

# focus



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Emirates Natural History Group

Patron: H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan

## EDITORIAL

I hope that you enjoy this issue of Focus with its emphasis on Natural History photos, and are inspired to send in photos for the 'Members Sightings' section of Focus. With the date and locality data, these photos make extremely useful records for the study of biodiversity and ecology in the UAE, and will also provide a record of species distributions in a fast changing environment. Even common species records are useful. The aim is not necessarily to showcase the highest quality pictures as much as to build a collection of species records in space and time, and to act as a way of helping members identify the animals and plants of our local environment. Hopefully those with the relevant expertise will be able to make accurate identifications (or at least as close an identification as possible) of the photo subjects. Thanks to Dick Hornby and Gordon Kirkwood for kicking off the process!

A reminder ... the calendar year is nearly up and so it is time to renew memberships again. Fortunately, we do not need to raise the membership fees, and so once again they are 100 Dhs for 2008—for single or family membership. As usual, membership gives access to Focus and to our scientific journal *Tribulus*, as well as the lecture and field programme. Not bad value, really! Membership forms will be available at all meetings, or you may contact a committee member.

Talking of calendars, remember to buy some copies of the Arabian Birds calendar for 2008 from our book stall. The calendar is produced by the acclaimed bird photographers Jens and Hanne Eriksen (who in case you didn't realize are the couple behind the book stall!). The 2008 version is the best yet!

In case all this talk of photography inspires you, remember we will be running a photo competition at the Inter Emirates Weekend. The weekend is scheduled for the 28<sup>th</sup> Feb to 1<sup>st</sup> March and will be based at the Mafraq Hotel. It will actually be really helpful if you can book rooms for this event as soon as possible. Book directly through the hotel, mentioning the ENHG.

Greetings for the festive season!

**Drew Gardner**

## ENHG Members' Sightings

*Editor's Note: Starting with this issue of Focus, we invite all members to submit documentation of observations of flora and fauna in the UAE, preferably with captions, and with or without a short write-up of the circumstances surrounding the observations. Please include locality information (GPS waypoints, if possible). The date the picture was taken should be in any digital photo's EXIF data—visible when you hover over the image icon with a mouse.*

*A selection of captioned photographs of flora and fauna observed in the UAE and the region will be published in the ENHG Members' Sightings section in each issue. If we receive enough photographs, we will investigate making the larger collection of submissions available to members on-line.*

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### FRONT COVER PICTURE

*Photograph: Jewel Beetle, *Julodis euphratica**

*Photographer: Dick Hornby*

*By sharing various observations in this forum, we may be able to spark each other's interest in specific aspects of natural history in the UAE and also perhaps come up with some data that is of real use to professionals. Photos of species rarely observed in the region as well as those detailing seasonal blooming and breeding cycles will be especially welcome. If you are unsure of the identification details, give it your best guess, and we'll invite those with expertise in species identification to weigh in.*

*Special thanks go to Gordon Kirkwood for the excellent photographs of reef fish and dolphins in the Musandam included in his write-up in this issue. As far as photographing wildlife on field trips goes, this definitely raises the bar!*



Malaise trap for flight interception of insects

*photo: Drew Gardner*

**ENHG Members' Sightings: Fauna**

The two beetle species below have both been confirmed as new records for the UAE:



This jewel beetle *Capnodis excisa* was sighted near Nad al Sheba in Dubai, 3 Oct. 2007.



This mating pair of tiger beetles *Calomera littoralis* was observed in mangroves near Yas Island, 25 Oct. 2007.



This Robber Fly, of a species commonly observed in the UAE, is eating another one, apparently of the same species--a female eating a male, perhaps, after mating? Talk about an efficient use of resources! 5 Nov. 2007



A dragonfly *Orthetrum sabina* (the 'Slender Skimmer') eating a Blue-spotted Arab, near Dubai, 6 Oct. 2007.



A Mediterranean Pierrot with badly damaged wings, probably due to bird damage, 18 Nov. 2007.

**Above five photos & captions by Dick Hornby**



An oil beetle *Cyllindrothorax angusticollis suturellus*, photographed at 'Village One' near Khutwa during the 2007 Inter Emirates Weekend.



Desert Eagle Owl (now re-named the Pharaoh Eagle-owl, *Bubo ascalaphus desertorum*) photographed near Jebel Ali, 19 October 2007

## ENHG Members' Sightings: Flora



Desert Hyacinth *Cistanche tubulosa* nestled in the salt bush *Anabasis setifera*. At Khor Beidah, Umm al Quwayn, 23 February 2007.

*Above three photos & captions by Drew Gardner*

## ENHG Trip Convoy Guidelines

*Editor's Note: As it is the prime field trip season now, it's a good time for all ENHG members, new and returning, to review basic convoy rules. Because convoys are something of a bothersome necessity on field trips, we offer this set of rules to make our journeys together as safe and hassle-free as possible.*

### 1 General Items

Arrive at the starting point in plenty of time for the briefing on the route and destination of the trip. Please be ready to start with a full fuel tank. If you are going to leave the group before the end of the trip, please notify the trip leader and others. Do not go faster than you feel comfortable driving.

