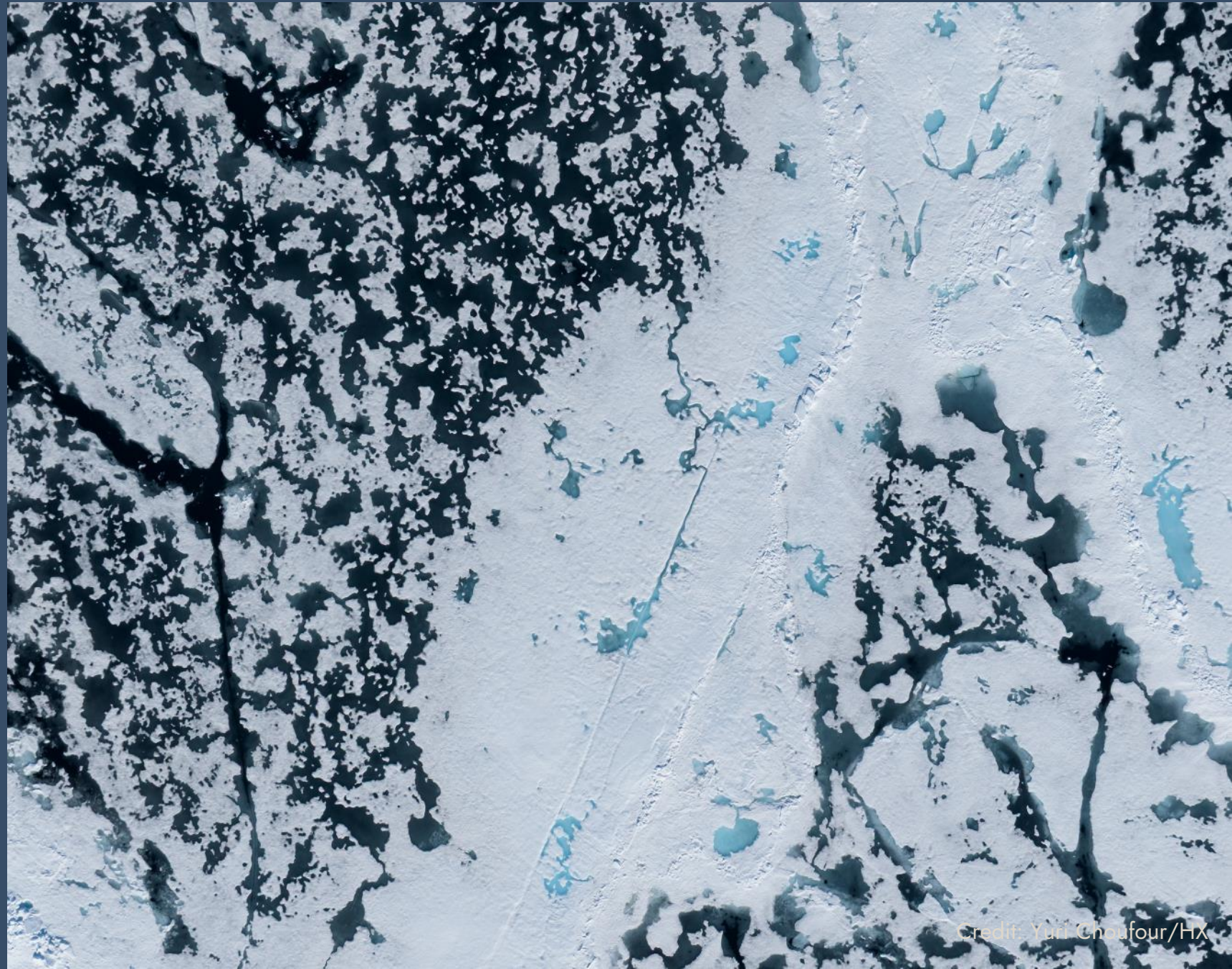


The background of the slide features a deep blue underwater scene with two whales swimming. A large, semi-transparent watermark of the Roman numeral 'IX' is overlaid on the left side of the image. The text 'Science & Education Report' is centered in white.

Science & Education Report

Circumnavigating Svalbard — The Ultimate Expedition

MS FRAM — 30 June — 12 July 2026



Credit: Yuri Choufour/HX



Science & Education Programme

Over the course of this voyage, we collected data for five Citizen Science projects: eBird, iNaturalist, Happywhale, NASA's GLOBE Cloud Observer, and the Secchi Disk project. You joined us for 12 lectures spanning subjects from birds to rocks, and took part in eight Discovery Sessions.

We also welcomed a Guest Scientist from the WAVE project, whose research helps us better understand and minimise the impact of vessels on Arctic whales, along with two Guest Scientists from Sound-Cruising, who are investigating underwater noise pollution.

Many of you engaged deeply with the scientific side of the expedition, and we thank you for your curiosity and enthusiasm. What follows is a summary of the science we carried out together.



Lectures & Discovery Sessions

- 12** lectures
- 8** discovery sessions
- 5** citizen science projects
- 3** science boats
- 2** Guest Scientist projects

History & Culture

During this voyage, we learned not only about the remarkable history of Svalbard but also about some of the most important expeditions that set out to reach the North Pole, including Fridtjof Nansen's voyage aboard the original Fram.

At nearly 79°N, we visited Ny-Ålesund, the world's northernmost year-round research station — once a coal-mining outpost, now an international hub for Arctic science. In 1926, Roald Amundsen, the American Lincoln Ellsworth, and the Italian Umberto Nobile flew the airship Norge over the North Pole from here. The mooring mast and a bronze bust of Amundsen still stand in Ny-Ålesund, honouring Svalbard's exploration legacy.





Wildlife Watch

27 species:
11 mammals
16 birds

Marine Mammal Sightings

Species name	Days sighted
blue whale	1 (4 ind.)
fin whale	1
humpback whale	3
minke whale	multiple
belugas	2
walrus	3
harp seal	3
harbour seal	1
ringed seal	1



This voyage delivered exceptional marine mammal sightings. We recorded four species of baleen whales, belugas, walruses, and three species of seals across the twelve days.

Land Mammal Sightings



Species name	Days sighted
reindeer	4
arctic fox	3

Land mammals were also present throughout the voyage. Reindeer were the most frequently sighted, and Arctic foxes appeared during several of our landings.



