

EIGHT MEETING OF THE SAKER FALCON TASK FORCE (STF8)

(Online, 3 August 2022)

UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/STF8/Doc.1

MEETING REPORT

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)

1. Welcome

The Saker Falcon Task Force (STF) Chair (the “Chair”), Mr Colin Galbraith, welcomed all participants to the meeting.

2. Update on the team of the Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit

The Chair introduced the two new members of the Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit (the “Coordinating Unit”): Mr Umberto Gallo-Orsi, who joined as Programme Management Officer in March 2021, and Ms Lauren Lopes, who joined as Associate Programme Management Officer in April 2022. Mr Gallo-Orsi introduced Ms Enas Alsarahniah, who has been supporting the Coordinating Unit since March 2022 in the role of consultant.

3. Revisiting the STF team

Mr Galbraith introduced himself as Chair of the STF, Mr Andras Kovacs, as Technical Advisor to the STF and Coordinator of the Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework Discussion Group Discussion (AMFDG), and Mr Rob Sheldon, as Coordinator of the Electrocution Discussion Group (EDG).

The current membership of the STF was presented as follows (**red** indicates amendments proposed during the discussion):

Membership of the STF	
Range States	
Armenia	Dr Karen Aghababyan Mr Sevak Baloyan
Bahrain	Dr Adel Mohamed Al Awadhi
China	Dr Xiangjiang Zhan Mr Difei Chen
Hungary	Mr Mátyás Prommer
India	Dr Suresh Kumar
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Mr Mohammad Asghari Tabari
Iraq	Mr Samer Adnan Hani Mr Ali Ne'ama Salman
Kazakhstan	Dr Sergey Sklyarenko
Mongolia	Mr Purev Tsogtaiskhan Dr Nyambayar Batbayar
Qatar	Mr Zayed Al-Ali Al-Maadeed
Saudi Arabia	Mr Abdullah A Alhakami

	Mr Albara Alothman Mr Jaber Haressi Mr Abdullah Alsuhaibany
Slovakia	Dr Peter Puchala Mr Branislav Hrabkovsky Dr Andrea Lešová Dr Ján Kadlečík
Tajikistan	Dr Neimatullo Safarov
Ukraine	Dr Maksym Gavrilyuk
United Arab Emirates	Dr Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri Dr Salim Javed
Partners & Independent Experts	
BirdLife International	Dr Vicky Jones
CITES	Mr David Morgan Ms Karen Gaynor
CMS Scientific Council	Dr Fernando Spina
CMS Secretariat	Mr Ivan Ramirez Mr Tilman Schneider
European Union	Mr Joseph van der Stegen
FACE	Mr David Scallan
Independent Expert	Prof Mohammed Shobrak
Independent Researcher	Dr Andrew Dixon
International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF)	Mr Janusz Sielicki Mr Gary Timbrell
IUCN – Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)	Prof Robert Kenward Dr Adrian Lombard
League of Arab States	Ms Nermine Fawaz Talaat Wafa
Raptor Protection Slovakia	Ing Zuzana Guziová
Saudi Falcon Club	Dr Albara Binothman <u>Mr Yones Radwan</u>
Siberian Environmental Centre (Russia)	Mr Igor Karyakin Ms Elvira Nikolenko
UNEP Regional Office for West Asia	Ms Etaf Chehade
Steering Group	
STF Chair	Prof Colin Galbraith
Technical Advisor to the STF & Coordinator of the Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework Discussion Group	Mr Andras Kovacs
Coordinator of the Electrocutation Discussion Group	Dr Rob Sheldon
Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit	Ms Rouba Abou-Atieh Mr Umberto Gallo-Orsi Ms Lauren Lopes

4. Update on the “Legal Analysis of Saker Falcon Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework”

The Chair updated the STF members on the “Legal Analysis of Saker Falcon Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework”, explaining that such analysis was undertaken following a request from the European Union. The goal of the analysis was to demonstrate the legal basis of the work related to adaptive management that the STF has been planning to undertake. The analysis was shared with the European Union, who took note of the document. The Chair reported to be satisfied with the findings of the analysis.

