



GAZELLE

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مجموعتنا في التاريخ والطبيعي

Heritage and Nature exploration at the East Coast and Hajar Mountains.

A day full of a variety of activities started off with an in-depth tour through the Sharjah Institute for Heritage guided by Firas Othman, conservatory architect

Inside this month: page

East coast/Hajar mountains	1
Announcements and Recorders	2
Spotlight!	3
Sultan bin Zayed Festival	4
Wadi Naqab	5
Al Qudra Lakes	6
New UAE Butterflies	7
Salut Archaeological Site	8
Lectures and field trips	10
H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan speech	11

Contributors—

Thanks to the following for their contributions:

Ulrike Andorff, Chandrashekhar Sardesai, Rob Zaetta, Paola Enrico, Gosia van Unen, Graham Murray, Gary Feulner, Sandhya Prakash, Helga Meyer, Rahul Shah, Panos and Marie Azmanis, Susan Hassall, Angela Manthorpe, Harold Bekker, Sonja Lavrenčič and John Dayton.

STOP PRESS!

Celebrating 40 years in existence, this auspicious occasion was addressed by our patron, H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, in Abu Dhabi this month. His speech is on page 11, for all members to read.



in charge of this project. The village is several hundreds of years old, though the first description of Khor Fakkan “around which are gardens and farms in plenty” was by Duarte Barbosa around 1500. The village has been under restoration since 2012 with careful observation of adhering to the natural evolution of building materials and change in architecture throughout the past. Firas described in detail the structure of the different house types and gave an interesting historical insight. The highlights obviously are the remains of the triangular Portuguese fort built in 1620, in ruins in 1666 and obviously the famous “5 Dirhams Mosque”. Before leaving Khor Fakkan, we had a short stop at the protected cinema from the 70’s decorated with the symbols of the UAE; i.e. gazelle, Bedouin tent, camel and dhow. Arriving at second-order enclave Nahwa, we viewed the traditional wedding rock (ready to get married? Only if you are able to lift the rock!) under the old Sam Tree and the rock art with Qurainic inscription at the old cemetery. Thereafter we finally had some physical activity: the group climbed up a path to explore the top of the hills with 6 old watch towers as well as 6 shelters. In the elevated valley between the hills several plants were in flower such as *Tephrosia apollinea*, *Senna italica*, *Euphorbia larica*, *Asphodelus tenuifolius*, etc (big thanks to Valerie for her identification from the distance!). The group continued along a partially steep dirt road up and down through the amazing Wadi Shis until it reached Hijer Bani Humayd, a lush oasis with an old settlement on the opposite wadi plateau.

(Continued on page 4)

Announcements and Recordors

Monthly Speaker - 8pm on Sunday 4th February, 2017

Lecture Title - "British Community at Ras Al Khaimah before and the first few years post Federation. Dr. Miriam and Captain Tim Ash as a case study."

Biography - Lt. Col. Dr. Saif bin Aboud Al Bedwawi

Lt. Col Dr. Bedwawi was born and raised in Masfut, Ajman. He completed his Doctorate in Durham University in the United Kingdom and has a Masters degree in Political Science from California State University, Chicago.

Lt. Col Dr. Bedwawi is currently serving as the Head of the Oral Military History Department for the UAE Armed forces, Abu Dhabi. Previously he has worked as Senior Researcher at Ajman Ruler's Court and Assistant Professor of Modern History at Sharjah University and part time Assistant Professor at the Universities of Sharjah, Abu Dhabi & Preston University in Ajman.

In 2000 Lt. Col. Dr. Al Bedwawi retired from the UAE Armed Forces with a rank of Lt. Colonel. While serving in the UAE military, he held positions of Head of Scholarship Department at General Quarter of the Armed Forces in Abu Dhabi, Academic Wing Commander at Zayed Military College (responsible for academic studies and Head of the Academic Department at Zayed Military College, Al Ain, UAE.

Lt. Col. Dr. Al Bedwawi has also attended more than 25 local and international conferences in which he has delivered various Papers.

