FALCO

The Newsletter of the Middle East Falcon Research Group
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Objectives of the MEFRG (www.mefrg.org):

Provide a forum for information exchange on matters relating to falcons and falconry in the Middle East

Promote and/or improve the understanding of:

- The cultural heritage of Arabic falconry
- The utilisation and management of quarry species
- The conservation of wild falcons used in Arabic falconry
- The management of falcons in falconry
- Advances in veterinary and aviculture care of falcons
- International issues impacting on, or arising from, Arabic falconry

The objectives of the MEFRG will be achieved by

- Holding regional workshop meetings and international conferences
- Publishing and distributing a paper and electronic Newsletter (FALCO) on issues of common interest to the MEFRG
- Coordinating and hosting a website and maintaining an online subscribers database

We welcome the submission of articles for FALCO. Please bear in mind that FALCO is not a scientific journal and we would like authors to remember that articles should be accessible to a diverse readership comprising falconers, biologists, veterinarians and policy makers. We are interested in authoritative, accurate and informative articles related to the subject areas listed below

Falconry

articles about the practice of falconry of interest and relevance to Arabic falconers

Falconry Heritage

articles about Falconry Heritage of interest and relevance to Arabic falconers

Quarry Management

articles on the conservation and management of quarry species utilised in Arabic Falconry or of interest to Arabic falconers

Raptor Conservation

articles on the conservation and management of raptors used in Arabic falconry, but also more generally of any raptors in the Middle East

Avian Health and Management

articles on veterinary and avicultural issues specifically originating from work carried out in the Middle East, but external studies that are relevant to improving the health of raptors in the Middle East will be considered

Research Biology

articles on biological research of falcons used in Arabic falconry, to cover issues such as migration, taxonomy, genetic research, etc

International Issues

articles and updates on international policy decisions and discussions relating to falconry, conservation, trade and animal health that is of relevance and interest to Arabic falconry

Public Awareness and Education

articles on initiatives that can contribute to a better understanding of Arabic falconry and the wider issues surrounding it

Technical Updates

reviews and updates on new products/equipment etc. that may be useful for biologists, falconers and vets working with raptors

Photo Section

interesting images of relevance to subjects covered by the MEFRG

Raptors in the News

summary of recent press releases relating to subjects covered by the MEFRG

What's New in the Literature

Review of recently published scientific literature relevant to the objectives of the MEFRG

We also accept and publish Book Reviews and Letters. If you are in doubt about whether or not an article fits any of the above categories please contact the editors:

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Cover picture
Saker Falcon in Mongolia by Gabor Papp (www.raptorimages.hu)

Back Cover picture
Peregrine Falcon in Yakutia, Russia by Ed Duthie

Editorial

The publication date of Falco seems to come around quicker with each successive issue and the time available to produce them seems to diminish! Nevertheless, we have at last managed to produce this Autumn issue, albeit a couple of months late.

For this issue we have been fortunate to receive a couple of articles relating to raptors in Iraq. The first article informs us of the unfortunate fate of a migrant Eastern Imperial Eagle that was ringed as a chick in Russia. Many eagles and falcons are ringed at their breeding grounds in Europe, and increasing numbers are ringed in their Asian breeding grounds. Reports of ringed birds are very useful to understand the biology, movements and threats facing birds of prey and we urge anyone finding a ringed bird to contact the appropriate ringing scheme. Information on various national ringing schemes can be found on the EURING website (www.euring.org).

It is pleasing to note that an article in Falco can stimulate further interest and in this issue we have two further contributions relating to urban-dwelling Peregrines. The first concerns observations of birds in Baghdad, indicating that Peregrines regularly occupy localities in the city and exploit the local pigeons. The second gives a perspective from the Americas, describing how the tundra peregrines of the North American Arctic can spend their winter in the starkly contrasting urban centres of South America.

The Peregrine is a species that has made a dramatic recovery from a population crash caused by the widespread use of certain agricultural pesticides. Following this turn-around in fortunes, the species now occupies much of its former range and in many areas is more abundant than before the crash. In contrast the Saker Falcon population in Central Asia is in decline, especially in Russia and Kazakhstan. The relatively small population in Europe is increasing and in the eastern part of the range, the large breeding population in Mongolia, and possibly China, appears to be stable if not increasing. This mixed pattern of population trends, together with uncertainty as to the factors responsible for regulating population sizes, is a challenge being faced by the Saker Falcon Task Force, established by the Convention of Migratory Species. In this issue, Nick Williams provides us with an update on the progress of the work of the Saker Falcon Task Force.

The conservation of falcon species that are used for falconry in the Middle East is an important aspect of maintaining falconry as part of the cultural heritage of the region. In order to understand how birds of prey are embedded in this culture, it is also necessary to identify and preserve falconry heritage.

The Falconry Heritage Trust (FHT; www.falconryheritage.org) aims to do this by compiling an on-line database of falconry artefacts and documents from all falconry nations. In this issue Jevgeni Shergalin (Archivist, FHT) shares some images of falconry from the Maghreb, specifically Algeria.

An appeal for contributions

For the first time Falco does not include any articles relating to Avian Health & Management. We encourage veterinarians to send any contributions to Dr. Tom Bailey.

We would like to see more MEFRG subscribers share their opinions, experience and knowledge through Falco. We can accommodate articles written in Arabic and English that fit within the subject areas listed opposite.

The fate of a ringed Eastern Imperial Eagle in Iraq

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Iraq is considered one of the main pathways for migratory raptors wintering in Arabia and Africa. The Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*, a globally threatened species, is a widespread passage migrant and winter visitor to Iraq. Every year thousands of migrant raptors are shot or trapped and exhibited at the local animal markets in Iraq (Al-Sheikhly, 2011).

