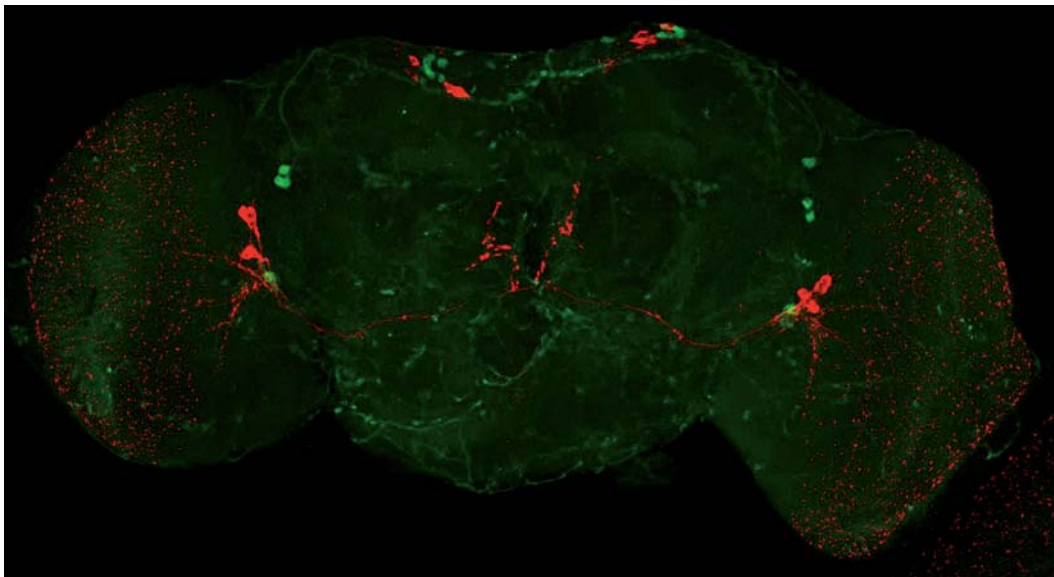


Hannele Kauranen

The Role of the Circadian Clock in  
Adaptation in Seasonally Changing  
Environment in *Drosophila montana*



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Editors

Jari Haimi

The Department of Biological and Environmental Science, University of Jyväskylä

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Department of Biological and Environmental Science, University of Jyväskylä

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## ABSTRACT

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Yhteenveto: Sirkadisen kellon rooli vaihteleviin ympäristöolosuhteisiin sopeutumisessa *Drosophila montana* -lajilla

Diss.

Adaptation to daily and seasonal changes in environmental conditions is crucially important for the survival and reproduction of all organisms, especially the ones living in the northern latitudes. One of the key factors in enhancing adaptation to this kind of environment is the evolution of two time-measuring systems; the circadian clock regulating daily variation and the photoperiodic timer regulating seasonal activities. In my thesis I have studied the role of the circadian clock in adaptation in northern environment and tried to find out whether and how it is connected with the photoperiodic timer in northern *Drosophila montana* species. My studies showed that *D. montana* possesses good entraining rhythms, displays only the evening activity peak and maintains its free-running rhythm better in constant light than in constant darkness differing in all these aspects e.g. from the more southern species *D. melanogaster*. I also found that the species differences in fly locomotor activity rhythms can be explained by the differences at the neuronal level. The function of the photoperiodic timer in *D. montana* seems to be based on either a non-circadian oscillatory hourglass timer or a rapidly damping circadian oscillator. The fact that the flies of this species shift both their evening activity peak and the expression level peaks of two circadian clock genes, *period* and *timeless*, in concert with the day length suggests that *D. montana* uses only one circadian oscillator to measure the day length. The lack of the morning activity peak in entrained conditions, the degradation of free-running activity rhythm in constant darkness and the lack of the expression of two studied neurotransmitter and photoreceptor proteins in specific brain neurons in *D. montana* suggest that the circadian clock has evolved in a different direction than that of *D. melanogaster*. The circadian clock of *D. montana* shows many features important for adaptation to northern environment and has undoubtedly been one of the key factors enabling this species to distribute to the North.

Keywords: Circadian clock; clock neurons; gene expression; eclosion rhythm; locomotor activity rhythm; seasonality.

Hannele Kauranen, University of Jyväskylä, Department of Biological and Environmental Science, P.O. Box 35, FI-40014 University of Jyväskylä, Finland

**Author's address** Hannele Kauranen  
Department of Biological and Environmental Science  
P.O. Box 35  
FI-40014 University of Jyväskylä  
Finland  
hannele.kauranen@jyu.fi

**Supervisors** Professor Anneli Hoikkala  
Department of Biological and Environmental Science  
P.O. Box 35  
FI-40014 University of Jyväskylä  
Finland

Dr. Maaria Kankare  
Department of Biological and Environmental Science  
P.O. Box 35  
FI-40014 University of Jyväskylä  
Finland

**Reviewers** Docent Tapio Heino, PhD  
Department of Biosciences  
P.O. Box 56  
FI-00014 University of Helsinki  
Finland

Professor Sakiko Shiga  
Department of Biology and Geosciences  
Graduate School of Science  
University of Osaka city  
3-3-138 Sugimoto, Sumiyoshi  
Osaka 558-8585 Japan

**Opponent** Dr. David Doležal  
Faculty of Science  
University of South Bohemia  
Branišovská 31  
370 05 České Budějovice  
Czech Republic



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## LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

The thesis is based on the following original papers, which will be referred to in the text by their Roman numerals I-IV.

- I Kauranen, H., Menegazzi, P., Costa, R., Helfrich-Förster, C., Kankainen, AL. & Hoikkala, A. 2012. Flies in the North: Locomotor behavior and clock neuron organization of *Drosophila montana*. *Journal of Biological Rhythms*. 27: 377-387.
- II Kauranen, H., Tyukmaeva, V. & Hoikkala, A. 2012. The flies of a northern *Drosophila* species with robust diapause lose their rhythmicity and ability to enter diapause in prolonged scotophases. Manuscript.
- III Kauranen, H., Hoikkala, A. & Kankare, M. 2012. Daily and seasonal changes in the locomotor activity of *Drosophila montana* flies is accompanied by changes in the expression of two circadian genes, *period* and *timeless*. Manuscript.
- IV Kauranen, H. & Hoikkala, A. 2012. Circadian control of entrained and free-running locomotor and eclosion rhythms in *Drosophila montana*. Manuscript.

The table shows the contributions to the original papers. HK = Hannele Kauranen, PM = Pamela Menegazzi, ALK = Annaliisa Kankainen, RC = Rodolfo Costa, CH-F = Charlotte Helfrich-Förster, VT = Venera Tyukmaeva, MK = Maaria Kankare, AH = Anneli Hoikkala.

	I	II	III	IV
Original idea	HK, AH	HK, VT	HK, MK, AH	HK, AH
Data	HK, PM	VT, HK	HK	HK
Analyses	HK, PM, ALK	VT, HK	HK, MK	HK
Writing	HK, RC, CH-F, AH	HK, VT, AH	HK, AH, MK	HK, AH

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ct</i>	circadian time
<i>DD</i>	constant darkness treatment
<i>DN</i>	Dorsal neurons
<i>E</i>	evening
<i>FC</i>	fold change
<i>HLL</i>	constant high light intensity treatment
<i>LD</i>	light: dark cycle
<i>LL</i>	constant light treatment
<i>LLL</i>	constant low light intensity treatment
<i>LN<sub>d</sub>s</i>	dorsolateral neurons
<i>LN</i>	Lateral neurons
<i>l-LN<sub>v</sub>s</i>	large ventrolateral neurons
<i>LPNs</i>	lateral-posterior neurons
<i>M</i>	morning
<i>qPCR</i>	quantitative real time PCR
<i>s-LN<sub>v</sub>s</i>	small ventrolateral neurons
<i>RNA</i>	ribonucleic acid
<i>Zt</i>	Zeitgeber time
$\tau$	period; the length of the intrinsic day of the flies in hours

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Importance of measuring time

From the beginning of life, all living organisms on Earth have been exposed to rhythmic fluctuations in environmental factors, such as day length, temperature and humidity, caused by the rotation of Earth around its axis and around the Sun. The only exceptions are the organisms living in the ocean basin or in underground caves. To be able to forecast daily and seasonal changes in their environment and to adjust their life cycle accordingly, the organisms have evolved different kinds of time-measuring mechanisms. These biological clocks help the individuals e.g. to coordinate their metabolic processes, to be active at the right time of day and/or to adjust physiological changes so that they occur at the right time of day or year (Saunders 2002).

One of the best studied biological clocks is the circadian clock, which has evolved as a response to the rotation of the Earth around its axis. As its' name reveals (in Latin, *circa* = about, *dies* = a day), this time keeping mechanism measures time in the cycles of approximate length of 24 h (Saunders 2002). Fossil evidence suggests that the circadian rhythms have existed already several hundred million years ago e.g. in corals and nautiloids (see Sharma 2003). Nowadays circadian clocks are found in a wide range of organisms from the cyanobacteria *Synechococcus* (Kondo & Ishiura 1999, Iwasaki & Kondo 2004), to plants (Johnson 2001), insects (Williams & Sehgal 2001) and mammals, including humans (Reppert & Weaver 2001). Regulation of daily changes in metabolism increases the intrinsic fitness value of organisms (Green et al. 2008), while synchronized changes in behavior and physiology increase their extrinsic adaptive value (Sharma 2003). Circadian control of daily changes in the above-mentioned traits is usually based on changes in photoperiod and/or temperature, but the circadian clock may function even in constant conditions. For example, some cave-dwelling millipedes have been shown to have functional circadian oscillators even though they live in constant environments (Koilraj et al. 2000).

