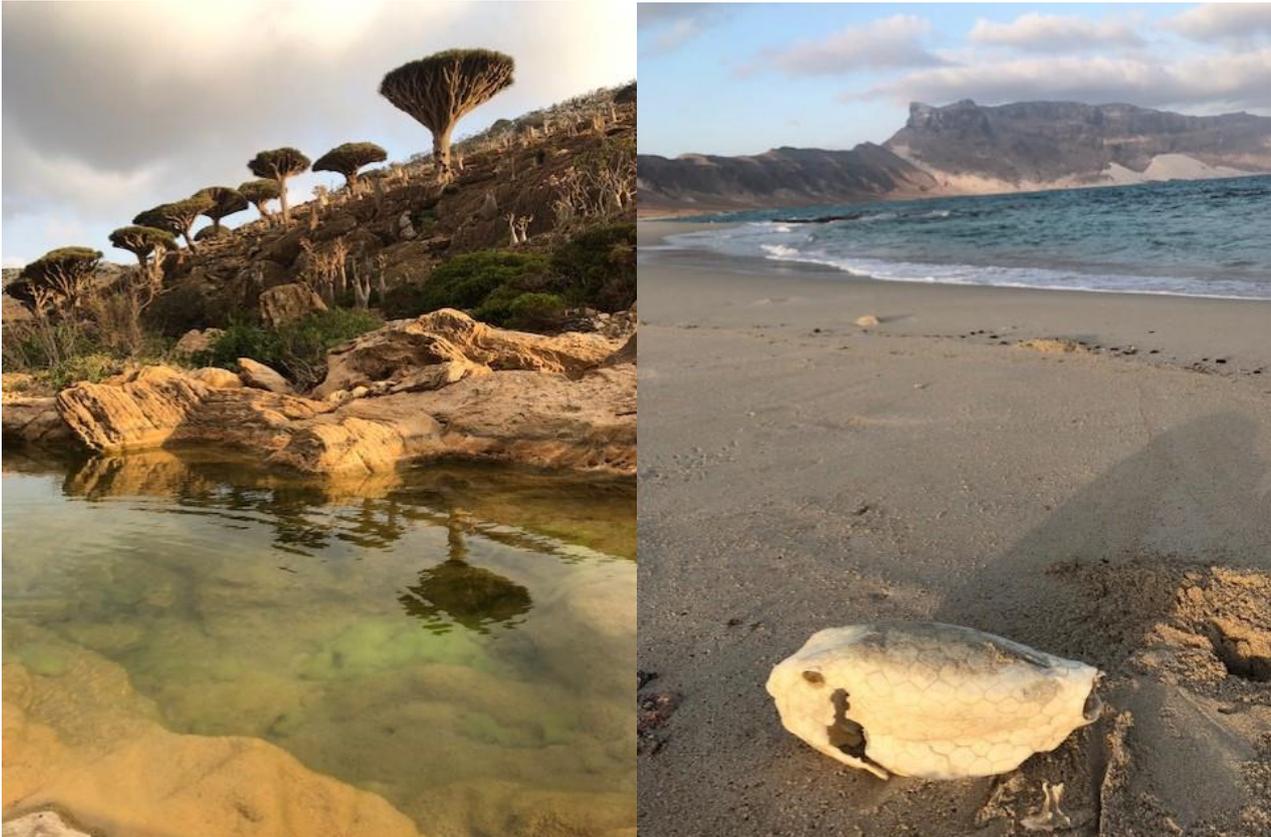


Socotra

A Trip Report

21st – 28th February 2022

Led by Ian Green and Chris Gardner



Day 1 February 21st Arrival

The flight from Abu Dhabi left only a little late and soon we were out over the waters of the Arabian Sea as the sun rose. Suddenly a mountainous island rose in front of us out of the sea. The approach to Socotra is spectacular with the crenulated parapets of the Hajhir Mountains rising not far inland of the airport.

The arrivals procedure was as expected rather chaotic! However our minder and guide for the trip, Salem, had slipped through to our side of passport control and showed us which part of the throng to push through. It actually didn't take very long at all and soon we were being re-united with our baggage. Now we met our drivers and our 4wds which were to be our steeds for the next week. We headed off to the capital and soon saw evidence of just how amazing the flora is on this island. Between the airport and the town a mountain reaches the sea and the slopes of this, right by the road,

were covered in all sorts of botanical wonders! Our first Desert Roses were a spectacular sight and there were some lovely tree euphorbias, *Euphorbia arbuscula*.

Then it was into the capital. In contrast to the lovely slopes we'd been passing the town was an absolute mess and rubbish was everywhere. In places completely covering the ground! We were soon introduced to the local garbage collectors – Egyptian Vultures! These wandered like chickens around the town, and we would become used to them walking around us and even hopping onto the backs of chairs to see what was on the table! We had a belated (second) breakfast in a pleasant little restaurant and sorted out a few practicalities such as mobile sims – new on the island in the last year!

Then it was along the coast, our eyes devouring the amazing habitats we were driving through, but we were also tired from a largely sleepless night and the heat. A wadi with water gave us a few common waterbirds including Common Coot – we were a bit surprised later to discover that this is a vagrant to the island. We stopped by an amazing old Tamarind Tree where we saw Somali Starlings. Then it was up onto the Homhil Plateau via a twisting bumpy track – the drivers did well. Our team was ahead of us and had the camp set up with those lovely 'Arab'-style tents looking a picture in the imposing landscape. A delicious lunch of fish and fragrant rice was awaiting us and we enjoyed the cold drinks. We spent the first part of the afternoon relaxing and settling into our tents.

