



Volunteers acting as "silhouettes" carry ice blocks to Guesthouse 102 during the March 16 filming of "The Nightmare Of Noah," a short movie scheduled for completion later this year about the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and the possible end of the world.

Is the seed vault turning us into ice zombies?

Apocalyptic movie questions impact of Svalbard facility on society

Thomas Zimmerman didn't have what it took to be a Nazi, but turning into an ice zombie overnight in Longyearbyen was no problem.

"We had nothing better to do," he said. So Zimmerman and Stefanie Mentele,

visiting from Germany, spent the second day of their vacation walking semi-robotically back and forth across the road in howling winds with a chill factor of more than -30C, carrying and stacking large ice blocks at Guesthouse

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High life, low crime

Svalbard population tops 2,500 using new count method, rate of crime third lowest in Norway

More than 2,500 people are listed as living in Svalbard for the first time in more than a decade, with those not registered as

Clueless at the CIA: Spy agency's data on Svalbard skimpy and skewed

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residents of Norway's mainland accounting for the increase. And if anyone got a traffic ticket, it was big news.

Population and crime reports released this month by Statistics Norway show 2,565 people in the archipelago as of Jan. 1, 2009, up from 2,449 the previous year. It's the third year of increases since the population was 2,266 in 2006, with this year's total seemingly resulting from a new counting method, but still significantly lower than 3,544 in 1990 due to a sharp drop at Russian settlements.

Crime in Norway last year had the fewest reported incidents since 1994, although the picture wasn't as rosy for Svalbard. A total of 114 Svalbard incidents were reported to police, the most since 2002 except for the 125 incidents reported in 2004. But the ratio of 44.44 crimes per 1,000 residents is the lower

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Editor's note: The next issue of Icepeople will be April 14 due to printing complications from the academic Easter holiday. Daily updates will continue to be posted at www.icepeople.net.

An ode to blubber concrete

Debut CD by Schmeerenburgh a tribute to weekend warriors, government and heavy drinkers

When you're the world's northernmost rock band there's little use for wasting lyrics on "struggles" other acts find "substance" in like bad relationships and drug trips. Especially when your forefathers were boiling whale blubber in a settlement so miserable prisoners refused to spend a season working there instead of serving a life sentence.

Of course it's not an experience the average teenybopper or stoner relates to, so don't expect the band's songs on "Idol" anytime soon.

But those willing to venture to the end of the Earth – or maybe just send an e-mail – can hear the debut CD by Schmeerenburgh, a



Web bonus: Download the song "Sysselmannen" free at icepeople.net.

Longyearbyen foursome that released the five-song *Longyear Brenner* during the annual Solfestuka celebration this month. In addition to the blubber boilers, there's tributes to legendary drinkers, the governor's office and people arguing about who's spent the most time enduring the brutal outdoors.

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Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

Foreigners boost Svalbard's population

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than all but two of 27 other districts in Norway. Also, while drug arrests and traffic citations may be common in big cities, there were only two of the former and 10 of the latter in Svalbard.

The current totals are the first collected by the agency using the Population Register of Svalbard, created in the summer of 2008 using the same structure as Norway's Central Population Register. In Norwegian settlements the new register includes all people registering for a "D-number" intending to stay at least six months, according to Øivind Rustad, senior executive officer for Norway's Division for Population Statistics. Previous counts for Norwegian settlements included only those registered both in a municipality in mainland Norway and as a resident at Svalbard, not foreign nationals.

"Hence, the total population in the table seemingly has increased somewhat, although the Russian settlements' population has decreased," he wrote in an e-mail interview. "In reality it has not increased, but we have earlier not had any information on this (foreign nationals) group."

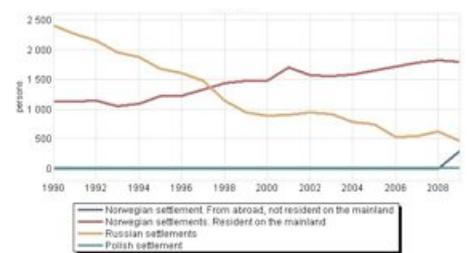
The change means Statistics Norway will publish a more extensive amount of data about the area, including a "This Is Svalbard" report awaiting final approval and scheduled for public release in May or June.

