

# GAZELLE

Vol 15 no 9 - September 2000



مجموعة دبي للتاريخ الطبيعي

**DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP**

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Members' News

### *Summer Happenings*

RAK-based members **Barbara Coudrey** and **Dee McEnery** continued to explore challenging mountain routes over the summer, beating the heat with pre-dawn starts. Of the northerly approach to Sal Dayah, above the coastal village of Rams, Barbara writes: "Went on a hair-raising path last Friday with Dee (started walking at 4.30am in the dark!). Up from the quarry after Rams and down the waterfall route at the end of Sal Dayah - then back to the quarry - 7 hours. It was face to the wall stuff, clawing for handholds and tooting for tooting. I saw another one of those Oman lizards [*Lacerta jayakari*] on the way down... but not much else."

**Gary Faulner** took a short August vacation in the Palau archipelago, east of the Philippines, sea kayaking and snorkeling among the rock islands in the company of an enthusiastic marine biologist and all-around naturalist guide. What might this have to do with UAE natural history? See Gary's comments on page 6.

**Peter and Anna Griffin** recently took off for Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Birtan Island in Indonesia.

The island is made up of mature woodland, mangroves, sandflats and freshwater streams. The small pockets of mangroves contain a rich diversity of life and many plants and animals found here are totally dependant on its survival, such as the Small-clawed Otter, Great bitufted Heron, Pied Imperial Pigeon, Stork-billed Kingfisher and Copper-throated Sunbird. They had fruit bats sleeping in the rafters and monkeys giving a wake up call early in the morning.

### Flamingoes in Crisis

A small article in Gulf News, on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September, highlighted the disaster taking place in southern Iran where the severe drought has caused the 50,000 hectare Bakhegan lake to be reduced to a few stagnant pools of water. This is an important breeding ground for flamingoes. Some 3,000 chicks not mature or strong enough to migrate have already died, and another 2,000 are threatened. According to a piece found on the internet, 100 Iranian students have joined the environmental department in a desperate rescue effort to save 2,000 chicks by "relocating them to a nearby lake. Kevin Hyland, in his talk to the DNHG last October, mentioned that the flock at Khor Dubai originated from the large lakes of Iran.

### DNHG Membership is due for renewal in September

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

You may join or renew at meetings (see Membership Secretary Fi Skonneron) or send us a cheque made out to Lloyds Bank account no 173748. (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:

Barbara Coudrey  
Gary Faulner  
Stephen Green  
Michael and Jill Oates



## Green Turtle Trip to Ras al Hadd 11/12 October

10 more places have been made available for this trip due to popular demand. The following have already registered:

Cynthia and Hugh Paton  
Davis/Morag + daughter  
Jan Denning  
Ian and Anne Holt  
Sue and Jim Balderstone  
Mary Beardwood  
Flaine Harmsworth  
Valerie Chalmers  
Fran McCaw  
Nella Price  
Andy and Yvonne Krick  
Fi Skennerton  
Rademan family of 4

If any of the above are unable to attend please notify Fi Skennerton as soon as possible

The weekend will start on the Wednesday evening, with an Omani meal plus traditional music, at the Musca penthouse flat of Siw Rantapa. The DNHG has block booked Siw's bed and breakfast rooms. The cost for the evening meal and B & B will be RO 7,500. Please contact Siw direct to make your reservation:  
Tel: (968) 607020  
Fax: (968) 607460  
E.mail: siwman@omantel.net.om

On Thursday we shall be camping on the beach. Ras al Hadd is a 5 hour drive from Muscat, and 4 wheel drive is necessary. It is a long journey, but well worth it.

For further information please contact Mary Beardwood 3422546, e-mail mikemary@emirates.net.ae or Fi Skennerton 050-6243028, e-mail skennerf@mkidubai.co.ae

15 places will be available for our group. We shall have a guide with us to tell us all about the life cycle of the turtles. A true adventure is promised!

## Omani Visa

Multiple Entry Visas valid for 2 years can be obtained from the Omani Consulate for Dh 420.

Single Entry Visas can also be obtained at the Omani Consulate.

## Wadi Bih Friday 20 October

A guided tour led by Peter van Amsterdam through the ever changing Wadi Bih. This is a very popular event. 4x4 essential. Bring at least 3 litres of water per person, packed lunch, hat and sun lotion, camera and binoculars. Limited to 10 cars. Please contact Peter on 050 6425077 to reserve your place.

