

**CONVENTION ON  
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**POSITION PAPER ON THE SAKER FALCON**

**Submitted by the Saudi Wildlife Authority on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to  
the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the CMS Scientific Council**



## Position paper on the Saker Falcon, (*Falco cherrug*)

Submitted by the Saudi Wildlife Authority on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CMS Scientific Council, Bergen, Norway 17 – 18 November 2011

1. The listing of the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in CMS Appendix I of the Convention was discussed at CMS COP9 during which Resolution 9.20 was adopted. This resolution, *inter alia*, stated the following:  
  
“Further urges Parties to assist in the delivery of a research programme, initially supported by Saudi Arabia, designed to re-evaluate vigorously the conservation status of the species across its range”.
2. In response to this resolution the Saudi Wildlife Commission (now named the Saudi Wildlife Authority, SWA), on behalf of Saudi Arabia, initiated and funded a study conducted by BirdLife International on the Conservation Status for the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*). A copy of the report of this study was provided to the CMS Secretariat and to the Scientific Council. It is tabled in the Scientific Council documents as: UNEP/CMS/ScC17/inf.6.
3. The issue of listing the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in CMS Appendix I was also discussed in the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CMS Scientific Council, 28-30 June 2011. The Saudi Wildlife Authority submitted a one-page report to this respected Scientific Council at its 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. In its report, SWA summarized the findings of the study conducted by BirdLife International. These findings showed that there are gaps in the information available and indicated that the current status of the Saker Falcon qualifies for down listing to vulnerable.
4. The Saker Falcon is among the most difficult species to assess, since populations of this species live in low densities but occupy very large ranges. These populations exist in very remote regions across the species range.

5. The gaps in knowledge are, in fact, so great that they can only be outlined in generality in the SWA/BLI report. These gaps fall into five different categories. They are: (1) distribution; (2) population sizes and trends; (3) ecological issues; (4) trade effects; and (5) anthropogenic pressures other than trade. Nevertheless, the IUCN red listing guidelines require assessors not to classify species as "Data Deficient" (meaning that there is insufficient evidence to decide on status) if it is possible to make some kind of deduction of status from the available body of evidence, however incompatible its parts. Therefore, BirdLife had to work with any data available, even the poor quality information.
6. The SWA anticipated if other range states and Parties had more actively participated in this study by providing information and funds to evaluate the status in their territories the results of the BirdLife report would have been more realistic.
7. Saudi Arabia is committed to the conservation of biodiversity on the National, Regional and International levels and also supports the principles of sustainable use of biodiversity. It also gives this important species high consideration. This species has very significant cultural and traditional values to the Saudi society; such values are also shared with other societies across its range. These values were recognized by UNESCO as "Human Living Heritage".
8. The Saudi Wildlife Authority believes that listing *Falco cherrug* in CMS Appendix I may not achieve great conservation benefits for the future of the species. Such a decision may increase the uncontrollable illegal taking and trafficking of this species in many parts of its range.
9. We further believe that collaboration from all range states is important and still needed to bridge any information gaps. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be happy to collaborate, as much as possible, with CMS, CMS Parties and partners on the conservation of this species.

10. In addition, we support the recommendation that came out from the meeting of the Arab Team on MEAs, Desertification and Biodiversity, held in Cairo 25 – 27 September 2011. This recommendation strongly supports leaving the Saker Falcon on CMS Appendix II.
11. Finally, Saudi Arabia does not agree with listing the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in CMS Appendix I. Instead we recommend that the CMS Scientific Council and CMS Secretariat urge Range States and other Parties to generate and implement conservation programs to conserve this species throughout its range.