

Socotra

A Greentours Reconnaissance

February 2010

By Chris Gardner

Days 1 & 2 Turkey to Yemen and Socotra

All in all it took me twenty four hours to finally set foot on Socotra after shutting the front door in Antalya. I had flown via Cairo and then the Yemeni capital Sana'a arriving at a bleary-eyed 3.20am. I met the local ground agents chatted for an hour then returned to the airport to take the onward flight to Socotra, waking up in time to see the island's rugged hills and sweeping coastline before landing. It was very warm on arrival and as we drove to the main town of Haribu we passed hillsides cloaked in amazing plants with the swollen trunks of *Adenium obesum* subspecies *sokotranum*, taller paler-trunked *Dendrosicyos socotrana* (actually an amazing arborescent member of the cucumber family), spreading crowns of *Euphorbia arbuscula* and abundant *Jatropha unicostata*. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were lounging on the sand of the coast and a whirling flock of Egyptian Vultures was spiralling up on a thermal.

A lunch of tuna steaks with saffron rice and fresh naan bread went down well along with some local coffee. A bit later in the afternoon we set off for a local lagoon for some birdwatching passing the low rise stone houses that spread out from the main town where many children were playing and goats chomping on anything edible. Much of the Socotran flora has been modified by the huge population of goats, but many of the more interesting endemics appear to be goat-proof. At the lagoon were a decent assortment of waterbirds with Garganey, Black-winged Stilt, Greenshank, Little Stint, Snipe, Ringed Plover and a Glossy Ibis along with Western Reef, Grey and Purple Herons.

Tumbling masses of greyish *Cissus subaphylla* were common among the dry coastal plain where we stopped again to look at very handsome Black-crowned Finch Larks and African Rock Bunting. Diminutive tufts of pale blue *Oldenlandia pulvinata* grew among the stony ground. Arriving at Delisha Beach there were the first broad coastal views as large dunes swept down to the sea between cliffs. A handful of Swift Terns were flying offshore and there was also the odd Sooty Gull as we made our way back passing through town where the Sunday football match had drawn a fair crowd.

Day 3

Today we drove east passing mainly along the coastline past a gorgeous turquoise ocean. Cutting inland we stopped to watch about twenty Greater Flamingo feeding in a shallow wetland and then there followed the first of many bizarre Bottle Trees *Adenium obesum* subspecies *sokotranum* some sporting a few pink flowers. A little further along and a look at a

freshwater stream produced big clumps of pretty blue-flowered *Exacum affine*. Sandy stretches were populated with large flocks of Sooty and Lesser Black-backed Gulls that gathered alongside mixed groups of Swift, Lesser Crested and Sandwich Terns. We took lunch in the cool shade of large overhanging rocks and almost immediately several Egyptian Vultures settled nearby in hope of scraps. These birds really are quite abundant on the island and are a constant sight, rising on thermals or hopping ungainly on the ground in search of food.

On the rocks around the cave was a typical mixture of flora with *Jatropha unicostata*, *Euphorbia spiralis* and occasional plants of *Lachnocapsa spatulata*. Continuing north we passed some immense sand dunes piled up against the soaring limestone cliffs of Arher, the rock faces scarred and pitted, with many gaping caverns. Reaching the eastern point of the island we looked at a couple of beaches, the first having little of interest but the second was a remarkable landscape of hundreds of neat sand cones, each the work of the large Ghost Crabs that scuttled about the beach and creating a crab city of sorts. We returned to the sand dunes to make our camp for the night as glooming grey clouds hovered about the cliffs and vultures sat somewhat incongruously on the dunes.

Day 4 Hoq Cave

We returned a short distance along the coast seeing more big gatherings of gulls and terns and then stopped by a small village where we picked up a local guide to take us into the hills. Our destination was Hoq Cave, a huge gaping hole just below the highest cliffs. Thankfully it was cloudy today making the walk up cooler and as we moved through the scrub of *Jatropha* and various other goat nibbled plants there were Socotra Sunbird singing from the top of bushes and a pair of Socotra Warbler. As we gained height the first *Sterculia africana* appeared with wonderful lilac-grey bark marbled with cream patches. The branch structure was fantastically twisted and the whole tree quite wonderful. Growing among cracks in the stones were pretty blue-flowered *Commelina forsskalei*, white *Asystasia gangetica* and the mauve flowered *Exacum affine*. Reaching the cave itself after an hour (Chris speed) we switched on torches and headed on in past amazing stalactites and stalagmites and huge contorted stone structures. One area contained a floor covered in crystal 'flowers' that in the wet season are submerged like a subterranean coral reef. We walked for some time and the guide told us that nobody had ever reached the end of the cave system yet! Returning to the entrance the song of Golden-winged Grosbeak echoed around the chamber, the bird sitting perched high on the cave wall.