Happywhale

Species name	No. submissions
blue whales	2
fin whales	1
humpback whales	2

We made five submissions to the Happywhale database during this voyage. You can follow the MS Fram whales by clicking [here](#)





Happywhale – We have a match!

Individual



Knut (Husavik)

ID HW-MN0200757

Sex Unknown

Humpback Whale

Also Known As

HRC-Mn1486

Sightings 4

First



2025-07-16

Svalbard, Svalbard and Jan Mayen

Last



2026-07-03

Svalbard, Svalbard and Jan Mayen

Followers

1

Follow



Seen this individual?





SEEN ON TRIP :



HX Expeditions

2026-06-29 - 2026-07-12

Boat MS Fram

Fin whale



Blue whale



Humpback whales





iNaturalist

Event in progress



FRSVA270 20260630-20260712 Circumnavigatin...

Jun 30, 2026 - Jul 12, 2026

About

Leave  9

Summary of the wildlife observations from expedition team members and guests on-board MS FRAM during our springtime navigation along the coast of Svalbard.

Read More > ⚙️ Your Membership

Project Members Only 📅 Project Journal

Overview

443 OBSERVATIONS

106 SPECIES

44 IDENTIFIERS

8 OBSERVERS

 Stats

Recent Observations 

View All



Nodding Saxifrage

Saxifraga cernua

 1 6h



Marsh Saxifrage

Saxifraga hirculus

 1 6h

RG



Eight-petal Mountain-Avens

Dryas octopetala

 2 5h



Polar Poppy

Oreomecon dahliana

 1 5h

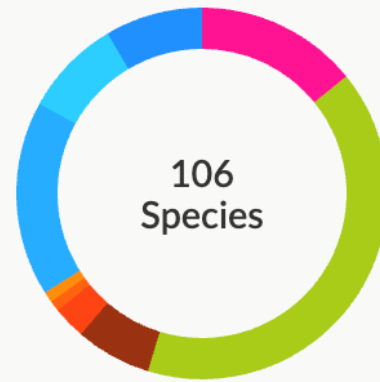


iNaturalist

Stats



- Research Grade
- Needs ID
- Casual



- Unknown
- Protozoans
- Fungi
- Plants
- Chromista
- Mollusks
- Insects
- Arachnids
- Ray-Finned F...
- Amphibians
- Reptiles
- Birds
- Mammals
- Other Animals



Most Observed Species

Tufted Saxifrage 35



Purple Saxifrage 20



Greenland Cochlearia 14



Alpine Sorrel 13



Moss Campion 13



Polar Willow 11



5

Longyearbyen

NASA's GLOBE Cloud Observer

Across this voyage, 14 guests completed five submissions to NASA's GLOBE Cloud Observer from up at the ice edge. These are valuable data points that help scientists understand the complex relationships between sea, ice, and sky.

We encourage you to keep looking up at the sky once you return home — every contribution helps.

[View our data](#) on the global map



GLOBE Cloud Observations Paired with NASA Satellite Data

Total Satellite Comparisons: 68

Useful Resources: [How to Read My NASA GLOBE Clouds Satellite Comparison Table](#), [How to Compare My Cloud Observations with Satellite Data](#), [Cloud Cover](#), [Cloud Type](#), [Cloud Opacity](#), [Satellites](#)

Observation	GLOBE	NOAA-20 Satellite
Universal Date/Time	2026-07-02 08:57:00	2026-07-02 09:12
Latitude	79.56	79.18 to 79.98
Longitude	11.03	10.8 to 11.6
Total Cloud Cover	Overcast (>90%)	Overcast 96.27%
High Clouds		
Mid Clouds		Cover: Scattered 28.52% Altitude: 2.6 (km) Phase: Ice/Water Mix 268.22 (K) Opacity: Opaque
Low Clouds	 Stratus Cover: Overcast (>90%) Opacity: Opaque	Cover: Broken 67.74% Altitude: 1.16 (km) Phase: Ice/Water Mix 272.36 (K) Opacity: Opaque
GLOBE Cloud Photos and Corresponding NASA Satellite Images.	GLOBE Photos North East South West Up Down Click image to view ---> Note: Photos submitted though GLOBE need approval before being displayed, this may take a few days.	VIIRS NOAA-20  Worldview Tutorial
Sky Conditions, Surface Conditions and Observer Comments	Sky Conditions Sky Visibility : no report Sky Color : no report Surface Conditions Snow/Ice : No Standing Water : No Muddy : No Dry Ground : No Leaves on Trees : No Raining or Snowing : Yes	Are there any comments you would like to add? Be sure to add the name of the satellite for our record. Submit Comment



Page Curator: Tina Rogerson

NASA Official: Jessica Taylor

Page Last Modified: 07/11/2026 11:01:53

+ No FEAR Act

+ Freedom of Information Act

+ Privacy Policy

+ Office of Inspector General

+ Agency Financial Reports

+ Accessibility

+ Comments or Questions?

NASA's GLOBE Cloud Observer

Several of our observations were matched to satellite passes. The table below compares our ground-based observations with the satellite view from above.

[View our data](#) on the global map



eBird

Our stand-in Ornithologist, Dominic, completed nine eBird checklists covering 12 species over our 12-day voyage, documenting 561 individual birds.

The most abundant species were the little auk (dovekie), black guillemot, and black-legged kittiwake. For full survey details, follow the link below.

[MS Fram: Circumnavigating Spitsbergen
30.06.2026 – 12.07.2026 - eBird Trip
Report](#)



Locations of eBird Surveys

Red symbols indicate travelling surveys conducted while the ship was in motion; blue symbols represent surveys carried out from a stationary position.

Species Observed

12	Barnacle Goose
12	Common Eider
2	Parasitic Jaeger
12	Atlantic Puffin
124	Black Guillemot
184	Dovekie
1	Thick-billed Murre
107	Black-legged Kittiwake
6	Glaucous Gull
34	Arctic Tern
57	Northern Fulmar
10	Snow Bunting

Species Totals from eBird Surveys

Please note: black-legged kittiwake numbers are under-reported due to counting difficulties at Gnålodden and Burgerbukta, likely by a factor of 10.



Science Boat

We ran three science boat sessions during this voyage: at Smeerenburg, Texas Bar, and Bamsebu.



