



# Emirates Natural History Group Al Ain Chapter Newsletter December 2007



Your committee wishes you a very  
happy and safe Christmas  
and looks forward to seeing you in  
the New Year

## ENHG Al Ain Chapter Committee

### Annual General Meeting

27<sup>th</sup> November  
Intercontinental Hotel

Please see reports later in this  
newsletter

And Guest Speaker write up:

**Mark Beech**

Head of Division - Cultural Landscapes, Abu  
Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage  
(ADACH), Abu Dhabi.

**“My 10 Favourite Dig Sites  
or A Light Hearted Walk Through Time”**

### Your 2008 Committee:

**Chair:** Brien Holmes

**Vice Chair:** Brigitte Howarth

**Treasurer:** Christine Henry

**Secretary:** Marion Campey

**Membership:** Marion Campey

**Photography:** Bob Reimer

**Environment:** Michelle MacLean

**Newsletter:** Margaret Lambert

**Library:** Amer Abu Kuhail

**Flora:** Marion Campey and Martha Coetzee

**Fauna (Insects):** Brigitte Howarth

**Fauna (Birds):**

Visit the webpage at <http://www.enhg.org/index.htm>  
or contact us:

[enhg@yahoo.com](mailto:enhg@yahoo.com) (all Al Ain chapter  
members)

## Upcoming Events

### *Christmas Eve In the Desert*



Date to be advised!?!

In the spirit of the season, this event is opened  
up to the general public

Watch your email for details.

### 12/12 Clean Up UAE Day

On December 12, (a Wednesday this year) we will join thousands of volunteers across the UAE for the national clean up day organized by the Emirates Environment Group (EEG). The 12/12 event is one we have supported for several years. Our role has been to coordinate the distribution of t-shirts, caps and gloves to the students who participate. This year, we expect approximately 800 students to join the campaign here in Al Ain. We will return to the site we refer to as Al Masoudi, just beyond the ring road off the road from Jimi/La Brioche.

<b>Geology Workshop Planned for January</b>	<b>Photography Competition May 2007</b>
This will be based on field trips in our video collection as well as Ben Jordan's book and articles. The workshop will be followed by a geology fieldtrip.	Competition categories will be announced in January . . .and there will definitely be a category for your winning shot!!

## What we've been up to:

**School Trips**

1. 10<sup>th</sup> November, Amer led a school trip to Al Ain Oasis
2. National School did a trip to Jimi Oasis
3. the Al Ain HCT Women's Campus was out and about on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

Amer has posted his school trip photos which can be viewed at  
<http://someone1986.blogspot.com/2007/11/school-trips-alain-jimi-oasis.html>  
and this one for the Al Ain English Speaking School  
<http://someone1986.blogspot.com/2007/12/school-trips-hafeet-tombs-aaess.html>



## Sheik Mubarak Award



Brigitte receives the award



. . . and with her proud husband and son.

*Photos: Luke Howarth*

## Bish Brown Award



Roy & Liz Richards receiving their Bish Brown Award



*Photos Roy Richards*

**Bev Raasch and Chris Ellis,  
"1<sup>st</sup> Aid and Safety in the Bush"  
14<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

Dr Chris Ellis from the FMHS Department of Family Medicine concentrated in his talk on one of his pet topics – snakes (and other venomous creatures). He went through the major groups of venomous (and other) snakes which might be encountered in the UAE, making several points about the poisons and their management in each. The vipers inject a neurotoxin, which act distant from the bite, for instance causing paralysis of respiration, difficulty swallowing, and ultimately stopping the heart. Poisons of the vipers, on the other hand, are mainly cytotoxic, causing local tissue destruction. Haemotoxic venoms basically interfere with the body's clotting mechanism which may result in haemorrhage. Examples from his practice in South Africa were given, as well as advice on avoiding encounters with snakes and first aid in case of a bite.

Other examples of venomous beasts were mentioned – scorpions whose sting is painful but rare! life threatening, bees and other hymenoptera which cause many more deaths than snakes, mainly due to individual hypersensitivity leading to anaphylaxis. Mosquitoes, as vectors of parasites, are by far the most lethal of the beasts that sting or bite.

