

Circumnavigating Svalbard – The Ultimate Expedition

MS Fram

21 July – 2 August 2026



History & Culture

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



History & Culture

Gnålodden, Hornsund: the place where Wanny Woldstad, a taxi driver from Tromsø, became Svalbard's first female trapper. She spent the winter in this weathered hut, located beneath a cliff of nesting seabirds.



Science Boat

During this voyage, we carried out seven science boat outings, from Hornsund at the southernmost part of Spitsbergen, all the way north to Storøya and Kvitøya.



Science Boat

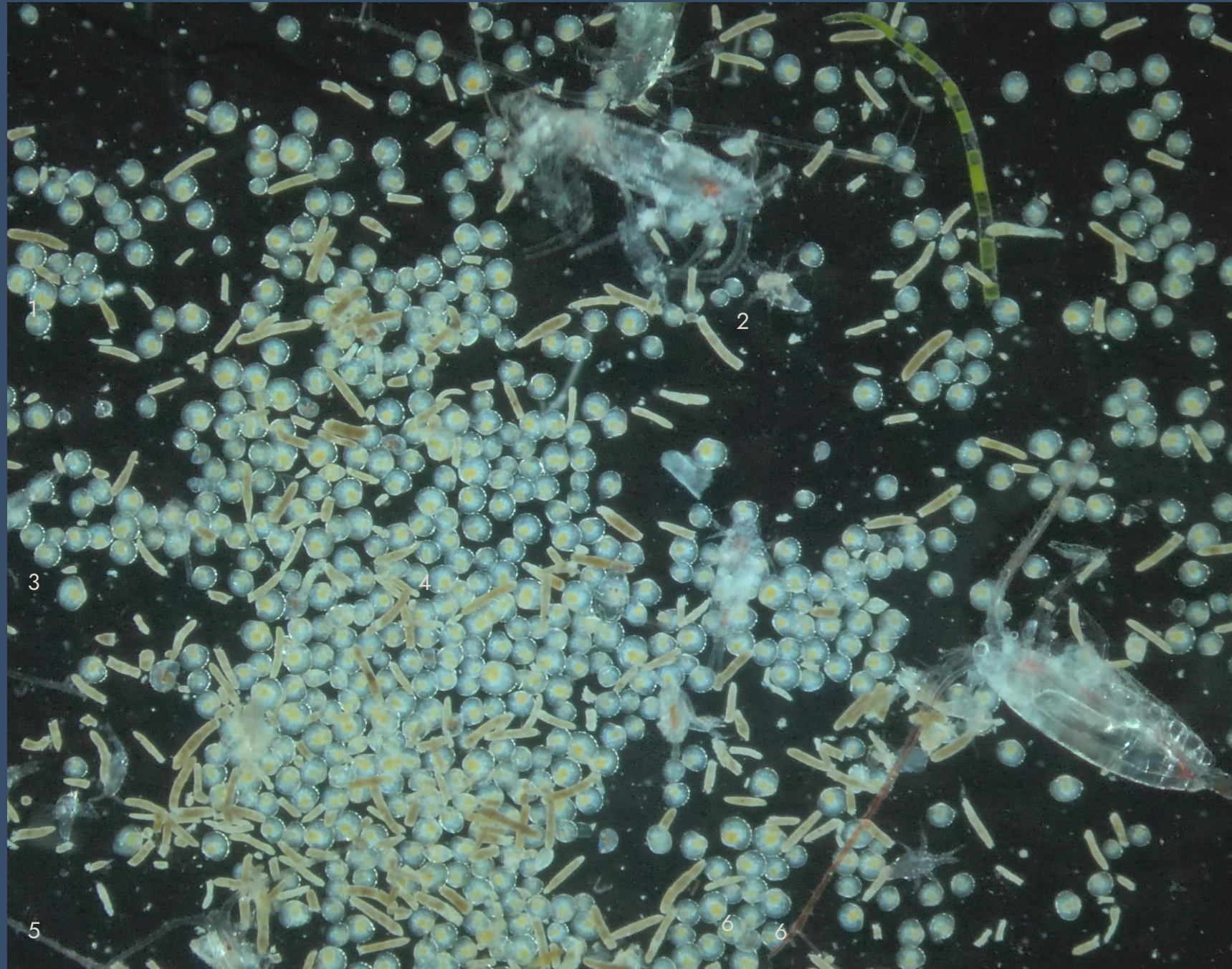
We performed CTD measurements, collected water samples, and launched our hydrophone to record the underwater soundscapes. Among our results, we observed megalopa larvae of crustaceans, larval sea worms and copepods, as well as adult individuals. We detected a bloom of zooplankton (copepods) all around the archipelago.