Photo 1: Juvenile female Eastern Imperial Eagle at the local animal market in Baghdad (Photo: O. Al-Sheikhly)

On 28 December 2012 a juvenile female Eastern Imperial Eagle was presented at one of the local animal markets in Baghdad. The bird was wearing a numbered colour-ring on its left leg and an aluminum ring on its right leg (Photo 1); the green/white colour-ring was inscribed 'A-05' while the aluminum ring was inscribed 'MOSKWA AB-0378' indicting it was registered to the Russian Ringing Center. The rings had been fitted to a 36-40 day old nestling by researchers of the Russian Raptor Research and Conservation Network (RRRCN; http://rrrcn.ru/en/ringing/obraztsyi-kolets; Photo 3) on 11 July 2012, at the Bugulma-Belebey upland in the Volga-Ural region of the Republic of Tatarstan, Russian Federation (Photo 2). This region is inhabited by a large population of Eastern Imperial Eagles nesting in hills surrounding pastures. A total of 49 Eastern Imperial Eagles were ringed at 27 breeding territories at the Bugulma-Belebey upland in 2012 and this record is the first recovery of an Eastern Imperial Eagle from this region.

This particular Eastern Imperial Eagle was in very poor condition when located at Suq Al-Gazel, a market in the old city of Baghdad. When a trapped bird of prey, especially a globally threatened species, is discovered at an animal market careful examination of its physical status is undertaken and the hunter, trapper or trader who is presenting the bird is interviewed. This bird was captured after it had been shot in its left wing by a young hunter using a rifle. It was shot down when it was soaring over semi-desert area near Suwaira, Wasit province in central Iraq on 20 December 2012. Eight days later it was in the main animal market of Baghdad having been brought 65 km from Suwaira. The left humerus bone was fractured, the surrounding tissue inflamed, and the wing joint was dislocated. The bird was underweight, in shock and suffering from poor treatment and handling.

This bird attracted international attention via the internet and became matter of interest among many raptors conservationists. Many suggested that this bird should be obtained from the market in order to rehabilitate it at a suitable wildlife care centre or zoo. Consequently, further negotiation efforts with the local hunter were made in order to get the injured eagle but unfortunately the local hunter reported the death of this Eastern Imperial Eagle on 30 December 2012 and its journey ended in Iraq (Figure 1).

Each year, hundreds of birds of prey are presented at the local animal markets of Baghdad. The illegal hunting and trapping of birds of prey is a major threat facing raptors in Iraq. The absence of adequate laws and full enforcement of existing laws might cause regional declines of certain raptor species (Al-Sheikhly, 2011). The continuance of such practices combined with other man-made threats such as poisoning, habitat

Photo. 2: The Eastern Imperial Eagle chick at its nest in Tatarstan, Russian Federation (Photo: R. Bekmansurov)

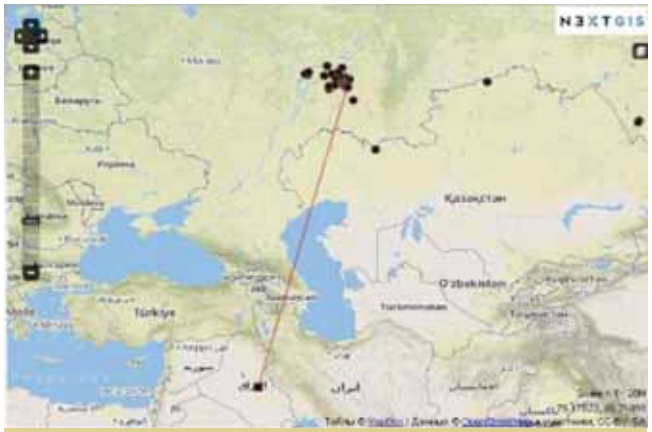

Figure 1. Map showing direction of movement of the Eastern Imperial Eagle Eagle.

destruction and disturbance could potentially reduce populations of resident and migrant raptor species in Iraq unless action is taken. It is encouraging to note that Iraq is currently discussing becoming a signatory nation to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES). This will hopefully lead to future conservation steps to protect raptor species in Iraq.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Tatyana M. Bragina and Evgeny A. Bragin at Naurzum Nature Reserve (Kazakhstan) who helped to find the origin of the ringed eagle. To Mr. Abd Al-Bari Al Sa'adon for assisting in fieldwork. To Dr. Todd Katzner at the Division of Forestry and Natural Resources in West Virginia University and Jemima Parry-Jones MBE Director International Centre for Birds of Prey for their kind efforts and advice. To Rinur H. Bekmansurov for organization of field work of the RRRCN in the Republic of Tatarstan.

Reference

Al-Sheikhly, 2011. A survey report on trapping and trade of raptors in Iraq. Wildlife Middle East News 6, 6.

Photo 3. Field team of ringers near the nest of the Eastern Imperial Eagle Aquila (Photo: R. Bekmansurov)

Peregrine Falcons wintering in Baghdad, Iraq

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The Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus is a passage migrant and winter visitor in Iraq, though the race brookei may possibly breed in the mountains of northern Iraq (Kurdistan). The Barbary Falcon F. pelegrinoides, considered by some authorities to be a subspecies of the Peregrine e.g., White et al. (2013), is believed to be a resident breeder, and is widely distributed in the deserts and arid steppes of Mesopotamia during winter. Allouse (1953, 1960) indicated that brookei together with the babylonicus race of the Barbary Falcon (referred to as the "red-naped shaheen") are widely distributed in winter, especially frequenting flooded areas and marshes where wildfowl abound. Field surveys undertaken by Nature Iraq and Iraq Ministry of Environment during 2007-12 reported the Barbary Falcon from Iraq but did not secure any recent records of the Peregrine. However, Ararat et al. (2011) confirmed the breeding of Barbary Falcon (of the race pelegrinoides) in northern Iraq and reported that Peregrines (of the race brookei) were also breeding, though they were found at only one site in northwestern Iraq. Subsequently, this Peregrine breeding record was revised by Al-Sheikhly (2012) and assigned to the pelegrinoides race of the Barbary Falcon. Barbary Falcons breeding in western Iran are believed to be of the race pelegrinoides, whilst those breeding in central and eastern Iran have been assigned to the race babylonicus (Khaelghizadeh et al. 2011).

