

Socotra

A Greentours Trip Report

6th – 13th February 2023

Led by Ian Green



Day 1 February 6th Arrival

We'd started our flights the day before and by early on the morning of the 6th were in Aden checking in again for the last section of our journey as the sun rose. This took us across the waters of the Arabian Sea where suddenly a mountainous island rose in front of us out of the sea. The approach to Socotra is spectacular with the crenulated parapets of the Hajhir Mountains rising not far inland of the airport.

The arrivals procedure was straightforward. It took a while to spot our baggage through the throng of people crowding round the rather small belt. We met Ali, our minder and guide for the next week and then headed outside. Now we met our drivers and our 4wds which were to be our steeds for the next week. We headed off to the capital and soon saw evidence of just how amazing the flora is on this island. Between the airport and the town a mountain reaches the sea and the slopes of this, right by the road, were covered in all sorts of botanical wonders! Our first Desert Roses were a spectacular sight and there were some lovely tree euphorbias, *Euphorbia arbuscula*.

Then it was into the capital. In contrast to the lovely slopes we'd been passing the town was an absolute mess and rubbish was everywhere. In places completely covering the ground! We were soon introduced to the local garbage collectors – Egyptian Vultures! These wandered like chickens around the town, and we would become used to them walking around us and even hopping onto the backs of chairs to see what was on the table! We had an excellent fish (very tasty grouper), rice and flatbread lunch in a pleasant little restaurant and sorted out a few practicalities.

Then it was along the coast, our eyes devouring the amazing habitats we were driving through, but we were also tired from a largely sleepless night and the heat. A wadi with water gave us a few

common waterbirds including Red-knobbed Coot – we were a bit surprised later to discover that this is a vagrant to the island. Further on we spotted Black-winged Stilts, Western Reef Heron and an Indian Pond Heron. Driving across the Croton plains Black-crowned Finch Larks were numerous. We stopped by an amazing old Tamarind Tree where we saw Somali Starlings. Then it was up onto the Homhil Plateau via a twisting bumpy track – the drivers did well. Our team was ahead of us and had the camp set up with those lovely ‘Arab’-style tents looking a picture in the imposing landscape.



Once we’d settled into our rather beautiful tents we set off down a water course where the smooth-worn rocks allowed fairly easy walking. There were little pools and some running water. The delightful little gentian relative *Exacum affine* was common in damp spots. Black-winged Stilts were noisy. A Socotra Buzzard sailed overhead. The walk took us eventually to a beautiful ‘infinity’ pool about 10m across and full of cool water. The lip looked all the way down to the sea and there were cliffs and steep slopes either side. Socotra Sparrows were common. The flora was extraordinary. Our first Dragon Trees were scattered across the slope opposite and some not far from the camp. The old man whose land we were camping on had in the past told us that when he was a child the Dragon Trees here were so close together he could clamber from the top of one to the top of another. Not anymore! But still to us they were impressive. Scattered amongst them were Frankincense

Trees. Mostly *Boswellia elongata* with long leaves but also a few *Boswellia socotrana* too. We saw the impressive skipper *Coeliades anchioses* with its striking red and orange marked body and the orange and black Common Joker (the endemic subspecies *Byblis anvatara boydii*). We found our first *Kalanchoe farinosa* just about still in bloom. There were a number of common little *Acanthaceae* such as *Dicliptera effusa* and *Hypoestes pubescens*. Little mounds of *Oldenlandia pulvinata* were a delight, this is a very pretty little *Rubiaceae*. There were also *Indogiferas* flowering. *Asphodelus tenuifolius* surprised us by being native! I had a very pleasant swim in the infinity pool!

As the sun disappeared behind the big ridge we were back at the camp, the cooks hard at work making the evening meal. Another fish dish... we were to eat fish often, but there were so many different ones...



A little night walk gave us a glimpse of life after dark among the dragon trees. There were no less than four species of Gecko and we found two of them amongst the dragon trees. One was the slightly spikey *Hermodactylus inintellectus* – what a damning name! The other was the widespread *Hermodactylus homoeolepis*. Amongst rocks was *Pristurus socotranus* and another member of this genus was unidentified. We found that the papery plates of bark on the *Sterculia* trees each sheltered the large beetle *Malldon arabicum*.

Day 2 February 7th Homhil and to Arher

Breakfast was flat lavaş-style breads with honey and cheese and eggs.

This morning's walk was up the ridge opposite. It was quite a tough hike, the land rocky and steep, and it took us two hours to reach the top, with many stops. We found a rich assortment of rare and fantastical flora. There were wonderful patches of *Kalanchoe farinacea*, only the highest in good flower, and *Aloe perryi* had spike of orange flowers though again only the topmost were in flower. The lack of Aloes in flower probably explained why we only saw three or four of the endemic Socotra Sunbird this morning.

On the cliffs we found the extraordinary 'rock' Frankincense *Boswellia nana*. It really just resembles a chunky little rock with leaves coming out. Its squat little trunk is squeezed into cracks in the low cliffs here never deigning to emerge more than a few centimetres. A totally weird tree! There were another two *Boswellias* up here – *elongata*, and *socotrana* with tiny leaflets. The long-tubed white blooms of *Tamridea capsulifera* grew amongst the rocks early in our walk whilst at the top was the lilac *Barleria aculeata*. On the top of the cliffs was a low scrub of the lovely 'daphne' *Gnidia socotrana* the bright yellow flowers only in bud, orange *Ballochia amoena*, yellow *Barleria tetracantha* and the blue pea *Zygocarpum caeruleum*. Another herbaceous pea with larger violet flowers, *Tephrosia odorata*, was commoner. There were innumerable small beauties such as the weird violet relative *Hybanthus enneaspermus*, yellow *Portulaca quadrifida*, and both delicate *Oldenlandia balfourii* and *Oldenlandia bicornuta*. Unexpected finds included *Habenaria socotrana* in seed and the yellow bulb *Hypoxis angustifolia*.

The shrub *Anisotes diversifolius* had long-lipped curved orange and yellow flowers. Another shrub was the prostrate *Ruellia dioscoridis* with nice white blooms.

Hill-topping butterflies included the Joker, a 'desert Orange-tip and Painted Lady.



Socotra Sparrows were common and so too the Somali Starlings but we saw few birds other than a Socotra Buzzard.

Another strange tree grew right on the highest spot on the ridge. This was *Croton pachycladus*. Its current status is not clear as apparently it was thought that it might just be a form of *Croton socotranus* but it is very clearly different- we even compared them on the way down! It is known only from this ridge and there's probably less than ten trees of this species in the entire world! We found some

amazing specimens of the Cucumber Tree *Dendrosicyos socotrana*. This strange cucurbit has taken water conservation to an extreme having a trunk that looks like a baobab and with a little head of curving leafy branches poking out the top! Some of us had a dip in the infinity pool to cool down on the way back

Fully exercised and by now rather warm we devoured a fine lunch of pasta, rice, stewed vegetables and goat ribs which were very tasty. Our tents had already been packed up and had gone on to the next camp. Driving across the plateau we passed a grove of Frankincense Trees. These were the most widespread species – *Boswellia elongata*. *Boswellias* are a very important genus on the island, not least for their commercial worth which in former times was considerable. They are still harvested for the ‘frankincense’ even today. The essential oils have a strong and very pleasant perfume. These particular ones showed signs of the harvesting.



