



GAZELLE



مجموعتنا دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي

Dragonflies have an enviable reputation for accuracy and efficiency, which they have honed over more than 300 million years. Success rates from nearly 50% to more than 90% for prey capture attempts have been reported, a statistic that would be envied by most active hunters on land, sea or air. Ten percent would be a good success rate for most mammalian predators on land.

But the dragonfly's predatory skill does not necessarily carry over to more amorous affairs – or maybe there are always a few bumbling first time suitors. In mid-May, at the edge of a drying agricultural pond along the mountain front near Al-Ghayl, we noticed a number of males of resident dragonfly species "hanging out" at the water's edge, as they do to await females visiting to feed or mate. (Analogy has been made to UAE shopping malls.)

Dragonflies, when they mate, do so in the so-called "wheel position". The

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Contributors—

Thanks to the following for their contributions this month:

Gary Feulner, Binish Roobas, Agnieszka Dolatowska and Huw Roberts

male grasps the female by the head and neck (pronotum) with his anal claspers, located at the tip of his abdomen. The female then bends her abdomen forward and upward, so that her genital opening, near the tip of her abdomen, touches the secondary genital opening of the male, on the underside of his second and third abdominal segments, from which she will receive stored sperm.



An unconsummated attempt to mate by a male Slender Skimmer *Orthetrum sabina* (top) with a female Gidled Skimmer *Orthetrum chrysostigma* (photo by Gary Feulner)

One young(?) Slender Skimmer male at our site was evidently over-eager, and certainly didn't discriminate properly. We spotted him just after he had seized his chosen damsel (dragon?) and flown off with her to a perch on a low wall. Many dragonfly species are sexually dimorphic, so it is no surprise to see a coupling between two somewhat different looking individuals. But Slender Skimmer females look identical to males, so in this case we knew immediately that something was wrong.

Tempted to stay here?

See page 3 for more photos of the DNHG Greece Trip



It took the would-be Lothario a few minutes and several changes of perch to catch on. The female, which we recognized as a Girdled Skimmer *Orthetrum chrysostigma*, followed the male's lead, flying clasped head-to-tail in the so-called tandem position; in the grip of his claspers, she had little choice. But she never took the fateful and critical step of curling her abdomen to complete the wheel.

We can have no inkling of what was going on in the male's mind (or the hapless female's mind, for that matter). Did hope spring eternal? Was he reluctant, in full view of observers, to admit his careless error? Whatever, at a certain point, and without any obvious fanfare, he simply released the female and darted away. And she, the instant she was released, did exactly the same.

Contribution by Gary Feulner and Binish Roobas



An example of dragonflies mating in the "wheel" position (photo by Huw Roberts)

Announcements and Recordors

Monthly Speaker

Lectures will re-commence in September. Speaker details will be circulated to members via email and posted in the July/August edition.

Tibor Paluch



DNHG are saddened to learn of the sudden death of Tibor Paluch, senior archaeologist from RAK Department of Antiquities.

Tibor was deeply involved in the work of the Department of Antiquities and Museums. He also collaborated with the RAK National Museum to organize new exhibitions related to the history of the Emirate. He constantly conducted surveys in remote areas of the emirate to register and document new archaeological sites. His passion was searching for petroglyphs. He collaborated with various international archaeological expeditions conducting excavations in RAK. He never refused to help anyone, and never laughed at the ideas of others. He was always kind and polite to those who were close to him. He died in Wadi Naqab while carrying out his duties. Doing what he loved the most; he worked way too much.

He was a devoted husband and father, although his work consumed much of his time. Tibor was a man who took on many responsibilities and did exceptionally well in all of them. His death has touched all who knew him.

Contribution by his colleague, Agnieszka Dolatowska



Photo shows Tibor leading the February DNHG field trip to Hala village in Ras al Khaimah

Important Notice!

Following the Covid hiatus and the resumption of in-person and Zoom (hybrid) monthly meetings at the Emirates Academy for Hospitality Management, membership fees will be payable from September. See page 4 for details.

Errata

Thanks to Geoff Sanderson for recognizing the error in last month's Gazelle on page 6 in the article regarding the Saudi NW vegetation.

Geoff, who is presently working with this species, points out that a photo of *Hyphaene thebaica* had the wrong caption title *Fagonia*.

On checking it was found that the captions on this page were mixed up. These have been corrected and appear as such on the website.

We apologize for this error and would ask that if readers spot any errors in articles or captions, please let us know at:

gazelleeditor@gmail.com

Goodbyes

We say goodbye to one of our regular contributors, Ulrike Andorff who has taken up a posting in Qatar.

