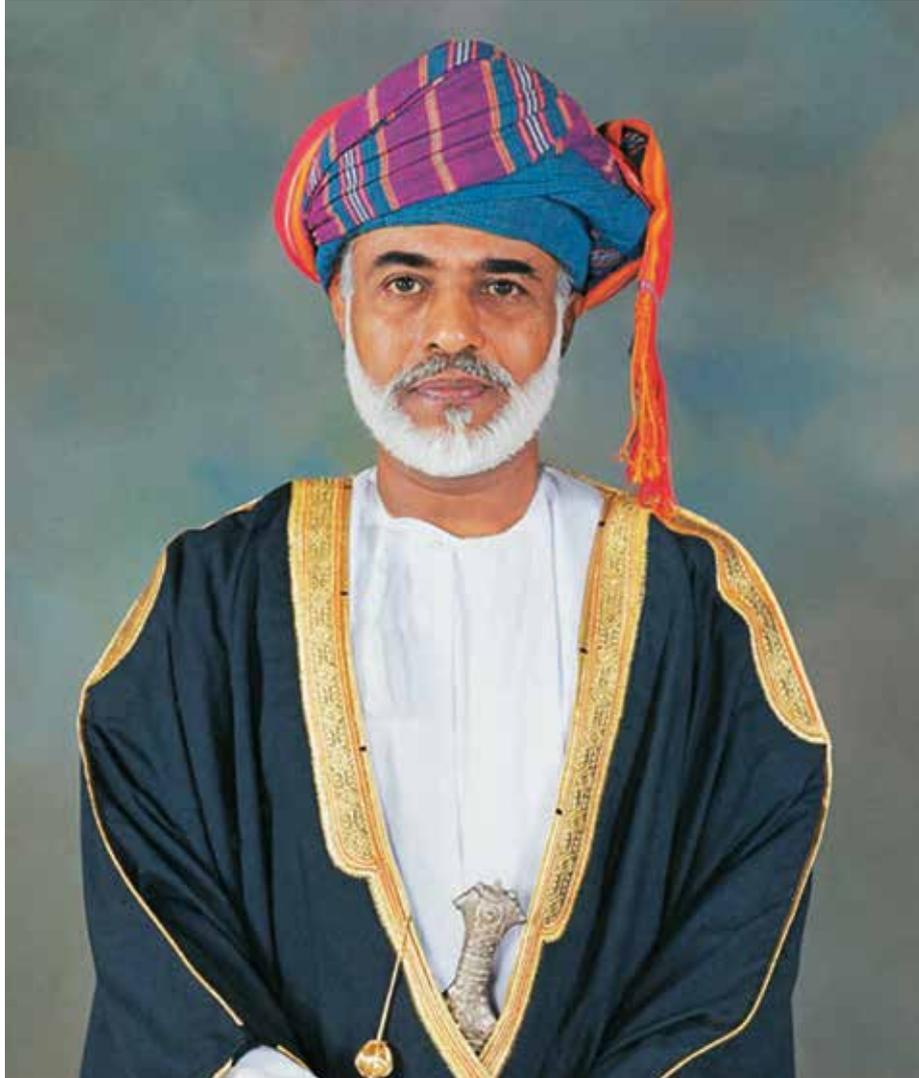




Annual Report 2017





His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said

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Front Cover: Arabian chameleon,
Haitham Al Shanfari

This Page: Hamed Al Gheilani

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Message from the President

2017 has continued to be financially challenging for ESO. We did, however, organise a very successful fundraiser towards the end of the year, which has helped tremendously and we are thankful to all who supported us. I am happy to say that many projects have continued as planned, although given the financial situation we were in towards the end of the year, a difficult decision had to be taken to close the Dhofar Office. This was not a decision that was taken lightly, as the region is environmentally extremely important, and has been the focus of the frankincense research and tree planting initiatives. This does not mean, however, that we will stop working in the Dhofar region and we will continue to cover that area from Muscat.

The Board has continued to work on implementing new policies to ensure the Society runs in a professional manner and we are working on redrafting the constitution in order for it to be in line with the way in which our organisation has come to function.

2018 is an election year and with that we have some board members who will be stepping down and new board members joining the board. I would like to take the opportunity thank all the board members for their time, effort and contributions they have made.

Our work continues to be supported by companies who believe in our cause and have partnered with us over the years. This annual report is a testament to what their funds continue to enable us to achieve.

The continued strengthening of our relationship with the private sector, the government and the public is critical to our future success. ESO has built strong ties with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and we are very grateful for their support and trust in ESO's abilities.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our supporters who have played a vital role in helping ESO grow into a significant stakeholder in the conservation of Oman's natural heritage. I'd like to extend a special thanks and appreciation to all the individual members, volunteers who give so much time to ESO and without whom, we would not be where we are today.

Tania S Al Said
President



Introduction



As many of you know, this will be my last year on the ESO Board. After more than 14 years I will be stepping down from the board in March 2018 and I am so proud to see what we have achieved and built, together with dedicated staff, board and volunteers. I am grateful for all the support, guidance and encouragement over the years and I look forward to continuing to be an active ESO volunteer.

Considering the financial difficulty that ESO has faced, along with the rest of the NGOs in Oman, 2017 has been a year of great success.

We have seen the continuation of annual events such as Earth Hour and the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition, which was an incredible success this year with the participation of 174 students representing 21 colleges and universities, with the winners going on to win top placement at the regional level in Dubai.

Our research and conservation projects continue with new discoveries and findings being made; significantly, the analysis of our acoustic data for the Arabian Sea humpback whale is proving to be very interesting in our understanding of their behaviour. Our advocacy work continues to progress for these

endangered animals and ESO held its first international conference to continue regional collaboration in this area. Turtle conservation has moved to high level stakeholder engagement with Oman's government and the monitoring of loggerhead turtles continues to show a devastating reduction in numbers. Our Frankincense Research and Conservation Project has come to an end and although we did not have funding to continue our Egyptian vulture conservation this year, we did manage to release some beautiful raptors brought in from Bahrain.

Our community outreach and education work was exceptional this year and included visits all over the Sultanate, targeting schools, colleges and community groups. Presentations, games, clean-ups, discussions and stakeholder engagement took place in conjunction with our office in Salalah, which unfortunately, due to lack of funding, has now been closed.

Although funding has decreased, our Capacity Building Program still thrives and training of young Omanis in the field of environmental conservation has exceeded expectations and enhanced our educational projects, community outreach work, volunteer programs and scientific research.

2017 has seen eight of our Omani staff being trained in field research, data entry and analysis, education and awareness programs, volunteer engagement and project management. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ESO staff, board members and volunteers for all the time and energy they put into making ESO a success. Our work would not be possible without the support of Oman's corporate sector – we thank you for your generous contributions.

Enjoy the 2017 Annual Report and thank you for taking the time to read about our work and achievements.

Best Wishes,
Lamees Daar
Executive Director

ESO Board

The following Board Members were elected in April 2016 for a two-year duration:

President

HH Sayyida Tania bint Shabib Al Said holds a BSc in Marine and Freshwater Biology and a Diploma in Early Childhood Education. She is a founding member of ESO and has served as the President of the board of directors of ESO since its establishment. Sayyida Tania initiated the Say No to Plastic Bags Campaign, organises the annual ESO fundraising ball as well as the annual corporate ECO BOWL competition. She represents ESO in the media and helps with fundraising initiatives. Currently Sayyida Tania is working on the renewal of the ESO strategy and is updating the old constitution to bring it in line with current work and operations.

Vice President

Mr Amor Nasser Al Matani holds a BEng (Hons) and an MBA. 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 a number of executive positions, including Deputy Director General for Administration and Finance at the Royal Hospital, Oman's largest hospital for specialised medical care. 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 is also the Chief HR Executive Officer. Mr Al Matani has a passion for better working and safe environments and is a proactive leader in striving for a cleaner 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 OLN's HAS International School and is also the Chairman of the Oman Road Safety Association.

Executive Director

Ms Lamees Daar is a founding board member of ESO and has been on the executive board since ESO's establishment. She voluntarily managed the society for three years until a manager was hired in 2007 and she represented ESO at most regional UNEP meetings in the Society's early years. She holds a BSc in Environmental Sciences and in the past, has worked for HMR Environmental Consultants. Lamees has been responsible for securing numerous funding opportunities and sponsorships for ESO, writing proposals for current projects, chairing the Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve Steering Committee, co-managing the Say No to Plastic Bags Campaign and the Earth Hour Initiative, writing regular press releases and managing a comprehensive overhaul of the ESO website. She is also responsible for putting training programs in place for the ESO Capacity Building Program.

Treasurer

Mr Yasser Macki works as the IT System Engineer with Hill International on the Development of Muscat International and Salalah Airports. He holds a BA in Management Information Systems and has been an ESO member since 2004 as well as ESO's Treasurer on the current board. During his tenure as treasurer, Yasser has been responsible for managing ESO's overall as well as specific project budgets. He has also implemented ESO's accounting system. Yasser is very active in a voluntary capacity and has organised and managed the majority of ESO clean-ups over the years.

Public Relations Officer

Ms Dana Sarhan is a Special Project Advisor at Petroleum Development Oman. In 2016 she was seconded as a Subject Matter Expert to a government Tourism Lab and led the development of two projects within the Protected Area and Nature Sites Initiatives. She is currently working with PDO and the Geological Society of Oman on developing Oman's first Geopark. She has held various corporate communication roles in over 17 years of PR and CSR experience at Omran, HSBC, the Al Bustan Palace Hotel and Crowne Plaza Muscat. She helped establish PR and media relations at ESO and strategically handled ESO's public image during press conferences and crisis management. Whether in paid work or while volunteering, Dana has followed Sustainability and Development agendas. She supports NGOs such as the Association for Handicapped Children, Dar Al Atta, ESO, UNEP, UNICEF and International Refugee and Emergency Response. She holds a postgraduate diploma in Responsible Tourism Management from Leeds Metropolitan University and has a keen interest in tourism in protected areas.

Board Member

Ms Dureen Mehdi is the interim head of the Education and Communication department at Oman Botanic Garden. Upon finishing a degree in Biotechnology at Sultan Qaboos University, she started work as an Environmental Education Specialist at Oman Botanic Garden where she worked to promote the garden, its

mission and goals through participating in exhibitions, delivering presentations to a wide range of audiences. Dareen completed her MSc in Conservation Science at Imperial College, London, UK after which she returned to OBG. She has special interests in environmental education, public outreach and the promotion of nature conservation and social empowerment through preservation of local livelihoods and traditional practices.

Board Member

Mr Mohammed Al Mashani is the General Manager for Corporate Affairs at Port of Salalah. He holds a BSc in Safety Management from Central Missouri State University and an MSc in Facilities Management and Asset Maintenance from Herriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. Over the last 15 years Mohammed has worked in different sectors: oil and gas, where he worked in PDO in logistics and HSE Petrochemicals, where he joined Aromatics Oman. Until moving to his current position, he was the HSE Senior Manager for Port of Salalah. He has been through a CPMD Program through APM Terminals in association with ESADE Business School and in 2015 was chosen for the first cohort of the Oman National CEO program.

