



PROTECTED AREAS IN SVALBARD

— SECURING INTERNATIONALLY VALUABLE CULTURAL
AND NATURAL HERITAGE



- NATURE RESERVE
- GEOTOPE PROTECTION AREA
- NATIONAL PARK
- BIRD SANCTUARY



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FRONT COVER: MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: SVALBARD REINDEER AND BARNACLE GEESE AT BELLSUND (GB), slightly manipulated

UPPER PHOTOGRAPHS: TUNHEIM, BJØRNØYA (SMS), FEMALE POLAR BEAR WITH TRIPLETS (ML) AND SNOW BUTTERCUPS (ML)

BACK COVER: MÄLARDALEN, NORDENSKIÖLD LAND (OHH) **MAP:** NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

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Svalbard is part of the Kingdom of Norway and, under the terms of the Svalbard Treaty (1920), Norway is responsible for managing the archipelago. This means, for example, that it has the right and obligation to secure its outstanding natural and cultural heritage for posterity. This obligation has been amplified and repeated through various international conventions and agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Norway has national objectives to safeguard endangered species and habitats, and to preserve a representative selection of Norwegian nature for posterity. In response to an evaluation of area protection in Svalbard in 1998, eight new areas were protected in 2002–2005.

The objective to establish a representative network of protected areas in Svalbard was thereby achieved.*)

The 29 areas in the archipelago protected as of 2008 cover some 65 per cent of its land area and about 86 per cent of its territorial waters. In addition to unique geology and plant and animal life, cultural heritage remains from activities spanning many generations are outstanding in an international context.

The landscape, biology and cultural heritage monuments and sites in the archipelago are vital features in the total experience of Svalbard. We trust that this booklet will make you better informed about the protected areas in Svalbard and at the same time help to elucidate the importance of these protected areas to safeguard unique natural history and cultural assets.

*) Additional needs to protect individual species and some small localities or occurrences, such as reptile fossils, are being assessed.



Mountain avens (JH)

FACTS

Land area: Ca. 61 022 km²

Midnight sun (in Longyearbyen):
20 April – 23 August

Polar night (in Longyearbyen):
11 November – 30 January

Administrative centre:
Longyearbyen

Population (in 2009):
About 2100



Whaling vessel (NP)



Smeerenburgreen (ML)

FROM NO-MAN'S-LAND TO A TREATY AND THE SVALBARD ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

Svalbard was regarded as a no-man's-land, or rather an every-man's-land, until the Svalbard Treaty was signed in 1920. Activities in the archipelago had chiefly been associated with exploiting the natural resources, but tourists, adventurers and scientists had also discovered it.

WHALERS, POMORS AND TRAPPERS

Hunting of whales and walrus started after Willem Barentsz discovered Svalbard in 1596. The hunters were mainly Dutchmen and Englishmen, but some Danish-Norwegians and other nationalities were also involved. Excessive hunting gradually led to falling income. Pomors from north-western Russia exploited the archipelago from about 1700 to 1850, mainly by wintering there to hunt reindeer, arctic foxes, polar bears, walrus and seals, and also collecting eggs and down in summer. Norwegian trappers then took over, and continued until the 1970s. Some Norwegians also came from Norway on sealing vessels to hunt, trap and collect eggs and down in summer. Excessive hunting of some species and consequent protection measures brought most of the trapping to a halt.

Considerable prospecting for commercial deposits of coal and various minerals and rocks (including gypsum and marble) took place from the beginning of the 20th century, and coal has been worked in Isfjorden, Kongsfjorden and Van Mijenfjorden.

Svalbard has been the starting point for various North Pole expeditions. Numerous scientists have studied High Arctic phenomena, and visitors have learnt to derive pleasure from the exotic natural history. Meteorological stations have operated in the archipelago for a long time, and due to its strategic location more were built and operated during the Second World War.

Citizens from nations that have endorsed the Svalbard Treaty are permitted to carry on commercial operations in the archipelago, and Russians mine coal at Barentsburg and Norwegians at Longyearbyen and Sveagruba. Longyearbyen is an international community with inhabitants from 36 nations (in 2009) and a variety of businesses. In addition, a Polish research station operates in Hornsund, and Ny-Ålesund is an important base for many international scientists. The archipelago is also a popular tourist goal, especially in summer.

The environmental legislation applies to everyone living and carrying on business in Svalbard, as well as all visitors.

THE HISTORY OF NATURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION IN SVALBARD

The Svalbard Treaty was a very early example of an active environmental protection way of thinking. As early as the 19th century, worried observers noted the heavy slaughtering of birds and mammals in Svalbard, and in the 1920s concern was expressed about the robbing of souvenirs from the graves of whalers in Magdalenefjorden.

The Svalbard Act (1925) enabled the protection of "animals, plants, natural formations, landscapes and relics from the past". Reindeer were protected in 1925, and the hunting of ptarmigan, geese and arctic foxes was regulated from 1928. Walrus were protected in 1952. In 1932, two large areas were protected on account of their botanical assets. Polar bears were protected in Kong Karls Land in 1939.

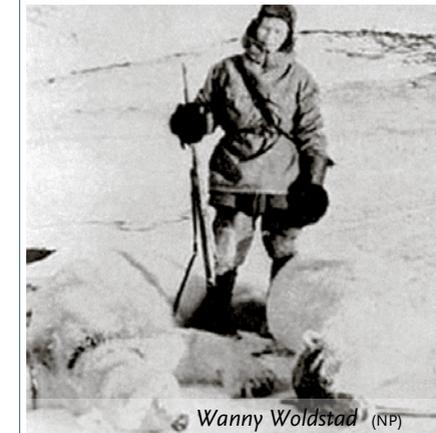
The task of protecting cultural heritage monuments and sites did not start in earnest before the 1960s. The first cultural heritage regulations for Svalbard came in 1974. They were upgraded and adjusted in 1992, and then changed with the enactment of the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act in 2001. In 1973, Norwegian authorities adopted wide-ranging environmental measures. The polar bear was totally protected. Three national parks, two nature reserves and 15 bird sanctuaries were established, amounting to about 25 000 km². The Moffen and Bjørnøya nature reserves were set up in 1984 and 2002, respectively. An analysis performed in 1998 to find out whether the protected areas covered a representative selection of Svalbard's natural history found that arctic vegetation, among other things, was seriously underrepresented. Three national parks around Isfjorden were established in 2003, in addition to the Festningen Geotope Protection Area and the Ossian Sars and Hopen nature reserves. The Indre Wijdefjorden National Park was established in 2005.



The Andrée Expedition in 1897 (NP)



Tourists in Krossfjorden about 1910 (NP)



Wanny Woldstad (NP)



THE PURPOSE OF THE PROTECTED AREAS

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROTECTED AREAS CAN BE SUMMED UP AS:

- to safeguard large, unbroken and mainly pristine and beautiful areas on land and at sea
- to secure a representative selection of habitats
- to secure key areas for ecology (for example, important breeding and grazing areas)
- to safeguard the habitats of endangered and vulnerable species

THE DIVERSITY OF NATURAL HISTORY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN SVALBARD IS SECURED FOR POSTERITY

Svalbard's 29 protected areas cover about 65 per cent of the total land area of the archipelago, which is 61 020 km², and about 86.5 per cent of the territorial waters (out to 12 nautical miles). They embrace the diversity of the natural history and cultural heritage in a good way. They also help to fulfil the aim that Svalbard should be one of the best managed wilderness areas in the world. The protected areas are furthermore vital reference areas for research and important for enjoying the natural history of Svalbard.

| Number | Land area (km ²) (incl. glaciers and fresh water) | Marine area (km ²) |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| National parks | 7 14 500 | 19 900 |
| Nature reserves | 21 25 300 | 58 100 |
| Geotope protection area | 1 14 | 3 |
| Sum | 29 Ca. 39 800 or 65 % of the land area | Ca. 78 000 or 86.5 % of the territorial waters |

Help take care of the biodiversity. Do not pick flowers.

