



GAZELLE

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مجموعة دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي



Large larvae of *Oryctes rhinoceros* – 6cm long
Spotted & measured by Anne Millen in Sri Lanka
See Members' News (Page 7) for more

Inside this month

- Page 2:** Upcoming Field Trips: Nestle Bottling Plant, Project WET, Our Next Speaker (Nov)
Page 3: Upcoming Field Trips: Sharjah Archaeology Trip, Ecology of the Desert – Dubai/Abu Dhabi Border
Page 4: Upcoming Field Trips: Photography Workshop
Page 5: Field Trip Reports: Pivot Fields Bird watching
Page 6: Field Trip Reports: Reptiles spotted Jan-Mar 2012
Page 7: Recorders, Members' News, Contributions
Page 8: Programme, Committee Members, Membership

Contributions

The editor would like to thank the following for their reports and contributions:

Gary Feulner
Sonja Lavrencic
Valerie Chalmers
Tamsin Carlisle
Anne Millen
Ajmal Hasan

Nestlé's Bottling Plant Visit

Date: Sat 17 Nov 2012

Length: 2hrs

Availability: Limited to 20 people. Booking required to secure your place

Contact: Sonja at lavson@gmail.com

The "production" and quality of water in Dubai and UAE is always an interesting topic that raises a lot of questions, concerns and usually polarizes opinions about the water that we are using and drinking in the UAE.

After two successful visits to the water bottling plant last year, Nestlé Waters kindly agreed to host another visit on Nov 17th where you will have the opportunity to see how the water in Dubai is treated and bottled.

You will also get the chance to address all your water concerns and questions with experts of the water business. The 2-hour factory visit will take place on Saturday morning Nov 17 and is limited to 20 people. To secure your place, please contact Sonja at lavson@gmail.com.

Project WET – Water Education for Teachers

Date: TBC

Availability: Limited to 20 people. Booking required to secure your place.

Contact: Sonja @ lavson@gmail.com

Members of DNHG will have the opportunity to participate in one-day workshop Project WET. The aim of the workshop is to enable teachers and educators to convey the message of importance of water conservation to children aged 8 to 12 years through 10 ready-to-teach fun game-like activities.

The workshop will be free of charge and will be limited to a maximum of 20 participants. Please look out for more information in the next Gazelle.

Our Next Speaker

Date: Sun 4 November 2012

Speaker: Geoff Sanderson

Topic: The 'B' Word: Beauty in Design

About Geoff: A landscape architect and horticulturist with over 20 years experience in the MENA region, Geoff is currently advising the Saudi government on the upgrading of public realm in all Saudi municipalities.

Prior to this he had a significant role in the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council's Public Realm Design Strategy. Geoff has a deep interest in the natural history of the region, in particular the plants of cultivation and the contemporary application of cultural traditions in the design of urban places.

About the topic: Beauty is a fundamental need in the human species but with the current trend towards sustainability in its multiple forms it has become obvious that beauty in design is being largely overlooked.

Contemporary art, buildings and landscape seem to have forgotten one of the principal forces behind design. A quick Google search for 'beautiful buildings' comes up with a strange assortment, few of which are really pleasing to the eye let alone "beautiful".

Landscape design is just as bad, using terms like 'low maintenance', 'robust', 'shady'; almost every adjective except beautiful.

My approach is to surmise the science of beauty and how to understand its secrets. This talk will be an opportunity to debate the issue.

Archaeology Trip - Sharjah

Date: Sat 24 Nov 2012

Availability: Limited to 20 people.

What to bring: Water (2 litres minimum), Lunch, Hat or other sun protection. Optional: Camera, binoculars, notepad/pen

Special Instructions: Please come with a full tank of fuel. You can get petrol at Madam for your return trip.

Contact: MaryAnne Pardoe

maryannpardoe@yahoo.co.uk

The day will begin at Sharjah's world-class Archaeology Museum where we will explore the rich heritage of the ancient inhabitants of this desert region from about 5000BC to 611AD. The museum is laid out in time zones that correspond to the three sites we will later visit.

At mid-morning we will travel a short distance to the ancient site of Muweilah, close to Sharjah Airport. This was a walled settlement with well-defined houses, occupied from about 1000BC until 600BC when it was destroyed by fire. The gold museum emblem was found here.

Afterwards we will drive about one hour, through Al Dhaid and on south to Mleiha. We will stop for a picnic lunch in the Cultural Park surrounding the ancient tombs and then cross the road to see the reconstructed Fort. (If time permits, we will also visit Hellenic burial sites that have yielded impressive artefacts.)

Our final stop is 15 minutes further along to see some of the many tombs at Jebel Al Buhais, the UAE's oldest mainland archaeological site. This area was a major spring camp for nomads for about 1000 years and a burial ground for significant numbers of their dead.

We aim to finish mid-afternoon and will return via Madam on to the E44 for onward travel to Dubai.

