



Will summit chill Svalbard?

Agreement unlikely at climate conference, but Norway among leaders offering to sacrifice

Temperatures in Svalbard set a record in November at 1.9 degrees Celsius (8.4 degrees Fahrenheit) above normal and Earth is wrapping up its warmest decade ever. But in Copenhagen where representatives from more than 190 nations are discussing what to do about it, it's tempers that are running hot.

Basically, it's all about money. Wealthy countries generally don't want to pay for green policies and aid, while developing nations need cash to halt changes they say are already having devastating impacts.

Norway is proving to be among the more

generous nations with money, joining Britain, Australia and Mexico during the opening week of the international climate summit in proposing guidelines for "green funds" designated to help developing countries. Norway is also donating 35 million kroner to a new World Bank fund to help develop carbon capture programs, which Environmental Minister Erik Solheim said is the largest contribution of any country.

"Global emissions will have to be reduced by 50 to 85 percent by 2050, most likely closer to 85 percent," the Norwegian government declares in a policy statement submitted to the conference, arguing the rise in global mean temperature must be limited to two degrees Celsius compared to the pre-industrial era.

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One-third of species on Svalbard 'red list'

Since global warming is hitting the Arctic the hardest, it's fitting the ratio of threatened species is significantly above the mainland's as well.

But while human activity is blamed, much of it is not related to climate change, according to a newly published analysis of Svalbard's "red list." The list, part of an international database, includes 70 of 212 species surveyed in 2006, including the polar bear, walrus, several birds and more than

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Visions of julmust and duck in their heads

Holiday wish and shopping lists for Svalbard residents don't include many retailers' 'hot' items

Call it a hunch, but the "coal in stocking" thing probably happens a few times every year.

It's hardly scarce or expensive in Svalbard, and those not living at the top of the world probably don't feel they've been naughty if a lump arrives from a loved one at Christmas. Still, it doesn't seem to be high on a lot of lists when it comes to presents most often being sent or sought for the holidays this year.

The mix of practical, sentimental and fanciful gifts common worldwide is little different here, although specific items frequently are, especially with even the small familiar comforts of hometowns so far away.

Kristin Stegs, who moved from Sweden to Longyearbyen in October, said the thing she'd like to have most in Svalbard is julmust, a

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Longyearbyen students make Christmas cards and other crafts during a gathering today at Ungdomsklubb. Organizers said they expected a large number of younger participants, but older ones were the most common among the dozens who showed up.

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Chipping away at history's monsters

Youths reveal footprints left 60 million years ago during series focusing on prehistoric studies

It's not like discovering gigantic sea monsters, but chipping away coal to reveal 60-million-year-old footprints has its rewards.

For Longyearbyen youths at a Svalbard Museum workshop, it meant seeing the results of their efforts put on display after the fossilized tracks left by Pantodonta mammals were removed last month from Mine 7. Working with small chisels and hammers at tables in small groups, faint markings on the otherwise

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"Predator X," a prehistoric Svalbard sea monster, crushes a Plesiosaur with a 33,000-lb. bite in this artistic depiction. The creature was discovered in 2006 by Jørn Hurum, who will continue excavations next summer.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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Isflakbukta, above, on the Svalbard island of Phippsøya, is a bay where scores of walrus come ashore. It's also a popular spot for tourist boats, which officials say is a contributing factor in the animals being placed on a "red list" of at-risk species. The island is also one of the few known colonies for ivory gulls, at right, another species on the list. A report puts 70 of 212 species surveyed on the list due to climate change, development and other human activity. Photos by the Norwegian Polar Institute.



Climate change fight proving costly

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"The developed countries must take the lead by cutting their emissions by between 25 and 40 percent in 2020 compared to 1990 levels."

But emphasizing such projects – with an eye on reducing coal-fired emissions by 85-95 percent in countries such as China, India and South Africa – raises questions about Norway's own tapping of oil and coal in the Arctic. There's also a mix of conflict and cooperation among many nations when it comes to research and boundaries in the far north, where scientists say global warming is most prominent.

With the world's biggest leaders and a barrage of publicity minded activists attending, Svalbard isn't likely to play a starring role at the summit. But the archipelago's highest profile event so far, a pre-summit bell ringing by church and science officials that launched similar ceremonies throughout Norway, is giving plenty of ammunition to skeptics who are calling it the perfect symbol of climate change turning into a religion where the devout unquestioningly follow the leaders.

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

Human use of land a key 'red list' factor

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50 vascular plants.

The new analysis calls temperature a key factor, but land-use changes including development, tourism and research are also a major cause. Also cited is pollution contaminating animals' food supplies and reducing their reproductive abilities.

