



'Outbreak' of rabies

Drastic actions, including killing foxes in area and restricting dog freedoms, enacted by governor

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

"Extraordinary" measures are being taken after three cases of rabies were diagnosed in wild animals within a week in or near Longyearbyen, which officials say qualifies as an outbreak of the disease.

Among the actions are trying to trap and kill as many foxes in the area as possible, plus requiring all dogs be kept on leashes and supervised if they are outside. The public is also being asked to avoid all dead animals or those behaving strangely, and a shipment of 500 vaccinations is expected to arrive Friday for hunters and other having contact with animals.

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SYSSELMANNEN

Espen Stokke burns a reindeer infected with rabies Sunday at Platåberget. The reindeer and another at Fuglefjellet were found paralyzed by officials patrolling for infected animals.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Jørn Dybdahl, head of the local Konsekvenslista party, packs up field tents this week at The University Centre in Svalbard. His party is making the most controversial proposal so far in next month's city council election, arguing the council's role should be largely advisory to the state.

Lose power, gain strength

Konsekvenslista Party: State, not locals, should rule large issues

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Jørn Dybdahl questions if Longyearbyen needs a local government and says the city council is mostly powerless. So why does the outdoorsman want to be a part of it and sit through all those committee meetings?

"Our case, number one, is to be elected

so we can discuss with the government of Norway a better way this place can be run," said Dybdahl, leader of the local Konsekvenslista Party.

Longyearbyen is "not a normal community" and, while the local council should make decisions about smaller issues such as

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Suspense not just on screen at film festival

CinemArctic debuts with movies and concerts next Friday after struggles, but lineup still not final

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Improvisational theater isn't usually associated with watching movies. But a new film festival beginning in Svalbard next Friday offers plenty

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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.



THINKFILM

A diver explores the sea under an ice sheet in Antarctica in Werner Herzog's 2007 documentary "Encounters at the End of the World," which will be shown next week at the CinemArctic festival.

Festival opens with concert film

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of surprises – even for its organizers.

The schedule for the three-day inaugural Svalbard CinemArctic in Longyearbyen and Barentsburg features an assortment of polar-region movies and live music. But the timing and lineup for the festival – plus questions about whether it would even happen – have been constant dilemmas.

Martha Otte, the festival's project manager, said that while there will also be surprises such as the featured guests, officials aren't certain themselves who will be there.

"It looks like it's coming together very quickly, but there's been two years of work on it," she said. Fortunately, "what we've learned is that the people in Longyearbyen are very positive and flexible. They're used to changing their schedule around because of the weather and whatnot."

The festival opens in Longyearbyen at 6 p.m. Friday, Sept. 30, with a concert film showing of "Nanook of the North" at Kulturhuset. The 1922 documentary about an Inuit

family in Canada will be accompanied by live music from the Matti Bye Ensemble visiting from Sweden.

Also scheduled Friday at 9:30 p.m. at Kulturhuset is a concert by the Russian rock/fusion band Hipsters.

The Matti Bye Ensemble will also perform live music during the first of three films during the festival's one day in Barentsburg. An assortment of movies is scheduled to screen in Longyearbyen from noon until midnight Saturday.

The festival concludes in Longyearbyen at 3 p.m. Sunday with "How I Ended This Summer," about two men alone with a polar bear at a remote weather station in northeastern Russia.

Festival passes cost 150 kroner for adults and 50 kroner for youths, with single-show tickets available for 80 kroner for all shows except the opening. Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis.

