



Annual Report 2019





His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

As a nation we look back at the Omani renaissance era which began half a century ago. We look back with great pride and deep appreciation for the selfless dedication of HM Qaboos and his work to propel his people into the 21st century while navigating the most challenging geopolitical landscape. He met divisiveness and sectarianism with patience, tolerance and inclusion. He fostered reconciliation and always chose fraternity and empathy, in the face of animosity, love over hatred, light over darkness.

It now falls upon all of us to look to the future with optimism and solidarity. Our new leader, HM Haitham bin Tarik bin Taimur Al Said stands on the threshold of a new era, gifted with the great vision afforded by his unique perspective gained while Secretary General of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Heritage and Culture, overseeing the National Vision 2040. With the love and support of the people of Oman we wish him only the best!

HH Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib Al Said
Patron, Environment Society of Oman

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Blackstart, Hamed Al Gheilani



Message from the President

ESO's Community Outreach this year included 2,400 school students and 700 university students. The two-day Eco-thon was a dynamic, intense and enjoyable event, and began with speakers who gave talks on various subjects to 95 students from 28 colleges in preparation for the event. The students then had 24-hours to find solutions to particular environmental problems. Supported by volunteer mentors, they were then given the opportunity to "pitch" their ideas to a panel of judges.

Turtle conservation work continues on Masirah island and we have begun concentrating on areas of behavioural change: the team engaged with the fishing community on the island and made available large bins for fishermen to be able to dispose of nets responsibly. This is extremely important as discarded nets at sea entangle turtles, whales and other species. This is known as ghost fishing and is a worldwide problem, contributing to the deaths of 650,000 marine mammals per year. The nets themselves also add to the increasing litter problem at sea and on beaches. The use of bins on Masirah has still not taken off as we had hoped, but we are confident that incentives could lead to a higher adoption rate. Net clean-ups on the island from the beaches in 2019 saw the collection of 197 tons of abandoned fishing gear.



In June scientists from Oman, including ESO staff and representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, visited the sea turtle nesting beaches in Florida. This was a wonderful opportunity for them to meet with like-minded conservationists and protected-area managers in order to understand how a community can work together towards the conservation of endangered species such as sea turtles. Through collaborative efforts with US partners we are looking forward to seeing a collective approach towards the management of sea turtle nesting beaches in Oman in the near future.

While funding remains a major issue for ESO, in 2019 we saw funds from individual actions rise considerably. Individuals have come forward and found innovative ways to raise funds for ESO, because they believe in our organisation's work. Many have pushed themselves to their physical limits to achieve their goal, from cycling the Haute Route Oman, to running the UTMB, a 50km run over Oman's rugged mountain terrain. Others have used their artistic skills to raise funds at exhibitions. To all of you, a very heartfelt thank you. More details of this can be found in the report. Our Hotel Donation Program continues to bring in funding from the visitors to Oman and we currently have four hotels and two tour operators partnering with ESO. This successful program allows tourists to contribute to the environment which they have come to enjoy.

Our work continues to be supported by companies who 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. I would like to thank all our corporate members for the ongoing support you have provided us, as well as our other supporters, be it from private sector companies or personal donations. Through your support and sponsorship, we are able to pursue our goal of conserving Oman's natural heritage for future generations.

We are also grateful to our individual members and volunteers who are always at hand to help, and to the government of Oman who continues to support our work.

Tania S Al Said
President

Introduction



At the end of a decade, we take the opportunity to reflect on our achievements and look to our aspirations over the next ten years.

We have made advances in our understanding of flagship species such as Arabian Sea humpback whales and loggerhead sea turtles. Having a better understanding of the population sizes, where they are located and the threats that they face has given us a desire to shift our efforts from researching the wildlife towards understanding people and their connections with the environment. There are natural factors and threats in the environment that we cannot change, however, but influencing people, raising their awareness and observing changes in their behavior is something that we can do. In the last couple of years our efforts have concentrated towards influencing the behavior of fishermen towards the safe disposal of fishing nets, and visiting communities adjacent to nesting beaches on Masirah island to make them more aware of the impacts of activities such as beach driving and artificial lighting towards hatchlings and nesting sea turtles. Likewise, in the terrestrial environment we have gained more insight into sustainable frankincense tree harvesting and have worked towards educating farmers on frankincense growth and sustainable harvesting techniques.

Our outreach efforts have expanded over the years, targeting all governorates and different members of the society including women, children, fishermen, farmers and corporates, as it takes an individual as well as a collective effort to make a change. There has been progress in the level of environmental awareness, however we realise that there is always more to be achieved, and we are challenged by converting this awareness towards observable changes in behavior. If we take the example of plastics in the environment, we can see that it is being discussed in many for a, but we will need to work collectively towards reducing our reliance on single-use plastics for a cleaner and healthier Omani environment.

Over the next decade, we hope to work towards aligning ourselves with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals are a blueprint to achieve a more sustainable future for all - a world where all people can live productive, vibrant and peaceful lives on a healthy planet. These goals were adopted in 2015 and although progress has been, made more ambitious actions are required over the next ten years to deliver the goals by 2030.

As a civil society in Oman, we are proud to be able to contribute in some way towards these global targets that influence us locally and mobilize action. We believe that the youth are our future and have launched two new programs this year including the Green Innovation Eco-thon and the Green Schools Initiative, with the former targeting university level students and the latter targeting schools. Both of these programs were themed around energy, waste and water efficiency. We aim to encourage innovation, creativity and sustainable thinking through encouraging young minds to question the current status of their surrounding environment and look at what changes they can make individually, or collectively with their communities to minimise their ecological footprint. Youth empowerment is key for developing sustainable cities of the future.

As you read through our annual report, we encourage you to think of joining our journey over the next decade, helping us support innovation, creating a balance between people and nature, and unlocking more financing for sustainable development.

Suaad Al Harthi
Executive Director

ESO Board

The following Board Members were elected in April 2018 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.

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

Mr Ahmed Al Rashdi holds an MBA in Business Administration and Management from the University of Bedfordshire. 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 seeks to standardise it in Oman. Ahmed has 12 years experience in the aluminium smelting industry and in the airport and aviation industry. Currently Ahmed is managing the Asset Data of the new Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport. He had the chance to participate in the mobile Environment Research Unit - Hajar Mountains Biodiversity Survey in 2015. Over the last three years on the board of ESO, Ahmed has played a key role in HR, education and community outreach where his interest has taken him to Buraimi, Masirah and Dhofar. He is very keen to continue his involvement with local communities and students as well as other key stakeholders. Ahmed has represented ESO in the office of Oman Vision 2040 and participated in the Future Quest Forum in 2017.

Treasurer

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 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, a risk management framework adopted by financial institutions for determining, assessing and managing environmental and social risks in projects. Osamah has a Bachelor's in Finance from California State University, a Master's in Business IT Systems from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, and has completed the General Management Program at Harvard Business School.

Board Member

Ms Dareen Mehdi is a 3rd time elected board member of ESO and is part of the Education and Outreach team at the Oman Botanic Garden. She holds a Master's in Conservation Science from Imperial College, London. Her background has facilitated a set of skills in various disciplines, but her personal focus has always been towards developing community-based solutions through volunteerism. Dareen is passionate about empowering youth and has helped communicate ESO's vision since joining as a student member in 2006, and ensuring that Omani youth are key stewards of our economic development and natural resources. She has hosted a few radio programs discussing environmental topics and enjoys using social media as a platform to raise awareness.

ESO Board



Board Member

Mr Waheed Al Fazari is the Head of Wildlife Division at the Office for Conservation of Environment, Diwan of Royal Court. He holds a BSc in Environmental Biology from Sultan Qaboos University and has received training in the USA in avian research (bald eagles) and in national parks management. He is also a member of the Oman Bird Record Committee, a Lifeline Earth specialist advisor and a member of other national committees. He has 10 years' experience in Oman wildlife studies, research and conservation. Waheed has contributed to eight referred journal papers in topics that include ornithology, mammal studies and conservation. His highlighted projects are the Sooty Falcon Project with OCE and other international institutions, the Egyptian Vulture Project with ESO and International Avian Research, Survey of Waders and Barr Al Hikman with MECA, NIOZ and Wetland International, Illegal bird hunting in Oman with Birdlife International and ESO. His current duties include supervising several wild species studies such as the Nubian Ibex Project, Arabian Tahr Project and Arabian Gazelles Project. Waheed is also distinguished with the title Artist (A-FIAP) from the International Federation of Photographic Art, a member of Photographic Society of Oman and a winner of several national and international wildlife photographic competitions.