Two observations related to city-dwelling Peregrines were made in Baghdad. The first was of an adult female seen at the University of Baghdad Tower in the Al-Jadriyah area of Baghdad (16°31'44.5"N 22°36'34"E) on 19 September 2009. This bird was noticed after she flushed a big flock of pigeons that were roosting at the University Tower. The female Peregrine grasped a pigeon in the air and fed on it whilst perched at one of the tower windows. It was watched feeding for 20 minutes after which it flew away, carrying what was left of its prey toward another perching site, probably in the Al-Dora sector of Baghdad. The second observation was of an adult male, which was seen and photographed hunting around Al-M'amon Tower, "Baghdad Tower", on 24 February 2013 (Figures 1 & 2). This male was observed soaring at high altitude before it started hunting pigeons roosting near the Al Rahman mosque in the Mansour district.

Figure 1: A satellite map of Baghdad showing the two sites of the Baghdad-dwelling Peregrine Falcon: Red circles: Al-M'amon Tower and Al Rahman mosque; Yellow circle: the University of Baghdad Tower.

The observed Peregrines both exhibited broad bodies and they were very dark in their overhead silhouette; exhibited bold barring on their underparts contrasting with a clear white chest. They had uniform barring on the underwings, blackish heads with a broad moustache contrasting with their white throat, chin and ear coverts, and were lacking any rufous-buffy smears on the nape and underparts. Both birds were identified as wintering Peregrines, either of the nominate race peregrinus or the Arctic race calidus. They differed from brookei by lacking the heavier markings, rufous napes and ear coverts, and dark rufous-buff wash on their underparts. They were distinguished from Barbary Falcons F. pelegrinoides by absence of a rufous nape, ear coverts and supercillium, buffy underparts with sparse fine markings and absence of the fine streaking on the chest.

Our 2013 observation was in the same area (Al-M'amon Tower) as a satellite tracked adult male Peregrine of the race calidus, which wintered here three years earlier (Dixon et al., 2013). This male Peregrine tagged on the Yamal Peninsula of Russia in 2009 had travelled a great circle distance of 4188 km from his breeding territory and settled Baghdad, the capital city of Iraq.

It seems that Al-M'amon and the University of Baghdad Towers attract passage and wintering Peregrines. Both sites are considered the highest points of Baghdad and are surrounded by open urban and farmland areas with wide range of hunting habitats and prey suitable for Peregrines. The Peregrine is a traditional bird of prey used in falconry in Iraq which is targeted annually by local falcon trappers all over the country. Trapping on and around the two towers is negligible and they provide a safe environment for Peregrines to spend the winter or during their annual migrations. More investigation and field monitoring is required in order to estimate the wintering/migrating population of the city-dwelling Peregrines in Baghdad

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Figure 2: Multiple views of an adult male Peregrine soaring around the Al-M'amon Tower in Baghdad on 24 February 2013 (Photo: Omar F. Al-Sheikhly)

On migrant Western Hemisphere Arctic Peregrines in urban environments

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Migrant Peregrine on an air conditioner in an urban locality of coastal Brazil. (Photo: Robson Silva e Silva)

The article by Dixon *et al*. in *Falco* for Spring 2013 on Eurasian Arctic Peregrines (*Falco peregrinus calidus*) wintering in cities stimulated the following remarks. In the Arctic of North America, the Peregrine *F.p. tundrius* is the ecological counterpart to *calidus* of Eurasian tundras, and like *calidus*, North American tundra Peregrines migrate south into other parts of the hemisphere to winter (spend the northern or boreal winter), such as the southern U.S., Mexico and Central and South America. Dixon *et al*. (2012) had the added aid of transmitters to help find locations of certain falcons that wintered far south of the tundra in urban areas of Bagdad, Iraq and New Delhi, India. My comments below relate, for comparison, to specimens, casual observations, and longer term observation studies of the falcons rather than the use of telemetry. The results are similar to those of Eurasia.

Within literature for the Western Hemisphere there are scores of records of these Arctic migrants wintering in urban regions. In fact, urban situations seem to outnumber non-urban observations in some instances but this may simply be a function of where people occur and thus have access of observations. While not relying on telemetry to locate Peregrines I will refer to several studies that highlight this same phenomenon described by Dixon *et al*. (2013) I think what I am most taken by is the "tameness" these Arctic migrants show while on their southern wintering grounds. Many people view the Arctic peregrines as creatures of the wilderness and places remote from human presence and thus they avoid humans. This mind-set is upended when watching such Peregrines hunting bats in the early evening along the busy wide colorfully tiled boulevards, packed with people, and streets, packed with noisy automobiles, as the falcon zooms just below the street light after bats as we have seen in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul (see also Sick 1961). The falcons seem completely oblivious to all the discombobulation just several meters below them.

A tundra Peregrine wintering in an urban setting in coastal Brazil. (Photo: Robson Silva e Silva)

For starters I think the observations of Helmut Sick (1960, 1993) are of particular interest. The Peregrine he observed in urban Rio de Janeiro had been trapped and banded, so in a sense it was "marked" just as were the birds reported by Dixon et al. This particular individual

banded, so in a sense it was "marked" just as were the birds reported by Dixon *et al*.(2012:2013) This particular individual had a territory centered on the University Hospital in Rio using the hospital as a roost. This individual arrived in October from the north and left Rio again in April each year to return to the northern hemisphere. The bird was seen in the same Rio location for 12 consecutive years before it disappeared. In Porto Alegre, Brazil, J.L.B. Albuquerque (1984) watched identifiable Arctic individuals for several consecutive years that returned each winter to the same roost on the same building until they disappeared. That same roost might then also be occupied by a replacement individual for a sequence of years, or remain unoccupied.

A tundra Peregrine from North America wintering in an urban setting in coastal Brazil.
(Photo: Robson Silva e Silva)

Both Silva e Silva (1996) and Pereira *et al*. (2006) mention the high degree of urban use of peregrines wintering in Brazil but also the Peregrine's high use of agricultural lands and coasts or along water courses. Likewise, Mestre (2007) indicated that other than urban wintering Nearctic Peregrines, these falcons also occurred along rivers or near the coast away from urban regions in Brazil. Such observations of habitat use mimic the findings of Risebrough *et al*. 1990 (see also White *et al*. 1989) in Colombia, Equador, Peru, southern Brazil, Uruguay and northern Argentina. Kéry (2007) commented on Arctic Peregrines that crossed vast regions of tropical forest and jungle to winter in urban situations. This would also be the case with Peregrines observed in Manaus, Brazil, situated near the confluences of the Rio Negro and Solimöes. It is these two great rivers that there, after their confluence, technically form the Amazon River over its final 1,600 km course through the vast tropical jungle to the Atlantic Ocean.

