

The biggest what? Dubai seeks glory in obscure world records

By Jon Gambrell
The Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The 6,148 whiskey shots perched atop glasses of energy drink waited for the push that might send them tumbling into the record books — just another night in Dubai, and another chance to make a certain kind of history.

Superlatives like “the world’s biggest” and “the world’s first” are almost as ubiquitous as the skyscrapers and mega-projects that have come to define the city-state on the Arabian Peninsula, home to the tallest building and the busiest international airport on earth.

With time, this largest-in-life approach has filtered down to more humble and odder pursuits — such as the attempt at the world’s longest domino drop shot.

You probably weren’t aware that there was a record to beat in the domino drop shot, or even that there was something called a domino drop shot. Just imagine someone dropping a shot glass into a beer, but before you can guzzle it down, another thousand shots drop into another thousand pints behind it, like dominoes.

The previous recordholder for the longest drop was the Bahama-based location of the alcohol-soaked chain Señor Frog, which got 4,107 of its 4,109 shot glasses to fall correctly in February 2013.

In early September, the Huddle Sports Bar & Grill in Bur Dubai sought to break the record. Staffers carefully set up more than 6,000 glasses of Camros whiskey and Bazooka energy drink. It was an effort five months in the making, with tests twice a month that took 12 hours to set up.

The bar successfully ‘dropped’ 4,578 glasses of Camros whiskey into Bazooka energy drink, according to Seyda Subasi Gemici, an official adjudicator for Guinness World Records.



DOMINO DROP SHOT. A crew member fixes new drinks after a misfire due to sound vibration before an attempt to make the world’s longest domino drop shot in early September. The Citymax Hotel’s Huddle Sports Bar & Grill in Bur Dubai successfully ‘dropped’ 4,578 glasses of Camros whiskey into Bazooka energy drink, according to Seyda Subasi Gemici, an official adjudicator for Guinness World Records. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili)

Leila Issa said.

“The UAE’s initiative to be the first in all industries and their drive for success and to be the best is what drives them to attempt Guinness World Records titles,” she said.

The Emirati push for world records corresponds with academic research on social comparison. Studies show that the higher ranked a person becomes in a field, “the more thirsty you are to get to that No. 1 position,” said Stephen Garcia, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan.

“Even with adults, if you say, ‘First one to the tree is the coolest person in the world,’ you’re going to get the adults running to the tree,” Garcia said. “That’s such a childhood game, but people are ready to run with it. Whenever you create a competition, people tend to buy in, even around these trivial dimensions, like this Guinness World Record.”

Garcia’s lack of enthusiasm was nowhere to be seen at the Huddle on Monday, where the vibration of the speakers in the bar caused a premature drop of some of the shot glasses at around 8:45pm, to the horror of onlookers.

The same thing happened again at 10:09pm, but was stopped by a nimble-fingered bartender. Five minutes later, another fourth of the shots fell into their glasses before time, sending some workers scrambling to reset the glasses as others asked patrons in the noisy bar to be quiet.

Guinness World Records.

“When you say Guinness World Record in Dubai, it’s something everyone will talk about,” said Ahmad Taher, the food and beverage manager at Citymax Hotels, which went for the record.

Such an event would be inconceivable in other Mideast countries like neighboring Saudi Arabia, where alcohol is illegal and officials are preparing for the annual *hajj* pilgrimage, required of all able-bodied Muslims once in their life.

Prior to the new record, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) held 165 such records, including 129 set in Dubai, according to Guinness.

Among them are the architectural marvels of Dubai, like the Burj Khalifa, the world’s tallest building at 2,716 feet, and the continent-shaped islands of The World, the largest manmade archipelago. The world’s longest driverless metro line passes by the twin towers of the J.W. Marriott Marquis, the world’s tallest hotel

at 1,165 feet.

Then there are the stranger feats, like when Indian national Maharoo Decibels won the Operation board game with surgical precision in a world-record 21.87 seconds in 2008. Or when Mohamed Ahmed al-Mulla, an Emirati, typed the fastest blindfolded Arabic text message in 2009. The two-sentences included the phrase: “the razor-toothed piranhas of the genera Serrasalmus and Pygocentrus.”

Some records are more infamous. The largest tanker ship ever hijacked? The UAE-based *Sirius Star*, later released by Somali pirates for a \$3 million ransom. The highest shortage of women, according to Guinness? The UAE, with its vast workforce of male, low-paid migrant laborers.

