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Workers aboard the Transocean Spitsbergen oil rig, top, prepare to conduct another test drill in the Barents Sea south of Svalbard this summer, the northernmost such tests ever. At bottom left, "protesters" objecting to a co-promotional deal between The Lego Group and Royal Dutch Shell are part of a Greenpeace campaign that successfully ended the agreement. At bottom right, a geologist samples a boulder in northwest Spitsbergen as part of a study assessing the historical configuration of the Barents Sea Ice Sheet. Such studies may aid oil drilling efforts in the far north.

OIL'S WELL

Magnates, greenies and boffins struck it big – and got drilled – during boring summer in Arctic

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

One could say William Philipps is making key discoveries about how nature and humans are shaping and will be shaped by the Arctic.

Or that he's paving the way for oil companies to run roughshod over it.

The latter, of course, is easier and more provocative, but something less than credible if greenies are willing to give Big Oil the same respect that they want from the industry.

"I'm just a lowly master's student," said Philipps, who just completed a summer of analyzing deglaciation, uplift and sea ice drift in

See COMBUSTIBLE, page 4

Dare to be blues

Festival gambling on bigger lineup of names, new events to lure at least a break-even crowd

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A 12th anniversary isn't usually as sexy as a 10th (even if the traditional gift is silk instead of tin), but the organizers of this year's Dark Season Blues say they think it's just as alluring.

"It's at least as good," said Espen Helgesen, head of the Longyearbyen Blues Club, referring to the lineup of artists scheduled to perform at the four-day festival beginning Thursday.

While the schedule is largely familiar with numerous returning musicians, this year's festival also features two new events Saturday plus several new performers. Among the latter is Diunna Greenleaf, an award-winning traditional blues vocalist from the U.S. that Helgesen called this year's headliner.

"In the blues community we have, if you take a look at the lists of artists we have, it's natural to put her at the top," he said.

Greenleaf and her Blue Mercy band are
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Dumpster food fuels dastardly surf

'Dashing surfers' takes on new meaning as brothers face rocky shores and times in 'Bjørnøya'

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Trying to find a safe place for surfboards during a raging blizzard isn't normally a problem for people camping in the mountains. But there's a lot to suggest Inge, Markus and Håkon Wegge are anything but normal campers.

The three brothers, all in their 20s, also
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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Håken, Markus and Inge Wegge are introduced before Sunday's preview of "Bjørnøya" by Longyearbyen cultural advisor Roger Ødegård.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Principal of principles

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

Accomplice

Jeff Newsom

Mailing address

Icepeople

Vei 210 -2- 13

Longyearbyen, Svalbard

9170

Norway

Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38

U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

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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.

Didn't donate your share? Maybe they did...



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Bidders vie for a framed artwork during the annual charity auction Sunday at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel. Longyearbyen residents again raised the highest per-person total from the auction and a month of other events related to the national NRK telethon, with this year's proceeds benefiting clean water and sanitation projects in developing nations. The average national donation was 47.1 kroner, while those in Longyearbyen donated 366 kroner, according to preliminary figures. Top bids for local auctions items included 126,000 kroner for a cruise around Spitsbergen for two people aboard the Norwegian Polar Institute's research vessel and 100,000 kroner for a polar bear pelt.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

The year of bears behaving badly lives on, as **the fearsome predator that visited Longyearbyen last week and was subsequently rewarded with a free flight to Nordaustlandet has "managed to get off his yoke with a GPS transmitter"** according to the governor's office. The bear, perhaps adopting an anti-surveillance attitude from people he was palling around with, ditched his new high-tech necklace within hours of being dropped off Thursday afternoon, prompting officials to fly out and see why no signals of movement were coming from the transmitter. But fear not, the animal is "marked in several other ways so that it can be identified if it reappears," meaning at least your next-of-kin will know the alphanumeric nickname of the bear if ends up chewing on you ... But while the predators have committed some horribly inhumane acts this year, mostly notably raiding the bear at the hotel in Pyramiden a couple of weeks ago, none are quite as bad as the demonic act they pulled in a Canadian town where **Halloween has been cancelled due to visits by aggressive polar bears**. For the benefit of our many visitors this week (especially those disdainful of "junk science"), such aggression is an increasing problem in Arctic communities because the ice sheets the bears traditionally feed from are



