

GAZELLE

Vol 26 no 4 April 2011



مجموعة دبي للتاريخ الطبيعي

DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Members' News

Binish Roobas assisted recently in confirming the identification of an Indian palm squirrel photographed near a housing complex in Fujairah and alerted to EWS-WWF by Fujairah resident Joseph Viker. Two very similar looking species exist in India – the three-striped palm squirrel in the south and the five-striped palm squirrel in the dry north-west. Both can live happily in association with humans and either could potentially become established in UAE plantation environments. In this instance, however, there is as yet no evidence that the squirrel represents more than a single escaped pet.



Indian palm squirrel on the East Coast
Photograph by Joseph Viker

Our non-resident member **Peter Cunningham**, who resides in Namibia but continues his contacts with King Khalid Wildlife Research Center in Saudi Arabia and the Zoological Society of London's conservation programmes, has published several papers over the last two years on

Arabian gazelle species, including work on group size, sexual dimorphism and a 20-year study of the population on the isolated Farasan Islands. References are available on request.



Baton blue butterfly *Pseudophilotes vicrama*
from Wadi Hiluw.
Photograph Rafeek Khalid

Rafeek Khalid, a lepidopterist and former DNHG member now in Abu Dhabi, has shared a number of very interesting observations over the years, from Dhofar, Brunei and India. Most recently he has discovered a small population of the baton blue butterfly *Pseudophilotes vicrama* from Wadi Hiluw. This finding is significant because the baton blue is otherwise known outside the Musandam from only two neighbouring sites in Wadi Sfai, in the central Hajar Mountains of the UAE.

DNHG Membership

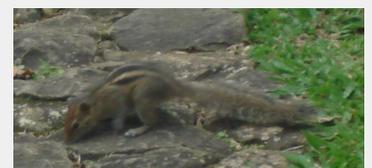
DNHG Membership remains a bargain at Dhs.100 for couples and Dh. 50 for singles. You can join or renew at our meetings or by sending us your details and a cheque made out to: Lloyds TSB Bank account no. 60600669933501. (Please note we cannot cash cheques made out to the DNHG. Please also note our account number has changed.)

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:

Gary Feulner
Mairead Porter
Rafeek Khalid
Binish Roobas
Valerie Chalmers



Sri Lankan squirrel, from the highlands near Kandy

Under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan



Visit to Bottling Plant with Fausto Tazzi 30 April

This unusual trip will be led by Sonja Lavrenčič. Contact her by email to register: lavsonja@yahoo.it

Archeological Exhibition, Al Jahili Fort (Until 02 May)

The *Dawn of History* exhibition is still on, and a report by Mairead Porter appears in this issue of *Gazelle*.

Kayaking in Umm Al Quwain/ Boat Trip Fri 6 May

This houseboat trip around the mangroves departs at 11am and returns to the Marine Club at around 5pm (6 hours), but you must be *there and ready by 10.30am*. Kayaks will be available for use but if you have one you can bring it. Bring binoculars for bird watching. Turtles have also been seen there. Also bring swim-wear, snorkeling gear, sun-tan lotion/cream, a hat. A buffet lunch plus soft drinks is included in the price which is Dh130/- per person. (Please bring your own tea and coffee). Minimum number of 20. Children are the same price as adults; under the age of 2 years free.

Note: Dh130/- will either have to be transferred into the Umm Al Quwain Marine Club's account by 5th May at the latest or be paid in cash to Martina Fella at the DNHG meeting on Sunday, May 1st.

Banking details:

Bank: National Bank of Abu Dhabi
Name of Account: Umm Al Quwain Marine Club

Account No.: 01-5774689-3

Branch: Umm Al Quwain
Address: King Faisal Road, UAQ
Swift Code: NBAD AE AA UAQ
Please e-mail the t/t or deposit slip as confirmation to Club Manager Jenny Allan,

uaqmarin@emirates.net.ae

(Mobile: +971 50 796 0649)

If the transfer is done through Al Ansari Exchange it is very important to e-mail a copy of the transfer slip to the UAQ club as otherwise it cannot be identified who made the payment. A transfer through Al Ansari does not mention the name of the person who sent the money. If paying by transfer, please also inform Martina when you have done so.

