

# GAZELLE

Vol 26 no 11 November 2011



مجموعة دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي

**DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP**

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Members' News

### Obituary

DNHG life member Carolyn Lehmann died in Germany on October 25 from complications following surgery and subsequent treatment for advanced ovarian cancer. After more than a decade in Dubai, Carolyn and her husband Dieter, a military pilot, retired in 1997 to Florida, where they kept a sailboat. Carolyn served the DNHG as newsletter editor and later as Librarian, and it was under her stewardship that the library amassed much of our eclectic collection of reprints and photocopies of articles from scientific journals.



Carolyn Lehmann

Carolyn was one of Dubai's early seashell collectors and contributed Arabian Gulf specimens and information to *Seashells of Eastern Arabia*. She also published articles in the *Abu Dhabi ENHG's Bulletin* on local marine algae and in early issues of *Tribulus* on the late Cretaceous echinoderm fossils of the UAE. In all of these endeavours, Carolyn was

known for her attention to accuracy and detail and she encouraged the same standards from others.

In the mid-1990s Carolyn and Dieter were among the more adventurous explorers of the deserts of the Liwa region, which they crossed from end-to-end in the course of periodic trips. Dieter reports that it was a pleasure for Carolyn (through Dieter as an e-mail intermediary) to be able to recall her DNHG experiences with old friends in recent months, during what proved to be a very challenging medical ordeal. The DNHG extends its condolences to Dieter and to Carolyn's daughter Kristin Bikos and son-in-law Michael Bikos.

**Needed: Volunteer to print Gazelle copies monthly.** The impending departure of DNHG Publisher Peter van Amsterdam puts us in need of a volunteer to print ca. 35 copies of the *Gazelle* on a monthly basis, to accommodate recipients including libraries, government institutions, our Patron and a few long-time members to whom we still send paper copies. Printed copies are posted by our Postmaster, Sandi Ellis. If you can assist, please contact Chairman Gary Feulner, Vice Chairman Valerie Chalmers, or Editor Clare O'Hare.

### DNHG Membership

DNHG Membership remains a bargain at Dh.100 for couples/families 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.)

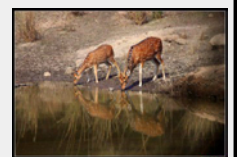
**DNHG membership entitles you to participate in field trips.** It also helps pay for our lecture hall, publication and distribution of our monthly newsletter, the *Gazelle*, additions to our library, incidental expenses of speakers and occasional special projects.

### This Month's Contributors

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

Denis Cheng	Gary Feulner
Roberta Lattuada	Jenny Hill
Margit Levay	
Binish Roobas	
Nirjhar Chakraborty	
Tanusre Chakraborty	

Photograph by  
Mrs. T  
Chakraborty



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



## Wadi Wurraya Hike Fri 25 Nov

We will meet at the entrance of Wadi Wurayah at 7am. The hike will take approximately 6 to 7 hours of moderate to strenuous hiking. Due to the long driving time from Dubai (2.5 hours), a number of people will camp near Wadi Wurayah the night before the night before. The group is limited to 15 people. For more information, contact Christine Verreydt at [infinistan@gmail.com](mailto:infinistan@gmail.com)

## Geology Trip with JP Berger Fri 9 Dec

Trip will start at 9 am and will end at around 5 pm. The meeting point is Emarat petrol station located at Al Qalaa. A 4x4 is preferred but no difficult driving is involved. You must take your own picnic and enough water for the whole day. The group is not limited but it is always better to share cars to make the convoy as small as possible. For more information contact Christine Verreydt at: [infinistan@gmail.com](mailto:infinistan@gmail.com) or 050 685 37 20.

