EDITORIAL

Welcome to the September 2013 issue of focus, containing follow-ups to several key points of interest from last season. And welcome to the start of another busy season of ENHG activities!

Please note that our lecture meetings, normally at held at Emirates Hall – AD Women’s College city campus, will now start a half hour earlier at 7:00 PM. We kick off our lecture series in Sept with talks on archaeology in Syria and the natural history of the Arabian Gulf (see pp 5-6). Sept 7th, our field trip programme (see p. 8) gets started with a visit to the Sharjah Desert Park (natural history museum, Arabian wildlife centre & kid’s farm).

And of course, this season it will be our chapter’s turn to host the Inter-Emirates Weekend (probably in late February 2014 – date and details TBA). This year the IEW focus will be points of interest on or near Abu Dhabi Island itself. Stay tuned for further announcements!

We give warm farewells to Ronnie Gallagher, who has just left the UAE for a job in N. Iraq, and to Rex Sartain, now back in the UK. We will miss them! Now we must appeal for someone to replace Ronnie on our Field Trip Coordinators’ team. Rex has handed over the Treasurer’s position to Avra—but only till Feb, when she has to leave! Currently, we also still need a Lecture Coordinator to help keep our lectures coming smoothly. See top of p. 8 for our current Committee vacancies.

We also pass along the sad news that Carol James, wife of former ENHG Chairman Steve James, passed away this July. Our sincere condolences go to her family.

Finally, please note the re-arranged Websites of General Interest panel on pp 5-6 of this issue; also note on the bottom of p 8 the insertion of a link to an index of Focus issues uploaded on www.enhg.org in which you can search for subjects, titles & names of contributors in this newsletter during the seasons from 2007 to 2013.

Keith Taylor

Jan Visit to Tell Abraq & Ed Dur Sites

Though a strong shamaal windstorm the weekend of Jan 12th cancelled our camping trip, it cleared up just in time to allow Prof Peter Magee to proceed with a very illuminating tour of Tell Abraq. This multi-layered site lies astride the Sharjah-Umm Al Quwain border (marked by the white pole on top of the tell). On this issue’s cover Dr Magee is shown with our group at this site pointing to the site of the Umm an Nar period communal tomb, c 2100 BCE. Adjacent are walls of structures built up against a central watchtower, shown behind him, which dates to around 2500 BCE. Proposed as being ancient ‘Magan’, this was a transhipment point between Mesopotamia & the Indus Valley, occupied continuously till Hellenistic times in the 1st Millennium BCE.

The site was first excavated by a team from Iraq in the early 1970s, at the request of Sheikh Zayed. The main excavation, begun by Prof Magee’s mentor Prof Dan Potts in 1989, has since turned up important historical clues at the site. Notably, finds included high proportions of young male camel bones and a ceramic figurine of a saddled camel, helping to fix the date of the camel’s
domestication, crucial to trading, at ca. 1,000 BCE. Excavation of trenches on the tell’s north side next season should reveal more about the layout & purpose of the newly discovered perimeter wall.

Prof Magee also explained how strontium isotope analysis of camels' teeth can reveal their lifetime grazing range. NB: ENHG has funded tooth analysis from Profs Magee & Uerpmann’s associated inland site at Muweilah. We look forward to the results mid-2014.

After the Tell Abraq visit, we were met at the UAQ Museum by Obaid, a UAQ native & tour guide in the making, whose local perspective was most helpful. A look at the former Palace of UAQ’s Rulers was followed by the bonus spontaneously arranged opening of the UAQ Antiquities Museum across the road. It houses a marvellous collection of artefacts, jewellery & pottery, from Tell Abraq, Ed Dur & other important UAQ sites, and was the perfect complement to that day’s site visits. We were also honoured to receive a very well-illustrated book on the museum’s collections on behalf of the ENHG-AD, which will be on display near the book sales table at ENHG meetings during the upcoming season.

Obaid then led us to the Roman era site of Ed Dur (“The houses”, so-called as it was the largest permanent settlement at the time). He was happy to speculate that he himself might even be a descendant of the people of Ed Dur, as his family has lived here beyond memory.

Save Cheetahs from Extinction, UAE Owners Urged

We reprint, with permission from The National, the following article published on May 27th prior to Dr Marker’s talk to our Group about her conservation work.

Several wildlife centres in the UAE already participate in international captive breeding programmes. However, Dr Laurie Marker, one of the world's top experts on cheetahs, says individuals with one or two animals also have a part to play.

Dr Marker, who lives in Namibia, is the founder and executive director of the Cheetah Conservation Fund, which operates a number of initiatives to protect the animals.