Common sense rules for Svalbard

PROTECTION VALUES

CULTURAL HERITAGE RELICS

Cultural heritage relics are chiefly found close to the sea in places with good access to resources, a safe harbour and availability of fresh water and driftwood. They include everything from graves to remains of buildings and industrial facilities. Building materials may be natural, like stone, turf and driftwood, or introduced, like metal, fibreboard, tarpaulins and glass. Objects such as tools, furniture, food packaging and other equipment are often found. Everything from before 1946 is automatically protected and should not be touched. It has a potential to inform us about the history of Svalbard.

Cultural heritage relics are important sources of knowledge about activities in former times, and many of the most important ones are found in the protected areas. An example is Virgohamna, where the Swedish Andrée Expedition started its balloon flight in 1897. The protected areas also contain the remains of such features as whaling stations, large cemeteries for whalers, sites of Pomor shacks and an intact Russian Orthodox cross, the only preserved Second World War German meteorological station, and the remains of former Swedish and Russian research stations.

THE MARINE AREAS

86.5 per cent of the territorial waters as far out as 12 nautical miles are protected for a variety of reasons:

- they are particularly valuable for seabirds and their food
- they are important for polar bears, whales, walrus and other species of seals
- they include river mouths and fans
- they are part of the total natural environment

Rivers pour a great deal of meltwater into the fjords making the water less saline and depositing large quantities of mud. This strongly influences which bottom animals live there, and the animals that live on them. There are probably more than 3 000 species of bottom animals in the Svalbard area.

The biological diversity in and around Svalbard is strongly linked to the surrounding oceanic waters. The Barents Sea is one of the most productive seas in the world because it is here the warm, saline Atlantic Ocean water meets the cold, less saline water from the Polar Basin. The conservation assets in eastern Svalbard are particularly closely linked with the ice edge and its importance as a habitat for marine mammals and seabirds.



BIRDS

About 30 species of birds nest annually in Svalbard, but only a few key species remain here in winter. The wintering quarters and migration times in spring and autumn vary from species to species. The arctic tern has one of the most extreme annual migrations, to and from its breeding sites in Svalbard and winter quarters towards the Antarctic.

Migrants must be managed uniformly. They must be given good living conditions in the breeding season in Svalbard and in key areas in other countries at other times of the year. Poor access to food, disturbance, hunting and toxicants are some of the factors that may affect the populations. The Svalbard barnacle goose population is a good example of how protection measures function across national borders. The population has its winter quarters in Scotland, and active management measures there have increased the population from 300 in 1948 to several tens of thousands today.

The Barents Sea is one of the areas in the world with most seabirds, about 20 million in late summer; the little auk, fulmar, Brünnich's guillemot and kittiwake are the most abundant. This huge seabird aggregation has great national and international value. Bjørnøya, Storfjorden and Hopen are particularly important breeding areas for seabirds, and hundreds of colonies are known. The large ones are situated along the polar front, an area where cold water from the Polar Basin meets warmer water streaming from the south causing the water masses to blend on a large scale, bringing many nutrients towards the surface. Many species are first and foremost vulnerable when they are not in Svalbard waters. The threats include shortage of food, drowning in fishing gear, oil slicks and toxicants. The consequences of rapid changes in climate are a major challenge that is difficult to fully grasp. The Norwegian Red List of vulnerable and endangered species of birds has 16 species that are found in Svalbard, most of them associated with the marine environment. They therefore deserve special focus. Disturbance during the breeding season is one factor which everyone travelling in Svalbard must be aware of.

PLANTS

The vegetation in Svalbard is marked by the harsh climate, and the species diversity is relatively limited. Just over 50 species of vascular plants are Red Listed, 17 of these being regarded as critically endangered, 9 endangered and 11 vulnerable. Several species are rare in Svalbard and the rest of Europe. Moonwort and diminutive gentian are examples of critically endangered species in Svalbard. Many of the most endangered species are comparatively warmth-demanding and confined to sites with a favourable local climate. The national parks at the heads of fjords in central Spitsbergen are particularly rich in plants.

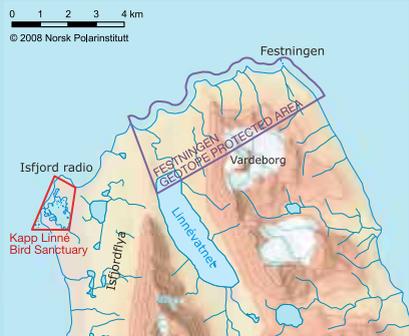
The vegetation in the High Arctic steppe area of the Indre Wijdefjorden National Park, along with the High Arctic vegetation on bird cliff, is reckoned to be the most exotic in Svalbard.

Svalbard has comparatively few species of mammals, just three living on land, the Svalbard reindeer, the arctic fox and the sibling vole which is confined to Grumant, a former Russian coal-mining settlement. The polar bear is regarded as a marine mammal, along with 15–20 species of seals and whales.

Unlike the arctic fox population in mainland Norway, the Svalbard population is regarded as large and stable, and residents are permitted to hunt foxes. The Svalbard reindeer was almost made extinct by hunting before being totally protected in 1925. Since then, the population has grown strongly and quota-regulated hunting is now permitted. Some of the reindeer's most valuable grazing is in protected areas, including Reindalen and Sassendalen in the Nordenskiöld Land and Sassen-Bünsow Land national parks, respectively.

Three Svalbard mammals are Red Listed, the polar bear, the walrus and the harbour seal. Various kinds of protection help to secure their habitats. The common Norwegian-Russian polar bear population is estimated to number about 3 000. Hopen and Kong Karls Land have been important denning areas for polar bears, but changes in the ice distribution give the polar bear different requirements. The most used haul-out sites for walrus are in the protected areas. It is mostly males who lay there; females with cubs mainly live in Franz Josef Land. The northernmost population of harbour seals lives on the west coast of Spitsbergen and numbers at least 1 000.





GEOTOPE PROTECTION AREAS

Geotope protection areas have valuable or characteristic geological occurrences, and activities that may damage or destroy them should be avoided.

FESTNINGEN

GEOTOPE PROTECTION AREA

The Festningen Geotope Protection Area is outermost in Grøn fjorden, at the mouth of Isfjorden (protected in 2003, 14 km² land and 3 km² sea area). The well-known Festning profile is made up of a geological succession deposited over several hundred millions of years. Fossilised footprints of an Iguanodon, a herbivorous species of dinosaur, have been found on the east side of Festningsodden. These reptiles were 10–12 metres long, 3–5 metres tall and lived 100 million years ago. The prints were more than half a metre in diameter. They were on a section of cliff that extended down to the sea and were very exposed to wave erosion. Not long after the footprints were found and drawn, the entire slab crashed into the sea.

THE PROTECTED AREAS IN SVALBARD



National parks are large, more or less undisturbed areas which have high scientific value or may be of great significance for enjoying the natural and cultural heritage of Svalbard. The natural environment and cultural heritage relics in the parks must be protected from changes and destruction. The landscape and any seabed, plants, animal life and geological deposits or features must be protected from development, constructions, pollution and other activities, including traffic that may influence or disturb the natural environment. The regulations drawn up for each national park detail the activities permitted in that particular park.



Nature reserves are areas whose natural history is undisturbed or almost undisturbed. They may have special or vulnerable ecosystems, great scientific value or be particularly important for animal and plant life. They may also have special geological deposits or features.