Secretary

Mr Ammar H Mohamed graduated in 2002 from Pennsylvania State University, USA with a Master's in Architectural Engineering, specialising in Lighting Design. He worked in the USA for two years before returning to Oman and joining the Royal Court Affairs, where he currently holds the position of the Senior Lighting Specialist and head of the Lighting Design Department at the Central Design Office of the Royal Estates. Ammar is a green building advocate, holds the 'LEED Green Associate' credential from the United States Green Building Council and is currently preparing for his 'LEED Accredited Professional' credential. He has lectured about green buildings and energy efficient lighting at the Sultan Qaboos University and other colleges in Oman and has also been involved in a number of studies related to green building and using daylight and clean energy at the Royal Estates.

Membership Officer

Mr Omar Al Riyami holds a Master's in Environmental Impact Assessment and Management from the University of Manchester, UK and a BSc in Marine Science and Fisheries from the Sultan Qaboos University. He is a former ESO employee who served the organisation from 2009 to 2013 and occupied many positions including Marine Projects Assistant Manager, Membership and Volunteer Manager and Community Outreach Manager. He participated in many ESO projects and activities such as the Renaissance Whale and Dolphin Project, Turtle Research and Conservation Project and Annual Masirah Festival, Earth Hour and the Native Tree Planting Campaign, as well as delivering environmental awareness presentations to all levels of the community. During his time with ESO, Omar represented Arab youth in the UNESCO's conference on the 40th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, Japan 2011. Omar currently works as the lead Environment Engineer at Duqm Refinery and Petrochemicals Oman.

PR Officer

Ms Rumaitha Al Busaidi is an advocate for sustainability, youth involvement and innovation in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Most recently, she has been overseeing investments of the governments of Oman and Qatar in the fisheries and aquaculture sector as an aquaculture specialist in Al Hosn Investment Company. Rumaitha was a recipient of the Royal Netherlands Society of Arts & Sciences fellowship allowing her to pursue her studies in the Netherlands and work as a researcher at the Netherlands Institute of Ecology, resulting in a series of publications. She is also a key participant of the National Program for Enhancing Economic Diversification (Tanfeedh) currently serving as Vice Chair of the Food Manufacturing sectorial working group. An award-winning radio presenter and sportswoman, Rumaitha is credited with being the first female football analyst in the Arab world; a feat that she only could achieve due to her passion for the sport and being part of the Oman women's national football team. Rumaitha also became the youngest Omani woman to step foot on the South Pole and has climbed Mounts Kilimanjaro and Damavand. Rumaitha holds two MSc degrees in Marine Pollution and Aquaculture Management. She is also part of the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Community and was recently named by the European Commission as a One Young World Peace Ambassador.

Board Member

Dr Mohammed Saif Al Kalbani holds a PhD in Environmental Sustainability from the University of Aberdeen, UK. He has MSc and BSc in Environmental Engineering Sciences and Management. He worked as Research Assistant at Sultan Qaboos University and then at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA) as Director of Environment and Sustainable Development. He currently works as the Director of Environmental Inspection and Control at MECA and is also entrusted to carry out duties as Director General of Environmental Affairs at MECA. Dr Al Kalbani has participated in many research projects related to integrated environmental assessment, environment preservation, biodiversity conservation, climate change and environmental management and legislation. He has published several articles in international journals and has participated in the preparation of the 4th - 6th Global Environmental Outlook Reports for UNEP and the Arab Environmental Outlook Report for the Arab League. He has published and presented many papers at international, regional and national conferences, symposiums, and workshops; and has participated in International meetings related to environmental conventions and protocols. He has memberships in different social societies and has received awards and distinctions as an active employee, researcher and social member from government officials, academic and research institutes and non-governmental organisations.



Sustainable Development Goals



ESO Staff



1. **Suaad Al Harthi**
Executive 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. **Aisha Al Ghallabi**
Membership Coordinator
8. **Said Al Jabri**
Public Relations Officer
9. **Asma Al Balushi**
Research and Conservation Coordinator
10. **Ghasi Al Farsi**
Field Coordinator
11. **Jenan Al Asfoor**
Corporate Relations Manager
12. **Juma Al Araimi**
Field Assistant
13. **Jawaher Al Ghafri**
Education Coordinator
14. **Atika Ahmed**
Accountant

ESO in Numbers



28 Collaborations with international organizations



60 schools visited



2400 School students



120 Educators reached
(through ministry of education directorates)



700 University students engaged



140 Fishermen reached



27 Corporate members



95 Students from **29 colleges** and universities participated in the **GREEN INNOVATION ECO-THON**

33 Schools participating in the green school initiative consisting of **330** students



287 Individual members

76 Volunteers assisted in ESO activities



4 Hotels and **2** tour operators part of the donation program



12 Weeks of sea turtle survey work



197 Tons of abandoned fishing nets removed from turtle nesting beaches on Masirah



More than **5** nesting sea turtles saved from fishing nets

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 ten 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 funding from the **Marine Turtle Conservation Act - US Fish and Wildlife Service** to support the Turtle Research and Conservation Project in 2019.

The project is based mainly on Masirah Island and focuses on loggerhead turtles. Outside of the loggerhead nesting season, field assistants monitor green, hawksbill and olive Ridley 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. The major threats that impact both the habitat and population numbers are land-use disturbances such as extensive coastal development, light pollution and beach driving, and sea-based disturbances such as turtles being caught in fishing nets by mistake (bycatch).

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.

Community Outreach and Public Engagement

Several community outreach activities were planned throughout the year to raise awareness on the importance of marine turtles, the main aim being to introduce conservation actions by reducing light pollution on Masirah Island. These visits included meetings with, and presentations to, the local community.



Since 2012, ESO's annual Masirah Turtle Festival has taken place ahead of the loggerhead nesting season aiming to raise awareness of the threats facing Masirah's turtle populations and the potential solutions to those threats. Following local school presentations highlighting Masirah's sea turtles in September 2018 which included community engagement and awareness of the impacts of light pollution on nesting turtles and hatchlings, the annual festival took place from April-May, with net entanglement and disposal of fishing gear as a key theme. The festival included the following activities:

- **Community presentations:** five presentations were given to local communities on Masirah, reaching out to around 150 adults and children. Discussions included the various threats to sea turtles on Masirah such impacts from fisheries, beach driving, light pollution and plastic waste. Presentations were given to Royal Air Force of Oman staff and nursery school children, Masirah Women's Association nursery school, Masirah Secondary School for Girls, Al Mohalb Secondary School for Boys and Al Mashaal Elementary School.
- **Football match:** four local teams of 15 players competed in a football game, each taking on the name of a local nesting turtle species: Remani (loggerhead), Sherfaf (hawksbill), Zetoni (olive Ridley) and Akhdar (green). Congratulations to the winning team, Remani!
- **Municipal clean-ups:** 120 students and members of the local community participated in a municipal clean-up of nesting beaches on Dhariah beach. The event included participation of three local schools, the waste management company and their contractor (Be'ah and Ecovision), Masirah municipality, and the local fisheries center.
- **Fishermen one-to-one engagement:** a series of one-to-one engagements with local and expatriate fishermen was undertaken, discussing general fisheries practices, impacts of ghost fishing and entanglement of marine wildlife in fishing gear.

An awareness video on the decline of marine turtles on Masirah was produced in June 2019, with the support of **Renaissance Services SAOG**. The 6-minute documentary video entitled Voices from Masirah has been made public on ESO's social media channels, and is publicly accessible on You Tube via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2fiVb-ilww&t=49s>. It includes testimonies from community representatives on the island on their observations of loggerhead turtle decline, notable threats and recommended practices to be adopted by local citizens and entities. With the help of further funding from **Renaissance Services**, a second video illustrating ESO's conservation efforts is currently being produced for 2020.