## Birdwatching Friday 27 October

Simon Aspinall who is well known in the UAE for his expertise in this field will take a group around the most interesting sights in the Abu Dhabi region. To register please contact Fi Skennerton on 050-6243028

Details of times and meeting place will be published in the October Gazette

## Field Trip Policies

Members are reminded that DNHG field trips are cooperative ventures among the participants, for their mutual benefit and enjoyment. DNHG field trip leaders are not normally professionals or experts, but fellow members who have agreed to share their time and their knowledge with other participants, on a volunteer basis. The relationship of trip leaders and participants is that of co-venturers, not professional and client. For these reasons field trip participation is limited to DNHG members and their bona fide non-resident guests.

Various dangers are inherent in travel in and around the UAE and in the exploration of the natural environment, whether by automobile, by boat, on foot or otherwise, and whether on-road or off-road, in the cities or countryside, in the mountains or deserts or at sea. By participating in DNHG field trips, members accept these risks, and they accept responsibility for their own safety and welfare. Field trip participants are normally required to sign a waiver form to this effect. Without these understandings, the DNHG would be unable to sponsor field trips or to recruit volunteers to lead them.

Field trips vary in both format and organization, depending on the nature of the trip, the number of participants, and the preferences of the field trip leader. If the number of participants is limited and sign-up is required, members should make every effort to honour their commitments or to give timely notice otherwise, as a courtesy both to the trip leader and to other members who might like to have the chance to participate.

## Our Next Speaker

Kathy Bird has lived and worked in the Gulf since 1992. She is a teacher and teacher trainer. She has lived in Muscat, Sohar and Salalah in the Sultanate of Oman, and Al Ain and Dubai in the UAE. She currently teaches English language at the Zayed University.

"The Dhofar region of the Sultanate of Oman is fascinating in its diversity" says Kathy who spent one year in the area as a teacher/trainer/advisor, working from the Ministry of Education. Her talk will give an overview of the different kinds of environment and climate found in the region.



## Mango Tango

When I got back to my car one hot July afternoon, after a few hours of hiking in the mountains near Shawkah, I had no more than unloaded my pack and had a drink when a "lillic old man" appeared out of nowhere -- a Pakistani agricultural laborer with herma-red hair and beard (and hands) and not very many teeth. He didn't bother to talk (at first I thought he might be mute) but made lots of signs, indicating somewhat extravagantly that if I drove in the direction of his plantation home (which I knew to be about 5 or 6 km away) he would pick me fresh fruit (unspecified) from a tree. I'm sure he hoped it was an offer I wouldn't refuse, as it was 2:30 in the afternoon, very hot, and he didn't seem to have any water with him.

I still wonder if he really just happened along or if he'd been waiting in the shade somewhere for me to return (hoping it would be soon and that I'd be a soft touch). Little did he know! I always reason that I may need help from just such a person someday, so I try to keep good relations and I was happy to give him a ride. At the plantation we stocked up on mangoes. Lots of mangoes. I gave him a small blue plastic bag, just a grocer's fruit bag, and he went off and managed somehow to cram it with sixty mangoes!

They were mostly green, but he carefully showed me how to ripen them: scoop a hole in the gravel and cover them with palm leaves. I hadn't the heart to tell him that I didn't have any gravel at home, much less palm leaves. Instead I improvised with plastic bags in the kitchen. He said they'd ripen in two days, but the process must require heat, because my green ones didn't start to turn until I moved them outdoors to the balcony. This was important because until they're fully ripe, mangoes are very fibrous and eating them is a lot more like milling them, though still tasty. Even when ripe, it is a messy fruit. The old fellow insisted on feeding me a number of fresh mangoes at his camp. When I

finished, he made a point of encouraging me to wash up at his cistern before I left, and he wasn't just being polite.

Report by Gary Fowler

## East Coast Tiger Beetle

With the benefit of instruction and identification materials previously supplied by Prof Michael Gillett of Al-Ain, Gary Fowler was able to recognize and report the large black and ivory striped tiger beetle *Hyphaethia schmidtii*, first at Khor Kalba in late July and then at Yiti, south of Muscat, in August. *H. schmidtii* is known from the Arabian Gulf (Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran), but this is apparently the first report for Oman -- it was not included in a recent professional paper on the tiger beetles of Oman. A photograph and specimen were taken at Khor Kalba for confirmation.

