

**THE IRISH  
FLY FISHING AND  
GAME SHOOTING  
MUSEUM**  
ATTANAGH, CO. LAOIS

**Letter of support  
for inscription of Irish falconry on the UNESCO Representative List  
of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**

I wish to express my support for the proposed inscription of Irish Falconry on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

As the founder and curator of the Irish Fly Fishing and Game Shooting Museum in Attanagh, Co Laois, I am fully aware of what country pursuits mean to so many people all over Ireland. This heritage needs to be protected as it is part of our deep and varied history.

Falconry has existed in Ireland for several centuries and has brought much joy and inspiration to a passionate and dedicated group of people.

For this reason, I wish The Irish Hawking Club every success with their application.

Walter Phelan  
Curator  
Irish Flyfishing and Shooting Museum

Email: [fishingmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:fishingmuseum@gmail.com)

12.1.2020

Ms. Sínead O'Hara  
Department of Culture,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin,  
Ireland.

Department of Culture and Tourism,  
PO Box  
Abu Dhabi,  
United Arab Emirates.

Dear Minister,

My name is Declan Cairney, I am writing to you as a Nineteen year-old Irish falconer who has been practicing this great historical sport since the tender age of Nine. I am sure that, like myself, many falconers who enjoyed this exposure during their childhood have had their lives profoundly shaped by the unique insight into the natural world which it provides.

Falconry has been woven into the fabric of my life since I began volunteering at the 'Bird of Prey Center' at Aillwee Coves, close to where I grew up. It was there I met my mentor and learned much from the various staff members over the years. The importance of teaching within the falconry community is something remarkable, and the 'mentor' ethos crucially important. This is not a practice which can be learned by poring over books exclusively, a person must live it and breathe it with an experienced practitioner to guide them. This in itself is priceless.

For a sport that connects people to nature in a time when this has possibly never been more important. For something to be passed down generation to generation for over Four Thousand years and still remain as raw and breathtaking as ever, I believe its cultural value is immeasurable and its place within our heritage almost sacred. I count myself extraordinarily lucky to be part of the falconry community.

Yours in Sport,

Declan Cairney



**Member of IUCN and  
Accredited NGO to  
UNESCO ICH**

H.E Majed Al Mansouri  
President  
*United Arab Emirates*

Gary Timbrell  
Chief Executive Officer  
*Ireland*

Omar Fouad Al Ahmed  
*SEO MENA Region*

Janusz Sielicki  
Vice President  
Europe, Oceania and Africa  
(South of Sahara)  
*Poland*

Dr. Keiya Nakajima  
Vice President  
Asia  
*Japan*

Dan Cecchini  
Vice President  
for the Americas  
*United States of America*

Mark Upton  
Executive Secretary  
*United Kingdom*

António Carapuço  
Treasurer  
*Portugal*

Rue de Flandre 31  
Bruxelles 1000  
Belgium  
Date: 12.01.20

To:

Ms. Sinéad O'Hara  
Department of Culture,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin  
Ireland.

Department of Culture and Tourism,  
PO Box  
Abu Dhabi  
United Arab Emirates.

Subject: application to add Ireland to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage nomination file number 01209. "Falconry. a living human heritage"

Dear Sir Madam,

This organization, the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) has been since 2010, the non-governmental organization accredited to provide advisory services to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee on matters concerned with the Falconry element. Our accreditation registration number is 90006.

IAF would like to add its support to the application from Ireland to be added to the Falconry element extension and to join the eighteen other countries listed there. The Irish Hawking Club has played a very active role in IAF since our foundation in 1968 and its delegates have always been very forthright and open in passing on knowledge, ideas and wisdom about the element.

The 2016 event held in Sneem, Co. Kerry, and Moyvalley, Co. Meath, showcased to the world the excellence of Irish falconry and its important role in influencing bird of prey conservation at home, in the European Union and in the wider world

Yours faithfully,

Gary Timbrell, Chief Executive Officer IAF  
PP H.E. Majed Al Mansouri, President IAF



## IRISH RED & WHITE SETTER CLUB

Swilly View

Craig

Rathmullan

Co. Donegal

Date; 14/01/2020

To whom it may concern

We are delighted to support the application by the Irish Hawking Club to UNESCO to have Falconry recognised as having intangible cultural heritage status.

