



# GAZELLE



مجموعة دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي

**Inside this month:**

Spotted - Domino Beetle	1
Announcements and Recorders!	2
In Memoriam : Peter Hellyer (1947—2023)	3
Discovering the Shindagha Museums	4
Natural History Destinations: Sulawesi	5
Sulawesi continued	6
Dubai Natural History Group Library	7
DNHG Programme	8

**Contributors : -**

Thanks to the following members for their contributions this month:

- \* Anelisa Lambert
- \* Angela Manthorpe
- \* Gary Feulner

Destination Sulawesi  
.....see page 5.....



Maleo nests in black sandy soil, unearthed by rangers to ensure survival of the chicks



**Spotted**

Contribution and photos by Angela Manthorpe

In February 2023, while exploring Mushrif Park, I was lucky to encounter several Domino beetles (*Anthia duodecimguttata*), of the Carabidae family. With distinctive white spots this is one of the UAE's most striking beetles and, at approx. 5 cm in size, they are amongst the largest.

Domino beetles are generally found in areas of hard sand in which they construct underground burrows. Whilst they are usually active at night, in the cooler months they will venture out during the daytime to feed. They cannot fly but are fast runners equipped with powerful mandibles; those long legs also allow the beetle to keep its body off the hot sand.

According to *Insects of Eastern Arabia*, the domino beetle hunts other insects, particularly darkling beetles (Family Tenebrionidae). In addition to an unpleasant smell the domino beetles can also spray a chemical irritant to deter predators - this is apparently quite painful to humans, so you have been warned.

In 1999 the UAE postal authority issued a series of stamps representing local arthropods. The Domino beetle featured on 50 fils stamp, together with the Oleander Hawkmoth 150 fils, Grasshopper 250 fils and Scorpion 350 fils.



## Announcements and Recorders



### Monthly Lecture

**Monday 18th September at 7.45 pm**

**Speaker :** Jinesh Shah

**Topic :** The history of animal collections, where it all started and where we are currently and what the future holds for zoo/animal collections

#### Abstract:

The talk is about the history of animal collections from Roman times right through to the modern era of zoos with a focus on how we kept animals and how we currently keep animals, through to what the future may hold for animal collections. The primary focus is about land-based animals such as carnivores, primates, birds, reptiles and inverts in the area of the animal kingdom. However, Jinesh will also touch on marine animals, such as cetaceans, anti-zoo movement and welfare considerations. Note that this does not only cover zoos but also wildlife parks, rehabilitation centres and sanctuaries. It will address what is considered “good” within the Zoo community; how accreditation is obtained from governing bodies such as BIAZA (British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums), WAZA (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums), EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquariums) and AZA (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums); and how they have helped elevate animal welfare and conservation education. It will also cover the impact of the pet trade, the legality of keeping animals in captivity and the impact of illegal wildlife trade and illegal captivity on legal animal collections.

#### Biography of the Speaker:

Jinesh Shah has worked in both the zoo industry and conservation field for the past 20 years. He started as a volunteer in a wildlife rehabilitation centre in South Africa back in 2003 and is currently Curator of Primates and Carnivores at Al Ain Zoo. Jinesh has spent his career working around the world with different animal institutes/collections as well as on a range of conservation projects. He has a Diploma in Conservation and a BSc in Zoology and Animal Management.

In 2014 Jinesh co-founded “Freshwater Life Projects”, a UK-registered charity, which focuses on conserving and restoring freshwater ecosystems.

In 2019 he was hired as Crisis Manager at Borth Wildlife Kingdom in Wales, dubbed by the media as Britain's worst zoo, to improve animal welfare standards and resolve the violations in their zoo license inspection report. His goal has always been to improve animal welfare standards in captivity and giving the animals under his care the best life possible.