Just inland of the coastal strip rose a cliff that got higher and higher as we drove. Huge sand dunes had been blown up against the cliff. The white sand pristine for hundreds of metres up to the cliff. Until we looked very closely that is – a few goats grazed on tiny patches of green way up these immense dunes. This is traditionally the camping spot for groups but with other groups here and mosquitoes around the fresh water spring we just made a brief stop to look at a mixed flock of Sooty Gulls, Crested Terns and Heuglin’s Gulls on the beach. Much

lovely *Heliotropium sokotranum* with white and yellow flowers and *Heliotropium pterocarpum* with white flowers and a greenish-yellow centre were on the sand by the road. Offshore we spotted Socotra Cormorant, Osprey and a pod of at least half a dozen Bottle-nosed Dolphins. Then we continued east almost to the farthest tip of the island at Irasel. What an amazing spot! Apart from a couple of buildings housing fishing boats we had the whole place to ourselves (except a kilometre away the journalists camped...). The views back to the dunes and cliffs of Arher were amazing. We soon found that this beach was a good spot for shells. Tiger Cowries and Arabian False Cowries were frequent, many of them in good condition and there was a big range of other shells too. Beach-combing also revealed a dead White-tipped Reef Shark, a dead Loggerhead Turtle and a dead Pufferfish with white lips – may be a fungal infection? Crested Terns, Brown Boobies and Sooty Gulls flew past. A speeding pod of around ten Spinner Dolphins rushed by offshore – my these dolphins can move fast! In the low dunes where we met both *Limonium paulayanum* and *Limonium sokotranum* and lots of *Zygophyllum simplex*.



Dinner under the stars on the beach was sublime!

Day 3 February 8th Irasel Camp, Hoq Cave & Dihamry

Dawn was a great time to experience the pristine beach. Grey Plover, Greenshank and Kentish Plover moved on ahead of us and Swift Terns caroused past just offshore. There were any number of Brown Boobies passing, some quite close, and a flock of Lesser Crested Terns too. Western Reef Heron and Osprey were seen. At 'the point' there were large conch shells and some fine coral rocks. These made great foregrounds of scenic pictures along the beach towards the camp and the rocky promontory beyond with the sun rising behind. In the other direction across the sea were the giant dunes and escarpments of Arher behind.

Breakfast was much enjoyed on the beach and then it was time to pack up and head for our morning rendezvous with Hoq Cave. At the trailhead we got ourselves ready for the walk. Its not hugely long, but it is uphill and at times steep and would take us about two hours to complete. It was already very warm! We ascended gently at first through rather monotonous Croton 'woodland' but soon 'escarpment' diversity kicked in and we admired various trees alongside the path. Some of the *Sterculia africana* were really big, some of the largest trees on the island are here, again they had the large beetle *Mallodon arabicum* hiding underneath loose plates of bark. There were also a number of *Boswellia elongata* and a little further up we saw *Boswellia dioscorides*. This species has waxy blue-green leaves and is always growing out of rock. Which can make it difficult to get close to. We also saw *Commiphora parvifolia*, *Commiphora ornifolia*, *Acacia pennivenia*, *Dirichletia* (was *Carphalea*) *obovata* and the pendulous *Muhaea angolensis*. A lone *Lannea transulta* stood overlooking the blue and turquoise sea below. Socotra Sunbirds and Socotra Sparrows were the main birds. The skipper *Coeliades anchioses* was common as was the Common Joker. Little *Hypoestes pubescens* was common and as we got higher we found the blue form of *Anagallis arvensis*, the delicate pink flowered *Peristrophe paniculata* and lots of *Helichrysum gracilipes* in flower. We saw both blue *Trichodesma microcalyx* and white *Trichodesma laxiflora*. The shiny brown skink *Trachylepis socotranus* was common.



The cave entrance is huge and cascades of *Adiantum balfouri* hung there with the rare *Exacum caeruleum*. Once inside the cave we were transported into a different world. Stalactites and stalagmites vied for our attention, mostly keeping a discreet distance from each other but occasionally un-covid-like proximity was noted, two fine examples actually almost touching. There were sheets and drapes on the walls, minarets and organs on the floor. We wandered deep into the cave – we were in there over an hour. At the farthest point there were pools which reflected the speleological architecture to wonderful affect.

Meanwhile I was outside exploring an area of cliff. Here was *Aerva microphylla*, the strange umbellifer *Rughidia milleri*, and a highlight – the twisted *Boswellia popoviana*. The vine *Dioscorea lanata* trailed through various bushes and trees including the lovely yellow-flowered *Ballochhia*

atro-virgata and the fig *Ficus vasta* with improbably large bright green leaves. *Lavandula ninmoi* and the delicate cerise and black *Geranium biuncinattum* were in flower. A family of Socotra White-eyes were seen and the 'ringlet' *Ypthima asterope* was common.

Then it was along to close to Dihamry for a much-needed lunch. The afternoon was spent snorkelling in the waters offshore of Dihmary. This was truly superb. Fishlife was most evident and in places it was absolutely crazy how many fish there were. There were stunning yellow and blue Yellowtail Tang in the shallows but only a few metres on around a coral head were all sorts of fish. There were swarms of Sweepers. There were large groups of Sohail Surgeonfish and Lined Surgeonfish, sometimes the two species together – hybrids are apparently known from Socotran waters. Butterflyfishes are a delight and there were many species here – Madagascar Butterflyfish, Red-tailed Butterflyfish, the widespread Raccoon Butterflyfish, Rip Butterflyfish, Lined Butterflyfish, and the little African Butterflyfish.



Longbarbel Goatfish fossicked on the sandy bottoms with occasional Picasso Triggerfish. Gorgeous Crowned Tobies hovered about coral heads and Starry Pufferfish floated past. A Hawksbill Turtle came to see what I was doing. In places the water was thick with mixed shoals of black and white Indian Triggerfish, Convict Surgeonfish and Circle-Spine Surgeonfish. There were some impressively large and improbably bright-coloured parrotfishes nibbling away at the reef. Bicolor Parrotfish and



Ember Parrotfish chief among them and probably some others – I always find parrotfish ID a bit of a challenge! There were some impressive Bullethead Parrotfish too. There seemed endless variety of wrasse species – those identified were Barred Thicklip Wrasse, Zigzag Wrasse, Goldbar Wrasse, Moon Wrasse, and the distinctive juvenile forms of Indian Sand Wrasse or Queen Coris. There were shoals of Trevallies most them seemed to be Black Trevally. Pairs of Moorish Idols sailed serenely around and we also saw Yellowtail Triggerfish, Orangespine Unicornfish, Cube Boxfish and Yellowfin Emperor. A Scribbled Filefish cruised past and there were Unicorn Fish too.

At dusk a boat landed and the fisherman sold us four lovely Long-legged Spiny Lobsters to be exact. These were prepared for rightaway for dinner – delicious. And fish too...

Day 4 February 9th Dhamry & to Omeq

Pre-breakfast I wandered over to see what feathers the falcon had left me. There were two species, both from the *Cuculidae*. One was Common Cuckoo and the other was it seems Lesser Cuckoo which if confirmed by DNA analysis (currently ongoing...) is a new bird record for Socotra. Interesting that this particular bird clearly prefers cuckoos. *Capparis cartilaginea*, *Indogifera argentea*, *Convolvulus agrestis* and *Neuracanthus aculeatus* grew on the sandstone outcrops. The usual terns and gulls were offshore and a few Brown Boobies too. There was also a pod of Bottle-nosed Dolphins that came and swam round the snorkeling area. Tania was already on the water and at one point looked like she might meet them but it didn't happen.



After breakfast we took to Dhamry's waters with the snorkels. As yesterday the fish were simply outstanding and other marine life too. Three large Black-spotted Morays were seen very well and there was also a much smaller Honeycomb Morays. The large shoal of Silver Batfish was again present. New fish included Clown Triggerfish, Blue Triggerfish and the lovely Solander's Toby. At least three turtles were seen – Tania went for a leisurely swim with one before breakfast. These were Green Turtles and a Hawksbill Turtle too. I surprised what appeared to be a really huge Octopus as I rounded a rock but it turned out to be two Octopuses (mating?) each octopus hurriedly heading in the opposite direction! There was a subadult Great Barracuda, various Fusiliers including Lunar and Multi-lined, Eyestriped Surgeonfish, Bird Wrasse, lots of Trevallies, and a stunning little Redstripe Fairy Basslet.