Together, these results will help us better understand the ongoing changes in the Arctic Ocean. Our data will be submitted to EMODnet, the living platform and network, at the end of this voyage.



Science Boat

This photo, taken under our microscope, shows a plankton sample from around the archipelago, which was full of zooplankton. The sample, collected in Storøya, also contained adult copepods, bivalve larvae, and nauplius larvae. The abundance of clams is consistent with the presence of walrus hauling out around the island.

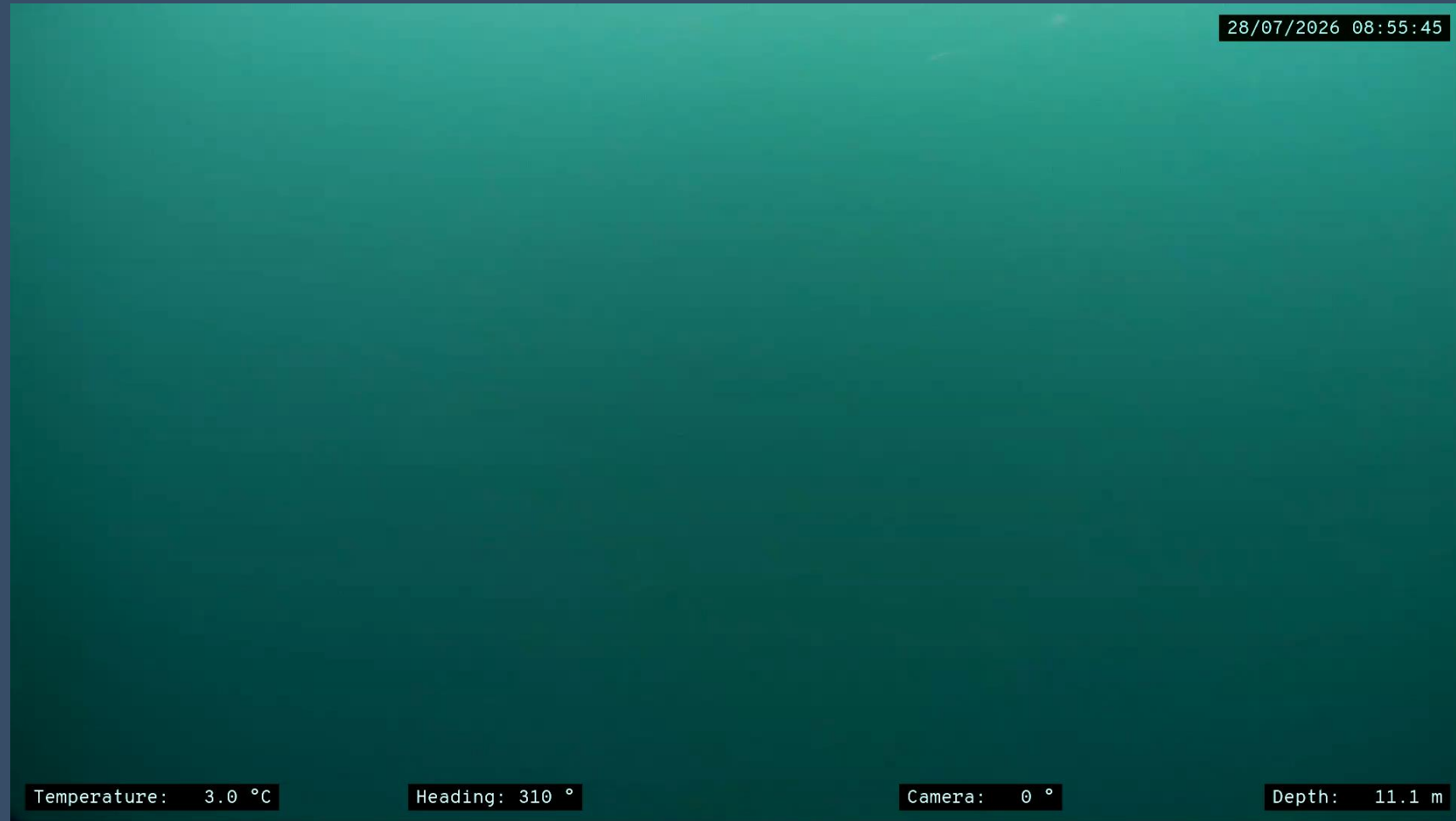


Underwater Drone

We deployed our underwater drone in Storøya and recorded the presence of a vibrant kelp forest composed mainly of winged kelp (*Alaria esculenta*) growing at 24 m depth.

