

# GAZELLE

Vol 15 no 11 - November 2000



مجموعة دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي

DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Members' News

### *Winter at last.....*

Membership Secretary **Fl Skennerton** jettied off on short notice for a long weekend at Petra, the "rose-red city half as old as time." The package was too good to pass up, says Fl - and so was Petra.

Congratulations to **Peter and Janke Cunningham** on their new baby girl, born in November. Mother and baby are doing fine - except that Janke fell and broke her foot as a preliminary. We offer our best wishes for a smooth and speedy recovery.

Chairman **Gary Feulner** celebrated another birthday in October - and where better to celebrate than in Khor Fakkan, watching a spring tide roll in over his beloved storm channel population of *Terebralis palustris*, the mangrove mud snail, 40 km from the nearest mangroves. Look for the results of Gary's investigations in the upcoming *Tribulus*.

**Bob White**, the DNHG's former "Chief Engineer," now retired and living in Eugene, Oregon, thoughtfully wrote to the Chairman about some endangered tree snails in Florida's Everglades. Bob has been cultivating an unusual hobby - urban shell collecting. Says he, "I spent some time in Europe collecting sea shells this summer. A lot of stores

use sea shells in their displays. I would go in and ask if I could have the one I liked, and they often gave it to me. So I now have shells from Zurich, Prague, and Amsterdam." Bob and Geni are also planning a trip to Sanibel Island, one of Florida's finest shelling spots.

### "A tree is worth US\$ 196,250"

*According to Prof Jim Das of the University of Calcutta*

"A tree living for 50 years will generate \$31,250 worth of oxygen, provide \$62,000 worth of pollution control, control soil erosion and increase soil fertility to the tune of \$31,250, recycle \$37,500 worth of water and provide a home for animals worth \$31,250. This figure does not include the value of the fruits, lumber or beauty derived from trees. Just another sensible reason to take care of our forests".

*From Update Forestry, Michigan State University*

On December 10th our speaker will be **Dr Lubomir Mrhac (Luban)**

See Page 6 for details

## DNHG Membership and Renewal

DNHG membership remains a bargain at Dhs 50 (singles or couples).

You may join or renew at meetings or send a cheque to Fl Skennerton, DNHG Membership Secretary, PO Box 29561, cheque made out to Lloyd's Bank account no 173746. (Please note we cannot cash cheques made out to the DNHG.) Membership is valid from September 2000 to August 2001.

DNHG membership entitles you to participate in field trips and helps pay for our lecture hall, publication and distribution of our monthly newsletter, 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:

Mary Beardwood  
Gary Feulner  
Peter Hellyer  
Steve James  
Michael and Jill Ostes



### Overnight camp in the Hajar Mountains 7/8 December

Allen and Marilyn Hartley will lead an over-night camp in the Hajar mountains. The emphasis of the camp is to relax and enjoy the mountains. There will be a campfire and star-gazing on the Thursday evening and an optional Wadi walk on the Friday. The trip departs at 15:00 on the 7th from the Hilton Car park.

The camp is limited to 5 carloads of 4 people (children over 5 years of age welcome). For sign-up contact Allen and Marilyn on Dubai 3527114

### Musandam Hike Friday 15 December

Musandam contour hike to various Shihuh settlements. Nick Hephher will lead a full day hike in the Musandam with panoramic views and a gorge to be revisited. The route commences at an altitude of approx 1000 metres and follows a bedouin trail ascending and descending +/- 300 metres in the lee of Jebel Qawah leading to interesting Shihuh settlements. The hike is suitable for experienced hikers and those regularly engaged in active sports.

Bring boots, rucksack, hat and light clothing. A jacket or jersey is recommended. A minimum of 4.5 litres of liquid should be carried and a packed lunch. A 4WD vehicle is necessary for this trip.

Depart Dubai 06:00 sharp Hilton Hotel car park. The trip is limited to 10 members.

