



# GAZELLE

مجموعة دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي



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## Inter-Emirates Weekend - Special Edition!

This year's Inter-Emirates Weekend, hosted by the Dubai Natural History Group and held in Ras Al Khaimah, was a very successful event.

Despite the unfortunate weather and huge sandstorm, over 150 participants took part in a variety of field trips including early morning

birdwatching trips, half-day treks through various wadis, stargazing, dhow trips, hunting for shells, exploring abandoned villages, re-discovering archaeological sites, delving into date factories and wading through mangroves.

A special thank you to the IEW Committee and Trip Leaders for all their time and hard work.

And a very special thank you to Vice-Chairman Valerie Chalmers for all her hard work, time, effort and patience to make the IEW such an enjoyable and successful weekend.

Reports on the various trips that took place during the weekend and the Gala Dinner can be found within this edition of the *Gazelle*.

- *Gazelle Editor,*  
on behalf of the DNHG Committee



## Al Jazeera Al Hamra

During the IEW we made an interesting trip to the village Al Jazeera Al Hamra.

This small coastal town to the south of Ras Al Khaimah was initially home to the Al Zaab family/tribe. All the houses are now abandoned as the whole community was re-housed to the Abu Dhabi emirate after a dispute with the local authorities in 1975.



Al Jazeera Al Hamra (meaning 'The Red Island') was originally a tidal island and the district is referred to as the 'Al Zaab area'. By 1830, the village was home to some 200 people who lived mainly off trading and pearl diving.

What they left behind is truly remarkable. Most of the houses are still untouched since the time they were abandoned, resulting in a unique heritage site within the UAE. Thankfully some parts have been protected and renovated.

Thank you very much to Lamjed for showing us this remarkable settlement.

Report and photo by  
Christine Verreydt

## Inside this month

IEW - Gala Dinner

IEW - Photographic Comp

IEW - Dhayah Fort

IEW - Dhow Cruise

IEW - Wadi Ayim

IEW - Wadi Naqab

## Contributors

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

Christine Verreydt, Bev McKay, Valerie Chalmers, Keith Taylor, Melanie Wood, Luigi Fasso, Alan Freeland, Tamsin Carlisle, Konstantina Sakellariou, Anne Millen and Pradeep Radhakrishna

## Announcements

### Next Month's Speaker

The DNHG are delighted to welcome Ahmed Al Harethi who will be giving a talk entitled:

***"Life in the Desert"***

Ahmed Al Harethi is a second-year PhD student in the Inter-Disciplinary Doctoral Program (IDDP) at the Masdar Institute where he works under Dr. Hector Hernandez, researching substances produced by native microalgae strains and assessing their potential for the UAE.

Ahmed joined the Masdar Institute in 2011, and finished his Master's degree in chemical engineering in 2013. Prior to joining the Masdar Institute he graduated from the Chemical Engineering Program at the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi in 2007, followed by working as an operation supervisor and process engineer for 4 years at GASCO in the Habshan Gas Plant.

### Come Join our Field Trip Team!

If you would like to join the '*Field Trip Coordination Team*' or are interested in leading your own field trip then we would like to hear from you!

Field trip leaders do not need to be professional experts, just be generally interested and enthusiastic. We have a number of field trips to choose from or if you have somewhere specific in mind, our field trip coordinators are here to help.

Our field trips have taken DNHG members to museums, souks, sea-shores and mangrove swamps and from mountain wadis to mountain tops, archaeological and fossil sites as well as to offshore islands. We have also ventured into Oman to the Jebel Akhdar, the tombs at Bat, the Wahiba Sands and the turtle beach at Sur.

**Field Trip Coordinators:**

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Angela: [manthorpe2005@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:manthorpe2005@yahoo.co.uk)

### Annual General Meeting

The DNHG's Annual General Meeting will be held at our lecture on **May 10**.

The AGM has been postponed from its normal March date due to the absence of the Chairman, Gary Feulner.

The AGM will feature a brief report by the Chairman and the Treasurer, followed by election of officers to the DNHG Committee for the coming year.

Members who would like to volunteer for responsibilities on the Committee should contact the Chairman, or Vice-Chairman Valerie Chalmers, or any other member of the Committee.