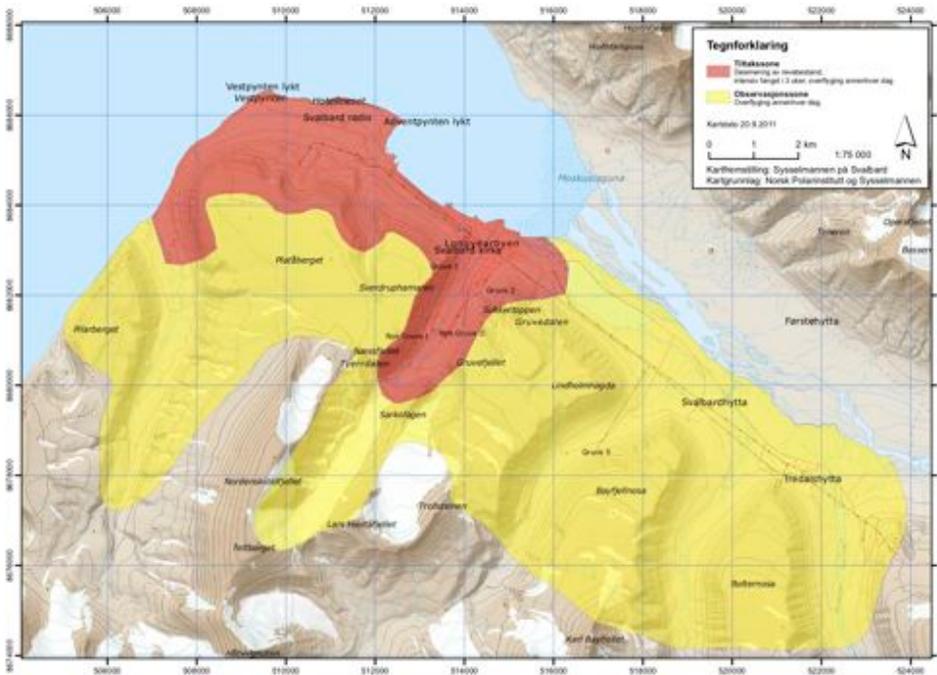
There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Our local culinary gurus didn't fare so well this week in Tromsø in what we'll call the "Top Of The World Chef" competition (actual name: "Arctic Chef 2011"). Six chefs, including locals Nattapol Chuphu (Beng) from the Radisson and Stian Hansen from the Spitsbergen Hotel, prepared meals using raw shrimp for the appetizer, lamb for the main course and Norwegian plums as part of the dessert. The Svalbard chefs didn't finish in the top three, the second year in a row that's happened. But we can still cling to Anne-Berit Mydland Simonsen's win in 2009 ... This week's question

we're too incompetent to answer: How many locals voted for Socialist Left Party candidates in their hometown elections on the mainland earlier this month? That's the party making headlines this week by stating they want to shut down coal mining in Svalbard. Not surprisingly, they don't have any candidates in Longyearbyen's municipal council election ... Shocking development of the week: Nowhere-island, the pile of Svalbard dirt and rocks being towed to Britain to be a £500,000 art display, is being called an "astonishing folly" and other less-than-flattering things by politicians and others in lots of news reports from there.



SYSSELMANNEN

Efforts to trap and kill Arctic foxes in and near Longyearbyen (areas shaded in red) are being made by officials after a fox and two reindeer were found infected with rabies within a week. Areas in yellow are being patrolled by helicopter every other day to search for potentially infected animals.

Vaccinations urged for hunters

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"The main thing is people should let us know if they see something suspicious," said Espen Stokke, a senior advisor to Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø.

A woman bitten by a fox near Svalbard Auto last Monday was treated for a possible rabies infection. A man reported the same day his dog killed a fox that tried to attack the day before near The University Centre in Svalbard.

On Sunday two reindeer spotted by a patrol helicopter at Platåberget and Fuglefjellet were found paralyzed, which Stokke said is a symptom of rabies along with abnormal and aggressive behavior.

Autopsies revealed the fox killed by the dog and the reindeer were infected. Stokke said the extraordinary measures now being taken are due to the three cases happening in a relatively small area and time it takes for symptoms to appear.

"It could mean that rabies has been in the area for some time," he said.

The last outbreak this severe was in 1980 when several animals were diagnosed with the disease, Stokke said. There were 25 diagnosed cases between 1980 and 1999, but none from

1999 to 2010.