Chris also suggested that everyone carry in his or her wallet or purse a list of important phone numbers and a phone card. Assuming he or she carries a mobile phone, the charge and balance should be checked before going out with the card being available to recharge the phone if necessary. Important phone numbers include police (999), ambulance (998), fire (997), directory assistance (181), phone numbers of an Arabic speaking male and female friend or employee, taxis, insurance company (or other) vehicle rescue service, and ICE1, ICE2, etc. ICE means In Case of Emergency and are numbers which a rescuer could use to call those people you'd like to have summoned if you are unconscious or otherwise unable to do so; he suggests that these numbers should be in everyone's mobile phone.

*Jerry Buzzell*

**Bev Raasch offered advice on how to protect ourselves in the local climate.**

**Precautions in the heat (especially for children)**

**Avoid direct sun** between 10 am and 4 pm, remembering that sand, water and snow all intensify the sun's effect through reflection. Also avoid tanning beds.

**Reduce exposure** by covering up with a broad-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt, pants and sunglasses.

**Sunscreen** (broad-spectrum, high SPF) should be applied generously 15 minutes before exposure, and reapplied every two hours or more if swimming or sweating. Generous means ½ tsp to each arm, the face & neck, and 1 tsp each to chest, abdomen, back and legs.

**Check** skin with a dermatologist yearly: "Check your birthday suit on your birthday".

**Symptoms of heat illnesses**

**Heat exhaustion** may exhibit: cool moist pale skin, headache, heavy sweating, rapid, shallow breathing and weak pulse, maybe dizziness and/ or nausea, muscle cramps.

**Heat stroke** is life threatening, and may show: red, dry skin, lack of sweating, high body temperature, throbbing headache, rapid breathing and strong pulse, confusion, vomiting, possible loss of consciousness.

**Treatment**

**For heat exhaustion:** cool the body, rest them and loosen their clothing, re-hydrate (slowly: ½ glass every 15 minutes, excluding caffeine or alcohol).

**For heat stroke:** call emergency services, quickly cool the body (wet sheets, wrapped ice packs to wrists, ankles, armpits, neck, fanning the body), keep the person lying down.

*Patricia Valiant*

**For muscle sprains, Beverly outlined the **RICE** procedure:**

**R**..... Rest the injured part

**I**..... Apply Ice or a cold compress

**C**..... Compress the injury.

**E**..... Elevate the injured part

## Walk to Village 1 17<sup>th</sup> November , 2007

Nine people (six veterans and three neophytes) set off from the Buraimi Hotel to conquer the route to Village 1! All made it and returned safely!



Fig 2. Mountains, valley, gorges between Khutwa and Village 1

Village 1. A site in the Hajar Mountains north of Khutwa, discovered by Brigitte and Brien on a reconnaissance several years ago. We discussed renaming it Brigitteville or Medina Brigitte but Village 1 seems to have stuck.

After driving to downtown Old Khutwa, we donned packs and headed into the oasis, stopping for a chat and photos with the Baluchi workers farming market vegetables there, before leaving the oasis and walking alongside the falaj to Sultan's Oasis. We stopped along the way to look over putative copper smelting sites, the falaj, and the graveyard on the hillside.

At Sultan's Oasis, we left settled territory and passed into the interior, following donkey trails and ridges, rising from about 650m to 730m, meanwhile surrounded by the mountains, plain, and deep gorges characterizing this area (Fig 1).

We don't know when Village 1 was inhabited or anything about its occupants. Today (Fig 2) it is a series of stone walls, some above ground and some below ground. The latter may have been pens for animals; the former residences. There is an old falaj system and terraces built up of stone walls filled with dry dusty soil, typical of the abandoned terraces we often see in the mountains. There was no sign of an oasis but several dead trunks of palm trees. There is water at Village 1 and signs of someone recently camping there; we can only speculate on his identity.

I can always be tempted to a trip to Village 1, because there is a potential prize winning photograph awaiting me at the falaj. It's still only a *potential* prize; the actual photo has escaped me until now. Has it finally been taken? We'll just have to wait and see!