She is the keeper of the international cheetah stud book that is used to plan captive breeding programmes. Animals from different collections around the world are brought together to mate, according to a schedule designed to maximise the genetic viability of the total captive population.

"We've helped the world to develop a cooperative programme to manage the animals properly, to care for them properly and communicate about their animals," said Dr Marker. "This is what I'd like to see here."

Big cats are in demand from collectors and exotic pet owners in the UAE. A recent study by the Ministry of the Interior's 999 Magazine found that cheetahs were popular and were readily available to buy. The species is classified as threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Dr Marker urged private owners to register their animals with the breeding scheme or consider setting up breeding programmes here. It would also be possible for the cats’ sperm to be banked.

Dr Anne Schmidt-Küntzel, who works for the fund, said: "If the owner is not able to breed cheetahs because they are isolated or have just one animal, a veterinarian can collect the sperm and then bank it for the future so that the genetic diversity of the individual is available to future generations if needed.

"Some of these animals are very valuable genetically, especially ones removed from the wild."

Dr Marker, who has worked with cheetahs for 40 years, arrived in the UAE yesterday to deliver a series of talks for the Emirates Natural History Group.

"I'm here to talk about cheetah health, cheetah care and cheetah conservation," she said.

"Everyone here loves cheetahs, but I want to help them know more about why love needs to equal conservation."

She said she would like to see owners sharing information and learning more about the needs of their animals.

"It seems like here it's behind closed doors," Dr Marker said. "I've been told that many people don't want
anything to do with sharing, and yet it is so much better to share.

"I'm not sure if there's enough awareness of how rare the animals are in the wild. We need help to keep them in the wild, and this is a pretty rich area to have people realise they can contribute to species survival. We want to open the doors on it in a positive way."

Some wildlife experts condemn the keeping of cheetahs and other wild animals by individuals and say it should not be allowed. However, captive breeding can help to protect wild populations by meeting the demand for animals.

"The amount of good breeding that's gone on is important," said Dr Marker. "There is a lot of illegal trade that's going on.

"Worldwide we're trying to keep wild cheetahs living in the wild."

Emirati vet Dr Majid Al Qassimi said there was growing awareness of the impact that the illegal trade in wild animals could have.

"There are new laws that are coming into play and enforcement along with them," he said. "The country is moving in the right direction. These things take time, but we see progress. It's all about awareness, it's all about education."

Mr Campbell, a chemistry teacher at the British School Al Khubairat, is chairman of the Emirates Bird Records Committee, which has carried out extensive work to record and count populations of important resident and migratory birds.

He was awarded the Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohammed Prize for Natural History. "This is a big honour, if you look at some of the people who have received this award before," Mr Campbell said.

For 20 years, the award has recognised some of the most prominent researchers and conservationists. Past recipients include influential naturalist Gary Feulner and the late Simon Aspinall, author of several influential books including Breeding Birds of the UAE. "To be in company like this is very touching," said Mr Campbell, 38.

He was chosen because of his original research and publication of topics related to UAE natural history. He has written extensively, in local and international scientific publications.

Mr Campbell plans to continue researching and recording rare and endangered bird species such as the Socotra Cormorant, of which Abu Dhabi hosts 35 per cent of the world's population.

Ms Jabado, 33, is a postgraduate student at UAE University and has been studying sharks in the Arabian Gulf since 2011.

Her work provides baseline data on the Gulf's sharks for the first time. It also provides knowledge on the biology of sharks and UAE shark fishing - both of which are important for setting up conservation policies.

She said she was surprised to learn she was chosen for the Bish Brown Award. "It shows people really care about my project, and I am very happy about that."

The Lebanese national is now completing her thesis.

"My first choice will be to stay in the UAE and work with sharks," she said. "Ideally, I would like to stay and build on my research here."

Ms Jabado is also interested in helping to develop policies to protect sharks in the UAE and the Gulf.

Mr Campbell and Ms Jabado received their awards from Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development.

He spoke of the importance of the work done by the conservationists and by the Emirates Natural History Group. "This is a very important society, established here for a very long time," said Sheikh Nahyan, who is also the group's patron. "This society creates through its members, awareness on how to protect the UAE's environment."

"It also contributes to recording baseline environmental information for future generations."

Through its work, the group contributes to continuing the vision of Sheikh Zayed, founding father of the UAE, who had a great interest in preserving the UAE's flora and fauna", Sheikh Nahyan said.

