



# The Emirates Natural History Group in Al Ain Newsletter

## Inside This Issue:

FINDING THE FOUNDER	1
PARASITIC PLEASURE	1
PAST/UPCOMING EVENTS	1
THE LIBRARY	2
CARBON CONUNDRUM (Cont.)	3
WHO'S WHO	4
FRAUKE HEARD-BEY	4
PHOTO FRENZY	5
QATTARA ARTS CENTRE	5
AL AIN PALACE MUSEUM	5
MEETING LOCATION	6
LOCATION DETAILS	6
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	6

## Finding the Founder (By Brigitte Howarth)



*Continued on Page 2*

## Parasitic Pleasure (By Susanne Hofstra)

Members might be interested in a neat plant that's cropping up around the Palm Sports Resort area this time of year. It has been seen in previous years but only when it was quite dried out. One popped up right by the rugby club tennis courts so it was finally possible to identify it. It took a while because it's not from the lily family as first thought, but a parasitic plant!

*Continued on Page 4*

## Past/Upcoming Events:

### Walk: Airport Pools

7 March "Camel Roundabout" 8:00 am

### General Meeting: Four Decades

11 March Islamic Institute 7:30 pm

### General Meeting: Farewell Arabia

25 March Islamic Institute 7:30 pm

### Ramtha to Khodra Hike

28 March Details will be emailed

### General Meeting

8 April Islamic Institute 7:30 pm

### General Meeting

22 April Islamic Institute 7:30 pm

*From Page 1: Finding the Founder*

Brigitte relates that she was never more taken aback when preparing a presentation on the ENHG's history, when Keith Taylor suggested that she should contact John Stewart-Smith, the founder chair of the group. She had always thought that Bish Brown was the man responsible for the group. Sure enough he was, he conceptualized the group, but he asked John to be the founding chair.

Brigitte felt that if just 35 odd years after its formation we don't know the ENHG history that well, then there might never be another chance of getting this right. So this article is a tribute to John, keen bird watcher that he was (and still is in Pembrokeshire, Wales). He in fact gave the ENHG's very first two lectures, a two-part slide-show giving detailed identification of all of the waders to be found in Abu Dhabi.

John's specialty was Air Weapons and Air Combat. He joined the Abu Dhabi Defence Force as a fighter pilot and instructor. He arrived in Abu Dhabi in 1969 with a commission in the recently formed Abu Dhabi Defense Force. He then worked in AD in the early days of the country, patrolling the coast and training pilots. He took many valuable photos of the huge flocks of Socotra Cormorants then inhabiting AD's coastal islands during his coastal reconnaissance flights.

He served at the Sharjah Air Base for about a year but his main base was at Abu Dhabi Air Base and at the General Headquarters at Abu Dhabi where he was tasked with negotiating all purchases of weapons and aircraft for the growing Defense Force. His immediate boss at GHQ was Sheikh Faisal Al Khassimi. He once asked the Sheikh what his spending limits were. He was told, "You're in this office because you are trusted. Zayed wants to get rid of corruption. Spend what you need."

John has a son in the British Air Force who is serving as an advisor here in the UAE, and in that way maintains family ties here. When Brigitte told him that we were celebrating the history of the ENHG at the IEW in Al Ain last year, he said he very much wished he could join us for that, and asked her to pass on his regards to all the members (which was done in Focus, but not at the IEW).

John sent his complete photographic UAE archive, including several thousand large format black and white negatives and boxes of large prints, to the UAE for safe deposit there. Sadly they all disappeared soon after arrival and have not been recovered. At least three of the pictures did feature in a book published commercially in the UAE. Most of these pictures were taken by reconnaissance cameras mounted in a jet fighter he flew all over the Emirates. They were of brilliant quality of the Emirates in the early 1970s. These pictures would be invaluable historically and he would be delighted if they could be recovered and made available to the people of the Emirates, as was the intention. ✕

## The Library

The library is housed in our ENHG room in the Islamic Institute. Members and non-members can access the catalog on-line under [www.librarything.com/catalog/enhg](http://www.librarything.com/catalog/enhg).

