

FALCONRY, THE PAST & CONSERVATION

Falconers have always been conservationists, protecting the species they fly and the quarry they hunt. Many have been environmentalists well ahead of their time.

In 1228 Frederic II, Holy Roman Emperor's passion for falconry became part of a project on ornithology and he wrote a book *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*. He answered many ornithological questions and implemented a systematic approach to natural sciences based on actual experiment. His achievements were great and they exercised a lasting influence on science and conservation.



Falconry was responsible for the earliest legislation protecting raptors; there are references in the ninth century Irish Brehon Laws detailing penalties appropriate for nest-robbing. In Poland from the XIIth Century, it was forbidden to cut down trees with peregrine nests, the chicks belonged to the king and the villagers were obliged to protect them. The XIVth century Eleanor d'Arborea, Queen of Sardinia was so protective of hawks and falcons that, a species was named in her honour *Falco eleanorae*, Eleanor's falcon.



The first recorded ringing and releasing of birds to gather information on their movements was by the Loo Hawking Club in Holland in the early 1800s. Herons that they caught were released with engraved silver bands. Information on recaptures was recorded.

After the worldwide decline in Peregrine Falcon populations of the 1950s and '60s, concerned falconers believed that breeding falcons in captivity would be the best way to keep the species alive.

Ornithology professor Tom Cade (a falconer of some renown) founded The Peregrine Fund at Cornell University in 1970 to breed falcons in captivity and release them to the wild.



From 1974 to 1997 The Peregrine Fund bred and released more than 4,000 falcons and restored the peregrine populations in North America to optimum numbers.



FALCONRY, THE PRESENT & CONSERVATION

Since 1970 the Peregrine Fund, the biggest falconer led organization in the world, has hatched and raised 20 species of rare birds and pioneered propagation and releasing techniques for numerous species.

