

GAZELLE

Vol 25 no 7&8 July & August 2010



مجموعة دبي للتاريخ والطبيعه

DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Members' News

DNHG Membership

DNHG Membership remains a bargain at Dhs.100 for couples and Dh. 50 for singles. You can join or renew at our meetings or by sending us your details and a cheque made out to: Lloyds TSB Bank account no. 60600669933501. (Please note we cannot cash cheques made out to the DNHG. Please also note our account number has changed.) Subscriptions paid now are good through to August 2011.

DNHG membership entitles you to participate in field trips and helps pay for our lecture hall, publication and distribution of our monthly newsletter, the *Gazelle*, additions to our library, incidental expenses of speakers and occasional special projects.



Narayan Karki exploring in the Ru'us al-Jibal

Narayan Karki will leave Dubai in mid-August to return to Nepal. Narayan's energy and keen eyes were responsible for many contributions to UAE natural history, including records of new and rare plant species, rare molluscs and rare butterflies, the first report of a sand partridge nest from Arabia, a new (introduced) species of freshwater fish in the UAE, and new observations about the behaviour of local wadi fish and lizards (some reported in this month's *Gazelle*). In Nepal he is hoping to start an English language boarding school in his rural village. His home in Kathmandu hosts an internet café where visiting DNHG members can find a friend. Narayan had hoped, before leaving, to be able to accept the Chairman's invitation to spend a month outdoors in the American west, but plans had to be scrapped when a U.S. visa was not forthcoming.

Rafeek Khalid, resident in Abu Dhabi for the past several years, continues to share his butterfly news with us, from Arabia, India and beyond. Most recently he has outdone even his own remarkable record. On honeymoon in his native Kerala he captured what are believed to be the first confirmed photographs of a rare butterfly endemic to the Western Ghats, soon to be recognized as a distinct species, the Sahyadri Silver Royal (*Ancema sudica*). A top expert advised that this butterfly has not been reported in decades. And to add to the distinction, Rafeek also found and photographed the egg and caterpillar of the species. He notes that his wife shares his interest in nature, so this is surely a good omen for both his marriage and his future butterfly exploits.



Sahyadri Silver Royal (*Ancema sudica*)

This month's Contributors

The Editor would like to thank the following for their reports and contributions:

- Nancy Papathanasopoulou
- Ali Alhafez of KTCP
- Angela & Steve Manthorpe
- Gary Feulner
- MaryAnn Pardoe
- Richard Dennis
- Martina Fella



Ali & Nada on a windy beach (p.3,4)

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



Birding Trip Late September

Gary plans a trip to some good local spots, and will give details closer to the time.

Turtle Rescue Centre, Burj Al Arab Oct/Nov TBC

No further details as yet but information will be circulated by email closer to the time.

Dibba plant nursery Weekend of the 5th/6th Nov

The Ministry of Environment and Water's Dibba plant nursery is a place that's full of surprises. This will be a day trip, which you can do easily from Dubai, and promises to be very informative. Contact Jenny Hill on jennyhill76@hotmail.com for further details.

Zanzibar with Sonja Lavrenčič 12 - 17 or 20 November

Registration for this trip is now closed. Sonja reports: The Zanzibar trip is shaping up well; the travel dates are now confirmed as from Nov 12 to 20 (Eid Al Adha, hopefully) or, for those who cannot stay the entire week, from Nov 12 to 17. We have 20 confirmed people on the trip (including Al Ain and Abu Dhabi NHG members) which is a good number – the group is now closed. The program remains as per my previous notice. We are currently finalising the hotel and flight bookings. Please contact Sonja by email (lavsonja@yahoo.it or sonja@publicisgraphics.ae) if you have further questions.

Socotra Island Prob. Eid Al Adha, approx. Dec 2 - 7

This trip, like the Zanzibar one, will be quite something! The flights will be via Sana'a to the island, and accommodation will be arranged. Pradeep will require firm commit-

ments once you're in. Birding, geology, plants, insects and lots more! Details are not yet firm, but will be available as soon as possible. For information, contact Pradeep at wgarnet@emirates.net.ae

Further trips proposed: Camping trip to Jebel Shams and Hoti Caves

Breeding Centre for Endangered Species, Sharjah Desert Park

Sir Abu Nu'air

Musandam dhow day

Bat-spotting

Camping and half-day canoeing in Umm Al Qawain mangroves

DNHG Field Trip Policies

Members are reminded that DNHG field trips are cooperative ventures among the participants, for their mutual benefit and enjoyment. DNHG field trip leaders are not normally professionals or experts, but fellow members who have agreed to share their time and their knowledge with other participants, on a volunteer basis. The relationship of trip leaders and participants is that of co-venturers, not professional and client. For these reasons field trip participation is limited to DNHG members and their bona fide non-resident guests.

