

DNHG Trip to Wadi Wurayah
Friday 21st March 2014

Wadi Wurayah is a 12,700 hectares area between the towns of Masafi, Khor Fakkan and Bidiyah in the Emirate of Fujairah. It shelters a rich diversity of rare and endangered mountainous and freshwater habitats and species.

Wadi Wurayah is home to more than 100 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians as well as around 200 species of plants. It is one of the few areas where the caracal lynx survives, a small, shy predator, which is persecuted by farmers who believe it targets chickens and goats. It is also one of the last remaining areas in the UAE where the Arabian Tahr, an endemic species of the Hajar mountains, can be found. The wadi is equally home to the *Garra barreimiae*, a species of freshwater fish that lives only in the Hajar Mountains. One species of dragon fly, *Urothemis thomasi*, discovered in the wadi in June 2013, was the first record of the insect for the UAE. Among the roughly 200 species of plants recorded so far is a species of wild orchid unique to the UAE, the *Epipactis veratrifolia*.

Famous for its scenic waterfall and wonderful location with streams and pools dotted around rocky outcrops, the Wadi Wurayah was until recently a popular picnic spot. On 16 March 2009, it became the first protected mountain area in the United Arab Emirates, after a three-year field study by the Emirates Wildlife Society in Association with World Wide Fund for Nature. Since late 2013, the main entrance to the wadi has been closed off in order to preserve the ecosystem and design and implement a proper management system for the protected area. Only small guided groups are allowed to visit upon request.

On 21st March, the DNHG will visit the Wadi Wurayah for a full day hike. We plan to walk for 2-3 hours along the main wadi and one of its tributaries, on a rocky path with some scrambling. We will then break for a short lunch before returning through the wadi bed where we will encounter water. We expect to be walking for 5-6 hours, and participants need a decent level of fitness.

Jacky Judas, the EWS/WWF field biologist at Wadi Wurayah will accompany us and we will along the way see many plants and wildlife that are now monitored and studied by specialists involved in the development of the protected area. Our route will also take us to a camera trap and Jacky will be able to tell us more about the results of the program so far.

Practicalities: Friday 21st March, rendezvous at the Wadi Wurayah project HQ at the entrance of the wadi at 08:15. Return to Dubai expected to be no earlier than 17:00. Participants will be mailed a map, release forms by the DNHG as well as the EWS/WWF, and safety procedures by EWS/WWF.

Max number of participants: 12.

What to bring: water (at least 3l pp), lunch and some snacks. A hat, sturdy walking boots as well as footwear to traverse the sometimes substantial puddles along the wadi bed, a change of clothes and/or swimwear. Field guides, binoculars.

Please contact me, Barbara Van Meir, on barbaravmeir@hotmail.com if you would like to join us.

We will need four wheel drives to reach our hike's starting point, so please indicate if your car is a 4x4. Following Gary's lead, I will accept expressions of interest until 23rd February and an innocent hand will then draw the participants from a hat, allowing for the necessary number of 4x4 cars.