



Falconry – Inscribed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind

Minutes of the Meeting of the Hawk Board held on 22nd June 2017
UCMK, 502 Avebury Boulevard, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK9 3HS

The Chairman opened the meeting at 12:30.

Present: Graham Bennett (GB); Steve Eastwood (SE); Nick Havemann-Mart (NH-M); Graham Irving (GI); Andrew Knowles-Brown (AK-B); Terry Large (TL); Gordon Mellor (GM); Martyn Standley (MS); Rachelle Upton (RU); Dean White (DW)

Apologies: Gary Biddiss; Jim Collins; Paul Manning; Jemima Parry-Jones; Don Ryan; Derek Stotton; Mark Upton

Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising:
Minutes signed as a true record.

Chairman's Report:

It seems an age since we last met, and during that time we have continued to face a number of issues and the list has been added to by the return of some older matters. The political context has changed considerably and whilst at one level it is business as usual with the same Government and Prime Minister, the flavor of the forthcoming months and perhaps years is likely to be somewhat different.

Brexit continues to perplex Government departments and DEFRA is showing no signs of leadership in this context. I am still to make progress at getting a meeting with a suitably senior Civil Servant (although this should become easier now that the general election is over). From our point of view the major focus of the meeting will be how and which regulations will be drafted into UK law, what European legislation we are likely to sign up to, protection of international transport of BoP's. Of course, we will also need to raise Avian Influenza and the pressing issue of their recognition of us as a key stakeholder.

As you will be aware the continued identification of Avian Influenza across the country, is posing us some challenges, both directly relating to the HB and for the whole hawk keeping fraternity. I am the first to admit that we have been subject to considerable criticism about our recommendation to cease flying (issued on Christmas day 2016). I have explained previously that the veterinary advice that we received and the lack of clear guidance at that time, from both DEFRA and APHA, put us in an invidious position. I believe that in future, we must support and communicate the Government's articulation and restrictions on our activities need to be spelled out by DEFRA and APHA. That said, I think that we are now facing the reality that Avian Influenza is with us to stay (and may actually have been present in our wild bird population for a considerable time), so the question is how do we support falconers and others who keep and fly birds of prey in this context?

GM: GI and GM will try to meet with someone from DEFRA.

I would like to see us produce and publish guidelines promoting best practice in husbandry and the field, that will enable falconers and hawk keepers to minimise the albeit small, risk of birds of prey contracting and transmitting the virus. This will need Board support and likely veterinary contribution, in order that we can proceed in this regard with confidence.

We must congratulate Rachelle on providing an excellent and regular update on Avian Influenza via our Facebook pages. She also updates on other matters such as the UAE import restrictions and DEFRA export licensing to that country. Those FB users are well advised to check in regularly.

The Welsh Assembly proposals to legislate for a prohibition on the use of wild animals in circuses and travelling exhibits, is proceeding slowly. We used the Freedom of Information legislation to gain insight into whom they included in the latest consultation. The results of this are currently with the Countryside Alliance, and we await guidance from them about the legitimacy of the processes that the Assembly has used. In a parallel move it has been announced that the Scottish Government will legislate to ban wild animal use in circuses. This results from a 2014 consultation. Whilst previous articulations in Scotland, provided some assurance that captive birds of prey were not the intended targets for such legislation, we are advised that we should not presume that we are safe from interference – perhaps Andrew KB will update us.

AK-B: The Scotland bill has gone forward, but doesn't mention BoPs. James Legge said if it is not in the bill legally they won't look at the consultation but at the wording. Technically due to wording BoPs are caught up in this, although not intentional. The SHB during consultation said wording should be clarified in the bill.

TL: Is there not any leeway in CITES F2?

AK-B: Has to be over F2 to be captive bred, but still wild.

GI: Who will have the prosecution powers?

AK-B Unsure at the moment.

I took on a 'combined' role of representing the HB, the BFC, and IAF, at the recent Conservation Optimism conference at Dulwich College and ZSL. It was both interesting and informative. I was left with the strong impression that falconry has a good reputation and are viewed positively by younger conservationists, whilst some of the older and more established professionals from the larger conservation and protectionist organisations retain a rather outdated skepticism about us and the contribution we can and do make. I am indebted to Jemima and Dr Nick Fox for material that supported my presentation.

At the request of Adrian Lombard the President of IAF, I wrote to the Danish Minister of the Environment in support of the bid to change the legal status of falconry there. At the time of writing this there has been no official word on the outcome but the IAF have posted on social media, an indication that the application has been successful. If this is indeed the case, it is a major success.

Whilst speaking of IAF, I report that I have been asked to become a non-voting member of the Advisory Board. Establishing closer working relationships with organisations holding similar objectives as our own is important and I believe that this is a recognition of the HB's pivotal position in the UK. There are no cost implications for the Board.

