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DAVID NASH 2005 NEWS

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2005 has been a transitional year for me. In June I once again became employed full time to do research as part of our new Centre for Social Evolution, and so I have spent 100% of my time doing research instead of the approximately 25% it has been for the past few years. Unfortunately I've not been so good at NOT doing the other things that were taking up 75% of my time before, so I've ended up working about 150%. I hope that I can train myself to say "no" more effectively in 2006!

Going back to the end of 2004, the last instalment of these continuing adventures saw me about to depart for Western Australia to spend Christmas there with Mischa Dijkstra, his brother Arjan and his girlfriend Bregje Hulscher. This was a fantastic trip, involving a lot of driving, a lot of wonderful nature (even 'though I did not succeed in my ambition of seeing a numbat in the wild), and some great times with my hosts. It was also great to catch up with Boris, Barbara and Andrin Baer in Perth. If you're interested, you can find many photographs from the trip (as well as other expeditions and occasions) on my web site at <http://www.bi.ku.dk/drnash>



Mischa, Bregje and Arjan at Wave Rock, Western Australia

The turn of the year saw me in transit back to Copenhagen, with midnight passing at Singapore airport, which I can't really recommend as the best place to welcome a new year, particularly as the airport was also hosting many passengers affected by the tsunami, so it was not the jolliest of places.

Back in Copenhagen I got straight back into teaching a conservation course at the University of Copenhagen, before heading off for my first meeting of the year at the end of January; the annual meeting of *MacMan* network of *Maculinea* butterfly researchers, this time held in Laufen in Germany.



Pie, as she looked back in 2000

February brought "fastelavn", the Danish version of carnival / shrove Tuesday, and this year we had a traditional fancy dress party at work, which was great fun. I went as the Danish king Christian IV, and again you can find pictures on my web site if you're curious (in fact check the web site for pictures of any of the things I mention in the rest of the newsletter). In the middle of the month I took a brief trip back to the UK for my niece Chrissie's birthday, and could also say goodbye to our cat Pie, who passed away at the age of 17 while I was there. Her

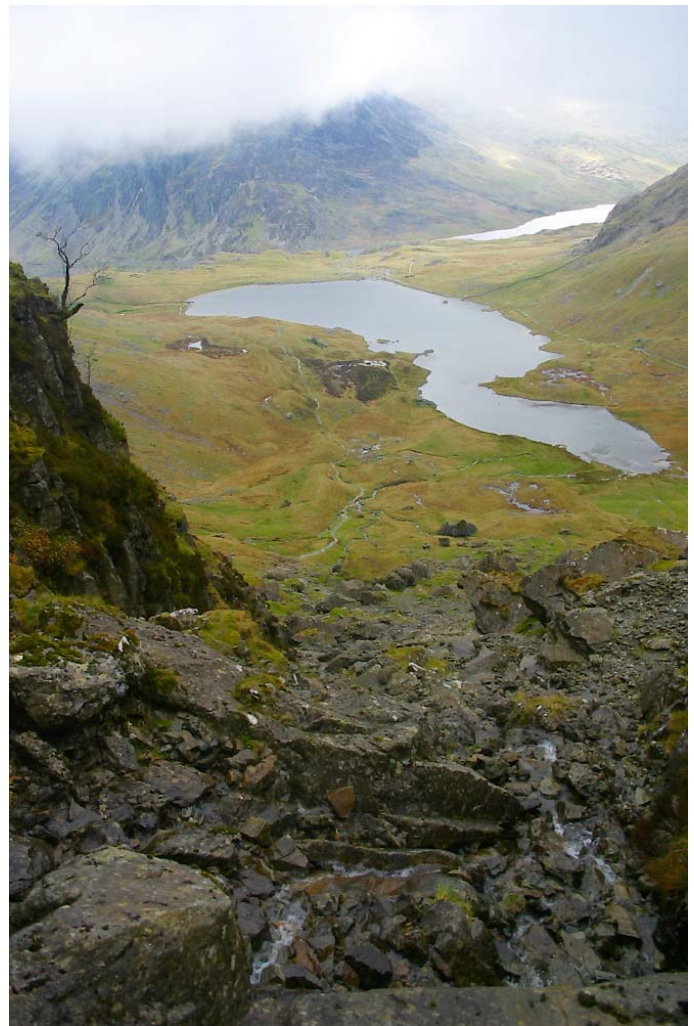
littermate, Tigger, is still going strong (if rather wobbly) at the moment, and has passed 18, even though I expect every time I see him to be the last... At the end of the month, I had a visit from Sarah Kraak, who was in Copenhagen for a meeting, and it was great to catch up with her after five years or so, and visit the Louisiana museum of modern art together.

