



# Anti-poaching investigations in Italy and the National Plan against poaching

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# Operation Free Wildlife

1. Illegal organized birds traffic affects some provinces in the south of Italy

2. Strategic position (Mediterraneum Area)



# «Criminal Association»

1/2

More than ten people belonged to the criminal association

It's a pyramidal structure

The boss assigns orders to the members (capture areas, management of business relationships)



# «Criminal Association»

2/2

Poacher “A” manages all business relationships with buyers:

1- Northern Italy (Butcher’s shop)

2- Malta





# «Malta»

1/3

Poachers caught protected birds shipping them to Malta through a Port in Sicily.

The poachers involved in the criminal association transport birds on their own



# «Malta»

2/3

In Malta, hunting is widespread

Live decoys are used

there are 9000 legal huts in addition to illegal ones





# «Northern Italy»

3/3

The female birds are shipped to northern Italy to be sold to restaurants



# «Modus operandi»

1/3

**Adopted**

**“Sistem work”**

Poachers identify the areas with presence of birds, crossed by rivers.





# «Modus Operandi»

2/3

Poachers put food  
on the chosen area  
to make them to frequent  
those areas. |



# «Modus Operandi»

3/3

Birds are placed inside small cages to attract other birds with their singing



Electromagnetic calls are positioned



At the end, Nets are put in



# “Economic Crime” 1/2

The criminal organization lives on poaching

Each “Worker” captures no less than 200/300 birds every day

(Dead and Alive)

A Goldfinch is worth about 50 euros



A Serin is worth from 25 to 50 euros





# “Economic Crime” 2/2

It's a real business activity

A lot of money is necessary to buy food for birds



Poachers carry out also 400 - 500 kilometers per day by car to reach the places where the birds are caught



# Environmental Damage. «Loss of biodiversity»

1/3

1. Nets are used to capture birds.
2. Use of nets is forbidden in Italy and in other European Union countries in according to National and International legislation (*Birds Directive*).
3. There are over 530 protected species of birds in Italy



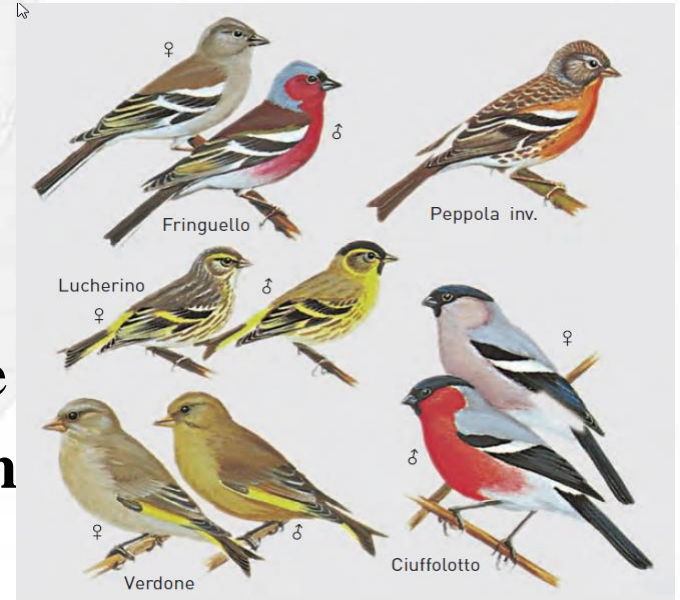
# Environmental Damage. «Loss of biodiversity

2/3

## Nets don't allow to distinguish birds by:

1. Species
2. Number
3. Sex
4. Age

The poachers capture birds during all the year causing a **problem of reproduction**





# Environmental Damage. «Loss of biodiversity»

3/3

1. Environmental Damage of significant gravity
2. Loss of Biodiversity
3. It's estimated that a "poacher" is able to capture no less than 200/300 birds per day.



Press release: Protected Birds a' la carte: thousands of rare birds illegally sold for gourmet food business in Italy. 25 May, 2018

The organized group behind the crime from Reggio Calabria in southern Italy, was dismantled by the Operational Anti-Poaching Unit of Carabinieri.



**Ten people were arrested** on suspicion of belonging to a criminal network aimed at illegally trading protected wildlife (mostly songbirds), which are protected under the Berne Convention.

## Ten People arrested



Europol supported the investigation by providing intelligence and analysis services to Italian law enforcement authorities.

