

# GAZELLE

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مجموعة دبي للتاريخ الطبيعي

**DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP**

PO Box 9234, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Members' News

### **Sheikh Nahayan becomes DNHG Patron**

We are very pleased and proud to announce that **H.E. Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan**, the UAE Minister of Education, has consented to extend his patronage to the Dubai Natural History Group. Sheikh Nahayan has for many years been the Patron of the Emirates Natural History Groups in Abu Dhabi and Al-Ain, which have prospered under this relationship and have made a substantial contribution to the study, education and enjoyment of the wildlife, environment and cultural heritage of the UAE.

Sheikh Nahayan was educated in Great Britain. His initial government appointment was as Chancellor of UAE University in Al-Ain. Subsequently he was appointed to the additional posts of Chancellor of the Higher Colleges of Technology and Zayed University. He first joined the Federal Cabinet as Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and assumed his current portfolio as Minister of Education when the two ministries were merged last November.

In his capacity as Patron, Sheikh Nahayan has endowed the Sheikh Mubarak Award for Natural History, the most prestigious UAE natural history award, and named it in hon-

our of his father, Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohammed Al Nahayan, a former UAE Minister of Interior. Sheikh Nahayan's patronage of the DNHG coincides not only with his own expanded official responsibilities, but also with mutual efforts to increase coordination and interaction among the UAE's three natural history groups.

### *A Farewell..*

Speaker Coordinator **David Palmer** has overseen an interesting and varied lecture program and has conscientiously booked speakers well into the coming year—quite a feat! Unfortunately, he will be leaving us in July. David says he plans to try traveling as a pastime for a year or so, to see how he likes it. Inquiring to the end, David spent May weekends investigating the East Coast for cairn tombs, then paid a visit to Jebel Hafit to examine in detail the tombs there that gave their name to the 5000 year-old Hafit period.

### *...and a Welcome!*

**Geoff Sanderson**, new to Dubai but formerly Vice Chairman of the ENHG in Al-Ain, has volunteered to step up as Speaker Coordinator. In Al-Ain, Geoff was also a member of the ENHG's botanical special interest group, and he has a particular interest in cultivated plants.

### *DNHG Membership Renewals*

September 2005 starts our the new DNHG membership year. Please make our lives easier by renewing early. Membership remains a bargain at Dhs. 100 for couples and Dh. 50 for singles. You can join or renew at meetings or by sending us a cheque made out to Lloyds Bank account no. 173746. (Please note we cannot cash cheques made out to the DNHG.)

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*, 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:**

Angela and Stephen Manthorpe  
Ricus van Zijl  
Barbara Couldry  
David Palmer  
Valerie Chalmers  
Gary Feulner  
Dr. John Fox

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



## End-of-Season Dinner and Photo Competition

This year's annual affair at Dubai Country Club was especially spirited and convivial. Many thanks are due to Vice Chairman Valerie Chalmers, assisted by Fran M'Caw and Trish Cox, for organising the booking, dinner, tickets, photography competition and prizes, and officiating on the evening. Thanks also to Gary Feulner and Pradeep and Anin Radhakrishna for the evening's natural history quiz.

This year's quiz was particularly hard fought. The seven tables all scored within the range of 64-77 points (based on 75 questions), so it seems we are in fact in pretty well informed and sophisticated bunch, from a natural history point of view. The one answer that no table seemed to know is that Umm an-Nar tombs have been found in all Emirates.

There was also a post-quiz adjustment. Most tables knew that live *Terebralia palustris*, the large mangrove mud snail, can be found in the UAE only at Khor Kalba; however, that site is not in Fujairah (the answer given as correct), but in Sharjah. No one challenged this from the floor, and it did not change the winners, but it did mean that the top three teams finished even fewer points apart: 77-75-74.

The winning team consisted of Peter and Jutta Jackson, Geoff Sanderson, Colin Trees and daughter, Fran M'Caw, Trish Cox and Val Chalmers. The team members each received a DNHG poloshirt, except for Val who has two already. The runner-up team was Angela and Stephen Manthorpe, Sandy Fowler and Beryl Comar, Sandhya Prakash, Anu Pama and David Palmer. Each received a small pack of photographs in the form of cards by Adrienne Brady which she very kindly donated to the DNHG.

