



Annual Report 2016





His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said

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Baby whale shark, Damaniyat
Islands, N Georgiou
Front Cover: Green turtle, R Baldwin

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Message from the President

2016 has been a challenging year for ESO given the financial situation and it has made raising funds particularly arduous. ESO has still managed to continue with annual projects and events, but not without compromise. Research is conducted with the goal of providing information for conservation and education initiatives, and we continue to raise awareness of both marine and terrestrial habitats in Oman.

The Dhofar Office continues to operate in Salalah and is used primarily for Frankincense Research and Conservation, the Native Tree Planting Campaign and to raise awareness in the region.

The various regulations that govern Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have raised some challenges this year, but we hope to be able to overcome these and maintain the work that we passionately feel is necessary to help sustain Oman's natural heritage.

At the end of 2016 and continuing through 2017, at a board level, we are striving to create a working strategy and implement new policies to enhance the functionality of the Society; putting in place certain regulations to further clarify aims and responsibilities of the organisation and the governing body.

Work is continuing with the Egyptian Vulture Research and Conservation Project, the Turtle Research and Conservation Project and the Renaissance Whale and Dolphin Conservation Project. Following much research on these species, the aim is advocacy to ensure continued protection by the various stakeholders.

Loggerhead turtles are still classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'Critically Endangered', the highest threat category on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and continues to be concerning for Oman, being a strong indicator of country's marine health. This can have a negative effect on tourism, especially for those that come to see these wonderful creatures in their natural habitats, as opposed to seeing animals in captivity. Our natural habitats are what tourists are looking for these days. ESO continues to be in discussion with the government to ensure this is kept at a high priority.

Our work is supported by companies who continue to believe in our cause and have partnered with us over the years. Our Annual Report is a testament to what your 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, the Ministry of Social Development 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 and board members who give so much time to ESO and without whom, we would not be where we are today.

Tania S Al Said
President



Introduction



Considering the financial difficulty that ESO has faced, along with the rest of the NGOs in Oman, 2016 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 172 students representing 14 colleges and universities, with the winners going on to win first, second and third places at the regional level in Dubai. Our collaborations with colleges and universities didn't stop there, with seven new Eco College Clubs being established with ESO's guidance around the country!

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. Advocacy work is continuing with industry in the Gulf of Masirah, which is the main hotspot for these endangered animals. 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. In addition, although

research continues, the Frankincense Research and Conservation Project has moved to the advocacy, awareness and educational level. This year our outreach team continued discussions and workshops with frankincense harvesters to explain the results of a culmination of four years of research on the best practices for sustainable harvesting.

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 the opening of our office in Salalah, which continues to be the base of our operations in the south.

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.

2016 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 2016 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 for bring it in line with current work.

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 OLNG'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 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 Dareen 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 of 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.



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 Araimi**
Field Assistant
17. **Jawaher Al Ghafri**
Education Coordinator
18. **Atika Ahmed**
Accountant
19. **Mussallam Tabook**
Dhofar Office Manager





Osprey, Al Mouj,
N Georgiou

Marine Conservation Projects



Turtle Research and Conservation

The global importance of Oman to the survival of turtles – where all species are classified under ‘Endangered’ or ‘Critically Endangered’ status listings throughout the world – has been definitively established through surveys and research conducted within the Sultanate over the past 35 years. In the last nine years, ESO, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs** 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 turtle resources. Through funding provided by the **Port of Duqm** and **Oman Oil Company**, ESO has been able to work towards the conservation of turtles with continued monitoring and research efforts, enhancement of resource capacity and management activities and the engagement of local communities.

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).

An assessment of the loggerhead sea turtle was completed in 2015 by the Marine Turtle Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (a global network of sea turtle experts). The North-West Indian Ocean loggerhead subpopulation has been assigned as critically endangered, thus facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future. This sub-population nests in Oman and Yemen and the assessment was attributed to the reported nesting decline on Masirah Island.

Sea Turtle Conservation and Sustainable Fishing

The Turtle Research and Conservation Project continued in 2016 with the aim of 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. Stakeholders engaged in this first project recommended follow up studies to further define and quantify the scale of the problem whilst engaging the support of the local community.

The follow-up studies conducted in 2016 enlisted the support of a project team based on Masirah to trial 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.

Using dhows enabled the partially successful gathering of track data that was used to plot the density of drifting gillnet fishing. This data 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.



Capacity Building in the Local Community

In order to assist with research on Masirah Island, ESO has been training three full-time local field assistants (FAs) over the last five years. These FAs work on the Turtle Research and Conservation Project during the nesting season and then assist with both the Renaissance Whale and Dolphin Conservation Project and Egyptian Vulture Research and Conservation Project during the off-season. To ensure the sustainability of this program, ESO has a permanent office on Masirah from which the FAs work.

Community Outreach and Public Engagement

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

- Awareness presentations given to schools on Masirah Island in March, with a special emphasis on marine turtles and the threats they face. Interactive games were used to reinforce what the children have learned in the classroom.
- Clean-ups were organised in April to clean the nesting beaches of discarded nets and litter ahead of the arrival of first loggerhead nesters. This engaged both boys and girls from local schools, Scout teams, Women's Associations and the general public. The clean-up covered 2km of nesting beaches on the north-west of the Island, with the participation of 116 individuals.



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 2016 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 Oman's 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.

Special attention has also been given to working with the **Ministry of Tourism** in relation to whale and dolphin watching guidelines. We are also very excited to be working with **Shell Development Oman LLC** on acoustic data processing (further information below).

ESO also produced a short awareness film on the Arabian Sea humpback whale with a focus on industry and fishermen. This film is featured on YouTube on the 'ESOMediaChannel' and we would like to thank **Justine Kwaan** and **Miguel Willis** for this stunning piece of work.

What does our recent data reveal?

In 2016, our efforts focused on summarising past work conducted under the support of **Renaissance Services**, in collaboration with international and regional bodies, such as the Wildlife Conservation Society, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the Arabian Sea Whale Network.

The analysis of three surveys between February 2014 and November 2015 resulted in the sighting of 40 different individuals in 29 groups of Arabian Sea humpback whales. Tagging efforts resulted in successful deployment of nine satellite tags, six of which provided data on dive behaviour and vertical distribution within the water column. The satellite tracking data revealed whales ranging within a 1,150 km corridor along the southern coast of Oman and northern Yemen, the first trans-boundary movement recorded for this population.

Further spatial analysis indicated that 35% of location points in the study were within the Gulf of Masirah, a habitat with an emerging industrial activity and existing artisanal fisheries. Although no field research activities were completed this year, tagging will continue in 2017 with the support of **Renaissance Services**.



