

2011/12 SEASON

Qatar Natural History Group

Newsletter # 1
October 2011





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Front Cover Picture:

Taken from February 2011 Ramble Report by Bronwyn Donaldson.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Welcome from the new Chair:

I welcome everyone to the Qatar Natural History Group's 2011-2012 season.

We encourage you to arrive early at our opening speaker's meeting on 5 October 2011 at the Doha English Speaking School (DESS). Our Social-Secretary, Ros Hewitt, will welcome you with refreshments at 6:30 pm. Simon Hewitt – Membership Chair, Sheila Butler – Secretary, and Roeland Weisfelt – Treasurer, will help you register for the new season at our membership tables and process your annual dues. Robin Urban, our Library Chair, will introduce you to our library which has many out-of-print and rare books on the people, culture, and natural history of the region (books may be checked-out with a cash deposit).

You can get the details of exciting vacations from Patricia Grindley, Overseas Trips Chair, and purchase a field hat and water bottle at the QNHG souk. Meet and chat with Balaji Alagusudaram, our Newsletter Editor, about the great articles assembled in this issue and discuss how you can contribute to future newsletters. Get the details on our upcoming rambles and trips from Adrian Teague, our Rambles Chair, and the Rambles Support Team. Last but not least, learn about the

distinguished presenters that Fran Gillespie and Orlin Lavallie, Speaker Coordinators, have confirmed for our monthly talks.

We hope that you can actively participate in the QNHG this season, and we ask that you consider volunteering to help us maintain our high quality programmes and events. We know that you are busy, so we try to distribute committee responsibilities among co-chairs and team members to help make volunteering easier. The Steering Committee meets once every 4-6 weeks during the season (September – May). If you are only in Qatar for a short time, we also accept short-term Committee appointments. Current Steering Committee vacancies are listed below. Please contact me if you are interested in serving on the Committee or would like more information on a position. I look forward to a successful season.



Sincerely,

April A. T. Conkey, 2011-12 QNHG Chair
chairman@qnhg.org

Steering Committee Needs:

Newsletter Co-Editors – Duties include assisting in soliciting, compiling, and organizing articles for the QNHG newsletter; participating in QNHG Steering Committee meetings; familiarity with Microsoft Publisher is a plus but not required.

Web and Email Team – Duties include uploading and managing materials and announcements on the QNHG website (Drupal based); managing the email listserv (PHP list); managing document archives; annual domain payment; participating in QNHG Steering Committee meetings; previous web page or listserv experience a plus.

Rambles Support Team – Duties include supporting the Team in planning, reconnaissance, and implementation of rambles and field trips.



NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the first QNHG newsletter of the 2011-2012 season. For those of you new to the QNHG, the newsletter is published 4 times per year and is available for you to read and download from the QNHG website.

The newsletter is a means of providing our membership with details of forthcoming QNHG events, to which both members and guests are welcome. Please do share our newsletter with family, friends and colleagues and anyone new to Qatar who may not yet have heard of the QNHG. Committee members all work together to try to organise a varied and hugely enjoyable programme on your behalf. All information is also available on our website and regular email alerts are sent to our members. We welcome feedback from our members and hope to reflect your interests in the range of information provided and the events offered.

Whilst the emphasis of the majority of our articles is on Qatar, our host country, the newsletter editorial team welcomes articles relating to the wider Gulf region. These can include your personal accounts of travel within the region (see page for an article on Jordan).

Often articles are submitted by our guest speakers and reflect their own area of research or interests but many articles are provided by our general membership – that means you! We want to hear about your interests and expertise and value your contributions and comments.

Please send any articles, information or announcements to newsletter-editor@qnhg.org or hunterlm95@yahoo.com or yathiraigal@gmail.com and put 'QNHG Newsletter' in the subject line. Please send photographs separately and make sure to label them.

Check out the QNHG archive and read past newsletters. These represent a wealth of information. Whether your hobbies lie in archaeology, botany, bird watching or desert driving etc you are bound to find something of interest. Many thanks to all those who have contributed to the first newsletter of the 2011/12 season, enjoy!

Balaji Alagusundaram / Louise Hunter
QNHG Newsletter Editorial Team

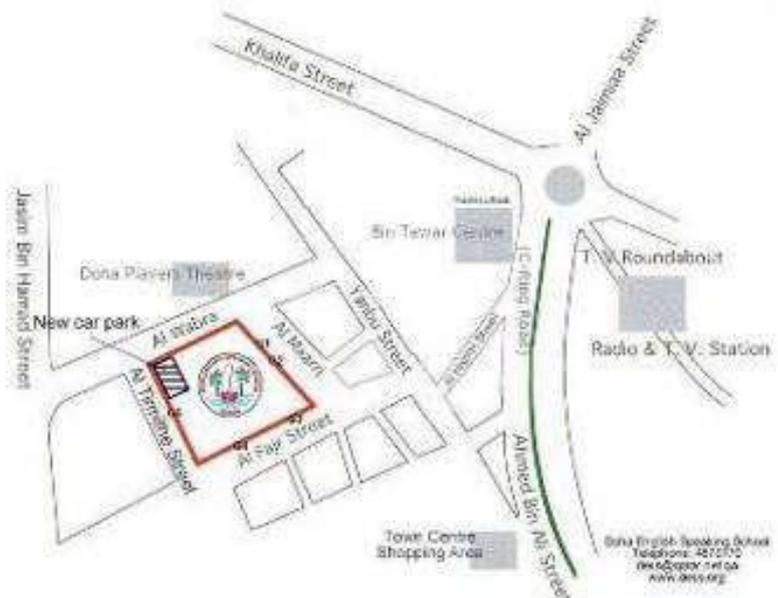
QNHG MEETING DETAILS

QNHG meetings take place between October and June, usually on the **first Wednesday of the month**.

Please note that the dates for the next three meetings of the 2011/2012 season will be: **October 5th, November 2nd and December 7th, 2011.**

Further details about our speakers may be found on page 14. Meetings are held at **7.00 pm in the Multipurposehall of the Doha English Speaking School (DESS)**. [See location map]. However, the location of meetings may sometimes be changed to the smaller **gymnasium at DESS**.

An illustrated talk follows any announcements, and there is a lending





library of books available to members, with over 200 books and journals to choose from.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL WITH QNHG

QNHG Overseas trips provide not just a great trip, but give the opportunity to travel with a group of other QNHG members to share the experience. Note that whilst these trips are limited to members, friends of members are welcome; all they need to do is to join the QNHG.

