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SODOM'S APPLE

by Jerry Buzzell

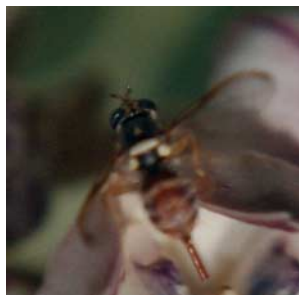
Sodom's apple (*Calotropis procera*) is one of the most common shrubs in the desert around Al Ain and in built up areas of this city. The plant itself is somewhat gangly, growing up as a bush, with spindly woody main stems and broad light green fuzzy leaves. Dead leaves and broken branches usually litter the ground underneath the bush. The flowers are glorious; five pointed stars tipped with lavender and with dark purple spokes radiating out from a yellow-green pentagon at the centre. They are arranged as bunches, with mature open flowers and closed-up immature ones together, begging to be photographed.

ken fleshy stems and leaves. It is said to be poisonous, though why anyone would want to eat a milkweed is beyond me. Perhaps this is why it survives the depredations of the camels and goats in the desert.

For the past three months, I have been visiting two Sodom's apple bushes within a few hundred metres of our villa in Khabisi, taking pictures of the fauna which lives on them or visits them. So far, I have photos of flies, bees, ants, aphids, beetles, and birds from these two bushes, as well as caterpillars from near the east coast and a magnificent praying mantis from Fossil Valley.

Calotropis is a type of milkweed, with a viscous white sap, which exudes from bro-

On a visit to Khutwa some time ago, Brigitte pointed out the Sodom's apple fruit



Calopteris procera

Editorial

"...as long as we are travellers in 'this wilderness of the world', we will need to find authentic ways of telling each other what we discover there."


From 'Journeys; An Anthology',
by Robyn Davidson

In September last year, during the interview process for the position I now have, I was lucky to go on a trip to a Wadi in Oman that the ENHG took, to see the full moon rise over the mountains. In the months that have passed I have forgotten what that Wadi was called and where it was. I have never been very good with details. My brain tends to sift out information, invariably leaving me only with a set of images plastered on the walls of my memory. I have not forgotten what that wadi looks like, the light going down over one mountain and the moon rising over another.

I have not forgotten the falaj and the salts suspended in the water holes where the Wadi runs through.

So when I was approached to take on the ENHG newsletter, quite selfishly it seemed a perfect opportunity to sift back in some of the information I tend to sift out.

What is good about these newsletters is that so many people get an opportunity to sift back in some of those forgotten details, or better still to learn something completely new. As Robyn Davidson puts it, we need 'to find authentic ways of telling each other what we discover' and the ENHG newsletter does just that.

I will be working together with Will Moore on this newsletter and we look forward to working with the various ENHG members that will contribute to the ENHG papers, and more importantly to the many trips we will go on and the many lectures and slide shows to be seen. 

SODOM'S APPLE (cont'd)

by Jerry Buzzell



fly (*Dacus longistylus*), which is almost always associated with Sodom's apple. *D. longistylus*, a member of the family Tephritidae (true fruit flies), can almost always be found on the plant, crawling around the open flowers or resting on the underside of a leaf. The female fly is characterized by having a long broad ovipositor, which trails behind her and is the basis of the species name.



One of the bushes I monitor sits by a villa wall, with an eastern exposure. In early January, this bush had an unhealthy appearance and examination soon revealed thousands of



aphids, festooning stems and leaves, especially over the veins. These aphids were bright orange in color, with distinct black legs and black spiracles on the sides of the abdomen. An internet search revealed this to be the common oleander aphid, *Aphis nerii*.

bourhood; just hangin' around. Like the odd ladybug.

The second bush has a western exposure. It lies beside a pile of building rubble, beside a wall enclosing a generator. It is much larger than the other bush and the intense afternoon sun on it gives it a different feel as well as a different fauna.

Fruit flies and ants are present and abundant, but I have not seen any aphids of any colour. It's the birds and the bees that make this bush interesting.



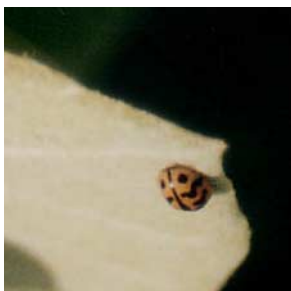
We were away from Al Ain for two weeks in January; when we returned, these orange aphids were much reduced in numbers. Instead, there were populations of small green aphids on the flowers and on the short stems to the flowers.

