



## FUTURE OF CONSERVATION THROUGH FALCONRY

Every year thousands if not millions of birds, many of them raptors and endangered species, are killed because of poorly constructed electricity supply structures. Electrocutions are one of most significant factors in the decline of the saker falcon. The structures can be built correctly or modified. This issue was considered by the IAF in December 2012 and, to address the issue an International Data Base of Electrocutions is being managed. Falconers are encouraged to report the electrocution of any raptor. Power companies and local authorities are encouraged to address the problem reported. In this way, falconers are addressing a problem and assisting with an international conservation issue. This structure resulted in the death of a falconry bird that landed on the transformer box. The remains of an eagle owl and a steppe buzzard were found at the foot of the poles.

Mitigation is simple, involving placing insulating sleeves on the three cables leading down to the transformer box.

Falconers are involved in conservation and research projects, such as this one „The Urban Ecology of Crowned Eagles in KwaZulu-Natal”, University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

Here a female crowned eagle prepares to feed a hyrax to its eaglet. Nest cameras are deployed to investigate breeding biology and diet. The composition of the diet can be thoroughly described and will report aspects of urban ecology, including the impact on urban wildlife, livestock and pets.

Many similar projects of this kind are run all over the world by local falconry communities in close cooperation with ornithologists, conservationists, hunters, foresters, farmers, etc.

## IAF AS A CONSERVATION ORGANISATION

The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey represents falconry communities and raptor related organisations in 70 countries.

IAF is a member of IUCN and Collaborating Partner to UNEP/CMS Raptors MoU. IAF is recognized as an official advisory NGO to UNESCO.



1968 IAF attended the Conference of the European Section of ICBP

1970 IAF at the 15th World Conference of the ICBP

1972 At the 10th Conference of the European Section of ICBP, IAF is accorded its own separate status. A resolution prohibits trade in birds of prey except for “approved purposes”

1975 IAF is one of the sponsors ICBP first World Conference on Birds of Prey. Formulates resolutions to avert an international campaign to ban falconry

1976 IAF cooperates with ICBP in discussions on resolutions concerning trade in wildlife

1985 After comments by IAF’s president the world’s largest raptor research conference resolved that „contributions of falconers have never been adequately acknowledged”

1986 IAF is granted observer status in the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention at the Council of Europe

1995 IAF sponsors raptor conservation project in Belarus

1996 IAF sponsors project on raptor demography Kazakhstan

1996 IAF helped found the Conservation Action Network in the US

1996 IAF becomes a member of the World Conservation Union (IUCN)

1997 IAF’s proposal to CITES of „Falconry passport system” simplifies cross border movements of trained raptors

2000 IAF takes part in the World Conservation Congress in Amman where a resolution on sustainable use of wild raptors in falconry is adopted

2009 IAF contributed to the specialist meeting in Abu Dhabi on the Conservation of Saker Falcon

2011 IAF signs Raptors MoU of UNEP/CMS as Collaborating Partner Organisation

2012 IAF is represented in the Saker Task Force of UNEP/CMS Raptors MoU

## PRESIDENTS OF IAF

1968	Jack Mavrogordato	UK
1972	Otto Abensperg-Traun	Austria
1975	Toni Lutz	Switzerland
1978	Charles de Ganay	France
1984	Christian de Coune	Belgium
1998	Ferrante Pratesi	Italy
2000	Patrick Morel	Belgium
2006	Frank Bond	USA

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The Peregrine Fund

Peregrine Project Poland

Japan Falconiformes Centre

New Zealand Wingspan Trust

Mongolian Saker Artificial Nestsite Project

Eagle Encounters Rehabilitation, Education and Eco-Tourism of South Africa

Urban Ecology of Crowned Eagles in KwaZulu-Natal

International Raptor Electrocution and Strike of Transmission-lines Project

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# FALCONERS IN CONSERVATION



Falconers have **always** been conservationists, protecting the species they fly and the quarry they hunt. Many have been environmentalists well ahead of their time.

From 1974 to 1997 the falconer-led Peregrine Fund bred and released more than 4,000 falcons and restored peregrine populations in North America.

The United Arab Emirates leads the world in raptor conservation projects, research and funding in many countries. Falconer-led conservation projects exist all over the world.

## CONSERVATION OF BIRDS OF PREY AS IT BEGAN

The oldest records of conservation decisions and measures are of hunting and falconry origin.

In 1228 Frederic II, Holy Roman Emperor's passion for falconry became part of a project on ornithology and he wrote a book *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*. He answered many ornithological questions and implemented a systematic approach to natural sciences based on actual experiment. That was one of the first ornithological books ever. His achievements were great and they exercised a lasting influence on science and conservation.

Falconry was responsible for the earliest legislation protecting raptors; there are references in the ninth century Irish Brehon Laws detailing penalties appropriate for nest-robbing. In Poland from the XIIth Century, it was forbidden to cut down trees with peregrine nests, the chicks belonged to the sovereigns and the villagers were obliged to protect them. The XIVth century Eleanor d'Arborea, Queen of Sardinia was so protective of hawks and falcons that a species was named in her honour *Falco eleanorae*, Eleanor's falcon. The first recorded ringing and releasing of birds to gather information on their movements was by the Loo Hawking Club in Holland in the early 1800s. Herons that they caught were released with engraved silver bands. Information on recaptures was recorded.



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## FALCONERS ROLE IN MODERN CONSERVATION

First known breeding of peregrines in captivity was by falconer Renz Waller in 1940's in Germany. After the DDT caused worldwide decline in peregrine falcon populations of the 1950s and '60s, concerned falconers believed that breeding falcons in captivity would be the best way to keep the species alive.