It is recognized that observations during the 1970s-1980s were made when Nearctic migrant Peregrines were at a low population density. Current observations, however, have not found a greatly different habitant use even though the numbers of peregrines have dramatically increased. There are simply more Peregrines crowded into various habitats. It is worth mentioning that in areas where the resident South American Peregrines (*F.p. cassini*) breed and also migrants occur, such as Peru, northern Chile (Christian González pers. comm.), and northwestern Argentina, the use of urban situations, rivers, pampas, agricultural lands and sea coasts by the migrants in effect produce a habitat partitioning between resident and migrant Peregrines. It is true that Nearctic Peregrines wintering in some locations, such as Lima, Peru (Oscar Beingolea *pers. comm*.), and the high Andes at such locations as Cuczo, Peru, might come in direct contact with the resident breeding *cassini*.

There is a rather cryptic and tentative statement by Pereyra (1938) that he thought Peregrines bred in urban Buenos Aires, Argentina, based on his seeing pairs there. I make the assumption that he may also have seen copulation. He does not mention migrant North American Peregrines in his article only the resident South American subspecies *F.p. cassini*. Since he saw the falcons in the Austral summer (December through at least March when the Arctic North American migrants are there) he assumed they were the *cassini* subspecies that had already bred further south and then moved north to breed again, a most unlikely scenario. What I hypothesize he saw were Arctic North American migrants spending their winter period in Buenos Aires, which is a well-documented and common phenomenon. We have even seen these Arctic migrants copulate (a very rare event) while on their wintering grounds as well as seeing them feed "food begging" migrant juveniles. This of course might suggest breeding to the unwary observer.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that in a previous article by Dixon *et al*. (1912), none of the Arctic peregrines with satellite telemetry attached were shown, on their very innovative map, to go south of about 5-6° N. Latitude. There were no transequatorial migrants recorded in the data presented.

It would be of great interest to determine where the Eurasian Arctic Peregrines originate that venture south into sub-Saharan Africa to winter on the coastal sand dunes of southwestern South Africa about 30° S. Latitude (Jenkins 1997).

A tundra Peregrine in coastal Brazil. (Photo: Robson Silva e Silva)

Photographs illustrating this article have been taken from:

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The Saker Falcon Task Force. A collaborative international initiative to save the Endangered Saker Falcon

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The Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* is a large and spectacular migratory bird of prey with a range that spans over 70 countries, primarily in the Palearctic and African regions. The species is adapted to relatively arid, open landscapes, wooded steppe and foothills. It breeds in Central and Eastern Europe and throughout Asia, and migrates south annually , including through the Gulf Region, to its wintering areas in Africa.

Due to rapid population declines which has reduced the number of breeding pairs by almost 50% in the last 25 years, the species is now classified as globally 'Endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and has been uplisted to Appendix I of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), with the exception of the population inhabiting Mongolia.

For centuries, Bedouin tribes trapped wild Saker Falcons during their autumn migration and trained them using falconry techniques to hunt mammals and birds to feed their families. The falcons were released in the following spring. The Saker Falcon is still highly prized by Arab falconers and commands a special place in the cultural traditions of many countries, particularly the Gulf States.

The Saker Falcon Task Force (STF) is a collaborative international project led by the Coordinating Unit of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Bird of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU), under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). It was established at the 10th Conference of the Parties to CMS in November 2011.

The Saker Falcon Task Force brings together government representatives and specialists from more than 20 countries to work together to find long-term solutions for the conservation and management of the species, through the development of a Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP). The SakerGAP will need to include a management and monitoring system to conserve the species, and robust mechanisms to ensure that the use of wild Saker Falcons is sustainable and is set within an adaptive management framework.

The First Meeting of the STF was held in March 2012 during which a three-year Workplan was agreed. Subsequently, four temporary Working Groups were established to consider the following key topics: international policy and legislation, knowledge gaps, sustainable use, and fieldwork. In addition, a modelling framework to integrate population dynamics and sustainable use of the Saker Falcon was elaborated by means of a short consultancy contract. In August 2013, reports of the four Working Groups and the Modelling Project were published on the CMS Raptors MoU webpage alongside the First Draft of the SakerGAP.

The Saker Falcon Task Force - Stakeholders' Workshop convened on 9 – 11 September 2013 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, gathered more than 70 representatives from Range State Governments, Partners, organisations and interested parties from more than 30 countries throughout the range of the species. The aim was to review all available information about the species and to collaborate to develop a Second draft of the SakerGAP, which covers the conservation threats, challenges Saker Falcons face and the roles and responsibilities for the next steps. The meeting concluded that an adaptive management system for the species will include positive conservation action on the breeding grounds to enhance the population, improved monitoring, and a framework for legal harvest of the species. Information gaps were identified and a research programme is being developed to address them. Electrocution by power lines and unsustainable taking of falcons from the wild for falconry purposes were recognized as key threats. The 2nd Meeting of the STF was held immediately after the Workshop to consider its outcomes and to agree a timetable to finalise the SakerGAP. This meeting also planned the preparations needed to present the SakerGAP to the 11th CMS Conference of Parties, scheduled in late 2014.

More conservation actions on the breeding grounds such as habitat conservation and restoration, protection of existing nest sites and erection of artificial platforms, monitoring using satellite tags to better understand Saker Falcon ecology during the winter, and a framework for legal harvest of the species are the necessary steps to address major threats to the species. An online information portal is proposed to raise awareness amongst trappers, falconers and falcon hospitals about the plight of the Saker Falcon. In addition, the Workshop delegates called for 1 million existing or new electricity poles to be made safe for the Saker Falcon across its migration range, which will also benefit many other species of birds.

Birds of prey, and falcons in particular, are symbols of power and freedom. The position of these predators at the top of the food chain means that they act as sentinel species to indicate the levels of prey populations, contaminants and the overall health of the environment.