Around 11.00 we left the camp and headed south across the island passing the vast Croton plains before heading uphill to rockier terrain dominated by *Adenium obesum*. We stopped to look at some *Caralluma* which had some flowers! The large reddish blooms are really quite something. Also here were *Ruellia insignis*, *Stiga gesneroides*, *Barleria tetraantha* and lovely *Oldenlandia pulverulenta*. Moving on we passed fabulous hillsides covered in the *Adeniums* and *Boswellia elongata*. We stopped for lunch deep into Wadi Jo'ob.



Here the pools in the river were much appreciated and some



of us took to the water. *Trithemis arteriosa* and Emperor Dragonflies perched on waterside rocks and in the water were pretty little *Aphaniops dispar* fish.

Eventually we emerged at sea level on the southern side of the island. This was a different landscape with the arid flatlands interrupted by the occasional village and date palms. Soon we found ourselves in an amazing dune scape. Pure white sand stretching to the coast. It was beautiful. The drivers enjoyed throwing their 4wds onto the top of the dunes and we enjoyed watching them get the one they got stuck out too! Then it was on to our campsite on the beach at Omeq, a long sweeping stretch of sand, stopping to photograph Socotra Grey Shrikes on the way.



We had time to walk along the beach before dusk. It was a wide open beach with almost nobody on it. A Brown Booby caught everyone by surprise as it swopped past various group members on their beach side. It landed and it turned out to be rather ill. Offshore were large groups of smaller terns (White-cheeked?) and more Boobies. Along the shore were Greenshank, Turnstone, Kentish Plover, Common Sandpiper, Whimbrel and Little Stint. A cetacean, somewhat decomposed had been washed up on the beach – I think it was a Bottle-nosed Dolphin. Also washed up were Stellate Pufferfish and Common Porcupinefish! Shells were numerous on the rocky part of shore, also sorts of large species, and there were abundant echinoderms too.

Day 5 February 10th Omeq Beach and to Dixaim & Firmihin

Some went for an early morning dip in the Indian Ocean others walked along the beach. The tide line had sparse reward on the beach but the end section was covered in the dried up remains of Masked Porcupine Fishes (and other species) and plentiful large shells including some huge conches. Sea Urchins were lovely, their delicate shells still perfectly intact in the main. Sanderling, Kentish Plovers, Grey Plovers, Common Sandpipers, Turnstones, Greenshank, two Greater Sandpipers and a Whimbrel or two were on the shore and lots of Socotra Cisticolas in the light scrub of Tamarisk and *Limonium paulayanum* on the dunes. A surprise was an elegant little snake with dark and red-brown

cross bars along its length just at the back of the beach. This was the endemic *Hemerophis socotrae* apparently a relict Gondwana species now only surviving on remote islands.

After another feast of a breakfast we headed across the arid coastal plain stopping to admire a couple of Socotra Grey Shrikes. Quite quickly we were up against the southern escarpment. This stretches along most of the south side of the island separating the limestone inland plateau from the coastal plain. Not particularly high it is nevertheless an important geomorphological feature on the island. We visited Dagub Cave. The cave entrance was quite something with stalactites hanging down like a curtain. These dripping with water. In fact these seepages which occur in a just a few places along the escarpment are home to some of Socotra's rarest plants – here we could see two of them – *Exacum socotranum* (though they looked just the same as *affine* to me!) and *Erythroxyton socotranum*. There were some fine large shrubs of the sea-lavender *Limonium paulayanum* growing on the cliff. Inside the cave a Lesser Mouse-tailed Bat hung from the roof.

Then it was up on the limestone plateau and along to Dixiam crossing a largely bare landscape.



We made a brief stop on said plateau which allowed us to see a rare endemic - a pomegranate! *Punica protopunica*. It even had diminutive fruits. The seemingly barren landscape had an unusual assemblage of plants growing in the canyons one being a large tree of *Ficus vasta*. This and *Ficus cordata* would seem to have their names applied wrongly somehow as it is *vasta* that has the large very cordate leaves. The little fern *Negripteris sciona* was already drying up in the cracks of the limestone. There was a fine tree of *Boswellia ameero* and on some low cliffs the woody *Reseda viridis*. A Bruce's Green Pigeon flew off.

At Dixiam we decided to head straight to the main Dragon Tree forests at Firmihin and our camp there, descending a spectacular and rough road through the canyon and up the other side. We passed *Ochradenus arabica*, a strange broom-like mignonette, and the yellow-flowered composite *Euryops arabica* en route.

Dragon Trees soon appeared and it wasn't long before we were in quite a forest of these amazing trees. Ecologically they are a mist-forest denizen, gaining a significant proportion of their water from the moisture on their leaves each morning. They have a form like an umbrella. They were spread across the hillsides and slopes making a surreal landscape. We relaxed a while or pottered about our camp site before lunch.

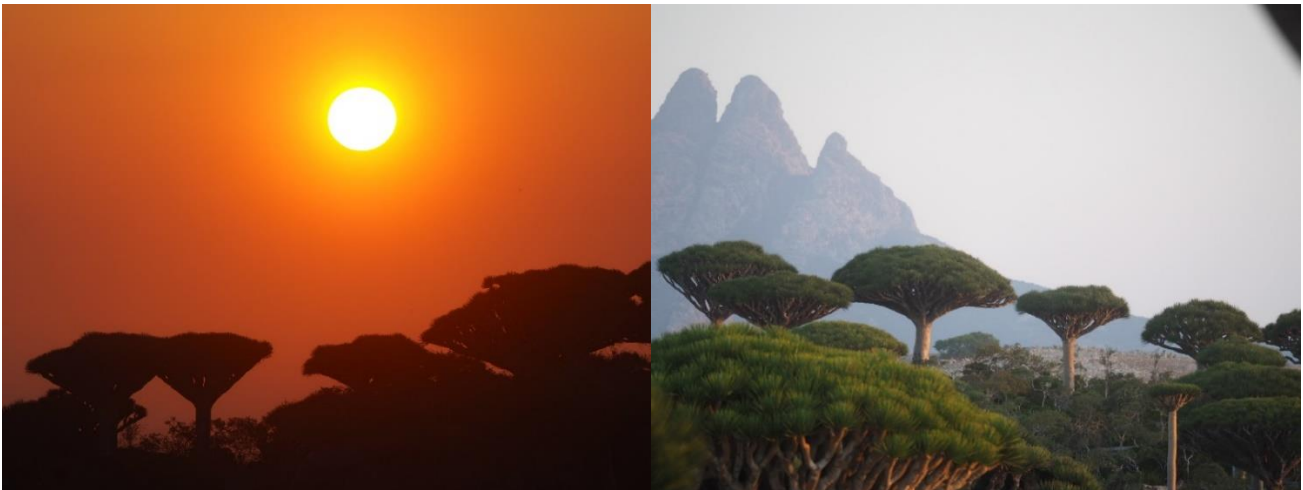
Further relaxation before we took a gentle two hour walk with a local guide through the trees. This was a delight as the sun wandered in and out of clouds as it dropped in the western sky. The guide (recently graduated and learning his English down in Hadibo) showed us how the dragon's blood was harvested. We saw no sign of young trees and were quite concerned about this until we reached areas where there were a good number of teenage trees. There were as usual Somali Starlings but this

time we did manage to see a couple of the endemic Socotra Starlings. Scattered amongst the Dragon Trees were frankincense trees, these *Boswellia dioscorides*, and just a few *Boswellia ameero* – or were they? Miller maintains that the trees that resemble *ameero* at Firmihin are not that species. However he states that they are in the rock-dwelling side of the *Boswellia* family however we noted them growing out of the ground as well as rocks. We encountered small trees such as *Trichocalyx orbicularis* and *Dirichletia* (was *Carphalea*) *obovata*. Stands of *Aloe perryi* mostly didn't have flowers and *Kalanchoe farinacea* was likewise flowerless until we got higher up.