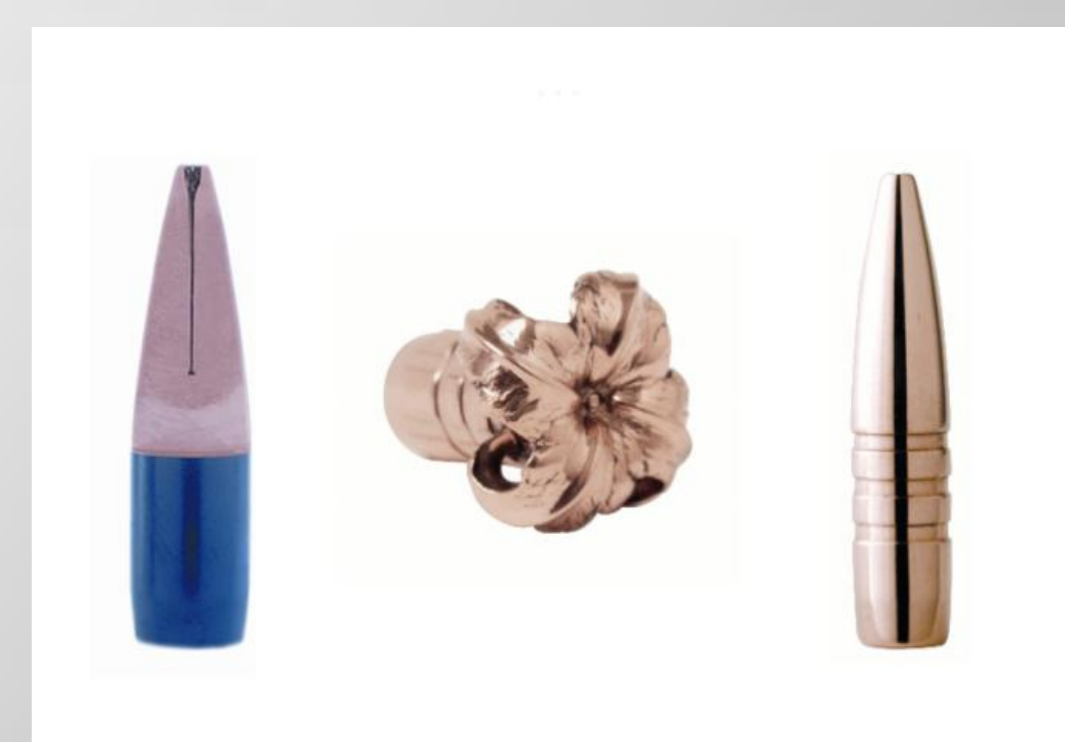
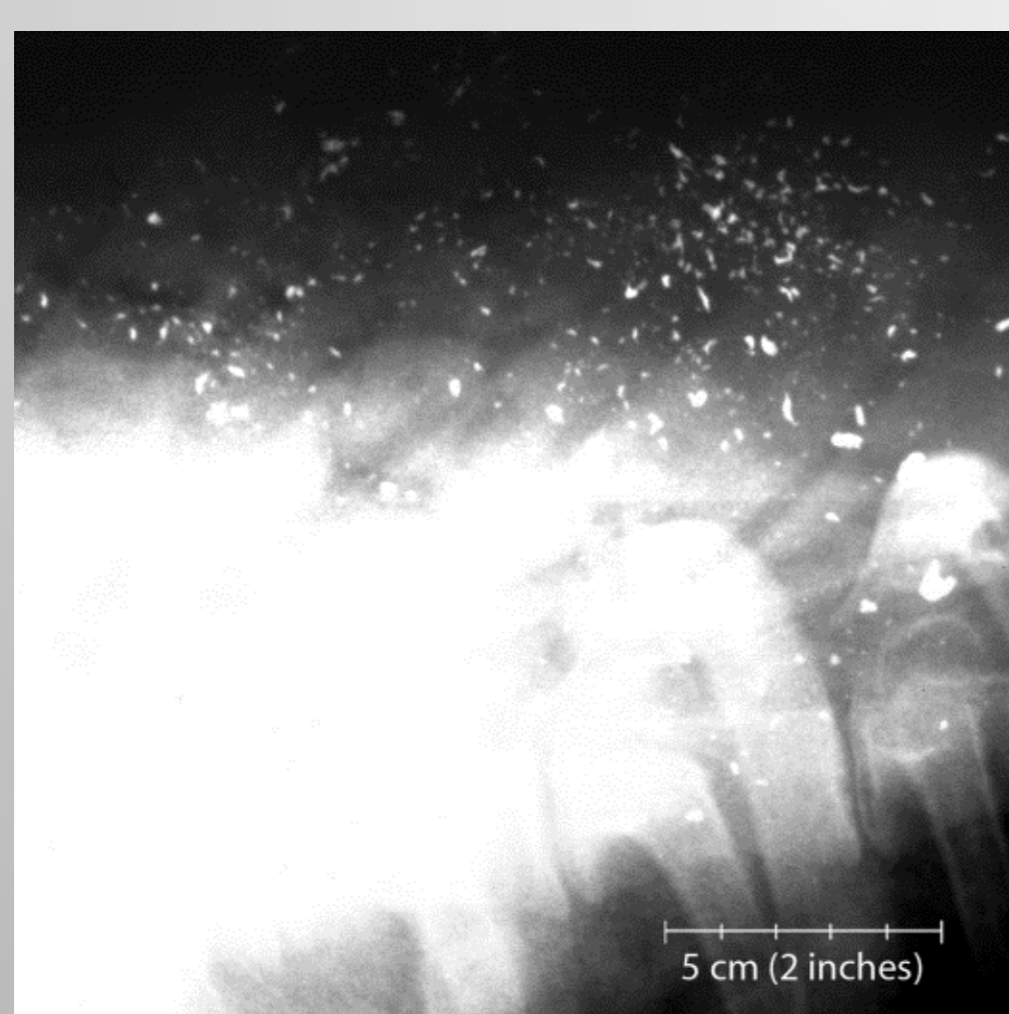
Species systematically released to restore wild populations include the aplomado falcon, bald eagle, bat falcon, California condor, harpy eagle, Madagascar fish eagle, Mauritius kestrel, orange-breasted falcon, prairie falcon.