Seasonal changes induced by the rotation of the Earth around the Sun are often even more drastic than daily variation. Adaptation of organisms to seasonally varying environment has been enhanced by the evolution of the photoperiod timer. This time measurement system is based on changes in day length, which is the most reliable environmental cue for detecting the seasonal changes (Tauber et al. 1986). The photoperiodic timer enables organisms to predict the forthcoming cold season early enough to prepare for it and it also regulates seasonal changes in various kinds of processes linked with development, survival and progeny production. Adaptation to drastic seasonal changes in environmental conditions is of crucial importance especially for species living in the northern environments.

## 1.2 Circadian clock

### 1.2.1 Evolution of the circadian clock

Daily light/dark cycles are thought to be the main force enhancing the evolution of circadian clocks (Hastings et al. 1991). These clocks may increase the adaptive value of organisms e.g. by gating their light-sensitive metabolic processes to occur during the dark period to avoid the harmful effects of light/UV radiation (see Sharma 2003). Also the high level of free oxygen in the atmosphere during early eukaryote evolution might have favoured the development of circadian rhythmicity in metabolic activities to minimize the deleterious effects of diurnal photo-oxidative exposures (Paietta 1982). Later on also rhythmic activities, such as prey-predator interactions (Fenn & Macdonald 1995) and the avoidance of competition (Gutman & Dayan 2005, Levy et al. 2007), are thought to have fine-tuned the circadian rhythms of different species (Sharma 2003). Circadian rhythmicity is likely to play an important role also in progeny production. For example, in *Drosophila melanogaster*, the reproductive success of flies with nonfunctional circadian clocks has been found to be markedly decreased compared to flies with functional circadian clocks (Beaver et al. 2002).

Circadian clock controls rhythmic changes in numerous traits in organisms. For example, in cyanobacteria this clock has been found to control cell division and in the fungus *Neurospora crassa* the production of asexual spores (Loros & Dunlap 2001). In plants the circadian system is known to synchronize e.g. leaf movements (Yakir et al. 2007). For example, in *Mimosa pudica* the persistence of circadian leaf opening and closing rhythms under constant conditions was discovered as early as 1729 (de Mairan 1729). In insects behavioral traits that are known to be under circadian regulation include locomotor activity (Klarsfeld et al. 2003), the timing of eclosion (Konopka & Benzer 1971), egg-laying rhythms (Howlader & Sharma 2006) and courtship behavior (Fujii et al. 2007). In humans, the circadian clock has been found to control e.g. the sleep-wake cycles, the maintenance of body temperature and the release of endocrine hormones (Haus 2007, Lack & Wright 2007, Refinetti 2010).

All circadian rhythms maintained by the circadian clock have some common basic characteristics. First, the circadian rhythms possess an ability to be entrained by environmental cues, Zeitgebers (time giver; in German, zeit = time, geber = giver), such as light and temperature. In diurnally changing environmental conditions the entrained period ( $\tau$ ) corresponds to the length of an extrinsic day, which is 24 h (entrained rhythms) (Dubruille & Emery 2008). Second, under constant conditions the circadian clock is able to maintain the circadian rhythms for a long time with a free-running period ( $\tau$ ), which is close to 24 h (free-running rhythms) (Dubruille & Emery 2008). The third well-known character of the circadian rhythms is that they are temperature-compensated, which means that the circadian clock is able to maintain a free-running period ( $\tau$ ) of the rhythm close to 24 h under a wide range of temperatures (Pittendrigh, 1960).

Changes in day length are extreme at high latitudes where the day length can vary from constant light in summer to constant darkness during winter. Some studies have suggested that these kinds of constant conditions may have favored weaker circadian regulation of different traits. For example, in the Svalbard ptarmigan, *Lagopus mutus hyperboreus*, the daily oscillating melatonin levels attenuate during the summer and winter (Reierth et al. 1999). Also, 2 reindeer subspecies, the northern *Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus* and the southern *R. t. tarandus*, have been found to show interesting changes in their locomotor activity rhythms during the year. The northern *R. t. platyrhynchus* shows circadian activity rhythm only during the autumn and spring (van Oort et al. 2005), whereas the southern *R. t. tarandus* shows strong circadian activity rhythms for longer periods throughout the year (van Oort et al. 2007). However, even though the circadian regulation of some traits may be reduced at high latitudes, the clock can still control other circadian processes of the same species (Yerushalmi & Green 2009).

### 1.2.2 Genetic and neuronal background of the circadian clock

In *Drosophila* flies, as well as in many other organisms, circadian clock consists of three basic elements: the input pathways, the pacemaker/oscillator and the output pathways. Environmental signals, such as daily changes in light or temperature, are transmitted to the pacemaker through the input pathways to entrain it. The pacemaker itself generates molecular oscillations with a period ( $\tau$ ) approximately 24 h and controls several output pathways maintaining rhythmicity e.g. at metabolic, physiological and/or behavioural level.

Genetic studies on *D. melanogaster* rhythms have shown that the pacemaker is constructed of molecular transcriptional-translational feedback loops. These feedback loops, which involve a number of genes, lead to self-sustained circadian oscillations (Williams & Sehgal 2001). This kind of molecular feedback loop mechanism has been found in the circadian clocks of several organisms ranging from bacteria to *Neurospora* (Loros & Dunlap 2001, Lakin-Thomas et al. 2011), plants (Alabadi et al. 2001) and mammals, including humans (King & Takahashi

2000, Okamura et al. 2002). Interestingly, many circadian clock genes show striking homology between the species (Young & Kay 2001, Stanewsky 2003).

In *D. melanogaster*, the main pacemaker consists of numerous genes, including *Clock* (*Clk*), *cycle* (*cyc*), *period* (*per*) and *timeless* (*tim*) (Peschel & Helfrich-Förster 2011). To create the oscillating pacemaker, *Clk* and *cyc* activate the transcription of other circadian genes, including *period* (*per*) and *timeless* (*tim*). Due to this activation, the transcription levels of *per* and *tim* start to increase, reaching their peak expression at the end of the day or during the early night (Hardin et al. 1990, Sehgal et al. 1995). Increased mRNA production of these genes leads to oscillations of PER and TIM proteins, which lag behind the RNA oscillations by about 6 h (reviewed in Hardin 2004, Nitabach & Taghert 2008). Subsequent light-induced degradation of TIM during the next morning, mediated by an intracellular photoreceptor *cryptochrome* (Konopka et al. 1989, Stanewsky et al. 1998, Emery et al. 2000a), leads to a degradation of PER and permits CLK-CYC mediated transcriptional activation to start again (see Nitabach & Taghert 2008).

The location of the pacemaker running the circadian rhythms varies between the species. For example, in the sea slug *Aplysia* the pacemaker has been found to locate in the eye (Block et al. 1993), while in mammals the circadian pacemaker is located in the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) of the hypothalamus (see Harrington 1992). Some species have also been found to have peripheral oscillators, which can be under the control of the central pacemaker or be directly entrained by environmental cues (Hege et al. 1997, Giebultowicz 2001, Myers et al. 2003). In plants, almost all cells have their own autonomous circadian system (Thain et al. 2002), whereas mammals have peripheral oscillators that are located in many tissues, such as the liver, but they are coordinated by the central pacemaker (Yamazaki et al. 2000).

In *D. melanogaster*, the neural network behind the circadian pacemaker is located in the central neuronal system consisting of ~150 lateral (LN) and dorsal (DN) neurons, which express particular circadian clock genes (reviewed in Taghert & Shafer 2006, Nitabach & Taghert 2008). LNs and DNs can further be divided into several subgroups: the small ventrolateral neurons (s-LN<sub>v,s</sub>), the large ventrolateral neurons (l-LN<sub>v,s</sub>), the dorsolateral neurons (LN<sub>ds</sub>) and three groups of dorsal neurons (DN<sub>1s</sub>, DN<sub>2s</sub> and DN<sub>3s</sub>) (reviewed in Helfrich-Förster 2003), as well as lateral-posterior neurons (LPNs) (Taghert & Shafer 2006). *D. melanogaster* have also peripheral oscillators, which can be directly entrained by environmental signals. In this species, light-sensitive autonomous peripheral oscillators have been found to be located e.g. in the head (other than central pacemaker), thorax, gut, excretory system and testes (Giebultowicz 2001, Beaver et al. 2002, Glossop & Hardin 2002, Myers et al. 2003).

