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Citation: Wyatt, Tanya (2011) The illegal trade of raptors in the Russian Federation. Contemporary Justice Review, 14 (2). pp. 103-123. ISSN 1028-2580

Published by: Taylor & Francis

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2011.565969>
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2011.565969>>

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The Illegal Trade of Raptors in the Russian Federation

Abstract

Wildlife trafficking, along with other green crimes, receives little attention from the criminological community. This study provides further knowledge of this black market, and exposes the structural harms that are associated with it, by examining the illegal trade in falcons in Russia FarEast. The structural harms proposed here are that wildlife trafficking, and the illegal raptor trade in particular endanger the environment, is cruel to animals, and threatens national and human security because of its connection to other dangerous, illicit activities. Through semi-structured interviews, trade statistics, and online news sources, a framework is developed as to who is involved, how it is occurring and where it is taking place as well as possible ways in which to curb this activity.

Keywords: Green Criminology; Illegal Wildlife Trade; Wildlife Trafficking; Corruption; Organized Crime; Russia.

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April 18, 2009

The Illegal Trade of Raptors in the Russian Federation

Throughout history, humans have used the resources available in the environment, specifically the wildlife, as a means of survival and a source of capital. The trade of such products is as ancient as the civilizations around the globe. The immense value of some wildlife and wildlife products has led and is leading to the overexploitation of those populations of plants and animals. Currently, such actions are a source of concern for conservation in conjunction with the call for sustainable use. This issue must also now receive attention from criminologists because of the criminal and structurally harmful elements of wildlife trade, for which evidence will be given within this paper.

In order to decrease these destructive activities, governments have drafted some legislation criminalizing certain aspects of wildlife trade as required by becoming members of international treaties, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES manages the killing, capturing or using of threatened and endangered species and their products, by regulating their trade, and/or monitoring species' populations for trade purposes. The legislation and treaties have had some impact, but a huge worldwide illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife articles is flourishing. Whereas this black market has and continues to receive focus from a conservation and biological aspect, there has been little research into the criminological aspect or structural harm of this trade. Specifically, the causes, profiles (little is known of the traffickers and if they form syndicates or act opportunistically), and motivations of the perpetrators, and the political, social, and cultural context influencing this green crime (and related harms) are largely unknown (Warchol, Zupan & Clack, 2003, p. 7). "Perhaps a reason that this set of trades has garnered less critical attention is because they so clearly link to the insatiable consumer demand of wealthy countries...Luxury furnishings,

clothes, accessories are the motor of the endangered species business” (Naim, 2005, p. 174).

This possibly intentional oversight must be broached because of the large-scale impact that wildlife trafficking directly can have on our planet and the species involved, let alone the further political and economic issues it can affect through its connectedness with state corruption, terrorism, transnational, and organized crime, and other forms of illicit trade.

Purpose of the Study

The species that supply the various illegal wildlife trades are numerous and are found throughout the world. This article will use the illegal raptor trade in Russia Far East as a case study to highlight the criminal and harmful elements that are integral in this black market. Additionally, the aim of this paper is to fill part of the gap in knowledge about the illegal wildlife trade by discovering in the illegal trade of birds of prey who is involved; how it is occurring; and where the trade is taking place. To begin, the method of data collection will be summarized that was designed to fulfill these research aims. This is followed by a brief history of the raptor trade and falconry. Essential to a wildlife trafficking discussion is an overview of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, an international convention dedicated to wildlife trade. Next, the role of Russia within this trade is explored, as are the dynamics of the illegal trade of raptors. The discussion section will focus on how this illegal trade embodies three important structural harms – a danger to the environment, cruelty to animals, and a threat to human and national security because of this markets' ties to organized crime, transnational crime, corruption, and possibly terrorism. Finally, suggestions will be made as to how the illegal trade in raptors might be curbed.

Methods

There were three sources of data collection for this study. First, nineteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with NGO and government officials mostly in Russia, but with CITES and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as well. These interviews consisted of the original purposive sample of wildlife trade experts chosen for their knowledge of the illegal wildlife trade and the snowball sample that resulted from these initial interviews. Questions centered on the research aims of discovering who is involved, and how and where it is taking place, which also brings to light the three structural harms connected to this black market. In order to maintain the anonymity of those experts interviewed, when these interviews are referenced only the organization where the expert worked is given.

Second, the United Nations Environment Program – Wildlife Conservation Monitoring Center on behalf of CITES maintains a trade database detailing all of the recorded transactions. Member countries are required at the end of year to send CITES a report on all of the trades that they have been a part of. Using this online accessible database, all trade of birds of prey species used for falconry was gathered that involved the USSR and the Russian Federation between 1975 and 2006. This quantified the legal trade taking place and gave some indication as to the illegal transactions occurring as these too are reported to the CITES Secretariat. Finally, online news sources were searched for coverage of the illegal falcon and wildlife trade. This included two Russian search engines, Rambler and Yandex, which scan all of the major news sources as well as regional and local media. This resulted in hundreds of articles being examined for evidence that the media and the wider public are aware of illegal wildlife trade, and who they believe is involved in addition to how and where it occurring.

Background

History and description of falconry and the legal raptor trade.

The trade in falcons, and some other birds of prey such as hawks and eagles, stems from their use in the sport of falconry. Though it is still not completely confirmed, it is believed that falconry, or hawking, developed in the advanced civilizations of the Near, Middle, or Far East (Epstein, 1943). This practice is thought to have originated in the nomadic tribes of the Asiatic plains, as a means of securing essential food in one of the first forms of hunting (ArabNet, 2002). Ancient records and artifacts support the existence of falconry in this region of the world (Ash, 2007). Falconry's expansion into the western world is evident from literature and art depicting the use of birds of prey in hunting in Rome, Greece, Europe, and much later the United States (Epstein, 1943; Oswald, 1982). In the later years of falconry, it had developed into a sport rather than exclusively a means of survival, and it is believed to be the world's oldest sport (Oswald, 1982). Falconry was well developed in Russia and Central Asia in the 16th and 17th centuries, but with the advent of firearms in the 18th century, it fell into disuse in Russia and throughout Europe (Oswald, 1982, p. 18). The practice continues to the present day in the Middle East and in Central Asia (ArabNet, 2002). As is evident, there is a historical and cultural component to falconry and therefore also to the trade of raptors. Whereas this is an important aspect, an examination of the this component was beyond the scope of this paper.

Those birds used in falconry require an extensive amount of training to become hunters. The sport also requires a great deal of equipment and space. Birds are fitted with jesses, or leathers straps, around their ankles that the handler uses to control them. These are permanently worn, and when not hunting the jesses are attached to a leash that either the handler controls, or that is tied to a perch or swivel to keep the bird from flying away (Oswald, 1982). Falcons,

hawks, and eagles are kept in mews, which are special buildings where the birds live when not outside. During transportation to the hunting grounds and waiting to hunt, birds are often fitted with hoods covering their eyes, so that they remain calm (Oswald, 1982). This has replaced an older practice of sewing their eyes closed with a needle and thread (Oswald, 1982). Training involves using lures and a system of rewards to induce the bird of prey to trap the quarry (Oswald, 1982). The care of raptors can be time consuming including daily exercise, close monitoring of the birds' health, and maintenance of the beak and talons (Oswald, 1982). The falcon flies for its prey from the fist of the handler, and through the use of whistles, returns to the fist when the hunt is over (Oswald, 1982). The bird is also fitted with bells that help the handler locate the raptor in the event that the bird does not return to the fist after the hunt, or when called (Oswald, 1982; Ash, 2007). Female birds are usually used as they are bigger and less skittish than the males, but males can be used for longer periods throughout the year because their biology does not signal them to nest, but to continue hunting to provide for the female (Ash, 2007).

