

جمعيّة البيئّة العمانيّة
Environment Society of Oman



ESO Administration Report

2005

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In the Name of Allâh, the Most Benficient, the Most Merciful

“And the earth We spread out, and placed therein firm mountains, and caused to grow therein all kinds of things in due proportion (19) And We have provided therein means of living, for you and for those whom you provide not [moving (living) creatures, cattle, beasts, and other animals (20) And there is not a thing, but with Us are the stores thereof. And We send it not down except in a known measure(21)”

Surat Al-Hijr (19-21)

Introduction:

ESO was officially established on 24th / March 2004, as per the Ministerial decision #. (42/2004) issued by the Ministry of Social Development; however; ESQ's activities and the mobilization stage commenced only in October of same year due to the logistic limitation.

Throughout most of the past phase ESO meetings were being hosted graciously by many institutions of ESO friends and supporters, with the focus naturally on the importance and need to build up its infrastructure. ESO unveiled its logo, which is of a turtle with an outline of a Wa'al (Arabian Tahr) on its shell, symbolizing both the marine and terrestrial environment.

ESO tentative guiding strategy is based on three main pivots:

- 1. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS.*
- 2. MARINE ENVIRONMENT.*
- 3. TERRESTRIAL ENVIRONMENT.*

Education and Awareness:

As start-up activities, two key campaigns were identified and launched. These two concrete projects were excellent opportunities to actively involve our members to take part in conservation activities, demonstrating ESO's commitment to action as well as general awareness-building.

PLASTIC BAG CAMPAIGN:

11th of January 2005 - was the actual launch of ESO anti-plastic bag campaign, that aims to reduce the use of plastic bags throughout the

Sultanate, and educate the public about its adverse environmental effects.

In order to gain support and encourage people to be involved in this campaign ESO initiated sale and distribution of large and small ESO made reusable canvas bags in some retail outlets, all funds raised from the sale of the bags went towards the campaign.

RECYCLING CAMPAIGN:

A campaign, that aims to promote the recycling of cans, glass, paper and cardboard in the Sultanate, in order to reduce the large quantities of waste. The main objectives are:

- Promote awareness on the issues of recycling.
- Promote recycling in schools, universities and colleges.
- Create collection points with bins through the shops.
- Cooperate with municipalities and local companies that have recycling facilities.

What we have done:

1. Wadi clean-up at Wadi Al Ansab on March 10, 2005.
2. Children are the future of Oman's environment they are tomorrow's ESO members. ESO has set up special activities for children where they can have a good time, and at the same time come away with some environment knowledge.
3. To support ESO educational and awareness efforts, MEPI (Middle East Partnership Initiative) has granted the sum of \$ 25000 (9623.75 OR) to ESO educational and infrastructural projects. In August 18, 2005 ESO has received \$10000 (3850 OR) as the first draw for furnishing and equipping its office.

Marine:

The seas of the Sultanate of Oman occupy an isolated corner of the Indian Ocean, where some of the world's most varied and biologically productive waters are found. Oman's marine environment holds a great deal of valuable natural resources, including coral communities that attract diving tourism, bountiful fish for consumption, and at least 20 species of whales and dolphins. Marine nature and wildlife habitats are heavily affected by the inappropriate human activities and construction and consequently are at risk of destruction, therefore, ESO established its marine projects that aim to raise awareness and conserve marine nature and wildlife components.

WHALE AND DOLPHIN RESEARCH:

Whale and dolphin research project is conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, environment and Water Resources who provide all necessary permits for its execution. Research results are also discussed with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This project aims to study the different species of whales and dolphins in Oman, and to learn as much as possible about their distribution and ecology in order to protect their habitats.

The research group (including Omani and expatriate scientists) recently returned from the Gulf of Masirah, after spending 1 month in the field collecting data on cetacean distribution and relative abundance, as well as continuing with the humpback whale research programme that began in 2000. This trip marked the start of the 2006 research season for the group. False killer whales, Risso's dolphins, killer whales, Bryde's whales were among the species encountered on this survey. The group also conducted beach surveys and managed to comb all stretches of beach on Masirah Island. A few dead dolphins and the skeletal remains of baleen whales were found along with many dead turtles. The Masirah field trip also involved international researchers from Kuwait, South Africa and USA, who took part in field research and planning.

To promote awareness about the project ESO held a lecture in February 19, 2005 on the Oman Whale and Dolphin Research.

