

GAZELLE

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مجموعة دبي للتاريخ الطبيعي

DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Members' News

DNHG Membership Renewals

Old Friends

It is a pleasure to welcome back **Angela** and **Stephen Manthorpe**, who were DNHG Secretary and Treasurer, respectively, in the early 1990s and who headed the DNHG Committee in 1994, during an interregnum in the Chairmanship. Angela and Stephen went on to become avid scuba divers and dive masters. They left the UAE in 1998 to work in Indonesia and then the U.K., with a year out for travel in Central and South America.

Dr Sandy Fowler has followed up his successful climb on Mt Kinabalu, in northern Borneo, with a trip to Kenya to tackle Mt Kilimanjaro. He took a week to get to the summit via the Western Breach, "a ring of cliffs a couple of thousand feet high and covered in snow". He mentioned casually that his fingers are peeling from the intense cold, and he may lose a toenail or two. The walk up starts in tropical rainforest, and, higher up, passes through giant lobelias, ericas 10m high, and giant senecio which looks like GM asparagus. Towards the top, vegetation is sparse, and Sandy says he was well past looking at it. "It was head down and keep plodding — that's all". Sandy is being encouraged to tell us about it on Members' Night.

In Ras Al Kaimah, **Barbara Couldrey** has been birdwatching while it lasts. Barbara wrote, "As the beautiful Al Jazeera wetlands are already flagged out by the developers, I thought, 'better make the most of it!' So I visited in time for evening feeding last Thursday. What a delight! It is ages since I watched one of my favourite waders, the Crab Plover (*Dromas ardeola*). I counted at least two dozen of these elegant birds feeding individually or in small groups. This relatively large wader, at 40cm, is an eye-catcher with its beautiful long blue legs, black and white flight feathers, black mantle and thick black bill. There were a few juveniles around too, with their light grey mantles. Dining at the same time were two pairs of Pintail ducks (*Anas acuta*), which measure almost 60cm, with slender, graceful necks and long pointed tails. The male's white neck and breast with dark head and back is quite distinctive. The female is uniformly brown except for a paler belly. Adding a splash of colour, there was an abundance of yellow desert hyacinths (*Cistanche tubulosa*) pushing their heads through the sand. There were also dozens of other birds feeding, or watching the sunset, (including herons, 'little' shore birds, flamingos, etc.) but the light deserted me before I could focus on them."

The current DNHG membership year runs from September 2004 to September 2005. Membership remains a bargain at Dhs. 100 for couples and Dh. 50 for singles. You can join or renew at meetings or by sending us a cheque made out to Lloyds Bank account no. 173746. (Please note we cannot cash cheques made out to the DNHG.)

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

This month's Contributors

The Editor would like to thank the following for their reports and contributions:

Larry Schwab
Barbara Couldrey
Pradeep Radhakrishna
Gary Feulner
David Bradford
MaryAnne Pardoe
Mohammed Arfan Asif



Making the most of winter...

Bat and Flora trip

Friday, February 25

Mary Ann Pardoe and Jenny Irwin plan to go to Wadi A'Dahir (near Al Ain). There is an underground mountain falaj, where the bats live and the walk down the wadi is very pleasant and good for flora. Anyone interested contact Jenny Irwin at jenny_irwin2000@yahoo.com for further details. (Please note correction to email address.)

Jebel Akhdar rim walk

Thur-Fri, Mar 3-4 (leaving on Wed Mar 2)

Peter van Amsterdam will lead this trip to Jebel Shams and the 'hidden village'. It is a relatively easy but rough walk, and a spectacular cure for vertigo. Prepare to spend the first night at the Ibri Hotel, the second camping at altitude, and make sure you take steps to avoid being dehydrated, sunburned and exhausted. Contact Peter by email for details.

Musandam Dhow Trip

Friday, March 11

Lena Linton informs me that this trip is completely booked. If participants have any queries, they should email her.



Inter-Emirates Weekend at Mafraq Hotel

Wed-Fri, March 16-18

Details have been emailed out to members. If you haven't received any information, please contact Lena Linton as soon as possible on linton@emirates.net.ae This is always a great weekend!

