

Some Benefits of Membership

Learn about Soqotra's unique and globally important species and habitats.

Keep up-to-date with news and events on Soqotra via our email updates.

Gain insights into Soqotran history and culture.

Discuss your views and opinions.

Be in contact with specialists of different subjects.

Make new friends with people for whom Soqotra is special.

Help make improvements to both the environment and the lives of the people of Soqotra.

Receive the annual newsletter 'Tayf' in English or Arabic, including updates of current research projects, news and special features.

Receive a guided tour of the Soqotra Folk Museum.



Photo: Diccon Alexander

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Annual Subscriptions, payable 1st October:

£25.00 UK, €30.00 EU, \$30.00 USA

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1000 YR Soqotra, Arabia

Donations also welcome

Registered charity number 1097546 (UK)

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Become a member

Support the people and environment of Soqotra

APRIL 2008 ISSUE 5 **Tayf - the Soqotra Newsletter**

Issued By FRIENDS OF SOQOTRA and SOQOTRA CONSERVATION FUND



Crowds at the opening of the new Soqotra Folk Museum in Riqeleh in Hallah on 10 January 2008. See article on Page 3.

FRIENDS OF SOQOTRA CONFERENCE 2008

The next Annual Conference and AGM will be held on 4-7 September 2008 in Brno, Czech Republic, at the Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry. To register contact Sue at Drsuechristie@aol.com.

WORLD HERITAGE SITE DESIGNATION PROGRESSING

Paul Scholte, SCDP
In response to questions raised by IUCN-World Heritage, the Minister of Water and Environment has organised a series of Ministerial meetings that

YEMEN JOINS THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS—DETWAH LAGOON FIRST DESIGNATED SITE

The Secretariat is very pleased to report that we have been informed by the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs at UNESCO that Yemen deposited the instrument of accession to the Ramsar Convention, as amended in 1982, on 8 October 2007, and therefore the Convention will come into force for Yemen on 8 February 2008.

The 158th Contracting Party to the Convention has designated as its obligatory first Ramsar site the Detwah Lagoon in the northwest of Soqatra Island some 340 kilometres to the south in the Indian Ocean. No information or boundary delimitations have yet been received for the new Ramsar site, but we will have a site description made up as soon as the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) has been received.

Congratulations to Yemen for its commitment to the objectives of the Ramsar Convention.

Dwight Peck



950 US dollars donated to a project fighting serious soil erosion problems in Homhil Protected Area in partnership with local people.



Donation of 800 US dollars to the new Soqatra Folk Museum in Riqeleh in Hallah, opened on 10th January 2008.

Did you know...

In 2008 Soqatra was declared a World Heritage Site.

100% of the cave crustaceans, 90% of the reptiles, 60% of spiders and 37% of the plants on Soqatra are endemic (found nowhere else in the world).

The longest cave in the Middle East has recently been discovered on Soqatra, at 13.5km! (Peter De Geest, 2008)

The people of the 3 smallest islands are completely isolated during the monsoon winds, as was Soqatra before the runway was built in 1999.

Soqatra has a unique language called Soqotri.

About Soqotra

At 3,625 km², Soqotra is the largest of 4 islands of the Soqatra Archipelago, found in the Indian Ocean. It has an estimated population of 50,000 people. It is part of Yemen, one of the poorest of the world's low-income countries.

Soqotra is globally recognised for its unique and beautiful flora and fauna and diversity of its marine environment, and is perhaps most famous for forests of dragon's blood trees. It is thanks to the care of Soqotri people that this unique landscape has been preserved. However, rapid development is now threatening the culture and environment of this unique island.



Soqatra sunbird
Photo: Richard Porter



Dragon's blood trees
Photo: Diccon Alexander



Endemic gecko
Photo: Kay Van Damme



1000 US dollars donated to coastal villages following powerful storms that caused damage to fishing boats and houses.



Campaigning against and raising awareness of unsustainable and environmentally damaging development, for example the current road-building programme.

About the Friends of Soqotra

Friends of Soqotra was established in 2001 to:

- Promote the sustainable use and conservation of the natural environment of the Soqatra 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.

We have members in Soqatra, Yemen, Oman, the Gulf, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, USA, UK and the EU.

Other Projects Include...

Assistance in creating a major Soqatra exhibition shown in Edinburgh, Sana'a and Aden, visited by more than 60,000 people.

Donation of 22 sewing machines and implements to the Local Councils and The Woman's Association of Soqatra (Jam'iyah Soqatra An Nisawiya).

Annual rent paid for the Public Library in Hadibo, plus the provision of books, a DVD player and educational DVDs including all BBC Wildlife programmes.