*H. schmidtii* is distinctive in its colour, size, "erect" posture and behavior. The latter is particularly noteworthy as in Saudi Arabia it was confirmed to prey on small shoreline crabs of the species *Paracleistostoma arabicum*. At Khor Kalba, Gary watched a single *H. schmidtii* prowling along the strand line at high tide (in the heat of the day, in typical tiger beetle fashion), pausing at many small crab burrows, peering in one, and actually entering two of them for a period of up to ten seconds or so. Unaware of the beetle's habits at the time, Gary thought it might be seeking an unoccupied shelter from the heat. Large numbers were seen just two weeks later along the khor at Yiti. In densities of as many as 50 along 10 meters of silty strand, in company with two other tiger beetles, the small, scroll-patterned *H. copulata* and the medium-sized, spotted *Lophyrtdia aulica*.

Thanks for these results are also due to Patricia Rosetti, who reinforced the choice of Yiti as the base of operations for a long weekend in Oman. She and Robert had visited with Omani friends last year and she

recommended it warmly as "laid back" and "off the beaten track." She didn't mention, however, that it was historically reached only by boat or by 25 km of dirt track (and she didn't mention that there's a new access road, paved but for the last 5 km). She also didn't mention that the beach area where she had stayed and where she recommended a charming guest house, can be cut off from the upper khor at highest tides. But then, if there hadn't been time to kill waiting for the tide to fall, Gary wouldn't have walked that stretch of strand and found the tiger beetles.

## Mountain Termites

Barbara Coudrey reports that she was up at Sal Dhayah (in the Ru'us A-Jibal east of Rams) in August and took an "observation" hour out while a companion walked down to the "white waterfall." Says Barbara, "Must do it more often as the last time was when I watched the tiny wasps building their nests, carrying relatively large pebbles to block the holes. Well, this time I watched a huge army of worker termites (should have bagged one for identification) gathering their food for the day - sticks and bits of leaf - which they turned on end and shoved down the small holes to the queen and soldiers below. The area must have measured about 4 yards square and was dotted with little holes - most being serviced by the workers. I would like to have had one of Attenborough's camera probes to stick down into the colony. The sticks were sometimes 1 to 1.5 inches long - strong pincers! The termites and their sticks reminded me of pole vaulters when they manoeuvred them on end to insert into the holes".





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

### Boulder Art Collects Dust

Boulder art can be found in a number of places in the mountains of the UAE. Designs or images are typically pecked into heavily varnished boulders on gravel terraces adjacent to wadis. In some locations up to a hundred or more examples can be found. Images include stylized representations of humans and animals, other less easily decipherable designs, and simpler patterns identified as *wusum* (sing. *wasim*) – tribal or familial marks or brands.

Boulder art has been largely neglected by archaeologists working in the UAE, partly due to the notorious difficulty of dating the images, and therefore tying them to other archaeological information. The only area that has been the subject of comprehensive professional study is upper Wadi Hayf, where some 85 petroglyph compositions were described and analyzed by Michella Ziolkowski in 1995-96 under the supervision of Prof Dan Potts of the University of Sydney.

This scholarly attention came none too soon, since the same area also became the site of small scale but intensive chromite mining, only recently terminated. A graded access road through the terrace "art gallery" itself, plus daily relays of heavy dump trucks, appear to have taken their toll on the rock art. When visited in June 2000, most images in Wadi Hayf were badly obscured in comparison to those in other areas. This is almost certainly attributable to the high ambient dust levels created by the mining and transport operations. It is not known

whether this is a temporary phenomenon (the summer visitors were unwilling to part with precious water to experiment) or whether the dust load has somehow interfered with normal weathering processes and differentiation of the man-made images. It is hoped that the next heavy rains (Insha'Allah!) will restore the artwork, but this remains to be seen.

