



Meeting of many minds

Seminars on Arctic narration, Norwegian-Russian scientific research gather under one roof

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The collection of long-syllabled academics hardly seems like it's scaring youths away from decent jobs, especially since members admit many people aren't listening anyhow.

A massive collection of minds is gathering under one roof in Longyearbyen this week to discuss the Arctic, climate change and ways to better spread the message about "alarming" impacts whose speed is taking researcher by surprise. But ultimately, the cliché about actions speaking louder than words is likely to prevail.

"We're going to get another huge surprise within 20 years and it's going to take some huge disaster to get people's attention," said James Overland during the opening keynote speech at the 15th annual Russian-Norwegian Symposium.

Overland, a lead researcher for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, focused on surprising results in recent sea ice research during his discussion at The University Centre in Svalbard. Down the hall at the Svalbard Museum another group was gathering for "Narrating the High North," highlighting his-

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KRISTIAN BRANDSHØY



NORWEGIAN MAPPING AUTHORITY

A polar bear and her two cubs, above, feast on a seal at Wahlenbergfjorden in this video captured in mid-August by a crew member aboard the Norwegian Mapping Authority vessel *Hydrograf*. At left, a young polar bear inspects equipment on the deck of the *Hydrograf* at Nordautlandet on Aug. 27 after following the vessel by land and sea for three days. It spent about 30 minutes onboard before jumping back into the water.

Bear buzz bothersome

Close encounters go viral, irking officials a month after fatal attack

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Less than a month after the first fatal attack in 16 years, polar bears in Svalbard are back to being entertaining.

Images from two recent bear encounters are getting plenty of media and website play, often with quirky headlines as one of the incidents involved a bear jumping on board a

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ship after stalking it for three days. Requests for comments are pouring into the Svalbard governor's office, which sternly issued a "no
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Experiencing Mars via geometry

Close-up analysis of polygons in Svalbard may show what's on – and under – red planet

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

If teachers just explained learning about polygons is a good way to get to Mars a lot more kids would pay attention in math class.

Plus you get to fly remote-controlled planes, dig in the dirt and walk around the pristine Arctic with a GPS to learn if a planet's surface is the same as it appears from high above. Of course, most of the time you'll be stuck in a
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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Mario Neves, left, and Marc Oliva extract and analyze soil samples Aug. 31 in Adventalen.

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.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

James Overland, left, explains his analysis of Arctic sea ice conditions after his keynote speech this week at the Russian-Norwegian Symposium at The University Centre In Svalbard.

A lot of smarts, but a tough task

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toric explorer Fridtjof Nansen.

"The goal is to present new research results and problems, and based on Nansen's book 'Nord i Tåkeheimen' ('North in the Misty Mountains') to focus on how stories about the northern and polar region has been and is operating politically, culturally and literary, nationally and internationally," said Einar-Arne Drivenes, a history professor at The University of Tromsø.

"We as researchers also have much to learn from each other when it comes to prose

and presentation. We have the academic benefit of joint research, but we also have much to learn about how we arrange our research."

Participants at both are facing a sizable number of influential skeptics who say dealing with current crises is more vital than constantly changing future scenarios. Oil officials in Norway have accused researchers of trying to scare younger people away from working in the industry (although mainstream politicians have called such remarks embarrassing).

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

Briefly

Hospital celebrates 20th anniversary with concert

A concert celebrating the 20th anniversary of Longyearbyen's hospital is scheduled at 7 p.m. Sept. 24 at Kulturhuset.

Among the featured guests is singer Anne

Nymo Trulsen, with other performers including Longyearbyen Blandakor, Store Norske Mand-skor, Spitsbergen Revylag, Longyearbyen Kulturskole, Liv Mari Schei and University Hospital of Northern Norway Big Band.

Tickets are available for 100 kroner at Kulturhuset and online at www.lokalstyre.no.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

As if there wasn't enough controversy about the leaders of the expedition attacked by a polar bear last month, here a headline about one of the teenage victims likely to raise a ruckus: "Jersey schoolboy Patrick Flinders has signed a lucrative deal with celebrity publicist Max Clifford to tell the horrific story of how he survived a polar bear attack." Flinders, 16, suffered head and arm injuries, with parts of the bear's teeth left embedded in his skull, during the attack resulting in the death of a 17-year-old sharing the tent that was attacked and injuries to three other people. OK, we get the lure of taking a bunch of money offered by "Britain's most famous PR agent" (although the article doesn't say if Flinders and his family

were shopping their story), but the teen hopefully has seen numerous previous instances where victims of tragedies were savagely denounced for trying to profit from them. That aside, our main question is a practical one since he's already told his story to two national newspapers and a magazine. What can he offer that those sensationally headlined articles haven't already? ... Speaking of stirring up rage from good fortune, fishermen are rejoicing after northern Norway's best whaling season since 2008. Nineteen ships caught 529 of the 1,286 allowed, 202 of which came from Spitsbergen. If we did online polls (hmmm...), our question this week would be would you welcome those fishermen with garlic sauce or a cluster of the stinky stuff to ward them off?