I spent some time exploring around the amazing *Sterculia africana* trees finding the peculiar parasitic 'scroph' *Striga gesneroides* before we descended for a late lunch. The remainder of the afternoon was spent relaxing at a protected marine area. We camped for the night watching the waves roll in.

Day 5 To Homhil

Leaving the campsite early we arrived at the base of another area of cliffs and collected a different guide for the walk up to Homhil. Passing through now familiar scrub and some fine Bottle Trees and clumps of *Aloe perryi* we eventually caught sight of our first Dragon Tree *Dracaena cinnabari* perched on a cliff top. At the top there was an inviting swimming hole before

we entered a different world with many magnificent broad crowned trees spread out on the rocky slopes and cliff tops where they could best intercept the moisture-laden fogs that provide them with water. Somali Starlings whistled and flew about the unique forest. In drier rockier area the dragons were joined by many swollen Bottle Trees and also the spreading crowns of *Euphorbia arbuscula*. Here and there were other strange bottle-trunked trees, but these were much whiter in colour and belonged to the extraordinary Cucumber Tree *Dendrosicyos socotrana* perhaps the most remarkable member of the cucurbitae that exists.

After some time relaxing during the hotter part of the day and watching the light play on the amazing *Dracaena* forest I walked back down to the excellent swimming hole and did a refreshing few lengths before walking back up finding flowering plants of *Kalanchoe farinacea* on the way as Socotra (Common) Buzzard glided overhead.

Day 6 To Dixam

I'd gone off at dawn to explore the Dragon Tree forest finding many more *Kalanchoe farinacea* as well as some pretty herbs such as *Exacum affine* and some flowering Bottle Trees. After breakfast we walked down off the plateau via a different route that took us past a fantastic forest of Frankincense Trees *Boswellia socotrana*, yet another species with a broad, flat crown akin to the Dragon Tree. As we descended there were a number of very handsome Bruce's Green Pigeon and a small flock of pretty White-breasted White-eye before we were reunited with the vehicle and our trusty driver Ibrahim. As we drove back to the main town there were some lovely big cushions of white *Oldenlandia pulvinata* and then we saw once again the small flamingo flock at the same wetland.

After gathering supplies we drove west along the flat coastal plain and then turned south quickly gaining height as we climbed onto the Dixam Plateau, an area of rugged limestone ridges that are peppered with stately Dragon Trees. However, nothing quite prepared me for the site that awaited me at our camp site overlooking a forest of thousands of these charismatic trees, perched high on the flanks of a spectacular plunging gorge, quite a place to spend the night.

Day 7 Dixam

The morning brought a fantastic sunrise with soft morning light on the stately Dragon Trees. Nestled in among the limestone pavement were occasional spiny stems of *Edithcolea grandis* and a single plant of *Aloe squarrosa*. After breakfast we explored the plateau checking a few areas on the main road where there were flowering shrubs of pink *Commicarpus simonyi* and a fantastic slab of limestone pavement with the odd gem growing among the grikes such as deep blue *Trichodesma microcalyx*. Mid-morning saw us driving across an area of dark rubblely limestone with scattered clumps of *Caralluma socotrana* though none in flower and stands of the ever present *Dracaena cinnabari*. As we dropped down into Wadi Daerhu there were some very fine Bottle Trees in flower overlooking the plunging gorge of the wadi. In the wadi the scree covered slopes were populated with fine Cucumber Trees and there were stands of Date Palms perfect for a shady lunch as the occasional Bruce's Green Pigeon flew past.

Letting the heat of the day pass I climbed up onto a plateau and wandered into a magnificent forest of Dragon Trees with hundreds of specimens of all shapes and sizes. There was little else but nothing else was needed as the forest was quite superb and unique. Somali Starlings were buzzing around as ever as the late afternoon light filtered through the umbrella-like crowns around me and along the distant ridges beyond.

