

International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon - Resources

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Sooty Falcon ISSAP Webpage

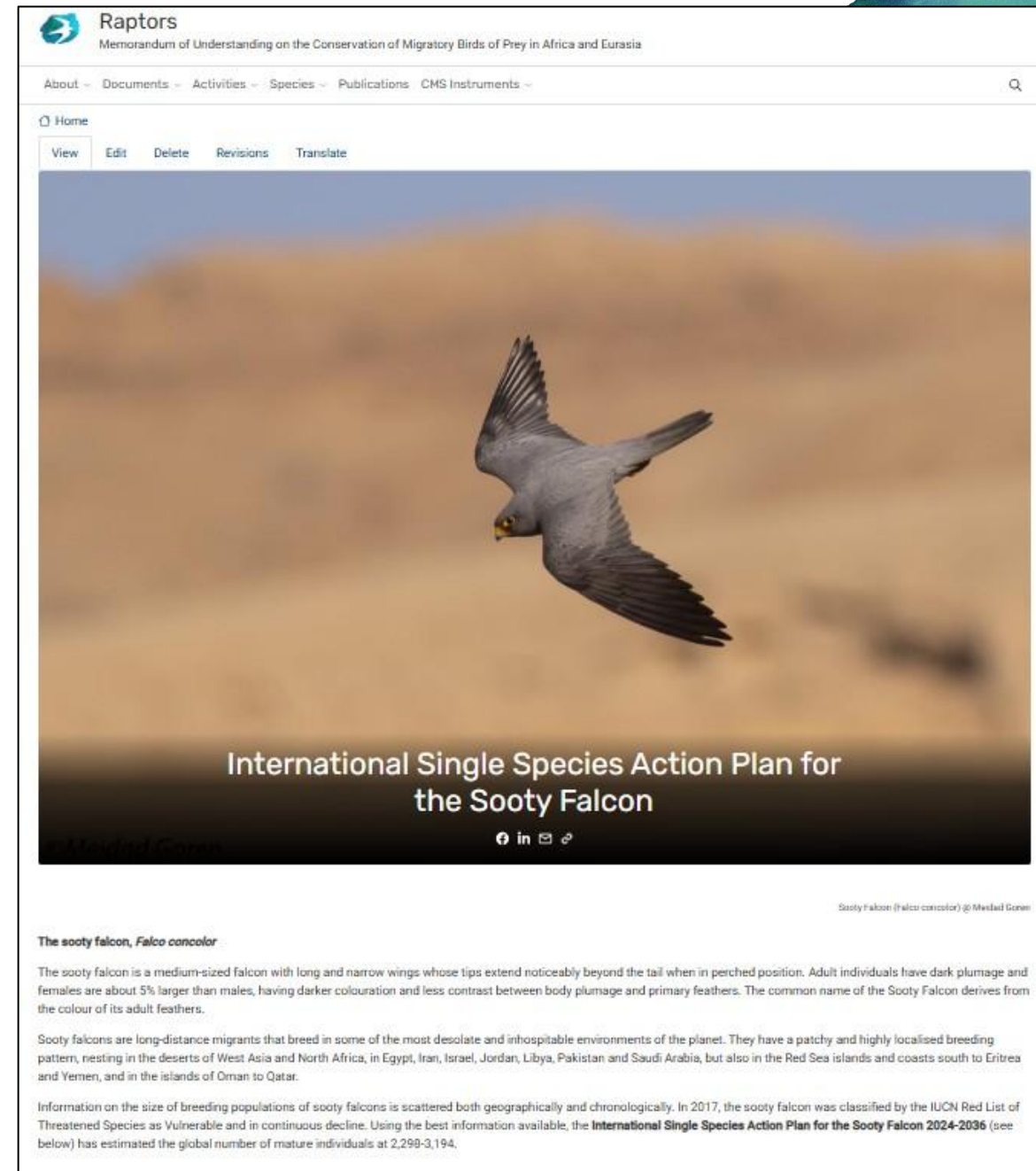
Available on the
Raptors MOU website,
under Activities:
<https://raptors.cms.int/>

