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DAVID NASH 2003 News

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This year I thought I'd reverse my usual practise and look ahead to some milestones that will be coming up in the next year before I start my look back at 2003.

On 9th May 2004, I shall be turning 40, 'though I can't say that I feel any different to when I was 30 or 20 – Maybe a bit more cynical, but hopefully not too much so. Although I haven't made any firm plans for how to celebrate my birthday, I certainly plan to have some sort of party or event in Copenhagen, and I hope you will be able to come along. I'm going to put details of what I'm planning (whatever the final size) on my web site:

<http://www.zi.ku.dk/personal/drnash/may2004>

If you have any suggestions, please let me know. One thing I've been thinking about is trying to organize a *ceilidh*, but that would rely on having some musicians that would be willing to play...

In 2004 it will be 10 years since I last lived and worked in England, and my 7th year in Denmark. I'm still enjoying my time here, and while I'm not "going native" yet, I feel as though I fit in a little better each year, so I hope that the 7-year-itch will pass me by.



Ditte putting the finishing touches to the igloo

So, what of 2003? The year started with a cold and snowy January in Copenhagen – A nice change after the dull wetness of recent winters. There was even enough snow for me and several others to build a complete igloo outside the department, 'though only Bettina Markussen and Ditte Christiansen were brave enough to spend the night in it.

In January, in an effort to get a bit more exercise, I took up fencing at the university club, along with Mischa Dijkstra, Boris Baer, and Nette Levermann. I'm still not sure whether I really like it; the training element is fine, but I still have some problems with the "trying to hit other people with large bits of metal" part, and am constantly apologizing to my sparring partners. Unfortunately pressures of work meant that I haven't been to the training since early summer, but I have resolved to start again in the new year.

My pacifist tendencies were also exercised in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, when I took part in several demonstrations, marches and candle-lit vigils in the early part of the year. As you'll probably know well, I'm not normally one to take part in anything provocative, but I must admit to increasing concern about the way that many things are starting to go. Denmark is still relatively unscathed by the cult of personality, dumbing-down and the erosion of social values that are all too obvious in many places, which is one reason that I'm happy to be here. I had planned to dress as "Uncle Sam" for Inga Zeisset's Halloween party this year (The most frightening thing I can think of at the moment), but because it would take too long to explain, instead opted for the much milder disguise of Satan, which also went better with my decision in October to try out a new beard. Anyway that's more than enough ranting for this year; I hope current trends are only a temporary downturn on an otherwise increasing curve...



My new beard (personality change, what personality change?)

As usual, I've done a fair amount of travelling this year, mostly associated with conferences or other work-related meetings, but I haven't strayed beyond Europe this time. In March I spent an interesting week in Germany, first of all attending the mid-term review meeting of the INSECTS network (see <http://www.zi.ku.dk/eunet/> if you don't know what that is) in Laufen, then attending a workshop on mathematical modelling of *Maculinea* populations in Fabrikschleichach as part of the MacMan network (<http://www.macman-project.de>). Between the two meetings, I spent a perfect afternoon going around the beautiful city of Regensburg with Anna Dornhaus.

I was back in Germany again for a weekend in April to pay a long-overdue visit to Max Garzarolli and Michele Munzel in Hamburg. It was great to have another chance to talk with Max, who I've known since my days at Silwood Park (where he was called Stefan, in case anyone is confused). Another friend from that time is Karel Alders, who has also been living in Denmark, and who had a very pleasant surprise 40th birthday party in Copenhagen in early May, organized for him by Mette Larsen. Just after this excellent event, I paid a short visit to England, and managed to catch up with a lot of old friends around Oxford, Dorchester, Bath and Bristol. I had a particularly nice weekend with Glenda Orledge where we had a reunion with our former Bath colleagues Guy Blanchard and Lucas, Kris and Ben Partridge. I also enjoyed seeing Joanna Byrd and Jane Memmott for the first time in ages, and caught up with Kate Buchanan, Maddy Mitchell, Karsten Schönrogge and Nigel Franks. From the UK I flew, once more, to Laufen in Germany, this time for another MacMan meeting (The conference centre there now recognizes me when I arrive!).



