

# RECORDERS' REPORTS FOR JANUARY-JUNE 1991

## Archaeology and Palaeontology

Thanks to the war in the northern Gulf earlier in the year, there was a substantial reduction in the amount of activity by foreign teams investigating the archaeology and palaeontology of the Emirates.

The only team to work a full season on the archaeological front in the period from January to March was the British team led by Dr. Geoffrey King of London University, at the site of Julfar in Ras al Khaimah. A report on his findings can be found elsewhere in this issue of TRIBULUS. There was also a short dig undertaken by archaeologists from Japan, again on the Julfar site.

On the palaeontological front, Peter Whybrow, of the British Museum (Natural History) continued his ADCO-sponsored work examining the Miocene outcrops in the Western Region of Abu Dhabi Emirate, collecting a substantial number of new fossils, and also finding time to give us a talk on January 21st.

Again on the palaeontological side, Dr. Andrew Smith, of the BM(NH), carried out a preliminary survey, sponsored by ADCO, of the late Cretaceous fossil outcrops, (of the Simsim Formation), to be found in the mountains between Al Ain and Dhaid, including Jebel Huwayyah, (Fossil Valley), Jebel Rawdah, Jebel Buhays and Jebel Faiyah.

The focus of his work was on fossil echinoids, (sea urchins), and he received considerable assistance from several Group members, including Bish Brown and Carolyn Lehmann, Jose de Matos and Dr. Terry Adams,

(our former Vice Chairman who was then General Manager of ADCO).

He will be continuing the work in early 1992, and we hope to publish his preliminary report, as well as additional material prepared by Carolyn Lehmann, in a future issue of TRIBULUS.

As far as the Group itself is concerned, there were two events worth noting.

In April, Dr. Terry Adams led a weekend outing to Al Ain, focussing on Fossil Valley, which attracted the greatest turn-out yet for a Group weekend — nearly 150 people.

In May, a number of Group members visited the island of Sir Bani Yas to carry out a multi-disciplinary, albeit very quick, survey of the natural history and archaeology of the island. A collection of surface pottery was made by Carolyn Lehmann, (now in the Al Ain Museum), most of which was fairly recent, but some of which may be from the First Millenium BC. A number of possible graves and Miocene rock outcrops were also identified, which will be studied later.

In the autumn and winter of 1991, Geoffrey King will resume work at Ras al Khaimah, and Peter Whybrow in Abu Dhabi's Western Region, (including Sir Bani Yas). Professor Ernie Haerinck of Ghent University in Belgium is also expected to resume work at Ad Door in Umm al Qaiwain and in Ajman.

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Archaeology Recorder

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## Birds

In January individual observers contributed some shorebird records to the Asian Wetland Bureau during the two-week count period in the middle of the month. The number of waders wintering in the southern Arabian Gulf is unknown but quite possibly significant in international terms. Counts were done at Khor al Beidah, (Umm al Qaiwain), Khor Dubai and Dhabbiyah but the vast shallow tidal flats, islands and mangroves west of Abu Dhabi island were not surveyed. Understandably so, as access is difficult by both road and sea. It is hoped that some aerial survey work of the area will be done later in 1991 in order to identify particular areas to visit on the ground during the 1992 AWB survey.

Oil slicks arising from the Gulf War did not cause widespread mortality and the damage, in the short term at least, appears to have been confined to the northern Gulf. Judging from television pictures the worst affected species were Black-necked Grebes and Socotra Cormorants. In our area Socotra Cormorants, frustratingly difficult to count, are a common resident breeder. A brave effort to assess the numbers coming to roost at Fatair Island off Ruwais was made in late March — 100,000 birds! Easier to count were the flocks of

Greater Flamingos which were present at a number of sites. Most birds departed in spring to their breeding lakes in Iran and the Soviet Union but some, probably younger birds, will stay through the summer. Largest numbers were reported at Khor Dubai, 1500-2000, with smaller numbers at Al Ghar Lake, Ramtha Tip, and other coastal locations.

A flock of 25 White Storks spent the winter in the fields of Ras al Khaimah at Digdagg being last seen on 5 April. Most UAE records refer to here and similar habitat on the east coast. Further south at Ramtha Tip in Sharjah, two birds from 1990 remained there until the second week of February — Black Kite and Pied Kingfisher. Single Barbary Falcons at Dhabbiyah and Jebel Hafit in the winter months and then two birds together at Diftah on 4 April add to the total number of sightings but do little to resolve the mystery of the species' status in the country.

Abu Dhabi maintained its local monopoly on Honey Buzzard records with two individuals present in the Bateen area, one of which was still present, oddly, until June. Amongst the common winter visitors were a smattering of single Black-throated Thrushes from most emirates, usually at coastal locations but also at