Board Member

Mr Ahmed Al Rashdi holds an MBA in Business Administration and Management. He is an environmental activist interested in the vegetation of Oman and a co-founder of the Civil Initiative for the Cultivation of Native Plants in Jabal Al Akhdar, he is also very interested in promoting organic farming and urges the official agencies to standardise it in Oman. He had the chance to participate in the mobile Environment Research Unit - Hajar Mountains Biodiversity Survey in 2015.

Board Member

Dr Mahad Bawain is an Associate Professor in the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering at the College of Engineering. Before that he was the Director of the Centre of Environmental Studies and Research at Sultan Qaboos University. He holds PhD in Environmental Engineering from the University of Alberta, Canada. He has 16 years experience in the area of environmental engineering with an emphasis on wastewater management. He has been managing many research and consultancy projects related to wastewater management during the last 8 years such as Coastal Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Development, Feasibility of Marine Water Quality Monitoring Network in the Coastal Region of Sultanate of Oman and several others. Dr Bawain has contributed to 42 peer-reviewed international publications, 46 conference papers and presentations and has also published a book and contributed to book chapters.

Board Member

Mr Osamah Abdullatif is currently Assistant General Manager - Project Finance at Bank Muscat. He is one of ESO's founding members and was a board member from 2004-2012. During his time on the board he held positions including Executive Director, in which he set up ESO's first office and hired its first full time staff members and Treasurer. He is a banker with 22 years experience, most of which are with Bank Muscat. Among the positions he has held is CEO of Bank Muscat in Kuwait (2012-2016). His department is responsible for the bank's membership in the Equator Principles (EP), a risk management framework adopted by financial institutions for determining, assessing and managing environmental and social risks in projects. Osamah has a Bachelors Degree in Finance from California State University, a Masters Degree in Business IT Systems from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow and has completed the General Management Program at Harvard Business School.



ESO Staff



1. **Suaad Al Harthi**
Program Director
2. **Bashaar Zaitoon**
Administrative Manager
3. **Maïa Sarrouf Willson**
Research and Conservation Manager
4. **Dr Hamed Al Gheilani**
Community Outreach Manager
5. **Antonia Vegh**
Event and Volunteerism Coordinator
6. **Juma Al Humaidi**
Field Assistant
7. **Yusra Jaffer**
Public Relations Manager
8. **Hamed Al Mazroei**
Office Coordinator – Dhofar Office
9. **Aisha Al Ghallabi**
Membership Coordinator
10. **Abdulaziz Alawi**
Community Outreach Coordinator

11. **Siham Al Tuwaijri**
Administrative Assistant
12. **Said Al Jabri**
Public Relations Officer
13. **Asma Al Balushi**
Research and Conservation Coordinator
14. **Ghasi Al Farsi**
Field Coordinator
15. **Jenan Al Asfoor**
Communications Coordinator
16. **Juma Al Arami**
Field Assistant
17. **Jawaher Al Ghafri**
Education Coordinator
18. **Atika Ahmed**
Accountant
19. **Mussallam Tabook**
Dhofar Office Manager

Wadi Arbiyeen,
Qasim Al Farsi



Marine Conservation Projects



Turtle Research and Conservation

The global importance of Oman to the survival of sea turtles has been definitively established through surveys and research conducted within the Sultanate over the past 40 years. In the last nine years, ESO, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA)** and senior international scientists, has played the lead research role on turtles in the Sultanate. We have accelerated our knowledge and understanding of turtle biology, ecology and conservation needs, as well as raised the international profile of Oman's turtles. ESO was able to secure partial funding from **Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO)** to support the Sea Turtle Conservation Project in 2017 and as such, only basic monitoring took place in 2017. Additionally, ESO continued to engage with the local community to raise awareness through funding from **PDO** for awareness on the island.

The project is based mainly on Masirah Island and focuses on loggerhead turtles. In 2013, an initial review of 2008-2012 loggerhead nesting data revealed the first indication of a dramatic decline in loggerhead nesting on Masirah, with a reduction in nesting females by approximately two-thirds from the pre-1980 estimates. The recent estimated numbers of loggerhead turtles nesting on Masirah further confirm these alarming figures. An average of 11,000 female turtles are estimated to have visited the island in 2014, compared to an estimation of 30,000 to 40,000 females in the late 1970s. In 2016 a shorter-term decline of 58.9% was noted when comparing the data set with the average from 2008-2015. The major threats that impact both the habitat and population numbers are land-use disturbances such as extensive coastal development and beach driving, and sea-based disturbances such as turtles being caught in fishing nets by mistake (bycatch).

A 2015 assessment of loggerhead sea turtle populations by the IUCN Species Survival Commission assigned (Oman's) North-West Indian Ocean loggerhead subpopulation as critically endangered, thus facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future. *The assessment was attributed to the reported nesting decline on Masirah Island.*

Sea Turtle Conservation and Sustainable Fishing

In order to evaluate the threat of sea-based activities, ESO has begun evaluating artisanal fisheries off the coast of Masirah Island, particularly with reference to the co-occurrence of loggerhead female turtles that are found nesting on the Island annually. The work follows on from community-based interview surveys conducted in 2013, which reported a concern for the levels of turtle capture from fisheries.



The follow-up studies conducted in 2016-2017 trialled a series of methods to map vessel movements, generate metadata of gear types used and to document bycatch of turtles and other marine vertebrates from fishing activities.

The use of dhows enabled the gathering of track data that showed the highest levels of co-occurrence was found to the south and east of the Island, with a cluster of bycatch including various turtle species and dolphins reported from the southern fishing grounds. More comprehensive data has been generated in 2017 using time-lapse cameras deployed onto each vessel, which allows the detection of exactly when nets are set and recovered, and this can then be accurately aligned with the GPS location data. This development will now allow accurate characterisation of all vessel activities. The methodology used has been shared with **Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)** for potential replication in their monitoring systems for dhow vessels.



Community Outreach and Public Engagement

Several community outreach activities were planned throughout the year to raise awareness on the importance of marine turtles, with generous support from PDO, notably:

A community awareness campaign in April to raise awareness and clean the nesting beaches of discarded nets and litter ahead of the arrival of the first loggerhead nesters. This campaign was made possible through collaboration with the **Masirah Municipality**, the **Wali of Masirah** and the **Oman Women's Association of Masirah**, the **Royal Air Force of Oman, MAF and MECA**. The community also participated in an environmental quiz and football tournament in which four teams were formed representing each of the four species of sea turtles nesting on the Island (Loggerhead, Olive Ridley, Hawksbill and Green).

In August an additional campaign took place, which included presentations to schools, the Women's Association of Masirah and members of the local community. Fishermen were provided with information on improving fishing practices, appropriate waste disposal and methods of releasing turtles entangled in fishing nets. Over 100 boat owners and fishermen were targeted and provided with information leaflets. More information can be found in Community Outreach section of this report.

3 التاثير The Impact

2 الصيغ غير المستدام Unustainable Fishing

1 بيئة متوازنة Balanced Environment

٤ أنزل السلحفاة إلى البحر من المنطقة المنخفضة من القارب بعيداً عن المحرك أو بعد إطفاءه.

٣ خالص السلحفاة من الشباك بواسطة مقص أو مقبض

٢ ارفع السلحفاة من صدفتها من الأمام والخلف

١ اجتنب رفع السلحفاة من زعنفتها الأمامية أو الخلفية

تخليص السلحفاة من الشباك

١٠ ٩ ٨ ٧ ٦ ٥ ٤ ٣ ٢ ١

Bottlenose dolphins,
Amy Kennedy

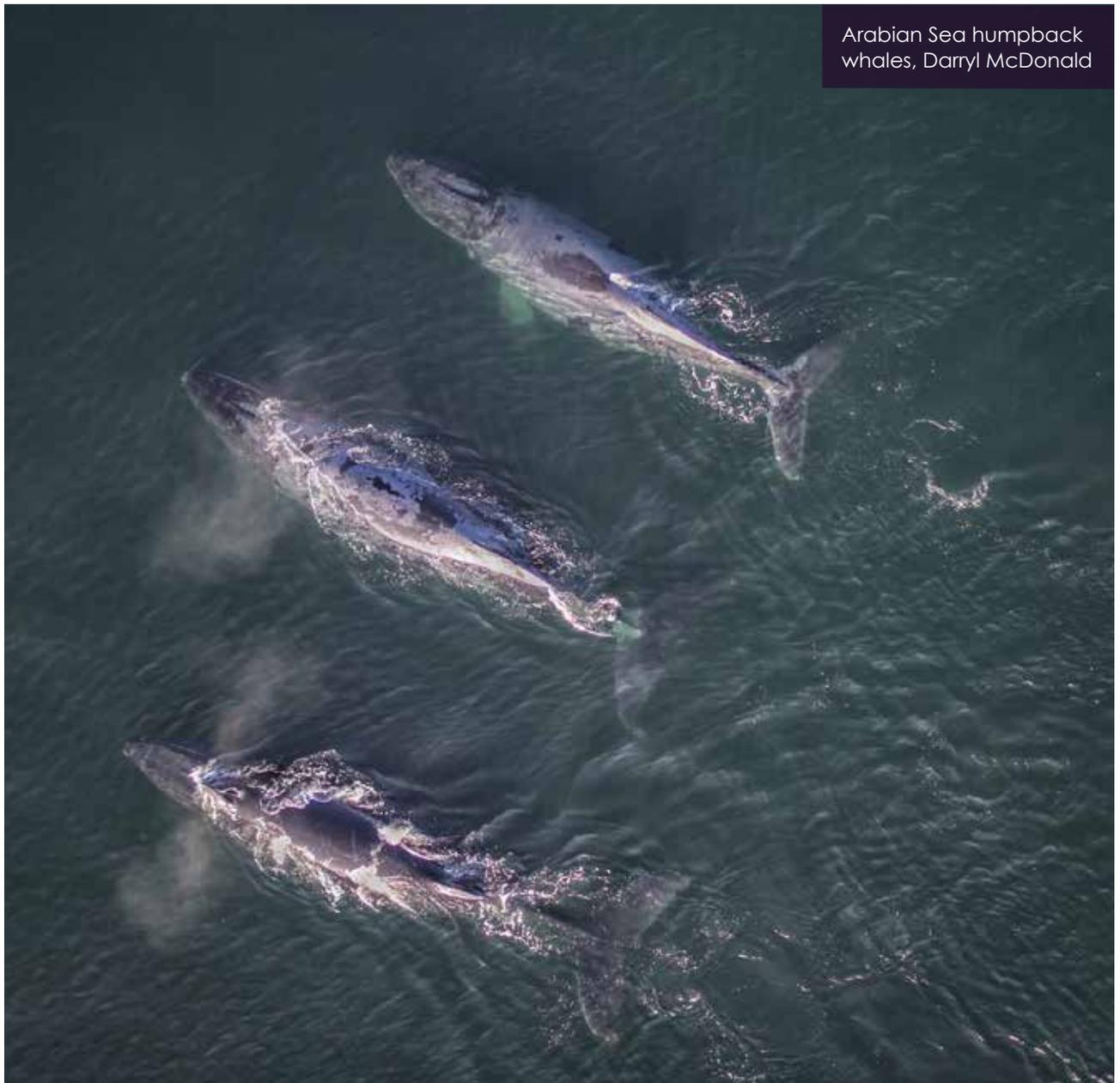


Renaissance Whale and Dolphin Conservation

Thanks to the renewed support of **Renaissance Services SAOG**, the Renaissance Whale and Dolphin Conservation Project, which began in 2011, has continued throughout 2017 in coordination with the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs** and the **Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries**. Our research and conservation efforts over the last few years have focused on Arabian Sea humpback whales. Humpbacks are world famous for undertaking long seasonal migrations between polar feeding areas and tropical breeding areas but our research has shown Arabian Sea humpback whales to be the only known population in the world not to migrate, but rather to breed and feed in the same geographic area. This makes them truly Arabian whales! Not only are these whales distinct in this regard, but our recent research also indicates they are one of the smallest and potentially most vulnerable whale populations in the world, numbering fewer than 100 individuals in Oman.

