



## Live: A dinosaur dig online

*Ancient meets new as excavation broadcasts 24 hours a day on the Web from four camera locations*

The pitch would get you laughed out of any TV executive's office: A reality show of people sifting through soil 24 hours a day.

But...but...wait! They're looking for dinosaurs which, as everybody knows, are seriously cool. And there's always the possibility a polar bear will invade the site.

Fortunately, people can watch such a production without product placements and hokey rival-fueling "challenges." An excavation of prehistoric fossils that began Monday and continues through Aug. 18 at Konusen is being broadcast continuously on the internet, with viewers able to select from four camera locations.

A 14-member team is excavating two ichthyosaurs and one plesiosaur, marine reptiles that inhabited Earth 150 million years ago. They're also looking for other fossils and species as part of a project launched in 2004 and headed by Jørn Hurum, a paleontologist at the Natural History Museum in Oslo.

"It's something I've thought about for a long time," he said about the webcast, in an interview with NRK. "In documentaries on TV such excavations look easy. It shows a maximum of five minutes where you come in and find a skeleton, dig it up and fly out again. And that's not how it works."

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A dead polar bear, above, lies on a northern Nordaustlandet beach after being shot last Thursday by Ludvig Fjeld, a kayaker rescuing his companion, Sebastian Plur Nilssen, after he was dragged out of their tent and dragged across the beach by the animal. At right, Nilssen and Fjeld pause for a self portrait during one of the last days of their attempt to become the first people to circumnavigate Svalbard by kayak. Polar bear photo by Arild Lyssand/Svalbard governor's office.



## Polar bear clashes heat up

*Number of encounters rise this year, but is warming to blame?*

Getting into a battle with a polar bear is unquestionably a horrible experience. But the bears would probably prefer avoiding skirmishes these days as well, with studies suggesting they're doomed to defeat in the larger war due to climate change.

A polar bear that attacked two kayakers last Thursday on the northern side of Nordaustlandet was "not well nourished," likely due to difficulties finding food, according to officials. One of the kayakers was hospitalized after being dragged 40 meters from his tent by the bear with its jaws, the first injury from a bear attack in Svalbard since 1995.

It was the latest in an abnormally high number of encounters between polar bears and humans in the archipelago this year. The past winter saw long periods of record temperatures, which researchers have said affected wildlife feeding areas.

But there seems to be no consensus about the reason for the increase in polar bear encounters or if it's a sign global warming's predicted effects – occurring with the species in many other Arctic regions – are beginning.

There's little question, for instance, the 11-

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”  
year-old, 360-kilogram bear attacking the kayakers was having trouble finding food.

"Hunger gets them to take greater risks than they normally would," said Jan Aars, a researcher with the Norwegian Polar Institute in Tromsø, in an interview with NRK.

But he said polar bears in Svalbard typically have little access to food during the summer. Also, it doesn't appear the animal was suffering excessively.

"He is not a young bear and was in fairly good shape," said Per Andreassen, a lieutenant with the Svalbard governor's office, in an interview with *Svalbardposten*. "He's not

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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.

## Inspiration from India



Benny Prasad, creator of the world's first bongo guitar and a 54-string instrument known as the Benetar, is scheduled to perform a concert at 7 p.m. Aug. 10 at Svalbard Church. Prasad, who celebrates his 35th birthday Saturday, credits "an encounter with God" for his musical inspiration following health and behavioral troubles growing up in India. He is reportedly India's most-traveled musician, visiting more than 200 countries, and has recorded four albums mixing Indian and Western styles. Waffles and other refreshments will be available at the Svalbard concert. A free seven-song sampler of his music is at icepeople.net. Photo courtesy of Benny Prasad.

## Briefly

### Dekabrist crew honored by Russians, Norwegians

Consul-General Aleksandr Antipov became the first Russian official since 2005 to lay flowers at the memorial monument near the Hopen meteorological station during a visit July 24, the Svalbard governor's office said in a prepared statement.

The monument was built in 1975 in recognition of the *Dekabrist*, which was providing supplies to Western Allies during World War II when it was attacked in 1942 by German aircraft 120 nautical miles from Hopen. The 80-member crew abandoned the vessel after a 12-hour battle to save it, but only one of the four lifeboats reached Hopen, carrying 19 people. Only three members survived the winter and subsequent capture by a German submarine crew.

Among those at the July 24 ceremony were Svalbard Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø and former governor and Norwegian Attorney General Svein Ola Fagermes.

### Low calving, population alters reindeer hunting

Quotas for the upcoming reindeer hunting season are being altered due to signs of low calving activity this year and recent years of declines in the herd's population, according to the Svalbard governor's office.

