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## Camera traps as an innovative tool for detecting illegal activities committed to the environment\*

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**Abstract:** The article examines the use of camera traps as an innovative tool for detecting illegal activities committed against the environment. It analyses their significance and practical application, highlighting how modern technologies effectively contribute to obtaining key evidence for administrative authorities. It focuses on the legal status of camera traps and the admissibility of their recordings for monitoring environmental administrative offenses. The aim of the article is to demonstrate that camera traps significantly increase the effectiveness of environmental surveillance and the process of establishing liability in environmental protection.

**Key words:** camera traps, innovative tool, environmental protection, attributing liability, environmental administrative offenses

### 1. Introduction

The environment is one of the essential conditions for our existence and long-term survival, and therefore its protection and enhancement are essential.<sup>1</sup> The effective application and enforcement of legal standards is one of the key prerequisites and a real guarantee for maintaining and improving its current state. In addition to the law, there is a whole range of measures that play an important role in pro-

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<sup>1</sup> B. Cepek et al., *Environmentálne právo. Všeobecná a osobitná časť*, Aleš Čeněk Publishing House, Plzeň 2015, p. 12.

tecting the environment. Economic, technical, technological, and other measures work together with legal norms and complement each other.<sup>2</sup> Current environmental challenges clearly show that it is necessary to actively use the achievements of modern technology. Environmental protection requires the implementation of the latest technological innovations into environmental protection strategies.

Modern technical tools are becoming an established part of individual lives, helping in everyday life as well as in legal practice. Human capabilities and abilities are limited in many ways, while modern technologies complement and augment them. In the field of environmental protection, innovations can ensure monitoring, risk prediction, and detection of illegal activities. Legal practice in the field of environmental protection has recently confirmed that innovative tools are effective and beneficial. The benefits of these tools are wide-ranging, and in this article, we will focus on their role in detecting environmental crimes. One proven, significant innovation is the camera trap. Currently, camera traps are considered a non-invasive tool for studying wildlife and providing data on their behaviour that was previously difficult to obtain.<sup>3</sup> In this article, we provide a brief overview of the legal framework for the use of camera traps. The primary objective of the article is to highlight the benefits and effectiveness of these approaches in environmental protection. At the same time, it aims to educate and alert operators of these devices to exercise greater caution when installing and operating them to avoid violating applicable laws. Finally, the article discusses the conditions for the admissibility and usability of camera trap recordings in administrative proceedings.

## 2. Trail cameras as a tool for overcoming evidentiary barriers

Camera traps were originally used predominantly by researchers to monitor the movement, occurrence, and behaviour of wild animals in their natural environment.<sup>4</sup> Today, however, their importance and practical application are increasingly recognised in legal practice, particularly in connection with the detection of environmental offences.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> M. Damohorský et al., *Právo životního prostředí*, C.H.Beck, Prague 2003, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> A. Caravaggi et al., *A review of camera trapping for conservation behaviour research*, "Remote Sensing in Ecology and Conservation" 2017, vol. 3, no. 3, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup> L. M. Cardona et al., *Survival analysis of wildlife cameras on roads exposed to theft*, "Biodiversity and Conservation" 2025, vol. 34, p. 4073.

<sup>5</sup> C. P. Cordier et al., *Camera trap research in Africa: A systematic review to show trends in wildlife monitoring and its value as a research tool*, "Global Ecology and Conservation" 2022, vol. 40, p. 10.

Their contribution to the legal field is most apparent in the proceedings aimed at establishing liability for environmental offenses. This is due to their considerable potential to detect perpetrators engaged in unlawful activities, thanks to their high ability to detect perpetrators in natural settings where continuous human surveillance is impossible. The impossibility of continuous human surveillance is linked both to the size of the area being monitored and to the limited capabilities of the entities themselves.