Ali took us on a short walk to a mightily impressive viewpoint not far from the camp. The views over the canyon were amazing. Unfortunately the sun chose the only small cloud in the sky to set behind!

This evening was decidedly cool and we were pleased when the team made a campfire. A great way to enjoy the fabulous night sky where the stars shone so brightly with no discernible light pollution. A short nightwalk (it was too cool!) yielded only the gecko *Hermodactylus homoeolepis*.

Day 6 February 11th Dirhor Canyon and to Qalansiyah



Several of us wandered the surrounding Dragon Tree forest pre-dawn trying to find the right spot to capture the rising sun through the geometric trees. It was a clear morning and I reckon a great many photos were obtained! Amongst the trees we spotted the rarer starling, the Socotra Starling, as well as several Socotra White-eyes and a family of Socotra Warblers. On some cliffs an interesting flora included two *Hypericums*, *balfouri* and *tortuosum*, the lovely *Ruellia insignis* and hanging veils of *Plocama puberula*.

After a tasty and much appreciated breakfast we were off driving back down through the forest. We stopped first to look for *Edithcolea* which we duly found however we couldn't find any in flower, only some in seed. Again cliffs proved productive with some fine plants of *Reseda viridis* and the lovely tree *Acridocarpus socotranus* with racemes of yellow flowers.

Then it was down into the Dirhor Canyon that separates Firmihin from Dixaim. This has water in it much of the year and there were plenty of pools. Several of us took a dip in the cool waters. There

were a few Bruce's Green Pigeons around (these only as we got back to the vehicles though!) and a



couple of parties of Socotra White-eyes. The flora was interesting with some fine plants. *Cryptolepis socotrana* formed small trees on the gorge walls. We were searching for something else though. The Bottle Fig. Superficially similar to the widespread Desert Rose. We observed Desert Rose after Desert Rose until finally Jörg spotted them growing high on the cliff above us. The very first one found was actually in flower. *Pulicaria vieraoides* was the chasmophytic yellow *Asteraceae* on the gorge walls.

Driving up the far side of the gorge we stopped for the strange mignonette relative *Ochradenus socotranus*.

Now we descended from the highlands to the north coast.



Then it was along to Qalansiyah. This is the Socotra's second largest settlement which is to say, a big-ish village. By the village is a hill. And behind it... a stunning landscape of white sands, lagoon and cliffs. What a setting. The camp was placed at the back of the lagoon which was almost a kilometre across. Great expanses of white sand spread around and behind it, the eastern edge a high cliff/mountain. We enjoyed a late lunch and spent the afternoon exploring the area or swimming down by the sea. The lagoon had



plenty of Western Reef Egrets as well as Grey Herons. There were Curlews and Whimbrels, the latter in some numbers. A group of Black-winged Stilts was seen, and some Greenshank too. An Osprey worried the gulls. Offshore were Crested Terns and over the lagoon a Caspian Tern. A group of three Masked Boobies flew past. *Boswellia bullata*, *Lachnocapsa spathulata* *Camptoloma lyperiifolium* and *Aloe jawiyon* all grew on the steep slopes to the east of the lagoon.

Day 7 February 12th Shoab



Just after dawn there were at least twenty Slender-billed Gulls on the lagoon below the tents. After an early breakfast we headed straight to Qalansiyah village to catch our boat to Shoab. There were many little boats lined up on the shore and chaotic crowd of fishermen and children welcomed us. However we were soon in our boats and motoring smoothly (there was a decent swell though) out into the bay. It didn't take long to spot the first dolphins! This was a large pod of Spinner Dolphins. They coursed through the water right by the boat at times and at others launched themselves into their trademark aerial spins. The problem was to try and catch that in your camera. Some managed...

After playing with them for a little we headed west towards Shoab, passing a rather more sedate group of Spinner Dolphins as we went. This took us along a spectacular stretch of coast. The mountains inland reaching right to the sea in some impressive cliffs. We found Red-billed Tropicbirds sailing high over the water here. There were at least twenty of them favouring one particular high and rugged cliff. It looked like they were probably nesting on the almost vertical mountainsides. It was a beautiful sight seeing them sailing above us – some of them even seemed to have a turquoise hue to their white undersides presumably reflecting the colour of the water? Later I found feathers of this species on the beach.

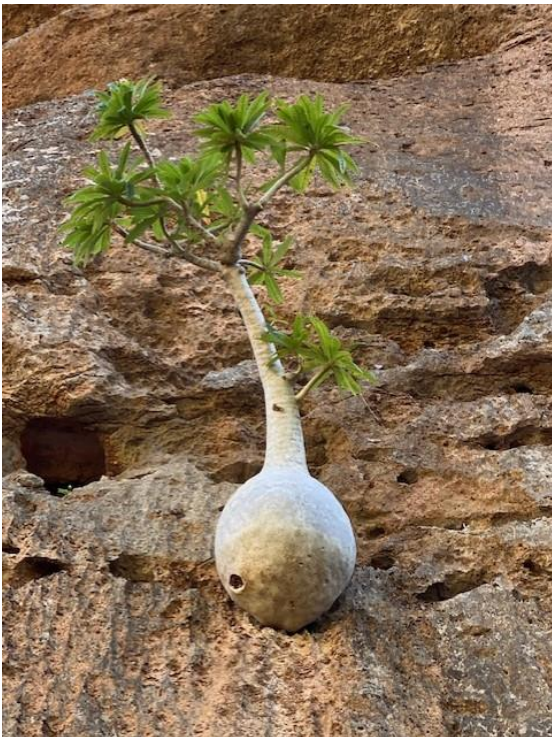


A few Socotra Cormorants perched on several tiny islets that had abundant Lesser Crested Terns and Sooty Gulls. One had a pair of Brown Boobies too. One rock in the sea gave most of us our first views of yet another Frankincense *Boswellia bullata*.

Eventually we landed at Shoab. A spectacular location with a lovely beach backed by a little mangrove and behind those mountains and more mountains. Shoab lies right at the western tip of Socotra. Dried pufferfish littered the back

of the beach. This was a common theme around the island's beaches and is apparently a regular phenomenon. But we found no explanation as to why this happens! There was an interesting flora in the sand areas by the mangroves with lots of *Chenopodiaceae* such as *Atriplex stocksii*, *Anthrocnemum macrostachyum* and the spikey *Cornulaca ehrenbergii*. There was also the local endemic *Heliotropium shoabense* and a truly tough Acacia – *Vachellia oerfota*. Most took a swim and did a little beach combing. Our boat journey back featured rather more lively seas than the lovely calm ocean on the way out!

Then it was back to Qalansiyah. There were Red-knobbed Coots and Indian Pond Herons in the little wetland behind the boats. Then it was back for an early lunch by the lagoon.



