

# Tayf - the Soqatra Newsletter

Issued By *FRIENDS OF SOQOTRA and SOCOTRA CONSERVATION FUND*

Asugalo camel trail. Photo: Catherine Cheung.



## RBGE Exhibition to be Launched on 30 June

The Socotra Exhibition at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh will be officially launched on 30 June and run through the end of October. In addition to the Exhibition a symposium on Research and Development will run from the 5th to the 7th of September. Additional films, talks and events will also be taking place during the Exhibition. See additional articles on Page 12.

## Abdul Rahman Al-Eryani named Minister for Environment and Water

Tayf offers its congratulations to HE Abdul-Rahman Fathel Al-Eryani on becoming Minister of Water and Environment in the February cabinet reshuffle.

Since 2002 he has served with great distinction as the National Manager, Socotra Conservation and Development Programme (SCDP). Some achievements during this time include the Conservation Zoning Plan, UNESCO MAB status for Socotra in 2003 and the proposal for inclusion of the Socotra Archipelago in the UNESCO World Heritage List, in January 2006. Before becoming National Manager of SCDP he was, from 2000, Vice Chairman, The General Authority for the Promotion and Development of the Yemeni Islands (YIPDA) and from 1996-2000 Director and Freelance Consultant with Al-Yemen Al-Khadhra

## World Heritage Site Designation Progresses

The team of consultants supported by a UNESCO-Italy trust fund is working with various Yemeni and international experts to finalize the dossier for the nomination of Socotra as World Heritage Site. The completed document was submitted for the deadline of 1 February 2006. The proposal will then be assessed by UNESCO and IUCN for a period of one year and, if successful, the nomination may be formalised by UNESCO in mid 2007. An important question mark for the success of the nomination remains the capacity of the Government of Yemen to set-up and guarantee an appropriate governance system for the Archipelago, to be equal to the challenges that lie ahead.

**Ed Zandri**

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## Winter Rains

Until the middle of January there were serious concerns for those Soqotrans living in the interior, as rains have been very poor or failed throughout the island. However, since then there has been heavy rain all over the island (except Noged), raising hopes for a productive and healthy year.

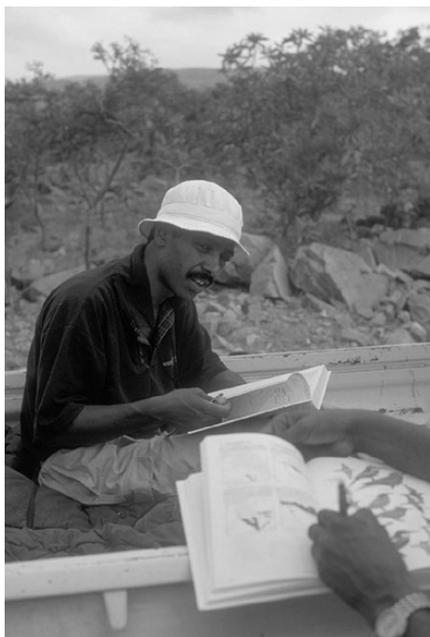


## Nadim Taleb Undertakes PhD

Nadim Taleb, who manages the Socotra Conservation Development Programme on Socotra, will shortly be leaving for Italy to start his PhD in Decision Support Systems (DSS). Following training in bird research and surveys during the first Darwin Initiative on Socotra, Nadim gained a place at the University of East Anglia, UK to take his MSc. His dissertation was on the globally threatened Socotra Cisticola, a small bird of the grassy and halophytic-rich plains.

His PhD is designed to help environmental decision-making and his degree topic will be Planning and Environmental Management for the Socotra Archipelago.

**Richard Porter**



## Obituary

### Tobias Siebert and Manuela Milite

We are overwhelmed by the sudden death of Mr. Tobias Siebert (German) and Ms. Manuela Milite (Italian) at Delicia beach, Socotra, on December 1. Tobias and Manuela worked as volunteers in the Socotra Conservation and Development Programme.

Tobias Siebert, geographer by background, started working with his girlfriend Natalie Klein in Socotra in December 2004. In close collaboration with his counterpart Salem Dahak, he supervised the Solid Waste Management project, being responsible for the preparation, subcontracting, and the October 2005 start of the solid waste collection that is changing the appearance of Hadibou and Qualansiya. Tobias was eager to properly round-up his work for which he got a contract extension just before the tragic accident.

Manuela Milite came to Socotra in September 2005 as postgraduate student in International Cooperation and Project Design at Rome University. Together with Simona Somma she carried out a characterization on the socio-economic context of Socotra, providing much-needed background information for the Decision Support System that is currently in preparation. She was particularly interested in the role of women in home gardening. She had rounded up her study in Socotra and prepared a final debriefing presentation in Sana'a scheduled on December the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

We are grateful for the commitment of Tobias and Manuela to the sustainable development of Socotra and their friendship that touched the hearts of many on Socotra. We wish their families and friends our sincerest condolences with this tragic loss.

**Paul Scholte (CTA).**

## HERBAL MEDICINE IN HADIBOH

Tanuf Salim Nuh Il Kishin, with the support of the Local Council and a testimonial from Dr. Sa'ad al Qaddomi, Director of Public Health on Soqotra, has recently started operating a clinic for herbal medicine in Hadiboh. He uses only Soqotri products, and prescribes according to traditional Soqotri expertise handed down over generations. There is apparently another 'alternative medicine' clinic operating in Hadiboh, operated by a Yemeni from the mainland, who offers a wide variety of products and types of treatment from all over the Middle East, medicinal and non-medicinal. Tanuf makes use especially of aloes-juice, *Salvadora* and Soqotri wild honey in his medicaments. His charges are low, and he reports increasing numbers of people seeking this form of alternative therapy.

**Miranda Morris**

## First Diving Course on Socotra Island

Between February and April 2005, SCDP organised its first ever scuba diving training course on the island. PADI Diving Instructor Ms. Hajnalka Kovacs (#88593) and PADI Divemaster Mr. Attila Siklosi (#88707) have trained the project's marine staff, the representatives of Di Hamri and Shouab protected areas and the representative of Socotra Ecotourism Society in diving. 11 people took part in the PADI Open Water Diver course and Adventures in Diving course. These courses will be followed by the Emergency First Response and Rescue Diver courses in the future.

In addition, Discover Snorkeling and Discover Scuba Diving experience programmes were provided for school pupils, Environmental Club members and the Socotra Women Society's members.

The aim of these diving courses was to increase the number of qualified divers who can take part in the marine monitoring programmes and who are able to work together with tourists visiting the island for diving.

Socotra's richness lies within its natural resources. Its coral reefs attract more and more divers and snorkelers every year from all over the world. It is crucial that local people are aware of the importance of protecting the marine habitats. Since they live here, they are the ones who can preserve it and pass this heritage to future generations.

### **SCDP**

Whitebarred rubberlip  
*Plectorhinchus playfairi* and hard coral  
*Leptoria phrygia*. Photo by  
Lyndon DeVantier.

