

focus



Abu Dhabi, June 2012

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Emirates Natural History Group

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

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the bumper June 2012 issue of *Focus*, featuring a long write-up of last month's camping trip to Delma Island and an article (courtesy of *The Gazelle*) by our final speaker of the season, Dr Reza Khan, on UAE's little-known stick insects—which he touched on in his June 5th talk on the wide range of wildlife found in the Emirate of Dubai. NB: We have also included a link in the News Media panel on p. 9 to an article on Dr Khan's timely call for an international wildlife reserve for the conservation of the Arabian Oryx. A glance at the full calendar of events in the p. 10 Field Trip panel will show that outgoing Excursion Secretary Andrew Bean has managed to keep the momentum going wonderfully to the very end of this season—his sixth, and last, in that enthusiastically performed role.

At the ENHG-AD's Annual General Meeting for 2011, held on June 5th, Outgoing Treasurer Ron Priestley reported that the Group still has a healthy balance, and Chairman Andrew Bean noted the number of Research & Conservation projects sponsored and the special edition of *Tribulus* published during the past year. At the close of the AGM, our Chairman presented a certificate of Lifetime Membership to Nick Bengé, a member of our Group for nearly three decades, in recognition of his services to the Group doing the annual financial audit for most of that time and also of his instrumental role in introducing to the ENHG our Patron H.E. Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak. Our heartfelt thanks go out to you, Nick!



Nick Bengé with his ENHG Lifetime Membership Cert.

Photo: Sally Bengé

At the June 5th meeting, the Committee voted to award the following Research & Conservation grants in 2012: 1) AED 7,167 to Professors Peter Magee and Hans-Peter Uerpmann for analysis of an archaeological artefact (a camel tooth) vital to the understanding of the early domestication of dromedaries in SE Arabia and 2) AED 10,050 to David Stanton of FPALY for continued monitoring of Arabian Leopards and other large mammals in the Hawf Protected Area in Yemen.

In Committee news, we welcome several new members to vital positions: Maggie Case as Treasurer, Stephanie Baldwin as Lecture Coordinator, and Ian Townson and Denis Cheng to join yours truly as Field Trip Coordinators. We give a warm vote of thanks to Kiya Murman,

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FRONT COVER PICTURE

Photograph: Osprey with dinner, Abu Dhabi

Photographer: Paul Hooper

This month's contributors

Sally Bengé, Denis Cheng, Ronnie Gallagher, Paul Hooper, Reza Khan, Simon Strickland, Keith Taylor, Silvija Ulmanis

ENHG Membership Information

Annual membership in the Abu Dhabi chapter of the ENHG is 100 Dhs – for both individual and family membership. See Membership Sec. or Asst. at the next meeting for a membership form.

Members are entitled to join the group on all day trips and overnight camping trips. Each member is also entitled to a copy of the ENHG's normally annual peer-reviewed journal, *Tribulus*. Volume 19 is now available at meetings. Work on Volume 20 is currently under way.

who has done a wonderful job as Lecture Coordinator over the past few months. We wish her well in her relocation to Melbourne, Australia.

In members' news, we say farewell to former Committee member Molly McQuarrie, who is heading home to Canada. Molly's profound interest in natural history specimens of all sorts -- alive and dead -- has enlivened and informed many an ENHG field trip for over a decade. Also heading home this summer – to the UK – are long-time ENHG members Nick Poultney and Marjon Post. We wish these fellow travellers all the best back on their home turf.

We wish all our members and associates good adventures and visits during the summer months, and we invite everyone to join us to kick off the 2012-2013 season on Sept. 4th with a presentation by Hans Laabs on the new Shams 1 Concentrated Solar Power Plant.

Keith Taylor

ENHG Field Trip to Dalma Island

Upon arriving at the ferry on 4th May for the cruise out to Dalma Island, I was pleasantly surprised to see how up-to-date and well maintained it appeared to be and that it was not overcrowded with a thronging mass of “day trippers.” In fact, it was nice having the luxury of taking individual vehicles. I must admit that I did feel somewhat “sinful” in indulging in such a “non-ecologically correct” luxury BUT I wasn’t the only one doing so as all three of us scuba divers (Andrew Bean, Bernhard Sabotta, and yours truly) did so with the justification that we each had all of our dive gear (including two air cylinders each) as well as our camping gear to contend with. And even after the ferry was fully loaded with all of our, and the other passengers’, vehicles, there was still plenty of space left over to accommodate another half dozen or so.



