

Title: Wildlife Crime Update

Produced by: Sgt Ian Guildford, South Wales Police/Countryside Council for Wales

Background/Progress

A guide to dealing with crime in woodlands was officially launched on the 14 July at Troserch Woodland, Llangennech.

Operation Birch - investigation into the illegal trade in wild taken birds, this matter is still progressing and offences are currently being considered by the complex case unit of the CPS.

Since the last steering group meeting the Welsh wildlife crime enforcement group has met at CCW's offices in Cardiff Bay. The actions from the meeting dated 22.9.2011 are attached (Appendix 1). One of the actions for this group is looking at Welsh Wildlife Crime priorities, this is work in progress and will be finalised at the next meeting of the Enforcement Group.

The Welsh Wildlife Crime Conference will take place at the Dyfed Powys Police HQ's on Wednesday 23rd November 2011, papers relating to this can be found at Appendix 2.

The South Wales Police are in the process of identifying new officers to take up the role of PWCO's within the force, it is anticipated that there will be 11 new officers in place prior to the end of November; an induction day has been arranged for these officers on 2.11.2011 at the Forestry Commission offices in Resolven. In addition to this a number of new officers are due to be appointed within Dyfed Powys and it is hoped to run a one week Wildlife Officers course within Wales for all the newly appointed officers.

A Welsh Wildfire Enforcement Working Group has been formed to look at the issues of wildfires within Wales, they have met on two occasions (15th July and 20th September 2011) work is on going including the production of an enforcement guide relating to wildfires.

On the 2nd November 2011 a meeting of the UK Tasking and Coordination Group and the PAW Steering Group took place in London, Sgt Guildford provided an update on matters relating to Wildlife crime in Wales including an overview of the work of the Enforcement Group.

On 14th July 2011 representatives from all four Welsh Police Forces met together with Chief Superintendent Gwyn Thomas to discuss progressing and improving the response of the four Welsh Police Forces to wildlife crime, a

number of issues were discussed and actions are progressing including internal reviews in each force on the way the force deals with wildlife crime.

Deer Strategy – Sgt Andy Scourfield is arranging two half day training sessions for local officers who patrol areas around the Afon Forest area, the training session will hopefully raise awareness of local officers in relation to the problem of Deer Poaching in the run up to Christmas. These sessions will compliment the Wild Deer Management in Wales' strategy which was recently published.

One area of wildlife related crime that has seen a dramatic increase in the past twelve months has been the theft of Rhino Horns from museums and other establishments, since March this year 50 horns have been stolen across Europe including 5 within the UK. This has also included 4 fake horns that were put on display in replacement for the original horns. Interpol are currently looking at an organised crime group who they believe are responsible for these thefts.

Law Commission review of Wildlife Crime – The commission aim to publish provisional proposals for reform in June 2012. This will be followed by a three month public consultation. A final report with recommendations and draft bill is planned to be published by mid 2014. The Enforcement working group aim to make contact with the Law Commission to ensure an early exchange of views in relation to Wildlife Crime within Wales.

Cases

Ryan Howells from Ferndale in the Rhondda appeared at Rhondda Magistrates Court on 13th October 2011 where he pleaded guilty to three offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These related to the possession of two Goshawks which he had failed to register in accordance with the requirements of the WCA 1981 and a false registration application for one of these birds. He pleaded guilty to all 3 offences and was fined £200 plus £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge.

Three people have been reported for summons to court after an operation to clamp down on illegal cockling in the Dee Estuary, Flintshire.

The case against a 39 yr old man from Cheltenham who drove a Vauxhall Frontera up Snowden will now be heard at Crown Court. Another man is also facing charges for a similar offence involving the same vehicle.

After a lengthy and often complex investigation two persons have been summonsed with third party damage to the LLwyn, Llanrahedr SSSI. The case will be the first Section 28 offence to be taken on by the CPS and will be a landmark prosecution. – the case is due to be heard on 31.10.2011.

A 19 year old male from Blaenau Ffestiniog received a formal police caution after admitting an offence under the 1828 Night Poaching Act. The offence

occurred at Llangybi, where the offender admitted trespassing on land and setting his dog on rabbits.

The following cases are various stages of investigation:

South Wales

- False application to export Rhino Horn
- Damage/Disturbance to Great Crested Newt habitat
- Illegal possession of wild owls
- Illegal laundering of wild taken raptors into the legal market.
- Third party damage to a SSSI during a building development.

Gwent

- Breach of bat licence.
- Deer poaching – three persons arrested.
- Obstruction of bat roost.
- Illegal poisoning of wilds birds

Dyfed Powys

- Unconsented operations on SSSI (notified for Marsh Fritillaries)
- Unlicensed display of protected animals
- Interference of a Badger Sett
- Release of non native species – Signal Crayfish

North Wales

- Interference with a Badger sett - in court 17/11/11.
- Badger baiting case.
- Schedule 1 bird nest destruction.
- Bat roost case.
- Bat roost destruction case.
- Newt disturbance.
- Finch trapping.

Plan/Proposals

Action Requested

- Form a task and finish team to carry out next step NO
- Approve us to carry on as suggested above YES
- Ask all WBP members to comment on the format of the report YES