

Polar Hour 2021

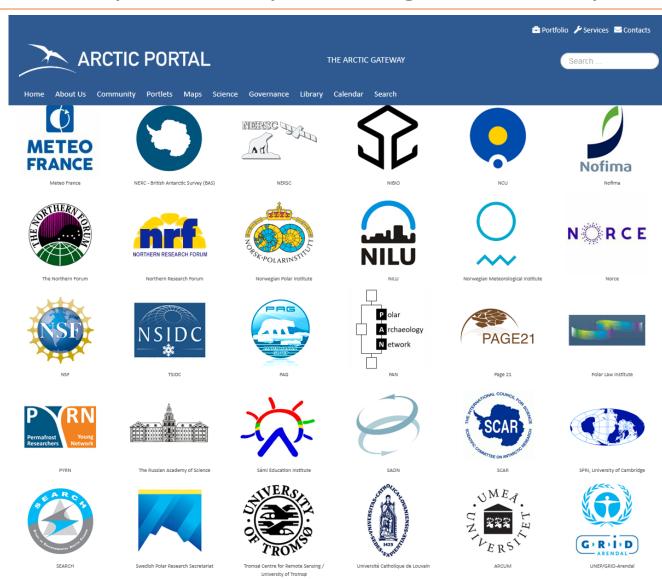
An online series of alternating science talks and coffee breaks For Members and Friends of the Polar Archaeology Network

Do past human-walrus interactions have anything to offer Svalbard?

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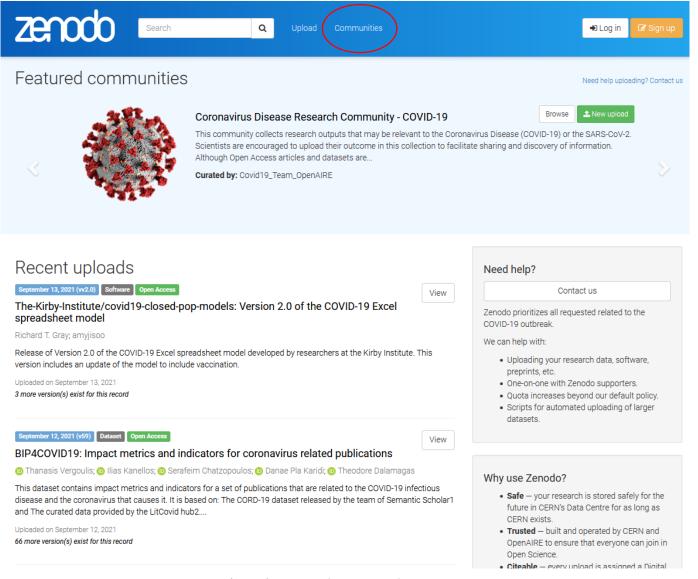


