



## Emirates Natural History Group Al Ain Chapter Newsletter 2009/03

Spring season has come with unusual hot weather followed by two weeks of sand- and rainstorms around Al Ain and Buraimi. Nevertheless field trips are very popular amongst our members and are usually scheduled every Friday and Saturday. The Inter Emirates Weekend in Khor Fakkan was one of the highlights in March, another Nizwa visit is planned for first May-weekend.

### 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:** 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](mailto:enhg@yahoo.com) (all Al A in chapter members)

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### Upcoming Events

May 01-02: 2<sup>nd</sup> Nizwa Weekend (more information see below)  
May 26: Photo competition

### Hikes

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

**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

#### Frequent 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.

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### 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:

**April 28 – Mike Gillett and Laurence Garey**

**May 12 (deadline for submittals for photo competition)**

**May 26 (photo competition)**

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## 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 05 May at 7:30 pm.

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## Photography Competition season 2008/2009

Reminder: You have time until May 12 (1<sup>st</sup> meeting at InterContinental Al Ain Resort) to submit your pictures for the competition.

For details about rules and regulations please refer to previous newsletter or look at our webpage.

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## 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 described the procedure in previous newsletters and it can also be seen on the webpage.

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## News

### Emirates Environmental Group

For the yearly dinner of the EEG one representative of the ENHG of Al Ain, has been invited. Our member Walter Cramerstetter took part and received in the name of ENHG Al Ain the award.



The reward has been handed over to our Environment members of our committee during the following Tuesday meeting:



## Walking and Hiking Trails in Al Ain

Town Planning Department is thinking about to install Walking Trails for residents, tourists and visitors through Al Ain city and Hiking Trails of different difficulties around Jebel Hafeet with signs of explanation about geology, plants and animals. Our chairman Brien briefed them in a meeting with a lot of information about the matter including literature, dvd's and points of interests.

We keep in touch for the further progress.

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## The Library

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

Our library database can be searched and visited under [www.librarything.com/catalog/enhg](http://www.librarything.com/catalog/enhg)

If you're looking for a publication, videotape or periodical, please contact Marybeth [mary.gaudette@gmail.com](mailto:mary.gaudette@gmail.com). We try to put an inventory list on our webpage so everybody can look for something they are interested in or something special they may be looking for. Any problems? – just ask Marybeth.

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. These are available to ENHG members only. You can subscribe at the general meetings for your collection.

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## What Happened Previous Weeks? Walks and Hikes

Some of the recent walks and hikes:

### Friday 06/03 Ras al Khaimah Dhow trip

We made our monthly trip to Ras al Khaimah to check on the progress of the large dhow (boom) under construction there. We will return to visit the site again in early March. Watch for email. Progress on the dhow can be seen at

<<http://www.enhg.org/resources/archives/rakdhow/rakdhow.htm>>

In the afternoon we visited Wadi Sily, an abandoned village close to the Oman border, situated in a grandiose mountainous scene. Some of the structures are going to be privately rebuild in order to keep the heritage of ancient village life



### Saturday 07/03

### Friday 13/03 Hike from Grape Oasis to Qutrah Oasis, followed by Qutrah oasis walk to watch blooming plants and trees



### Saturday 14/03

### Friday 20/03

### Saturday 21/03

**27/03 – 28/03 Inter Emirates Weekend in Khor Fakkan**

**Friday 03/04** Khabbayn – al Ilal



**Saturday 04/04** Ras al Khaimah Dhow visit

**Thursday 09/04** Full-Moon hike to Jebel  
lighttrapping



Quattara, BBQ, camping,



**Friday 10/04** Rainbow ridge hike

**Saturday 11/04** Subeitah Oasis – always a nice experience – the Oasis has no electricity, the walk on the falaj makes your heart beat, and at the end there's the pool with refreshing, clear water where water-rats have fun until the walk back to the cars, either along the falaj or in the wadi with additional stunning views.

**Friday 18/04** Kahl to Wadi Sharm Drive: 4 full-loaded 4WDs (with 17 adventure-hungry members) drove along rock- and sand tracks through different wadis behind Mahdah. Mike Gillett gave Information about water traps (for insects) and different acacias (in bloom), Bien explained the changing in some places to previous years.



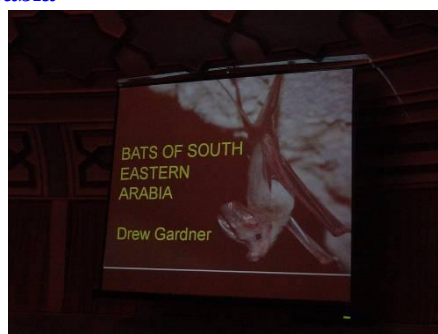
**Saturday 19/04** Wadi Hamad in Wadi Agran

## Meetings

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### 10 March: Bats of South-East Arabia

A very informative presentation of Drew Gardner, the Chairman of Abu Dhabi Chapter, gave us facts and figures about species and population of bats in UAE and Oman.