We stopped en route to meet *Boswellia socotrana* subspecies *argentea* and then it was time to head to our last port of call, Wadi Ayaft. This is one of the most diverse botanical sites on the island and there seemed to be a different tree every corner we turned. The wadi is also exceptionally beautiful with cliffs on high and the slopes below with giant tumbled boulder sheltering all sorts of goodies. And all the time, the jagged peaks of the Hajhir at the end of the valley. It was noisy with Laughing Doves and Socotra Sparrows, and two Socotra Buzzards were also pretty lively. Green Carpenter Bees and large beetles flew about. There were some truly large *Sterculia africana* and also fine trees of *Lanaea trisulca*. Rocks had much *Boswellia popoviana* and we also saw the *socotrana* form of *Boswellia socotrana* and *Boswellia elongata* too! *Commiphoras* were represented by *ornifolia*, *parviflora* and *socotrana*. *Cordia obtusa*, a *Boraginacean* tree was in orange fruit. On the big rocks we started to find

many bottle-figs *Dorsteinia gigas*, indeed the high cliffs above had huge numbers of these strange plants. The scrambling vine *Vincetoxicum linifolium* had tiny brown flowers, the equally twining *Cryptolepis volubilis* had yellow flowers with elongated petals. There were little ferns like *Actiniopteris semiflabellata* and *Negripteris sciona*. A *Resedacean* had us scratching our heads. *Leucas spiculifolia* flowered on rocks and there was a *Withania*, and a bellflower, *Campanula balfourii* too. *Cissus paniculata* trailed over *Cissus subaphylla* showing just how different two plants of the same genus could look. We also noted butterflies such as the Joker, Plain Tiger and the skipper *Coeliades anchises* before heading back down as the sun sank in the western sky.

And then to our last campsite east of the capital. En route some spent a little time in the town, either visiting shops for specific purchases or just wandering round the market.

The last dinner featured both a tasty fish and lobster!

Day 8 February 13th Departure

We had time for a relaxed breakfast above the beach before heading into town and brief look at a local nursery. Here they are growing various *Boswellias* with a view to reintroducing them in appropriate spots around the island. They also have many young dragon trees here, the oldest perhaps twenty years. It was great to see so many youngsters!

Then it was along to the airport where check-in etc was perhaps less chaotic that we might have imagined and we were soon on our way over the Arabian Sea where we landed in scenic Aden – what a position this city is in! Geographically I mean....

Systematic List Number 1

Flora

A big thankyou to Heinz Kloser and Kok van Herk for their immense contributions to the following list. There are still some question marks perhaps for future visits to elucidate. Species in [square brackets] not seen in 2023.

<i>[Angkalanthus oligophylla]</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon. Beautiful species with hanging orange and yellow pea flowers. Rare]
<i>Anisotes diversifolius</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Avicennia marina</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	behind Shoab beach
<i>Ballochia amoena</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Ballochia atrovirgata</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Ballochia rotundifolia</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Homhil and Wadi Ayaft
<i>[Barleria aculeata]</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	gorgeous purple flowers. Homhil]
<i>Barleria tetraantha</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	scattered throughout
<i>Dicliptera effusa</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Dicliptera paniculata</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Hypoestes pubescens</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Justicia rigida</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Dihamry
<i>Neuracanthus aculeatus</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Dihamry
<i>Peristrophe paniculata</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Rhinacanthus scoparius</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Ruellia dioscoridis</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Ruellia insignis</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon, Wadi Ayaft
<i>Ruellia patula</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Ruellia paulayana</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Jo'oh
<i>Trichocalyx obovatus</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Homhil and Wadi Ayaft
<i>Trichocalyx orbiculatus</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	central hills
<i>Actinopterys semiflabellata</i>	<i>Actinopterydaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Adiantum balfourii</i>	<i>Adiantaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>	<i>Adiantaceae</i>	Hoq Cave and Dirhor
<i>Negripteris sciona</i>	<i>Adiantaceae</i>	Dirhor
<i>Aizoon canariense</i>	<i>Aizoaceae</i>	Dihamry
<i>Achyranthes aspera</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Aerva javanica</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	throughout
<i>Aerva lanata</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Aerva microphylla</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	cliffs – Homhil, Hoq Cave
<i>Arthrocaulon macrostachyum</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	Shoab
<i>Psilotrichum aphyllum</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	Dagub cave
<i>Ledebouria grandiflora</i>	<i>Amaryllidaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Lannea transulta</i>	<i>Anacardiaceae</i>	throughout
<i>Searsia thyrsofolia</i>	<i>Anacardiaceae</i>	Homhil, Firmihin etc
<i>Rughidia milleri</i>	<i>Apiaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Trachyspermum pimpinelloides</i>	<i>Apiaceae</i>	frequent in the north

<i>Adenium obesum</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Desert Rose. Widespread and sometimes dominant. Some reach exceptional proportions not seen in the East African populations
<i>Calotropis procera</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	coastal areas
<i>Caralluma socotrana</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	reasonably frequent in leaf and with one nice population in flower as we travelled south from Dihamry
<i>Cryptolepis macrophylla</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Dirhor
<i>Cryptolepis socotrana</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Hoq Cave and Firmihin
<i>Cryptolepis volubilis</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Edithcolea grandis</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	plants seen at Firmihin but none in flower this year
<i>[Pergularia tomentosa</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Homhil]
<i>Secamone cuneifolia</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	south of Dihamry
<i>Secamone socotranus</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Homhil, Burkatin
<i>Vincetoxicum linifolium</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Asparagus africanus</i>	<i>Asparagaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Dipcadi balfourii</i>	<i>Asparagaceae</i>	Hoq Cave entrance
<i>Dracaena cinnabari</i>	<i>Asparagaceae</i>	scattered throughout the interior above about 400m but locally dominant in areas, especially at Firmihin
<i>Ledebouria grandiflora</i>	<i>Asparagaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Aloe jawiyon</i>	<i>Asphodelaceae</i>	cliffs inland of Qalansiyah
<i>Aloe perryi</i>	<i>Asphodelaceae</i>	widespread – in good flower
<i>Asphodelus tenuifolius</i>	<i>Asphodelaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	widespread
<i>Bidens biternata</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	scattered
<i>Euryops arabicus</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Dixaim, Firmihin, Qalansiyah
<i>Helichrysum arachnoides</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Helichrysum balfourii</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Omeq
<i>Helichrysum</i> sp B	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Hoq Cave. B as shown in the ethnoflora!
<i>Launaea crepoides</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	campsite at Firmihin
<i>Launaea massauensis</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Dihamry
<i>Libinhania gracilipes</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	widespread in the north
<i>Pulicaria diversifolia</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	widespread
<i>[Pulicaria elegans</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon]
<i>Pulicaria stephanocarpa</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	coastal plains in the north
<i>Pulicaria vieraoides</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon
<i>Reichardia tingitana</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	scattered
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	scattered
<i>Vernonia cockburniana</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Firmihin, Wadi Ayaft
<i>Vernonia unicata</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Volutaria lippii</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Cordia obtusa</i>	<i>Boraginaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Cystostemon socotranus</i>	<i>Boraginaceae</i>	Homhil

