



Emirates Natural History Group Al Ain Chapter Newsletter January 2009

The season continues with more hikes and conferences after members enjoyed several holidays in December: National Day, Eid al Adha, Hijrah new year and Gregorian new year.

We regret that the Al Ain Chapter will lose two of our longtime members: Bill Jones is going back to Australia, setting up a camel farm business, Marion Campey leaves for Cyprus. We hope they will keep in touch and keep us up-to-date with some information. Big thanks for their long-lasting contribution to the chapter.

ENHG Al Ain Chapter Committee

Committee members:

Chair: Brien Holmes; **Vice Chair** Brigitte Howarth; **Treasurer:** Simon Wall; **Secretary:** Saima Tariq Khan; **Membership:** Amer Abu Kuhail; **Photography:** Bob Reimer; **Newsletter:** Roland Ochmann; **Library:** Amer Abu Kuhail/ Marybeth Gaudette; **Flora:** Marion Campey and Martha Coetzee; **Fauna (Insects):** Brigitte Howarth; **Fauna (Birds):** vacant; **Environment:** Jodie Healy

Visit the webpage at <http://www.enhg.org/index.htm> or contact us at enhg@yahoo.com (all Al Ain chapter members)

Upcoming Events

Friday January 23:	Dhub Valley
Saturday January 24:	A'Dahir
February 12-14:	Nizwa Weekend
February 19-20:	Fossil Valley Weekend
March 27-29:	Inter Emirates Weekend (March 28/29) Khor Fakkan (see below)
February 13/April 06	Classical Music Concerts at Jahili Fort

Hikes

We will continue with weekend hikes and walks at nearby destinations, either in Oman or in the Emirates.

A special experience is always the Full-Moon-walk. If you never take part, you'll miss something special! Please watch out for the weekly emails for details.

The more ambitious "Triple Crescent hikes" started in October; repeat climbs will be re-scheduled, if possible. Watch for emails.

Hint: Please read these hike-related mails carefully in order to be well prepared for the hikes (equipment, shoes, severity, etc.) also to get the right time and place to meet.

Thuraya Satellite Phones

Reminder

We have 2 Thuraya telephones. The numbers are **0088-216-2150- 2400** for Phone One and **0088-216-5552-1121** for Phone Two.

We recommend that you add these numbers to your mobile phones and lists of important phone numbers.

One or both phones will be taken on each field trip and will be turned on for the duration of each trip.

General Meetings

The general meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesday at Al Ain InterContinental Resort hotel at 19:30. Watch out for ENHG email for themes.

Upcoming meetings:

Tuesday January 27: Film Night

Committee

Committee meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at the Al Ain English Speaking School. Everyone is welcome to participate! We are always looking for people to join our discussions and help deliver events.

The next Committee meeting will be Tuesday February 03 at 7:30 pm.

Photography Competition season 2008/2009

For the past several years, Al Ain chapter has invited every member to participate in the annual photography competition. In the past, we have organized entries into eight categories including flora, fauna, archaeology/architecture, landscapes etc. Some of the winning photographs will be featured on the home page in coming months.

For a view to the competition last season please visit <http://www.enhg.org/alain/photocomp.htm>.

2009-2009 ENHG Photography Competition: Guidelines and Rules

This is to announce the 2008-09 version of the Al Ain ENHG's annual photography competition, where the UAE's finest amateur photographers (*you*) vie for glory and prizes.

The date for the show and awarding of prizes is **May 26th, 2009**; the location is the Al Ain InterContinental Resort.

The competition is open to amateur photographers who are members of the Al Ain chapter of the ENHG.

All photos must have a natural history theme and have been taken in the UAE or Oman. They may be oriented either horizontally or vertically ('landscape' or 'portrait'). Photos must be mounted (matted). The long side of the photo (without the matting) can be between 20 and 30 cm (8-12 inches). Panoramas with a maximum short dimension of 4 inches (10 cm) will also be accepted. Each member may enter a maximum of 8 photos.

