



The top 10 stories of 2011

Tragedy, then triumphs



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Flowers, messages and other tributes are placed at the Gruvebus statue in Longyearbyen's central square, above, for Johannes Buø, 14, and Viljar Hanssen, 17, after they were shot July 22 by Anders Behring Brevik at an island youth camp in Utøya. Buø was among the 77 people killed by Brevik. At right, rescuers move a polar bear after it attacked a youth expedition campsite Aug. 5, killing Horatio Chapple, 17, of the United Kingdom.



SYSSELMANNEN

Two local teens shot at Utøya, first fatal polar bear attack since 1995 overshadow year's events

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It was a year whose reminiscence will always begin with a moment of respectful silence.

Two incidents claiming the lives of teenagers, including the July 22 attacks by Anders Behring Brevik that history will record as one of Norway's greatest tragedies, were Svalbard's biggest news stories of 2011. Longyearbyen's Johannes Buø, 14, was among Brevik's 77 victims, while Horatio Chapple, 17, of the United Kingdom, became Svalbard's first fatality from a polar bear attack since 1995.



JOHANNES BUØ



HORATIO CHAPPLE

But one of year's most inspiring stories also resulted from Brevik's attack, as Viljar Hanssen, now 18, recovered from life-threatening injuries and became the youngest-ever member of Longyearbyen's municipal council when he was elected in October after campaigning from his hospital bed.

See **REVIEW**, page 4

Inside

Nude clergy on ice, other '11 oddities
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- Ski Marathon fully booked four months early
- The lone man at a hunting cabin for Christmas
- Norway to nominate Svalbard as Heritage Site
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

Advice for visitors tripping out

Cruise group hopes new site, guide results in better tourist behavior in sensitive locations

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

No, it's not always OK to just take pictures and no, it's not always OK to just leave footprints.

A new set of guidelines and tips for nine sites in Svalbard considered environmentally and/or cultural sensitive are now being offered by a cruise ship industry group in the hope

See **AWARENESS**, page 3



JØRN HENRIKSEN / SPITSBERGEN TRAVEL

A warning sign for visitors is pictured in a newly published tourist guide funded by Svalbard's Environmental Protection Fund. **Also:** Extra 5M for next grants; deadline is Feb. 1. See page 3.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Staff writer/photographer

Karla Paz

Copy editor

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

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

Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

Copyright stuff

Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if *Icepeople* is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

Corrections policy

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.

Delivering Christmas Mass in Svalbard



LINE NAGELL YLVISÅKER / SVALBARDPOSTEN

Svalbard Church Priest Leif Magne Helgesen, left, emerges from a polar dip during a Dec. 21 visit to the meteorological research station at Hopen to deliver Christmas Mass. At right, Inge Skjevick, a search and rescue official with Airlift, gets into a hot suit after his Arctic baptism in holy (s•••) water. The stop was among several by Helgesen, Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alheim and others to deliver gifts and other holiday cheer to remote settlements.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Since we're doing the year in review and space is pitifully limited to mention things that actually matter, we figured the least we could do was rant at length about the seemingly endless strangeness that continued with great infamy in 2011. Our favorite bizarre image appeared right at the end in the last issue of the newspaper people actually read, which we loved so much we made a first-ever payment to the "competition" so we could run it above and on our website (if we ever finish recoding it). Line Nagell Ylvisåker, the journalist capturing the shot, said the blur (an artistic mastery worthy of preserving as a Christmas card for future generations) was intentional. She also offered tips on improving our crappy photography, so it was money well spent.

We're exceedingly lame because we couldn't come up with a clear favorite for the most surreal story, although surely the biggest gossip item had to be Prince Harry's Excellent Adventure. His comments about testicles during a polar bear dip and global speculation about whether averse conditions would improve in time for him to get off the island in time for his brother's wedding was the stuff of huge tabloid headlines.

Another British expedition whose wackiness was every muckraker's dream was Alex Hartley's Nowhere Island project, where he's basically taking a massive clump of isolated soil and rock on a barge tour along England's coast and the 2012 Olympics in London, then returning it. To say the massively expensive grant project, one of those high-profile stunts intended to raise environmental awareness, is instead being met with near-universal ridicule and outrage seems like a journalistically objec-

tive observation.

Speaking of high-profile awareness events not exactly getting the hoped-for results, does anybody remember Ted Turner's trip here with a bunch of bigshots? We didn't think so.

