

1. PROGRAMME

21st. March - "China - a Travellogue" by Martyn and Karen Clarke.

4th. April - "Birds of the UAE" by J.N.B.Brown.

28th. March - Informal session by the Insect Recorders, Diane Donohue and Ian Hamer, in the Workroom at the Federal Building, 6.30 p.m.

2. RECORDERS EVENING

A most interesting evening was held by the Geology Recorder on 28th. February at the Workroom, on the subject of fossil identification. A large number of people turned up to show that geology and related subjects are catching on in the public imagination. Let's have a follow up sometime Dick, perhaps on the geology of the Abu Dhabi area.

The proposed meeting on 28th. March should interest anybody interested in insects, bearing in mind that Giles Roche got the Group's collection of bees and wasps off to an excellent start in 1982. Ian Hamer is continuing to record, and would appreciate any help. The equipment and paraphernalia used in collecting and recording will be on show.

The informal drawing lessons conducted on Tuesday evenings by Jenny Beckett will continue into April.

3. BULLETIN 19

Bulletin 19 has been issued (on time for once) and copy for Bulletin 20 is requested by the end of May.

4. RECORDERS NOTES

(a) Reptiles - Jan 25th - Feb 23rd 1983

Weather conditions have retarded reptile activity as they don't like the cold. The rains may well have flooded many hibernation holes, causing a further reduction in numbers which were already noticeably smaller after the 1982 rains. Yellow-bellied house geckos (*Hemidactylus flaviridus*) were seen at 6.45 a.m. one morning, waiting for a passing insect breakfast or warming themselves near ceiling lights.

(Bish Brown)

(b) Birds - Jan 25th - Feb 23rd

The northward migration has not yet started at our usual sites, although there has been some increase in the number of gulls and waders. The Sewage Farm has been further reduced by backfilling but still attracts up to thirty species for an afternoon's recording. The west side of Abu Dhabi Island with its shallow muddy beaches is also interesting as waders fly in to feed on the ebb tides. An unprecedented number of flamingoes has been recorded very recently off the east of the island.

(Bish Brown)

(c) Plants

The road between Abu Dhabi and Ras al Khaimah was surveyed early in February for its vegetation patterns at this time of the year. Apart from saline depressions particularly in Dubai Emirate, the biomass is fairly constant in the variety and distribution of species recorded up as far as Ajman. North of Ajman there is an alluvial element in the soils, and annuals are thicker on the ground. New species recorded were a variety of Sea Lavender, a Rumex and various Composites. North of Umm al Qawain the dominant annual was the desert asphodel which covered large tracts of the desert and mountain forelands. Near Ajman a number of local families, men, women and children, were out truffle hunting. They were out in the damp desert looking for any break in the sand that might indicate a fungus pushing through. It was clearly a time-consuming business with poor rewards. The largest truffle we were shown measured less than two cms. across. The local name for this delicacy ( ) is the same as in Kuwait.

The Caper species recorded on Sir Abu Nu'air Island at the end of December has turned out to be Capparis spinosa, relatively uncommon in the UAE, though it has been recorded in Hatta and in the Northern Emirates. The commoner species here is *C. cartilaginea*.

(Rob Western)

ARCHAEOLOGY

(d) The site of Julfar was visited by the Recorder early in February.

This once-important port lies a few kms. north of Ras al Khaimah town. The port was harassed by the Portuguese in the early seventeenth century after similar raids on Kalba, Fujairah and Khor Fakkan, and the site was abandoned soon after 1633. The inhabitants established the new town of RAK in a safer spot (it was next attacked by the British in 1819). The site of Julfar has never been systematically excavated and now consists of a series of low mounds adjacent to the shoreline, eroding into the sea; it is now part of RAK's municipal rubbish tip. The total area was not measured but an estimate is 250 by 150 metres. The surface is littered with potsherds, including fragments of

Chinese porcelain of assumed Chinese origin and more recent Islamic ware. Pieces of glass and metal of indeterminate age were also picked up. Where the site adjoins the sea there is a three metre sand cliff with archaeological layers covering the top two thirds. A cluster of hardboiled eggs with shells partly intact but extremely fragile, was found about a metre from the top. Fortunately we were not hungry enough to be tempted by this 350 year old breakfast. Julfar, incidentally, is said to be the birthplace of one Ahmed bin Magid, who was Vasco da Gama's chief navigator on the voyage of discovery from East Africa to India at the very end of the fifteenth century.