Climbing back out of the wadi and we reached the same rubblely limestone, only this time I saw a *Caralluma socotrana* with a single perfect flower and many buds. Knowing that goats readily eat the flowers (along with children I'm told) we built a little shelter all around hoping to protect it until we came by again in a couple of days to get more pictures.

Day 8 Skend

A pre-dawn drive took us from our campsite to the base of the Hagger Mountains and we ate breakfast behind a shelter as the wind was decidedly chilly this morning. Setting off with our guide we began to climb into the hills through a dry stream bed with many orange-red *Kalanchoe farinacea*, the pretty scroph *Craterostigma pumilum* with its delicate little purple flowers and ribbed leaves and the bizarre flattened trees of *Commiphora planifrons*. Making our way towards the granitic outcrops above we reached a fine viewpoint before a short descent and then another ascent. Rounding a corner a giveaway twitter alerted us to the beautiful Socotra Bunting and we had superb views of this lovely bird feeding on the ground. Another fantastic view followed with another Socotra Bunting and also our first *Dorsteinia gigas* a wonderful 'bottle plant', with grotesque swollen stem and peculiar flattened waxy yellow-green flowers. Actually a member of the fig family they always grow on inaccessible cliffs as goats are partial to them.

After bashing through some scrub and climbing still further we scrambled down through tangled woodland of Dragon Trees and *Rhus thyrsoiflora*. In the undergrowth were fine ferns such as *Pteris quadriaurita* and when we broke cover we entered a different world as mists swirled around Dragon Trees and down plunging valleys. Around us were many interesting plants including mauve *Exacum caeruleum* and neat hummocks of *Helichrysum rostulatum* peppered with globular white and pink inflorescences. The leaves of the tiny orchid *Holothrix socotrana* were common nestled under boulders but I couldn't locate any flower spikes. Big round bushes of *Hypericum scopulorum* (and to a lesser extent *balfourii*) were everywhere as we continued along the last section of the walk seeing White-breasted White-eye and then arriving at yet another staggering viewpoint with fabulous spires of granite topped by Dragon Trees and the landscape sweeping down to the coast below.

A rest and something to eat were in order before our return leg descending now through the hotter part of the day, but this was greatly moderated at this altitude. I stopped to photograph good plants of the bright pink *Indigofera socotrana* and blue *Trichodesma microcalyx* and we also saw *Teucrium sokotranum*. Between many of the rocks grew the diminutive *Helichrysum gracilipes* with pretty pinkish flowers on the thinnest of stems quivering in the breeze.

Ibrahim had prepared a lunch for us when we arrived and after this we started on the journey back to the 'capital' Hadibo. Bouncing slowly along the rough road we came to an abrupt halt

when I saw a quite stunning plant of *Carallum socotrana* bearing at least a dozen beautiful deep red-brown flowers, wow! A fantastic finale to a very productive day.

The hot shower at the hotel was very welcome after five days on the road.

Day 9 To Nogid

We eventually rolled out of town at nine seeing a Lesser Kestrel perched on a rock and then stopping at an area of low coastal scrub beside a small lagoon. It didn't take long to locate the first Socotra Cisticola and we enjoyed some good views of the birds as they bounced across the area in display flights. On the lagoon were ten Greater Flamingos, all asleep with the heads tucked under their wings and also a few Pintail and a Whimbrel. Other stops followed to search without success for Cream-coloured Courser before we climbed up onto the Dixam Plateau once again. There were good displays of *Kalanchoe farinacea* and among an area of limestone pavement its smaller cousin *Kalanchoe rotundifolia* along with *Commicarpus simonyi* and white *Tamridaea capsulifera*. Our main stop though was at a wadi where we walked along the boulder strewn floor towards a low cliff. A Wigeon was flushed from one of the pools along with Common Sandpiper and White Wagtail. Reaching the cliffs we found a few *Dorsteinia gigas*, but all unreachable. However, a bit of scanning with the binoculars soon located another population on a flat area of limestone and these were huge specimens. We made our way over and found that they were on an isolated limestone block that goats couldn't reach, but we could with a bit of jumping and scrambling (we'll bring a ladder for the tour!). The plants were magnificent, with huge swollen bases and healthy tops with a good number of sweet-scented flowers.

Wandering back up the wadi we met Ibrahim who had brought us lunch and we sat under a shady spot as Egyptian Vultures quickly gathered around us hoping for scraps. In fact there was a considerable number just across the road with a least fifty birds sitting or cruising overhead. Probably more of this species than I usually see in a year on all my tours!

