

GAZELLE

Vol 15 no 12 - December 2000



مجموعة دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي

DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Members' News

Out and about in the Emirates and Oman

Congratulations and thanks to **Geoff Cosson** for sharing with us his report (and specimen) of leopard droppings from the summit ridge of Jebel Wammr, overlooking Dioba. This is more than most people ever see of the Arabian leopard. Leopard droppings were reported from the same area four years ago by Barbara Cougray. The commanding views may make this spot a favourite with man and beast alike.

Committee member and Seashell Recorder **Dr Sandy Fowler** recently celebrated the big '5-0-0' - the 500th determined entry in his UAE seashell collection. Sandy is characteristically modest about this collection, and frets more about the specimens that remain unidentified, as well as those that remain to be found. However, he celebrated by going out and collecting number 501.

For the National Day weekend, **Geoff Cosson** and **Gary Feulner** joined forces for a look 'underneath' South Eastern Arabia, at the Precambrian rocks that underlie the Jebel Akhdar in Oman. These include glacial sediments formed some 600 million years ago when Arabia was situated near the South Pole, as well

as limestones formed by layered algal heads called stromatolites, indicative of a warmer climate. All of these rocks were deformed, uplifted, eroded and then submerged and covered some 300 million years later by the thick carbonates of the Jebel Akhdar, cousins to the rocks of the Musandam Peninsula. An additional weekend attraction was a visit to an eyrie-like but idyllic mountain village with grape arbours, date, fig, peach, pomegranate and apricot trees, as well as beans, onions and radishes. Their guide for the weekend was Samir Hanna's Field Guide to the Geology of Oman.

Volunteers Needed!

A number of Committee members will be retiring early in the New Year and we shall need volunteers to replace them, at or before the Annual General Meeting in March 2001. Among the positions that will be coming open are Treasurer and Newsletter Editor. We also continue to need a second Field Trip Coordinator. If you have an interest in these or any other Committee positions, or if you wish to discuss the possibility, please contact either Chairman Gary Feulner, Vice Chairman Valene Chalmers, or the relevant Committee member.

The DNHG has functioned as well

as it has because the work has been shared and everyone has done his/her part. For several years we have had 150 or more paid memberships, amounting to some 225 individuals. This is an indication that we are doing things that people find interesting, appealing and valuable.

Your help is needed in order to allow the group to continue its current level of activities and to expand them consistent with member interest. The group will always be what we make of it. Ideas are ever welcome, but the time and effort of volunteers are necessary to see them through.

Season's Greetings

to all our
members



This month's Contributors

The Editor would like to thank the following for their reports:

Peter Cunningham
Dr Raza Khan
Gary Feulner
Dr Sandy Fowler
Christine Namour



Jebel Rawdah Hike
Friday 5 January

Helen Emery's hike will be up Jebel Rawdah. The hike is demanding and will involve scrambling over big boulders. It will be hot as there is no wind in the gulleys route. Participants need to be physically fit. Take 2 x 1.5 litre bottles of water, hat, sun lotion, and wear good boots.

Meeting at the Hilton covered car park at 7.30am sharp. Please note that people should be early as Helen will not wait.

A beginner's guide to the Fish Souq
Friday 12 January

Are you unsure what to buy? Do you need help selecting recipes to make use of local fish? Are you paying the right price? Come along and see what's on offer and how best to buy.

Meet at Mary's house at 8.30am for coffee and exchange of recipes, or at the Fish Souq at 9.30am. Contact Mary Beardwood on 04 - 3422546 email: mikemary@amirelas.net.ae

Canoeing in the Mangroves at Khor Kalba
Friday 26 January

Dr Reza Khan has kindly agreed to accompany a party to Khor Kalba where the company Daser Rangers provide canoes to explore the mangroves. Dr Khan is the author of indigenous trees of the UAE and the curator of Dubai Zoo. He has a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm for all aspects of natural history.

