



Volunteers pick up trash from a northern Spitsbergen shore during the 2008 cleanup. Photo by Halvard Pedersen.

Trash cleanup to bring lucky few to north shore

It's not hard to imagine the ecstasy of a garbage man winning the lottery. But how about winning the lottery to be a garbage man?

For those living in Svalbard, that can also be a dream come true.

A drawing selecting 24 volunteers to spend three days picking up trash on the shores of northern Spitsbergen this summer is scheduled shortly after the entry deadline of June 1. Nearly 140 residents entered last year's drawing, said Halvard Pedersen, an environmental protection supervisor in the Svalbard governor's office.

"You need to be in all right physical shape and 18 or older," he said. "Also, people who have joined us before are being separated out. We want as many (new) people as possible to join this operation overall."

This is the tenth year of cleanups, with about 800 cubic meters of trash collected along 275 kilometers of shoreline, according a report from the governor's office.

"It is still waste from fishing boats that dominate, with yarn balls, plastic/metal, fish boxes, plastic cans, household waste such as bottles, plastic and glass, other plastic packaging, shoe soles and other objects," the report notes (as translated by Icepeople). Volunteers also found larger items such as trawl bags that kill dozens of reindeer whose

See **CLEANUP**, page 4



Sébastien Barrault takes his dog team for a training run in preparation for the Trappers' Trail race he is helping organize. Racers will spend two days mushing from Longyearbyen to Bikkjebu and back.

Feeling a rush to mush

Inaugural sled dog race in Svalbard starts Saturday at university

It seems this whole "world's northernmost" thing is really going to the dogs.

Groans aside, Svalbard will add another category to its lengthy list of such distinctions when the inaugural Trappers' Trail dog sled race gets mushing at 9 a.m. Saturday. The two-day, 70-kilometer race from Longyearbyen to Bikkjebu and back is open to all Svalbard residents with one or more dogs.

Sébastien Barrault, one of the race organizers, said he recently started taking dogs out on sleds and, along with other members of the Longyearbyen Hundeklubb, thought Svalbard was due for an organized event.

"At some point we thought it would be fun to do something fun with these dogs, just a day trip," he said. "Then we decided to do

Where ski season begins in April: Race, opening of pole lift keeps snow bums busy
Page 3

something bigger."

"It's long enough to be a race, but it's also short enough that people who are not experienced can do it also," he said. Also, "if people want to look at the race it's in the scooter area, so it's easy."

Barrault, who is studying sea ice after moving to Longyearbyen five years ago from Switzerland, said he started training a team of seven dogs he and a friend own about two months ago. The team is mushing 20 to 40

See **RACE**, page 4

Healer returns for a spring at the altar



Priest finds clinic, church missions similar

Maybe it's just a temp gig in the pulpit, but Magne Klingsheim has a lifetime of genes – and jeans – befitting a spiritual healer in a rugged environment.

The longtime Alta wilderness teacher and health clinic leader is serving as the priest at Svalbard Church for three months while full-time priest Leif Helgesen researches a book about the archipelago. Klingsheim, who also led the church for a year in 2005, has father who's a doctor and a large family used to roughing the outdoors in street clothes without tents, And, it seems, an aunt and a couple of family friends

See **PRIEST**, page 2

Magne Klingsheim leads the congregation in a Biblical version of "Simon Says" at Svalbard Church.

Inside

Headlines from Svalbardposten

- Hundreds to be affected by ferry cancelation
- Permanent environmental chief finally named
- Tax return deadline day relatively quiet

Page 3

Weather forecast

Page 3

Events calendar

Page 4

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.

Mail held up by fee error

Official: 'Don't pay' bills being sent to Svalbard for customs

Those receiving parcels by mail in Svalbard are erroneously being asked to pay customs fees before the packages are sent from the mainland due an error in new regulations implemented by Norway's postal service, officials said.

Svalbard is generally exempt from customs fees under the Spitsbergen Treaty, which excludes taxes directly supporting

Norway.

But Helge Ask, manager of the Svalbard post office, said locals are bringing in bills for customs fees, confused about why the charges are being sought.

"Don't pay it," he said. "Check with the post office first."

Ask said the postal system's new policy for processing mail apparently doesn't recognize Svalbard's exemption, so employees here are having to contact Oslo officials to get packages delivered without paying the fees.

Local calling goes beyond the church

PRIEST, from page 1

blessed with the gift of prophecy.

"When I was a tiny boy, just born, three different people said 'Oh, he's going to be a priest,'" he said.