There is a family of purple sunbirds living nearby and these birds flit in and out of the bush, alighting to lap up nectar from the flowers. They can often be heard before they are seen. They are somewhat shy and fast-moving but, with patience, they are lovely subjects for photography.



I examined this bush again at the beginning of March; neither population of aphids was evident and the plant looked healthier than I have seen it in a long time. Of course, it may have been sprayed with insecticide; however, it still had a small population of ants and *D. longistylus* flies.

This bush has lots of flowers and pollinators are present in abundance. I suspect that the fruit flies do some pollinating, but the professional pollinators are the bees. Small bees, about the size of the flies, are present but in early March, the most obvious pollinators were large solitary carpenter bees of the genus *Xylocopa*. There are two types of these bees, one of which is entirely black and the other has a black head and abdomen and a yellow dorsal thorax with a black spot in the centre. The one with the yellow thorax is *X. aestuans*; the wholly black one cannot yet be identified to species level. (*X. aestuans* was featured on a UAE postage stamp in 1998 [<http://www.ping.be/honingbijen/arab.htm>].) These bees buzz in and out, sample flowers, crawl over the flowers, and then buzz off to another.



Small black ants are also found on these Sodom's apples. Though they were associated with the aphids, they don't appear to be farming them or milking them. I suspect that they are like ants elsewhere in this neigh-

SODOM'S APPLE (cont'd)

by Jerry Buzzell

They showed no aggression to me watching them or to the sunbirds with which they were sharing the bush.

Calotropis leaves are a favourite food of the caterpillar of the plain tiger butterfly, *Danaus chrysippus*. The one pictured was noted in Wadi Zikt, near the east coast, during Inter-Emirates Weekend in March.

Finally I should mention that casual visitors to the Sodom's apple bushes are also worth a picture or two.

Last December, on an ENHG field trip to Fossil Valley, we happened upon an Egyptian flower mantis (*Blepharopsis mendica*), and watched it make a meal of a passing fly. The experience was enjoyed by all (though presumably not by the fly).

A few words about technique: Photographing this menagerie is a bit of a challenge and I have used a number of approaches.

For basic equipment, I have a Canon Rebel S camera with Canon 35-80 and 75-300 mm zoom lenses. I also have a 2x Tamron teleconverter, which, when used with the longest zoom, gives it an effective focal length of 600 mm. Amongst my filters, I have +2 and +3 close-up lenses, which magnify the image and allow a shorter focusing distance. Finally, I usually use Kodak Pro 100 film or Kodak Ultra Gold (ISO 400) film.

I don't record apertures or shutter speeds but am aware of them when I take pictures. I generally leave my camera on aperture priority, which means that I control the size of the opening for light to enter the camera (f stop) and therefore the depth of focus. A small aperture (large f stop number) gives a sharper focus over a greater distance than a large aperture does; the trade-off is that it also gives a longer shutter speed, increasing the probability of blurring due to movement of

the subject or camera. Alternatively, increasing the aperture (smaller f stop) leads to faster shutter speed (freezing motion better) but a shallower depth of acceptable focus. Close-up photography involves balancing (or attempting to balance) these considerations, with the added complication that additional filters and longer lenses inevitably lead to both slower shutter speeds and reduced depth of focus. This can be compensated (to some extent) by using a faster film.



Photo by Brigitte Howarth

The aphids and flies were relatively simple to photograph with my 35-80 zoom lens and close-up filters. Focusing is critical because there is virtually no depth of focus. Because of my wonky eyesight, I had to throw away quite a number of prints to get some good shots.

The mantis and the caterpillar were shot with no special considerations, using the 35-80 lens and a medium aperture (to provide an acceptable shutter speed (considering the

wind moving the leaves) and a reasonable depth of focus). The mantis was on the underside of the leaf, so I had to squiggle under on my back, which explains the clouds. The photo was also cropped to eliminate an out of focus face watching from the side.

Last summer I bought the 2x teleconverter lens, which converts my 300mm telephoto zoom to a focal length of 600mm.

It also reduces the depth of focus and cuts down on the light to the film, requiring more exposure and increasing the risk of camera shake. The bush's west exposure, the bright afternoon sun, and faster 400 speed film allowed exposure times in the 1/125-250th of a second range, fast enough so camera shake isn't as much of a problem (though, strictly speaking, a shutter speed of 1/600th of a second should be used with a lens of that focal length). Focus is still critical.

