

**A Celebration of the Natural History of the
Emirates
6 - 7 December 2021
Speaker Biographies**

Name	Title	Institution	Biography
Ada Natoli	Assistant Professor	Zayed University & UAE Dolphin Project	Ada Natoli is assistant professor at Zayed University, founder and current director of the UAE Dolphin Project Initiative. Ada's research focuses on whales and dolphins, species indicators of the status of the marine ecosystem. Specialized in population genetics, Ada utilizes a suite of multidisciplinary techniques (citizen sciences, dedicated surveys, stranding data, stomach content analysis, genetics analysis) to gather scientific information on these species to support formulating dedicated conservation measures. Ada has nearly 30 years of work experience in cetacean research, she is member of the IUCN Cetaceans specialist list (https://iucn-csg.org/members-list/) and IP/country delegation member at the International Whaling Commission (https://iwc.int/home).
Brigitte Howarth	Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Associate Professor of Natural Sciences	American University in Dubai	Brigitte Howarth is an ecologist with extensive experience in desert ecology. Her first degree was in Applied Ecology (BSc (Hons)), and her PhD in ecological entomology. Having spent 20 years in the Middle East, Brigitte has a good understanding of the local species biodiversity, and researches the insect biodiversity of the various terrestrial habitats found in the UAE. Her interests have expanded to researching how and why ecosystems have changed through land use change and development, and is currently assessing how these changes are impacting species biodiversity in the United Arab Emirates. Brigitte is a life-time member of the Al Ain Chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group which she currently chairs, with one of her roles in the ENHG being that of curator and custodian of the ENHG's entomological collection.
Daniel Mateos-Molina	Senior Manager and Scientific Advisor	Emirates Nature - WWF	Daniel Mateos-Molina is the Senior Manager and Scientific Advisor of the Marine Biodiversity team at Emirates Nature- WWF. Daniel is a marine ecologist with interest in innovative and interdisciplinary projects. His work focuses on data-driven support for marine protected area management, design and implementation, as well as marine spatial planning and conservation of coastal ecosystems.
David John	Scientific Associate	Natural History Museum, London	David is a Scientific Associate at the Natural History Museum (NHM) in London, formerly head of the Division of Algae and an adjunct professor at the National University of Ireland, Galway. His research has focuses on the taxonomy, ecology and biogeography of freshwater and tropical marine algae. He has carried research and consultancy work in various parts of the world, including South Atlantic islands, Patagonia, British Isles, West Africa and the Red Sea. He led a team of marine biologists from the NHM who carried out a 5-year survey of the diversity and distribution of the marine life of Abu Dhabi.
Fadi Yaghmour	Scientific Researcher and Conservation Specialist	Sharjah Environment and Protected Areas Authority	Fadi Yaghmour has worked with Sharjah's EPAA for a number of years, focusing on issues around conservation. His specialty is on marine turtles, and he has published extensively on research related to UAE turtles over the past number of years, particularly around issues of pollution and plastic ingestion.
Francesco Paparella	Associate Professor of Mathematics	New York University Abu Dhabi	Francesco's research focuses on developing mathematical models of Earth-system processes. His interests range from convecting fluids to phenomena at the interface between the physical and the biological world, as well as, since joining NYU Abu Dhabi in 2016, coral reef ecology and the physical oceanography of the Gulf. He is the director of NYUAD's newly formed Arabian Center for Climate and Environmental Sciences (ACCESS).