Ferry to Dalma Island

Ronnie Gallagher

The 90-minute trip over to the island was another very pleasant surprise. The sea was absolutely dead calm and flat, thus ensuring a very pleasant and “incident free” passage. Landing precisely 90 minutes later, we all proceeded in convoy to the social center of the island which was a modest sized shopping mall in the center of town. There was also a row of shops lining the main street leading away from the main entrance of the mall – the kind of thing you would expect to see in any other bustling town in Abu Dhabi – and this added to the familiar ambience, showing that this was not some insignificant village in the middle of an island adrift in the vastness of the ocean. Not knowing beforehand what amenities – if any – existed on the island, I was gratified to see this “oasis of modern convenience,” i.e., it was nice knowing that we wouldn’t have to worry about getting fresh, even fully prepared, food and water – and even a cup of cappuccino or nice cool ice cream cone! But upon closer inspection of all of the structures, my feeling of pleasant surprise soon gave way to uneasy apprehension as everything appeared to be slightly dilapidated and shabby. It appeared as though there were big plans for the development of Dalma at one time, but, they had since been forgotten and Dalma was now becoming something of a backwater... This feeling was further enhanced by seeing the excellent condition of the roads running throughout the island and especially around it and the airport that services regularly scheduled flights to the mainland, which are free (!) to all residents of the island. Again, both of these things would seem to be signs that Dalma had been earmarked for “great things” and yet there was only one hotel and no other tourist support facilities... how curious...

We met up with our guide for the rest of that first day, Park Ranger Fathi – a transplanted Egyptian who has

been living on the island for more than 20 years. After listing the day’s itinerary, he led us to our first attraction, which was the site of the three traditional mosques and original government buildings dating back to the early 20th century. The first building we entered was the island’s museum, which is the restored house of a well-to-do pearl merchant. It is an outstanding example of the methods and materials used to construct a typical traditional official building on Dalma Island. It was built in 1931 of “beach stone” and coral and covered over with gypsum plaster. I was especially impressed by the intricacy, craftsmanship and sheer amount of labor that went into the construction of the roofs and ceilings. They were comprised of no less than five alternating layers of weaved thatching, plaster and wood rafters. It is an interesting fact that the latter were made from the trunks of mangrove trees and, though there is an abundance growing in the local marshes all over Abu Dhabi, the trunks of these local specimens are too short (only about a meter long), so longer and straighter mangrove trunks had to be imported from elsewhere (was it from India or Africa??). The length of these trunks, then, also dictated the breadth of all the old buildings, each being some multiple of the two meter long trunks (usually 2X or four meters). The former pearl merchant’s house also bore testimony to how significant pearl diving, along with fishing and fresh water production, was to Dalma’s economy, BO (before oil).



Dalma Island Museum

Photo: Ian Townson

We then moved on to the most complex of the three traditional mosques. One of the major features of these three is the absence of minarets, which, as it turns out, is in keeping with the true architectural tradition of the Gulf. The famous and seemingly ubiquitous structure that almost everyone from the West immediately envisions at the mention of the word “mosque” is actually an innovation devised by the Ottoman Turks and was not an integral part of the older mosques in the Gulf region such as these three on Dalma Island.



Inside one of the traditional mosques

Photo: Ian Townson

Another prominent feature of all three mosques was a “well room” which was an attached chamber with outside entrances which enclosed one or two wells. This demonstrated the significance of fresh drinking water to the traditional island community. Ranger Fathi provided us with the insight that at one time during the winter season it would rain every day for an entire month. And this is what filled the island’s aquifers with a plentiful supply of fresh water that could be used to grow local fruits and vegetables and turn a nice profit through its sale to mainland locals and to international seafarers. In fact, this is how Dalma Island got its name. Ranger Fathi explained it as being the shortening of the Arabic phrase “dal-ah-ma” meaning “to bring up water”, while another source claims that “dal-ma” is the Arabic word for “water bucket.” Alas, nowadays, as we all know, rainfall is not nearly as abundant, and the springs and wells of Dalma are not the fountainheads that they were in its heyday, BO, as an international port-of-call.