5. Review of the STF’s Terms of Reference

Mr Gallo-Orsi presented some background information on the establishment of the STF and introduced the Task Force’s Terms of Reference (TOR). He explained that changes to those TOR are required as the current TOR are based on a resolution that has since been repealed (Resolution 10.28 [2011]). The mandate of the STF currently comes from [Resolution 11.18 \(Rev.COP12\)](#) (2017), which calls for the STF to promote the implementation of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP), enable the implementation of an adaptive management and monitoring framework for Saker Falcons, and keep under review the possibility of any future Conference of the Parties to CMS downlisting the species in the CMS Appendices, should recovery objectives be met. Mr Gallo-Orsi then noted that the next step is to consult the STF members on the changes proposed to the TOR so that a new text may be agreed at the next meeting of the STF.

Action points:

- a) Coordinating Unit to share the revisions of the STF’s TOR with all STF members for comments.

6. Sharing thoughts on how to expand & improve the STF membership

The Chair explained how, based on the current TOR, the membership of the STF should comprise between 15 and 20 members and how such roles should be allocated. Following, the Chair provided an overview of the current membership of the STF by region and by country. The Chair identified geographical coverage gaps (see table below), noting that any suggestions from STF members to close such gaps would be welcomed. In response, one of the participants suggested that, for Central and Eastern Europe, the STF could consider approaching colleagues in Romania.

The Chair then consulted the STF members on whether the STF Steering Group could approach governments that are not currently STF members to explore their interest in joining the membership, and no one opposed. Some participants pointed out that the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) could be a valuable partner, given their training experience, capacity, and network in the region. Another participant noted that there is a forum facility in SakerNet (www.sakernet.org) that could be used to improve communication among STF members.

	Expected members	Actual members	Gaps/Potential members
Range States			
Central and East Asia and the Caucasus region	3 - 4	5 (Armenia, China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan)	Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
South Asia	0	1 (India)	Afghanistan, Pakistan
Europe and Eastern Europe	2	3 (Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine)	Austria, Moldova, Serbia, Romania
Middle East	2-3	6 (Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates)	Turkey
North and East Africa	1-2	0	Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia
Partners & Independent Experts			
Non-governmental organization partners	2-3	5 (BirdLife International, FACE, IAF, Raptor Protection Slovakia,	Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital, International Fund for Animal Welfare

		Siberian Environmental Centre)	
Others	0	2 (IUCN-CEM, Saudi Falcon Club)	International Fund for Houbara Conservation
Independent Experts	0	2	
CITES	1	1	
CMS Secretariat	1	1	
CMS Scientific Council	2	1	
International organizations	0	2 (Arab League, European Union)	
Steering Group			
Chair, Vice-Chair	2	1	
Advisor	1	2	
Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit	1	3	
Total	18 - 22	35	18

Action points:

- a) STF members to inform the Chair of any suggestions on how to strengthen the STF membership.
- b) Coordinating Unit to engage with IFAW to explore its interest in joining the STF.

7. Updates from the Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework Discussion Group (AMFDG):

7.1. Revisiting the Group’s membership

7.2. Review of the Group’s TOR

7.3. Date of the next meeting

The Chair noted the importance of identifying a clear structure for decision-making within the STF and clarified the composition of the STF Steering Group. Mr Kovacs went on to describe the key conclusions of the “Legal Analysis of Saker Falcon Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework”, highlighting the following:

“The development of an adaptive management and monitoring framework for the Saker Falcon would not, by itself, contravene any provision of the Convention. However, any implementation of an AMF that includes harvesting or taking of the Saker Falcon beyond the Mongolian population would contravene Article III.5 unless it is limited to populations, or the entire species, previously delisted from Appendix I.”

Mr Kovacs then revisited the AMFDG’s membership, noted that a decision needs to be taken on whether to re-open to further revisions the TOR of the Discussion Group (explaining what would be the relevant priorities in doing so), and indicated that the next AMFDG meeting shall, tentatively, be held at the end of August or early September 2022.

Participants noted the following necessary revisions to the AMFDG’s membership list presented by Mr Kovacs: Mr Yones Radwan is the new representative for the Saudi Falcon Club; Mr Adrian Lombard should be added as an additional representative of IUCN-CEM; Mr Thomas De Meulenaer and Mr Johannes Stahl should be removed for the CITES Secretariat, and Mr David Morgan should be added.