<i>Heliotropium aegyptiacum</i>	Boraginaceae	Hoq Cave
<i>Heliotropium balfourii</i>	Boraginaceae	scattered
<i>Heliotropium ovalifolium</i>	Boraginaceae	Hoq Cave
<i>Heliotropium nigricans</i>	Boraginaceae	Firmihin
<i>Heliotropium pterocarpum</i>	Boraginaceae	Arher
<i>Heliotropium shoabense</i>	Boraginaceae	Shoab!
<i>Heliotropium sokotranum</i>	Boraginaceae	Arher & Irasel, also Qalansiyah lagoon area
<i>Heliotropium strigosum</i>	Boraginaceae	Omeq
<i>Trichodesma laxiflorum</i>	Boraginaceae	Homhil, Dixaim Plateau
<i>Trichodesma microcalyx</i>	Boraginaceae	Hoq Cave
<i>Diceratella incana</i>	Brassicaceae	Homhil
<i>Erucastrum rostratum</i>	Brassicaceae	scattered in the hills
<i>Farsetia socotrana</i>	Brassicaceae	Homhil
<i>Lachnocapsa spathulata</i>	Brassicaceae	slopes behind Qalansiyah lagoon
<i>Boswellia ameero</i>	Burseraceae	Dixaim and Firmihin
<i>Boswellia bullata</i>	Burseraceae	Qalansiyah and Shoab
<i>Boswellia dioscoridis</i>	Burseraceae	widespread in centre and northeast
<i>Boswellia elongata</i>	Burseraceae	widespread
<i>Boswellia nana</i>	Burseraceae	only found on cliffs above Homhil
<i>Boswellia popoviana</i>	Burseraceae	Hoq Cave and Wadi Ayaft
<i>Boswellia socotrana</i>	Burseraceae	subspecies <i>socotrana</i> with green leaves at Homhil and Hoq Cave, subspecies <i>aspleniifolia</i> in the plains by the coast west of Qalansiyah
<i>Commiphora ornifolia</i>	Burseraceae	scattered throughout
<i>Commiphora parvifolia</i>	Burseraceae	scattered throughout
<i>Commiphora planifrons</i>	Burseraceae	Homhil
<i>Commiphora socotrana</i>	Burseraceae	Homhil, Wadi Ayaft
<i>Buxus hildebrandtii</i>	Buxaceae	widespread and locally abundant
<i>Campanula balfouri</i>	Campanulaceae	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Capparis cartilaginea</i>	Capparaceae	widespread
<i>Cleome brachycarpa</i>	Capparaceae	Homhil, Arher
<i>Cleome</i> sp	Capparaceae	scattered – didn't ID to species
<i>Maerua angolensis</i>	Capparaceae	frequent along northeast part of the Island
<i>Haya obovata</i>	Caryophyllaceae	scattered
<i>Polycarpaea balfourii</i>	Caryophyllaceae	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Polycarpaea caespitosa</i>	Caryophyllaceae	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Polycarpaea kuriensis</i>	Caryophyllaceae	Qalansiyah
<i>Polycarpaea paulayana</i>	Caryophyllaceae	Hoq Cave entrance
<i>Polycarpaea spicata</i>	Caryophyllaceae	Qalansiyah
<i>Anthrocnemum macrostachyum</i>	Chenopodiaceae	behind Shoab beach
<i>Atriplex farinosa</i>	Chenopodiaceae	Homhil
<i>Atriplex stocksii</i>	Chenopodiaceae	behind Shoab beach
<i>Chenopodium murale</i>	Chenopodiaceae	Hoq Cave
<i>Cornulaca ehrenbergii</i>	Chenopodiaceae	behind Shoab beach
<i>Salsola spinescens</i>	Chenopodiaceae	Dihamry

<i>Suaeda monoica</i>	<i>Chenopodiaceae</i>	behind Shoab beach
<i>Commelina albescens</i>	<i>Commelinaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Commelina forskaoleii</i>	<i>Commelinaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Convolvulus agrestis</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	Jo'oh
<i>Convolvulus grantii</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	Firmihin campsite
[<i>Convolvulus hildebrandtii</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	scattered]
<i>Convolvulus sarmentosus</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Convolvulus siculus</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Dichondra repens</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Evolvulus alsinoides</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	Dixiam Plateau
<i>Ipomoea sinensis</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Kalanchoe farinacea</i>	<i>Crassulaceae</i>	scattered throughout in hills
<i>Kalanchoe robusta</i>	<i>Crassulaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Citrullus colocynthis</i>	<i>Cucurbitaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Citrullus prophetarum</i>	<i>Cucurbitaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Cucumis dipsaceus</i>	<i>Cucurbitaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Dendrosicyos socotrana</i>	<i>Cucurbitaceae</i>	scattered throughout
<i>Eureiandra balfourii</i>	<i>Cucurbitaceae</i>	Firmihin, Wadi Ayaft
<i>Cuscuta</i> sp	<i>Cuscutaceae</i>	scattered – chinensis or kuriensis?
<i>Cuscuta planiflora</i>	<i>Cuscutaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Eleocharis caduca</i>	<i>Cyperaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Dioscorea lanata</i>	<i>Dioscoraceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Euclea divinorum</i>	<i>Ebenaceae</i>	Hoq Cave and central hills
<i>Erythroxyllum socotranum</i>	<i>Erythroxyllaceae</i>	Extreme rarity. On seeps on cliffs by Dagub Cave
<i>Acalypha indica</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Cephalocroton socotranus</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Croton pachycladus</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	ridge above Homhil. If as seems likely it's a good species then one of the rarest trees in the World!
<i>Croton sarocarpus</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	Dixiam Plateau
<i>Croton socotranus</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Croton sulcifructus</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	Firmihin and Dirhor
<i>Euphorbia arbuscula</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	locally frequent
<i>Euphorbia schimperi</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	locally frequent
<i>Euphorbia schweinfurthii</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	locally frequent
<i>Euphorbia socotrana</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	stunning tree with rather beautiful flowers. Homhil and Wadi Ayaft
<i>Euphorbia spiralis</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	locally frequent
<i>Jatropha unicostata</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	locally dominant
<i>Tragia balfourii</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	ridge above Homhil
<i>Acacia pennivenia</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	scattered throughout
<i>Crotalaria strigulosa</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Homhil campsite
<i>Indigofera argentea</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	frequent in the north
[<i>Indigofera oblongifolia</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Firmihin]
<i>Indigofera nephrocarpa</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	inland hills
<i>Indigofera pseudointricata</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	scattered
[<i>Indigofera sokotrana</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Hoq Cave]

<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Lotus mollis</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	inland hills
<i>Lotus ononopsis</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Lotus schimperi</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Qalansiyah, Shoab
[<i>Paracalyx balfourii</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Hoq Cave]
<i>Prosopis juliflora</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Digor Canyon - origin?
<i>Senna alexandrina</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Senna holoserica</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Homhil, Dihamry
<i>Senna hookeriana</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Burkatin
<i>Senna italica</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Senna obtusifolia</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Homhil, Wadi Ayaft
<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	en route to Homhil, also Wadi Ayaft
<i>Tephrosia apollinea</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Tephrosia odorata</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Dixaim Plateau
<i>Vachellia oerfota</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Shoab
<i>Zygodarpum coeruleum</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	ridge above Homhil, Jo'oh
<i>Dovyalis abyssinica</i>	<i>Flacourtiaceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Exacum affine</i>	<i>Gentianaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Exacum socotranum</i>	<i>Gentianaceae</i>	there was some debate whether we really saw this species. The plants in question were on the wet seeps at Digor Cave and in the entrance to the Hoq Cave. Maybe just a form of <i>affine</i> ?
<i>Geranium biuncinatum</i>	<i>Geraniaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Hypericum balfourii</i>	<i>Guttiferae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Hypericum tortuosum</i>	<i>Guttiferae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Hypoxis angustifolia</i>	<i>Hypoxidaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Lavandula nimmoi</i>	<i>Lamiaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Leucas kischenensis</i>	<i>Lamiaceae</i>	inland hills
<i>Leucas martinicensis</i>	<i>Lamiaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Leucas spiculifolia</i>	<i>Lamiaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Leucas virgata</i>	<i>Lamiaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Teucrium sokotranum</i>	<i>Lamiaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Corbichonia decumbens</i>	<i>Lophiocarpaceae</i>	Hasalnah- the wadi we went through to the south of the island
<i>Acridocarpus socotranus</i>	<i>Malphigiaceae</i>	Firmihin, Wadi Ayaft
<i>Corchorus depressus</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Dihamry
<i>Corchorus erodioides</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	looks more like a dandelion than a mallow! Scattered
[<i>Hibiscus diriffan</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon, Dixiam]
<i>Hibiscus micranthus</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Homhil
[<i>Hibiscus scottii</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Wadi Kalisan]
[<i>Hibiscus stenanthus</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Homhil]
[<i>Turraea socotrana</i>	<i>Meliaceae</i>	Hoq Cave]
<i>Dorstenia gigas</i>	<i>Moraceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon and more frequent, Wadi Ayaft
<i>Ficus cordata</i>	<i>Moraceae</i>	widespread. Generally shrubby

