

FOURTH MEETING OF SIGNATORIES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY BIRDS OF PREY IN AFRICA AND EURASIA

(Victoria Falls, 30 November- 2 December 2026)

UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS4/Doc.13.5

INTERNATIONAL SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN FOR THE SOOTY FALCON (*Falco concolor*) (2024–2036): PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)

Summary:

This document reports on progress in supporting implementation of the International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon (ISSAP), including communication resources, research and monitoring support, and expert meetings, and invites outlines coordination and resource needs. .

The Meeting of Signatories is invited to take note of the progress reported and to support the coordination and implementation of the Plan.

1. The Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*) is listed in Annex 1 of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU), where it is classified as a Category 1 species in Table 1 of the Action Plan (Annex 3), and is covered by Appendix II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) as a member of the family Falconidae. A long-distance migrant, the species breeds discontinuously in desert and island habitats from the central-eastern Sahara, along the Red Sea, to the southern Gulf region, and winters mainly in Madagascar. It is classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. The International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon (ISSAP) reports an estimated global population of 1,149–1,597 breeding pairs (2,298–3,194 mature individuals), an estimated decline of 18–20 per cent over the past ten-year period preceding the assessment presented in the Plan, and no surveyed breeding population known to be increasing¹.
2. Paragraph 8(a) of the Raptors MOU calls on Signatories to establish and implement effective strategies and action plans for the conservation of birds of prey and their habitats. Paragraph 12 further provides that Signatories will aim to prepare and submit to the Coordinating Unit, where appropriate, national or regional strategies or equivalent documents, including Single Species Action Plans, for species listed in Category 1 and, where appropriate, Category 2 of Table 1 of the Action Plan.
3. In 2013, the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU, commissioned the development of the draft ISSAP and established a Sooty Falcon Working Group (SFWG) to support its development (document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS2/8](#), paragraph 18). At MOS2, the Coordinating Unit highlighted the need for funding for an action-planning workshop to finalise the draft (document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS2/Report](#), paragraph 174).
4. With funding becoming available in 2022 through the support from the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, the Coordinating Unit engaged a consultant to update and finalize the draft and revitalized the SFWG, bringing together Range States representatives, specialist ornithologists and other experts working on Sooty Falcon conservation.
5. At the Third Meeting of Signatories (MOS3, Dubai, 3–6 July 2023), the Meeting took note of the progress reported in document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Doc.13.3](#), urged the finalization of the ISSAP, and Signatories agreed to contribute to its future implementation ([UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Report/Annex XIII](#), paragraph 27). The Meeting also invited the Coordinating Unit to ask the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS to request the Scientific Council to review the ISSAP and formulate its recommendations, as appropriate, for consideration by the Standing Committee ([UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Report/Rev.1, paragraph 210](#)).
6. At its 14th Meeting (COP14, Samarkand, February 2024), the Conference of the Parties to CMS adopted Decision 14.146, requesting the Standing Committee, following consultation with the Scientific Council, to consider and adopt the ISSAP upon its finalization in the intersessional period between COP14 and COP15.

Adoption of the International Single Species Action Plan

7. The final draft of the ISSAP was considered by the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council at its 7th Meeting (ScC-SC7, September 2024), which recommended it to the Standing Committee for adoption. The Plan was subsequently submitted to the

¹ Leonardi et al. (2024), International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon 2024–2036, p. 4.

56th Meeting of the Standing Committee (StC56, Bonn, 25–27 March 2025) in document [UNEP/CMS/StC56/Doc.18](#), with the full Plan made available as information document [UNEP/CMS/StC56/Inf.18](#), and was adopted by the Standing Committee in accordance with Decision 14.146 ([UNEP/CMS/StC56/Report, paragraph 137](#)). The Plan calls on all Range States of the Sooty Falcon to implement its provisions.