→ List of resources

The screenshot shows the website for Raptors, a Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia. The navigation menu includes 'About', 'Documents', 'Activities' (circled in red), 'Species', 'Publications', and 'CMS Instruments'. Below the menu, there are four columns of resources: 'CONSERVING SPECIES', 'ADDRESSING THREATS', 'CAPACITY BUILDING', and 'COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH'. Under 'CONSERVING SPECIES', the 'International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon 2024-2036' is highlighted with a red circle. Below the menu, there are three featured articles: 'National and Regional Leadership Strengthens Raptor Conservation' (NEWS), 'Threatened with Extinction, the Snowy Owl is Proposed for...' (PRESS RELEASE), and 'Capacity-Building Mission Strengthens Efforts to Combat...' (ARTICLE). A button for 'More News, Stories and Press Releases' is located below the articles. At the bottom, there are three sections: 'Quick access' (Convention Text, COP Resolutions), 'Meetings' (Sooty Falcon Knowledge Exchange Meeting, 19 Nov 2025), and 'Notifications' (2025/024: Survey for Parties Implementing COP14 Decisions on Seagrass Ecosystems).

Sooty Falcon ISSAP Webpage

- Information on the species
- Related work under the Raptors MOU
- Context and information on the ISSAP
- List of related meetings
- List of resources



Raptors
Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia

About Documents Activities Species Publications CMS Instruments

Home

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International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon

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Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*) © Medjed Gonen

The sooty falcon, *Falco concolor*

The sooty falcon is a medium-sized falcon with long and narrow wings whose tips extend noticeably beyond the tail when in perched position. Adult individuals have dark plumage and females are about 5% larger than males, having darker colouration and less contrast between body plumage and primary feathers. The common name of the Sooty Falcon derives from the colour of its adult feathers.

Sooty falcons are long-distance migrants that breed in some of the most desolate and inhospitable environments of the planet. They have a patchy and highly localised breeding pattern, nesting in the deserts of West Asia and North Africa, in Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, but also in the Red Sea islands and coasts south to Eritrea and Yemen, and in the islands of Oman to Qatar.

Information on the size of breeding populations of sooty falcons is scattered both geographically and chronologically. In 2017, the sooty falcon was classified by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as Vulnerable and in continuous decline. Using the best information available, the **International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon 2024-2036** (see below) has estimated the global number of mature individuals at 2,299-3,194.

Sooty Falcon ISSAP - Webpage

- Information on the species
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Since 2013, the global conservation status of the sooty falcon deteriorated, reiterating the urgency of finalising an ISSAP.

The work to finalise an ISSAP was able to recommence in 2022. The Sooty Falcon Working Group was also revitalised in that year, integrating Range State representatives and independent species experts to contribute technical advice to the plan. Following the Third Meeting of Signatories (Dubai, July 2023), sooty falcon Range States also collaborated with the Coordinating Unit to review drafts of the ISSAP. A side event to introduce the draft Action Plan was held at the 14th Meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties (Samarkand, February 2024). The Parties requested that the Standing Committee adopt the document in consultation with the Scientific Council.

The final draft of the ISSAP was approved by the Scientific Council at the 6th meeting of its Sessional Committee in September 2024 and the ISSAP was endorsed by the Standing Committee at its 56th meeting in March 2025.

"The **International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon 2024 – 2036 (ISSAP)** aims to reduce the risk of extinction of the sooty falcon (*Falco concolor*) by halting the decline of its population to a point where it qualifies for downlisting to at least Near Threatened. The ISSAP has been developed using the best information available on the biology, ecology, conservation status and threats to the species."

Meetings

- **Sooty Falcon Knowledge Exchange Meeting** - 19 November 2025. This meeting marks the first coordinated action under the International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Sooty Falcon, bringing together experts and practitioners from across its range.

Resources

- Leonardi G, Lopes L, Gallo Orsi U, Javed S, McGrady M (2024) **International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon 2024 - 2036**. CMS Raptors MOU, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
- **Factsheet on the sooty falcon**
- **Library of literature on the sooty falcon**, Version 2 updated as 31/12/2025
- **Sooty Falcon Breeding Population Survey Protocol**
- **CMS species page on the sooty falcon**
- Award-winning Omani-German film **The Migrant - Sooty Falcons in Oman** that documents efforts to study and conserve this long-range migratory bird
- **Documents of the Sooty Falcon Knowledge Exchange Meeting**, 19 November 2025



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Are you new to this website?

