



Memorandum of Understanding
on the Conservation of
Migratory Birds of Prey in
Africa and Eurasia

11 January 2021

Saker Falcon Task Force Teleconference

14 December 2020 14:00-15:30 (UAE) / 10:00-11:30 (GMT) / 11:00-12:30 (CET)

Summary Note

Participants:

| Range States | Name |
|--|---|
| China | Dr. Xiangjiang Zhan |
| Iran (Islamic Rep. of) | Mr. Mohammad Asghari Tabari |
| Mongolia | Dr. Nyambayar Batbayar |
| Saudi Arabia | Mr. Abdullah Alhakami Mr. Abdullah Alsuhaibany Mr. Albara Alothman Mr. Jaber Haressi |
| Slovakia | Dr. Peter Puchala |
| Ukraine | Dr. Maxim Gavrilyuk |
| Partner Organisations and Independent Experts | |
| BirdLife International | Dr. Vicky Jones |
| CITES | Ms. Karen Gaynor |
| CMS | Mr. Marco Barbieri |
| European Commission | Mr. Joseph van der Stegen |
| Independent expert | Prof. Mohammed Shobrak |
| Independent researcher | Dr. Andrew Dixon |
| International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) | Mr. Janusz Sielicki |
| IUCN-Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) | Prof. Robert Kenward Dr. Adrian Lombard |
| Raptor Protection of Slovakia (observer) | Ing. Zuzana Guziova |
| Coordinating Unit (CU) | |
| STF Chair | Prof. Colin Galbraith |
| Advisor to the Coordinating Unit | Mr. Andras Kovacs |
| Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU | Mr. Lyle Glowka / Ms. Sofi Hinchliffe |

Apologies: Dr. Suresh Kumar, India; Dr. Robert Sheldon, Advisor to the Coordinating Unit

Also Invited: Armenia, Bahrain, Hungary, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Tajikistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, CMS Scientific Council, European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE), League of Arab States, UNEP Regional Office for West Asia and Siberian Environmental Center (Russia).



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1. Welcome

The Chair, Prof. Colin Galbraith welcomed the Saker Falcon Task Force (STF) members to the teleconference and thanked participants for joining the meeting. The Chair particularly welcomed the new representatives from the National Center for Wildlife, Saudi Arabia.

Abdullah Alsuhaibany gave an update on the newly formed National Center for Wildlife in Saudi Arabia.

2. Update on activities from Task Force members

Xiangjiang Zhan gave a short update on his recent work in China. He is Director of the Institute of Zoology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and currently has a team of 20 people in Beijing doing falcon research, focusing on genomics and ecological approaches. The team are undertaking work on population genetics in the Qinghai Tibet Plateau and Mongolia and are also studying migration behaviour using satellite tracking and genetics. The Chinese government recently increased the protected status of the Saker Falcon.

Andrew Dixon gave a presentation on the artificial nest project in Mongolia, supported by the Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund (MBZRCF). The rationale for this programme was the use of artificial nests to underpin a sustainable harvest system in Mongolia. From 2006-2010, experimental studies were done to determine the optimum nest design and found that Sakers preferred enclosed nest boxes. It was calculated that around 5,000 artificial nests were needed to create a breeding population that could sustain a harvest. The artificial nests were erected between 2009-2010 across 20 different districts, with community involvement from stakeholders such as rangers and schools. There was an average of around 600 breeding pairs of Sakers by 2015 which produced ~2,000 chicks each year, which is sufficient to underpin a sustainable harvest system. There was a change in the Mongolian government in 2013 and commercial trade was banned, however it continued as unregulated diplomatic trade. Conservation benefits of the artificial nests include as a buffer against high mortality rates from threats such as electrocution; as a resource for promoting environmental awareness, capacity and education; potential to monitor heavy metal pollution; and for the biological control of pest species. The project ultimately ended in 2016 and no further field work has been done.

The Chair thanked the participants for these presentations and asked any other Task Force members who would like to update at a subsequent meeting to contact the CU.

3. Feedback from discussion groups

a. Mitigating electrocution

Andras Kovacs gave feedback from the Electrocution Discussion Group on Robert Sheldon's behalf. He thanked the group for their participation and outlined that the group had agreed upon four slightly revised actions from the TOR to make them more explicit and cross cutting.

The four revised actions:

1. Stakeholder engagement and communications: raise awareness of and engage with key stakeholders, including CMS Energy Task Force, in preventing construction of dangerous lines and retrofitting of existing dangerous lines.