A nature reserve may be totally protected, or have special provisions to protect cultural heritage relics. The activities permitted in nature reserves vary, but in general they are more stringent than in national parks. Nature reserve is the strictest form of protection and is used when the natural environment is of particularly high value.

BIRD SANCTUARIES

The west coast of Svalbard has 15 nature reserves specifically intended to protect the breeding sites of birds (protected in 1973, covering altogether 15 km² on land and 64 km² on the sea). Five of them also have international protection status as Ramsar Sites. 14 of the 15 sanctuaries are islets or small islands. The sanctuaries are important breeding sites for, among others, eider ducks and geese, which prefer to breed on islets and skerries that are not surrounded by ice in summer. This protects them from arctic foxes. Since such sites are scarce in Svalbard, large numbers of birds may be breeding there. It is forbidden to enter bird sanctuaries on foot or in a boat (with or without an engine) from 15 May to 15 August. These reserves also extend for 300 metres beyond islands and skerries.

The 15 bird sanctuaries are:

- Sørkapp
- Isøyane
- Dunøyane
- Olsholmen
- Kapp Linné
- Gåsøyane
- Plankeholmane
- Kongsfjorden
- Forlandsøyane
- Hermansenøya
- Boheman
- Blomstrandhamna
- Guissegsholmen
- Skorpa
- Moseøya

Birds are vulnerable in the breeding season. Geese are particularly easily frightened and you may disturb them even though you are several hundred metres away. Their eggs are then easy prey for arctic foxes, skuas and glaucous gulls. So keep well away. If you get too close to the nest of a skua, the parents will often attack you, but they may instead try to entice you away from their nest; if so, follow the bird.





Sørhamna, Bjørnøya (GB)



Hopen (GB)



BJØRNØYA NATURE RESERVE

Protected: 2002 **Area:** Land area: 177 km² Marine area: 2 805 km²

The reserve comprises the whole island apart from a small area around the meteorological station. The island is largely flat, except for the southernmost part and Miseryfjellet in the east. There are enormous seabird colonies, among the largest in the world, around the island's southern extremity.

The shallow waters surrounding the island are among the most productive in the whole Barents Sea. The polar front generally lies off the east, south and west coasts of Bjørnøya, producing particularly good feeding conditions. The island is also an important resting place for migratory birds journeying to and from the rest of Svalbard. Barnacle geese are among those that rest on their autumn migration. The flat parts of the island have many lakes with a rich bird life and arctic char. Bans or regulations on traffic in small areas on land and on the sea are in place for parts of the year.

Bjørnøya was the first land the Willem Barentsz' expedition sighted in the Svalbard region in 1596, and the island received its name then. It was here walrus were first slaughtered in large numbers. Later, Russians and Norwegians trapped and hunted here in winter. Attempts were made to mine various minerals, and coal was mined at Tunheim from 1916 to 1925. There are several valuable cultural heritage remains from all these periods. The oldest is a blubber cooker at a walrus slaughtering site on a headland named Koefoedodden. Svalbard's oldest preserved hunter's cabin, Hammerfesthytta, dating from 1822, stands on Bjørnøya.

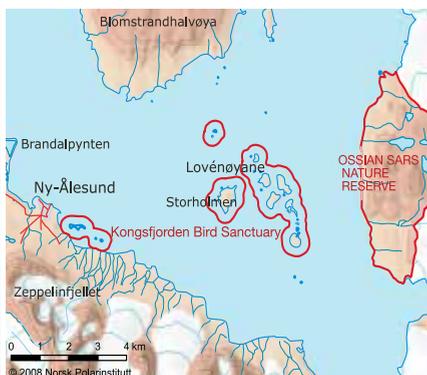
OSSIAN SARS NATURE RESERVE

Protected: 2003 **Area:** Land area: 12 km²

The Ossian Sars Nature Reserve is at the head of Kongsfjorden, not far from Ny-Ålesund. The plant life in the area was specially protected in 1973. The vegetation is unusually lush and many birds also live in the area. The reserve has many rare plants, including diminutive gentian, mountain eyebright and white arctic Whitlow-grass. You may walk in the area, but not camp or travel by snowmobile.



Ossian Sars (GB)



Moffen (ML)



HOPEN NATURE RESERVE

Protected: 2003 **Area:** Land area: 46 km² Marine area: 3 140 km²

Hopen is a long, narrow, mainly cliff-lined island south-east of Edgeøya. Apart from a small area around the meteorological station, the reserve comprises the whole island along with the surrounding sea as far as the territorial limit. Hopen used to be a very important dens area for polar bears. The number of dens varies, partly depending on ice conditions around the island early in winter. Hopen is also on a principal migration route for polar bears and 200–500 pass the meteorological station each year. The surrounding sea is also a very important feeding area for polar bears when there is pack ice. Hopen is on the BirdLife International List of Important Bird Localities in Europe. The island has several nesting cliffs with colonies of Brünnich's guillemots and kittiwakes, for instance. The sea surrounding the island is a key habitat for walrus in winter.

MOFFEN NATURE RESERVE

Protected: 1983 **Area:** Land area: 5 km² Marine area: 4 km²

Moffen is a small gravel island off the north coast of Spitsbergen. The reserve is in the Nordvest Spitsbergen National Park. The island is an important resting place for walrus and breeding locality for birds. The whole island and a 300 m zone beyond the island and skerries are protected. It is forbidden to visit Moffen and the sea surrounding it from 15 May to 15 September. Many cruise boats sail to Moffen to watch the walrus from the 300 m limit.

NORDAUST-SVALBARD NATURE RESERVE

Protected: 1973 **Area:** Land area: 18 663 km² Marine area: 36 691 km²

The Nordaust-Svalbard Nature Reserve is the largest protected area in Svalbard and embraces the whole of Nordaustlandet, the north-eastern part of Spitsbergen, Kvitøya and Kong Karls Land. Nordaustlandet has the largest glaciers in Norway.



Bråsvellbreen, Nordaustfonna (ML)



Russian Orthodox cross, Krossøya (ML)



Ivory gulls (GB)

HISTORY

Russian Orthodox cross. The area has many valuable cultural heritage monuments and sites, including the only Russian Orthodox cross which is still standing, on Krossøya in Murchisonfjorden.

Andréeneset on Kvitøya, where the Andrée Expedition camp was found 33 years after the men left Virgohamna in a hydrogen-filled balloon in 1897, is no doubt the most well-known site. A ruined station used by the joint Swedish-Russian Arc-of-Meridian Expedition in the winter of 1899–1900 stands on the shore of Sorgfjorden. The best-preserved German meteorological station from the Second World War is found in Rijpfjorden.

LANDSCAPE

Enormous glaciers. Svalbard's most extensive ice cover is in this nature reserve. Ice conceals more than three-quarters of Nordaustlandet. Austfonna, covering 7 000 km², is the largest ice cap in Norway. Its impressive snout is almost 250 km long. The landscape is greatly influenced by glacial action in former ice ages and is therefore dominated by low, rounded hills and plains.

TRAFFIC

Increasing numbers of coastal cruise vessels sail eastwards either along Hinlopenstretet or round Nordaustlandet. Sjuøyane, Alkefjellet, Bråsvellbreen and Kvitøya are popular places to visit. Scientists also use the nature reserve. There is a year-round ban on visitors to Haudegen.

