

GAZELLE

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مجموعة دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي

DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Members' News

News from Near & Far

Jim and Susy Balderstone have left Dubai and are now living in Shanghai. Susy reports that they are already exploring China and recently visited a panda breeding sanctuary near Chengdu. Susy wrote, "The pandas are so cute and playful. There were lots of babies in humidicribs, a popular sight as there were crowds pushing and shoving their way around to see. The sanctuary also had Tibetan pandas which are red, with fox-like tails. We then visited the site of an ancient civilisation at Sanxindui - not as awe inspiring as the terracotta soldiers but still fascinating." The rest of the wildlife they have seen has been in the soup bowl. On a less enthusiastic note, Susy wrote of a visit to a restaurant, "Amongst the buckets of dirty water full of crockery, were the frogs, terrapin and snake heads. I went for the duck and Jim the hot fish dish, but I was awake in the night wondering what I may have picked up. So far so good. It was better than the hot pot we had in Chendou which, when we got to the bottom, had black chicken feet, a whole pigeon and some mysterious ears."

Professor Ulli Wernery spent part of his summer on a busman's holiday - looking at camels. He went to

Ethiopia for one of the thirteen months of sunshine, and traveled through almost the whole country. In the north, he visited the ancient settlement of Lalibela, where there are 15 or 16 stone-hewn churches, around 1,500 years old. In the south of the country, he saw many camels (dromedaries, of course) and was interested to learn about husbandry and health in the area. He also saw many camels in the north of Kenya where some of the cattle-dependent peoples, such as the Masai, are giving up rearing and grazing cattle and instead, browsing camels. Camels are not so affected by drought, and with careful management of numbers, will not destroy the habitat. Professor Wernery has promised to speak to the DNHG about camel milk at our December meeting.



Young camel in the Wahiba, living solely on the available vegetation

DNHG Membership

Our new membership year begins in September, so please remember to renew at the next meeting if you have not already. Membership remains a bargain at Dhs. 100 for couples and Dh. 50 for singles. You can join or renew at meetings or by sending us a cheque made out to Lloyds Bank account no. 173746. (Please note we cannot cash cheques made out to the DNHG.)

DNHG membership entitles you to participate in field trips and helps pay for our lecture hall, publication and distribution of our monthly newsletter, the *Gazelle*, additions to our library, incidental expenses of speakers and occasional special projects.

This month's Contributors

The Editor would like to thank the following for their reports and contributions:

Barbara Couldrey
Gary Feulner
Mike Lorrigan

Under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan



Something for Everyone...

Wadi Bih with Peter van Amsterdam.

Friday 27 Oct

This is a day trip that involves mountain driving, a short sharp walk to a traditionally constructed stone village, and perhaps a swim on Dibba beach to cool off. Email Peter for more details at pvana@emirates.net.ae

Astronomy with Lamjed El-Kefi

Friday evening 10 Nov

Details will be provided at the next meeting. This is an evening not to

missed, especially if you have never looked through a really big telescope. It is necessarily out of town, away from the lights, but is usually in a spot that does not require a 4WD. If you have your own binoculars, bring them; you will be surprised what you can see when you know where to look! Also bring whatever else you might need e.g. a mat if you don't have a flexible neck. Maps should be available by our November meeting.

Ibri Anticline with Anne Mil-len & Peter van Amsterdam

Friday/Saturday 24&25 Nov

This will be a camping/fossilling

trip but it would be possible to stay at the Ibri Hotel and join in by day. Peter and Anne will do a recce and announce details at the November meeting. Val Chalmers has promised to come, to identify fossils and answer questions.

Elephant Walkways with Steve and Jo Raynor

Friday 8 Dec

Jo advises: As yet we have not worked out whether it will be overnight or a long 1 day, or mix of both. Ask those interested to register with us and I will put people on a contact email list, and keep them posted. The purpose will be to view the Mleisa trackway (the

Our Next Speaker

Prior to studying archaeology, **Dr Michele Ziolkowski** studied photography and graphic design. She also worked as a photographic assistant in Sydney. This knowledge of photography led to an opportunity to take part in an archaeological excavation in the U.A.E.