https://arcticportal.org/community

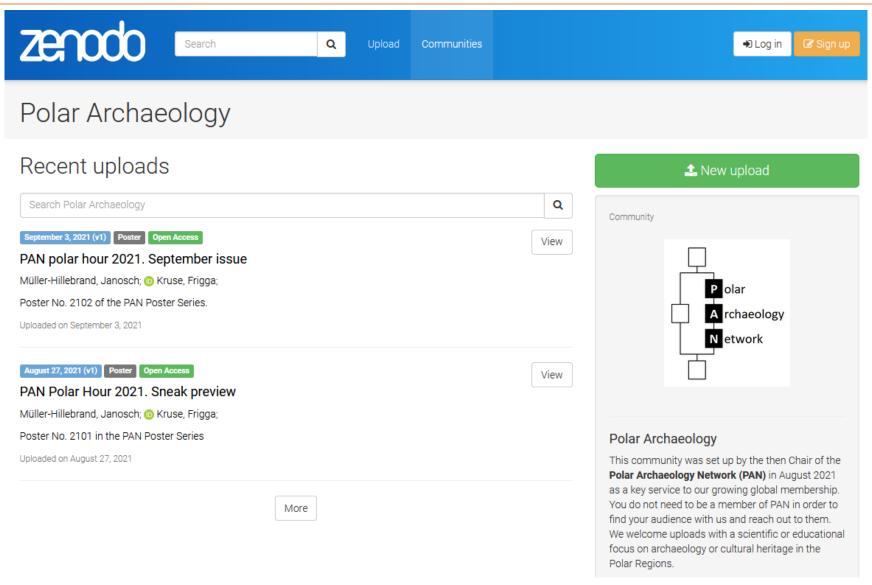


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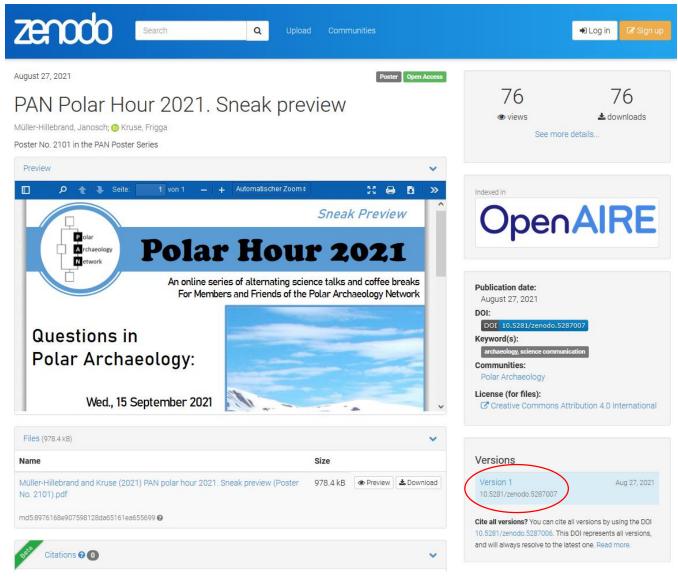
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Centre stage: Atlantic walrus





