

# RAPTOR TRADE IN KUWAIT BIRD MARKET

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## Summary

This article documents the illegal raptor trade in Kuwait Bird Market for the period from 1st January 2010 to 30th May 2010. Seventeen species of raptors were offered for sale of which three are listed in the IUCN red list.

## Introduction

There have been a number of recent assessments of the trade in wild birds in the Middle East, (Bachmann 2010, Stanton 2010) and our report sheds some light on this illegal activity in Kuwait. Our aim was to address this issue for further bird conservation.

The Bird Market is situated in Al-Rai Area. It started near to the old Sheep Market and developed into a weekend market run by pet owners who sell pigeons, chickens and cage birds. The municipality intervened and made a building to include licensed pet shops and a covered open area used by pet owners who only sell during weekends. Later the area was expanded to include what is known today as the Friday Market.

The birds include many cage birds imported from Europe, South America and South East Asia. Many wild birds caught from neighbouring countries (Iran and Iraq, Syria) are imported into Kuwait for sale in the Bird Market. These wild birds include raptors (Accipitriformes), bulbuls (Pycnonotidae), Hypocolius (*Hypocolius ampelinus*), Larks (*Alaudidae*), sandgrouses (*Pteroclididae*) and quails (Coturnix). Birds used in Falconry such as Saker (*Falco cherrug*) and Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) are trapped during their Autumn migration and are usually kept in private houses. They are sold to interested parties in at informal auctions where the highest bidder gets the bird.

**Table 1. The species and numbers of birds observed in the Kuwait Bird Market Survey.**

Species	IUCN Red List Summary	Number of Birds	Other Remarks
Eurasian Griffon Vulture <i>Gyps fulvus</i>	LC	3	Offered for sale at US\$450
Short-toed Snake Eagle <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	LC	5	
Western Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	LC	25	
Pallid Harrier <i>Circus macrourus</i>	NT	25	
Montagu's Harrier <i>Circus pygargus</i>	LC	11	
Dark Chanting Goshawk <i>Melierax metabates</i>	LC	1	Caught in Qatif, Saudi Arabia
Levant Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter brevipes</i>	LC	1	
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	LC	14	
Northern Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	LC	1	
Steppe Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>	LC	8	
Long-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo rufinus</i>	LC	1	
Steppe Eagle <i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	LC	2	
Eastern Imperial Eagle <i>Aquila heliaca</i>	VU	1	
Lesser Kestrel <i>Falco naumanni</i>	VU	225	
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	LC	963	
Eurasian Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	LC	13	
Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	LC	1	

IUCN Red List Categories Key: LC: Least Concern, NT: Near Threatened VU: Vulnerable



Fig. 1: Kuwait bird market

## METHODS

The weekend in Kuwait is Friday and Saturday. Weekly visits were made to the Bird Market on weekends from 1st January to 30th May 2010. Only one weekend was missed in January. Visits were brief; scanning the market from one end to the other, sometimes more time was spent.

Thirty two visits were paid to the Bird Market. The authors estimate that on average they have recorded only less than 25% of what had been sold in the market and actual numbers may be much higher. Our survey provides a snapshot of the range of birds sold in the market.

## Results

Seventeen species of raptors of which three are in the IUCN red list were offered for sale in the Bird Market. The species and numbers of birds are presented in Table 1.

## Conclusion

Although the survey was done by private individuals, our purpose was to attract the attention of governmental bodies and encourage them to take appropriate action. A detailed copy of the survey was distributed to governmental bodies. It has yielded some effects and tighter controls and law enforcement have partially stopped the illegal trade. Now we hope this survey might encourage other individuals in the Middle East to do the same, so that a regional picture will emerge and tighter controls over the bird trade can become a reality.

Fig. 2: Raptors for sale in Kuwait bird market



Fig. 4: Griffon vulture for sale



Fig. 3: Kestrels for sale

## References:

Bachmann, A. 2010. Animal trade in Iraq. Wildlife Middle East, vol 5, 1. Stanton D.B. 2010. A rough guide to the raptor trade in Yemen, Falco, Newsletter of the Middle East Falcon Research Group 36: 5-7

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