Aplomados in a P-fund project in Texas.



Condors in the P-fund Arizona project



The Californian condor's expansion into Arizona and Utah has been one of the great successes of the Peregrine Fund. It still faces problems, though. The x-ray on the left shows lead fragments in a deer carcass. In the centre the x-ray is of a condor that fed on such a carcass. The Peregrine Fund has worked closely with the Arizona State

Authorities to replace lead ammunition with non-fragmenting copper (right). Over 90% of the hunters in the state of Arizona voluntarily use these bullets supplied by the AZ Game and Fish Dept.

FALCONRY, EDUCATION & CONSERVATION

Conservation is not just the projects where post-grad students count raptors in remote regions; it is also about teaching ordinary people and changing their attitudes and behaviour.

All Falconers have daily contact with members of the public with whom they interact: farmers, farm labourers, pigeon fanciers etc., all have an impact on raptors, prey species and environment. Whether in a traditional setting or in modern schools, falconry educates and encourages an interest in and an understanding of nature.

For those of us condemned to live in an urban setting, handling a bird of prey or watching one in flight at close quarters is an inspiration.



Almost every Falconer does some educational activities such as school talks. Most of the work done by falconers receives and requires no donor funding.

Educating young people leads to public awareness, not only in their generation, but they in turn educate their parents and those around them.



Involvement of young people with falconry trained birds in New Zealand where human persecution of falcons and hawks remains the biggest threat. Wingspan is a New Zealand falconer-founded organisation; it does just this.



Here a Spanish falconer hand-rears a Bonelli's eagle for a high-profile reintroduction project with extensive media coverage.



The same falconers have set up rehabilitation projects in Peru, Colombia and Indonesia.

FALCONRY, REINTRODUCTION & CONSERVATION

Successful falconer-led breeding projects in the USA, Germany, Poland and other countries, have proved the falconer's expertise. The German falconry club, the DFO, has even been afforded government recognition as an official conservation organisation. Falconers and their methods have been used to save many other bird species worldwide.



The first tree-nesting peregrines in Poland since the 1960s hatched in 2012, the result of a falconer led conservation project. The German and Polish projects both used traditional falconry "hacking" techniques, rearing captive bred youngsters in tree-top nests to make them use such a site when it comes their time to breed.

A Czech project successfully fostered captive-bred peregrines onto wild goshawks to the same end.



With such great successes, European falconers are now turning their efforts to saker populations, breeding youngsters of the European genotype with a view to releasing them into the wild.



Projects in Croatia and in the Czech Republic



Falconry techniques ensure birds released can hunt for themselves and survive to breed.

FALCONRY, REHABILITATION & CONSERVATION

Falconers run many birds of prey rehabilitation centres and hospitals all over the world.

The Japan Falconiforms Centre is a falconer led specialised facility for rehabilitation and release.



In Kenya falconers have numbered less than half a dozen individuals at any one time over the last 60 years. With the absence of any Government raptor facility the private sector is solely responsible for all raptor rehabilitation and raptor management. The reason for the shortage of raptors handlers, rehabbers, falconers, aviculturalists, even biologists, has been the strict non-utilisation wildlife regulations. While certainly not intended to impede raptor conservation there is little doubt that some flexibility would improve the situation.

A member of "Fridericus Rex Maltese Falconers" cuts the jesses on a marsh harrier prior to releasing the first bird in Malta rehabilitated by falconers using falconry techniques and recognised by the Maltese authorities.



