



# Annual Report 2023







His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said  
*May Allah have mercy upon him*



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik



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Turtle hatchling, Oman In Focus

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# Message from the President

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to present this year's annual report for the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) as we celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Over the past two decades, ESO has been at the forefront of protecting and improving Oman's natural environment, our most precious inheritance.

Oman is gifted with diverse landscapes, rich biodiversity, and vital habitats. At ESO, we are united by a deep passion for safeguarding and enhancing these natural treasures for future generations. We understand that if our youth is to thrive in the future, we must adopt sustainable pro-environment behaviours and eco-friendly practices, such as wise resource usage and waste reduction.

Following in the footsteps of my esteemed predecessor, HH Sayyida Tania bint Shabib Al Said, I am proud to share the remarkable accomplishments we have achieved together. ESO's legacy of conservation, research, collaboration, and community engagement has formed a solid foundation for our successes. By working together, we contribute to an improved natural environment and find inspiration to confront the environmental challenges we face today and in the future.

I firmly believe in the power of raising environmental awareness, and I take great pride in the diverse initiatives led by ESO. These initiatives span various sectors, including children, women's associations, youth groups, farming and fishing communities, corporate entities, and government organisations. This year, our engagement activities have focused on sustainability, climate change awareness, and plastic pollution. We are immensely grateful for the ongoing support of the community and the corporate sector as they continue to elevate environmental awareness in Oman.

Biodiversity, which forms the interconnected natural world around us, is the cornerstone of our existence. Recognising this, ESO has undertaken numerous initiatives to protect our seas and endangered marine species. I am particularly proud of the four early-career Omani scientists who recently completed a year-long capacity-building programme focused on cetacean research and conservation. These magnificent creatures are critical to marine biodiversity and have faced significant threats from human activities.

While celebrating our achievements, we must also acknowledge the indispensable support and collaboration of our stakeholders. However, access to sufficient funds remains a constant challenge. I am honoured to be part of ESO's multiple fundraising initiatives, and was overwhelmed by the generous support we received from corporations and individuals, especially during the ESO Charity Ball held earlier this year.

Lastly, I am privileged to work closely with the remarkable team at ESO. Their dedication and commitment are truly inspiring. In addition to achieving significant milestones in research and conservation, our team actively represents Oman and our society in international and local environmental fora, including the UN Climate Change Conference - COP28.

ESO is a national non-governmental, non-profit champion for protecting Oman's natural environment. From fostering collaboration to raising awareness about the importance of reducing plastic waste and cutting carbon emissions to safeguarding our precious biodiversity, we remain dedicated to our mission. Together, we will continue to build on our track record, aiming to reach even more significant milestones in the years ahead as we move towards our subsequent milestone anniversaries.

With gratitude and optimism,

**Dr Amor Al Matani**  
President



Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Oman In Focus



# Introduction



Locally and globally, we face a dual crisis of biodiversity loss and climate change; two issues that are inextricably linked. A holistic approach is required to address these threats, and as governments continue to strive towards ambitious targets, such as zero emissions, it is increasingly evident that nature-based solutions have a vital role to play, and are more cost effective than many engineered solutions. Nature-based solutions minimize the climate crisis by sequestering and storing carbon, protecting human infrastructure from hazards and storm surges, and keep us healthy through access to clean air, food and water.

ESO's research and conservation of threatened and endangered species and their associated ecosystems directly contributes to climate change mitigation. Blue carbon is the carbon stored in coastal and marine ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes, and these ecosystems arguably sequester more carbon per unit than terrestrial forests. Additionally, large marine megafauna such as whales play a vital role in regulating climate change by transporting carbon and other nutrients vertically through the water column, helping to create conditions for phytoplankton blooms that support the entire food chain and absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

ESO's education and community engagement initiatives raise community awareness about the impact of climate change and empower individuals to take positive actions towards making a difference. In the lead up to the UN Climate Change Conference - COP28, ESO and ASYAD Group launched the 'Oman Climate Dialogues,' a series of panel sessions and workshops aimed to raise environmental awareness on the climate challenges we face and Oman's current mitigation efforts. Part of this series will include a targeted workshop for the youth, encouraging and guiding them towards green jobs as custodians of an improved and more sustainable future for Oman.

For our younger generation, we launched the third edition of the NAMAT Competition, inspiring school aged students to develop practical and innovative solutions focusing on sustainability and minimizing carbon footprints. Through this programme, students developed innovative initiatives utilizing solar power, grey water systems and community integration. The commitment and innovation demonstrated by participants in each of these programmes is a testament to the potential of our future environmental leaders.

We wrapped up this year with strong participation at the UN Climate Change Conference – COP28 in Dubai, which concluded with the adoption of the landmark UAE Consensus with 4 main outcomes; 1) fast-tracking energy transition 2) climate finance 3) focusing on people, lives, livelihoods and nature and, 4) inclusivity of all parties and partners involved. Going hand in hand with this historic agreement, we believe that climate action starts at home, at the individual level, and we must all do our part for the planet.

We remain optimistic that with the strong support of our collaborators, partners, sponsors, in-kind supporters, and members prioritizing their investments in nature, we can work together, here and now, for a more sustainable future for all.

**Suaad Al Harthi**  
Executive Director



Common cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), Amardeep Singh



# Supporting Oman's Vision 2040 and UN Sustainable Development Goals

# 2023 Year in Numbers

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Al Said, Oman's Vision 2040 provides strong foundations for a development agenda that recognizes the importance of protecting our nation's outstanding natural resources. At ESO, we strongly advocate for national initiatives that promote sustainable development and mitigate, if not eliminate, negative actions detrimental to Oman's environment and rich biodiversity.



### ESO Strategy

In 2023, ESO launched its [Five-Year Strategic Plan 2023-2027](#) which can be accessed on our website.

**Our Vision** To play a leading role in the conservation of Oman's natural heritage.

**Our Mission** is to protect and conserve Oman's natural heritage and influence environmentally sustainable behaviour through education, awareness and conservation.

**Our strategic priorities** are defined as Partnership, Conservation, Fundraising, Internal Capabilities and People and Culture, with key objectives and performance indicators set in order to respond to the overarching goal of protecting Oman's natural heritage for future generations.

#### Our Programmes:

Conduct **research** on threatened species

**Build capacity** within the environmental sector

**Conserve** Oman's natural heritage for future generations

**Educate** and raise awareness of communities on the importance of adopting sustainable lifestyles

**Advocate** for environmental sustainability

### Alignment to UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly to provide a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all. While we contribute to all 17 SDGs, our work at ESO mostly aligns to the following global goals:



**34**  
Collaborations with international organisations

**28**  
Corporate members

**9**  
Community lectures

**17**  
Membership events

**6** Donation channels  
**4** Hotels and Tour Operators  
**2** part of the ESO donation program

**31,941**  
Followers on social media

**885+**  
Light sources evaluated to assess lighting pollution on Masirah Island

**30** Weeks of sea turtle survey work

**3**  
Cetacean surveys

**139**  
Egyptian vulture nesting territories surveyed

**14**  
Conservation awareness materials produced

**2**  
Rounds of Lappet-faced vulture breeding surveys

**43**  
Awareness presentations on Ad Dimaniyyat Island Nature Reserve

**7**  
Houses retrofitted with turtle-friendly lighting fixtures on Masirah Island

**2** Egyptian vulture nests monitored via camera traps

**85**  
Schools registered in the Namat Competition 3rd edition representing

**9** Governorates with winning schools

**5**  
Omani Women's Associations engaged

**162**  
Individual members

# ESO Board

At the 2023 AGM, HH Sayyida Tania bint Shabib Al Said , ESO's President for nearly 20 years, stepped down from the Board. We were joined by two newly elected board members (Mr Nasser Al Maskari and Dr Omama Al Lawati) and are grateful for the support of all of our Board Members who voluntarily serve ESO.

## President

**Honourable Dr Amor Al Matani** holds a BEng (Hons), an MBA and a PhD in Sustainability. After graduating from Teesside University, UK in 1990 as an Instrumentation and Control Engineer, he joined Petroleum Development Oman in upstream operations and commissioning. In 1993 he moved to the Ministry of Health where he occupied several executive positions. He completed his MBA (Newcastle) in 1997 before being appointed Director-General for Sur Industrial Estate in the Public Establishment of Industrial Estates. He joined Oman LNG in 2002 as Deputy CEO and the Chief HR Executive Officer. In June 2019 Dr Al Matani was appointed CEO of the Oman LNG foundation. Dr Al Matani has a passion for improving work environments and is a proactive leader, striving for a more sustainable Oman. He has a keen interest in education and is a member of several university and technical college boards. He is Chairman of the Board of Trustees for OLNG's HAS International School and many others. In 2023 Dr Amor was appointed as a member of the Oman State Council.

## Vice President

**Mr Omar Al Riyami** holds a master's degree in Environmental Impact Assessment and Management from the University of Manchester, UK and a BSc in Marine Science and Fisheries from the Sultan Qaboos University. As a former ESO employee from 2009 to 2013, he represented the organisation at high-level environmental committees and work teams both locally and internationally. He joined the International Visitors Leadership Programme on 'National Parks, Biodiversity and Ecotourism' sponsored by the US Department of State in 2011. He also represented Omani and Arab youth at UNESCO's conference on the 40th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in Kyoto, Japan in 2011. Omar has worked in the Environment and Sustainability field at different organisations in Oman including PDO, Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries, and OQ. He currently works as Head of Sustainability in OQ Gas Network. In 2020, Omar led the development of the 'Environment and Natural Resources' priority in the 10th Development Plan for the implementation of the Oman Vision 2040.

## Director

**Ms Rumaiitha Al Busaidi** is a scientist and environmental advocate working on sustainable solutions to climate change. Her 2021 TED talk examining women as the key to our climate future has garnered more than a million views. Rumaiitha currently serves as Business Development Manager at Hydrom, the orchestrator of green hydrogen development in Oman. Nationally, she actively works with the government on sustainable diversification and energy transition strategies. Internationally, she has advised the Biden administration on developing a climate resilience standard for US foreign aid, the government of Greenland on creating a framework for local sustainable tourism, and the Arab League on empowering Arab youth in climate change negotiations spaces. Her work in climate change has been recognized by the United Nations, the EU, and NATO. Rumaiitha was most recently named in Reuters's climate hot list and subsequently recognized in their 'Top 25 Women in Climate Change' list as well as listed on the BBC list of 100 inspiring and influential women from around the world in 2023.

## Treasurer

**Mrs Amira Al Yarubi** holds a BSc in Management Information Systems from Sultan Qaboos University and a 2019 IEMA (Environmental Management Certification). She is part of Oman Vision 2040's team within the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. Amira is a certified Lead Auditor in Environmental Management Systems and a Sustainability Practitioner. She began her career as a CSR specialist at the Information Technology Authority before joining the QHSE team to handle the Environment Management System at the Ministry of Technology & Communication. Amira initiated environmental programmes such as waste reduction campaigns aimed at reducing paper and plastic consumption and worked closely with the event team to ensure environmentally friendly practices were



Honourable Dr Amor Al Matani



Mr Omar Al Riyami



Ms Rumaiitha Al Busaidi



Mrs Amira Al Yarubi



Mrs Laila Al Zakwani



Dr Andrew Spalton



Dr Mohammed Al Kalbani



Dr Ali Akaak



Mr Nasser Al Maskari



Dr Omama Al Lawati

adopted. As an ESO member, Amira participated in the Eco-thon as a mentor for the student groups and continues to spread conservation messages through her social media accounts. As a mother, she continually strives to raise environmentally conscious children by educating them on saving the planet and engaging them in clean-up campaigns.