Roses on the Saiq Plateau Thur-Fri, April 7-8 (leaving Wed 6)

Peter van Amsterdam will lead yet another attempt to catch the roses in full bloom. Please let him know as soon as possible if you plan to go, as it is not the roses but the hotel rooms that are elusive. The Jebel Akhdar Hotel arranges entry permits for the military area along with bookings. The hotel is a pleasant place, and there's a lot more to do on the Saiq Plateau than smell roses. Contact Peter on pvana@emirates.net.ae for details and bookings. Early booking is essential.

Calling all adventurers! If you have an idea for a trip you'd like to lead, please contact one of our trip coordinators and put forward your offer. You do not have to be an expert on whatever it is. You can invite one along, research the details yourself or just wing it and let members discover things for themselves!

* * *



Earthwatch Institute

Robert Llewellyn-Smith formerly conducted research, education and lobbying in Ras al-Khaimah on behalf of the Arabian Leopard Trust. Robert is now based in the UK and supervises programmes in the Middle East and Africa for Earthwatch Institute. Earthwatch is probably best known for offering to the general public the opportunity to participate in environmental research and conservation by "vacationing" as paying research assistants. The 2004 catalogue describes some 100 research projects, covering every continent except Antarctica. Earthwatch also encourages corporate sponsorship of projects and of employee participants, and makes small grants available to corporate

sponsors to allow their Earthwatch veteran employees to participate in environmental projects and/or research in their local areas. Robert recently visited Dubai to help identify projects that might be suitable for participation by Dubai employees of HSBC, an Earthwatch sponsor that has supported some 2000 individual Earthwatch participants worldwide.

Various Earthwatch materials are now available with the DNHG. Companies or individuals that would like more information about Earthwatch programmes may visit the Earthwatch website at www.earthwatch.org/europe, or write to Earthwatch Institute (Europe) 267 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7HT, United Kingdom or projects@earthwatch.org.uk.

Our Next Speaker

Dr. Gary Brown was born in England but moved to Germany while still young. He completed his doctorate at the University of Bonn in 1992 after investigating the natural vegetation and eco-physiology of the natural heavy metal vegetation of western mainland Europe. He first came into contact with desert vegetation when he worked at Kuwait University. He has worked on the desert ecology of Kuwait, Qatar and Oman, as well as the natural vegetation of central Europe and the Canary Islands, where he often spends his holidays.

Dr Brown is currently Plant Ecologist at ERWDA. He has a special interest in lichens and ornithology. He has numerous publications on heavy metal vegetation of Europe, desert ecology, and lichens of Europe and Arabia. Several of his publications deal specifically with the UAE, including a study of the vegetation and flora of Jebel Hafit.



A Ridge Too Far?

Two Robs, two Garys and two Larrys set out along with Barbara, Paolo, Peter and Jo, for the thousand metre ridge of Jebel Sfai, in the central Hajar Mountains south of Siji and Wadi Asfani. The walk began in a wadi bordered by current and former cultivation, including old fields, stone foundations and an old well - enough of interest that some participants may be tempted to return for a more leisurely look.

Dried out oleander and abandoned palm cultivation testified to the intensity of the past several years of drought, but probably also to the lowering of the ground water level by pumping. The recent rains had refreshed the vegetation somewhat, so that many shrubs were flowering in the wadi, along with an assortment of annuals mostly just about to flower, including the rare, white-spotted *Anchusa aegyptiaca*.

Before we had gone a kilometer, we had seen all three of the UAE's principal climbing plants draped over trees of various sorts (mostly ghafs). The climbers were the leafless *Ephedra foliata* (the UAE's sole gymnosperm), the rubbery leafed *Pentatropis nivalis* (a milkweed) and *Cocculus pendulus*, fruiting with red berries. Taking little on faith, several members traced the roots of these climbers to confirm that they were not parasites, but were simply using their host trees for "cheap" structural support.

After ascending gradually via the wadi, we climbed more steeply up a spur to the summit ridge. The bedrock in this area is gabbro, making it an easier climb than in much of the ophiolite terrain, but we still had to negotiate many slopes that were strewn with scree, and tiptoe along narrow ridges that required a head for heights. We reached the crest in time for lunch on a small promontory at 950m with views to both Fujairah and Fossil Rock, but not much real estate: the crest varied from about 2m to half a metre wide.