Well room in mosque, with goatskin bucket

Photo: Denis Cheng

Adjacent to all three mosques is a modest sized room used to store dates and extract their juice. An interesting aside to this adoption of dates into the diet of all Gulf societies is that prior to this, the people of the Gulf were known to have few dental problems and retained most of their natural teeth for most of their lives. But after the date became a significant part of the local diet, the local population began to suffer significant dental problems including cavities and eventual loss of teeth.

When our tours here were completed, Ranger Fathi led us out to the water’s edge only 100 meters away, for a quick “look-see.” What Ranger Fathi wanted to point out to us was the unique nature of the rocks that were strewn all about the rocky shoreline. In fact, we all noticed immediately how strikingly unusual they all were in form and color. Many of them literally glittered and sparkled with a bluish gray luster while others exhibited a pronounced dark shade of “rusty red.” Ranger Fathi pointed out that these rocks were, in fact, from the interior of the island, and a close examination of them revealed a great deal about the island’s geology. With

the help of some supplemental information provided by the geologist in our group, Bob Bunch, who does indeed earn his keep in that capacity for Exxon Mobile here in Abu Dhabi, we learned that most of the rock was metamorphosed sedimentary rock, thus confirming the fact that Dalma Island was once just a part of the seabed, which was raised up by an intrusion of super-hot liquefied salt from below, which folded the sedimentary rock layers into metamorphic rock formations. The most predominant mineral in the rocks – hematite or iron ore – produced both the blue-gray color of the glittering “specks and sprinkles” as well as the rusty red (iron in its oxidized or “rusted” state) of some of the other rocks. Bob’s wife Katherine, noticing how the red hematite was staining her hands, ventured the theory that this could be the main ingredient in henna.

Ranger Fathi then led us to the beach that would be our campsite for that night. It was about ten km outside of town along the “ring road.” When we first came upon it, we were literally dazzled by the sight we beheld! We were gazing upon a truly “sparkling beach!” The myriad tiny flakes of hematite scattered all about the sands produced a truly extraordinary and even “magical” sight! Ranger Fathi then left us to re-join his family for the noontime prayer call, lunch and “siesta”, and we were left to wander about on our own for the next three hours, which included our own late lunch at 2:00 p.m.



Lesser Crested Terns on Dalma Island

Photo: Ronnie Gallagher

Half of our group, including yours truly riding along with Bernhard Sabotta, decided to take a driving tour of the island along the well paved roads. I took note of the numerous housing projects that we passed and drove through during this tour and wondered if there were really enough inhabitants on the island (latest estimates are 8,000 – 10,000) to occupy all of them! And, indeed, we could see that many villas in one particular tract were unoccupied – or abandoned? – again testifying to grand plans that were now unfulfilled...

This driving tour did not last long – a mere 30 minutes due to the fact that the island is not very big – only 33 sq. km – and there simply is not that much to see. And so we soon found ourselves back at the central shopping mall with nothing to do since all of the shops were closed for the midday “siesta.” And so we loitered in the air conditioned lobby of the mall, as it was the only refuge from the heat outside, and waited for our lunch to commence at 2:00 p.m. The lunch at the one Lebanese restaurant in the mall was a very nice sherry grilled in olive oil and garlic. After lunch Ranger Fathi took us on a walking tour of the numerous conical rock formations which dot the lunar landscape of the interior of the island. Many of the cones appear to some observers to be volcanic, i.e., cinder cones resulting from relatively small volcanic eruptions, but most sources assert that these cones are actually the result of salt intrusions thrusting up from below layers of sedimentary rock

which used to lie below the sea. We also came upon several craters that perplexed many members of our group as they appeared to be man-made rather than natural formations. Neither Ranger Fathi nor Bob Bunch could provide an explanation for them and so they remain one of the unsolved mysteries of this trip.

