

Editorial

As readers will note, this issue of *Tribulus*, Volume 17, for the year 2007, is not only several months late, but it is also presented as a single annual volume, rather than in the two parts that have appeared each year since the journal was launched in 1991. It is appropriate to provide an explanation.

The delay in publication, to be completely honest, is primarily because of the fact that those members of the Editorial Board who take on the main tasks associated with publication have had extensive other commitments to discharge, or have been away for extended periods since summer 2007. Production of the journal has always been a labour of love, and there are times when other commitments must take priority.

The decision to cease bi-annual publication and to change to an annual format is partly related to this pressure of other work. It is, however, never easy to arrange for a sufficient number of papers, of suitable quality, to be submitted for publication, and this, too, has caused delays. It is hoped that the change to an annual publication will help the Editors to prompt more potential contributors to submit copy. The fact that papers in *Tribulus* are now available on-line, on the website of the Al Ain chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group, (<http://www.enhg.org/trib/tribpdf.htm>) may also make the journal more attractive as a place in which to publish, of course, and we are grateful to the Group for having arranged to provide this facility. We do, however, plan to continue production of hard-copy issues of the journal, even though this takes longer, since we believe that such issues are preferred by many of our readers and contributors.

Having made the explanations above, we believe that the latest issue of *Tribulus*, in its single annual volume format, is the most substantial yet, in terms not only of its total content (well over double that of the average number of pages in the former, bi-annual, issues), but also in terms of the nature of its contents.

The journal has always sought to provide a wide range of papers, dealing with the history, archaeology and natural history of the United Arab Emirates, and this issue is no exception. The major papers include an important examination of the flora of one of the country's most diverse, and most endangered habitats, an important review of shark species known in the region (a much under-studied topic), a archaeological baseline study of an important wadi in Fujairah and a lengthy annotated checklist of the UAE's dragonflies and damselflies, containing much previously unpublished data. These are complemented by a host of shorter notes,

on archaeology, butterflies, moths, snakes and other topics.

While many of the contributors have previously published papers in *Tribulus* – and we hope that they will continue to do so for many years to come we are delighted to welcome some new contributors to this issue of the journal and hope that they, too, will come to see the journal as being a suitable place in which to publish.

Tribulus arose out of the Bulletin of the Emirates Natural History Group in Abu Dhabi, a duplicated, thrice-yearly magazine that commenced publication in 1978, now thirty years ago. The objective of the Bulletin was to provide a place in which some of the early research into the natural history and archaeology of the country could be published – much of which was of considerable value, even if it was written in a non-academic format.

When *Tribulus* began, in 1991, its objective was to continue publishing of such material, albeit in a more academic format, and, at the same time, to attract many more contributors from outside the ENHG membership, these comprising primarily people with a more detailed knowledge of the topics concerned. At that time, there was no academic journal in English devoted to the history, archaeology and natural history of the UAE, although there were a number of specialist journals overseas which published papers on these aspects of the Emirates. It was then our belief that there would, some day, be such a journal, produced by a leading local academic institution, or by an innovative local publisher.

Since then, the number of specialist journals outside the country, but which carry UAE-related papers, has increased, but, despite its shortcomings, *Tribulus* is still the only journal of its type published inside the country. It is our belief that, over the years, the papers it has published have made a significant contribution to the sum of scientific knowledge about the country, even if that knowledge is not always distributed as widely as we would like.

The amount of research being undertaken continues to grow, and, as the papers in this volume indicate, there is a steady flow of discoveries, in a wide variety of fields and disciplines.

We intend, therefore, to continue to provide a suitable place for the publication of these discoveries, and look forward to further years of publication in our new annual format.

Peter Hellyer

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