



Coal is black again

Store Norske rebounds from troubles with strong quarter, but more tough times still ahead

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Finally.
After a few years of setbacks – corruption scandals, collapsing coal prices, worker accidents and equipment malfunctions – Store Norske has rebounded with a second-quarter profit of 83.6 million kroner, compared to a loss of 178.1 million a year ago.

Of course, the good news was accompanied by another reminder the company's coal supply is running out. Also, they just paid an undisclosed amount of money to settle a 400-million-kroner lawsuit.

Increase coal production by removing "bottlenecks" is credited for the pre-tax profit despite lower than expected prices.

"Coal reserves at Svea Nord are near the end and the remaining production in this mine has a higher stone content than before," a press

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Longyearbyen residents flock to the city clerk's office during the final hour of voting Monday in this year's Parliamentary election. A total of 623 people cast ballots during the two-month early voting period. Citizens voting on election day next Monday must do so from their mainland city of residence.

Voting early and often

Anticipation of change results in big increase in Svalbard balloting

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

The election may see a decisive victor, but among this group of locals there wasn't much in common except a rush to vote early at the last minute.

"I waited until the last day because I forgot," said Bente Birkedal Sandnes, an administrator and teacher at Longyearbyen School. "We started to talk about it at work and then ran inside and asked 'Did everybody vote?'"

Sandnes, who cast her ballot minutes before early voting in this year's Parliamentary election ended at 4 p.m. Monday, was among 122 people voting in Longyearbyen during the day. Combined with 25 people voting during a two-hour period Saturday, they represented nearly a quarter of the 623 ballots cast during the early voting period that began July 1.

The total, up from the 535 ballots cast in 2009, comes as a change in leadership is

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Goodbye salmon, hello tuna?

Zooplankton adapt well to Arctic climate change, allowing new predators to move in, studies find

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

It's hard not to feel sorry for zooplankton. Relegated to being the fast food of the sea, they notched a rare triumph by thriving where mightier creatures cope poorly with climate change.

But all it means is being the welcome wagon for the next wave of predators muscling in.

Geese grub: Record flock a threat to tundra
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JANNE E. SØREIDE / UNIS

Researchers takes samples of zooplankton under the ice in Billefjorden in March. A study of the tiny organisms shows they adapt well to a period of low sea ice, but warmer waters may still be a threat due to other species invading.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

When trivia ceases to be trivial



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

About 50 people test their knowledge of celebrities and other vital facts during the first trivia competition of the season Monday at Barentz Pub. The contests take place every Monday at 8 p.m., although a nationwide competition, with NRK making broadcast stops in 27 cities, will host a qualifying event in Longyearbyen at 6 p.m. Sept. 30 at the pub. Details are at tinyurl.com/mf29rdw.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Doh! Forever cementing our reputation as the world's limpest tabloid, we missed the crowning of **Marcela Fuentes, 19, as the first-ever Svalbardpiken ("Svalbard girl") during the inaugural Gruvebusens Høstfestival ("miners' fall festival") at Mary-Anns Polarrigg** a couple of weekends ago. No there wasn't a swimsuit competition – Fuentes said she was picked based on the essay she submitted to the pageant – but we still would have run a huge honkin' Page 3 Girl photo because she obviously has plenty of beauty to go with the brains and creative talent. But smitten suitors warming up their pick-up lines may want to take a cold shower as the Chilean native, who moved here with her family four years ago, is planning to use the prize of a three-year scholarship and 10,000 kroner to return to her homeland to study fashion design ... This week's Bizarre Svalbard Headline goes to *Nordlys* for **"If You Have Star Trek in One Hand and the Stone Age in the Other..."** **This combination apparently makes people think about traveling to Svalbard**, or so say the gurus hired for a new adventure tour marketing campaign. A series of low-budget videos they filmed in the Harstad region and posted at svalbard.me will hopefully generate lots of social media buzz. Because that, of



CHILI GROUP

And in the interest of pandering to both genders equally: Isn't this totally the guy you want giving you the eye in Svalbard?



Humiliating ourselves again with a knockout: We missed the pageant so, yes, we resorted to taking a photo of the real local newspaper because, as you can see, she's totally worth it.

course, is a totally new concept ... Our other major non-mining industry isn't exactly graceful on the silver screen either, as the new documentary "GMO OMG" is described as "Jeremy Seifert dumbs down the debate over genetically modified organisms," according to the *Hollywood Reporter*. Seifert portrays, or is, the world's most clueless idiot about GMOs, dressing his kids in gas masks "to run through cornfields he describes as containing more pesticide than food." He then goes globetrotting, including a trip to our Doomsday Vault, described in the review as "a bastion of biodiversity in a political environment less beholden to the lobbyists of agrigiants like Monsanto... With work like this passing for democratic discourse, one can almost sympathize with the conventional seed dealers who roll their eyes at anyone objecting to their industry's 'progress.'"