[View our data](#) submitted to the Secchi Disk Project



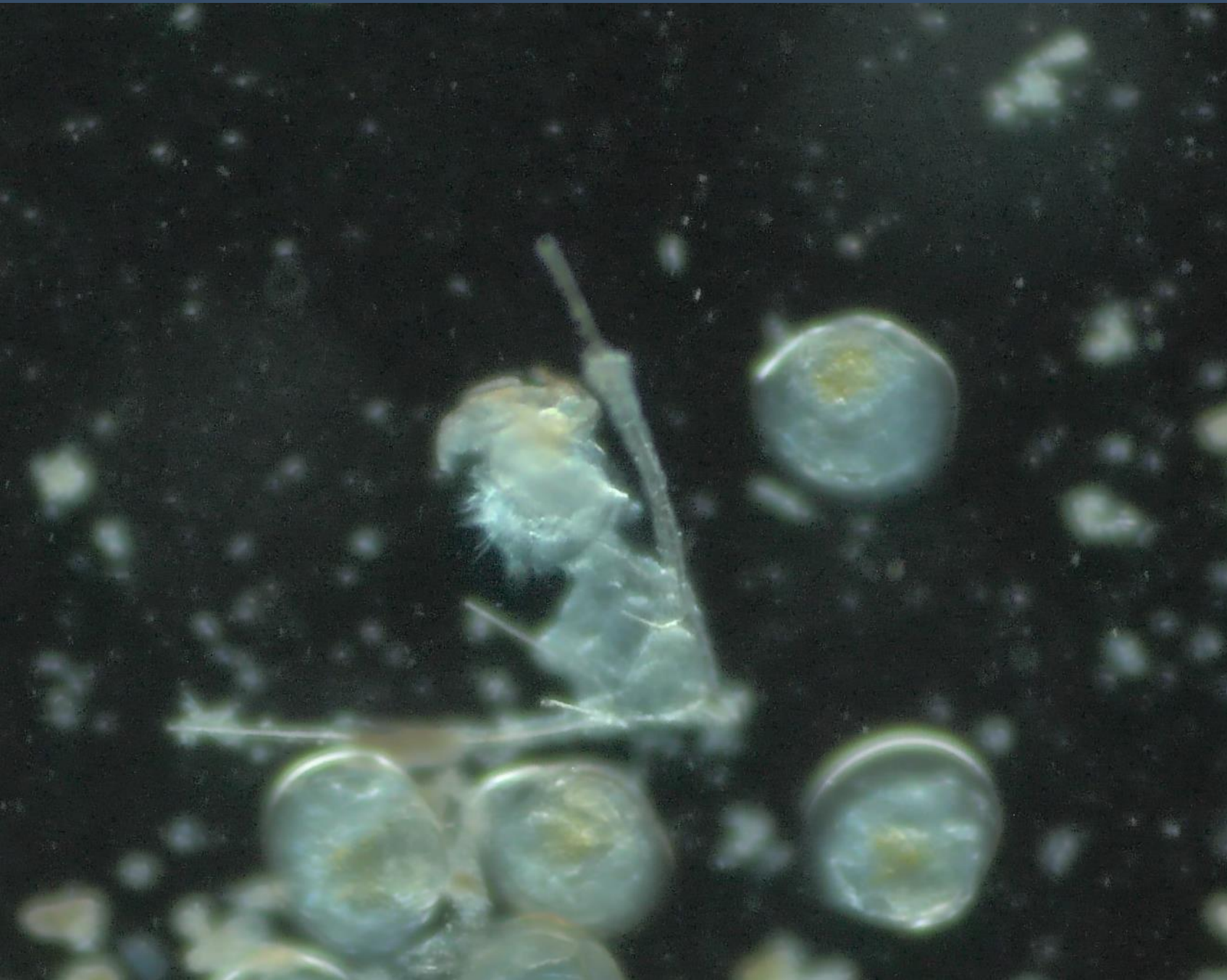
Plankton Samples



**Plankton
Samples:
*Copepoda***



