



Hamdan Bin Zayed

**ADIHEX is a Comprehensive Cultural Platform
Uniting Tradition and Innovation**

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A History Full of Achievements

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24 Years of Excellence

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Deeply rooted in Arabian heritage and widely practiced



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Special Edition - September 2025





Falconry in the UAE...

Noble Values, Human Heritage, and Global Leadership

Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Emirates Falconers' Club

At the outset of this new edition of Al Saggar magazine, I am honored to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to my brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, may God protect him, for the distinguished care and unwavering support he dedicates to safeguarding the cultural heritage of falconry, elevating its stature on every forum, and strengthening our nation's presence on the international stage as a beacon of peace and a crossroads of civilizations, and as a steadfast model that unites the preservation of human heritage with modernity and progress.

Throughout its long history, the sport of falconry has been an integral part of Emirati identity and a genuine source of the noble values passed down to us by our forefathers. Our wise leadership has accorded this heritage exceptional care, culminating in the historic achievement of inscribing falconry in 2010 on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, thereby affirming it as a shared human legacy that reflects the UAE's unwavering commitment to safeguarding heritage for generations to come.

The legacy of Emirati falconry is rich with historic milestones that embody the profound attention devoted to this heritage, foremost among them the historic initiative of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, who sponsored the First International Falconry Conference in Abu Dhabi in 1976. Through this initiative, he laid the foundations of international cooperation in the service of falconry and established a unique vision that positioned our nation's capital as a prominent global hub in this field.

The journey of achievements has continued for nearly half a century, with the Emirates Falconers' Club playing a pivotal role in safeguarding this heritage through pioneering initiatives and projects focused on sustainable hunting, nurturing a new generation of falconers, and supporting environmental, heritage, and scientific research.

The Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition has evolved into a comprehensive cultural platform that bridges tradition and innovation, providing companies, institutions, researchers, and scholars with opportunities to exchange ideas and expertise, and to propose advanced solutions to sustainability challenges, thereby cementing its position on the global map of events related to heritage, culture, and the environment.

Today, the exhibition represents a true oasis for the people of the UAE and the region, where they proudly celebrate their customs and traditions, and safeguard their rich heritage and its noble human values. It has also become an international gathering for showcasing the finest expressions of human culture from around the world.

We reaffirm our commitment to continuing the path of the founding fathers in preserving this distinguished sport, reinforcing the UAE's position as a global leader in safeguarding human heritage, and promoting dialogue and cooperation between cultures. At the same time, we continue our efforts to highlight the UAE's pioneering role in safeguarding falconry as a human value and as a bridge connecting the past with the present while looking towards the future.

We hope that we can all succeed in serving Dar Zayed in a manner worthy of our love for him, and in ways that elevate our beloved nation, preserve its authentic heritage, and showcase its noble values on the global stage.

Table of Contents

The UAE Revives the Sport of Falconry	48
--	-----------

From Heritage to Sustainability... The Emirates Falconers' Club Preserves Falconry with a Contemporary Spirit	55
--	-----------

Sheikh Zayed: The Falconer Who Protected the Environment and Taught Generations Worldwide the Art of Hunting and Desert Etiquette	77
--	-----------

The International Festival of Falconry: A Cultural Bridge Across Continents	100
--	------------

Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund Protects 25,000 Raptors in Mongolia	140
---	------------

Along the Silk Roads, the Art of Falconry: A Living Heritage and Traditional Sport	172
---	------------

Discover the 16 Emirati Heritage Elements on UNESCO's List	170
---	------------

More Features:

24 Years of Passion and Dedication to the Art of Falconry	08
Falconry Around the World	10
Arab Falconry Roundup	26
Falconry in the UAE	38
Special Feature 1	48
Special Feature 2	55
Featured Personality	77
Milestones	88
Projects and Achievements	100
Innovations	105
World of Birds	109
Scientific Facts – Raptors	111
Scientific Facts – Prey	113
Scientific Facts – Hounds	117
Towards Sustainable Falconry	121
Special Coverage	123
Spotlight On	126
History and Authenticity	129
Falcons Soar in the Creativity of UAE Artists	137
Falconry and UNESCO	140
A Falconer's Biography (1)	144
A Falconer's Biography (2)	149
A Falconer's Biography (3)	158
Hunting Rhymes	162
Brotherhood	165
Houbara Bustard in Emirati Poetic Selections	170
Heritage School	172
Empowering Falconers Worldwide: A Proactive Emirati Approach	176
Research and Studies	178
The Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition: From a Simple Idea to a Phenomenon	183
From the Clubs	185
Selections	190
Book releases	196
How Do We Present Our Local Heritage and Culture to Our Children and Youth?	200
Falconry Medicine	202
The falconry bag	213
Did You Know?	216
A legacy we take pride in, and a mission we carry forward.....	222

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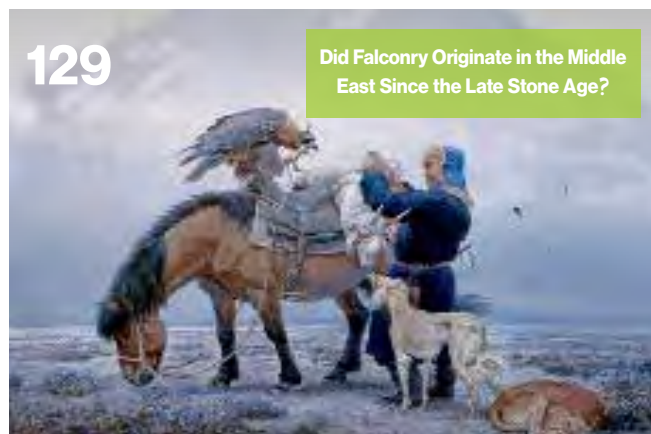
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24 Years of Passion and Dedication to the Art of Falconry

Harvest of the 2024-2025 Season: Emirates Falconers' Club: Leadership and Excellence

Majed Ali AlMansoori

Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club

Editor-in-Chief of "Al Saggar" Magazine

In the heart of the ancient heritage and the renewed fragrance of the past, the Emirates Falconers' Club continues to revive the arts of ancestors and forefathers, preserving one of the deepest cultural symbols: hunting with falcons.

During the last 2024-2025 season, we achieved the most prominent accomplishments in the club's history since its establishment nearly a quarter of a century ago. Our vision has embodied the preservation and development of this heritage in a way that keeps pace with the times, without compromising its ancient essence.

From participating in local and international activities, organizing major events, to specialized training programs and fruitful cooperation agreements, and from educational awareness initiatives to ongoing efforts in preserving sustainable hunting, we have affirmed our deep commitment to preserving this noble art and passing it on to future generations.

In this edition, we highlight the most prominent milestones that shaped a season of dedication and diligent work. We share with you stories of achievement and success, and document moments of pride and appreciation that illuminate the path to the future, extending our mission to preserve falconry and reinforce its status as a rich cultural heritage deeply rooted in the conscience of the people of this good land.

Since its establishment in 2001, and over nearly 24 years, the Emirates Falconers' Club has succeeded, thanks to the directives and guidance of its Chairman His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region, in fulfilling its mission and realizing the vision of the first falconer and pioneer of environmental preservation, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, for sustainable falconry for future generations.

The club continues its journey of achievements locally and internationally, achieving more successes in preserving falconry and its heritage, and striving to contribute to the development of a new generation that preserves its heritage with smart technologies.

The club is keen to participate in the most important heritage and national activities and events with the aim of preserving inherited customs and traditions, and conveying them to new generations to help them refine their personalities.

As the Emirates Falconers' Club participates in organizing the 22nd edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition this year, it is also highlighting its most prominent projects at its exhibition stand, foremost among them the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition itself, the Mohammed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, the Club's leading educational project, which, since its establishment, attracted the highest number of students during the last season, the International Festival of Falconry, the Arabian Saluki Centre in Abu Dhabi, and "Al Saggar" magazine.

During ADIHEX, the Club showcases its pioneering initiatives to tens of thousands of visitors, notably including the Mohammed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, the Middle East Falconry Archive, and the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, in addition to the Emirati-Japanese Falconry Program, which has achieved great success.



The club continued in the last hunting season, in cooperation with the International Fund for Houbara Conservation, to distribute captive-bred Houbara to falconers and trainees in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Kuwait, Algeria, Bahrain, Mauritania, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.

While efforts are intensifying to establish the Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed International Falconry Library, the first of its kind, the Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed International Falconry Museum in Brussels has started welcoming visitors, aiming to promote the cultural heritage of falconry worldwide and to explore the enduring art of life passed down through generations.

The club has signed several memoranda of understanding and collaboration agreements with local and international institutions and organizations, seeking to expand the base of joint efforts in preserving heritage and sustainable hunting and ensuring its survival for future generations. These agreements include the Abu Dhabi Heritage Authority, The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood in the UAE, The British Archives of Falconry, and the Russian Roscongress Foundation, the official organizer of the International Falcon Day Forum.

The activities and projects of the Emirates Falconers' Club also aim to instill values of national identity and behaviours associated with the people of the UAE, in addition to contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage and strengthening the connection between the authentic past and the bright present of the Emirati citizen.

These achievements would not have been realized without the deep conviction that heritage is not merely a past that is recounted, but a present to be built and a future to be preserved. This is all thanks to the directives of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, The President of the State, may God protect him, the founder of the Emirates Falconers Club, and His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club, following the path of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan - may God rest his soul - and what he instilled in the hearts of the people of the UAE for falconry heritage and pride in it.

All gratitude and appreciation go to Their Highnesses the Sheikhs for the immense support and strategic vision provided by the State, which aims to preserve intangible cultural heritage, foremost among them falconry, which has become a globally exemplary model for combining authenticity and sustainability. The State's ongoing commitment to species conservation and the provision of suitable environment for breeding falcons and protecting them in captivity, and increasing their numbers, represents a fundamental pillar for the success of all efforts exerted in this field.

As the Emirates Falconers' Club concludes the 2024-2025 season by achieving a series of qualitative accomplishments that have solidified its position as a leading platform for protecting the intangible cultural heritage of the UAE, and promoting the sport of falconry locally and internationally, it prepares with full confidence and efficiency to continue its pivotal role in preserving falconry traditions, safeguarding heritage and species, and supporting the new generation of falconers during the upcoming 2025-2026 season, especially as the club will celebrate its 25th anniversary next year.

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Falconry Around the World



Tokyo Falconers Preserve Ancient Traditions



Hamarikyu Gardens in Tokyo witnessed a magnificent show in January 2025, dating back centuries, where falconers showcased their traditional craft against the backdrop of what was once a hunting ground during the Edo period (1603-1868) of ancient Japanese history.

The event, hosted by the “Suwa” association for the preservation of falconry, offered a glimpse into a popular tradition that has evolved over thousands of years yet remains deeply rooted in its ancient origins.

While the show revolved around enjoyment and education, the sport of falconry, like other sports involving animals, is also a serious pursuit for competitors at the highest levels of this sport.

“During the event, eagles and falcons soared among hundreds of trainers and volunteers, displaying their agility and precision. The highlight of the event was when a falconer called his bird from the top of the 13-story “Hamarikyu Mitsui” building. The audience gasped with delight as the bird swooped towards the event hall, its wings slicing through the air, before gracefully landing on the falconer’s glove amidst warm applause from the audience.



Mitsu Yamamuro, 74, a resident of Suginami, Tokyo, commented, “It was amazing. The falcons were absolutely stunning!” adding, “It was the first time I’ve ever seen a falcon in my life.

I had no idea they were this fast. I was impressed by their power.”

The history of falconry, known as “Takagari” in Japanese, dates back to pre-recorded history. Scientists believe it originated when nomadic herders observed the capabilities of raptors in hunting prey and realized their potential as partners. This practice dates back to before 700 BC in China. By 355 AD, it had reached Japan, crossing the sea via the Korean Peninsula.”



American Photographer Wins International Award for Documenting Falconry Heritage in Kazakhstan

The American photographer Carolina Voitacik visited Kazakhstan for the first time during the Fifth World Nomadic Games, which were held in September 2024, where she documented the ancient art of hunting with birds of prey within the traditional Kokpar competition (Kyz Kuu), in which the bird's flight speed is evaluated by calculating the time it takes for the bird to reach the bait or the duration it takes for the bird to reach the food in its owner's hand.

Voitacik's photographs, taken in the Almaty region in the village of Kurty on the slopes of Alatau Island, won the prestigious Communication Arts Award for Excellence in Documentary Photography in Kazakhstan, according to a post she made on Instagram on April 4th.

The Kazakh Tourism National Company, stated that "The world champions in Berkutchi (falconry), who use the giant golden eagle, are masters who dedicated their lives to breeding and hunting with birds of prey. They showcased the ancient traditions of the Kazakh people." The organizing body for the winning competition issued a special statement saying: "Voitacik captured unique moments of interaction between man and bird. In her work, she conveys not only aesthetics, but also the deep meaning of an ancient art."

The series of works by the American photographer, which were exhibited in the international competition, received great attention from the global audience, as they highlighted the cultural heritage of Kazakhstan.



In November 2024, the Ardesen district in Rize, Turkey, hosted the Fifth Annual "Beauty and Skill of Falcons" competition, which attracted falcon enthusiasts and highlighted a rich cultural heritage that extends for hundreds of years. Participants competed with their falcons in categories of beauty, agility, and flying skill.

The competition featured the participation of 25 falcons, which were evaluated by the judging committee in four colour-based categories: red, white, black, and yellow.

Expert judges evaluated each bird, considering feather color and head structure to select the most beautiful hawks in each category. In addition to the beauty competition, a long-distance flight competition was held to test the hawks' endurance and skill range.

The beauty and skill of sparrowhawks take center stage at the Rize Festival in Turkey.

Farhat Altay, Governor of Ardesen Province, told reporters: "The hawk embodies three main qualities: speed, strength, and agility. It represents the spirit of the Black Sea people, who have a strong bond with these birds and care for them as if they were family."

He explained that after 3-4 months of care, the hawks are released into the wild once again, emphasizing: "This is not hunting; it is a cultural heritage." Indeed, the participants released 60 falcons from their restraints and returned them to nature.

This unique annual event not only preserves the traditions of falconry in the Black Sea region of Turkey, but also deeply reinforces the connection with nature and highlights the special role that falconry plays in cultural identity.

The Falcon Capital of India: How Nagaland Protects These Rare Birds?

The Amur Falcon is a small, rare bird distinguished by beautiful dark plumage and white wing patterns. This bird spends the warm seasons in cold regions such as Siberia and northern China. In winter, it migrates to warmer places in Southern Africa. It is a long and arduous journey spanning thousands of miles, during which the falcons stop along the way, especially in Nagaland, to rest and gain energy before continuing their journey.

Nagaland, a beautiful and unique state in Northeast India, is known as the 'Falcon Capital of the World.' This title was granted in 2013, according to various online sources, due to its important role in the migration of a unique Amur falcon, which is known to travel thousands of miles every year.

Nagaland offers these rare birds a safe haven to rest during their long migration, providing suitable food to regain their strength and continue their journey. It is known that these small birds migrate in search of better living conditions; when cold weather is about to set in their breeding grounds, they migrate south



to the warm climates of Africa, where food and conditions are better during winter.

Although Nagaland is considered a safe environment for falcons, it does not necessarily guarantee their safety. The destruction of forests and wetlands ruins their resting places and natural habitats. Falcon hunting in some areas also threatens their numbers. These problems indicate that strengthening bird and environmental protection efforts is imperative.

The Indian state has made diligent efforts to preserve the Amur falcons. Awareness meetings, in which all local residents, the government, and wildlife organizations participated, have contributed to curbing illegal falcon hunting.

The people of Nagaland now consider the Amur Falcon a symbol and part of their culture and heritage, and thus, its preservation has become a fruitful collective effort.

For the first time, peregrine falcons have been spotted in Singapore's Central Business District

A pair of peregrine falcons was recorded nesting in a high cavity at the OCBC Centre on Chulia Street in Singapore in 2024. Although this attempt did not result in offspring, some measures have been taken before their next breeding season in 2025.

Dr. Malcolm Soh, Principal Researcher at the National Parks Board in Singapore, stated that peregrine falcons usually build their nests on a substrate of loose gravel, where they can dig a scrape to hold their eggs. Therefore, the absence of a suitable environment or an appropriate surface in the concrete cavity may have affected the nesting success.

To improve breeding opportunities for the falcons, he recom-



mended creating a spacious nesting area containing gravel in the cavity, which has already been done on the thirty-fourth floor of the building. A CCTV camera system was also installed to allow researchers to monitor the progress of the falcons' breeding cycle.

Soh considered that 'the nesting of these falcons here (in Singapore's Central Business District) demonstrates their adaptability. As long as conditions are suitable for them with a ready food source, they can adapt somewhat to changing conditions.'

The story of the peregrine falcons in the heart of Singapore captured the attention of many, who found it always encouraging to see such positive stories in the field of environmental conservation in public discourse.

Cypriot MP Proposes Legalizing Falconry in His Country for Economic Reasons



In January 2025, MP Chrysanthos Savvides from the Diko district proposed that Cyprus legalize falconry and hunting with other birds of prey, with the aim of curbing the growth in pigeon populations in the Paphos region. His proposal gained the support of local farmers, who informed the Environment Committee in the House of Representatives that 'the number of pigeons has increased significantly, from the Kouklia area to Agios Georgios in Paphos, and as a result, these birds have started eating crops and fruits.

The farmers explained that pigeons cause 'severe damage' and even 'complete destruction' to some crops while foraging for food, indicating that the problem cannot be solved by traditional hunting methods, given the increasing number of pigeons in areas where hunting

is not allowed. They also noted that the large number of trees in the area has contributed to the growth in bird populations.

The Cypriot MP's proposal stipulates granting the current Minister of Agriculture the authority to issue decrees to legalize falconry in specific areas, with the aim of controlling the number of wild animal species that "cause damage to agricultural crops in areas where hunting is not allowed. "

He told the Environment Committee in Parliament that "agriculture is a profession in continuous decline, and that farmers' income is unstable because it depends on many factors. " He also mentioned that, according to the government, no funds can be allocated to compensate farmers affected by pigeons.

Savvides emphasized that falconry is an ancient art recognized by UNESCO as 'intangible cultural heritage,' a tradition also revived in Greece to reduce the number of wild birds that cause damage to agricultural crops.

He revealed that 'it seems a positive stance will be taken' and efforts will be made to legislate the law, given 'the urgent nature of the problem,' but he clarified that it is not easy today to find local falcon trainers, although many falconers from abroad have shown interest in coming to Cyprus..

Hotels Worldwide Use Birds of Prey for a Dual Benefit

With their increasing numbers in city centers, pigeons cause chaos and harm. The droppings they leave behind are not only unsightly but can also damage properties and buildings, disfigure centuries-old monuments, and may even cause health problems if left untreated.

Pigeons cause real problems for those in the hospitality sector. To avoid this, a solution is gradually shifting from commercial properties to the tourism sector, which involves using falconers, falcons, eagles, and other birds of prey as a deterrent.

While commercial falconry is legal in the United States, more companies are inviting falconers onto their properties to scare away birds that are considered prey for falcons. Additionally, tourist resorts in other countries, such as Cancun in Mexico and Madeira in Portugal, rely on falconers year-round.

According to the American writer Tay Belgeri of TravelAwaits, a news network specializing in travel destinations, this is a win-win situation in every respect: on one hand, falconers scare away pigeons, but without harming them; on the other hand, this method usually attracts guests who enjoy seeing the practical application in real life. Even falconers have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to showcase their training results publicly. This helps attract interest in birds of prey and the sport of falconry, in addition to comprehensive pest bird control.

Today, throughout the world, an increasing number of hotels and resorts rely on falconers to deter nuisance pigeons. Several hotels in the United States offer falconry experiences, including: Hotel Hershey (Pennsylvania), Broadmoor Hotel (Colorado), Woodstock Inn & Resort (New York), Omni Homestead Resort (Virginia), and Troutbeck (Amenia, New York).





Closure of Wind Farm Responsible for Falcon Deaths in France

In an unprecedented decision and after a first-of-its-kind trial, the French judiciary convicted EDF (Électricité de France), one of the largest electricity and energy companies, in April 2025 for its responsibility in the death of nearly 200 endangered lesser kestrels in France, due to a deadly wind farm owned by the company near the city of Montpellier in the south of the country. According to scientists, the current population of small falcons would have been twice as large were it not for the impact of the wind turbines.

The judiciary ordered the shutdown of 31 giant wind turbines for at least 4 months (from April to August annually) to ensure the safe return of falcons to the Greater Sahara region in Africa by the end of summer.

The rulings also included heavy fines exceeding 2.5 million euros, in addition to significant material compensation to the France Nature Environnement Association to support its projects for falcon protection.

The lesser kestrel is a migratory falcon, about 60 centimetres long, with males displaying red plumage, and females having mottled reddish-brown feathers. This species has been classified as “vulnerable” on the Red List of endangered species in France, and is classified as such by both the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the National Museum of Natural History.

According to Aurélien Besnard, a lecturer and researcher at the Centre for Functional and Evolutionary Ecology, a unit of the French National Centre for Scientific Research, researchers are trying to understand why birds are unable to avoid wind turbines despite their enormous size. He explained, “We believe that these birds, due to their less acute perception of contrast compared to humans, have difficulty distinguishing rotational motion, while wind turbines blades spin at hundreds of kilometres per hour.”

Sedona Film Festival Presents a Celebration of World Falconry Day



The Sedona International Film Festival, in partnership with the International Raptor and Falconry Center, expressed its pride in presenting the “Celebrating World Falconry Day” on November 16, 2024, at the Alice Gill-Sheldon Theatre in Arizona, United States.

Dr. Michele Losee presented to the attendees an overview of the rich history and cultural heritage of falconry, stating: “Get a close look at the legacy of this ancient practice, which has connected cultures and continents over centuries. Discover how falconers, as some of the earliest advocates for raptor conser-

vation, have shaped this unique relationship between humans and nature.”

As a special event, it featured four types of raptors used in distinguished demonstrations, providing a rare opportunity to admire and learn about these amazing birds up close.

This event, dedicated to supporting the International Raptor and Falconry Center, provided an unforgettable occasion for nature lovers, history enthusiasts, and anyone interested in the ancient heritage of falconry.

US Air Force Brings Peregrine Falcons to Renown Children's Hospital



Since late last year, patients and their families at Renown Children's Hospital in Nevada, USA, have been enjoying unique nature experiences. A falconry program has been established by the Air Force to bring two peregrine falcons, "Kuzco" and "Cairo", to the hospital, where they were warmly welcomed by children, doctors, and all staff.

The program, run by the hospital, aims to lift the spirits of young patients and their families by introducing them to these magnificent birds of prey. Air Force personnel were enthusiastically present to educate visitors about the practice of falconry in the United States.



Its emblem since 1782, the bald eagle has finally become the official bird of the United States



On Christmas Eve, December 2024, former US President Joe Biden signed a law officially designating the "Bald Eagle" as the national bird of the United States. It is a globally renowned bird of prey and appears on the national seal and the Presidential seal, which makes it one of the most iconic symbols since the Declaration of Independence.

The bald eagle has adorned the US seal since 1782. It can still be found on the seals of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, as well as the Presidential seal. This bird is considered one of the country's symbols, but it had never been officially recognized by law until now.

Jake Davis, the participating co-chair of the National Bird Initiative, whose goal was to achieve this recognition, said: "for 250 years, we called the bald eagle the national bird when it wasn't. Today, it has become a fact, since Joe Biden signed a law in this regard.

After the independence of the United States in 1776, Congress tasked a committee with designing the future Great Seal of the United States. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams worked on this for six years before Congress finally adopted the bald eagle in 1782. The seal depicts this raptor as a symbol of courage and honor, clutching arrows of war in one talon and an olive branch of peace in the other.

It is said that Benjamin Franklin opposed the choice of the golden eagle, arguing that it was a "bird of bad moral character," describing it as too lazy to hunt for itself, as it steals prey from ospreys. Franklin preferred

the wild turkey as a bird, which in his view was a "more respectable bird," and "certainly a bit silly and vain," but nevertheless, in his opinion, it was more "courageous."

Despite this, the bald eagle was Thomas Jefferson's preferred choice, as he saw in the majestic appearance of the raptor a sign of nobility and courage. "Eagles have long been part of heraldry due to their majestic image, symbolizing freedom and strength," thus symbolism prevailed over biology.

It is worth noting that since 1940, the sale or hunting of bald eagles has been prohibited in the United States. After being on the verge of extinction, the numbers of these raptors have seen significant growth since 2009.

Dutch Falconers Distribute Their Information Guide in Schools



This educational project was inspired by a joint initiative between the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) and the Dutch Falconry Museum in Valkenswaard, where a specialized booklet on falconry was prepared, serving as a guide to be distributed in schools in the educational field. Andrea Fella, the Union's secretary, undertook the translation and reformulation process, which allowed for its distribution to students.

The booklet is divided into several chapters, discussing the history of falconry and its training methods, but specifically focusing on hunting with specially trained birds of prey, without confusing it with interesting shows where the falcons themselves are the stars.

The guide explains to students how to practice falconry using various birds of prey, the most common being the peregrine falcon, in addition to the goshawk. The two birds differ not only in appearance but also in their hunting methods. The peregrine falcon is very fast and accustomed to hunting in open areas (such as barren lands or meadows), preferring airborne prey. As for hunting with a goshawk, a dog or ferret is also used to make the prey flee from its hiding places, allowing the raptor to pounce on it.

Power Lines in Romania Receive Safety Upgrades for Bird Protection



Bird mortality due to electrocution is a major environmental conservation issue, with uninsulated medium-voltage power lines, which birds often use as resting places, pose one of the biggest threats to these species.

In this context, the Romanian Ornithological Society collaborated with the electricity company to install insulating sleeves on medium-voltage power poles in the central Dobrogea region, starting in January 2025.

A study conducted by the “Life for Falcons” team of the Society in 2024 highlighted the important conservation issue in Dobrogea, a key area for falcons in the Danube River basin in southern Romania.

Over a period of two months, the team inspected 3764 electricity poles in the Danube falcon nesting territories in the region, discovering that at least 13.4% of the poles had caused electric shock to at least one bird. A total of 28 bird species were found as victims, mainly magpies and jackdaws, and other species included storks, eagles, red kites, and goshawks.

The results of this study are of great importance for preserving biodiversity and will form the basis for developing effective protection measures for Danube falcons, which are listed as endangered species in both Romania and Bulgaria.

The research identified horizontal insulators poles and metal crown poles as the most dangerous, with the central Dobrogea region witnessing the highest number of fatalities. These poles were given top priority for insulation within the framework of the “Life for Falcons” project, which is implemented in cooperation with the electricity distribution operator in the region.

A team of 30 specialists carried out fieldwork using specialized equipment to install 1000 insulating sleeves on medium-voltage power lines in eight towns in Constanta County. These sleeves were placed on 300 poles identified as the most dangerous to birds.

After completing the installation of the insulating sleeves, the next step will be to conduct a follow-up study in 2025. The new data will be compared with the initial results to evaluate the effectiveness of this conservation measure.

The factors leading to the decline in Danube falcon populations, such as electrocution, lack of nesting sites, and habitat loss, are an essential part of the LIFE20 project, and this regional strategic program is part of an initiative of the European Union.

Wildlife Hospitals in Australia Collaborate to Save One Peregrine Falcon

In an important and exemplary initiative, Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital and Port Stephens Koala Hospital collaborated across 600 kilometres to treat, rehabilitate, and release a young, injured peregrine falcon.

In early January 2025, Dr. Tom Tran, the veterinarian at Port Stephens Koala Hospital, transferred the injured bird of prey for over six hours to receive specialized care from the veterinary team at Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital and the new raptor recovery centre located near Ewingdale in northern New South Wales."



Ron Land, President of Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital, said, "We treat many types of wildlife species. Magnificent birds like this falcon need to be evaluated by veterinarians with specialized skills and knowledge in raptor physiology and anatomy so we did not hesitate to embark on the long journey for the sake of the peregrine falcon's health."

It was found that the falcon suffered a severe injury to the propatagium, the membrane extending from the shoulder to the wrist, and it is suspected that this injury resulted from exposure to barbed wire.

Dr. Stephen Van Mil, founder and CEO of the board of directors of Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital, said, "The medical team was able to provide primary care, including surgery to stitch the wound, which fortunately has healed very well."

After X-rays, a thorough health check and an overnight stay in the hospital, the small falcon spent two weeks in the large aviary at Byron Bay' Raptor Recovery Centre. Its final examination showed that it was in good health and gaining flight strength.

It is worth noting that the advanced raptor center provides specialized care and long-term rehabilitation for sick and injured raptors. Large circular aviaries, of over 100 meters in circumference facilitate accelerated recovery by allowing raptors to fly continuously for long periods.



The Raptor Recovery Centre operates under the management of Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital to provide specialized care for all types of Australian raptors. Mr. Land said, "This facility is the best of its kind in Australia and a perfect environment to complete its rehabilitation prior to release where she was rescued".

Dr. Bree Talbott, General Manager of Veterinary Services at Byron Hospital, said, "The level of collaboration between rescue groups and wildlife hospitals required to treat a single injured animal is significant and costly."

Achieving positive results in wildlife care requires a lot of time, money, and expertise from trained and skilled veterinarians, nurses, and rehabilitators. Considering that the root causes of local animal suffering is invariably due to human activity, their care is a moral imperative.



Peregrine Falcon Spotted Over Suffolk, England, in a Rare Sighting



A lucky photographer was able to capture a rare image of a raptor as it flew over a beautiful spot in Suffolk, England, where Chris Drakes successfully captured the moment a peregrine falcon landed on Lackford Lakes, near Bury St Edmunds.

According to the Wildlife Trust, species have been abused to the point that their numbers have significantly decreased. However, they

are now starting to reappear, especially in our cities, where they nest on tall buildings.

Regarding the story behind the photo, Drakes said, "I was sitting in Bernard's Hide at Lackford Lake, west of Stow. It was a quiet day, with very few birds in the air, so I was hoping to get a good photo of anything, when this peregrine falcon appeared and circled around me."

He continued, "It was probably looking for Lapwings, which are its favorite food, but there weren't any. I was very lucky to get a photo of it, as it was far on the other side of the lake, then it came close enough for me to capture several good shots," considering that "patience often pays off in wildlife photography."

Three Peregrine Falcons Hatch on Sagrada Familia Towers in Spain



In April 2025, three peregrine falcon chicks hatched in a nest located on the towers of the unfinished Sagrada Família basilica, but unfortunately, only two survived.

The nest is part of a peregrine falcon reintroduction project launched by the Barcelona City Council in collaboration with the Galanthis Natura environmental organization. This reintroduction project has lasted for a decade, aiming to help birds nest in Barcelona.

The Sagrada Família church was chosen as one of the ideal locations for reintroducing this species, because it was among the last places in the city where peregrine falcons nested before disappearing from the Catalan capital. These birds have been successfully breeding in their nest for more than twenty years, feeding on pigeons and other birds in Barcelona.

It is worth noting that since 2022, the City Council and the Sagrada Família church have signed an agreement to ensure the continuity of the project and raise public awareness. In 2024, a camera was installed at the nest to monitor the breeding process of the falcon pair.

The camera allows the monitoring of the birds and chicks through a livestream, which is published by the Sagrada Família Church with a link for accessing live broadcast of the nesting process.

Currently, there are 11 pairs of peregrine falcons nesting in the area, eight in Barcelona, two in "Hospitalet de Llobregat," and one in "Sant Adrià de Besòs." All pairs have laid eggs this year, and it is expected that between 35 and 40 chicks will hatch.

Birth of two peregrine falcons for the first time in the centre of the French city of Bordeaux

The French League for the Protection of Birds announced in mid-May 2025, in the Aquitaine region, the birth of two peregrine falcon chicks nesting in a cavity within the Saint-Marie church, located in the center of Bordeaux.

League experts had observed on February 21st last year, the presence of two peregrine falcons, a male and a female, who had paired four days earlier. On March 19th, the female was seen incubating her eggs within the church cavity. A month later, the chicks hatched and began flying in early June.

This is the first time that the city of Bordeaux has witnessed the breeding of peregrine falcons. These birds of prey are usually found in mountains, and along the coasts (including the Seine River valley)



and the eastern coast of the country. Since the first decade of the 21st century, peregrine falcon breeding has been observed in urban areas, particularly in many major cities in France.

Globally, the peregrine falcon is classified as “least concern” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and is therefore not considered globally threatened.

However, in France, peregrine falcons experienced a significant decline during the 20th century, primarily due to the use of organochlorine pesticides, which weakened the birds’ eggshells. By the 1960s, only about 20 nesting pairs remained. Since then, thanks to preventive measures, peregrine numbers have gradually stabilized. Today, it is estimated that there are around 1,600 pairs of these falcons in France.

750 hunting dogs at a French festival



The latest edition of The Game Fair – France, held on June 13, 14, and 15, 2025, featured a village dedicated exclusively to hunting dogs. More than 100 owners, participated with around 750 hunting dogs. The event included wolf hunting trips and featured hunting dog breeders from France, Italy, and Switzerland, with a display and explanation of breeds that were present in the village and exciting activities for all, including the Grand Hunting Dog Race, and the selection of “Best Performance” award for the dogs.

It is worth noting that this unique event, specializing in hunting and nature in France and Europe, started in 1981, and is held in the heart of the city of Lamotte-Beuvron, in central France. Over 120,000 visitors attended its last edition, with more than 650 exhibitors and about 5000 commercial brands participated in the field of hunting weapons and their accessories. The event included a special village for hunting and interaction with participants, a village for dogs, a village for archery, in addition to a special village for local foods and cooking arts, another for crafts and handmade products, along with competitions and auctions that received wide popularity.

England Bans Wild Peregrine Falcon Hunting



In a decision praised by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in March 2025, and after years of debate and uncertainty, hunting wild peregrine falcons is no longer permitted under license for the purposes of falconry or bird breeding.

However, the validity of issuing wild hunting licenses remains in exceptional circumstances and to strict criteria, and according to the assessment and review of Natural England, which stated that currently it will be extremely difficult for applicants to justify their need to hunt wild birds at the present time.

Natural England's study clarified that taking birds of prey from the wild is not necessary to continue practicing falconry or breeding falcons in England. Falcons bred in captivity are considered a suitable and sufficient alternative and can reach a high level of hunting efficiency when properly trained and handled. This step will help protect wild birds of prey and promote sustainable hunting practices.

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Arab Falconry Roundup



National Geographic Al Arabia celebrates “Falconry Across Borders”



National Geographic Al Arabia magazine, affiliated with Abu Dhabi Media, the leading media company in the United Arab Emirates, participated in the ninth edition of the “Xposure” the International Photography Festival, held in Sharjah from 20 to 26 February 2025, featuring more than 400 photographers from 48 countries.

The magazine presented, as part of its participation, a photographic exhibition titled “Falconry Across Borders,” inspired by a feature it had previously published that shed light on the journey of falconry since its origins in the plains of Central Asia, through the Middle East, and into the Arabian Peninsula. The exhibition showcased a collection of photographs captured by the photographer “Mustafa Azab,” which embodied the unique relationship between the falconer and his falcon, and highlighted the rich cultural heritage associated with this ancient tradition.

The UAE has always been keen to safeguard the sport of falconry, playing a pivotal role in its preservation and global promotion. These efforts culminated in the inclusion of falconry on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Holding the First International Falconry Conference in 1976 is credited to the founding leader, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, who was an internationally renowned falconer and a pioneer in promoting sustainable falconry.

Gulf Falconers Shine in Nasser Bin Hamad Falcons and Hunting Season in Bahrain



The falconry competitions of the 10th edition of the Nasser bin Hamad Falcons and Hunting Season concluded at the end of January 2025, with an international race featuring elite group of falconers from the GCC countries. This took place at the Bahrain International Endurance Village field, where dozens of falconers competed in 8 varied rounds.

Mohammed bin Ayed Al-Athba Al-Marri, Board Member of the Bahrain Inherited Traditional Sports Committee (Mawrooth) and chairman of the organizing committee, crowned the winners of the eight rounds in the international race during the closing ceremony. The winners of the local rounds for professionals and the local rounds for novice owners were also crowned, in addition to the two rounds for local production and young falconer.

The Nasser bin Hamad Falcons and Hunting Season is considered one of the most important sporting and cultural events in the Kingdom of Bahrain, as part of efforts to revive wild heritage and hunting competitions.

The results of the eight international rounds revealed that Mohammed Al-Hajri from the State of Qatar won first and third place in the Saker - Juvenile round, while Fahad Al-Mansouri achieved second place in the same round.



In the Peregrine - Juvenile round, the Saudi falconer Saeed Al-Marri won first place, while the Qatari falconer Abdullah Al-Marri came second, and the Emirati falconer Sultan Al-Niyadi took third place.

In the Gyr Peregrine- Juvenile round, the Saudi falconer Abdulrahman Al-Shamisi achieved first and second place, while the Qatari falconer Mubarak bin Nayefa took third place..

In the Gyr Hybrid- Juvenile round, the falconer Sultan Al-Mutairi from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia claimed first place, while the falconer Hamad Al-Kindi from the United Arab Emirates came second, and the third place went to Saudi falconer Fahad Al-Mansouri.

In the Adult (Jernas) category, 4 international rounds were held, as the Qatari falconer Mohammed Al-Hajri won first and second place in the Gyr Hybrid round, while the Saudi falconer Sultan Al-Mutairi took third place.

In the Gyr Peregrine - Adult (Jernas) round, the Emirati falconer Hamad Al-Kindi achieved first place, then the Kuwaiti Fahd Al-Mulla came second, and the Saudi Fahd Al-Mutairi came third.

As for the Saker - Adult (Jernas) round, the Emirati Hamad Al-Kindi also won first place, while the Qatari Mubarak bin Nayefa achieved second place, and the Saudi Sultan Al-Mutairi took third place.

For the Peregrine - Adult (Jernas) round, the Qatari falconer Mohammed Al-Henzab achieved first place, while his compatriot Abdullah Al-Marri came second, and the Saudi Fahd Al-Mansouri came third.

Carrier Pigeons Dominate and Defeat Peregrine Falcons at Marmi Festival 2025

During the Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival "Marmi 2025", which took place from January 1 to February 1, the peregrine falcons failed through many rounds and in most groups, to achieve significant results in the Al-Haddad Al-Tahaddi championship. Owners of the peregrine falcons in the twenty-first group, hoped to achieve good results and increase the number of winners, but they were unable to achieve that.

The peregrine falcons performed wonderfully and maneuvered in the sky with a desire to win over the pigeon, and present this victory to their owners. However, the pigeons' determination was stronger,

allowing them to escape and return safely to their lofts.

Mr. Shawi Al-Kabi, Chairman of the Haddad Al-Tahaddi committee, stated that the peregrine falcons performed between excellent and average, but they could not win. In Round 21, which featured 31 participants, Abdullah Fakhro emerged as the winner.

In turn, the falconers praised the level of the Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2025) for its high standards of organization and well-arranged competition arenas, emphasizing that their participation is to preserve the



heritage of falconry and pass it on to future generations. They also clarified that one of the festival's positive aspects is its attention to all age groups of falconers from 6 years old and above, which has brought much satisfaction regarding the preservation of the heritage of falconry.

It is worth noting that the championship field is the same field where adult falconers compete, but the distance differs. The distance for the adult falconers race is 400 meters, and the distance for the young falconers championship is 200 meters, this allows the young falconer to release the falcon correctly, ensuring the bird remains clearly visible.



Crowning of Winners at the 15th Al Gannas Society International Saluki Race Championship

The 15th edition of Al Gannas Society International Saluki Race Championship for the year 2025 concluded on February 22, 2025, in Sabkhat Marmi, Sealine, Qatar.

12 Salukis qualified for the final after thrilling qualifiers in 3 rounds, with 4 Salukis advancing from each round.

The Emirati participant Nasser Obaid Al-Ketbi won first and fourth place with Salukis "Rumooz" and "Lawaheeb" respectively. Abdulaziz Al-Zaraa took second place with Saluki "Ghara", while Al-Hashir team secured third place with Saluki "Mawa'ed". Fifth place went to the Injaz team achievement by Saluki "Bolbola."

The first-place winner receives a prize of 100 thousand Qatari riyals, and the second-place winner receives 50 thousand riyals, while the third-place winner receives 30 thousand riyals. The fourth-place winner receives 20 thousand riyals, and the fifth-place winner receives 10 thousand riyals.

Mr. Ibrahim Khalil Al-Tamimi, a member of the organizing Committee at Al Gannas Society, said: "The Al Gannas Society International Saluki Race Championship is considered one of the strongest tournaments in the region, as it features champions who have previously won this championship, or similar races in many countries", praising "the great public turnout from the State of Qatar and from fellow GCC countries and several Arab countries."

He pointed out that the final race was exciting and the levels were close, but the victory went to the Emirati participant Nasser Obaid Al-Ketbi, who had previously won first place last year.

It is worth noting that the racetrack is approximately two kilometres long, the preparation and events committee took precautions and fenced it on both sides to ensure the safety of the participants who follow the race from their cars along the track.

The Saluki race is considered an integral part of the cultural heritage, alongside falconry, as ancestors used Salukis for hunting.



Qatari Falconry Archive... A Huge Project to Preserve Cultural Heritage

The Qatari Al Gannas Society is making diligent efforts in its project, "The Falconry Archive," which was commenced years ago, enabling it to collect several sources and references concerned with falconry heritage, in addition to oral narratives, and documentary videos of hunting and falconry.

In this regard, the academic researcher, Dr. Omar Al-Ajli, a member of the Union of Arab Historians, stated in a statement to the Qatari News Agency that these outputs help preserve cultural heritage and its authenticity, that includes values, customs, traditions, arts, languages and dialects, in order to prevent their loss or forgetfulness. He also pointed out that archiving contributes to storing information and knowledge, enhancing collective memory, and protecting this heritage along with its historical data and facts from manipulation and falsification through accurate documentation, to be used by future generations.

He noted that the Qatari Falconry Archive, launched by the association in 2015 aims to document the history of hunting and falconry and to record the veteran falconers of Qatar, and it is considered an important step in preserving this intangible human heritage."

On his part, Mr. Ali bin Khatam Al-Mahshadi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Qatari Al Gannas Society, said that the society has taken upon itself the mission of documenting falconry heritage and preserving it for future generations, pointing out that the society's work is not limited to this matter, but extends to other significant projects such as the campaign to return falcons to their natural habitat, as well as the Qatar Falcon Genome Project, the Qatar International Conference on Falcon Veterinary Medicine, and other important initiatives.

He clarified that since the launch of the Falconry Archive project, the AGQ has started establishing the Al Gannas Society Library in Qatar, intended to serve as a specialized reference library on Qatari, Gulf, Arab, and international falconry. He revealed that the library contains approximately 300 books, including 50 Arabic titles and more than 300 international books in English, German, Spanish, Russian, and others languages. The library also contains an extensive archive of specialized international falconry magazines and periodicals dating back more than 50 years.

Sustainable Hunting in the Saudi North Reserve: An Integrated Experience Preserving Heritage and Environment

The Imam Turki bin Abdullah Royal Reserve Development Authority continues, through the North Reserve for Sustainable Hunting, to regulate hunting practices under precise environmental regulations, curbing illegal hunting, and enhancing the sustainability of natural resources. These efforts contribute to achieving a balance between reviving national heritage and preserving wildlife, through an integrated regulatory mechanism that ensures the continuity of this practice while raising awareness among individuals interested in preserving biodiversity.

As part of its efforts to provide an integrated sustainable hunting experience, the authority has established fully equipped camps designed to meet the needs of hunting enthusiasts, ensuring a safe environment that aligns with the requirements of this sport. Prey species are carefully regulated according to the season cycles, ensuring the continuity of natural life cycles and the preservation of biodiversity.

Hunting is not merely a hobby; it is a skill that requires expertise and precision, as its practitioners rely on trained falcons or traditional methods that are practiced according to systems ensuring adherence to sustainable hunting standards and maintaining environmental balance.

The North Reserve for Sustainable Hunting is the only reserve in the Kingdom where hunting is permitted using firearms, falcons, and salukis. It also offers tailored hunting programs and a range of accommodation options.

The reserve clarified that its programs begin on the first of November, coinciding with the migration of houbara birds and the start of the hunting season. It aims to conduct regulated hunting activities with a controlled number of participants without harming wildlife, reduce illegal hunting by providing sustainable alternatives, minimize the impact on wild animals in their natural habitat, revive traditional heritage, and develop the tourism products in line with Saudi Vision 2030.



Historically, the reserve has served as grazing area rich in natural resources such as acacia and lote trees, with abundant water pools. It is located along the Houbara migratory route and other wildlife species that find a haven within its boundaries

The varied terrain of the region makes it an ideal destination for hunting enthusiasts, especially in areas like Shuaib Al-Kharsh, Shuaib Qobaa, and Al-Nufud sand dunes including (Irq Al-Lubaid and Lubaydeen, Faydat Umm Al-Sheeh, and the Mataiyah area) offering a truly distinctive experience for houbara hunting experience.

It is worth noting that the North Reserve for Sustainable Hunting was established in 2022 to be the first reserve of its kind in the Kingdom, extending over an area.



King Abdulaziz Falcon Festival 2024 Concludes with Record-Breaking Prizes



The Saudi Falcons Club concluded the King Abdulaziz Falconry Festival 2024, which it organized from December 3 to 19, 2024, at its headquarters in Malham, north of Riyadh city, with prizes exceeding 36 million Saudi riyals, classified as the largest in the history of the festival's competitions.

The event witnessed the participation of 1032 falconers from nine countries (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Qatar, Syria, Italy, and Ireland), with 160 international falconers competing with 3322 falcons, alongside 49 youth participants in the "Future Falconer" category.

The festival concluded with the King's Sword round, the most valuable and anticipated rounds in the "Al-Mallouah" competition, with total prizes reaching about 1,850,000 Saudi riyals, at an average of 925,000 Riyals for each round.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Falcons Club, Talal Al-Shamisi, expressed gratitude for the unwavering support provided to falconry by the wise leadership. He praised the guidance of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince, Prime Minister and General Supervisor of the Saudi Falcons Club, and the continuous support from His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef, Minister of Interior and Chairman of the Club's Board, both of whom spared no effort to elevate this heritage, a source of pride for all citizens of the Kingdom.

Al-Shamisi congratulated the winners of the beauty and Al-Mallouah competitions across their various stages, noting that the King Abdulaziz Falconry Festival 2024 awarded the largest prizes in the festival's history. The prizes were distributed across 138 rounds; including 49 qualifying rounds for, elite locals, professional locals, local owners, amateur locals, and a round for local breeding. The prizes also included six rounds for International Falcon Auction from breeding farms, a round for youth (Future Falconer), another round for women, and 73 rounds for competitors in the King Abdulaziz Cup prizes from international and professional owners, elite and amateur owners, where falconers competed for the King Abdulaziz Cups, and the (King's Sword).

Al-Shamisi said, "The King Abdulaziz Falconry Festival 2024 continues the success story started by the Saudi Falcons Club in 2018, building on a sustained journey of achievements." He emphasized that all the club's activities aim to preserve the hobby of falconry while promoting cultural, environmental, and economic values and concepts, all of which align with Saudi Vision 2030 in enhancing environmental quality and wildlife conservation.

He thanked everyone who contributed to the success of the King Abdulaziz Falconry Festival 2024, noting that the recent falcon season was full of diverse events and activities.

45 Saker Falconers Competed in the Al-Hadad Competition at Al-Qassim Falcon Festival



Al-Qassim Falcons Festival in Al-Asyiah Governorate, organized by Al-Qassim Region Municipality at Prince Faisal bin Mishaal Falcon Field, witnessed a wide turnout of visitors in February 2025, where falcon enthusiasts flocked to watch Al-Hadad shows with more than 40 falconers participating in a thrilling competitive atmosphere.

The festival featured exciting competitions, during which 45 sakers from the best and fastest falcons participated in an exciting sporting event, considered one of the most prominent events that highlights the skills of falconers and the capabilities of birds of prey in fast flight. Participants from across the Kingdom and Gulf countries demonstrated exceptional skills in handling their birds, and presented distinguished shows in guiding and swooping.

A “Young Falconer” competition was also held, with the support and guidance of His Royal Highness the Prince of Al-Qassim region. The event aimed to introduce younger generations to the art of falconry, teaching them the basics of handling falcons, training techniques, and traditional hunting methods, thereby helping to instill this deeply rooted heritage in their hearts.

The festival featured numerous accompanying events, including the provision free spaces for productive families and owners of specialized commercial activities, in addition to governmental bodies, which added a rich and integrated cultural and traditional aspect to the festival. Falcon sales were also active during this event, earning admiration of visitors who particularly praised the exciting Al-Hadad shows.





Salman Al Balushi, the Largest Falcon Trader in Bahrain

In an interview with Al-Watan newspaper in Bahrain, Salman Al Balushi, one of the leading falcon traders and a prominent practitioner of hunting and falcon racing in Bahrain and the region, said: "The bird means everything to me in my life... literally everything. I cannot live without it, and it cannot live without me. "

Al Balushi began his falconry journey at an early age, driven by a passion for acquiring and breeding falcons, to the point where the hobby evolved into a business and participation in Gulf and international competitions. He revealed that he owns more than 70 trained falcons at his farm in the Southern Region of Bahrain, requiring daily care including nutrition, treatment, and training. He pointed out that Bahrain imports captive-bred falcons from abroad, particularly from the United States and some European countries.

He also indicated that there are more than 50 Bahraini falconers, whom he is proud to be associated with, and that falcon breeding has advanced significantly thanks to modern equipment. He also confirmed that every falcon now has a passport and a health record, allowing it to travel between countries around the world.

Al Balushi said, "We now represent Bahrain in international championships, as we participated last season in the International Federation Cup in Dubai, and secured third place, in addition to winning first places in more than 30 times in several

competitions such as the President's Cup, King Abdulaziz Festival in Saudi Arabia, and the traditional heritage competitions in Kuwait and Qatar.

He mentioned that falconry involves preparing the bird for hunting in the wilderness, which forms the foundation of the falcon-breeding hobby. However, training for racing is a different realm within traditional heritage sports, where the bird becomes an athlete requiring an intensive training and nutritional program, just like a human athlete. He expressed his hope to establish a school to teach falcon breeding and race training, explaining that passing down this hobby offers many benefits to the younger generations, including teaching courage and compassion.



Seasonal Falconry Licensing Service



This service allows falcon owners to practice falconry during a single hunting season within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, in accordance with the regulatory and organizational requirements



Sultan Al Qasimi Inaugurates the Sharjah Falconers Club and Approves the Falcon Breeding Center Project

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, inaugurated the Sharjah Falconers Club in February 2025, in Al Burair area.

His Highness toured the corridors of the administrative building, which includes a lecture hall with simulators for remote-controlled gliding and drones, a library for falconers, administrative offices and a rest area for falconers. He also viewed the exhibition, which contains the most prominent tools used for falconry and hunting, and the latest devices used in various falconry competitions.

His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah, during a meeting with the chairman and members of the Board of Directors of the Club, was briefed on the club's progress and the most prominent efforts made to achieve titles and achievements in various local and international championships. He also viewed a presentation on the Sharjah Falcon Breeding Centre project, which will enable falconers to acquire birds easily and take care of their health and training in a correct manner, in addition to the best global practices and experiences in the field of bird breeding .



His Highness approved the Sharjah Falcon Breeding Center project, which aims to provide a natural environment for birds to facilitate breeding, nurturing and healthcare for different types of birds, in collaboration with Al Dhaid University. He also approved the surrounding natural area to be a protected zone that allows the club to practice falconry activities and provides a safe and suitable environment for training.

The Board of Directors of the Sharjah Falconers Club expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Ruler of Sharjah for his great support, which has enabled the club and its falconers to achieve accomplishments and titles through participation in various tournaments, and for the advanced facilities and amenities provided



to the club which contribute to shaping a new generation interested in breeding and falconry.

The Ruler of Sharjah then honored the falconers who achieved accomplishments and titles in various local and international competitions, and presented them with the Distinguished Falconer Shield, wishing them continued success in achieving more titles.

H.H. also visited the Sharjah Falconers Club Clinic which provides advanced and integrated healthcare for falcons. It includes a laboratory equipped with the latest international devices and technologies, a feather splinting room, a specialized operating room, a CT scan machine, the first of its kind in the region, and a centre for selling falconry equipment.

The Ruler of Sharjah was briefed on the examination procedures that birds undergo in the clinic, starting with preliminary examination, sedation, and providing the necessary nutrients, all the way to performing an endoscopy for internal diagnosis, taking swab tests to detect and identify fungal infections, and choosing the appropriate treatment plans, in addition to regular examinations, mobile services and health awareness programs.

H.H then moved to the Molting falcon shelter, which has a capacity of 500 birds and was briefed on its specifications, as it is equipped with the highest health standards by providing air purifiers and temperature and humidity sensors to maintain the place's temperature.

The "Molting " building also provides the ideal environment for birds living in Siberian regions. The building is characterized by multiple windows that allow natural light and a cool atmosphere that enable birds to live in their suitable environment.

The Sharjah Falconers Club is considered a beacon of heritage, reflecting the ancient history of falconry while preserving the noble values and traditions rooted in this sport and passing them on to future generations. The club aims to provide a distinguished environment for falconry enthusiasts to practice their favourite hobby and exchanging experiences and knowledge in this field.



The Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program has entered its fourth decade by releasing 81 falcons in the Republic of Kazakhstan during May 2025, bringing the total number of falcons returned to the wild since the program's inception to 2,355 falcons of the Saker (Hurr) and Peregrine (Shaheen) species.

The program aims to increase falcon populations and protect them from threats such as the expansion of human activity at the expense of natural habitats, unsustainable breeding practices, climate change, and other factors that place them at risk of extinction.

The program has been conducted in Kazakhstan for the ninth consecutive year, marking the start of its fourth decade since its launch in 1995, with the release of 53 Peregrine falcons and 28 Saker falcons within their natural migratory range. This range includes parts of Kazakhstan, Russia, China, Mongolia, and neighbouring countries. These regions are characterized by rugged mountains and vast plains, providing ideal habitats rich in prey for the falcons.

All falcons in the program underwent a comprehensive series of veterinary checks, intensive training, and the attachment of identification rings, in addition to being implanted with electronic microchips. Moreover, 10 falcons (five from each species) were equipped with solar-powered satellite tracking devices to monitor survival rates, migration patterns, and dispersal. The scientific data collected helps refine future rehabilitation, training, and release strategies.

His Excellency Mohammed Ahmed Al Bowardi, Vice Chairman of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) and Vice Chairman of the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC), extended his sincere thanks to His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of EAD ((Environment Agency-AbuDhabi)), for his patronage and continued support of the Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program. The program is now recognized as one of the world's most important initiatives for the reintroduction of endangered wild species, continuing the legacy of the late Founding Father and reinforcing Abu Dhabi and the UAE's leadership in nature conservation and biodiversity protection, essential for both environmental and human well-being.

His Excellency also praised the partnerships that contributed to the program's success, which include the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, the Mohammed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, the International Fund for Houbara Conservation, and the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital. He also acknowledged the support of the Office of the Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Special Affairs, and the UAE Embassy in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

His Excellency expressed deep appreciation to the Committee on Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Agriculture in Kazakhstan, and the relevant Kazakh authorities for facilitating the work of the joint team in implementing the program.



Launch of the UAE World Falcon Racing Cup

In implementation of the directives of His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President of the UAE, Deputy Prime Minister, and Chairman of the Presidential Court, and under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Second Deputy Ruler of Dubai, President of the International Federation for Falconry and Falcon Racing Sports, and President of the UAE Falconry Federation, the UAE Federation has approved the organization of the “UAE World Falcon Racing Cup – Telwah ((The Lure))” annually across different continents starting from the 2025–2026 season.

The championship aims to solidify the UAE’s position as a leading destination in falcon racing and to elevate and globally promote falconry, making it a key sporting activity across various nations and communities. This initiative is overseen by Sheikh Zayed bin Hamad bin Hamdan Al Nahyan, Vice President of the International Federation for Falconry and Falcon Racing Sports and Vice President of the UAE Falconry Federation.

The tournament is the first of its kind to bear the name of the UAE and to be held outside of the country. The hosting rights will be granted to the country that demonstrates the highest level of readiness and compliance with the championship’s standards and conditions among the member states of the International Federation for Falconry and Falcon Racing Sports.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum emphasized that the wise leadership’s support for falconry carries deep national significance, tied to the authentic Emirati heritage. Falconry has become a cultural hallmark not only within the UAE but globally, establishing a unique model that blends cultural and historical richness with a modern global perspective through international sports events related to falconry.

His Highness also noted that the UAE has established international standards to enhance falconry and boost its presence in the global competitive sports arena. This is based on the country’s outstanding experience in the field, along with its pioneering initiatives and programs that began decades ago under the vision and wisdom of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may he rest in peace, who gave falconry and its related sectors great attention and care — the fruits of which are being reaped today.

