



**SYSSELMANNEN
PÅ SVALBARD**

**THE GOVERNOR OF SVALBARD
ГУБЕРНАТОР СВАЛЪБАРДА**

Norsk Polarinstitutt Tromsø
Framsenteret
9296 TROMSØ

Att.: Sebastien Descamps

Our date:
18.04.2021

Our reference
16/00650-38

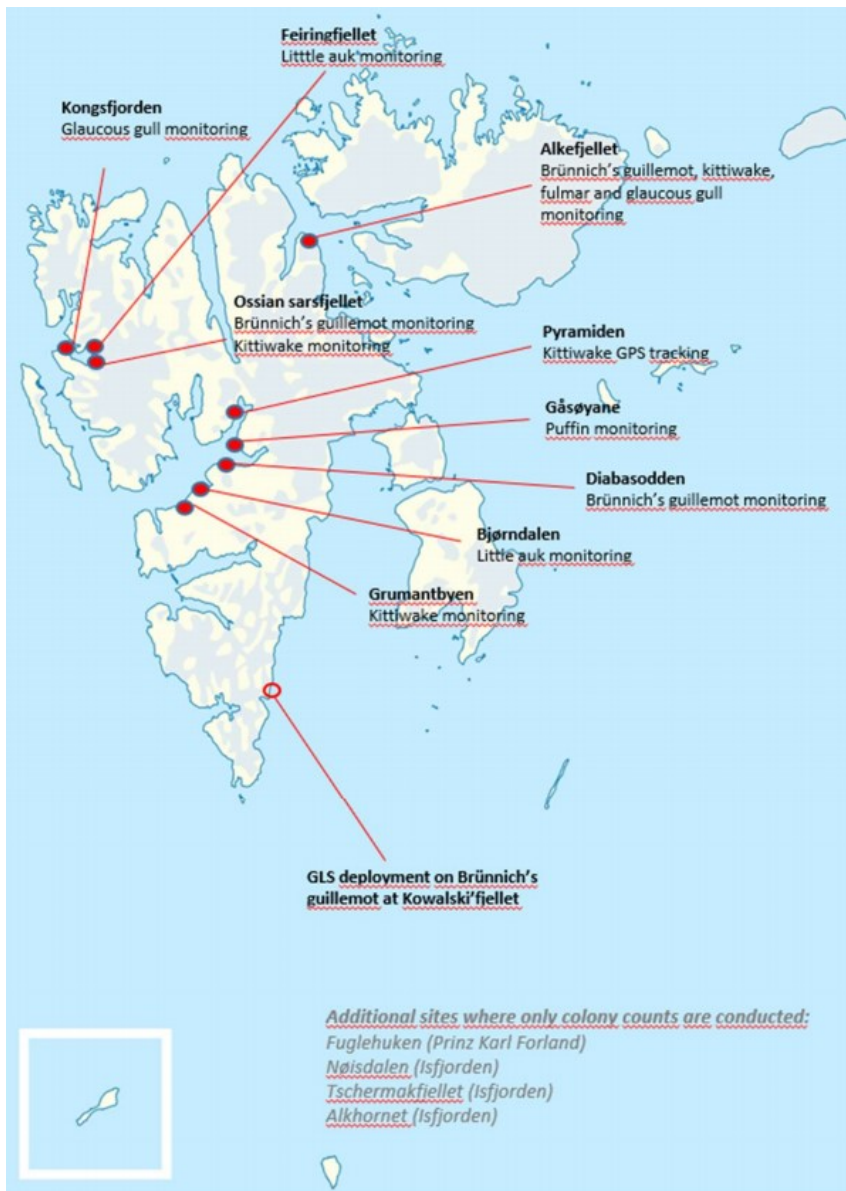
Your date:
08.03.2021

Reply to research application on seabirds - SEAPOPOP - Kongsfjorden, Isfjorden, Alkefjellet, Kovalskij'fjellet - 2021 - NP - RiS-ID 361

We refer to application submitted 08.03.2021 regarding fieldwork on seabird locations in Kongsfjorden, Isfjorden, Hinlopen and Kovalskij'fjellet in summer 2021.

The Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI) is planning to do population and demographic monitoring in connection to the seabird monitoring programme "SEAPOPOP" (SEAbird POPulations), and the "MOSJ" programme (Miljøovervåking Svalbard og Jan Mayen). The fieldwork activities encompass colony monitoring (counts), bird capture and ringing (to estimate body condition and survival rates), nest monitoring (to estimate breeding success), diet observation or sampling, and foraging studies (through logger deployments to identify key foraging areas or wintering grounds). The level of activities depends on field site and species.

A sum-up of the Spitsbergen field sites in 2021 are presented in the map from NP below.



Excerpt from the application:

Project description

Key-site monitoring:

This population and demographic monitoring will take place in Isfjorden, Kongsfjorden and Hinlopen. It will concern colonies of Brünnich's guillemots (Diabasodden in Isfjorden and Ossian sarsfjellet in Kongsfjorden, Alkefjellet in Hinlopen), kittiwakes (Grumantbyen and Pyramiden in Isfjorden, Ossian sarsfjellet in Kongsfjorden, Alkefjellet in Hinlopen) and little auks (Bjørndalen in Isfjorden and Feiringsfjellet in Kongsfjorden), as well as glaucous gulls breeding in Kongsfjorden and puffins on Gåsøyane.

Isfjorden fieldwork:

A team of two to four persons will work in Isfjorden in summer 2021. Field season will start on June 8th and end up on August 2nd (plus one week of fieldwork at the Gåsøyane puffin colony end of August). Work will mostly be conducted at Diabasodden, Bjørndalen, Gåsøyane and



Grumantbyen. Additionnaly, there will be two sessions of work at Pyramiden (ca. 3 days in June and July) for deploying and retrieving VHF and GPS loggers on kittiwakes.

Kongsfjorden fieldwork:

One team of two people will work in Kongsfjorden in summer 2021 to run the long-term seabird monitoring there. This team will work from 8th of June to 2nd of August on Brünnich's guillemots, kittiwakes, little auks and glaucous gulls. An additional team of two will spend approximately one week for doing the annual population counts at Fuglehuken and for deploying GPS loggers on kittiwakes at Ossian sarffjellet in July.

Alkefjellet fieldwork:

One team of four people will work at Alkefjellet approximately 5 days between the 20th and 30th of June. Four species will be monitored: Brünnich's guillemot, Black legged kittiwakes, Glaucous gulls and Northern fulmars.

Field work details per site and species (long term activities):

• Diabasodden and Ossian Sarsfjellet guillemot colonies

The work on Brünnich's guillemots includes capture (or recapture) of ca. 20 individuals at Ossian sarffjellet and 10 at Diabasodden, ringing (with metal and plastic bands) and nest monitoring (through visual observation at a distance). A subsample of the captured adults at Ossian sarffjellet will receive a GLS logger to get insight about their at-sea distribution outside the breeding season.

• Bjørndalen and Feiringfjellet little auk colonies The work on little auks includes capture and ringing (metal + plastic bands) of about 30 individuals in each colony, resighting (at a distance) of ringed individuals and nest monitoring (Bjørndalen only). Sampling of food (food brought back to the chicks; 20 samples in each colony) will also be done throughout the season. Field personnel will have rubber gloves available when sampling and manipulating birds, and they will be instructed how to take the necessary precautions to avoid contamination by Echinococcus multilocularis (Bjørndalen colony). Each colony will be visited 2 to 3 days pr week.

Since 2016, a collaboration is running with the Polish team in Hornsund (Katarzyna Wojczulanis-Jakubas, University of Gdansk). Long-term monitoring of little auks is ongoing there and from 2015 onwards, we deploy GLS loggers at Hornsund every summer to identify little auk wintering strategies.