### Killer Whales sighted in Abu Dhabi waters

This month *The National* newspaper reported a sighting of 2 Killer Whales (*Orcinus orca*) near Ras Ghurab Island in Abu Dhabi.

Spotted during a routine inspection for the maritime division of the Department of Transport, a 10-minute video of the sighting was recorded and uploaded on social media.

Sightings of Killer Whales in the Arabian Gulf are uncommon as they live in the open ocean and prefer temperate waters. However, other confirmed sightings have been recorded in Mubarraz in Abu Dhabi, Jebel Ali, Kuwait, Qatar and, in 2008, a pod were sighted off the shores of Ras Al Khaimah.

To find out more or see the video please visit the following link:

<http://www.thenational.ae/uae/rarely-sighted-killer-whales-spotted-in-abu-dhabi-waters>

### Help save Dubai's Turtles!



Volunteer with us by sending us a message on Facebook or email at [emeg.general@gmail.com](mailto:emeg.general@gmail.com)



## Inter-Emirates Weekend 2015 Gala Dinner



The Gala Dinner was held in the restaurant of the Golden Tulip Khatt Springs Hotel in Ras Al Khaimah.

A highlight of the evening was an illustrated talk entitled 'The British Attacks of 1809 and 1819: A brief History and what remains today' given by Christian Velde, Resident Archaeologist at the Department of Antiquities in RAK.

Christian's talk was followed by the presentation of the Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohamed Award for Natural History and the Bish Brown Award, (this year's winners are listed below). Finally the prizes for the Inter-Emirates Weekend Photographic Competition were handed out (details on the next page).

*Report and following 'award' write-ups by  
Keith Taylor and Valerie Chalmers*

### Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohamed Award for Natural History

The **Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohamed Award for Natural History**, which is the country's premier natural history award, is intended to acknowledge the contributions made by an individual, primarily through original research and publication, to the scientific study of the archaeology, history and natural history of the UAE.

**Dr. Richard Hornby** was the recipient of this award for 2014, principally in recognition of his considerable contributions to the knowledge of the UAE's fauna and flora for over twenty years, first through his work as managing director of the National Avian Research Centre, then as an adviser

to the Federal Environment Agency and now through the environmental consultancy, Nautica Environmental Associates, of which he is a co-founder.

Additionally, through his consultancy work through Nautica for the EAD, for oil companies and for other bodies, he has done much to raise the level of scientific recording and analysis in this important aspect of the overall environment and natural history scene here.

At the same time he has engaged in his own independent research and publication through many contributions to **Tribulus**, and his service as editor of and leading contributor to the ADCO study formed the basis of the Jebel Hafit book published by the ENHG.

He has also advised many others, both professional and amateur naturalists who are active in their field, through mentoring in the preparation of their own papers, through collecting samples for identification by external specialists and in many other ways.



### Bish Brown Award



The presentation of the **Bish Brown Award** is given to a person who has made a significant contribution to promoting wider interest in the objectives of the UAE's four natural history groups through means such as educational activities, raising public consciousness in the media, playing a leading role in NHG activities etc.

The award for 2014 was made to our own **Sonja Lavrencic**, DNHG Field Trip Coordinator, in recognition of her sustained exploration and active sharing of places and phenomena of varied natural history interest; her revitalization of

the Dubai Natural History Group's field trip program, with the inclusion of several trips to regional destinations; her encouragement of mutually beneficial interaction between the DNHG and the ENHG -Al Ain as well as two other groups with shared interests – the Emirates Architectural Heritage Group and the Dubai Astronomy Group – and her services in general as a respected ambassador of the shared goals of all of the UAE's natural history groups, welcoming many residents of this region to the sophisticated enjoyment of the world around us.



Tamsin Carlisle's  
"Rimth" – Empty Quarter, Dhohar



Robert Cook's "Tiger Butterflies at Dusk"



Cheryl Bray's "Solitary Walk"



Sally Koornneef's "Resting in Fujairah"



Andrew Childs'  
"Watch Tower in Southern Oman"

## Winners of the IEW Photographic Competition

This year's Inter-Emirates Weekend Photographic Competition saw many excellent and varied entries, making it difficult to vote for the best one!