"I heard this through the years when I grew up and I said, 'No, no, no – I'm going to be a veterinarian,'" said Klingsheim, saying he developed an early love of animals growing up on a farm and in the outdoors.

But the crib-era predictions won out as he has spent his life helping people with physical and psychological problems, guiding year-long outdoor skills classes for high schoolers, and bringing new services such as joint replacements to Alta with the clinic – plus seven years of theology study in Oslo to become an ordained priest. He said his medical work, ranging from teens abusing substances to the elderly suffering depression after the death of loved ones, has always been intensely spiritual.

"It's a new start, but it's also what you have left," he said. When a loved one dies "are you going to go on with your life? When you lose your health you can't walk. Maybe the biggest crisis in a person's life is when you lose your health function."

Still wearing jeans, along with Birkenstocks and an Izod sweatshirt, he spent a recent workday counseling students at Longyearbyen School who have a classmate that committed suicide earlier this year. The outdoor experience also came in handy since one of his first sermons upon returning here was the windy and frigid Good Friday service at Vindodden, a 90-minute snowmobile ride away (full disclosure: when this writer got "scooter sick" during his first long-distance trip, Klingsheim stopped to offer assistance).

Klingsheim said he was "very excited and very nervous...it's such a small church and you are so near to the people" during his first appointment here. But those traits, in a community where "there's no social security, the plane comes five times a week and the people are toughened by the mining industry," proved a fitting match.

"If you are staying in (another) town or a place and you work in the church, you work in the church," he said. "Here every Friday we eat lunch with the hospital, just the people you have to work with when bad things happen. The team, it's much bigger here in a small town."

Small communities aren't new to Klingsheim, who grew up on an island near Bergen during the 1960s. His father worked with drug- and alcohol-abuse patients. His mother was kept busy with seven kids, of which Klingsheim was the third.

"They say that is the perfect position," he said. "The first one is responsible. The second one is fighting to get on top. The third has to fight with intellect to get on top. Also, when you have younger brothers and sisters you have to be responsible."

The family was largely self-dependent ("to fish for dinner, it was necessary") and activities such as hunting trips where specialized gear was eschewed for jeans and sleeping under the stars without sleeping bags and tents.

"It was my life and I loved it, but I didn't think of it as outdoor activity," he said.

His northern calling came when he left home, working for the YMCA/YWCA in the Lofoten Islands. Like many, he found the exotic portrayals of the area alluring.

"Many people talk about northern Norway like something way up there the Russians have," he said.

While there Klingsheim said he met a priest whose down-to-Earth ways were a role model for the profession he supposedly was destined for.

"He wasn't a part of the church, separate from us," he said. "He was one of us."

A year later Klingsheim began studying theology in Oslo, where the similarities of spiritual and physical healing were evident from the beginning.

"You have to study as long as being a doctor," he said, adding about half the students drop out. Also, he focused his energies on hospital work where "we were always working with people who had to pick up and start over their lives in a new way."

But it wasn't all somber moments and sermons, as Klingsheim spent his summers working as a tour bus driver all over Scandinavia

"I could travel and I was well paid," he said.

He was ordained in 1986, after which he spent three more years with the YMCA/YWCA as a project leader. Then came a 16-year stint teaching youths the ways of the outdoors at Øytun Folk High School.

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



Racers, above, start the Spitsbergen Skimarathon on April 25. At right, youths use the rope tow near Longyearbyen School on April 26.

Ski spree

World's northernmost race, opening of tow lift comes as places elsewhere end season

As ski resorts elsewhere were closing down, Svalbard's snow bums were just getting off to the races and lifts.

Hundreds of outsiders joined a throng of Longyearbyen residents for a weekend featuring the world's northernmost ski race and the opening of maybe the last free ski lift on Earth (which anyone with an hour to spare can learn to run).

A record 453 people participated in the Svalbard Skimarathon beginning at Mine 6 on April 25, covering all or half of the 42-kilometer course along the valley to Fritham with varying competitiveness. Skies were clear, the temperature a tolerable -10C and winds light.

For Joakim Bolteus, 37, of Göteborg, who's raced for nearly a decade including the 90-kilometer Vasaloppet race in Dalarna, Sweden, the big adjustment this late in the spring was going straight from training on roller skis to unfamiliar snow.

"The hard part for us is the ski waxing, because we're not familiar with the conditions," said Bolteus, who arrived in



Longyearbyen without time for a practice run.