For his part, Sheikh Zayed bin Hamad bin Hamdan Al Nahyan praised this step, stating that it comes at a time when the UAE has succeeded in securing a leading position for falconry among the most promising sports. The country has built a large base of practitioners and contributed to the establishment of an international body that aims to support and regulate the sport globally in accordance with competitive rules, principles, and strong sporting values — the International Federation for Falconry and Falcon Racing Sports.

Rashed bin Markhan, Secretary-General of the International Federation for Falconry and Falcon Racing Sports and Secretary-General of the UAE Falconry Federation, affirmed that the approach the UAE is taking to support falconry has strengthened its global presence. The country is now among the most distinguished worldwide thanks to deliberate and strategic efforts that have made it an active partner in the development of this ancient sport and a key player in the international sporting landscape.



Abu Dhabi Environment: Tracking 53 Osprey Chicks

The Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) has ringed 53 osprey chicks during the 2025 breeding season. The agency also targeted 31 active nests in Abu Dhabi, using a global identification system for these birds. This system uses a dark blue ring on the right leg bearing a unique alphanumeric code, which helps track their distribution and survival after leaving the nest.

The agency has urged the public to take a photo of the bird without disturbing it and share it with its teams by emailing osprey@ead.gov.ae to help study the bird's routes and protect it. The efforts of EAD teams are contributing to the conservation of this species and ensuring its continued existence.

The osprey is one of the most prominent birds of prey in the UAE, soaring over its coasts and relying almost entirely on fish for survival.

The Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) is implementing an intensive program to protect the osprey, known locally as the (Dammi). It conducts ongoing surveys throughout the emirate to monitor its breeding populations and its movements through banding and the installation of artificial nesting platforms.

While the osprey is classified as Endangered according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) local list, Abu Dhabi hosts the largest recorded osprey breeding population. Recent surveys (2023-2024) showed that Abu Dhabi hosts 100% of the osprey breeding population in the country, with 127 pairs. This is the largest in the Arabian Gulf region, representing 15% of the osprey population in the Arabian Peninsula.

The Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) explained that the osprey is protected under Federal Law No. 24 of 1999, which prohibits hunting, killing, or capturing these birds, collecting their eggs or hatchlings, or causing damage to their breeding sites. The Agency explained that the presence of ospreys along coastal areas is a good indicator of the health and quality of marine ecosystems, especially since they feed exclusively on fish and are widespread in marine habitats only, with very few nesting inland.

Ospreys breed in the UAE from December to March, and usually nest on the ground in massive nests. Each breeding pair builds one or more large nests using dry vegetation found at the nesting site. Nests are also built on coastal rocky outcrops, abandoned structures, or any raised platform large enough to accommodate them. The authority noted that the most significant threats facing the osprey are predation, particularly by the red fox, which poses a particular threat to ground-nesting birds. Human interventions at nesting sites during the breeding season can also negatively impact the reproduction process.

“Barqa Al Soqour” in Al Dhafra region provides protection for 120 living species

“Barqa Al Soqour” Protected Area in Abu Dhabi provides protection for 120 living species, including three endangered species. The reserve is considered a habitat for many critical species. According to the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, the reserve hosts a number of important endangered species such as the Arabian Oryx, Houbara, and rare species like the Spiny-tailed Lizard, among other nocturnal wildlife.

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi indicated that the reserve is one of the most important breeding sites for the Houbara bustard, located in the Al Dhafra region. It is characterized by coastal sabkhas, gravel plains, rocky outcrops, and planted forests.

The “Barqa Al Soqour” Protected Area, which spans an area of 79 square kilometers, is characterized by its rich biodiversity and dense plant cover, especially as it is a passage for many migratory birds, particularly falcons. The reserve is home to 19 bird species, including one endangered species, 6 reptile species, one of which is endangered, 726 plant species, seven mammal species one of which is endangered, and 62 invertebrate species.



The “Barqa Al Soqour” natural reserve is considered a habitat for many critical species, and features a variety of ecosystems, with deserts and sand dunes covering 26 square kilometers, representing 33%. The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi has established general rules to protect the reserve and its environmental treasures, such as prohibiting pets, preventing soil and water pollution, refraining from waste disposal, and avoiding disturbance or cutting plants. It also prohibits feeding wild animals or lighting fires. Additionally, hunting, using drones without a permit, camping without a authorization, cutting trees, riding bicycles or motorized vehicles, and damaging geological formations are all strictly prohibited.





An Emirati Scientific Break-through: Breeding the Great Indian Houbara Bustard Through Artificial Insemination

The Emirate of Abu Dhabi has achieved a new success in preserving endangered species, as the efforts of the International Fund for Houbara Conservation, through its captive breeding program, contributed to producing the first chick of the Great Indian Houbara Bustard through artificial insemination.

This achievement is a significant indicator of the UAE's efforts locally and globally in species conservation, where the innovative techniques developed by the International Fund for Houbara Conservation have helped restore hope for the propagation of several endangered Houbara species, including the Great Indian Houbara. The population of the Great Indian Houbara, which was estimated at over 1000 birds in the sixties of the last century, has now decreased to about 120 birds due to multiple factors, most notably habitat loss, overhunting, and collisions with power lines and facilities, in addition to a decline in the natural breeding rate.

At the end of last year, the first chick of the Great Indian Houbara hatched through artificial insemination, a technique developed by experts from the Houbara Program in Abu Dhabi in collaboration with their Indian counterparts, specifically adapted for the Great Indian Houbara. As part of ongoing cooperation between the

UAE and India, a frozen sperm bank will be established to preserve the genetic material of these endangered birds in the long term, and to ensure genetic diversity for these birds in captivity and in the wild.

Scientists, officials, and environmental activists in India celebrated this success, considering it a major step towards restoring the natural population of this endangered bird. The outcome of experiments and scientific studies conducted by the International Fund for Houbara Conservation, have helped strengthen hope for saving more endangered species around the world.

Abdullah Ghurair Al Qubaisi, Director General of the International Fund for Houbara Conservation, said: "We are delighted to be part of this significant achievement for the Great Indian Houbara, a critically endangered bird, which conventional methods have failed to protect. This prompted the Wildlife Institute of India and the Indian government to collaborate with us in 2018 to establish an innovative program, simulating the captive breeding and release model developed at our research centers in Abu Dhabi, the Kingdom of Morocco, and the Republic of Kazakhstan."

Professor Shyam Sundar Meena, an ecology specialist, described the artificial insemination experiment as a "great success," saying: "Environmental enthusiasts are very happy about this. I congratulate everyone on this wonderful news."

Ashish Vyas, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Wildlife Division, in Jaisalmer, India, expressed his happiness with this achievement, saying: "This is the first time the Great Indian Houbara has been bred through artificial insemination. This breakthrough will enable us to preserve the sperm of these rare birds, establish a sperm bank, and eventually increase their numbers."

He also pointed out that a similar technique was tested on the Houbara by the International Fund for Houbara Conservation in Abu Dhabi, where it proved successful. He noted that, in this regard, scientists from the Wildlife Institute in India travelled to Abu Dhabi last year to learn this technique.



Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund Signs Historic Agreement in Kazakhstan

The Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund (MBZRCF) signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kazakhstan Electricity Grid Operating Company (KEGOC) and Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar). This strategic agreement aims to enhance biodiversity outcomes and mitigate risks related to wildlife associated with power transmission infrastructure across Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's vast steppes and deserts are vital habitats for raptors, including the endangered Saker Falcon. However, the increasing of power infrastructure poses significant threats to these raptors.

This MoU paves the way for joint efforts to mitigate these risks and build infrastructure models that are biodiversity-friendly in the region. The Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, a global leader in raptor conservation, will provide scientific and technical guidance to promote best practices in energy development with positive environmental solutions. KEGOC, as the national grid operator in Kazakhstan, and Masdar, a leading international renewable energy developer, will work in cooperation with the Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund to assess risks, develop strategies for mitigation, and promote knowledge exchange initiatives.

His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Al Qubaisi, Managing Director of the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, stated: "This agreement is a milestone in our mission to integrate environmental conservation with infrastructure development." He added: "Through unifying our efforts with KEGOC and Masdar, we are demonstrating that protecting biodiversity and advancing energy resilience are indispensable."

The partnership will focus on identifying and mitigating biodiversity risks across major bird migration corridors, promoting the use of bird-safe infrastructure designs, building capacity for biodiversity, monitoring and data collection, and supporting research to strengthen conservation efforts and infrastructure planning.

This agreement reinforces the commitment of the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund to developing science-based collaborative solutions to conserve raptor along the Eurasian migration route and beyond.

DP World integrates falconry with logistics services to revolutionize golf balls recovery



Dubai Port World, known for its advanced logistics solutions, has demonstrated its innovative approach in solving an age-old sports problem: recovering lost golf balls. Over the past three years, this innovative project has successfully collected more than 350,000 golf balls, showcasing a variety of unconventional and effective retrieval methods.

Among the prominent techniques used by DP World is the art of traditional falconry, which was prominently featured during the DP World Tour Championship held at Jumeirah Golf Estates in the UAE at the end of December 2024.

This method not only adds an impressive touch to the event but also ties in strongly with the local heritage of the UAE, symbolizing the deep connection and power between humans and nature.

DP World described its unique integration of hunting with falcons into sports logistics services as “smart logistics services par excellence.” The company believes that this demonstrates its precision and commitment, which is reflected in the meticulous control exercised by falconers over their birds, and which reflects DP World’s leadership in global trade.

It is worth noting that during the recent championship, James Oertel from the Desert



Kings Falconry Club, along with his falcons Malikah and Habib, played pivotal roles in the search for lost golf balls, which brought joy and wonder to the attendees.

This initiative strongly highlighted how traditional practices can be seamlessly integrated into modern commercial operations to enhance efficiency and foster cultural reflection.

Emirati Engineer Develops “Drones” for Falcon Training

Engineer Zayed Mohammed Salem Al Mashjari succeeded in developing drones specialized for falcon training, which have become linked to the sport of falconry and hunting in recent years, through adapting modern technologies to carry out professional training tasks that contribute to spreading the sport among its enthusiasts and reaching the highest levels of training.

The Emirati company, AL HADAD AERO owns specialized and locally developed drones for training falcons, these drones are characterized by ease of control, auto-



mous take-off and landing, automatic balance, a speed that reaches up to 110 kilometres per hour, a flight duration of up to 53 minutes, and an altitude of up to 1000 meters, in addition to an Arabic-language control device, and can also be used as a normal aircraft or drone.

Emirati engineer Zayed Al Mashjari explained that the modern training method provides greater control than the traditional method. The prey’s direction (the lure) is guided via the drone, while its speed and altitude can also be adjusted. This enable the trainers to control the bird’s speed, improve its fitness, and encourage it to fly for longer periods, resulting in more effective training compared with the traditional method, which required more effort and time.

He pointed out that his journey with the project began during the COVID-19 crisis, as he decided to pursue traditional falconry first. After gaining experience in modern training needs, he transitioned to modern training, leveraging his expertise as an electrical engineer. He acquired the first drone from Dubai and studied its design throughout a full season, during which he was able to discover its defects, represented in the difficulty of flying and manoeuvring especially for beginners, in addition to choosing the appropriate and most effective design.

Al Mshjari added in an interview with Al Khaleej newspaper: “We surveyed global drone manufacturing markets and then reached out to the Chinese company HEQ, which manufactures such products. We ordered a drone from them and tested it for six months. Its performance improved significantly by 90% after major modifications, including reprogramming and upgrading all electronic components. It was transformed from a photography drone into one dedicated to falconers after modifying its motors, installing “the lure,” which represents the falcon’s artificial prey, and equipping it with a power distributor to handle the extra weight to ensure its safety.”

NOTE: SEPERATE FILE FOR THE
FOLDABLE HISTORY WALL

Sheikh Zayed

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FOLDABLE HISTORY WALL

3 FOLDS

**Clubs, Competitions,
Championships, Exhibitions, Events,
projects and scientific research**

From the Heart of the Desert to the World: The UAE Revives the Sport of Falconry and Soars High with It

Traditional sports have represented for decades a fundamental pillar in the national identity of the UAE and have received great care due to their importance in preserving cultural and popular heritage for fathers and grandfathers. The UAE has established the best standards and practices to support these sports, especially equestrian, camel racing, and marine sports, and hunting with falcons. It has also been keen to establish many concerned clubs and launch many championships and competitions in this regard.

Falconry has received special attention, reflecting the strong commitment to preserving this authentic sport and following



the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, who said that falconry is an important sport that teaches patience and strength, and how to

overcome difficulties through intelligence and insight, which reflects the ability of the desert people to tame this wild bird.

Ensuring the Sustainability of Falconry and Developing It as a Global Sport

From ancient Bedouin traditions and hunting ethics to modern efforts to preserve the environment, including projects and research on breeding in captivity and preserving species, Emirati falconers are writing a new chapter in the story of falconry through sustainable practices rooted in an appreciation of nature.

In the field of falcon conservation and protection from extinction, the UAE has signed relevant international agreements on environmental and wildlife protection and species conservation. Before that, the UAE launched captive breeding and release programs for falcons had already started their research and operations at an early stage. The UAE has become one of the leading countries in the world in the field of falcon production and breeding, and Emiratis represent a large percentage of falconers in the Middle East and the world.



Since the era of the late Sheikh Zayed, the UAE has led efforts to preserve falconry and consolidate its global presence, based on its unwavering approach to protecting cultural heritage and promoting sustainable hunting methods. The UAE has succeeded in bringing falconry back to the forefront of the global sporting scene, boosting its popularity and widespread dissemination.

Today, falconry is witnessing a significant increase in popularity, thanks to the interest and support it receives from Their Highnesses, the Sheikhs of the UAE, who believe in

its importance, values, and principles, which are closely linked to the national identity, civilizations, and history of the people, contributing to the promotion of the sport's achievements and successes at all levels.

The UAE has played a major role in spreading and developing this sport at the international level, establishing the foundations for its growth and advancement to global levels, and consolidating the culture of its practice among different generations and groups, and raising awareness of its values and heritage globally.

Your victory matters to us “Namousak Yhemna”

Under the directives of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Second Deputy Ruler of Dubai, President of the UAE Falconers Federation, President of the International Federation for Falconry Sports & Racing: The UAE Falconers Federation signed, during the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition on September 7, 2024, and in partnership with many concerned national authorities, the “ Namousak Yhemna ” document at its pavilion at ADIHEX.

The signing of the document was witnessed by Sheikh Zayed bin Hamdan Al Nahyan, Vice

President of the UAE Falconers Federation, Vice President of the International Federation for Falconry Sports and Racing, in the presence of His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers Club.

Also in attendance were His Excellency Mohammed Saeed Al Nuaimi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, His Excellency Ghanem Mubarak Al Hajeri, Director General of the General Authority for Sports, His Excellency Fares Mohammed Al Mutawa, Secretary General of the National Olympic Committee, and His Excellency Rashid bin

Markhan Al Hammadi, Secretary General of the UAE Falconers Federation, Secretary General of the International Federation for Falconry Sports and Racing.

The event was attended by a number of representatives from supporting entities, including His Excellency Abdullah Hamdan bin Dalmook, CEO of Hamdan bin Mohammed Heritage Centre, His Excellency Sultan Ibrahim Al Mahmoud, Executive Director of Abu Dhabi Falconers Club, and His Excellency Mohammed Khalifa Al Badwawi, Chairman of Sharjah Falconers Club.

This initiative aims to facilitate the participation of falcons from the United Arab Emirates in international falcon championships and races, and to encourage governmental and private entities to become partners in supporting the sport of falconry, in addition to monitoring and documenting sporting achievements for Emirati falconers.



The UAE Falconers Federation has succeeded in concluding many partnerships and cooperation agreements with several entities and organizations during the recent period, aiming to promote the culture of falconry sports, introduce its noble principles and values, and finding the necessary frameworks to advance its rich journey through a set of ambitious programs and initiatives.



Continuous efforts for 50 years

Sheikh Zayed, may God rest his soul, recognized, even before the founding of the UAE, the importance of preserving nature and sustaining the heritage of falconry, while achieving a balance between them. This led to the organization of the first International Conference on Falconry and Conservation in Abu Dhabi, in 1976, bringing together falconers, researchers, and specialists from different countries around the world, marking a pivotal starting point for an important global strategy to protect falcons and Houbara bustards, and to enhance the role of falconers, research, and studies in conserving species and safeguarding cultural heritage. This conference laid the

foundation for many of the institutions we see today, including the Emirates Falconers' Club, the first Arab club to join the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF), which now includes more than 150 institutions, associations, and clubs from nearly 90 countries. From 2018 to 2024, the UAE has won the presidency of the IAF for two consecutive terms, thanks to the election of His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, as President of the Association.

ADIHEX and the International Falconry Festival

In September 2001, the Emirates Falconers' Club was officially established as the first club in the UAE to support falconry using sustainable methods and practices, and to bring together falconers from the Arab Gulf region to be a beacon for them in practicing and preserving their authentic heritage and achieving sustainable hunting. This was thanks to the efforts and support of the founder of the club, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, may God protect him, and stemming from the vision of Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him, in preserving falconry as one of the most important pillars of the nation's heritage.

Since its establishment and over 24 years, the Emirates Falconers' Club has succeeded, thanks to the directives and guidance of its Chairman, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region, in conveying its message and achieving the vision of Sheikh Zayed for sustainable falconry for future generations.

In 2003, the EFC began organizing the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) as an annual international event, strengthening its leadership on the global map by bringing together falconers, researchers, specialists, environmental advocates, and breeders of captive-bred falcons from around the world. It also brought together falconry clubs and associations from various countries, in addition to organizing specialized conferences, workshops, and seminars on the sport of falconry, and attracting innovators of both traditional and modern falconry equipment.

ADIHEX constitutes an important opportunity for both falconers and falcon farms, as its timing coincides with the start of the hunting season on one hand, and the launch of the falconry competitions and

championships season on the other. Held at the turn of the year, it attracts falconers seeking to acquire the best captive-bred falcons for participation in local and regional events, as well as for use in permitted reserves.

The club also played an active and tangible role, in collaboration with national and international entities, in the successful efforts to register falconry with UNESCO in 2010 as a living human heritage on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Thanks to these efforts led by the UAE, falconry now has a dedicated global day, celebrated annually on November 16. Thus, falconers everywhere can achieve their dream of receiving international recognition for their legitimate practice.

Extending the first gathering of falconers nearly five decades ago in Abu Dhabi, the Emirates Falconers' Club has continued its efforts to celebrate falconers of the world in the editions of the International Festival of Falconry for the years 2011, 2014, and 2017, an event considered a global forum for falconers.

For more than two decades, the EFC has contributed through its membership in the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey to conveying its message in preserving Arab falconry through strategic partnerships with various clubs, enhancing their programs, and supporting



conservation and species-protection initiatives. EFC has also contributed to organizing dozens of conferences and seminars with many partners such as New York University Abu Dhabi and the UAE University, it encouraged the publication of specialized books on falconry, as well as establishing and preserving the falconry archive in the Middle East.

The Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School in Al Ain desert, in Remah area, has witnessed widespread interest in learning the art of Arabian falconry and desert living traditions. The school has attracted thousands of students of various nationalities, while also organizing special attractive programs for tourists and distinguished guests visiting Abu Dhabi and the UAE. Today, the school has become a leading educational, cultural, and touristic destination in the region.

Competitions and Championships

The Falcon Racing Federation Cup contributed, through its organization by the UAE Falcons Federation, to stimulating falcon breeding centres and developing their production to meet the increasing needs of falconers and purchasers, for participation in speed races and hunting trips. In this regard, the International Federation for Falconry Sports and Racing was established, with the aim of encouraging and supporting the practice of falconry globally, thus contributing to preserving this ancient sport and its sustainability.

The UAE hosts the headquarters of the International Federation for Falconry Sports and Racing and has played a leading role in its establishment. The Federation represents a strong foundation and a solid platform for the global advancement of this traditional sport, under the presidency of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Second Deputy Ruler of Dubai and President of the National Olympic Committee.

The Federation has contributed to the development and promotion of this sport internationally, laying down the foundations for its growth and advancement through a comprehensive framework. It has elevated falconry sports to global standards while strengthening efforts to support all disciplines related to falcon racing. The establishment of the International Federation for Falconry Sports and Racing is regarded as a fundamental pillar of the UAE's role and success in achieving numerous milestones in the sustainability of falconry.

At the forefront of the local competitions and championships for which falcons are acquired is the prestigious President's Cup for Falconry, the Falconry Competitions in the Al Dhafra Festival, and the "Zajil (Carrier Pigeon) Challenges" Championship in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the "Fakhr Al Ajyal (Pride of Generations) Falconry Championship", and Fazza Championship for Falconry Telwah (lure) organized by



the Hamdan bin Mohammed Heritage Centre in Dubai, in addition to the annual hunting season in the Marzoum Reserve in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, which runs from November to February for traditional falconers and hunting enthusiasts. Also, the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School programs in Remah, Telal Resort near Al Ain, has attracted widespread interest in learning Arab falconry. In addition, there are various exciting competitions, including the Sharjah Championships, Ghayathi, Al Dhafra, Tal Mor'ab Festival, Sheikh Zayed Festival, and the UAE Falconry League, which is held annually through a joint organization between the Abu Dhabi Falconers Club and the Hamdan bin Mohammed Heritage Centre.

Leading the falconry Championships in the UAE is the President's Falconry Cup, which annually attracts a large number of participants and features nearly 100 rounds. This championship highlights the vital role of local falcon breeding farms in promoting the sport of falconry and supports participation in various events. It also holds great importance among enthusiasts of authentic national heritage, as falconers from all over the UAE and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries are keen to participate in it.

Moreover, the Mohammed bin Rashid Falconry Cup organized by the Hamdan bin

Mohammed Heritage Centre in Dubai and affiliated with the Fazza Championships Department, is also held annually, with a record participation of over 5000 falcons, and 800 falconers, and prizes exceeding 23 million dirhams. The event also includes two final rounds with prizes totalling one million dirhams for each round. The competitions also feature the main Fazza Falconry Championship, "Al-Tilwah," which attracts widespread participation.

The International Federation for Falconry Sports and Racing covering a distance of 400 meters, is considered one of the major and important championships that contribute to the development of this sport, given the wide international participation each year, in addition to the preliminary Tilwah races in the Juvenile (Farkh) category, and the Federation Cup for Tilwah falcon Racing.

The falconry sport competitions held in the UAE also include the Shield for National Falcon Breeding Championship, and other events that are held annually with significant participation from those interested in this sport locally and internationally. In addition, the initiative for the Best Falcons Breeding award, recognizing individual falcon breeders and breeding centers is held on the side-lines of the Shield for National Falcon Breeding rounds.



Sport and Heritage

In this regard, Sultan Al Mahmoud, Executive Director of the Abu Dhabi Falconers Club, stated that hunting or falconry is very popular and is considered one of the beloved sports in the UAE, thanks to the attention and support of the wise leadership, as it is an integral part of the ancient heritage of the UAE. He emphasized the club's keenness to organize events and programs that contribute to promoting this sport and ensuring its sustainability across different generations. He also pointed out that falconry in the Emirates enjoys remarkable attention, stemming from the legacy of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may he rest in peace, noting that the UAE has adopted many initiatives to protect falcons and the main species threatened with extinction ensuring their conservation.

From his side, Rashid Hareb Al Khasnoui, Director of the Fazza Championships Department at the Hamdan bin Mohammed Heritage Center, confirmed that the Fazza Falconry Championships, which include the main Championship "Al Tilwah", and the Mohammed bin Rashid Falconry Racing Cup, and the Fazza "Al-hadad" Championship, are among the most prominent events held in the UAE, and enjoy great appreciation at the regional and global levels. They are not merely sporting competitions, but rather a cultural and heritage events that reflect the deep bond between the people of the UAE and falcons, as well as their rich falconry traditions..

In turn, Demaitan bin Suwaidan, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Fazza Championships affiliated with the Hamdan bin Mohammed Heritage Center, affirmed that these championships are considered one of the main pillars contributing to the preservation of the ancient Emirati heritage, and a living example of the deep connection with the Emirati cultural heritage. They revive well-established traditions that reflect the authenticity of Emirati culture and heritage, while greatly contribute to raising awareness of the importance of preserving it and developing a sense of belonging and pride.



Clubs and a Thriving Sports Program

In recent years, the UAE has witnessed a remarkable increase in the establishment of clubs, championships, competitions, auctions, and events dedicated to falconry, clearly reflecting the importance of this authentic heritage and the commitment to ensuring its sustainable practice for future generations.

- Emirates Falconers' Club.
- Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition.
- International Festival of Falconry.
- Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School.
- Auctions of captive-bred falcons at the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX)
- Abu Dhabi Falconers' Club.
- The President's Cup for Falconry Competition at Al Falah Field in Abu Dhabi.
- The President's Cup Falcon Beauty Contest.
- The President's Cup for Haddad Competition.
- Hamdan bin Mohammed Heritage Centre.
- Fazza Championship for Falconry - Tilwah.
- UAE Falcons Federation.
- International Federation for Falconry Sports & Racing
- Federation Falconry Cup, in Dubai, organized by the UAE Falcons Federation.
- UAE Falconers League.
- Sharjah Falconers Club.
- Sharjah Tilwah Championship.
- Rashid bin Humaid Falconry Championship in Ajman - Tilwah.
- Pride of Generation Falconry Championship "Tilwah".
- Al Dhafra Festival Falconry Competitions - Zayed City Field.
- Sheikh Zayed Falconry Competitions - Al Falah Field in Abu Dhabi.
- Al Marzoom Hunting Reserve.
- Tilal Resort in Al Ain - Ramah area.
- Falcon racing competitions in Liwa International Festival - Tal Moreeb.
- "Al Zajil Challenges" Championship for falconry.
- Ghayathi Falconry Competition.
- Falconry Competition at Al Sila Marine Festival.
- Falconry Competition at Al Yasat Festival.

UAE Global Achievements

Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program

The sustainability of falconry is maintained by releasing falcons back into their natural breeding habitats after their use in hunting."

- ✓ Release of 2274 falcons of various species, including the Saker and Peregrine, into the wild since 1995.
- ✓ Providing important data through satellite tracking of released falcons, revealing invaluable scientific information for ornithologists.



International Fund for Houbara Conservation

- ✓ Production of more than 795,500 Houbara birds (including Asian and North African Houbara) since 1996.
- ✓ Since 1998, approximately 625,000 Houbara bustards have been released into the wild across 17 countries within the species' natural range.
- ✓ More than 120,000 Houbara birds have been distributed to falconers.

Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital

- ✓ Treatment of more than 160,000 falcons since 1999, with an annual average of approximately 11,500 falcons.
- ✓ Analysis of more than 730,000 laboratory samples, with a current annual average of approximately 70,000 samples.
- ✓ 50 local and international awards.

Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi

Support for genetic studies and research on Saker and Peregrine falcons, in co-operation with the Wildlife Consultancy Group, Cardiff University, and the Beijing Institute of Genomics.

- ✓ Installation of 5,000 artificial falcon nests in Mongolia to increase the population of saker falcons and boost the number of breeding pairs.
- ✓ More than 25,000 Saker falcon chicks hatched in the wild.
- ✓ Issuance of more than 7500 falconry permits in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi during the last three seasons.

Captive Breeding of Falcons

- ✓ A qualitative leap in the sport of falconry and in sustaining and reviving this authentic heritage.
- ✓ Abu Dhabi's research and scientific efforts have enhanced the quality of bred falcons, making them more resistant to fungi and diseases, while also improving their hunting abilities and aesthetic traits.
- ✓ Abu Dhabi supports genetic research and studies on falcons, as it has succeeded in determining the genetic makeup of the Eurasian Saker falcon and the Peregrine falcon, in addition to discovering the complete genetic map for Saker and Peregrine falcons.

Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund

- ✓ Providing grants for specialized local and international research and scientific projects aimed at the conservation of birds of prey and supporting initiatives to preserve falconry in its traditional form.
- ✓ 27,000 electricity poles have been modified in Mongolia.
- ✓ Rescuing 18,000 birds of prey annually, including 4,000 Saker falcons.



الصندوق الدولي للحفاظ على الحبارى
International Fund For Houbara Conservation

Promoting Ecological Balance

Ensuring a Sustainable Future for the Houbara Bustard

قم بزيارة جناحنا وكن جزءًا من
رحلتنا في الحفاظ على البيئة

VISIT US AT OUR STAND AND BE PART
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24 Years of Remarkable Achievements

From Heritage to Sustainability... The Emirates Falconers' Club Preserves Falconry with a Contemporary Spirit

Vision: Sustainable falconry deeply rooted in Arabian heritage, widely practiced, for future generation.

Mission: Develop, facilitate and conduct programs that support sustainable falconry and falcon and prey species.

The Emirates Falconers' Club (EFC) was officially launched in September 2001 as part of efforts to support traditional hunting through sustainable methods and practices, thanks to the efforts of its founder, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, may God protect him, who is known for his passion for falconry and his love for heritage. This initiative stems from the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may he rest in peace, and reflects Abu Dhabi's efforts in preserving falconry as one of the most important pillars of national heritage.

The Club aims to preserve falconry as an Arab and human heritage and a historical legacy to be proud of. It also seeks to promote the fundamental principles, sound practices, and ethics of falconry, promote sustainable hunting, and support studies, legislation, and mechanisms aimed at preserving biodiversity. Furthermore, it contributes to projects for conserving falcons and prey, breeding them in captivity, and protecting their natural habitats and distribution areas, in addition to organizing related activities and events, and developing international cooperation with institutions concerned with falconry preservation.

Over nearly 24 years, the Emirates Falconers' Club, under the guidance and direction of its Chairman, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in the Al Dhafra Region, has achieved numerous accomplishments and attracted thousands of falconers from across the UAE and the region.

His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, stated that falconry has always represented overcoming the difficulties faced by our ancestors in the past, and this is what has strengthened our connection to it. More importantly, the benefit of falconry extends to preserving wildlife by

providing a healthy environment for birds and prey. He added, while unveiling the Club's new website, that falconry management was a duty for us at the Emirates Falconers' Club to contribute to providing prey and falcons with suitable environmental conditions that would increase their numbers, thereby preserving species and enhancing the practice of this heritage.

His Excellency extended his sincere thanks and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, may God protect him, the founder of the Emirates Falconers' Club, and to His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Club, for the great support they provide to local and global efforts and projects for falconry conservation, following the path of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan – may he rest in peace – and the love for and pride in falconry heritage that he instilled in the hearts of the people of the UAE.

Over the years 2024 and 2025, the Emirates Falconers' Club continued its achievements locally and internationally, achieving further successes in preserving falconry and passing it on to future generations. It played a prominent role in the celebrations of the 53rd National Day of the UAE (last December 2nd), in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, the National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority, and several schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

The Club celebrated World Falconry Day (November 16, 2024) and the 14th anniversary of falconry's inscription on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as well as the expansion of the global map of falconry practice, reflecting the efforts initiated and led by the UAE.

Projects and Initiatives

Since 2003, the Emirates Falconers' Club has organized the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX), the largest of its kind in the Middle East and Africa. Its falconry sector is one of its most attractive sectors for the public and serves as the primary destination for tens of thousands of falconers in the GCC region who visit annually to prepare for the hunting season by acquiring traditional and modern falconry tools.

The Club has also organized numerous events supporting sustainable hunting, falcon conservation, and heritage preservation. Among the most prominent is the International Festival of Falconry (IFF), a global forum and gathering for falconers from all over the world, which began in 2011.

Another prominent project is the establishment of the Arabian Saluki Centre in Abu Dhabi, the first of its kind in the region, aimed at reviving one of the pillars of desert traditions based on hunting with falcons accompanied by Saluki dogs.

In 2016, the Emirates Falconers' Club also established the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, the Club's pioneering educational project, as the world's first specialized leading platform for teaching the art of Arabian falconry and the traditions and ways of desert life.

In September 2024, the Club re-issued Al Saggar magazine, a specialized scientific heritage periodical focused on falconry and sustainable hunting. It was originally published from 2002 to 2007 and achieved wide circulation, playing a significant role in highlighting and spreading the heritage of falconry.

Among the most important heritage and environmental initiatives of the Emirates Falconers' Club, which have garnered widespread regional and international attention, are the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, the Middle East Falconry Archive, and the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey.

Since 2017, the Club has organized the Winter Camp for Sons of Pride in cooperation with the Martyrs' Families Affairs Office at the Crown Prince Court in Abu Dhabi. The camp hosts children of martyrs aged between 12 and 18, providing theoretical and practical lessons on the principles and ethics of Arabian falconry and its correct practices.







Preserving Arabian Falconry and Promoting Sustainable Hunting – Houbara Distribution Program

The primary objectives of the Emirates Falconers' Club's include conserving falcons and their prey, and ensuring their continued abundance. This aims to preserve and develop Arabian falconry, promote widespread acceptance of sustainable hunting, thereby ensuring the sustainability of falconry and the preservation of the UAE's cultural heritage.

Through its contribution to efforts in conserving and passing down falconry to future generations, promoting sustainable hunting practices, and reducing illegal trade in wild houbara, the Emirates Falconers' Club, in cooperation with the International Fund for Houbara Conservation, annually sets a plan for providing captive-bred houbara bustards. In past seasons, these birds have been allocated for training falcons for falconers and beneficiaries of the Club's program, registered by hunting reserves, contributing to reducing the illegal trade of wild houbara and protecting them in their natural habitats.

Inscription of Falconry on UNESCO List

Since 2006, the Emirates Falconers' Club has participated in all efforts to inscribe falconry on the UNESCO list. These international endeavors, led by the UAE, culminated on November 16, 2010, with the adoption of the largest joint file for human heritage in the history of the international organization. Falconry was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, a significant achievement that brought the greatest recognition to the legitimacy of falconry as a sport.

Members of the Emirates Falconers' Club commended the tangible efforts made by the state in cooperation with other countries to achieve this accomplishment, which contributed to raising awareness of the value of falconry as both a heritage and a global human art form.

Emirati falconers affirmed that, given the deep roots of falconry in our culture and its status as one of the main symbols of our national identity, its inclusion on the UNESCO list will enhance the prominence and promotion of this heritage locally and globally. It will also encourage future young generations to learn and practice falconry, and to be proud of it as an important element of their national heritage.

Global Falconry Photography Research and Scientific Cooperation Program



This program, implemented in cooperation with New York University Abu Dhabi and the International Fund for Houbara Conservation, aimed to study and research the relationship between humans and raptors, extending from over 3000 BC to the present day. It involved a large group of specialized international scientists and experts representing various disciplines, including archaeology, anthropology, history, art history, and media studies.

The program included the organization and preparation for authoring a global book on the history of falconry, comprising nearly 60 articles. This encyclopedic work also involved creating a database of falconry images with comprehensive explanations and descriptions, which is accessible to scientists and the public.

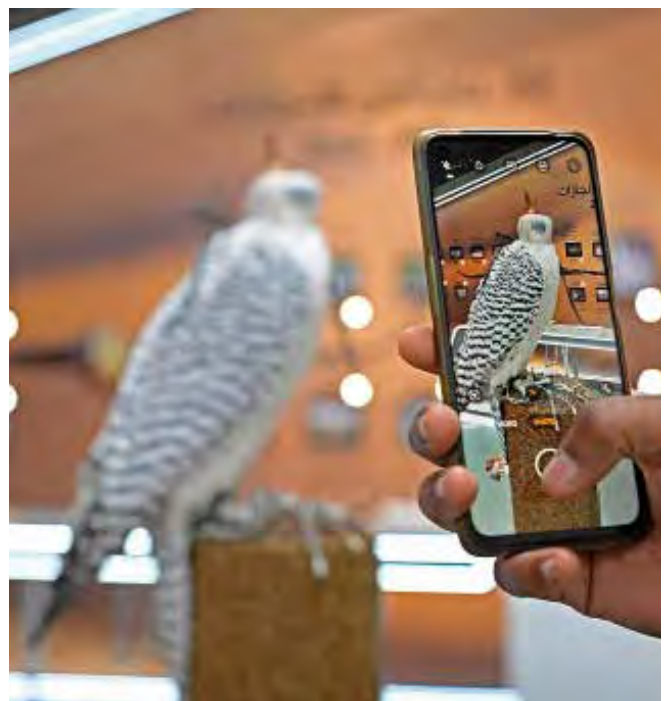
New Website Launched

The Emirates Falconers' Club (EFC) has launched a new bilingual website (Arabic and English) at (<https://efcuae.com/>), which aims to enhance communication with the public and falconry enthusiasts both inside and outside the UAE, and to provide falconers and interested individuals with all the information they need. The website is continuously being developed and updated.

The website features an attractive design and user-friendly navigation that attracts visitors, and it includes comprehensive information about the EFC's key initiatives and projects.

The launch of the new website is a first step in an ongoing development process. It will serve as a gateway for communication with the public, providing them with everything related to falcons, falconry, hunting, as well as the Club's activities, events, projects, and its local and international participation.

The Emirates Falconers' Club has also updated its social media platforms, emphasizing the increasing importance of digital media communication, which has become a leading means of direct and instantaneous interaction with the public.



Emirates Falconers' Club (2001-2025)

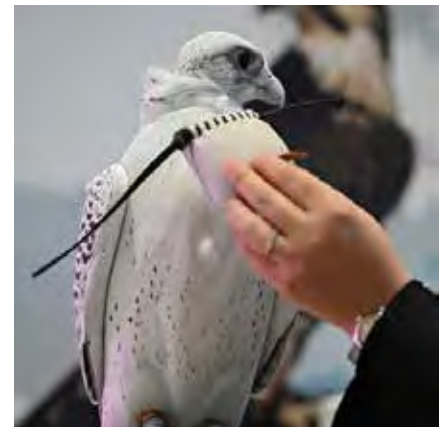
- Facts and Figures -

- More than 90 missions accomplished by the Emirates Falconers' Club over 24 years.
- Organized 22 editions of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition, the largest event of its kind in the Middle East and Africa.
- Organized 4 editions of the International Festival of Falconry (IFF).
- More than 100 main and sub-competitions organized during ADIHEX, with hundreds of competitors from the UAE and various continents participating in each over 23 years.
- Conducted more than 2,000 workshops.
- Organized more than 10 auctions for captive-bred falcons.
- Contributed to the inscription of falconry on the UNESCO list.
- Publishing "Al Saggar" magazine, a specialized scientific heritage periodical focused on falconry and sustainable hunting.
- Contributing to the Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program.
- Established the Arabian Saluki Centre in Abu Dhabi.
- Established the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School.
- Evolved into a global reference platform for falconry and sustainability affairs.
- Developed the falconry strategy for the Middle East and North Africa region.
- Preparing to establish the Hamdan bin Zayed International Falconry Library.
- Collaborating with the Martyrs' Families Affairs Office, Crown Prince Court, since 2017, to organize the annual Winter Camp for Sons of Pride program.
- Organizing of the Emirati-Japanese Falconry Program.
- More than 2 million visitors have attended ADIHEX since 2003, which is organized by the Emirates Falconers' Club.
- More than 6,500 male and female students trained at the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School since 2016.
- Contributing to the establishment of the Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Museum of International Falconry in Brussels, in 2024.
- More than 12,000 captive-bred houbara distributed to falconers in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Morocco, Bahrain, Mauritania, Algeria, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the International Fund for Houbara Conservation.
- Approximately 90 countries participated in the last edition of the International Festival of Falconry in 2017, represented by more than 700 falconers.
- Nearly half a million people visit the Emirates Falconers' Club pavilion each year during the Sheikh Zayed Festival.
- Significant growth of the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) since the Emirates Falconers' Club assumed its presidency in 2018 (and before that, Vice President since 2014): the association's membership now includes 150 institutions, associations, and clubs from 90 countries where falconry is practiced by over 100,000 falconers.
- The Emirates Falconers' Club participates in dozens of the most important heritage and cultural events inside and outside the UAE.
- Signing of several memoranda of understanding with official and private institutions and entities in the UAE, the UK, Japan, and Russia.



Emirates Falconers' Club in 2024

1. Hosted the first edition of the joint Emirati-Japanese Falconry Camp in Ramah area, Al Ain, in January 2024, supported by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club.
2. Participated in organizing the 21st edition of (ADIHEX 2024), under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
3. Highlighted the Emirates Falconers' Club's prominent projects and initiatives at its pavilion within the Abu Dhabi International Hunting Exhibition, attracting a wide public turnout.
4. Issued a special edition of "Al Saggar" magazine, comprising 25 diverse and engaging sections with 86 heritage, cultural, scientific, and environmental articles.
5. Signed a Memorandum of Understanding for joint cooperation between the Emirates Falconers' Club and Abu Dhabi Culture Authority, aiming to expand collaboration in heritage preservation and sustainable hunting.
6. Launched the ninth season of the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School.
7. The Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed International Falconry Museum in Brussels began welcoming visitors, aiming to promote the cultural heritage of falconry globally.
8. Initiated preparations for the establishment of the Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed International Falconry Library, the first of its kind in the Arab world and globally.
9. Launching the official website of the Emirates Falconers' Club with a new design and developing its social media platforms.
10. Participated in the AEROS 2024 exhibition hosted by Khalifa University of Science and Technology, as part of efforts to prepare a new generation that preserves its heritage using smart technologies.
11. Participated in the second edition of the "Early Childhood Development Exhibition" at Umm Al Emarat Park, where joy filled the Club's pavilion, and children happily interacted with falcon and Saluki shows.
12. The Emirates Falconers' Club and the Arabian Saluki Centre participated in the Sheikh Zayed Festival in Al Wathba, Abu Dhabi, starting from November 1, 2024 (until March 31, 2025), where the pavilion saw a remarkable turnout of visitors and tourists of various nationalities and ages.
13. Celebrated World Falconry Day (November 16) and the 14th anniversary of falconry's inscription on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as well as the expansion of falconry practice worldwide thanks to efforts initiated and led by the UAE.
14. Participated in the celebrations of the 53rd National Day of the UAE (December 2), in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, the National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority, and several schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.



Emirates Falconers' Club in 2025

1. The second edition of the joint Emirati-Japanese Falconry Program was held in Ichihara City, Japan, in February 2025, supported by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club.
2. Successfully concluded the ninth educational falconry season at the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, with the participation of 1,622 male and female students, marking the highest number of trainees in the school's history.
3. Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), which has 1,900 members in 86 countries and aims to enhance the sustainable management of wildlife and natural resources.
4. Participated in the General Assembly meetings of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) in Doha – April 2025.
5. Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Russian Roscongress Foundation, the official organizer of the Falcon Day International Forum.
6. Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood to educate children about falconry traditions.
7. Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the British Archive of Falconry.
8. Active participation in the "Make it in the Emirates" exhibition, from May 19 to 22, 2025.
9. Participated in organizing the 22nd edition of (ADIHEX2025).



Emirates Falconers' Club Attracts ADIHEX Visitors with Events Promoting Its Vision for Sustainable Hunting

The Emirates Falconers' Club pavilion at the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition 2024 witnessed a remarkable turnout. It successfully captured the attention of many attendees of various nationalities and ages, including children, through events that showcased the Club's objectives of preserving falconry, safeguarding cultural heritage, and maintaining authentic traditions.

The Emirates Falconers' Club provided introductory principles on falcon care, training, and the practice of falconry and sustainable hunting. It also introduced the Arabian Saluki, highlighting proper care and the traditions of training hunting dogs. Through an interactive screen, a special digital edition of "Al Saggar" magazine was launched, in addition to printed copies. Visitors also got to learn about traditional Arabic coffee-making and explore the Hadheera Area.

The Emirates Falconers' Club pavilion featured interactive screens with information about falcons and displayed essential traditional falconry tools. Additionally, it showcased the Club's successes over the past five years in developing the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition through publications and illustrative graphical statistics. It also presented the Club's achievements and initiatives since its establishment.

During the exhibition, the Emirates Falconers' Club, through its participation, highlighted its most prominent projects, namely the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition, the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School (the Club's pioneering educational

project), the International Festival of Falconry (IFF), the Arabian Saluki Centre in Abu Dhabi, and "Al Saggar" magazine.

Through its pavilion, the Emirates Falconers' Club also offered visitors an opportunity to learn about its significant heritage and environmental initiatives, such as the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, the Middle East Falconry Archive, and the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey.

His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, affirmed that ADIHEX serves as a platform where civilizations from various continents meet together through a range of distinguished events, reflecting the UAE's commitment to reviving and preserving Arab and human heritage.

He added that, through its falconry sector, the exhibition provides the ideal opportunity to launch a positive and fruitful hunting season, with preparations for falconry hunting, falconry races and championships, as well as auctions for captive-bred falcons.

The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF), through its dedicated corner within the Emirates Falconers' Club's pavilion, was keen to highlight the association's role and achievements in falcon conservation and representing the rights and needs of falconers in all international agreements affecting falconry. It also provided essential information about the IAF and the evolution of falconry practice since its inscription on the UNESCO list in 2010.



Wide Turnout for Arabian Saluki Activities

The Arabian Saluki Centre in Abu Dhabi, an affiliate of the Emirates Falconers' Club, provided visitors with publications, display screens, and essential educational information related to Salukis and the diverse services offered by the Centre. It also allowed them direct interaction with Saluki dogs during the exhibition.

The Saluki is an important part of Arab hunting heritage and falconry. Saluki dog races and beauty contests, which began hundreds of years ago in the Arabian Peninsula, continue to this day. Salukis can run at speeds of up to 75 kilometers per hour and can maintain this speed for distances of up to 3 miles.

The Centre also aims to preserve purebred strains, provide documented references for them, and equip interested individuals with the necessary knowledge about this ancient sport, the unique traits of Saluki dogs, and their proper care.

Driven by its commitment to preserving the customs and traditions associated



with traditional hunting in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the Arabian Saluki Centre specializes in providing the best purebred Arabian hunting dog strains for those who wish to acquire them. In addition,

the Centre provides comprehensive care and attention, including Saluki breeding, training, healthcare, reproduction, and microchipping, as well as registering births, issuing passports and pedigree certificates, and arranging travel and transportation according to approved regulations





Abu Dhabi Heritage Authority and Emirates Falconers' Club Sign Memorandum of Understanding for Joint Collaboration

In a move to strengthen a rich history of achievements and expand cooperation in heritage preservation and sustainable hunting, His Excellency Major General Staff Pilot Fares Khalaf Al Mazrouei, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Heritage Authority, and His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for joint cooperation between the two entities.

The signing ceremony took place on the sidelines of their participation in the 21st edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting Exhibition. This reaffirms the strong ties between the two parties and their commitment to establishing and fostering fruitful cooperation and partnership.

The MoU aims to enhance joint collaboration and coordination, develop and support the strategic partnership between both parties, and strengthen integrated collaboration towards achieving their shared goals and visions. This will solidify Abu Dhabi and the UAE's prominent and leading position. Additionally, it includes providing immediate mutual support for implementing joint projects, ensuring a real and reliable partnership within each party's operational framework. It also covers the exchange of reports and information according to timelines set by the communication team for each subsequent agreement.

The areas of cooperation and coordination include raising awareness about falconry ethics and its authentic traditions, developing sustainable hunting methods, and preserving falconry as a genuine Arab heritage and historical legacy, in which we take pride in with all its unique characteristics and merits. It also encompasses cooperation in educational programs on the art of Arabian falconry, desert physiognomy, and desert living traditions, as well as active participation in heritage programs at specialized falconry festivals, both locally and internationally.



Promoting Efforts to Prepare a New Generation that Preserves its Heritage with Smart Technologies

Emirates Falconers' Club Presents Stunning Live Shows at IROS 2024

The Emirates Falconers' Club (EFC) participated in the 36th edition of the International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS 2024), which concluded in Abu Dhabi in October 2024 and was hosted by Khalifa University of Science and Technology at ADNEC. The EFC presented activities that reflected its commitment to preserving this ancient heritage while keeping pace with modern developments, promoting the traditional sport of falconry among students and visitors, and encouraging them to innovate and design advanced smart technologies and software for falcon protection, tracking, and monitoring threats, with the goal of finding innovative solutions for their preservation. This supports nurturing of a new generation that combines its dedication to preserving heritage and traditions with enhanced investment in smart technologies to achieve this.



Over five days, nearly 10,000 enthusiasts enjoyed a rich and comprehensive falconry experience that included stunning live shows and interactive sessions with professional falconers. The Club offered the public opportunities for direct interaction with falcons, while falconers released them to soar within a specially designated area at the venue.

The Emirates Falconers' Club highlighted its continuous efforts in promoting sustainable hunting initiatives and preserving the authentic heritage of falconry. It also presented a series of spectacular falconry shows that captivated the event's audience and contributed to reinforcing Abu Dhabi's position as a global hub for robotics, intelligent systems, and advanced technology innovation.



The IROS 2024 conference is one of the largest and most important robotics research conferences in the world. It attracts researchers, academics, and industry professionals from around the globe. The Emirates Falconers' Club also extended its support to Khalifa University of Science and Technology, the conference organizer, where the university showcased models of the latest innovations in falconry and highlighted the integration of advanced technology and artificial intelligence with traditional practices.

During the conference, the Falcon Monitoring Challenge was launched as part of efforts to protect wildlife and conserve

species. This was a collaboration between Khalifa University of Science and Technology (Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering), the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), and the Robotics Society of Japan.

The IROS 2024 conference served as an important platform for cooperation and coordination between the Emirates Falconers' Club, environmental preservationists, and experts in robotics and intelligent systems. This contributes to understanding the challenges of monitoring and protecting falcons, and preserving the heritage of falconry through safe and smart methods, relying on technology developers.

Among the most significant developments in wildlife, based on intelligent systems and technologies, is the use of tracking devices, drones, and data management technology. These have contributed to monitoring threats to species and developing innovative solutions for their protection.



It brought the joy and delight to the faces of the children and offered them something beneficial

Emirates Falconers' Club Spreads Joy and Knowledge at the Early Childhood Development Fair

The Emirates Falconers' Club (EFC) participated in the 2024 Early Childhood Development Fair, held at Umm Al Emarat Park from October 31 to November 2, organized by the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority. The Club captured the attention of children and school students who attended with their families to explore new, fun, and educational experiences that enriched their young imaginations through innovative activities and programs.

The Club introduced its objectives of preserving cultural heritage and safeguarding authentic traditions, aiming to raise awareness about the importance of preserving heritage and safeguarding falconry. The club provided visitors with informational brochures, booklets, and display screens highlighting its projects and initiatives.



A festive atmosphere filled the booth of the Emirates Falconers' Club, with children's faces lighting up in delight and excitement. They also gained valuable experiences that deepened their bond with falcons, hunting dogs, and other animals.

The Club's participation also captured the attention of parents who are passionate about heritage and authenticity. The shows featuring falcons and Salukis were hugely popular, being a source of pride and admiration

The Club gave children the opportunity to interact directly with falcons and Arabian Salukis, encouraging them to get close and take memorable photos. It also presented a selection of souvenirs, including special coloring kits, sustainable bags to color and use, and informative publications for visitors.



Significant Turnout for Emirates Falconers' Club Activities at Sheikh Zayed Festival



The Emirates Falconers' Club pavilion at the Sheikh Zayed Festival in Al Wathba, Abu Dhabi, witnessed a remarkable turnout from visitors of various nationalities and ages. Attendees of this major event learned about the Club's objectives in preserving falconry, safeguarding heritage, and upholding authentic traditions.

The Emirates Falconers' Club provided visitors with introductory principles on falcon care, training, and the practice of falconry and sustainable hunting. It also introduced the Arabian Saluki, explaining how to care for it and the traditions of training hunting dogs. The Club successfully attracted those passionate about heritage, authenticity, and cultural entertainment., offering children opportunities for direct interaction with falcons and Arabian Salukis, encouraging them to get close and take memorable photos.



His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, affirmed that the Sheikh Zayed Festival serves as a platform where civilizations and heritage masterpieces from different continents of the world meet through a large array of cultural, artistic activities, and distinctive features. The festival holds a prestigious place among major events in the UAE and the region and has successfully attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors and tourists.

His Excellency stated that the vision of the Emirates Falconers' Club emphasizes celebrating falconry and ensuring the harmonious preservation of authentic traditions with modern principles of species conservation. Its mission and objectives focus on developing programs that support sustainable falconry, conserving falcons and prey, and preserving heritage.

**Supported by His Highness Sheikh
Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Conclusion of the Emirati-Japanese
Falconry Program Activities in Ichihara City**



The second edition of the Emirati-Japanese Falconry Program has concluded. The program continued with the support of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club. This initiative falls within the framework of the agreement signed between the Club and the Japanese "INPEX-JODCO" foundation, aiming to enhance and support friendship programs, student exchange, and cultural cooperation between Emirati and Japanese falconers.

Several Emirati and Japanese falconers participated in the camp program in Ichihara City, Japan, in February 2025. Participants included students from the Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for Boys and Suwa Falconry School, Japan's oldest and most renowned falconry school, established approximately 1,650 years ago. Falconry is regarded as one of Japan's most traditional hunting practices. At the conclusion of the program, participants were honored and

presented with certificates of appreciation by the Japanese side, in recognition of their contributions to efforts aimed at preserving authentic traditions, safeguarding falconry practices, ensuring their sustainability, and strengthening the pillars of shared human cultural heritage.

His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, extended his sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, may God protect him, and to His Highness Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, and His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club, for their unwavering support of efforts and projects to sustainably preserve the sport of falconry both within and beyond the UAE, for their commitment to passing it on to future



generations, and for supporting the activities of the joint falconry camp with Japan.

He expressed his great happiness at the continuation of this unique cultural exchange between two countries renowned for their deep-rooted falconry traditions. He thanked the Japanese side and all participants who contributed to the success of the second edition, affirming that this exchange represents a valuable experience that strengthens the spirit of cooperation and the historic friendship between the UAE and Japan, with culture, particularly falconry, inscribed by UNESCO as shared human heritage—serving as one of its main pillars.

The participants visited the Mayor of Ichihara, who welcomed them and commended the activities and importance of the program in both the UAE and Japan, which strengthens the friendly relations between the two countries. They also attended a workshop on

the art of “Amezaiku,” a traditional Japanese candy sculpting art reflecting the country’s diverse culture, through depictions of animals and plants. Additionally, they visited Ichihara’s natural and cultural landmarks and the city’s most prominent museums.

The program also included workshops on the history of falconry in Japan and the traditional techniques and methods used, as well as training activities on tracking prey, handling birds of prey, and hunting with them. The program further featured practical falconry experiences in the Ichihara region with several hunting teams, and an exploration of the Japanese cultural experience in this regard, with the participation of the Mohammed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, the leading educational project of the Emirates Falconers’ Club, and Suwa Falconry School.

The program further featured practical falconry experiences in the Ichihiro region, organized through several hunting teams, offering participants the opportunity to explore Japan's cultural approach to falconry. The Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, the Emirates Falconers' Club's pioneering educational project, took part in the program, alongside Japan's Suwa Falconry School.

Emirati and Japanese falconers exchanged knowledge and expertise in the art of falconry, supporting ongoing efforts to preserve and sustain falconry heritage. They demonstrated falcon training methods and highlighted the differences in falconry practice between the UAE and Japan, particularly in the types of falcons and prey used, as well as falconry tools and equipment, and the hunting areas and their nature.

Japanese falconer Noriko Otsuka, President of the Suwa Falconry Preservation Association, expressed her hope that falconry would become a gateway to ancient Japanese culture. She noted a commonality between young falconers in Japan and the UAE: they are trained from a young age, and as they gain experience, they begin participating in hunting trips with professional falconers.

She said, "I believe that through falconry, one can learn about the noble values, courage, pride, and glory inherent in this sport, as well as cultivate respect for nature, preserve it, and honor customs, traditions, and the heritage of our ancestors."

She mentioned that thanks to the Emirates Falconers' Club and her participation in the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition since its early editions, she developed the will and determination to become an ambassador for Japanese falconry, sharing her expertise and introducing it to the world, while also nurturing a new generation of Japanese falconers by imparting knowledge of falconry in Arab countries.

Mohammed Saeed Al Suwaidi, a participant from Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for Boys, expressed his happiness at having this unique opportunity to join the falconry trip to Japan, noting that it was a wonderful journey rich in diverse cultural experiences.

For his part, Mohammed Ahmed Bin Nawi Al Mazrouei extended his sincere thanks to Their Highnesses the Sheikhs for providing the opportunity to visit Japan, a country with a rich history in falconry. He pointed he learned new things about handling birds in Japan, and that there are few differences in training, as fathers and grandfathers are keen to train their children.

Participant Saeed Ali Al Badi Al Dhaheri spoke about the importance of the experience and how to release falcons. Hareb bin Ahmed Al Qamzi affirmed that the joint falconry program provided students with new valuable information about falcons in Japan, especially regarding the releasing of the bird. Meanwhile, Hadher Salem Al Muhairi spoke about the warm hospitality in Japan and their dedication to introducing their falconry practices, expressing his happiness that the UAE provided them with the opportunity to participate in this important program.





MOU Signed Between Emirates Falconers' Club and International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation

His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, stated that falconry has become a global model for international cooperation and cultural dialogue. He affirmed that, as a result of intensive efforts led by the UAE, falconry was inscribed in 2010 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity at UNESCO.