Categories:

1. *Architecture and Archaeology*
2. *Culture and Heritage*
3. *People of the UAE and Oman*
4. *Environmental Issues*
5. *Animals in the Wild*
6. *Plants in the Wild*
7. *'Scapes* (landscapes, seascapes, skiescapes, cityscapes, etc.)
8. *Miscellaneous* (pictures that don't fit easily into the other 7 headings)

(The organizers and judges reserve the right to alter/amend these categories or to add other categories.)

There are some major changes in the categories this year. To encourage more flora photographs, we are splitting *Plants and Animals in the Wild*. For the two "*in the Wild*" categories, we are expecting photographs of indigenous plants and animals that are not domesticated, captive or cultivated. This **excludes** photographs of camels, goats, dogs, cats, zoo animals, date palms, gardens and farms among others. Does this mean that these photographs can't be entered in the contest? No, it just means they need to go in another category. Depending on the subject, they could fit in *Culture and Heritage*, *'Scapes* or *Miscellaneous*. There IS a category for any picture you take in UAE or Oman.

We've also changed *Field Trips and Care of the Environment* to *Environmental Issues*. This category is looking for your photographic comments on the state of the environment.

There will not be a separate *Youth* category this year. Young people 16 years of age and under, should submit their photos in an appropriate category and note their age on the back. Youth entries will be judged in their categories and then after the regular judging is complete, the entries by young people will be judged together.

Digital Manipulation: It is expected that entrants will present their photographs to their best advantage. Judicious cropping is always recommended by the judges. Changing levels, curves, colour, saturation and contrast,

sharpening, and cleaning of dust spots are allowed. These are analogous to traditional darkroom techniques such as dodging and burning. Be careful with your manipulations as over-saturation and over-sharpening can spoil a picture.

Deadlines: All entries must be delivered to a member of the Committee by the end of the ENHG meeting of **May 12th, 2009**. Earlier delivery of entries will be appreciated. Please submit a digital version of your entries by email to photocontest@enhg.org. The digital version should be no smaller than 800 pixels on the longest side. Larger can easily be resized down, but smaller cannot be resized up and still retain good quality.

Identification: All photos entered **MUST** have the following information on the back:

- Photographer's name,
- E-mail address and/or phone number,
- A title for the photo,
- The location the photo was taken and approximate date, and
- The category entered.
- Age if 16 years old or younger.

Be as specific as possible when giving the location (e.g. "Dubai Creek" or "Al Ain Oasis" rather than "UAE"; "Nizwa Souq" or "Wadi Khutwa", not "Oman"). Entries not adhering to these rules may be displayed, but will not be judged. A Word template for creating labels for the back of your entry is available [here](#).

Judging: Decisions of the judges are final. An independent panel of professional photographers and natural history experts will judge the photographs. Judging will be coordinated by an ENHG committee member who hasn't entered the contest.

The People's Choice Award will be given to the photographer whose photograph receives the most votes by the people attending on the night of the exhibit.

Copyright: Copyright remains with the photographer. However, by entering, the ENHG assumes that you give us the right to scan the photo and display it on the website, in the newsletter and in a CD-ROM which may be offered for sale to members.

Questions or concerns? Contact me or one of the members of the Committee.

Good shooting,
Bob

P.S. If you are printing your photographs at home, please use proper photo paper and not plain paper. Mounting enhances the appearance of your photo so it should be done well. If you don't know where to have this done in Al Ain, ask one of us.

P.P.S. A piece of advice: if your camera has a 'date' function, disable it. A date running down the side of a photo can spoil an otherwise lovely picture and judges deal harshly with that sort of thing.

Find your way and meeting places in Al Ain and around.

Waypoints.kmz

There are some members who are still unsure about some of the meeting places we routinely use to assemble for field trips and meetings. We hope this file will help clear things up.

This is a file that will be recognized by Google Earth. It includes 'pins' marking some familiar landmarks in Al Ain and Al Buraimi as well as many locations frequently used by the Al Ain chapter.

