

**Template for Submission of Scientific Information
to Describe Areas Meeting Scientific Criteria for
Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas**

Title/Name of the area: Socotra Archipelago, Yemen

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Abstract

Socotra Archipelago represents a unique environmental group of islands, with very significant marine habitats that have been identified and classified into four conservation zones. Sharks, dolphins and whales are frequently seen at different sites around the island (Foad Nsseeb, per. Comm.). However, my experience in Socotra is limited to conservation of loggerhead sea turtles which nest along Abalhen beach during May to September each year. (see Google earth map).

Introduction

Socotra Archipelago includes the islands of Socotra, Samha, Darsa,, Abd Al Kuri and small island rocks and rock outcrops. The government of Yemen realized the uniqueness of the archipelago in general, and Socotra, in particular for its rich biodiversity and high degree of endemism, hence made collaboration with scientists and international organizations to carry out research and protect its habitats. These efforts lead to establishing a marine zoning map (Figs. 1) and summary for activity guide and marine features for selection (Fig. 2). Abalhen Beach has long been recognized to be a nesting site for loggerhead sea turtle. It is generally sandy with some rocky patches. Conservation campaigns started in 1998, but stopped in 2007 due to shortage of funding. This stoppage encouraged poachers to butcher turtles and destroy their habitat on this beach which required serious actions to be taken. Other sites such as Showab (1 km), Neet (1 km), Mahfarhen-Zaheq (5 km), Sibrahoo (2 km), and Ras Ersel (1 km), are smaller sandy beaches where loggerhead sea turtles have been reported by locals to nest. Also green turtles have been reported to forage in the Nogid area, South Socotra (Ahmed Saeed Suleiman & Foad Naseeb,pers. Comm.).

Location (Map 1)

The main Island, Socotra is located between N12°34'04.65"; E 53°19'13.14" to N12°33'41.39"; E 54°32'05.42". My activities at Abalhen cover the 15 km distance from Qadama Village N12°36'59.97"; E 53°46'00.28" to Ghubba N 12°36'54.46"; E 53°46'00.00". The area is within Yemen's national jurisdiction.

Feature description of the proposed area

The area where sea turtle conservation activities are conducted is ideal for sea turtle nesting (Fig. 3). However, building an asphalt road along its western boarder caused a lot of disturbances, noise and fume pollution which will have a negative impact on the habitat as well as its biotopes, animals, mainly turtles, and plants. These impacts can be assessed by looking at the decline in numbers of nesting turtles from 206 individuals in 2007 to 95 in 2012.

Feature condition and future outlook of the proposed area

The area is being exploited by inhabitants of nearby villages which causes a decline in its stability and sustainability of nesting turtle populations. Current activities funded by US Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Turtle Conservation Fund, aim at local community's awareness and capacity building, protection of loggerhead turtles and their habitats.

Assessment of the area against CBD EBSA Criteria

(Discuss the area in relation to each of the CBD criteria and relate the best available science. Note that a proposed area for EBSA description may qualify on the basis of one or more of the criteria, and that the polygons of the EBSA need not be defined with exact precision. And modeling may be used to estimate the presence of EBSA attributes. Please note where there are significant information gaps)

CBD EBSA Criteria (Annex I to decision IX/20)	Description (Annex I to decision IX/20)	Ranking of criterion relevance (please mark one column with an X)			
		No information	Low	Medium	High
Uniqueness or rarity	Area contains either (i) unique (“the only one of its kind”), rare (occurs only in few locations) or endemic species, populations or communities, and/or (ii) unique, rare or distinct, habitats or ecosystems; and/or (iii) unique or unusual geomorphological or oceanographic features.				
<i>Explanation for ranking</i>					
Special importance for life-history stages of species	Areas that are required for a population to survive and thrive.				X
<i>Explanation for ranking</i> Abalhen Beach is the most important nesting area for loggerhead sea turtles in the entire country. Hatchlings require special protection from predators, such as sea birds and ghost crabs					
Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats	Area containing habitat for the survival and recovery of endangered, threatened, declining species or area with significant assemblages of such species.				X
<i>Explanation for ranking</i> The loggerhead sea turtle <i>Caretta caretta</i> is an endangered species listed on CITES appendix 1					
Vulnerability, fragility, sensitivity, or slow recovery	Areas that contain a relatively high proportion of sensitive habitats, biotopes or species that are functionally fragile (highly susceptible to degradation or depletion by human activity or by natural events) or with slow recovery.				
<i>Explanation for ranking</i>					
Biological productivity	Area containing species, populations or communities with comparatively higher natural biological productivity.				
<i>Explanation for ranking</i>					
Biological diversity	Area contains comparatively higher diversity of ecosystems, habitats, communities, or species, or has higher genetic diversity.				
<i>Explanation for ranking</i>					
Naturalness	Area with a comparatively higher degree of naturalness as a result of the lack of or low level of human-induced disturbance or degradation.				
<i>Explanation for ranking</i>					

Sharing experiences and information applying other criteria (Optional)

Other Criteria	Description	Ranking of criterion relevance (please mark one column with an X)			
		Don't Know	Low	Medium	High
Add relevant criteria					
Explanation for ranking					

References

Abdullah, A. (2011). Socotra's turtles at risk as meat hunters on the loose. Yemen Observer. Vol. XIV, Issue 56

Nasher, A. K. and Al Jumaily, M. (2013). Initial steps to building long term sea turtle conservation program on Soqotra. *Tayf, the Soqotra Newsletter*, 10: page 14.