• Grumantbyen kittiwake colony: The work on kittiwakes includes capture (or recapture) of ~40 individuals, ringing (metal and plastic bands), and nest monitoring (through visual observation). Chicks of all banded individuals will be captured and banded. Sampling of food (food brought back to the chicks; in total 10 to 20 samples) will also be done. A subsample of the captured birds will receive a GLS or GPS logger to get insight about their foraging behaviour and at-sea distribution outside the breeding season. Field personnel will have rubber gloves available when sampling and manipulating birds, and they will be instructed how to take the necessary precautions to avoid contamination by Echinococcus multilocularis.

• Pyramiden kittiwake colony The Isfjorden team will spend 2-3 days in June and 2-3 days in July at Pyramiden to monitor the population and deploy (and retrieve) VHF and GPS loggers and track movements and foraging behaviour of breeding kittiwakes.

• Glaucous gulls in Kongsfjorden (collaboration with Geir Wing Gabrielsen, NPI and Børge Moe, NINA) The population and demographic monitoring of glaucous gulls in Kongsfjorden will be done in close collaboration with project RiS 3859. This will imply regular visits to the glaucous gull nests (2 times per week) throughout the breeding season, capture of 15-20 adults (in June) and

capture/ringing of chicks (June/July). Glaucous gull nests are spread throughout Kongsfjorden and in total, ca. 50 nests will be monitored.

- *Seabird counts in Isfjorden Once in June, the Isfjorden field assistants will go to the Alkhorner (guillemots and kittiwakes), Tschermakfjellet (guillemots and kittiwakes) and Nøisdalen (fulmars) colonies to count individuals in some specific monitoring plots (established in 1988).*

- *Seabird counts at Forlandet / Fuglehuken A team of two will spend 4 days on Prins Karl Forland in late June/early July to count birds (guillemots and kittiwakes) in 9 monitoring plots within the Fuglehuken colony. Those plots have been established in 1988 and have been annually counted. They will stay at the cabin close to the colony (northern tip of Prinz Karl Forland).*

- *Puffin monitoring on Gåsøyane We started monitoring the puffin colony on Gåsøyane in 2015. This monitoring is based on (i) population counts, (ii) nest monitoring and (iii) capture/ringing/recapture (since 2018). Work is only done on the western part of the main island where most puffins breed. To get accurate estimate of chick production and population numbers, we visit this colony once a week from late June to early August. At each visit, we (i) monitor the status of ca. 50 nests and (ii) count the number of active nests in several plots distributed in the colony (plots established in 2015). Capture and ringing of ca. 30 puffins will be done in 2020 to assess puffin survival (through capture-ringing-recapture methods) and deploy GLS loggers (to describe their winter distribution). GLS loggers will also be deployed on 50 chicks at the end of August, just before they fledge.*



Gåsøyane and location of the main puffin colony.

Work will only be done in this blue area and the other parts of the reserve will remain undisturbed.

- *Seabird monitoring on the East coast of Svalbard: Brünnich's guillemot, kittiwake, glaucous gulls and fulmars at Alkefjellet In 2015, we started studying the status, trend and general ecology of Brünnich's guillemots, kittiwakes and fulmars breeding in East Svalbard (Alkefjellet colony). In 2017, we added glaucous gulls in this monitoring work and start counting the glaucous gull population breeding there. This work will be continued in 2020. A field camp (4 igloo tents + 1 lavo; team of 4 persons) will be established for ca. 1 week on top of the Alkefjellet colony. During this period, we will:*

- (i) *Monitor plots (established in 2015) for estimating the trend in the number of breeding birds.*

- (ii) *Capture and ring birds (guillemots, kittiwakes and fulmars only) to monitor bird survival (through capture/recapture methods)*

- (iii) *Deploy and retrieve GLS loggers to identify their wintering areas (guillemots, kittiwakes and fulmars only).*

Additional project in 2021:

migration and winter distribution of Brünnich's guillemots breeding in South-East Svalbard.