### 2 Rules of the Road

Our line of cars should not dominate the road. If others are trying to pass the group, please let them do so. Whenever the group stops, if at all feasible, make sure you pull off the road completely. Always use your indicators in plenty of time to guide cars in the group, as well as other road users. If you want the group to stop, flash your headlights. If the car behind you flashes its headlights, flash yours until the group leader pulls over. When the group passes through a congested area, it should try to stop as soon as safely practicable to regroup.

### 3 Overtaking

Overtake only when it is permitted and safe to do so.

### 4 Speed

Always stay within the legal speed limit. If the traffic is flowing more slowly than the legal limit, go with the traffic flow. The lead car should establish a sensible pace for the group. It is the individual driver's responsibility to keep the vehicle behind in sight, insuring that the group stays together. If the car behind slows down, please slow down with it. If every car does this, the convoy will stay together.

### 5 Tips for the trip leader

Have a short meeting of all drivers to explain the route and destinations. Assign a buddy to drivers who are unfamiliar with the route. Hand out route directions if possible. If there is a large number of vehicles it is advisable to break up into two groups with a lead car for each group.

### 6 Lead car driver

Lead car driver should designate someone to act as "sweep" (tail-end-Charlie) for the convoy.

## Insurance for Oman

When I reinsured my car this year, I was chatting in general to the chap at the insurance office about insurance for Oman. Apparently the Omani Police have taken to doing spot checks on UAE registered cars beyond the limits of Buraimi, to see if they have insurance valid for Oman.

The fine for those caught without insurance is 70 OR = 700 Dhs. Ten days' worth of cover for Oman costs around 100 Dhs. At my insurance company it costs 300 Dhs extra to have year-round cover for the whole of Oman for a 4WD.

Just thought I would pass the information on.... Most of our favourite weekend destinations are beyond Buraimi.

**Geraldine Kershaw**

## Musandam Camping & Snorkelling

On Friday 9th November, 14 intrepid explorers from the ENHG set out from Abu Dhabi on this trip led by Andrew Bean.

We proceeded in convoy North-East via Emirates Road, and after passing through the middle of several cement works and rock factories in Northern Ras Al Khaimah, we reached the Oman border at Al Dara. The border was slightly busy, but as Andrew was wearing an Oman cap we seemed to get the best attention of all the officials on both sides.

Once we had completed the border formalities, we headed up the coast a short way to have lunch on a beach in the shelter of an empty boat shed normally inhabited by goats. After lunch we headed through Khasab and then into the mountains along a steep and winding road through magnificent scenery to our campsite.



The Magnificent Musandam

The campsite was located below a mountain on the top of which was an Omani Army listening post, purportedly monitoring Iran. While pitching his tent, one normally happy camper (the author) fell over and impaled his foot on a metal tent peg. The bleeding was finally stemmed by raising the foot, and several other campers rendered assistance, notably Paul, who boldly announced that he was a Doctor (of Economics!), and his wife. Once the drama was over, several campers went on short walks in all directions, while Andrew and the children (and Gordon) watched over the camp site.



Our campsite

The evening passed uneventfully with hearty dinners cooked and eaten, following which we all gathered around the campfire to be treated to a cup of delicious festive drink provided by our Czech friends.

The campsite was incredibly quiet, and sounds from each tent carried easily to the others, as there was very little wind except that passed by the other campers. The night was cold with a temperature of around 10 Deg C, and all slept in tents except Andrew, who slept outside in a thick sleeping bag with only the stars and donkeys for company. We were all woken early in the morning by a tractor, which started ploughing a nearby field, reminding us that we had to get up and pack up to return to Khasab for the dhow trip and snorkelling.

In Khasab we boarded a dhow, which took us into an 16-km-long fjord called Khor Sham. On the way we passed by spectacular scenery and encountered two groups of humpbacked dolphins, including a mother and calf, who swam alongside our boat for a short time.



Humpbacked Dolphin



Baby Dolphin

The dhow stopped for snorkelling at Telegraph Island, which was used by the British in the 18th century as an

important link in communications between the UK and India.



Snorkellers

While snorkelling, we saw several interesting reef-fish from the area:



Yellowbar Angelfish



Parrotfish



Schooling Bannerfish



Arabian Butterflyfish

After snorkelling, the dhow headed back to Khasab, from where we all made our way home to Abu Dhabi— tired but satisfied after an interesting trip.

Many thanks from all must go to Andrew Bean, who organised the trip so efficiently.

