



GAZELLE

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مجموعتنا دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي



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Contributors—

Thanks to the following for their contributions this month:

Ulrike Andorff, Andrew Childs, Gary Feulner, Anelisa Lambert, Margaret Swan and Heidi Sruksma.

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Festive view of *Festilyria festiva* as recently described in Festivus Magazine Vol 52(4),

The volutes have always been one of the more sought-after families of shells, due to their large size and interesting colours and patterns. There are two species listed in Seashells of Eastern Arabia: the very rare *Lyria leslieboschae*, of which only about 20 examples are known, and the much more common *Festilyria festiva*, now moved to the Callipara family, so known as ***Callipara (Festilyria) festiva* (Lamarck, 1811)**.

After several years of collecting shells in Oman, we have amassed quite a number of these *festiva* volutes. The variations that we saw prompted me to investigate the species further, and submit an article which was published in the November 2020 Vol 52(4) edition of Festivus magazine (San Diego Shell Club).

There are many much larger shells from East Africa that have been listed under the same *Festilyria festiva* name, and I wondered why the species from Oman were only 1/3rd of their size, averaging 80mm. The African shells are a much broader shape, and can get to over 250mm in size. What I deduced was that the African shells are in fact a different species, now named as *Callipara casaana*. The new name is derived from the Somali word for “red” because of their bright red early whorls.

I also found that the photo in the Seashells of Eastern Arabia shows two separate

(Continued on page 4)

Announcements and Recorders

Monthly Virtual Speaker Information

Sunday, 15th November, 2020, at 8pm via Zoom

Co-presentors: Fadi Yaghmour, Fatin Samara and Isra Alam

Lecture Title: "Sharjah Strandings response program: insights on marine turtle threats and mortality factors."

Biography - Fadi Yaghmour will co-present with Fatin Samara and Isra Alam. With five years of experience in conservation and wild-life management in critical marine habitats of the Sharjah emirate, Fadi's work has focused on providing advisory support for the local governmental leaders as well as identifying and filling gaps in the scientific literature to support evidence-based conservation action on threatened marine fauna.

As the research team leader for the east coast chapter of the Environment and Protected Areas Authority scientific research department, Fadi has led the development, management and maintenance of the Sharjah Strandings Response Program which has facilitated research, rescue and rehabilitation of sea snakes, sea birds, cetaceans and sea turtle throughout Sharjah waters. Using this program, he is currently leading several research projects focused on the ecology, natural pressures and anthropogenic threats of marine turtles which aim to augment conservation of marine turtles in the United Arab Emirates and the surrounding region. Fadi's goal is to continue developing capacity to support governmental and intergovernmental entities in their protection of the marine environment and its inhabitants.

Biography - Dr. Fatin Samara has a PhD in Environmental/Analytical Chemistry from the State University of New York- Buffalo, NY, USA and did her post-doctoral work at the Environmental Protection Agency in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, USA. Dr. Samara joined the American University of Sharjah in 2009 and currently holds a position as an Associate Professor of Environmental Sciences. Her areas of teaching interest include Climate Change, Environmental Sciences, Environmental Chemistry, Soil Chemistry and Toxicology.

Dr. Samara's areas of research interest include the chemical and toxicological assessment of persistent organic pollutants environmental compartments including turtles, oyster bed ecosystems, food, sediment/soil, water and air. She has experience in the conversion of waste biomass to adsorbent materials for the removal of heavy metals, pesticides and organic pollutants in water, the use of zeolites, UV and activated carbon for degradation purposes, with focus on the photodecomposition of toxic pollutants such as dioxins and furans and their relative toxicity measurements. In addition, Dr. Samara is interested in health effects of environmental exposure such as passive exposure to smoking midwakh, e-cigarettes and other products and she is working on a review of the available information related to Climate Change in the Gulf region, and the effects of climate in local ecosystems.