Take your grubbing jaws off of me



CHRISTIANE HÜBNER / NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

Pink-footed geese go "grubbing," described as a unique feeding technique of tearing plants up by their roots, on the tundra of Svalbard this summer. A record number of geese, combined with a warmer climate resulting in a longer feeding season, are threatening the fragile and sparse vegetation to the point some areas may become free of growth, according to Norwegian Polar Institute researchers. The breeding population of the geese has doubled during the past 15 years to about 80,000 and "we find traces of grubbing at over four times as large areas now than was the case just five years ago," said Åshild Ørvik Pedersen, one of the study's participants. The researchers examined 19 areas in the archipelago and are recommending larger hunting quotas among their measures for reducing the grazing damage. The study, with links to previous research in English, is available at <http://tinyurl.com/kupdanv>.

Tiny creatures make big adjustment

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Of course, self-centered humans might be feeling too sorry for themselves about local salmon being replaced by tuna to care about the perpetual victimhood of those drifting organisms that are mostly too small to see anyhow.

That situation, expressed in considerably more educated and nuanced terms, is detailed in two new studies, including one by a graduate student at The University Centre in Svalbard.

The UNIS study, part of a larger multi-year project, found the Arctic zooplankter *Calanus glacialis* was able to adapt to a changing climate during a period of sea ice retreat. The species, about four millimeters in size, is described as "a key component of the Arctic marine food web due to its high biomass and its unique ability to convert low-energy carbohydrates and proteins from algae into high-energy wax ester lipids."

"This grazer feeds intensively on the primary production during the short, but productive Arctic summer," a summary of the project by Lauris Boissonnot notes. "In winter, it migrates down to deeper waters, entering dia-

pause, a state of highly reduced metabolism."

Boissonnot, by conducting field observations in Billefjorden and lab tests from February to May, found light and especially food are key "wake up" cues. The species also adapts quickly to new environmental conditions, making it likely they'll cope with climate change.

But a concern – also expressed in the second study – is "it remains to see whether less sea ice and a longer productive season may favor smaller and more temperate zooplankton that may outcompete the larger long-lived and more lipid-rich Arctic zooplankton" Such displacement would have widespread implications for the entire marine food chain.

The second study, by an international team of scientists, found many species of fish and plankton are relocating towards the Poles at an "astonishing" rate of hundreds of kilometers per decade due to climate change. The migration is severely disrupting ecosystems and forcing commercial fishers throughout the Arctic to make adjustments.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Ny-Ålesund to get subsea fiber optic cable next summer

An underwater fiber optic cable linking Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund is scheduled to be installed next summer, according to officials now mapping the seabed from aboard the *Fugro Helmer*. "The most important thing is to look at the condition of the seabed and thus determine the route we should go with cable," said Helge Stranden, the project's leader. "It is desirable to bury the cable as much as possible. But it is also important to look for shipwrecks and other things that might be in the way." Such wrecks are being documented for historical and legal purposes by a marine archaeologist who is participating in the mapping.

Power plant gets new roof, safety measures after fire

A new roof, walls and safety measures are in place at Longyearbyen's power plant in response to a fire last December that forced a shutdown and put the city at risk of evacuation. The fire exposed numerous deficiencies, such as the inability to operate the city's reserve facility if workers needed to evacuate the main plant's control room. The roof where the fire ignited has been replaced with a non-combustible polystyrene material and bids for a new fire truck with a lift capable of reaching the roof are scheduled for review this month. Relocating the reserve controls and other upgrades are continuing, including replacing water pipes with non-combustible material and creating digital images of the main plant. Annual maintenance such as replacing panels inside the boilers and worker safety training are also underway.

Officials forced to kill two reindeer attacked by dogs

The Svalbard governor's office was forced to kill two reindeer last week after they were attacked by huskies in separate incidents. The first occurred last Friday at Hotellneset, with officials seizing the dog and returning it to its owner, who has been fined once before previously for a similar attack. The second incident occurred when two dogs got loose and attacked a deer in the vicinity of Longyearbyen. Officials said such attacks are rising, in violation of a year-round leash law for huskies.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. SE winds to 32 km/h. High 9C (5C wind chill), low 7C (4C wind chill).	Rain. S winds to 39 km/h. High 7C (3C wind chill), low 4C (0C wind chill).	Rain/partly cloudy. W winds to 62 km/h. High 5C (-1C wind chill), low 4C (-3C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NW winds to 55 km/h. High 4C (-2C wind chill), low 4C (-3C wind chill).
Sunrise: 4:07a, sunset: 9:38p	Sunrise: 4:16a, sunset: 9:29p	Sunrise: 4:25a, sunset: 9:19p	Sunrise: 4:34a, sunset: 9:10p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, 4C (-3C), 2C (-1C), light 16:17h; Monday, rain/snow, 2C (-3C), 1C (-5C), light 16:02h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, 1C (-3C), -1C (-6C), light 15:45h; Wednesday, cloudy, 1C (-3C), -2C (-8C), light 15:28h			

