



## Chiming in about climate

*Church takes involvement in global warming to new level with scientists at Svalbard gathering*

The hope is sending a little heat from the Arctic now will keep people from feeling a lot of it later.

A church bell chiming 12 times from Svalbard on Sunday launched what religious and science leaders called a historic event as other churches throughout Norway are participating in a bell relay seeking to draw attention to the

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Leif Magne Helgesen, background center, rings the church bell at Skjæringa as Biskop Per Oskar Kjålaas delivers a message about the church and Arctic warming Nov. 21 during "Rop Fra Arktis," a three-day gathering of science and religious leaders in Svalbard seeking to raise awareness before the Copenhagen climate summit in December. The bell ringing in Longyearbyen was the first in a relay of similar ceremonies at churches throughout Norway.

## No malls, but plenty of holiday tussle

*Gymnastics show, torchlight march help launch more than a month of Christmas activities*

Standing outside a door for hours and then trampling your fellow man for cheap TV sets on Black Friday signals the beginning of the Christmas season in certain parts of the world. In Svalbard, where malls are scarce and blackness reigns much longer, grand bargains give way to holiday exertions decidedly less combative in nature.

A gymnastics holiday show by about 80 youths on Saturday begins a weekend of events celebrating the start of Advent. A family liturgy, torchlight procession through Longyearbyen, tree-lighting ceremony, music



About 80 Turngruppa members will perform a holiday show Saturday at Svalbardhallen.

and stories are scheduled Sunday as part of more than five weeks of Christmas-related events.

The festivities started last Sunday when about 50 members of two Longyearbyen choirs joined singer Geirr Lystrup and the Moscow Balalaika Quartet for "Stjerna Fra Øst," a concert performed throughout Norway annually combining traditional Russian folk music with a Norwegian holiday tale. A packed crowd at Huset offered a standing ovation for the performance, the second Longyearbyen since the show debuted in 2002.

While Thanksgiving and the subsequent shopping madness of Black Friday are a decidedly U.S.-based phenomenon, an abundance of food and bargains will be offered by merchants throughout Longyearbyen staying open late Thursday for a "Happy Hour" celebration.

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## Big finds, small steps of progress

*Leader of Ida, Predator X fossil projects says plenty of debate and discovery remain ahead*

Getting 1.2 billion Google hits in a day isn't a bad start, but Jørn Hurum says he hopes discussion about a controversial fossil discovery is just beginning.

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Jørn Hurum poses with a T-rex at Oslo's Natural History Museum in this History Channel photo.

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

### Editor

Mark Sabbatini

### 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

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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.



Jørn Hurum, an adjunct associate professor at UNIS this year, discusses the discovery of the Ida primate fossil at the university Tuesday. He will discuss his work excavating "Predator X" and other prehistoric creatures from Svalbard at UNIS on Thursday, participate in an open house at Svalbard Museum from noon to 4 p.m. Friday, and conduct workshops to preserve fossilized footprints from Mine 7 at the museum from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday.

## Workshops to preserve local fossils

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Hurum, a paleontologist serving as an adjunct professor at The University Centre In Svalbard this year, presented his highly publicized findings about a fossil nicknamed Ida at the university Tuesday as part of a series of activities this week related to his work. Another lecture is scheduled Thursday about the record-size "Predator X" and other sea monsters from prehistoric Svalbard, while workshops Friday and Saturday at the Svalbard Museum will focus on preserving fossilized footprints discovered in Mine 7.

Ida generated front-page headlines worldwide this May when Hurum and other researchers claimed the 47-million-year-old primate might be the crucial missing link in the history of human evolution. The 95-percent-complete fossil, discovered in 1983 in a village near Frankfurt, was reassembled in 2007 by Hurum and other members of the international "dream team" after the two slabs it was preserved on were acquired from separate owners.

The completeness of the fossil is what allowed the Ida team to reach its conclusions, Hurum said during his lecture before an audience of about 60 people Tuesday at UNIS.

"Look at her fingers, look at her hands – every piece is there," he said. "This is the first time we've seen a complete picture of a primate that is this old."

Some experts raised concerns the high-profile announcement overplayed the fossil's importance before data could be independently scrutinized, but Hurum said publishing the findings is the start of debate, not the end.

"I think we will have to keep the discus-

sion going for 10 years before something happens, even with a convincing specimen like Ida," he said.

Hurum acknowledged the Ida researchers took "a very unusual approach" to their outreach campaign. But he said the high-profile effort paid off in a number of ways, including a depiction of Ida in a logo used by Google for its homepage for a 26-hour stretch. During that time, he said, there were 1.2 billion clicks on the logo, which linked to information about the project.

"That makes this the fastest outreach project for a single science paper ever in the history of the world," he said.

Hurum also got considerable attention for dramatic claims regarding Predator X, a prehistoric marine predator discovered in Svalbard in 2006. Dubbed the most powerful creature ever to inhabit the ocean, its bite may have been four times as forceful as that of a Tyrannosaurus Rex.

