescue helicopters was deployed to the campsite to chase the bear away so the remaining equipment could be collected, according to the statement.

Both police and participants in the guide course said the encounter offers a valuable lesson for everyone in Svalbard.

"Even though we have signal shots and

other scare resources, there is no certainty polar bear can be intimidated," said Christian Svarstad, a police chief lieutenant for the governor. "We have seen more aggressive bears in the Isfjorden area this summer."

The governor's office has also used a helicopter during the past two weekends to chase away a bear seen on north side of Adventfjorden where there are numerous cabins, although observers are uncertain if it was the same animal on both occasions. The area is visible to the naked eye from Longyearbyen and numerous people tried to get a closer look on boats, prompting a warning from the governor's office that actions affecting the behavior of the protected species are illegal.

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

What's up

Sept. 2

7 p.m.: Interview of Spitsbergen Travel Director Svend-Erik Svendsen by Priest Leif Magne Helgesen. Svalbard Church.

Sept. 3

5 p.m.: Polargospel practice begins for youths in grades 3-6. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Børning," Norwegian action/comedy, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 6

Noon: Quadrathlon, consisting of 5.8K run, 5K kayaking, 13.1 bicycling and rifle shooting, either individually or in teams of up to three people. Start and registration at the Svalbard Sailing Club.

Sept. 7

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "The Fault in Our Stars," U.S. drama, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

7:30 p.m.: Movie: "The Expendables 3," U.S. action/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 8

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

Sept. 9

7 p.m.: Longyearbyen Community Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

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

Sept. 10

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Expendables 3," U.S. action/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 11

6 p.m.: Registration for Confirmation for Sept. 18 (first meeting) to Sept. 28 (graduation). Birth certificate required, attendance of one or both parents suggested. Svalbard Church.

Sept. 13

4 p.m.: Photographic contrasts walking tour w/ Longyearbyen Fotoklubb and Japan Photo. Meet at Næringsbygget.

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:

- *Putin: Arctic, not Ukraine, is our big goal*
- *Warming not yet a 'gold rush' in Arctic*
- *U.S. facing decades of 'megadroughts'*
- *Vegan win: Less meat = less warming*