Camera traps are discreet monitoring devices specifically designed to minimise visual detection in the environment where they are installed.<sup>6</sup> This innovative tool is constructed based on the sensor detectors that enable automatic recording of visual material in response to the detection of movement or heat signature in the monitored area. Their use in environmental law has proven essential in documenting and detecting environmental offenses, which are often committed in remote locations with a low probability of direct surveillance. This fact influences the perpetrator's behaviour, as they act under the assumption that their illegal activity is not being directly observed by anyone or anything, meaning they do not anticipate being recorded. This is precisely where camera traps come in: they capture the perpetrator and create an image or audiovisual record. The recordings generated by the camera traps are stored on an electronic data carrier. Provided that the installation and operation of the camera traps strictly comply with the legal requirements, the recording can serve as legitimate evidence for administrative authorities as well as for law enforcement authorities in criminal proceedings.

A typical example of environmental crime is illegal waste disposal, a high-impact phenomenon associated with significant societal burdens and ecological risks across the territory of the Slovak Republic. In 2024, the Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic conducted an audit focused on illegal waste disposal. According to the Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic's audit report, no significant systemic successes were detected. The fact that more than eleven thousand illegal dumpsites are within our national borders is an alarming data point. This alarming value indicates a systemic shortcoming in administrative or criminal liability. Specifically, it indicates a low success rate in identifying perpetrators as well as insufficient effectiveness in imposing and enforcing sanctions that would serve as a robust deterrent.<sup>7</sup>

In practice, identifying the perpetrator is difficult, as illegal waste dumps are often located in hard-to-reach areas outside municipalities or in the forest.

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<sup>6</sup> K. Sharma et al., *Conservation and people: Towards an ethical code of conduct for the use of camera traps in wildlife research*, "Ecological Solutions and Evidence" 2020, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 1–6.

<sup>7</sup> Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic, *Report on the results of audit 2024. Illegally dumped waste*, <https://www.nku.gov.sk/documents/d/nku/nezakonne-umiestneny-od-pad-pdf?csrt=8761137259385806910> [accessed 29 September 2025].

These are remote locations where it is not possible to ensure constant surveillance or catch perpetrators in the act. This challenge applies not only to the abovementioned issue but also to other equally serious environmental offences, such as poaching and illegal logging. In this context, camera traps appear to be an indispensable tool for field reconnaissance and detection. Their long-term monitoring capability effectively overcomes evidentiary barriers and furnishes crucial evidence required for the successful prosecution and sanctioning of offenders.

### **3. Slovak Environmental Inspection as an administrative authority using camera traps**

The Slovak Environmental Inspectorate (hereinafter: the Inspectorate or SEI) is one of the state administration bodies responsible for environmental protection, which guarantees it a significant position within this sector. The legal status of the Inspectorate is defined by Act No. 525/2003 Coll. on State Administration of Justice in Environmental Matters and on Amendments to Certain Acts as amended, which establishes the Inspectorate as a professional supervisory body in Section 9(1). The Inspectorate performs a wide range of activities essential to effective environmental policy. Its main tasks include exercising state supervision over environmental matters and imposing fines for environmental administrative offences. SEI carries out control activities in accordance with Act No. 10/1996 Coll. on control in public administration, as amended, as well as with special legal regulations in the field of the environment. In the context of state supervision in the field of nature and landscape protection, authorised employees have the powers defined in Section 71(2)(k) of Act No. 543/2002 Coll. on nature and landscape protection as amended. The provision explicitly authorises entities supervising in the field of nature and landscape protection to use technical means to make photo, video, and audio recordings. The purpose of this authorisation is to secure evidence effectively. However, the application of these tools is conditional on respecting legal limits on special legal regulations. In addition to the camera traps, technical means can also include satellite imagery and drones. The significance of deploying these technologies lies in their capacity to effectively contribute to the protection and maintenance of natural balance, the diversity of life forms, and natural values.

