

Raptor Persecution UK

Attempt to downlist conservation status of Peregrine Falcons (to allow international trade) is thwarted at CITES conference

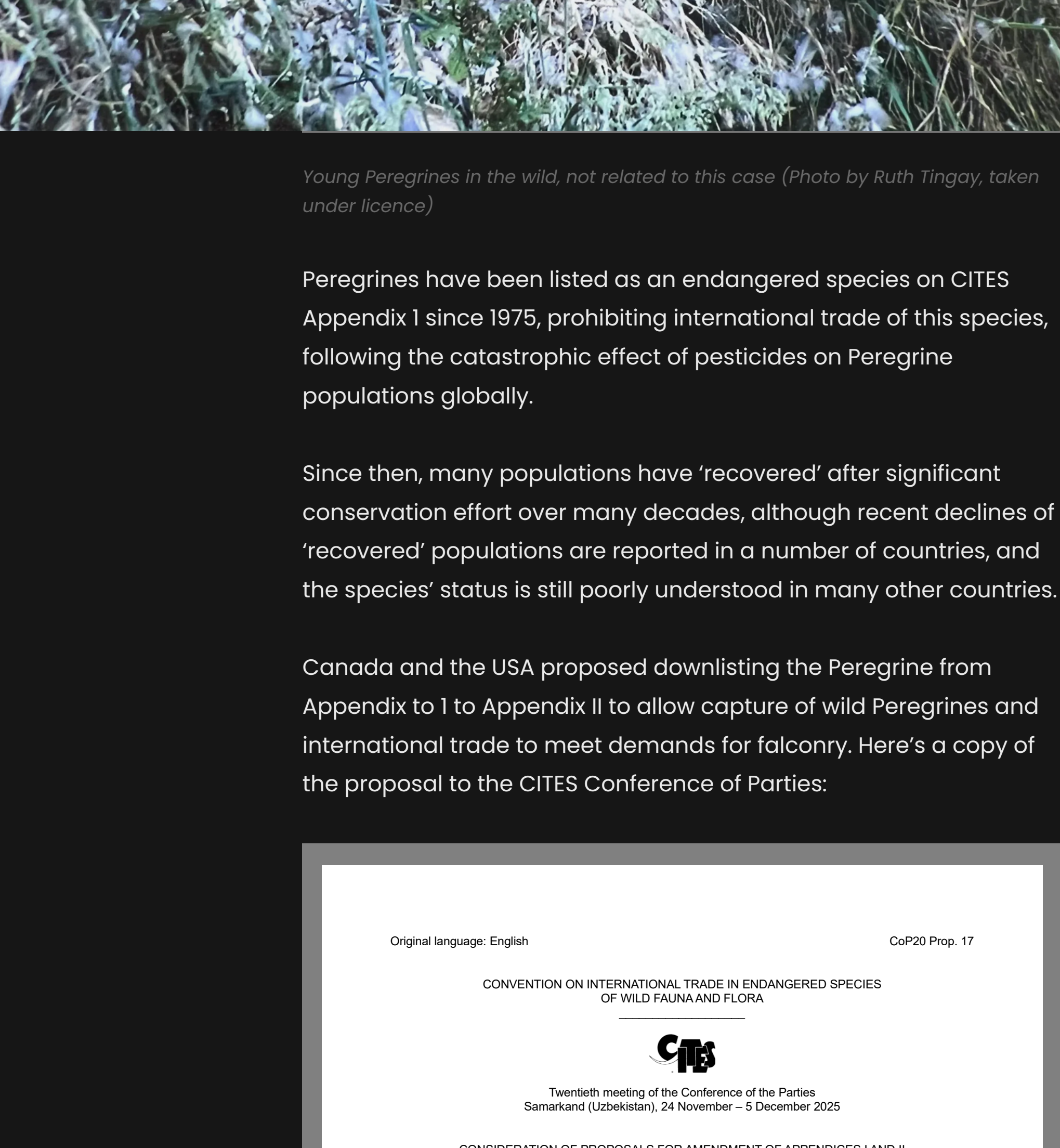
RaptorPersecutionUK

December 4, 2025

News

peregrine

To the relief of many raptor conservationists, a proposal to downlist the Peregrine Falcon from Appendix I to Appendix II of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), which would allow the capture and trade of wild Peregrines) has been thwarted at the 20th Conference of the Parties on CITES (CoP20), currently taking place in Uzbekistan.



