



Red Sea Global

Update on the Sooty Falcon surveys in Al Wajh Bank and Amaala (Saudi Arabia)

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The Red Sea Destination and AMAALA

- Al Wajh Bank Important Bird Area (BirdLife International)
- Breeding bird hot spot in the Red Sea
- About 20 species of birds breeding on the islands

Crab plover



5% global population

Sooty gull



15-35 % global population

White-eyed gull

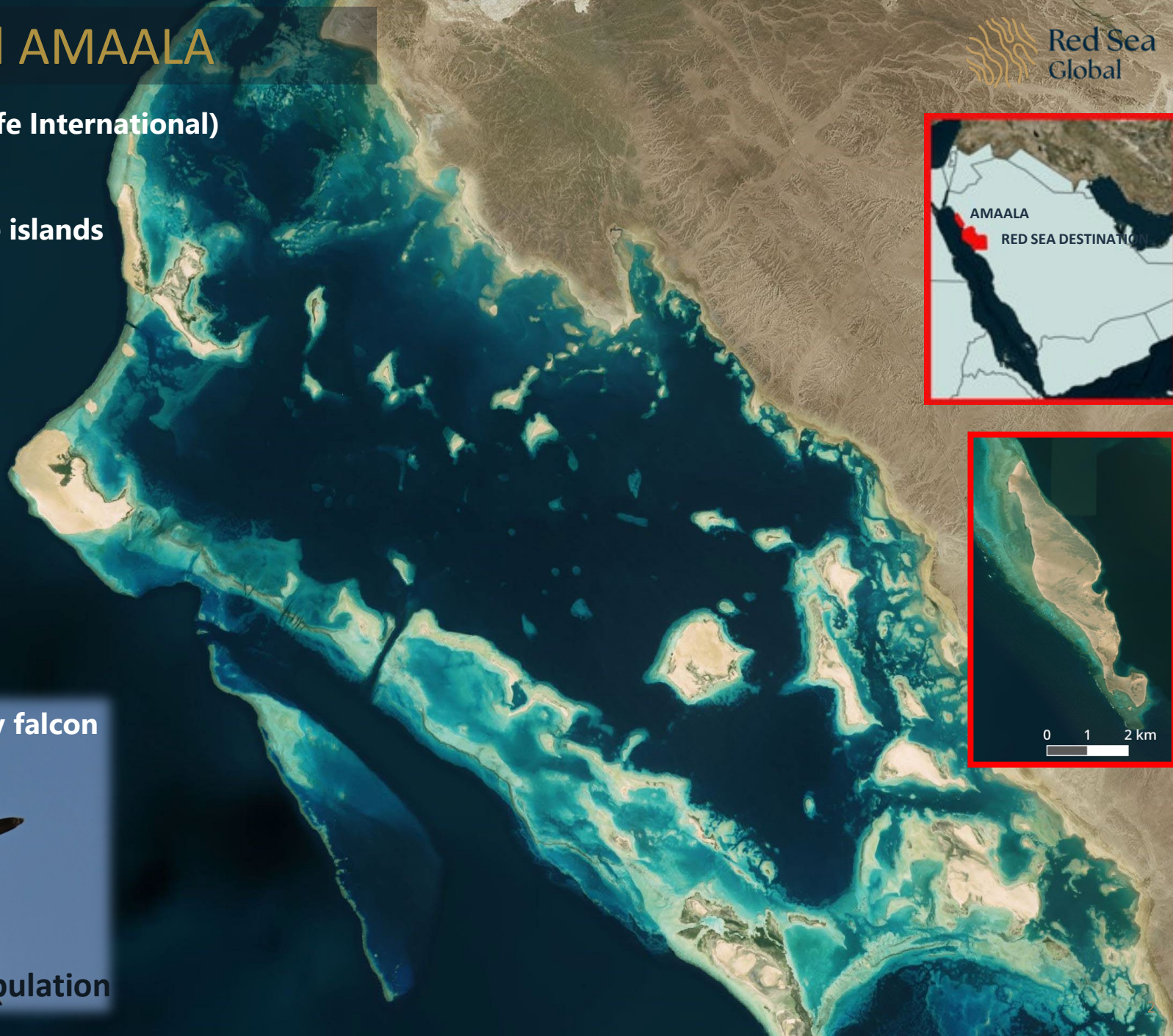
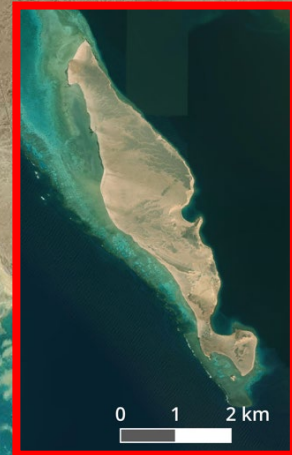