PUBLICATIONS include 5 Books and 21 refereed Papers. A sample is listed below:

- 2007 *Britain's and the Gulf: the withdrawal years*. Amman, Al Falah Publication, 2007 (Book)
- 2007 The Military History of the Armed Forces of the Emirates before the Federation. *Bulletin of School of Arts at Ain Sham University*. Vol., 35. Jan-March 2007.
- 2010 *Minerates and Boyas in the Gulf: a study in the light of British Documents, 1908-1928. Liwa*. Vol. 4. P. 22-36. Abu Dhabi
- 2014 Book on : *Murgab Military Camp, 1967-1983*. Sharjah: Armed forces Publications. (For Military Eyes only))
- 2014 A chapter in the Book: *Are you the Man: Memories of Life in the Trucial Oman Scouts*. Edited by Terry Ward and Hugh Nicklin. London, Trucial Oman Scouts Association.
- 2017 Pearl merchants of the Gulf and their life in Bombay. Proceedings of the *Seminar for Arabian Studies*. Vol. 47, 2017. P., 1

From the Editor:

The Emirates Natural History Group, Abu Dhabi chapter, hosted the annual Inter-Emirates Weekend (IEW) between 22—24th February, 2018. We were honoured with the presence of our patron, H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, who addressed attending members and presented awards. A copy of his speech, marking the 40th Anniversary of the ENHG, is on page 11.

In addition to the IEW weekend, members have been very active. Thanks to those sending in contributions to the Gazelle, whether trip reports, photographs or field clips.

Read about forthcoming trips on page 10 this month.

Enjoy your read!



Team working on Salut Archaeology site (see page 8—photo by Helga Meyer)

Wanted—

Membership Secretary

Many hands make light work!

An outline of responsibilities was circulated on

[page 7 of the December Gazelle.](#)

Interested members should contact Chairman Gary Feulner or Vice Chairman Valerie Chalmers (contact details on page 8)

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Mammals - new recorder needed!

Spotlight!

Sweihaan Festival (photos by Susan Hassall)



Camel Beauty
Contestants



The winner, powdered in turmeric



Traditional
Emirati
dancers



Traditional singing



Some of the prizes

DNHG Geology trip to Wadi Naqab (photos by Rahul Shah)



Geology lesson in the field



Rock strata are clearly defined at
the study site.



Vertical fault line



Triassic period fossils

DNHG group photos



DNHG Wadi Walk on 19th January
(photo courtesy of Rob Zaetta)



Students with their papers on
DNHG Wadi Naqab geology trip on
10th February (photo courtesy of
Sonja)



DNHG Field Trip to Salut Archaeological Site in
Oman between 16th—17th February (photo
courtesy of Paola Enrico)

Field Trips

(Continued from page 1)

Further on, the highlights of Shis Village were the extended falaj systems along the mountains ensuring the survival of the large plantations, the pool and the waterfall with its



refreshing and tasty mountain water. Pioneering the new road Sharjah – Khor



Fakkan, a 5 billion AED project, through the Al Gazir tunnel we reached Daftah, our last stop. A range of petroglyphs with antropomorphs (horse and rider) and geometric forms (foot, dot and else) awaited us. Panos & Marie Azmanis reported a total 14 bird species seen by the group during this trip, which are listed in the table below:

House Crow	Green bee-eaters	Kestrel	White-spectacled bulbul
Purple sunbird	Indian Roller	Hume's wheatear	Striolated bunting
Pale craig martin	House sparrow	Laughing dove	Eurasian collared dove
Blue rock thrush	Eurasian Sparrowhawk		

Dr Panos Azmanis witnessed the capture of a female Blue rock thrush by a male sparrowhawk in the wadi, at a distance of 15 meters. A wonderful and enjoyable day out bringing UAE nature and history a bit closer to us!

Contribution by Ulrike Andorff, Panos and Marie Azmanis

Sultan bin Zayed Heritage Festival

On 27 January a group from DNHG attended this Festival, held at Al Sweihan in the Abu Dhabi Emirate. We were joined by other visitors, including a group of Ukrainian nationals for whom this was their third year of attendance.