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Gonçalo Vieira, left, Maura Lousada, center, and Marco Jorge study aerial photos of Adventdalen as they try to determine if polygonal sections of land are similar to those found on Mars.

Lots of polygons on map to Mars

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lab analyzing data, but it's not like that long flight to Mars is going to be a picnic either (especially if, as some suggest, the initial expedition is one-way).

A small team of researchers from Portugal spent last week roaming Adventdalen for the second and final field season of the ANAPOLIS project (the analogue being the simple expression for "analysis of polygonal terrains on Mars based on Earth analogues"). They will continue analyzing data collected as part of the three-year project and hope to publish their findings next year.

The section of Adventdalen most carefully scrutinized hardly looks like a site for space-age research, with basic tools and equipment being used to examine land marked off into polygons with tiny flags easily overlooked by casual observers. But Pedro Pina, lead investigator for the project, said the work may indeed help answer some big questions.

"One of the big questions is whether there is water on Mars under the surface," he said. The planet's polygonal soil, which can be studied through the ground in terrestrial polar regions, form networks characteristic of some regions on Earth, including the Arctic, with sub-surface water.

While the polygonal features on Mars are much more extensive and diverse, there's

enough similarities in Svalbard for meaningful comparisons, Pina said.

Pina spent much of the week taking GPS measurements every ten steps in an 800-meter-by-600-meter area, plus less detailed readings in other areas. Other members inspected vegetation, measured the size of soil particles dug up from under the surface and noted geothermal features.

The goal was not to depart with answers, but rather the ability to seek them by comparing the close-up data to photographs taken earlier from a remote-controlled aircraft above the field and from spacecraft capturing images of Mars.

"What we are trying to do is validate the information we got from those images," said Marco Jorge, a researcher comparing surface features to those in the photographs.

Svalbard is a popular site for researching the red planet. Among the other projects is the Arctic Mars Analog Svalbard Expedition (AMASE), whose annual trips since 1997 have included activities ranging from geological analysis to testing equipment such as space instruments and rover vehicles.

An abstract and other information about the ANAPOLIS project are available at www.antecc.org/anapolis.html.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Longyearbyen doesn't need local council, Lista Party says

A conference by regional leaders last week about policy in the high north turned into a discussion about whether Longyearbyen should have a local government when members of the revived Svalbard Lista Party raised the question. "We are not against the people in Longyearbyen being heard, but we are against them deciding," said Jørn Dybdahl, head of the party, arguing an advisory council similar to what existed before the local council was formed in 2002 would be preferable. He said the local board does not have an impact in many important cases, with the state deciding instead. The proposal was criticized by several officials with other parties. "My clear view is that it is a waste of time to say that you should put down the local board," said Geir Hekne, a Conservative Party member who called the suggestion embarrassing. "I do not think they will use our time to debate it. We want a democracy and to develop it."

Mostly smooth Svea takeover as AF Gruppen replaces LNSS

AF Gruppen took over coal loading and transportation at Svea at midnight Thursday as Store Norske officially ended a long-time contract with LNS Spitsbergen to provide support services. "It's been fine," said Kjetil Vikane, Gruppen's branch director. "We have been trained and gone through the rules." About 20 of the company's employees were at work the first day transporting coal from a storage facility at Kapp Amsterdam in preparation for shipment, with just a "little false start" along the way, Vikane said. LNSS was terminated due to a scandal involving the terms of its contracts, although criminal charges against the company have been dismissed.

Long unaccompanied trips nixed from guide training

Students with the Arctic nature guide program will no longer go on longer trips alone after three members and four guests had to be rescued from north Spitsbergen during the past winter in an expensive operation. The two-year-old guide-training program will instead keep trips short and near Longyearbyen.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Occasional rain. E winds to 25 km/h. High 5C (5C wind chill), low 1C (-4C wind chill).	Occasional rain. SE winds to 18 km/h. High 7C (4C wind chill), low 2C (-2C wind chill).	Occasional rain. E winds to 11 km/h. High 3C (1C wind chill), low 2C (-1C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 11 km/h. High 2C (-1C wind chill), low 1C (-1C wind chill).
Sunrise 4:30a; sunset 9:15p	Sunrise 4:38a; sunset 9:06p	Sunrise 4:47a; sunset 8:57p	Sunrise 4:55a; sunset 8:48p
Extended forecast: Sunday, occasional rain, 2C (0C), 1C (-1C), light 15:37h; Monday, rain, 2C (0C), 0C (-2C), light 15:21h; Tuesday, cloudy, 0C (-2C), -1C (-3C), light 15:04h; Wednesday, cloudy, -1C (-4C), -2C (-4C), light 14:49h.			
Data provided by yr.no			



