

The image features two whales swimming in deep blue water. A large, semi-transparent 'IHW' logo is overlaid on the left side of the image. The text 'Science & Education Report' is centered in white. The whale in the foreground is larger and more detailed, showing its eye and skin texture. The second whale is smaller and positioned behind it.

Science & Education Report

MS Spitsbergen

21 – 28 February 2026

Ultimate Norway –
Arctic Expedition
under the Northern
Lights





Science & Education Programme

Our Science and Education Team accompanied you during your expedition to the remote communities and impressive nature of Arctic Norway.

We had the opportunity to explore our destination's natural beauty, exceptional wildlife, and rich culture. We organised lectures and activities on board and explored our destinations through landings, experiences, and from the water.

History & Culture

During our expedition along the coast of Northern Norway, we explored a cultural history stretching from the Viking Age to the present day, gaining insight into why churches were built on small islands strategically located along historic shipping routes. Stories of fishing communities brought to life the seasonal rhythms and resilience that have long defined coastal settlements.

A visit to Trollfjord and small boat cruising offered a closer understanding of how geography, resources, and access to the sea shaped where and how people chose to settle.





Lofotfiske

In Lofoten, we explored both the stunning landscapes and the rich history of the region, learning about the famous winter cod fishery that takes place from January to April. During this period, thousands of fishermen participate in the traditional Lofoten fishery for the skrei (cod), which comes to Lofoten to spawn.

The Vikings were the first to hang cod to dry, preserving it for food on their journeys. Today, cod is still dried on racks, just as it was in Viking times. First practised over a thousand years ago, this fishery continues to thrive today, attracting fishermen from across Norway and remaining a cornerstone of coastal life.

Friluftsliv

During our seven-day voyage, we immersed ourselves in nature through the Norwegian concept of *friluftsliv*.

This term encompasses more than just spending time outdoors; it emphasizes actively engaging with nature and recognizing our place within it. Throughout the journey, we truly embraced this philosophy.



Arts & Crafts

During our open art sessions we invited you to slow down and get creative throughout the voyage. Many chose to decorate their reusable water bottles with Arctic-inspired designs, turning everyday items into personal mementos of the journey.

These relaxed sessions offered a welcoming space to connect, reflect, and add a splash of creativity to life on board.





Geology

As we sailed along Northern Norway's coast, we travelled across landscapes shaped by nearly 1.8 billion years of Earth's history.

Beneath the rugged peaks lies ancient crystalline bedrock, later uplifted during the Caledonian Orogeny, when continental collision built vast mountain ranges some 400 million years ago.

Over time, erosion and repeated Ice Age glaciations carved deep fjords and sharp ridgelines, creating the dramatic scenery unfolding around us from the deck.

Aurorasaurus

We contributed to aurora science by providing observations of auroras during geomagnetic storms and substorms!

This information will assist Aurorasaurus scientists in collecting data from northern Norway, a region with very few residents. If you would like to contribute your own observations, it's not too late!

Visit [Aurorasaurus](#) to learn more about the project and submit your photos!





iNaturalist

Throughout our expedition, we documented the flora and fauna of Northern Norway and uploaded all our findings to the iNaturalist biodiversity platform.

During our voyage, we submitted **63** observations of **37** different species. This effort contributes a more comprehensive understanding of the geographical distribution of species and can aid researchers in their ongoing studies and conservation efforts to protect these species.

View our data submitted on our [iNaturalist project](#)