Once the day had cooled off a little we set off down a water course where the smooth-worn rocks allowed fairly easy walking. There were little pools and some running water. The delightful little gentian relative *Exacum affine* was common in damp spots. Black-winged Stilts were noisy. A Socotra Buzzard sailed overhead. The walk took us eventually to a beautiful 'infinity' pool about 20m across and full of cool water. The lip looked all the way down to the sea and there were cliffs and steep slopes either side. Socotra Sparrows were common. The flora was extraordinary. Our first Dragon Trees were scattered across the slope opposite and some not far from the camp. The old man whose land we were camping on and who was acting as a local guide told us that when he was a child the Dragon Trees here were so close together he could clamber from the top of one to the top of another. Not anymore! But still to us they were impressive. Scattered amongst them were Frankincense Trees. Mostly *Boswellia dioscoridis* with rounded greyish leaves but also a few *Boswellia elongata* too. We saw the impressive skipper *Coeliades anchioses* with its striking red and orange marked body and the orange and black Common Joker (the endemic subspecies *Byblis anvatara boydii*) was quite common. We found our first *Kalanchoe farinosa* just about still in bloom. There were a number of common little *Acanthaceae* such as *Dicliptera effusa* and *Hyopestes pubescens*. Little mounds of *Oldenlandia pulvinata* were a delight, this is a very pretty little *Rubiaceae*. There were also *Indogiferas* flowering. *Asphodelus fistulosus* surprised us by being native! We had a very pleasant swim in the infinity pool!

As the sun disappeared behind the big ridge we were back at the camp, the cooks hard at work making the evening meal. Another fish dish... we were to eat fish often, but there were so many different ones...

A little night walk didn't produce much except a nice Socotra Chamaeleon in the *Ficus cordata* in the river bed.

Day 2 February 22nd Homhil and to Arher

Several of us met up for an early morning walk up the ridge opposite. It was quite a tough little hike, the land rocky and steep, but after half an hour or so we reached the low cliffs at the top. Here we found a rich assortment of rare and fantastical flora. There were wonderful flowering patches of *Kalanchoe farinacea*, and *Aloe perryi* had spike of orange flowers some of them being visited by the endemic Socotra Sunbird. On the cliffs we found the extraordinary 'rock' Frankincense *Boswellia nana*. It really just resembles a chunky little rock with leaves coming out. Its squat little trunk is squeezed into cracks in the low cliffs here never deigning to emerge more than a few centimetres. A totally weird tree! There were another three *Boswellias* up here – *elongata* and *dioscorides* as yesterday. And *Boswellia socotrana* too with tiny leaflets. The long-tubed white blooms of *Tamridea capsulifera* grew amongst the rocks as did the lilac *Barleria aculeata*. On the top of the cliffs was a low scrub of the lovely 'daphne' *Gnidia socotrana* with nice bright yellow flowers, orange *Ballochia amoena*, yellow *Barleria tetraacantha* and the blue pea *Zygocarpum caeruleum*. Another strange tree grew right on the highest spot on the ridge. This was *Croton pachycladus*. Its current status is not clear as apparently it was thought that it might just be a form of *Croton socotranus* but it is very clearly different. It is known only from this ridge and there's probably less than ten trees of this species in the entire world!

Fully exercised we devoured a fine breakfast of flat lavaş-style breads with honey and cheese and of course eggs. Then we did a leisurely repeat of yesterday afternoon's walk with time to enjoy the plants more. It was a beautiful morning, the temperatures pleasant at this altitude and with a little cloud too. We found some amazing specimens of the Cucumber Tree *Dendrosicyos socotrana*. This strange cucurbit has taken water conservation to an extreme having a trunk that looks like a baobab and with a little head of curving leafy branches poking out the top! The infinity pool kept us occupied even longer this morning as the day warmed up.



We took lunch here, our tents had already packed up and gone on to the next camp. Driving across the plateau we stopped amongst a grove of Frankincense Trees. These were the most widespread species – *Boswellia elongata*. *Boswellias* are a very important genus on the island, not least for their

commercial worth which in former times was considerable. They are still harvested for the 'frankincense' even today. The essential oils have a strong and very pleasant perfume. These particular ones showed signs of the harvesting. So by the time we'd finished our first 30 hours or so on the island we'd seen half of the eight species of *Boswellia* found in the archipelago, all of them endemic.

We dropped down to the north coast and headed east along an increasingly impressive coastline. We stopped at a little museum in a village – Frankincense trees in the courtyard. Inside were a range of local artefacts that intrigued us including a variety of water carriers and a boat. The bones of a large *Balaenoptera* whale were in the courtyard too.

Just inland of the coastal strip rose a cliff that got higher and higher as we drove. Huge sand dunes had been blown up against the cliff. The white sand pristine for hundreds of metres up to the cliff. Until we looked very closely that is – a few goats grazed on tiny patches of green way up these immense dunes. This is traditionally the camping spot for groups but with other groups here and mosquitoes around the fresh water spring we just made a brief stop to look at the flock of Sooty Gulls on the beach before continuing east almost to the farthest tip of the island at Irasel. What an amazing spot! Apart from the two little buildings which housed a couple of fishing families a kilometre from us we had the whole place to ourselves. The views back to the dunes and cliffs of Arher were amazing. We soon found that this beach was a marvellous spot for shells. Tiger Cowries and Arabian False Cowries were frequent, many of them in good condition and there was a big range of other shells too including some vast conches. Crested Terns and Sooty Gulls flew past. There was a small flock of Greater Sandpipers in the low dunes where we met both *Limonium paulayanum* and *Limonium sokotranum*.

Dinner under the stars on the beach was sublime!

