

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 whales are positioned diagonally, with one in the upper left and another in the lower right.

Science & Education Report

MS Spitsbergen

14 – 21 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 destination's natural beauty, exceptional wildlife, and rich culture. We organised lectures and activities on board and explored our destinations on land 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. 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 and women 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 Norwegian concept of *friluftsliv*.

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





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 that unfolded 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 all our findings to the iNaturalist biodiversity platform.

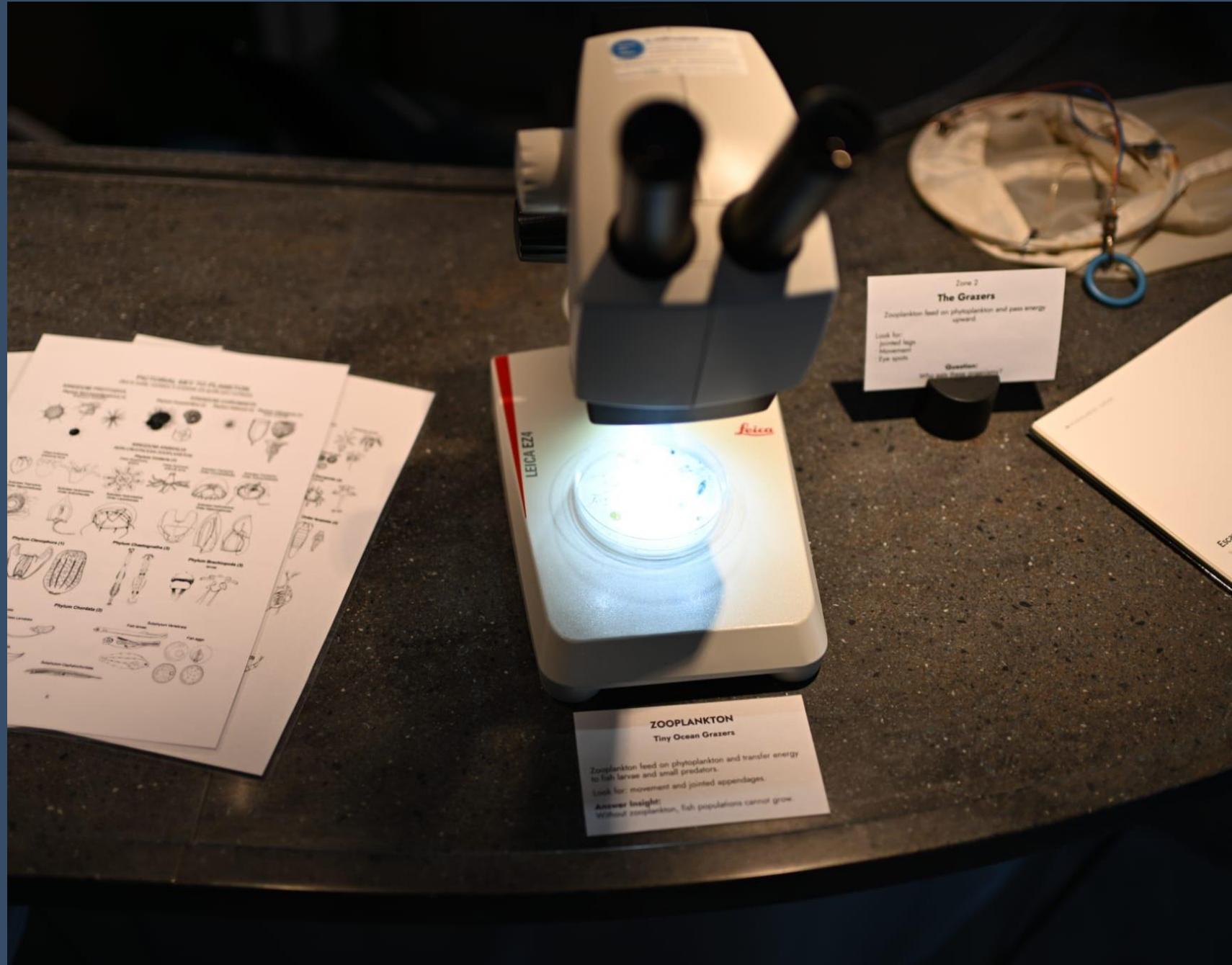
During our voyage, we submitted 49 observations of 31 different species. This effort contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the geographical distribution of species and aids researchers in their ongoing studies and conservation efforts to protect these species.