Biography - Isra Alam graduated with a degree in Environmental Chemistry and Analysis from the American University of Sharjah. Her area of research interest is broadly focused towards marine environmental science and analytical chemistry. Her current research work is focused towards the study and ecotoxicology of persistent organic pollutants in the marine environment, through collaborations with the Sharjah Environment and Protected Areas Authority, and Emirates Nature-WWF.

Photograph taken by Echte Karettschildkröte, posted on the website www.fotocommunity.de



DNHG Recorders

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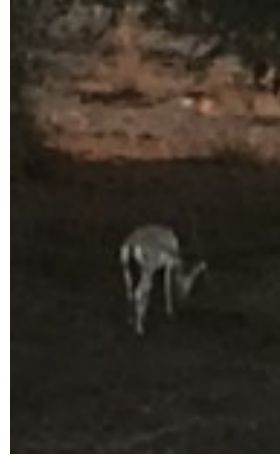
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From the Editor:

Marijcke Jongbloed photographed, illustrated and recorded much of the natural world during her time in the UAE. Her books are well-researched and referenced. Today, these books are becoming difficult to find. Therefore, it is good to know that *The Comprehensive Guide to Wild Flowers in the UAE* is available online. Marijcke was also the founder of the Arabian Leopard Trust. Recent sightings have been reported in Dhofar, Oman (see page 6). Enjoy your read!

Spotlight!

Observations at Al Wadi Khadija Nature Reserve, Ras al Khaimah, by Margaret Swan



Top row left to right:

Indian Roller

Indian Roller wing and tail span

Kingfisher

Gazelle

Arabian Oryx

Bottom row left to right:

Beetle—he collects moisture on the bumps of his back.

Early morning tracks



Sand Dollar found at Palm Island, by Margaret Swan



This flattened disc is the remains of a sand dollar, found just under the water off one of the fronds at Palm Island.

According to the *'Beachcombers' Guide to the Gulf'* they are close relatives of the sea urchin and there are five species (possibly more) known in the Gulf.

They move around the sandy bottom near the shore on tiny legs, leaving a wide trail.

The sand dollar has a sharp outline of a five-pointed flower shape on the top, as seen here. The mouth is located underneath in the centre (photo on the right).

Field Clips

(Continued from page 1)

species. The true *Callipara festiva*, as described in Lamarck's original 1811 document, is tall and slender, and the other species is shorter-spined, less ribbed and has a broader and rounder last whorl. This smoother species has now been named as *Callipara victoriae*, found on Masirah island.

There are three quite distinct colour forms of *Callipara festiva* that we have found in Oman, all of which we have collected in fresh-dead condition. The shells are not as glossy as a cowrie, but still have a sheen to the surface when fresh.

Fig 1. *Callipara festiva f.dobsonae*, *Callipara festiva f.lizae*, and *Callipara festiva*, shown alongside *Callipara victoriae* for shape comparison. These species were collected in Oman.

The paler colour is the most commonly found, and these are exactly as described by Lamarck in his original 1811 text:

“Voluta festiva. Volute with central swelling, spindle-shaped, ribbed, flesh-coloured, with golden blotches; small light brown wavy vertical lines, scattered, and banded. Columella has three folds”.

Occasionally shells with dark brown or black markings are found. This colour form is named as *Callipara festiva f.lizae*. It has previously been called “Type-2” by some authors, and is much less common than the paler version.

In Dhofar, southern Oman we found a different and very distinctive darker colour variant. This is called *Callipara festiva f.dobsonae* after the discoverer of the first example of this shell. This colour form is not found further up the Oman coast, nor on Masirah island.

An additional colour form of *festiva* is found in Africa. This has strong orange-red colouration on the early whorls. The shells are usually slightly larger than the Omani equivalents, reaching over 150mm. This is named as *Callipara festiva f.deceptrix*, and is shown here on the right of the photo. Below are the African *Callipara*, which are not found in Oman, and are both quite different from Lamarck's original description.



