

Saker Falcon Task Force Teleconference

28 October 2020 14:00 – 15:30 (UAE time, UTC+4)

Summary Note

Participants:

Range States	Name
Armenia	Dr. Karen Aghababyan
Hungary	Mr. Mátyás Prommer
India	Dr. Suresh Kumar
Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	Mr. Mohammad Asghari Tabari
Kazakhstan	Dr. Sergey Sklyarenko
Slovakia	Dr. Peter Puchala / Mr. Branislav Hrabkovsky
Mongolia	Dr. Nyambayar Batbayar
Partner Organisations and Independent Experts	
BirdLife International	Dr. Vicky Jones
CITES	Mr. Thomas De Meulenaer
CMS	Mr. Marco Barbieri
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
Raptor Protection of Slovakia (observer)	Ing. Zuzana Guziova
Coordinating Unit (CU)	
STF Chair	Prof. Colin Galbraith
Advisor to the Coordinating Unit	Mr. Andras Kovacs
Advisor to the Coordinating Unit	Dr. Robert Sheldon
Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU	Mr. Lyle Glowka / Ms. Sofi Hinchliffe

Apologies: Mr. Joseph van der Stegen, European Commission; Dr. Fernando Spina, CMS Appointed Councillor

Also Invited: Bahrain, China, Iraq, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, United Arab Emirates, European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE), League of Arab States, UNEP Regional Office for West Asia and Siberian Environmental Center (Russia).

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 also thanked those members that had participated in the two working group discussions on preventing electrocution and developing the Adaptive Management Framework (AMF) for the sustainable use of the Saker Falcon.

2. Update on Task Force membership

Lyle Glowka provided a short overview on STF membership. The [first STF meeting took place in March 2012](#) and terms of reference were agreed outlining the membership structure:

“The aim is for a relatively small (15 - 20 person) but highly effective Task Force. Membership should be focused on scientific representation, based on nominations from the Range States, Signatories and Partners. Members will be required to take responsibility for leading and driving forward discrete tasks or Work Streams, as identified by the STF.”

The STF membership may be adjusted as required.

Mr. Glowka proposed that in collaboration with the Chair, the CU can review the STF’s existing membership and reach out to range states and partners to confirm continued interest in participating in the STF.

In response to a question from Thomas De Meulenaer (CITES), Prof. Galbraith explained that the STF membership was a mix of Range States, partner organisations and independent experts. Mr. Glowka clarified that the Range States would be nominating someone to participate in an expert capacity.

Robert Kenward noted that the Task Force is heavily represented by scientific experts. The only representative from falconry is IAF.

Mohammed Shobrak confirmed he is now participating in the STF as an independent expert not representing Saudi Wildlife Authority or Taif University. He noted that it is important to have representation from falconers in different regions, and particularly in the context of sustainable use.

Janusz Sielicki agreed that it is important to have representation from regions that are using Sakers. He noted that the STF does not have state representation from Russia and some of the key central Asian countries. In terms of the falconers involvement, IAF acts as a coordinator between the smaller clubs. There are different situations in the breeding range, migration and wintering range which should also be taken into account.

Robert Kenward noted that the veterinarians were involved in the developing of the SakerGAP but are not represented currently on the Task Force and it would be critical to include a vet from a range state where wild Sakers are used.

The Chair summarised that he will work together with the CU to review the STF’s membership and provide an update to the next STF meeting. There is a need for representation from range

states, partner organisations and experts, as well as falconry and veterinarians. It is important also to take account of the socio-economic aspect and have good regional representation.

Action 1: CU to work with the Chair to review the STF membership and provide an update to the STF at its next meeting.

3. Update from Task Force members

No updates were made by Task Force members.

4. Feedback on discussion group TORs

a. Mitigating electrocution

Robert Sheldon, who chaired the meeting of the Electrocution Discussion Group, introduced the draft TORs. At the previous meeting of the STF in June, it was agreed that remediation of dangerous powerlines was one of the key areas to take forward as a priority. The discussion group met on 28th September with the following participants: Andrew Dixon, Colin Galbraith, Vicky Jones, Andras Kovacs, Suresh Kumar, Elvira Nikolenko, Robert Sheldon, Mohammed Shobrak and Janusz Sielicki. Two broad areas of work were identified; information collation and management and initiating conservation action.

Four key recommendations were made for immediate priority actions to be taken forward:

1. Request information from all STF members on ongoing and recent (from 2018 on) activities relating to electrocution, effective mitigation techniques and key publications.
2. Review the main principles of best practices and technologies across different geographies.
3. Collate information and identify gaps in knowledge, stakeholder engagement and communications.
4. Engage and cooperate with key groups such as the CMS Energy Task Force (ETF).

Vicky Jones noted that the TORs outline identifying the knowledge gaps, but should also include the implementation gaps i.e. collate the activities and projects ongoing and planned, and identify areas where there is a significant issue but no action planned.

Janusz Sielicki noted the important distinction between issues relating to existing lines and development of new lines. The “Quick Guidance for Preventing Electrocution Impacts on Birds” prepared by IAF should be promoted within institutions financing new and renovated medium voltage lines, which includes banks and governmental institutions. The document was specially prepared for non-specialists. The awareness of the problem of electrocution should be raised by all CMS tools, not only within Saker Task Force and Energy Task Force.

In response to a question regarding practical delivery of point 2, Robert Sheldon outlined that the details of the review and delivery of the four recommendations would be discussed during the next meeting of the electrocution discussion group.

Suresh Kumar outlined that the work on electrocution should also include the broader consideration of other birds of prey, in addition to Saker. Particularly in the context of India where the Saker is an uncommon migrant.