Michele first visited the U.A.E. in 1993 as an undergraduate student from the University of Sydney, Australia. The season took place at Jebel al-Emaleh, Sharjah Emirate, under the directorship of Prof. Dan Potts. Subsequent seasons followed with a second season in Sharjah; excavation of the Umm an/al-Nar tomb at Al-Sufouh (Dubai); plus a metallurgical survey in Fujairah. Whilst working on the metallurgy survey under the directorship of Dan Potts, Michele was given the opportunity to survey and study the emerging rock art corpus of Wadi al-Hayl. This study formed Michele's honours thesis. The following archaeological season also took place in Fujairah, and consisted of a survey in the date palm gardens of Dibba and the excavation of a second millennium BC collective tomb at Sharm.

After receiving an 'Australian Postgraduate Award', Michele started work on her PhD entitled: *The Historical Archaeology of the Coast of Fujairah, United Arab Emirates: from the Eve of Islam to the Early Twentieth Century, Volumes I & II*. During the winter of 1997/98 she surveyed historical sites located along Fujairah's coastline. The following season she organised a team and excavated at the site of the Portuguese fort in Bidyah, completing and submitting her Ph.D. in 2001.

Michele has also worked in a teaching capacity at the University of Sydney. She has tutored in a number of archaeology courses coordinated by Prof. Potts and Dr Alison Betts. Michele has also worked with the Nicholson Museum, 'School Education Programme.' She has published articles in various journals including *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, *Proceedings for the Seminar of Arabian Studies*, and *Tribulus*. Recently Michele has co-edited (with Peter Hellyer) and authored papers from the annual symposia on palaeontological and archaeological research in the U.A.E., held in Al Ain.

Since 2002 Michele has been residing in the Emirate of Fujairah. Archaeological work since this period has involved various studies including Qidfa excavations; Wadi Saqamqam (survey and excavation); al-Fara; Fujairah Fort; Bithnah Fort; al-Hayl settlement (Fujairah); an ethnographic study of henna; rock art survey; and Hayoot Beach Survey (Musandam Peninsula, Oman). The recent studies of historical sites in Fujairah have involved the collection of ethnographic material. These studies have been conducted with Abdullah Suhail al-Sharqi.

2006: Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohammed al-Nahyan Award for Natural History (Emirates Natural History Group, UAE).



eight million year old elephant tracks) and explore the desert environs for flora and fauna. Contact joray@emirates.net.ae

Musandam Dhow Trip with Lamjed El-Kefi Friday 15th Dec

You have to plan well ahead and stick to your commitment with this one, because the dhow must be paid for at booking time. It is a wonderful day trip up the east coast, into fjordland, with snorkeling and swimming.

Other trips that are planned but not yet confirmed

Falcon Hospital

Details as yet sketchy. Watch this space.

Field Trip with Gary Feulner

This walk will be arranged when it is a little cooler. These walks usually require moderate fitness

Temple Walk with Sandhya Prakash

This walk is in Bur Dubai, and is full of surprises.

Wadi Tarabat (below Jebel Hafit) with Val Chalmers

Val is liaising with Brigitte regarding this and no date is yet fixed.

And ... The Trek of a Lifetime!

Mike Lorrigan is planning a trip that he has wanted to do for the past 20 years and is looking for 8-12 willing participants from the DNHG and all Natural History Groups in the Emirates to join him.

Target:
Everest Base Camp, Nepal.
Starting from the town of Lukla,

the party will trek and camp all the way up to Everest Base Camp, accompanied by porters. Most of the walk will be through Sagarmatha National Park. After a short stay at Everest Base Camp, the party will trek back to Lukla. The current proposed dates are late March/early April, but there is flexibility depending on who is interested. The first summit of Everest was achieved by Hillary and Tensing on 29th May 1953, so if people want to be at Base Camp for the anniversary, the trip can probably be scheduled to achieve this, and the dates adjusted accordingly. Mike is flexible.

The basic itinerary is as follows:

Fly from UAE to Katmandu
2 days stay in Katmandu
Flight to Lukla
Overnight stay in Lukla
Trek starts next day. Approximately 6-8 days trekking to Everest Base Camp – depending on altitude acclimatisation of the group.
Arrive Everest Base Camp
Stay at Base Camp one/ two days.
Return trek to Lukla
On arrival in Lukla, one night hotel stay
Fly back to Katmandu
Two nights in Katmandu, including celebratory meal at Rum Doodle Restaurant – made famous by parties from Everest dining there.
Return flight to UAE

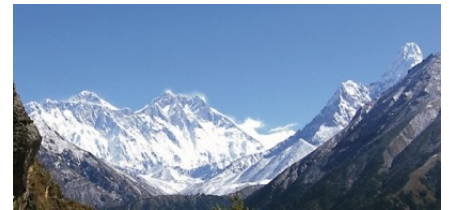
Total trip from start to finish ... maximum 23 days. Actual trekking will be between 14 and 16 days.