At the end of this tour, we bid farewell to Ranger Fathi and were again left to fend for ourselves. Most of the group headed back to “the sparkling beach” to set up camp while Bernhard Sabotta and I decided to explore a bit more as we had both been curious about the long (approximately 10km) artificial sand spit that ran due south of the island and what was designated as a large patch of green on a map in Bernhard’s possession. The long sand spit which actually sported some very inviting white sand beaches proved to be further evidence of plans to develop tourist facilities which had been abandoned since several structures were encountered, including an entire compound that appeared to be incompletely constructed. The “green patch” turned out to be even more engrossing. After driving along several of the narrow dirt roads that crisscrossed the patch we came to the agreement that the individually fenced plots comprised the agricultural industry of the island and that each plot was owned and operated by one of the families inhabiting the island. But it also seemed evident that many of these plots were lying fallow, as the irrigation systems hadn’t even been installed in some of them, most probably due to the scarcity of fresh water in recent years... On that glum note Bernhard and I decided it was finally time to head back to “the sparkling beach” to set up our camps before night fell. Along the way, however, we stopped at the shopping mall for a refreshingly cool treat at the local ice cream parlor. Confirmation of the fact that it had indeed been a very hot day came when one of the locals walked in and, upon exchanging greetings, declared, “Oh, it is very hot today!” as he bought his second ice cold milkshake... Having timed it just right, Bernhard and I arrived back at camp just as the sun was setting and the cool evening breeze was picking up. Camping out on the beach that night under the scant canopy of the scrawny palms turned out to be a very pleasant experience. After all of us “happy campers” had settled into our camp set-ups, we partook of, and shared, the provisions we had brought along with us. My thanks to Ronnie Gallagher and Molly McQuarrie for sharing their Chinese take-out with me. We then sat around a cheery campfire provided entirely by driftwood collected by Milos and Alena Ruzicka. This and the calm and peaceful sea sighing softly on the sparkling beach all night long, and a full moon glowing softly above in a clear indigo sky, made this entire trip worthwhile.

The first item on the next day’s itinerary was snorkeling and scuba diving in the beautiful crystal blue and green waters surrounding the island, and it was this particular activity for which I was especially “keyed up” to do on this trip. How unfortunate that this turned out to be such a disaster! It had been emphasised in the preannouncements for this trip that Maj. Ali Al Suweidi, Director of the Emirates Marine Environmental Group, had promised all of us who would be snorkeling or scuba diving that we would behold some of the most breathtakingly beautiful coral we had ever seen! The

catch, however, was that the diving spots where this coral could be accessed could only be reached by boat. But despite our high hopes to the contrary, nary a boat – or rather, a pilot of a boat – could be found on this particular morning, and we had to resort to “stumbling upon” (none of us knew anything about the coastline of this island) some locations to attempt a shore entry to view who-knew-what. Shore entries can be very difficult, unpleasant and downright dangerous (as they are in numerous locations along the coast of California), and the spots we ended up “stumbling upon” proved to be all three! The first was too shallow (never getting deeper than 7 metres!) and the coral was colourless and lifeless with few other forms of life either “planted in” the coral or swimming about. The second spot was quite a bit more scenic ABOVE the water but proved to be pure HELL, at least for yours truly, as a point of entry to what was beneath it. One had to endure an interminably long walk (over 100m) over very jagged coral (painfully felt even through the thick rubber soles of diving booties by a “tenderfoot” like me) that was also studded with sea urchins, so that if you were unfortunate enough to fall over, you would most likely receive a very nasty puncture wound!



Pencil Urchin, *Prionocidaris baculosa* (believed to be a first sighting of this species in UAE waters!)

Photo: Ronnie Gallagher

That treacherous walk over that killer coral in a full wet suit and bearing the full weight of all of my dive gear (more than 20 kg worth) left me exhausted... And now I also found myself too light (I was not wearing enough weights) to submerge without some considerable effort. On top of this, I also felt myself struggling against a monster current that was running in the opposite direction of our original dive plan – this was definitely NOT a good development! It was at this point that I realized that “prudence was indeed the better part of valour” and decided to abort my dive and leave Andrew and Bernhard to struggle on against that current without me. And so I headed back to shore where I had to endure once again that hellish walk back over the “minefield” of jagged coral studded with sea urchins. When I finally reached the shelter and relative comfort of my Honda CRV, I would have kissed it out of pure joy and relief had the surface of it not been so damn hot! I was soon further gratified to learn that my decision to abort was not only prudent but possibly life-saving as well. I was now the only one left on the beach of this “port to hell” as everyone else had fled the jagged coral and, now, the blistering sun. I kept scanning the area where Andrew and Bernhard were supposed to be exiting the water according to our original dive plan, but, after more than half an hour, there was still no sign of

either of them. As I began to become a bit concerned, I was startled by the sudden arrival of a car – from the completely opposite direction – out of which sprang Andrew and Bernhard! The current had proven to be so strong that it had swept them both more than a kilometer back down the coast to the location of our first dive! It was pure happenstance that Ian and Jane Townson were there so that Ian could, then, give them both a lift back to their vehicles here at the second location! That was an experience I was glad I had missed!