Renaissance Conservation Actions Project

Dedicated Net Clean-ups

Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) poses a risk to marine wildlife and is a severe entanglement threat for both nesting sea turtles and emerging hatchlings and is a major waste management threat to Oman's marine environment. Entanglement incidents have increased in recent years on Masirah and have proved ALDFG to be a significant threat to sea turtles on Masirah Island.

Net clean-ups have been organised by ESO on the Island for the last three years, and in January and February, ESO coordinated two clean-up campaigns, specifically targeting discarded fishing nets on turtle nesting beaches on the East coast of Masirah, before the commencement of the hawksbill and olive Ridley nesting season. 197 tons were collected with many of the nets having been buried in the sand for over a decade.



Photo credits: Antonia Vegh



Made possible with funds from the **US Fish and Wildlife Service** and **Renaissance Services**, the clean-ups were a collaborative effort and supported by ESO staff, locally employed laborers, volunteers, the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs**, the **Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth** and the **National Ferries Company**, along with significant contributions from **Suma/Ecovision** (subcontractors of the local authority for waste management, Be'ah, for the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah) and **Masirah Municipality**.

Over the last three years an estimated 425 tons of abandoned fishing gear have been collected from 78km of vitally important turtle nesting beaches. To our knowledge, this represents one of the largest dedicated net clean-ups of fishing gear globally and is one of ESO's proudest achievements to date.

Light Pollution Assessment

With donations from 2017 Sprint for Oman, a rapid assessment of lighting was completed on Masirah in July 2018 and included nesting beaches from K8 to K22. Observations indicate that there are several attainable changes that can be made to improve the lighting pollution on the island. While some solutions can be led and funded by ESO and supported by stakeholders, others will be dependent upon stakeholder engagement and intervention. Recommendations have been made to the **Royal Air Force of Oman**, the **Royal Oman Police**, **OMRAN**, local property owners as well as the Ministry of Regional Municipality and **Water Resources** and the **Ministry of Housing**, and we hope that further engagement will encourage these changes. One on one engagement with local homeowners yielded positive agreement to turn off unnecessary lighting during the nesting season and we hope to draft a lighting code for Masirah Island to guide future developments in 2020.

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 2019 in coordination with the **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (MECA)** and the **Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)**. Our research and conservation efforts over the last few years have focused on conducting a behaviour change study with the fishermen of Masirah targeting the reduction of net disposal at sea. Masirah Island hosts the second largest loggerhead turtle rookery in the world, and a diverse assemblage of endangered marine mammals associated with coastal and deep ocean environment, including Arabian Sea humpback whales.





The overall aim of the study is to reduce unregulated disposal of nets by fishermen as a means of addressing 'ghost fishing' mortalities of marine mammals and other marine life. Community-based social marketing was used to encourage fishermen to discard old or damaged nets, fishing gear and other waste in designated bins rather than at sea. Bins were deployed at three fishing sites in February 2019 with accompanying signs written in the five most common languages spoken by the fishing community (Arabic, Bengali, English, Hindi and Urdu). Monitoring until June 2019 indicated a behaviour adoption rate of around 10%. Regular engagement was undertaken with more than 85 boat crews, and an estimated 332kg of nets were collected, in addition to 293kg loose plastic and ropes and 832kg general waste. Additional analysis is required to better understand the barriers that are preventing fishermen from using the bins to dispose of their nets, to assess the potential benefits of this behaviour (e.g. demonstrating economic and ecologic impacts of ghost nets), and to increase the rate of use.

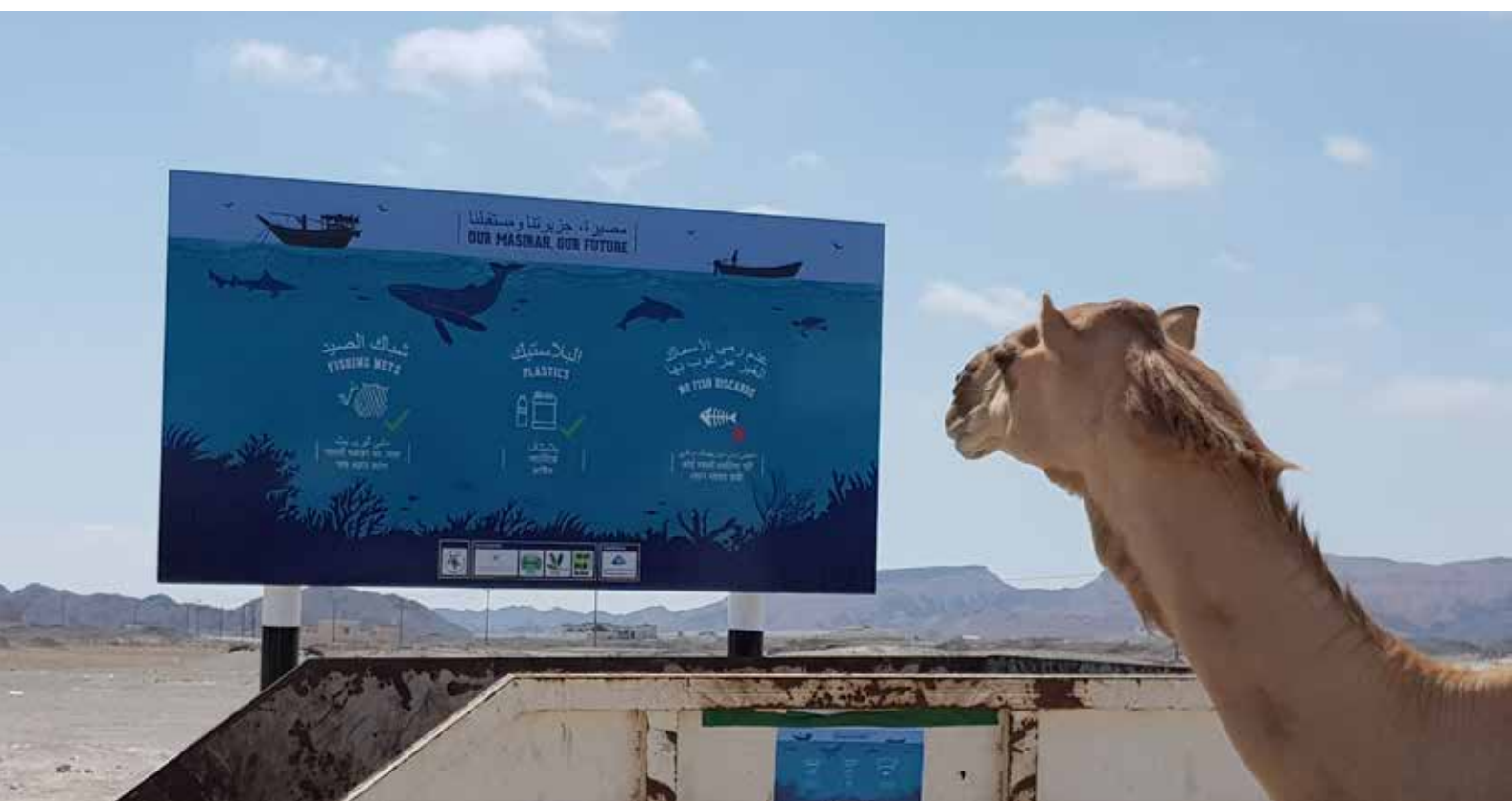




Photo credit: Darryl McDonald

ESO distributed posters in the same five languages, designed by **Edward Hemphill**, to be placed directly on fishing dhows, prompting the crews to collect their plastic and fishing nets and dispose of them responsibly when they return to shore.

The behaviour change project was highlighted and presented at the International Congress for Conservation Biology, held in Kuala Lumpur in July.

Flukebook Launch

A regional data platform for Arabian Sea whales and dolphins was launched in January. The platform was developed by the **Arabian Sea Whale Network** in partnership with **Wild Me** and the **Indian Ocean Network for Cetacean Research**. With the aim of facilitating the identification of individuals by researchers in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, the Flukebook enables research groups to upload data and match species using photo-identification and computer vision matching technology.