### 1.2.3 Locomotor activity

The locomotor activity rhythm is the best studied circadian rhythm in *D. melanogaster*. The flies of this species are crepuscular showing 2 activity peaks in laboratory conditions, the morning (M) and evening (E) peak (Hamblencoye et



al. 1992, Rieger et al. 2003). When *D. melanogaster* flies are released into constant darkness, they show only the evening activity peak and free-run with a period of ~ 24 h (Helfrich-Förster 2000, Allada & Chung 2010). In constant light these flies lose their rhythmicity at light intensities over 10 lux (Aschoff 1979, Konopka et al. 1989, Helfrich-Förster et al. 2001), but show free-running rhythms at low light intensities (~ 0.03 lx) (Bachleitner et al. 2007). Contrary to *D. melanogaster*, some *Drosophila* species living at higher latitudes, such as *D. suboccidentalis*, *D. subquinaria* and *D. virilis*, have been found to show only an evening activity peak (Simunovic & Jaenike 2006, Bahn et al. 2009).

In *D. melanogaster*, 4 out of 5 s-LNVs and all l-LNVs express neuropeptide *Pigment-dispersing factor* (*Pdf*) (see Yoshii et al. 2009), but the 5th s-LNV does not express *Pdf* (Kaneko et al. 1997, Rieger et al. 2006). PDF-positive s-LNVs are necessary for the morning activity of *D. melanogaster* flies under LD conditions, which forms a neuronal basis for the morning (M) oscillator, while the 5th PDF-negative s-LNV and LNds control the evening activity of the flies and are defined as the evening (E) oscillator under LD conditions (Grima et al. 2004, Stoleru et al. 2004, Rieger et al. 2006, Nitabach & Taghert 2008). s-LNVs are also the most important clock neurons for the maintenance of persistent locomotor activity rhythms in constant darkness (Renn et al. 1999).

Pittendrigh and Daan suggested already in 1976 that the morning (M) and evening (E) activity peaks are controlled by separate circadian oscillators and that by adjusting the phase-relationship between them the circadian clock enables organisms to synchronize their behaviour with seasonal changes in day length (Allada & Chung 2010). The phase-relationship between (M) and (E) - oscillators has indeed been found to change according to the season in several species, including *D. melanogaster* (Aschoff 1966, Majercak et al. 1999). In *D. melanogaster* the interval between the morning (M) activity and the evening activity (E) peaks is longer under long day conditions than under short day conditions, which helps the flies to keep track of the changing seasons (Rieger et al. 2003, Beer et al. 2010, Rieger et al. 2012). Based on the current view, the neurons of the M-oscillators maintain circadian rhythm under constant darkness and during the short winter days (Picot et al. 2007, Stoleru et al. 2007), whereas those of the E-oscillator control the rhythm in constant light and under long summer days (Stoleru et al. 2004, Picot et al. 2007, Stoleru et al. 2007).

Studies on the rhythmicity of organisms in natural or semi-natural conditions can give a more reliable picture of their rhythmicity than do studies performed in laboratory conditions with regularly changing LD and / or temperature cycles (Boulos & Macchi 2005, Rieger et al. 2007, Vanin et al. 2012). For example, simulated twilight increases the ability of these flies to adapt their locomotor activity rhythms to long photoperiods (Rieger et al. 2012).

#### 1.2.4 Eclosion rhythm

Eclosion is the developmental stage, when insects emerge from their pupal case. The role of the circadian clock in regulating the timing of eclosion is to gate it to occur at a particular time of day, usually in the morning when the relative

humidity is high (Pittendrigh 1954, Qiu & Hardin 1996). The first circadian clock gene, *period*, was found in *D. melanogaster* by Konopka and Benzer (1971), when these researchers were studying eclosion rhythm of the wild-type and mutant flies of this species.

The eclosion rhythm of *D. melanogaster* flies is regulated by a peripheral clock in the prothoracic glands (Myers et al. 2003). These glands are known to assess the growth and the size of developing pupae and determine when the pupae are ready to eclose (Allada & Chung 2010). Evidence for a partly independent control of the locomotion and eclosion rhythms comes from the differences between these rhythms detected in various *Drosophila* species, including *D. pseudoobscura* (Engelmann & Mack 1978), *D. rajasekari* (Joshi 2001) and *D. melanogaster* (Myers et al. 2003). Further evidence comes from the findings that *ebony* (Newby & Jackson 1991) and *tim<sup>blind</sup>* (Wulbeck et al. 2005) mutations change the locomotor activity rhythm, but not the eclosion rhythm, of *D. melanogaster* flies. The function of the peripheral clock in *D. melanogaster* may, however, still be partly regulated by the central circadian clock neurons as ablation of PDF-expressing lateral neurons (LN<sub>v</sub>s) and a null mutation of *Pdf* have been found to disrupt the PG clock and change the eclosion rhythm of the flies (Myers et al. 2003). Also, some mutations in the circadian clock genes (e.g. *period*, *timeless* and *doubletime*) have been found to have the same kind of effects on both locomotor activity and eclosion rhythms of the flies (Sehgal et al. 1994, Sehgal et al. 1996, Rothenfluh et al. 2000).

### 1.3 Photoperiodic timer

Photoperiodic timer enables the organisms to measure seasonal changes in day length and forecast the forthcoming changes in environmental conditions on the basis of this information. As the photoperiod is the most reliable cue for the changing seasons, many organisms living in the north control their physiology and behavior on the basis of this cue.

Photoperiodic timer consists of light receptors, the photoperiodic counter and the photoperiodic clock. Light receptors differ between species, but e.g. *D. melanogaster* flies sense light with 3 different photoreceptive organs, the ocelli, the compound eyes and the Hofbauer-Buchner eyelets (HB-eyelets) containing different rhodopsins (Peschel & Helfrich-Förster 2011). Photoperiodic counter counts and accumulates information on LD cycles and delivers this information to the photoperiodic clock, which interprets the information and evokes specific behavioral or physiological changes when the day length goes below (or the night above) the critical day/night length.

In insects many traits are controlled by the photoperiod timer. Good examples are the dormancy (quiescence/diapause) e.g. in *Drosophila auraria* (Pittendrigh & Takamura 1987) and linden bug *Pyrrhocoris apterus* (Hodek 1968, Hodkova 1977), seasonal changes in the morphological forms of silk moth *Bombyx mori* (Tsurumaki et al. 1999), the growth of cutworm *Agrostis occulta*

larvae (Danilevskii 1965) and the migration of the monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus* (Brower 1977). One of the best studied dormancies in insects is adult reproductive diapause, during which the females postpone their sexual maturation and reproduction until a more favourable season (Saunders 2002). Photoperiodically regulated diapause responses have been found to occur in more than 500 insect species (Nishizuka et al. 1998).

## 1.4 Connection between the circadian clock and photoperiodic timer

### 1.4.1 Models describing the possible connection

In 1936 Bünning proposed that the photoperiodic timer requires cooperation with the circadian clock, but the role of this clock in the photoperiodic control of seasonal rhythms is still under intense debate. In theory, the length of the photoperiod could be measured without the involvement of the circadian clock, but studies on several species have suggested that the circadian clock takes part in this process (Imaizumi & Kay 2006, reviewed in Foster & Kreizman 2009). Although the genetic regulation of circadian clock is well-described in *D. melanogaster* (reviewed in Peschel & Helfrich-Förster 2011), the genetic and physiological mechanisms underlying the photoperiodic timer are poorly understood, which is partly due to the fact that the above-mentioned species does not show robust photoperiodic responses.

Many theoretical models have been developed for the function of photoperiodic timer with or without the involvement of the circadian clock in photoperiodic time measurement. In an hour-glass model, the photoperiodic timer has been suggested to be based on a non-circadian mechanism and to be driven only by external LD cycles, so that it needs to be reset every day (Lees 1973). The hour-glass model has been suggested to explain e.g. the induction of adult reproductive diapause in the spider mite *Tetranychus urticae* (Veerman & Vaz Nunes 1987) and larval diapause in the rice stem borer *Chilo suppressalis* (Chen et al. 2011).

Bünning (1936) suggested a model, in which the photoperiod time measurement is based on the oscillation of organisms' circadian clock. In this model, the photoperiodic timer is assumed to consist of 1 or more circadian oscillators, which are entrainable by light and which restart time measurement spontaneously during prolonged dark phases. Thus, the light signals perceived by the organisms should entrain the circadian oscillator and evoke (or do not evoke) photoperiodic responses, when the light period coincides with the organisms' photosensitive phase (Bünning 1936). Bünning presented also a damped circadian oscillator model, where both hourglass-like and oscillatory photoperiodic timers are thought to be based on the circadian system of the organisms and to differ from each other only in their propensity to dampen

(Bünning 1969, Lewis & Saunders 1987, Saunders & Lewis 1987a, Saunders & Lewis 1987b).

Bünning's original hypothesis was further developed in external (Pittendrigh & Minis 1964, Pittendrigh 1966) and internal (Pittendrigh 1972) coincidence models. The external coincidence model is based on a single circadian oscillator in which phase is set by the LD cycle in such a way that a particular light-sensitive phase ( $\phi_i$ ) is restricted to a short period during the latter half of the subjective night. Here, a short-day/long-night response is thought to be evoked when  $\phi_i$  regularly coincides with darkness during the long autumn nights (see Vaz Nunes & Saunders 1999). In the internal coincidence model, on the other hand, the photoperiodic time measurement has been suggested to be based on changes in phase relationship between the morning (M) and evening (E) oscillators so that an increase in the day length leads to an increase in the phase angle difference between the oscillators triggering a long-day response, and vice versa (Pittendrigh 1972).