After lunch we continued on towards our goal of one of the several

sub-equal summit knobs. At certain points we were forced to drop below the rocky ridge crest in order to make progress, often by following goat trails on the unstable slope. It was in this awkward environment, however, that we satisfied one of the aims of the trip, which was to find the rare yellow *Caralluma* in flower.

Caralluma is a genus of milkweeds (*Asclepidaceae*) that closely resembles the cacti of the New World. The most common species throughout the UAE is the purple-flowering *Caralluma arabica*. Its flowers, clustered on a globular head, have a velvety texture and the pungent smell of rotting meat, although the smell is apparent only at very short distances. In the area of Jebel Sfai, another species is present, *C. flava*, first reported by Minie van de Weg of Fujairah, which can be distinguished by its smaller, bright yellow flowers. The Chairman's (virtual) gold doubloon goes (once again) to Jo Raynor for spotting a specimen sporting a number of flowers as well as fruits that rise erectly like small, paired horns or tusks. We determined that *C. flava* has a distinctly more perfumed smell, although not necessarily anyone's favourite. The buds of *C. flava* are purple, like those of *C. arabica*, and it is all but impossible to tell the two apart when not in flower.

Another milkweed seen in modest numbers as seedlings on the loose slopes (as small rosettes of somewhat fuzzy leaves) was *Glossonema varians*, otherwise a relatively rare plant.

From atop the ridge, we spied wild olive trees at a distance below us, on the slopes to the east, but when we finally descended via a wadi to the NW, we passed through dozens of olive trees until we were somewhat below the 800m contour. More olives were visible in other gullies feeding the main wadi. These are believed to be the westernmost occurrences within the UAE. Almost all, however, were leafless or heavily grazed in their lower portions due to the attentions of goats and donkeys. In the steep wadi environ-

ment we saw a number of other plants not seen earlier in the day, including the spiny *Astragalus fasciculifolius* in flower, here near the southern extent of its range in the UAE.

Our descent took us through very large boulders in the lower wadi bed, and through more abandoned fields and sunken stone foundations, before reaching the village of Sfai, with its new housing project and the bulldozing of fresh agricultural terraces.

The most common animals seen during the day included Painted Lady butterflies (strong migrants doubtless attracted by the recent rain) and semaphore geckos (both the common *Pristurus rupestris* and the larger, more spotted and banded-tailed *P. celerrimus*). A herd of nine goats was spotted on a distant hillside, and a 5cm stick insect was found at our high point at 1025m.

This proved to be a fairly strenuous mountain hike (as advertised), and several participants finished with enthusiasm still high, but energy very near empty, emphasizing the importance of positive thinking. A few reckoned that gloves would have been a good idea to assist in the clambering sometimes necessary on the rough terrain. *Report by Gary Feulner*

LOOK THE PART!

The DNHG has navy blue sweat shirts, with the DNHG emblem embroidered in silver. Sizes: Large and Extra Large Dh65/-each and silver grey polo shirts with the DNHG emblem embroidered in black. Sizes: Medium, Large and Extra Large Dh50/-each.

The quality of both items is excellent!





E.mail your reports to pvana@emirates.net.ae, (Arial 10 justified) or deliver them to Anne Millen on floppy disk at monthly meetings.

Thru' the Lens...

There are two aspects to mountain photography: getting there and taking the photographs. Mountainscapes, like sandscapes, skyscapes, and seascapes are all classified as landscapes in photographic terms.



On our recent hike to *Jebel Qattara*, the light was not very good on our way up, but it improved later and was at its best at dusk. It is very important to turn around and see the play of light, and that is why our chairman often found me a distant last in the group. But he knew what I was up to.



The vistas keep changing and carrying heavy equipment is difficult. Apart from concentrating on the climb up, one has to look for picture possibilities around. Elements like people, flora, rocks, silhouettes, and atmosphere – mist and clouds - add to the perspective, scale, human interest and majesty to the mountains.

Look out for dramatic images and use silhouettes, haze and back-

lighting to advantage. I cannot forget the remarkable work of the late Galen Rowell, who loved the mountains. The images that he captured will remain unique perspectives taken from difficult terrain and situations.



Carry a towel to protect your equipment from dust and a plastic bag in case there is rain. I would have preferred to carry a tripod, particularly to shoot macro subjects, but it would have been cumbersome since the pace of the hike was quite fast and there were many steep *wadis* to cross. Also carrying heavy equipment all by yourself can drain too much energy. A polarizing filter does wonders to the subject; Galen advocated SinghRay filters for their superb quality.