## Secretary

**Mrs Laila Al Zakwani** is an Executive Director at Apex Media heading their HR and Events functions, playing an integral role in establishing one of the nation's leading publishing houses. She holds a major in Psychology and an associate degree in Business from the University of Missouri, St. Louis, USA. Laila has been a proud member of ESO since 2006 and as a board member brings extensive media experience to help guide ESO's communications strategy. She also carries across her knowledge in CSR campaigns like those spearheaded by Apex Media to reduce litter, recycle paper and change existing behaviours in a push for responsible waste disposal.

## Board Member

**Dr Andrew Spalton** is a wildlife biologist who came to Oman in 1987 to join a team that was reintroducing the Arabian oryx. He has extensive experience in many aspects of wildlife conservation in Oman, including overseeing protected areas and working with the iconic Arabian leopard, as well as less understood animals, such as bats. He has worked on issues such as wildlife trade, poaching, overgrazing and climate change. Andrew holds a BSc in Environmental Science and PhD in Zoology. He serves on several IUCN specialist groups and on other international technical committees. Andrew is a founding member of ESO and served as Advisor for Environmental Affairs at the Diwan of Royal Court until he retired at the end of 2020.

## Board Member

**Dr Mohammed Al Kalbani** holds a PhD in Environmental Sustainability from the University of Aberdeen, UK. He holds an MSc and BSc in Environmental Engineering Sciences and Management. He has worked as a Research Assistant at Sultan Qaboos University, and most recently as Director of the Department of Sustainable Development at the Environment Authority. Dr Al Kalbani regularly participates in research projects related to integrated environmental assessment, environmental preservation, biodiversity conservation, climate change, environmental management, and legislation. He has published several



papers and participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Global Environmental Outlook Reports for UNEP and the Arab Environmental Outlook Report for the Arab League. He has presented papers at international conferences, symposiums, and workshops; and has participated in numerous meetings related to environmental conventions and protocols. Serving on ESO's board since 2017, Dr Al Kalbani has represented ESO internationally and has worked on the organisation's Green Schools Campaign, Eco-thon, Inter-College Environmental Speaking Competition, research and conservation projects and community outreach programmes.

## Board Member

**Dr Ali Akaak** is an academic and professional in business and tourism management. He has a doctorate's degree in Management Studies (Tourism Management and Development) from the University of Exeter Business School, UK. He has over 15 years of experience in academic and administrative positions in public and private universities. Dr Akaak is currently serving as the Head of the Continuing Education and Community Service Department in the College of Economics and Business Administration. He has published and presented papers at conferences about strategic planning, destination management, tourism development, labor unions, and social entrepreneurs. Dr Akaak has been a member of several societies, including the Environment Society of Oman (ESO), Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Dhofar, Omani Society of Human Resources (OSHRM), World Tourism Association for Cultural and Heritage (WTACH), Tour Guiding Committee at the General Directorate of Heritage and Tourism-Dhofar, Green Destination Organization, and New Generation Group (NGG) at the Anglo-Omani Society.

## Board Member

**Mr Nasser Al Maskari** is a committed advocate for sustainable development in Oman, deeply committed to environmental, safety, and health causes, while actively supporting Omani civil societies. His educational journey includes a Master of Science (MSc) specializing in Environmental Studies within the field of Marine Sciences from Sultan Qaboos University (2003-2006). He also holds a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Fisheries Science from the same institution (1992-1996), reflecting his strong academic foundation. Nasser's professional journey traverses both the public and private sectors. During his tenure at the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment, and Water Resources (MRME&WR) from 1997 to 2006, he held significant roles, including Head of Permits Section and Director of Planning for the Nature Conservation Department. In 2006, Nasser embarked on a corporate career, joining Occidental Mukhaizna LLC (OXY) as an Environmental Compliance Specialist. Over the years, he has shouldered progressively responsible positions, culminating in his current role as Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Occidental Oman (OXY). Nasser is dedicated to fostering collaboration between governmental and private sectors, raising public awareness on critical issues, and actively supporting the objectives of Omani civil societies. As a founding member of ESO, he has left a lasting impact on environmental causes and sustainable practices.

## Board Member

**Dr Omama Al Lawati** is a dedicated academic and educator. Dr Omama earned her PhD in Communication and Media Studies from Université de La Manouba, Tunis, and holds an MA in Public Relations and Public Communication from the University of Westminster, London, as well as a BA in Mass Communication from the University of Sultan Qaboos, Oman. She has had the privilege of contributing to the field through publications, including books, book chapters, and journal articles, and has authored over 14 children's books. She is a member of various local and international organizations, such as the Omani Association of Writers and the British Association for Islamic Studies. She has had the opportunity to attend workshops and lectures related to quality assurance and academic accreditation. Omama has presented research at international conferences, is a nature photographer and is genuinely passionate about cultural exploration.



Frankincense tree (*Boswellia sacra*)





## Turtle Research and Conservation Programme

The global importance of Oman to the survival of sea turtles has been definitively established through research conducted within the Sultanate since the 1970s. Since 2008, ESO, in collaboration with the **Environment Authority (EA)** and senior international scientists, has played a lead research role in accelerating our knowledge and understanding of turtle biology, ecology and conservation needs, raising the international profile of Oman's turtles.

Masirah Island is the second largest nesting rookery for loggerhead turtles in the world. ESO Research confirms that this population has suffered a 79% decline since the late 1970s. The major threats that impact both habitat and population numbers are land-use disturbances, such as extensive coastal development, light pollution, and beach driving; and sea-based disturbances such as turtles being caught in fishing nets by mistake (bycatch). This assessment was published in a [peer-reviewed journal](#) in August 2020.

## Field Surveys and Data Analysis

For the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, ESO conducted monitoring surveys of nesting loggerheads on Masirah Island. Outside of the loggerhead nesting season, field assistants monitor green, hawksbill and olive ridley turtles. This effort is supported by a five-year funding plan from the **US Fish and Wildlife Service - Marine Turtle Conservation Fund**.

The new team recruited and trained in 2022 continued its work throughout this year with mentoring from experienced personnel. Surveys were conducted according to accustomed and well-established protocols, with the core goal of completing track count surveys and nesting success data collection in support of ongoing long-term trend assessments. These surveys were held on both index beaches (high density nesting) and secondary or island-wide beaches to understand the distribution of nesting females. Additionally, stranding surveys of both cetaceans and turtles were conducted across the island. The ESO team also continues to support the field work on hatching success implemented by **Future Seas Global SPC**, in collaboration with the **EA** and **Ocean Ecology Network**.

The 'Masirah Island Turtle Atlas' is currently in its final design phase and will be released shortly on ESO's website with the main aim of communicating project findings to the public.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <b>Suaad Al Harthi</b><br>Executive Director                       | 7. <b>Atika Ahmed</b><br>Accountant                                     |
| 2. <b>Bashaar Zaitoon</b><br>Administrative Manager                   | 8. <b>Rabab Al Lawati</b><br>Conservation and Outreach Coordinator      |
| 3. <b>Maïa Sarrouf Willson</b><br>Research and Conservation Manager   | 9. <b>Juhaina Al Ghafri</b><br>Communication and Membership Coordinator |
| 4. <b>Said Al Jabri</b><br>Public Relations Officer                   | 10. <b>Mai Abumughli</b><br>Communication and Events Coordinator        |
| 5. <b>Ghaniya Al Mawali</b><br>Communications and Fundraising Manager | 11. <b>Juma Al Arai</b><br>Masirah Field Coordinator                    |
| 6. <b>Jawaher Al Ghafri</b><br>Education Coordinator                  |   |



Turtle hatchling, Paul Flandinette



# Advocacy Efforts

## Light Pollution

Working closely with the **EA** and the **Wali's office on Masirah**, ESO and its collaborators have been highlighting conservation concerns and working with the community to develop solutions. In 2023, two advocacy meetings were held with authorities in both Muscat and Masirah to discuss lighting pollution and bycatch as the two main threats faced by the nesting turtles on Masirah. A meeting with the **EA** was joined by Dr Kellie Pendoley, Principal Scientist and Managing Director of **Pendoley Environmental**, who shared her 35 years of experience researching the relationship between lighting pollution and marine turtles. Dr Pendoley presented her involvement in developing national lighting guidelines in Australia, prompting valuable discussions with local authorities on how to best address the issue in Oman.

A successful output of the team's advocacy efforts towards lighting pollution mitigation, is the decision to turn off a set of streetlights close to nesting beaches on Masirah Island after 10 pm. This should be celebrated as a conservation success, and we would like to thank the **Wali of Masirah, Masirah Municipality, EA, Ocean Ecology Network, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Future Seas Global SPC** for supporting turtle threat mitigation on Masirah. Additionally, lighting guidelines and considerations for future work on turtle friendly lighting options are being considered in other municipal areas with street light pollution. Guidelines developed specifically for Masirah Island, by **Pendoley Environmental** and **Future Seas Global SPC**, will help guide the selection process for turtle-friendly lighting fixtures, and present best practice principles in lighting design, local planning regulations and technical requirements for existing and new lighting sources near turtle nesting habitats.



## Bycatch

A meeting was also conducted with the **Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources** and joined by Dr Ellen Hines, Associate Director and Professor of Geography and Environment at the **San Francisco State University Estuary and Ocean Science Centre**. Dr Hines highlighted the significance of bycatch, an unresolved threat to marine life that is likely to be escalating with time, and the shortage of comprehensive databases on bycatch. The team discussed a multi-step Bycatch Risk Assessment Toolbox that would guide future bycatch mitigation efforts in Oman, and the current progress with fisheries monitoring and bycatch projects on Masirah.

## Light Pollution Mitigation

Maximising the recruitment of loggerhead turtles (new individuals added to a population either by birth or maturation) has been identified as one of the most important conservation activities for addressing the loggerhead turtle population decline on Masirah. The Lighting Solutions Project was launched to address reduced turtle nesting on beaches due to the disturbance of adults and misorientation of hatchlings caused by artificial light sources from public infrastructure and private buildings. The project was initiated

in 2021 by identifying the most serious light pollution areas and initiating dialogue with authorities on the Island. The various project phases are detailed below.

The assessment phase included a rapid lighting pollution impact assessment of private and commercial properties along key nesting beaches. A total of 63 properties were identified, of which 29 properties had lighting sources in the direct line of sight of nesting beaches. Throughout the engagement phase, the team had one-to-one talks with the local community to identify individuals interested in changing external lighting fixtures at their properties to turtle-friendly alternatives. A total of 13 private properties and three mosques were successfully visited, evaluating 885 light sources. Commercial and government properties, such as Masirah Island Resort and the Masirah Fishermen's Village respectively, were also engaged. Following the agreement of twelve private property owners, existing lights were retrofitted with turtle-friendly lighting. The success of this initiative has resulted in a growing interest from other homeowners, presenting an opportunity for further community engagement and changes.



## Abandoned Fishing Net Threats and Collection

Entanglement in derelict fishing nets is an overarching threat to all marine species, and, as observed by the ESO field team on an annual basis, turtles are not exempt. Numerous cases of female turtles digging nests with missing front or rear flippers, from injuries sustained by net entanglement, were noted in 2023, showing the species resilience to recover from a missing limb. This, however, reduces the turtle's lifespan by decreasing its ability to survive in the wild and reducing its capacity to carry out normal activities, making it more vulnerable to predation, and harder to escape future entanglement incidents. While ESO has observed these incidents on Masirah's beaches, entanglement impacts at sea remain an undocumented threat.

ESO's project focusing on the collection and recycling of abandoned fishing nets aims to reduce wildlife entanglement on Masirah Island while accelerating a circular economy initiative. A net clean-up campaign took place in January 2023 and was implemented in partnership with **Future Seas Global SPC** and in collaboration with the **EA, be'ah, SUMA EcoVision LLC**, local labourers, the **Wali of Masirah**, and the **Masirah Municipality**.

In total, 78 kilometres of nesting beaches were cleaned of nets, with an estimated 80 tons of abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) collected and transferred to a dumpsite. The exercise resulted in cleaner beaches, increased community awareness about the importance of discarding fishing nets appropriately, and the need to properly plan the lifecycle of similar initiatives. Since 2017, ESO has removed an estimated total of 765 tons of ALDFG from Masirah's nesting beaches through these clean-up initiatives.