The sunbirds and bees were somewhat skittish but I pretended to be part of a water pipe five metres away from the bush and, from this vantage point, captured them on film. A most satisfactory way to spend an hour or so on a bright sunny afternoon!

Thanks to Brigitte Howarth for introducing me to Sodom's apple's fauna and for information on the taxonomy of the fruit flies, caterpillars, and bees. 🐛

All photos by Jerry Buzzell unless otherwise noted.



A Prize winning flower show entry

Photos and article by Will Moore

The Emirates Natural history Group – Al Ain Chapter has once again successfully participated in the Third annual Al Ain Flower Festival, constructing a garden “oasis” and garnering a tie for second place Silver Medal. Many, many thanks go out to the volunteers who so ably participated in the affair. The garden is best described by the words posted on the front-board.

Most of the plants found here might well be found in a real oasis. The towering date palms provide shade for orange, lemon and lime trees - for pomegranate, guava, mango, fig, papaya, and banana trees. The chili, guava basil, onions and papyrus reed, are equally likely to be found. The bougainvillea, orange blossom, and jasmine are all true to life. The cotton plant, lemon grass and “dolichos” beans might be found in a true oasis.

We have intimated the well, falaj, adobe hut and stone walls that occur in every true oasis, and have enlarged the insect population to more clearly communicate their role in the setting. A date weevil creeps up the trunk of a palm tree. A dragonfly rests on a nearby flame bush. A water scorpion sits on the wall waiting to hunt on the water in the falaj. A ‘hemiptera’ or ‘true bug’ rests on the wall of the hut. Crickets, birds and other oasis creatures are included through the use of sounds, adding still more dimension to the colourfully lit display.

The smaller purple and white flowers have been used to intimate water - in the well, running in the falaj, and spilling out into one section of the garden where the stop has been removed. The yellow and brown flowers suggest sand and earth. Dark purple (shade) and variegated bright foliage (dappled sunlight) are set in a pattern imitating the shade thrown by the date palm leaves above.



Fiona – thank you for your excellent organizational skills, without which we would not have achieved such success.

Ruth and Earl – THANK YOU for the plants and expertise and for leading a winning team of superb volunteers: Jackie Rohan, Jerry Buzzell, Emily, Becky Turner, Peter Bars, Murphy Turner, Brigitte Howarth, Judy Worthington, Chris Howarth, Sylvia Holmes, Helene Dumarty, Don Worthington, Brien Holmes and Glen Griffin.

Thanks to you insect makers: Marlene Bezuidenhout, Brigitte Howarth, Carol Hawkins, and Helene Dumarty – they were wonderful. Thanks to the concrete and stone masons: Murphy Turner, Bill Jones, Will Moore, Tom Carter, Brien Holmes, Mike Clifton, and Judy Worthington – your work will stand the rigors of the Middle East climate at least until the end of the festival!

Thanks to the builders and painters of the adobe hut: Chris Howarth, Peter Lawrence,

Helene Dumarty, Emily, Will Moore, Becky Turner, Brien Holmes, and Sylvia Holmes. Thanks for the natural music and electrical system which not only provided sounds, but also lit the site nightly – spectacular: Marlene Bezuidenhout, Daphne Gernetzky, Brien Holmes, Murphy Turner, and Brigitte Howarth,

And thanks to the watering committee and site maintenance group for your tireless efforts in keeping the site beautiful during the ten day festival: Ruth Dunn, Melita Kosanovik, Daphne Gernetzsky, Pamela, Jacek, Jackie Rohan, Peter Bars, and Helene Dumarty.

And finally thanks to those I've forgotten to thank because we needed you just as much as we needed anyone.

– a work of amazing excellence folks – take a bow! 🙇



A TRIP TO RAS AL KHAIMAH

by Brien Holmes, photos by Jerry Buzzell



Geoff Sanderson and I were sitting around one evening last summer, when almost all of the Al Ain chapter membership was long gone, and realized that Geoff had not visited the emirate of Ras al Khaimah. It did not take much convincing to persuade Geoff to join me for a quick one-day trip to the city and countryside.

We did not see all the highlights but did see enough to convince us both that a weekend trip was appropriate for the membership. Planning for the weekend involved two reconnaissance visits; Phil Iddison and I spent one weekend in the city, meeting with the resident archaeologist Christian Welde, and visiting a long list of sights. A few weeks later, Murphy Turner and I returned for a one-day trip to collect reference information. The group visit, postponed once for personal reasons, eventually was held in late February.