Camels represent the focal point of the festival, with competitions such as beauty pageants (Mazayna), milking contests (Mahalib) and camel racing. Other activities centre on the saluki dogs, which have their own beauty pageants and races; the saluki were in the past used for hunting. In addition there is a poetry contest and photography competition, and a traditional souq.

On our visit we were fortunate to be guided by Ali, an Emirati who had previously also assisted us at the Al Dhafra Heritage Festival. He invited us to the VIP tent for the camel beauty pageant, where we also saw some traditional Yula dancing with live musical accompaniment. After the competition ended we had the honour of being photographed with Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed, the brother of the President of the UAE.

Camel trainers from Sudan take a break



Instruments for Yula Dance

After being treated to lunch in the Sultan's Majlis (there were several traditional dishes, including some featuring camel

meat) we visited a tented souq where we could hold falcons, learnt about new date products that are being developed (a fresh date juice should be hitting the shelves soon), and also view and buy a large variety of local products (from woven baskets to jewellery, swords, honey, desserts, perfumes and clothing). A retired pearl diver was also on hand to explain how he performed his work, and to demonstrate some of the tools of his trade.

This year the festival ran from 21 January to 3 February. It was just 90 minutes drive from Dubai and well worth the visit.

Contribution by Rahul Shah
(see more photos on page 3)



A retired pearl diver demonstrates his skill



Group photo with Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed

Field Trips

DNHG geological trip to Wadi Naqab on Saturday 10th February, 2018

This geological field trip was led by David Kingston and the location was chosen to view the stratigraphic column in order to help understand how the rocks were originally formed. As we worked our way across the column, we saw how the rock types were influenced by the environment that prevailed at the time of deposition. We also saw evidence of how subsequent tectonic movement shaped the rocks to form the mountains we see today.

David Kingston had prepared handouts which were immensely useful for all trekkers.

There were moderate technical descriptions and discussions which were explained by David in simple terms. Fossil inspection was the fun part where a magnifying glass was most helpful.

The field trip was short in terms of distance and hardly required any climbing, though some scrambling was needed to touch the Jurassic white line, set in the Musandam Limestone.

Pangea prior to breakup, started about 175 million years ago. The Americas, Africa and Eurasia were all connected. Now the Central Atlantic Magma Platform divides the Americas from Europe in the north and Africa in the southern hemisphere. The Ethiopian fault line is another major divider. At the Wadi Naqab the rocks are layered roughly 1 million years apart each. Triassic 200-250 million years old and Jurassic 150-200 million years apart.

The Wadi Naqab stratigraphic column extended over the Triassic - Jurassic boundary. This boundary is about 200 million years old and the period prior Triassic is associated with one of the world's mass extinctions. We found evidence of this mass extinction by working our way across the stratigraphic column and looked at the fossil assemblages as they changed from one geological formation to the next. At the time of mass extinction at the end of the Triassic period – as we found out towards the end of the walk -

acidification of the ocean was not the cause. We found a lot of fossils in the layer before the mass extinction occurred. As the permafrost melted, methane was released into the atmosphere then, increasing the CO₂ multifold – may be the major cause for the planet being heated up and sea levels rising.

The wadi continues to be influenced by geological processes so we looked for and identified some of these recent, less dramatic processes.

Four hours flew by as David helped our understanding of visualizing millions of years in the rocks. Climbing up to the white line and touching those Jurassic era stone was a particularly fascinating experience.

Surrendering to the enormity of the

timeless planet, the huge old stones and rocks, embedded with fossils, which we could actually touch and feel, time shrank.

The fault line and the up-down grazing of the stones was clearly visible. Shuba, Sumra, Sakhra are part of the Elphinstone group and are a few of the Arabic names given to the rock of yesteryears. Quarrying activity is currently going on in this area. The rounded limestones are like ball-bearings and not useful to the cement industry which needs to invest more in breaking them. So they prefer quarrying the limestone.