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

Under the Microscope

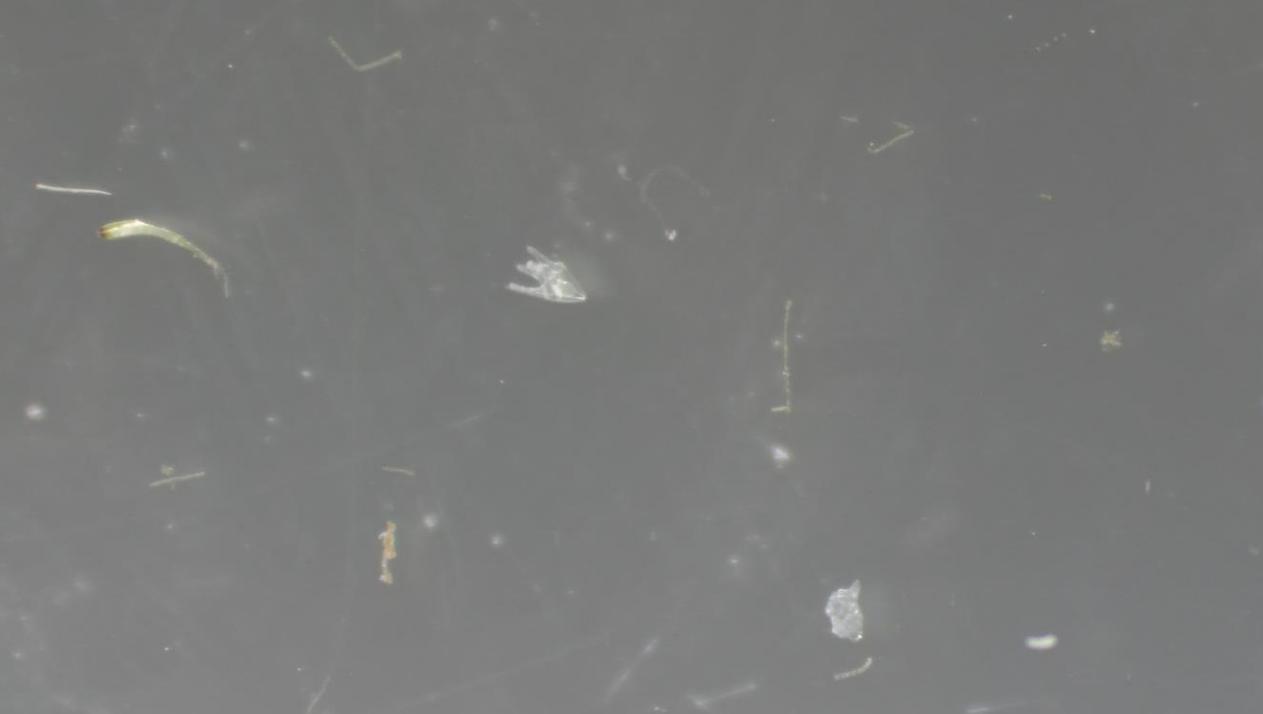
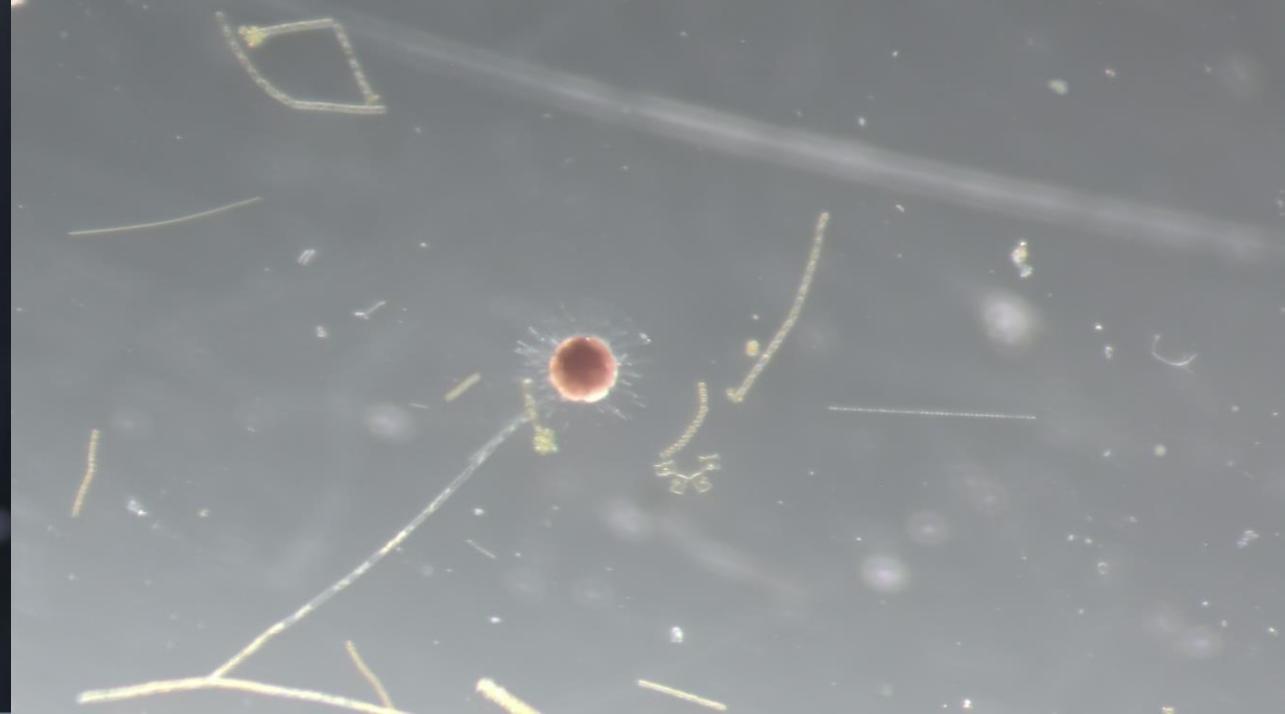
Often there is more to see than meets the eye when we take the time to look a little closer.