Distribution of quotas for the season, which begins Aug. 15, are 40 percent free

range, 50 percent female/younger and 10 percent calves. The allocations are based on helicopter surveys of the hunting areas in late July.

Hunting cards can be picked up at governor's office starting Monday. A firearms permit is required. Workshops on proper hunting procedures are being offered Aug. 11 and 17.

More information about hunting regulations is available at [www.sysselmannen.no](http://www.sysselmannen.no).

### More weather stations to aid forecasts, research

The Norwegian Meteorological Institute is installing more permanent weather stations in Svalbard to improve daily weather forecasting and aid a long-term study of climate change in the region.

Three automatic stations on Karl XII-øya, Verlegenuken and Kapp Heuglin will be upgraded with more stable installations, according to the agency. In addition, three automatic stations will be placed on Kongsøya, Andréneset and Sørkappøya.

"We plan to install four out of six stations this summer," said Ragnar Brækkan, section leader for the institute, in a prepared statement. "How many stations we manage to set out in the end depends on the weather."

The institute will also install three temporary weather stations at Akseløya, Svarttangen and Crozierpynten in connection with the AWAKE research project, a cooperative effort between Norwegian and Polish scientists studying changes in the atmosphere, ocean, sea ice and glaciers.



Excavators look for fossilized skeletons this week at one of four locations at Konusen being broadcast live on the internet. Videos of the 14 team members and others visiting the site, updates, details about the project, and profiles of the participants are at [www.forskning.no/svalbard](http://www.forskning.no/svalbard).

## Excavation becomes reality TV

### DINOSAURS, from page 1

Early viewership, if not viral, indicates decent ratings. Counters at the site show it consistently has hundreds of viewers, even during overnight periods, which of course don't necessarily halt work due to the 24-hour daylight of polar summer. There's also an ongoing scroll of Twitter messages from participants and observers in a window below the camera view.

"I think they found something just now," wrote Georg Kjöll in one tweet. "The dino diggers are working their butts off!" wrote Eli Gjörven in the next. "So...anybody up for a betting pool on whether we'll get to see polar bears on the Svalbard streams?" wrote Thorild Stray in another immediately following.

The site, [www.forskning.no/svalbard](http://www.forskning.no/svalbard), also features extensive videos and other details from past excavations, plus profiles of the participants in Norwegian and English. Besides paleontologists, occupations of some members include property manager, electro-technician and data engineer. But the science aspect is alluring to all of them.

"The fact that we are contributing to new geological discoveries being made through these excavations is pretty exciting all by itself," wrote Stig Larsen, 43, a handyman and freelancer, in a profile where he lists his responsibilities as "logistics, toilet technology, machine handling and maintenance, (and) pliosaur hunter and excavator."

He wrote the pliosaur is his favorite prehis-

toric creature because "it's the biggest, baddest and ugliest thing out there. I'm especially fascinated by its triangle-shaped teeth, the signature of a true predator."

This year's excavation includes two five-meter-long ichthyosaurs discovered last year under several tons of shale that could not be removed before the season ended. The most notable previous discovery was the 2007 unveiling of "Predator X," claimed to be the world's largest and most dangerous pliosaur. Hurum is also notorious for co-leading the high-profile and highly controversial reassembly and analysis of the "Ida" fossil discovered in Germany, touted as the missing link between primates and humans in evolution.

This year's excavators probably don't have to worry about controversies and being kicked off the island. But if the biggest fears of Linn Novis, 29, a paleontology student at The University Centre in Svalbard, are any indication, there's still plenty of concerns and hardships.

"That we only find the butts of the reptiles," she wrote in response to the question. "And that we run out of bread. That means we have to eat canned rye bread. I also fear that Jørn by mistake has ordered 500 Chicken Korma."

Those in Svalbard wanting more than virtual reality can visit the site during tours offered by Spitsbergen Travel on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays through Aug. 12.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### City asks lawyers to look into faulty food grinders

Longyearbyen officials are asking lawyers to look into the dispute about problematic food waste grinders installed in hundreds of residences this summer. The city mandated the grinders for all homes, but the model installed by the vendor, Activum Consulting, has been widely criticized locally and by officials elsewhere experiencing trouble with them. "There is no conflict yet, but there are certainly disagreements," said Iver Rode, general manager of Bydrift, the municipal waste agency. Jostein Gundersen, a Kristiansand resident who owns the vending company, said they will fix incorrect or incomplete installations, but "we understand that we have delivered in accordance with the contract. The solutions have been outlined in the meetings we've had in advance."