(Rob Western)

(e) Marine Report for 1982

Better late than never. 1982 was a quiet year as far as talks and workshop sessions were concerned but Bulletin articles on fish species continued. Lately interest has been aroused by a particular species of freshwater fish which visits the sea during its life cycle. Called the Arabian Killifish (Aphanius dispar) this fish lays its eggs in the muddy sediment of small pools and flashes. When the pools dry out, the eggs remain protected in the mud.

Few record forms were received during the year, but interest actually increased. Other groups, especially diving clubs, returned useful information on many aspects of marine life. Whilst swimming, snorkelling and scuba diving are useful skills, it is well worth remembering that evidence of marine life can often be found on dry land, especially the shore line itself. Hopefully, 1983 will see an increase in recording activities especially after the introduction of the new recording form. This form should simplify the job of recording and identifying. It is also planned that more emphasis be given to field trips, the first probably being the search for the Arabian killifish.

(Roger Brown)

(f) Mammals

I've not seen 'hide' nor 'hair' of a mammal recording since the last newsletter.

(Val Stokell)

5. CAMEL MIGRATION

During Nov. 1982 herds of up to 20 camels were noted grazing at the roadside between Habshan and Medinat Zayed in the Western Region. This indicates that the migration to the coastal area from the deep desert took place in mid-October. Small trains of three and four camels with a young rider on the lead camel were seen approaching Medinat Zayed from the south (Liwa). Towards evening groups of camels were herded back towards desert areas with an Indian helper and a Bedu cowboy on his four-wheel Toyota steed acting as herdsman. The young boys are well-wrapped to keep out the cold morning air, whilst one elderly tribesman was resplendantly attired in a lounge jacket. The boys are out exercising the camels from the local Sheikhs' stables,

whilst the older riders had their possessions slung over the backs of their trailing beasts, indicative of a longer ride, perhaps from Asab, Liwa or even further afield.

A colleague has mentioned seeing a train of twenty or more camels with local women and children aloft in Maqatra. This new village is some twenty kms. from Mafraq. Further sightings would be of interest to archaeologists who are interested in tracing old caravan routes.

(Charles Spedding)

## 6. WEATHER SUMMARY - JANUARY 1983

A glance at the records for the two Abu Dhabi airports shows just how misleading statistics can be. The amount of rainfall at the New Airport was twice that for the old. Given such discrepancies from these two nearby locations, records from other meteorological sites in the UAE makes it difficult to give any accurate summary of overall weather patterns throughout the country, beyond emphasising their inconsistency.

	<u>NADIA</u>	<u>OLD AIRPORT</u>
<u>TEMPERATURE</u>		
Mean	17 C	17.8 C
Absolute max.	29.8 (2nd)	30.4 (2nd)
Absolute min.	8.3 (18th)	9.5 (18th)
<u>Rainfall</u>	10.1 mm (20th)	5.0 (20th)
<u>Fog days</u>	4	3
<u>Hazy days</u>	17	9

## 7. COMMITTEE REPORT

The new Committee held its first meeting on 14th. Feb. in the ENHG Workroom. In accordance with the decision made after the AGM, Rob Western was elected new Chairman, replacing Bish Brown who stands down to concentrate on recording work. Committee meetings are held on the second Monday of the month. If any Group member wants a point raised could he or she contact a Committee member during the usual Monday evening talks.

(Val Stokell)