

## UAE, July 18-20 2017.

VLADIMIR DINETS

I had only one day and two nights in UAE, so this is mostly an update on [Jon Hall's report](#) from February 2017. There was no moonlight to speak of. I didn't set traps, but I wish I did, particularly in Jebel Hafeet area.

### Abu Dabi

Jebel Hafeet: seeing an **Arabian thar** took a couple hours of searching; it was S from the highest parking lot, on the Omani side of the border fence. The owner of the restaurant there said that the thars don't normally cross into UAE in summer. A box-like metal building at the edge of the same parking lot had some bat droppings inside; I checked it a few times next night and saw a disappointingly shy **Muscat mouse-eared bat**. Other mammals seen in two hours of spotlighting were one **wildcat** in the Green Mubazzarah Dam area, a few **Arabian spiny mice** on the slopes above the dam area and on the grounds of Mercure Grand Hotel, one **jird** (very light-colored, possibly **Arabian**) along the dirt road that branches off towards SE at 24.12326N, 55.754E, and one **Wagner's gerbil** near the spur road that branches off at 24.09025N, 55.763E. There were a few near-white bats that flew by the hotel lights, I think they were **Muscat mouse-eared bats**. Once they were joined by a really tiny bat; **Arabian pipistrelle** is apparently the only species of that size in the area. A plaque in one of the parking lots mentioned extensive karst caves inside the mountain, but all I could find were small batless niches. While looking around the summit parking lot, I saw a pair of eyes at the Omani side of the border fence, and decided to check if it was a Blanford's fox (it's known from the mountain and I've seen it only once, very briefly, in 1993). I spent a long time getting around the gates blocking access to the short road towards the border fence, climbed there, and found that the eyes belonged to an Omani owl, which is even rarer. As I drove by the zoo in Al Ain, I caught a glimpse of a **Egyptian fruit bat** flying over the grounds.

### Dubai

Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve: **Arabian oryxes** and **mountain gazelles** had a good breeding season, so overpopulation is a growing problem; reserve scientists are considering releasing wolves or cheetahs. The vegetation inside the reserve is still in better shape than outside where it is overgrazed by camels. I saw only one **sand gazelle** in about an hour. I didn't trap or spotlight inside DDCR, but spent three hours spotlighting the area between the highway and the first gate. Gerbil numbers were ridiculously high, particularly in areas with lots of dense shrubs. I quickly lost count of **Cheesman's gerbils**, but saw only two or three certain **Balochistan gerbils**. Gerbils were very tame and often approached me or my car, providing excellent views at close range – a typical behavior of rodents at the peak of a population explosion just weeks before the crash. As Jon has noticed, the fur color differs between the two species; you can sometimes confirm the ID by looking at their tracks (Cheesman's have furry hind soles, so their hind footprints are never sharp). I saw only one **lesser Egyptian jerboa**, one jerboa burrow, very few jerboa tracks, and one **Sundevall's jird**; jird burrows were much more common inside the reserve. I also saw one happy-looking **red fox** and **two feral cats**, plus two beautiful dune sand geckos. Almost-white **Botta's serotines** were hunting around the lights at the first gate.

Ras al Khor Nature Reserve ([directions](#)) is an area of mangroves and tidal mudflats, popular with birders. At night it is closed and patrolled by very skinny **red foxes**. Looking through the fence I spotted a **Libyan jird**, recognizable by its reddish tail. Old tacks in the mud could be of a **white-tailed mongoose**.

### Sharjah

Al Mamzar Beach Park had a few **Egyptian fruit bats** flying over, and one small bat flying around the lights that I think was a **Kuhl's pipistrelle**.

Bee'ah Waste Management Complex is said to be a good place to look for **golden jackals**, but I didn't have time to check and I can't even find the birding trip report where I've read about it.

Thanks to Tamer Khafaga for help at DDCR.