I continue to attend club and organisation meetings as requested and respond to requests for advice and contact as appropriate. I will represent us at the Sussex Peregrine Study open day on the 24th June in East Sussex.

Our new constitution has not resulted in any significant requests for either individual or professional membership. I am still seeking an electronic application form that we can put on the new website. I acknowledge that it was always going to be a slow burn in attracting those who have hitherto been outside the club structure and that the group most critical of our Avian Influenza recommendation in December, has understandably been the pest control and bird abatement professionals. Thus it may take some time and careful nurturing to bring them onboard. With almost all of the affiliated clubs experiencing continued pressure on membership and attendance, I remain convinced that we were correct to attempt to widen our appeal.

Treasurers Report:

At present both the current and savings accounts are holding a healthy amount and the CFF account has a small amount in it; their donations are paid into the HB current account.

TL: I have approx. £300 in coins to pay in.

The accounts for 2016-2017 have been submitted to the accountants and returned. We made a small loss.

There is no Corporation Tax owing.

Clubs are slowly paying their subs, I will chase again in July.

BFC and YFC have no HB rep at this time.

MS: I am the stand in rep for the BFC.

I require printer cartridges and also a new external hard disk for backing up HB documents as the existing one has crashed and is irreparable.

Agreed

We need to look into generating more revenue, especially with an election coming up in 2018.

GM: Could ask the clubs to send out voting forms electronically.

DW: Doesn't work due to dual memberships.

MS: Need to sort out the ballot papers so that they are numbered.

RU: The problem with that is proving confidentiality, a club in Europe was sued for using numbered ballot papers and had to close down.

MS: Can you get the details for me?

RU: Will do.

GM: I will asses what we are legally bound to do.

Website/Facebook:

All happy with Facebook page; need to do some more work on the website.

RU: Need to be sent more information for Facebook and the website.

SE: I will send you our club information.

Membership:

GM: Still looking into a membership form for those wishing to become an individual member. They would get a copy of the minutes and representation from the HB at a cost of £10 per year.

GI: I propose.

AK-B: Seconded.

RU: Raptor Awards have applied to join HB, but would like to be treated as a club. Need to take into consideration that they are an organisation not a club, so won't have a constitution.

AK-B: If we do it for them then we will have to do it for anyone. Could we have a different logo that says affiliated member?

MS: A few years ago when I wrote about this my take was so long as they followed HB guidelines they could use the logo.

NH-M: Their members should pay more as they are businesses/organisations.

GM: What will happen if they pay more? They could end up our biggest contributor.

AK-B: They would still only get one vote.

TL: Is LANTRA still going? Did we endorse RA?

GM: We agreed we would allow them representation on our website to direct people their way.

TL: At the moment on the awards we are the LANTRA hub for Level 4, are we still promoting it?

AK-B: LANTRA charge too much.

GM: We declined LANTRA's offer of HB becoming a hub and since then they have stayed away from us, but we still endorse them.

SE: LANTRA assessors are swapping to Raptor Awards.

AK-B: Are RA approved by the Government the way LANTRA is?

GM: The whole skills led forum has moved on and there is no such thing as a licensed body anymore.

Derek has assured GM that RA are legally able to deliver what they train. We would probably support any organisation doing good hawk husbandry courses. The question is does RA meet our criteria in spirit for us to say you can become an affiliated member? So:

1. Are we in a mind to accept them?
2. How much do we charge?
3. What do they get for it?

AK-B: We were trying to get pest controllers; breeders; etc. to join.

DW: Accept them.

SE: Need declaration.

GM: If we vote yes then I need to go back to Derek and say that we need a list of their 'members'; welfare guidelines/constitution. If we are in a mind to allow an organisation of his sort we need to vote and have a clear majority. Then go back and ensure they meet certain criteria.

Vote Yes = Unanimous to look into further

GM: I will write to them and get the information from them. If they meet our criteria then go ahead. So how much do we charge?

TL: How much do they get paid by their members?

AK-B: Suggest fee for Derek and so much for each of his members.

NH-M: Too onerous, should be a flat fee.

TL: Should be high; CLA, etc. you pay a few hundred pounds to be a member.

NH-M: They their members can go to businesses saying they are HB affiliated members, which could get them more work.

GM: RA represents different sized organisations so it has to be achievable for RA or they won't join.

AK-B: You don't know how many members they have.

DW: A flat fee would be better.

RU: What about HB elections?

GM: If they pay they should get a vote in elections.

AK-B: Only clubs vote in the elections.

MS: We could put a tab on the website for affiliated members and then a link to each affiliated members website.

GM: We have to put into context that we aren't very popular at the moment – we don't want to be putting something out there that might be rejected.

