

North American Falconers' Association



Protecting the Ancient Art of Falconry

For Immediate Release - November 16, 2010

The North American Falconers' Association in coordination with the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey released the following statement today.

Nairobi, Kenya - Today the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage added Falconry, a traditional hunting method, to its List of the Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity.

For over 4000 years, falconry as a hunting method has retained an unbroken thread of tradition. For nearly 200 generations in an unbroken chain of intangible heritage, falconers worldwide have passed along their knowledge and skills bringing this art to us in the 21st century. Today's modern lifestyle and rapid urbanization have restricted opportunities to practice falconry. This has led to a dangerous decline in many countries. 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 fulfills 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 coordinating 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 practiced on all continents and has given the entire world so much. Bond pointed out, "*There are a thousand falconry words in common language. For example: even the universal term 'gentleman' is derived from falconry implying a man who could fly a female peregrine, the 'falcon gentle'; falconers gave the world the first scientific book on nature 'De arte venandi cum avibus' (1248 A.D.) and wars have even been avoided by diplomatic gifts of falcons.*"

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 behavior. 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 they have been practicing 'sustainable use' for centuries. Professor Tom Cade of the Peregrine Fund pointed out: "*Falconers have been instrumental in the worldwide recovery of the once endangered peregrine falcon and are involved in many conservation projects.*"

Falconers share universal principles. The 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. Larry Dickerson, President of the North American Falconers Association, sums up, "*While falconry is a hunting sport, compared to modern methods it is not an efficient means of hunting. It is more of an art form kept alive in North America by a small group of ardent and dedicated practitioners. This recognition by the United Nations is a milestone for falconry*". The American father of game management, Aldo Leopold, referred to falconry as "*the perfect hobby*" and renowned American ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson pointed out the ancient relationship between man, falcons, and falconry in his famous quote "*Man has emerged from the shadows of antiquity with a Peregrine on his wrist. Its dispassionate brown eyes, more than those of any other bird, have been witness to the struggle for civilization, from the squalid tents on the steppes of Asia thousands of years ago to the marble halls of European kings in the seventeenth century.*"

"*The North American Falconers' Association joins falconers around the globe in celebration of this historical announcement and expresses appreciation to the falconers and organizations in so many countries that were instrumental in the successful recognition of falconry as an intangible cultural heritage.*" Dickerson said.



For more information on the UNESCO listing contact:

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Useful links

For more information on **UNESCO** visit: 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

For information or photographs on Falconry in North America visit: <http://www.n-a-f-a.com>

For **international falconry** today and the history of world falconry visit: www.iaf.org

For information on **conservation** and the **Peregrine Fund** visit: www.peregrinefund.org

For **information** on falconry in the submitting countries:

- **Belgium** www.associationdesfauconniersbelges.be (official comprehensive site)
- **Czech Republic.** www.sokolnictvi.net (official comprehensive site)
- **France** www.anfa.net (official comprehensive site)
- **Korea** www.falconry.kr (site with articles)
- **Mongolia** www.eurasianet.org/node/61713 (article)
- **Morocco** 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 (site with articles)
- **Saudi Arabia** www.ada.gov.sa/Eng/Sports/Left/Traditiona/Falconry.doc_cvt.htm (article)
- **Spain** www.aecca.org (official comprehensive site)
- **Syria** www.openwriting.com/archives/2008/05/falconry_with_s.php (article)
- **United Arab Emirates** www.uaeinteract.com/falconry/ (official comprehensive site) and www.thenational.ae/guide/historical/flora-and-fauna/falcons/unesco-weighs-protecting-falconry (article)

Other useful websites;

- United Kingdom: www.britishfalconersclub.co.uk
- Germany: www.falkenorden.de