Patricia Grindley is our Overseas Trip coordinator and she hopes to offer a number of trips for members this year coinciding with not just the Eid holidays, but also other holiday periods. Future trip options are listed on the next page. Further information may be found on the QNHG website plus a useful packing guide to help you remember all those essential little items that we all need but often forget to take along! www.qnhg.org/activities/overseastrips.

For any further queries, comments, suggestions, please contact Patricia at overseas-trips-coordinator@qnhg.org.

A Message from Patricia

Dear Fellow-members,

I have enjoyed this last season on the QNHG committee, organizing Overseas trips to Egypt, Vietnam & Cambodia, and to Oman - and I sincerely hope that those who took part enjoyed the actual trips as well. To date, we have not received any complaints, unless we count the letter asking why we did not plan a trip for 1st Eid. Simple answer to that one – 1st Eid this year was really still part of the Summer and we are sure that you were all busy with Summer and School activities during that period. Elsewhere in this newsletter is a delightful letter-of-thanks from a satisfied QNHG traveller.

Fun was also had sourcing water-bottles with little plastic stickers and sun-hats with embroidered maps on them. These will continue to be sold both before and after each monthly meeting and also at Rambles and other jaunts. Both are super light-weight gifts to take home with you, or even commemorative items for when you leave Qatar, "For Good", as they say! The price has not changed, still QR20.00 and QR40.00 respectively. See the [advertisement](#) to find about the features of these products.

The next Overseas trip will include the two countries of the Vatican City and Southern Italy, including Sicily. This is for the period of 2nd Eid, early in November, while the sun is still warm and before the snow arrives. See the [tentative itinerary](#) provided in the following pages of this Newsletter.

Where would you like to go for Christmas and New Year? Your wish is our command! Yet, we need quite a few travelers to make the trips viable and to be cost-effective – the more, the merrier, the less-expensive it becomes - members, their guests and children of all ages welcome.

Take care wherever you are, keep well and enjoy your sojourn in Qatar.

Kind regards to all of you,

Patricia Grindley

The following is a tentative itinerary for the overseas travel in November 2011 during second Eid. Please note that this may be subject to changes.



JOIN US, HAVE FUN IN THE SUN, BOOK NOW!!!!!!!

Enquiries to be sent to QNHG Overseas Co-ordinator, Patricia Grindley (overseas-trips-coordinator@qnhg.org)

SOUTHERN ITALY and VATICAN CITY (SECOND EID, November 2011)

ROME

Day	Itinerary Description	Accommodation
Day One (Friday)	Transfer from airport to hotel by bus with English speaking assistance. Rest of the day at leisure for walking around at leisure and for shopping.	Overnight stay at the hotel in Rome
Day Two: (Saturday)	Morning tour of Classic Rome. Coach / Walking tour - the classic monuments of Rome. Crossing Piazza della Repubblica with the Fountain of the Nayads, our local guide will take you on a pleasant stroll through the historical centre, where you can admire the Trevi Fountain, La Colonna di Marco Aurelio, the Palazzo di Montecitorio, designed by Bernini, the Pantheon (visit inside), Palazzo Madama seat of the senate, and Piazza Navona.	Overnight stay at the hotel in Rome
Day Three: (Sunday)	Morning tour of Imperial Rome Arriving by coach at Piazza Venezia with its impressive monument dedicated to King Victor Emanuel II and the Unknown Soldier, continue on foot to the famous Piazza del Campidoglio designed by Michelangelo from where you will have a fantastic view of the Roman Forum. Then by bus to the hill of Aventino facing the glorious Circus Maximum and Caracalla Bath. Final stop will be at the imposing Colosseum. Afternoon free for personal visits.	Overnight stay at the hotel in Rome (3 nights in total)

POMPEII and NAPLES

Day Four: (Monday)	Early departure by bus & English-speaking tour escort to POMPEII. Morning foot-tour of the excavations on an archaeological journey through the ancient city. In two hours, you will see some of what has been discovered in more than 1,700 years since Pompeii was covered by ashes during the eruption of Vesuvius in the year 79 AD. Through the remains and ruins of this ancient city, we can picture the everyday life of the Imperial Age and imagine the panic felt by the people in those last few minutes	Overnight stay at the hotel in Naples
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SOUTHERN ITALY and VATICAN CITY (SECOND EID, November 2011)

	<p>before the city was so disastrously buried.</p> <p>Proceed to Naples for a panoramic tour of the city, towards the hill of Posillipo from where we can enjoy one of the most spectacular views of the Gulf of Naples and the volcano Vesuvius. Descending towards the port of Mergellina and following the coastal road, we arrive in the ancient fishing quarter of Santa Lucia and see the impressive Castel dell'Ovo (photo stop). The city tour continues, crossing by bus the historical centre to see Piazza del Plebiscito, the Royal Palace, the Basilica of San Francesco di Paola, the San Carlo Opera House, the Gallery of Umberto I and the imposing Maschio Angioino.</p> <p>Early departure by bus & English-speaking tour escort to POMPEII.</p>	
Day Five (Tuesday)	<p>NAPLES and CATANIA-SICILY</p> <p>Transfer to Naples Airport for flight to Catania / Sicily Arrival in Catania and meet local Tour Escort who will join the group till the departure.</p> <p>Panoramic tour of Catania and then transfer to SIRACUSA</p>	Overnight stay at the hotel in Siracusa
SIRACUSA and AGRIGENTO		
Day Six (Wednesday)	<p>Morning tour of the archaeological area of Siracusa including the famous Latomie of the Paradise and the Dionysius "Ear".</p> <p>Continue to the island of Ortigia, historical centre of the city. Visit of the Cathedral and Arethuse fountain, proceed to Agrigento</p>	Overnight stay at the hotel in Agrigento
Day Seven (Thursday)	<p>AGRIGENTO/MONREALE/PALERMO</p> <p>Morning tour of Valley of the Temples, known for its well-preserved Greek Temples.</p> <p>Proceed to Monreale to visit the Cathedral and its Cloister.</p>	Overnight stay at the hotel in Palermo
Day Eight (Friday)	<p>Morning visit to the historical centre of Palermo, including the Cathedral, the Palatine Chapel, the Royal Palace. Balance of day at leisure / good beaches</p>	Overnight stay at the hotel in Palermo(2 nights in total)
Day nine: (Saturday)	<p>Check out from the hotel, fly from Palermo to Rome, and Rome to Doha</p>	Back in own home in Qatar.