15 % global population

Sooty falcon



2-3 % global population



Objectives

Protect and enhance the bird species and their populations within the Red Sea destination area and AMAALA

Provide benchmark and useful data to be used for conservation elsewhere



Assess breeding and foraging distribution, abundance, phenology, and population trends of targeted bird species

Breeding success habitat and prey selection



Sooty falcon monitoring program

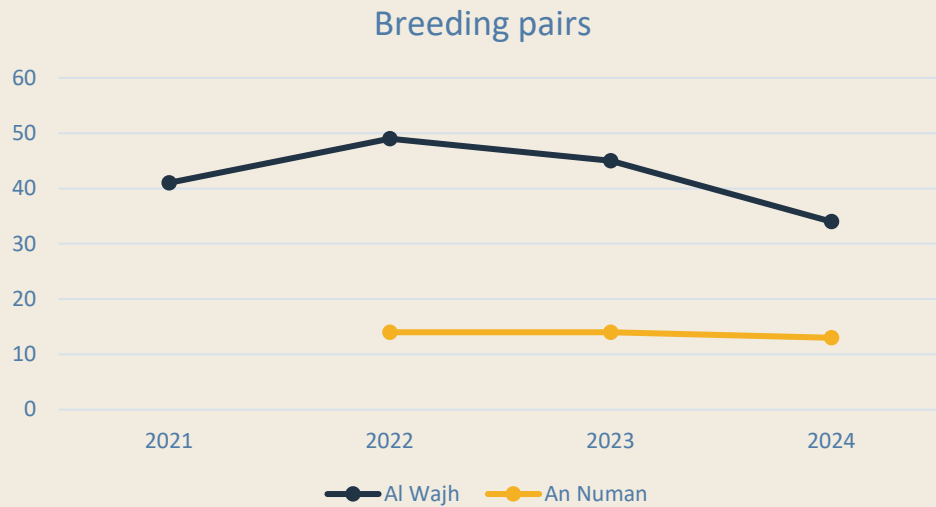
1. **Five years census and breeding success in the Al Wajh lagoon**
2. **Four years of census in AMAALA**
3. **Chicks ringing**
4. **Artificial nesting sites deployment**
5. **Adult GPS tagging**
6. **Adults and juvenile satellite tagging**



1. Census and breeding success

- a) Baseline assessment and trend
- b) Inform development spatial planning
- c) Monitor population and compare with other areas
- d) Assess conservation efforts

RESULTS



Al Wajh and AMAALA 3-4% global population

POTENTIAL DECLINE CAUSES

- Invasive species at breeding sites.
- Illegal hunting (breeding and non-breeding sites)
- Poor recruitment
- Other issues during migration and wintering



2. Chick ringing

- a) Assessing demographic parameters for the Al Wajh population – survival & recruitment
- b) Assessing populations connectivity and site fidelity
- c) Gather more info on dispersal



RESULTS

Since 2022, 239 chicks were ringed with red darvic rings and 10 resighting

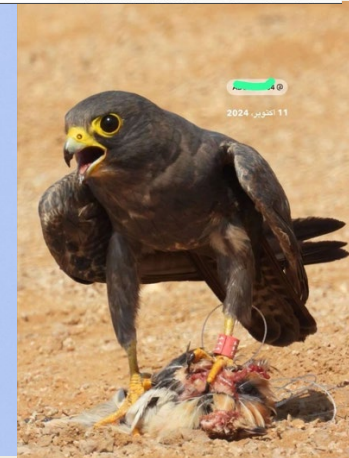


Photo credit Roxanne Whelan - KBD

3. Satellite tagging

- a) Track adults and juveniles during non-breeding season and assess returns to breeding sites and dispersal.
- b) Assess mortality rate, locations and threats (whenever possible)
- c) Assess important migration and stop-over areas.

