

Right: A buried cache of late Paleolithic quartzite "blanks" still with original lustre, unpolished by sand and wind

The expedition viewed exploratory excavations performed by Dr Michael Petraglia, of Cambridge University, during a previous expedition led by Peter in early April 2002, during which Michael stated that Wadi Ghiran was the largest lithic archaeological site he had ever visited.

Peter went on to say, "from the archaeological viewpoint, the expedition demonstrated the richness and extent of the lithic sites in only one small part of Ar Rub Al Khali. The high concentration of sites, the variety of cultures and the artefacts contained in them, and the areas over which these sites extend, demonstrated the urgent need to formulate a programme to identify, classify and record them before the surface and sub-surface record is affected by intensive seismological survey and subsequent development activity; recreational expeditions and



Inset- neolithic Arrowhead

organised tourism. The Gas Project will cause environmental damage and loss of surface artifacts that Shell aims to minimise. Recreation and tourism are already proving very destructive and urgently require control. In my humble opinion, there is no better time to initiate a conservation programme for the archaeological sites of the Ar Rub Al Khali.

Ornithology and zoology were not neglected. Several species of migratory birds were found using the few trees and many rock outcrops in the area to provide resting points and shelter from sun and wind. Signs of animal life were scarcer, confined to jerboas and red foxes. Disappointingly for Tim and Peter, a keen wildlife observer, there were no evidence of oryx and gazelle having reached the area from the NCWCD reserve at Bani Ma'arid, 150km to the south west.



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