Finally, Pittendrigh (1972) presented a third model of how the circadian clock could be involved in the photoperiodic timer: a circadian resonance model. This model was further developed by Vaz Nunes and Veerman (1982) and named an hourglass timer-oscillator counter model. In this model the night length is suggested to be measured through a non-circadian hourglass timer, but the photoperiodic counter mechanism still requires the involvement of the circadian clock (Vaz Nunes & Veerman 1982).

Even though researchers have found evidence for all above-mentioned models while studying the function of photoperiodic timer in different species (Saunders 1990, Claret & Arpagaus 1994, Tauber & Kyriacou 2001), the final conclusion on whether the circadian clock is or is not necessary for the function of the photoperiodic timer is still unresolved.

#### 1.4.2 Candidate genes for the circadian clock and photoperiodic timer

Information on the molecular basis of the circadian clock of *D. melanogaster* offers a good possibility to find out whether any of the circadian clock core genes (e.g. *clock*, *cycle*, *timeless* and *period*) play a role in the photoperiodic timer. *timeless* (*tim*) is one of the key genes that could play an important role in both time measuring systems through its sensitivity to night length. Indeed, mRNA and protein levels of *tim* have been found to decrease under long-day conditions compared to short day conditions e.g. in *Sarcophaga crassipalpis* and *D. melanogaster* flies (Goto & Denlinger 2002, Shafer et al. 2004). *period* is a second clock gene that has been suggested to play a role in seasonal adaptation (Saunders et al. 2004). Mutations in this gene have been found to disrupt e.g. the females' ability to discriminate between long and short days in *D. melanogaster* (Saunders et al. 1989). As Emerson et al. (2009) have noticed, mutations or allelic variants in clock genes do not need to modify the effects of the entire circadian clock on photoperiodism, but they can also have direct effects on diapause.

## 1.5 Aims of the thesis

The main aim of my thesis was to trace the role of the circadian clock in adaptation to northern environment and to find out whether and how its function is connected with the photoperiodic timer. To address these questions, I studied how the circadian clock regulates daily and seasonal rhythms in the locomotor activity and eclosion of northern *D. montana* flies and traced the genetic and neuronal background of the circadian clock in this species.

In the first paper I studied the function of the circadian clock of *D. montana* at phenotypic (locomotor activity) and neuronal level to find out whether the clock shows features that could be adaptive to seasonally varying conditions at high latitudes. Both the entrained and free-running locomotor activity rhythms of the female flies were monitored in different LD cycles and temperatures to see whether and how these rhythms differ from those of a more southern species, *D. melanogaster*. In addition, I studied the neuronal background of the circadian clock of *D. montana* by tracing the expression of PDF neuropeptide and CRY protein in its neural cells of the brains to find out whether the two species show differences also at the neuronal level.

The connection between the circadian clock and the photoperiodic timer in *D. montana* was studied in more detail by using the Nanda-Hammer protocol as described in paper II. The purpose of this study was to find out whether the induction of the photoperiodic reproductive diapause of *D. montana* females requires the involvement of the circadian oscillator or not. In this experiment the flies were kept in 13 chambers in LD cycles with the same duration of the light period (12 h) followed by unique dark periods ranging from 12 to 60 h, so that the total LD cycle in different chambers varied between 24 and 72h. The general assumption of this experiment is that if the circadian clock takes part in the photoperiodic response, then the underlying sensitivity to light should cycle between light insensitivity and light sensitivity during the long dark periods. In our experiment this means that only the females that were maintained in LD cycles of 24, 48 or 72 h were expected to give a photoperiodic response (enter diapause).

In paper III I traced daily and seasonal rhythms in the locomotor activity of the flies and in the expression level of 2 key circadian clock genes, *per* and *tim*, when flies were reared in seminatural conditions during summer and autumn where females are expected to develop ovaries or enter reproductive diapause, respectively. The main purpose of this study was to see how seasonal changes in light and temperature conditions affect the locomotor activity patterns of the females and also to find out whether the expression level of *per* and *tim* show daily and/or seasonal rhythms. I also studied whether the reproductive stage of the females has an effect on their locomotor activity and/or on the daily changes in the expression level of the above mentioned genes.

Finally, I studied the effects of different constant condition treatments (constant darkness and constant high and low light intensity) on the flies' free-

running locomotor activity rhythm (IV) to see whether flies are more active and retain their locomotor activity better in constant high and/or low light intensity than in constant darkness and whether their rhythms differ under these conditions. I also measured the free-running eclosion rhythm of *D. montana* larvae in constant darkness to find out whether the eclosion and the locomotor activity rhythms of *D. montana* are under different neuronal control in different circadian oscillators (IV).

## 2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Study species and populations

*Drosophila montana* belongs to the *Drosophila virilis* species group. It is originated in Asia from where it has spread on different continents at high latitudes (Throckmorton 1982). *D. montana* has diverged from *D. virilis* approximately 10 million years ago (Spicer & Bell 2002), and the divergence time between *D. virilis* (genus *Drosophila*) and *D. melanogaster* groups (genus *Sophophora*) is about 63 million years (Tamura et al. 2004).

In my thesis work I have used the females of *D. montana* isofemale strains and a mass-bred population originating from Oulanka (66 °N, 29 °E) (I, III, IV) and isofemale strains collected from Pelkosenniemi (67 °N, 27 °E) and from Lahti (60 °N, 25 °E) (II). Isofemale strains were established from the progenies of wild-caught females inseminated in the wild and the mass-bred population was created by combining F<sub>3</sub> progenies of 20 isofemale strains. Isofemale strains were maintained in bottles containing malt medium (Lakovaara 1969) and the mass-bred population was reared in a wooden population cage attached to six malt bottles. Both isofemale strains and the mass-bred population have been maintained since their establishment (2008 or 2009) in the laboratory in constant light of ~ 300 lux at 19 °C and with relative humidity of 60 %.

In Finland, *D. montana* flies are exposed to very long days or continuous light during their mating season in the early summer, and thus maintaining them in continuous light in our “fly room” enabled the flies to produce about 7-8 generations per year. When the day length starts to shorten in late summer, practically all females of this species enter adult reproductive diapause (Lumme 1978, Tyukmaeva 2011) and they spend the long and dark winter under constant darkness, probably under snow cover.



## 2.2 Phenotypic measurements

### 2.2.1 The locomotor activity experiments (I, III, IV)

I studied the entrained locomotor activity rhythms of *D. montana* females under different photoperiods either in constant or fluctuating temperature. In addition, I traced their free-running locomotor activity rhythms in constant light or darkness and constant temperature (see Table I for the experimental conditions).

Females were collected within 1 day after eclosion for the locomotor activity experiments (I, IV). Only in studies concerning the females' entrained locomotor activity rhythms in seminatural conditions (III) the age of the females differ between the study groups: non-diapausing females and diapausing females. The locomotor activity rhythms of the females were measured by placing the females in glass tubes connected with either Trikinetics *Drosophila* Activity Monitors (I, III) or Trikinetics *Drosophila* High Resolution Activity Monitors (IV) (Waltham, MA, USA).

### 2.2.2 The eclosion rhythm experiments (IV)

Free-running eclosion rhythms of fly pupae in study IV were monitored in constant darkness at 19 °C using recording equipment based on the "falling ball" principle (Lankinen & Lumme 1982). Sexually mature females and males of the parental generation were allowed to mate and lay eggs in malt bottles for one week and, once most of their progeny had pupated, the pupae were rinsed from the walls of the bottles with water (at 19 °C), washed and dried on absorbing paper. The pupae were placed individually into the holes in an acryl plate (80 x 100 mm), whose opening was closed with a stainless steel ball. The plates were then placed in an eclosion rhythm monitor and maintained in constant darkness at 19 °C for 21 days.

### 2.2.3 Reproductive diapause (I, II, III, IV)

In the Nanda-Hamner experiment (II), the females were collected within 1 day after their emergence, sexed and transferred into vials containing yeast-sucrose-agar media (Rosato & Kyriacou, 2006) with some dry yeast on the top. Female vials were transferred into an air-conditioned room with automatically controlled temperature (16 °C) and divided into 13 wooden experimental chambers with specific LD cycles. All chambers had a light period of 12 h followed by unique dark periods ranging from 12 h to 60 h. In addition, we transferred females of same strains into constant darkness in the same room. All females were kept in a given LD cycle or constant darkness for 21 days.

After all the locomotor experiments (I, III, IV) and the Nanda-Hamner experiment (II) either whole females (I, II) or their abdomens (III, IV) were stored until their reproductive stage was determined on the basis of the size and developmental stage of their ovaries (Tyukmaeva et al. 2011).



## 2.3 Neurogenetic and genetic methods

### 2.3.1 Immunohistochemistry (I)

I performed immunohistochemistry experiments with 1 *D. montana* isofemale line using antibodies designed against PDF and CRY (I). Prior to PDF and CRY staining, female flies were kept in constant darkness (DD) at 20 °C for 72 h. At Zeitgeber time (ZT) 0, the females were fixed in 4 % paraformaldehyde in a phosphate buffer (PB, pH 7.4) with 0.5 % Triton-X in darkness for 4 h at room temperature and rinsed 3 times for 15 min in PB, after which their brains were dissected in the same buffer. Brains were collected in PB with 0.5 % Triton X and subsequently blocked in 5 % normal goat serum (NGS) in PB with 0.5 % Triton X overnight at 4 °C before treating them with primary and secondary antibodies. Brains were then incubated in PDF or CRY antibody solution for 48 h at 4 °C and rinsed 5 times for 10 min in PB with 0.5 % Triton X-100. The primary rabbit anti-CRY was diluted by 1:1000 and the primary mouse anti-PDF by 1:2500 in PB containing 5 % NGS and 0.5 % Triton X-100.

