

GAZELLE

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مجموعة دبي للتاريخ والطبيعي

DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Members' News

DNHG Membership

DNHG Membership remains a bargain at Dhs.100 for couples/families and Dh. 50 for singles. You can **join or renew at our meetings or by sending us your details and a cheque** made out to: Lloyds TSB Bank account no. 60600669933501. (Please note we cannot cash cheques made out to the DNHG.)

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

This Month's Contributors

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

Roelie Le Roux
Valerie Chalmers
Gary Feulner

Christine Verreydt.
Michelle Sinclair
Tamsin Carlisle

Under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan



Our Next Speaker

Tamsin Carlisle

Tamsin Carlisle has a BA in zoology from Oxford University, where she studied and co-authored a paper with evolutionary theorist Richard Dawkins. She went on to obtain a PhD in evolutionary ecology from the University of California at Santa Barbara, winning a fellowship from the US National Science Foundation to support field research in Panama on parental behaviour in a species of stream-dwelling cichlid fish. This was followed by post-doctoral field-work in Wadi Araba, bordering the Negev Desert, on brood-rearing behaviour in the Arabian babbler, a group-nesting bird species with complex social behaviour.

For various reasons, Tamsin's subsequent career has been more involved with energy journalism than biological research. However, she has maintained a lifelong interest in evolutionary ecology and is delighted to have this opportunity to discuss her recent observations on the remarkably rich flora of northern Nepal with the Dubai Natural History Group.

Tamsin recently joined the DNHG, after moving to Dubai from Abu Dhabi and has become a regular contributor to the Gazelle.



Nepal hill temple ceremony



Email your field reports and news to clare.ohare@gmail.com (Arial 10 justified). Please send your photographs as **separate .jpg files** (preferably compressed for documents) or deliver them to Editor Clare O'Hare for scanning.

Nepal facebook page

Nepal fauna photos

[http://www.facebook.com/#!/media/
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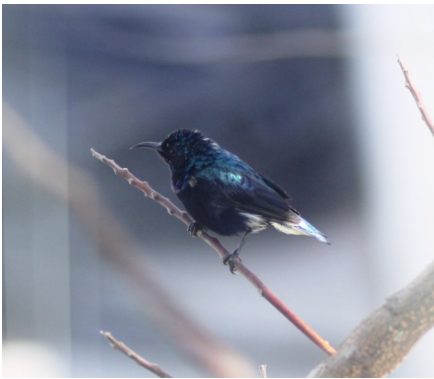
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UAE's rarest Bird: Black Drongo in Al Barsha Pond Park

Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocerus*) is purely a black bird of the size of a Myna but with a long and forked tail as well as powerful hooked bills. It measures just 28 cm, half of which is THE tail. On the whole black body there is just one white spot at the junction of upper and lower bills - called GAPE as seen in the pictures.

It naturally occurs from parts of Pakistan to India, Nepal, and Bhutan, Bangladesh to China and Indonesia and Sri Lanka. But during the last two to three decades several times people have reported sighting this bird in the UAE but never from Dubai. There are two confirmed records of its sighting from Al Qurayah in Fujairah during 2005 and 2006. But for the first time it has been seen in the Dubai Emirate that is too in Al Barsha Pond Park on the 18 January 2012 by a gentleman birdwatcher named M. Charlton.



Purple Sunbird - common in the park-

I went looking for the Drongo on the 23 January and was amazed to see the Drongo is still loitering inside Al Barsha Pond Park. It was so feeling at home that I could be within its 7-10 metres range for nearly 2 hours. It prefers the southern side or the side of the park facing the new Union Cooperative Hypermarket. During a repeat visit on 28 January it was still occupying the same area of the park.

It is a determined insect eater and there are plenty of these in Barsha Park. Also this proves that Dubai

Parks, managed by the Public Parks and Horticulture Department of Dubai Municipality, are becoming attractive to many birds that earlier never reached Dubai from destinations either from north, south or east of the country.

On 28 January I also watched a number of other birds during my hour long sojourn in the park (some photos are included in this piece).



Black-winged Stilt

Dr Reza Khan, Specialist, Public Parks and Horticulture Department, Dubai Municipality

A Bit Above the Beach

Places accessible to fishermen along the beaches in northern Oman yielded enough varied and interesting things to be proved worth scouting on future trips. The new road works have made access more difficult and perhaps concentrated fishing activity in certain areas.

Some of our best shell finds, for example, were high on the beach near crude shelters where fishermen had emptied and untangled their nets. Several perfect *Tonnus* and *Murex* were found half-buried in the sand, much better speci-



mens than those found on the open beach. Large inedible fish had also been left to dry out.



The wire mesh traps were most interesting of all and raised a couple of questions. These were often encrusted with what appeared, at a distance, to be bleached dead seaweed. (photo ...46) Closer up, it was a pretty white frill set about with plentiful brown (and sometimes redish) lumps. Closer again, we found that the mesh was covered with a fine fragile coral and fairly uniformly small shells of the Pteriidae family.



How long had the traps been left down, to become a habitat for these creatures? We wish we knew! The shells appeared to be of several species, *Pteria macoptera*, *tortisostris* and *penguin*, but not *Pinctada*, which also like to attach but to rocks on the lower shore and below. Further, in some places we saw patches of 'string' which in places seemed to be part of the coral and in others appeared to have inhibited the growth of coral.





Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

Reptiles - Dr Reza Khan
res 344 8283
off 344 0462
fax (off) 349 9437

Archaeology - David Palmer
050-7387703
office direct line: 04-2072636
dpalmer@ud.ac.ae

Birds - David Bradford
davebradford9@hotmail.com

Astronomy - Lamjed El-Kefi
res: 06-5310467
off: 06-5583 003
email: lankefi@emirates.net.ae

Marine Life - Lamjed El-Kefi

Geology - Gary Feulner
res 306 5570
fax 330 3550

Insects – Gary Feulner

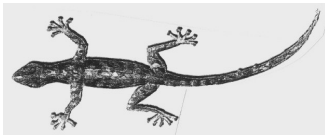
Fossils - Valerie Chalmers
res 349 4816,
fax 340 0990
email: valeriechalmers@hotmail.com

Plants – Valerie Chalmers

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



To the bottom of each trap, two iron bars had been had been attached and the one on the side opposite the entrance had a bundle of small sticks or weed stalks around it. Each trap had this, so it is a common practice, but for what purpose? Several good shell specimens were lodged behind the bundled sticks, and Sandi went to extraordinary lengths to retrieve some for Myki.



And we discovered the secret of how to keep the traditional fragile palm-frond boats, which are neither water tight nor water resistant, afloat. You fill them with blocks of polystyrene!



Report and photographs by Anne Millen



Dubai wildlife quiz— Spot the wildlife

This month's photographs also come courtesy of Tamsin Carlisle, who spotted them around the Dubai Media City lake this month.



Picture 1: Which bird is laughing?



Picture 2



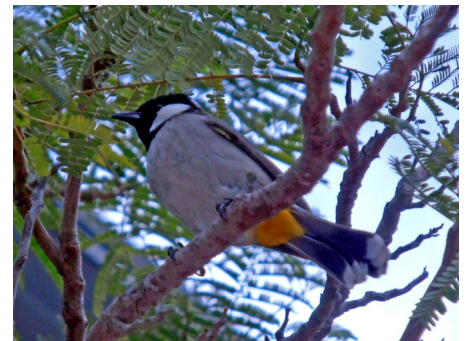
Picture 3



Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6

Answers to last month's bird photographs:

Picture 1: Common black-headed gull (*Croicocephalus ridibundus*)

Picture 2 Red-wattled lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)

Picture 3: Striated heron

Picture 4: Little grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficolis*)

If you have any other suggestions for where members can spot wildlife, please let the Gazelle know.



	name	tel home	tel office	fax
Chairman	Gary Feulner email: grfeulner@gmail.com	306 5570	messages: 306 5300	
Vice Chairman	Valerie Chalmers email: valeriechalmers@gmail.com	394 8872	050-4558498	
Treasurer	Rakesh Rungta email: rakesh99@emirates.net.ae	050-5582435 & 050-7744273		
Membership Secretary	Anindita Radhakrishna email: anin@emirates.net.ae	282 3952	050-656 9165	
Speaker Co-ordinator	Martina Fella / Michelle Sinclair email: martina_fella@hotmail.com			
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Pradeep Radhakrishna email: wgarnet@emirates.net.ae	282 3952	050-450 8496	
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Jenny Hill email: jennyhill76@hotmail.com		050-8861508	
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Sonja Lavrenčić email: lavsonja@yahoo.it	050 2561496		
Fieldtrip Co-ordinator	Christine Verreydt email: infinistan@gmail.com		050-6853720	
Newsletter Editor	Clare O'Hare email: clare.ohare@gmail.com		050-7088936	
Publisher				
Librarian / Book Sales	Mairead Porter email: portermme@hotmail.com		055 656 1949	
Postmaster	Sandi Ellis email: sandiellis@gmail.com	050-644 2682		
Chief Engineer	Ajmal Hasan email: ajmal_hasan@hotmail.com		06-5043523	06-5611789
Website Coordinator	Sandhya Prakash email: sandy_pi@yahoo.com	050-5512481		

Books available at DNHG

The Dubai Natural History Group has a number of books available for sale at monthly meetings. Books available include:

Book	AED
Windtower - Anne Coles and Peter Jackson	200
Annotated check-list for Plants of the UAE – M. Jongbloed, R. A. Western and B. Boer	30
The Native Plants of Oman – An Introduction - Clive Winbow	80
The Butterflies of Saudi Arabia and its Neighbours – Torben B. Larsen	100

Anthropod Fauna of the UAE Vol 4	120
Birds of Abu Dhabi	5
Field Guide to the Geology of Oman – Samir S Hanna	80
Arabian Wildlife Encyclopaedia	130
Jebel Hafit – A Natural History	100
Emirates Heritage Volume 1	65
Wild Cats of the UAE - Reza Khan	40

Please contact Mairead Porter, the DNHG Librarian with any enquireies.

Writers & photographers wanted!

Contributions to the Gazelle from new and old members alike are welcomed. Short pieces of 100-500 words are ideal as this allows publication of more pieces. Photographs of local wildlife and suggestions for places to spot Du-

Dubai Natural History Group Programme

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

Mar 4 Flora of Lantang Valley—Tamsin Carlisle

April 1

Field Trips (Members only, please)

Feb 24—25 InterEmirates Weekend

Further field trips, details or changes to trips will be announced/confirmed by e-mail circular.