

Tower of London ravens are moved indoors

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Increasing fears of bird flu have prompted British officials to move the Tower of London's famous ravens indoors to protect them.

The H5N1 strain of avian influenza, first identified in China, has reached France and British government officials say they expect bird flu will likely arrive soon in their nation, National Geographic News reported Monday.

The unusual move was, at least in part, spurred by English legend that says a terrible evil will befall the kingdom if the Tower loses its ravens, which have lived at the landmark for more than 300 years.

King Charles II, who reigned from 1660 to 1685, decreed at least six ravens should always be kept at the 11th-century fortress overlooking the Thames River. The Tower is also home to Britain's Crown Jewels.

The Tower's current resident ravens -- Baldrick, Branwen, Gwyllum, Hugine, Munin, and Thor -- are usually seen strutting about the Tower's green where they are popular with sightseers.

But the birds, whose wings are clipped to prevent them flying away, are now residing in a royal aviary at one of the royal palace's towers and are said to be doing well, NGN reported.

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