Day 3 February 23rd Irasel Camp, Hoq Cave & Dihamry

Most of us woke early and wandered along the pristine beach. Grey Plovers and Kentish Plovers moved on ahead of us and Swift Terns caroused past just offshore. Two Greater Sandplover crouched behind the shore. We found large conch shells and a box fish exoskeleton and both made for foregrounds of scenic pictures with the sea and the giant dunes and escarpments of Arher behind. A small pod of Bottlenose Dolphins cruised past. In rock pools we found some small Barred Moray Eels.

Breakfast was much enjoyed on the beach and then it was time to pack up and head for our morning rendezvous with Hoq Cave. Passing Arher's giant piles of sand Chris noticed a White-browed Coucal sitting by the roadside and there were also large numbers of Sooty and Heuglin's Gulls in the beach. We stopped to admire a fine *Cistanche phelypaea*.

At the trailhead for Hoq Cave we got ourselves ready for the walk. Its not hugely long, but it is uphill and at times steep and would take us the best part of two hours to complete. It was already very warm! We ascended gently at first through rather monotonous Croton 'woodland' but soon 'escarpment' diversity kicked in and we admired various trees alongside the path. Some of the

Sterculia africana were really big, some of the largest trees on the island are here. There were also a number of *Boswellia elongata* and a little further up we saw *Boswellia dioscorides*. This species has waxy blue-green leaves and is always growing out of rock. Which can make it difficult to get close to. We also saw *Commiphora parvifolia*, *Acacia pennivenia*, *Dirichletia* (was *Carphalea*) *obovata* and the pendulous *Muhlea angolensis*. A lone *Lannea transulta* stood overlooking the blue and turquoise sea below. Socotra Sunbirds and Socotra Sparrows were the main birds. The skipper *Coeliades anchioses* was common as was the Common Joker. Little *Hypoestes pubescens* was common and as we got higher we found the blue form of *Anagallis arvensis*, *Commiphora ornifolia* and lots of *Helichrysum gracilipes* in flower.

The cave entrance is huge and cascades of *Adiantum balfourii* hung there with the rare *Exacum caeruleum*. Once inside the cave we were transported into a different world. Stalactites and stalagmites vied for our attention, mostly keeping a discreet distance from each other but occasionally un-covid-like proximity was noted, two fine examples actually almost touching. There were sheets and drapes on the walls, minarets and organs on the floor. We wandered deep into the cave – we were in there over an hour. At the farthest point there were pools which reflected the speleological architecture to wonderful affect.

Meanwhile I was outside exploring an area of cliff. Here was *Aerva microphylla*, the strange umbellifer *Rughidia milleri*, and a highlight – the twisted *Boswellia popoviana*. The vine *Dioscorea lanata* trailed through various bushes and trees including the pea *Paracalyx balfourii* and the fig *Ficus vasta* with improbably large bright green leaves. *Lavandula ninmoi* and several pretty little *Acanthaceae* were in flower. As was the shrub *Ballochia atrovirgata*. A family of Socotra Warblers was seen.

Then it was along to Dihamry for lunch. The afternoon was spent snorkelling in the water's offshore. This was truly superb. Fishlife was most evident and in places it was absolutely crazy how many fish there were. There was a stunning yellow and blue Tang in the shallows but only a few metres on around a coral head were all sorts of fish. There were swarms of Sweepers. There were large groups of Sohail Surgeonfish and Lined Surgeonfish, sometimes the two species together – hybrids are apparently known from Socotran waters.

Butterflyfishes are a delight and there were many species here – Madagascar Butterflyfish, Red-tailed Butterflyfish, the widespread Raccoon Butterflyfish, Rip Butterflyfish, Lined Butterflyfish, and the little African Butterflyfish.

Longbarbel Goatfish fossicked on the sandy bottoms with occasional Picasso Triggerfish. Gorgeous Crowned Tobies hovered about coral heads and Starry Pufferfish floated past. A Green Turtle came to see what I was doing. In places the water was thick with mixed shoals of black and white Indian Triggerfish, Convict Surgeonfish and Circled Spine Surgeonfish. There were some impressively large and improbably bright-coloured parrotfishes nibbling away at the reef. Bicolor Parrotfish and Ember Parrotfish chief among them and probably some others – I always find parrotfish ID a bit of a challenge! There were some impressive Bulettehead Parrotfish too. There seemed endless variety of wrasse species – those identified were Banded Thicklip Wrasse, Zigzag Wrasse, Goldbar Wrasse, Moon Wrasse, and the distinctive juvenile forms of Indian Sand Wrasse or Queen Coris. There were shoals of Trevallies most of them seemed to be Black Trevally. Pairs of Moorish Idols sailed serenely

around and we also saw Yellowtail Triggerfish, Orangespine Unicornfish, Cube Boxfish and Yellowfin Emperor.

Day 4 February 24th Dighamry & to Omeq

Pre-breakfast I wandered over to see what feathers the falcon had left me. There were Common Cuckoo and also some Common Quail feathers. *Capparis cartilaginea* and *Indogifera argentea* grew on the sandstone outcrops. I found a chiton 'shell' on the beach.

After breakfast some headed off to a nearby lagoon where they found half a dozen Greater Flamingos as well as Great Egret, Grey Heron and Western Reef Egret. Meanwhile the rest of us took to Dighamry's waters with the snorkels. As yesterday the fish were simply outstanding and other marine life too. Two large Honeycomb Morays were seen, one a metre long. And also a large white Moray? The large shoal of Silver Batfish was again present. New fish included Clown Triggerfish, Blue Triggerfish and the lovely Solander's Toby. A Scribbled Filefish cruised past. There were any number of large fish about today including a shoal of Blackspotted Sweetlips, a Silver Sweetlips or two, and a pair of improbably chunky Smooth Groupers. Almost as big was a Trapeze Angelfish.