This announcement came during His Excellency's participation in the 71st General Assembly of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) in Doha, Qatar. He spoke at a working session titled "Falconry in the Arabian Peninsula," attended by a selection of experts and specialists from around the world.

The General Assembly convened from April 25-27, 2025. The CIC comprises approximately 1,900 members in 86 countries and aims to promote the sustainable management of wildlife and natural resources.

During his speech, the Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club recalled a significant historical milestone in the journey of global falconry: the convening of the First International Falconry Conference in Abu

Dhabi in 1976. This event brought together falconers from the Arabian Peninsula with their counterparts from North America, Europe, and the Far East for the first time. This conference marked a strategic starting point led by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may he rest in peace, to unite falconers worldwide as pioneers in nature and species conservation, and safeguarding falconry as a shared global cultural heritage. From this perspective, education and raising awareness among new generations remain crucial to ensure the sustainability of falconry as a human heritage and to enhance the role of sustainable hunting in environmental preservation.

He explained that through these initiatives, the Emirates Falconers' Club aims to preserve falconry as a human heritage, establish sound principles of Arabian falconry, advance sustainable hunting, and support studies and legislation that contribute to biodiversity conservation, alongside programs for the breeding of falcons and prey in captivity and the protection of their natural habitats.

The MoU includes cooperation in raising awareness about falconry ethics, preserving authentic traditions, and developing sustainable hunting methods. It also covers cultural exchange among students in the field of falconry, and the exchange of knowledge and expertise between Emirati falconers and their counterparts from other countries under the umbrella of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation. Furthermore, it emphasizes promoting falconry as a sustainable practice aligned with international environmental conservation goals and highlights its significance on global platforms, including CIC events and UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage initiatives.

The MoU also includes supporting the participation of falcon breeding farms in relevant falconry events organized by both parties, cooperation in organizing falcon auctions, and developing new plans and activities to expand cooperation in Saluki hunting, highlight its rich cultural aspects, collaborate on the conservation of prey, and raise global awareness about the importance of environmental preservation.

“The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood” and “Emirates Falconers’ Club” Sign MoU to Educate Children on Falconry Traditions



In May 2025, the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood and the Emirates Falconers’ Club signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to cooperate in strengthening and embedding Emirati national identity and instilling Emirati values and authentic heritage customs in children and youth. This will be achieved through designing and implementing a series of joint programs and activities.

This MoU comes as both parties celebrate Emirati Children’s Day, which launched nationwide on March 15 and continues throughout the year under the theme “The Right to National Identity and Culture.” This initiative is guided by Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, “Mother of the Nation,” Chairwoman of the General Women’s Union, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation.

The MoU was signed by Her Excellency Al Reem Abdullah Al Falasi, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers’ Club.

Through this Memorandum of Understanding, both parties aim to strengthen ties of cooperation and coordination, develop and support their partnership, find proactive solutions to any difficulties or obstacles, and reinforce their

integrated collaboration to achieve shared goals and visions.

Under the MoU, the Council and the Club will collaborate to organize educational sessions for children on the history of falconry and its role in national identity, along with interactive workshops to enable them to learn about falcons and methods of their care and training.

The MoU includes organizing field visits for children to learn firsthand about falconry traditions, and producing educational visual materials and stories for children that narrate the history of falconry and its importance in promoting national values.

The MoU stipulates the desire of both parties to cooperate in qualifying and educating children and youth about the fundamental principles of sustainable hunting methods and falconry ethics. This is considered a historical legacy and an important aspect of the ancient Emirati heritage, which contributes to supporting the formation of a child’s identity, developing their ability to interact with their cultural heritage, participate in and express it, and enhancing their sense of belonging and identity—a crucial element for their well-being and integrated development.

Through signing this MoU, the Supreme Council for Childhood seeks to implement the National Strategy for Childhood and fulfill the provisions of the Child Protection

Law (Wadeema), including guaranteeing children’s right to enjoy national identity and culture, which is one of the strategy’s pillars, by developing cultural awareness and enabling children and youth to connect with the nation’s heritage.

Through the MoU, the Emirates Falconers’ Club aims to contribute to raising awareness among children, youth, and beneficiaries of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood’s services about sustainable hunting methods and falconry ethics, and to promote and elevate these practices, while preserving this authentic Arab heritage in all its richness as a venerable historical legacy.

In this context, the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood organizes awareness programs aimed at introducing the fundamental and sound principles related to the world of falconry, and the foundations and rules of practicing this sport, which is associated with many noble values and authentic qualities such as courage, pride, patience, insight, shrewdness, contentment, humility, and teamwork.

Emirates Falconers' Club Captivates Visitors: Falconry on Display at “Make it in the Emirates” Exhibition

The Emirates Falconers' Club (EFC) participated in the fourth edition of the “Make it in the Emirates” exhibition, held from May 19 to 22, 2025. This premier industrial event in the UAE brought together innovators, investors, and policymakers to shape the future of industry and foster growth. The Club's presence aimed to offer the public an enjoyable journey through time in the world of falconry, highlighting the convergence of the sport's heritage with the latest innovations and technologies.

At its stand, the Club presented a large documentary mural detailing the history of falconry, which dates back over 9,000 years. It also showcased Abu Dhabi's achievements and efforts in preserving falconry, which began in 1968 with the establishment



falconry heritage, as well as the latest issue of “Al Saggar” magazine, published by the Club, were also on display.

His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, affirmed that the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, May God rest his soul, embodied the true values of falconry.

“Make it in the Emirates” exhibition holds great significance in enhancing efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage from an industrial perspective with purely local capabilities. This allows Emirati heritage to contribute to economic development through the utilization of falconry as a pillar of national identity in the fields of handicrafts and heritage-inspired artisanal products, in addition to being an important tourist attraction. This contributes to supporting specialized national industries.

He emphasized the importance of encouraging and supporting small and medium-sized industries interested in traditional crafts or producing falconry supplies and training methods, opening avenues for local companies to expand, and enhancing the UAE's international standing as a center for heritage, knowledge, and industry. This contributes to integrating heritage into industrial and economic development paths and reinforces the UAE's position as a hub for innovation and cultural preservation simultaneously.



He played a unique and pioneering role in reviving and developing the sport of falconry and preserving its environments globally. He was the first to link falconry with sustainability, emphasizing responsible hunting practices. He banned excessive hunting and launched projects for the captive breeding of falcons and Houbara bustards with Emirati efforts and capabilities.

His Excellency noted that the Emirates Falconers' Club's participation in the

of Al Ain Zoo, and later in 1976 with the organization of the first International Festival of Falconry in Abu Dhabi under the patronage and support of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, May God rest his soul. The display also emphasized the UAE's role in protecting and documenting falconry within UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The Emirates Falconers' Club's pavilion also featured a model of a falcon hunting a Houbara bustard, along with falconry tools and equipment made in the UAE. These attracted significant interest from visitors, who took numerous photos at the stand. Publications highlighting Abu Dhabi's achievements and projects in preserving



6,696 Students of Both Genders in Nine Seasons

Successful Conclusion of the Ninth Educational Falconry Season at the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School

Highest Number of Trainee Students in the School's History

The ninth season of the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, held from November 2, 2024, to February 28, 2025, attracted a large number of school students. A new generation passionately and enthusiastically learned the art of falconry through theoretical lessons and practical sessions, including releasing falcons into the wild, exploring the desert, and understanding traditional etiquette and values. They affirmed their keenness to keep their ancient heritage alive.

Since its establishment in 2016, the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, the pioneering educational project of the Emirates Falconers' Club, has seen widespread interest in learning the art of falconry and the traditions of desert living. To date, over nine seasons, it has attracted 6696 students of both genders, including 4342 males and 2354 females. According to the statistical and evaluative report recently issued by the Club in March, the last season saw the participation of 1622 students, the highest number of trainee students in the school's history.

His Excellency Majed Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, affirmed that the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School aims to increase awareness of the value of falconry as a human heritage and instill the correct principles and practices of this authentic Arab heritage in the youth. It forms part of the efforts to deepen the connection between the present and the past, reviving the achievements of the world-leading falconer, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, May God rest his soul, and his authentic approach to preserving and passing on the sport of falconry to future generations.



His Excellency extended his sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club, for his unwavering support of efforts and projects to preserve the sport of falconry and the rich cultural heritage of the UAE, specifically for his support of the activities, events, and programs of the Emirates Falconers' Club and the Mohamed bin Zayed

Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School. The ninth season of the school began last November with three educational and engaging courses for students aged between 7 and 17. The first was the Basic Skills Course (ideal for beginners), followed by the Membership Course (for young falconers wishing to learn more deeply), alongside educational group activities suitable for all age groups.

Among the unique advantages of the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School is that it provides girls with a unique opportunity to learn skills that celebrate the UAE's rich heritage, alongside engaging in practical experiences. By fostering a special bond with falcons and mastering essential falconry techniques, female students learn more about the art of falconry, becoming part of this ancient tradition that generations inherit and strive to preserve with pride and honor.

During the school's educational seasons, the Hadhira (falconry enclosure) comes alive with fascinating stories about Al Megnas (hunting expeditions) and hunting trips undertaken by Emirati falconers for many decades. This also reinforces the principles of Al Sanaa, the ethics of hospitality, and the traditions of the Arab majlis—a central element in community life in the UAE. Students also receive comprehensive



information about the unique plants of the desert environment and the fascinating traces left by animals in the wild.

The school offers a distinguished range of educational programs, including theoretical lessons on falcons covering their types, anatomy, prey, and the principles and ethics of falconry; guidance on preserving and sustaining falcons through proper handling; practical falconry lessons focusing on training, rearing, caring for, and safeguarding these birds; desert physiognomy, which emphasizes etiquette, ethical conduct, and traditional practices; as well as an understanding of the significance of the Houbara bustard in Arabian falconry.



Together, We Preserve the Art of Arabian Falconry.. Ensuring its Sustainability



Initiatives



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Sheikh Zayed: The Falconer Who Protected the Environment and Taught Generations Worldwide the Art of Hunting and Desert Etiquette

- The late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, is considered the foremost falconer and a pioneer in nature conservation. He combined his deep love for the authentic art of falconry with a profound awareness of the importance of preserving the environment and biodiversity, embodying the true values of falconry, a sport in which he played a unique and pioneering role in its revival and development.
- Sheikh Zayed left a lasting legacy that combined the preservation of identity, environmental conservation, and respect for humanity. He made falconry a bridge between the past and the future, and elevated the protection of nature to both a national and humanitarian priority.
- Thanks to his strategy for sustainable hunting and his civilized vision for protecting the environment and heritage, Sheikh Zayed shaped the efforts to register falconry on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, thereby ensuring the conservation of this legacy for future generations.
- Sheikh Zayed devoted his efforts to launching sustainable hunting programs, establishing nature reserves, and initiating breeding projects for falcons and Houbara bustards. In addition, he established specialized environmental bodies and institutions and issuing laws and legislation that regulate environmental work mechanisms at the state level while ensuring communication with similar international bodies.









Sheikh Zayed's Hunting Expeditions

The late Founder, Sheikh Zayed, distilled his extensive falconry expertise in his book, “Falconry as a Sport”, published in 1976. This book is considered a key reference in this ancient sport, and perhaps the most comprehensive and accurate, as its information stems directly from practice and experience.

Sheikh Zayed recounts: “A long time ago, when I was about 12 years old, I used to hunt with a rifle. I remember at that age, I wasn’t strong enough to carry it for long. I loved hunting and started practicing it, often going out with older people to learn from them. By the age of 16, I had learned falconry, so I began hunting sometimes with a rifle and sometimes with a falcon. When I reached 25, having spent a considerable amount of time learning the principles and arts of hunting, I preferred falconry and stopped using a rifle for hunting animals.”

Regarding his reasons, he explained: “...I thought about it for a long time and felt that hunting with a rifle was an unjust assault on animals, a rapid cause of their extinction. So I abandoned it and confined myself to falconry.”

Some believe that the hobby of falconry is associated with the first generation, while the interests of the new generation differ, Sheikh Zayed, however, believed each generation has its own tastes and hobbies. He stated: (Whoever enjoys meeting and sitting with people and conversing with them will enjoy hunting, because falconry requires a journey of at least seven days, and sometimes up to a month.)



- When a journalist asked him, "Do you go on hunting trips every year? And are these trips for relaxation?" Sheikh Zayed replied: "Hunting is not for rest; it teaches endurance and patience. There is no luxury or entertainment in it. I love hunting because it brings together young and old... On hunting trips, we pass through vast lands and deserts where we encounter people we haven't met before, hear their stories, interact with them, live their lives, and benefit from their experiences."
- The falconer Murshid Ali Murshid Al Marar, from the Al Dhafra region, says: "We used to hunt with the late Sheikh Zayed, may he rest in peace, in Baynunah and Ghantoot. Hunting with Zayed wasn't just an ordinary hunting trip; he used it as an opportunity to assess the needs of the areas he passed through. He also made sure to check on the citizens' conditions and would immediately order their needs to be met, for the sake of the nation and the dignity of the citizen." Al Marar adds: "We never felt bored or tired during hunting trips with Sheikh Zayed because he made sure they included friendly gatherings and useful conversations, poetry recitations, and storytelling with good morals. There were also humorous moments, especially since Sheikh Zayed himself would participate in preparing the food."
- For his part, citizen Dhahi bin Hamad Al Mazrouei, from Sweihan, states: "Sheikh Zayed was a unique school in falconry, from whom we learned profound wisdom and noble values, especially when we went hunting with him in Baynunah and west of Liwa. He taught us unforgettable hunting lessons, wisdom, and sermons that we are proud of to this day."
- Citizen Abdullah Rabie Al Qamzi, from Sweihan, affirms that "Sheikh Zayed's vision has borne fruit, and the younger generation has reaped its rewards." He explains: "I started hunting with my father at the age of 10 and I still hunt, and I have taught my children to hunt. We are continuing what Zayed instilled in us, and in turn, we have instilled it in our children."
- The late Sheikh Zayed left a rich legacy for falconers and environmental advocates based on his convictions and experiences. He had a great love for nature and wildlife, which was expressed by the famous British journalist and writer Patrick Seale, who met him in 1965 in Al Ain when he was its ruler. In an article titled "The Man Who Planted a Hundred Million Trees," Seale wrote: "Sheikh Zayed knows every stone, every tree, and every bird that comes to his region. Above all, he understands the importance of preserving every drop of water and knows how to utilize it effectively, and he is passionate about planting trees."
- The London-based AlSharq Al Awsat newspaper discussed Sheikh Zayed's love for the desert and nature: Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan knew the tribes and clans and loved the desert deeply. He adopted the desert's simplicity and purity, which is why he was always direct in his speech and frank in his presentation. Sheikh Zayed loved hunting and had a book on falconry. He considered hunting trips an opportunity to meet people and learn about their needs and natures. Moreover, hunting trips were a way to connect with the desert and escape the life and luxuries of the city. Sheikh Zayed was also a man who prioritized wildlife and the desert, constantly calling for care of the environment and reconciling with the land, which to him represented purity and nature.



Sheikh Zayed's Achievements in Conserving Falcons and Their Prey

The First International Falconry Conference, organized in Abu Dhabi in 1976 at the directive of the late Sheikh Zayed, may God rest his soul, marked an unprecedented global initiative. It paved the way for international cooperation to protect falconry as a human heritage. Sheikh Zayed was the first to link falconry with sustainability, emphasizing that hunting must be practiced responsibly. He banned indiscriminate hunting, launched projects for breeding Houbara bustards, and established nature reserves to protect falcons and their habitats. He also directed the establishment of the Emirates Falconers' Club to be a leading destination for falconry conservation.

At the time, the conference brought together, for the first time, falconers from the Arabian Peninsula, North America, Europe, and the Far East. It marked a true starting point for the strategy Sheikh Zayed, may he rest in peace, developed to mobilize falconers as active advocates with a genuine commitment to nature conservation.

In the field of protecting falcons and their prey, Sheikh Zayed was the first to recognize the dangers facing bird and animal species. He initiated several projects to protect endangered species. Under his

directives, the Asian Houbara captive breeding program began at Al Ain Zoo in 1977, and in 1982, the hatching of the first captive-bred chick in the UAE was announced.

In the early 1980s, Sheikh Zayed established the Falcon Hospital in the Al Khaznah area, and later directed the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital in 1999. His passion for falcons and falconry led him to order the creation of an unparalleled veterinary hospital focused on diagnosing and treating diseases affecting birds of prey, alongside related applied research. This resulted in qualitative improvements in management and healthcare specifically for trained hunting falcons worldwide.

During his reign, the National Avian Research Center (NARC) was founded in 1989, later becoming part of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi. It launched its ambitious program for breeding Asian Houbara, which grew from humble beginnings to producing 200 birds in 2004, steadily progressing toward the long-term goal set by the late Founder: producing ten thousand Asian Houbara annually and releasing most of them to increase wild populations. This number was later significantly surpassed.



In 1995, the Emirates Center for Wildlife Propagation (ECWP) was established in the Kingdom of Morocco to breed Houbara and release them into the wild. The increasing success year after year led to the hatching of 2,150 birds in 2004, the year Sheikh Zayed, may he rest in peace, passed away.

Since 1995, Sheikh Zayed recognized the necessity of shifting from using wild falcons to captive-bred falcons. By 2002, UAE falconers were 90% reliant on captive-bred falcons, making the UAE the first Arab country to depend on these falcons as an alternative to wild birds in falconry.

He strongly supported the establishment of the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC) in Pakistan, which led to increased cooperation and coordination with the Pakistani government to combat illegal hunting of Houbara birds and rehabilitate confiscated birds for release into the wild.

The late Sheikh Zayed adopted the tradition of releasing many of his falcons back into the wild at the end of the hunting season. The Sheikh Zayed Release Programme for Falcons began in 1995, releasing hundreds of Saker and Peregrine falcons that successfully returned to their natural habitat after being released along their original migration routes in Pakistan and Central Asia.

Sheikh Zayed actively encouraged falconers to make optimal use of captive-bred birds and implemented a strict licensing system for using wild birds in the UAE. This was accompanied by the issuance of the "Falcon Passport," adopted by the CITES, which significantly reduced illegal hunting activities in the region.

In his endeavor to support falconers in the UAE and GCC countries, and to protect falcons from extinction, the Emirates Falconers' Club was officially established in 2001.

Sheikh Zayed launched the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) with its first edition in 2003, which he honored with his visit. He then, may he rest in peace, directed that the exhibition be world-class and held annually in Abu Dhabi, organized by the Emirates Falconers' Club. The ADIHEX 2004 edition was a great success and attracted considerable attention.

The exhibition continues to be an important landmark on the map of specialized international exhibitions in this field, due to its significant role in establishing sustainable hunting and supporting and encouraging the strategy of preserving the heritage, traditions, and authentic values that define the UAE.



Sheikh Zayed and Falconry: A Renewed Legacy Across Generations

- Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan was a man who appreciated the value of preserving our environment and heritage since the early 1960s, leaving us with a strong foundation and a steadfast approach.
- Sheikh Zayed was deeply attached to and passionate about falconry, excelling as an expert in its principles and arts, and a global authority on its practice and sustainability.
- The late Sheikh Zayed lived and passed away, but his values of preserving nature and safeguarding heritage remained among his foremost concerns.
- While skillfully steering the wheel of his country's development, Sheikh Zayed also worked to encourage heritage revival efforts and species conservation projects.
- Sheikh Zayed viewed falconry as a vital means of life and social interaction, understanding that everything would perish if not adequately protected.
- Sheikh Zayed's practice of falconry exemplified humanity and brotherhood in their finest forms, reflecting his eagerness to interact with people and learn about their conditions and opinions.
- Sheikh Zayed's unique vision, at an early age, anticipated what contemporary conservationists later termed "sustainable hunting."



- Sheikh Zayed uniquely embodied the ideal image of the Arab falconer due to his sincere intuition and extensive knowledge of nature.
- Patrick Seale: "Sheikh Zayed knows every stone, every tree, and every bird that comes to his region."
- Sheikh Zayed was able to understand the language of nature and Mother Life, and he early on rejected the use of rifles for hunting..
- Since the 1960s, Sheikh Zayed established an animal welfare body in Al Ain, tasked with guarding the desert and overseeing the enforcement of the ban on hunting wild animals.
- Organizing the First International Falconry Conference in 1976 was one of Sheikh Zayed's most important initiatives, may God rest his soul.
- In 1977, under the directives of Sheikh Zayed, a program for breeding Asian Houbara bustards in captivity began at Al Ain Zoo. In 1989, the National Avian Research Center started its ambitious Houbara breeding program.
- By 1995, the late Sheikh Zayed had initiated the transition from using wild falcons to captive-bred ones, and by the beginning of this century, the UAE had become the first Arab country to rely entirely on captive-bred falcons for the sport of falconry.



- Despite Abu Dhabi's rapid development, Sheikh Zayed never forgot his authentic Bedouin roots and his beloved falcons.
- Sheikh Zayed possessed extensive expertise in falconry and falcons, and he could discern with remarkable precision which birds were suitable for hunting.
- The late Sheikh Zayed recognized early on the importance of preserving nature, sustaining the heritage of falconry, and achieving a balance between the two.
- Sheikh Zayed's character combined the authentic Bedouin heritage he inherited with the wisdom and eloquence of a seasoned statesman.
- Wildlife had a profound impact on shaping Sheikh Zayed's personality and distinctive traits, molding him into a majestic horseman, a skilled falconer, and a devoted camel enthusiast.
- Sheikh Zayed's deep connection to his nation's heritage and his profound understanding of the importance of preserving and reviving it are among the most prominent traits that distinguished his personality.
- Sheikh Zayed was keen to ensure that elements of heritage, especially falconry, remained an enduring presence in Emirati society.

The Foremost Falconer in the Eyes of Falconers Worldwide

The late Sheikh Zayed, may God rest his soul, was renowned worldwide as a great falconer, distinguished by his noble character. Falconers across the globe mourned him immediately upon the announcement of his passing, expressing their profound sorrow at this loss.

Falconers around the world continue to cherish their love and loyalty to him and his immense contributions to this sport. He elevated falconry into an authentic heritage art form that he loved, mastered, and excelled in, imbuing it with his benevolent spirit and his love for nature and wildlife.

Ken Riddle

The falconry community owes a debt of gratitude to Sheikh Zayed for his guidance and counsel to a group of traditional Arab falconers, elevating them to a global standing in practicing this art. We also acknowledge his pioneering role in establishing a new philosophy for promoting falconry and hunting in the 21st century.



Mark Robb and Sara Skalman

Sheikh Zayed's interest in wildlife and his passion for falconry were well-known to everyone, and his efforts in this regard earned immense respect worldwide.

The world has lost a great man, and words fail to express the magnitude of this loss. However, I am absolutely certain that Sheikh Zayed will live forever in the hearts and eyes of his people and will remain alive in every tree and plant across the UAE. He was and will always be an integral part of the UAE.



Brian Sullivan

Sheikh Zayed's name was closely associated with falconry in the Middle East due to his known interest and passion for this sport. He was also known for his interest in, and generous support of the peoples of many countries in the Middle East region.

Patrick Morel

Sheikh Zayed garnered great appreciation worldwide as one of the pioneering falconers who had a significant impact on the world of falconry, while we in the West were still at the beginning of our journey.

Karl Buchberger

The world of falconry lost one of its pioneering and most skilled falconers with the passing of Sheikh Zayed. He was a true expert in assessing the quality of falcons, particularly Saker falcons. I had the privilege of learning from one of the greatest experts in this field, and a large part of my knowledge of falcons was acquired from Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him.

José Manuel Rodríguez-Villa

It is imperative for the falconry community to always highlight his remarkable record as a falconer and a dedicated conservationist.

Zenjiro Tagomori

I was deeply shocked when I read the heartbreaking news of the passing of the great leader and exceptional falconer, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. My fellow Japanese falconers and I can only extend our heartfelt condolences to every citizen of the United Arab Emirates.

Lars and David Sego

Like Sheikh Zayed, we have been falcon lovers our entire lives. In our youth, we spent hours reading about Sheikh Zayed and other wonderful falconers in the UAE, hoping to one day see this great land with our own eyes. Sheikh Zayed was undoubtedly the driving force behind the Conservation of falconry in the UAE. God blessed him with a special love and a remarkable understanding of this sport, and the sophisticated level that falconry enjoys in the UAE today is nothing but a testament to the efforts and vision of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The world has lost a great leader, a wonderful father, and one of the noblest falconers of all time with the passing of Sheikh Zayed, who will forever be remembered as a chivalrous man and a great leader.

Dr. Nick Fox

Despite everything, Sheikh Zayed never forgot his Bedouin roots and his beloved falcons. Throughout the history of falconry, Sheikh Zayed stands alongside other distinguished international figures. The world of falconry has lost a friend named Sheikh Zayed.

Awards and Accolades Received by Sheikh Zayed



Man of the Year – 1988

In 1988, the “Man of the Year” organization in Paris honored Sheikh Zayed for his success in achieving prosperity for the people of the UAE, developing its land and its people, and transforming it into an advanced, modern nation, becoming the “Pearl of the Gulf.”

Man of the Environment and Development – 1993

In September 1993, during the Arab Youth Festival held in Beirut, His Highness Sheikh Zayed was honored with the title “Man of the Environment and Development” in recognition of his pioneering role in environmental protection and combating desertification.

The Arab League Sash – 1993

In 1993, the Arab League honored Sheikh Zayed with the “Man of Development and Progress” sash in recognition of his efforts to combat desertification, his focus on the environment, and his development projects across the UAE, Arab, and Islamic countries.

Development Personality – 1995

In 1995, Sheikh Zayed was chosen as the “Development Personality of the Year 1995” at a global level, based on a survey conducted by the Middle East Center for Research and Media Studies in Jeddah, in which over half a million Arabs participated.

FAO Award – 1995

In December 1995, His Highness received a commemorative award and a gold medal from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in recognition of his efforts to promote agricultural development within the UAE and his contributions to several developing countries in this field.

Gulf Business Awards – 1996

In 1996, the “Gulf Business Awards ‘96” committee awarded His Highness the Environmental Protection Award, in recognition and appreciation of his timeless and significant contributions to protecting the environment and nature in the UAE.

Golden Panda Certificate – 1997

His Highness received the Golden Panda Certificate from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as a result of his boundless contributions and continuous efforts in the field of environment and all its related aspects, making him the first head of state to receive an international environmental award.

Environmental Preservation Medal – 1997

Former Pakistani President Farooq Leghari, awarded His Highness the Environmental Preservation Medal, which was presented for the first time to a head of state, in recognition of His Highness’s continuous efforts and contributions to environmental conservation, the development of the UAE’s natural resources, and the expansion of agricultural land.

Honorary Doctorate in Agriculture – 1997

In June 1997, he was awarded an honorary doctorate in agriculture from Ain Shams University in recognition of his significant efforts in agricultural development projects.



Zayed International Prize – 1998

Sheikh Zayed was awarded for his environmental contributions during the UAE's first National Environment Day celebrations on February 4, 1998 .

Zayed, Environmental Advocate – 1998

The Arab Towns Organization awarded His Highness the "Environmental Advocate" award in 1998 in appreciation and recognition of his prominent and distinguished personal efforts in the field of environmental conservation and his remarkable interests, both personally and officially, in afforestation, greening, and the establishment of nature reserves.

Prominent International Personality – 1998

In 1998, Sheikh Zayed was honored by the French "Man of the Year" organization, for his efforts in combating desertification, environmental protection, and development projects.

Zayed, Environmental Man of the Year – 2000

On the occasion of World Environment Day in June 2000, Lebanon honored His Highness Sheikh Zayed and selected him as the Environmental Man of the Year. His Highness was presented with certificates of appreciation and historical commemorative gifts from the Lebanese Quality Institute.

World Food Day Medal – 2001

In recognition of his efforts in serving humanity and his great concern for issues of agriculture, food, and water resources, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) decided in May 2001 to award His Highness the World Food Day Medal.



The Great International Cannes Prize-2001

The Mediterranean Network organization, under the auspices of UNESCO for Water Resources, Sustainable Development, and Peace, awarded the Great International Cannes Prize for Water to the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, in recognition of his significant role in the environment and its conservation locally, regionally, and internationally.

United Nations Award – 2002

In June 2002, His Highness Sheikh Zayed received a commemorative shield from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in appreciation and recognition of his sincere efforts in environmental protection, combating desertification, and expanding green areas.



Champions of the Earth – 2005

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) selected the late Sheikh Zayed as one of seven global figures honored as "Champions of the Earth," in recognition and appreciation of his achievements in protecting the environment in the United Arab Emirates and other parts of the world.

Leader Who Contributed to "Remaking" His Country – 2009

Newsweek magazine chose the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan for a list of 10 post-World War II world leaders who it said contributed to "remaking" their countries. The magazine stated that the late Sheikh Zayed excelled in founding the United Arab Emirates, transforming it into a modern regional economic power known for social tolerance and liberal policies regarding women's rights.

**In Strategic Partnership Between
the Emirates Falconers' Club and
ADNEC Group**

Abu Dhabi Prepares to Launch the 22nd Edition of the Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition

A Success Story Renewed Every Year

Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club, the 22nd edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) will take place from August 30 to September 7, 2025, at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC). This new edition is expected to witness record participation following the remarkable success of last year's edition.

The 21st edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX), which ran for nine days from August 31 to September 8, 2024, concluded with a massive public turnout. It achieved new successes in attracting global attention to the rich heritage and history of the UAE, while highlighting key sports related to falconry and horsemanship.

The last edition, strategically organized in partnership between the Emirates Falconers' Club and ADNEC Group, spanned an area of 87,000 square meters. It featured the participation of over 1,742 exhibiting companies and brands from



65 countries, hosted by Abu Dhabi, the patron of culture and sustainable hunting. Thanks to this annually renewed event, Abu Dhabi has become an important regional and international hub, combining the authenticity of ancient heritage with the latest technological advancements.

The exhibition was a showcase for many leading local and international companies providing luxurious and traditional hunting products, which added a special allure to the event and captivated hunting enthusiasts from around the world.

ADIHEX aims to preserve falconry as a human heritage, offering folkloric displays on falconry and falcon breeding. Visitors also saw dedicated platforms for exhibiting captive-bred falcons.

The last edition of the exhibition featured 11 distinct sectors, including equestrianism, falconry, hunting, camping, arts, handicrafts, and Emirati heritage. It also introduced several new features, such as the Knowledge Platform, which hosted numerous enriching discussions and dialogues on sustainable hunting and conservation.





One of the most significant events at the last Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) was the daily falcon auction, held in the Arena area. This auction underscored the UAE's pioneering role in falcon breeding, reflecting its ongoing commitment to wildlife conservation and conservation. For the first time in its history, the exhibition also offered the opportunity for online bidding on exceptional falcons showcased in a special display area.

The auction provided a platform for participants to present their bred falcons, optimized for top performance in hunting expeditions and competitive events. The Elite Falcon Auction was an exclusive highlight during the exhibition, drawing thousands of falcon enthusiasts from across the UAE to bid on high-quality and distinguished falcons.

During the exhibition, 325 falcons were sold, with a total value reaching 5.4 million dirhams. Furthermore, 302 falcons received the ADIHEX badge, qualifying them to participate in the President's Cup Championship for the 2024-2025 season.

The Falcon Beauty Contest, featuring 10 falcons, truly reflected the deep cultural heritage of the UAE. The Arabian Camel Auction also garnered significant visitor interest, achieving sales of approximately 2.5 million AED for 15 camels. Furthermore, the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) set a Guinness World Record for creating the largest falcon hood in the world.

The exhibition included educational and interactive visits for thousands of schoolchildren from across Abu Dhabi, alongside a variety of activities for all age groups, and a competition for people of determination on its final day.

In the "Best Falcon Perch" competition, Khanjar company won the award for their handcrafted falcon perches. These perches were judged based on material quality, functionality, comfort and safety for the falcons, and innovative designs that reflect Emirati heritage and craftsmanship at affordable prices.

Kaltham Balseh won the award for "Best Falconry Tools Used in Hunting" for the exceptional quality, functionality, and safety of her falconry equipment.

The International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC) received the "Best Efforts in Sustainability" award. This recognized their outstanding leadership in conserving endangered species, with over forty years of scientific innovations in restoring wild houbara populations.



**UAE President Visits
“Abu Dhabi Hunting
Exhibition”**





His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE, visited the 21st edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX). The event, organized by the Emirates Falconers' Club under the theme "A History Woven with an Innovative Spirit," took place at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC).

During his tour, His Highness reviewed the participation of several national pavilions and international companies in the hunting and equestrian industries. He also explored the innovative technologies and supplies they showcased for these sports.

During his tour, His Highness exchanged conversations with exhibitors about the latest developments in their field and listened to explanations regarding their most prominent innovations and products featured at the exhibition.

His Highness emphasized the importance of the exhibition in reviving Emirati heritage and its role as a global platform for enhancing cultural interaction among peoples. He stressed the UAE's dedication to heritage as a means to connect new generations with their history and civilization.

Accompanying His Highness on the tour were His Highness Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Development and Fallen Heroes' Families Affairs; His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Special Affairs; His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan; His Excellency Mohamed Mubarak Fadhel Al Mazrouei, Minister of State for Defence Affairs; His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Tahnoun Al Nahyan, Advisor for Special Affairs at the Presidential Court; and a number of senior officials.



**Khaled bin Mohamed
bin Zayed: Abu Dhabi
Hunting Exhibition
is a Cultural Bridge
Connecting Generations**





His Highness Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, also visited the 21st edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX).

During his tour, His Highness inspected several pavilions of participating entities at the exhibition, which is considered the largest hunting and equestrian exhibition in the Middle East and Africa. He reviewed the latest innovations and technological solutions presented by exhibitors across various fields related to hunting and equestrianism. These included prominent areas such as falconry, traditional hunting, shooting, camping, marine sports, and other arts and handicrafts, all of which contribute to enhancing environmental sustainability efforts in various local traditional and heritage activities.

During this visit, His Highness also learned about the efforts made by participating entities to strengthen the position of popular sports activities. He commended their dedication and commitment to preserving national identity and raising awareness among young people about the importance of popular heritage and authentic Emirati customs.

His Highness highlighted that this annual exhibition has become a cultural bridge, connecting present and future generations with the past of their forefathers by showcasing and preserving the profound richness and authenticity of the national heritage.

During his visit, His Highness was accompanied by his sons, along with Sheikh Sultan bin Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Ain Sports and Cultural Club and Chairman of the Executive Committee; His Excellency Major General Pilot Faris Khalaf Al Mazrouei, Commander-in-Chief of Abu Dhabi Police and Chairman of Abu Dhabi Heritage Authority; His Excellency Majid Ali Al Mansouri, Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee for the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition and Secretary-General of the Emirates Falconers' Club; and His Excellency Humaid Matar Al Dhaheeri, Managing Director and CEO of ADNEC and its affiliated companies.



Hamdan bin Zayed: Exhibition to Continue Highlighting UAE's Cultural Identity, Bright Future, and Rich Heritage



His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club, visited the 21st edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition, where he inspected the various pavilions.

Accompanying His Highness on the visit were Sheikh Sultan bin Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Sheikh Rashid bin Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, His Excellency Majid Al Mansouri, Secretary-General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, His Excellency Major General Pilot Faris Khalaf Al Mazrouei, Commander-in-Chief of Abu Dhabi Police, His Excellency Nasser Al Mansouri, Undersecretary of the Ruler's Representative Court in Al Dhafra Region, His Excellency Humaid Matar Al Dhaheri, Managing Director and CEO of ADNEC Group, His Excellency Issa Abu Shahab, Advisor to His Highness the President of the UAE Red Crescent, His Excellency Khadim Al Derei, and a number of senior officials.

During his tour of the exhibition, His Highness inspected prominent local and international participants specializing in the hunting and equestrian industries. These exhibitors showcased the latest developments and modern technologies used in these sectors. He met with several participants, learning about key national initiatives, projects, and accompanying cultural and heritage events. His Highness also visited the pavilions of several national companies, including Baynunah and Caracal, as well as the International Fund for Houbara Conservation. He was briefed on the "Al Maqnas" initiative, which offers an interactive experience to learn about falconry through performances and an accompanying exhibition. Furthermore, he visited the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi's pavilion and "Ma Hawa" company, which produces water from air, as well as the Al Ghadeer project.

His Highness expressed his pleasure at the exhibition's success and the wide participation of local and international exhibitors, which reflected the richness of local heritage. He affirmed that the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition continues its role as a platform for cultural and civilized exchange and a forum for sustainable practices in this field.

His Highness stated: "The 21st edition of the exhibition is an exceptional event that has solidified Abu Dhabi's position as a capital for the hunting and equestrian sectors regionally and internationally, and an incubator for creativity and innovation in these vital sectors. This is in line with the directives of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE, aiming to reconcile the demands of modernity with the nation's rich civilized and cultural heritage across various knowledge and economic sectors, thus preserving the nation's resources and heritage gains for future generations."

His Highness lauded the efforts of the work teams and national cadres responsible for the current edition of the exhibition. He praised their contributions to the event's success and its presentation in a manner befitting the UAE's reputation and standing. His Highness expressed his confidence that the exhibition will continue its role in highlighting the civilized and bright image, and the rich heritage of the nation.



“Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition Badge” for Falcons Launched

Under the directives of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region, ADNEC Group, in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Falconers Club, launched the "Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition Badge" for falcons during the 21st edition of the exhibition.

This badge qualifies falcons purchased at the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition and its accompanying events and auctions to participate, under the supervision of the Abu Dhabi Falconers Club, in newly created race heats. These heats are specifically for badge-holding falcons across four categories: "Gyr Pure," "Gyr Qarmousha," "Gyr Peregrine," and "Tabaa," within the 2024-2025 President's Cup for Falconry.

His Excellency Majid Ali Al Mansouri, Secretary-General of the Emirates Falconers' Club, stated, "The launch of this badge is a direct translation of our wise leadership's aspirations to support all national events that contribute to providing added value, enhancing Abu Dhabi's position as a capital that combines modernity and authenticity, and a leading center for creativity and innovation in various traditional sports and activities."

His Excellency expressed confidence in the significant positive impact of such an initiative on supporting the falconry sector and falcons, both locally and internationally. He believes it will enhance participation in the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition, extending to all supporting and related sectors.

Humaid Matar Al Dhaheeri, Managing Director and CEO of ADNEC Group, stated, "The launch of this badge, sponsored and supported by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region, reflects the wise leadership's commitment to advancing the present and future of the falconry sector in the UAE. It also demonstrates their dedication to preserving the assets and popular heritage of these important sports and enhancing their competitiveness regionally and internationally."

Al Dhaheeri added, "The aim of launching this badge is to support producers in increasing their participation in the exhibition. It will incentivize the inclusion of high-level birds, encourage visitors to acquire falcons, promote awareness of falconry heritage, and ultimately elevate the exhibition's role in supporting this sport locally and internationally."

Sultan Al Mahmoud, Executive Director of the Abu Dhabi Falconers Club, remarked, "We are proud of our strategic partnership with the Emirates Falconers' Club and ADNEC Group to launch this badge. I am confident that it will enhance the exhibition's regional and global competitiveness and standing, and also support a wide range of supporting sectors, from producers to experts and enthusiasts in these fields."

Al Mahmoud further noted that the Abu Dhabi Falconers Club's teams, in collaboration with ADNEC Group, are working to ensure the success of future championship rounds for the badge under the umbrella of the President's Cup Championship. This will effectively contribute to supporting these important sports and enhancing their presence and competitiveness.



Under the Patronage of Hazza bin Zayed, First Edition of “Al Ain International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition 2025” to Launch Next November



Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Ain Region, ADNEC Group will organize the first edition of the Al Ain International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition 2025. This inaugural event is set to take place from November 26 to 30, 2025, at the ADNEC Al Ain Centre.

The first edition of the exhibition, organized by ADNEC Group in collaboration with the Emirates Falconers' Club, is expected to see the participation of a stellar group of national and international institutions and companies specializing in hunting equipment, falconry, camel and equestrian sports, and Saluki activities, in addition to adventure and safari businesses from around the world.

Through its strategic partnership with ADNEC in organizing the exhibition, the Emirates Falconers' Club aims to contribute to highlighting the UAE's rich falconry heritage, drawing on its extensive expertise in organizing major heritage activities and events. The club is keen on promoting knowledge about the ancient art of falconry and reinforcing the values of heritage preservation and environmental conservation, enriching the exhibition with educational and cultural value and allowing the public to gain close insight into this traditional sport.

The features and activities of the “Al Ain 2025” exhibition will be held over an area exceeding 12,000 square meters, showcasing the latest innovations, equipment, and modern technologies specialized in these fields. The exhibition is an extension of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition, which has witnessed remarkable success since its first launch 22 years ago. Al Ain was chosen for its rich cultural and civilizational heritage, as well as for the importance of its large market to partners and exhibitors, especially in the outdoor sports, camping, and adventure sectors.

The exhibition will include 11 main sectors: Arts and Crafts, 4x4 Vehicles and Outdoor Sports Equipment, Camping Equipment, Falconry, Camels, Equestrianism, Saluki, in addition to Veterinary Products and Equipment, Environmental and Heritage Conservation, RV Mobile Homes, and Hunting and Safari Trips.

The exhibition will also feature numerous accompanying events, such as coffee preparation competitions and traditional food competitions, alongside a variety of activities for visitors and all segments of the local community and families. These include equestrian entertainment shows and various cultural and environmental events.

Abu Dhabi Hunting Exhibition Achieves Guinness World Record for Largest Falcon Hood

Through a collaboration between the Abu Dhabi Heritage Authority and ADNEC Group, the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition has achieved a new global milestone by setting a Guinness World Record for the largest falcon hood in the world. This marks the first time such a record has been added to the Guinness Book. Representatives from Guinness World Records verified and approved the hood's measurements, confirming its diameter at 1.95 meters, significantly exceeding the minimum record threshold of 1.65 meters.

His Excellency Abdullah Mubarak Al Muhairi, Acting Director General of the Abu Dhabi Heritage Authority, stated, "This achievement is not just a record; it's the fruit of national efforts to preserve the Emirati falconry heritage, which is an integral part of our national identity, and to ensure its continuity for future generations. We are proud to add this accomplishment to the list of successes achieved by the UAE, highlighting Abu Dhabi's pioneering efforts in safeguarding Emirati heritage."

His Excellency added that the design of the hood took into account all technical and traditional aspects that characterize the Emirati falcon hood. The hood is an essential tool in training falcons for hunting, and it met all the required standards adopted in the evaluation process. This achievement contributes to promoting the authentic heritage of the UAE.

For his part, Humaid Matar Al Dhaheri, Managing Director and Group CEO of ADNEC, expressed his pride in this achievement,

stating: "We are proud to have achieved this Guinness World Record during the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition. This is a testament to our commitment to introducing and promoting the UAE's vast and rich cultural legacy both regionally and internationally."

He explained that this achievement reflects their pride in Emirati traditions and underscores their commitment to showcasing them on a global level. Through this record, they hope to inspire future generations to appreciate and continue the legacy of falconry, which has always been, and continues to be, a part of their history and identity.

The falcon hood, whose use dates back to ancient civilizations in the Middle East, has been an essential tool in the practice of falconry for centuries. Its primary function is to cover the falcon's eyes to keep it calm and prevent it from interacting with its surroundings.

The record-breaking falcon hood was entirely crafted by Emirati hands, utilizing traditional methods and materials, including camel leather. This achievement marks a new entry in the Guinness World Records for the largest falcon hood in the world, boasting a diameter of 1.95 meters. This significantly surpasses Guinness's minimum requirement for the new record, which was 1.65 meters. The hood met all the criteria set by Guinness World Records for evaluation, solidifying this accomplishment as a testament to the authentic heritage of the UAE.





Together..

We preserve the Arabian Saluki's Heritage & Authentic Legacy

The Arabian Saluki Centre offers
a variety of services:

- Shelter facilities
- Breeding
- Training and events
- Travel and transport arrangements
- Opportunities for adoption



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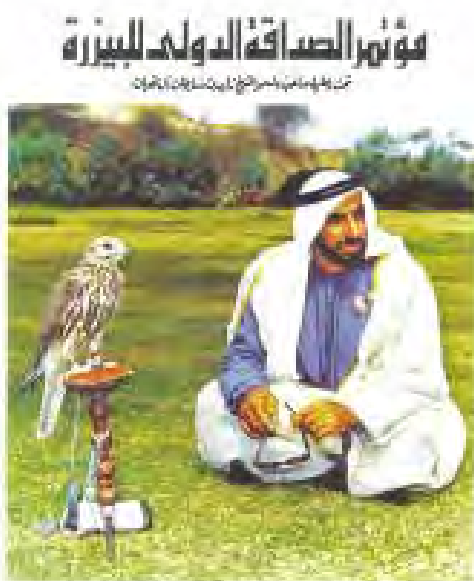
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The Largest Gathering of Falconers in the World

The International Festival of Falconry: A Cultural Bridge Across Continents to Preserve the Heritage of Falconry



He was committed, may God bless his soul, to ensure that elements of heritage always remained present in Emirati society, foremost among them the sport of falconry, to which he was devoted. He was an expert in its principles and arts, and a global authority on its practice and sustainability.

The United Arab Emirates began its commitment to preserving falconry as a human heritage from the early years of its establishment, nearly 55 years ago.

The International Festival of Falconry (IFF) is the premier global forum, bringing together falconers, organizations, and events dedicated to the conservation of the human heritage of falconry.

The late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan's deep connection to his nation's heritage, along with his profound commitment to preserving and revitalizing it, was among the defining traits of his distinguished character.

The First International Falconry Conference

1976

The first global initiative launched for the conservation of falconry

The first global initiative launched for the conservation of falconry

In that year, falconers and activists worldwide answered the call of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may he rest in peace, with the aim of launching efforts to preserve the sport of falconry, safeguard authentic heritage, and protect wildlife.

The conference successfully laid the groundwork for a long-term strategy of continuous regional and international endeavors and efforts. It was attended by a large gathering of representatives from clubs, institutions, scientists, veterinarians, researchers specializing in birds, and museum curators to discuss how to develop falconry, preserve falcons, enrich the laws and traditions of this sport, and exchange expertise in all matters related to falconry.

Fruitful Decisions and Outcomes

The decisions of the first edition then marked the beginning of intensive activity and work. Today, we see the extension of that conference, with its hopes and aspirations, into the present and future, especially concerning the patronage of the cultural and scientific heritage of falconry, as stated in the resolutions of the 1976 conference.

Today, nearly 50 years later, the conference's decisions have transformed into tangible realities and achievements, and even more!

✓ Many of the most important books, encyclopedias, and manuscripts documenting and chronicling falconry in both Arabic and English have been published. This includes the translation of Emperor Frederick II's book on raptors and the art of falconry, and the publication of "Falconry: A Living Heritage" by Dr. Javier Ceballos.



- ✓ The archival photographic collection of British falconer and author Roger Upton was acquired, and an encyclopedia on the study of the history and cultural heritage related to falconry was published, specifically "World Falconry Photography, from Ancient Times around 3000 BC to the Present Era."
- ✓ As part of the UAE's strategy to preserve the cultural heritage in the Arab region and the world, the Middle East Falconry Archive was established. This initiative aims to revive interest in ancient historical writings on falconry, and to use them for raising awareness of this authentic heritage and for scientific research purposes.
- ✓ Barely one year after the first conference, captive breeding projects for Houbara bustards were launched in 1977 at Al Ain Zoo. After intensive scientific efforts, success was achieved with the production of the first Asian Houbara chick in captivity in 1982.
- ✓ The establishment of the National Avian Research Center (NARC) in Sweihan in 1989 and the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC) in 2006 were extensions of Sheikh Zayed's vision, may he rest in peace, and his efforts to protect this endangered bird, after he foresaw the importance of establishing a specialized program for Houbara breeding, release, and protection from extinction.
- ✓ Regarding falcon conservation projects, the UAE has been a pioneer in falcon breeding and care programs, encouraging falconers to work with farm-bred falcons.
- ✓ The Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program has also successfully released hundreds of Saker and Peregrine falcons into the wild since 1995.

- ✓ Among the most prominent projects that have been implemented and established, representing a tangible translation of the conference's decisions and aspirations, are the establishment of the Emirates Falconers' Club, the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, the Mohamed bin Zayed Fund Raptor Conservation Fund, and other institutions and projects aimed at protecting wildlife diversity, conserving endangered species, and preserving cultural heritage.
- ✓ One of the most significant long-term positive impacts of the conference was the successful efforts to inscribe falconry as a living human heritage on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010, following intensive efforts led by Abu Dhabi since 2005.





The Second International Festival of Falconry Al Ain 2011

Al Ain – December 2011
Falconers' camp in the Ramah area, and forum and festival events around Al Jahili Fort.



- More than 500 falconers from 75 countries.
- Over 65,000 visitors.
- 93 speakers at the International Falconry Forum and Conference.
- 82 official representatives to UNESCO.
- 51 exhibitors and performers in the show arena.
- 19 falcon trainers.
- 45 painters and sculptors.
- 47 photographers.
- 10 specialized exhibitions of painting and photography.
- Photography Competition: 199 entries from 25 countries.
- Participation from: International Wildlife Consultants (IWC), International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF), and International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC).



- Ramah Camp:**
- Camel Race: 44 camels participated.
 - Arabian Saluki Competition: 125 Saluki dogs.
 - Falconry Hunting Competition: 150 falconers.
 - Equestrian Endurance Race: 113 male and female horseriders.

- National Camps:**
- (Al Suhub) Steppe Village.
 - North African Village.
 - North American Teepee Village.



The Third International Festival of Falconry Abu Dhabi 2014

Abu Dhabi – December 2014

**-Falconers' camp in the Marzoom
Protected Area, Al Dhafra region,
Emirate of Abu Dhabi.**

**-International Forum: held at both the
falconers' camp and Al Forsan Club.**

**-Festival Events: Al Forsan
International Sports Resort.**

- Establishment of the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School.
- More than 800 falconers from 82 countries.
- 10 specialized exhibitions showcasing the art of drawing and photography.
- 50 speakers at the International Falconry Forum.
- 51 exhibitors and performers in the show arena.
- 19 falcon trainers.
- 47 photographers.
- 40 painters and artists.
- 30 international journalists.
- Traditional conical tents, Medieval tents, tents from the United Kingdom, East Asia, South America, the GCC countries, and the Balkans.
- Participation from: International Wildlife Consultants (IWC), International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF), and International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC).
- Arabian Falconry Corner.
- Family Corner.



The Fourth International Festival of Falconry Abu Dhabi 2017

Khalifa Park, Abu Dhabi – December
2017.

The desert camp for falconers at
Tilal Resort, Remah.

The accompanying conference
program at the Sheikh Zayed Desert
Learning Centre in Al Ain Zoo.

- Over 50 events.
- More than 700 falconers from 90 countries.
- 250 young falconers and researchers.
- 27 falconers, researchers, and experts who witnessed the first festival in 1976.
- 8 international falconry schools and academies.
- 30 specialized strategic workshops on falconry.
- Artistic workshops on leatherwork for making falcon hoods and falconry equipment, with participation from falconers from Italy and South Africa.
- Practical lessons on various trap-making methods presented by falconers from the UAE.
- 22 researchers and experts in international falconry affairs.
- 40 photographers.
- 44 international journalists.
- 102 rare photos from the first 1976 festival.
- A tribute ceremony for 27 pioneering falconers and researchers who witnessed the first edition.
- Extensive participation from government entities, departments, and authorities concerned with preserving the environment and authentic Emirati heritage.
- Announcement of the establishment of the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund.



A Promising Tool in Ornithology, Despite Its Limitations

Wild Birds and Artificial Intelligence: Pros and Cons

Love it or hate it, artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly permeating our daily lives at a rapid pace. Now, this technology is being used to identify, track, and monitor wild birds, among other things. So, what are the pros and cons of using AI in the natural world?

Learning More About Birds, Towards a Better Understanding of Our Ecosystems

For several years, scientists and researchers from around the globe have been using AI to learn more about the birds around us. An example is the BirdCast project, a collaboration between the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Colorado State University, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the United States.

This project uses radar sites from 48 states, along with live weather maps, to identify, track, and analyze bird movements. It then uses AI and machine learning technology to predict when and how birds will migrate.

The BirdNET app, another innovation from the Cornell Lab, is powered by AI to recognize bird sounds, and it has quickly become a favorite tool for avian experts and birdwatchers alike. The app identifies birds by their sounds and calls. It's a leading scientific platform that embodies machine learning at its finest, where AI is used to sort through vast collections of bird sound recordings from various sources to build a network of 3,000 birds, identified only by sound.

In England, researchers are using AI-controlled cameras to monitor birds and wild animals. This technology has enabled the capture of tens of thousands of data files and thousands of hours of audio recordings from different sites. AI sifts and sorts this large amount of data, quickly identifying and classifying different bird species, a process that would take humans years to accomplish.



AI achieved another significant breakthrough in ornithology on Palmyra Atoll last year. The Nature Conservancy used AI-powered image analysis to discover two seabirds – the Blue Noddy and the Wedge-tailed Shearwater, that were previously thought to be locally extinct since the 1940s.

Why is the data collected from these and other AI-based projects so vital? We get answers to fundamental questions such as: How are birds affected by climate change? Which bird species are declining in population? Which migratory birds are starting their journey later than usual? In short, this data helps us better understand not only the health of our birds but also our ecosystems. And what we understand, we can work to preserve.



AI and Bird Images: Which is Real?

From virtual assistants and chatbots to smart homes and facial recognition on our devices, AI is making our daily lives easier. In content creation, AI has produced stunning realistic images. Certain applications allow AI to render a desired scene with dynamic details. But this last example is where the problem lies: AI-generated “nature photography.”

Perhaps the problem isn’t as severe as some AI opponents predict: a future where robots take over our jobs, or worse, our lives. However, in scientific circles and other fields, this issue is considered worthy of study.

A Bird That Doesn’t Exist in Nature

Let’s consider just one example to illustrate this point: the “Santa Cardinal” image that went viral on social media in November 2023. The image featured a festive red, white, and black bird perched on a snowy landscape. Posts of the image garnered 170,000 reactions and 74,000 shares. The only problem? The image turned out to be AI-generated, and this bird does not actually exist in nature.

While AI-generated images often “give themselves away” with machine learning flaws, some are difficult to identify as fake. Why is this so important? Because “clean data” (including spontaneous shots of birds in nature) is the backbone of scientific research.

So, with the existence of AI-generated images, how can we trust that an image is telling the truth? How can we be sure that a bird image is a scientifically documented species and that it was found in its true season and habitat? This also complicates data collection efforts for scientists, conservationists, researchers, wildlife photographers, and bird lovers.

Moving forward, not knowing the difference between a real and an AI-generated image can also undermine public trust in important issues like climate change and declining bird populations.

The Limitations of AI

What’s the bottom line? AI is a promising tool in the field of ornithology, despite its limitations. However, experts repeatedly share the same opinion: there is no substitute for human experience. In scientific research, the importance of scientific contributions from enthusiasts highlights this point; the raw data collected by people in nature is what AI technology uses to learn from and operate on. And when it comes to the pleasure of birdwatching or the calming effects of nature, AI fails miserably.

What technology can truly simulate the thrill of hearing a bird’s song on an early morning nature walk? Or the awe of watching swans gracefully form a “V” shape as they soar through the sky? Any nature lover can provide the well-known answer, according to American researcher and content writer Annie Krogh on chirpforbirds.com.

**Enabling Precise and Instant
Identification of Birds Flying Overhead**

AI is Changing How We Study Bird Migration

After decades of frustration, machine learning tools are unlocking a treasure trove of acoustic data for ecologists.

A small songbird flies over Ithaca, New York, on a September night. It's one of four billion birds in a massive annual bird migration across North America. In the air, it emits what ornithologists call a "nocturnal flight call" to communicate with its flock.

It's the shortest of audio signals, lasting no more than 50 milliseconds, emitted in the woods in the middle of the night. Yet humans have managed to capture it using a microphone fitted with a concentrating funnel. Moments later, a program called BirdVoxDetect, a collaboration between New York University, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Centrale Nantes engineering school in France, identifies and classifies the bird down to the species level.

Biologists like Andrew Farnsworth of Cornell have long dreamed of eavesdropping on birds this way. In a world growing warmer and increasingly cluttered with potentially lethal human infrastructure like glass skyscrapers and power lines, migratory birds face many existential threats.

Scientists rely on a range of methods to track the timing and location of their migrations, but each has drawbacks. Doppler radar, with weather filtering, can detect the total biomass of birds in the air, but it can't break down that total by species.

GPS tags on individual birds and meticulous observations by citizen-scientist birders help fill in that gap, but tagging birds at scale is costly and intrusive. Another major issue: most birds migrate at night, when they're difficult to identify visually and when most birdwatchers are asleep in their beds. For more than a century, acoustic monitoring remained elusive as a method that would solve ornithologists' problems.



