



YET ANOTHER SCORCHING 'JUNK-SCIENCE' EXTRAVAGANZA



I'm melting! Um, OK, maybe not: This image of a "lake" at the "North Pole" captured people's attention worldwide earlier this month, but it turns out the buoy deployed a few dozen kilometers from the Pole in April has since drifted to about latitude 85 degrees north. Also, the "lake" is actually a layer of melt water above the ice sheet and the wide angle of the web camera's lens makes it appear deceptive large. But scientists say the image's message about the perils of Arctic warming is very real.

NORTH POLE ENVIRONMENTAL OBSERVATORY

Surf's up – at the Pole

Top of the world is now a 'lake,' but media exaggeration puts a damper on rising danger of melt

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

"The North Pole Has Melted. Again." A catchy headline being repeated all over the world. Alas, it's not quite accurate and that's allowing another sign of climate change

See **LAKE**, page 4

Bears hit the beach

A polar bear family, including the first observed cub, join the rising number of visitors to Ny-Ålesund

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

People can live in Svalbard for years without seeing a polar bear, but an increasing chance of doing so isn't entirely a thrill for residents worried about where the bears should be.

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Price: Just \$60 trillion

Methane escaping from thawing Arctic permafrost a 50-gigaton 'time-bomb,' scientists claim

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

For everyone who's joked about a methane probe, here's a sobering thought: \$60 trillion.

That's the price of climate change – for just the part involving the release of methane

See **METHANE**, page 4

Beware of Arctic 'hitchhikers'



CHRIS WARE / UNIS

A researcher collects a ballast water sample for analysis aboard a coal ship at Svea in 2011.

Species from warmer climates a increasing threat to come north aboard ships, researchers say

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Picking up hitchhikers has long been considered risky, but extra concern is being voiced after travelers establishing roots in Svalbard by getting sneaky about hitching a lift.

Warmer-weather species are an increasing threat to come north aboard the rapidly rising

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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.

When polar bear protection wasn't enough



SIDSEL SVARSTAD / SYSSELMANNEN

A cache of mortar shells from World War II awaits removal from a ridge just north of Longyearbyen after being discovered July 22 by two military officials. They were sent to the ridge between Adventtoppen and Hiorthfjelletotal after a group of hikers found five of the shells July 17, resulting in Svalbard's governor closing the area until a search was conducted. The explosives experts discovered an additional 19 shells, which were produced in 1941 and apparently belonged to Britain during the war. "The grenades were in very nice condition," Maj. Dag Ellefsrud told *Svalbardposten*. "There was even visible handwriting labeling the production number and date." The shells would have had a firing range of about three kilometers from the ridge and been deadly within a circumference of 10 meters. The experts were able to detonate 15 of the shells on the mountain and the other nine at Longyearbyen's firing range. The governor's office has lifted the ban on the area, but is urging caution since more explosives may still be there.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Since this week's fishwrapper is all about junk science, here's a toast to those who predicted a scorching summer resulting in a quick meltdown of the giant snow "champaign glass" on Operafjellet. **The stem of the glass was severed July 12, well before the usual end-of-July mark and absurdly at odds with last year's date of Aug. 31. The first two people to submit correct guesses for this year's date were Torgeir Mørk and Anders Worm, with the former having something of an advantage since he's been an aviation weather service worker since 1974. Mørk advises pilots, boaters and expeditioners about conditions and forecasts using state-of-the-art computerized weather models, so naturally one assumes he had some deep insight other missed.** "It was a warm period when I guessed, so I thought maybe that would help," he told *The Local Paper* of Rotgut, which sponsors and gives each



ANDREW PARSONS / PA

When staring at a dog's butt is no longer heroic: British Prime Minister David Cameron is seeing flattery turning to feces for this "I care about the environment" photo from Svalbard.

of the winners an engraved shot glass during the annual contest ... Another person noticing some heat lately is **British Prime Minister David Cameron, who fellow pols say needs to return to Svalbard for another photo op because "his government (is) dangerously complacent about oil exploration in the region,"** according to *The Independent*. A famous photo of him dogsledding during a visit in 2006 is now a reminder of his unfulfilled environmental pledges, the gurus say, and another junket to see how climate change has impacted the area since then would be reassuring ... Finally, if Longyearbyen decides it actually wants more of the sun's effect rather than less, it can look to **Rjukan, which plans to fight its five months of winter darkness by placing three giant mirrors on surrounding hillsides to redirect rays upon the town.**



VISITNORWAY.COM

We just have the Domsday Vault. They have Domsday Rays. Rjukan is planning to use giant mirrors to soak up some winter sun.