The Brünnich's guillemot has been declining on Bjørnøya and in west Spitsbergen since the late 1990s and has become red listed. This decline is linked to the warming of the ocean during the non-breeding season, which is a key period to consider to explain guillemot population trend. Brünnich's guillemots from north east Svalbard (Alkefjellet) winter in the Barents Sea and the population there is stable ; on the opposite, guillemots from west Spitsbergen and Bjørnøya winter around Iceland and South Greenland, and all colonies wintering there are declining. The majority of the Svalbard Brünnich's guillemot population breeds in south east Svalbard (incl. Hopen), and the overall status of the species on Svalbard is thus highly dependent on the population trends in this area. One can expect that if birds from south east Svalbard winter in the Barents Sea, this part of the population may be stable (as Alkefjellet), while if they winter in the west Atlantic, they would likely be declining. Identifying the winter distribution of Brünnich's guillemots breeding in south east Svalbard is the central objective of this project. This is essential to re-assess the overall status and trend of Svalbard Brünnich's guillemot.

To answer this question, we planned a field expedition to Kowalski'fjellet in summer 2021 to deploy GLS loggers on breeding Brünnich's guillemots. Loggers will be retrieved in 2022. A team of 3 will reach these colonies by helicopter and deploy GLS loggers on 30 individuals. No field camp is planned at Kowalski'fjellet and the team will only stay there a few hours. Work will be combined with the "ivory gull monitoring" program (H. Strøm, NPI). Both teams will fly out from LYR with the same helicopter, and one team will be dropped off at Kowalski in the morning and picked up at the end of the day. The team of 3 will include 2 bird handlers and 1 polar bear guard.

Helicopter

To access the study area in Alkefjellet (Hinlopen), NP plan to use helicopter and therefore apply for two landings close to Alkefjellet (between the 20 June and 30 June). Landing sites will be at 79.584 N 18.461 E. Landing will take place >500 m away from the colonies, and done in a way that will not disturb the colony (i.e. arrival from the back of the colony). NP also plan 2 landings at the top of Kowalski'fjellet colony (77.072°N 17.285°E), approx. 0.5 km away from the colony. This will happen between the 20th and 30th of June and both landings will occur on the same day (flight combined with the ivory gull monitoring).

Camping

One field camp will be established in summer 2021 at Alkefjellet (top of the colony). Tents (4 igloos + 1 lavo) will be placed on top of the colony on bare ground at 79.584 N 18.461 E. Human watches will be organized at night for bear safety. Food items will be kept tightly wrapped and locked inside metal boxes. Flare guns and rifles will always be kept close at hand and ready-to-use. Human waste will be brought back to LYR along with the other waste (specific compostable plastic bags will be used for human waste). All other garbages will be brought to Longyearbyen and disposed of according to local regulations. The camp will stay up only for 5 days in late June.

Regulations

Act of 15 June 2001 No.79 Relating to the Protection of the Environment in Svalbard

iv. Fauna

Section 25 (the principle of general protection)

All species of flora and fauna, including their eggs, nests and lairs, are protected unless otherwise provided by this Act.

Section 30 (what protection of the fauna involves)



No person may hunt, capture, injure or kill fauna or damage eggs, nests or lairs unless so authorised by the provisions of this chapter.

Section 37 (*exemptions*)

Even if permission may not be granted for a particular undertaking under this chapter, the Governor may grant exemptions from the provisions of this chapter for scientific purposes or when other special reasons so indicate.

Section 83 (the use of aircraft)

Aircraft may not land on ships or on the ground or water outside a landing strip that has been licensed or approved in accordance with the Air Traffic Act. The Governor may on application grant exemptions from the provision of the first sentence.

No person may fly an aircraft closer than one nautical mile from large known concentrations of mammals and birds.

Section 84 (individual permits for motor traffic)

When the Governor decides applications for permits for motor traffic, weight shall be attached to the purpose of the application, the risk of environmental damage from the traffic in question, and the objective of restricting motor traffic in Svalbard. If a permit is granted, the grounds for this shall indicate how these factors have been evaluated.