Whale and Dolphin Field Surveys

ESO joined a collaborative field research effort organised by **Five Oceans Environmental Services** in April and November in Dhofar. These short, opportunistic surveys continue to provide evidence of the ecological importance of Southern Oman for large baleen whales (including humpback, Bryde's and blue whales) as well as other species of odontocetes (toothed whales). The April survey included the unusual observation of blue whales engaged in feeding behaviour over a three-day period. Blue whales are infrequently observed in Oman and were documented off the survey site for the first time in 2011. Their presence elsewhere in the northern Indian Ocean (eg off Sri Lanka) is better known, although the taxonomy and population structure remain unresolved. The team was able to collect photographic, tissue and faecal samples that are expected to help resolve some of these questions.

IWC Workshop on Bycatch Mitigation Opportunities in the Western Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea

A multi-disciplinary expert workshop was held in May in Nairobi, Kenya, in conjunction with the **International Whaling Commission** (IWC) Scientific Committee and attended by 50 participants including 24 from nine countries within the Indian Ocean region. The primary objectives were to develop a broad-scale picture of cetacean bycatch across the North and Western Indian Ocean region (gaps, priorities, challenges and opportunities), to introduce the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI) to Indian Ocean stakeholders, and to assess how the BMI can be of use. ESO sent progress of its bycatch activities, which were included in the final workshop report.

Capacity Building and National/Regional Collaboration

A 5-day workshop took place in Salalah in March identifying Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) in the Western Indian Ocean and Arabian Seas. The workshop was led by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force, in collaboration with **Tethys Research Institute**, the **Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative**, the **Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society**, the **German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety**, and under the auspices of Oman's **Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs**. 55 candidate IMMAs were identified in the Western Indian Ocean, along with 13 areas of interest, including five from Oman. Participation from Oman included representatives from ESO, MECA and MAF. The candidate IMMAs will go to an independent review panel and will be placed on the IMMA e-Atlas once approved, to be used for conservation planning.

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 was launched in 2019 to share data and research protocols among members.

At the local level, ESO is a member of the **National Stranding Response Committee**, led by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs in association with 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, providing 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.



Terrestrial Conservation Projects

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. For example, they eat millions of insects, which, if left unchecked, could threaten agriculture. They also consume animal carcasses, which in turn, prevents the spread of disease. Raptors face a wide variety of threats. Over the last few decades, human activities have contributed to the fragmentation and destruction of raptor habitats through development. In addition, the intensification of agriculture and other land-use practices; electrocution and collision with power infrastructure; shooting, poisoning and trapping; and reduced breeding success due to pesticides and other contaminants are negatively affecting raptors. 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 globally endangered Egyptian vulture, 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 shown 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 to a collaboration with **International Avian Research** and the **Bernd Meyburg Foundation for Raptor Research and Conservation** to fix satellite tags to raptors in Oman. Field research and the tracking of 17 Egyptian vultures from 2015-2019 near Muscat has shown that Oman's resident population is much larger than expected, and that the population on Masirah is one of the densest in the world. Ongoing tracking of 11 steppe eagles from Muscat and Salalah is revealing their migratory routes between Oman and their breeding range in central Asia, and has highlighted likely threats they face throughout the year.



Egyptian vulture, Masirah Island,
Dunstan Fernando

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 contribute to the development of sensitivity maps as a tool for conservation. ESO was able to secure some funding for this research from donations made to the '**Wild Oman**' wildlife exhibition by artist **Violet Astor** in November, which will be used for field research in 2020.

Frankincense Community Outreach

Frankincense plays an integral part in the Omani heritage and culture and has been a main source of income for Dhofari communities for centuries. Oman is home to the primary range of the *Boswellia sacra* tree, a species considered to produce a fine quality resin. Several threats affect this species range such as habitat destruction, insect infestation, overgrazing and over tapping for trade. In 2019, ESO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with **Neal's Yard Remedies**, an award-winning natural and organic health and beauty brand, launching a Frankincense community outreach and tree planting campaign in the Sultanate. Aimed at safeguarding the future of the Omani frankincense trees, this campaign kicked off in Sadah, Salalah, where more than 1,000 *Boswellia sacra* seedlings were distributed to participating local farmers and harvesters, students, and community members. In addition, awareness presentations took place at local schools with the participation of over 500 students. Additional tree planting will take place in 2020 in the towns of Mirbat and Thumrait.



We would like to pay tribute to Dr Mohsin Al Amri, who sadly passed away in 2019. Dr Mohsin was an ESO Board member for many years and the founder of ESO's frankincense project. He will be missed.



Community Outreach and Education Projects



Masirah Sea Turtle Awareness Campaign

As part of the Turtle Research and Conservation Project, an awareness campaign targeting the local community of Masirah took place. The program included the clean-up of important turtle nesting beaches as well as five school presentations and a presentation to the Royal Air Force Oman. Fishermen were also visited, and information was presented on the importance of protecting marine life, the importance of safe disposal of fishing gear and posters on safe release of entangled sea turtles were distributed. A local football tournament saw the formation of four teams each representing a different species of sea turtle which nests on the island (green, loggerhead, hawksbill and olive Ridley).

HSBC Plastic Awareness Campaign

Through **HSBC** sponsorship an anti-littering and plastic awareness campaign took place in Muscat and Al Wusta governorates. Twenty schools were targeted and information on the effects of plastic on the environment was shared. 800 students were engaged overall and re-usable jute bags were distributed to encourage a shift away from the use of plastic bags. **HSBC** were also keen on encouraging less plastic usage within their offices and glass bottles with ESO and HSBC logos were printed to be used to replace plastic bottles. Additionally, 200 reusable jute bags were distributed to HSBC staff to increase their awareness of minimising the use of plastic bags. With the help of volunteers, HSBC staff and ESO partnered for a beach clean-up with school students from Seeb.



Frankincense Seedling Distribution and Awareness Campaign in Dhofar

Through sponsorship from **Neal's Yard Remedies**, a total of 1,500 frankincense seedlings were distributed to over 1,000 students and local farmers. Awareness presentations were delivered and leaflets distributed to share the importance of this cultural and environmentally significant native tree, as well as how to take care of the seedlings. The campaign included engagement with the schools, farmers and local communities of Thumrait, Mirbat and Sadah.



Fishermen Awareness Campaign in Dhofar

Fishermen in Sadah, Hasik, Sharbetat and Shuwaymiyyah were engaged to raise awareness on the significance of Oman's marine environment, the unique species of whales, dolphins and turtles which exist in these areas, and the impact of plastics and net pollution. Discussions took place on how we can work together to protect these species and an emphasis was placed on anti-littering and encouraging disposal of plastics and nets in designated areas.

Green Schools

The Green Schools Initiative is being implemented through sponsorship from **Veolia Oman** and **Emily's Garden**. This initiative specifically targets government school students in Oman with the aim of raising environmental awareness, providing an opportunity for students to get involved and make a solid contribution towards making our planet clean and green. All participating schools are required to form an environmental team consisting of students, staff and parents, and complete a current school sustainability evaluation. Action plans are then developed to promote environmental activities within their school and surrounding community. Possible actions fall under these the themes of Waste Management, Water Management and Energy Management.

Once teams have submitted their action plans, they receive necessary support and guidance from ESO prior to submitting the final report which outlines their activities and achievements. Schools are visited by ESO and the Ministry of Education Regional Directorate offices to assess projects and determine winners which will be announced during an Award Ceremony in April 2020.

We are grateful to **Emily's Garden** and its volunteers for continuing to lead fundraising initiatives through sporting events to continue support of this program.





Green Innovation Eco-thon

The three-day Green Innovation Eco-thon was organised in partnership with **Nama Group**, providing a platform for young minds to be challenged with developing technological solutions to environmental problems. 481 registrations from 24 colleges and universities across the Sultanate were shortlisted into 19 teams. The first day of the event exposed college and university students to 11 subject matter experts on topics related to renewable energy, waste-to-energy and innovative thinking. The students were then paired with volunteer mentors and worked over a 24-hour period to tackle an environmental issue, develop project ideas and fine tune pitches. On the third day of the event, all teams had the opportunity to exhibit their ideas to stakeholders, investors and interested partners.



An award ceremony to announce the winners took place on the 2nd November under the auspices of HE Najeeb Ali Al Rawas, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. Three winners and runners up were announced for each of the three main themes: Waste and Energy Efficiency, Carbon Capture and Alternatives, and Energy and Water Efficiency.