NH-M: With the recent General Election falconry is on the line, it won't take much for them to ban us.

GM: So shall I go back to RA and suggest £50 per business.

DW: He has a choice of a fixed fee of several hundred pounds or each individual business pays.

GM: Flat fee and can't vote in the election. So go to Derek with the following choices.

1. How many do you represent and pay per head like the clubs
2. Or you pay an annual fee

GI: BFC has a big disclaimer for trade members. HB could do something similar.
GM: Ask Mark Upton to sort the Logo; for Affiliated Member and Supporter Member

RU: The Female Falconers Group have expressed an interest in joining the HB, they become a year old in July so would then be eligible. They are the fastest growing Falconry group at the moment.
RU: Remind GM to email the Female Falconers Club regarding going to talk to them

ICBP Falconry Weekend:

RU: JP-J has asked if HB will be attending the Falconry Weekend in September?
GM: SEFG has said that we won't get more members as we are not at the shows. But if we can't do it well then we shouldn't do it at all. I will there, who else is going that could help man a stand?
RU: I am already busy that weekend and Mark will still be in Scotland hawking.
No one offered to help GM
DW: SEFG are happy to put a pop-up on their stand.
GM: Let's supply show active member clubs with pop-ups.
Ask MU that if GM supplies the spiel than can MU put it together?
GM: RU can you go back to JP-J and let her know that we won't require a stand as we will do our promotion through the clubs.

RU: Also you need to note that the Falconry Weekend next year will be at JP-J's and is on the last bank holiday in May, I won't be able to go as that is Half Term and I will be away with the family.

Legal/Guidelines Update:

See Appendix 1

GM: Will we refer back to Global CITES after Brexit?
AK-B: A bird coming into the EU from outside comes in on Global CITES, once it has arrived the new owner then applies for their country's CITES papers.
GM: More concerning for those moving hawks for hawking purposes, e.g. taking one from UK to Spain or vice versa.

GM: We need a conduit into DEFRA

GI: Elaine Kendall (CITES & Trade not AI); contact ministers from DEFRA.

RU: 2 questions from MU:

1. I believe there was an aim by DEFRA and APHA to issue CITES Article 10's within 14 days of receiving an application. This year mine took nearly 4 weeks. Whilst this was no problem for me, breeders who are selling birds to those that want to imprint them are being put in an impossible situation and having to decide to let birds go without paperwork or risk losing the sale.

GI: It is a 15 working day target. The problem is African Greys and Redwood is now covered by CITES and they now inundated with requests. They have been given money for 5 more employees, but they won't start until the autumn.

2. On the registration information page of DEFRA and APHA they say you must register birds before they are 15 days old. This is extremely difficult. Chicks usually need to be between 10 and 12 days old before rings will stay on, so it is impossible to register before then, which leaves too short a time to register.

AK-B: HB got the Eagle registration changed to 21 days 2 years ago.

GI: It is a NE thing – I will look into it.

SUN Update:

See Appendix 2

As you know, I'm away in the US and will not therefore be attending the HB meeting this week. I did send an update (along with Graham) in respect of the meeting we had with DEFRA/APHA/JNCC and, in particular, with initial thoughts on how Brexit might impact upon animal-keeping and animal trade activities but thought I might give a quick summary of this and other matters in any case.

On Brexit, DEFRA appear on first soundings to be keen to have as much flexibility as possible in respect of the trading of animals and plants between ourselves and other EU Member States - post-Brexit. However, this will not necessarily be fully in their remit since animal-keeping/animal trade is not high on a list of

priorities and we may well be used as reward or punishment depending upon how the major negotiations progress. This applies to all animal/plant trade but especially to CITES-listed species which obviously, therefore, includes all birds of prey with the exception of a handful of New World vultures.

The UK will certainly leave the EU's Scientific Review Group and will not, therefore, be bound by Positive/Negative Opinions made by the latter in respect of imports from other countries i.e. we could stick to the global CITES decisions like the rest of the world with the exception of the EU. We will also have our own separate vote at CITES meetings rather than voting uniformly within a block of 28. What is very uncertain at the current time is how restrictive/paperwork intense will be the trade situation between the UK and EU Member States though I hope to get a better understanding of how other EU Member States are viewing matters at the forthcoming CITES Animals Committee meeting (July in Geneva).

In respect of the CITES Animals Committee, I will be focusing most efforts on Working Groups that most impact upon animal-keeping activities including keepers/traders of birds of prey - including the reviews on captive-breeding of CITES species, Significant Trade Reviews, Periodic Review of the Appendices to CITES and regulations on the transportation of CITES specimens. I will, of course, report back on these deliberations in due course.