The secondary fluorescence-conjugated antibody PDF and CRY stainings were performed for 2 different groups of brains. As secondary antibodies in these stainings, we used Alexa Fluor 546 (goat anti-mouse; Invitrogen) for PDF and Alexa Fluor 488 (goat anti-rabbit; Invitrogen) for CRY. The secondary antibodies were diluted 1:200 in PB containing 5 % NGS and 0.5 % Triton X-100. After washes the brains were mounted on Vectashield mounting medium (Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, CA). More detailed information on the protocol is given in paper I. The fluorescence signals of the whole brains were detected using a confocal microscope (Olympus FV1000). We examined at least 10 brains for PDF and CRY immunostaining. Images were processed using the program ImageJ.

### 2.3.2 Gene expression (III)

When studying both daily and seasonal variation in the expression levels of *timeless* and *period* genes (III), fresh samples of females for RNA extractions were collected from the experimental photoperiod every 6 h over the 24 h period after performing the locomotor activity experiments. The samples for non-diapausing females were collected at photoperiods 24LL, 16:8 LD and 14:10 LD and the ones for diapausing females at photoperiods 16:8 LD and 14:10 LD. In each of these photoperiods the first RNA sample was collected immediately before the lights-on transition (ZT 0) and the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> samples 6, 12 and 18 h after lights-on transition (ZT 6, ZT 12 and ZT 18). The females of all samples were flash-frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at - 84 °C.

### 2.3.3 RNA extraction and cDNA synthesis (III)

Prior to RNA extractions the flies were put in pre-cooled (2 h in  $-84^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) RNAlaterICE solution and kept overnight or for at least 16 h in  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ , after which their heads were cut off using a scalpel and then used individually for RNA extractions.

Total RNA was extracted with the ZR RNA Microprep kit with DNase treatment according to the manufacturer's protocol. After extraction, the purity and concentration of each sample was measured with a NanoDrop spectrophotometer and the integrity of RNA in some samples was checked with an Agilent 2100 Bioanalyzer.

Before cDNA synthesis, RNA samples were diluted to equal concentrations (10-15 ng/ $\mu\text{l}$ ) and 2  $\mu\text{l}$  of total RNA of each sample was used as template for cDNA synthesis using iScript Reverse Transcription Supermix (Bio-Rad Laboratories) following the manufacturer's protocol. 20  $\mu\text{l}$  of the reaction mixture included in addition to RNA, 4  $\mu\text{l}$  of 5 x iScript reaction mixture, 1  $\mu\text{l}$  of reverse transcriptase enzyme and dH<sub>2</sub>O. The PCR cycling conditions were: 5 min at 25  $^{\circ}\text{C}$ , 30 min at 42  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  and 5 min at 85  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  for cDNA reactions.

### 2.3.4 Quantitative real time PCR (qPCR) (III)

Primers for *timeless* and *period* genes and candidate control genes for quantitative real time PCR (qPCR) were designed using NetPrimer and Geneious programs (III). Candidates for the control genes were chosen on the basis of their stability in our earlier studies (Kankare et al. 2010, Kankare et al. unpublished, Salminen et al. unpublished). Amplification efficiency values of all the primer pairs were checked using 2-fold serial dilutions of pooled cDNA (from all the treatments) with 3 technical replicates and 7-9 dilution points.

Expression patterns of experimental and control genes were traced with qPCR using 6 biological replicates and 3 technical replicates from all the treatments. qPCR reactions were run using the following mixture: 10  $\mu\text{l}$  2x Power SYBR Green PCR Master Mix (Bio-Rad Laboratories), 0.3  $\mu\text{l}$  of each gene-specific primer and 1  $\mu\text{l}$  of cDNA solution; the total volume of reaction was 20  $\mu\text{l}$ . qPCR reactions were run with a Bio-Rad CFX96 instrument with the following cycling conditions: initiation at 95  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 3 min, denaturation at 95  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 10 seconds, annealing at 55  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 10 seconds and extension at 72  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 30 seconds. Denaturation, annealing and extension phases of the PCR were repeated 40 times and they were followed by a melting curve analysis to check the purity of the qPCR reaction.

## 2.4 Statistical analysis

### 2.4.1 Analysis of fly locomotor activity (I, III, IV)

The raw locomotor activity data of the flies were displayed as double-plotted actograms (48-h plots) for experimental days under different entraining conditions (LD cycles and temperatures) (I, III, IV) and constant conditions (I, IV). The primary analysis of these actograms was done with the program ActogramJ (Schmid et al., 2011). The rhythmicity and the length of the period ( $\tau$ ) of the flies were traced by analyzing the actograms using the Lomb-Scargle periodogram method; when the periodogram analysis detected significant periodicity in fly's activity rhythm across consecutive days, the fly was determined to be rhythmic. The power of the Lomb-Scargle periodogram analysis was defined as the amplitude of the peak only for the rhythmic flies from the Lomb Scargle periodogram with significance level  $p < 0.05$ .

The mean activity level of the females was calculated under different entraining (I, III, IV) and constant conditions (I, IV) over experimental days in five-minute bins. Prior to performing these tests, normality assumptions of the distributions of fly activity levels were tested with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests and homogeneity of variance with Levene's test. If the data did not fulfill the criteria of normal distribution and/or homogeneity of variances, non-parametric tests were used. All the analyses were done with PASW Statistics 18.0 (SPSS Inc.).

The effects of temperature and photoperiod on the mean activity levels of the flies in entraining conditions (I) were analyzed with 2-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with temperature and photoperiod as fixed factors. In cases, when the data were not normally distributed and/or the variances were not equal, we used Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U -tests. Pairwise comparisons between the mean activity levels of the flies in constant light or darkness were performed with Mann-Whitney U -tests (I).

When tracing the factors (strain, temperature, entraining photoperiod, and/or constant condition) affecting fly rhythmicity (I), the data were analyzed with hierarchical logit models. For this analysis the locomotor activity data were made binary, with a value of 1 for each rhythmic fly and a value of 2 for each arrhythmic fly. The goodness of fit of the final model including all significant variables and their interaction terms was tested by using the likelihood-ratio  $\chi^2$ -test.

### 2.4.2 Analysis of pupal eclosion data (IV)

Pupal eclosion rhythms were traced by plotting the number of eclosions per 1 h bin for each strain. The free-running period ( $\tau$ ) of fly eclosion rhythms was estimated by periodogram analysis using the Lomb-Scargle periodogram method. The data for the first 12 circadian hours after the pupae had been

transferred to the eclosion monitors in constant darkness were excluded from the periodogram analysis to avoid possible effects of the transfer.

### **2.4.3 Analysis of qPCR data (III)**

The relative gene expression values of *tim* and *per* were calculated using a relative expression method ( $\Delta(Ct)$ ) with real efficiency values (see study III for more details of the analysis). Statistical significance of the expression changes in these genes between the studied time points within the LD cycles, as well as between the non-diapausing and diapausing females in short photoperiods, were calculated with REST 2009 program using randomization with 10 000 iterations and bootstrapping methods.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Function of the circadian clock at phenotypic level: regulation of the locomotor activity and eclosion rhythms in *Drosophila montana*

I have studied the role of the circadian clock in adaptation to environmental conditions prevailing at high latitudes by tracing the locomotor activity and eclosion rhythms of the flies of a northern *D. montana* population. The flies of this species appeared to possess good entrained locomotor activity rhythm in all LD cycles used in studies I, III and IV. Interestingly, these flies displayed only an evening activity peak in all studied photoperiods and temperatures, both in fluctuating (III) and constant (I, IV) temperature. Even though most insect species studied so far, including *D. melanogaster*, have been found to show bimodal locomotor activity with clear morning and evening peaks (e.g. Hamblencoyle et al. 1992), unimodal activity is not exceptional. This kind of activity has been detected e.g. in the Japanese honeybee *Apis cerana japonica* (Fuchikawa & Shimizu 2007) and in 2 *Drosophila* species, *D. subquinaria* (Simunovic & Jaenike 2006) and *D. virilis* (Bahn et al. 2009).

One of the main characters of circadian clock rhythms is their self-sustainability, which means that the circadian rhythms keep cycling (free-run) even in the absence of environmental cues. However, the conditions in which free-running rhythms can be seen vary between the species. For example, *D. melanogaster* flies have been shown to retain their rhythmicity in constant darkness (Helfrich-Förster 2000, Dubruille & Emery 2008), but become rapidly arrhythmic in constant light (Konopka et al. 1989, Stanewsky et al. 1998), whereas *D. virilis* flies lose their rhythmicity in constant darkness (Bahn et al. 2009). *D. montana* flies were found to lose their locomotor activity rhythm when released into constant darkness after entrainment (like *D. virilis*), but not when released into constant high and low light intensities (I, IV). In addition, the flies were more active in constant high and low intensity light than in constant darkness (IV).

