

# Tayf - the Soqatra Newsletter

Issued By *FRIENDS OF SOQOTRA* and *SOCOTRA CONSERVATION FUND*

Tsunami damage in Mifrahin. Photo SCF.



## Asian Tsunami – Impacts on Soqatra

Leaving a trail of destruction behind, waves generated by the East Asian seaquake moved through the Indian Ocean at high speed, hitting the Maldives on their way, which reduced the energy of the northern part of the tsunami before it reached the southern coast of Soqatra. The wave crashing into East Africa (mainly Somalia and Kenya) passed just below the island, but the energy with which it hit in the south-eastern coast (Noged) was high enough to have a profound effect on local fishing communities.

The wave hit the south coast about 5 pm on Sunday evening. Along the north coast there was just a swelling of the tide which came up over the beach in an unusual manner. At Qalansiya the sea went out just before the swell came in, and a boy (Salim Abdullah Salim Al Qiyssi, from the Qalansiyah Directorate was killed; about 5 years old) was drowned trying to run out and pick up stranded fish. We extend our sympathy to his family and friends. At Hadiboh there were apparently a few young people caught in the swell, but all managed to get to shore.

The biggest financial loss was in the Noged, particularly at Mahferihin in the south-east, Shir'in and Matyaf in the east, and Qadheb in the north), Qalansiyah, Shi'ib, 'Amdehen, Abd al Kuri and Samha Islands 27 fishing boats and 60 outboard motors were damaged. 204 houses and 44 stores also suffered damage.

## Soqatra Nomination as a World Heritage Site

UNESCO has formally established a small Task Force in charge of assisting Yemen in finalizing the WHS nomination file for Socotra.

UNESCO has assigned Dr Mario Caruso, Italian Architect, who has significant experience in preparing successful UNESCO World Heritage Sites nomination files for high-profile cultural sites in Italy. Edoardo and Teresa Zandri are also on the initial Task Force. SCDP, SCF and FoS are all offering support to this important venture.



Boats and boat shed damaged by Tsunami. Photo: Len Pearce.

## Soqatra Exhibition Delayed to Summer 2006

The Soqatra Exhibition at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh will now take place during the summer of 2006. Ambitious plans for the Exhibition have been prepared, and in order to be able to realise these plans fully a significant amount of funding will be required. See p. 12 for more details.

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SCDP and SCF are working with the Government of Yemen to help the fishermen replace their boats. However, this is unlikely to cover fully the costs of replacing nets. FoS is therefore taking donations to help replace the nets that were destroyed. Please send donations to FoS or donate via the website.

### C or Q?

*Spelling of the main island name in English is still controversial. Contributors to **Tayf** are welcome to use whichever spelling they prefer.*



# Current Issues

## RAINS ON SOQOTRA

Peter De Geest

The Soqotra Karst Project team visited the Island from 26th of November until the 6th of December. On arrival we heard that it had been raining very severely over the last weeks, more intensely than over the last 20 years people said. At many places the landscape was transformed into lush greenery. Hoq and other cave systems were much wetter than usual. Near Erher cave, the dunes were partly flushed away and re-deposited at the sea, resulting in a new, almost 5m wide beach. On the 3rd of December the north coast was hit again by another heavy rainfall. Cars were swept away from the new road and parts of the ring road around Hadibu were flooded. A breach had to be made in the new road from Hadibu towards the petrol station to avoid further damage. The Soqotri suffered more during this period than with the Tsunami, except for the loss of their boats of course.

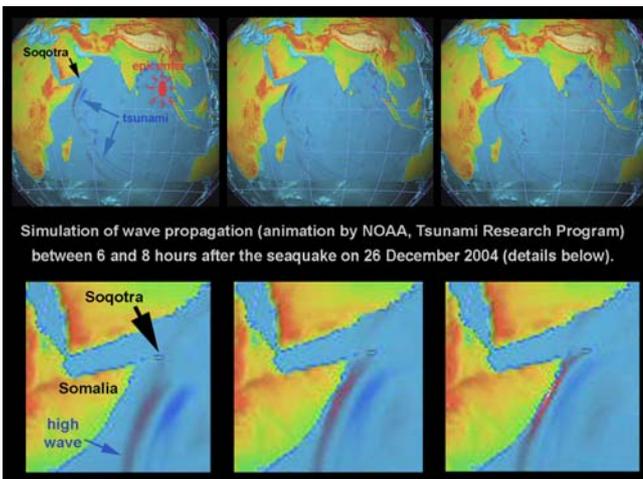
The Yemeni Observer reported on 11 December that 'Hundreds of people had been displaced by severe floods on Socotra. The head of the UNDP-funded conservation project on the island said Old Hadibo, the island's main town, and the villages of Sarhan and Qatab were subjected to floods starting Friday morning which have swept away cars, palm trees and plantations, as well as drowning cattle. The military took the lead in rescue efforts and Gen. Hussein Nagi said that 300 people from the two villages were rescued and placed in temporary housing in two local schools. No human casualties have been reported.'



## RAINS DAMAGE ROADS

Julian Jansen van Rensburg

During November 2004 Socotra experienced a series of torrential downpours that transformed the landscape and roads. Areas like Eriosh had become miniature lakes while once dry riverbeds were turned into raging torrents of water. These events especially affected the roads, turning some areas of roads into rivers of red mud while in other areas the roads were awash with fallen rock and other debris. Several crossings had also become virtually impassable due to the force of the water, while lagoons and wadis had been completely transformed by the force of the water. While several days after the rain the damage done to the roads became apparent with many areas showing signs of breaking up or complete collapse through the undermining effects of the water.



Simulation of the Tsunami wave front. With kind permission of: NOAA images:

<http://www.pmel.noaa.gov/tsunami/>



## Beekeeping Project Gets Hives

The first stages of the beekeeping project have started with pilot projects introducing the use of established beekeeping techniques. The idea is to replace the economically and environmentally unsustainable practices of smoking natural beehives to acquire honey with an organized system of wooden beehives. How successful will this be?

The basic needs team has been working with a representative of the Agricultural Office in Socotra and two French beekeeper: Camille and Thierry, training 14 Socotri beekeepers in established beekeeping techniques and providing them with the necessary equipment including wooden beehives and wax sheets.

The second stage of the project involved starting 70 hives. Of these, 50 were successful and the first load of honey will be produced from these hives from mid-February to March 2005. Visits to the hives so far indicate that this pilot project has been a success. The team hopes to receive funding to cover the costs of training and converting more beekeepers to using these techniques.

**Ahmed Jumaan, Basic Needs Team**

## YEMENI ISLANDS ARE INVALUABLE

Extracted from an article By Amin Abdul-Jalil, Yemen Observer Dec 4, 2004

SANA'A - Yemen's islands in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean have always been invaluable economic assets, said Prime Minister Abdul-Qader Bajammal at the First International Conference on the Investment Opportunities in the Yemeni Islands. He asserted that "today, on the 37th anniversary of independence, they are of enormous economic significance and constitute bridges of communication and exchange with other world countries. Continued development for welfare is the path to peace, stability and common well being," Bajammal said, reiterating that the Government is mindful of the environmental impact of projects.

He said the Yemen would ensure that projects are ecologically safe. "Environmental protection is a major part of the sustainable development strategy," he said, promising that "substantial efforts are being made to increase the man-nature harmony."

The Director-General of the Organisation for the Development of the Islands (ODI), Yehya Al-Kaina'i, said that investment in the islands is more likely to thrive than mainland investments. He said that scientific research has proven investments are more lucrative on islands than on the mainland.

He laid special stress on Socotra as an example, saying that the archipelago, which consists of seven islands, is so vast that it can host many simultaneous investments. He said that 30% of the islands in Yemen's territorial waters "don't have names yet," referring to the fact that although locally known, many islands have not been formally charted or identified.

