



Drones are among the tools Richard Hann uses to study Svalbard. Photo:
Private

Get to know a climate scientist: **Taking research into the** **air and into the water**

Drone technology gives senior researcher Richard Hann new knowledge about glaciers, permafrost and wildlife in Svalbard.

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This summer, Svalbardposten is publishing interviews with people from various fields who are conducting research in Svalbard. Here is one of them.

– Why did you want to do research in Svalbard?

– Svalbard is not only an exciting place to live and call my second home. It is a place that offers unique opportunities to research an environment that is challenging to access elsewhere. For example, a large part of my research is based on glaciers, of which there are many here.

– How long have you been doing research here?

– I began my research career in Svalbard in 2012 as a student at UNIS. Since then, I have worked with everything from ecotoxicology to wind power and drones in Svalbard.

– What do you work on?

Right now I am working on the use of unmanned systems, drones, to study Svalbard. I help other researchers take their research into the air and into the water using aerial and underwater drones. I have applied this in various fields, mainly glaciology, but have also carried out projects related to reindeer counting, permafrost and cultural heritage.

– What is the most important thing you have learned?

– Svalbard will always find new ways to surprise you. Whether it's with unexpected challenges during fieldwork or with new and unexpected research findings.

– What has surprised you most about the developments you have seen in Svalbard?

– The pace at which it is happening. After working in Svalbard for more than ten years, many effects of climate change have become visible and possible to



Drone technology is used to study everything from glaciology and reindeer populations to permafrost and cultural heritage. Photo: Private

– What is the most fascinating curiosity for you about the climate, the environment, the animals in Svalbard?

– I find it very fascinating how glaciers can suddenly increase their speed to more than 100 times their "normal" speed, through so-called "surging" or glacier thrust.

– What is the most important question to answer now?

– I think it's difficult to find the most important question, because we have so many important questions and findings. Being able to formulate a clear and comprehensive message through them is perhaps the most important thing.

– What is it like for you to research climate change, when we already have the tools and knowledge needed to solve the climate crisis and are not doing so?

– I see it as a motivation to communicate, educate and activate people.

– Do you see anything in the Arctic that solves a problem or gives you hope?



Richard Hann heading towards the finish line during a dog race in Adventdalen in 2025. Photo: Kåre M. Hansen

– The 1.5 degree goal is almost officially dead. How should we proceed? What should we strive for now?

– I think we need to talk more about the potential consequences and emphasize that it is not too late. I think the discussions also need to be about what policy changes we need, rather than focusing on individual responsibility.

– What do you think is possible to achieve with current resources, and what do you think will happen based on the political reality, as you see it?

– I think we have a lot of technology and ideas for policies that can have a big impact on climate change. To implement them, we depend on politicians taking action.

– Do you have any advice for people on how to deal with climate change now?

– Get involved and participate in the shaping of green policy.

– How should the press cover climate change?

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