More than 30 Al Ain members took part with the two-day agenda complicated in part because we were reduced to a single guide who knew where all the sites were located. That meant that the convoy of vehicles criss-crossing the city was much longer than initially planned. However, patience and good fortune meant that we all managed to see each site in due course.

The weekend began with a visit to the RAK Museum, arguably one of the better Museums in the country with a diverse collection with items appropriately labelled and presented. The archaeology rooms of the Museum were particularly impressive, reflecting the wealth of archaeological sites in the emirate. There were also galleries on culture and ethnicity, silver, sea life and the history of the ruling family.

From there, a dash to the dhow yards where, regrettably, the large dhow that Phil and I had seen under construction, and Murphy and I had

photographed as it was moored in the nearby channel, was long gone. However, workmen had laid the keel for a new dhow that appeared to be even larger. Nearby, workmen were working on modern sleek racing dhows, but our agenda did not permit time for a visit.

Next stop on Thursday was Shimal, where sites reflected 3rd millennium civilization, several Umm an Nar and Hili period tombs, a 2nd millennium settlement site, and a watchtower, probably the last remaining structure of the Julfar period. Several of the Shimal tombs,



long rectangular tombs that held several dozen remains, were recently excavated and are in remarkably good condition. A quick glance around the site suggested there are several more waiting to be excavated.

The busy Thursday afternoon continued with a visit to Falayah, a site still being worked by Christian Welde. Three structures have been restored using traditional building methods. This his-

toric site is reported the place where, following the British shelling of RAK in 1819, in 1820 the local leaders signed what became known as the trucial state treaty. Adjacent to one of the reconstructed buildings are the remains of farms and barasti buildings with 'plaster' floors and tannour cookers. Christian also showed the mud brick making facilities and a well. Christian's generous donation of time and expert discussion of the site was, for many, the highlight of the weekend.

We ended the long day with a visit to the 'ghost' town of Jazirat al Hamra, a large community just west of RAK. Houses built there with the first oil revenues -- in the late 1960's and 1970's -- of the UAE were abandoned. Some restoration work has taken place but the eventual demise of the area remains unclear. Some buildings, including one with two wind-towers and another, older structure made almost exclusively with coral, are likely to be restored. A mosque with a unique minaret is also likely

A TRIP TO RAS AL KHAIMAH (cont'd)

by Brien Holmes



Photo by Kevin Gernetzky, taken two weeks after Ras al Khaimah trip.

to be preserved. The homes, known in some papers as 'bait arabi' or Arab style homes, include the same complement of rooms as we see in houses hundreds and even thousands of years older.

Friday was reserved for the sights and sites near the village of Sha'am, the last village before the Oman border. Two sites were visited in Wadi Sha'am, the first an extensive collection of storage compartments, the second an abandoned settlement known as Wadi Sili.

On the western side of the wadi, about half way up the wadi, farmers built storage compartments known as 'yanz'. The stone buildings, resembling small houses, are located on a narrow rock ledge. From a distance, none of the buildings are visible; only when you are a few hundred meters away are the individual structures visible. Not many years ago the yanz were used to store crops harvested from the nearby terraces. Some of the yanz are still sealed. These stone buildings, with a mud plaster interior and stone roof tightly constructed so that rodents could not enter. There are more than 50 in this one location and, once the observer is accustomed to the features of the yanz, the storage buildings are recognizable elsewhere.

The final stop of the weekend was Wadi Sili, a community built on at least three levels and, like the yanz, almost impossible to recognize until you are a hundred meters away.



These stone buildings were occupied up until a few years ago and several buildings appear to have been abandoned just a few weeks ago. Many doors remain locked. Storage containers are everywhere; in one building, where part of the roof had collapsed, we spotted more than a dozen large containers, several jars and jugs, and a cannonball, perhaps left over from the barrage of 1819! There is an elaborate and extensive water collection system that includes several reservoirs. Terraces for farming are located around and among the homes. There are even at least three very large pottery kilns.

