On Wednesday 15th February 2017, Dr Junid and I, organized a field-ringing session for the passerines at Al Qudra Lake. The lake is in the Al Marmoum Desert Conservation Reserve, one of the largest protected areas in Dubai, declared as such in 2014, by HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President and Ruler of Dubai.

Al Qudra Lake is one of the oldest artificial lakes in the reserve, and is host to many populations of migratory and resident birds. It is close to Bab Al Shams Hotel and is supported by sewage water from the Jebel Ali Treatment Plant. The lake is a favourite site for bird watchers within the reserve.

We headed towards the lake during the early morning, in order to erect the mist nets, prior to bird foraging activities, which occur mostly at this time of day. Two mist nets (16mm mesh size x 18 m long) were erected in the middle of the reed beds, where the possibility of

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<th>Contributors—Thanks to the following for their reports and contributions:</th>
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<td>Esmat Elhassan, Angela Manthorpe, Tamsin Carlisle, Gary Feulner and Margaret Swan.</td>
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For inclusion in the next issue, send your contributions to: gazelleeditor@gmail.com
no later than 26th March, 2017
Malgorzata de Latour-Abdalla is a native of Poland. She has lived in several Arab and Western countries. After arriving in the Emirates in 2003, she became fascinated by the local nature, which she explored extensively. Additionally, she found interest in local folklore, which she studied from museums, periodicals and direct contacts with Emirati friends. Seeing local folklore disappearing and restricted to local festivals and museums she decided to share her knowledge of it with the expatriate community at large. On the subjects of Emirati folklore and nature in the years 2006-2007 she contributed articles to the Sharjah English newspaper “Gulf Today”.

In the years 2008-2010, Malgorzata conducted an informal photographic study on the insects visiting Sodom’s Apple plants in urban Sharjah. In her study she documented over 100 insect and spider species living off these bushes.

Malgorzata is currently is working on a book about the Sodom’s Apple and its importance in the local ecosystem.

**Tribulus vol. 24**

The latest issue of Tribulus, vol. 24, was published in February and is available at DNHG lectures for AED 50. This is another extra-large edition, featuring a diverse mix of topics and contributors. We are very lucky to have a journal that facilitates access by resident amateurs to original local research. Volume 24 includes papers on all of the following:

- A survey of the flora of Wadi Wurayah National Park and a discussion of its regional biogeographic significance.
- A geological excursus to Jebels Rawdah, Buhais and Faiyah, and an interpretation of the sedimentary history that is seen there.
- Pleistocene gypsum deposits near Yas Island, and their significance for the Quaternary geological history of the area.
- A guide to the identification of a rare UAE dragonfly from its aquatic larvae and their exuviae.
- A summary of rare records of the Giant Eggfly butterfly from the UAE and Oman.
- An update on UAE spiders, including photos of 10 newly recognized species.
- New records and photos of flowering plants found in the UAE.
- A report on the Five-Striped Palm Squirrel – a mammalian addition to the exotic fauna of the UAE.
- An account of the work of the Sharjah Seed Bank and Herbarium.
- A report confirming that the adult Arabian water scorpion can fly.

**From the Editor:**

A second excursion to Shimel and Wadi Haqil took place earlier this month, whilst a tour of the Tell Agrab Temple (page 4), provided an insight into the reconstruction process. The cover article explains the process of ringing birds at Al Qudra, whereas in total contrast, learn more about ‘rock art’ examples on page 5.

Spotlight features photographs from Mleiha and the inter-Emirate Weekend (IEW) while page 6 reveals flora, located on IEW excursions.

On behalf of the DNHG committee and members who attended the well-organized IEW, many thanks go to the Al Ain chapter, who hosted a wide variety of field trips and workshops both in, and around Al Ain. Enjoy your read!

**DNHG Recorders**

**Reptiles - Dr. Reza Khan** 050 6563601

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

**Marine Life - Lamjed El-Kefi**

**Geology - Gary Feulner** res: 306 5570

**Insects - Gary Feulner**

**Fossils - Valerie Chalmers** res: 4572167 mobile: 050 455 8498 email: valeriechalmers@gmail.com

**Plants - Valerie Chalmers**

**Archaeology - MaryAnne Pardoe** mobile: 050 724 2984 email: maryannepardoe@yahoo.co.uk

**Mammals - Lynsey Gedman** mobile: 050 576 0383 email: lynseygedman@hotmail.com

**Seashells - Andrew Childs** mobile: 050 459 0112 email: andrew.childs@eim.ae

**Birds - Tamsin Carlisle** mobile: 050 1004702 email: tamsin.carlisle@platts.com
Spotlight!

Mleiha Trip, by Tamsin Carlisle

Crested Lark

Egyptian Vulture (left and below)