Differences between the daily locomotor activity rhythms and activity levels of *D. montana* and *D. melanogaster* flies in constant light and darkness might be explained by species differences at the neuronal level. The difference in the activity rhythms is likely to be due to the fact that *D. montana* flies lack the expression of PDF in s-LN<sub>v</sub> neurons, which have been shown to be necessary for the morning activity of *D. melanogaster* (more about this in chapter 1.2). Furthermore, in *D. melanogaster* the M oscillator has been shown to periodically rouse the fly in constant darkness, but not in constant light, whereas the E oscillator can do the same in constant light but not in constant darkness (Picot et al. 2007). The ability of *D. montana* flies to retain their locomotor activity rhythm in constant light is likely to be adaptive as these flies are exposed to long (even continuous) days during their mating season in early summer in the northern latitudes. On the other hand, also the loss of rhythmicity in constant darkness can be an evolutionary adaptation, as these flies are exposed to constant darkness during the long and dark winters, which they generally spend under a snow cover.

Contrary to showing weak locomotor activity rhythm in darkness, *D. montana* flies possessed persistent free-running eclosion rhythms in this condition (IV), which suggests that the locomotor activity and eclosion rhythms are at least partly under different neuronal control in this species. This kind of discrepancy has earlier been detected also in *D. montana*'s sister species *D. littoralis* (Lankinen, 1985). The presence of two or more circadian oscillators, which control independently or cooperatively the locomotor activity and eclosion rhythms, has been postulated also for *D. pseudoobscura* (Engelmann & Mack 1978), *D. rajasekari* (Joshi 2001) and *D. melanogaster* (Myers et al. 2003). In the last-mentioned species, the peripheral oscillator acting in the prothoracic gland controlling the eclosion rhythm has been found to be under the control of a central clock (Myers et al. 2003).

### 3.2 The neuronal background of the circadian clock of *D. montana*

In addition to differences in their locomotor activity rhythms, *D. montana* flies were found to differ from *D. melanogaster* also in the number and location of specific circadian clock neurons regulating these rhythms. In *D. montana* the expression of PDF neuropeptide, which is essential for synchronizing the oscillations of the circadian clock neurons and in transferring the circadian signals from the pacemaker to downstream neurons, was totally lacking (or showed very low expression) in small ventrolateral neurons (s-LN<sub>v</sub>s) in the fly brains (I). Based on recent studies, the same seems to be true also in the other studied species of the *D. virilis* group; in *D. virilis*, *D. littoralis* and *D. ezoana* (Bahn et al. 2009, Hermann et al. 2012). Thus, the situation of all these species resembles that of *D. melanogaster Pdf<sup>01</sup>*-mutants, which do not express PDF in their s-LN<sub>v</sub> neurons and also lack the morning activity peak (Renn et al. 1999). Furthermore, ablation of PDF positive s-LN<sub>v</sub> neurons in *D. melanogaster* has been found to

result in arrhythmic behavior in constant darkness and the loss of the morning activity peak in laboratory conditions (Shafer & Taghert 2009).

In *D. melanogaster*, the circadian photoreceptor gene *cryptochrome* (*cry*) plays an important role in entraining the flies to LD cycles and contributes also to the adjustment of the evening activity peak (Stanewsky et al. 1998, Emery et al. 2000b). *D. montana* differed from *D. melanogaster* in that this protein was not expressed in its large ventrolateral neurons (l-LN<sub>vs</sub>) (I), again resembling the situation in *D. virilis*, *D. littoralis* and *D. ezoana* (Bahn et al. 2009, Hermann et al. 2012). In *D. melanogaster*, the expression of CRY in different neuron groups, including l-LN<sub>vs</sub>, has been suggested to be responsible for the arrhythmicity of the flies in LL (Emery et al. 2000a, Benito et al. 2008, Yoshii et al. 2008). This is supported by the finding that *cry<sup>b</sup>* and *cry<sup>0</sup>* mutants of this species retain their rhythmicity in LL (Emery et al. 2000a, Dolezelova et al. 2007) due to the reduced action of CRY in their dorsal neurons (Dubruille et al. 2009, Zhang et al. 2010a, Zhang et al. 2010b) and possibly also in l-LN<sub>vs</sub> (Emery et al. 2000b, Shang et al. 2008, Fogle et al. 2011).

Neurogenetic differences detected in this study (I) between *D. montana* and *D. melanogaster* are not likely to be due to a lack of immunoreactivity of *D. melanogaster* antibodies used in *D. montana*. The comparisons of the amino acid sequences for PDF antibody region between *D. melanogaster*, *D. virilis* and *D. montana* showed this region to be identical between these 3 species and also the CRY antibody region showed high sequence similarities between the species (I). The differences found in the expression of PDF in s-LN<sub>vs</sub> in *D. montana* compared to *D. melanogaster* could explain, at least partly, the lack of the morning activity and the attenuated function of the circadian clock in this species in constant darkness. In addition, the absence of CRY expression in l-LN<sub>vs</sub> in *D. montana* may enable the flies to retain their rhythmicity in continuous light during northern summers.

### 3.3 The role of the circadian clock in controlling seasonal rhythms and its possible connection with the photoperiodic timer

The role of the circadian clock in controlling seasonal changes in insect behavior and development, alone or together with a photoperiodic timer, is still unclear (Schiesari et al. 2011) and many theoretical models and experimental designs have been developed to find answers to this question (Bünning 1936, Pittendrigh & Minis 1964, Pittendrigh 1972, Lees 1973). To find out whether the circadian clock is involved in the function of the photoperiodic timer in *D. montana* I traced photoperiodic responses of the females of this species (diapause/reproduction) under different LDs using the classical Nanda-Hamner protocol (II). If *D. montana* females used circadian clock in photoperiodic time measurement, their diapause response would be predicted to rise and fall with a period ~24 h during the prolonged nights. On the other hand, if they showed non-rhythmic diapause



response during those prolonged nights, their photoperiodic time measurement could be expected to be based on an hourglass-like mechanism or a damped oscillator. The study revealed no cycling in the females' diapause response, thus favoring the latter option. The fact that *D. montana* females did not show a 'short day response' and enter diapause in prolonged nights could be due to the fact that their light-sensitivity did not show rhythmic fluctuation in darkness (circadian clock is not involved or it is rapidly damped). Another possibility would be that the females had problems in the counter mechanism of the photoperiodic timer (they did not succeed in collecting information on the required number of LD cycles for diapause induction). The finding on low diapause incidence of these flies is intriguing, as usually insects that have given negative results in the Nanda-Hamner protocol have shown short and not long day response (e.g. high diapause incidence) during the prolonged nights.

Pittendrigh and Daan (1976) proposed for the maintenance of seasonal changes in behavior a general model, in which the morning (M) and evening (E) activity peaks are assumed to be induced by the morning and evening oscillators. Seasonal changes in the phase relationship between these peaks enable the organisms to anticipate environmental changes and to synchronize their behavior accordingly (Allada & Chung 2010). As *D. montana* flies do not show a morning peak in their locomotor activity, they cannot measure changes in day length by comparing the distance between morning and evening peaks (I, III, IV). The same is true for some other species with unimodal activity, such as the house fly *Musca domestica* (Helfrich et al. 1985), Japanese honeybee *Apis cerana japonica* (Fuchikawa & Shimizu 2007) and *D. virilis* (Bahn et al. 2009). However, Potdar and Sheeba (2012) have recently demonstrated that in *D. melanogaster* l-LN<sub>v</sub>s may set the phase of the evening peak in a wide variety of photoperiods, ranging from extreme short days (4:20 LD) up to extreme long days (20:4 LD). Thus the evening activity peak and its' phase-shifting during a day in different day lengths might enable *D. montana* and other species showing unimodal activity to detect seasonal changes in day length. The measurement of the day length in these species could follow the external coincidence hypothesis proposed by Bünning in 1936, where only one circadian oscillator (in this case the evening oscillator) is thought to be responsible for measuring the length of the day.

Seasonal changes in photoperiod and temperature are known to modify the daily activity patterns of organisms. In *D. montana* the position of the single activity peak (evening peak) phase-shifted earlier in respect to the lights-off transition along with an increase in day length (I). Simultaneous changes in photoperiod and temperature in seminatural conditions advanced the females' evening activity peak even more than photoperiodic changes alone (III). In addition, the activity level of the females decreased towards the autumn; diapausing females being less active than the non-diapausing females in the shortest photoperiod (III). Photoperiod and temperature are known to affect the phase-shift of the flies' activity peaks also in *D. melanogaster*, in which the evening activity of the flies is delayed under long day conditions relative to the prior sunrise and the flies become progressively more nocturnal (Chen et al. 2006). In colder temperatures, *D. melanogaster* flies phase-shift their evening



activity to an earlier time of day (Majercak et al. 1999). Temperature cycles have been found to entrain the circadian clock of the flies of this species also without any changes in the photoperiod (Wheeler et al. 1993). The same seems to be true also in *D. montana*, as I have found a 3 °C difference in the temperature to increase the flies' free-running rhythmicity in constant darkness (Kauranen, unpublished). Furthermore, Vanin et al. (2012) have shown that in natural conditions *D. melanogaster* flies show a third activity peak, the afternoon peak. We did not detect this kind of 'extra' peak in *D. montana* in seminatural conditions. An advancement of the evening activity peak and a decrease in the activity level of *D. montana* flies towards the autumn, as well as the lower activity of diapausing females compared to the non-diapausing females in late summer, are expected to be adaptive features in northern latitudes.