From Cheung & DeVantier, see p 15

## Stranded Petrol Ship Threatens Socotra

Oct 27, 2005

Copyright (c) 2004 - 2005  
Yemen Observer Newspaper

An oil tanker carrying 1000 tones of fuel ran aground near Hullaf beach in Socotra on Monday evening, missing the entrance to the port (Jetty). An informed source from the Socotra Archipelago Conservation and Development Program (SCDP) told the Yemen Observer that no oil was believed to have leaked from the vessel.

"The rescue operation began shortly before low tide to force water out of the bottom of the ship," said the source. "Local authorities have been informed of the danger of the incident."

"The SCDP team carried out a full diving survey to assess damage to the ship's hull, but were unable to ascertain the status of the vessel's stability," he added. "Recommendations were made to the crew not to disturb the ship or attempt to use towing vessels from Socotra."

Socotra has tugboats, but they are not sufficiently powerful to carry out the operation. "Their use might increase friction with the sea-bed, which could further damage the ship and possibly cause an oil leak and potential environmental disaster," he explained.

Supervised and guided by the SCDP team with the help of the army, the vessel began Wednesday discharging its oil cargo through 3-inch pipes into on-land oil reservoirs located 200 meters from the vessel.

"The operation is now under control and we hope to have the entire cargo of oil completely discharged within the next week, allowing the salvage operation of the ship to start," he concluded.



# Projects

## More Sewing Machines for Soqotra

Thanks to the great generosity of André van Ryn, FoS was able to purchase 16 further sewing machines for Soqotra. The Oman/Gulf representative for FoS, Ahmad Sa'ad Tahki, arranged their purchase and transport from Mukalla to Soqotra. Like everything else in Yemen, the price has gone up, both for the machines and for their transport. Nevertheless, the machines safely reached Soqotra in December while I was there, though they had not yet been unloaded by the time I left, as their boat was at the end of a queue of boats waiting at the jetty.

After discussion with Tummuh Muhammad Hadeed, director of the Socotra Women's Development Association (SWDA), an NGO established in 2001, it was decided to give six of the machines to them for their centre in Hadiboh. The remaining ten will be handed over to the Local Council of the Qalansiyah District for distribution (Dr. Sa'ad Al Qaddomi handed over the first ten sewing machines to the Local Council for the Hadiboh District for distribution). I hope to provide further details of the distribution after my next visit to Soqotra early in 2006.

**Miranda Morris**

## Solar Lamps

The German embassy in Yemen provided a grant for the Socotra Women Association, for a project consisting of 100 solar lamps, training for ten people (women & men) on installing the various parts of the lamps and their maintenance. The lamps have been distributed to the local people at only 25% of the initial price to encourage their uptake, with a subsequent 25% paid to the SWDA in installments for a further year. Workshops for maintaining the solar lamps were arranged within the SWDA office.

**Malek Abdulaziz and Tony Milroy SCF/SCDP**

## Solid Waste s

The study of the Solid Waste Management Project Started in April 2004, the preparation phase of the project was from January 2005 and implemented from June 2005. The project was the first initiative of this kind in Socotra. The SCF mobilised funds from GTZ, SCDP, SFD, Japan and GOY, purchased 4 trucks from Dubai, financed from the Japanese embassy in Yemen, and delivered all the equipment to the local district.

**Malek Abdulaziz and Tony Milroy SCF/SCDP**

## US Embassy Supports Livestock Project

The US-embassy has confirmed support for the 'Community-based Livestock development and Marketing Project' with an amount of \$500,000. The start of this SCF-project will enable the reinforcement of the SCF team with a full-time manager and the Ministry of Planning has given approval after some delays.

**Malek Abdulaziz and Tony Milroy SCF/SCDP**

## Improving Livelihoods

The Japanese embassy in Yemen and the Socotra Conservation Fund, in partnership with local communities represented by local NGOs (Socotra Homhil Protected Area Association, Dihamri Protected Area Association, Women Development Society and Socotra Ecotourism Society) conducted a joint project, from February 2004 to February 2005. This project aimed to improve livelihoods by developing basic ecotourism infrastructure inside the pilot protected areas, enhancing capacity building and training of local guides, promoting Socotra's unique biodiversity and supporting local women in the production and marketing of handicrafts.

**Malek Abdulaziz and Tony Milroy SCF/SCDP**

## New Schools for De'arho and Demerko

The nearest school for the children of the De'arho valley used to be located more than 10km away, over very steep territory, making it difficult for the students to walk to school every day. A visit by the chairman of the SCF, Dr. Abdul Karim Al-Eryani, in June 2004, resulted in a donation by a Yemeni businessman to build a new school in the area. Construction began in January 2005 and finished in September 2005. This is a demonstration of good practice, as it has a large number of potential students, the local community provided the manpower, it has an environmentally sensitive design using local materials and the build was very inexpensive.

Demerko village is located in the middle of the Socotra Island, and had no school close by. The Social Fund for Development provided finance for a school in the village through a contribution of 95% of the cost, with the local community contributing the remaining 5% as building materials. The local people agreed to provide rocks and sand for building, but these materials were located far away from the village and had to be transported by trucks. SCF helped them in April 2005 to transport the materials, enabling them to complete their project.

**Malek Abdulaziz and Tony Milroy SCF/SCDP**

# Projects

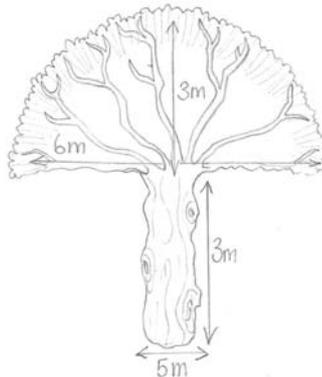
## Environmental Education for Soqotran Children

A Darwin Initiative funded project is developing a set of lesson plans to deliver environmental education to school children on Soqatra, using their native plants and cultural heritage to provide insights into aspects of the curriculum from Arabic to Science. The project was launched with a seminar in Sana'a in September and developed further with work on the island in November, when a local NGO, the Soqatra Society for Heritage and History, agreed to help to develop and deliver the project.

Pilot materials are being prepared for children in levels 4, 5 and 6 in curriculum areas of Arabic, Social Studies, Mathematics and Science. Training sessions in March will lead to three schools testing these materials over the following few months - Salah ad-Din in Hadibo, Sayf bin Diyzan in Qalinsaya and Mohammed Mahmoud Zubayri on the Nugid plain. Following modifications on the basis of this piloting further materials will be produced and ultimately distributed to other schools on the island. It is hoped that in the longer term lessons can be prepared for all levels and that these will be delivered in all of the schools. Another element of the project, 'learning by growing', will encourage children to learn about plant growth through hands-on experience.

The goal of the lessons is to facilitate local children to value their cultural and natural heritage and see why it is vital to care for it for future generations. Lessons will highlight how the natural environment is fundamental to continued social and economic development of the island. Lessons use examples from the natural environment to deliver curriculum subjects, so that by making these other subjects more interesting, relevant and fun the children will learn their core subjects better and improve their future exam performance.

