Detailed descriptions and interpretations of the sabkha sediments (Evans et al., 1969) indicate that they were deposited in subaqueous to supratidal environments. The layers in which the skeleton is embedded are, for the most part, intertidal to shallow subtidal and represent tidal flats, beaches, and storm-derived beach ridges (Kirkham, 1997; Evans and Kirkham, 2001).

Under the direction of Simon Aspinall, part of the skeleton has been excavated, and, based on its size and comparison with the skeleton of a Brydes' Whale Balenoptera edeni, has been provisionally identified as being that of a Blue Whale, B. musculus. Excavation and conservation of the remainder of the skeleton is planned for late 2006, with the support of the Environmental Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD), the relevant government agency. Samples will be sent for DNA analysis in order to determine the exact genetic relationship of this individual to present-day populations of blue whale, while consideration is also being given to radiocarbon-dating to try to determine its precise antiquity. The bones will also be examined for scratch marks, cut marks, or any sign of human or animal interference. The Late Stone Age (Neolithic) period in the United Arab Emirates began around 7500 years Before Present, prior to the commencement of the formation of the Musaffah sabkha sequence, with archaeological sites from the period indicating that the Late Stone Age inhabitants were present along the existing coastline and on offshore islands and were exploiting inshore marine resources.

This is the first sub-fossil whale skeleton to be found in the Emirates and the fact that it appears to be that of a blue whale, the largest animal on earth today, is rather surprising. Although blue whales tend to prefer deep and cold waters at high latitudes, rare specimens have been sighted in the Indian Ocean, south of the Arabian Peninsula, in the Gulf of Oman and in the Arabian Gulf (Baldwin, 2003). The waters of the southern Arabian Gulf, where the skeleton was found, do not exceed depths of 40 m and are very shallow, mostly less than 10 m, along the Abu Dhabi coast. Bathymetric conditions were practically identical at the time this whale came to rest on a Holocene beach. How this animal ended up exactly where it did is somewhat intriguing. It is hoped that careful excavation may yield some insight into the sequence of events that led to it beaching here.

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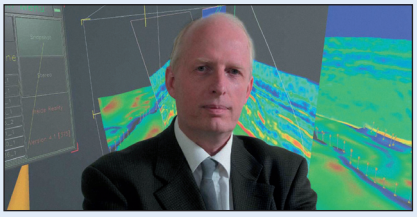
Oslo welcomes DLP presentation

Johan O. A. Robertsson, president, Oslo Society of Exploration Geophysicists, writes: The Oslo Society of Exploration Geophysicists (OSEG) opened its autumn seminar session in September with the EAGE's Distinguished Lecturer programme (DLP), Prof Kees Wapenaar of Delft University of Technology presented his three hour lecture course entitled 'Seismic Interferometry'. This is a fascinating subject that has evolved significantly over the last few years and one in which Prof Wapenaar has been at the forefront. It has already had a significant impact on large array seismology and imaging of the deep crust. It also has revitalized research into methods for exploration and production seismics such as imaging, ground roll attenuation, and modelling of wave propagation, evidenced by recent special issues on the topic and workshops associated with EAGE and SEG conventions.

After introducing interferometry through intuitive arguments, Prof Wapenaar showed us how so-called Green's function retrieval can be derived through interferometry, time-reversal, and reciprocity theory. He then demonstrated how these new insights can be applied to both passive and active seismic data recordings in surface as well as borehole seismic settings.



Prof Kees Wapenaar.

Somewhere between 25 and 30 members of the OSEG participated in this thought-provoking afternoon lecture course. The event was held at the Hotel Continental in central Oslo with the venue and following dinner/refreshments kindly sponsored by READ ASA. For more information about OSEG and its activities, please visit www.oseg.no.