## SOQOTRA ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROJECT ATTAINS DARWIN GRANT

An Education Project, designed to produce education materials to support delivery of environmental education through the curriculum on Socotra plus providing teacher training and support, has been granted funding by the Darwin Initiative. The project is headed by Roderic Dutton under the auspices of Durham University and the funding will allow delivery over the next three years. Work involves preparing education materials to promote the Socotran natural and cultural heritage, working with local teachers, students and parents to pilot delivery mechanisms and providing training for student teachers in the use of the materials and delivery of the lessons.

## Soqotra Designation

The island of Soqotra has been classified within one of the areas for support by Conservation International as part of the biodiversity region of the Horn of Africa, which is now officially recognised as one of the most important areas for biodiversity in the world. This designation will facilitate the island and its inhabitants receiving a variety of types of funding.

## NEW GIS UNIT IN SCDP

This new system will allow integration of the data collected from a variety of sources and collate it into one system to allow environmental analysis, production of maps and planning of projects. It can be used to provide information on protected areas, monitor and record (weather, plants, animals, birds, etc.), locate specific activities (home gardens, water projects) and map roads, schools, villages etc.

**Ziad Mohammed Abo Ghanim  
GIS Unit**

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT UNIT IN SCDP

The need for EIAs for new projects on Socotra is imperative, and a new unit has been set up within the SCDP to carry them out. EIAs have been conducted so far for:

- The road from Hawlaf to Arrerhin.
- The road from Ma'auna to Hagher.
- Fish store in Noged.
- Others road and small activities.

However, more training is still required to develop the techniques and skills.

**Ahmed Issa Afrar, EIA Unit**

## THE MOBILE CLINIC

The mobile clinic is one of the most important activities which the Socotra conservation and Development Program organizes, providing health services to the islanders and specifically to the more remote regions far from the fixed health centers located on the island. The mobile clinic works with the aim of ridding the islanders of preventable diseases, providing medical services and medication in the more remote regions, and increasing both health and environmental awareness on the island.

In 2004 the mobile clinic travelled to 35 locations, receiving 8161 patients. 1548 women aged 15 – 45 and 1323 children of various ages were given immunizations. In addition, 48 health and environmental awareness workshops were conducted through the clinic.

**Noah Adham Ali**  
*Basic Needs Team, Health Section*

## Home Gardens Growing Well

I took part in a training program for agricultural extension officers which was attended by 40 women. Since then 11 nurseries specialized in growing vegetables have been started in various region in the island. Each nursery is responsible for growing seedlings and distributing them among the home gardens in neighbouring villages in the appropriate seasons. We also helped 23 women start home gardens and these women were trained on location in various agricultural skills. Good practices are being encouraged including using home made organic fertilizers and environmentally friendly pesticides.

**Inas Anees**  
*Basic Needs Team,*

## NADIM TALEB HAS NARROW ESCAPE

At the end of November 2004 Nadim Taleb, director of the SCDP on Socotra, had a serious accident. Whilst surveying wildlife, he slipped on a wet, algae- covered rock and tumbled to the edge of a steep cliff on Socotra; only a boulder prevented him from plummeting to the foot. Nevertheless he sustained nine broken ribs, a punctured lung, and other internal injuries. It took his rescuers three hours to get him to the car, and then he faced a tortuous drive to Hadiboh, and a 24 hour wait with limited medical facilities before he could be flown to hospital in Sana'a. He then was medivaced to Jordan.

After two months of recovery and rehabilitation we are very pleased to announce that Nadim is now back at his important post on Socotra. We all send him very best wishes.

## EDOARDO GOES TO CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

Edoardo Zandri, who has been working with the SCDP programme for many years on Soqotra, has now moved to the Cape Verde Islands. We would all like to extend our best wishes and our thanks to him for all the work and many successful outcomes he has delivered for Soqotra over the past few years. He remains in touch, and continues to help Soqotra from his new position.

## MALEK ABDULAZIZ COMPLETES MSC

Malek Abdulaziz came back to the Socotra Island after finishing a master degree in marine environmental protection in UK, The thesis discusses the recovery on coral communities after the 1998 bleaching event. Malek is now continuing his work with the SCDP team and leading the Socotra Conservation Fund activities on the Island.

## PHOTOS FROM 1957

Roderic Dutton has obtained a series of aerial photographs of Soqotra. He is scanning these for future use for Soqotra. The photos are RAF flown on 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 1957, height of plane 40,000 feet, focal length 6 inches. Total of 130 photos covers Soqotra and the Brothers. Virtually cloud free. One 9" photo covers about 12km. Photos are of good quality. R.w.dutton@durham.ac.uk

## Historical and Cultural Association for Soqotra

We are delighted to announce that Soqotrans are in the process of setting up an NGO "Historical and Cultural Association for Soqotra"

### DIVE TRAINING

Between February and April 2005 SCDP organised its first ever scuba diving training course on the island. The aim of these diving courses was to increase the number of qualified divers who can take part in the marine monitoring programmes and work with tourists visiting the island for diving. Full article and photographs in the next edition of Tayf.

Hajnalka Kovacs PADI diving instructor #88593

## TAYF

**Tayf** is the Soqotri word for Aloes, including *Aloe perryi*. This is a plant of special importance to the people of Soqotra. It has many medical and veterinary uses and is exported throughout the Gulf region. Many families, having inherited land on which *Aloe* plants grow, harvest the *Aloe* sap, a practice that has been carried on for thousands of years. The dried sap serves as an important source of income for many families, and the market is expanding in the whole of the Gulf region.

# Funding and Appeals

## AMERICAN FUNDING FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT ON SOQOTRA

SCF has just announced that funding of up to USD500,000 for the years 2005-2006 has been allocated for Socotra island by the government of Yemen and the American Embassy in Sana'a from a special fund called PL480. The allocated fund will be used strictly for rural development activities in the fields of livestock, date palm cultivation and processing, development and marketing of Socotri specific products (i.e. aloe, frankincense, dragon blood resin etc) small domestic water projects, fisheries, ecotourism development, primary health care and education

SCF has asked the advice of FoS on relevant ideas which will be offering full support to SCF so we can work together to make the best use of this funding to benefit the Socotri people.

***AbdulRahman Al Eryani***

## TSUNAMI RELIEF

As a small contribution towards helping those affected by the Tsunami on Soqatra, Friends of Soqatra is organising an appeal to provide funds to replace lost fishing nets. While major fundraising work is being conducted by SCDP and SCF to replace boats and motors, additional funds will be most useful to replace the nets.

The smallest useful nets are YR25,000, and then they go up to 40,000 and 50,000. It is approximately 185 riyals to the American dollar at the moment in Sana'a. Therefore each net will be between \$135 and \$270, or £70—£150.

Please help us to assist these fishermen; donate on the FoS website (via paypal) or by cheque to FoS.



## DONATION OF \$100 FROM SOQOTRI FOS MEMBER LIVING IN THE GULF

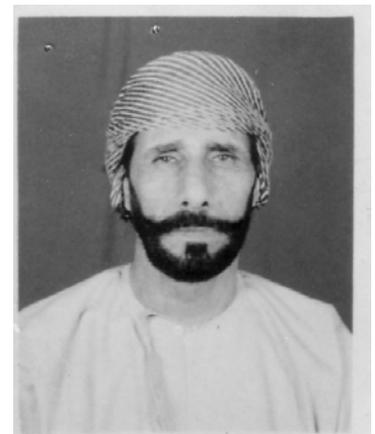
FoS member, Muhammad Abdullah Sulaiman, known as "Abu Shanab", has donated one hundred dollars to further the work of the charity. Originally from the Il Kishin area in western Soqatra, he left the island in the late 1960s, and lived and worked in Sa'udi Arabia before finally settling down in Oman in 1971. He is a well-known poet who works under the pen-name of Fukhari Di Min Daqoyhim. Although he himself has not been back to Soqatra since, his poetry - courtesy of the cassette tape - travels back and forth between the Gulf, Oman and Soqatra.