There are established stocks of breeding birds of prey in captivity, but wild raptors are still taken to be trained as hunting birds, or to add to the gene diversification of captive colonies. Wild falcons and hawks are obtained either from nests when their feathers are half grown, or as adults with nets (Oswald, 1982). If taken from the nest, only one or two are taken, but if there is one, it will not be taken in order to conserve the species (Oswald, 1982, p. 20). This of course might provide sustainable populations of birds of prey, but as will be evident such care in capturing has not been maintained throughout these birds' ranges. Currently, trade in wild raptors has mostly been criminalized because all species are endangered.

“In falconry, the splendid Gyr falcon *Falco rusticolus* is much prized for its size and the handsome appearance of its grey-white plumage. The Peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*

has darker, brown-and-cream plumage, and can pursue its prey at a tremendous rate, often achieving speeds of over 200km/h, making it the fastest of all living creatures” (ArabNet, 2002).

Other birds that are captured for this trade are northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*, and the Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* (Lyapustin, 2006). The Peregrine, Saker falcon *Falco cherrug* and Gyrfalcons, taken from more northerly Russia, were rarely used when falconry was observed in the late 1950’s in Central Asia (Oswald, 1982, p. 19). Falcons are extraordinary hunters and very valuable in the desert, “where climatic conditions are extreme and no protection from the elements is available. Here, the falcon can pursue its prey from a great distance, and with a speed and accuracy second to none” (ArabNet, 2002). Training and care of the falcons, as mentioned above, is a time consuming and expensive endeavor, and maybe it is this aspect that has made falconry a luxury sport of the nobility.

“Today, the Arabian Peninsula is one of the last places in the world where falconry remains an important sporting activity. Although falconry clubs do exist in America and in almost all European countries, it is in the Gulf region that the sport is held in truly high regard and commands the greatest interest. The people of the Gulf have a strong personal commitment to falconry and ensure that it is practiced in the correct manner, with the proper respect due to Islamic customs” (ArabNet, 2002).

CITES

No research involving international trade of wildlife would be possible without a discussion of the governing treaty – the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora known as CITES. As with green crimes, CITES has received little if no scrutiny from the criminological community, and is one of the few “key agreements which now await detailed study by criminologists” (Carrabine, Iganski, Lee, Plummer, & South, 2004, p. 322). It is a convention with voluntary membership that once countries have become parties to it, they are obligated to pass legislation meeting the minimum requirements determined by the

convention (CITES, 2007b). Member states are allowed to have stricter legislation in their own countries. For instance, some countries require a permit for the export of all wildlife, and not just a species listed on one of the CITES appendices (de Klemm, 1993, p. 116). Each member designates two organizations or divisions of the government as CITES authorities. One is the Management Authority, who oversees the permit system, and the other is the Scientific Authority, who is in charge of the identification and biological aspects of administering the convention (CITES, 2007b).

The framework of the convention consists of three appendices with varying degrees of conservation priority. Appendix I species are only traded in exceptional cases due to their danger of extinction. These specimens require both an import and export permit or re-export certificate. Re-export is the export of any specimen that has previously been imported (Wijnstekers, 2001, p. 28). In the case of re-export of Appendix I species, the import permit and (re)-export permit (both of which are required since it is Appendix I) are verified by the Management Authority who issues a re-export certificate. “An important fact to establish is that the documents concerning the importation really concern the specimens to be re-exported in order to avoid the possibility that illegally imported specimens are legalized” (Wijnstekers, 2001, p. 85). Species listed in Appendix II are less threatened, and can be traded with the proper export permit after it has been determined by the Scientific Authority that the trade will not have a detrimental effect on the population (CITES, 2007b). Since Appendix II species do not require an import permit, it is difficult for a Management Authority to verify that the import was legal and issue a re-export certificate. Customs should give an endorsed copy of the (re)-export certificate to the importer so that they can prove the legality (Wijnstekers, 2001, p. 95). Appendix III includes wildlife that is being monitored, and which member countries may have

individually discovered to be threatened in their territories (CITES, 2007b). For the detailed criteria of how species are listed in the separate appendices, see The Annexes of Resolution Conference 9.24 of CITES.

There is a permanent CITES Secretariat, who is part of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). The UNEP's Wildlife Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC), TRAFFIC (a NGO focused on wildlife trade), and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) counsel the Secretariat. The four committees that form the foundation for CITES are the Standing, Animal, Plant, and Nomenclature Committees. This is where the research and suggestions are formulated. Every few years, the member states, referred to as the Conference of the Parties, meet to discuss proposals and changes to CITES (CITES, 2007b). Currently, there are 169 members from all parts of the world (CITES, 2007b).

The Russian Federation is a party to CITES. They are the 112th member, and are located in the European region (CITES, 2006a). The Soviet Union was originally a party on December 8, 1976, but the Russian Federation joined in January of 1992 (CITES, 2006a). The CITES Management Authority in Russia is the Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resources Management – the Department of Specially Protected Natural Areas, Ecological Expertise and Permitting Activity (CITES, 2006a). There are several Scientific Authorities, which are as follows: The All Russian Institute of Nature Protection, The Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Science, and The Russian Ichthyological Commission (CITES, 2006a). In the Russian Federation, there are 67 plant species listed and 266 species of animals listed in the CITES Appendices (CITES, 2006a). The birds of prey species traded are in Table 1.

| Scientific Name | Common Name | Appendix |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| <i>Accipiter badius</i> | Shikra | II |
| <i>Accipiter gentilis</i> | Northern Goshawk | II |
| <i>Accipiter nisus</i> | Eurasian Sparrowhawk | II |
| <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> | Golden Eagle | II |
| <i>Aquila clanga</i> | Greater Spotted Eagle | II |
| <i>Aquila heliaca</i> | Imperial Eagle | I |
| <i>Aquila nipalensis</i> | Steppe Eagle | II |
| <i>Aquila pomarina</i> | Lesser Spotted Eagle | II |
| <i>Aquila rapax</i> | Tawny Eagle | II |
| <i>Falco amurensis</i> | Amur Falcon | II |
| <i>Falco biarmicus</i> | Lanner Falcon | II |
| <i>Falco cherrug</i> | Saker Falcon | II |
| <i>Falco columbarius</i> | Merlin | II |
| <i>Falco naumanni</i> | Lesser Kestrel | II |
| <i>Falco pelegrinoides</i> | Barbary Falcon | II |
| <i>Falco peregrinus</i> | Peregrine Falcon | I/II |
| <i>Falco rusticolus</i> | Gyr Falcon | I/II |
| <i>Falco subbuteo</i> | Hobby | II |
| <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> | Common Kestrel | II |
| <i>Falco vespertinus</i> | Red-Footed Falcon | II |

Source: Adapted from CITES Species Database

Russia's Role and the Current State of the Raptor Trade

The limited amount of literature written discussing the raptor trade in Russia indicates that the Middle East is the most prominent consumer for wild caught falcons. This includes Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (Lyapustin, 2006; WWF Vladivostok, 2006). So since falconry is isolated mostly to the Gulf States, what is Russia's role in the continued trade of falcons, both legal and illegal? The answer is that Russia has become one of the main sources for wild caught raptors that are taken to the Middle East for use in the continued ancient sport of falconry. As populations of falcons have dwindled in Central Asia, traders or traffickers of the birds have had to increase the range from which they seek their product (Lyapustin, 2006). In the 1990's then and today, this means that Russia has become the

supply area, whereas before the falcons could have been found further south. Falcons are caught in *Primorsky Krai*, which is the region around Vladivostok in the Far East, and on the peninsula of Kamchatka (also a region in the Far East) (WWF Vladivostok, personal communication, April 19, 2007).