Colin Simpson / The National

Abu Dhabi Chemistry Teacher is One of Two Honoured at Natural History Awards

Below we re-print, with permission, the article from The National, by Vesela Todorova, published on June 5, 2013, about the official presentation of the ENHG’s two natural history awards on June 4th – also referred to in the June 2013 issue of Focus. –Ed.

he annual natural history awards by the Emirates Natural History Group.

Shiekh Nahyan bin Mubarak, Minister for Culture, Youth and Community Development, presents the annual natural history award to Oscar Campbell, a teacher at the British School Al Khubairat and bird conservationist, at his majlis in Abu Dhabi.

Photo: Pawan Singh / The National

Bird conservationist Oscar Campbell and shark researcher Rima Jabado were yesterday awarded the annual natural history awards by the Emirates Natural History Group.

Vesela Todorova / The National

NB: Also see WAM article in June 2013 focus, p. 6.
Update: Volunteer Teachers at Nepal Hill Country School

We reprint from DNHG’s Gazelle, June 2013, an update to the appeal that appeared in April 2013 focus. –Ed.

Narayan Karki has written to update us on the volunteer teacher situation at GN English Boarding School, which was reported in the last Gazelle. Thanks largely to our friends at ENHG and St. Andrews in Abu Dhabi, the school will now host five summer volunteers, mostly from NYU Abu Dhabi, who will visit in pairs from June through August. In addition, the school’s original long-term volunteer will arrive in July; the family medical problems that delayed her have been diagnosed and resolved. Finally, the school has received expressions of interest in other long-term positions extending through the balance of the school year, which are being pursued. Narayan extends a big thank you to all who have tried to help.

Gary Feulner

Update: Educational Materials Funded by Can Collection Drive

Partly with the help of cans collected from ENHG donations, “Mike” Manlogon was able to provide sets of school supplies this June to 60 children at Perez Central Elementary School and 140 2nd & 3rd graders at Pambuhan Elementary School (see below). Besides this, Michael, a sales manager in AD, is also supporting three children in different parts of the Philippines as a World Vision monthly donor – all from his recycling fund. We encourage ENHG members to bring in aluminium cans to our meetings so we can pass them on to him. We also urge members to bring in plastic bottle caps, now recyclable as well. A suggestion from Michael: try adopting a restaurant to collect cans & caps from. –Ed.

Grateful children at Perez Central Elementary School

Children & teachers at Pambuhan Elementary School

Photographs Courtesy of Michael Manlogon

Upcoming Speakers

ENHG member Munir El Kadi, originally from Iraq with strong links to Syria through his grandmother, is an Education Technology Web Developer for HCT at the Abu Dhabi Women’s College. With a Master’s degree in Physics and Informatics, and an abiding interest in the early human history of the Middle East, he has keen interests in photography and archaeology. In this talk at the start of this ENHG season, Munir will be assisted by his wife, Jennifer. They will share photographs, reports and insights from visits to two archaeological sites in Syria in a presentation titled, Two Important Archeological Sites in Syria: Tal Sabi Abyad & Amrit.

Tal Sabi Abyad (near Hamman Al Turkman in Northern Syria) is a Neolithic settlement 80 kms north of Raqqa on the Balikh River in Syria going back to 5,000 BC Late Neolithic. It has been extensively excavated by groups from the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, led by Prof. D.J.W. Meijer. Munir will begin the presentation with his documentation of a day in the dig at Tal Hammam based on his visit there in 2001. He will then draw comparisons with other similar sites, based more on research than with direct personal experience of the latter site, sharing the implications about life in what is now the Levant during Neolithic times.

The second site, Amrit (known to the Greeks as Marathos), is a Phoenician site on the Mediterranean eight kms south of Tatrousa and was an extension of the main Phoenician settlement of Arwad Island. Jennifer will describe their visit there in 2006 and will tell us what that site reveals about the lives and religious traditions of the Phoenicians in the period from third millennium BC until its destruction in the 3rd century BC. Due to the site’s decline from prominence in the Greek and Roman eras, the Phoenician monuments of Amrit did not undergo alterations later in their history. As a result, in contrast to nearby sites like Arwad and Tartous, Amrit today preserves Phoenician remains of the highest significance. Phoenician culture is known for its openness to outside influences, making Amrit a highly important site for archaeologists to study.

Amrit religious graves
Dr. John Burt is the head of the Marine Biology Laboratory at New York University Abu Dhabi. Dr. Burt has extensive experience working on coral reefs throughout the Gulf and surrounding region, having published numerous scientific articles and book chapters on the marine ecology of the Gulf. Dr. Burt's lab has a strong capacity building focus and he has offered multiple marine monitoring and research training workshops to UAE and GCC national stakeholders in recent years and hosted the largest ever regional conference 'Coral Reefs of the Gulf' in 2012, attended by representatives from 19 different countries, including every GCC nation. He and his research team examine the implications for environmental extremes and climate change on coral and coral reef fish communities.

