



International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey

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Website: www.iaf.org

IAF has normalized falconry, and played key role in making it acceptable to the international organisations

IAF signs the CMS Raptors Memorandum of Understanding

Al Ain, Abu Dhabi Emirate, 16th December 2011 the IAF signed a memorandum of understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia. The ceremony took place at the close of the Raptor Conservation sessions at the 2nd International Falconry Conference. IAF is only the second collaborating partner organisation (the other being Birdlife) to join the 38 countries that have signed the Raptor MoU.

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species acts under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 116 countries, which works for the conservation of endangered migratory animals worldwide, through the negotiation and implementation of practical action plans. In other words Raptor MoU is a UN organisation concerned with improving the conservation of endangered migratory raptors, with the overall aim being to return and maintain the populations to Favourable Conservation Status – practical conservation rather than blind preservation.

While only signatory governments may vote on issues and agreements in CMS, IAF's new status affords it the right to be consulted and to advise. Furthermore its presence is significant in that it can lobby hard and correct misleading statements made by other organisations that oppose falconry. For example in the 2007–8 Convention on Migratory Species the IAF fought very hard to get a proposed clause forbidding wildtake excluded "...unless there is no other satisfactory solution" and replaced it with "...authorized by a competent body where the action is sustainable and not detrimental to the conservation status of the species". This action preserved the rights of many nations to continue with a sustainable wildtake for falconry purposes. If IAF had not been there a significant part of world falconry would have been banned.

This signing of the MoU means that IAF takes a much more active role in the CMS and it will be much less likely that clauses detrimental to falconry and raptor conservation can slip in on the strength of incorrect information.

By communicating the contributions made to conservation by falconers to the international bodies, IAF has normalized falconry and played a key role in making it acceptable to those international organisations. Falconers have now become their internationally respected partners.

In addition to CMS, IAF is a member of IUCN and an advisory NGO to UNESCO. It also takes part in deliberations at the Conference of Biodiversity and anywhere else that falconry and falconry related issues may be discussed.

Vice President Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania : Bohumil Straka (Czech Republic)

Vice President for the Americas: Ralph Rogers (USA)

Executive Secretary : Adrian Lombard (South Africa)

Treasurer: António Carapuço (Portugal)

The I.A.F. currently has 75 associations from 55 countries worldwide totalling 40 000 members.

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IAF prevents a disaster at the Conference of Migratory Species. CMS Resolution on the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*), Bergen, Norway

In 2004 the IAF, at its AGM, formulated a Saker Resolution. Until that time the saker had been regarded as one of the most widespread and least threatened of all falcon species. IAF Delegates were made aware of worries about sudden saker decline and a number of reliable scientific sources were cited. The Council of Delegates worked on an IAF resolution and agreed to take part in positive measures towards saker conservation. Later that year IAF had representation at a dedicated Saker Conference held in Abu Dhabi that resulted in the creation of a CMS Working Group.

Since that conference saker populations have plummeted and in 2011 the CMS considered a proposal made by the European Union Member States to list the Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* in CMS Appendix I, the most endangered conservation status. Acceptance of the original text would have disallowed any use of wild birds and strictly controlled the use of captive bred birds, their sale and movement etc. It also cited falconry as a major cause of the saker's decline. Due to IAF intervention all references to falconry were omitted from the final document. The real causes for the saker's decline have yet to be determined.

In the lead up to the conference date IAF lobbied all voting countries and put facts before the delegates to convince them that it would not be sufficient to merely put negative measures in place, a blanket ban on saker use would simply put a full-stop after the saker story. It would be much more important to encourage positive conservation measures towards saker conservation by recognising the contributions made by falconry nations and other stake-holders and encouraging their continued participation.

The final resolution noted "that some Parties are not, at this point in time, fully convinced that Appendix I listing is the best means of achieving improvements in the conservation status of the Saker Falcon and believe that parties should take actions consistent with other international instruments, stressing the need for conservation actions to be supported by all".

The resolution went on to recognise that the proposal to list the Saker Falcon in Appendix I should exclude the population in Mongolia, in recognition of its saker conservation and management programme, carried out in collaboration with the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates. It further recognised that the conservation of the Saker Falcon should be a partnership involving a wide range of parties, noting in particular the contributions already made by the governments of the UAE and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The final agreement did indeed up list the Saker Falcon to Appendix I (inevitable since the saker really is critically endangered), but it excluded the population in Mongolia by virtue of the specific conservation programme for the saker it had in place. This effectively opens the door for other nations to apply for up-listing by operating similar conservation programmes. Significantly (and pushed for by IAF) the resolution even states that improvements in the conservation status in any Range State may allow sustainable taking from the wild in that Range State under a management system. In such cases a Party or Parties may request an exclusion from Appendix I listing to apply for that Range State.

It encouraged Range States, Partners and interested parties to develop a coordinated Global Action Plan, including a management and monitoring system, to conserve the Saker Falcon and CMS will provide financial and other resources to the operation of a Task Force to implement it in cooperation with the Signatories of the Raptors MoU, Range States and interested parties.

This Task Force will meet early in 2012 to identify priority actions and to begin implementation immediately. It will report to the 1st Meeting of the Signatories of the UNEP/CMS Raptors MoU, envisaged for the last quarter of 2012 and will give consideration to down-listing the Saker Falcon at that time.

IAF's representative in Bergen, Janusz Sielicki, said, "IAF has prevented a disaster at the Conference of Migratory Species. If the original wording had been adopted falconry would have been blamed for all the problems causing the decline of this genuinely endangered and iconic species. Even worse there would have been no measures put in place to ensure its survival and return to favourable conservation status".

This has been a very good result for falconry worldwide and for raptor conservation in general.

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