## FUNDING DRIVE FOR RBGE EXHIBITION

Friends of Soqatra is currently looking for funding for the RBGE Exhibition to be held in 2006. Sponsors will be acknowledged in all Exhibition material and will be invited to special events and activities associated with the Exhibition.

Sponsors will be designated Desert Rose, Dragon's Blood, Myrrh, Frankincense or Gold, depending on the amount of donation from £500 up to £50,000.

This offers an excellent opportunity to promote your company to an international audience; contact FoS for further details on how you can become involved.



# Features

## CAPTIVE BREEDING AND REPATRIATION OF SOQOTRAN GECKOS

Dr. Wolfgang Wranik , Universität Rostock & Herbert Rösler Museum für Tierkunde Dresden

As part of a study of the life cycle and ecology of the geckos of Soqootra, we arranged to remove some animals to attempt captive breeding. Besides, it was also the idea to think about developing an ex-situ

population, especially for those species who are considered as more rare, to have an opportunity in case of habitat destruction or any unexpected effects (such as the tsunami) to save the species and to have a chance to repatriate them.

The experiments in breeding were very successful, and much information on breeding habits was obtained. Four individuals (two males and two females) of *Haemodracon. trachyrhinus* were located during the day in an inactive state by turning stones and taken to Germany. They were maintained in terraria in controlled conditions of temperature and humidity and fed with crickets, locusts and cockroaches; we were surprised that *H. riebeckii* also ate various fruits.



The female excavates a 2.5 to 5 cm deep vertical pit with a diameter of approximately 2,0 cm and a basin-like extension at its lower part. Two white and sticky soft-shelled eggs are usually laid; the egg shells harden in air and become fragile. The eggs are usually placed closely side by side. immediately after the eggs are laid the female closes the pit with substrate and does



not worry further about them; due to their sticky shell the eggs are usually densely covered with substrate.

The young break the shell with their paired egg-teeth and form a round to oval aperture through which they hatch; usually they have to dig themselves through the substrate by driving a narrow vertical shaft to the surface. Young specimens are more colourful than adult specimens, most striking is the brown/white striped lower jaw and the white-banded tail; immediately after hatching they shed their skin and consume the exuvia; they eat their first food after 3-5 days.

Seven young specimens of *H. riebeckii* were returned to Yemen; two specimens died in Sana'a of natural causes, but the remaining five were still in good and healthy conditions when handed over to the SCDP office in Hadiboh.

## SOCOTRA'S POPULARITY WITH THE ITALIANS

Rowan Salim

Socotra has long been popular with holiday makers who come for the beautiful scenery, the diving, the white untainted beaches and the overall hospitality and friendliness of the Socotra people. In 2004 Italian visitors who came to the island were the most numerous in comparison with any other nationality. A number of examples of how the link between Italian visitors and Socotris can benefit people here are already apparent: the small action of donating some articles (jewelry and toys) by Aldo Gabbana raised some money which was put to good use in repainting the blackboards in the Salaheddin Primary school of Hadibo.

At the end of 2001 two Italian tourists, Giovanni Borchini and Salvatore Carta, visited Socotra. Deeply impressed by their first visit, they decided this year that they would like to try and better the island in some small way. Landscape architects by profession, they brought vital equipment including electric fences and irrigation systems which was put to use to improve to agriculture infrastructure on the island. A number of local schools (in Arerhin, Medhobo and Qariah) also benefited from their donations of stationary and school resources.

Italians have always had an enduring love affair with the Beautiful Game. As a result the local team *Al Jazeera* can now enjoy playing football equipped in the colours of a famous Italian soccer team. Perhaps the most effective contribution was made to the hospital in the form of much needed medical equipment and drugs. This was in addition to a donation to those who suffered from the Tsunami.

Contributions from these people will affect many lives on the island in a very positive way and hopefully the results will be seen for years to come.

# Features

## THE SOCOTRA EXPERIENCE

Miles Davis

The drive from Socotra's airport into Hadibo was fascinating. The view rolled out before me was one of beautiful clear blue sea, unusual looking trees and a rugged terrain that seemed unworldly. I had come to Socotra as an international ecotourism worker to assist the Socotra Ecotourism Society (SES) in a variety of ways including improving their knowledge and understanding of how ecotourism works and what to do to ensure that it is a success for the people and the island in general. My first impression of Socotra's tourism was numbed a little by the exhaustive travel to the island from anywhere outside of Yemen and the high cost of the domestic flight from Sana'a which foreigners are obliged to pay. These two factors alone are a major barrier to increasing tourism on Socotra. On the other hand, these factors can be seen as a way of ensuring that only people who are *really* interested in Socotra's natural and cultural wonders visit the island, ensuring the continuation of effective ecotourism.



I was immediately struck by the friendliness of not only the people I was about to work with, but also the people of the island in general. There are many examples from around the world where bad tourism planning and practices have led to resentment between locals and foreigners, stemming from a multitude of contributing factors. It was paramount in my mind that one of the tenets of any ecotourism project is to create and manage a sustainable balance between the environmental, economic and social factors of the area where ecotourism is initiated. This would help ensure such problems do not arise. I continually conveyed this pragmatic message to those I was working with and others that had an interest in the future of tourism on Socotra. It was very interesting to explain and inform Socotrans that ecotourism is a niche sector of the tourism industry and thus, due to the components of ecotourism and the circumstances on Socotra, there will not be plane-loads of tourists each week, but it can go some way to providing a certain level of stability to the island in the long-term. The people of the SES are certainly striving to grow their customer base and are very positive about what they are working towards. I had a job description with tasks to fulfil, there were also many things to do that were not in the job description but were necessary when dealing with an ecotourism initiative in its infancy. Reassuringly, the majority of people on Socotra realised that the development of ecotourism has to be in balance with the conservation efforts on the island.



I am confident that ecotourism on Socotra will go from strength to strength and gain more international coverage as a fabulous ecotourism destination.

Miles Davis – [misr69@aol.com](mailto:misr69@aol.com).

Photographs courtesy of Valerio Bartelino. Valerio worked in the marine centre of the SCDP on Socotra for about 5 months. He has produced a cd on Socotra's coral collection. [valerionbartolino@hotmail.com](mailto:valerionbartolino@hotmail.com)

# Features

## LOCAL INITIATIVE - THE HOMHIL BOTANICAL GARDEN

Miranda Morris



Sign at entrance with, from left to right, Ahmad, Khamis and Umr

In February of last year, a group of people from the village of Lih in Homhil decided to embark on an astonishing project: nothing less than a botanical garden. The villagers had long been aware of the lack of regeneration of some of the key trees and shrubs of the area – such as the frankincense and commiphora trees, and the valuable *Sterculia* – and had become increasingly conscious of the value of the island vegetation, not only to the islanders, but also to the many visitors to the island, tourists and scientists alike.

An area was enclosed, a plough hired from Hadiboh, a well - originally for finger-millet - deepened and widened, a cistern built, two water pumps imported from the Gulf and yards of piping installed. The enclosed area was then divided into two: one for the experimental growing of fodder grasses, and the other to establish an experimental botanical garden.