Small rocks indicate slow moving water in the past and large rocks indicate huge floods which could move the massive stones downhill. Brown layer is due to Silica and Iron and Grey is Limestone with impurities. The enormity of what is happening over millions of years hit me hard and filled me with hope for doing something to preserve this for posterity.

Thank you David for your patient explanations and depth of knowledge and the sharing and Sonja for organizing this special field trip.

Article by Sandhya Prakash with photos by Helga Meyer



Field Clips

The anniversary of a visit!

In case it is a seasonal thing:

Nearly a year ago this visitor gained entry, presumably under the apartment door from the corridor. Appearing to be out of energy, it made no effort to escape.

In response to "arthropod 23 pairs legs" Google offered:

Managing Turfgrass Pests, Second Edition

By Thomas L. Watschke, Peter H. Dernoeden, David J. Shetlar

who suggested centipede would be a safe bet. Wikipedia advises that they perhaps should not be handled. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centipede>

The body (excluding appendages) could have been 40mm.

Contribution by Graham Murray



The Mystery Corner

Can anyone identify this? I don't know whether to call it a cocoon or an egg case. Spotted on a tree in Mushrif Park in May 2017. Looking at the underside the 3 compartments have the remains of what looks like pupae inside, 8 cm in length.

Contribution by Angela Manthorpe



Attached to tree (left)

The underside (below)



A Man-made Oasis

Al Qudra Lakes, a man-made habitat for birds, is part of an extensive area within Al Marmoom Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve and has a sizeable population of animals both endemic and re-introduced. Large herds of Gazelles, Oryx and Houbara Bustards have been successfully re-introduced and occupy the northern portion of the reserve in addition to the prolific bird life staying within the lakes area. Water birds around the lakes of Al Qudra include Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*), Black-Winged Stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*), Black-Crowned Sparrow Lark (*Eremopterix nigriceps*), Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), Socotra Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*), and more common species of heron, egrets, swans, duck, geese and more. There is a good number of large Koi fish around the pump/fountain of the main lake, that enjoy oxygenated water in this area.

Houbara or Macqueen's Bustard (*Chlamydotis macqueenii*) can be encountered further in the desert, among the surrounding dunes. All birds are tagged and can be seen solitary as well as in small groups of 2-5 individuals.

The Oryx, despite being bred in captivity still displays some behavioral traits of the wild species. One of those characteristics is guarding the herd by a dominant male that positions himself between the possible danger and the herd. Some of the animals encountered have horn deformation or missing horns often as a result of entanglement in the surrounding wire fencing.

Arabian Gazelle (*Gazella gazelle cora*) can be found roaming larger areas of the desert north of the lakes and even close to residential areas adjacent to the desert.

Apart from the re-introduced species this man-made oasis is home to the native species of reptiles. There are Toad-headed agama lizards (*Phrynocephalus arabicus*), Spiny-Tailed lizard or Dhub (*Uromostyx*)

The surrounding dunes support limited vegetation of mostly Sedge (*Cyperatus conglomeratus*) and Sodom's apple (*Calotropis procera*) adorned in the spring with beautiful flowers.

Contribution by Gosia van Unen



Field Clips

Two New UAE Butterflies

As recently reported in the UAE press, two new butterfly species have been found in the UAE by DNHG members Gary Feulner and Binish Roobas, the lead authors of a pending comprehensive account of the UAE butterfly fauna, which now totals at least 57 species.

The Mottled Emigrant, *Catopsilia pyranthe*, is a medium-sized, pale yellow butterfly common in India, which looks like a leaf when perched in vegetation. It was found on Al Noor Island, a leisure venue in Khalid Lagoon, Sharjah, where Binish has photographed its entire life cycle.

Tiny Grass Blue *Zizula hylax*



The Tiny Grass Blue, *Zizula hylax*, a very small butterfly from the African and Asian tropics, was found on landscaping in urban Dubai. In each case the

butterflies were associated with particular imported ornamental plants on which they lay their eggs in their native homes, and on which their caterpillars develop.