Fig 3. Panorama view of Village 1. Possible animal pens are in the foreground and (with the eye of faith) the line of the falaj entering on the left can just be made out.



Fig 1. ENHG group heading back from Village 1 to Sultan's Oasis. One final Kodak moment!

We sat around talking, taking pictures, and exploring for the better part of an hour before heading back. We took a different route this time – more donkey trailish and less ridge-bound (Fig. 3) – arriving back at Sultan's Oasis near sundown. We spent some time around Khutwa weir and the pools upstream before heading back down the wadi and falaj to the village, back to the vehicles, and home.

Thanks to Brien for leading and to all the participants for good moments and fellowship.

Jerry Buzzell

**AGM**  
**27th November**  
**Intercontinental Hotel**

**Treasurers Report**

A healthy bank balance was reported with a bank balance of approximately Dhm 23,000 and Dhm 972 cash at hand.

*Presented by Marion Campey on behalf of Christina Henry*

**Co-Chairs Report**

As co-chairs Brigitte and Jerry highlighted the year's activities as follows:

**Activities:**

- 12/12
- Xmas eve in the desert
- Music Festival
- Inter Emirates weekend
- RAK trip
- Nizwa trip
- School trips
- Joint venture with Abu Dhabi
- Triple Crescent
- Photo competition
- Newsletter
- Website
- Curation
- Iftar dinner
- Numerous field trips including summer activities organized and run by Brien and Amer.

**People who mean a lot to us:**

- Passing of
  - Jim Crawford, Past Principal of AAESS and supporter of AAENHG
  - Alan Kay, linguist at UAEU with a passion for the Arabic language
- Visits from old friends
  - Laurence & Josette Garey
  - Becky Turner
  - Debbie Handley
- Pat & Rebecca Keogh (Antarctica)
- Jane Anderson
- Khudooma, now in Preston, UK

**Milestones:**

- Bish Brown awards (Roy and Liz Richardson)
- Sheik Mubarak Award (Brigitte Howarth)
- Association with Sorbonne Knowledge Society
- Involving Omani authorities in the pre-history of areas we know well

**Challenges:**

- Being non-profit, reliance on volunteers
- Buraimi border
- Ongoing discussions with AAESS re workroom as they renovate
- Wadi Tarabat fence and key

**Special thanks to:**

- George Diab, Intercontinental Hotel Food & Beverage Manager for his hospitality and friendship
- All volunteers for helping with activities, leading field trips etc.

*Jerry Buzzell and Brigitte Howarth*

**AGM Guest Speaker Mark Beech**

**My 10 Favourite Dig Sites  
or A Light Hearted Walk Through Time with**

Dr. Mark Beech, Head of Division - Cultural Landscapes,  
Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH), Abu Dhabi.

On Tuesday evening November 22, 2007 Dr. Mark Beech provided the Al Ain Emirates Natural History Group with an insight into "what interests an archeologist" with his presentation of 10 vignettes which were chosen as reflections of his personal interests spanning the years from 1994 to the present.

Mark quickly moved us through the Jebel Barakah dig representing finds related to the Paleolithic to middle paleolithic times (150,00 to 35,00 years ago) to the finds of the Banouniyah formation – stone tools – Levallois flakes which reflected expansion of peoples out of Africa.

From there he moved us along in time to Sir Baniyas Island to a site of the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. Here he discussed the finds from a Nestorian Church and Monastery along with some pre-Islamic period pottery shards. In addition he discussed other finds on Dalma island of Urbaid pottery reflective of the neolithic period of 52-4500 BC. These pottery pieces (finds) provide us with a background to the movements of people both up and down the gulf coast, Ubaid pottery representing the Mesopotamian period of approximately 7000

years ago.

Mark invited the audience to participate in a "guessing game" of a piece of "Something". This turned out to be a date stone from Dalma island which had been radiocarbon dated (bad pun) to about 7000 -6500BC. This finding and site was coastal and again indicative of the early movement of peoples along the gulf coast.

From there Mark took the group to Ras al Khaima to Kush tell at Shimal, a 2<sup>nd</sup> century burial ground and to Unar Shimal an Umn an Nar burial site where a rare find of the skeleton of a woman and her dog were found intact in the grave site.

