



An Educational and Cultural project in Qatar



Valérie Collet is Belgian and has been a falconer for 6 years. From the summer of 2013 until summer 2014, she lived in Qatar as an expat with her family.

Because her children were studying in a French/Qatari school (Lycée Voltaire) and because the school principal knew she was a falconer, she was asked to put together a school project about falconry. Since Falconry is such a big institution in Arabic countries, it seemed very relevant to get the children from various cultures to realize that they shared common practices and history which could

be illustrated through the art of falconry. With the help of many teachers they built the project «Semaine de la Fauconnerie ». The idea was to present European Falconry and compare it with Arabic Falconry.

- A visit to the falconry souk at Souk Wakif was organized and combined with a visit to the Veterinary Clinic for a group of approximately 35 students.
- Valérie presented two conferences to children around 10 to 12 years old about European Falconry followed by an open discussion where the children could share what they knew about falconry and ask many questions.
- A representative of the Qatari Society of Algannas (the Qatari Falconry Association) presented Arab Falconry at a similar conference that was very well illustrated with stuffed game and colourful banners.



It was a real success. The children were very responsive and the teachers had done their part in getting them to prepare documentation, questions, drawings and poems. The school management was delighted to bring the students and their families together around a cultural project with such a powerful symbolic common to all cultures. Last year, the school invited Valérie again to lead a second edition of «La Semaine de la Fauconnerie» and present conferences to students at the secondary school.

The Doha Film Institute came to present a very well made film (A Falcon a Revolution) where Falconry was used as a metaphor of political leadership in troubled countries. An avian veterinarian came to explain the development of a falcon from the egg to leaving the nest. A Qatari falconer presented Al Galayel which is a guild of traditional falconers teaching falconry with camel, dogs and falcons. The last day everyone was invited to the private farm of the Ministry of Environment, where many falcons were presented and flown.

Valerie states: "I was very pleased to witness the fact that what started as my little school project had bloomed in a mature annual event for the school. It has always been my aim to share the heritage of falconry with other cultures and what a beautiful way to do it with school kids, their parents, their teachers and their mentors!"

Together with Lycée Voltaire, she is already preparing the 2016 edition and this year they are considering linking the Qatari/French/Belgian adventure with other communities through the IAF and through the « school link » program. Early contacts with the USA are promising and there are hopes to develop a fruitful collaboration between each other's educational projects.