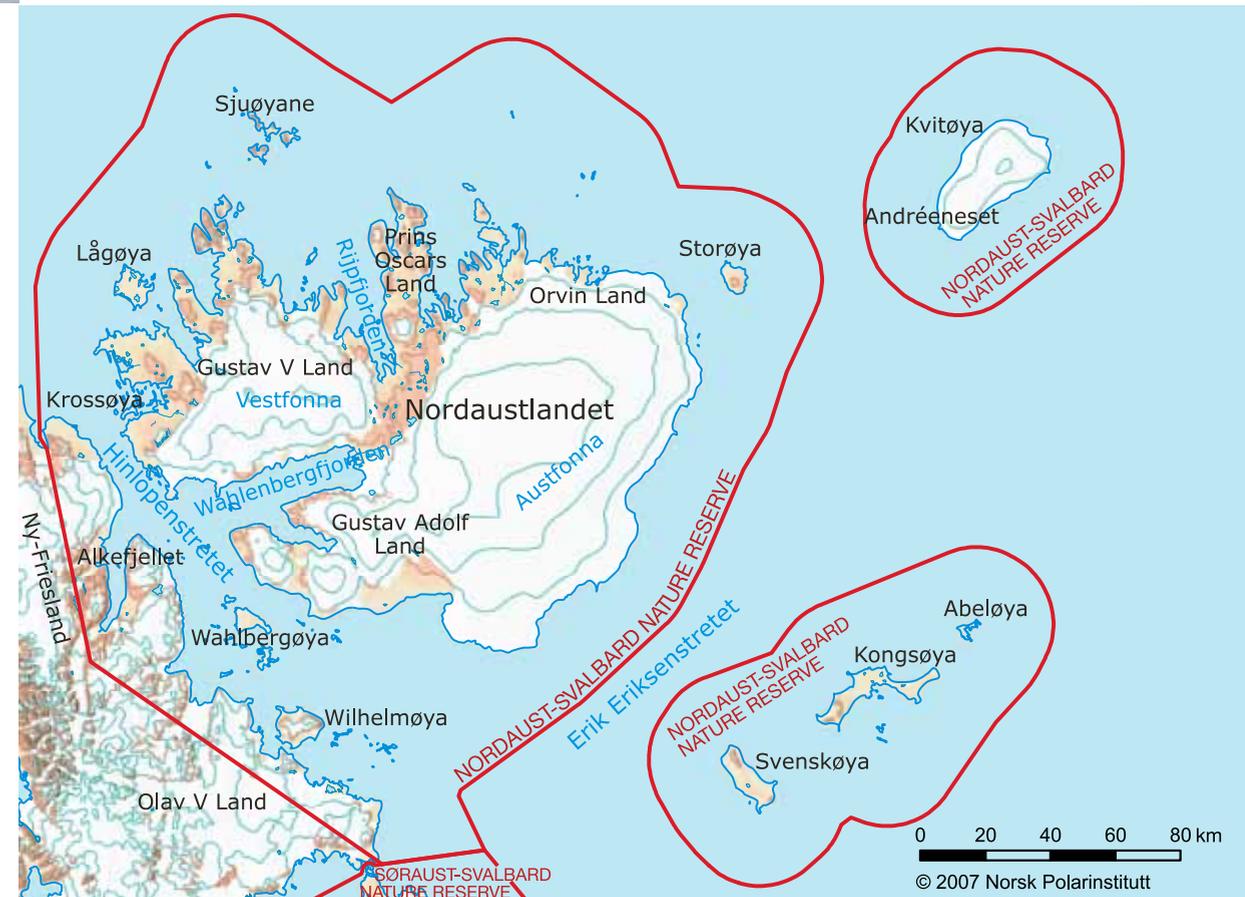
ANIMAL LIFE

Breeding area for polar bears. As the Kong Karls Land archipelago is one of the most important breeding areas for polar bears in this part of the Arctic, no-one is allowed to visit it. Walrus also have several resting places in the reserve. Bulls make up most of the groups, but cows and calves have also been observed in recent years.

Large numbers of Brünnich's guillemots nest on Alkefjellet, on the west coast of Hinlopenstretet. Parts of the nature reserve are also valuable breeding sites for Brent geese. The scarce Sabine's gull and ivory gull nest in the reserve. Sjuøyane, Lågøya and the islands in Hinlopenstretet are valuable breeding sites for aquatic birds.

PLANT LIFE

Polar desert. The vegetation in the reserve belongs in the polar desert zone. Large parts of the nature reserve have little or no plant cover.



SØRAUST-SVALBARD NATURE RESERVE

Protected Area: Land area: 6 400 km² Marine area: 15 426 km²

The Sørøst-Svalbard Nature Reserve covers Edgeøya, Barentsøya, Tusenøyane, Ryke Yseøyane and Halvmåneøya. Raised beach deposits with distinct, old strandlines are found here.



Walrus at Kapp Lee (ML)



Kittiwakes (GB)

PLANT LIFE

Moss tundra. The vegetation in low-lying areas on the east coasts of Edgeøya and Barentsøya is characterised by discontinuous moss tundra. Reindeer excrements dropped over many centuries have formed the basis for this rare type of vegetation.

ANIMAL LIFE

Walrus and polar bears. The nature reserve has several of the most important resting places for walrus in Svalbard. Cows accompanied by calves are also observed here. Edgeøya is one of the areas with most reindeer in Svalbard, and is also an important area for polar bears. Many species of birds nest in the reserve. Tusenøyane is a key core area for red-throated divers, brent geese, eider ducks and arctic terns, among others.



Whale vertebra (ML)

HISTORY

Polar Bear King. A great deal of trapping has taken place in this area, for instance in Habenichtbukta. Ekrollhamna has building remains, cross foundations and graves left by Russians. Bjørneborg on Halvmåneøya was the favourite base of the "Polar Bear King", Henry Rudi. He truly earned his nickname, having taken 713 polar bears in his 12 seasons as a trapper.

LANDSCAPE

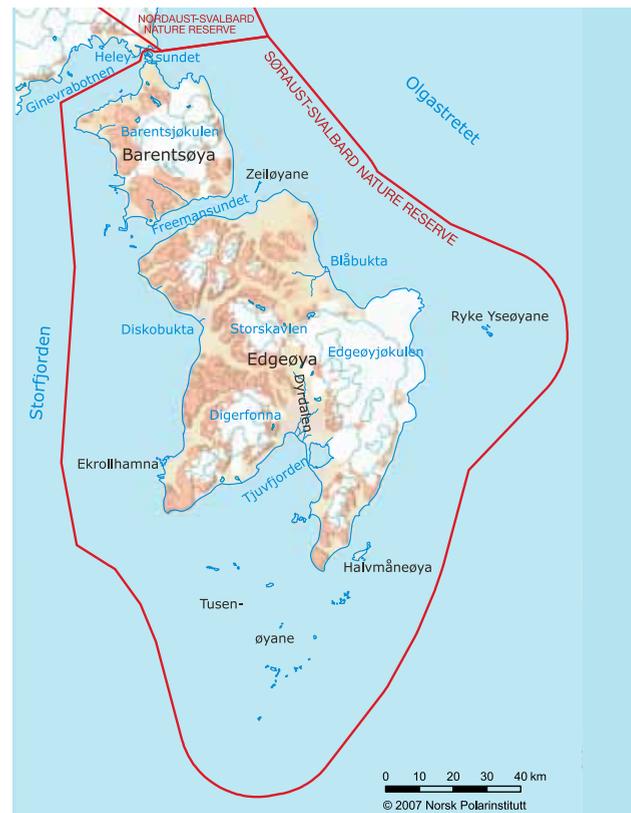
Raised strandlines and patterned ground. Comparatively large parts of the nature reserve are covered by glaciers. The landscape forms are rounded. Large areas, particularly on Edgeøya, have raised beach deposits, and the former strandlines are very distinct in many places. The land uplift means that whalebones that once lay beneath sea level can now be seen. Extensive areas also have patterned ground.

TRAFFIC

Kapp Lee, Diskobukta and Halvmåneøya are popular visiting places for coastal cruise vessels. Some scientific work also takes place in the reserve. There is a year-round ban on visitors to Zieglerøya/Delitschøya/Spekkholmen, Haudegen and the major part of Halvmåneøya.