Others talked about adjusting to the cold, the Arctic landscape and keeping away from polar bears – although a rescue helicopter kept watch for the latter.

Heavy favorites Erlend Hoff and Sara Svendsen won the men's and women's divisions, respectively, the third straight victory for both. Hoff's time was 2:03:43, Svendsen's was 2:27:49.

Coming in more leisurely were Turil Endresen, 55, and Göril Sguve, 55, both of Tønsberg, who had the makings of a decent picnic in their packs and expected to complete the half-marathon course in four hours.

"We are going out there looking at the view," Sguve said. "When we go on the scooter we don't see anything."

The next day featured youths participating in a series of races on a short course at Longyearbyen School, followed by the opening of the 180-meter rope tow lift on the hill across the street.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Hurtigruten cancellation to affect hundreds this summer

A decision not to bring the Nordstjernen ferry to Spitsbergen this summer means hundreds of passengers will have their trips here altered or cancelled, officials said. Hurtigruten is extending an agreement to use the vessel in Italy through July. Officials will try to rebook passengers on another ship sailing in the area, but estimate only there is only room for 40 percent of the 500 passengers affected. Alternate bookings to Greenland, Antarctica and the Norwegian coast will also be offered.

Permanent environmental chief finally named

Guri Tveito, 49, Norway's director of food policy, will become the head of Svalbard's environmental ministry this fall. A longtime environmental policy manager, she said she has never been to Svalbard, but called her new job "incredibly exciting, in an environment where the government has a high level of ambition." Temporary appointees have filled the position since 2007.

Tax return deadline day quiet

A steady stream of people filed last-minute tax returns on April 30, but few sought assistance compared to past years, an tax agency official said. It appears more people are taking time to learn a new form and fill it out themselves.

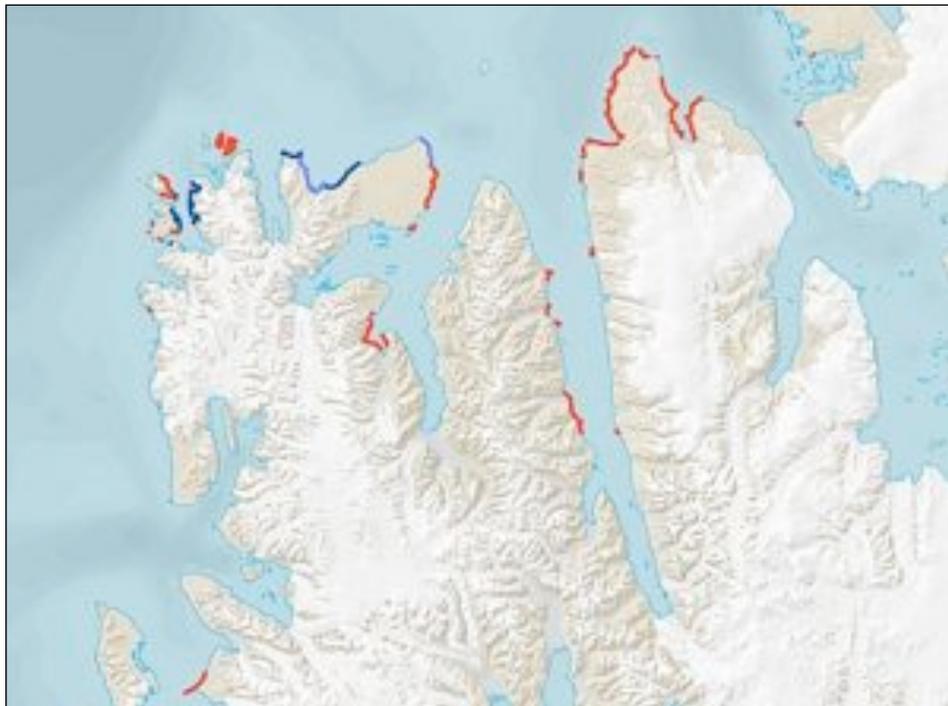
Dead dogs in garbage causing officials trouble

Two dead dogs were found in separate disposal containers last month, causing mechanical and health problems at Longyearbyen's waste facility, an official there said. He said it is a recurring problem and dead animals are supposed to be brought to the facility during operational hours for disposal.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A little snow. ESE winds at 11 km/h. High -4C (-6C wind chill), low -11C (-16C wind chill).	Mostly cloudy and colder. E winds at 14 km/h. High -9C (-14C wind chill), low -10C (-15C wind chill).	Warmer, periods of sun. E winds at 12 km/h. High -4C (-7C wind chill), low -4C (-8C wind chill).	Mixed sun and clouds, ESE winds at 9 km/h. High -1C (-1C wind chill), low -2C (-3C wind chill).
Extended forecast: Sunday, more sun than clouds, 0C (-1C), -3C (-4C); Monday, mostly cloudy -1C (-3C), -3C (-7C); Tuesday, cloudy, -1C (-5C), -3C (-6C); Wednesday, snow flurries, -1C (-2C), -2C (-4C).			