There was not time to visit:

- salt pits between Umm al Qawain and RAK where sea water is evaporated to collect salt
- the morning and afternoon fish markets (RAK is a fishing community still and the character here is amazing; outstanding range of fish available)
- area beaches, ideal for relaxation and shell collecting
- a classic archaeological tell excavated near Shamal, the site identified as Kush
- miscellaneous houses and watch towers around the city
- fishing net manufacturing yards

My thanks to Phil and Murphy for their help in planning a very successful, busy and enjoyable weekend. Several of us are anxious to return. 🏠

The Arabian Coffee Pot: A few Q&A's

by Peter Hudson

The question always arises, of the Arabian coffee pots, which is the coffee pot style from the UAE? This is not an easy question to answer. Part of the answer is that pots vary between the Saudi style with the more pronounced pointed lid and the much flatter lid of Omani and Yemeni style. These pots tend to be more squat in appearance than those of other regions. The UAE pot style follows essentially the Omani type but perhaps with not quite so flat a lid...or similar to the Saudi style with not so pointed a lid!

There are essentially two types of pots; those for cooking the coffee and those for serving. The coffee is boiled in the larger, more solid looking cooking pot and then transferred to the delicate more socially acceptable and certainly more exquisitely decorated serving pot. The former is a basic brass or copper combination (i.e. copper body brass lid or vice-versa) whilst the latter may be very ornate with small hanging ornamentation and decorated in bands of ornate copper, brass or silver.

There is also a pure silver service version which is still made in Nizwa today. At an auction in the UK I found two pots from the same source, which were signed and dated 1912 by the maker in Nizwa. It is ironic that antique pots find their way back onto the market in this fashion.

The lid occasionally contains small pebbles, which announce the boiling of the coffee but also act as a warning should anyone attempt to lift the lid to add poison to the brew. Poisoning was the main method of doing away with your enemy here in the old days. For this reason making the coffee was entrusted only to the senior servant of the household or tent.

The interior of the pot is covered in white metal which is usually tin or a tin solder which protects the contents from oxidized copper or more importantly in the case of brass: Verdigris - a mould which grows on brass and which can be fatal! All cooking utensils, including ladles, spoons and all cooking pots, are coated with tin or a tin solder. A lot of cooking pots are simply drenched in molten tin inside and out. It is a simple but hazardous

process to remove the outer tin with sulphuric acid but worth it to reveal the brass or copper below the surface.

Some ask why the spout is shaped the way it is? The spout follows a traditional shape seen also in spouted pouring bowls and it would seem that it is simply more practical and effi-




cient to shape the spout in this fashion. It is also a sensible design as it balances the pot, i.e. the heavy handle counterbalances the heavy protruding spout. The spout may also have a little flap cover to stop the flies getting in.

What did they use in ancient times? You may also find on your travels an odd looking small round bottomed red clay pot which was the original coffee cooking pot. This pot is still used today in some households together with a little bunch of date palm bark which is used to strain the coffee. These clay pots are still available in the old village pottery at Bahla in Oman. Once out of the fire, the pot sits on a small round ring of woven date.

What comprises a full set of Arabian coffee pots and associated items? A full set would comprise a variety of items in addition to a few serving and cooking pots. These include coffee stirring spoons, the mortar and pestle (yad wa yad mal hawwan), the winder type of coffee grinder from the central sector of Egypt / Syria, the little cups (finjaan) and other coffee pot variants from adjacent Arabian cultures.

There are, it is said a number of pots needed to make a full set and I have heard the figures 5 and 7 mentioned though I have never actually seen a complete set and this appears to

include cooking pots since it would only be necessary to have one serving pot or possibly two in a normal household. Nice to have the full collection which to be absolutely correct would sit in a brass or copper heating tray about 3 feet by 2 feet in size. You often see these displayed in Hotel reception areas. This contraption also has the same name in Arabic as the coffee pot itself; Dhellah. 

The Arabian Coffee Pot

By Peter Hudson

Peter (Chud) has been in the middle east and collecting since 1982 and runs the Arabian Antiques Gallery at The Inter-Continental Hotel here in Al Ain.



As a lead-up to the flower Festival, the ENHG also organized six local tours to various spots-of-interest for tourists here for the Third Al-Ain Classical Music Festival, March 5 – 7, 2003. The list of individuals who helped to make the weekend a success for the Al Ain chapter included Bill Jones (two trips to the Hanging Gardens), Bill Reimer (Wadi Aboul both mornings), Brigitte Howarth (two outings to Fossil Valley and Mahdah Oasis), Will Moore and Fiona Newson-Smith (Jebel Hafit and the hot springs), Jerry Buzzell (Wadi Aboul), Geoff Sanderson and Sylvia Holmes (Al Ain oases), Murphy Turner (Wadi Aboul), and Debbie Handley (Museum and oases).