Cushioned Whitlow-grass (GB)



Grey phalarope (ML)



Blanknuten, Diskobukta (GB)



FORLANDET NATIONAL PARK

Protected: 1973 **Area:** Land area: 616 km² Marine area: 4 018 km²

The Forlandet National Park comprises the whole of the long island of Prins Karls Forland on the west coast of Spitsbergen, which consists of a long row of mountains flanked by an extensive coastal plain.

HISTORY

Norwegian and Russian trapping. The park has many cultural heritage monuments and sites and cultural environments linked with Norwegian and Russian whaling and winter trapping. Prins Karls Forland was annexed early because iron ore was found there at the beginning of the 20th century.

LANDSCAPE

Extensive plains and alpine peaks. Prins Karls Forland is a long island with tall mountains. It is almost divided in two by a long, low plain called Forlandsletta. The west coast has an almost continuous coastal plain, but the east coast has steep glaciers and a shoreline interrupted by glacier snouts. A number of rock glaciers are found on the mountainsides. A rock glacier is a glacier-shaped feature composed of rocks, gravel and sand, and having a core of ice.

TRAFFIC

All vessels which sail along the northern part of the west coast of Spitsbergen must pass Prins Karls Forland. Only quite small boats can sail along Forlandsundet because it is only four metres deep at its shallowest. Few people go ashore. Only two or three places are visited by local cruise boats, and some Longyearbyen tour operators arrange walks.

ANIMAL LIFE

Harbour seals and common guillemots. This park is the core area for the world's northernmost population of harbour seals and one of the few places where common guillemots nest in Spitsbergen. The park has several large and small bird-nesting cliffs. The west side of Fuglehukfjellet is one of the lushest bird-nesting cliffs in Svalbard. The Plankeholmane and Forlandsøyane bird sanctuaries are in the park and both have large populations of breeding wetland birds. Forlandsletta is an important breeding area for red-throated divers, long-tailed ducks and grey phalaropes. The west coast of Prins Karls Forland offers valuable winter quarters for seabirds.



Harbour seals (GB)



Grave, Fuglehuken (GB)



March light in the northern part of Forlandet (GB)



Fuglehukfjellet (GB)



Tufted saxifrage (JH)



INDRE WIJDEFJORDEN NATIONAL PARK

Protected: 2005 **Area:** Land area: 745 km² Marine area 382 km²

This north-south trending fjord on the north coast of Spitsbergen almost divides Spitsbergen in two. The area has unique High Arctic steppe vegetation.

HISTORY

Important area for trapping. Trapping has been carried out in the Wijdefjorden area since the Pomor period. Today a hunting station at Austfjordnes forms the base for trapping and is let by the Governor of Svalbard for one year at a time. A number of huts on both sides of the fjord north and south of the main base also belong to the station.

LANDSCAPE

Great variation. The fjord has a broad mouth in the north, a threshold and a cold-water basin in the inner part. Its location makes the fjord interesting for scientists owing to life on land and in the fjord, and also in connection with climate studies. The areas of High Arctic steppe on either side of the fjord are characterised by grass-like species, extreme dryness, alkaline soil with precipitation of salt on the surface and extensive areas lacking vegetation.

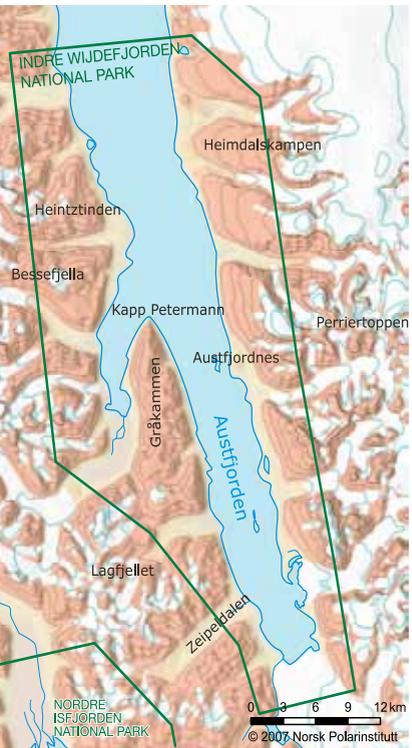
TRAFFIC

Most of the traffic in the national park is linked with the trapping station at Austfjordnes. Very few cruise boats enter the fjord. Taken as a whole, Wijdefjorden is less influenced by human activity than other fjords in Svalbard which are also regarded as being particularly valuable. The national park is also crossed by people travelling north by snowmobile.

PLANT LIFE

Unique vegetation and rare flora. The special climatic and geological conditions around the fjord offer living conditions for unique plant communities. The High Arctic steppe vegetation is regarded as among the most exclusive types of vegetation in Svalbard. It is not known elsewhere in the European Arctic, including other protected areas in Svalbard. Purple reedgrass, Sabine's grass, *Puccinellia angustata* ssp. *palibinii*, diminutive gentian and false sedge are examples of species found here.

Please note that the regulations and restrictions in Svalbard differ from area to area and tourists to residents.



Tufted cinquefoil (AE)



Austfjordnes (CB)



Steppe landscape at the mouth of Reinbukkdalen (AE)



King eiders and common eiders (ME)



NORDENSKIÖLD LAND NATIONAL PARK

Protected: 2003 **Area:** Land area: 1 207 km² Marine area: 155 km²

The Nordenskiöld Land National Park covers most of the southern part of the area separating Isfjorden and Van Mijenfjorden. Reindalen, the largest ice-free valley in Svalbard, is in the centre of the park.

HISTORY

Trapping in winter and mineral extraction. Many of the cultural heritage remains are associated with trapping in winter undertaken by Russians and to a much lesser extent Norwegians. Valuable remains from early mineral extraction have also been left in several places. Camp Bell, for example, is one of many interesting industrial sites in Svalbard left by the English company, Northern Exploration Co. Ltd.

LANDSCAPE

Ice-free valley and river delta. The river in Reindalen has a comparatively fixed course so that large parts of the valley floor are relatively stable. Reindalen has moraines, rock glaciers and various avalanche features that are of great scientific interest. Some of the largest pingos in Svalbard are found innermost in the valley. A pingo is a volcano-like mound of gravel with an ice core, and is formed in permafrost in association with springs. The area has extensive marine deposits and the river flowing along the Reindalen valley has one of the largest marine deltas in the archipelago. It is valuable for many species of birds during their autumn migration.

TRAFFIC

In winter, some residents and visitors travel by snowmobile. The approved route for snowmobiles and larger caterpillar-tracked vehicles travelling between Longyearbyen and the coal mine at Svea also crosses the park. There is relatively little traffic in summer. Three or four places are visited by coastal cruise boats. Its close vicinity to Longyearbyen and Svea means that some tourists on foot or ski, and hunters, also visit the area.

ANIMAL LIFE

Important area for birds. The coast of Nordenskiöld Land and the lower part of Reindalen are important areas for waders, ducks and geese. Ingeborgfjellet is a large bird-nesting cliff and, along with the coast of Nordenskiöld Land in general, figures on the BirdLife International List of Important Bird Areas in Europe. The whole area is valuable for Svalbard reindeer and arctic foxes.

PLANT LIFE

Unique, lush vegetation. Reindalen has the largest continuous area of lush vegetation in Svalbard, but the bedrock is more acid than corresponding areas on Spitsbergen. Lowermost in Reindalen is a large wetland and delta area, Stormyra, which is particularly rich in rare peat mosses.



