



Al Ain ENHG Participates in the 4th Annual Classical Music Festival

Once again, we had a successful weekend in support of the 4th Annual Al Ain Classical Music Festival with a total of 12 tours conducted, six each on Thursday and Friday morning.

We are grateful to the organizers of the event, The Abu Dhabi Concert Committee, to the InterContinental Hotel and, of course, to the Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism for permitting the Al Ain fort to be used for the Gala concert event. It was an event to remember.

A special thank you to the volunteers: Tom Weeks, Jerry Buzzell, Linda Buzzell, Denise Lee, Mike Gillett, Bob Reimer, Barb Reimer, Chris Sanor, Beth Wallace, Brigitte Howarth,

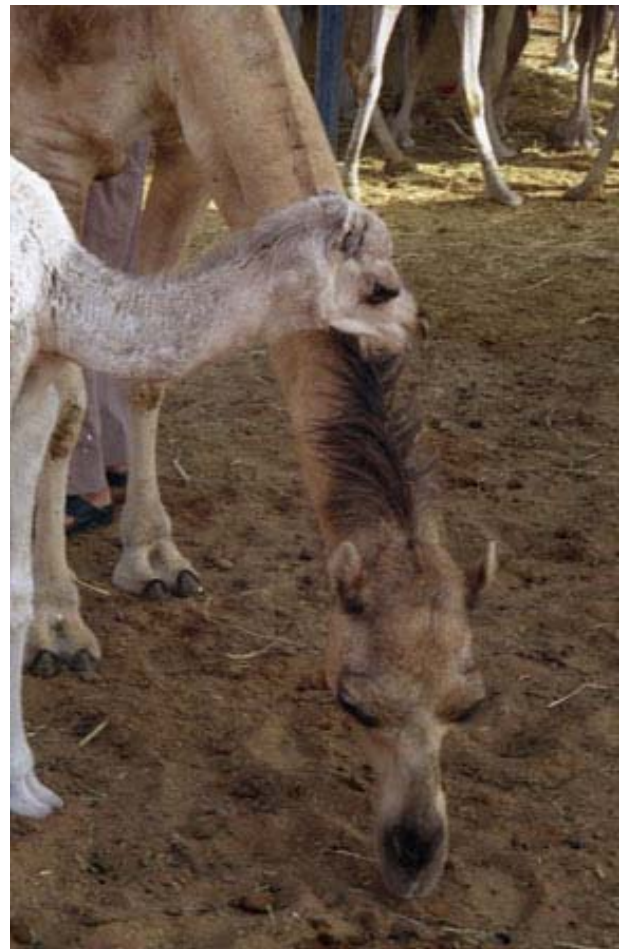
Geoff Sanderson, Jenny Sanderson, Stephen Roney, Helene Dumarty, Will Moore, Murphy Turner, Bill Jones, and Sylvia Holmes, Ann Perelli and Anna Venter.

A very special thanks to Phil Iddison who joined us for the Khutwah trip Friday morning! Phil brought his wealth of experience and information along on the walk, much to the delight of the visitors.

Once again both the Festival organizers and the Festival subscribers were most complementary on the generosity of the Al Ain chapter in providing these tours which, for at least one family, was the reason for returning to the Festival!!! Thanks again to the trip leaders for providing entertaining and informative trips to Wadi Aboul, Wadi Khutway, the Al Ain Oasis, the Al Ain camel souq and downtown souq, Hanging Gardens of Jebel Qatarra, and Fossil Valley!



One happy Fossil Valley tour group



**Left:**

*A whelk fossil found by one of the younger guests touring Fossil Valley.*

**Right:**

*Two happy camels at the Camel souq, where guests wandered amongst the beautiful beasts.*



## **RAK 2004 - alias Ras Al Khaima Trip 2004**

article & photos by Brien Holmes

On the weekend of March 17-19 2004, the Al Ain chapter of the ENHG travelled to Ras al Khaimah for a weekend of touring some of the more spectacular sites in the Emirates.

