

Pakistan foils attempt to smuggle endangered falcons

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Customs officials seized 75 falcons and a houbara bustard at locations around Karachi

Pakistani authorities said Saturday they had foiled an attempt to smuggle dozens of endangered falcons worth more than one million dollars out of the country.

Wildlife traffickers catch falcons in Pakistan's mountainous north, often to sell them for lucrative profits in the Gulf region, where hunting with the [birds](#) is a popular sport.

Customs officials seized 75 falcons and a houbara bustard at locations around the southern port city of Karachi in what they called an "unprecedented" anti-smuggling operation.

"The birds are listed as rare and [endangered species](#) and their trade is strictly banned," said senior customs officer Mohammad Saqif Saeed.

He did not identify the species of the birds but estimated their value to be around 200 million rupees (over \$1 million) on the [black market](#).

Authorities have arrested two suspects and plan to

release the birds into the wild.

The houbara bustard is a desert bird whose meat is prized among Arab sheikhs as an aphrodisiac.

Falcons are often used by wealthy hunting parties from the Gulf who travel to Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province every winter to catch and kill the houbara.

An earlier ban on the sport was overturned by Pakistan's top court.

Two hundred rare falcons were reportedly exported to Qatar from Pakistan earlier this year on special permission.



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