



Some Freshwater Animals of Socotra

Dr Kay Van Damme

Freshwater animals occur in all types of water on Socotra. Many of the native freshwater animals are important indicators of good water quality, and several species, like the dragonflies, are important natural controls of mosquitoes. The aquatic habitats in the island include wadi pools, streams, temporary lakes, leems, khors and even underground lakes and rivers. Water is life! Several impressive native and some endemic species commonly seen on Socotra Island are shown here, as well as some exotic species.



Socotra Freshwater Crab

Socotrapotamon socotrensis

Endemic genus and species. Important top predator in wadis, sensitive to pollution. The most widespread freshwater crab on the island. Locally abundant, needs clean running water to reproduce. IUCN Red List category – Least Concern (needs updating).



Socotra Karst Crab

Socotra pseudocardisoma

Endemic genus and species. Largest invertebrate predator on land in Socotra. Large terrestrial crab that lives in holes in limestone and in caves during the day, walks on land after sunset. It differs from the Socotra Freshwater Crab by the large yellow margin on the carapace. Feeds on scolopenders, insects and small reptiles. Occurs in Diksam. Not a common species. IUCN Red List category – Least Concern (needs updating).



Socotra Bluet

Azuragrion granti

The only endemic damselfly species on Socotra. This beautiful slender blue damselfly is locally abundant in mountain streams and in wadis connected to the Haggeher. It prefers running, clean water. Like all damselflies, it hunts on small insects near the water, including mosquitoes. IUCN RedList category – Near Threatened (needs updating).



Arabian Toothcarp

Aphanius dispar

Most populations of this fish have been introduced on the island and can be considered exotic. This animal presents a threat to local endemic freshwater species. The fish may occur in very high numbers in wadi pools, leaving a bad smell when the pools dry out. Occurs in nearly all wadis on Socotra.



Tadpole Shrimp

Triops cf. granarius

Likely an endemic species. Important control of mosquito larvae. Lives only in large shallow temporary ponds. Appears at the archeological site Eriosh, where a small shallow lake forms after rains. The animals are very special, because they leave resting eggs in dry mud and need only two weeks to become adults when water is added.



Red-rimmed Melania

Melanoides tuberculata

This mollusc is an exotic species, introduced more than a century ago on Socotra. Tolerant to a wide range of salinity conditions and very tolerant to pollution. Common and abundant in wadis on Socotra.



Diving beetles

Dytiscidae

These large beetles are commonly seen on Socotra in both running and standing waters in wadis. They can be quite large, and are very useful predators of small insects such as mosquito larvae. Several diving beetles are endemic to Socotra.



Scarlet Dragonfly

Crocothemis erythraea

This red dragonfly is very common on the island. It is not an endemic, but a native species with wide distribution from Africa to Asia. Typical for both running and standing waters on Socotra. The Scarlet Dragonfly is deep red in color and has a flattened abdomen. They feed on small insects, including mosquitoes. As all dragonflies, the larvae are aquatic.



Epaulet Skimmer

Orthetrum chrysostigma

Common species on Socotra, with light blue body. Also found on mainland Yemen. This species is seen often along wadis such as Ayhaft and Daneghan, sitting on boulders. Dragonflies are very useful animals as they feed on a wide range of small insects, including mosquitoes. As all dragonflies, the larvae are aquatic.

