

Home:
Jens Juels Gade 33
DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø
Denmark

Tel: +45 35554959
Mobile: +45 23718973
Home page:
www.zi.ku.dk/personal/drnash

DAVID NASH
2002
News

Work:
Department of Population Ecology
Universitetsparken 15
DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø
Denmark

Tel (New!): +45 35321323
Fax: +45 35321250
e-mail: DRNash@zi.ku.dk

I always seem to start these newsletters by saying how it's been a busy year, and I've been to too many places and done too many things. This year has definitely continued that pattern, so I guess I should start getting used to it ☺

Some things do change 'though, and things are actually a lot more stable than they have been for the last few years. I've now been living in the same flat for one and a half years – a record for my time in Denmark. It's in a really nice area of Copenhagen (known affectionately as the *Kartoffelrækkerne*, or "potato rows", because there are parallel rows of small terraced houses looking like rows of potatoes planted in a vegetable garden), and although it's rather small, I've now invested in a sofa-bed, so I look forward to having more visitors in the coming year, and to putting them up in comparative comfort.



Jens Juels Gade, during a visit by Steve, Julie & Alexia in September

The most significant change, however, is in my job: From the 1st January 2003 I have been offered a permanent position at the University of Copenhagen. I have to admit that I find this a bit scary – I guess it means that I'm supposed to be a grown-up and responsible adult now, however I feel inside... "Permanent" also seems a very long time, but I suppose that I will be here for at least a couple more years, and probably longer.

Copenhagen grows on me more the longer I live here - while I don't in general like cities, Copenhagen doesn't really feel like one. The winters may be dark and cold ('though not actually much colder than England), but there is a community

spirit among the Danes that makes everything seem brighter and warmer, and the long summer days are wonderful (and not *too* hot...).

So, what have I been up to this year? Well, in summary, I've been to seven different meetings this year, and visited eight different countries (5 trips to the UK, 2 to Hungary and one each to The Netherlands, Panama, Japan, Sweden, Austria and Germany).



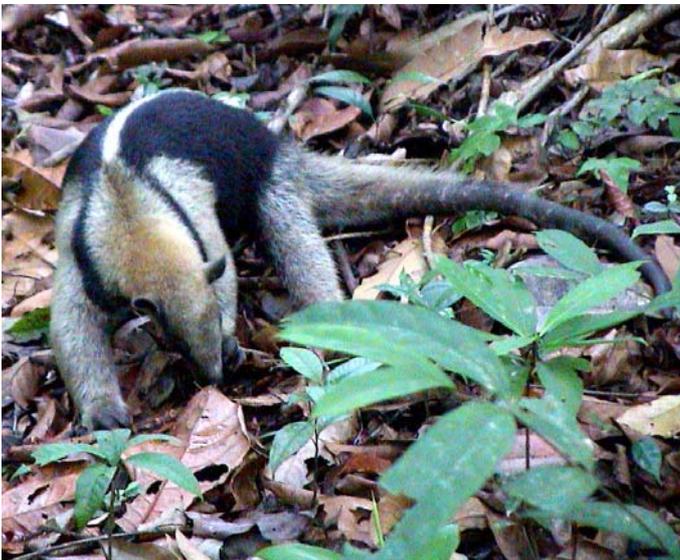
A female *Maculinea alcon* butterfly laying eggs on a gentian plant

I also managed to do considerably more fieldwork in Denmark than usual, thanks mainly to the help of several new recruits working on the Alcon blue butterfly /*Myrmica* ant project. I think this is my personal record on most accounts – no wonder I feel exhausted! It would probably get rather boring if I went in to all the details of where I'd been when, so this year I thought I'd concentrate on my trips to the most far-flung destinations.

In April, I spent three weeks at Gamboa in Panama. There is a more-or-less annual trip there by the Copenhagen group working on leaf-cutter ants, and I usually get left in Denmark to hold the fort while they're away. This time, however, I had

the opportunity to go along too, and to help out with the ant collecting, as well as being official expedition photographer. Gamboa is a small town approximately half way along the Panama Canal on it's northern shore. It's one of the bases of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, with whom the group from Copenhagen have been collaborating for some 10 years now.

This was the first time that I had been to the neotropics, and I had a good opportunity to spend time in the secondary rainforest around Gamboa while looking for ants, as well as visiting Barro Colorado Island a couple of times. The wildlife was fantastic, particularly on the island, which is a nature reserve and has troops of howler and capuchin monkeys, as well as some primary rain forest. The one animal that I wanted to see most, 'though, was a tamandua (also known as a tree anteater), and I eventually got my chance while I was walking alone in the forest – I heard a snuffling sound and then spotted the creature half way up a small tree – It had apparently also spotted me, so that it was making its way down to the ground in an agitated state. However, it then seemed to forget why it was in a hurry, and started snuffling around in the undergrowth and digging in the ground, while I kept as still as possible. After a couple of minutes it seemed to come to some sort of decision and walked straight up to me (I think it had mistaken me for another small tree in the dusk) and sniffed my shoe. Whether it was the effect of my feet, or just the realisation that I was not what it had expected, I don't know, but it then did the most extraordinary thing – jumping backwards about 2m and lying on it's back waving its feet in the air!



The tamandua, shortly before it met my foot

I took lots of other pictures while I was in Panama, and if you have Internet access you can see some of them at:

<http://www.zi.ku.dk/personal/drnash/panama>

The second distant destination this year, and one that could not be more of a contrast, was Sapporo in Japan, where I attended the congress of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects. From a western point of view, Japan is a very strange country, with a mixture of hi-tech and primitive facilities (exemplified by the toilets in the hotel where we had

the conference reception, which had heated seats and played music to disguise the sound of the flush, and those in one of the restaurants we ate in, which were little more than holes in the ground).



The Hokkaido shrine near Sapporo

Once again, I took my camera along, and you can find more pictures at:

<http://www.zi.ku.dk/personal/drnash/sapporo>

Other notable events of the year have been Seirian Sumner and Nick Isaac's wedding in June, and visits by Steve Mott and Julie and Alexia Beale in September and by Christine Müller and Jeanette Bot in November. I also spent a very enjoyable few days visiting Jeanette in the Netherlands back in March, seeing the wonderful dune country around her parent's home and *finally* seeing the aardvark at Arnhem zoo in the flesh. In September I went along to Chris Perrins' retirement celebrations in Oxford, which allowed me to meet up with lots of people from my old Oxford days, some of whom I've not seen for twelve years.

There also seems to have been a spate of 40th birthdays this year, often with associated 40th birthday parties, so congratulations once more to Steve Mott, Julie Beale, Sylvia Mathiasen, my brother Paul and his girlfriend Alison. I'm already contemplating how to celebrate joining the over-the-hill club in 2004, so if anyone has any suggestions, you've got plenty of time to let me know.

In the meantime, I'm already planning more globetrotting in 2003, though not beyond Europe as far as I know. I hope that despite this, it will be a more relaxing year, and that I'll get to catch up with even more friends, old and new. I hope it will also be a good year for you, and that you'll spend the festive season doing what (and with whom) you like most.

David