### 3.4 Daily and seasonal changes in the expression level of *timeless* and *period* genes

The expression of the circadian clock genes has been found to show both daily and seasonal changes in several insect species (Majercak et al. 1999, Warman et al. 2000, Goto & Denlinger 2002). For example, in *Sargophaga crassipalpis*, the expression level of *tim*, but not that of *per*, has been found to dampen under long day conditions, and the expression levels of both genes has been shown to be sensitive to cold temperature (Goto & Denlinger 2002). In addition, the expression peaks of both of these genes have been shown to phase-shift in concert with the onset of scotophase in this species (Kostal et al. 2009). However, the species seem to vary in this, since in other species, such as *Protophormia terraenovae* (Muguruma et al. 2010), neither of these genes show expression differences under short- and long-day conditions.

In *D. montana*, the expression levels of *per* and *tim* cycled in all photoperiods showing a mutual phase relationship with each other (III). The peak expression of both of these genes phase-shifted towards the light-on transition as the day length and temperature decreased (III). The peak expression of *per* and *tim* have been found to phase-shift to an earlier time of day in shorter photoperiods also in the silkworm *Bombyx mori* (Iwai et al. 2006). In *D. melanogaster* the phases of *tim* and *per* are advanced at lower temperatures and in *per* this phase advance has been found to be caused by its differential splicing (Majercak et al. 1999). Co-occurrence of the evening activity peak and the highest levels of *tim* and *per* expression varied in *D. montana* between the photoperiods / temperatures in seminatural conditions (III). In the shortest photoperiod the expression peaks of these genes phase-shifted to an earlier time of day so that they occurred earlier than the evening activity peak of the females, both in diapausing and non-diapausing females. The cyclic expression of these genes suggests the action of the circadian component in these oscillations. In addition, phase-shifting of the peak expression of *per* and *tim* indicate the plasticity of the circadian clock in *D. montana*, which is an important character for the species living in northern hemisphere.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

An ability to predict forthcoming changes in environmental conditions is crucial for the survival and reproduction of organisms living in a seasonally changing environment, as their fitness depends largely on their capability to utilize available energy resources and to synchronize their metabolic, developmental and behavioural processes along with the changing seasons. One of the key factors in enhancing adaptation to this kind of environment is the evolution of two time-measuring systems: the circadian clock regulating daily variation and the photoperiodic timer regulating seasonal activities. The genetic background of the circadian clock is well-known, but the genetic and physiological mechanisms behind the photoperiodic timer and the role of the circadian clock in this timer are still unclear. In my thesis I have studied the role of the circadian clock in adaptation to seasonally varying environment in a northern *Drosophila* species, *D. montana*, by tracing the locomotor activity and eclosion rhythms of the flies of this species, as well as by studying the function of their circadian clock at the genetic and neuronal level. In addition, I have tried to find out whether and how the circadian clock plays a role in the function of the photoperiodic timer regulating the diapause behaviour of this species.

My studies show that the circadian clock of *D. montana* possesses features that are adaptative in seasonally varying northern environments. First, I found that *D. montana* flies show good entrained activity rhythms and display only a single, evening activity peak in different photoperiods (I, III, IV). Second, the flies of this species were found to maintain their free-running locomotor activity rhythm better in constant light (both high and low light intensity) than in constant darkness (I, IV). *D. montana* flies differ in both above-mentioned characters from the more southern species *D. melanogaster*, which is one of the most important model species used in studies of the circadian clock. Study I showed that explanations for the species differences in fly locomotor activity rhythms can be found at the neuronal level. In this study *D. montana* was found to differ from *D. melanogaster* in the number and location of specific circadian neurons expressing the neuropeptide PDF and the photoreceptor CRY protein, both of which play an important role in regulating circadian rhythms e.g. in the

locomotor activity (I). Study IV also showed that contrary to the situation with the locomotor activity rhythms, *D. montana* flies show persistent free-running eclosion rhythm in constant darkness (IV). This difference is likely explained by a difference in their control: the locomotor activity of the flies is directly under the control of central circadian clock whereas the eclosion rhythm is regulated by the circadian oscillators in peripheral ganglia, which might function more independently in this species than e.g. in *D. melanogaster*. To study the possible role of the circadian clock in the function of photoperiodic timer, I traced the females' photoperiodic diapause responses under different LDs using a classical Nanda-Hamner protocol (II). The study revealed no circadian rhythmicity in females' diapause response, which suggests that the function of the photoperiodic timer in *D. montana* is based on either a non-oscillatory hourglass timer or a rapidly damping circadian oscillator. *D. montana* flies can use only one circadian oscillator (evening oscillator) to measure the length of day, as they do not show a morning activity peak (I), hence their time measurement could be described using the external coincidence model proposed by Bünning in 1936. Indeed, I found in study IV that *D. montana* females shift their evening activity towards an earlier time of the day in seasonally changing environmental conditions and also decrease their activity towards the autumn, with diapausing females being less active than non-diapausing females (III). In this study also the expression peaks of two circadian clock genes *per* and *tim*, were found to phase-shift in concert with a decrease in the day length, so that in the shortest photoperiod the highest expression peak of these genes occurred earlier than did the females' evening activity peak.

Circadian rhythms of *D. montana* are not exceptional among insect species and recent studies on some other species of the *D. virilis* species group have detected the same kinds of phenomena (Bahn et al. 2009, Hermann et al. 2012). Differences in the function of the circadian clock between the species of *D. virilis* group (genus *Drosophila*) and *D. melanogaster* (genus *Sophophora*) suggest that the circadian clock has evolved in different directions in the different evolutionary lineages. The lack of the morning activity peak in entrained rhythms, the degradation of free-running activity rhythm in constant darkness and the findings on the expression of PDF and CRY in the brain neurons of *D. montana* flies strongly suggest that the morning oscillator of this species does not function in the same way as it does in *D. melanogaster* and that the evening oscillator plays a more important role in the circadian clock of *D. montana*. This kind of circadian clock may have been one of the key factors enabling *D. montana* flies to distribute to high latitudes and altitudes, where it is beneficial to be rhythmic during the long summer days and non-rhythmic and less active during the short winter days.

Altogether, the studies included in my thesis expand the knowledge on the function of the circadian clock as well as on its role in seasonal adaptation. However, further studies at the behavioural, genetic and neuronal levels are needed to find out whether and how the circadian clock is involved in the function of the photoperiodic timer. For example, studies on the expression of the circadian clock genes at the protein level in the brains of *D. montana* flies could

give more detailed information on their direct or indirect role in photoperiodism, especially if the studies would be performed on females at different developmental stages (non-diapausing/diapausing) and in different environmental conditions. In addition, the use of other kinds of techniques, such as gene silencing, would help to trace the importance of the circadian clock genes in evoking photoperiodic responses in *D. montana*. In efforts to understand the function and interaction between the two clock mechanisms, selection of suitable model species with clear free-running and entrained rhythms controlled by the circadian clock, and robust photoperiodic responses determined by the photoperiodic timer, will be the key factor. Clearly, *D. montana* offers a good object for these studies.

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## YHTEENVETO (RÉSUMÉ IN FINNISH)

Sopeutuminen ympäristöoloissa tapahtuviin vuorokauden ja vuoden aikaisiin muutoksiin on tärkeää erityisesti pohjoisessa eläville eliölajeille. Tällaisissa oloissa yksilöiden on kyettävä mittaamaan aikaa ja ennakoimaan tulevat ympäristön muutokset, jotta ne voivat muuttaa niin aineenvaihduntaansa, fysiologiaansa kuin käyttäytymistäänkin vallitseviin ympäristöoloihin sopiviksi. Tässä "ennustamisessa" ovat keskeisessä roolissa vuorokausirytmeyttä ylläpitävä sirkadinen kello ja vuodenaikaisrytmeyttä säätelevä valojaksoinen kello.

Maapallon pyöriminen oman akselinsa ympäri 24 tunnin sykleissä on johtanut eliöiden sirkadisen kellon evoluutioon. Tämä aikaa mittaava biologinen kellomekanismi ylläpitää eliöiden noin 24 tunnin pituista sisäistä vuorokautta ja lisää eliöiden sekä sisäistä että ulkoista kelpoisuutta säätelemällä esimerkiksi syanobakteereilla solun jakautumista, kasveilla lehtien liikkeitä, *Drosophila*-kärpäksillä liikeaktiivisuutta ja kuoriutumiskykyä sekä ihmisillä uni-valverytmeyttä ja ruumiinlämpötilaa. Sirkadisen kellon ylläpitämille rytmisille ominaisuuksille on tyypillistä se, että ne tahdistuvat ympäristön antamien signaalien, kuten valon tai lämpötilamuutosten mukaan. Lisäksi ko. ominaisuuksien rytmisyys säilyy vaikka eliöt laitetaan vakaaseen ympäristöön. Maapallon pyörimisliike auringon ympäri vuoden kuluessa on vastaavasti johtanut valojaksoisen kellon evoluutioon. Valojaksoisen kellon tiedetään mittaavan lähinnä päivän pituudessa tapahtuvia muutoksia, joiden avulla se auttaa eliöitä luotettavasti ennakoimaan ympäristön tulevat vuodenaikojen vaihtelut ja mahdollistaa siten niiden sopeutumisen tällaisiin muuttuviin olosuhteisiin. Valojaksoisen kellon tiedetään säätelevän mm. *Drosophila*-naaraiden lisääntymislepokauden eli diapaussiin siirtymistä ja monarkkiperhosten vuodenaikaisvaellusta. Sirkadisen kellon geneettisestä ja neurologisesta taustasta tiedetään jo paljon, mutta valojaksoisen kellon taustalla vaikuttavat geenit sekä neurologiset kytkennät ovat vielä suurelta osin tuntemattomia. Lisäksi on vielä epäselvää nojautuuko valojaksoisen kellon toiminta sirkadiseen kelloon, vai perustuvatko kyseiset biologiset kellot täysin eri mekanismeihin.