Range State Governments, stakeholders and individuals all have a role to play in conserving the species. The SakerGAP will identify the actions required to promote the recovery of a flourishing wild population of Saker Falcons, including by linking conservation and management activities all along its flyway. Actions will be needed at all levels: international, national, regional and local.

If you require more information, please contact Nick P. Williams, CMS Programme Officer - Birds of Prey (Raptors) at nwilliams@cms.int.

Images of falconry in Algeria from the Falconry Heritage Trust's image collection

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Algeria is the largest country in the north of Africa and the majority of its territory is covered by the Sahara desert. Information on falconry in this country is very limited, with the majority of sources in French or Arabic, whilst falconry in the country has practically disappeared. Despite this, the Falconry Heritage Trust has a good set of images from this country. One of the oldest videos of falconry scenes from the early 20th Century shows Saharan nomads on horseback hunting a hare using falcons in the Pathé Baby film *Falconry in Algeria / Une Chasse au Faucon en Algérie* (1909), which can be found online at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eS-RwTlvDtg.

An excellent collection of paintings on Algerian falconry by French artists are represented in the book by Christian Antoine de Chamerlat: "*Falconry and Art*" Sotheby's Publications, London, 1987. There are two pages in French on falconry in Algeria (*La fauconnerie en Algerie*) in the article by Th. Vincent "*Inter-relation entre la migration et la capture des rapaces pour la fauconnerie*" published on pp.31-43 in a collection of papers entited "*La chasse au vol au fil des temps*" published by Musee International de la Chasse, Gien in 1994 as a catalogue to exhibit held in Museum of Hunting in Gien, France on 05 June -23 October 1994.

Falconry in Algeria mainly involved hunting hares with falcons and it is striking that many images of falconry from this country illustrate the hunting birds sitting on head of falconers. Also there is another unusual feature of the images in that they show the simultaneous use of two or even three birds for falconry.

Eugene Fromentin (1820-1876). A Falcon Hunt in Algeria. Oil. Orientalist painter and novelist, Fromentin stayed in Africa three times, painting pictures including several scenes on falconry. Original is in Musee d'Orsay in Paris.

Extract of picture "The Falconer" by Henri Emilien Rosseau (1875-1933).16 x 12 cm.

Two pictures of Algerian falconers by Victor Pierre Huguet (1835-1902)

Falconer in Touggourt, Algeria/ Extracts from old postcards in French.

Photos of Algerian falconers from some old postcards in French.

Mongolian School Links Programme

As part of the School Links Programme linked to the Mongolian Artificial Nest Project, Bayan School in Töv Province, Mongolia has recently been connected to the internet. Headteacher, Mrs. Rensenthand thanked School Links Programme staff for helping raise money to contribute to the cost of installing the school internet connection. Funding was obtained through generous donations by Panoramic Journeys, Roy Willis and the South Wales Reptile and Exotic Animal Group together with the proceeds of fund-raising efforts by the pupils of Glyncoed School, the partnered link school in South Wales, UK. Access to the internet will improve student learning and enable staff to plan lessons using the internet as a source of information.

Romanian-hatched Saker Falcon breeds in Crimea

Satellite-tracking has revealed natal dispersal of a Saker Falcon from Central to Eastern Europe, confirming gene flow across this fragmented population.

A female Saker Falcon was hatched at a nest site on an electricity pylon in West Romania in 2012, in the area where the borders of Romania, Serbia and Hungary meet. Conservationists from the Milvus Group (Romania), Bükk National Park Directorate (Hungary) and MME/BirdLife Hungary, with active support from Transelectrica Romania, mounted a satellite transmitter on the bird in order to track her movements and gather information for conservation purposes. This work was conducted as part of the second Saker Falcon conservation LIFE-Nature (LIFE09 NAT/H/000384) project (see: www.sakerlife.mme.hu).

Young, female satellite-tagged Saker Falcon at its nest in West Romania before fledging.
Photo: Socrate Adrianopolit.

A month after fledging the young Saker Falcon had already moved to the steppes of Eastern Europe and she spent the summer in Russia, in a mosaic of natural steppe and agricultural land between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. In the autumn of 2012, she moved about 800 km southwest to spend the winter in the Crimea. Location data indicated that she did not move far and in mid-March the locations of the bird started to focus on one specific spot. Subsequently, Yuri Milobog (Ukrainian Birds of Prey Research Centre) surveyed the area and confirmed that this 1-year old female was breeding and was incubating a clutch of three eggs in a tree nest 1200 km away from its fledging site.

This is the first direct evidence of natal dispersal of a Saker Falcon to a disjunct population, although ring recoveries and tracking have previously shown that Central European juveniles regularly visit the Eastern European steppes.
http://milvus.ro/en/un-soim-dunarean-din-romania-cuibareste-in-crimeea/5075

The shocking facts about the electrocution of birds of prey

Mongolia has one of the highest recorded rates of raptor electrocution in the world according to a recent scientific paper published by the journal *Bird Conservation International*. Having highlighted the problem, the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) has initiated a project to address the issue of raptor electrocution at electricity distribution lines in Mongolia. EAD are now funding a 1-year trial to examine to efficiency of different mitigation techniques destined to reduce the risk of electrocution for birds of prey.

Working in partnership with the Sukhbaatar branch of the Mongolian 'Eastern Energy System', engineers have fitted insulated covers, perch deflectors on crossarms and new insulation mounts for carrying the live cables on a 56 km power line connecting the villages of Munkhkhaan and Ullbayan. Two local surveyors from these villages have been trained and employed to undertake daily line surveys for electrocuted raptors. Batkhuu Sugarsaikhan (Sukhbaatar branch, Eastern Energy System) said "Eastern Energy is committed to providing safe and secure electricity supplies with minimal impact on the wild birds on Mongolia".

The project is being implemented by International Wildlife Consultants (IWC, UK) on behalf of EAD, working in partnership with the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center (WSCC) of Mongolia. The project funds the employment of biologist Batmunkh Davaasuren at WSCC, who is undertaking MSc research to estimate the number of Endangered Saker Falcons killed at the line. Over a 5-month period from April to August 2013 the surveyors found 319 Saker Falcons electrocuted on this single 56 km power line; equivalent to two Saker Falcons killed every day.

