

ANONYMOUS

A polar bear experiencing a facepalm moment may feel inclined to revisit the gesture of annoyance after a Norwegian Polar Institute researcher sent an e-mail to a right-wing blogger stating scientists have spent years merely guessing the world's total polar bear population "to satisfy public demand."

## A COUNTING SCAM!

*Right-wing media giddy as polar bear scientist's e-mail 'admits' population counts are guesses*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

"The greatest scientific fraud in history is slowly but surely unraveling, and the breadth of the corruption revealed is stunning."

Scores of similar opening lines are appearing in conservative media reports and blogs worldwide after a Norwegian Polar In-

stitute researcher sent an unsolicited e-mail to a blogger stating polar bear population counts are "simply a qualified guess given to satisfy public demand" – along with what might be interpreted as a taunt.

"This might keep you blogging for a day or two," wrote Dag Vongraven, a senior advisor for the institute, in the e-mail to Susan Crockford, publisher of polarbearsience.com.

Crockford revealed the e-mail in a May 30 blog post, noting Vongraven was referring to a footnote in a "polar bear action plan" now

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## A very scary silence

*Svalbard cut off from world and emergency help as phone and internet service lost for five hours*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

Svalbard was forced into a scary and potentially deadly silence when phone and internet service was lost for nearly five hours Monday, prompting officials to immediately demand upgrades in the archipelago's telecommunications capabilities.

The outage occurred between 2:36 p.m. and 7:10 p.m. due to a fault in an upgrade to transmission equipment in Harstad, according to a statement by Telenor. The only communications possible were by satellite phone – although heavy traffic overwhelmed the network at one point – and within Longyearbyen via a relative handful of analogue phones still in use.

Air traffic between Svalbard and the mainland was grounded and the possibility of having emergency officials patrol streets was considered after Telenor said the outage might last for a couple of days.

"As far as I know the outage had no serious consequences for anyone's health," Svalbard Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø stated in an e-mail interview. "However, it is clear that air travel was

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## UNIS: 20 years, 1,000 steps

*University's 'academic footprint' shows research held in higher esteem than mainland schools*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

It may still be a youngster, but apparently it really does know more than many of its elders.

Researchers at The University Centre in Svalbard are "somewhat" more productive and their articles are cited "slightly" more often

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STEVE COULSON / UNIS

Arctic biology students at The University Centre in Svalbard collect samples of tadpole shrimp near Ny-Ålesund in August of 2013.

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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## Copyright stuff

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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.

## Who brings a rubber duck to the Arctic?



### ASSOCIATION OF ARCTIC EXPEDITION CRUISE SHIP OPERATORS

An animated guide instructs viewers not to litter or leave other visible traces on the Arctic landscape during a nine-minute video about proper tourist behavior that will be shown to cruise ship passengers traveling to Svalbard, northern Norway, Greenland, Canada and the Russian Arctic beginning this summer. The guidelines established by the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Ship Operators (AECO) were distributed in booklet form in past years, but a press release from the organization states the video "shows visitors what they can and cannot do when traveling in the Arctic in a down-to-Earth and entertaining way." The video, funded by a grant from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund and produced by Norway's Raindog Studios, can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/97093751>.

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Although the University Centre in Svalbard is patting itself on the back this week for a successful 20th year of existence, they're getting slighted in one of the less intelligent ways we've seen in a while. A Huffington Post article with the headline "The World's Northernmost University: Going Arctic on the Looney Front" might make one suspect UNIS folks are going to be portrayed as a bunch of lunatics, but it's even more empty-headed than that. We'll let the opening paragraph speak for itself: "If Longyearbyen on the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen boasts of being the world's northernmost city, just 813 miles south of the North Pole, then **Tromsø, 595 miles further south but still 218 miles north of the Arctic Circle, prides itself on being the Capital of the Arctic, with the world's most northerly university.**" It's a very long and nicely written feature, but we have no idea how author Mike Arkus, who's been to 273 of the world's 321 countries during his four decades as a journalist, could talk to that many people and come away without a clue about a university farther north in a city he obviously knows about. Our inquirer to him went unanswered, so apparently our presence as a media outlet in Svalbard is invisible as well (OK, we already did have a clue about that) ... And in other strange media coverage, Greenpeace is still in a huff about being forcefully evicted from an oil rig they seized in the Barents Sea last week and the organization has something of an ally in one of the least likely of places. A Greenpeace blog post titled "The 'get lost zone' - a novel concept in international law" claims Norway acted bizarrely and possibly illegally by 1) removing the protesters from



### UNIVERSITY OF TROMSØ

**Lamestream media math: 69>78.** Because this obviously is far more Arctic than Svalbard's institute of liberal indoctrination.