The new butterflies most likely arrived in the UAE with imports of the plants in question, which are very common in public and commercial properties. There is a slim possibility, however, that the Tiny Grass Blue may have expanded its range northward from Oman along with the continued greening of the UAE, or perhaps due to global climate change. Both species could have been present for a number of years and been overlooked until now, because of their close resemblance to better known UAE butterflies – the African Emigrant, *Catopsilia florella* and the Asian Grass Blue, *Zizeeria karsandra*, respectively.

Two other resident butterfly species have reached the UAE with horticultural imports in the modern era. One, the Western Pygmy Blue, *Brephidium exilis*, is originally from dry southwestern North America, but arrived here by the early 1990s. It lives on saltbushes and is now found throughout the

Western Pygmy Blue *Brephidium exilis*



Arabian Gulf. The other, the Cycad Cupid, *Chilades pandava*, from southeast Asia, was first noticed in

Mottled Emigrant *Catopsilia pyranthe*



2014 by the DNHG's Helga Meyer. It lives on landscaped cycads and has since been found at a number of locations in suburban Dubai.

Binish and Gary noticed that the appearance, behavior and seasonality of the Mottled Emigrant differed from what was known about the African

Emigrant. They sought assistance and the identification was provided by international butterfly experts Dubi Benyamini and Ofir Tomer. In the case of the Tiny Grass Blue, Binish recognized it among his own earlier photos after assisting a correspondent with the identification of a photo of the same butterfly from India. The identification was confirmed by a European expert, Zsolt Balint.

Mottled Emigrant eggs



Cycad Cupid *Chilades pandava*



Gary and Binish have earlier collaborated to produce an introductory catalog of UAE spiders and reported another new butterfly species from high in the Hajar Mountains, as well as the return of mudskippers (an amphibious fish) to the UAE after an apparent absence of almost twenty years.

Article by Gary Feulner, photographs by Binish Roobas

Salut Archaeological Site, Oman—a multi-authored report.

Some of the group that visited the above site this month, record their observations and experiences in the following article:

Harold Bekker writes:

Camping, the night before the visit:

Imagine camping under the stars, while being indulged with culinary treats next to a pleasant campfire and at the same time having the awareness being at a site where maybe just underneath the surface, a new discovery will take place.

That's how the Salut Archeological Site visit in Oman started after a first glimpse from a hill top with a restored "temple" and tomb.

Despite the unprecedented high temperature for the time of the year, the next day we had a very interesting and animated tour through what once must have been a bustling city, the city called Salut. Traveling from bronze via iron, pre-Islamic and Islamic time Salut has a lot of unanswered questions. What was the "Snake-Culture" with somehow an admiration for Horned Vipers, was it a trade post, religious site or industrial city?

Clearly situated on a strategic location in Wadi Bahla, Salut must have been something and yet so much to be discovered which requires the passion for archaeology the Italian team from the University of Pisa showed during the walk around. Would there be a link with Saruq Al Hadid in Dubai? Time will tell.

Sonja Lavrenčič writes about ancient water management discovered at the site:

Salut towers – testimonial to Bronze Age water management

Salut towers are important since they are not the usual defence towers, but an elaborate system to manage the rain water and protect the well, as well as a testimony to how water management evolved, adapting to changing climate conditions through centuries.

A total four towers was recorded in Salut. Two are further out of the valley, the third one is outside the Italian Mission to Oman



excavation area and excavated by the French team. With the Italian team we visited the tower inside the Salut Archaeological area.

Partially restored (using the same stones) this Salut tower is dating to Bronze Age. Some measurements were done with the drones to establish the tower's 22 meter diameter surrounded by three concentric ditches and a well inside the central tower. Thanks also to the relatively low walls of the tower and the three concentric, 3.5 m deep ditches, it was soon obvious that the tower did not have a defence function but was built to manage the precious but unsteady water resources, collecting

and storing rain water. There were two water channels from wadi Bahla leading to the ditches as well as one exiting channel, collecting the periodic wadi water as well as protecting the area from floods. The ditches were dug into the wadi bed and the evidence of still water was found inside, as well as deeper pits at the bottom of the ditches that served for soil and dirt deposition, keeping thus the surface water clear.