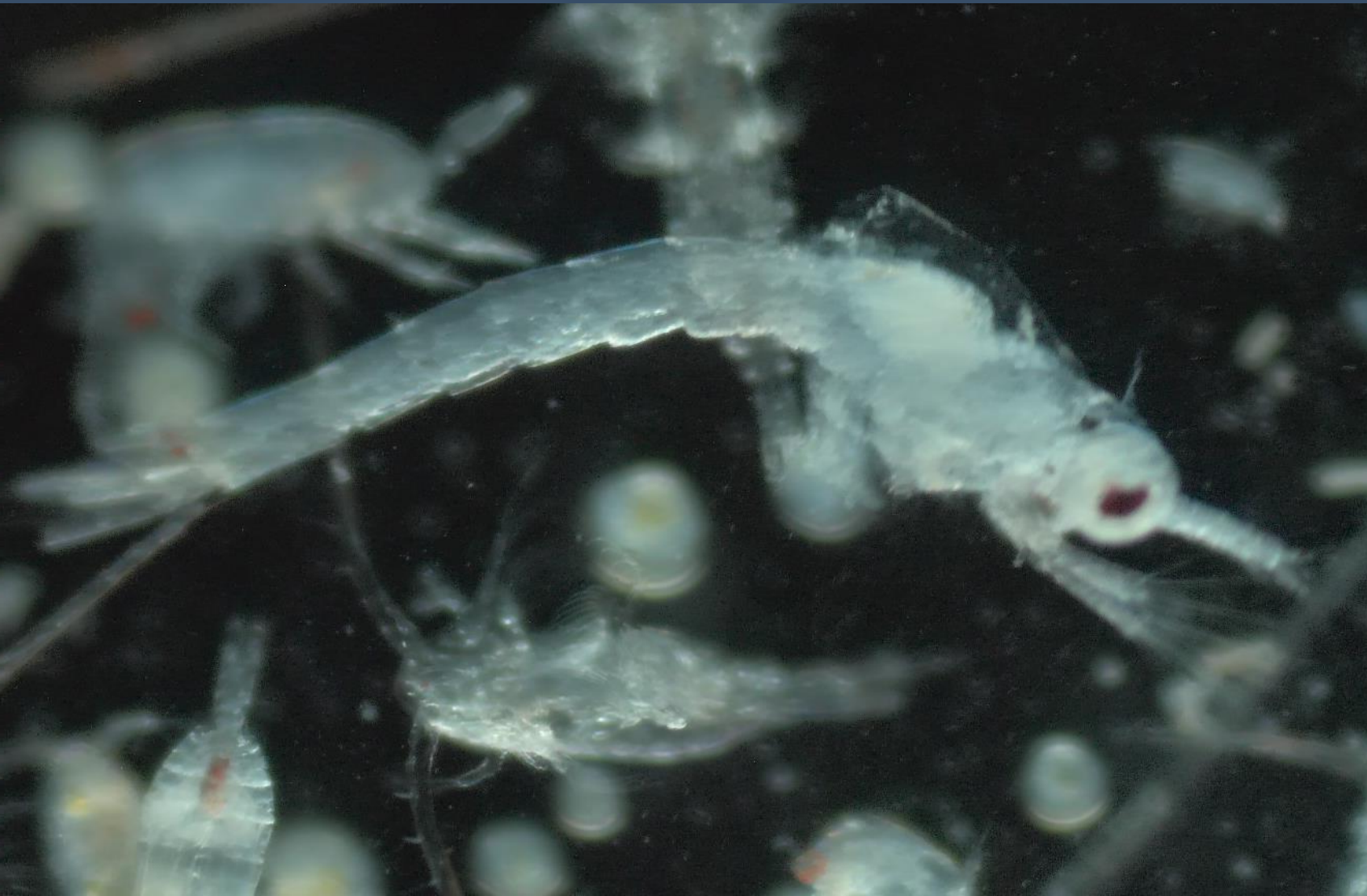
**Plankton
Samples:
*Copepod
Larvae***



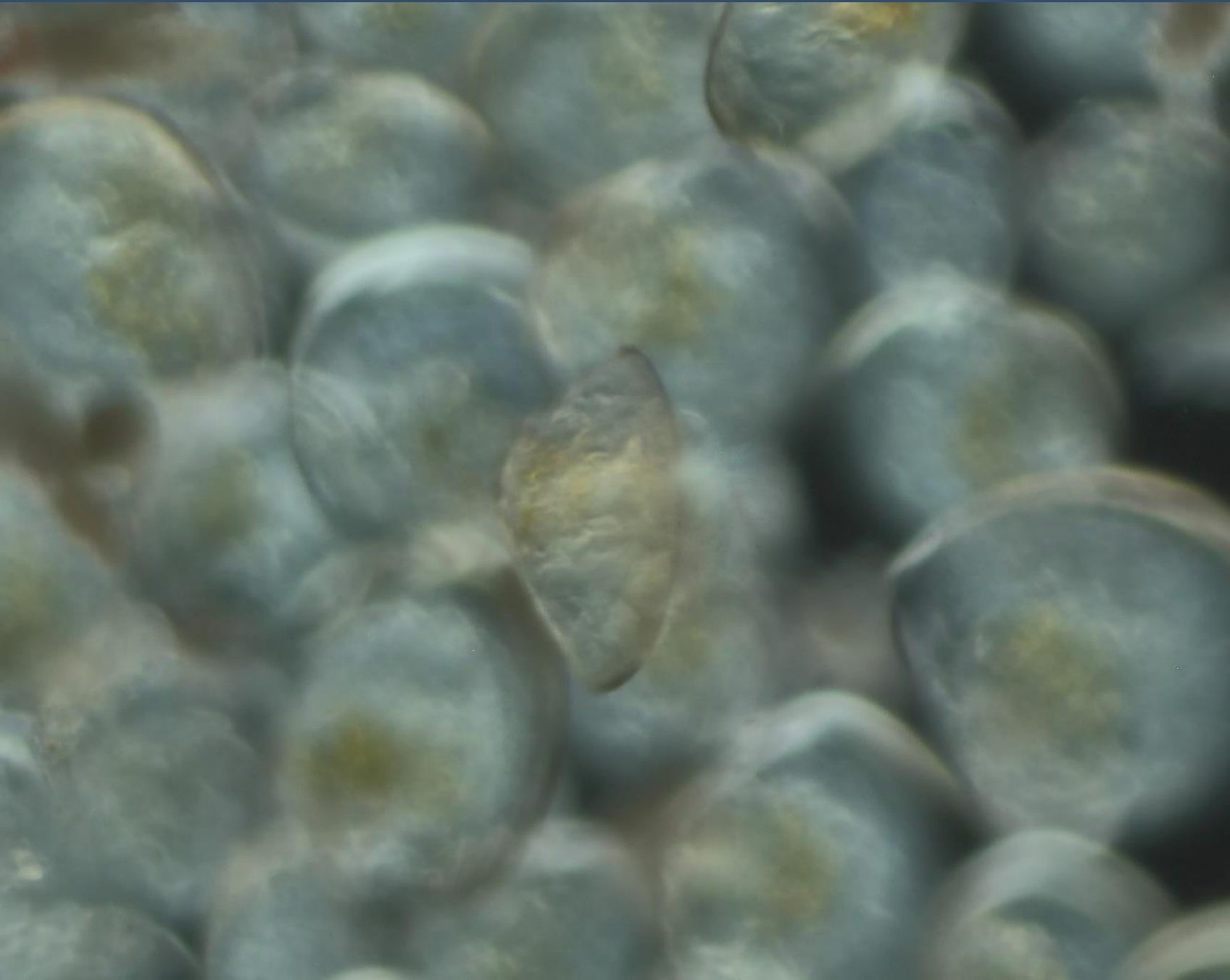
Plankton
Samples:
Echinoderm
Larvae
(sea star / sea
urchin)