BØRGE MOE / NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE FOR NATURE RESEARCH

A rose seagull is spotted with a flock of kittiwakes earlier this month in Dyrvika near Blomstrandbreen.

Looks like a duck – and that's amok

Rarely seen bird species from warmer areas showing up in force in Svalbard this summer

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Millions of birds flock annually to Svalbard's famous breeding sanctuaries, but observers say it's the few fowls of another feather that are catching their attention this summer.

Several species of birds normally seen on the mainland and in other warmer climates are showing up at the same time as a decline in the

the population of several native Arctic seabird populations, according to researchers with the Norwegian Polar Institute. Among the new arrivals are rose gulls, gannets and hybrids of eider ducks. The sightings are occurring at a various locations ranging from Ny-Ålesund to Bjørnøya

Researchers say climate change can't be definitely linked to some of the new arrivals, but warming temperatures are making it more likely they will establish themselves here.

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

Study: Hard to ditch ship 'hitchhikers'

STOWAWAYS, from page 1

number of ships traveling to the Arctic for shipping and other purposes, according to a team of researchers studying vessels in Svalbard. They argue the government needs to establish strong regulations to ensure invasive species don't disrupt or destroy the fragile native ecosystem.

"A warmer climate will place Svalbard further south – climatically speaking – and will therefore render Svalbard increasingly vulnerable to ship-mediated species invasion," said Inger Greve Alsos, a Tromsø University Museum researcher, in an article published by the High North Research Centre for Climate and

the Environment.

The team began the first such study in Svalbard in 2011 by analyzing ballast and bio-fouling water samples from various types of vessels. While analysis is ongoing, it appears even ships taking potentially mitigating actions – such as exchanging ballast water mid-ocean – may still arrive with stowaway organisms.

No alien marine species have established a stronghold so far, but Arctic shipping has quadrupled this year compared to 2012.

Details about the study are available at <http://tinyurl.com/ptt8hv>.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Few Longyearbyen residents casting early votes so far

Few Longyearbyen residents are casting early votes for the Sept. 9 parliamentary election, with 27 submitted since balloting began July 1, said Halvor Olsen, an employee at the information desk in the municipal building, where the voting booth is located. Norwegian citizens can cast early ballots until Sept. 2, although those in Svalbard are advised to vote earlier so their ballots have time to reach their mainland municipality of residence.

Classic Pizza must move or close by Oct. 1, owner says

Classic Pizza is facing closure if it can't find a new home before its lease at Lompensenteret ends Oct. 1, said owner Sam Ziaei. "We are unhappy that we are being thrown out," he said. "We've been here since 2001 and have always paid the rent. It all smells a bit dirty." The accusation is rejected by Lars Erik Hoel, chairman of Eiendomsinvestor, which co-owns the shopping center with Store Norske. He said the fast food restaurant was told long ago the lease would be terminated because significant structural improvements are being made to that part of the building. Ziaei is applying to relocate to the small nearby building occupied by Bruktikken, but significant issues must be overcome. UNIS needs to give permission to relocate the second-hand boutique and the Municipal Council – which doesn't meet during the summer – needs to approve a new facility suitable for food preparation.

Sandmo & Svenkerud seeks to improve on strong 2012

New construction projects are continuing to provide a solid foundation for Sandmo & Svenkerud, which is reporting a profit of more than seven million kroner in 2012 and expectations for similar results this year. Among the major projects keeping the company busy is a new 1,850-square-meter hanger at Svalbard Airport, said Arne Bøe, the company's chief executive officer. But he said the company's 2012 profit margin of 8.5 percent on 82 million kroner of income could be improved, since high-performing companies are averaging well above 10 percent.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rain. SE winds to 15 km/h. High 11C (10C wind chill), low 11C (9C wind chill).	Rain. E winds to 29 km/h. High 11C (9C wind chill), low 9C (7C wind chill).	Cloudy. Variable winds to 15 km/h. High 9C (8C wind chill), low 8C (6C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 15 km/h. High 9C (8C wind chill), low 8C (6C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, 9C (6C), 7C (4C), light 24:00h; Monday, rain, 7C (3C), 6C (0C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, rain, 6C (4C), 5C (1C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, 6C (3C), 4C (0C), light 24:00h			