Ireland has a long association with falconry dating back before the 12<sup>th</sup> century and it is great that this ancient sport is still practised today.

Falconry has a shared history with another very important part of our heritage – our two native setters, the Irish Red Setter and the Irish Red and White Setter, which to this day are used to locate wild quarry for the sport of falconry.

As president of the Irish Red and White Setter Club I would like to endorse in the strongest terms the application by the Irish Hawking Club to have Falconry in Ireland considered for ratification under the UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE.

I trust that UNESCO will look on this application favourably.

Yours Sincerely,

Jim Sheridan

President of the Irish Red & White Setter Club



13<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Sinéad O'Hara  
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht  
23 Kildare Street,  
Dublin

**Re: In Support of UNESCO Ratification for Irish Falconry.**

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) is an expert and informed rural campaigning organisation, representing over 11,000 people throughout Ireland. We, and our members, work, live and participate in recreation in Ireland's countryside and we are delighted to write in support of Irish Falconry in their request to be considered for ratification under the UNESCO Convention to have Irish Falconry awarded Intangible Cultural Heritage status.

Originally a method of obtaining food, the practice of falconry has evolved over time to be more associated with nature conservation, cultural heritage and social engagement within and amongst communities. Following their own set of traditions and ethical principles, falconers train, fly and breed birds of prey (which includes besides falcons, birds such as eagles and hawks) developing a bond with them and becoming their main source of protection.

Falconers regard themselves as a group and may travel weeks at a time engaging in the practice, while in the evenings recounting stories of the day together. They consider falconry as providing a connection to the past, particularly for communities for which the practice is one of their few remaining links with their natural environment and traditional culture. Knowledge and skills are transmitted in an intergenerational manner within families by formal mentoring, apprenticeship or training in clubs and schools.

In some countries, a national examination must be passed in order to become a falconer. Field meets and festivals provide opportunities for communities to share knowledge, raise awareness and promote diversity.

Thanks to the promotion and dedicated work of Irish falconers and others, falconry continues to flourish across the island of Ireland.

We trust that UNESCO will consider the application favourably.

Yours sincerely



**LYALL PLANT**

**Chief Executive**

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## THE VOICE OF EUROPEAN HUNTERS

FACE

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Sinéad O'Hara  
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht  
23 Kildare Street, Dublin 2,  
D02 TD30

13.01.2019,

Dear Sinéad,

On behalf of the European Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE), I am writing to you to express our full support for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to add falconry to the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This would be an obvious step forward from the recent listing of falconry within Ireland's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

FACE represents the national hunting associations from 37 countries in Europe and the collective interest of Europe's seven million hunters. Since 1977, FACE has been a highly respected international non-governmental organisation recognised by the European institutions in all matters related to hunting, wildlife management, animal welfare, and the representation of hunters' legitimate interests. We are long-standing members of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and actively participate as observers to all major nature conservation conventions/agreements including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, the Ramsar Convention and the Bern Convention. FACE is also an advisor organisation to UNESCO.

Falconry is practiced throughout the world and has a long-standing record of success in a wide range of conservation-related areas. Falconers actively engage in research, rehabilitation of birds of prey, education and awareness-raising, habitat creation and management for prey species and birds of prey, raptor population monitoring, combatting illegal killing and taking of raptors, as well as raptor translocation and reintroduction projects. Some popular ongoing projects lead by falconers include [www.sakernet.org](http://www.sakernet.org) and [www.perdixnet.org](http://www.perdixnet.org)

Aside from its conservation role, falconry has a rich cultural heritage and has contributed significantly to language and arts, and in developing a scientific understanding in ornithology, wildlife and the natural world. Falconry is recognised by the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, with UNESCO inscription in many countries.

FACE remains at your disposal, and we offer our expertise and technical resources to support your Government in promoting falconry as a sustainable hunting 'art' in Ireland. Most importantly, we remain very confident that you will see a wide range of cultural benefits arising from promoting falconry within UNESCO.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. David Scallan  
Secretary General  
**FACE – European Federation for Hunting and Conservation**  
Rue Belliard 205 – B-1040 BRUSSELS  
Office: +32 (0)2-4161614  
Mobile: +353 87-9504563  
Email: [david.scallan@face.eu](mailto:david.scallan@face.eu)



Eoghan Ryan,  
Laurhill,  
Hempstown,  
Blessington,  
County Kildare  
W91 A489

14<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.