We are also very excited to be working with **Shell Development Oman LLC** on acoustic data processing (further information below).

Construction at Duqm and increased oil and gas exploration in the Gulf of Masirah will inevitably transform this core humpback whale habitat in Oman into a busy industrial area along with coastal tourism, a large fishing harbour and aquaculture. Threats to whales in this region are significant, with measurable consequences for the health of the population as a whole.



Arabian Sea humpback whales, Darryl McDonald

Satellite Tracking of the Arabian Sea Humpback Whale

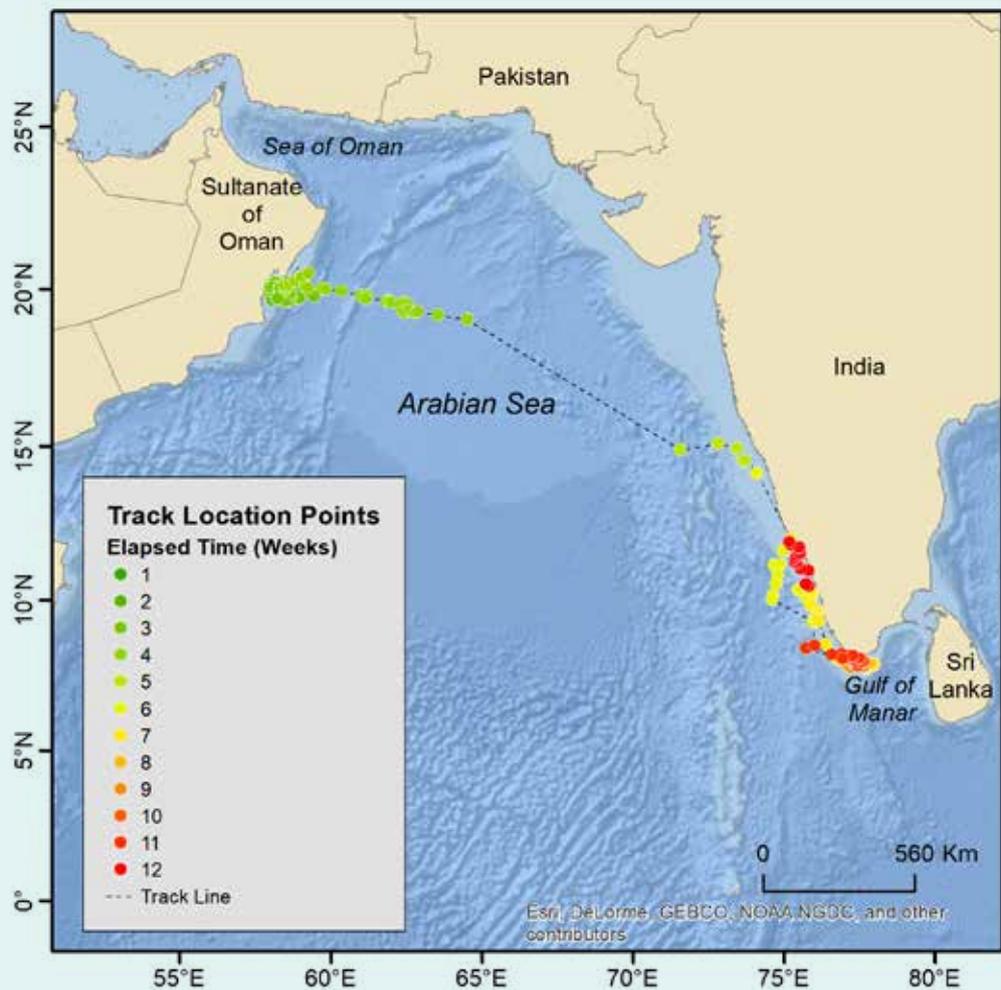
2017 focused on continuing satellite tagging of the Arabian Sea humpback whales to gain further insights into their behaviour, seasonality and distribution. The first field survey took place in March and due to the sighting of only two humpbacks, no whales were tagged. However, valuable information was gathered on the other species of cetaceans sighted as well as escalating threats.

The November field survey yielded more positive results, perhaps indicating the seasonality of their presence and five humpbacks were tagged contributing to a total of 14 since tagging was initiated in 2014.

One female humpback whale (named Luban) was tagged in the Gulf of Masirah and crossed the Northern Indian Ocean making her way to the southern coast of India. This is the first confirmed recording of an Arabian Sea humpback whale from Oman in India!

Cutting-edge drone technology was also used for the first time in Oman to evaluate health status of whales by assessing their physical condition: net scarring, skin disease and body length-width relationship. Additionally, snot samples were collected from whale blows using the drones and this will be used to provide the first evidence on the respiratory health of this population.

This map shows tracked movements of Luban.





Passive Acoustic Monitoring

From 2011-2013 Marine Acoustic Recording Units were deployed in the Gulf of Masirah and Hallaniyat Bay, previously identified as hotspot areas. The monitoring allowed for whale detection, noise and song analysis and is significant in providing information on critical habitats, understanding the impact of noise-related human activities and understanding whale behaviour. Data from this work has been processed with the support of **Shell Development Oman** and in collaboration with the **New England Aquarium**.

Initial results from the whale detection data analysis in 2016 confirmed that there appears to be a strong seasonal component to the use of song by this population, primarily from November-May, which is consistent with the Northern Hemisphere breeding cycle.

Analysis was completed in 2017 and by identifying sources of anthropogenic noises, the information can be used to assess risk to whales and dolphins and develop mitigation strategies. The noise analysis revealed increased noise levels in proximity to the Port of Duqm and reduced singing activity from humpback whales – possibly indicating that increased noise levels from shipping traffic are either disturbing the humpbacks or masking the whale vocalizations, which requires further investigation.

Analysis of Oman's humpback whale song has revealed some interesting information

Humpback whale songs tend to change from year to year, as new phrases are adapted, known as “cultural evolution”. However, the humpbacks off Oman seem to be singing a similar song every year. This has not been documented in other populations and may show that the Arabian humpbacks are less flexible learners and may reflect their small population size.

Typically, when humpback whale populations come in contact with one another their songs become similar or share the same patterns. Although the Arabian Sea humpback whale has been genetically isolated from the southern hemisphere populations for 70,000 years, the acoustic recordings show humpback whales with a similar song to those in Reunion singing during our summer months when the Omani humpbacks aren't singing. The Omani humpbacks have not picked up any phrases from the songs of Reunion. This indicates that the southern hemisphere whales are visiting Oman, but it is unclear why their songs do not appear to be integrating.

Capacity Building and National/Regional Collaboration

Collaboration with regional and international entities such as the **Wildlife Conservation Society**, the **International Whaling Commission (IWC)** and the **Arabian Sea Whale Network** are ongoing, with a regional workshop set to take place in Oman in January 2018. The 12th Meeting of the Convention of Migratory Species Conference of Parties (Manila, October 2017) saw the endorsement of a *Concerted Action for the Arabian Sea Humpback Whale* to prevent further decline and promote recovery of the population. By 2020 the Concerted Action aims to address knowledge gaps, promote information sharing and awareness and build capacity to develop and implement mitigation strategies within the region.

The **IWC Scientific Committee** meeting in June 2017 in Bled, Slovenia, provided an opportunity for ESO to present whale research, which was commended and the committee reiterated their concern for the status of the endangered Arabian Sea humpback whale population. They recommended the development of an online regional data archiving platform to facilitate regional cooperation and comparison of data. The committee also recommended continuing the collection of tissue samples to facilitate studies on the genetic identity of Arabian Sea humpback whales.

ESO is a member of the **Arabian Sea Whale Network**. Members include representatives from the UAE, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Iran and India as well as international research partners. The network updates members on new sightings and strandings, which has increased the number of confirmed records from countries within the range helping to further understand whale distribution. An online regional data platform will be launched in 2018 to share data and research protocols among members.

At the local level, ESO is a member of the **National Stranding Response Committee** which is led by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs and includes several key stakeholders including: the Coast Guard – Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, Sultan Qaboos University, the Diwan of Royal Court, the Ministry of Health, Muscat Municipality, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Royal Navy of Oman, the Ministry of Tourism, the Museum of Natural History, and the Oman Plant and Animal Genetic Resources Center. ESO is also a member of the Technical Committee, which provides technical advice and recommendations to the National Stranding Response Committee.

Meanwhile, ESO continues to build the capacity of our three Field Assistants based on Masirah Island. The training has also enabled them to independently conduct stranding surveys along the entire coastline of the Island, which contributes to the stranding databases used for both cetaceans and sea turtles. In October, a community outreach campaign took place in the Al Wusta region, raising awareness on Oman's whales and dolphins and the threats that they face. More information can be found in the Community Outreach section of this report.

ARABIAN SEA HUMPBACK WHALES

Arabian Sea humpback whales (ASHW) are present year-round in the Arabian Sea. Other humpbacks migrate between tropical and pole-tropical waters.

Seasonal upwelling of cold, nutrient rich waters provides food for the whales that also mate, calve, and nurse their young in the Arabian Sea.

ASHW became isolated from other populations in the Indian Ocean approximately 70,000 years ago.

Research conducted in Oman since 2000 includes photo-ID, genetic studies, and satellite tagging, but little is known about ASHW in other parts of the Arabian Sea.

WITHOUT ACTION, THIS SMALL, UNIQUE POPULATION OF WHALES COULD DISAPPEAR

THE POPULATION IS DESIGNATED AS - ENDANGERED -
IN THE IUCN RED LIST OF THREATENED SPECIES, THE IWC, CMS, CITES AND THE US ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

PHOTO IDENTIFICATION STUDIES INDICATE THAT ONLY **60 - 111 HUMPBACK WHALES** REMAIN OFF THE COAST OF OMAN. **242 HUMPBACK WHALES** WERE KILLED IN THE ARABIAN SEA BY ILLEGAL SOVIET WHALING IN THE 1980'S.

THREATS TO KNOW

- Stratch: 30-40% of whales photographed off Oman have scars from entanglement in fishing gear.
- Ship strike: The region hosts many ports, and some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.
- Underwater noise and risk of pollution from oil and gas activities.
- Harvest degradation from aquaculture development, shipping and construction noise.