The Gulf is a young sea with naturally hostile environmental conditions compared with most subtropical regions, yet it contains a number of interesting and unique marine habitats that support associated flora and fauna, and they also provide goods and services of benefit to coastal human populations. Dr Burt’s lecture to the ENHG on September 17th will be titled *A Natural History of the Gulf: A Fragile and Unique Marine Ecosystem*. The goal of this lecture will be to provide an overview of the unique environment of the Arabian Gulf and to highlight the major marine ecosystems associated with it from the intertidal areas down to the depths of the Gulf, including sabkhas, beaches, rocky shores, soft-bottom habitats, seagrass beds, and coral reefs. This non-technical lecture will provide an excellent overview of the Gulf for attendees new to the region, as well as more detailed information for those with longer regional experience. The talk will end with a short segment describing some of the research being conducted by Dr. Burt's team at the NYU Abu Dhabi marine biology laboratory.

Musandam Coral Reef, near Ras al Khaimah

*The Editor thanks the above speakers for providing autobiographical information & photos for Focus.*
### Websites of General Interest, Cont’d.

#### II. Websites of UAE-based affiliated organisations:
- Emirates Wildlife Society – World Wildlife Fund: [http://wwf.panda.org/who_we_are/wwf_offices/united_arab_emirates/](http://wwf.panda.org/who_we_are/wwf_offices/united_arab_emirates/)
  
  [EAD Online Library: [http://library.ead.ae](http://library.ead.ae)]
  
  (Still using ADACH website)
- Noukhada Adventure Co.: [http://noukhada.ae](http://noukhada.ae)
- Dubai Astronomy Group: [http://www.dubiastronomy.com](http://www.dubiastronomy.com)
- Sharjah Museums: [http://www.sharjahmuseums.ae](http://www.sharjahmuseums.ae)

#### III. UAE-based & regional informational websites:
- An outline of Systematic Conservation Planning
  
  [http://dev.grida.no/rob/Hyder/index.html#1](http://dev.grida.no/rob/Hyder/index.html#1) [by AGEDI]
- UAE archaeology website: [http://www.adias-uae.com](http://www.adias-uae.com)
- NYUAD Events Calendar: [http://nyuad.nyu.edu/news.events/events.ad.html](http://nyuad.nyu.edu/news.events/events.ad.html)
- Khalifa University Events Calendar:
  
  [http://www.kustar.ac.ae/campus/dss/schedules/default.asp](http://www.kustar.ac.ae/campus/dss/schedules/default.asp)
- The Rock Art of the Hajar Mountains:
  
- Arabian Wildlife: [http://www.arabianwildlife.com](http://www.arabianwildlife.com)
- Wildlife Middle East News: [http://www.wmenews.com](http://www.wmenews.com)
- Zoology in the Middle East (Peer-reviewed ISI Journal):
  
  [http://www.kasperek-verlag.de/ZME-allgen.htm](http://www.kasperek-verlag.de/ZME-allgen.htm)
- Sharkwatch Arabia: [http://www.sharkwatcharabia.com](http://www.sharkwatcharabia.com)
- Foundation for the Protection of the Arabian Leopard in Yemen: [http://www.yemenileopard.org](http://www.yemenileopard.org)

#### IV. International informational websites:
- ARKive Images of Life on Earth: [http://www.arkive.org](http://www.arkive.org)
  
- EDGE: Evolutionarily Distinct & Globally Endangered:
  
  [http://www.edgeofexistence.org](http://www.edgeofexistence.org)
- Protected Planet: IUCN & UNEP-WCMC database: [http://www.protectedplanet.net](http://www.protectedplanet.net)
- Cheetah Conservation Fund: [http://www.cheetah.org](http://www.cheetah.org)
  
  [Bushblok: [http://www.bushblok.com](http://www.bushblok.com)]
- Fish base: [http://www.fishbase.org](http://www.fishbase.org)