Another major flameout shows how awful we are at punditry, as we predicted a major gathering and historical hut reopening in Ny-Ålesund would be one of 2011's biggest stories ("The Year of Nansen-Amundsen"). But a volcano eruption in Iceland, the lesser sequel to one of 2010's biggest hits, screwed that up as ash clouds grounded flights.

Also in the explosive Acts of God category was a declaration in April by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an Islamic theologian some Norwegian media described as more dangerous than Osama bin Laden, to live in Norway to determine proper prayer times for polar regions (where a lack of sunrises and sunsets creates obvious problems). Svalbard was pretty much the most appropriate place – not to mention its more lax residency requirements – but we never did spot him.

The entertainment industry admirably fulfilled its role of portraying Svalbard as a doomsday haven for mad scientists, aliens and zombies. Books included an awful supermarket romance paperback and the tale of a Blair Witch-type intruder at a remote cabin. Documentaries about dinosaur digs and polar bear births used fake footage and poorly disguised truthiness. An inaugural film festival in Longyearbyen scored a big splat on the Rotten Tomatoes scale thanks to long-running organizational fiasco.

And with 2012 being hailed as the year of doomsday, we're gleefully certain things will only get better in the world of warped.



JØRN HENRIKSEN / SPITSBERGEN TRAVEL

Cruise ship visitors explore a site at Ytre Norskøya used by whalers as a lookout spot during the 1600s. The waters, "boiling" with whales then, were almost depleted of the species 200 years later.

Seeking travelers' sensitive side

AWARENESS, from page 1

more informed visitors will practice better habits. An interactive presentation is available at www.aeco.no/guidelines, where print versions of the guide are also available in PDF format.

"The guide will point out what the qualities of the place are and what experiences you can have there," said Frigg Jørgensen, general manager, of the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, an interview with NRK. "But first of all, it shows what considerations you should take when visiting this place, to be of minimal environmental impact."

Jørgensen said she believes she think most visitors act well now, but hopes those traveling

independently will follow the guidelines cruise ship travelers will be required to.

The website offers a general overview of each location, plus highlights about the fauna, vegetation, cultural remains, tips to best enjoy the experience and photo galleries. There is also a more general presentation about practicing sensitive habits for all of Svalbard.

The project is also based on evaluations last summer by experts including an archaeologist, two biologists, an ornithologist and a representative of Svalbard's governor. Funding for the project came from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund.

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

Extra 5M for environmental grants

Priority in 2012 include limiting tourist, other human impacts; deadline for first round is Feb. 1

An extra five million kroner in grants is available in 2012 from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund, with priority this year being given to projects aiming to limit the impacts of tourism and other activities.

A total of 13 million kroner is available for two application periods, with the first deadline on Feb. 1.

"In allocation of funding in 2012 the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund will emphasize the following content in projects:

Overall understanding of the environmental status, possible impact of climate change, sustainable development of tourism (and) development of a knowledge base for harvesting on Svalbard," the governor's office notes in a statement at its website.

Priority for the extra funds include protections for outdoor and settlement activities, recycling, limiting resource usage and environmentally industry practices.

Applications and additional information are available at <http://sysselmannen.no/hoved.aspx?m=44365&amid=3182200>.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Skimarathon fully booked four months before race

A new limit of 500 entries into the Svalbard Skimarathon has been filled four months before the race, said Helle M. Jakobsen, the event's coordinator. "We have set a limit of 500 athletes because of logistics and security on the trail," she said. "(Last) year we received many submissions during the last week, especially the day before the race." A record 520 racers participated in 2010, prompting the new limit with registration starting Nov. 1. Jakobsen said numerous tour operators made reservations, with most participants coming from mainland Norway.

The lone Svalbard man at a hunting cabin for Christmas

Harald A. Soleim, 71, is the only person in Svalbard who spent Christmas at a hunting station, continuing his long traditional of spending the holiday alone in the wild. Other stations are either closed, or their occupants have moved to new residences or are visiting the mainland. "There are only two times that I have not spent Christmas at Kapp Wijk," said Soleim, who moved to the cabin at that site in 1977. But it's hardly a holiday of what he jokingly called "privation and suffering," as he served himself the traditional Christmas Eve meal of a reindeer steak. "It was a huge steak at over ten kilograms," he said. "It was so tender it almost fell off the fork, after hanging for quite a while in the attic ... Usually I also serve sauerkraut, cooked prunes and apricots to, if I have it. This year was the only prunes." He also did enjoy some company just before the holiday as his godson, Erik Ekeblad Eggenfellner, 9, was among the guests on a helicopter that brought gifts and mail.