Jahili Fort (an IEW excursion in Al Ain), by Margaret Swan

Green Mubazzarah (an IEW birdwatching field trip), by Tamsin Carlisle

Egyptian Vulture (left and below)

Crested Lark

Bivalve fossil

Gastropod Fossils

Rudist fossils in limestone

Limestone overhang with potter wasp cells

Fossil sea urchin spines embedded in limestone
Field Clip

The elusive Limestone Wren Babbler also a local breeder.

Other passerine species observed at the site were the Purple Sun Bird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*), White-eared Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucotis*), Graceful Prinia (*Prinia gracilis*), Western Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) and White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*).

Within the reed beds, the Clamorous Reed Warbler seemed to be the most abundant species of the small passerines as 6 individuals were captured and ringed. This bird is native to UAE, and has a very large range stretching from Northeast Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, through South and Southeast Asia to the Philippines. It appeared to be breeding at the site, but no evidence was found. The Clamorous Reed Warbler is very similar to the Great Reed Warbler, which makes identification very difficult, even with the bird in your hand, as the two birds are almost identical, with only minor differences. According to the IUCN red list of the threatened species, its population trend appears to be stable, and hence the species does not approach the threshold for ‘vulnerable’ under the population trend criterion (>30% decline over ten years or three generations).

Both male and female of the Blue Throat were also ringed. The male is very remarkable, with an iridescent blue bib, edged below with successive black, white and rust-coloured borders. The female has less colour. The bird is native to UAE and is classified as ‘least concern’ under IUCN red list.

Other species ringed were the Laughing Dove, with two individuals. This bird is native and is also a local breeder.

Our ringing program, which was launched in 2014, is the regular ringing program under the authority of the Natural Resources Conservation Section of Dubai Municipality. The rings have Dubai/UAE digits, and are manufactured by Porzana, Ltd., who are mostly active now in Dubai but they also plan to have joint activities with other Emirates.

**Contribution by Esmat Elhassan, Ornithologist, Dubai Municipality**

Tell Abraq Field Trip

Following road changes in the area, DNHG members met at 7.45am on 18th February, in Umm Al Quwain, in order to visit the newly-restored Tell Abrak Temple at Ed-Dur. Here are some photographs, as supplied by guide, Mekdad:
Rock Art in RAK

With the onset of the cooler weather I’ve been back to the mountains and, during a lunch stop in a village above the Jebel Jais road recently, I stumbled across a rich field of petroglyphs. I was crossing a flat platform strewn with large rocks and noticed an image picked out of the rock’s surface. The details of this first petroglyph were hard to determine as the sun was in my eyes and the image and background were the same colour. I took a photo and, studying this image later (photo 1) it appears to show 2 figures riding horses or donkeys. I soon spotted several more pictures, with modes of transport being the dominant theme: photo 2 man on camel; photo 3 man on donkey, and photo 4 man on motorbike (well, that’s what it looks like to me)! When I turned around to survey the whole boulder field even more images revealed themselves – a fantastic array of riders, and a big camel with a spotted hump (photo 5).

Pushing on, I dropped into a lower field and the wall there contained another fine rider – maybe a camel? (photo 6). My final objective was a reasonably well preserved house on the edge of the field, and in the back wall was another highlight - a wonderful necklace motif (photo 7). I couldn’t help but smile when I saw that one!

I counted over 20 different images - a mix of bright petroglyphs that were easy to spot from a distance, and others that blended with the surrounding rock surface. Were some old, some new? I’m not sure, but I have heard in DNHG lectures that rock art is very difficult to date. Those who’d like to know more about the recurring motifs and the location of other petroglyphs might like to seek out Michele Ziolkowski’s 2007 paper “Rock on art: Petroglyph sites in the United Arab Emirates.”

Contribution by
Angela Manthorpe
IEW Field Trips

Wadi Tarabah

A short jaunt up Wadi Tarabah near Al Ain, which was officially part of Friday morning’s IEW birdwatching activities, turned up some interesting plant observations.

First we found *Iphiona aucheri*, a lovely but deadly poisonous plant bearing bright yellow daisy-type blooms. This plant has been known to cause liver failure in camels, which is really saying something.