We continued across the open plateau stopping to admire some superb Bottle Trees in full bloom with fine displays of pink flowers. Descending finally past plunging, craggy wadis we reached the southern coastal plain and continued across this seeing a number of Desert Wheatears before arriving at a large cave with some large stalactites hanging from the entrance. From here our campsite was close and we enjoyed a relaxing sunset across the white sand dunes looking towards the distant cliffs of eastern Socotra.

Day 10 Matiaf & Dihamri

There was a fine sunrise across the dunes and after breakfast we set off further east crossing through a large tract of semi-desert with the cliffs moving ever closer to the coast and the rich-turquoise sea until eventually they were rising almost directly from the waves. Arriving at Wadi Matiaf in complete contrast to the dryness all around there was a water-filled wadi with many deep pools full of thriving aquatic plants such as *Potamogeton nodosus*. The surrounding slopes were home to many plants of the rare and local *Ruellia paulayana* with lilac flowers and

cream-flowered *Lachnocapsa spathulata*. There were good stands of *Euphorbia spiralis* and much *Euphorbia schimperi* and among the latter we found a plant of the parasitic *Striga gesneroides*.

Backtracking we took the back road north entering a long wadi with a number of small villages and intermittent pools of water where there were Greenshank, Common Sandpiper and Purple Heron. The golden yellow flowers of *Hibiscus dirrifan* stood out from the dense shrubbery and further along the wadi were slopes with twisted Frankincense trees and big stands of Bottle Trees.

As we passed the Sirhen wetland close to Hadibo there were the resident Glossy Ibis, Garganey and Black-winged Stilt.

Day 11 Ma'alah & Qlanssya

Leaving Hadibo early we crossed the coastal plain as the sun broke through the clouds onto the many ridges of the Dixam Plateau. The tall limestone cliffs of Ma'alah at the western end of Socotra are home to many endemic plants and we climbed up into the rocks. There were many blue flowers of *Commelina forsskalei*, yellow *Corchorus erodioides* and abundant pink *Ocimum forskalei*, whilst on the cliffs we could see *Dorsteinia gigas*. With some route finding we made the top of the cliffs only to discover there was a road that came from the other direction to save all the effort! Nonetheless, there were some good plants up here with bushes of the *Daphne Gnidia socotrana* with many golden-yellow flowers, the white flowered borage *Cystostemon socotranum*, masses more *Commelina forsskalei*, *Exacum affine* in the crevices and also the attractive cream-flowered *Hibiscus lobatus* and trailing stems of *Ipomoea obscura* with orange-yellow flowers. A Peregrine flew swiftly across the cliff top, Socotra Buntings were hopping about the boulders and we could hear Socotra Cisticola.

Lunch was taken with some local people and including yogurt rice and goat including a choice of whatever offal took your fancy! We returned to the vehicle with Great Grey Shrike and Socotra Sunbird calling around us and then drove down to the impressive Qlanssya beach with a large lagoon encircled by sand bars. Whimbrel, Greenshank and Grey Herons were feeding in the shallows.

Day 12 Mtoloh

The day was spent climbing onto the rugged slopes of Jabal Mtoloh in search of one of Socotra's real gems *Socotrella dolichocnema*. The ascent was more taxing than we'd imagined but was at least interrupted by a superb large chameleon and when we gained the top we could see that the mountain stretched away for kilometres until the real summit. We looked around the limestone pavement finding nothing new and certainly not the target plant. There was not time to explore the higher reaches so we descended again seeing Socotra Sunbird and Long-billed Pipit. Lunch was waiting for us and afterwards we decided to explore another road up onto Ma-alah. The rough dirt road continued for many miles and after an hour and a half it was time to turn back having again found nothing of consequence. It is fair to say that this part of the island has not had its share of rain this year and is noticeably drier than other parts.

Day 13 Wadi Ayaft & Dixam

The weather looked very promising this morning as we ate breakfast and indeed the sun shone all day with blue skies and little cloud wisps over the ragged Haiger Mountains. We headed up into Wadi Ayaft climbing into a well wooded valley with many superb old *Sterculia africana* trees, Frankincense and gnarled old Tamarinds. There were tumbling masses of silvery-stemmed *Sarcostemma viminalis* and big clumps of *Caralluma socotrana* with long seed pods on. However, a more interesting succulent followed when we found a fine colony of *Edithcolea grandis*. Frustratingly the only two flowers we could find had gone over yesterday (!) and thorough searching found no more. Afterwards we spent an hour climbing higher into the woods where we found the attractive mauve-flowered shrub *Ruellia insignis*, tubular red flowered *Ballochia amoena*, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Sunbird and two Socotra Starlings as various butterflies glided around including a familiar Two-tailed Pasha. The latter was seen very well again after lunch as we continued our search for more *Edithcolea* as we descended from the wadi with superb views of the mountains.