In the original 1996 report *Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biodiversity of Socotra Archipelago, Yemen*, the authors (Miller and Morris) had proposed the experimental growing of fodder crops within enclosures and the establishment of a nursery for indigenous and endemic plants. It is indeed marvellous to see Soqotrans themselves so enthusiastically engaged in such activities. The garden is managed by Umr Sa'ad Khamis Tahki and his son, Khamis, with initial funding provided by Umr's two brothers, Ahmad (in Oman) and Ali (in 'Ajman). Already by December 2004 when I visited the garden, a total of 141 plants of 43 species had been planted, each plant clearly labelled with its Soqotri name and the date of planting. Aluminium plants tags with the botanical name of the plant, where known, are also attached.

### *Fodder grasses*

The many varieties of grasses have grown well – so well indeed that additional barrier of barbed wire has had to be installed around the initial fencing to discourage donkeys and camels attracted by the vivid greenery. Grass seeds have been brought in from elsewhere in the island, or from Yemen, Oman and the Emirates. Umr and Khamis are also growing some tomatoes and chilli peppers for home consumption, but experimental vegetable cultivation is largely carried out in the small kitchen garden funded by SCDP and run by Sahaam Eesa in another part of the valley.

### *The Botanical Garden*

The garden consists of plants that were already present; transplanted plants; plants grown from cuttings, and plants grown from seed.

Already present were trees such as *Dracaena*, tree *Euphorbia*, a frankincense tree, the tree cucumber, *Dendrosicyos*, and *Clerodendrum*, which produces the best wood for herding staffs. They were left in situ, as were shrubs such as the thorny *Lycium*, *Carphalea*, the 'desert rose' *Adenium*, the endemic *Croton soctranus*, and *Ballochia* which produces delicious, nectar-filled flowers. The ground around them has been cleared and the soil dug, and with regular watering, all these plants are thriving.

Transplants: a young cucumber tree, the unusual fig *Dorstenia*, the hard-wooded *Buxanthus*, the cactus-like spiny *Euphorbia spiralis* and the bitter *Euphorbia schimperi* were all transplanted as young plants. Young aloes have also been transplanted, and *Jatropha* and *Asparagus* species.



View of fodder grasses enclosures (with double fencing, cistern and enclosed *Dracaena*)

# Features



young tree Euphorbia, with sign reading: cutting: 'imtehe'; planted 4/10/2004



young Sterculia with sign reading: transplanted: 'bohin', planted 7/9/2004

Grown from cuttings: of especial interest, given their failure to regenerate in the wild, are the cuttings of frankincense (*Boswellia elongata* and *B. socotrana*) and commiphora (*Commiphora ornifolia* and *C. parvifolia*). Cuttings from the highly-valued trees *Sterculia*, *Grewia* and *Lannea* have also taken well, as have those both the fig trees. Important browse plants, such as *Paracalyx*, *Carphalea* and *Anisotes* have been planted. An interesting experiment with *Dracaena* is taking place: a bunch of leaflets on a fallen tree was noticed to be producing healthy roots; it was planted out and at the moment this young plant seems to be doing well.

Grown from seed: interesting trials are being made with locally gathered seed. Seed from key trees which are failing to regenerate naturally, such as the tamarind, various frankincense and commiphora species, *Sterculia*, *Maerua*, the larger *Cordia*, and *Cryptolepis socotrana* have been gathered and planted. The villagers had noticed that after good rains, seedlings of all the above proliferate in and among unpalatable plants such as *Lycium*, *Cissus* and *Buxanthus*. However, when the seedlings are checked a month or two later they are found to have died right back to or to have been eaten. Khamis and Umr are keen to see whether their protected seedlings fare any better. The seeds of the tree *Euphorbia* have also produced strong young seedlings (the more usual way of propagating this important dry-season fodder for goats is planting bunches of leaflets).

Umr and Khamis warmly welcome visitors to the garden: "Anyone can come to Liyeh and ask for either of us and we will be only too happy to show them around." The very attractive new camp-site in Homhil should attract more visitors to this scenically spectacular area, and the villagers of Liyeh hope to be able to show them, in one easily visited site, as many of the fascinating and endemic plants of the island as possible. Umr and Khamis would also welcome the involvement of scientists and botanists in their work, and say they would be happy to become involved in serious experiments in plant propagation and monitoring, or in trials of local versus imported fertilizers, and natural and chemical pest control.

## Home Gardens

SCDP has been continuing to support the development of home gardens through encouragement, training and providing seeds and seedlings. Eleven small nurseries, each with a trained Agriculture Guide (all of them women) have been established. So far more than 757 farmers have benefited from this programme. This programme needs more support as it is of great importance to the people of Socotra.

**Fahmi Ba Hashowan**  
**Ahmed Issa Afrar**



Water cistern with Umr and Khamis

# Life on the Island

## THE EGYPTIAN VULTURE

Richard Porter

Probably the first bird that a traveller to Socotra becomes aware of is the Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*: around the airport as one lands, on the roof tops of Hadibu or as a squabbling visitor to any picnic, especially when goat is on the menu.

Widespread throughout the island, it is impossible to spend a day without seeing at least a group of these small vultures. Nesting on rocky mountain ledges it usually lays two eggs which are incubated for six weeks. The chicks then take a further ten to twelve weeks before they are able to make their first flight.

Much of a vulture's day is spent in search of food. There seems to be two strategies. Sitting on roof-tops waiting for waste scraps to be put out - a kind of roof-top bird table; or soaring high on outstretched wings looking for other vultures on the ground that might indicate a food supply - perhaps a dead animal or villagers about to boil a goat. Indeed the Socotrans give it the name of 'municipal bird' because it is one of the natural clean-up systems.

The adult vulture is a creamy-white with black flight-feathers and thin, yellow bill and face. It takes five years for it to gain this plumage during which time it transforms, through a succession of moults, from a scruffy blackish-brown juvenile. The photographs show the range of plumages you may encounter.

It would be a mistake to think that because Egyptian Vultures are so common and tame on Socotra the same is the case everywhere they occur. Indeed Socotra probably has the largest concentration of Egyptian Vultures anywhere in the world, and for this reason the island has an international responsibility to ensure its protection. The population has been calculated at well over 1,000 birds, and one can easily see up to 50 soaring together over Hadibu in the warm air thermals, or flying to and from their roosts in the hills at dawn and dusk.

The fortune of vultures throughout the world is mixed and in the last few years we have seen the populations of several species crash in the Indian sub-continent and parts of Africa. The cause, at least in India, is the use of diclofenac, a veterinary drug used for controlling inflammation in cattle. If vultures feed on dead cattle injected with the drug they will almost certainly die.



Socotrans greatly respect their vultures and recognise the valuable job they do as garbage collectors. Whilst this continues their future on the island seems assured.



### BIRDWATCHING – JANUARY 2005

The good rains this winter have meant large numbers of migratory birds have visited the island. Spotted have been Spoonbill, White Stork, Purple Heron, Cattle Heron, Hoopoe, Masked Booby and Glossy Ibis. There are also particularly large numbers of the Socotra Cormorant and Sooty Gull.

**Ahmed Saeed**, *Terrestrial research*

### ERADICATING THE INDIAN HOUSE CROW

The eradication programme continues (see *Tayf* 1) with numbers now reduced to just 16 birds.

**Ahmed Saeed**, *Terrestrial research*

# Myth and History

## ISLAND OF FAIRY TALES

Vladimir Agafonov, Moscow

Two men loved each other - because the men were brothers. One day one of them said to the other: - Brother, do you know what will separate us? - What? - the other said. - Woman's work,- the first said. - Woman's work? It's impossible!- his brother said." Fatima Salim, who is telling me this oldest tale, doesn't stop sewing and the voice of her sewing machine accompanies the story. Fatima, who never went to school in her life, is sitting on the entrance of her family's cave. She doesn't know that a story like this one - about the two brothers and the dishonest wife of one of them - was once recorded in ancient Egypt over 3000 years ago for the Crown Prince Seti and is kept now as a great value in the Papiry collection of the British Museum.