Data provided by storm.no



HASSE CARLSON / NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

A female polar bear nurses her cub on a beach in Ny-Ålesund in mid-July. The cub is the first seen by residents in the international research community, which bears seldom visited in the past but are doing so increasingly as traditional habitats are disappearing due to climate change.

Bear cub a first for Ny-Ålesund

FAMILY, from page 1

The first sighting of a polar bear cub in the research community of Ny-Ålesund occurred in mid-July when it visited with its mother, according to a report from the Norwegian Polar Institute. The bears were quickly chased away from settlements, but showed no rush to leave the beach as the mother nursed the cub before they swam away.

A total of six bears have visited the community this month.

"In the last ten years we have seen more and more polar bears in Ny-Ålesund than was usual before," said Geir Wing Gabrielsen, a bird researcher for the institute. "Changes of ice in the north and the east sides may explain why polar bears now increasingly prefer the other, new areas."

The ice is critical for bears trying to reach traditional feeding and denning areas.

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

Pole 'melt' false, but worries true

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to fall victim to accusations of hyperbole.

Above-average temperatures caused a "lake" to begin forming July 13 around a buoy deployed by the North Pole Environmental Observatory, according to researchers monitoring images sent from a camera nearby. Melt ponds have been observed several times in recent decades, but climatologists say the frequency is increasing and the North Pole could see completely ice-free summers in the near future.

News of this year's melt spread quickly, along with images showing water around the buoy stretching to the horizon. But it turns out the device, placed on the ice a few dozen kilo-

meters from the Pole in April, has since drifted with the floe to about latitude 85 degrees north.

"It's also important to remember that the water you're seeing is actually on top of a layer of ice," a followup report by the science blog io9.com notes. "So it's not like the camera is adrift in the open water."

Furthermore, the camera's lens distorts the size of the melt area, according to observers.

Webcam images of the buoy, a map of its progress and articles about previous observations are available at <http://psc.apl.washington.edu/northpole>.

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

Heating bill: A not-so-cool \$60 trillion

METHANE, from page 1

from thawing Arctic permafrost, according to an article by a group of scientists that unsurprisingly is generating heated debate.

Methane acts as a greenhouse gas when released, trapping heat 20 times as effectively as carbon dioxide, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The article in the current issue of *Nature*, by researchers with Britain's University of Cambridge and Erasmus University in the Netherlands, argues a 50-gigaton "economic time bomb" is in just one part of northeast Russia.

"The release of methane from thawing per-

mafrost beneath the East Siberian Sea, off northern Russia, alone comes with an average global price tag of \$60 trillion in the absence of mitigating action — a figure comparable to the size of the world economy in 2012 (about \$70 trillion)," the article states. "The total cost of Arctic change will be much higher."

Scientists argue global average temperatures need to rise less than two degrees Celsius this century to prevent major consequences, but current emissions will result in an increase of 3.6 to 5.3 degrees.

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

What's up

July 30

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

Aug. 4

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Pornopung," Norwegian drama/comedy, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 6

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

Aug. 11

11 a.m.: Mass, with return of regular Priest Leif Magne Helgesen. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "R.I.P.D.," U.S. action/comedy, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 13

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

Aug. 18

6 p.m.: Movie: "Ernest and Celestine," French animated film dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Percey Jackson: Sea of Monsters" (3D), U.S. action/adventure, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 19

2 p.m.: Environmental and Industrial Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Aug. 20

1 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Aug. 21

6 p.m.: Movie: "Despicable Me 2," U.S. animated/comedy dubbed in Norwegian, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 25

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Despicable Me 2," U.S. animated/comedy dubbed in Norwegian, no age limit specified. 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:

- *Puffins face pile of problems in Lofoten*
- *Arctic shipping quadruples as ice melts*
- *Test: Are you a capitalist climate denier?*
- *Swim race from Russia to Alaska debuts*