In October, WSCC research teams undertook a major survey of dangerous power lines in eastern and central Mongolia, Batbayar Galtbalt (Saker Falcon Project Leader, WSCC) said "our surveys show that raptor electrocution is widespread throughout Mongolia and causes the death of several thousand birds of prey each year". Nyambayar Batbayar (director, WSCC) said "increasing awareness of the electrocution issue is critical to stop the continued use of current designs, and all future power lines must be safe for birds of prey, whilst measures to make existing dangerous lines safe also need to be developed".

Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) integrate Geographic Information System (GIS) in school subjects

In 2010, ADEC introduced the New School Model (NSM), which is the foundation for an improved educational system in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. One of the main objectives of the NSM is to equip students with 21st Century Skills, which includes critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal and self-direction, global awareness, collaboration across networks and leading by influence in addition to other skills.
Based on the NSM and the requirements of 21st century skills, ADEC's GIS team in collaboration with the curriculum team, ADSIC and ESRI has recently launched a project to introduce GIS in the schools. GIS can provide tools to model the real world and enable spatial inquiry, develop critical and spatial thinking, and nurture the innovation and IT skills.

This academic year, GIS will be introduced to grade 6 through Geography, Math, and Science. Through the use of ArcGIS online and other technologies, students will be able to gather, analyse, share and visualize spatial data through interactive web maps. Data from the Mongolian Artificial Nest project has been used to develop a science investigation, which will provide students with knowledge of falcon habitat and food availability which will lead to a greater understanding of food chains and food webs. Al Muttahida, Al Rehab and Al Gharbiya Schools will be teaching this unit of work in the New Year and will be linking with three schools in Mongolia as part of the School Links programme. For more information please see: http://maps.adec.ac.ae

What's New in Literature

"Conference on the conservation of the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in Europe"

A series of papers presented at the "**Conference on the conservation of the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in Europe**", held in Eger, Hungary on 16-18 September 2010 has been produced in a recently published issue of *Aquila* (Vol. 119). Papers include:

Dixon. Conservation of the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and the use of hybrids for falconry. Pp. 9-19.

Beran *et al*. The breeding population of Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in the Czech republic between 1999-2010. Pp. 21-30.

Iankov *et al*. Conservation strategy for the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in Bulgaria. Pp. 31-45.

Corso & Harris. Status of the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in Italy: past present and future. Pp. 47-63.

Chavko & Deutschova. Population of Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in Western Slovakia between 1976 and 2010. Pp. 57-63.

Gamauf & Dosedel. Satellite telemetry of Saker Falcons (*Falco cherrug*) in Austria: juvenile dispersal at the westernmost distribution limit of the species. Pp. 65-78.

Issaka & Brouwer. Field observations of a Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) holding a satellite transmitter on its wintering ground in Niger. Pp. 79-90.

Ragyov *et al*. Preparatory activities for Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) reintroduction in Bulgaria: habitat management and electrocution risk assessment. Pp. 91-103.

Bagyura *et al*. results of the Saker conservation programme in Hungary, 1980-2010. Pp. 105-110.

Prommer *et al*. Migratory movements of the Central and Eastern European Saker Falcons (*Falco cherrug*) from juvenile dispersal to adulthood. Pp. 111-135.

Habitat use by Female Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) in an Agricultural Landscape

J. Lapointe , L. Imbeau , J. A. Tremblay , C. Maisonneuve and M. J. Mazerolle. 2013. The Auk 130, 381-391.

Intensive agriculture, as is typical of corn and soybean production, may be responsible for declines in the abundance and diversity of farmland birds. In Quebec, the transition to intensive crops is evidenced by marked increases of corn and soybean fields. From 2008 to 2010, we used satellite telemetry to study use of corn (*Zea mays*) and soybean (*Glycine max*) fields, other farmlands, wetlands, urban areas, and other habitats by 10 female Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) of the *anatum—tundrius* complex, a taxon of "special concern" in Canada. We monitored females during the nesting season, from hatching of eggs to independence of young, but before the young dispersed away from the nest site. Adult females were less likely to use corn and soybean fields than the "other farmlands" and "other habitats" categories during the nestling stage and the first month after young fledged. Once young fledged, other farmlands and urban areas were more likely to be used than the "other habitats" category when females were hunting in the areas that were farthest from the nest. The expansion of corn and soybean fields in the Quebec agricultural landscape has occurred to the detriment of other crops and may contribute to the decline in quality of hunting habitat of Peregrine Falcons and other avian top predators.

The Use of Power Lines by Breeding Raptors and Corvids in Mongolia: Nest-Site Characteristics and Management Using Artificial Nests

A. Dixon, G. Purev-Ochir, B. Galtbalt and N. Batbayar. 2013. Journal of Raptor Research 47, 282-291.

The use of power line support structures as nesting sites enables some raptors and corvids to increase their breeding range and/or density in landscapes where alternative nest sites are limited. We report on the use of power poles for nesting by two nest-building species, Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) and Upland Buzzard (*Buteo hemilasius*), and two falcon species, Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) in the nest-site-limited steppes of central Mongolia. Various power pole designs differed in their attractiveness to nest-building species, with structures that provided stable support and shelter being significantly favored. Trials of artificial nest barrels to (i) provide alternative nest sites on favored nesting support structures and (ii) provide additional nest sites on unfavored support structures, failed to induce nest-building species to shift their nest location in the first instance or to increase overall breeding density of large raptors and corvids in the second case. However, both trials resulted in large increases in the number of nesting Eurasian Kestrels.

Saker Falcon using a nest barrel placed on a concrete power pole in Central Mongolia. Photo: Andrew Dixon.