Ornithology professor Tom Cade (a falconer of some renown) in 1970 started at Cornell University to breed peregrines in captivity to release them to the wild and two years later together with four other falconers founded The Peregrine Fund. The Peregrine Fund, the biggest falconer led organization in the world, has hatched and raised 20 species of rare birds and pioneered propagation and releasing techniques for numerous species.

Species systematically released to restore wild populations include the aplomado falcon, bald eagle, bat falcon, California condor, harpy eagle, Madagascar fish eagle, Mauritius kestrel, orange-breasted falcon, prairie falcon. Most of them are of no use for falconry.

Once extinct in wild, Californian condor's expansion into Arizona and Utah has



been one of the great successes of the Peregrine Fund. There is still a problem of poisoning condors – both directly and with lead bullets. The Peregrine Fund has worked closely with the Arizona State authorities to replace lead ammunition with non-fragmenting copper. Over 90% of the hunters in the state of Arizona voluntarily use these bullets supplied by the generosity of Cabela's through the AZ Game and Fish Dept.



## EDUCATION FOR CONSERVATION

Conservation is not just the projects where post-grad students count raptors in remote regions; it is also about teaching ordinary people and changing attitudes and behaviour. All falconers have daily contact with members of the public with whom they interact: farmers, farm labourers, pigeon fanciers etc., all have an impact on raptors, prey species and environment.

Whether in a traditional setting or in modern schools, falconry educates and encourages an interest in and an understanding of nature.

For those of us condemned to live in an urban setting, handling a bird of prey or watching one in flight at close quarters is an inspiration.



Almost every falconer does some educational activities such as school talks. Most of the work done by falconers receives and requires no donor funding.

Educating young people leads to public awareness, not only in their generation, but they in turn educate their parents and those around them.

Involvement of young people with falconry trained birds in New Zealand is important because here human persecution of falcons and hawks remains the biggest threat. Wingspan is a New Zealand falconer-founded falconry and conservation organisation. Its most recent success was campaign to have the karearea, the New Zealand falcon, win an internet competition for the New Zealand Bird of the Year 2012.

Here a Spanish falconer hand-rears a Bonelli's eagle for a high-profile reintroduction project with extensive media coverage.

Spanish falconers have set up rehabilitation projects in Peru, Colombia and Indonesia.

## SUCCESS OF PEREGRINE REINTRODUCTION PROJECTS AND SAKER CONSERVATION PLANS

Successful falconer-led breeding and reintroduction projects in the USA, Germany, Poland and other countries, have proved the falconer's expertise. The German falconry club, the DFO, has even been afforded government recognition as an official conservation organisation. Falconers and their methods have been used to save many other bird species worldwide.

The first tree-nesting peregrines in Poland since the 1960s hatched in 2012, the result of a falconer led conservation project. The German and Polish projects both used traditional falconry "hacking" techniques, rearing captive bred youngsters in tree-top nests to make them use such a site when it comes their time to breed. A Czech project successfully fostered captive-bred peregrines onto wild goshawks to the same end.

With such great successes, European falconers are now turning their efforts to saker populations, breeding youngsters of the European genotype with a view to releasing them into the wild in Croatia and other countries of Balkan region.



## REHABILITATION FOR CONSERVATION

Falconers run many birds of prey rehabilitation centres and hospitals all over the world.

One of the most used conservation techniques is hacking, used by falconers to strengthen young birds muscles before starting training them. Falconry techniques ensure birds released can hunt for themselves and survive to breed – both in reintroduction and rehabilitation projects.

The Japan Falconiformes Centre is a falconer led specialised facility for rehabilitation and release.



there is little doubt that some flexibility would improve the situation.

A member of "Fridericus Rex Maltese Falconers" cuts the jesses on a marsh harrier prior to releasing the first bird in Malta rehabilitated by falconers using falconry techniques and recognised by the Maltese authorities.

## THE BENEFITS TO CONSERVATION OF FALCONRY AS UNESCO INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Just as it has been improved by involving falconer scientists, involving traditional falconers in conservation projects is beneficial to the whole raptor conservation movement.

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation. The 2010 success led by UAE inscribing falconry on the representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is helping falconry communities by preserving all that is best about falconry. In the submission falconers spoke of conservation and the many projects depicted here.

UNESCO inscriptions insist the elements must be passed down generations and that those who practice the element must be active in the process. What better way to involve humanity in the preservation of what is best? The conservation of the birds we fly and the quarry we hunt: Science and Culture.

In countries where a sustainable harvest of wild raptors for falconry is encouraged, falconers must learn where to find them and how to catch them. The techniques may take years



to learn and continue thousands of years of a sustainable tradition.

In Mongolia a Kazakh takes a young eagle from its eyrie, trains and hunts with it for two years. He then releases it because it is old enough to breed. This is an understanding of "environmentalism" predating all other "isms."

The UAE, leader of raptors conservation in the region, has taken a number of actions to achieve its conservation objectives:

- Captive breeding centres for falcons
- A passport system launched in the UAE to reduce the illegal trade in falcons
- The Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Project returning thousands falcons to the wild at the end of the annual hunting seasons
- The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital (ADFH) is the largest falcon hospital in the world and a leading centre for falcon medicine
- The Falcon Genome Project will help to decipher genetic relationships between wild populations and will help managing the captive populations of falcons long-term
- 5000 artificial nests for saker falcons were erected in Mongolia in 2010, in addition to 250 nests that had been part of a preceding five-year experimental study. These artificial nests provide new nesting sites for sakers in areas of central Mongolia where few natural nesting sites exist. In 2011 there were 200 breeding saker falcons in these artificial nests and over 600 chicks produced at these nests were implanted with micro-chips. This initiative has been endorsed by CITES and work in Mongolia is continuing to ensure that the trade in saker falcons is sustainable and has conservation benefits for the species.

