El-Ga’ab Depression is located south to the third cataract in the western bank of the River Nile parallel to Dongola reach in northern Sudan. It extends at about 123 km in the desert in the southwest direction and it departs away from the Nile when heading to the south.

Since it is a depressed area, the underground water is near to the surface. It was a paleo-lake connected to the Nile. The increase in water level in the Pleistocene and the Holocene resulted in forming a lake due to rise of the River Nile water level and its entering the Depression through a stream attached to the Nile at
Sorooj village. The existence of fossilised skeletons for crocodiles, hippos, fish and shells proves that there was aquatic environment appropriate to those animals to live in that area.

The strategic location of the Depression makes it easy to get to it. One can travel to the depression by bus on the land road (Khartoum – Dongola) 544 km and Ga’ab El-Lagia is only 10 km from the road opposite to Binna Mountain. There is also the air road through Dongola airport.

**Geography**

El-Ga’ab Depression has a varied and unique landscape, flora and fauna by nature. Generally, the geography of the Depression includes Northern Bab El-Ga’ab, Wadi El-Hasha, a number of Ga’abs (Oases) such as Ga’ab El-Lagia (the biggest one), Abu Namil, El-Mangoor, El-Mwailih, Um Hilal, Ga’ab El-Mraibeet , Baioda, and Sothern El-Bab
El-Ga’ab. In addition, a gravel Plateau separates the depression from the River Nile. Besides, there are a number of mountains such as El-Lagia Mountain, El-Hasha, El-Hatana, Um-Grainat, and El-Kwies. A group of sand dunes and hills form the main geographical features of El-Ga’ab Depression.

**Work History in El-Ga’ab Depression**

Major Turner (1884) described the wells, plants, villages, and archaeological buildings in the area and Ga’ab El-Lagia in particular (Turner, 1905).

Mohammed Mahri El-Karkooki, who visited Sudan in 1909, stated that a group of Kababeesh Arabs inhabited El-Ga’ab Depression. He also explained that it had a lot of palm trees, wells, nice air and water and the Sudanese used to go there to relax and breathe its good air and bath in its sand that is useful for neurological, internal diseases and fevers (El-Karkooki, 1914: 309-310). According to Arkell, Karkanis has found an Acheulian tool, hand axe, at the right bank of Wadi El-Ga’ab (Arkell, 1949).
Smith described the dessert castle, which dates back to the 17th century, in Kap area (south to Ga’ab) as a centre in Darb El- Arbaeen (Smith, 2002:160). Kröplin found what was believed to be Dimotiqi script that was usually associated to administrative building. Dimotiqi texts were used during 650-30 BC (Kröplin, 2006). Williams et al (2010) mentioned the Holocene lake in Ga’ab Depression.

The organised archaeological work in Ga’ab Depression is executed by the Department of Archaeology, University of Khartoum. The work is called Archaeological, Ethnographical and Ecological Project of El Ga’ab Depression in Western Dongola. The Project director is Dr Yahia Fadul Tahir. Three seasons of the work have finished. The first one finished in 2009. The second was completed in 2010, and the third executed 2011. The results of these seasons were published in local and international journals and conferences (Tahir, 2009; 2010; 2012; 2013; and 2014). Nubian Archaeological Development Organisation finances the work. The fourth and Fifth seasons were done in 2013-2015.
Groundwater Lake in the middle of the desert, a shelter for animal and bird and human.
The population in El-Ga’ab area belongs to El-Kababeesh tribe. The majority of the population is Awaida and a little of it is Hawaweer. The verbal narrations state that the people had come from Kurdufan to El-Ga’ab and they found it a suitable place for them and their camels. Kababeesh, generally, live near caravan roads extended in the dessert from Egypt to Darfur and the west like Darb El-Arbaeen, Wadi El-Malik, and Wadi El-Magadam. Economically, the tribe depends on rasing camels and agriculture.
Touristic Attractions

El-Ga’ab is distinguished by attractive features that provided it readiness for a variety of tours like:

Archaeological Tour

1- Prehistory

Evidences signify the existence of human settlement in El-Ga’ab Depression since Stone Ages (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic). The settlements spread all over the Depression to tell the story of prehistory groups. They reflect that age life features like settlement campuses, cemeteries, and tethering stones among others.
2- Historical Period

• Forts

A number of castles and forts are found in El-Ga’ab Depression. These are:

• El-Kweib Fort

It is found in Wadi El-Kweib southwest to El-Ga’ab Ba’aooda (18.52.096 N/ 029.57.614 E). It was built from Nubian stone and some Granit stones. It is 70 m long and 70 m wide. The walls’ thickness is 2 m and their height is 4 m. There are four patrolling towers in the four corners.
• El-Kab Fort

Two castles are found northwest to Ga’ab Um Hilal (19.66.275 N/ 030.08.919 E).

- The northern fort was built of Nubian sandstone on the peak of El-Kab Mountain. It consists of two units. The first one is smaller. The walls height is one metre in most parts. Their thickness is 1 m. The door opens toward the southeast in a reception 3x3x2 m. the second unit is found at the bottom of the mountain and it is bigger. It is circular with a 145 m diameter.

