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NEWS 2018

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Having just finished my busiest teaching period, while simultaneously working to submit various long-planned research papers over the last three months, I'm feeling rather lacking in inspiration as I sit down to write this year's newsletter. When I look back 'though, it's not been a bad year at all, and I'm looking forward to rounding it off with a few relaxing days and a (partial) double Christmas – spending most of the 24th of December in Denmark, and the 25th in the U.K.



Lukas, Glenda, Kris and Ben in Southampton

Last Christmas I was in Denmark but visited my Dad between Christmas and New Year – this first festive season without my mum certainly had a bit less sparkle than previously, but visits to and from family and friends meant that it was still festive. I returned to the U.K. a couple more times in the spring, firstly to spend Easter with my Dad, and secondly to attend the 8th International Butterfly Conservation Symposium in Southampton in April. I love this event and venue, not only because it allows me to catch up with many butterfly biologists from Europe and beyond, but because my old Bath University friends Lukas and Kris Partridge live in Southampton, and it gives me a rare opportunity to catch up with them and Glenda Orledge for a get-together, this time with the added bonus of their son Ben who I had not seen for fifteen years.



Flying into Naples, with Vesuvius in the background



Guarujá beach, Brazil

My other conferences this year have been even more exotic. At the beginning of July I attended the XI European Congress of Entomology in a very hot and bustling Naples, and in August it was off to the XVII International Congress of the IUSI (International Union for the Study of Social Insects) at Guarujá near São Paulo in Brazil. This was a great meeting, but unfortunately time pressures and the general insecurities in Brazil at the moment meant that I and most other delegates didn't see much except the hotel where the conference was held.



It was an amazingly hot summer in Denmark this year, from which tropical Brazil provided a brief respite. The Alcon blue butterflies that I study were flying a good two weeks earlier than I've ever seen them, and I had a couple of warm weeks of fieldwork on the island of Læsø in mid and late June. On both occasions I was also helping a TV film company try to get some good footage of the butterflies, which was an interesting experience, particularly getting their hefty equipment out to the sites on the south of the island which normally involve a 1.5 km walk. I hope that we'll be able to do some more filming this coming year, and hopefully catch them a little earlier so that we can complete the life cycle. The sequences should be part of a Danish wildlife documentary series to be broadcast in 2020.



Our taxi ride to my usual Læsø field site

In late August we celebrated Janes 50th birthday in style at a local restaurant, with some 20 of her friends and relatives, with a Churrasco (Brazilian Barbecue), having had a wonderful “trial run” for my birthday in May. The day after, I made another trip to the U.K., this time primarily to celebrate the 10th wedding anniversary of my brother Pete and Marion – an even bigger affair with live music featuring, amongst many others, Pete, Marion, my other brother Paul, and even my Dad (and me at one point) joining in on percussion.



Bearded Nashes and Sue at Pete's wedding anniversary

It was particularly good to catch up with cousin Sue and her husband Ken again. They had also visited us in Denmark earlier in the year, when we took them out to Louisiana museum of modern art, North of Copenhagen, on a warm and sunny May afternoon. Jane and I returned to Louisiana in September (*though it was much duller then) to celebrate our 10th wedding anniversary.

Since then, as usual, most of my time (including weekends) has been taken up with teaching and writing papers, and it is a great relief to have two papers that have been, respectively, taking up an inordinate amount of time over the last 3 years, and dragging on for the last 12 years, finally completed and accepted. There is no shortage of other manuscripts in preparation, so I hope that shifting these two will mean that 2019 will be a productive year.



Jane and me at Louisiana on *our* wedding anniversary

Emily has continued to amuse and delight us throughout the year, as well as providing us with mice in various conditions, several of which have managed to escape behind the furniture for hours, or in one case, weeks. She has honed her skill at determining when I'm trying to write something on the laptop, and lying on the keyboard, which has certainly delayed this newsletter.



Emily and her one-eyed alien teddybear

Otherwise, 2018 has been a year of consolidation for me – living with the type II diabetes diagnosed last year has become more routine, but also more of a drag, but all is going well there. I did manage to receive my first ever surgical stitches this year following a work accident involving a table, a chair and a coffee cup, which has now left me with an impressive “duelling scar” on my forearm. Still, I am ending the year in good spirits, and looking forward to many new adventures (but hopefully without scars) in 2019 – I hope you are doing the same.

David