Purple saxifrage (GB)



Snow bunting (PHO)



Glaucous gull (GB)



The coast of Nordenskiöld Land (GB)



Svalbard reindeer (ML)



NORDRE ISFJORDEN NATIONAL PARK

Protected: 2003 **Area:** Land area: 2 050 km² Marine area: 904 km²

The Nordre Isfjorden National Park covers large parts of the north coast of Isfjorden. It has several extensive shore plains with lush, species-rich vegetation that is valuable for many species of birds.

HISTORY

Three generations of trapper's huts. The national park has cultural heritage relics dating from all the main periods in the history of Svalbard. Trygghamna has blubber cookers from the whaling period and remains left by the Pomors. The area has also been much used by trappers, partly based at Kapp Wijk, where there are three generations of huts. The base is still used by trappers. The park also has industrial remains, including a former coal mine at Bohemanneset and a gypsum quarry in Skansbukta.

LANDSCAPE

Large shore plains. The park has several extensive sandy plains (Bohemianflya, Erdmannflya and Daudmannsøyra) mainly consisting of marine shore deposits. The islets of Coraholmen and Flinholmen in Ekmanfjorden have distinctive, interesting landscapes. The barren, uneven moon-like landscape on part of each islet results from Sefströmbreen undertaking a sudden advance (surge) in 1896, which piled debris from the bed of the fjord onto these otherwise lush, flat islets.

TRAFFIC

Many people visit the park, particularly in summer. Longyearbyen residents shoot geese and ptarmigan, and fish char. Several tour operators have camps in the park that are used by visitors in summer as bases for walking and kayaking. Organised day-trip boats as well as coastal cruise vessels use the area. When the ice conditions on Isfjorden are favourable in late winter, many people drive snowmobiles across to Kapp Wijk and continue northwards to Ny-Ålesund.

ANIMAL LIFE

Fulmars. The lush shore plains and several islands and islets are important breeding sites for birds. Alkhorvet is one of a number of bird cliffs in the park and along with a large plain, Daudmannsøyra, it figures on the BirdLife International List of Important Bird Areas in Europe. Numerous fulmars breed on the mountainsides around Ekmanfjorden and Dicksonfjorden.



Svalbard ptarmigan (ML)



Pink-footed geese (ME)



Polar campion (GB)



Coraholmen (GB)



PLANT LIFE

Valuable wetlands. The national park has extensive areas of vegetation containing many different species, several of which are regarded as rare, including *Ranunculus wilanderi*, cloudberry, polar bilberry, reindeer wood-rush, Krause's sedge and Sabine's grass. The area also has large areas with peat deposits that are several metres thick, which is unusual for Svalbard.



Kapp Wijk (GB)



Boreal Jacob's-ladder below Skansen (OHH)



NORDVEST-SPITSBERGEN NATIONAL PARK

Protected: 1973 **Area:** Land area: 3 684 km² Marine area: 6 189 km²

The Nordvest-Spitsbergen National Park covers the north-western corner of Spitsbergen, which is a part of Svalbard that is unusually varied. It also has numerous valuable cultural heritage remains.

HISTORY

Whaling and polar expeditions. It was here Willem Barentsz first went ashore in 1596 after discovering Bjørnøya. Both Smeerenburg, the whaling station on Amsterdamøya, and Gravneset in Magdalenefjorden, where some 130 whalers were buried, are in the park. The same goes for Virgohamna, with its remains from various North Pole expeditions, including Andrée's balloon flight in 1897. Special permission is required from the Governor of Svalbard to go ashore in Virgohamna. The park also has remains of Norwegian and Russian winter trapping bases, as well as relicts from the Second World War.

LANDSCAP

Wild and varied. The characteristic alpine shape of the mountains here gave rise to the name Spitsbergen. The park also has large glaciers, islands, straits and extensive coastal plains. A north-south fault along Bockfjorden explains the distinct difference between the alpine peaks on the west side of the fjord and the rounded, red mountains on the east side.

TRAFFIC

This national park, particularly Magdalenefjorden, is one of the most visited places in Svalbard away from the settlements. Both ocean-going cruise ships and coastal cruise boats call here. Between 15 000 and 20 000 people go ashore at Gravneset in Magdalenefjorden during the brief summer season, resulting in great wear and tear to both the vegetation and the cultural heritage remains. There is a year-round ban on visitors to Likneset, Ebeltofthamna and parts of Ytre Norskøya.

ANIMAL LIFE

Varied animal life. The national park has many arctic foxes and reindeer, as well as several char rivers. Moffen Nature Reserve is in this park. There are many bird cliffs in north-western Spitsbergen. Reinsdyrflya is an important area for aquatic birds. In addition, all the islands that are more or less lacking arctic foxes, including those in Liefdefjorden, are important breeding sites for seabirds. Guisseezholmen, Moseøya and Skorpa are bird sanctuaries with many nesting eiders and geese.

PLANT LIFE

Thermophilous (warmth-loving) plants. The hot springs in Bockfjorden are remnants of extinct Quaternary volcanoes and give rise to a unique botanical locality where such plants as mountain eyebright, sibbaldia and *Puccinellia angustata* ssp. *palibinii* are found.



Arctic tern (ME)

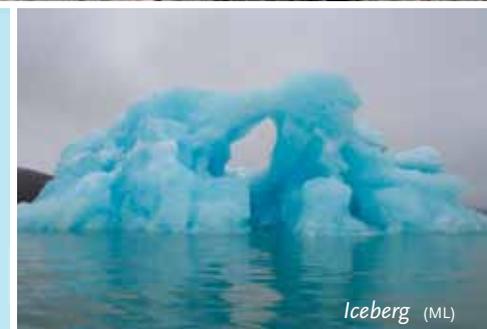


A Second World War German weather station at Signehamna (ML)

▼
Visiting cultural heritage sites: All remains left by people before 1946 are protected. Please tread carefully; such remains may be difficult to spot. You should therefore stay on the margin of areas where there are scattered cultural heritage relics. All cultural heritage sites have a security zone that is 100 m in radius, where nothing may be moved, damaged or destroyed and where tents may not be erected.



Blubber cooker at Smeerenburg (SMS)



Iceberg (ML)



Polygonal stone rings, Raudfjorden (SMS)



SASSEN-BÜNSOW LAND NATIONAL PARK

Protected: 2003 **Area:** Land area: 1 157 km² Marine area: 73 km²

The Sassen-Bünsow Land National Park is at the head of Isfjorden and includes Tempelfjorden and the vast Sassendalen valley.

HISTORY

Fredheim. Fredheim, the trapping base which Hilmar Nøis built in 1924, stands at the mouth of Sassenelva, the river flowing along Sassendalen. He lived there for 38 years. There are still three generations of buildings at Fredheim. The park also has a number of industrial cultural heritage relics, including gypsum workings at Gipsvika.

LANDSCAPE

Templet. Templet is a magnificent, photogenic mountain built of characteristic horizontal strata. The area also has a variety of interesting, well-developed Quaternary geological features, including marine and fluvial deposits, and patterned ground.

TRAFFIC

Many people visit this national park, particularly in winter. Tour operators arrange day trips by snowmobile to Tempelfjorden and the Von Post Glacier. Some also cross to the east coast of Spitsbergen. A yacht is allowed to freeze fast in Tempelfjorden for part of the winter, and guided groups can eat and spend the night there. Residents drive snowmobiles through the park, some on their way further north, others to reach their cabins at Vindodden. In summer, there are some ptarmigan and reindeer hunters in the area, and also some foreign and local cruise vessels.

ANIMAL LIFE

Ringed seals in Tempelfjorden. Tempelfjorden is an important breeding site for ringed seals, which can be seen in abundance on the ice in the spring. The lower stretches of Gipsdalen and Sassendalen are especially important breeding areas for geese. Several wetlands are valuable for waders. Long-tailed skuas, knots and sanderlings have one of their few breeding areas here in Svalbard. There are also bird-nesting cliffs dominated by fulmars. The park is important for reindeer, ptarmigan and arctic foxes.