## Falaj hiking trip with Brien Holmes Sat 10 Dec

The group will meet at the bus stop near Juwaif at 9.30am and proceed to A'Dahir, where we will see parts of the aflaj (falaj) system. We will also see the "Bat Cave" and – time permitting – the oasis. We will then proceed to Ramthah and start our hike at around noon. The afternoon hike will cover 11 km, approximately 5 hours of moderately paced walk. This is a circular route and turning back will not be possible. You must bring your own food and enough water for the whole day. It will be a full day trip with some great sites and the usual excellent guiding by Brien Holmes. For more information, please contact Sonja Lavrenčič on [sonja@publicisgraphics.ae](mailto:sonja@publicisgraphics.ae).

## Shelling with Anne Millen Fri 16 Dec International Falcon Festival, Al Ain, 16-17 Dec

The Emirates Falconer's Club will host the 3rd International Festival of Falconry at the Al Jahili Fort in Al Ain, UAE. Admission is FREE. For more information see [www.falconryfestival.com](http://www.falconryfestival.com) or [contactinfo@falconryfestival.com](mailto:contactinfo@falconryfestival.com).

And some trips to bear in mind pending details:

## Nepal Hill Country March 23-31, 2012

Experience Nepal hill country scenery and rural village life (terraced cultivation of rice, corn and millet, footbridges across rivers, water buffalo milk, temple ceremonies, traditional dancing) via homestay and optional day hikes. Also birds, butterflies, etc. Sightseeing in Kathmandu en route. Return via upper Sunkosi River, with temple visit and hot springs resort. (Note: This is a customised visit. The village area is part of the Indigenous Peoples Trail but the itinerary is not a standard commercial offering.) For more information, contact Gary Feulner: [grfeulner@gmail.com](mailto:grfeulner@gmail.com) or 04-306-5570.

## Christmas Field Trip with Brien Holmes, Fri 23 Dec

## Wadi Al Shah Fri 13 Jan 2012

## Astronomy Night with JP Berger, Fri 20 Jan 2012

## InterEmirates Weekend 24 - 25 Feb 2012

The 2012 InterEmirates weekend will be hosted by the Dubai Natural History Group. Planning has already begun, and it is likely that it will be a first - held in Dubai itself! Usually it is a weekend away

for Dubai, so this will be an exciting weekend. Planning for trips, activities and events is afoot, but if you have ideas of what you'd like to do, think others might learn from or enjoy, please contact any of the Committee members and tell them your idea.

### Look the Part!

The DNHG has navy blue sweat shirts, with the DNHG emblem embroidered in silver. Sizes: L & XL Dh65/- each.

Also, silver grey polo shirts with the DNHG emblem embroidered in black. Sizes: M, L & XL Dh50/- each. The quality of both items is excellent. See Val Chalmers at the next meeting.

### Our Next Speakers

All of our Members' Night speakers are long-time DNHG members. **David Wernery** is a lawyer turned conservationist. David is a founding member of the EEG, and a member of the DNHG, together with his father, for nearly twenty years. David is married to Theresa, daughter of Dr. Frauke Heard and Mr. David Heard, Abu Dhabi. Based on his father's 'Fatal Pollution' campaign, Theresa and David founded the PlasticNotSoFantastic (PNSF) campaign and expedition over a year ago – they are raising awareness about plastic pollution from the UAE to the rest of the world (see [www.pnsfexpedition.com](http://www.pnsfexpedition.com)). Through PNSF, David and Theresa have been signed as consultants for waste management of biosphere reserves by UNESCO, and will be visiting reserves on their global road trip starting in March 2012.

**Colin Emmitt** is a Civil Engineer, outdoorsman and participant in many DNHG field trips, in company with his wife, Jenny Hill. Colin and Jenny recently enjoyed extended leave during which they visited, among other places, the Galapagos Islands. Colin's talk "The Galapagos Islands" will show a brief history of the islands and some of their unique features.



Email your field reports and news to [clare.ohare@gmail.com](mailto:clare.ohare@gmail.com) (Arial 10 justified). Please send your photographs as **separate .jpg files** (preferably compressed for documents) or deliver them to Editor Clare O'Hare for scanning.