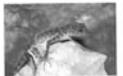
### Roderic Dutton



### Marine Natural Resources – Social Studies

**Key concepts:** Biological community; commercial species; nursery areas; bycatch; overfishing; sustainable use of resources.

In the drawing below (busy coral reef scene) there are a number of animals common in the seas off Soqatra. Please identify as many of these as you can with their Arabic and Soqotri names. Do they have a commercial use?



إرشادات للمدرس:  
المستوى الرابع



نبات وحيوان سقري - العرب  
توزيع ووفرة النبات - ريفيات  
عوامل التغيير - علوم  
الموارد الطبيعية البحرية - دراسات اقتصادية

Darwin Education Project

دروس استرشادية  
February 2006



# Endangered Language

## THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

When I was teaching in Lebanon just over a year ago, I was invited back to Socotra to run the English Language Programme at the SCDP. I had to decide whether to stay in Lebanon or return to the island. That was one of life's easier decisions, and I now find myself running the English language programme at the project. There are currently 50 students studying at 4 different levels.

Demand for English on the island is high; in addition to SCDP employees who have opted for language training, there has been a wide range of students from other fields like the District Director of the island, the head of fisheries and the head of the tourist police. At a more grass roots level there are extension officers from protected areas learning basic English. The most successful group of learners have been a core class of SCDP staff who began with elementary work like *Have you any brothers and sisters?* but can now tackle a text about the Galapagos Islands.

Language learning requires a daily commitment and the success of students largely depends on how much they put into the course. Another issue has been the gender imbalance on the programme: only 5 Socotri women are attending the courses, even though the Women's Association has been a priority for us.

One advantage of teaching on Socotra is the context in which language is presented. Teaching English as an international language often involves promoting a vacuous culture of international celebrities and consumer goods. In contrast, teaching English in Socotra relates to the environment and eco-tourism.

As far as possible we have experienced English directly in the field, whether it involves hiking on a cold misty day in the mountains of Skand, or going with Ahmed Sa'ad to a pool near the airport to hear the sand grouse drink at dusk. Recently when teaching the word 'sand grouse' in class, I found myself in the situation where students were learning the English word, but some did not know the Socotri word *mokeedo* for the bird. Socotri is spoken by only 50,000 people, yet I find myself promoting a language that is spoken globally by countless millions.

The Socotri language is very much under threat, yet in class we use course books which promote an international monoculture. In this situation I have encouraged the use of Socotri in the English class, as in translating certain words and phrases from English into Socotri, in order to acknowledge the endangered language.

It goes without saying that employees of an international organisation need competence in English. However with languages becoming extinct by the hour, and with the project's emphasis on biodiversity, I feel it is even more important to help in the conservation and promotion of the island's unique language.

The Socotri language and the culture it embodies are as much a part of the island's biodiversity as the lovely sunbird or the frankincense trees of Homhil. Is there any chance that the next language project on the island will involve the teaching of Socotri?

**Richard Boggs**

## Socotra Exhibition Dinner

On Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup> of October a Yemeni British friendship Society (YBFS) organized an Iftar (breaking the fast) and dinner called by H.E. Dr. Abu Baker Al-Qirbi the Yemeni Foreign minister and chairman of YBFS. The occasion was sponsored by the prominent Yemeni businessman Mr. Abdul-Wahab Thabet chairman of the board of the Thabet group of Companies and the treasurer of YBFS and the president of the Yemeni society for protection of Archeology and heritage. The guest of honor of the party was H. E. Dr. Abdul-Karim Al-Eryani the Political Advisor of the president and patron of the conservation effort of the archipelago of Socotra and the chairman of Socotra Conservation Fund. Among the important guests were the H. E. Mr. Michael Gifford the United Kingdom to Yemen, members of YBSF, representatives of major international companies in Yemen and representatives of Yemeni companies with business relations with the UK. The gathering also was attended by many prominent social, cultural and political personalities who are concerned with the conservation of cultural and environmental heritage of Yemen.

The purpose of the gathering was to raise funds for the Socotra Exhibition in Edinburgh in the summer of 2006. In his keynote speech Dr. Al-Eryani stressed the fact that Socotra Island is the jewel of Yemen and the world and its conservation is the responsibility of everybody. He also reiterates the government of Yemen commitment to its protection and sustainable development. This commitment is demonstrated in many ways not least by the frequent visits by the President of the Republic and the care he is giving to its inhabitants' welfare. During the dinner generous donation were promised by many of the guest towards covering the cost of Socotra exhibition in Edinburgh that will contribute to the advancement of the conservation and sustainable development of Socotra archipelago.

# Exhibitions and Conferences

## Soqatra Land of the Dragon's Blood tree

*The first scientific expedition to the island of Soqatra was made by Isaac Bayley Balfour, later to become the Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, in 1879. 125 years later the RBGE published the first definitive account of the botany and ethnobotany of the islands.*

This year the relationship between Scotland's national botanic garden and the archipelago continues as RBGE hosts a major new exhibition on the natural history and culture of Soqatra, under the title Land of the Dragon's Blood tree. As well as providing the visitor with an interesting array of displays about geographical, ecological and human aspects of the islands the exhibition aims to evoke something of the atmosphere of a group of remote islands largely forgotten by the outside world. This includes panoramas of the tree-studded landscape, a reconstructed village house and even a cave for adventurous youngsters to explore. Artefacts and natural objects from the island will be combined with still and video images, recorded sounds and smells to create an overall impression of what visiting Soqatra is like for those who are not lucky enough to go there themselves.

Some of the stories that the exhibition will explore include the origin of cultivated Begonias, diversity of land snails, value of goats, changing lifestyles and, of course, the collection of Dragon's blood, aloe and frankincense. There will also be activities for families, including making traditional style pots and trying on some of the clothes worn by island children.

For adults there is a programme of films and talks and we hope to include some aspects of the performing arts as well. The exhibition is presented in partnership with the Friends of Soqatra and runs in the Exhibition Hall of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh from 1 July to 29 October. During the four months of the exhibition over 40,000 people are expected to visit. Admission to the RBGE, the exhibition and most of the events is free.

**Ian Darwin Edwards, RBGE**

## COLLECTING ARTEFACTS FOR THE SOQOTRA EXHIBITION

During his visit to Soqatra in November, December, Ahmad Sa'ad Tahki, the Oman and Gulf Representative for FoS, very kindly agreed to spend some of his time to try and collect various artifacts for the forthcoming Soqatra Exhibition, in particular items for the 'Soqotri home' part of the exhibition. He returned to Hadiboh a few days before my departure and presented me with the most amazing collection, including such items as a set of cauterizing instruments, children games, sheeps' wool plait extenders, artificial lures used in fishing, weaving and plaiting equipment and samples, mouse and wild cat traps, ancient wooden locks, a collection of pipes made from every possible natural material as well as a traditional hubble-bubble pipe – and very much more which we hope you will see next year.

