

## **Introducing Persian Gulf's sea attractions as reinforcement factors for the Qeshm Geopark**

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In 2006, with an area of approximately 320 km<sup>2</sup>, Qeshm Geopark was established. The Geopark boundary then became fivefold bigger and changed to 1560 km<sup>2</sup> in 2012. A variety of important features such as the World's Longest Salt Cave, which is located in Namakdan, and also beautiful Chahkooh Canyon, Statues Valley, Star Valley and Shour Valley geosites are within the Qeshm Geopark's property. While the Geopark has much potential, it has come across many obstacles during the past years because of uncertainty of responsible supports and the head managers of the area. We believe that we can introduce two factors for improvement of Qeshm Geopark, which are: the local community living inside the Geopark boundary which is keen on the issue and is trying to conserve the Geopark, and second is the natural potential of the area.

This paper focuses on sea factors which include: sea mammals, sea turtles, especially critically endangered species of hawks bill, and coral reefs and to showcase how these factors can affect the Geopark positively. Coral reefs beside tropical pluvial jungles and ponds are the most important and the most valuable ecosystems of the world. In the north of the Persian Gulf in Iran, the main spread of coral reefs is around the islands, but unfortunately this important and sensitive ecosystem is not managed. In this paper, in addition to a brief introduction on coral reefs, Tonbe Bozorg Island is suggested to be added to the Geopark's boundaries because of its adjacency. In this manner, it can be managed and conserved under the world criteria's and standards, under support of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) experts.

Presented in Theme 1