Various dangers are inherent in travel in and around the UAE and in the exploration of the natural environment, whether by automobile, by boat, on foot or otherwise, and whether on-road or off-road, in the cities or countryside, in the mountains or deserts or at sea. By participating in DNHG field trips, members accept these risks, and they accept responsibility for their own safety and welfare. Field trip participants are normally required to sign a waiver form to this effect. Without these understandings, the DNHG would be unable to sponsor field trips or to recruit volunteers to lead them.

Field trips vary in both format and organisation, depending on the nature of the trip, the number of participants, and the preferences of the field trip leader. If the number of participants is limited and sign-up is required, members should make every effort to honour their commitments or to give timely notice otherwise, as a courtesy both to the trip leader and to other members who might like to have the chance to participate.

Our Next Speaker

Nessrine Alzahlawi holds a Master of Science in Aquatic Biology and Resource Management from Exeter University, UK and a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Sciences from the American University of Sharjah, UAE. She was born in Syria, and first came to the UAE in 1996. She has always had a passion for biology, and discovered her love for marine ecosystems during her undergraduate studies.

Nessrine joined EWS-WWF in 2009 as a Marine Biologist and Conservation Officer for the Sustainable Fisheries Campaign. She has also worked as a Marine Ecology Consultant and Research Assistant with the United Nations University International Network on Water, Environment and Health, Dubai, where she carried out her Masters Research Project on the impacts of Palm Jumeirah development on benthic invertebrate communities. Her undergraduate research focused on the habitat ecology of marine invertebrates in Al Aqqa marine reserve in Fujairah.

Nessrine is especially interested in researching marine habitats in the region, in particular looking at connectivity between habitats and impacts of development on coastal systems. Her role on the Sustainable Fisheries Campaign is to increase awareness about threats currently faced by fisheries in the UAE by identifying local overfished species and highlighting the importance of consumer action.



Email your field reports and news to pvana@emirates.net.ae (Arial 10 justified). Please send your photographs as separate jpg files, or deliver them to Anne Millen for scanning.

Pretty but an Ugly Customer

Members who attended the End of Season dinner were able to have a look at the dried, ragged remains of an echinoderm, found on the coral beach just south of Dibba in late January this year. Gary Feulner was asked about it at the time and wrote to the editor, "You passed to me, via Val Chalmers, an unusual beach item from near Dhadnah on the east coast. Since Val and I were attending the biodiversity conference in Sharjah when I received it, I had the additional benefit of comment by naturalists Dick Hornby and David Stanton (of Yemen). We agreed it appeared to be an echinoderm and, from "A Field Guide to the Seashores of Eastern Africa" by Matthew Richmond, it seems to me to be a good match for *Toxopneustes pileolus* (a very short-spined sea urchin found in the western Indian Ocean and Red Sea) or perhaps a similar species.



Toxopneustes pileolus or a similar species

This merits further comment, because the text advises that *T. pileolus* has pedicellariae (flower-like little "feet") longer than the spines, and the pedicellariae have poisonous sacs containing a toxin that is potentially lethal to humans, causing numbness, general paralysis and respiratory distress. So, good you found only a dead one on the beach. And another reason that snorkelers and divers should either keep their hands to themselves, or wear gloves, and waders among

rocks or coral should wear protective footwear. The recommended treatment is immersion of the affected area in near-scalding water (just below 50 degrees C). DNHG members will recall that the late Dr. Sandy Fowler recommended carrying a thermos of hot water when beachcombing. I didn't know we had this species here, but perhaps some of our members who are SCUBA divers may be able to tell us more."