Perhaps it was no surprise that the echidna was relatively well known, given that a number of members hail from the Antipodes. But many

also knew the Basenji, a North African dog that growls but doesn't bark. And as usual, there were some updates to the record books on which our quizzes sometimes rely: David Bradford informed us that the last Spix's Macaw is thought to have died last year, rendering it extinct and therefore no longer the rarest bird in the world. That honor now belongs instead to the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, seen months ago in Arkansas, although it had not been observed for decades and was thought extinct. So maybe there's hope yet for Spix's Macaw. (Or is that M'Caw?)

The photo competition featured entries of a very high standard and many members wished they could have voted for more than three. Many of the photos were exceptional as much for what they told about where our members had been and what they had done, as for their technical features. We had, among others, mountain gorillas, tropical islands, turtle beaches and exotic penguin species. The bar was set high.

The winning photo was by Geoff Sanderson: an elderly Arab shopkeeper, framed obliquely as he sat in the doorway of his cluttered storefront in the souk. Geoff will hold the DNHG's annual trophy, donated in 1993 by then-Chairman Jim Footitt and recently discovered among the DNHG's accumulated paraphernalia, after a disappearance of several years. He also received a mounted photograph of wind towers by the late Jane Roberts who was a member of the DNHG and who was also a prizewinner at a previous photographic competition.

Second place went to an underwater entry by Ricus Van Zijl: a hawkbill turtle, seen and lit from below, floating in an undisturbed blue sea. He received a copy of *Whales and Dolphins of the United Arab Emirates* by Robert Baldwin. Third place winner was Mohammed Arfan Asif, who captured, close up, a freshly molted Arabian cicada, just as it somersaulted from its abandoned exoskeleton. He received a large

black luggage bag/holdall. Congratulations to the winners, and congratulations and thanks to all participants for so many excellent entries.

Dr Sandy Fowler, who has done so much for the DNHG, man and boy it seems, was presented with the ENHG's book, *Jebel Hafit: A Natural History* as a memento of his time with DNHG and in recognition of his work on shells and the posts he has held on the DNHG Committee. Sandy will be around until August, but is preparing to retire.

Our thanks go to the Dubai Country Club for the delicious buffet and for the excellent service provided by their staff. *Thanks to Valerie Chalmers and Gary Feulner for these details*

## And now... E-Gazelle !

Remember that you can request the DNHG's monthly newsletter, the *Gazelle*, by e-mail. If you think you would prefer this, please e-mail Peter van Amsterdam and to be placed on the address list.

Once we are sure that e-mail delivery works reliably, we will offer members the opportunity to elect to receive the *Gazelle* by mail or by e-mail. This is quick and easy for you (and you see the photographs in colour) and could save us a small but significant amount in annual postage.

The e-mail initiative should also address the recent complaints of some members (especially at AUS) that they have not been receiving their newsletters in a timely manner (or, indeed, at all).

The initiative was undertaken by publisher Peter van Amsterdam and benefited greatly from advice and prodding by Committee members Pradeep Radhakrishna, Peter Jackson and Sandhya Prakash.



### More Members News

**Prof. John Fox** is another who is leaving Dubai this summer, though in John's case, he says it will be a temporary absence. We hope so.

It was good to see **Colin Trees** back in action at our end-of-season dinner. Colin is making a strong recovery from a serious accident. He gives great credit to the Dubai police and the surgeons at Rashid Hospital.



**Angela Manthorpe** writes that this photo, which was taken in the Musandam and shown on the front page of the May Gazelle, shows a string of salps, or pelagic tunicates. Although they look like jellyfish, they are harmless organisms and often occur in long chains of many individuals. She also encountered a huge congregation some years back on the east coast. This summary comes courtesy of *New Scientist*. "Salps are a tunicate organism related to sea squirts. They are filter feeders, sifting microscopic plankton from the water. The chains can reach lengths of over 25 metres, although they are easily broken. Each individual can reach a length of around 12 centimetres. They are found in tropical and temperate waters."

The editor's apologies go to **Valerie Chalmers** for reproducing her *Caralluma* photograph sideways! Here it is right way up, for those of you wondering what a *Caralluma* looks like.



And apologies too to Ricus van Zijl who was thanked for this photo which did not appear. It was taken on the Saiq Roses trip, on top of the Saiq Plateau, while we breathed a sign of relief—too soon.

While we are on the subject of promises not kept, here is ...

### Digiscoping in Mushrif Park

Having recently returned to Dubai equipped with some shiny new camera kit, we took the chance in early March to go 'digiscoping' in Mushrif Park. This increasingly popular activity (amongst the UK birding community at least) involves taking digital photos through a spotting scope.