### DNHG Recorders

**Reptiles - Dr. Reza Khan**  
M: 050 6563601

**Astronomy - Lamjed El-Kefi**  
T: 06-5310467  
Off: 06-5583 003  
E: lankefi@emirates.net.ae

**Marine Life - Lamjed El-Kefi**  
(contact as above)

**Geology - Gary Feulner**  
T: 04 306 5570  
E: grfeulner@gmail.com

**Insects - Gary Feulner**  
(contact as above)

**Fossils - Valerie Chalmers**  
T: 04 8832930  
M: 050 8305018  
E: valeriechalmers@gmail.com

**Plants - Valerie Chalmers**  
(contact as above)

**Archaeology - Anelisa Lambert**  
M: 056 6904508  
E: anelisalambert@gmail.com

**Seashells - Andrew Childs**  
M: 050 4590112  
E: andrew.childs@eim.ae

**Bird Recorder - Panos Azmanis**  
M: 050 7083555  
E: azmanis.vet@gmail.com

**Mammals—Jacky Judas**  
T: 04 354 9776  
M: 050 6181026

### From the Editor:

The Suhail star has been spotted! Summer is coming to an end and the cooler season will soon start.

Please do share with us, by email, your recent stories and photos of your wildlife encounters in the UAE or abroad by **20 September 2023**.

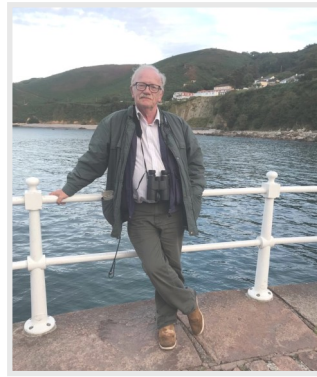
E : [gazelleeditor@gmail.com](mailto:gazelleeditor@gmail.com)

We look forward to hearing from you!

## In Memoriam : Peter Hellyer (1947 - 2023)

The death of Peter Hellyer in Abu Dhabi on July 2, at age 75, was a loss to the UAE and a special loss to the community of individuals having an interest in the natural history, history, archaeology, environment and heritage of the UAE. For more than 50 years, Peter was a member of that community and played a central role, through the Emirates Natural History Group – Abu Dhabi (ENHG-AD) and through *Tribulus* (a peer-reviewed scientific journal), in encouraging independent exploration and study of the natural history of the UAE. It is difficult to imagine another individual whose death could have a greater impact on the future of those activities, which include some of the best work from the 1990s and 2000s.

Tributes were led by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi.



Peter's natural history contributions are embodied in 28 volumes of *Tribulus*, the journal of the ENHG-AD, for which he served as Managing Editor; the results of studies by the Abu Dhabi Islands Archaeological Survey (ADIAS) of which he was the founder; lectures by international personalities including explorers Thor Heyerdahl and Wilfred Thesiger and geologist Ken Glennie; and numerous books which he authored, edited and/or midwived, including *Natural Emirates* (1995); *Hidden Riches* (1998); *Filling in the Blanks: Recent Discoveries by the Abu Dhabi Islands Archaeological Survey Project* (1998); *United Arab Emirates: a new perspective* (2001); *Jebel Hafit: A Natural History* (2004); and *The Emirates: A Natural History* (2005), as well as an upcoming volume on the natural history of Fujairah Emirate.

He was awarded UAE citizenship for his services to the nation and in 2013 received an Abu Dhabi Award, the highest award that can be bestowed on a citizen in the Emirate, for his work in identifying key archaeological sites in the UAE.

But Peter's contributions to the UAE were much greater than just the natural history realm. He was, among other things, a long-term advisor to the National Media Council and, in his early years in the country, he helped to establish the English language broadcasting service (WAM), headed up foreign language radio broadcasting for Abu Dhabi, and in the 1980s and early 1990s he was Managing Editor of *Emirates News*, a national newspaper published in Abu Dhabi. He also had a close relationship with Fujairah authorities over several decades.

Peter was born and raised in Sussex, but vacationed regularly in Jersey, Channel Islands, where he eventually resided when not in the UAE. He first came to the Emirates in 1971 to develop documentaries for foreign visits by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the father of the nation. He recalled his youthful experiences during the years 1967-1973 particularly fondly; they included student political activism and foreign visits including Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring, Sudan during a pro-Soviet coup, fox hunting in South Yemen, and the Dhofar insurrection in Oman.