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### 24 March: Marine Life of UAE and Oman

A colorful and vivid presentation from Frank Gordon Kirkwood of Abu Dhabi NHG shows us what's happening below the (water-) surface: he's showing us fishes, mammals, reptiles, no-fish, hazards and pollution in the waters along the coast of UAE and Oman, some favorite diving spots and a lot of short video-clips bringing the sealife to life.



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### 14 April: Water Issues in the United Arab Emirates

This evening we had a more serious problem on talk: Water -- one of the most talked-about issues in the country where water resources are extremely limited but water consumption rates are among the highest in the world. Christophe Tourenq of the Emirates Wildlife Society and the World Wide Fund for Nature-UAE Project Office talked about water sources and consumption in GCC and UAE with related problems, dependencies and solutions.

The discussion after the presentation shows a deep interest of the audience in this matter.



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## Birds of Al Ain

### 08 April: Bird identifying work shop

Dave gave the curious audience a vivid power point presentation of locations in Al Ain where to view birds with pictures and typical voices of birds appearing at these places. Especially now after the massive rain of previous weeks there are a lot of "lakes" attracting the birds.

Here's a list of [Al Ain Likely Bird Species](#)

<b>Podicipediformes</b> <b>Grebes (Podicipedidae)</b> Little Grebe ( <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> ) <b>Pelecaniformes</b> <b>Cormorants (Phalacrocoracidae)</b> Great Cormorant ( <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> ) <b>Ciconiiformes</b> <b>Storks (Ciconiidae)</b> White Stork ( <i>Ciconia ciconia</i> ) <b>Ibises and Spoonbills (Threskiornithidae)</b>	<b>Apodiformes</b> <b>Swifts (Apodidae)</b> Common Swift ( <i>Apus apus</i> ) Pallid Swift ( <i>Apus pallidus</i> ) <b>Coraciiformes</b> <b>Rollers (Coraciidae)</b> Indian Roller ( <i>Coracias benghalensis</i> ) European Roller ( <i>Coracias garrulus</i> ) <b>Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)</b> Common Kingfisher ( <i>Alcedo atthis</i> ) <b>Bee-Eaters (Meropidae)</b>
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Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

### **Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns (Ardeidae)**

Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)  
Striated Heron (*Butorides striata*)  
Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*)  
Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)  
Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)  
Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)  
Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)  
Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)  
Western Reef Heron (*Egretta gularis*)

### **Phoenicopteriformes**

#### **Flamingos (Phoenicopteridae)**

Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)

### **Anseriformes**

#### **Ducks, Swans and Waterfowl (Anatidae)**

Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)  
Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)  
Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)  
Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)  
Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)  
Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)  
Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)  
Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)  
Eurasian Teal (*Anas crecca*)  
Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

### **Falconiformes**

#### **Falcons (Falconidae)**

Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) Barbary Falcon (*Falco pelegrinoides*)

#### **Osprey (Pandionidae)**

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

#### **Hawks, Eagles and Kites (Accipitridae)**

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)  
Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)  
Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*)  
Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*)

### **Galliformes**

#### **(Phasianidae)**

Sand Partridge (*Ammoperdix heyi*)  
Grey Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*)

### **Gruiformes**

#### **Rails and Coots (Rallidae)**

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)  
Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*)

### **Charadriiformes**

#### **Stilts and Avocets (Recurvirostridae)**

Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) Pied

#### **Plovers and Lapwings (Charadriidae)**

Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)  
Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)  
Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)  
Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

#### **Snipes, Sandpipers and Phalaropes (Scolopacidae)**

Green Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*)

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops persicus*) European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*)

### **Hoopoes (Upupidae)**

Common Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

### **Piciformes**

#### **Woodpeckers (Picidae)**

Eurasian Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*)

### **Passeriformes**

#### **Shrikes (Laniidae)**

Brown Shrike (*Lanius cristatus*)  
Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*)  
Isabelline Shrike (*Lanius isabellinus*)  
Lesser Grey Shrike (*Lanius minor*)  
Southern Grey Shrike (*Lanius meridionalis*)  
Woodchat Shrike (*Lanius senator*)  
Masked Shrike (*Lanius nubicus*)

#### **Orioles (Oriolidae)**

Eurasian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*)

#### **Crows and Jays (Corvidae)**

Brown-necked Raven (*Corvus ruficollis*)

#### **Swallows and Martins (Hirundinidae)**

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)  
Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)  
Pale Crag Martin (*Ptyonoprogne obsoleta*)  
Common House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)  
Red-rumped Swallow (*Cecropis daurica*)

#### **Larks (Alaudidae)**

Desert Lark (*Ammomanes deserti*)  
Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*)  
Black-crowned Sparrow-lark (*Eremopterix nigriceps*)

#### **Cisticolas and Allies (Cisticolidae)**

Graceful Prinia (*Prinia gracilis*)

#### **Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae)**

White-eared Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucotis*)  
Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*)  
White-spectacled Bulbul (*Pycnonotus xanthopygos*)

#### **Old World Warblers (Sylviidae)**

Clamorous Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus stentoreus*)  
Eurasian Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)  
Marsh Warbler (*Acrocephalus palustris*)  
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (*Iduna pallida*)  
Upcher's Warbler (*Hippolais languida*)  
Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)  
Plain Leaf Warbler (*Phylloscopus neglectus*)  
Barred Warbler (*Sylvia nisoria*)  
Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)  
Desert Whitethroat (*Sylvia minula*)  
Asian Desert Warbler (*Sylvia nana*)  
Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)  
Menetries's Warbler (*Sylvia mystacea*)