Marco Barbieri noted that CMS Energy Task Force is currently updating its programme of work which will be discussed at the next virtual meeting in December. It would therefore be timely to provide input into the ETF programme of work.

The Chair noted that the Task Force agreed upon the 4 main actions outlined in the TORs with the additions on implementation gaps and existing and new power lines.

Action 2: Electrocution sub-group to keep in mind connections to the CMS Energy Task Force, particularly as the programme of work is currently being updated.

Action 3: Robert Sheldon to add points on implementation gaps and existing and new power lines to the Electrocution Discussion Group TORs.

b. Developing an Adaptive Management Framework for sustainable use

The Chair introduced the TORs for the Adaptive Management Framework Discussion Group. The discussion group met on 30th September with the following participants: Karen Aghababyan, Mohammad Asghari Tabari, Andrew Dixon, Colin Galbraith, Karen Gaynor/Johannes Stahl (CITES), Vicky Jones, Robert Kenward, Andras Kovacs, Robert Sheldon, Mohammed Shobrak, Janusz Sielicki, Fernando Spina.

Three key priorities were identified: (i) conceptualise the governance framework; (ii) develop a clear implementation plan; and (iii) develop a carefully designed and managed evidence-based adaptive management model at the appropriate geographical scales.

The draft TORs that were circulated to the Task Force in advance of the meeting take into account initial comments made by the discussion group however subsequently, further comments were made so there will be a need to revise the TORs for further consideration by the discussion group.

Robert Kenward noted the importance of having sufficient funding available to achieve the tasks outlined in the AMF TORs. He mentioned that there is a need to look back to the section of the SakerGAP on the AMF, particularly Figure 10 which outlines the stakeholder groups. The regional politics are complex and critical to include.

Janusz Sielicki agreed that there is a need to include other stakeholder groups. He noted that perhaps there is a need for a global framework, taking account the differences in the European and the Asian populations, but the same time have local models for individual countries. The aim of the framework should be to provide a tool to a country in the case that they plan to implement a management system for sustainable use. There are lots of gaps in the science and there is a lack of reliable data. The experience of Mongolia can provide important lessons learnt for the organisation of the framework. The aim should be to create a workable solution, and move forward even with limited funding.

Nyambayar Batbayar outlined his full support for developing the AMF and reiterated the need to address the political influences. He noted that Saker Falcons are not being exported from Mongolia, however, trade continues with many Gulf countries as a “diplomatic harvest”.

Mohammed Shobrak noted that he has been in discussions with the Saudi club for falconers. There were 223 Sakers captured from all the GCC countries from 2014 – 2019 during the migration. This year, Saudi Arabia has started to stop the trapping of Sakers, but it is difficult to do this without a roadmap or guidelines. It is important to take account of the socio-economic issues.

Marco Barbieri asked how the work under the STF is linked to the listing of Saker Falcon on CMS Appendix I (with the exception of the Mongolian population) meaning that no harvest is allowed under the convention. He asked if there are steps needed under the convention to make a potential AMF applicable.

Janusz Sielicki noted that Objective 2 under the SakerGAP is to “ensure that where trapping and other forms of taking Saker Falcons from the wild are legal, they are controlled, and sustainable, thereby encouraging population growth and eventual stabilization.” IAF organised a workshop with Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi on illegal trade and take in 2018 and can share the output documentation. A lot of trapping occurs at the local level and is driven by local markets, there is limited international trade as from the data from CITES.

Thomas De Meulenaer commented that such a global framework, including national level models, would be very helpful for the CITES community as a source of guidance. Around 10 years ago, the CITES community investigated the trade of Saker Falcons that was allowed from various range states. Some CITES Parties agreed to stop exporting Sakers, as they would have been facing CITES sanctions, and the Secretariat can go back to these countries for an update on the situation.

Robert Kenward noted that in order to assess Sakers over the wider migratory areas, a mark recapture approach would work well. This would need collaboration at the international level as well as taking into account the national context.

The Chair summarised that the STF is looking to develop an international framework, with guidance and a toolkit for individual range states to implement at a national level. There needs to be a clear timeline for the work, taking into account the CMS and CITES meetings. Developing the AMF is essential piece of work for the STF to undertake and CITES welcomes the framework going forward. It is also key to address the budget and resources in order to deliver this.

In conclusion, the STF take note of the text of the AMF TORs but remit back to the Discussion Group for further consideration, in particular section 3 with the aim to submit revised TORs to the Task Force at the next meeting. The Chair noted that the membership for the AMF Discussion Group should remain the same for now, but could be broadened if necessary.

Action 4: AMF sub group to revise the TORs, for submission and discussion at the next STF meeting.

5. Timeline for activities and identification of key milestones

The CU will aim to organise the two sub-group meetings in November. The Electrocutation Group would start outlining the more substantive work and the AMF group would discuss and revise the TORs. The CU would aim to organise the next Task Force meeting in early or mid-December.

The Chair noted the need to outline the longer timescale for delivery of the work:

- CMS Raptors MOU TAG4 Meeting (Q4 2021);
- CMS Raptors MOU MOS3 (Q3 2022);
- CITES COP19 (2022); and
- CMS COP14 (2023).

Action 5: Reconvene both STF sub-groups in mid-November and organise the next STF meeting in early to mid-December.

6. AOB

Lyle Glowka provided an update on the Raptor MOU Programme Officer hiring process which is on track and the target is to have someone on board in Q1 2021.

The Chair thanked the STF members for their engagement and closed the meeting.

END