The Dutch Government will on the 1st July proceed with implementation of a very restrictive and illogical Positive List for mammals (with the stated intent to move on to birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians) despite the deriving of the list having been ruled illegal by the Supreme Court. In this they are basically demanding that animal keepers take them back to court in order to have the legislation quashed.

In respect of the EU's Non-Native Species legislation nothing has shifted in the past two months as they consider challenges to the Risk Assessments presented to support banning the latest tranche of species. We would expect to see movement on this by September and, thereafter, an opening of a new list which might well include certain raptors. The UK say they will follow lists until we finally Brexit which could lead us into the absurd situation where we ban a species and then, having exited the UK, decide we didn't really support the species being banned and subsequently lift such a prohibition.

GM: The SUN Group is absolutely vital to us.

IAF Update:
See Appendix 3

CA Update:
See Appendix 4

GM: Who does their Falconry for Schools?
No one seems to know

A.O.B:

TL: I have a copy of the guidelines we issued during the 1st outbreak of Avian Influenza; will try and find it and send it to GM.

GI: When it comes to expenses it would be sensible to have a limit you can spend up to and then over that get prior approval.

GM: There are certain meetings we need to have representation, (e.g. CITES, WCC). Over £100 check with GM/RU first.

MS: A couple of years ago we had a small team looking into UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, since then politics has gone haywire – what should we do now?

GM: We were advised to wait until after the election. But now no one seems interested, we need to pick our time carefully.

The meeting closed at 15:30

Next Meeting: 12.30pm Thursday, 19th October
Location: London Zoo, Regents Park, London, NW1 4RY

Rachelle Upton, Co-coordinator – 28th June 2017

Legal/Guidelines Update from Graham Irving

Law Commission review of wildlife legislation:

On 22 November 2016 Dr Therese Coffey MP, the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State, wrote to the Chair of the Law Commission giving the UK Government's response to our recommendations.

Dr Coffey noted: Exit from the EU provides an opportunity to re-examine our regulatory framework and how it works, so that it is fit for purpose to meet our national needs in future and fulfil our international obligations. It means we need to consider the implications of EU Exit for our approach to wildlife policy before deciding whether and how to implement your proposals and whether some of your proposals would need amending in light of EU Exit.

Pressure on parliamentary time also means it is likely to be very difficult to find time to bring forward legislative proposals for major reform in the near future. However, I am happy to support the principle of looking at wildlife legislation as a whole to provide a coherent system which achieves better outcomes. The Law Commission's work will be invaluable in informing the Government's thinking.

In his responses the Chair of the Law Commission group undertaking this review noted that the project's core aim (to provide clear, coherent legislation and a modern, flexible regulatory framework to govern wildlife management in England and Wales) remains vitally important, and expressed his hope that the Report and draft Bill would help both Governments take stock of the current situation and make further adaptation to reflect future policy choices. He also suggested that a certain amount of rationalisation of the domestic legislation could be achieved without primary legislation.

As things slowly move forward with the unpicking of the elements of UK legislation that are EU based (and this include the birds directive and the habitats directive, two pieces of legislation that have heavily influenced UK legislation covering flora, fauna and habitats) will hopefully be disentangled enough to allow fresh discussions with DEFRA and other government policy makers such as Natural England via consultations to take place. Unfortunately the speed and time frame within which wildlife legislation will be discussed is currently unknown so it is currently impossible to give any idea of what is on the horizon re new or amended legislation that may affect falconry and raptor keeping. The presence of hawk board members on several DEFRA NGO discussion panels does give us a good opportunity to put forward relevant and specific input into the forthcoming review of wildlife legislation and we will supply updates as and when available.

Brexit and its impact on trade and movement of raptors between the UK and EU member states.

At the CITES sustainable user group meeting with DEFRA, APHA and other government bodies that oversee the keeping, breeding and commercial activities involving raptors in April, we were told that as of yet no formal discussions had been arranged or were currently planned to be held between the UK and EU CITES management teams to discuss what, if any changes would come into force post Brexit. But, at that meeting the NGO representatives present were asked to provide some feedback to DEFRA as to what we would like to see changed post Brexit, not the easiest of things to do when we have no idea what the EU is going to introduce (if anything) post Brexit, but one thing we flagged up straight away was the removal from the current COTES review of the need to designate ports for export of raptors from the UK which is a purely EU requirement, this appears to have been (and we remain optimistic) to have been taken on-board by the chair of the meeting, we will hopefully have an update towards the end of the summer. Something that has recently been suggested we could propose is the "passport scheme" for use within both the EU and elsewhere, this is still in its infancy but is something we will be exploring with the help of other similarly affected animal keeper/trader groups.

Avian influenza and its impacts on falconry in the UK.