Fig 2. A comparative photo of the slim *C. festiva f.deceptrix* with heavy red colour on the early whorls, beside the much larger *C. casaana*. Both species were collected in East Africa.

Until recently, all six of the shells illustrated in this document shared the same name of *Callipara (Festilyria) festiva*, despite their obvious differences in size, shape and geographical location,

Contribution by Andrew Childs

Field Clips

Jazirat al-Hamra

RAK's Jazirat al-Hamra is one of four sites in the Emirate that have recently been added to the UAE's tentative UNESCO World Heritage List. The site provides a snapshot in time of a traditional pearling village, built at the edge of a desert of red sand that gave the settlement its name, meaning 'the Red Island'. Abandoned in 1968 when modernization projects offered new accommodation, it remained largely untouched for decades, while many other maritime and inland villages were transformed by the new oil revenues. Built of coral, fossilized beach rock and palm, in addition to some more modern materials like sand-brick and concrete, the village offers a unique record of Gulf architecture through the centuries. Many of the coral-stone houses display elegant plaster decoration along their walls and in architectural niches.

No longer on an island, it is a fascinating anachronism situated near the more modern port industrial zone, water park and golf course with gated community.

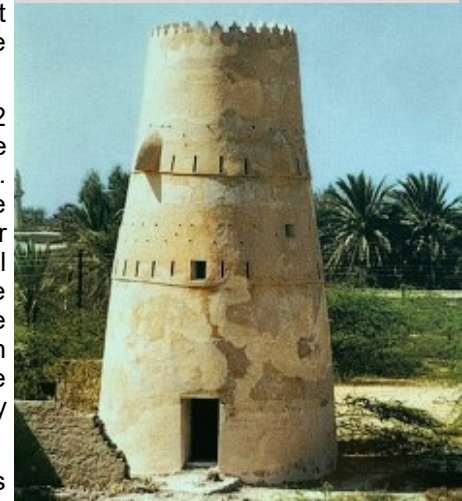
Positioned strategically near the entrance to the Gulf, the site had important trading status, growing to become a renowned pearling centre. Its inhabitants were mainly but not exclusively from the Zaabi tribe, famed for their fierce coastal resistance to the Portuguese and then the British. Other notable citizens were of Iranian, African and Baluchi descent.

By 1831, the British recorded a population of 4100 residents with 20 pearling ships, 22 fishing ships and 12 bateel-trading boats. Around the start of the 20th century, the Zaab are estimated to have numbered about 500 households, with a pearling fleet of about 25 ships. The local pearling industry suffered a devastating blow around 1920, however, when the Japanese began to flood the market with cultured pearls. At that time, the Ruler's brother sustained Jazirat al-Hamra by investing in boatbuilding and the manufacture of agricultural tools. Further changes took place when the oil revenue of the 1950s caused many of the men to leave for long periods to work in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. By 1968, the Zaab began to move away permanently, settling in Abu Dhabi, the Batinah Coast of Oman and other parts of RAK. Interestingly, the properties are still owned and even visited by the once-residents of al-Hamra, who return to keep any eye on the dwellings and to enjoy memories of the past.

A conservation project was begun in 2015 to restore many of the more than 450 buildings at the site. The hope is to open the area as a national heritage site in 2022, with a winding pathway linking many of the main buildings and features. Of particular interest are the fort, a wind-tower house, the souq, a pearl merchant's residence and several mosques. To date, around 25 buildings have been restored, seven buildings fully excavated, with many others surveyed and documented. Agnieszka Dolatowska is currently assisting with the excavation of what was once a large, 20-domed mosque. Uncovered by rainfall in 2015, and marked on a British Survey map from 1820, excavations are revealing that the mosque was rebuilt five times over a 150-year period. Here's to a DHHG fieldtrip, once all things pandemic permit.

