



# Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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## 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC1)

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### Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP)

*Report from the CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the conservation of migratory birds of prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU)*

1. In November 2014, CMS COP11 adopted [CMS Resolution 11.18](#) on the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) along with the [SakerGAP](#) itself. CMS Parties also congratulated the Saker Falcon Task Force (STF) on its work during the three-year negotiation process, especially on the transparent consensus-building approach that had been employed, and decided that the STF should continue, under the auspices of the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU, with a revised remit to:

- Actively promote the implementation of the SakerGAP, including by continuing to facilitate engagement, communication, cooperation and collaboration between the stakeholders;
- Further develop, refine and implement an adaptive management and monitoring framework to improve the present conservation status of the Saker Falcon through, inter alia, regulated and sustainable use; and,
- Keep under review the option to down-list the species (in the CMS Appendices).

2. Subsequently, the SakerGAP was endorsed by Signatories to Memorandum of Understanding on the conservation of migratory birds of prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU) at the Second Meeting of Signatories (MoS2), held in October 2015. The SakerGAP has now been translated into both Arabic and Russian and published on the Raptors MoU website.

3. The overall goal of the SakerGAP is ‘to re-establish a healthy and self-sustaining wild Saker Falcon population throughout its range, and to ensure that any use is sustainable’. It is envisaged that the SakerGAP be implemented over a 10-year period (2015 – 2024), incorporating regular reports to the CMS Conferences of Parties (COPs) scheduled to be held in 2017, 2020, 2023 and 2026.

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4. No specific funds were made available by CMS Parties in 2015 to drive forward implementation of the SakerGAP so only modest progress could be achieved. However, significant financial support was received from the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) to support the first Flagship Project identified in the SakerGAP which enabled excellent progress to be made to develop and launch an Online Information Portal.

5. At MoS2 of the Raptors MoU, it was announced that Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), would continue their generous sponsorship of the CMS Office – Abu Dhabi, including the Coordinating Unit, for a further four years commencing 1 January 2016. In light of this, the Coordinating Unit is poised to recruit a full-time consultant Coordinator dedicated to driving forward implementation of the SakerGAP over the next two years.

6. The four Flagship Proposals described in the SakerGAP will provide strategic guidance, underpinned by a coordination structure led by the Saker Falcon Task Force and including plans to establish four Regional Implementation Groups (Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East and North Africa) to ensure coverage throughout the whole range of the species.

7. The Flagship Proposals are:

**Create 1 Saker Falcon Online Information Portal engaging 10 falcon hospitals, falconers and trappers within a Saker Falcon Network:** This multilingual portal aims to build trust and to raise awareness by linking falconers, trappers, falcon hospitals, conservationist and researchers within a network to exchange information that should enable estimation of sustainable harvest levels for Saker Falcon populations, and also encourage husbandry best practice. In late 2014, the Coordinating Unit let a project with the IUCN European Sustainable Use Group (ESUG), funded primarily by a generous contribution from IAF, which is a Co-operating Partner to the Raptors MoU. A project Steering Group meeting was hosted by the Coordinating Unit in Abu Dhabi, UAE in March 2015, and the Saker Online Portal was released live on the web in April 2015 in five languages: Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Russian and English. An initial survey of visitors to the site confirmed the practicality of engaging falconers and trappers through the internet, and also that they already mark trained Sakers widely with the aid of veterinarians, who are prepared to help use this for conservation purposes so that a semi-voluntary system could monitor populations, harvest levels and trade. A report of Phase I of this project has been drafted and will be published soon.

**Deploy 100 satellite tags on Saker Falcon:** The primary aim is to reveal the potential impact of the threats, including their spatial distribution, posed on adult Saker Falcons in their breeding habitat by collecting information about the daily movements of individual falcons. The secondary aim is to identify the risks faced by adult and juvenile Saker Falcons on migration and in their wintering areas. A number of tags were deployed in 2015 and more are planned to be fitted this year.

**Erect 1,000 artificial nest platforms for Saker Falcons:** The aim is to increase the breeding population and productivity of the Saker Falcon in areas where a shortage of optimal nest sites is limiting the size of the breeding population. A groundbreaking project led by International Wildlife Consultants UK Ltd has already created a managed breeding population in Mongolia occupying artificial nests, which produced in the region of 2,500 fledgling Saker Falcons in 2014. There are plans to extend this proven approach into other areas, particularly steppe habitats in Kazakhstan.

**Install or retro-fit 1,000,000 new or existing ‘Bird-safe’ electricity poles:** One of the main threats to the Saker Falcon is the electrocution on medium-voltage electricity poles, which occurs across the full extent of its range and also affects other threatened birds, including populations of other birds of prey. The objectives of Phase I are to a) identify priority areas for action; b) ensure that new and fully reconstructed electric line sections are safe for birds in target areas from 2017 onwards; and c) ensure that existing ‘killer’ poles (e.g. switch, strain and transformer poles) are modified to be bird-safe and their number gradually reduced by 20% by 2024. In December 2014, the Coordinating Unit contributed to a meeting of representatives from all the power distribution companies in Mongolia to raise awareness of the risks posed to birds by power lines. MME (BirdLife Hungary) are planning to host an international conference on the threat posed to birds by power grids to be held in Hungary in November 2016.

8. Once the consultant SakerGAP Coordinator has been recruited, it is intended that members of the Saker Falcon Task Force will be invited to meet via teleconference, probably in May 2016, to plan the way ahead.