

# GAZELLE

Vol 15 no 10 - October 2000



مجموعتنا دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي

DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP  
PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Members' News

### *Rain Rain Glorious Rain*

After the October 8 dust storm that hit downtown Dubai -- the densest in most peoples' memories -- now DNHG member **Christine Namour** went home to Jaisal Aji to find that it had only rained there, and that her children had been out playing in the rain the whole time. She also noticed that herons were soon feeding in the puddles that had formed in the coastal sands. What, she asks, were they eating? What, indeed, we'd like to know -- the UAE has not yet been reported to host the dramatic ephemeral pond life known from elsewhere in the region, such as the tadpole shrimp (*Triops* sp. of Bahrain and the Empty Quarter). But see the reports of clam shrimps in this issue.

We say goodbye this month to **Pieter and Clare Kunz** who have left Dubai for the UK. Clare has won our end of season photographic competition twice.

### Plastic Peregrine Protection

Uncharacteristically at home one weekend afternoon, Chairman **Gary Feulner** noticed a pigeon nested atop a light fixture on his balcony. This provided the opportunity for an

instructive experiment. Protected from view by the lightly tinted glass, Gary eased open the French door and put his head full out, slowly, looking directly at the bird. The pigeon rose to its feet and looked back cautiously, but made no move to fly, and Gary withdrew and closed the door. A half hour later, the pigeon still relaxing, Gary eased the French doors open again and extended, in the same position, a plastic peregrine falcon (available at local hardware stores). The pigeon stared directly at the decoy falcon for about a second. Its eyes widened with the gleam of recognition, and then it was off and away from the 13th floor. Note: A label on the base of the decoy says: "IMPORTANT: For maximum effectiveness, move every few days."



### DNHG Membership was due for renewal in September

**So please renew by the November meeting** to continue to enjoy the monthly *Gezelle* and to participate in the exciting forthcoming field trips! DNHG membership remains a bargain at Dh50 (singles or couples).

You may join or renew at meetings (see Membership Secretary Fi Skennerton) or send us a cheque made out to Lloyds 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:

Peter Cunningham  
Stephen Green  
Michael and Jill Gates

Gary Feulner  
Dr Marijcke Jangbloed  
Dave Sheldon



## Shell Hunting Friday 10th November

Sandy and Beryl will lead a shelling trip to either Rams el Ras el Khaimah or an East coast beach (or both), depending on demand. Interested folks should contact Sandy or Beryl at the numbers listed on page 7 of Gazelle, for full details.

## Scorpion hunting at night 16th/17th November

Alan and Marilyn Dickson will lead this overnight Wadi camping trip to hunt for scorpions which are of course nocturnal creatures.

Please contact Mary Beardwood on 04-3422546 for further details.

## Hajar Mountain Nature Hike Friday 24th November

Gary Foulner will lead a full-day hike in the central Hajar Mountains of the UAE. The emphasis will be on natural history and the route will follow a wadi but will ultimately ascend (and later descend) 400 metres (1350 ft) for panoramic views from the local peaks. The ground is rough underfoot and there are no trails. The hike is suitable for experienced hikers or those who regularly engage in active sports or other exercise.

Bring boots, 4 litres of water (3 to carry) and packed lunch, plus camera, binoculars, hand lens etc. 4WD required. Depart Dubai 7:00am sharp, estimated return c. 7:00pm. Maximum will be 15 people.

For further information, sign-up and logistics, see Gary at the November 5th DNHG meeting, or telephone: 330-3900 (office) or 306-5570 (home).

## Autumn Star Gazing Thursday 23rd November

Lamjed El-Kafi will lead this trip away from the lights of Dubai. Please bring telescope (if you have one), binoculars, and refreshments and chairs are also a good idea.

Details and maps will be available at the meeting on the 5th, or contact Mary Beardwood on 04-3422546.

## Emirates Towers Kestrels

One or more kestrels have already taken up residence, along with new tenants, at Dubai's landmark Emirates Towers.

### Our Next Speaker

Rob Gregory was born in Awa, Bahrain where his father worked for an oil company. When he returned as a teenager to Bahrain, from school in England, he was involved in a project filming for Walt Disney—'Hamad and the Pirates'. As the only diver amongst the group of teenagers working on the project, he was asked to take some under water cinematography and he recorded the last original Bahraini pearl divers. A clip from this film will be shown at the meeting. Rob continued his studies of the pearl oyster, *Pinna fucata*, over many years and is now a part-owner of the Aquatech Dive Centre in Bahrain.