Data provided by storm.no

Going on trial in Barentsburg



SYSSELMANNEN

Svalbard Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim, left, addresses Nord-Troms District Court officials meeting in Barentsburg as the prosecutor in the trial of a 33-year-old Ukrainian man accused of the April 21 stabbing of a 30-year-old Ukrainian man in the Russian community. The rare trial in Svalbard on Aug. 27 and 28 featured testimony from 13 witnesses, 11 of them from Barentsburg, including the defendant. He admitted stabbing the victim, but said it occurred during one of numerous confrontations they had with each other over several days, and he immediately provided assistance to the victim afterward. The victim required four weeks of hospitalization, but has recovered fully. The degree of willfulness with which the defendant used the knife in the attack is a key aspect of the trial, with Alfheim seeking a two-year prison sentence, a fine of 116,000 kroner to cover hospital expenses, plus additional restitution to the victim. A ruling is expected within two weeks.

Local voters match national mood

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widely anticipated after most Norwegians go to the polls Sept. 9. A center-right coalition of four parties, led by Erna Solberg's Conservative Party, is expected to win decisively over the three-party coalition, led by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's Labor Party, that has led for the past eight years.

"My vote is based on the future for my kids. That means education," said Carl Einar Ianssen, who changed his unstated preference from four years ago. Casting his first vote from Svalbard this year, he said management of natural resources is also a key issue for him and "that probably changed my vote."

Store Norske rebounds, but clouds remain

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release by the company states. "This makes it necessary to clean the litter as it is removed from the mine, which has previously led to technical problems and occasionally production shutdowns. A number of initiatives on the cleaning work has provided more stable operation in the second quarter and thus been able to process larger volumes."

The company is also cutting costs by reducing its employees to about 300, down from 385, through natural attrition and layoffs.

About 1.2 million tons of coal was produced at Svea in 2012, a sharp drop from the record of more than four million tons in 2008, when the company reported sales of more than three billion kroner and a net profit of 881 mil-

An online *Svalbardposten* poll with 520 respondents mirrors the national mood, with the center-right coalition receiving 262 votes to 191 for the Labor-led trio. Labor received the most individual party votes with 161, but the Conservative Party with 125 votes and Progress Party with 104 combined for a decisive edge.

Norwegians residing in Svalbard were required to vote by Monday in order for their ballots to be tallied in their mainland municipality of residence. Citizens voting on election day must do so from their home town.

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

lion kroner. In the first quarter of 2013, a loss of 7.4 million kroner was reported, although that was a notable improvement over the loss of 43.8 million kroner for the same quarter a year ago.

But the announcement of a profitable second quarter was followed almost immediately by word of a settlement in a lawsuit filed by Oxbow Coal, which claimed Store Norske unilaterally terminated a shipping contract. The contract was among several made by former Store Norske administrative director Robert Hermansen found to be excessive and reached without proper authorization. He served a two-year prison sentence for gross corruption.

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

What's up

Sept. 4

6 p.m.: Movie: "Kick-Ass 2," U.S. action/comedy, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 5

6 p.m.: Inscriptions of confirmations. Remember to bring birth certificates. Parents invited. Svalbard Church.

Sept. 7

Noon: Quadrathlon, featuring 6K run, 5K kayak, 13K bicycling and target shooting. Teams of up to three persons permitted. Registration information at svalbardseilforening.com. Race begins at Svalbard Sailing Club.

Sept. 8

6 p.m.: Movie: "Grown Ups 2," U.S. comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Oh Boy," German drama/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 9

11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.: Norwegian class for beginners starts. Meets Mondays and Wednesdays until December. Contact Torunn Winsnes at 9941 1308 or torunn.winsnes@lybskole.no. Longyearbyen School.

6:30 p.m.: Ten-week pilates class begins. Sign up by contacting kathrin@fjellpust.no or sending an SMS to 9301 2183. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Ten-week beginner's yoga class begins. Sign up by contacting kathrin@fjellpust.no or sending an SMS to 9301 2183. Kulturhuset.

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

Sept. 10

5-8 p.m.: Norwegian class for intermediate students starts. Meets Tuesdays and Thursdays until June. Contact Torunn Winsnes at 9941 1308 or torunn.winsnes@lybskole.no. Longyearbyen School.

Sept. 11

6 p.m.: Movie: "Mormor og de Åtte Ungene," Norwegian family film, all ages. 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:

- *Crop pests fleeing toward the Poles*
- *Rowing team abandons Arctic crossing*
- *'Grand Canyon II' under Greenland ice*
- *Australia mandates voting in Antarctica*