The top six winners provided the following technological solutions:

- 'E-Nitro': an electronic mobile station using pressure by nitrogen
- 'Carbon Catcher System': using solar energy to capture carbon and reduce emissions
- 'Winds for Lights': utilising the wind created by cars on highways to generate electricity
- 'Smart Irrigation System': reusing farming wastewater and sensing when water is required for watering plants - building a smart solution in watering plants using 4IR technology (IoT)
- 'CCP': monitoring and calculating the percentage of carbon dioxide in factory fumes by installing sensors connected to factory devices
- 'E-Green Platform': creating an application that allows users to sell and recycle unwanted electronic devices and components



Earth Hour

2019 saw a huge success with 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** and **Blue Box**.

ESO launched an environmental awareness campaign during the month of March harnessing the power of social media to reach the Sultanate's growing social media population via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The campaign generated high engagement across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

This year Earth Hour continued to advocate for taking an action beyond the hour by using the theme of "Connect to Earth – Spark Conversations on Biodiversity". ESO encouraged the public in Oman to take action towards protecting Oman's unique environment with a particular focus on the marine environment and encouraging people to take action towards tackling the global issue of plastic in our oceans.

Media support was received from **TRACCS Oman** and **Touchpoints Consulting**. 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.

Other Outreach and Education Activities

ESO joined **ORPIC** during their annual environmental awareness campaign in Fins and Dhabab and gave awareness presentations on the environment and the impact of plastic and methods to reduce our plastics consumption.

Various school visits have taken place throughout the year including presentations on biodiversity, native tree planting, plastics awareness at schools in Bahla, Buraimi and Al Fikr School for the Disabled. ESO also participated during the cultural week of Shamsa Al Khalili School with environmental presentations and biodiversity games targeting 90 school students, the games were an interactive way to learn about Oman's biodiversity.

ESO participated in **Souk es Sabt** this year with a booth to interact with members of the public and encourage them to learn more about our initiatives. The booth was very popular amongst the youth with interesting activities including environmental storytelling, face painting, environmental puzzles, colouring pictures of Oman's wildlife and memory games with Oman's animals.

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In addition, clean-ups, lectures and field trips were organised by ESO throughout the year and across the Sultanate 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 2019 six 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. She ensures that results of our scientific projects are regularly shared with relevant parties. She is a member of the National Stranding Response Committee. Throughout the years, Asma gathered solid experience on global conservation issues by participating in various trips, most notably the US-Oman Environmental Delegation trip on protected areas in 2014. This year, she participated in the World Marine Mammal Science Conference in Barcelona, Spain.

Juma Al Humaidi, Ghasi Al Farsi and Juma Al Araiimi

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 ten 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.



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 2019, she worked hard on running the membership department. Her efforts led to the organisation of nine public lectures throughout the



year, some attended by over one hundred people. Presentations included various topics ranging from terrestrial and marine species conservation to personal environmental experiences (reducing ghost fishing in Oman, migratory birds of Oman, coral reefs of Oman, snakes of Oman, etc.). Aisha is enthusiastic and has continued developing initiatives in the membership department in 2019: the organisation of three environmentally themed movie nights, two members' outdoor activities and the update 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. She also organised the participation of ESO in the popular Souq al Sabt market in November and December.

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 ensured that hundreds of student from colleges and universities around the country were properly registered and mentored prior to their presenting at the event. This year, Jawaher challenged college and university students further through the Green Innovation Eco-thon in which the students had to develop solutions to environmental challenges over a 24-hour period and were given a limited time to pitch their ideas. Jawaher has also been in charge of ESO's Education Program, coordinating volunteers and visiting schools in different regions throughout the Sultanate and in she focused on launching the Green Schools Initiative to encourage schools to form teams and work towards minimising their ecological footprint and improving sustainability within their schools and their communities. Jawaher has become the backbone of the education department and we look forward to having her with us in 2020.



Other Activities and Fundraisers

Nature Oman Initiative

Launched by ESO to encourage members of the public to get involved in raising environmental awareness and funds for environmental causes within Oman, Nature Oman's first initiative is fundraising through sporting events. Athletes can enjoy the connection of fitness and the outdoors while show their appreciation for the Sultanate by pledging to raise funds through their race. We would like to thank **Muscat Marathon** for their support in this initiative. We would also like to specifically thank **Kowrathanan Ganesha** who completed the full Muscat Marathon to raise funds for ESO and **Rigel Cedeño** who completed a 50km mountain run to raise funds for ESO.



Emily's Garden - Grown Through ESO

Emily Jewitt's family and friends have joined forces with ESO and in Emily's legacy they are supporting the Green School Initiative. Emily, who lived in Oman, was an active environmentalist and sadly passed away last year. She was fun, bright, happy and had a passion for life. We would like thank **Emily's Garden** for raising funds through the Haute Route and the UTMB trail run this year. Additionally, in support of Emily's Garden, three young individuals **Anna Minton**, **Ella Hart** and **Rebekah Bourne** organised the Sunflower Run and a Bake Sale to continue to raise funds, and we thank them for their initiative.



Glowing Glowing Gone

ESO member and former Board Member, **Dana Sarhan** organised a private event to raise funds to support coral reef conservation in Oman and particularly reef check monitoring. We sincerely thank her for her contribution.



The Mongol Rally

Patrick Deacon and **Devin Schreuder** raised funds for ESO along with two other charities through their participation in The Mongol Rally. This rally is one of the greatest motoring adventure races on the planet, which involves driving a 1000cc car across 10,000 miles of mountains, deserts and steppes leading to Mongolia. We thank them for raising funds through their adventures.



Greater flamingos, Masirah Island,
Dunstan Fernando

Internship Program



Sabrina Al Riyami interned with ESO and helped analyse and process ESO's dataset on beach-use surveys on Masirah Island as part of her dissertation project at Lancaster University.



Roopali Raveendran interned with ESO for 30 hours. She helped with updating contact details of a list of companies, assisted with preparing and sending out the Annual Report, built an online survey for corporates and assisted

with all of the functions on a day-to-day basis in the Corporate Communications Department. Her positive attitude and eagerness to learn made her a great asset to the team.



Sreya Vinod interned with ESO for 30 hours and was working on maintaining our volunteer database, researching and preparing a draft of a volunteer handbook and assisted with all of the functions on a day-

to-day basis supporting alongside the Event and Volunteer Coordinator. Sreya was extremely helpful and always willing to work on any task in a positive and cooperative manner.

Thank you to all our 2019 interns for their hard work and dedication.

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 2019 Award went to:



Ghadeer Al Lawati spent over a month at ESO office and helped with our Educational Program, both Green Innovation Eco-thon and Green Schools. She was also managing and developing content for ESO Social Media. Her positive attitude and willingness to help in all of the functions on a day-to-day basis made her one of the most productive volunteers we had in 2019.



Musalam Juma Ali Al Uraimi volunteered his time and assisted the ESO Community Outreach Manager on the ground and behind the scenes during Awareness Programs in Dhofar, on Masirah Island and in Musandam. He played a key role in the success of these programs in 2019.

Green Innovation Eco-Thon Mentors

The mentoring program had a group of 18 individuals with different backgrounds and skills at the Eco-thon event working exclusively as mentors. They supported students by helping them develop their ideas, inspiring them, encouraging their hard work and challenging them to develop environmental solutions. The Eco-thon would not have been as successful without the commitment of these volunteer mentors who gave up their weekends and worked tirelessly with the students to make them achieve their best.