Regulations relating to the national parks Sør-Spitsbergen, Forlandet and Nordvest-Spitsbergen, the nature reserves Nordaust-Svalbard and Sørøst-Svalbard, and the nature reserves for birds on Svalbard.

Forlandet national park and Sør-Spitsbergen national park

Section 3. *Purpose of the national parks*

The national parks is particularly intended to safeguard:

- an island with a characteristic mountain range with jagged (alpine) mountains and a wide coastal plain
- well-developed rock glaciers and frozen ground formations
- several localities of varying sizes with cliff-nesting seabird colonies and a core area for the world's most northerly population of common seal (harbour seal)
- important structures and sites and cultural environments with traces of earlier whaling activities, overwintering hunters and trappers and prospecting for minerals.

Section 4. *Prohibition against motor traffic*

The use of off-road vehicles and landing of aircraft is prohibited. This prohibition also applies to overflight of the areas above at altitudes below 300 metres and out to one nautical mile from land.

Section 11. *Exemptions*

The Governor may permit:

- d) scientific studies, provided that these will not be contrary to the purpose of the national park

Nordaust-Svalbard nature reserve

Section 14. *Purpose of the nature reserves*

Nordaust-Svalbard nature reserve is particularly intended to safeguard:



- an area with a spectacular landscape, including the largest glaciers in Svalbard and many fjords and peninsulas
- several small localities with cliff-nesting seabird colonies, breeding grounds for brent goose, haul-out and breeding areas for walrus and polar bear habitat
- many lakes containing Arctic char, especially landlocked char
- important structures and sites and cultural environments with traces of earlier whaling activities, overwintering hunters and trappers, North Pole expeditions, research and the Second World War.

Section 15. *Prohibition against motor traffic*

The use of off-road vehicles and landing of aircraft is prohibited. This prohibition also applies to overflight of the areas at altitudes below 500 metres. The prohibition against overflight applies to the extent that weather conditions permit.

Section 28. *Exemptions*

The Governor may permit:

- c) scientific studies, provided that these will not be contrary to the purpose of the nature reserves

Section 29. *Bird reserves*

- g) Gåsøyane bird reserve, which comprises the Gåsøyane islands

The bird reserves comprise include waters around the islands out to a distance of 300 metres from land or skerry at the lowest water level.

- k) Kongsfjorden bird reserve, which comprises the islands Mietholmen, Prins Heinrichøya, Lovenøyane and Eskjeret

Section 30. *Purpose*

The purpose of protecting these areas is to safeguard important breeding areas and areas of habitat for birds, especially common eider and geese.

Section 31. *Prohibition against access and passage*

All access and passage in the bird reserves, including at sea and landing of aircraft, is prohibited in the period 15 May–15 August.

Section 37. *Exemptions*

The Governor may permit:

- a) scientific studies, provided that these will not be contrary to the purpose of the bird reserves
- b) other activities when there are special reasons and they will not be contrary to the purpose of the bird reserves.

Regulation relating to Ossian Sars nature reserve FOR-2003-09-26-1188

Section 4.

2.3. Fauna are regulated of the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act chapter IV.

Regulation relating to Nordre Isfjorden national park FOR-2003-09-26-1187

Regulation relating to Sassen-Bünsow national park FOR-2003-09-26-1189

Section 4.

2.1. Fauna are regulated of the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act chapter IV and the Svalbard Act section 4.



Section 3 Purpose of the national park

The purpose of the conservation is to preserve a large and essentially untouched Arctic coastal and fjord landscape with intact habitats, ecosystems, species, natural ecological processes, landscapes and cultural monuments as an area for research and experience of Svalbard's natural and cultural heritage.

Regulation relating to camping activities in Svalbard of June 2002, chapter III (section 6 through section 9).

Section 6: Tents and equipment are whenever possible to be placed on ground that is free of vegetation.