In Soqotran fairy tales you can also find elements and themes similar to European ( French, German, etc.) and Russian folk-lore tales that disclose their very old mutual ecumenical ground.

In the same time the Soqotran version of "Cinderella" (there are at least two versions of this tale on the island) or "The Story of the Brother and the Sister" ( which greatly reminds me of the popular Russian "The Sister Aljonushka and the Brother Ivanushka" folk tale) are full of local exotic details and original and rich subject lines that makes them very attractive. We feel that this is a sort of ancient oral pre-literate "literature" which must be saved along with its environmental context in which it still exists. And Soqotrans themselves, adults and children at schools, could help very much in collecting and promoting of this remarkable heritage.

The role the Soqotran folk-lore tales played for hundreds of years in the island society and play now is very important. They contribute a lot in early childhood traditional language and behaviour education and form a basis for the unique peaceful nature of Soqotran people. They also develop imagination and thinking skills among the Soqotran children (the Russian versions of some Soqotran folk tales made by the author help now to develop the same skills damaged by TV and computer-plays among Russian children with perceptible success). That's why this oral literature also can be used in the frame of innovative environmental education that may help to achieve stable balance between the conservation of Soqotra's natural environment and forthcoming development of the island in the 21st century. Its own ancient heritage can help Soqotra to stay a fairy tale island in the era of modernisation.

## A GLIMPSE OF SOCOTRA, The Latest British Possession

Eliza Clarke

From *Cassell's Family Magazine*, 1886 (extract)

...Its value as a coaling station in the earlier days of steam-vessels was seen to be immense, and with the view of making use of it for this purpose, it was thoroughly surveyed by Lieutenant Wellsted in 1834. The result of his investigation was that a negotiation was opened with the Sheikh of Keshin for the purchase of the island. But the Eastern ruler, small as were his domains, preferred the inheritance of his fathers to the acquisition of gold, and refused to listen for a moment to the representations of John Company, in spite of the length of his purse, or the crafty charming of his specious words. Spanning a little space with his fingers, the chieftain swore, "As surely as there is but one God and He is in heaven, I will not sell even so much; this island was a gift of the Almighty to the Mahras, and has descended from our forefathers to their children, over whom I am Sultan." But in this instance, as in most others, the old saying held good –

"That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can,"

and accordingly a detachment of the Bombay Native Infantry took possession of Socotra, and held it for their masters as long as it seemed good to them, which proved to be a period of four years, until the capture of Aden, a spot thought to possess all the capabilities and none of the disadvantages of the little isle, which was immediately abandoned, and reverted to its Sheikh, who retained it till 1876. At that date longing eyes were cast on this coign of vantage-ground so conveniently near the Red Sea, and so much more important than it was before the construction of the Suez Canal, that lest it should be occupied by either of the Powers jealous of British supremacy in the East, the Political Resident at Aden was sent to the Sheikh to make arrangements for the frustration of all such inimical designs. After some little exercise of diplomacy a treaty was drawn up and signed, which secured the dignity of the Arab as well as the safety of his paternal acres, and the increase of his modest revenue. He accepted the annual payment of a thousand dollars from the Government of Great Britain, and agreed not to allow any alien residents to settle in Socotra, nor to cede any portion of it to any foreign Power without her consent. He thus became a feudatory of England, and it was but a step from the state of things then established to the supremacy now declared and manifested.....

# Exhibitions and Conferences

## DAUGHTERS OF YEMEN

Lothar Stein

In cooperation between the German-Yemeni Association and the Museum of Ethnography in Leipzig an exhibition on Women of Yemen was organized which was opened on 29 January, 2005, in Leipzig, and directed by Mrs. Inge Seiwert. Several private collectors of traditional silver jewellery from Yemen, as well as dresses from many parts of the country and even cosmetics were lending their exhibits for this colourful show.

The museum added items of its own Soqatra collection: a nice Soqotri dress of unique design, embroidered with silver threads and a headscarve (nuqba fidda) adorned with small silver ornaments which are applied by the women themselves. Several pottery products are also exhibited, among them different types of incense burners (migmara) which are made by woman of the mountain dwellers, and after burning they are painted red with raisins of the famous Dragon's blood tree.

Together with this show a catalogue is offered and the exhibition will be shown until May, 2006, before it is transferred to other cities in Germany. Every day the documentary film "The veil unveiled" by Vanessa Langer, Genève, can be seen by the public, and a variety of interesting lectures is offered every week together with this beautiful exhibition.



## SOQOTRA EXHIBITION AND AUXILIARY EVENTS

(from Page 1)

The RBGE Exhibition will include a Soqotran house and stories presented in a variety of interesting media about Trade, Aloes, Goats, Biogeography and Current Development Issues.

In addition to the Exhibition itself there will be a series of auxiliary events, including a scientific seminar and film/slide shows in Edinburgh and its surroundings. If people have ideas about the Exhibition or supplementary events, or have materials (artefacts, films, photographs) which they would like to contribute please let us know so that they can be incorporated into the final programme.

## FINAL HOME IN YEMEN FOR THE SOQOTRA EXHIBITION

Professor Yusuf Muhammad Abdullah, the new President of the *Organisation for Antiquities, Museums and Manuscripts* (GOAM) plans to devote a wing of the Ethnographical Museum in Tahrir Square, currently being refurbished, to Soqotra, and has agreed that this would make a suitable permanent home for the Edinburgh Soqotra Exhibition.

## EXHIBITION OF SOQOTRI HANDICRAFTS

To coincide with the 'International Conference on Island Development' held in Sana'a at the end of Ramadhan, Amat Al Bari Al Adi of GOAM organised an exhibition on Soqotran handicrafts. This, and the publication of her research on Soqotri handicrafts, was funded by the Social Fund for Development. There was a display of handicrafts, illustrated with drawings, videos, photographs and maps. A number of Soqotran craftspeople were also present to explain their craft to the many visitors. GOAM and the Social Fund for Development have agreed to put all this material at the disposal of the Soqotra exhibition committee.

## FRIENDS OF SOQOTRA CONFERENCE AND AGM 16 – 17 SEPTEMBER, DURHAM UNIVERSITY

This meeting will take place in conjunction with the EURAMES/BRISMES conference at Durham University. See [www.dur.ac.uk/eurames.brismes/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/eurames.brismes/) for more info. We are planning to have a 'Soqotra Session' on Friday afternoon, 16 Sept. This would focus on social aspects. The FOS AGM will take place on the next day, Saturday, with a few discussions/papers/workshops on more biological/geological topics. Please contact Sue to register your interest: [Drsuechristie@aol.com](mailto:Drsuechristie@aol.com).

## FRIENDS OF SOQOTRA AGM AND CONFERENCE 2004

The FoS AGM and annual conference were held in London on 18 – 19 September of this year. Attended by over 25 people, the Conference looked at current social and cultural issues in the afternoon, with talks by Neil Orr looking back at his trips to Soqotra in 1952 and 2002 and the many changes on the island in that time, by Edoardo Zandri and associates from SCF on their current activities on the island and by Peter De Geest on the work of the Soqotra Karst Team on caves and their potential as a water source. In the evening Miranda Morris provided a fascinating glimpse of the culture with recordings of poems and songs and explanations of their meanings and contexts. Full text of the contents will be available on the website shortly. The AGM took place the next day and involved a full discussion about future FoS activities, particularly the RBGE Exhibition (Annual Report 2003-4 and AGM minutes available on the website or by request).