## Bycatch Efforts

Fisheries engagement and bycatch assessment work on Masirah has been on-going since 2010. Bycatch is the unintended continual fishing of marine life by abandoned (ghost) nets. Successive project phases have investigated bycatch interactions and sought solutions to threats from artisanal fisheries on threatened biodiversity, including cetaceans and turtles. In August 2023, ESO supported the Masirah Fisheries Sustainability and Bycatch Workshop, led by **Future Seas Global SPC** and **Ocean Ecology Network**, in collaboration with **San Francisco State University**, **George Mason University** and **St Andrew's University**. Visits to Masirah introduced participants to local biodiversity, fisheries interactions, and past and present by-catch focused efforts on the island. Interviews with fishermen and dhow fisheries were conducted to further understand local skiff fishing activities. In Muscat, a bycatch risk assessment toolkit with theoretical and practical training was delivered by Dr Ellen Hines and Sarah Farinelli to the project team. Several presentations were also delivered as part of this workshop, including the following:

- Review of the stranding assessment project by Sohini Dudhat, who is completing a PhD study on the subject at St Andrews University. The aim of this study is to understand the spatial and temporal patterns of commonly stranded and recorded marine megafauna and explore the drivers of this phenomenon.
- Review of the small-scale fisheries datahub in Scotland by Mark James, who presented the work initiated at St Andrews University on using remote electronic monitoring techniques to monitor the effort and catch associated with the creel (pot) fishing industry in the Shetland Islands, and explore the applications of these techniques for Oman.
- Review of remote sensing techniques by Sarah Farinelli of George Mason University, who presented the results of a remote sensing project supported by the US Department of Interior and the International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee. The project aims to test the feasibility of using remote sensing imagery to map the occurrence of artisanal fishing vessels in the bycatch risk assessment study area in the Gulf of Masirah and around Masirah Island.

## Whale and Dolphin Research and Conservation Programme

20 different species of whales and dolphins (cetaceans) can be found in Oman's waters, including 4 species of great whales. ESO has been engaged in cetacean research since 2004, with a particular focus on the Arabian Sea humpback whale (ASHW). Dedicated research on ASHW has confirmed that this unique sub-population comprises fewer than 100 individuals off the coast of Oman, resides in the Indian Ocean year-round, and is genetically isolated from other humpback whale populations. As a result of ESO's research, the population was designated as Endangered on the IUCN Red List of threatened species in 2008. The conservation of this unique population across its regional range is critical to its survival.



Arabian Sea humpback whale, Gianna Minton



## Whale and Dolphin Field Monitoring Surveys

A 20-day marine mammal survey focused on Arabian Sea humpback whales took place between the end of November and early December 2023 in the Gulf of Masirah. Whilst collecting standard population and health assessment data from ASHW encounters the main objective of the survey, driven by the **Environment Authority**, was to instrument Arabian Sea humpback whales with satellite tags. One tag was successfully deployed. ESO and partners also contributed to additional efforts to successfully deploy short-term biologging archiving devices onto whales using drones as the deployment technique. Fitted with high resolution cameras, GPS and accelerometers data from these devices will be used to better understand the behaviour and energetics of the whales in areas of critical habitat formerly identified by the ESO's satellite tracking studies. Combined, the data collected will be used to support efforts to develop a Conservation Management Plan for ASHWs.

The survey was commissioned by the **Environment Authority**, and implemented by **Future Seas Global SPC** in collaboration with **Megaptera Marine Conservation**, **Clear Blue Photo**, and **Ocean Alliance**.

The Environment Society of Oman participated in a Marine Mammal Species survey in the Governorate of Musandam (November 2023), led by the **Environment Authority**. The survey objectives were to record the number of encountered marine mammal species in the Governorate, address their distribution locations and visiting season, and create a database and maps of sighting locations.

## Capacity Building for Cetacean Research & Conservation

Recognising the need to cultivate local expertise in cetacean research and conservation, ESO, with funding from **HSBC Oman** (now **Sohar International**), has developed a unique capacity building programme. The programme has been delivered for four candidates, including two ESO staff members. The immediate goal was to form an Omani team that can contribute to future cetacean research activities in Oman. The programme provided candidates with opportunities to learn about cetacean biology, ecology, research methodology and protocols, photo-identification, data collection, networking, and conservation communication.

Building on the previous programme modules, the sixth and final module was delivered in 2023, focusing on engaging stakeholders in conservation through media and communication. Programme candidates also participated in a boat-based survey off the coast of Muscat, observing two active groups of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). In October, candidates presented their final projects to the management team and project sponsors, applying the experience they have learnt over the past year. These presentations included the drafting of a survey report for funders, geospatial analysis of 2022 Gulf of Masirah survey data, a systematic cetacean survey design and implementation in Musandam, cetacean conservation needs in Oman, and the design of a national social media campaign to raise awareness of cetaceans.





## Conservation Management Plan for the Arabian Sea Humpback Whale

In November 2022, the **Environment Authority** in collaboration with ESO, hosted a workshop focusing on the conservation and development of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Arabian Sea humpback whale. The workshop was held due to the need for cross-cutting conservation action to be taken at the government level to address the critical threats faced by these whales and other marine mammals in Oman. These threats include; ship collisions, noise pollution, unsustainable tourism and entanglement in fishing nets. The two-day workshop was attended by over 60 participants representing 30 local and international organisations. In 2023, ESO continued to engage with the Environment Authority for their endorsement of the CMP process and its implementation.

## Marine Mammal Atlas of Oman

The **Environment Authority** commissioned ESO to translate the Marine Mammal Atlas of Oman into Arabic which was completed this year. The Atlas is now published online in both [English](#) and [Arabic](#) and is freely available on the 'Resources' page of the ESO website. The atlas provides a detailed biogeographical account of all marine mammals recorded in the Sultanate of Oman to date. The information is derived from evidence that has been assembled and assessed through scientific processes, including records of whales and dolphins collected during dedicated scientific field surveys, as well as incidental records from third parties. It is aimed at whale and dolphin enthusiasts, scientists, environmental consultants, policymakers or developers, and provides tools to complement and build existing knowledge of cetaceans.

## Regional and International Collaborations

ESO is a member of the **Arabian Sea Whale Network** (ASWN), with members including representatives from the UAE, Kuwait, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Iran and India, as well as international research partners. The network updates members on new sightings and strandings, helping to further understand whale distribution. An online regional data platform was launched in 2019 to share data and research protocols among members.

In 2017, the ASWN submitted a proposal for the 'Concerted Action Plan for humpback whales of the Arabian Sea' which was endorsed by the **Convention on Migratory Species** (CMS) Conference of Parties. This was extended by the Conference of Parties in 2020, and is expected to be extended again during the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties in February 2024. The Concerted Action Plan promotes actions to address knowledge gaps and monitor the Arabian Sea humpback whale population in Oman and other countries in the region, to raise awareness and capacity in the region, and work towards more formal government participation and support for a regional conservation management plan under a joint framework of the **International Whaling Commission** (IWC) and the CMS.

ESO continues to liaise with local authorities on the work presented to the **IWC Scientific Committee** meetings. The 2023 meeting was held in Bled, Slovenia and submissions from Oman included papers on research updates, acoustic analysis, bycatch risk assessment and continuation on the review of ship strike assessments and Conservation Management Plan progress for the Arabian Sea Humpback Whale population.

# Terrestrial Conservation Projects

## Raptor Research and Conservation Programme

Raptors, or birds of prey, such as eagles, falcons, vultures, hawks, and owls are key indicators of the overall health of ecosystems. Sitting at the top of the food chain, they provide many ecosystem services. For example, some species eat millions of insects, which, if left unchecked, could threaten agriculture. Others consume animal carcasses, helping to prevent the spread of disease. Over the last few decades, human activities have contributed to the fragmentation and destruction of raptor habitats. In addition, the intensification of agriculture; electrocution and collision with power infrastructure; shooting, poisoning, and trapping; and reduced breeding success due to pesticides and other contaminants, are threatening raptors, leading to reduced population levels, and limited geographic ranges.

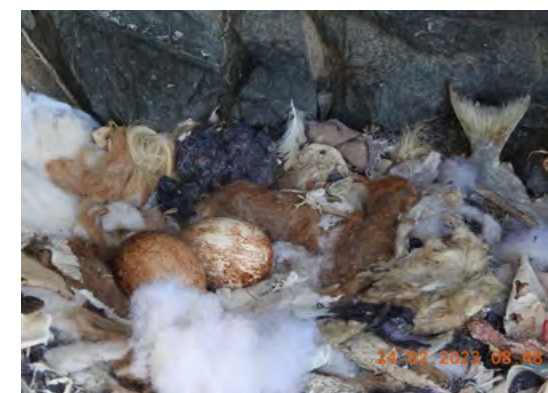
## Vulture Field Surveys

ESO continues its research efforts on two globally endangered vultures found in Oman: the Egyptian and the Lappet-faced vultures, with support from the **Disney Conservation Fund**. In 2023, two Lappet-faced vulture breeding surveys took place, bringing the total number of sites surveyed since 2021 to 133 sites. Throughout the field surveys, nests were inspected for signs of activity, and where suitable, chicks were fitted with unique identity rings and satellite tracking devices through a shared initiative between **International Avian Research**, the **Environment Authority** and ESO. Ten tracking tags have been fitted on 15 juvenile Lappet-faced vultures to date allowing ESO to closely monitor movement and survivorship, and updates can be found at [www.lappetsoman.blogspot.com](http://www.lappetsoman.blogspot.com). Although some movement has been recorded from Oman to the south-east mountainous enclave of the United Arab Emirates (Hatta), the majority of birds remained in-land, in the Hajar mountains of Oman.

Nest failure at both the egg and chick stage continue to be observed, and the explicit causes for offspring loss requires further investigation. To accommodate the extensive amount of data collected, the ESO team started building a Microsoft Access database to store all past and new Lappet-faced vulture data, a process that was completed in early 2023, and actively updated throughout the year. The local community played a crucial role in this project, contributing information about vulture breeding activity and territories. In 2023, a total of 59 certificates of appreciation were distributed to volunteers and representatives from local authorities such as the **Environment Authority** for their invaluable contributions.

Between February and April 2023, ESO also re-initiated Egyptian vulture nesting surveys on Masirah Island. The aim was to revisit all 52 Egyptian vulture territories that had been identified and last visited in 2012, to understand the current population and the impact of changes in waste management (dumpsite closures) on species distribution. A total of 139 Egyptian vulture territories were surveyed, locating several active nests. Camera traps were placed at two of these nests, recording vulture eggs, and chicks and adults resting, preening, and feeding. Offspring loss was observed, along with a suspected electrocution of a juvenile near a powerline. Surveys also included two dumpsite monitoring activities at Masirah Dumpsite, observing Egyptian vultures in groups of five to 30 individuals, soaring and feeding near rubbish piles, alongside other coastal bird species and feral cats. This survey was completed in collaboration with **Future Seas Global SPC**.

With current project funding coming to an end, ESO is seeking sponsorship for additional vulture monitoring to understand the long-term trend of the population, and causes of offspring loss observed in both Lappet-faced vultures and Egyptian vultures.





## Illegal Trafficking of Birds in the Middle East

Trafficking of wildlife involves the illegal capture, trade, smuggling, poaching or collection of protected wildlife, and is a major threat to biodiversity. It can lead to population declines, and in some cases, even species extinction. The Illegal Trafficking of Birds in the Middle East project was funded in 2022 by the **US Fish and Wildlife Service** through **Conservation Science Global (CSG)** and aimed to understand the illegal trade of wild birds in target Middle Eastern countries, including the Sultanate of Oman. Project field activities, consisting of monthly physical and online market surveys, were completed in 2022. In 2023, ESO reported on the evidence found of wild bird capture and trade, including endangered species such as the Lappet-faced vulture, and highlighted recommended actions moving forward.