We set ourselves up near the BBQ area away from the majority of early morning visitors and were soon rewarded with sightings of common residents such as a pair of ring-necked parakeets, palm doves, white-cheeked bulbuls and little green bee-eaters. Digiscoping is not a quick process, as you have to sight the bird in the scope, focus, fasten the digital camera in place and then take the shot, but we had some early success with photos of the above birds.

A pair of hoopoes kept landing and taking off nearby, but it was only when one landed in an adjacent tree with a caterpillar in its mouth, that got us thinking that we might be standing near their nest. We're not familiar with hoopoe nests, so wandered around looking upwards. Sitting motionless only a metre or so above us was a collared dove on its nest, and once we'd sat down to watch, a busy house sparrow ap-

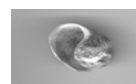
peared with nest building material in its beak, and although it alighted at a tiny hole in the tree trunk near us, it was too nervous to go inside.

We waited patiently for some time, getting more snaps of the circling bee eaters, but it was only once we decided to pack up for lunch that things really took off! We'd been keeping an eye on the parakeets who were working their way down a particular tree, and as we set off, the female disappeared inside a hole in the trunk and stayed inside for long enough for us to set up the camera again and take some shots once she emerged. At the same time, having now moved 4-5 metres from our original spot, the hoopoes moved in, and sure enough, one of them disappeared deep inside the tree trunk near where we had been standing, whilst the other stood outside preening. When we got the chance we crept up to the nest but the bird was so deep inside that we could not see anything.

The photos taken through the scope were of varying quality, but the chance to see so many nesters in action made this an interesting and enjoyable morning out. Get out now if you want to catch some of the action! *Thanks to Angela and Stephen Manthorpe*

### Shell Cabinets For Sale

Dr Sandy Fowler, our Seashell Recorder, has two display cabinets for sale. If you are interested in them, you can call him on 04—3442243 to arrange to see them.





E.mail your reports to [pvana@emirates.net.ae](mailto:pvana@emirates.net.ae), (Arial 10 justified) or deliver them to Anne Millen on floppy disk at monthly meetings.

## Old *Tribulus* Volumes Wanted

This summer, the ENHG journal, *Tribulus*, will begin its fifteenth year of semi-annual publication. Since it began, it has become increasingly important as a source of published data about the natural history and archaeology of the Emirates. Much of the material published in *Tribulus* is available nowhere else.

As the journal continues to expand its reputation overseas, the Editorial Board are receiving an increasing number of requests from overseas academic and other scientific institutions for sets of *Tribulus*. Unfortunately, it is not possible to meet all of these requests, since some of the issues are out of print, and re-printing would make no economic sense.

If any DNHG members are leaving the UAE, and do not want to take their copies of *Tribulus* with them, then the Editorial Board would be delighted to have them back!

Anyone wishing to hand back copies should contact any member of the DNHG Committee, who will arrange to get the copies to the Editorial Board. Many thanks, in advance! Request by Peter Hellyer, Managing Editor, *Tribulus*

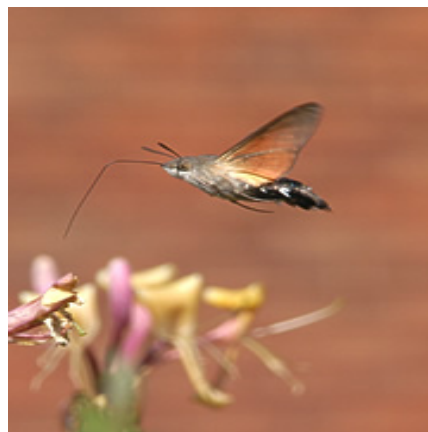
## Musandam in Bloom

The weather has stayed cooler longer than in recent years, and the April 1 hike to a terraced settlement in the Ru'us al-Jibal, announced by e-mail and led by Barbara Couldrey of Ras Al Khaimah, was a good chance to investigate the results of the relatively gentle but sustained winter rains. As it turned out, there was plenty of action on all fronts.

Enroute to the 750m settlement of 'Aini, above Wadi Bih, we passed a natural spring (rare in this limestone area) full of tadpoles of the Dhofar toad, most beginning to sprout legs; also a very large caterpillar with prominent false, defensive eye spots – probably some kind of hawkmoth, but so far unidentified.