One place the UAE isn’t ahead, however, is in the number of overall world records. The United States leads the pack with 6,874. But the UAE and Dubai dominate the Middle East, Guinness spokeswoman

Return of snow leopards brings hope to remote Afghan region

By Lynne O’Donnell
The Associated Press

WAKHAN, Afghanistan — In a picturesque corner of Afghanistan, a unique conservation effort has helped bring the elusive snow leopard back from the brink and given hope to one of the poorest and most isolated communities on earth.

The leopards range across the snowy mountains of a

dozen countries in Central and South Asia, but their numbers had declined in recent decades as hunters sought their spotted pelts and farmers killed them to protect livestock. Now they appear to be thriving, thanks to a seven-year program and a newly declared national park.

Scientists who have been tracking the shy leopards estimate there are up to 140 cats in Wakhan National Park, established two years ago across 4,200 square miles. Stephane Ostrowski, a specialist with the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), says that’s a healthy and sustainable number, and indicates that other species like the Siberian ibex and golden marmot — the leopards’ main prey — are also doing well.

WCS believes global leopard numbers could be much higher than a previous upper estimate of 7,500, after data gathered by Ostrowski and others showed there could be more than 8,000 in just 44 percent of the animal’s known range. The World Wildlife Fund lists the species as “endangered.”

His findings are the result of research carried out in one of the most hard-to-reach places on earth. The Wakhan corridor is nestled high in the Hindu Kush mountain range and cut off by snow for most of the year. The 15-year-old war with the Taliban rages 18 miles to the south, and the nearby borders with Tajikistan, Pakistan, and China are usually closed.

The United Nations Development Program funds and oversees all the WCS activities in Wakhan, and will provide \$3 million for the snow leopard project over the next two years.

Ostrowski and the other foreign and Afghan scientists camp in yellow tents in the Sarkand Valley for months on end, monitoring and maintaining a far-flung network of cameras and traps. In just one year, they collected around 5,000 images of 38 individual cats. They managed to capture four leopards — one of them twice — and were able to fit them with collars and track them with GPS. They hope to catch another two by the end of the year.

They’ve learned that snow leopards range widely. Like house cats, they mark their territory by spraying and scratching the ground, but unlike their distant relatives, they don’t mind getting wet.

“These cats can cross big rivers and swim in extremely cold water,” Ostrowski said. One female crossed the Amu Darya river into Tajikistan, stayed a couple of weeks and



EFFECTIVE EFFORT. A snow leopard walks on Pamir mountain in Sarkand valley, in the Wakhan district of Badakhshan province, Afghanistan, in this June 8, 2012 camera-trap photo. In the picturesque corner of Afghanistan, a unique conservation effort has helped bring the elusive snow leopard back from the brink and given hope to one of the poorest and most isolated communities on earth. (H. Ali WCS via AP)

then returned. The snow leopards have benefitted from conservation programs going back to 2009, when WCS began building enclosed corrals with mesh roofs to protect the sheep, goats, and cows that are the backbone of the local economy.

It was the first step toward bringing modern conservation techniques to Wakhan, where the population of around 17,000 lives off of subsistence farming. In one of the poorest regions of one of the world’s poorest countries, the leopards had long been seen as a menace.

Hassan Beg says he lost 22 sheep and goats in one night a few years ago when a snow leopard got into his uncovered corral, and his cousin Saeed said he was attacked by one late at night. Hassan has since built his own roof over the enclosure using tree branches. “We can’t kill them,” he said, “so I just make sure it won’t happen again.”

A presidential decree banning all hunting countrywide was issued in 2005, but the scientists recently found a carcass with a bullet in its head. Some 250 miles to the southwest, at a crowded market in the capital, Kabul, a shopkeeper discreetly produced a snow leopard pelt with a long cylindrical tail and a face distorted by crude taxidermy. He wanted \$1,800 for it.

“We receive reports from all of the provinces where hunting is going on illegally, whether it is because of poverty, whether it is for hobby, whether it is for selling it

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		5		9			2	
	8						3	
7		6			3			
4				1	5			
8			9		7			3
			6	3				8
			5			6		2
	1						9	
	4			6		7		

Difficulty level: Hard

#59283

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue’s puzzle

Puzzle #45928 (Medium)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

4	1	6	3	7	8	9	5	2
5	3	9	4	6	2	8	7	1
8	7	2	1	9	5	3	4	6
3	2	1	5	8	7	4	6	9
7	4	8	9	1	6	5	2	3
9	6	5	2	4	3	1	8	7
6	5	4	7	3	1	2	9	8
2	8	3	6	5	9	7	1	4
1	9	7	8	2	4	6	3	5