the rig while it was still under the jurisdiction of another country and 2) towing Greenpeace's ship away from the drilling site by suddenly declaring a 500-meter "safety zone" around it without the required 30-day advance notice. Plenty of environmentalists are sharing the outrage, of course, but the real surprise was a **taunting blurb in the ultra-conservative *Wall Street Journal*, which apparently disdains socialist Norway more than it does greenies.** It shares Greenpeace's attitude about the questionableness of Norway's actions and adds "what makes it all the more strange is that Norwegian authorities were acting on behalf of the Marshall Islands, which are some 7,000 miles from where the action is taking place." The rig, while in transit, was technically a ship under the flag of that country ... Finally, it's going to be **another summer without movies in Longyearbyen because the stage floor at Kulturhuset is being replaced yet again.** A floor installed in 2012 to replace the badly-scarred original built in 2010 is proving fragile, so the company hired by the city is going to try again using the same materials and what will hopefully be an improved installation process.



NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

Dag Vongraven, a Norwegian Polar Institute scientist helping to create an international polar bear management plan, says sending an e-mail to a blogger calling population counts guesses was "stupid."

## 'I grossly underestimated her integrity'

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being drafted by the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group

"It appears the PBSG have come to the realization that public outrage (or just confusion) is brewing over their global population estimates and some damage control is perhaps called for," she wrote. "Their solution – bury a statement of clarification within their next official missive."

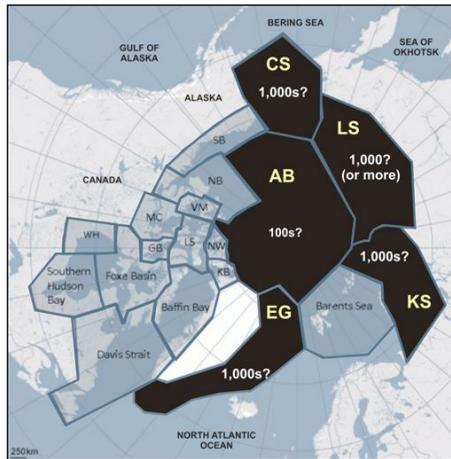
Crockford, who states she has been a zoologist for more than 35 years, is a frequent critic of what she perceives as flawed mainstream polar science. Her post was quickly picked up by conservative media outlets such as Fox News and *The Washington Times*, along with plenty of bloggers expressing various degrees of gleeful outrage.

Vongraven, in an interview Monday, said there's nothing scandalous about his comments when taken in the proper scientific context, but "in retrospect it was stupid" to send the e-mail.

"I think my naïveté was I sent it to her and I grossly underestimated her integrity," he said. But he said he isn't too bothered being the right-wing's latest punching bag.

"She can write this for day, or two, or three and it'll pass," he said.

The population of polar bears in the circumpolar Arctic has been estimated at about 20,000 to 25,000 since 2005, but "it is important to realize that this range never has been an



POLARBEARSCIENCE.COM

A map showing Arctic areas inhabited by polar bears includes several large regions where scientists can only estimate population counts.

estimate of total abundance in a scientific sense," the footnote sent by Vongraven states.

"It is also important to note that even though we have scientifically valid estimates for a majority of the subpopulations, some are dated. Furthermore, there are no abundance estimates for the Arctic Basin, East Greenland, and the Russian subpopulations."

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

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Companies settle lawsuit over mine road construction

A settlement in a lawsuit by a construction company seeking an extra 60 million kroner from Store Norske for work on a road between the Svea and Lunckefjell mines has been reached halfway through the trial, company officials announced this week. Veidekke Arctic claimed construction of the road over a glacier was harder and more costly than expected due to faulty geographical information provided by Store Norske. The mining company, which paid 200 million kroner in the original contract for the work, stated Veidekke Arctic bore the responsibility of obtaining proper data about the area. The trial started May 22 in Nord-Troms District Court before the companies settled for an undisclosed amount.

### Thirteen rescued from tour ship hit by underwater reef

Thirteen people were rescued from a tour boat that was damaged after hitting an underwater reef Friday night in Borebukta, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The *Langøysund* sustained only a small hole in its bow that crew members were able to patch, but the boat was unable to move because it was caught on the reef. Eight passengers, a guide and four crew members were transferred to the *Polargirl* tour vessel while officials from the governor's office monitored the situation by helicopter. The ship was able to break free of the reef about three hours after the collision and return to Longyearbyen for repairs.