Norway has 3,799 "red list" species, about 21 percent of those assessed, with Svalbard representing 2 percent of that total, according to the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre, which published the 2006 results compiled by 23 teams of experts. The new study of the archipelago – by Christian Lydersen and

Harald Steen of the Norwegian Polar Institute, and Inger Greve Alsos of The University Centre In Svalbard – is part of nine articles examining the environmental influences causing species to be considered threatened.

Temperature has wide-ranging impacts, including affecting the moisture and length of the growing season for plants, according to the analysis. That can affect animals' feeding habits, which are also dependent on factors such as the location of the polar ice edge and snowpack depth.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story and to download documents including the full reports.

Swine flu shots for all available next week

Vaccinations for H1N1 flu will be offered to all Svalbard residents at Longyearbyen Hospital between 4 and 5 p.m. next Monday through Thursday.

Two initial shipments were limited primarily to higher-risk patients and those living in the Russian settlement of Barentsburg. A limited number of cases of the disease, also known as swine flu, have been reported locally, but officials said the widespread infection seen in some other parts of Norway have been avoided

to date.

Residents were asked to notify the hospital this week to schedule an appointment, but Aksel Bilicz, a supervising nurse at the hospital, said those who show up will receive shots. He said most people scheduling appointments have done so for Monday.

Although a second dose of the vaccine is recommended by officials, regulations require all interested persons receive an initial shot first.



Jørn Hurum, an adjunct professor at The University Centre In Svalbard, helps youths prepare fossilized mammal footprints recovered from Mine 7 during a Nov. 27 workshop at Svalbard Museum. The footprints, plus others prepared by experts, are on display at the museum.

Preserving history is a lasting memory

FOSSILS, from page 1

unremarkable rocks slowly emerged as raised imprints left at was apparently a feeding ground for the creatures.

Trusting kids with preserving such history might seem chancy, but paleontologist Jørn Hurum had no concerns as he instructed and supervised the group.

"They are so careful there's no danger in letting them do it," he said. "This is something they will remember."

Hurum, an adjunct professor at The University Centre In Svalbard, conducted the Nov. 27 workshop as part of a multi-day series of events focusing on his recent discoveries in Svalbard and elsewhere. He led a team that made global headlines this year for the "Ida" fossil – called by some the possible "missing link" in establishing human evolution – and is continuing to excavate sites in Svalbard following his 2006 discovery of "Predator X," a sea monster with a bite believed to be four

times as powerful as a Tyrannosaurus Rex.

Two miners discovered the Pantodontia tracks in Mine 7 by chance shortly before Christmas of 2006. Four tracks removed shortly afterward were expertly prepared and are on display at the museum.

Another 16 tracks were removed last month for preservation during the youths' workshop and another one open to all ages the following day. Hurum said a slip here or there by someone new to the work isn't critical.

"There is a scratch here or there that we would have made," but nothing likely to be detected to the untrained eye, he said.

Hurum, during a lecture at UNIS earlier in the week also focusing on his "Predator X" work, said the Mine 7 tracks appear to be from creatures of different sizes. There's a lot of "stepping on one another," indicating feeding tracks rather than a traveling procession.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Some events may stay at Huset after new center opens

An agreement to keep the theater at Huset operating after the new cultural center is complete has been reached, with an advocate hoping the older building can also be used to continue hosting cultural events. Anne Lise Klungseth Sandvik, who has opposed the new center since discussions about it started several years ago, said a volunteer association will do restoration work at Huset and pay the cost of electricity. Details are still being worked out, with nothing yet in writing, she said. Einar Buø, the city's cultural chief, said he is open to the plan, but advance discussions are needed to ensure conflicts don't arise about the location for specific events.

Longyearbyen, Barentsburg split wins at sports exchange

Longyearbyen and Barentsburg won three events each during a weekend sports exchange at Svalbardhallen. About 70 athletes, 28 from Barentsburg, participated in the event that take place annually in both towns. Longyearbyen's victories included 4-1 at soccer, 6-2 at badminton and 12-3 at floorball. Barentsburg's wins were 5-1 at table tennis, 3-2 at volleyball and 5-3 at chess.