Under the Microscope

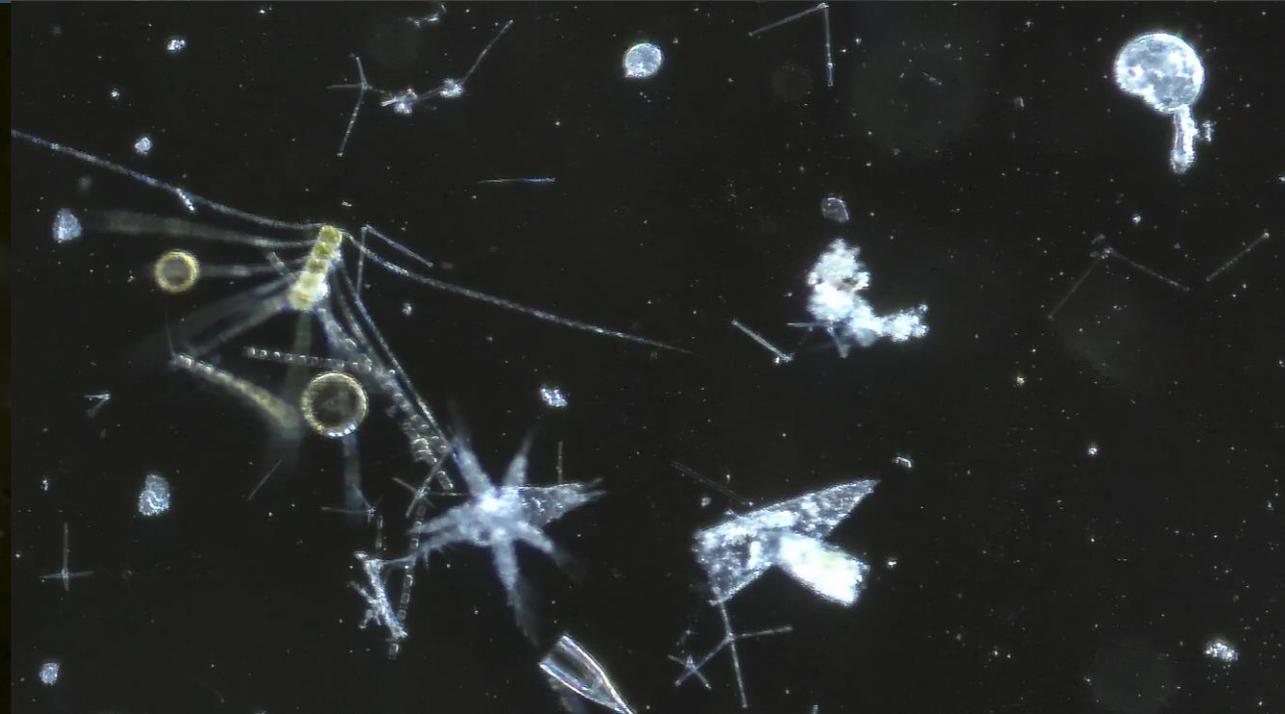
Often there is more to see than meets the eye when we take the time to look a little closer. During our time in Norway, you took part and engaged in several discovery sessions in our Science Centre, where we took the time to dig a little deeper.



Plankton Samples

We explored the microscopic world of plankton, the tiny organisms that drift in our ocean. Samples were collecting in both Tranøya and at Ulvøya.

The plankton sample at Tranøya was taken using a zooplankton net, and was mostly dominated by *Calanus* copepods (pictured top left). In addition to a zooplankton sample at Ulvøya we also took a phytoplankton sample. Diatoms of varying shapes and sizes were present, along with their silica spikes (pictured bottom left).





The Magical World of Moss

During our microscope session we took a closer look at some moss. A basal, non-vascular plant, moss does not contain roots or a stem for the uptake and transport of water. Instead, mosses absorb water over their cell walls, directly from the environment. We were able to see the cellulose structure of the cell wall under the microscope, while marvelling at the beauty of these often-underappreciated plants.

Explorer Lab

After our morning exploring Sandøya, there was plenty of time to discover some of the things we had seen ashore, under the microscopes!

Diving deep into the world of the sea urchin we marvelled at the structure of their spines, while sand revealed itself as a multitude of particles of many shapes and sizes.