## The Rehabilitated Turtle Release

Happy to be part of big day out for turtles on Friday October 21, we had the pleasure of attending the second hawksbill Rehabilitated Turtle Release organised by the Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project in partnership with the Turtle Rehabilitation Unit at the Burj al Arab. The location for the release was the most gorgeous Ghantoot Reserve between Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Using the map provided with the invitation, we travelled along Sheikh Zayed Road. The destination was about ten kilometres from the Emirati station past Jebel Ali. There, we reached an exit road, which after a few metres became unmarked and unsealed. After a four minutes' drive on a sand and gravel pavement we saw a couple of small low rise buildings in the distance which seemed to be the location we were heading to.

The day was pleasant, barely over

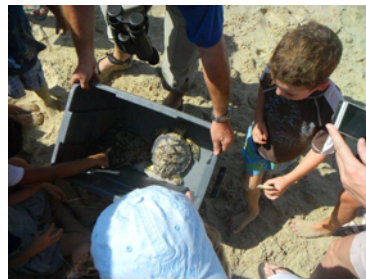


30 degrees Celsius. It was just before 9.00am and not many had yet arrived which gave us time to walk around and enjoy the area, the man made shades along the most beautiful beach we have seen in Dubai.

The main majlis was prepared for all guests with bottled water and fruits of all varieties. This kind gesture was sponsored for all guests by EMEG.

Whilst we enjoyed the beach and surroundings under a turquoise blue sky and jade green seas we met a family of four Germans who were very happy to state that if it was not for the DNHG that they had just joined, they would not have known of this special event.

The Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project was a unique experience attended by some 200 plus Dubai residents, including families with their children. It was organised by Emirates Marine Environmental Group, in collaboration with IN-TIGRAL (who screened movies about the project).



The children were asked to be close to the organisers to have the possibility of holding a turtle and bring it to the sea. Reporters for local and overseas newspapers and magazines were in attendance to capture this important milestone.

Although the area was cordoned off to ensure safety for the hawksbill to return to the sea, the temptation to come close to them was just too much and the organisers needed to be attentive to the safety of the turtles. We were curious but respectful and clearly maintained a needed distance once we saw the little ones running for the sea. Some reporters had cameras for under water which also assisted in ensuring that the turtles managed to go further into the sea rather than mistakenly sneaking back.

Some 30 – 35 turtles were released in three groups, each of around 10-12 turtles, with a fair distance between each station so that the people were scattered at the beach. This avoided having 200 people on top of one another

trying to have a glimpse of the turtles and also helped the turtles not to feel overwhelmed with the large crowd. Around 11.30am all was finished, some guests still stayed at the main majlis to enjoy water and hot sweets brought out for their enjoyment.

We thank Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project, EMEG (and certainly also the DNHG for letting us know about this event) for their dedication to the wildlife and allowing the public to be part of such a heartfelt event. *Report and photographs by Margit Levay*

## Al Ain Zoo

Founded in 1968 by the late Sheikh Zayed, Al Ain Zoo (or Al Ain Wildlife Park and Resort as it is also known) is a unique place within the UAE where a lot of effort has been put into creating habitats as natural as possible for the 4,000 species of wildlife as well as providing education, research and conservation programmes on African and Arabian species.

Nine members of the DNHG went for a day trip on the 21st October where we were lucky enough to be taken on a tour by Kim Lucey, one of the education coordinators at the zoo. Kim's enthusiasm and her knowledge about the history of the zoo and the species she showed us was excellent as she guided us through the African exhibits, bird house and reptile house giving us an insight on what it was like to work there and how very different the culture is here for keeping pets to many of the members' home countries - 'my domestic cat is a cheetah Miss'. Highlights of the trip included the chance to talk to one of the keepers and to see the snakes, tortoises and hedgehogs up close; watching the baboons flicking lice off each other; admiring, through the glass, the contrast in the penguins' movement on land where they waddled around and below water where they were agile and inquisitive; observing the beautiful and majestic white lions chilling out in their enclosures, and the new giraffe feeding area. Here we got to experience



