Sovereign Base Area Administration of Akrotiri and Dhekelia

A strategic approach to illegal bird killing

Presented by: Graham Johnstone – SBAA Environmental Policy Officer

SBAA background

About the SBAs

- 397.4km of terrestrial territory
- United Kingdom overseas territory
- SBA Administration – funded by MOD
- A primary function of the SBAA is to ensure that the SBAs can be used in support British Forces Cyprus, including the provision of Military Training Activities.

Our biodiversity

- Very important fly-way and migration route
- Numerous endemic and red list species
- Important habitats & protected species
- Nationally and internationally protected areas

Bird Trapping & Poaching in the SBAs

- Is an island-wide multi-faceted problem extending into SBAs

- 'Ambelopoulia' is an expensive Cyprus delicacy. Birds are lured, illegally captured by non-selective methods, slaughtered and sold for profit by organised groups or consumed by individuals

- Strong links to organised crime

Where did the Strategic approach come from?

- Result of political & media pressure on SBAA and UK government from local and International NGOs

- Identified the activity as a significant risk to the SBAA

- Legal obligations of the SBAA (national & international)

CyprusMail
Founded 1945

Cyprus

Prince Charles weighs in on bird trapping controversy

By Jean Christou   March 24, 2014   80   489

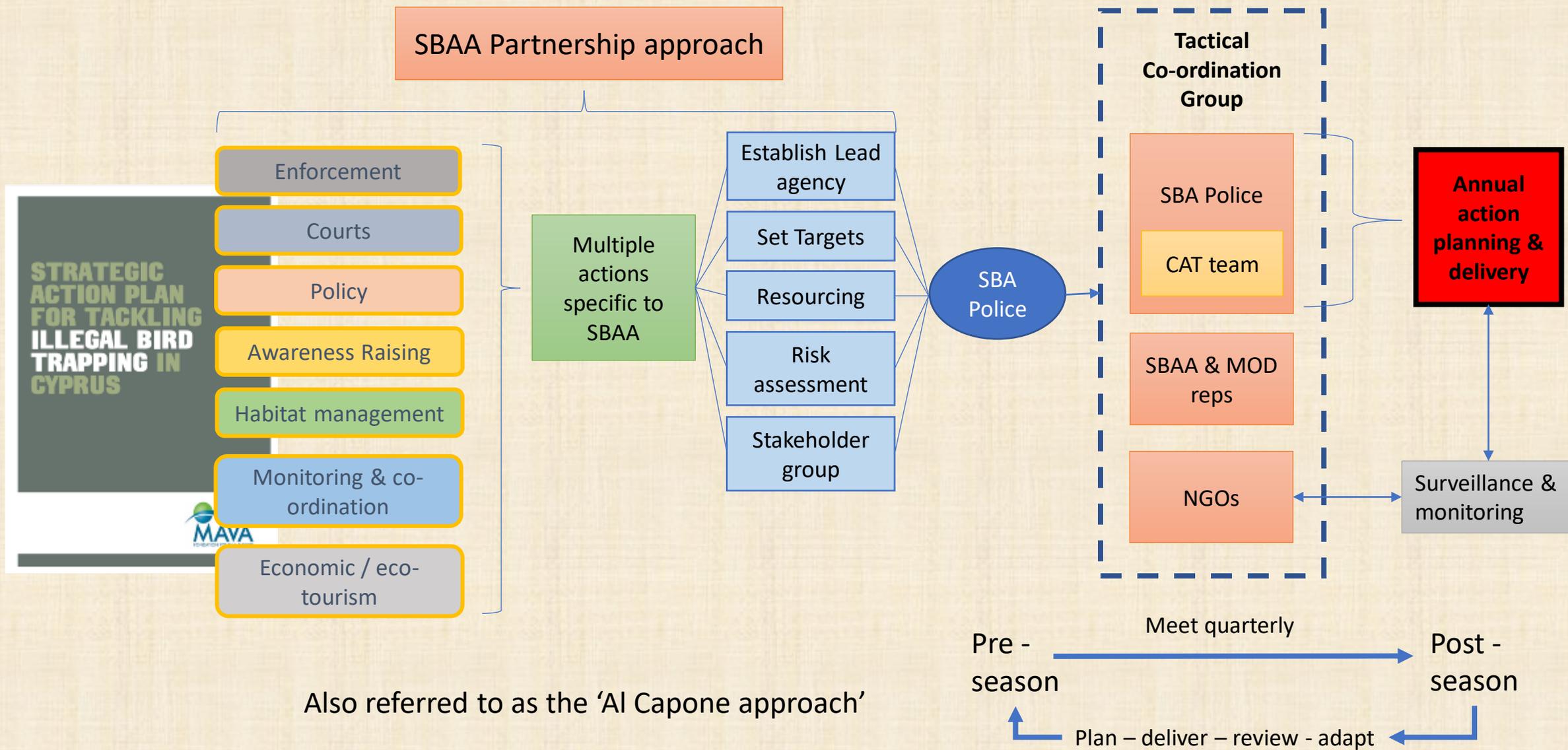## Birds 'trapped and killed' on UK soil in Cyprus