SATELLITE TAGGING OF OMANI LOGGERHEAD TURTLES:

Confirmation of funding for a loggerhead turtle satellite tagging project has now been received. The aim of the project is to tag and monitor loggerhead turtles nesting on Masirah Island, in order to further our understanding of this population, thought to be the world's largest. This project will be conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Water Resources and Environment (MRMEWR), as well as international collaborators IUCN's Turtle Specialist Group, and the US Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (part of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission). Funding has been secured from both the US Marine Turtle Conservation Fund and the US Fish and Wildlife Service for purchase of 10 satellite tags and download time. Logistical support and other resources are being provided by MRMEWR. It is envisaged that the tags will be deployed in August 2006 and will be preceded by a detailed training programme.

In March 2006 ESO attended the 4th annual meeting of the Indian Ocean and South East Asia Memorandum of Understanding (IOSEA MOU), which brought together over 24 countries from the region. The meeting, hosted by MRMEWR, made significant steps towards the furthering of turtle conservation both in Oman and elsewhere in the region. During the course

of the meeting, ESO was able to announce and discuss plans for its turtle research programme, as well as to specifically finalise details for the satellite tagging project with the attendant international collaborators.

MOORING BUOYS CAMPAIGN:

Aim: To secure mooring buoys at all known popular dive sites throughout Oman in order to protect the coral reefs, which provide both food and shelter to marine life.

Two buoys have already been made but are to be secured. Both fundraising and donations are necessary to continue this campaign as the cost of each buoy is quite high.

Terrestrial Environment:

Our terrestrial projects are:

1. Project Wa'al

Aim: To raise public awareness of the importance conservation of the Wa'al al 'Arabi (*Hemitragus jayakari*).

Project Shajar

Aim: To raise public awareness of the importance of native plants, especially trees, to Oman's biodiversity, both positive and negative.

Project Manadhir (Landscapes)

Aim: To raise public awareness about the economic and aesthetic importance of Oman's natural and cultural landscapes.

ESO information lectures discussions and field visits about the terrestrial projects:

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| January 8, 2005 | Two lectures on "The Challenges Facing Omani Environment" to ME college staff and students, by: Dr. Mehdi Ahmed Jaaffer |
| January 15, 2005 | The first ESO lecture on the topic (Endangered Species of Oman) with a presentation about the Arabian Tahr, Arabian Leopard and the turtles of Oman. presented by: Ali Al Kiyumi, David Insall and Dr. Andrew Spalton |
| March 10, 2005 | Field trip to the Wa'al reserve in Wadi Al Sareen, organized |

- by David Insall
- March 19, 2005** Lecture on (Nature reserves in Oman) by Nasser Al Maskri
- April 24, 2005** Pictorial Lecture on (the Landscapes of Oman: Perceptions and Challenges), by Khamis Al Muharibi and David Insall
- May 21, 2005** Lecture on (Birdwatching Tour of Oman) by Hanne and Dr. Jens Erikson
- June 18, 2005** Lecture on (Snakes of Oman) by Dr. Seyad Mohammed Farook
- October 10, 2005** Lecture on the (Conservation of the Houbara Bustard) by Yasser Hamdan Al Kharusi
- November 26, 2005** Lecture on (The Importance of Planting Native Trees to Support Oman's Natural Environment) By David Insall
- December 10, 2005** Lecture on (Bird Flu) by Dr. Faryal Al Lawati
- February 25, 2006** Lecture on (Plant Biodiversity in Oman) by Dr. Annette Patzelt
- March 16, 2006** field trip to Arabian Wa'al reserve In Wadi Al Sareen, organized by David Insall.

Public Relations:

Marketing the ESO strategy required the setting of comprehensive network of public relation with different sections of the Omani society (government and non-government) in order to harness support and involvement towards environmental issues.

Environmental issues needs environmental support, that must be founded on a wide base of Public relation with all community segments in order to ensure the best conditions to achieve the sought objectives through environmental awareness programs.

Public relation Strategy:

ESO PR Strategy is based on the following:

- Annual ESO fundraising Balls: present general information about the society as well as attracting new members.

- To organize various activities ((workshop, open days, presentations, etc)) that is suitable for all community segments, where environmental ideas and information can be discussed.
- media has the ability to address all sectors and categories of society and provide a variety of diverse awareness messages. collaboration with media resources is essentially required to cover all ESO campaigns and activities.
- ESO regularly participates and attends conferences and meetings organized by international and local organizations and institutions, such as:
 1. Participation in West Asia Civic Societies steering Committee meeting organized by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in Bahrain. November 26, 2005
 2. Informational and consultative meeting with IUCN - WESCANA: Dr. Achim Steiner(Director General), Dr. Odeh Al Jayyousi (Regional Director), Tariq AbuAlhawa (Advisor) and Simon Ansty (Advisor). Organized by ESO December 13, 2005.
 3. Participation in ((Capacity Building Management)) workshop organized by INTRAC in collaboration with MSD in November 7, 2005.
 4. Participation in ((Third World Network of Scientific Organizations International)) TWNSO seminar organized by SQU – Center for Environmental Researches and Studies (CESAR). April 2002
 5. Participation in ((Scientific Research at SQU. An Overview)) seminar organized by SQU in January 2005
 6. Organizing and participation in celebrating many regional, Arab and international occasions, such as Oman Environmental Day (8 January), World Environment Day (5 June) and Arab Environment day (14 October),
 7. Participation in the first interim workshop on ((Al Jabal Al Akhdar Initiative)) organized by SQU - Center for Environmental Researches and Studies (CESAR), February 8, 2006
 8. Participation in social voluntary work open day organized by SQU – Careers Advisory Center, February 20, 2006
 9. Participation in ((Oman International Conference on Eco-Tourism)) organized by MRMEWR, February 26, 2006