For further details and sign up contact Nick Hephher on tel: 04-2216288 or fax: 04 3943524 or e-mail: [desrat18@yahoo.com](mailto:desrat18@yahoo.com)



### The Turtle Beach Ras al Hadd Oman

Thanks to the invitation from Rosemary Hector of the Oman Historical Association to visit the turtle beaches, members of the DNHG set off in October for their "Oman Experience". The first stop was in Muscat where we were entertained by the Sharqiyah Ramlat Bank and poet, Abdullah al Harthy at the beautiful home of Siw Rantapaa. Lamb, wrapped in banana leaves and cooked in the traditional Shuwa pil, was on the menu and our hosts provided us with welcome liquid refreshments.

A large convoy set off the next day, with an Omani guide, for the lengthy drive to Ras al Hadd. The long coastline of the Arabian Peninsula is home to a turtle population of global importance where five different species are known to live. The most commonly found are the Green Turtles, which nest in thousands in Oman. It is estimated that between 50-80,000 green turtle egg clutches are laid each year. Although the turtles may only nest once every two to three years they usually return to the same shore. The Government of Oman is making every effort to preserve the nesting sites for the turtles, by fencing off the beaches and only permitting entrance with a pass. Some of our party chose to camp on the beach while others stayed in a charming barasti village a short journey away. We were instructed to meet at 9.30pm for our first sight of the turtles. Gradually our eyes became accustomed to the dark shore and we started to pick out black humps at the water's edge. The turtles made a slow, determined trudge up the beach to the huge pits, that had already been excavated by generations of turtles, to start the egg laying process. At this stage they are very sensitive to disturbance and some quickly retreated into the water when they sensed human presence. Once they had settled into a spot and dug their nest they became focused on de-

positing their eggs and we were able to approach for a closer look. As many as 120 eggs may be laid in each clutch.

After an hour we were asked to leave the turtles in peace, but returned to the beach at 5.30am to see the latecomers finishing their laying. Footprints of foxes surrounded the nests, gulls whirled overhead and crabs formed a barrier between the beach and the ocean. Although collecting of eggs by people is now banned, many caravans lie in wait for the baby turtles as they hatch approximately 50 days after being laid. For ninety million years turtles have swum the seas and emerged on beaches to lay their eggs. There are now only a few sites worldwide where turtles visit in such large numbers and the entire group felt privileged to be there. Many thanks to the Historical Association of Oman from us all.

Report by Mary Beardwood



### Sharjah Archaeological Website

The Sharjah Department of Culture and Information maintains a website with information about Sharjah Archaeology, including news of current finds at: <http://www.uaeiinterac.com/ancient/ar02.htm>

### Letters to the editor News? Views?

Please write to us at PO Box 9234, or fax/e-mail Anna Griffin or any of the committee members listed on Page 7.



### Colour-ringing of gulls

A major programme of colour-ringing of large gulls is taking place in countries to the north of the UAE, and the organisers of the scheme have requested that birdwatchers in the Emirates watch out for, and report, any sightings of large gulls with rings.

The Voorn Bird Observatory in the Netherlands has organised a number of joint projects in Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Turkey whereby the following species of gull, Armenian Gull (*L. armenicus*), Yellow-legged Gull (*L. cachinnans*), Baraba Gull (*L. (?) barabensis*), Heuglin's Gull (*L. fuscus heuglini*) and another form from farther east, *L. fuscus laimyrrensis*, have been ringed with red and white engraved plastic rings. Danish researchers have a joint project in Belarus on Yellow-legged Gull (*L. (?) cachinnans*) and Finnish researchers have colour-ringed large numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gull (*L. fuscus*) both in Finland and Russia with white rings. Birds from all of these countries may migrate to the Gulf in winter.

Observers seeing any colour-ringed gull should note the colour of the ring, on which leg it is placed, and the species (if possible), as well as the time, date and place of the sighting.

Additional information relating to the circumstances of the sighting (e.g. was the bird alive or dead; if alive, was it alone or with other gulls of the same or different species?), would also be useful. There is a lot of confusion about the specific or subspecific status and the origins of many of the large gulls seen in the Gulf in winter. Details of birds seen with colour rings could help to answer some of the questions.

So, over the winter months, eyes open, please!