# Women

## THE SOCOTRA WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

**Rowan Salim**

The SWDA has been very busy and active since the last publication of Tayf. The Solar lamps project funded by the German embassy has been successful with many villages now having solar lamps and hundreds of requests for new systems coming in.

In August the association opened its shop on rd number 20 in Hadibo with funding from the Japanese Embassy and a "Women for Women" trip organized by the female expatriate community in Sana'a. The shop is now one of only a handful of Socotri owned shops in Hadibo, and is the only shop run by women. The aims of the shop are threefold. Firstly the shop provides an outlet for women (and men to a lesser extent) to sell handicrafts and other natural products. Providing this market works to encourage income generating activities such as weaving or pottery making and therefore increases household income. Providing this outlet for women is especially important as research has shown that women are more likely than men to invest income into basic needs for the household. Secondly, through its work in the shop, the association helps to preserve traditional skills and technologies which may otherwise be lost. Shamlas (woolen rugs) for example were once a main export of Socotra, however now that the trade has all but ceased, shamlas are produced more rarely. Hence in many areas only the older women still know the production technique, and the quality of the final product has also decreased. The association is therefore working to encourage younger women to learn traditional techniques as well as improving the quality of produce. So far this effort has been met with enthusiasm. Finally, the shop has a key role in raising money for the association so that it can support itself and be sustainable, running its own activities once outside funding stops. Slowly word in Socotra is spreading about the shop, and now, almost everyday, people from all over the island come to sell their goods to the Women's Association.

In addition to the shop, the association also rents a training centre in which classes are held on subjects including literacy, math, languages, health and environmental awareness.

Another project that the SWDA has been working on has involved tourism and trying to build a niche role for women to be involved in the growing tourist industry on Socotra. At present tourism is almost solely the domain of men. The SWDA has therefore organized a "Women for Women Morning Program" where tourists can spend the morning with Socotri women in a relaxed atmosphere with craft demonstrations, food, henna and short trips. This allows tourists to meet Socotri women and also allows Socotri women to find out about and benefit from tourists.

Finally, the SWDA is very keen on building a lending library at the association office. The library would cater for both men and women as well as children and would provide books in Arabic and English. We are looking to provide academic books as well as books to cater for specific interests such as gardening, literature, culture and more. The association has started correspondence with various organizations to negotiate book donations.

## SEWING MACHINES FOR SOQOTRA

**Miranda Morris**

In early November, ten sewing machines plus necessary spare parts were purchased in Makalla by FoS Oman/ Gulf representative, Ahmad Sa'ad Tahki. However, stormy weather and poor sailing conditions meant that shipping was held there until December. However, the sewing machines have now arrived safely on the island and are in store in Hadiboh awaiting the return of FoS Soqotra representative, Dr. Sa'ad al Qaddomi, from Sana'a. I met with him there in January and confirmed that the sewing machines were being held until he arrived, and that they had been opened, checked, and 'Friends of Soqotra' written in arabic on each one with indelible marker. On his return to the island later in January he will deliver them to the Biodiversity Project Office and will follow up the selection of the ten women and send us progress reports.

Each woman will be told that the sewing machine will become her property once she has taught six other women how to use and maintain the machine. We also propose that the ten selected women be given training in Hadiboh on how to carry out minor repairs and essential maintenance so that they can in turn to pass on this vital knowledge to their pupils.

A committee has been set up to distribute the machines, through local councils. The members of the Committee are: Ahmed Khatem (Representative of the Local Council), Dr. Sa'ad Ahmed Al-Kaddoomi (Director Of Soqotra Health Office), Ali Muqaddem Ahmed (Community) and Muhamed Amer Ahmed (Director of Environment). The following women have received machines: Fatima Mubarak (Qalansiyah), Miriam Kayof and Zion Ali Eessa (Noged), Tummuh Ahmad Sa'id (Qa'arah), Zinah Amer Hamoudi and Aminah Salih Ali (Momi), Tummuh Sa'id Abdullah (Ma'alah), Makhlokah Mubarak Sabeet (Hallah), Tummuh Ali Hamoudi (Hadiboh) and Ahlam Sinhi Salem (Mashlahi).

# Libraries

*We are proud to announce three new Libraries for Soqotra. Donations for any of these libraries are most heartily solicited.*

- **The Friends of Soqotra library is for all material related to Soqotra, scientific, cultural or popular. It is based in the UK at Durham University.**
- **The Al Zahra Cultural Library is on Soqotra and is devoted to all Soqotra related material; it is hoped that much of the material housed in Durham will be duplicated in this library.**
- **The SWDA Library is devoted primarily to teaching English to local people, and thus consists of appropriate English texts, on whatever subject and specifically including language, maps, and practical books.**

## SOCOTRI WOMEN'S LIBRARY

The Socotra Women's Development Association (SWDA) is an NGO set up in 2001 with a key focus of encouraging Socotri women to play a central role in the development of their island and the conservation of its important habitats. Until now, the association has been working towards this aim on two main fronts, through the sale of locally produced crafts and through the organization of education and training sessions for Socotri women. These sessions include literacy and maths, health awareness, environmental awareness and language classes. The association has recently started providing English lessons for beginners, and our idea to build a library partly stems from the need to provide students with appropriate English books. Our target audience therefore includes:

- Beginner English language students
- Non English speakers who are literate in Arabic
- Illiterate men and women.

The association would therefore be interested in receiving English books for beginners as well as more advanced levels. Dictionaries and encyclopaedias would be specifically appreciated. Arabic books about British and other cultures would also find a readership. We would also be keen on acquiring picture books, atlases and other visual or audio materials (cassette players are still more predominantly available than CD and DVD players). We are particularly keen on displaying maps of the world. As many of the women we work with have families, children's books in English would also be highly valued as would those concerning family health, nutrition, cookery and home vegetable gardening.

In addition, we hope to be able to provide a range of books covering the sciences, technology, geography (magazines and National Geographics would be appreciated), conservation, history and other academic subjects. Complex English language texts, books concerning religion, or those with inappropriate imagery are not suitable.

The association has the space available for the library (next to their shop at the SCDP Office) and hopes that it will be able to start lending within the next month or two.

## FRIENDS OF SOQOTRA LIBRARY

Friends of Soqotra has arranged with the Middle East Documentation Unit at the University of Durham to house a library of all material related to Soqotra. As it is attached to the main Durham Library and therefore has access to all formally published work, it will concentrate primarily on material that is not easily available. However, it would also be useful to have copies of recent publications for easy referencing. It will also contain copies of major publications concerning Soqotra, including, it is planned, scanned copies of old or out of print documents.

FoS is also maintaining a database of all publications on Soqotra, available on the Website. FoS would like to request that all people publishing articles on any aspect of Soqotra would let the Website Manager have details, and if possible a copy for the Library.

## AL ZAHRA CULTURAL LIBRARY OF SOQOTRA

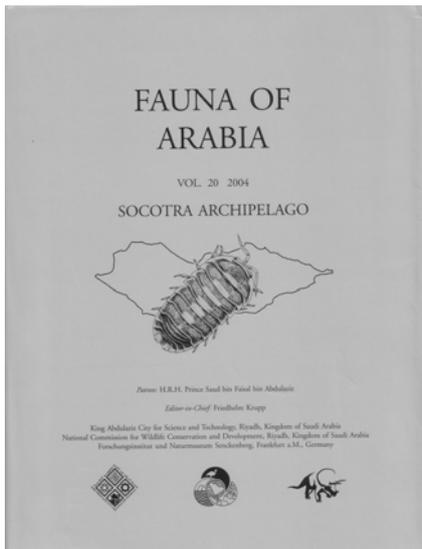
A number of Soqotrans are keen to establish a reference library under their control in central Hadiboh. This library is aimed at literate, adult Soqotris, and will concentrate on obtaining books in Arabic from donors in the Gulf and elsewhere in the Arab world, and on material pertaining to Soqotra in particular in whatever language.