Future plans:

In the past nearly two years, ESO was firmly placing its feet on the right track, forming committees, recruiting members, setting up projects and publicizing activities. In October 10, 2005 ESO established its main office in Al Khuwair, where ESO board and committees are running and holding their meeting.

During the last year ESO has also launched its Website, www.environment.org.om where general information about its activities, projects and future plan can be found. The website addresses a comprehensive presentation about environmental issues and natural wildlife in Oman to all and provides a list of practical advises that can be endorsed to help preserve the environment.

ESO is pleased to announce today that it has (207) members, 106 (52 %) are Omani, and 12 corporate members:

- 1. HSBC Bank**
- 2. Muscat Pharmacy & Stores LLC**
- 3. Port of Suhar**
- 4. Al Hassan group of companies**
- 5. Ajit Khimji Group of Companies**
- 6. Shell Representative Office Oman**
- 7. Sohar Aluminium**
- 8. InterContinental Hotel Muscat**
- 9. Marina Bandhar Al Rowdha**
- 10. Salala port Services**
- 11. Occidental Oman**
- 12. Shell Marketing**

Throughout the next two years and depending on a wide campaign; ESO is seeking to increase its membership base and recruit new members, while focusing on actual membership involvement in ESO activities. The campaign is based on:

- To increase the number of individual members during the coming two years
- To increase the number of corporate members, ESO can depend on those members to supplement its resources.
- Through subcommittees formed by ESO board, more activities and events will be organized in all the Sultanate regions and cities, consequently recruiting more members.
- To build up more educational and awareness campaigns.
- To publish books, booklets that combine general information about environment issues; ESO is to publish in both Arabic and English a book about The Importance of Planting Native Trees and Plants for landscaping, and has already published its calendar for 2006 which combines interactive photos of the Omani environment.
- To organize more interactive lectures, conferences and other events.
- Setting up special educational campaigns for school children in order to teach them the basic values and positive attitudes about nature conservation.
- To consolidate support and tap resources for our main projects (Whale and Dolphin research, turtles satellite tagging, recycling, and public awareness campaigns) through getting all community sections to be involved in, as well as increasing ESO budget for these projects,
- Building up new projects that support the environment and at the same time providing sustainable incomes, that will ensure ESO resources mobilization.
- To set up prudent plans for expenditures, certain rate of the ESO income will be expended throughout certain defined period to ensure sustainability.

In Conclusion:

The conservation of nature, wildlife habitats and protection of biodiversity is a matter of great importance in the Sultanate. Changes that might occur to natural habitats may be accompanied by priceless loss and severe deficiency of rare natural resources, in view of the extreme sensitivity of scarce natural resources and wildlife components to the impacts of inappropriate human activities and construction, these sensitive areas are becoming heavily affected by over exploitation and consequently are at risk of destruction. The sensitive situation of biodiversity in the Sultanate has necessitated the requirement for the conservation of natural resources and establishing international and regional coordination in this respect through rehabilitation of damaged natural habitats, setting of plans to protect species and lay out principles and basis to organize the utilization of our environment and renewable natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Instead of cursing the darkness, the old piece of wood it said to convey, let a candle, and the thousand mile journey commences with one foot step. ESO is our first candle as a concerned community that cares for its plant. It is the first right footstep that deserves your undivided support.

Last but not least, we conclude with HM inspirational words to the leaders of the Universe.

As human beings co-existing on this planet, we have gravely neglected the vital necessity of conserving the environment and natural resources due to the lack of collective coordination. Indeed, we have taken a potential progress, regardless of the resulting imbalance between development and the environment, and without taking into account the dire consequences of the effects upon the atmosphere and the ozone layer, river and sea water, the extermination of certain species, the destruction of forest and the contamination of once fertile soil. Should this continue humanity will court collective suicide.

Qaboos Bin Said

June 3, 1992

Speech by his Majesty on the occasion of the International Conference on Environment and Development

Brazil, June 3-14, 1992