[Brief intro to the CMS Raptors MOU and migratory birds of prey](#)

ISSAP



International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon

2024 - 2036

CMS Raptors MOU Technical Publication No. 10



Fact Sheet on the sooty falcon

Double page on the sooty falcon

Provides a summary of:

- Names and general traits
- Conservation status
- Population size
- Threats
- Conservation needs



Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*) © Eyal Bartov

NAMES AND GENERAL TRAITS

- Scientific: *Falco concolor*
- Arabic: صقر اسود
- English: Sooty Falcon
- French: Faucon Concolore

The Sooty Falcon is a medium-sized bird of prey with long and narrow wings. It displays a dark plumage in its adult stage and a brownish-grey one when young.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Owing to its population being considered a single, small and declining one, the Sooty Falcon has been classified by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as 'Vulnerable' since 2017. However, information on its population and ecology is largely considered fragmented and incomplete.

Under CMS and CITES, the species is classified as follows:

- CMS Appendix II, since 1979
- Raptors MOU Category 1, since 2008
- CITES Appendix II, since 1975

POPULATION SIZE

Sooty Falcon population estimates have been widely varying and inconsistent. Using the best information available on the species, the International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon 2024-2036 has estimated the global number of mature individuals at 2,298-3,194.

Threats at Breeding and Migrating Sites

Around breeding sites, human disturbance and development are thought to be the most significant factors contributing to the decline of Sooty Falcons. These factors are believed to particularly impact birds nesting in coastal areas (e.g. in Bahrain, Egypt, Oman, Saudi Arabia). For instance, research has suggested that the development of tourism infrastructure, housing and shrimp farms on the islands of the Arabian Red Sea has resulted in the loss of suitable habitat for the species to nest.

Habitat loss due to development may also reduce the availability of habitat preferred by migrating passerines, which are prey of the Sooty Falcon. As Sooty Falcons are specialised predators, declines in their prey populations are likely to affect their survival.

Threats are also a concern along the Sooty Falcon's migratory route. For example, one such threat is the increased use of chemical compounds for insect and Red-billed Quail (*Quail quail*). These compounds can cause primary, though more often secondary poisoning.

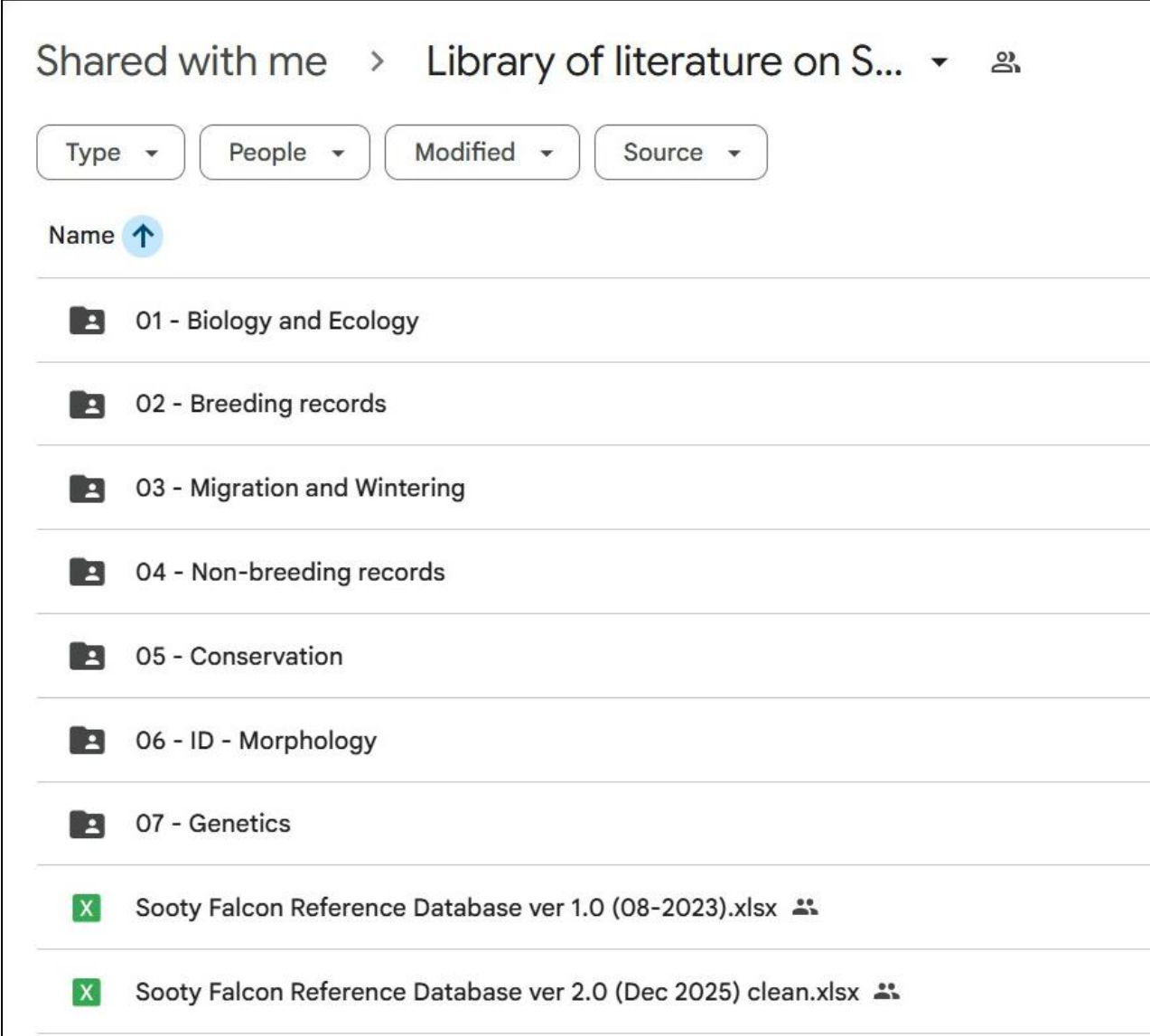
Habitat alteration linked to agricultural expansion, intensification and deforestation is also likely to affect Sooty Falcons, both directly and indirectly, by reducing the availability of insects that are their main source of food outside of the breeding period.