Ecology of the Desert

Date: Fri 9 Nov 2012

Length: 8 hrs. approx. (9am – 5.30pm)

Availability: Limited to 20 people (7 cars)

What to bring: Footwear for walking in sand, Daypack or hip belt for equipment, lunch, hat or other sun protection. Optional: camera binoculars, magnifying glass

Special Instructions: Please come with a full tank of fuel.

Meeting place: Dubai World Trade Centre Apartments (in front of Block C) - **9am sharp** [Alternate rendezvous: 9:30 am at roadside restaurant on the right (west) of Dubai/Al-Ain Road, immediately after the flyover for Hatta /Al-Hibab/Jebel Ali road]

Route: Dubai/Al-Ain Road to Lisaili:

Endurance Village Road to Saih Sidirah Rd.;

Saih Sidirah Rd to Al-Faya Truck Rd; return

by Dubai/Abu Dhabi Border Rd to Faqa

Contact: Sonja @ lavson@gmail.com

Gary Feulner will lead this introduction to the ecology of the white sand desert and intermittent plains between the Arabian Gulf coast and the deeper red sands of Al-Ain, Liwa and the Empty Quarter.

Visit diverse 'wild' sites accessible from the Endurance Village Road, the Al Faya Truck Road and the Dubai/Abu Dhabi border road, to examine the flora and fauna (plants, lizards, gazelle, hare, insects et al.) plus changes wrought by development in this area over the past 20 years.

This trip will consist of driving punctuated with short nature walks (up to one hour) at several selected sites. [4WD may be required for short final access at one site, but we will be able to accommodate 2WD participants.]

To sign up contact Sonja: lavson@gmail.com

Photography Workshop

Date: 8-12 Jan 2013

Length: 5 days

Availability: Limited to 12 people.

Contact: Roberta roberta.lattuada@fasso.it

Roberta Lattuada is organizing a Photo workshop exclusively for DNHG members. The workshop will be led by Dutch photo-professional Michiel Fokkema. Michiel is a professional photographer, co-founder and owner of the International Photo School in Rotterdam. He has already led a successful workshop in Dubai last year for a non-profit photo club.

The photo workshop will consist of three successive evenings sessions (Tues Jan 8 – Thurs Jan 10) followed by a two-day weekend field trip. The evening sessions will be held from 6pm to 9pm. Attendees will travel outside Dubai for the two-day field workshop (Jan 11/12).



Agenda: Starting with a Basic Technique and Camera Handling approach and building up in the following days to more challenging topics, including the use of Post Production techniques (Lightroom and Basic Photoshop). All participants will receive a PDF with the Presentation on Camera Technique prior to the workshop in order to have time to prepare for the first day Q&A discussion with Michiel. No pre-knowledge or special equipment is needed for this workshop; your usual camera will do. Michiel will personalize the workshop and follow/advise each participant individually as much as possible.

The number of participants will be limited to a maximum of 12.

The total cost of the workshop will be approx. AED600 per person including all the sessions but excluding the cost of travel (petrol), food and lodging during the weekend field trip. This is a packaged deal; sessions cannot be bought separately. The field trip will be open only to the participants of the workshop. Spouses/families can join the trip but will not be able to participate in the workshop.

The group will be closed on November 30th or when full – whichever happens first. If interested please contact Roberta at: roberta.lattuada@fasso.it for more detail information.

Pivot Fields Birdwatching Tour

My taxi driver was puzzled.

"Madame, there is nothing here," he insisted. "On this side, municipal sewage treatment plant. Other side, only farm."

"The farm sounds right," I said, just as I caught sight of an early morning gaggle of *Homo twitchensis*, clearly identifiable by their khaki shorts, floppy sun-hats and dangling binoculars.

Inside the gate of what turned out to be a large expanse of grass and reeds, interspersed with large mounds of compost, softened by regular sprinklings from several enormous pivoting irrigation machines, master birder Neil Tovey quickly pointed out various subspecies of yellow wagtail, as well as white wagtail, crested larks, hoopoes, bank mynahs and, as special treats, a shrike and emerald jewel of a little green bee-eater.

Next, for me, came the highlight of the trip, as Neil drew our attention to a group of long-billed, brown-mottled snipe in front of a manure pile in the middle distance.

Next up, as we progressed around the field, were common European bee-eaters and doves perched on the transverse supports of the pivots, cattle egrets in the long grass and various



Cattle Egrets spotted at Pivot Fields 1

species of waders around the well watered manure piles.

The waders included red-wattled lapwings, one of which appeared to be nesting, black-winged stints towering above the others on long pink legs, ringed and Kentish plovers and ruff, none of which showed any sign of the namesake ruff of neck feathers worn by breeding males.

Other visitors, seen mostly in flight, included sand grouse and a solitary small duck, possibly a teal or gadwall, as well as two or three impressively large grey heron.

Every so often a cloud of doves and mynahs would rise into the air, signaling a threat from raptors. At least two marsh harriers and a kestrel were spotted hunting.

Our visit was rounded out by sightings of a little brown warbler in the reeds, a short-toed lark in the meadow and a spotted flycatcher, which obligingly posed atop a post.

A fellow DNHG member obligingly offered me a lift home - just as well, as taxis seemed to be on the endemically endangered list!