Address: Umm Al Quwain Marine Club
P.O. Box 624

Umm Al Quwain, U.A.E.

Telephone: +9716 766 6644

Fax: +9716 766 5446

Directions and a map can be downloaded from the website: www.uaqmarineclub.com

Those who wish to arrive at the Club the afternoon before the boat trip have the option to camp there or use the Club's dormitory. In both cases sleeping bags, pillows, bed sheets (and tent) will have to be brought along. For camping or the use of the dormitory Dh75/- will be charged per person. Further details and information can be obtained from the Club's website:

www.uaqmarineclub.com

Martina Fella is coordinating the trip, and you can contact her by email: martina_fella@hotmail.com

Overnight on Sir Abu Nu'air Fri 27 -Sat 28 May

Sonja Lavrenčič is liaising with Major Ali and when the details are available, they will be advertised. There will be an overnight camp on the island. Registrations will need to be firm, as numbers are limited to 25 people.

ENHG-Abu Dhabi lecture:
Training of Yemeni Arabian
Leopard field researchers in
Oman - David Stanton
Tues 03 May 19.30 – 21.30
HCT – Abu Dhabi men's Col-
lege Auditorium, Al Sa'ada
(19th) Street

David Stanton, Director of the Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen, will update us on the week-long training session for Yemeni field researchers conducted in Oman in October 1010. This history-making cross-border cooperative venture aimed at building regional capacity for the conservation of the extremely endangered Arabian Leopard, was partially funded by a Research & Conservation Grant awarded to the NGO FPALY by the ENHG. The members of our Socotra field trip enjoyed hearing David Stanton lecture in Sana'a on efforts to save the Arabian Leopard in Yemen. If you would like to join other DNHG members to drive to Abu Dhabi to hear David Stanton's latest report on May 3, please contact Ulrike Andorff at **050 4565042** or uandorff@hotmail.com

And on the agenda now that the weather is warming up ...

Jebel Shams Camping and the Hidden Village Week-end in June

This starts on the evening before the weekend, and can involve camping; the temperatures are about 10 degrees lower in the Jebel Akhdar. It's an easy walk, but spectacular.

Musandam Boat Trip One day, April / May

Registration needs to be firm and made early. Details out soon.

Turtle Sanctuary, Dubai

Many were disappointed not to catch the last two trips to this and so be quick with your registration when the date and details are announced.

Ras Al khor Wildlife Sanctuary Right on your door-step, this is an easy and interesting outing.

Our Next Speaker

Dr Susanne Hofstra is an assistant professor of Archaeology in the Department of History and Archaeology at UAEU. Previously she taught at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, Greece as well as at various universities and colleges in the U.S., mostly in the Midwest states; her Ph.D. is from the University of Texas at Austin. Her main area of research interest is Mediterranean prehistory, especially the cultures of early Greece, Crete and Turkey, and their languages and scripts. She has also worked on several archaeological field projects in Greece including the Stanford Skourta Plain survey and Mochlos excavations in central Greece, and the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project in the Peloponnese of southern Greece. Her current focus is the study of material from the 1950s-1960s excavation of the Bronze Age palace site of Pylos (main occupation period 1650-1200 BCE).



Email your field reports and news to pvana@emirates.net.ae (Arial 10 justified). Please send your photographs as **separate .jpg files**, or deliver them to Anne Miller for scanning.

The 'Dawn of History' (and a Good Bit Before)

Eighteen members from Dubai and Abu Dhabi groups met up with Brien Holmes in Al Ain to visit two locations of prehistoric burial sites on the outskirts of Al Ain (UAE side): Hafit Tombs and Hili Archaeological Park Tombs, and visit the *Dawn of Time* exhibition beside Al Jahili Fort.