Collecting Vast Amounts of Acoustic Data is Easy, But Analyzing It is Hard

In the late 19th century, scientists realized that migratory birds emit species-specific nocturnal flight calls – what are called “acoustic fingerprints.” When microphones became commercially available in the 1950s, scientists began recording bird sounds at night. Farnsworth led some of the bioacoustics research in the 1990s. But even then, it was challenging to spot the short calls, some of which are at the edge of the frequency range humans can hear. Scientists ended up with thousands of tapes they had to scan in real-time while looking at spectrograms that visually depicted the sound. Though digital technology made recording easier, the “perpetual problem,” as Farnsworth says, “was that it became increasingly easy to collect a huge amount of acoustic data, but increasingly difficult to analyze even some of it.”

Then Farnsworth met Juan Pablo Bello, director of NYU's Music and Audio Research Lab. After finishing a project using machine learning to identify sources of urban noise pollution in New York City, Bello agreed to tackle the nocturnal flight call problem. He assembled a team that included French machine listening expert Vincent Lostanlen, and in 2015, the BirdVox project was born to automate the process.

“Everyone was saying: ‘Eventually, when this thing is figured out, this is going to be a rich source of information’,” Farnsworth says. But at first, Lostanlen recalls, “there was not even a hint that this was doable.” It seemed unimaginable that machine learning could come close to the listening abilities of experts like Farnsworth.

“Andrew is our hero,” Bello says. “All we want to imitate with computers is Andrew.” They began by training BirdVoxDetect, a neural network, to ignore faults like the low buzzes from rain-damaged microphones. Then they trained the system to detect flight calls, which vary across (and even within) species and can easily be confused with the chirp of a car alarm or a spring peeper. Lostanlen says the challenge was similar to that of a smart speaker listening for its unique “wake word,” except in this case, the distance from the target noise to the microphone is much greater (meaning more background noise to compensate for).

Of course, the scientists couldn't choose a unique sound like “Alexa” or “Hey Google” for their trigger. “For birds, we don't really make that choice,” he quips. “Charles Darwin made that choice for us.” Fortunately, they had plenty of training data to work with – Farnsworth's team had manually annotated thousands of hours of recordings collected by microphones in Ithaca.

It's Like Learning a Language You Already Speak

BirdVoxDetect works on a subset of North American migratory songbirds. But through “few-shot learning,” it can be trained to detect other similar birds with just a few training examples. Bello says it's like learning a language similar to one you already speak. Using inexpensive microphones, the system can be expanded to places around the world without birdwatchers or Doppler radar, even in vastly different recording conditions.

233,124 Flight Calls Detected, and Acoustic Data Rivals Radar Effectiveness

With BirdVoxDetect trained to detect flight calls, another difficult task awaited: teaching it to classify the detected calls by species, something only a few expert birders can do. To handle uncertainty, and since training data isn't available for every species, they decided to use a hierarchical system. For example, for a given call, BirdVoxDetect might be able to identify the bird's order and family, even if it's unsure of the species – just as a birdwatcher might identify a call as that of a warbler, whether yellow-rumped or chestnut-sided. During training, the neural network was penalized less when it mixed up birds that were closer on the taxonomical tree.

In August 2024, after eight years of research, the team published a paper detailing BirdVoxDetect's machine-learning algorithms. They also released the software as a free, open-source product for ornithologists to use and adapt. In a test on a full season of migration recordings, totaling 6,671 hours, the neural network detected 233,124 flight calls. In a 2022 study in the *Journal of Applied Ecology*, the team that tested BirdVoxDetect found acoustic data as effective as radar for estimating total biomass.

“If you go to a bioacoustics conference and talk to a number of people, everyone has different use cases,” Lostanlen says. The next step in bioacoustics, he says, is to create a foundational model, like those scientists are working on for natural language processing and image and video analysis, which would be reconfigurable for any species – even beyond birds. That way, scientists won't have to build a new BirdVoxDetect for every animal they want to study.

A Single Microphone Cannot Detect a Bird's Altitude or Direction of Movement

The BirdVox project is complete, but scientists are already building on its algorithms and approach. Benjamin Van Doren, a migration biologist at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign who worked on BirdVox, is using Nighthawk, a new user-friendly neural network that builds on both BirdVoxDetect and the popular birdsong ID app Merlin, to study birds migrating over Chicago and other locations in North and South America. Dan Mennill, who runs a bioacoustics lab at the University of Windsor, says he's excited to try Nighthawk on flight calls his team manually annotates after they're recorded by microphones on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes.

One weakness of acoustic monitoring is that, unlike radar, a single microphone cannot detect a bird's altitude or direction of movement. Mennill's lab is experimenting with an array of eight microphones that can triangulate to solve this problem. Sifting through recordings has been slow. But with Nighthawk, analysis will speed dramatically.

Instantly and Accurately Identifying Birds Soaring Overhead Helps Scien- tists Protect Them

Mennill says that with birds and other migratory animals at risk, BirdVoxDetect came at just the right time. Knowing exactly which birds are flying over in real time can help scientists monitor the status and destination of species.

This, in turn, contributes to practical conservation efforts, such as “lights out” initiatives that encourage skyscrapers to turn off their lights at night to prevent bird collisions. He adds: “Bioacoustics is the future of migration research, and we are close to having the right tools. This heralds a new era.”

By: Christian Elliott, Science and Environmental Reporter - Scientific Review Network - Massachusetts Institute of Technology – USA.

Two Peregrine Falcons and Four Harris Hawks for VIP Protection

At the Villacoublay Military Base in France, Birds of Prey are deployed to ensure aviation safety

In the Yvelines region of Île-de-France, west of Paris, the French Air Force uses falcons and eagles to scare away birds and small mammals that could disrupt flight operations and air traffic. This highly effective method is carried out by trained falconers and requires both patience and precision.

“Genis” is not happy. This Harris hawk does not tolerate intruders on his territory, even if it’s just to photograph his speckled feathers, which are becoming increasingly ruffled on his perch. To calm him, Corporal Maxime places a hood over his head, covering his eyes. They sleep in the dark; “it soothes them,” explains Louis, a falconer working with French authorities.

We are at the Villacoublay Air Base in Yvelines, which means there are rules to follow. The first is the omission of last names: soldiers are referred to by their rank, and civilians, like Louis, by their first names. This is explained by Camille Beis, a journalist for the French daily *Libération* who specializes in biodiversity reporting.



Making the Airport “Hostile” to Birds and Small Animals

At this air base, animals are viewed as service providers. Mafalda, the master falconer’s dog, is actually under contract with the army to protect the birds. “She’s learned to respect their small space,” says Louis, even if “sometimes, when she gets too close, they remind her.”

As for the squadron of raptors, Genis and his companions—four Harris hawks and two peregrine falcons—have a vital mission: to secure the base’s runways half-hour before various takeoffs and landings. Louis explains, “Our birds work to ensure flight safety.”

These falcons are expected to create an unsafe environment, making the base’s airport “hostile” to small animals, especially

birds, to prevent them from being sucked into aircraft engines and thus avoiding the risk of damage or crashes. It must be said that the falcons have important clients to protect, and it’s worth noting that the presidential fleet is also based stationed at this base.

However, there is a great disappointment. Despite expectations, the falcon squadron that protects planes and VIPs is not called the beautifully-named “Air Force Rapace,” but is more simply referred to as the SPPA, which stands for the Animal Hazard Prevention Section—a name that loses some of its luster compared to its military appeal.

The Most Effective Method

In the 1980s, air force military bases began equipping themselves with falconry teams. The first base to open was in 1980 at Istres (Bouches-du-Rhône), followed by the Villacoublay base in 1988. At this 327-hectare base, which includes extensive green spaces and a golf course, both resident and migratory birds are numerous and can disrupt landing and takeoff operations.

Louis explains that “introducing a predator into the environment is one way to deter animals, including birds. It’s one of several methods, but it is effective compared to sonic techniques (such as broadcasting bird alarm calls or the sounds of predators) and pyrotechnic methods (such as firing crackle rockets) used in civil aviation to scare animals.”



“It’s completely surgical”

Every morning, the raptors pass through the weighing room. Louis continues, “Falconry is primarily the art of weighing and feeding the birds.” To maintain their weight, the raptors receive one or two frozen chicks each day, while the falcons are given an extra pigeon wing. The key is to keep them slightly hungry so they maintain their hunting instincts without weakening them.

We weigh “Kronos,” Louis writes (685 grams) on his weighing sheet. The falcon is ready to fly, so we can take it out once it’s ready and equipped with a GPS. Furthermore, the falcon begins to get restless, opening its wings in protest due to “impatient behavior.” Sergeant Maxim diagnoses the situation, but he’s not really surprised because if he had to describe Kronos’s personality, he’d say “eager to hunt and impatient.”

As for the soaring falcon, a type of “low-flying” raptor, the operation is carried out directly from the car, from the falconer’s glove, as the raptor takes off. The sergeant, sitting in the passenger seat, releases the falcon through the window as soon as it spots the prey. The unique feature of Harris hawk is that they perform a completely surgical operation. If it doesn’t work, the result is counterproductive. The term is well chosen: the first time, we barely have time to understand what’s happening before the bird returns, unable to catch its prey, even though it feels frightened and therefore wary of approaching the base airfield, which is exactly what is required.



Runway Clearance on Time

“Genis,” a very young falcon, is still in the training phase. He is learning to socialize with the falconer, recognizing him as his provider, which will determine his desire to return. “The raptor is still very opportunistic,” says Louis. “We are an easy food source for him.”

This time, the car is no longer a hunting tool, but simply a means of transport to the runway. It took some negotiation for the control tower to grant the falconers five minutes to work with the trainee falcon before a helicopter would need the runway clear for takeoff. Falcons are “high-flying” birds, so you have to “simulate a hunt” with them.

For now, “Genis” is making his first unrestricted flights at increasingly longer distances. Corporal Maxime releases him at one end of the runway, while Louis waits further down with a lure attached to a piece of pigeon. The dive isn’t perfect, but it’s enough to clear the runway on time. Soon, “Genis” will be ready to deter birds, especially the gulls that land on the runway throughout the year. In the meantime, we place his small hood on him again to calm him down.



The Strongest and Most Robust Falcon

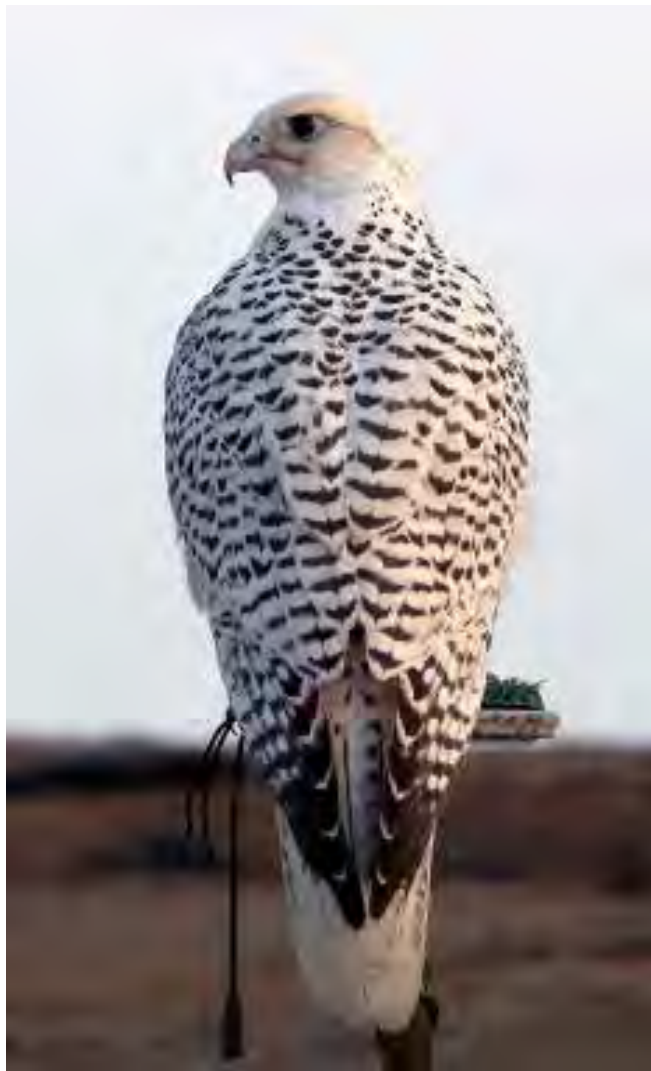
The Gyrfalcon, an Unstoppable Hunter

The largest and most magnificent of all falcon species in the world, anyone who has hunted with this falcon becomes captivated—not only by its inherent qualities but also by the thrill and passion it inspires, igniting a desire to own and hunt with it.

The Gyrfalcon earned its prestigious reputation when the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (may he rest in peace) chose it for hunting several years ago, marking the first high-profile use of this falcon in the Arabian Gulf and the Middle East. He recognized it as the strongest and most capable among all falcons in capturing prey.

In the Arabian Peninsula, the Gyrfalcon continues to prove, day after day, year after year, that it's the most worthy falcon, thanks to its immense strength and the striking beauty of its unique physical build, which sets it apart from all other birds of prey. It primarily comes in two colors: white and black, with other variations falling between these two extremes.

Today, Gyrfalcon breeding is the most widespread in the region. These falcons are the most sought-after among falconry enthusiasts in the UAE, largely because of their impressive size, incredible flight speed, and formidable hunting abilities.



Origin of the Name

The word “Gyr” is an Arabicized form of the English term, which itself originated from Latin, the root of modern European languages. It means “spear,” reflecting this bird’s ability and skill in hunting and maneuvering. The Germans specifically named it the “Polar Falcon,” while the Greeks dubbed it the “King of Falcons.” The scientific Latin name settled on (RUSTICOLUS), meaning “wanderer.”

Through comprehensive research and travel to all countries within the Gyrfalcon’s range, researchers and authors Eugene Potapov and Richard Sale mapped a new distribution for the bird. They concluded that the Gyrfalcon is more adaptable than previously thought and reinstated the traditional scientific name for the species: (Falco Gyrfalco).

They also revealed that Gyrfalcons rely on a limited number of prey types for most of their lives, which is rare not only among birds of prey but among bird species in general.

Hunting with the Gyrfalcon

The exact beginning of humans using Gyrfalcons for hunting remains unknown. However, evidence of their use appears in paintings from the Song Dynasty in China, dating between 960 and 1279 CE.

The Gyrfalcon was mentioned as a rare commodity used in trade exchanges and even as currency for paying fines in Europe during the 12th century. In the 13th century, the Roman Emperor Frederick II, who dedicated his life to falconry and the care of these birds, wrote about it. He authored a book, still considered a reference for falconers today, titled “The Art of Falconry,” in which he stated, “In respect to its size, strength, speed, and courage, we love to place it at the top of the ladder, above all falcons.”

Globally, the Gyrfalcon is listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). However, it’s bred in captivity in large numbers for use in hunting.

Reproduction and Geographical Distribution

The breeding season for the Gyrfalcon occurs between March and July, although they naturally begin searching for nesting sites in January and February.

Gyrfalcons are distributed across the Arctic regions of the world, including Eurasia, North America, Greenland, and Iceland. During harsh winters, they move slightly south, depending on food availability.



Captive Breeding

Although the Saker Falcon has traditionally been considered the classic falconry bird in Middle Eastern countries, it is no longer the most commonly used falcon in the sport of falconry within the United Arab Emirates. In recent years, there has been a rapid increase in



the number of captive-bred falcons of both Gyr-Saker and Gyr-Peregrine hybrids used in falconry.

One of the primary reasons for this increase is the CITES law, issued in October 2002, which permits only the use of captive-bred falcons for falconry purposes within the UAE. This led to an urgent need to enhance research on these falcons to ensure their health and well-being.



The Icelandic Gyrfalcon and Ptarmigan

For more than ten years, the Peregrine Fund has collaborated with Ólafur Nielsen, an animal ecologist at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, to study the populations of Gyrfalcons and Rock Ptarmigan in northeast Iceland. The Gyrfalcon, the largest falcon species, breeds in the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions of the world, with possibly 400 pairs or more breeding in Iceland alone.

Throughout most of the Gyrfalcon's range, the Ptarmigan is considered its primary prey. Ptarmigan populations fluctuate between

scarcity and abundance in a cycle of approximately ten years. When Ptarmigan numbers are low, Gyrfalcons struggle to find food and reproduce unless other prey is available. For many Gyrfalcons in Iceland, alternative food sources are not available in their nesting areas. For this reason, Gyrfalcons do not breed during years when Ptarmigan numbers are low, and they may even abandon their nests. Therefore, prey availability often determines the population numbers of birds of prey.

Gyrfalcon Conservation

- Abu Dhabi is actively involved in conserving the Gyrfalcon and its habitats in the Arctic tundra regions. This is achieved by uniting the efforts of scientists from all Arctic countries in an ongoing research project that studies the impact of climate change on ecosystems and facilitates information exchange with experts who can make a difference.
- In 2011, an international conference was held focusing on the ecology and conservation of the Gyrfalcon and its prey in Arctic ecosystems. More than 120 scientists from Arctic nations participated, contributing 70 research papers and scientific presentations. The conference concluded the following:
- The Gyrfalcon is not currently threatened with extinction. However, climate change predictions indicate a potential loss of 50-60% of suitable habitats for the Gyrfalcon and its prey within the next eighty years.
- The conference emphasized the necessity of establishing a continuous, long-term research project and enhancing cooperation among scientists from the eight Arctic countries in this field.

The Desert Hare

**A Falconer's Prey
Protected by the UAE**



For centuries, the desert hare has been an important source of food for Bedouin tribes across the Arabian Peninsula, traditionally hunted with falcons and Saluki hound. Bedouins also caught hares by pulling them directly from their burrows in the sand. Concern over declining hare populations led the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to ban hare hunting in 1983.

Arabian Hare Breeding Program

The Emirates Falconers' Club is implementing a pioneering program for breeding the Arabian Desert hare in captivity. In addition to this, they are carrying out reintroduction programs into the wild to boost wild hare populations in protected areas and in designated hunting zones, where they serve as prey for falcons.

Easy Prey for Falcons

The hare is considered easy prey for falcons, with the Saker Falcon being among the most skilled at hunting it. The Saker is well adapted to desert life, particularly in its feeding habits, where it re-chews and re-digests its food. Desert hares dig deep burrows in the ground, and an experienced falconer can track them by observing their size, the burrow itself, and the spacing of their footprints.



Declining Populations

Hare populations across the Arabian Peninsula are experiencing a continuous decline. The Arabian Peninsula is a vast arid desert region with generally low rainfall. To survive under these harsh conditions, the region's animals have had to adapt physiologically and behaviorally. Desert ungulates, such as the sand gazelle and Arabian gazelle, are well known for tolerating extreme heat, because their surface area is small relative to their total body volume allows them to reduce heat absorption when the external temperature rises. In contrast, small desert rodents like the jerboa have adapted by only coming out at night, spending their days in deep burrows dug into the sand.



Distribution

The desert hare is a mammal species that faces immense difficulty surviving in the desert. Its large body surface area to total volume ratio means it readily absorbs heat when exposed to the scorching sun during the day. On the other hand, its skeletal and muscular structure has adapted more for escaping predators than for digging burrows, as what it digs is merely a shallow scrape in the sand. The Arabian desert hare, therefore, undoubtedly requires further physiological and behavioral adaptations to withstand or avoid the burden of heat.

Globally, the desert hare has a vast geographical distribution, extending from Southern Africa, across North Africa, Southwestern Europe, into the Middle East and Central Asia, and even to Eastern China. Within this range, countless ecological patterns are defined by temperate, subtropical, tropical, and desert climates.



The Desert Hare

The desert hare is found throughout the Arabian Peninsula and on many of its offshore islands.

It's a nocturnal herbivore that emerges from shallow scrapes or small burrows shortly after sunset and typically returns to the same spot at or around sunrise the following morning. If startled by a predator or grazing camel and forced from its burrow, it's unlikely to use the same burrow again for several months. The scrapes and burrows used by the desert hare for resting are usually located at the base of shrubs where soft sand accumulates. Hares have also been observed using abandoned burrows dug by foxes and spiny-tailed lizards in the harder, lower layers of gravel plains and within the depressions of sand dunes.

During winter, hares most likely take shelter under shrubs in gravel plains or flat areas. In summer, they move to the outer edges of gravel plains or into sandy dune areas where larger shrubs provide them with the opportunity to dig shallow burrows in the compacted sand at the base of the shrubs around the roots.

Desert hares differ very significantly from their brown hare counterparts, in terms of physiology, size, and behavior. Desert hares are much smaller, averaging around 1,050 g in body mass, compared to the European hare's average of 3,870 g. Moreover, considerable variation exists among the subspecies of the Cape hare. A recent study reported that the average body mass of the Cape hare in China is about 2,200 g in autumn (Luo, 2000). Future DNA research may very well confirm that the desert hare is a completely distinct species.

Presence and Characteristics

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Adaptation to the Desert Environment

Desert hares have developed several morphological, physiological, and behavioral adaptations to withstand hot summer days and cold winter nights. While many mammal species resort to sweating or panting to stay cool, hares cannot tolerate the water loss required by these processes. Research on long-eared hares has shown that they reduce water loss by expelling dry feces, concentrating urine, and allowing their body temperature to rise during the day. The same species also increases blood flow to its large ears, resulting in increased convective and radiative heat loss. Heat dissipation through the fur is higher in summer because summer fur has greater thermal conductivity than winter fur.

Desert hares have a significantly lower metabolic rate than European hares, noting that a high metabolic rate causes an increase in body temperature. They can also tolerate drinking water with a salinity of up to 6% (seawater salinity is about 3.5%), whereas European hares can only tolerate water with a salinity of up to 2%.

Behaviorally, hares choose different resting places depending on the season. It is widely believed that when the temperature becomes extremely high, the ears are no longer able to radiate body heat. In such cases, hares constrict blood flow to their ears and press them flat against their body surface, providing an umbrella-like shade.

Reproduction

Desert hares are capable of breeding year-round, though their primary breeding season usually occurs during the cooler winter months. All hare species are opportunistic breeders; when suitable conditions are available (often periods of rainfall), they can reproduce quickly. Each time, they typically produce one or at most two offspring.

If conditions are favorable, females can become pregnant again immediately after giving birth. During the main breeding season, males are often seen chasing each other in an attempt to attract females. European hares are frequently observed boxing each other, a struggle usually occurring between females, and it is likely that this also happens with desert hares.

Desert hare young are born after a gestation period of approximately 42 days. At birth, they are fully furred and have open eyes (precocial), unlike rabbit kits, which are born naked and blind. The mother leaves her young within hours of their birth, and the feeding of the young remains somewhat mysterious, although she visits her offspring once a day for nursing.



Feeding

Young European hares typically choose a resting spot close to their birthplace. The mother and offspring return to the birth site shortly after sunset, where the young nurse for less than fifteen minutes. As soon as feeding concludes, the mother departs, while the young return to a safe resting place. For desert hares, feeding times are less predictable, although some have been observed feeding their young in the early morning.

The home range of desert hares varies between 0.11 and 0.3 km². These home ranges often overlap, particularly between males and females during the main breeding season.

Since desert hares obtain all their water from the food they consume, they naturally prefer succulent plants. They also feed on new shoots of acacia shrubs and most grasses. The branches that provide them with food at night also offer shelter during the day.

Hunting Prohibition

Many parts of the land have been marked by extensive human settlement within sandy desert regions. The impact of camel grazing on scattered desert vegetation has also increased significantly due to a noticeable rise in camel numbers, facilitated by easier access to the desert and the availability of water transported in tankers (rather than relying on underground well water). Consequently, many gravel plains that were once covered with succulent plants are now completely barren.

It has been observed that desert hares are generally found away from areas heavily impacted by human settlement. The underlying reasons for this have not been fully studied, but these reasons likely include environmental damage and an increase in predator populations, particularly foxes and wild cats, which often accompany human settlement.

Hounds in Falconry

**Good Selection
and Training Skill
Ensure Outstanding
Performance**

Derry Argue

Birds of prey are very quick to grasp what gives them an opportunity to hunt, and most of them quickly learn to work with a Hound once they realize the benefit. Your falcon's performance can only improve if you are able to release it regularly towards prey, and there is no better way to achieve this than by using a well-trained hunting dog.



Choosing the Right Hound

I would never presume to advise anyone regarding such a personal matter as choosing a Hound for falconry. I have seen Spaniels work with Goshawks very effectively, with the human participants merely being spectators. There are also falconers who fly their Merlins at larks and use Brittany Spaniels specifically trained to chase larks.

For centuries, falconers have flown their falcons at various types of prey using Pointers or Setters to direct them towards these quarries. I know American falconers who use Hounds trained to flush ducks from ponds on command and to stop working when given a specific signal or when the falcon has caught the prey or is in an unsuitable position. The only limitation to using trained hunting hounds in falconry is your own imagination and skill as a trainer.

Which Breed?

Generally, I find it's usually wise to stick with well-known and common hunting hound breeds. Over the past few decades, many exotic and wonderful breeds have been imported from around the world, and most of these breeds have been touted as answers to the calls of hunters or falconers. What saddens me is to see many people looking for the hound that does everything on its own, without its owner bothering to train or give it experience. Believe me, such hounds are either the result of hard work or simply an unusual, accidental occurrence.

A hound doesn't need deep-rooted lineage or even a Kennel Club (KC) registration certificate to succeed, and you can take that from a hound breeder who has been breeding the same Pointers for 33 years. One of the best hunting and falconry hounds I've ever seen was the result of a deliberate cross between a Pointer and a Springer Spaniel. The Irish regularly perform these crosses, perhaps between a Springer and a Setter, a Springer and a Pointer, a Labrador and a Pointer, or any combination that suits the local environment. These hounds are called "Droppers" and are also very popular. For some reason, here in the UK, we are bogged down with paperwork, which is far from common sense or logic.

Perhaps the worst thing that can happen to a hunting hound breed is for it to become popular. When that day comes, puppies will be sold at high prices, eagerly snapped up by buyers keen to breed more, and if the breed is somewhat rare, the gene pool is limited, and with the breeding of each individual, the quality deteriorates until it eventually reaches a stage of collapse, with the final blow being the selection for show purposes.



The most popular hunting hound breeds in the UK are probably the English Springer Spaniel and the Labrador Retriever. Spaniels can be taught to point, and I know at least one breeder in the USA who has developed a pointing Labrador. Frankly, in my mind, there are a few breeds that I consider better than a Spaniel for hunting with Buteos or Accipiters. Cocker Spaniels are also excellent hounds, but their training tends to be more difficult than that of Springers. Almost all hound breeds can be trained to point, although it's probably best to start with a breed naturally inclined to do so.

In open moorlands, nothing can beat one of the traditional Setter or Pointer breeds. Even on stubble fields when hunting partridge, a specialized bird hound is extremely valuable. What I like most is when



the farmland's ground cover is either too thick or too sparse to help the quarry hide, and falconers scout for prey birds with binoculars from their car window. But what happens if the falcon is young and still needs assistance?

So far, I haven't mentioned the various Pointer-Retrievers breeds found on our continent, and I put them in parentheses here because the UK is unique in being the only country in the world where traditional Pointers and Setters are not trained to retrieve.

Beyond that, the German Short-haired Pointer, German Wire-haired Pointer, Vizsla, Munsterlander, Brittany Spaniel, etc., all perform well when a hound capable of pointing and flushing is needed in farmland adjacent to cultivated areas. The choice is yours.



The Most Important Points

Perhaps the most important point in choosing a hound is that it should be from a breed used in this field and of a type known to be relatively easy to train. The second point is that it must be your personal choice, and of a type, breed, or lineage that you genuinely like and admire. Some types or breeds respond to a specific training system, while other types and breeds respond to a different training system. For example, Vizslas are known to be easy to train, while German Short-haired Pointers are known to be difficult to train. Therefore, the hound must be suitable for the training system as well as the trainer's temperament.

In any case, that hound could stay with you and your family for ten or even fifteen years, so it's best to choose it carefully and thoughtfully.

Spaniel	A breed of hunting hound Characterized by long, floppy ears and soft, silky fur
Springer Spaniel (or Springer)	One of two Spaniel breeds Characterized by a slightly domed head and medium-length ears.
Pointer	A breed of hunting hound Characterized by a large size and smooth coat, typically white with black, brown, or lemon markings.
Setter	A breed of hunting hound Characterized by a large size and long coat, trained to point to the location of prey by standing rigidly.
Labrador Retriever (or Labrador)	A breed of hunting hound that locates prey Characterized by a strong build and a short, dense coat, typically black or golden-brown in color.
Cocker	A breed of Spaniel Characterized by its small size and stocky body
Vizsla	A breed of Hungarian hunting hound Characterized by a smooth, golden-yellow coat

INPEX

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JAPANESE HERITAGE IN HARMONY WITH THE UAE



Insulation of 30,000 Electricity Poles to Protect Birds in the World's Largest Power Line Modernization Project

Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund's Electrocution Mitigation Initiative Protects 25,000 Raptors in Mongolia

The Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, one of the leading initiatives of the Emirates Falconers' Club, continues to implement important global projects aimed at species conservation and the sustainability of falconry, especially given that one in five raptor species is threatened with extinction.

One of the most significant and positively impactful achievements of the Fund to date towards sustainable falconry is the electrocution mitigation initiative for raptors launched in Mongolia to protect the endangered Saker Falcon, serving as a model for pioneering conservation efforts.



Four Essential Pillars for Species Conservation

Dr. Munir Z. Virani, CEO of Operations at the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, stated that "Our mission is to ensure the protection and flourishing of raptor species worldwide in their natural habitats. By working with our global partners, we are changing the trajectory of these magnificent birds."

He explained that the Fund operates on four fundamental pillars of environmental conservation: species conservation, scientific research, global partnerships, and developing leadership in conservation. These pillars are used as strategic focal points for guidance, facilitating efficient resource allocation while providing a clear framework for cooperation and impact measurement. This, in turn, drives the Fund's mission to achieve transformative conservation outcomes and deliver tangible results on the ground.

Insulation of 30,000 Electricity Poles to Make Them Safe for Raptors

Dr. Andrew Dixon, Director of Science and Conservation at the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, explained that with the increasing global demand for energy, the need to ensure positive investments in nature is more pressing than ever. This is especially true as many continents with rich raptor diversity are rapidly expanding electricity grids and power lines, ensuring the safety of raptors.

He clarified that the Fund's international raptor conservation projects began by addressing a pressing issue: the electrocution of millions of birds annually on low-voltage electricity distribution lines. He noted that these incidents not only lead to the deaths of large numbers of birds but also cause power outages, equipment damage, and potential fires, resulting in significant financial losses and environmental harm.



Dixon reported that over the past years, the Fund has successfully insulated 30,000 poles to make them safe for raptors and other birds across Mongolia. He pointed out that this Abu Dhabi-led initiative is one of the largest global efforts to mitigate electrocution impacts worldwide and provide artificial nests. These efforts have helped to fledge and protect 25,000 raptors from electrocutions that previously caused the demise of approximately 4,000 Saker Falcons annually.

This is considered the world's largest power line modernization project, demonstrating that effective mitigation can be widely deployed, significantly reducing raptor electrocution rates and saving tens of thousands of birds each year. The electrocution pole insulation equipment comprises insulating covers fitted to the cross-arms and concrete tops of standard power lines in Mongolia, suitable for both retrofitting existing lines and installing on new ones. Dixon also highlighted other programs implemented by the Fund in Mongolia, including the creation of artificial nests for falcons in areas where food sources, such as small rodents, are available. This also contributes to protecting pastures and agricultural crops from rodents through predation by falcons.



Guiding Model

Based on the successes achieved by the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund in tackling the risk of electrocution in Mongolia, its next steps involve using the Mongolia project as a guiding model, advocating for the establishment of bird-safe specifications when building power lines, and attracting the attention of funders and stakeholders to address the issue of electrocution on a global scale.

The Fund hopes to inspire countries, organizations, falconers, and community members to help implement ambitious protection plans in raptor breeding areas and along their migration routes, as bird electrocution poses a significant threat in addition to habitat degradation and negative impacts on wildlife species.

In addition to continuing its efforts in Mongolia and Bulgaria, the Fund is currently working with partners worldwide to develop new raptor conservation projects to achieve comprehensive strategic outcomes for raptor protection while developing local capacities in raptor research and conservation methods.

It is worth noting that the Fund was established in 2018 under the initiative of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, may God protect him, to develop solutions for the major challenges facing raptors worldwide. This contributes to environmental protection and the sustainability of national and global cultural heritage associated with raptors.

From its headquarters in Abu Dhabi, the Fund works to develop innovative and transformative solutions for raptor conservation worldwide and supports global programs aimed at restoring raptors and protecting their natural habitats. Approximately 570 raptor species worldwide are threatened with extinction. These birds are of great importance to ecological balance and human life. Therefore, ensuring the conservation and restoration of raptors and their habitats is crucial as they are valuable components of regional and global biodiversity.



Fund Objectives:

- Providing grants for specialized research and scientific projects – local and international – in raptor conservation.
- Encouraging other entities to provide grants and donations to project owners to ensure project sustainability and a continuous flow of annual financial contributions.
- Encouraging scientific and veterinary research on wild and captive-bred raptors.
- Disseminating research and projects supported by the Fund.
- Supporting projects to preserve the traditional form of falconry in regions where it has been practiced for centuries.
- Highlighting and raising awareness of leading pioneers and major initiatives in raptor conservation.



**From the Heart of the Desert to the Platforms
of Victory and Crowning: A Championship
Embracing Authenticity and Modernity**

Great Success of the President's Falconry Cup

**Wide Participation in the Abu Dhabi
International Hunting & Equestrian
Exhibition's Badge Rounds**

The President's Falconry Cup is held annually, in line with the support and interest of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE "may God protect him", and under the direct supervision of His Highness Sheikh Nahyan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Sports Council. It is organized by the Abu Dhabi Falconers' Club, which seeks to preserve the achievements of the past and strive to support the journey of UAE heritage and the authenticity of traditional sports, rich in history, noble values, and a purposeful message. This is in appreciation of the efforts to proudly uphold the historical legacy whose foundations were laid by pioneering ancestors and forefathers.

The President's Cup competitions reached their twelfth season, building on the great successes achieved in previous seasons, with widespread participation from falconers and outstanding performance across various rounds.

The competitions took place in the Al Falah area of Abu Dhabi, commencing with the GCC citizens rounds on January 10, 2025, for the Saker and Gyr Peregrine categories. This was followed by the General Owners' competitions with rounds for Gyr Taba' Hurr and Jirnas. Then came competitions in the Gyr Peregrine, Gyr Qarmousha (ultra white- female Gyr falcon), and Gyr. The General Open rounds included Gyr Taba' Farkh (Juvenile) and Jirnas (Adults).

The organizing committee of the championship allocated January 21 for the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition rounds, followed by the Ladies' General Amateur category rounds, and the People of Determination and Juniors rounds. The competitions for the twelfth edition of the President's Cup concluded on January 27 with the final rounds for the General Open Farkh, General Owners Farkh, General Open Jirnas, and General Owners Jirnas categories.



The President's Falconry Cup is considered the most important and valuable, especially as it bears a name cherished by all. It is also the most valuable competition in terms of prize money, with the organizing committee allocating substantial prizes for winners across all rounds and categories.

Under the directives of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region, ADNEC Group, in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Falconers' Club, launched the "Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition Badge" for falcons during the 21st edition of the exhibition in September 2024. This effectively contributes to supporting these important sports and enhancing their presence and competitiveness.

The badge qualified falcons purchased at the "Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition," associated auctions, and events to compete under the supervision of the Abu Dhabi Falconers' Club in the new race rounds, which were introduced for badge holders in four falcon categories: "Gyr Pure," "Gyr Qarmousha," "Gyr Shaheen," and "Taba'," within the His Highness the President's Falconry Cup 2024-2025.

Zayed Bin Hamad Crowns Winners at the Conclusion of the President's Falconry Cup

The falcon "Hakar" owned by Abdullah Khalfan Butti Salem Al Qubaisi clinched the title of the President's Cup Farkh (Young Falcon) round for the Open General category on the concluding day of the twelfth edition of the President's Falconry Cup, organized by the Abu Dhabi Falconers' Club.

The final day witnessed four final rounds in the General Open and General Owners categories, with two rounds for each.

The falcon "Limited" belonging to Ghadeer Suhail Salem Al Ketbi took second place in the final Farkh round for the General Open, while "Mubashir" belonging to Abdullah Khalfan Butti Al Qubaisi came in third.

In the President's Cup Farkh category for General Owners, the falcon "S69" belonging to Ahmed Ateeq Mohammed Al Muhairi soared to the title. "N7" belonging to Khalid Juma Khadem Al Hameli came in second, while "Al Athb" belonging to Hamad Abdullah Halis Al Falasi secured third place.

As for the Golden Telwah (Lure) round for Jirnas (Adult Falcon) in the General Open category, the title went to the falcon "Mirage" from Dubai Team. Second place went to "Murashah" from Meydan Team, and "S03" from Al Hilal Team came in third.

"Al Asmar" belonging to Abdul Aziz Abdullah Saeed Al Kindi snatched the title of the Golden Telwah round for Jirnas in the General Owners category. "Ghaid" belonging to Abdul Rahim Ibrahim Ali Al Hosani took second place, and "Ghaibhan" belonging to Saeed Abdullah Halis Al Falasi came in third.

The winners of the top places on the concluding day of the competition were crowned by Sheikh Zayed bin Hamad bin Hamdan Al Nahyan, Vice President of the UAE Falcons Federation; His Excellency Fares Mohammed Al Mazrouei, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Abu Dhabi Falconers' Club; His Excellency Aref Al Awani, Secretary General of Abu Dhabi Sports Council; His Excellency Rashid Mubarak Bin Markhan, Secretary General of the UAE Falcon Federation; Ghanem Fares Al Mazrouei, Board Member of Abu Dhabi Falconers' Club; and His Excellency Sultan Al Mahmoud, Executive Director of Abu Dhabi Falconers' Club.

The twelfth edition of the President's Falconry Cup competitions commenced on January 10 in the Al Falah area and witnessed strong competition across various categories, including participants from GCC countries, youth, People of Determination, and ladies. It concluded with great success exceeding expectations on January 27, 2025.





"Al Naseem", "Matrouka", "Shan", "Tuwaiq"

Soar to Victory in Abu Dhabi Hunting Exhibition Badge Rounds

"Al Naseem" owned by Salem Mohammed Rashid Al Muhannadi, clinched the title of the International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition round for Gyr Pure General (young falcon), at the opening of the twelfth day of the President's Falconry Cup competitions.

"B1" belonging to Abid Saleh Zayed Mohammed Al Falahi took second place in this round, while "Naqi" belonging to Hadi Saeed Salem Al Mansouri secured third place.

"Matrouka" belonging to Hadi Saeed Salem Al Mansouri soared to the title of the International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition round for Qarmousha Gyr Farkh. "G1" belonging to Ali Omar Ali Al Balushi came in second, and "Nasayem" belonging to Salem Mohammed Rashid Al Muhannadi placed third.

The title of the International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition round for Gyr Shaheen General went to "Shan" belonging to Majed Saad Abdullah Al Minhali. "Barzan" belonging to Hadi Mohammed Hashil Al Mansouri came in second, and "Desert 24" belonging to Zayed Battal Sultan Al Marar took third place.

The competitions on the twelfth day of the President's Falconry Cup concluded with the International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition round for Gyr Tabah Farkh. "Tuwaiq" belonging to Abdullah Saif Sayyah Al Mansouri soared to its title, while "Suhail" belonging to Salem Mohammed Rashid Al Muhannadi came in second, and "Battash" belonging to Rashid Mohammed Abdullah Al Sahli placed third.

It is worth noting that the number of registered participants in the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition badge rounds reached 215 individuals, while the number of participants was 45, and the number of award recipients reached 30 falconers.

**Preserving the Legacy of Falconry
and Enhancing Conservation Efforts**

Hamdan bin Zayed International Falconry Library

**Serving a Diverse Local and
Global Community of Falconers,
Researchers, Scientists,
Students, and the General Public**



Falconry is an authentic element of humanity's intangible cultural heritage. Thanks to international efforts led by the United Arab Emirates, it has been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, confirming its cultural value and importance in strengthening human identity and heritage.

Stemming from the vision of the UAE leadership to preserve this ancient legacy, and to document and develop falconry traditions to ensure their continuity for future generations, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club, directed the establishment of the «Hamdan bin Zayed International Falconry Library,» which is the first of its kind at both the Arab and global levels.

The library aims to be a comprehensive center for preserving and documenting knowledge related to falconry, while making it accessible to researchers, academics, falconers, and all those interested in this ancient heritage.

In this context, the Emirates Falconers' Club seeks to cooperate and coordinate with several leading official and private institutions concerned with and leading in the field of knowledge dissemination and the promotion of cultural heritage preservation, with the aim of:

- Enriching the library's content by providing rare books or recent publications covering the history and traditions of falconry, birds of prey and their quarry, as well as topics related to their conservation, training, and care.
- Exchanging knowledge and expertise on best practices in library management and the utilization of modern technologies, such as artificial intelligence and digitalization, to enhance access to information.
- Collaborating in organizing scientific and cultural events that help raise awareness of the importance of falconry as a global heritage.

■ Following in Zayed's Footsteps

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club, is renowned for his passion for falconry and his dedication to preserving the environment and promote sustainable hunting. He grew up in an environment rich in authenticity, love for the homeland, the heritage of falconry, and the ethics and discernment of desert dwellers, drawing inspiration from the first falconer, his late father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may he rest in peace.

Heritage conservation and environmental preservation are central to His Highness's priorities. He chairs the Board of Directors of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi and also serves as chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club. He is the patron of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition, which has been held annually since 2003 and has achieved continuous success year after year, growing to become the largest of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa

■ Why the Hamdan bin Zayed International Falconry Library?

- Mission:

To serve as the world's foremost repository for falconry knowledge, history, and cultural heritage, ensuring the preservation and dissemination of this ancient practice through comprehensive collections, scholarly research, and public education programs.

- Vision:

A global center of excellence for falconry, integrating tradition, modern practice, and conservation efforts, promoting falconry as a bridge between heritage and sustainable wildlife management.

- Importance:

- The Abu Dhabi government has given great attention to preserving and documenting Arabian falconry. The establishment of a falconry library in Abu Dhabi represents a true treasure and a comprehensive repository of historical and cultural information related to this ancient sport.
- The creation of the Emirati Falconry Library, serving as a reference for individuals and institutions, is a valuable and pivotal project to preserve the heritage and history of this ancient tradition in digital form, making it accessible locally and globally through artificial intelligence technology.

- Objectives

1. Preserving Cultural Heritage:

Falconry is a vital part of the cultural heritage in many countries, particularly in the Arabian Gulf region. Preserving and documenting its traditions and practices ensures their transmission to future generations, nurturing pride in their heritage and the authenticity of their age-old customs.

2. Preserving Falconers' Legacy:

This includes their correspondence, memorabilia, artworks, literature, and life stories, as well as books related to falconry.

3. Scientific Documentation:

Supporting learning and exploring the ancient relationship between humans and birds of prey, as the library provides valuable information for researchers and scientists studying falcons, their behaviors, and their habitats, contributing to a better understanding of biodiversity and the conservation of endangered species.

4. Education and Awareness:

The library can serve as an educational tool to spread awareness about the importance of falconry and its cultural and environmental value, and to teach interested individuals about falconry practices and techniques.

5. Cultural Tourism:

The library can attract tourists interested in learning about falconry traditions and experiences, contributing to the development of cultural tourism.

6. Preserving Personal and Family History:

The falconry library helps document the individual and family experiences and stories of falconers, which enhances pride and belonging among practitioners of this ancient sport.

7. Highlighting and Documenting:

Interpreting important events in the history of falconry, celebrating the role of falconers in species conservation, and documenting their achievements.

■ A Selection of the Library's Contents:

- Rare and modern books about the history of falconry, its tools and techniques, and efforts to preserve it.
- Historical Manuscripts.
- Rare Photographs.
- Distinguished Research and Studies.
- Traditional Falconry Equipment.
- Audio and Video Recordings.
- Collectibles and Donations.
- Digital Archive for remote access to falconry resources.

■ Library Facilities and Sections

- **Exhibition Spaces:** To highlight the evolution of falconry and its cultural impact.
- **Research Center:** To support in-depth studies on sustainable hunting and environmental conservation initiatives.
- **Preservation Halls:** Dedicated to preserving historical collections and manuscripts.
- **Activity and Event Venues:** To host lectures, workshops, and international conferences.

■ Library Programs & Activities:

- Seminars on falconry heritage.
- Educational workshops for schools, the community, and falconry enthusiasts.
- Art exhibitions highlighting falconry traditions worldwide.
- Research grants and fellowships for studies related to environmental and cultural conservation.



■ Partnerships and Collaboration Opportunities:

Sustainable Hunting: Participate in efforts to promote environmentally friendly falconry sustainability and species conservation.

Environmental Conservation Projects: Develop sustainable research and solutions to protect birds of prey and their habitats, especially endangered species.

Cultural Exchange Initiatives: Highlight falconry traditions through exhibitions, events, and publications that celebrate the global heritage of falconry, emphasizing its cultural importance.

Community Engagement: Raise awareness through participation in educational programs, youth initiatives, and outreach activities with all members of the community to foster a deep understanding of falconry and its conservation efforts for future generations.

Research and Studies: Launch research partnerships in collaboration with academic and environmental institutions to advance knowledge in the fields of falcons, ornithology, and environmental studies. We provide extensive resources to support innovative research.

■ Contributing to the Enrichment of the Library's Content and the Development of Its Activities:

- Importance, Advantages, and Returns:

- **Enhanced Visibility:** An opportunity to highlight your noble community initiatives to a global audience, and through our network of conservation specialists, academics, enthusiasts, and falconry experts.
- **Shared Impact:** Amplify your efforts by contributing to the preservation of falconry traditions and wildlife conservation on an international scale.
- **Exclusive Benefits:** Partners receive early access to library resources, event invitations, and collaborative opportunities.
- **Recognition and Participation:** Showcase your contributions through co-branded programs, exhibitions, and documentation, highlighting your partnership and recognizing your efforts.

- How to Collaborate and Donate

- **Sponsorship:** Support specific programs, conservation initiatives, or exhibitions.
- **Collaborative Events:** Co-host workshops, seminars, or joint cultural presentations.
- **Knowledge Exchange:** Contribute research, publications, or share your expertise.
- **Contribution:** Sharing personal archives and private collections from contributors to help highlight and preserve the heritage of falconry.

10,000 – 12,000 Years Ago

Did Falconry Originate in the Middle East Since the Late Stone Age?

By Prof. Keith Dobney

A new theory traces the origins of falconry much further back into prehistory, possibly to the late preceding Ice Age, around 10,000 – 12,000 years ago. Falconry might even have been one of humanity's first steps on the path towards agriculture.

Falconry has long been regarded as a noble and ancient sport. According to some views, people first began to use tame birds of prey for hunting in Central Asia during the first or second millennium BC. Through trade and other contacts, the practice of falconry then extended westward towards the Middle East and eventually to Europe.

But that theory raises a major puzzle. The first artistic views of falconry come not from the Far East, but from Turkey. Several carvings from around 1500 BC show a large bird on the fist of a human figure. Grasped in the same fist is the figure of a hare (presumably the quarry) held by the back legs.

Similar engravings were also found in northern Iraq, dating back to the period of King Sargon II (722 – 705 BC), depicting a small bird of prey on the wrist of a man. This means that falconry was practiced in the Middle East in the eighth century BC. In both cases, some researchers interpreted these engravings as purely religious or symbolic scenes. But if these examples do indeed depict hawking, then the sport is at least 3,500 years old in Western Eurasia.



"One of the earliest evidences of falconry (over 5,500 years ago), Tall Shuwayrah, Syria."

New Meat on Old Bones

Archaeological excavations are now shedding new and interesting light on the origin of falconry in the Middle East, as well as providing new evidence for its reasons and timing of emergence, through the study of fossilized mammal and bird bones. In recent years, archaeologists have excavated many ancient human settlements in Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, dating back to 8,000 – 10,000 BC. Among the remains, they consistently discovered the presence of raptor bones. Most researchers interpret these bones as remnants of food left by the humans living at those sites, or as elements of religious activities. But could there be another explanation? These fragile remains might represent the beginning of raising

and training live birds of prey and the first steps towards practicing falconry. To explore this idea from all its angles, we need the following:

- Understanding the significance of other animal bones extracted from these ancient sites.
- Exploring the historical records of falconry and its current practice by peoples who still hunt with birds of prey.
- Placing these data within the environmental and cultural context of the world as it was ten thousand years ago.

Mongol Rule and the Spread of Falconry





Late Stone Age Diet

Remains from these early sites have surprised archaeologists by revealing the inhabitants exploited a broad and diverse range of mammals and birds. It marks a major shift in human diet. Earlier in the Stone Age, people tended to hunt mainly the larger mammals. But during the short period of human history from 12,000 to 10,000 years ago, the economic focus of hunting in the Middle East appears to shift from large mammal species towards a broader range of food – most importantly, a greater reliance on smaller animals. The range of mammals and birds remains at all these sites is very similar. They include gazelle, fox and hare, as well as game birds such as partridges, francolins and sandgrouse. Hunters must have been both skilled and versatile in order to catch enough of these small species to feed their settlement. They certainly used a variety of techniques to capture their prey, including trapping, netting, digging and perhaps even poisoning.

Perhaps the birds of prey found at these sites were also part of the repertoire of hunting techniques - an additional means of catching smaller prey species. In other words, was falconry first developed and employed as one of the hunting strategies in the Middle East as early as the late Stone Age?



Which Birds Were Used?

The presence of raptor and game bird bones in the same deposits does not prove that these raptors were used for hunting prey. As mentioned earlier, many archaeologists believe that raptors were brought to settlements for religious purposes, independently of the carcasses of other species which were part of the food supply. But we can obtain additional evidence by examining the different types of raptors found among the remains. A first analysis seems to indicate a serious flaw in the hypothesis that birds of prey were used for hunting: the majority of the bones belong to the larger birds of prey, such as eagles, buzzards, vultures and eagle owl, while falcons are much less common.

The problem is that most large raptors are unsuitable for hunting. The smaller eagles and some buzzards are mainly scavengers and carrion feeders and will only occasionally hunt live prey. Falconers today generally use a relatively limited range of species, all of which are smaller in size and include falcons capable of killing birds such as the Peregrine, Lanner, and Saker falcons, and

sometimes the Gyrfalcon, in addition to the majority of Goshawks and Sparrowhawks, precisely the kinds of bird that are rare in the Middle Eastern archaeological sites. But can we be sure that ancient falconers followed the same practice?

All birds of prey can be easily tamed and trained, and present-day falconers in Central Asia, India, and even Europe have trained a whole host of larger birds of prey to fly and hunt, some more successfully than others. Golden eagles, for example, can be trained to catch something as large and formidable as a wolf. In Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan today, some skilled hunters still depend upon golden eagles to catch hares, foxes and wolves for their skins, which are then sold. In the 13th century, Marco Polo participated in a hunting expedition using eagles with the Great Kublai Khan, where he commented: " He has also a great multitude of eagles which are very well trained to hunt; for they take wolves and foxes and buck and roe deer, hares and other small animals."

Vultures can certainly be easily tamed and trained to fly to hand, particularly the Egyptian vulture, which is flown today at several bird of prey centres around Britain. Even if the vultures at these sites weren't actually used for hunting, falconers may have used them to train smaller birds of prey to hunt the larger ones, a common practice described in the historic literature.

The discovery of eagle owl bones in many Stone Age sites also added another interesting dimension to the falconry hypothesis. This extremely powerful bird of prey can also be trained to hunt a range of prey, excelling particularly at dusk or even at night, and few falconers use it this way today.



**Falconry carving from Boğazköy, Asia Minor
(13th century)**

Falconry, Foraging and Farming

How can the study of ancient falconry contribute to our understanding of human society and civilization in the late Stone Age and as the last Ice Age drew to a close?

During the period mentioned, human groups in the Middle East and Near East underwent radical changes in their social and economic lives. Archaeological remains bear witness to one of the most important events in human history: the transition from a nomadic life of hunting and gathering wild resources to a life of settlement, agriculture, crop harvesting, and animal husbandry. This immensely important event led to a rapid increase in human populations and subsequently the dawn of major ancient civilizations and a radical change in the shape of the world as we know it today. The sites – the focus of the study – in the Middle East and Near East offer an important insight into this transformation. The remains contain a very wide range of species, which means that the inhabitants were facing a rapid decline in their food resources,

perhaps because they over-exploited a particular hunting area, leading to its complete depletion. This is undoubtedly a plausible explanation for hunters turning towards smaller species, and perhaps this forced many of these human groups to turn towards agriculture as an alternative and sole means of survival.

Eating small-sized species must have been accompanied by changes in hunting methods, and perhaps the use of raptors for hunting was one of the solutions. What's most intriguing is that this period coincides with the appearance of the domestic dog. Descended from tamed wolves, the dog may have served as a hunting aid and companion. This allows for a connection between the origins of falconry—which emerged as an alternative hunting method—and the domestication of the dog. If the bird-of-prey remains at these sites do indeed represent evidence of experimentation with their taming and management, then birds of prey may take their place (along with

the dog) as the earliest domestic animals. More important, both must have been extremely influential in setting the scene for the subsequent domestication of the later economically important species - sheep, goat, cattle.

Considering all the available evidence, the significance of raptor bones recovered from these ancient sites remains very much open to debate. It is unclear whether they represent mere food waste, symbolic objects, or remains of domesticated birds. The idea that raptors were domesticated before the advent of agriculture, and may have even contributed to its beginnings, may still be a theory, but it deserves further attention and consideration as it could provide a crucial insight into our origins.

***Prof. Keith Dobney** is the Head of Archaeology at the University of Liverpool, a former researcher at the Environmental Archaeology Unit at the University of York in the UK, and specializes in the study of human and animal bones extracted from archaeological sites.

Source: First Science website



Raptors Were Considered a Good Omen Before Any Battle

The Art of Falconry in Greece – A Historical Overview

Significant efforts and a difficult legal battle were waged by the Hellenic Falconry Association to gain recognition for the legality of falconry as a legitimate practice, and as a sport and activity considered beneficial for both humans and nature.

By Stavros Athanasiou and Dr. Panos Azmanis

Falconry in Greece has ancient traditions. Despite the destruction of much historical evidence during the period (1453-1821), there are still many important discoveries that prove the ancient and diverse existence of the art of falconry as practiced in our country.

The Association of Hellenic Falconry (AHF) launched historical research in 2016, which is still ongoing under the guidance of specialized scholars (historians, linguists, ethnologists, etc.). This research has shed light on astonishing lost cultural data. The first and most important element is the existence of a raptor cult throughout ancient Greece, which is why Greek mythology embodied the most prominent deities. Zeus, for example, was embodied in the form of a golden eagle, Athena in the form of a little owl, and Apollo in the form of a falcon.

The Odyssey and the Fall of Troy

Raptors flying around the earth were considered a good omen before any battle, whether during the Classical era or later in the Hellenistic period, where the flight path of an eagle before battle was of utmost strategic importance to Alexander the Great. Numerous artifacts, such as writings, murals, coins, mosaics, and statues, have been discovered, testifying to a great deal of love and knowledge of raptors in ancient Greece. Even if this does not directly prove the practice of falconry, it undoubtedly constitutes a great precedent for it.

Analyzing some historical data, the earliest report comes from the 13th century BC, where Homer, in the epic Odyssey, mentions the return journey of Greek warriors to their homes. After the fall of Troy, these Greek warriors took hunting falcons as spoils and brought them back to Greece. Later, Aristotle's book "Peri Zoon" ("On Animals") recounted a scene from the early days of falconry, and how people cooperated with raptors to hunt birds or mammals.

Documenting Falconry and Eagle Hunting

From the Classical era, numerous elements such as statues, drawings, and references from historians have been discovered and processed by our scientific and cultural team. Ancient coins also represent an important source of evidence for falconry. Just last year, our research team discovered two coins bearing images of falconry. One, belonging to Alexander the Great, dates back to the 3rd century BC, and the other, from the 4th century BC, from the island of Rhodes, depicts hunting from horseback with a golden eagle. Considering that the ancient Greeks colonized the Mediterranean basin, had trade relations with Egypt and the Middle East, and that Alexander the Great conquered Babylon and reached India, we anticipate more data from the Classical era to prove the involvement of the ancient Greeks in the spread of falconry from East to West.

Moving through history, the next record comes from the 4th century AD (Byzantine Era 313-1453 AD) where the largest falconry school in the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire was found in Argos (Peloponnese). In the "Falconer's Villa," as the French archaeological team who discovered it called it, there are falconry mosaics. Gonilla Åkerström-Hougen authored a book titled "Calendar and Hunt: The Falconer's Villa Mosaic at Argos" about what was found in this building. This school continued until the 6th century AD, then was transferred to Phanari (Constantinople). The irony of this discovery lies in the fact that all evidence is derived from foreign literature.

