

EMIRATES NATURAL HISTORY GROUP (ABU DHABI)

NEWSLETTER: VOL 6 No.3 - APRIL 1982

1. PROGRAMME

5th April - "The Yemen Arab Republic and it's People"
By Nabil Al Alawi

(Nabil Al Alawi has resided in Abu Dhabi for a number of years and took his slides during a visit to his homeland. They show an insight into everyday life not normally seen by outside visitors.)

12th April- Committee Meeting

If any member has anything they wish to bring to the attention of the committee could they please see any committee member at the first general meeting in the month.

19th April- "Landscape Design in the UAE"
By Ann Tourney MSC. GILA

(Ann Tourney was a Registered Landscape Architect with George Wimpey in the UK)

26th April- The workroom in the ADMA-OPCO Federal Building will be open.

3rd May - "Burma" The Life/Culture and Rituals
By Sylvia Schofield

17th May - "Maps"
By Peter Cox

Review of March's Programme

Both of the talks in March were given by committee members. The first was "A Review of Archaeology in the UAE" by Rob Western." This talk proved very enlightening to a lot of members who had no idea that so many archaeological sites existed in the UAE (More under Archaeology).

The second talk was "A vist to Oman" by David Maclennan. This was another very interesting talk presented in two parts. the first part being the history of Oman and the second part a series of slides taken on his visit there.

2. Members Information

- (a) The Hilton International Fujairah have special weekday rates available to members of the E.N.H.G. on production of their current membership card.

	<u>Single</u>	<u>Twin</u>
Normal Room Rates	Dh.245	Dh.360
ENHG - Special Rates	Dh.150	Dh.180

- (b) George Allen and Unwin have already started to publish a series of books entitled "Natural History of the Arabian Gulf". The first three titles are now published and they are "Inshore Fishes", "Mammals" and "Birds". "Reptiles" and "Flowers" should be following shortly.

The publishers have offered to sell these books in bulk to the E.N.H.G. at a 25% reduction on the UK retail price. The taking up of this offer would depend on demand from the members. If you are interested in purchasing any of these books would you please contact any committee member as soon as possible.

- (c) The Al-Ain N.H.G. is running a photographic competition to help raise funds for the production of a calendar. This is open to members and non-members and the closing date for entries is April 30th. Any further information can be obtained by contacting Valerie Stokell (327813) or asking at the next meeting.

3. Trips

- (a) 12 Km up the Sueyhan Road - 26th February

Two cars braved the early rains and, after being turned back by floods at the pipeline on the Tarif road, returned to the Sueyhan road and sunshine.

Recording of the day were 5 Fluorescent green Scorpions, one Sand Boa (asleep), one Hoopoe lark (singing and diving), one Thrush hole and a dropping, 4 Toad Head Lizards and six worn out kids. There was obvious new growth on plants enjoying the rains. There were some Desert Hyacinths and several calligonum Comosum were in full flower.

- (b) On a gravel plain off the link road between the Sueyhan/Al-Ain Roads (5th March)

Four cars penetrated the gravel plain where a forestry plantation is being set up. We drove

back in the Abu Dhabi direction between two ranges of dunes and eventually stopped at the dunes which were much like the Liwa. There was much evidence of young seedlings. Walking on the dunes was made much easier by the compacting of the sand due to the recent rain. Many Toad-Head and a few other Lizards were seen.

(c) Natural lighting in the Water Garden of Fossil Canyon
(11th/12th March)

Those members who have been on trips during the past two months will no doubt have stories about the weather. Several families with children (7 vehicles) camped in Fossil Canyon during the weekend and received the brunt of the thunderstorms that crossed the whole country that night. Sitting in the open around a campfire (under sun umbrellas) watching such spectacular lightening as was to be seen that night is an experience few of the party will forget quickly.

The problems of driving out through thick cloying mud in torrential rain the following morning turned a routine camp into quite an adventure. The Canyon is definitely best left alone during heavy rain.

During the same weekend, however, a small group successfully climbed Jebel Hafit, but reported that there was too strong a wind on top to stand up.

(d) Any other trips?

