

# focus



Abu Dhabi, June 2013  
Vol 37 (6)



Emirates Natural History Group

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

## EDITORIAL

At the close of this season, the ENHG Committee voted to award two R&C grants for archaeological research in the UAE. The first, to Prof Adrian Parker for AED 8,358, will fund Optical Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) analysis of three lake sediments from the Mleiha region, helping enable a detailed understanding of climate and landscape change from 5000 years ago until the present in southeast Arabia. The second, to Dr Hannah Russ, for AED 6,600, will fund analysis and interpretation of fish remains from the sites Akab & Uaq-2 in Umm Al Quwain, enabling a fuller understanding of subsistence strategies at these sites during the Neolithic. We look forward to talks and articles about this valuable research within the next year.

In this issue on p. 7 are several links to articles related to Dr. Laurie Marker's inspiring talk to us & others on her cheetah conservation work at the start of June (See *May 2013 Focus speaker info.*). The website of the Cheetah Conservation Fund & the related Bushblok site, both well worth visiting, are at the top of our expanded Websites of General Interest panel on p. 6 – along with a link to an online conservation planning document by AGEDI, shared by new ENHG Committee member Clive Swan.

This season, the ENHG was invited to deeper collaboration with other environmental groups including AGEDI's Blue Carbon Initiative & EAD's AD Survey Baseline – to be followed up on in outings next season. And on June 5<sup>th</sup>, World Environment Day, volunteers represented the ENHG at Etihad's annual event (see below) after which Andrew & I joined ENHG-AI Ain Chair Dr Brigitte Howarth at the EAD-organised Sustainable Schools Awards—a nod to some of the UAE's future leaders.

In Committee news, we wish to give a heartfelt thanks to Chairman & Excursion Secretary Emeritus Dr Andrew Bean for his sustained, enthusiastic service to the Committee over many years. Though he will now be spending more time back home 'down under', we are fortunate that he will remain an occasional presence on our Committee on his continuing business trips to the UAE. Our warm thanks also go out to Rex Sartain and Gordon Higgs, each of whom happily stepped up and very competently filled vacancies during the past season – as Treasurer and Book Stall Coordinator respectively. Gordon is leaving us now for Ras al Khaimah, and we'll miss him, but hope to catch up with him at the next IEW, to be hosted by Abu Dhabi in 2014.

In members' news, we say farewell to outgoing ENHG Auditor and Life member Nick Bengé and his wife Sally, a former Committee member. After living in Abu Dhabi for thirty years, they are now re-settling back in the UK. We thank them for their many services to our Group over the years, and we know they will stay in touch. We give our best wishes to others who are leaving as well.

Finally, we're happy to report that the first two lectures of next season are already confirmed, with presentations by Munir El Kadi on two archaeological sites in Syria (Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>) and by Dr John Burt to talk on the natural history of the Arabian Gulf (Sept 17<sup>th</sup>) – See p 8 listings.

Have a great summer; see you in September!

**Keith Taylor**

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### FRONT COVER PICTURE

Photograph: Male Purple Sunbird (non-breeding) on Aloe Vera  
Photographer: May Yoke Taylor

## This month's contributors

Peter Hellyer, Brigitte Howarth, Keith Taylor, May Yoke Taylor

## ENHG Membership Information

Annual membership in the Abu Dhabi chapter of the ENHG is 100 Dhs per individual and now 150 Dhs per family membership. See Membership Sec. or Asst. at the next meeting for a membership form. Membership renewals for 2013 are due in January.

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 20 is available at ENHG meetings.

## Etihad World Environment Day Event



On June 5 World Environment Day Etihad held an eco-friendly exhibition at their Head Office with roughly 10 different exhibitors from around the UAE. ENHG answered questions about the UAE's environment and hopefully interested some new members from amongst Etihad staff. The exhibition had a good turn-out and thanks are due to Andrew Bean & Rex Sartain for coming along to man the stall during the day. –Ed.