In both the Byzantine and ancient eras, numerous carved statues and murals prove that falconry held a prominent place in the daily lives of nobles

and common people alike. This expression was clearly manifested in a detailed book on falconry, falcon breeding, and raptor medicine, called "Hierakosophion." Its name is derived from the words "Hierax" (an ancient Greek word for falcon) and "Sophion" (a Greek term meaning wisdom). Emperor Palaiologos ordered the writing of "Hierakosophion" by his beloved physician/falconer/naturalist, Demetrius Pepagomenos. It is a treatise on falconry, training, trade, care, and management of trained falcons, and is perhaps the oldest European treatise of its kind, dating back to between 1230 and 1250. It appears to have been completed two years before the famous treatise of Emperor Frederick II von Hohenstaufen. Research is ongoing to determine this aspect; nevertheless, it is a magnificent treatise of no less importance, and contemporary falconers can read and enjoy it. Its translation into modern Greek, and then into English, is a top priority for our association.

As the search for evidence of falconry practice throughout the country continues, we stumbled upon the lyrics of the Erotokritos song (1590-1610 AD) in which references to falconry persist, and the hero's love for this art is evident. According to a chapter titled "A Voyage to Crete and the Archipelago Islands" in Joseph Pitton de Tournefort's "Relation d'un Voyage du Levant" (1718), Crete, at that time, traded in falcons and was the largest exporter of them throughout Europe.

Last but not least, a statue of a mounted falconer carrying a falcon adorns the Royal Palace and Estate (1889) in Tatoi (Athens, Attica). These are just some of the historical elements discovered by the Hellenic Falconry Association, as it continues its diligent pursuit of discovering more examples in collaboration with scholars.



In the Modern Era

In the newly established Greek state (1822), the art of falconry was included as a hunting practice in the first Forest Law and Hunting Law (1860) and subsequent ones, until 1998 when falconry was excluded from the Hunting Law without any prior notice or public consultation. This was primarily due to the low activity of falconry and the absence of any collective cooperation within the falconry community. The only application of falconry that continued was an application by the Hellenic Air Force for pest control around military airports.

The intensive efforts of the Association of Hellenic Falconry (AHF) successfully lobbied the

Ministry of Environment in 2020, leading to the re-inclusion of falconry in the Forest Law and Hunting Law. Since 2021, a new ministerial decision has been issued regulating the practice of falconry and the education/certification of falconry in Greece. As of February 2023, the Ministry of Environment and the Hellenic Falconry Association launched a new emblem for the Hellenic Falconry Association. The Ministry of Environment established a new educational system for certifying falconers and officially appointed the first licensed falconers.

The Great Battle for Legalizing Falconry

We faced a tremendous challenge in legalizing the art of falconry in Greece, due to the opposition of "anti-hunting" lobby groups represented by environmental and animal welfare NGOs. The Association of Hellenic Falconry was founded in 2016 and is the national representative of the International Association for Falconry and conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) and the sole falconry club in Greece. Despite all the difficulties and opposition from environmental and animal welfare NGOs, the Association of Hellenic Falconry (AHF) has achieved remarkable accomplishments in all fields, in addition to its success in legalizing falconry.

Despite our limited human and financial resources, the members of the Association of Hellenic Falconry (AHF) have successfully rehabilitated over 750 injured raptors and rescued over 150 birds over the past seven years. The Association's scientific committee comprises distinguished scientists, who have individually completed valuable scientific studies on raptors and biodiversity conservation, organized national seminars and workshops, and set the dates for all subsequent scientific activities of the Association.

Furthermore, the Association has been highly active in combating raptor trafficking and illegal trade, and raising public awareness about the importance of raptor conservation (reaching over 60,000 students) and in the field of biological control of invasive wildlife species. This has earned it the trust of the competent authorities and the general public, who are now aware of the art of falconry and its beneficial modern applications. Initially, the Association of Hellenic Falconry (AHF) was considered a sympathetic and promising organization that would not achieve much and

would not last long. Some environmental NGOs that the Association contacted personally or officially to discuss and find common ground arrogantly refused dialogue or even cooperation in important areas such as bird crimes or raptor rehabilitation. As our strategy grew and our voices rose, environmental NGOs, such as the Hellenic Ornithological Society and two rehabilitation NGOs, began spreading propaganda against falconry and falcons to influence public opinion and competent authorities. These environmental NGOs are essentially anti-hunting NGOs, and they believe that they should monopolize the rehabilitation and conservation of wild raptors. Furthermore, they oppose the use of the term "raptor ambassadors" in public awareness events/campaigns, and they accused falconers of being "nature thieves" and tarnished the reputation of falconry by describing it as a cruel sport. They were later joined by radical animal welfare NGOs that oppose any perceived cruelty to animals and meat consumption.

Towards the Legality of Falconry at Last

All these attacks were countered with sound, evidence-based scientific responses, disseminated through social media and mainstream media.

Stavros Athanasiou and Dr. Panagiotis (Panos) Azmanis, with the assistance of the Board of Directors and members of the Hellenic Falconry Association, led the fight against the opponents of falconry. Our responses and activities infuriated the NGOs, who escalated their opposition, leading to a covert and legal war against falconry. These organizations initiated written complaints and intervention attempts with the Ministry of Environment, in an effort to influence or sabotage licensing procedures, and then engaged in personal attacks on the members of the Hellenic Falconry Association's Board of Directors. They threatened and attempted to exert political pressure, but ultimately resorted to court over individual incidents related to falconry activities.

The Board of Directors of the Association of Hellenic Falconry (AHF) was always present, one step ahead of developments,

anticipating their reactions, neutralizing their actions, and winning every legal dispute. In their panic, they began to rely on extremist behaviors, such as refusing to hand over an eagle to the forest authorities for delivery to our association for falconry rehabilitation, lying to the Ministry of Environment, sending angry messages to the competent authorities, and conducting public polls against falconry. These measures also failed, pushing them in June 2022 to the ultimate solution: appealing to the Supreme State Court against the Ministry of Environment to annul all laws related to falconry!

The Association of Hellenic Falconry (AHF), as an assisting consultant to the Ministry of Environment, appointed an expert lawyer and prepared a detailed 23-page report against all accusations, supported by compelling evidence. The Supreme Court convened in November 2022 to rule on the appeal, and issued its final decision in January 2023, the fastest final decision in the history of the Supreme State Court.

With the Supreme Court's decision, the legal war between the NGOs ended, and the sport of falconry in Greece was officially validated, thereby dispelling any doubts about its legitimacy or its benefit to humanity and nature. In all these long, complex, and multifaceted efforts undertaken by the Association of Hellenic Falconry (AHF), nothing would have been achieved without the continuous technical support from the International Association for Falconry (IAF). We were, and will remain, in close cooperation and constant alignment to continue our joint strategy in the future, for the benefit of the art of falconry in Greece and internationally.





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Photos provided by Stavros Athanasiou

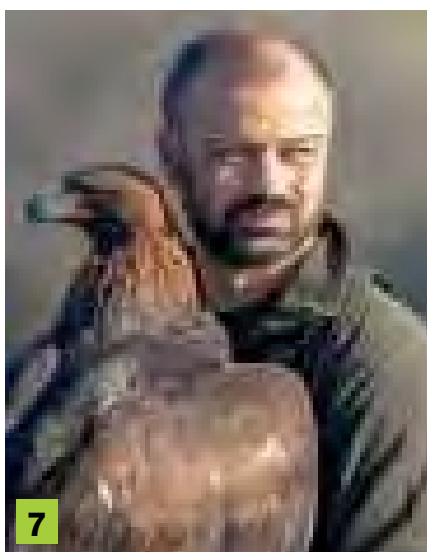
1. Mosaic depicting the practice of falconry, circa 4th century AD.
2. Ancient book, "Hierakosophion," on falcon breeding and raptor medicine.
3. Mosaic representing falconry, circa 4th century AD.
4. New logo of the Hellenic Falconry Association.
5. Stavros Athanasiou and Dr. Panos Azmanis.
6. Celebrating the successful end of a lawsuit filed by anti-hunting groups. In January 2023, the Supreme State Court ruled that falconry is a legal practice and is considered beneficial to humans and nature.
7. Mr. Stavros Athanasiou A retired police officer, skilled falconer, and the president and founder of the Hellenic Falconry Association. He has been a falconer for 24 years and has rehabilitated over 430 wild raptors over 15 years. He has collaborated with Kapodistrian University of Athens and the largest environmental education center to teach raptor conservation in schools. Over 60,000 students have attended his classes. Stavros is busy with his company, which handles various falconry activities such as education, pest control, and rehabilitation.
8. Dr. Panos Azmanis A veterinarian in Greece, he obtained his PhD in avian orthopedics in Zurich. He is a recognized specialist in animal medicine in Europe, a member of the Vulture Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and a member of the Vulture Care Group of the International Association for Falconry (IAF). He is a founding member, Vice President, and Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the Hellenic Falconry Association. Since 1994, he has been involved in the protection and rehabilitation of raptors in Greece, and since 2015, he has worked at Dubai Falcon Hospital (UAE). He is a skilled falconer, hunting with falcons, Bonelli's eagles, and Verreaux's eagles.



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His Highness
Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed
**MUSEUM OF
INTERNATIONAL
FALCONRY**

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Museum of International Falconry

In 2010, falconry was officially inscribed as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO, to be safeguarded for future generations and promoted to those who may not yet recognize its significance.

Join us at the Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Museum of International Falconry in Brussels to explore the fascinating and intricate world of falconry, its history, and the diplomatic ties that have connected cultures for thousands of years up to the present day.

The museum tour unveils both the tangible and intangible dimensions of falconry, including traditional hunting, poetry, fine art, a photographic archive, falconry equipment, as well as sculptures and depictions of falcons.

The museum highlights that although falconry is practiced in nearly 90 countries, its roots lie deeply in Bedouin culture and the realities of desert life. Passing down the heritage of falconry is not only about preserving a central element of Emirati tradition, but also about offering an inspiring model for the wider world, where falconry continues to hold great cultural value.

Located in the heart of Brussels, Europe, the museum reflects efforts to safeguard falconry that were initiated by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and are today carried forward under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates.

The museum is a collaborative initiative between the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, the Emirates Falconers' Club, and the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey.

www.internationalfalconrymuseum.org



Falcons Soar in the Creativity of UAE Artists

By Abeer Younis

- The movements and symbolism of falcons were captured with striking realism in the works of many Emirati and resident artists.
- Photographs documented rare moments of falcons swooping on their prey.
- Designers relied on the shape of the falcon in the Zayed National Museum building and the UAE Pavilion at Expo Dubai.

The sight of falcons soaring high in the sky, or swooping down on their prey with power and confidence, or the hunting trips that fathers and grandfathers in the UAE used to undertake, and many other traditional scenes, have become an important and frequently observed theme in the works of Emirati or resident artists. Capturing the moment, just as the falcon captures its prey, has led artists to embody various moments of this bird's movements and its diverse practices.

All artistic styles, from design and architecture to painting and sculpture, and various art movements from realistic to abstract to photography, have been employed by artists to express their appreciation for the falcon. In doing so, they align with other entities in the country that highlight their appreciation for this highly distinctive bird in their heritage, past, and present.



Buildings Embracing the Sky

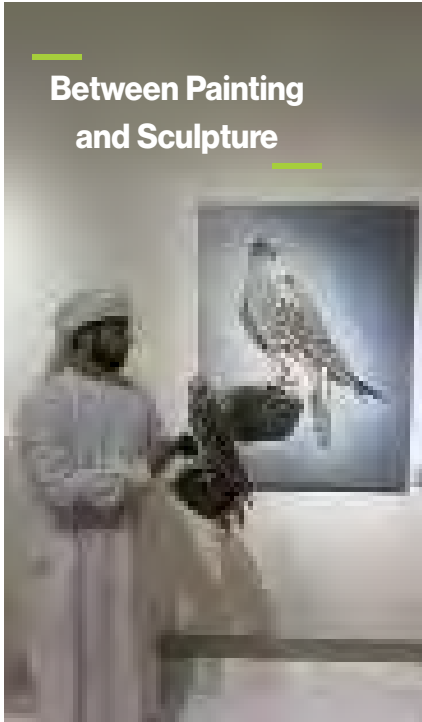
Everything embodied or to be embodied in art about the falcon reflects the value of this bird, which symbolizes Emirati national identity. It is an important element in the first emblem after the establishment of the UAE, reflecting with its distinctive shape and rare majesty the long history with the deserts and the memories of fathers and grandfathers.

After the falcon appeared on banknotes, postage stamps, in the logos of many brands, and in the emblems of many official and private institutions, the falcon is set to appear to the public in a different way that preserves the meaning this creature represents, in the building of the Zayed National Museum, which will open in the near future. The museum's design was inspired by the shape of a falcon's wing in flight, which expresses the efforts

of the Founding Father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God bless his soul, and his passion for the environment and national heritage.

The UAE had also demonstrated to the world the importance of the falcon as a national symbol in buildings through the UAE Pavilion at Expo Dubai 2020, which reflected high aesthetics and deep symbolism, embodied in the exterior structure that took the form of a falcon preparing to take flight, spreading its wings freely, to remind the world of stories drawn from the depths of Emirati heritage, and of Sheikh Zayed's great interest in falcons as an authentic tradition associated with hunting trips.





In sculptures and paintings, the falcon appears according to the artist's style. Some embody it realistically, like the artist Fares Al Hammadi, who is keen in his works to embody Emirati landmarks and their elements, such as creatures, houses, horses, and falcons in different poses. Therefore, his oil colors are often saturated with appreciation for everything he draws and embodies as art in more than one way. In one of his paintings of falcons, a falcon stands comfortably and familiarly on its owner's hand. Al Hammadi was able in this painting to be faithful to every detail, from the bird's feathers to its posture, which recalls his professionalism in realistic drawing, which he often used to embody the aesthetic of local environmental elements, as he repeatedly emphasized when discussing his experience.

The issue of embodying falcons realistically also appeared in the works of many Emirati artists, including the artist Khawla Al Falasi, who dedicated one of her exhibitions entirely to falcons. The exhibition was titled "Soaring High... A Source of Pride and Glory" and in each of her paintings, she embodied precise details to show specific postures and expressions of falcons, from a side view of a falcon to a front view, and in both cases, the sharp gaze that distinguishes the falcon's eyes is



shown. The artist reflects its mood through many of its intelligent head movements, and in every moment that passes, it does not fail to explore the surrounding areas in impressive and interesting ways.

As artists continue to paint falcons, they continue to present their ideas with their works, like the artist Amna Al Banna, who expressed in a painting displayed in the Youth Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, the continued appreciation for falcons, through a painting representing a falcon on a small child's hand. Through this, she wanted to show that the sport of falconry and appreciation for falcons continues through generations, in addition to her keenness to choose this particular subject in front of an audience from different cultures, so that people will learn about the importance of falcons in Emirati society.

However, the form of this bird can be expressed in an abstract way, which appeared in one of the sculptures of the Emirati artist Azza Al Qubaisi. This sculpture took its name from one of the types of falcons, "Al Hurr," (the Saker) where she embodied with every curve and fluidity in this piece the movement of the bird, not the bird's shape itself.

The expression of falcons in the UAE was not limited to Emirati artists, but a number of resident artists also worked on this important topic, including the Chinese artist "Jack Lee," whose paintings are saturated with details characterized by precision and professionalism. Artist "Lee," known in the local community for his highly realistic depiction of Emirati heritage, painted many portraits representing their Highnesses



the Sheikhs on hunting trips, with all the particularity of these scenes that differs from what can be seen in daily life, which shows the continued appreciation of the UAE government for this bird through a painting representing His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE "may God protect him," carrying a falcon.

Majestic Photos

The "Art for All" initiative, supported by the Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, has worked to archive and document the cultural memory of the UAE. To achieve this, the initiative collaborated with many individuals, families, and the community to publish and produce books, exhibitions, films, and artworks. Therefore, it is not surprising that among their many acquisitions, a collection of black-and-white and grayscale photographs taken during a past era of the UAE emerged. Among them is a photo of Sheikh Zayed, giving a falcon water during one of his cherished hunting trips. This translates some of the objectives of the "Art for All" initiative and presents to the public one of the scenes that demonstrates the inherited interest in falcons.

The camera, with all its technological advancements, has enabled photographers to race against time and capture many images of falcons in various poses. Through their race with the bird's movements, they managed, within the four corners of the photos, to document the falcon as it hunted its prey, or to document it in one of its flight movements that showed whether it was speeding or flying slowly. And within the minutes of the day, the photographer's eye could capture the scene before the lens did. Through these photos, they introduced people to falcons, their types, and their beauty. This diversity appeared in many photographic experiences, including that of the Emirati wildlife photographer Yaqoub Al Hammadi, who documented,



through a series of diverse images, majestic shots of falcons swooping on their prey in the Dubai desert. Even though falcons are among the fastest birds in the world, such as the Peregrine Falcon, which reaches a speed of 200 miles per hour (320 kilometers per hour) when swooping on its prey in open spaces, according to specialists, Al Hammadi managed to document this majestic scene repeatedly in photos that differ from each other, yet feature the falcon as the absolute hero every time.

While the primary element remains the falcon, the approach appears different with the international Iraqi photographer Kareem

Sahib, whose book "An Eye that captures the Moment" was recently published by the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre as part of the "Publications" project and the "Pioneers Among Us" series. The book included 400 photos that had been published by major media outlets worldwide, some of which were also documented in the United Nations archive. These photos, in which the Agence France-Presse photographer documented the UAE's environment, served as a text carrying many meanings that reached people without words, which helped in their widespread distribution in various Arab and foreign countries.

It was not surprising, as he photographs the UAE, that the falcon in its various states dominated many of the photos Kareem Sahib captured in moments he deemed perfect. Among them were photos in the Liwa desert where falconers release their falcons in search of houbara, and in another scene, he captured a photo he titled "Falcons and Houbara: Hunting that Enhances Ancestral Heritage in Al Marzoom Reserve," while in another photo he showed "An Emirati Falconer During the International Festival of Falconry."

Thus, just as photos and artworks have captured diverse scenes of falcons, their flight movements, and the unique way they capture their prey, this connection will continue in future images and works, each potentially as astonishing and captivating as the remarkable world of falcons in all its forms.



Along the Silk Roads, the Art of Falconry: A Living Heritage and Traditional Sport

Traditional sports and games have played, and continue to play, an important role in the cultural identities of various peoples and civilizations living along the Silk Roads.

The cultural exchanges and community encounters that have occurred for thousands of years along these historic routes have provided valuable opportunities not only for the spread of traditional sports and games in various parts of the world but also for their gradual development and adoption



by new peoples. A number of traditional sports that still exist today along the Silk Roads were originally derived from a specific land use, a hunting technique, or means of interacting with the natural world related to the conditions of a particular region.

An example of this is falconry, the traditional art where falcons and other birds of prey are raised and trained to hunt wild animals, a practice that has continued for over 4,000 years.

While the exact origins of this traditional art remain unknown, it is widely believed to have originated in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Iranian Plateau, and spread through cultural and commercial links to various other regions, including East Asia, North Africa, and Europe, and later from the 16th century AD to many parts of the world.





The earliest strong evidence of falconry comes from the Tell Halaf site in northern Syria today, which is the remains of a pottery shard depicting a raptor, dating back to the third millennium BC. Meanwhile, the oldest rock art images of falconers were found in the Altai Mountains, which extend across parts of Central and East Asia, dating back to approximately 1000 BC.

By the early Middle Ages, the art of falconry had spread significantly and was documented in several regions of the world, including illustrations on Chinese tombs from the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907 AD).

This traditional heritage became particularly popular along the Silk Roads among peoples living in the steppe regions of Central Asia. In fact, the falcon was an important symbolic bird in ancient Mongolia.

Along the Silk Roads, falconry, especially the tradition of exchanging birds of prey as gifts, was closely linked to diplomatic activities and cultural interactions between different communities along these routes.

Another way in which this traditional art spread was through merchants, who often carried both knowledge of the practice and the hunting birds themselves back to their homelands after becoming acquainted with falconers in parts of Central Asia and the Arabian Peninsula.



Today, the heritage of falconry remains integrated into many societies as part of social leisure activities and common means of interacting with nature.

Although falconry originally emerged as a technique for obtaining food, over time it evolved into a traditional sport, acquiring additional values and greater social significance.

In particular, falconry became associated with close friendships, community interaction, joyful expression, and a deeper connection with nature.

Furthermore, along the Silk Roads, falconry has inspired the production of a wide range of artistic creativity, including books, manuscripts, poetry, paintings, and historical buildings. The falcon remains an important cultural symbol in many countries, often used on postage stamps, coins, and military uniforms and emblems.

While there is enormous diversity in the distinctive local conditions and traditions associated with the art of falconry around the world, this tradition for many communities provides a link to the past,



especially for communities for whom this practice represents a remaining link to their natural environment and traditional culture.

For example, while falconers in the Middle Ages often rode horses, this style of the sport has become rare today, except in contemporary Kazakh and Mongolian falconry.

This traditional art is also closely linked to specific regional traditional sports and games, such as the Kyrgyz "Salburun" festival competitions, which combine various forms of falconry and archery, sometimes on horseback.



In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia, the golden eagle is traditionally used, often from horseback, to hunt larger prey such as foxes and wolves. In many regions, related knowledge and skills are passed down through generations within families or through formal instruction and professional training. Additionally, field gatherings and festivals provide communities with opportunities to exchange knowledge, raise awareness, and promote diversity.

Over time, the practice of falconry, which originally served as a means of obtaining food, has evolved to align more closely with nature conservation, cultural heritage, and social engagement, both within individual communities and among communities along the Silk Roads, as well as in many other parts of the world



In recognition of this rich heritage, the traditional art of falconry has been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in many countries around the world and remains an integral part of the shared heritage of the Silk Road peoples to this day.

About / UNESCO Silk Roads Programme - UNESCO

The Silk Roads have formed a bridge connecting civilizations and have contributed over thousands of years to the meeting of peoples and cultures from all over the world. Since ancient times, humans have been accustomed to traveling from one place to another and establishing trade relations with neighboring peoples, exchanging goods, skills and ideas.

In the Eurasian region, transportation routes and trade paths were developed over history, gradually intertwining and connecting to form what is known today as the "Silk Roads"; these are land and sea routes through which people from all corners of the world exchanged silk and many other goods.



Falconry Without Borders:

The Work of the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF)

The IAF is a global community of over 120 falconry organisations in 90 countries. It unites falconers across cultures, promoting falconry as an ancient art and a modern tool for conservation, heritage preservation, and animal welfare.

Representing Falconry on the Global Stage

The IAF is the official voice of falconry in major Multinational Environmental Agreements (MEAs) like CMS, CITES, and CBD, giving falconers a role in shaping international wildlife policy.

Since UNESCO's 2010 inscription of Falconry as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the IAF has represented falconers at UNESCO — safeguarding traditional knowledge and passing it on responsibly.

Falconry as Conservation, Heritage, and Welfare

The IAF promotes sustainable falconry practices and leads in raptor welfare standards through advocacy, training, and education.

One key initiative is the IAF Welfare Course, a free online program that improves global raptor care for both beginners and experienced falconers.



Inspired by the enduring vision of the late Sheikh Zayed and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, the IAF gratefully honours their continued patronage by preserving falconry as living heritage and a global force for conservation.



Calls to Benefit from the UAE's Expertise in Raising Awareness Among the New Generation to Protect Falconry Culture in Japan

Noriko Otsuka, President of "SUWA" Falconry Preservation Society: "I Hope Falconry Becomes a Gateway to Japanese Culture"

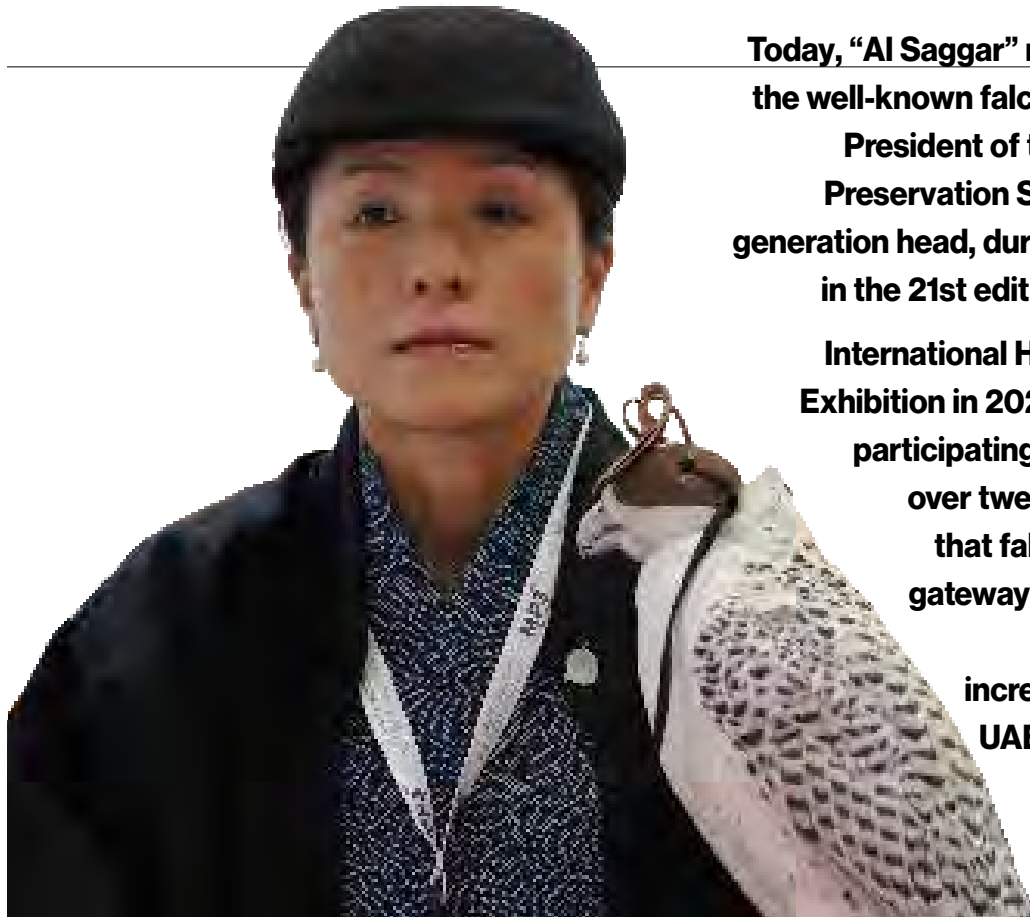


Falconry is one of the most traditional hunting methods in Japan. It arrived in Japan from its neighbor, Korea in 355 AD, reportedly during the reign of Emperor Nintoku in the 4th century AD. It then transformed into a sport practiced by nobles and flourished in Japan as a hunting method approved by the Imperial Family until the outbreak of World War II, when falconry lost official support, and its royal patronage ceased.

The practice of falconry remained exclusive to nobles and feudal lords until the 19th century, flourishing in the 17th century under the Tokugawa Shogunate.

The first falconer in Japan was Korean. The Emperor at the time granted him a Japanese wife to encourage him to stay in Japan, and she learned to use falcons for hunting. The art of falconry then spread to a large number of men who studied and trained at the "Suwa" school.

The "Suwa" school is the oldest and most famous falconry school in Japan. When it was founded, more than 1650 years ago, it sought to attract members from a wide range of people interested in falconry culture without being limited to any specific school.



Today, "Al Saggar" magazine interviews the well-known falconer Noriko Otsuka, President of the "Suwa" Falconry Preservation Society and the 18th-generation head, during her participation in the 21st edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition in 2024. Otsuka has been participating in the exhibition for over twenty years and hopes that falconry will become a gateway to Japanese culture and contribute to increasing the interest of UAE residents in Japan.

Tell us about your beginnings with falconry, and what was the turning point that made you one of the prominent falconry masters in Japan and the 18th-generation Lady of Falcons at the Suwa school?

When I was a university student, I was looking for a traditional sport practiced by people and animals together to be the topic of my graduation thesis. Then, fortunately, I met a great falconer, Zenjiro Tagomori, the 17th-generation head of the Suwa School of Falconry. He was very famous and humble, to the extent that he not only answered my questions but also offered me his expertise and skills in falconry. I was very impressed by the hunting trip, and I developed a passion for contemplating and understanding the falcon and the falconer's mindset.

In 1995, I graduated from university and dedicated my time to training with him, and that was the beginning of my life as a falconer. I then continued my training. In 2015, when my mentor fell ill, he appointed me as his successor as the 18th-generation head. It was a great honor for me, but at the same time, it placed on my shoulders a great responsibility to transmit the ideas of my ancestors, preserve this sport and pass it on to the younger generation, help young students build their traditional culture, and ensure a bright future for falconry.



Who is the person who influenced your career in the world of falconry?

My mentor, Mr. Zenjiro Tagomori, the 17th-generation head of the Suwa Falconry School, is the person who introduced me to training initially. He was a wonderful falconer and was not only passionate about preserving traditions but also passionate about sharing Japanese culture abroad.

I have the utmost appreciation for Master Zenjiro Tagomori; he was my inspiration and teacher, the one who first taught me training and helped me become a well-known falconer. I was deeply moved by the journey of the birds, and that was the true beginning of my life in the field of falconry.

How do you believe falconry can help people learn about Japanese culture?

I believe that through falconry, the Japanese people can learn about the noble values, courage, pride, and glory that characterize this sport, in addition to respecting and preserving nature, and respecting ancestral customs, traditions, and heritage.

What methods and tools do you rely on in teaching the new generation this sport and dealing with falcons, which are considered birds of prey?

Since holding a falcon on one's fist is very exhausting for an inexperienced person, students practice the correct method using a teacup or a plastic bottle filled with water. When their grip becomes as steady as tree branches, the falcons can naturally settle on their hands.



Can you highlight your participation in the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition, and what are your impressions of the exhibition?

In 2004, my mentor was invited to the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition, and I accompanied him as one of his students. That was my first trip to the Middle East. The exhibition and its visitors were full of unique energy, and I realized how ignorant I was about the world of falconry. I became interested in what falconers around the world could do, considering this sport's ability to introduce national cultures and create relationships of cooperation and knowledge exchange.

This trip to Abu Dhabi was one of the turning points in my life. It gave me the will and determination to become an ambassador for Japanese falconry, to share its expertise and introduce it to the world, while also raising a new generation of Japanese falconers who are familiar with the falconry traditions of Arab countries and engaged in exchanging knowledge and experience.

After this trip, I decided to become a falconer who can contribute to society and transfer knowledge to the new generation of falconers.



What is the goal of your annual participation in the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition, and what message do you aim to convey?

The Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition is a rare opportunity to promote falconry, a shared culture between Japan and the United Arab Emirates, and to convey this sport to a wide range of people, not limiting it to the wealthy but also teaching and passing on its knowledge to the general public, while sharing it with tourists from around the world.

What I dream of is for falconry to gain broader recognition across the world, and for heritage conservation activities to become more intensive. The exhibition has succeeded in attracting global attention to the UAE's heritage and ancient history, highlighting the most important sports associated with falconry and equestrianism.

How would you assess the visitors' interaction with Japanese falconry and your contribution to introducing them to Japanese culture?

As a Japanese falconer, I am very proud that falconry has become one of the gateways for introducing Japanese culture, especially since the exhibition attracted many visitors who do not have extensive knowledge of falcons. Through their desire to learn more about these raptors, they became eager to speak with the Japanese falconers participating in the Japan pavilion, who worked to transfer expertise, exchange knowledge, and indirectly introduce Japanese culture.



What is your assessment of the Emirati-Japanese Falconry Camp hosted by the UAE in January 2024, and how did it contribute to knowledge transfer?

Japanese children tend to be shy and reserved. Their trip to the UAE to participate in the Emirati camp helped them overcome their fears of traveling abroad for the first time and experiencing life in the desert.

I was very proud to see them become more receptive to other cultures. Through their participation in the Emirati-Japanese camp, they acquired new skills and developed a passion for learning everything new about falconry in the UAE. This prompted us to consider organizing another camp, but this time in Japan in February 2025. Young people from Japan are looking forward to hosting their counterparts from the UAE and transferring knowledge to them regarding falconry in Japan, its tools, and its prey.

How did the camp help introduce Emirati and Japanese students and falconers to the history of falconry in each country, and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences?

For the students, the camp was their first experience with falconry in a different country. For some, it was a life-changing experience. Through this joy and learning, the time will come when they take on leadership roles. The camp played a major role in fostering this knowledge and inspiring them to become future leaders in falconry.



What are the similarities and differences between falconry in Japan and the UAE? Especially regarding the nature of falcons, their tools, care methods, ages, and migration routes?

The Eurasian falcon found in Japan is known to be more high-strung than the falcon species known in the UAE and more sensitive to changes in the environment and humans, so it is necessary to take enough time to accustom them to it. It is important that the tools are chosen to suit their nature. There are differences between falcons in Japan and the UAE regarding the

type of perch and feeding method. There is a common denominator between falcons in Japan and the UAE, which is that they are trained from a young age, and once they gain experience, all they need is to adapt to the falconer.

Regarding falcon migration, the Eurasian falcons in Japan, known as "Hawks," do not migrate, while the situation is different for the Saker and Peregrine falcons known in the UAE, as they have a migration route and come to the UAE during the winter months.

There is also a difference in culture and traditions in dealing with falcons. The Japanese people are not used to communicating with falcons and touching them as is customary among Emiratis, but we share the same love and interest in birds.



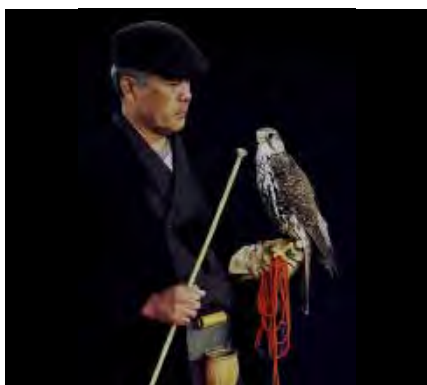
In the UAE, the preferred prey for falconers is the Houbara bustard. What is the preferred prey for Japanese falconers?

Currently, ducks are the preferred quarry in Japanese falconry, but previously, pheasants, also known as wildfowl, were the favored prey for Japanese falconers.

Regarding cooperation between Japan and the United Arab Emirates in falconry, what are the future aspects of cooperation that can be implemented to develop new Japanese generations interested in this field?

In Japan, there is a shortage of hunting grounds, and it is not easy to keep Eurasian falcons at home. However, in the UAE, the culture of falconry is preserved through stories and tales passed down from adults to children, raising their awareness of the importance of this sport and its role in instilling in the new generation the ethics of the falconer, which include patience, tolerance, and gratitude. Such methods help ensure the continuity of this sport and its transmission across generations.

By exchanging knowledge with Emirati falconers, we can benefit from the methods employed by ancestors and use them in Japan to raise awareness among our new generation, ensuring the preservation of falconry culture in the future and earning the recognition it deserves."



Regarding heritage conservation, how can falconry play a role in protecting heritage and transmitting it among youth? And can you highlight Japanese efforts in this regard?

In Japan, the conditions for preserving cultural heritage are complex, making it difficult for young people to participate. However, through lectures and exhibitions, such as their participation in the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition, it is possible to introduce that falconry in Japan has a long history exceeding 1650 years. They are given the opportunity to learn about the charm of Eurasian falcons, which sparks their passion for this sport, encourages more interaction with falcons, and inspires them to pursue related careers."

It is important for falconers to undertake tasks and roles in environmental and nature conservation and heritage protection. This will have positive repercussions on future conservation activities.

Recently, there have been many female falconers. How do you see the spread of this sport among girls, and what role can women play in preserving and spreading this sport among future generations?

When I started professional training in falconry, there were no women involved in this field. I believe that women's participation would make falconry more acceptable in society. Although many women may not be active enough to compete for the number of prey, the impact of women who love falcons on child-rearing at home and at school is immeasurable. Joint hunting between men and women would also encourage their respective efforts in environmental conservation.



Youth play a prominent role in transmitting heritage to future generations. In your opinion, how can young falconers play a role in introducing falconry and benefiting from social media to introduce youth to the basics of falconry during hunting trips?

The use of social media by youth has facilitated the transfer of information across country and regional borders, transcending differences in race, gender, culture, customs, and traditions. It may not be enough to convey real information, and it may sometimes lead to misunderstanding, so caution is necessary when using it. However, I believe that the ability to share experiences in hunting methods, the excitement of hunting trips and tracking prey, and the joy of traveling with friends can be a great source of strength for us as falconers, which can be utilized to encourage youth and the new generation to engage in this sport.

Finally, as a result of your own experiences, how can falconry shape Japanese heritage?

Japanese falconry is characterized by unique techniques and spirit, and I have worked hard to pass it on to future generations. These behaviors must be adopted by the Japanese falconers, who must carry a message throughout their life to transfer this expertise and knowledge to the new generation, ensuring that it becomes part of modern culture while preserving its continuity despite the fast pace of contemporary life.

In a Fascinating Interview:

Falconer Mohammed Ibrahim Ali Al Hammadi Speaks About the Details of Sheikh Zayed's Hunting Expeditions

- Falconry teaches endurance and being responsible for one's actions towards nature.
- Sheikh Zayed was an important reference in falconry, and among the most knowledgeable about falcons, even concerning their diseases and treatment methods.
- Sheikh Zayed's hunting expeditions included more than 100 people, but public trips were no less than four people, and more than two vehicles had to be provided to deal with any emergencies.
- Currently, hunting expeditions take place in Houbara breeding and release reserves, such as Remah and Al Marzoom reserves, and some still head to other countries.
- We lived the most beautiful days, hours, and moments with Sheikh Zayed. He was among us as one of us, as if we were one family. Every evening, we would gather and circle around him, talking to him and he to us, listening to poetry of birds and hunting.



- He loves the sport of falconry, knows its finest types and colors, and trains raptors until they become docile and obedient to commands. He is dedicated to preserving ancestral heritage and reviving the features of desert life that poets have sung about. He accompanied the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, during hunting trips, and is skilled in dealing with falcons of all types and genders, most importantly the Saker and Peregrine.
- His memories of falconry and his talks about the fragrance of the past are endless. He affirms that falconry was one of the favorite hobbies of Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him, who was passionate about this ancient sport and provided all support for it as a main pillar of the popular heritage in the UAE and an essential part of the community's culture. He also, may God rest his soul, encouraged the revival of all elements of popular culture.
- As part of its efforts to document the sport of falconry and highlight falcons in the country, the magazine met with Emirati falconer Mohammed Ibrahim Ali Al Hammadi, who has over 30 years of experience in falconry, during which he sought to preserve the heritage of the past and spread the ethics of falconry.



• Beginnings and Memories:

1. Falconry is one of the most important inherited sports in the UAE. How did your journey in this field begin, and who influenced your practice of this authentic sport?

Since childhood, I learned from my father how to hunt falcons using different methods, and I would imitate whatever he did. I would sit next to him and watch him work, then I'd do the same, gaining experience from him. I saw how he made the Kookha, how he set it up, how he installed the Alyakh (nets), and how he pulled the Sheryas (lure). I accompanied my father during falconry seasons because, in the past, it was a means of livelihood and food provision.

After learning the arts of hunting from my father, I apprenticed under the first falconer, the late Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him. He was a teacher to all his falconers on how to deal with the falcon, train it, feed it, and starve it if it was not successful in its hunting rounds. I was a trainer for Sheikh Zayed's falcons and accompanied him on many of his trips within the country in Baynunah and abroad in Morocco and Pakistan, which gained me a lot of experience. I accompanied the late Sheikh on hunting trips since I was 20 years old.

2. How do you view the sport of falconry and the importance of preserving it in the UAE and the Arabian Gulf region generally?

Sheikh Zayed, may God rest his soul, was passionate about the sport of falconry and provided all support for this sport, which is considered part of the popular heritage of the UAE and an essential part of society's culture. Father Zayed encouraged the revival of all elements of popular culture and preserved this sport for the nation's children to inherit. He instilled in his sons, the Sheikhs, a love for this sport and its conservation.

Among the manifestations of interest in preserving falconry is the establishment of many reserves for breeding Houbara bustards, which are among the most preferred prey for falconers, thereby achieving sustainable hunting standards. Additionally, there is the conservation of rare falcons like the Saker and Peregrine through the Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program, established by the late Father Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God have mercy on him, in 1995. The program has returned approximately 2300 falcons of the Saker and Peregrine species, which have been under environmental pressure over the past thirty years, back to nature.



3. When did you first become attached to this sport? What were the effects of your first hunting trip? And how old were you then?

I was 20 years old when I accompanied the late Sheikh Zayed on my first hunting trip. My joy was indescribable to be one of the falconers in Sheikh Zayed's falconry group, as he was a school from which everyone drew the arts of life and its management.

4. Tell us about the details of the hunting trips you accompanied the late Sheikh Zayed on, and the lessons you gained as falconers from Father Sheikh Zayed?

The late Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him, is considered an important reference in the sport of falconry in terms of its origins, arts, and etiquette.

We learned many lessons from Sheikh Zayed in practical, scientific, and cognitive life, especially in our work in raising falcons and other aspects of life. I learned many things about birds that I did not know before. May God have mercy on him, he was one of the most knowledgeable about falcons, their types, methods of raising, handling, and training them, even in hunting methods and the type of prey they hunt, and even in their diseases and how to treat them. He had great insight in everything, even with falcons; from the first glance, he could distinguish the good from the bad.

Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him, would gather those interested in falconry during the hunting season. During the hunting trip, he would gather the falconers and senior officials accompanying him on hunting trips, which lasted for ten days or two weeks in the desert. He personally supervised the distribution of falcons to the falconers and monitored their health and training.

Every morning, he would divide his companions on hunting trips into groups. Each group consisted of three or four cars, and he would designate a supervisor for the group, who in turn would report the details to the late Sheikh Zayed. The hunting trip would begin at sunrise, and in the evening, they would return to the camp, and he would inquire about the birds, falconers, and their needs.

The hunting trip would begin after sunrise. After breakfast, the groups would disperse according to Sheikh Zayed's vision, as he would give them the directions they should take. At noon, the late Sheikh would take a nap under the trees in the hunting area from Dhuhr prayer until Asr prayer, and then he would continue hunting until sunset.



5. How did the late Sheikh Zayed deal with the falconers?

May God have mercy on him, he had a big heart, and I do not remember him ever treating any of the falconers harshly or severely, especially if we made an unintentional mistake. I remember that in my early days with him, he came to see how we prepared the birds (falcons). When he looked at a bird, he knew if the falcon needed to be starved to succeed in hunting prey. He called one of the falconers, looked at the bird in his hand, and told him: «Don't feed the bird too much, reduce its meal to the size of two fingers of meat.» However, the falconer fed the bird more than the quantity recommended by the late Sheikh, and the result was its inability to hunt. His reaction was to warn the falconer with words, but without harshness or offense, as His Highness wanted us to learn from him more than we knew.

6. How did he, may God have mercy on him, coordinate between his immense responsibilities and multiple engagements, and his practice of his favorite sport (hunting), especially since he maintained this authentic sport throughout his struggle?

- Whenever Sheikh Zayed participated in hunting, those who accompanied him never felt that he had other responsibilities. He always gave attention to his accompanying falconers and gave falconry its due. During his rest time, he would begin to follow up on the affairs of his people and the issues of the Arab nation. Throughout his rest time, he would be busy managing the affairs of the country.

7. What experiences have you gained through the sport of falconry?

- Falconry teaches patience and endurance, and being responsible for one's actions towards nature, especially since the falconer relies on himself to prepare for the hunting trip, bearing the responsibility for the falcon, training it, and preparing it to be able to go on the hunting trip, in addition to being a good companion to the group accompanying him on the hunting trip.

8. "Al-Makhwa" has its etiquette and principles. As a falconer closely associated with it, what can you tell us about it, what are its duties and its rights? And how do you preserve it?

- "Al-Makhwa" refers to the "travel companion" when you go with someone on a hunting trip. "Al-Makhwa" helps you get to know people during travel, their personality, their sense of responsibility in their actions, and in protecting their companion during travel and educating them about right and wrong.



9. In your opinion, what are the most prominent qualities and characteristics that a skilled falconer should possess?

- A falconer must possess patience, gentleness, kindness, and love in dealing with the falcon, and refrain from hitting it. This is reflected in the person's behavior with people and their high morals.

- **Trip and Hunting Expedition Details:**

10. Hunting trips in the wilderness and desert have a special pleasure. Could you tell us about the duration of the trip and the number of participants?

Hunting trips led by the late Sheikh Zayed would involve over a hundred people. However, for general trips, there should be no fewer than four individuals, and more than two vehicles should be available to handle any emergencies. A hunting expedition typically lasts from ten days to two weeks.

11. It's known that hunting has specific seasons and areas. Could you tell us about the hunting seasons and preferred hunting areas, and the reasons for choosing them, for falconers in the UAE?

The hunting season in the UAE begins in October with the start of bird migration to the country. Currently, hunting expeditions take place in Houbara breeding and release reserves, such as Ramah Reserve and Marzoom Reserve. Falconers also head to the northern regions of the UAE. Some falconers travel abroad to hunt in their preferred destinations outside the country, such as hunting areas in Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania, and Pakistan.

12. In your opinion, what are the motivations behind hunting trips today? Have these motivations differed from those of the past?

And why do falconers incur such effort, time, and travel costs?
In the past, hunting was for subsistence and food provision. Currently, it's a hobby and a step towards preserving cultural heritage, along with a desire to pass this sport on to the younger generation.

13. How has hunting changed from the past to the present? And how so?

Previously, hunting relied on the falcon and the saluki, and camels were used for transportation. However, hunting has evolved today, and the process of training and tracking falcons now relies on technology and satellites.

We also currently observe advancements in dealing with falcon diseases, as there are modern hospitals and treatments for falcons, and each falcon has a registered passport. .

14. 14. What about the dangers and difficulties that falconers faced in the past during hunting trips (wild animals, lack of water, getting lost), and how did falconers prepare for them?

In the past, a falconer had to prepare for the trip with water and food, considering the destination and the duration of the trip. Currently, things are different, as hunting is carried out in specific, permitted reserves after registration and specifying the number of desired prey.





- 15. What tools does a falconer use today for hunting, and what are the essential items they wouldn't leave without? Are these the same tools used previously?**

The ancient tools are still used. A falconer needs a Mursal (Leach) and a Sabooq (Jess), a rope used to tether the bird to the glove, perch, or a block and tied to the bird's leg.

They also need a Minqalah (portable perch), a Makhlat (a pouch for carrying food or equipment), and a Telwah (a lure made of a set of wings, layered and tied with a string, used by the falconer to attract the falcon during training). The Telwah itself is a training method for the falcon to learn flying at different altitudes and swooping.

Currently, these traditional tools are used alongside a falcon tracking device and fishing line tools for training falcons. Vehicles are also equipped with enough water and food for the duration of the hunting trip.

- 16. Generally, how do you view the role of modern civilization with all its discoveries in supporting this sport? Has it stripped the sport of its essence and meaning by performing all tasks for the falconer?**

Technology has helped facilitate the falconer's journey, allowing them to travel further distances. It has also contributed to providing medical solutions for falcons.

- 17. "The falcon is from its falconer" is a famous saying among falconers. What does this phrase mean, especially since training a falcon requires experience and skill?**

This phrase signifies the strong relationship between the falcon and the falconer. The more care and compassion the falconer shows their falcon during training, the deeper the bond of love and reciprocity between them.

- 18. How long does a falconer need to train their bird? How does this vary from one falconer to another, and from one bird to another? How is it done? And what are its tools?**

Training is an arduous process that only a falconer with high skill and artistry in dealing with falcons can master. It progresses through stages and provides the trainer with many benefits, most notably patience and perseverance, especially for a wild falcon caught from the wilderness. In the first stage, the trainer must place a Burqa' (hood) over the falcon's eyes so it cannot see, then feed it by hand. The trainer stays close to the falcon for the first few weeks to build a relationship, by tethering its legs with a rope to teach it how to stand on the falconer's arm and the trainer's arm. Then begins the second stage, which is the learning process, by releasing a type of Houbara bird, and then the falcon is released after it to catch it. The final stage is releasing the falcon into nature.

- 19. Can a falcon recognize its owner by appearance or voice? Does this take a long time?**

The falcon recognizes its falconer by voice and the method of instruction while being fed, as well as by touch and sound.

- **Falconer's Expertise and Passion for the Bird:**

20. The falcon is a symbol of strength and pride, and strong men are always compared to it. What are the characteristics of a strong falcon, and how is it chosen from your perspective?

The finest type of falcon is the Saker falcon, which is distinguished by its many colors and large head. It holds a special place in the hearts of falconers in the UAE, who adore its white color, in addition to the Gyrfalcon, which is considered one of the best and rarest types of falcons due to its speed in hunting prey.

Other types of falcons in the UAE include the Qarmousha, characterized by its long beak and small head, as well as the Peregrine falcon, and captive-bred falcons which are the result of hybridizing two types of falcons: Saker, Peregrine, or Gyr.

The falconer chooses the falcon based on their preferred type (some prefer Gyr, Saker, or Peregrine), as well as based on the falconer's purchasing power.

Typically, a chick or a Jernas (older falcon) is chosen. A chick is preferred because the falconer can train it their own way. When buying a Jernas falcon, the falconer should inquire about the falcon's experience during its first year of life, in terms of the prey it has caught and its speed.

When buying a falcon, its feathers must be complete, and it must be examined to ensure it is free of diseases. After all these matters, the falcon is cared for by providing clean food and conducting continuous medical examinations. All these things help the falcon to be strong, fast, and highly capable of acquiring training skills.

21. What are the most prominent falcon species known in the region? And what distinguishes them from others?

The well-known falcons in the Arabian Gulf countries are the Gyr, Saker, and Peregrine—three main types. They are distinguished by their ability to withstand weather conditions. Our ancestors previously used the Saker and Peregrine, while the Gyr began to be used in the late 1980s to preserve other endangered species.

22. What are the descriptions of a perfect Saker falcon, and what justifies the high prices of falcons?

Falcon prices vary according to their type, size, age, and time of purchase. At the beginning of the season, the price differs from the end of the season. The price of a trained falcon with hunting experience differs from others. Additionally, the price of a captive-bred falcon varies depending on the farm it comes from.

23. Capturing and hunting falcons are prohibited today to preserve their numbers and reproduction. But how were falcons hunted in the past? And has that changed today?

In the past, falcons were hunted because they were abundant during their migration seasons. Hunting was done using the Kookha, a method employed by falcon catchers, who in turn sold the falcons to falconers, whose numbers were limited.

However, in the 1990s, the late Sheikh Zayed issued a directive to prohibit the hunting of Saker and Peregrine falcons. Those who owned these falcons were advised to release them to migrate and reproduce, protecting them from extinction.

Currently, there are many falcon breeding farms, and they are now abundant. A falconer can choose their falcon from any farm. Moreover, the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition provides a suitable platform for purchasing falcons and comparing the types displayed by various farms.



24. What were the most common diseases that falcons suffered from in the past in the UAE? How were they treated? And what is the importance of the role played by falcon hospitals today?

In the past, falcons would suffer from mouth ulcers or intestinal inflammations. Falcons were given horse medications used to cleanse the intestines.

Another common ailment was broken falcon feathers, which falconers would treat by "wusur al-reish", meaning mending the broken feathers.

Diseases were few in the past, but now the existing diseases are known by name due to scientific advancements, including Raddad, Coccidiosis, bacterial infections, and Somar. With the progress of science, there is now knowledge about these diseases and their early treatments.

- 25. Statistics indicate a decrease in the numbers of some falcon species, especially the Saker falcon, to the point of imminent extinction. How do you view the Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program, where does its importance lie, and how can it be supported?**

The Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program began in 1995. Before that, Saker and Peregrine falcons were used for hunting, and the late Sheikh Zayed would release his falcons after each hunting trip, in a move to encourage falconers to release their falcons to preserve the reproduction of Saker and Peregrine. When the program was launched, falconers began handing over their falcons at the end of the hunting season to the concerned authorities, who would take care of the falcons and prepare them for release in their breeding and distribution areas in northern Pakistan or Kazakhstan, to be close to breeding grounds. This program has greatly helped protect these falcons from extinction.



- 26. What efforts has the UAE undertaken to preserve the sport of falconry and protect it from extinction?**

The UAE has given significant attention to the sport of falconry, from the era of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, to this day. In 2010, the UAE successfully registered falconry with UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In December 2016, the Mohammed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School was inaugurated, and in 2018, the UAE won the presidency of the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF). The UAE also launched the Middle East Falconry Archive project.

The UAE's production of captive-bred falcons leads the world, competing with major international breeding farms in the production and rearing of falcons. Emiratis also represent a significant percentage of the world's falconers.

The Emirates Falconers' Club has enhanced its unique, influential, and important role in the development of this sport by organizing numerous diverse activities and events aimed at its advancement and preserving falconry as a human heritage and historical legacy. This includes introducing the basic principles and sound practices of Arab falconry and its ethics, promoting sustainable hunting, supporting studies, legislation, and mechanisms aimed at preserving biodiversity, contributing to projects for the conservation and captive breeding of falcons and prey, protecting their natural habitats and distribution areas, in addition to organizing related activities and events, and developing international cooperation with institutions concerned with falconry conservation.

- 27. Do you see captive-bred falcons as a suitable alternative to wild falcons? Do you encourage dealing with these birds?**

Captive-bred falcons contribute to preserving Saker and Peregrine falcons from extinction. Each falconer differs in their preference for one type of falcon over another. Some prefer pure Gyr falcons, or love Peregrine, while others prefer Gyr-Saker or pure Gyr, which if hybridized become Gyr-Peregrine or Gyr-Saker. The farms determine the percentage of hybridization.

The falconer determines the falcon's strength and speed based on training. Its temperament also varies according to how its falconer treats it.

- 28. What is your assessment of falcon breeding centers? Do you consider them a good source of falcons, or do they encourage indifference to the declining numbers of wild falcons?**

Yes, they definitely play an important role in preserving the sustainability of falconry and protecting endangered falcons from extinction.



• Falconer's Beloved Prey:

29. What are the preferred prey for falconers? Is a specific falcon used for each type of prey?

The Asian Houbara (Macqueen's Bustard) is the preferred prey for falconers, and its availability in reserves has now become possible. Captive-bred Houbara are released in reserves during hunting seasons.

Other prey includes the stone-curlew, both migratory and resident in the UAE, where it reproduces in the same area. Small male falcons like Qarmousha, Wekri, and Tab'a are used for hunting the stone-curlew.

Rabbits are also a preferred prey in the UAE. For hunting them, the falcon needs to be accompanied by a Saluki dog, as it helps the falcon in hunting the rabbit.

30. It is known that illegal trade in Houbara is one of the main threats to this bird. How can it be eliminated? Are current efforts sufficient?

Illegal trade in Houbara is very limited today, as the regulatory authorities in the UAE are vigilant about this issue. In cases of smuggling across borders, they are apprehended and confiscated.

• Poetry in Hunting Evenings

31. Hunting evenings become more enjoyable and beautiful with the presence of poets among the falconers. What memories do you have in this regard?

We lived the most beautiful days, hours, and moments with Sheikh Zayed. We would gather around him during hunting seasons, more than three hundred men, starting from the bird preparation season and then the hunting trips. There, the bond and connection between us and him would grow stronger. He was among us as one of us, as if we were one family. He was kind and gentle, teasing this one and joking with that one, cheering up one and alleviating the worries of another. Every evening, we would gather and circle around him, talking to him and he to us. We would listen to his conversations and knowledge, and he loved listening to poetry. May God have mercy on him, he would recite some of his wonderful poems to us, including his famous verses:

**Oh bird, I've trained you well
I want to perfect my hunting with you
When Houbara bustards fly up in the sky
Escaping predators to somewhere safe
Go after them, may you not fail
And aim for their leader, defiantly**

Poets were present on hunting trips in the past. Some would compose poems praising the bird for its courage, speed, and strength, while others would weave verses criticizing less efficient falcons. All these atmospheres would excite the team and create enjoyable moments.





• Advice and Aspirations

33. How do you guide young people and the new generation on the best practices of this sport to ensure its continuity for future generations, without conflicting with the laws of nature and its balance?

Through my participation as a falconer and falconry trainer in all editions of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting & Equestrian Exhibition since its inception, as well as the International Festival of Falconry (Baizara), and the annual "Sons of Pride" which is organized by the Martyrs' Families' Affairs Office to teach the children of martyrs the sport of falconry and preserve it, and also as a volunteer trainer at the Mohamed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, I try in every forum to convey what we learned from the late Sheikh Zayed, may God have mercy on him, on how to preserve this sport, considering it the heritage of our ancestors, which must be cared for and instilled in the new generation, for the noble ethics and qualities of patience and humanity that falconry bestows upon its practitioners in dealing with the environment and birds.

Through various forums and exhibitions, we try to educate the new generation about the importance of preserving the Houbara (the falconers' preferred prey), and to benefit from all the reserves and programs established by the state to protect and ensure the continuity of this sport. At the same time, we aim to be an aid to the environment in light of urban expansion and climate change.

What I wish for and strive to achieve is to continue transmitting the heritage of our ancestors to future generations.

• Women and Falconry

32. Is there a relationship between women and falconry, both in the past and today? Do you expect stronger participation of Gulf women in this authentic sport? What are the justifications for this?