KNOWLEDGE GAPS THAT HINDER EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION

- How far does the ASHW range extend outside of Oman, and which areas are critical for feeding and breeding?
- How many whales remain in the Arabian Sea?
- How can threats be most effectively mitigated?

ARABIAN SEA WHALE NETWORK MEMBERS ARE COLLABORATING TO ADDRESS THESE KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Research methods include collection of data from fishery and other types of vessels, dedicated boat surveys with photo-identification, satellite tracking, genetic sampling and acoustic monitoring. The network aims to work with government, business and industry to mitigate the threats of fishing gear entanglement, ship strike, and habitat degradation.

If you are interested in learning **HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT** these efforts, please visit our website: arabianseawhalenetwork.org

THE ARABIAN SEA WHALE NETWORK IS AN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION SUPPORTED BY:

- WCS
- U.S. Navy
- CMS
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Marine Mammal Commission
- U.S. Marine Mammal Society
- U.S. Navy
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Marine Mammal Commission
- U.S. Marine Mammal Society

Damaniyat Islands Conservation

The Damaniyat Islands Conservation Program, sponsored by **Petroleum Development Oman**, aims to engage volunteers in conducting clean-ups to remove marine debris both underwater as well as on beaches of Oman's only marine protected area. The Islands host beautiful coral reefs and provide nesting beaches for hawksbill and green turtles. They are also home to a multitude of sea birds, fish, invertebrate and plant species, some of which are endemic to the area. The Islands attract recreational as well as fishing activities which, coupled with ocean currents, have made the Islands a magnet for plastic waste, nets and litter that negatively impact the unique ecosystem.



Through this project, ESO has engaged with more than 120 volunteers and raised awareness of the conservational importance of the Islands in collaboration with the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs**, the **Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries**, **Averda Environmental Sciences LLC**, the **Marine Science & Fisheries Centre**, **SeaOman**, **Shell Oman Marketing**, **TRACCS Oman**, **Oman Flour Mills** and **Al Mouj Marina**.

Over eight days, teams of volunteers removed a total 1064kg and 202 bags of rubbish and pollutants from three beaches. Volunteer scuba divers removed a total of 590kg of fishing nets, lines and discarded anchors from three popular dive sites. 910kg was sent for disposal and 743kg for recycling in cooperation with **Averda Environmental Services**.

Litter and coral reef data collection sheets are fed into Geographic Information System (GIS) maps to allow us to visualize the type and quantity of litter. The most common litter collected included plastic bags, plastic wrappers, plastic bottles and fishing nets.



Terrestrial Conservation Projects



Frankincense Research and Conservation

Frankincense has played an integral part in the Omani heritage and culture and has been the main source of income for the Dhofari people for centuries. Frankincense trees have also played important environmental roles: they grow on marginal land not suitable for ordinary agriculture, protect the soil from erosion, produce good biomass and provide shade. Frankincense is harvested by tapping the trunk and branches of the *Boswellia sacra* tree and researchers have noticed that the tapping has been too harsh, often leading to the degradation of the tree beyond repair.

Sponsored by HSBC, this long-term research project has focused on four experimental research locations in Dhofar in order to determine the right frequency of cutting to produce a good yield without adversely harming the trees. Between 2014-2017 the project monitored 180 trees, closely examining foliage and seed germination as indicators of their health.

An assessment of the impact of tapping on flowering and fruit formation found that tapping trees to extract the resin can adversely affect the tree flowering process and the production of healthy mature seeds that can germinate. Flowering was decreased in normally harvested trees, but interestingly, the trees that were exposed to over-harvesting flowered more than the trees that were under normal tapping practices. This can be explained as a survival mechanism in the trees, triggered by the sense of risk.

Frankincense Awareness Program

In order for conservation to succeed, a community outreach and awareness team engaged with relevant stakeholders to improve awareness and promote a culture of conservation among local communities as well as at the institutional level. In addition, educational presentations have been given at schools and Women's Associations in Taqah, Makshan, Mander, Manader, Al Mashash, Marsodd, Sadah, Mirbat, Rakhyut and Dhalkout.

In 2016 workshops were held in Dhofar targeting government stakeholders as well as frankincense farmers and harvesters. A series of recommendations were put forward from both workshops related to research,

governance, trading regulations, education and awareness and have been shared with the appropriate government entities. ESO aims to continue advocating for these recommendations to improve the regulation and practice of harvesting frankincense in Dhofar.

This project has now come to a close and ESO is grateful for the generous support that **HSBC** has provided as well as the dedication and time that has been given by lead researcher Dr Mohsin Al Amri and research coordinator Bader Al Shanfari over the years.

Raptor Research and Conservation

Raptors, or birds of prey, such as eagles, falcons, vultures, hawks and owls are key indicators of the overall health of the ecosystem. Sitting at the top of the food chain, they provide many ecosystem services. An example of this is that they eat millions of insects, which, if left unchecked, would threaten agriculture crops. They also consume animal carcasses, which in turn, prevents the spread of disease. Over the last few decades, human activities have contributed to the fragmentation and destruction of raptor habitats through development; the intensification of agriculture and other land-use practices; electrocution and collision with power lines; shooting, poisoning and trapping; and reduced breeding success due to pesticides and other contaminants. These continuing threats have led to the reduction in population levels and to the reduction of the geographic range of many species.

Oman is known to be a haven for a variety of raptors including the endangered Egyptian vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, one of the region's most threatened bird species. ESO started researching this vulture in 2012, showing the country to be a stronghold for this species. Our studies have showed that Masirah Island hosts the second highest density of breeding Egyptian vultures in the world. Current gaps in understanding vulture ecology and movement have led ESO to collaborate with **International Avian Research** and the **Berd Meyburg Foundation for Raptor Research and Conservation** to fix satellite tags to raptors in Oman. To date, two juvenile Egyptian vultures were tagged in 2016 and two juvenile steppe eagles were tagged in 2017 with the aim of increasing tagging in 2018.

ESO's research has strongly demonstrated the value of studying the spatial ecology of Egyptian vultures and other raptors to inform conservation management. Mapping out threats such as low voltage electricity power lines and coupling this with information on their movement can develop sensitivity maps as a tool for conservation.

Relocation and Release of Egyptian Vultures

ESO engaged in its first trans-boundary relocation and release of captive Egyptian vultures in coordination with **Raptor Rehab** in Bahrain. Three birds were rescued from being held in unfavourable conditions and then cared for by Raptor Rehab in Bahrain as they awaited permits for their safe release in Oman. The relocation was closely coordinated with local authorities such as the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs** in Oman, the **Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries**, **Diwan Office for Conservation of Environment** and Oman customs, and their transportation was provided through generous support from **Oman Air**.

A fourth Egyptian vulture was also released on the same day after being rehabilitated at the **Oman Wild Animal Breeding Centre** (Royal Court Affairs) after being found to be in an unhealthy condition by staff at the Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa.





Community Outreach and Education Projects



Masirah Turtle Awareness Week

ESO's Turtle Research and Conservation Project focuses mainly on Masirah Island and it is a priority to raise awareness of the global importance of the loggerhead turtle amongst the local community on the Island. From 15th - 20th April the community outreach team along with ESO's local Field Assistants organized a large-scale educational and participatory event, which included discussions with stakeholders (**Royal Oman Air Force**, the **Wali of Masirah**, the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs**, the **Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries**, the fishing community, **Oman Women's Association**, and schools and nurseries).

In addition to school presentations, a football tournament, large-scale clean-ups, environmental quizzes were organized with over 350 local volunteers coming together to ensure the campaign's success.

One of the main conservation issues on the Island is fishing bycatch, where turtles are caught accidentally by gillnets. ESO met with 52 local Masirah fishermen (Omani and Bengali) throughout the campaign and distributed information on the importance of releasing turtles from nets. Discussions were also had to understand how ESO might be able to raise further awareness and a further visit was made in August with 30 boat owners and 100 fishermen to demonstrate best methods to release net-caught turtles.

2017 also saw a great effort to clean-up abandoned and discarded fishing nets along 36km of beaches on Masirah Island in May - an estimated 38 tons were collected! A special thank you to Talal Bin Saif Al Hosni (Wali of Masirah), Saleem Al Junaidi (Manager of Environment and Climate Affairs, Masirah), local labourers, Be'ah, Masirah Municipality and ESO staff who volunteered.





Sixth Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition

In cooperation with **Emirates Environmental Group**, ESO held the Sixth Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition, organised with the aim of developing a deep appreciation of the environment and an understanding of the challenges facing it through study, research, discussion and debate.

174 competing students (40 teams), representing 21 colleges and universities from across the Sultanate, were challenged to build and present strong cases on different contemporary issues and questions relating to the environment. The competition gives the participants a wonderful opportunity to showcase knowledge and talent and served as a good networking opportunity for government and private academic institutions.

Sponsored by **Occidental Oman, Mitsui E&P Middle East BV** and **Nama Group** (Gold Sponsors), **Ominvest, CGG** and **BP Oman** (Silver Sponsors) and **Vale Oman** (Bronze Sponsors) and supported by **TRACCS Oman, ESHRAQA** (Khimji Ramdas Social Development Arm), **Pinky Bell**, the **Crowne Plaza Muscat, Rasasi** and **Slider Station**; the competition was held from 23rd - 24th October under the patronage of HE Mohammed Salim Al Tobi, the Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs.