Officials are deploying fox traps from the main settled areas of Longyearbyen to the airport in an effort to catch and kill as many of the animals as possible. Stokke said the action is necessary because the animals must be sent to Oslo and a diagnosis can take up to three days.

Some dogs were seen early this week tied on up leashes outdoors without any supervision, but Stokke said there hasn't been any discussion about penalties for people violating the governor's mandate.

"We hope people use common sense and do what they can to avoid breaking the laws," he said.

Vaccinations at Longyearbyen Hospital are being urged for anyone licked or bitten by a dog that may have been in contact with animals suspected of being infected. Also, hunters and other in contact with the saliva or mouths of reindeer in the area are being urged to get shots.

Reports of suspicious animals can be made by calling the governor's office at 4140 3165.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Tougher rules result in large increase in visa applications

The number of visa applications processed by the Svalbard governor's office has increased significantly this year due to tougher restrictions that took effect in February. A total of 262 applications have been processed to date, compared to 153 at this time last year and 199 for all of 2010. The visa are necessary for citizens of some countries traveling to the mainland from Svalbard. Such travelers coming from the mainland cannot get a second visa to return while they are there, therefore requiring one of two employees in the governor's office to issue them. The change is in compliance with Schengen Regulations stating identities of all travelers crossing any Schengen external border must be checked.

Man rescued by helicopter after injuring self at Fardalen

A hunter who injured himself and had trouble with his knee was rescued by helicopter Thursday night from Fardalen after triggering his emergency beacon. Per Andreassen, police chief for the Svalbard governor's office, said there was some confusion because the beacon, which the victim said he bought in Longyearbyen, was not registered with the Norwegian Post and Telecommunications Authority. Also, the man had to be hoisted into the helicopter while it was in the air due to difficult landing conditions.

Danish dog racer takes over sled dog tours at Bolterdalen

Martin Munck, a Danish dog racer, has moved with his family to Svalbard to take over the kennels from Jens Ablid, who runs the tourist company Arctic Adventures. Ablid will continue his snowmobile and other activities while Munck runs the new company Greendog. Munck, 39, lived in Greenland for 12 years before moving to Svalbard with his girlfriend and two small children, and they will be living at the kennel facility at Bolterdalen with about 70 dogs. He has lived in Svalbard previously, working at Svalbard Villmarkssenter from 1996 to 1998. Terms of the kennel sale were not disclosed and Munck said payment is still pending.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. SE winds to 18 km/h. High 2C (-2C wind chill), low -1C (-6C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 18 km/h. High 4C (0C wind chill), low 2C (-3C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds at 7 km/h. High 0C (-3C wind chill), low -1C (-5C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds at 7 km/h. High 0C (-3C wind chill), low -2C (-5C wind chill).
Sunrise 6:18a; sunset 7:19p	Sunrise 6:25a; sunset 7:11p	Sunrise 6:32a; sunset 7:04p	Sunrise 6:39a; sunset 6:56p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, 0C (-3C), -2C (-5C), light 12:01h; Monday, rain and snow, 1C (-2C), -1C (-4C), light 11:47h; Tuesday, rain and snow, 1C (-2C), 1C (-2C), light 11:32h; Wednesday, rain and snow, 2C (-1C), 1C (-3C), light 11:17h.			
Data provided by yr.no			

Food for distraught



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Volunteers sell waffles and drinks Saturday in Longyearbyen's central square to kick off this year's fundraising for the NRK telethon. Numerous local events are scheduled before the Oct. 23 broadcast, with proceeds going to Norwegian People's Aid for efforts to remove land mines and cluster bombs from war-torn areas. Events this weekend include an open day at Longyearbyen Hospital from 3 to 7 p.m. Friday and an open day at the fire station from noon to 3 p.m. Saturday.

Party seeks aggressive change for city

ELECTION, from page 1

rules for serving alcohol in restaurants, larger issues such as where housing can be built should be made by the national government.