During our snorkel a boat landed on the beach and Laetitia bought the contents of said boat. This was a fresh sextet of lobsters – Scalloped Spiny Lobsters and Long-legged Spiny Lobsters to be exact. These were later prepared for lunch – delicious. And chicken legs too...

Around 12.30 we left the camp and headed south across the island passing the vast Croton plains before heading uphill to rockier terrain dominated by *Adenium obesum*. We stopped when Salem spotted some *Caralluma*, but no matter how much we willed it, it simply would not flower! Moving on we found a fabulous hillside covered in the *Adeniums* and *Boswellia elongata*. Further still we explored a slope where the rocks held much *Boswellia dioscoridis*. The pools in the river were much appreciated and some of us took to the water. Disturbing Green Sandpipers and Black-winged Stilts.

Eventually we emerged at sea level on the southern side of the island. This was a different landscape with the arid flatlands interrupted by the occasional village and date palms. Soon we found ourselves in an amazing dune scape. Pure white sand stretching to the coast. It was beautiful. The drivers enjoyed throwing their 4wds onto the top of the dunes and we enjoyed watching them get the one they got stuck out too! Then it was on to our campsite on the beach at Omeq, a long sweeping stretch of sand.

Day 5 February 25th Omeq Beach and to Dixaim & Firmihin

The sun rose through some light clouds out over the sea giving an orange glow to things. Some went for an early morning dip in the Indian Ocean others walked along the beach. The tide line had sparse reward on the beach but the end section was covered in the dried up remains of Masked Porcupine Fishes (and other species) and plentiful large shells including some huge conches. Sea Urchins were lovely, their delicate shells still perfectly intact in the main. Several camels wandered down to the shore. Sanderling, Kentish Plovers, Grey Plovers, Common Sandpipers and a Whimbrel or two were

on the shore and lots of Socotra Cisticolas and a few Desert Wheatear in the light scrub of Tamarisk and *Limonium paulayanum* on the dunes.

After another feast of a breakfast we headed across the arid coastal plain stopping to admire a couple of Socotra Grey Shrikes. Quite quickly we were up against the southern escarpment. This stretches along most of the south side of the island separating the limestone inland plateau from the coastal plain. Not particularly high it is nevertheless an important geomorphological feature on the island. We visited Dagub Cave. The cave entrance was quite something with stalactites hanging down like a curtain. These dripping with water. In fact these seepages which occur in a just a few places along the escarpment are home to some of Socotra's rarest plants – here we could see two of them – *Exacum socotranum* and *Erythroxyton socotranum*. Inside the cave Lesser Mouse-tailed Bats hung from the roof.

Then it was up on the limestone plateau and along to Dixiam crossing a largely bare landscape.

We made a brief stop on said plateau which allowed us to see a couple of rare endemics. One was the Socotra Golden-winged Grosbeak, a distinctive and chunky bird. The other was a pomegranate! *Punica protopunica*. It even had flowers. The seemingly barren landscape had an unusual assemblage of plants growing in the canyons one being a large tree of *Ficus vasta*. This and *Ficus cordata* would seem to have their names applied wrongly somehow as it is *vasta* that has the large very cordate leaves.



At Dixiam we decided to head straight to the main Dragon Tree forests at Firmihin and our camp there, descending a spectacular and rough road through the canyon and up the other side. We passed *Hibiscus diffiran* and the yellow-flowered composite *Euryops arabica* en route.

Dragon Trees soon appeared and it wasn't long before we were in quite a forest of these amazing trees. Ecologically they are a mist-forest denizen, gaining a significant proportion of their water from the moisture on their leaves each morning. They have a form like an umbrella. They were spread

across the hillsides and slopes making a surreal landscape. We relaxed a while or pottered about our camp site before lunch. What a lunch! Jennifer had purchased a bag full of lobsters as we were leaving the beach and we feasted on them. Omer and Fattoosh as usual cooking them to perfection. Served with some chicken, the usual tasty rice and a sauce made of vegetables and stock. Delicious. Especially with the lime chutney.

Further relaxation before we took a gentle two hour walk with a local guide through the trees. This was a delight as the sun wandered in and out of clouds as it dropped in the western sky. The guide (10 years old) showed us how the dragon's blood was harvested. We saw no sign of young trees and were quite concerned about this until we reached higher areas where there were a good number of teenage trees. Socotra Buzzard flew over and Socotra Sunbirds were common. There were as usual Somali Starlings but this time we did manage to see a couple of the endemic Socotra Starlings. Scattered amongst the Dragon Trees were frankincense trees, these *Boswellia dioscorides*, and just one or two *Boswellia ameero*. We encountered small trees such as *Trichocalyx orbicularis* and *Dirichletia* (was *Carphalea*) *obovata*. Stands of *Aloe perryi* mostly didn't have flowers and *Kalanchoe farinacea* was likewise flowerless until we got higher up. One small area of cliff held an interesting assemblage of species including *Vernonia cockburniana*, a tree in the daisy family, as well as *Plocama puberula* (formerly *Gaillonia puberula*) and the weird woody *Reseda viridis*!

This evening a local shepherd joined us round the campfire and regaled us with some tunes on his pipe. Soon the drivers were joining with an eclectic percussion featuring all sorts of plastic!

Day 6 February 26th Dirhor Canyon and to Qalansiyah

Several of us wandered the surrounding Dragon Tree forest pre-dawn trying to find the right spot to capture the rising sun through the geometric trees. It was a clear morning and I reckon a great many photos were obtained! Amongst the trees we spotted the rarer starling, the Socotra Starling.

