



## International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey

# UNESCO RECOGNISES FALCONRY

The I.A.F. currently has 70 associations from 50 countries worldwide totalling 30,500 members.

*Contacts in International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey*

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The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) is delighted to announce that Falconry, an ancient hunting art that has captured the imagination of mankind for over 4000 years, has been placed by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity at a ceremony in Nairobi today 16<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

Falconry is the art of hunting with trained birds of prey, a tradition that has appeared in a host of historical settings from the royal courts of Asia to Medieval Europe and on into the New World.

In recent times, falconers have played a vital role in the conservation of wild raptors and their prey species, while passing this heritage on to subsequent generations and instilling an appreciation of wildlife and tradition in their children. This recognition by UNESCO is of major importance to anyone with an interest in heritage or conservation; two areas under threat and ones we feel are valued highly by your readership and editorial team. Therefore we would ask you consider this UNESCO announcement for content in a forthcoming edition of your paper.

Falconry and bird of prey-related stories are eye catching in any publication; even people with little interest in animals are captivated by the noble beauty of eagles, hawks and falcons. We offer some hi-resolution images of such birds for use with any coverage you could provide for this recent UNESCO announcement. For further information, I refer you to the attached press release. If I can be of any help whatsoever, do not hesitate to contact me on +353 87 133 0922



The inscription of Mongolian Falconry onto UNESCO's list ensures the continuance of the way of life of the Kazakh falconers of the Bayan Ulgii region of Mongolia .



Yours sincerely,  
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## United Nations declare ancient hunting as global cultural heritage “FALCONRY is a Living Human Heritage”

Today in Nairobi, Kenya, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage added Falconry, a traditional hunting method, to its List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since before the time of the pyramids, over 4000 years, falconry as a hunting method has retained an unbroken thread of tradition. Fathers have been passing down skills to their children for nearly 200 generations in a chain of intangible heritage, bringing this art to us, the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Today's modern lifestyle and rapid urbanisation have restricted opportunities to practise falconry. This has been leading to a dangerous decline in many countries. Migration from countryside to towns is a major threat to rural-based traditions and UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage lists ensure signatory governments protect traditions such as: traditional skills, knowledge and rituals, handicrafts, song, dance, art and poetry or practices related to nature. "Traditional Falconry is exceptional in that it fulfils all of these," said Frank Bond, President of the International Association for Falconry.

This is the largest ever nomination in the history of the UNESCO convention and was presented by eleven nations: Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. The Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage took the lead in co-ordinating this massive submission and UNESCO officials wrote during the inscription process that "...this is an outstanding example of cooperation between nations".

From its ancient beginnings in the Middle East falconry is now practised on all continents and has given the entire world so much. Bond pointed out, "There are a thousand falconry words in common language, some common to many languages. For example: even the universal term 'gentleman' is derived from falconry vernacular implying a man who could fly a female peregrine, the 'falcon gentile'; falconers gave the world the first scientific book on nature '*De arte venandi cum avibus*'; wars have even been avoided and stopped by diplomatic gifts of falcons." Mme. Veronique Blontrock from Belgium noted that: "In Belgium today children use a book on falconry to learn to read Flemish." Dr. Bohumil Straka of the Czech Republic said: "Flights out of major airports are protected by falconers who prevent bird strikes and save human lives.

The UNESCO submission stated "Falconry is one of the oldest relationships between man and bird, dating back more than 4000 years. Falconry is a traditional activity using trained birds of prey to take quarry in its natural state and habitat. It is a natural activity because the falcon and her prey have evolved together over millions of years; their interaction is an age-old drama. The falcon is adapted to hunt the prey, and the prey has evolved many ways to escape from the falcon. This leads to a fascinating insight into the way nature works and poses an intellectual challenge to the falconer in his understanding of behaviour. His task is to bring the actors together on nature's stage. To do this the falconer must develop a strong relationship and synergy with his bird."