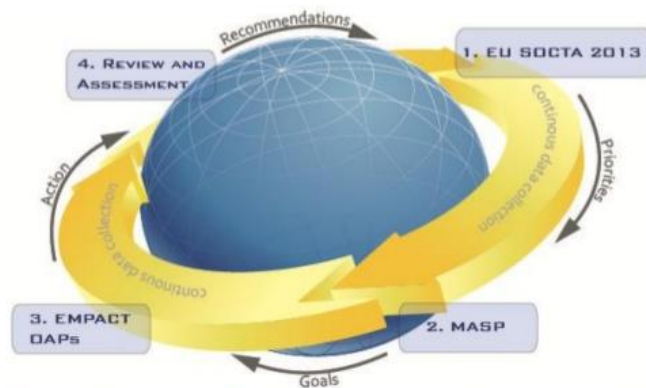




# Policy Cycle

In 2010 the European Union (EU) set up a four-year Policy Cycle to ensure greater continuity in the fight against serious international and organized crime.

## The EU Policy Cycle



The policy cycle ensures effective cooperation between national law enforcement agencies, EU institutions, EU Agencies and other relevant partners in the fight against serious and organised crime.



***The Italian Action Plan  
against illegal killing of  
birds (IKB)***

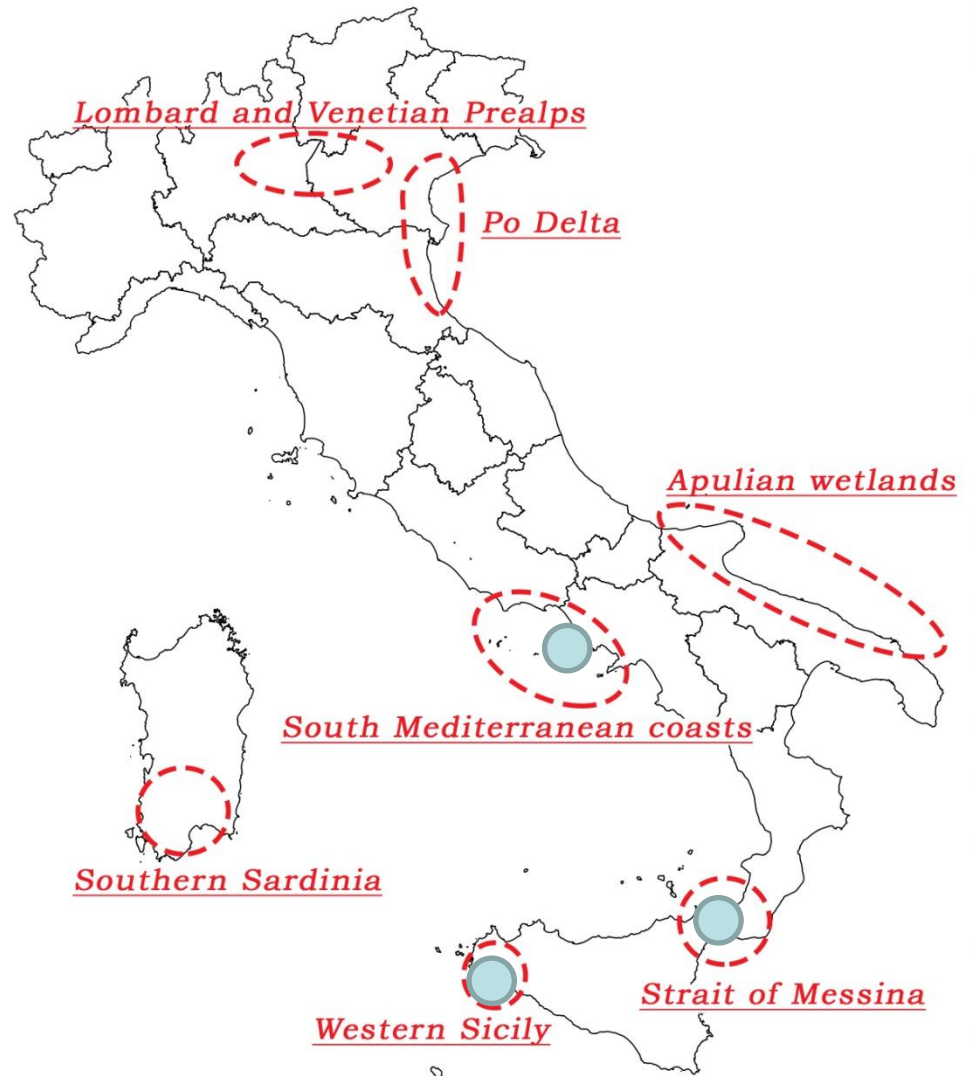
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# Catching of songbirds





