



GAZELLE

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مجموعتنا دورية للتاريخ والطبيعي

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Contributors—

Thanks to the following for their contributions this month:

Angela Manthorpe, Margaret Swan.

Send your contributions to:

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Tuning in

As Jacky Judas and Peter Hellyer noted in the July/August edition of *Gazelle* and in their 2016 study in Volume 24 of *Tribulus*, the five-striped Palm Squirrel, *Funambulus pennantii*, has established a self-sustaining population in the UAE and has been added to the list of the country's exotic fauna. I'm starting to see them closer to home and I'm getting used to their alarm calls. My training started last year. I was cycling around Mushrif Park and, as I slowed to cross the road, I heard a persistent squeaking call nearby. It wasn't a sound I recognized and, thinking it was an unusual bird, I scoured the trees until the culprit scampered into view on a distant branch. Training session 2 was in June this year. I was wandering through a neglected palm plantation on the other side of Mushrif Park and this time, hearing the alarm call, I was better prepared. I spotted her almost immediately, sitting at the top of a tall palm tree – every time she squeaked, her tail twitched – if you're not familiar with the call yourself, see my shaky video on the DNHG Facebook page. She got used to me eventually and resorted to grooming

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I walked the beach in 2020,

Early morning, shells a-plenty!

Maids on the tideline, all in a row

Re-arranged here for a festive show!

Wishing our readers health, wealth and happiness for 2021

From the Committee

Announcements and Recorders

Monthly Virtual Speaker Information

Sunday, 15th November, 2020, at 8pm via Zoom

Co-presentors: Dr Panagiotis Azmanis

Lecture Title: "Falcons, falcon medicine and falconry.
Path from tradition to modern applications."

Biography:

Panagiotis Azmanis was born in Thessaloniki/Greece and he completed his veterinary studies in 2006 at Aristotle's University. After graduation he started a 1 to 5 year rotating internship in Small Animal Surgery/Exotics at the same University, whilst also working as a freelance avian/exotic vet.

In 2007 he moved in Zurich to fulfill a doctoral thesis on avian orthopaedic surgery in the Clinic for Exotic Pets, Zoo Animals and Wildlife, UZH, Vetsuisse Faculty. After practising small animal/exotic medicine in private practice in Athens/Greece, he moved to Germany to take a 3-year residency of the European College of Zoological Medicine in Avian Medicine and Surgery.

In 2014, after a successful examination, he was awarded the title of Diplomate ECZM (Avian)/European recognised Specialist in Avian Medicine (the first Greek, the second in Middle East and one of 30 in Europe). Afterwards he resumed his positions as leading avian specialist in exotic animal practice and in zoo consulting.

Since 1993 he has been a keen birdwatcher, member of the scientific committee of the Hellenic Ornithological Society, member of the Greek and German Herpetological Societies, founding member of two NGOs for the protection of wildlife in Greece and a member of various professional vet organisations and nature conservation NGOs in Greece, Balkans, Europe and Internationally.

He has managed and volunteered in various conservation projects of bird, raptor, vulture, wildlife conservation and has published and presented numerous scientific work in international conferences on avian medicine topics and raptor/vulture conservation. In September 2015 he moved to Dubai with his falcon Iskander, to work at Dubai Falcon Hospital and with HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum.



DNHG Recorders

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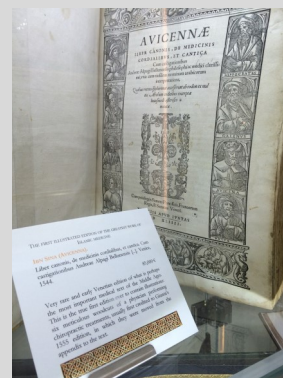
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Rare books on display at Sharjah International Book Fair (see page 4)



Field Clips

Strange insect

I returned from an early morning walk to find this insect resting on the lip of my tea cup. It didn't move at all whilst I quickly took a photo with my 'phone.