#### **Babblers (Timaliidae)**

Arabian Babbler (*Turdoides squamiceps*)

#### **Starlings (Sturnidae)**

Bank Myna (*Acridotheres ginginianus*) Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*)

#### **Thrushes (Turdidae)**

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)  
Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)

<p>Common Snipe (<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>)  Spotted Redshank (<i>Tringa erythropus</i>) Common  Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)  Marsh Sandpiper (<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>)  Common Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>)  Green Sandpiper (<i>Tringa ochropus</i>)  Wood Sandpiper (<i>Tringa glareola</i>)  Common Sandpiper (<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>)  Little Stint (<i>Calidris minuta</i>)  Temminck's Stint (<i>Calidris temminckii</i>)  Ruff (<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>)  Red-necked Phalarope (<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>)</p> <p><b>Courasers and Pratincoles (Glareolidae)</b>  Collared Pratincole (<i>Glareola pratincola</i>)</p> <p><b>Gulls and Terns (Laridae)</b>  Common Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)  Slender-billed Gull (<i>Larus genei</i>)  Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)  Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>)</p> <p><b>Pterocloriformes</b></p> <p><b>Sandgrouse (Pteroclididae)</b>  Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (<i>Pterocles exustus</i>)</p> <p><b>Columbiformes</b></p> <p><b>Doves and Pigeons (Columbidae)</b>  Rock Dove (<i>Columba livia</i>)  Eurasian Collared Dove (<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>)  Laughing Dove (<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>)</p> <p><b>Psittaciformes</b></p> <p><b>Parrots and Macaws (Psittacidae)</b>  Rose-ringed Parakeet (<i>Psittacula krameri</i>)</p> <p><b>Caprimulgiformes</b></p> <p><b>Nightjars (Caprimulgidae)</b>  European Nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>)</p>	<p><b>Chats (Muscicapidae)</b>  Bluethroat (<i>Luscinia svecica</i>)  Common Nightingale (<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>)  Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>)  Black Redstart (<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>)  Common Redstart (<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>)  Whinchat (<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>)  Common Stonechat (<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>)  Isabelline Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>)  Northern Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>)  Red-tailed Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe chrysopygia</i>)  Pied Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>)  Desert Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>)  Hume's Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe albonigra</i>)  Hooded Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe monacha</i>)  Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush (<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>)  Blue Rock Thrush (<i>Monticola solitarius</i>)</p> <p><b>Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)</b>  Spotted Flycatcher (<i>Muscicapa striata</i>)</p> <p><b>Sunbirds (Nectariniidae)</b>  Purple Sunbird (<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>)</p> <p><b>Sparrows, Snowfinches and Allies (Passeridae)</b>  House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)  Streaked Weaver (<i>Ploceus manyar</i>)</p> <p><b>Waxbills (Estrildidae)</b>  Indian Silverbill (<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>)</p> <p><b>Pipits and Wagtails (Motacillidae)</b>  Yellow Wagtail (<i>Motacilla flava</i>) Citrine Wagtail (<i>Motacilla citreola</i>) Grey Wagtail (<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>) White Wagtail (<i>Motacilla alba</i>) Tawny Pipit (<i>Anthus campestris</i>) Long-billed Pipit (<i>Anthus similis</i>) Red-throated Pipit (<i>Anthus cervinus</i>) Water Pipit (<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>)</p> <p><b>Finches and Hawaiian Honeycreepers (Fringillidae)</b>  Trumpeter Finch (<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>)</p> <p><b>Buntings and New World Sparrows (Emberizidae)</b>  Corn Bunting (<i>Emberiza calandra</i>)  Ortolan Bunting (<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>)  House Bunting (<i>Emberiza striolata</i>)</p>
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### Ancient discoveries in Al Ain

Archaeological discoveries in Al Ain  
Middle East Online [UK], 2009-03-11

A glazed pottery jar and a part of an extension of a falaj (waterchannel) have been unearthed in Al Ain city centre during a building development carried out by the Municipality. Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) archaeological team checked the site using sensors following the jar's discovery in the works area. The important discovery was made in the surrounding area of Sheikh Salama Mosque, which is being rebuilt. Some pottery dating back to the late Islamic era was unearthed among layers of an old cleavage that dates back to the same period of time and other pieces which date back to Umm al-Nar civilization found in the soil layers above the falaj.

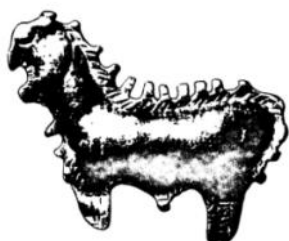


<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/culture/?id=30892>

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## History of ENHG

### **EMIRATES** **Natural History Group** **(ABU DHABI)**



### **BULLETIN**

No. 1  
March 1977

P.O. Box 270  
ABU DHABI  
U. A. E.

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Members have heard mention of 'The Bulletin' from time to time, occasionally from someone with a far-away look in the eye.