The next areas for discussion were at the other end of the country at Ruwais where late Meiocene fossils were the focus of hunt prior to land being developed and in the process the uncovering of a giant elephant tusk occurred providing a peek at the landscape of 6-8 million years ago.

A trip to Marawah island (home base for summering Rumaitis) provided information about the earliest known inhabitants of Abu Dhabi. Here houses, flints, trihedral arrowheads and pearl shell buttons from over 7000 years ago hint at the early pearl diving and fishing society.

At Marawah other pieces of Ubaid pottery – a burial pot – were discovered and again provided evidence of early society and, in fact, was the earliest known pot found in South-eastern Arabia. In discussing the dating techniques, sharing with us his knowledge of bones, tools, fossils, and other bits and pieces. Dr Beech was able to present to the group an interesting and factual story of life in the Gulf as seen through the eyes and brain of the archeologist.

*Linda Buzzell*

### **The first of the Triple Crescents – Jebel Qatar**

It was a small group of 6 that kicked off the first of the Ibrahim Zakhoo Triple Crescent hikes. The hike was to begin with a scramble up the dreaded 'Chimney' and the thought of this had been looming in my mind for the week before the hike. Fortunately, this chimney proved to have slightly larger footholes than a regular one and we were soon at the top. The summit appears a short step and a hop away while the plateau stretches out endlessly. Needless to say, Bill had decided that this year's hike would be to the end of the plateau.

The view from the plateau over Buraimi and the UAE is however stunning. As Bill strode over to the edge to peer down, a couple of us gingerly picked our way to about a good two metres from the edge, quickly declared it spectacular and hastily retreated. Moving away from the edge(!) we continued up and down a variety of wadis as we made our way to the end of the plateau.



The far end provides a not often seen view of the mountain ridges which extend to Wadi Agram- which we all duly admired except for one of our party who had plucked from his bag a book which looked to weigh more than my entire backpack and had settled himself down to read.

Lunch was taken under the shade of an acacia tree amid the company of more flies than I had previously seen in my lifetime. The return trip was at a leisurely pace and it gave us the opportunity to truly appreciate this spectacular mountain.

Thanks Bill, one down two to go!

*Text: Jodie Healy Photo: Amer Abu Kuhail*

### **George Archibald Co-founder of the International Crane Foundation "Saving West Asian Cranes" 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2007**

George was an excellent speaker who has been active in crane conservation around the world, collaborating and helping to train fellow scientists from many countries.

Watch or a synopsis of his talk in the January newsletter.

## Kahil to Wadi Sharm

A great time was had by all on the Kahil to Wadi Sharm trip on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. As we drove from Burami to Kahil we passed several goat herds and palm tree groves.

Driving through the sand was great fun for everyone especially those who had not expected to do the driving...**well done Barb Reimer**.

We stopped first at a natural Ghaf tree forest.

**The Ghaf tree (*Prosopis cineraria*)** is an indigenous tree species that dots the landscapes of the flat sandy plains of Al Ain's deserts. A true desert survivor, this tree's very long roots reach water from sub-terranean sources beyond the grasp of other plants and is salt tolerant to 4,500 ppm. The ghaf tree has held an important value to the inhabitants of the UAE. Historically its leaves were used instead of rice before this grain became available; and its elongated pods provide fodder for animals which in turn supply milk, butter, cheese and meat. The ghaf trees also provides shade, wood for cooking, timber for shelters and food in the form of edible leaves and fruit. The ghaf woodlands also support large populations of insects that either feed on the trees or use them as shelter or habitat. The insects provide food for reptiles, birds and small mammals, on which, in turn, wild cats and desert foxes prey.

Several **long horned beetles** were spotted in the forest area. The female of the species is distinguished by a thinner thigh than the male.

We enjoyed the climb up the sand dune and especially the run back down. As we watched from the top a camel and its handler passed through the desert sands below.



On one of our stops Brigitte pointed out some of the features of the **Sodom's Apple**, a common large bush which is a milkweed that secretes a milky juice or latex whenever a leaf or stem is broken. All parts are poisonous so it is not eaten by the animals. Insects are attracted to it and you can often spot small orange and yellow striped fruit flies around the plant.