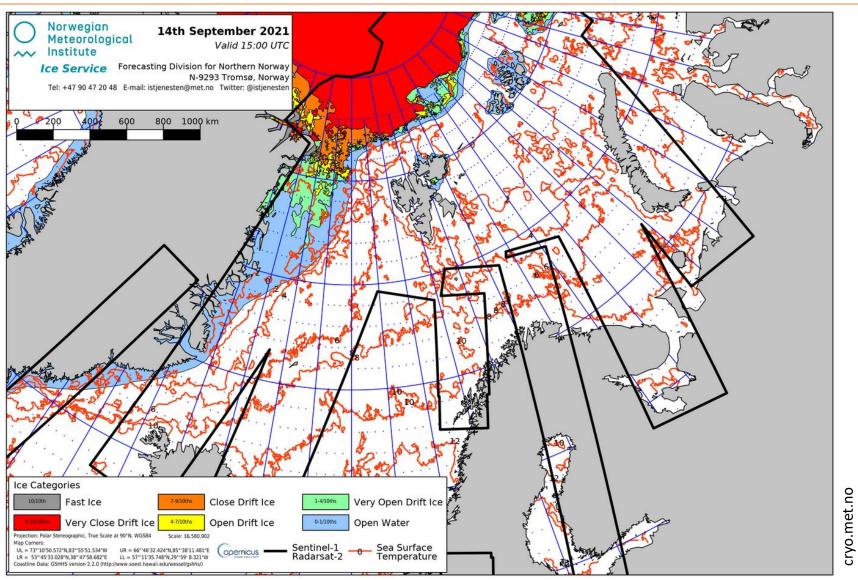




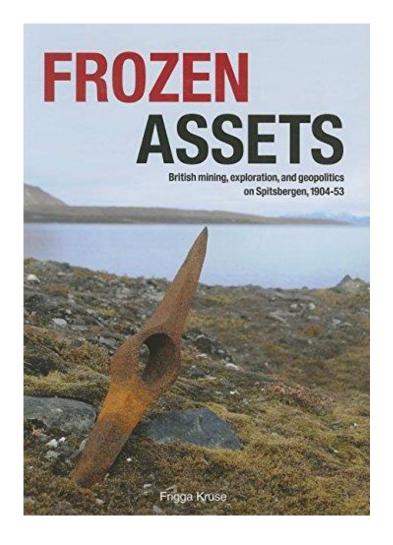


visitsvalbard.com

Centre stage: Svalbard



Context: My previous research in Svalbard



- PhD research (2008 2012) on British mining history and industrial archaeology
- Kruse, F. (2013) *Frozen assets. British mining, exploration, and geopolitics on Spitsbergen, 1904 53.* Groningen: Barkhuis.

- Active in Svalbard since 2008
- Admittedly a long way from humanwalrus interactions yet...

Context: My previous research in Svalbard

Postdoc research (2014 - 2016) on Svalbard's
 environmental archaeology and historical ecology

Polar Record 52 (266): 518–534 (2016). © Cambridge University Press 2016. doi:10.1017/S0032247416000309

Is Svalbard a pristine ecosystem? Reconstructing 420 years of human presence in an Arctic archipelago.

Frigga Kruse

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Received November 2015; first published online 3 May 2016

ABSTRACT. The Arctic is commonly perceived as a pristine wilderness, yet more than four centuries of human industry have not left Svalbard untouched. This paper explores the historical dimension of human-induced ecosystem change using human presence as a proxy. Its aims are fourfold: to reconstruct and quantify historical human presence, to ascertain if human presence is a suitable indicator of long-term anthropogenic pressure, to deduce trends in anthropogenic pressure on five selected species of game animal, and to postulate trends in their subpopulation sizes. Published sources give rise to 57 datasets dealing with the annual voyages to Svalbard as well as the participants in them. All known archaeological sites are visualised in a distribution map. Despite the large amount of data, the quantification of historical human presence remains biased and partial. Only with the aid of a timeline of known milestones is it possible to make hypotheses about changes in anthropogenic pressure and animal subpopulations over time. The exercise is nonetheless a necessary and instructive one: it confirms that the erroneous view of Svalbard as a pristine ecosystem hinders timely historical-ecological research. Future work must aim at the systematic quantification of past human impact in a holistic approach to environmental conservation and restoration.

Polar Record 53 (5): 520-533 (2017). © Cambridge University Press 2017. doi:10.1017/S0032247417000481

Catching up: the state and potential of historical catch data from Svalbard in the European Arctic

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Received October 2016

ABSTRACT. Svalbard in the European Arctic has a well-documented history of natural resource exploitation. Since its discovery in 1596, the archipelago has witnessed phases of commercial whaling, sealing, fur hunting and fishing. Scientists, trophy hunters and miners have also added to the depletion of wildlife. The magnitude, scale and speed of the hunt, however, remain largely unknown. This paper collates historical catch data of five selected species of game animal from published written and archaeological sources. These species include the bowhead whale, the Atlantic walrus, the polar bear, the Arctic fox and the Svalbard reindeer. The paper thereby aims to quantify the anthropogenic pressure on Svalbard's ecosystems over more than four centuries. This quantification is only moderately successful. The incomplete record prevents the use of this catch data as a suitable indicator of human-induced ecosystem change. To advance the state of knowledge, the paper recommends a return to the primary sources across international archives, libraries and museum collections, and outlines steps with which to arrive at the much needed time-depth in Svalbard historical ecology.