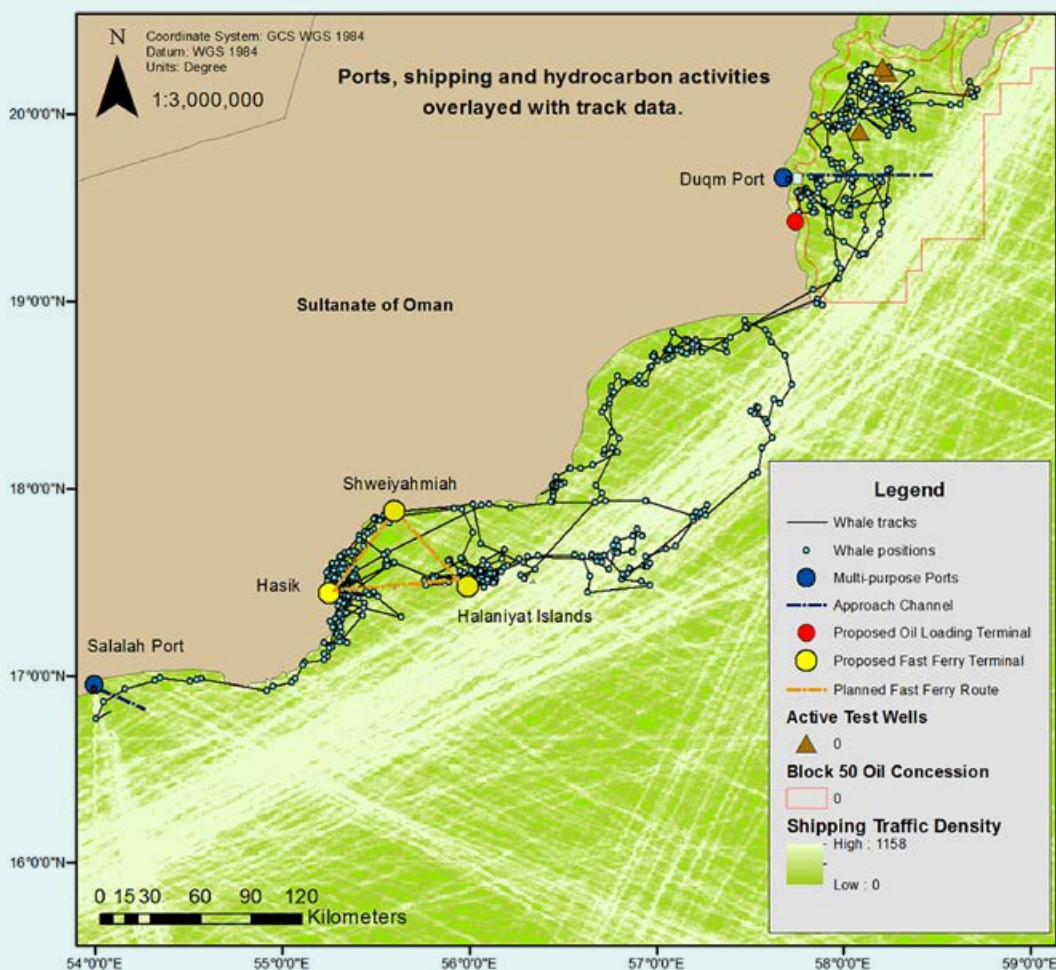
Passive Acoustic Monitoring

From 2011-2013 Marine Acoustic Recording Units were deployed in the Gulf of Masirah and Hallaniyat Bay, previously identified as hotspot areas. The monitoring allows for whale detection, noise analysis 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 LLC** and in collaboration with the **New England Aquarium**.



Initial results from the whale detection data analysis confirmed that singing was heard in both Hallaniyat Bay and the Gulf of Masirah, which are separated by approximately 400km, indicating that the population utilises both of these regions. However, there was a much stronger presence in Hallaniyat Bay, with singing heard nearly 24 hours a day during the peak months and detected simultaneously at multiple sites across the Bay. The difference in the predominance of song between regions suggests that the area may be more important habitat for breeding activity. In both areas, there is an apparent rise in singing activity during daylight hours. This is considered unusual and in most regions globally where this has been assessed, singing intensifies at night and drops off during the day. It is yet unknown why this is happening. There also appears a strong seasonal component to the use of song by this population, primarily from November through May, which is consistent with the Northern Hemisphere breeding cycle and singing season. There also appears to be a northward movement towards the end of the singing season, with singing activity trailing off sooner in the more southern Hallaniyat Bay and persisting later in the Gulf of Masirah. This suggests there may be a tendency for the population to shift distribution during this time of year. Details of the noise and song analysis will continue to be analysed in 2017.

This map shows tagged humpback whale movements in relation to ports and the white lines of shipping routes.





Dolphins, Musandam,
C Sachs

The Significance of the Gulf of Masirah (Khyama to Duqm to Ras Madrakah)

The coastline of Oman is becoming increasingly industrialised and whilst Environmental Impact Assessments are routinely conducted, few provide adequate mitigation against the impact on whales. The cumulative impact of new development and activities in coastal and offshore areas remains almost entirely unaccounted for in Oman. The major recent economic activity in the Gulf of Masirah has been gillnet fishery which represents a significant threat to humpback whales in the area, with a number of whale entanglements reported between 1990 and 2014 and 30-40% of photographed humpback whales bearing scars consistent with prior entanglement.

The recent construction of Duqm and increased oil and gas exploration in the Gulf of Masirah will also 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.

Over the last two years, ESO has been in discussions with the **Special Economic Zone in Duqm (SEZAD)**, who have guaranteed that all projects and industry that come under their supervision will include the whale population in their Environmental Impact Assessments. The **Port of Duqm** has already begun mitigation measures to ensure minimal risk to the resident whale population.

Capacity Building and Regional Collaboration

The IWC Scientific Committee meeting in June 2016 in Bled, Slovenia, provided an opportunity for ESO to present the Arabian Sea humpback whale tagging data and the acoustic research. The Scientific Committee recommended that satellite tagging work continues in Oman to include gender representation and tagging in seasons not included in work-to-date. The Committee recognised the importance of acoustic monitoring in providing information about the distribution and behaviour of Arabian Sea humpback whales and endorsed the continuation of the study. Additionally, ESO was urged to collect genetic samples where possible, as the population identity and structuring of many Northern Indian Ocean species is unknown.

ESO is a member of, and has been closely collaborating with, the Arabian Sea Whale Network, which aims to conserve humpback whales in the Arabian Sea. Members include representatives of large international NGOs like the World Wildlife Fund and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

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.

Damaniyat Islands Conservation

The Damaniyat Islands Conservation Program, sponsored by **Petroleum Development Oman (PDO)**, aims to engage volunteers and ESO members in the clean-up of marine litter 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 large numbers of nesting seabirds. Due to recreational and fishing activities as well as ocean currents the islands have become a magnet for rubbish and nets that are impacting the unique ecosystem on land and underwater.



Through this project, ESO engages with volunteers and raises awareness of the conservational importance of the Islands and is implemented in collaboration with the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Averda Environmental Sciences LLC, Muscat Municipality, the Marine Science & Fisheries Centre, SeaOman, Shell Oman Marketing, TRACCS, Oman Flour Mills and Al Mouj Marina.**

Litter data and coral reef data collection sheets are filled out by volunteers. Beach surveys and risk assessments help ESO analyse the risks on beaches and understand where clean-ups should be carried out. In 2016 ESO targeted the beaches of Jebel Al Kabeer, Al Joon, Al Qismah and Al Kharabah and collected data is being fed into Geographic Information System (GIS) maps to allow us to visualise the type and quantity of litter. The litter varies between plastic bags, plastic wrappers, plastic bottles and fishing nets and clean-ups will continue into 2017.

In February, two beach clean-ups united more than fifty volunteers from different backgrounds. Over two days, teams of volunteers removed a total of 560 kilograms and 97 bags of rubbish and pollutants from just two beaches.

In August, October and December, four underwater clean-ups united more than 40 volunteers from different backgrounds. Over four days, teams of volunteers removed a total 590 kilograms of fishing nets and lines as well as anchors and other metal items from Al Joon Shallow, Doc's Wall and Mousetrap dive sites. The collected waste was sent for disposal in cooperation with **Averda Environmental Services.**



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. Few people know that frankincense is harvested by tapping the trunk and branches of the *Boswellia sacra* tree. In the past few years and after close monitoring of the growth patterns of frankincense trees, researchers 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 had, in the past, focused on four experimental research locations in the Governorate of Dhofar in order to determine the right frequency of cutting to produce a good yield without adversely harming the trees. The research now continues and aims to fill in the significant research gaps remaining in the understanding of sustainable harvesting. Indicators such as flower density and seed germination have been closely examined and will be thoroughly analysed at the end of the field season in May 2017.