I would not think there are many of you reading this report that are not aware that a new strain of AI reached our shores last year and even in the summer of 2017 is still erupting in small but scattered areas of the UK. If this new strain continues to be present within the UK 12 months of the year there will be a need for us to review the way we house our birds irrespective of whether you are a large or small scale breeder, display giver or single raptor owner there is the potential, all be it very small, that a falconer could become a victim of this disease. It is heartening to see that we are discussing this issue via numerous social media options and people are beginning to look at and modify the housing they have for their birds, there does seem to be a bit of a shift towards full roofing on breeding and moulting pens but as always there are those who are willing to take the chance that they will not be affected and that is their prerogative, but at least they are aware of the

potential consequences and have made up their own minds.

To date the biggest impact for UK raptor keepers from AI has been the withdrawal of the export permit to ship birds to the UAE, this restriction has thankfully been lifted in the past few days and breeders are now liaising with their clients to start exporting birds. Individuals within the control and surveillance zones that were set up following each outbreak during the hawking season will have suffered the inconvenience of not being able to fly their birds within those zones but all in all it appears that the majority of people managed to continue flying their hawks.

At the end of the day it is down to us all to remain vigilant and I would recommend that everyone with a smart phone or computer signs up to receive the updates from DEFRA/APHA so they can stay fully up to date with what is happening across the UK with this disease.

Sun Report from Jim Collins

Our detailed discussions with the various Government Departments and Agencies in respect of Brexit were very revealing. It was clear that none had any real idea of what the implications from Brexit there would be for animal keeping and trade. Nevertheless, this gives us an opportunity and DEFRA/APHA have extended us the opportunity - which I urge the HB to take-up - to submit to them what we would want to see post-Brexit. Clearly the UK will now have its own vote on CITES matters rather than being rolled-up under the EU - though, in all likelihood most of the time the UK will vote the same way. Hopefully, we can retain either fully or in a minimally modified form, freedom of trade and movement of live animals across what is now the EU and, likewise, the possibilities of Balai and the Five-Bird Rule. We will obviously keep an active involvement on these issues as we move through the next two years.

The CITES Animals Committee will be held in Geneva in July and I'll be in attendance. As usual I will participate in the Periodic Review of the Appendices and the Significant Trade Review and will take an active engagement on both the Animal Transportation deliberations and those on Captive-breeding Operations and Controls both of which Hawk Board members could be heavily impacted upon. Preparation for these meetings involves huge amount of pre-reading required in order to do justice to the lobbying activity at the meetings themselves - where we are invariably massively outnumbered by protectionist NGO's. I will, of course, provide a full report on these activities and outcomes upon conclusion of the meeting.

As I have previously indicated, what we call the Third List (what the European Commission refer to as the Second revision) of the EU's Directive on Invasive Species has been circulated to Member States' Government's and some of these have then allowed interested parties to see the list. I made a detailed submission to the European Commission on the latest proposed list of species to be banned from keeping and trade and have had follow-up conversations with Brussels as well as lobbying the UK Government to support our position on these proposals. Hopefully, colleagues in other EU Member States will likewise be lobbying their respective Government's to support our position. I believe that we have very strong arguments against a good number of the species proposed. Although no birds-of-prey surfaced on this latest list the principles are very important since if passed it holds the field wide-open to mass listing of whole suites of taxa, including temperate, non-European raptors like Harris Hawks. Accordingly, below is my summation on the latest list.

One particularly popular Genus kept in captivity that is proposed for banning is that of the fish grouping of Snakeheads (*Channa Spp. - all species*). The proposed list also includes two other fish genera (again block-listed in their entirety as a genus) - Pumpkinseeds (*Lepomis Spp.*) and American Bullhead Catfish (*Ameiurus Spp.*). Perhaps, even worse is that several plant species are proposed including the ever popular Water Lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*).

I have lobbied that the European Commission needs to adhere to two basic principles that the Commission itself have told us time and again would be adhered to but which are blatantly undermined by these current proposals - indeed, it is a shock that the European Commission are even allowing them to be entertained in the first place.

Throughout the negotiations we were told categorically that only **SPECIES** with a **self-sustaining wild population in at least one EU Member State** would be considered and that this would be taken as a set criterion. Why then are entire genera being proposed with the presented Risk Assessments making clear that in each case only a tiny percentage of the species within the genus match this criteria or, in the case of the snakeheads not a single species matching the criteria? If the Commission want to retain a semblance of respect for this legislation and its criteria all these genus block-listings should be dismissed out-of-hand.

Throughout, we were also told that only SPECIES with a strong Risk Assessment would be countenanced as possibilities for inclusion and yet the presented Risk Assessments seek to add masses of species without a semblance of specific risk assessment covering species. In almost all these cases the culprit is the Spanish Government who I suggest have rather lost the plot and who need reigning in before the whole concept of invasive species legislations loses all credibility - listing snakehead species resident in Indonesia and you might as well go ahead and list the entire flora and fauna of the world!