Many thanks to Angela Manthorpe for arranging the prizes and announcing the winners for each category to end the evening of the IEW Gala dinner.

The winners were as follows:

### PLANTS:

**Winner:** Tamsin Carlisle with "Rimth" – Empty Quarter, Dhohar.

**Runner-up:** Martina Fella with "Close-up of *Tephrosia apollinea* – "dhafra".

### ANIMALS:

**Winner:** Robert Cook with "Tiger Butterflies at Dusk".

**Runner-up:** Brigitte Howarth with "Smile! *Pristurus carter*".

### GEOLOGY/ LANDSCAPE:

**Winner:** Cheryl Bray with "Solitary Walk".

**Runner-up:** Angela Manthorpe with "Rawdah Bowl, Musandam".

### ARCHITECTURE/ ARCHAEOLOGY:

**Winner:** Andrew Childs with "Watch Tower in Southern Oman".

**Runner-up:** Peter Olliff with "Wadi House".

### CULTURE:

**Winner:** Sally Koornneef with "Resting in Fujairah".

**Runner-up:** Michelle Sinclair with "RAK Scarecrow".



This year's competition was kindly sponsored by  
**Adventure HQ** and **Explorer**.

Each of the winners received a Dh100/- voucher from Adventure HQ and a book from Explorer, with the five runners-up receiving Explorer calendars.





## Dhayah Fort

During the IEW field trip to Dhayah Fort we were hit by a large sandstorm. The sandstorm hit us so strongly that, a couple of times, we had to sit down and hold onto a rock, waiting for the whipping wave to pass by. Visibility decreased to almost 50 metres, and the lashes of sand on the car sounded like a threatening massive attack (I will never say again that the sandstorm in Mission Impossible IV was an exaggeration!).



*Pottery samples found at the site*

Considering this, we were extremely lucky to enjoy the field trip, led very skilfully by Ulrike Andorff, during a precious morning pocket of relatively clear weather. This allowed us some magnificent views from the hills behind Dhayah Fort over the nearby canyon, sea, mangroves and sand islands of the Arabian Gulf.

There is always a special feeling of discovery when one visits old deserted villages in the UAE. We climbed up to reach the remains of what is possibly called Qudairah (or Old Rams) village, a cluster of 71 stone houses possibly dating from around the 18th or 19th century, surrounded by cultivation terraces and protected by the rocky mountain on one side and by the fort and watch towers on the other.

Though now the area looks rocky and deserted, it has a long history (as "confirmed" by the prehistoric tombs around, one of which we also identified at the base of the hill),

possibly dating back 5000 years and based on the water available in the nearby wadi and oasis.

We went in and out of the roofless remains, either jumping over the walls or entering politely through the door opening, excited to identify the old mosque with its stone mihrab and what seemed to be ablution facilities of the past, and the village ruler's house on top of a hill with a good view towards the sea.

The excitement lies in trying to connect pieces of information, scattered knowledge, personal experiences and a lot of imagination, in order to recreate how these tribes might have lived and their daily routines.

This was similar to how we tried to fit together fragments of pottery we collected from the rocks we found at the site (most probably from the Late Islamic period). All different colours and kinds were found, some pieces being the dark, thick local pottery, others the thinner Indian style, and others decorated with painted designs or with the characteristic green Iranian glaze. We also saw several piles of seashells, scattered on the ground, maybe used as fertilizers.

However, not everything was old and "dead" in the village. Within the shadowed space created among some rocks, we discovered a busy beehive of local wild bees. On another field trip, we were told that the locals put grass over beehives they find so that no one claims it in the future, and occasionally they will check them and collect the honey – which is exceptionally tasty. We also got quite interested in what seemed to be a



*A busy beehive of local wild bees*

huge beetle – which ended up being two beetles having some fun under the sun!

Leaving the old village, we walked up the stairs to the Dhayah Fort, which dates back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> C AD. This fort is of particular importance as it was the last point of resistance during the 1819 British attack. Despite the deep mud, the British army managed to push up the hill their heaviest cannons from their ship and, hence, very quickly brought the fort and the rest of the surrounding buildings to the ground (on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1819).



