

DIPTERA OF SOCOTRA

Diptera

Diptera is the scientific name for flies. Diptera means two wings. The house fly and the mosquito are probably the best known Diptera in the world. And these will definitely never win a popularity poll! However, most flies do not harm or hinder humans and are sometimes rich in colour. There are several hundreds of fly species on Socotra. Most of them are small and obscure animals, but some groups are relatively large and conspicuous. Among these flies are Hoverflies (Syrphidae), Robberflies (Asilidae), Bee flies (Bombyliidae) and Soldier flies (Stratiomyidae).

Robber flies (Asilidae)

Robber flies have mostly a slender shape and rather long legs with stiff spines. They attack other insects and insert their robust snout (of proboscis) into the victim's body in order to digest the insides (see picture on the right). Robber flies often sit on the ground or on branches and stems. Robber flies detect preys with their excellent eyes and catch them after a short chase. The fauna of Socotra holds around 15 species.



Microstylum sp. with prey (*Azuragrion granti*)

Four species of Robber flies, from left to right: *Trichardis* sp., *Rhadinus socotrae*, *Microstylum* sp. & *Tolmerus* sp.



Bee flies (Bombyliidae)

Bee flies are, like hoverflies, visitors of flowers to feed on nectar and pollen. Bee flies are rather common in places and probably important pollinators of flowers. The wings are often partly coloured or speckled black or brown. The number of species known on Socotra is around 25.



Hoverflies (Syrphidae)

Hoverflies feed mainly on nectar and pollen and can mostly be found on or near flowers. At least seven species are known from Socotra. All species are rare. On the left an *Eristalis* depositing eggs in sandy mud near Qalansiya.

Soldier flies (Stratiomyidae)

Soldier flies are a small group of Diptera, related to hoverflies. They are diverse in size and shape, though they commonly are partly or wholly metallic green, or somewhat wasp like mimics, marked with black and yellow or green and sometimes metallic. The fauna of Socotra is rather poor, with two species (and only three individuals!) known.