We visited the Hafit Tombs first. The leaflet produced by ADACH – the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage - gives the following information: "Hafit graves, also called Mezyad graves (named after the village located near the eastern slopes of Jebel Hafit), are well known to archaeologists as they represent an early period in UAE history. They gave their name to the period known as the 'Hafit Period' or 'Hafit Cultural Horizon' which dates from 3200 to 2700 BC. Scores of these graves have been excavated over more than four decades and have proved to share many similarities. Unlike the tombs of the Umm an Nar period, each tomb has a single round or oval chamber built of rough local stones. One, two or three ring-walls encircle the chamber and rise to a height of 3-4 metres above the ground. As they rise, the walls gradually slope inwards until they eventually meet and form what looks like a dome. A narrow entrance, usually facing south towards the sun, pierces the walls. Few skeletal remains have been discovered. However, it is thought that up to ten bodies were often buried together in family groups."

We next visited Hili Archaeological Park, which is described by ADACH as the largest Bronze Age complex in the UAE. For some of us it was a revelation to learn of the importance of the tombs in establishing links with the Mesopotamian Civilization in the Bronze Age. We learned that up to 5000 people lived in Hili at different periods. One collective grave, not far from the Grand Tomb,

had the remains of hundreds of bodies. This archaeological evidence gave fascinating information on their diet and life and the fact that few died in violent situations, suggesting that they may have led a peaceful life in the middle of the desert. The culture of the people who lived here was comparable in development to the civilizations in Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley civilizations.



The photograph above shows the reconstructed Grand Tomb in Hili Archaeological Park which is over 4000 years old and is considered the most magnificent burial in this culture. It is called an Umm an Nar type tomb after the circular 3rd Millennium tombs discovered at Umm an Nar in Abu Dhabi. It was discovered and excavated by Danish archaeologists during 1968-70 and was restored by the former Al Ain Department of Antiquities and Tourism in 1973. It is 12 metres in diameter and it must originally have stood at least four metres above ground. The tomb has four interior chambers, each intended to house a number of bodies. The two entrances to the grave are decorated with carvings. An ADACH leaflet informed us: "The northern entrance was cut into a large stone which is decorated with three scenes: above the opening is a man riding an animal while his companion walks behind; to the right are two embracing figures and below, the opening, two animals which may be Arabian leopards facing each other and possibly devouring a young gazelle or oryx. The decoration on the southern entrance consists of a pair of oryx with two standing figures between them." The northern entrance can be seen in the photograph.

Afterwards we had a guided tour of the archaeological exhibition, *Dawn of History*, opened by Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage in the temporary building located beside the Jahili Fort. (The exhibition runs till 2nd May.) During our visit we were able to see the links between the different Stone Age sites and with Brien's help get a clearer picture of the scale and relevance of this desert area 5000 years ago. We were very grateful to Brien for sharing his knowledge of this fascinating period in UAE history.

Further reading:

You will find very detail information on the following websites:
<http://www.adach.ae/en/>
http://www.enhg.org/bulletin/b14/14_03.htm (Serge Cleuziou's summary of the French team's work at Hili in the 1980-1981 season)

http://www.enhg.org/bulletin/b23/23_04.htm (Serge Cleuziou's summary of the French team's work over seven seasons in Al Ain)

http://www.enhg.org/bulletin/b02/02_18.HTM (Tony Harris' summary of the French team's work in Al Ain during the 1976-1977 season)

http://www.enhg.org/bulletin/b11/11_10.htm (Rob Western's summary of the French team's work in Al Ain during the 1979-1980 season)

http://www.enhg.org/bulletin/b07/07_24.htm (Rob Western's summary of the French team's work in Al Ain during the 1978-1979 season)

http://www.enhg.org/bulletin/b30/30_17.htm (Dr. Walid's summary of archaeology in Al Ain)
http://www.enhg.org/bulletin/b20/20_13.htm (Another overview of archaeology by Dr. Walid)

<http://www.enhg.org/resources/articles/pottery/pottery.htm> (Sophie Mery's article on pottery production during Early Bronze Age)

http://www.enhg.org/resources/articles/hafit_stones/



[hafit_stones.html](#) (stone patterns on gravel plain east of Jebel Hafit)
Report and photograph by Mairead Porter

Celebrating 25 Years of the Dubai Natural History Group

With its Silver Anniversary upon us, it is timely to give a brief account of the history of the Dubai Natural History Group. The DNHG was established in 1985 by Dr. Joseph Platt, Environmental Advisor to H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. It was initially intended to complement the efforts of the Dubai Wildlife Research Centre, an entity created by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed. The DNHG initiative undoubtedly took account of the success of the two chapters of the Emirates Natural History Group established in Abu Dhabi (in 1977) and Al-Ain (in 1981).