The Bulletin began in March 1977, just a few months after the Emirates Natural History Group began in Abu Dhabi. The first editor was Jeni Stewart-Smith, wife of the first Chairman, John Stewart-Smith. For most of its existence, however, the Bulletin was edited by Rob Western who, along with 'Bish' Brown and Annette Allen, are recognized as the individuals who provided the enthusiasm, expertise and leadership to allow the ENHG to mature.

"The idea of forming a Natural History Group within the United Arab Emirates has been mooted several times in the past but it took the combined talents of Annette Allen and Bish Brown to actually get this group going -- and we seem to have got off to a really good start with almost 100 members already," John Stewart-Smith wrote in the Introduction to the first Bulletin.

"We do not (yet!) aim to produce a purely scientific journal. The only criterion will be 'interest'. The Bulletin is designed as a link between members of the ENHG, and also between the ENHG and other similar groups. Some of the articles published may provocative (sic); that is to say we do not intend to print only fully documented scientific papers. If you have something to add to what you have read in this Bulletin or if you disagree with some statement please write to the Editor and tell her about it."

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The first issue reflected the fact that Abu Dhabi city was located on an island on the shores of the Arabian Gulf. Topics discussed in that first issue had a decidedly marine flavor: 'Dugongs in Abu Dhabi Waters'; 'Waders in the UAE -- Part I'; 'Sand, Subkha and Shells'; 'Fishes of Abu Dhabi I'; and 'Stalked Barnacles in Abu Dhabi'.

In future issues, ornithology played a significant role reflecting the interests of some of the key members of the chapter in its early years.

It would be the influence of Bish and Rob that would dominate the majority of issues over the years, the variety of topics reflecting the eclectic interests of the two men. They were at home talking about plants or snakes or flint-making or sea turtles. While individuals like Mike Crumbie, one of the Abu Dhabi chapter's most influential Chairmen, had a disproportionate effect on the direction and competence of the chapter, Bish and Rob set the standard for the quality and breadth of material published in the Bulletin.

In its lifetime, The Bulletin was a 'members only' document though complementary copies would have been distributed to interested parties in the UAE and abroad, especially organizations and agencies that were interested in specific aspects of the natural history of the Gulf.

Remarkably, the last issue of The Bulletin -- number 42 in November of 1990 -- makes no mention of the fact that there would not be another. Reflecting how the publication had evolved, the final issue contained articles by Rob ('Flora in the United Arab Emirates') and



Bish ('Ticks') and a comprehensive list of birds recorded offshore. But the majority of the issue was devoted to a comprehensive study of the 'Natural History of Merawah Island' by a team of ENHG members, the last of a series of island studies and one of a number of 'team' projects undertaken over the years.

#### *Rob*

One of these group studies had been the natural history of Jebel Hafit, the first of a series of studies that led to the publication of the book of the same title now sold to members and containing detailed information on all aspects of the Abu Dhabi emirate landmark.

And so began the history of The Bulletin, produced three times each year with a total of 42 issues circulated to members.



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Publication of the issues of The Bulletin were, by today's standard, remarkably basic. It was many years before a photograph was included; until then, the publisher could only print black-and-white line drawings. Details of exactly how the issues were printed is not known but it appears that each page was "cut" into a stencil and copies produced on a spirit duplicator, perhaps a Gestetner. Such were the limited options in the days before computers and photo copiers.

All the text was in a standard Courier font, suggesting the typists prepared each page on a manual typewriter.

It was several years in existence before the first articles appeared in Arabic. Over the years, The Bulletin covered every topic imaginable and contains, some would argue, the best baseline data available on the natural history of the UAE, or at least one corner of the country. The exploits of the Abu Dhabi chapter were not limited to the island of Abu Dhabi; field trips were held as far away as Gail, Suweihan and Fossil Valley. Articles often reflected topics covered by guest speakers, notably those who reported on the archaeological work underway in the various emirates.

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For natural history group members today, the 42 issues of The Bulletin represent a valuable resource with countless suggestions on interesting places to visit. In November of 1984, for example, Rob Western reported on an early Islamic copper mine and smelting operation in Wadi Safarfir in the Ras al Khaimah enclave just outside of Hatta. Written at a time before handheld GPS devices, the references to the exact location of the site were minimal. Today, in the nearest community, Huwaylat, no one seems to know where this wadi exists. The mine shaft remains, as do many of the fields of slag, but the smelting site discussed in the article has been destroyed by farm development.

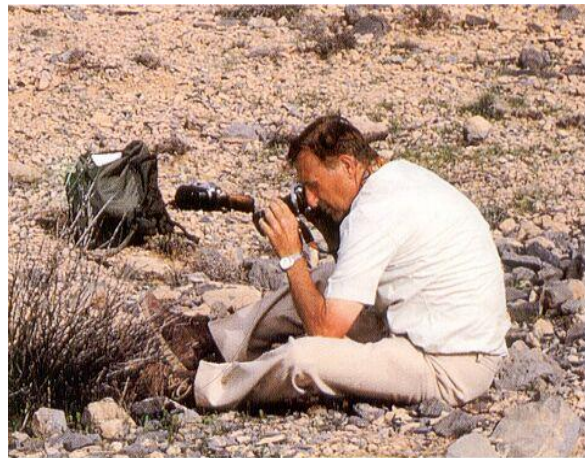
Closer to home, the tombs on Qarn bint Saud -- aka Bida bint Saud -- were mapped and studied. The drawings were later used to reconstruct the tombs after the original structures were bulldozed off the top. The article in the November, 1982 issue, contained some of the most reliable data available.