His early activities in support of the anti-apartheid movement earned him a meeting with Nelson Mandela when the latter visited the UAE, and later an award from the South African government. More recently he received from Jersey a Bailiff's Award, for organising what has remained an annual commercial visit by Jersey government and financial industry officials to the UAE.

Personal remembrances all emphasized his gentlemanliness, his sound judgment, his willingness to help researchers and journalists, and his skill as a raconteur. In later years he was perhaps best known to the general public as a columnist for *The National*.

Peter was being treated for an aggressive cancer for a number of months before his death, although this was not generally known. He was aware that the outcome was very much in doubt, but he was admirable in his determination to continue with "business as usual", to the extent that periodic chemo and radiation therapy permitted. He had, however, already made provision for the disposition of most of his notes and papers to academic, environmental and/or research institutions. At the time of his death a 29th volume of *Tribulus* was nearing publication and he was soliciting articles for a 30th volume.

**The DNHG extends its condolences to Peter's family.**

## Discovering the Shindagha Museums

Contribution and photos by Anelisa Lambert

Several members of the DNHG met in the historic Shindagha area on 17<sup>th</sup> June to enjoy three museums, two of which had kindly opened their doors especially for us on a Saturday.

Access to the area has been greatly facilitated by a flyover and there is plenty of parking all along Khaleej Street; Al Ghubaiba metro station is a mere two minutes' walk away, so we have no excuse not to visit these treasures that are right on our doorstep! The glass-walled visitor centre offers a very reasonable package for visiting up to 16 local museums.

Our first stop was the "Crossroads of Civilizations Museum" which used to belong to the current Sheikh's grandfather, Sheikh Saeed bin Maktoum bin Hasher Al Maktoum. Around 2008 it became a museum, and currently houses six small galleries arranged around a traditional courtyard. The museum is home to the remarkable private collection of Mr Ahmed Al Mansoori which includes antique books, maps, documents, pearls and historic items. It also displays the Dubai Spirit of Tolerance by housing the first Holocaust Exhibition in the wider region – a moving tribute.

The group then moved on to visit "Saruq al Hadid Museum". This multi-period site produced a prolific quantity of material culture during the heyday of Iron Age II. Whilst the smelting that took place there produced tens of thousands of copper and copper alloy materials (arrow heads, axe-heads, dishes, farm implements, incense burners and more) the site is also notable for having produced at least 200kg of iron. The iron consists largely of broken, double-blade fragments but there are a few stunning items such as swords over a meter long, bimetallic daggers and arrow heads. Whether made up of fragments or final objects, this surprising quantity of ferrous material flies in the face of earlier views that the SE Arabian Iron Age was "an Iron Age without iron." Bronze objects such as the Neo-Assyrian incense burner with its striking bulls' hooves, the Dilmun pottery, the Egyptian scarab or the cylinder seal from Kassite Babylon all point to communication and trade across the region, all those millennia ago.

Our final stop was at the Historical Documents Centre which is less than thirty seconds walk from Saruq al Hadid Museum. It faces onto the Creek and has several chambers housing fascinating photos, articles, maps and documents from the early days of Dubai and from its period as a Trucial State. We enjoyed seeing early passports, cheque books from the first ever bank in Dubai, early newspapers that are long since gone, iconic photos like the one of Sheikh Zayed Road with sand all around and much more besides.

We ended the morning with lunch at the restaurant next door, which also overlooks the Creek, and raised a cold diet coke to more DNHG outings once the cooler weather comes around.

*Crossroads of Civilizations Museum*



*Saruq al Hadid archeological museum*



*Historical Documents Centre*



## Natural History Destinations : Sulawesi

For those interested in the evolution and distribution of plants and animals, the Indonesian island of Sulawesi is an especially fascinating destination, both for its wildlife and for its place in the history of science. It was there, in the 1850s, that the young and impecunious Alfred Russel Wallace, supporting himself and his natural history interests by collecting specimens of the Southeast Asian fauna for wealthy collectors, conceived and formulated, independently of Charles Darwin, the concept of the progressive evolution of species – a concept which is today the backbone of our understanding of the biology and ecology of organisms.