In March I went to the first of two wedding celebrations this year when Michael Poulsen and Jeremy Thomas (not the *Maculinea* one, in case anyone is confused) got married. Denmark was the first country to allow same sex marriages, in 1989, and it was great that they could do this in Copenhagen before they moved to the USA following Michael's successful PhD examination in April.



Jeremy and Michael at their wedding reception. Cutting off the toes of the bridegroom's socks is a Danish tradition

At the end of April and beginning of May I took another trip to the UK to use up the remains of my annual leave, and managed to pack a lot into three weeks. Sadly, my old junior school headmaster, Mike Roberts, passed away just before I went over, but I was glad to have the opportunity to attend his funeral and pay my respects. Happier events were a Nash brothers outing to the Albert Hall to see *The Musical Box* and relive some of our lost youth, and the annual May Day festivities in Oxford, which were once again spent with Steve Mott and Julie and Alexia Beale. I also spent four days in Wales, visiting Bettina Markussen, and managed to do and see quite a lot while I was there, including visiting Celyn farm where I lived from the age of 9 months until I was four years old (and which is now part of a housing estate), Portmeirion, Anglesey, and climbing the devil's kitchen in Snowdonia.



The view down onto Cwm Idwal from the Devil's Kitchen

With the start of June came the start of my renewed career as a researcher, and the start of an awful lot of fieldwork which took up most of the time until the beginning of September. This year I extended our previous studies of large blue butterflies into Southern Sweden, visiting some very picturesque lakeside sites near Göteborg (Gothenburg in English), as well as a couple of sites in Skåne. I was ably assisted in the field by Andreas Lomberg, who later returned to these sites to carry out his own MSc research. Once again, I took a large crew of volunteers to the Island of Læsø, including at various times Patrizia D'Ettore, Jelle van Zweden, Maëlle Durey, Ida Hartvig, Louise Holst Hansen, Inga Zeisset, Sandra South and Jonna Saapunki. Jonna, who was visiting from Finland, was involved with much of the fieldwork over the summer, and also accompanied me and Ida on a whirlwind tour of butterfly sites in Jutland, most of which I had not visited for seven years. Driving around Jutland also gave me the opportunity to revisit Randers Regnskov, an artificial rainforest zoo, which has acquired two aardvarks in the last couple of years, so I spent a happy half hour conversing with them while other visitors walked carefully past the insane biologist.

I spent a pleasant day in Sweden in June visiting the University of Lund's chemical ecology group, along with Patrizia, and then in the evening I managed to catch up with Og de Sousa, who was spending a few weeks at Ålnarp near Malmö. I can't remember how long it is since I've seen Og (more than 10 years?), so it was great to catch up with him, as well as meeting Eraldo and Nerilda Lima, and having some excellent Brazilian food.

At the end of August, Karel Alders and Mette Dalgaard Larsen got married, and I was very happy to be asked to be their wedding photographer, and to take part in the celebrations in Himmerland on Jutland. Shortly before the wedding they moved to Aalborg from Copenhagen, but I hope that we'll be able to keep in touch, as they are more-or-less the only people I know here outside work. I've known Karel for about 12 years now, and it was nice to catch up with some other old friends at the wedding, particularly Rob and Cindy Belshaw and Rosemary Setchfield.



Karel and Mette in Overlade church

In September I took another week-long trip to the UK, and managed to have a brief reunion with old colleagues from Bath; Glenda Orledge, Lucas, Kris and Ben Partridge and Guy Blanchard, plus Guy's girlfriend Cherry, who none of us had met before. It also transpired that Cherry was expecting their baby, and I was very pleased to hear a couple of days ago that their son, Locke Gerald Nolan Blanchard, was born safe and well on the 25th November – Congratulations Guy and Cherry! I also managed to catch up with Maddy Mitchell and Rob Belshaw while in Oxford, as well as spending some time with Robert Esnouf and Iris Geens, including attending the post-degree-ceremony garden party at Oxford Brookes University. Then I spent a couple of days down in Bath, and visited Glenda and Joanna Byrd, who also had Beatrice Steck staying while I was there. At the end of the month, I managed to get a ticket to see Alfred Schnittke's opera "Life with an idiot" at the newly-opened opera house in Copenhagen. This is a wonderful building on the inside (the auditorium is enclosed in a large wooden egg), even if it's not so inspiring from the outside.