Mike Gifford, British Ambassador, and Elizabeth White, Director of the British Council, are currently considering the availability of funding for the Soqotri-run Al Zahra Soqotran Cultural Library, which is supported by Salim Sa'ad Bu Haqibah, the Soqotra MP. Dr. Sa'ad al Qaddomi has agreed to be its local

## BRITISH COUNCIL AIDS CULTURAL LIBRARY

The British Council has agreed to grant aid furnishings and some initial English language textbooks for the library, and to investigate helping to ship other books.

# Publications



## FAUNA OF ARABIA VOL. 20

**Socotra Archipelago**

**Editor in Chief: Friedhelm Krupp**

This volume completes the 'trilogy' of major tomes produced on Soqotra in 2004. It is a compilation of scientific papers on the fauna of Soqotra. Following three general articles on conservation, geology and marine biotopes there are a couple of articles on Corals and Rotifers, but the majority of the book is devoted to the arthropods. There are sections on Chilopods, Crustaceans and Arachnids, but the largest section is devoted to the Insects. Vertebrates are relegated to but two articles, one each on reptiles and birds.

Articles are written in classic scientific format, and beautifully illustrated with a variety of formats, from line drawings to colour photographs; the quality of the production is superb. All articles are in English with Arabic abstracts.

This is the first 'special issue' of Fauna of Arabia, and its objectives were: to contribute to a biodiversity inventory to aid environmental management and conservation, to provide scientific baseline information for accurate identification and to contribute to a faunistic and biogeographical analysis of the Archipelago's unique terrestrial and marine fauna.

This is in general a book for the specialist scientist rather than the general reader, although the introductory articles on conservation issues, geological history and marine biotopes will be of more general interest.



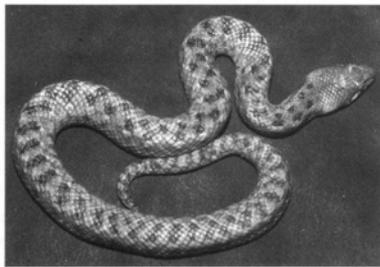
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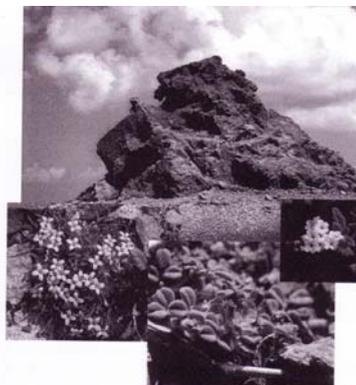


44

Plates 41-44: Leptyophlopidae and Colubridae from the Socotra Archipelago. 41: *Leptyophlops* sp., from Hasaant. Photo: H. Rösler. 42: *Hemerophis socotrae* (Günther, 1881), coloured specimen from Socotra Island. Photo: W. Wranik. 43: *H. socotrae*, dark specimen from Darsa Island. Photo: H. Rösler. 44: *Dityophis vivax* Günther, 1881, from Diksam. Photo: H. Rösler.

### ETHNOFLORA OF THE SOQOTRA ARCHIPELAGO WINS AWARD

The Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries (CBHL) has informed us that the Ethnoflora (see **Tayf 1**) has been awarded by their international membership for its 'outstanding contribution to the literature of horticulture / botany'. It is among a total of 23 titles that the Awards Committee considered for the Sixth Annual Literature Award in either the General Interest or Technical Category. Many congratulations on this most prestigious award.



Coastal Plants of  
Di Hamri  
Marine Protected Area  
Soqotra Island, Yemen

### COASTAL PLANTS OF DIHAMRI MARINE PROTECTED AREA

The above booklet is the first of a series to be produced describing the culture, flora and fauna of Soqotra. The booklet is available from SCF/SCDP on the island. Funds raised from the sale of the booklet, primarily to tourists, will go towards projects helping the local people, and will be administered jointly by FoS and SCF.

The booklet was produced by Friends of Soqotra and was printed in Yemen by SCF.

If you would like to prepare similar booklets on other areas or groups please let us know.

# Protected Areas

## SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

**Tobias Siebert**

The challenging economic changes Socotra is facing recently, like the enhanced access to the island, have not just changed economic and social conditions on the island and thereby opened new opportunities for the people of Socotra. These changes also mean great challenges for the people themselves and their environment. One of these challenges is the management of the steadily growing amount of waste, especially within the two major population centres on the island, Hadibou and Qalansia.

The non-organic fraction of the waste is constantly growing and is now estimated to be 0.2 kg per person per day. The local authorities, the SCDP, the German-Yemeni Solid Waste Management project (GTZ), the Japanese Embassy, UNDP and last but not least the Governor of Hadramaut have joined their forces and agreed upon the introduction of a Solid Waste Management System which is appropriated to the specific conditions and capabilities of the island. As the efficiency and especially the financial sustainability of any Waste Management System have to be considered as major obstacles, the SWM-System in Socotra will be based on three basic pillars: 1) collection of the waste in the two towns, 2) transportation of the waste to newly constructed dumping sites nearby and 3) final disposal of the waste.

So far the project has been designed and approved by all stakeholders and the sites for the landfills have been chosen in both towns. The next step is at the governorate level which is meant to fulfil their agreement to reimburse the landowners of the landfill sites and to allocate a monthly payment of the Cleaning Fund to the Local Council to cover the operational costs for the newly introduced service. The international and national donor agencies will cover the investment costs for the construction measures, the equipment needed and the logistical assistance during the implementation.

But beside all those technical and organisational procedures the main responsibility for the success of the new Waste Management System in Socotra is with the people of the island. It is in their hands to contribute to a clean and healthy environment.

## ECOSYSTEMS, PROTECTED AREAS AND PEOPLE PROJECT (EPP)

**Natalie Klein**

Since December 2004 the SCDP has been participating in a global cooperative project called the Ecosystems, Protected Areas and People Project (EPP). The EPP was initiated by the World Commission of Protected Areas, one of six Commissions of the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The project includes protected areas (PA) from around the world as field learning sites, which will elaborate and exchange their lessons learned within the management of PAs: PAs in Cameroon, Cuba, Ecuador, Nepal, South Africa, Philippines and Yemen have been selected.

The idea of the project is built upon the recognition that the protected areas of the world, which harbour the world's most valuable biodiversity of life, are at risk: they are facing a set of global changes which threatens the existing capacity to protect and maintain these unique resources. Consequently PA managers, policy makers and other stakeholders have to adapt their policies, strategies and practices to anticipate these threats and at the same time capture new opportunities generated by these changes.

The goal of the project is therefore to enable protected areas managers to understand and be prepared for the impacts and opportunities of global change by elaborating and analysing their specific lessons learned. In addition, the EPP approach facilitates the target groups to share their lessons learned with the global community while developing their capacities.

The overall result will be a range of case studies which will be exchanged within a network of PAs, a network web site (PALnet) and a series of hard copy reports. Five technical working groups will finally analyse the lessons learned and prepare generalized guidelines which can be seen as a unique working resource for globally threaten protected areas. The EPP Project will run for three years.

# Research



## THE *HAWĀRĪ* OF SOQOTRA

Julian Jansen van Rensburg

The island of Soqotra lies almost centrally between Somalia and Yemen in the Gulf of Aden and as such serves as a prominent and important port of call both into and out of the Red Sea. Soqotra has had a lengthy, heterogeneous historical contact with many different cultures at different epochs. These contacts are reflected in both the people of the coastline as well as their vessels, a vessel type known as *huri*, (pl. *hawāri*) which is a dugout canoe, one of the earliest forms of water transport. These *hawāri* however are not from Soqotra or Arabia and have all been imported, from what is believed to be India.

