

*“No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were ...”\**

There are two Christmas presents this year – a carrot and a whip ...? No, not really – actually a chocolate and a little whiteboard. Both are, in their own way, an expression of the fact that the Department of Biology cares about you and needs you!

1. It is certainly effective for our teachers and PhD students to sit at home from time to time to finish a paper or to prepare a lecture. I often do this myself when I have the opportunity to do so. And field trips and conferences and external evaluation duties are of course also very important. But in your absence we will also miss you at the Department ☹. We will miss your creative ideas during seminars, your administrative contributions and your cheerful countenance.

- Where are you?
- When will you be back?
- How can one get in touch with you?

E-mail can be overwhelming. Instead, your Head of Department celebrates *“management by walking around”*. When I succeed in getting out of my office it is therefore really disappointing if offices are empty and there are no indications of whether their inhabitants are in South Africa for a month, or simply out to lunch. One often hears talk of room shortages, particularly in the Ecology building. *“Maybe there’s a vacant room here, or a place for one more person...?”* In order to make communication easier with your colleagues, each of you will receive a little whiteboard (and pen) to attach to your office door. Your colleagues need you!

2. Even the other Christmas present – chocolates – is somewhat symbolic. This present is also small, but is nonetheless an expression of our genuine appreciation. It is small because we currently live in tight economic times. We are feeling the effects of unchanged faculty funding for research and teaching despite rising salary costs. Nonetheless, we will make neither a profit nor a loss during 2014, and even though our budget for 2015 isn’t really balanced, the situation is under control. We have a *“myndighetskaptal”* (= money in the bank) that we can draw upon if needed and the quality of our activities remains high. So many thanks for all your excellent work. And thanks to all of you that make sure we stay within our budget.

Today our research is funded entirely from external grants. Thanks and congratulations to all of you who, during the past year, have attracted almost 100 million kronor in funding to the Department and have made our research possible. To those of you who were unsuccessful in obtaining funding, step back and reconsider your strategy. Try something new; different funding calls require different approaches. There are many different types of grants. Thanks to all those that fund us – both the foundations and the taxpayers!

The interest of the general public in what we do is considerable, as is the impact of our research in the scientific media, in the daily papers and in other news outlets. Thanks to those of you who take our *“Third Mission”* seriously.

We will have a new Rector at the beginning of next year. Torbjörn von Schantz has significant experience as a researcher within the field of Animal Ecology, and as a teacher and

Department Head at the former Department of Ecology. He has also been the Dean of Science, and most recently was seconded as Vice-Rector for our rival SLU. There is now every reason to believe that the core missions of the university will be prioritised and that the recent excesses centrally at the university will decline in favour of more funding for the faculties and their institutions. I would dare to buy another used car from this man!

I would therefore like to take the opportunity to congratulate Torbjörn on his new appointment and to wish him the best of luck! Not simply to flatter him or to improve my own position, but rather because there is much to fix and it is laudable that someone with an understanding of the true role of the university is willing to take on such a demanding position of leadership. I have encouraged Torbjörn to at the very least keep a symbolic office at the Department so that he doesn't become too detached from reality in those upper echelons of power. If it was possible for Philip Sandblom to perform operations before lunch and then after lunch cycle down to University House to lead the university, then surely Torbjörn can do the same? At least a couple of days a week? In anticipation that he will accept this invitation, I have reserved space for him next to my office in the Pheromone Group. The VVS (plumbing) shaft has been renamed the TvS shaft.

As Head of Department it is my opinion that collaboration between colleagues at the Department continues to be excellent, but it is not impossible that as Head I have missed more subtle "signals". So if you think differently than I do, you are welcome to share these opinions with me. There will of course be no retaliations. I promise I will listen – but I won't necessarily do as you suggest. When I once complained to our incoming Rector during his earlier role as Dean, he said roughly the following:

*"Yes, I'm listening. But I might not do as you are suggesting..."*

There was probably something meaningful in that statement. Nonetheless, in most issues we have excellent support from the Faculty. Thanks to all of you at this higher level that are working for Biology in Lund and who support good science and excellent teaching in general!

With confidence and joy I look forward to a new year at the Department of Biology. Good luck with all your various projects. Think of – but also benefit from – your colleagues!

*"No man is an island..."* – together we can make 2015 a very

**Happy New Year!**

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\* John Donne, from *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1623), *Meditation XVII*. From this sermon, Ernest Hemmingway borrowed a title for possibly his most important work, *For whom the bell tolls*, a description of the struggle for dignity and humanity against all odds, a work full of rich symbolism.