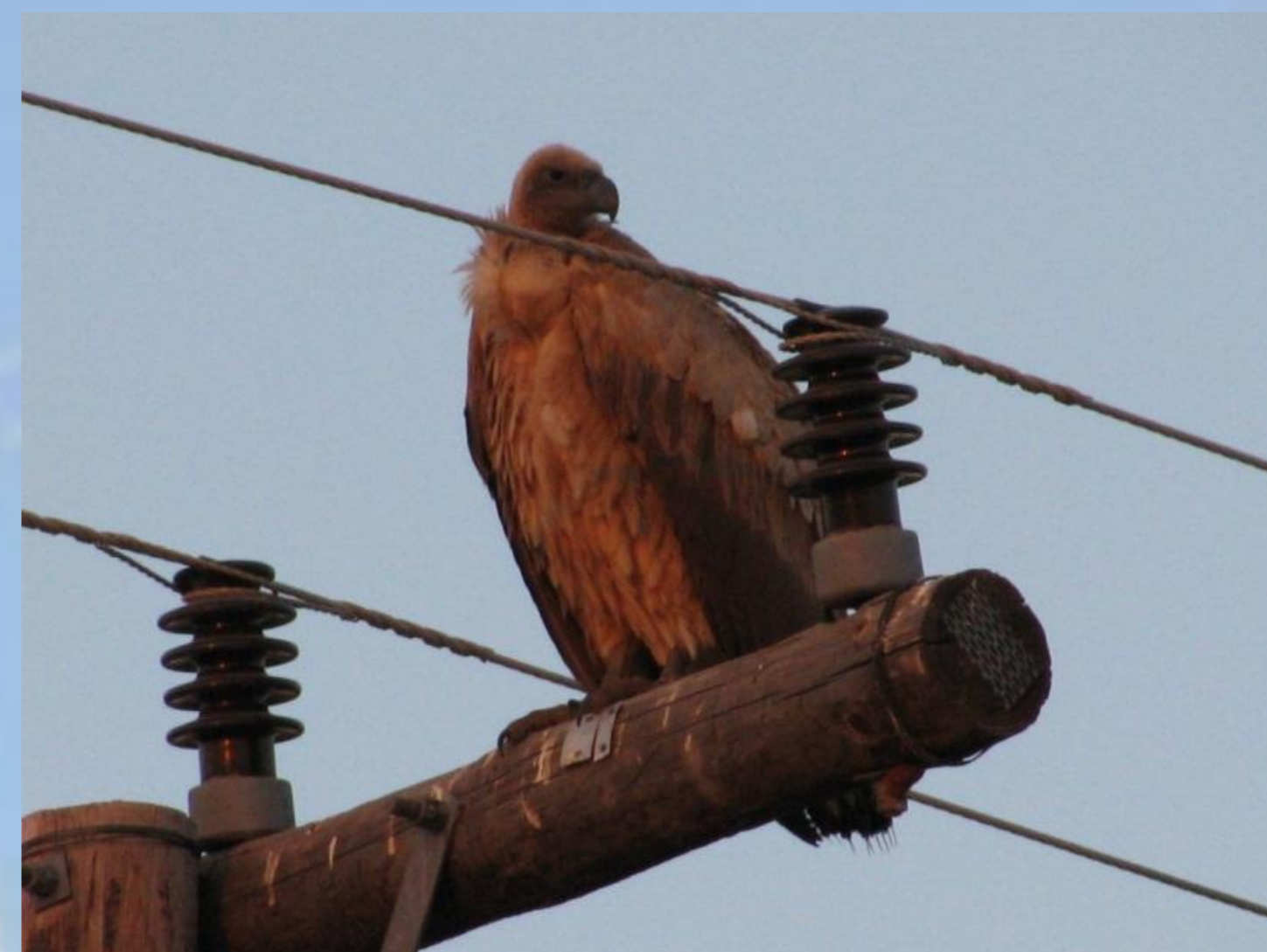
FALCONRY, FUTURE & CONSERVATION

Every year thousands if not millions of birds, many of them raptors and endangered species are killed because of poorly constructed electricity supply structures. Electrocutions are a significant factor in the decline of the Saker falcon. The structures can be built correctly or modified.

This issue was considered by the IAF in December 2012 and, to address the issue an **International Data Base of Electrocutions** is being managed. Falconers are encouraged to report the electrocution of any raptor. Power companies and local authorities are encouraged to address the problem reported. In this way, falconers are addressing a problem and assisting with an international conservation issue.

This structure resulted in the death of a falconry bird that landed on the transformer box. The remains of an eagle owl and a steppe buzzard were found at the foot of the poles.