The European Commission assured us time after time that the IAS Regulations would not become like CITES and we would not see block lists but rather only the listing of truly problematic **species**. Further, that the list would be focused and limited and targeted at around 50 (albeit the strict restriction to less than fifty species was dropped). We would respectfully suggest that the Commission needs to be reminded of these previous stated commitments.

We see several genus block listing proposals (including all these latest fish proposals) when at the **very most** only the odd species or two might be problematic - an especially relevant comment in respect of Snakeheads. We also see that acceptance of these block listings would take the number of species covered to be a multiple of fifty already. Block listings would in principle be a nonsense otherwise we would see obviously tropical species banned just because they have a taxonomic relative that happens to be an inhabitant of temperate climates. Having any of these block listing proposals accepted - without specific Risk Assessments undertaken and approved on a species-by-species basis would set a highly dangerous precedent, bring the European Commission into further disrepute and make the legislation even more hated by direct stakeholders than it already is courtesy of ludicrous listings like that of Red-eared Sliders and Ring-tailed Coatis which simply could not establish in most of Europe. Such listings should be done on a biogeographic basis i.e. only banned in southern EU countries if the species could only realistically be established in hotter climate countries.

Looking at the Risk Assessments sitting on the EU web site really does make particularly the *Channa Spp.* proposal look absurd at best! It's another one from the Spanish Government - one would have thought the European Commission might have treated such proposals with more reservation given that it was the self same country that gave us the pathetic proposal on the Ring-tailed Coati (*Nasua nasua*). The EU Chapeau presented in the Spanish proposal clearly states under Question 2 "In how many EU Member States has this species currently established populations" the answer **NONE!** Equally, in Question 3 "In how many EU Member States has this species shown signs of invasiveness" they answer the question as **NONE!** These answers to their own question should have been sufficient for the European Commission to have simply dismissed these proposals since the *Commission has always indicated previously that no species would be considered if there is no established population somewhere within an EU Member State and, equally, that species would not be listed unless a species could be shown to have displayed significant signs of invasiveness within at least one EU Member State and that these are specific criteria for adoption.* Furthermore, in this ludicrous so-called Risk Assessment the Spanish state that **on only three occasions have single specimens been found** - hardly a sign of invasive likelihood within the EU- one *Channa micropeltes* in 2012 in Tuscany which they seem to be especially excited about, one *C. argus* in Slovakia and one *C. argus* in the Czech Republic. Most of the species are purely tropical in range and present not the slightest risk as to possibility of establishment in temperate climates.

The proposal for block listing the Pumpkinseed and all its relatives as a Genus fish listing of *Lepomis Spp.* (also yet another Spanish proposal) is almost as ridiculous in contradicting previously stated intention not to allow block listings, to only accept proposals on a species-by-species basis not on a generic level (with each species proposal accompanied by a rigorous Risk Assessment) and to only accept species with known and established populations in at least one EU Member State that have demonstrated a substantive degree of invasiveness. In the vast bulk of the species of *Lepomis* none of these criteria are met - with the Spanish proposal itself clearly stating that only 4 species are seen at all naturalised within the EU and with the statement in the Risk Assessment that "**There is no evidence of invasiveness of other *Lepomis Spp.* in Europe at the moment**". Enough said or, at least, that should be the conclusion!

On a different matter, looking at the EU's appointments to the EU Platform on Animal Welfare it is noticeable (and deeply worrying) that there are no pet-keeping, hunting or other direct stakeholder whatsoever. The animal welfare organisations (pretty much all all openly radical animal-rightists) will be FOUR PAWS International, Eurogroup for Animals, Animals' Angels e.V., Compassion in World Farming, European Forum for Animal Welfare Councils (EuroFAWC), Humane Society International, Organisation for Respect and Care of Animals (ORCA), RSPCA International, World Animal Protection and World Horse Welfare. No wonder they are so buoyant with this outcome!

A good result was the ruling in the Dutch courts against the Dutch Government on their proposed Positive List for mammals. I provided considerable amount of background input into the submissions that indicated that the species listed and not listed made no sense from a captive husbandry perspective and that the stated criteria used were contradictory and in many cases the species listed or not listed ran in the opposite direction to the stated criteria. We must now see if the Dutch Government will cease bringing in the law on 1st July or if they will defy the ruling by the judge and still proceed with introducing the Positive List (in which case we would need to go back to the courts to see the law introduction thrown-out). Ultimately this should be an excellent result and hopefully we can then go back to see the Belgium Positive Lists on mammals and reptiles dismissed in the courts - it is important that we see Positive Lists thrown-out for any EU country because if they get established it becomes much more likely that the European Commission will take-up the idea for a Positive List across all the European Union.