## Bird Migration

On Thursday 5th October, I drove up to the Hatta mountains, doing the usual round of slight seeing with relatives. It was interesting to see lots of Common Swallows and a single Common Swift migrating across the desert between Qarn Nizwa and the Oman border mid afternoon. No water in the "Hatta lakes" (and hence no birds) at 4pm, and the vegetation, away from the wadi oeds, was looking very sorry for itself. However, a stupendous thunderstorm/downpour occurred about 5-15pm. Very dramatic, with even the smallest hillock awash in waterfalls, and the road impassable for while. An amazing spectacle. The lakes, I assume, will soon be full! As might be expected by old hands in the region, the road was dry 5km out of Hatta. The view in rear mirror on the way back was very dramatic, with an anvil shaped storm cloud every shade from black to pink in the setting sun. (As is customary on these occasions, I'd forgotten my camera).

I also went to the "Wimpey Pits" on the Al Awir Road late afternoon of the 8th October and found the following migrants: at least 14 very confident white-tailed plovers (is this a record for the UAE?), 6 blue checked bee eaters, 60+ little grebe, 1 black-necked grebe, 20+ garganey, 6 shoveler, a marsh harrier, 60+ little stint, at least 4 black-tailed godwit, 3 snipe, a spotted redshank, a greenshank, 3 green, 4 common, 6 wood and 2 marsh sandpipers, 50+ ruff, and a pair of glossy ibis. The Hirundine roost included approx 250 common swallows, 30 sand and 10 house martins. All this within 15km of Dubai.....

This is the first time I've found the place.....cultic on impressive site birdwise, if not aesthetically. (Truth be told, it's also more than a little smelly). However, in the words of Arnold Schwarzenegger "I'll be back".

Report by Dave Sheldon



## Rain, Rain, Come Again

Those who've been bemoaning the lack of rain for most of the past three years, and the consequent baleful effects on local flora and fauna, can now take some joy in the aftermath of recent scattered showers. Rain has fallen since late August in many areas from Al-Ain to Masafi. Mosquitos may be the biggest short-term beneficiary; their larvae and pupae are now abundant in temporary pools and puddles.

Thunderstorms over Jebel Qatar near Al-Ain created short-lived but picturesque waterfalls above the Hanging Gardens, which many UAE and Omani locals went out to visit. Peter Cunningham and Gary Faulner investigated a couple of weeks later and found several plants already in flower on the summit plateau, including particularly Hibiscus micranthus and Lycium shawii (the Desert Thorn). The latter attracted large numbers of butterflies, mostly the Blue Spotted Arabs, and one tree attracted courting Caper Whites. A total of nine butterfly species were observed, after a lackluster summer. Dipsacidi lifias (Dipsacidi biflorum) were sprouting like topsy and many other plants showed tender, green new growth or seedlings.

Clam-shrimps were also observed in many pools at Jebel Qatar. These small crustaceans look like tiny shrimps housed in a transparent clam shell, and were first noticed in the UAE little more than a year ago in fresh bedrock pools at Jebel Hafafit by Dick Homby of the ENHG in Abu Dhabi. Most of those seen at Jebel Qatar bore yellow egg masses. The polkadot diving beetle was a predator.

It was a surprise to find that such recent rain had even brought donkeys back to the top of the plateau, which would have been exceptionally dry and barren during the drought. Not only did the donkeys come in groups of three, but Peter and Gary saw three groups of three. These were family groups of mother and young, but only one of the young appeared to be from the cur-

rent year.

One of the highlights of the day was to watch a Peregrine Falcon alternately soaring and swooping on the air currents at the edge of the cliff, first perhaps to impress a few resident flocks of pigeons, and then, it seemed, just for the fun of it.

Elsewhere in the UAE, pondlife included many tiny toads as well as tiny juvenile wadi fish *Gaira barrimiana*, both plausibly a response to the long-awaited rains.

Several related items in this issue of the *Gazelle* tell more about the post-rain renaissance elsewhere.