It is proposed to camp along the way to Base Camp from Lukla and back, so everyone in the party needs their own good quality tent, or share with another. The bulk of your kit will be carried by porters; you will just be carrying a day pack. Very warm clothing and top quality sleeping bag are needed for night time. Overall though, the weather at that time of year is very pleasant during the day, and according to the organizers, crampons will not be needed for boots, right up to Base Camp. You do not have to be superfit for this trek but a good level of fitness is required. A dedicated fit-

ness programme starting two months prior to setting off is highly recommended for anyone interested.

The trip will also include a flight out from Katmandu, with Buddha Air, to see the summit of Everest. Depart from the hotel at 5.00 a.m., back in the hotel by 8.30 a.m. - an amazing experience! Mike has done this!

If interested, please e-mail Mike on oxymoron@emirates.net.ae. The trip is open to non-Natural History Group members if not enough members register.



Field Clips ...

Aaagh!

It is 7 – 5 cms long, brown and slimy and moves at 5 – 9 miles an hour! It hides during the day and attacks at night. In Denmark, they have 'declared war' on it. In some places in Norway, it is driving people mad, especially when discovered indoor and not singly! In Norway, it is called the Iberian Wood Slug (*Arion lusitanicus*), a naked snail and a major agricultural pest. Hailing from the Iberian peninsular, it has been found as far away as the Falkland Islands and, although it has not spread yet, it has been found at Cornell University in the United States.

It has a voracious appetite and will happily devour any vegetables in the veggie patch ... and the veggie basket inside, too! Deterrants range from salt to electric fences, but to no avail. However, as it prefers a damp environment (the damper the better for extreme breeding), we are not likely to be bothered by them in the UAE.

Report by Barbara Couldrey



E.mail your reports to pvana@emirates.net.ae, (Arial 10 justified) or deliver them to Anne Millen on disk at monthly meetings.

A glimpse of flora and fauna in Norway

August/September is berry season in Norway both in the Telemark (south) and around the more northerly Sognefjord region. We picked kilos of blueberries (*Vaccinium cyanococcus*) with special forked cans which one runs through the low lying plants. As a picker's reward we had a traditional blueberry treat - berries squashed with a little sugar on bread.



Blueberries and lichen

Also for the picking were abundant wild raspberries, blackberries and cranberries. We found the foliage of cloudberries (*Rubus chamaemorus*) but, unusually, no fruit. These amber coloured berries are very popular in Scandinavia.



A collage of lichen

While walking up in the fell land above Sognefjord, we saw many varieties of lichen, one in particular was a joy to walk on. Reindeer li-

chen (*Cladonia rangiferina*) is whitish in colour, soft and spongy. It is extremely cold-hardy and likes well drained open environments. In winter the reindeer toss through the snow with their antlers until they uncover this nourishing fodder. Reindeer lichen has many uses including decoration, medicine and a beverage which could make reindeer feel quite happy!

There was also masses of beautiful cotton grass (*Eriophorum scheuchzeri*) growing in the mountain bogs, waving their fluffy white heads in the breeze. And among the blueberry and cranberry plants were purple flowering heathers.



Eriophorum scheuchzeri

As for wildlife, we heard foxes, saw large moose droppings, caught sight of raptors and, below the tree line, saw green woodpeckers and several varieties of tits. One delightful sighting high in the mountains were three ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*), scampering over rocks on their fluffy white legs, their coats already mottled white preparing for winter camouflage. Thanks to Barbara Couldrey for text and photographs.