CITES data shows the following trends of legal transactions: Trade data for the USSR given to the CITES Secretariat, begins in 1981 and continues through 1992. There are 19 different species of falcons, hawks, and eagles traded. The most frequently exported raptors are the Tawny eagle *Aquila rapax* with 100 birds traded from 1983 to 1991, the Goshawk with 85 entering trade from 1982 to 1992, the Saker falcon with 64 being traded from 1981 to 1992, and the Golden eagle with 53 traded from 1982 to 1992. Nearly all of these birds were live animals, with only two being eggs. During the period of the Soviet Union, the vast majority of the trade is headed west into Europe. The main destinations in Europe were former Czechoslovakia, and Germany. An exception to this is that Japan imported 53 raptors between 1987 and 1992. Trade to the Middle East is not apparent until 1991, when the United Arab Emirates imported one Goshawk and Syria imported 15 Saker falcons.

The trends for Russia prove to be different. In total, there were 17 species traded. The four most commonly traded from 1992 through 2006 can be found in Figure 1. The raptor that is most frequently exported from the Russian Federation is the Saker falcon with 1,352 raptors, with only 142 of these being taken from the wild. The next most commonly exported bird of prey is the Goshawk with 1,274 birds. All but three of these hawks were wild. The Goshawk was the most frequently exported bird each year until 2002, when the number of Saker falcon exports overtook those of the Goshawk. The third most prevalently traded raptor is the Tawny eagle with 333 birds being exported, and 47 of these from farming practices. The purpose for

most of the exports was listed as commercial reasons, with some trade for zoos, circuses, breeding in captivity, and personal use. Other birds of prey of particular use in falconry, such as the Peregrine falcon and the Gyrfalcon, had only four captive bred falcons and 130 falcons, 69 of which were captive bred respectively.



Figure 1 – Source: Adapted from CITES Trade Database managed by UNEP-WCMC

The countries to which Russia exports raptors also differs from the destinations during the time of the Soviet Union. The two main importers of Russian birds of prey are Japan and the United Arab Emirates as seen in Figures 2 and 3. In Figure 2, Japan has imported a total of 1,958 birds, 1,789 of which were wild. The bird primarily imported is the Goshawk, with around 900 birds from the wild. Over the 14-year period of data, the UAE has imported 1,171 birds of prey. Only 166 of these were wild, which is 14% as compared to Japan's wild caught imported raptors, which totaled 91%. The Saker falcon was the most frequent import at 863 birds, with the vast

majority of them being from farms. The second most popular bird of prey was the Goshawk at 152, all of those being from the wild.