In this rich ecosystem, we also found sponges, ascidians, and sea snails, which benefit from the shade provided by the kelp, allowing them to grow undisturbed and away from predators. Kelp forests are unique and vital ecosystems found in temperate and polar waters. Help save the kelp forests.

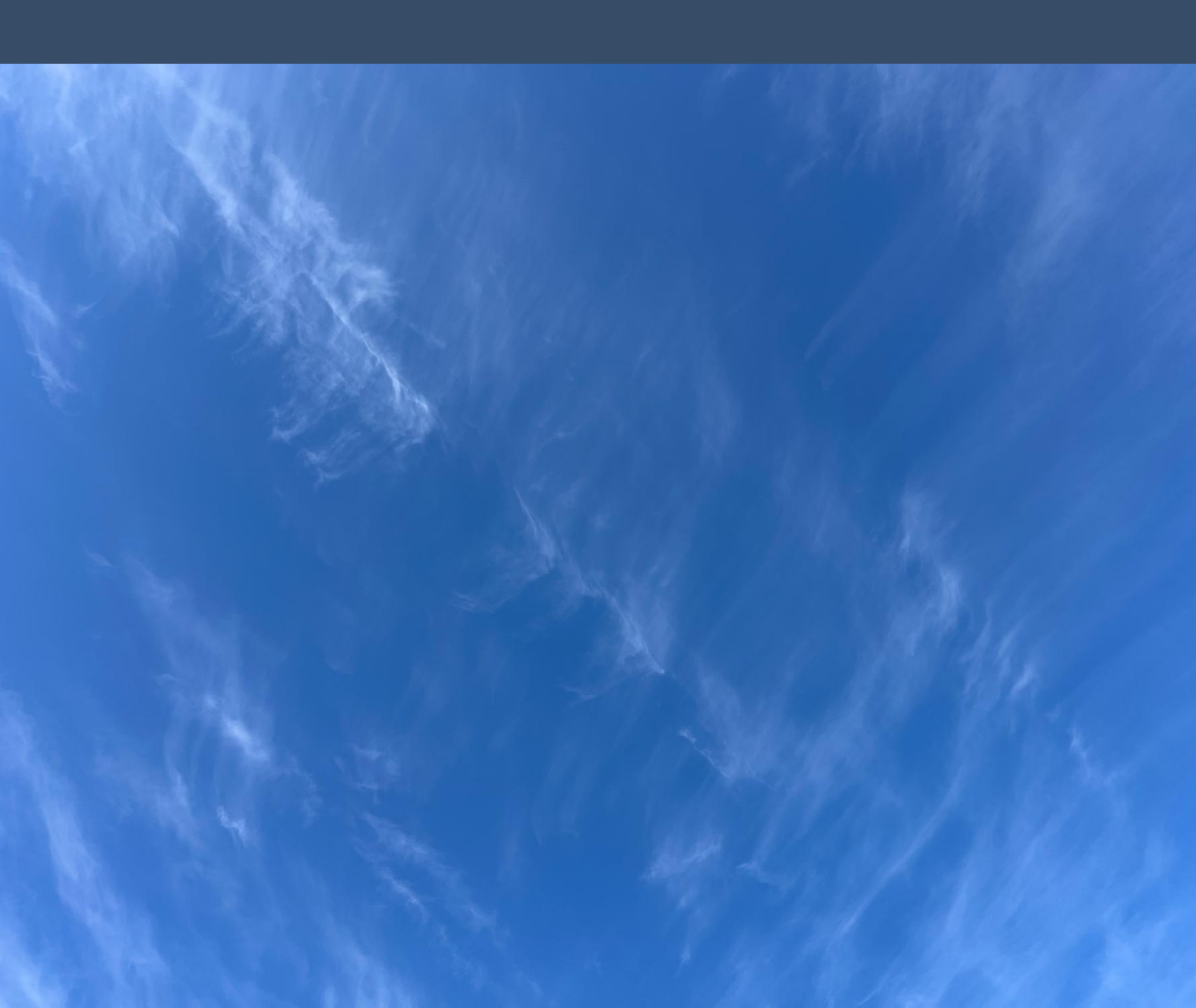
View the highlights from our underwater drone footage [on YouTube](#)