Arabian Biogeography: The Eremic Zone

[Note: Most discussions of Arabian biogeography make reference to the Eremic Zone, encompassing more or less the belt of arid regions

that extends from North Africa through Arabia and into SW Asia. Torben B. Larsen, in a 1984 paper discussing the zoogeography of Arabian butterflies, includes an enlightening discussion of the concept of the Eremic Zone and its relationship to the more traditional biogeographical regions. I read it only very recently, and immediately wished I had read it many years ago. The contribution below is adapted from Larsen's discussion, for the most part using his own words. The full reference is: Larsen, T.B. (1984) The zoogeographical composition and distribution of the Arabian butterflies (Lepidoptera; Rhopalocera), *Jour. Biogeography* 11:119-158. – Gary Feulner]

The Arabian Peninsula straddles three of the world's main zoogeographical regions: the Afro-tropical Region (Africa south of the Sahara, formerly called the Ethiopian Region), the Oriental Region (Asian tropical and subtropical) and the Palaearctic Region (Old World temperate regions). These regions were first delineated by Sclater in 1858 and broadly confirmed by Alfred Russel Wallace in 1876. The basic concepts have stood the test of time remarkably well. The boundaries between these zones are at their least precise where they are not reinforced by geographical barriers, and have been the subject of much discussion. Arabia lies in a complex zone of contact.

Soon after Sclater and Wallace had proposed their main zoogeographical regions, it became clear that the boundaries between the Palaearctic and Afro-tropical Regions were defined in an unsatisfactory manner. The deserts and sub-deserts stretching from Mauritania in the west to Egypt and Arabia, and from there in a patchy way to parts of Asia, contained a fauna and flora which did not belong to either of the main regions. Sclater modified his original view and accepted this area as a distinct region. Plant geographers recognize the Eremic Zone as the Saharo-Sindian zone.

Larsen believes that giving the Eremic Zone full regional status would



Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

Reptiles - Dr Reza Khan
res 344 8283
off 344 0462
fax (off) 349 9437

Archaeology - Prof. John Fox
jfox@aus.ac.au
(Temporarily away - hold your reports)

Birds - David Bradford
davebradford9@hotmail.com

Astronomy - Lamjed El-Kefi
res: 06-5247 958
off: 06-5583 003
email: lankefi@emirates.net.ae

Marine Life - Lamjed El-Kefi

Geology - Gary Feulner
res 306 5570
fax 330 3550

Insects - Gary Feulner

Fossils - Valerie Chalmers
res 349 4816,
fax 340 0990
vmc@latifaschool.co.ae

Plants - Valerie Chalmers

Mammals & Seashells - Recorders needed!

The recorders are not necessarily scientific experts in their designated fields. In fact, most are not. However, they are interested and knowledgeable amateurs - please contact them if you have any interesting reports or queries.

The intention is that information will be channelled through to the *Gazelle* editor, so new information can be shared with all our readers.



be going too far. It is not as old as the main regions and most of its flora and fauna is clearly derived from Afrotropical, Palearctic and Oriental stock and now adapted to the stringent ecological conditions that have prevailed in the area since some time in the Miocene (c.5-25 million years ago). It was during the late Miocene and early Pliocene that the Saharan and Arabian deserts became effective zoogeographical barriers, while the mountains of Iran and the Red Sea rift arose as additional physical barriers.

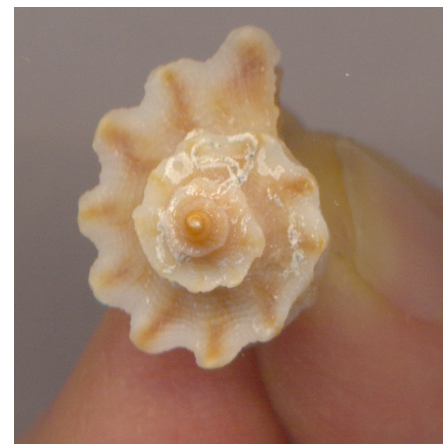
In Larsen's view, the Eremic Zone is not so much a zoogeographical region as a distinct biome which has drawn its flora and fauna from the neighbouring regions. As such it constitutes both a necessary simplification and a useful tool in zoogeographical analysis. However, the definition of the Eremic Zone on the basis of faunal distribution patterns is neither easy nor unambiguous. In its most narrow sense it corresponds to the high temperature, very low rainfall Saharo-Arabian phytogeographical region of Zohary (1973). In its widest sense, it encompasses the arid zones from Mauritania and Morocco to India, lowland Afghanistan, parts of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and the drier parts of Africa north of the Sahara.