### Barentsburg's rapid upgrade work raises cultural worries

An aggressive effort to refurbish buildings in Barentsburg to boost tourism is a concern because "it may go too fast in terms of preservation of cultural heritage," according to Siri Hoem, a former heritage advisor for Svalbard's governor. She said miners lacking conservation knowledge tried to replace old windows with plastic ones, for example, and there's no legal protection for preserving most of the city's buildings. Hoem, a board member for the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund, said the fund should provide assistance for the work, with conditions set on how it is done.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Clear. Variable winds to 15 km/h. High 3C (0C wind chill), low 1C (-3C wind chill).	Rain. SE winds to 15 km/h. High 4C (2C wind chill), low 3C (0C wind chill).	Cloudy. SW winds to 15 km/h. High 4C (2C wind chill), low 3C (0C wind chill).	Cloudy. SW winds to 15 km/h. High 3C (0C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, cloudy, 4C (-1C), 1C (-2C), light 24:00h; Monday, rain/snow, 3C (0C), 2C (-2C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, clear, 2C (-1C), 1C (-3C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, clear, 2C (-2C), 1C (-2C), light 24:00h

Data provided by storm.no

## Yeah, it's different in Russia these days



Barentsburg residents, abandon their traditional folk outfits and karaoke tracks as they perform a set of rock songs, adding a new element to the annual cultural exchange show Saturday at Kulturhuset. The first half of the show featured the old songs and dances about Russian miners and their wives, the latter seen doing the wash at right. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.



## Outage exposes emergency flaws

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hindered as long telecommunication were broken, so if anyone needed an air ambulance during this period it would have not been possible for it to fly to or from Svalbard."

Both Telenor and government officials said they are working on immediate upgrades to remedy the faults in emergency preparedness revealed by the outage.

"The main measure now being done is that we have communicated to the central authorities that as soon as possible it is necessary to investigate and put in place alternative satellite communications...with priority for emergency services and enabling air travel," Ingerø wrote.

The possibility of street patrols was "something we were just thinking about very slowly...if communications were out for a night or two," said Longyearbyen Mayor

Christin Kristoffersen, a member of Svalbard's emergency council, which met immediately after the outage and the following day.

A subcontractor performed the faulty upgrade work, said Telenor CEO Berit Svendsen in the company's statement.

"Since the error was discovered we have worked on several possible measures to back up communications," he said.

A patient at Longyearbyen Hospital needing to be transported to Tromsø had to wait until about 11 p.m. for an air ambulance due to the outage, according to *Svalbardposten*. Aksel Bilicz, a doctor at the hospital, said the patient's condition wasn't life-threatening, but the outage exposed numerous dangerous vulnerabilities.

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

## At 20, UNIS finds its place in the world

### UNIVERSITY, from page 1

than average compared to institutions on the mainland, according to university's annual report released this week.

The report, which highlights an "academic footprint" compiled for the university's 20-year anniversary, notes staff have produced nearly 1,000 scientific publications since 1993.

"Two-thirds of the articles were produced in an international scientific cooperation," UNIS Director Ole Arve Misund wrote in the report's opening statement.

A total of 497 students attended UNIS in

2013, 30 more than in 2012. About 35 percent were from Norway and rest from 36 countries, with Germany (11 percent) and the United Kingdom (seven percent) representing the largest groups of foreigners.

Among the year's major events was the university became a partner in the Birkeland Centre for Space Science and the adoption of a new strategic plan for 2014 to 2020.

The report, in English, is available at [tinyurl.com/ndtx4r](http://tinyurl.com/ndtx4r).

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

## What's up

### June 7

10 a.m.: Spitsbergen Marathon, also featuring half-marathon, 10K and 3K races. Svalbardhallen. Registration and other details at <http://svalbardturn.no/index.php?id=4>.

### June 10

Longyearbyen Day. Free admission to Svalbard Museum and Gallery Svalbard from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; "Clownery and Antics" performance by Sirkus Svalnardo and the Svalbard Turn gymnastics group at Kulturhuset at 5 p.m.; and historic walking tour of Longyearbyen starting at the Skjæringa memorial at 6 p.m.

### June 11

6 p.m.: Movie: "Edge of Tomorrow" (3D), U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

### June 15

5 p.m.: Movie: "A Million Ways To Die In The West," U.S. comedy/western, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Transcendence," U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

### June 17

7 p.m.: Longyearbyen Community Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace social. Svalbard Church.

### June 18

11 a.m.: Ceremonial laying of foundational stone for new flue gas treatment plant at Longyearbyen's power station by Mayor Christin Kristoffersen.

### June 22

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

### June 23

6 p.m.: Polar "Summer Boot Camp," offering "very tough and fun training activities." Begins at Svalbardhallen. Contact [polarpuls.lyb@gmail.com](mailto:polarpuls.lyb@gmail.com) for details.

### June 29

11 a.m.: Mass. 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:

- *Oil spill in Arctic Finland threatens birds*
- *'Frozen' ups U.S. visitors in Norway 37%*
- *Despairing Russia lays off 35,000 miners*
- *Cheery Russia eyes diamonds in Arctic*