Report by Gary Feulner

### Blowin' in the Wind

Summer is milkweed season, when many of the seven local varieties open their pods and release flattened seeds to float aloft on a spray of silken fibers. The best known is *Calotropis procera* or Sodom's apple, which can still be seen around Dubai despite an official eradication campaign. Another milkweed, the large, apparently leafless shrub *Leptadenia pyrotechnica* (the "fireworks" bush, which sports tiny but vivid yellow flowers in season), is a prominent feature of the desert landscape on the roads to Dhaid or Al-Ain, partly because it is resistant to grazing camels. It is planted as a landscape shrub on the road from the Trade Centre to Dubai Creek, and the air there was thick with drifting seeds in July. In the lower mountains, *Pergularia tomentosa* can be found, often on disturbed ground beside graded tracks. Its evenly-spaced leaves look like little hearts and its pods look like spiny pickles. The pods split open, curl back, release their seeds and dry out to look like pairs of small butterfly wings.

Three other milkweeds are less commonly seen in summer because of their more remote mountain habitat. These are the stiff, leafless *Periploca aphylla*, a denizen of the higher mountains, the climbing vine *Pentstemon nivalis*, the small, semi-prostrate, wrinkled-leaved *Glossopoma varians*, and the cactus-like *Caralluma*

(both the red-flowering *C. arabica* and the yellow-flowering *C. flava*). These local representatives of the distinctive and varied milkweed family (Asclepidaceae) are discussed in more detail in an article by Rob Westcott in an early *Tribulus*, vol. 2.1.

### Stucco Handprints

Visitors to the so-called Summer Palace and fort at Wadi Hayf in Fujairah are encouraged to keep an eye out for handprints in the "stucco" finish on walls. These can be found in many places, both exterior and interior, and are tentatively thought to be the "autographs" of the concerned craftsmen. Almost all are imprints of the right hand, with fingers pointing upwards. There is at least one left hand print, however, and its fingers point down. DNHG members who find it will earn honourable mention in these pages.

### Traveller's Advisory

#### Beware the Summertime Blues

One of our more intrepid members (an Englishman, of course) warns from recent experience that even accomplished trekkers should remember to take careful account of the UAE's summer heat, if they are not already well accustomed and acclimatized. This member often plays host to visitors including some pretty tough characters that have trotted him over hill and dale elsewhere in the world, but he has seen heat and dehydration take their toll and bring these same people to a halt. As a result, he always carries extra provisions in a large cool box, that can be fetched in case of emergency.

Another useful summer emergency item is a packet or two of rehydration salts. These can be purchased cheaply at most pharmacies.



## Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

- Reptiles - Dr Reza Khan  
res 344 8283  
of: 344 0462  
fax (off): 349 5437
- Archaeology - Robert Lovelace  
res 342 0492  
lovelace@emirates.net.ae
- Birds - Mike & Jill Oates  
res 305 4006  
oates@emirates.net.ae
- Scasalsala - Sandy Fowler  
res 344 2213  
fax 344 2243
- Astronomy - Tareq El-Keft  
res 06-583 003  
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- Geology - Gary Feulner  
res 306 3370  
fax 330 3550
- Fossils - Valerie Chalmers  
res 349 4016,  
fax 398 3727
- Insects - Gary Feulner  
(see above)
- Mammals - Marijcke Jonghloed  
res 349 7963  
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mjjonghloed@emirates.net.ae
- Marine Life - Lareq El-Keft  
(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

We always find something interesting to see in Safa Park, so after the Summer break we started our regular walks again. It was certainly hot at around 10am on Friday 1st Sept and we spent our time walking from one patch of shade to another. There are already migrants coming through, our first sight was a group of 5/6 whimbrels sheltering from the sun under a tree. We always have difficulty in distinguishing whimbrels from curlews but as we could get quite close we saw the head stripe, smaller bill and slightly smaller size. Also on the grass we spotted two wagtails which were browner than normal with only the slightest trace of yellow on their lower breast which we decided were 1st year yellow wagtails. In one of the tree areas we saw a group 6 or more blue checked bee eaters, we were able to pick them out from the smaller more common little green bee eater by their red throats. In the same area the alexandrine parakeet larger than the green parakeet with a red patch on its shoulder was shrieking at the top of its voice. We also wondered what the small yellow birds were right up in the canopy, and decided they were purple sunbirds in non breeding plumage. It seems this bird although still around is not prominent outside the breeding season. There were Indian silverbills up in the trees with grey francolin running on the ground. In the bird sanctuary lake we had a very good close-up of a black necked grebe in winter plumage and wished we had brought our camera. Also around the lake we spotted a garganey, green and common sandpipers. In the boating lake we saw a striped heron, grey heron, blackwinged stilt, Egyptian geese. The colourful escapoe red bishops are nesting in the rushes. A graceful warbler was flitting from bush to bush. Hoopoes

seem to be feeding on the grass and under the trees and are probably resident in the area.

