



### The authors

Catherine Cheung and Lyndon DeVantier spent three years on Socotra during the late 1990s. As part of a team supported by the United Nations Development Programme, they worked towards the conservation and sustainable development of the islands. Their interests range much across natural history, specializing in marine science, protected areas and natural resource management.



Erik Claes, SKP

### Science editor

Kay Van Damme, freshwater biologist of the University of Ghent, Belgium, first visited Socotra in 1999. He has returned almost yearly since, contributing to scientific studies on different subjects and exploring the formerly unknown cave fauna. Intrigued by Socotra's past, he has also developed a collection of rare historical documents.

# سقطري التاريخ الطبيعي للجزر وأهاليها

Located in the Arabian Sea, east of the Horn of Africa, the Socotra Islands of Yemen are often referred to as the 'Galápagos of the Indian Ocean', renowned for their many endemic species. In 2003, the islands became a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve, acknowledging the intimate relationship between the islanders and their environment. Nomination as a natural World Heritage Site is underway.

Formed from disparate roots, the Socotran people maintain a unique cultural identity, as philosophical as it is practical, developed in one of the world's most isolated places. Today this is changing, with increased accessibility and the influence of globalization, the islands are threatened by unsustainable development.

This book provides a comprehensive review of the islands' flora, fauna and people. While documenting the geological history, land and marine biodiversity, ecology, human culture and history, the book also highlights hitherto unexplored aspects of the islands' biogeography, ecology and evolution. It also includes nine case studies illustrating local approaches to achieving conservation and sustainable development.

Through this book, the authors and contributors hope to arouse interest and engender actions to sustain Socotra's unique natural history and cultural heritage into the future.

- Published for the Socotra Conservation Fund (SCF)
- With Arabic abstracts for all chapters
- Over 800 references
- 400 colour photographs, historic illustrations and maps
- Includes advice for visitors



UK£ 39.50  
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Hanne and Jens Eriksen



Hajnalka Kovacs - Attila Siklosi



# Socotra

## A Natural History of the Islands and their People



Catherine Cheung and Lyndon DeVantier

Science Editor: Kay Van Damme

### Front cover

Sunrise over a woodland of the Dragon's Blood Tree *Dracaena cinnabari*, high on the Sarahin Plateau, Socotra Island. Sarahin is a Nature Sanctuary, designated in the Socotra Conservation Zoning Plan in 2000.

Inside: A 16<sup>th</sup> century chart of the North-western Indian Ocean, with Socotra marked as *Cacotora* off the Horn of Africa. It was made by the Dutch East India Company, based on earlier Portuguese charts. Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum, London.

### Back cover

Top: A Socotra Sunbird *Nectarina balfouri* feeding from the endemic shrub *Trichocalyx obovatus*, illustrating one of many intricate ecological relationships among endemic species. Courtesy of Hanne and Jens Eriksen.

Middle: Sheikh Issa, with his son, leading his camel through the *Dracaena* woodland of Rokeb Di Firmihin. For generations, camels have played a crucial role in trade and the transport of essential goods across the rugged mountains of Socotra.

Bottom: The seastar *Protoreaster lincki*, characterized by its red spines and reticulate pattern, is widespread across the Indo-west Pacific region. Courtesy of Hajnalka Kovacs and Attila Siklosi.

Inside: A detailed topographic map of the Socotra Archipelago, 2004. Courtesy of the Friends of Socotra and Socotra Conservation Fund.