Contact Mary Beardwood 04 3422546 or Fi Skennerton 050 9243028 to sign up. Cost 190 dirhams per person which includes soft drinks and use of canoe for approximately 3 hours. Trip limited to 30 people. Payment must be made in advance. Meeting place: Fujairah Hilton 9.30am or Khor Kalba 10am.

Wadi Nature Walk
Friday 19 January

Gary Feulner will lead a full-day nature walk in a wadi in the Hajar Mountains. Suitable for energetic novices. Elevation change will be small but there are no trails, the ground is often rough and uneven underfoot, and participants will be on foot for up to 8 hours. Bring boots or sturdy shoes, minimum 3 litres of water, lunch, hat, sun cream, camera, binoculars, and hand lens, etc. 4WD preferred.

Depart Dubai 7:00am sharp, estimated return c.6:30pm. Maximum 20 people. For further information, sign-up and logistics, see Gary at the Jan 14 DNHC meeting or telephone: 330 8600 (office) or 308-5570 (home).

New Site for Rare Pond Snail

Bulnus wrighti is the rarest of the UAE's native freshwater snails. It represents a genus that may have originated in Arabia, although it is now centred in Africa. It has attracted particular attention because the genus is a potential host for schistosome parasites and B. wrighti itself is susceptible to most schistosome strains. As a result, it is used for medical research: specimens were collected for this purpose in September from one of two known sites in the northern Hajar Mountains.

Coincidentally, a third site was discovered in the Ru'us Al-Jibal only last month, in Wadi Naqab, just within the borders of the UAE, by a determined DNHC party consisting of Barbara Couldrey, Nick Hephner, Peter Cunningham and Gary Feulner. The site is a long pool carved in bedrock, more than 2 metres deep when full, but now reduced to a small gravel puddle the size of a drinking cup. Shells, but no live snails, were found.

Report by Gary Feulner

Clam shrimps found at Hatta, too

Molly McQuarrie of the ENHG in Abu Dhabi read our reports in the Gazette about clam shrimps being found in mountain pools after recent rains in the mountains NE of Al-Ain. While showing off the Hatta area to visitors, Molly managed to find more clam shrimps in a small ephemeral pool in silt beside the main wadi, just below Hatta village. Although one may question Molly's judgment as a tour guide, this observation extends the known range of these organisms locally (it is the northernmost report) and renews the question whether the arrival of clam shrimps is recent, or whether observers have been missing them all these years. They were first reported from Jebel Hafet in 1999.



Our Next Speaker

Gary Feulner has been Chairman of the Dubai Natural History Group since March 1995. A lawyer by profession, he has an academic background in natural science (geology and biology) and has done geologic field work in Italy, Zambia and Ecuador. Since 1986 he has been a regular weekend and holiday explorer of the UAE, afoot in the mountains, deserts and, in recent years, the khors and mangrove swamps. He has published articles on various aspects of the flora, fauna and geology of the Emirates, including countryside surveys of wadi fish and freshwater snails, and has reported a number of plants and animals new to the UAE, among them wild olive trees and various other mountain plants, freshwater snails, fish and damselflies.



Hajar Mountain Nature Hike

To our chairman's disappointment this nature hike was more hike than nature, because the scattered showers in September and October were not enough to make a great difference to the plant life in many areas. The plants may be dusted off, but most are not revived. The hiking area seemed to have received only a sprinkle of rain. One of the few plants seen in flower was the lavender, *Lavandula subnuda*, which follows a strategy of "firing" its row of buds one-at-a-time, so there's always a blossom - but after only one - on display. Another was a lone specimen of the wispy mountain morning glory, *Convolvulus virgatus* perhaps fooled by the rain, which aimed three or four white, funnel-shaped flowers towards the sun.

At the start of the hike was a natural spring and pool which previous field trips have visited amidst lush vegetation of oleanders, wadi grass, reeds and rushes. Sadly, all this had been cut and burned to facilitate the construction of a concrete dam, used as a water supply for new plantations, some two kilometres downstream. A few toads had survived the destruction, but apparently no wadi fish.