The trafficking of wildlife, including birds, is prohibited under Article 15 of Royal Decree 6/2003 Promulgating the Nature Reserves and Wildlife Conservation Law, and violators may be subject to fines and/or face imprisonment. The **Environment Authority** encourages all citizens and visitors to report on wildlife violations through the hotline 80071999.

## Frankincense Research and Conservation Programme

Frankincense, also known as Luban, plays an integral part in the Omani heritage and culture and has been a main source of income for local communities for centuries. The species of frankincense native to Oman, Yemen and Northern Somalia is the *Boswellia sacra*, considered to produce a fine quality resin. *Boswellia sacra* has a Near Threatened status on the IUCN Red List and only occurs in the Dhofar Governorate within the Sultanate.

## Population Assessment of Frankincense Trees in Oman

In 2022, a rapid population assessment of frankincense trees in Dhofar, funded by the **British Embassy's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)**, highlighted the need for threat mitigation to prevent population declines. In 2023, funding for the next research phase was secured from **Shell Development Oman LLC**. The aims are to i) continue monitoring the population of frankincense trees across key sites, ii) raise awareness and advocate for conservation and iii) build local capacity for tree and habitat management. The project will be delivered over the course of two years (2024-2025).



Rakhyut, Dhofar, Mohammed Al Bahar Rawas



# Community Engagement

## Marine Turtle Research and Conservation Engagement

### Light Pollution Community Engagement

Light pollution poses a major threat to nesting turtles and hatchlings. Marine turtles have evolved to locate the ocean by following the brightest point on the horizon, typically illuminated by the moon. Consequently, artificial lighting sources often disorient turtles, causing them to wander in-land towards houses and streetlights, rather than to the sea. This exposes turtles to threats such as predation, entanglement, dehydration, and trampling by cars, amongst other threats, ultimately contributing to turtle deaths and population decline. Community engagement and awareness raising is a key part of mitigating this threat. Over the past three years, and with sponsorship from the **Marine Turtle Conservation Fund** of the **US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS)**, ESO, together with the **Environment Authority** and **Future Seas Global SPC**, has engaged with communities to raise awareness on the issue. A total of 16 property owners of houses on key nesting turtle beaches were encouraged to adopt better lighting practices and fittings, to benefit the livelihoods of both people and sea turtles on the island. In 2023, capital works were completed for seven of these properties, and existing lights were replaced with turtle-friendly lighting fixtures. The success of this initiative has resulted in a growing interest from other home-owners within the community, presenting an opportunity for further engagement and capital works.

## Awareness Raising for Ad Dimaniyyat Island Nature Reserve

The Ad Dimaniyyat Island Nature Reserve (DINR) is a Marine Protected Area designated under Royal Decree No. 23/96 in 1996 and managed by Ministerial Decree No. 62/2019. The reserve comprises nine islands arranged semi-linearly over 21 kilometres and are located 15 kilometres off Muscat's shore. The islands and their surrounding waters are characterised by diverse terrestrial and marine wildlife, and some of Oman's best developed coral reefs. In 2023, ESO visited the wilayats of Bousher, Al Seeb, Barka and Al Mussanah, engaging with over 1,400 individuals, to deliver presentations on the DINR and its rich biodiversity, in addition to the threats they face, and what local communities can do to help. This included community members from four **Wali offices**, two **Omani Women's Associations**, 16 **government schools**, four **universities**, and around 80 **fishermen**. Future presentations will target additional Omani Women's Associations, universities, marinas and reserve rangers. The presentations were accompanied by the distribution of awareness materials: a [general infographic on the DINR](#), and a [biodiversity booklet](#) compiling 120 species of marine and terrestrial species found within the reserve. This campaign was delivered in collaboration with the **Environment Authority**, and supported by the **Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources**, **Ministry of Education**, **Ministry of Social Development**, **Ministry of Interior**, **Port of Barka**, **Port of Al Seeb**, **Al Mussanah Municipality** and the **National Survey Authority**. The initiative was made possible with funds raised from the **Mongol Rally** and **Glowing Glowing Gone** donations from **Ms Dana Sarhan**.



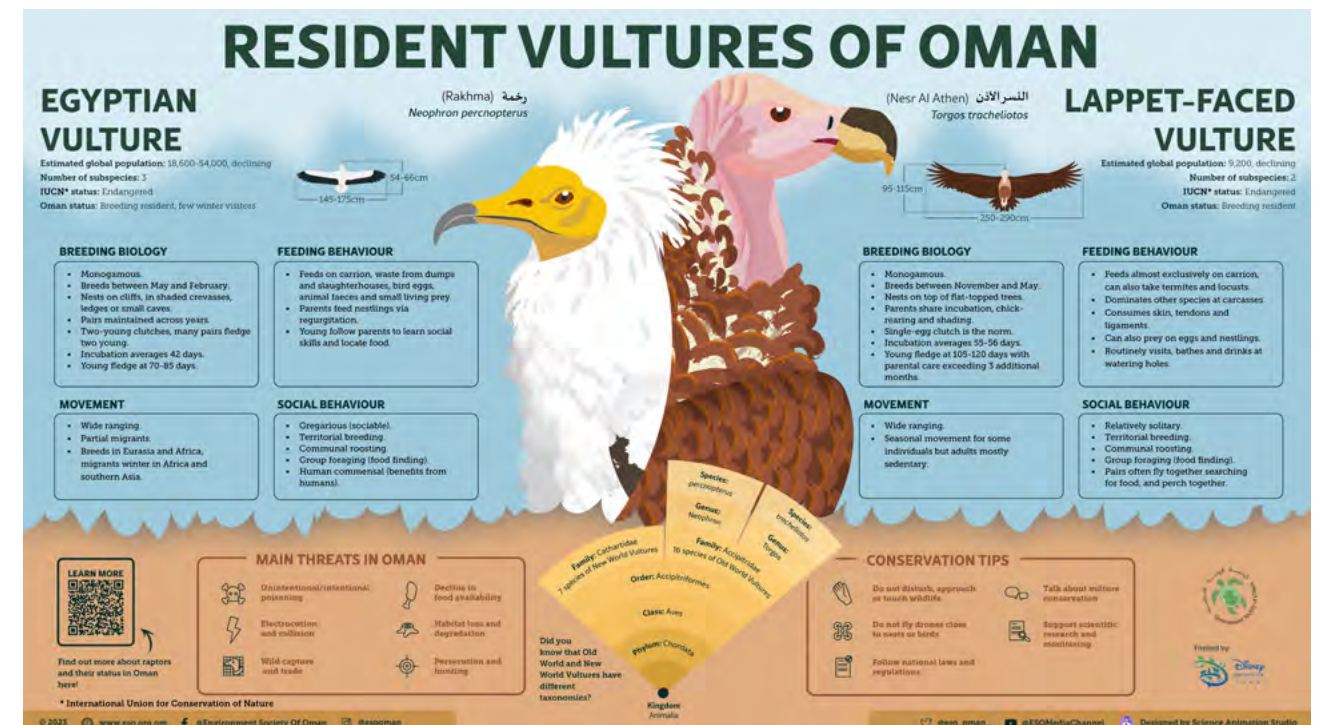
## Raptor Research and Conservation Engagement

One of the main focuses of ESO's Raptor Research and Conservation Programme is raising community awareness on raptors, their critical ecosystem roles, the threats they face, and the importance of their conservation to Oman's ecosystem. As such, ESO continues to ensure active engagement with various members of the public. In 2023, community engagement efforts focused on the appreciation of local guides, volunteers and **Environment Authority** rangers for contributing information about Lappet-faced vulture breeding activity and territories. A total of 59 certificates of appreciation were distributed to these individuals for their invaluable contributions.

An infographic titled the 'Resident Vultures of Oman' was produced in 2023, presenting key information on the endangered Egyptian vulture and the Lappet-faced vulture. Available on ESO's website in both [Arabic](#) and [English](#), it includes interesting facts on the breeding biology, feeding behaviour, movement and social behaviour for each of the two species. Threats to vultures and tips for their conservation are also highlighted.

ESO celebrated [International Vulture Awareness Day](#) (IVAD) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2023. It is intended to raise awareness on vultures around the world, celebrate their importance within our ecosystems, and reduce their unfavourable reputation. Unlike popular belief, vultures deliver some crucial ecological services, including nutrient recycling, pest control and mitigating the spread of disease and waste management.

In September 2022, four captive Lappet-faced vultures confiscated by the **Environment Authority** for illegal capture and trade, were released back into the wild at Al Sareen Nature Reserve. In 2023, a [video](#) summarising this collaborative effort was produced, and can be found on ESO's YouTube Channel (ESOMediaChannel). This campaign was funded by the **Disney Conservation Fund**.





## Plastic Awareness Campaign

In line with our commitment to raising environmental awareness, we were pleased to launch a Plastic Awareness Campaign, generously sponsored by **Barka Desalination Company SAOG** (operated by **Veolia Oman**), and in collaboration with the **Omani Women's Association**. This campaign aimed to inspire citizens across Oman to embrace sustainable practices by reducing single-use plastic consumption, promoting recycling, and adopting eco-friendly alternatives.

The Plastic Awareness campaign featured presentations, problem-solving activities, clean-up drives, and engaging children's activities. It also provided valuable resources and information to empower individuals in making informed choices towards a plastic-free future. The community campaign spanned six locations strategically selected in alignment with the sponsor's operations in Oman, including Barka (South Al Batinh), Adam, Al Zahiya (Al Dakhliya), Salalah (Dhofar), Sur, and Qurun (South Sharqiyah).



## Oman Climate Dialogues

In May, ESO launched the Oman Climate Dialogues, a collaborative effort between ESO and **ASYAD Group** aimed at addressing Oman's climate change challenges. This initiative aimed to draw upon ESO's expertise and engage local and international stakeholders through a series of panel sessions and workshops. The events emphasized the urgency of environmental adaptation and the necessity for transformative actions at individual, organizational, and national levels to achieve our collective climate change goals. The dialogues proved beneficial to both ESO members and the general public, providing valuable insights into Oman's position on current climate issues and our shared ambitions for the future. In total, four panel sessions were delivered covering the topics of: "The Status of Oman's Climate: Why It Matters?", "Energy transition and Carbon neutrality by 2050", "Climate Adaptation: Role of Nature-Based Solutions" and "The Road to COP28: Expectations and Ambitions." Additionally, a workshop entitled "How to Run a Sustainable Event" targeted corporates and event organizers to showcase practical methods of improving sustainability of events, including minimizing food waste, energy consumption and water efficiency. Additional workshops aim to be hosted at the beginning of 2024 targeting youth and green jobs, and green finance.



## Oman Environment Day

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, ESO members and volunteers came together to mark Oman Environment Day. 68 volunteers worked tirelessly to fill 110 bags with an estimated 1,232 kg of litter, from Seeb beach. Special appreciation goes to **Tunes** for the drum circle, **Al Bustan** for the snacks, **be'ah** for their logistical support and **Alluban Alfakher** who provided wonderful frankincense gifts for the volunteers.



## Earth Hour 2023

Earth Hour is a global initiative that encourages individuals, communities, and businesses to switch off non-essential lights for one hour on the last Saturday of March, symbolizing their commitment to our planet. It was inspiring to witness people and organizations from across Oman unite in support of this worldwide movement. ESO celebrated the occasion by hosting an event that brought our members together to enjoy nature through a sunset kayak experience and a waste-free iftar.





World Ocean Day 2023

On the occasion of World Ocean Day, ESO partnered with **Oman Sail** and the **Environment Authority** to organize an underwater clean-up mission at the Ad Dimaniyyat Islands targeting abandoned fishing nets entangled in the coral reefs. It is estimated that up to 1 million tons of fishing equipment is abandoned in our oceans annually, resulting in the death of approximately 650,000 marine animals. During this initiative, our dedicated volunteer team successfully removed approximately 200 kilograms of these hazardous nets.