The flower-like 'little feet' of *T. pileolus*
(Photograph from the Internet)

Angela Manthorpe, a keen diver, confirmed that *Toxopneustes* sp. are found in UAE waters, particularly the east coast around Martini Rock and in the Musandam. The ones she has seen are about 8 – 10 cm across, and partly covered/hidden by pieces of shell and coral. It is not clear how they do this. She has not heard of anyone being injured by them but *UAE Underwater Explorer* advises bathing the part in hot water, immobilizing the limb or person, removing spines/other material and seeking urgent medical attention. *Thanks to Gary Feulner and Angela Manthorpe for this information. Photograph Gary Feulner*

A First: Three Hawksbills Satellite Tagged by KTCP

Kuwait Turtle Conservation Project (KTCP – www.kuwaitturtles.com) has been studying sea turtle populations on the islets of Garouh and Umm Al-Maradim since June 2008. In addition to night and morning

surveys for nesting females, and diving and snorkeling expeditions in search of foraging and mating individuals from April to October, KTCP also planned a satellite telemetry project to establish migratory routes of both nesting species, hawksbill and green turtles. As hawksbills are the first to nest (May and June), KTCP team members, with Mr Alan F. Rees of the University of Exeter, UK, traveled to Umm Al-Maradim and Garouh islands with the purpose of attaching satellite transmitters on turtles encountered there.

Within a few hours on the night of the 24th May, two hawksbill females crawled out on to the south beach to dig nests and lay eggs.



Cleaning prior to gluing on the transmitter

Despite a fierce sandstorm, KTCP team members successfully attached satellite transmitters on both turtles and released them back into the sea in the small hours. The first turtle, which they named Nada, measured about a metre in length and the second one, Dareen, was smaller and measured about 80 cm in total.



Alan and Nancy with Dareen



First glue ...

Dareen had not nested when intercepted by the tagging team, but came back to nest successfully the following night, her transmitter safely on her carapace.

In Garouh, a few days later, on a quiet evening at very low tide, another small hawksbill crawled out of the water in front of the Coast Guard station and looked for an appropriate place to nest. She changed her mind and, as she was returning to the water, the KTCP team attached a satellite transmitter on her. Najat, this third turtle, was seen attempting to nest the next night and finally laid her eggs in a shallow nest in front of the Coast Guard Station.



then transmitter ...



Alan Rees with Ali Alhafez of KTCP

tion may not only improve turtle conservation but also the conservation of fisheries and coral reefs.



Nada ready for sea again

KTCP will continue its mission to flipper and satellite tag turtles it encounters on the islets of Garouh and Umm Al-Maradim throughout the summer. Until more updates on this action, you can obtain more detailed information and maps of the three Kuwaiti Hawksbill turtles' movements in the last few days by visiting http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking/?project_id=503. If you wish, you can also "adopt" the animal of your choice, thus contributing actively to satellite tracking efforts in Kuwait.

A very special thanks should be attributed to His Excellency the Assistant Undersecretary of Border Security Affairs, Major General Mohammed Yousef Al-Sabah as well as to all Coast Guard Officers and personnel in Khairan, Garouh and Umm Al-Maradim for their friendship and help. Without them, the project would never be able to achieve its goals. *Photographs by Ali Alhafez / KTCP, report by Nancy Papathanasopoulou, nancy@kuwaitturtles.com*



then Nancy gets the glue gun and makes doubly, absolutely sure!

Another turtle had been encountered on Garouh the night before Najat was tagged, but the team only attached flipper tags on her and not a satellite transmitter, as the animal had a large crack on her shell, most likely due to an encounter with a fast moving vessel (boat or jet ski).

Satellite tracking is one of the most important and significant tools for researchers to acquire knowledge of these animals' migrations. Tracking the movements of turtles throughout the planet's seas and oceans contributes to improving conservation strategies and understanding characteristics of the ocean itself wherever turtles go. This invaluable informa-

Darwin, Tahiti and Us

Gazelle Editor Anne Millen recently visited Queensland, to see it as she has never seen it before. Although the World Meteorological Society declared the first half of 2010 an El Niño (dry) period, in decay, phenomenal rainfall in the first four months (on average >1.5 times annual rainfall) filled lagoons, grew grass above shoulder height and provoked a bumper breeding season for native fauna. Flocks of parrots wheeled and screamed around the towns and the kangaroos and wallabies had abandoned the country



Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

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Marine Life - Lamjed El-Kefi

Geology - Gary Feulner
res 306 5570
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Insects – Gary Feulner

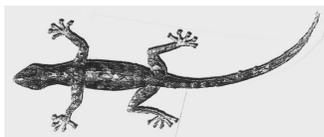
Fossils - Valerie Chalmers
res 349 4816,
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email: valeriechalmers@hotmail.com

Plants – Valerie Chalmers

Seashells - Recorder needed!

The recorders are not necessarily scientific experts in their designated fields. In fact, most are not. However, they are interested and knowledgeable amateurs - please contact them if you have any interesting reports or queries.

