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**Artificial nests for Saker Falcons: their role in management and conservation**

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**Abstract:** In 2009/10, the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) erected 5,000 artificial nests under a MOU with the Ministry of Nature, Environment, and Tourism (MNET) in a CITES-endorsed initiative aimed at integrating the productivity of a managed and monitored Saker Falcon population into sustainable harvest quotas. However, the quota system ended in 2012 with the switch from a 'commercial' to a 'diplomatic' harvest, and after 5-years monitoring, EAD funding ended in 2016. During monitoring ca. 600 pairs of Sakers produced ca. 1,735 fledglings annually. Warm, dry conditions during breeding led to earlier egg-laying and increased fledging success, while rodent densities were positively correlated with nest survival, clutch size, and breeding density. In 2023, a survey by the Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund (MBZRCF), found 1,728 artificial nests still standing, with 926 occupied by Sakers. Overall, around 25,000 Sakers have fledged from these artificial nests since the program's inception. In 2024, we established a research project to examine the potential role of raptors in rodent pest control, whereby artificial nests can contribute to ecosystem preservation and climate action.

**Keywords:** Artificial nests, Raptors, Rodents, Ecosystem preservation, Sustainable management

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## Conservation of Birds of Prey in Japan

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Total 22 raptor species are observed in Japan as common resident or migrant (Table 1). All of them are protected by the Wildlife Protection, Control, and Hunting Management Act. 14 species are included in the Red List 2020 by Ministry of the Environment Government of Japan. 8 species are specific endangered species as subject to the Act on Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Keeping of native birds of prey for private purpose is prohibited by these regulations for wildlife. Therefore, imported birds or their offspring are used for current falconry in Japan.

Various actions are being put into practice to improve the situation of endangered species such as conservation of habitat and individuals. The Japan Falconiformes Center (JFC) is engaging in the research and conservation of wild birds of prey in Japan since 1982. The knowledge of research is helpful for consideration of conservation program in the area that habitat of endangered species is included in the land development project. Falconry technique is applied to the management of injured wild birds as conservation of individuals. Rehabilitation of recovered birds to confirm the flying and hunting abilities is important to prevent starvation by failure of hunting after the release.

Total 145 injured birds including endangered species were carried into JFC during 2013 - 2022. 35% of rescued birds were killed within 30 days by severe damage such as fracture of wing with necrosis or starvation. However, 43% of rescued birds were released back into the wild after recovery. If released birds make the breeding pair in the future, the rescue work will be contribution to the next generation. Dead birds and captive birds by aftereffects are made use of the education or research.

No.	English Name	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus haliaetus</i>	Resident, NT
2	Oriental Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus orientalis</i>	Summer Visitor, NT
3	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans lineatus</i>	Resident
4	White-tailed Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla albicilla</i>	Winter Visitor, VU*
5	Steller's Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus pelagicus pelagicus</i>	Winter Visitor, VU*
6	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis fuyiyamae</i>	Resident, NT
7	Chinese Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter soloensis soloensis</i>	Passage Visitor
8.1	Japanese Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter gularis gularis</i>	Resident
8.2	Japanese Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter gularis iwasakii</i>	Resident in Yaeyama islands, EN
9	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus nisosimilis</i>	Resident, NT
10	Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus menzbieri</i>	Winter Visitor
11.1	Eastern Buzzard	<i>Buteo japonicus japonicus</i>	Resident
11.2	Bonin Buzzard	<i>Buteo japonicus toyoshimai</i>	Resident in Bonin Islands, EN*
12	Grey-faced Buzzard	<i>Butastur indicus</i>	Summer Visitor, VU
13	Mountain Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus nipalensis orientalis</i>	Resident, EN*
14	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos japonica</i>	Resident, EN*
15	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela perplexus</i>	Resident in Yaeyama Islands, CR*
16	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus cyaneus</i>	Winter Visitor
17	Eastern Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus spilonotus spilonotus</i>	Resident or Winter Visitor, EN*
18	Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus intermedius</i>	Winter Visitor*
19	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus japonensis</i>	Resident or Winter Visitor, VU*
20	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo subbuteo</i>	Summer Visitor
21	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius insignis</i>	Winter Visitor
22	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus interstinctus</i>	Resident

### Abbreviation in Notes

CR : Critically Endangered Species, EN : Endangered Species, VU : Vulnerable Species, NT : Near Threatened.

Classification is based on Red List 2020 by Ministry of the Environment Government of Japan.

\* : Subject Species to the Act on Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

Table 1 Accipitriformes and Falconi formes in Japan

## THE FALCONRY HERITAGE TRUST: TASKS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Jevgeni Shergalin (Archivist)

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The Falconry Heritage Trust is a charitable organization, registered in the UK in 2005.

Its work become possible due to generous contribution of HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who donated 1 000 000 USD in 2007 in endowment fund for setting up this charity. The main idea was to create virtual museum of various artefacts in cyberspace on history and heritage of falconry (hawking) in all countries across the globe where falconry was practised in the past or is spreading at the present time.

The heart and core of the FHT – the searchable database of images of 9200 artefacts by the moment: books, articles, paintings, photos, drawings, falconry equipment, postcards, post-stamps, banknotes, coins, sculptures, figurines, badges, other memorabilia, video- and audio-recordings from more than 80 countries of the world. The database is free, does not need registration and is open for everyone. Database is searchable by type of artefact, region, country, century and type of bird of prey.

