

Police Swoop on Russian Falcon Smugglers

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Two men were detained by police in Russia's Jewish autonomous region for smuggling 19 endangered gyrfalcons worth a combined 22 million rubles (\$670,000), investigators said Wednesday.

One of the birds died while being moved in a car, but the rest were seized and placed in a shelter, a spokesman for the Investigative Committee's Far East branch said.

The suspects, whose names were withheld, face up to three years in prison and a fine of up to 1 million rubles (\$30,500) on charges of smuggling endangered animals.

Gyrfalcons are not on the international list of endangered species but are listed as such in Russia, where less than 1,000 remain, according to the country's Red Data Book of endangered species and plants.

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