A distinguished panel of judges was invited to evaluate the performances of the participants:

Mr Mohammed Al Wahaibi, Co-Founder and CEO of Al Rud'ha Oman

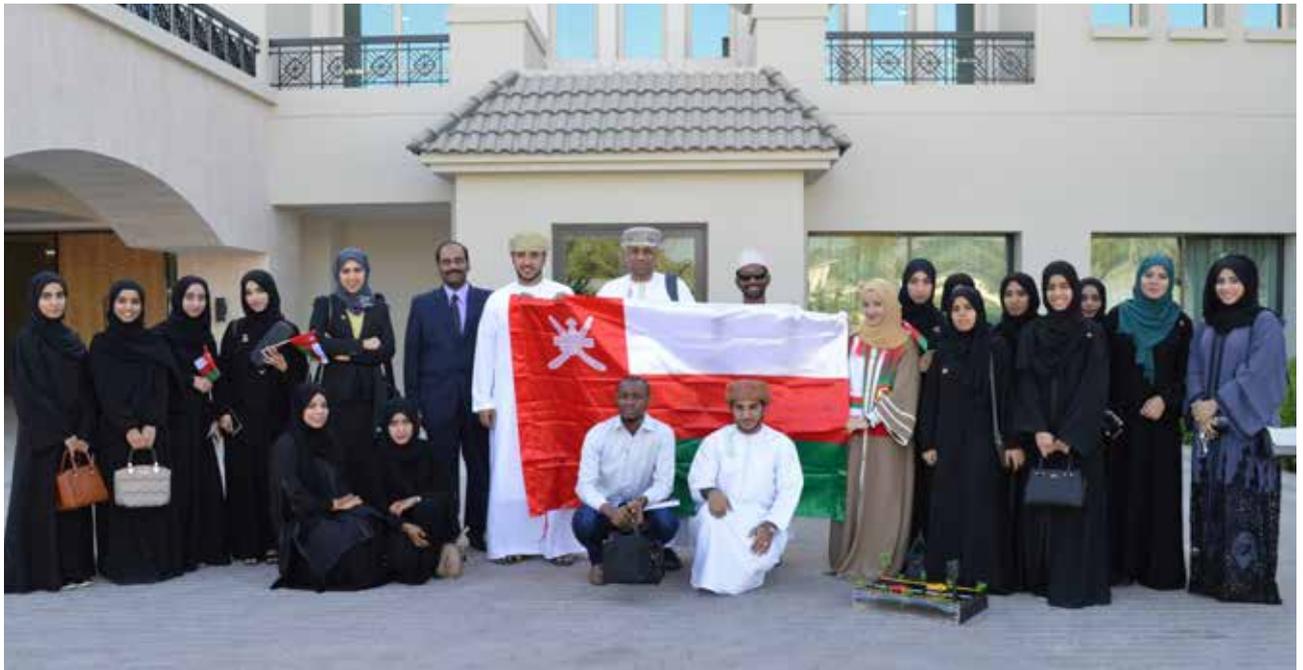
Ms Fatma Bahwan, Co-Founder of Al Rud'ha Oman

Ms Habiba Al Marashi, Co-Founder and Chairperson, EEG, United Arab Emirates

Dr Mohammed Al Kalbani, Director of Inspection and Environmental Control Department, Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs

Dr Fatma Said Al Hajri, Director of Graduate Survey Department, Ministry of Higher Education





Winning Teams

People and the Planet: Finding a Sustainable Balance – **Sohar College of Applied Science** (Shamsa Nasser Al Wardi, Jihan Saif Al Shabnuti, Nawras Yahya Al Omairi).

Quality Education: Roadmap to Sustainable Development – **Ibri College of Technology** (Hajar Hamed Al Shukili, Sarah Obaid Al Shukili, Ebtisam Sulaiman Al Hatmi).

The Future of Power – **Sultan Qaboos University** (Ahmed Khalfan Al Mayahi, Abdallah Niran Akintola, Enas Elsir Mubarak, Afrah Hamed Al Shukaili, Malik Salim Al Wahaibi).

Sustainable Food Systems: Understanding Food Security - **Sultan Qaboos University** (Abeer Amer Al Jabri, Sulaima Said Al Alawi, Ruqaiya Saif Al Julandani, Mallak Hadoub Al Yazeedi, Ishraq Mohammed Al Aubaidani).

Following the success of the National Competition, the winners were mentored and given further presentation skills by **Khimji Training Institute**. They then met with HE Mohammed Al Tobi, the Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs, for a discussion on environmental issues with the winning students.



The winning teams then went on to compete at the Regional Competition, which was held in Dubai in late November. ESO is very proud that the teams from Higher College of Technology and Ibri College of Technology scored top places at the regional competition.

Earth Hour 2017

2017 saw a huge success in ESO joining the global initiative of Earth Hour, which aims to demonstrate concerns about the future of our planet by doing something simple, yet remarkable – turning off lights for one hour on the last Saturday in March at 8.30pm. This year we were proud to partner with **Special Technical Services, Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries Company (Orpic)** and **Towell Engineering Group**.

In-kind supporters included: **Oman LNG, Oman Chlorine, Al Anwar Holdings Group, Nama Group, Pinky Bell, Opera Galleria, Boutique Muscat** and **The Cultural Club**.



Using social and conventional media ESO held a large-scale awareness raising campaign. It was an incredible display of community participation and culminated in a family event at **Shangri-La Barr al Jissah Resort and Spa**, which included games, activities and entertainment. Power-saving light bulbs, candles and reusable bags were given to each guest and e-waste was collected for recycling. Awareness presentations and activities were also held throughout the month of March in Dhofar.

ESO also focused on adding local relevant content to our Earth Hour website, www.omanearthhour.org and encouraging colleges, companies and individuals across the country to participate in the campaign by organising their own events.

Media support was received from **TRACCS Oman, Sabco Media** (Merge, Al Wisal and Y Magazine), **Apex Press and Publishing** (Muscat Daily, The Week), **Muscat Media Group** (Al Shabiba, Times of Oman), **Al Roya** and **Al Watan** newspapers. The support enabled ESO to get the message out across Oman and engage volunteers. ESO was honoured that the **Royal Opera House Muscat**, the **Grand Mosque, Muscat Municipality** and **Sultan Qaboos University** also joined in the initiative and turned off all non-essential lighting.



'Let's Plant One' Native Tree Planting Campaign

The 2017 Native Tree Planting Campaign was sponsored by **Nama Group**. The campaign aims to not only plant native trees, but to also engage volunteers and raise awareness of the importance of planting such trees. The focus is on the Dhofar region, which is home to more than 800 of the 1,200 native Omani plant species and faces desertification, overgrazing and the invasion of alien plant species. Through this campaign, ESO has built long-standing relationships with the local community, officials, volunteers, schools, universities and colleges. Over the years ESO has planted more than 8,500 trees and we are grateful for the collaboration of many organisations in Dhofar, such as the **Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)**, the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA)**, **Dhofar Municipality** and the **Ministry of Education**.

This year's planting activities saw 1,000 trees of seven different species planted in a MECA-protected area with the help of many volunteers from MECA, MAF, schools and the local community.

In addition to our Dhofar efforts, 300 native trees were planted in six schools in Muscat.



Eco Summer Program

With sponsorship from **Petroleum Development Oman (PDO)**, ESO was able to continue the summer education programs, engaging children of all ages in a 2-week program. Activities included: the Importance of Water Conservation; Environmental Storytelling; Energy and Waste Innovations; Bio Workshops (through experiments and exploring cells); and ending with an Eco Challenge Quiz. ESO is grateful to **Sharqiyah University** and **Sultan Qaboos University** for their assistance in this program.



School Education Program

ESO's Environmental Education Program, sponsored by **PDO**, aims to raise environmental awareness amongst Omani youth through a program designed for school children in different parts of the Sultanate. In collaboration with the **Ministry of Education**, the program endeavours to implement four themes over the 2-year project period, which are: energy and water, Biodiversity, Ecological Footprint and Green Schools. During the year, with the help of dedicated volunteers, 46 schools were visited with a focus on the first two themes of energy and water and Oman's biodiversity. Games and interactive tools were developed and presentations were given at schools in Muscat, Al Sawadi, Rustaq, Sur, Musannah, Khaburah, Ibri, Yanqul, Wadi Al Mawael, Nakhal, Samail and Buraimi.



Other Outreach Activities in Communities and Schools

ESO's has a dedicated Community Outreach Department, which focuses on supporting ESO's aim to raise awareness on environmental conservation and engage members through lectures, events and activities. ESO aims to reach out to different sectors of the community including women, children in schools, fishermen and the general public.

ESO's dedicated community outreach team tailors presentations to different communities based on their local environments and biodiversity. Presentations include areas such as Sustainable Frankincense Gathering, Oman's Biodiversity, ESO Research, Recycling, Climate Change, Clean-Ups and discussions on ESO's conservation work.



Women and children are seen to be key drivers to societal change and ESO has been targeting these groups across the Sultanate, presenting environmental awareness lectures on important biological components and the ways in which our actions impact the environment. School and college presentations and lectures to the Omani Women's Associations took place throughout the year.

This year saw a large awareness campaign of the outreach program in the Al Wusta region and presentations were given in six schools, the Duqm Free Zone and the protected area of Arabian Oryx in Hima. The importance of the Arabian Sea humpback whale was the main focus and beach clean-ups were also undertaken in Khaluf and Sarab, where over 750 bags of rubbish were collected. ESO would like to thank **MECA, Mahoot Municipality, Duqm Free Zone, London Cleaning Company, SEZAD, Boskalis, Galfar, the Ministry of Education** and the schools and women's associations as well as the local community for ensuring the success of this campaign.

Another dedicated awareness week took place in Buraimi, with participation by Shura Council members, six schools, Buraimi University, the Women's association, Buraimi Training Institute, **Buraimi Trading and Industries Chamber** and the local community. ESO would like to thank Shura Council member **Mohammed Ali Al Badi** for his support in this campaign.

In addition, clean-ups, lectures and field trips were organised by ESO throughout the year in Muscat, Sharqiya, Al Batinah and Dhofar and continue to be a core part of ESO's commitment to ensuring participatory events for members.





Arabian gazelle, Al Maha
Protected Area, Hamed
Al Gheilani

Capacity Building Program

ESO has been steadily growing over the last ten years and it remains our goal to train Omanis in the field of environmental conservation. In 2011 we found ourselves faced with a major restructuring of staff in order to keep up with the growing responsibilities and projects that ESO has and wants to continue taking on.

It was agreed by the ESO Board that a central part of ESO's mandate would be to train Omani graduates in conservation strategies and NGO and community involvement before joining Oman's workforce and give them an opportunity to pursue a career with ESO.

Since 2012, ESO has speedily been making progress in the area of capacity building. In 2017 eight Omanis were included in the Capacity Building Program.

Omani Training Program

Although graduates are trained in a specific area of NGO management, each leave the training program with experience in the following areas:

- NGO Management
- Project Management
- Conservation Management
- In-Field Research Experience
- Community Outreach
- Awareness Raising
- Volunteer Management

Asma Al Balushi

Asma graduated from Sultan Qaboos University in 2011 with a BSc in Marine Science. She was recruited for the position of Projects Management Coordinator in the Research and Conservation Department and has been with ESO since April 2012, assisting in coordination of all research - field and desk based activities. One of her essential tasks is liaising with government entities, such as the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries among others. She ensures that results of our scientific projects are regularly shared with relevant parties. This year, she assisted in the submission of several conservation research funds. She also became a member of the technical team of the National Stranding Response Committee and has been regularly attending their meetings. Following the shipwreck of a vessel in mid-2016, polluting turtle nesting beaches on Masirah Island, Asma presented the results of the emergency beach clean-up led by ESO to a large stakeholder audience including PDO and Public Authority representatives. This year, she also focused on data archiving and organization within the office and on developing social media campaigns for conservation awareness of whales, marine turtles, Egyptian vultures and whale acoustics. Through the program, Asma has travelled to the USA, South Africa, Morocco, Turkey, Jordan, Kuwait and the UAE, and is keen to continue her influence in education and advocacy.



Siham Al Tuwaijri

Siham joined ESO at the end of 2014 as an Administrative Assistant. Siham has attended a finance course and a problem-solving course and has been receiving hands-on training in office management skills. She is actively involved in tasks related to personnel issues such as maintaining staff records and contract renewals. Her administrative work includes writing correspondence, maintaining accurate records and databases, translation and logistics. Siham also provides support to the accounting department. As an important member of the administrative team, she has provided invaluable support to all of ESO's projects.