Board of Directors of FHT consists of the following Directors: Dr Nick Fox Chairman, OBE, UK; Mark Upton, UK; Paul Beecroft, UK; Patrizia Cimberio, Italy; Dick ten Bosch, Netherlands; Kris Ulens, Belgium; Huisheng Chen, Taiwan/USA; Scott McNeff, USA; David Horobin, UK; Karl-Heinz Gersmann, FRG; Adolfo Ruiz, Spain.

Programme of the FHT grants was started in 2010. The list of countries received FHT grants so far: Turkey, Nepal, Croatia, Netherlands, UK, Germany, Ukraine, Japan, Pakistan, Italy, Belgium, Romania, Hungary, France, USA, Russia. Size of grants was £250-5000 with average size of £2000 with maximum up to £5000. As exclusion the bigger amounts are possible. FHT does

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not support commercial projects, but is happy to support any educational materials and programs on the birds of prey used in falconry. The FHT works with all clubs in all countries, but in the first turn is happy to support projects in developing countries who especially need financial help.

During last 10 years (2014-2024) the FHT has recorded video-interviews with more than 30 well-known and old respected falconers from 20 countries in 70 parts. Some of them are already passed away, but their faces, voice and charisma are saved for the future. All countries are invited to participate in this task with own renowned falconers.

A new project launched by the FHT during autumn 2023 – scanning and uploading falconry journals/magazines/newsletters across the world. In total 240 numbers of falconry periodicals are scanned and uploaded. For example, Newsletter of the Middle-East Falcon Research Group (UK) “FALCO” - all 47 numbers are uploaded with a lot of information on Mongolia.

In November 2023 the first book in the series of publications of the Falconry Heritage Trust was printed – on the long-lasting President of IAF during 1984-1998 Christian de Coune (1941-2011) by number of 100 copies – for coauthors and the main libraries of the world.

Any additional information, any scans, photos, videos on falconry history heritage (in the past and at present) will be only appreciated. Success of organization is completely based on activity and initiative of all falconers in the world. If you have something interesting to share – please don't hesitate to do that. You are always welcome with any ideas and thoughts.

## The Revival of Falconry in China: Tradition, Innovation, and Symbiotic Relationships

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Background: After a three-year hiatus due to the global pandemic, falconry in China has experienced a remarkable revival. This resurgence has led to the development of a dynamic and interconnected network encompassing traditional practices, cultural heritage, sustainability, conservation, education, legal issues, and social aspects. Methods: This presentation examines the current state of falconry in China by exploring key regions where it thrives, such as Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia etc. It highlights efforts in cultural heritage preservation, like the Falconry Culture Festival in Xinjiang, and modern applications including bird abatement at airports. The role of falconers in raptor conservation and education is also reviewed, focusing on rescue stations, GPS tracking of released birds, and community engagement.

Results: The analysis reveals a complex web of symbiotic relationships between falconry and various societal elements. These include the integration of falconry into conservation efforts, legal frameworks, and its impact on socio-economic development. The revival of falconry has led to increased public and governmental recognition, the legal importation and breeding of raptors, and enhanced educational outreach. Conclusions: The findings highlight the unique symbiotic relationships that link falconry with environmental conservation, legal regulation, and socio-economic benefits. Falconry in China not only preserves

cultural heritage but also contributes to ecological balance and community engagement. Future efforts should aim to balance traditional practices with modern needs, advancing sustainable approaches to ensure the continued success and

## FALCONRY IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

TULA STAPERT<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adriaan Mollen

Tula Stapert shares her insights and experience on the IAF education plan. For the past 15 years, she embraced education as a way to share her falconry passion with the public. Teaching children became an integral part of her journey, where she utilized the educational framework of the IAF. This not only provided education to children but also opened a window to a more international perspective, introducing them to a fascinating world.

Conservation has been her primary focus as an estate manager. With this knowledge, she has been able to raise greater awareness about falconry. Tula firmly believes that humans are part of the ecosystem, not external governors of it.

## **COUNTRY-SCALE RETROFITTING OF INSULATION TO REDUCE AVIAN ELECTROCUTION AT POWER LINES**

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Medium-voltage (6-15kV) powerlines are used to deliver electricity to communities and industries across Mongolia. These lines, which previously used wooden poles, have been upgraded to steel-reinforced concrete poles with steel cross arms. This design poses a serious electrocution risk for medium to large birds, including the endangered Saker Falcon. Raptors are electrocuted when they perch on a pole top or steel crossarm and simultaneously touch live cables.

Approximately 18,000 raptors, including 4,000 Saker Falcons, were electrocuted annually, with the highest rates occurring in prey-rich steppe areas. To address this, we implemented a country-scale mitigation project between 2019-2022 and retrofitted 27,600 line poles in the steppe zone with insulation covers. These covers were designed to be effective, durable, failsafe, easy to install, and low cost (less than \$50 per pole). The project covered 69 power lines in 15 provinces with a linear distance of 3450 km. Surveys conducted in 2023 recorded a 95% reduction in raptor electrocution rates.

However, 30% of distribution lines have not been retrofitted with insulation, and anchor poles require additional solutions. To progress this, we are creating a GIS database that maps dangerous lines and tracks the progress of mitigation, to enable engineers to prioritise future mitigation. In addition, we are focusing on enforcing bird-safe standards for new powerlines and facilitating the adoption of bird-safe practices. This project shows that large-scale retrofitting can greatly reduce bird electrocution at a low cost and could serve as a model for similar efforts internationally.