Now that we were all accounted for, we all headed back to the ferry for our peaceful (especially in relation to the calamitous events of that morning) cruise back to the mainland and the end to our eventful trip to Dalma Island. We can truly say that we all learned so much – both easy and pleasant, i.e., the natural and social history and current demographics and economy of the island – and hard and painful, i.e., DO NOT attempt to make any shore entries for snorkeling or scuba diving! What there is to see beneath the surface of the water is definitely not worth the considerable pain and effort you would have to expend to get to it...

Denis Cheng

Mussafah Flamingo Colony Boat Trip



Flamingoes taking flight



Crow harassing an osprey

On the way to the Mussafah flamingo colony on 12 May, Captain Maarten took us to an island just west of AD island where we observed a crow persistently pushing an osprey from tree to tree until the much larger bird finally quit the island. He told us that a successful crow eradication program had removed all the crows from these islands, but this was one that had recently moved back in. Crows had become a major pest as they had stripped the very exposed eggs from all of the terns' nests on these islands, preventing the terns from breeding. These nests, no more than scooped hollows in the sand under bits of salt bush just above the high tide mark, are also so exposed to heat that the mother has to wet her feathers in the sea to cool the eggs down. It was a real lesson in the fragility & resilience of life here.



Checking out tern's nest No. 2



Tern's nest No. 1

Keith Taylor

All photographs by Silvija Ulmanis

12 May 2012 Bird List

- Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
- Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*
- Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*
- Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*
- Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
- Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*
- Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*
- Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
- Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*
- Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*
- Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*
- Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
- Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*
- Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
- Red-wattled Plover *Hoplopterus indicus*
- Little Stint *Calidris minuta*
- Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
- Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*
- Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
- Curlew *Numenius arquata*
- Redshank *Tringa tetanus*
- Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*
- Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
- Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

- Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*
- Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*
- White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*
- Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*
- Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi*
- Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
- Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*
- Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*
- Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
- White-cheeked Bul bul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*
- House Crow *Corvus splendens*
- House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Possible sightings:

- Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
- Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*
- Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*
- Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*

Simon Strickland

Date with a Stick Insect

Back in February 17, 1995 we had a DNHG Inter-Emirate meet-cum-field trip with counterparts from Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. The field trip headed for Wadi Sarfana, some 37 km SE of the Mahdah town of Wilayat of Mahdah (Oman), along the Sohar-Buraimi Road.

On March 7 this year I tried to visit the same spot. However, just 7 km before the Wadi Sarfana there is a huge structure housing the new immigration check post. To cross this border post we needed visa. I had no clue of this as in 1995 there was no such check post. The immigration person was very polite and kind in allowing me to cross over the border just to make an about turn!

Frustrated by my own ignorance I decided to go back to our old haunt—the area of the Old Abool [also spelt as UBOUL] fort. The falaj system and nearly dying wadi systems are always rewarding as these have never completely dried up in spite of the fact that there has been little or no rain during the past decade or so.

While my companions were unpacking our field gear at the veranda of the oldest mosque in the old Abool settlement I took a round of the abandoned houses looking for Fan-footed Gecko and Muscat Mouse-tailed Bat. As it was little a chilly, these animals have possibly moved out and found new shelters elsewhere. I did see broken shells of lizard eggs still solidly glued to the mud wall of the old human dwellings and an old nest of a crag martin.

As the others were taking more time to unpack, I took a round of the mosque and its perimeter, turning over old rags, pieces of carpentry materials and stones. Barring a few scorpions and a lizard there was nothing much to record.

Suddenly my attention was drawn to a small stick-like object tucked on the rough but otherwise spotlessly cleaned boundary wall of the mosque veranda. On a closer look I found it was a stick insect! I found it hard to believe that such a creature existed anywhere in the Abool area, which I had been visiting since 1991.