Contribution by Anelisa Lambert with photographs by Margaret Swan and the RAK Department of Antiquities and Museums

The round tower of the fort



Coral used for construction



Decorative window detail



Inter-connecting passageways between family homes (windtower in the background)



Upper majlis



Mosque renovation

Resources

Wild Flowers of the UAE is now online

Marijcke Jongbloed's *The Comprehensive Guide to the Wild Flowers of the United Arab Emirates* is now available online via the Resources section of the DNHG website. This initiative was taken with the consent of the author and the publisher, Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency (ERWDA), now Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi (EAD).

Completed in 2003 with the collaboration of Gary Feulner, Benno Boer and A.R. (Rob) Western, and with sponsorship from First Gulf Bank, 'Wild Flowers of the UAE' remains the most authoritative illustrated work on the flora of the United Arab Emirates, a status which it is likely to hold for the foreseeable future. It was the principal background resource for last September's workshop to assess the conservation status of the UAE's native flora, sponsored by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment and IUCN.

Limited distribution has made *Wild Flowers of the UAE* difficult to obtain even within the Emirates, and extremely difficult for interested foreign researchers without established local contacts. The online posting, sponsored at very modest cost by the DNHG, responds to that small but steady drumbeat of demand. The volume has also been made available on ResearchGate, a professional site.

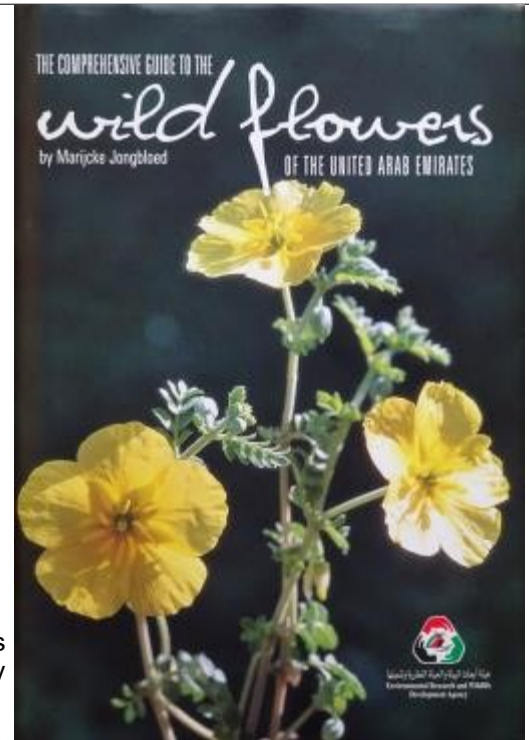
Marijcke Jongbloed, the principal author, was (among other things) the author of *Living Desert* and *Green Guide to the United Arab Emirates*, two early volumes from the late 1980s and early 1990s that were among the first to introduce the surprisingly rich and accessible natural history of the UAE to a popular audience. Marijcke went on to found the Arabian Leopard Trust, which gave a major impetus to UAE conservation efforts in the 1990s, and she wrote several other UAE wildlife guides as well as children's stories with conservation themes (which she illustrated herself). She is now retired in the Netherlands but keeps in touch with friends in Dubai. She is also one of three DNHG life members.

Angela Manthorpe, DNHG Librarian and Bookseller, undertook the task of having *Wild Flowers of the UAE* professionally scanned in Dubai. We hope to be able to do the same soon for several other out-of-print and/or hard-to-get UAE natural history classics, as we have for, e.g., *Butterflies of Oman* and *Insects of Eastern Arabia*.

Contribution by Gary Feulner



Marijcke Jongbloed and Minie van de Weg plant collecting in the 1990s.



DNHG members enjoyed a pleasant and informative field trip to the Emirates Soil Museum a while back during pre-Covid times.

The museum remains open during this time but, visitors are requested to abide by the social distancing protocols which are in effect.

For more information, please visit the website.

<http://www.emiratessoilmuseum.org/>

**Open daily
from Sunday
to Thursday
from 09:00 to
17:00.**

Closed on weekends
and public holidays.



Arabian Leopard sightings

The following article provides encouraging information about the sighting of Arabian Leopards in Dhofar (Oman). They are referred to as tigers but that is because the Omanis call them 'Nimr' in Arabic, which means 'tigers.'