24 December 2010

B B C

rspb

Songbirds killed on British military base in Cyprus reaches record level

Monday 9 March 2015

Establishing the SBAA approach

Also referred to as the 'Al Capone approach'

The Annual Action Plan

- Delivered by SBA Police Community Action Team(CAT)
- Phased approach
    1. Phase 1 - Pre-season preparations (July-Sept)
    2. Phase 2 – Trapping season(Sept-April)
    3. Phase 3 – Post season activities (May-June)

Objectives of plan:
- To **disrupt and deter** bird trappers
- Intelligence led operations – utilizing **'Hot net'** list
- Implementation of new **legislation** in line with RoC
- Utilize available **technology** (Drones & covert surveillance cameras)
- Arrest offenders / High investigation standards / Secure best evidence / scene findings for Prosecution / **'Zero tolerance!'**/ Deterrent Court punishments
- **Communicate** SBA Police & partnership work, with successful operational outcomes on Social media

CyprusMail

Cyprus

British minister defends bases bird trapping crackdown

By Evie Andreou ⊙ October 18, 2017 💬 10 👁 163

BirdLife Cyprus

July 3, 2017

Bird trappers caught 'in action' on camera in SBAs sentenced
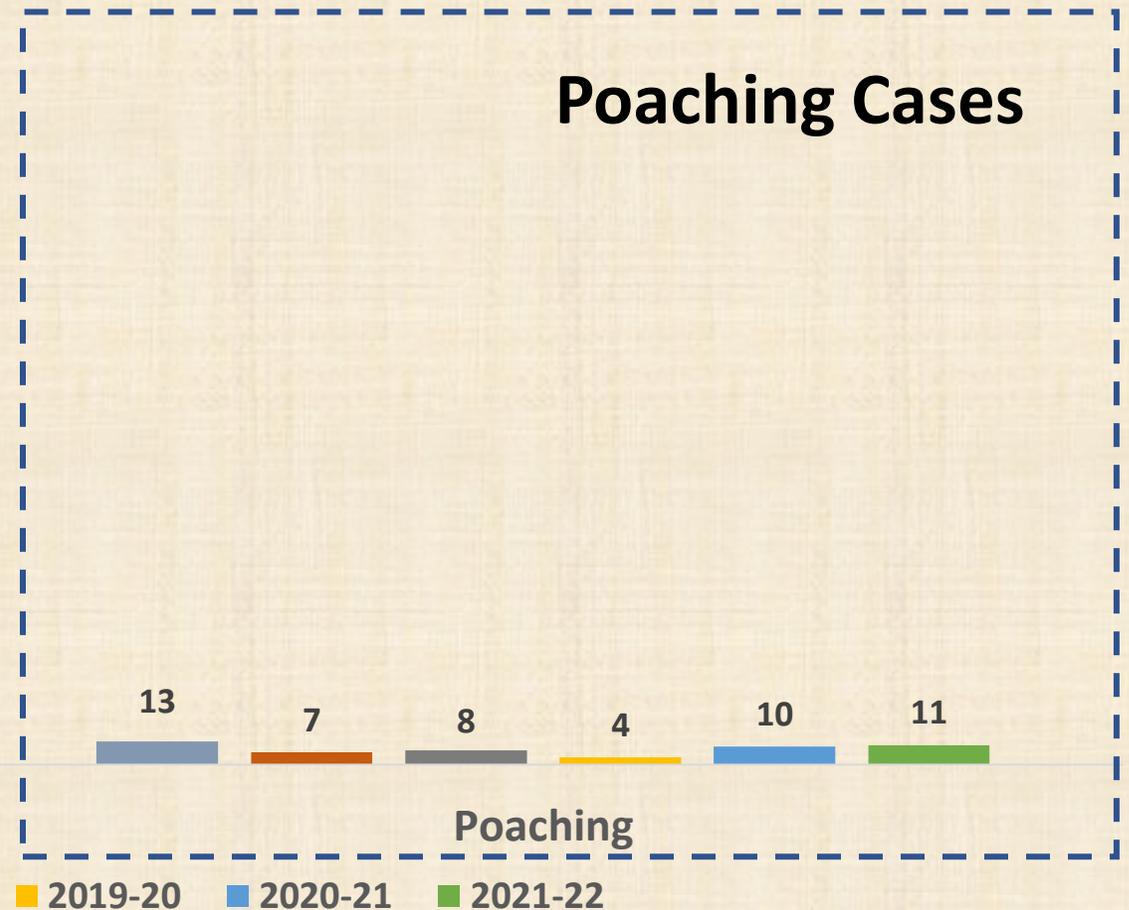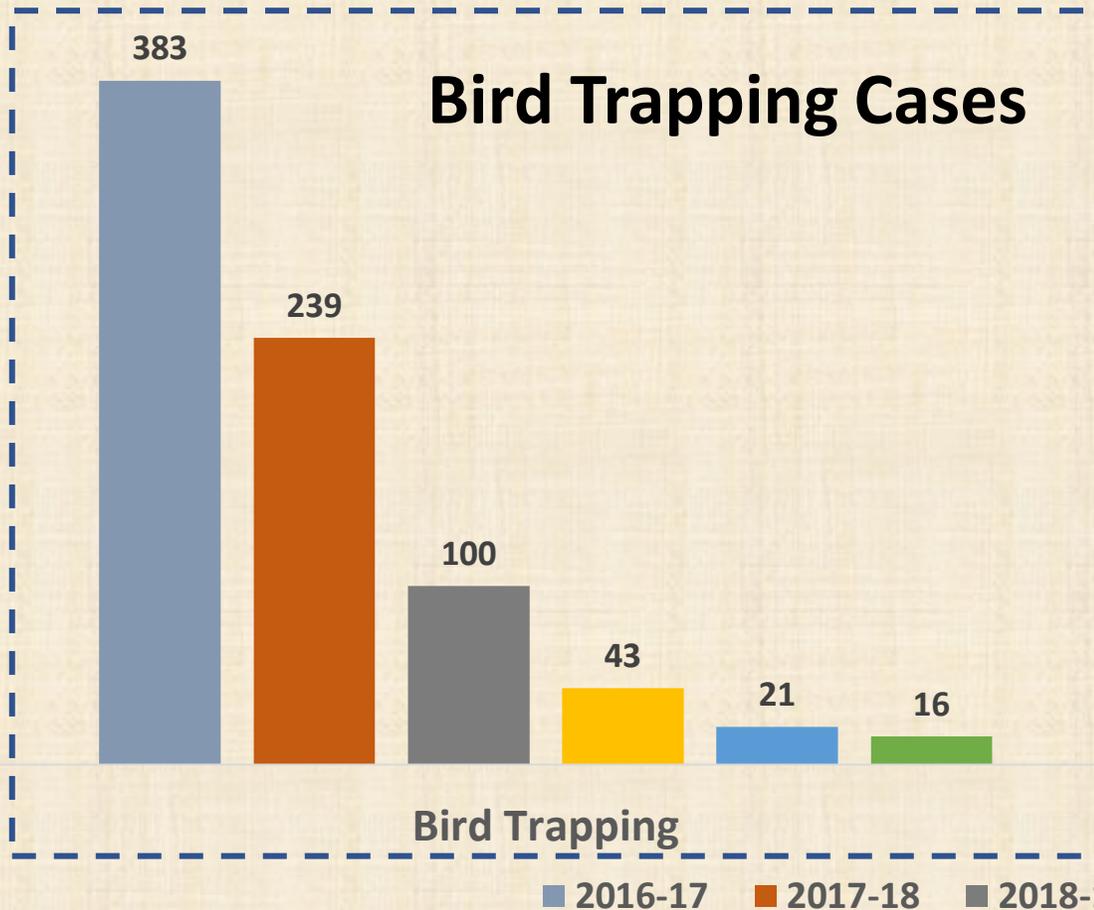
The Al Capone approach