Report by Gary Faulner

## Rare Snails / Clam Shrimps / Dragonflies

Stephen Green and Gary Faulner succeeded in collecting specimens of the rare snail *Bulinus wrightii* for an epidemiological research unit of the British Museum (Natural History) – a project that was reported in last month's *Gazelle*. More than a dozen snails were lodged in the comfort of a plastic thermos bottle and flown to London, where they were breeding successfully less than two weeks later. Steve and Gary noticed that: although bedrock pools in the upper wadi were full, downstream pools, mostly in gravel, remained empty. This suggested highly localized and not very heavy precipitation.

Clam shrimps (see also "Rain, Rain, Come Again") were the most abundant animals in most of the pools, which suggests that the rain was fairly recent. Clam shrimps seem to be one of the earliest organisms to emerge from dormancy (as a long-lived egg) following rain after a long drought, but they do not seem to persist. They have so far been found only in the Al-Ain/Buraimi area, at Jebel Hafafit, Jebel Qatar and along the mountain front to the NE. However, they could yet turn up further north, but in upper wadi environments, since they seem to be

inhibited by the presence of wadi fish.

It was a surprise to find the Globe Skimmer dragonfly, *Pantala flavescens*, abundant in this wadi. Virtually every pool had one or two in residence. The Globe Skimmer is a pan-tropical dragonfly with extraordinary migratory powers (it even reaches Easter Island). It is found in many environments in the UAE, but is not normally common in rocky wadis. In this instance it probably used its superior dispersal ability to lay first claim to an area of fresh rain. One female was seen laying eggs.

Report by Gary Faulner

## Reptile Day

Peter Cunningham, Stephen Green and Gary Faulner teamed up to investigate a large wadi near Masafi, about five weeks after rain at the end of August sufficient to cause the wadi to flow under the Masafi-Fujeirah road and into Wadi Ham. It appeared the rain had not been particularly heavy and had not fallen at all in some of the lower tributaries. Nevertheless it was sufficient to have loosened the grip of the drought and to make it a banner day for reptiles and amphibians, bringing out almost the full cast of Major Mountain diurnal (daytime) species: both the Arabian and Dhofar toads (*Bufo arabicus* and *B. dhofarensis*); the Rock and Bar-tailed semaphore geckos *Pristurus rupestris* and *P. celerrimus*; the Fan-footed gecko (*Ptyodactylus nasalsquistii*); two endemic lizards, the large Jayakar's (*Lacerta jayakari*) and the smaller Blue-tailed (*L. cyanura*); the rare mountain skink (*Mabuya tessallata*) and the equally rare Asian snake-eyed skink (*Ablepharus pannonicus*), a plantation resident; and last, but not least, the Carpet Viper, (*Echis coloratus*) represented by a specimen that seems to have died in place waiting for a meal.



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

### Big Black Scorpion

Some early local natural history references may leave the impression that the large black scorpion common in UAE desert areas, *Androctonus crassicauda*, may not be as painful or dangerous as some of the smaller scorpions. Comparisons aside, most experts now consider *A. crassicauda* to be a potentially very dangerous species and it should be left well alone. See, for example, the description by Barbara Tiger in Natural Emirates, who describes the symptoms of a sting as similar to strychnine poisoning. A relative, *A. australis*, found in North Africa, has long been recognized as potentially lethal to humans. Recent local experience with *A. crassicauda* emphasizes the danger. An experienced and fit outdoorsman suffered systemic symptoms, including apparent cardiac irregularity, severe enough to force him to seek medical attention. More generally, caution is always advisable, since most UAE scorpions in both desert and mountain areas are members of the Buthid family, all of which are typically armed with relatively potent venom.

Report by Gary Feulner

### Spiny-tail Lizards suffering from lack of rain

Peter Cunningham has monitored twenty Spiny-tail Lizard individuals since May 1999 in the Al Ain area as part of a PhD study on the conservation ecology of the species. Since the start of the study no rain has fallen in the study area. This, coupled with a large number of camels in the area, has resulted in the visible decline of the desert vegetation. The coarse desert grass, *Pennisetum divinum*, which is a fa-

voured plant utilized by the Spiny-tails, have been particularly badly affected. Between May 1999 and June 2000, 11 individuals had succumbed indicating a 55% mortality rate over a 1-year period. In another study area where *Molliopsis cilata*, of the Borage family, is the dominant plant, the Spiny-tails are faring much better with no fatalities since January 2000. *Molliopsis cilata* is closely cropped through active browsing by Spiny-tails, making it unavailable to camels. The *Molliopsis* area is a favoured habitat with a high density ( $\pm 10$  individuals per hectare) of Spiny-tails in the area. Very little work has been done on the diet of Spiny-tail Lizards throughout their range. During my research, ten perennial plant species from 8 different families have been identified as being included in their diet. These include species from the Milkweed, Pea and Gourd family. Interestingly the Desert Squash, *Citrullus colocynthis*, is also eaten. It is expected that many more plant species, especially annuals, would be consumed once (if) the rains arrive.