TAGS

Sunbird PTT ~ 2.5g

Pinpoint GPS Argos solar ~7g
Mortality sensor



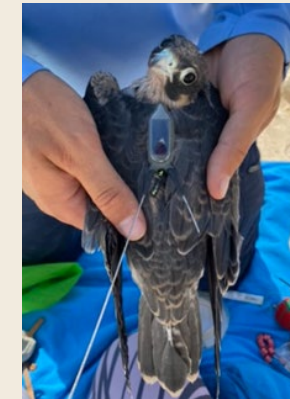
Juveniles



Adults and Juveniles

METHODS

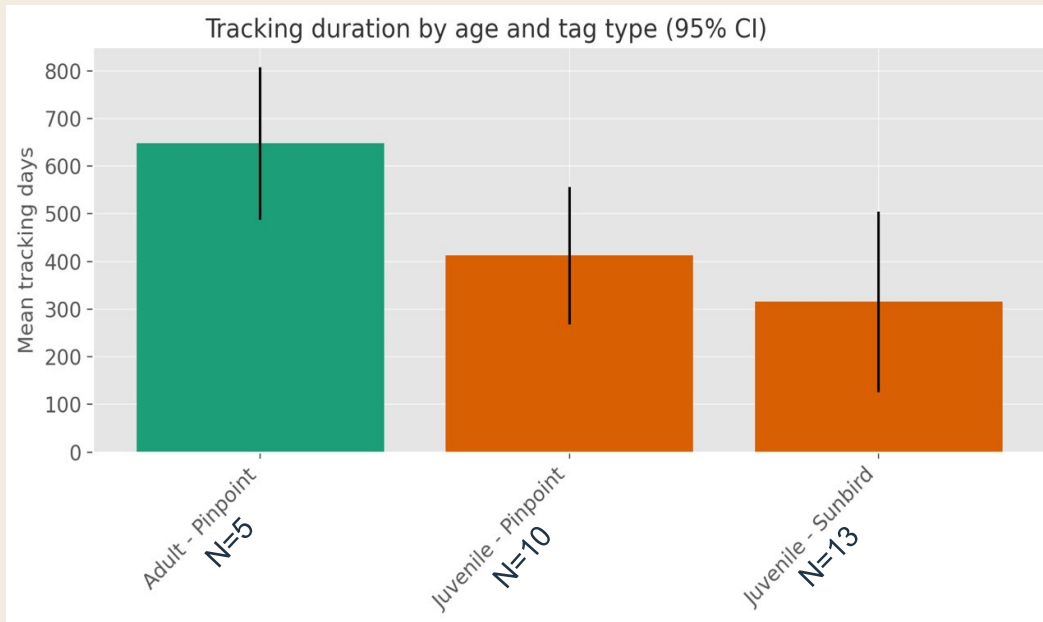
- Capture: bal-chatri at nesting sites during the day and net at night on selected nests.
- Attachment method: backpack harness made with Teflon and sewed with UV resistant thread.
- Years of tagging: 2022 and 2023.
- Juveniles: 13 with Sunbird & 10 with Pinpoint
- Adults: 5 with Pinpoint



3. Satellite tagging

RESULTS

- Tracking days



- Number of migrations

	southbound migration	partial southbound migration	northbound migration	partial northbound migration
ADULTS TOTAL	9	0	7	2
juv sunbird	4	10	5	0
juv pinpoint	11	2	7	0
JUVENILES TOTAL	15	12	12	0
TOT	24	12	19	2

- Mortality

Age at deployment	Probably dead	Uncertain if dead	Country where last location recorded
Adults	2	1	Somalia (2), Saudi Arabia (1)
Juveniles	8	14	Madagascar (12), Sudan (3), Ethiopia (2), Tanzania (2), Saudi Arabia (2), Mozambique (1)

Conclusions

- First through assessment of sooty falcon breeding in the Al Wajh Bank and AMAALA.
- Hosting a **2-3% of global population**, however more recent estimates are needed across the whole range.
- Ringing of chicks has been proven a good tool to monitor recruitment, survival and **populations exchanges**.
- **Sooty falcon can nest on artificial nesting sites** if properly planned and placed – 3 occupied in 2025.
- **Satellite tracking** should select the appropriate devices and attachment methods. More analysis are needed to confirm mortality locations of both adults and juveniles and locations of disappearance should be investigated to identify threats.





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