At the settlement, a calling cuckoo graced our arrival, and not long after we watched a large, distinctively patterned raptor soar far overhead. Consensus reckoned it, after the fact, a rare Eastern Imperial Eagle. Pied Wheatears were the most common bird among the sparse trees of the terraced plain.

Two uncommon butterflies were about, among others – the striking and distinctively royal blue Loew's Blue (a relatively large member of the "Little Blue" group) and the Baton Blue, a species that has locally eluded even Torben Larsen, who "wrote the book" on Arabian butterflies. The day-flying moth community was represented by several Hummingbird Hawkmoths, one Coffee Clearwing and a hyperabundant, straw-colored Notucid moth. Many of these were feeding on the annual Crucifer *Erucaria hispanica*.



Hummingbird Hawkmoth

Less enjoyable was the abundant open-field grass *Stipa capensis*, not-so-affectionately known as "stick-in-your-pantsis," whose dry awns can penetrate clothing, socks and skin, making the walk a "memorable" experience.

Not ignoring human artifacts, we inspected the probable Hafit tomb

overlooking the settlement; the recent stone dwellings and abandoned implements (carefully returned to their original places); the large graveyard (now partly obscured by ground cover); and the unusual "coffee table" area, where dozens of stone platforms have been erected, looking much like altars, but (on further consideration) for the much more secular purpose of clearing a path for rain to wash uninterrupted across gently sloping ground to feed thirsty fields.

Finally, when we had nearly descended, Barbara detoured to inspect a large, semi-open cave, where Angela Manthorpe reprised her earlier years as a spelunker in England and returned with excellent photos of a nest full of Pale Crag Martin chicks and a hanging Mouse-Tailed Bat.

For those who opted to forego this late season trip, it has to be said that the one newcomer along was impressed at how much a natural history perspective added to hiking, but found it physically demanding and about as much of an introduction as he would want. Report by Gary Feulner

## More on the Archaeology Symposium

*A Coastal Location for Muweileh*  
Peter Magee from Bryn Mawr College reported on the Iron Age II settlement at Muweileh (1000 - 600 BC), close to the present-day University City in Sharjah. In the last ten years about 20% of it has been excavated. Geophysical techniques such as ground-penetrating radar have also been used to determine the extent of the site. In addition to the cluster of buildings investigated in the south-west of the site, substantial buildings have now been found in other areas, as well as a long perimeter wall with southern and eastern gateways, and fragments of an older mudbrick wall outside that. At some point the settlement was destroyed by fire.

Also found recently in the materials used at the site was evidence of



## Dubai Natural History Group Recorders

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

Archaeology - Prof. John Fox  
jfox@aus.ac.ae  
(Temporarily away - hold your reports)

Birds - David Bradford  
davebradford9@hotmail.com

Seashells - Sandy Fowler  
res & fax 344 2243  
shellerdoc@yahoo.com

Astronomy - Lamjed El-Kefi  
res: 06-5247 958  
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  
vmc@latifaschool.co.ae

Plants - Valerie Chalmers

### Mammals - Recorder 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

marine creatures contemporary with the time of construction, indicating that Muweilih was not then an inland site. There was a lagoon nearby, probably where some of the structures of University City now stand.

### Defensive Structure in RAK

Ahmed Hilal, who works at the RAK Museum, reported on the excavations at Al-Najdi in Al-Ghubb in RAK. DNHG members who went on the field-trip with Christian Velde last year will remember this as the last site that we visited that day. It is in the midst of the decaying palm gardens which contain the ruined summer homes of wealthy UAE families from the days before air conditioning. Local legend says that this place was the birthplace of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century navigator, Ahmad bin Majid al-Najdi. The site, which was probably a defensive structure for the surrounding palm gardens, consisted of two circular towers connected by rectangular walls and surrounded by a ditch. Post-holes indicate the former existence of areesh houses inside the walls. Similar complexes are known from the Batinah coast in Oman.

### Iron Age Religion in Bithnah

Speaking on behalf of her colleague at CNRS, Anne Benoist, Sophie Mery described two seasons' work at a complex of three Iron Age II sites (1100 - 600 BC) in Bithnah, an oasis in the wadi beside the road from Masafi to Fujairah. Benoist believes that these sites were used for religious purposes. She found pottery with snake decorations, which may indicate use for fertility rituals, a canal for ablutions, pits with pots and animal bones which may indicate sacrifices, as well as altars and incense burners.