The majority of burrows face in a southerly and easterly direction. During summer this makes sense as burrows facing in a northerly and westerly direction would be warmer and receive more windblown sand, as the prevailing wind is northwest during summer. It has also been determined that the burrow temperatures are on average 6°C cooler than the ambient temperature 30cm below ground. This is significant when ambient temperatures are regularly in the mid-to-high 40°C during summer with soil temperatures above 60°C. The author would welcome any other interesting data concerning Spiny-tail Lizards as observed by members. If any Spiny-tail Lizard road-kills are encountered please collect, freeze and inform Peter whereupon he will come and collect the specimens.

Report by Peter Cunningham  
plc@omirates.net.ae

### World Animal Day Charity Event

October 5th/6th heralded the start of an annual event, this year organised by Harlequin and sponsored by Pedigree, Whiskas, Harlequin and Channel 4FM. It took place in a marquee at Le Meridien Mina Seyahi. The event raised funds for K9, Feline Friends, the Arabian Leopard Trust, and Horse Riding for the Disabled.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> the Social Animal Ball, with excellent buffet dinner, was celebrated by some 400 paying guests. The dress code was black tie, feathers or animal prints. The costume Marijcke liked best was the gentleman who was dressed in a dinner jacket, tie, black tights, and lots of white feathers peeping out from under the jacket - one of the best ostriches Marijcke had ever seen. The entertainment was provided by Andrew Gordon and Zenya Shah performing a self-choreographed dance, and later, the Straight-Up band, that had been re-named The Animals for the evening! Four crystal awards sponsored by Pedigree, Whiskas and Harlequin were handed to two companies (Shell Markets ME, and Byma Drilling) and two individuals (Linda Ramadan and Marijcke Jongbloed) for their "outstanding contribution to animal welfare". Afterwards Jonathan Miles of Channel 4FM kept things swinging until the early hours!

On the 6<sup>th</sup> a "Carnival of Animals" was held, with a craft fair. Dogs, cats, ponies and camels could be seen, touched, ridden and in some cases homed. There was a puppet show by some ALT volunteers, storybook reading by Gail Gordon, face and henna-painting, a bouncy castle and a show by children from the Ballet Centre. The aim is to set up and maintain an Animal Welfare society to prevent cruelty to animals, and promote proper care for animals in Dubai. In the next newsletter Marijcke Jongbloed will report on the amount of funds raised and the plans for the future.

Report by Marijcke Jongbloed



## Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

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- 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 *Gazelle* 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

## Bird Watching in the Dubai Area

We are concentrating this month on exotics, escaped and released birds which are not native to the area, brought here by man, rather than flying here naturally. Many exotics are now very common in Dubai and surrounding areas and may cause confusion. Therefore we are listing some we have seen, and others which have been reported in the area. Dubai has several palaces where collections of birds are kept. These birds occasionally escape and stay in the area, while other birds have been released intentionally. The fairly recent development of parks, large gardens and other well watered green areas has encouraged some of these birds to stay and breed. Following on from our visit to Safa Park, reported in last month's issue, we have again seen the shikra, (a type of sparrow hawk) which is common in India and the Yemen. It can be seen regularly in the park, usually hunting in the wooded areas or perched in a tree. It is assumed this bird is an escapee. On the 8th September we were surprised to see 2 crowned cranes, (the national bird of Kenya). They must have escaped from a private collection recently, and they stayed about a week. Also in the Park one can regularly see the Southern red bishops, which inhabit the rushes near the boating lake. Now that the rushes have been cut back, the birds, with their bright orange and black colours, can be recognized easily. Pied mynahs are commonly seen, often flying and feeding with the common mynah which has multiplied in the last 10 years. The pied mynah was thought to have been an escapee or released bird. The populations of the