Young Peregrines in the wild, not related to this case (Photo by Ruth Tingay, taken under licence)

Peregrines have been listed as an endangered species on CITES Appendix I since 1975, prohibiting international trade of this species, following the catastrophic effect of pesticides on Peregrine populations globally.

Since then, many populations have 'recovered' after significant conservation effort over many decades, although recent declines of 'recovered' populations are reported in a number of countries, and the species' status is still poorly understood in many other countries.

Canada and the USA proposed downlisting the Peregrine from Appendix I to Appendix II to allow capture of wild Peregrines and international trade to meet demands for falconry. Here's a copy of the proposal to the CITES Conference of Parties:

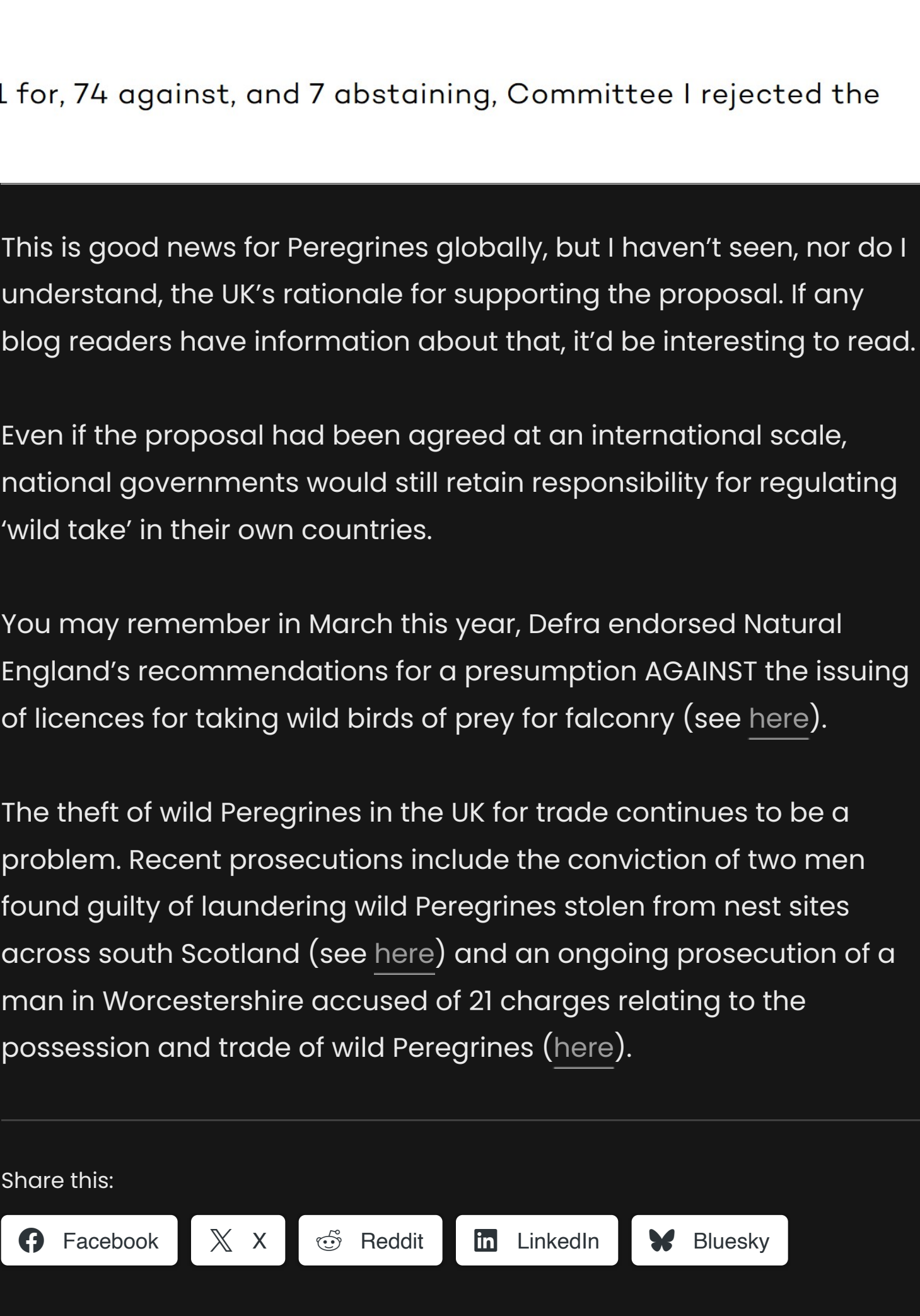


E-CoP20-Prop-17_0

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However, a large number of raptor biologists and conservationists from around the world, many of them specialising in Peregrine research, opposed the proposal and warned of the high risk to some populations.