The good news is that Joseph Mansour managed to transport his book cart from the Danat location to the Islamic Institute at the Al Ain University. That means that books are on sale again.

Joseph kindly exhibits his wares at each ENHG meeting and visiting speakers are often given a book as a gift. So there is more than one way in which you can get your hands on a good book! We look forward to listening to your lecture/presentation. Do speak with Brigitte Howarth if you have a topic to present. ✕

## Carbon Conundrum Continued (by Digby Scorgie)

As explained in the February issue, if global warming is to be kept below two degrees Celsius, then a carbon cap is required. A likely choice for the size of such a cap is 1 600 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide.

What next comes to mind is how this allowance of 1 600 gigatonnes compares with the amount emitted as a result of human use of fossil fuel.

Fossil-fuel producers have 90% accurate estimates of the total that can be extracted from existing coal mines, oil fields, and gas fields. These are their stated proven reserves. If all this fossil fuel is extracted, it will be burnt. If all of it is burnt, about 2 800 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide will be released into the atmosphere.

And one can see, 2 800 gigatonnes is a great deal more than 1 600 gigatonnes. If other possible (not proven) reserves and sources of fossil fuels are included, the carbon cap would be exceeded many times over.

The international community is therefore faced with two unavoidable decisions: Firstly, a limit needs to be placed on the amount of fossil fuel that may be extracted from existing coal mines, oil fields, and gas fields. If it cannot all be burnt for fear of exceeding two degrees of global warming, it is pointless extracting it all.

Secondly, the establishment of new coal mines and exploration for new oil and gas fields should be stopped. If existing reserves of fossil fuel may not be fully exploited, it is then pointless searching for more. These approaches obviously have serious consequences to the livelihood of many people.

Next to consider is the permitted quota of fossil fuel that may be extracted. This might be, for example, only 50% of proven reserves -- as stated BEFORE any allocation of quotas! How should fossil-fuel producers set their annual production rates so as to accommodate their allocated quotas? One way would be for them to maintain full production until their quotas have been filled -- and then cease production completely. But this would obviously cause a sudden and considerable disruption of the global economy.

A better way would be to reduce production by a certain percentage every year for the duration of an agreed period. At the end of the period the total quota of fossil fuel would have been extracted; global production of fossil fuel would then cease or, circumstances permitting, continue indefinitely at a very low rate, hopefully being replaced by other energy sources.

The period allowed for fossil-fuel production would have to be subject to international agreement, as would the annual rate of decrease.

Needless to say, no fossil-fuel producer can be expected to voluntarily preside over the demise of their own industry in this way.

Only a powerful regulatory authority would be able to enforce compliance. How such an authority might be instituted will be discussed in the next issue.

*To be continued in April.....*

## Parasitic Pleasure

*From Page 1*

The plant's host is a shrub, and according to some sources it's becoming rare, because it is used in traditional Chinese medicine.

It's from the Cistanche genus and according to Alshindagh online, *C. Tubulosa* is the local species, also called a "Desert Hyacinth".



The plant is near the road just inside the fence of the shooting club, next to the rugby club tennis courts. Pass the driveway for the shooting club. Take the right for the rugby club but stop there by the tennis court and then look just inside the shooting club green wire fence, where it turns the corner. The plant is pretty impressive in size, over a foot high, and growing all by itself so it is fairly easy to spot. A second specimen in Al Ain is shown on the next page. ✕

## Frauke Heard-Bey

There were close to forty people at the Institute on 11 March to listen to Dr. Frauke's riveting presentation as regards four decades of change in Abu Dhabi and the UAE. She helped to establish the Centre for Documentation and Research in Abu Dhabi after arriving in 1967.