Mitigation is simple, involving placing insulating sleeves on the three cables leading down to the transformer box.

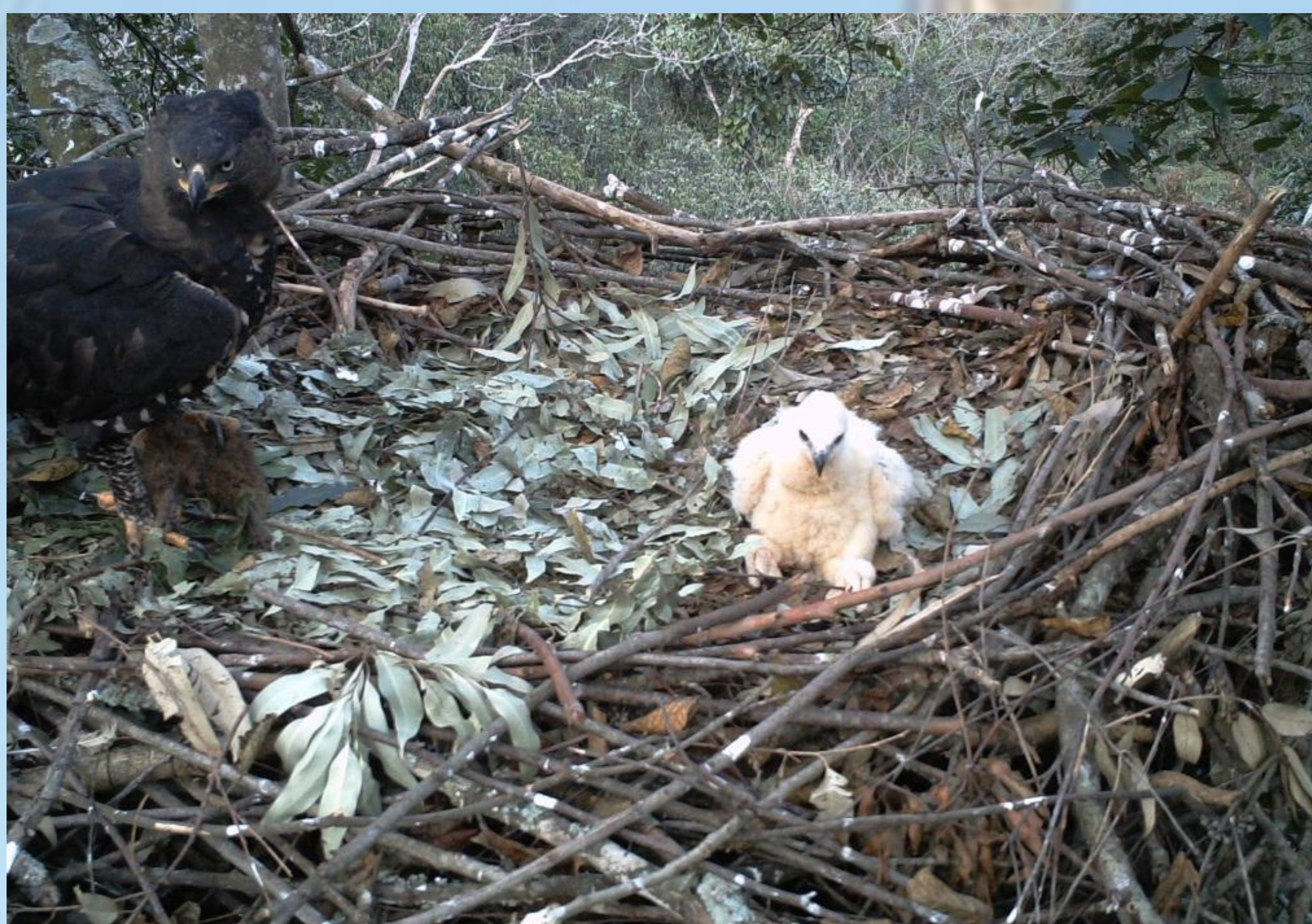


White-backed Vulture

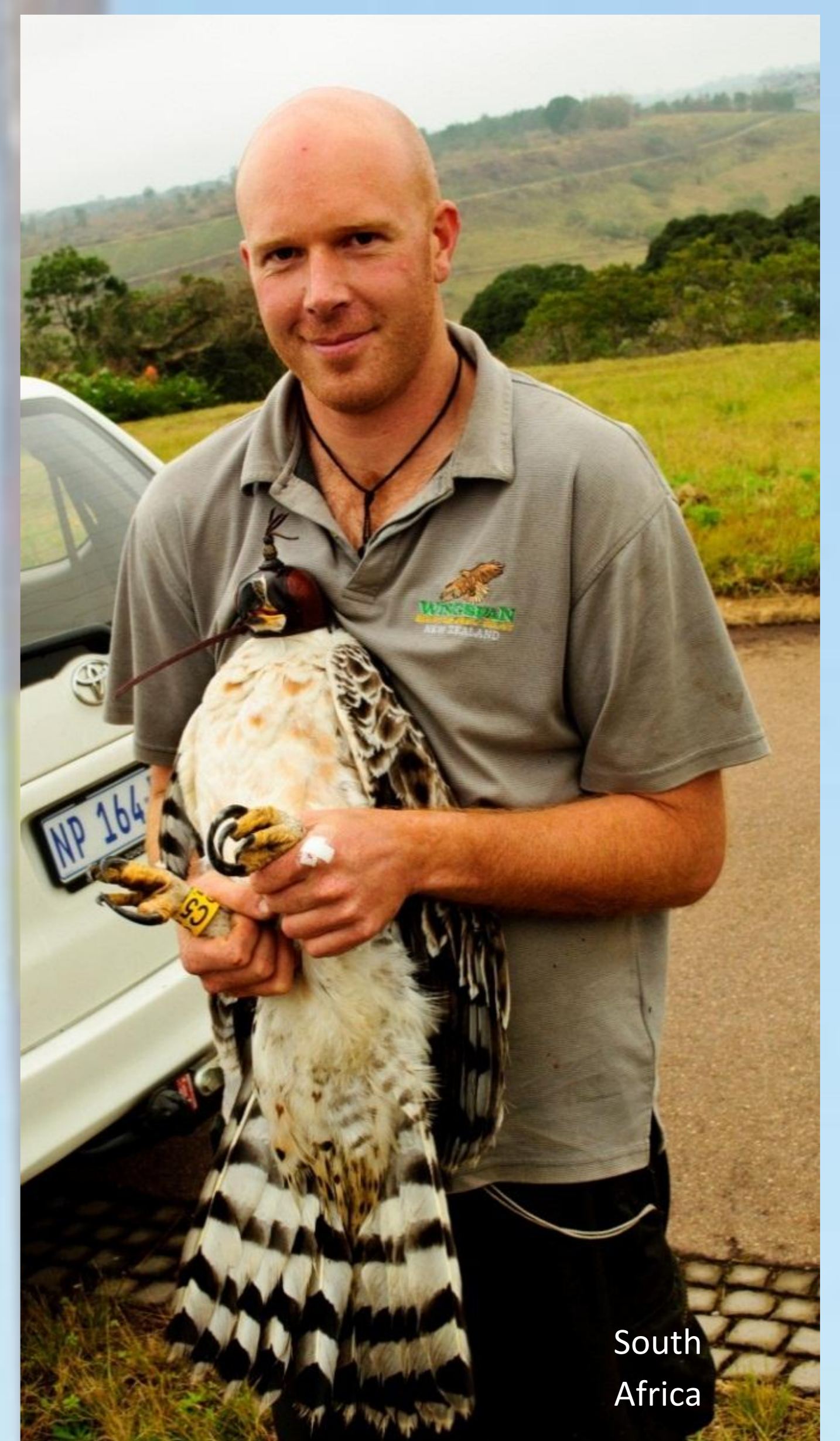


Pale Chanting Goshawk

Falconers are every year getting more involved in conservation projects *Below:* a female crowned eagle prepares to feed a hyrax to its eaglet. Nest cameras are deployed to investigate breeding biology and diet. The composition of the diet can be thoroughly described and will inform various aspects of urban ecology, including the impact on synurban wildlife, livestock and pets.