## March Camping Trip & Hike in RAK

On a clear and pleasant weekend at the end of March (22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>) seven of us turned up for an ENHG camping trip in the Hajar mountain region of Ras Al Khaimah – an attractive mountain option that's accessible without a border crossing – well worth the drive from Abu Dhabi. Our main aim was to visit an old but still maintained mountain village field system off of Wadi Shah to which former ENHG member and wadi explorer Wayne Oliver, now home in New Zealand, had left us directions.



Ruins of old village at Wadi Hala

On the Friday we first visited the ruins of the remarkable old village of Wadi Hala, the subject of investigations by Dr. Christian Velde, Resident Archaeologist, RAK Department of Antiquities. We were impressed by the large number of ruins of old houses and other structures at this site, apparently dated at over 400 years old.



Well-constructed stone walls in Wadi Hala house

Looking around the site, we pondered the meanings of cupmarks drilled in a rock overlooking the village, which suggest a more ancient origin, as well as the possible use of a "passage hole" in the lip of the steep ridge surrounding the village.



Cupmarks in rock at Wadi Hala



Accessible hole in ridge surrounding Wadi Hala

We also saw veins of what looked like copper ore, speculating that this village evolved to mine the ore and transport it elsewhere for smelting. And we supposed some small terraces along the wadi channel may have been used to grow date palms. But we will be happy to be properly informed by an official report in due course.



Copper ore at Wadi Hala



Blue-tailed Oman Lizard *Omanosaura cyanura* at Hala

Later that afternoon, we scouted out the entrance to our planned walk up Wadi Hamad, a tributary to Wadi Shah, up which a very well-reinforced road is being completed, in support of the planned ruler's palace and tourist resort (to be complete with cable-car access) at the top of Jebel Al Jais – the summit of which is the highest point in RAK and indeed in the UAE. That evening, we camped in a quiet wadi campsite, safely above the flood channel and set back from the road, which we plan to use for future trips to this region. It is distinguished by a curious low wall of upright slabs of rock and a boulder mound, possibly of quite ancient origin – worth a proper investigation.



Bee-eater in action at the Wadi Shah campsite

On the Saturday, following a trail that was clearly marked most of the way, we hiked up to a field system on what turned out to be a fairly rigorous hike of approx. 12 km total length, gaining 500 m in altitude as we ascended the wadi. Along the way, we saw a number of walled up rock shelters that we supposed could have been storage caches, animal enclosures, or possibly tombs. On the right hand side we passed what was clearly an Islamic graveyard.



Cliffside cache in Wadi Hamad



Islamic graveyard terrace on opposite side



Wadi Hamad mountain field system

Losing sight of the trail but following the Google Earth map on Ronnie's iPad, we made our way up to the left from a clump of clearly tended palm trees and came to a set of broad terraced fields, where we were welcomed

by the two Pakistani caretakers. As in many of the other old field systems in RAK and Fujairah, we understand, these fellows have been hired to renovate a couple of the old buildings and tend a herd of goats and the old palm trees in order to assert the owner's continuing claim to this ancestral property, lest it be claimed by the government as "abandoned" property. After welcome cups of tea and water and basic conversation, we headed back down, unexpectedly crossing paths with a trio from the DNHG who'd just been to a field system on the opposite side of Wadi Hamad!



Our ENHG Group with caretaker hosts



Jewel beetle at Wadi Hamad field system

*Capparis cartaliginea* at Wadi Hamad

This turned out to be a more strenuous hike than we had planned on, but a marvelous opportunity to see this unspoiled mountain territory, continuing the exploration begun by Stefan Beck on his Wadi Khabb - Difan Village trips (See *Focus* March 2009 and May 2012). We will be back to explore more of this region soon, for sure.

**Keith Taylor**

**Photographs by May Yoke Taylor**

## Update: the Curation of the Al Ain - Abu Dhabi Joint Insect Collection

Since 2007, Dr Brigitte Howarth – now ENHG-Al Ain Chair – has served as the curator of the Group's decades-old insect collection under an MOU between the Al Ain and Abu Dhabi chapters, helping to preserve its valuable legacy for environmental research here. Dr. Howarth has persisted in this work for several years, leading insect collection and curation workshops at Inter Emirates Weekends. During this past season, two ENHG-AD Research & Conservation grants have enabled this curation to be set up on a fully professional basis, as detailed in Brigitte's remarks below, adapted from her announcement of the curation workshop she held on May 31<sup>st</sup>, titled 'Hands on Collection – The Next Step'. –Ed.