From their goal on the summit of Jebel Bulaydati, the group could see the surrounding area, including the Masafi, the Masafi-Fujairah Road and the plantations springing up along it, the white metamorphic rocks to the north, the profile of Jebel Masafi. On top of Jebel Bulaydah a lone dragonfly paid a visit, the pan-tropical Globe Skimmer (*Pantala flavescens*), a strong migrant.

From the ridge-top return route there were distant views of a group of four large, soaring raptors. At a guess, based on colour pattern, they were probably Booted Eagles.

To Gary's great surprise, one of the most popular photo opportunities seemed to be the mummy of a dead donkey, still resting its head on a

grassy pillow.

This was a rigorous hike where the ascent seemed to go on for ever and the initial descent on loose scree was perhaps a lot faster than planned. It might have been easier to sit on a large cushion and slide down. Everyone enjoyed the day, and probably had the best night's sleep this year!

Special mention goes to Gary Feulner for ignoring the moans and groans behind him, Richard Dennis for the most spring in his step (with Alan Buck as a runner-up, at least downhill), Salah A Halyon for the best shortcuts, Paul Callaghan for the longest nap at lunch, Gary Harden for the most stylish hat, and "Iron Mike" O'riegan for best storytelling, with his recollections of DN-FC field trips past.

Report by Gary Feulner with a little help from the editor

Blue-tailed lizard drinking water

We were out in Wadi Wurayyah earlier this year. We drove our 4WD vehicle up to the end of the wadi bottom track, past the waterfall. It was 9 in the morning when we started looking for signs of animals and noting the plant cover of the area around. Almost the entire vegetation cover of the area was dry barring a few *Tephrosia*, *Gynacarpus* and *Euphorbia lanica*. Reed and grass species grew along the wadi where there was water around. *Dysoxylum indicum* leaves had a full layer of wax and when we removed it the leaf appeared brittle.

Most of the wadi was dry except for the portions where the wadi had run deep through a very narrow gorge that is unapproachable from the top-side of the wadi. At the end of the track there was a fairly big pool still receiving little water from a feebly flowing stream. There were several toads but no tadpoles and many

wadi fish *Garra barreimiae*. There was also a swarm of whirligig beetles, diving beetles, dragonflies and larvae of both beetles and dragonflies. Many snails had accumulated on a mat of algae, partly submerged in the pool.

Close to the pool several pieces of small rocks remained misplaced due to the activities of humans or vehicular movements. Water seeped close to such stones. We saw a Blue-tailed lizard (*Lacerta cyanura*), a species endemic to the Hajar Mountains, walking by the side of the pool. It came close to one of the upturned stones, slowly went at its side where there was just a bit of water and seemed to sip! At this time I could go within a metre of the lizard. After a minute or so the lizard started moving away from the stone and literally ran from there to the steep side of the wadi and disappeared completely.

When we first saw the lizard we thought it was looking for insects. But this is not its usual haunt for searching food, as it prefers dry rocky areas. We followed it for over 10 minutes when it covered more than 5 metres before reaching the particular stone that had little water at its base.

The place from where it drank (:) water was shadowed. So, I could not be absolutely sure that it was sipping water. But the position I got in my picture reveals it was doing something that could be similar to drinking water. Also, the way it vanished from the site indicated that it did not come to the side of the pool looking for food. This may seem unremarkable, but it is common for arid region reptiles to satisfy all or most of their fluid needs from their food, without actually drinking. For example, there are no reported observations of mountain agamas or geckos drinking water.

Report by Dr Reza Khan





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

Land Snails in Fox Droppings

Examining the contents of one of a number of samples of Blandford's fox droppings he'd collected from various mountain sites around the UAE, Peter Cunningham was surprised to find no fewer than 8 small (5mm) land snail shells of three different species. Peter had never encountered this phenomenon before, nor had a European expert who was consulted.