PER ANDREASSEN / SYSSELMANNEN

"Don't worry, white on white is in style." So it's not like this bear is going to discard his new necklace out of embarrassment or anything.

rapidly vanishing. That, along with things like the cracks you see in our buildings and landslide-prone hills that may wipe out parts of town, is how climate change rolls ... Turning to another kind of human-caused warming showing an alarming increase lately, we've had **yet another early-morning kitchen fire/smoke incident caused by drunk folks trying to bake a pizza because they can't have one delivered any longer**, according to The Local Paper of Wreckord. The mishap at a row house in the wee hours of Sunday didn't cause any significant damage, but the occupant is facing one of those rather harmful combined fines of about 11,000 kroner from the fire department and governor's office. A bunch of similarly blistering incidents have occurred since Classic Pizza, which delivered until 5 a.m. and was the town's last remaining after-the-pubs-close food source, was denied a renewal of their lease at the end of last year so Fruene could its expand its cafe into the space ... Finally, ho-hum, we're again on a "top travel destinations" list, this one being (another) shout-out from **The Lonely Planet, which ranks northern Norway fifth among its "Top Ten Regions in the World."** But where you really want to go, according to those turkeys, is the WWI battle-grounds of Gallipoli.



WORLDNOMADS.COM

We suck compared to here: Those of you visiting to get the blues could instead be getting a case of super-happy knowing you're in the official World's Most Totally Awesomest Place.

Don't try anything. I'm taller than you...



FLIMKAMERTENE AS

One of three young girls stranded on Halvmåneøya confronts a polar bear in "Operasjon Arktis," a drama/adventure film debuting at Kulturhuset at 5 p.m. Sunday. The girls find themselves trapped on the tiny uninhabited Svalbard island after sneaking a ride there aboard a helicopter that departs before they can sneak back on. Their parents and police on the mainland, of course, have no idea where to start searching for the youths as they encounter constant peril. The movie, which premiered Oct. 17, had the seventh highest-grossing opening weekend in Norway this year.

Eat trashy food or help fiancé? Hmmm...

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made their own dried provisions by digging through dumpsters for discarded food and survived the extreme weather by wearing clothing that was supposed to be destroyed due to defects like broken zippers. The surfboards, on the other hand, had to meet the standards of the most demanding wave fanatics.

Their 65 days of dragging 100-kilogram sleds over mountains, sketching precise diagrams of tidal patterns, and waiting out unfavorable conditions by snowboarding and bowling with trash found on beaches are captured in the documentary "Bjørnøya: Følg Drømmen." The 82-minute film was shown in its fully finished form for the first time during a preview screening Sunday at Kulturhuset and will officially debut Friday when it will be shown at 7 p.m. on the same screen.

The brothers, during an interview before the preview screening, said surfing on the island in southwest Svalbard was the motivation for their trip from April and June in 2013, but the real goal was experiencing as many adventures as possible that were new and could never happen in any other way.

"We didn't find world-class, like the best surf ever, but it was a lot of fun," said Inge, the filmmaker among the brothers. "The fact there was nobody who had surfed there before made it 1,000 times more exciting."

Why Bjørnøya, of all the islands in Svalbard?

"It's open season in all directions," Markus said. "There can be surf and swells coming in from all sides. Also, it's such a small island we can explore each."

The film begins at a frantic pace, with one of the brothers breathlessly racing after getting little warning the catch the cargo ship that agreed to carry them was departing, and keeps up the intensity during a large part of the film due to the extreme conditions and activities. Snowboarding, ice climbing, skinny dipping from snow beaches (and regretting not washing armpits afterwards) and, of course, the thrills of riding waves large and small are plentiful, as one expects in a film of this genre.

But quieter and more reflective moments exist throughout, such as explaining they were digging through dumpsters because "our goal was to spend no money on food" since people throw so much away and Inge discussing his conflicted feelings after learning just before departing he's going to be a father. The debris they play with on one beach at one point is actually collected there and on all other shores they visit.