They have always been known to inhabit Oman but, it is positive news that they have in fact been sighted again.

The article also describes another eight mammals, including the Porcupine, Lynx and Honey Badger.

The full article with photographs can be read here:

<https://www.omanobserver.om/presence-of-arabian-leopard-confirmed-in-dhofar/>

Contribution by Heidi Struiksma

Field Clips

Extreme Rare Find at the East Coast

Strolling along the beach at the East Coast I spotted an unusual almost flat, thin shell in the shape of an oriental single boot which neither looked worn nor broken.

The Bosch's "Seashell of Arabia" did not offer any possible ID, therefore I reached out to Andrew Childs, our sea shells expert. He suggests that this sea shell is a *Dolabella auricularia* (Lightfoot, 1786) referring to WoRMS. The size of 39mm, the shape and coloration match.

The *Dolabella auricularia* is defined as "an ear-shaped" shell which gives it its name and lies in the circular shield at the back of the body of the sea slug which bears the same name. The animal is a rather large species which can reach a length of 400mm and has a flattened disk on the posterior surface. It may be found with soft pustules, leading to a rather knob-like appearance. It has a short, blunt head and the body is covered with tubercles and skin flaps. Like all sea hares, it ejects a purple ink when disturbed. This sea hare lives in areas that are sheltered from rough currents. They will often hide in sea grass, sand and mud, feeding on algae. Intertidal rock pools are also a favoured place to live.

Dolabella auricularia can be found in the Indian Ocean, the western and NW Pacific and Philippines.

According to my research, there are no records of the *Dolabella auricularia* sea hare at the East Coast of the UAE.

Contribution by Ulrike Andorff with thanks to Andrew Childs

Sources: WoRMS, Wikipedia, The Sea Slug Forum



Dolabella auricularia



Dolabella auricularia sea hare

Another World Record for Dubai!

The Guinness Book of World Records has recognized the building of the largest Arabian wooden dhow.

Measuring 91.47 m (301.18 ft) long and 20.41 m (66.27 ft) wide, it was built by Majid Obaid Bin Majid Al Falasi & Sons (UAE). The project was initiated by Emirati, Obaid Jumaa Bin Majid Al Falasi, who learned the skills of dhow-building in the 1940s.

The dhow was launched on 28 October 2020 and was aptly named, 'Obaid,'

For a full report and a video of the dhow travelling down the Creek, visit the Guinness website at:

<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/commercial/2020/10/mighty-dhow-launched-from-dubai-recognised-as-the-worlds-largest>



Dubai Natural History Group (DNHG) Programme

Monthly lectures are presently transmitted via Zoom, starting at 8.00pm

15 November: Fadi Yaghmour will co-present with Fatin Samara and Isra Alam via Zoom, a talk on "Sharjah Strandings response program: insights on marine turtle threats and mortality factors."

13 December: Panos Azmanis will present a virtual talk on "Falcons, falcon medicine and falconry: the path from tradition to modern applications"

Scheduled Field Trips (Members only):

The DNHG field trip program has been temporarily suspended in compliance with UAE coronavirus precautions, which are still in force.

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When possible, please contact committee members outside office hours

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DNHG Membership

DNHG membership remains one of Dubai's best bargains at Dh100 for families and Dh50 for singles. Membership for the current year is valid from September 2020 to September 2021. In consideration of the restrictions on our lectures and field trips due to COVID-19, **all members who were paid up for 2019-2020 will be automatically renewed for 2020-2021**, without a renewal fee.

New members can join by (i) sending to the Membership Secretary (see above) a completed one-page membership form, which can be downloaded from our website (www.dnhg.org) and (ii) making payment to our Emirates NBD account by cash deposit or transfer from your bank or ATM, using our IBAN number:

AE640260001012012013302. However, this process does not always identify the payer. So if you wish to pay by cash deposit, 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 helps 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.