Geological Highlights

During this voyage we circumnavigated Svalbard and encountered its vast geological history. One highlight was the Iguanodon dinosaur footprints at Boltodden, dating back around 200 million years. They are evidence of a shallow ocean basin characterised by soft sediment, in which dinosaur prints could easily become fossilised. Tectonic movements following this period allowed the material to be uplifted to Earth's surface, where erosion carved the sedimentary rocks, making the footprints visible to the naked eye.





NASA's GLOBE Cloud Observer

We collected two observations for NASA, though no satellite match has been reported yet. Do not hesitate to continue looking at the sky back home, since every contribution helps scientists.

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



Beach clean-up

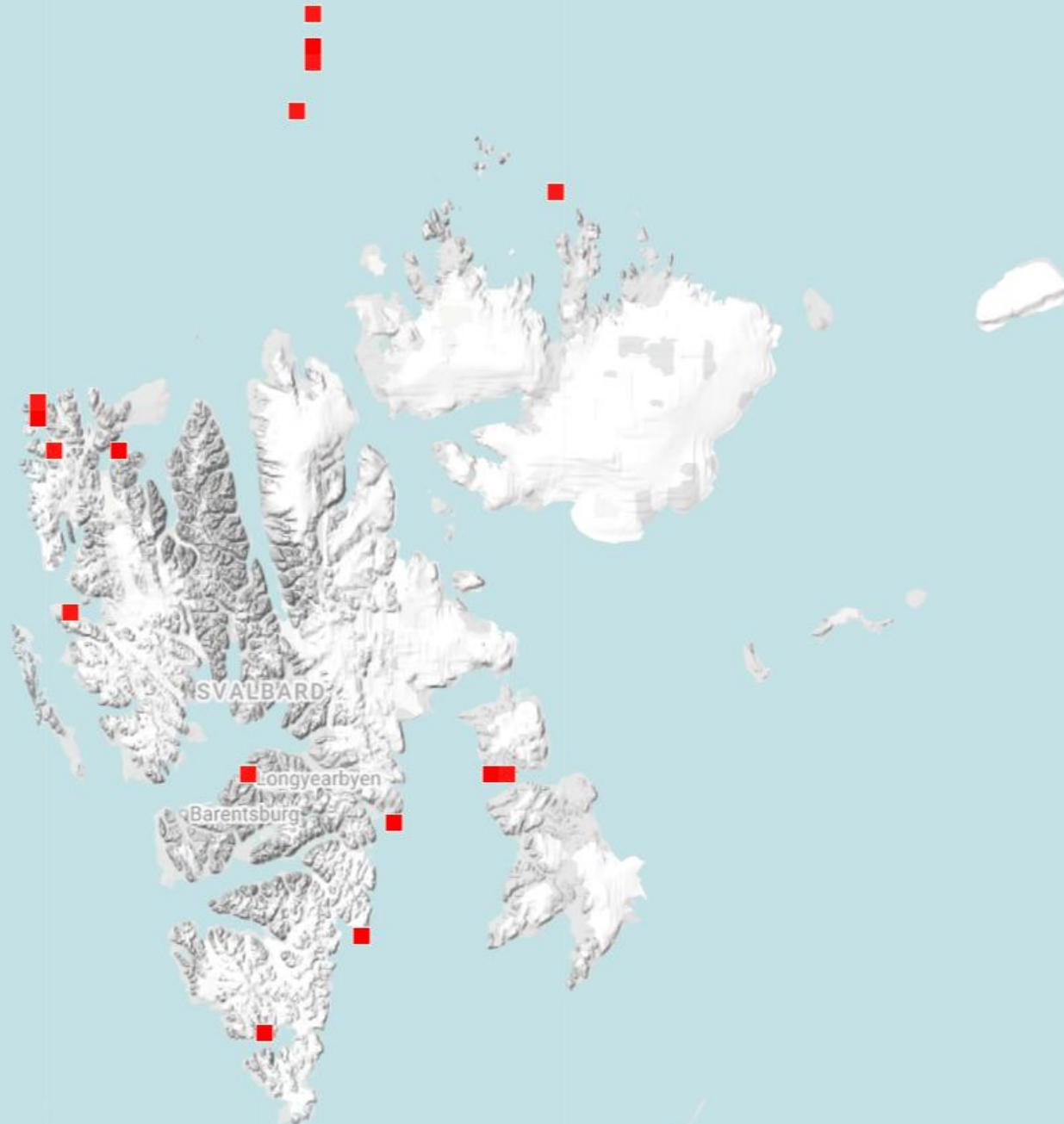
MS Fram is on a mission to collect ocean waste in the isolated locations we visit. We collected 23 kg of ocean waste during our voyage, the majority of which was collected at Smeerenburg. Since the beginning of the Svalbard season, we have collected a total of 53 kg of ocean waste.

