

focus



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Emirates Natural History Group

Patron: H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan

EDITORIAL

One of the genuinely useful roles that the ENHG can play is to record species distributions and other interesting natural history observations in the UAE. Indeed the ENHG in many ways was the pioneering organisation in building up species distribution records, locating archaeological sites and providing a forum for distributing such information in the old Bulletins and now in our journal *Tribulus*. In the past there were designated 'recorders' for birds, reptiles, mammals, plants etc, and group members would send in their records to these individuals. While this role has in part been taken over by the newer official bodies such as the EAD (Environment Agency) and the Abu Dhabi Authority for Cultural Heritage (ADACH), there is still a vital role for ENHG members in recording information, which can be channelled to the official bodies. Indeed, we are looking into setting up an easy to use database system that will allow the ENHG chapters to share information and store the considerable numbers of records that we have accumulated over the years in a more useful manner.

Obviously none of us can be experts in all aspects of natural history, and many members may feel that they don't have the expertise to really contribute to this task. However, with the universality of digital cameras, GPS and access to mapping such as Google Earth, **all of us** can now record species and interesting observations with ease (even if you are not sure what you are seeing). The question is how to easily share the information ... and this is where Flickr.com may come in...

Etisalat has once again unblocked Flickr.com. This is a photo sharing and organizing website which is part of Yahoo inc. It is free and very easy to sign up for and use. Just go to <http://www.flickr.com>. With almost everyone having digital cameras these days it is a lot of fun and an inspiring way to share photos and get tips for improving your photography. Now, having given Flickr a plug, where does the ENHG and record sharing come in? By photographing natural history .. whether animals, flowers, fossils, interesting views and sites or whatever else, we can share these pictures with group members, and if you want more information, such as getting that plant or lizard identified, this is the easy way to do it. Just ask a question in the description of the photo and sit back and wait for the comments! We have a considerable pool of expertise within the three chapters of the ENHG covering plants, insects, birds, reptiles, mammals, fossils, archaeology and so on.

A natural history photo which can be identified constitutes an important record, especially if it is accompanied by distribution data and the date. Digital cameras automatically include the time and date in the EXIF data, which is included when a photo is uploaded to Flickr. The geographical data can be incorporated in a number of ways. Of course you can add a line in the Flickr description to say "3 km along the road east of Al Dhaid" or some such. Or you can add in the GPS waypoint (preferably in decimal degrees and the WGS84

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FRONT COVER PICTURE

*Photograph : Dhow Racing on the Corniche
Photographer: A. Vogler*

datum), or you can use the 'map' function in Flickr which allows you to zoom in on satellite maps and click the spot. This is then available as part of the Flickr record. Finally, how do you ensure that ENHG members can see your photos? To do this I have set up a private 'Group' within Flickr called 'Emirates Natural History Group'. As this is a private group only ENHG members or invited experts will be able to see the photos. I have added over a hundred of my photos to get things started. To join the group, please email me and I will send you an invitation.

Hope to see you on Flickr and get those natural history photos rolling in!

Drew Gardner

About Bob Reimer

As a weather and ice observer in the late 70s, I enjoyed wildlife and flower photography in Canada's Arctic. However, family and work pressures limited my time behind a camera until we arrived in UAE in 2002.



Rider Crop

Just prior to coming to UAE, I was a partner in a custom software development company which unfortunately was negatively affected by the changes in the business environment after 9/11.

Since coming to UAE, I have worked in the IT Services area of UAE University's bridge program and completed a MSc in Information Technology from the University of Liverpool.

Working with Dr. Mike Gillett and Dr. Brigitte Howarth in the Al Ain Chapter broadened my photographic interests from flora to insects, and from photography to a deeper study of entomology.



Bob Reimer in the field

My photos have been used in *The Emirates: A Natural History* and *Jebel Hafit: A Natural History*. The arthropod chapter in the upcoming revision of *Abu Dhabi: A Desert Ecology* will also be illustrated with my photos.

I also enjoy cartography and have compiled a collection of satellite imagery and digitized maps of UAE and Oman for use by the Al Ain Chapter.

Bob Reimer

Everest Base Camp

Trek of a life time

To: All Abu Dhabi Natural History Group Members.

Target: Everest Base Camp, Nepal - April 2007

Mike Lorrigan from the Dubai Natural History Group is planning a trip that he has always wanted to do for the past 20 years or so and is looking for 8-12 willing participants from the Natural History Groups in the Emirates (or outside the groups if not enough members wish to participate), to join him.

The trek itinerary is as follows:

Starting from the town of Lukla, the party will trek and camp all the way up to Everest Base Camp, accompanied by porters. The majority of the trip will be through Sagarmatha National Park. After a short stay at Everest Base

Camp, the party will return by trek back to Lukla. The current proposed dates are departing around the 19th April for a round trip of approximately 22-23 day's. But there is flexibility depending on who is interested.