Larsen believes that it is necessary to adopt a pragmatic view in the definition of floral and faunal elements that characterize the Eremic Zone. This, he argues, is not an abdication from scientific stringency since the eremic element in the wider sense does represent actual distributional facts which are not explained through the traditional regions. Larsen quotes Uvarov (1938) to say that "[E]cological and biogeographical analysis applied to the Eremian fauna proved it to be not an entity, but a complicated mosaic pattern formed by several ecofaunae, each one composed of genera and species of different origins, unequal geological age, with different ecological requirements and different evolutionary trends. . . . [I]t would be unscientific to try to

characterize the Eremian fauna as a whole by the usual statistical method, while any attempt to define an Eremian Region by linear boundaries would result in a crude violation of distributional fact."

A Journey of Re-Discovery: *Thais carinifera*

Sometimes there's a shortcut to knowledge, sometimes you get there the long way. A small but attractive seashell provided more than its fair share of excitement, as well as some valuable lessons, during the past summer. Editor Anne Millen was taken by the appearance of a delicate specimen that she found on a Dubai beach in mid-spring. It was a 21mm, off-white coloured shell decorated with pale orange stripes and the apex was turreted and resembled a genuine crown, with a broad, flared and slightly upturned 'brim' on the shoulder of each whorl. Anne was all the more intrigued when she found she couldn't identify it from *Seashells of Eastern Arabia* by Bosch et al. Correspondence with Dr. Sandy Fowler in Mexico did not advance matters immediately. His tentative suggestion was *Thais rugosa* (# 492 in SEA), a rare shell and seemingly too spiny overall, but having the uppermost whorls "expanded into leaf-like, open scales resembling a circular saw seen from above" (SEA).



Anne's specimen, seen from the top
Max. diam. 16mm

One unidentifiable shell was merely a curiosity, especially given the construction, landfill and dredging along the Dubai coast. But Anne



found several more over the remainder of the spring and summer, including one apparently weathering out of older sediments along the beachfront. Chairman Gary Feulner became involved when a similar, slightly larger specimen turned up in the collection of Minie van de Weg of Fujeirah. It appeared to belong to the Subfamily Rapaninae, which includes the genus *Thais*, but little more could be said. Then, by chance, while looking up some other information, Gary noticed a very similar looking drawing of an East African shell of the genus *Drupa*.

The name was unfamiliar and provoked Gary, uncharacteristically, to visit the internet. There *Drupa* led to the genus *Drupella* and also to *Thais* and a newly created genus called *Stramonita*, which seems to encompass many shells formerly assigned to each of the other foregoing genera, and others. Photos were available for only a minority of all the species listed in these groups, but this was enough to satisfy Gary and Anne that they were in the right group of shells – all, incidentally, carnivores that feed on other molluscs and/or coral (several snails of the genus *Drupella* are considered serious menaces to coral in the Indo-Pacific region).



Aperture and columella, and the characteristic 'coronate' whorls



Different but the same; things were getting worse

With that much 'homework' done, Gary took a chance. Along with correspondence on other matters with molluscan researchers at The Natural History Museum in London, he sent a photo of the unknown and asked innocently: "Do you happen to know of anyone knowledgeable and interested in the genus *Stramonita* and its kin?" The answer came back: "By a happy coincidence the world expert in *Thais* for this region [Dr. K.S. Tan of Singapore] is visiting us today. We will ask his opinion." By a happy coincidence, indeed!

But at the same time, our heroes were having second thoughts. Anne had found a specimen with a bit of cement in it and was planning to inquire further about the source of landfill for The World project. Moreover, she questioned whether Minie's East Coast specimen was the same as her Dubai examples, as it had much less elaborate coronation. Gary, meanwhile, had belatedly recalled and applied three basic rules of UAE shell collecting: (1) Do not be quick to assume you have found something new – it is unlikely; (2) Remember that *Seashells of Eastern Arabia* is NOT comprehensive for Arabian Gulf seashells, even distinctive and attractive ones like Anne's unknown; and (3) Remember to consult other, earlier references.