The tour included stops at:

- the yanz of Wadi Sha'am
- the abandoned village of Sili in Wadi Sha'am
- the Wadi Suq tombs at Shimal
- the dhow building yards
- the ghost town of Jazirat al Hamra
- the fort and farm at Falayah



*A yanz at Wadi Sha'am*



*Weary ENHGers return to their vehicles in wadi Sha'am.*

Across the wadi bed and at the end of the wadi is the abandoned settlement at Sili. Evidence suggests individuals were living in the community up until a generation ago -- one man we spoke with estimated people moved out 20 or 25 years ago. The exodus from the community would correspond with the construction of new housing, complete with municipal water supply, sewers, schools and electricity, constructed with the first oil revenues.

At least two of the original houses at Sili have been renovated in the past two years, evidence that families are returning to the community, if only for weekends. Many of the doors of the houses are locked and many of the courtyards appear to have been abandoned only recently. Unfortunately a few of the structures are showing signs of neglect.

## **Monthly Presentations:**

Our thanks to the presenters for sharing their insight and experience. Because of the Music Festival, Inter-Emirates Weekend, RAK Weekend and Nizwa Weekend there was no time to prepare write-ups for these excellent presentations – my apologies to all.

March 09 - **Traditional Housing in Al Ain,**

by Phil Iddison.

March 23 - **The Camel Brain,**

by Laurence Garey  
(to be published soon)

April 13 - ' **Environmental Issues in the UAE –  
Role of the WWF, in the UAE.**

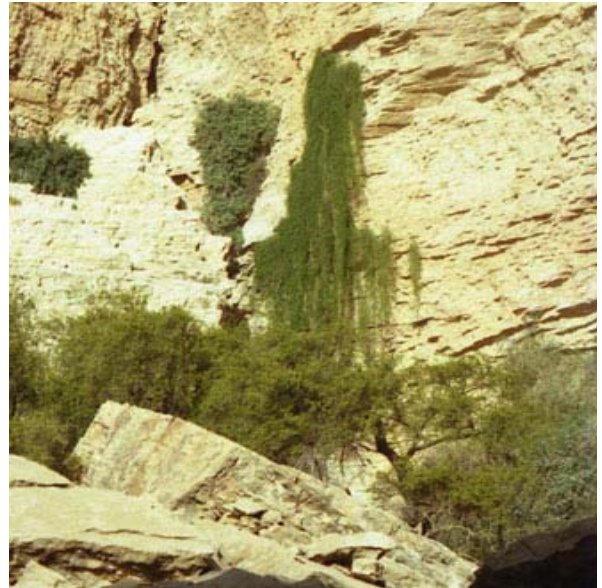
by Dr Frederic Launay,  
Director of the World Wildlife Fund - EWS

April 27 - cancelled



## Inter-Emirates Weekend 2004

This year, the Al Ain Chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group hosted the annual Inter-Emirates weekend. ENHGers from the Dubai and Abu Dhabi Chapters were treated to some of our local interests. Activities included trips to the Al Ain Oasis and Al Ain Museum, the Hanging Gardens, Wadi Khutwah, Hili Archaeological site, Saleh's Farm, Mahdah Oasis, Fossil Valley and Camel Souq on both Thursday and Friday mornings. A special workshop session was put on with presentations by Bob Reimer (on maps, GPS's and websites), by Dr Laurence Garey on the camel brain and on human remains from Al Buhais. The beetle display by Mike Gillett and associated bug pinning activity by Dr Brigitte howarth added to this special after-noon activity. Special thanks to trip leaders, presenters organizers, volunteers and to the Al Ain English Speaking School for providing us with the workshop space.



*The Hanging Gardens - clinging to life!*



*Bob Reimer gives a talk on Computer websites, GPS, and maps.*

The IEW would not be complete without the catered dinner - held at the Al Ain fort - thank you Amal Baky for your excellent organization and thank you to the staff of the Intercontinental hotel who catered the dinner. Thank you also to the Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism for preserving this beautiful historical building in Al Ain



*Bug pinning – Yeah!*



*Dinner is served!*



## Inter-Emirates Weekend 2004 – Photography Contest



*IEW winner 'Alert' – by Jerry Buzzell*

This year's Inter-Emirates Weekend included an open photography competition. This was a "People's Choice" contest with those attending the IEW dinner voting on their favourites. The winners, in no particular order, included Naseer Ommer: "Camouflage" (a wadi Khutwa toad with palm trimmings) Rick Green: "Dune" (a dune shot from Al Hayer) Geoff Sanderson: "Carmen the Caramel Camel..." (use your imagination!) Jerry Buzzell: "Alert!" (an agamid with tail coiled like a scorpion, at Jbeeb), and Naseer Ommer: "Ethereal Beauty" (a dragonfly on a stick, at Subaita). Congratulations and well done to these four snappers. Thanks to all who entered photos and to all who voted. Thanks to Milena who did most of the work.