World Clean-up Day 2023

In honor of World Clean-up Day, a global initiative dedicated to cleaning up our environment, ESO organized a beach clean-up at Al Hail Beach, generously supported by **Petrogas E&P**, **Kempinski Hotel Muscat**, and **be'ah**. The clean-up took place on Saturday, September 16th, drawing 250 participants. Together, volunteers collected an estimated 1,680 kilograms of litter. We extend our special thanks to all the dedicated volunteers and valuable sponsors whose contributions were instrumental in making this event a resounding success.



Sardine season in Dhofar, Hamed Al Gheilani



# Education Activities

Oman's youth are our most important environmental campaigners for a sustainable future. ESO delivers a range of educational initiatives that target schools, colleges and universities, aiming to raise environmental awareness and promote the adoption of more sustainable behaviors.

## Namat Schools Competition

The Namat Schools Competition was designed for government schools from grades five to twelve and is a collaborative effort between students, teachers, parents and the local community. Students are challenged to make tangible changes within their school environment and local community to minimize their footprint across three main themes: waste, water, and energy. The third edition of Namat Competition 2022-2023 was sponsored by **Veolia Oman** and implemented in close collaboration with the **Ministry of Education**.

A total of 85 registration forms were received from government schools across all 11 governorates. Teams were shortlisted based on an assessment of their action plans before being asked to proceed to the implementation phase. Based on criteria published on the competition website, 57 reports were evaluated by a panel of judges from ESO and Veolia Oman. The judging panel visited the finalists to personally review their successes before identifying nine winning schools (three in each category).



An award ceremony was held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 under the patronage of HE Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education. The nine winning teams (representing four governorates) were given the opportunity to exhibit their projects to VIP guests ahead of the ceremony.



The Namat Competition continues to serve as a beacon of hope for schools throughout Oman and their surrounding communities. Participants channel their voices, skills, and ideas towards influencing positive changes within their schools and local areas. This movement is dedicated to nurturing change makers, recognizing the urgent need to protect our fragile environment and make sustainability a lifestyle. We congratulate the winning schools below, and look forward to the fourth round of the Namat Competition next year.



**1<sup>ST</sup>** **Bilal bin Rabah (Dakhliya)**  
The team developed agricultural land and a fish farm utilizing gray water and solar power. They successfully harvested 1,600kgs of eggplants and 226kgs of sugar cane and engaged the local community which observed reduced water bills.

**2<sup>ND</sup>** **Abdullah Bin Abbass (North Al Batinah)**  
The school utilized gray water from air conditioners, water coolers and sinks to maintain an agricultural space and involved the local community in expanding green spaces and utilizing green water. The students also marketed their agricultural products and seedlings.

**3<sup>RD</sup>** **Al Qala'ah (Dakhliya)**  
The team built a graywater tank for crop irrigation, utilized innovative irrigation methods, encouraged classrooms to grow seedlings using self-irrigation techniques, implemented rainwater drainage systems, and engaged parents in the "From You to Us" initiative through informative videos.



**1<sup>ST</sup>** **Al Sininah School (Al Buraimi)**  
The team implemented competitions and incentives to promote 100% usage of reusable water bottles and to reduce paper use by 60% through the "Paperless Management" initiative.

**2<sup>ND</sup>** **Al Mamurah (Al Buraimi)**  
The team implemented "Be the Hero of the Story" initiative creating compost from food waste and launching a YouTube environmental awareness channel. They also developed play-based awareness for first-grade students and a "Fasting Iftar" initiative to minimize food waste.

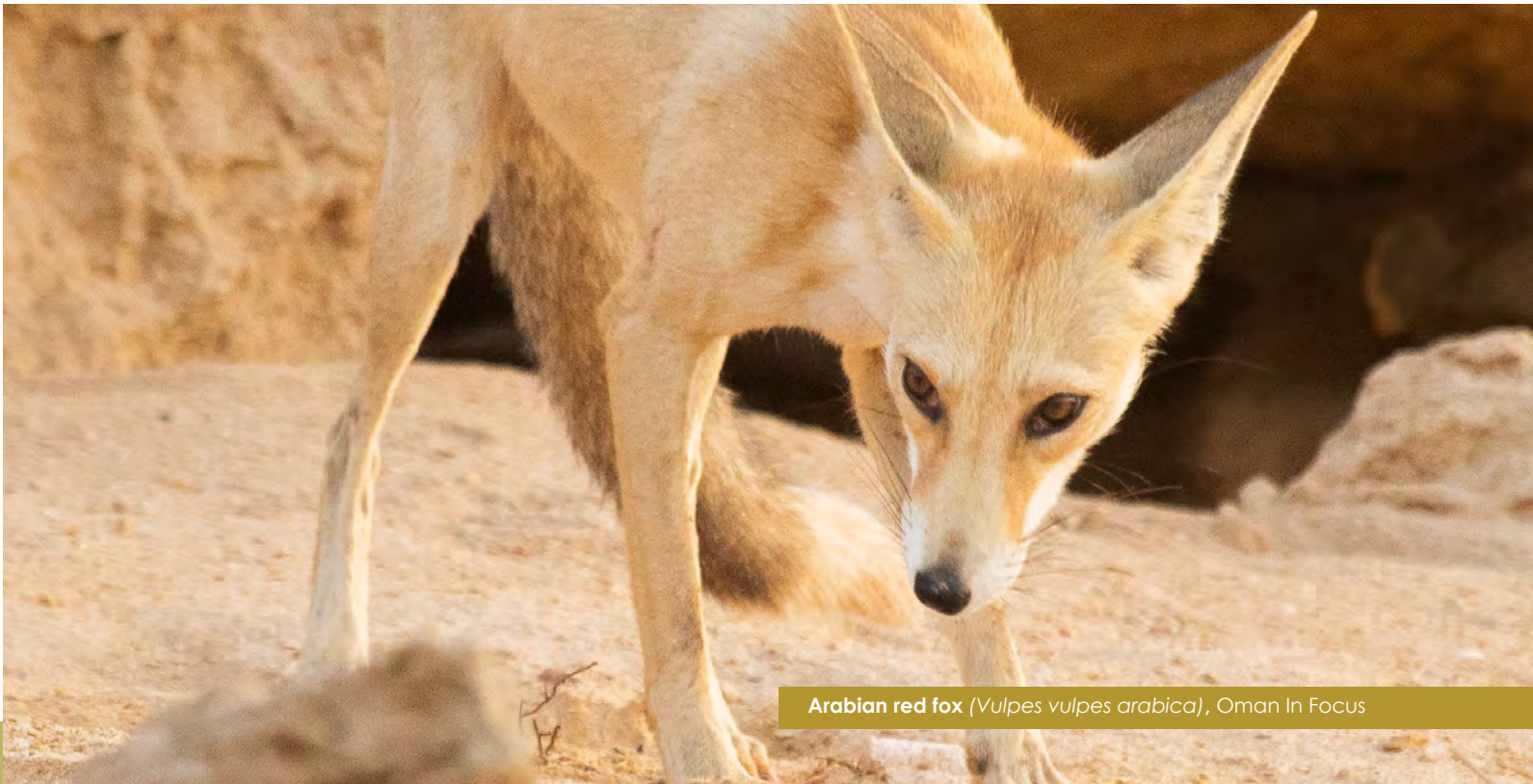
**3<sup>RD</sup>** **Al Hassan Bin Al Haiitham (Al Dhahirah)**  
The team launched the Sustainability Center for Recycling Palm Residues. They established a palm residue collection point, processed the residues into animal feed using a donated grinder, introduced the "Hassan's Coffee" project, and organized workshops to clean palm residues from the outskirts and Al-Aflaj areas.



**1<sup>ST</sup>** **Sima & Mqazah School (Dakhliya)**  
The team implemented energy-saving rules with penalties, replaced 70 electric bulbs with eco-friendly LEDs and switched outdoor floodlights to solar-powered ones.

**2<sup>ND</sup>** **Al Taouq (Dakhliya)**  
The team installed solar panels to power fans in the assembly area and held a competition to encourage "switching off." They introduced an energy awareness "Fatla Cart" containing leaflets and games, encouraging engagement through creative videos and workshops.

**3<sup>RD</sup>** **Al Dhiya'a (North Al Batinah)**  
The team introduced awards and penalties to encourage energy efficiency, utilized solar power for external lighting, held an energy awareness competition and collaborated with the local community through a programme titled "My Eco-Friendly Home" to promote energy conservation awareness.



Arabian red fox (*Vulpes vulpes arabica*), Oman In Focus



# Capacity Building Programme

In 2010, due to a lack of Omanis in the field of environment within the country, it was agreed by the ESO Board that a central part of ESO's mandate would be to hire and train Omani graduates in conservation, community engagement and NGO management, giving them an opportunity to pursue a career with ESO or take on environmental roles in the public or private sector.

ESO has successfully trained 17 young Omanis, some of whom are still with ESO and some who have gone on to work in both the public or private sector, spreading their knowledge and experience. Many of these graduates are very active members and volunteers of ESO and continue to be environmental ambassadors for Oman.

In 2023 the Capacity Building Programme was sponsored by **Veolia Oman** and **Sohar International** (formerly **HSBC**), with three Omanis being supported through the programme. Although graduates are trained in a specific area of NGO management, each are given exposure to the following areas:

- ESO Manage - NGO Management and Fundraising
- ESO Protect - Research and Conservation
- ESO Advocate - Education and Community Outreach



## Rabab Al Lawati

Rabab Al Lawati holds a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Wildlife and Conservation Biology, from La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. She joined ESO as Conservation Outreach Coordinator in February 2021, where she has been involved in field work, data processing, reporting and active engagement with local authorities and communities. Throughout the year, Rabab has played a role in the development and delivery of ESO's research and conservation awareness-raising initiatives, including those on raptors, sea turtles, marine mammals, and frankincense, amongst others. In 2023, she completed a Microsoft Access database course, and the cetacean survey capacity building training organised by ESO. She also participated in the Egyptian vulture nesting surveys, and Arabian Sea humpback whale boat-based surveys, gaining further insight into survey methodology.



## Jawaher Al Ghafri

Jawaher Al Ghafri holds a Bachelor of Communication Studies from Sur College of Applied Sciences and joined ESO as Education Coordinator in 2016. She has subsequently taken over the leadership of our education programmes, targeting school children as well as college and university students in different regions of the Sultanate. In 2019, Jawaher set up a 24-hour Green Innovation Eco-thon, encouraging the development of solutions to environmental challenges by college and university students. The Namat Competition (formerly Green School Competition) was launched in the same year and Jawaher has successfully implemented 3 rounds of the competition which challenges public schools across the Sultanate to form teams and work towards minimizing their water, energy or waste footprint. Owing to the success of the initiative, we continue to gain the support of Veolia and the Ministry of Education to continue the event and this year Jawaher kick started the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Namat Competition (2023-2024). Jawaher is keen to contribute towards UN Sustainable Development Goals and has represented ESO at several local workshops related to Goal 4 – Education and represented ESO at the UNESCO – Transforming Education Together ESD-NET Global Meeting in Tokyo. She also joined the Oman Delegation to the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties 28 in the UAE (COP28). Jawaher continues to develop new education and community engagement materials targeting different youth groups.



## Juhaina Al Ghafri

Juhaina Al Ghafri holds a Bachelor in Bioscience from La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. After volunteering with ESO in 2020, Juhaina joined the team as Communication and Membership Coordinator in February 2021. She has quickly taken on the management of ESO's membership programme, welcoming new members, organising membership events such as clean-up initiatives and managing the delivery of ESO's monthly lecture series. Juhaina has also played a role in the development and delivery of ESO's communication initiatives and now manages all social media platforms with a reach of over 30,000 followers. She has recently completed the cetacean survey capacity building training organized by ESO that plays an important role in developing Omani skill sets in research and conservation.