After a tasty and much appreciated breakfast we were off down into the Dirhor Canyon that separates Firmihin from Dixaim. This has water in it much of the year and there were plenty of pools. Several of us took a dip in the cool waters. There was good birding here with quite a few Bruce's Green Pigeons around, Pale Crag Martin, and a couple of parties of Socotra White-eyes. The flora was extremely interesting with some fine plants. The lovely lilac cushion plant *Campylanthus spinosus* grew on the gorge walls. *Cryptolepis socotrana* formed small trees on the gorge walls. We were searching for something else though. The Bottle Fig. Superficially similar to the widespread Desert Rose. We observed Desert Rose after Desert Rose until finally we spotted them, growing high on the cliff above us. Luckily Salem found some much closer at hand so we could photograph them.

Driving up the far side of the gorge we stopped for the strange mignonette relative *Ochradenus socotranus*.

Now we descended from the highlands to the north coast. Salem stopped us on the flat plain just before the coast. A shallow drainage course held some intriguing marks in the rocks – were they

man-made? Certainly odd and nobody apparently able to give an explanation. We found a Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark on its nest here.

Then it was along to Qalansiyah. This is the Socotra's second largest settlement which is to say, a big-ish village. By the village is a hill. And behind it... a stunning landscape of white sands, lagoon and cliffs. What a setting. The camp was placed at the back of the lagoon which was almost a kilometre across. Great expanses of white sand spread around and behind it, the eastern edge a high cliff/mountain. We enjoyed a late lunch and spent the afternoon pottering about the area, swimming down by the sea, visiting the village and even one or two explored slopes inland where they found *Aloe jawiyon*. The lagoon had plenty of Western Reef Egrets as well as Little Egrets, Grey Herons and Western Great Egrets. There were Curlews and Whimbrels and even a Bar-tailed Godwit. A Lesser Sandplover was seen, and Greenshank too. Offshore were Crested and Caspian Terns. Brown Boobies flew past and Socotra Cormorants were regular. An Osprey flew over and by the rivermouth there was a large flock of mixed gulls and terns that included no less than 14 Slender-billed Gulls, a vagrant to the island.

On the beach was a dead Spotted Eagle Ray and a dead shark! I waded back through part of the lagoon (knee-deep) and saw lots of cuttlefish and several Sting-Rays!

Day 7 February 27th Shoab

After an early breakfast we headed straight to the village to catch our boat to Shoab. There were many little boats lined up on the shore and chaotic crowd of fishermen and children welcomed us. However we were soon in our boats and motoring smoothly out into the bay. It didn't take long to spot the first dolphins! We spent a happy hour or so amongst two or more (it was difficult to tell at times) large pods of Spinner Dolphins. They coursed through the water right by the boat at times and at others launched themselves into their trademark aerial spins. The problem was to try and catch that in your camera. Some managed... After playing with them for some time we headed west towards Shoab. This took us along a spectacular stretch of coast. The mountains inland reaching right to the sea in some impressive cliffs. To our surprise we found Red-tailed Tropicbirds sailing high over the water here. Ten of them at least in pairs along this rugged coast. It looked like they were probably nesting on the almost vertical mountainsides. It was a beautiful sight seeing them sailing above us. Later I found feathers of this species on the beach.

Every 500m or so we'd see another similar boat fishing. Everyone of them was hauling impressive fish out of the water or huge lobsters. We stopped by one and chatted with the affable fishermen who were only too happy to sell us some lobsters – as fresh as fresh could be. It was sad though to see the odd Emperor Angelfish and some large colourful Parrotfish discarded as bycatch though sure there would be predators enough in the waters to benefit too... A few pairs of Socotra Cormorant perched on the cliffs. Several tiny islets had abundant Lesser Crested Terns and Sooty Gulls. One had a pair of Brown Boobies and offshore we noticed a Masked Booby.

Eventually we landed at Shoab. A spectacular location with a lovely beach backed by a little mangrove and behind that mountains and more mountains. Shoab lies right at the western tip of Socotra. Huge numbers of dried pufferfish littered the back of the beach, so thick you couldn't walk

in bare feet around them. This was a common theme around the islands beaches and is apparently a regular phenomenon. But we found no explanation as to why this happens! There was an interesting flora in the sand areas by the mangroves with lots of *Atriplex griffithii*, the local endemic *Heliotropium shoabense*. We enjoyed some tea and snacks in a shelter and I think most took a swim. Snorkelling was not so productive here. Our boat journey back featured rather more lively seas than the lovely calm ocean on the way out! One rock in the sea gave us our first views of yet another Frankincense *Boswellia bullata*.

Then it was back to Qalansiyah and a late lunch by the lagoon. Here we spoke to a couple of girls who'd been to Shoab in the morning and were shocked to learn that they'd had fantastic views of Whale Sharks – two separate animals. We were a mite jealous!

We had time for a brief visit to Wadi Ayaft. This made us realise that we should not make it so brief next time for it seemed that Wadi Ayaft had almost every species we'd seen already and a host of new ones too. The habitat was quite green. Of particular note was the lovely *Acridocarpus socotranus* which flowered along the river bed – a beautiful little tree. And then to our last campsite east of the capital. En route we spent a little time in the town, either visiting shops for specific purchases or just wandering round the market.

Day 8 February 28th Departure

Very early to the airport...