The inaugural meeting took place at the Art Society of Dubai (now the Dubai International Art Centre). A general introduction was given and then Joe Platt, Mike West and Colin Richardson gave illustrated talks on birds.

From the outset, a principal objective of the DNHG has been to facilitate and participate in gathering and disseminating information about the flora and fauna of Dubai and the UAE. Initially it was proposed to do this through publication of a series of books. For that purpose early members were encouraged to join and meet in more specialised interest groups (botany, insects, mammals, etc.) on a monthly basis. A newsletter was instituted and circulated to interested people.



An early shelling trip, featuring (adults, L-R) Alan Dickson, Frances Dipper, Valerie Chalmers, Tony Woodward.

The effort to encourage amateur research and publication of information about the wildlife and environment of the UAE succeeded very well. By 1990, four major natural history publications had been published by individuals associated with the DNHG – *The Living Desert* by Dr. Marijcke Jongbloed, *Mammals of the Southern Gulf* by Christian Gross and *The Living Seas*, by Frances Dipper (née Buckley) and Tony Woodward, all published by Motivate Press, and *The Birds of the United Arab Emirates* by Colin Richardson, published by Hobby Press.

At the end of its first year, in February 1986, the DNHG formalised its organisational structure by electing a Committee and officers. Bird-watcher Mike West was elected as Chairman and Linda Coupland as Secretary, with Christian Gross as Mammals/Reptiles Coordinator (becoming Vice Chairman a year later), the late Adrian Chapman as Bird Coordinator, Valerie Chalmers as Botany Coordinator, and Joseph Platt as Newsletter Editor. Membership was AED 25 and the meeting place moved to The Lodge at Al Nasr Leisureland.

The first edition of the newsletter under the current title of *Gazelle* was published in March 1986. The DNHG's logo, the head of the Arabian Gazelle, was donated to the group by Dubai artist Judy Roberts, one of the founding members, from her collection of UAE wildlife drawings.

In March 1986, entomologist Dr. Alan Dickson joined the Committee as Insects Coordinator. In 1987 Alan became Vice Chairman, then Chairman, upon Mike West's departure from Dubai. Alan served energetically until 1992, focusing particularly on recruiting monthly speakers for the group and encouraging individual research efforts. During most of Alan's tenure our meetings were held at the original Metropolitan Hotel – in Lucifer's Discotheque(!) and later the Andalus Ballroom – and then the Metropolitan Beach Club. Early lectures and field trips covered a wide range

of interests, e.g., local birds, bees, butterflies, mammals, reptiles, sea-shells, environmental protection and astronomy.



First Chairman Mike West hands over to Alan Dickson in 1987.
Photograph courtesy of Valerie Chalmers

It was during this period that the character and approach of the DNHG was established that has continued to the present day. In particular, the DNHG has always sought to serve as a forum for those interested in local natural history to meet like-minded individuals and to find and share information, whether through lectures, field trips, library resources, the encouragement of individual research efforts, or simple discussion.

Unique and successful in its niche, the DNHG as an organisation has, by design, not attempted to expand its institutional role to encompass environmental activism or public outreach or to compete in fund raising with the many other organizations in Dubai that have been expressly established and staffed to do so. Over the years, however, many individual DNHG members have been leaders and/or active supporters of related environmental and conservation organisations.

In 1992, Alan Dickson was succeeded as Chairman by the genial Jim Footitt, yet another keen bird-watcher, who led the DNHG for the next two years, assisted in particular by the late Jim Hart and Bob Clevely.