- To the south of this fort at about 200 m, there is another smaller fort part of which is built on the top of rocky hill. The western part is about 25 m x 11 m, while the eastern one is 11m X21 m. On the top of the hill, there are Cross drawings on rocky plates.
• El-Hufra Fort

It is found in Wadi El-Kweib in a depressed area south to Ga’ab El-Thawani and western to Ga’ab Ba’aooda (18.52.096 N/ 029.57.614 E). It was built of sand stones with about 18 m diameter and a two-metre height. In the four corners, there are patrolling towers.
There are a number of Christian archaeologies in Ga’ab El-Lagia. They include:

- **The Church**
  It is located in a high hill northeast Ga’ab El-Lagia. It was built of mud bricks. The architectural design of the Church appears in the arches at the Church gate.

- **The Monastery**
  The monastery is located at about 600 m to the west of El-Lagia Church. It was built of mud bricks. It is thought to be a monastery. The exploration has not been done in this location yet.

- **The Cemeteries**
  A number of Christian cemeteries are found to the east of the monastery. They are circular big stacks.
4- Others

• El-Hamra Complex

El-Hamra complex is considered one of the biggest Christian sites, which have recently been revealed. It is situated to the southwest of Ga’ab El-Lagia (N 19.18/E30.07). It is a Christian complex where we can find a number of sites dating back to the Christian period. These sites include the Church, Castle House and a group of buildings in addition to Christian cemeteries. In Ga’ab El-Mраibeet, southwest of Ga’ab El-Thawani, there is a group of Christian buildings, which have not been explored yet.
• Islamic Archaeologies

• Benia

Benias are regarded as one of the Islamic architecture features in Sudan. In El-Ga’ab Depression there are three domes. One is Shaikh Wad Fazari’s tomb in Ga’ab El-Mangoor (19.22.079 N/30.12.419 E) and two Benias are northwest to Ga’ab Um Hilal (19 06.357 N/ 030 07.972 E).
• Rock Drawings

El-Ga’ab Oasis human was skilful in expressing himself since early times using rocky drawings like the hippos, deer, giraffes, camels, and other drawings as in Jebel Hatana southeast to Ga’ab El-Lagai. They appear on the sides of high rocks in El-Ga’ab Depression forming eternal pillars signifying the excellence in opinion and execution.

Moreover, there is a variety of drawings on rocks dating back to the Christian period. They are represented in Crosses in the mountains like Um-Grainat and East Mangoor mountains.
El-Ga’ab Depression contains a wealth of plant fossils that include (fossilised forests) that extend for kilometres. There are also zoological fossils that include remains of crocodiles, hippos, fish, and shells, which are scattered all over the paleo-lake. Thus, El-Ga’ab Depression is regarded as one of few places where fossilised remains are found in high density and variety in their natural environment.
El-Ga’ab Depression is distinguished by underground water that is near to the surface. This resulted in a water spring near Ga’ab El-Thawani in the south-western region of the Depression. This spring formed a lake full of flora. Willow leaf and Halfa trees dance for the singing of birds and water murmuring which springs from the deep ground. This water caused the desert to be full of vegetation.

There is also a small spring near Ga’ab El-Miraibeet.
Burring in the sand is regarded as one of the remedial tourism landmarks. The sand in Gooz El-A’afia in Ga’ab El-Lagia carries in its particles the mystery of oases sand in treating diseases. Mohammed Mahri El-Karkooki mentioned the remedial tourism in El-Ga’ab area in 1909. This proves that this type of tourism is very old in this region. It is worth mentioning that burring in the sand heals from Rheumatism and other diseases. In addition, El-Ga’ab Depression’s people were skilful in employing variety of plants found in the area to treat some diseases using herbs and bushes growing in the Depression.
**Natural Tourism**

Mediation, looking and enjoying the charming nature calmness is another feature of natural tourism that El-Ga’ab Depression oasis builds in the souls of its visitors. Extended hills, verdant trees, Turfa hills, green grass, and water drew a breath-taking scene.

**Sports Tourism**

The hills and sand dunes in El-Ga’ab Depression make it an appropriate place for Rally races and sand skiing and other types of desert sports.
Hunting Tourism

The varied existence of animals in El-Ga’ab Depression environment qualifies it for hunting tourism. Animals like deer and rabbits live the Depression particularly in the western and southern edges of the Depression. El-Thawani spring offered a place for the terrestrial ducks and other types of birds.
Handcrafts

A number of handcrafts are practiced in El-Ga’ab Depression such as baskets and carpets (Broosh) made of palm leaves woven by skilful women’s hand.

The Museum

Believing in dissemination of cultural and archaeological awareness in the region and the necessity of establishing museums in the states in Sudan, work has started in building a museum in Ga’ab El-Lagia with support from Nubian Archaeological Development Organisation. The aim of the museum is to display the huge cultural and human heritage.

The museum buildings include show rooms for the archaeological materials and the folk heritage in El-Ga’ab. It also includes a lounge, store, and park for children.
Groundwater flowing impulsively without pumps.
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