The talk's several photographs illustrated the AD changes, it is amazing to see how the Corniche (for example) changed with time and to comprehend what challenges had to be overcome. ✕

## Who's Who (Leslie Butler)

Here is the third article in a series that features some of our ENHG members; Leslie Butler is the ENHG Vice Chairperson.



Leslie has been in Al Ain since 1998 after having left Qatar.

More of a rambler than a natural historian, he nonetheless enjoys checking out the bugs, birds, rocks and green stuff that make walks more interesting. His family is back in the UK, and his significant other half is in Oman, so he has plenty of time to do useful things (and he has promised to do these useful things).

He teaches English in Al Ain, a career he's been pursuing for ages. He sings a bit with the local choir, and also enjoys folk music and amateur dramatics, though these interests are less well catered for locally.

He used to go kayaking and these days sometimes cycles to work, being distinctive for insisting on not wearing Lycra. ✕

## Photo Frenzy



*Desert Hyacinth (Credit: Susanne Hofstra)*



*Al Ain Palace Museum Oasis – Looking Up*



*Dresden Philharmonic Children's Choir*

### Al Ain Palace Museum

The Palace Museum has an oasis behind it with spectacular palm trees, as evidenced by the middle photograph on the left.

Future newsletters will address the former home of the late UAE founder, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

Built in 1910, it became a museum in 1998, well worth a visit. ✕

### Qattara Arts Centre

The Dresden Philharmonic Children's Choir presented a "Concert underneath the Stars" on Saturday 22 February at 6 pm. The audience was enchanted by a selection of International Folksongs and pieces by the German Composers Bach, Schubert and Brahms.

The choir was joined by local choirs including the Al Ain English Speaking School Choir, for a grand finale.

Songs such as *Labt das Hertz* and *Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär*, were presented along with the Al Ain Local Song *Allah yadar Zayed*.

The choir can be seen on the left at the Qattara Arts Centre in Al Ain; the Centre is newly opened and is well worth a visit.

The event was supported by the German Embassy and the House of Arts. ✕

## Meeting Location

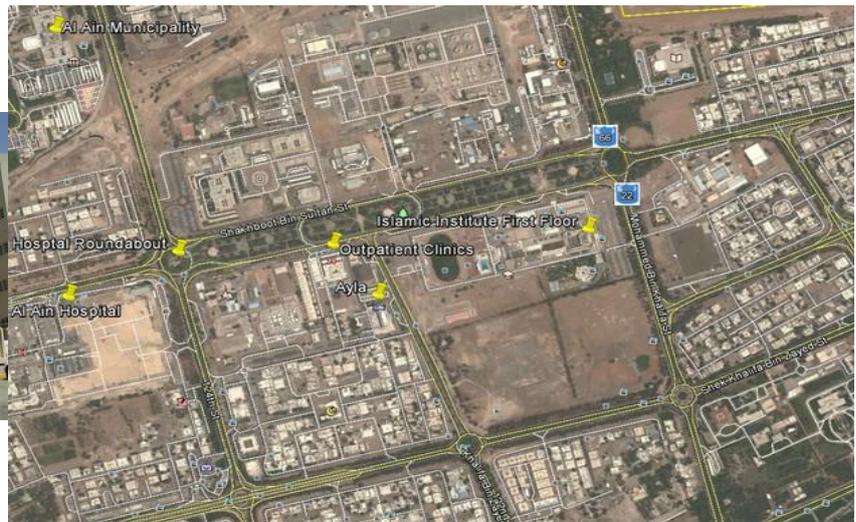
The Al Ain Chapter of the ENHG meets at the Emirates University Islamic Institute.

General meetings as well as committee meetings take place on announced Tuesdays, all members and invited friends are welcome to attend either meeting.

## Location Details (Courtesy of Google Earth)



Islamic Institute



Islamic Institute GPS location : 24 13 44.80 N 055 44 59.50 E

[www.enhg.org](http://www.enhg.org)

### Committee Members:

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