Svalbard's population of mainland Norway residents is 1,792, down from 1,821 in 2008. There are 293 non-mainland residents in Norwegian settlements, 470 in the Russian settlement of Barentsburg and 10 at the Polish settlement of Hornsund. The Norwegian settlements have increased from 1,125 in 1990, while the Russian settlement population has declined from 2,407.

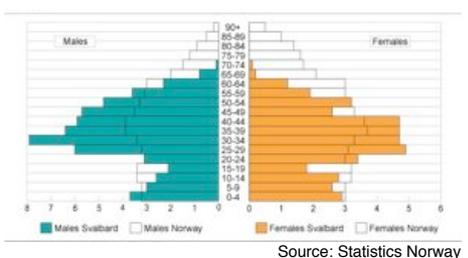
More than half of the residents in the Norwegian settlements arrived after 2004, with only 10 here since the 1960s. The average residency length is six years. While 140 people have never lived outside Svalbard, more than 60 percent are below school age and the oldest are about 30 years old. The population of men ages 25 to 59 and women ages 25 to 44 is notably higher than mainland settlements, as is the male ratio of Svalbard's population at 58.1 percent.

That ratio is even more unbalanced among those from Norwegian municipalities since there are more women than men among the foreign nationals from 36 countries. Nearly a third of foreigners are from Thailand and 70 percent of them are women. The next largest foreigner totals include 92 from Sweden, 43

Svalbard population by settlement and year



Svalbard population by sex and age



Source: Statistics Norway

from Germany and 26 from Russia.

The 386,251 criminal offenses reported to police in Norway in 2008 is a 3 percent decline from the previous year, with an 8 percent decrease in drug crimes and aggravated larcenies, 7 percent drop in auto thefts and 5.1 percent drop in traffic misdemeanors cited as significant factors. The total represents a general decline since 437,250 offenses were reported in 2002 and is the lowest since 385,446 were reported in 1996.

Comparable Svalbard data is incomplete due to different collection methods until last year, but the 2008 total is significantly higher than the 84 offenses reported in 2007. The overall trend, however, is more even.

"The yearly rate of offenses reported to the police committed in Svalbard varies, (but is) relatively stable around 100 during these last seven years," wrote Sigmund B. Mohn, senior executive officer of Norway's Group for Crime Statistics, in an e-mail. "The main group of offenses is offenses for profit, followed by a relatively large share in the 'other' category."

Crimes reported in Svalbard in 2008 include 42 offenses for profit (up from 29 in 2007), one economic offense (down from six), six offenses of violence (up from three), one sexual offense (down from two), two narcotics offenses (up from one), 10 traffic offenses (down from 18), three incidents of property damage (up from one), six environmental offenses (up from four), six work environment offenses (up from none) and 35 "other" offenses (up from 20).

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

CIA clueless about Svalbard

The phone system is "probably adequate." Svalbard is sometimes known as "Spitzbergen." And 450 residents are predicted to flee by July.

Those tidbits from the CIA World Factbook may seem questionable, but at least the U.S. spy agency has some information in those areas. Their book is blank when it comes to a vast number of other facts, including the age

and sex of the population, current environmental issues and basic economic indicators such as gross domestic product.

Many basics about Svalbard are accurately portrayed by the agency, but statements such as a predicted population of 2,116 on July 1 aren't likely to boost credibility.

The page is at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sv.html>.



Pauline Julier films a scene March 16 for "The Nightmare Of Noah," a movie about the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The Geneva resident plans to show it at festivals, but its availability is unknown.

'Noah' questions vault's impact

MOVIE from page 1

102. While not on any tour company's list of featured activities, it seems this is everyday life in a post-apocalyptic world somehow linked to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.