We would especially like to thank the following for their huge contribution to the collection:

Umr Sa'ad Tahki and his wife and sons, and especially Khamis and Sa'id

Hamad Selmeen Tahki and his wife

Hsan Sa'ad Tahki and his mother, Zuhoor

Salim Abdurrahman Sowqer

Abdullah Ali Sowqer

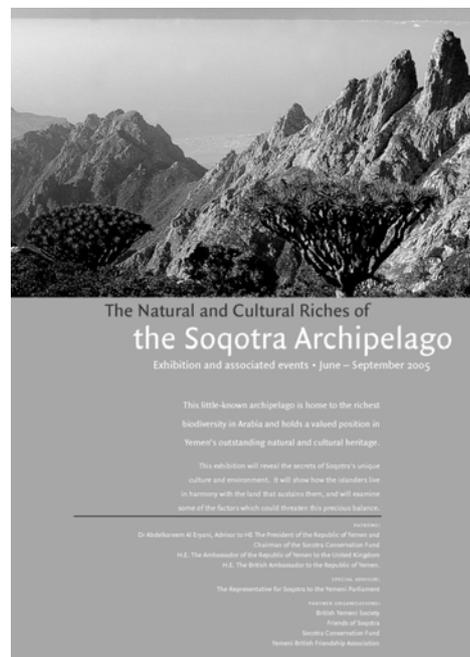
Sa'ad Muhammad Maqaaq Sowqer

Ibrahim Hammoudi Tahki

Umm Salih Tahkiyo and Hunnu Umm Sa'ad Lahsiyo

And the many children of Homhil and Hallah who were sent rushing around collecting material such as *Aerva* flowering heads, lichens and barks, shells to pierce to make necklaces and rattles and matching pebbles for examples of games.

**Miranda Morris**



# Tourism

## Tourism and Socotra's Future

Everyone you talk to has their opinions on the future of Socotra. "It will be like the Galapagos!!!"; "No, no, no, it will end up like that Phi Phi island from the movie *The Beach*, devastated by tourism in a matter of a couple of years."

It is very easy to see Socotra falling victim to mass tourism and joining the myriad islands one can learn about through books, magazines and documentaries. A "lost paradise" suddenly "discovered" and thrown into the capitalist lair of profit, consumerism, waste creation, and a loss of culture. Case studies abound, especially on islands, from the Pacific, the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.

The road to this fate has already been paved in Socotra – literally – with wide roads being built everywhere with little consideration to their environmental and social consequences. Beaches have been bought and foundations for large hotels laid down – again with little social and environmental concern. There is talk of an international airport opening within two years, bringing tourists directly from Europe and the Gulf to Socotra. And it's difficult to criticize these developments. Every Socotri I've spoken to wants roads. It's no fun having to carry a sick relative for days to reach the hospital in Hadibo. Hotels will create jobs and a source of much needed income. Tourism is a multibillion dollar industry and Socotra has just the right attractions to grab a piece of the pie.

The challenge is to a) develop tourism so that Socotris benefit from it, b) develop tourism in a manner which is sensitive to local customs and feelings and c) develop tourism without jeopardizing the environment. But examples from around the world show that this is a very difficult objective to fulfill. Tourism resorts are often staffed with migrant labour – a phenomenon already evident in Socotra where mainlanders, equipped with language and business skills, run the majority of enterprises. Tour groups visiting Socotra often act in total disregard to local feelings – with bikini clad long-legged models strutting their stuff from the beaches to the streets of Hadibo – radicalizing the most liberal thinking Socotri and inviting a deluge of angry commentary from hot tempered imams in the mosques.

Places like Dihamri, a marine gem, are already looking like a coral graveyard, and the creeping arms of plastic bags and tin cans are just as keen on discovering the island as the rest of us are. And this is just the start. The point is that we've learnt our lessons a thousand times before. There is a library in Islington in London run by an NGO called Tourism Concern where you can read endless articles and books on how tourism went wrong. Socotra is still at the beginning stages of tourism development and appropriate and preemptive planning is needed right now to ensure that growth is controlled and maintained without leading to eventual decline.

International development and conservation efforts went into Socotra seven years ago knowing all this fully well. But I think that a more serious and focused effort needs to be made to get the balance right. Apart from a few well planned projects, much of the work going on seems reactive, dealing with problems as they come along, allowing them time to brew up and not effectively managing them. Preemptive action would be more effective and is possible because so many problems faced are well documented in other case studies. The land use Zoning Plan was a well studied and detailed plan for the sustainable use and development of the island. However that is rarely referred to in current planning.

There are three factors I can think of which may buy Socotra time to improve its management. The first is the monsoon period, which being during most people's summer holidays, will save Socotra from the worst of the Majorca Mob. It will allow Socotra a few months a year to recover from the party and perhaps reflect on how to play it better the next year. Secondly, if the current pattern of conservatism continues, as it seems set to, then Socotra is unlikely to attract package holiday makers who are looking for sun, sea, sex and alcohol. They'll probably stick to the Med. Thirdly, the number of tourists visiting Socotra is currently limited by the number of flights. However, this cap is soon to be lifted.

Finally, I can't help thinking that Socotra could do with more strict rules and regulations such as a gradually increasing cap on the number of tourists arriving per year. This would allow the island and the islanders time to develop services with respect to environmental and social standards. The land use Zoning Plan, as well as other laws must also not be deviated from and a system should be put in place for enforcement.

We've seen so many island ecosystems ruined, so many islands swarming with tourists where the locals still live at the poverty line, so many cases where local traditions are relegated to five minute displays to tourists. Let's make use of the lessons learnt elsewhere, anticipate future problems and prepare for them now

. **Rowan Salim**

# Tourism

## Eco-tourism in Socotra Highlights of the British-Yemeni Society trip- 2005

The British-Yemeni Society visit to the island of Socotra in January 2005 was a special opportunity to experience this remarkable island first hand through an eco-tour facilitated by the Universal Touring Company in Sana'a and the Socotra Eco-tourism Society.

The top places to visit on this island of unspoilt natural beauty are listed below and keyed on the attached map.

**1 DIKSAM.** The base for trekking in the high Haggier Mountains with its stunning scenery and *Dracena* (dragon's blood) forests. Try the ascent of Jebel Skand (c.1600m/5250ft), the highest mountain on the island, with its spectacular views of the north coast and the Haggier Range. Swim and picnic in the dramatic Da'arho Canyon with its freshwater pools and shady palm groves.

**2 HOMHIL.** This peaceful protected area with special plants and succulent trees including mature stands of *Boswellia frankincense* trees has excellent camping facilities. Try a swim in the natural fresh water pool at D'kibkub perched high above the coastal plain with its breathtaking views of the Arabian Sea.