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



A map of northern Spitsbergen shows the routes along the coast where volunteers have picked up trash during the past nine years. A tenth cleanup is scheduled this August.

Visitors seeking 'expedition lite'

CLEANUP, from page 1

antlers are trapped in them.

There may be extra urgency for those interested to enter this year, since most of the polluted shoreline appears to be cleaned up, Pedersen said. The governor's office has also implemented stricter regulations to reduce waste washing ashore and "we may rethink our plans next year" as a result.

"We don't have so many shorelines where this is such a problem," Pedersen said.

Two groups of 12 volunteers will be deployed this summer. The first, scheduled

Aug. 2-5, will travel to the pickup area by ship and return on the helicopter that brings the second crew. The second crew is scheduled to work Aug. 5-9 and return by ship. Applicants must be registered residents of Svalbard. They are asked to rank their shift preference and declare if they are able to serve as a guard against polar bears.

An online application and more information about the pickup is available in Norwegian at www.sysselmannen.no. An English translation is available at www.icepeople.net.

Dog sled race casual, but gear isn't

RACE, from page 1

kilometers on alternating days and has completed about half the Trappers' Trail course so far.

"I don't want to win it," he said. "I just want to come back with a decent time."

Nine teams are registered so far, with most consisting of two members who will switch driving duties after the mandatory overnight stay at the Bikkjebu checkpoint. Two of the teams have mushers who have participated in other sled dog races in Norway, but Barrault said the first Trappers' Trail is something of a trial-and-error process.

"It's a first race so we don't have great expectations," he said.

Barrault said he'd like more teams, for instance, but "the bad thing is it's high season, so the commercial kennels would like to take part in it, but can't."

On the other hand, the casual arrangements mean that, while the official registration deadline was May 1, Barrault said he is willing to consider applicants who apply past that date.

Another adjustment is starting the race at The University Centre In Svalbard, even though Barrault would like to do so in the center of town.

"Some people don't feel that comfortable driving their dogs in town," he said. "Not everyone has a dog they can steer like a joystick."

A complete list of rules and required equipment, along with other race and registration details, is at <http://trapperstrail.blogspot.com>. There is also a mandatory briefing at 6 p.m. Friday at UNIS.

The first-day course to Bikkjebu is the easiest, but longer at 40 kilometers, while the return trip is over steeper terrain. Enforcement of the route will be done with tracker-capable GPS systems all teams are required to carry, but Barrault said there don't appear to be any obvious shortcuts across terrain that can be traveled legally. Prizes are simple, including drinks from Svalbard and a new donated Therm-a-Rest.

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

What's up

May 9

9 a.m.: Trappers' Trail sled dog race. Starts at UNIS, overnight checkpoint at Bikkjebu, concludes May 10. For more information visit <http://trapperstrail.blogspot.com>.

May 10

6 p.m.: Movie: "Yatzy," Norwegian thriller, ages 11 and up. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie, "The Wrestler," U.S. drama, ages 15 and up. Huset.

May 12

7 p.m.: Meeting of the local board, Næringsbygget 3.

May 17

7 a.m.: Norwegian Constitution Day, children's activities, theater performance and other traditional events throughout the day.

May 23

6:30 p.m.: Cultural show in Barentsburg, featuring various artists and performers from Longyearbyen. Barentsburg residents will perform at Huset at 7 p.m. in Longyearbyen on June 6.

May 24

6 p.m.: Movie, "ORPS – The Movie," Norwegian comedy, all ages. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Reader," U.S. drama/romance. Ages 15 and up. Huset.

May 25

10:15 a.m.: Meeting of the environment and industry committee, Næringsbygget 3.

June 1

8 p.m.: Movie "Spurvenes Sang," Iranian drama, ages 7 and up. Huset.

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:

- *April one of coldest ever in Svalbard*
- *When the flu ravaged Longyearbyen*
- *Svalbard's CO2 levels at record high*