1. You must have Google Earth loaded on your computer. (You can download the program free of charge at < <http://earth.google.com/> >.
 2. Download the file (waypoints.kmz) from the ENHG website < http://www.enhg.org/resources/links/res_links.htm > and save it in a place you will remember. (We recommend saving the file on your Desktop for now and putting it in a safe place later. With most Internet browsers, right click on the link "Waypoints.kmz" and select "Save link as . . .")
 3. If, when you download the file, you click on 'Run', proceed to #4. If you have chosen to save the file, go to the location where you saved the file and double-click on the file or, using your right mouse button, select 'Open'.
 4. As soon as you perform the operation described in No. 3, Google Earth should load automatically and the image will be that of the cities of Al Ain and Al Buraimi with a number of yellow pins marking various locations.
 5. Hit F11 to get a full screen view of the city.
 6. If you hold the mouse over one of the pins and click the left mouse button once, you will get a description of the location (except the Al Ain Mall and the Jimi Mall).
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7. If you have a number of points saved in Google Earth, your map may be littered with other information. To get an uncluttered view, unselect all but the waypoints that are included in the file waypoints.kmz. (This means editing the boxes in the side menu – left -- that opens when you open Google Earth.)
8. When you close Google Earth, click 'yes' when asked if you want to save the waypoint information.
9. If you are unable to get the above procedure to work, let us know and we will send you a graphic file (no animation) showing the pin locations.

News The Library



The Library is now situated in our room at the Palace museum. Amer, Heather and Marybeth are busy pu collection online.

If you're looking for a publication, videotape or periodical, please contact Marybeth mary.gaudette@gmail.com.

We have prepared a DVD-collection of **20 DVDs** including all videos and CDs in our library. We are offering this set to members for Dh 100. Watch for email with more details. These are available to ENHG members only.

What Happened Previous Weeks? Walks and Hikes

Some of the recent walks and hikes:

Thursday 13/11 Night: **MOONWALK:** We took advantage of the full moon Thursday evening for a moon walk on Jebel Qatara with the light trap set up in the wadi near the car park. We had set up the light trap and saw what insects are at the base of the mountain. When the moon is sufficiently high, we headed up the mountain for the relatively easy walk up to the Hanging Gardens.

Friday 14/11 Daytrip: Triple Crescent Hike to Jebel Sumaini started very early in the morning.
Afternoon: Visit of the Jebel Hafeet tombs and the Mezyad Fort. Restoration work on the



Mezyad Fort was suspended a few years ago and lately building materials have been scavenged for use on other restoration projects in Al Ain. The Mezyad Fort was one of the two large forts in Al Ain used by the Trucial Oman Scouts. We will also drive out to the base of the eastern slopes of Jebel Hafit to visit the third millennium tombs, some of which have been reconstructed.



Friday 21/11 Morning hike to Jebel Hafeet: The route began slowly with a gradual increase in elevation as we made our way across at least three of the folds, climbing two 'waterfalls' that have cut through the ridges. After the third cut, the route turns up the steep southern face. We kept an eye out for reptiles, insects and plants; at the moment, the caper plants are in flower and many are displaying their incredible seed pods.

Saturday 22/11 Afternoon walk to Mahdah Oasis: We drove by the Mahdah Oasis for many of our field trips to destinations along the base of the Hajar Mountains and, in recent years, we have noticed how the date palms around the outside of the oasis have died and been removed. Recent work to improve the falaj providing water to the oasis seems to have resulted in more water for the farms, though a significant proportion of the original oasis is now abandoned.

Friday 28/11 Afternoon walk to some of our favorite places in Wadi Agran.
Stops included:
-- the talc deposit in Wadi Hamed. The soft talc stone is located in a seam located near a small farm in Wadi Hamed. We investigated the talc and walked upstream to check out the plants and wildlife. Much of this area is impacted severely by quarrying operations and we like to visit from time to time to see how the plants and animals are adapting.
-- the spring. About a kilometer from the talc deposit is a small collection of farms fed by a relatively weak spring system and intermittent stream flow from a wadi. The spring is an excellent example of how farmers exploited every water resource available. The water, saturated with dissolved minerals, makes the small pools colorful and covered in 'ice sheets' as a result of evaporation. See also "**Geology**" below.



-- the village. We will walk upstream from the spring to an abandoned village with nice stone foundations.