Systematic List Number 1

Flora

<i>Acacia pennivenia</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	scattered throughout
<i>Acridocarpus socotranus</i>	<i>Malphigiaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft
<i>Adenium obesum</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Desert Rose. Widespread and sometimes dominant. Some reach exceptional proportions not seen in the East African populations
<i>Adiantum balfourii</i>	<i>Pteridaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>	<i>Pteridaceae</i>	Dirhor
<i>Aerva javanica</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	throughout
<i>Aerva lanata</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Aerva microphylla</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	cliffs – Homhil, Hoq Cave
<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	widespread
<i>Allophylus rubifolius</i>	<i>Sapindaceae</i>	Dirhor and Qalansiyah area
<i>Aloe jawiyon</i>	<i>Xanthorrhoeaceae</i>	cliffs inland of Qalansiyah
<i>Aloe perryi</i>	<i>Xanthorrhoeaceae</i>	widespread – in good flower
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	<i>Primulaceae</i>	blue form. Here and there...
<i>Angkalanthus oligophylla</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon. Beautiful species with hanging orange and yellow pea flowers. Rare
<i>Anisotes diversifolius</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Asparagus africanus</i>	<i>Asparagaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Asphodelus fistulosus</i>	<i>Xanthorrhoeaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Atriplex griffithii</i>	<i>Chenopodiaceae</i>	behind Shoab beach
<i>Avicennia marina</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	behind Shoab beach
<i>Ballochia amoena</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Wadi Ayaft and above Homhil
<i>Ballochia atrovirgata</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Ballochia rotundifolia</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Barleria aculeata</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	gorgeous purple flowers. Homhil
<i>Barleria tetraantha</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	scattered throughout
<i>Boswellia ameero</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	Dixaim
<i>Boswellia bullata</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	Qalansiyah and Shoab
<i>Boswellia dioscoridis</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	widespread in centre and northeast
<i>Boswellia elongata</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	widespread
<i>Boswellia nana</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	only found on cliffs above Homhil
<i>Boswellia popoviana</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	Hoq Cave and Wadi Ayaft
<i>Boswellia socotrana</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	subspecies <i>socotrana</i> with green leaves at Homhil and Hoq Cave, subspecies <i>aspleniifolia</i> in the plains by the coast west of Qalansiyah
<i>Buxanthus pedicellatus</i>	<i>Buxaceae</i>	widespread and locally abundant
<i>Camptoloma lyperiiflorum</i>	<i>Scrophulariaceae</i>	little white flowers, glandular hair leaves, rock crevices Qalansiyah and Shoab
<i>Campylanthus spinosus</i>	<i>Plantaginaceae</i>	pretty lilac-pink dome. Dirhor canyon
<i>Capparis cartilaginea</i>	<i>Capparaceae</i>	widespread

<i>Caralluma socotrana</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	reasonably frequent but could not find in flower this year due the dry conditions
<i>Cissus hamaderoensis</i>	<i>Vitaceae</i>	widespread at Homhil and Dixaim
<i>Cissus paniculata</i>	<i>Vitaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Cissus subaphylla</i>	<i>Vitaceae</i>	widespread at low altitudes
<i>Cistanche phelypaea</i>	<i>Orobanchaceae</i>	Arher Dunes
<i>Citrullus colocynthis</i>	<i>Cucurbitaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Cleome</i> sp	<i>Capparaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Commelina ramulosa</i>	<i>Commelinaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Commicarpus heimerlii</i>	<i>Nyctaginaceae</i>	Dixaim, Qalansiyah area
<i>Commicarpus simonyi</i>	<i>Nyctaginaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Commiphora ornifolia</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	scattered throughout
<i>Commiphora parvifolia</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	scattered throughout
<i>Commiphora socotrana</i>	<i>Burseraceae</i>	Homhil, Wadi Ayaft
<i>Convolvulus hildebrandtii</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Corchorus erodioides</i>	<i>Tiliaceae</i>	looks more like a dandelion than a lime! Scattered
<i>Croton pachycladus</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	ridge above Homhil. If as seems likely it's a good species then one of the rarest trees in the World!
<i>Croton socotranus</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Croton sulcifructus</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	Firmihin and Dirhor
<i>Cryptolepis macrophylla</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Dirhor
<i>Cryptolepis socotrana</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Hoq Cave and Firmihin
<i>Cuscuta</i> sp	<i>Cuscutaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Dendrosicyos socotrana</i>	<i>Cucurbitaceae</i>	scattered throughout
<i>Dicliptera effusa</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Dioscorea lanata</i>	<i>Dioscoraceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Dirichletia obovata</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	was <i>Carphalea obovata</i> . Widespread
<i>Dirichletia virgata</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Dorstenia gigas</i>	<i>Moraceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon and more frequent, Wadi Ayaft
<i>Dovyalis abyssinica</i>	<i>Flacourtiaceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Dracaena cinnabari</i>	<i>Asparagaceae</i>	scattered throughout the interior above about 400m but locally dominant in areas, especially at Firmihin
<i>Edithcolea grandis</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	plants seen at Firmihin but none in flower this year at this season due to the dry year
<i>Erythroxylum socotranum</i>	<i>Erythroxylaceae</i>	Extreme rarity. On seeps on cliffs by Dagub Cave
<i>Euclea divinorum</i>	<i>Ebenaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Euphorbia arbuscula</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	locally frequent
<i>Euphorbia schimperi</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	locally frequent
<i>Euphorbia socotrana</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	stunning tree with rather beautiful flowers. Homhil and Wadi Ayaft