Other interesting finds are Hindus seal and pottery found at the bottom of the ditches, a testimonial of Bronze Age trading routes with Hindus Valley.

Archaeologists concluded that in Bronze Age the water levels were at the base of the wadi, while later, in the Iron Age, the climate became more arid and, although Salut dwellers attempted to deepen the wells for a further 3 meters, this didn't yield enough results. So a falaj system was developed with a completely new system of water management which brought running water to the site.

* * * * *

John Dayton writes about snake items found at the site:

Snake effigies

Among the intriguing artefacts found at Salut are the small serpent effigies, made of bronze or copper but dating to the Iron Age, similar to those found at Saruq Al Hadid in Dubai, the "Mound of Serpents" at Al-Qusais, and other sites through eastern Arabia to southern Iran. They typically exhibit a jagged curving design. The large numbers of these snakes, which are also depicted in ceramic decoration on pottery, attest to their significance as ritual or totemic objects. An example in copper was found at the hilltop shrine on Jebel Salut, overlooking the main site. Snakes are found in Old World artwork from at least the Bronze Age onward, e.g. in Minoan figurines, where they seem to be associated with the generative powers of the earth. According to the Salut virtual museum, here their context links them with water distribution and fertility. Some at Salut and other locations display triangular heads, sometimes with horns, apparently representing local venomous species such as *Cerastes gasperettii* and *Echis carinatus*. Possibly these images served an apotropaic purpose, in effect co-opting the

powers of the snake for protective ends. More research on snakes in the belief systems of Iron Age Arabia is imperative.

* * * * *

Helga Meyer describes some key people involved in the dig:

Salut Archaeological Dig—members of staff



Filippo opens our eyes to the foundations they have uncovered of dwellings with a waterway and a wide passage—I could only visualize it after his vivid description of where walls and columns once stood.

Greetings are exchanged. The Omani gentleman on the right works on site and restores walls the traditional way with a mixture of clay and straw. He was the only one they could find in Oman, who still knows how to do it.

Helga adds that the group also managed a trip to the 'Beehive Tombs' and a shrine on the ridge of Jebel Salut (see photos below).

Co-authored by Harold Bekker, Sonja Lavrenčič, John Dayton and Helga Meyer



Dubai Natural History Group Programme

Lectures at Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, 7.30 for 8.00pm

- March 4: Dr Saif Al Bedwawi—"British Community at Ras Al Khaimah before and the first few years Post Federation. Dr Miriam and Captain Tim Ash as a case study."
- April 8: Nirmal Rajah—"Endless Forms Most beautiful" - fossil display and presentation.
- May 6: Dr John Burt and Noura Al Mansouri.

Scheduled Field Trips (Members only)

- March 3: Explore Heritage and Nature at the East Coast and Hajar Mountains
- March 9: DNHG Hike to Jebel Jais—the HARD way!
- March 10: Birdwatching at Al Qudra Lakes/Al Marmoom reserve

Field trips details will be circulated to members via e-mail

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When possible, please contact committee members outside office hours

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Contributions

Do you have a field report, unusual finding, interesting news article, book review, amazing photograph, or community news to share?

Send your contributions to:

gazelleeditor@gmail.com

It is most helpful if articles can be sent in Arial font, fully justified in size 10.

DNHG Membership

Membership remains one of Dubai's best bargains at Dh100 for families and Dh50 for singles. Membership is valid from September 2017 to September 2018. You can join or renew at meetings or by sending us a cheque made out to HSBC account number 030100242001. (Please note we cannot cash cheques made out to the DNHG).

Payment can also be made by cash deposit at a bank or ATM, using our IBAN number AE900200000030 100242001. However, this process does not identify you as the payer. If you wish to pay by cash, 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 help 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.

Speech by H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, at the 40th Anniversary Dinner, held in Abu Dhabi on 23rd February, 2018.