Norwegian Polar Institute

Svalbard Visitors' Marine Mammal Sightings Database

Since the start of the season, we have submitted our sightings to the Norwegian Polar Institute as part of our voyage. This has helped to document the abundance and distribution of marine mammals around the archipelago. With 13 polar bears and over 80 walrus recorded on this trip alone, our statistics will undoubtedly inform the work of researchers, helping to improve our understanding of how marine fauna are responding to a warming Arctic.

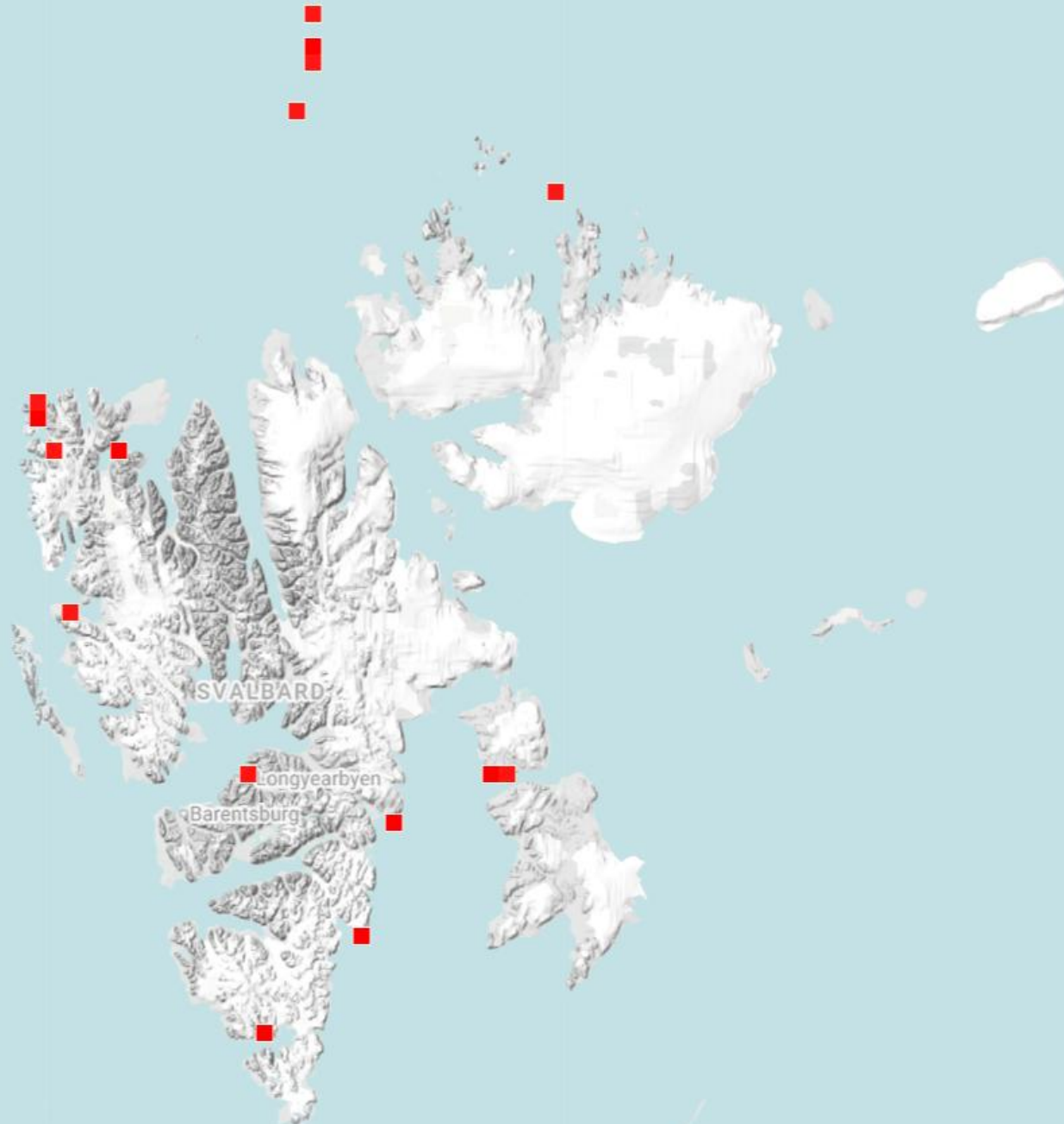
You can find a summary of our observations on the next page. Please note that these statistics do not include the sightings recorded by Charlotte Findlay and our other Guest Scientists while on board MS Fram during this voyage.





