

# NOTES AND QUERIES

## New ostrich shell finds

The range of the Arabian race of the Ostrich *Struthio camelus syriacus*, the 'Syrian Ostrich', extinct for several decades, is known to have extended into the deserts of the United Arab Emirates, although the species probably disappeared from the UAE early this century, if not earlier. Occasional reports of ostrich shell fragments being found in desert areas of Abu Dhabi emirate testify to its former presence. It should be noted,

however, that the presence of ostrich shell fragments is not in itself an indication of a former breeding site, since complete shells were formerly used as strong and serviceable containers for liquids by the country's nomadic population. Human artefacts, or a hearth site at least, almost invariably accompany the finds, so if you find shell fragments always be on the lookout for other items.

New finds have recently been reported by Chris Drew, of Abu Dhabi's Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency, ERWDA, by Jakub Czastka and Simon Aspinall from the Abu Dhabi Islands

Archaeological Survey, ADIAS and Anthony Harris (see p25-27). All are documented here.

Site	Coordinates	Notes
South-west of Al Wagan	23° 38' 04N 55° 21' 50E	hearth & flints
South-west of Tawi al Qisemah	23° 54' 04N 54° 53' 34E	
South-west of Bida Mutawa	23° 44' 12N 52° 34' 13E	
South-west of Bida Mutawa	23° 45' 38N 52° 34' 13E	Late Stone Age <sup>1</sup> flints
Northern Sabkhat Matti	23° 54' 27N 52° 22' 28E	charcoal & unworked flint
South of Liwa oasis	22° 53' N 54° 21' E	Late Stone Age flints

In order to keep records up to date, please report any findings to ADIAS, P.O. Box 45553, Abu Dhabi. If possible take a GPS reading. Although this may tell little about the ecology of an extinct<sup>2</sup> breed, it may prove of value to continuing archaeological investigations.

## Reference

Whybrow, P.J., Hill, A. & Al Tikriti W.Y. (1991). **Miocene fossils from Abu Dhabi**. *Tribulus* 1.1:4-9.

<sup>1</sup>Late Stone Age (Neolithic) is 5000+years BP

<sup>2</sup>Whybrow *et al.* (1991) reports the finding of fossil ostrich shell of late Miocene Age (5-7 million years BP) in beds of the Baynunah Formation. The shell was of inordinate thickness compared to that of modern ostriches, being respectively 3.56mm and 1.2mm thick.

SIMON ASPINALL

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## New wetland plants for the UAE: *Potamogeton pectinatus* L. and *Zannichellia palustris* L.

In one of the recent **Tribulus** issues (*Tribulus* 7.1) I reported about a variety of different wetland systems and plants that occur in the Emirates, both marine and freshwater. The article discussed the lack of botanical knowledge concerning the country's wetlands. Also a few plant species, previously not known to occur in the UAE, were documented for the first time.

Two other new wetland species, *Zannichellia palustris* L., of the Zannichelliaceae family, and *Potamogeton pectinatus* L., of the Potamogetonaceae family were found in the months of February and March 1998 in Abu Dhabi Emirate.

*Z. palustris* was collected from a brackish water pool close to the Liwa at exactly 22°52'13.27" N and 54°22'27.59" E. The pool was a man-made bulldozed depression, 5m x 5m in size, with a water depth of about 1m. The pool edges (above the water line) were dominated by *Zygophyllum mandavillei* Hadidi, and there were also specimen of *Tamarix* sp. and *Cistanche tubulosa* (Schrenk) Hook. f. *Z. palustris* grew submerged in the pool. We found the water to be strongly saline. At the ERWDA laboratory we analysed the water for pH, electrical conductivity, and the NaCl concentration. The pH value was neutral with pH 6.5 at 25.8°C. The electric conductivity was 24.1 mS (milliSiemens), and the refractometer value was 1.4% NaCl.

Another species, *Potamogeton pectinatus* L. was found inundated in the brackish water pools of Ayn al Faida, close to Jebel Hafeet. The water tasted mildly saline, and we measured 0.0% NaCl, pH 6.6 at 25.1°C, and

11.8 mS electric conductivity. The remaining vegetation of the pool was dominated by *Phragmites australis* (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud., and the edges of the lake were dominated by *Tamarix* sp. and *Juncus* sp. above the water line.

*Potamogeton pectinatus* L. and *Zannichellia palustris* L. are to the author's knowledge not previously reported for the UAE, and are new plant species for the UAE check list. The findings once again confirm the lack of floristic knowledge of the Emirates. *Potamogeton pectinatus* L. was previously reported for Saudi Arabia (Collenette 1985; Mandaville 1990), and for Oman (Ghazanfar 1992), and *Zannichellia palustris* L. is known to occur in Saudi Arabia (Collenette 1985; Mandaville 1990), but not for Oman. The species are known to occur in fresh or brackish water.

Sincere thanks go to ERWDA colleague, Dr Ron Phillips, to Dr Shahina Ghazanfar in Muscat, who confirmed our identification, and to Steve Britsch who kindly helped with the water analyses.

## References

Böer, B. (1997). **New wetland plants in the UAE**. *Tribulus* 7.1 pp. 22-23.

Collenette, S. (1985). **An illustrated guide to the flowers of Saudi Arabia**. Scorpion Publishing Ltd., London. 514p.

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Mandaville, J.P. (1990). **Flora of Eastern Saudi Arabia**. Kegan Paul International, London. 482p.

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