the Nubian giraffes up close with their long tongues gobbling up the carrot treats that we offered to them. We had a great trip and I recommend anyone who has not been to this zoo to take a look as it is a great place for a day visit to experience large animals (there were giraffe, zebra, rhino, white lions, hyenas, oryx, gazelle, cheetahs) as well as reptiles, birds, primates etc. that you would not normally get the chance to see otherwise and feel at the same time that they are being well looked after. There are grassed areas where you can relax and have a picnic and enjoy the surroundings. The glassed wall enclosures and raised platforms mean that you can get a close view of the animals without disturbing them. *Report by Jenny Hill*

## Toad Egg "Craters"

Truly is it said that wonders never cease, even small wonders. It has been recognised for a number of years that the local Arabian Toad *Bufo arabicus* can and does engineer its environment to some extent, in summer creating and inhabiting modest asymmetrical depressions in fine gravel at wadi bed sites, presumably to take advantage of a slightly more sheltered and humid microhabitat. The alternative explanation, that the toads were opportunistically using shallow donkey hoofprints, was defeated by observational evidence, including observations of the phenomenon at sites not accessible to feral donkeys. (Our former member Stephen Green persevered on this point, in the face of scepticism.)

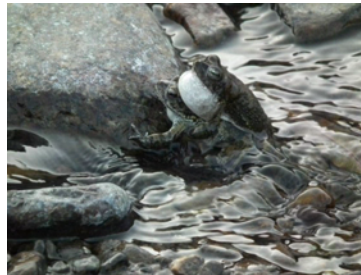


Close-up of crater showing fresh strings of black toad eggs.

Now, it seems that the engineering talents of *Bufo arabicus* extend even further, to the construction of circular craters in wadi gravel as

sites for egg deposition. On a late October visit to lower Wadi Qahfi, the very wet "Hatta Pools" wadi in northernmost Oman, Binish Roobas and I observed the usual considerable evidence of fishing with bottle traps by local visitors, accompanied by equally customary evidence of small scale hydro-engineering, probably also to trap fish.

But in several areas of shallow gravel banks or gravel islands within the stream, among the human and other footprints, we saw perfectly circular shallow depressions, 8-10 inches in diameter. The freshest of these had distinct raised margins (see photo) and proved to contain strings of toad eggs and, in one case, tiny tadpoles (just millimetres in length, the smallest I have ever seen), evidently just hatched. Less well preserved craters, without a distinct rim, were empty.



Mating Arabian Toads (in a tempest)

It therefore seemed that this association was not a coincidence, but that the toads, at some stage of the mating and egg-laying process, were 'building' these craters, excavating the gravel and fashioning a distinct rim. The advantage would be to keep the toad eggs out of the wadi current and out of reach by predatory wadi fish (3 species are present), while still providing them with a shallow reservoir of water. We inferred that the responsible species was *B. arabicus* because we saw many adults in the wadi, as well as instances of copulation, but it should be noted that the Dhofar Toad *B. dhufarensis* can also be found in Wadi Qahfi.

If the above is true, why has this phenomenon not been noticed and remarked on before? Two points suggest at least a partial answer. First, there may be no need for such precautions in the environ-

ments more common in most mountain wadis, where the water is pooled rather than rapidly flowing and where there are no fish (or perhaps where there is only the bottom-snuffling *Garra barreimiae*). Second, it may only be possible to build and maintain a crater in the proper substrate, i.e., fine-medium size gravel; finer substrates (mud or sand) might collapse and coarser gravel might be too large for the toads to manipulate. But these hypotheses themselves are a source of small wonder – they imply that the toads somehow "know" both what is necessary and what is feasible. *Report by Gary Feulner and Binish Roobas. Photographs by Binish Roobas.*

## East Coast: Kalba to Fujairah

Everyone who participated in the field trip on Friday, Oct. 28, to archeological sites on the east coast of the U.A.E. both north and south of Fujairah city was treated, once again, by Brien Holmes to a most interesting and edifying trip back to the past of the U.A.E.