Reports can be sent either to the UAE Twitchers' Guide, (Peter Hellyer, PO Box 45553, Abu Dhabi) or e-mail: [Hellyer@emirates.net.ae](mailto:Hellyer@emirates.net.ae), or

direct to: Voorn Bird Observatory, Scheepersweg 26, 3233 CL Oostvoorne, The Netherlands, (e-mail: [Norman.vanswelmi@wxs.nl](mailto:Norman.vanswelmi@wxs.nl)) Peter Hellyer, Co-editor, Twitchers' Guide

### New Damselfly Breeding on East Coast

Visiting amateur Graham Giles published an illustrated checklist of UAE dragonflies and damselflies in *Tribulus* 8.1 (Winter 1998). His work, and his predictions, facilitated the subsequent UAE discovery of two additional damselfies known to be resident in Oman. One of those, *Pseudagrion decorum*, a small electric blue species, was recently found to be abundant at the Wadi S-1 dam near Khor Fakkan. This site provided the first records of *P. decorum* females in the UAE. These are dull yellow in color. A number of pairs were observed mating, both flying in tandem and perched in "wheel" formation.

In one dramatic instance a pair flying in tandem alighted on a tiny sprig of underwater plant projecting above the lake surface. The female began to descend along the stem until she had pulled the male almost entirely underwater. At that point he (uncharitably?) released her and flew free. She, however, continued to inch down the stem, tall first, "looping" like a leech, until she was out of sight some 6-8 inches or more below the surface, seeking just the "right" place to lay her eggs. Moments passed while a crowd of three males circled over the sprig. 30 seconds passed, 60 seconds, 90 seconds, perhaps more, before she suddenly popped to the surface like a diver in a free ascent, only to be snatched up immediately in tandem once more.

The ladies in question apparently know what they want. Another female, deposited on some rather horizontal branches only an inch or two below the surface, fidgeted almost constantly during more

than 5 minutes underwater, investigating various spots with the tip of her abdomen. It wasn't clear in the end if she had laid her eggs or not, but she, too, was off in tandem again within only a second of regaining the surface.

Despite a name suggestive of propriety, mating among *P. decorum* is a rather an ungentlemanly affair. One pair mating in wheel formation on a twig was repeatedly molested by other males who landed on both the mating male's arched abdomen and the female's wings.

Report by Gary Feulner

### Challenge Met!

The September 2000 *Gzelle* invited readers to find an upside-down, left handed handprint on the mud-brick walls of the Summer Palace complex in Wadi Hayt. An enthusiastic team consisting of Kim and Deanne White, Andy and Yvonne Kerck and Tom and Bonnie Krajewski rose to the challenge and located an upside-down print on the exterior wall of a chamber within the main courtyard. However, as this issue goes to press, an award of the gold doubloon has been delayed for a "Florida recount," while the team develops a photo to confirm that it was a left handprint they found. Deanne says of the search, "It was fun to have a purpose" while examining the site.

### Rain, Rain, Here to Stay?

We have reports of heavy rain in Khor Fakkan on November 8, from Peter Hellyer. Barbara Couldrey reports a good soaking in Ras Al-Khaima and the nearby mountains on November 8 and more over the mountains (heavy on the Wadi Khabb Shamsi side) on November 8. Camping near the border post in Wadi Bih on the 8th, Barbara says her group could hear water running in the wadi.



*E-mail your reports to griff@emirates.net.ae. (Arial 10 justified) or deliver them on floppy disk at monthly meetings.*

### Death of a Khor

Wetlands are under pressure worldwide and the UAE is no exception. The international Year of the Wetlands has come and gone, and many wetlands continue to do the same. The latest UAE victim is a small, peaceful khor just southwest of Jazirat Al-Hamra, affectionately known to many as Watchtower Khor because it stands under the gaze of the two old stone watchtowers atop the dune ridge overlooking Jazirat Al-Hamra itself. The khor is (was) only about a kilometre in diameter, round and shallow, and it virtually emptied with the tide. At its edges were at least two shell middens dating back, it is likely, to the earliest records of human habitation in this area. The death of this khor was presaged by the construction of a large resort hotel on a peninsula of sand to the southwest. On the other side of the resort, a natural inlet has already been dredged, stabilized and sanitized for use as a recreational harbor and for water sports. Now, the khor itself is ringed and half buried beneath a perimeter and gridwork of dirty grey landfill. A golf course is known to be planned. Is that what will become of the khor?