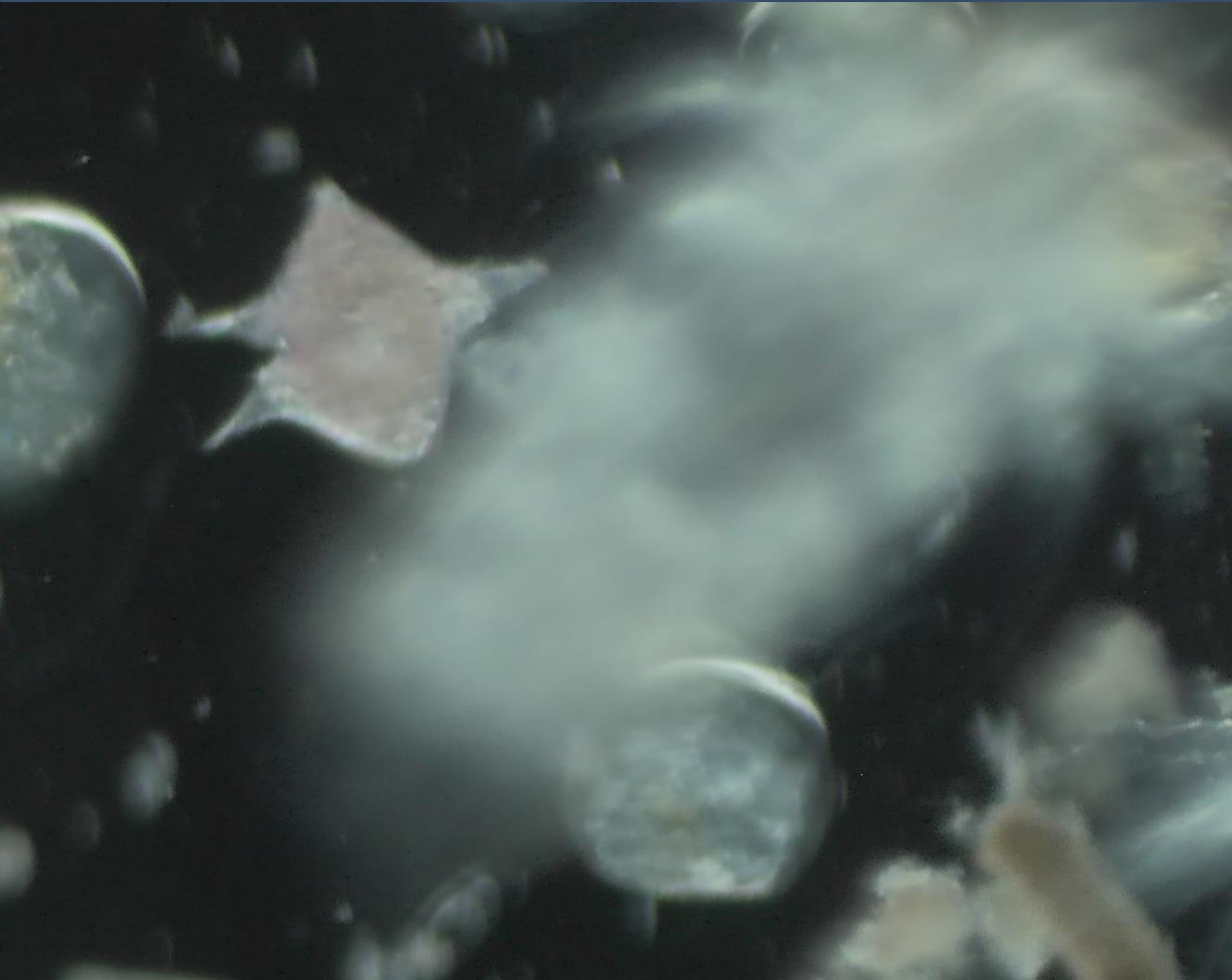
Plankton Samples: Crab Larvae



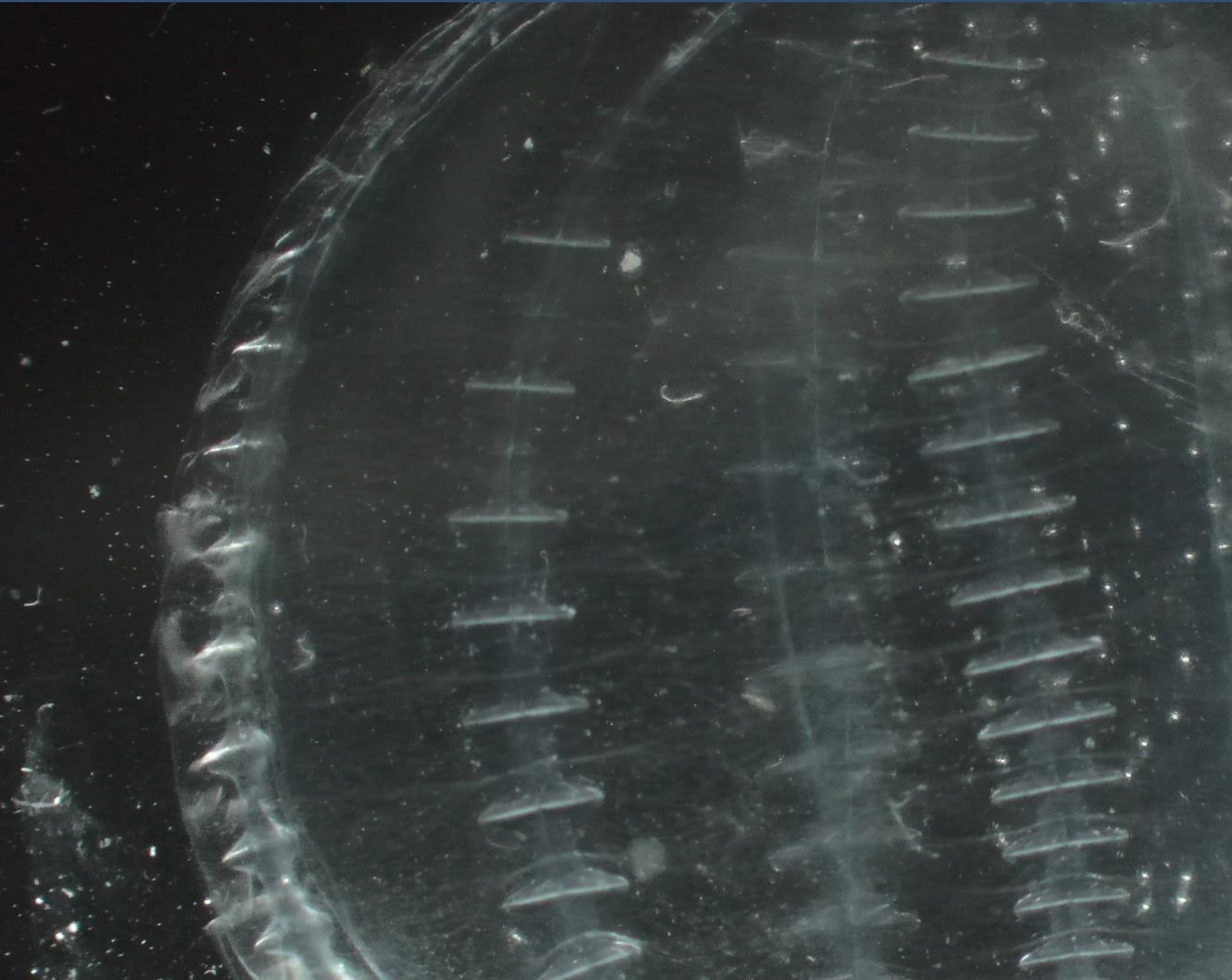
**Plankton
Samples:
Crustacean
Larvae
(possibly
shrimp)**