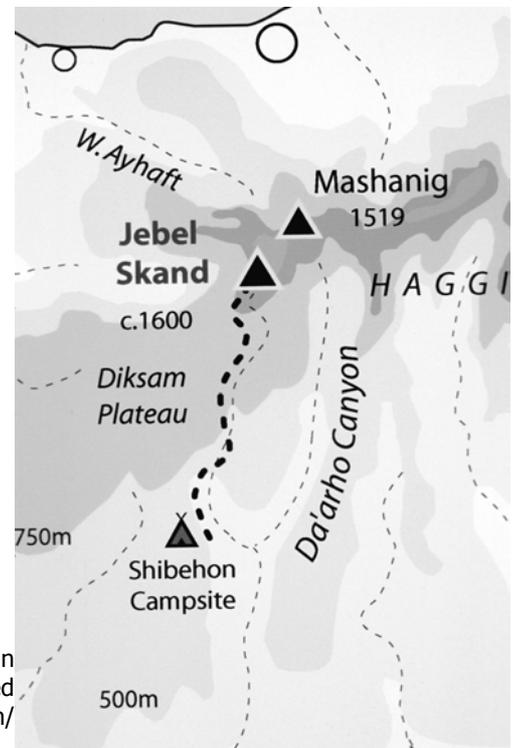
**3 RAS DIHAMRI.** Marine Protected Area, northeast Socotra. The seas of the Socotran Archipelago still remain in a largely pristine state and spectacular areas of hard and soft corals including branching *Acropora* exist together with some 730 species of coastal reef fish which make for a fantastic snorkelling and diving experience, all providing the waters stay calm that is. Corals form small, discrete communities, rather than true reef structures because of cool water upwelling during the south-west summer monsoons.

**4 AR'AHER BEACH.** Still further along the north coast near the eastern tip of the island camping is possible on this quite remarkable stretch of beach with its 100 foot storm dunes. Enjoy the exhilaration of warm piped spring water, and nightly phosphorescence shows. Visit Hoq, with its extraordinary stalactites and natural columns, a two kilometre long limestone cave complex in the coastal cliffs above Terbac village.

**5 QALANSIYAH.** Camp on the far west coast beside the tranquil Detwah lagoon. Swim and sunbathe along this expansive unspoilt stretch of sand. Take a local fishing boat to Bander Shu'ub to an even more remote beach, home to thousands of Socotran cormorants and spinning dolphins. Watch ariel displays of brown boobies *Sula leucogaster* as they fish by diving from great heights. This is a bird watchers paradise with the island having by far the most native birds in the Middle East.

Follow up activities by the British-Yemeni Society on the conclusion of the trip included efforts to assist in the teaching of English on the island through the funding of an English language teacher for a year and the supply English books for the island's library in Hadibu as well as books and wall maps sent to the Soqotra Women's Development Association also in Hadibu.

For a more detailed account of the actual trip and a review of tourism in Socotra in general the reader is directed to the Guardian on-line website to an article entitled "The Island that Darwin Forgot" on: <http://travel.guardian.co.uk/saturdaysection/story/0,8922,1524113,00.html>



**Charles Aithie**

# Soqotra Around the World

## NEWS FROM THE GULF

The number of people visiting Soqotra from the Gulf has risen greatly. Most of the visitors already have some family connection with the island and come to visit relations and to see how they might be able to help. There has also been a sharp rise in the number of marriages between Soqotri women and men from the Gulf and Oman. All this has been greatly helped by the increased availability and ease of communications: from telephone centres in Hadiboh, and from the rapid spread of mobile phones. Yementel costs are low, and the coverage over the island reasonable – by 2006 the network is expected to cover the entire island.

There is also increased general interest in the Gulf and Oman about Soqotra and things Soqotri. The trading links between the areas are ancient: the visits of pearlers, the trade vessels; additionally numbers of Soqotrans used to travel to Oman to work the date harvest there, and later, when the Gulf states began to prosper, travelled there to seek work.

Other visitors also come from the Gulf: those with no previous Soqotra connection come as part of a 'da'wa', or missionary visit, to spread the Word of God and raise religious awareness ('taw'iyat ad-din'). They travel around the island, teaching and giving sermons at local mosques; many have helped to raise funding for the construction of mosques and schools, or for water distribution projects.

In 'Ajmaan where, for historical reasons, many émigré Soqotrans have settled, a centre has been set up where people interested and involved in Soqotra can meet and exchange news: how the rains have been on the island, who has married whom, who has died, who is working where. The centre has a small library concerned with things Soqotri, and is planning to have a small display of Soqotran artefacts and photographs.

***Ahmad Sa'ad Tahki provided the following news to Miranda Morris during a meeting on Soqotra in December***

## **Soqotra's Cultural and Natural Heritage— Friends of Soqotra AGM and Conference 2005**

The third annual conference and Annual General Meeting was held at Durham University on 16 – 18 September 2005. Nearly 20 people attended representing some six countries. A number of papers were presented on aspects of the social and natural heritage of the islands and discussions were undertaken concerning them, other current developments on the islands and current projects, including the Darwin Initiative and the RBGE Exhibition. Reports on these projects and on several of the research reports presented are included elsewhere in this Newsletter.

The 2006 Conference will take place during the RBGE Exhibition in Edinburgh. Future conferences will be held in Europe and on Soqotra itself. All agreed that we should continue the tradition of annual conferences and that they had both enjoyed themselves and had a most useful and informative weekend.

## **SOQOTRA ON MOSCOW TV**

After more than 25 years millions of TV-watchers in Russia and CIS as well as Russian speaking people all around the world had an opportunity to visit Soqotra through the screens of their TV-sets. One hardly remembers now that in the end of 1979 Farid Seyfulmuljukov, a top level Soviet Middle East political correspondent, visited Soqotra and presented his video-film about the island in the Arabian Sea in the most beloved TV-program in that closed society - "The Club of Film-travellers" – on the 1st channel of Moscow central television.

Last February Russian the federal NTV-channel, now owned by the biggest state gas producing and exporting monopoly Gasprom, took over the initiative. One of today's top journalists, Pavel Lobkov, a Doctor in Biology and an author of "The Vegetable Life" popular program, made a trip to Sana'a and then had a special journey to the island of Soqotra. It attracted him first of all as the only untouched piece that remained from the ancient mainland of Gandwana with all of its endemic biological "antiquities".

The living in sea water avicennia marina tree, the famous "dam al-akhaweyn" - dragon's blood tree, incense tree, aloe and some others were shown as well as their usage by Soqotrans in their traditional life. Some interesting local trades, rites and cultural heritage elements as well as ancient drawings at Eriosh and a modern endemic plants conservation farm near Hadibo were also shown.

***Vladimir Agafonov***

# Life on the Island

## Bird Surveys

An understanding of breeding populations, including endemic birds, can yield valuable information about the overall, ecological health of local environments, as birds are at the top of significant marine and terrestrial food chains and thus act not only as 'flagship species' but also early indicators of local ecosystem changes.

Over the last five years the SCF/SCDP with support from BirdLife International have been undertaking surveys of the breeding birds of the archipelago. This has included mapping their distributions and undertaking over 300km of transects in order to calculate populations. All the data has been housed with SCF/SCDP and hopefully will be published within the next year when analyses are complete.