<i>Euphorbia spiralis</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	locally frequent
<i>Euryops arabicus</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Dixaim
<i>Exacum affine</i>	<i>Gentianaceae</i>	widespread
<i>Exacum socotranum</i>	<i>Gentianaceae</i>	there was some debate whether we really saw this species. The plants in question were on the wet seeps at Digor Cave and in the entrance to the Hoq Cave.
<i>Ficus cordata</i>	<i>Moraceae</i>	widespread. Generally shrubby
<i>Ficus vasta</i>	<i>Moraceae</i>	uncommon. Hoq Cave, Dixaim. Large cordate leaves. A large tree
<i>Gnidia socotrana</i>	<i>Thymelaeaceae</i>	Homhil and Wadi Ayaft
<i>Grewia mansouria</i>	<i>Tiliaceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Heliotropium balfourii</i>	<i>Boraginaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Heliotropium nigricans</i>	<i>Boraginaceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Heliotropium shoabense</i>	<i>Boraginaceae</i>	Shoab!
<i>Heliotropium sokotranum</i>	<i>Boraginaceae</i>	Arher
<i>Hibiscus diriffan</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon, Dixiam
<i>Hibiscus scottii</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Wadi Kalisan
<i>Hibiscus stenanthus</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Hypericum tortuosum</i>	<i>Guttiferae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Hypoestes pubescens</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Indigofera argentea</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Dihamry
<i>Indigofera oblongifolia</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Indigofera sokotrana</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Kalanchoe farinacea</i>	<i>Crassulaceae</i>	scattered throughout in hills
<i>Kalanchoe robusta</i>	<i>Crassulaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Kohautia socotrana</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Lachnocapsa spathulata</i>	<i>Brassicaceae</i>	slopes behind Qalansiyah lagoon
<i>Lannea transulta</i>	<i>Anacardiaceae</i>	throughout
<i>Lavandula nimmoi</i>	<i>Lamiaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Leucas spiculifolia</i>	<i>Lamiaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Limonium paulayanum</i>	<i>Plumbaginaceae</i>	coasts
<i>Limonium sokotranum</i>	<i>Plumbaginaceae</i>	coasts, and in a more woody form on inland cliffs
<i>Lindenbergia sokotrana</i>	<i>Plantaginaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Lycium sokotranum</i>	<i>Solanaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Maerua angolensis</i>	<i>Capparaceae</i>	frequent along northeast part of the island
<i>Oldenlandia pulvinata</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	Homhil etc
<i>Oxalis corniculata</i>	<i>Oxalidaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Paracalyx balfourii</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Pergularia tomentosa</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Plocama puberula</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	on rocks, Firmihin
<i>Poskea socotrana</i>	<i>Plantaginaceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Pulicaria diversifolia</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Pulicaria elegans</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon
<i>Pulicaria stephanocarpa</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	coastal plains in the north

<i>Reseda viridis</i>	<i>Resedaceae</i>	A woody mignonette! Firmihin
<i>Rhinacanthus scoparius</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Rhus thyrsofolia</i>	<i>Anacardiaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Ruellia dioscoridis</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Ruellia insignis</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Dirhor Canyon
<i>Rughidia milleri</i>	<i>Apiaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Scrophularia arguta</i>	<i>Scrophulariaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Senna obtusifolia</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Solanum incanum</i>	<i>Solanaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Solanum villosum</i>	<i>Solanaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	scattered
<i>Sterculia africana</i>	<i>Sterculiaceae</i>	scattered throughout, particularly common Homhil and Wadi Ahaft
<i>Tamrindaea capsulifera</i>	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Tetraena simplex</i>	<i>Zygophyllaceae</i>	Shoab Beach
<i>Tragia balfourii</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	ridge above Homhil
<i>Trichocalyx obovatus</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Trichocalyx orbiculatus</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Homhil, central hills too
<i>Trichodesma laxiflorum</i>	<i>Boraginaceae</i>	Homhil
<i>Turraea socotrana</i>	<i>Meliaceae</i>	Hoq Cave
<i>Vernonia cockburniana</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Firmihin
<i>Withania riebeckii</i>	<i>Solanaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Ziziphus spina-christi</i>	<i>Rhamnaceae</i>	scattered
<i>Zygocarpum coeruleum</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	ridge above Homhil

Systematic List Number 2

Birds

Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	the falcon at Dihamry had plucked one!
Nubian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus nubicus</i>	1 at dusk south of Qalansiyeh
White-browed Coucal	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>	1 near Arher
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	the falcon at Dihamry had plucked one!
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Very common and widespread
Bruce's Green Pigeon	<i>Treron waalia</i>	Several flocks in Wadi Daerhu, also Shoab
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	vagrant to the island! Lagoon just east of Haribu
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	6 in a shallow lagoon near Dihamry
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	wetlands throughout
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	scattered
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Omeq Beach
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	beaches throughout
Lesser Sandplover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	uncommon – a few records
Greater Sandplover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	several at Irasel Beach
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	scattered throughout
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	frequent at Qalansiyah Lagoon
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	1 at Qalansiyah Lagoon
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	scattered along coasts
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Omeq Beach
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Scattered on coasts
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	mainly wadis
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Scattered along coasts and wadis
Noddy sp	<i>Anous</i> sp	one on the way to Shoab
Common Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	singles a couple of times
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	14+ on Qalansiyah Beach. Apparently a vagrant to the island so a significant record!
Sooty Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus hemprichii</i>	Large flocks along north coast mixing with the next species, less common on south coast
Heuglin's Gull	<i>Larus heuglini</i>	Large flocks along sandy shores
Baltic Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	just one or two records
Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Irasel Beach
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Irasel Beach
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	several at Qalansiyah Lagoon
Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	abundant along all shores
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>	only noted between Qalansiyah and Shoab
but common there		
Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	c.10 along the cliffs between Qalansiyah and Shoab looked like they might be breeding
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>	2 at Irasel Beach and 1 off Shoab
Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>	Occasional birds along N coast
Socotra Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax nigrogularis</i>	scattered and occasionally frequent (e.g. off Qalansiyah Lagoon) along shores
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Singles at Qalansiyah
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	a few at Qalansiyah Lagoon