Juma Al Humaidi, Ghasi Al Farsi and Juma Al Araithi

Juma, Ghasi and Juma have been working for ESO since 2009 as part-time Field Assistants (FAs) on Masirah Island. Although they were initially recruited and trained by ESO to help with field surveys of loggerhead turtles, their contributions have been unparalleled in terms of creating ties with the local community in Masirah. Our FAs have now been working full-time with ESO for six years, assisting in the field with our Turtle Research and Conservation Project, the Renaissance Whale and Dolphin Conservation Project and the Egyptian Vulture Research and Conservation Project. Not only have the FAs been trained in field surveying methods, they have completed courses in computing, English, typing, bird identification and ringing, and whale and dolphin identification. They have worked with experts from the US, Netherlands, Bulgaria and the UK and recently took the lead in ESO's Sustainable Fishing Towards Turtle Conservation Project during which they worked with interns from Sultan Qaboos University and marine scientists. They have completed the Oman National Powerboat Course and during the Egyptian vulture research the FAs' technical capabilities were noticeably further developed when they were trained in identification skills, data collection and analysis, assessment of breeding vultures according to the British Trust of Ornithology breeding codes / evidences and training in using the IUCN threat assessment Pressure-State-Response scoring model to diagnose and measure the severity of the threat impacts on both species and habitats. The FAs were instrumental in helping coordinate ESO's effort to thoroughly clean turtle nesting beaches following the sinking of a ship off the coast of Masirah Island.



Abdulaziz Al Alawi

Abdulaziz Al Alawi graduated from Nizwa Applied Sciences College with a BA in Digital and Graphic Design. He joined ESO in March 2014 as a Community Outreach Coordinator and has since worked on raising awareness of environmental issues and ESO in general across the Sultanate. His areas of focus included collaboration with the Omani Women's Association, schools and local communities. Abdulaziz has led several awareness campaigns including the Native Tree Planting Campaign in Mirbat, liaising with various schools, universities and government organizations. He co-organised ESO's annual Ramadhan Quiz in Masirah, Sur and Salalah and in addition to his community outreach work, he has been very involved in design work for ESO activities including Earth Hour, the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition, educational booklets and information posters. Abdulaziz also made numerous social media videos that enabled ESO to showcase our work. In addition, he represented ESO at a workshop for Gulf NGOs in Kuwait. Abdulaziz recently left ESO to pursue a career with more emphasis on media and we wish him the best of luck.



Aisha Al Ghallabi

Aisha Al Ghallabi holds a BSc in Environmental Health Management from the Canadian University of Dubai and joined ESO as a Membership Coordinator in 2015. Throughout 2017, she worked hard on organizing and further revitalizing the membership department. Her efforts led to the organization of 14 public lectures throughout the year, some attended by over 100 people. Presentations included various topics ranging from terrestrial and marine species conservation to personal environmental experiences (wildlife photography, crossing the Empty Quarter and rowing across the Atlantic!) Aisha is enthusiastic and has led three new initiatives in the membership department in 2017: the introduction of environmentally themed movie nights, the organization of members' outdoor activities and the initiation of membership benefits. The latter includes a series of retail relationships in various fields (food and beverage, recreational, beauty and fitness) that will provide discounts and benefits to ESO members. These activities have

increased engagement with members and spread awareness of sensitive environmental topics. Next year Aisha will focus her efforts on further developing this department and liaising with and increasing membership.

Jawaher Al Ghafri

Jawaher Al Ghafri holds a Bachelor of Communication Studies from Sur College of Applied Sciences and joined ESO as an Education Coordinator in March 2016. She took over the leadership of the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition during which time she liaised with supervisors of student teams and ensured hundreds of students from colleges and universities around the country were properly registered and mentored prior to their presenting at the event. She accompanied the winning teams to Dubai, where our Oman teams won second and third place. Jawaher has also been in charge of ESO's Education Program, coordinating volunteers and visiting schools in different regions throughout the Sultanate and in 2017 she focused on Ecological Footprint as a main theme. Additionally, she organizes the Eco-Summer Program for children during the summer months to raise their environmental consciousness and encourage creativity in minimizing waste and reusing materials. Jawaher has become the backbone of the education department and we look forward to having her with us in 2018.



Other Activities



Sprint For Oman Initiative

ESO was approached by a dynamic and enthusiastic group of volunteers in September who happened to be running a number of Spartan Obstacle Races both in Oman and the UAE. They wanted to run for a cause and decided to find people who would sponsor their run and give the donations to ESO's Turtle Research and Conservation Project. The #SprintForOman movement took on a life of its own and through social media and with design help from **OHI Leo Burnett**, more volunteers participating in the Spartan Arabia joined and a total of RO14,000 was raised! We are so grateful for this support and would like to thank the initiating team: Nilesh Gavankar and Raghuram Krishnamurthy for their huge support as well as Srikanth Viswanathan for his wonderful designs. Also, to Caroline Bolle, Julien Romanet, Margarita Miranda, Rajeev Padmanabhan, Vishal Malpani, Sunny Gupta, Jinesh Gosar, Asuman Dayican, Shridhar Shenoy and Shantanu Sarkari. (special thanks to all the volunteers who supported #SprintForOman are listed in the Acknowledgements section).



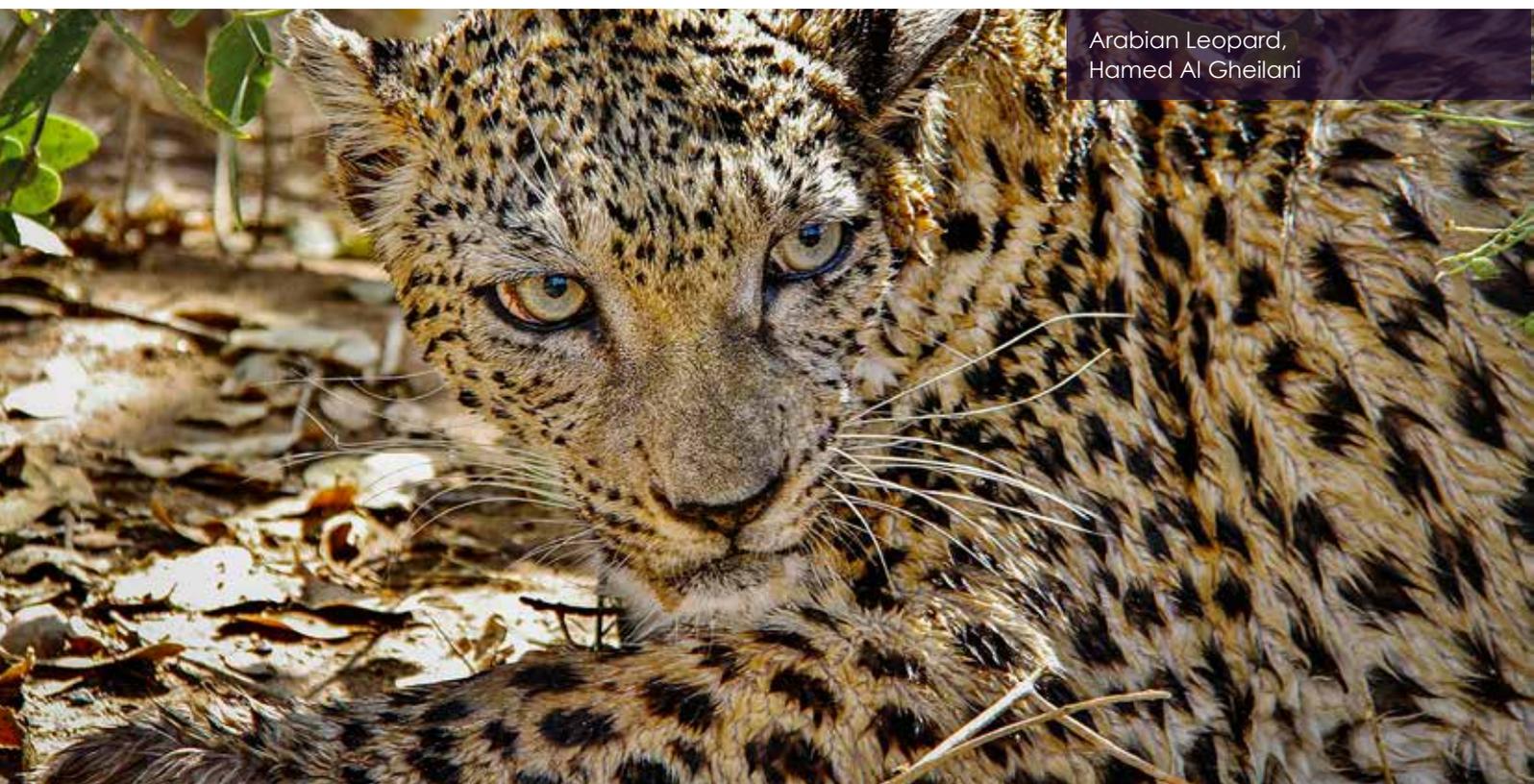


ECO BOWL 2018

Eight teams competed in ESO's 6th annual corporate bowling competition held to raise funds for ESO. In first place was Port of Salah, second place went to Omantel and third place to HSBC. Prizes and support were provided courtesy of **Al Angham Restaurant, Capital Stores, Crowne Plaza Muscat, Ooredoo** and **Crossfit 2307**. We would like to thank all the companies who participated and look forward to the 2018 rematch!

Ramadhan Quiz

ESO's annual environmental Ramadhan Quiz took place in Sur, Masirah and Salalah this year. We would like to thank those that participated as well as our supporters for the events: **Petroleum Development Oman, Oman LNG** and **Masirah Club**.



Arabian Leopard,
Hamed Al Gheilani

Volunteers of the Year Award

The ESO Volunteers of the Year Award recognises and celebrates the outstanding efforts of our volunteers. It's our way of thanking them for their generous hours and services throughout the year.

The Volunteers of the Year 2017 Award went to Sprint for Oman, Piyush Singh, Khalid Al Khaldi and Samtah Al Awisi.

Sprint for Oman. For the first time, ESO is awarding a group of volunteers rather than an individual. The Sprint for Oman group ran the Spartan Race and Sprint for a cause, finding personal sponsors and donating money raised to our Turtle Conservation Project. They initiated a social media campaign allowing fellow runners to join their cause and jointly raised over RO14,000 for ESO. Sprint for Oman volunteers image

Piyush Singh volunteered his time on many occasions this year. His positive attitude and willingness to contribute make him a great asset to ESO team. He assisted with many ESO activities and events in 2017 and was particularly helpful with Earth Hour, beach clean-ups at the Damaniyat Islands, the Spartan Race and the Al Mouj Golf event.

Khalid Al Khaldi left ESO as a staff member a few years ago and has since tirelessly and voluntarily contributed to our Educational Program as well as assisted during the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition. We thank him for his dedication to ESO and for continuing to support our activities.

Samtah Al Awisi is the Manager of the Omani Women Association on Masirah Island and provided invaluable support to ESO during our activities there, both with community outreach and with education initiatives.