The fort (pictured above) is comprised of two mudbrick towers that were built on top of a man-made platform and connected with a perimeter wall. Several stones in the centre of this platform point to semi-permanent buildings (Areesh huts), which supplemented the towers.

The fort was not built for long sieges, as it lacks a cistern for the storage of water, but was a defence against fast attacks of light-armed raiders. It was part of the defence system of Dhayah together with several watchtowers and a second fort (which was also the Sheikh's Palace, currently almost completely ruined) at the foot of the hill. The watchtowers were used to detect the enemy and as a first line of defence. In the meantime, the inhabitants and their flock could gather in the lower fort, while armed soldiers were taking their positions in both forts to fight the attacker.

The fort was restored around the 1830s, and it was used by the Sheikh till 1964 before being used as a prison. From 2001 it has been open to the public as an archaeological site.

*Report and photos by  
Konstantina Sakellariou*

## IEW - Field Trips

### Mangrove Dhow Cruise

A perfect, easy afternoon excursion was the mangrove dhow cruise, in which we saw many beautiful birds and their habitat. From our port at the Manar Mall we had a little city tour, which had some interesting abandoned boats, and also saw some other sinking structures.

We asked our captain to take us into the midst of the mangrove area, where all the birds were singing out evening songs, and dining on fish and insects. Along the way we viewed and took pictures of many cormorants, flamingos and herons. There were many other interesting birds, but I can't be sure I could accurately identify them. One significant sighting for me was one small tree that was filled with, what I believe to be, white egrets; we counted at least ten sitting in there altogether.

To keep the trip adventurous we asked our captain to take us deep into the mangrove at low tide, resulting in one of the three dhow boats running aground on a sand bar! For 20 minutes another boat tried to free the dhow that was stuck but, as the tide continued to lower, the rescue boat also risked becoming marooned and so the passengers of the beached dhow transferred to the rescue boat. Then we all went back to port, including the captain.

Many agreed that we saw many amazing things during the time we were stuck, such as flamingos who appeared to walk on water across the mangroves, and we are very glad that we chose the dhow cruise excursion for the amazing birds we saw.

*Report and photo by  
Melanie Wood*



### Wadi Ayim

Jean-Paul Berger shared with us his enthusiasm for rocks and nature while pleasantly leading a walk up Wadi Ayim, an extraordinary fault line, which is a rare location where one of the great geology feats can be seen at close range - the subduction of the Arabian continental plate under the Tethys oceanic crust, with colourful metamorphic rock inserts that bear witness to the great depth at which this occurred, including a spectacular red formation made by siliceous plankton.

We also saw a prominent example of a wadi terrace. A dried-up toad at the start of the walk took us closer to living organisms, later found in the shape of tadpoles and even fish, possibly two species, in one of the few water holes hidden between rocks. Plants were few and far between, but some very interesting, notably the pictured *Lindenbergia indica*.

*Contribution by Luigi Fasso  
and Bev McKay*

### Wadi Naqab

Angela chose a gem of a wadi hike for us, which included adventurous features such as an abandoned beehive hut, an old grave site, some interesting rock structures, and a huge camera tower. We scrambled in and out of the wadi with some degree of exertion but not too much. Those of us who needed to rest on boulders just went at our own pace because the hike was walk in and walk out the same way.

The disused bee house was probably used in the last 10 years, and all of the materials inside were

left as they were when in use. Perhaps the colony collapsed, as has been happening in Europe and North America. The grave site was gorgeous, with dark rocks from the area marking headstones. Some burial sites were completely surrounded with square rocks, marking where someone is permanently resting.

Along the walk we found small rock huts built up in clusters. I cannot speculate who used these and for what purpose, though it would be nice to know. The camera tower is situated just along the border of the UAE and Oman and must be used to observe border crossings. Lots of plants were

green along the way, popping up between the rocks and boulders. Of the natural fauna we saw were black beetles, black and orange butterflies and little mountain goats climbing around. The goats could belong to the people who have homes in the wadi area.

*Report by Melanie Wood*



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## 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.