At the same time our lecture venue moved to Jumeirah English Speaking School (JESS), where we met until 2002, sometimes in the gymnasium and sometimes in a large utility room. Current members may be amused to know that one of the chores of lecture attendees in that era was to set up and return portable chairs to and from the adjacent storage closet. This



Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

Reptiles - Dr Reza Khan
res 344 8283
off 344 0462
fax (off) 349 9437

Archaeology - David Palmer
050-7387703
office direct line: 04-2072636
dpalmer@ud.ac.ae

Birds - David Bradford
davebradford9@hotmail.com

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
fax 330 3550

Insects - Gary Feulner

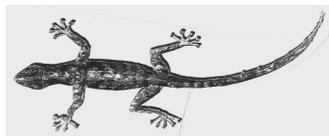
Fossils - Valerie Chalmers
res 349 4816,
fax 340 0990
email: valeriechalmers@hotmail.com

Plants - Valerie Chalmers

Seashells and Mammals - Recorders 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.



reflected the economic reality – a continuing reality – that commercial meeting space in Dubai is beyond the modest budget of the DNHG, whose principal source of income is from membership fees. (The current fees, AED 50 for individuals and AED 100 for family memberships, have not increased for a decade.)

During the years at JESS our meetings included an express social component. Initially there was an intermission for that purpose, complete with beverage service. As membership grew the intermission was abandoned in favor of the less disruptive alternative of a pre-meeting reception. Eventually, however, this luxury fell victim to the pace and other exigencies of modern Dubai.

The chairmanship remained vacant in 1994-95, but Secretary Stephen Manthorpe and Treasurer Angela Smout (now Angela Manthorpe) stepped up to jointly supervise the DNHG's lectures and other activities, with veteran Alan Dickson returning to the Committee to lend a hand as Vice Chairman.



Some DNHG stalwarts, reunited in 1998 at a farewell for Carolyn & Dieter Lehmann: *Front row:* Colin Richardson, Alan Dickson, Carolyn Lehmann, Marijcke Jongbloed, Valerie Chalmers; *Back row:* Nick Goss, Jim Footitt. Photograph courtesy of Valerie Chalmers

Gary Feulner was elected Chairman in 1995, with Alan Dickson remaining as Vice Chairman and Valerie Chalmers as Secretary. Valerie became Vice Chairman in 1997. Both Gary and Valerie have held their positions since that time, assisted by a large number of able and energetic Committee members. A complete list of past and present DNHG Committee mem-

bers is set out below, and all are acknowledged with sincere thanks for their participation and contribution.

Monthly lectures moved to our current venue, Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, in February 2002 and we are grateful to Emirates Academy and its parent, the Jumeirah Group, for accommodating us.

In 2005, H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, then UAE Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and patron of the Emirates Natural History Groups in Abu Dhabi and Al-Ain, consented to assume patronage of the DNHG as well, reflecting the increasingly close ties and cooperation between the UAE's three natural history groups. (Sheikh Nahayan is also the sponsor of the Sheikh Mubarak Award for Natural History, the most prestigious natural history award in the UAE, named in honor of his father, Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohammed Al Nahayan, a former UAE Minister of Interior.)

DNHG membership has more or less doubled over the past fifteen years, to a current level of about 175 memberships annually, representing approximately 250 individuals. Numbers have been steady for several years, even in the face of Dubai's economic downturn. We are pleased to welcome the interest of many new members each year, most of whom have come to Dubai without appreciating the scope of the natural environment of the UAE or the wealth of information and opportunity that is available.

The DNHG's monthly newsletter, *Gazelle*, has grown steadily in sophistication, in parallel with the progress of information technology and computer graphics, under a line of diligent, creative and resourceful editors, from founder Joseph Platt through Carolyn Lehmann, the late Jim Hart, Marijcke Jongbloed, Beryl Comar, Neil Curtis, Anna Griffin and Anne Millen. Photographs were introduced to *Gazelle* as a regular feature in mid-2002, and most members now receive their newsletter by



e-mail, incidentally relieving us of most of the former expense of printing and mailing.



Former Membership Secretary Anne-Marie Bui ascends a rock stairway on Jebel Qatar in 1997. Photographer not known.