Saturday 29/11 Dayhike to A'Dahir to I'lal (near Subaitah)
This is one of the mountain walks that Jodie developed earlier this year. This walk includes abandoned walking paths, animal tracks and some scrambling down into and out of wadis along the way. In our explorations in the mountains we have located countless structures, evidence of human activity. Some of these include structures that suggest hunting camps. Others are evidently associated with some sort of mining activity. Occasionally there are graves, fox traps and small animal shelters. Crescent-shaped piles of stones suggest small wind breaks that travelers would have used as protection against the wind while they slept or rested.



Tuesday 02/12: Due to National day an out-of-sequence trip into Fossil Valley and Buraimi tombs. Some magnificent geological formations, gecko eggs, hollow plants, a camel herd walking around the trees, a lot of remaining of the former sea ground creatures (shells, corals, etc.), finalized by widely unknown tombs of former population of the Buraimi area, up to 5.000 years old, covered with perfect weather conditions made a nice day for round 20 people.

Friday 05/12 Ramtha Oasis to Khudra Oasis, the long way. One of our interesting but a little more challenging mountain walks. This hike began in the small oasis community of Ramtha and follows a strong trail east into the mountains, crossing a deep wadi before hiking over a low pass into the Khudra catchment area. We returned to Khudra via the wadi, passing a remarkable geological feature we refer to as the chimneys . . . vertical shafts that remain like chimneys of conglomerate in the middle of the wadi bed. There is a lot of fresh water in the wadi but no pools suitable for swimming at the moment.



One of our frequent participant on hikes, Feng Wen from Abu Dhabi, has caught the curious faces of Qudrah children we met on the walk.

Saturday 06/12 Hamassa Oasis, Buraimi. The oases of Al Ain have seen considerable investment in recent years, providing ample water for the farmers and upgraded access roads inside each of the five large oases. The situation in Buraimi, just a few kilometers away, is considerably different. Hamassa is one of the two oases in Buraimi and features a spectacular collection of mud brick buildings. Many of these buildings were abandoned in the past 40 or 50 years. We will visit the old souq, some of the large buildings in the oasis, and other private houses on the perimeter of the oasis. There are only a handful of farms that have water so the contrast with oases in Al Ain is stark.

Monday 08/12 Eid Holiday: Daytrip to Oman: Copper smelting place, Structures in Wadi Farfar, Wadi Jizzi



Thursday 11/12 Moonwalk to "Big structure". A well prepared (by stones and flour) walk on a new and easier path has enjoyed the people participating.

(Pictures shows 'big structure valley' by day)



Friday 12/12

Drive to Al Wagan: the participants saw the difference between the unspoiled Oman area and the cultivated (irrigated) UAE area. A stop at some sand-dunes gives the possibility to climb up and enjoy the view over the dunes. A last stop took us to depression where salty water appears and where to find crystallized salt (desert rose).



Saturday 13/12

Explore Al Ain Wadi

Friday 19/12

Triple crescent hike

Saturday 20/12

National cleanup day: Jazeera oasis cleanup

Friday 26/12

Triple crescent hike to Jebel Sumaini

Saturday 27/12

Leisure trip to oasis

2009

Friday 09/01

Triple crescent hike to Jabal Abyar. 14 courageous members climbed up to the 790m peak and enjoyed a wonderful lookaround with perfect weather conditions.

Moonwalk to Musah Oasis and behind. 16 people (including 1 fearless nightswimmer) took part in this lovely (nearly-full) moonwalk.



Saturday 10/01

Morning trip to Zakher pools: bird watching, plants, etc.

For a variety of reasons, the wet area around the Zakher Pools has been expanding in recent months, bringing some of the migrating birds back and sparking an abundance of plant and insect activity.

Meetings

Neolithic discoveries on AKAB-island, Umm-al-Qwain



Presented on 11 November by Dr. Sophie Marie who is leading the excavations on Akab-island. Reminding the activities (former and actual) of French archeologists in the UAE, Sophie showed us in an interesting appearance about the difficulties and the results of the archeological site. Post-holes have been discovered, tools made from shells and remaining of fishes, crabs and dugong dugongs some 6,500 years old.

The same evening the auditors had the opportunity to purchase books and maps about the Middle-East during the book-fare courtesy of motivate bookshop.



Annual General Meeting

On 25 November our Annual General Meeting took place. Chairman Brien Holmes presented the actual members of the ENHG Al Ain chapter committee. There were no elections and all current Committee members agreed to continue.