### In the News Media

#### The National, June 18: Life remains a struggle for the Arabian oryx

- [The National, June 6: What would you pay to save the coral? UAE residents asked](http://www.thenational.ae/national/environment/what-would-you-pay-to-save-the-coral-uae-residents-asked)
- [The National July 5: Dragonfly species thought extinct found in UAE wadi](http://www.thenational.ae/national/environment/dragonfly-species-thought-extinct-found-in-uae-wadi)
- [The National, July 22: Record numbers of flamingos breeding at Abu Dhabi reserve](http://www.thenational.ae/national/environment/record-numbers-of-flamingos-breeding-at-abu-dhabi-reserve)
- [The National, July 28: Fossils show Abu Dhabi was once a savannah](http://www.thenational.ae/national/environment/fossils-show-abu-dhabi-was-once-a-savannah)
- [The National, Aug 30: Dubai Zoo calls on public to name newborn penguin](http://www.thenational.ae/national/environment/dubai-zoo-calls-on-public-to-name-newborn-penguin)

### ITEMS ON SALE

**AT THE ENHG BOOK STALL**

_All prices are in dirhams._

- **Jebel Hafit – A Natural History, 100**
  
  An attractive, encyclopaedic presentation of the natural resources of this national landmark. (Free copies available for schools donations.)
- **Abu Dhabi 8 Million Years Ago, 15**
- **Birds of the UAE - A guide to common and important species, 60**
- **Birds of the UAE - Helm field guide, 70**
- **Sandgrouse - Checklist of the birds of the United Arab Emirates, 25**
- **Emirates Bird Report, 20**
- **Birdwatching guide to Oman, 2nd edition, 100 Guide to bird watching spots in Oman.**
- **Common Birds in Oman, 2nd ed, 120**
- **Exploring Oman, 120**
- **Native Plants of Oman, 80**
- **Natural History of Oman, 50**
- **Native Plants of Oman, 80**
- **Little O in Oman, 25**
- **Butterflies of Saudi Arabia & its neighbours, 90**
- **Sulphur, Camels and Gunpowder, 100**
- **Wild about mammals, 40**
- **Focus on Fujairah: Through Minie’s lens 1964-2001, 150**
- **Field Guide: Wild Plants in Oman, 300**
- **Tribulus, our annual Journal - Enquire re. details**
Lectures
Meeting Venue: Abu Dhabi Women’s College, City Campus Emirates Halls
Now starting: 7:00 PM
Sept 3rd 7:00 PM
Two Archaeological Sites in Syria: Tal Sabi Abyad & Amrit

Muin El Kadi & Jennifer Hasenknopf

Field Trips
Sept 7th Daytrip to Sharjah Desert Park

Keith Taylor

Oct 1st 7:00 PM
Introduction to Amateur Astronomy

Denis Cheng

ENHG-AD Research & Conservation Fund Grant Application Information
For background on this fund, see Dec 2009 Focus, p.5.
For further enquiries and for grant application guidelines and application form, contact ENHG Deputy Chairman Keith Taylor at kjtaylor13@yahoo.com.
NB: These documents are posted in the Files section of the AUHENHG YahooGroup (see address below).

ENHG Equipment for Members’ Use
The following ENHG equipment is available for members’ use during field trips or on request:
- Starter camping set: 2 new sleeping bags & maps, medium-sized cool box, old Coleman ‘5-man’ tent
- GPS unit – GARMIN GPSMAP 60CSx
- First-Aid Kit
- Birding Telescope
- Two satellite phones, taken on camping trips.
- Enquiries: Keith Taylor, kjtaylor13@yahoo.com
- Celestron NexStar telescope (on field trips only)
- Sky Scout astronomical object locator/identifier
- Enquiries: Denis Cheng, spacemandc@gmail.com

Marine Life Rescue Contact Info.
In Abu Dhabi:
EAD Customer Service: 800555 (or) customerservice@ead.ae
EAD Emergency Response (pollution and wildlife) available 24 hours/day: Mob 050 6674171 (or) 050 6178218

In Dubai:
Emirates Marine Environment Group (EMEG) (Tel: 043630581/Fax:043630460; Email: info@emeg.ae)
Dubai Municipality: Main number: 800900. Marine Environment & Sanctuaries Unit (Tel: +9714 606 6818, Fax +9714 703 3532), Email: marabdulla@dm.gov.ae.
Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Centre at the Burj al Arab Aquarium. Tel: 043011798. 24-hour email contact, Attn. Mr Warren Baverstock, Manager of Operations, BAA Aquarium: warren.baverstock@jumeirah.com To post Facebook message triggering an after-hours SMS alert: www.facebook.com/turtle.rehabilitation

ENHG-AD Postal Address / YahooGroups Website
ENHG c/o Environment Agency - PO Box 45553, Abu Dhabi, UAE http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/AUHENHG
(Click Join button to sign up for ENHG info.)

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Lecture Coordinator
Corporate Sponsorship Sec.
Public Relations Sec.
Field Trip Coordinator #4
Meeting Assistant
Treasurer – by Feb. 2014
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