Back in September at the beginning of this past season, the Al Ain Chapter of the ENHG took a slightly different stance and began moving closer to its raison d'être, which is looking at observing, recording and reporting more closely. A part of this has been to work with reference collections that help identify specimens that can then be recorded and reported. Thus, in Fall 2012 we offered several workshops to discuss how collections play a role in biodiversity conservation, and followed this up with two field workshops on sampling techniques. This theme continued during the ENHG-Al Ain-hosted IEW 2013. In September/October we also invited Heather Mikhail to join us in Al Ain for a few weeks, and she shared her skills and best practices that she had amassed by working as a volunteer behind the scenes at the Natural History Museum in London. Heather's work with us had been possible thanks to a grant kindly awarded by the Abu Dhabi Chapter of the ENHG. As part of Heather's brief, she sourced the best supplier to buy entomological cabinets from, and using funds awarded by the Abu Dhabi Chapter, we were also able to buy a cabinet for the ENHG collection.

You might ask, why did we need a cabinet? Ever since the origins of the ENHG over 35 years ago, individuals understood the importance of collecting arthropod specimens and record data as they realized little was known about the organisms found in the UAE. A collection serves as a reference source, as well as a data source. Individuals such as founder Bish Brown were careful in recording details and learning the curation of insects; the result is a legacy of several hundreds of specimens with important biological data. Many others, including ENHG members, have added to this collection, a significant part donated by Mike Gillett. Bob Reimer also contributed to the collection, as have I.

To this day, the collection is housed in wooden entomological boxes that are not secure for long term storage as pest species can get in (and have!), causing damage that can result in devastating loss of specimens. It is with grateful thanks to our Abu Dhabi colleagues that we now have storage that can be used for the future, and this will ensure that specimens are secure. I was delighted to receive the Bish Brown Award last year, and the prize money went towards a second cabinet that is my own and will partially also contribute towards working with and storing some of the collection.



Dr Howarth's cabinet (left), ENHG-funded cabinet (right)

On the weekend of May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013 we began the task of moving specimens into the new cabinet, housed in a converted room in my house that acts as a lab. My son, Luke Howarth, oversaw the organization of this work as part of his 'Duke of Edinburgh' award project. I'd like to thank Luke for this help towards this curating event, as well as the time he has invested in scanning and archiving important documents collected by Bish Brown that pertain to insect identification and curation, including some of Bish's hand-written notes.



Luke Howarth curating the insect collection



We will keep members of all the UAE-based NHGs informed of future invitations to join in on sessions of this nature, as the slow and careful work of preparing these specimens for permanent storage goes on. This is an opportunity to see the collection and appreciate the incredible diversity of arthropods (with a focus on insects) that we have in the UAE.

**Dr Brigitte Howarth**

**Photographs by Brigitte Howarth**

## Scientific research 'a fundamental element' of environment conservation, says Nahyan

ABU DHABI, 4th June 2013 (WAM): The carrying out of scientific research into the country's environment and wildlife is 'a fundamental element' of any strategy to conserve and protect the UAE's environment and wildlife, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, said today.

He was speaking at a ceremony to present two of the UAE's top environmental awards, the Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohammed Annual Award for Natural History, named after the former Minister of Interior, and the Bish Brown Award, named after the founder, over 35 years ago, of the Abu Dhabi-based Emirates Natural History Group., EHNG.

"The father of the UAE, the late Sheikh Zayed, was an advocate of environmental conservation long before it became a fashionable term," Sheikh Nahyan said. "Thanks to his vision and leadership, the protection of our environment and wildlife has always been a key part of our national priorities. Today, that commitment continues, under the guidance of President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He has noted that protection of our environment is important not just for ourselves, but for the generations to come."

"In the process of conservation, the carrying out of original scientific research is a fundamental element," the Minister added. "Unless we know properly what we have, we cannot prepare the necessary strategy to protect it."

The Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohammed Award is presented for scientific research and publication that makes a significant contribution to knowledge of the UAE's natural heritage or archaeology, while the Bish Brown Award is presented to an individual who has made a major contribution to promoting public awareness of environmental issues.

The Sheikh Mubarak Award for this year was won by Oscar Campbell, a teacher at the British School Al Khubairat in Abu Dhabi, who is also the Chairman of the Emirates Bird Records Committee, EBRC. The Committee has overseen the collection and recording of over 250,000 sightings of birds in the UAE, which are shared with the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, EAD, to help in the preparation of conservation planning.

The Bish Brown Award was won by Rima Jabado, founder of the Gulf Elasmu Project, which studies the endangered sharks in the UAE's waters and which promotes greater awareness about the need for a coherent conservation strategy to protect these important elements of the UAE's marine life.

"Both of the award winners have made an important contribution both to our knowledge of our wildlife and to recognition of the need to protect it," Sheikh Nahyan said. It is right that they, and others like them, should receive recognition for the way in which they are contributing to the achievement of the vision first spelt out by Sheikh Zayed and now being guided by President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa."

*Courtesy of Peter Hellyer*

NB: Here is a link to a news article on the above natural history awards ceremony. – Ed.

The National, June 5: [Chemistry teacher is one of two honoured at natural history awards](#)

### Corporate Sponsors of the ENHG - 2013

These companies are supporting the ENHG activities in the region. We hope you as ENHG members will in turn support these companies whenever you can. Click on the links below for information about the sponsors.

<a href="#">Al Masaood Group</a>	
<a href="#">Bin Moosa &amp; Daly</a>	
<a href="#">British Petroleum</a>	
<a href="#">Crowne Plaza Abu Dhabi – Sheikh Hamdan Street</a>	
<a href="#">Dome International L.L.C.</a>	
<a href="#">Dolphin Energy</a>	
<a href="#">Fugro Survey (Middle East) Ltd.</a>	
<a href="#">Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund</a>	
<a href="#">Nautica Environmental Associates L.L.C.</a>	
<a href="#">Partex Oil and Gas</a>	
<a href="#">Shell</a>	
<a href="#">Readymix Abu Dhabi Limited L.L.C.</a> (Click on link & scroll down)	
<a href="#">URS</a>	

### Websites of General Interest

#### Newly added:

Cheetah Conservation Fund: <http://www.cheetah.org>

Bushblok: <http://www.bushblok.com>

An outline of Systematic Conservation Planning  
<http://dev.grida.no/rob/Hyder/index.html#/1/> [published by AGEDI: Abu Dhabi Global Data Initiative]

## Websites of General Interest, Cont'd.

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>

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

Roy & Liz's mountain website: [www.chirri2000.com](http://www.chirri2000.com)

Hanne & Jens Eriksen's website: [www.BirdsOman.com](http://www.BirdsOman.com)

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

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

Emirates Marine Environmental Group: [www.emeg.ae](http://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/](http://wwf.panda.org/who_we_are/wwf_offices/united_arab_emirates/)

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

UAE Environmental Atlas  
<http://www.environmentalatlus.ae/>

Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority  
<http://www.adach.ae/en/> (Still using ADACH website)

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.dubaiastromy.com>

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

The Rock Art of the Hajar Mountains:  
[http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/uae/hajar\\_mountains/index.php](http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/uae/hajar_mountains/index.php)

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

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

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 & Globally Endangered:  
<http://www.edgeofexistence.org>

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

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

ARKive Images of Life on Earth: <http://www.arkive.org>  
Jewels of the UAE: <http://www.arkive.org/uae/en/>

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

## In the News Media

The National, May 27: [Save cheetahs from extinction UAE owners urged](#)

Gulf News, June 2: [Cheetah awareness](#)

Emirates 24/7, June 3: [Call to let 'captive cheetahs' in UAE go wild](#)

7 Days, June 3: [Campaigners call for action to protect exotic pets in UAE homes](#)

Khaleej Times / WAM: June 8: [17 schools honoured for green initiatives](#)

The National, June 9: [Sustainable makeover for Abu Dhabi's Mushrif Park](#)

The National, June 11: [Sharjah's hawksbill turtles celebrate World Oceans Day](#)

The National, June 18: [Scrutinising UAE history to save future lives](#) [Re. project by the ENHG's Dr Athol Yates]

### ITEMS ON SALE

#### AT THE ENHG BOOK STALL

All prices are in dirhams.