**Plankton
Samples:
Bivalves (clams
or mussels)**



Plankton
Samples:
Dinoflagellates



Plankton Samples: Comb Jelly



Plankton Samples: Comb Jelly



Land and Marine Mammals

WAVE Project – Whales & Arctic Vessels

Dr Lauren McWhinnie of Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh joined us as one of our Guest Scientists during this voyage. She was conducting fieldwork for the WAVE project, which works to better understand and minimise the impact of vessels on Arctic whales.

Over 11 days aboard, Dr McWhinnie logged 88 hours of dedicated survey effort while MS Fram was underway, and a further 28 hours of opportunistic observation while we were at anchor. During that time, she recorded 13 species of marine mammal, including nine encounters with Svalbard's belugas – a population thought to number fewer than 600 individuals and listed as endangered by the Norwegian Government. These were remarkable sightings.

The WAVE project is supported by the HX Foundation and HX Expeditions. Dr McWhinnie and her team send their thanks to every guest who contributed observations, and invite you to follow the project over the coming years to see how this research is helping protect these unique animals.

Aims:

- Establish an understanding of Arctic cetacean populations in collaboration with expedition operators.
- Understand the exposure of Arctic whales to vessels.
- Inform decision-making on the conservation of Arctic cetaceans and their habitats.

Keep up to date and stay involved: www.wave-arcticwhales.com

Please send marine mammal photos to: l.mcwhinnie@hw.ac.uk



Sound-Cruising

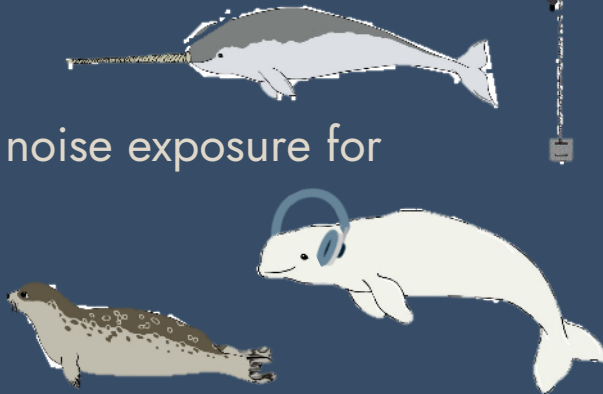


Investigating underwater noise from cruise operations in Svalbard

Funded study (NOK 900.000) to collect a dataset of noise budgets and characteristics associated with local cruise activity