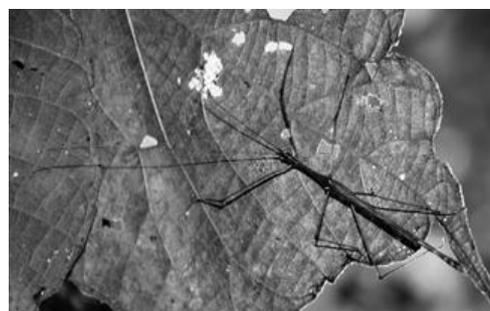


Stick Insect near Abool Fort



Stick insect found near Abool Fort

On my return to Dubai and after an internet search I found that there are two records of this kind of stick insect in the area – one from Al Faqa, now called Al Foa, agricultural fields in Al Ain and the other from the Wilayat of Mahdah, but the reports did not identify the species. Maybe there are scientific publications on these that did not show up during my search.



Stick insect found in Bangladesh

So far as the UAE is concerned, Peter Hellyer and Simon Aspinal (2005) mentioned that 'Stick insects (Phasmida) have only recently been found in the UAE. Previously, small nymphs were known from the Mahdah area of Oman, but unidentified adult insects have now been found in grassy areas of sand desert near Al Faqah, Abu Dhabi' (*The Emirates – a Natural History: Insects and arthropods*, pages 168-195. This paper is available at http://www.uaeinteract.com/uaeint_misc/teanh/016inse.pdf). I could not confirm its species identity but found record of three species of such stick insects reported from Yemen. These are *Burria brachyxipha*, *B. cana* or *Ramulus dicranurus*.

Dr. Reza Khan

Abstract: Wildlife Around Dubai

The following abstract provides a good summary of Dr. Reza Khan's very informative & well-illustrated June 5th talk. See Speaker details in May2012 Focus. –Ed

Dubai, being the second largest emirate of the seven emirates within the UAE, is a home for many species of indigenous, migratory and exotic animals and has the lion's share of the biodiversity that exists in the country.

In the absence of a proper zoological survey organisation for the fauna or a national depository of voucher specimens, most animals recorded here are based on field observations made by this and many other biologists and nature lovers in this and other emirates. Possibly the most appreciable body of work in

the field of biodiversity has been done by the EAD in Abu Dhabi.

My own observation suggests that we have at least 35 land mammals of the 55 we have in the UAE, about 350 bird species out of national total of 450 when 53 species of about 60 species present in the country. There are just 2 species of amphibians and we have no frog nor any freshwater or land terrapins and turtles. Land invertebrates are visibly dominated by insects that are too by beetles, moths, butterflies, ants and grasshoppers. In the absence of a proper and long term survey of these vast array of back-bone less animals I guess it could be anywhere around 500.

I am just presenting here an overview of some of the animals that I have encountered during the past two decades or so. These are shown under the following four categories of habitats: Desert, Coastal areas, Hills and Man-made areas. Of these, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish Coastal areas from man-made areas as these often overlap.

Desert animals are dominated by Arabian oryx [extinct but reintroduced], Reem or Sand Gazelle, Arabian hare, Jerboa, Gerbil, Ruppell's Fox; sand grouse, Houbara [possibly extinct in Dubai], hoopoe lark, black-crowned sparrow lark, courser; sand skink, sand lizard, sand boa, sand viper, etc., among the vertebrates. Scarab Beetle, Sand-swimming Beetle, Desert Runner Ant, Opossum weevil, etc., represent the invertebrates.

Hills have both species of toads, Blue-tailed and Jayakar's Agama, several geckos, skins, wadi racer, carpet and false horned vipers, sand partridge, Lichtenstein's sandgrouse, white-spectacled bulbul, a few warblers, wheatears; fruit bat, mouse-tailed and other smaller bats, caracal, Blanford's fox, white-tailed mongoose, possibly spiny mouse, extinct Tahr and leopard, etc., when several species of dragonflies and damselflies, diving beetles, water scorpion, water strider, backswimmer, whirligig beetle, bush brown butterfly, ground mantis, etc., live in hilly terrain where we have the only natural flow of freshwater.

Coastal areas and man-made habitats have more or less similar species, barring most gulls, terns, smaller waders, and many migratory and introduced terrestrial birds. These are also the areas where many species of birds which were earlier considered as migrants have now started breeding in the country. Garden Beetle, Ants, bees and houseflies, mosquitoes, butterflies, moths, centipedes, scorpions, spiders, earthworms, etc., invertebrates; Ocellated Skink, House Gecko, Blind Snakes, Diadem and Awal-headed snakes, sparrows, doves and pigeons, roller, Pallid Swift, sunbird, etc.; house mouse, rats, red fox, insect bat, etc. prevail in these environments.