Norwegian Polar Institute

Svalbard Visitors' Marine Mammal Sightings Database



Species	Number of individuals
Minke whales	10
Fin whales	2
Belugas	6
Harbour seals	35
Bearded seals	3
Hooded seals	2
Unidentified seals	2
Walrus	80+
Polar bears	13



WAVE Project



Guest Scientist
Dr. Charlotte Findlay

During this voyage around Svalbard, Charlotte spent 80 hours surveying the bridge for whales while MS Fram was navigating. She recorded 10 species, including humpback and blue whales that were missed by our Science Team on board MS Fram. The most abundant were minke whales, with rare blue whales around the ice edges. Encounters with these animals made this voyage successful for acquiring key data to monitor the impact of growing maritime traffic on these sensitive animals.

Keep up to date with the project and stay involved:

www.wave-arcticwhales.com

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



Wildlife

List — Marine Mammals

Wildlife List – Marine Mammals

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH
<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>	common minke whale	Zwergwal
<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	fin whale	Finnwal
<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	blue whale	Blauwal
<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>Pagophilus groenlandicus</i>	harp seal	Sattelrobbe
<i>Cystophora cristata</i>	hooded seal	Klappmütze
<i>Erignathus barbatus</i>	bearded seal	Bartrobbe
<i>Pusa hispida</i>	ringed seal	Ringelrobbe
<i>Odobenus rosmarus</i>	walrus	Walross



Happywhale

Although we did not manage to submit any photos to the Happywhale project during this voyage, we were fortunate to spot several marine mammals, including minke and fin whales, as well as walruses, polar bears, and hooded seals. The photo here shows the emblematic bearded seal, the largest seal after the walrus, and favourite prey of the polar bear. We hope you keep your eyes on the horizon for wildlife once you are back home. We may see you on board again soon. Thanks for travelling with HX. Do not forget to visit MS Fram's profile on Happywhale by clicking [here](#).

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Wildlife List — Land Mammals

Wildlife List – Land Mammals

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



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>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Arctic skua/ parasitic jaeger	Schmarotzerraubmöwe
<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	pomarine skua/jaeger	Spatelraubmöwe
<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	great skua	Skua
<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Arctic tern	Küstenseeschwalbe
<i>Uria lomvia</i>	Brünnich's guillemot / thick-billed murre	Dickschnabellumme

Wildlife List – Waterbirds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH
<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	pink-footed goose	Kurzschnabelgans
<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	barnacle goose	Weißwangengans
<i>Calidris maritima</i>	purple sandpiper	Meerstrandläufer
<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	long-tailed duck	Eisente
<i>Gavia stellata</i>	red-throated diver/loon	Sterntaucher
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	common eider	Eiderente
<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	king eider	Prachteiderente
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	common ringed plover	Sandregenpfeifer

Wildlife List — Landbirds

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





eBird

Thanks to Enzo's efforts combined with yours, we recorded around 18 different bird species during 17 surveys (checklists). The most numerous species were the little auks, with 460 individuals observed, followed by Brünnich's guillemots with 120 individuals.

You can review these observations by joining our [Trip Report](#) for this voyage.