Some participants noted that it would be relevant to consider expanding the AMFDG’s membership to non-breeding countries, and the Chair agreed. One participant suggested that

adding the Saudi Falcon Club to the AMFDG would be valuable, and the Chair noted that if STF members agreed, this should be done.

The current membership of the AMFDG was presented as follows (red indicates amendments proposed during the discussion):

Membership of the AMFDG	
Range States	
Armenia	Dr Karen Aghababyan
China	Dr Xiangjiang Zhan
Hungary	Mr Mátyás Prommer
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Mr Mohammad Tabari
Partners & Independent Experts	
BirdLife International	Dr Vicky Jones
CITES	Ms Karen Gaynor <u>Mr David Morgan</u>
CMS Appointed Councillor (Connectivity/Networks)	Dr Fernando Spina
Independent Expert	Prof Mohammed Shobrak
Independent Researcher	Dr Andrew Dixon
International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF)	Mr Janusz Sielicki Mr Gary Timbrell
IUCN – Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)	Prof Robert Kenward <u>Dr Adrian Lombard</u>
<u>Saudi Falcon Club</u>	<u>Mr Yones Radwan</u>
Coordinator of the AMFDG	
Mr Andras Kovacs	

Action points:

- a) STF members to send any updates on the above AMFDG membership table to Mr Kovacs and the Coordinating Unit.
- b) Coordinating Unit to circulate the TOR of the AMFDG for STF members to comment on.
- c) Coordinating Unit to organize the next meeting of the AMFDG.

8. Updates from the Electrocutation Discussion Group (EDG):

8.1. Revisiting the Group’s membership

8.2. Proposing a timeline: activities, deliverables, and major events to participate in

8.3. Revisiting the workplan and its deliverables

8.4. Update on cooperation with the Energy Task Force (ETF)

8.5. Date of the next meeting

Mr Gallo-Orsi presented in replacement of Mr Sheldon, who was experiencing internet connection issues. Mr Gallo-Orsi explained the origin of the EDG and when the group’s TOR were endorsed by the STF, and indicated that the following should be immediate priority actions and deliverables of the Discussion Group:

- Request information from all STF members on ongoing and recent (from 2018 onwards) activities relating to electrocution, effective mitigation techniques and key publications:
 - o Review the questionnaire on electrocution launched in 2018 and the questionnaire proposed by BirdLife International on bird electrocution and collision with energy infrastructure;
 - o Develop and launch an updated questionnaire on electrocution and analyse responses to it;

- Develop a plan for collecting and storing information on Saker Falcon electrocution incidences;
- Review best-practice and technology for preventing and mitigating electrocution across different geographies:
 - Analyse how existing biodiversity planning documents in Saker Falcon Range States, such as National Raptor Conservations Strategies, have addressed the issue of electrocution;
 - Produce an updated and concise review of electrocution prevention and mitigation best-practice, including existing risk assessments, pre- and post-remediation surveying, and monitoring protocols;
 - Develop a facts sheet or guide for Saker Falcon Range States and electricity companies on how to prevent and mitigate electrocution;
- Collate information and identify gaps in knowledge, implementation, stakeholder engagement, and communication:
 - Define the baseline mortality impact of electrocution on Saker Falcon populations through analysing available data;
 - Assess the feasibility of mapping powerlines across the Saker Falcon’s distribution range;
- Engage and cooperate with key groups, such as the CMS Energy Task Force:
 - Identify funding opportunities for electrocution-related projects and contribute to developing project proposals.

One participant raised the need to engage with electrical engineers working for governmental electricity companies to share best-practice with them. He also reflected on the importance of countries sharing lessons learnt on electrocution prevention and mitigation with one another.