Further up the wadi by a small pool at the bases of a cliff we found *Acridocarpus orientalis*, a rare perennial shrub that has been found only in Somalia, Oman and the UAE, and in the UAE only within a 1 km stretch of Wadi Tarabah. It is apparently the larval host species of the Giant Skipper butterfly (*Coliades anchises*). It was too early in the season for caterpillars to be present, but I did find a couple of rolled leaves containing remains of last year’s cocoons.

Contribution by Tamsin Carlisle

Cotton Bush in Al Ain

On a tour Friday afternoon of Al Ain’s somewhat dilapidated Mezyad Fort, formerly a Trucial Scouts stronghold, we found a small cotton bush growing just outside the wall. Perhaps it’s all that remains of a previous resident or caretaker’s experiment in crop transplantation.

Contribution by Tamsin Carlisle


title About Books

Books on the UAE and Beyond!

DNHG have hosted presentations and book-signings in recent past by authors, such as David Neild, Dr Athol Yates and David Heard.

David Neild was initially posted to Ras al Khaimah in 1959, at the time of the Trucial States. This posting was only for 18 months but he returned in 1966 and was ‘often closely involved in the skirmishes, incursions and political upheavals’ of the time. A Soldier in Arabia follows the history of events, prior to, and leading up to the formation of the United Arab Emirates. This book is easy to read, in a good-sized font and includes some historical photographs of dignitaries and prestigious events from David’s personal collection.

Dr Athol Yates presented a talk to DNHG members quite recently and, judging from the many people that attended, proved to be very popular. Catastrophes, Crashes and Crimes in the UAE covers news articles found in local newspapers during the 1970s. It is anecdotal in its content, which includes a fascinating article with the headline, ‘Abominable Fishgirl is a Hoax.’ The book makes for light reading, as there is no authoritative commentary alongside. It is, however, an unabridged record of local news from this time period.

Those wishing to meet Dr Yates, have another opportunity on 7th March at the Park Hyatt, Abu Dhabi, where he will present a lecture to the Emirates Natural History Group (Abu Dhabi Chapter).

If you like this (as they say on Amazon) and for a more global perspective on news reportage, you will also enjoy Unreliable Sources: How the 20th Century was reported, by John Simpson, the BBC World Affairs Editor.

David Heard provides an insight into oil company archives. He arrived in the UAE in 1963 as an oil industry professional and published his book From Pearls to Oil in 2012. It covers a time period up to 1946 and describes some colourful, key characters, such as ‘Haji’ Williamson, who was born in 1873 and was a ‘pioneer’ within the oil industry.

Frauke Heard-Bey is an historian and a political scientist, who has also written several books and articles on developments in the Gulf over four decades. From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates is an updated edition of this most important book. It was first published in 1982 and is a key to the past, as it chronicles the creation of the UAE federation.

There is an opportunity to meet David Heard and his wife, Frauke Heard-Bey, as they will be presenting sessions at the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature in March. (click on the link for details of sessions and location map).

Also making an appearance at the ‘Lit Fest’ is Peter Hellyer, who is author and editor of many books on the UAE’s archaeology, history and environment. He will moderate a session entitled Birds of the Middle East on 11th March, with panel participants, Richard Porter (co-author of the book), Ahmed Al Ali (wildlife photographer) and Oscar Campbell (Chairman of Emirates Bird Records Committee). Read more about this session here.

A relatively new book on the shelves for young people is Wildlife in Oman. Published in October, 2016, authors, Hanne and Jens Eriksen, are not listed for the Lit Fest, but are scheduled to present an illustrated talk for DNHG at the April meeting. Although intended for children, the authors stress that there is ‘something for everyone in this book.’

Contribution by Margaret Swan
Membership remains one of Dubai's best bargains at Dh100 for families and Dh50 for singles. Membership is valid from September 2016 to September 2017. You can join or renew at meetings or by sending us a cheque made out to HSBC account number 030100242001. (Please note we cannot cash cheques made out to the DNHG).

Payment can also be made by cash deposit at a bank or ATM, using our IBAN number AE900200000030 100242001. However, this process does not identify you as the payer. If you wish to pay by cash, please also photograph or scan a copy of your payment confirmation and send via e-mail to the Membership Secretary, so we know whose money we have received.

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

Field trips will be circulated to members via e-mail.

Contributions

Trip reports and photographs from the IEW are very welcome, for inclusion in the next Gazelle!

Field Clips are also welcome!

email your contributions to: gazelleeditor@gmail.com

(Arial 10 fully justified)