(As an aside, perusal of *Gazelle* issues from 'the early years' can be an interesting experience, not least for the knowledge contained in them that has been largely forgotten. An example is Carolyn Lehmann's March 1993 identifications of marine algae collected on the perimeter fence of the Chicago Beach Hotel, illustrated very effectively by a black and white photocopy of their silhouettes!)

As a 25th anniversary present, the Committee has inaugurated the DNHG website (see information about it opposite), which will enable us to better serve current and future members to whom the 21st century is home, and who cannot remember the days before fax machines.

We look forward optimistically to the next 25 years!

Alphabetically listed below, with our thanks, are the many individuals who have served as DNHG Committee members or Recorders over the years:

Louisa Akerina, Peter van Amsterdam, Sa'eed Al Awadi, Mary Beardwood, Kathy Bird, David Bradford, Frances Buckley, Anne-Marie Bui, Valerie Chalmers, the late Adrian Chapman, Eileen Chedister, Bob Clevely, Beryl Comar, Linda Coupland, Neil Curtis, Diana Darke,

Jan Denning, Dr Alan Dickson, Jesse Ellis, Sandi Ellis, Ossama Al Fangary, Martina Fella, Gary Feulner, Jim Fischer, Jim Footitt, the late Dr Sandy Fowler, Prof. John Fox, Rod Fox, Gail Gordon, Anna Griffin, Glynn Griffith, Peter Griffin, Christian Gross, Nick Goss, the late James Hart, Stella Hart, Sim Hasker, Ajmal Hasan, Barbara Hayward, Jenny Hill, Jenny Irwin, Peter Jackson, Jenny Jarvis, Stephen Jarvis, Marijcke Jongbloed, Ranju Kapoor, Lamjed El-Kefi, Mike Kerley, Reza Khan, Sonja Lavrenčič, Carolyn Lehmann, Lena Linton, Robert Lovelace, Clive Lowe, Linda Lowe, Katrina Lynes, Angela Manthorpe, Stephen Manthorpe, Anne Millen, Maha Abdul Moneim, Diana Oates, Jill Oates, Mike Oates, Dr Joseph Platt, David Palmer, James Pardoe, the late Martin Parker, Mairead Porter, Sandhya Prakash, Anindita Radhakrishna, Pradeep Radhakrishna, Johanna Raynor, Rachel Raynor, Colin Richardson, Gerry Ricks, Ian Robson, Jen Robinson, Patricia Rosetti, Geoff Sanderson, Larry Schwab, Michelle Sinclair, Fi Skennerton, David Snelling, Alex Walker, Peter Walker, Mike West, Bob White, David White-Cooper, Deanne White. *Thanks to Gary Feulner and Valerie Chalmers for compiling this information, and for the old photographs.*

DNHG Website

[The following excerpt is from the Chairman's Report, presented at the Annual General Meeting conducted at the DNHG lecture on 3 April 2011. Copies of the full report are available on request.]

It is a special pleasure, on the occasion of our 25th anniversary, to be able to announce the inauguration of the DNHG's website, which will be accessible online soon at www.dnhg.org. Contrary to appearances, the Committee was not slow in undertaking this initiative. In fact, extensive discussion began in late 2002 and the Committee's vision for the nature of a DNHG website has remained relatively constant since that time.

Are You a Techie with Time?

The website sub-committee would like to find volunteers who can help with maintenance of the on-line newsletter, and to upload the wealth of information and photographs from past *Gazelles*. Full training will be given. Contact any Committee person - we will be very pleased to hear from you!

The aim throughout has been to have a 'no frills' site, easy to use and maintain, that serves two primary functions: (1) to give members and others information about the DNHG and its current programs, and (2) to serve as an archive for natural history reports and information, particularly items contained in the *Gazelle*.

At an early stage the decision was taken to avail ourselves of space on the site hosted by the Al-Ain ENHG, but in pursuing this goal we learned that the necessary technical skills were not available, either on the DNHG Committee or among volunteers from our membership, to understand and make the necessary choices among technology, to design or maintain a DNHG website or even to oversee the conversion and posting of data on a site managed by the Al-Ain ENHG. What has changed in the interim, allowing us to transform desire into reality, is the available technology.