In the past, women had a prominent role when the falcon was at home with them; they would take care of it, and their role in preserving the falcon was exemplary. However, there were no female falconers back then.

Currently, there is a growing trend among girls to become falconers and falcon trainers. Through the Mohammed bin Zayed Falconry and Desert Physiognomy School, girls are encouraged to develop skills in handling falcons, carrying them, providing care, and feeding them, so they become accustomed to and comfortable with the falcon.



Falconers Recall “Hafar Al-Batin” Hunting Trip

King Khalid, Brotherhood, and Humanitarian Stances on Hunting and Desert Expeditions

***By Dr. Ali Al-Quhais**

King Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, may God have mercy on him, was a prominent figure in the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Alongside his wisdom and political acumen, he was distinguished by his deep love for authentic Arab heritage and culture. One of the most prominent manifestations of this attachment was the sport of falconry.

Falconry in the Arabian Peninsula is a love that began and never ends, a joy not bound by time or era. It possesses a unique character that has persisted through the ages, both before and after the discovery of oil, and before and after the urban development and renaissance in the Arabian Gulf region. This beautiful hobby and cherished sport of the Bedouins has neither ceased nor faded.

Falconry has transformed from a profession and a source of livelihood into a cherished hobby and a beloved, specialized sport for the falconers of the desert and the Arabian Gulf.

Anyone who has experienced hunting expeditions and fallen in love with falcons and their training will never give up their hobby and obsession, despite the hardships, troubles, and costs. This remains true even amid the challenging circumstances that have seen the Middle East become a battleground for wars, conflicts, and clashes between nations, and the proliferation of disputes in this region due to its strategic location.

Hunting, in general, is a beautiful, authentic heritage and popular hobby, deeply rooted in the history and general culture of the region's people. This has been the case for the people of Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf countries since ancient times. They were known for their intense passion and strong attachment to practicing falconry to obtain food, such as the meat of the Houbara bustard, rabbit, and gazelle. Consequently, the methods, types, forms, and categories of falconry diversified, evolving from expeditions on horseback and camelback to specialized hunting vehicles and desert excursions.

And if this ancient, traditional Arab sport is indeed the sport of kings, princes, sheikhs, and the people of the desert and the Arabian Gulf alike, then one cannot mention hunting expeditions, the love of birds, and their passion without recalling the name of King Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, may God have mercy on him (February 13, 1913 – June 13, 1982 AD), the fourth King of Saudi Arabia, who reigned from March 25, 1975, to June 13, 1982.



King Khalid was deeply attached to nature and the desert environment, finding in falconry an opportunity for serenity and connection with the land and heritage. He was known for his participation in hunting expeditions organized in various regions of the Kingdom, especially in the Empty Quarter and the eastern and northern areas.

He was also famous for personally leading hunting trips deep into the desert, over 200 km in length. These expeditions were gatherings for prominent hunters, where falconry was practiced according to authentic Arab traditions, with special attention to the welfare and training of the birds.

King Khalid left behind a good legacy of simplicity, generosity, love, and a passion for nature. Falconers and desert lovers missed him dearly, for his love of the desert's scent, the fragrance of the Arab land, and the heritage of Bedouin life and its people. They missed his simple nature in his love for the desert, as he was captivated by it and spent most of his time there. He loved hunting expeditions, good companionship, and the company of his friends on hunting trips in the desert of Hafar Al-Batin (500 km north of Riyadh), where he loved to spend his time, whether in spring or during the hunting season from late autumn to early winter, in flat plains where the falcon's favorite prey, the Houbara bustard, abounds, as well as truffle grounds.

When we mention the hunting expeditions of King Khalid bin Abdulaziz, may God have mercy on him, we find him embodying the desert man and the passionate admirer of the Arab desert environment and the Bedouin life, with all the beautiful meanings and qualities it carries, whether in psychological, ethical, social, or heritage aspects, and in his relations with common people, poets, and hunting enthusiasts. He combined in his person all noble qualities, integrity, sincerity, and his love for the authentic Arab environment. All the more so when this man was one of the most prominent falconers renowned for his passion for hunting, desert excursions, and wilderness hobbies. He had several humanitarian moments during hunting trips narrated by his friends and admirers.

As for his love for falconry and desert trips, one cannot mention hunting without mentioning the name of King Khalid, may God have mercy on him. He was famous for his keenness to purchase, acquire, and understand most types of precious, authentic, and rare falcons, rare Arabian horses, and noble camels. King Khalid bin Abdulaziz is considered a walking encyclopedia of knowledge on types of falcons, their upbringing, acquisition, and meticulous care.

Among the signs of his vast knowledge of all the characteristics of these rare, beloved, and desired domesticated animals is what his private doctor narrated when he accompanied him on a visit to Pakistan, where he spent a full day hunting with him. The doctor says: "The hunting expedition began early in the morning and did not end until sunset. On our way back by car, King Khalid saw a large camel that he liked. He said: 'Doctor, find its location.' I pinpointed the location and later returned to the camel's owners and asked about who it belonged to. I learned that it was the most famous camel in that area, but its owner refused to sell it because he considered it rare and cared for it like his own children. This indicates that King Khalid recognized the camel's authenticity from a single glance."

During hunting, King Khalid worked to strengthen the bonds of his companions, their harmony, and mutual affection. He had an organized program and was keen on performing prayers in congregation, especially the dawn prayer. He also helped his companions prepare food in the camp, maintaining no distance between himself and them, yet without diminishing his stature as a statesman.

King Khalid's hunting expeditions were a source of immense good and blessing for the Bedouin people in the areas he visited. They would rejoice at his arrival and eagerly await the right time to meet and greet him. He, in turn, would stop by them, listen to their concerns, inquire about their well-being, speak with them, solve their problems, and lavish upon them his renowned generosity, kindness, and compassion.

His hunting trips were also famous for countless amusing anecdotes, incidents, and fascinating stories, as some of his companions recounted truly delightful and rare occurrences. During his hunting expeditions, King Khalid was a simple man, deeply committed to the happiness of everyone who accompanied him, and most eager to bring good to all who came to his camp.



The Falcon "Mashhour" (Legendary)

In Hafar Al-Batin province, located in northern Saudi Arabia, falconry stands as one of the most ancient and esteemed Arab pastimes. It's skillfully practiced across its flat terrain. The people of Hafar Al-Batin are dedicated to preserving this sport, seeing it as a symbol of Arab simplicity and authenticity. Falcons receive meticulous care in specialized areas where their behavior, movements, and temperaments are closely monitored. Experts dedicate themselves to serving, training, and preparing these birds, providing them with quality food and necessary medical treatments. This ensures the falcons are ready to soar when the hunting season arrives. Hafar Al-Batin is a fertile haven and an attractive environment during spring and the autumn hunting season, offering a safe sanctuary for falcons and Houbara due to its vast, uninhabited desert expanses.

King Khalid Al Saud (may God have mercy on him) frequently enjoyed hunting in Hafar Al-Batin. During one of his trips to Rawdat (Ibn Hanaya), he released his cherished and beloved private falcon, famously named "Mashhour," which he had meticulously trained. However, an unexpected incident occurred. The falcon suddenly soared high into the sky, flying powerfully, and despite King Khalid's calls and gestures ("Mashhour... Mashhour..."), it never returned to its owner or its perch. The bird spread its wings to the endless sky, racing the wind, choosing a journey of no return.

Upon learning of the loss of "Mashhour" from King Khalid, who grieved deeply over it, the Kuwaiti poet Murshed Al-Bathal was moved to compose a poem titled "The Falcon Mashhour," in which he said:

Oh, whoever brings us news of the falcon Mashhour,
I'll give him glad tidings from the King, a reward awaits him.
A bird that, when you see it, you're compelled by its presence;
It's the desire of one who truly understands falconry.

The wilderness of Hafar Al-Batin is renowned as one of the most famous hunting grounds in the Arab region. Falconers from across the Kingdom and GCC countries flock to it, as it serves as a migratory pathway for birds like turtle doves, sandgrouse, Spur-winged Lapwing, stone-curlews, and Houbara.

During spring and the hunting season, the area witnesses an influx of hunting enthusiasts. They pursue Houbara in their natural habitat during the designated hunting seasons, on foot and in vehicles. They release their falcons, using various methods to flush out the Houbara, always careful not to overfeed the falcon before its release.

In the past, falconers would journey to Houbara locations in their specialized carts, laden with their belongings, provisions, and hunting gear. They'd stay for weeks, moving from one spot to another depending on the abundance of prey. Their trips could even extend for over a month or two. Today, with advancements in transportation, cars have replaced traditional mounts, and hunting locations and countries have diversified. Falconers now use lightweight wireless devices to pinpoint distant hunting spots.

Falcons in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf countries commonly bear names that evoke strength, insight, courage, boldness, intelligence, nobility, and ferocity. Some popular names include Mashhour, Falah, Azzam, Ammash, Rakan, Nawaf, Mansour, Sha'lan, Hazza, Dhurgham, and Batta'a'.

Great Humanitarian Stances

Returning to the human qualities, conduct, and ethics of King Khalid, affirmed by all who knew and interacted with him, these traits often overshadowed all his other positions. He was humble and profoundly close to people, their concerns, and their suffering. In a memorable encounter, Muhaysin Al-Baqami, one of King Khalid's companions who remained with him throughout his life, recounted moving stories about King Khalid during his hunting expeditions.

Al-Baqami stated: Once, when King Khalid was "Prince" and Crown Prince, we headed north of Saudi Arabia for a hunting trip. As was his custom, he was always asking about people's conditions, livelihoods, and circumstances. He also constantly inquired about hunting, falcons, and rainfall. His hunting expeditions were exploratory journeys into social conditions and the humanitarian circumstances of the region's inhabitants; they were enjoyable hunting trips, a sport, and a means of self-refinement and behavior rectification.

Al-Baqami continued: Our journey extended to the northern fringes of the Kingdom. Suddenly, a distant, lonely, and isolated tent appeared, ancient and worn by time. All around it was emptiness and barren desert. The sight of this small, solitary dwelling truly prompted the question: Who lives in such isolation under these circumstances?

King Khalid asked us to stop and inquire about the owner of this dwelling, to understand the secret, and perhaps find some knowledge about the hunting conditions and prey in this isolated area. Acceding to King Khalid's wish, I approached the tent and called out loudly to seek permission: "Oh owner of the house... Is anyone there?" But there was no answer. At that point, King Khalid noticed that something was amiss. He ordered me to stay put, and His Highness quickly ran to my position, saying: "Stop, Muhaysin... The owner of this house is either dead, sick, or something strange has happened." He intended to take responsibility for entering the house himself, to remove me from any potential liability. King Khalid then resumed calling out loudly: "Oh owner of the house!" But to no avail.

King Khalid slowly continued towards the dwelling until he reached its entrance and held the tent rope. He then stopped in his tracks, astonished and terrified by what he saw, and I realized that something serious had happened. He calmly called out to me: "Come, Muhaysin." I approached, and the terrifying scene was heartbreaking. I couldn't imagine that a human being could be in such a frightening state when God removes the garment of health and well-being from them! A lonely, sick man, whose illness had worsened to the point where he could barely speak, as if his bones had never been covered with flesh.

King Khalid asked him: "Are you sick?" He replied: "Yes." King Khalid, with a heart aching with pain and a face showing deep emotion and sorrow, responded: "How long have you been sick?" The man said: "For a year." King Khalid asked him: "Do you have children?" The sick man replied in a weak, broken voice: "One son. My wife and my only son are with the camels and sheep." Then he asked him again: "If God blesses you with a benefactor who sends you to Kuwait for treatment, would you be able to go?" (This was before advanced medical centers existed in the Kingdom, similar to the current situation, and Kuwait was closer to him than Riyadh). The man said, as if health had infused him just by hearing the word "treatment": "Yes... (I want anything that brings health)." King Khalid then ordered me to follow his son's tracks and bring him, then sent me to the people in the nearby area to bring two of them, while he remained sitting with the sick man. When two of them arrived,





King Khalid said to them: "I want you to take care of this woman (the sick man's wife), her camels, and her sheep, and keep them safe for me, and I will give you whatever you want in return." They replied: "By God, we will not take anything. We will keep them safe and take care of them in her home and look after her camels and sheep. May God reward you, son of Abdulaziz, your command is obeyed."

This is one of his many humanitarian stances in the north, and there was another similar one in the south. On one of his hunting trips in the Empty Quarter, he saw from a distance a woman running aimlessly and unconsciously in the wilderness. The King wondered: "Who is this woman running in this place that even wild beasts fear and predators shun? She must be in some calamity greater than the horror of the Empty Quarter." King Khalid ordered the driver to stop and called out to the woman: "Woman, what is wrong with you? You are heading for destruction. What has cast you into these desolate, empty places?" She replied: "I am looking for my lost camels!"

A woman in her youth and strength, running aimlessly in the vast desert in search of her camels. Thoughts and fears for this woman, who could become prey for evildoers in these barren places, swirled in "Khalid's mind." So King Khalid, distressed for her, said: "What if a benefactor came to you and gave you money to hire someone you trust to search for your camels?" The woman stopped to catch her breath, almost losing her life from exhaustion. Life returned to her, and she agreed to the request... without knowing him.

The late King Khalid was always keen to direct his people to the importance of preserving the blessings God had bestowed upon humanity, foremost among them caring for crops, livestock, and animals. In this regard, he said: "You know, may God bless you, what God has bestowed upon this land and its people of goodness, and what He has granted them of blessings. It is our duty and yours to be grateful for these blessings so that they may endure and remain steadfast. Thanks are expressed by obeying Him and avoiding His prohibitions, by acknowledging these blessings inwardly and speaking of them outwardly, and by dedicating them in obedience to God."

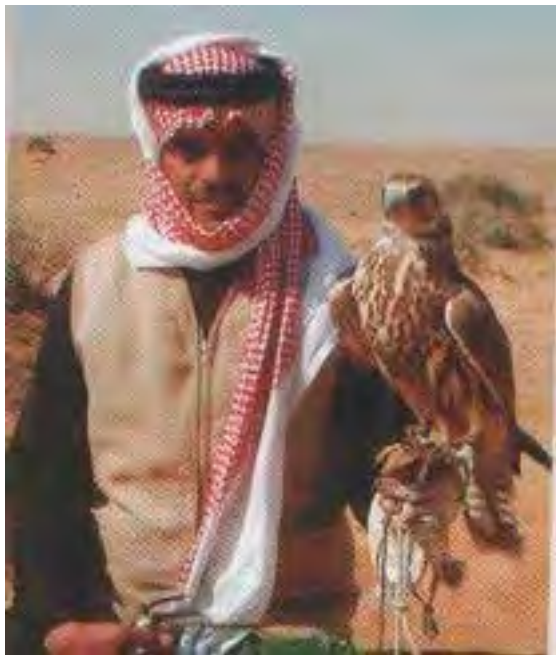
In appreciation of King Khalid bin Abdulaziz's efforts (may God have mercy on him) in protecting the environment and wildlife, the King Khalid Wildlife Research Center was established in 1987 to manage and develop the large private animal collection that the late King began on his Thumamah farm. This collection includes over 600 animals representing 20 different species, among them a number of important traditional Arabian species living under semi-wild conditions in a 600-hectare enclosure. The King Khalid Center in Thumamah is located at the foothills of the picturesque Tuwaiq Mountain, approximately 70 km north of Riyadh.

To facilitate the center's mission, the Saudi National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development established laboratories next to the main enclosure, in addition to constructing 70 breeding pens, each half a hectare in size. The center was also granted the use of the stables complex in Thumamah.

The number of animals at the center has increased over the past five years. They have been reorganized after the removal of all indigenous species, prioritizing indigenous species such as the Arabian Oryx, Reem Gazelle, and Admi Gazelle, for which the center is developing scientific captive breeding programs. The center is distinguished by advanced diagnostic capabilities effectively used to treat disease problems, in addition to housing specialized scientific competencies and precise modern equipment that serve and preserve the environment and wildlife.

*Saudi writer and heritage researcher





Hamdan, I Entrust You Farewell: A Falcon's Release

The poem "Hamdan, I Bid You Farewell" by the poet Hamad Abdul Karim Al-Saeed captures one of life's most challenging experiences: separation. This isn't just any farewell; it's the poignant parting with Hamdan, a falcon likely among the most cherished and distinctive due to its unique actions, qualities, and the beautiful memories it created.

After a decade-long bond between hunter and companion, through countless shared moments, the poet now releases Hamdan as part of the Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan Falcon Release Program. This act serves as an encouragement for others to follow suit, preserving the falcon and granting it a renewed chance at life and reproduction...

This beautiful text conveys the poet's deep emotion and struggle in letting go...

Hamdan, I Entrust You farewell, to Zayed's falconers you go,
People who honor the bird, its standing they know.
A father instilled in them these customs long ago,
As if he left the falcon's love, a trust to bestow.

A prince of his people, to falconers a guide,
With wisdom and thought, ahead of his time he strode.
God created Zayed for others' good, wide,
God, from a soul whose tenderness overflowed.

Here are the birds, with etched, ancient custom dyed,
Long-held, they'd never suffer scorn or abide.
His program for falcons, still a pioneering stride,
He gathers and frees each bird in its destined tide.

And I, by his custom, may peace forever preside,
I wouldn't cheapen you for one who'd mock or deride.
Hamdan, this is your right, no burden to hide,
For one like you, a sanctuary is supplied.

Your deeds, no empty words, in verse they reside,
No trivial poems about a fleeting bride.
From your noble acts, unique verses I've applied,
How many have said, "May his tongue be glorified!"

Go, may your journey be blessed, your memory confide,
You'll surely return to my thoughts, I guarantee, no lie.
Those soaring ascents, the distant flights, can't be denied,
And that wing that fills with joy, the heart's true eye.

How often I've cried, "Rejoice, the bird has preyed!"
And "Look, he's balanced now, with grace displayed!"
How much new wisdom from you I've relayed,
To fledglings for whom in my heart a place is made.

Ten years between hunter and his prize arrayed,
Not once did I say, "The bird's bond has swayed."
You are my solace, your ascent, a task unbetrayed,
May he be sacrificed, whose owner has him betrayed.

With me, you're cherished, a pulse in my veins played,
I swear, no one will say, "Such a one was dismayed."
Yes, I release you, oh torment of the strayed,
This, rather than "Your sacrifice we made."

And better than saying, "He got tangled and frayed,"
In a snare where the swirling sands had him laid.
Or sick with the illness the young birds parade,
From which, if it strikes, the bird's cure is delayed.

At night, your prey is the best bounty swayed,
From your claw, whose grip is known, not gainsaid.
Let no country's bounty hold you, no neutral glade,
Nor swiftness deceive you, in softness arrayed.

You'll rest far off, and each dawn, new prey you've made,
In a land where with its mountains, you've a bond displayed.
For the bird there's love, and for one like you, it's amplified,
Oh, you who holds in my heart, a place forever wide.

Hamad Abdul Karim Al-Saeed

In the land of poetry and poets... Falcons bring life back to Souk Okaz.

On January 27, 2025, life returned to Souk Okaz, which had been suspended since 2019, to witness its five-day Taif Cup championship, the first of its kind in the homeland of poetry (Souk Okaz), with the participation of approximately 300 falconers.

Falcons have always captured significant attention from poets, who have written many poems describing and symbolizing them in strength, transcendence, courage, and daring.

The championship was accompanied by a diverse range of recreational and cultural activities, including exhibitions, poetry evenings, discussion forums, and innovative workshops, providing visitors with a unique experience that blends enjoyment and learning, and strengthens their connection to this authentic heritage.

Falconry is considered one of the oldest traditional sports in the Arabian Peninsula, a heritage passed down through history and generations, celebrated by poets in their odes/ poems with pride and admiration.

And among these innovators is the poet Muhammad Al-Sudairi in his famous poem:

The bird of fortune, from its palm flows blood,
With a broad claw, a good striker.
And do not be deceived by the size of the vulture, for it is of little worth,
And the greatness of the Eagles, the menacing and the curved-beaked.

And the poet Badr Al-Hawifi said:

If every man who carries a bird was a falconer,
His falconry would not have changed its nature.



While the poet Saleh Al-Zayed said:

OH you with beautiful feathers and the grace of its beauty,
With the bird, he captures the gaze with contemplation.

Rare in its description, countless its merits,
From a strong rib, not of ordinary clay,
And when its past is mentioned, O what a sweet biography!

They persisted in training without faltering,
No waves appeared for the bird, then they came.

The mind expanded at the first signs,
Always on its palm, it is gently caressed,
From fear lest its feather gets broken.
He wipes its face and its chest with his right hand,

A small, pious pampering.
Its love surpassed the love of Antar and Layla,
And its affection surpassed the love of fair maidens.

And the poet Nayef Saqr wrote, saying:

OH bird, whose wings are broad and your greatness is majestic,

And your eyes are sharp daggers, O fair-feathered one.

How many Houbara and Quail have you hunted between deception and killing,

And from what your hands teach you, hunger does not prolong your life, and you live long.



By God, Oh Hunter, Don't Catch the Bird, Leave the wild one, don't pain it with your gentle snare.

The great poet Abdullah bin Oun stands among the most prominent bards of his generation, counted among the elite connoisseurs of falconry's hidden secrets and the nuanced handling of birds. In this poem, which delves into hunting, the netting of birds, and vivid descriptions of both the birds themselves and the springtime, he earnestly implores the catcher not to strike down or capture the bird. This plea stems from a profound love and reverence for the creature, inviting us to immerse ourselves in an atmosphere of poetic brilliance.



By God, Oh Hunter, Don't Catch the Bird
Leave the wild one, don't pain it with your gentle snare
Let its cries echo from mountain peaks unbound
Across the plains or rocky desert's bare

It reigns by its own will, its sustenance decreed
Safe from the hood, no guiding leash it's bound
And you, find ease, from loss be freed
For netting birds today, is toil profound

Unless Abu Turki remembers his journey's pull
And the hunt's allure calls forth in time of chase
Then strive for him, with falcons grand and full
Long-winged and broad of chest, of noble grace

Seek out the one whose hue's a furnace's bright flame
Pure-white, with broad, commanding wings that gleam
Or whiter still, like bountiful, swift-moving ream
In the description of a bird brought last year by Hade

With short-set reach, yet perfect in its form
Its chest robust, its feathers sharply keen
The bane of soaring flyers, weathering the storm
It chases on, though flight seems to convene

When it departs, its early plumage it does sway
Its shoulders broad, its chest profoundly shown
Given its due, from dawn to fading day
When the cool north wind, a gentle breath, is blown

Along the path where early rain has blessed
Rippling waters fill each valley low
Where greenery sprouts, by signs of growth possessed
Like tender shoots where hardest rocks do grow

When sandgrouse rise, in scattered flight they flee
And hover in the air like swarming locusts vast
Release it then, to dominate the wild and free
Like a fierce leader, against old foes it's cast

And if they're vexed, seeking refuge in their fear
Concealed within the south of Arad's shade
Some fleeing far, and some approaching near
Like scratched marks on which white patches laid

They seize them unawares, dividing, taking flight
And what escapes is destined for demise
Their joy from last year's hunt, a vivid sight
With mounting boasts and stubborn, fierce replies

Feathers lie scattered, where the hunt was fought
Danced by the breezes near the resting place
This, oh Prince, is life's delight, hard-sought
And life's sown seeds, now promise harvest's grace.



The Saluki expresses intelligence and loyalty, the falcon signifies alertness of the mind and soul, and the horse symbolizes beauty and power

The novel “The Horse, The Saluki, and The Falcon” by Sheikhha Salama bint Hazza Al Nahyan explores human inquiries

The writer Sheikhha Salama bint Hazza Al Nahyan celebrates in her novel 'The Horse, The Saluki, and The Falcon' her homeland, as she chooses famous animals in Emirati culture and transforms them into wise characters that offer lessons in empathy, love, affection, and companionship. She follows a unique approach in this, addressing the development of youth's understanding of the world and ways to build relationships with others.

The three animals come together to provide a deeper understanding of human relationships, self-love, and self-worth. And when each of them converses with a little girl captivated by curiosity, they reflect different aspects of the human experience.

The novel includes a collection of quotes and sheds light on the positivity of the universe and what it holds within its folds of bright flashes that dispel the prevailing gloom. It relies on the idea that animals represent wisdom that preceded human existence, and that they speak languages we don't hear, and that will endure long after humans are gone.

In the novel, the horse represents beauty and power and speaks of the perseverance of the heart, while the Saluki symbolizes intelligence, speed, and loyalty; and the falcon signifies mental and spiritual alertness. Each quote draws from the animals' characteristics, offering fresh perspectives in answering the curious child's questions.

The writer says, speaking as the Saluki: 'Remember to show love to those who don't show it, because they didn't have love when they needed it most.'

"And speaking as the horse, it says: When you realize that life is your greatest teacher, you will be at peace with everything that comes afterward, for everything teaches you something."

"As for the falcon, when it looks at its problems from above, they seem small and not impossible or difficult, and this is one of the faces of not giving up in the face of things that can be easily solved.

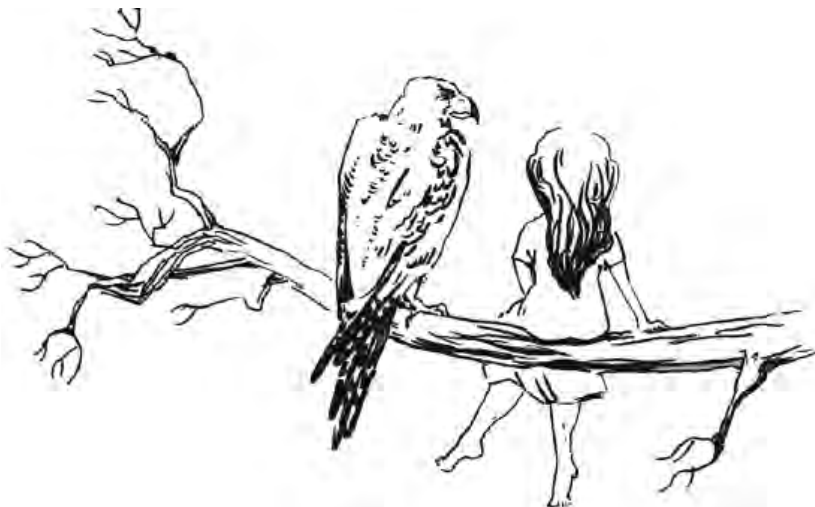
A novel that reflects many human questions

One seeks advice from friends and strives to find it, and perhaps the truth comes to them served on a platter of love; this is what we see in the warmth of the truth that a seemingly confused girl records in her heart before her memory, from her friends: the horse, the Saluki, and the falcon."

This is the novel by Sheikhha Salama bint Hazza Al Nahyan, which she places in the hearts, minds, and souls of her readers. It creates a dialogue between the girl and these animals, through which we feel the meanings and symbolism they carry, signifying strength, freedom, soaring, loyalty, and flight, reflecting many human inquiries.

The writer relied on short phrases that condense armies of words, and also carry much of the implicit meaning in spontaneous expressions, but the preconceived notion in the narrative takes into account the extent of human psychological passion with proverbs or wisdom, or what happens in the minds and is experienced.

And the truth is that this novel, in which Sheikhha Salama took care to have no more than forty-two pages with supporting pictures, and its brevity or conciseness raises questions about the girl and her friends (the horse, the Saluki, and the falcon). It is a novel rich in information that makes the reader emerge filled with positive influence in himself and in the souls of those who read it, and in many cases it stands in the middle, especially when the girl's matter becomes a question, or when she is



hesitant between things, or finds something new, contradictory, or different from what people are accustomed to.

This novel reflects the great cultural richness of its author, Sheikha Salama Bint Hazza, and it summarizes her experiences and contemplations on human existence and courage and achieving intellectual liberation; and it is one of the rare literary works that contain many primary points that are scattered in integrated dialogues. We find in it a new approach to novel writing, relying on the element of speed, which does not tolerate stopping and slowness, but rather requires the reader or recipient to dig for joy within the novel's framework. This is what the novel carries on its main axes, which we will address in these dialogues.

The novel presents, through the horse's voice, three ideal topics: acceptance, coexistence, and a heart full of mercy. These are, in reality, very important from a human perspective, and we can directly apply them to the struggles of nations and peoples, the intertwining of agendas, and the erosion of human values when it comes to accepting "the other," coexisting with them, or even regarding them with mercy, love, and respect.

Then comes the concept of "homeland," brilliantly expressed by the falcon in its answer to the girl's question, as it does not settle in one place: "My homeland is wherever I find love." The truth is that Sheikha Salama Bint Hazza conveys through this word "love" that humanity's homeland is the entire universe, and that love makes the whole earth suitable for living. At the same time, the word is also left open to "seeds," suggesting that birds survive on small amounts of seeds, just as humans need a little love to live fully; it is advice on love and joy so that humans can truly live.

Indeed, the novel, integrated through the dialogues of the girl and her friends, makes the three animals a source of experience and wisdom. This wisdom is conveyed by the author, Sheikha Salama Bint Hazza, resembling the philosophy of Ibn Muqaffa in his famous book *Kalila wa Dimna*. Moreover, the brevity gives us a beautiful glimpse, just as the alternating dialogues between the girl and her friends have a profound effect in changing false beliefs and looking at the future with optimism and love.

In the novel, there are important themes of empathy, compassion, challenge, growth, and the philosophy of looking at things from the top of a tree, explored through a dialogue between the falcon and the girl. This is the role the horse recognizes the girl must undertake, just as discovering one's true nature is considered vital from the horse's perspective.

The quest for freedom, symbolized by the vastness of the sky, is a topic worthy of attention from the falcon's point of view. This hovering bird in the sky undoubtedly enjoys freedoms that are increasingly diminished in our world today. Similarly, observing nature and reflecting on the present through the lens of the past is a challenging intellectual endeavor, creating a struggle between past, present, and future.

Thus, the novel presents elements of confidence, joy, and resilience in life, highlighting that despair and despondency have no place, even before the last moment of taking flight or during human hesitation.

When the falcon observes a person's problems from above, they appear small, this represents strength and perseverance in the face of challenges that may seem difficult but are often easily solved.

Love, courage, fear, bravery, life, school, reflection, happiness, virtue, patience, liberation from self-imposed constraints, transparency, honesty—all these are key points the author conveys through dialogues that reflect the traits of the three animal friends, fostering hope for the future. These conversations remind us that in the journey of life, we take with us only our good deeds, reflecting the values of Arab-Islamic culture while encouraging readers to confront obstacles and barriers that often challenge human progress.

In the final scene of the novel, the girl asks her friends: "Why do some people treat animals harshly?!" They answer: "Because many consider them, as animals, to be lower than humans, since they do not speak the human language, whereas we share the same language of silence and the same emotions and feelings."

Adorned with drawings by Olga Berry, the novel is a profound and expressive work that readers can carry with them on journeys, in public spaces, or share with their families to enjoy its refined philosophical dialogues. This effort reflects the depth and warmth of the dialogues, the sensitivity of the words, and the beauty of the intimate illustrations accompanying each line. It is a journey into our inner selves, helping lighten human burdens and explore personal concerns. The author, Sheikha Salama Bint Hazza, pours her pure and gentle emotions into fragments of complaint and dialogue between the girl and her companions: the horse, the Saluki, and the falcon.

From media sources

In Sheikh Zayed's Hunting Expeditions

One falcon takes flight,
while another awaits the
bustard's rise,

This one draws apart,
and that one has already
claimed his prize.



Poet Ahmed bin Ali Al-Kindi... May God have mercy on Him

Some poems fade while their creators still live, and some verses disappear with the passing of their authors. Yet, a select few poems live on forever.

The poem we've chosen for you today, from the collection of the late poet Ahmed bin Ali Al Kindi Al Murar, is considered among the most exquisite Arabic poetry from the Arabian Peninsula. In it, the poet meticulously chronicles the events of one of the hunting trips undertaken by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. He details the regions they visited during that beautiful journey, though he doesn't specify the date, which is crucial for poems of this nature.

These verses offer an exceptional example of popular literature that deserves to be taught to the younger generation. It can impart the noble qualities mentioned by Al Kindi in his hunting ode, educate them on the art of falconry and hawk training, and familiarize them with authentic terms that some youth are unfamiliar with today, yet remain well-known and used by desert dwellers even now.

The poems of Ahmed bin Ali Al Kindi (1940-1985) left a strong and lasting impact on both the poetic and artistic scenes in the UAE. Al Kindi is regarded as one of the most celebrated Nabati poets in the Emirates during the 20th century. He was among the key poets who contributed to the development of popular poetry and worked to preserve its presence and beauty among other popular arts and literature.

We invite you to enjoy reading this creative poem.

We set forth with the Ruler, on a day he resolved to depart,
Determined for the hunt, swift and purposeful of heart.

Gentle in companionship, a lion in the dark, light in his sleep,
Strong in resolve, capable, wherever his desires sweep.

From Al Dhafra, they urged them, traversing plains and rocky steepes,
And sands like mountains, with valleys where rivers creep.

To Dhofar, "Al Jaddah," a land well-deserved they deemed,
New vehicles, as they journeyed, conquering all that teemed.

With noble falcons from Sham, and valiant, generous men,
Every praised blond hawk, a hunter of the open plain.

Each praised his bird, releasing it with a call so deep,
It descended like lightning, through peaks where thunders sleep.

One falcon takes flight, while another awaits the bustard's rise,
This one draws apart, and that one has already claimed his prize.

That one, his bird, when a month in the skies it had soared,
Stopped with a wave on the plateau, and called out, adored.

We stayed there for a while, hunting what was destined to be caught,
Large prey, and success, by the Guide, to us was brought.

Then, the leader commanded, for them to proceed,
And took them to Dar Al Wahiba, on the true road indeed.

When they descended from the plains, they fell upon rich ground,
And when they crossed a valley, another valley they found.

How many times they stopped, etching marks on pure sands so fine,
A dwelling for gazelles, where they faced the winds' design.

And "Al Murair" they roamed, with falcons tracing their day,
From there, the return began, the journey gently led away.

They passed by Wadi Al Omairi, on a cloudy day so grand,
And cut through the floodwaters, as the torrent swept the land.

We headed for Al Ain, how beautiful that day did seem,
Returning from the hunt, making for our homeland's dream.

With our Sheikh Zayed, our shield, may he forever last,
Of praised virtues, truly our treasure and our steadfast cast.

Story

(Jarrah)

In 1982, Hunting Expeditions and hunting were at their peak, and among the most famous hunting grounds were the Iraqi lands. The poet Fahd bin Jibril was on a Hunting Expeditions with Sayed Ghaith Al-Suwait and some of his companions. This trip remains a cherished and enjoyable memory for them, full of hunting and pleasure.

Al-Saad had a falcon named Jarrah, one of the most renowned birds on this journey for its courage, speed, and long-range vision, able to spot prey from great distances. For our poet, hunting with Jarrah was a kind of challenge, a contest of skill and stubbornness. But for Al-Saad, Jarrah meant far more; everyone who knew him also knew of his falcon.

Then came the day when Jarrah was released for the hunt, and it was the last time he ever returned. In those times, when hunting was plentiful, losing a falcon felt like losing a dear companion. How much greater, then, was the pain of losing Jarrah?

The falcon had gone after a houbara bustard whose speed was extraordinary. True to his nature, Jarrah would never abandon the chase. He pursued the bird across rough terrain until he disappeared from his falconer's sight. Al-Saad searched tirelessly, climbing from hill to hill, waving and calling in hopes that Jarrah might hear him. He even released pigeons to lure him back, but it was all in vain.

Jarrah was lost. For Al-Saad, it was as if he had lost a beloved son. He withdrew from his companions, unable to share their meals or their rest, consumed by grief. The sorrow weighed heavily on him, and though friends



offered him other falcons, he refused them all, swearing that without Jarrah, his heart could never find joy again.

Jarrah went and Al-Saad remained grieving over its loss, and his worries intertwined in his chest like waves of the sea. The poet Fahd bin Jibril noticed his companion's condition and addressed him saying, "The bird, Saad, is either 'gone' or 'dead'," so he left Al-Saad in this sorrow. And all these falcons were under your control, so think about your actions. Al-Saad's eyes overflowed with sorrow and tears, and Fahd had no choice but to employ his poetic talent to express his feelings through these famous verses, which became proverbs:

Oh Saad, my days have now departed (my Jarrah),
The doves withdraw, disturbed by my mournful cries.
A swift hunter, whose feathers stood unmarred and hearty,
When it sought, it spanned the furthest skies.

And count no ledger for the bird that flies, once gone.
The lightning flash of feathers, such was its nature's way,
Behold the keen hunter that pursued its prey.
Its wild dominion, in our records shall forever stay,

Pure feathered, its keen eye confirmed its worth each day.
For Hunting Expeditions, no accounting for what fades away.

(1): To throw away the pigeons: i.e. to shoot the pigeons.

(2): Al-Kharm: The fugitive bustard.



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Houbara Bustard in Emirati Poetic Selections

Dr. Fatima Masoud Al Mansouri

The Houbara Bustard is an environmental and cultural symbol deeply rooted in the Arab psyche, particularly in the Arabian Gulf region and the UAE in particular. This bird is associated with the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula, as it is a native inhabitant of its lands, particularly the Asian Houbara Bustard species, which has adopted its pigmentation. Its feathers are brown, mottled with black and white.

Its name is derived from "ink" (hibr in Arabic), or from its beauty and splendor, both in form and color. The word "tahbeer" (inking) refers to improving handwriting and poetry, as mentioned in Lisan al-Arab by Ibn Manzur. It also appears in the Holy Quran in Surat At-Tawbah and Surat Al-Ma'idah. The verb (they ink) appears in Surat Ar-Room and (they ink) appears in Surat Az-Zukhruf, meaning "you delight and enjoy." The word and its derivatives appear frequently in ancient Arabic poetry, as well as in poetry from the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula 1.

From the cultural and heritage aspect, the Houbara Bustard is closely linked to one of the most important components of intangible heritage in the state. Therefore, we note that the state is interested in this bird, and this is within the framework of its commitment to preserving its cultural heritage. The Houbara Bustard is considered an authentic Emirati heritage symbol, and a fundamental pillar in the sport of falconry. It is the primary and most important prey for falconers, and hunting it poses a great challenge to them, and at the same time gives them a sense of pride and glory.

Houbara Bustard are classified by their sizes into three types: "Al-Hafana": This is the small-sized Houbara Bustard which is usually less resistant to the falcon, making it easier to hunt. The second type is "Al-Rabad" or "Al-Rabdah": This is the medium-sized Houbara, and it can be a female Houbara. As for its nature, it is difficult to handle and rarely resists the falcon, as it is distinguished by its great speed. It often escapes the falcon, causing it to fly out of the falconer's sight, sometimes leading to its loss. As for the third type, it is "Al-Kharb": This is the male Houbara, which is always the desired prey for hunting, and it usually confronts the falcon, leaving the flock to meet and challenge it.

Distinctive Presence in Nabati Poetry

The Houbara Bustard holds a prominent presence in Emirati folk literature, especially Nabati poetry. This poetry is deeply connected to the natural environment and its fascinating creatures, so it can be said that folk poetry is a gift from nature. Therefore, it is natural for folk poets to address birds in their poems, drawing inspiration from them, whether in terms of description or interpretation. The Houbara Bustard, in particular, appears as a central motif in many hunting poems. It has been portrayed as a symbol of speed and wisdom, depicted in duels with the falcon, and its presence in poetic texts has served as a means of highlighting the skills of both the hunter and the falcon.

The poets do not neglect to draw a picture of the desert in which the Houbara Bustard grazes and wishes for it every time the hunting season arrives. For example, in the diwan of the poet Eid bin Ahmed bin Masa'ed Al Mansouri, we find a distinct model for the nature of that relationship. He mentions the Houbara Bustard in many of his poems, including, for example, the poem titled (The Clan of Praise and Generosity), in which the poet implicitly refers to the Houbara Bustard when mentioning the subject of going out hunting with Sheikh Mohammed bin Buti Al Hamed, and this is evident in one of his verses, where he says:

My falcon, the mighty adult, and the young hatchling,
A gift from a noble knight, a source of pride.
How beautiful its golden blonde hue amidst the many prey,
What the hunter's hand has tamed from the other falcons.

A swift wild one, it chases the Kharab (male Houbara),
Its prey soars high in the vastness of the sky.
In the pursuit of the deep valley and its expanse,
Its soaring makes a beautiful sight, from dawn till dusk.

It rises and wins the race, its keeper bewildered,
It sees the Houbara, its vision clear and decisive.

We notice that the poet in the verses goes on to explain the falcon's habitat, praise it, and describe it with attributes of strength, beauty, and courage. This is not surprising, as falcons hold a high position in the popular conscience because of these attributes. Then he links these attributes to the scene of the chase between the falcon and the Houbara Bustard, especially the "kharab," which is the male Houbara Bustard. The bird swoops down on the "kharab" while it is soaring in the air. Then the poet continues to describe the courage and speed of this bird or falcon. It is fast in the air and predatory on the ground. This is what the third verse shows when he says, "In the bottom there is a butcher," meaning it destroys them. There is an allusion in this verse to the precision of hunting and the decisiveness of the battle.

The poet concludes his verses by describing the Houbara Bustard bird as (makhamir), in reference to the Houbara Bustard hidden in the sands. This expression shows the poet's mastery in using rhetorical imagery to highlight the Houbara Bustard's behavior when it feels danger, as it hides from sight and takes cover on the ground until the danger passes. This verse completes the image drawn by the poet about the hunting scene, by adding an aspect of fear and apprehension that accompanies the Houbara Bustard during moments of pursuit, which reflects its cleverness and defensive instinct.

In another poem by the same poet, titled: (We wander far with our virtuous companions), the poet recalls some verses about hunting trips and the companionship of good friends from a long poem, and says in it:

My tents are beautifully pitched, in a desolate hollow,
Where dangers lurk, and I name them.

Within it, gazelles recount my deeds and my advances,
And the hunt within it, a sight to behold and to witness.

For me, who journeyed forth with divine grace in my encounters,
In a barren land where the Houbara Bustard roam.

We notice that the poet describes the house or hunting ground as "deserted," barren, and deserted. Qafar (deserted) is a term for a place devoid of anything but traces of the wasm (marking). Wasm (marking) or wasm (marking) is the beginning of the rainy season, which occurs in mid-October. The hunting ground is devoid of everything except traces of rain and the traces of the jawazi (a type of deer). He also describes the Houbara Bustard Houbara Bustard, as the Houbara Bustard in this land flies and walks freely and fearlessly. This is explained by the word (after it had gone) in the second half of the third verse, meaning that the Houbara Bustard did not hide, as it did not sense any danger looming over it.

In a parallel vein, the poet Muhammad bin Saeed Al Raqraqi Al Mazroui relies on descriptions of the Houbara Bustard in many of his poems, particularly those that document hunting trips. His style does not differ greatly from that of the poet Eid bin Musa'id. In one of his poems, entitled "Suhail Wandered and Approached the Wasm and the Bird," he says:

My passion is for chasing the retreating ones, those that flew and then
recoiled in flight,
They fall, even if untouched, not a speck of dust from their capture,
untouched.

A free spirit, he desires the male Houbara, approaching it swiftly,
A vivid explanation of the hunt, how he seized it for me.

We observe that the poet in the third verse delves into describing the method of the bird's predation of the Houbara, by his saying, "A free spirit, he desires the male Houbara, approaching it swiftly," meaning when the falcon swoops down on the Houbara Bustard, the first strike is on its back (The raider). The poet likened the bird's strike to that of a butcher.

The poet Muhammad bin Sultan Al-Darmki is also considered one of the most prominent poets who paid great attention to documenting hunting trips and their traditional vocabulary in Nabati poetry. These trips formed an authentic part of his poetic experience, as he was one of the constant companions of Sheikh Zayed on hunting trips, whether in inland areas or abroad. This is clearly highlighted in his Diwan. We note that the poet delves deeply into describing the Houbara Bustard and this is through his poems in the field of birds and hunting. For instance, in one of his poems titled (Hān Al-Mashām), he describes the special hunting ground as being covered with grass and considered a dwelling place for the Rabd (female Houbara Bustard), and he says in that regard:

Longing stirred within me, seeing the distant peaks of Al-Manshar,
The very dust adorned with green,
And valleys, wide and green, clothed in lush vegetation,
Where the Rabd (female Houbara) makes its dwelling, a cherished
quarter they seek.

And in another poem titled (Za'eimna - Our Leader), the poet Al-Darmki describes the hunting trip with Sheikh Zayed and says:

Our leader, Sheikh Zayed, our pride,
With your presence, the hunt just begins its flow.

And your companionship, O Sheikh, fount of benefits,
O our treasure and you are for us the anchor of glory.

until he reaches the praise of Sheikh Zayed's birds, especially his bird "Farhan," which is distinguished by courage, strength, and speed. Through the verses, he describes the ink with noble qualities, and says:

And among your birds, praise I offer, and I possess certainty,
The second witness, "Bin Mughaira," attested to its glory.

"Farhan," for him, O Sheikh, possesses swift and ancient habits,
Accustomed it is, like the returning flood to its riverbed.

They released it when the scattered Rabd (female Houbara) took flight,
And I do not believe, when released, "Farhan" will be forgotten.

If it swoops, it overtakes the swift and noble ones,
And glory belongs to him who carries it upon his right hand.



As for Al-Qasaili's Diwan 6, it also mentions the Houbara Bustard, which is found hiding from the bird out of fear, and this is a testament to its power, as he says in one of his poems titled (O Bird, Khalid, Wielder of Glories):

O Bird, Khalid, wielder of glories, a blonde-feathered one,
It brought me gain from my companion.

From its resemblance to the beloved falcons,
A day they came to us with desirable bounty.

It chases and separates in the hidden places,
Its resolve slender in vast, empty lands.

From those who guard their virtues,
Whose high resolve is strong.

It becomes clear from the foregoing that the Houbara Bustard, with its distinctive characteristics, behaviors, and life, has formed a rich source of inspiration for poets' imaginations. Its influence was not limited to merely stimulating the composition of poetry, but extended to being a source for generating innovative poetic imagery, which made it clearly and powerfully present in hunting poetry.

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The UAE: First in the Arab World and Seventh Globally

Discover the 16 Emirati Heritage Elements inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List

Countries around the world are racing to intensify their efforts and harness their energies with the aim of registering their cultural masterpieces as human heritage. This enhances feelings of pride among nations and individuals. Cultural heritage fosters respect, understanding, and peace among peoples, and helps achieve sustainable development. Strategies and projects for preserving heritage mean transmitting knowledge, skills, meanings, and values from one generation to the next.

The number of intangible cultural heritage elements inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity at UNESCO is 676 elements across 140 countries, many of which are shared elements across more than one country. The list adopted by the United Nations aims to raise awareness of intangible heritage and provide recognition for community traditions and knowledge that reflect their cultural diversity.

Since 2010, the UAE has successfully registered 16 elements on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, considering them human cultural heritage important to all humanity. This is a significant cultural achievement that has placed the UAE seventh globally and first among Arab countries in this regard.

The latest statistics published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) revealed that the UAE leads all Arab countries in the number of heritage elements recognized and inscribed by UNESCO on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Furthermore, the UAE now ranks seventh globally in this field, surpassing many other countries, cultures, and global civilizations.

Moreover, cultural heritage experts and consultants in the UAE have been able to compile inventory lists for dozens of intangible heritage elements, according to the precise standards imposed by UNESCO. Completing a file for each element takes several years and requires significant effort.

Living Heritage for Humanity

According to UNESCO, intangible cultural heritage is the living heritage of humanity. It encompasses all forms of expression, customs, traditions, social practices, knowledge, and skills inherited by parents from their ancestors. It plays a crucial role in preserving cultural diversity in the face of increasing globalization, in addition to the significant social and economic value inherent in transmitting knowledge from one generation to another.

More specifically, intangible cultural heritage includes living traditions or expressions inherited from our ancestors that are passed on to future generations, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, or knowledge and skills related to producing traditional crafts.

16 Heritage Elements of the UAE

Although the United Arab Emirates began its series of successes in 2010 with the registration of its first heritage cornerstone—falconry—on UNESCO's list, it has since achieved the remarkable feat of inscribing 16 elements on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. These elements are recognized as human cultural heritage of significance to all of humanity.

The inclusion of these authentic Emirati heritage elements in UNESCO crowns a long journey of documenting, reviving, and sustaining the nation's heritage components. They are regarded as a civilizational and cultural legacy that must be preserved for future generations.

Falconry - 2010

Thanks to efforts led by the UAE through its coordination and cooperation with 11 Arab and foreign countries, reaching 24 countries today.

With this important achievement, falconry, a practice dating back more than 4,000 years, received its most significant global recognition as a unique human cultural heritage, reflecting the pride of nations, communities, and individuals, and serving as one of the main components of their culture and identity.

Al-Sadu - 2011

Abu Dhabi succeeded in inscribing "Al Sadu: traditional weaving skills in the United Arab Emirates" on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2011, in an effort to preserve this traditional craft and highlight Emirati heritage.

Al Sadu is a form of weaving practiced by women in Bedouin communities to produce soft furnishings and decorative accessories for camels, horses, and other purposes.

Al-Taghrooda - 2012

"Traditional Bedouin poetry chanted while riding camels" — this has contributed to the continuity of Al-Taghrooda as an authentic heritage art form, affirming its place among the region's performing arts and ensuring its practice by current and future generations.

Al-Taghrooda represents a cumulative record of Bedouin tribal poetry, encompassing their history, cultural values, social customs, wisdom, and expressive traditions.

Al-Ayyala - 2014

A significant achievement that has helped revive various performing arts, shed light on the UAE's cultural heritage, and promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

Al-Ayyala is a deeply rooted traditional folk performance art historically associated with the culture and chivalry of desert dwellers. It is an important social ritual that nurtures a spirit of dignity and pride. Today, it is a central feature of events celebrating national identity.

Arabic Coffee - 2015

The traditions of Arabic coffee are deeply woven into the fabric of desert society through its tools and rituals, have become synonymous with generosity, hospitality, and authentic values.

Arabic coffee symbolizes the hospitality for which Emirati society is known, making it a strongly rooted element of the UAE's rich traditions.

Al-Razfa - 2015

A traditional art form that blends performance and poetry, deeply embedded in the heritage and culture of the United Arab Emirates.

The songs of Al-Razfa have been preserved in the collective memory of Emirati culture for generations and continue to be a source of inspiration, providing performers today a strong sense of identity and pride in their roots.





The Majlis – 2015

The Majlis, with its cultural and social functions, is considered a living tradition that rulers and community members have been keen to preserve, continuing to serve as a bridge for communication, dialogue, and building social relations.

It serves as a forum where individuals gather with tribal leaders and elders to discuss daily matters and community affairs.

Al-Azi (oral poetry performance) 2017

This form of pride poetry emerged centuries ago on battlefields and is now recited at national events and celebrations in the UAE.

Originating in victory celebrations, it was traditionally performed in war arenas and has been passed down through generations.

Al-Azi performances strengthen community bonds and serve as a powerful medium for transmitting traditions, knowledge, and cultural values.



The Palm Tree 2019

People in the Arab region have shared a long historical relationship with the palm tree, which is an inseparable part of their traditions and heritage.

Date palms—and the associated knowledge, skills, traditions, and practices—have played a vital role in strengthening the connection between people and the land in the Arab region, to help them face the harsh challenges of the desert environment.



Al Aflaj - 2020

Al Aflaj refers to the oral traditions, knowledge, and skills related to the construction and maintenance of traditional irrigation systems in the UAE, aimed at ensuring the fair distribution of water.

The term is derived from falaj, meaning a small water channel or stream. These systems date back to ancient times and reflect the rich historical heritage of the country.



Camel Racing - 2020

Camel racing is a cultural heritage practiced in many countries, with competitions held among camels in designated races divided by age categories. These events attract large crowds.

It is a festive tradition and a social practice associated with camels, jointly inscribed by the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman.



Arabic Calligraphy - 2021

Arabic calligraphy developed alongside the evolution of Arabic script since the early centuries of Islam.

Today, it is regarded as an art form practiced by individuals from diverse religions, communities, and backgrounds.



Alheda'a - 2022

Alheda'a is an oral polyphonic expression accompanied by gestures or musical instruments played by herders to communicate with their camels and strengthen their bond.

This rhythmic form of expression inspired by poetry.

Alheda'a can also be used for swift assembly in case of immediate danger. The practice is traditionally transmitted within families and communities.



Al-Talli - 2022

A traditional handicraft practiced in various regions of the UAE, Al-Talli is passed down from mothers to daughters, as well as through training courses, workshops, and heritage festivals.

Women gather in homes and neighbourhoods to braid Al-Talli, giving the craft a social dimension by providing opportunities for social interaction and intergenerational knowledge exchange.



Harees Dish - 2023

A traditional heritage dish often served during significant family gatherings such as weddings, national and religious holidays, with a special presence during the holy month of Ramadan.

It is prepared by cooking wheat grain in lightly salted water for several hours, after which meat is added and the mixture is cooked again for at least four hours. The dish is served with a spoonful of local ghee on top.



Henna 2024

A social and aesthetic practice and a symbol of joy, creativity, and artistry, especially prominent in community celebrations, events, and festivals across generations.

According to UNESCO, henna symbolizes the life cycle of an individual and is present during key life stages.

Its uses in society have ranged from healing and decoration to celebration. Henna rituals are often accompanied by oral expressions such as songs and stories. The resulting dyes or tattoos can last from a few days to several weeks.



Empowering Falconers Worldwide: A Proactive Emirati Approach

By Dr. Ihsan Al-Maysari Researcher

Specializing in Cultural Sustainability and Heritage Affairs

Falconry, in the UAE's national memory, has been linked to sustainable environmental practices, becoming a hallmark in the heritage of the United Arab Emirates. Over the years, interest in this ancient sport hasn't been limited to historical documentation or celebration at national and international events. Instead, all international efforts have been dedicated to empowering falconers worldwide to practice this deeply rooted sport across successive human civilizations. This aims to foster a culture of interest in falcons among various cultures, supporting their presence and developing sustainable hunting methods.



The Pioneer of Sustainability

The late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, since the founding of the United Arab Emirates, was keen to mobilize international efforts to enable falconers to practice sustainable hunting. This was achieved through an early interest in falconry and its institutionalization by establishing dedicated facilities and bodies. Furthermore, he rallied international efforts for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to register falconry as a living human heritage on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This was not a sudden development but was strongly present in the wise leadership of the United Arab Emirates from the very beginning.

"The Pioneer of Sustainability," Sheikh Zayed, may God rest his soul, was keen to mobilize international efforts to develop a global strategy for falconry since the mid-1970s. This was demonstrated by the UAE's hosting of The First International Festival of Falconry Conference in 1976. This event served as an "official inauguration" of the state's early aspirations, emphasizing the necessity of concerted international efforts to protect this sport from extinction. It also served as a "communication" message to various nations committed to preserving their ancient heritage.

Sheikh Zayed also ensured the mobilization of institutional and popular efforts to preserve falconry through a series of sustainable initiatives and projects, allocating resources to establish an infrastructure dedicated to safeguarding popular heritage. Falconry was among the most important issues that topped the national agenda since the establishment of the state in 1971.

It was not surprising that the number of natural reserves in the UAE increased, reaching approximately "49" according to the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, in addition to facilities related to environmental conservation, biodiversity, and wildlife. These reserves serve as habitats for Houbara bustards and falcons, stemming from the wise leadership's comprehensive vision to provide an integrated environment for the sustainability of the environment in all its forms.

The Institutional Framework for Falconry: Embracing Events that Support its Global Practice

The institutional framework for falconry in the United Arab Emirates – representing an unprecedented infrastructure in the region – has played a significant role at both regional and international levels. This is evident through international hunting agreements and legislations, future strategies for global falconry, and the adoption of the latest technologies and best practices to preserve falcons and their prey.

The UAE has issued several legislations and regulations to ensure the sustainable practice of falconry in accordance with internationally approved environmental standards. These include issuing passports for falcons, implementing electronic tracking systems, and early measures prohibiting the use of wild falcons and practices that harm biodiversity. Falconry is now entirely dependent on falcons bred in captivity, which is considered a proactive and globally recognized model for regulating falconry.

The prestigious annual international festivals that the UAE is keen to host and organize contribute to strengthening international cooperation and exchanging expertise among falconers. This is achieved by creating platforms that keep pace with modern requirements, in addition to supporting research and academic efforts. This stems from the understanding that empowering falconers is not limited to practice alone; those responsible must focus on knowledge and professional development. Furthermore, specialized training centers for students have been established, and falconry has been included as a cultural educational subject to raise awareness and foster pride in their heritage.

The Emirati momentum in empowering falconry is embodied in the establishment of the Emirates Falconers' Club, which has been working since 2001 to preserve falconry as a human heritage, promote sound practices of Arab falconry, and encourage sustainable hunting. The club's leadership has not overlooked the importance of preserving cultural heritage, diligently organizing and sponsoring specialized exhibitions. Foremost among these is the International Festival of Falconry, a global forum and the largest

gathering for falconers from various continents, as well as the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition, which has become a global icon for attracting experts, enthusiasts, and amateurs of hunting, falconry, and equestrian sports.