The whole itinerary is as follows:

- * Flight from UAE to Kathmandu
- * 2 nights in Kathmandu in Soaltee Crowne Plaza
- * Flight to Lukla
- * One night in hotel in Lukla
- * Trek to Base Camp - camping all the way.

- All participants will have their own tents, or be sharing
- Each trekker will have a porter to carry their main pack and tent

- In addition, there will be porters for carrying cooking equipment and food

- Trekkers will walk each day with a small day pack

- * One or Two days stay at Everest Base Camp
- * Trek back to Lukla
- * Overnight in Lukla
- * Fly to Kathmandu
- * Two nights in Kathmandu in Soaltee Crowne Plaza

(To include flight with Buddha Air to see summit of Everest on one morning) + Meal at Rum Doodle Restaurant, Kathmandu, famous for all Everest parties dining and a days sightseeing in Kathmandu.

- * Return Flight to UAE

Total trip from start to finish allow approximately maximum 23 days

N.B. Very warm clothing and top quality sleeping bag needed for night time.

Overall though, the weather at this time of year is regarded as pleasant during the day, with excellent visibility. According to the organizers, crampons will not be needed for boots, right up to Base Camp. You also do not have to be super fit for this trek, but a good level of fitness is required.

A dedicated fitness program starting two months prior to the trip is highly recommended for anyone interested.

Actual trekking will be between 14 and 16 days.

The trip will include a flight out from Kathmandu, with Buddha Air, to see the summit of Everest. Depart from the hotel at 5.00 AM. Back in the hotel by 8.30 a.m. having flown out to see the summit! And many other peaks

An amazing experience. Mike has done this part!

If interested, please e-mail Mike on oxymoron@emirates.net.ae. The trip is open to non-Natural History Group members if not enough members register.

Costs should be available within the next two weeks.

Mike Lorrigan

Excursions

Advance notice of day-trip (No. 1) planned for November 24th (Flora & Fauna)

At the November 7th meeting of the ENHG there will be a sign-up sheet for a day-trip to the Shanayl area to investigate the area between the "dew forest" (*Haloxylon persicum*) and the "arta" (*Calligonum comosum*). Does either species tolerate the other? What is the vegetation of the cross-over zone? etc. If you are interested in this trip, please bring a packed lunch.

Departure from behind Popeyes at 8.30am.

Return to AD at about 4.00pm

Advance notice of day-trip (No. 2) planned for December 22nd (Flora & Archaeology)

The sign-up sheet for this trip will be available on November 7th. We shall drive to Masfut, via Al Madam, to see the *Tecomella* trees in bloom. These are one of the showiest displays in the country. Not to be missed.

We shall have lunch in the Buhays area and visit an archaeological site.

8.00 am departure, returning at about 6.00 pm.

Allestree Fisher

ITEMS ON SALE AT THE ENHG STALL

- The Emirates – A Natural History, 300 Dhs
The first complete referencing guide to the wildlife of the UAE. 580 colour photos.
- Marine Atlas of Abu Dhabi, 280 dhs
- Jebel Hafit – A Natural History, 100Dhs.
- Abu Dhabi Bird checklist 10Dhs.
(Free if you spend over 50Dhs!)
- Emirates Bird Report, 50Dhs.
- Birdlife in Oman, 120Dhs.
Beautiful photographs by the Eriksens.
- Bird watching Guide to Oman, 95Dhs
(Copies signed by Eriksens & Sargeants).
- Breeding Birds of UAE, 60Dhs.
Author: Simon Aspinall
- Seashells, 30Dhs.
A useful little waterproof guide to the region's shells.
- Wild about Reptiles, 60Dhs.
- Wild about Mammals, 40Dhs.
Marijcke Jongbloed, mammals of the UAE.
- Comprehensive Guide to the Flora of the UAE, 100 Dhs
- Plant Checklist, 25Dhs.
Marijcke Jongbloed - Know your local wild plants.
- Pests – Find out what's in and around your home
- Children's books: Yaw the Wildcat; Hayat the Leopard
- 2007 bird calendar. Beautiful pictures from the Eriksons. A must for yourself ... and a perfect gift
- ENHG T-shirts/golf (polo) shirts/caps.
25Dhs/35Dhs/10Dhs.
Buy any 2 – get 10Dhs off.

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Lectures

**7th November,
7.30pm:**
'Human impact on the
coastline'

Graham Evans

**21st November,
7.30 pm:**
'There's gold in them
there dunes-or-oil and
gas in Abu Dhabi'

Peter Roberts

**5th December,
7.30 pm:**
'Soil survey in the UAE'

Bill Porter

Field Trips

17/18 November

Overnight (desert)
Camping trip,
destination to be
confirmed

24th November

Day-trip to Shanayl
area (Flora & Fauna)

22nd December

Day-trip to Masfut and
Buhays area
(Flora & Archaeology)

Corporate Sponsors of the ENHG - 2006

The following companies are supporting the ENHG's activities in the region. We hope you as ENHG members will in turn support these companies whenever you can.

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