Gary Feulner commented, on the way to *Jebel Qattara*, that mountain trips should be classified into three: walk, hike and climb. I agree with him, since each has a different requirement in fitness levels, articles to carry and mental preparedness. A mountain hike is quite strenuous and the avid natural history photographer has to maintain his resources well to concentrate on capturing the essence and majesty of the mountains. It is always preferable to approach the subject in a smaller group and have more time to work on each subject encountered. Yes, mountain trekking does help us realize our potential, and our energy levels. At the end of the

day, it was great satisfaction to see the limestone reflect a memorable golden facade. *Photographs and text by Arfan Asif*

The Upside of Sewage

On Friday 4th Feb an enthusiastic group of around 20 birders met at the sewage farm, just beyond the new Dragon Mart. It was a beautiful day, if a bit wiffy! We were guided by David Bradford, an experienced bird watcher who provided background information. He also brought his Questar telescope which allowed us to see the birds as though they were just in front of us.

Our first stop was at a private nursery known to DNHG as the Pivot Fields due to the method of irrigation. As this is private land, we carpooled to cause minimum disruption. A total of 45 different species were spotted here, many of which are migrant: the Starling, Eurasian Skylark and European Winged Lapwing (becoming rare in UK) were familiar to many of us. Excitement was caused by a sighting of the Sociable Plover, an endangered species whose numbers have dropped in the last two years. Also the White Tailed Plover for whom this is the only known breeding ground in the Emirates. David's telescope enabled us to get up close enough to see the orange of the Bank Myna and the red legs of the Black Winged Stilt.

Around Pivot Fields we added more species to our list, including The Glossy Ibis and Isabelline Shrike. Apparently the Shrike was named after a queen of Spain who, when besieged by the Portugese, swore that she would not remove her underwear until the invading troops withdrew. After 3 years she was finally able to remove the offending garment, by which time the colour resembled that of the Shrike!

From the Pivot Fields we moved to the Wimpy Pits. These are lakes supplied by the clean run-off water from the sewage farm. Having visited this area 3 years ago, I was disappointed to see how much the building of the International City has



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Mammals - Recorder needed

The recorders are not necessarily scientific experts in their designated fields. In fact, most are not. However, they are interested and knowledgeable amateurs - please contact them if you have any interesting reports or queries.

The intention is that information will be channelled through to the *Gazelle* editor, so new information can be shared with all our readers.

changed it. I remembered a lake-land area surrounded by trees and bushes, very much resembling a European lake. The present lake is much reduced in size, with one tree. However, it is still home to many bird species, including the Mallard and the Coot, both familiar in Europe. As well as the Common Coot we also saw the rare Crested Coot, so named because of the two red spots on its head. When our lists had increased by about 10 species around the lake we made our way back past the construction workers' camp. An impromptu barbers' shop had been set up, but even the low price of 5dhs was not enough to persuade Gary to get a hair cut!

We finished the day at Ras al Khor, near the Dubai Country Club. The Municipality has built a number of smart new hides for observing the Flamingoes, but they were not accessible. However, with the use of binoculars and David's telescope, we were still able to see 10 species of birds. The highlights of this stop were an Osprey perched on an island and a Spotted Eagle soaring against the backdrop of skyscrapers along the Sheikh Zayed Road. Everyone had a most rewarding day and we would all like to thank David Bradford for an excellent trip and Sandhya Prakash for coordinating it. *Report by MaryAnne Pardo*

David Bradford adds that they saw "a whopping 72 different species - a record for a Dubai outing". If you would like the full list (too long to reproduce here) you can contact David Bradford by email for it on: davebradford9@hotmail.com

(Ed.'s note: A small article on p.2 of 7DAYS, 17 February, reports that Dubai Municipality will open the bird watching facility at Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary on Monday 21st Feb., and that a small fee will be charged to use it.)



Falcons and Salukis

It was the perfect day hoped for by DNHG for the trip, and the two hour drive to the falcon hospital was easy and free of traffic snarls. From the roundabout to the hospital (7kms), construction activity on the road did pose problems to some of the members. Otherwise, everyone (well almost everyone) was there when briefing at the museum of the falcon hospital started at 10 am sharp. The Bradfords from ENHG joined us for the day.