Lene, Suzanne, Majken, Inga and Anna busy doing fieldwork on Læsø

In late May, the 2003 butterfly field season got under way. Although it was a warm summer in Denmark, we didn't have the ridiculously high temperatures from which many European countries suffered. Possibly because of this, it was a record year for *Maculinea alcon* butterflies on the Danish island of Læsø, where we found one *Myrmica rubra* nest with 97 caterpillars and pupae that had survived the winter (almost doubling our previous record), as well as marking nearly 3500 butterflies in a population study in July. Once more I was carrying out fieldwork with Jon Ebsen, Henning Bang Madsen, Ian Wynne and Inga Zeisset, and we got some very useful voluntary help from Lene Jung Kjær, Suzanne Lommen, Majken Hirche and Anna Mosegaard Schmidt, which meant we could get *nearly* everything we wanted done. There'll probably be more opportunities for volunteers to help out on Læsø in summer 2004 if anyone is interested...

In late July I received a very welcome visit from Gyuri Csóka and his family, following my unforgivable lapse of not visiting them when I was in Hungary last year. I had forgotten how long it had been since I'd seen Aniko and Agi, and Bence wasn't even born the last time I visited them in Hungary. I will be in Budapest for another MacMan conference in January, so I hope I will be able to meet up with at least Gyuri again then.

In August I was back in the UK again, this time for the European Society of Evolutionary Biology congress in Leeds – The first time I have visited this town. The conference was partially organized by Tom Tregenza and Nina Wedell, old friends from Naomi Pierce's lab, and it was good to catch up

with them and meet their young son, as well as attending a very stimulating meeting. As usual, I spent a few days in the UK either side of the meeting, and made good use of it to catch up on some of the sleep I'd lost during the field season.



Road sign on the outskirts of Sorø

After the field season I could start being a bit more sociable again, and even took a few "tourist" trips to Møn and around Sjælland, doing a nice walk around Sorø with Suzanne and visiting the Royal Deer Park with Susanne den Boer and her boyfriend, as well as going to Rosenborg castle and having another great barbecue at Sylvia Mathiasen's place in Hillerød.

On the 23rd September, Copenhagen, along with the rest of Sjælland, parts of Fyn, Bornholm and Southern Sweden had one of the massive power-cuts that seem to have become more common world-wide this year. It only lasted a few hours in most places, and the natural caution of Danish drivers meant that the lack of traffic lights didn't lead to many accidents, but instead to stationary traffic. Since the power cut happened at lunchtime, I, along with much of the rest of the department, took a prolonged lunch break, extending it into our usual afternoon coffee break with the aid of Bunsen burners to brew coffee. We weren't short of entertainment during this time, as a lorry turned up to deliver a dead elephant from Copenhagen Zoo to the Zoological Museum (which is next door to the Zoological institute), 'though I decided not to include a rather gruesome picture of the dismembered body in this newsletter.

The rest of the year has mostly been a period of analysing the data we collected during the field season, doing some paper-writing, and preparing for the merger of the Copenhagen University Zoological and Botanical institutes, which will officially take place on 1st January 2004. In November I spent a couple of days at the Sømme field station on Sjælland (a former naval torpedo test centre) attending the annual meeting of the ISOBIS PhD school (<http://www.isobis.org>), and in early December I went to the annual IUSSI UK section winter meeting in Dublin. The meeting was excellent, but sadly I didn't really have enough time to see the city, but my first visit to Ireland has whetted my appetite to return someday soon.

For the last few weeks I've been enjoying the usual Danish build-up to Christmas, even 'though it started far too early this year (not like when I was young... I'm nearly 40 now, so I'm entitled to start becoming an old codger). I hope that you'll also enjoy Christmas and the coming year, and spend it where and with whom you love most. I hope that I'll get to see more of you this year, either around my birthday or at another time.

Best wishes for 2004.

David