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.



Zone 2
The Grazers
Zooplankton feed on phytoplankton and pass energy upward.
Look for:
jointed legs
movement
eye spots
Question:
Why are they important?

ZOOPLANKTON
Tiny Ocean Grazers
Zooplankton feed on phytoplankton and transfer energy to fish larvae and small predators.
Look for: movement and jointed appendages.
Answer insight:
Without zooplankton, fish populations cannot grow.



Plankton Samples

We explored the microscopic world of plankton, the tiny organisms that drift in our ocean. Samples were collected at Lonkanfjord.

The plankton sample was taken using a zooplankton net, and was found to be mostly dominated by *Calanus* copepods (pictured top left). In addition, we found the *first* diatom chains of the spring phytoplankton bloom – a first for this year!

Explorer Labs

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

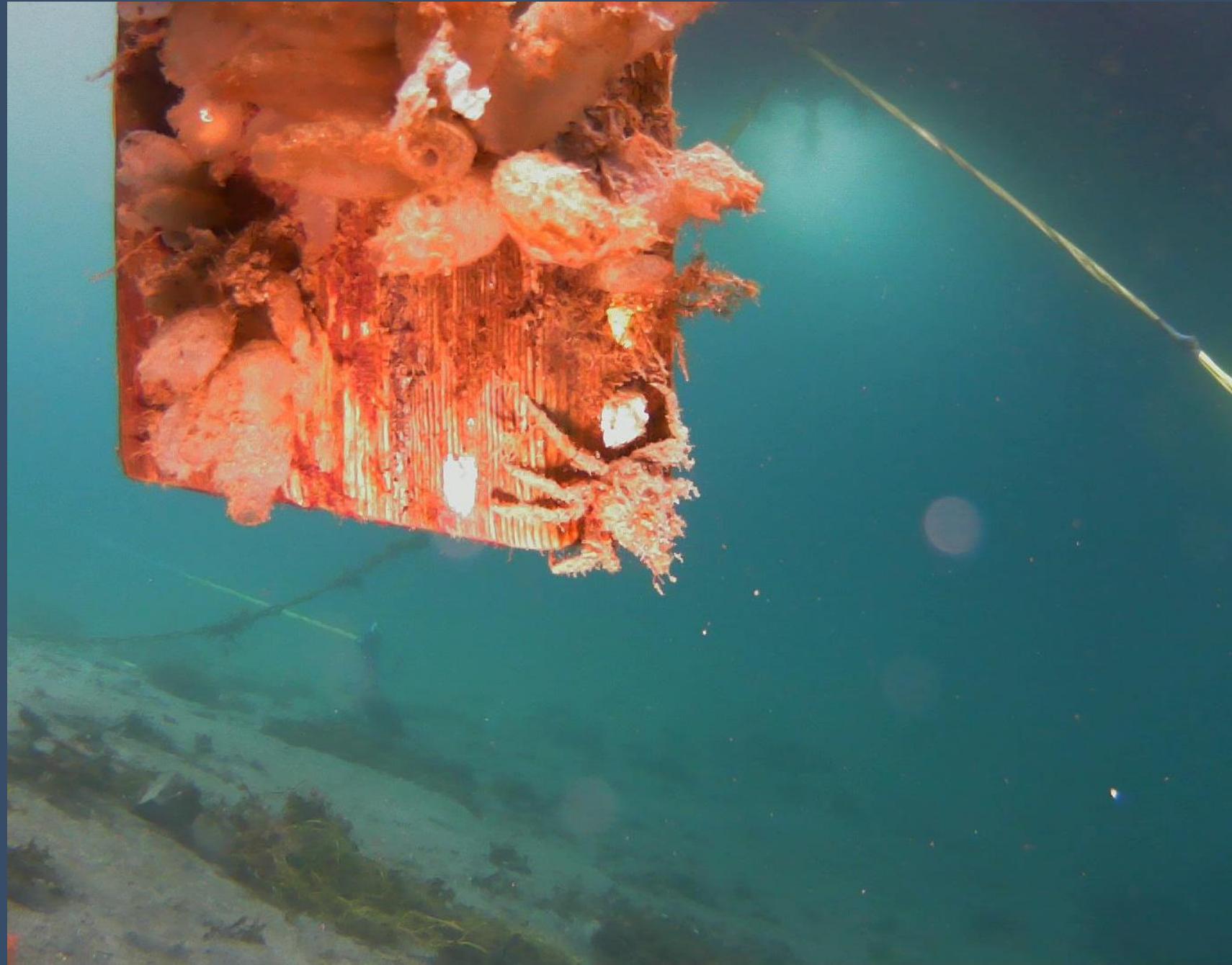
From Arctic geology and adaptation to the cold, to microscopic ecosystems found in moss, you could explore what life in these harsh environments is all about!



Underwater Drone

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

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





Science & History Boat Outings

In Narvik, 56 eager participants joined our 6 science & history boat outings to explore the wreck of the Swedish iron ore transporter *D/S Stråssa*, which was sunk during the Battle of Narvik on 11 April 1940.

We discovered how, after decades on the seafloor, life has reclaimed the ship, transforming it into an artificial reef supporting a diverse and thriving biological community.

Find the footage of our Science & History Boat Outings [on YouTube](#)





Wildlife List — Birds





Wildlife List – Seabirds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	great cormorant	Storskarv	grand cormoran