### Portuguese Forts of the Batinah

Geoffrey King, from ADIAS and the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University, described an early 17<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese map of the fortifications of the Arabian coast, made by order of the King. At that time the Portuguese empire was under threat from the British and the Dutch, as well as the

local forces of the Qawasim and the Omani, so the state of Portuguese defences was a matter of concern. The map shows Portuguese forts along the eastern coast of the UAE at Dibba, Bidya, Khorfakkan, Kalba and other places, all of which have completely disappeared. The largest of these forts was at Dibba. Along the Batinah, only the fortress at Sohar was bigger. Interestingly, the illustration of Dibba on the map shows the division of the area into three parts, with the fort in the middle, as it remains today. *Thanks to David Palmer.*

### The Trading Ports of Julfar and Kush, RAK

#### Part 1

Last year, Christian Velde, the professional archaeologist in Ras al Khaimah, led members of the Dubai Natural History Group to four sites that he has investigated. I will assert some anthropological license, and interpret the four sites we visited within the distinctive Arab Gulf community type of the trading port.

We must keep in mind that this tip of the Horn of Arabia has figured prominently in the historical annuals of the first civilization, and has been variously known as Magan (ca. 3000-1500 BC), and then probably as Maka as the peninsula adjacent to Hormuz, described by Arrian, Strabo, Pliny, Ammianus during Classical times (see Robert Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, Routledge, 2001). Arrian also mentions Alexander the Great planned to colonize the Gulf on the eve of his untimely death, for the area's great potential in maritime trade.

Perhaps the over riding characteristic of the Gulf urban community since time immemorial has been the multi-ethnic port town, nested within a society of strong Arab social organization (i.e. primarily segmentary lineages, see Peter Lienhardt, *Shaikhdoms of Eastern Arabia*, Palgrave 2001). The first glimpse begins with history itself, when the cuneiform clay texts of Mesopotamia, which mention ca. 3000 B.C. the pearl merchants of Dilmun and the importing timber on



ships to build temples. Dilmun is identified with the stone masonry complexes, perhaps from the 3,000s-1700 B.C. in Bahrain (T.G. Bibby, *Looking for Dilmun*, Penguin, 1970, Harriet Crawford, Robert Killick and Jane Moon, *The Dilmun Temple at Saar*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1997). The Mesopotamian origin myth, "Enki and Ninhursag," identifies Dilmun as the origin point of the world (a forerunner or analogy to the Garden of Eden). The archaeology of Dilmun, and indeed of much of the Gulf through the Bronze Age, until about 900 B.C., shows equally strong influences from Mesopotamia to the north and the Indus Harappan (or *Meluhha*, also mentioned in the Akkadian tablets, ca 2260 BC during the reign of Sargon) civilization of the sub-continent to the East.



Bronze Age Tools  
(From Mary Beardwood's *The Children's Encyclopaedia of Arabia*)

Two generations later the Akkadians thought it worth their while to conquer Magan and capture its ruler, Manium, who supplied copper ingots to Mesopotamia (in Frayne, Douglas, *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia*, Vol. 2, *Sargonic and Gutian Periods*, University of Toronto Press, 1993). However, the Horn suffered a decline along with Indus after about 1700 BC, and became a less prominent province within the wider Mesopotamian and/or Persian and Islamic spheres until the arrival of the Portuguese. While Dilmun continues to be mentioned in the chronicles of the Kassites, Assyrians (ca. early 700s BC) and the Babylonians (500s), Magan is not. Under Cyrus the Great, who conquered Babylon in 539 BC, our region of eastern Arabia fell under the control of the Persians, who held sway until the advent of Islam

in the 600s AD. At this time, the Emirates were known as the land of Khatt in a number of letters by Christian bishops with an eye to establishing missions in the 600s AD (Hoyland, p. 32).

Christian Velde cited another reference to the trading town prototype, in the likes of Sinbad the Sailor of *The Arabian Nights* fame, who legendarily hailed from Sohar on the opposite west coast. Sohar was of sufficient significance to be a likely candidate for the *Omania* noted by the geographer Pliny in describing the outer reaches of the Roman world. *Thanks to Prof. John Fox for this article which will be continued in our July/August issue.*

### *Paleolithic Tools in UAE?*

One of the major announcements at the recent 3rd Annual Symposium on Recent Archaeological Discoveries in the Emirates, held in Al Ain on April 6-7, was the news from Professor Hans-Peter Uerpmann of the first discovery of Palaeolithic flint tools in the UAE, pushing the history of human occupation of the country back over 100,000 years - and perhaps much, much more. Some of the tools were collected and identified by Uerpmann and colleagues from Germany's University of Tubingen, who have been excavating at Jebel Buhais in Sharjah with the Sharjah Directorate of Antiquities for several years.