A skeleton staff at the hospital were available for us and Dr Raj took us through the Museum, examination rooms, operation theatre, wards and the various facilities of the hospital. It was interesting to note that the hospital had state of the art facilities like diagnostic imaging, surgery facilities, endoscopy, diagnostic laboratory and a pharmacy. The hospital was extremely well maintained and organised, the staff friendly and efficient.

At the saluki breeding centre, the salukis welcomed us as we drove in. A few of the junior members caged themselves in with some of the saluki pups and had a great time with the friendly hounds. Hamad Al Ghanem, the Director of the Center was away on another engagement, but Mohammed showed us around the centre explaining patiently the way Salukis are bred, trained and looked after in the complex.

Around 1 pm, we were treated to a lovely lunch by the falcon hospital staff before we left to take the drive back to Dubai. Except for minor starting trouble with Dalice's 4WD, the drive back was safe and comfortable. We did receive quite a few thank you emails from delighted members hungry for more such super trips. *Thanks to Pradeep Radhakrishna for this report*

Large Mammal Sightings

On the mammal front, there's good news and bad. Larry Schwab has



reported back from an 'Eid trip deep into the Liwa crescent. In the area south of Hamim he saw a group of seven sand gazelle - hopefully evidence that these beautiful animals are returning to this area. For years the sand gazelle had been reckoned quite rare in the UAE, but the curtailment of hunting, perhaps coupled with some man-made improvements, may be encouraging their return. Chris Drew and his ERWDA teams working in the Umm Az-Zamool area in the southeast of the country report a substantial sand gazelle population centered in the area of the Qusaywirah plantations.

Barbara Couldrey adds some less happy mammal reports from Ras al-Khaimah. On a mid-January trip into the southern Ru'us al-Jibal, she saw two dead caracal and a fox (Blanford's?) strung up near a relatively low but isolated mountain village, now inhabited primarily by expatriate goat herders.

UAE's "Carpet Viper" is a New Species

The Carpet Viper of the Hajar Mountains of the UAE and Oman has been recognized as a distinct species, based on a recently published study of 353 museum specimens from around Arabia. The Carpet Viper is typically found near pools in wadis in the Hajar Mountains. It is small and relatively placid, but it is considered highly poisonous and should be treated with care.

Previously, the local Carpet Viper was considered to be identical with similar populations found elsewhere in the mountains of Arabia, from the Levant to western Saudi Arabia to Yemen and Dhofar, all of which bear the scientific name *Echis coloratus*. However, statistical analysis of a large number of features showed that the Hajar Mountain populations were distinct from all the others, to an extent sufficient to justify a distinction at the species level.

The principal differences, while con-

sistent, are nevertheless arcane. One is the number and shape of the scales in the nasal area and along the midline under the chin. Another is a relatively longer tail in proportion to the body. More conspicuous associated differences are coloration (the Hajar Mountain species is duller) and maximum size (the Hajar Mountain specimens are shorter overall).

One might wish that the researcher had been as sensitive politically as he was statistically, for despite choosing a UAE specimen, from Wadi Siji, as the type specimen of the "new" species, he chose to name it *Echis omanensis*.

Politics aside, there is broader significance in this finding, because it supports similar conclusions from studies of other animal and plant species that the Hajar Mountains are biogeographically distinctive - that is, that they have a flora and fauna which is somewhat more different than expected from that of the rest of Arabia. This finding in turn emphasizes the role of the low plains of southeastern Oman, the Haushi-Huqf area, as a floral and faunal barrier. At the same time, many of the distinctive species of the Hajar Mountains show affinities with plants and animals of Iran, including the Zagros Mountains and the Makran.

It is good news that the author of the paper is now in touch with Prof. Drew Gardner of Abu Dhabi, who has collected, studied and photographed Carpet Vipers in Oman, including in the area of the "gap" between the new and old species, and Prof. Ted Papenfuss of the University of California at Berkeley, whose research involves DNA analysis to detect or confirm such hidden species distinctions among Middle East reptiles (see *DNA Results for Local Reptile* in the January '05 *Gazelle*). It would be potentially very instructive to study the populations of *E. coloratus* of Dhofar region and *E. omanensis* of the Hajar Mountains, in the area where their ranges are closest.