- Aim to provide a baseline and share a vision
- Substantial problems finding reviewers

Context: My "previous" research in Svalbard

Postdoc research (2018 - present)

Polar Record

www.cambridge.org/pol

Research Article

Cite this article: Kruse F, Nobles GR, de Jong M, van Bodegom RMK, van Oortmerssen GJM, Kooistra J, van den Berg M, Küchelmann HC, Schepers M, Leusink EHP, Cornelder BA, Kruijer JD, and Dee MW. Human–environment interactions at a short-lived Arctic mine and the long-term response of the local tundra vegetation. *Polar Record* **57**(e3): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247420000418

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Keywords:

Svalbard; Mining; Archaeology; Environmental impact; Tundra vegetation

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Human-environment interactions at a shortlived Arctic mine and the long-term response of the local tundra vegetation

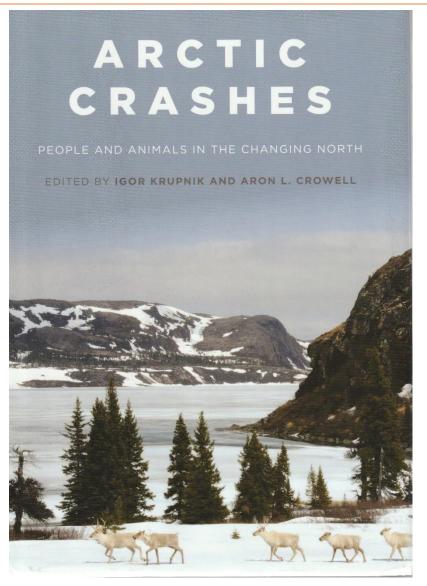
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Abstract

Arctic mining has a bad reputation because the extractive industry is often responsible for a suite of environmental problems. Yet, few studies explore the gap between untouched tundra and messy megaproject from a historical perspective. Our paper focuses on Advent City as a case study of the emergence of coal mining in Svalbard (Norway) coupled with the onset of mining-related environmental change. After short but intensive human activity (1904–1908), the ecosystem had a century to respond, and we observe a lasting impact on the flora in particular. With interdisciplinary contributions from historical archaeology, archaeozoology, archaeobotany and botany, supplemented by stable isotope analysis, we examine 1) which

Inspiration



- key outcome of the Arctic Crashes project, "Arctic People and Animal Crashes: Human, Climate and Habitat Agency in the Anthropocene."
- implemented during 2014-2016 at the Smithsonian Institution's Arctic Studies Center
- collaboration with colleagues and indigenous partners from the U.S., Canada, Denmark, Greenland, and the Netherlands
- introduced a new vision to explore humananimal-climate interactions, including rapid animal declines ("crashes") in the North that analyzed such relations primarily at regional and local scale
- unlike earlier top-down models that tied changes in species' abundance and ranges to alternating warmer and cooler (high sea-ice/low sea-ice) regimes across the polar zone

Inspiration



Xénia Keighley (Weber)

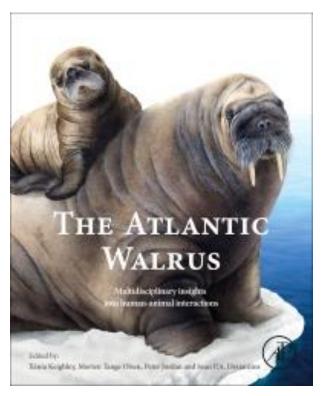


PhD candidate, University of Copenhagen & University of Groningen Verified email at palaeome.org