Lastly, intrinsic factors, such as the relatively low survival rate of young birds, can result in fewer birds joining the breeding population, potentially leading to a decrease in the population's size. Radio-tagging of Sooty Falcons in Oman in 2007-2014 (McGrady et al. 2016) found that only about 12% of young birds survived until the age at which they could breed. That research also found that most deaths occurred during the birds' first year of life, either during migration or shortly after arriving at non-breeding sites.

Library of literature on sooty falcon


Available literature on the sooty falcon organized in thematic folders.












Reference database (v2 updated in December 2025) with classification of references per theme.



Shared with me > Library of literature on S... 


Type ▾ People ▾ Modified ▾ Source ▾

Name 

-  01 - Biology and Ecology
-  02 - Breeding records
-  03 - Migration and Wintering
-  04 - Non-breeding records
-  05 - Conservation
-  06 - ID - Morphology
-  07 - Genetics
-  Sooty Falcon Reference Database ver 1.0 (08-2023).xlsx 
-  Sooty Falcon Reference Database ver 2.0 (Dec 2025) clean.xlsx 

CMS species page on sooty falcon

- Photo gallery
- Sooty falcon related documents
- Geographical range
- Sooty falcon news
- Sooty falcon publication



Sooty Falcon © EAD


Photo gallery icons

RELATED CONTENTS

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Sooty Falcon Knowledge Exchange Meeting
19 Nov 2025