Wildlife List — Flora



Wildlife List — Flora

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH
<i>Flavocetraria cucullata</i>	curled snow lichen	Kapuzenflechte
<i>Bistorta vivipara</i>	alpine bistort	Knöllchen-Knöterich
<i>Saxifrage paniculata</i>	alpine saxifrage	Schnee-steinbrech
<i>Cerastium arcticum</i>	Arctic mouse-ear chickweed	Arktisches hornkraut
<i>Saxifrage cernua</i>	drooping saxifrage	Nickende Steinbrech
<i>Pedicularis hirsute</i>	hairy lousewort	Behaartes läusekraut
<i>Xanthoria spp.</i>	elegant sunburst lichen	Zierliche Gelbflechte
	feather mosses	
<i>Silene acaulis</i>	moss campion	Stengelloses leimkraut
<i>Silene latifolia</i>	white campion	Breitblättrige Lichtnelke
<i>Saxifraga oppositifolia</i>	purple saxifrage	Roter steinbrech
<i>Oreomecon dahliana</i>	Svalbard poppy	Svalbard-mohn
<i>Saxifraga cespitosa</i>	tufted saxifrage	Rasen-steinbrech vierkantiges heidekraut
<i>Carex spp.</i>	Sedge	-
<i>Alaria esculenta</i>	winged kelp	-

Wildlife List — Flora

SCIENTIFIC NAME		ENGLISH	DEUTSCH
<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>		marsh saxifrage	Moor-Steinbrech
<i>Dryas octopetala</i>		mountain avens	Silberwurz
<i>Oxyria digyna</i>		mountain sorrel	Alpen-Säuerling
<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>		scurvy-grass	Gebräuchliches Löffelkraut
<i>Fucus vesiculosus</i>		bladderwrack	



iNaturalist

Thanks to your efforts, we recorded almost 100 opportunistic observations representing over 45 different species.

As summer takes hold in the Arctic, plants are flourishing. They represent around 30% of our observations, followed by breeding birds and marine mammals.

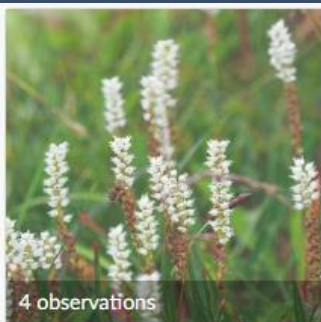
By sharing your data on iNaturalist, you are contributing to a global, open-access database that fuels scientific research and conservation monitoring. These records are vital tools for researchers tracking species distribution and assessing ecosystem health.

You can view the project and also upload your observations from our voyage by [clicking here](#).