The first stop was the site of a shell or "kitchen" midden (ancient refuse heap) found at the foot of a rocky mount just to the south of Kalba. The most common types of shells found were bivalves (clams and mussels) and turricula (spiral cones). Such piles of ancient refuse are vital "data banks" to archeologists seeking to reconstruct the daily lives of a "long lost" people. Those who created this particular midden did so some 7,000 years ago. More accurate dating of this and all of the other sites we were to visit has been difficult to obtain since radiocarbon dating cannot be performed. The artifacts and food remnants, e.g. shells, discovered at the sites to date do not contain the required carbon (typically in the form of wood or charcoal) to conduct the dating procedure. Brien, then, led us all further up the rocky mount where



## Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

Reptiles - Dr Reza Khan  
res 344 8283  
off 344 0462  
fax (off) 349 9437

Archaeology - David Palmer  
050-7387703  
office direct line: 04-2072636  
dpalmer@ud.ac.ae

Birds - David Bradford  
davebradford9@hotmail.com

Astronomy - Lamjed El-Kefi  
res: 06-5310467  
off: 06-5583 003  
email: lankefi@emirates.net.ae

Marine Life - Lamjed El-Kefi

Geology - Gary Feulner  
res 306 5570  
fax 330 3550

Insects - Gary Feulner

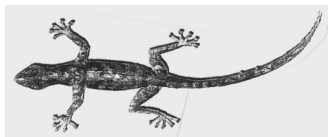
Fossils - Valerie Chalmers  
res 349 4816,  
fax 340 0990  
email: valeriechalmers@hotmail.com

Plants - Valerie Chalmers

### Seashells and Mammals - Recorders 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.



ancient rock art, "pictographs," soon became evident.

The second stop of our tour took us to the residence of a Sheikh(!) or more specifically, the grounds surrounding the ruins of the Al Fara residence of Sheikh Suhail bin Hamdan which was, itself, something of a more recent (less than a 100 years old) archeological site. The more ancient sites on the grounds surrounding the Sheikh's residence consisted of the tracings of ancient agricultural fields, remnants of the Falaj irrigation systems and small stone enclosures used for drying the crops grown in the fields, tobacco, and for drying fish.

After lunch, we headed to a local pottery workshop in Masafi Village and had a good view of the current state of the art through inspections of the on-site clay pit, potters' wheels and firing kilns. As the proprietor was not available, it was left to one of our own tour members, Claudia Kiburz from the Abu Dhabi contingent, to provide a thorough explanation of the actual process of pottery making.



From here, we headed over to a rather curious site which was literally just a hut on the side of the road. This was the Bait Khaimah ("tent house") which was a rather small (approx. 3 meters in diameter) structure simply constructed of thatch and stones intended to shelter a people who, due to the local geography and climate, lived mainly "outside" and therefore had no need for a larger and more substantial dwelling. And the significant fact presented by Brien was that these people were not from such a "distant past." He ventured the guess that the "khaimah" was constructed as recently as 35 years ago and that it has only been pure chance that the structure still survives today since it is obvious that present day road

clearing bulldozers have come with in only a meter or two of it on recent occasions. It was suggested that more deliberate efforts must be taken to protect and conserve such relics of the local heritage.