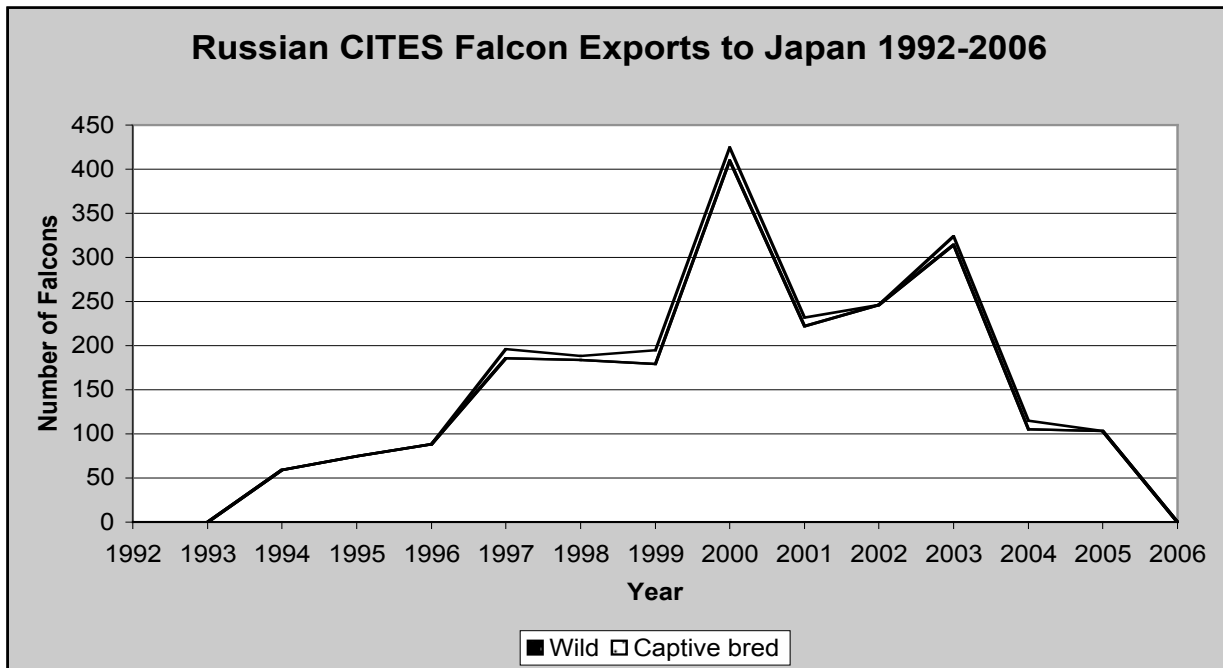


Figure 2 – Source: Adapted from CITES Trade Database managed by UNEP-WCMC

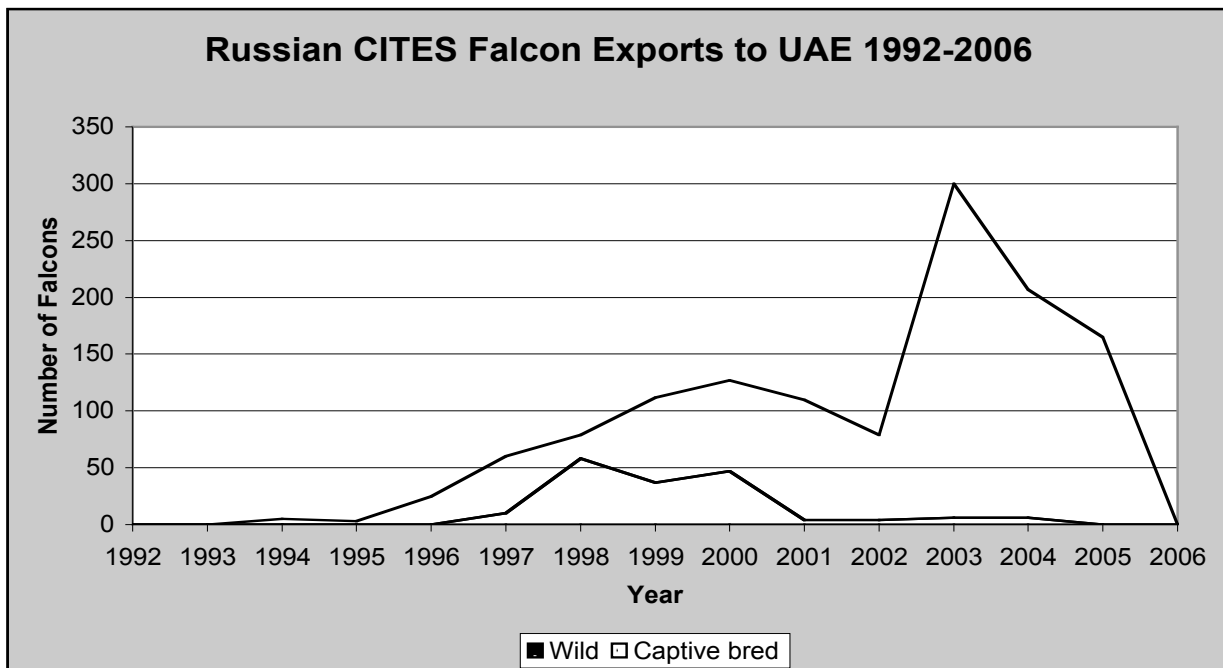


Figure 3 - Source: Adapted from CITES Trade Database managed by UNEP-WCMC

In every year of complete data, so through 2006, Japan has imported more birds than the UAE. Other countries importing falcons from the Russian Federation are Uzbekistan, which imported more than 200 birds over this period. This was primarily the Saker falcon, and none of them were taken from the wild. Europe therefore is no longer the leader in imports of Russian birds of prey. The other countries in the Middle East, which imported raptors were Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Israel, but this was around 100 falcons in total, and all of them, except for the one Tawny eagle taken to Israel, were taken from captive stocks.

In further comparing the trade in raptors under the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation, there is definitely an increase in exports that coincides with the opening of borders that occurred with the break up of the USSR. In 1981, the Soviet Union exported only 10 raptors. This amount oscillated up and down as it climbed to an all time high of 74 in 1991. In 1992, there is data for both the USSR and Russia. The USSR exported 27, and Russia exported 82, already more than its predecessor. Quantities of exported birds of prey continued to rise through out the 1990's, reaching 560 in 2000 (Figure 1). After two slower years of trade, in 2003, 667 raptors were exported from the Russian Federation. The following three years proved to be slower.

As will be shown in the next section, the literature indicates that the demand for the birds of prey in Russia and Central Asia is coming from the Middle East. While there is some demand from this region, the CITES trade data shows that there are more raptors exported to Japan in the legal trade, then to the countries implicated by the experts. If the illegal trade is then being fueled by demand from the Gulf States is the issue which will now be examined.

The Illegal Raptor Trade

The trade of birds for falconry is having a detrimental effect on the populations of these birds in the Russian Federation. The four birds in particular that are taken from Russia – the Saker falcon, the Gyrfalcon, the Peregrine falcon, and the Goshawk (WWF Vladivostok, 2006) – are experiencing declines, and experts say that that is due to the following reasons: the Saker falcon are endanger because of the use of pesticides, and because they are poached from their nests to be used in falconry abroad (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). This has caused a catastrophic drop in numbers, and because of the increased popularity of falconry, the Saker falcon is threatened to become extinct (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). Populations of Saker falcons are estimated around 2 – 3,000 pairs in the Russian Federation (Falco, 1999, p. 3). This is 1/20th of the numbers from 20 years ago (Falco, 1999, p. 3). One of the greatest dangers to the populations of Gyrfalcons are poaching and illegally smuggling them out of the Russian Federation, especially the white colored raptors (WWF Vladivostok, 2006, p. 15). Illegal taking of the young from nests, and using nets to capture adults migrating to the seacoast in autumn, are real dangers to the preservation of this species (WWF Vladivostok, 2006).

The Peregrine falcon populations are also limited by the collection of its eggs and young for falconry (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). The Goshawk is also endangered because their young are being taken from nests by poachers wanting them for falconry in other countries (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). The loss of habitat and forest fires also adds to their threatened status (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). To a lesser degree, the Golden Eagle is also poached for use in falconry abroad (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). CITES (2004) also states that illicit trade is a concern, and threatens wild populations especially of Saker falcons.

Illegal capture of birds of prey, and smuggling of them began in the USSR at the end of the 1980's (Lyapustin, 2006). This was connected to the increased access and contact with foreigners (Lyapustin, 2006). The Arab governments showed interest in capturing Saker falcons in the Altai region of Russia in the early 1990's (Lyapustin, 2006). From 1991 to 1996, most of the poaching and smuggling took place in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, then independent countries (Lyapustin, 2006). As a result of this activity, the populations of these birds in Central Asia decreased (Lyapustin, 2006). In the period from 1996 to 1998, poaching was prevalent, and spread into Russian territory (Lyapustin, 2006). Prior to this, regions in the Russian Federation began to attempt to legally protect their populations of birds of prey. In 1994, capturing of Saker falcons became illegal in the Chitinsky oblast (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 90). In the years following, restrictions increased. In 1995-6, the capturing of Saker falcons and Peregrine falcons was made illegal in Pribaikal, Khakasia, and Tuva. Kamchatka banned capturing of Gyrfalcons in 1994, when a resident of Saint Petersburg was found at the airport with three Gyrfalcons (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 90). In 1995, a woman from Kyiv, Ukraine was found with two more (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 90).

The list of seizures by Customs in Russia Far East goes on as is evident in Table 2, as they repeatedly found contraband birds of prey. In 1997 alone at airports around the country, more than 200 Saker falcons were seized (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 93). Some years have seen between 200 and 1000 birds being seized (Falco, 1999, p. 3). Lyapustin (2006, p. 97), a retired Customs official, states that Saker falcons are exported to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Oman, even though the above listed CITES data supports this only in that 18 captive bred Saker falcons have been traded to Saudi Arabia from Russia. The Federal Security Bureau (FSB), the successor of the KGB, estimates that 100 rare birds are smuggled out of Kamchatka each year, and that this is

a five-fold increase within the last five years (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 95, 100). Seizures account for only one-quarter of the total amount of smuggling suspected and often those birds seized die or are given to zoos because they are unable to be returned to the wild (Lyapustin, 2006).