Frankincense Awareness Program

In order for conservation to succeed, a community outreach and awareness program is being implemented to complement the research findings, vital to the survival of this endemic Omani species. The program engages with relevant stakeholders such as ministries and local farmers to improve the level of awareness; promotes a conservation culture among the local communities and at the institutional level; and disseminates sustainable harvesting methods. In addition, educational presentations have been given at schools and Women's Associations in Taqah, Makshan, Mander, Manader, Al Mashash, Marsodd, Sadah, Mirbat, Rakhiut and Dhalkout.

Frankincense Workshops

Two workshops on sustainable harvesting of frankincense trees were organised in Dhofar in May and November. Both workshops aimed to discuss sustainable harvesting of frankincense with government entities, local communities and relevant stakeholders (such as farmers) in Dhofar. An infographic poster on how to tap frankincense trees was designed in both English and Arabic and distributed to the workshop participants and government entities.

The first workshop was held on the 11th May 2016 at the Hilton Salalah Resort, under the patronage of HE Mohamed bin Salim Al Tobi (Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs) and HE Mohamed bin Sultan

Al Busaidi (Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar). 80 guests attended the workshop representing organizations such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, the Office of Environment Conservation in Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality, Governance of Dhofar, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Office of Royal Affairs in Dhofar, HBSO officers in Dhofar and frankincense tree harvesters.







The second workshop allowed participants to share the issues currently faced by the frankincense industry and was held on the 14th November 2016 at the Mirbat Marriott Resort. The guest of honour was Sheikh Salim bin Suhail Tabook - Wali of Mirbat. 70 participants were in attendance including the Walis of Sadah, Shalim, Al Hallaniyat Islands and Thumrait, and representatives of other local entities such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, the Office of Environment Conservation in Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality, the Governor of Dhofar, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Office of Royal Affairs in Dhofar and HBSO officers in Dhofar.

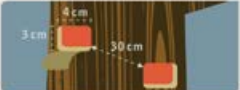
A series of recommendations was put forward from both workshops related to research, governance, trading regulations, education and awareness and have been shared with the appropriate government entities.

International Frankincense Conference

Following the success of the workshops, a committee was put in place to organise an international conference on frankincense. The committee is led by Sultan Qaboos University and local and international partners including ESO, Dhofar University, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Center. The aim of the conference will be to revive frankincense research and give an international attention to this near-threatened species.



WHEN AND HOW TO TAP FRANKINCENSE TREES					
Tapping depends on three factors: Tree height, trunk size and tree foliage cover.					
TREE HEIGHT	TRUNK SIZE	TREE FOLIAGE COVER			
					
		WELL-FOLIATED	POORLY-FOLIATED	NATURAL	GRAZED
		NUMBER OF TAPS (SPOTS)			
> 3 METER	> 80 CM	18	16	14	10
	50 - 80 CM	12	10	6	5
1-3 METER	30 - 50 CM	6	4	3	2
	< 30 CM	5	3	2	1



12 cm² cut size, barely shaving the external layer. Cuts about 30 cm distant from each other.

HARVESTING SEQUENCE:
November to May every 28 days
March to April every 14 days

START OF TAPPING:
November after Khareef (Monsoon)
Anytime in areas non-affected by Monsoon

END OF TAPPING:
End of May before Khareef (Monsoon)
Anytime in areas non-affected by Monsoon

Find out more: www.eso.org.om/frankincense
facebook.com/EnvironmentSocietyOman
@eso_oman
@esooman



Juvenile Egyptian vulture,
M McGrady

Egyptian Vulture 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 severe decline of birds of prey in Africa and Eurasia. Populations suffer from the fragmentation and destruction of their habitat 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.



Egyptian vulture being fitted with
a solar-powered GPS-GSM tag

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, both as a breeding sanctuary and as a haven for visiting birds. 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 in January to fit two satellite tags on juvenile Egyptian vultures.

Sadly, in February, one of the tagged vultures died in Al Amerat and was recovered by the ESO team. The cause of death was not fully determined, but natural mortality is frequent among juveniles of all bird species. The second tagged vulture is healthy, with its tag still transmitting. 3,900 locations have been received as of December showing the bird mainly making short journeys around the Hajar Mountains, between the different dumpsites of Al Multaqa, Bidbid and Quriyat, and often roosting in the mountains surrounding Al Sareen Nature Reserve.

Monthly dumpsite counts take place on Masirah Island by our FAs. The rubbish dump counts demonstrated their importance as food sources for the resident Egyptian vulture population and their potential as good locations for monitoring local and migratory populations.

Research since 2012 has strongly demonstrated the value of studying the spatial ecology of Egyptian vultures. Continuation of this research will depend on funding but ESO hopes to continue with a special emphasis on dumpsite counts, breeding surveys, threat evaluation and satellite tagging. Future activities will also include community engagement, public awareness and stakeholder engagement, the latter being important to coordinate the impact of the large-scale modernisation of rubbish dumps on Egyptian vulture populations.

Release of a transmitted juvenile
Egyptian vulture, January



Community Outreach and Education Projects



Fifth Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition

In cooperation with **Emirates Environmental Group (EEG)**, ESO held the Fifth 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.

172 competing students 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 **HSBC** and **Occidental Oman** (Gold Sponsors), **Ominvest** (Silver Sponsor), and **Shell Marketing** and **Shell Development Oman** (Bronze Sponsors) and supported by **TRACCS Oman**, **Khimji Ramdas**, **Pinky Bell** and the **Crowne Plaza Muscat**; the competition was held on 16-17 October under the patronage of HE Dr Rawya bint Saud Al Busaidi, Minister for Higher Education.

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

- Mr Yasser Abdullah Sulaiman, Former District 20 Governor, Toastmasters International
- Abdulaziz Al Midfaa, Vice Chairperson, EEG, United Arab Emirates
- Dr Mehdi Ahmed Jaaffar, Independent Advisor on Sustainable Development, Riyadh
- Dr Fatma Said Al Hajri, Director of Graduate Survey Department, the Ministry of Higher Education

Winning Teams

Climate Change: Impact on Water Security - Sultan Qaboos University (Abeer Saud Al Jaradi, Al Ghaliya Nasser Al Rubkhi, Sharifa Khamis Al Qutaiti, Awadh Saif Al Hashami).

Alternative Energy Resources: A Viable Option?
- Modern College of Business and Science (Aisha Darwish Al Matrooshi, Ghadeer Nasser Al Humaidi, Omer Mohammed Al Balushi, Abdullah Mohammed Al Balushi).

Sustainable Development Goals: A New Course for Humanity - University of Nizwa (Hajar Yaqoob Al Jabri, Maryam Abdullah Al Shammakhi, Amal Ali Al Saidi, Haroon Issa Al Qarni).

E-Waste: Where is the Green? - Rustaq College of Applied Science (Abdelrahman Mohammed Al Jahdhmi, Zeyana Sultan Al Rawahi, Abdulrahman Mohammed Al Balushi, Siham Mohammed Al Handhali).

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 Modern College of Business and Science and the University of Nizwa both won first prizes at the regional competition. In addition to this success, a second team from Modern College of Business and Science and the Oman Nursing Institute won second place, and Higher College of Technology and Rustaq College of Applied Science won third place.