Section 7: Camping is not permitted within a 100 meter security zone that extends in all directions from the visible or known perimeter of a cultural heritage site.

Section 8: All stones, stakes or other objects used to build a camp are to be cleared away and replaced where they were found.

Section 9: No fires are to be built on vegetation covered ground or soil covered ground. Remains of campfires shall be removed and the sites cleaned up.

Necessary measures must also be taken to avoid polar bear attack (section 11).

The Governor's considerations

According to the regulations listed above, all birds and their lairs and nests shall be protected against damage and disturbance of any kind. Fieldwork localities applied for lie both inside and outside protected areas. Activity applied for inside protected areas needs an exemption from the regulations relating to large conservation areas and bird reserves in Svalbard. Outside protected areas the activity needs an exemption from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act.

Fieldwork locations in protected areas are Gåsøyane (Gåsøyane nature reserve), Ossian Sarsfjellet (Ossian Sars nature reserve), Fuglehuken (Forlandet national park), Lovénøyane (Kongsfjorden nature reserve), Alkehornet and Tschermakfjellet (Nordre Isfjorden national park), Nøisdalen (Sassen-Bünsow Land national park), Alkefjellet (Nordaust-Svalbard nature reserve) and Koval'skijfjella (Sør-Spitsbergen national park). Traffic in Kongsfjorden and Gåsøyane nature reserves is prohibited in the period 15 May-15 August (section 31). According to the regulations, the Governor may grant exemptions for scientific purposes as long as this is not in conflict with the purposes of the protected areas. This does not necessarily mean that exemption is given. Generally, fieldwork should be carried out outside protected areas. In this particular case, the Governor must consider if the applied activity on specific localities is in conflict with the purpose of the protected areas.

Localities with cliff-nesting seabird colonies and breeding grounds are a part of the purpose of the protected areas. The scientific fieldwork applied for, must be weighted up against the protection purposes and the potential negative effect on the nature. Fieldwork inside protected areas applied for is on brünnich's guillemot, little auk, black legged kittiwake, puffin, northern fulmar and glaucous gull. The brünnich's guillemot, glaucous gull and black legged kittiwake are classified as near threatened (NT) and the puffin, little auk and northern fulmar as viable (LC) on the Norwegian Red List for Species. For locations Gåsøyane, Kongsfjorden, Ossian Sars, Alkefjellet and Koval'skijfjellet, the fieldwork includes physical handling of birds. For locations Alkehornet, Nøisdalen and Tschermakfjellet the fieldwork includes counting of birds.



Capturing, handling, sampling and instrumentation of birds are regarded as disturbance. Performed in a correct way, with short handling time, it is assumed that this will have a minimal negative effect on the individuals. The studied birds in this scientific project will only be a small part of the local population breeding in the areas. Number of birds handled for all locations in the project are of greatest extent for fieldwork locations outside the protected areas. The fieldwork is a part of a long term project where the project personnel has good experiences with handling birds. By following the conditions set to the permissions, the Governor consider that the fieldwork is not in conflict with the purposes of Forlandet national park, Sør-Spitsbergen national park, Nordre Isfjorden national park, Sassen-Bünsow national park, Nordaust-Svalbard nature reserve, Kongsfjorden nature reserve, Gåsøyane nature reserve and Ossian Sars nature reserve.

Fieldwork locations outside protected areas are Diabasodden, Bjørndalen, Feiringfjellet, Grumantbyen, Pyramiden and includes capturing, handling, ringing of seabird species black legged kittiwake, brünnich's guillemot and little auk. According to the regulations, the Governor may grant exemptions from the provisions of this chapter for scientific purposes or when other special reasons so indicate. Performed in a correct way, with short handling time, it is assumed that this will have a minimal negative effect on the individuals. The studied birds in this scientific project will only be a small part of the local population breeding in the areas.