The UAE's pioneering role in preserving human heritage and safeguarding falconry and sustainable hunting has received international recognition. This was exemplified in 2017 when His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE "may God protect him" and founder of the Emirates Falconers' Club, was selected as Honorary President of the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey. The UAE's efforts have extended to include numerous projects supporting falconers in many countries through training, facilities, and equipment, as well as projects aimed at reintroducing falcons into their natural habitats and protecting their nests and breeding grounds, thereby contributing to the global sustainability of these rare species.

In conclusion, we find that the UAE has successfully and deservedly led international efforts in preserving human heritage, particularly the sport of falconry. It has played a pivotal role in international forums to support efforts aimed at its conservation, considering that empowering falconers worldwide and legally legislating their sport is the true beginning of preserving this ancient sport. It has also succeeded remarkably in protecting and safeguarding the environment and its sustainability, enforcing strict legislations and policies that support it on one hand, and adhering to authentic customs and traditions on the other.

11 Countries See Decline in Peregrine Falcon Population

Decades after peregrines came back from the brink, a new threat emerges

The use of DDT nearly wiped-out raptors by the 1950s. Now, peregrine falcon populations are declining again in many countries, and no one is quite sure why.

Over the past six years, Gordon Propp, who builds sets for British Columbia's film industry, has been closely monitoring 13 peregrine falcon nests in and around Vancouver, including 10 nests on city bridges.

Propp, who describes himself as a wildlife enthusiast and a local scientist, has been fascinated by these raptors his entire life. He says, "Seeing a creature at the top of the food chain adapt to an urban environment is truly amazing."

He continues, "Watching peregrine falcons soar, chase prey, and swoop to catch it at their distinctive speed of up to 250 miles per hour (400 kilometers per hour) are sights etched in my mind."

But over the past two years, most of those peregrine nests have disappeared. The predation of eggs by intelligent crows might explain the disappearance of two sites, but it cannot explain why the other nests are empty.

Propp's observations are hardly isolated. Scientists around the world have been recording a sharp decline in peregrine falcon populations in at least 11 countries.

Name any place in the world, and you are likely to find peregrine falcons soaring in its skies.

These falcons breed in the Eastern United States and Northern Canada, as well as Greenland, Russia, and the Scandinavian countries. They are present year-round along the west coast of North America, and in South and Central America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and across Asia and Australia.

In North America, Skip Ambrose, a former peregrine falcon expert with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has been monitoring falcons along the Yukon River in Alaska since 1973. He too has noted a sharp decline in their numbers.



In the summer of 2023, Ambrose reported that 20 out of 60 peregrine nesting sites were empty, and nearly 12 other sites had lost either the male or female parent. This is particularly notable because peregrine falcons are typically faithful to their nesting site and their partner.

Ambrose's alarming observations prompted Bud Anderson to act. In May 2024, Anderson, a retired falconer who used to manage the Falcon Research Group in Washington state, helped launch a forum focused on the mysterious declines in falcon populations.

Since then, over 100 researchers have joined to discuss hypotheses and share their own observations of declining peregrine falcon numbers in Denmark, southwestern France, Germany, Malaysia, the Netherlands, central Norway, northern Russia, southern Sweden, and Switzerland.

While none of the scientists can definitively explain what is happening, Ambrose says that nothing has ever been capable of killing adult peregrine falcons this quickly – not even DDT, the heavily used pesticide that nearly drove the birds to extinction by the 1970s.

Oddly, the peregrine falcons' struggles in North America appear to be more pronounced along the coasts. In New Jersey, for example, 22 out of 44 known nesting peregrine falcons disappeared during the last breeding season. In Virginia, local scientists recently observed the disappearance of 12 out of about 70 birds.

Anderson notes that peregrine falcon nests in inland Washington State, near the Cascade Mountains, appear stable, while those in the nearby San Juan Islands are struggling to survive.

Patrick Redig, a veterinarian and president of the Midwest Peregrine Society, who helps track 200 pairs of raptors in seven states, says, "It's interesting that coastal populations are showing an effect while inland populations, so far, are not."



Could a More Virulent Strain of Bird Flu Be the Cause?

Though scientists lack an official answer as to what is driving such sudden and widespread disappearances, many—including David Bird, who formerly led the Avian Science and Conservation Centre at McGill University in Quebec, Montreal, Canada—believe that highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) may be largely responsible.

Since 2022, the variant of the virus known as A(H5N1) clade 2.3.4.4b has been spreading around the world, infecting birds but also leaping across species to cattle, foxes, seals and even humans. It's therefore possible that peregrine falcons have contracted HPAI after preying on coastal birds, seabirds, and waterfowl—transient groups that may have been infected at poultry farms.

Blaming HPAI aligns with the observations of Eve Bélisle, who has been monitoring peregrine falcons in Montreal, Canada, since 2008. About 30 peregrine falcons in Montreal hunt a mix of pigeons, starlings, and other urban birds, but they also occasionally prey on waterfowl and shorebirds.

Necropsies confirmed that at least two falcons in the city died of HPAI last year, while others disappeared, laid infertile eggs or lost chicks during the breeding season.

Jérôme Lemaître, an avian biologist with the Quebec government, has been tracking the nesting success of peregrine falcons in the province. He says that while peregrines have not been missing from their nests, as in other places, their breeding success in southern Quebec dropped from 50% to 30% in 2022, though breeding rates rebounded in 2023. Lemaître notes it is unclear what role HPAI might have played in this decline.

Without a large-scale surveillance effort across North America, determining whether HPAI is behind the peregrine falcon declines along the coast—and in some places even inland—is difficult.

However, Kathy Clark, who leads New Jersey's endangered and non-game species program, says that to get a better view of the situation, New Jersey and Virginia officials may begin collecting and testing the blood of dead peregrine falcons for HPAI starting this breeding season.

In the longer term, Guy Fitzgérald, a veterinarian who launched Quebec's raptor rehabilitation program, says the province's peregrine falcon population have reached a plateau and remain vulnerable to further declines until the bird flu outbreak ends.

If HPAI is the primary cause of this decline, Bryan Watts, an ecologist who leads the Center for Conservation Biology at William & Mary university in Williamsburg, Virginia, says "North America's peregrine falcons have a difficult journey ahead. This disease is going to have to work its way through, and we're going to have to develop immunity to it."

- From the British newspaper The Guardian. This article was originally published in bioGraphic, an independent magazine about Nature and Regeneration - California Academy of Sciences.



Hunting New Prey! And Starting Hunting Seasons Late or Early!

American Winters are Changing, and so is the Traditional Sport of Falconry

By Melina Walling

GREENLEAF, Wisconsin – USA (AP) – Stephanie Stevens has a good reason to love Wisconsin's bitter cold winter. Every weekend, she loads her minivan with a large green box and drives to rural areas, usually on the edges of her friends' farm fields.

After donning a thick leather glove, her unconventional hunting companion emerges from the box and hops onto her wrist: Alexie Echo-Hawk, or Echo for short: a juvenile red-tailed hawk.

A Changing Natural World

Falconers dedicate long periods of the coldest seasons of the year to spending time outdoors, working with their birds to hunt small prey like rabbits and grouse. Many falconers emphasize that climate change, development of rural areas, and agricultural and forestry practices are all shaping the landscapes and prey they rely on.

The signs are everywhere, from snowshoe hares migrating north to patchy, short-lived snow cover, to the emergence of new populations in rural areas. This means falconers are forced to hunt different prey than they're used to, start their seasons later or end earlier, and confront their feelings as they watch the natural world change.

Falconry also gives its practitioners an added incentive to preserve the lands where they hunt with their birds, along with a greater sense of loss as climate change and other human factors permanently alter those places.





Radical Shift

"My empathy is just as much to what I'm hunting as to the bird I have in my hand," said Tom Doolittle, a retired wildlife biologist from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a veteran falconer in northern Wisconsin. He adds that falconry "is a sport of observation and participation. It has changed radically."

As Echo soars and settles high in the trees, Stevens, her son, and her daughter wander through the snow, primarily looking for cottontail rabbits.

The ideal "rabbit" seems to be hidden among clumps of grass or thickets of brambles and thorns. Stevens wades directly through water and strikes grass clumps with a stick, or jumps directly over them, hoping something will emerge.

Then it happened – a rabbit bolted. The falcon attacked and dove, faster than a blink of an eye, the bells on her anklets tinkling. Echo extended its talons and pulled out a tuft of fur.

The falcon nearly hit the rabbit. But even when the falcon misses, it is always so close, as Stevens' son Daniel said. "That moment really wakes you up."

Falconry began thousands of years ago, but in North America, where the sport is neither indigenous nor easily accessible to the average person, it's governed by federal and state laws, as well as an ethical code developed by falconry associations.

Falconers usually hunt with a wild raptor after it has learned to hunt on its own, then eventually return it back to the wild, making it a temporary and practical relationship. If the falcons wanted to, they could fly away and never return. But they come back because humans act as the falcons' version of hunting dogs, flushing out prey. And even if they don't catch anything, they still get a meal.

Hilary Niff, president of the Wisconsin Falconers Association, says this gives falconers a greater sense of responsibility to observe and conserve nature. She explains that she pays more attention to weather and animal population changes than ever before; some falconers even record their observations.

Niff notes that she's frustrated because the falconry season started late this year due to an unusually warm autumn.

"When you hunt with a raptor, you're inserting yourself into the cycle of life in all its details," the president of the Wisconsin Falconers Association continues. "You are at the mercy of nature's whim."



Changing Populations of Small Animals

When Doolittle, the retired biologist, goes hunting at his home in the forest about an hour south of Lake Superior, he uses a Goshawk, a dappled grey bird with orange eyes.

Goshawks naturally hunt snowshoe hares, and Doolittle has personally seen on his farm how these small mammals, which change color from brown to snowy white in winter, are disappearing from his area.

Last year, when the ground was bare in mid-winter, he watched a hare trying to camouflage itself, but it ran and hid in front of his hawk house—the only thing around with a white background for miles.

"I felt so sad for him," Doolittle said.

Snow cover varies greatly from year to year, but the prevailing trend over decades is that snow cover doesn't last long. Higher average temperatures mean that snow melts faster when it falls, and its physical properties change. Therefore, animals that rely on snow are struggling.

When Doolittle ventures into what should be ideal hare habitat and sees only a faint trace of footprints on the snow under the pine trees, he says, "You've lost something somehow. You've lost that one piece of the puzzle that represents, in my opinion, the North."

This is what Jonathan Pauli, a professor of wildlife ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has observed by systematically hunting carnivores and their prey throughout the state, collaring them, monitoring them, and comparing their historical numbers to current ones. He said his team has noticed a "relatively rapid range contraction" of snowshoe hares, as they move north while increasingly turning into what look like "white lightbulbs" clearly visible to their predators in winter.

"It's sad for me that species that have persisted for thousands of years won't be abundant anymore or won't be present in our state eventually," Pauli said.

He explains that studies have shown that concerted forest efforts can mitigate the impact of climate change on snowshoe hares, though what benefits snowshoe hares might harm other species like martens. He believes the challenge lies in the concerted efforts of federal and local forest managers, residents, and scientists to strategically conserve multiple winter-adapted species simultaneously.



Climate Change: Among Many Factors Affecting Falconry

Falconers know that every hunt is different, and the reasons are numerous. Less snow cover might make movement easier, but it robs the birds of the advantage of slowing down escaping prey or making animals and their tracks more visible. Birds don't necessarily like hunting in polar temperatures, like those repeatedly seen in the United States in winter. Unusual local weather phenomena, such as floods, can also temporarily reshape prey populations.

Additionally, the overuse of agricultural pesticides can decimate the insects that birds of prey's prey feed on. Furthermore, human development, like new subdivisions, can reshape entire natural landscapes in rural areas. Everything, from coyote populations to land zoning decisions matters.

Doolittle states that the changes he has observed over decades are all related to the human footprint, which often comes at the expense of other species. He continues, "We have to realize that we, as a human species, are the biggest environmental changing influence on the planet, that's all there is to it. I know we're supposed to get past change, but it's incredibly difficult when it's of significance or a way of life."

Photos: (Associated Press/Joshua A. Bickel)

The Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition: from a Simple Idea to a Phenomenon

By Dr. Ali Al-Quhais*

Any project begins with an idea, which then expands and grows if the idea is mature and well-thought-out. The first edition of the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) was held in 2003, under the guidance of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul. He visited and toured its pavilions at the time, and his face clearly showed the joy of the opening and attendance. He expressed his admiration for the exhibition and called for its continuous periodic staging, regardless of the circumstances.

It was an inspiring, innovative, and pioneering idea. The late friend Mohammed Khalaf AlMazrouei, may God have mercy on him, renowned for his many cultural and heritage initiatives in Abu Dhabi, spoke about the directives of Sheikh Zayed, may he rest in peace, who was one of the world's foremost pioneering falconers and a true lover of hunting, falconry, and equestrian pursuits. Following these directives, the first International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition was held in Abu Dhabi in September 2003, after the Arabian Hunting Exhibition had been relocated from Dubai. Sheikh Zayed directed the purchase of all the equipment and tools of the exhibitors who participated in that inaugural edition after its conclusion, as a gesture of encouragement, support, and honor. Preparations for the second edition began immediately, allowing the exhibition to continue annually, progressing from one success to another.

At that time, I was in Saudi Arabia, and the late Abu Khalaf called me, "flying with joy," as we say, over Sheikh Zayed's generous support for the exhibition. Since then, the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition has been held every September in an astonishing and spectacular manner, just before the hunting season in the region, allowing falconers to prepare and purchase their tools from this important event. Local, Arab, and international companies and institutions specializing in hunting and outdoor equipment, falconry gear, and hunting rifles participate in the exhibition. It also features distinguished falcon displays highlighted by participants from inside and outside the UAE. Thus, the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition has become a global phenomenon in the region and a significant platform, due to the large scale of participation, its significance, reputation, diverse participation, and high attendance of visitors and exhibitors. In addition, its sales figures have increased year after year, thanks to growing demand for purchasing hunting equipment, participating in falcon auctions, acquiring hunting vehicles and mobile homes, as well as tents and gear for outdoor trips, travel, and various forms of falconry that have evolved with modern, precise devices.

Despite the regional and global circumstances that the region and the world have witnessed in recent years, the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition has never stopped; on the contrary, it has become more dense, well-attended, and participatory. It has maintained its continuity, essence, and international and local reputation, becoming the most famous and distinctive platform of its kind in the Middle East in this specialization. It has become an effective source of attraction and inspiration for many hunting and equestrian enthusiasts, and lovers of traditional sports and cultural activities of paramount importance in the region. This is all thanks to the United Arab Emirates' interest and keenness to sponsor, support, and ensure the continuous annual staging of the exhibition.



ADIHEX represents a dazzling and continuous success story for over two decades. It is an important forum for preserving and conserving the environment and heritage, encouraging sustainable hunting, maintaining the Arab heritage related to hunting and equestrianism, and enhancing the awareness of youth and new generations about authentic Emirati traditions, instilling and developing them in youth culture. It is a unique, impressive, and highly enjoyable cultural, heritage, and economic event that now extends for more than a week, attracting exhibitors, visitors, and hunting and equestrian enthusiasts, in addition to fine arts related to this heritage.

Due to its strategic location in the region, and the professionalism of its management and the highly skilled and expertise of its organizers, the exhibition has become a focal point for Gulf nationals, Arabs, and international audiences, attracting them annually under the organization of the Emirates Falconers' Club at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, where visitors, enthusiasts of this authentic cultural heritage sport deeply rooted in the heritage and culture of the people of the UAE and the Arabian Gulf region, come. Hence, Abu Dhabi has been keen to continuously and generously support the exhibition without interruption, because it proudly views the heritage of its fathers and grandfathers and their noble values as an important message, and all that belongs to the UAE's heritage, authentic traditions, and cultural identity.

Since its founding, the UAE has been keen to notably encourage, support, and enhance Arab heritage and its conservation, one aspect of which is evident in the continuity of equestrian activities, falconry sports, and hunting in their sustainable, environmentally friendly form, as well as the publication of research and studies, and the establishment and issuance of a specialized magazine (Al-Saggar) published every season at this time.

The UAE has prioritized the conservation of falcons and ensuring their breeding, upbringing, and care, including rare and endangered species, because they are considered part of the authentic national cultural heritage identity, linked to the country's history, the spirit of its heritage, its uniqueness, and its vision.

It is well-known that the UAE has adopted the Arabian falcon as the symbol of its emblem, and its image is present on the country's currency, in its documents, and on the buildings of its governmental and private institutions. The falcon in the UAE is considered an "extraordinary honored guest," an integral part of its renaissance and a symbol of its progress. It is a witness to the stages of development in this young, prosperous country, continuously giving and excelling and thriving. Proud of its authentic past and flourishing present, it looks forward to its bright future, renewed every year, every month, every hour, indeed, every moment the UAE launches an inspiring initiative on a global level.

*Saudi Writer and Researcher

Falcon Clinic

Specialized Care for Falcons

Our Services

- 👉 Crop endoscopy
- 👉 Tracheal endoscopy
- 👉 Coelioscopy
- 👉 Bacterial culture for pseudomonas and other bacteria
- 👉 Tail mount fixing
- 👉 Vaccination for avian flu & Newcastle
- 👉 Biochemistry
- 👉 Coproscopy
- 👉 Glucose and vitamins
- 👉 Internal and external deworming
- 👉 Beak and talons trimming
- 👉 Microchip fixation
- 👉 Feather imping



Initiatives



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Sharjah Falconers Club Prepares for Hunting Season by Providing a Suitable Environment for Falcon Training and Invites Hunting Enthusiasts to Telwah Championship and Magyed Competition

Mohammed Khalifa Al Badwawi:

Falconry is a living heritage we carry with pride, and an authentic message we pass on to future generations.

At the heart of authentic Emirati heritage, falconry remains a symbol of pride and identity, a field flourishing with continuous interest and support. Among the most prominent names that have carried the banner of preserving this traditional sport and enhancing its presence on the local and international stage is Mohammed Khalifa Al Badwawi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Sharjah Falconers Club.

Through his clear vision and deep-rooted passion for heritage, Al Badwawi has led the club to advanced stages of excellence and organization, making it a vital platform that combines ancient traditions with sustainable development.

In this exclusive interview, he opens the doors to his vision, speaking about the founding of the club and its future, the anticipated achievements, the challenges facing falconry today, and how the support of the wise leadership and the interest of the younger generation are reflected in safeguarding the falconry heritage.



- **We congratulate you on the opening of the Sharjah Falconers Club by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, in February 2025. What are the club's goals and expectations from its establishment?**

The objectives of the Sharjah Falconers Club are to:

- Safeguard the cultural heritage associated with falconry, raise community awareness of its importance, and promote its practice within a stimulating environment that fosters its development.
- Facilitate the integration of all community members through the practice of falconry and all cultural and community activities organized by the club.
- Elevate the emirate's status in falconry at local, regional, and international levels.
- Help establish a modern and integrated system for developing legal and administrative regulations related to falconry in the emirate, adhering to best practices.
- Empower national talents and provide the necessary resources for practicing and organizing falconry competitions.





As for the desired expectations from the establishment of the club, they are to:

- Qualify leaders and experts in the field of falconry.
- Represent Sharjah both domestically and internationally in entities related to falconry.
- Prepare and execute introductory and promotional campaigns aimed at spreading the culture of falconry.
- Host and organize festivals, competitions, conferences, and gatherings related to falconry.
- Provide all necessary resources and requirements to empower and encourage all segments of society to engage in falconry and cultural and community activities.
- Prepare and submit recommendations and legislative drafts related to the practice of falconry in the emirate.
- Provide medical care and a shelter center for falcons and live prey.

▪ **What are the club's departments and facilities? What's new? Is modern technology being utilized? Are there any plans for future development?**

The Sharjah Falconers Club is an ideal destination for every falconer, as it contains everything a falconer needs. The club consists of:

- **An administrative building** containing theoretical lecture halls, simulation training halls for paragliding and drones, a falconers' lounge, a falconer's library containing all Arab and international references related to falconry, an exhibition of falconry tools used in the past and present, and staff offices.
- **A veterinary clinic** provides veterinary care services for falcons and is equipped with the latest medical equipment. It also includes a CT scanner, the first of its kind in a falcon clinic.
- The club's moulting facility has a capacity of approximately 400 falcons.
- **A race track** (the first track to provide an ideal competitive environment by overcoming the effect of wind on falcon speed).
- The club utilizes modern technologies in both training and competitions. For training it provides falconers with the latest training equipment (including tracking devices, modern aircraft, and a simulation training center). In competitions, races are managed entirely electronically, from registration to final results.

Regarding the club's development plans:

- Two additional moulting shelters will be installed to increase capacity.
- Establishing the «Falconers Market,» which offers everything a falconer needs, including training tools, veterinary medicines, and falconry equipment.

- **The Sharjah Falcon Breeding Center Project:**
What are its objectives? How do you view the current use of captive-bred falcons in the UAE and its role in sustainable hunting? What efforts has the UAE taken to preserve the sport of falconry and protect it from extinction?

The Sharjah Falcon Breeding Center focuses on:

- Breeding falcons in captivity to ensure the sustainability of their populations.
- Enhancing the breeds of falcons produced through scientific breeding programs.
- Providing falconers with falcons of exceptional traits, which reduces the need for overhunting wild falcons.

Falcons bred in captivity have also demonstrated high hunting capabilities and are now widely used in falconry. Studies show these falcons possess distinct health and aesthetic qualities, making them a preferred choice for falconers. These efforts have contributed to promoting sustainable hunting practices and preserving the Emirati cultural heritage. Thanks to these initiatives, the UAE has become a global model in falcon breeding and the conservation of falconry.

- **What is your assessment of falcon breeding centers? Do you consider them a valuable resource for falcons?**

These centers are considered an excellent and reliable source of falcons, especially in light of growing environmental awareness and demand for more sustainable hunting practices.

Falcon breeding centers, such as the Sharjah Falcon Breeding Center and others in the region, are also an important and effective resource for falcons and are generally highly regarded by falconry specialists and enthusiasts for the following reasons:

- **Environmental sustainability**
Reduces reliance on hunting wild falcons, which helps preserve endangered species.
- **Improving Quality**
Through selective breeding programs, the centers produce falcons with superior hunting abilities and better tolerance to climatic conditions.
- **Health and Technical Control**
Captive-bred falcons undergo rigorous medical examinations and receive proper nutrition, which increases their lifespan and performance.
- **Supporting Heritage**
Helps continue the sport of falconry in an organized and responsible manner, an important aspect of Gulf cultural identity.



▪ **What tools does the club use to promote the sustainability of falconry in the UAE? Are there any upcoming club activities and events?**

- **Training Programs and Workshops**
The club organizes introductory and specialized workshops to introduce new generations to falconry, focusing on the noble values inherent in this sport.
- **Falcon Clinic**
The clinic provides advanced medical care for falcons, contributing to maintaining the birds' health and ensuring their performance in falconry.
- **Competitions and Events**
The club organizes competitions such as the "Telwah Championship" to promote the practice of falconry among individuals, encourage active participation, and discourage poaching.
- **"Sustainable Young Falconers Council" Initiative**
This initiative aims to develop a generation of athletes capable of caring for and raising falcons.
- **"Sustainable Bird Watering" Initiative**
This initiative aims to provide water resources for birds in various locations, especially during the summer, in cooperation with government agencies and clubs in the entral Region.

The club also continues to organize various events aimed at raising awareness of falconry and its sustainability throughout the year. Each year during the summer, a competition for the best Magyed (a protective moulting shelter for falcons) is held to encourage falconers and educate them on best practices related to the moulting process. A non-summer 'Our Holiday' program will also be launched, organized by the Sharjah Sports Council in cooperation with the clubs of the Emirate of Sharjah.

▪ **How do you view falconry and the importance of preserving it in the UAE and globally? What are the hunting areas for club members, and what prey are hunted?**

In the UAE, falconry is more than just a hobby or a sport; it's an authentic heritage deeply rooted in ancestral history, reflecting the unique relationship between humans and nature in a challenging desert environment. It has been recognized by UNESCO as a global human heritage, emphasizing its cultural significance.

It must also be preserved because:

1. Falconry represents an important element of UAE culture, and teaching it to new generations preserves the authentic spirit of the community.
2. Falconry instills values of patience, respect for nature, and knowledge of wildlife in its practitioners.
3. Through limited, regulated, and monitored hunting, falconry is practiced in a way that doesn't negatively impact the environment or wildlife.
4. The UAE has become a global model in organizing falconry in a way that respects nature and promotes international cooperation in the conservation of raptors.

▪ **What is the club's role in educating and training falconers and motivating them to continue practicing their favorite sport at the same time?**

The Sharjah Falconers Club's role is pivotal in educating and training falconers, motivating them to continue practicing falconry in a sustainable and modern manner, while preserving its authenticity. This is achieved through an integrated set of initiatives and services, most notably:

Awareness, education, training, technical support, motivation, and moral support.

▪ **As the 2025-2026 hunting season approaches, how do you see falconers' interest in club membership? What preparations are being made to provide them with services and facilities? Are there plans to organize any competitions or tournaments?**

The Sharjah Falconers Club continues its diligent efforts to promote falconry in the UAE by offering distinguished services and facilities to falconers, and organizing events and championships that encourage continuity and active participation.

Club membership is seeing increasing interest from both professional and amateur falconers. This is due to the club's excellent reputation in falconry and its provision of specialized services that meet falconers' needs, such as training, veterinary care, and necessary equipment.

The club is preparing for the hunting season by:

- Equipping training fields and providing a suitable environment for falcon training (Al Da'ou).
- Organizing training workshops to enhance falconers' skills in taming falcons and training them for hunting.
- Providing veterinary consultations to ensure the health and safety of falcons during the season.

The club is expected to organize a series of championships and competitions in the upcoming season, such as the Telwah Championship, the Juniors Championship, and the Magyed Competition.

▪ **What are the future opportunities for cooperation between the Sharjah Falconers Club and other important falconry clubs in the UAE?**

Future cooperation between the Sharjah Falconers Club and other falconry clubs in the UAE offers numerous opportunities aimed at promoting falconry and preserving this rich cultural heritage. These opportunities aim to achieve common goals such as environmental sustainability, improving falconry practices, and encouraging new generations to participate.

Some potential future cooperation opportunities include:

1. Coordination of tournaments and competitions to avoid scheduling conflicts, allowing falconers to participate as much as possible.
2. Joint environmental and heritage initiatives, including participation in all joint events.
3. Exchange of expertise between trainers and professional falconers from various clubs, by organizing dialogue sessions and scientific seminars on the latest methods of training and caring for falcons.
4. Supporting educational initiatives in schools and universities, in cooperation with other clubs, by organizing events that introduce falconry as part of the Emirati cultural identity.

▪ **Will the club participate in the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition 2025? What will it include, if any, and how are you preparing to welcome the large audience at this anticipated event at the end of next August?**

Yes, the Sharjah Falconers Club is expected to participate in the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition 2025, which will be held at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Center. The club's participation aims to:

- Introduce the public to the club's activities and services, such as training, membership benefits, and healthcare.
- Showcase the club's achievements in the field of falconry, such as organizing tournaments and competitions.
- Offer exclusive offers to members and visitors, including discounts on products and services.

The club is also expected to prepare for welcoming the large audience by:

- Setting up a distinctive pavilion showcasing the club's services and achievements.
- Organizing workshops and introductory sessions to introduce the sport of falconry and the importance of preserving it.
- Providing opportunities for direct interaction with professional falconers and exchanging experiences and knowledge.

▪ **Would you like to add anything to the readers and followers of "Al Saggar" magazine?**

My fellow falconers and lovers of this authentic heritage...

Falconry is not just a hobby we practice; it is a living heritage we carry with pride and a genuine message we pass on to future generations. Preserving falconry is preserving our identity, the values of patience, courage, and respect for nature.

We at the Sharjah Falconers Club open our doors to all who share this passion, and we promise to continue providing everything we can to serve this noble sport, from training, awareness, and care... so that we may always remain guardians of this ancient heritage.

We thank you at "Al Saggar" magazine for your efforts in documenting, publishing, and honoring this legacy, and we invite everyone to become closer to this sport and enjoy its beauty.

With sincere greetings and appreciation.

Despite being tamed and trained, they remain wild and punkish at heart:

Why I Fell in Love with Falconry

Hillary A. White

As the endangered pastime is put on the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Hillary A. White explains why it's a worthwhile addition.

Hawks are not known for being reasonable when holidays must be taken. It's not like you can just ring an old school friend and leave them with a glove and some raw meat, telling them you'll be back Sunday night and to help themselves to whatever they find in the fridge..

There's a reason we falconers are light on the ground and it's probably because only a thoroughbred takes more management than a hunting hawk. Either you don't take a holiday during the hawking season (September to February), or if you do need to get away, you leave your bird with another licensed falconer. You don't have to spend all of every day with the bird, but you do sort of organise the day around them.

My sparrowhawk recently returned to the wild where she initially came from. Her name was Sarah Greene (when she arrived, there was a green theme happening and the Cork actress had just joined the cast of Penny Dreadful. I revealed this to the real Ms Greene while interviewing her and she proceeded to gush over photos of her namesake).

She was raised by hand as a chick in a process called 'imprinting' and spent her evenings on a perch in our kitchen. By day, she was out on a perch with a bath until the afternoon would come around and we would go flying.



Raptors and humans have dwelled together in domestic settings since pre-history, the earliest known evidence being engraved depictions of this partnership found in Central Asia from 5,000 years ago. Putting food on the table was the reason back then, but as falconry caught on through the centuries and steadily spread West, it came to signify prestige, skill and acumen. If you were a good falconer, you were probably a good human being because to do it right takes patience, resolve, sensitivity, craftsmanship and intuition

In fact, it wasn't long ago that keeping a hawk was commonplace. Dublin's Phoenix Park, for example, was originally established in the mid-1600s as somewhere for Dubliners to fly their hawks and run their hounds.

Funnily enough, I'm starting to wonder if there are. In this era of mindfulness and increased digital stress, falconry is an excellent way to shut out the noise of modern life and focus yourself entirely on another life form so it can flourish. Maintaining a bounteous vegetable patch probably provides a similar fix. And as society becomes more urbanised and obsessed with the latest and the shiniest, there is something very enriching about not only having a passport to nature on an intimate level, but also a connection to times past.

Falconers today might use GPS technology to find lost hawks, but the ancient fundamentals remain unchanged for me or any falconer in the 90 countries around the world where falconry is practised: a unique relationship with a bird of prey for the purpose of hunting. Yes, that's right - hunting. As Helen Macdonald put it so neatly in her Obama-approved international bestseller *H Is For Hawk*, wild hawks hunt and so does mine. It is their driving force, the one thing evolution has honed them to excel at, and it is wrong to deny them it. The difference, however, with falconry is that you can have an excellent day hawking and not catch a thing.

Falconers have been likened to frustrated birdwatchers. All we truly care about is the drama of the chase and getting a front-row seat to the same thrilling natural equation you'd watch on a David Attenborough program (British documentary maker, television presenter, and environmental writer.)

There is much more to it as well, which is why today, Ireland officially adds the art to our National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, meaning that falconry is now recognised alongside the likes of hurling, trad music and Limerick lace as being a keystone of our national identity.

I was part of a small team that advocated for the inclusion of falconry on this prestigious list. Our motivations were partly rooted in the fear that falconry, like many other green practices, struggles to compete with digital screen culture when it comes to attracting young people.

Intangible Cultural Heritage is truly a wonderful thing. UNESCO defines it as practices or skills passed down from generation to generation within communities in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history.

Nothing quite matches falconry in its description and expression. You learn it from an experienced mentor or one of your parents; it's linked to the environment you live in and involves a continuity of connection with ancient history.

For me, it always felt like the most natural inclination. I saw the picture in a bird book in my school library as a child of 10 and that was that. I didn't really know what it was, but I had to have it. It seemed the most immaculate expression of my love for birds of prey and the natural world that I could imagine. It would be another two years before my mother would knock on the door of a local falconer one school night and beg him to teach her hawk-mad son to be a falconer. It was passed on to me, and one



day it'll be my turn to do the same.

So, what is the secret to this very special relationship? It comes down to the fact that falcons and hawks are not domesticated like dogs or horses. While tamed and trained, they remain wild and punkish at heart, and it is this that I love to be around. Affection exists but, alas, it is one way. I can have a hawk for years and it can desert me any day while out flying. Once she leaves the glove, I have little control ultimately beyond the training I've given her.

That you do have, though, is trust and that is what the whole thing stands or falls on. Good falconers maintain this trust. Bad ones squander it. Nature is beautiful, but it is also unforgiving. Birds of prey in the wild run a 60pc chance of perishing in their first winter, starvation the major cause. Sometimes my hawk is successful and sometimes she isn't. Either way, she gets fed, whether from what she's caught or else from the store of frozen hawk food (chicks, quail, mice) at home. The only times we share is if she brings down a woodpigeon. In that case, the breasts go to my freezer and the rest is for her. As any fisherman or backyard horticulturalist will agree, food you have sourced yourself is unbeatable,

and pan-fried woodpigeon supplied by a hawk preening near the kitchen table tastes out of this world. In truth, mind you, it's just one of many ways flying hawks has brought nourishment to my life.

This article was first published in the Irish Independent, in English.



Covering one-third of the Earth's landmass

How do living creatures survive in the desert?

A temporary exhibition at the National Museum of Natural History in Paris highlights life in desert environments, which represent a third of our planet's landmass, as well as the risks that climate change and modern lifestyles pose to the balance of these environments and biodiversity. The exhibition tells the story of the endless strategies of wildlife in arid regions.

In the spring of 2025, the National Museum of Natural History in the French capital invited visitors on a unique journey to the heart of our planet's desert environments, from the famous Sahara to the polar deserts, including the Sonoran, Atacama, and Gobi deserts.

What these environments share are exceptional conditions that appear hostile to life. Yet, animals and plants have developed ingenious adaptation strategies that the public can discover through models of the astonishing biodiversity from different regions of the world. Deserts, contrary to popular belief, and despite the scarcity of water and food, extreme temperatures, and violent winds, are not at all devoid of life.

The exhibition also showcases the methods humans use to live in these restrictive environments, in addition to the threats they pose to these fragile environments. It's also an opportunity to discover the desert experience as a distinct field of research. Through approximately 200 specimens and models of various species, along with mechanical devices, multimedia, and large projections, the exhibition offers a scientific, engaging, and aesthetically appealing presentation of these fascinating environments.



Strategy Number One: Drinking

The primary challenge for species is finding water. While precisely defining a desert isn't easy, "the common point among these regions, whether hot or cold, is aridity," explains Anne-Camille Bouillé, the exhibition designer. To gather the scarce "blue gold" despite minimal rainfall, nature demonstrates endless creativity. "He who eats, drinks" is an initial clue: for animals, the main source of water comes from food.

However, other species have developed their own strategies: for example, the Namib Desert beetle, a species endemic to Namibia, climbs to the top of the sand dunes at the first light of day. There, it stands on its head to collect fog coming from the ocean. The droplets that form and gather on its shell then slide... directly down into its mouth!"

As for desert plants, their highly developed root systems allow them to spread vertically and horizontally. Anticipating the slightest dip, they can reach deep into the earth or cover a large perimeter. Once water is found, it must be conserved. Denis Larpin, scientific director of tropical plant collections at the National Museum of Natural History, noted during a visit to the greenhouse at the botanical garden a few weeks ago: "The hairs, spines, and protective fuzz on cacti prevent evaporation and protect them from UV rays and dry winds."



Strategy Two: Resisting Extreme Temperatures

To protect themselves from the suffocating heat in hot deserts, most animals, like the fennec fox, escape the scorching sun and hide in burrows until nightfall. Others, however, are unbothered, as their morphological adaptations allow them to endure the dizzying mercury without risk. For example, the Arabian oryx, a species of antelope, has a built-in cooling system that enables it to cool its skull. Others, thanks to their light fur or large ears, can dissipate heat and avoid sweating. In polar deserts, thick fur acts like a protective coat. And when these measures are no longer enough, social behavior takes over: to cope with temperatures as low as -40°C and fierce snowstorms, penguins huddle together."

Despite their ability to adapt, these animals are "particularly vulnerable to climate change" and are currently "at the limits of their physiological capabilities," as stated in the exhibition. Rising temperatures can be fatal for them or force them to migrate to cooler regions. This is a tragedy at a time when the Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of the planet.

Strategy Three: Detecting Predators or Prey

In these vast environments that stretch as far as the eye can see, animals are exposed to view. Should one be cautious? Show off? Or be able to scent a predator's arrival? In the white expanse of polar landscapes, the Arctic hare or the weasel, for instance, are masters of camouflage. With their immaculate white fur, they are difficult to distinguish from their surroundings.

Conversely, hunting species like the scorpion or the polar bear must be able to locate their prey. To do this, the scorpion's legs are covered with sensitive hairs, allowing it to perceive vibrations on the ground that signal a creature's arrival. The polar bear, for its part, can smell seals under two meters of ice thanks to its elongated snout, enlarged nasal cavities, and an unparalleled sense of smell.



What About Humans in All of This?

Despite the challenging environment, many humans have made deserts their home. Consequently, the population of the Central Sahara is estimated at between 9 and 10 million. On the lower floor of the museum, opposite the Arabian camel—nicknamed the "ship of the desert" for enabling human travel across the dunes—a display has been set up...

A Tuareg tent is set up, displaying drums, colorful cushions, and tea cups. Originally, these people were largely nomadic, required to erect and dismantle their dwellings as they traveled. However, this tradition is now losing its hold.

Vincent Battesti, a researcher at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and an ethno-ecologist at the National Museum of Natural History, points out that "the majority of the population today is settled, and nomadism is in decline almost everywhere."

Consequences of Modernity : Most nomadic tents are now equipped with solar panels and satellite dishes; travel by camel or dog sled is being abandoned in favor of motorized vehicles; and traditional fabrics, whose materials and thickness provide a shield against extreme heat, are being replaced by

imported clothing, which is cheaper and less suited to their environment.

With headphones on, it's finally possible to assess the disturbances caused by climate change, armed conflicts, overexploitation of water, and state pressures. Under increasing modernity, life sometimes becomes easier, or harder. Due to armed conflicts over resources, for example, those who reside in their homes and wish to live in peace can no longer do so. "People now live in terror and fear," says Assalik Ag Tita, a Tuareg refugee who now works as a teacher in the Île-de-France region.

"There used to be a lot of snow at this time of year, and as you can see, none has fallen yet [this current year 2025]," adds Ole Olsvig, 31, from the small village of Nage. "It's raining, winter is shorter, and travel is difficult due to strong winds." Today, the residents of Nage no longer live solely by hunting: "We have the internet, means of communication that didn't exist before. We look for what we need in other cities and countries. We have to adapt to modernity."

Adapted from the French newspaper Libération.

IROS 2024 Conference Fosters Collaboration Between AI Innovators and Wildlife Experts to Protect Species

Falcon Monitoring Challenge Unites Technology and Conservation

In recent years, the field of wildlife conservation has witnessed breakthroughs driven by advanced technology and artificial intelligence. From drone surveillance to camera traps and data management tools, these innovations are transforming how endangered species are monitored and protected, while prioritizing non-invasive methods.

In the wild, these advanced techniques must seamlessly integrate with traditional practices and the people who implement them, ensuring our respect for natural habitats.



It's crucial that we recognise this synergy, as a significant gap still exists between technology innovators and traditional conservationists—a gap that the "Falcon Monitoring Challenge" at the recent International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS 2024) in Abu Dhabi aimed to bridge.

Traditional conservation experts possess invaluable knowledge about ecosystems, species behavior, and the complexities of habitat management; their expertise is fundamental for developing effective conservation strategies. However, they often operate under limitations, relying on methods that can be outdated or invasive. Innovators, on the other hand, possess the tools for data collection and analysis, but frequently lack the ecological context and understanding of wildlife needs.

The Falcon Monitoring Challenge, as part of the IROS 2024 exhibition, held in October 2024 and organized by Khalifa University of Science and Technology at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Center (ADNEC), offered a unique opportunity to foster collaboration. By bringing together robotics experts, computer vision specialists, and conservation experts, the challenge encourages a dialogue that can lead to innovative solutions tailored to the needs of wildlife conservation in the UAE and the world.

Participants in the challenge designed, developed, and deployed advanced non-invasive systems to track falcon movement within large halls, promoting innovation in wildlife monitoring techniques and technology. The challenge took place in a specially designed arena at the exhibition, where the full challenge included prototyping solutions using both hardware and custom software.

Participants were also able to take part in a partial challenge, where teams or individuals proposed specialized software using cameras to monitor falcons in realistic and dynamic environments, focusing on accuracy, innovation, and the ability to analyze complex behaviors.



Leveraging Cutting-Edge Technologies

In the future, this challenge could lead to robots designed for real-time falcon tracking, helping wildlife biologists understand the birds' hunting patterns and social dynamics. This partnership can yield advanced technologies that are also compatible with the ecological realities that conservationists face every day.

A prime example of this progress is Khalifa University, which has made significant contributions to wildlife conservation through its innovative research and interdisciplinary approach. Its faculty members have actively participated in projects that leverage cutting-edge technology to monitor ecosystems and protect houbara bustard species.

By collaborating with the International Fund for Houbara Conservation, Khalifa University focuses on scientific research and training including robotics, intelligent systems, genetics, and genomics in breeding projects, and implementing practical solutions for conservation challenges.

Khalifa University's commitment to delivering world-class education and research fosters a new generation of conservationists, equipped with the necessary skills to address the complexities of wildlife conservation in a rapidly changing world.

By allowing technology developers to gain insights into the fieldwork challenges faced by conservationists, the challenge also serves as a platform for shared learning through the several workshops, seminars, exhibitions, and conferences featured at IROS 2024.

When conservationists are actively involved in the design and implementation of technological tools, they are more likely to advocate for their use and ensure that these innovations are employed ethically and responsibly.

As we face unprecedented biodiversity loss, we must harness the power of innovation and traditional methods to establish a comprehensive approach to wildlife conservation. The Falcon Monitoring Challenge at the conference was a crucial step in this direction, and it's essential that we unite these two vital forces for the conservation of wildlife.

From an article published by the UAE newspaper Gulf News, by Dr. Hamad Karki, Competitions Local Chair on the Technical Committee of the IROS 2024 Conference and Associate Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Khalifa University of Science and Technology."

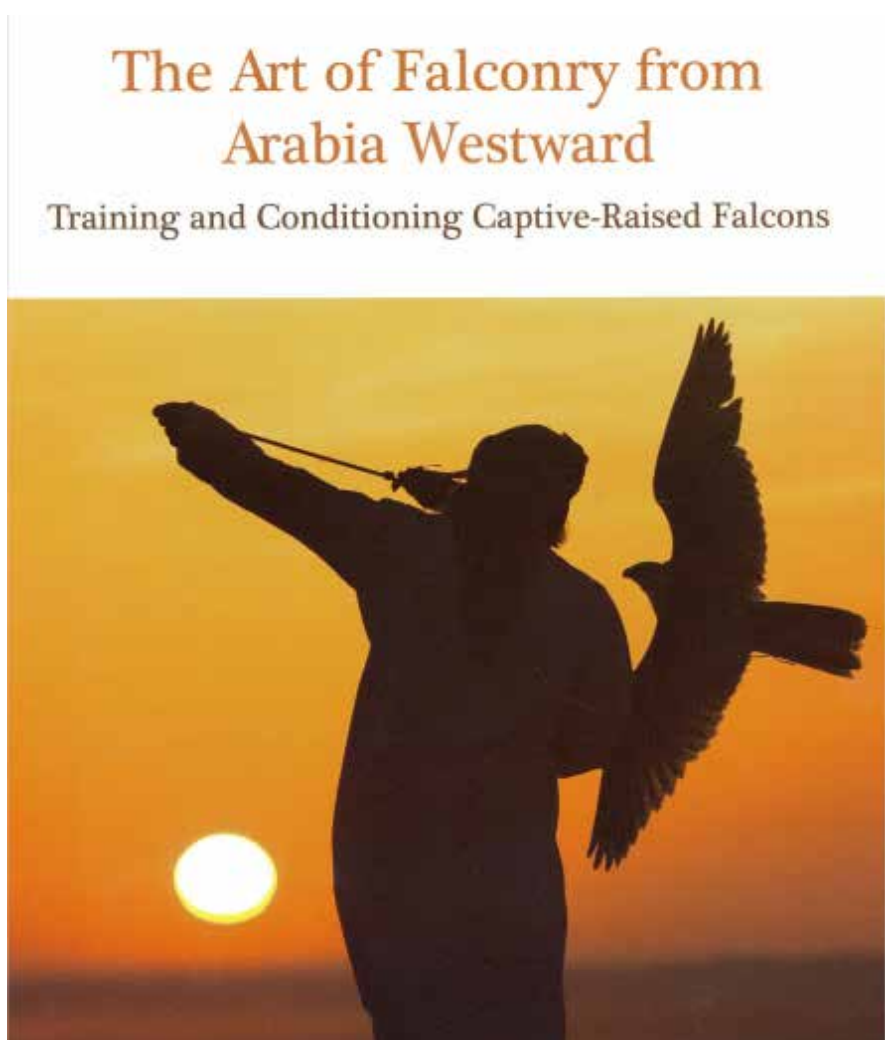
A Reference and Guide in the World of Falconry

The Art of Falconry from Arabia Westward

This book was published to commemorate the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, "the great, skilled, and persistent falconer and protector of nature," as described by the author, Ken Riddle. Riddle asserts that the falconry community owes a debt of gratitude to Sheikh Zayed for his advice and guidance to a group of traditional Arab falconers, helping them achieve international recognition in practicing this art, and for his pioneering role in establishing a new philosophy for promoting falconry and hunting in the 21st century.

The book serves as a reference and guide in the world of falconry, illustrated with images and figures. Through its twelve chapters, it offers a comprehensive overview of the sport of falconry, starting with a historical glimpse and the philosophy behind this art, advice and considerations to observe when choosing birds with explanations of their different types, the basics of training falcons, protection and taming, preparation for hunting, and the ethical standards governing falconry in the 21st century. The book also includes five appendices containing brief guidelines for a range of problems and solutions, medical procedures and techniques, a body condition index test, a training log, and a training objectives log.

In his introduction to the book, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan refers to this popular sport in the Arabian Peninsula and other parts of the world as "one of the main components that form the essential link between man and his environment within the intricate fabric of desert life. For this reason, the practice of Arab falconry differs significantly from its counterparts in other parts of the world, where it emerged as a sport for a class of notables or a means of self-defense."



He adds, "People have passed down many Arab falconry skills and techniques through generations. As a result, we have done little to disseminate this information and to record it for future generations or to share with falconers from other regions of the world. There is currently much focus on promoting education and awareness among the younger generation about our glorious heritage of falconry through the production of scientific reference materials."

Sheikh Mohamed continues, "In this book, Ken Riddle seeks to document all prevalent hunting methods of the past alongside current practices used in the Arab world for training and conditioning domesticated falcons. As a Western falconer, he is an unparalleled hunter in terms of his experience and ability to connect with Arab falconry. In fact, he spent a long time accompanying my late father Sheikh Zayed and a number of current generation falconers. This book represents an appropriate expression of his comprehensive understanding and extensive knowledge."

Ken Riddle was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, United States. He became interested in falconry in his early school years and remained passionate about falconry for approximately 60 years. He graduated from Oklahoma State University. From his profession as a veterinarian, he participated in many diverse professional activities. Ken also has experience in studying areas of Greenland, Alaska, and the Texas Gulf Coast on topics including peregrine falcon migration, bird ranges, and toxicology using radio signals. Over the past 25 years, he has specialized in avian medicine and surgery alongside falconry in the Middle East.

He is a skilled hunter and experienced falconer who has consistently succeeded in hunting ducks with falcons using thermally enhanced "air vents." He is also known for focusing on conditioning domesticated falcons through physical fitness training, enabling them to excel in hunting by performing a powerful swoop on houbara bustards from the hand.



**Tracing its History and
Contribution to the
Development of Societies**

“Falconry: Celebrating a Living Heritage”

The book “Falconry: Celebrating a Living Heritage ” is one of the most significant publications in the world of falconry in recent years, available in both English and Arabic. It is authored by Dr. Javier Ceballos, with a foreword by His Excellency Mohammed Ahmed Al Bowardi, and translated into Arabic by Mahmoud Shaabani.

The book contains 6 chapters: Origins – Man’s fascination with Birds of Prey, From Asia to the Far East – An oriental Migration, The Arab Traditions, Europe – A Hobby of Princes and Peoples, The New Worlds – The expanding frontiers of falconry, and An Ancient Legacy in a Modern World.

Dr. Javier Ceballos is recognized as one of Spain’s foremost and most renowned falconry experts. A distinguished photographer, author, lecturer, and filmmaker who has dedicated most of his life to practicing and developing the arts and skills of falconry.

His Excellency Mohammed Ahmed Al Bowardi writes in the book’s foreword: “ In the lifetime of the late Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan (God rest his soul), we have changed from the original ways of living with the desert to a modern urban oil-rich nation. Falconry has enabled us to hold onto that link, not just with the past, but with nature itself. This book tries to explain to you what falconry means to us falconers, how it builds bridges between nations, creeds and policies. How we share a common bond, both with each other and with the natural world.”

The book narrates the history of falconry and how, throughout the centuries, it has significantly contributed to the development of societies across many countries, and to the conservation of birds of prey and their quarry. The book also highlights how falconry’s contributions to environmental protection played a truly decisive role in the development of environmental sciences

and helped prevent the extinction of many threatened species. Being a falconer is considered an expression in itself of a human’s love for birds of prey, which drives a strong commitment to their conservation.

Arabs still widely practice falconry in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, and the State of Qatar. Only falcons are used for hunting in these countries, with peregrine falcons and gyrfalcons being the most common. The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) makes every effort to implement regulations to protect the state’s environment and natural resources. Awareness and training programs for falconers are also organized through the Emirates Falconers’ Club, which is an important and active member of the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey.

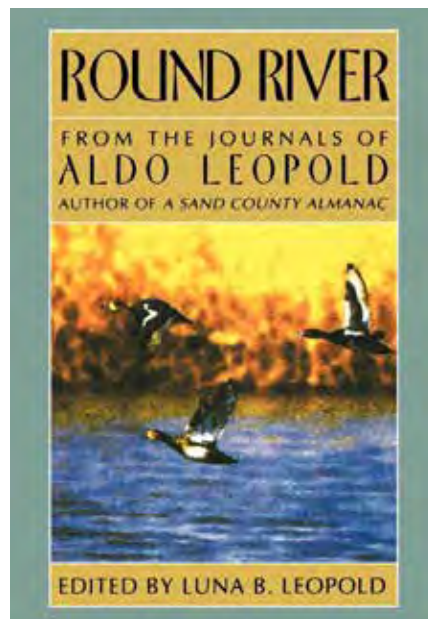


About Abu Dhabi Poetry Academy

“Poetry and Falconry Expedition”

In the introduction to the book, its author Dr. Ghassan Al Hassan notes that although the practice of hunting involves a struggle between predator and prey, between the falcon and its quarry, it appears in the poetry of Arab falconers as a noble and refined human pursuit. They were able to strip it of savage and cruel qualities and replace them with features of love, beauty, and civilized action. This was achieved by adding human bonds between its parties, tender feelings, and a delicate sense to this practice. Poetry had the most profound effect in formulating, justifying, and conveying these emotions to our souls through our hearts and feelings, which are delighted by the music of poetry and interact with the pulsations of joy and sorrow in the hearts of falconers yearning for permissible pleasure, because it is rooted in the natures and instincts of God’s creatures.

Dr. Ghassan Al-Hassan says in the book’s introduction: “Hunting poetry has become abundant in Nabati poetry, though I don’t think it’s the same in contemporary classical Arabic poetry. Over time, it has crystallized its own identity and characteristics, and poets have emerged with this tradition. Most of them belonged to nomadic areas in general, and to the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula regions in particular. In this book, we have tried to trace these poems and these poets, focusing on the UAE scene without neglecting others, using available references for these poems from collected works, as well as the Emirati Al Saggar magazine.”



Excerpts from Toby Bradshaw’s Favorite Readings on Falconry

- **From the book (Round River) by Aldo Leopold / Oxford University Press 1966:**

“The most glamorous hobby I know of today is the revival of falconry. It has a few addicts in America and perhaps a dozen in England, a minority indeed. For two and a half cents one can buy and shoot a cartridge that will kill the heron whose capture by hawking required months or years of laborious training of both the hawk and the hawker. The cartridge, as a lethal agent, is a perfect product of industrial chemistry. The hawk, as a lethal agent, is the perfect flower of that still utterly mysterious alchemy – evolution. No living man can, or possibly ever will, understand the instinct of predation that we share with our raptors. No man-made machine can, or ever will, synthesize that perfect coordination of eye, muscle, and pinion as he stoops to his kill. Moreover the hawk, at the slightest error in technique of handling, may turn it into a pet or cause it to fly away, and in all cases, falconry remains the distinguished hobby.”

▪ **From “The Immense Journey” by
Loren Eiseley / Vintage Books 1957:**

(Background: Eiseley, an American anthropologist, on an archaeological expedition, is asked to collect some wildlife specimens for the museum. He finds a hole in the roof of an abandoned cabin on the prairie and plans to collect the birds that have been using the hole.)

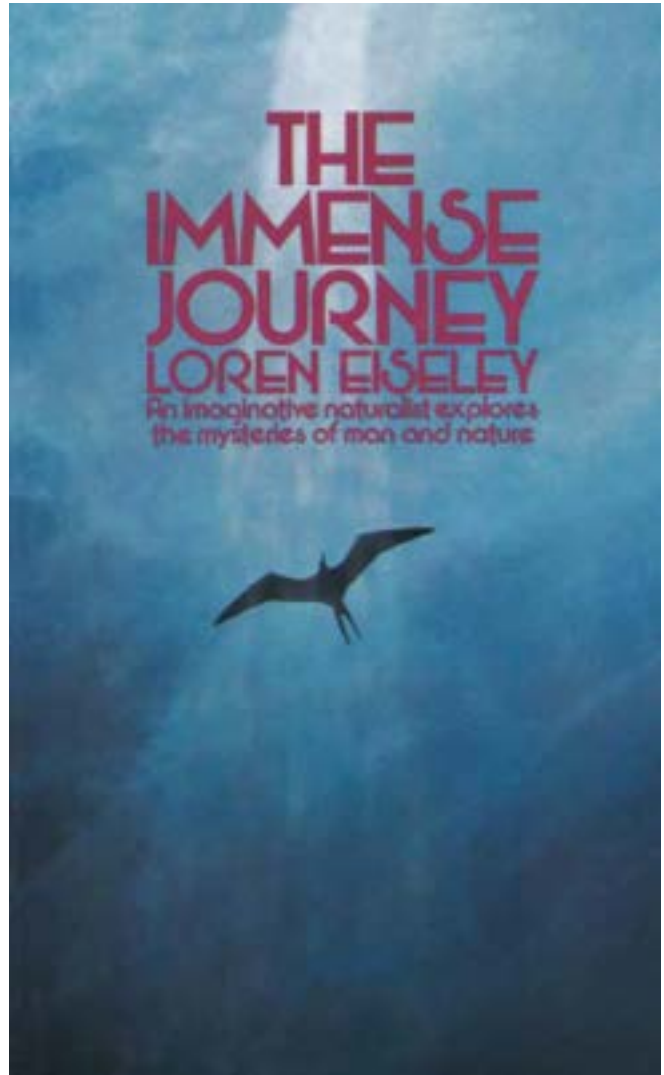
I finally managed to grasp it with both hands; it was a young sparrowhawk. I regretted not being able to catch the other falcon; this small companion saved its female by diverting my attention, and so it happened. It seemed relaxed and helpless in my hands, but it stared at me with a fierce gaze not devoid of indifference. I looked away from those eyes and held the bird's body, placing it in a small box so it couldn't harm itself if it tried to struggle. Then I went out to greet the approaching trucks.

It had been a long day, and we had to stay at the camp and spend the night there. In the morning, that bird would just be another item, returning in the truck along with other things to a small cage in the city to spend the rest of its life there.

In the morning, the sky was a deep blue, I was up early and brought the box in which the little hawk was imprisoned out onto the grass where I was building a cage. A wind as cool as a mountain spring ran over the grass and stirred my hair. It was a fine day to be alive. I looked up and all around and at the hole in the cabin roof out of which the other little hawk had fled. There was no sign of her anywhere that I could see. “Probably in the next county by now,” I thought cynically, but before beginning work I decided I'd have a look at my last night's capture.

Without anyone noticing, I looked around the camp again, opened the box, and gently took the bird out, careful not to startle it. It lay loosely in my hands, and I felt its violent heartbeats pulsing from beneath its feathers, but it merely looked past me and then upwards. I saw it take that last look far into a sky full of light, and the cold breeze stirred the small leaves again. I had to decide what to do. I placed the falcon on the grass where it remained for a long time, hopeless and motionless, its eyes constantly fixed on the blue dome above it. Then, in the blink of an eye, it vanished from my sight and headed directly into the towering, light-filled expanse that my eyes could not bear to look at. A complete silence followed; I could no longer see it, and the light was too strong. Then, a cry came from afar, breaking the silence.