This excellent paper published recently in the scientific journal *Animal Conservation* explains those concerns:



Animal Conservation 2025 Saggese et al Peregrine Falcon Populations Under Threat

Again

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A vote on the downlisting proposal took place at the CITES Conference yesterday (3 Dec 2025) and did not receive sufficient support to pass and the proposal was rejected.

Here is a note of what happened, published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in its Earth Negotiations Bulletin as part of its daily CITES Conference reporting:

Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*): CANADA introduced CoP20 Prop.17 to downlist *Falco peregrinus* from Appendix I to Appendix II.

KUWAIT, the UK, CHINA, and others supported the proposal, asserting that the species no longer meets the Appendix I biological criteria. DJIBOUTI, the EU, ARGENTINA, and others opposed, citing insufficient global data to justify the downlisting. As a compromise, NEW ZEALAND proposed adding a zero annual export quota for wild-taken specimens traded for commercial purposes, which was accepted.

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL clarified that while some metric data used in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List in 2021 was of poor quality, current data still suggest that peregrine falcon is of least concern globally.

By a secret vote of 61 for, 74 against, and 7 abstaining, Committee I rejected the proposal.

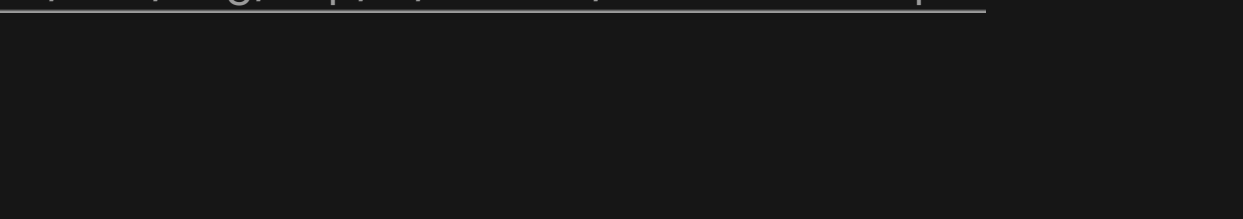
This is good news for Peregrines globally, but I haven't seen, nor do I understand, the UK's rationale for supporting the proposal. If any blog readers have information about that, it'd be interesting to read.

Even if the proposal had been agreed at an international scale, national governments would still retain responsibility for regulating 'wild take' in their own countries.

You may remember in March this year, Defra endorsed Natural England's recommendations for a presumption AGAINST the issuing of licences for taking wild birds of prey for falconry (see [here](#)).

The theft of wild peregrines in the UK for trade continues to be a problem. Recent prosecutions include the conviction of two men found guilty of laundering wild Peregrines stolen from nest sites across south Scotland (see [here](#)) and an ongoing prosecution of a man in Worcestershire accused of 21 charges relating to the possession and trade of wild Peregrines ([here](#)).

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2 thoughts on "Attempt to downlist conservation status of Peregrine Falcons (to allow international trade) is thwarted at CITES conference"

Keith Dancy

December 4, 2025 at 9:23 pm

"This is good news for Peregrines globally, but I haven't seen, nor do I understand, the UK's rationale for supporting the proposal."

Me too!

Google tells me this:

"The UK is represented by a delegation from several government and scientific bodies at the 20th Conference of the Parties (CoP20) on CITES, rather than a single individual.

The delegation includes experts from:

- The **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)**, which serves as the UK's CITES Management Authority for policy.
- The **Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)**, which provides scientific advice.
- Border Force**, involved in compliance and enforcement.
- The **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew**, which acts as the UK's independent Scientific Authority for Flora.
- The **Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)**, responsible for issuing permits and certificates.

Members of Parliament (MPs) from different parties also form part of the broader UK presence, with a specific delegation to CoP20 also noted.