Howlin' Huskies yap for one last concert after three years

Howlin' Huskies played their final concert as a Longyearbyen blues band at Barentz Pub on Saturday night, with band members saying they have differing aspirations after three years. The band made its debut during the 2006 Dark Season Blues festival, featuring Ørjan Augustinussen as the lead vocalist, Nick Weis-Fogh on bass, Glenn Karlsen on drums and Jon Gunnar Hansen on guitar. Kyrre Fledsberg has also been a regular keyboardist for the band. The final concert was a lengthy tour of many of the estimated 40 cover songs the band has worked into its repertoire over the years.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Cloudy, some snow. SE winds at 14 km/h. High -1C (-6C wind chill), low -5C (-7C wind chill).

Thursday

Cloudy, a flurry or two. NE winds at 8 km/h. High -1C (-2C wind chill), low -5C (-7C wind chill).

Friday

A morning flurry, overnight snow. E winds at 11 km/h. High -2C (-4C wind chill), low -7C (-9C wind chill).

Saturday

A few flurries. S winds at 19 km/h. High -4C (-10C wind chill), low -9C (-17C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, colder with snow, -8C (-18C), -11C (-19C); Monday, mainly clear, -6C (-6C), -10C (-12C); Tuesday, partly cloudy, -7C (-8C), -12C (-21C); Wednesday, cloudy and colder, -11C (-22C), -14C (-29C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Locals, above, deposit letters into "Santa's Mailbox" below Mine 2B in Nybyen during a Nov. 29 torchlight procession from Huset to the center of Longyearbyen. At right, revelers dance in traditional circles around the tree is lit in the town center. Unlike last year, the lighting didn't cause an overload at the power station.



Gifts are OK, but some want to visit instead

CHRISTMAS, from page 1

Scandinavian hops/malt soft drink offered only during the holidays.

"It's the greatest drink ever," she said.

Stegs said she'll also miss her homeland's celebration of Lucia (St. Lucy's Day), which Longyearbyen children will observe this Sunday with a short outdoor procession and storytime at the library, complete with the traditional lussekatt saffron buns.

As for her friends and relatives back home, the requests are simple.

"They only want to see pictures of polar

bears," she said. Also, some are hoping she's not walking around outside for fear she'll be eaten by one.

Inge Skad, 14, a student living in Longyearbyen for the past four years, said polar bears and T-shirts are still a popular outside gift, and shopping in Svalbard has the advantage of being cheaper due to the absence of taxes imposed on the mainland. On his wish list are games for his Xbox not sold here, but he said the communal nature of Longyearbyen makes the holiday stand out compared to his hometown of Sola.

"When you go out you see more people you know," he said.

As for outsiders, the first thing they often want isn't a present from Svalbard.

"They want to come up," said Lene Villumsen, a municipal employee who moved to Longyearbyen two years ago. "They want to see something."

If that's not possible, CDs, art prints and books are the recommendation of Elfrida Nord, a member of the Svalbard Lodge of Sons Of Norway, located in Juneau, Alaska. Those items were among the souvenirs she took home after her trip here this summer, along with a long-sleeve polar bear T-shirt that made her "the envy of others on the cruise."

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



Two Longyearbyen School students, monitored by an "elf," roll a rhönrad across the floor of Svalbardhallen during Turngruppa's Christmas gymnastics show Nov. 29.

What's up

Dec. 9

9 a.m.: Movie: "Bestevenner," special showing for students. Ages 7 and up. Longyearbyen School.

5-8 p.m.: Power outage in seaside area from Vei 601 to Svalbard Auto.

Dec. 12

10 a.m.-1 p.m.: Martial arts group graduation performance. Svalbardhallen.

Dec. 13

Noon: St. Lucy's Day celebration and storytelling. Children's procession from Polarflokken kindergarten to Longyearbyen Library, where storytime will be hosted by Ellinor Rafaelsen.

4 p.m.: Christmas concert featuring Polargospel, Longyearbyen mixed choir, Store Norske men's choir and other local musicians. Svalbard Church.

5:30 p.m.: "Open Skies" program from Svalbard. NRK 1.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Reisen til Julestjernen," Norwegian family film, all ages. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Julie & Julia," U.S. comedy/drama, all ages. Huset.

Dec. 15

7 p.m.: Meeting of the local government board. Mediateket.

Dec. 18 – Jan. 5

School break for Christmas.

Dec. 20

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

5:30 p.m.: "Open Skies" program from Svalbard. NRK 1.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Julenatt i Blåfjell," Norwegian family film, all ages. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Engelen," Norwegian drama, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Dec. 24

2 p.m. and 4 p.m.: Christmas Eve liturgies. Svalbard Church.

Dec. 25

Noon: Christmas Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

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:

- *Svalbard soot half that of decades past*
- *Norway's whaling plan angers Aussies*
- *Oil spill among North Slope's worst ever*
- *Prostitutes' freebies at climate summit*