Our last stop took us on a real "off-road adventure" to the site of the abandoned village of Abadilah located at the end of a rough dirt track, large portions of which had been washed out by the flash flood of a rainstorm the previous week, that ran through Wadi Shimal. The featured site at Abadilah was a not-so-ancient (>100 years) burial ground or graveyard. There was also a truly impressive gorge running through the bottom of the wadi cut by numerous flash floods coursing violently through it during the infrequent but significant rainstorms. The burial ground/graveyard set atop a mound deep within the wadi and above the gorge presented a truly "underwhelming" and somewhat eerie sight being nothing more than a collection of rocks roughly arranged into nondescript ovals marking each burial. Brien pointed out that Islamic burial sites are not very formal or ornate since Muslims do not believe that the mortal remains of a deceased individual have any special spiritual significance and, therefore, do not require any special commemorative marking. An interesting feature of the mound on which the burial site sat were clumps of Aloe Vera plants growing on its north slope. Brien concluded his presentation here in the wadi with his revelatory and somewhat disquieting explanations for the cause of the high infant mortality rate that recently and mysteriously plagued the current generation of U.A.E. nationals. (Editor's note: for further information on the UAE's progress towards the UNDP's Millennium Development Goals, including the reduction of infant mortality rates, please see the UNDP UAE website <http://www.undp.org.ae>.)

And so ended another superbly informative and enjoyable field trip with Brien Holmes. *Report by Denis Cheng, photographs by Roberta Lattuada*



## Striated Herons in a Mountain Wadi

In late October we encountered not one but a pair of adult Striated Herons *Butorides striatus* (formerly called the Little Green Heron) at ponds along a well-watered stretch of lower Wadi Qahfi – in an area where the so-called 'Hatta Goby' *Awaous aeneofuscus* could be found for a number of years. The Striated Heron is primarily a coastal species that breeds on the coasts of eastern and south-western Arabia, and in Dhofar, but Mike Jennings of ABBA has commented that it sometimes wanders to freshwater habitats a few kilometres inland. On one of the pair we saw may have been ailing, since it flew only a short distance when first flushed, then tolerated our approach to ca. 30 metres and kept its position when we returned past the site a half hour later.



Striated Heron in Wadi Qahfi

Report by Gary Feulner and Binish Roobas. Photograph by Binish Roobas

## A Closer Look at a Common Large Moth

I noticed the large (3.75 cm) moth in the photo in mid-September while I was keeping in shape by running up and down the spacious emergency staircase in my apartment building. It had found a daytime perch to its liking on the rough stucco walls. I noted that this moth rests with its wings peaked over the body like a pup tent, not splayed like many moth species. A few hundred vertical metres later, I returned with my camera for a photo.

It was fairly easy to identify the moth from the classic paperback guide *Insects of Eastern Arabia* by D.H. Walker and A.R. Pittaway, which can now be consulted online at the [enhg.org](http://www.enhg.org) website, under "Resources": <http://www.enhg.org/>

[resources/ebooks/IOEA/IOEA.htm](http://resources/ebooks/IOEA/IOEA.htm).

The moth is *Streblote siva* (a common name is given as 'Jujube Lappet') and this rust-coloured specimen is a female. The male is somewhat smaller and darker brown. It is a member of the Family *Lasiocampidae*, which are relatively large moths having generally pale, very hairy caterpillars which can be irritating to bare skin.



*Streblote siva* female, side view

Walker & Pittaway call *S. siva* the most common member of the *Lasiocampidae* in Arabia, but I have never noticed one before. Perhaps it is better known to members who have gardens. The larvae (caterpillars) are said to feed on a wide variety of common UAE trees, including tamarisk and sidr (or jujube) trees as well as the local mangrove. At least in 1987, when *Insects of Eastern Arabia* was published, the larvae were sometimes so abundant as to defoliate whole trees.

I kept my specimen overnight on my balcony in a clear plastic container. In the morning, consistent with the primary mission of adult *Lepidoptera* to mate and lay eggs, I found 23 eggs, lightly glued to the bottom with a transparent adhesive. Individual eggs were sub-rounded, only slightly elliptical, in shape, about 1.6 to 1.9 mm in diameter and dull white in overall colour, but one end of each egg had a distinct dark brown depressed spot surrounded (at a distance) by a halo of short, dark brown grooves in a radial pattern. The opposite end had a less regular pattern of dark brown spots and streaks.