While these *hawāri* were ubiquitous throughout the Arabian Peninsula, today they have been all but replaced by fibreglass equivalents and it is only on Soqotra that there is such a wealth of dugout *hawāri* remaining. Both the good state of preservation they are in and the lack of any major modifications makes the *hawāri* on Soqotra an ideal case study for tracing cultural traditions between India and Arabia.

Through this study similar technical features between those *hawāri* of Soqotra, Arabia and India have been identified providing additional evidence for the cultural contact and exchange that Soqotra was involved in. While the basic hull shape of the *hawāri* has remained virtually unchanged, the variety of structural modifications that have been added is seemingly endless. This diversity can be related to the local fishing populace whose own diversity in both cultural and economic terms provides another aspect to the influences that have shaped Soqotrian society. The *hawāri* on Soqotra therefore represent not only a historical link with India and Arabia but also form part of Soqotra's own heritage, helping to trace the cultural history of the people of Soqotra.

Yet with the mechanisation of the fishing industry the reality is that the Soqotrian *hawāri* are also being ultimately replaced by their fibreglass equivalents and will suffer the same fate as those along the Arabian Peninsula. With this in mind it essential to act now to preserve what remains of this unique and valuable part of Soqotra's maritime heritage.

Thanks to The Leigh Douglas Memorial Fund and British Institute of East Africa who have supported my recent trip to Soqotra.

### FISH AND LOBSTERS

Lobsters are of great economic importance for Socotran fishermen. They can be found in coral reefs up to 5m in depth. In the past nets were used to catch them, but this damages the coral reef and the fish and young lobsters which depend upon it. The programme to replace netting with the use of traps continues (see Tayf 1 Page ?), with 3000 traps, and training in their use, to be supplied to all the fishermen on Socotra in 2005. Traps will be provided to Abd al Kuri fishermen in 2006. The SCF is providing 15% of the cost of these traps. The use of traps extends the season as well as conserving the coral reef.

A PhD project with the University of Rome is beginning to look at other economically important species such as sea cucumber, sharks and kingfish. A team from the University will visit Socotra.

Marine Department, SCDP



## ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF CHANGING BEHAVIOUR

SCDP Awareness Team

The idea of changing people's attitudes and awareness of a society towards a certain issue is not as simple or as easy as some seem to imagine. The process requires much participation, effort and time, and a careful and transparent strategy. The need for environmental awareness campaigns is a result of there being environmental problems worldwide as has become more and more evident over the last 35 years. Such problems include those relating for example to environmental pollution of many forms, themselves involving political, social and economic dimensions. These issues stem from human activities which take place without regard to biological diversity and the environment, threatening the possibility of safe, pollution free and sustainable life on earth.

In the past, the people of Socotra have stuck by a traditional system of social values which aimed to a large extent at environmental conservation. However today, the Socotri society needs to, and has the right to develop and improve their living conditions. Unfortunately, this development is leading many to leave their traditional environmental values behind and consequently a range of indicators show that environmental change is also starting to take place. Such indicators include deforestation and an increase of pressure on rangelands due to excessive numbers of livestock. For this reason, the Socotra Conservation and Development Program was started in 1998, and specifically the awareness team of the program was created in order to raise environmental awareness within different spheres of society, the old and the young, men and women. Through the awareness team various environmental messages are spread as well as the environmental importance and significance of Socotra both nationally and internationally.

Over the last 6 years, through sustained activities, the awareness team has gained the trust of the Socotri people and has had a positive reception. With regards to the marine environment for example, fishermen have been cooperating with the SCDP and the local council in notifying and keeping track of trawler and fishing foreign fishing boat activities. In the field of waste management the Socotri people actively partake in 200 monthly cleaning campaigns involving approximately 2000 individuals. 80 monthly environmental lectures take place, attended by approximately 1500 people. Schools are also targeted with visits to 40 schools, meeting 940 students and facilitating the creation of environmental clubs at schools. In addition, workshops and meetings are held with members from all the different sections of society.

Hence the awareness team wants to make sure that environmental awareness is in fact a successful tool in changing attitudes and behaviour. We strive to continue and increase the participatory element of our efforts in order to reach positive results.

### APOLGUY

We apologise unreservedly for the delay in producing this edition of *Tayf*. This is due to difficulties in translation and the decision in August to print in Yemen, although the English version was completed in March. We are working to ensure that our communication mechanisms with members improve.

### Friends of Soqatra Website

We use the Website to keep Members and others informed of new information and activities. If you would like to include a note, article or report on the Web, please get in touch with John Farrar,  
[JohnFarrar@metronet.co.uk](mailto:JohnFarrar@metronet.co.uk).

### WEBSITES

[www.FriendsofSoqatra.org](http://www.FriendsofSoqatra.org)  
[www.Socotraisland.org/fund](http://www.Socotraisland.org/fund)

The following websites also provide information on the island:

<http://rbgesun1.rbge.org.uk/Arabia/Soqatra/home/page01.html> Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Plants, panoramas and ethnobotany.

[www.speleo.be/socotra](http://www.speleo.be/socotra) Soqatra Karst Project (caving and speleology)

[www.uni-rostock.de/fakult/mafak/biologie/wranik/socotra](http://www.uni-rostock.de/fakult/mafak/biologie/wranik/socotra). University of Rostock (Animals)

[www.soqatra.info](http://www.soqatra.info) A personal view by John Farrar.

[www.yemen-protectedareas.org](http://www.yemen-protectedareas.org)

If you know of other sites, please let us know and we can publish them in the next issue of *Tayf*.

### TAYF

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

If you would like to include an article, research note or notice in future issues please send to:

[FriendsofSoqatra@aol.com](mailto:FriendsofSoqatra@aol.com) or  
SCF, C/o SCDP office, P. O. Box 551, Sana'a

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## SCF T-SHIRT

*T-shirts, books and cups available for  
sale at the Airport and Hadibu visitor  
centres on Socotra.*

*T-shirts YR700—all proceeds to SCF.*

## FRIENDS OF SOQOTRA

Friends of Soqotra (UK Charity  
Number 1097546) was formed in  
2001. Its distinctive rationale for  
is to bring together people with  
backgrounds in scientific research  
and those with a more general  
interest and develops the  
synergies between them in order  
to:

- Promote the sustainable use and conservation of the natural environment of the Soqotra island group
- Raise awareness of the archipelago's biodiversity and the unique culture and language of the islanders
- Help improve the quality of life of the island communities and support their traditional land management practices.

## SOCOTRA CONSERVATION FUND

The Socotra Conservation Fund is an independent, not for profit organisation dedicated to support conservation and sustainable development on the Island of Socotra. The Fund is a non-governmental organisation, born in Yemen in November 2002 and registered in the United Kingdom (Company No 4545975). The main objective of the Socotra Conservation Fund is to support community based environmental projects on the Socotra Archipelago.

The SCF aims to improve the lives of the islanders through capacity building and activities such as ecotourism development and nature conservation handicrafts. All our activities are focused on sustainable development for the Socotra Archipelago. The Fund also supports the conservation and protection of the unique characteristics of the island and its culture.



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# Pictures from the Past



Camel train from the airport to Hadibo, during the windstorms, 1956. Photo Neil Orr  
1956 ,



Airport, 1956. Photo Douglas Botting  
1956 ,

The Sultan, 1956. Photo Douglas Botting  
1956 ,





Hadiboh Mosque, 1964. Photo John Farrar  
1964 , ,

Qadheb Village, 1964 Photo John Farrar  
1964 , ,



End of Ramadhan celebrations, Hadibo, 1964.  
Photo John Farrar  
1964 , ,