

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 skin texture and fins. The second whale is smaller and positioned behind it, partially obscured by the 'IHW' text.

Science & Education Report

MS Spitsbergen

7 – 14 March 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 destinations' natural beauty, exceptional wildlife, and rich culture. We organised lectures and interactive activities onboard and explored our destinations on land and from the water.

History & Culture

During our expedition along the Northern Norway, we traced a rich cultural history spanning from the Viking Age to the present. Our visit to Trollfjord, along with the expedition-boat cruise through the surrounding waters, offered a vivid sense of how geography, natural resources, and access to the sea shaped settlement patterns over time. We also learned why churches were often built on small, strategically located islands along historic shipping routes.

Stories from fishing communities further illuminated the seasonal rhythms, adaptability, and resilience that have long defined life along the Norwegian coast.





Lofotfiske

In Lofoten, we explored both the stunning landscapes and the rich history of the region, learning about the famous winter cod fishing season that takes place from January to April. During this period, known as *Lofotfiske*, thousands of fishermen participate in the traditional harvest of *skrei* (cod), the migratory cod which comes to Lofoten to spawn. First practised over a thousand years ago, this fishing tradition continues to thrive today and remains a cornerstone of coastal life in Norway.

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.

Friluftsliv

During our seven-day voyage, we immersed ourselves in nature through the Scandinavian 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.



Guest Speaker: Linda Åkeson- McGurk

During our voyage, Swedish-American bestselling author and *friluftsliv* expert Linda Åkeson-McGurk introduced us to over a century of Scandinavian outdoor traditions.

Drawing on the legacy of polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen and the evolution towards modern nature therapy, she shared insights into the Scandinavian way of life in the open air.

The original friluftsliv influencer



Fridtjof Nansen, Norwegian explorer, scientist & statesman



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, which was 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 that unfolded all around us.

Aurorasaurus

We contributed to aurora science by providing boots-on-the-ground 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

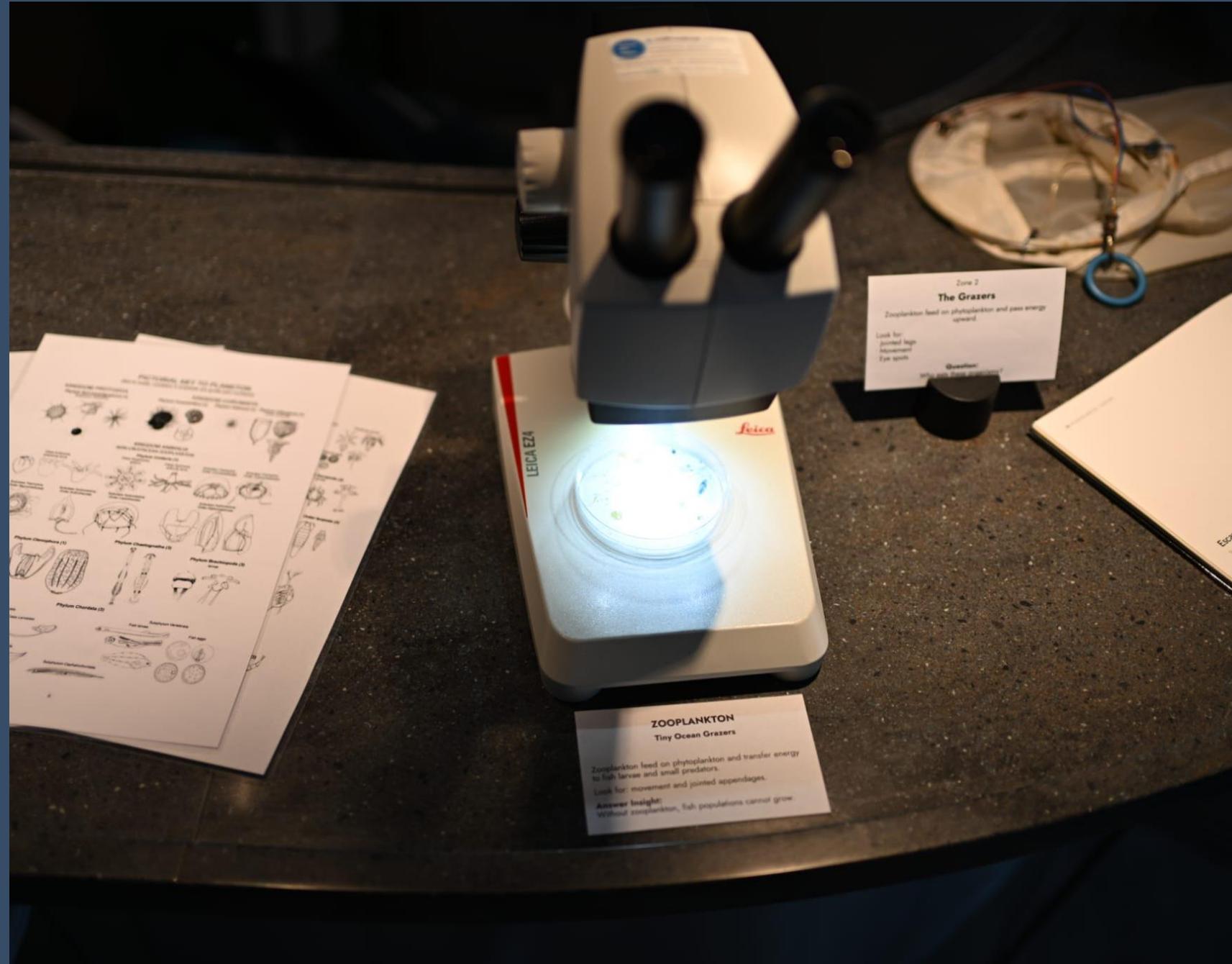
Throughout our expedition, we documented the flora and fauna of Norway and uploaded our findings to the iNaturalist biodiversity platform.