Indian silverbill and white-cheeked bulbul in Dubai are thought to have been introduced, although the birds could arrive naturally in the wild in small numbers. The red vented bulbul, which can now be seen in most parks and gardens, was introduced in the last 20 years or so, probably from India. On the boating lake in Safa Park, one can often see Egyptian geese. In the trees there are streaked weavers, and feeding on the ground chestnut munias. Green and Alexandrine parakeets are commonly heard shrieking as they fly from tree to tree, usually in small flocks. Near the Mirage Hotel peacocks can be seen, having flown over the wall of the garden where they live. In Jumeirah Park we have seen red avadavats, and we understand the pin tailed whydah is found in some areas of Jumeirah. In Sharjah recently we were surprised to see 4 superb starlings feeding with common mynahs on the Corniche, we had to identify this one from our book on East African birds. Also on these lawns we saw 2 pairs of Brahminy mynahs another bird from India. This list is certainly not complete, last year the yellow billed stork, another African bird, was to be seen at Knor Dubai, and was one of a group of seven released or escapees, but these birds did not seem to establish themselves in this area. Ornithologists, though interested in these escaped birds, would obviously prefer to observe genuinely rare migrants.

If anyone comes across an unusual escaped or released bird, especially one which is nesting in the area, please report it, as it may not yet be recorded in the breeding birds of Dubai or even Arabia.

Report by Mike and Jill Oates

### Letters to the editor News? Views?

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



## Slugs, Snails, Walnuts, Wolves and Leopards

I'm in my best suit and office shoes. On my left is a roaring mountain stream bordered against an eight foot terraced wall. To my right a sixty foot verticle drop on to a ragging rocky torrent. The mountain stream overflows in places making the one foot wide muddy path that meanders along its edge extremely slippery. I have about one hundred feet of this pathway to scramble over without losing too much dignity. Let me explain. I am on a four day business trip to Iran (Tehran) and am part of the Bahrain delegation to the 26th Tehran International Trade Fair. After a busy morning and lunch time I decide to take a break and ask my driver to take me back to the hotel. This is day two and he probably realises by now I am not the ordinary 'businessman'. He suggests that rather than going to the hotel we visit his father who is a farmer in the mountain range ('Alborz') North of Tehran. About 50 kilometers as the crow flies it should take about two hours to get there depending on the traffic. So here I am, overweight, unfit and overdressed, hiking up the path to the farm hut on the side of an enormous mountain to meet my driver's father. We are at about 3000 metres by now (north of the village of Zayegan) and it is starting to feel quite chilly. I am told that the winter lasts around six months and that for one to two months the snow here is around two metres thick. The farmland is mainly terraced gardens orchards and meadows sandwiched in between the main river gorge and the precipitous barren mountain tops. The hut is basic but contains a beautiful log burning stove that is already lit and was very much needed (2nd Oct - and it snowed the next day). Tea is to be prepared. I then ask if I can look in his stream and fields for snails. I was almost too embarrassed but just couldn't withhold myself from this opportunity. Father and son, without blinking an eyelid provide me with better footwear and some shovels and tell me I've got twenty minutes until the tea's ready. So off I set, with help from the son, lifting up rocks, turning over potter plants and digging up the occa-

sional weed (we found one type of terrestrial slug and one type of freshwater gastropod). Back to the hut for tea and fresh walnuts picked from the trees on the way back. On realising I am interested in wildlife they start to tell me some of their stories.

Last winter, after a trip to the village, the driver set off much later than normal to return to Tehran (about 5pm). A light snow had fallen and upon entering the main road he had to skid to a halt as the road was blocked by over 20 huge wolves. He turned off his headlights and edged slowly forward, eventually the wolf pack ran-off into the mountainside. About five years ago his brother was returning home from the farm in the late afternoon (about 5pm) and in the centre of the village a leopard had decided to go to sleep in the middle of the road. No-one wanted to hurt it (or be hurt by it). All the cars stopped, wound up their windows and turned off their engines and waited - about 2 hours. By which time at least 10 cars each way were stopped. Thankfully no-one fetched a gun. Eventually the leopard woke, stretched, licked itself and walked off into the mountains as if nothing had happened. The father remembered the day when he was young and a shepherd, from his village was out with his flock of sheep and was attacked by a leopard. Thinking quickly the shepherd offered his left elbow, the leopard accepted, the arm never recovered. In his right hand the shepherd brought up his dagger stabbed the chest and split the stomach open. He killed the leopard and survived, a very rare event. Sadly the driver recorded the time about 30 years ago when the Shah's wife decided she wanted some clothes made from wild Iranian leopard. The Shah's royal guard arrived in the village and spent 2 days in the surrounding mountainside. They shot 5 leopards and brought them all down to the village tied to poles. He, being about 15 year old couldn't resist going to look. One of the leopards was wounded and still alive and fiercely growling. He remembers the boys throwing small rocks into the leop-