Estimated Cost – QR12,000.00

Package Includes:

1. Flights from and to DOHA
2. Eight (08) nights' accommodation on Bed & Breakfast basis
3. Private bus at disposal as per the programme including board & lodging of the driver.
4. English-speaking assistant and/or Tour Escort as per the programme.
5. English-speaking guides: 2 Half-day in Rome (3 hrs each) + 1 half-day in Pompeii (2 hrs),
6. Half-day in Siracusa (3 hrs) + Half-day in Agrigento (3 hrs) + Half-day in Palermo (3 hrs)
7. Entrance fees: Colosseum in Rome and Excavations in Pompeii,
8. Archeological area in Siracusa, Valle dei Templi in Agrigento and Royal Palace Palermo

Package Excludes:

1. Local city tax of 3 euros per person per night
2. Lunch & dinner is NOT included
3. Estimated at QAR 180.00 per person per Lunch or Dinner

A Members Experience Being Part of QNHG's Overseas Travel

Sent: 11 May 2011 10:09 AM
Subject: OMAN TRIP

Greetings from where the buffalo roam!

Just a short note to let you know that I did finally get to Oman, with two others, and also with Iris (for part of the time)

-- turned out to be a perfect small group. The trip was just excellent!

Great itinerary and professional, charming young Omani driver/guide.

I'm so glad that this worked out; I seemed fated to be a group of one until almost the last minute. It was all I'd hoped for. What a spectacular country.

I'm back in Calgary now and go back to my regular teaching at the university of c. in September. Very exciting to be in Doha this winter

If I had been in Doha longer I would certainly have volunteered to help the group in some way, but 4 months is just too short to be useful.

Thanks for your help,

Cheers,
Leslie

JORDAN, A LIVING HISTORY

The article below has been contributed by Roeland, a QNHG member.

It was written by Karen Genest who published it first in a blog to her family and friends.



Once again our trip began with an early morning wake-up - 3:30 am.

We spent the first hour sitting in the plane...waiting...and waiting... Apparently someone had checked in then disappeared so they had to unload to find his luggage. That wasn't bad but...we began to worry about our next flight from Bahrain to Jordan. We

landed with 15 minutes to spare so we did the airport jog, weaving through people to get to our gate...to find that THAT plane was late :) Jordan is very different from Qatar. There are far more mountains in the region around Amman. We are currently in the Dead Sea area, some 280m below sea level. It's quite warm and pleasant. Thanksgiving was spent overlooking the water, watching the sun set over the mountains of the West Bank.



Dead Sea

We spent a decadent day yesterday, swimming (read that floating) in the Dead Sea, followed by a long lounge in the Spa here. The Dead Sea is extremely salty and you just bob to the surface instantly. It also has a bit of a slick feel to it on the skin, I'm assuming from all of the various minerals and such in it. The spa, however, was delightful. While the Dead Sea was quite cool, the spa had a heated pool with the same minerals - ah...to rest in an onsen type environment!!! The only difference was that here everyone has bathing suits on.



Bethany Beyond the Jordan

After leaving the Dead Sea, we continued on our Biblical journey, heading first for Bethany Beyond the Jordan, the baptismal site of Jesus. Theologians have argued for years concerning the exact location of



where John the Baptist met and baptized Jesus. For years it was thought to have been in Israel, right across the River Jordan, however, after much research and review of literature and the bible and any records they could find,

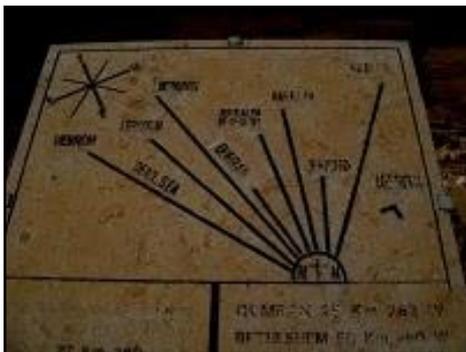


it was finally determined that the site of the Baptism was actually in Jordan, roughly 200 meters from the

current flow of the river (the River Jordan divides Israel and Jordan). They found the church of John the Baptist (created much later and now reconstructed) built immediately next to the spot. It was quite an emotional experience for many of the people there.

The river, of course, has changed over time, and the farmers and cities above draw off the water, so it no longer flows as it did 2000 years ago and sadly, I must say it does not resemble the river I have always pictured. The point where we were able to step into the river was only about 1 meter across. You could see the steps leading down to the water on the Israeli side - the Jordan side was much less developed with only a wooden platform. They actually still do baptisms there, though the water is fairly polluted. The Israeli side was close enough to almost touch though the soldiers were there to prevent any crossings – from either side. All is not calm on this front, even though there is indeed a treaty between the two countries.

Mt. Nebo



From there we travelled across the country, stopping at Mt. Nebo where Moses died and, according to some, was buried there (we heard different things so I'll leave that discussion to others). The view was absolutely spectacular - they had a map with the main cities marked; Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jericho and some others. It made you realize how close together all of these cities are - as well as how far apart (given that they were traveling by camel with no paved roads). You could actually see the cluster of buildings marking the cities from the point on the mountain.



They have a church up there but we were unable to enter it because it was being worked on. They are working on preserving many different sites across the country - evident in most of the areas we visited. They do have the olive tree that Pope John Paul planted as a symbol for peace protected as they work on the church next to it.

Petra Hotel



We arrived in Petra late in the afternoon, to discover that they had overbooked our hotel and would we be willing to go to the Castle Movenpick, overlooking the valley. The one we had a reservation at was immediately opposite the





Petra entrance.

Well....they threw in 2 dinners and wine and the executive suite so Jeff said well, why not.



The road to the hotel was crazy. You've got to picture this...the town is laid out on hills much like San Francisco, however, the roads are as steep if not steeper and as wide as the Japanese streets - and just as congested. Add to this I am following a black car that knows his way around - he is racing to get up to the hotel. We are going through every back road imaginable, weaving around camels and cars and walking people. (Did I mention the car was a stick?)

Believe me, we found the main road for our other trips up and down this mountain!

While the hotel itself was nice and the people were great, it was the view that was spectacular. We were even able to see our hotel from down in Petra - the picture here is the magnified view - it looked just like a small white blob from the Petra valley. Hmmmm.thinking about it and looking at the picture now...it STILL looks like a small white blob.