PLANT LIFE

Active fluvial plain. Sassendalen is very long and wide and has extensive areas of continuous vegetation. Compared with Reindalen, much of the valley floor is an active fluvial plain and the soil is calcareous. Bünsow Land has areas of lush vegetation composed of calciophile species like mountain avens and white arctic Whitlow-grass. The park also has species categorised as vulnerable. Some of these, like polar mouse-ear and broad-sepal saxifrage, have their only European occurrence in Svalbard.



Ringed seal (GB)



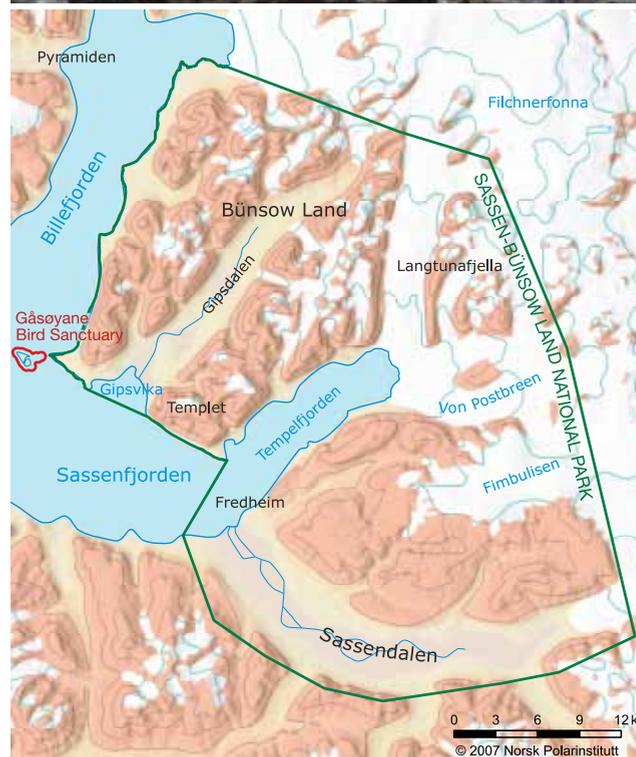
Moss campion (ML)



Ice columns on Tunabreen (OHH)



Fulmars (GB)



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Sassendalen (GB)



Fredheim (OHH)



SØR-SPITSBERGEN NATIONAL PARK

Protected: 1973 **Area:** Land area: 5 030 km² Marine area: 8 198 km²

The Sør-Spitsbergen National Park covers all the southern part of Spitsbergen. The mountains on the west side are tall and jagged, while those on the east side are flatter and rounded. The Hornsund area is on a very important east-west migration route for polar bears. The park also has many valuable cultural heritage remains.

HISTORY

17th century whaling. The area has been important for the exploitation of Svalbard. Gåshamna has the remains of a whaling station, with blubber cookers, skulls and rib bones from bowhead whales. Recherchefjorden, in the northern part of the park, was named after the French expedition ship, *La Recherche*, which navigated the west coast of Svalbard in 1839. The park also contains cultural heritage relicts deriving from winter trapping activities, mining, tourism, research and the Second World War.

LANDSCAPE

Jagged mountains. The jagged, alpine peaks here, like those in the North-west Spitsbergen National Park, result from the collision between Spitsbergen and eastern Greenland in the Tertiary (65–1.8 million years ago). Folded, stratified sedimentary rocks are found further east, where the mountains are lower and more rounded. Inland areas are dominated by large systems of glaciers, including Brepollen at the head of Hornsund.

TRAFFIC

A Polish research station stands at the mouth of Hornsund. Increasing numbers of coastal cruise vessels use the Hornsund district and the northern part of the national park at the mouth of Van Keulenfjorden. There is a year-round ban on visitors to Lægerneset.

ANIMAL LIFE

The realm of the polar bear. Hornsund is vital for polar bears. The most important migration route between Storfjorden and the west coast of Spitsbergen passes through here and used to be exploited by trappers. The national park has several large and small bird-nesting cliffs and valuable breeding areas for eider ducks. The district around Sørkappøya is an extremely important resting area for migratory birds. Its vicinity to key parts of the Barents Sea also means that the area has some of the largest seabird colonies in Svalbard. The Sørkapp, Dunøyane, Isøyane and Olsholmen bird sanctuaries are in the park, which also has several char rivers.

PLANT LIFE

Productive areas. The plains along the west coast have a favourable climate and are among the most productive land areas in Svalbard. The east coast is generally colder and mostly consists of barren moraines and glaciers.



Svalbard poppy (JH)



Ripple-marked sandstone at Van Keulenfjorden (OHH)



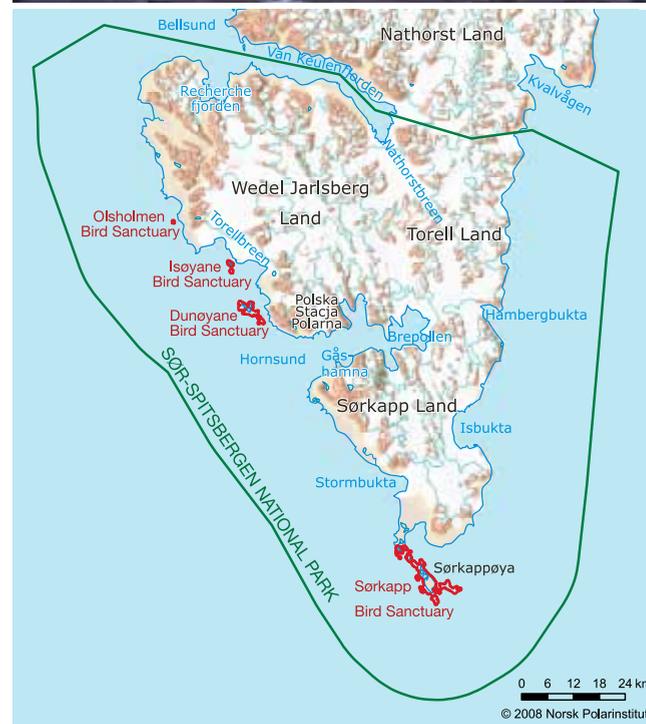
Purple sandpiper (GB)



Hansbreen, Hornsund (OHH)



Polar bears eating a seal (GB)



THE POLAR BEAR AGREEMENT

The aim of the 1973 Polar Bear Agreement between the five Arctic nations, Russia, Denmark, Canada, the USA and Norway, is to preserve the polar bear and its habitat. The Agreement protects the polar bear throughout the Arctic except for a few parts of Canada and Greenland where the Inuit have hunting quotas. The polar bear is regarded as an endangered species. Climate change is of particularly serious concern for the future of the species. Polar bears mainly live on seals and are at the top of the arctic marine food chain, which means that they have high concentrations of toxicants in some areas.

It is prohibited to lure, pursue or otherwise seek out polar bears in such a way as to disturb them or expose either bears or humans to danger.

(Svalbard Environmental Protection Act)



Staupbreen, Storfjorden (GB)



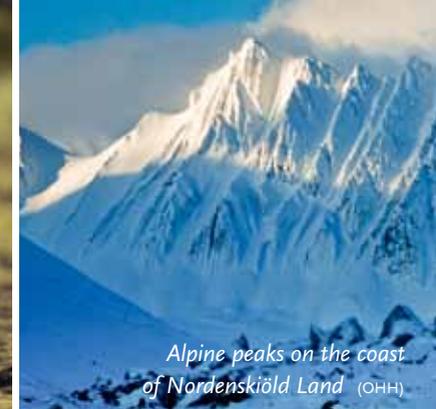
Brucebyen, Billefjorden (SMS)



Arctic fox cub (ML)



Brent goose (GB)



Alpine peaks on the coast of Nordenskiöld Land (OHH)



CULTURAL HERITAGE CONVENTIONS

The Convention on the illegal trade in cultural objects and the illegal transfer

of property rights to cultural objects (1970, ratified by Norway in 2004) is intended to ensure that stolen objects are returned and to encourage nations to cooperate in returning illegally exported objects.