Sulawesi is also a place where the role of earth history in determining the distribution of plant and animal species is exceptionally well demonstrated. The large, pinwheel-shaped island lies in the middle of an island zone known to biologists as Wallacea, which separates the larger faunal provinces of Sundaland and Australia–New Guinea. Wallacea (which also includes the other islands of eastern Indonesia such as Flores, Sumba and Timor) contains elements of both of the neighbouring major provinces as well as a large number of endemics of its own.

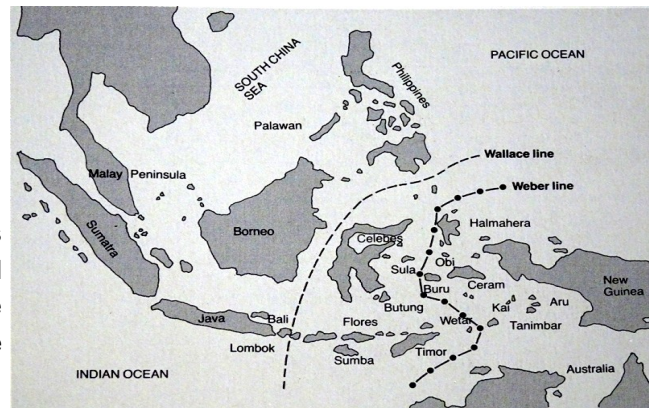
Sundaland is the name given by biogeographers to mainland Southeast Asia (including peninsular Malaysia), the large islands of western Indonesia (Sumatra, Java and Bali), and the island of Borneo, now shared by Malaysia and Indonesia. The islands of Sundaland are separated from each other and the mainland only by shallow seas that were emergent during the Ice Ages of the past ca. 1.8 million years. Thus these areas share species such as river dolphins, whose populations were isolated from each other only recently, following the last glacial peak about 18,000 years ago.

Australia and New Guinea are similarly separated by only a shallow sea – an extensive lowland in a larger continental mass – which helps to explain why they share such unusual animals as kangaroos (tree kangaroos in the case of New Guinea) and spiny echidnas (primitive insectivorous mammals related to the platypus). But Sundaland and Australia–New Guinea are continental masses located on different tectonic plates. They are separated by deep ocean basins floored by oceanic crust, presenting a barrier to strictly land-based species. They have been brought into their current proximity by plate tectonic processes, which have also raised the high mountains of New Guinea and created the many volcanoes of the Indonesian archipelago.

Sulawesi and the other islands of Wallacea are also primarily volcanic, although many coastal areas are fringed by coral reefs that make them popular with scuba divers. Volcanic cones, craters, crater lakes, sulfur deposits, hot springs, mud volcanoes, and geothermal power are common and form the physical backdrop for the tropical rain forest that supports most of Sulawesi's flora and fauna.

It was exciting for me, many decades after first learning about the area, to make a summer visit to North Sulawesi (the Minahasa peninsula), the northeastern blade of the 'pinwheel'. It proved to be relatively prosperous place, politically stable and welcoming, with good tourist facilities (but to a rustic standard, not luxurious), good roads (but winding, and traffic is sometimes slowed by trucks or landslides) and excellent quality nature guides, both island wide and locally (although the guides are invariably more knowledgeable about vertebrate than invertebrate fauna, which is equally distinctive).

A sampling of the landscapes and endemic wildlife of North Sulawesi is shown in the accompanying photos.