Awards, Grants and Donations

ESO would like to give special thanks to all those who have helped us achieve our goals in 2019. These donors, sponsors and grant agencies are listed below in alphabetical order:

- **Affordable Art Fair** organised by Radhika Hamlai for donations through selling ceramic turtles
- **Ajit Khimji Group LLC** for free office space and office relocation
- **Al Bayan, Mazoon College, OCTAL, Oman Arab Bank, Sohar Aluminium** for their sponsorship at the ESO Fundraising Ball
- **Al Busaidy, Mansoor Jamal & Co.** for legal advice and updating ESO's constitution
- **Al Bustan Palace Hotel, Amouage, Anantara Jabal Akhdar Resort, Asmaa Collectionz, Bhacker Suleman Jaffer Company, Blue Box, Eye Candy, Hud Hud Travels, Kempinski Hotel Muscat, Mistal, Nabay, Omanta Scuba, Resplendent Ceylon, Rove, SainBag, Sea Oman, Six Senses Spa Muscat, Six Senses Zighy Bay, Smart Eco Park, Sri Lankan Airlines and Vox Cinemas** for providing auction items and raffle prizes at the ESO Fundraising Ball
- **Alila Jebel Akhdar** for guest donations
- **Al Maha** for fuel cards
- **Al Mouj** for their donations through the Muscat Marathon
- **Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort** for guest donations
- **Apex Press and Publishing** for their continued support
- **Arabian Fly** for their tourism donation to ESO
- **Blue Box and Special Technical Services** for their sponsorship of Earth Hour
- **Beah** for supporting ESO Renaissance Conservation Actions project
- **Coral Muscat Hotel** for guest donations
- **Crowe Oman** for auditing services
- **Emily's Garden** and the **Sunflower Run** for continuing to raise funds to support the Green Schools Initiative
- **ECO Vision** for supporting ESO Renaissance Conservation Actions project
- **Five Oceans Environmental Services LLC** for providing ATVs for the Turtle Research and Conservation Project
- **Gulf Hotel Oman SAOG** for their donation to ESO
- **HSBC** for supporting a plastics awareness campaign
- **InterRent** for vehicle rental
- **Mazoon Printing, Publishing and Advertising** for printing of our annual report
- **Mongol Rally** for their donation to ESO
- **Nama Group** for sponsoring the Green Innovation Eco-thon
- **National Ferries Company** for providing transportation for Masirah for the net clean-up campaign and for displaying the ESO awareness film on their ferries
- **Neal's Yard Remedies** for supporting frankincense community outreach in Dhofar
- **Oman Air** for displaying the ESO awareness film on board flights
- **Omantel** for providing free internet for the Green Innovation Eco-thon
- **PDO** for supporting ESO's Community Outreach Program
- **PDO EcOman Centre** for the use of their lecture facilities
- **Renaissance Services SAOG** for the Renaissance Marine Conservation Project
- **Sabco Art** for the design of our annual report
- **Shell Development Oman** for training courses for ESO employees
- **Shell Marketing** for providing fuel cards
- **Tanweer** for providing a venue for the Green Innovation Eco-thon Award Ceremony
- **The Chedi Muscat** for guest donations
- **The Cultural Club** for use of their facilities for the AGM
- **Towell Auto Centre** for vehicle rental
- **TRACCS Oman**, for media and public relations support throughout the year
- **UMS** for website hosting support
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service** for the Turtle Research and Conservation Project
- **Veolia Oman** for sponsoring the Green Schools Initiative
- **Veolia Oman** for sponsoring the Capacity Building Program
- **Violet Aster** for raising funds through her artwork to support the Egyptian Vulture Research and Conservation Project
- **Waterfront & Marina Services SAOC** for free berthing of the ESO boat

Donation Program

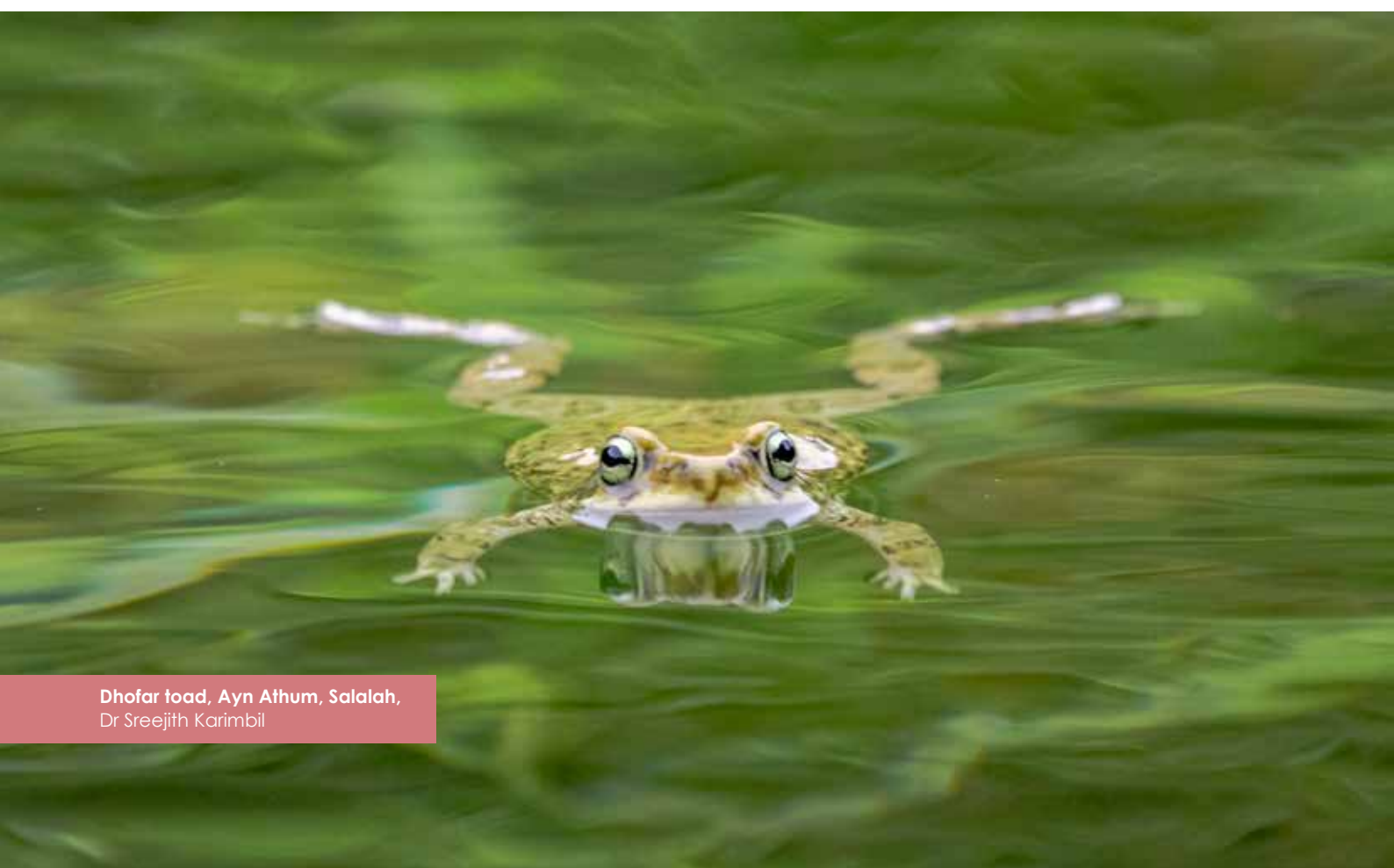
Oman's Visitors Giving Back

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 and tour operators to join this program and are grateful to the following hotels and tour operators who give their guests the opportunity to donate RO1 to ESO.



Dhofar toad, Ayn Athum, Salalah,
Dr Sreejith Karimbil

Local and International Highlights

IUCN Important Marine Mammal Areas Regional Workshop for the Western Indian Ocean and Arabian Seas

4-8 March, Salalah, Oman

The IMMA regional workshop was held in Salalah, with the goal of identifying, delineating and conserving Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs). The workshop was attended by 40 experts and observers from 16 countries and opened with welcoming remarks from Ahmad Abdullah Sayari, Director General of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs in Dhofar. The workshop identified 54 candidate IMMAs in the region that were to be sent to an independent review panel for assessment. Once these are approved through a peer review process the IMMAs are made available on the IMMA e-Atlas www.marinemammalhabitat.org/imma-eatlas and become available for implementation initiatives.