Government wants Svalbard to be a World Heritage Site

The Norwegian government is determining what locations in Svalbard are worthy of being nominated for UNESCO's World Heritage Site designation, said State Secretary Heidi Sørensen. An Environmental Ministry statement claims Arctic wilderness is severely underrepresented, but notes it may take several years to determine nominees.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. SE winds to 37 km/h. High -4C (-12C wind chill), low -6C (-14C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. E winds to 33 km/h. High -7C (-15C wind chill), low -11C (-21C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NE winds to 33 km/h. High -12C (-22C wind chill), low -17C (-25C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NE winds to 15 km/h. High -17C (-23C wind chill), low -17C (-24C wind chill).
Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -16C (-21C), -18C (-24C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, -16C (-21C), -18C (-24C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -18C (-24C), -19C (-25C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -18C (-25C), -19C (-25C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by yr.no			



GETTY IMAGES

Britain's Prince Harry, right, contemplates the impact to his crown jewels during a polar bear dip in Longyearbyen's sub-freezing waters while training in March for a North Pole expedition. The second-in-line to the throne accompanied a group of wounded veterans partway on their fundraising ski trip.

Ups in '11: Viljar's recovery, new mine

REVIEW, from page 1

There was also good news for Store Norske after a disastrously costly corruption scandal in 2010 that was the top story that year. A new coal mine at Lunckefjell essentially cleared its last major hurdles days before the end of 2011, which will add four years to Longyearbyen's dominant industry, which after a century is facing a relatively short lifespan.

But Norway's government put environmental concerns above economic ones in a revised East Svalbard management plan that severely limits access for human activities. A final plan is expected to be voted on by Parliament in 2012, with the tourism industry and local politicians expressing concerns.

Another environmental concern was Svalbard's most serious rabies outbreak in 30 years. The discovery of infected animals in September resulted in a lengthy effort to kill as many foxes as possible near Longyearbyen and an ongoing ban on dogs being outdoors without a leash or human supervision.

Snaring the world's attention was Prince Harry's North Pole trip in March and April.

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

Top 10 stories of 2011

1. Two Longyearbyen teens shot at Utøya.
2. Polar bear kills U.K. youth, wounds four.
3. New Lunckefjell mine clears hurdles.
4. Revised East Svalbard plan limits access.
5. Most serious rabies outbreak in 30 years.
6. New municipal council elected, including first female leader, Christin Kristoffersen, and her son becomes youngest-ever member as Viljar Hanssen, 18, recovers from life-threatening Utøya injuries.
7. Robert Hermanssen pleads guilty, other legal resolutions in Store Norske corruption scandal.
8. Longyearbyen residents see huge utility bill increases to pay for new facilities.
9. Russia's cooperation/conflict escalates, with beginning of massive cleanup marred by illegal construction and threats after illegal trawlers are detained.
10. Britain's Prince Harry accompanies wounded soldiers on North Pole expedition.



SYSSELMANNEN MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Espen Stokke, above left, burns a reindeer infected with rabies Sept. 18 after it was discovered paralyzed at Plataberget. Above right, Longyearbyen Council members Anita Johansen, Christin Kristoffersen (the first woman to lead the council) and Viljar Hanssen (a Utøya shooting victim who became the council's youngest member ever at 18) confer during the council's first meeting Oct. 25.

What's up

Jan. 4

6 p.m.: Movie: "Varg Veum – I Mørket er Alle Ulver Grå," Norwegian/Danish crime/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 7

7:30 p.m.: Concert featuring Elizabeth Norberg-Schulz. Opera and classical works including Schumann, Puccini and Bellini. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 8

6 p.m.: Movie: "Hysteria," British comedy/romance, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Meeting in Tuscany," British/French romance, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 11

6 p.m.: Movie: "Arietta's Secret," Japanese animated/family film, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 14

2 p.m.: Presentation about SvalSat's role in military activities by Bård Wormdal, author of "Sattellittkrigen." Longyearbyen Library.

Jan. 15

6 p.m.: Movie: "Real Steel," U.S. action/sci-fi, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

8:30 p.m.: Movie: "Dream House," U.S. drama/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 17

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar: UNIS.

Jan. 18

6 p.m.: Movie: "Jodaeiye Nader az Simin" ("A Separation"), Iranian drama, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 19

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Jan. 22

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Lion King" (3D), U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. 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:

- Russian fuel ship set back in Nome trip
- Russia: Norway's priority in fish market
- Floating Arctic university at Arkhangelsk
- Hairy 'yeti' crabs discovered in Antarctica