We now know that 41 species breed on the island and that at least seven are endemic. The taxonomic status of two further species - the buzzard and the scops owl - is still under review. Five of Socotra's bird species are listed as globally threatened by BirdLife International.

This data allows the monitoring of impact of large scale developments on the environment of Socotra. *Socotra cisticola*, for example, inhabits mainly low-growing vegetation found in those flat coastal areas most coveted for development opportunities and, therefore, is an excellent indicator of development pressure. The distribution atlas of breeding birds may also be used for the monitoring of future developments and was presented as such in the recently developed logframe of the GEF-project in preparation.

A total of 185 species have now been recorded on Socotra and in November/December Nadim Taleb and Ahmed Saeed Suliman of SCF/SCDP found two new ones for the archipelago list: Sacred Ibis and Little Crake. Whilst in January 2006 Ian Sinclair on an ornithological visit added Northern Lapwing and confirmed Caspian Plover (an earlier record lacked supporting detail).

***Richard Porter, Malek Abdulaziz and Tony Milroy SCF/SCDP***



***The list bird species seen on Socotra has recently been updated by Richard Porter and is now available on the FoS website.***

Socotra Scops Owl (*Otus* sp), the taxonomy of which is under investigation.

# Libraries

## THE AL ZAHRA CULTURAL LIBRARY

The Al Zahra Cultural Library is looking very handsome. Some of the funds have been usefully spent in painting the interior white, leveling the floor and laying down vinyl. Two large reading tables have been made locally, extra chairs purchased, and a table for women-readers has been made and placed beside the desk of the woman librarian, Nadhera Abdullah. The building materials from another site that were heaped around the front of the library have been removed, and a load of beach pebbles will be laid below the library steps: these have already become a popular place to sit and chat.

The British Ambassador visited the library in December, which was a great encouragement to all those who have worked so hard to make the library operational. He spent some time there, looking at the books and talking to the librarian and some of the users. He also discussed the needs of the library with Dr. Sa'ad Al Qaddomi of the Library Committee.

Since his visit, a notice clearly stating library morning and afternoon opening hours has been painted and erected, and a five-person Library Committee formed, two members of which are women. This committee will meet monthly to discuss finances, fund-raising, and to determine priorities for book purchase with the funds available.

The American Institute for Yemeni Studies has promised to donate a considerable number of books which I hope to take out with me early in 2006.

Anyone visiting Soqotra can help by taking some books with them and delivering them to the library in person.

**Miranda Morris**

## The Socotra Women's Development Association Library opened in June

The opening of the library was delayed due to a shipping accident in which we lost our major collection of books. In May 2005 a boat heading from Mukala to Socotra was forced to throw much of its cargo overboard due to high seas and it having been overloaded. Our shipment of approximately 180 books as well as other materials was lost. We were however able to repurchase the books and open the library thanks to a grant donated by Mr. Patrick Tardif.

The SWDA would like to thank all its donors for the help they have provided in getting this project started. If you would like further information about the library, or if you would like to find out how to donate books or other materials to the library please do contact us!

**Rowan Salim**

**The Socotra Women's Development Association Mother and Child Library**



The library opened in June 2005 following several months of fundraising and organisation. The library serves several purposes:

- 1 – It encourages women who are taking literacy classes to read.
- 2 – It encourages women to enrol in literacy classes by providing a child care area.
- 3 – It encourages mothers to spend time reading with their children, strengthening their relationship.
- 4 – It provides children with a new avenue to explore ideas and to socialise.

The library is located in the association's training centre and is open from 3-5pm Saturday to Wednesday with a story reading session at 4pm.



Ali Muqaddam: one of six-member committee (of which two are women), headed by Soqotra MP Salim Sa'd Bu Haqibah, Tables and all shelving made on the island by Hammoud Salih 'Alawi



# Publications

## SOCOTRA

### A natural history of the islands and their people

Catherine Cheung and Lyndon DeVantier; Science Editor: Kay Van Damme

#### **Purpose**

Beautifully designed and written in easy English, with Arabic abstracts for each chapter, the book aims to broaden the knowledge and awareness of decision makers, visitors and the general public, while addressing the increasing demand by natural and social scientists, conservationists and arm-chair travelers for a comprehensive documentation of the islands.

The book is also set to help raise funds for on-ground conservation activities on Socotra, as proceeds from sales will be channeled into the Socotra Conservation Fund.

#### **Content**

This book provides a comprehensive review of the natural history of the islands. While documenting the geological history, biodiversity, ecology and human culture, the book also highlights hitherto unexplored aspects of the islands' biogeography, evolution and conservation. Thoroughly researched and referenced, with contributions from almost 50 international and national specialists, the book is packed with the latest scientific, historic and cultural information, richly illustrated with some 300 photographs, maps and drawings, including two dozen historical illustrations from the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century. Each chapter has been reviewed by specialists renowned in their particular fields.

#### **The Chapters**

1. Overview; 2. Geology and Environment; 3. Flora; 4. Fauna; 5. Birds; 6. The Marine Realm; 7. Early Settlers and Visitors; 8. The Islanders; 9. Conservation and Development

The book is 21.5 x 28 cm, 384 pages in hardback, and priced at UK£ 39.95 / USD \$60.

Enquires and interested sponsors and bulk orders, please contact:

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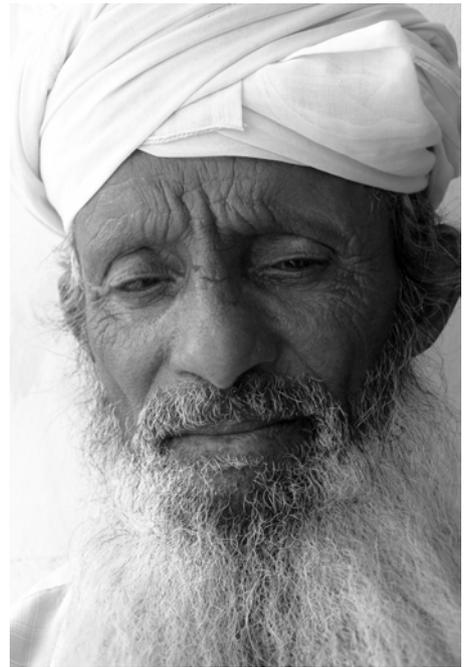
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Said Monsour Ahmed, extension officer of Samha.  
Photo by Richard Boggs.

*Achatinelloides* on *Adenium* tree trunk. Photo by  
Fareed Krupp.

Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster*. Photo by Richard  
Porter.



## SEASONAL DYNAMICS OF MAIN VEGETATION FORMATIONS OF THE SOQOTRA ISLAND AND ITS RELATION TO MONSOONAL RAINFALLS

2 illustrations

This project contributes to the understanding of seasonal dynamics of vegetation cover of Soqotra and its causes. The study is based on analyses of NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index) time series of 16-day composites of the MODIS satellite using specific image processing procedures as principal component analyses and spatial and temporal profiling. Strong relationship between the NDVI value, altitude and monsoon effect has been found.

