



### Falconry regulations published

Following thorough stakeholder consultation, the Government published Conservation of Wild Birds (Falconry) Regulations (S.L. 549.106) which is available online from <http://justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=12529&l=1>.

Falconry, which comprises a set of activities related to the rearing, training and flying of birds of prey, including for the purpose of hunting of quarry species, is a long standing traditional practice that dates back centuries. The European Union Birds Directive requires EU Member States to ensure *"that the practice of hunting, including falconry if practised, is carried on in accordance with the national measures in force, complies with the principles of wise use and ecologically balanced control of the species of birds concerned and that this practice is compatible as regards the population of these species, in particular migratory species, with the measures resulting from Article 2."*

Although falconry in Malta has been practiced for millennia, until the coming into force of new regulations there were no dedicated legal provisions that would specifically cater for, and regulate the various activities comprising traditional falconry within the modern framework of law.

In order to address the above limitations, and to afford the long standing tradition of falconry the legal recognition that it deserves under Maltese law, the Wild Birds Regulation Unit conducted extensive discussions with the local voluntary organisations which promote falconry, as well as with the International Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, as well as other NGOs and independent experts. The resulting Regulations, adopted and published by Government in July, aim to provide an appropriate regulatory framework for the practice of falconry in Malta and to ensure that the practice is regulated in a manner that would, on the one hand, enable the various activities comprising the art of falconry, whilst on the other hand – ensure that the practice is carried out strictly in accordance with the national, EU and international law on the conservation of wild birds.

In this regard, the new regulations lay down clear provisions concerning permitted falconry practices, as well as stipulate the need for a license to keep and fly specimens from the falconry species for the purpose of training, display of flight or for the taking of quarry species. The license, which will stipulate applicable conditions, would only be granted to persons who are:

- at least sixteen years of age at the time of application;
- have completed the relevant application form in the format prescribed by the Wild Bird Regulation Unit;
- members of a recognised falconry organisation;
- covered with a third party liability insurance covering the activity of falconry;
- have paid the applicable license fees; and
- successfully sat for an examination as established by the Wild Birds Regulation Unit which shall include an examination in the knowledge of the applicable regulations, knowledge in the practical handling of the falconry species and knowledge in the identification of birds.

Parts of the examination procedure will be done in conjunction with the falconry organisations, under syllabus to be approved and supervised by the Wild Birds Regulation Unit.

General falconry license application forms are available from:

<https://environment.gov.mt/en/Document%20Repository/WBRU/Licence%20Application%20Form%20for%20new%20applicants-%20FALCONRY.pdf>