I decided it was worth spending more time at Dixam and also because the Dragon tree forest at Rokeb di Firmihin is simply stunning. It turned out to be well worthwhile as we saw a fine *Caralluma socotrana* in flower as we ascended, also stopping for a huge Bottle Tree and then below our campsite I spent the last hour of light exploring the limestone pavement finding none other than *Edithcolea grandis* in perfect flower, the maroon 'starfish' flower barred with creamy yellow, quite a sight.

A crescent moon and amazing stars graced a night sky free of light pollution.

Day 14 Dixam to Delisha Beach

There was another glorious sunrise across the remarkable Dragon Tree forests. My morning wandering found more *Caralluma socotrana* in flower and then in an area of limestone pavement a deep crevice held a large clump of the orchid *Eulophea petersii* and the delicate little white flowers of *Rhinacanthus scoparius* delicately spotted with lilac. The adjacent wadi was home to Common and Green Sandpipers. We drove back across the clear plateau and down onto the coast road where we stopped by an impressive population of the statuesque *Euphorbia arbuscula* backed by blue skies and stunning turquoise sea. A fine stand of Cucumber Trees followed before we reached Hadibo and took a delicious lunch of fish, rice and fresh flatbreads.

The afternoon was spent looking for a route to ascend the Haiger Mountains in search of *Begonia socotrana*, although this was planned for tomorrow as it was far too hot now. However, as we drove through the hot dry scrub there we found two beautiful Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse. The birds allowed close approach to about six metres for outstanding views. Passing Sirhen Lagoon again there were the resident Glossy Ibis, Black-winged Stilt and Greenshank along with Kentish Plover and a Temminck's Stint. Surf was rushing up the shore of Delisha Beach as we waited until it was time to look for Socotra (African) Scops Owl in the nearby date palms. We waited for forty minutes seeing Bruce's Green Pigeon and Moorhen (!) before hearing a bird calling and with a bit of searching the owl was located and seen superbly well less than ten metres away.

All that was left was to make camp as the sun set behind the jagged toothed outline of the Hagier Mountains.

Day 15 Wadi Manof

Fine sunrise, breakfast and away from the sweeping sands of Delisha Beach by 6.45, passing Sirhen Lagoon with perfect reflections of the Hagier Mountains and flocks of Sooty Gulls on the beaches. Turning inland we drove a rough track to the foot of Wadi Manof. From here it was on foot and we climbed through a mixture of granite and limestone for an hour and a half passing some immense *Sterculia africana* trees before reaching a low pass studded with Dragon Trees. Scanning with binoculars revealed a number of pink spots and round green leaves in the granite crags a little higher up. Scrambling up through rough stone and scrub we reached the first lovely *Begonia socotrana* with attractive round leaves and bright pink flowers, far superior to any blousy florists' begonia. A bit higher still and we found some perfect groups with begonias filling long cracks in the rock as Socotra Sunbirds flitted about. A fine flower to finish the trip on and all that was left was to descend and drive back to Hadibo for another excellent fish lunch.

The afternoon was spent preparing for take-off tomorrow.

Days 16 & 17 Socotra to Sana'a and Turkey

One last tasty breakfast and I was on my way to the airport passing the now familiar Cucumber Trees and Bottle Trees. Airport proceedings went smoothly and I was soon in San'a and off for a half day tour of some of the sights, after a delicious lunch. Our first stop was the superbly positioned Rock Palace, followed by the outrageously unnecessary new giant mosque (\$60 million could have been spent on something more needed as there's already a mosque every 200 metres) and then finally a spin around the extensive old town with its labyrinthine streets, spice markets and sellers of pretty much everything else finishing with a drink up above it all as the sun slowly dropped away.

My journey home went smoothly.