Petra

Jordan is totally steeped in history. It seems that wherever you look, there is a meeting of cultures, religion and trade. Our next stop took us to Petra historically in the center of it all. We had a wonderful tour guide, Ahkmid, who was a fountain of knowledge - unbelievable what he knew and how he tied it all in together. He also knew the best places to take fabulous pictures, as well as how to get to the tops of rocks for the best views. We had a small group, only us and Yvonne and Claire, two women who work in Dubai. Absolutely a wonderful group to spend a day with.



Guess I'll start with the history lesson, courtesy of Ahkmid. This is, of course, the short version, skipping all sorts of stuff I'm sure Ahkmid said that I've sadly forgotten. Petra, located in the southern portion of Jordan, was originally settled by the Nabataeans, an ancient Arab tribe that settled in the area of Petra, a strategic location where trade routes that connected China and India to the Mediterranean met. They quickly took over the trade routes, levying tolls, protecting caravans and generally performing many services for the traders. This brought great riches to the area and allowed them to develop an amazing kingdom with influence from Greek, Romans, Christians and Muslims. Monuments they built showed classical Egyptian, Mesopotamian and local styles all fused into one piece - and we're talking at a grand scale. The magnificent Al-Khazneh, the treasury building, is 43m high!!



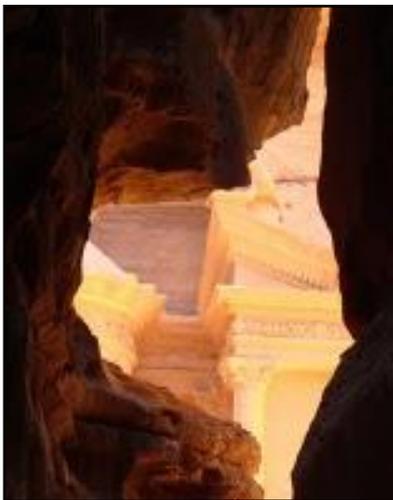
Not only did they build amazing buildings, they had an unbelievable plumbing system. The Wadi Musa (a wadi is a dry river bed and Musa refers to Moses - though there



are disagreements as to which Moses it was named after) is subject to flash floods - to this very day. They built a dam to route the water around the long entrance to Petra itself, having it arrive in a controlled path where they could divert it as needed. (The original dam and created river course was discovered when they decided to build a dam to divert flood waters after a flash flood killed a group of people in Petra.) They used a dike system to bring water into the city and to the many buildings, complete with periodic sumps where the sand and heavier materials could settle out before the clean water continued into the city. The city itself is built into the many mountain cliffs and, not wanting to have to haul water up themselves, they built a siphon system, using terracotta pipes that were progressively smaller, allowing the water to travel uphill, thus furnishing homes and businesses with water! The entry was through the As-Siq, a long, narrow gorge that extends about 1200 meters. It is on a geologic fault, so the sandstone cliffs on both sides have slipped past each other leaving gorgeously colorful rocks exposed, striking terraces, odd placed trees and many carvings by the Nabataeans. It is amazing to be walking through the towering gorge with cliffs 80 meters high.

Al-Khazneh - the Treasury

The Al-Khazneh is a spectacular monument, and the first thing that the visitor sees as you leave the As-Siq. Actually, you get a hint of this immense carving as you near the end of the long walk. Between the massive walls of sandstone, glimpses of the building come into view. Stepping out of the passageway, the full view of this building is spectacular. The structure is an imposing, 30 m wide and 43 m tall. It is exquisitely carved. The top portion was inspired by the Greeks, with various stylistic choices and statues - including Amazons! The middle section shows the Roman influence with more carvings followed by the great, stately carved pillars out front. Spectacular at any time but even more so when you realize that these were carved out of sandstone in about 200 BC! It was originally carved as a tomb for an important (I'd say) Nabataean king. They believe it might have been used as a temple at a later date.



QNHG LIBRARY NEWS

Qatar Natural History Group has its own library covering a wide range of natural history subjects focussing on the Arabian Gulf -especially Qatar.

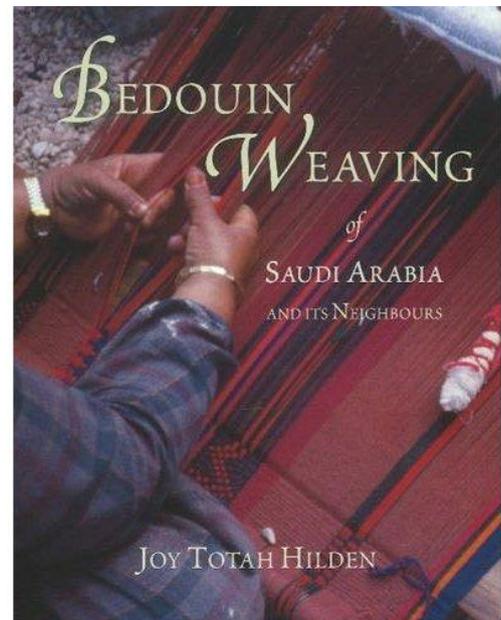
A Message from QNHG Librarian, Robyn Urban

Thanks everyone for using the library this past year. There are a great many books, journals, and magazines that we have that are filled with invaluable information about the area we live in. The process for using the library is to come to the library bookshelf at each meeting, find a book you are interested in, check it out, pay a small deposit, read the book, return it, and get your deposit back.

New books to look forward to reading this fall include donations of:

- A Bird Watcher's Guide to Qatar
- Birds of Great Britain and Europe
- Hayat-The Arabian Leopard
- Yawi-The Wild Cat
- Houbara-Bustard
- Pearls
- The Desert Driver's Manual, Off Road in the, Emirates, Off Road in the Emirates #2,
- The Valley of the Kings and Queens, Qatar,
- The Flight of the Holy Family to Egypt,
- Red Sea Reef Fishes, Rocks and Minerals, Minerals and Rocks
- Wild Flowers of the Mediterranean.
- Bedouin Weaving of Saudi Arabia and Its Neighbours

New to our library, thanks to Mrs. Fran Gillespie, is the newly published book: ***Bedouin Weaving of Saudi Arabia and Its Neighbours***. Amazon.com has this to say about the book: "Portable and practical, tough and colourful, Bedouin textiles played until recent times a vital and functional part in the life of the Arab nomads. Bedouin women were expected to master the art of making entire tents as well as a wide range of rugs, saddlebags and other equipment able to withstand the rigours of the desert. They took a fierce pride in their work and produced, on the simplest ground looms, textiles that were at once hard-wearing and of vibrant aesthetic appeal. The true craftspeople of the desert, Bedouin women wove to provide the very fabric of day-to-day living.