CITES CoP20 is being held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, from November 24 to December 5, 2025. "

<https://www.facebook.com/JNCCUK/posts/jncc-experts-are-proud-to-support-the-uk-delegation-at-cites-cop20-pictured-are-/1150145257330200/>

I see that, according to the proposers, the United Kingdom exported 2031 Peregrine Falcons to Saudi Arabia between 2015 and 2024 – the third highest exporter in the world – whilst importing 427 from Poland: - (The UK also has a CITES-registered captive breeding programme.

The RSPB report about 1500 breeding pairs in the wild in UK today. The BTO say the Peregrine has declined by 48% from 1995 to 2023, but their most recent data is 1768 pairs in just 2014.

The proposers even mention HPAl as a threat:

"At a global scale, Peregrine Falcon populations are considered secure" but, are they?

"The latest (i.e., 2020–2023) highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5 virus has recently caused repeated mass mortality events among wild birds and infection has been detrimental for a variety of bird species, including the **Peregrine Falcon** (Couty et al. 2025; EFSA et al. 2023). The number of wintering and breeding Peregrine Falcons in the Netherlands for example has recently declined (Callendo et al. 2024).

The World Animal Health Information System has reported 392 Peregrine Falcons infected by avian flu from 2017 to June 2025. By region, most of these infected falcons were found in Europe with 236 cases and in North America with 110 cases. Asia declared 37 cases, Central and South America and the Caribbean had 7 cases and only 2 cases were reported in Africa."

Yet they wanted to start up capturing wild birds for trade?

There is a local study on the effects of HPAl on Peregrines:

<https://www.bto.org/potential-effects-hpai-occupancy-rates-breeding-success-age-and-turnover-breeding-peregrine-falcons>

The Telegraph report 'plummeting' numbers of UK Peregrine Falcons:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/09/23/peregrine-falcon-numbers-plummet-rewilding-drive/>

The vote, itself, was secret, so we may never find who and why the "UK and others supported the proposal". On the other hand, all may be revealed when the official reports and documents are published?

<https://cites.org/eng/cop/20/amendment-proposals>

The UK response to this proposal in 2017 was equivocal:

"D. Effectiveness of legislation and management measures

Key traders provided information concerning effectiveness of legislation in controlling legal trade and illegal trade, and species management such as population monitoring. This information was used to support development of sections 7 and 8 of CoP17 Prop. 17.

United Kingdom

Illegal trade in CITES listed raptors is currently a UK enforcement priority and a *down-listing to Appendix II would not have an effect on this process in itself* (J. E. Malpass, Policy Officer, in litt. to ECCC, Dec. 23, 2015)."

<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/InDocs/E-CoP17-Inf-5.pdf>

Reply

Simon Tucker

December 6, 2025 at 10 pm

I note that it was the USA and Canada that applied for the lifting. I am not too confident that the current USA administration will not exempt themselves from CITES.

Reply

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- 2014 persecution incidents (182)
- 2015 persecution incidents (106)
- 2016 persecution incidents (149)
- 2017 persecution incidents (146)
- 2018 persecution incidents (215)
- 2019 persecution incidents (218)
- 2020 persecution incidents (275)
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- October 2024 (19)
- September 2024 (17)
- August 2024 (20)
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- June 2024 (18)
- May 2024 (17)
- April 2024 (20)
- March 2024 (28)
- February 2024 (23)
- January 2024 (27)
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- November 2023 (29)
- October 2023 (21)
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- August 2023 (50)
- July 2023 (20)
- June 2023 (36)
- May 2023 (37)
- April 2023 (31)
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- February 2023 (24)
- January 2023 (30)
- December 2022 (16)
- November 2022 (15)
- October 2022 (22)
- September 2022 (14)
- August 2022 (33)
- July 2022 (21)
- June 2022 (26)
- May 2022 (32)
- April 2022 (28)
- March 2022 (34)
- February 2022 (28)
- January 2022 (31)
- December 2021 (22)
- November 2021 (27)
- October 2021 (58)
- September 2021 (24)
- August 2021 (28)
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- June 2021 (16)
- May 2021 (25)
- April 2021 (41)
- March 2021 (38)
- February 2021 (42)
- January 2021 (39)
- December 2020 (33)
- November 2020 (48)
- October 2020 (29)
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