Geographic range

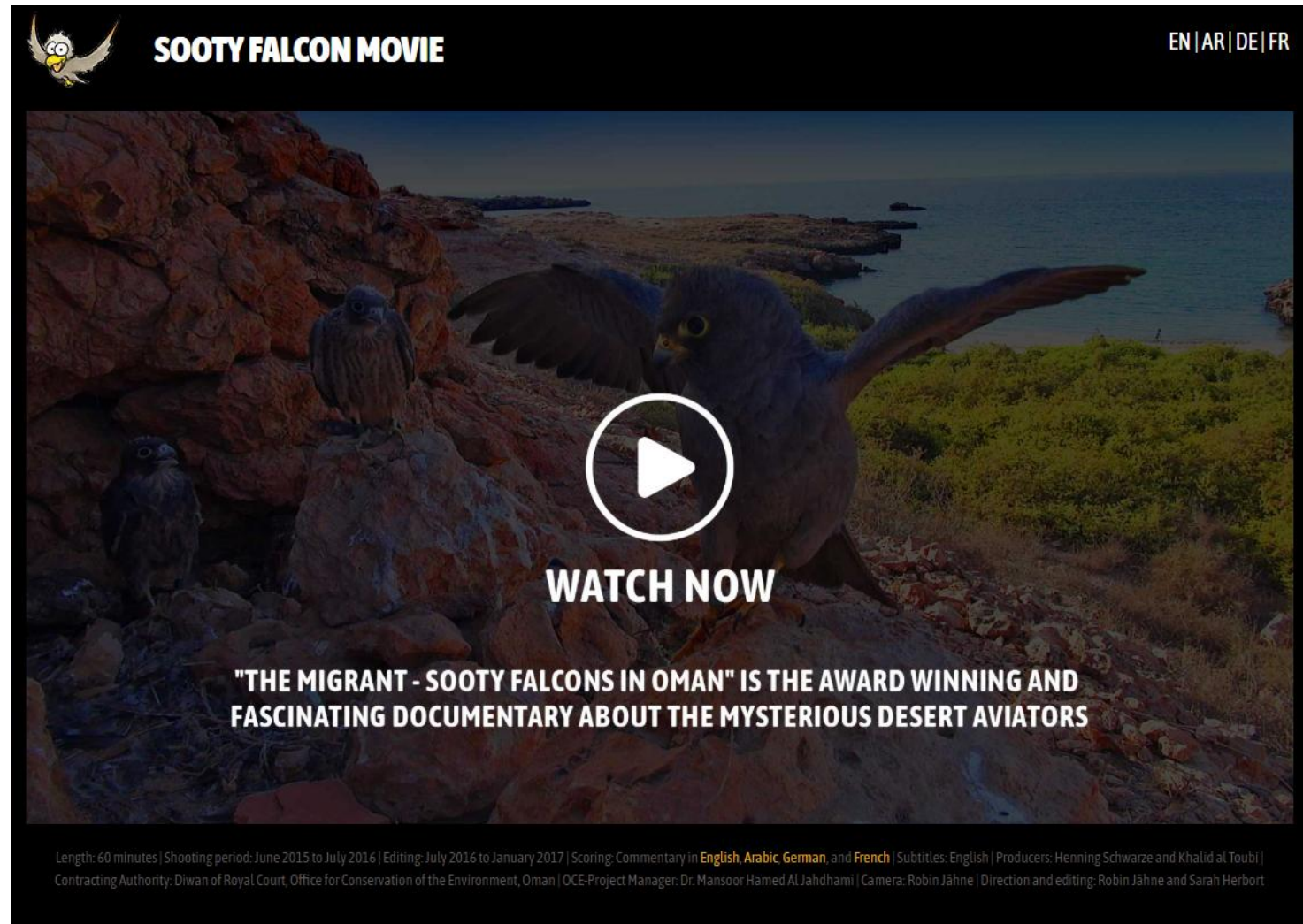


The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.
Non-Self-Governing Territories.
© United Kingdom, approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.
A dispute exists between the governments of Algeria and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the island of Shetland.

The Migrant – Sooty Falcons in Oman

Award-winning Omani-German film **The Migrant - Sooty Falcons in Oman**

Documents efforts to study and conserve this long-range migratory bird.



Breeding population survey protocol

2 pages document summarizing:

- The main prerequisites
- The main field procedures for mainland and island breeding sites
- The constraints

Sooty Falcon breeding population survey protocol¹

1. Main prerequisites

- 1.1 Use GIS tools for location, study area and distance measurements;
- 1.2 Visit historical sites first (due to nesting site philopatry);
- 1.3. Base other areas' surveys on:
 - 1.3.1 Unverified information from the public;
 - 1.3.2 Nesting habitat suitability;
 - 1.3.3 Use of Species Distribution Model algorithms;
- 1.4. Experienced observers to conduct surveys using binoculars and spotting scopes.