A short statement for the Financial Status of the Chapter has been presented (apologized absent of the treasurer Simon Wall) by Brien; members who would like more details should contact Brien or Simon.

Again we want to say many thanks to the Manager of InterContinental Resort hotel who gives us space, hospitality and catering for our fortnightly events.

Socotra Island (Yemen)

A colorful and vivid presentation on 25 November, after our Annual General Meeting.

Hanne and Jens Eriksen show us unique pictures of their journey to Socotra Island, comparing the location similar to Galapagos islands, where endemic species (birds, lizards, spiders, etc.) can be found. They give us a mouthwatering story about the island, how to reach and what to look for the island, recommending the next best travel-time as the next Eid-al-fitr (September 09).

Please refer also to their webpage: www.BirdsOman.com



Influence of private collectors to information about biodiversity

Brigitte presented the importance of private collections on biodiversity research. She also discussed the status of the Al Ain collection of arthropods which she's curating. Watch for a summary of her paper and presentation in the next Newsletter.

EEG November's Newsletter

Emirates Environmental Group November Newsletter has a lot of interesting articles, hints and useful information, so don't hesitate to check it at www.eeg-uae.org if you missed it.

An early warning of threats of global warming

Thoreau is rediscovered as a Climatologist (Rick Friedman for The New York Times)

Studying the loss and change in plant species in Walden Pond. By CORNELIA DEAN

>> Published: October 27, 2008

The Warming of Walden



CONCORD, Mass. — Henry David Thoreau endorsed civil disobedience, opposed slavery and lived for two years in a hut in the woods here, an experience he described in "Walden." Now he turns out to have another line in his résumé: climate researcher.

He did not realize it, of course. Thoreau died in 1862, when the industrial revolution was just beginning to pump climate-changing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. In 1851, when he started recording when and where plants flowered in Concord, he was making notes for a book on the seasons.

Now, though, researchers at Boston University and Harvard are using those notes to discern patterns of plant abundance and decline in Concord — and by extension, New England — and to link those patterns to changing climate.

Their conclusions are clear. On average, common species are flowering seven days earlier than they did in Thoreau's day, Richard B. Primack, a conservation biologist at Boston University, and Abraham J. Miller-Rushing, then his graduate student, reported this year in the journal *Ecology*.

Working with Charles C. Davis, an evolutionary biologist at Harvard and two of his graduate students, they determined that 27 percent of the species documented by Thoreau have vanished from Concord and 36 percent are present in such small numbers that they probably will not survive for long. Those findings appear in the current issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

"It's targeting certain branches in the tree of life," Dr. Davis said. "They happen to be our most charismatic species — orchids, mints, gentians, lilies, iris."

Of the 21 species of orchids Thoreau observed in Concord, "we could only find 7," Dr. Primack said. From 1851 through 1858, Thoreau tracked the first flowerings of perhaps 500 species, Dr. Primack said. "He knew what he was doing, and he did it really systematically."

Dr. Primack and Dr. Miller-Rushing did their own surveys in 2004, 2005 and 2006. They also consulted notes from Pennie Logemann, a landscape designer who tracked flowering times from 1963 to 1993 as an aid to planning Concord gardens. And they looked at contributions by members of area plant, insect and bird clubs and the work of

additional participants in Concord's long line of passionate amateur naturalists, some of whose records are preserved in the Free Public Library here.

One of them, Richard J. Eaton, is best known to botanists for his 1974 book, "A Flora of Concord." Dr. Primack recalled that as a graduate student at Harvard, he had worked alongside Mr. Eaton in the university's natural history collection — curators relegated the two of them to the same obscure table. "He was just this very elderly man," Dr. Primack recalled. "Not a professor, an enthusiast. But he was a very, very good botanist. He used very good methods."

Another contributor, Alfred Hosmer, is more obscure, but his contribution is enormous: detailed notes he made in Concord from 1888 through 1902. "He was a storekeeper," Dr. Primack told a small group of graduate students as he gathered them around a table in a special collections room in the Concord library one recent morning. He opened a gray cardboard box, sifted through photocopies of Thoreau's notoriously hard-to-read notes and pulled out what looked like an ancient composition book. He turned to a page where an inventory of orchid species ended and one of irises began. The entries move across the page in tiny but precise script.

