

# RECORDERS REPORTS

## Archaeology and Palaeontology

With the Recorder's Report in the last issue, (*Tribulus* Vol. 4.1, April 1994, P. 25), having covered, in outline at least, the details of the whole of the 1993/1994 winter season of activity, there is, not surprisingly, little to report from the summer months, during which the weather prevents both foreign and local teams from undertaking much activity outside the laboratory or away from the drawing board or report-writing computer.

The only outdoors work of any significance has been rescue excavation on a Third Millennium site at Umm Suqeim in Dubai, where an Umm an Nar tomb and settlement originally identified by our member Carolyn Lehmann was partially damaged as a result of construction work. Swift action by the Dubai Museum managed to halt the work, and a rescue dig was undertaken by Dr. Hussein Kandeel. A complete dig is planned for this winter, and will be undertaken by Professor Dan Potts.

As usual, the UAE figured prominently at the annual Seminar for Arabian Studies in London, with papers being presented, among others, by Dr. Geoffrey King, (on the Sir Bani Yas excavations - see Page 5), and Carl Phillips on his work in Kalba.

The 1994/1995 winter season began in early October, with the Al Ain Department of Antiquities and Tourism being first into the field. An early discovery, in October, was the first site ever found in Al Ain from the period around the beginning of the Christian era. Foreign teams will once again be active, with work planned by the Potts-led Australians in Dubai, Sharjah and Fujairah, the Germans and Japanese in Ras al Khaimah, the French in Sharjah, the Belgians in Umm al Qaiwain, and the British-led Abu Dhabi 'Islands team both onshore

and offshore in Abu Dhabi. The first focus of the latter will be the Late Stone Age site at Merawah.

Group members, as usual, have been relatively quiet insofar as field activity is concerned, although a second brief survey of the island of Bal Ghelam, east of Abu Dhabi, was carried out at the end of September.

With attendance at Group talks on archaeology suggesting that there is very considerable interest in the country's ancient heritage, it is a pity that some members cannot be persuaded to get out more into the field.

On the palaeontological front, the focus will be a conference planned next March under the aegis of ENHG Patron and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak al Nahayan. The first conference ever on the fossils of Arabia, it will review the academic results of the work undertaken in the past few years in the Bainuna region, and is being supported by our Corporate member ADCO.

Discoveries in the UAE's archaeology and palaeontology remain one of the more exciting areas of research taking place locally, and it is pleasing to see growing support for the work not only from Government but also from the corporate sector.

One result, may be the feeling that there is no way in which the amateur can take part. The scientists, however, remain delighted to collaborate with volunteers, some of whom have helped to identify significant new sites over the years, and Group members should not feel there is no place for them. On the contrary.

PETER HELLYER  
Recorder



## Birds

After one of the driest winters on record migration was rather slow to get into gear in the early part of the year.

However, **Blyth's Pipits** certainly pumped adrenalin back into the system when three were reported from Dibba and one from Abu Dhabi on March 27 and March 29. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was found in Abu Dhabi on March 29, and a **Semi-collared** was there on April 6.

The Emirates Golf Course turned up quality birds, as it often does, with up to three **Barred Warblers** from March 25-April 14, up to two male **White-throated Robins** from March 29-April 20, two **White-tailed Plovers** on April 5, single **Corncrakes** on April 14 and 20, a **Spotted Crane** on April 20, a (**Hume's**) **Yellow-browed Warbler** also on April 20 and three **Masked Shrikes** from April 10-14. Several **Hume's Lesser Whitethroats** were seen in the Dubai area from March 27 to April 14.

Probably the star attractions were at least 64 **Grey Hypocollius** feeding on ripe berries in a small wood near the Al Wathba Camel track, first found on March 24 and staying for at least five days. Lucky for some, a male **Finsch's Wheatear** was present at the race track fields nearby on March 27.

During studies of **Lesser Kestrel** migration, 109 birds were found circling over a field at Hamraniyah on April 7, a record number for the UAE. On the same day, a

flock of over 100 **Pale Rock Sparrows** were feeding among the stones on the edge of Wadi Bih. Higher up in the wadi, a **Long-billed Pipit** and several **Trumpeter Finches** were heard in song on April 2. **Plain Leaf Warblers** stayed late in the mountains this year, with one still present on April 1.

During a month of massive passage by swifts, (**Common** and **Pallid**), an **Alpine Swift** (7th record), was seen near Kalba on March 31, while in Al Ain a **Little Swift** (also 7th record), was over the camel track on April 5.

Late spring is usually quiet in the Emirates, with only the tail end of migration visible when a few **Nightjars**, **Cuckoos**, **Red-backed Shrikes** and **Spotted Flycatchers** are still wending their way north. Thousands of **Marsh Warblers** passed through the Emirates during the first two weeks of May.

Contrary to the usual pattern, however, three new species for the country were reported between May 6-9. The first to be found was a **Blyth's Reed Warbler**, long expected, and reported by several observers over the years, but never conclusively identified in the hand. The bird was trapped by Erik Hirschfeld at Zabeel fish ponds in Dubai on May 6. The next day, a smart male **Pied Stonechat** turned up at the Emirates Golf Club in Jebel Ali, only a second record for the Gulf States. Perhaps the most interesting was a **White-eyed Gull**, found on