**Re: Proposed Inscription of Irish Falconry on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**

To Whom it May Concern,

From a very early age, I had a passion for everything to do with the natural world. I loved wildlife and was drawn to birds and then birds of prey. For me they were the 'crème de la crème' of the avian world – predators at the top of the food chain. I recall, as a young boy, taking a book about raptors out of the library and as I leafed through its pages, I recall reading about falconry and the art and practice of falconry and I said to myself, '*one day I am going to do that!*' without any idea as to how I might.

My passion and interest met with serendipity and I began to accidentally meet falconers at home and on travels abroad and eventually I got to pursue this ancient and noble activity myself. This practical aspect of falconry, where a younger or apprentice falconer observes and learns from a mentor or elder is essential – with knowledge passed from one generation to another.

Falconry is the art and practice of training a bird of prey to pursue prey in its natural environment – this is important for the birds mental and physical well-being, but it is less about the game caught but for me more about the art, the beauty and the style of flight and that coordinated role of bird, dog and falconer in the outdoors. Thus, it is frequently referred to as the '*art and practice of falconry*'.

Falconry has connected me intimately with nature in a way that I think few other activities could (though I find it fascinating that so many falconers are also bee-keepers, like myself, and/or pursue art, like myself). Falconry requires an understanding about habitat and the importance of protecting the environment. In this modern world of technological advancements and mass food production, I think it is critical that younger generations get the opportunity to connect or re-connect with nature and that older generations of falconers (like myself) are part of both a local and global community that provides opportunities to share and transfer our cultural heritage of falconry to others in the community and especially to younger generations.

This country has such a very rich tradition of falconry going back centuries and thankfully the standard of falconry practiced in Ireland is on a par with best in the world, and some might even argue it is second to none! For these reasons, and as a former President of the Irish Hawking Club, I wholeheartedly support the Inscription of Irish Falconry on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Sincerely,

  
Eoghan Ryan, B.A., M.R.U.P., M.Sc.

(Letter of support 13. January 2020)

Re: Falconry in Ireland for UNESCO, support from Norway

Dear UNESCO committee

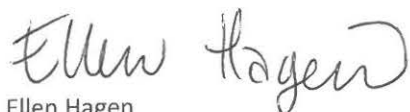
It has come to my attention that Ireland with the Irish Hawking Club, is applying for falconry on the UNESCO list, and I wish to express a strong support from Norway for that to happen.

Falconry in Ireland is unique historically because it also includes a connection to Norway from the Norse settlement from the Viking Age, 840AD. This led to the development of Dublin as a united trading city, linking it to major international trading cities across the continent. No other country in all of Europe has the same amount of Irish artefacts as Norway has, which created a diverse and rich Hiberno-Norse culture, including advanced and treasured shared hunting skills such as falconry. Falconry itself is the definition of hunting with a trained bird of prey on wild game. The skill is an intangible heritage, as it needs to be learned through apprenticeship over time. In archaeology, falconry artefacts are fragile materials such as bird bones, leather (gloves and foot wear/jesses) thin metals (bells), such material is hard to recover and needs the help of experienced falconers so researchers can recognize true falconry materials in museums. To include falconry on the UNESCO list, this will help give more historical awareness on a heritage that is still practiced in Ireland today.

The National Museum of Ireland has in the last two years had three events on falconry in order to educate the public of Irish falconry history. The National Museum of Ireland was not aware of the historical importance and immediately arranged public awareness on it in Dublin, both of Irelands own history, and the connection to Norway. The first event was a collaboration between the Museum of Archaeology at the University of Stavanger in Norway and the National Museum of Ireland in the Natural History museum in Dublin on the collection of donated and important taxidermy falconry birds, in Irish history. The second and third events were with the Irish Hawking Club, The Museum of Archaeology Uis and the National Museum of Ireland on Irish wild falcons and public awareness of the collection at the Natural History Museum, and also a presentation of 'A history of Falconry in Ireland and Norway', all of which were a public success event.