Unfortunately the bird trap is still there which had mynahs and house crows in it with several dead on the bottom where they had flown into the wire. Last year they captured the shikra which is common in the park although probably an escapoe.

As the migration season builds up it is not uncommon to see more than 50 different species in the park, in a 2 hour walk. Our full list was as follows -

Red vented bulbul, white checked bulbul, common mynah, striped weaver, house sparrow, pied mynah, green parakeet, alexandrine parakeet, hoopoe, Indian roller, crested lark, yellow wagtail, house crow, whimbrel, red bishops, common sandpiper, green sandpiper, striped heron, black winged stilt, Egyptian goose, grey heron, palm dove, collared dove, blue checked bee eater, purple sunbird, graceful warbler, black necked grebe, Indian silverbill, garganey, grey francolin.

Report by Mike and Jill Oates

## Book Reviews

### Tribulus 10.1

The latest *Tribulus*, no 10.1 (Spring/Summer 2000), is now out. This issue (with a photo of a wadi pua on the front cover) contains articles on the remains of Late Islamic forts in Wadi Safad, the construction and use of the snasha (the traditional East Coast fishing craft), evidence for pre-18th century habitation of Abu Dhabi island, the unusual freshwater goby population living in a wadi near Hatta, UAE ticks, the spread of the Namaqua dove in Arabia, desert truffles, the use of burrows by the hoopoe lark, photo-trapping cats on Blanford's fox, as well as brief updates on a multitude of ongoing archaeological and other research projects. Copies are available for Dh5 15 at DNHG monthly meetings.



## Tropical Island Perspective on the UAE

The well-watered tropical islands of the Palau archipelago in the western Pacific are well known to scuba divers, but few others. These remnants of volcanic islands and uplifted limestone plateau, which I visited in August, represent a very different environment from the UAE, but there were nevertheless some interesting natural history constants:

**Archaeology:** Like Gulf of Oman coastal sites, many Palauan archaeological sites are littered with the remains of *Strombus* shells (the red-mouthed conch, nearly indistinguishable from our own *Strombus persicus*) and cone shells, especially the broken lugs, which in Balraan were used as personal seals. *Strombus* was also eaten more recently in Palau. Shells litter WWII sites where the occupying Japanese entrenched themselves in the caves on the battlefield island of Peleliu.

**Mangroves:** The large mangrove crab, *Scylla serrata*, an Indo-Pacific species, was present in muddy shoreline environments in Palau as it is at Khor Kalba in the UAE, where it is hunted (illegally) by both locals and expatriates. It was a popular menu item in Palau as well, both in camp and in restaurants. Live crabs must be collected and handled carefully, as their powerful pincers can sever human fingers.

**Botany:** Not surprisingly, Palau has few plant species in common with the UAE. The islands are, however, rich in shoreline forests of large trees that rely on dispersal by large, nutritious ocean-going seeds. The coconut palm is the best example. Most of species found in both places are widespread plants found only in relatively well-watered sites in the UAE,

and considered "plantation" species here. By far the most striking is the large tree *Casuarina equisetifolia* (the Whispering Pine or She Oak), the tall "pine" tree that can be found, eg. in Safa Park. This tree was identified and discussed in the July/August 2000 *Gazelle*. It is native to the tropics and common in Australia and the Pacific; it has been introduced in Dubai. In the environment of the tropical rainforest, however, this same tree develops distinctive curtain-like buttresses at the base of the trunk.

**Birds:** The birds of Palau that are also found in the UAE are limited to the Bridled Tern, (Great) Crested Tern, Barn Swallow, Cattle Egret, Whimbrel and (surprisingly?) the White-Collared Kingfisher, which is common there but limited to only two sites (including Khor Kalba) in Arabia. Interestingly, there are no birds of prey in Palau. As to the rest, well, I promised myself not to gloat over the likes of circling White-Tailed Tropicbirds, squawking Sulfur Crested Cockatoos or any of the various endemics I added to my life list, including the beautiful but reclusive national bird, the Palauan Fruit Dove.