<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	European shag	Toppskarv	cormoran huppé
<i>Larus marinus</i>	great black-backed gull	Svartbak	goéland marin
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	European herring gull	Gråmåke	goéland argenté
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	black-legged kittiwake	Krykkje	mouette tridactyle
<i>Cephus grylle</i>	black guillemot	Teist	guillemot à miroir

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>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

Wildlife List – Land birds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Corvus cornix</i>	hooded crow	Nebelkrähe	corneille mantelée
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	house sparrow	Haussperling	moineau domestique
<i>Parus major</i>	great tit	Kohlmeise	mésange charbonnière
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	white-tailed eagle	Seeadler	pygargue à queue blanche
<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	willow ptarmigan	Moorschneehuhn	lagopède des saules



Norway's White-Tailed Eagles

We are always excited to catch sight of the whitetailed Eagle, one of Norway's iconic birds.

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

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>Orcinus orca</i>	orca (killer whale)	Orca, Schwertwal	orque
<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	harbour porpoise	Gewöhnlicher Schweinswal	marsouin commun
<i>Alces alces</i>	moose	Elch	élan
<i>Lemmus lemmus</i>	Norway brown lemming	Norwegischer Lemming	lemming de Norvège
<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Eurasian otter	Fischotter	loutre d'Europe
<i>Lepus timidus</i>	mountain hare	Schneehase	lievre variable



THX

Thanks for your participation!