The tension peaks when Inge gets a satellite telephone call from his mother saying his girlfriend is experiencing complications with her pregnancy. The resulting dilemma isn't just about whether to end the trip early, since a ship to bring them home isn't available for a month.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Long-term drop in coal prices has Store Norske scrambling

Coal prices are \$40 a ton less than what Store Norske projected when it was in the planning stages of the Lunckefjell mine and there is little evidence to suggest the situation will change during the mine's operation. The current price of about \$75 a ton is at least \$10 less than the company needs to be profitable, according to Administrative Director Per Andersson. Furthermore, while company has cut staff and made other cost reductions, they were forced to hire workers when difficulties drilling access tunnels into the mine forced them to shift extraction to fringe areas at Svea. The company, now drafting a 2015 budget plan that tries to address the lower projected prices, is also considering long-term alternative revenue sources such as becoming an industry research and testing facility for others working in Arctic areas.

Miner breaks arm at Svea due to equipment failure

A miner at Svea was flown by helicopter to Longyearbyen Hospital on Monday after breaking his arm when a support plate on a conveyor belt collapsed, according to Einar Fjerdingsøy, Store Norske's health, safety and environmental manager. The man was subsequently transferred to a hospital in Tromsø via a regularly scheduled passenger flight Tuesday. The Governor of Svalbard and Norwegian Labor Inspectore were notified about the incident, and Fjerdingsøy said a review will be conducted to determine if safety improvements can be made.

Platåberget again the top favorite in summit contest

Platåberget was the most-conquered peak for the seventh straight year in the annual Toptrimmen competition, where participants attempts to scale at least 10 of 14 selected mountains between March 1 and Sept. 28. A total of 3,569 signatures were entered into the book atop Platåberget, while Sukkertoppen was second with 1,903. There were a total of 11,997 signatures for all peaks. A drawing for the grand prize of a trip to two to Ny-Ålesund was won by Alexander Kongsmo.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Snow. SE winds to 29 km/h. High 0C (-5C wind chill), low -2C (-7C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 39 km/h. High 3C (-2C wind chill), low -2C (-7C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 49 km/h. High 4C (-1C wind chill), low 2C (-4C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 42 km/h. High 4C (-2C wind chill), low 3C (-2C wind chill).
Sunrise 10:49a; sunset 2:34p	Sunrise 11:05a; sunset 2:18p	Sunrise 11:23a; sunset 1:59p	Sunrise 11:48a; sunset 1:46p
Extended forecast: Sunday, rain/snow, 4C (-1C), -1C (-5C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, 2C (-4C), -2C (-8C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, 1C (-5C), -1C (-7C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -1C (-7C), -2C (-8C), light 0:00h			

Data provided by storm.no



COURTESY OF DIUNNA GREENLEAF

Diunna Greenleaf, seen here in May accepting the award for Traditional Female Artist of the Year at the Blues Music Awards in Memphis, is billed as the headliner for this year's Dark Season Blues.

Even dinosaurs get the blues

TWELVE, from page 1

scheduled to perform in main auditorium during the concert marathon by 11 bands on two-floors Saturday night at Huset, plus a gospel concert Sunday evening at Svalbard Church.

The new events on Saturday include a "Dinosaurs" show by for kids by the Tromsø band Pristine at 11:30 a.m. in the Kulturhuset cafe and an acoustic session featuring discussions about songwriting by four festival musicians at

1 p.m. at Mary-Ann's Polarrigg.

Extra money was spent bringing in the lineup for the 10-year anniversary. But Helgesen said "this year we are gambling" by striving for a more appealing lineup. He said last year's festival suffered a small financial loss and organizers are hoping a better lineup will at least achieve the overall goal of breaking even.

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

Everyone wins, everyone loses oil fight

COMBUSTIBLE, from page 1

Svalbard as part of a project largely funded by ConocoPhillips and Lundin Petroleum.

Philipps, a geology researcher at The University of Buffalo in New York, said the oil companies are providing "hands-off funding" and he's never met anybody from them, but they share one key interest with the scientists.

"They like the project and want to increase the database," he said.

There are many practical reasons for determining the historical rise and fall of the Arctic ice sheet, and its impact on the landscape, beyond oil exploration. But accepting assurances of good intentions are proving difficult during a summer when oil drilling crept closed to Svalbard than ever before, with a rig operated by Lundin Petroleum and Statoil exploring an area less than 200 kilometers from Bjørnøya.