Joy Hilden describes the weaving techniques of the Bedouin in the context of their transitional mode of life, as they adapt from their centuries-old nomadic existence to being both semi- and fully settled. She gathered her information on dyeing, spinning and weaving while living and travelling in Saudi Arabia between 1982 and 1994, extending her scope with trips to other parts of the Arabian Peninsula and adjacent Arab countries. She describes visits to Bedouin families, desert markets and urban centres where Bedouin gathered. Her work comes at a time when many tribal peoples are losing their cultural traditions and, with them, their crafts and the material of everyday life in the desert. This is the most exhaustive study to date of the weaving methods practised by the Bedouin of Saudi Arabia. Profusely



illustrated, and giving thorough instruction in techniques, "Bedouin Weaving" is an essential companion for collectors and connoisseurs of flat-weave textiles, the category into which Bedouin weavings fall. It is aimed both at general readers and at weavers, craftspeople in general, students, ethnographers, and museum and textile authorities."

If you have questions about library, contact librarian Robyn Urban at librarian@qnhg.org. An inventory of the books held in the QNHG library may be found on our website using the following link: <http://www.qnhg.org/Library/Inventory>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

QATAR GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Qatar Geological Society has a new website. Visit www.site.qatargeolsoc.com/QatarGeolSoc.html to see information about the schedule of meetings, speakers and fieldtrips.

BIRDING NEWS

Spring 2011 Birding Summary: Spring passage in Qatar is a somewhat protracted affair. It starts at the beginning of February and tends to peak from late March to late April. Migrants are then recorded in smaller numbers right through into early June. This spring has certainly followed the general pattern, if anything this year's passage has been extended with Lesser Kestrel, Hobby, Red-tailed Shrike and White-throated Robin to name a few, all recorded into mid-June.

This Spring the peak week for sheer numbers of birds was around 14th April with four records of Grey Hypocolius at sites in the south, this was unusually late and probably involves individuals returning north to their breeding grounds in Iraq/Iran. Also recorded this spring were a single Black-winged Pratincole, 2-male Cinereous Bunting (semenowi), and a Black-headed Bunting.

In late May, 3-Common Rosefinch were found at Irkayya farm, all were drab brown but one was singing profusely, it might have been a first year male. In early June, an Egyptian Nightjar was found and photographed. Egyptian Nightjar is an enigmatic species, they are difficult to see anywhere in the world and you have to be very fortunate to find one roosting on the ground in Qatar. Records for Qatar show a definite peak in early June. We do not know what they are doing here, they seem to be very late for migrants heading to breeding grounds yet they do not spend the summer or winter here. This is clearly a data-deficient species.

This year Black-crowned Night-heron, Squacco Heron, and Purple Heron all bred again at Abu Nakhla. It is the second successive year that Purple Heron has bred here with Qatar being the only Gulf country to hold a breeding population. In mid-June, an adult Greater Short-toed Lark was found feeding a youngster, which constitutes the first proven breeding record for Qatar.

In July, bird-watching became quiet with the focus being on the few summering shorebirds. By the end of the month, and certainly by mid August large numbers of waders usually return to coasts and wetlands, indeed late August is the peak time for species such as Red-necked phalarope and Dunlin.

If you were in Qatar through the summer and kept a record of the birds you saw, please let us know. We were absent from Qatar in July and August this year but we are now looking forward to lots of migrants arriving in September.



STOP PRESS!! Last season Dr. Brian Hunter gave a presentation on the potential for the development of wastewater wetland reserves in Qatar, with particular emphasis on the opportunity for the creation of habitats suitable for birdlife. It is understood that the first steps have been taken by the Public Works Authority who are expected to invite expressions of interest in the construction of a natural wastewater treatment lagoon system in the very near future. Look out for further information in the local press.

RAMBLE REPORTS

QATAR NATURAL HISTORY GROUP 2010/2011 RAMBLES AND FIELD TRIPS REPORT

By Adrian Teague

Below is a summary of the diverse programme that was organised and run last season by John Tribuna, the QNHG rambles and field trips coordinator, with the generous and capable assistance of a handful of other leaders. The 2011-2012 Rambles schedule will be posted on the QNHG website soon.

May 2011 End-of season visit and luncheon at Sheikh Faisal Museum.

Too hot for trips outside now so the season ended with an interesting trip to the vast and eclectic museum of Sheikh Faisal. We had lunch in one of the large halls which was a perfect setting. This excursion proved to very popular and there seemed to be something to interest everyone.

April 2011 Abrouq Peninsula

This is a favourite trip although starting to get warm at this time of year. During a pleasant stop by the water one member found a small sea snake swimming near him. We visited the Film City village which is always interesting with its traditional style buildings. Then on to the valley with the circular stone enclosures, to look at fossils in the rocks and have lunch in some shade.

March 2011: Zubara City Archeological Site

The trip started with a short safety and archeology site etiquette talk by John Tribuna at the Al Zubara fort. Winners of his short quiz were rewarded with a compact first aid kit.

The University of Copenhagen, under contract to the Qatar Museum Authority, is heading the archeological excavation of the hidden seaside town of Al Zubara. Tobias, one of their archeologists, met us at the fort and briefed us on the layout of the old town and history inferred from the archeology and of more recent historical developments affecting the rule of Qatar and neighbouring Bahrain. Then he gave us a guided tour of excavations of the old town.

March 2011 Mesaieed Marshes

February 2011: Qal'at Ruwaya Archeological Site

This site is few km north of Al Zubara in northwestern Qatar and consists of a large fort with sides approximately 100m long and at least a kilometre and a half of mounds along the coast. The University of Wales in collaboration with Qatar Museums Authority is excavating the site. Our guide was Dr. Andrew Petersen who explained the work of his team and described what discoveries had been made.

February 2011: 4x4 Desert Driving Course Part 2

This was a great success and participants learnt a lot about driving in rocky deserts.

January 2011: Simaisma GPS Walking/Geocache



The purpose of this exercise was to teach people how to use their handheld GPS. It took part in the outskirts of Simaisma beside the sea. We were supplied with co-ordinates for each location and there was a question to be answered when one arrived at each one. It was a like a slow motion rally and a lot of fun. One member saw more than he expected when he spotted a small pet monkey on the top of the back wall of a residential property.