Pictographs, rare in most of the UAE, were reported in March 1987 and November 1983.

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Other articles explained the way sand dunes were formed, how the fog that blankets Abu Dhabi city is created, the geology of the Hajar mountains, how flint was worked, how to identify plants, and how to collect and preserve insects.

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*Bish Brown*

Copies of The Bulletin are rare these days, one of the reasons why it was decided to put the information on the Internet and make it available to anyone interested in the natural history of the region. The reproduction began with volunteers typing articles into the computer, made necessary because the copies available were photocopies of photocopies of relatively crudely produced publications. As a result, OCR (optical character recognition) software struggled to recognize the characters when reproduction began; fortunately, by the time only 15 or 20 copies remained to be copied, OCR software and scanners were better able to distinguish characters. Today, illustrations are being rescanned, cleaned and the lettering replaced so that the graphics are closer to the original quality.

The Internet allows The Bulletin to remain alive and a useful resource. For ENHG members, The Bulletin has been replaced by Tribulus, where material is more rigorously edited and the production reflects the digital information age of today. Copies of both publications are available on the ENHG website.

## Flora's corner - on closer inspection...

Contributed by Jodie

**Cuscuta planiflora** (common names include small seed dodder, small seeded alfalfa dodder, red dodder or the general Cuscuta spp. name of love vine or strangleweed) is a parasitic plant that starts off with its own root system, however, once it has attached itself to its host plant (through the growth of haustoria or rootlike outgrowths) the roots of C. planiflora die off. C. planiflora is an annual, flowering between Feb-April and generally if you find it on one plant, you'll find it on others within the seed dispersal area.

Some species of Cuscuta have specific hosts while others, like C. planiflora, don't seem to be particularly bothered what they attach themselves to. Marijcke records 8 host plants for C. planiflora<sup>1</sup> although I have seen it on a number of other plants as well. In 2001 C. planiflora was recorded on canola and lupin crops in Australia<sup>2</sup> and has been recorded on alfalfa crops in Iran. It can be a problem as it has an impact upon the size of its host plant and is difficult to eradicate as it entwines itself like a spider's web on its host and its seeds are generally then collected along with the crop and it continues to spread<sup>3</sup>.

I would like to compile a database of the occurrence of C. planiflora in this area. It would be greatly appreciated if people could let me know where/when they have found it, preferably accompanied by a photograph of the whole host plant along with a close-up. Obviously a GPS reading would be great although a description of the area in which it was found would also be good. This information can be sent to me at [enviromailaa@gmail.com](mailto:enviromailaa@gmail.com).

A great website for more information about Cuscuta is <http://www.main.nc.us/naturenotebook/plants/dodder.html>



Cuscuta planiflora at work



Close up of C.planiflora

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1 See Marijcke Jongbloed. 2003. Wildflowers of the UAE p318.

2 See [http://members.iinet.net.au/~weeds/ww\\_update.pdf](http://members.iinet.net.au/~weeds/ww_update.pdf)

3 See also <http://www.main.nc.us/naturenotebook/plants/dodder.html> for more information about the effects of C. planiflora on its host.

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## An Omani in USA

Yet another story of our former member Khutooma, this time from his stay in USA:

### Hiking with Tom and Anne in the American Canyons

By Khudooma Al Na'imi

I arrived to the United States of America from the United Kingdom in the 27th January, 2009 to attend the American Academy of Forensic Sciences conference. I decided in 24th February to take a bus to visit Tom and Anne Weeks after I get invitation from them. I know Tom and Anne from the Emirates Natural history Group in Al Ain. They are working in North Arizona as volunteer in an Indian reservation museum.

#### First day:

The travel by bus was long; it took 13 hours from Denver city in Colorado State to St. George city in Utah State. This part of the trip was mostly in the night and I reached St. George at 8:15 am, at MacDonald restaurant. As I was waiting for my order, I surprised by a voice from my back saying "Salam Alikum Khudooma", I turned back and it was Tom, and he give me a hug, and saying "welcome and good that you make it". Tom changed a little since last time I saw him in Al Ain. After breakfast, and to use the time wisely, Tom take me with his car to the city called Leeds in Utah, then to a national park nearby called Red Clift. He commented later that the National Parks has an important value in the American public life as they are consider a safe haven for natural resources and historical monuments.

#### Red Clift National Park:

General rules

There is a fee you need to pay to enter the park, by stopping on marked location without a guard and filling a form with your car number and butting little fees in an envelope and insert it in a box. This well helps the park rangers to know who enter the park, for safety, security, funding, services, and statistical purposes. Other parks also has list you need to fill it up if you are hiking in them, by reporting the time when you enter, group number, exit time, and any notes you like to report, so the guard will look for the hikers if they did not sign out.