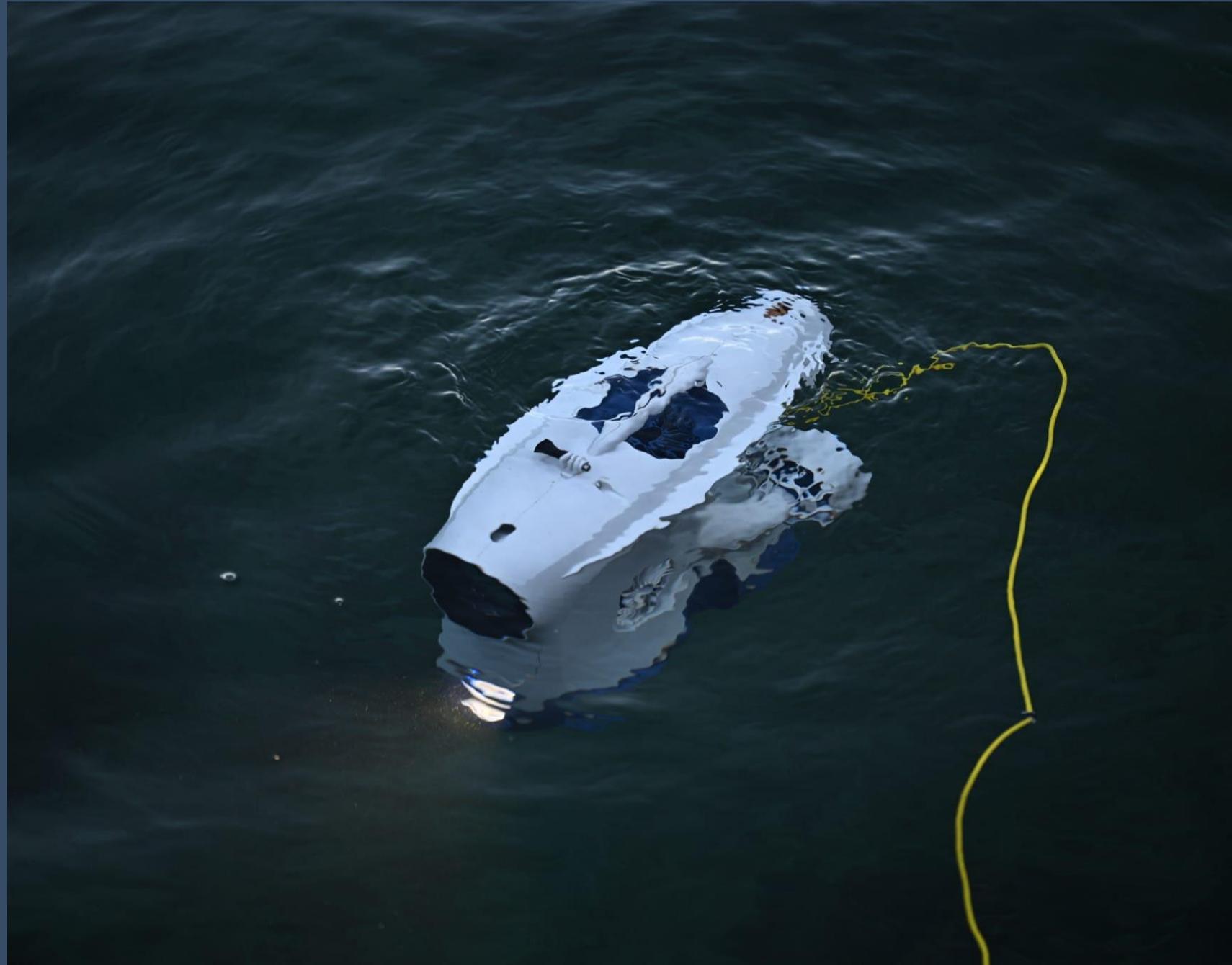
In the top right image we can see some granite, one of the dominant types of bedrock in this part of Norway.