IAF Report from Mark Upton

The 11 session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage took place in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, from 28 November to 2 December 2016. IAF attended as an Accredited Advisory NGO to the UNESCO. IAF is working closely with the NGO Forum which assists the Intergovernmental Committee. Portugal, Italy, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Germany have now joined the list of "Falconry, a living human heritage" bringing the total to 18.

Vice-President for Europe, Janusz Sielicki, wrote an excellent paper "Falconry as a Biodiversity Conservation Tool". The IAF decided to promote it on Facebook by paying €200 to boost the post-reach all European countries west of Poland, especially into those Facebook accounts that have liked CMS, CBD, UNEP, CITES, IUCN and WWF. It went well, reaching over 52,000 people. Of those, nearly 1800 "liked" or "loved" it (probably falconers) and only 45 "hated" it.

The Animal Welfare Intergroup of the European Parliament had an amendment put forward in January to change the wording for traditional sports (which was undefined) to include the wording that traditional sports include cruel practices like bull fighting, dog racings, fox hunting, canned hunting of game birds and falconry which are unacceptable on animal welfare grounds.

Kris Ulens, of the Belgian Falconers Federation, used personal contacts in the Belgian Cultural Ministry to find out more information on the results of the amendments in the CULT Committee on Animal Welfare and the attempt by anti-hunting MEP members to have falconry labelled as "cruel", adding an animal welfare agenda into a set of motions originally designed simply to give guidelines on team games and athletics. The final wording of the paragraph in question is simply:

66. Considers that traditional sports are part of the European cultural heritage.

This illustrates how useful the DODS information we receive is in alerting us of dangerous wording of legislation in Europe and how the IAF can move into action to attempt to fight these cases.

The official launch of the Perdix Portal was held on 10th and 11th in the Bozar arts complex in the centre of Brussels. An associated art exhibition "Living in Arable Landscapes" was also held at the event in order to give more interest to the event. The Perdix Portal is now live and being used, particularly by European falconers and those interested in farmland conservation as a tool for improving the environment. www.perdixnet.org

The IAF are now fully involved in the organization of the 4th Falconry Festival in Abu Dhabi which will take place on 4-9 December 2017. Youth is to be the theme of the event and every countries member clubs have been invited to propose one young falconer to travel to the Festival as a guest of the Emirates Falconers Club. Also being invited are falconers and conservationists who attended the original Falconry and Conservation Conference held in Abu Dhabi in 1976.

Plans for the venue and associated conferences are still in progress.

Countryside Alliance Update from James Legge

POLITICAL

General Election and Rural Charter

On Tuesday 18 April the Prime Minister announced her intention to hold a General Election. This took place on Thursday 8 June and has returned a hung parliament with the Conservatives as the largest party. The Conservatives lost 13 seats overall whilst Labour achieved a net gain of 30 seats. The result means that the Government will have to rely on a supply and confidence deal with the Democratic Unionist Party in order to pass legislation in the Commons. Many Conservative manifesto commitments, including the promise to give MPs the opportunity “to decide the future of the Hunting Act”, are not expected to be brought forward in this Parliament. We produced a manifesto ahead of the General Election with a Rural Charter setting out five key rural policies. The State Opening of Parliament took place on Wednesday 21 June.

People Moves

- Theresa May was invited to form a Government on Friday 9 June and has made a number of ministerial changes.
- Andrea Leadsom has been moved from Defra to Leader of the Commons.
- Michael Gove has been appointed Secretary of State for Defra. George Eustice, Therese Coffey, and Lord Gardiner of Kimble have all been reappointed.
- Sue Hayman is to continue as Shadow Secretary of State for Defra.
- The rural affairs spokespeople for the Liberal Democrats and SNP, Mark Williams and Callum Kerr respectively both lost their seats. Baroness Parminter becomes sole Defra spokesperson and the SNP appointment is awaited.
- A number of supportive MPs lost their seats at the election, and letters have been sent to them, including Ben Gummer, David Burrowes and Sir Julian Brazier.
- Former Chairman, Kate Hoey, increased her majority in Vauxhall and current Chairman, Simon Hart, was re-elected.

Party Leadership

Paul Nuttall has resigned as leader of UKIP, and Tim Farron has resigned as leader of the Liberal Democrats. Ian Blackford is the new leader of the SNP in Westminster, and Liz Saville-Roberts is the new leader of Plaid Cymru in Westminster.

