In this talk, I will give an empirical overview of the different ways of forming passive in the Scandinavian languages. In the first half of my talk, I will compare the different uses of the morphological s-passive on the one hand and the periphrastic passive, formed with a passive auxiliary (*be/*become) and an agreeing past/adjectival participle, on the other:

(1) a. Dyrnar eru opnaðar kl. 19. (Icelandic)
   doors.DEF be.PRES open.FEM.PL.NOM clock 19
   ‘The doors are opened at 7 o’clock. (specific event)’

b. Dyrnar opnast kl. 19.
   doors.DEF open.PL.PRES.PASS clock 19
   ‘The doors opened at 7 o’clock. (habitual)’

Most varieties of Scandinavian display restrictions on tense/finiteness in the s-passive. In Danish and Norwegian (bokmål), for instance, only the regular verbs and a few irregular verbs occur in the past tense in the s-passive, whereas Swedish does not display any restrictions with regard to tense. Icelandic and Norwegian (nyrosk) display even stronger restrictions, since the s-passive is predominantly used in the infinitive in the two languages. In the varieties of Scandinavian that display tense restrictions on the s-passive, the periphrastic passive is used to describe specific events, whereas the other is used to describe habituality/genericity. The distinction disappears in the past tense. In this first part of the talk, I will also discuss non-passive uses of the Icelandic morpheme -st.

In the second part of my talk, I will discuss the Icelandic New Construction (or the New Passive, Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002, to appear, Eyþórsson 2008, Jónsson 2009), which is an expletive construction involving non-nominative post-verbal arguments:

(2) a. Það var barið mig. (Icelandic)
   EXPL be.PAST hit.NEUT.SG.ACC I.ACC
   ‘I was hit.’

b. Það var selt honum nýjan bíl.
   EXPL be.PAST sell.NEUT.SG.ACC he.DAT new.MASC.SG.ACC car.ACC
   ‘A new car was sold to him.’

This construction has been considered an innovation in Icelandic, but if scrutinized more closely, one can in fact find similar examples in Mainland Scandinavian. In the Icelandic New Construction, we may also find clues to the absence of agreement in other impersonal passives involving post-verbal arguments, such as (3), which standardly have been related to intervention effects (Holmberg 2002).

(3) Det blev skjutet / *skjutna många älgar igård. (Swedish)
   EXPL become.PAST shoot.PPL.PAST shoot.MASC.PL many elks yesterday
   ‘Many elks were shot yesterday’