Professor Uerpmann later informed DNHG representatives that the Palaeolithic tools collected to date include those reported by Stephen Green (a former DNHG member) in 1999 from north of Fili, which Steve had left with the Uerpmann team. In fact, a couple of Steve's tools were among those depicted in Prof. Uerpmann's slides. Steve's report had remarked that, from their appearance, they might be "very old." So, yet another major discovery related to the UAE's archaeology has been made by an interested amateur member of one of the three Natural History Groups, who recognized something unusual, recorded details, and passed it on to

a specialist to examine. Congratulations to Stephen Green. Who's next? *Report by Gary Feulner*

### *Hajar Mountain Boating*

"Extreme" sports are making an entrée in the UAE. Will whitewater rafting be one of them?

Those who have seen Chairman Gary Feulner's apartment have noted, among other things, a small, brightly coloured inflatable boat, propped out of the way but nevertheless conspicuous in the foyer. The Dashboat® was originally purchased at a roadside emporium in Dhaid, jointly with former DNHG Committee members Angela and Stephen Manthorpe, to float gear on a journey within Khor Kalba.

Thus it was fitting that Angela and Stephen celebrated their return to Hajar Mountain hiking in March by putting the Dashboat back into service, this time joining Gary to explore through and beyond an extended, permanently water-filled gorge, deep in the mountain hinterland of Khutwah. Angela and Stephen brought not only their wet-suit booties, but swim goggles as well, for an underwater tour.

The boat performed well and the choice proved a wise one, since at several points the pools were too deep, and the bottom too uncertain, to risk carrying overnight packs. The modest extra weight was a small price to pay for access to a new area.

The cool water of the pools was a tempting attraction on the return, but the trio forsook them in favor of a (successful) search for the "Northwest Passage" route home, which Gary had first heard about from local hunters on a visit to the area in 1997. *Report by Gary Feulner*

### Phoenix No. 21

The latest annual Phoenix has reached us, compiled and distributed by ABBA (Atlas of Breeding Birds of Arabia). This issue reports on new breeding records for Arabia



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(the Woodchat Shrike and the Pheasant-Tailed Jacana and, as always, briefly reviews a number of other publications about Arabian natural history in general.

Of particular interest to Dubai residents is the call for detailed breeding reports for the Southern Red Bishop (*Euplectes orix*), an African exotic that has maintained a presence in Dubai for some fifteen years, principally at Safa Park and the Dubai Fish Farm – apparently surviving numerous prunings of the vegetation at both sites. In their native environment in southern Africa they nest in small groups or colonies in reedbeds. The nest is also constructed of reeds and is egg-shaped with a side entrance.

Other UAE contributions include David Diskin on "The Breeding Birds of Al Warsen Lake" (i.e., Wimpey Pits), Simon Aspinall on "The

Mysterious Status of the Gulf Pallid Swift," and Colin Richardson on "The White Tailed Plover – Now an Established Resident in the UAE."

Our own Mohammed Arfan Asif contributed a marvelous photo of an adult Red-Wattled Plover cooling its speckled eggs with its wet breast feathers.

#### *Bulbuls in RAK Wadi*

Barbara Couldrey was out walking on the first weekend in April and saw a beautifully constructed nest in an acacia tree near Wadi Hakil. She identified it as probably belonging to yellow-vented bulbuls. Michael Gallagher's description - "a neat cup of plant stems, lined with hair, wool, etc. in a tree or bush. The eggs, three to five in number, are glossy pink, heavily spotted with brown and purple" - described her find well, and there were yellow

vented bulbuls in the area that day. Thanks to Barbara Couldrey for both text and photograph.



Members will not receive a copy of the Gazelle next month because the July and August Gazelles are combined. You will receive your next issue in the third or fourth week of August, in time for an enthusiastic start to our autumn activities.

## Dubai Natural History Group Programme

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

Sept 18                      The Making of "Arabia's Cycles of Life" - Jonathan Ali Khan

Oct 02                      Date Palm Cultivation - Geoff Sanderson

**Field Trips (Members only, please. Details inside.)**

Summer field trips to be announced.