### Goat Graveyard

The April 2000 *Gazelle* reported tentatively about the effect of the continuing drought on the feral goat population in the mountains. Nick Hepher's March field trip to Wadi Naqab counted more than 40 dead goat carcasses in the wadi, en route to the terraced settlement that was their goal that day. A prominent feature of each carcass, however, was a stomach full of dried plant fibre, showing that the culprit was not quantity but nutritional quality, or wa-

ter.

On a return visit in early November with several DNHG members, Nick pushed a few kilometres further up the wadi, where a rocky gorge normally holds a chain of pools stretching for almost a kilometre, some of them deeper than two metres. Had the pools dried up completely? Or were the goats so territorial in their behaviour or so local in their knowledge that they had not made use of them. The answer was not long in coming.

The gorge looked like a goat's version of "Apocalypse Now" with corpses, skulls and rounded balls of fibrous stomach contents everywhere. A skull count confirmed more than 200 individuals. Some carcasses had been chewed by carnivores, probably foxes and caracals, whose droppings were also found in the area. Carcasses were more concentrated in several areas where the last groundwater had continued to seep from the rocks. The trickle was now sufficient only to slake the thirst of wasps that could drink from tiny damp cracks, but this had mixed with the goat remains and stained large areas the colour of dried blood, making the whole look even more grisly.

Peter Cunningham pointed out that lack of water was not necessarily the sole factor in the goats' demise. Nutritional deficiencies and poisoning may also have played a role. Ruminants like goats, he explained, cannot process poor quality food very effectively, because of their long digestive time. In times of drought, their normal plant foods may be deficient in protein. To compensate, the goats try to eat more, but are limited because their stomachs are already full. Additionally, goats may turn to plants that they do not normally eat, some of which could be toxic. Moreover, plants tend to be more concentrated in toxins in times of drought.

While it seemed a terrible thing to see, the decimation of the feral goat population is not necessarily a bad thing from the point of view of the

ecology of the Rufus Al-Jibal area, where domestic and feral goat populations have been a significant factor in shaping the current flora, with the result that the most common species are either spiny or unpalatable. Feral goats may have a certain advantage over wild species in that they are willing to come into closer contact with man to obtain water, when necessary.

Goat-lovers needn't fear for extinction, however. The latest party saw at least a dozen goats feeding on the mountain slopes en route, and the rains - at least some rain - fell in the area just days later. Also, domesticated and semi-domesticated herds are maintained (primarily watered) in the mountains from a few settlements and facilities such as the radar station atop J. Yibir in the UAE, overlooking RAK airport. Presumably these animals provide an occasional protein supplement for the personnel stationed there.

*Report by Gary Faulner*

### Petrel breeding ground discovered on Socotra

Some exciting ornithological news is the discovery of the nesting grounds of the Jouanin's Petrel (*Bulweria fallax*) on Socotra Island, just off the Horn of Africa.

This enigmatic Indian Ocean wanderer is common within its restricted range, however its nesting grounds have remained unknown until now. According to Omar Al Saghler, who works for the BirdLife International, Yemen Conservation Programme the Jouanin's Petrel has been found on the high cliffs of Socotra Island. "They sent a traditional Socotran mountaineer over the cliffs and he brought back a chick of Jouanin's Petrel. The bird was photographed and returned to the nest" says Omar.

*Edited from an article in Focus, the ENHG Newsletter Nov 2000*





## Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

- Reptile:** Dr Reza Khan  
res 344 3263  
off 344 0462  
fax (off) 349 9437
- Archaeology:** Robert Lovelace  
res 342 0492  
lovelace@emirates.net.ae
- Birds:** Mike & Jill Oates  
res 345 4006  
oatesj@emirates.net.ae
- Seashells:** Sandy Fowler  
res 344 2243  
fax 344 2243
- Astronomy:** Lamjed El-Kedi  
res 06-583 003  
off 06-247 938
- Geology:** Gary Faulner  
res 306 1570  
fax 330 3550
- Fossils:** Valerie Chalmers  
res 349 4016,  
fax 398 3727
- Insects:** Gary Faulner  
(see above)
- Mammals:** Marjette Jongbloed  
res 349 7963  
fax 349 7963  
mjjongbloed@emirates.net.ae
- Marine Life:** Lamjed El-Kedi  
(see above)
- Plants:** Valerie Chalmers  
(see above)

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 Gazette editor, so new information can be shared with all our readers.