2. Main field procedure (mainland breeding areas and islands)

Mainland and islands

- 2.1 Observations to be made during mid-morning and mid- to late afternoon;
- 2.2 Observations to be made from August to October (variable depending on local phenology);
- 2.3 Search for 2-3 hours;
- 2.4 Seek signs of nesting;
- 2.5 Identify, at a minimum, the location of occupied nesting sites. An occupied nesting site is one where, at least, a single Sooty Falcon has been observed displaying behaviours deemed to be consistent with territory occupancy:
 - 2.6.1 Attendance at a site of suitable habitat;
 - 2.6.2 Territorial defence behavioural displays;
 - 2.6.3 Existence of a presumed mate;
 - 2.6.4 Existence of eggs, nestlings or fledglings;
- 2.7 Record the number of individuals seen and their age/sex;

Island-specific

- 2.8 Undertake a reconnaissance trip around the breeding islands (landing not necessary) to estimate the numbers of birds and potential pairs present across the entire archipelago;
- 2.9 Undertake a second, more detailed visit when pair bonding is complete to identify and qualify the numbers of breeding pairs and the location of nest sites being used. Potential nest sites suitable for chick ringing can also be identified;

Knowledge Exchange Meeting

19 November 2025

First coordinated action under the Sooty Falcon ISSAP, bringing together experts and practitioners from across its range.



Convention on the Conservation of
Migratory Species of Wild Animals



Sooty Falcon: A Regional Knowledge Exchange for Collaborative Conservation

(Online, 19 November 2025)

UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/SFKECC Report

MEETING REPORT

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)

1. Welcome and introductions

The meeting marked the first coordinated session under the newly adopted *International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Sooty Falcon (2024–2036)*. Participants from across the species' breeding, migration, and wintering range shared current knowledge and research insights, with a focus on improving understanding of population trends, threats, and opportunities for coordinated conservation of Sooty Falcon.

Ms. Rouba Abou Atieh, (Coordinating Unit), opened the meeting emphasising the importance of collaboration, as Sooty Falcon conservation requires range-wide coordination across Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean islands.

2. The International Sooty Falcon Action Plan

Mr. Umberto Gallo-Orsi, (Coordinating Unit), provided a brief overview of the ISSAP development process, noting its adoption by CMS in 2024 and the Plan's role in guiding 12 years of coordinated conservation. The Plan prioritises legal protection, reduction of key threats, and expanding research to address major knowledge gaps on demography, migration, and drivers of decline.

3. National updates

Bahrain

- Historic breeding on Hawar Islands since the 1950s; decline observed in recent years.
- Recent surveys found only ~7 nests; population likely reduced.
- Plan to initiate tagging in 2026 to understand movements and threats.

Egypt

- Research on Red Sea islands indicates Egypt a major global stronghold.
- Diet overwhelmingly migratory passerines; strong synchrony with autumn migration.
- Disturbance, predation, and lack of funding are major challenges.