The most likely explanation is that the fox had eaten a prey species or other food item that had run, fallen or been washed into a patch of soil and debris where the tiny shells had been washed and accumulated as flotsam, and that the fox had consumed the shells inadvertently. It is almost certainly not energy efficient for a fox to seek out and consume 5 mm snails. Alternative theories were not lacking, however. Shortly thereafter, Stephen Green found a small snail shell caught in a bit of hair from a dead goat and suggested impishly that the fox in question might have eaten a goat with snails attached.

Intriguing that the snail shells (made of calcium carbonate, CaCO₃) passed through the fox intact. This was unexpected since calcium carbonate dissolves readily in an acid environment like that of a mammalian digestive tract. Peter Cunningham suggests this may be due to the fox's short digestion time, implying a short residence time in the digestive tract for material consumed. But if the shells were not dissolved, could the snails themselves have survived if they had been ingested alive? And if so, is this a potentially unappreciated means of dispersal

for land snails?

The episode also suggests a future for forensic malacology. It was possible to use the snail shells to identify the concerned fox dropping as having been collected in the Ru'us Al-Jibal (as confirmed by Peter's notes), since two of the three species are found only there and not further south in the UAE.

Report by Gary Faulner

"Springtime" in Oman

National Day weekend saw Gary Faulner and Geoff Coason hiking to the top of the Saiq Plateau (2400m) in the eastern Jebel Akhdar, overlooking the Ghubrah Bowl (Wadi Mstal) between Nakhl and Rustaq. This area supports permanent springs where the relatively porous carbonate rocks of the plateau overlie impermeable older rocks. It also had healthy autumn rains this year.

This was reflected in a weekend count of 13 species of butterflies, including a Yellow Fanny and abundant Giant Skippers and Desert Orange Tips, both species rarely seen in the UAE.

The steep, north-facing slopes inside the bowl, where they are not vertical cliffs, support a veritable forest of trees such as wild olive or 'utm (*Olea cf. europaea*), elm (*Sagorotia spiciflora*), boob (*Monotheba buxifolia*) and others. They benefit, presumably, not only from subsurface water but also from the shade of the escarpment.

On top of the plateau the vegetation is much sparser but the views are grand for 360 degrees, one can see north to the coast and west all the way to the radar dome atop Jebel Shams. One floral constant at higher elevations was the bright yellow flowering *Euryops plinifolius*, a tall woody member of the daisy family.

Report by Gary Faulner

Backyard Terrarium

Fascinated by an epidemic of amphisbaenids (legless lizards) in a neighbour's yard after recent rains, Christine Namour searched her own backyard and turned up not only an amphisbaenid, but also thread snakes (*Leptotyphlops* spp., true reptiles that look like spaghetti).

Under rocks, she found the small but very successful little snail *Allopeas gracilis*, which can also be found in grass and on the base of mossy trees. The shell of *A. gracilis* is a tall thin spiral typically from 0.5 to 1.0 cm long, and the aperture is U-shaped without any lip. Alive, the shell usually appears two-tone -- yellow in front and brown at the tip. The animal itself is pale yellow. *A. gracilis* is believed to be a native of the New World tropics but is now a cosmopolitan resident of the tropics and subtropics worldwide, due to dispersal by man and agriculture. It requires moisture, however, and is not found in the wild in the UAE.

Christine's garden pond, which filled up after recent rains, now sports a small population of dragonfly larvae, and adult dragonflies congregate in view of the back porch. She plans to keep the pond topped up and landscaped so she and the children can continue to watch the action, which has included good examples of mating, egg-laying and territorial behaviour.

Summer Palace Challenge "Left" Open

The US presidential race is still open as of this writing, and so is the challenge to find the upside-down left hand print on the stucco walls of the Summer Palace complex in Wadi Hayl. Our "manual" recount -- by examination of the photographic evidence -- shows that the latest claimants were premature: the upside-down print they recorded was a right hand print, not a left.





Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

- Reptiles - Dr Reza Khan
res 344 8283
off 344 0462
fax (all) 349 9437
- Archaeology - Robert Lovelace
res 342 0497
lovelace@emirates.net.ae
- Birds - Mike & Jill Oates
res 335 4066
oatesj@emirates.net.ae
- Seashells - Sandy Fowler
res 344 2243
fax 344 2243
- Astronomy - Lamej El Kef
res 06-583 003
off 06 247 958
- Geology - Gary Fowler
res 406 4570
fax 330 3550
- Insects - Valerie Chalmers
res 349 4016,
fax 398 3727
- Molluscs - Gary Fowler
(see above)
- Mammals - Mirrijke Jongbloed
res 345 7963
fax 345 7963
mjjongbloed@emirates.net.ae
- Marine Life - Lamej El Kef
(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 *Gazelle* editor, so new information can be shared with all our readers.

—SHELL— —REPORT—



Please send your shell reports
to Sandy Fowler

Shelling Report October/ November 2000

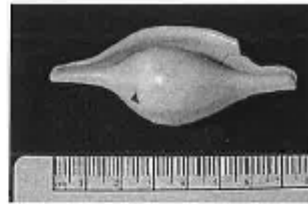
Beryl and I checked out Rams beach on 27 October. It was in a terrible state. Garbage everywhere and almost no shells. Patricia and Robert Rosetti had the same experience the week before. We left in disgust after 2 hours.

I reported earlier taking a shell from a Khor Fakkan beach to the Natural History Museum in June this year. It was identified as *Latirus tumulus*, not recorded before in UAE waters. I've found 3 more since, on the same beach, the latest on the DNHG field trip of 10 November 2000.

Field Trip 10 November

A good turnout of shelling stalwarts turned up at the beach north of Khor Fakkan, with an unlucky twosome undeterred by a puncture in Masafi Weather conditions, a perfect tide and a good mix of shells should have let everyone collect at least 50 different species. I was lucky enough to find a specimen of *Volva vulva* previously unrecorded in Eastern Arabia. With both ends of a beach to check out, the group quickly fragmented, and I wasn't able to check everyone's finds individually. If anyone wants help with identification, call me at home and I'll be glad to help if I can.

I checked out Hamriya beach this month. It's an easy 45-minute drive from Dubai. There was a good mix of shells (I identified about 40 separate species), and I was fascinated to see *Terebralia* embedded in rocks below the high water mark. Is this why we're still finding them on the beaches? Are they truly extinct within the Gulf? The hunt for live ones goes on!



Photograph of *Volva vulva*

One or two people have been asking for another shell workshop. Where interested shellers can get together at my home, compare finds, and maybe get those stubborn shells identified. I provisionally hope to hold one in early spring. If you are interested call me and put your name down for it; I'll contact you when a date is fixed.

Report by Sandy Fowler

Bird Reporting

Colin Richardson is chasing up bird reports to prepare the annual Emirates Bird Report and tidy up EBRC files. He would be grateful if those people, who are out birdwatching on a regular basis, would be prepared to fill in forms recording the birds that they have observed. Forms are available from our bird recorder Michael Oates - contact number and e-mail address can be found on this page.

UAE Consumes Natural Resources

According to local newspaper reports, the UAE was recently ranked number three in the world in terms of per capita resource use, after the United States and Singapore. In particular, the UAE was said to have a per capita water use of 500 litres (approximately 125 gallons) per day. No figures were given for how this use is distributed or for how much is desalinated water, a renewable resource (but ultimately dependent for energy on consumption of non-renewable hydrocarbons), versus unsustainable pumping of groundwater.



Tahr on Jebel Hafit

During a hike up to the summit wadi's on Jebel Hafit during October I witnessed a rare event that made the unusual heat for this time of the year more bearable. An adult male Tahr emerged unexpectedly out of a gully approximately 100m ahead of me. Recognizing it immediately I knew how privileged I was to see this rare ungulate in its natural environment.