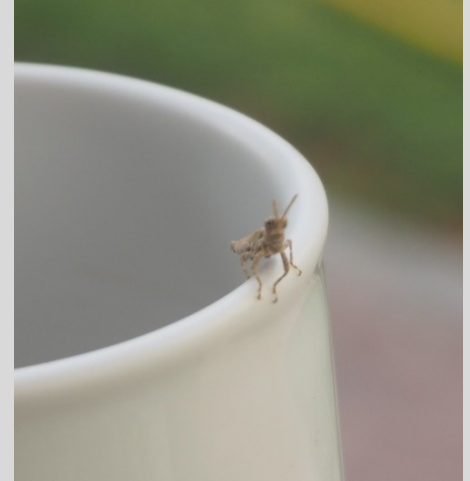
In fact, it didn't move for three hours so I took the opportunity to periodically take photos from different angles with the large camera.

Puzzled as to what it was, I initially thought that it could have stowed away inside one of the recently purchased sweet sand or soil bags.

It only seemed to have four legs but larger 'jumping' legs could be in the process of being formed towards the rear of the insect.

Maybe it was an insect that had not formed normally for some reason. I came to the conclusion that it was possibly a desert locust undergoing some stage of its development. However, it was very small as readers can see in the photos. Perhaps someone reading this can identify the species? I do have more photos should anyone wish to see them.

Contribution by Margaret Swan



Khor Fakkan

It is understandable why Khor Fakkan was a good place to decide on a settlement. The mountains at the back and the ocean in front offered protection from potential invaders. The mountains also provided materials for building and more importantly, had an essential role to play in the rainfall cycle.

View from Al Rabi watchtower



Khor Fakkan amphitheatre under construction



A friend had mentioned that she had completed a mountain hike at Khor Fakkan, which reminded me of times past when we took schoolchildren on field trip excursions in and around the area.

This particular track was not open to the public at that time but we came across it when following signs for Al Rabi Tower during the summer. It is also the starting point of the hike and the view from here is stunning. It encompasses the port and most of the Khor Fakkan coast. If readers wish to know more, 'Google' *Al Rabi Hiking Trail* for a variety of photos, videos and further details.

Over the past few years Khor Fakkan has restored an old village near the port, which is well worth a visit. Whilst there, take a walk around the colourful fresh fruit and vegetable market. A fish market can be found near some dhows and a wire fence cordons off a storage area for steel fish traps.

Along the coast itself there has been some re-development of land use and trendy fast food vans can be seen parked up at various beach focal points. Quite near the Oceanic hotel, an amphitheatre has been constructed on the side of a mountain. As a seasoned choral singer, I know that the acoustics will be excellent against this setting. The photos above were taken during the summer and the Shaikh's house can be seen atop the mountain. An historic documentary featuring the struggle to resist a Portuguese invasion will premiere at the amphitheatre on December 15th.

And there is more! Further coverage of coastal developments can be found at the following link:

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/heritage/ruler-of-sharjah-tours-new-khor-fakkan-amphitheatre-as-regeneration-plans-take-shape-1.1116196> Contribution by Margaret Swan

Signage for Al Rabi Tower



Field Clips

(Continued from page 1)

her belly and tail.

Just a couple of weeks ago I was wandering around Digdaga and those persistent chirrupings seemed to come from every mesquite tree, another introduced species which has established a firm foothold in the country. But my closest encounter with this little mammal was a silent one in the farms overlooked by the Khatt Springs Hotel. I'd found an untended palm tree, branches laden with the summer's fruit, which was alive with the calls of bulbuls and sparrows and, as I paused in the shade, I was thinking that this readily available food supply would be great for a squirrel. As I scanned the branches it was the bushy tail that I spotted first. This time there was no alarm call and so, for a few minutes we observed each other through the branches, quietly.

Contribution by Angela Manthorpe



Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF)

The annual SIBF is an 11-day event that takes place every November at Sharjah Expo Centre. This popular event brings together publishers from around the region, antiquarian booksellers and Government ministries to form a lively marketplace for bibliophiles. Even in our digital age, the book sales are so popular that you can hire a trolley on site to carry your purchases back to the car.