<i>Ficus vasta</i>	<i>Moraceae</i>	uncommon. Hoq Cave, Dixaim. Large cordate leaves. A large tree
<i>Boerhavia boissieri</i>	<i>Nyctaginaceae</i>	Homhil, Dixaim, Qalansiyah area
<i>Boerhavia heimerlii</i>	<i>Nyctaginaceae</i>	Homhil, Dixaim, Qalansiyah area
<i>Boerhavia simonyi</i>	<i>Nyctaginaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Boerhavia</i> sp	<i>Nyctaginaceae</i>	mystery prostrate one Dirhor Canyon – maybe this was <i>Corbichonia decumbens</i> above?
<i>Habenaria socotrana</i>	<i>Orchidaceae</i>	Homhil – leaves only
<i>Eulophia petersii</i>	<i>Orchidaceae</i>	Digor Canyon – leaves only
[<i>Cistanche phelypaea</i>	<i>Orobanchaceae</i>	Arher Dunes]
<i>Striga gesneroides</i>	<i>Orobanchaceae</i>	south of Dihamry
<i>Oxalis corniculata</i>	<i>Oxalidaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	<i>Palmae</i>	widespread – cultivated
<i>Argemone mexicana</i>	<i>Papaveraceae</i>	scattered – naturalized
<i>Bacopa monnieri</i>	<i>Plantaginaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Campylanthus spinosus</i>	<i>Plantaginaceae</i>	pretty lilac-pink dome. Dirhor canyon
<i>Lindenbergia sokotrana</i>	<i>Plantaginaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Plantago amplexicaulis</i>	<i>Plantaginaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Plantago ovata</i>	<i>Plantaginaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Poskea socotrana</i>	<i>Plantaginaceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Limonium paulayanum</i>	<i>Plumbaginaceae</i>	coasts
<i>Limonium sokotranum</i>	<i>Plumbaginaceae</i>	coasts, and in a more woody form on inland cliffs
<i>Aristada adscensionis</i>	<i>Poaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Cenchrus ciliaris</i>	<i>Poaceae</i>	Firmihin campsite
<i>Cenchrus pennisetiformis</i>	<i>Poaceae</i>	Dihamry
<i>Urochondra setulosa</i>	<i>Poaceae</i>	Dihamry
<i>Portulaca quadrifida</i>	<i>Portulacaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	<i>Primulaceae</i>	blue form. Here and there...
<i>Hemionitis cuspidata</i>	<i>Pteridaceae</i>	Dixaim Plateau
<i>Punica protopunica</i>	<i>Punicaceae</i>	Dixaim Plateau
<i>Ochradenus socotranus</i>	<i>Resedaceae</i>	central hills
<i>Reseda viridis</i>	<i>Resedaceae</i>	A woody mignonette! Firmihin, Digor and Wadi Ayaft
?????	<i>Resedaceae</i>	mystery plant with 5 leaflets in Wadi Ayaft
<i>Ziziphus spina-christi</i>	<i>Rhamnaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Diodia aulacosperma</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	Hoq Cave path -about half way up was <i>Carphalea obovata</i> . Widespread
<i>Dirichletia obovata</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Dirichletia virgata</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	scattered
[<i>Kohautia socotrana</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	Firmihin]
<i>Kohautia subverticillata</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	Digor
<i>Kraussia socotrana</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Oldenlandia balfourii</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	scattered throughout
<i>Oldenlandia bicornuta</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Oldenlandia pulvinata</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	common in the north
<i>Plocama puberula</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	on rocks, Firmihin

<i>Tamridaea capsulifera</i>	Rubiaceae	Homhil and Hoq Cave
<i>Dovyalis abyssinica</i>	Salicaceae	Dixiam Plateau
<i>Allophylus rubifolius</i>	Sapindaceae	Dirhor and Qalansiyah area
<i>Camptoloma lyperiiflorum</i>	Scrophulariaceae	little white flowers, glandular hair leaves, rock crevices Qalansiyah and Shoab
<i>Lindenbergia sokotrana</i>	Scrophulariaceae	scattered throughout
<i>Scrophularia arguta</i>	Scrophulariaceae	Hoq Cave
<i>Datrua fastuosa</i>	Solanaceae	Digor Canyon
<i>Lycium sokotranum</i>	Solanaceae	Hoq Cave, inland hills
<i>Solanum incanum</i>	Solanaceae	widespread
<i>Solanum villosum</i>	Solanaceae	scattered
<i>Withania riebeckii</i>	Solanaceae	scattered
<i>Sterculia africana</i>	Sterculiaceae	scattered throughout, particularly common Homhil and Wadi Ahaft
<i>Tamarix aphylla</i>	Tamaricaceae	Shoab
<i>Tamarix arborea</i>	Tamaricaceae	Heinz records this from Arher though the ethnoflora treats records of arborea as <i>nilotica</i> ?
<i>Tamarix nilotica</i>	Tamaricaceae	scattered on coasts
<i>Gnidia socotrana</i>	Thymelaeaceae	Homhil and Wadi Ayaft
<i>Grewia mansouria</i>	Tiliaceae	Firmihin
<i>Forsskaolea viridis</i>	Urticaceae	Dagub Cave
<i>Priva socotrana</i>	Verbenaceae	scattered
<i>Afrohybanthus ennaespermus</i>	Violaceae	Homhil and Hoq Cave
<i>Cissus hamaderohensis</i>	Vitaceae	widespread at Homhil and Dixaim
<i>Cissus paniculata</i>	Vitaceae	Digor and Wadi Ayaft
<i>Cissus subaphylla</i>	Vitaceae	widespread at low altitudes
<i>Fagonia bruguieri</i>	Zygophyllaceae	or <i>Fagonia paulayana</i> or both?
<i>Fagonia luntii</i>	Zygophyllaceae	south of Dihamry
<i>Tetraena simplex</i>	Zygophyllaceae	Irasel Beach and Shoab Beach
<i>Zygophyllum qatarense</i>	Zygophyllaceae	Qalansiyah lagoon

Systematic List Number 2

Birds

Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	the falcon at Dihamry had plucked one!
Lesser Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus poliocephalus</i>	the falcon at Dihamry had plucked one! If confirmed (waiting for the results from DNA analysis) this will be the first record for Socotra
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Qalansiyah
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Very common and widespread
Bruce's Green Pigeon	<i>Treron waalia</i>	Several flocks in Firmihin and Dixaim
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>	Qalansiyah area on two days
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	wetlands throughout
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	scattered
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	scattered
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	beaches throughout
Greater Sandplover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	just 2 at Omeq
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	scattered throughout
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	frequent at Qalansiyah Lagoon
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	scattered along coasts
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	1 Omeq Beach
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	1 Omeq Beach
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Scattered on coasts
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	mainly wadis
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Scattered along coasts and wadis
Sooty Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus hemprichii</i>	Large flocks along north coast mixing with the next species, less common on south coast
Heuglin's Gull	<i>Larus heuglini</i>	Large flocks along sandy shores
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	Heinz records it not sure where?
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Irasel Beach
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	1 at Qalansiyah Lagoon
Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	abundant along all shores
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>	much less common than previous species except at Shoab where common
Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	c.20 along the cliffs between Qalansiyah and Shoab looked like they must be breeding. Also 1 off of Dihamry
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>	3 off Qalansiyah
Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>	Occasional birds on all coasts
Socotra Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax nigrogularis</i>	scattered and occasionally frequent (e.g. off Qalansiyah Lagoon) along shores
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	1 east of Haribu and 3 at Qalansiyah
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	1 at Qalansiyah Lagoon
Western Reef Heron	<i>Egretta gularis</i>	Common and widespread around the coast
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	widespread in low numbers
Western Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	1 east of Haribu
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	scattered
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Abundant and ever present in the sky

Socotra Buzzard	<i>Buteo socotranus</i>	1 or 2 seen most days
Socotra Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor uncinatus</i>	scattered throughout
Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	scattered
Black-crowned Finch Lark	<i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>	common in open dry areas
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Heinz saw some Qalansiyah
Pale Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne obsoleta</i>	2 in Daerhu Wadi
Socotra Warbler	<i>Incana incana</i>	only noted Dixaim
Socotra Cisticola	<i>Cisticola haesitata</i>	scattered at low altitudes
White-breasted White-eye	<i>Zosterops abyssinica</i>	scattered throughout
Socotra Starling	<i>Onychognathus frater</i>	Dixiam and Firmihin. Notably shy
Somali Starling	<i>Onychognathus blythii</i>	Very common and widespread
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	scattered
Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maura</i>	Heinz records this species
Socotra Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia balfouri</i>	widespread
Socotra Sparrow	<i>Passer insularis</i>	abundant
Long-billed Pipit	<i>Anthus similes</i>	local in dry areas
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza tahapsi</i>	1 Homhil

Systematic List Number 3 Marine

The majority of the following were recorded at Dihamry.

Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella longirostris</i> – a few Irasel and Dihamry, many off Qalansiyah
Bottle-nosed Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> – a few Irasel and Dihamry
Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i> – at least three at Dihamry
Loggerhead Turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i> – a dead one
Olive Ridley Turtle	<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i> – a dead one
Hawksbill Turtle	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i> – at least two at Dihamry
White-tipped Reef Shark	<i>Triaenodon obesus</i>
Valenciennes Halfbeak	<i>Hyporhamphus limbatus</i>
Honeycomb Moray	<i>Gymnothorax favagineus</i>
Geometric Moray	<i>Gymnothorax griseus</i>
Barred Moray	<i>Echidna polyzona</i>
Mullet sp	<i>Crenimugil pedaraki</i> (dead on the beach - Heinz)
White-tipped Soldierfish	<i>Myripristis vittata</i>
Pinecone Soldierfish	<i>Myripristis murdjan</i>
Crown Squirrelfish	<i>Sargocentron diadema</i>
Trumpetfish	<i>Aulostomus chinensis</i>
Cornetfish	<i>Fistularia commersonii</i>
Peacock Grouper	<i>Cephalopholis argus</i>
Smooth Grouper	<i>Dermatolepis striolatus</i>
Redstripe Fairy Basslet	<i>Pseudanthias fasciatus</i>
Two-bar Seabream	<i>Acanthopagrus bifasciatus</i>
Blackspotted Sweetlips	<i>Plectorhinchus gaterinus</i>
Silver Sweetlips	<i>Diagramma punctatum</i>
Yellowfin Emperor	<i>Lethrinus erythracanthus</i>
	<i>Lethrinus crocineus</i>
Silver Batfish	<i>Monodactylus argenteus</i>
Lunar Fusilier	<i>Caesio lunaris</i>
Multi-lined Fusilier	<i>Caesio varilineata</i>
Yellowsaddle Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus cyclostomus</i>
Round-spot Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus pleurostigma</i>
Doublebar Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus bifasciatus</i>
Longbarbel Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus macronema</i>
Yellowfin Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus vanicolensis</i>
Emperor Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus imperator</i>
Trapeze Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus rhomboides</i>
Koran Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus semicirculatus</i> (probable...)
Longfin Bannerfish	<i>Heniochus acuminatus</i>
Madagascar Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon madagaskariensis</i>
Red-tailed Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon collare</i>
Raccoon Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon lunula</i>
Rip Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon trifasciatus</i>
Lined Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon lineolatus</i>

African Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon dolosus</i>
Threadfin Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon auriga</i>
Arabian Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon melapterus</i>
Vagabond Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon vagabundus</i>
Teardrop Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon unimaculatus</i>
Cave Sweeper	<i>Pempheris vanicolensis</i>
Vanderbilt's Puller	<i>Chromis vanderbilti</i>
Scissortail Sergeant	<i>Abudefduf sexfasciatus</i>
Blue-yellow Damsel	<i>Pomacentrus caeruleus</i>
Saddleback Hogfish	<i>Bodianus bilunulatus</i>
Indian Sand Wrasse (Queen Coris)	<i>Coris frerei</i>
Clown Sand Wrasse	<i>Coris aygula</i>
Sixbar Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma hardwicke</i>
Goldbar Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma hebraicum</i>
Moon Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma lunare</i>
Bird Wrasse	<i>Gomphosus varius</i>
Zigzag Wrasse	<i>Halichoeres scapularis</i>
Barred Thicklip Wrasse	<i>Hemigymnus fasciatus</i>
Bicolor Cleaner Wrasse	<i>Labroides bicolor</i>
Common Cleaner Wrasse	<i>Labroides dimidiatus</i>
Bullethead Parrotfish	<i>Scarus sordidus</i>
Indian Parrotfish	<i>Scarus strongylocphalus</i>
Ember Parrotfish	<i>Scarus rubroviolaceus</i>
Bicolor Parrotfish	<i>Cetoscarus bicolor</i>
Fringelip Mullet	<i>Crenimugil crenilabis</i>
Eyestripe Surgeofish	<i>Acanthurus dussumieri</i>
Pale-lipped Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus leucocheilos</i>
Circled Spine Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus tennentii</i>
Convict Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus triostegus</i>
Lined Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus lineatus</i>
Sohail Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus sohai</i>
Striped Bristletooth	<i>Ctenochaetus striatus</i>
Humpback Unicornfish	<i>Naso brachycentron</i>
Orangespine Unicornfish	<i>Naso elegans</i>
Bluespine Unicornfish	<i>Naso unicornis</i>
Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>
Yellowtail Tang	<i>Zebrosoma xanthurum</i>
Black Trevally	<i>Caranx lugubris</i>
Rainbow Runner	<i>Elagatis bipinnulata</i>
Clown Triggerfish	<i>Balistoides conspicillum</i>
Blue Triggerfish	<i>Pseudobalistes fuscus</i>
Yellowtail Triggerfish	<i>Balistapus undulatus</i>
Indian Triggerfish	<i>Milichthys indicus</i>
Halfmoon Triggerfish	<i>Sufflamen chrysopterus</i>
Picasso Triggerfish	<i>Rhinecanthus aculeatus</i>
Scribbled Filefish	<i>Aluterus scriptus</i>
Cube Boxfish	<i>Ostracion cubicus</i>
Starry (Black-spotted) Pufferfish	<i>Arothron meleagris</i>

Stellate Pufferfish	<i>Arothron stellatus</i>
Crowned Toby	<i>Canthigaster coronata</i>
Solander's Toby	<i>Canthigaster solandri</i>
Valentin's Toby	<i>Canthigaster valentina</i>
Masked Porcupinefish	<i>Diodon liturosus</i>
Long-spine Porcupinefish	<i>Diodon holocanthus</i> (dead on the beach)

Systematic List Number 3 Invertebrates

Thanks to Heinz for this list of assorted invertebrates.

Snails:

Achatinellidae:

Achatelloides hadibuensis

Achatinidae:

Rieckia sokotrana (only shell)

Pomatiidae:

Socotora naticoides (only shell)

Cephalopods:

Argonautidae:

Argonauta argo (only shell)

Spiders:

Araneidae:

Argyope lobata

Gasteracantha sanguine

Crustaceans:

Chelonibiidae:

Chelonibia testudinea

Ocypodidae:

Ocypode saratan

Potamidae:

Socotrapotamon socotranus

Tetraclitidae:

Tetraclita rufotincta

Dragonflies:

Libellulidae:

Orthetron chrysosticta

Trithemis arteriosa

Locusts:

Acrididae:

Achatelloides hadibuensis

Dioscoridus depressus

Scintharista forbesii

Tettigonidae:

Pachysmopoda abbreviata

Butterflies:***Hesperidae:***

Coeliades anchises jucunda

Beetles:***Buprestidae:***

Julodis clouei

Cerambycidae:

Malloдон arabicum

Gyrinidae:

Dineutus arabicus

Ant Lions:***Myrmeleontidae:***

Myrmeleon saldaitis