8. The ISSAP² aims to reduce the risk of extinction of the Sooty Falcon by halting the decline of its population to a point where it qualifies for downlisting to at least Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List by 2036. The 12-year plan covers approximately three generations of the species and applies to its 29 Range States. It sets out actions under three objectives:
 - a) protect the species;
 - b) improve knowledge through monitoring and research; and
 - c) exchange lessons learnt and raise awareness.
9. Each action of the Plan is accompanied by an intended outcome, target countries and stakeholders, and an indication of implementation priority. The Plan identifies urban, industrial and energy development as the most important threat to the species. Other threats include disturbance at breeding sites, introduced terrestrial predators, locust and red-billed quelea (*Quelea quelea*) control operations, hunting and taking, poisoning and habitat degradation from agricultural intensification. The Plan also identifies gaps in knowledge of the species and uncertainty about the impacts of climate change.
10. The Plan recommends that a mid-term review of its implementation be undertaken in 2030 and a final review and update in 2036, and that an emergency review be conducted in the event of a sudden, significant negative impact on one or more populations of the species. It further recommends that a dedicated coordinating entity be established to coordinate, oversee and report on implementation progress.
11. Annex 1 presents indicative resource requirements of EUR 165,000 for ISSAP coordination and selected implementation activities in 2027–2029, corresponding to Activity 1.1.28 of the CMS Programme of Work for the intersessional period between COP15 and COP16 ([UNEP/CMS/COP15/Resolution 15.1/Rev.1/Annex 6](#), p. 4). The proposed support comprises a part-time ISSAP Coordinator to support the coordination function recommended by the Plan, a meeting of Range States and grants to implementing partners for selected priority actions. Inclusion in the Programme of Work does not imply that funding has been secured. Signatories and partners are invited to consider financial or in-kind contributions. Secondment or hosting arrangements could also be explored with interested Range States or partner organizations, subject to the relevant administrative arrangements.

Activities undertaken since the adoption of the Plan

Dedicated webpage

12. A [dedicated webpage](#) has been created on the Raptors MOU website, providing access to the full Plan, its fact sheets, the library of Sooty Falcon literature, the Breeding Population Survey Protocol, the documents of the meetings organized under the Plan, and other communication materials, including information on the documentary film *The Migrant – Sooty Falcons in Oman*.

² <https://www.cms.int/publication/international-single-species-action-plan-sooty-falcon-2024-2036>

Publication of the Plan and fact sheets

13. The ISSAP has been published as a [CMS publication](#) (Leonardi et al., 2024³). To support its implementation and dissemination, the Coordinating Unit has produced a [fact sheet on the ISSAP](#), summarizing the Plan's aims, objectives and priority actions, and a [species fact sheet](#), presenting the Sooty Falcon's biology, conservation status and threats.

Library of Sooty Falcon literature

14. As anticipated at MOS3, the Coordinating Unit has compiled an online library of literature on the Sooty Falcon, building on the review of some 450 publications undertaken for the development of the Plan. The library is accessible through the ISSAP webpage, and its second version was last updated on 31 December 2025.
15. The Coordinating Unit, working with the consultant, coordinated a collection of 14 original papers on the Sooty Falcon published in *Ornis Hungarica*, volume 34, issue 1 (2026)⁴.

Sooty Falcon Knowledge Exchange Meeting

16. On 19 November 2025, the Coordinating Unit convened an online Sooty Falcon Knowledge Exchange Meeting to support implementation of the ISSAP⁵. The meeting brought together experts and practitioners from Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Madagascar and Saudi Arabia to exchange information on research, monitoring and conservation, and to identify shared implementation priorities. Participants reported declines in breeding numbers on the Hawar Islands (Bahrain), highlighted the importance of the Red Sea islands as a global stronghold for the species confirmed by recent censuses carried out in the Saudi islands along the northern and central sections of the Red Sea, presented findings on newly discovered inland breeding sites in Jordan and in the Al Ula region of Saudi Arabia, tests on the suitability of different nest boxes for the species, and the preliminary results of ongoing satellite tracking of birds tagged in Saudi Arabia confirming wintering sites in western Madagascar.⁶ These results contribute significantly to fill in the knowledge gap identified in the ISSAP.
17. Participants raised concerns regarding the satellite transmitter failures, fragmented research and data-sharing arrangements, and discussed the possible role of food availability, invasive predators and climate change in population declines, as well as the risks and opportunities associated with artificial nest boxes. The meeting highlighted the need for coordinated work on migration ecology, tagging standards and data transparency, and identified standardized tagging, multi-year national monitoring, coordinated surveys of potential inland breeding areas and genetic sampling as priorities. The meeting report was published on 30 January 2026⁷.

Breeding Population Survey Protocol

³ 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.

⁴ *Ornis Hungarica* 2026, vol 34 (1) [http://www.ornis.hu/?contents&lang=eng&idd=52&vol=2026_34\(1\)](http://www.ornis.hu/?contents&lang=eng&idd=52&vol=2026_34(1))

⁵ <https://raptors.cms.int/meeting/sooty-falco-knowledge-exchange-meeting>

⁶ <https://raptors.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/2026-01/Meeting%20Report%202819-11-2025%29.pdf>

⁷ <https://raptors.cms.int/document/meeting-report-28>

18. To support standardized monitoring across the breeding range, the [Sooty Falcon Breeding Population Survey Protocol](#), which constitutes Annex 4 to the ISSAP, was published as a stand-alone document on 3 February 2026 for use by Range States, researchers and site managers.