The couple joined two others volunteering as actors in "The Nightmare Of Noah," a short movie by Geneva filmmaker Pauline Julier scheduled for completion this fall. She said the movie, promoted as "a video of exploration halfway between documentary and science fiction," focuses on a futuristic Noah who becomes unable to stand his confinement in the seed vault and emerges to find the world has apparently disappeared under ice.

"He thinks it's the end of the world and he's all alone and nothing is alive," she said. While battling conflicting feelings of fear and penitence, he sees a snow-covered village only to discover "they are people who alive, but they are doing absurd things."

Julier said the movie is meant to highlight concerns being ignored in generally positive coverage about the year-old seed vault, the world's largest such facility with the ability to store 4.5 million species of seeds as a safeguard against catastrophic events. Advocates call it a modern-day "Noah's Ark," but some dissenting

organizations and individuals argue seed banks place too much trust and power in government and agribusiness entities, resulting in less effort to help farmers adjust to conditions and situations where they grow the crops.

"I don't trust the way they present the thing," Julier said. "The press and journalists present it like it's something amazing for all eternity. I just don't believe that."

It's not the first post-apocalyptic movie about the seed vault. "Frozen Seed," a nine-minute Canadian film Tim Bissell wrote in 2008 after reading an article about the vault, focuses on two scientists trying to get to a seed cache in a frozen wilderness after a nuclear war. They hope to bring to seeds to survivors in underground dwellings, but meet a team of commandos determined to recover the cache to feed those the government favors.

Julier and Xavier Lavorel, the sound technician for "The Nightmare Of Noah," spent several days in Longyearbyen filming landscapes, buildings in town and ice moving on the sea. She said the seed vault scenes will be filmed at a set in Geneva since they were unable to film inside the Svalbard facility.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Svalbard governor, two first lieutenants departing

Sysselmann Per Sefland, governor of Svalbard since October 2005, is voluntarily leaving office this fall, with officials hoping to name a replacement after Easter. The two longest-serving lieutenants, Petter Braaten and Roar Mordal Hilde, are also leaving before the end of summer.

17 environmental projects selected for funding

Studying the effects of Arctic nature guiding, helping local government with the environmental certification process and several youth programs were among 17 initiatives selected last week to share 4.4 million kroner from Svalbard's Environment Fund.

Seed vault wins award

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault was named Plant Of 2008 by ByggeGallaen at its Consturction Week convention in Oslo. Jurors cited the vault's operational organization and importance on a worldwide scale in selecting it over two other finalists.

Cargo ship delayed by ice

The Norbjørn, carrying scientific equipment and food, did not arrive March 23 as scheduled due to ice up to 70 cm thick in Adventfjorden. Cold weather during the next 10 days may cause further delays.

New administrator named

Ivar Undheim, chief administrative officer for the municipality of Klepp, was named the new administrator of Longyearbyen Lokalstyre. He will serve a six-year term.

English translations of these and other pillaged articles (OK, we owe them many thanks for allowing this) are at www.icepeople.net.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cold and sunny. NNE winds at 19 km/h. High -16C (-21C wind chill), low -19C (-20C wind chill).	Warmer and light snow. SW winds at 6 km/h. High -11C (-11C wind chill), low -14C (-14C wind chill).	Cloudy and light snow. N winds at 6 km/h. High -13C (-13C wind chill), low -21C (-24C wind chill).	Mixed sun and clouds, ENE winds at 6 km/h. High -17C (-17C wind chill), low -20C (-20C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, cold and partly cloudy, -18C (-18C), -23C (-26C); Monday, cold and partly cloudy -19C (-21C), -21C (-27C); Tuesday, cold with snow, -18C (-27C), -19C (-29C); Wednesday, cloudy and not as cold, -14C (-14C), -19C (-24C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Schmeerenburgh members, from left to right, Ketil Rønning, Mads Sandvik, Haakon Sandvik and Jeff Holmes released their first CD, *Longyear Brenner*, earlier this month.

A rocking tribute to Svalbard

ALBUM, from page 1

Exotic, perhaps, for strangers to the area. But if the overcrowded release party at Huset is any indication, it's material a hefty portion of the local population is familiar with and embraces.