### ---BIRD--- ---REPORT---



Please fax our Bird Recorders,  
Michael and Jill Oates with new  
sites and sightings

## Field Trip to Al Wathba Camel Track

Some of the Dubai contingent left at 5.30 am on Friday 27th October to meet the trip leader Simon Aspinall at dawn. From Abu Dhabi came keen birdwatchers, Peter Hellyer, Abdulhakim, Andrew and others. The Al Wathba Camel Track is now the premier bird watching site in UAE. The large area of well watered grassland attracting a large variety of migrant and resident birds. Those early risers were not disappointed, although they did not see any of the rarities observed in previous weeks, such as the lesser spotted eagle, yellow breasted bunting, and short eared owl, most of the members added ticks to their UAE lists. They saw a good variety of birds, including an excellent number of eagles and other birds of prey. There is a lot more to bird watching than ticks on a list, but it was interesting to hear the Abu Dhabi members had 296 and 230 birds on their UAE lists, compared with Dubai members who had about 250 species.

A walk around the grass in the centre of the camel track for several hours required plenty of stamina and water to keep going. It was cosy to see why a keen birder and naturalist is fit and slim waisted, walking through the bushes trying to flush birds in temperatures like this - it was around 38C at mid day. They were fortunate to see around 40 different varieties of birds, and our thanks go to Simon Aspinall and his team of keen birdwatchers for answering questions and assisting in identification. A site well worth a visit.

The full list of birds seen was as follows:-

yellow wagtail [flavia], white wagtail,

cinereous wagtail, isabelline whistler, swallow, crested lark, collared dove, palm dove, skylark, short toed lark, kestrel, desert wheatear, black crowned finch, whiskered tern, montague harrier, tawny pipit, stoppage grey shrike, ruff, black winged stilt, grey heron, chestnut bellied sand grouse, hoopoe, pallid harrier, greenshank, black tailed godwit, short toed eagle, blue cheeked bee eater, curlew, sand martin, hooded eagle, ortolan bunting, bluethroat, red throated pipit, quail, bimaculated lark, isabelline shrike, marsh harrier, house sparrow, grey francolin, tree pipit.

Report by Jill and Michael Oates

## Cockroaches

Cockroaches are found everywhere in the UAE and many of you would like them to be a lot less common. However they really are fascinating animals. Cockroaches are thought to have originated about 280 million years ago and they were probably the world's first flying animals, although not all species found today can fly.

They live all over the UAE, and all over the world, but most of the 5,000 species live in the tropics. They are nocturnal, have six very long legs and at least eighteen knees on each leg. They have claws on the bottom of their feet, which helps them to climb walls and, as most of you can testify, they are very fast runners.

Unlike mammals, who use lungs to breathe, cockroaches breathe through holes in the side of their bodies. Their brains are also different from mammals, instead of being stored in the head they stretch across the underside of their bodies. This means that if you cut off a cockroach's head it could survive for a week, before eventually dying of thirst!

Edited from an article by Steve James in Focus Nov 2000



## Mouse-Tailed Bats

**Pending matters:** On a detour from last spring's field trip trek to a terraced settlement above Wadi Naqab in the Ru'us Al-Jibal, led by Nick Hopher, Gary Feulner and Helen Emery detoured to explore a convenient cave. It proved to be home to what seemed to be at least a couple of dozen bats of two kinds, large (probably the Egyptian fruit bat) and small.

On a return visit in early November, Nick, Gary, Barbara Couldrey and Peter Cunningham braved the 99% humidity and fine dust of the inner chamber to inspect more thoroughly. This time, though, they found only 6 bats, identified by Peter as insect-eating Mouse-Tailed Bats (*Rhinopoma* sp.), recognizable by their thin, string-like tails. Three species have been reported from Arabia.