"You can imagine this as a storekeeper's ledger," Dr. Primack said. But Hosmer's plant nomenclature was more accurate than Thoreau's, he said. "Plus we can read his writing." According to Dr. Primack, Hosmer spent "15 years walking around Concord for several hours a day several times a week" making notes about plants. "He never wrote about why he was doing this," Dr. Primack said, "but he had known Thoreau when he was a boy. Hosmer was one of the first people who said Thoreau was a genius and not just a nut."

Dr. Primack said he had never heard of Hosmer until his interest in Thoreau led him to search for old journals, diaries and other records. "I started going to all these funny scientific societies we have," he said. "I was getting up in the 'new business' and telling people what I was looking for. I got a lot of leads, but most were not very useful. Then Ray Angelo told me about Hosmer."

Mr. Angelo, who stepped down recently as curator of vascular plants at the New England Botanical Club, is the author of a monograph, "Concord Area Trees and Shrubs." The eminent biologist Ernst Mayr once called him "the most knowledgeable student of the Concord flora" and today, when Dr. Primack and the other researchers are looking for this species or that in Concord, Mr. Angelo tells them where to find it. The most daunting challenge, though, was making sense of this kind of data

"There were a couple of big problems," Dr. Miller-Rushing, now at the University of Maryland, said in a telephone interview from Colorado, where he was studying mountain plants. "Thoreau had incredibly messy handwriting. That was a big difficulty." Also, he said, "in some cases he and Hosmer called the same species by different names. We had to figure all that out."

Their work with Dr. Davis and his students began then, after they heard the two give talks at Harvard on their efforts and convinced them additional analysis was necessary.

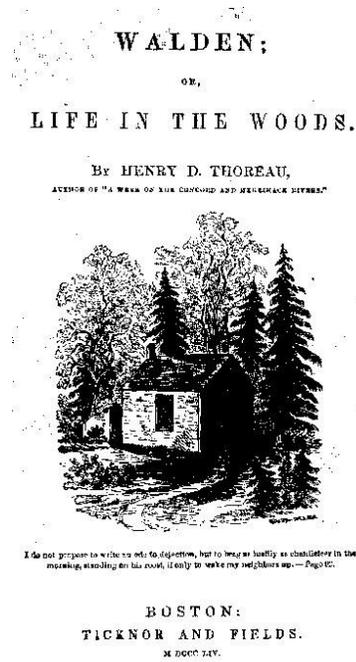
"We just treated each individual species as a data point," Dr. Primack said. "That was not the way to do it." Dr. Davis and two of his graduate students, Charles G. Willis and Brad Ruhfel, began looking at the species data from an evolutionary perspective including, for example, the relationship between species traits and abundance. "Those species that are falling out are more closely related than you would expect," Mr. Willis said.

As Dr. Davis put it, "certain branches of the tree of life are being lopped off." But when Dr. Davis and his colleagues began analyzing the data, things got off to a rough start. "It's actually a very specialized kind of analysis," Dr. Primack said. Mr. Willis "kept explaining what the analysis was showing, and I kept saying, 'I don't understand.'"

Once he did understand, he added, it became apparent that "a couple of times they had not done the analysis correctly because they did not understand the field data." Now, though, they have figured out how to communicate. "Climate change, ecology and evolutionary biology have been going their own separate ways," Mr. Ruhfel said. "We see now we have information we can share and really further the field."

Now the professors and their graduate students are on the trail of more data. For example, there is growing evidence that as birds change their migration patterns in response to climate change, they may no longer be in sync with the insect species they feed on. Elizabeth Bacon, another of Dr. Primack's graduate students, is combing Thoreau's notes on birds and the records of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, a local organization, to see what they can contribute.

Dr. Miller-Rushing worked this summer in the Rockies on whether plants that begin to flower earlier have more problems with late-season frost. Mr. Willis and Mr. Ruhfel are looking at which species are moving in to Concord to occupy niches vacated by vanished plants, and whether they come from "adjacent species pools," as Mr. Willis puts



it. The scientists say their research demonstrates the importance of simply watching the landscape and recording what occurs in it. And it demonstrates the importance of old records and natural history collections, Dr. Davis said. But in general, he said, there is little interest in devoting money, time and space to their preservation.