عن صقور الشاهين المهاجرة من نصف الكرة الغربي في البيئات الحضرية

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تعتبر صقور الشاهين من سلالة التندرا *F.p. tundrius* المقيمة في تندرا المناطق القطبية لشمال أمريكا نظيرة صقور الشاهين كاليدس في التندرا الأوراسية، وتهاجر جنوبا أسوة بنظيراتها الأوراسية إلى أجزاء أخرى من نصف الكرة الأرضية للتشتية (لقضاء فصل الشتاء الشمالي) مثل جنوب الولايات المتحدة والمكسيك وأمريكا الوسطى والشمالية. تضم وثائق نصف الكرة الأرضية الغربي عشرات من سجلات تشتية هذه الطيور القطبية المهاجرة في المناطق الحضرية. يرى الكثيرون أن الشواهين القطبية هي مخلوقات البرية والمناطق النائية عن التواجد البشري، إلا أن تلك الأفكار تنقلب رأسا على عقب عند مشاهدة تلك الصقور وهي تصطاد الخفافيش في أوائل المساء على طرق تزدحم بالناس وأصوات السيارات. لاحظ Helmut Sick (1960, 1993) أن أحد أفرادها قد اتخذ منطقة تتركز على مستشفى الجامعة في مدينة ريو وشوهد في نفس الموقع لـ 12 سنة متوالية. يمكن لمكان الجثوم هذا أن يحتله فرد آخر لسلسة من الأعوام أو أن يبقى خاليا. في أماكن تكاثر صقر شاهين أمريكا الجنوبية المقيم *F.p. cassini* وتواجد الصقور المهاجرة أيضا في أماكن مثل البيرو وشمال المكسيك وشمال غرب الأرجنتين فإن استخدام المناطق الحضرية من أنهار وسهوب ومناطق زراعية ومناطق ساحلية ينتج في الواقع تقسيما للموائل بين صقور الشاهين المقيمة والمهاجرة. تتكاثر الشواهين القطبية المهاجرة (في حالات نادرة) في مواقع التشتية وتغذي أفراخها "بتسول الغذاء"، مما قد ينبه المراقب الغافل بالطبع إلى تكاثرها.

مجموعة عمل الصقر الحر. مبادرة تعاونية دولية لإنقاذ الصقر الحر (الغزال) المهدد

نِك وليامز
مذكرة التفاهم لحماية الطيور الجارحة المهاجرة في نطاق إفريقيا وأوراسيا
مكتب اتفاقية المحافظة على الأنواع المهاجرة – أبو ظبي

مجموعة عمل الصقر الحر هي مبادرة تعاونية دولية تقودها وحدة تنسيق مذكرة التفاهم لحماية الطيور الجارحة المهاجرة في نطاق إفريقيا وأوراسيا Raptors Mo، تحت رعاية اتفاقية الحفاظ على الأنواع المهاجرة CMS. تجمع المجموعة ممثلي وخبراء الحكومات من أكثر من 20 دولة للعمل معا للعثور على حلول طويلة الأمد لحماية وإدارة النوع من خلال تطوير خطة عمل عالمية شاملة لاسترجاع الصقر الحر المهدد *Falco cherrug*. اجتمعت الأطراف المعنية في ورشة مجموعة الصقر الحر التي عقدت بين 9-11 سبتمبر في أبو ظبي، حضرها أكثر من 70 ممثلا لحكومات الدول التي ينتشر الصقر فيها، إضافة للشركاء والمنظمات والجماعات المهتمة من أكثر من 30 دولة عبر مجال تواجد الصقر الحر، وطالعوا كافة المعلومات المتوفرة عن النوع، وتعاونوا في تطوير مسودة ثانية لخطة العمل العالمية للصقر الحر، تغطي التهديدات والتحديات التي تواجه صون الصقر الحر، والنشاطات والأدوار والمسئوليات للخطوات القادمة.

صور عن الصقارة في الجزائر من أرشيف صندوق تراث الصقارة

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الجزائر هي أكبر دول شمال أفريقيا وتغطي الصحاري معظم مساحتها. المعلومات عن الصقارة في هذه الدولة جد محدودة، ومعظمها باللغتين العربية أو الفرنسية، فيما اختفت هذه الرياضة عمليا. تضمنت الصقارة في الجزائر في الأغلب صيد الأرانب البرية بالصقور، ويلفت النظر أن الكثير من صور الصقارة من هذه الدولة تظهر الصقور جاثمة على رؤوس الصقارين. من الغريب أيضا أن الصور تظهر استخدام صقرين بل وثلاثة في وقت واحد عند الصيد بالصقور.

مصير نسر امبراطوري شرقي مهاجر كان قد سبق تطويقه بحلقة

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في 28 ديسمبر 2012 وردت أنثى نسر امبراطوري شرقي صغيرة السن إلى إحدى أسواق الحيوانات المحلية في بغداد. كانت الأنثى تحمل طوقا ملونا مرقّما على ساقها اليسرى وطوقا من الألومنيوم على ساقها اليمنى؛ كان الطوق الملون يحمل النقش A-05 بينما كان طوق الألومنيوم يحمل النقش MOSKWA AB-0378 مما يدل على أنها مسجلة لدى مركز التطويق الروسي. كان الطوق قد ثبّت عليها كفرخ بعمر 36-40 يوما من قبل باحثو الشبكة الروسية لصون وأبحاث الطيور الجارحة في 11 يوليو 2012 في منطقة فولجا-أورال في جمهورية تتارستان في الاتحاد الفدرالي الروسي. يقطن في تلك المنطقة أعداد كبيرة من النسور الإمبراطورية الشرقية التي تعشش في التلال المحيطة بأراضي المراعي ويعتبر هذا التسجيل أول استرجاع لنسر امبراطوري شرقي من المنطقة. كان الطير قد أمسك به بعد إصابته بطلق في الجناح الأيسر صدر من بندقية صياد شاب. أصيبت الأنثى في 20 ديسمبر 2012 أثناء تحليقها فوق منطقة شبه صحراوية شمال غرب مدينة الكوت في محافظة واسط في وسط العراق. كانت تعاني من كسر في العضد الأيسر والتهاب في الأنسجة المحيطة وخلع في مفصل الجناح، كما كانت هزيلة وتعاني من الصدمة ومن سوء المعاملة، ثم نفقت في 30 ديسمبر 2012. تُجلب مئات من الطيور الجارحة إلى أسواق الحيوانات المحلية في بغداد في كل عام، ويعتبر الصيد والإمساك بالفخاخ غير القانونيين أحد أعظم المخاطر التي تهدد الطيور الجارحة في العراق.