Not only has Ulrike sent articles and excellent photographs, but she has also led trips into the mountains and villages in the Fujairah region.

DNHG hope to hear from Ulrike once she has settled into her new post and is out and about once more exploring.

We also say goodbye to Sandi Ellis who has served on the committee for many years. Sandi is relocating to her home country of the USA.

Field Reporters for Gazelle

Do you have a field report, unusual finding, interesting news article, book review, an amazing photograph or community news to share? Perhaps you have some interesting photos for the Spotlight page?

Send your contributions to the:

gazelleeditor@gmail.com

Due to the small size of the Gazelle, articles with about four photographs can either be accompanied by a few sentences or a small number of paragraphs. Ideally, longer articles should be around (or less than) 600 words.

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From the Editor:

And so the summer begins ...

Whilst the UAE is quiet at this time of year, many readers will be travelling.

Please write to us at the email below with your observations of wildlife either abroad or in the UAE.

gazelleeditor@gmail.com

Enjoy your read and have a great summer break!

Spotlight! On the DNHG Field Trip to Greece



DNHG members spent nine days during May in Peloponnese, where they undertook a 'journey through time'.

(1st row from left to right)

In the streets of Nafplio

Epidauros Theatre

(2nd row from left to right)

Nafplio old town—view from Venicean castle, Palamidi

Only churches remain intact in the ruins of medieval Mystra

(3rd row from left to right)

Orthodox churches in medieval Mystra are famous for their frescos

Part of a Venitian fort, Methoni

(4th row from left to right)

Royal Baths in the Mycenaean Nestor Palace, as described by Homer

Stadium with remains of Stoaae at ancient Messene

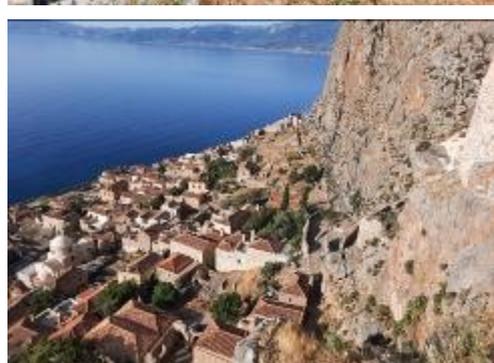
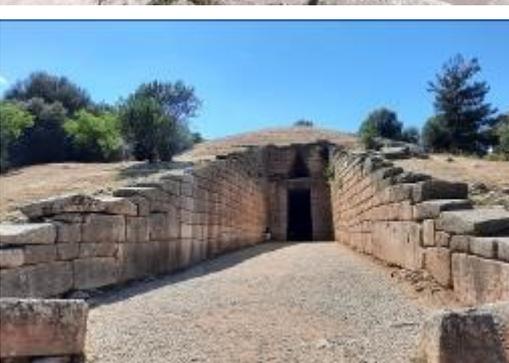
Temple of Apollo in the Delphic Sanctuary, 4th century BC

(5th row from left to right)

Temple of Zeus in Nemea

Entrance to the tomb of Agamemnon, 1350—1250, Micene

Traditional houses in Monemvasia were transformed into an atmospheric hotel town



Dubai Natural History Group (DNHG) Programme 2021/2022

DNHG Lectures

Monthly lectures will resume in September, 2022

DNHG Field Trips

9—16 July Northern Sumatra

7—19 September Madagascar (a shorter version will be between 11—19 September)

Please note that field trips will only take place in accordance with current Dubai Government regulations. Participants need proof of vaccination or proof of PCR test not older than 72 hours upon registration/arrival.

DNHG COMMITTEE 2021/2022

When possible, please contact committee members outside office hours

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DNHG Membership

DNHG membership remains one of Dubai's best bargains at Dh100 for families and Dh50 for singles. Membership for the current year is valid from September 2021 to September 2022. In consideration of the restrictions on our lectures and field trips due to COVID-19, all members who were paid up (or considered paid up) for 2020—2021 were automatically renewed for 2021- 2022, without a renewal fee. As we will be starting hybrid meetings from September, renewal fees can be paid at meetings or by the methods mentioned below.

New members can join by (i) sending to the Membership Secretary (see above) a completed one-page membership form, which can be downloaded from our website (www.dnhg.org) and (ii) making payment to our Emirates NBD account by cash deposit or transfer from your bank or ATM, using our IBAN number AE640260001012012013302. However, this process does not always identify the payer. So if you wish to pay by cash deposit, 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 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.