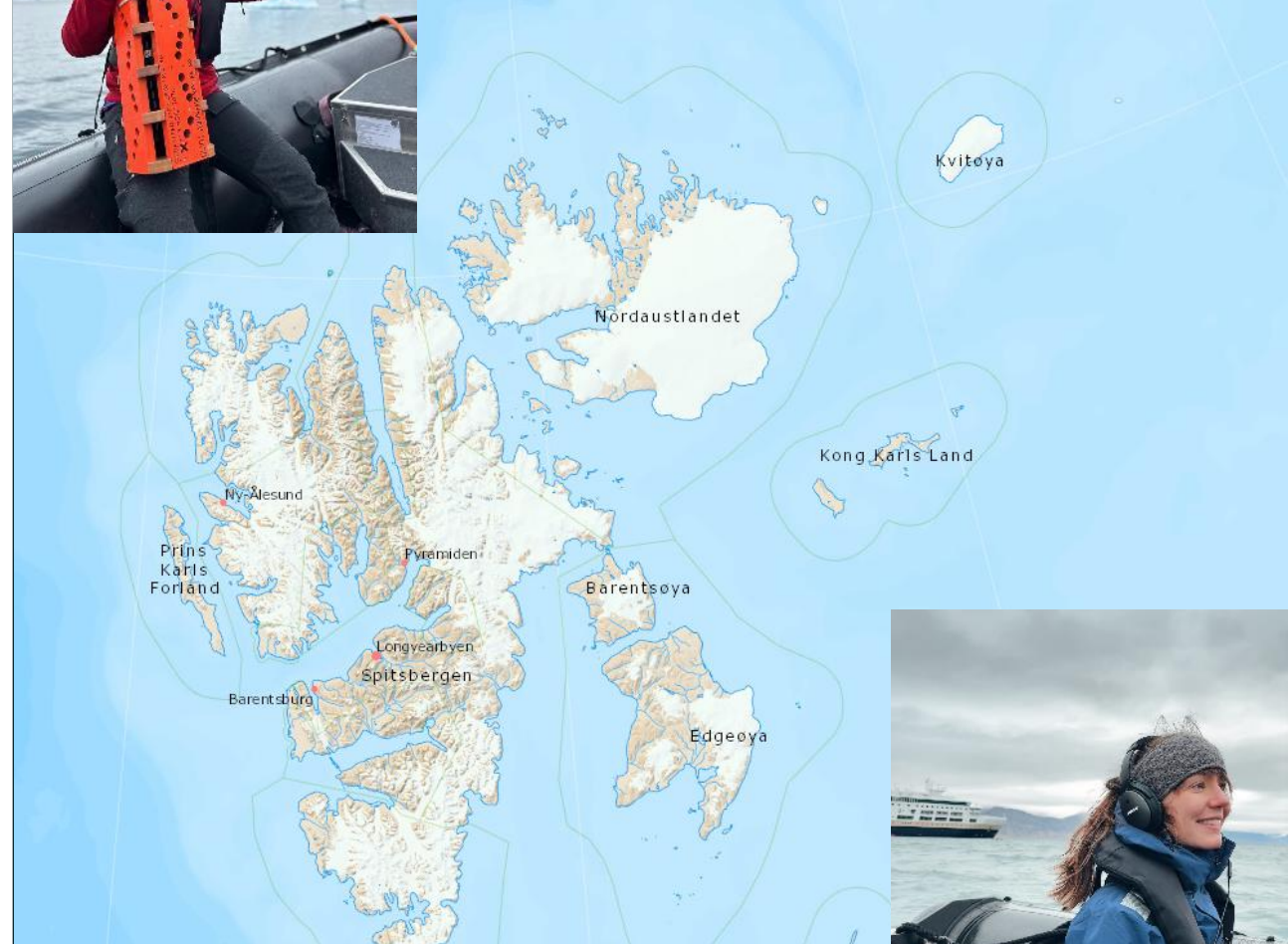
- Local
- Prolonged
- Repeated

noise exposure for



Heidi Ahonen, PhD

Senior Researcher, Marine Bioacoustics /
Norwegian Polar Institute



Fabienne Mannherz

PhD Candidate, Marine Bioacoustics /
Aarhus University, Denmark



During this voyage

Svalbard 30th June – 12th July 2026



Locations

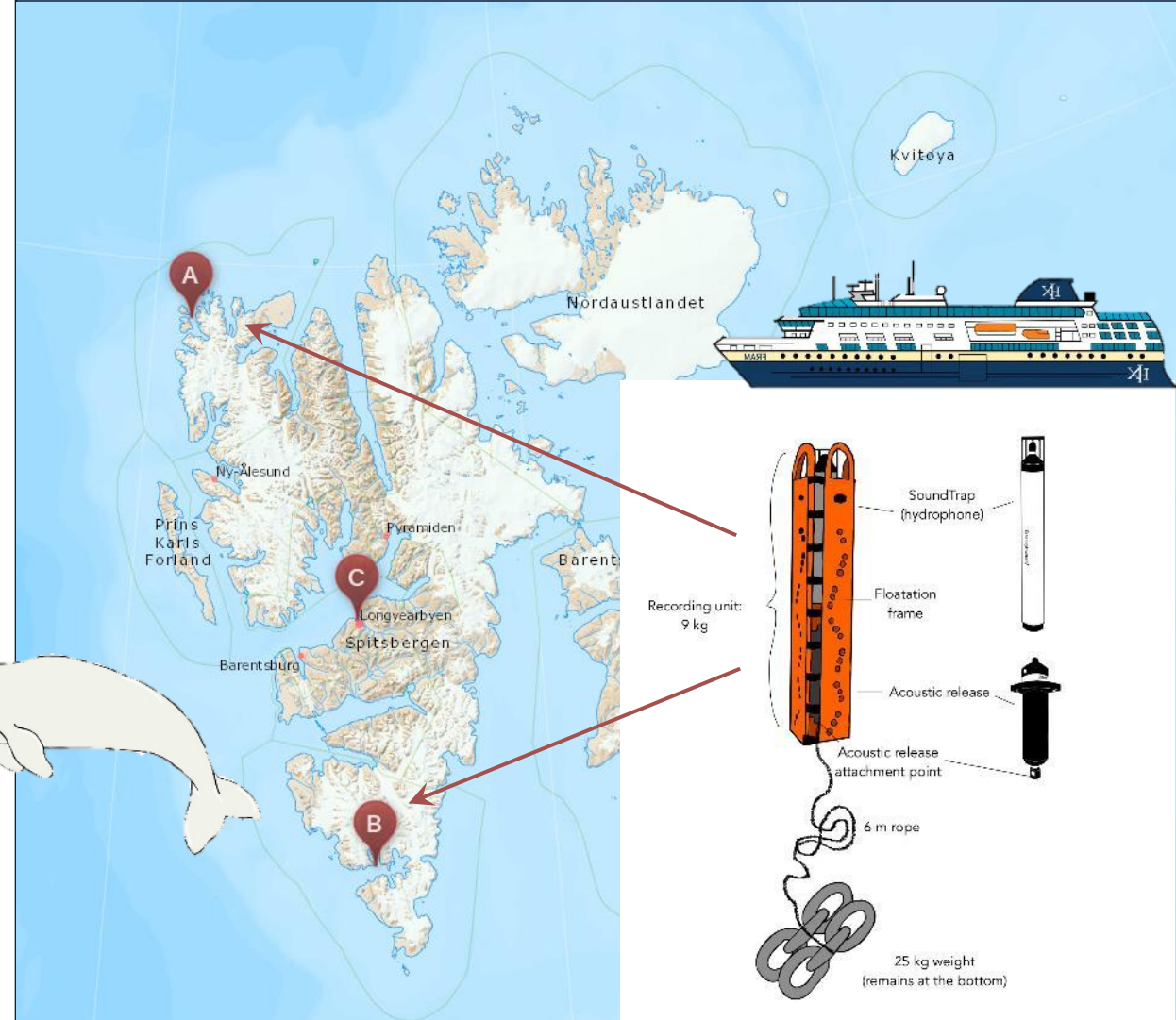
A-Smeerenburg & B-Hornsund/Gnålodden

Successful recovery of "winter" data

→ Capturing of natural autumn - spring soundscape
(10 min./hour duty cycle)

Successful deployment for summer data

→ Capturing the summer soundscape, focusing on
expedition operations
(will record continuously until August 2026)



60 km

Maps/coordinates are unsuited for navigation

During this voyage

Svalbard 30th June – 12th July 2026

Thank you 

Fabienne Mannherz
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@fabienne-mannherz



@heidi-ahonen

Heidi Ahonen, PhD
Senior Researcher
Marine Bioacoustics
Heidi.Ahonen@npolar.no

Recovery in Gnålodden



Wildlife

List — Birds



Wildlife List — Seabirds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH
<i>Alle alle</i>	little auk/dovekie	Krabbentaucher
<i>Cephus grylle</i>	black guillemot	Gryllteiste
<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Atlantic puffin	Papageitaucher
<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	northern fulmar	Eissturmvogel
<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	glaucous gull	Eismöwe
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	black-legged kittiwake	Dreizehenmöwe
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	common eider	Eiderente
<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Arctic skua/ parasitic jaeger	Schmarotzerraubmöwe
<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	great skua	Skua
<i>Uria lomvia</i>	Brünnich's guillemot / thick-billed murre	Dickschnabellumme