To increase the effectiveness of inspection tasks and achieve a sustainable improvement in the state of the environment, the SEI also focuses on imple-

menting and actively using modern technical means. The Action Plan for the Improvement of the Slovak Environmental Inspectorate for the years 2024–2026 ranks this approach as one of its objectives.<sup>8</sup> The vision is to develop employees in technical areas, specifically in the use of innovative tools.

In 2023, the Slovak Environmental Inspectorate underwent a structural change by creating the Department of Technological Innovations. The main task of this department was to ensure the use of available technological equipment and to methodically guide employees in the use of innovations during inspection activities. The activities of this department also included coordinating and cooperating on inspection activities using technological innovations, and preparing materials for inspectors based on findings from the various deployed tools. The strategic goal was to maximise the applicability of these tools in field inspection activities and data analysis, thereby fundamentally strengthening the enforceability of environmental law.<sup>9</sup>

Despite this strategic intention and the expected benefits, the Department of Technological Innovations was unfortunately abolished shortly after its establishment as part of internal organizational changes. Although this is an internal decision, it is surprising that it came at a time when the institution itself clearly declares on its website that “[m]odern technologies are an essential part of our work.” Such a discrepancy between a public statement and an organisational action naturally raises questions about the future. The demise of the specialised department could, in fact, make the systematic introduction of innovations more difficult and thus potentially slow the effort to prosecute environmental offenses more effectively. The presence and active use of modern technologies within the performance of state supervision represent a fundamental shift in the formation and implementation of inspection work. These tools enhance the capacity of inspections to detect, document, and effectively prosecute environmental offenses. Their deployment brings results, especially in areas where human surveillance is difficult and inefficient. These include illegal waste disposal, illegal logging, illegal fishing, and poaching. These technologies streamline evidence collection and strengthen the overall enforceability of environmental law in the field.

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<sup>8</sup> Slovak Environmental Inspectorate, *Action Plan for Improving SEI 2024–2026*, <https://www.sizp.sk/projekty/operacny-program-efektivna-verejna-sprava-caf/akcny-plan-zlepsovania-sizp-2024-2026> [accessed 19 September 2025].

<sup>9</sup> Slovak Environmental Inspectorate, *Modern technologies are an essential part of our work*, <https://www.sizp.sk/novinky/moderne-technologie-su-nevyhnutnou-sucastou-nasej-prace> [accessed 15 September 2025].

#### 4. Technical parameters of camera traps

Camera traps are fully automated digital monitoring devices of various models. These devices are designed for outdoor use and have a high degree of resistance to various weather changes. Their visual and colour camouflage is specifically designed to ensure they discreetly blend into the surrounding environment, minimising the risk of detection by perpetrators.<sup>10</sup>

The mechanism of camera traps consists of automatic recording of photos and videos in day and night modes. Triggering is activated by an integrated passive infrared sensor that detects thermal changes or movement of objects within its field of view. The thermal sensor triggers an image capture and records an object whose temperature is higher than the ambient temperature. The motion sensor starts recording upon detecting movement within its field of view. A key comparative advantage of camera traps is their detection function based on sensor triggering, which, in practice, minimises unwanted recordings and ensures efficient energy use. In contrast, continuously recording surveillance footage is also legitimately used in legal practice and represents a relevant means of evidence in uncovering a wide range of illegal activities, and not just in the field of the environment. However, the difference lies primarily in the method of data collection, operating costs, and the costs incurred in purchasing this equipment.

Camera traps can capture night recordings using invisible infrared illumination, enabling recording even in complete darkness. It is important to emphasise that night shots are realised in black and white, which distinguishes them from daytime ones. Using a xenon flash for video is not possible at night, but certain devices do support it for daytime shooting.<sup>11</sup> All acquired data is stored on a removable SD card, allowing storage of thousands of records. For video recordings, the maximum length is one minute, which is sufficient for subsequent use in legal proceedings. The newest generations of these devices feature advanced communication functions, such as automatically sending recordings directly to a mobile phone or a predefined email inbox. This feature is crucial for increasing the operational speed and effectiveness of the individuals managing the device. Notification of ongoing activity allows the administrator to analyse the acquired record and initiate subsequent steps immediately. A quick response can often lead to the apprehension of the perpetrator in the act.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> S. Nazir, M. Kaleem, *Advances in image acquisition and processing technologies transforming animal ecological studies*, "Ecological Informatics" 2021, vol. 61, 101212.