*Sulawesi (formerly the Celebes) lies in the centre of Wallacea, bounded by the Wallace Line to the west and the Weber Line to the east*



*A bust of the elderly A.R. Wallace in Tangkoko NP, North Sulawesi*



*It's volcanoes all the way to the horizon in North Sulawesi*



*A dormant crater bottomed with sulfurous residue*



*A bubbling mudpot*

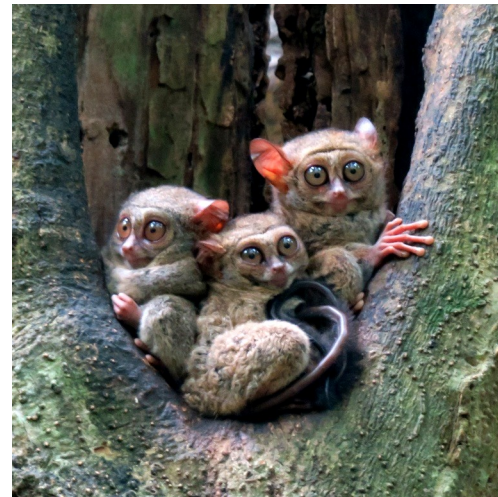
*(Continued on page 6)*

(Continued from page 5)

A personal favourite was a trio of Tarsier babies (*Tarsio* sp.) in their hollow tree home. Tarsiers are a specialty of Sulawesi; the genus is endemic and seven species are known from Sulawesi and adjacent smaller islands. But there were many runner-up favourites, including the male Knobbed Hornbill *Rhyticeros cassidix* who brought food to his nesting mate walled up in a tree; the Maleo bird *Macrocephalon maleo*, a megapode which broods its eggs not in nests, but in dark, volcanic sand or soil; the Crested Black Macaque *Macaca nigra*, a small troupe of which rested and played only meters from our respectful gaze; the Cuscus Bear (*Ailurops ursinus*), a leaf-eating, arboreal, bear-like marsupial; and a very, very large (15cm+) tarantula that lives on palm trunks.

It was also interesting to see the non-endemic Reticulated Python hunting by night, but sobering to learn its hunting method: The snakes drop from tree branches by night to ambush their prey; even a medium sized snake can weigh tens of kilos and can knock quadruped (or human) prey down. The snake then bites the victim's neck to gain a firm hold while it quickly throws its coils to squeeze and suffocate the unfortunate target. Many guides are reluctant to enter the forests at night; we were advised never to stray from the path or the group!

Contribution and photos by Gary Feulner



Three tiny Tarsiers in their tree



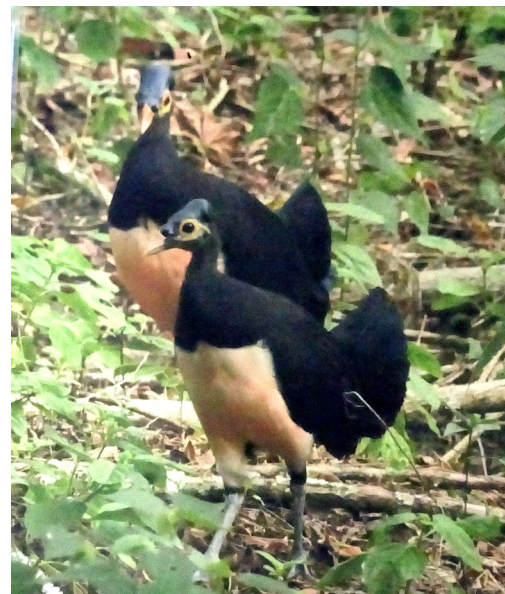
A Knobbed Hornbill gives a quizzical but unconcerned look



A pair of Ochre-Bellied Hawk Owls (*Ninox ochracea*) resting by day



An adolescent male Crested Black Macaque



The Maleo, a megapode



Diminutive baby(?) bats shelter under a leaf



A Reticulated Python climbs a tree by night, from where it hopes to ambush prey



A forest skink showing colouration reminiscent of lizards in the UAE

## Dubai Natural History Group (DNHG) Library!

Contribution and photo by Angela Manthorpe

Did you know that the Dubai Natural History Group (DNHG) has its own library? Well we do!

We have in fact several hundred books and papers covering a wide range of natural history, archaeology and related topics. Our collection is housed on the first floor in the library of the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management (EAHM), so it is in the same building as our monthly lectures. Why not come early to the October lecture and see what hidden gems we have there, some of which date back to the early 1990s.