From a heritage perspective, it is vital to give support to intangible heritages such as falconry in order to secure the practice in the future. This was not done in Norway, and the skill and history was almost lost permanently, and is just recently being revived. Ireland has the chance now to secure Irish falconry in its history and heritage which touch upon topics from Irish art, archaeology, language and literature.

Falconry is an essential activity in areas such as conservation of nature habitats and species protection since it needs to be learned and practiced in nature, if any of these elements are in imbalance this will affect the art of falconry. Falconry is additionally eco friendly and sustainable, and has a positive impact on both personal health and in rehabilitation of injured wild bird of prey. Falconry is unique and interdisciplinary which can enrich Irish culture, heritage, health and nature conservation.



Ellen Hagen

Museum Pedagog on heritage, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger

President of Norwegian Falconry Association, NFA

Delegate for Norway at the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, IAF

Local Huntress Contact for Norway's Hunting and Fishing Society, NJFF

Mobile: 0047 47415022

[Ellen.hagen@uis.no](mailto:Ellen.hagen@uis.no)

Norway



Mr Shay O' Byrne  
Dromard House  
Cowpasture  
Dunlavin  
Co. Wicklow

13<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Re: Proposed inscription of Irish Falconry on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

To Whom it Concerns,

I wish to express my whole hearted support for the proposed inscription of Irish Falconry on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Since the early seventies I have had a passion for falconry and birds of prey, nurtured from those that went before, the art and practice which was handed down from generation to generation is an integral part of our heritage. The art and practice of falconry in Ireland is in a healthy state with more enthusiasts practising. It is heartening to see more young people engaged in falconry and long may this lineage continue.

I'm a visual artist and practising falconer with one inspiring the other as most my work is nature based. For me personally to be out in the field hunting with a bird of prey in its natural environment at one with nature there is no better way, the same as our ancestors.

To have Irish Falconry protected and enshrined as proposed is of paramount importance for the future of this ancient sport in Ireland, I give it my full support.

Yours Faithfully.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shay O' Byrne', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shay O' Byrne

(Artist / Falconer)



# IRISH HAWKING CLUB

ESTABLISHED 1860

Sinéad O' Hara  
Culture Ireland  
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht  
23 Kildare St  
Dublin 2

12/01/2020

Dear Sinéad,

On behalf of the Irish Hawking Club, I would like to offer our full support for the nomination of Falconry to be inscribed on the multinational Representative List of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritages

The Irish Hawking Club is one of the oldest falconry clubs in the world; first founded in Dublin in 1860 and reconstituted in 1967. As the only representative organisation for falconry in Ireland, the Irish Hawking Club has always played a key role in defining, encouraging and safeguarding the practice of falconry in Ireland.

Falconry has been practiced in Ireland for millennia and it is part of the intricate tapestry of our rich heritage and culture. History reveals that there wasn't a corner of Ireland where the tradition of falconry didn't exist. This practice still exists in the 32 counties to the present day and it is a source of pride that the Irish Hawking Club boasts of a unified membership north and south of the border.

Today, falconry in Ireland enriches the lives of many through its connection with the natural environment. It provides people with a sense of identity and continuity, and its safeguarding promotes, sustains, and develops cultural diversity and human creativity.

It was a great sense of honour and pride for the Irish falconry community to have Falconry inscribed on our National List of Intangible Cultural Heritages in July 2019 and we fully endorse its inscription on the UNESCO multinational Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritages.

Yours Sincerely,

Don Ryan  
Director  
Irish Hawking Club

Falconry

Inscribed by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind

DARRY REED

4 COOLEVIN  
BALLYBRACK  
CO. DUBLIN  
IRELAND

15/01/2020

Dear Minister,

I am writing this letter in support of the nomination to add Falconry in Ireland to the multinational inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage.

I am a 36 year old falconer, midwife and mother of three. As a child I had a keen interest in the natural world, in particular, birds of prey. Through the Irish Hawking Club, I was put in contact with a mentor and started as an apprentice falconer at 12 years of age and trained my first hawk under supervision a year later. Falconry gave me a far greater insight and relationship with nature than any of the walks, books and documentaries that had come before. In the years since, both as a child and adult, training birds of prey and watching them in action in their natural environment has been a grounding connection to nature amid the hustle and technology of the modern world.