Awards, Grants and Donations

ESO would like to give special thanks to all those who have helped us achieve our goals in 2017. These donors, sponsors and grant agencies are listed below in order of the date donations:

- **Sabco Art** for the design of our annual report
- **Mazoon Printing, Publishing and Advertising** for printing of our annual report
- **Ajit Khimji Group LLC** for free office space
- **TRACCS Oman** for public relations support
- **Apex Press and Publishing** for their continued support
- **InterRent** for vehicle rental
- **HSBC** for the Frankincense Research and Conservation Project
- **Renaissance Services SAOG** for the Renaissance Whale and Dolphin Conservation Project
- **Waterfront & Marina Services SAOC** for free berthing of the ESO boat
- **Nama Group** for the Dhofar office and the Native Tree Planting Campaign
- **Shell Oman** for fuel cards
- **Towell Auto Centre** for vehicle rental
- **The Chedi Muscat** for guest donations
- **Alila Jebel Akhdar** for guest donations
- **Coral Muscat** for guest donations
- **PDO EcOman Centre** for use of their lecture facilities
- **Crowne Plaza Muscat** for press conference facilities
- **Zubair Corporation** for donation to Capacity Building
- **Shell Development Oman** for Acoustic Humpback Whale Data Analysis
- **Petroleum Development Oman** for the Ramadhan Quiz
- **Masirah Club** for Ramadhan Quiz prizes
- **Oman LNG** for Ramadhan Quiz prizes
- **Hamed Al Wahaibi** for ATV repair
- **Voltamp** for donation to capacity building
- **Petroleum Development Oman** for the Community Outreach Program
- **Petroleum Development Oman** for the Education Program
- **Petroleum Development Oman** for the Damaniyat Islands Conservation Program
- **Petroleum Development Oman** for Women's Environmental Education and Empowerment
- **Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa** for the Earth Hour event venue



- **Shell Development Oman** for Training Courses for ESO Employees
- **Khalid Al Khaldi** for donation of a laptop during the Public Speaking Competition
- **Special Technical Services, Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries Company (Orpic)** and **Towell Engineering Group** for their sponsorship of Earth Hour
- **Oman LNG, Oman Chlorine, Al Anwar Holdings Group, Nama Group, Pinky Bell, Opera Galleria, Boutique Muscat** and **The Cultural Club** for in-kind support during Earth Hour
- **TRACCS Oman, Sabco Group (Merge, Al Wisal and Y Magazine), Apex Press and Publishing (Muscat Daily, The Week), Muscat Media Group (Al Shabiba, Times of Oman), Al Roya** and **Al Watan** for media support during Earth Hour
- **Pinky Bell** for website services for Earth Hour and the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition
- **Occidental Oman, Mitsui E&P Middle East B.V.** and **Nama Group** (Gold Sponsors), **Ominvest, CGG** and **BP Oman** (Silver Sponsors) and **Vale Oman** for sponsorship of the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition
- **TRACCS Oman, Eshraqa (Khimji Ramdas Social Development Arm), Pinky Bell** and the **Crowne Plaza Muscat** for in-kind sponsorship of the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition
- **Oman Air** for displaying the ESO awareness film on board flights
- **UMS** for website hosting support
- **ABA School** for donation
- **Sultan's School** for donation
- **Bank Sohar** for sponsorship of movie night
- **TAISM** for sponsorship of movie night
- **VOX Cinemas** for sponsorship of movie nights
- **Horwath Mak Ghazali** for auditing ahead of the AGM
- **Sprint for Oman Volunteer Donations** for Turtle Conservation Project
- **OHI Leo Burnett** for Sprint for Oman designs
- **Barclays** and **Private Donors** for Capacity Building Program
- **Brand Infinity** for Community Outreach film
- **Al Busaidy, Mansoor Jamal & Co.** for legal advice and updating ESO's constitution
- **Renaissance Services, Asha Enterprises, Port of Salalah, Ooredoo, HSBC, Port of Duqm, Omantel** and **Shell Oman Marketing** for ECO BOWL participation
- **TRACCS Oman** for ECO BOWL media partnership
- **Al Angham Restaurant, Capital Stores, Crowne Plaza Muscat, Ooredoo** and **Crossfit 2307** for ECO BOWL prizes



Terns on Masirah,
Hamed Al Gheilani

Hotel Donation Program

Oman's Visitors Giving Back

Tourism puts enormous pressure on the environment, but it can also have a positive impact. Through hotels, and to assist with ESO's efforts, we are offering Oman's tourists the chance to support our projects and to give back to Oman and its environment by helping to protect our endangered wildlife and conserve our natural heritage.

Where do donations go?

Donations add much needed funds to our projects focusing on the conservation of Oman's endangered biodiversity, including: the Arabian Sea humpback whale, loggerhead turtles, Egyptian vultures and frankincense trees. These donations will enable ESO to help protect these endangered species and give us the resources to ensure future generations can do the same.

We hope to encourage more hotels to join this program and are grateful to the following hotels who give their guests the opportunity to donate RO1 to ESO upon check out.

THE CHEDI
MUSCAT, OMAN

Alila الـيـلا الجـبـل الاخـضـر . عـمـان
JABAL AKHDAR . OMAN

CORAL Muscat
Hotel & Apartments

Arabian oryx,
Hamed Al Gheilani



Local and International Highlights



Oman Natural Marine Heritage Lecture, Royal Geographical Society; London, UK

At the invitation of Dr. Roderic Dutton, Sean Nelson and Nigel Winser, Suaad Al Harthi (ESO's Program Director) joined an Oman delegation to present the story of Oman's natural marine heritage to a large and distinguished audience at the Royal Geographical Society on 18th October. The presentation also included details of marine turtles along the coast of Oman and an overall description of Oman's unique marine heritage at a time of great change in the Sultanate. The importance of 35 years of systematic survey work in Oman to date was described and the current projects being led by Oman field scientists.

Suaad provided a presentation on the 30+ year conservation journey of the sea turtles of Masirah Island, which hosts the world's second largest population of loggerhead turtles, drawing attention to their critically endangered status. Over the past decade, a team including the ESO, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs and Five Oceans Environmental Services have played a lead role in researching turtles on the Island. This work has accelerated our knowledge and understanding of turtle biology, ecology and conservation needs in Oman, whilst at the same time revealing a dramatic decline in numbers that require an urgent conservation response.

UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development Program; Beirut, Lebanon

Aisha Al Ghallabi (ESO's Membership Coordinator) attended the UNESCO regional ESD flagship training in Beirut in August where 41 out of 450 Arab leaders in sustainable development sectors and NGOs were selected to join. The training was on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focusing on SDG4 Quality Education through the practical activities covering relevant topics: sustainability, system thinking, conflict transformation, leadership, networking and evaluation, finding the link and connections within the diverse backgrounds of the activists. The training included visits to different sustainable development projects and businesses and encouraged youth to create environmental leadership skills and network with youth from all over the Arab region.

Conferences, Lectures and Workshops attended in 2017

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 2017:

Tanfeedh: National Program for Enhancing Economic Diversification; Muscat, Oman

The World Energy for Future Summit; Abu Dhabi, UAE

Oil Spill Action Training Workshop (MECA); Muscat, Oman

UN High Level Conference on Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation in the Arab Region; Beirut, Lebanon

IWC Scientific Committee Meeting; Bled, Slovenia

Al Roya Oman Environmental Forum; Muscat, Oman

2nd Forum for Voluntary Work (Gulf NGOs); Kuwait City, Kuwait

Arab NGO Network for Development Meeting; Beirut, Lebanon

Food and Agriculture Organization Country Planning Framework (MAF); Muscat, Oman

UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-3); Amman, Jordan

National Field Research Center for Environmental Conservation Workshop on Environmental Volunteers; Muscat, Oman

National Strategy for Protection of Marine Environment Workshop (MECA); Muscat, Oman

Oman Natural Heritage Marine Lecture given by ESO at the Royal Geographic Society; London, UK

International Conference of Education for Sustainable Development; Muscat, Oman

2nd UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture; Muscat, Oman

Festival of Science in Oman; Muscat, Oman

World Food Security Day (MAF and FAO); Muscat, Oman

ESO TEDx Talk on Arabian Sea Humpback Whales; Muscat, Oman

Improving Awareness Efforts of Eco-Tourism (MECA); Muscat, Oman

"Oman Future Quest" Forum (the Supreme Council of Planning); Muscat, Oman

Sultan Qaboos Volunteer Award Ceremony; Muscat, Oman

2nd International Conference and Exhibition on Waste Management, Sustainability and Environment; Muscat, Oman

Annual Research Conference (the Research Council); Muscat, Oman

National Stranding Response Committee meetings (MECA); Muscat, Oman

ESO Public Lectures and Events

January: Public lectures on "Egyptian Vulture Research and Conservation" by Mike McGrady and "Oman's Last Pre-Islamic Period: The First Omanis" by Paul Yule

February: Public lectures on "Filming Wildlife" by Mateo Willis and "Crossing the Empty Quarter" by Mark Evans

March: Two-day members field trip to Al Ansab Wetland

April: Public lecture on "Wildlife in Oman" by Jens Eriksen and two-day members field trip to Jebel Akhdar

May: Public lecture on "Crossing the Empty Quarter" by Mohammed Al Zadjali and "Geospatial Analysis of the Migration of Birds Wintering at Barr Al Hikman" by Andy Kwarteng. Movie Night: Sonic Sea

July: Two public lectures on "Wildlife photography, an Adventure in the Serengeti" by Waheed Abdullah Al Fazari and Movie Night: Sooty Falcons