Zandri, E. (2003). (Author, Coordinator, and Editor). Saving Socotra: the Treasure Island of Yemen. UNDP/EPA/GEF/UNOPS.

Maps and Figures



Map 1. Socotra Island showing Abalhen Beach marked with the two pins (Source: Google Earth).

THE MARINE ZONING PLAN

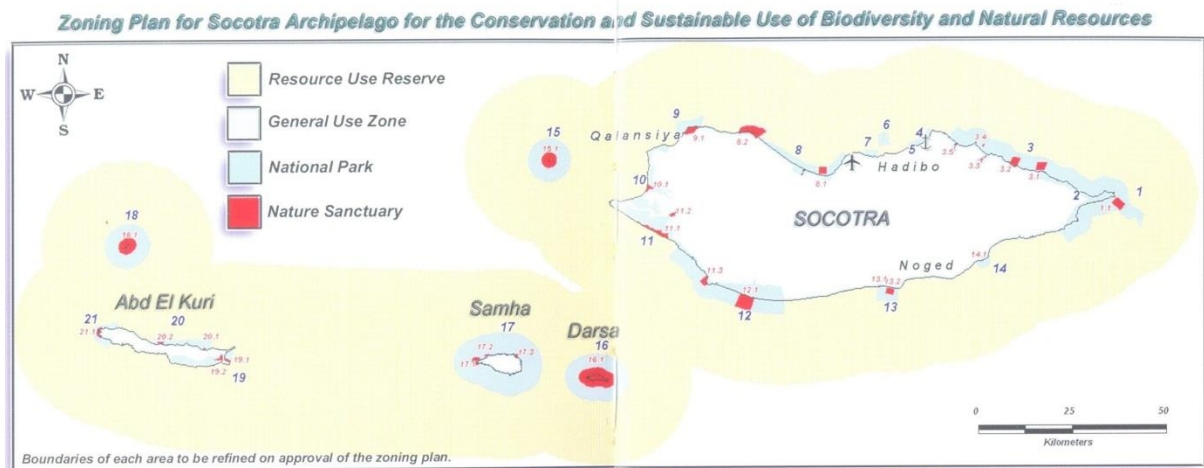


Fig. 1. Socotra marine Zoning plan (source: Zandri, E., 2003)

SUMMARY ACTIVITY GUIDE FOR THE MARINE ZONING PLAN					MARINE FEATURES FOR SELECTION											
					Resource Use Reserve	General Use Zone	National Park	Nature Sanctuary								
Management guidelines will be developed specifically for each area on approval of the zoning plan.									NP: National Park	NS: Nature Sanctuary	biotope	algae / seagrass	coral	fish	birds	crustacea & molluscs
									1 East Socotra Ras Momi	1.1 Galles						
									2 East Socotra Cliffs							
									3 East Socotra Roosh to Di-Lishiah	3.1 Roosh						
										3.2 Rhy di Adahoh to Di Timiri						
										3.3 Khor Qaryih						
										3.4 Shuab near Rhy Di Hamri						
										3.5 Khor Di-Lishiah						
									4 North East Socotra Port Area							
									5 North East Socotra Erhina Lagoon							
									6 North Socotra Seq							
									7 North Socotra Qadub	7.1 Off from Qadub						
									8 North Socotra Ras Dilio-Qadama	8.1 Ras Qatalni-Alame						
										8.2 Qadama and Medina						
									9 West Socotra Qalansiya Lagoon	9.1 Qalansiya lagoon						
									10 West Socotra Ras Bidooh-Shuab	10.1 Mangrove at Shuab						
									11 South West Socotra Net to Qatanin	11.1 Mangrove at Neet						
										11.2 Jousanins Petrel Cliff						
									12 South Socotra Qaari	12.1 Qatanin						
									13 South Socotra Maharef - Bedholah	13.1 Muthaz (Barbar) - Zeraghin						
										13.2 Qasharhin						
									14 South Socotra Mahferhan	14.1 Qasharhin						
									15 Sabonia 3nm Buffer	15.1 Sabonia (islands to 1 nautical mile offshore)						
									16 Darsa 3nm Buffer	16.1 Darsa (island to 1 nautical mile offshore)						
									17 Samha 3nm Buffer	17.1 West Samha						
										17.2 North Samha						
										17.3 East Samha						
									18 Kaal Faroun 3nm Buffer	18.1 Khal Faroun (islands up to 1nm offshore)						
									19 East Abd El Kuri and highlands	19.1 Anjara Bay						
										19.2 Wadi of Moutain Cimali						
									20 North Abd El Kuri	20.1 North Abd El Kuri 1						
										20.2 North Abd El Kuri 2						
									21 West Abd El Kuri	21.1 SW Abd El Kuri to Khalsat on Naum						

Fig. 2. Summary for activity guide ad marine features for selection (Source: Zandri, E., 2003)



Fig. 3. Part of Abalhen Beach, Socotra Island