We would also like to thank HE Mohammed Al Tobi, Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs, for taking the time to meet and discuss environmental issues with the winning students.



Following the success of the National Competition, the winners were mentored and given further presentation skills by Yasser Sulaiman and the Khimji Training Institute.

Earth Hour 2016

2016 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 **Oman LNG, Sohar Aluminium, Towell Engineering Group, Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries Company (Orpic), Daleel Petroleum and United Power Company.**

In-kind supporters included: **Crowne Plaza Muscat, Averde Environmental Services, Muscat Hills Golf & Country Club, Pinky Bell, Shell Oman Marketing, Mustafa Sultan Enterprises, Novell, Talentz, Tanuf Water and GT Stagetech.**



Using social and conventional media ESO received pledges of support from the public and private sector, government and educational institutions to turn their lights off for one hour. It was an incredible display of community participation and culminated in a family event at **Muscat Hills Golf & Country Club**, 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.



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. Colleges were visited by and Earth Hour Ambassadors were recruited to encourage students to pledge their support and switch off lights. Many colleges in turn, and through the ESO Eco College Clubs, organised their own Earth Hour events.

Media support was received from **TRACCS Oman, Merge & Al Wisal, Y Magazine, Black & White Magazine, Apex Media and Publishing (Muscat Daily and The Week), Muscat Media Group (Al Shabiba, Times of Oman, Hi Magazine, 7Ayam)** and **Al Roya Magazine**. 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.

THANK YOU!



دليل النفط ش.م.م.
DALEEL PETROLEUM L.L.C.

أوربك
Orpic


TOWELL ENGINEERING


الشركة المتحدة للطاقة (ش.م.م.)
UNITED POWER COMPANY (SAOG)

 SOHAR
ALUMINIUM


الشركة العمانية للغاز الطبيعي المسال ش.م.م.
Oman LNG L.L.C.


MUSCAT HILLS
GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

Tanuf
Water
The Natural Choice

noVell
L'ESPRESSO
Distributed in Oman by: DRED Desert River Diamond

pinky BELL 


شل عمان
Shell Oman

 TALENTZ
ENTERPRISES L.L.C.

 MSE
Mustafa Sultan
Enterprises L.L.C.

 AVERDA

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MUSCAT DAILY

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Times
OF OMAN

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TRACCS



'Let's Plant One' Native Tree Planting Campaign

ESO's Native Tree Planting Campaign was sponsored in 2016 by **Nama Group**. It aims not only to plant native trees, but to engage volunteers and raise awareness of the importance of planting native trees. The campaign focuses 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 7,500 trees and we are grateful for the collaboration of many organisations in Dhofar, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Dhofar Municipality and the Ministry of Education.

Planting activities took place in April and September and 200 trees of seven different species were planted in parks, schools, social centres and Women's Associations with the help of many volunteers including **Basmat Khair**.



Eco Summer Program

With sponsorship from **Petroleum Development Oman**, ESO was able to continue the summer education programs, engaging children of all ages in a 2-week program. 72 students registered for the Eco Summer Program and activities included the importance of native tree planting, Oman's biodiversity, exploring microorganisms, photography, art, eco crafting and digital design.

School Education Program

ESO's Environmental Education Program, sponsored by **Petroleum Development Oman**, aims to raise environmental awareness amongst Omani youth through a program catered to 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, 45 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 Masirah, Muscat, Al Sawadi, Rustaq, Sur, Musannah, Musandam, Khaburah, Ibri and Buraimi.



Eco College Clubs

The Eco College Clubs Program, sponsored by **BP Oman**, specifically targets university and college students in Oman with the aim of raising awareness among the youth and encouraging them to take the initiative of developing their own activities to positively impact their environment. The program reaches out the student community and has successfully established a network among higher education institutions in the Sultanate.

Each Club consists of a group of students and staff in a higher education institution that are responsible for activities and events to help raise environmental awareness. ESO aims to work together with existing Eco College Clubs and work on encouraging establishment of new Clubs within universities and colleges where they do not exist. These Clubs provide a place for the exchange of ideas and information on environmental issues and activities and ESO encourages the Clubs by posting their achievements on social media and providing guidance to the students.

With the help of ESO volunteer ambassadors and **Youth Vision**, seven universities and colleges were successfully recruited to set up Eco College Clubs; Nizwa University, Al Sharqiyah University, the Higher College of Technology, Ibra College of Technology, the College of Applied Science in Ibri, the College of Applied Science in Nizwa and Sultan Qaboos University.

In November, 45 students from participating universities attended a leadership workshop organised by ESO in collaboration with **The Lounge**. The sessions included icebreakers, teamwork, time management and event management skills.

Eco College Club activities were judged by Ahmed Al Rashdi - ESO Board Member, Maryam Al Amri - Founder and Executive Director of Youth Vision, Khalid Al Hatali - Environmental Advisor at BP Oman and Yasser Al Suleiman - Former District 20 governor, Toastmasters International.

A Green Award was given to the winning teams at an event that provided the opportunity for students to showcase their projects and achievements. Congratulations to Higher College of Technology (1st place), Al Sharqiyah University (2nd place) and Sultan Qaboos University (3rd place). We are very grateful to the support of **Arabian Overland** for providing the winning prize of a team-building trip to Bandar Al Khayran, which included kayaking, treasure hunts and beach clean-ups.



Women's Environmental Education and Empowerment

The Women's Environmental Education and Empowerment Project was initiated by ESO in 2009 to engage and empower Omani women to take ownership of their local environment by studying a specific environmental issue within their local area. ESO provided them with training and skills to conduct research, discuss environmental issues and write environmental essays to be entered into a competition. Through Oman's Women's Associations, ESO worked with women from Muscat, Salalah, Nizwa, Sur, Sohar, Ibri, Yanqul and Khasab.



The winners of the competition were then given the opportunity to meet with their local Majlis Al Shura representatives to discuss mitigation measures to improve the environmental situation and thereby promote Omani women's participation in the decision-making process.

Petroleum Development Oman is now sponsoring the third phase of the project, in which ESO has chosen one of the winners, Buthaina Al Alawi, to be given the opportunity to delve further into the environmental issue that has been raised. Buthaina's case study was the environmental impact of the abandoned gold mine in Yanqul. The aim is to engage further with government officials and develop a steering group in which mitigation options can be discussed. An environmental consultancy and geologist prepared a situational analysis assessing some of the environmental risks of the gold mine in order to provide some further evidence to support outcomes of an action plan to improve the environmental and health conditions of the local community.

This project aims to raise women's awareness of environmental issues and promote their civic engagement, while facilitating community partners to champion public participation sessions and inform their fellow residents of the benefit of public and environmental health of their community. It also creates partnerships among stakeholders to enhance collaboration between civil society organisations, public authorities and the private sector in Oman.

Throughout the project ESO has engaged with numerous stakeholders including the **Wali of Yanqul, Oman Women's Association**, the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs**, the **Ministry of Health**, the **Ministry of Housing** and the **Public Authority for Mining**.



Cormorants, Bandar Khayran, N Georgiou

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 public at large. The opening of ESO's office in Dhofar has allowed a base from which many more activities can be planned and executed.

Outreach and awareness activities were held in Muscat, Sharqiya, Al Batinah and Dhofar, targeting schools and the wider community. 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.

Clean-ups, lectures and field trips were organised by ESO throughout the year and continue to be a core part of ESO's commitment to ensuring participatory events for members.



