



THE INTERNATIONAL SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN FOR THE SOOTY FALCON (ISSAP)

Sooty falcon (*Falco concolor*) © Meidad Goren

General Traits

The sooty falcon is a medium-sized bird of prey with long and narrow wings. Adults display a dark plumage, while juveniles are brownish-grey.

Population Size

Information on the size of breeding populations of sooty falcons is scattered, with many countries lacking recent surveys. 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.

Main Threats

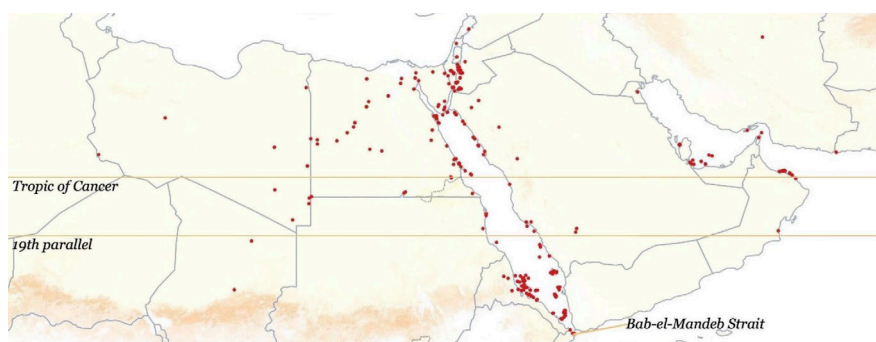
- Urban, industrial and energy development
- Disturbance by tourists and fishers
- Lack of knowledge on the species
- Introduced terrestrial predators
- Locust and *Quelea* control operations
- Hunting and taking
- Lack of knowledge on the impacts of climate change
- Poisoning and habitat degradation from agricultural intensification

Overview

The sooty falcon (*Falco concolor*) is classified as Vulnerable following an estimated 18–20% decline of its global population over the past decade. Significant knowledge gaps remain regarding its migration route and stopovers sites, mortality causes, distribution and the impacts of key threats, making coordinated international conservation action increasingly urgent. Following consultations and the establishment of the Sooty Falcon Working Group (SFWG), the International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon (ISSAP) was endorsed by the CMS Standing Committee in March 2025. The ISSAP aims to reduce the species' risk of extinction by halting the decline of its population to a point where it qualifies for downlisting to at least Near Threatened.

Breeding Distribution and Migration

The sooty falcon breeds discontinuously across 16 countries, from the central and eastern Sahara through the Red Sea region to the southern Arabian/Persian Gulf. After breeding, birds migrate through eastern Africa and across the Mozambique Channel to winter mainly in southwestern and central-western Madagascar.



Breeding distribution of the Sooty Falcon. Red dots represent confirmed breeding sites. © ISSAP

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ISSAP Key Objectives

The 12-year-long Plan covers approximately three generations of the species and puts in place actions under three objectives:

1. protect the species;
2. improve knowledge through monitoring and research;
3. exchange lessons learnt and raise awareness.

Range States

The sooty falcon's distribution is believed to cover a total of 29 Range States: Bahrain, Central African Republic (the), Chad, Congo (the), Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Libya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Oman, Pakistan, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan (the), Uganda, United Arab Emirates (the), United Republic of Tanzania (the), Yemen and Zambia. In addition to these Range States, the species is considered vagrant in 19 other countries. All relevant stakeholders are also encouraged to take active, coordinated and immediate action.

Implementation Milestones

- Provide full legal protection to the species and its colonies
- Develop National Action Plans
- Monitor national breeding populations
- Assess threats along the flyway
- Engage local communities to protect the species

Further Resources

The CMS Raptors MOU website provides resources to support implementation of the Sooty Falcon Action Plan. These include a library of literature on the species, a breeding population survey protocol, and reports and presentations from Sooty Falcon meetings.



Wintering habitat of the Sooty Falcon © Bernard Gagnon

International Instruments

Several international tools and instruments are relevant to the conservation of the sooty falcon and attribute specific classification:

- CMS: Appendix II, since 1979
- Raptors MOU: Category 1, since 2008
- CITES: Appendix II, since 1975
- Convention on the Conservation

of Wildlife and their Natural Habitats in the Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council: Appendix III

Other Environmental Frameworks:

- CBD
- African Convention
- Jeddah Convention
- Kuwait Convention
- Nairobi Convention

Read the full International Single Species Action Plan:



About CMS

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), also known as the Bonn Convention, is an environmental treaty of the United Nations that provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory animals and their habitats.

CMS Instruments

Animals receive protection under CMS through listing on its two Appendices, through global or regional agreements and through action plans. The Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU) is the CMS instrument devoted to the conservation of this group of species.

Contact



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For more Fact Sheets please visit: <http://www.cms.int/en/publications/factsheets>



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