### CNN founder may return to Svalbard with U.N. backers

CNN founder Ted Turner may return to Svalbard next year with a delegation of dignitaries as part of a board meeting by the United Nations Foundation, created by Turner in 1998 to support U.N. efforts to resolve global challenges. The board meeting is in Oslo, but members would also like to spend two or three days in Svalbard studying climate change and other issues. Among the board's members are former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Nobel laureate Muhammed Yunus and former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov. Turner visited Svalbard in July of 2008 with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and other officials, touring the Svalbard Global Seed Vault as part of a cruise aboard the *National Geographic Endeavour*.

### Russians get temporary OK for commercial flights

A Trust Arktikugol helicopter licensed only for the Russian company's mining operations is also providing commercial flight service for Avinor this summer after bids from Norwegian companies were considered too expensive. A one-time exemption was granted by the Norwegian Civil Aviation Authority.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Mixed sun and clouds. WNW winds at 2 km/h. High 5C (5C wind chill), low 3C (3C wind chill).	Clouds increasing. NW winds at 3 km/h. High 6C (6C wind chill), low 3C (3C wind chill).	Mostly cloudy. WSW winds at 4 km/h. High 6C (6C wind chill), low 2C (2C wind chill).	Cloudy. WNW winds at 2 km/h. High 2C (2C wind chill), low 1C (1C wind chill).

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, periods of rain, 2C (2C), 1C (1C); Monday, rain ending late, 2C (2C), 2C (2C); Tuesday, cloudy with a chance of rain, 2C (2C), 1C (1C); Wednesday, cloudy with a chance of rain, 2C (2C), 0C (0C).

Data provided by yr.no



Rescuers carry Sebastian Plur Nilssen to a helicopter July 29 after his was attacked by a polar bear on the north side of Nordaustlandet. Photo by Arild Lyssand/Svalbard governor's office.

## Encounters in Arctic on the rise

### BEARS, from page 1

well nourished, but not in poor health. There are no emaciated bears."

Furthermore, there's contradictions in the short- and long-term past about the number of encounters (not to be confused with sightings) between humans and polar bears in Svalbard.

There's been an average of two to three incidents reported during the past 30 years, compared to about eight or nine so far this year, said Lt. Gov. Lars Fause. But he noted the numbers have varied significantly during certain periods, with nine bears killed during the 1980s. Also, there were actually two separate incidents resulting in injuries when they last occurred 15 years ago.

A recently published study of encounters between 1987 and 2009 suggests the number of encounters is declining. Margrete Keyser, who authored the study for her thesis at The University Centre in Svalbard, said she can't assess if the high number of encounters this year is like-

ly to continue in the short- and long-term.

"You never know where the polar bears are and they can show up at any place," she wrote in an e-mail interview before the incident with the kayakers. "I think the number of encounters will depend more on how people behave than where the bear shows up."

But observers in Canada, Russia, Greenland and Alaska say encounters with polar bears are becoming more problematic and it's because climate change is threatening habitats. A study published last month, for instance, states the species is likely to die out in Canada's western Hudson Bay in about 25 years.

Security experts from Svalbard are being asked to assist with a rise in troublesome encounters in Greenland, including an archaeologist who killed a polar bear Saturday after it severely clawed a colleague. Another attack occurred in the region a few weeks ago.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**



Ludvig Fjeld waits for rescuers at the campsite where his companion, Sebastian Plur Nilssen, was attacked by a polar bear. Those familiar with the kayakers said they are knowledgeable about polar bears and were well prepared, but the beach location of the campsite is being questioned by some officials. Photo by Arild Lyssand/Svalbard governor's office.

## What's up

### Aug. 8

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Cash," Swedish action/drama, ages 15 and up. Huset.

### Aug. 10

7 p.m.: Concert by Benny Prasad, a guitarist from India. Svalbard Church.

### Aug. 14

Svalbard's National Day celebration. Details at [www.svalbardkirke.no](http://www.svalbardkirke.no).

### Aug. 15

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Twilight Saga - Eclipse," U.S. fantasy/romance/thriller, ages 11 and up. Huset.

### Aug. 22

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Operasjon Froskeegg," Norwegian family film, all ages. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "She's Out Of My League," U.S. comedy/romance, all ages. Huset.

### Aug. 29

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

### Sept. 1

6 p.m.: Activity fair featuring local recreation clubs. Svalbardhallen.

### Sept. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Shrek – Happily Ever After," U.S. animated film with Norwegian subtitles, no age limit. Huset.

### Sept. 6

5 p.m.: Svalbard Turn's 80th anniversary celebration. Sports competitions, gymnastics exhibition and other events. Svalbardhallen.

### Sept. 7

10 a.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

### Sept. 13

10:15 a.m.: Environment and Industry Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

## 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:

- *BP claims oil well in Gulf plugged*
- *Study: Less soot best hope for Arctic ice*
- *High costs, few oil finds in Barents Sea*
- *U.S. deploys climate change 'weapon?'*