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 2016 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 March 2012, assisting in consultant management, proposal and report writing, securing permits and participating in research. Asma has led meetings with the Wali of Masirah, engaged with the Omani Women's Association and given numerous presentations, strengthening ESO's Community Outreach Program and ensuring that results of our scientific projects are shared with relevant parties. Through the program, Asma has traveled to the USA, South Africa, UAE, Jordan, Kuwait and Turkey. She attended several workshops this year that allowed her to strengthen her knowledge, expand her network and exposure and tap into a wealth of specialised resources. In September Asma took part in the Mobile Seminar on Planning and Managing Tourism in Protected Areas in the USA, organised by Colorado State University. Asma was awarded a full scholarship from the United States Department of the Interior through the International Technical Assistance Program, the trip included visits to protected areas and national parks in the four states of Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana. She also attended a GCC Ocean's Expert Workshop held in Kuwait in April, where she presented on ESO's marine projects. Asma is keen to begin work in the area of turning research data into education and advocacy materials and start focusing her efforts more on conservation actions.



Siham Al Tuwaijri

Siham joined ESO at the end of 2014 as Administrative Assistant. Siham has attended a finance 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. We congratulate Siham on the recent delivery of her second child.



Juma Al Humaidi, Ghasi Al Farsi and Juma Al Araimi

Juma, Ghasi and Juma have been working for ESO since 2009 as part-time field assistants 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 field assistants have now been working full-time with ESO for five 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 field assistants been trained in field surveying methods, they have completed courses in computers, 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 field assistants' technical capabilities were further noticeably 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 field assistants were instrumental in helping coordinate ESO's effort to thoroughly clean turtle nesting beaches following a ship sinking off the coast of Masirah Island.



Nuhaila Al Sulaimani

Nuhaila holds both a BSc in Applied Biology from the Higher College of Technology and an MSc in Environmental Monitoring and Management from the University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus. Nuhaila joined ESO as Education Coordinator in 2013 and is a great asset to the organisation. She has worked with higher education students on the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition when she liaised with supervisors of student teams and ensured hundreds of students from colleges and universities around the country were properly mentored prior to their presenting at the event. During her tenure at ESO, Nuhaila produced educational material and organised the Eco Summer Program for children in Muscat. She also travelled to Tunisia for a conference on development of civic society in environment education and to Japan for the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development. In 2016 Nuhaila began work on an intensive education program focusing initially on the theme of energy saving. Nuhaila recently married, started a family and has moved out of Muscat. She continues to volunteer with ESO on a regular basis and we wish her the best of luck.



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 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. In 2016 Abdulaziz led the Native Tree Planting Campaign in Mirbat, liaising with various schools, universities and government organizations. He co-organised ESO's annual Ramadhan Quiz both in Muscat and Salalah and in addition to his community outreach work, he has been very involved in design work for ESO activities including Earth Hour, educational booklets and information posters. Abdulaziz has also become our official photographer documenting all ESO's activities. We congratulate him on his recent marriage and look forward to working with him in 2017.



Aisha Al Ghallabi

Aisha Al Ghallabi holds a BSc in Environmental Health Management from the Canadian University of Dubai and joined ESO as Membership Coordinator in 2015. In addition to managing ESO's membership database, Aisha has been developing ESO's Eco College Clubs, through which she aims to encourage college and university students to become more proactive on environmental issues and to enable them to organise and lead on-campus environmental events. As a result of these efforts, Aisha has engaged with several colleges, universities and institutes across the Sultanate. Furthermore, Aisha has been supporting ESO's educational programs and has been actively engaged in the Eco Summer Program and the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition. Aisha has worked with over 200 students preparing them for the Inter-College event and mentoring them through the process and assisting with the

organisation of the Oman event; she then accompanied the winning teams to Dubai for the regional competition. She attended a training course on Creative Thinking with Shell Development Oman and has led a successful membership renewal campaign in November. Aisha is currently focusing her efforts on increasing membership engagement at ESO and we congratulate her on her hard work this year.

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 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 brought home first, second and third places! Jawaher has also been in charge of ESO's Education Program, coordinating volunteers and visiting schools in different regions throughout the Sultanate to present on two themes in 2016 which included biodiversity and energy saving. This entailed creating educative material and fun games for children aged 11-16. In addition, she organised and ran the 2-week Eco Summer Program for children. Jawaher has become the backbone of the education department and we look forward to having her with us in 2017.



Other Activities



Masirah Emergency Clean-Up

On the 23rd July a vessel sank off the Masirah Island, around 1.5 km from shore. The cargo ship was carrying food, cleaning and other domestic items as well as plastic material for recycling. Large amounts of plastic debris began reaching the shores shortly after the incident and were deposited on the beaches.

Masirah is a world-renowned habitat for the critically endangered loggerhead turtles and ESO has been involved in research and conservation efforts there over the last nine years. Unfortunately, the timing of the vessel incident corresponded with their peak turtle nesting season and the beginning of the hatchling season making the response to this incident critical.

Through a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach, an incredible clean-up effort of 54 km of beaches on Masirah was conducted over two months to remove the plastic waste and debris generated from the sunken vessel. A total of 2,361 bags of waste (7 tons) collected with approximately 133 bags consisting solely of plastic bottle tops.

We would like to give a special thanks to the mobilisation of funds and support from: **PDO, Carillion Alawi, Oman LNG, OIG, Shell Marketing Oman, Be'ah, Five Oceans Environmental Services, SUMA, Omran and TRACCS**. We would also like to especially acknowledge the effort of ESO Board Member Dana Sarhan for leading the effort, ESO staff, ESO volunteers, Craig Turley who organised volunteer efforts on the ground and volunteers from the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Royal Oman Airforce (SQ Air Academy)**.



ESO Dhofar Office

ESO has always recognised the importance and responsibility of being the only environmental NGO in Oman. ESO's head office is located in Muscat and the Board has always ensured that there is a board member representing southern interests. The environment in the south of the country is unique, thereby giving way to very different environmental concerns than in the north.

With the support of **Nama Group**, ESO established a Dhofar Office in 2015 and has managed to increase ESO activities and outreach programs at schools and communities as well as increase our membership and volunteer database there.

There have been numerous visits to schools, colleges and both governmental and corporate stakeholders. Tree planting, educational presentations, social activities and clean-ups have been organised and the office is a great logistical help to ESO's research projects.



Internship Program

Pratyusha Varanasi interned with ESO for a period of one month in May and was invaluable in assisting our administrative, educational and social media needs. Her tasks included updating databases, crosschecking ESO's database for flora and fauna in Oman, updating the recycling companies list, helping with our Ramadhan Quiz preparation, helping with environmental educational games for children, updating information on the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition website and assisting with many day-to-day needs of the office.

Enosh Pathmanathan worked as an intern for ESO for five months and exceeded our expectations with his efficiency and enthusiasm in completing assigned tasks. Enosh worked on a presentation explaining the relationship between a decrease in turtles and decrease in fish, which is now being translated to Arabic for awareness with fishermen. He assisted with the designs for hotel donation proposal and corporate membership proposal and assisted in writing the *Green Your Office Guidelines*, which will be exclusively available to corporate members in 2017. He assisted in updating the database for Oman's flora and fauna and conducted research to update the list of recycling companies found in Oman. Enosh also assisted with many day-to-day needs of the office.



ECO BOWL 2016

11 teams competed in ESO's 5th annual corporate bowling competition aiming to raise funds for ESO. In first place was Port of Salalah, second place went to Omantel and third place to HSBC. Prizes and support were provided courtesy of **Sumo Sushi**, **Easy Life**, **Capital Stores** and **Samsung**. We would like to thank all the companies who participated and look forward to the 2017 rematch!