Other highlights from Juhaina's experience in 2023 include project leading the recently launched "Oman Climate Dialogues", which entails a series of educational sessions that target climate change and environmental issues in the lead up to COP28. She was also a proud youth representative in the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) and a local ambassador within ESO leading in plastic awareness efforts.



Honeycomb moray eel (*Gymnathorax favagineus*), Paul Flandinette



# Other Activities and Fundraisers

## ESO Fundraising Dinner



The economic impact of the last few years has been hugely detrimental to ESO's financial viability. We were, therefore, extremely grateful to kick start the year on 29<sup>th</sup> January with a successful fundraising dinner event that was graciously hosted by the **Honorable Lujaina Darwish**, raising much needed funds to sustain ESO's conservation work.

## Wild Oman: Wonder of Arabia – Fundraising Movie Event



ESO had the privilege of hosting two exclusive screenings of 'Wild Oman: Wonder of Arabia,' a groundbreaking wildlife documentary showcasing Oman's diverse wildlife. Our heartfelt thanks go out to the **Oman in Focus** team for sharing their stunning documentary and to **Omantel** for providing the venue. These events brought together a diverse audience, both from our members and the public, who generously contributed donations while gaining insights into Oman's unique wildlife.

## Anglo-Omani Society Event



ESO, in collaboration with **The Anglo-Omani Society**, hosted an enlightening lecture titled 'Unlocking the Mysteries of Oman's Arabian Sea Humpback Whale Population'. The lecture, presented by Dr Andrew Willson, a renowned humpback whale expert and founder of Future Seas Global SPC, along with ESO's Executive Director, Suaad Al Harthi, offered a comprehensive insight into the Arabian Sea humpback whales, covering their population, ecological significance, the challenges they face, and the vital need for their protection. We are deeply grateful to the event sponsors, **OQ** and **Oman LNG**, whose contributions were instrumental to the success of this event.

## ESO Charity Ball



After a four-year hiatus due to COVID-19 restrictions, we proudly hosted the thirteenth edition of the ESO Charity Ball sponsored by **Oman LNG**, **OMINVEST**, and **Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC**. This event united over 240 corporate leaders, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders who share our passion for making a tangible impact on environmental causes. It also shone a spotlight on ESO's impressive legacy of achievements in education, awareness, and conservation. Our heartfelt gratitude extends to everyone who contributed to the event's success, from sponsors and donors to auction contributors and in-kind supporters, highlighted in the grants and donations section of this report.

## Nicholai Georgiou Photography



**Nicholai Georgiou**, an underwater photographer, discovered his passion for photography through freediving and has since extended it to landscape, travel, and cityscapes. He generously donates a portion of his earnings to ESO and remains committed to supporting our cause as his marine photography portfolio grows.

## Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro for a Cause



**Ella Rajda**, a passionate 16-year-old who interned briefly with ESO, quickly became captivated by our projects, especially the Arabian Sea humpback whale Project. Shortly after her internship, while planning her Mount Kilimanjaro ascent, she felt compelled to raise funds for ESO in support of this project. Her unwavering commitment to our cause was truly inspiring, and her efforts were nothing short of remarkable. Ella's dedication not only raised awareness about the endangered and unique Arabian Sea humpback whale population but also proactively secured \$13,000 in funds for their conservation. We extend our sincere gratitude for her exceptional contributions.

## International Schools & Universities

ESO actively engages with international schools and universities, conducting sessions to foster environmental awareness and engagement with students. Notable participants this year included **ABA International School**, **International French School**, **British School Muscat**, and **Nizwa University of Technology**. In a wonderful display of support, these educational institutions organized donation drives to contribute to ESO's mission.

## Private Donations from Friends of ESO

We were fortunate to be the recipients of donations from our treasured supporters who chose us as their charity of choice, asking friends and family to contribute towards ESO's crucial initiatives in lieu of gifts for their birthdays and during their personally held events. Generous donations were received and we thank them for this thoughtful contribution underscoring their enduring commitment to environmental conservation.



## Awards, Grants, Donations and In-Kind Support

ESO would like to give special thanks to all those who have helped us achieve our goals in 2023. Our donors, sponsors, grant agencies and those who have provided in kind support are listed below in alphabetical order:

- **ABA International School** for donations
- **Abdulaziz Al Alawi, Ali Al Rasbi, Amardeep Singh, Darryl McDonald, Dr Hamed Al Gheilani, Fredrik Christiansen, Gianna Minton, Ghazi Al Farsi, Mohammed Bahar Al Rawas, Nicholai Georgiou, Oman In Focus, Othman Al Jabri and Paul Flandinette** for allowing us to use their imagery on ESO's platforms and materials.
- **Ajit Khimji Group LLC** for free office space
- **Al Bustan Palace a Ritz-Carlton Hotel** for contributing catering for Oman Environment Day
- **Al Qurum Sports Activities, Al Bustan Palace a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Ayana Spa, Booma, Crowne Plaza, Luban, Magic Camp Wahiba Sands, Mumtaz Mahal, Muscat Beauty Salon, National Hospitality Institute, Omanta Scuba, Ote, Padel Addicts, Raw, Seen Ceramics, Wave Summit, Woodlands** for providing gifts and raffle prizes at the ESO Charity Ball 2023
- **Al Sharqiya Aviation, Anantara Al Jabal Akhdar Resort, Hud Hud Tourism and Petrogas E&P** for providing auction prizes at the ESO Charity Ball
- **Anantara Al Baleed Resort Salalah** for guest donations
- **Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort** for guest donations
- **Anglo Omani Society** for organising a lecture on Arabian Sea humpback whale
- **Arid Lands** for supporting the Raptors Research & Conservation Programme
- **ASYAD Group** for funding the Oman Climate Dialogue Series
- **Bank Dhofar** for allowing their customers to donate to ESO via their mobile banking app
- **Barka Desalination Company** for funding the Plastic Awareness and Community Outreach Project
- **be'ah, Climate Fresk Oman, Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel and Al Luban Al Fakher** for supporting our 2023 membership events
- **Book Depository** for donating books to ESO
- **Brandmarks** for offering design and animation work beyond their agreed scope
- **British School Muscat** for donations
- **British Omani Society, the London Speaker Bureau, Oman LNG and Earthwatch Europe** for funding ESO team member's participation in the Oman Natural Heritage Lecture in London
- **Cheltenham School Muscat** for donations
- **Clyde and Co.** for legal advice
- **Crowne Plaza** for donations towards ESO Art 2024
- **Glowing Glowing Gone** event held by Dana Sarhan for raising funds for Ad Dimaniyyat Island conservation
- **Ella Rajda** for her inspiring achievement of summiting Mount Kilimanjaro while raising funds for the Arabian Sea humpback whale Project
- **Ernst and Young** for auditing services
- **Europcar** for donating vehicles to support our field work
- **Future Seas Global SPC** for supporting the Marine Turtle Research and Conservation Programme, Egyptian vulture surveys and the development of the Ad Dimaniyyat Island Nature Reserve awareness materials
- **HH Sayyida Tania Al Said** for her 'Golden Gift' to ESO
- **Hud Hud Travel** for guest donations
- **IMTAC** for donating computers to support our operations
- **International Avian Research** for supporting the Raptors Research & Conservation Programme
- **International French School** for donations
- **Laura Kate Rowlands** for bake sale donations
- **Luban AlFakher** for donating gifts to Oman Environment Day Volunteers
- **Masirah Municipality** for supporting the Turtle Research & Conservation Programme
- **Mendel University** for supporting the Frankincense Research and Conservation Programme
- **Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources** for supporting our conservation projects
- **Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior** for supporting the delivery of the Ad Dimaniyyat Island Nature Reserve community engagement campaign
- **Mosaic Events, Tunes, The Flower Shop, EY Oman, Towell Take Solutions, African & Eastern, KR Eshraqa** for supporting the ESO Charity Ball as in-kind supporters
- **Nicholai Georgiou Photography** for donations through his exhibition
- **Ocean Ecology Network** for supporting the Turtle Research and Conservation Programme
- **Oman Arab Bank** for allowing customers to donate to ESO via their mobile banking app
- **Oman in Focus** for providing Wild Oman Documentary and **Omantel** for providing the space for ESO Fundraising Movie Night
- **Oman National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science** for joining our judging panel for the Namat Schools Competition
- **Oman Sail** for collaborating with ESO to conduct underwater clean-ups at the Ad Dimaniyyat Islands for World Ocean Day
- **Omantel** for supporting donations to ESO from their customers via app and SMS services
- **Ominvest** (Pearl Sponsor), **Oman LNG** (Pearl Sponsor) and **Al Jenaibi International Automobiles** (Coral Sponsor) for supporting the ESO Charity Ball as the official sponsors
- **Panorama Travel** for guest donations
- **PDO's EcOman Centre** for hosting our monthly membership lectures

- **Pendoley Environmental** for supporting the Turtle Research and Conservation Programme lighting solutions initiatives
- **Petrogas E&P, Kempinski Hotel Muscat and be'ah**, for collaborating with us to deliver our 2023 World Clean-up Day event
- **Port of Barka, Port of Al Seeb and Al Mussanah Municipality** for providing a venue for the delivery of the Ad Dimaniyyat Island Nature Reserve presentation to the local community
- **San Francisco State University – Estuary and Ocean Science Centre** for supporting the Turtle Research and Conservation Programme – Bycatch initiative
- **Sharef & Co** for supporting ESO's strategy
- **Shell Development Oman LLC** for funding the Frankincense Research and Conservation Programme
- **Sohar International** for supporting the Capacity Building Programme for Oman Cetacean Research and Conservation
- **Talabat** for allowing their customers to donate to ESO via their food delivery app
- **The Chedi Muscat** for guest donations
- **The Conscious Travel Foundation** for their generous donation
- **The German Embassy in Oman, German Federal Foreign Office** and the **Goethe Institute** for funding ESO team member's participation at The Climate Change and Energy Paradigm Shift Information Tour in Germany
- **The Gulf Research Center (GRC) and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's Regional Programme Gulf States** for funding ESO team member's participation at COP28
- **The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** and the **Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT)** for funding ESO team member's accommodation arrangement at the ESD-Net 2030.
- **TMDone** for allowing their customers to donate to ESO via their food delivery app
- **TRACCS Oman** for media and public relations support throughout the year
- **University of Technology and Applied Sciences** for donations
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service – Marine Turtle Conservation Fund** for funding the Turtle Research and Conservation Programme
- **Veolia Oman** for sponsoring the ESO Capacity Building Programme and the Namat Schools Competition
- **Wali of Masirah and be'ah** for supporting our Masirah Island Net Collection initiative
- **Waterfront & Marina Services SAOC** for free berthing of the ESO boat

## Tourism Donation Programme

### Oman's Visitors Giving Back

While tourism can exert significant pressure on the environment, it also holds the potential for positive change. Collaborating with hotels and tour operators, we present Oman's tourists with the opportunity to actively contribute to our conservation efforts. By doing so, they can play a vital role in safeguarding our endangered wildlife and preserving our precious natural heritage, giving back to Oman and its environment.

### Where do donations go?

Donations play a crucial role in providing the essential funds required to administer our conservation projects, dedicated to safeguarding Oman's endangered biodiversity. These initiatives encompass the Arabian Sea humpback whale, loggerhead turtles, Egyptian and Lappet-faced vultures, and the preservation of frankincense trees. With your generous contributions, ESO can actively protect these imperilled species and equip future generations to do the same.

We aspire to inspire more hotels and tour operators to join this program, and we extend our heartfelt appreciation to the following establishments for offering their guests the opportunity to contribute to ESO's mission.