"We should give advice, but we should not be in a position to make decisions," he said.

The party notes Norway's Parliament already decrees major things, such as whether local coal mining should continue, that theoretically have the unique ability to determine if Longyearbyen even remains a viable city.

Achieving the goal of less control will be an uphill battle, to say the least, for the non-Parliamentary Party that won one of the 15 council seats during the last election in 2007 (receiving about six percent of the vote). Other parties likely to dominate the council reject the idea strongly and Dybdahl acknowledges a reasonable goal for his party is winning one or two seats in the Oct. 9-10 election.

But the party's desire to see the council give up much of its power shouldn't be mistaken for a lack of an ambitious vision and agenda for the city. Dybdahl envisions projects and objectives for Longyearbyen with global, not just local, impacts.

The biggest future problem for the planet isn't climate change, for instance, but pollutants causing more significant impacts such as contaminating food supplies, he said. A low- or no-emissions coal plant and a sewage treatment facilities that turns phosphorus into fertilizer are among the projects he believes could

Polar bear kills man on Franz Josef Land

A polar bear killed a Russian weather scientist today on Franz Josef Land, according to the ITAR-TASS news agency.

Mikhail Eryomkin, was mauled on the archipelago a few hundred kilometers east of Svalbard, where a teenager was killed last

Konsekvenslista priorities

- Eliminate local council in its current form
- Have state take over all important functions
- Gradual reduction of road tax
- Equalize public and private class distinctions
- Stop housing densification in Longyearbyen
- State-funded discounts for mainland flights
- Increase cabins available to residents

draw international attention to the city.

"I think this town should be a model for a how a modern society should be run," he said.

Building such facilities is costly and, like candidates from other parties, Dybdahl said there isn't enough state funding and local tax revenue to do more than barely meet current needs. But he rejects the argument leaders on the mainland are less likely to listen to Konsekvenslista members since they're from a different party, stating current officials "wear too many hats" and have conflicts of interest when making decisions.

"They're not fighting hard enough showing the problems for the government," he said.

The party has nine candidates on the ballot, with Dybdahl, Jens Abild and Trond Ola Berg listed as the top-ranked candidates. Jon Sandmo, elected as the leader of the party in 2007, is listed fifth.

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

month by a bear that attacked a field camp.

Officials are trying to locate and kill the bear in today's attack to protect the other scientists at the weather station.

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

What's up

Sept. 22-24

Beer festival. Radisson SAS Polar Hotel.

Sept. 23

3-7 p.m.: Open day at Longyearbyen Hospital. Science lectures, children's activities, food sales. Proceeds benefit TV auction.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Knerten i Knipe," Norwegian children's, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset. Proceeds to benefit annual TV auction.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Kong Curling," Norwegian comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 24

Noon-3 p.m.: Open day at Longyearbyen Fire Station.

7 p.m.: Concert to celebrate Longyearbyen Hospital's 20th anniversary. Features guest singer Anne Nymo Trulsen and numerous other artists. Tickets 100 kr. at www.lokalstyre.no or Kulturhuset, venue for the event.

Sept. 25

11 a.m.: Family Mass with performance by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Tree of Life," U.S. drama/fantasy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 27

7 p.m.: Interview with UNIS Director Gunnar Sand. Svalbard Church.

Sept. 28

8 p.m.: Movie: "Jegerne - Falske Spor," Swedish thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 30-Oct. 2

Svalbard CinemArctic 2011. Russian-Norwegian film festival in Longyearbyen and Barentsburg.

Sept. 30

Power meter reading for Q3.

Oct. 1

Noon-3 p.m.: Car wash hosted by governor to raise money for telethon.

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:

- *Barentsburg: Soviet relic frozen in time*
- *Moscow Arctic forum focuses on riches*
- *Election to pick new ruler at top of world*
- *Arctic squirrels muscle up for long naps*