KRISTIAN BRANDSHØY

A polar bear inspecting the deck of the Norwegian Mapping Authority vessel *Hydrograf* is captured in this video that, with other images captured during the voyage, is getting widespread media play.

Images a bear of a problem

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on the specific encounters while reminding people about the dangers of bears and special protection they have by law.

"If you are unlucky enough to get a polar bear on board his own vessel, it is imperative to be frightened and get out of the boat as soon as possible," the notice states. "Polar bears are unpredictable predators that can easily kill people."

The encounters came after a 17-year-old boy was killed and four others severely wounded when a bear attacked their campsite at Tempelfjorden on Aug. 5. That incident is under investigation by officials in Norway and the United Kingdom, where the student expedition came from, as questions about the group's training and equipment are being raised.

Images of the two more recent encounters were captured by participants aboard the *Hydrograf* during a Norwegian Mapping Authority expedition.

The closest encounter occurred Aug. 27 at Nordautlandet when a young polar bear that followed the vessel by land and swam near the boat the three days came aboard during the

middle of the night. The watchman alerted the crew as the bear tried to enter the cabin.

"Fortunately, the door of the wheelhouse locked, said Omar Olsen, foundation leader of the agency, in an interview with *Dagbladet*.

"It seemed friendly, and the crew allowed (the bear's) investigation to finish while they stood in safety," he said. "After a half hour it jumped into the sea again."

More brutal images were captured during the other encounter just days after the fatal attack. A bear and her two cubs, who may have been spotted on land a few days earlier, were filmed devouring a seal on an ice floe a mere 20 meters away.

Kristian Brandshøy, 26, a student from the United States working as a crew member aboard the vessel, recorded the bears on video. He said they were aware of the earlier attack and "we naturally were particularly tight on safety."

Norwegian officials are investigating the incidents to, among other things, address questions about the closeness of the vessel.

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

Crab invasion threatens ecosystems

Warmer waters bringing new species to Svalbard, other polar seas; sign of 'major changes'

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It's hard to believe a single bug-like creature a few inches long can wreak destruction on an entire region.

But a snow crab caught in Svalbard this summer during a research voyage is an ominous sign for the existing ecosystem, said Jan H. Sundet, senior scientist at Norway's Institute of Marine Research, in a statement today.

"This helps to confirm the snow crab is about to establish itself in the Svalbard zone," he said. "Among other things, we expect major changes in animal life on the seabed."



JAN SUNDET / MARINE INSTITUTE

A snow crab caught in Svalbard this summer.

Similar worries are being expressed at the other end of the world as researchers have discovered a growing king crab population in the Antarctic peninsula. They are described as "voracious crushers of sea floor animals."

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

What's up

Sept. 6-9

15th Russian-Norwegian Symposium, focusing on climate change in the Barents Sea and its effects on the region's future. UNIS. For registration information contact vera.helene.lund@imr.no.

Sept. 6

8 p.m.: Svalbard Cabin Association meeting. Kulturhuset cafe.

Sept. 7

6 p.m.: Movie: "Få Meg På For Faen," Norwegian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Meeting for groups interested in rehearsing at Kulturhuset. In the Kulturhuset cafe.

Sept. 8

7:30 p.m.: Book launch: "Adresse Ny-Ålesund," by Åse Kristine Tveit. Longyearbyen Library.

Sept. 11

6 p.m.: Movie: "Popper's Penguins," U.S. children's/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Cowboys and Aliens," U.S. action/sci-fi, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 13

6 p.m.: Children's book launch: "Sjøfuglene i Arktis" by Kirsti Blom and Geir Wing Gabrielsen. Longyearbyen Library.

7 p.m.: Organ meditation and lighting of candles. Svalbard Church.

Sept. 14

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

Sept. 18

11 a.m.: Mass with confirmation and homily by Swedish Bishop Hans Stiglund. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Smurfs" (3D), U.S. animated/family, no age limit determined. 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:

- *500M people displaced by glacier thaw?*
- *Arctic commerce shipping setting records*
- *First UAE woman at S. Pole turns activist*
- *Murmansk to Oslo on one tank of gas*