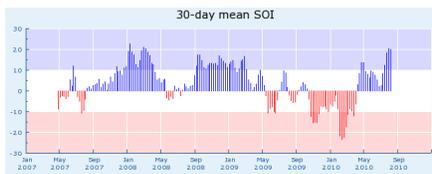
The intention is that information will be channelled through to the *Gazelle* editor, so new information can be shared with all our readers.



roadsides, making driving safer and easier.

Mid-year, there was to be a shift into a La Niña period, and this time things are as expected – east coast areas have had further heavy rain bringing the year's total so far to well above annual levels.

The southern oscillation index (SOI), the difference in surface air pressure between the Pacific and Indian oceans, is a fascinating and frustrating measure. The two variations are coupled: the warm oceanic phase, El Niño, accompanies high air surface pressure in the west Pacific, while the cold phase, La Niña, accompanies low air surface pressure in the west Pacific (and high in the Indian Ocean). Mechanisms that cause the oscillation remain under study. Superimposed on this basic pattern is 'noise' – the smaller and less predictable variations in relative pressure which, to the average observer, create the confusion, especially since there's more 'noise' in Darwin than Tahiti, the two observation centres.



Signs of an emerging La Niña event have been apparent in the equatorial Pacific for some months. Pacific Ocean temperatures have cooled steadily throughout the year, the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) has increased in value and is currently around +21, trade winds continue to be stronger than average and cloudiness has remained suppressed over the central Pacific. All of these key indicators have now reached or exceed La Niña levels. The reverse is likely for the Indian ocean.

Well, what does this have to do with the UAE? The powerful influences of El Niño / La Niña are not confined to the southern hemisphere – water levels in Fujairah's Wadi Wurayah have been shown to follow

the SOI pattern through its proximity to the Indian ocean.



Swimmers in Wadi Wurayah in 2006 enjoying the benefits of a Pacific El Niño (Photograph by MaryAnne Pardoe)

The Importance of Dietary Salt in Hot Climates

UAE residents are generally well aware of the importance of water and the need to remain properly hydrated in the high temperature environment of the UAE. It may be somewhat less well known that water alone is not sufficient to ensure good health or survival, even for a few days, at high temperatures and/or when doing strenuous work. Instead, salt (sodium chloride/NaCl) is also important. An engaging volume titled *The Great Hedge of India*, by Roy Moxham (2001)* summarises some basic facts and statistics about the physiology of salt in the body.

Salt makes up about 1/400 of the average human body weight, amounting to about 170g per person, and is essential to life. It is the concentration of salt that is critical and the body will gain or lose water to keep the concentration constant. This can be problematic in a hot climate, since the body responds to heat by sweating to keep cool by evaporation.

Doing hard manual work on a really hot day, one can sweat up to 1 litre of water per hour. However, sweat contains salt, so the body loses salt at the same time. In hot climates, normal salt loss can exceed 30g per day, and in very hot climates salt loss can be as much as 90g per day, or half the body's salt.



To keep salt concentration constant, the body will not retain all water drunk to replenish sweat. Surplus water will be lost as urine. To compensate, blood volume will drop and blood pressure will fall as a result. Volunteers on low salt diet in a temperate climate lost more than 1kg in the first five days. An experimenter on a low salt diet and doing manual work in the tropics lost 2kg in 2 days.

As the process continues, the brain will be starved of blood, causing fainting and eventually total unconsciousness. Since it is impossible to feed or re-hydrate an unconscious person except intravenously, death often ensues.



The author in a salt cave near Ghaba, Oman
Photograph by Anne Millen

The body cannot store salt for more than a few days. Excess salt is passed in urine. Therefore salt must be taken regularly and the effects of salt deprivation are felt quickly. Possibly this is the evolutionary explanation for the human craving for additional or excess salt on food.

Heat exhaustion may result from either too little water or too little salt, but the body's reaction to the two phenomena is very different. Lack of water produces thirst, and a person drinks and recovers. Salt depletion, on the other hand, produces neither thirst nor a craving for salt. The victim feels unwell, but doesn't know why. Initial symptoms of salt deprivation include lassitude, apathy, headache and muscular weakness. These may be followed by giddiness and fainting, and finally by anorexia and vomiting, which themselves impede re-hydration. Death from salt depletion may often have been misdiagnosed, especially if it was accompanied by another illness, e.g., typhus.



Salt collectors, Masirah Island, Oman
(Photograph by Martina Fella)

The minimum daily salt requirement of an individual varies with, e.g., body size, climate, activity and metabolism. In the 19th century the British military in India provided a special tropical allowance of 30g per day, but medical experience suggests that in hot weather this was not always sufficient for all. Moxham estimates conservatively that an average of 15g per day, or 5.5kg per year, is required in a climate such as that of northern India, but the actual minimum requirement would vary seasonally, with more required in warmer weather.