Inside the park Tom show me some of the natural wild plants, and what their usage. The park has red mountains, from hard texture red sand, with beautiful architectures made through the years through erosion factors. A river is running in the middle which has greenish water due to the algae present, you can hear the sounds of this river from its running force between the rocks. This was the only thing you can hear in this quite place. In addition to the voices of passing hiking groups.

We moved later to the red Clift archaeological site, which is an American Indian monument which represented by adjacent large holes in the ground in a top of a hill supported from inside with stone walls. It was used in the past time by the American Indians for food storage such as corn. The sand in our way was soft and wet from rains in the last days. Some shrubs grow also in it, a typical site of an American wild desert.

Waking and smelling the land air remember me by the desert back home after rain time. We drove later to a shop to get our lunch and water, which allow me to change from cold heavy clothes which I came with, to lighter clothes as the weather was warmer than Denver.

#### Zion National Park:

Our next target is to visit the Zion Park, in Utah. I asked Tom, what the meaning of Zion, he said it means the land which God promised and it has a religious meaning. We stopped for short time in the visitor centers. This park has beautiful mountain summits ascend toward a blue sky, and canyons running the middle (the word of canyon is similar to Wadi in Arabic). A group of mountain Peaks in Zion parks called Court of the Patriarchs were names by Abraham, Isaac, Moroni and Jacob.

Zion Park in summer, Tom said, is full with people, and you are not allowed to use your car in it, and a bus used to transport people inside it. The road was constructed by reddish materials in color as the mountain around it. We took our lunch in a table surrounded by trees and High Mountain sends their shadow on us.

The second stop was the weeping rock, which has a water streams and dropping from the top, it's a larger version of the Hanging Gardens in Jabal Qattar in Buraimi (Oman). Steps were build for the tourists to walk on them until the mountain side, and cold water drops will hit your head as you cross them. The drops clear color and sun rays will mix as look to them from inside to form flying diamonds. There are also several signs in your way up, which introduce the plants, names, and their general information to the visitors, which is an important idea. We could not go to the end of the Zion Park as it was closed due probably to snow fill out risk. In our walk we get greetings from a group of students pass beside us, as friendly sings from the people, the greeting which people use here are "Hi, Hello, How are you, or how do you do". If you said thank you for a help you get they could say "You bet" which mean you may rest assured from my help. In north of England they greet you some time by saying "alright" as short of "are you alright?". We noticed in our way out several deer's grazing in the park, they feel safe and used to the people and the cars around them. After that we drove for East Zion of Checkerboard Mesa Canyon, we get to it through crossing a long tunnel in the mountain. Parts of that mountain also have some snow covering them. We noticed the police searching for a missing person in that area, as he/she parked his car for more 24 hours in the Natural Park which is not allowed. We hiked in the Angle's landing mountain. We walk in small canyon to see American Indian rock art, which represent a historic document of their life stories and open library printed in rocks surface.

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There is sign near the stone art which express to the visitor to care about the place and not touch the stone with that art to keep it safe from the damage.

### **Going to Arizona and Anne bread story:**

The time is reaching now the sun set, so we made our way to Arizona, Kaibab city, and from it we enter the American Indian reservation where Tom and Anne are working as volunteer rangers which called Pipe Spring National monument. I met Anne in their home as she was waiting us, and it was nice to meet her again. In dinner we have some of her homemade bread. Anne mention the story of here yeast strain which she use in making the bread. One day she mixed wheat with water to make wheat sponge in the museum fort, and a strain of yeast as she said come to the bread from there. That strain is special that it produces good type of bread. She keep the yeast strain inside a jar in her kitchen with wheat and water to keep them growing and take from it when she want to make bread. She takes them with her to Ohio state when she goes home, and also gave some of this yeast strain to her neighbors. The dinner chatting were great and I went to sleep early in that night to be reading for the next day adventure with Tom and Anne.

### **Second day:**

Breakfast:

This is my second day of my visit to Tom and Anne, 26 February 2009. It was a beautiful day to wake up in an American Indian reservation, in a federal property, with its quietness and peace. After taking the breakfast, Anne made for us hot bread with eggs. Tom introduce for me the Prickly pear cactus syrup, which is unique and cultural food in the southwestern desert of the USA, it's made from the deep red flower fruit of cactus plants. Mostly collected and prepared by the American Indian. We notice some species of cactus in Buraimi (Oman) during the ENHG hiking trips, but they are smaller than the species which are in the Arizona.

### **Pipe Museum visit and meeting Benn:**

I mention to Tom before I come to visit him that I like to meet the American Indian who we heard and read about them. In your arrival also in Denver airport you will be welcomed by American Indian large photos, music and singing, which still in my mind. Pipe spring is like an oasis in the desert. It's surrounded by few mountain, and large open area of sand with shrubs.

Tom takes me then to the museum to meet Benn, The American Indian who is working in the museum. Benn has two braids of hair in both his side of his head, which remember me by some of the older Arabic Bedouin trip men. During work he wears the green ranger uniform. He is very respectable man between his trip members of the Paiute (name of the trip) and his friends. Benn is well known by his wisdom and historical and cultural knowledge about the American Indian. Benn also known also for the traditional American Indian healing practice such as the sweat lodge.