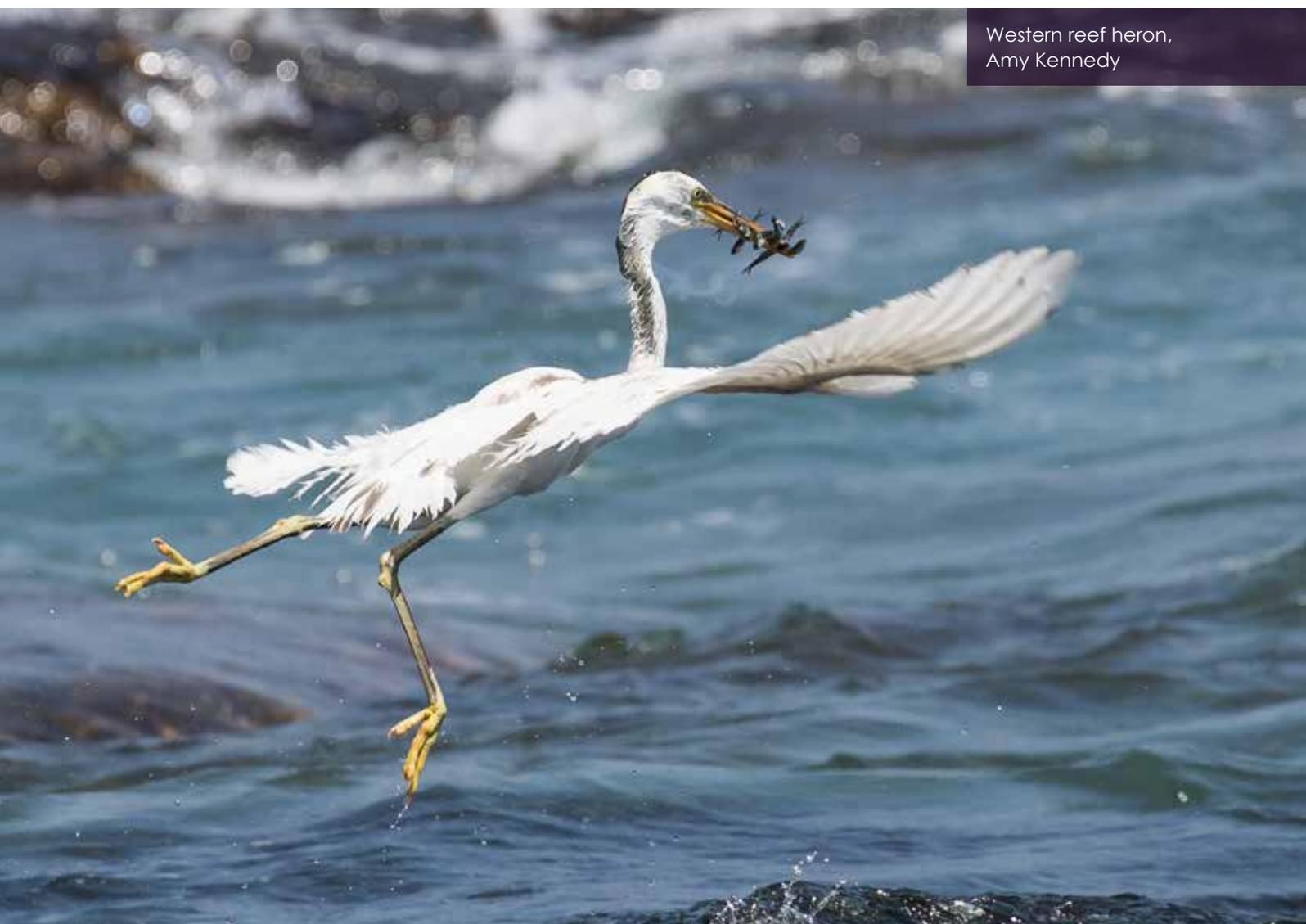
August: Public lecture on "Fat Biking the Empty Quarter" by Steve Holyoak and members visit to the Natural History Museum.

September: Movie Night: Plastic Ocean

October: Public lecture on "Rowing the Atlantic Ocean" presented by Charlotte Best and Members kayaking trip at Bandar Khayran.

November: "Surviving Epilepsy" presented by Medina Ilyassova

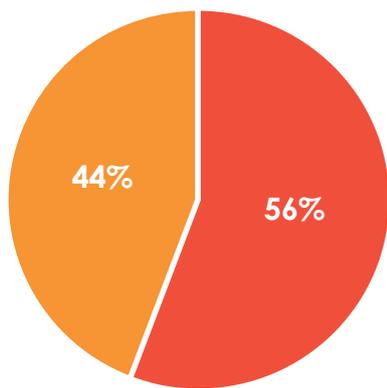
December: "Whale Tales of the South Pacific" by Nan Daeschler Hauser and "Diatom Communities on Marine Turtles" by Mario De Stefano



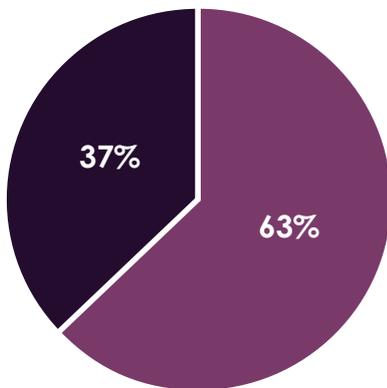
Western reef heron,
Amy Kennedy

Membership

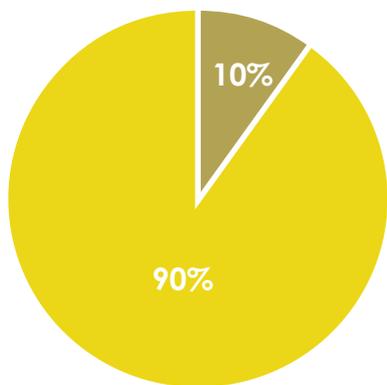
In December 2017 ESO counted 377 active members. The charts below show percentages of Omanis, students and male vs female members.



 Omani  Non- Omani



 Male  Female



 Student  Non-student

Corporate Membership

ESO is grateful for the support of all our corporate members:

- Ajit Kimji Group
- Carillion Alawi
- Central Bank of Oman
- Daleel Petroleum
- Duqm Refineries
- Enhance
- Khimji Ramdas
- Oman Cables Industry
- Oman Oil Company
- Oman Shipping Company
- Oman Solar Systems
- OMINVEST
- Omran
- Occidental of Oman
- Port Sultan Qaboos
- Raysut Cement Company
- Six Senses Zighy Bay Resort
- Sohar Power Company
- Strabag Oman
- Towell Group
- United Power Company
- Voltamp Oman

As an exclusive benefit to our corporate members, ESO has developed Oman-relevant guidelines for Greening Your Office and Organising Corporate Clean-Ups.

Collaboration with International Organisations

- United Nations Environmental Program
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature
- International Whaling Commission
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- Birdlife International, Middle East Branch
- Emirates Environmental Group
- Emirates Wildlife Society in association with World Wildlife Fund
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration – South West Fisheries and Science Centre
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration – Alaska Fisheries Science Centre, Marine Mammal Laboratory
- Sackler Institute of Comparative Genomics, American Museum of Natural History
- University of Exeter, Centre for Ecology and Conservation
- Cetacean Conservation Medicine Group
- Peruvian Centre for Cetacean Research
- Durham University
- French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea
- Instituto Aqualie
- Motte Marine Laboratory
- Kelonia, La Réunion
- International Avian Research
- Spanish National Research Council
- New England Aquarium
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Abu Dhabi Office)
- Sri Lankan Killer Whale Project
- Arabian Sea Whale Network
- University of Derby
- Vulture Conservation Foundation
- Wild Me
- UNESCO
- Smithsonian Institution
- Blue Planet Marine Ltd of New Zealand
- Slovenian Marine Mammal Society
- Anglo-Omani Society
- Birdlife International
- WWF-Pakistan
- Raptor Rehab Bahrain

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 Patron, HH Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib Al Said, who has always supported the Society and has been instrumental in its success.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development have always been 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 much needed funding from our corporate members, sponsors and supporters. We thank all of them and hope that their generosity will continue for years to come.

The ESO staff are the backbone of the Society and its work and we thank all that have been with us throughout the years. We were sad to see Abdulaziz Al Alawi and Mussallem Tabook leave ESO but wish them the best of luck!

Congratulations to Andy Willson and Maia Sarrouf-Willson for the beautiful new addition to their family. We wish you all the best in your new adventure!

ESO Members are the organisation's ambassadors and we thank every one of our dedicated members for coming to events, dedicating their time and supporting the conservation of Oman's environment.

Ajit Khmiji Group, who have given ESO free office space for the last few years and Towell Auto Centre and InterRent who provide our staff vehicles.

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 Apex Press and Publishing who have given free advertising space to ESO over the last seven years for which we are extremely grateful, and TRACCS Oman for providing our PR services.

Volunteer Acknowledgements

Volunteers are a very important part of our ESO's work. In particular we would like to thank:

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Piyush Singh for his continued assistance with ESO events and Hamad Al Shidani for his photography skills.

Volunteer in My Environment team from A'Sharqiyah University, Ibra; Innovative Leaders team from Muscat; and Bio-Group from SQU, who offered their time and knowledge during our ECO Summer program.

Rashid Al Alawi and **Khalid Al Khaldi** who helped with arrangements and presentations on for ESO's Educational Program theme Ecological Footprint.

Dvita Kapatia who assisted with PR related tasks and Amna Al Jahwari who helped with administrative work.

Yousuf Alghammari for volunteering his time over three months to photograph our Earth Hour Event and Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition and for helping with ESO's table at the Al Mouj Golf event.

Said Lamki, Karola Lamki, Geraldine Stanton, Kamilya Al Sharif, Fareed Al Hinai and Hannah Macki for their help with ESO table at the Spartan training sessions.

Abeer Al Saadi, Abeer Al shkaily, Alaa Al Zadjali, Ali Al Lawati, Alyaqhdan Alsalamy, Arun Krishna, Asma Al Kalbani, Athar Al Fadha, Bashair Al Sabibi, Bushra Al Mukhaini, Darwish Al Saadi, Eman Al Zadjali, Fahar Al Falahi, Farooqui Safir, Fatma Hasmi, Hamdoon Al-Hashmi, Harinikaa Raja, Iman Al Wahaibi, Khalid Al Khaldi, Kristine Lagula, Marwa Al Wadhahi, Mazin Al Shehhi, Michael Ramsis, Mohammed Al Akhzami, Moza Al Rawahi, Nawar Al busaidi, Nicholas Wrinckles, Nida Jafan, Nrithya, Pillai Baburai, Piyush Singh, Rahma Al Kindi, Raja Packirisamy, Rajaraman Madhavan, Rajasekar Ramalingam, Rashid Al Badaai, Rashid Al Lamki, Said Al Jardani, Saleh Al Shehhi, Salim Al Hasni, Samiha Al Julndani, Saravanan Subramaniam, Saravanan TK, Sarojni Ganjoo, Vijay Babu, Vipin Lal P, Yousuf Al Ghammari for their time and help during Earth Hour event.

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Juma Al Farsi, Assad Al Aamri, Juma Al Arami, Abdur Rahim, Al Amin, Foujul Karim, Mamun Miah, Mohammad Ahemed, Mohammad Hanif, Mohammad Rubel Mia, Mosharraf Hossain, Riasat Nawaz, Saiful Bashar, Shahidul Islam, Sharif Miah, Sobouj Miah for their tireless support during the Masirah net-clean-up efforts.

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Khalid Al Khaldi and **Al Khalil Al Rahbi** for volunteering during the Speaking Competition and **Taha Al Qasmi, Abdul Rahman Al Mayahi, Hawaa Al Shuraiqi, Shada Al Rawahi, Humaid Al Qasmi, Sulieman Al Rahbi, Abdulrahman Al Jahdami** and **Aisha Al Matrooshi** for being dedicated student ambassadors and playing a key role in the Speaking Competition. **Hanan Al Masqati** for her MC skills and **Elias Suleiman Al Kindi** for being a skillful reader of Quran during the Opening Ceremony.

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Leanne George for interning for two weeks and helping with archiving field data sheets, filing and data inventory.

Mohammed Al Qarni, Fatik Al Amri, Sachin Mahse and **Rabaa Al Adawiya** for participating in a native tree planting campaign organized by the National Field Research Centre for Environmental Conservation.

A special thank you to **RAFO** in Masirah for their 300 volunteers during clean-ups on the Island and for helping with installing conservation signs.

Salalah Scouts for their incredible efforts during clean-ups and their Say No to Plastic Bag awareness activities in Dhofar.

Thank you to all our volunteers without whom our work would not be possible.

Jebel Akhdar,
Qasim Al Farsi