- Jebel Hafit – A Natural History, 100  
*An attractive, encyclopaedic presentation of the natural resources of this national landmark. (Free copies available for schools donations.)*
- Abu Dhabi 8 Million Years Ago, 15
- Birds of the UAE- - A guide to common and important species, 60
- Birds of the UAE--Helm field guide, 70
- 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
- Exploring Oman, 120
- Native Plants of Oman, 80
- Natural History of Oman, 50
- Native Plants of Oman, 80
- Little O in Oman, 25
- Butterflies of Saudi Arabia & its neighbours, 90
- Sulphur, Camels and Gunpowder, 100
- Tribulus, our annual Journal, see for details
- Wild about mammals, 40
- Focus on Fujairah: Through Minie's lens 1964-2001, 150
- Field Guide: Wild Plants in Oman, 300

## Committee Members

**Required next season:  
Lecture Coordinator, Public Relations Secretary, Corporate Sponsorship Secretary, Meeting Assistant & Chairman.  
Can you help us?**

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## Lecture

One-off venue for season-ending talk: Al Mamoura Auditorium

June 4<sup>th</sup>  
Cheetah Futures  
**Dr Laurie Marker**

*NB: We are now on our summer recess. In Sept our talks will resume in the Emirates Hall, ADWC, but starting earlier at 7 PM.*

Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> **7:00 PM**  
Two Archaeological Sites in Syria: Tal Sabi Abyad & Amrit  
**Munir El Kadi**

Sept 17<sup>th</sup> **7:00 PM**  
A Natural History of the Gulf: A Fragile and Unique Marine Ecosystem  
**Dr John Burt**

## Social Event

June 18<sup>th</sup> **7:00 PM**  
Season-ending dinner at Le Terrace Rest., top floor, Mushrif Mall

## Field Trips

June 6<sup>th</sup>  
Sunset kayaking tour with Noukhada  
**Keith Taylor**

*NB: No more ENHG field trips will be scheduled till Sept. However, if you would like to organise a trip with fellow ENHG members this summer, you can post a message to the YahooGroups website shown below. -Ed.*

## ENHG-AD Research & Conservation Fund Grant Application Information

For background on this fund, see [Dec 2009 Focus](#), p5.

For further enquiries and for grant application guidelines and application form, contact ENHG Acting Chairman Keith Taylor at [kjtaylor13@yahoo.com](mailto:kjtaylor13@yahoo.com).

NB: These documents are posted in the Files section of the AUHENHG YahooGroup (see address below).

## ENHG Equipment for Members' Use

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

- Starter camping set: 2 new sleeping bags & maps, medium-sized cool box, old Coleman '5-man' tent
- GPS unit – GARMIN GPSMAP 60CSx
- First-Aid Kit
- Birding Telescope
- Two satellite phones, taken on camping trips.

Phone numbers: No. 1: 008821644400956

No. 2: 008821644400965

Enquiries: Keith Taylor, [kjtaylor13@yahoo.com](mailto:kjtaylor13@yahoo.com)

- Celestron NexStar telescope (on field trips only)
- Sky Scout astronomical object locator/identifier

Enquiries: Denis Cheng, [spacemandc@gmail.com](mailto:spacemandc@gmail.com).

## Marine Life Rescue Contact Info.

**In Abu Dhabi:**

EAD Customer Service: 800555 (or)  
[customerservice@ead.ae](mailto:customerservice@ead.ae)

EAD Emergency Response (pollution and wildlife) available 24 hours/day: Mob 050 6674171 (or) 050 6178218

**In Dubai:**

Emirates Marine Environment Group (EMEG) (Tel: 043630581/Fax:043630460; Email: [info@emeg.ae](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:warren.baverstock@jumeirah.com)  
To post Facebook message triggering an after-hours SMS alert: [www.facebook.com/turtle.rehabilitation](http://www.facebook.com/turtle.rehabilitation)

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## Members' Items for sale

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## 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.)