Ramadhan Quiz

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



Green Turtle, Damaniyat Islands, N Georgiou

Volunteers of the Year Award 2016

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 2016 Award went to Aditi Janin Tickoo, Bridie Vaughan and Craig Turley.

Aditi Janin Tickoo volunteered at the ESO office for three months and was exceptionally helpful. Her positive attitude and willingness to work in any area made her a great asset to ESO team. She contributed to various administrative issues as well as activity and events related tasks. She assisted with ESO's Annual General Assembly and helped prepare for and implement the Earth Hour event. Aditi updated existing and created new databases, helped with several event related surveys and evaluation and registration forms. She began and established a threatened species database of flora and fauna in Oman based on the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of biological species the IUCN Red list and assisted in many office related activities on a day-to-day basis.



Bridie Vaughan spent a month at the ESO office and her outstanding knowledge, kindness and optimistic attitude made her one of our most productive volunteers we have had. She helped ESO's Membership Coordinator in the difficult task of calling over 1,000 members, updating and editing available information on the database and encouraging members to renew. Bridie informed members of the changes in membership regulations and guided them through the different membership renewal methods.

Craig Turley had a key role in the success of the Masirah Emergency Clean-Up following a shipwreck, which deposited tons of waste over 60km of beach. He was deeply committed to and involved in the effort right from the beginning and was ESO's on-the-ground contact, managing volunteers, ensuring their safety and coordinating logistical support. Craig's support in this clean-up effort ensured the beaches were safe and clean ready for the endangered loggerhead turtle nesting season and his enthusiasm and dedication to protecting our environment proved exceptional.



Green turtle, Ras Al Jinz,
H Cheilani



Awards, Grants and Donations

ESO would like to give special thanks to all those who have helped us achieve our goals in 2016. These donors, sponsors and grant agencies are listed below in order of the date donations:

- **The Agency** 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 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
- **Marina Bandar Al Rowdha** 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
- **PDO EcOman Centre** for use of their lecture facilities
- **Crowne Plaza Muscat** for press conference facilities
- **Oman Airports Management Company** for the donation to Capacity Building Program
- **PDO, Carillion Alawi, OLNG, Shell Marketing Oman, OIG, Be'ah, Five Oceans Environmental Services, SUMA and TRACCS** for support during the Masirah Emergency Clean-Up
- **Oman Oil Company** and **Port of Duqm** for the Turtle Research and Conservation Project
- **Shell Development Oman** for Acoustic Humpback Whale Data Analysis
- **Babcock** and **Port of Salalah** for sponsorship of the ESO Fundraising Ball
- **The Crafty Kitchen, Mahali Mzuri, Khimji Watches** and **Anagama Mara** for auction prizes at the ESO Fundraising Ball
- **Ajit Khimji Group, Amouage, Maraca Interior Design** and the **Cryolounge at The Wellness Centre** for raffle prizes at the ESO Fundraising Ball
- **A&E, DJ AA, GT Stagetech** for in-kind sponsorship at the ESO Fundraising Ball
- **Petroleum Development Oman** for the Ramadhan Quiz
- **Dates Club/Golden Dates** for Ramadhan Quiz prizes
- **Petroleum Development Oman** for the Community Outreach Program



- **Petroleum Development Oman** for the Damaniyat Islands Conservation Program
- **Petroleum Development Oman** for Women's Environmental Education and Empowerment
- **BP Oman** for Eco College Clubs
- **Oman LNG, Sohar Aluminium, Towell Engineering Group, Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries Company (Orpic), Daleel Petroleum, United Power Company** for sponsorship of Earth Hour
- **Crowne Plaza Muscat, Averda Environmental Services, Muscat Hills Golf & Country Club, Pinky Bell, Shell Oman Marketing, Mustafa Sultan Enterprises, Novell, Talentz, Tanuf Water, GT Stagetechn** for in-kind support during Earth Hour
- **TRACCS Oman, Merge & Wisal FM, Y Magazine, Black & White Magazine, Apex Media and Publishing (Muscat Daily, The Week), Muscat Media Group (Al Shabiba, Times of Oman, Hi Magazine, 7Ayam) and Al Roya Magazine** for media support during Earth Hour
- **Pinky Bell** for website services for Earth Hour and the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition
- **HSBC and Occidental Oman, Ominvest, Shell Marketing and Shell Development Oman** for sponsorship of the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition
- **TRACCS Oman, Khimji Ramdas, 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
- **Mohsin Haider Darwish** for printer donation
- **British School** fashion show donation
- **National Training Institute** for support of staff training programs
- **Shell Development Oman** for training programs
- **PricewaterhouseCoopers** for financial audits
- **Al Busaidy, Mansoor Jamal & Co.** for legal advice and updating ESO's constitution
- **Jawad Sultan Electronics** for printer donation
- **IMTAC** for donation of laptops
- **Renaissance Services, Asha Enterprises/Ajit Khimji Group, Be'ah, Port of Salalah, Ooredoo, Khimji Ramdas, HSBC, Port of Duqm, Omantel, Sabco Media (Merge) and Shell Oman Marketing** for ECO BOWL participation
- **TRACCS Oman** for ECO BOWL media partnership
- **Samsung, Sumo Sushi, Easy Life and Capital Stores** for ECO BOWL prizes



Dalkhout, H Gheilani



Juvenile whale shark,
Damaniyat Islands, N Georgiou

Local and International Highlights



Planning and Managing Tourism in Protected Areas; Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana, USA

Asma Al Balushi, ESO's Research and Conservation Coordinator attended this mobile seminar, which brought 26 candidates from ten countries. Information was shared about protected areas and nature reserves as well as knowledge on tourism, ecology, awareness and community involvement in protected areas. Participants were of different backgrounds including researchers, biologists, nature reserve specialists, managers, directors, tourism technicians, tourism officers and film producers. Peru, Panama, Costa Rica, Oman, Indonesia, Honduras, Chili, Brazil, Belize and Bosnia and Herzegovina were represented. We thank the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs for giving ESO and Asma the opportunity to be a part of this spectacular trip!



Underwater Pioneers: Studying and Protecting the Unique Coral Reefs of the Musandam Peninsula, Oman

Coral reefs are important biodiversity hotspots that not only function as a crucial habitat for a multitude of organisms, but also provide humans with food and coastal protection. The coral reefs of the Musandam are situated in the Strait of Hormuz and endure extreme conditions such as high salinity and temperatures. In October, Jenan Al Asfoor, ESO Communications Coordinator, joined Biosphere Expeditions as part of a Musandam Reef Check survey team. The checks began in 2009 with the aim of monitoring the health of the coral reefs in the area and impacts and threats that they face. Data is shared with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs along with recommendations on their protection. Jenan has trained in this area over the last two years and we are grateful to Biosphere Expeditions for providing training to locals to be able to carry out surveys in other parts on Oman.