Select Committees

Chairmen of the new select committees will be elected, and Members appointed next month. We will work closely with the new Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs Committee to ensure the recommendations of their report from the last Parliament into animal welfare are taken forward, especially in relation to RSPCA and prosecutions. The Government published its response to the Committee's Report on 1 February and a number of the recommendations were debated during a Backbench Business Debate on 30 March. The Committee published their Report into Forestry in England on 21 March. The Report recommended changes to woodland grant schemes but made no reference to woodland managed for shooting.

Brexit

The Countryside Alliance has published a Brexit policy document “*Sustaining a Living and Working Countryside outside of the European Union*”, which is available on our website. The Alliance, on behalf of FACE UK, will be working with colleagues in Brussels to represent the interests of the hunting and shooting community as Brexit negotiations proceed.

Policing and Crime Act

The Bill received Royal Assent on 31 January. The changes relating to police powers to remove disguises came into force on 3 April and the then Home Office Minister, Brandon Lewis MP, wrote to all Chief Constables in England and Wales to make them aware of the changes, especially powers to remove face coverings. Most of the changes relating to firearms law came into force on 2 May.

Business Rates

The Countryside Alliance opposed the business rate rise announced earlier in the year. Working with the British Horse Society and Andrew Rosindell MP we made the case for a wholesale review of business rate proposals. In a joint statement we argued that the Government's proposals risk severely undermining the equine sector. We were pleased when the Chancellor, Philip Hammond MP, announced in the Budget proposals to provide additional support to small businesses, including a £50 a month cap on rate rises, and

the £300 million discretionary relief fund will help to ensure that many rural businesses can continue to thrive. However, this is only a temporary solution and does not address the long term problem of business rates. Businesses in rural areas play an important part of the economy so we must have a system which enables them to compete fairly with web based businesses.

Falconry for Schools

F4S is being refocussed in 2017. This will include tailoring the courses to older children, those with special needs, and altering the length from half day to two full days.

Avian Influenza

To reduce the risk of bird flu, new Avian Influenza Prevention Zones came into effect on the 28 February 2017, and the Countryside Alliance, along with other countryside and shooting organisations, issued a revised briefing note, which reflected the new laws, to all those involved with gamebirds. As of 13 April UK poultry have been allowed outside. Restrictions on poultry gatherings have now been lifted. However, a protection and surveillance zone remains in Norfolk and greater bio-security measures are recommended.

HUNTING

Online Abuse

With the growth of social media over the past few years there has been an increase in threatening and abusive behaviour towards those involved in lawful activities such as country sports and farming. We have taken a stand on this issue as we believe no one should be abused online and will continue to work with all social media platforms to stamp out this abuse.

Prosecutions

There have been Hunting Act charges from the 2016/17 season. These are all awaiting trial. The Grove & Rufford are appealing the decision made at Mansfield Magistrates Court in March and a further case from January 2016 is yet to be heard.

Bovine TB in hounds

Testing continues at the Kimblewick kennels. However it is believed the bTB has been contained.

SHOOTING CAMPAIGN AND MOORLANDS

RSPB 2015 Birdcrime Report

The RSPB published its 2015 Birdcrime Report on 3 February, and as in previous years, its continued use of reported incidents, as opposed to those that are subsequently confirmed, has resulted in misleading and misinterpreted coverage in the media. The Report's focus on birds of prey and the uplands has become a recurring theme, and in presenting its statistics there appears to be an underlying agenda, which includes calls for further legislation which the evidence does not support. Our analysis of the Report was sent to Defra, with copies also sent to supportive parliamentarians.

Snaring in England and Wales

We have sent a joint letter on behalf of shooting and countryside organisations to all known suppliers and manufacturers of snares in England and Wales, asking them to stock only snares that are compliant with the new Codes that have recently been published in both countries.

Wildlife Campaign

We have run a Wildfire Campaign to raise awareness of the risks of damage caused by wildfires in rural areas, especially on moorlands. The Campaign was launched through the website, and promoted in the media.

WALES

Access to Land and Water

The Cabinet Secretary, Lesley Griffiths AM, has announced her intention to hold yet another consultation on land reform in order to improve access to land and water in Wales.

Fly Grazing (Wales) Act

The Alliance gave written evidence to the Welsh Government's review of the Fly Grazing (Wales) Act and put forward recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Act, which would bring it into line with the English legislation.

Natural Resources Wales

The Countryside Alliance has submitted its response to the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Firearms Review. The review included the use of firearms for pest control including exempt hunting.

Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

The Assembly's Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee are currently drafting a report on the use of snares in Wales. The report is due at the end of June. The committee are also holding an inquiry in to the management of woodland in Wales.

Mobile Animal Exhibits

This remains an ongoing issue in Wales. It should also be noted that in Scotland the Scottish Parliament are considering the Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Bill. While not intended, according to the Scottish Government, to ban the showing of birds of prey etc., the drafting may be problematic and further clarification is needed.