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Tom said to Benn this is my friend from Oman and he want to talk to you, I was happy to meet Benn and to talk with him. As Benn was little busy, Tom take me to show me part of the museum collection and Mormon historic fort which is within the museum, In our way out Tom notice a blade eagle on the top of one of the trees, and he was very excited and he run back to the museum to mention to Benn about it, as it's a special occasion to see it. Blade eagle is the national symbol of the USA.

Tom show me the fort, from inside and mention its story. It has many things inside it such as water spring, bed rooms, kitchen, cheese preparation equipments, and telegraph wires cables. There was a big book of the bible, Tom said in old time the bible was a family history book also, as they write the date of birth and death of the family members. The fort has water pool out site formed from the water coming from the inside spring. Some birds of ducts were swimming in it. There was an old wood wagon beside it, with big wheels which has metallic sheet covering its external part, that touch the ground, as protecting when it run in the road similar to the horse shoes.

There is a mountain next to the fort, which Tom walks with me to it. I noticed several plants species were growing there; each species has a small sign beside it which introduce the plant name and general note about it to the visitor as we saw in Zion Park.

We return back to the museum and I had a chance to talk with Benn. I mentioned to Benn about some of the similarities which I found between the Arabic Bedouins and the American Indians and he was surprised, and there was interesting conversation between us about the meaning of spirit. He mentioned later that from their old stories that an evil man is buried in an area in the reservation and a stone was put over his grave and spirit to avoid its escape. If somebody removes this stone, this evil man spirit can cause harm. We invited Benn to dinner in Tom & Anne house before we leave for more sites seeing.

### **The north part of the Grand Canyon, Arizona:**

As the time was 10 am, it was late to take a long drive to Utah to visit another national park, so Tom & Anne decided to take me to see the northern part of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, which is a wide valley running in middle of it the Colorado river. Tom said the they keep peanut butter and cracker in their car as food which they take in case they stopped in snow storm or during hiking trips. Cracker is a type of biscuit.

We drove through Kaibab national park and then we crossed beautiful red mountains and cleft in our way to see the northern part of the Grand Canyon. We stopped on a bridge over the Colorado River in Arizona, and we saw two condor birds resting over the bridge. We drove to a closer position to be able to touch the Colorado River. We met group of men who are called rafters, who will raft in the river of Colorado for around 30 days without stop. Their boat is full with equipments and food for this long and challenging trip.

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We reached later the Lonely Dell Ranch, build in 1871, which include an old ranch house, cemetery, It has an orchard trees, and agriculture old equipments. A river of Paria which has greenish and yellow color from mixing with sand is running it. Paria will join later with Colorado River, and both rivers will move side by side with a distinct color for each of them for some distance. It's a glorious feeling when you stand looking to the river.

#### **An evening with Benn:**

We returned before the sunset. Benn come to visit us in Tom & Anne accommodation house in pipe spring, in the back of the museum. It was nice chance to talk with Benn. I got an American Indian short photos book, and I was pointing to Benn how there is many similarities between the American Indian and the Arab Bedouin life style. During the dinner which Anne cooks we had an interesting discussion about culture, and modern time obstacles which face the American Indian. Benn said later to reach a high spiritual stage we need to eat less, to let our mind and body be in balance.

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Going back to Colorado:

In the 27 of January early morning Tom take me to St. George (Utah) to be in the bus to Denver (Colorado), we took around 1 h driving. We talk in our way about different subjects, such as how hard was on the people in old time to travel on these desert with their wagons, and the cultural and religious life of the people of Utah. Tom was interested also to hear some of the forensic stories . Tom said you saw places in your visit that most of the American did not have a chance to see. Tom give me a huge before he leave me to ride my bus, and said send my greetings to the ENHG, then he said "Ma'al Salama" in loud voice.

First when Tom invited me to visit him in Arizona, I said why do I leave the civilization in big cities and go to wild and desert places. In the end I understand that I learn many things from this Wild West visit which civilization cannot offer. These are the most exiting two days from my visit to the United States and it run as dream.

After I came to Colorado, I moved to the city of Boulder to do a short research in the University of Colorado at Boulder, Anthropology department. My visit to the United States is interesting until now from different sides, culturally, natural history and scientifically. As few people will have all this in short time. I am plans to leave the United States in early April to return back the UAE.

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**Pictures of his excursion can be seen on our webpage:**

#### **Reference of interest:**

<http://www.sgcity.org/>

<http://www.utahoutdooractivities.com/redcliffs.html>

<http://www.nps.gov/pisp/>

<http://www.nps.gov/zion/>

<http://www.zionpark.org/foundation>

<http://chilechews.blogspot.com/2008/08/tuna-wrangling-aka-processing-prickly.html>

<http://www.nps.gov/pisp/>

<http://www.nps.gov/pisp/planyourvisit/virtual-tours-windsor-castle.htm>

[http://www.utah.com/nationalparks/zion/angels\\_landing.htm](http://www.utah.com/nationalparks/zion/angels_landing.htm)

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## Inter Emirates Weekend

A spotlight-report from the IEW Dhow trip from Anette, our member from New Zealand:

### The Dibba Dhow Trip (Khor Fakkan ENGH Dubai inter Emirates weekend)

We were supposed to camp the night before... on the Sandy Beach Resort Beach (what else?), listening to the waves crashing on the shoreline. Living in landlocked Al Ain you try to conjure up this serene scenario in your mind. Coming from a country with easy access to the Pacific Ocean you DO miss it dearly!!