*Sheila Macdonald*

## Wadi Madbah 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2007

It was a small group of 6 that showed up for the Saturday outing this week. The promise of cooler morning and many UAEU (university) staff and instructors having to work kept the numbers down.

We loaded up for the short drive from the Burami hotel to the trail head. Just at the turn off to the Wadi then proceeded down a very drivable 4x4 road. It was obvious that the road had been recently graded so it was easy going but you definitely needed a four wheel drive vehicle since the newly graded road turned into a gravel Wadi with sharp turns near the end.

We were in for some entertainment upon our arrival at the trail head since a small campsite (2 tents and many bags of groceries) left on the ground were being ransacked by a heard of goats. The most entertaining was the black goat chewing down on a roll of toilet paper. The roll of TP was on the ground and he was eating it a bit at a time.

I guess a young couple (we never did see them only heard their music) had left their camp with bags on the ground and had gone down into the Wadi and were swimming..... everyone from North America and other counties knows there are no bears on the prowl in the UAE but watch out for the goats!



I guess it was going to be a “drip-dry” evening for the campers if the goat eating the toilet paper continued. At one point Brien wondered what a small roll of toilet paper in the stomach of a goat might look like and what possible food value could come from the TP for the goat. No one had an answer.

We went down into the Wadi....very beautiful area with small pools and plants and insects all around. We lost Bob Reimer since the elusive dragonfly he had been chasing was present so he stayed behind to try to take pictures of his prize. We continued up the Wadi walking around some pools with loads of little fish and water striders, dragonflies, and some larva I did not recognize (we needed Brigitte to ID the bugs). There were very steep banks on both sides of the Wadi and loads of evidence of the wonders of erosion and how water has shaped the area. On we went up the valley with a promise of caves at the end. We never got to the caves as we ran out of time.....after two hours of hard walking.....it was flat but the boulders make the walking a challenge. I for one would love to return one day to a beautiful Wadi and find the caves.

*Sheila Macdonald*

## Bits 'n' Pieces

### Oman Insurance Advice

When I reinsured my car recently 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 100dhs. At my insurance company it costs 300dhs extra to have year round cover for the whole of Oman for a 4WD.

### Comet Holmes

One of the interesting comets in our solar system nowadays is Comet Holmes, which is named after the amateur English astronomer Edwin Holmes who noticed it in 1892. Its more shining this year, and it's visible to the naked eye if the weather is clear, which is interesting and amazing to see. You can read about it in these sites:

<http://www.dubaiastromy.com/>  
<http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap071105.html>

The city of Preston is cloudy this evening I hope to have a chance to look at this event also.

*Khudooma*

### Bird News:

Recent sighting include:

- flamingoes at the Compost Plant Pools and at the Neima Ponds
- white fronted geese
- lesser white fronted geese
- lesser yellow legs

### Links

.... here's the one for the Emirates Environment Group newsletter:

[December\\_EEG Newsletter.pdf](#)

## Geology with Ben Jordan (formerly UAEU)

Columnar-joints, which are cracks that form the hexagonal-shaped columns in this image, form in much the same way as mudcracks. However, instead of shrinking due to water loss as clay does to form mudcracks, they form as lava or magma shrinks due to cooling. The molten rock cools most rapidly on its outer surface and this is where the cracks first form. The cooling cracks then expand inward toward the center of the cooling liquid, perpendicular to the cooling surface. The columns thus formed can be any size from large (such as the ones in this image) to small only a few centimeters across. They can also form in other rocks that have been heated by magma and then subsequently cooled. I have seen columnar-jointed coal that formed in a coal vein that had been cut by a basaltic dike, as well as in sandstone.



Columnar-joints in Basalt Lava, Wadi Al Jizzi, Oman

## Plant of the month

CUCURBITACEAE Gourd Family

*Citrullus colocynthis*

Arabic name : shary, handhal, murrah, serew, hanzal, surii, hedge

English name : desert squash, bitter gourd, colocynth

Look out for this prostrate perennial with yellow flowers in bloom from November to April. It can be found in the desert around Al Ain and is common in the eastern area of the Emirates. The fruit, when young, are green with interrupted yellow stripes and completely yellow when mature. The leaves are deeply lobed and rough on both surfaces. Marijke Jongbloed, in *The Comprehensive Guide to the Wild Flowers of the United Arab Emirates*, records many traditional uses including the following: as a laxative, purgative, poultice for bites and stings, insecticide, and to darken hair colour.