Table 2 – Russian Far East Custom's Seizures of Birds of Prey from 1994 to 2005

| Time Period | Species | Quantity | Russian Far East Source | Transit/Destination |
|---------------|-----------|----------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1994 | Gyrfalcon | 3 | Kamchatka | |
| 1995 | Gyrfalcon | 2 | Kamchatka | |
| 11/99 – 03/00 | Gyrfalcon | 21 | Kamchatka | |
| 03/00 – 01/01 | Gyrfalcon | 10 | Kamchatka | |
| 2000 | Gyrfalcon | 5 | Unknown | |
| 2000 | Goshawk | 1 | Chukota | Moscow |
| 12/01 | Gyrfalcon | 15 | Unknown | Moscow to Armenia |
| 2004 | Gyrfalcon | 4 | Chukota | |
| 2004 | Gyrfalcon | 8 | Chukota | |
| 2004 | Gyrfalcon | 25 | Chukota | Irkutsk |
| 2004 | Gyrfalcon | 14 | Kamchatka | |
| 2005 | Gyrfalcon | 15 | Kamchatka | |
| 2005 | Gyrfalcon | 5 | Kamchatka | |
| 2005 | Gyrfalcon | 10 | Kamchatka | Moscow |
| 2005 | Gyrfalcon | 10 | Magadan | Moscow |
| 2005 | Goshawk | 1 | Magadan | Moscow |

Source: Adapted from Lyapustin, 2006.

A survey of Russian online news sources indicates awareness that the raptor trade is illegally supplied by Russian populations of birds. In a search of Yandex for articles written about the smuggling of Far Eastern fauna and flora, 13% of the 235 articles found mentioned falcons as an animal that is seized as contraband. Further scanning of news articles related to illegal trade in wildlife, also uncovered stories detailing the smuggling of falcons from their Russian habitats. Live falcons have been reported being sold at markets, particularly Krasnoyarsk in Siberia. The same search parameters conducted at the Russian search engine Rambler yielded different findings. Scanning for smuggling, unlawful, or illegal trade of wildlife, returned no articles written about the illegal trade in falcons from the Far East of Russia.

Closer examination of some of these articles show coverage of the confiscation that occurs of live tranquilized falcons at the airports (Goverdovskaya, 2003). In fact, Goverdovskaya (2003, p. 2) has stated,

“Birds of prey are the main item of contraband going out of Russia. They are usually delivered to Arab countries... The price of the goods in process of movement on a chain grows in hundreds and even thousand times. For example, endangered birds of prey like the Saker falcon, which comes from the Altai, has a huge popularity in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates where during a season of hunting each sheikh is obliged to have wild captured falcons. In Russia, at the intermediaries the falcon costs \$15,000, and during a season of hunting Arabs with pleasure buy birds for \$40,000 – 70,000 for an individual. The same falcon, but trained, can cost up to \$100,000. The difference at resale is enormous”.

Experts and NGO staff concur that there is an illegal trade in falcons, hawks, and eagles from the Far East that is a cause for concern. The CITES senior officer of Anti-smuggling, Fraud, and Organized Crime (personal communication, December 20, 2006) spoke of the illegal trade of falcons to the Middle East, as did the WWF Moscow (personal communication, April 12, 2007), the WWF Vladivostok (personal communication, April 19, 2007), IFAW Moscow (personal communication, April 17, 2007), and the Russian NGO Phoenix (personal communication, April 24, 2007). Phoenix (personal communication, April 24, 2007) thought that birds are taken illegally from Kamchatka, and then transported west to Novosibirsk, Dagestan (a region in the Caucasus), or Moscow, before going to the United Arab Emirates. IFAW (personal communication, April 17, 2007) is also concerned with the falcon trade that begins in Russia and ends in Arab countries. A single falcon, especially a more rare white one, can fetch up to \$50,000 in the Middle East. These arctic falcons are more prestigious, but the typical brown ones are more commonly traded (IFAW, personal communication, April 17, 2007). There have been several seizures in the last year and IFAW (personal communication, April 17, 2007) successfully released several of these falcons that had been illegally taken from

Chukota, and were being transported to the Middle East. WWF Moscow (personal communication, April 12, 2007) claimed that the Saker falcon, the Gyrfalcon, and the Peregrine falcon are the three most commonly desired birds, which are native to Russia, and in demand for use in falconry in the Middle East. It is a luxury and fashionable commodity for rich Arab sheiks (WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007). The scale appears to be fairly negligible, but from a conservation standpoint it is unsustainable (WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007). There are approximately 500 – 600 birds taken each year (WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007). In the 1980's, Central Asia was the main source, but 90% of those nests are now gone, so now traders come to the Altai, Zabaikal, and northern Kamchatka (WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007).

CITES trade data offers little support for an extensive criminal enterprise originating in Russia and ending in the Middle East. From 1992 to 2006, there are only six reported incidents of illegal transactions. In 1993, two Saker falcons were exported from Russia to the United Arab Emirates, and one Golden eagle was exported to the United States. In 1994, 58 illegal Gyrfalcons were exported from Russia to the United Arab Emirates, and 41 Saker falcons were exported to Kazakhstan. In 1998, Russia imported 12 illegal Peregrine falcons from Mongolia. And finally in 1999, Russia exported 15 illegal Saker falcons to an unlisted country. These numbers in no way indicate that 500 – 600 birds are taken each year, but maybe this is due to the fact that in-country confiscations are not reported to CITES. CITES though, in acknowledgement and an attempt to curb the illegal trade in birds of prey, has created an Enforcement Task Force to discuss the smuggling of falcons (CITES, 2007a). They have “produced an identification guide to help customs and other law enforcement agencies target criminals who remove falcons from the wild, smuggle them across borders, and then sell them

illegally for falconry” (CITES, 2007a). From the above limited data set, it is impossible to make large conjectures, but it provides a small amount of support for the idea that the Middle East might be involved in the illegal trade and that Central Asia, such as Kazakhstan and Mongolia, are transit and source countries for the raptors as well. In spite of the small amount of CITES data regarding illegal trade, every year Customs and FSB catch more than 20 smugglers of rare Far Eastern species of birds (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 97), and there are a wide variety of people involved in this global black market.

Who is Involved?

According to Russian ornithologists, the people responsible for the illegal falcon trade are specialists from Arab countries that have now endangered the populations of birds of prey in Russia (Lyapustin, 2006). The recorded instances of confiscations challenge this notion and offer a picture that shows a wider trend of Russians being involved in the illegal falcon trade from the beginning of the chain. Research by a former Russian Custom's officer establishes a complex picture with a variety of people involved at different steps along the smuggling chain (Lyapustin, 2006). The first step in this operation, the capture of the bird of prey, appears to be perpetrated by Russians and some Middle Easterners (Lyapustin, 2006). This can be carried out by inhabitants of taiga settlements and villages, professional hunters, workers of hunting facilities, and/or amateur hunters (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). The Middle East Falcon Research Group sites that a minority of Syrian students are responsible for some of the poaching (Flaco, 1999). WWF Moscow and IFAW claimed that crime syndicates are involved in this trade, and this is facilitated through some Syrian and Lebanese students studying at Russian universities (WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007; IFAW, personal communication, April 17,

2007). Research by WWF in Vladivostok supports that the capture of birds of prey is an organised operation (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). In the mountains of Altai in southern Russia, reportedly, there are groups specializing in the capture of raptors (Lyapustin, 2006). One such group consisted of four Syrians who had captured nearly 50 birds (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 98). The leader was sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison, and so were the Russian air transportation workers that assisted with the smuggling (Lyapustin, 2006, p.98). One media report claims that after several arrests by Customs for the capturing of falcons, the illegal trade became more professional in order to avoid inspectors (RIA-Siberia, in press). The groups accomplished this through training, improving equipment, and capturing falcons in more remote regions (RIA-Siberia, in press). It is thought that they operate in small, closed groups of two or three people, and that they are filling orders that they have received from Moscow (WWF Vladivostok, personal communication, April 19, 2007).