Mr Gallo-Orsi presented the current membership of the EDG as follows:

Membership of the EDG	
Affiliation	Name
Range States	
China	Dr Xiangjiang Zhan
Hungary	Mr Mátyás Prommer
India	Dr Suresh Kumar
United Arab Emirates	Dr Salim Javed
Partners & Independent Experts	
BirdLife International	Dr Vicky Jones
Independent Expert	Prof Mohammed Shobrak
Independent Researcher	Dr Andrew Dixon
International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF)	Mr Janusz Sielicki
Siberian Environmental Centre (Russia)	Ms Elvira Nikolenko
Coordinator of the EDG	
Dr Rob Sheldon	
Technical Advisor to the STF	
Mr Andras Kovacs	

Mr Gallo-Orsi explained that there are important linkages between the work of the EDG and the CMS Energy Task Force (ETF). The Chair noted that cooperation, rather than merging should be sought between these two groups, and that overlap and duplication should be avoided.

To conclude, Mr Gallo-Orsi indicated that the next EDG meeting shall, tentatively, be held during the week of 29 August 2022.

Action points:

- a) EDG to engage with electrical engineers in Saker Falcon Range States to share best-practice on electrical specifications.
- b) Coordinating Unit to seek an update from the Mohammed Bin Zayed Fund on its work on Saker Falcon conservation, with a view to establish linkages with the work of the STF.
- c) EDG to discuss at its next meeting the best way to deliver its ambitious work programme.
- d) Coordinating Unit to organize the next meeting of the EDG.

9. Way forward & Side event at Raptors MOU MOS3

The Chair indicated that STF9 may take place in October/early November 2022. Mr Gallo-Orsi added that the Third Meeting of Signatories to the Raptors MOU (MOS3) is tentatively scheduled for the week of 13-17 March 2023 and is likely to take place in the United Arab Emirates. It would be valuable to present an update on progress of the STF and to have the STF organize a side-event at MOS3 that could showcase Saker Falcon success stories. Two participants reminded the group that information concerning Saker Falcon conservation, including case studies is available online, including at [CMS | Energy Task Force](#) (under “Resources”).

10. AOB

Mr Mátyás Prommer noted that a recent study which is currently awaiting peer-review has found important genetic distances between Pannonian Sakers, Tuvaian Sakers (including “Altai Falcons”), and far Eastern Gyrfalcons. Mr Prommer noted also that these genetic groupings of the Saker Falcon have distinct demographic parameters, and that this should be taken into account in the implementation of the SakerGAP. He also suggested that consideration should be given as to whether these subspecies should be treated separately under the SakerGAP. These genetic and demographic differences would also be relevant to the adaptive management work that is being pursued by the AMFDG. Two participants shared the view that there is still scientific uncertainty regarding how distinct Saker Falcon populations are from one another across their range.

11. Closing of the meeting

The Chair closed the meeting thanking participants for their input during the same.

Action points:

- a) Coordinating Unit to share the PowerPoint presentations presented during the meeting.

Participant list

Range States	
Armenia	Dr Karen Aghababyan
China	Dr Xiangjiang Zhan
Hungary	Mr Mátyás Prommer
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Mr Mohammad A. Tabari
Kazakhstan	Dr Sergey Sklyarenko
Qatar	Mr Zayed Al-Ali Al-Maadeed
Slovakia	Dr Peter Puchala
Ukraine	Dr Maksym Gavrilyuk
Partners & Independent Experts	
CITES	Mr David Morgan
CMS Secretariat	Mr Tilman Schneider
Independent Expert	Prof Mohammed Shobrak
Independent Researcher	Dr Andrew Dixon
International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF)	Mr Janusz Sielicki Mr Gary Timbrell
IUCN – Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)	Prof Robert Kenward Dr Adrian Lombard
Raptor Protection Slovakia	Ing Zuzana Guziová
Saudi Falcon Club	Mr Yones Radwan
Steering Group	
STF Chair	Prof Colin Galbraith
Technical Advisor to the STF & Coordinator of the Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework Discussion Group Discussion	Mr Andras Kovacs
Coordinator of the Electrocutation Discussion Group	Dr Rob Sheldon
Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit	Mr Umberto Gallo-Orsi Ms Lauren Lopes
Other	
Consultant supporting the Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit	Ms Enas Alsarahniah

Also invited

Range States	Bahrain, India, Iraq, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, United Arab Emirates
Partners & Independent Experts	BirdLife International, CMS Scientific Council, European Union, FACE, League of Arab States, Siberian Environmental Centre (Russia), UNEP Regional Office for West Asia
Apologies	BirdLife International, European Union, India, Mongolia