Systematic List Number 1 Flora

Actiniopteridae	<i>Actiniopteris semiflabellata</i>	Scattered and widespread in rock crevices e.g. Hoq Cave
Adiantaceae	<i>Adiantum balfouri</i>	Widespread
Dennstaedtiaceae	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Skend at high levels
Pteridaceae	<i>Pteris quadriaurita</i>	Skend
Acanthaceae	<i>Anisotes deversifolius</i>	Shrub with long narrow orange flowers
	<i>Asystasia gangetica</i>	Widespread, white with lilac spots, like a violet
	<i>Ballochia amoena</i>	Wadi Ayaft, tubular red flowered shrub
	<i>Hypoestes pubescens</i>	Pink flowered herb, very common at Skend, Dixam, etc
	<i>Rhinacanthus scoparius</i>	Dixam, delicate little herb with white, lilac spotted flowers
	<i>Ruellia dioscorides</i>	White flowered woody herb, widespread in lower areas
	<i>Ruellia insignis</i>	Fine flowering shrub at Wadi Ayaft
	<i>Ruellia patula</i>	Pretty creeping herb with relatively large tubular, wide mouthed lilac flowers, Homhil, Dixam
	<i>Ruellia paulayana</i>	Rare species, large lilac flowers only found in SE. Wadi Matiaf
	<i>Trichocalyx obovatus</i>	Qlanssya, upright shrub with red flowers
Anacardiaceae	<i>Rhus thyriflora</i>	Oblong-leaved shrub, reminiscent of pistachio
Apiaceae	<i>Rughidia milleri</i>	Dixam
Apocynaceae	<i>Adenium obesum ssp sokotranum</i>	Common and widespread bottle tree, many in flower in places
Asclepiadaceae	<i>Caralluma socotrana</i>	Stunning succulent with red-brown five-pointed flowers, Dixam, Nogid, Wadi Ayaft
	<i>Cryptolepis intricata</i>	Wadi Ayaft
	<i>Echidonopsis insularis</i>	Dixam
	<i>Echidonopsis sp</i>	Hamadero
	<i>Edithcolea grandis</i>	Amazing flower. Spiny stemmed prostrate succulent, Dixam, Wadi Ayaft

Asclepiadaceae	<i>Sarcostemma viminalis</i>	Wadi Ayaft
Asteraceae	<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>	Widespread
	<i>Euryops arabicus</i>	Common at Dixam, yellow flowered sub-shrub
	<i>Helichrysum gracilipes</i>	Pretty little annual with pale pink flowers, Dixam, Skend
	<i>Helichrysum rosulatum</i>	Cushion plant with white and pink globular infl. Skend
	<i>Launaea crepoides</i>	Widespread
	<i>Pulicaria diversifolia</i>	Widespread yellow daisy herb
	<i>Pulicaria lanata</i>	Skend
	<i>Pulicaria stephanocarpa</i>	Qlanssya
Begoniaceae	<i>Begonia socotrana</i>	Lovely species in flower in granite crevices above Wadi Manof, also in leaf at Skend
Boraginaceae	<i>Cystostemon socotranum</i>	Attractive white flowered borage, Qlanssya
	<i>Heliotropium balfouri</i>	Scattered
	<i>Trichodesma microcalyx</i>	Pretty blue flowered 'borage'
Brassicaceae	<i>Lachnocapsa spathulata</i>	North-east coast
Burseraceae	<i>Boswellia ameero</i>	Scrubland, a Frankincense
	<i>Boswellia elongata</i>	Fine tree with twisted branches and peeling pale brown bark, scattered with fine stands at Hamadero also Wadi Ayaft.
	<i>Boswellia popoviana</i>	A Frankincense
	<i>Commiphora kua</i>	Hoq Cave
	<i>Commiphora planifrons</i>	Common goat-nibbled shrub
		Flat-crowned small tree
Buxaceae	<i>Buxanthus pedicellatus</i>	Mountains
Campanulaceae	<i>Campanula balfourii</i>	Wadi Manof
Capparaceae	<i>Capparis cartilaginea</i>	Widespread, but in fruit only
Convolvulaceae	<i>Convolvulus hildebrandtii</i>	Scattered, coastal scrub
	<i>Convolvulus sarmentosus</i>	Scattered, e.g. Hamadero
	<i>Ipomaea obscura</i>	Somewhat out of range but this species
Crassulaceae	<i>Crassula schimperi</i>	Crevices on Skend