"It's hard to defend the space on major campuses," Dr. Davis said. "Eaton could not have prepared his 'Flora' unless Harvard University had maintained herbarium specimens. Hosmer's book was here in Concord for 100 years before anyone used it."

Bits 'n' Pieces Arabic with Amer

We introduce our new column: learning some Arabic words with kindly support of Amer.

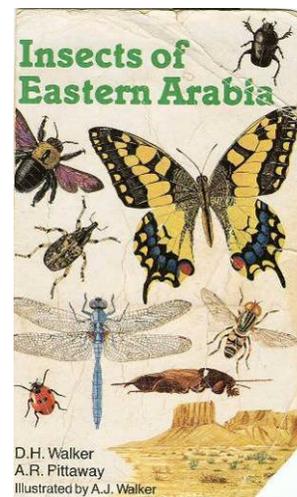
English	Arabic	English letters
Island	جزيرة	Jazeera
Wall	جدار أو سور	Jedar or Soor
Mud	طين	Teen
Room	غرفة	Ghorfah
Mosque	مسجد	Masjed
Cemetery	مقبرة	Maqbarah
Roof	سطح أو سقف	Sateh or Saqef
Well	بئر	Beer or Be'Ar

INSECTS

Insects of Eastern Arabia in PDF format – Bob Reimer

Finding materials to identify common insects in the UAE and Oman is very difficult. We have some information that was published in Tribulus, some in Fauna of Arabia, and more in books like *The Emirates: A Natural History* and the recently released *Terrestrial Environment of Abu Dhabi Emirate*. While Tony Van Harten's new *Arthropods of UAE* series will address the entomologist's needs for keys, it is difficult for the layman to use due to the taxonomic detail provided and will take many volumes to complete.

About the only accessible resource extant is *Insects of Eastern Arabia* authored by D. H. Walker and A. R. Pittaway with copious illustrations by A. J. Walker. Walker and Pittaway did many studies in Arabia, publishing in many journals. Tony Pittaway is an expert on Hawkmoths. *Insects of Eastern Arabia* was published in 1987 by Macmillan. Unfortunately, when the book didn't sell well, Macmillan pulped the remainders without offering them to the authors. Now it is almost impossible to obtain a copy as those that were sold are ensconced in libraries and private collections. While it is 30 years old and scientific knowledge of insect species in Eastern Arabia has grown tremendously, this book still provides a useful introduction to our local insects. Fortunately, a copy was held in the Al Ain Chapter's library. As you can perhaps see from the scan of the front cover of this copy, it is well used.



As I got interested in insects, I photographed the pages and built a PDF copy of the book. Later I had occasion to contact Mr. Pittaway on another topic and asked him if it might be possible to make the PDF available to others. He consulted Mr. Walker's heirs and let me know that all were enthusiastic about having the resource available again. As copyright holders, they have granted permission for us to post this on the ENHG web site. They are also trying to see if there are other sources available to build a better quality PDF. Apparently some of the plates were presented to Prince Abdullah Bin Faisal Bin Turki who sponsored the publication. For now, we have the version using the Al Ain Chapter's copy available at: <http://www.enhg.org/resources/other/IOEA.htm>

The file 14.2 mb, so you may want to save the file locally by right-clicking and saving the PDF rather than just clicking on the link.

Tony Pittaway maintains three sites that might be of interest:

- Spingiidae of the Western Palaearctic (<http://tpittaway.tripod.com/sphinx/list.htm>) which covers the hawkmoths of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East,
- Spingiidae of the Eastern Palaearctic (<http://tpittaway.tripod.com/china/china.htm>) which covers the hawkmoths of Siberia, Mongolia, China, Korea and Japan, and
- Saturniidae of Europe (<http://tpittaway.tripod.com/silk/satlist.htm>), the European members of silkmoths, a family of large moths that includes the Luna Moth.