Ms. Willing, Members of the Emirates Natural History Group, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This must be an important event since so many of you have come indoors, certainly not your preferred habitat. But this is a celebratory moment that will, I'm sure, inspire you [to venture again into the open air even more determined to engage in the “practice of intentional, focused attentiveness and receptivity to the more-than-human world, guided by honesty and accuracy.”](#) That description of natural history by the ecologist Tom Fleischner captures, it seems to me, the essence of your passion. For forty years you and your predecessors in the Natural History Group have enriched the venerable history of natural history. You have stepped out of air-conditioned comfort and away from ordinary human pursuits. You have concentrated your five senses on the more-than-human world. You have subscribed to the same honesty and accuracy that marked the observations of prominent naturalists around the world. You have joined a small but illustrious band of people consumed by wonder, burning with curiosity, oblivious to hardship, and enchanted by nature.

Your Emirates Natural History Group exhibits the spirit of my favorite naturalist from the past, **Alexander von Humboldt**, a Prussian aristocrat born in same year as Napoleon Bonaparte.



Humboldt benefited humanity far more than Napoleon. It is said that the Prussian king Frederick the Great asked young Alexander if he was going to conquer the world like his namesake Alexander the Great. Young Humboldt answered **“Yes, Sir, but with my head.”** His best biographer, Andrea Wulf, describes the force behind his ambition (and I quote):

At a time when other scientists were searching for universal laws, Humboldt wrote that nature had to be experienced through feelings.

Tonight's stunning exhibition of photographs, videos, and art work arouses such feelings. Our emotions

respond to those images, and we are grateful for them. At the same time, we recognize the reality of the labor that brought forth those images. That labor took most of the artists to the field. Depictions of nature begin in nature. They begin under the sky away from home.

Naturalists are travelers. Humboldt's travels were unbelievable—a five-year journey across the Americas, a one-year journey in the wilds of Venezuela, and a one-year journey across Russia and through Siberia. Humboldt (and again I quote Wulf):

...revolutionized the way we see the natural world. He found connections everywhere.

Most of you too are travelers looking for connections, and you are in a land that is still establishing its natural history. Many of you travelers from other countries and you Emiratis who have traveled to our deserts, mangrove forests, coasts, mountains, salt marshes, seas, and islands have added to the knowledge of our environment and, I am pleased to note, our archaeological past.

Your patient observation of flora and fauna, your desire to understand what you see, and your determination to invite discussion of your findings reminds me of the UAE's most prominent naturalist. He applied your approach to diplomacy. He said that relations among heads of state should be marked by tolerance and dialogue. It is entirely fitting that your group's celebration of its fortieth anniversary is occurring in the Year of Zayed because our nation's founder, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, is, of course, our country's most prominent naturalist. He had a love of nature. Let me repeat his words.

We cherish our environment because it is an integral part of our country, our history and our

heritage. On land and in the sea, our forefathers lived and survived in this environment. They were able to do so only because they recognized the need to conserve it, to take from it only what they needed to live, and to preserve it for succeeding generations.

With God's will, we shall continue to work to protect our environment and our wildlife, as did our forefathers before us. It is a duty, and, if we fail, our children, rightly, will reproach us for squandering an essential part of their inheritance, and of our heritage.

When we became a nation, Sheikh Zayed quickly designated Sir Bani Yas island as a nature reserve and initiated his ambitious '**Greening of the Desert**' program there. And as your own most prominent naturalist, Peter Hellyer, has written, the work of the Emirates Natural History Group contributed to Sheikh Zayed's decision in 1993 to form a federal environmental agency. The country's concern for the environment has steadily intensified so that now our country, led by His Highness the President, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, has established many more environmental organizations to include the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment.

Let me close by saying that you, members of the Emirates Natural History Group, lead the way in educating us all about our more-than-human world. I know that you will continue to venture into the open air determined to observe even the tiniest organisms honestly and accurately. You will find connections. You will help us all to understand and respect our more-than-human world. You will excite in us a love of nature. I admire your passion and am honored to be your patron. Congratulations on your fortieth anniversary!

Thank you.