Crassulaceae	<i>Kalanchoe farinacea</i>	Common at Skend, also Hamadero, rounded grey leaves and dense infl. of orange-red flowers
	<i>Kalanchoe robusta</i>	Dixam
	<i>Kalanchoe rotundifolia</i>	Below Skend, very slender
Cucurbitaceae	<i>Cucumis prophetarum</i>	Wadi Matiaf
	<i>Dendrosicyos socotrana</i>	Cucumber Tree, widespread e.g. near airport, Wadi Daerhu, Hamadero. Spectacular white trunked bottle plant.
Cuscutaceae	<i>Cuscuta planiflora</i>	Ma'ala
Euphorbiaceae	<i>Croton socotranus</i>	Abundant
	<i>Euphorbia arbuscula</i>	Impressive broad-crowned large shrub
	<i>Euphorbia schimperi</i>	Widespread, sub-shrub with many upright leafless stems
	<i>Euphorbia spiralis</i>	Widespread, spiny-stemmed cactus-like species
	<i>Jatropha unicostata</i>	Abundant
	<i>Tragia balfouriana</i>	Ovate leaves with stinging hairs, widespread
Fabaceae	<i>Crotalaria socotrana</i>	Probably this in Wadi Manof
	<i>Indigofera nephrocarpa</i>	Below Hamadero
	<i>Indigofera pseudointircata</i>	Shrubby, below Hamadero
	<i>Indigofera socotrana</i>	Skend, large flowered shrub
	<i>Lotus ononopsis</i>	Scattered, yellow flowered
	<i>Tephrosia odorata</i>	Pretty prostrate species with large pink flowers, Wadi Matiaf, Ma'alah, Jabal Mtoloh
Flacourtiaceae	<i>Dovyalis abyssinica</i>	Wadi Ayaft
Gentianaceae	<i>Exacum affine</i>	Widespread near streams and on wet rocks, e.g. Hoq Cave, Hamadero, Qlanssya
	<i>Exacum caeruleum</i>	Skend, deeper purple flowers than the previous species
Hypericaceae	<i>Hypericum balfouri</i>	Very common at Skend
	<i>Hypericum scopulorum</i>	Skend
Lamiaceae	<i>Lavandula nimmoi</i>	Common at Skend, also Dixam in limestone pavement
	<i>Micromeria remota</i>	Widespread

Lamiaceae	Ocimum forskolei Teucrium balfourii Teucrium socotranum	Qlanssya, etc Ma'ala Scarce at Skend
Malvaceae	Hibiscus diriffan Hibiscus lobatus	Lovely golden yellow flowers, large shrub. Qlanssya
Menispermaceae	Cocculus balfouri	Formidable plant with flattened hardened leaves with sharp point, akin to Ruscus. Skend
Moraceae	Dorsteinia gigas Ficus cordata Ficus vasta	Extraordinary bottle shrub with flattened waxy yellow flowers. Skend, Dixam (huge plants), Qlanssya Wadi Manof Dixam
Nyctaginaceae	Commicarpus heimerlii Commicarpus simonyi	Dixam, smaller than previous, Qlanssya Dixam, airy stems of pink flowers
Orobanchaceae	Cistanche phleypaea Orobanche ramosa	Dixam Qlanssya
Papaveraceae	Argemone mexicana	Widespread alien
Plumbaginaceae	Limonium sokotranum	Coasts
Portulacaceae	Portulaca quadrifida	Wadi Matiaf, etc
Primulaceae	Anagallis arvensis	Exclusively the blue form, widespread
Rubiaceae	Gallium spurium Oldenlandia balfouri Oldenlandia pulvinata	Skend Skend, Dixam, Wadi Manof, white flowers on longer stems Pretty cushion forming 'alpine' with white or pale blue flowers, common in lowlands
Scrophulariaceae	Tamridaea capsulifera Craterostigma pumilium Striga gesnerioides	Dixam Pretty purple and white flowered herb, with deeply veined pairs of leaves. Below Skend Reddish flowered parasite widespread but scarce; Hoq Cave, Wadi Matiaf, Mtoloh