In October, I took my second major holiday of the year, spending two weeks interrailing in central Europe. This was mostly spent in Switzerland catching up with old friends from my Bern days, but I also managed to spend a few days in Austria and Germany. I started off by travelling directly from Copenhagen to Fribourg, where I spent two days attending a meeting on the "Evolutionary Ecology of Parasite Resistance and Tolerance in Plants and Animals" (where it was great to see Dieter Ebert, Giorgina Bernasconi and Claus Wedekind again), after which I moved to Bern for a few days, staying for a couple of nights each with Maddalena Tognola and Markus Frischknecht. From there I took day trips to Gruyères (to see the Château, and the exhibitions there by Patrick Woodroffe, one of my favourite fantasy artists), and to Lausanne for a genomics meeting (and to see Giorgina again, plus Alexandre Roulin and Michel Chapuisat), and also met up with Rita Hüber-Eicher in Bern itself.



View of the gardens from the Château de Gruyères

Next I travelled to Vienna for the weekend, which I spent with Sarah Zala and Dustin Penn and their daughter Maya (plus Dustin's mother, Ginger), while staying with their neighbours Jan and Giselle. It was nice to take things relatively easily for a day and visit the Vienna Kunstmuseum and some Viennese cafés and konditori, before heading back to Switzerland. This time I took a spectacular bus journey through the Austrian alps and into the Engadin, where I eventually made my way to S-Chanf and spent 18 hours with Imelda Schmid. Next was another spectacular alpine journey, along the route of the glacier express, to Basle for a few hours (where I met up with Beatrice again), and eventually to Zürich, where I stayed with Ditte Guldager Christiansen.



The "golden autumn" in S-Chanf

The next day, Ditte and I had a nice tour around the West Bank of lake Zürich, and then met up with Christine Müller and Dennis Hansen for dinner. For the next two nights I stayed at Christine's flat in Zürich, and met up with Anja Rott at the ETH on the day between. Finally I caught the train back to Copenhagen, stopping off in Hamburg on the way to visit Max Garzarolli for the weekend, including spending a pleasant afternoon canoeing on the Alster with him and Anika. I guess I managed to pack quite a lot into 15 days.



The Atomium in Brussels, under repair

The first half of November was comparatively quiet, but then I went to Brussels for three days for an EU meeting on "Communicating European Research", which was held in the Brussels Expo, which is a massive art deco complex built in the 1930's and right next door to the famous Atomium and the

infamous Heysel stadium. The meeting itself was also massive (somewhere between 3000 and 5000 people), and so packed that I didn't get to see any of down-town Brussels. I also had to leave a little early to get back to Copenhagen to start this year's conservation course teaching at 8:00am on the following morning. November additionally saw the publication of several of my photographs of *Maculinea* butterflies and ants in *BBC Wildlife* magazine, to accompany an article about large blue butterflies, as an introduction to the BBC1 *Life in the undergrowth* TV series – they've even promised to pay me for them...

At the beginning of December I made another lightning trip to the UK, arriving on the 1st, celebrating my brother Paul's birthday on the 2nd, attending the IUSSI meeting in London on the 3rd and flying back to Copenhagen on the 4th. Then on the 7th, Koos Boomsma, Jon Ebsen and I drove to Leipzig for the closing meeting of the MacMan network. It's sad that this network is coming to an end, as I've made some good friends among the other large blue butterfly researchers across Europe, but hopefully the network will continue informally for many years to come. The meeting ended with an appropriate farewell party, but Koos and Jon still managed to drive us home to Copenhagen safely the next morning.



A puss moth caterpillar, Råbjerg Mile, August 2005

So, that just about brings me up to date. Once more I shall be in the UK with my parents (and Tigger) for Christmas itself, and will return to Copenhagen just before the New Year, as the conservation teaching resumes on the 2nd January. What will 2006 bring? Well, I will turn 42, so I hope to find the answer to "life the universe and everything" (you're very welcome to join me in this endeavour), and my mum will turn 70, so we have already booked a family holiday in the Peak District for late August.

I managed to catch up with quite a lot of people in 2005, but if you weren't among them, then maybe it will happen next year.

I hope you have a very happy Christmas, and all good things in 2006

David