Then came the weather forecast for most of the UAE, a very rare one for this part of the world; thunderstorms and rain for most of the weekend. Typical! The decision was easy, the tent stayed at home.....

The alarm clock was set for 6 am on Friday and managed to get away at a reasonable time. The weather looked okay!

After driving through Masaafi, seriously big clouds formed and it rained large droplets going over the 'mountain' pass before descending to the coast. We were feeling very pleased with ourselves having left the tent at home!

Dibba looked wet with huge puddles everywhere.

After extensive cruising through Dibba, following the downloaded map, we figured at last we had to cross the Oman border to get to our destination, the Al Marsa harbour.

A large ENHG crowd had already gathered, trying to shelter from the rain shower. Most of us had to use our rain coats for the first time since our arrival, August last year. It felt like..... being at home.

The harbour is pleasant enough with a large fleet of little fishing boats and a few touristy dhows anchored side by side, sheltered from the elements by rock walls.

It was time to board. We were met by a very friendly crew and the captain and were informed there is tea and coffee at our disposal..... rather welcomed by those who hadn't had their 'fix' for the day yet.

The skies looked menacing with thick thunder clouds packed above the mountains. Thank goodness we didn't go camping (Carrefour tents are not designed to keep the rain out I believe, only sand!)

Cruising out of the harbour we were soon treated to a true spectacle. The colour of the sky was like ink, then HUGE flashes of lightning zig-zagged above the mountain ranges. What a sight! On the top deck it was a scramble

for the dry spots (few and far between). Those who thought had secured themselves a lovely comfortable deck chair had to vacate their treasured seats quickly.

More rain coats emerged once more from the soggy back packs. More thunder and lightning, then the wind came up. The coffee and tea must have been stirring inside the stomachs a little..... Cameras tried to catch the lightning, thank goodness for digital photography!!

Then it all cleared up and the rain coats soon became too hot.

The coast line is quite spectacular with rugged, bare hills touching the sea, their structures occasionally intercepted by little beaches.

The whole area was pretty much void of any wildlife; no dolphins, a few birds and the occasional shoal of little red fish. Suppose they were all hiding, or maybe it was that 'red tide' we saw a few traces off.

We anchored in a sheltered bay where we were presented with choices; swim, go ashore, or stay on board. Soon quite a crowd emerged in their swim suits and there was great hilarity this as colourful crowd descended into the little boat that was towed behind the dhow.

More hilarity trying to get ashore jumping into the water by the beach.

The beach gave access to a small fishing village with stone dwellings beside and a tidal inlet. Of course the beach was coloured by the inevitable plastic bags and what else..... water bottles.

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Not much else to report here. Another scramble back on the boat quickly followed by quite a delicious lunch enjoyed by all. As people do during a weekend, a siesta for some, making new friends for others, just bobbing around in the bay. Some went for another swim, others had a go in the kayaks. One lady lost her prescription glasses and one of the kind crew quickly put on his scuba bottles etc. and miraculously re-surfaced wearing the glasses! What a guy.

We were back by four, after cruising a little closer to the shoreline. We viewed an amazing eco-style hotel perfectly blending with its location. That would be great place to stay, for all of us..... at ??????beach. I hate to think (Evason Hide away??)

Our return coincided with the returning of the fishing fleet. Many varieties of fish were on display and already being chopped up into pieces and packed in ice.

That night, after the lovely ENGH Buffet, enjoyed by all, we stayed in a lovely clean hostel with four girls in a bunk room. Right beside, a mosque. Who needs an alarm clock?



Annette

## Charles Darwin's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, 150 years of his evolution theory

Dates for your diary	Links
<p>April 2009</p> <p>20 Pinning night</p> <p>21 Work shop- Knapping night</p> <p>21 'Green Day' at the Al Ain Men's College.</p> <p>24 Earth day, weekend at EMEG, Ghantoot <a href="mailto:info@emeg.ae">info@emeg.ae</a>.</p> <p>28 General meeting</p> <p>May 2008</p> <p>01/02 Nizwa weekend</p> <p>05 Committee meeting</p> <p>12 General meeting (deadline photo competition)</p> <p>19 Work shop</p> <p>26 Photo competition</p>	<p><b>Dragonflies!!!!</b> <a href="#">IUCN Odonata Specialist Group</a></p> <p><b>Wildlife Middle East News:</b> <a href="http://www.wmenews.com">www.wmenews.com</a>&gt;.</p> <p><b>Desert oasis:</b> <a href="http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/featured/desert-oasis/2257">http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/featured/desert-oasis/2257</a></p> <p><b>Mike Gillett's contribution to our website</b> <a href="http://www.enhg.org/alain/mike/contrib.htm">http://www.enhg.org/alain/mike/contrib.htm</a> &gt;.</p>