This one is a study of "The Urban Ecology of Crowned Eagles in KwaZulu-Natal", University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa,



South Africa



Right: the release of a ringed Crowned Eagle.

FALCONRY, UNESCO & CONSERVATION

Just as it has been improved by involving falconer scientists, involving traditional falconers in conservation projects is beneficial to the whole conservation movement.

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation. The 2010 success led by UAE inscribing falconry on the representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is helping falconry communities by preserving all that is best about falconry. In the submission falconers spoke of conservation and the many projects depicted here.

UNESCO inscriptions insist the elements must be passed down generations and that those who practice the element must be active in the process. What better way to involve humanity in the preservation of what is best? The conservation of the birds we fly and the quarry we hunt: Science and Culture.



In countries where a sustainable harvest of wild raptors for falconry is encouraged, falconers must learn where to find them and how to catch them. The techniques may take years to learn and continue thousands of years of a sustainable tradition.

In Mongolia a Kazakh takes a young eagle from its eyrie, trains and hunts with it for two years. He then releases it because it is old enough to breed. This is an understanding of "environmentalism" predating all other "isms".

The UAE, leader in the UNESCO project, has also taken a number of actions to achieve its conservation objectives:

- Creation of hatching centres for falcons in captivity.
- With the intention of reducing the illegal trade in falcons, a passport system launched in the UAE.
- The Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Project is responsible for returning 1297 falcons to the wild at the end of the annual hunting seasons.
- The Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital (ADFH) is the largest falcon hospital in the world and a leading centre for falcon medicine.
- The Falcon Genome Project will help to decipher genetic relationships between wild populations and will help managing the captive populations of falcons long-term.
- In 2010, 5000 artificial nests for Saker Falcons were erected in Mongolia, in addition to 250 nests that had been part of a five-year experimental study.



These artificial nests provide new nesting sites for Sakers in areas of central Mongolia where few natural nesting sites exist. In 2011 there were 200 breeding Saker Falcons in these artificial nests and over 600 chicks produced at these nests were implanted with microchips. This initiative has been endorsed by CITES and work in Mongolia is continuing to ensure that the trade in Saker Falcons is sustainable and has conservation benefits for the species.



FALCONRY, IAF & CONSERVATION

The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey represents falconry communities and raptor related organisations in 70 countries. It is currently recognized as an official advisory NGO to UNESCO.

1968 – IAF attended the Conference of the European Section of ICBP

1970 – IAF at the 15th World Conference of the ICBP

1972 – At the 10th Conference of the European Section of ICBP, IAF is accorded its own separate status. A resolution prohibits trade in birds of prey except for “approved purposes”

1975 – IAF is one of the sponsors ICBP first World Conference on Birds of Prey. Formulates resolutions to avert an international campaign to ban falconry.

1976 – IAF cooperates with ICBP in discussions on resolutions concerning trade in wildlife.

1985 - After comments by IAF's president the world's largest raptor research conference resolved that "contributions of falconers have never been adequately acknowledged".

1986 – IAF is granted observer status in the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention at the Council of Europe.

1995 – IAF sponsors raptor conservation project in Belarus.

1996 – IAF sponsors project on raptor demography Kazakhstan.

1996 – IAF helped found the Conservation Action Network in the US.

1996 – IAF becomes a member of the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

1997 – IAF's proposal to CITES of "Falconry passport system" simplifies cross border movements of trained raptors

2000 – IAF takes part in the World Conservation Congress in Amman where a resolution on sustainable use of wild raptors in falconry is adopted.

2009 – IAF contributed to the specialist meeting in Abu Dhabi on the Conservation of Saker Falcon

2011 – IAF signs Raptors MoU of UNEP/CMS and gets a status of Collaborating Partner Organisation

2012 - IAF is represented in the Saker Task Force of UNEP/CMS Raptors MoU