Marion Campey



Photo taken at Dhuh Valley

## Clean Up Preston

Khudooma has sent this story from his new home in Preston, UK.

Hello every one,

I want to share my story which I hope it will be useful in your next clean up campaign in Al Ain.

I participated with the student union here for few hours clean up work in a student living area in Preston so I got nice information and experience about their method of work, which could be helpful to know. Our clean up work was in two sections, one group was collect waste from the street and the second to educate people in the area about the recycling process and how the household recycling is done. The waste from homes are collected in three types boxes, Red lidded box, for plastic and cardboard, yellow lidded box for paper, cans, and textiles, green bin for non recyclable waste such as food waste, Brown bin, for garden wastes such as leaves, dead plants, weeds, cut flowers etc. The city council collect the waste twice per month, due to the big area of the city, each collection is for one type of waste. We also educated people there about why they need to recycle for reasons such as to save the environment, the running out of landfill space, the expense of sending waste to landfill, the new laws which regulate the limit of waste which can be send to the landfill, in last, recycling will reduce the waste mountains and safe guard the natural resources.

In the street we got some instructions which included: registration in the morning before we left for the clean up work, so they know who participate in the work, you need to wear a good warm, water proof clothes,

wear a sensible shoes or boots, no heels, or flimsy pumps, let the team leader to know if you have any medical problem so they will keep an eye on you in case some thing happen, there will be a First Aid volunteer who can help in case of injuries, if you have any accident you need to make sure to tell the team leader who will need it to complete an accident/incident recording form, there will be hot food when we come back, you need to take a shower and clean up your self when you go home.

General safety rules include always wear personal protective equipment such as yellow color jacket, keep the weight of the waste sacks in low level do not make it over full, always use paths /walkways where practicable and avoid unsuitable walking routes. Be aware of any hazards items such as sharps, needles, and follow the correct procedure of disposal, be aware of your surrounding and look for any changes in ground levels such as kerbs, or uneven flags, a void any conflict with the public member when either collecting the waste or educating them. In the street always face the oncoming traffic and take care when passing the street or the parked vehicles. Always use the washing facilities before eating. Always report accidents/near misses no matter how trivial. Do not attempt to tackle large bins fires but contact the fire brigade. Avoid animal such as dogs in the street which could attack you.

I was walking with two British Student in the street collecting what we can and put it in a black color plastic bags, the Preston council give us gloves and waste collecting stick, and reflecting jacket, due to the cold weather we finished early but we achieved some of our work target. Some other student were visiting house in the street to educate people and give them a printed paper regarding the recycling and if they need any extra boxes, the Preston council education and waste management officers also were present with us all time.

I think you will have a similar instructions and advices in your coming clean up campaign in Al Ain. A good thing is to make this process a joint effort between the student and their organizing committee and the municipality which can give advices and back up support and print out materials. There is a big difference between the recycling strategy between UAE and UK but I think also UAE has started to put serious effort and plans for society education and managing the waste as today and future consideration.

#### References

- 1- Refuse and recycling calendar 07/08, thinking inside the box, Preston city council, Neighbourhood services. [www.preston.gov.uk](http://www.preston.gov.uk).
- 2- Big street clean, December 1st, 2007, University of Central Lancashire Student Union instructions for the students



#### Dates for your diary

**December 14th – 2<sup>nd</sup>** Triple Crescent hike – to the eastern summit of Swiss Mountain  
**December?** - Wadi weekend  
**December 24** – Xmas Eve in the Desert  
**December 28** – Triple Crescent Hike 3  
**January** – Geology Workshop and Fieldtrip  
**January or February** - RAK trip or Nizwa trip  
**February 28 – March 1** - Inter Emirates weekend (organized by Abu Dhabi chapter)  
**March** – Music Festival  
**May 27** - Photography competition