January 2011: Al Khararra Before The Rains

Another favourite QNHG ramble, through the low hills of Al Khararra. One highlight was finding the skeleton of a camel.

December 2010: Desert Driving Course Part 1

This proved to be very popular and participants learnt about driving in sandy desert conditions.

Dec 2010 Camp-out In The Singing Dunes

What a fabulous night! A clear starry sky, Santa and his elf, a big bonfire, children running up and down the big crescent dune and Christmas carols led by Qatar Chamber Singers.

November 2010: JaowHashemiyah (Acacia Camp)

This was a camping trip to the deep south of Qatar. On the way to the camp a stop was made at Al Qasaira, an old rain water cistern built to catch runoff from the surrounding rocky outcrops. Participants had an unexpected visit at the camp from a Qatari man with his falcons. In the morning the camping group moved to Jaow Hamyra (Shark's Teeth Valley) and one member found a perfect white shark's tooth. The last part of the trip was across to the western end of the Inland Sea where some flamingoes were spotted out in the water.

October 2010: Dhow Birding Trip

The aim of this start-of season trip was to spot as many pelagic birds as possible. After a hiccup with the location of the departure berth, we set off in 2 dhows. The really keen birdwatchers were one dhow and the remainder of the group were on the other. We were blessed with remarkably calm conditions and reached about 20-30km out to sea. On the return we moored off Banana Island (Jazirat Mishut) for a swim.

HEDGEHOG & INSECT NIGHT – FRIDAY MAY 27TH, 2011

By Tammy King

QNHG held its first hedgehog and Insect night last May thanks to the efforts of **Dr. Nobby Yamaguchi** and **Dr. Phillip Watson** of Qatar University Biological and Environmental Science Department. These two gentlemen not only educated the group about the species of hedgehog and variety of insects that can be found at the Qatar University farm but also we were able to see them in their natural habitat.

In the early evening the group was led by Dr. Phillip in a discussion about the types of insects found in Qatar as well as the best way to find them, through using a special black light and a large sheet that resembled a clothes line. Many varieties of beetles were attracted to the light and were relatively easy to examine in greater detail in small jars. Luckily no mosquitoes or cockroaches joined us in the desert for this pleasant evening.

Dr. Nobby Yamaguchi who has been studying the Ethiopian hedgehog since his arrival in Qatar gave the group an introduction to the breeding grounds for hedgehogs in Qatar, the garbage dump. Small groups

visited the dumpsite to locate hedgehogs with flashlights amongst the piles of rubbish. Many hedgehogs were present and participants donned thick gloves to properly catch and handle the hedgehogs until they could be examined by Dr. Nobby and their weight recorded. Many caught that night were babies. The smallest hedgehog recorded was 70gm and the largest approximately 350gm. Babies were given special markings on their spines to identify them in the future. Children were especially delighted to try to catch the hedgehogs and were patient enough to watch them unfold. Mock radio tracking of the hedgehogs was also demonstrated by Dr. Nobby.



The QNHG wishes to thank Qatar University as well as the two professors Dr. Nobby and Dr. Phillip that made this event possible. We look forward to future collaborations with the universities in Qatar.

LECTURE PROGRAMME

Our speaker meetings start at 7:00pm. All are welcome, and please feel free to bring along friends and guests to the presentation. Details of future speakers will be posted on the QNHG website in due course and in the next issue of the newsletter.

Please note that the dates for presentations for the next three months will be:

October 5th, November 2nd, & December 7th, 2011.

A Summary of the Lecture in June 2011 by Dr. Mohammad Abdeldawi

On 1st June, 2011 Dr. Mohammad Abdeldawi, Head of Environment of Ras Laffan Industrial City, spoke to us on the “**Ras Laffan Sustainable Development and Environmental Initiatives**”. His informative talk dispelled myths of Ras Laffan as polluter by outlining the programmes implemented to mitigate and compensate against negative effects. As Ras Laffan is an industrial port and hub for multiple industry facilities, the Environment Division is charged with monitoring air and water quality parameters and implementing targeted programs such as gas recovery, waste water management, control of volatile organic compounds, hazardous waste management, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Master Plan for development maintains a green area (buffer zone) and a conservation habitat area; the latter is available for small group tours by appointment. They also support marine environmental compliance projects (many conducted in partnership with Qatar University) including sea grass restoration, mangrove and coral conservation, fish, sea turtle, and dolphin monitoring, and a future study will focus on dugongs. Dr. Abdeldawi took audience questions after the talk and acknowledged several QNHG members who work in the area.

We would like to sincerely thank Dr. Abdeldawi for taking the time out of his busy schedule to address the Group with this enriching talk.

October 5th Programme: **Dr. Phillip L. Watson**, Professor and Programme Head of the Department of Biological and Environmental Biology at Qatar University, will give the first presentation of the season on the "***Biodiversity of Insects as it Relates to Environmental and Forensic Degradation, or How Bugs Tell Us What is Happening Without an Agenda***".



Professor Watson is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University, USA, where he studied zoology and biology, and wrote his doctoral thesis in entomology at the University of Illinois. In addition to his post at Qatar University, he is also the Emeriti Professor of Biology at Ferris State University in Michigan.

He joined the staff of Qatar University in 2009 as a Fulbright Senior Fellow and has taught ecology, presented a seminar on forensic entomology, helped with the biology museum insect specimen identification, published articles in the Qatar Biodiversity Newsletter and presented a student-led symposium on environmental management.

Professor Watson has also taught at the University of Botswana in Gabarone, Botswana and An Giang University in Vietnam and has given presentations as an invited speaker in Guatemala, Costa Rica and Belize in Central America. In Colombia, South America he helped in establishing a forest research project. His current research interest is the biodiversity of insects.

November 2nd Programme: **Dr Emma Tetlow**, archaeologist and a member of the team working on the Qatar National Historic Environment Record, a combined project of the Qatar Museums Authority and the University of Birmingham, UK. She will speak on the "***Environmental Archaeology is Rubbish! A Fishy Tale from Wadi Debayan, North Western Qatar***".



Previous to the work of the Qatar National Historic Environment Record, the application of environmental archaeology and geoarchaeology to sites in Qatar has been limited. This presentation will outline the principles and techniques of both fields, including the application of analytical techniques such as pollen, macroscopic plant and insect remains, and the importance of radiometric and other methods of dating. The value of geomorphological and sedimentological data to establish sites which would have been favourable for human occupation will also be considered.