After the capture of the live falcon, the bird is passed along the smuggling chain. Transportation in this process is key, and that is why the criminal network of smugglers is made up of drivers of cargo transport, personnel of the railways (mechanics, drivers, conductors), airline personnel (crew members, baggage handlers) (WWF Vladivostok, personal communication, April 19, 2007; WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007), and tour firm employees (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). In the capitals of the regions, there are specialists organising such enterprises (WWF Vladivostok, 2006). Russian Federal Customs officials believe that the very high profit of selling raptors attracts these international syndicates (Versii, in press). As is now evident, the picture is complex with a variety of people from different professions and parts of the world that are involved in stealing Russia's raptors.

Where and how is it taking place?

It is known then the occupations and the nationalities of those making up the organized gangs that trade falcons. Now how they are able to smuggle their live product and to where is further explored. Directions of the main smuggling operations are reported by WWF Vladivostok (2006, p. 50) to be as follows – the birds leave from the northern far east airports on flights to the interior of Russia - Moscow, Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg, Kazan, Irkutsk, and Ufa – and then on further flights to neighboring countries such as Azerbaijan and Armenia and then further on to the Middle East. The falcons from Kamchatka and the far east are sent by plane, and as quickly as possible, because the birds fair badly in the bondage required for transportation (WWF Vladivostok, personal communication, April 19, 2007). Also, birds are smuggled on trains through Russia to the airports of Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Federal Customs officials told the newspaper Versii (in press) that the destination for some of the falcons is Syria, and that they are taken first to Tajikistan.

Birds are wrapped in cloth that is taped closed, and then inserted into tubes (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 94). Temperatures can reach over 100 degrees and for birds from the far north these conditions are incredibly taxing (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 94). Birds are also hidden in sports bags, under fruit, and in diplomatic packages (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 99). Their eyes can be sewn shut, supposedly to reduce nervousness, and once swaddled sometimes they can be packed into rigid suitcases with holes drilled in them (Kornilova, 2007). Transport of the smuggled birds has a high mortality rate, with many dying from the stress and lack of food and water (Lyapustin, 2006, p. 93). Integral to this operation is the payoffs of customs officials, other law enforcement agencies, and border guards (WWF Vladivostok, 2006, p. 49). If guards cannot be bribed, there is always the chance that they will not look for live animals, or ignore them if they find them

(Phoenix, personal communication, April 24, 2007). Customs agents just close their eyes because they do not know what to do, and have no way to keep illegal live animals (Phoenix, personal communication, April 24, 2007).

These sections have illustrated the scope of the legal trade, and also explored the evidence for the prevalence of the illegal trade in falcons. The capturing of birds is a violation of CITES, and therefore of Russian law, and whereas this alone is a cause for concern, there are structural harms occurring as well that are equally if not more important to highlight.

Discussion

The Structural Harms of the Illegal Falcon Trade

The black market trade in illegal falcons poses several consequences beyond the violations within the trade itself. Discussion of such consequences is possible within green criminology, which enables researchers to examine these green violations, deviations, irregularities, and harms even though they are not legally defined as crimes (Carrabine et al, 2004). Furthermore, green criminological literature substantiates the capacity for animal suffering and rights (Beirne, 2007). There are three structural harms that this paper has proposed, which are inherent within wildlife trafficking that make it a significant crime that warrants more research and attention. These are that it is a danger to the environment, it is cruel to animals, and that it threatens human and national security. The illegal trade in raptors is a danger to the environment for two reasons. First, poaching of live birds of prey has reached such alarming levels that the populations of these majestic birds are threatened, as is their very existence. Extinction of a predator within the ecosystem can have dire consequences for the health and functioning of that system. For example, the loss of cougars in Yosemite Valley in the United States has been tied to increased

mule deer populations, which then consume vegetation (Ripple & Beschta, 2008). Increased consumption of vegetation, in this case black oak trees, affects erosion and soil nutrients (Ripple & Beschta, 2008). Such a 'trophic cascade' with the loss of birds of prey seems plausible.

Whereas falconry might be considered a cultural traditional, and arguments raised that it should be continued because of this, there is no reason that the stocks of captive birds cannot be used to fulfill the demand, rather than decimating the few remaining wild populations. The second danger to the environment is that the trade of live birds needs to be closely monitored in order to prevent the spread of avian and possibly zoonotic diseases, such as the avian flu. The legal trade has the essential quarantines and veterinarian checks that record and track the health of the traded birds and the presence of diseases. The illegal system, of course, circumvents all of these precautions, and increases the possibility of the spread of dangerous diseases within bird populations, and potentially too the spread of diseases between birds and other animals, including humans.

The second area of structural harm is that raptor trafficking is cruel to animals. The illegal trade (and potentially the legal trade in its infrequency) raises macrolevel animal welfare issues in the methods of transport. The hiddenness of smuggling forces terrible conditions upon the captured raptor. As previously described, tranquilized birds have their wings taped to their bodies, and are then stuffed into tubes. They are then piled on top of one another and placed into luggage, handbags, under fruit or other products being shipped. Temperatures are nearly unbearably high at over 100 degrees. These birds are forced to travel without access to food or water for hours on end, on planes and trains. Needless to say, the mortality on such journeys is quite high. Even for those birds that are confiscated, reintroduction to the wild is not the norm (Versii, 2007). Often the raptors are so traumatized or injured that they must be given to zoos

and rescue centers (Versii, 2007). All of this causes pain and suffering, and can therefore be defined as harmful and warrant attention as a crime. Again, the falcons are placed in these abhorrent conditions to satisfy a luxury lifestyle of a human, and this too should be questioned.

The third structural harm is how illicit trading of wildlife can pose a threat to human and national security. This is because the illegal raptor trade is connected to other criminal activities, such as corruption, transnational crime, organized crime through networks, and possibly terrorism. The illegal bird of prey trade is facilitated by corruption in the private sector and throughout the civil service, including law enforcement. As described, employees of transportation companies, railways, and airlines, as well as customs agents and officials, collude with criminals by arranging means of transporting illegally captured birds, or taking bribes to make the proper channels available and/or to look the other way. The involvement of customs agents and border guards in the black market trade of birds of prey and other wildlife supports that the trade is transnational, as does the collusion of airline crews and tour agencies. The transnational nature of this activity creates the danger of spreading disease throughout an extensive range, and indicates the lack of security at borders. Adding to the alarm of the lack of security, is the notion that only 25% of the illegal activity is detected. That means that potentially a massive amount of illicit products are crossing the border with impunity. This is disturbing because of the unknown type of dangerous, or endangered unlawful shipments, that also might be crossing borders throughout these unsecured areas unbeknownst to the governments of these nations. Of further concern, is who is initiating this trade, and as the literature and experts have indicated, the raptor trade is a structured transaction from the capture of a bird through the transportation stages to the purchase by the final buyer. This framework is apparently orchestrated by organized crime through a global network.