The next night I left the container open and the moth had flown by

mid-evening, presumably to lay the balance of her eggs at more suitable sites. Report and photograph by Gary Feulner

New member Nirjhar Chakraborty sent this report on Bandhavgarh Tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh, India. All photographs are by Mrs. T. Chakraborty.

Bandhavgarh Tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh India provides an unforgettable opportunity to glimpse some of India's most prized fauna and flora in their pristine surroundings.



We were lucky to sight tigers twice in the total of eight safaris that we took. You have to be extremely lucky to sight this beautiful animal in the wild even though Bandhavgarh has the highest density of tigers (about 59 according to the 2011 census) among all the tiger reserves in India (about 18 major reserves).

The jungle is dense and the best time for sighting is in summer when water becomes scarce and animals frequent water-holes. Sometimes it is so dry that the government has to bring in tankers to fill the water-holes. The park remains closed for the monsoon season from 1st July until 15th October.

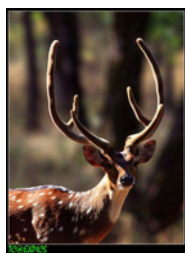
We also spotted a number of birds. The other common wild herbivores we saw were Sambar (deer), Chital (Spotted deer), Chowsingha (chow – four, singh- horns), Nilgai and Chinkara.

There is also a healthy population of leopards, sloth bears and wild dogs which we were not privileged to see during our day safaris (four hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon).



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Website Coordinator	<b>Sandhya Prakash</b> email: sandy_pi@yahoo.com	050-5512481		

The tour was a memorable one to say the least – a great detoxifier and you come back strong after spending few days with mother nature.



For more information please visit <http://www.toftigers.org> and <http://www.mptourism.com>

## In Memoriam: Simon Aspinall

The UAE lost one of its foremost naturalists with the death of Simon Aspinall on 31 October 2011, at the age of 53. Simon first came to the UAE in 1993 in what many would consider a dream job, as the principal field ornithologist for the newly-established National Avian Research Council (NARC), now part of Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD).

Simon is undoubtedly best known for his avian studies and publications, including his Status and Conservation of the Breeding Birds of the UAE (1996) and more recently, the second edition of Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East (2010), co-authored with Richard Porter. These alone would secure his reputation. But his talents and interests extended to natural history more broadly, and he was engaged in many studies and publications concerning the wildlife, environment, archaeology and ecology of the UAE, as a researcher, an author and editor. He was, among other things, a co-editor of the monumental *The Emirates – a Natural History* (2005), the most comprehensive and authoritative such volume to date. His energy and ability set a standard that other UAE naturalists must work to maintain.

Simon's death followed a four-year battle against motor neurone dis-

ease, for which no cure is yet known. He continued to conduct field studies until his final year, when the inexorable progress of the disease made it impossible. Even then he continued to write, edit and propose additional study projects, and he retained his trademark intellectual curiosity and wry wit to the very end. He is survived by his parents and his brother.

A full obituary, containing a more complete account of Simon's career and publications and some reminiscences by his family and friends, can be found online at [www.uaebirding.com](http://www.uaebirding.com). *Report by Gary Feulner*

A memorial service for Simon will be held at St. Andrew's Church & Community Centre, Abu Dhabi on Saturday 10 December at 5.30 pm - 6.30 pm. This will be followed by a short reception in the church courtyard. Simon's brother Richard will be attending on behalf of the family.

## Dubai Natural History Group Programme

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

Dec 11      Members' Night  
David Wernery: "Plastic not so Fantastic"  
Colin Emmitt: "The Galapagos Islands"

### **Field Trips (Members only, please)**

Nov 25      Wadi Wurraya Hike  
Dec 9        Geology Trip with JP Berger  
Dec 10      Falaj Hiking Trip with Brien Holmes  
Dec 16      Shelling with Anne Millen  
Dec 23      Pre-Christmas Trip with Brien Holmes

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