I spent a few hours there on Friday 13th November and here are a few highlights, worthy of more exploration:

National Archives – according to its website (na.ae) the National Archives, established in 1968, is the oldest cultural institution in the UAE. The NA collects valuable historical material relating to the UAE and the Arabian Gulf states. It documents, indexes and translates the material and makes it available to researchers in both physical and online forms. There are thousands of documents for researchers to study and an extensive online library to explore at this link: <http://library.na.ae/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/AvqJwuX9e0/MAN/69790004/60/502/X>

The Arabian Gulf Digital Archive: quoting the website (agda.ae), “this online archive has been created to showcase historical and cultural material that tells the story of the rich, intriguing and complex history of the Arabian Gulf. AGDA contains, among other things, letters, memos, transcripts,

photos and official correspondence...It's a free and open resource for students, researchers, enthusiasts and anyone who is curious to explore the rich and varied past of the Arabian Gulf". As a scuba diver, I particularly liked this snippet from the oil exploration page: “In 1954 Jacques Cousteau's ship Calypso entered the Arabian Gulf to survey the seabed and identify any potential drilling sites. Although Cousteau was neither a geologist nor a geophysicist, he was chosen for this task by BP and D'Arcy Exploration, as he and his team had unrivalled underwater skills". There are thousands of photos on the site – see the Falaj in Al Ain, 1968 shown on the right.

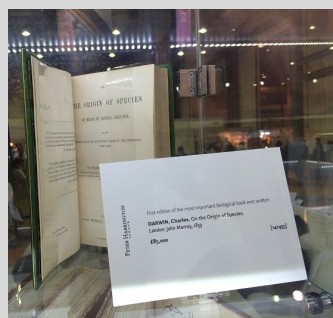


© National Archives

During my perambulations I was kindly presented with the following books for the DNHG library, for which I express my thanks to the individuals named below:

Al Mtwassf by Abdullah Bin Dalmouk. This book of proverbs from the UAE was donated by Ms' }\$ Fatma on behalf of the Hamdan bin Mohammad Heritage Centre <http://hmc.gov.ae/en/>

The Distinctive Arab Heritage by Dr. Ahmed Al Mansoori. This is a study of society, culture and sport in the UAE, and was donated by Badar Al Ameerii of the Emirates Heritage Club (see photo).



And finally book lovers, should you wish to own a piece of history, it's possible to buy extremely rare publications at SIBF, including this year: a first edition of Darwin's On the Origin of Species, 1859, (AED 413,000); a rare Venetian edition of Ibn Sina's (Avicenna's) Liber Canonis (AED 370,000) or a first edition of Euclid's Elementa Geometriae – one of the earliest printed books, dating from 1482 (AED 729,000). SIBF will be back next year so put the date in your calendar: 3 – 13 November 2021.

Contribution by Angela Manthorpe

Dubai Natural History Group (DNHG) Programme

Monthly lectures are presently transmitted via Zoom, starting at 8.00pm

- 13 December: 2020** Panos Azmanis will present a virtual talk on "Falcons, falcon medicine and falconry: the path from tradition to modern applications"
- 13 January: 2021** Dr Yash Veer Bhatnagar, Senior Scientist, NCF, Mysore & Director, Snow Leopard Trust, India. Talk and title to be advised.
- 7 February: 2021** Ali El-Keblawy, Professor of Plant Ecology, Department of Applied Ecology, College of Science will present a talk on "Plant diversity in the UAE: challenges and conservation."

The DNHG field trip program has been temporarily suspended in compliance with UAE coronavirus precautions, which are still in force.

DNHG COMMITTEE 2020

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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 2020 to September 2021. In consideration of the restrictions on our lectures and field trips due to COVID-19, **all members who were paid up for 2019-2020 will be automatically renewed for 2020-2021**, without a renewal fee.

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.