



A mudskipper coming out of its burrow.

Mudskipper lives life in both worlds

Mudflats in Warba home to many creatures

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Biodiversity East

WITH the superficial looks of a strange lizard sliding in the mud or jumping up to two feet when there is a reason for it, the mudskipper is called "Bushalambo" in Arabic. The lazy one. Local culture is making a point, stating that, even though all other marine animals follow the waters of the tide as they withdraw and return, this particular one lingers behind and lives life in both worlds.

On a boat trip to Warba, the northmost shore of Kuwait on the border with Iraq, we encountered a lot of them. Unable to identify which ones of the four species living in Kuwait we were looking at, as the sun was setting and light was getting scarce, we just sat there and enjoyed their busy movements, their slithering bodies in the nutritious mud of the Shatt Al-Arab, recalling a few interesting facts about them, which many people may not be aware of.

Mudskippers belong to the family of gobies. They are capable of breathing air thanks to a bubble that they retain in their gill chambers. They can also breathe through their skin if it's wet. And their habitat is somewhere between land and sea. It is, in fact, the fertile mud, the intertidal mudflats, which is the most nutritious environment in nature. Unlike other living organisms, evolutionary process did not result to the choice of

one element or another for these ones. They live inbetween, no matter whether their deep burrows are covered by the tide or not.

These fish, which are, in fact, gobies, use their fins to move vigorously in a series of skips. They are also able to catapult themselves up to more than half a meter into the air, in an effort to impress members of the opposite sex or competitors in defense of food and territory. They have eyes at the top of the head for an all-round view, while their mouth faces downwards to feed continuously on the mud surface.

They dig deep burrows in soft

sediments that allow the fish to thermo regulate, avoid marine predators during the high tide when both fish and burrow are submerged and for laying their eggs. Eggs are laid in a sealed pocket of air in the burrow and the father makes endless trips to the surface to renew the air, inhaling a bubble and exhaling it in the air pocket of the nest where the eggs are laid.

The mud is very good for burrowing in, since conditions are very sticky, unlike sand. Burrows will usually last for quite a long time.

Some sport a little chimney sticking up above the surface, others have small water-filled

pools beside the openings, and the reason for these variations is still unknown to science.

Under certain conditions, a single fish of the species *Boleophthalmus boddarti* build polygonal territories of a size of about one meter, surrounded by dams, defended against rivals, and large enough to provide food. It also builds walls for protection from all sorts of invaders. Members of this species build and maintain these polygonal walled territories by carrying mouthfuls of mud from their burrows and depositing them on their walls. The burrow may be anywhere in the territory, maybe right beside the wall. This wall-building behavior was for a long time believed to be unique for this species in Kuwait's Suleibikhat Bay but it was recently observed in Iran as well.

Mudflats and intertidal zones have always been considered "slimy" and "dirty". As such, it seems "no harm" to litter them continuously, with little regret. Apart, however, from the wondrous mudskipper, thousands of birds, fish, crabs, shrimp and a very large number of other living creatures call these areas their home and depend on their pristine condition to survive. Upon a next visit, a careful, close look may be a revelation, regarding this natural element, which without doubt deserves the utmost national pride.



A mudflat in Warba

Retired civilians & army men to get pension Nov 2

Panel to meet on 'pay hike'

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 24: Director General of the Public Authority for Social Security (PASS) Fahad Al-Raja'an announced that the pension of retired civilians and military men would be paid on Nov 2 to help them celebrate Eid Al-Adha, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Minister of Finance Mustafa Al-Shamali reportedly instructed PASS to pre-pone the payment of pensions which are usually paid on the 10th of every month.

Meanwhile, the ministerial Legal Affairs Committee will meet Thursday to discuss the proposed increment for the employees at the Fatwa and Legislation Department, reports Al-Anba daily quoting State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and official spokesperson of the government Ali Al-Rashed.

Al-Rashed also praised the employees in this vital government department for their dedicated service to the nation and for efficiently carrying out their tasks.

In another development, the Al-Watan Arabic daily has quoted some sources as saying that the head of the department, Faisal Al-Saraawi, violated the law when he renewed the tenure of expatriate legal consultants, who have reached the legal retirement age.

Kuwait-Russia ties in focus

Embassy in Moscow holds photo exhibition

MOSCOW, Oct 24, (KUNA): Kuwait Embassy here opened on Monday a photo exhibition featuring the development of the bilateral ties between Kuwait and Russia.

The opening ceremony brought together a large number of Arab ambassadors to Russia, Arab and Russian scholars and media celebrities as well as students of Africa Institute of Moscow University.

The cultural event is supervised by head of the international conventions division of the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry and advisor to the embassy Dr Fahad Al-Dhafiri, administrative and financial attache Mishaal AlMansouri, and third secretary of the embassy Ibrahim Al-Arfaj.

A symposium was held on the sidelines of the event where Chairman of the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait (CRSK) Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghunaim reviewed the stages of the bilateral ties and the contributions of the Russian scholars to the development of oriental studies particularly the researches on Kuwait.

"Ignatius Kratchkovsky (1883-1951) shed light on the history of Arabic geographic literature through a collection of writings that turned to be a rich indispensable material for studies in this domain," Al-Ghunaim pointed out.

Kratchkovsky's academic achievements served as nucleus of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, he noted.

Al-Ghunaim added that Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) decided to publish the "Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion, 1898-1900," a book written by the Soviet historian Vasilii Barthold (1869-1930).

Barthold explained the benefits the Muslim world derived from Mongol rule after the initial conquests; he was the first to publish obscure information from the early Arab historians on 'Kievan Rus' (land of the Rus') in Eastern Europe.

Al-Ghunaim also extolled the Russian historian Prof. Grigori Bondarevskii for his achievements relating to the history of Kuwait.

News in Brief

Actor denies 'death' rumor:

Renowned Kuwaiti actor Abdulhussein Abdulreda denied news item posted at the social networking sites yesterday about his death.

The actor resents rumor circulating that he died yesterday and describes the report as improper. He is determined to sue those who instigated the gossip, maintaining it's not the first time those people have spread rumor

about his death.

Run Q8 to be held on Jan 21:

Registrations are now open for RunQ8 the annual 10km charity race to be held on Jan 21. Organized by the Fawzia Sultan Rehabilitation Institute (FSRI) and Agility, the race is aimed at supporting health issues affecting our community and raising awareness around them.

Last year, the race raised over KD 50,000 for the Kuwait University's Community Eye Health Care Initiative that support Vision 2020, a joint initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB).

In its second year, RunQ8 is promoting road traffic safety. 2011-2020 has been named the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety with a goal to

stabilize and then reduce global road traffic fatalities by 2020. In Kuwait, traffic accidents are the third leading cause of mortality and a large number of people and their families are affected by the debilitating effects of injuries caused by road accidents.

RunQ8 invites all members of the community to join in this initiative and help support road traffic safety in Kuwait. To register for the race please contact the FSRI office 25720338.

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