[*The book as a whole is an extended personal essay on the tax levied by the British on the manufacture and trade in salt within colonial India in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in particular the erection in the 19th century of a nearly 2,500 km barrier to prevent salt smuggling and tax evasion. Some 1,100 km was a live hedge of thorn bushes, including species of *Ziziphus* (the genus of the local *sidr* tree and the Indian *jujube*.) The essay is interwoven with the tale of the author's personal search for modern day remains of the hedge.]



A thicket-forming *Ziziphus* species

Report by Gary Feulner

Great Himalayan Bird Count

The 3rd annual Great Himalayan Bird Count is planned for October 27-30, 2010. It will encompass 36 popular trekking trails situated in the Garhwal Himalayas of north-central India, including Asan & Jhilmil Jheel Conservation Reserves in Dehradun & Haridwar districts, respectively. The bird count will start and finish at Dehradun, India.

Individual group sizes will be a maximum of 5/6 birders plus 2/3 urban school/college students, plus local village youths and forestry staff. Each group is encouraged to interact with local village elders to generate a list of vernacular names and to document oral folk knowledge.



Himalayan snow cock seen on higher slopes
Photograph by Richard Dennis

Estimated cost is modest. Boarding & travel expenses for 4 days of dedicated jeep travel, boarding and lodging would come to AED 400/- (RS 5000/-) only. You should allow 1-2 days to travel between Dehradun and New Delhi.

The count is organized by Action & Research for Conservation in Himalayas (ARCH), based in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Registration is encouraged by August 30.

For more details and an application form, you can contact the organizers of the bird count directly at arch.birdcount@gmail.com or DNHG member Binish Roobas at johanrughus@hotmail.com. Binish recently participated in an ARCH-sponsored survey in the Dehradun area, focusing on the elusive Himalayan Quail.



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And Some More Members' News:

Continuing their travels **Steve and Angela Manthorpe** are now in Eastern Europe and they recently visited the Belavezhskaya Puscha National Park in Belarus. The park, which straddles the Belarus-Poland border (and is called the Bialowieza NP in Poland), is a Unesco biosphere reserve and contains much of the last primeval forest in Europe. It contains a wealth of wildlife –over 50 mammal species, including wolves, lynx, wild boar, deer, pole cats, martens and otter. However the main reason for their visit was to see the European bison (*Bison bonasus*) or Zubr, the largest mammal on the European continent, which used to roam the British Isles, throughout Europe and into Siberia.

The last wild animals were shot in the early 1900s, however, a breeding programme using a core of animals found in zoos has led to a successful reintroduction of the species. In the park the majority of Zubr roam

freely whilst a small number are kept in enclosures.



Zubr, *Bison bonasus*

Steve and Angela are now in Macedonia, heading shortly to Albania before they turn north and come back up to eastern Europe through Montenegro, Croatia, Serbia, Hungary etc. They will be back in the UAE in October for a spell.

On the cold pebble beach at Bexhill-on-Sea, UK, recently, **Anne Millen** found shells that were rather like those found on UAE beaches. The gastropod was reminiscent of *Crepidula fornicata* (SEA 229) but with the spiral curling to one side.



The long, fragile bivalve is almost certainly a member of the Solenidae family, the razor clams (SEA 1108—1113). Bosch et al, in *Seashells of Eastern Arabia*, describes them as “often rather thin”, and these were so thin as to be almost transparent, and about 120mm long. When found, the two halves were still together, showing the characteristic wide gape at each end and the remains of a thin, glossy periostracum. SEA mentions that several of these species are common on the beaches of the south eastern Gulf.

Dubai Natural History Group Programme

Lectures at Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, 7.30 for 8.00pm

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Sun Sep 19 | Nessrine Alzahlawi, Conservation Officer, Emirates Wildlife Society-WWF:
The problems of overfishing in the Gulf region |
| Sun Oct 03 | Brien Holmes: The falaj systems in and around Al Ain. |

Field Trips (Members only, please.)

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Sep TBA | Birding trip |
| Oct/Nov | Turtle Rescue Centre |
| Nov 5 or 6 | Dibba plant nursery |
| Nov 12 - 17 / 20 | Zanzibar |
| Dec 2 - 7 | Socotra Island |

Further field trips, details or changes will be announced or confirmed by e-mail circular.