

**An Academy Awards' first**

On this day in 1964, at the Academy Awards, Sidney Poitier became the first African-American male to win the Best Actor award for the 1963 film *Lilies of the Field*. In 1999, the American Film Institute named Poitier among the Greatest Male Stars of classic Hollywood cinema, ranking 22nd on the list of 25.

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Cultural insights at the intersection of geography and geosciences



The excursion was headed by Prof Dr Goesta 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 Geosciences professors from RWTH Aachen University, GUtech's partner-university and the University of Bonn, conducted a two-week excursion around the North of Oman.

The excursion was headed by Prof Dr Goesta 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 Goesta 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 realm of large mainstream tourism," explained Prof Goesta, who 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 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 outlook, future minerals and metals 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 — coasts, deserts, oases, 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 Muttrah, along an old donkey trail, where Prof Goesta explained the development of the mountains and the remains of a several centuries old falaj system. After the tour the

group visited Souq Muttrah, 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 souq. This development was explained by Manuela Gutberlet, 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 both Prof Hoffmann and Prof Kukla led this interdisciplinary excursion under the auspices of the Geoverbund ABC/J for 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 Juelich.

/environment /

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 these fascinating creatures home.

Locals are invited to join for school presentations, community discussions and football tournaments! For details, visit <http://www.eso.org.om>.



PHOTO BY KEVIN RASKOFF

Comb jellies were the earliest animals

The delicate marine predators 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 has been: 'What was the oldest branch of the animal family tree? Was it the sponges or was it the comb jellies?'

The new study, published in the journal *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, suggests that comb jellies were the first branch of the animal family tree.

With their analysis involving hundreds to thousands of genes, the researchers determined that comb jellies have considerably more genes which support their "first 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 judgement of the relative complexity of various organisms.

Because of their comparative 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 "first to diverge" status in the animal lineage than do sponges. — IANS

/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 Omanisation Career Fair (OCF) will take place from April 18 - 20, 2017 at newly built Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre. This job fair will give platform to fresh graduate and other professionals from Oman to grow by working for big companies in private and public sectors. For more information, visit www.ocfoman.com