My eldest child is now 12 years old, and shares my passion for falconry and nature. As I begin to pass on the ancient skills and knowledge that form the art of falconry, I feel a connection to the generations of falconers before me that have carried and passed on the torch.



Learning the art of forming a symbiotic relationship with an apex predator, and to see it fly and hunt in peak condition, in close proximity, is a profound gift and something I hope continues on for many more generations.

The standard of Falconry in Ireland, its nuances and our landscape, place it among the best in the world, attracting many international falconers that come to spectate. It is something ancient, unique and deserving of recognition.

Kind Regards

Darry Reed



# museum

National Museum of Ireland Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Ms. Sinéad O'Hara  
Department of Culture,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin  
Ireland.

Dr. Nasser Al Himiri  
Department of Culture and Tourism,  
PO Box 2390  
Abu Dhabi  
United Arab Emirates.

Dear Ms. Sinéad O'Hara and Dr. Nasser Al Himiri,

I am writing to you to explain what I as Education officer at the National Museum of Ireland have observed of the public interest in the ancient tradition of falconry in Ireland and why we consider it important to mention in our ongoing guided tours of the National Museum of Ireland.

In March 2019 we had two events at the National Museum of Ireland to celebrate and communicate the long history, heritage and modern practice of Falconry. The events were held on the one day, one at the Natural History branch and one at the Archaeological branch of the National Museum of Ireland. Both events were at booked out, in that they had full audiences, we had 208 people attend in the morning the drop-in event and 41 attend the discussion about the tradition and archaeological, oral, and written evidence for falconry in Ireland during the afternoon. The details of those events are as follows:

**Falconry & Falcons: Saturday 23rd March 2019. 10.00– 12.30pm / All Ages.**

No Booking Required. Drop-in and meet falconers, Ellen Hagen from the Museum of Archaeology at the University of Stavanger, Norway and Hilary White from the Irish Hawking Club. See up-close a real live falcon, discover this predator's top hunting techniques and learn about the different types of birds of prey in Ireland, during this drop-in event.

**A History of Falconry in Ireland and Norway: Saturday 23rd March / 2.30 - 3.30pm / Ages 12+**

Falconers Ellen Hagen from the Museum of Archaeology at the University of Stavanger, Norway, and Hilary White of the Irish Hawking Club will explain the archaeological and historical evidence for falconry in Norway and Ireland, from medieval to modern times.

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# museum

National Museum of Ireland Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

We commissioned these events as we thought it important to include the practice of Falconry in our programming to highlight traditional and medieval past-times. Additionally we also wanted to discuss past times which were practiced in Ireland during the time periods represented by the archaeological collections of the Museum, from the Neolithic to 1550 AD, and there is evidence that falcons were valued and it was practiced during those times. We were also interested in bringing to the public's notice those practices that would also be suitable to use to teach about sustainability and environmental education.

We had many happy families come to the more informal morning event and display at the Natural History Museum, both families based in Ireland and visiting from abroad, and adults, were fascinated to hear more about the modern practice and also the long history of falconry in Ireland. We were especially delighted on the day to see the appeal of Falconry to young people and their engagement with the practitioners. It can be difficult to reach young adults, or teenage audiences and to get them to engage in an enthusiastic way in a public forum about the ancient heritage of Ireland so we were delighted to see the reaction to this event.

We have built on this interest from the public and we expanded the teaching items we use during our regular guided tours to include a falconry hood and bell, this generates great interest and discussion during tours at the Museum. We also would intend to run more events on this topic in the future at the National Museum of Ireland.

Yours sincerely,

Siobhán Pierce  
Education and Outreach Officer - Archaeology & Natural History  
National Museum of Ireland - Archaeology  
Kildare Street  
Dublin D02 FH48  
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Direct line: ++ 353 1 648 6314  
Email: [spierce@museum.ie](mailto:spierce@museum.ie)  
Museum website: [www.museum.ie](http://www.museum.ie)

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