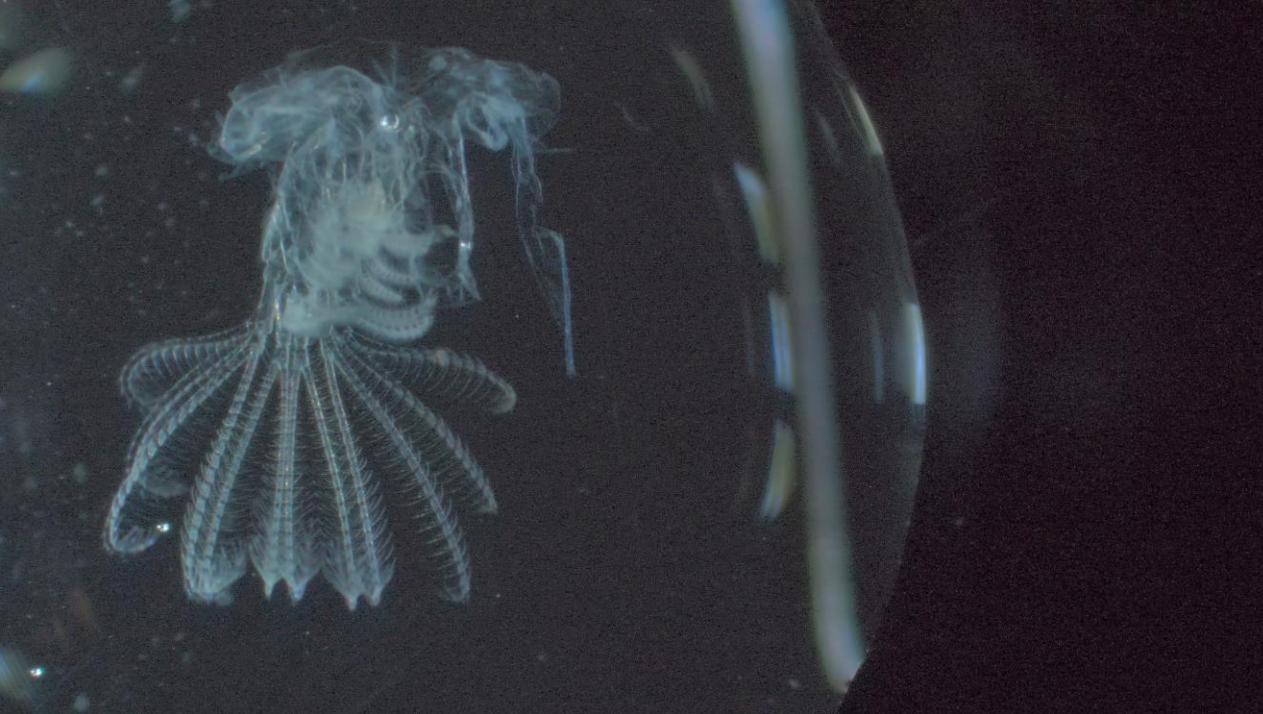
During our voyage, we submitted 59 observations of 35 different species. This effort contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the geographical distribution of species and will aid researchers in their ongoing studies and conservation efforts to protect these species.

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 collected a plankton sample at Sandøya using a zooplankton net to examine the microscopic life drifting through the ocean. The sample was dominated by *Calanus* copepods (pictured top left), which are common and abundant components of marine plankton.
- We also identified an arrow worm (top right) and the cirri of a barnacle (bottom left), the feathery appendages barnacles use for feeding.

Explorer Lab

Throughout our trip you had the opportunity to explore different aspects of Arctic Norway under the microscope during our self-guided Explorer Labs.

From Arctic geology and adaptation to the microscopic ecosystems found in moss, you explored what life in these harsh environments is all about!



Underwater Drone

We used a Blueye Pioneer underwater drone to explore the underwater world of Tranøya.

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>Larus marinus</i>	great black-backed gull	Mantelmöwe	goéland marin
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	European herring gull	Silbermöwe	goéland argenté
<i>Cephus grylle</i>	black guillemot	Gryllteiste	guillemot à miroir
<i>Uria aalge</i>	common guillemot (common murre)	Trottellumme	guillemot marmette

Wildlife List – Shore Birds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	grey heron	Graureiher	héron cendré
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	mallard	Stockente	canard colvert
<i>Mergus serrator</i>	red-breasted merganser	Mittelsäger	harle huppé
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	common eider	Eiderente	eider à duvet

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>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	white-tailed eagle	Seeadler	pygargue à queue blanche
<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	willow ptarmigan	Moorschneehuhn	lagopède des saules
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	house sparrow	Haussperling	moineau domestique



Norway's White-Tailed Eagles

The white-tailed eagle, one of Norway's iconic birds, is a sight we are always 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, 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>Lemmus lemmus</i>	Norway brown lemming	Norwegischer Lemming	lemming de Norvège
<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	common seal (harbour seal)	Seehund	phoque commun

A photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green and yellow, dancing over a dark mountain range and a body of water. The sky is filled with stars. Large, semi-transparent letters spelling 'THX' are overlaid on the right side of the image. The text 'Thank you for your participation!' is written in white, bold font across the lower right portion of the 'THX' letters.

**Thank you for your
participation!**