Photos by Fiona Newson-Smith and Will Moore

A trip to Jebel Hafit and Mubazzrah Hot springs

The Al Ain Music Festival is not just about music. Certainly, it provides an opportunity for music lovers to indulge their passion, but there are opportunities too to savour some of the archaeological wonders of this desert oasis as a welcome alternative to the beached seal routine by the hotel swimming pool.

The backdrop to the 3rd Al Ain Classical Music Festival provides nothing as grandiose as Edinburgh Castle perched upon its volcanic outcrop, nor the bohemian charm of Covant Garden. However, the trip to the top of Jebel Hafeet proved to be as informative as it was relaxing. The weather was better too.

It was 8.30am when we set off. No, actually, it was about 8.40am. Mercifully, the driver of our first bus thought fit to mention that

his brakes were faulty just seconds before we were due to depart. Will and Fiona, our trusty lieutenants in charge of our group, had clearly anticipated this problem and another bus appeared as if with a magic wand. The last time I drove up the thousand or so metres of this mountain was about 6 years ago and I felt sick because of all the bends. I felt sick this time too. They still haven't managed to straighten that road. The view from the top hadn't changed though, the desert below shimmering in the midday heat and providing a quite splendid view. There was also a 'new' perimeter fence around the viewing area. At first I thought this a bit pointless until Fiona pointed out all the car skid marks, to me a random jumble but a local artist saw them as a Jackson Pollockesque tapestry and they are now immortalized on canvas. It was time for coffee so off to the spanking new Mercure Hotel just

a few hundred metres below the summit. Time is pressing so, caffeine craving satisfied, we headed off back down the mountain, relieved that the brakes appeared to be functioning normally. Our destination was the hot springs in the valley below. We were ordered to take off our shoes and socks. I had often heard that the female of the species has a higher pain threshold and I can now confirm this to be the case. Yes, the water was fairly warm. Delightful spot though, complete with picnic spots, individual family hot pools, pedalos on the lake. What more could you want? A few grazing wildebeest perhaps...

But it was nearly noon and time to return to our hotel in time for the next concert. We'll be back again next year. Long live the Natural History Group! 🏠

Ken Nichol

The Bish Brown Award Presented to Brien Holmes

by Murphy Turner, Becky Turner and Brigitte Howarth



Congratulations to Brien Holmes who was awarded the Bish Brown Award in March 2003 at a ceremony in Khor Fakkan during the Inter-Emirates weekend. The Bish Brown Award is the country's premier natural history award. This award, created to commemorate one of the Emirates Natural History Group's founders, J.N.B. 'Bish' Brown, acknowledges "outstanding contributions made by an individual in terms of promoting study and conservation of the UAE's environment, wildlife, history, and heritage, whether through formal study, encouragement of educational awareness or other means." The award is a silver falcon (donated by Dr. Terry Adams and his wife Caroline Adams) which will be in Brien's home for the entire year.

Brien Holmes has been Chairman of the Al Ain Chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group for five years. During this period, he has been largely responsible for building up the chapter to a current membership of over 200 families and members. One of Brien's contributions in his inclusive approach; he reaches out to many in the community who might otherwise not have been interested in the natural history of the Emirates and become knowledgeable through their ENHG participation. His enthusiasm, his style of writing, and his frequent communication with all members make people more interested in natural history and in participating in this group.

In an effort to promote heritage and natural history in an informative, dynamic and interactive manner, he coordinates an extensive programme of desert, wadi and mountain field trips, and has encouraged the Al Ain chapter's Special Interest Groups which help generate a large number of records of the country's flora and fauna. He has stimulated the group with interesting and varied programs for the general membership meetings. His e-mails and messages keep the entire ENHG group well aware of the variety and purpose of both the field trips and the meetings.

Brien has played a major role in promoting collaboration and knowledge of the natural history in the Al Ain area and beyond. In the Al Ain area, he has been involved in developing the collaboration that exists between the Chapter and ERWDA, supporting their plans for the new protected area on Jebel Hafit. He has established links with the university, local

authorities, museums, local schools and colleges, archaeology groups, and Oman. Community links are strengthened by his promotion of our participation in the Al Ain Flower Festival, his development of a workshop in one of the local schools, and his encouragement of the local women's college natural history projects.