If any other members make trips that they think would be of interest to the group we would be pleased to have details for the newsletter. A written account (and this only need be a few lines) should be given to Valerie Stokell at the second meeting of the month.

4. Recorders Notes

(a) Scorpions

No scorpions were found during the weekend in Fossil Canyon but this may have had something to do with the weather. A few spiders were observed, all of the wolf variety.

If anyone should come across any scorpions on their travels, please collect them (with care!) and either bring them along to the meeting or contact Mike Southey (701088). They are able to survive for months without food so don't worry about feeding them. One variety has, in fact been known to survive for a year without food or water.

(b) Reptiles

The cooler weather and heavy rains have reduced reptile activity to a minimum. A few small lizards venture out in search of food on warm days when the sand dries. Apart from one sand boa (record sheet still awaited) there have been no snake reports this year. Sea snakes should reappear very soon once the sea temperature warms up. All reports gratefully received but remember, all sea snakes can inject a very toxic poison.

(c) Birds (February to Mid March)

The Spring migration from South to North has not yet been very noticeable. On odd days large numbers of birds have been seen on the eastern lagoon. 500 cormorants (many with white thigh patches), 1,00 Black headed gulls, 200+ reef herons, 100+ dunlin and 70+ teal. An unusual visitor was a bank myna in company with 12 common myna birds (all Indian species). Other visitors included Ring Necked Parakeets, Night Heron, Woodchat, Shrike, Kingfisher, Hoopoe, Shovellers, Black Winged Stilt and Black Headed Yellow Wagtail.

A small group of members climbing Jebel Hafit 6 weeks ago near Al Ain recorded a Griffon vulture's nest with one egg in it. Egyptian vultures were also seen patrolling the upper slopes.

Along the Shwaib/Madam road a nest with 3 eggs (believed to be a Great Grey Shrike's) was discovered in a partially uprooted Calatupio Procera bush. The most recent rains will probably have destroyed it but more news later if it survived.

We would be happy to receive more records from members who enjoy birds. Our computer record for 1981 has records from very few members but it is not too late to put them in.

(d) Plants

The prodigious rainfall during February and March this year augers well for the country's vegetation after two or three years relatively dry climate. Even in Abu Dhabi itself there is far more new growth and profusion of plants than was seen last year. Species of Melilotus and Medicago in particular have been very abundant.

The group has been requested by the Edinburgh Botanic Garden to forward pressed and dried specimens of UAE plants. They are currently undertaking a survey of the Arabian Peninsula. More details on pressing techniques are available from the plant recorder.

(e) Archaeology

For the first time Serge Cleuzion of the Centre Nationale des Rerserches Scientifiques in France was unable to be present to give his annual talk on the latest season's digging at Hili. Most of the work this year has concentrated on second and first millennium BC sites, and Hili in fact has received less attention than usual.

As said the Archaeology Recorder therefore talked to the Group on 1st March about the state of Archaeology in the UAE in general. The talk covered the known span, beginning with the early Holocene Stone Age and ending with a brief look at historical Beduin camp sites.

On Friday 19th March there was a field trip to Umm an Nar which was well attended (thanks to the continuing cool weather). Several members from the Al Ain Branch also attended, and afterwards some visited the Sewage Farm and the Group's workroom. There was a useful exchange of views between the two groups.

5. Weather Summary for The New Abu Dhabi Airport, February 1982 Temperature -

Absolute maximum for the month was 29.9C recorded on 5th and the absolute minimum was 8C on 4th. The monthly means were 22C and 13C respectively, giving an overall mean of 17.5C. The first week of the month was somewhat warmer than the rest

Humidity - Highest reading was 99% on 17th and the minimum was 28% on 5th. Daytime humidity surpassed 90% during each of the last 9 days of the month.

Rainfall - Transient rainfall was recorded on 1st, 6th, 22nd and 24th. Measurable rainfall totalled 110.1 mms, of which 79.7 mms fell on 13th alone. The balance was made up of 3.5mms on 8th, 11.8 mms on 14th, 12.2 mms on 23rd and 2.9mms on 26th.

Equivalent readings for Old Abu Dhabi Airport show a total precipitation of 96.5mms compared with a twelve year mean of only 9.7mms for February.