"It was the most microphones and guitars ever knocked over in a concert," said Haakon Sandvik, a bassist who's lived here most of his life. "Eight or nine people fell on the stage."

Songs may sound like typical garage punk/thrasher to the unfocused ear, but pay attention and it's clear these aren't your typical rockers – or groupies shouting out lyrics.

"My yoga teacher was crowd surfing, which was amazing because he's in his 60s," said drummer Jeff Holmes, who's about to use his newly earned PhD traveling the world studying the aurora borealis for the U.S. Air Force.

Schmeerenburgh formed as a covers band several years ago and typically plays three or four concerts a year. But the album didn't happen until, ironically, the group was facing even more of a breakup than exists with two of its members on the mainland.

"Mostly it's because it took a very long time before we wrote anything," Sandvik said. Their first song, "Veteran," was written about three years ago, "then there was a year until another one and then they came pretty fast."

Composing "Veteran" involved a combination of individual and group contributions, said Ketil Rønning, the group's lead singer and a technology transfer adviser for BioScience Park Ltd. at The Norwegian University of Life Sciences. He said everyone "agreed (songs) should be about Svalbard issues," and the first to come up was "talking about what happens to people in the wilderness, cabins and the binge drinking going on everywhere."

"Most people in Svalbard would like to go to the most exotic places, to go as far away as possible to go where nobody else is," he said. "That's sort of a competitive sport here in

Svalbard, talking about who's been here the longest."

Guitarist Mads Sandvik came up with a riff that Rønning, working solo from the mainland, listened to repeatedly while composing lyrics. Then the group refinement began.

"I sent the text to the other guys and they may say 'it's missing a part here,'" Rønning said. Finishing touches on songs happened when the group reunited, sometimes right before performing.

None of the songs are overly deep or structurally complex, but Rønning said one of his hopes is people actually hear (not just listen to) them, because "in Norway fewer and fewer bands are singing in Norwegian. Also, we sing about Svalbard, so it's a small segment."

For those unable to grok the lyrics, the songs on *Longyear Brenner* and their themes are:

- "Alkekongen:" The word means "a small bird up high," Sandvik said. "It could also be the king of alcohol." Holmes said the song is "a tribute to the legendary drinkers such as the miners at Karls-Berger."

- "Syssemmannen:" Perhaps the group's best-known song. One might expect a hard rock tune about Svalbard governor's office to be heavy on protest, or at least satire, but "the people are so nice we didn't have anything bad to say about them," Sandvik said. "It's a tribute."

- "Spekkbetong:" Literally meaning "blubber concrete," it's what 17th century Dutch whalers in Smeerenburg found themselves making when boiled whale fat spilled and mixed with the sand and gravel.

- "Veteran:" The aforementioned tribute to those fighting about bragging rights for taking the most trips to intoxicating places.

- "Kaldt Vann:" Translates in English to "cold water." "I guess we're in disagreement what that song's about," Holmes said.

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

What's up

April 3

6 p.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Monsters Vs. Aliens," Norwegian premier. The film is not in 3D. Huset.

April 4-19

Easter school holiday.

April 4

11 a.m.: Palm Sunday liturgy. Svalbard church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Hest Er Best 2," Danish children's film. Rescheduled from March 29. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The International," Norwegian premier. Huset.

April 9

7 p.m.: Liturgy with Magne Klingsheim and Leif Magne Helgesen. Svalbard church.

April 10

1 p.m.: Liturgy at Vindodden. Scooters depart at 10 a.m. from Svalbard Church.

April 12

11 a.m.: Easter liturgy. Svalbard church.

April 13

11 a.m.: Easter liturgy in New Ålesund.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Olsenbanden Jr.," Norwegian family film. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Watchmen." Huset.

April 19

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "North," rescheduled from March 29. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Pink Panther 2." Huset.

On the horizon

Tourism outlook: The global economy is in crisis, but exchange rates are making Norway a travel bargain. How are things going this year in Svalbard?

Getting fed up: A newcomer's assessment of the local restaurant scene and a struggling establishment's revamp.

And more in the next issue April 14.