He has also undertaken the task of creating the Group's website (address: <http://enhg.4t.com/index.html>) and an email address that is used to communicate with all members, thus making use of new technology to promote natural history in the UAE on a worldwide basis. His aim for the website is to create an archival site to make available all the Bulletin texts, which are now indexed on the website. The site also houses information on natural history, history and heritage-related links, and includes pages with current information such as field trips. Having set up the site, Brien's persistence in maintaining it, despite having to change servers on two occasions, has meant it is a reliable source of information and a focus for communicating with members. He continuously resources material for the site. The website and email discussion forum provide an important source of information for anyone wishing to study the natural history of the UAE - one of the key objectives of the original founders of the ENHG.

All of Brien's achievements are remarkable but equally effective is his approach. His unassuming manner and strong sense of ethics help the executive committee's work and focus. Volunteers put in hours on natural history projects and business because of his leadership style. He works with the committee to re-evaluate the effectiveness and inclusiveness of members in all our activities in order to ensure we continue to follow our key objectives.

The award was presented to Brien by Simon Aspinal, and, for Brien, was made even more special because last year's winner Ibrahim Zakhour, another key member of the Al Ain group, was in attendance. Brien Holmes fits all the requirements for this award and it is a fitting honor for an ENHG member well known in ENHG matters throughout the Emirates. 🏆



THE BACK PAGE

Thankyou from the Canadian Ambassador

A short note of thanks and appreciation from the Hutton's who in various family configurations enjoyed three of the excellent excursions which you and your colleagues so ably organised for the participants in the Al Ain Classical Musical Festival. It was a great family weekend to say the very least and these outings were an integral part of its success. Volunteerism is clearly very well established in Al Ain among a particularly well qualified, indeed remarkable group.

David Hutton
Ambassador/Ambassadeur
Canadian Embassy/Ambassade du Canada
Abu Dhabi U.A.E./E.A.U.

Upcoming ENHG

Among the tasks to complete is the cleaning and documentation of what appears to be an ore roasting pit in Wadi Khutwah, final mapping of houses and gravesites on Jebel Qattara, and the re-discovery of "Site Number One" and other archaeological sites on the Al Ain -- Abu Dhabi highway. I have also had a few requests to visit the tombs on the eastern side of Jebel Hafit.

If you have a place you would like to visit, or an event you are waiting to be announced, please do not hesitate to contact me or any other Committee member.

regards
Brien

Marmalade and spring photos!

The marmalade making competition will be held again this year. You still have time to track down some of the sour oranges we find in some mountain oases. I am not sure if there are any in the downtown souq. (Write to Jerry if you would like some help to locate oranges.) Further details are still to come.

We will be going ahead with the spring photo competition. The topic for this year's event is "Light". The exhibition and judging will take place at the Inter-Con on Tuesday, June 10. Deadline for submission will be the ENHG meeting of May 27.

Eligibility: Amateur members of the Al Ain ENHG. A maximum of three mounted prints interpreting the theme of LIGHT. Photos must have been taken by the entrant in the UAE or Oman. The longest dimension of the print (not the mount) should be between 8 and 12 inches (20 and 30 cm) or thereabout.

Please affix the following on the back of each entry: Photographer's name, phone no. or email address, Title of Photo, Approx. Location, Date taken.

The photos you enter will be on display and will be judged by other members of the ENHG - this is a "People's Choice" competition.

For further rules,details, mounting tips or other advice speak to Jerry Buzzell.

Thankyou Fiona

Thankyou thankyou thankyou to Fiona Newson-Smith from all ENHG'ers for all her hard work over the past year on the ENHG Newsletter. Only when you take on the job of producing the newsletter can you appreciate just how much work she did to get it out on time with interesting content every month. It is a hard act to follow.

Newsletter: Submission request.

Hi there, if you have something to submit for the newsletter, please do copy is certainly welcome. Speak to either Will Moore, Andrea Hamann or one of the committee members. To make life easier for us so that we can keep the image quality as high as possible please follow the following requirements.

Images: Please submit images in either hard copy or digitally. If you can submit them digitally all the better, in which case please submit them with a minimum 5cmX5cm with 200dpi, preferably larger so that there is the option to print them large format.

Text: Please keep formatting to a minimum as it will be reformatted anyway to fit the newsletter. The more tabs you put in, the more we have to take out.

COMING SOON

- Kutwa Project*
- Rain stories*
- Geoff's Date Palms*
- The Martini Henri Rifle*