ISSAP Workshop: Building support toward active conservation

19. On 5 February 2026, the Coordinating Unit hosted an online workshop targeted to the members of Sooty Falcon Working Group entitled "Sooty Falcon International Single Species Action Plan Workshop: Building support toward active conservation"⁸. The workshop reviewed the Plan and available implementation resources, with presentations on conservation activities in Saudi Arabia and Oman, satellite tagging in Madagascar supported by the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, and monitoring priorities. Participants identified priorities for breeding and non-breeding countries, including stronger monitoring, improved data sharing, assessment of pesticide risks and resource mobilisation. The [presentations](#) and workshop report ([UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/SFWorkshop1/Report](#)) are available on the Raptors MOU website.

Discussion and analysis

20. The adoption of the ISSAP by the CMS Standing Committee marks an important milestone in international cooperation for the conservation of the Sooty Falcon, providing a framework for coordinated action across its 29 Range States covered by the Plan. As a Category 1 species under the Raptors MOU, the Sooty Falcon is a priority for conservation action. Effective implementation of the ISSAP supports the objectives of the MOU and its Action Plan and can inform national or regional conservation strategies and relevant species action plans under paragraph 12 of the MOU.
21. Limited knowledge of the biology, ecology and population trends of the species remains a major constraint on the assessment of threats and on the prioritization of action. The Knowledge Exchange Meeting and the workshop highlighted the commitment of participating experts and Range States, alongside the need to standardize methods and improve data sharing. Wider use of the Breeding Population Survey Protocol, continued research and regular updates to the literature library would help generate comparable evidence for the Plan's mid-term review in 2030.
22. Priorities for the coming years are to secure the coordination support described in Annex 1, support the SFWG, convene Range States and mobilise resources for priority actions by Range States and partners. The proposed part-time ISSAP Coordinator would support the coordination function recommended by the Plan. Integrating relevant ISSAP actions into national raptor conservation strategies and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) would support implementation. Cooperation with the CMS Energy Task Force and relevant task forces addressing illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds could support action on specific threats, within their respective mandates and geographic remits.

Recommended actions

23. The Meeting of Signatories is invited to:

⁸ <https://raptors.cms.int/meeting/sooty-falcon-international-single-species-action-plan-workshop-building-support-toward>

- a. take note of this document and of progress in supporting the coordination and implementation of the ISSAP;
- b. welcome the adoption of the ISSAP by the 56th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee, thank the compilers of the Plan, the members of the SFWG and contributing Range States for their contributions to its development and implementation, and thank the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates, for its financial support to the development of the Plan;
- c. encourage Signatories that are Range States of the Sooty Falcon to identify and implement relevant priority ISSAP actions, integrate these into appropriate national strategies and planning processes, including NBSAPs, and use the Breeding Population Survey Protocol in relevant breeding-population monitoring programmes;
- d. requests the Coordinating Unit to develop terms of reference (TOR) for the SFWG that reflect its revised role in supporting the implementation of the Plan;
- e. invite Signatories that are Range States of the Sooty Falcon to identify suitable representatives or experts for the SFWG, in accordance with TOR one developed, and to share relevant data and publications with the Coordinating Unit, with appropriate safeguards for sensitive breeding-site and tracking information;
- f. invite Signatories that are Range States of the Sooty Falcon to include information on relevant ISSAP activities and implementation needs in their national reports to the Raptors MOU, using the applicable reporting arrangements;
- g. invite Signatories, Cooperating Partners and other donors in a position to do so to indicate, during the present Meeting or in writing to the Coordinating Unit, the financial or in-kind support they may provide for the priority needs identified in Annex 1, including part-time coordination support; and
- h. request the Coordinating Unit to report to MOS5 on coordination arrangements, support mobilised and implementation progress reported by Range States and partners.

ANNEX 1

Indicative resource requirements for selected activities supporting implementation of the International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon, 2027–2029 (EUR)

Based on Activity 1.1.28 of the CMS Programme of Work for the intersessional period between COP15 and COP16 ([UNEP/CMS/COP15/Resolution 15.1/Rev.1/Annex 6](#))

Activity 1.1.28 - Sooty Falcon International Single Species Action Plan: Coordinate, convene Range States meeting and implement priority actions

Mandate: Action Plan, Resolution 12.12 (Rev.COP15)

Budget item	Years			Total (EUR)
	2027 (EUR)	2028 (EUR)	2029 (EUR)	
Part-time Coordinator	25,000	25,000	25,000	75,000
Meeting (incl. participants travel)	30,000	–	–	30,000
Grants / implementing partners	20,000	20,000	20,000	60,000
Total funds required	75,000	45,000	45,000	165,000

These indicative requirements cover selected coordination and implementation activities, rather than the full cost of implementing the ISSAP. Inclusion in the Programme of Work does not imply that funding has been secured.