

# The Peninsula



Qatar

## Pesticides pose threat to life of falcons: Expert

Published: 06 Jan 2018 - 12:44 am | Last Updated: 01 Nov 2021 - 12:50 pm



Dr. Zubair Medammal with a hunting falcon at Marmi Festival 2018 at Sabkhat Marmi in Sealine. Pic: Saif / QNA

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**By Raynald C Rivera / The Peninsula**

DOHA: A visiting zoologist and falcon researcher has lauded Qatar for its efforts in preserving falcons and falconry as an essential element of its heritage.

"Qatari people are giving more importance to falcons because they are an important element of their heritage. Nowadays, Arabs are breeding falcons as well as houbaras, a migratory bird which is a favourable prey of falcons whose population is also now becoming low. Arabs especially Qatari people breed them artificially and release them to the wild to increase their population," Dr. Zubair Medammal

told The Peninsula.

The first Asian scientist to win a doctoral degree in falcon studies, Dr. Medammal, who hails from the southern Indian state of Kerala and teaches at Calicut University has done 25 years study on falcons in the Middle East.

He recently visited the ninth Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2018) as part of his research.

"I've been doing research on falcons for more than two decades in the UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. I come yearly to participate in falcon festivals all over the Middle East and I went to Marmi to get information about the competition and the hunting capacity of the different species of falcons," he said, while lauding the festival.

"The festival is important in educating people, especially nationals and residents from Arab countries, on the significance of falcons and falconry which can be found in The Holy Quran and Arabic literature. They are important historically and in the current situation and must be preserved," he stressed.

Falcons may soon become endangered as a result of food shortage, accidents and effect of pesticides, he said.

"Falcons are now becoming endangered because of pesticides, illegal logging and mismanagement and the deficiency of knowledge on how to handle these royal birds," he said.

About 35 percent of falcons die after eating prey that has been exposed to pesticides, Dr. Medammal claimed.

He said that the birds of prey were used originally by Bedouins to hunt game, providing an important addition to their diets. In Qatar today, the tradition of falconry remains a major sporting activity during the hunting season from October to March.

Dr. Medammal has done a documentary and a book on falcons in English and Arabic which are yet to be released.

Completely shot in the Middle East including Qatar, the 25-minute long documentary can be a useful material that can be shown for students in schools, colleges and universities in Qatar, he said.

The book, which was more than two decades in the making, has been translated to Arabic in Qatar. He is currently looking for a publisher for the book which is intended for degree students.



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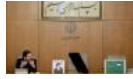


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