6 observations

Alpine Sorrel
Oxyria digyna



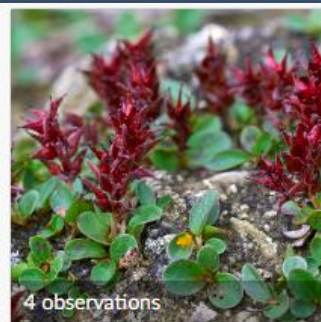
4 observations

Alpine Bistort
Bistorta vivipara



4 observations

Nodding Saxifrage
Saxifraga cernua



4 observations

Polar Willow
Salix polaris



3 observations

Moss Campion
Silene acaulis



3 observations

Eight-petal Mountain-Avens
Dryas octopetala



3 observations

Marsh Saxifrage
Saxifraga hirculus



3 observations

Polar Poppy
Oreomecon dahliana



2 observations

Purple Sandpiper
Calidris maritima



2 observations

Black-legged Kittiwake
Rissa tridactyla



2 observations

Hooded Seal
Cystophora cristata



2 observations

Bearded Seal
Erignathus barbatus



2 observations

Scurvy Grass
Cochlearia officinalis



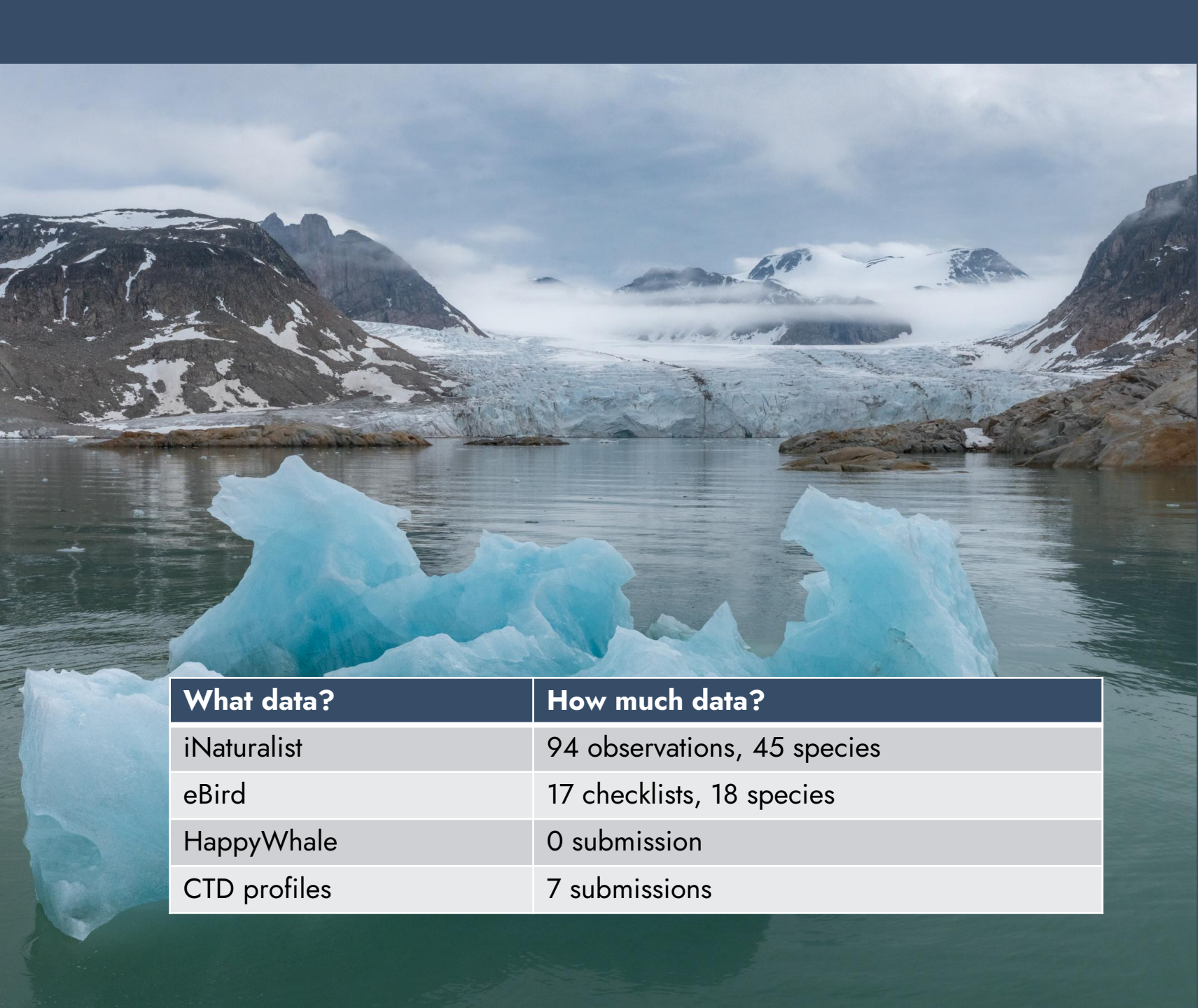
2 observations

Tufted Saxifrage
Saxifraga cespitosa



2 observations

Alpine Mouse-Ear
Cerastium alpinum



In Summary

Our summertime expedition around Svalbard was a remarkable journey into some of the most remote waters of the Arctic.

Our itinerary allowed us to collect valuable data regarding terrestrial flora, fauna, and marine ecosystems. Key scientific highlights included spectacular sightings of several polar bears, beluga whales, as well as the emblematic common and king eiders.

Our science boat outings were very popular, together with our lectures and workshops, helping to bridge the gap between science and general knowledge of the pristine and remote ecosystems we visited.

What data?	How much data?
iNaturalist	94 observations, 45 species
eBird	17 checklists, 18 species
HappyWhale	0 submission
CTD profiles	7 submissions

Thank you!

The MS Fram Science & Education Team extends heartfelt thanks for choosing HX Expeditions to explore the Svalbard archipelago during summertime. Your participation not only supports the ongoing work of researchers but also enables them to join our voyages, carry out meaningful studies, and access essential logistical resources that are often difficult to secure.

We are deeply appreciative of your genuine curiosity and shared enthusiasm for the natural world — from birds and marine mammals to flowers, lichens, mosses, and even the microscopic life found in a drop of water.

It was a true joy to exchange ideas, reflect on history over coffee, and marvel together at the diverse ecosystems we encountered. We hope this journey will remain among your most treasured memories.





THX

**Thanks for your
participation!**