Peter explained that whereas many other small bats are at home in cracks and fissures, Mouse-Tailed Bats prefer relatively large caves because their elbow joints are less highly specialized and they cannot manoeuvre with quite the same agility as most other species. He also pointed out that Mouse-Tailed Bats are particularly heat tolerant bats, which might have remained in residence over the summer while other bats migrated to cooler areas.

*Report by Gary Feulner*

## Seashells for Scientific Study

One good turn deserves another. The British Museum (Natural History) has assisted the DNHG and its members in many ways over the years, and we have also done our part to reciprocate. The September 2000 Gazette mentioned an urgent request for specimens of a rare snail needed to replenish a laboratory breeding population used for medical research.

Pure research was the motive behind another recent request, this one for specimens of the lower intertidal turban shell *Osilinus kotschyi* (# 47 in

Seashells of Eastern Arabia). It seems that *O. kotschyi*, which is common in the Arab-an Gulf but limited to the circum-Arabian area, is the only Indo-Pacific representative of the genus *Osilinus*, which is well represented in the Mediterranean and the East Atlantic. It is hypothesized that this genus pre-dates the closing of the Mesozoic Tethys Sea, a seaway which once separated the northern and southern continents, and that *O. kotschyi* was cut off from its Atlantic cousins when Afro-Arabia collided with Eurasia. Anatomical and DNA study will examine this hypothesis.

Armed with preservatives generously supplied by Seashell Recorder Dr Sandy Fowler, Gary Feulner did the legwork, collecting specimens amidst a herd of mangrove-grazing camels at Khor Hulaylah and a flock of flamingoes at Khor Al-Hamra.

## Bombay HNS

A surprise visitor at the DNHG's June meeting was Dr Saraswathy Unnithan, Senior Scientist and curator in charge of ornithology at the Bombay Natural History Society. Dr Unnithan was passing through Dubai after reviewing ornithological collectors at The Natural History Museum in London.

The Bombay Natural History Society was founded in 1883 for the purpose of exchanging notes and observations on natural history and exhibiting interesting specimens of animal life. Today it is the largest non-governmental organisation in the sub-continent, engaged in the conservation of nature and natural resources, education and research in natural history, with members in over 30 countries. The Society's guiding principle has always been that conservation must be based on scientific research - a tradition exemplified by its late President, Dr Salim Ali.

Membership is available to individuals resident outside India for GBP 2 or US\$30 per year. Membership includes a subscription to the soci-

ety's popular quarterly magazine, *Hornbill*. Subscription to the four-monthly *Journal of the BNHS*, a respected scientific publication now in its 114th year of continuous publication, is available at an additional fee of GBP15 or US\$30. Corporate memberships are also available. Membership applications and information are available from Gary Feulner or Anna Griffin.

The Bombay NHS also offers a number of publications on subjects such as the birds, mammals, reptiles, seashells, butterflies, trees and wildflowers of India. Additional information is available from Gary Feulner or Anna Griffin.

## Our Next Speaker

Dr Luban, medical doctor and specialist in Nuclear Medicine at Dubai Hospital, is an expert of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and the second best publishing doctor in Dubai (according to *Microscape/Internet*), hails from Czech Republic. He came to Dubai in 1989 following other assignments overseas in St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, University Hospital, Frankfurt and Gustav Carus Academy, Dresden.

DNHG member since 1990 Luban quickly established a reputation as a keen Friday tripper and photographer (mainly Macrophotography). He has led treks and climbs into the mountains and has won numerous prizes in our photography quizzes.