**Gordon Kirkwood**

**All photographs by Gordon Kirkwood**

## Inter-Emirates Weekend Update

- **Venue: Mafraq Hotel**
- **Dates: 28 February – 01 March 2008**
- **Rate per night (incl. breakfast, not dinner)**
  - 638 Dhs – Double Room
  - 580 Dhs – Single Room
- **Provisional Program:**
  - Elephant tracks—full day (Mark B., Drew G.)
  - Liwa Dunes tour—full day (Andrew B., Dick H.)
  - Sand ecology, near Sheikh's Palace on Hameem Rd.—half day (Allestree F.)
  - Birding, site tba—half day (Andrew Twyman)
  - Plant identification near hotel (Allestree F.)
  - Saltbushes—short walk near hotel (Dr. Shahina Ghazanfar)
  - Light-trapping insects near hotel—evening (Brigitte H.)
  - Star-gazing—evening, after dinner (leader tba)
- **Workshops:**
  - GPS Workshop
  - Taxonomy / Plant identification with Dr. Shahina Ghazanfar, professional botanist from Kew Gardens & author of The Flora of Oman Vols 1 and 2.
  - Work under the microscope
  - Herbarium and photography for children
- **Competitions:**
  - Photo competitions for the young and old.
  - Painting / drawing for children

## Websites of General Interest

ADACH website link to Cultural Foundation activities:

<http://www.cultural.org.ae/e/>

Website of Natural History Group of Al Ain, featuring archives of Tribulus and all three NHGs' newsletters:

[www.enhg.org](http://www.enhg.org)

Abu Dhabi Islands Archaeological Survey:

<http://www.adias-uae.com>

Website of UAE Bird Recorder Tommy Pedersen:

<http://www.tommypedersen.com>

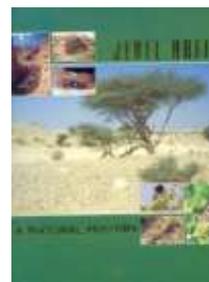
Blog of Al Ain Amateur Photographer Amer Abu Kuhail:

[www.someone1986.blogspot.com](http://www.someone1986.blogspot.com)

Comprehensive US-Based Species Locator:

<http://zipcodezoo.com/default.asp>

## Book for Donation to Schools



Copies of the book, Jebel Hafit – A Natural History, published by the ENHG, are available as donations to schools, colleges, and universities in the UAE. Please provide any committee member with contact information for any educational institutions you would like to furnish with a copy of this book. Parents of school children and school representatives are invited to attend an ENHG lecture and request a copy of this book from any committee member in attendance.

### ITEMS ON SALE AT THE ENHG STALL

- The Emirates – A Natural History, 350Dhs. *The first complete referencing guide to the wild life of the UAE. 580 colour photos.*
- Jebel Hafit – A Natural History, 100Dhs.
- Abu Dhabi Bird checklist 10Dhs. *(Free if you spend over 100Dhs!)*
- Emirates Bird Report, 50Dhs.
- Breeding Birds of UAE, by Simon Aspinall, 50Dhs.
- Wild about Mammals, by Marijcke Jongbloed, 40Dhs. *Guide to mammals of the UAE.*
- Comprehensive Guide to the Flora of the UAE, 100Dhs.
- Plant Checklist, by Marijcke Jongbloed, 25Dhs. *Know your local wild plants.*
- Pests, 35Dhs. *Find out what's in and around your home.*
- Children's books: Yaw the Wildcat; Hayat the Leopard, 15Dhs.
- 2008 bird calendar, 30Dhs. *A must for yourself ... and a perfect gift.*
- Reef Fishes of the UAE, 50Dhs.
- Feast of Dates, 100Dhs.
- Sir Bani Yas, 100Dhs.
- UAE in Focus, 100Dhs.
- Common Birds in Oman, 100Dhs. *A beginner's field guide—can be helpful in identifying birds in the UAE as well.*

## Committee Members

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gunpowder, 90Dhs.

## Lectures

13th November

The Crown-of-Thorns  
Starfish, a coral  
predator on the move

**Catherine Vogler**

20th November

What to see in the Al  
Ain and Buraimi Area

**Amer Abu Kuhail**

4th December  
The Sundarbans –  
Mangroves of  
Bangladesh

**Dr. Reza Khan**

18<sup>th</sup> December  
7:30 PM  
Marine Ecology in  
Dubai: Natural and  
Artificial Reef  
Ecosystems

**John Burt**

## Field Trips

26th October

Half-day Trip to Two  
Trees

**Allestree Fisher**

30th November – 1st  
December

Overnight Camping  
Trip to Two Trees

**Andrew Bean**

14th December

Full-Day Trip to Jebel  
Buhays

**Allestree Fisher**

## Corporate Sponsors of the ENHG - 2007

The following companies are supporting the ENHG activities in the region. We hope you as ENHG members will in turn support these companies whenever you can.

Al Masaood



Al Nasser Holdings



Al Sayegh Richards  
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RICHARDS BUTLER

BDO Patel



Dome International



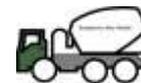
Kanoo Group



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Dhabi



Readymix Abu Dhabi



URS Corporation



Dames & Moore

WESCO Abu Dhabi



## In December Focus: Two-Trees Trips



photo by Cyrus Modavi

## Members' Items for sale

Please send small ads to [newsletter@chirri2000.com](mailto:newsletter@chirri2000.com)

## Newsletter Details

Newsletter contributions to: [newsletter@chirri2000.com](mailto:newsletter@chirri2000.com)

## Postal Address

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## Yahoo Groups website

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/AUHENHG/>