The Malta Convention (1992) on the protection of the archaeological heritage of Europe, also called the **European Council Convention**, gives regulations to protect the archaeological cultural heritage dating from any period in time.

The Unidroit Convention on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects (1995, ratified by Norway in 2001) applies to Svalbard, Jan Mayen and Norwegian dependencies. It is important for Svalbard because of all the objects that are strewn around.

SVALBARD IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Svalbard and the rest of the Arctic have great international significance. Many nations have interests here, and many international agreements and conventions, together with good cooperation, are important for the region.

ARCTIC COUNCIL

In 1996, the Arctic Council's Biodiversity Programme, CAFF (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna), presented a strategy and action plan to establish a Circumpolar Network of Protected Areas (CPAN), which was approved by the eight arctic nations (Norway, Russia, the USA, Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Iceland and Sweden). CPAN is intended to protect valuable and unique natural environments.



THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

The Ramsar Convention on wetlands of international importance (1971) has been ratified by 153 nations. The international Ramsar List comprises some of the most valuable wetlands in the world, and numbered some 1 640 areas in 2007. Five of Svalbard's 29 protected areas,

the Dunøyane, Isøyane, Forlandsøyane, Gåsøyane and Kongsfjorden nature reserves, are on the list. These were originally protected as small bird sanctuaries. Efforts are now being made to have more Svalbard wetlands placed on the Ramsar List.

THE UNESCO CONVENTION

The UNESCO Convention concerning the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage (1972) regards culture and nature as a common heritage to be passed on to future generations. Svalbard has been proposed as a potential world heritage site. The natural environment of the High Arctic is varied and beautiful, and has unique landforms, geology and ecosystems with a rich diversity of animals and plants. Together with multinational, well-preserved, cultural heritage sites and environments, Svalbard is outstanding and most important in an international context, and is thus well suited as a world heritage site.



NATURE CONSERVATION CONVENTIONS

The Convention on the preservation of biological diversity

(1992) was the first global convention embracing the protection and sustainable use of all biological diversity.

The Washington Convention (CITES) on international trade in endangered species of animals and plants was ratified by Norway in 1973. Several Svalbard species of plants and animals figure on the lists.

The Bonn Convention on the protection of migrating species was ratified in 1979 and protects populations of migrating wild animals which regularly cross national borders. In Svalbard, the Convention covers the blue whale, humpbacked whale, bowhead whale, beluga whale and fin whale, along with divers, ducks, geese, waders and terns.



Patterned ground (GB)



Migrating barnacle geese (GB)



Tourists at Gravneset, Magdalenefjorden (ML)



A scientist tagging a polar bear (JA)

MANAGEMENT OF THE PROTECTED AREAS

Svalbard has strict environmental legislation (the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act) regulating most of what takes place in the archipelago. The regulations for each protected area state the activities and actions that are permitted. The nature reserves have the most stringent provisions. The three national parks set up in 1973 have somewhat stricter regulations than those dating from 2003 and 2005, principally those concerning motorised traffic, hunting and trapping.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The Governor of Svalbard is responsible for the day-to-day practical management of the protected areas in Svalbard. The office carries out this work under the direction of the Ministry of the Environment, the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management, the Directorate for Cultural Heritage and the Norwegian Pollution Control Authority.

The Norwegian Polar Institute does not have management authority in Svalbard, but has several important tasks in the archipelago, including mapping, monitoring, advising and performing research.

INSPECTION

Inspection of an area that is almost as large as the counties of Troms and Nordland in northern Norway combined is a major challenge. The Governor's Office in Svalbard performs inspections by boat, snowmobile and helicopter from its base in Longyearbyen. Three field inspector patrols operate on the west coast of Spitsbergen between Bellsund and Raudfjorden from June to August. The Norwegian Coastguard Service also watches over the marine areas, and the staff at the Bjørnøya and Hopen meteorological stations help with inspection on those islands.

The Governor of Svalbard surveys wear and tear on cultural heritage sites and vegetation as a consequence of traffic, for instance at Gravneset in the North-west Spitsbergen National Park.

RESEARCH

Svalbard is very popular among international and Norwegian scientists. Research is being undertaken in many parts of the archipelago, including the protected areas. Several of the projects are directly linked to the management of the protected areas, including monitoring of polar bears, reindeer, ptarmigan, ivory gulls and marine mammals.

▼
Contact the Governor's office (Sysselmannen) if planning a longer field excursion. A mandatory registration applies for travel to large parts of Svalbard (outside Management Area 10).

Common sense rules for Svalbard

Little research has so far been performed on the significance of traffic in relation to the disturbance of animals and wear and tear on the natural environment and the cultural heritage. Scientists must apply to the Governor of Svalbard for permission to carry out research.

The projects are carefully evaluated and permission for studies in protected areas is only given if they cannot equally well be carried out elsewhere. In addition to the actual research work, environmental stress connected to the logistics (helicopter, boat, etc.) is also assessed. The Svalbard Science Forum coordinates the research in Svalbard. Read more at www.ssf.npolar.no and www.svalbard.miljostatus.no

TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

More and more tourists are coming to Svalbard; some 60 000 visited the archipelago in 2008. Independent traffic on foot or in private boats in the protected areas has remained fairly stable in recent years, as has snowmobile traffic in the national parks in central Spitsbergen. Cruise boat tourism, on the other hand, has increased and spread to new parts, not least in the protected areas. It is difficult to ensure that this takes place in an environmentally sound manner so that vegetation, animal life and cultural heritage sites are not unduly affected. Visitors are not permitted in the bird sanctuaries in the Moffen and Bjørnøya nature reserves in summer. There is a year-round ban on visitors to Kong Karls Land and to several cultural heritage sites. Special permission is required from the Governor of Svalbard to go ashore at Virgohamna. The cemetery and blubber cookers at Gravneset in Magdalenefjorden are fenced in to prevent wear and tear. Consideration is now being given as to whether there is a still greater need to direct traffic from areas that are vulnerable and especially important for their natural and cultural heritage assets to more robust areas.

THE GATEWAY TO SVALBARD

The Svalbard Portal is an information centre in the Svalbard Research Park in Longyearbyen. It includes environmental information from the Governor of Svalbard, Svalbard tourism and Svalbard Museum. You can obtain useful information here about the natural environment, cultural heritage, regulations and safety in Svalbard.



Polar bear hazard sign (ML)

▼
Don't be an arctic litter-bug! Leave no lasting signs of your visit. We realize it is not possible to be an invisible tourist, but we appreciate you trying.

Common sense rules for Svalbard

The Governor of Svalbard:
www.sysselmannen.no

Norwegian Polar Institute:
www.npolar.no

Directorate for Cultural Heritage:
www.riksantikvaren.no

Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management:
www.dirnat.no

Other useful links:
www.svalbard.npolar.no



NORWAY SHALL BE FREE TO MAINTAIN,
TAKE OR DECREE SUITABLE MEASURES TO
ENSURE THE PRESERVATION AND, IF
NECESSARY, THE RECONSTITUTION OF THE
FAUNA AND FLORA OF THE SAID REGIONS,
AND THEIR TERRITORIAL WATERS...

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NORWEGIAN DIRECTORATE
FOR NATURE MANAGEMENT