Unfortunately, Luban and his wife leave Dubai in January 2001. They will be greatly missed, however we are delighted to have this opportunity to see Luban's wonderful photography and hear his amusing tales of how he took them, and what he learned about these minute creatures that evade most people's lenses.



	name	tel home	tel office	fax
Chairman	<b>Gary Faulner</b> messages: 308 5300	306 5570	330 3600	330 3550
Vice Chairman	<b>Valerie Chalmers</b>	349 4818	no calls pls	398 3727
Treasurer	<b>Peter Griffin</b> e.mail: griff@emirates.net.ae	394 0342	394 0342	394 0352
Membership Secretary	<b>FI Skennerton</b> e.mail: skennerf@mkidubai.co.ae	050-6243028		355 7180
Speaker Co-ordinator	<b>Beryl Comar</b> e.mail: coma.1@emirates.net.ae	344 2243		344 2243
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	<b>Mary Beardwood</b> e.mail: mikemary@emirates.net.ae	342 2648		344 0378
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	<b>FI Skennerton</b> e.mail: skennerf@mkidubai.co.ae	050-6243028		355 7180
Newsletter Editor	<b>Anna Griffin</b> e.mail: griff@emirates.net.ae	394 0342	394 0342	354 0352
Publisher	<b>Peter van Amsterdam</b> e.mail: pvana@omirates.net.ae	269 2519	335 5495	2691 654
Librarian	<b>Deanne White</b> e.mail: dgwhite@emirates.net.ae	344 1510		
Sales Assistant			<b>Volunteer required</b>	
Chief Engineer	<b>James Pardoe</b>	266 6427		
Member at Large	<b>Sandy Fowler</b>	344 2243	no calls pls	344 2243
Postmaster	<b>Gail Gordon</b>	349 9879		349 9879
Membership Assistant	<b>Barbara Hayward</b>	384 5891	269 0029	338 7875

### Traveller's Advisory: N Emirates Roadworks

"Be Ready for Road Surprises" says the sign at the Khatt R/A on the road from Ras Al-Khaimah to Manama, near RAK airport. And surprises there certainly are! Many of the major roads linking the Northern Emirates are presently being renovated or upgraded. The RAK-Manama road is being improved north of Khatt and will become four lanes, at least on grades. For the moment, however, many sections are under construction and traffic detours are the rule.

Also under construction are most of the bridges on the Masafi-Fujeirah road, with cross-over detours. These can become major impediments in the Masafi-bound direction due to the slow speed at

which heavy-laden trucks ascend the steep grades and narrow detour lanes, especially on Friday afternoons when weekend traffic returns from the East Coast. On the East Coast itself, traffic is detoured for road construction around the village of Qurayyah, just north of Fujairah. Finally, refurbishment of the Sharjah-Dhaid Highway has advanced to a second phase, but more work remains and traffic delays should be expected due to crossover detours.

### Beached Whale rescued in India

A happy/sad story of a 40 ft whale beached in the muddy swamps of the South Tamil Nadu coast. The female, who weighed about 10 tonnes, became stuck in waist high water and no-one was willing to take the risk of winching her to safety.

Fortunately a light rain was falling and the whale's mouth was in the water, so the first job was to feed her 250kg of fish. Coast Guards, local fishermen and others managed to rescue her, after a 5 day operation, using an ingenious method.

Some light dredgers were deployed to make a path for the whale and then high pressure water jets blew the mud away from her so that she could be secured with ropes. She was freed on the second attempt and the flap of her tail was seen disappearing into deep water. It was thought that the female was reluctant to leave the spot because her companion, who had been beached with her, had died. He was buried by local fishermen.

*Edited from an article in Gulf News  
Thursday 16/11/00*

# GAZELLE

## Dubai Natural History Group Programme

Lectures at Jumeirah English Speaking School, Gymnasium 7.30 pm for 8.00 pm

Dec 10 Lubomir Mrhac - Scorpions and Other Friendly Creatures

Jan 14 Please see next Gazelle for our first speaker of 2001 and confirmation of this date

**Field Trips** (DNHG members only, please).

Dec 7/8 Overnight camping in the Hajar Mountains, camp fire and star gazing with Allen and Marilyn Hartley.

Dec 15 Musandam Contour Hike to various Shihuh Settlements with Nick Hopher

Jan 12 Beginners' Guide to the Fish Souq to start the year 2001 with Mary Beardwood (Further details in Dec issue)

---

**Mrs Valerie CHALMERS**  
**PO Box 12070**  
**Dubai**  
**UAE**

---

From: DNHG, PO Box 9234, Dubai, UAE