Several examples of the how these techniques have been applied in Qatar will also be presented. These include:

Investigation on the eastern fringes of the Wadi Debayan which has established the presence of an extensive midden deposit containing abundant fishbone consistent with a prolonged phase of human occupation. Radiometric evidence indicates that deposition commenced c. 3510 to 3410 cal BC (cal BP 5460 to 5360) - 3390 to 3340 cal BC (cal BP 5340 to 5290), confining the earliest episodes of deposit formation to the mid Neolithic.



An extensive program of geoprospection across the terrestrial and intertidal zones at the mouth of the Wadi Debayaan which aimed to establish the wider sedimentary regime. It was also anticipated that this geoprospection may isolate further areas of archaeological interest through the interpretation of these deposits by establishing other areas favourable for exploitation by past human populations.

On-going palaeoenvironmental analysis which will ultimately provide comment on both regional and more localised environmental change within both Wadi Debayan and north eastern Qatar during the Holocene.

Aspects of this work have recently formed part of a National Geographic documentary about the work and staff of the QNHER.

Emma Tetlow graduated with a degree in Environmental Science from the University of Wolverhampton, completing an M.Phil in Environmental Archaeology and a Ph.D, both from the University of Birmingham. She has worked as an Environmental Specialist and Geoarchaeologist since completing her PhD in 2004, specialising in wetlands with particular emphasis on coastal, intertidal and alluvial environments. She has extensive commercial experience and has worked as both an environmental specialist and excavator. In the UK her work has included sites such as Severn Estuary, Heathrow Terminal 5, Edinburgh's Grassmarket, and as Archaeological Clerk of Works at Clyde Wind Farm, the biggest of its kind in Europe.

Abroad, her work has included Swedish Sami sites in the Arctic Circle, in Bosnia-Herzegovina for ICMP, the successor to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and at the site of Ned Kelly's last stand in Glenrowan, Australia!

During early 2010, Emma became involved in the continued development of the Qatar National Historic Environment Record on behalf of Qatar Museums Authority. She is now based in Qatar as project environmental officer, and her role gives her direct responsibility for all aspects of the environmental programme including project design and evolution, field work, analysis and publication. She also acts in a specialist advisory role to the QMA field team.

December 7th Programme: **Dr. Edward M. Barrows**, Professor of Biology and Director of the Laboratory of Entomology and Biodiversity, Director of Environmental Studies, and the Director of the Center for the Environment, will speak about the importance of wetland conservation: "**Arthropods of the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve (Potomac River, USA) and Life on the Edge**".

The speaker will also show a professional film about Dyke Marsh, its conservation and the people who work there.

This presentation will be highly relevant to the preservation of our own waste water wetlands in Qatar and the rich biodiversity of fauna and flora that is sustained by them.

Speaker Profile: Dr Edward Barrows is paying a short visit to Qatar this month and has generously agreed to give us a presentation on his work. He studied at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, from which he earned a B.S. in Botany and Zoology, and earned his doctorate in Entomology from the University of Kansas in Lawrence. In 1975 he joined the Georgetown University Department of Biology in Washington, D.C. where he currently undertakes research, teaches, and administers as a Professor of

Biology and Director of the Laboratory of Entomology and Biodiversity, Director of Environmental Studies, and the Director of the Center for the Environment. His research focuses on the behaviour, ecology, evolution, and conservation, usually involving arthropods and plants as study organisms.

Some information about Dyke Marsh: Before European settlement of North America, much of the Washington, D.C area was a biologically rich, teeming, freshwater-tidal marsh. Unfortunately, when the European settlers arrived they destroyed almost all of this beneficial ecosystem in the area as well as throughout Eastern US. The largest remaining freshwater-tidal marsh near Washington, D.C., is Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve on the western shore of the Potomac River, which probably formed about 3000 years ago. Its estimated that there may be as many as 18,000 species inhabiting Dyke Marsh, including locally rare birds and insects.

The Marsh was relatively undamaged until 1951, when it began to be devastated by the large-scale removal of sand and gravel and the dumping of building rubble and garbage. In 1959 the US Congress designated Dyke Marsh as part of the National Park System but unfortunately sand and gravel continued to be removed until the early 1970s. In 1976 conservationists established Friends of Dyke Marsh to help the National Park Service guard the marsh from any further depredations. In 1996, the Laboratory of Entomology and Biodiversity at Georgetown University started an investigation of arthropod biodiversity at Dyke Marsh with an online database.

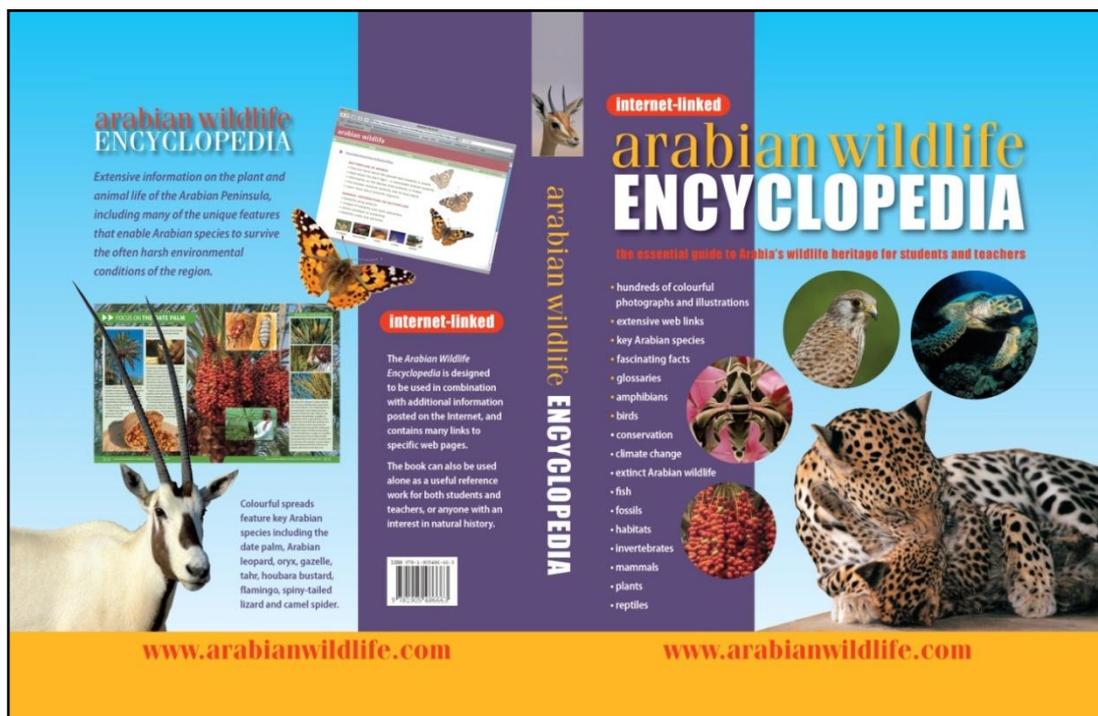
<http://biodiversity.georgetown.edu/files/informationfile.cfm?title=dykemar>