Conferences, Lectures and Workshops attended in 2016

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 2016:

Whale presentation to SEZAD (Special Economic Zone in Duqm) was delivered by ESO in celebration of Oman Environment Day; Duqm, Oman

Saving Water in Oman Workshop organised by Water Society of Oman; Ibri, Oman

Science Café Session organised by the Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Center; Muscat, Oman

Marine Data and Infrastructure – GCC workshop; Dubai, UAE

Stranding Committee Meetings organised by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs; Muscat, Oman

IWC Scientific Committee meeting; Bled, Slovenia

GCC's Oceans Experts Workshop organised by the Kuwait Environment Public Authority, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and also the US Department of State and NOAA; Kuwait City, Kuwait

BirdLife Middle East Regional Committee Meeting, Amman, Jordan

Turtle Day Event organised by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs; Muscat, Oman

Youth Campaign organised by the Ministry of Sports Affairs; Dhofar, Oman

Street Lighting on Highways Committee meetings organisation by the Ministry of Transportation and Communication; Muscat, Oman

Planning and Managing Tourism in Protected Areas Mobile Seminar organised by Colorado State University, USA

Annual Forum for Researchers organised by the Research Council; Muscat, Oman

6-week Tanfeedh Program organised by the Supreme Council for Planning attended by 3 board members; Muscat, Oman

Workshop to discuss benefits of frankincense organised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry; Salalah, Dhofar

Committee for Beach and Underwater Clean-ups at Bandar Khayran organised by the Ministry of Tourism; Muscat, Oman

18th Arabian Scout Conference; Muscat, Oman

Sea Water Spring Workshop organised by the Oman Water Society; Quriyat, Oman

'The Role of NGOs in Rationalization of Consuming' organised by Oman Association for Consumer Protection for NGOs; Muscat, Oman

Volunteer Day Seminar organised by the Ministry of Social Development; Muscat, Oman

ESO Public Lectures 2016

February: "Ghost and Abandoned Fishing Gear" by Martin Stelfox and Dr Jillian Hudgins

March: "Sea Turtle Research on Masirah Island" by Andrew Willson

April: "Marine Litter" by Elayne Looker and Maïa S. Willson

May: "Arabian Leopard Conservation in Oman" by Hadi Al Hikmani

May: "Bird Migration in Oman" by Dr Jens Eriksen

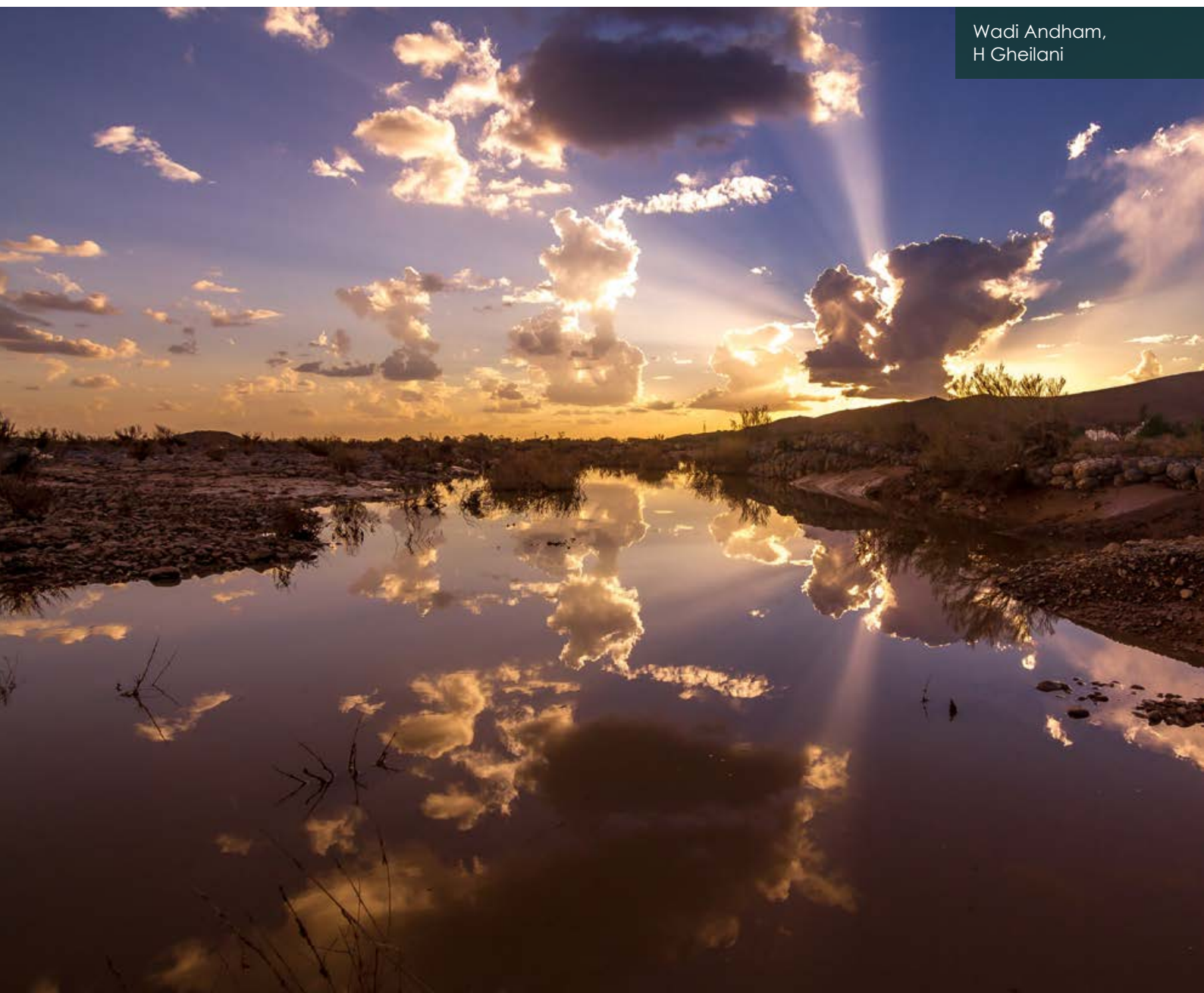
August: "Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change" by Dr Badr Al Qamashoui