Arabian Tahr, *Hemitragus jayakari*, are endemic to the Arabian Peninsula and occur in mountainous terrain throughout the eastern UAE and northern Oman, from the Musandam in the north, to the mountains bordering the Wahiba Sands in the south. The well-known Arabian explorer, Wilfred Thesiger, first documented them from Jebel Hafit in '548 and mentions them being regularly hunted by local Bedu during that time. According to a study conducted on this species in Oman in the late 70's, the Arabian Tahr world population did not exceed 2000 animals. A helicopter survey of Jebel Hafit in 1980 sighted only 5 animals. During the 80's they were thought to be extinct on Jebel Hafit as no sightings were reported. Confirmed sightings are infrequent and they are classified as "critically endangered" in the UAE (i.e. "facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future").

This little known species is in direct competition with domestic and feral goats for the available food. They are highly selective feeders mainly utilizing the growth tips and fruits of certain shrubs. The carrying capacity of mountains such as Jebel Hafit is generally low and the extra pressure of hunting (now illegal although not enforced) and excessive goat numbers could lead to the demise of this species in the wild if something drastic is not done to protect them.

The individual I encountered was typical of males of the species with its well-developed forequarters, prominent facial stripe, thick slightly curved horns and dark-brown shaggy coat (A previous sighting I

had of a female in the Central Hajar Mountains had an overall slender build and "plonder" appearance). Initially it was unaware of me as I had the wind in my favour, and had approached the rise I was on with care. As soon as I moved to get my camera from my backpack it sensed me and lopec off - not fleeing in fear - up the mountain towards some inaccessible cliffs where I could not follow. As I was not expecting to stumble upon Tahr, I was unprepared, but did eventually (after having to change lenses in haste) get two photos of the Tahr just before it disappeared over the crest. Unfortunately the distance involved as well as midday lighting, did not make for a great photo and I am now trying to get the subject enlarged. Although not detracting from the actual encounter of observing Tahr at such close quarters, one thing I did however learn is to always be prepared for the unexpected - next time!

Report by Peter Cunningham
plc@emirates.net.ae

Facts about Bats

Orchid Awards

Graham Giles of Buckinghamshire, who was a regular at DNHG events during his visits to study the dragonflies and damselflies of the UAE, is also an orchid fancier. In the UAE he sought out *Epipactis veratrifolia*, our only orchid, and on recent trips to Cyprus and Canada he has done more of the same.

In Canada he waxed poetic over the Calypso and *Cypripedium* orchids and wrote of laying on the ground under plastic in the pouring rain to photograph a magnificent display of hundreds of *Arethusa* in an acid bog. His fortune paid off, as two of his orchid photos from Canada and Cyprus won firsts in the Hardy Orchid Society's annual competition a few weeks ago. These photos can now be seen on the society's website --

www.drover.demon.co.uk/HOS/

Facts about Bats



Did you know:

- Nearly 1000 kinds of bats account for almost a quarter of all mammal species and most are highly beneficial.
- A single bat can catch up to 800 mosquitoes in just 1 hour.
- Agricultural plants such as bananas, mangoes, dates and certain figs rely on bats for pollination and seed dispersal.
- Bat droppings in caves support whole ecosystems of unique organisms.
- Contrary to popular belief, bats are not blind, do not become entangled in human hair, bite only in self-defence, and seldom transmit disease to other animals.
- Bats are exceptionally vulnerable to extinction, in part because they are the slowest reproducing mammals on earth for their size with most producing only one young per year.
- Only one species of "vampire bat" occurs in south and Central America and does not suck blood, but makes an incision and then laps up the blood.
- Very little scientific work has been conducted on bats from the UAE with only 8 species ever recorded although it is suspected that many more may occur.

I am busy doing some work on bat distribution in the UAE and would appreciate information regarding the following:

- Bat roosts (i.e. caves/crevasses/cellings, etc.)
- Bat gatherings (i.e. frequently used feeding areas or where seen often)
- Bat records (i.e. 16 Mouse-tailed Bats seen roosting at Aboul Fort on 15 March 1999, etc.)