# Shooting of raptors



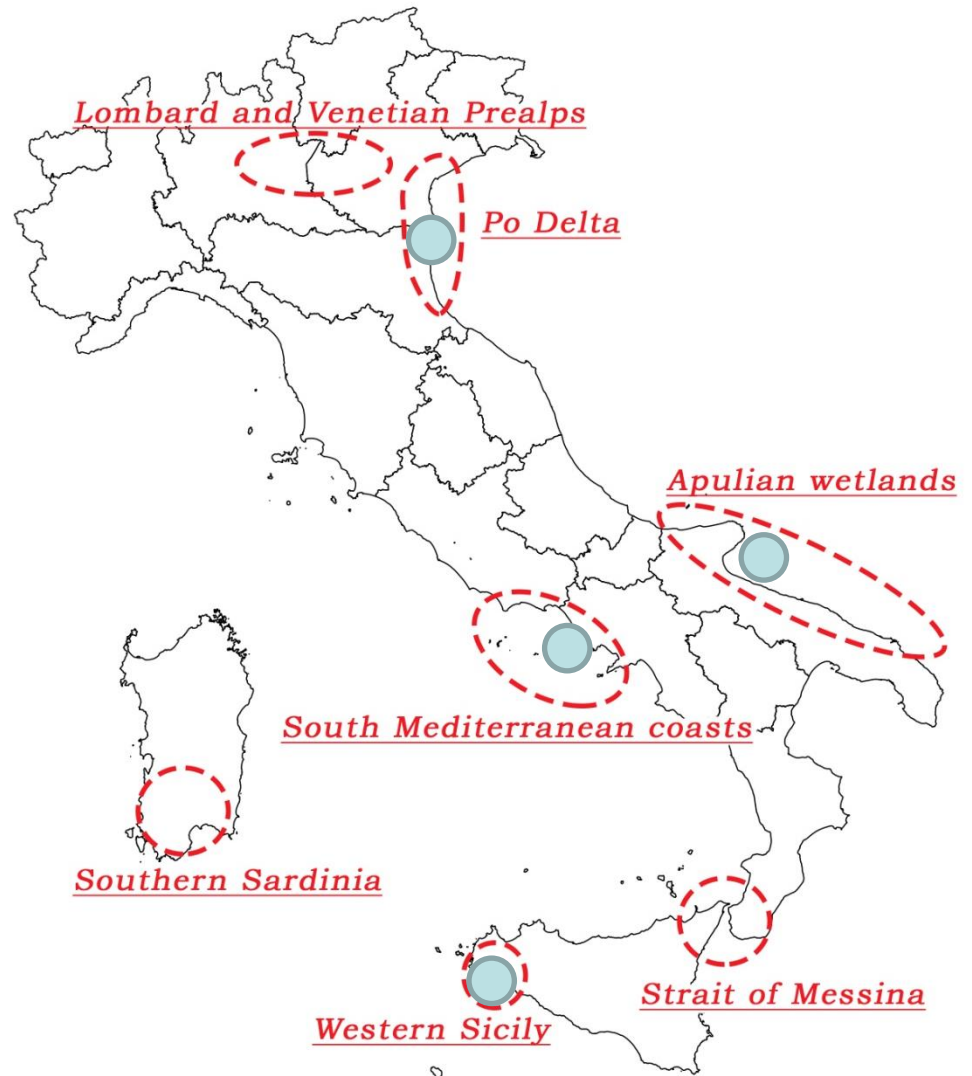
# Shooting of waterbirds



infringement of hunting regulation



use of electronic calls



## **FIVE MAIN GOALS (31 actions)**

1. Strengthening of **direct fight** against IKB
  2. Strengthening of **indirect fight** against IKB
  3. Prevention
  4. Monitoring of action plan implementation
  5. Setting up of a Coordination Unit (Steering Group)
-



# 1 - STRENGTHENING OF DIRECT FIGHT AGAINST IKB

## 1.1 - Setting up or strengthening of central units to tackle:

- illegal killing and catching
- illegal trade
- use of poisoned baits



# 1 - STRENGTHENING OF DIRECT FIGHT AGAINST IKB

## -1.1 - Setting up or strengthening of central units

- Carabinieri – S.O.A.R.D.A. –

1. Purchase
  - a. Off-road vehicles,
  - b. Telescopes, drones, night viewers,
  - c. technical clothing that allows you to stay overnight in rural and mountainous areas



## 2 - STRENGTHENING OF INDIRECT FIGHT AGAINST IKB

### 2.1 - Enhancement of law enforcement

- **Amendment** of laws and hunting regulations
- Training of judiciary





## 3 - PREVENTION



### 3.1 - Launch of awareness campaigns

- on specific issues (poisoned baits)
- in specific areas (black spots)
- among specific categories of persons (hunters, shepherds)