- Illegal use of water supplies & boreholes
- Vehicle checks (tax/ insurance/ MOTs)
- Increasing fines
- Removal of 90km irrigation
- Seizure of trapping paraphernalia
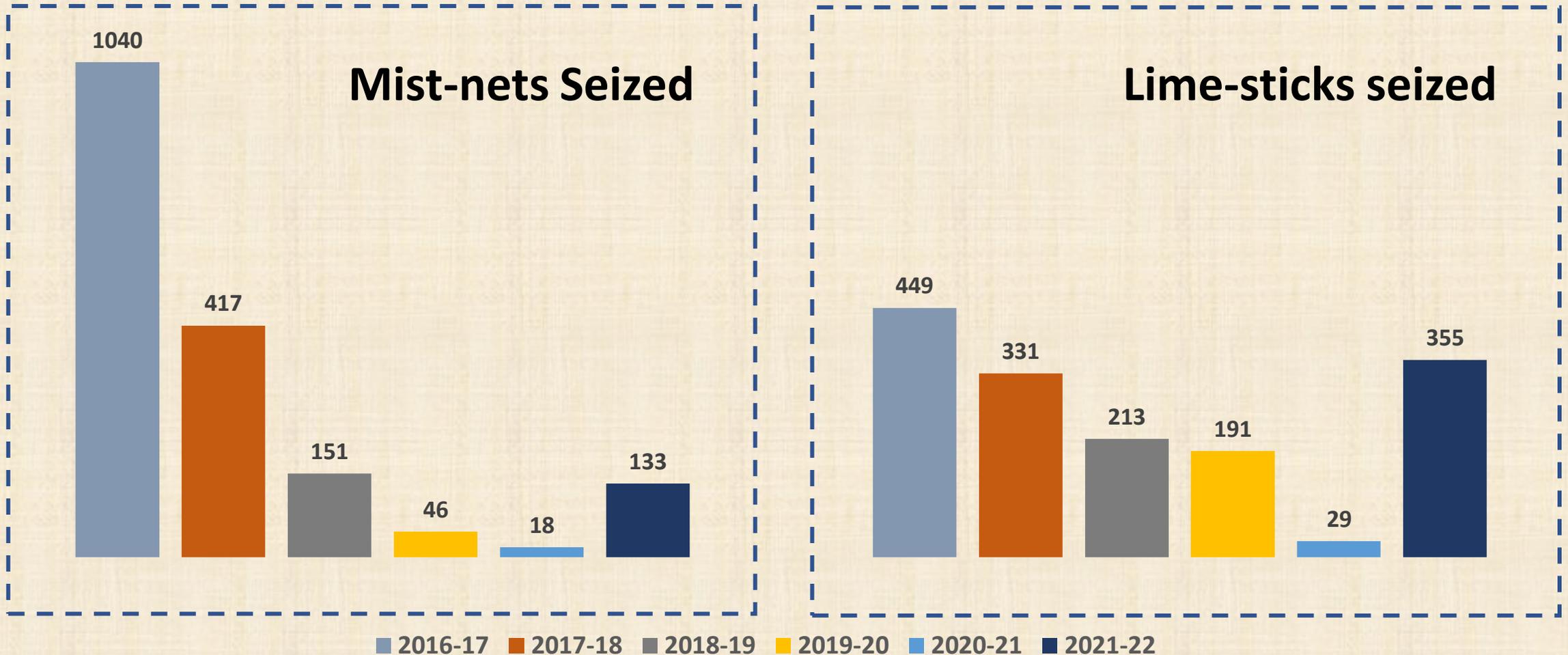- Removal of Acacia trees

What has been achieved...?

Illegal Bird Killing cases in the SBAs (2016 to 2022)

Bird Trapping Cases

383 · 239 · 100 · 43 · 21 · 16 — Bird Trapping

Poaching Cases

13 · 7 · 8 · 4 · 10 · 11 — Poaching

Legend: 2016-17 · 2017-18 · 2018-19 · 2019-20 · 2020-21 · 2021-22

What has been achieved…?

Statistics for bird-trapping in the SBAs (2016 to 2022)

Mist-nets Seized

1040
417
151
46
18
133

Lime-sticks seized

449
331
213
191
29
355

■ 2016-17 ■ 2017-18 ■ 2018-19 ■ 2019-20 ■ 2020-21 ■ 2021-22

Recognition and publicity….

Not just one award, but two!
The Sanctuary award 'Best Environmental Project' & 'Silver Otter Trophy'

Current situation

- Understanding the affect of the pandemic

- Acacia management (£3m spent annually by MOD)

- Funding - significant ongoing annual SBA Police resource

- Protected site management – plans/actions to further reduce bird-trapping & poaching

- Successful community engagement - increasing support for Acacia management & habitat restoration

- Requirement to maintain technological and tactical advantages (skills and knowledge)

Looking forward: Next steps & challenges

- Maintain approach:
  - tactical co-ordination partnership
  - update legislation and legal powers

- Justifying resources for further reductions (against other risk/threats to SBAA)

- Habitat management to support further reduction;
  - legacy of *Acacia saligna*
  - Access to sites

- Shift focus to preventative measures & deterrents;
  - Education and awareness
  - Pro-active habitat management
  - Access management
  - Eco-tourism potential

Thank You
&
questions please?