In particular, the advent of blog sites now offers a much simpler technical alternative to traditional websites. Under the guidance of Committee member Sandhya Prakash, we engaged a consultant, Ram Prasad, who showed us how a blog site could meet our needs and presented us with a selection of basic blog site templates which we could select and customise to meet our particular needs. We consciously opted for simplicity. From that point, last autumn, the process has been relatively straightforward, delayed primarily by time constraints on the part of the relevant sub-committee members. Michelle Sinclair has



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Vice Chairman	Valerie Chalmers email: valeriechalmers@gmail.com	394 8872	050-4558498	
Treasurer	Louisa Akerina email: Louisa.akerina@gmail.com		050-241 5045	
Membership Secretary	Anindita Radhakrishna email: anin@emirates.net.ae	282 3952	050-656 9165	
Speaker Co-ordinator	Martina Fella / Michelle Sinclair email: martina_fella@hotmail.com			
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Pradeep Radhakrishna email: wgarnet@emirates.net.ae	282 3952	050-450 8496	
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Jenny Hill email: jennyhill76@hotmail.com		050-8861508	
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Chief Engineer	Ajmal Hasan email: ajmal_hasan@hotmail.com		06-5043523	06-5611789
Website Coordinator	Sandhya Prakash email: sandy_pi@yahoo.com	050-5512481		

taken the lead, under Ram's tutelage, in implementing our customised design changes.

Work is still required on some pages and on internal links, but we expect that the basic architecture of the site will be in more or less final form very shortly, and the addition of new and archival content will follow on a continuing basis. *Report by Gary Feulner*

ABBA (Atlas of Breeding Birds of Arabia)

The final Atlas is now published* (as vol. 25 of *Fauna of Arabia*) but the ABBA project continues under the leadership of Coordinator Mike Jennings. Mike, who was recently the guest speaker at Inter-Emirates Weekend, wants to spread the word that the ABBA project is definitely *not* finished and is still actively collecting information on bird distribution, habitat changes, and species ecology in Arabia for the period since July 2010. (The project will also gratefully receive information relating to the earlier period not previously reported.)

Because birds are very mobile in range and population and are currently subject to a number of pressures in Arabia, such as climate change, habitat change and conservation pressures, it is important that changes are documented. Distribution data is welcome each year to up-date information held on common species everywhere in Arabia, to add additional birds discovered breeding in new areas and even new breeding birds for Arabia. Mike hopes in due course to completely revamp the existing database, going over to a more interactive system which will offer more opportunities for people to share the data collected for their own purposes. There will also be a new website (the existing site dates from about 2002).

Instructions and forms for contributors are available from ABBA website:

<http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/arabian.birds>,

from Mike Jennings at: arabian-birds@dsl.pipex.com or from

DNHG Chairman Gary Feulner.

Also encouraged are short reports for Phoenix or, for longer papers, *Sandgrouse* and other scientific journals. *Report by Gary Feulner*

[*The Atlas is available from Karger Libri, Basle, Switzerland (attn. Andrea Murdoch, a.murdoch@libri.ch, tel: ++41-61-306-1523.)



Hmmm ... probably *not* the Atlas cover.

Gazelle has not forgotten IEW; we have reports but not enough room for them this month. Add yours for our May issue! Long or short, we are happy to have it. Please send photographs as separate jpg files. Size does not matter; Anne can shrink them.

Dubai Natural History Group Programme

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

May 01 Dr Susanne Hofstra: A New Perspective on the Old Fertile Crescent: Archaeology and the Origins of Agriculture

Jun 05 Dr Mark Beech: Recent Research in UAE Archaeology (TBC)

Field Trips (Members only, please.)

Apr 30 Water Bottling Plant

Until May 02 Archeological Exhibition, Al Jahili Fort

May 06 Kayaking in Umm Al Quwain

May 27&28 Overnight on Siir Abu Nu'air

Further field trips, details or changes will be announced or confirmed by e-mail circular.