# Operative techniques for combating poaching

## Criticality

- Rural zones with little police
- Many escape routes
- Alert system: look-out and social network
- Local traditions related to poaching



## Operative techniques for combating poaching

- **Collaboration with animal rights organisations.**
- **knowledge of the territory with geolocation systems**
- **New operating tools such as drones and camera traps**





# 1° Study Case “Hunting Lodge Val Trompia”

## Problems

- **Panorama place**
- **Impossible to approach under cover**
- **Alert system: look-out**





# 1° Study Case “Hunting Lodge Val Trompia”

## Poaching strategy

Video footage from above using a drone

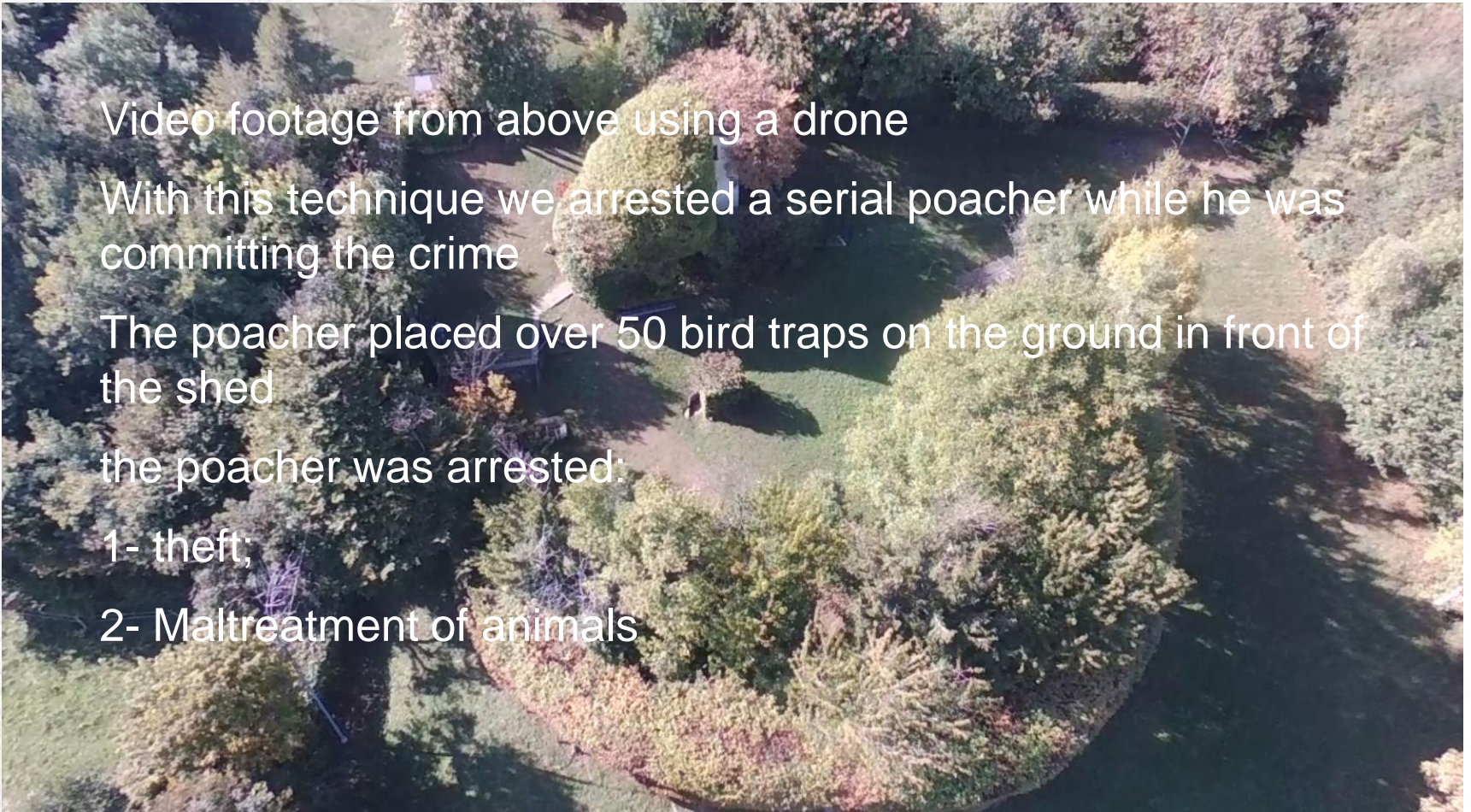
With this technique we arrested a serial poacher while he was committing the crime