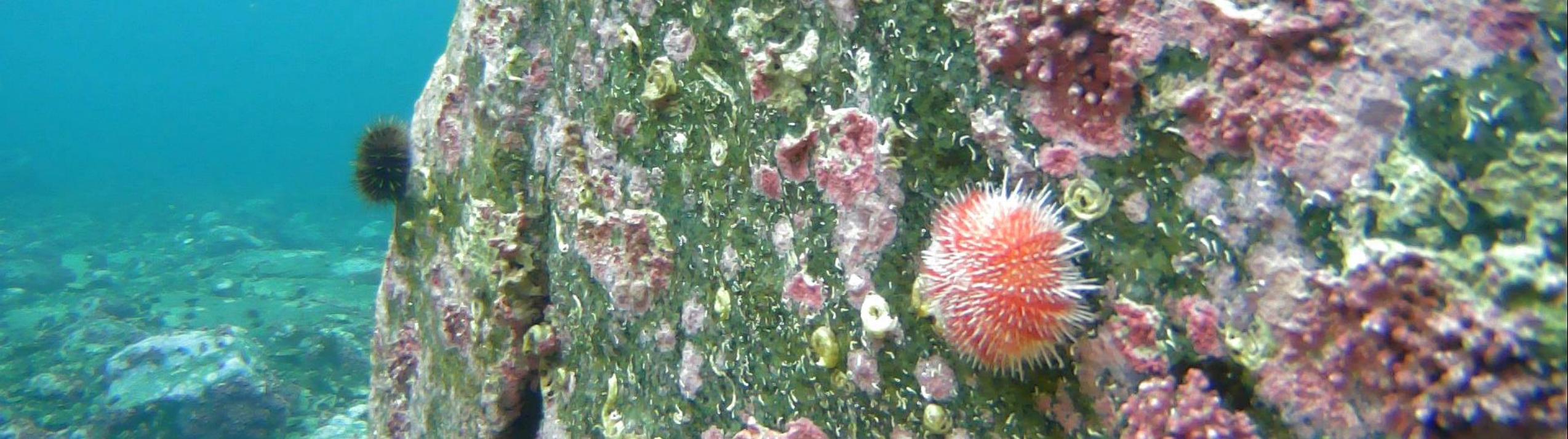


Underwater Drone

We used our Blueye Pioneer underwater drone to explore the underwater world of Norway, in Tranøya and Selfjord.

View the highlights from our underwater drone footage [on YouTube](#)





Wildlife List — Birds





Wildlife List – Seabirds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	great cormorant	Kormoran	grand cormoran
<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	European shag	Krähenscharbe	cormoran huppé
<i>Larus marinus</i>	Great black-backed gull	Mantelmöwe	goéland marin
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	European herring gull	Silbermöwe	goéland argenté
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	black-legged kittiwake	Dreizehenmöwe	mouette tridactyle
<i>Cephus grylle</i>	black guillemot	Gryllteiste	guillemot à miroir

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	grey heron	Graureiher	héron cendré
<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	whooper swan	Singschwan	cigne chanteur
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	mallard	Stockente	canard colvert
<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	long-tailed duck	Eisente	harelde kakawi
<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	common scoter	Trauerente	macreuse noire
<i>Mergus serrator</i>	red-breasted merganser	Mittelsäger	harle huppé
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	common eider	Eiderente	eider à duvet
<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	king eider	Prachteiderente	eider à tête grise
<i>Calidris maritima</i>	purple sandpiper	Meerstrandläufer	bécasseau violet
<i>Gavia immer</i>	great northern diver (Common Loon)	Eistaucher	plongeon imbrin

Wildlife List – Land Birds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Corvus corax</i>	northern (common) raven	Kolkrabe	grand corbeau
<i>Corvus cornix</i>	hooded crow	Nebelkrähe	corneille mantelée
<i>Pica pica</i>	Eurasian magpie	Elster	pie bavarde
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	European starling	Gemeiner Star	étourneau sansonnet
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Eurasian blackbird	Amsel	merle noir
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	house sparrow	Hausperling	moineau domestique
<i>Parus major</i>	great tit	Kohlmeise	mésange charbonnière
<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Eurasian blue tit	Blaumeise	mésange bleue
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	white-tailed eagle	Seeadler	pygargue à queue blanche
<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Eurasian sparrowhawk	Sperber	épervier d'Europe
<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	willow ptarmigan	Moorschneehuhn	lagopède des saules



Norway's White-Tailed Eagles

The white-tailed eagle, one of Norway's iconic birds, is a sight we were excited to see.

Once considered endangered and locally extinct in some areas, conservation efforts have helped this species make a remarkable recovery in Norway.

Whether you spotted it on land, from the expedition boats, while on landings, or during the Eagle Safari in Svolvær, we hope you caught a glimpse of this incredible master of the skies.

Wildlife List — Mammals



Wildlife List – Mammals



SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	harbour porpoise	Gewöhnlicher Schweinswal	marsouin commun
<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>	reindeer	Ren	renne

What's That Track?

We do not always have to see the wildlife to know it has been around. Taking note of the tracks and signs left behind by fauna, can give us valuable insights into who has been roaming around the wilderness.

Taking the opportunity to slow down and absorb nature, reminds us that if we take the time, there is often more to see in that meets the eye.

We hope you enjoyed exploring the more subtle signs of nature with us, and embrace this wherever you may explore next on your travels.



**Thanks for your
participation!**

THX