GEOLOGY with Ben Jordan (formerly UAEU)

Blue Pool, Wadi Madbah, Oman



The blue color of the pools at Wadi Madbah are a result of the water reflecting the blue of the sky. The water is highly saturated in calcium (Ca) giving it a high pH. The high concentration is a result of groundwater dissolving limestone and then reaching the surface at the pools where it evaporates in the hot climate. As the water evaporates the calcium reacts with carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere to precipitate the mineral calcite. The calcite is white. As it forms it lines the sides and bottom of the pool. This whiteness, combined with the clarity of the water, increases the reflectivity, and thus the blueness, of the water.

PLANTS



Looks like a compact rush of wood but indeed it's a plant.

It is called *Anastatica hierochuntica*. It is also commonly known as the 'Rose of Jericho' according to Marijcke's Wildflower book. In Arabic there are many names, e.g. 'kaf maryam' or 'Hand of Mariam' according to Rob Western's Flora of the UAE.

What we see in the picture is the remains of the plant. It's an annual, flowering from February - May. Once the fruit matures, the plant dies and the branches curl up. This encloses the fruit, protecting the seeds. Only when it rains do this woody ball open and the seeds then have a chance to drop out and to the ground to germinate. The most common place to find this plant is on gravel plains at the base of mountains.

Dates for your diary	Links
<p>January 2009 20 Work shop 27 General meeting</p> <p>February 2009 03 Committee meeting 10 General meeting 12-13-14 Nizwa weekend 17 Work shop 20-21 Fossil Valley weekend 24 General meeting</p> <p>March 2009 03 Committee meeting 10 General meeting 17 Work shop 24 General meeting 28/29 IEW Inter Emirates Weekend (proposed)</p>	<p>Classical Music Concerts at Jahili Fort/Abu Dhabi Classics: www.abudhabi-classics.com</p> <p>Dragonflies!!!! IUCN Odonata Specialist Group</p> <p>Wildlife Middle East News: www.wmenews.com></p> <p>Desert oasis: http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/featured/desert-oasis/2257</p> <p>Mike Gillett's contribution to our website http://www.enhg.org/alain/mike/contrib.htm ></p>

Inter Emirates Weekend

The Inter Emirates Weekend (IEW) will be held on Thursday/Friday/Saturday 26/27th/28th March 2009. The following details were circulated by the organizers from the Dubai chapter:

Each year in March/April the UAE's three Natural History Groups – Emirates Natural History Group Abu Dhabi, Emirates Natural History Group Al Ain and the Dubai Natural History Group – get together for an educational yet social weekend involving a dinner and various activities and trips. It is a chance to meet up with people/old friends from the other groups. The event is organised annually by one of the groups in rotation. This year it is the turn of the Dubai Natural History Group.

IEW 2009 will be based at the Oceanic Hotel, Khor Fakkan and the programme will begin on Friday morning, 27th March. The hotel has made a block booking of rooms for the Thursday and Friday nights on a first-come first-served basis. However, in view of the increased tourism in Khor Fakkan and the peak season date of IEW, it will be necessary to confirm and guarantee your booking by the end of February 2009.

Hotel rates (per night) are:

Double Bed/Twin-Bedded Room – Dh 660 (inclusive of breakfast & tax).

Single Room – Dh 540 (inclusive of breakfast & tax).

Children below 12 years may stay free in their parents' rooms with meals 50% of cost.

Without breakfast, room rates are Dh 580 for Double Bed/Twin-Bedded Room and Dh 500 for Single Room.

Cost of an extra bed in a room for an adult Dh 120.

A suite can be booked but you need to ask the hotel.

On Friday evening there will be a buffet dinner (Dh 96 per person).

Packed lunches will be available for Friday and Saturday – please arrange these directly with the hotel once you have been supplied with your booking reference.

It has been arranged with the hotel that all reservations should be made through the DNHG. To make a reservation, please email Lena Linton on linton@mailme.ae with your requirements as regards rooms and buffet dinner. Lena will email you the booking reference and then your credit card information will need to be sent to the hotel. If unable to use credit card, then to send a cheque to given address.

On the evening of Friday 27th we will be holding the Inter-Emirates photographic competition.

Further information as regards activities for the Friday and Saturday will follow in due course.

DNHG Committee