It was proved that overall NDVI value (and so the level of green biomass and photosynthetic activity) of particular sites on Soqotra is caused mainly by altitude (and consequently by appropriate current vegetation type), while the time variations of the value are affected especially by the effects of the monsoon. Therefore, the location of a particular site (whether it is on the 'north' or 'south half' of the island and at which altitude) is from the viewpoint of phytophenology extremely important (see fig. 1 and 2). Similarly, the amount and timing of rainfalls should always be assessed in conjunction with the particular site, not generally for the entire island.

It would be advisable to continue to monitor NDVI values and both their spatial and temporal (both seasonal and inter-annual) variations, as it is an effective means for recognition of extraordinary climatic events (e.g. extended dry periods, abnormally wet or dry years, etc.) and their impact on Soqotran vegetation. Lastly, but not least, NDVI time series can serve as a useful tool for reconstructing rainfall conditions in locations where conventional rainfall measurements are sparse or completely unavailable.

PICTURE?????

**Kamil KRÁL**

**e-mail: [kamil.kral@nature.cz](mailto:kamil.kral@nature.cz)**

## ***Freshwater and Estuarine Fishes of Socotra Island, Yemen***

During field surveys on Socotra Island between 1998 and 2000 freshwater and estuarine fishes were collected and studied. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, two species of primary freshwater fishes belonging to the cyprinid family (genera *Capoeta* and *Esomus*) with biogeographical affinities to Mesopotamia and India and two species of secondary freshwater fishes (Cyprinodontidae: *Aphanius*) had been recorded. Of these, only *Aphanius dispar* was retrieved during recent surveys.

Freshwater courses were inhabited by euryhaline and freshwater-adapted species of marine origin, consisting predominantly of Mugilidae and Gobiidae. One obligate catadromous species, the shortfin eel *Anguilla bicolor*, was recorded for the first time. The fish fauna of estuaries is dominated by juvenile marine species.

A total of 44 fish species belonging to 22 families were recorded from a wide range of freshwater and estuarine habitats. Of these, 55% are primarily benthic invertebrate feeders while the other trophic levels - herbivorous, iliophagous, planktivorous, piscivorous species and surface invertebrate feeders - are each represented with 7 % to 11 % of the total number of species. This composition of trophic levels is similar to that of other tropical Indo-Pacific estuaries. The abundance of piscivores is very low and they are mainly represented by juveniles. This is regarded as a reason why the estuaries of Socotra Island are safe havens for juvenile fish and important nurseries.

The study underlines the ecological and economic importance of Socotra's freshwater courses and estuaries and the conservation value of these highly sensitive biotopes.

***Friedhelm Krupp, Uwe Zajonz and Fuad N.S. Khamais***

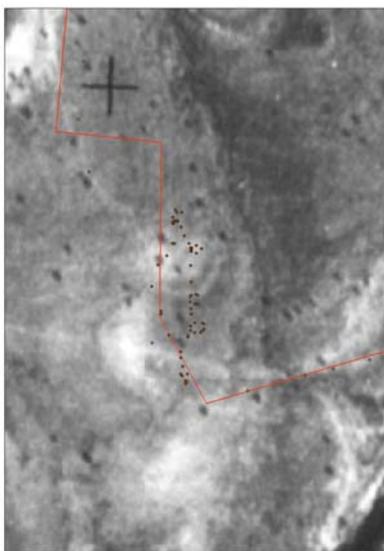
# Research

## THE ORAL ART OF SOQOTRA PROJECT

Tanuf and I worked with 16 men and women on experimenting with translating Soqotri song and poetry into Arabic. It proved a difficult but rewarding task. The main immediate difficulties for the translators lay firstly in transcribing the Soqotri material into Arabic script as an aide-memoire to take home to work on, and secondly in understanding much of the archaic and specialised language used in the older poems and songs. The first problem was solved by each translator in his own unique way, the second was greatly helped by having Tanuf present throughout each and every working session. This inevitably meant very long working days for him: beginning at 0630, a break for lunch, and then working again often until 1930 at night, with no days off. Without his admirable patience and hard work, this project would hardly have been possible.

Of the 16 people we worked with, eight have been selected to carry the work forward in 2006. Three of these eight are women, and others are working in pairs: a poet with limited Arabic working with a partner fluent in Arabic, a combination which seems to work very well.

***Miranda Morris***



## Identifying Dragon Blood trees using air photographs

The RAF organized a number of sorties to produce air photographs of all or parts of Soqotra and some of the other islands in the archipelago. Dates included: Nov 1944, Jan 1945, June 1956, Jan 1957 and Nov 1962. Enquiries have shown that no trace remains of the sorties in the 1940s, but the others are extant. The final three sorties included photographs at small scale; respectively 1:60,000, 1: 80,000 and 1:44,000. Also, in 1956 and 1962 in addition to the small scale pictures a series of off-nadir cameras took large scale images at, respectively, 1:10,000 and 1:7,300. All the photographs are monochrome. In 1957 coverage was of the whole of Soqotra and of Darsa and Samha (but not Abd al-Kuri) and the day chosen was almost entirely free of cloud cover. Pixel size is about 1m or so, very much in accord with today's high resolution satellite imagery from sources such as Quickbird and Ikonos. In 1956 and 1962 the sorties included only parts of Soqotra. Some of the photographs suffer from partial cloud cover.

I obtained the small scale coverage of all three available years as 9 inch by 9 inch photographs. Using the 1957 coverage (about 125 photographs in all), I scanned them all and have georectified them, using Erdas Imagine software, onto a base Landsat radar image with a 15m resolution. The photographs overlap east to west by about 60% (less south to north). In order to minimize distortion the all the photographs were used in the georectification process, but only after cropping to remove the outer 60% of each one. A first order polynomial was employed. The result is generally very good though in some cases, particularly over the high ground, there is some edge mis-matching.

One product has been obtained by making a complete photo mosaic of Soqotra. A poster of this printed on high gloss paper with a length of 1.5m is very clear. All geological and geomorphological features stand out very clearly as do patches of date palms and, of course, the coastline.

In the ArcMap GIS package (ESRI) it is perfectly possible by zooming in to see individual dragon's blood trees. But could these trees be identified on the ground today? This was put to the test in November 2005 in an area adjacent to the new road to Nugid on the Dixam plain. Using a hand held GPS I walked round a pattern of four dragon's blood trees and mapped the track on to the georectified air photographs. This clearly identified the four trees photographed in 1957, with an apparent separation of only 26m, which, given the many sources of possible error, is a remarkably good fit. It will thus definitely be possible using high resolution satellite images of Soqotra (which exist for Quickbird and Ikonos) to make a full comparison of the situation in 1957 and today, and so see if there has been change due to loss of trees or to new trees growing. Also, because trees on the images can thus be matched with trees on the ground with pinpoint accuracy, changes in other features between the trees can be quantitatively monitored.

***Roderic Dutton***

# Research

## First Results of Soil Investigations on Socotra Island

Soils are formed in as a result of natural features and their modification by human influences. As stated in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Yemen (EPC 1999) one important aim regarding the conservation of Biodiversity in Yemen is the "sustainable use of biological and related natural resources", which includes soils.