A lecture about the creature and excavation work related to it, which remains ongoing, is scheduled at 6 p.m. Thursday at UNIS.

Another local discovery, of mammal tracks about 60 million years old in Mine 7, will be a primary focus of workshops at Svalbard Museum from noon to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Friday's activities include a lecture on Hurum's various projects from 1 to 2 p.m. and a youth workshop to preserve the mine footprints at 2 p.m. Another open workshop is scheduled as part of Saturday's events. Admission to the museum and all events is free.

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



Geirr Lystrup, center right, the Moscow Balalaika Quartet, at left, and two Longyearbyen choirs perform the Christmas concert "Stjerna Fra Øst" at Huset on Nov. 22. The concert launched more than a month of holiday activities that continue with a torchlight march and tree lighting Sunday.

## Christmas events last until mid-January

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This weekend's activities begin with a gymnastics show by Turngruppa, featuring youths ages 5 to 17, at 4 p.m. Saturday at Svalbardhallen. The emphasis is on the various styles rather than theater, said Solbjørg Skadberg, a volunteer Svalbard Turn, which is sponsoring the event.

"There are Christmas tunes to it, but mostly it's for the youths to show off what they have been learning during the past half year," she said.

An Advent liturgy at 11 a.m. Sunday at Svalbard Church will be followed at 3 p.m. by a torchlight procession at Huset. After a welcome and songs, the procession will pass by Santa's mailbox below Mine 2B in Nybyen, where wish lists can be added to the outgoing mail. The procession will continue to the center of town, where at 4 p.m. a tree-lighting ceremony and music from the Longyearbyen Storbånd are scheduled.

A children's storytime is scheduled at Longyearbyen Library at 4:45 p.m., with the day's events ending in time for locals to watch the 5:30 p.m. broadcast of "Open Skies," a NRK series about the church and climate issues filmed in Svalbard that is airing during each Sunday of Advent.

This Sunday's episode will feature a previously filmed service at Tempelfjorden. Other episodes feature highlights from the "Rop Fra Arktis" climate rally, a profile of artists, and a holiday service in Ny-Ålesund.

Beyond this weekend are a range of traditional and not-so-ancient activities including:

- A Christmas run with prizes starting at Svalbardhallen at 6 p.m. Dec. 3.

- A Christmas swim gathering with coffee and cake (so much for waiting an hour after eating before going in the water) at Svalbardhallen at 2 p.m. Dec. 5.

- A Christmas concert featuring Polargospel, the Longyearbyen mixed choir, the Store Norske men's choir and other local musicians at Svalbard Church at 4 p.m. Dec. 13.

- Two Christmas Eve liturgies, the first at 3 p.m. and the second at 4 p.m., at Svalbard Church.

- A Christmas Day liturgy at noon at Svalbard Church.

- A Romjul procession beginning at Svalbardhallen at noon Dec. 26.

Movies with Christmas themes will also be featured at Huset throughout the holidays. And if anyone starts feeling the post-season blues, the newly released U.S. interpretation of "A Christmas Carol" will show Jan. 17.

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Court ruling means no tourist flights to Barentsburg

Plans to fly Russian tourists by helicopter from Longyearbyen to Barentsburg are being abandoned after an appeals court earlier this month upheld a ruling that Trust Arktikugo conducted an illegal flight. An agreement with the Svalbard governor allows flights only for the company's mining and other operations, and a 50,000 fine was imposed after a commercial film crew was taken on a flight of the ice fjords in 2007. Aleksander P. Veselov, the company's general director, said the court ruling gives unfair advantage to Norwegian competitors who have access to Longyearbyen Airport, and it is unrealistic to expect Russian tourists to travel by snowmobile to Barentsburg in March and April. He said he also questions if the policy is fair under the equal treatment principle of the Svalbard Treaty, but has not decided what action he may pursue as a remedy.

### Flu shot causes loss of taste, smell, local woman says

A Longyearbyen woman says she lost taste and smell, and been sick for several weeks, after being vaccinated for H1N1 flu. Silje Marie Våtvik, 30, was one of the first residents to receive a shot because she is an employee at Longyearbyen Airport, but said she would have waited and questioned possible effects if given the option. She is on sick leave because she is eating so little food. The Norwegian Medical Agency has received 79 reports of people experiencing similar symptoms, but officials there say it is not known if the incidents are related to the vaccine.

### Pair of brief power outages caused by operational errors

A brief power outage Nov. 19 caused by an employee pressing a wrong button was followed by a longer outage when an error occurred while trying to return from the backup to the main generator, officials said.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

### Wednesday

Cloudy, snow late. E winds at 11 km/h. High -2C (-10C wind chill), low -6C (-12C wind chill).

### Thursday

Cloudy, intermittent snow. ENE winds at 14 km/h. High -3C (-9C wind chill), low -12C (-21C wind chill).

### Friday

Colder and heavy snow. E winds at 14 km/h. High -8C (-14C wind chill), low -14C (-21C wind chill).

### Saturday

Cloudy with snow ending. SE winds at 9 km/h. High -14C (-18C wind chill), low -19C (-33C wind chill).