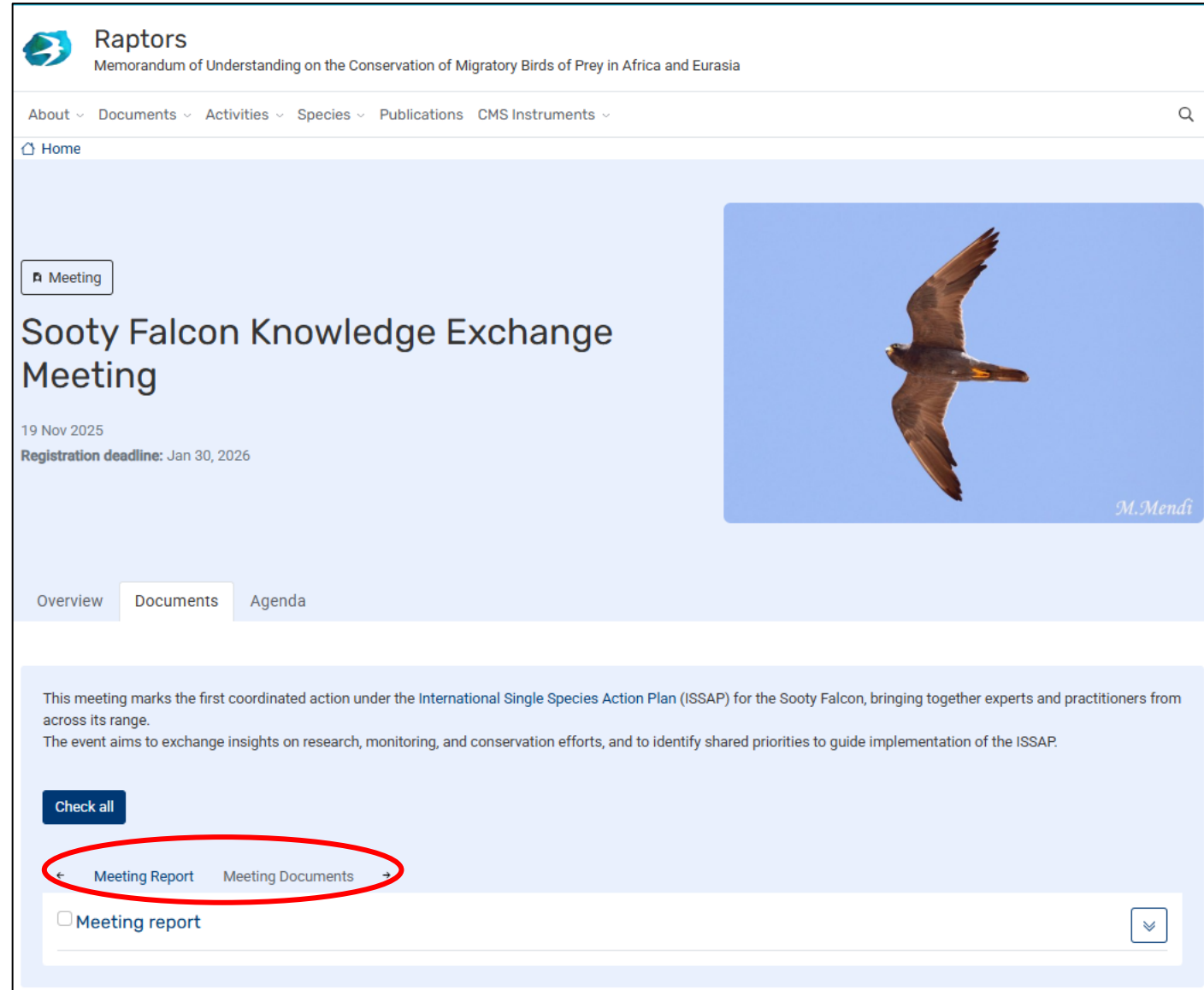
Israel

- The pelvic (leg-loop) harness appears to perform well, with no evidence of impaired solar charging or device malfunction.
- Potential breeding or summering detected outside known areas; need for larger sample sizes highlighted.

Knowledge Exchange Meeting

A webpage was created for this meeting with links to the report and related documents.

Accessible from the Sooty Falcon ISSAP webpage.



The screenshot shows the 'Raptors' website, which is a Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia. The page is titled 'Sooty Falcon Knowledge Exchange Meeting' and features a large image of a Sooty Falcon in flight. The page includes a navigation menu with options like 'About', 'Documents', 'Activities', 'Species', 'Publications', and 'CMS Instruments'. Below the navigation, there is a 'Meeting' button and a 'Home' link. The main content area has tabs for 'Overview', 'Documents', and 'Agenda'. A paragraph of text describes the meeting as the first coordinated action under the International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Sooty Falcon. At the bottom, there is a 'Check all' button and a dropdown menu with 'Meeting Report' and 'Meeting Documents' options. A red circle highlights the 'Meeting Report' and 'Meeting Documents' options in the dropdown menu. Below the dropdown, there is a search bar with the text 'Meeting report' and a search icon.

Raptors
Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia

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Meeting

Sooty Falcon Knowledge Exchange Meeting

19 Nov 2025
Registration deadline: Jan 30, 2026

M. Mendi

Overview Documents Agenda

This meeting marks the first coordinated action under the International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Sooty Falcon, bringing together experts and practitioners from across its range. The event aims to exchange insights on research, monitoring, and conservation efforts, and to identify shared priorities to guide implementation of the ISSAP.

Check all

Meeting Report Meeting Documents

Meeting report

Group Photo

**Please turn on your cameras
for the group photo**



Thank you

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Raptors MOU

CMS Office – Abu Dhabi