The aim of this project, carried out since 2002, is to figure out both the land use patterns and the modification of soils in Homhil, Hadiboh Costal Plain and Wadi Ayhaft as well as the distribution patterns of the soils and their levels of degradation.

Socotran soils show sequences of layers with substrata of different types, ages, original material, relief positions and mostly with unequal coarse textures. Assayed representative soil groups are Cambisols, Calcisols, Fluvisols and Regosols (World Reference Base for Soil Resources 1998). A very common soil type pointing to soil degradation is the Hypercalci Calcisol: with intact red topsoils, with erosion features in topsoils (see picture) or in a total truncated status. The Calcisols are mainly distributed in Homhil, where the intra-montaneous basin is overgrazed, or in the coastal plain where the *Croton* – shrubland is cut over. In contrast, in Wadi Ayhaft mainly Cambisols occur, soil relics from the past, which are still preserved by the Montane Bush.

One important result is that vegetation and land use patterns are the basis of soil distribution patterns and the degree of degradation in the various areas. That may be nothing new, but that the degree of soil degradation in Homhils remaining Cambisols is more progressed than in Ayhaft should be considered in the context of both climate change and land use practices.

An overview can be found at the link on the Friends of Socotra Homepage. Please also feel free to contact: [pietsch@staff.uni-marburg.de](mailto:pietsch@staff.uni-marburg.de)

***Dana Pietsch***



Rill erosion in Homhil (2004)

# Research

## Hawaris Made of Teak

Four wood samples were submitted for scientific identification. They required prolonged preparation before thin sectioning as they were extremely hard and contained some encrustations within the cellular structure which had to be dissolved before thin sectioning and microscopic examination could take place. After these procedures, standard techniques of optical microscopy at magnifications ranging from x50 to x350 revealed that all four samples were in fact the same wood, *Tectona grandis*, teak.

A member of the Verbenaceae family, teak is a medium-weight hardwood with a geographical distribution in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. Nowadays it is also cultivated in tropical Africa. It is well-documented as a favoured timber for boat-building in India from antiquity through to the recent historic past. Examples of teak ship's timbers have been excavated from Roman period sites in Egypt and testify to the importance of teak for the Indian Ocean trading networks.

Teak wood is principally golden brown, often with streaks. It has a distinct odour and is oily to the touch. Its specific gravity is 0.44–0.63–0.82 g/cm<sup>3</sup>. Teak is a well-known and excellent general-purpose timber whose resistant properties make it particularly suitable for boat building, general construction work which is in contact with water and also for (outdoor) furniture. The rates of shrinkage of teak wood are very low, and teak has good stability. Teak wood is not particularly difficult to work, but can require some effort owing to the presence of silica in the cells. Teak heartwood is classified as durable to very durable; the heartwood is resistant to insect attack, but the sapwood is susceptible to a degree.

I hope to be able to use this now with the data gathered and will be writing another article with regards to the hawari on Socotra in the near future.

***Julian Jansen Von Rensburg***

## Protected Areas in Socotra - Hopes and Challenges

Balancing the pressures for development with protecting high value conservation areas is often very difficult. In the last year we have developed baseline data and management plans for the next three years for two National Parks and six Nature Sanctuaries based on field visits, data collection and meetings with local communities.

Managers were employed for two existing protected areas, Homhil & Dihamri, who received training by SCDP staff. They are now engaged in delivery of new work plans for these areas, including small projects which will increase the income of local families, and monitoring programmes looking at range land and tourism effects. We also hope to continue implementation of management plans for Skand and Ditwah with support from the SGP, including development of a campsite in Skand and a water project in Shoab. We also hope to implement at least a few activities from the new management plans for Shoab, Neet ,Roosh and Temrah Nature Sanctuaries, and Abalhin and Ayhaft National Parks.

Some major challenges to our work include:

- The weakness of environmental legislation and lack of co-operation between government departments regarding implementation.
  - Lack of control of tourism, which provides a fast and easy income.
  - High levels of development pressure.
  - Demands of management beyond the capacity of the small team to deliver.
- Lack of specific training for staff.

The Protected Areas on Socotra are in good condition and progressing in the right way, but more support is required from central government through the strong implementation of the environmental laws.

***Abdulraqeb Shamsan Abdullah Al-Okashi, Protected Areas Specialist, Protected Areas Management EPA-SCDP Socotra***

# Etcetera

## Building the SCF Team

Since the establishment the SCF in Socotra in 2003 until now all the fund management team members are SCDP employers and have been working as volunteers with the SCF on a part time basis. The early management team comprised: Malek A. Abdulaziz Manager, Abdellatif Saad Amer Deputy Manager and Abdalla Ali Salman Accountant, Bookkeeping & Procurement Officer. In April 2004 another SCDP employer Rasheed Ali Rashed joined on a full time basis as an Executive Officer.

Several international volunteers worked with the SCF in Socotra, implementing several projects and capacity building local associations: Jeremy Roeygens - Japanese Project from Feb '04 – '05; Miles Davis - Socotra Ecotourism Society (SEC) from Apr - Oct '04; Flaminia Antonini - SEC From Nov '04-to July '05; Rowan Salim - Socotra Women Development Association (SWDA) Nov '04-Jun '05. Patrick Tardiff, hired by SCF to conduct training course on the development of local handicrafts and organise the SWDA shop and Egidio Germanetti SCF Sana'a office, setting up bookkeeping and administration.

It should be emphasised that SCF continues to be provided with invaluable support from SCDP, without which it would never have been able to 'take off' so effectively. The office of the SCF is still located within the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and local SCDP building in Hadibo, Socotra.

The SCF Management Committee is to be enlarged by the appointment of three Socotri's, including at least one woman to be selected by the women themselves. Paul Scholte (the CTA of SCDP and replacement for Eduardo Zandri) and Abdul Kader Bin Sada (Site advisor SCDP) were appointed as new advisory members to the SCF board, to join Richard Porter. Eduardo Zandri was appointed to the SCF Board of Directors and a new bookkeeper, Ali Mohammed Zaid has been appointed and trained by Chris Sutcliffe of Arid Lands and Sustainable Communities Trust.

**Malek Abdulaziz and Tony Milroy SCF/SCDP**

### Island of the Dragon's Blood to be Reprinted

A London printer will republish Douglas Botting's book *Island of the Dragon's Blood* in paperback next year. There will be an additional Epilogue containing a short overview bringing everything up to the present day. Next year also happens to be the 50th anniversary of the Oxford University Expedition to Soqotra of 1956, all the members of which are still alive and well, including the 95 year old archaeologist. The book will be available for the Soqotra Exhibition in Edinburgh this summer.

## WEBSITES

[www.FriendsofSoqotra.org](http://www.FriendsofSoqotra.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/Soqotra/home/page01.html> Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Plants, panoramas and ethnobotany.

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

[www.soqotra.info](http://www.soqotra.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*.

### Friends of Soqotra 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).

## TAYF

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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

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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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