Access is free during EAHM's opening hours, Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm.



The DNHG Library today

### How can we best preserve the DNHG library?

In order to make our collection more accessible and to create a backup in case of unforeseen loss we are embarking on a mega project to catalogue and digitise the DNHG library. The EAHM librarian will support us with this initiative but we really do need help from you - our members.

Here are some of the tasks that need to be completed and where we desperately require your support:

- \* **Organising folders and articles:** Over the years members who have left the Emirates have donated their natural history files to us. They were often a mix of brochures, newspaper cuttings and newsletters from pre-internet days. We would like to sort and categorise these miscellaneous cuttings and articles under subject matter folders, e.g. botany, birds, geology etc.
- \* **New publications:** We are constantly adding new publications and books to the DNHG library. These need to be classified according to the "Dewey Decimal System" and a reference number given to each item so that they are easy to identify on the shelves in the library.
- \* **Monthly newsletter - The Gazelle:** On the DNHG website we keep an archive of our monthly newsletter "The Gazelle" but there are some gaps. We will need to scan the missing editions and then, as a separate exercise, upload them onto the DNHG website.
- \* **Scanning and archiving:** The largest and most time-consuming task is of course to scan all relevant pamphlets and books in the collection. EAHM will provide the scanner and guidance, but we need to provide the manpower!
- \* **Relevant keywords:** As we digitise our material we will also require a member to write brief abstracts of the publications using the relevant keywords so that the publications are easily identifiable on the digital archive.

Some of the tasks mentioned above would suit someone with cataloguing skills or who has trained as a librarian, whereas other tasks require a member with a methodical approach, curiosity and time. If you would like to help with this mammoth project, even if you only have a few hours to spare, please reach out to Angela Manthorpe (E: [manthorpe2005@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:manthorpe2005@yahoo.co.uk)).

Timing is flexible but we would ideally like to start early October and complete the project as soon as possible.

## Dubai Natural History Group (DNHG) Programme 2022/2023

### DNHG Lectures 2023

18 September            The history of animal collections, where it all started and where we are currently and what the future holds for zoo/animal collections - by Jinesh Shah

### DNHG Field Trips 2023 / 2024

November 2023            Socotra Island (*exact dates to be communicated later*)

14 - 22 June 2024        Discovering Slovenia (*postponed to a better season*)

*For more information on upcoming lectures, field trips and membership please refer to the DNHG website [www.dnhg.org](http://www.dnhg.org)*

## DNHG COMMITTEE 2022/2023

When possible, please contact committee members outside office hours

	Name	Telephone	Email
Chairman	<b>Gary Feulner</b>	04 306 5570	grfeulner@gmail.com
Vice Chairman	<b>Valerie Chalmers</b>	050 830 5018	valeriechalmers@gmail.com
Treasurer	<b>Puneet Kumar</b>	050 452 4820	puneetcps@gmail.com
Membership Secretary	<b>Alessandra Pipan</b>	054 777 1183	lssndr.ppn@gmail.com
Speaker Co-ordinator	<b>Michelle Sinclair</b>	050 458 6079	sinclairmichelle611@gmail.com
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	<b>Sonja Lavrenčič</b>	050 256 1496	lavson@gmail.com
Member-at-Large	<b>Pradeep Radhakrishna</b>	050 450 8496	wgarnet@eim.ae
Member-at-Large	<b>Anindita Radhakrishna</b>	050 656 9165	anin@eim.ae
Newsletter Editor	<b>Heidi Struiksmá</b>	055 899 2222	gazelleeditor@gmail.com
Librarian/Book Sales	<b>Angela Manthorpe</b>	058 135 4143	manthorpe2005@yahoo.co.uk
Website Co-ordinator	<b>Alexis Biller</b>	055 103 9014	alexis.biller@gmail.com

Postal Address: DNHG, PO Box 9234, Dubai, UAE

## 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 2023 to September 2024**. As we have started hybrid meetings from September 2022, renewal fees can be paid at meetings or by the methods mentioned below.

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](http://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.