Väitöskirjatutkimukseni tavoitteena oli selvittää kuinka sirkadisen kellon evoluutio on voinut edesauttaa *Drosophila montana* -lajin kärpästen sopeutumista pohjoiseen ympäristöön. Lisäksi tutkin, onko sirkadisen kellon toiminta mahdollisesti yhteydessä valojaksoiseen kelloon ja jos on, niin miten. *D. montana* -laji on levittäytynyt ympäri pohjoista pallonpuoliskoa sopeutuen erilaisiin oloihin ja lisäksi sille on kehittynyt talvehtimisstrategiaksi valojakson säätelemä lisääntymislepokausi, joten se tarjoaa mielenkiintoisen tutkimuskohteen. Vastatakseni väitöskirjatutkimukseni kysymyksiin tutkin kuinka sirkadinen kello säätelee *D. montana* -naaraiden vuorokausi- ja vuodenaikaisrytmeyttä sekä liikeaktiivisuudessa että kuoriutumisen ajoittumisessa, ja kuinka tämä kello toimii geneettisellä ja neurologisella tasolla. Lisäksi pyrin selvittämään sirkadisen kellon osuutta valojaksoisen kellon toiminnassa tutkimalla *D. montana* -naarilla esiintyvää valojaksoista lisääntymislepokautta eri koeoloissa.

Tutkimukseni osoittavat, että *D. montana* -lajin sirkadinen kello omaa ominaisuuksia, jotka ovat tärkeitä ko. lajin sopeutumiselle pohjoiseen elinympäristöön. *D. montana* -naaraiden liikeaktiivisuus tahdistuu hyvin erilaisiin ympäristöoloihin kuten valojaksoihin ja lämpötiloihin, naaraiden aktiivisuustason saavuttaessa huippunsa alkuillan aikana. Vakaisissa oloissa *D. montana* ylläpitää liikeaktiivisuusrytmiä paremmin jatkuvassa valossa kuin jatkuvassa pimeydessä. Täten *D. montana* -kärpäsen liikeaktiivisuusrytmi poikkeaa eteläisemmästä, sirkadisen kelloon liittyvän tutkimuksen yhtenä mallilajina pidetystä *D. melanogaster* -lajista, jolla liikeaktiivisuuden on havaittu jakautuvan sekä aamu- että ilta-aktiivisuushuippuun. Viimeksi mainitun lajin kärpäset myös säilyttävät liikeaktiivisuusrytmiä jatkuvassa pimeydessä, mutta menettävät sen jatkuvassa valossa. Tutkimuksessani havaitsin *D. montana*- ja *D. melanogaster* -kärpästen välillä myös neuronitason eroja, jotka voivat selittää liikeaktiivisuudessa havaittuja eroavaisuuksia ko. lajien välillä. *D. montana* poikkeaa sekä *Pigment-dispersing factor*- ja *cryptochrome* -geenejä ekspressoivien neuronien lukumäärän että niiden sijainnin suhteen *D. melanogaster* -lajista. Vaikka *D. montana* -kärpäset menettävät liikeaktiivisuusrytmiä jatkuvassa pimeydessä, tutkimukseni osoittaa, että ne säilyttävät silti kuoriutumiskykyä ko. oloissa, mikä voi johtua siitä, että nämä rytmit toimivat osittain eri säätelymekanismien alla.

Väitöskirjatyöhöni sisältyi myös Nanda-Hamner -koe, jossa tutkin sirkadisen kellon yhteyttä lisääntymislepokauden laukeamiseen *D. montana* -naarailta 13 eri valojaksossa, joissa valoisan ajan määrä oli vakio ja pimeän ajan pituus vaihteleva. Mikäli sirkadinen kello olisi yhteydessä valojaksoisen kellon toimintaan, naaraiden valosensitiivisyyden ja samalla myös niiden herkkyyden siirtyä lisääntymislepokauteen tulisi vaihdella noin 24 tunnin sykleissä. Tämän kokeen tulokset eivät antaneet selkeää vastausta sirkadisen kellon osallisuudesta valojaksoisen kellon toimintaan *D. montana* -naarailta. Kokeen tulokset kuitenkin osoittivat valojaksoisen kellon toimivan *D. montana* -lajilla joko itsenäisesti ilman sirkadisen kellon osallisuutta tai pohjautuvan sellaiseen sirkadisen kellon ylläpitämään oskillaattoriin, joka menettää rytmisyytensä vakaisissa oloissa. Tutkimukseni mukaan päivän pituuden mittaus perustuu *D. montana* -lajilla lähinnä ilta-aktiivisuushuipun ajoittumiseen: päivänpituuden lyhentyessä *D. montana* -kärpästen ilta-aktiivisuushuippu siirtyi aikaisemmaksi ja niiden liikeaktiivisuus väheni. Myös kahden sirkadiseen kelloon liittyvien *period*- ja *timeless*-geenien ekspressiohuiput siirtyivät vastaavasti aikaisempaan ajankohtaan.

*D. montana*-lajin lisäksi myös kolmen muun saman *D. virilis* -ryhmän lajin sirkadisen kellon toiminnan on havaittu poikkeavan niille kaukaista sukua olevan *D. melanogaster* -lajin kellon toiminnasta. Löydetyt erot sirkadisen kellon toiminnassa eri lajiryhmien välillä kuvastavat todennäköisesti eri suuntaan edennyttä sirkadisten kellojen evoluutiota lajien sopeutuessa erilaisiin elinympäristöihin. *D. montana* -lajin sirkadinen kello omaa selkeästi piirteitä, jotka mahdollistavat ko. lajin sopeutumisen pohjoisiin elinympäristöihin. Tämän lajin kärpästen liikeaktiivisuusrytmin säilyminen jatkuvassa valossa kuvastaa ko. lajin sopeutumista pohjoisiin kesiin, jolloin pohjoisessa elävät lajit altistuvat



jatkuvalle valolle. Myös rytmisyyden katoaminen jatkuvan pimeyden aikana ja liikeaktiivisuuden väheneminen lyhyissä päivänpituuksissa ovat sopeutumia pohjoisiin talvioloihin, joissa ylimääräinen aktiivisuus tai sen rytmisyys kuluttaisi vain yksilöiden resursseja ja heikentäisi niiden talvesta selviytymistä.

Väitöskirjatutkimukseni tuo lisää tietoa sirkadisen kellon roolista eliöiden sopeutumisessa pohjoisiin oloihin niin fenotyypillisellä, geneettisellä kuin neurologisellakin tasolla. Lisäksi tutkimukseni valottaa evoluutiota, jota on tapahtunut eri lajien välillä niiden sopeutuessa erilaisiin elinympäristöihin. Tekemäni tutkimukset antavat hyvän pohjan jatkotutkimuksille, joissa erilaisten molekyylogeneettisten menetelmien, kuten proteiinitason tutkimuksien avulla voidaan tutkia tarkemmin sirkadisen kellon osuutta sekä eliöiden sopeutumisessa erilaisiin elinympäristöihin että erityisesti valojaksoisen kellon toiminnassa.

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TABLE 1

The experimental conditions and treatments used in the studies I, III & IV. Study strains as well as mass-bred population refer to the type of the strains vs. mass-bred population used in the experiments. Entraining photoperiod refers to the photoperiod used for the entrainment of the flies at the beginning of each experiment. Entraining temperature refers to the temperature in each experiment. Lashes used refer to the particular day vs. night temperatures if the temperature has been cycling during the experiment. Constant condition treatment refers to the constant condition where the flies in each experiment have been released after entrainment. LD = light: dark cycle, DD = constant darkness, LL = constant light, HLL = constant high light intensity, LLL = constant low light intensity.

	I	III	IV
Study lines/ mass-bred population	Isofemale lines, Oulanka	Mass-bred population, Oulanka	Isofemale lines, Oulanka
Entraining photoperiod	22:2 LD, 20:4 LD, 16:8 LD	24:0 LD, 22:2 LD, 18:6 LD, 16:8 LD, 14:10 LD	20:4 LD
Entraining temperature	20 °C, 16 °C	19 °C, 19 °C/13 °C, 17 °C/13 °C, 16 °C/12 °C, 14 °C/11 °C	20 °C
Constant condition treatment	DD, LL	—	DD, HLL, LLL

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