The basic level of the organized gang is that Russians, or former citizens of the Soviet Union, procure the raptors from the wild in the remote regions of eastern and northern Russia. The network then incorporates employees, as mentioned, of transportation agencies, be it road, rail, or air, to move the birds of prey through the corridors in Russia that lead to other countries where members of the network take up the transportation. The description of the routes that are available, or that have been known to be used by this network, lends to the idea that networks have a fluid nature that easily adjusts at signs of trouble (Castells, 1998; Wedel, 2005). Once the raptors reach central Russia, the mode of distribution can be very flexible, since the organized criminal group has at its disposal road, rail, and air transport. Furthermore, the inclusion of so many connections within the network increases the flexibility because the number of countries through which the birds can then transit through after leaving Russia. This appears to be former Soviet countries such as Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and possibly Tajikistan. These agents get the shipment of birds to the final destination and to the consumer, which mostly is thought to be in the Middle East. Particularly disturbing in this transaction, is the suspicion that the trade of raptors is used to fund terrorist operations in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus (WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007; IFAW, personal communication, April 17, 2007). The amount of money that is made from illegally selling raptors is high, with estimates ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000 at the final purchase (WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007; IFAW, personal communication, April 17, 2007). That large amounts of profits like this are reaped by organized crime with no fear of recrimination, makes the raptor trade and all wildlife trade alluring. In Russia, and in other areas, large amounts of money mean power, and the connection here is that organized crime can maintain its power base, which threatens the government, democracy, and free press, which in

combination with corruption and transnational criminals, such as terrorists, poses a danger to the human security and the national security of the Russian Federation. This complex network of multiple actors, multiple smuggling, and multiple places requires an equally multi-faceted approach to tackle this black market.

Possible Solutions to the Illegal Raptor Trade

The legal falcon trade is very restrictive and therefore the illicit trade has a specific character. All species are either limited in the number that can be traded because they are in CITES Appendix II, or they are completely banned under CITES Appendix I because of their highly endangered status. Since then, there is no high-scale visible legal trade outside of some small number of Appendix II species or captive bred birds; the illegal trade seemingly must be deep underground. The fact that the trade that is occurring is of a live animal, as mentioned before, brings in other factors of humane treatment in falconry and during transport. A complex trade, such as the illegal raptor trade with many actors and components along the supply chain, requires multi-faceted solutions. These are divided into four sections: policy, enforcement, economics of supply, and consumer demand (International Bank of Reconstruction and Development [IBRD], 2005).

Policy.

CITES is so concerned with the trade of falcons that there is a special working group with representatives from Western, Asian, and Middle Eastern members, which is devoted to addressing the policies that are developed in regards to the falcon species. In a meeting of this working group, some areas for policy implementation improvement were discussed (CITES,

2004). First, as detailed, for those species listed in the second appendix of CITES, a non-detrimental finding must be conducted in terms of how many animals are allowed to be traded. This finding entails determining how many animals can be taken from a population safely without damaging the sustainability of that group. CITES (2004, p. 1) representatives noted at this meeting that countries were not complying with the research into non-detrimental consequences before allowing the capture of wild falcons, and that this needed to be done.

In terms of policies that could be used in addition to those above to comply with CITES, the working group suggested that countries establish national registration schemes (CITES, 2004, p. 3). This would entail private owners being given certificates of ownership that contain a

“recording of the country of origin of the falcon, its source (wild or captive bred), and a reference to the proof of legal acquisition (e.g. the number of the relevant export permit or re-export certificate, captive breeding operation or license for removal from the wild)” (CITES, 2004, p. 3).

Officials believed that such

“mandatory registration schemes, where there is a requirement to demonstrate the legal acquisition of individual falcons, provide for the ready identification of illicitly-acquired and illicitly-traded birds and act as a deterrent to those that might wish to illegally import or illegally acquire falcons” (CITES, 2004, p. 2).

Required registration might also aid in discovering falcons that are taken illegally from the wild or illegally imported, which are sometimes used as breeding stock (CITES, 2004, p. 3), or falcons that are taken from the wild, but tagged with a metal ring around their leg to look as if they are captive bred (Oswald, 1982, p. 98). Further help in tracking the lineage of falcons could come from the use of DNA profiling to confirm parent-offspring relationships (CITES, 2004, p. 3). As always, policies must then be enforced, and the enforcement of current legislation is already lacking as will now be discussed.

Enforcement.

Protection for falcons could be aided through better enforcement at every step of the chain of trade. In general, there is “need for awareness-raising and training for law enforcement officials (and falconers) who are involved in implementing the Convention, enforcing national legislation, and combating illegal capture of falcons from the wild” (CITES, 2004, p. 3). Specifically, airport security, airlines, and border control play an important part in all of this, and need to be made aware of their role (CITES, 2004, p. 3). There needs to be more cooperation between agencies within the same country, and between agencies of different countries where falcons are smuggled from, through and to. Again at the CITES (2004, p. 2) meeting pertaining to falcons,

“Delegates stressed the need for countries to exchange information regarding illicit trade in falcons. In particular, countries seizing falcons being smuggled cross-border should advise the relevant countries of origin and transit so that such cases can be fully investigated with a view to identifying and taking action against the persons engaged at each stage in illicit trade”.

For consistent regulation in the varying countries where transnational crime (such as falconry) exists, there must be international harmony of laws (Shelley, 2005), which also need harmony of enforcement. Russian law lacks uniformity throughout its territory, and this allows traffickers to internally circumvent the existing legislation where there is weak enforcement (Danks, 2001). As Shelley (2005, p. 10) states, harmony is needed because if one state (region) cracks down the criminals simply go somewhere else. Also, uniformity in regulating breeding facilities in the countries where such farms exist, might go a long way in combating trafficking because “Some captive-breeding operations are not adequately monitored and are used by unscrupulous traders to ‘launder’ falcons that have been taken from the wild” (CITES, 2004, p. 3). Furthermore, such bird keeping facilities need to have licenses in their possession, and be regularly checked by

enforcement officials that the premises and licenses meet the required standards (Oswald, 1982, p. 98). Law enforcement dealing with illegal raptors and all wildlife is understaffed, underfunded, and poorly equipped and trained. In the case of live falcons, law enforcement agencies need to have facilities where the confiscated birds can be humanely housed until they can be reintroduced to the wild, or the proper place is found for them.

If and when enforcement does take place, it cannot only occur at the beginning of the chain of smuggling events. The illicit trade in falcons comprises a spectrum of individuals. As Shelley (2005, p. 6) says about transnational crime, it “couples high status officials, corrupt officials, and ground level criminals together, but only focusing on the lowest levels will not be effective”. The more powerful people in the criminal network also need to be targeted to stop operations and act as a deterrent. Admittedly, even where political will and capacity exist, it is difficult to investigate and prosecute (Shelley, 2005). There is a problem in Russia which consists of violators as a rule, do not reach court, or if they do, the result is ridiculous verdicts, and the same hunters continue to be engaged in the illicit activities (RIA–Siberia, in press). Some of the perpetrators are higher-level officials from other countries, and as reiterated at the working group for falcons of CITES (2004), there is no exemption to CITES legislation for diplomatic immunity.