ard's mouth and watching in awe as the leopard crushed the stones into splinters with one bite. On a happier note a leopard was seen just one year ago less than a kilometre from where I was having tea, so it seems they still exist in this area. Our walk back to the car is even more hair-raising as it is almost dark. However, I notice that a lot of the meadow land flora seem surprisingly similar to that in England. Thistle, Stinging Nettles, Clover, Grasses and various other wild flowers and weeds look familiar.

I did not expect this familiarity or lushness. Iran is a wonderful, wonderful place and the people are even better. I will certainly return and can recommend anyone to make the excuse to take a visit.

Report by Stephen Green

## Still New Creatures to be Discovered

A recent British-led expedition to the Cardamom mountains in Cambodia has led to the discovery of several species of animals new to science, as well as the wolf snake and the Siamese crocodile that were thought to be extinct in the wild. In an area riddled with landmines, Dr Jenny Daltry and her team found a large number of frogs, moths, and insects of which two-thirds have never been described before. In addition, large numbers of endangered animals, such as tiger, elephant, gaur, gibbon and Aslar wild dog were found. Even though the King and government have expressed excitement about the discovery, there is a threat from loggers and poachers who are also interested. The Khmer Rouge, who control the area, do not kill the Siamese crocodile because they believe that if they hunt the crocodile they will die. Unless protective measures are taken this great reservoir of unusual wildlife could be destroyed in a matter of years.

Report by Marjicke Jongbloed



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### What's in a Name? "Umm" and "Abu"

The Arabic language came of age as a language of oral traditions and above all a language of poetry, so it should perhaps be no surprise that it is rich in metaphor. Umm or "mother" and Abu or "father" are among the most common metaphors in many contexts. They are even used, metaphorically, in many common and proper names.

As place names we have, among others, Umm Suqeim (mother of debris) in suburban Dubai; Abu Dhabi (father of the gazelle); and Umm Al-Na: (mother of fire, perhaps a reference to the flammable petroleum seeps on the island). No one seems to know what Umm Al-Qeiwein is the mother of.

In other contexts we have umm al-Nabr (mother of ink, one of several names for the cuttlefish); abu saif (father of the sword, or swordfish); and umm arba'a wa arba'een (mother of forty-four, or centipede).

Arabic uses Umm and Abu more literally as familiar terms of address: friends are called according to the names of their firstborn, for example, Mohamed Al-Mazroui. If his oldest son is named Khalid, might often be called by close friends Abu Khalid (father of Khalid).

In place names and family names Abu is sometimes abbreviated over time to Bu, but with no change in meaning. Likewise Umm is sometimes abbreviated: observant drivers will notice that road signs at the air force base at Exit 4 on the Dubai/Al-Ain Road have recently changed from Min-

had to the more explicit Umm Ni-had.

English does not, for whatever reason, use mother and father metaphors as names. "Mother-of-pearl" (or *nauro*) is the only such noun listed in several dictionaries consulted. On the other hand, adjectival metaphorical expressions such as mother tongue, motherland (or fatherland) and sayings such as "Rebellion is the mother of learning" and "Necessity is the mother of invention" are reasonably common.

Report by Gary Feulner



# GAZELLE

## Dubai Natural History Group Programme

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

Nov 5 Rob Gregory - Traditional Pearl Diving in the Arabian Gulf

Dec 10 Luborn's Mitac - Scorpions and Other Friendly Creatures

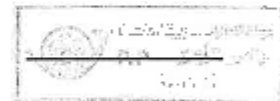
Field Trips (DNHG members only, please).

Nov 10 Searching the beaches of Ras al Khaimah and/or the East Coast  
with Sandy Fowler and Beryl Comar

Nov 10/17 Turning stones at night in the hunt for Scorpions  
Overnight camping in a Wadi with Marilyn and Alan Hartley

Nov 23 Autumn Star Gazing  
Away from the city lights with Lamjed El-Kefi

Nov 24 You must be fit to join Gary Feulner for an energetic hike in the Hajar Mountains



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