Sea Turtle Conservation Study Tour, US-Oman Environmental Cooperation

8-12 July, Masirah Island, Oman

ESO, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs and the US Government entities (US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Department of Interior and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency) have been in partnership for the conservation of sea turtles on Masirah Island for over 10 years. This trip was organised by US partners to provide an opportunity for conservation managers in Oman to learn from US experience at conserving, monitoring and managing sea turtle nesting beaches. Suaad Al Harthi and Dr Hamed Al Gheilani participated from ESO. The trip provided an opportunity to meet and interact with government reserve managers, NGOs, private sector stakeholders, university researchers and volunteers to give a broad understanding of how various stakeholders work in partnership at collecting data and contributing towards conservation goals. The trip provided an opportunity for conservationists from Oman to meet with Dr Perron Ross who initially set up the sea turtle monitoring program on Masirah Island in the 1977 under a joint program with WWF and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and listen to his initial observations. The team also had the opportunity to meet with Dr Blair Witherington who first came to Oman in 2004 and helped set up the current loggerhead monitoring program on Masirah Island which ESO field assistants continue to follow.





IUCN ROWA 9th Regional Conservation Forum

9-11 September, Kuwait City, Kuwait

The International Union for Conservation of Nature - Regional Office for West Asia (IUCN ROWA) and Environment Public Authority Kuwait organised the forum which was attended by Dr Hamed Al Gheilani. The main objective of the meeting was to prepare for the IUCN World Congress which will be taking place in Marseille, France in 2020, to discuss IUCN programs from 2021-2024 and share presentations from IUCN National Committees. Experts exchanged experiences, identified priorities for the region and discussed laws and policies and how activities can take place in parallel between IUCN member countries.

Arabian Coral Reefs Conference

11-13 November, NYU Abu Dhabi, Saadiyat Campus, UAE

Bringing together leading regional and international coral reef scientists to discuss recent research, the conference gave participants the opportunity for dialogue and collaboration. The geographic scope of this conference included reefs in the Arabian Gulf, the North Western Indian Ocean (eg the Arabian Sea and the Sea of Oman) and the Red Sea. Themed topics included reef conservation, biogeography and evolution, coral community structure and dynamics, reef fish community structure and dynamics, microbial ecology, physiology and biophysical processes.

World Marine Mammal Science Conference – Harmonizing Global Strandings Response

7 December, Barcelona, Spain

Organised by the IWC Strandings Initiative in collaboration with the US Marine Mammal Commission, the workshop aimed to synergise existing initiatives in marine mammal emergency response and to identify actions to coordinate, support, enhance and globalize the response to marine mammal strandings. In addition, discussions took place on harmonizing international and trans-boundary cetacean stranding response and detecting environmental changes and emerging concerns that impact cetacean populations, as well as enhancing data and sample collection and information sharing. Asma Al Balushi attended on behalf of ESO and the National Stranding Committee which is spearheaded by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs.

Conferences, Lectures and Workshops attended in 2018

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 2019:

Environment Day Workshop in Sur organised by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs; Sur, Oman

Marine Climate Change Strategy workshop organised by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs and the Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment; Muscat, Oman

Important Marine Mammal Area Regional Workshop for the Western Indian Ocean and Arabian Seas organised by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force and Tethys Institute; Salalah, Oman

Workshop on Development of Environment Responsibility for Green Technology, Oman Chamber of Commerce; Muscat, Oman

US - Oman Environmental Cooperation visit to Florida's Loggerhead Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches organised by the US Department of Interior and US Fish and Wildlife Service; Florida, USA

International Congress for Conservation Biology organised by the Society for Conservation Biology; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Al Roya Environmental Forum; Muscat, Oman

Shell Training and Development Courses; Muscat, Oman

IUCN ROWA 9th Regional Conservation Forum ; Kuwait City, Kuwait

Ecological Initiatives in the Arab World organised by Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA); Paris, France

Arabian Coral Reefs Conference organised by New York University- Abu Dhabi; Abu Dhabi, UAE

World Marine Mammal Conference organised by the Society for Marine Mammology and European Cetacean Society; Barcelona, Spain.

ESO Public Lectures and Events

- February:** Public lecture on 'Reducing ghost fishing from lost traps: overview of biological deterioration' by Dr Hussein Al Masroori
- March:** Public lecture on 'Initial results of the Oman Drilling Project' by Dr Peter B. Kelemen
Members activity: beach clean-up
Public lecture on 'The Bosch Legacy, what now for the seashells of Oman' by Dr Graham Oliver
- April:** Public lecture on 'Migration and local movements of bar-tailed godwits *Limosa lapponica* wintering at Barr Al Hikman' by Dr Andy Kwarteng
- May:** Public lecture on 'Solar plants in Oman' by Joao Ramos
- July:** Movie night: 'Chasing Corals'
Public lecture on 'Why Omani youth giving up meat' by Chantal Blake
- August:** Public lecture on 'Medicinal use of frankincense: a modern perspective' by Mohammed Al Broumi
Movie night: 'Intelligent Trees'
- September:** Public lecture on 'The Echinoderms, unique "stars" of the Oceans'
Members activity: Bandar Khayran for snorkelling and dolphin watching
Movie night: 'Our Planet'
- October:** Movie night: 'Virunga'
Public lecture on 'Arabian Tahir' by Haitham Al Rawahi
Public lecture on 'Oman's Wildlife (charcoal drawing)' by Violet Astor
- November:** Members activity: visit to the Seeb animal nursery and breeding centre
Public lecture on 'Omani Snakes' by Dr Sulaiman Al Hashmi



Membership

Individual Membership Benefits

We are proud to have partnered with the following companies to provide our members with discounts and benefits:



Revive Salon & Spa for Men

A true sanctuary; premier salon & spa designed exclusively for men to discover. We offer care treatments through essential techniques that relax the mind and the body, harmonize the silhouette, revive the skin and preserve youth in a calm, tranquil environment. Join us at Revive Salon & Spa to discover a new concept in men's grooming. After all, it's not just a haircut or a massage, it's an experience!

Contact: 90356565

Website: www.reviveoman.com

Facebook: @revivesalonspaoman

Instagram: @revivesalonspaoman

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- ESO Members will enjoy 10% off on any spa service
- Offer not applicable during the week prior to Eid celebrations
- Offer not applicable during any other discount or promotion or with any other offer
- Offer not valid for pre-set packages
- Offer can be availed, subject to prior appointment reservation and availability



Capital Veterinary Centre

Capital Veterinary Centre LLC "CVC" established in February 2010 provides the highest level of veterinary care available in Oman. Our services include, early-age neutering, ophthalmic surgery, orthopedic surgery, dental and scaling and other dental procedures, x-rays, precaution vaccinations along with treatments of various illnesses and diseases. At CVC we even take care of the hygiene of your pets, by providing complete pet grooming services which include washing, hair cutting, ear cleaning, nail clipping and even anal gland expression. In addition, we even take care of your pets when you are on leave by providing special accommodation. We are a complete centre, everything under one roof for all your pet's needs.

For more information visit www.vetoman.com

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- On purchase of one grooming service from the following packages (wash, blow dry, nail clipping and ear cleaning) or (haircut, washing blow dry, nail clipping and ear cleaning) receive the second service of equal or lower value free.
- On purchase of one day boarding service of cat/dog along with food, receive the second boarding day free.
- On purchase of one doctor consultation receive the second consultation free.
- 15% off dental and scaling under sedation
- 15% off dog spay or castration (neutering) operation
- 25% off for stray animals for any service
- 20% off rabies vaccine for cats and dogs
- 15% off DHPPL vaccine for dogs
- 15% off Tricat vaccine for cats
- 30% off microchip for cats and dogs



Al Qurum Veterinary Clinic

Al Qurum Veterinary Clinic, where your pets get the best Pet-erinary care in Oman. Visit us at our Main Hospital in Madinat Sultan Qaboos or at our branch in Azaiba.

Find our details on www.muscatvets.com or contact us on info@muscatvets.com . MSQ Hospital – +968 24607735 or Azaiba Clinic - +968 24121173.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 10% discount on Vaccinations, Routine Consultations and Neuterings
- Discount valid in both branches (Al Azaiba and MSQ)



The Bank Restaurant

Instagram: @thebankoman

Facebook: @thebankom

Telephone: 95299136

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 10% off the final bill



Ayana Spa

We are Oman's first organic, green spa, inspired by nature, using only premium organic products that are completely safe for the body and the environment. We have carefully selected luxurious treatments from around the world to rejuvenate and beautify your skin and hair, calm your mind and harmonize your soul. A relaxing ambiance of soothing music and the fragrance of pleasant organic aromatic oils fill your senses soon as you enter our doors.