Just getting the Transocean Spitsbergen rig to the site was chaotic, as Greenpeace temporarily halted the voyage by boarding the rig for two days in May before leaving either voluntarily or under arrest. But the environmental organization got their revenge – or so they thought – when test drills at multiple sites turned up dry and headlines in early October were calling the project a failure.

A sudden reversal of fortune occurred Oct. 14, however, when Lundin announced a "significant" find of field with up to 310 million barrels of oil, with company executives saying the find ensures they will have the resources

necessary to establish year-round drilling infrastructure in the area.

Greenpeace did score a significant victory against oil interests – and arguably scientific research – when it called attention to seismic tests being conducted by the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate in the northern Barents Sea, including much of Svalbard. The agency, which initially planned two months of tests, ended the project at the midpoint almost immediately after the ensuing publicity.

The environmental organization scored another publicity coup when a promotional deal between The Lego Group and Royal Dutch Shell was halted following a multimedia campaign showing Lego figures protesting and being affected by oil in the Arctic, including a video that attracted six million viewers in three months (available to at tinyurl.com/lff5e57).

The verdict on Philipps' project, meanwhile, won't be known for perhaps another year, as the nearly 400 driftwood samples and 150 kilograms of geological samples from throughout the archipelago will take months to analyze. A primary goal is assessing if a previous melt of the ice sheet occurred sooner than the 12,000 years ago commonly assumed, and how that might affect future melting and geological trends.

A field blog from the expedition is available at tinyurl.com/q49xev6.

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

What's up

Oct. 23-26

Dark Season Blues festival. Major events:

Thursday

- 6 p.m.: Official opening w/ performances by various bands. Kulturhuset. Free.

- 9 p.m.: Steinar Albrigtsen & Monika Nordli feat. Tom Pacheco; Eric 'Slim' Zahl & the South West Swingers. Barentz Pub.

- 9 p.m.: ORBO; Pristine. Svalbar.

- 9 p.m.: Barrelhouse Chuck w/ Sven Zetterberg & The Magnetic North Blues Band; Jace Everett. Kroa.

Friday

- Noon: Billy T. Band. Barentz Pub. Free.

- 5:30 p.m.: Formal dinner w/ music by Rita Engedalen, Danielle Nicole Schnebelen and Grainne Duffy. Spitsbergen Hotel. Sold out.

- 9 p.m.: Reidar Larsen; Billy T Band feat.

Betty Lou Fox; and Trond Olsen Band feat. Buddy Whittington. Barentz Pub.

- 9 p.m.: Torbjørn Risager & The Black Tornado; Grainne Duffy. Svalbar.

- 9 p.m.: ORBO; Trampled Under Foot; Riya Engedalen & Backbone. Kroa.

Saturday

- 11:30 a.m.: "Dinosaurs" show for kids by Pristine. Kulturhuset cafe. Free.

Noon: Blues lunch with JT Lauritsen w/ friends, followed by artist interview by Øyvind Rønning. Barentz Pub. Free.

- 1 p.m.: "In the Round" acoustic performance and songwriting discussion by Tom Pacheco, Steinar Albrigtsen, Ole Reinert Berg-Olsen and Monika Nordli. Mary-Ann's Polarrigg.

- 3 p.m.: Mine 3 concert by The Magnetic North Blues Band. Bus departs from Mix kiosk at 2:30 p.m.

- 3 p.m.: Jostein Forsberg og Morten Omlid. Karlsberger Pub.

- 7 p.m.: Blues marathon by 11 bands on two floors. Huset.

Sunday

6 p.m.: Gospel concert by Diunna Greenleaf & Blue Mercy. Svalbard Church.

9 p.m.: Jam session w/ The Magnetic North Blues Band. Radisson. Free.

Oct. 25-27

CQ World Wide DX Contest contest, with amateur radio operators trying to make as many contact as possible within 48 straight hours. Svalbard participants will begin at 2 a.m. Saturday at the Mathiasbu shack. Details at cqww.com.

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:

- *Swedes: Subs spying on us in Russian*
- *Russia: NATO bad, us good in Arctic*
- *Melting Arctic, extreme weather linked?*
- *Giant trout may be savior for Arctic*