Although in the past Dubai, and the UAE in general, has lost certain species from its environs, government at federal and emirates levels have become environmentally proactive and have been coming up with pragmatic programmes to re-establish some of the extinct species, while charting sustainable programmes for sustainable management of the wild fauna and flora.

Dr. Reza Khan

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In the News Media

Gulf News, May 13: [Kalba wildlife reserve prepares ground for eco-tourism project](#)

The National, May 15: [Khor Kalba, a village rebuilt from sands of time](#)

The National, May 20: [Conservationists nervous about development plan for mangrove forest](#)

In the News Media, Continued

Gulf News, May 13: [UAE releases 1,292 houbara bustards](#)

Gulf News, May 15: [Hundreds of UAE residents watch as turtles released into sea](#)

Gulf News, May 15: [Hatta, Al Aweer to help increase protected land proportion to 10%](#)

Gulf News, May 16: [Awareness drive against illegally shipped animals](#)

Khaleej Times, May 16: [Falconry attracting young generation, says expert](#)

The National, May 23: [Oryx 'must be saved by setting up wildlife reserve'](#)

ITEMS ON SALE

AT THE ENHG BOOK STALL

All prices are in dirhams.

- The Emirates – A Natural History, 350
The first complete referencing guide to the wildlife of the UAE. 580 colour photos
- Jebel Hafit – A Natural History, 100
An attractive, encyclopaedic presentation of the natural resources of this local landmark. (Free copies available for schools donations.)
- Wild about Mammals, 40
- Breeding Birds of the United Arab Emirates, 100
- Sandgrouse checklist of the birds of the United Arab Emirates, 25
- Emirates Bird Report, 20
- Birdwatching guide to Oman, 2nd edition, 100
Guide to bird watching spots in Oman.
- Common Birds in Oman, 2nd ed, 120
- Butterflies of Saudi Arabia & its neighbours, 90
- UAE in Focus, 100
- Natural History of Oman, 50
- Field Guide to the Geology of Oman, 75
- Abu Dhabi 8 Million Years ago, 15
- Arabian Wildlife Encyclopedia, 120
- Sulphur, Camels and Gunpowder, 100
- Native Plants of Oman, 80
- Little O in Oman, 25
- Marine Environment, Resource of the UAE, 140
- Flowering Plants of the UAE, 60
- Socotra Calendar – 2012, 35

Book Stall Coordinator: [Simon Strickland: 056-601-3931](#)

Websites of General Interest

Emirates Natural History Group – Al Ain (Archives: newsletters of 3 NHGs, *Tribulus*): <http://www.enhg.org>

Dubai Natural History Group: <http://dnhg.org>

Qatar Natural History Group: <http://www.qnhg.org>

Historical Association of Oman: <http://www.hao.org.om/>

Tommy Pedersen's UAE Birding / UAE Nature Forum:
<http://www.uaebirding.com>

Hanne & Jens Eriksen's website: www.BirdsOman.com

Emirates Soc. of Geoscience: <http://www.esg-uae.org>

Emirates Marine Environmental Group: www.emeg.ae

Emirates Diving Association:
<http://www.emiratesdiving.com/index.php>

Emirates Wildlife Society – World Wildlife Fund:
http://wwf.panda.org/who_we_are/wwf_offices/united_arab_emirates/

Environment Agency Abu Dhabi: <http://www.ead.ae/en>

UAE Environmental Atlas (Sign up for notice of release):
<http://www.environmentalatlas.ae/>

Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority
<http://www.adach.ae/en/>

UAE archaeology website: <http://www.adias-uae.com>

Noukhada Adventure Co.: <http://noukhada.ae>

NYUAD Events Calendar:
<http://nyuad.nyu.edu/news.events/events.ad.html>

Khalifa University Events Calendar:
<http://www.kustar.ac.ae/campus/dss/schedules/default.aspx>

Dubai Astronomy Group:
<http://www.dubaiastronomy.com/>

Sharjah Museums: <http://www.sharjahmuseums.ae>

Wildlife Middle East News: <http://www.wmenews.com>

Arabian Wildlife:
<http://www.arabianwildlife.com/main.htm>

Zoology in the Middle East (Peer-reviewed ISI Journal):
<http://www.kasperek-verlag.de/ZME-allgem.htm>