Western Reef Heron	<i>Egretta gularis</i>	Common and widespread around the coast
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	widespread in low numbers
Western Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	scattered on coasts
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Qalansiyah Lagoon
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Abundant and ever present in the sky
Socotra Buzzard	<i>Buteo socotranus</i>	1 or 2 seen most days
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinunculus</i>	scattered
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	Near Hadibo
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	singles twice
Socotra Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor uncinatus</i>	scattered throughout
Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	Widespread, especially at Dixiam
Black-crowned Finch Lark	<i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>	common in open dry areas
Pale Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne obsoleta</i>	2 in Daerhu Wadi
Socotra Warbler	<i>Incana incana</i>	only noted below Hoq Cave
Socotra Cisticola	<i>Cisticola haesitata</i>	scattered at low altitudes
White-breasted White-eye	<i>Zosterops abyssinica</i>	scattered – not common
Socotra Starling	<i>Onychognathus frater</i>	Dixiam, from Somali Starling by longer greyer beak, square tail, shy
Somali Starling	<i>Onychognathus blythii</i>	Very common and widespread
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Quite common
Socotra Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia balfouri</i>	widespread
Socotra Sparrow	<i>Passer insularis</i>	abundant
Long-billed Pipit	<i>Anthus similes</i>	local in dry areas
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	only noted in Haribu
Golden-winged Grosbeak	<i>Rhynchostruthus socotranus</i>	only noted south of Dixiam

Systematic List Number 3 Marine

The majority of the following were recorded at Dihamry.

Honeycomb Moray	<i>Gymnothorax favagineus</i>
a large white Moray was seen too	
Barred Moray	<i>Echidna polyzona</i>
White-tipped Soldierfish	<i>Myripristis vittata</i>
Crown Squirrelfish	<i>Sargocentron diadema</i>
Trumpetfish	<i>Aulostomus chinensis</i>
Cornetfish	<i>Fistularia commersonii</i>
Peacock Grouper	<i>Cephalopholis argus</i>
Smooth Grouper	<i>Dermatolepis striolatus</i>
Redstripe Fairy Basslet	<i>Pseudanthias fasciatus</i>
Two-bar Seabream	<i>Acanthopagrus bifasciatus</i>
Blackspotted Sweetlips	<i>Plectorhinchus gaterinus</i>
Silver Sweetlips	<i>Diagramma punctatum</i>
Yellowfin Emperor	<i>Lethrinus erythracanthus</i>
	<i>Lethrinus crocineus</i>
Silver Batfish	<i>Monodactylus argenteus</i>
Yellowsaddle Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus cyclostomus</i>
Round-spot Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus pleurostigma</i>
Doublebar Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus bifasciatus</i>
Longbarbel Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus macronema</i>
Yellowfin Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus vanicolensis</i>
Emperor Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus imperator</i>
Trapeze Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus rhomboides</i>
Koran Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus semicirculatus</i> (probable...)
Longfin Bannerfish	<i>Heniochus acuminatus</i>
Madagascar Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon madagaskariensis</i>
Red-tailed Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon collare</i>
Raccoon Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon lunula</i>
Rip Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon trifasciatus</i>
Lined Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon lineolatus</i>
African Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon dolosus</i>
Cave Sweeper	<i>Pempheris vanicolensis</i>
Vanderbilt's Puller	<i>Chromis vanderbilti</i>
Scissortail Sergeant	<i>Abudefduf sexfasciatus</i>
Blue-yellow Damsel	<i>Pomacentrus caeruleus</i>
Saddleback Hogfish	<i>Bodianus bilunulatus</i>
Indian Sand Wrasse (Queen Coris)	<i>Coris frerei</i>
Clown Sand Wrasse	<i>Coris aygula</i>
Sixbar Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma hardwicke</i>
Goldbar Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma hebraicum</i>
Moon Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma lunare</i>
Zigzag Wrasse	<i>Halichoeres scapularis</i>
Barred Thicklip Wrasse	<i>Hemigymnus fasciatus</i>

Bicolor Cleaner Wrasse	<i>Labroides bicolor</i>
Common Cleaner Wrasse	<i>Labroides dimidiatus</i>
Bullethead Parrotfish	<i>Scarus sordidus</i>
Indian Parrotfish	<i>Scarus strongylocphalus</i>
Ember Parrotfish	<i>Scarus rubroviolaceus</i>
Bicolor Parrotfish	<i>Cetoscarus bicolor</i>
Fringelip Mullet	<i>Crenimugil crenilabis</i>
Pale-lipped Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus leucocheilos</i>
Circled Spine Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus tennentii</i>
Convict Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus triostegus</i>
Lined Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus lineatus</i>
Sohail Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus sohal</i>
Striped Bristletooth	<i>Ctenochaetus striatus</i>
Orangespine Unicornfish	<i>Naso elegans</i>
Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>
Black Trevally	<i>Caranx lugubris</i>
Rainbow Runner	<i>Elagatis bipinnulata</i>
Clown Triggerfish	<i>Balistoides conspicillum</i>
Blue Triggerfish	<i>Pseudobalistes fuscus</i>
Yellowtail Triggerfish	<i>Balistapus undulatus</i>
Indian Triggerfish	<i>Milichthys indicus</i>
Halfmoon Triggerfish	<i>Sufflamen chrysopterus</i>
Picasso Triggerfish	<i>Rhinecanthus aculeatus</i>
Scribbled Filefish	<i>Aluterus scriptus</i>
Cube Boxfish	<i>Ostracion cubicus</i>
Starry Pufferfish	<i>Arothron meleagris</i>
Crowned Toby	<i>Canthigaster coronata</i>
Solander's Toby	<i>Canthigaster solandri</i>
Masked Porcupinefish	<i>Diodon liturosus</i>