In this case Gary consulted the re-

port of the Rev. Biggs on specimens from the 1960s (with the help of Peter Hellyer in Abu Dhabi), two books from the 1980s by Donald and Eloise Bosch (*Seashells of Oman* and *Seashells of Southern Arabia*), and the 1994 *Bahrain Seashells* by former DNHG member Stephen Green, as well as UAE lists compiled by local collectors Carolyn Lehmann, Dr. Sandy Fowler, Dr. Richard Hornby and Horst Kauch (three of them DNHG members and the fourth a former speaker), on file in the DNHG library.



Minie van der Weg's adult specimen

All of those references, with the exception of Sandy Fowler's list, include either *Thais mutabilis* (Link, 1807) or *Thais carinifera* (Lamarck, 1822), which Bosch and Green explain are now considered synonyms. The photos in the earlier Bosch books show a relatively lumpy shell, and Bosch and Green give adult sizes of 40-80mm – much larger than Anne's shells (max. 21mm). However, *Bahrain Seashells* depicts several juvenile shells that are excellent likenesses of Anne's unknown, and both Bosch and Green emphasize in the text that the distinctive coronation seen in juveniles becomes less so in adult shells.

At the same time, word came back from London: The shells in our photographs were probably *T. carinifera*. Dr. David Reid of The Natural History Museum provided some clarification: Although *T. mutabilis* is the senior name and according to established rules it should therefore be used in preference, the latest ICZN rules are



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Treasurer	<i>Very much needed!</i>			
Membership Secretary	Lena Linton e.mail: linton@emirates.net.ae	344 2591		344 2591
Membership Assistant	Anindita Radhakrishna e.mail: anin@emirates.net.ae	282 3952	050-656 9165	
Speaker Co-ordinator	Angela Manthorpe e mail: manthorpe2005@yahoo.co.uk	288 6232		
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Pradeep Radhakrishna e.mail: wgarnet@emirates.net.ae	282 3952	050-450 8496	
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Peter Jackson email: pj.architect@gmail.com	2882713	335 4545 050-5521005	3354338
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more flexible in permitting the use of a junior name that is already well established in the literature. *T. carinifera* is considered to satisfy that criterion.

Dr. Reid mentioned in addition that *T. lacera* (Born, 1778) (# 491 in SEA) is now also considered to be the same organism as *T. carinifera* (so, yet another senior synonym), despite its relatively distinctive morphology (especially the tall, turreted apex). One of Anne's objections to *T. lacera* was SEA's description of a "massive cord around the umbilicus"; the ones found on Jumeira beach had no umbilicus, and no cord. Dr Reid admitted that there had been some initial inclination on the part of Dr. Tan to consider Minie's East Coast specimen as *T. blanfordi*, which Dr. Tan had studied in India, Pakistan and the Malay Peninsula, but in default of a live specimen to study, they agreed it is wiser to suppose that Minie's shell

is the species already known to occur in our area.



Juvenile *Thais carinifera*

And what of *Stramonita*? Dr. Reid explained that this new genus had been defined based on type specimens from America, and that Dr. Tan therefore preferred to retain the name *Thais* (in the broad sense) for Old World Thaidis, pending further study.

The mystery solved, Anne admitted that she missed the thrill of the

chase, and the early morning beach walks (ahead of the Municipality sweeping machine) to find more specimens. But by mid-September she was already saying to Gary, "I have *another* shell I'd like to show you . . ." *Report by Gary Feulner and Anne Millen*

** Young Birders Dubai **

Sandhya Prakash is starting a birding group for 9-16 year olds, which will meet every third Saturday of the month, starting Oct. 21st This is not part of the DNHG.

Those interested should contact Sandhya on telephone 04—3487997 or 050—5512481, fax 04—3482868 or email her: sandy_pi@yahoo.com

Dubai Natural History Group Programme

Lectures at Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, 7.30 for 8.00pm

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| Nov 05 | Rock Art – Dr. Michele Ziolkowski |
| Dec 10 | Camel Milk: The White Gold of the Desert - Prof. Ulli Wernery |

Field Trips (Members only, please. Details inside.)

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|-----------|--|
| Oct 27 | Wadi Bih - Peter van Amsterdam |
| Nov 10 | Astronomy - Lamjed El-Kefi |
| Nov 24&25 | Ibri Anticline - Anne Millen and Peter van Amsterdam |
| Dec 08 | Elephant Walkways in Abu Dhabi - Steve and Jo Raynor |
| Dec 15 | Musandam Dhow Trip - Lamjed El-Kefi |