I was young then and had seen little of the world, but when I heard that cry my heart turned over. It was not the cry of the hawk I had captured; for, by shifting my position against the sun, I was now seeing further up. Straight out of the sun's eye, its female, who must have been soaring restlessly for untold hours, swooped down. At that moment, I saw both of them, he was rising fast to meet her. They met in a great soaring gyre that turned to a whirling circle and a dance of wings. Once more, just once, their two voices, joined in a harsh wild medley of question and response, struck and echoed against the pinnacles of the valley. Then they were gone forever somewhere in those upper regions beyond the eyes of men.



Toby Bradshaw: Professor in the Department of Biology (Plant Laboratory) at the University of Washington in Seattle, USA. He is very interested in falconry and has practiced it for more than 25 years. He also owned a number of different types of birds of prey.



How Do We Present Our Local Heritage and Culture to Our Children and Youth?

Ahmed Fadi Shabloul – Writer from Egypt

There's no doubt we are living through pivotal moments in human history, amidst major transformations visible to all. Just about thirty years ago, no one, perhaps only specialists in technology and futurology, expected that we would enter a new era, what is called the Digital Age. Its elements are manifest in everything around us, whether at home, on the street, at school, university, in the workplace, or on mobile phones, computers, and their numerous applications, all the way to social media and other manifestations that greet us every morning.

Everything has become digital and compatible with what we call the digital revolution or the digital age. We now have what can be called a "technological wealth."

Perhaps the most frequent users and beneficiaries of this era and this technological wealth are our children and youth. They interact with the elements of the digital age with great ease, unlike older adults or the generation of parents and grandparents, whom we might see in a state of doubt, apparent disapproval, or a lack of good understanding of these manifestations and how to use them.

Hence, the digital divide emerged, a divide with many manifestations: between rich and poor, between child and adult, between rural and urban, between developing and developed countries, etc. What concerns us here, however, is the gap between children and adults, as this paper focuses on children and youth and on how they can benefit from local heritage and culture.

We can likely agree that the current generation of children and youth are the most to benefit from the technological revolution and wealth and the digital transformation in all aspects of their lives. This informational and knowledge explosion was not available to previous generations who toiled and struggled to obtain a piece of information or find an important reference in their specialized field, or even in general areas.

Now, electronic libraries are open and accessible to everyone, most of them for free, which greatly facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and information for those who desire it. Furthermore, the methods of reading on electronic devices or screens, whether mobile phone screens or desktop and laptop computer screens, vary to suit each person and the programs and applications they interact with. This is something that the generation of parents and grandparents neither master nor prefer.

As an Arab nation, we possess an ancient heritage deeply rooted in history and in the depth of human civilization. We possess culture, arts, and sciences that we are surprised to see developed countries investing in, perhaps through modern methods, and re-exporting them to us in new forms. We are impressed by them as if they were their own original ideas, but anyone who examines them closely and knows their true path and how they transitioned from East to West, from our heritage to their present, will know how rich we are in this heritage and culture. However, we need to rediscover and utilize it in new ways so that it reaches our children and youth more easily and in a way that is more in tune with the spirit of the digital age we live in. Top of Form Bottom of Form

From this heritage, for example, are the "Tales of One Thousand and One Nights," from which the author of Harry Potter benefited when discussing the idea of the philosopher's stone in her multi-part novel. This is a simple example of how European or Western literature has benefited from our Arab heritage.

Heritage and the contemporary era - as Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Musallam, Chairman of the Sharjah Institute and editor-in-chief of "Marawed" magazine, notes - constitute a complex topic, characterized by immediacy and constant renewal, due to its strong connection with cultural changes, technical and technological developments, and the dynamics brought about by globalization, which have raised many fundamental questions about the future of knowledge and the world, and about the issue of cultural privacy, overlapping identities, and other problematic topics that are renewed from time to time. This makes raising, researching, contemplating, and discussing this topic indispensable for understanding the course of successive events and developments, and for presenting logical and cognitive conceptions about the relationship between heritage and the contemporary era amidst the current data and variables that have cast their dense shadows on our modern life and the thinking of the current generation.

There is no doubt that heritage and the contemporary era are intertwined. Heritage is the extension of the predecessors in the descendants, and the continuation of the achievements of parents and grandparents in children and grandchildren, which confirms that the past can spread into the circles of the present and future.

But how do we pass on this heritage to our children and grandchildren, or our children and youth, in a way that makes them love this heritage, so they appreciate it and engage with it passionately, just as they do with attractive foreign content that is often not produced for them?

This is the difficult equation between heritage and contemporary local culture. Some production entities concerned with this matter have become active. For example, they have converted some heritage stories from "Kalilah wa Dimnah" and re-produced them digitally, as well as some stories of the prophets, such as the story of Prophet Joseph, peace be upon him.

Directors of electronic children's programs have worked to transform written material for children into vibrant, attractive, and dynamic electronic content through distributing different units on the blank electronic page into artistic panels that pulse with beauty and meaning, in a way that suits children's abilities to use their various senses, especially sight, hearing, and touch. This is done while maintaining the element of balance, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, on the electronic page, as well as preserving the element of rhythm that facilitates the child's eyes moving across different parts of the page, and the element of color that distinguishes between components, highlights elements, facilitates the perception of relationships, and contributes to attracting attention and creating excitement.

Electronic program directors have also been able to use visual effects, cinematic tricks, lighting distribution, image blending, and the use of human voices, animal sounds, bird sounds, water sounds, etc., such as the roar of a lion, the braying of a donkey, the croaking of a frog, the howling of a wolf, the gurgle of water, the rustle of wind, the chirping of a bird, and the rumble of thunder, etc.

Since "Kalilah wa Dimnah" and its tales are considered among the most famous books of Arab heritage, which both adults and children turn to for reading and enjoying its stories, wisdom, and sermons, it includes a collection of amusing stories. It was translated by Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa' from Pahlavi into Arabic during the Abbasid era, specifically in the second century AH corresponding to the eighth century CE, and he rendered it in his literary style, adapting it from the original book.

I recently watched an animated version of "The Monkey and the

Tortoise", a story from *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, on a CD. When I compared it to the original text in the book, I found both similarities and differences, as well as deletions and additions. These changes were made to suit the new medium and the technologies used in the adaptation, much like converting a novel into a film. This conversion from a printed book to an electronic format, making it accessible on digital devices, is what we call digitization, which is perfectly suited for our children and youth in the digital age.

By analogy, we can approach most heritage materials in the same way, transforming or digitizing them with a new formulation and fresh perspective that aligns with our local culture, where culture encompasses the entirety of customs, traditions, arts, literature, history, monuments, and so on.

Some argue that digital literature transcends the boundaries of our cultural practices and reading habits. It challenges us, encourages intellectual openness, and exerts influence over our understanding of what literature is. It offers a different reading experience than what we're accustomed to. New media also present a challenge because they are constantly being updated, with new updates or entirely new systems replacing previous versions. Therefore, it's essential to maintain and update published literary or cultural applications to ensure they remain usable with new media.

Thus, electronic cultural products are dynamic and in continuous development. They also represent highly sophisticated evolving technology, divided into two main categories: 1) Hardware (devices and equipment) and 2) Software (programs and materials).

Some institutions and companies have developed their capabilities to play a role in the market for this culture, while others have directly entered the field without passing through the traditional, or "paper-based," cultural phase.

In this discussion, we must caution against certain electronic games that promote fighting, violence, bloodshed, and elevate individualism and selfishness through horror and absolute power that destroys anything threatening its existence. Their impact is no less, if not greater, than that of children's magazines popular in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Superman, Tarzan, Batman, and others.

Children's culture and literature are no longer, as some might imagine, confined to anthems, songs, lyrical poems, or illustrated short stories and poetic or prose plays written specifically for children to perform on a school stage, summer camp theater, or outdoors. Nor is it limited to children's journalism, books, magazines, newspapers, or printed encyclopedias, dictionaries, and knowledge resources directed at them. It also includes various radio and television programs, cartoons in cinema, on television, or video tapes, as well as regular films, among other media. Instead, children's culture and literature have evolved through new electronic and technological means that can leverage heritage materials and present them in a fresh way with new ideas and a new mindset suitable for the children and youth of the first half of the 21st century.

We cannot overlook the role of various media in responding to our children's aspirations and their way of integrating with their new electronic games and programs.

We all know that media in the past relied on the eloquent orator and their powerful influence over the crowds they addressed, through their vocal tones, strong personality, or charisma. This applied whether the crowds were members of their own tribe or neighboring nomadic or settled tribes.

These qualities often applied to the tribe's poet, who possessed eloquence, clear expression, and influence. Thus, Arab tribes celebrated the birth of a poet who would be their spokesperson, defender, praiser of their virtues, and satirizer of their enemies or those who challenged them.

The poet was the first media professional in their tribe. It was even better if this poet was also a knight, defending their tribe with both word and sword. The most prominent example of this was Antarah ibn Shaddad, despite not being officially recognized because he was a slave. Nevertheless, his tribe, Banu Abs, resorted to him and sought his help, and his story is well-known in Arab popular heritage.

This media role remained attached to Arab poets and orators for many decades. However, with the emergence of other media like newspapers, radio, and television, and more recently electronic platforms and social media, the voice of the poet and orator began to shrink and fade. Media became a subject taught in colleges and institutes; in fact, there are now entire faculties and institutes dedicated to media. Media evolved into both an art and a science, becoming even more specialized. We've seen political media, cultural media, sports media, tourism media, religious media, and currently, electronic media. There are now specialized channels for each branch of media. We've seen dedicated cultural channels like Nile Cultural Channel, educational channels, children's channels, sports channels like Abu Dhabi Sports, religious channels, heritage channels (like Kuwait's Al-Bawadi Channel), medical channels, and even channels for cooking, food, and beverages.

Every day, we hear about the emergence of even more specialized channels. For instance, cultural channels have branched out into Nabati poetry channels, and we've seen the "Million's Poet" channel. I previously worked at the Al-Babtain Cultural Channel in Kuwait, and there was also a channel for "Al-Arabi" magazine, though I'm unsure if it ever launched.

Furthermore, anyone observing content on YouTube will find a huge number of individual channels, with almost everyone having their own media outlet. Every day, I receive requests from friends who've created their own channels, urging me to subscribe and participate by watching their content to get all their latest updates, simply by clicking the "subscribe" button and activating the notification bell. This has become quite annoying, especially when it falls outside your personal interest or your cultural or literary specialization.

Amid all these currents, or rather the torrents of media pouring down upon us from every direction, whether from satellites or the internet, and the constantly increasing digital platforms, making it difficult to enumerate them or understand their purpose, we ponder quality versus mediocrity. Who holds the power to evaluate and rectify? As soon as you express a differing or opposing opinion, respondents emerge to refute you, challenge your view, and diminish your words, as if you've made an unforgivable mistake.

Perhaps we should ask: Where is the role of the Arab child in all this clutter? Certainly, there are platforms for children, and perhaps some children even establish their own channels. However, this matter requires close monitoring to observe, understand, comprehend, and track what's happening. This is crucial so we don't leave our children to the mercy of the wind, caught in ideological and emotional currents that toss them left and right. Otherwise, their identity will be lost, their language will fade, and their personality will become indistinct. They won't know their present from their past, nor their heritage from that of others. In such a situation, it becomes easy for any person or entity to claim that our Arab heritage belongs to them. How easy that will be in a future world if we haven't armed ourselves with awareness and knowledge of our authentic past and heritage.

The "Prince of Poets," Ahmed Shawqi, intentionally resurrected ancient words in his poems that people had forgotten and rejected. He believed that revival was a means of renewal and a return of spirit; indeed, revival might be the most widespread and successful means of renewal, alongside connecting the past with the present.

We conclude with the famous saying attributed to the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God have mercy on him: "He who has no past has no present and no future."

**Welcomed over 160,000
visitors**

Dr. Margit Muller: Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital receives over 11,500 falcons annually

**Your falcon is your partner on“
the hunting trip; take care of it as
you strive for a successful hunt...
through prevention, proper care, and
”.continuous follow-up**

At the heart of Abu Dhabi stands the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital, a globally renowned veterinary institution that beautifully merges heritage and tradition with science and technology. Behind this impressive facility is a prominent figure in veterinary medicine, Dr. Margit Muller, who has dedicated her life to caring for falcons and preserving their significance in the cultural heritage of the United Arab Emirates.

In this exclusive interview, we delve into the accomplishments of the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital, the largest of its kind worldwide, and Dr. Muller's extensive experience. We will explore her vision for veterinary medicine, the intricacies of the hospital's operations, and the achievements and challenges encountered over more than a quarter-century of dedicated work. Furthermore, we will gain insights into the future prospectives for preserving this unique legacy that seamlessly blends authenticity with modernity.



**Is it possible to provide an over-
view of the beginnings of the Abu
Dhabi Falcon Hospital, the objec-
tives behind its establishment,
and why it has become a tourist
destination today in addition to its
role in treating falcons?**

- The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital (ADFH) opened on October 3, 1999, becoming the UAE's first government-owned hospital for falcons. It has since become the largest falcon hospital in the world. Its primary objectives were to provide the highest level of medical care for falcons in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, to educate and raise awareness among the falconry community about falcon diseases, and to conduct research on falcon breeding and health. Today, the ADFH continues its role as the world's largest falcon hospital, treating over 11,500 falcons annually and leading the field in falcon medicine globally. Its excellent work has earned it over 50 local and international awards. The hospital runs with a dedicated team of more than 130 employees, including professional and support staff.
- To date, more than 160,000 tourists have joined the guided tours offered by the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital. This tourism program not only showcases the rich heritage of falconry but also promotes the United Arab Emirates as the cradle of falconry worldwide. Visitors from across the globe gain valuable insights into the fascinating world of falcons and the advanced medical care they receive. In doing so, the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital fosters a deep appreciation for the art of falconry, contributing to the preservation of this ancient tradition—not only in the UAE but also in the countries of its visitors."

■ **What developments have taken place at the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital over about 25 years since its establishment? Its departments and technologies? Have there been changes in the services it offers? How has it transformed from a seasonal veterinary facility into a world-class advanced medical center?**

- The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital (ADFH) began by admitting sick falcons from the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Over the years, the hospital established a wide base of patients, clients, and visitors not only in the United Arab Emirates but also in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain, becoming a world-class and recognized medical institution since diversifying its services. In 2007, the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital opened a pet care center, an internship program, and a tourism program. The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital has become one of the most prominent tourist destinations in Abu Dhabi through its award-winning tourism program, which attracts thousands of visitors annually.
- The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital is considered an accredited national laboratory for the UAE and serves as a reference laboratory for avian influenza in cooperation with the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment. The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital also holds international ISO certification.
- The hospital also plays a vital role in educating local and international communities about falconry and falcon medicine through cooperation with schools, universities, and international organizations. The hospital's efforts in tourism and education enhance the UAE's position as a global leader in preserving and advancing the sport of falconry.



■ **What are the stages of dealing with a sick falcon, starting from the registration process until the end of its treatment journey?**

1. **Registration and Reception:**
 - Receiving the falcon and its owner at the hospital.
 - Registering the owner's and falcon's data in the system (e.g., name, falcon type, age, gender, visit date, ring number, and microchip number).
 - Providing a reference number or file card for the falcon to document its medical history.
2. **Initial Examination and Assessment:**
 - The specialized veterinarian conducts an initial clinical examination to assess the falcon's general condition.
 - Initial symptoms and observations are recorded.
 - The case is discussed with the owner, inquiring about the history of the illness or any changes in behavior or diet.
3. **Comprehensive Diagnosis:**
 - Conducting laboratory and diagnostic tests as needed, such as:
 - Blood tests
 - X-ray imaging
 - Fecal examination or several other laboratory tests the bird may require
 - Endoscopy for the lungs, proventriculus, and trachea
4. **Treatment Plan Development:**
 - After diagnosis, a detailed treatment plan is prepared, which includes:
 - The type of medication or surgical intervention, if necessary.
 - A dietary program or supportive treatments (fluids, vitamins).
 - Determining whether the case requires hospitalization or can be treated on an outpatient basis.
5. **Treatment Implementation and Follow-up:**
 - Administering prescribed treatments (injections, ointments, antibiotics, surgery if needed).
 - Monitoring the condition during the treatment period.
 - If hospitalized, comprehensive daily care is provided within the hospital facilities.
6. **Education and Guidance:**
 - Explaining the follow-up plan to the falcon's owner.
 - Providing advice on nutrition, hygiene, and disease prevention.
 - Issuing a prescription or a detailed medical report on the falcon's condition.
7. **Discharge and Periodic Follow-up:**
 - Scheduling follow-up visits or future examinations.
 - In some cases, the falcon is placed under long-term observation.
 - Issuing a health certificate if the falcon will travel or participate in competitions.

■ **How many falcons have been received by the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital to date since its establishment? How many falcons does the hospital receive annually? What is its capacity?**

- Total number of falcons treated since establishment: More than 160,000 falcons up to April 2024.
- Number of falcons received annually: Approximately 11,500 falcons.

Hospital capacity:

The hospital has a high capacity, featuring advanced facilities that include:

- Examination rooms and specialized surgical operating rooms.
- Intensive care units for critical cases.
- An ophthalmology unit for treating eye problems in falcons.
- A radiology unit for providing medical imaging services.
- Accommodation facilities that can house over 250 falcons for treatment and convalescence, and over 450 falcons for "moulting "



■ **What is the hospital's role in raising public awareness about falcon health issues and diseases? Are there differences in this regard between wild falcons and captive-bred falcons?**

The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital plays a crucial role in raising public awareness about falcon health issues and the diseases that affect them. It achieves this through a series of ongoing activities and initiatives targeting falconers, the general public, and even educational and environmental institutions.

The Hospital's Role in Public Awareness:

1. Educational and Training Programs:

- Offering training courses and workshops for falconers on falcon care, disease prevention, and handling emergencies.
- Organizing school and university visits to introduce students and visitors to falconry culture and veterinary care.

2. Media and Community Engagement:

- Publishing awareness bulletins and educational videos on common diseases such as:
 - Crop worms
 - Respiratory infections
 - Feather and beak injuries
- Participating in exhibitions like the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) to showcase modern equipment and offer consultations.

3. Regular Check-up and Prevention Services:

- Encouraging falconers to conduct regular preventive check-ups, especially during hunting seasons.
- Providing vaccinations and preventive treatments to help limit the spread of infectious diseases.

4. Contribution to Scientific Research:

- Collecting and analyzing health data of falcons over many years.
- Participating in international and local research on raptor diseases and transferring knowledge to the scientific community and falconers.



Differences Between Wild Falcons and Captive-Bred Falcons:

Comparison Aspect	Wild Falcons	Captive-Bred Falcons
Lifestyle	Live in a natural environment, facing variable conditions	Live in a relatively controlled environment
Disease Exposure	More susceptible to parasites and viruses from the environment	Exposure to diseases can be controlled through vaccination and examination
Diet	Hunt their own prey	Rely on food provided by the falconer

The outcome: The hospital plays a dual role in awareness, taking into account the differences between wild and captive-bred falcons, and directing awareness programs accordingly to ensure the highest level of care for both categories.

■ How do you view falconry and the importance of preserving it in the UAE and globally?

Falconry is one of the most significant cultural symbols in the United Arab Emirates, representing a deeply rooted element of national identity and Arab heritage. It has received considerable attention from the Emirati leadership, as being more than just a hobby, but rather a way of life that reflects the inherited relationship between humans and nature.

Perspective on Falconry and its Importance:

1. Global Human Heritage:

- UNESCO recognized falconry as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (since 2010).
- The UAE was among the pioneering countries in getting falconry added to this classification, collaborating with other nations that practice this sport.

2. Fundamental Component of Emirati Identity:

- Falconry was a means of survival in the past, then transformed into a noble sport practiced with pride.
- The state encourages teaching new generations the art of falconry through specialized schools and awareness programs.

3. Preserving Environmental Balance:

- Modern falconry in the UAE is practiced in an environmentally responsible manner, with falcons used in controlled environments and under strict regulations.
- Significant efforts are in place to protect wild prey, such as the Houbara bustard, from depletion through programs for releasing wild birds and setting hunting seasons.

4. Role of the Hospital and Relevant Institutions:

- The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital supports falconry by:
 - Maintaining the health of falcons participating in hunting.
 - Issuing necessary health certificates for travel and participation in competitions.
 - Spreading the culture of ethical falconry and modern techniques in tracking and veterinary medicine.



5. Globally:

- Falconry connects different peoples and cultures across Asia, Europe, and America.
- The UAE plays a leading role in unifying international efforts to protect falcons and regulate falconry globally through institutions like the Emirates Falconers' Club and the International Fund for Houbara Conservation.

The Importance of Preserving Falconry:

- Protecting heritage from extinction.
- Promoting environmental awareness and connection to nature.
- Supporting global cultural diversity and exchange among nations.
- Encouraging heritage tourism and cultural events.

■ What is the role of the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital in the Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program? What is the importance of the program and the successes it has achieved?

The Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program is considered one of the most prominent environmental initiatives launched by the United Arab Emirates, and the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital is one of the main pillars in implementing this program.

The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital is a key partner in preserving the environmental heritage of the UAE and actively contributes to the success of the Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Program.

The hospital is responsible for the full medical supervision of the program, rehabilitating wild falcons of both the Saker and Peregrine species.

■ **Is the hospital's role limited to falcon medicine, or does it also provide services for other birds and pets in need of care?**

The role of the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital is not limited to falcon medicine; rather, it has evolved to become a comprehensive veterinary center serving various types of birds and pets.

1. **Expansion of Hospital Services:**

- Other Birds: Since 2006, the hospital began providing veterinary care for many other bird species, such as:
 - Parrots
 - Songbirds
 - Pigeons
 - Waterfowl
 - It provides services including:
 - Routine check-ups
 - Vaccinations
 - Delicate bird surgery
 - Treatment of injuries and fractures

2. **Pets: The hospital established a specialized pet clinic that provides:**

- Vaccinations for dogs and cats
- General and advanced surgeries
- Laboratory tests
- Treatment for internal and external parasites
- Nutritional and behavioral care
- This clinic is managed by internationally certified veterinarians and receives clients daily.

■ **Does the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital contribute to scientific research on falcon medicine? Can interested doctors and professionals access educational and training opportunities there? Does it offer awareness courses for school students?**

Yes, the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital is a leading center for scientific research and veterinary education, not just a therapeutic facility. The hospital actively contributes to the development of falcon and raptor medicine and provides various educational and training opportunities for various groups.

1. **Contribution to Scientific Research:**

- The hospital conducts field and clinical research on falcon diseases, such as:
 - Respiratory diseases
 - Collard worms
 - Feather and beak injuries
 - Antibiotic resistance
- It publishes its findings in international scientific journals and participates in specialized conferences.
- It contributes to the collection of long-term data on falcon health, migration, and behavior.

2. **Educational and training opportunities for doctors and professionals:**

- The hospital offers practical training programs for veterinarians and veterinary students from around the world, including:
 - Clinical training in falcon surgery and anesthesia
 - Daily veterinary case management
 - Using modern tools and techniques in examining falcons
- The training programs collaborate with international universities, and interested parties can apply through the hospital's official website.



3. **Awareness courses for school students:**

- The hospital offers organized educational visits for school students, including:
 - Introducing them to falconry culture and Emirati heritage
 - A simplified explanation of the basics of avian medicine
 - Interactive demonstrations with falcons in a safe environment
- These programs aim to instill environmental awareness and animal welfare from an early age.

- **We hope to provide readers of “Al Saggar” magazine with a quick overview of the most important first aid treatments provided to falcons, as well as the precautions that must be taken, whether for training falcons or preparing for a hunting trip inside or outside the UAE.**

Of course, here is a brief overview directed to readers of "Al Saggar" magazine by the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital, covering the most important first aid treatments for falcons, and the most important precautions that must be taken during training or hunting:

An overview from the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital: First aid and basic precautions for falconers

First: The most important first aid treatments for falcons

In cases of injury or emergency, falconers are advised to follow the following steps until the falcon reaches veterinary care:

1. Gently and calmly stabilize the falcon to avoid causing further damage or stress.
2. Check breathing and general condition, ensuring there is no bleeding or difficulty breathing.
3. Stop bleeding, if present, using sterile gauze or a clean bandage and applying gentle pressure to the wound.
4. Do not provide food or water if the falcon is unconscious or has a gastrointestinal injury.
5. Avoid moving injured wings or attempting to realign fractures.
6. Transport the falcon in a dark, quiet box to minimize stress while on the way to the veterinarian.

Important Note: It is always preferable for the falconer to have a first aid kit specifically designed for falcons containing gauze, scissors, gloves, and disinfectant.



Second: Training and Hunting Trip Precautions (Inside or Outside the UAE)

During training:

- Ensure the falcon is in good health before beginning training.
- Use safe training tools (hood, jess, and leash.)
- Gradually adjust the level of training according to the falcon's fitness and age.
- Avoid training during times of extreme heat or strong winds.
- Monitor the falcon after each training session for any signs of fatigue or injury.

Before a hunting trip (inside or outside the UAE:)

- Ensure that an international health certificate is issued for the falcon through accredited veterinary authorities, such as the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital.
- Carry GPS tracking devices to locate the falcon in the wild.
- Carry essential medications and first aid supplies.
- Study the environment and hunting conditions at the destination to avoid environmental risks or infection.
- Commitment to local and international hunting regulations, especially regulations for the protection of wild species.





■ **The Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition, organized annually by the Emirates Falconers' Club, coincides with the start of the 2025-2026 hunting season. What advice does Dr. Margit Muller offer falconers to raise awareness of falcon diseases and prevent them, ensuring a successful falconry season?**

Dr. Margit Muller's advice to falconers: To ensure the health of the falcon and the success of the falconry season:

1. **A comprehensive examination before the start of the season.**

"The falcon must undergo a comprehensive medical examination before the start of the hunting season to ensure it is free of chronic or parasitic diseases."

- This includes:
 - Blood tests
 - Fecal examination for parasites
 - X-rays, if necessary
 - Weight and fitness assessment

2. **Vaccinations and prevention are a priority**

"Prevention is better than cure – seasonal vaccinations protect falcons from fatal diseases such as Newcastle disease and influenza."

- She also recommends the regular use of internal and external antiparasitic agents, especially before traveling.

3. **Balanced nutrition and avoiding unsafe meats**

"Poor nutrition weakens the immune system and increases the risk of infection."

- It is preferable to provide fresh and pre-frozen meat to eliminate pathogens (such as veterinary-certified quail or chicken meat).

4. **Daily hygiene and sterilization**

"Cleanliness is one of the most important elements of prevention. Tools, the cage, and water should be cleaned daily."

- Sterilize food and drinking utensils.
- Change bedding regularly.
- Wash hands before handling the falcon.

5. **Secure the falcon during transport and field trips.**

"Prepare a first aid kit, and don't forget tracking devices to avoid losing the bird."

- The kit should include gauze, disinfectant, gloves, clippers, eye drops, and antibacterial ointment.

6. **Don't ignore early symptoms.**

"Any slight change in behavior, appetite, or breathing may indicate illness and should be investigated immediately."

- Such as lethargy, feather ruffles, weight loss, or nasal discharge.

7. **Don't ignore early symptoms.**

- Obtaining an international health certificate from an accredited hospital.
- Knowing the hunting conditions and environmental regulations in the destination country.

A closing message from Dr. Margit:

"The falcon is your partner on your hunting trip. Protect it as you protect the success of your hunt... through prevention, care, and continuous monitoring."



Tips and Advice for Falcon Health..

In breeding and roosting areas, prevention is better than cure

The concept of "health maintenance" includes all measures aimed at preserving the health of the animal and its owner, as well as preventing diseases. Taking health precautions helps prevent the spread of diseases, whether contagious or non-contagious.

In both human and veterinary medicine, there is a single principle that must be adhered to, summed up in the well-known advice: "Prevention is better than cure." Therefore, health measures help ensure that humans and animals remain in good health.

As everyone knows, the basic measures for maintaining falcon health include:

1. Regular cleaning of the ground and its coverings.
2. Regular cleaning of perches, leashes, other falconry tools.
3. Providing clean and appropriate food.
4. Regular inspection of the bird's feet, droppings, and crop.

However, no matter how careful you are in providing a healthy environment for your falcons, there may be hidden dangers in their breeding area that you can't detect with the naked eye. Nevertheless, these dangers can lead to very serious consequences, including the loss of your falcons if necessary actions are delayed.

These hidden dangers have many names, which can be summarized as:

Germes -Bacteria-Fungi-Viruses



So how can you tell if your falcons have been seriously affected by these hidden killers?

The symptoms typically include:

- One of your birds isn't eating enough.
- The bird isn't flying well.
- It begins to vomit.
- It often has diarrhea.
- The diarrhea then turns bloody.
- The falcon becomes thinner.

The sick falcon is taken to the vet for treatment, but the cycle may start again.



The most common types of bacteria that cause this dangerous chain reaction are:

- Escherichia coli
- Clostridium perfringens
- Chlamydia
- Klebsiella
- Streptococcus
- Staphylococcus
- or even fungal infections such as aspergillosis.

Most of these bacteria are usually part of normal soil flora only if present in very small quantities. Once their numbers increase due to various reasons (such as the temperature of spoiled food, poor hygiene, etc.), they become health hazards that you, as a falconer, cannot detect because they are invisible to the human eye. Therefore, do not be shy to inform your veterinarian of any increase in the same or similar symptoms you may notice in your birds over a short period of time. Never be convinced by the answer that the presence of bacteria is normal and does not warrant concern. As a falconer, you are qualified to make the most accurate diagnosis possible.



What can you expect from your veterinarian to interrupt this cycle?

Contamination - Injury - Treatment - New Injury - and possibly the loss of your falcon?

The most successful solution is to survey your falcon's enclosure... Surveying the enclosure means regularly inspecting the health of your bird's environment. This involves taking samples from:

- Your falcon's room: the floor, perch, and water bowl.
- Your falcon's food: the food preparation area, the food bowl, and the animals it feeds on (quail, chickens, etc.).
- Your falcon's equipment: falconry bag, leash, gauntlet
- Your falcon's feces.

How is the enclosure inspected?

- Examinations can be conducted monthly (preferably), every three months, or every six months, depending on your needs.
- Samples are examined in specialized veterinary laboratories, such as the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital.
- Full results are available within 24-48 hours and are compiled into a survey report.
- Based on the results of the survey, after determining the level of bacterial, fungal, or other growth, the veterinarian, in close cooperation with you, develops a set of measures to ensure the elimination of the source of the disease.
- If elimination is impossible due to financial or structural constraints, etc., appropriate advice will be provided to contain and mitigate the risks.
- The report is handed over to you as the owner of the falcon.
- The more frequent and regular the surveys are, the easier it will be for the falconer to monitor the health progress of the falconry areas.

Falconry Birds: Travel-Related Diseases, Risks, and Prevention

The risk of disease in falconry birds increases dramatically while traveling and arises from three distinct but interrelated factors. In addition, the risk is heightened by the combined effects of climate change, global animal movement, and the spread of disease-carrying organisms.

The increased risk of disease arises from:

1. The stress experienced by birds when separated from their familiar surroundings and habitats.
2. Exposure to food-borne illnesses from new and unreliable food sources.
3. Exposure to other sources of infection from infected falcons or disease-carrying organisms, primarily mosquitoes.

Dr. Patrick T. Redig, professor of avian medicine and surgery and founder of the Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota School of Veterinary Medicine, notes that some of these diseases are familiar to falconers, such as aspergillosis, trichomoniasis, Newcastle disease, salmonella, clostridium difficile, and coccidiosis, but they should be more carefully considered when protecting birds during travel.

Other diseases appear intermittently under travel conditions, such as chlamydia, cryptosporidiosis, lead poisoning, and unexplained health problems. Finally, some vector-borne diseases, such as West Nile virus and other invertebrate-borne viruses, as well as malaria (from the Plasmodium group), are expanding their geographic ranges. These diseases are being exacerbated by climate change and global trade, posing a new level of risk.

Many of these health problems have limited treatability, so vaccination, prevention, biosecurity, hygiene, and health care are of paramount importance for preventing them.





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Inclusion of Falconry in School Curricula: A Key Factor for its Preservation

50 Years Since the Founding of the Spanish Falconry Association: Continuous Efforts to Preserve and Honor Heritage

José Ángel Cañadas Miguel
Board Member of AECCA, Legal Advisor

The origins of the current Spanish Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (AECCA) can be traced back to the first Spanish Falconry Association, founded on September 1, 1975, but which no longer exists today.

This pioneering organization was born with the support of the renowned naturalist and science communicator, Dr. Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente, a prominent figure in the history of Spanish environmental conservation, and Dr. Vital Aza Sánchez, also a distinguished figure known for his commitment to birds of prey. Both were declared honorary members of the association for their significant contributions to the field of falconry.

In its early years, the Spanish Falconry Association played a key role in promoting this ancient hunting practice and raising awareness about it. However, in 1989, the industry suffered a major blow when Royal Decree 1095/89 banned falconry throughout Spain. This ban left Spanish falconers without legal protection and sparked a strong reaction from the falconry community.

But instead of discouraging falconers, this event became a catalyst for organization and collective awareness in defense of falconry as a cultural and natural heritage. In response, the National Coordination of Falconry Associations was established,



with the active participation of the Spanish Falconry Association. The main goal was to unify efforts to reverse the legal situation imposed by the previous decree and to defend the right to practice this thousands-year-old traditional form of hunting.

The turning point came with the Constitutional Court Ruling No. 102/1995, dated June 26, which ruled that the Royal Decree had exceeded its authority by banning a form of hunting – falconry – which should be regulated by the autonomous regions rather than the central government. This historic ruling gave renewed hope to those advocating for the recognition and protection of falconry in Spain.

In 1994, the Spanish Union for the Defense of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (UEDECA) was born with a promising vision and an understanding of the necessity to continue the struggle for the legalization of falconry in various regions. The Union and the Spanish Association of Falconry shared many goals and philosophies and eventually merged, culminating in 2001 with the establishment of the current AECCA, which continues its mission with renewed vigor and strong commitment.

Today, as the inheritor of the passion, effort, and commitment of those pioneering associations, AECCA has become the largest and most influential falconry association





in Spain, and one of the most important globally. It enjoys a solid membership base of falconers and supporters who back its efforts. The Spanish Association is now a member of the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF), and it collaborates with the Latin American Association of Falconry and Environmental Conservation (ALCCA), expanding the scope of its influence and commitment beyond national borders.

Thanks to this network and the diligent work of its members, AECCA has become a reference point for defending and promoting falconry. The association leads legal, political, educational, and awareness efforts to protect this ancient tradition, which is considered more than just a hunting method, it is a cultural heritage passed down through generations. There is no doubt that falconry is an art that requires sensitivity, a deep understanding of the behavior of living creatures, respect for the natural environment, and unwavering dedication.

In today's increasingly complex legal environment, defending falconry poses a significant challenge. The growing bureaucracy, the proliferation of protection lists, and pressure from unfamiliar groups or those who misunderstand falconry have pushed AECCA to intensify its efforts. The gradual loss of habitats, urban expansion, and the disconnect of younger generations from nature are all factors that underscore the need for decisive action to ensure the survival and preservation of the sport of falconry.

Among its many initiatives, the Spanish Falconry Association publishes its official annual magazine, which has become the oldest specialized print publication in the world of falconry in Spain. The book/magazine, meticulously prepared, is rich in high-quality scientific, historical, and technical articles and is internationally recognized. The yearbook not only disseminates knowledge but also documents the continuous efforts of Spanish falconers and their dedication to the conservation of birds of prey.

In recent years, falconry in Spain has faced numerous legal threats, starting from its prohibition in 1989 to challenges posed by various laws, such as the animal protection, rights, and welfare laws. While these laws aim to protect animals, they often overlook the special nature and cultural dimension of falconry. AECCA has concluded that UNESCO's classification of falconry as an intangible cultural heritage is insufficient because it lacks enforceable legal protection for falconers against administrative overreach.

As a result, the Spanish Falconry Association (AECCA) has adopted a strategic priority: promoting the declaration of falconry as a cultural heritage asset at the regional level. This classification entails clear legal obligations for regions and administrations, such as effective protection, active promotion, and ensuring the transmission of this practice to future generations. Falconry has been recognized as an essential cultural heritage asset in Castilla y León, Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha, Andalusia, and Madrid, where AECCA is intensifying its efforts in the latter three regions. Work continues to ensure the recognition of falconry in other regions.



When a heritage practice is declared a key cultural element, public administrations must not only ensure its preservation but also promote its understanding and respect through educational and cultural policies. The inclusion of falconry content in school curricula, supporting workshops and exhibitions, and other awareness activities are essential to ensure its future preservation.

At the same time, the Spanish Falconry Association promotes excellence in the practice of falconry. By organizing Royal Hunting Days, the association encourages knowledge exchange among its members and reinforces the values of respect and nobility that form the core of the sport of falconry. These events revive the dignified treatment of raptors and their quarry, embodying the ethics deeply rooted in the traditions of royal court falconers during the Middle Ages.

In short, AECCA is not just fighting for the survival of the sport of falconry; it is also striving for its recognition as an art, a science, and a way of life. The association's diligent work, supported by a committed community, ensures that this cultural heritage remains alive, relevant, and continuous in today's world, without losing its essence.

"Falconry is an inherited bond, perhaps a wisely adopted necessity, between humans and birds of prey, which has evolved over thousands of years into a noble art. Ultimately, in its most beautiful human form, falconry embodies beauty and emotion."



Did you know?

Emirati Falcon Breeders Achieve Major Leaps, Numbers Increasing

Emirati and international experts attribute the success of using captive-bred falcons in falconry practice, and consequently the significant increase in the number of falcon farms worldwide and the expansion and development of its industry, primarily to Emirati efforts. These efforts were spearheaded by the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition, which launched in 2003, organized by the Emirates Falconers' Club.

The Abu Dhabi Hunting Exhibition is an important opportunity for both falconers and falcon farms. Its timing coincides with the start of the hunting season on one hand, and the launch of falconry competitions and championships on the other, at the turn of the year. Falconers seek to acquire the best captive-bred falcons to compete in local and regional events, as well as to use them for practicing falconry in permitted reserves.

Ahmed Al Ketbi, an Emirati breeder of several types of captive-bred falcons, states that "the number of Emirati falcon breeders is on the rise, and the production quantity is increasing year after year. This is due to the support of Their Highnesses the Sheikhs to preserve this important pillar of Emirati heritage, especially through the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition, which represents an important display platform for Emirati falcon breeders to promote their production of various types of captive-bred falcons."



What is CITES? And how does it provide protection for species?

CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. It is an agreement among the governments of the world, aiming to establish safeguards to ensure that international trade in these species does not threaten their life and survival.

The Convention offers varying degrees of protection for over 40,000 species of plants and animals, whether traded as live specimens or otherwise.

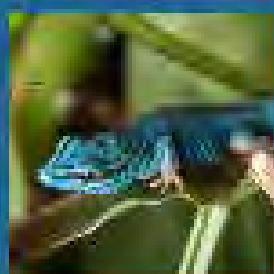
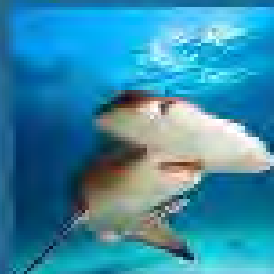
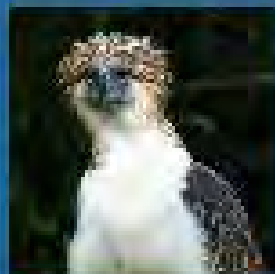
Lists of species covered by CITES have been prepared and categorized into three Appendices of the Convention, according to the degree of protection required by each species:

Appendix I: Includes rare and endangered species. Trade in these species is prohibited if the primary purpose is commercial gain.

Appendix II: Includes species that are not necessarily rare or currently endangered, but could become so. Therefore, trade in them must be restricted to avoid inappropriate use that threatens their survival.

Appendix III: Includes species that are not endangered but are protected in a specific country. Therefore, it requires the assistance of other CITES Party countries in controlling trade in these species.

To determine if the species you wish to deal with is listed in any of the three aforementioned Appendices, you can refer to the CITES website: www.cites.org. Any import, export, or re-export of any live animal or plant species listed in the Convention's Appendices requires special permits or certified certificates from CITES, which is represented in each country by a scientific authority whose mission is to provide scientific advice on the impacts of commercial activity on the status of these species.



CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



How did The Peregrine Fund contribute to the conservation of raptors?

The Peregrine Fund was founded at Cornell University in 1970 with the sole objective of restoring Peregrine Falcons in North America. The founders were five falconers who had experimented with hunting using captive-bred birds. After thousands of these falcons were bred in captivity and released in batches, the Peregrine Falcon was officially removed from the U.S. endangered species list in 1999, representing the largest and most successful effort ever in this field.

Professor Tom Cade explains that the first tasks thereafter were related to the Mauritius Kestrel in the Indian Ocean, starting in 1973. At one point in the 1970s, the numbers of this bird dwindled to only two known pairs in the wild. For over a decade, Karl Jones, a global pioneer in conservation, and the Jersey Zoo were assisted in breeding these falcons in captivity and re-releasing them into nature. Today, a few hundred of these birds have returned to nest on the island again.

In 1983, the directors of The Peregrine Fund decided to expand their efforts to include global raptor conservation by establishing a new headquarters known as the "World Center for Birds of Prey" located in Boise, Idaho, USA. Since then, research and conservation projects have been conducted on approximately 90 species of raptors in 61 countries. A brief overview of some of the most important of these species has been prepared.



Why did the Dutch School of Falconry become famous?

For centuries, the Netherlands, specifically the village of Valkenswaard, was the center of falconry in Europe. In the 17th and 18th centuries, falconry became a popular hobby among kings and nobles, practiced by every royal family. The passion for falconry led to a significant increase in demand for Peregrine Falcons.

The people of Valkenswaard, most of whom were poor, were grateful for this opportunity. They seized the moment and developed techniques for hunting migratory Peregrine Falcons. Through their connections with the Danish King, the people of Valkenswaard also obtained permission to hunt Gyrfalcons in Iceland and Scandinavia. The falconers of Valkenswaard were not only skilled hunters but also talented craftsmen in making hunting equipment such as hoods, bells, and other gear.

In addition to catching falcons and making equipment, the Valkenswaard falconers tamed and trained their birds. This combination of skills made them preferred professional falconers for royal families across Europe. This enabled them to trade trained falcons for considerable wealth and showcase the art of falconry throughout Europe.



According to Jacques van Gerven, a researcher in the history and science of falconry, two schools can be distinguished within the context of European falcon hunting traditions: the Scottish and the Dutch. The Scottish school gathers falcon chicks from their nests, while the Dutch school is known for hunting older, ready-to-hunt Peregrine Falcons. These wild-caught falcons were the preferred birds in the market. Thus, the Dutch School gained renown due to its superior techniques in catching falcons. These techniques were particularly applied in Valkenswaard and its surrounding areas, where the largest number of falcons are caught during autumn.



Medieval Manuscripts on Falconry: Hidden Treasures

For the entirety of the Middle Ages (500-1500 AD), there are currently 480 manuscripts available in Latin or vernacular languages containing treatises on falconry and hunting. This represents a significant body of written heritage reflecting the social and cultural importance of this practice in medieval societies. Among these manuscripts, it is known that at least 33 are held in private collections. Undoubtedly, these manuscripts represent hidden treasures, as they are not listed or identified in printed catalogs and are inaccessible through public institutions.

Baudouin van den Abeele, a researcher at the University of Leuven from the National Fund for Scientific Research in Belgium, cites examples of manuscripts found in private collections: one manuscript includes the Latin translation of two Arabic treatises on falconry; a number of the 21 French manuscripts preserved in private collections, some of which are richly illustrated; and a few treatises written in Spanish, Catalan, Italian, and English.

Falconry books have always captivated avid readers, including hunters themselves. These manuscripts boast quality in design, materials used, and illustrations, making them refined and appealing in their themes and drawings.



Frederick II, Emperor of Falcons

Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250) was one of the most remarkable rulers of the early Middle Ages, and there was a reason for his contemporaries to call him the "Wonder of the World." He was not only a successful statesman but also one of the scholars of his time. His heart was attached to falconry, and he wrote a comprehensive summary of this sport for the benefit of falconers, which is still used today: "The Art of Falconry."

In this literary work, Frederick II set new standards: integrating accumulated knowledge from both East and West. What is not easily credible in that era is his questioning of ruling figures, including, for example, the followers of Aristotle. Among the works that still hold great importance for scientific research today is the principle that uses experimentation and testing as a criterion for everything. He observed, contemplated, and verified all phenomena to achieve his goal of presenting things as they truly are.

In this way, Frederick II became one of the founders of modern natural sciences. His works became the foundation of modern falconry and can be regarded as a symbol for international falconry festivals, which bring together professional falconers and scientists from all over the world.

Over 1800 Families Practice Falconry in Pakistan



Pakistan has a rich history of falconry, a family heritage passed down through generations, with over 1800 families currently practicing this ancient tradition in Pakistan. This art has been preserved and practiced across generations as a traditional family legacy inherited from ancestors.

Falconry is practiced in rural areas and is limited to members of the local community, who live with their birds and dedicate their lives to falconry in winter, when their birds do not leave their hands from sunrise to sunset.

Falconers cooperate in practicing this art, sharing experiences and training their birds together. Goshawks are trained in the old style by keeping them alert, carrying them in crowded markets, and introducing them to the hunting dogs that accompany them. The taming process is completed within two to three weeks.

Kamran Khan Yousafzai, an expert in falconry, states: "Bells are attached to the legs and a bell to the neck with a strap suspended across the chest (to help the bird balance when launching). The falconer holds his bird in his right hand using a two-fingered glove. Birds are launched through the hunting dogs, and the goshawk is released to give the bird momentum for chasing prey in the air with direct flight or a pursuit flight. Smooth movement is used with rabbits and other wild quarry."

Falconry trips are arranged during their season, and falconers call upon each other to go out on hunting days. It is always beneficial to go together to pristine rural areas with a healthy environment to listen carefully to bird sounds. The hunting process begins as soon as prey is found, and the birds are released.

To Separate the Wheat from the Chaff

What do falconers need to know about veterinary examination before buying falcons?



Falconers in Middle Eastern countries use falcons caught during their migrations. The development in captive breeding of birds since the 1980s has led to the establishment of major falcon breeding projects, starting in North America and Europe, and later in the Middle East. These projects have become sources for providing captive-bred falcons to the falconry market in the region.

In August and September of each year, young captive-bred birds are shipped from breeding and rearing project sites in North America and Europe to the Middle East, where they enter the falconry market. The journey each bird undertakes to reach its buyer involves a number of stress factors that can accelerate the onset of illness in the bird.

According to the well-known expert Tom Bailey, from the international wildlife consultants group "Carmarthen Wales," these stresses generally fall into three categories:

1. Psychological transition from an untrained bird placed in an aviary with other falcons being prepared and shipped to the Middle East, where falconry training begins.
2. Environmental transition from the cold climates of North America or Europe to high levels of heat, humidity, and dust in the Middle East.
3. Exposure to new disease factors.

As a result, falcon buyers pay great attention to ensuring that the bird they purchase is in good health, and most falconers take the birds they intend to buy to a veterinarian for a pre-purchase examination. If the veterinarian discovers that the bird has a serious health problem, the purchase will not proceed. Therefore, the primary task of avian veterinarians working in a number of large falcon hospitals throughout the region is to conduct pre-purchase examinations on falcons during the period from August to October.

It is Worth the Effort

What is the role of veterinarians in falcon breeding programs?



Roughly between 1960 and 1970, the first individual efforts to breed falcons and other raptors in captivity began, whether for falconry purposes or for biodiversity conservation. These initial projects paved the way for the establishment of raptor breeding programs worldwide, and today, most falcons available to falconers come from breeding projects.

Large-scale falcon breeding is a costly endeavor. Given the specific nature of the raptors being bred (a single short breeding season each year, their endangered status, characteristics, etc.), veterinary interventions in these breeding programs help breeding specialists hatch falcons that are psychologically and physically healthy.

The primary task of the responsible veterinarian should be to manage the bird collection as a single flock. This includes facility design, bird selection, preventative medicine, nutrition, incubation supervision, database maintenance, forensic medicine, and biosecurity programs.

Marino Garcia-Montijano, from Altay Hospital for Raptors in Madrid, states that observing birds individually provides many clues about the health status of the entire flock, such as determining reproductive status and maintaining distinguished birds in this field for future breeding purposes. Because many falcons are highly valuable (economically or genetically), it is essential to provide them with cost-effective veterinary care. By providing good veterinary care for our falcons, we can improve productivity in breeding projects and hatch healthier birds.



**A legacy we take pride in, and a
mission we carry forward**

A new journey in the world of falconry

Between heritage and achievement

Omar Fouad Ahmad

Projects Directors at Emirates Falconers' Club

Editor-in-Chief of «Al Saggar» Magazine



Following the positive feedback and impressions we received about the last issue, which was distinguished and rich, and having been honored by its signing by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region, Chairman of the Emirates Falconers' Club, we are pleased to present to you a new edition of "Al Saggar," the pioneering magazine that keeps pace with your passion for the sport of fathers and grandfathers, documenting a deep-rooted heritage that continues to thrive in the hearts of falconers in the Emirates and around the world.

"Al Saggar" magazine is not just a periodic printed publication, but rather a mirror that reflects the pulse of falconry, and a link between the past and the present. We seek through its pages to document experiences, publish knowledge, and celebrate achievements, to be a platform that elevates the status of falconry as an art and culture, and enhances awareness of its importance in its environmental and humanitarian context.

As we take pleasure in presenting this issue, we renew our pride in continuing the message instilled in us by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, in preserving the authentic heritage of falconry, and upholding the values that have shaped the Emirati human identity and its deep connection with nature throughout history.

In this context, the Emirates Falconers' Club continues its pioneering role as a nurturing ground for this heritage, and as a gathering point for falconers from all over the world, reinforcing the UAE's position as a global capital for falconry. Over 24 years, the Club has proven that it is a living extension of Sheikh Zayed's approach, and a sincere expression of the UAE's commitment to its heritage and environmental responsibility.

A rich new issue comes from you and for you, loaded with ideas, research, and studies that reflect your interests. We take you on an exciting journey through diverse sections that highlight the latest in falconry, locally, regionally, and internationally, while showcasing the most prominent events and championships that celebrate this ancient art.

For enthusiasts of scientific research, documentation, and photography, you will find unique insights and stunning visuals across diverse sections that captivate the mind and heart, revealing the beauty of the human-nature connection in hunting journeys.

Together, we will explore the history of this ancient hobby and its latest developments across all continents, including falcon training methods, the most important species, their prey, and the success of projects enhancing their reproduction in their natural habitats and captive breeding programs. We also share fascinating stories and experiences from the heart of the falconry world and highlight efforts to preserve this precious heritage in the modern era.

The special issue comprises 232 pages and includes 32 diverse and engaging chapters, featuring over 100 heritage and scientific articles on the affairs and developments of falconry in various countries around the world, discussions and translations from several languages, research and conservation efforts for species and environmental protection both inside and outside the UAE, and modern cultural, literary, and scientific developments.

As part of its efforts to foster national identity, appreciation of nature, and sustainable hunting, the Emirates Falconers' Club is preparing to publish children's materials, including a supplement titled "In the Footsteps of a Falconer." This initiative serves as an effective tool to teach young falconers the authentic values and traditions associated with the sport of falconry. It also promotes intergenerational communication, strengthens family bonds, and nurtures a culture of reading, as both adults and children engage with the magazine and discuss its rich content.

Within its mission to support education, link life skills with cultural heritage, and encourage creativity, participation, and the exchange of ideas and information, Al Saggar magazine is pleased to invite contributions from young falconers. Submissions may include short stories, anecdotes, drawings, photographs with their falcons, impressions, and more. Selected entries will be published in the upcoming issue, fostering self-confidence and motivating them to continue pursuing this cherished tradition.

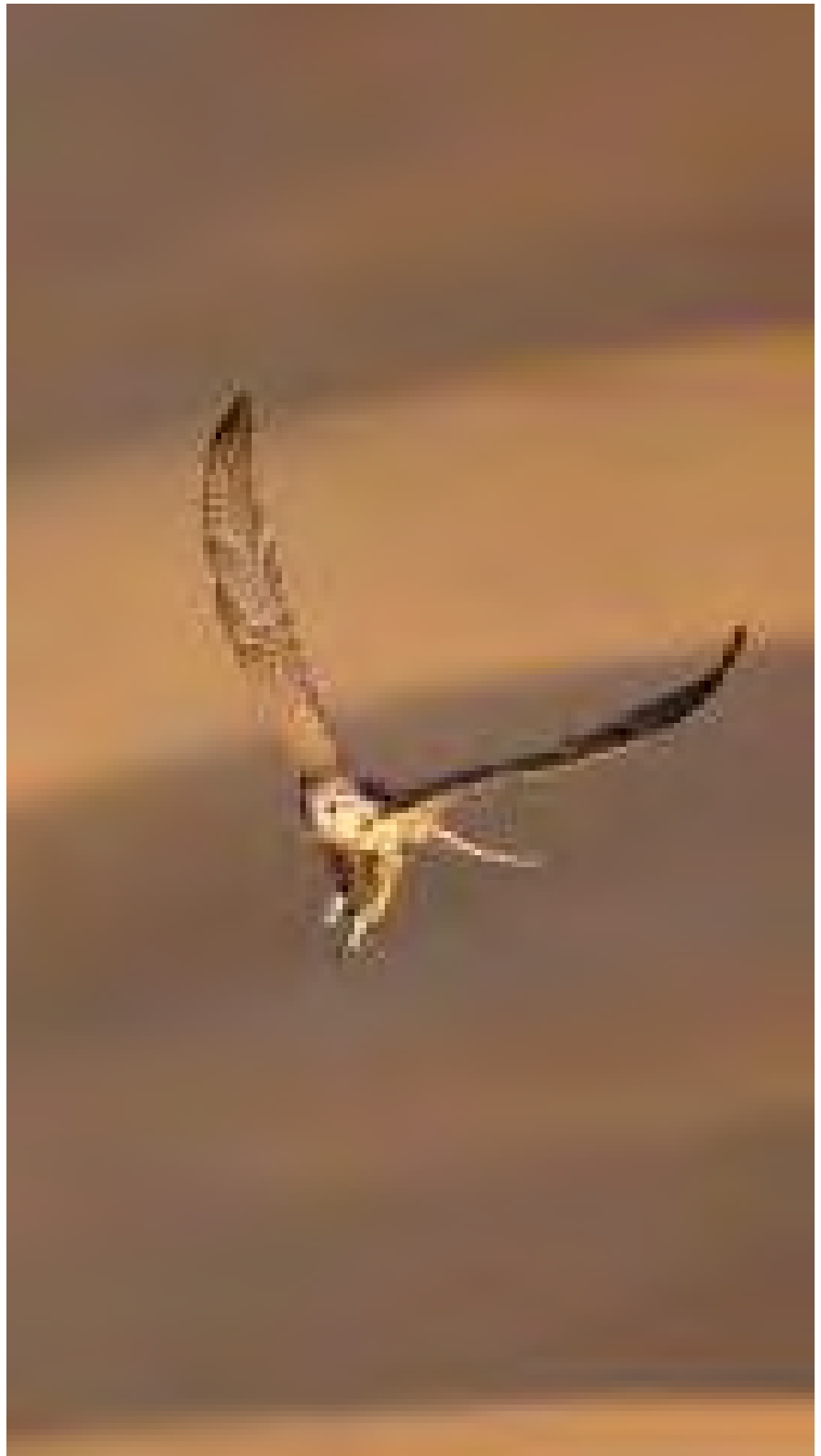
In conclusion, we extend our thanks and appreciation to everyone who contributed to enriching its content; from editors, researchers, and writers, to falconers, experts, and decision-makers. We affirm that the legacy and vision of Sheikh Zayed are deeply rooted in our hearts, inspiring us with enthusiasm, determination, and wisdom to continue the journey of achievements. We renew our pledge of preserving a heritage that we are proud of among nations, with our sights set on the importance of passing it on to future generations.

We also reaffirm our commitment in “Al Saggar” magazine to be your trusted source of knowledge and a mirror reflecting the state and sciences of falconry from the Emirates to the world, with sincerity to heritage, and a dedication to renewal and knowledge

We hope that the magazine has enriched your knowledge, increased your passion for this noble art, and contributed to enhancing the status of falconry and falconers in our esteemed Arab and humanistic culture.

We wish you an enjoyable and inspiring read with these magnificent birds and this noble art.

Until we meet in another issue, we bid you farewell, and we are confident that falcons and their quarry will remain a symbol of authenticity and sustainability.





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