



Al-Asad au Natural



Volume 1, Issue # 13

15 February 2009

Creature Feature

Special Points of Interest:

- The 371st is over our hump, but what about our Creature Feature?
- Salad anyone? Pages 2-3
- Let me out of here! Page 4!
- **Next Issue:** Return to my garden to meet some creatures that live there!

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"If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it."

-Lyndon Johnson

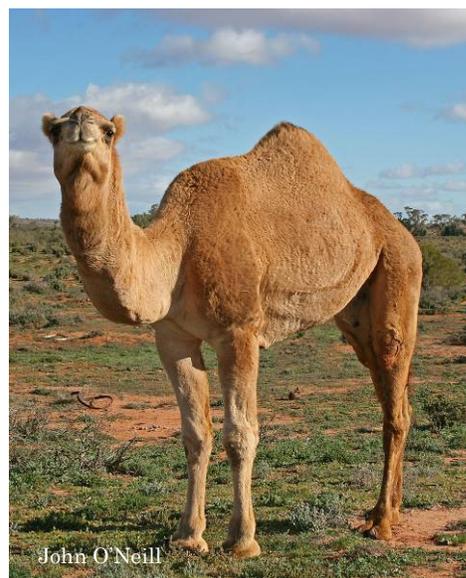
Arabian Camel

The Arabian camel, or dromedary, has a single hump, and is believed to have evolved from an ancestor in North America about 40 million years ago and migrated through Asia to the Middle East. They have been domesticated as beasts of burden and to provide milk and meat for over 4,000 years. All of the estimated 14 million dromedaries in the world are domesticated, although there is a

There are about 1.4 million 2-humped, or Bactrian camels. It is thought only about 1,000 of these are wild camels, living in the Gobi Desert.

substantial feral population.

Camels are fast, and are capable of reaching speeds up to 40mph for short bursts. The top of their hump can be as high as 7' off the ground. Camels store fat in their humps, possibly an adaptation that concentrates insulating fat in one area. Camels can burn this fat for energy, but this actually results in a net loss of water for the animal. They do have many special adaptations that conserve water and allow them to live in desert con-



ditions that other animals can't tolerate. Camels can have bad dispositions, and feral camels are considered dangerous if disturbed. Don't make a 900 lb, faster than you, bad tempered animal angry!

Who's Living Under My CHU?

Centipede Centipedes are nocturnal predators with modified appendages called "venom claws". Their bite can be mild or life threatening. They have one pair of legs per body segment (millipedes have more). It is esti-

mated there are 8,000 species worldwide, of which only about 3,000 have been described by scientists.



Geophilomorpha
centipede on
Al Asad.

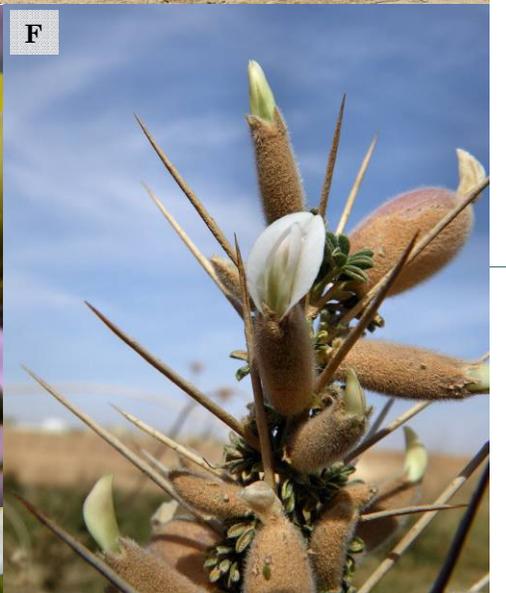
My Garden



Some soldiers bring seeds to plant potted flowers or vegetables to remind them of home. I'm way too lazy for that! I let nature do all the work in my garden—a "green" spot just 300 yards from our office. I don't know everything that grows in my garden, but have identified at least four edible plants there!



My Garden!





A. Unk.—possibly Fabaceae family B. Nightshade (toxic) C. Anthemis D. Geranium E. Mustard F. Milk Vetch G. Dandelion H. Unk. I. Unk. Compositae family J. Mustard (another species) K. Star Trigonel L. Grass M. Arugula N. Unk. O. Unk. P. Felty Germander



Questions from the Field—Your Questions Answered!

Are Animals Caught on Al Asad Infected with Rabies?

Not During Our Tour. I have examined the records for the last 3 years, and have found no positive tests for rabies on Al Asad. Nonetheless, rabies is prevalent in many parts of Iraq, and wildlife should be

given a wide berth, especially if the animal appears aggressive or sick. Since we have been here, one fox did test positive for Lyme disease, which is spread by ticks and can be serious in humans. Some programs vaccinate wild and feral animals to establish a healthy buffer zone around populated areas.

Only one person is known to have survived rabies without treatment, and even with treatment only a few have survived stage 2 rabies .

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE UNOFFICIAL
UNIT NATURALIST...
PUBLISHED EVERY 2 WEEKS, MORE OR LESS

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Always Right, Sustain the Fight!

371st SB

Birders' Corner

Species identified
on Al Asad to date:

104

Birders on Al Asad (and yes, I have found more than one of us!) are anxiously awaiting spring migration—checking pockets of habitat for the first birds returning to Europe or Asia from the southern Arabian peninsula or Africa. Birds that were winter visitors here have started to thin or make small flocks preparing to depart for breeding grounds in the north. Some birds have started to molt into breeding plumage, notably **Shoveler** ducks and **Stonechats**. One of the birds seen recently may have been an early arrival—a **Black-winged stilt**. While looking for migrants I added two birds to my list, **Corn bunting** and **Desert wheatear**.



Left: Desert wheatear Above (from top): Black-winged stilt, Corn bunting, Stonechat

Trapped! Animals Caught by Vector Control

Vector Control is contracted to deal with nuisance animals—a snake in your office, rats or roaches in the closet, feral animals, or wild animals getting into trash or otherwise causing problems. Some animals are euthanized for the rabies testing program or because they have health issues, or are otherwise a problem. Many of the native animals are checked by the vet and released. Some are even vaccinated or treated for minor problems. The records kept by Vector Control and the post vet are now being used to construct the first wildlife survey here in many decades—perhaps the first ever! All of the animals pictured here were released over the last 6 weeks.



*Pictured (clockwise from upper left):
Rueppell's fox, Jungle cat, female Black
francolin, and Honey badger.*

Critter problems? Call the KBR
Help Desk for assistance!