# Local and International Highlights

## UNEP West Asia Regional Consultative Meeting

Muscat, Oman

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) held its West Asia Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM) in Muscat this year. ESO was represented by Maia Sarrouf Willson, Rabab Al Lawati and Bashar Zaitoon. The objectives of the workshop included increasing civil society engagement in the global environment agenda and the development of a joint regional statement to present at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) which will be held in Nairobi next year. The three priority areas that were identified included; climate change, biodiversity conservation and plastic pollution. The impact of conflict and war on natural resources, the environment and human lives was also highlighted.

## Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative

Muscat, Oman

This workshop highlighted new biodiversity tools and methodologies to support ecosystem-oriented marine management and marine spatial planning in the North-West Indian Ocean region. The workshop was attended by representatives from regional organizations sharing their efforts to support regional biodiversity targets, including countries' implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF). Regional presentations highlighted efforts to reduce marine megafauna bycatch and vessel strikes, addressing the global decline of sharks and rays and the threats they face, and utilization of seabird tracking data to identify global flyways and important bird areas. The workshop highlighted tools to advance conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity and concluded discussing capacity needs, migratory connectivity in the ocean and area-based planning.

## Climate Change and Energy Paradigm Shift

Berlin & Dusseldorf, Germany

The Climate Change and Energy Paradigm Shift Information Tour to Germany was attended by Suaad Al Harthi at the invitation of the **German Embassy** and organized by the **German Federal Foreign Office** and the **Goethe Institute**. The tour included six representatives from Oman representing government, university, and NGO sectors. Several lectures and meetings were organized for the delegation to meet with government, research institutes and the private sector covering the themes of renewable energy, energy transition and energy efficiency. The programme emphasized technologies and advances related to the production of green hydrogen; storage opportunities, fuel cell technology and the challenges of transitioning from natural gas networks to hydrogen.

## Oman Natural Heritage Lecture

London, UK

The 7<sup>th</sup> Oman Natural Heritage Lecture took place at the Royal Geographical Society in London on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December covering the incredible mangroves of Oman and announcing the Barr Al Hikmann peninsula as Oman's third and most recent Ramsar site. The speakers included Badar Al Bulushi and Aziza Al Adhoobi showcasing the immense efforts towards restoration and building the resilience of Oman's mangroves as well as community engagement efforts. The session was co-chaired by Suaad Al Harthi and Nigel Winsor and can be accessed [online](#). Both the Environment Authority and ESO had the opportunity to exhibit literature and publications ahead of the session. The event was funded by the **British Omani Society**, the **London Speaker Bureau**, **Oman LNG** and **Earthwatch Europe** and was also supported by several in-kind supporters and volunteers who came together to make the event a success.

## UN Climate Change Conference – COP28

Dubai, UAE

ESO had the opportunity to participate in the United Nations Climate Change Conference - COP28 in Dubai as part of the Oman National Delegation. Participants from ESO included; Honourable Dr Amor Al Matani, Amira Al Yarubi, Dr Nasser Al Maskari, Rumaitha Al Busaidi, Suaad Al Harthi, Ghaniya Al Mawali and Jawaher Al Ghafri. ESO participants joined panel sessions showcasing the importance of nature-based solutions, gender equality and amplifying youth engagement for climate action. Additionally, Juhaina Al Ghafri was invited by **The Gulf Research Center (GRC) and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's Regional Programme Gulf States** to participate in 2 side events to highlight youth voices from the GCC countries on the topic of climate change, where she presented her role at ESO and highlighted ESO's efforts in mitigating the impact of climate change through various initiatives and campaigns.

## Transforming Education Together: ESD-Net Global Meeting

Tokyo, Japan

The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** and the **Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT)** co-organized the first global meeting of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) - ESD-Net 2030 which was attended by Jawaher Al Ghafri in Tokyo, Japan. The meeting, which was co-hosted by **United Nations University (UNU)**, shared practical information on the development and implementation of key ESD projects at the national and international level and included interactive plenaries, workshops and site visits to local schools and learning centers that integrate ESD in their activities.





Conferences, Lectures and Workshops

ESO is represented by volunteers, staff and board members at national, regional, and international conferences and workshops. Below is a list of those attended in 2023:

- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) Curlew and Godwit Meeting, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; Online
- The 9th session of the Arab Forum for Scientific Research and Sustainable Development, The Role of Arab Women Researchers in Achieving Sustainable Development, Ministry of Education; Muscat
- Cetacean Research: AMSO Introduction, Environment Authority; Muscat
- Climate Change and Energy Paradigm Shift - Information tour for guests from Oman, German Federal Foreign Office; Berlin and Dusseldorf
- Climate Fresk Workshop: Understanding Climate Change Causes & Consequences, Climate Fresk; Muscat
- Countdown to COP28, The Gulf Research Center; Online
- International Day for Biological Diversity EA Workshop, Environment Authority; Muscat
- IUCN Nature-Based Solutions Standard Update Webinars, IUCN; Online
- Multi-stakeholder Platform for Protecting Biodiversity: Inception Meeting, United National Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (WSCWA); Online
- Nature-based Solutions for Disaster and Climate Resilience, UNEP and the Partnership for the Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaptation (PEDRR); Online
- New tools to support ocean conservation, planning and sustainable use in the North West Indian Ocean, Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI); Muscat
- 7<sup>th</sup> Oman Natural Heritage Lecture, Oman UK Natural Heritage Lecture Group and the British Omani Society; London
- Public Cleanliness Symposium, Environment Authority; Muscat
- Regional Consultation for Major Group and Stakeholders (RCM), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Muscat
- REVERSE THE RED: Assessing recovery and conservation impact with the Green Status of Species: how and why you should get involved, IUCN; Online
- Science Laboratories for Sustainable Development Workshop, Ministry of Education and the Islamic Organization for Education, Science and Culture (ISESCO); Muscat
- Second International Meeting on Frankincense and Medicinal Plants, Dhofar University; Salalah
- Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) National Workshop for Oman, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); Muscat
- UN Arab Environment Forum 2023, Leagues of Arab States (LAS) and United Nations Environment Programme – Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP - ROWA); Muscat
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), COP-28; Dubai
- UNFCCC COP28 for First Timers, RMWSSS at Arizona State University and UNC Water Institute; Online
- Volunteering Platform Launch, Ministry of Social Development; Muscat
- Workshop on Reporting and Monitoring Indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Education 2030), Ministry of Education and UNESCO; Muscat



Dhufar rock agama (*Pseudotrapelus dhofarensis*), Ghasi Al Farsi

ESO Public Lectures and Membership Events

January	<p><b>Lecture:</b> Modern tools of Geo technology and its use in environment research, delivered by Petr Vahalik</p> <p><b>Membership Event:</b> Oman Environment Day - Beach clean-up delivered by ESO</p>
February	<p><b>Lecture:</b> Snakes in Oman, delivered by Ahmed Al Busaidi</p> <p><b>Membership Event:</b> World Wetlands Day – ESO Members visit to Al Ansab Wetlands in collaboration with Al Ansab Wetlands</p>
April	<p><b>Lecture:</b> Reptiles in Oman, delivered by Dr Salvador Carranza</p>
May	<p><b>Lecture:</b> Unlocking the Mysteries of Oman's Arabian Sea Humpback Whale Population delivered by Dr Andrew Willson and Suaad Al Harthi</p> <p><b>Panel Discussion:</b> Oman Climate Dialogues “The status of Oman's Climate: Why It Matters” delivered by Dr Yassine Charabi and Ambassador Dr Adnan Al Azri and facilitated by Rumaitha Al Busaidi</p> <p><b>Membership Event:</b> Wild Oman: Wonder of Arabia - Movie Screening</p>
June	<p><b>Panel Discussion:</b> Oman Climate Dialogues “Energy Transition and Carbon Neutrality by 2050” delivered by Eng Faiza Al Harthi, Khalid Al Huraibi and Eman Adel and facilitated by Rumaitha Al Busaidi</p> <p><b>Membership Event:</b> World Environment Day – Beach Clean-up</p>
July	<p><b>Lecture:</b> The Future of Microplastics, delivered by Sumaiya Al Siyabi</p>
August	<p><b>Panel Discussion:</b> Oman Climate Dialogues “Climate Adaptation: Role of Nature-Based Solutions” delivered by Hatim Al Abdissalaam, Dr Thuraya Al Sareeri and Suaad Al Harthi and moderated by Rumaitha Al Busaidi</p>
September	<p><b>Membership Event:</b> Wild Oman: Wonder of Arabia - Movie Screening</p> <p><b>Membership Event:</b> World Clean-up Day – Beach clean-up</p>
October	<p><b>Membership Event:</b> Climate Fresk Workshop, delivered by Aisha Al Balushi</p>
November	<p><b>Panel Discussion:</b> Oman Climate Dialogues “The Road to COP28: Expectations and Ambitions” delivered by Dr Said Al Sarmi and Mohammed Al Shuayli and facilitated by Rumaitha Al Busaidi</p> <p><b>Membership Event:</b> Oman Climate Dialogues “How to Run Sustainable Events” workshop, delivered by Kaiser M Tirmizi and Hassan Tayyab</p>



# Membership

## Membership Benefits

We are proud to announce that all previous partners from 2022 have continued their collaboration with us in 2023. We have established partnerships with various companies in the fields of beauty, veterinary care, hotels and resorts, activities and entertainment, as well as restaurants and cafés to offer our members exclusive discounts and benefits:

### Beauty



#### Ayana Spa

Oman's first organic, green spa, inspired by nature, using only premium organic products that are safe for the body and the environment. Members can select from a choice of luxurious treatments from around the world to rejuvenate and beautify.

2nd Floor Al Sarooj Plaza, Muscat  
Telephone: 2469 3435  
email: [info@ayanaspa.com](mailto:info@ayanaspa.com)  
website: [www.ayanaspa.com](http://www.ayanaspa.com)

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 10% on facial services, hair services and massage services
- 10% - 20% on body waxing packages, massage and spa treatment packages and manicure & pedicure package
- Discount is applicable Sun -Thurs on services above RO 16



#### Me Time Ladies Salon

Me Time Salon is a project by Bint Al Jabry Trading. Our Salon is located in Al Khuwair with experienced staff who will ensure your needs are met. Our services include all beauty treatment from hair styling to spa treatments. Offer extends to member's +1. A member who comes in with a partner can enjoy the discounts in Me Time Ladies Salon or Me Time Men's Salon.

Booking Tel:  
Naji (Hair Stylist) 95238483  
Mimi (Beauty Expert) 94061217

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 10% off any hair and facial services
- 20% off products
- 20 RO for 1 hour body massage
- 10 RO for 1 hour back and shoulders
- 10 RO for manicure & pedicure



#### Me Time Men's Salon

Me Time Salon is a project by Bint Al Jabry Trading. Our Salon is located in Al Khuwair with experienced staff who will ensure your needs are met.

Offer extends to member's +1. A member who comes in with a partner can enjoy the discounts in Me Time Ladies Salon or Me Time Men's Salon

Booking Tel: Iheb Kahloun (Hair Stylist) 79094423

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 10% off any hair treatments and style, any face waxing, any henna tattoo art
- 10% off 1 hour head & Shoulders massage
- 15 RO only for hair protein and straightener
- Discount is applicable to all above services plus any others including service type. Discount not applicable a week before Eid or on offer packages

## Veterinary



#### Capital Veterinary Centre

Capital Veterinary Centre LLC "CVC" provides the highest level of veterinary care available in Oman. Services include, early-age neutering, ophthalmic surgery, orthopaedic surgery, dental and scaling and other dental procedures, x-rays, precaution vaccinations along with treatments of various illnesses and diseases. Additional services include pet grooming services accommodating pets whilst their owners are travelling. For more information visit [www.vetoman.com](http://www.vetoman.com), or call +968 24577551

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

- On purchase of one eligible grooming service receive the second service of equal or lower value free.
- On purchase of one day boarding service, receive the second boarding day free.
- On purchase of one doctor consultation receive the second consultation free.
- 15% off dental and scaling under sedation, dog spay or castration (neutering) operation, DHPPL vaccine for dogs and

- Tricat vaccine for cats
- 20% off rabies vaccine for cats and dogs
- 25% off for stray animals for any service
- 30% off microchip for cats and dogs



#### Al Qurum Veterinary Clinic

Al Qurum Veterinary Clinic, where your pets get the best Pet-erinary care in Oman. Visit us at our Main Hospital in Madinat Sultan Qaboos or at our branch in Azaiba. Find our details on [www.muscatvets.com](http://www.muscatvets.com) or contact us on [info@muscatvets.com](mailto:info@muscatvets.com). MSQ Hospital 2460 7735 or Azaiba Clinic 2412 1173.