Falconry is considered a low-impact activity; falconers understand that their hawks and quarry species must be preserved and have been practicing 'sustainable use' for centuries. His late Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan said, "It is not what you catch that is important; it is what you leave behind". Professor Tom Cade of the Peregrine Fund pointed out: "Falconers have been instrumental in the worldwide recovery of the endangered peregrine falcon and are involved in many conservation projects."

Falconers share universal principles. The same methods of training and caring for birds, the equipment used and the bonding between man and the bird are found throughout the world. It is these common shared traditions and knowledge that make falconry universal and keep it alive, even though these traditions may differ from country to country. "This recognition by UNESCO means a great deal to the preservation of a traditional way of life in many countries," said Frank Bond.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Marco Polo at the court of Khublai Khan (a grandson of Ghengis), described an assembly of 10,000 falconers. To celebrate this exceptional achievement 10,000 falconers from around the world are expected to assemble again, this time in Abu Dhabi in December 2011. See [www.falconryfestival.com](http://www.falconryfestival.com).

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## SOME USEFUL LINKS

Website: [www.iaf.org](http://www.iaf.org)

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For more information on **UNESCO** see [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

To see a full copy of the actual **submission** documents, submission photographs and video go to [www.unesco.org/culture/ich/print.php?lg=ar&pg=00335#top](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/print.php?lg=ar&pg=00335#top) (document 6.45 foot of page)

For **international falconry** today and the history of world falconry see [www.iaf.org](http://www.iaf.org) also for some ideas on **photographs** available on request

For information on **conservation** and the **Peregrine Fund** see [www.peregrinefund.org](http://www.peregrinefund.org)

For **Marco Polo** and **Khublai Khan** [www.eaglehunter.co.uk/Vadim\\_Gallery/VG\\_19\\_Kublai\\_Khan](http://www.eaglehunter.co.uk/Vadim_Gallery/VG_19_Kublai_Khan)

For some **information** on falconry in the submitting countries<sup>1</sup>:

- **Belgium** [www.associationdesfauconniersbelges.be](http://www.associationdesfauconniersbelges.be) (official comprehensive site)
- **Czech Rep.** [www.sokolnictvi.net](http://www.sokolnictvi.net) (official comprehensive site)
- **France** [www.anfa.net](http://www.anfa.net) (official comprehensive site)
- **Korea** [www.falconry.kr](http://www.falconry.kr) (site with articles)
- **Mongolia** [www.eurasianet.org/node/61713](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61713) (article)
- **Morocco** [www.eljadida.ma/.../la-fauconnerie-au--maroc--plus-qu-une-tradition--un-patrimoine-a-preserver--a1577.htm](http://www.eljadida.ma/.../la-fauconnerie-au--maroc--plus-qu-une-tradition--un-patrimoine-a-preserver--a1577.htm) (article)
- **Qatar** [www.qmsf.com/falcon/wind2.html](http://www.qmsf.com/falcon/wind2.html) (site with articles)
- **Saudi Arabia** [www.ada.gov.sa/Eng/Sports/Left/Traditiona/Falconry.doc\\_cvt.htm](http://www.ada.gov.sa/Eng/Sports/Left/Traditiona/Falconry.doc_cvt.htm) (article)
- **Spain** [www.aecca.org](http://www.aecca.org) (official comprehensive site)
- **Syria** [www.openwriting.com/archives/2008/05/falconry\\_with\\_s.php](http://www.openwriting.com/archives/2008/05/falconry_with_s.php) (article)
- **United Arab Emirates** [www.uaeinteract.com/falconry/](http://www.uaeinteract.com/falconry/) (official comprehensive site) and [www.thenational.ae/guide/historical/flora-and-fauna/falcons/unesco-weighs-protecting-falconry](http://www.thenational.ae/guide/historical/flora-and-fauna/falcons/unesco-weighs-protecting-falconry) (article)

Other useful websites;

- North American Falconers' Association: [www.n-a-f-a.org](http://www.n-a-f-a.org)
- United Kingdom: [www.britishfalconersclub.co.uk](http://www.britishfalconersclub.co.uk)
- Germany: [www.falkenorden.de](http://www.falkenorden.de)

<sup>1</sup>Where official websites do not exist a link has been provided to the best of the other sites available.

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