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, cold with snow, -16C (-22C), -18C (-28C); Monday, cloudy with flurries, -9C (-28C), -10C (-25C); Tuesday, breezy with snow, -8C (-22C), -9C (-24C); Wednesday, windy with snow, -7C (-21C), -10C (-24C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Geir Egil Larsen, left, plays a shepherd's horn during the opening meeting of "Rop Fra Arktis" at Svalbard Church on Friday. The session featured a discussion between, seated from left to right, Bishop Per Oskar Kjølås, Norwegian Polar Institute Director Kim Holmén and Svalbard Church Pastor Leif Magne Helgesen. Larsen used the horn to sound the "Cry From the Arctic" at a bell-ringing ceremony Sunday at Skjæringa.

## Poor called most vulnerable to warming

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impacts of climate change in the far north. The goal is to spur meaningful action from those participating in the Copenhagen climate summit that begins Dec. 7.

The three-day gathering in Longyearbyen featured lectures, prayers, songs and other activities mixing factual and ethical aspects of global warming. The relay, which concludes in Oslo this Sunday, is the first time the church has allowed its bells to be used for a political purpose, said Leif Magne Helgesen, priest at Svalbard Church.

"We stand here on behalf of life that is threatened," he said before ringing the bell Sunday. "Birds in the air, the fish in the sea, animals and plants on Earth. From the smallest microbe to the polar bear."

"We are also here on behalf of the people – both in the north and south – who find that their lives are threatened by changes in climate that occur. We stand here on behalf of our own time and on behalf of generations to come – our children and grandchildren."

A resolution signed by leaders at the gathering, to be presented to officials in Copenhagen, calls the Arctic "a barometer for the climate of the globe" and notes conditions are visibly changing.

"Agriculture is dependent on the climate being predictable," the resolution states. "Different societies grow different species, depending on the climate at the site. The poorest among us are most vulnerable to changes. Therefore, solutions must reflect the global justice in a dimension that has so far not been present in international treaties. The changes

have an ethical dimension to all of us."

While the church was the setting for more casual and emotional appeals for action, the substance of the issue was the focus of a series of presentations Saturday at The University Centre In Svalbard.

An overview of the impact of warming was presented by Norwegian Polar Institute Director Kim Holmén, who noted the Arctic is the only region where temperatures are expected to rise 6 degrees Celsius during the 21st century. He also noted the United States and Canada are responsible for a quarter of the world's emissions despite making up a tiny percentage of the population, a ratio reversed in underdeveloped areas such as Africa.

"Global environmental issues span many scientific generations and political generations," he said. "They span across nations and continents, they require broad social commitment beyond individual careers, national interests and the current generation."

Ole Danbolt Mjøs, a physician who served as head Norwegian Nobel Committee from 2003 to 2008, read a message from a leader in Bangladesh lamenting "climate change has already become a question of survival." Inger Grene Alsos, an associate professor at UNIS, showed slides revealing the impact of 2 to 4 degrees of warming in Alaska between 1949 and 2001, with barren and ice-dotted landscapes giving way to lush greenery. She also noted warming temperatures allow plant species from other areas, often brought by visitors in their shoes, to thrive.

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

## What's up

### Nov. 23-27

5:33 a.m. and 8:27 a.m.: Svalbard Church Priest Leif Magne Helgesen offers morning devotions on NRK 1.

### Nov. 24

10 a.m.: Meeting of the management committee. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

Noon: Deadline for nomination of members to board of culture and leisure. Submit by e-mail to [rogerzoe@lokalstyre.no](mailto:rogerzoe@lokalstyre.no).

### Nov. 26

7:30 p.m.: Meeting of the cultural forum to select two member to board of culture and leisure. Also, information about proposed cinema use for 2010 will be presented. Næringsbygget 2, Smutthullet room.

### Nov 27

8 p.m.: Movie, "Luftslottet Som Sprengtes," Swedish thriller, ages 15 and up. World premier. Huset.

### Nov. 28

4 p.m.: Turngruppa's Christmas gymnastics show. Svalbardhallen. Admission 50 kroner.

### Nov. 29

11 a.m.: Family service, first Sunday of Advent. Svalbard Church.

3 p.m.: Traditional Advent celebration, beginning with torchlight procession from Huset to center of town. Christmas tree lighting in town center scheduled at 4:10 p.m., followed by storytelling in the Longyearbyen Library at 4:45 p.m. Program is scheduled earlier than usual due to the broadcast of the NRK series "Open Sky" featuring Svalbard at 5:30 p.m.

6:30 p.m.: Movie: "My Friend Choo Choo," Russian animated family film, all ages. Huset.

8:15 p.m.: Movie: "Luftslottet Som Sprengtes," Swedish thriller, ages 15 and up. Huset.

## 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:

- *Experts: Seed banks need \$250M more*
- *U.K. nitrogen feeding Svalbard bacteria*
- *Obama to bring offer to climate summit*
- *Norway first to harness power of salt*