Cultural insights at the intersection of geography and geosciences

The excursion was headed by Prof Dr Geosta Hoffmann, a geologist at the Steinmann Institute for Geology, Mineralogy and Paleontology, University of Bonn and Prof Dr Peter Kukla, Head of the Energy and Mineral Resources Group and the Geological Institute at RWTH Aachen University.

A group of 20 students from three different universities and two German professors from RWTH Aachen University, GUtech, partner university and the University of Bonn, conducted a two-week excursion around the North of Oman.

The excursion was headed by Prof Dr Geosta Hoffmann, a geologist at the Steinmann Institute for Geology, Mineralogy and Paleontology, University of Bonn and Prof Dr Peter Kukla, Head of the Energy and Mineral Resources Group and the Geological Institute at RWTH Aachen University. Both professors have been highly involved in setting up the Department of Applied Geosciences at GUtech around ten years ago and continue to serve as fly-in professors. For his recent work and research in Oman, Prof Dr Geosta received the Research Award from The Research Council in 2016.

We are pleased to conduct the excursion in Oman because it is an incredibly fascinating country which to date remains beyond the realms of large mainstream tourism,” explained Prof Geosta, who has lived in Oman for six years. “With Oman being a Muslim country, the excursion also aims to promote cultural exchange between Germany and Oman,” he said.

“Oman offers an exciting opportunity for integrated geographical, geo-scientific and socio-economic studies and perspectives,” said Prof Dr Peter Kukla, who has been conducting research related to oil and gas exploration and production together with PDO for the past 15 years. Not surprisingly, various geo-scientific questions related to the professor’s research in Oman, such as the oil and gas outlets, future minerals and metal resources, the development of the Omani coastline as well as geographical questions, were discussed.

Further issues addressed were the rapid transformation of the Omani landscape — cliffs, deserts, seas, flora and fauna — and the social developments in Oman. This included the transformation of the agricultural industry and the overall structural transformation and challenges Oman is facing while transforming from an oil-based economy towards a more service-oriented economy.

Towards the end of the excursion in Muscat, the group conducted a walking tour between Old Muscat and Mutrah, along an old donkey trail, where Prof Geosta explained the development of the mountains and the remains of a several centuries old fishery system. After the tour the group visited Soq, Mutrah, which has been transformed from a local market to a ‘tourist market’ in the past years, a development that was enhanced by increasing large-scale cruise tourism. This has caused various negative impacts such as overcrowding and the change of the identity of the market. This development was explained by Matuda Gathbeer, a PhD candidate at the Department of Geography at RWTH Aachen University and PR manager at GUtech who has been conducting research on the impacts of mega cruise tourism in Oman.

For the second time Prof Hoffmann and Prof Kukla led this interdisciplinary excursion under the auspices of the German-ARC (the post-graduate students and doctoral candidates from the fields of geography and geosciences of the three universities in Aachen, Bonn and Cologne and the large federal research facility in Jülich).

ESO to conduct Masirah Turtle Awareness Week

On April 15 to 20, 2017, the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) team will be holding an awareness week regarding the endangered loggerhead turtle on Masirah Island which has served as a home to fascinating creatures for many years.

Local are invited to join for school presentations, community discussions and football tournaments for details, visit http://www.eso.org.om.

Comb jellies were the earliest animals

The delicate marine producers called comb jellies were the earliest animals — not sponges as had long been thought, claims a new genetic analysis.

One of the longest-running controversies in evolutionary biology concerns the comb jelly, which received the popular name ‘comb jelly’ more than a century ago.

With their analysis involving hundreds to thousands of genes, the researchers determined that comb jellies have considerably more genes which support their “fast to diverge” status in the animal lineage than do sponges.

The researchers believe that the findings could have a major impact on scientists’ thinking about how the nervous system, digestive tract and other basic organs in modern animals evolved.

For nearly a century, scientists organised the animal family tree based in large part on their judgment of the relative complexity of various organisms.

Because of their comparatively simplicity, sponges were considered to be the earliest members of the animal lineage. The researchers’ analysis showed that comb jellies have considerably more genes which support their “fast to diverge” status in the animal lineage than do sponges — LNN

/Events /

May 1 - 3, 2017
The Oman Power & Water Exhibition & Conference is an international event dedicated to the power generation, renewable and alternative energy and transmission and distribution, and water-related industries.

It is designed to be a platform for stakeholders to discuss real issues and solutions to the energy and water challenges and opportunities in Oman.

April 18 - 20, 2017
The 16th edition of Omanization Career Fair (OCF) will take place from April 18-20, 2017 at newly built Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre. This job fair will give platforms to fresh graduates and other professionals from Oman to grow by working for big companies in private and public sectors. For more information, visit www.omanization.com