

Hadad: A reintroduction program to return falcons to their original habitats

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Falconry is a cultural legacy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudis have always held falconry dear to their hearts. For them, it is more than a legacy; rather, it is a deep-rooted cultural heritage that is passed down from generation to generation, dating back to nearly nine thousand years. It is widely practiced across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by falconers who follow a strict code of rules that are the essence to the practice of falconry.

To highlight the importance of this crucial part of Saudi cultural heritage the Saudi Falcons Club (SFC) was founded in 2017 with His Highness, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman being the General Supervisor and His Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz as the Chairman of the Board of Directors. The Saudi Leadership has also exerted great efforts to conserve and nurture this legacy and ensure its sustainability as a hobby and also protect the different species of falcons.

The SFC aims at preserving the rich heritage and traditions associated with falconry and promote awareness programs to conserve and protect falcons and ensure that falconry remains a living and flourishing hobby that is practiced by following generations.

In November 2020, the SFC launched the first phase of its program 'Hadad', which aims to reintroduce falcons to their original habitats, preserve falcon species and populations and also enhance the Kingdom's leading role in achieving environmental sustainability and protecting the wildlife, as part of the Saudi vision 2030.

Being supported by His Highness, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman himself, the program encourages owners of falcons to collaborate with SFC so that these falcons can be released back to their wild habitats in hopes of restoration to their populations. Before releasing the falcons to their natural habitats, the SFC runs a medical examination and a physical rehabilitation designed to assess the fitness of the falcons prior to release. The program also monitors their movements, survival and behaviors post-releasing to inform future reintroduction plans.

The program focuses on returning falcons to their natural habitats inside Saudi Arabia such as

the Barbary Falcon and Lanner Falcon. In addition, migratory falcons that are in Saudi Arabia including the Saker Falcon and the Peregrine Falcon will be rehabilitated and released in Central Asia in coordination with international falcon associations.

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