Scrophulariaceae	<i>Scrophularia arguta</i>	Scattered
Solanaceae	<i>Solanum incanum</i>	Widespread, mauve flowers, large grey leaves
Sterculiaceae	<i>Sterculia africana</i>	Beautiful tree with mauvish-grey and cream peeling bark and twisted branches. Hoq Cave, Hamadero, etc
Thymelaeaceae	<i>Gnidia socotrana</i>	Yellow flowers Qlanssya
Tiliaceae	<i>Corchorus erodioides</i>	Couldn't be less like a Lime! More akin to a dandelion!
Vitaceae	<i>Cissus hamaderoensis</i>	Much longer segment than previous species, common on Dixam, generally higher altitudes.
	<i>Cissus subaphylla</i>	Oval 'segmented' scrambling succulent. Coastal areas and up to c300m
Zygophyllaceae	<i>Zygophyllum simplex</i>	Coastal plains
Aloaceae	<i>Aloe perryi</i>	Widespread
	<i>Aloe squarrosa</i>	Dixam, Qlanssya
Anthericaceae	<i>Anthericum sp</i>	Very common in pastures
Commelinaceae	<i>Commelinia forsskalei</i>	Widespread e.g. Hoq Cave, Hamadero, v common at Qlanssya
Dracaenaceae	<i>Dracaena cinnabari</i>	Magnificent tree with pure stands at Rokeb di Firmihin on Dixam and Hamadero
Orchidaceae	<i>Eulophea petersii</i>	Dixam, non flowering
	<i>Habenaria socotrana</i>	Leaves only near Hoq Cave
	<i>Holothrix socotrana</i>	Many leaves at Skend
Palmaceae	<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	Very common in Wadis

Systematic List Number 2 Birds

All of the endemics were seen or heard.

Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>	Occasional birds along N coast
Socotra Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax nigrogularis</i>	Several at the small port, also on rocks en route to airport
Western Reef Heron	<i>Egretta gularis</i>	Common and widespread around the coast
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Common and widespread around the coast
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	A couple at Sirhen Lagoon, Wadi Defahro
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	One at Sirhen Lagoon
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	About 20 feeding in a shallow lagoon, 10 near Deham
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	A few at Sirhen Lagoon
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Deham lagoon
Wigeon	<i>Anas Penelope</i>	One in a wadi on Dixam
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Abundant and ever present in the sky
Socotra (Common) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo socotranus</i>	Widespread seen most days
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinunculus</i>	Dixam
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	Near Hadibo
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	One between the airport and Hadibo
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	It had to turn up didn't it! Bird with chicks near Delisha Beach
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Sirhen Lagoon, Dixam Wadi
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Sirhen Lagoon
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Sirhen Lagoon
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	One at Sirhen Lagoon
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Sirhen Lagoon
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Coasts
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Scattered on coast and wetlands, wadis, etc
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Dixam Wadi
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Scattered along coasts and wadis
Sooty Gull	<i>Larus hemprichii</i>	Large flocks along north coast mixing with the next species
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Large flocks along sandy shores
Swift Tern	<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Mixed flocks along north coast
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	Mixed flocks along north coast
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	A few with the previous two species
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Very common and widespread
Bruce's Green Pigeon	<i>Treron waalia</i>	Widespread, a few on the way down from Hamadero, Wadi Daerhu, near Delisha Beach, etc.
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles lichtensteinii</i>	Two near Hadibo

Socotra (African) Scops Owl	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>	Seen in date palms near Delisha Beach
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	High in the mountains at Skend
Black-crowned Finch Lark	<i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>	Lovely species, common in open dry areas
African Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>	Quite a few at Skend
Long-billed Pipit	<i>Anthus similes</i>	Widespread
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Near streams
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	A few on passage
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Near Hadibo & Delisha Beach
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Quite common
White-breasted White-eye	<i>Zosterops abyssinica</i>	Widespread e.g. below Hamadero, Skend
Socotra Warbler	<i>Incana incana</i>	Below Hoq Cave
Socotra Cisticola	<i>Cisticola haesitata</i>	Deham, also Ma'ala
Socotra Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia balfouri</i>	Widespread, common at Hoq Cave
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	Widespread
Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	Widespread, especially at Dixam
Socotra Starling	<i>Onychognathus frater</i>	Wadi Ayaft, from Somali Starling by longer greyer beak, square tail, shy
Somali Starling	<i>Onychognathus blythii</i>	Very common and widespread
Socotra Sparrow	<i>Passer insularis</i>	Abundant
Golden-winged Grosbeak	<i>Rhynchostruthus socotranus</i>	Seen well at Hoq Cave, Wadi Defarho, Wadi Ayaft
African Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>	Common in lowland plains
Socotra Bunting	<i>Emberiza socotrana</i>	A little beauty seen very well below Skend and at Qlanssya, Wadi Ayaft