Tamsin Carlisle

Report on Reptiles Jan-Mar 2012

January 2012

In early January, I paid a visit to the Umm Al Quwain mangroves, finding and photographing three specimens of short-snouted lizards (*Mesalina brevirostris*) that were on the sabkha plains. It was the first time I saw these beautiful reptiles so I was extremely pleased.

Although extremely shy, the specimen allowed me to get close enough to take a picture after I spent more than 20 minutes with it trying to win its trust. I only go around with a macro lens so you can understand my dilemma.

During the DNHG Wadi Wurrayah trek, a fellow trip member found the Oman saw-scaled viper (*Echis omanensis*) opposite almost immediately upon beginning our trek. It was very docile and I was pleasantly surprised as its cousin, the Sindh saw-scaled viper, is quite the opposite being very feisty. Later towards the end of the day, I explored one of the wadi veins where I came across a bar-tailed semaphore gecko (*Pristurus celerrimus*) and the very pretty blue-tailed Oman lizard (*Omanosaura jayakari*) opposite.



January: Oman saw-scaled viper



January: Oman blue-tailed lizard

February 2012

On routine weekend desert treks in Sharjah, I found the omnipotent Schmidt's fringe-toed lizard in good numbers along with Baluch ground geckos, Eastern sand skinks and Arabian toad-headed agamas (pictured bottom right) to a lesser extent. I also found a Red Sea leaf-toed gecko in Karama, Dubai on a sandy patch just opposite the metro station.

March 2012

Within Sharjah city, Rock semaphore geckos can be found in good numbers hiding between crevices in cement barriers and walls of buildings. This is the most abundant daytime gecko that I have encountered in the UAE. They're practically everywhere if you go looking for them. During a late March Sharjah desert trek, I found a very pretty Arabian toad-headed agama too.



February: Arabian toad-headed agama

Ajmal Hasan

Watch out for further reptile spottings in next month's Gazelle

Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

Reptiles - Dr Reza Khan
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off 344 0462

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dpalmer@ud.ac.ae

Astronomy -Lamjed El-Kefi
Marine Life - Lamjed El-Kefi
res: 06-5310467
off: 06-5583 003
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Geology - Gary Feulner
Insects – Gary Feulner
res 306 5570

Fossils - Valerie Chalmers
Plants – Valerie Chalmers
res 349 4816
valeriechalmers@hotmail.com

Seashells, Birds and Mammals - Recorders needed!

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 channeled through to the *Gazelle* editor, so new information can be shared with all our readers.

Notes from Sri Lanka

Living in Galle, Sri Lanka, and despite living in town, 1.5km from the market and beach, I am surrounded by wildlife. Recently I was shown a coconut beetle, *Oryctes rhinoceros*, a fairly astonishing sight at 5.8cm long, clinging to a boy's shoulder (pictured below left). Soon after, I had some rotting palm logs removed from the garden and out of them fell the astonishingly large larvae of *Oryctes rhinoceros* (cover pic). The biggest was also almost 6 cm long, as best I could measure, with legs only at the front end, and impressive mandibles for munching coconut debris.

The damage on the fronds (pictured below right) is the least of the beetles' destruction and a nation-wide campaign of control and eradication has been commenced. The main methods are clearing plantations of breeding grounds (rotting logs and debris), infection of the larvae with a fungus (*Metarhizium anisopliae*) or virus, placing naphtha balls at the leaf axils, piercing and extracting the larvae and beetles by hand using a 'beetle-hook', and by pheromone.

Anne Millen



Coconut Beetle – 5.8cm long



Beetle destruction

Contributions

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

If so, please email your contributions to: gazelleeditor@gmail.com
(Arial 10 justified).

Dubai Natural History Group Programme of Events

Lecture at Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, 7.30pm for 8pm

Nov 4: The 'B' Word: Beauty in Design – Geoff Sanderson

Field Trips (Members only, please)

Nov 2/3 Dhow Cruise to Musandam

Nov 9: Ecology of the Intermediate Desert (Dubai/Abu Dhabi border area)

Nov 17: Nestle Water Bottling Plant Tour

Nov 24: Sharjah Archaeology: Visit to Archaeological Museum plus 3 site visits

Dec 21: Christmas Picnic

2013

Jan 8-12: Photography Workshop

Further field trips, details or changes to trips will be announced/confirmed by email circular

DNHG COMMITTEE 2012

When possible, please contact committee members outside office hours

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DNHG Membership

Membership is priced at AED100 for couples and AED50 for singles (valid from Sep 2012 to Sep 2013). You can join or renew at meetings or by sending a cheque made out to Lloyds TSB Bank account no. 60600669933501. (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 no. AE650320060600669933501. As this process does not identify you as the payer please also scan and email a copy of your payment confirmation to the Membership Secretary so we know whose money we have received.

DNHG membership entitles you to participate in field trips and helps pay for our lecture hall, publications and distribution of our monthly newsletter, the Gazelle, our post office box, additions to our library, incidental expenses of speakers and occasional special projects.