Sharkwatch Arabia: <http://www.sharkwatcharabia.com>

Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen: <http://www.yemenileopard.org>

Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund:
<http://www.mbzspeciesconservation.org/>

EDGE: Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered: <http://www.edgeofexistence.org>

Protected Planet: IUCN & UNEP-WCMC Database:
<http://www.protectedplanet.net>

Wikispecies: <http://species.wikimedia.org/wiki>

Encyclopedia of Life: <http://eol.org/>

Midas Fly page: <http://eol.org/pages/713241/overview>

ARKive Images of Life on Earth: <http://www.arkive.org>

Sand Atlas: <http://sandatlas.org>

NHBS Environment Bookstore: <http://www.nhbs.com/>

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Required: Additional Field Trip Coordinators to serve on a team of 4 or 5, planning and leading 2-3 field trips each during the coming season. Can you do this? Assistance will gladly be provided by the Committee.

Required: Additional Book Stall Assistant to help with book sales at ENHG meetings.

Lectures

Venue: HCT / Abu Dhabi Men's College

Press CTRL+click [here](#) to view map/directions.

5th June
Wildlife Around Dubai:
An Overview of
Terrestrial Animals
Dr Reza Khan

Social Event

19th June 7:00 PM
Season closing dinner:
the Noodle House res-
taurant, Al Wahda Mall

Field Trips

10th May
EMEG's Third Marine
Turtle Release
Host: EMEG

25th/26th May
Boat trip/camping trip
to Bahrani Island
(instead of postponed
Ser Bu Nair trip)
Andrew Bean

8th June
World Environment
Day event
Host: EMEG

[Check email for details
of upcoming trips.]

23rd June
Noukhada Mangrove
Kayaking Tour (7am)
Andrew Bean

29th June
Turtle release at
Madinat Jumeirah
Beach
Host: DTRP

3rd July
Noukhada Full Moon
Kayaking Tour 6.30pm,
Andrew Bean

ENHG-AD Research & Conservation Fund Grant Application Information

For background on this fund, see [Dec 2009 Focus](#), p5.
For research & grant application guidelines, click [here](#).
For grant application form, click [here](#).
(Yahoo log-in may be required to open 2 above links.)
For further enquiries, contact ENHG Chairman Andrew Bean at rabean@eim.ae.

ENHG Equipment for Members' Use

The following ENHG equipment is available for members' use during field trips or on request:

- Birding Telescope
- GPS unit – GARMIN GPSMAP 60CSx
- First-Aid Kit
- Sky Scout astronomical object locator/identifier
- Celestron NexStar telescope (on field trips only)
- Two satellite phones, taken on camping trips.

Phone numbers: No. 1: 008821644400956

No. 2: 008821644400965

Enquiries: Andrew Bean, rexabean@emirates.net.ae

Marine Life Rescue Contact Info.

In Abu Dhabi:

EAD Hotline for reporting environmental emergencies including pollution and injured wildlife: 8009990. Email: envirocomplaint@ead.ae

EAD Emergency response manager: Mr. Abdul Rahman. Mob: 0506674171 (contactable 24 hours/day)

EAD contact for sea turtles, dugongs and dolphins: Dr. Himansu Das, Biodiversity Management Sector. Tel: 26934654; Mob: 0504465125; Email: hsdas@ead.ae

In Dubai:

Emirates Marine Environment Group (EMEG) (Tel: 043630581/Fax:043630460; Email: info@emeg.ae)

Dubai Municipality: Main number: 800900. Marine Environment & Sanctuaries Unit (Tel: +9714 606 6818, Fax +9714 703 3532), Email: marabdulla@dm.gov.ae.

Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Centre at the Burj al Arab Aquarium. Tel: 043017198. 24-hour email contact, Attn. Mr Warren Baverstock, Manager of Operations, BAA Aquarium: warren.baverstock@jumeirah.com
To post Facebook message triggering an after-hours SMS alert: www.facebook.com/turtle.rehabilitation

Newsletter Details

Newsletter contributions to:
newsletter@chirri2000.com

Members' Items for sale

Please send small ads to:
newsletter@chirri2000.com

Postal Address

ENHG c/o Environment Agency -
Abu Dhabi, PO Box 45553, Abu Dhabi

Yahoo Groups website

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/AUHENHG>
(Click Join button to sign up for ENHG info.)