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 10% discount on vaccinations, routine consultations and neutering
- Discount valid in both branches (Al Azaiba and MSQ)

## Hotels & Resorts



Sama Properties:  
Sama Heights (Jabel Al Akhdar), Sama Al Wasil (Ibra, Al Sharikiyah), Sama Ras Al Jinz, Sama Heritage

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 15% discount on room rate which are on half board. This offer cannot be combined with any other promotions. Reservation must be made prior to arrival and a confirmation voucher along with membership card must be presented upon check in. Any extras will be an additional charge.



#### Turtle Beach Resort

A traditional Omani-style resort operating for more than 20 years, located in Ras Al Hadd area (world-famous breeding ground for the Green turtles). Turtle Beach Resort is a semi-island resort surrounded by sea.

For Reservation: [info@tbroman.com](mailto:info@tbroman.com)  
Mobile: +968 99007709

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 15% discount on room rate which are half board
- Discount cannot be combined with any other promotions
- Reservations must be done prior to arrival



Wattled starling (*Creatophora cinerea*). Amardeep Singh



## Corporate Membership

ESO is grateful for the support of all our Corporate Members

- Ajit Khimji Group
- Alizz Islamic Bank
- Bank Muscat
- Barka Desalination Company
- Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang (CMS)
- Europcar Oman
- EY Oman
- Nama Water Services
- National Finance
- National Trading Company
- OCTAL Holding SAOC
- Oman Cables Industry SAOG
- Oman Oil Marketing Company
- Oman Sail
- Omantel
- Omran Group
- OQ Group
- OQ8
- Oman Qatar Insurance Company
- Petrofac International Oman
- Port of Duqm
- STRABAG Oman LLC
- Tethys Oil Oman Ltd
- TotalEnergies Renewables Development Middle East (Oman)

As an exclusive privilege for our corporate members, ESO has crafted Oman-specific guidelines to promote sustainable office practices and facilitate corporate clean-up initiatives. We are committed to fostering closer collaboration with our members, working together on joint campaigns that champion environmental causes.

## Collaboration with International Organisations

- Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies
- African Aquatic Mammal Network
- Anglo-Omani Society
- Arabian Sea Whale Network
- BirdLife International - Middle East Regional Office
- Clear Blue Photo
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Abu Dhabi Office)
- Endangered Wildlife Trust
- European Union
- Fair Source Botanicals LLC
- Fundación Cethus
- Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI)
- HawkWatch International
- International Avian Research
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature – Regional Office for West Asia
- International Whaling Commission
- IUCN SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group
- IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group
- Let's Do It World - World Clean-up Day
- Megaptera Marine Conservation
- Mendel University in Brno
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration - SouthWest Fisheries and Science Centre
- Ocean Ecology Network
- Oceanswell
- Ornithological Society of the Middle East
- United Nations Environment Programme - West Asia
- University of Exeter, Centre for Ecology and Conservation
- Wageningen University and Research
- Wild Me
- Wildbook
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- World Shipping Council
- WWF - Earth Hour
- WWF - Pakistan



Cattle egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Oman In Focus



# Acknowledgements

There are many people we wish to thank for their support, hard work and dedication to ESO.

First and foremost, special thanks go to ESO's Patron, HH Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib Al Said, who has always supported the Society and has been instrumental in its success. We also thank the ESO Board 2022-2024 for their voluntary commitment and dedication over this term.

A special thank you goes to ESO President, the Honourable Dr Amor Al Matani for his strategic vision and guidance.

We must acknowledge the continued support of our Emeriti Board members, HH Sayyida Tania Al Said, Sayyida Lamees Daar and Dr Mehdi Jaffar who continue to support and inspire us.

Thank you to Rumaitha Al Busaidi, ESO Board Member who volunteered hours of her time in support of the Oman Climate Dialogues.

We thank the Honorable Lujaina Darwish who graciously hosted a dinner in support of raising funds for ESO.

We acknowledge the beautiful work of Maisa Al Hooti and the Oman in Focus team, for launching the 'Wild Oman: Wonder of Arabia' documentary showcasing Oman's wildlife and generously providing exclusive screenings for two fundraising movie nights for ESO.

We thank Nicholai Georgiou for providing donations to ESO through the sale of his underwater photographs; and Ali Al Rasbi, Amardeep Singh, Darryl McDonald, Dr Hamed Al Gheilani, Fredrik Christiansen, Gianna Minton, Ghasi Al Farsi, Mohammed Bahar Al Rawas, Nicholai Georgiou, Oman In Focus and Paul Flandinette who have allowed us the use of their beautiful images throughout this report.

The Environment Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Social Development continue to be staunch supporters of ESO, and we thank them for their guidance and understanding of our work.

None of ESO's work would be possible without the much-needed funding we receive from our corporate members, sponsors, and supporters. We thank all of them and hope that their generosity will continue for years to come.

We thank Ajit Khmiji Group, who have given ESO free office space for many years.

PDO EcOman Center who have provided space for ESO membership events over the years. EY Oman and Clyde & Co who provide in kind auditing and legal services. Sharef & Co for their in-kind support with the development of ESO's strategy. Europcar who provide staff vehicles for our field work and Waterfront & Marina Services SAOC who provide ESO with free berthing for the ESO boat.

Oman's media have been extremely supportive in making our efforts public, and ESO would like to thank all media houses for their continued coverage of our projects and successes. Special thanks go to TRACCS Oman for providing our PR services.

We thank every one of our members for attending our events and dedicating their time and energy to supporting the conservation of Oman's environment.

Last but not least, we must also acknowledge the dedication of our staff who are the backbone of the Society and its work.

As we move forward, we remain committed to our vision of conserving Oman's environment and seek continued collaboration and support from all our valued partners and supporters.

## Volunteer Acknowledgements

Volunteers are a very important part of ESO's work, strengthening our organization's ability to deliver our mission to protect Oman's environment and wildlife. In particular, we would like to thank:

- **Ali Al Rasbi**, and the **Environment Authority's rangers and staff**, for supporting the 'Chasing Oman's Endangered Vulture Populations' project.
- **Anne Manuel** for supporting the Strategic Communications Assessment.
- **Antonio Dias De Almeida**, **Fiona Lemaire**, **Irene Gomez**, and **Reem Al Harthy** for participating in World Oceans Day-Ad Dimaniyyat Underwater Clean-up.
- **Arooba Saeed** for supporting the Communication Team and contributing to the Membership Database Management.
- **Badar Al Yazidi** for giving his time to support Namat Competition 3<sup>rd</sup> edition judging and evaluation phase.
- **Ella Rajda** for her valuable support to the ESO Communications Team and her contributions to engaging international schools. We also extend our sincere gratitude to her for raising funds for ESO during her recent journey to summit Mount Kilimanjaro.
- **Fuad Tbaileh** and **Sarah Zaitoon**, for giving up their time to support World Clean-up Day.
- **Irene Gomez Perez**, **James Cran Stewart** and **Marianna Jutta Theresia Stammeijer** for their help with Egyptian vulture breeding surveys on Masirah Island.
- **Khalid Al Huraibi** for moderating the 4<sup>th</sup> Oman Climate Dialogues panel discussion.
- **Sayyida Lamees Daar** and **Olivia Dalziel**, for their dedication and support in the design and production of ESO's 2023 Annual Report.
- **Maryam Al Farsi** for interning and supporting several Research and Conservation initiatives.
- **Dr Michael McGrady**, **Ali Al Rasbi** and **Faisal Al Lamki** for supporting the Raptors Research and Conservation Programme.
- **Rumaitha Al Busaidi** for leading and moderating the Oman Climate Dialogues Series initiative.
- **Sara Zaitoon** for interning with ESO and supporting the organisation of ESO's photo database.
- **HH Sayyida Tania Al Said**, **Sayyida Lamees Daar**, **Gabriela Romera-Giorgi** and **Antonia Vegh**, for their instrumental support in driving the success of ESO's Charity Ball.
- The following entities and volunteers for actively supporting ESO's work and the 2023 Masirah net clean-up campaign: local labourers, **HE Wali of Masirah**, **South Sharqiyah and Masirah Municipality**, **Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources**, **Environment Authority**, **be'ah** and **SUMA EcoVision LLC team members**, and team members from **ESO** and **Future Seas Global SPC**.

Thank you to those volunteers who may not be mentioned and have helped ESO in any way in 2023.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at ESO, please email us on [admin@eso.org.om](mailto:admin@eso.org.om).



Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Paul Flandinette



## Volunteer of the Year Award



**Ali Al Rasbi**  
For the third consecutive year, Ali continued to provide new information about nesting sites for vultures and other birds of prey in Oman through a network of collaborators from various Omani governorates. This network includes more than sixty people interested in wildlife, which he established from scratch and annexed to ESO projects. Through his efforts, Ali enabled us to save time, effort and money, therefore allowing more resources to go towards raptor conservation.



**Ella Rajda** channelled her deep passion for the Arabian Sea humpback whale into a remarkable climb up Mount Kilimanjaro. Her commitment to these magnificent marine mammals, ignited during a brief internship with ESO, led her to dedicate her ascent to their cause. Ella's unwavering dedication not only raised crucial awareness for these endangered species but also proactively generated \$13,000 in funds. We wholeheartedly express our gratitude for her exceptional contributions.



**Gabriela Romera-Giorgi** has dedicated her time to supporting the organisation of ESO's Charity Ball. She tirelessly reached out to numerous companies to collect in-kind support for the raffle, produced the raffle video, maintained communication with supporters and was involved in the overall planning. Thank you for your commitment!

## Interns



**Arooba Saeed** provided valuable assistance to the Communication and Membership Coordinator during her three-week internship at ESO. Her responsibilities included managing the membership database, drafting the Membership Events report, and aiding in the organization of membership forms. Arooba demonstrated a clear grasp of her tasks and exhibited exceptional cooperation and readiness to complete assignments.



**Ella Rajda** is in her final school year, and completed a two-week internship with the Communication and Fundraising Team, where she participated in the UN Environment Programme - Arab Forum and gained extensive insight into ESO's mission. Ella shadowed the team, assisted and coordinated international school donation drives, and learned about social media content creation, contributing to the organization's online efforts.



**Sohini Dudhat**  
Sohini is a PhD student at The University of St Andrews who is working on the factors influencing marine mammal strandings in the coastal waters of Oman. She completed a one-month internship at ESO in 2023, with the aim of understanding the long-term spatial and temporal trends of strandings in Oman and exploring the effects of human activities and oceanographic factors on the stranding rates observed.



**Fatma Al Farsi, Maryam Al Farsi and Sara Zaitoon**  
Fatma Al Farsi (BSc in Environmental Management and Practice – ongoing, Global College of Engineering and Technology), Maryam Al Farsi (BSc in Environmental Engineer, German University of Technology in Oman) and Sara Zaitoon (high school graduate) completed internships at ESO, supporting the Research and Conservation team on the Raptors Research and Conservation Programme, the Whale and Dolphin Research and Conservation Programme, and other administrative tasks.

Thank you to everyone who supported the efforts of ESO in 2023. Without the support of our sponsors, members and volunteers none of the work we deliver would be possible. We look forward to working with you again in 2024 as we deliver our 20<sup>th</sup> year of support to Oman's incredible natural environment.



Dragon moray eel (*Enchelycore paradalis*), Paul Flandinette





# Annual Report 2023