---

## ***Nizwa Weekend***



*A weary group take shelter in the shade on the Cliff Walk at Jebel Shams*

To see more photos of this excellent location, go to: [www.enhg.org/](http://www.enhg.org/) and click on Nizwa Weekend : Jebel Shams

This trip to Nizwa was organized and led by Geoff Sanderson. Thirty-two members went along. The trip included stops on Wednesday: at Ibri, Al Sulayf abandoned village, Ibri Suq, Bat – Um An Arr period tombs, Al Ayn necropolis World Heritage site, Amlah, Nizwa Fort.

Then on Thursday:

Trip A went to Tanuf Village and Wadis, Fort Jabrin, Bahla Suq - Silver Smith then to Potters, Wadis Ghul Village, Al Hamra Village, and Al Misfah Mountain Village, and

Trip B went to Jebel Shams and the cliff walk. Ten Al Ain members enjoyed a leisurely walk along the cliff face; it was the first time on the hike for nine of the trekkers. From the new signboards, we know the trail is approximately four kilometers in total and the hike in should take about an hour. We also learned that the village is known as Sap Bani Khamis and had, at one time, approximately 15 families.

Finally on Friday, stops include: Nizwa Goat market and Suq and Manah Village.



## Weekly Outings - Madbah

This March and April saw ENHGers out and about on Friday mornings to a great variety of sites. In March, despite the hectic schedule with the 4th Al Ain Classical Music Festival tours, Hatta, Musah, and Wadi Khutwah were all toured. Wadi Aboul was added as a Thursday outing for the true enthusiasts. April saw us wandering about in Madbah, Wadi Tarabat and Khutwah again. The outing to Madbah involved a clean-up campaign, and members brought along plenty of shopping bags to fill with garbage. This site is very attractive with beautiful waterfalls and pools for swimming, but you can't swim in garbage - unless you're a crazy ENHGer.



*Jerry poking about for bottom garbage in one of the beautiful pools that flow through Madbah Wadi.*

## Map Corner

by Peter Hudson



*Map 3 Ortelius Map of Arabia. Circa 1580 "Turcici Imperii Descriptio"*

The famous Dutch family were commissioned to produce this map for the Turks. Shoreline accuracy is, by now, looking remarkably accurate however interior details are almost guesswork being based on rumour and myth. This map carries a huge sea monster in the Black Sea and a sea battle in the Med. Almost half the map is actually blank but cleverly waffled over with manuscript, fancy cartouche and text.

The map's main focus is The Turkish Empire, from The Austrian border, through Anatolia and Arabia. It is liberally smudged with mountains and cities whilst big rivers like the Nile are drawn in very simplistic and totally inaccurate form. The Jury still appears out on the whole question of Persia and lands east of the Caspian, however, it was early days and development would soon take place through force of arms, trade and exploration.

Following a peculiar and very short lived Turkish soire into the Indian Ocean by the Great Turkish General Pire Reus during which the Portuguese temporarily lost Muscat, the Portuguese constructed a series of impressive fortresses in an effort to better defend their assets. This secure military gambit was short lived. Bigger players were on the prowl and soon they would be ousted.

Pire Reus; this great general had his head removed on return to Istanbul from what had been a thoroughly successful escapade. A completely inaccurate rumor had preceded his return slanderously indicating total failure. Pire Reus had become too powerful and as a possible contender to the leadership the easiest thing to do was have him executed based on the spurious macheavelian lies of a "failed enterprise" which had in fact been a total success!

Portugal spawned some great explorers who pioneered and charted sea routes with help from Arab navigators to India and China and had their own cartography experts.

The Portuguese reputation however, was terrible. Religious bigots; they slaughtered almost anyone not of their faith and destroyed virtually to a man the great seaport of Sohar.

Their 150 year dominance slid to rout and they were harassed by the British, Persian and Omani Navies and even attacked off Goa. As one fortress after another fell ~ Bahrain, Hormus, then Muscat, by 1650 they were being pursued down the East African coast, their often barbaric rule ending on the fringes and supplanted by the new masters in the region; The Dutch, British and French.