Any information regarding bats from the UAE & neighbouring Oman areas could be useful. Any dead specimens and skulls, etc. could also be used for identification purposes.

Report by Peter Cunningham
plc@emirates.net.ae



	name	tel home	tel office	fax
Chairman	Gary Faulner messages: 306 5300	308 5570	330 3600	330 3550
Vice Chairman	Valerie Chalmers	349 4816	no calls pls	398 3727
Treasurer	Peter Griffin e.mail: griff@emirates.net.ae	394 0342	394 0342	394 0352
Membership Secretary	Fi Skennerton e.mail: skenna1@mk.dubai.co.ae	050-6243028		355 7180
Speaker Co-ordinator	Beryl Comar e.mail: comar@emirates.net.ae	344 2243		344 2243
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Mary Beardwood e.mail: mikemary@emirates.net.ae	342 2546		344 0376
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Fi Skennerton e.mail: skennart@mkidubai.co.ae	050-6243028		355 7180
Newsletter Editor	Anna Griffin e.mail: griff@emirates.net.ae	394 0342	394 0342	394 0352
Pub lsher	Peter van Amsterdam e.mail: pvana@emirates.net.ae	269 2519	335 5495	2691 654
Librarian	Deanno White e.mail: dgwhite@emirates.net.ae	344 1510		
Sales Assistant:			Volunteer required	
Chief Engineer	James Pardoe	266 6427		
Member at Large	Sandy Fowler	344 2243	no calls pls	344 2243
Postmaster	Gail Gordon	349 9679		349 9979
Membership Assistant	Barbara Hayward	304 5691	269 0029	338 7875

Caralluma in Flower

With few exceptions, the showers that fell around the UAE in September, October and early November have so far made little visible difference to the parched landscape. It's nice to report, therefore, that at least a few *Caralluma arabica* have been seen in flower, in the east (by Geoff Cosson) and west (by Barbara Cauldrey) of the Ras Al-Jibal. *C. arabica* is a succulent, leafless milkweed that is easily mistaken for a cactus. The inflorescence is a globular head of many small, deep wine-red flowers which are said to smell like rotting meat.

A second *Caralluma* species with yellow flowers is found occasionally in the area to the SW of Fujairah. There are no true cactuses native to the Old World, but the prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia* sp.)

has been introduced in a small number of synanthropic environments.

Snail Call

A reminder, especially for new members: your unwanted garden snails and slugs are wanted for scientific study and an accounting of the terrestrial snails of the UAE. All specimens will be gratefully accepted by Chairman Gary Faulner, and contributors will be kept informed of progress and pedigrees. Suburban gardens are home to several native Arabian snails, but also to a number of introduced species. There have already been a few surprises. Dead shells are preferred; we'll follow up if you've got something unusual. It's easy. Just bag 'em and tag 'em! Please remember to record the location and the habitat, as well as your name, the date, and any remarks.

DNHG Membership and Renewal

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

You may join or renew at meetings or send a cheque to Fi Skennerton, DNHG Membership Secretary, PO Box 29561, 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.



GAZELLE

Dubai Natural History Group Programme

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

Jan 14 Introduction to the Natural History of the Mountains of the UAE
- Gary Feulner

Feb 4 Archaeology—speaker to be announced

Field Trips (DNHG members only, please).

Jan 5 Hike up Jebel Rawdan with Helen Emery

Jan 12 Beginners' Guide to the Fian Souq in Dubai
with Mary Beardwood

Jan 19 Wadi Nature Walk with Gary Feulner

Further details about the following two field trips will be found in the January edition of Gazelle

Feb 9 Nature walk with Valerie Chalmers in Wadi Qattab

Feb 22/23 Explore the Tombs at Baitan Qudus, camp overnight and walk the ridge
with Peter van Amsterdam

Mrs Valerie CHALMERS
PO Box 12070
Dubai
UAE



From: DNHG, PO Box 9234, Dubai, UAE