August: "Recycling Grey Water" by Dr Abdulrahim Al Ismaili

October: "Valley of Giants" by Miguel Willis & Read Macadam

November: "Lead Toxicity" by Dr Salah Al Zadjali

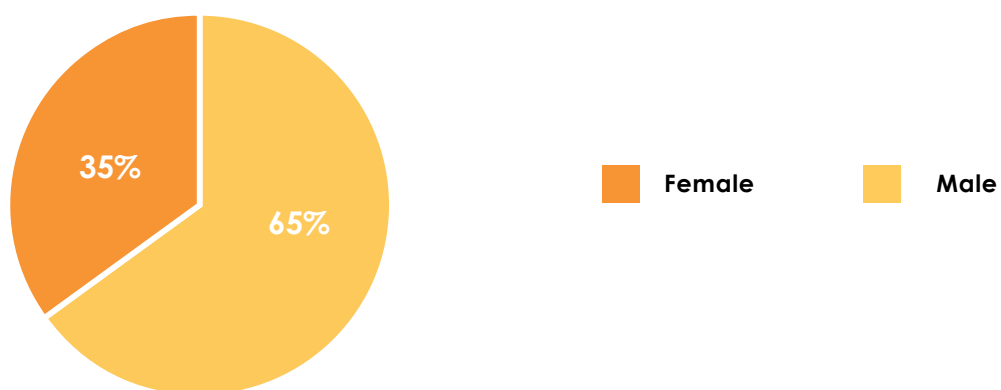
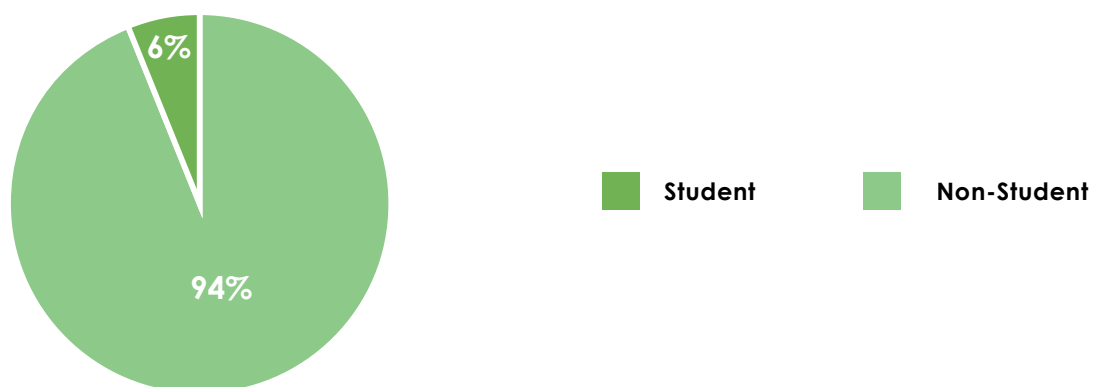
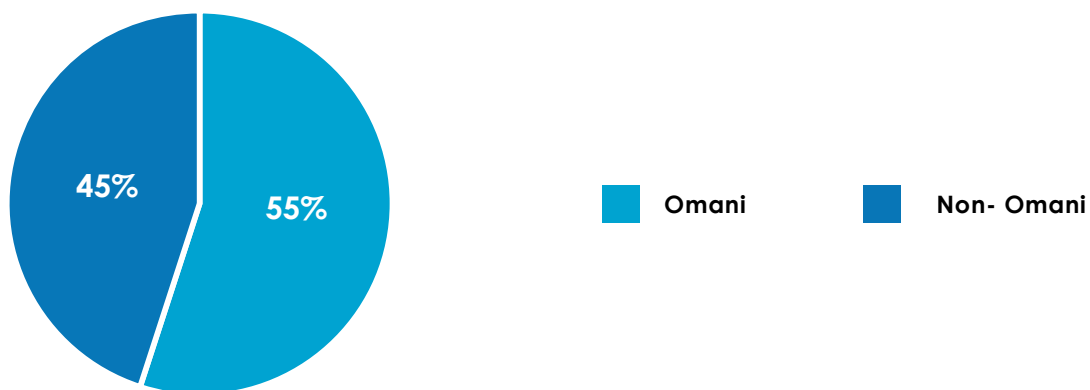
December: "Coral Reefs of Musandam" by Jenan Al Asfoor



Wadi Andham,
H Gheilani

Membership

In December 2016 ESO counted 220 active members. The charts below show percentages of Omanis, students and male vs female members.



Corporate Membership

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

- Port of Duqm
- Sohar Aluminium
- Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC Oman)
- Oman Solar Systems
- Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries Company (Orpic)
- PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Towell Auto Centre
- HSBC
- Carillion Alawi
- Khimji Ramdas
- Strabag Oman
- Oman Trading International
- Shell Oman Marketing Company
- United Power Company
- Sohar Power Company
- Enhance Oman
- Special Economic Zone Authority Duqm
- Al Jarwani Hospitality
- Daleel Petroleum
- Al Mouj Muscat
- Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran)

Collaborations 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

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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.

Dr Mehdi Ahmed Jaaffar, ESO's Vice President (2004-2014), is now an advisor and valued volunteer who regularly attends conferences and meetings on ESO's behalf.

ESO staff are the backbone of the Society and its work and we thank all that have been with us throughout the years. Congratulations to Nuhaila Al Sulaimani, Siham Al Tawairjri and Suaad Al Harthi for the new additions to their families. Also congratulations to Abdulaziz Al Alawi on the occasion of his marriage. We wish you all the best in your new adventures!

We were sad to see staff members Nuhaila Al Sulaimani and Ali Al Kathiri leave ESO but wish them the best of luck!

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

Salalah,
H Gheilani



Volunteer Acknowledgements

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

Bridie Vaughan who did an outstanding job as a membership affairs volunteer, calling and updating our membership database for weeks and guiding members through renewal processes.

Aditi Janin Tickoo who helped with analysing event evaluation forms, creating and updating databases, helping with admin and supporting our research by putting together a document on the IUCN Red list focusing on Omani flora and fauna. She also assisted in many other areas on a day-to-day basis.

Jesal Asher who dedicated so much time and energy to ensuring a smooth process for ESO's future strategy.

Khalid Al Khaldi, former ESO Membership Coordinator, who has continued to give valuable volunteer time to numerous ESO events including the Eco College Clubs, the School Education Program and the Inter-College Environmental Public Speaking Competition

Waheed Al Fazari who worked on the Illegal Killing of Birds Initiative on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman in collaboration with Bird Life International. **Chris Rusnak** who assisted with quality control, data management, data analysis and mapping of Egyptian vulture field data.

Oman Botanic Garden team, **Oman Plant and Animal Genetic Resources Center** team and **Moosa Al Lawati** for offering their time and knowledge on various topics during the ECO Summer Program.

Ahmed Al Mahrouqi, **Duaa Al Harrasi**, **Taher Al Subhi** and the **Oman Women's Association** in Samail for helping with biodiversity presentations as part of ESO's educational program. **Rigel Cedeño** for her assistance with social media.

Oman Women's Association for their constant **Galaan Bani Bu Ali**, **Galaan Bani Bu Hasan**, **Al Kabeel** and **Modaibi** throughout 2016.

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Said Azem Alamri, **Abu Baker Kofaan**, **Naseer Mohammed Al Mamari** their support during ESO's Native Tree Planting Campaign in Dhofar.

Ahmed Salim Al Farsi, **Majid Mahfoodh Al Oraimi**, **Salim Hamad Al Saadi**, **Muhammad Ali Al Awisi**, **MD Sobouj Miah (Be'ah Masirah)**, **Al Amin**, **Sharif Miah**, **Foujul Karim**, **Mohammad Hanif**, **Mamun Miah**, **Saiful Basar**, **Shahidul Islam**, **Khorshed Alam**, **Mosharaf Hossain**, **Abdur Rahim**, **Mohammed Rubel Mia**, **Juma Ali Al Farsi**, **Jameel Khamis Al Hakmani**, **Salam Khurabish Al Wahibi**, **Al Mundhir Al Humaidi**, **Saeed Al Humaidi**, **Abdulmajid Al Humaidi**, **Salim Rashid Al Saadi**, **Humaid Nasser Al Saadi**, **Ameer Salim Al Saadi**, **Hzaa Ali Al Saadi**, **Osama Salim Al Saadi**, **Amjad Salim Al Saadi**, **Michael Ramsis**, **Sanjeewa Prasad Silva**, **Ananth Balasubramaniam**, **Sher Singh Tanwar**, **Dulal Fabia Gomes**, **Varadendra Kumar**, **Suresh Santa**, **Bansoo Kumar Rao**, **Bonala Bhumaiah**, **Sayyad Imran**, **Bharat Singh**, **Sunil Kumar Marothia**, **Atul Gomes**, **Jalem Naga Raju**, **Vibudhi Chandra Shekar**, **Ali Sultan Al Shammakhi**, **Khamis Ali Al Hakmani** for their support during the Masirah Emergency Clean-Up.

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Justine Kwaan for her dedication, support, time and energy in the design and production of ESO's Annual Report and for managing the production of ESO's new whale awareness film.

Sundus Al Busaidi for her help in the ESO office.

Shehla Hussein for her help with designing the Damaniyat Islands clean-up t-shirts, presentation and posters.

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



Coral reef,
Damaniyats