Amber International LLC
2nd Floor Al Sarooj Plaza, Muscat, Oman
Telephone: 24693435
email: info@ayanaspas.com
website: www.ayanaspas.com

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 10% discount on all regular priced spa & beauty services above RO7,000
- 10% discount is valid for Ayana Spa cash vouchers and service vouchers*
- Discount not valid on packages and monthly promotions
- Discount is valid only on Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday of the week.
- Discount is not valid throughout Eid periods.



Park Inn by Radisson Hotel & Residence Duqm

Hotel & Residence Duqm is a 4-star located midway between the cities of Muscat and Salalah. It is an ideal accommodation choice when travelling in Oman. The 73 contemporary chalets and apartments are spread over a large area providing a feeling of space and privacy. The design and the character of all accommodation units and the public areas are inimitably Park Inn by Radisson, designed for today's new generation traveller. It features onsite restaurants and pool bar, 24-hour room service, free Wi-Fi access throughout the hotel, laundry service, concierge, business centre, children's area, spa, tennis court, gym, outdoor pool and 2 modern & versatile meeting rooms for a variety of social and business events. The hotel location provides guests with easy access.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- We offer 15% discount for Park inn Duqm
- Not valid for any hotel promotions.



Park Inn by Radisson Muscat

A 4-star hotel centrally located hotel in Al Khuwair on Sultan Qaboos Street. It displays a modern, sophisticated décor with state-of-the-art facilities. The 175 tastefully furnished guest rooms including seven suites and handicapped rooms in the colourful and vibrant Park Inn style have been done keeping the business traveller in mind. Sama Terrazza rooftop lounge/bar, RBG Grill Restaurant, Palm Restaurant, rooftop pool, gym, sauna & steam rooms, salon, gift shop, free Wi-Fi, 5 meeting rooms, business centre and free parking.

*Both Park Inn by Radisson Hotels in Oman are Green Key, Safe hotels Premium Level and HACCP certified properties.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- We offer 15% discount for Park inn Muscat
- Not valid for any hotel promotions.



Brow Bar Salon

Brow Bar, your one stop salon! Get pampered without compromising quality. Also try what nature has to offer with Brow Bar's special natural treatments.

Instagram: @browbarmuscat
Telephone: 24591943
Working Hours – 10am to 10pm

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Buy 1 and get 20% off the next service of same or less amount
- This offer is not valid with any vouchers, promotions or peak and festive seasons



InnerChi Centre

InnerChi Center is a unique Oman-based yoga studio which takes an innovative approach to providing a relaxing and holistically rejuvenating experience that will leave you feeling refreshed and renewed. We provide our clients with a variety of options when it comes managing their overall health and wellness. Make the positive lifestyle change you've been wanting; see what InnerChi Center has to offer you.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Offer 30% on our yoga packages (valid for one time per member) and not valid with any other offer.



Laser Maxx Tag

Laser Maxx from the Kingdom of Netherlands. It's Located at the Fun Zone - near the Qurum Natural Park, Muscat.

Contact Number: 95677480

Facebook: @LaserMaxxoman

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 2 OMR instead of 3 OMR
- Not valid on Eid holidays



Wave Summit

Break your routine by joining our kayaking trips and enjoying spectacular views of Oman from a different angle.

Instagram: @wave_summit

Contact:

Bassam Al Jabri

97471484

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- 20% discount for ESO members up to 5 times per person on any 2 hour program
- Offer is not valid for full day trips
- Offer valid during week days only, from Sunday to Thursday
- Members have to book for their trip and wait for confirmation as we have to check weather forecast for sea conditions
- Members have to provide ESO membership number when booking a trip



UbCool Adventures

The fastest growing online adventure booking platform with 700+ companies in 70+ destinations.

Website: www.ub-cool.com

Instagram: ub.cool

Telephone: +968 71708777

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- \$30 discount per booking
- Use special ESO promo code "ESO2018"



Sama Heights Resort, Jebel Shams

Experience the beauty of Sama Heights, Jebel Shams in the only true eco resort in Oman and affordable luxury within your reach.

Telephone: +96892721999

Email: samaheights@samaresorts.com

Instagram: @samaresortsandspa

Facebook: @samaresortsandspa

Room type	Current rate	High season 20%	Low season 30%
Grand Chalet	120.000	96.000	84.000
Mountain View	85.000	68.000	59.000
Chalet	75.000	60.000	52.500
Bungalow	60.000	48.000	42.000
Arabic Tent	45.000	36.000	31.500



Sama Al Wasil Desert Camp, Al Sharqiya

Sands Adventure in the desert like never before. Discover the home of the bedouin and experience the true spirit of desert life.

Telephone: +96891126369

Email: samaalwasil@samaresorts.com

Instagram: @samaresortsandspa

Facebook: @samaresortsandspa

Room type	Current rate	High season 20%	Low season 30%
Sultan Tent	65.000	52.000	45.500
Family Chalet Room	95.000	76.000	66.500
Chalet Room	60.000	48.000	42.000

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Rates are inclusive of all taxes
- Rates including half board "Dinner & Breakfast"
- Offer not valid in public holidays (special holiday 10% discount only)
- Maximum occupancy is 2 adults + 1 child per room in both properties, except "Family Chalet Room" in Sama Al Wasil Camp: 2 Adults + 2 kids or 4 Adults.
- High season: 1st October – 30th April
- Low season: 1st May – 31st September
- Applicable for ESO employees and members ONLY.
- ESO employees and members should be present for check in and holding the membership ID card.

Corporate Membership

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

- Towell Auto Centre
- Orpic
- Ominvest
- OHI
- Sohar Port & Free Zone
- Ajit Khimji Group
- Qarat Al Milh Petroleum
- Averda Waste Management
- Omran
- Oman Sail
- Omifco
- Strabag
- Nama Group
- Oman Gas Company
- Majid Al Futtaim
- Sohar Power Company
- Travel Point
- Haya Water
- Apergy
- Oman Arab Bank
- Al Anwar Holdings
- Qurum Business Group
- Daleel Petroleum
- Central Bank of Oman
- Ominvest
- OCTAL
- Oman Oil Marketing
- Oman Sail
- PDO
- United Securities



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 Environment Program
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature – Regional Office for West Asia
- International Whaling Commission
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- US Department of Interior
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- Emirates Environmental Group
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration - South West Fisheries and Science Centre
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration - Alaska Fisheries Science Centre, Marine Mammal Laboratory
- University of Exeter, Centre for Ecology and Conservation
- Durham University
- French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea
- Kelonia, La Réunion
- International Avian Research
- New England Aquarium
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Abu Dhabi Office)
- Arabian Sea Whale Network
- Vulture Conservation Foundation
- Wild Me
- Slovenian Marine Mammal Society
- Anglo-Omani Society
- WWF-Pakistan
- Oceanswell
- Bernd Meyburg Foundation for Raptor Research and Conservation
- Clear Blue Photo
- Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute
- Megaptera Marine Conservation
- National Institute of Ocean Technology (India)

Spotted eagle ray,
Paul Flandinette

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 Jenan Al Asfoor leave ESO but wish her the best of luck!

Congratulations to Atika Ahmed for the beautiful new addition to her 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 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 many years and this year have also helped us re-locate to our new offices 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 eight years for which we are extremely grateful, and to TRACCS Oman for providing our PR services.

We are also very grateful to Emily's Garden which was set up in memory of Emily Jewitt, who passed away in 2018. Emily lived in Oman and was deeply committed to the environment. Her family and friends continue to raise funds for ESO's Green School Initiative through taking part in ultramarathons like the UTMB and Haute Route.

Volunteer Acknowledgements

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

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Ghadeer Al Lawati for dedicating her time and assisting with our educational programs and social media communication.

Daniel Owen for volunteering in helping to gain a preliminary understanding of the fisheries sector on Masirah and Muscat.

Sarayu Raghavan for creating a library inventory and a simple cataloguing system for ESO and for starting work on a Green Guideline (Code of Conduct – Best Environmentally Friendly Practices) for Hotels and Restaurants in Oman.

Shaymaa Al Kharusi and Usama Kindi for their support with graphic design work.

Thank you to all the volunteers who may not be mentioned and have helped in any way during our community outreach and educational programs in 2019.

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



Arabian gazelle, Labid Al Amri