More details on the recognition of *Echis omanensis* will be discussed in the upcoming issue of *Tribulus*, no. 14.2. A copy of the paper itself is available on request from Gary Feulner or Johanna Raynor. The reference is Babocsay, G., 2004, 'A new species of saw-scaled viper of the *Echis coloratus* complex', *Systematics and Biodiversity* 1(4):503-514. Report by Gary Feulner

Beating the Bushes

Exploring a track in the mountains of the Sharqiyah area of Oman, SE of Muscat, a trio of current and former DNHG members spied a young local man flailing vigorously in a large tree with a long (4m), thin stick. What on earth was he doing? Was something caught in the tree? If so, could he not prize it loose more efficiently by a more focused approach? Was he chasing something out of the tree? A creature with any sense would have fled long ago, it seemed. Alas, the trio was at some distance across a broad wadi, and with miles to go before they slept, so they left this little mystery unsolved.

Patience was rewarded, however, unexpectedly but within weeks. Holiday reading of a seminal 1985 paper on the Arabian Tahr, by Paul Munton, contained a wealth of ancillary information about mountain ecology, including traditional Bedu conservation practices. With respect to "beating the bushes," it is best to let Munton speak for himself:

"There is a traditional law in the Sultanate of Oman that trees may only be cut for certain limited purposes unless they are dead. Thus only dead wood may be cut for firewood and branches may not be cut to feed livestock. Instead of cutting, trees are beaten with a long pole and the leaves and fruits gathered in a blanket placed underneath for the purpose and then given to domestic livestock." See Munton, P., 1985, 'The Ecology of the Arabian Tahr', *Journal of Oman Studies* v. 8, part 1). Report by Gary Feulner



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"Off-Road" in Northern Oman

The January Gazelle commented on a major new road under construction in Oman, through the mountains from Ibri to Rustaq. Other reports indicate that the roads ascending to Jebel Shams and the Saiq Plateau may now be largely paved. Less ambitious but effective efforts have made many other areas of Oman more accessible by good (albeit sometimes very steep) graded roads. It is now possible to surmount the Jebel Akhdar range by at least two and possibly three tracks east of Al Hamra. At present, these are not for the faint-hearted, but further improvements are foreseen.

A December trip to the Selma Plateau area also revealed (unexpectedly) at least two, and

possibly three, graded roads over the top of the Jebel Bani Jaber, SE of Muscat. We had ascended to view the Majlis Al-Jinn, the world's second largest underground chamber, first recognized and explored in the mid-1980s. The track saved us the expected day's walk, but everything comes at a price. In this case, the "down side" of accessibility was the intrusion of the traveler's nightmare - beggars along the roadside and children in villages clamoring around and shouting for "sweets." (A special curse on (s)he who first handed out sweets there (or school pens), and on everyone who follows suit. In the modern era, no one can plead ignorance of where this leads.) *Report by Gary Feulner*

Yes, butterflies! Well, maybe...



Watch this space. Not literally this one—a bigger one, because there's a big report coming next issue. Readers will remember the ongoing saga of "Larry Woods' Dump", a landfill area near the American University in Sharjah. Well, happily, it is it now "Larry Woods' Remediation Site"!



Next month we will have a comprehensive report from Prof. Lawrence Woods on the International Conference on Landfill Site Remediation held last month at AUS. Larry has also promised some photographs to illustrate the problems and solutions.



Dubai Natural History Group Programme

Lectures at Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, 7.30 for 8.00pm

- Mar 6 Natural History of the Canary Islands – the Arabian Connection: Dr. Gary Brown
- Apr 3: Deciphering the Past: Geoarchaeology and Palaeoenvironments in the Middle East - Prof. Helmut Brückner
- May 1: The Biology of Swordfish in the Arabian Gulf - John Hoolihan

Field Trips (Members only, please. Details inside.)

- Feb 25 Wadi Dhahr Bat Falaj & Flora – Jenny Irwin & Mary Ann Pardoe
- Mar 3-4 Grand Canyon Rim Walk - Peter van Amsterdam
- Mar 11 East Coast dhow trip - Lena Linton
- Mar 16-18 Inter-Emirates Weekend (Mafraq Hotel)
- Apr 6-8 Roses on the Saiq Plateau - Peter van Amsterdam