FRAN'S BOOKSTALL

Due to popular demand Fran has obtained a further 20 copies of the **Arabian Wildlife Encyclopedia** published by Trident Press Ltd in UK, which was an instant sell-out at the bookstall last year. This excellent, lavishly illustrated guide to all aspects of Arabian wildlife is still not readily available in Doha bookstores.

Copies will be available on a first-come, first-served basis at the QNHG meeting on **October 5**.

Fran will, as before, also have signed copies of her books **Discovering Qatar** (priced QR 120) and **Common Birds of Qatar**(priced QR 120) on sale.



MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION PROJECT

The Marine Turtle Conservation Project, set up last year, is currently tracking female Hawksbill turtles which have been fitted with radio transmitters in Oman, UAE, Qatar and Iran. Last year 5 turtles were tagged in each of the above named countries, and the College of the North Atlantic in Qatar is one of the sponsors of the 'Qatari' turtles. This year, at the end of April, another 5 turtles were successfully tagged in Qatar. Follow the progress of this valuable work and join the Great Turtle Race on the website www.gulfturtles.com



Photographs: A Hawksbill turtle nesting on Fuwairit beach

Text by Fran Gillespie & Photo Credits: David Gillespie

RAMBLE/ FIELD TRIP PROGRAMME

Watch out this space in future for exciting announcements on ramble and field trip programmes from QNHG Ramble and Fields Trips team!

QNHG MERCHANDISE

Patricia Grindley has organised the manufacture and sale of QNHG bush hats! Available in beige or blue with the QNHG logo. Hurry while stocks last! Only 40QR each!

Hats and water bottles can be purchased at the monthly meetings. The contact person is:



Patricia Grindley
Overseas Trip Co-ordinator
QNHG

WATER BOTTLES, Only QR 20 Each!

If you think, why buy, this is why:

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With chin cord	For wind
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QNHG logo	QNHG souvenir
Availability	QNHG functions



The prices of the above mentioned products have not changed since 2010.

QATAR MUSEUMS AUTHORITY

There is a line up of events organized by Qatar Museums Authority for the new season. To name a few:

- The Arab Games Exhibition, 04-OCT-11
- An Eloquent Eye: Recent Works by Mohamed Zakariya, 25-OCT-11– 10-JAN-12
- The Dream of a King: Dresden's Green Vault, 01-Nov-11

For more information about each of the above events, visit <http://goo.gl/gVykv>

Please note the new public opening hours here: <http://goo.gl/8GE04>

KATARA, CULTURAL VILLAGE

Latin American Cultural Festival,6-OCT –15-OCT, 2011

For the first time in Doha ,KATARA proudly presents the Latin American Cultural Festival,a celebration of the great value of the cultural heritage inherent of this part of the world. Latin America is a region with an impressive cultural diversity, normally unknown to foreigners.The region counts with a rich variety of rhythms ,dances ,traditions, flavours and so much more ! Discover the joyful atmosphere that has made the Latin Americans so popular throughout the history of arts.www.katara.net

QAWS

For information about the Qatar Animal Welfare Society please visit their website www.qaws.org or contact them via contact@qaws.org. Volunteers are always welcome volunteers@qaws.org .

For more information on their events,contact QAWS on 5539 6074 or email: contact@qaws.org

TUESDAY LADIES GROUP – NEW SEASON

All ladies are welcome to join us at the Ramada Hotel for an informal meeting on alternate Tuesdays throughout the year at 9.30 am. For further information contact TLG by email: tlgdoha@gmail.com or visit their website – www.tlgdoha.com. Not sure if you want to become a member? You can join them as a guest.



QNHG MEMBERSHIP

QNHG Membership Guidelines

- Our new season starts in the month of October every year.
- Membership to the Qatar Natural History Group is to be renewed on a yearly basis.
- A membership period coincides with our season (October to September of the next year).
- Membership applications are accepted throughout the year. Memberships always expire on September 30th of each year.
- There are two types of memberships with the following membership fees (effective October 2011):
 - Single Membership (QR.50/year)
 - Family Membership (QR.100/year)

Members from last season **do not** need to repeat the online registration process –simply pay your 2011/12 fees at the next meeting or event. Fees for the 2011/2012 season will remain at the same rate as last year: 50QR for individual membership and 100QR for a couple or family.

QNHG Membership Application Process for NEW members

1. Applicant submits membership request using the [online application form](#)
2. Applicant receives an email confirming the successful submission of the membership application.
3. The applicant's membership to QNHG remains blocked until membership fees are received.
4. Membership fees may be paid at any QNHG event: general meeting; ramble or special event.
5. Once the membership fees have been received, the applicant's membership is changed to active and access to all web site functions is enabled. The applicant will receive QNHG emails from this time.

Steering Committee Needs:

Current Steering Committee vacancies are listed below. The Steering Committee meets once every 4-6 weeks during the season (September – May). Please contact the Chair (chairman@qnhg.org) if you are interested in serving on the Committee or would like more information on a position.

Newsletter Co-Editors – Duties include assisting in soliciting, compiling, and organizing articles for the QNHG newsletter; participating in QNHG Steering Committee meetings; familiarity with Microsoft Publisher is a plus but not required

Web and Email Team – Duties include uploading and managing materials and announcements on the QNHG website (Drupal based); managing the email listserv (PHP list); managing document archives; annual domain payment; participating in QNHG Steering Committee meetings; previous web page or listserv experience a plus

Rambles Support Team – Duties include supporting the Team in planning, reconnaissance, and implementation of rambles and field trips.



2011/12 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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