2. Request information from all STF members on ongoing and recent (from 2018 on) activities relating to electrocution, effective mitigation techniques and key publications.
3. Review the main principles of best practices and technologies across different geographies and species.
4. Collate information and identify gaps in knowledge and implementation.

Important work principles were also mentioned. The group will focus on the Saker Falcon as the primary species however, these activities will be relevant and beneficial for other species too. The group will work towards remediation wherever possible, if not then mitigation of the issue. Different approaches would be applied in the case of existing or new powerlines. Prior to these actions, the group would undertake a prioritisation of range states, geographical areas, pole types, remediation techniques and stakeholders. Engagement of stakeholders is key to success of all these actions.

Janusz Sielicki mentioned the [Bird Electrocution website](#) developed by the IAF where any additional documents and resources relating to electrocution can be shared. He attended the CMS Energy Task Force (ETF) meeting in early December which is currently reviewing the IAF Quick Guide on electrocution, with the view to making it an official ETF document. The aim is that the guidelines will be adopted by the International Finance Corporation.

Nyambayar Batbayar mentioned that with support from MBZRCF, there is an ongoing project to retrofit dangerous 15kV powerlines in Mongolia. There is also collaboration with the Ministry of Energy to develop a national standard for retrofitting 15kV lines. A country wide survey on bird collisions was undertaken in 2019 and found that 7% of the birds affected were raptors. As part of the project, a mobile app is being developed for powerline engineers to help collect and monitor data on the mitigation technique.

Andrew Dixon added that post mitigation survey work will be conducted by MBZRCF to determine the effectiveness of the equipment deployed. Power companies will be conducting annual maintenance surveys. The main issue in Mongolia that influences the incidence of electrocution of Sakers is the abundance of rodents, however this fluctuates over time and geographical area making it harder to address.

The Chair noted that the STF thanked the Electrocution Discussion Group for their work and asked them to produce a practical programme of work, focusing on how to deliver the priority actions going forward.

b. Developing an Adaptive Management Framework for sustainable use

The Chair clarified that the draft TORs for the AMF Discussion Group would apply to a global context, not just the Mongolian population.

Joseph van der Stegen (European Commission) indicated that a harvest would not comply with the EU Birds Directive. The Commission has also expressed serious doubts regarding the compliance of the on-going process with the legal framework under CMS.

The Chair invited the European Commission to join the AMF Discussion Group.

Action 1: CU to invite European Commission to the AMF Discussion Group.

Marco Barbieri outlined that other conditions would need to be addressed, e.g. CMS Appendix I listing of the Saker Falcon before an AMF could become operational.

The Chair outlined that this is a core part of the discussion in the AMF Discussion Group to address the various MEA frameworks and the EU Birds Directive. He agreed that the CU should develop a background information pack for new STF members to understand the history of the SakerGAP and process towards developing the AMF.

Action 2: The CU, in consultation with the STF Chair, to develop a background briefing note and information pack for new STF members to understand the history of the SakerGAP and process towards developing the AMF.

Mohammed Shobrak mentioned the work being done by AEWA on a harvest management system under the Goose Management Group which could provide some useful comparison.

Andras Kovacs noted that a review of key international policies and legislation was done in 2013 by the STF Objective 4 Working Group which is included in the SakerGAP (p54).

Robert Kenward noted that the report on Sakernet "[Developing the Flagship Project for a Saker Falcon Portal and Network – Final Report](#)" was published in 2017 by CMS, with endorsement of the STF. He also noted that the report "Conclusion of the demographic and socio-economic modelling for SakerGAP" (Kenward et al., 2013) is included in the SakerGAP (p. 56) and therefore endorsed by the STF.

Janusz Sielicki noted that there are a number of synergies with the CMS Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT).

The Chair summarised that the STF noted the draft TOR for the AMF Discussion Group, with the need to take account of existing legal frameworks under international conventions and EU Directives. The group should develop a programme of work, addressing the key question of how the various activities will be taken forward.

4. Update on Task Force membership

Lyle Glowka outlined that there is a need to review the membership and also the original TORs of the STF. The CU has done an initial gap analysis on the Task Force membership and will produce a paper on membership to present at the next STF meeting.

Robert Kenward noted the importance of including practitioner stakeholders such as falconers, trappers and veterinarians in the STF meetings.

Action 3: CU to draft a paper reviewing the STF membership for the next STF meeting.

5. Next steps

Discussion Group meetings will be held mid-February 2021 with the next STF meeting to be held mid-March 2021. The Chair thanked the STF members for their engagement and closed the meeting.