Gary Brown	Independent Consultant		Gary first moved to the Arabian Peninsula in 1995, when he took up a faculty position at Kuwait University. Since then, he has been employed in various countries of the region in academia and government institutions. His main field of specialisation is vegetation ecology and botany, but he has a long-standing interest in ornithology. In the meantime, he is a freelance ecologist and is currently working on various megaprojects and smaller assignments in the region. Gary has published extensively in international peer-reviewed journals and is the senior author of the book "Vegetation Ecology of Socotra."
Gary R. Feulner	Chairman	Dubai Natural History Group	Gary has actively explored the UAE and adjacent Oman for more than 35 years and has authored or co-authored comprehensive surveys of UAE wadi fish, freshwater snails, land snails and dragonflies, as well as the floras of the UAE generally, the mountains of the Musandam peninsula and the extensive ultrabasic environment of Wadi Wurayah National Park. He is also the author of an introduction to the geology of the UAE and co-author of an introductory catalogue of UAE spiders, <i>Freshwater Fishes of the Arabian Peninsula</i> and, most recently, <i>Butterflies of the UAE</i> .
Guillermo Friis	Postdoctoral Research Associate	New York University Abu Dhabi	Guillermo Friis is an evolutionary biologist interested in the origin and maintenance of biodiversity, inferring evolutionary mechanisms of diversification and understanding the genomic basis of phenotypic variation. His research at NYUAD focuses on applying genomic and transcriptomic techniques to study the evolutionary processes leading to the colonization and adaptation of the gray mangrove to the extreme, variable habitats of the Arabian Peninsula.
Ivonne Bejarano	Assistant Professor of Biology	American University of Sharjah	Ivonne Bejarano is an Assistant Professor of Biology at the American University of Sharjah. Her research focuses on coastal and marine ecology, marine fish, ecosystem-based management, and marine conservation. She is engaged in the effective management, use and conservation of marine resources, and has work extensively with protected and endangered habitats and wildlife, including commercial fishery species. She has held research positions on four continents: Asia, North America, South America, and Europe, and has experience working with academia and policy and management agencies.
Jacky Judas	Nature conservation & Wildlife Consultant	Soudah Development Company - KSA	Jacky is a naturalist, mainly interested in birds and mammals, but in surveying all biodiversity in general. He has been working in wildlife conservation in Arabia since 1998, firstly on the reintroduction and ecological study of the Houbara Bustard in Arabia and central Asia. In 2012, he joined Emirates Nature-WWF, contributing to the implementation of Wadi Wurayah National Park, and to the renovation of the falaj of wadi Shis. He conducted surveys on owls, bats and dragonflies in UAE, that resulted in the discovery of several species previously unknown to the UAE. He recently moved to the Asir Mountains of Saudi Arabia, working on habitat rehabilitation and species reintroduction.
Johannes Els	Head of Department	Environment and Protected Areas Authority, Sharjah.	Johannes Els is the head of the Herpetology and Freshwater Fish Department at the Environment and Protected Areas Authority of Sharjah. Member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Middle East and North African Viper Specialist Group, West Asia Amphibian Specialist Group, and the Freshwater Fish Specialist Group. He is co-author of <i>Freshwater Fishes of the Arabian Peninsula</i> and <i>Field guide to the Reptiles of Oman</i> .
John A. Burt	Associate Professor of Biology	New York University Abu Dhabi	John Burt is an Associate Professor of Biology and Head of the Marine Biology Lab at NYU Abu Dhabi, where he has been based since 2009. Burt focuses on marine and coastal ecology, particularly around coral reefs and reef fishes, but also including work on mangroves and seagrasses. He is also interested in using science to inform better marine conservation and management across the Arabian region.
Marie J. Seraphim	Postdoctoral Research Associate	New York University Abu Dhabi	Marie is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the NYUAD Marine Biology Lab, exploring the impact of the Arabian Gulf's extreme environmental conditions on reef fish and other marine organisms. Prior to joining the lab in February 2021, Marie completed her PhD on fish population and behavioural responses to large-scale coral reef restoration activities. She has also held a variety of positions in conservation NGOs.

Noura Al Mansoori	Research Assistant	New York University Abu Dhabi	Noura is a research assistant that joined NYUAD in 2016 to take part in the research of the Marine Biology lab. She completed her undergraduate studies in Environmental horticulture at UAEU, but her passion lies in marine life and ecology. She is an avid diver and conservationist and has assisted in underwater surveys, become the secondary skipper as well as work on projects with other lab members, focusing on bioerosion on coral reefs. Her current focus is her PhD in seagrass ecophysiology in the Arabian Gulf.
Oscar Campbell	Teacher of Science	British School Al-Khubairat, Abu Dhabi	Oscar is an avid birdwatcher first and Teacher of Science second, and has been based in Abu Dhabi since 2006. He has travelled to seven continents in search of birds and been Chairman of the Emirates Birds Records Committee since 2010. He has published widely on identification, distribution and ecology of birds of the region and is currently working on the third edition of <i>Birds of the Middle East</i> . He is also a co-author of the recently published <i>Butterflies of the United Arab Emirates</i> .
Shamsa Al Hameli	Fisheries Assistant Scientist	Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD)	Shamsa Al Hameli is an assistant scientist that joined EAD in 2017 to take part in the research carried out in the Fisheries Department. She completed her undergraduate studies in Ecological and Environmental Biology in 2017, and her MSc in Environmental Science focused on Elasmobranchs in 2020 at UAEU. She is currently completing her studies on Elasmobranchs in Abu Dhabi for her PhD.
Stephen Lokier	Senior Lecturer in Applied Sedimentology and GeoEnergy	University of Derby, UK	Stephen is an academic at the University of Derby with more than 20 years of practical applied experience in the fields of sedimentary geology, reservoir characterisation, palaeontology, sequence stratigraphy and environmental geology, working with academia, industry, local government and NGO's. One of the long-term topics of his research has been the sedimentary systems of the Abu Dhabi sabkha with projects focusing on the effects of sea level rise, early diagenetic systems, and facies mapping. Stephen is the General Secretary of the International Association of Sedimentologists and the founder of Seds Online - an Open Access online community for sedimentologists globally.