Not only does there need to be an effort to combat the existing crime, but also to curb its development, and this needs to be taken into account when making programs for “economic development, conflict resolution and the struggle with terrorism” (Shelley, 2005, p. 10) because as also noted previously, the illicit trade in falcons is believed to be connected to the financing of terrorist organizations, as well as organized crime groups.

Economics of Supply.

A repeated theme in terms of wildlife trade is that bans do not work nor does enforcement alone (Homes, 2004). A reoccurring suggestion to help end the illegal trade in falcons, and any wildlife, is to provide economic incentives, or financial alternatives to poaching and capturing at the initial stage in the chain of smuggling, so that those taking birds illegally from the wild will stop doing it (Homes, 2004, p. 82). This could happen by shifting a larger part of the profits from legal trade to hunters and middlemen in the Russian Federation (Homes, 2004, p. 82). In the trade of falcons, this is a substantial redistribution. For the capture of a bird, the collector might receive a few hundred dollars, and the final buyer will pay up to \$50,000 or \$100,000 for the most rare varieties. If in the legal instances of the trade, this sum of money can be evened out along the line of people involved, the collectors could be motivated to protect birds of prey in their area for further licit trade because they would be guaranteed an amount of income that could support them. “If you can generate income or benefits for the local people by hunting on a regular basis as sustainable use, the more they will have an interest in conserving the species” (O’Rourke, 2003). Alternatives that could be promoted to people in these remote regions could be the cultivation of valued non-timber forest products for which there is a growing demand (Brok, personal communication, April 19, 2007).

In regards to the current supply of falcons in the licit market, transparent quota information needs to be made available to the CITES Secretariat and to falcon traders (CITES, 2004, p. 1). This can aid in detection of illegal trading by providing monitors with guidelines as to how many birds of prey are allowed to be on the market, and then they can better gauge if the numbers have exceeded the limits, and therefore illegally captured falcons must be selling as well. There are captive breeding facilities that sell falcons for use in falconry. These operations

should be promoted as the means to obtain birds and continue the tradition, rather than decimating the wild populations. Not only does this promote conservation, but also legal trade of captive bred falcons would improve the animal welfare issues that surround the illegal smuggling of wild birds of prey. In an open market, the falcons can be cared for properly, and have the stress of transport minimized, rather than in illicit trading where the birds are tranquilized, swaddled, and placed in tubes in terrible conditions with high mortality rates. This idea introduces the next topic of focus – that of consumer demand.

Consumer Demand.

It is thought that the consumer demand centers on the Arabian Peninsula (ArabNet, 2002), but CITES trade data point to the largest demand, for wild birds in particular, coming from Japan. There should be campaigns to educate the consumers in those countries that the use of wild falcons in falconry is endangering the populations of these species. Presumably, such a task would be undertaken by a NGO focusing on animal rights and welfare. Also, part of this education is that the demand for wild falcons also creates the conditions that enable the systematic suffering of these birds that occurs during transport. Material about the horrendous conditions of illegally smuggled birds should be circulated to clubs and falcon owners. An appeal can be made in terms of animal welfare, as it is likely that those people most involved with the birds of prey, can empathize with their treatment. These campaigns are not advocating the end of falconry *per se*, they are aimed to have consumers purchase birds from captive breeding facilities rather than taking them from the wild, if they insist on continuing with the sport. It also needs to be addressed that it is in the consumers' best interest to do so, as continued collection of birds of prey from the wild at the current rate, will cause the extinction of many of

these populations and species, so then there would be no alternative, but to buy from captive breeding operations.

Conclusion

The workings of the raptor trade are hard to unravel. Customs officials state to the mass media that hundreds of birds of prey are confiscated, and that up to 20 smugglers are arrested each year. Reports to CITES though indicate very little illicit transnational trade, which contradicts further media and NGO claims that all the birds of prey are going to the Middle East. Presumably, the customs officials might be catching the smugglers before they reach the borders, but news sources indicate that a majority of these seizures have occurred at airports, and that indicates a transaction that may in fact need to be reported to the Secretariat. CITES data show that in terms of the legitimate trade, the main importer of Russian wild raptors is Japan, but no mention is made of that country's role in the decimation of raptor populations in the east and north of the Russian Federation in the media, or the reports produced by NGOs. The licit trade to the Middle East from the Far East is of captive bred birds of prey, according to the CITES data.

Scientists and ecologists are certain that the populations of falconry birds, such as the Saker falcon, the Gyrfalcon, the Peregrine falcon, and the Goshawk, are shrinking to dangerous levels, and that this is due in part to the illegal capture of these birds and their eggs. The media and NGO literature point to the involvement of people from Russia and its neighbors in a transnational smuggling operation of the birds through and out of Russia. The four illicit transactions reported to CITES included the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Mongolia. Seizures of various smuggled shipments of raptors throughout the Russian Federation support that multiple people are involved, and that they form a global network of possibly

organized crime. Corruption is undoubtedly a part of how birds of prey are smuggled from remote regions through the transportation hubs of central Russia. This not only involves state corruption in the form of law enforcement, border patrol, and customs agents accepting bribes to help the activity or to ignore it, but also corruption includes the private sector transportation companies, which include vehicle, train, and plane. The media and NGOs state that the final buyers are from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and it is true that falconry still enjoys popularity there, where in other areas, such as Europe, this has decreased. None of the data collected pointed to the use of falsified documentation of captive birds as a means of transporting illegally caught wild raptors. Therefore, apparently the illegal trade is carried out by smuggling. One NGO has gone so far as to claim that the organized Arab mafia uses the proceeds from this very profitable illegal trade of birds of prey, to fund terrorist operations in the Middle East (WWFMoscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007). Whereas CITES is aware of the illegal trade taking place from Russia, the reports of their falcon working group, which again is made up of Middle Eastern, Asian and Western members, makes no mention of links to terrorism.

The illegal trade in raptors highlights the structural harms present in illegal wildlife trade. The capturing of eggs, nestlings, and other birds of prey to fuel the demands of the sport of falconry, is a danger to the environment because of the threat that it poses to the diversity of the Russian ecosystems. The experts interviewed shared this perception that continued hunting was likely to contribute to the extinction of these species (IFAW, personal communication, April 17, 2007; Phoenix, personal communication, April 24, 2007; WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007). Experts also cited the terrible conditions that smuggled falcons are subjected to when being taken to the Middle East (IFAW, personal communication, April 17,

2007; Phoenix, personal communication, April 24, 2007; WWF Moscow, personal communication, April 12, 2007).

Raptor trafficking is certainly occurring and having a devastating effect on the birds of prey of the Russian Federation, in both the danger to the environment and the cruelty to the falcons. There is a wide array of people forming a network that are involved, and it is taking place transnationally through corruption and organized criminal groups, but further research needs to be done in order to examine the claim that this is because of demand coming solely from the Middle East, and that there is some connection to terrorism. There is no one solution that can curb the illegal trade in falcons. A multi-facted approach must address the policies affecting regulation, the enforcement of the laws, the supply-side of the trade, and of equal importance, the demand-side of the trade as well. This black market is one of many that is occurring in Russia and one of a multitude that is taking place in the world. The information presented here will hopefully provide some basis for further studies into wildlife trafficking, a green crime that threatens the environment, is cruel to animals, and that threatens human and national security through its ties to corruption, transnational crime, organized crime, and possibly terrorism.

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