The poacher placed over 50 bird traps on the ground in front of the shed

the poacher was arrested:

1- theft;

2- Maltreatment of animals





## 2° Study Case “Nets to capture in Sarezzo”

### Problems

- Panorama place
- Alert system: look-out
- Habits of the non-standard poacher
- long staekout times





# **1° Study Case “Hunting Lodge Val Trompia”**

## **Poaching strategy**

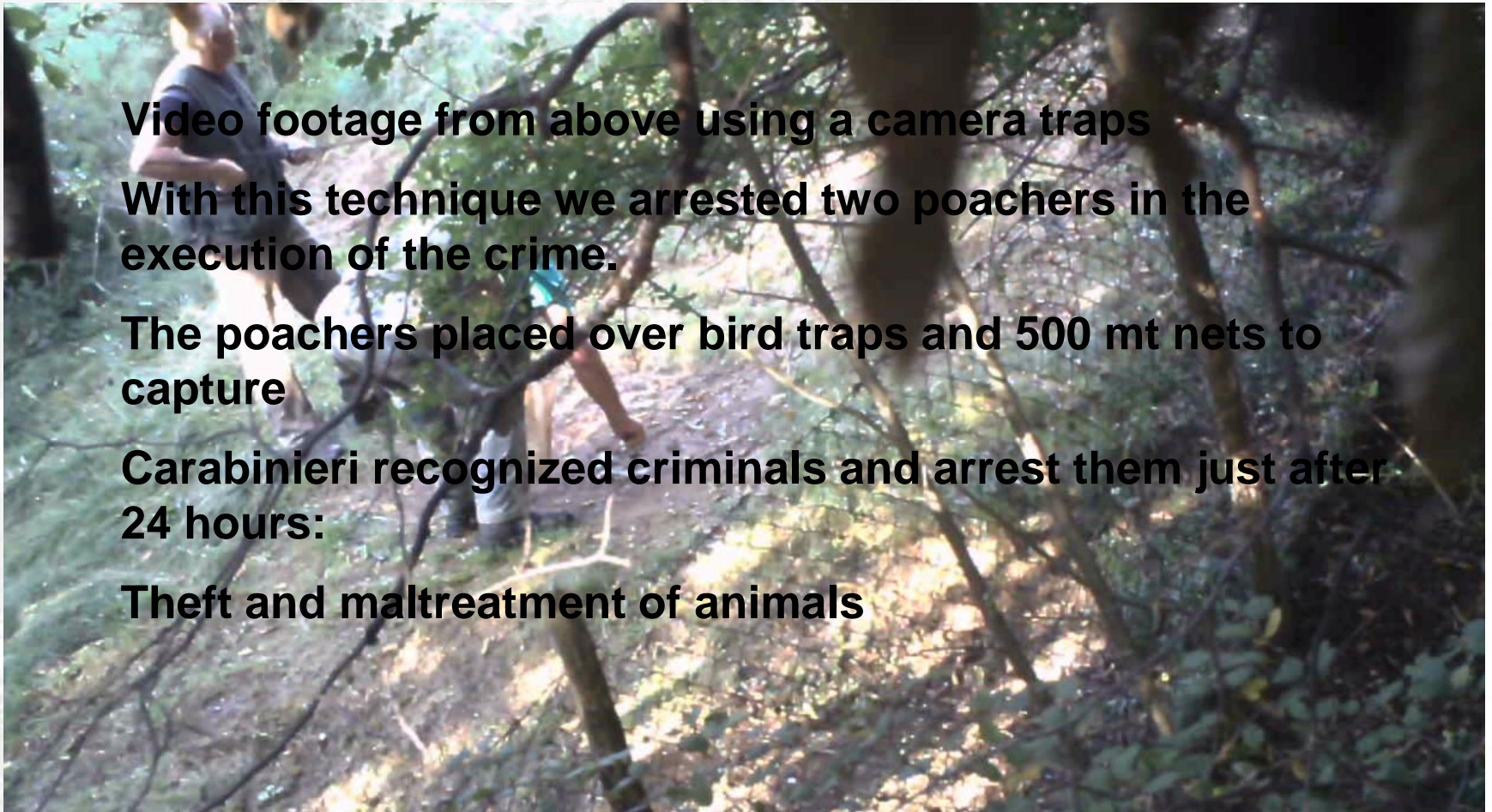
**Video footage from above using a camera traps**

**With this technique we arrested two poachers in the execution of the crime.**

**The poachers placed over bird traps and 500 mt nets to capture**

**Carabinieri recognized criminals and arrest them just after 24 hours:**

**Theft and maltreatment of animals**



**Thank you for your attention**