Ancient DNA evolution taxonomy

TITLE	CITED BY	YEAR
The Atlantic Walrus: Multidisciplinary Insights into Human-Animal Interactions X Keighley, MT Olsen, P Jordan, S Desjardins Elsevier		2021
Predicting sample success for large-scale ancient DNA studies on marine mammals X Keighley, MH Bro-Jørgensen, H Ahlgren, P Szpak, MM Ciucani, Molecular Ecology Resources 21 (4), 1149-1166	2	2021
Genomic sex identification of ancient pinnipeds using the dog genome MH Bro-Jørgensen, X Keighley, H Ahlgren, CH Scharff-Olsen, Journal of Archaeological Science 127, 105321		2021
Hunting Ancient Walrus Genomes: Uncovering the hidden past of Atlantic walruses (Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus) X Keighley		2021
Disappearance of Icelandic walruses coincided with Norse settlement X Keighley, S Pálsson, BF Einarsson, A Petersen, M Fernández-Coll, Molecular biology and evolution 36 (12), 2656-2667	10	2019
Integrating cultural and biological perspectives on long-term human-walrus (Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus) interactions across the North Atlantic X Keighley, MT Olsen, P Jordan Quaternary Research, 1-21	2	2019
Sex identification of ancient pinnipeds using the dog genome MH Bro-Jørgensen, X Keighley, H Ahlgren, CH Scharff-Olsen, bioRxiv, 838797	2	2019
based learning: Designing the course behind the research EA Beckmann, X Weber, M Whitehead, A Nicotra Field Studies in Ecology		2018
Ancient Pinnipeds X Keighley, MH Bro-Jørgensen, P Jordan, MT Olsen SAAarchaeological record the, 38		2018
Ancient Pinnipeds: What Paleogenetics Can Tell Us About Past Human-Marine Mammal Interactions X Keighley, MH Bro-Jørgensen, P Jordan, M Tange Olsen SAA Archaeological Record 18 (4), 38-45	2	2018

Inspiration



The Atlantic Walrus:
Multidisciplinary Insights into
Human-Animal Interactions

- overviews of the biology of the Atlantic Walrus as well as human cultures within the North Atlantic Arctic and the surrounding region by consolidating research which until now has been scattered across fields and academic publications
- Editorial team of inter-disciplinary researchers
- Thirteen chapters, each authored by leading international researchers and experts on the Atlantic Walrus
- Considers the inter-relatedness and complexity of species biology, ecological change, human culture, and anthropogenic pressures onto the Atlantic Walrus
- Draws upon the latest methods in marine mammal and archaeological research
- Assesses historical management of the species, while also considering current and future conservation efforts in light of human activities and climate change

The *Timeless Arctic* Project 2018 - 2023







Hunted commercially!







How and to what effect?

Bio-cultural archives in Svalbard: underrepresented!











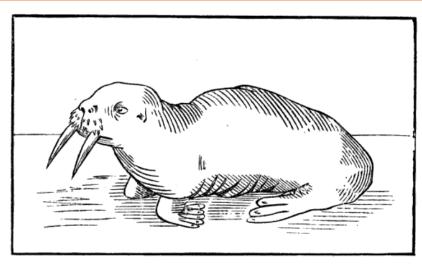


Walrus slaughter sites in Svalbard: undervalued!

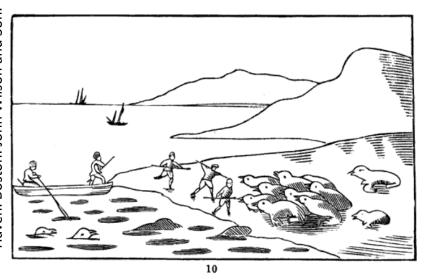


Human-walrus interactions in Svalbard

at otherby, R. (1860) Narrative of a voyage to Spitzbergen in the year 1613-English merchants for the discovery of new F. Haven. Edited by

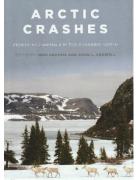


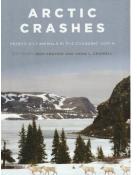
- No evidence of indigenous peoples
- No evidence of human contact prior to Barentsz in 1596
- A fairly recent human past
- Historical sources that speak of the demise of the Svalbard walrus

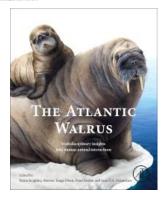


- Why should additional archaeological research be of interest to anyone?
- Professional vs political and public perceptions of Arctic archaeology!

Next steps







- Book reviews: that's what's on offer!
- Literature reviews
- Policy reviews
- No need to reinvent the wheel
- **Building collaborations**
- Letters of reference from specialists
- Contact Riksantikvaren & Sysselmesteren
- Re-submitting project design for TA expedition in August 2022
- Keeping my fingers crossing for permission to sample walrus bones!

Thank you!



Please keep any questions for the Q&A.