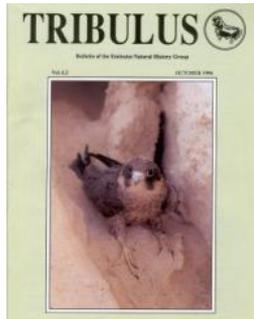
Please contact any Committee person - we will be very pleased to hear from you!

## DNHG Facebook

Come join our 660+ followers!

<http://facebook.com/DNHG.UAE>

## Old *Tribulus* Volumes Wanted



The ENHG journal, *Tribulus*, is now in its twenty-third year of publication. Since it began, it has become increasingly important as a source of published data about the natural history and archaeology of the UAE. Much of the material published in *Tribulus* is available nowhere else.

As the journal continues to expand its reputation overseas, the Editorial Board have received an increasing number of requests from overseas academic and other scientific institutions for sets of *Tribulus*. Unfortunately, it is not possible to meet all of these requests, since some of the older issues are out of stock and reprinting would make no economic sense.

If any DNHG members are leaving the UAE and do not want to take their copies of *Tribulus* with them, then the Editorial Board would be delighted to have them back!

Anyone wishing to hand back copies should contact any member of the DNHG Committee, who will arrange to get the copies to the Editorial Board. Many thanks, in advance.

## Anna Griffin

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of former Committee member Anna Griffin on 3rd March, in Montpellier, France.



Anna was an office bearer on the DNHG Committee for most of her stay in Dubai, beginning in the 1990s. She took over the position of Membership Secretary from Anne-Marie Bui in March 1998, and by early 1999 she had added Editorship of the *Gazelle*, which she took over from Neil Curtis. In March 1999, Kathy Bird relieved her of her duties as Membership Secretary, and Anna's husband Peter became Treasurer.

She was a very enthusiastic, reliable and effective Editor and Committee member. In February 2001, when the Griffins were leaving for France, Anne Millen became the *Gazelle* editor and Jim Fischer Treasurer. Anna kept in touch, sending snippets for the *Gazelle* about local wildlife and from several adventures from the Himalayas to Mt Kilimanjaro.

Some members will remember her as the marathon-runner with white bobbed hair and mischievous smile. A small piece of Members' News from the April 1998 *Gazelle* reported that while doing a bit of natural history on the run, Anna Griffin broke her stride in a marathon to put aside a dead viper she encountered along the course. She hoped to collect it later, but it had disappeared when she and Peter returned. (Perhaps it was not very dead!)

Throughout all this, she had leukaemia, unbeknownst to any of us. In France she polished her French and continued running in the woods for as long as possible. Her soft spot for Dubai showed in her choice of Twitter name: *PurpleSunbird*.

Report by Anne Millen

## Dubai Natural History Group Programme

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

April 12: Ahmed Al Harethi: Life in the Desert

May 10: Dr. Richard Hornby: *(title of lecture to be announced)*

### Field Trips (Members Only)

Mar 29 - Apr 3: Andaman Islands Trip

April 3-11: Nepal Hill Country

April 10: Wadi Bih Walk

April 11: Visit to Historical Sharjah

April 18: Visit to Abu Dhabi Wildlife Centre and Al Wathba Wetland Reserve

June 5-13: Slovenia

*Further field trips, details or changes to trips will be announced/confirmed by email circular*

### DNHG COMMITTEE 2014

When possible, please contact committee members outside office hours

|                        | name                         | tel          | email                     |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
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### Contributions

Do you have a field report, unusual finding, interesting news article, book review, amazing photograph, or community news to share?

If so, email your contributions to: [gazelleeditor@gmail.com](mailto:gazelleeditor@gmail.com)

*(Arial 10 justified).*

### DNHG Membership

Membership remains one of Dubai's best bargains at 100 Dhs. for families and 50 Dhs. for individuals. Membership is valid from Sep 2014 to Sep 2015. You can join or renew at meetings or by sending us a cheque made out to HSBC account no. 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 AE90020000030100242001. However, this process does not identify you as the payer. If you wish to pay by cash, please also scan and e-mail a copy of your payment confirmation to the Membership Secretary, so we know whose money we have received.

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*, our post office box, additions to our library, incidental expenses of speakers and occasional special projects.