Report by Gary Faulner

## UAE Snails for Medical Research

Stephen Green has received an emergency request from scientists at The Natural History Museum [formerly British Museum (Natural History)] in London for more specimens of *Bulinus wrighti*, an uncommon freshwater snail found only in a few isolated rocky pools in Yemen, Oman and the UAE.

The genus *Bulinus* belongs to a group that is able to serve as an intermediate host for the schistosome parasites that cause bilharzia (schistosomiasis). *B. wrighti* itself is

a suitable host for almost the entire spectrum of an important schistosome group. As a result, it is bred for research purposes at the Wellcome Welcomes Biomedical Laboratories, WHO Collaborating Centre for the identification and characterisation of schistosomes and their snail hosts, which is located at the museum. Not only is *B. wrighti* important for maintaining schistosomes in the laboratory, but it is also used in the field when collecting new isolates of schistosomes. Researchers take out uninfected snails in the field to be exposed to *Schistosoma miracidia*.

Unfortunately the laboratory experienced a crash in its (relatively inbred) population of *B. wrighti* and is in urgent need of acquiring a new stock from the wild in order to start a new breeding programme. It remains to be seen, however, whether any significant number of live snails can be collected from the few known sites in and around the UAE, all of which are will have been severely affected by the continuing drought.

## Night-time Snails by Day

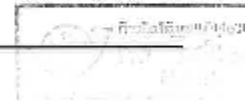
In the course of their relatively extensive observations of UAE wadi snails, Stephen Green and Gary Faulner had always found the tiny (3mm) flat-spiraled *Gyraulus* sp. residing inconspicuously under rocks, usually out of the main current (see *Tribulus* 9.1, Summer 1999). Only once, at dusk, was this snail observed in a more exposed position, leading to the inference that it was nocturnal in its habits. Thus it was a great surprise to find the same snail present by the hundreds in Wadi Hayl, fully exposed to the heat and light of a June midday, atop rocks and along the gravel bottom. Samples were taken in order to permit expert confirmation that it is in fact the same species. The genus *Gyraulus* includes several closely related species but it is not known whether they may differ in habits to the extent observed.

# GAZELLE

## Dubai Natural History Group Programme

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

Ocl 1	Kathy Bird - The Dhofar Region of Oman
Nov 5	Rob Gregory - Traditional Pearl Diving in the Arabian Gulf
Dec 2	Lubomir Mrhec - Scorpions and Other Friendly Creatures
Field Trips	(DNHG members only, please).
11/12 Oct	The Omani Experience From Muscat to Ras al Hadd Beach to see Green Turtles
20 Oct	Return to Wadi Bih with Peter van Amsterdam
27 Oct	Birdwatching in and around Abu Dhabi with Simon Aspinall



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## Library

### Geology of Oman now in stock

At the request of one of our members, Magrudy's Book Store has tracked down Samir Hanna's spiral-bound Geology of Oman and now has a number of copies available. This book was reviewed in the April 2000 Gazelle and was praised for its self-guided field trips in the mountains of Oman. Price: Dhs 55.

Also now in stock in limited numbers at Magrudy's is a similar and interesting volume titled Caves of Oman, by Samir Hanna and Mohamed Al-Belushi. Oman is well known for its caves and harbours, among other things, the world's second largest underground

chamber. Even for those who may never explore these caves themselves (most require expert skills), the book contains interesting information and photographs and diagrams explaining cave formation and depicting various erosional features characteristic of caves and limestone areas generally. Price: Dhs 55.

### Pre-Islamic Coinage of Eastern Arabia

Stephen Green has very kindly arranged to make available to the DNHG a copy of The Pre-Islamic Coinage of Eastern Arabia, by Dr Dan Potts. Originally published in 1991 in Copenhagen by the Carsten Niebuhr Institute, Publication 14, this study is now difficult to obtain but Steve has provided a copy of the Arabic translation published by the Sharjah Department of Culture and Information in honour of

Sharjah's 1998 designation as cultural capital of the Arab world. The study is an illustrated catalogue and discussion of hundreds of coins from sites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Ad-Door and Mleiha in the UAE.



## 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.