Wildlife List – Waterbirds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH
<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	barnacle goose	Weißwangengans
<i>Gavia stellata</i>	red-throated diver/loon	Sterntaucher
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	common eider	Eiderente
<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	long-tailed duck	Eisente

Wildlife List — Landbirds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH
<i>Lagopus muta</i>	rock ptarmigan	Alpenschneehuhn
<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	snow bunting	Schneeammer



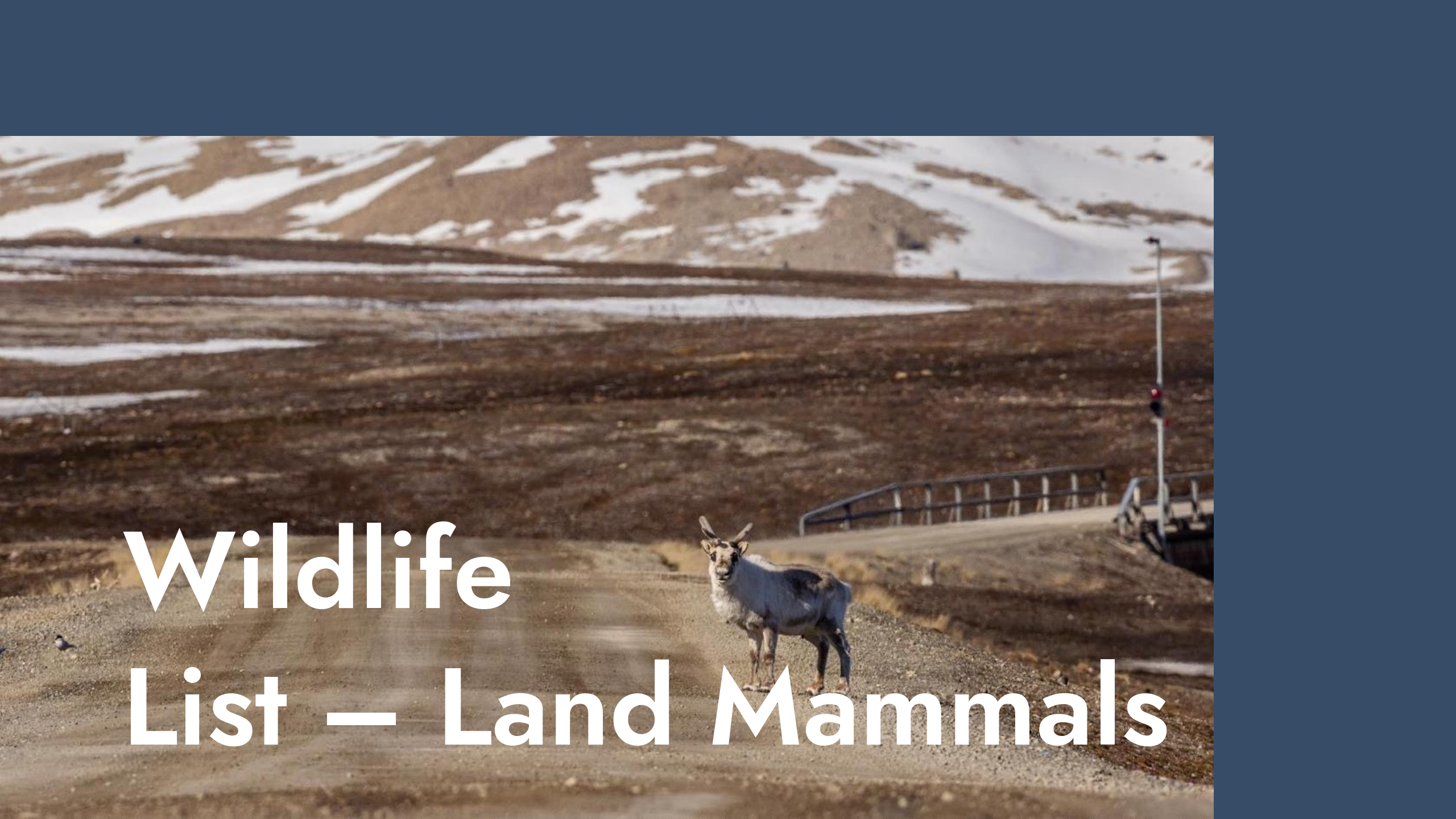
Wildlife

List — Marine Mammals

Wildlife List – Marine Mammals



SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH
<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>	minke whale	Zwergwal
<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	blue whale	Blauwal
<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	fin whale	Finnwal
<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	humpback whale	Buckelwal
<i>Delphinapterus leucas</i>	beluga whale	Weißwal
<i>Ursus maritimus</i>	polar bear	Eisbär
<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	harbour seal, common seal	Seehund
<i>Pusa hispida</i>	ringed seal	Ringelrobbe
<i>Odobenus rosmarus</i>	walrus	Walross

A photograph of a mountain goat standing on a gravel path in a snowy, mountainous landscape. The goat is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. The background shows a steep, snow-covered mountain slope with patches of brown vegetation. A metal railing and a traffic light are visible on the right side of the path.

Wildlife List — Land Mammals

Wildlife List – Land Mammals



SCIENTIFIC NAME		ENGLISH	DEUTSCH
<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>		reindeer	Rentier
<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>		Arctic fox	Polarfuchs

Thank you!

The MS Fram Science & Education Team extends heartfelt thanks for choosing HX Expeditions to circumnavigate the Svalbard archipelago with us this summer. Your participation supports the ongoing work of the researchers we host on board, giving them the platform, the logistical support, and the collaborators they need to carry out meaningful studies in one of the most challenging environments on Earth.

We are deeply grateful for the curiosity and shared enthusiasm you brought to the natural world – from birds and marine mammals to flowers, lichens, mosses, and even the microscopic life found in a single drop of water.

It was a genuine pleasure to exchange ideas, reflect on Svalbard's history over coffee, and pause together in front of the landscapes and ecosystems we encountered. We hope this journey stays with you for a long time to come.





THANKS

Thanks for your participation!