The purpose of the fieldwork in SEAPOP and MOSJ is exclusively scientific, and part of a long term research program that has been ongoing since 2005. Some of the locations have been followed since 1988. The results from the monitoring are important knowledge for the management of seabirds and may be of importance for the management authorities.

Regarding the four helicopter landings at Alkefjellet and Kavalski'fjellet, the Governor has placed emphasis on the fact that the locations are difficult to access without the use of helicopter, the purpose of the landings is scientific and that the results will be of importance to the management authorities. The activity has a limited extent (two landings for each location), and by choosing flight route and landing site that safeguard the conditions mentioned under, the helicopter activity is not considered to constitute an acceptable damage to the environmental values in the area.

Conclusion

The Governor has placed emphasis that the extent of the scientific activity will not be contrary to the purposes of the protections. The results from the fieldwork are also of importance to the management authorities.

Camping

Camping planned during the fieldwork is for five days and need no special permission according to the Regulation relating to camping activities in Svalbard. Regardless, we ask that the sections in the camping regulations are followed.

The Governor's decision

The Governor of Svalbard grants the Norwegian Polar Institute attn. Sebastien Descamps following exemptions:

- to capture, handle, sample and instrument seabirds as described in the application in the period from 01.06.-01.09.2021.
- access and passage in Kongsfjorden nature reserve for two people to conduct scientific fieldwork as described in the application in the period 08.06.-02.08.2021.



- 2 helicopter landings near Alkefjellet between 20 June and 30 June 2021 at landing site 79.584 N 18.461 E
- 2 helicopter landings at the top of Kavalski'fjellet colony (77.072°N 17.285°E).

The exemptions are given under the provision of the Regulations relating to the national parks Sør-Spitsbergen, Forlandet and Nordvest-Spitsbergen, the nature reserves Nordaust-Svalbard and Søraust-Svalbard, and the nature reserves for birds on Svalbard section 11 letter d, section 28 letter c and section 37 letter a, and the Act of 15 June 2001 No.79 Relating to the Protection of the Environment in Svalbard section 37.

The exemptions are granted on the following conditions:

- Procedures for preventing transmission of any disease shall be followed.
- The fieldwork shall not cause unnecessary stress and strain on the birds.
- The project leader shall provide for immediate reporting of possible accidents/irregularities to the Governor.
- Whenever possible the observing/data collection shall be done from boat and not going ashore.
- All equipment and all waste items are to be removed and brought back. Garbage shall not be burned, except clean untreated wood.
- These exemptions are only valid for the people included in the project.
- This permit must be brought along during the fieldwork.
- The project shall submit a yearly report from the fieldwork in the RiS database by 01.11.2021.
- All helicopter flying should be done in a way that causes minimal disturbance to animal- and birdlife, and no damage is done to vegetation, terrain or cultural heritage. When choosing in and out flying routes, these considerations must be done.
- A record of the date and GPS-position of the landing should be sent to firmapost@sysselmannen.no latest by 01.11.2021. If Lufttransport is carrying out the flight: They provide the Governor with such reports already, and any extra reports must not be sent us.

Please notice that your planned fieldwork outside Management Area 10 requires notification to the Governor according to the regulation FOR-1991-10-18-671 on travel in Svalbard (the Tourism Regulation). The notification form is available here: [Notification of travel plans for individual travellers](#).

Duty of care

The Governor calls attention to the duty of care in the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act § 5 first sentence, «Any person who is staying in or operates an undertaking in Svalbard shall show due consideration and exercise the caution required to avoid unnecessary damage or disturbance to the natural environment or cultural heritage.» The Governor requests particular attention regarding wildlife.

Right to complain

According to Norwegian law you are entitled to complain about the present decision. Written complaints must be submitted within three weeks of receiving this letter. The complaint must be submitted to the Governor.



Regards

Kristin Heggelund
Head of Environment Protection

Ingvild Øyjordet
Adviser nature management

This document is approved and expedited electronically without signature

Copy
Kings Bay AS
Miljødirektoratet