صقور شاهين تقضي فصل الشتاء في بغداد

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جرت مشاهدتين لصقري شاهين يقيمان في مناطق حضرية في بغداد. أولهما أنثى بالغة شوهدت في برج جامعة بغداد في منطقة الجادرية ببغداد في 19 سبتمبر 2009. لوحظت الأنثى بعد أن أجفلت سربا كبيرا من الحمام كانت تجثم في البرج. أمسكت الأنثى بحمامة أثناء طيرانها في الهواء وأكلتها وهي تجثم على أحد نوافذ البرج. ثاني مشاهدة كانت لذكر بالغ شوهد وصوّر وهو يصيد حول برج المأمون "برج بغداد" في 24 فبراير 2013. شوهد هذا الطير وهو يحلق على ارتفاع عالي قبل أن يبدأ في صيد الحمام الجاثم قرب مسجد الرحمن في ضاحية المنصور. حُدد الطيرين كصقري شاهين يقضيان فصل الشتاء إما من السلالة البربرية *peregrinus* أو سلالة كاليدس القطبية *calidus*. جاءت مشاهدتي للطير في عام 2013 في نفس المنطقة (برج المأمون) كذكر مُتابع بالأقمار الاصطناعية من سلالة كاليدس كان قد قضى شتائه هنا قبل ثلاث سنوات. يبدو أن برج الجامعة وبرج المأمون يجتذبان الشواهين العابرة أو التي تقضي فصل الشتاء، إذ أن الموقعين يعتبران أعلى نقطتين في بغداد وتحيطهما مساحات حضرية وزراعية مفتوحة بمجال واسع من موائل الصيد والفرائس الملائمة لطيور الشاهين.

كلمة العدد

يبدو أن تاريخ نشر ***فالكو*** يقترب بسرعة أكبر مع كل عدد، مع تلاشي للوقت الذي نحتاجه للإعداد. وها نحن، على كل حال، قد استطعنا إنجاز عدد الخريف وإن كان ذلك بعد الموعد بشهرين.

أسعدنا الحظ بالحصول على مقالين لهذا العدد يتعلقان بالطيور الجارحة في العراق. يعلمنا أولهما عن المصير المؤسف لنسر امبراطوري شرقي مهاجر كان قد طوّق بحلقة في رجله حين كان فرخا في روسيا. يطوّق العديد من النسور والصقور في مناطق تكاثرها في أوروبا، كما طوقت أعداد متزايدة في مناطق التكاثر الآسيوية في السنوات الأخيرة. التقارير عن الطيور المطوقة جد مفيدة لفهم بيولوجيا وتحركات الطيور الجارحة والتهديدات التي تواجهها، ونحث كل من يعثر على طير مطوّق الاتصال بجهة التطويق المناسبة. يمكن العثور على مختلف الجهات الوطنية للتطويق في موقع EURING بالإنترنت www.euring.org.

نُسرّ حين نعلم أن أحد مقالات ***فالكو*** قد أثار مزيدا من الاهتمام، وتجدون في هذا العدد مساهمتين تتعلقان بصقور الشاهين المقيمة في المدن. تتعلق أولاهما بمشاهدات تلك الطيور في بغداد وتدل على أنها تستوطن أماكن في المدينة وتستغل الحمام فيها. أما الثانية فتقدم منظورا من الأميركتين بصف كيف تقضي صقور شاهين التندرا من المناطق القطبية في شمال أمريكا شهور الشتاء في مراكز حضرية في أمريكا الجنوبية تتناقض بشكل صارخ مع موائلها الأصلية.

صقور الشاهين هي نوع استعادت أعداده عافيتها بصورة دراماتيكية بعد انخفاض حاد سببه الاستخدام الواسع للمبيدات الحشرية الزراعية. عاد النوع الآن ليحتل، بعد تلك الانتكاسة لأوضاعه، مساحة كبيرة من نطاقات تواجده السابقة، بل وبأعداد في بعضها تفوق ما كانت عليه قبل الانخفاض. في المقابل فإن أعداد الصقر الحر (الغزال) في أواسط آسيا هي في تناقص وبخاصة في روسيا وكازاخستان. أما الأعداد الصغيرة في أوربا فهي في ازدياد، في حين تبدو الأعداد في الجزء الشرقي لنطاق تواجده - في منغوليا، وربما في الصين أيضا – في وضع الاستقرار إن لم يكن التزايد. إن هذه الأنماط المختلطة لاتجاهات الأعداد، إلى جانب عدم اليقين من العوامل التي تؤثر في أحجام الأعداد، يمثل التحدي الذي تواجهه مجموعة عمل الصقر الحر التي أنشأت وفق اتفاقية الحفاظ على الأنواع المهاجرة CMS. يقدم لنا نِك وليامز في هذا العدد تحديثا عن التقدم الذي أحرز في أعمال مجموعة عمل صقر الغزال.

يمثل الحفاظ على أنواع الصقور المستخدمة في الصيد في الشرق الأوسط جانبا هاما من جوانب المحافظة على الصقارة كجزء من التراث الثقافي للمنطقة. ولكي نفهم مكانة الطيور الجارحة في هذا التراث، فإن من الضروري أن نحدد ونحافظ على تراث الصقارة. يهدف صندوق تراث الصقارة (www.falconryheritage.org) فعل ذلك عن طريق تجميع قاعدة بيانات على الإنترنت عن الأعمال الفنية والوثائق من كافة دول الصقارة. يقدم لنا جيفجيني شيرجالين (العامل في أرشيف الصندوق) بعض الصور عن الصقارة في المغرب العربي، والجزائر بوجه خاص.

دعوة لتلقي المساهمات

هذه أول مرة يخلو فيها عدد ***فالكو*** من أي مقالة تتعلق بصحة وإدارة الطيور، ونشجع وندعو أطباء البيطرة لإرسال مساهماتهم إلى د. توم بيلي.

نود أن نرى المزيد من المشتركين في مجموعة الشرق الأوسط لأبحاث الصقور MEFRG يشاطروننا آرائهم وخبراتهم ومعارفهم من خلال ***فالكو***، ونرحب بالمقالات المكتوبة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية التي تتعلق بالمواضيع المدرجة في الصفحة المقابلة.

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