

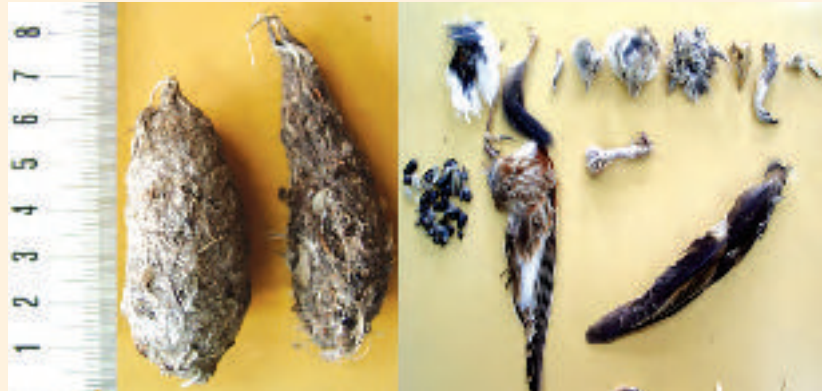


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### Food:



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Carnivore. Lizards, ground squirrels, picas, hare, gerbils, birds (larks, quails, ducks, herons, even raptors , etc .) Get prey by pursuit near the ground but also in mid-air by stooping at great speed.



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Tundra and taiga biomes in temperate region. Open country with arid regions, grasslands, forest steppe, desert steppe and montane regions.

**Habit:** Diurnal ‘Desert Falcon’. Perch on trees, pylons, poles or on the top of boulders. Courtship displays with soaring, offering food and bowing.

**Distribution:** Eastern Europe, Asia and Manchuria. Winter in Ethiopia, Arabia, India, Pakistan and west China.

**Status:** Vulnerable. Rare winter migrant (October to April) to arid regions of NW India, Rajasthan and Gujarat. 9,600 – 17,000 breeding pairs (Birdlife International, 2010).

## Phenology:



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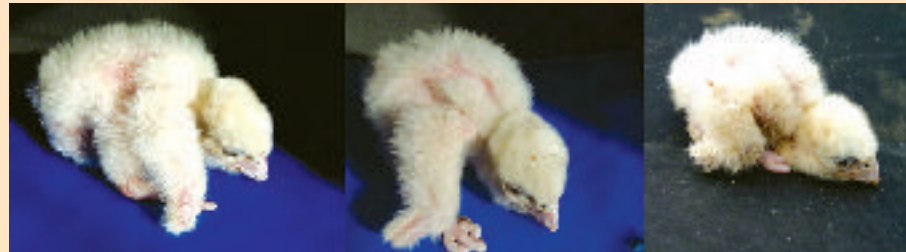
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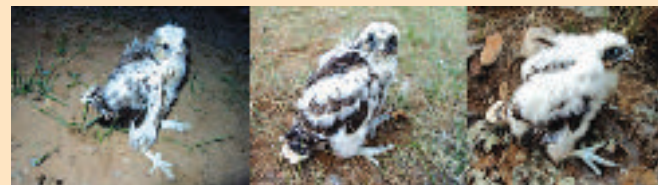
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Pectacular aerial pre-breeding displays. Flap, soar and stoop.

### Key Features:

- Variable chocolate brown to sandy brown plumage.
- Pale head with dusky stripes on ears.
- Belly streaked and barred on flanks.
- Broad sickle-shaped wings.
- Iris dark brown; Bill yellow to ivory white, black tipped.
- Legs and feet pale yellowish-green.
- Claws powerful, black.
- Curved, pointed, strong beak.
- Female larger than male.



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## FACT FILE : Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* J. E. Grey, 1834.

**Type locality:** India.

**Local names:** *Chirg, Chirgela* (Hindi); *Chirug, Sasana* (Marathi).

- **Size:** 50-56 cm.
- **Average weight:** 970 - 1300 g (Female).
- **Wing:** Male 348 - 370 mm; Female 390 -412 mm.
- **Wing span:** 100 – 130 cm.
- **Breeding season:** April - May.
- **Breeding interval:** Every year.
- **Clutch:** 2 to 6 eggs.
- **Eggs:** Cream, blotched with red-brown. Oval.
- **Incubation:** 36 d. Fledging period: 45 - 50 d.
- **Average life span:** 7 years in wild. 25 years in captivity
- **Call:** Loud kie-ye and whistles.
- **Chief Editor:** Satish Pande.
- **Guest Editor:** Gombobaatar Sundev (Mongolia).
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- **References:** \*Ali & Ripley (1969). \*Satish Pande. (2009) Latin Names of Indian Birds Explained. Book made and Funded by Ela Foundation. Published by Oxford University Press and Bombay Natural History Society; PLEASE GIVE TWO REFERENCES WITH YOUR JUDGEMENT.
- **Recommended citation:** Pande, Satish and S. Gombobaatar. (2013). Saker Falcon. Ela File 12: 1-6. Ela Foundation, Pune.



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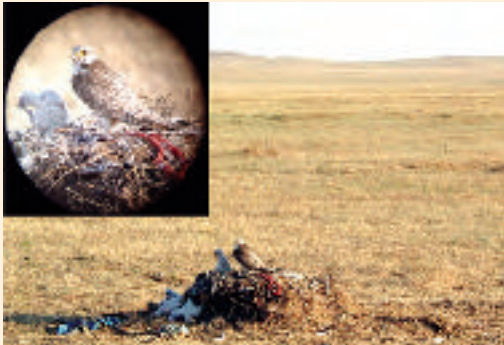
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Nests



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On cliffs, rocks, trees, ground, pylons, poles and abandoned buildings. Accept artificial nest platforms. Stick nests are constructed or nests of magpies are taken by abducting rightful owners.

Related species:

Laggar Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, Red-capped Falcon.



SAKER FALCON

- **Order:** Falconiformes ● **Family:** Falconidae.
- **Status:** Red List Category - Vulnerable.

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Amezing Facts



**Etymology:**  
Falco (L), a falcon, refers to sickle-shaped wings; cherrug (L), from Hindi charg. Saker from Saqr (a falcon, from Arabic). (Pande, Satish. 2009).

**Cultural aspects:**  
Saker is the national bird of Hungary, features in mythology and is known as Turul. Is in great demand for falconry.

This fast flying falcon is monogamous. Cases are reported to be infected with H5N1 avian influenza virus. Dead chick in the nest is eaten by surviving siblings (necrophagy) but fratricide is not known.



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**THREATS:** Degradation of steppes, agriculture intensification, pesticides, electrocutions and offtake for falconry are major threats. Hybridization is also reported. It is presently vulnerable.



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Economic importance and conservation:

Predator of insects and rodents. Large financial transactions occur due to demand for falconry. According to one estimate up to 8500 Sakers were trapped in one year for falconry in Middle East countries. Populations are declining in the breeding range and illegal trapping and trade continues in spite of legal protection and inclusion under CITES. Artificial nest platforms, captive breeding programs and ecotourism are proving successful.

Based on photographs and field research by Prof. Gombobaatar Sundev (Mongolia).