



International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey

NEWSLETTER

Website: www.iaf.org

The I.A.F. currently has 70 associations from 48 countries worldwide totalling 28,500 members.

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The Future of Falconry

Global celebrations launch in Strasbourg, France

Falconry's official inscription at UNESCO's 5th Intergovernmental Committee in Nairobi last November is an immense achievement encompassing the largest nomination in the history of the Convention, 11 nations. To recognise the endeavours of the falconry community **FACE** and **IAF** joined with **European Parliament's Sustainable Hunting Intergroup** at the heart of Europe, Strasbourg, 19th January 2011.

Representatives of 16 countries gathered with EU decision makers to launch global celebrations. The event began with photos in the European Parliament building and continued with a colloquium to present and discuss the impact of UNESCO's recognition of falconry as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The international line-up of speakers shared their expert views on falconry, hunting, culture and politics. Guests discussed the impact of this recognition for the future of falconry and its potential for hunting in Europe. Falconers, fellow hunters and government officials flew in from as far as the USA and Qatar to join Europeans in their reflections and celebrations. It has played a pivotal role in multiple facets of our culture and the beauty and benefits of falconry have often been unseen, underestimated and misunderstood. Falconry glows with potential for our future, an unbroken thread of culture binding man to his natural world.



FACE (Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of EU) represents and promotes the interests of over 7 million European hunters in accordance with sustainable use of wildlife. It is an international non-profit making NGO whose Members are the national hunters' associations within 36 states of the Council of Europe, including the EU27, as well as 4 Associate Members. www.face.eu. FACE head office is in Brussels and it specialises in EU legislation that affects hunting. FACE staff organised and co-ordinated the event.

The European Parliament Intergroup "Sustainable hunting, biodiversity, countryside activities & forestry" is an official body of the European Parliament and recognised as an expert group, it is a unique political platform. Its President is the MEP

Véronique Mathieu. It brings together MEPs from different political groups to discuss a common topic. The Sustainable Hunting Intergroup was created in 1985 and is one of the oldest and biggest in the Parliament. Since then, it has consistently attracted interest and impact with its debates and events. MEP Mathieu was the principal host and chair of this celebratory event.



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 Carapuco (Portugal)



Presentations

MEP Véronique Mathieu, President of the EU Sustainable Hunting Intergroup, welcomed dignitaries, delegates and guests. She introduced herself as a hunter and she had become fascinated by falconry since hunting with the accomplished falconer Jean-Claude Dufour in Champagne. To illustrate the passion falconry can evoke she read out a text on hunting magpies with a sparrow hawk which illustrated the wonder of the relationship between man, hawk and quarry. She praised falconers and hunters in general for their extraordinary rapport with nature.

MEP Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos, VP of the EU Sustainable Hunting Intergroup is very happy to associate himself with falconry, stating that hunters are the most important conservationists of all and the fantastic and perennial images that falconry offers must be preserved for future generations.

Phillipe Justeau is the President of ANFA (the French national falconry organisation). ANFA members brought a number of falcons to show to MEPs and dignitaries. Strasbourg being in France and ANFA having played a pivotal role in the French part of the submission to UNESCO, Phillipe gave the principle presentation on falconry in the French language. The full text of his speech will appear in the next IAF Journal. He thanked the intergroup and described the submission. He praised Dr. Awadh Saleh, President of the UNESCO committee of Abu Dhabi who led the global project and Mme Sylvie Grenet whose mastery of the French submission documents had made a difficult task much easier.

He defined falconry as *“The art of capturing wild quarry in its natural environment, with the aid of a specially trained bird of prey, with or without the aid of a dog”*. He stated that, with the advent of guns, falconry had transcended from being simply a hunting method to being a hunting art where man has prioritised the beauty of the spectacle as opposed to the mere catching of prey. He spoke learnedly about falconry in paintings and tapestries and in literature, the importance it has played in diplomacy and language and its part in conservation. He went on to describe the problems small game is experiencing with modern intensive farming and stated that even the recognition of UNESCO may not save falconry if we have nothing left to hunt. He asked the EU to work towards the recognition of falconry in northern Europe where it is still prohibited, from Denmark to Estonia and he pleaded with it to be attentive to protectionist laws which may be “full of good intentions” but which risk by wider application, bringing important parts of culture to an end; I am thinking of current discussions on “invasive species”. He presented a short film and concluded by citing the role played by the master falconers of modern Europe.

Sylvie Grenet, the French Ministry of Culture’s Delegate for Intangible Heritage had been involved in the French submission from the start. She listed as pivotal the need to establish falconry as a cultural activity and praised the technical mastery of the UAE. She explained that the submission had not been a *fait accompli* by any means – the Ministry is often sceptical of hunting activities, even prejudicial and these prejudices had been removed by DR. Awad and by ANFA who had demonstrated the ancient and continuing aspects of a sustainable and environmentally friendly activity. Due to the many workshops sponsored by UAE the passage of the joint submission went smoothly through all stages, unlike many other applications to UNESCO. This particular submission had been one of the best packages they had ever seen, largely due to the passion of the falconers and their desire to succeed. She noted that other forms of hunting may request inscription, but unless they are culturally important, as sustainable, as transnational or of as much ecological value as falconry, success is not guaranteed. She congratulated Dr. Awah, his colleagues, ANFA and all other falconry organisations concerned on their work.

H.E Dr. Awah Ali Saleh Al Musabi, President of the UNESCO Committee 2008-9, expressed his appreciation and conveyed the regards from Abu Dhabi of all who had been involved in the project. He stated that falconry is not only about falcons, it is about community and this is what UNESCO has now recognised. Falconry is deeply rooted in the history and culture of the UAE, so much so that even today it is not disputed there. The strong relationship UAE holds with falconry associations worldwide made the joint submission feasible. He explained the UNESCO mission to promote peace between nations and that culture was stronger than any weapon, uniting as it does the destiny of states. Falconry’s recognition is an early step to enhance cultural awareness

We cannot be falconers just for ourselves any more; it is our duty to represent ourselves to our communities through human interest and contact. He stated he was honoured to have been involved in this achievement and privileged to have made so many friends during the process and he looked forward to the other falconry communities joining the recognition – Austria, Croatia, Hungary, and to the celebrations in Qatar in February and in the UAE in December.

Angus Middleton, CEO of FACE, himself a falconer, applauded falconers and organisations that had been involved in the submission. He spoke of childhood hunting in the Zimbabwe bush, his adolescence as a passionate falconer and the global friendships falconry brought. He went on to describe the Peregrine Fund as one of the greatest conservation organisations of our time, adapting falconry techniques in their continuing conservation work. He praised the enlightened attitudes of UNESCO – peace between man and nature. He finished by saying the EU promotes culture for the same reasons and he thanked everyone concerned.

MEP Véronique Mathieu then chaired questions and gave a closing speech in which she thanked everyone who attended the colloquium.



Evening Reception

The colloquium was followed by a reception where speakers, falconers, guests and MEP’s informally continued the discussions and where falconry was presented as an art born out of ancient local traditions and recognised today as a global cultural phenomenon. Dignitaries and delegates were able to mingle with MEPs over drinks and discuss the day’s proceedings. Brief speeches thanking the organisers and congratulating all the countries of the joint submission were heard from IAF President Frank Bond, FACE President Gilbert de Turckheim and Bernard Lozé, CIC President.