<sup>11</sup> P. J. Apps, J. W. McNutt, *How camera traps work and how to work them*, "African Journal of Ecology" 2018, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 702–709.

<sup>12</sup> K. Sharma et al., *Conservation and people: Towards an ethical code of conduct for the use of camera traps in wildlife research*, "Ecological Solutions and Evidence" 2020, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 1–6.

## 5. Case study: Sundarbans Nature Reserves

The effectiveness of camera traps in detecting illegal activities against the environment has been confirmed through research led by Abu Naser Mohsin Hossain. The study focuses on the Sundarbans, a nature reserve located in the southwest of Bangladesh, where biodiversity is rapidly declining. It was also the first research to explore the use of camera traps in densely forested regions. Sundarbans Nature Reserves lack sufficient protection, exemplifying protected areas where monitoring and detecting environmental crime is extremely challenging. This difficulty correlates with the limited number and frequency of patrols by field workers relative to the size of the monitored area. The most common illegal activities threatening the biodiversity of these reserves include illegal fishing, poaching, and illegal logging. Managers have been unable to ensure effective protection and have instead relied on the limited capacity of field staff. Control patrols often faced issues such as boat engine failures, fuel shortages, or adverse natural conditions, which seriously hampered surveillance over the vast protected areas. As the lead author of the study noted, “Resources for patrolling rangers are limited, but we have technology available that can help monitor the forest when rangers are not nearby.” The research results were promising, confirming the high effectiveness of technical monitoring. With strategically placed camera traps, 914 unique instances of human activity were recorded over 1,039 days. Of these, 872 activities were illegal, while only 42 were legal, related to patrolling or tourism. A co-author of the study added, “By using camera traps, we captured evidence of illegal activity, helping to identify perpetrators and define risk areas that require greater attention from patrols.” It is important to note that not all recordings provided clear information for unambiguous identification of the offender.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, the study results fundamentally alter the current understanding of illegal activities in nature reserves, where only about one case was reported annually before. In conclusion, camera traps significantly enhance law enforcement efforts and are a vital tool in combating environmental crimes.

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<sup>13</sup> A. N. Mohsin Hossain et al., *Assessing the efficacy of camera trapping as a tool for increasing detection rates of wildlife crime in tropical protected areas*, “Biological Conservation” 2016, vol. 61, pp. 314–319.

## 6. Legal framework for the installation and operation of camera traps

Camera traps, as modern technologies designed for autonomous environmental monitoring, are becoming increasingly popular. Their widespread use is currently accompanied by a legislative gap, as there is no legal regulation that explicitly establishes the legal basis for the use of camera traps. The nature of this device inherently carries the risk of recording data on individuals moving within the monitored area. This risk is directly related to the protection of personal data. Therefore, it is necessary to establish clear legal boundaries for the use of these innovative tools. The complexity of this issue is also demonstrated by a precedent from Austria, where an Austrian politician was inadvertently recorded in an intimate situation via surveillance devices. This incident raised a fundamental doctrinal question regarding the obligation of transparency in surveillance in remote locations.<sup>14</sup>

While entities advocating strict privacy protection argue for the necessity of prior marking of the monitored area, the operators (hunting associations) object that the visibility of such markings would directly negate the purpose of wildlife monitoring. The legal assessment of the situation in the above-mentioned case was further complicated by the fact that the data subject (the politician) was in a zone with an explicit entry ban. Nevertheless, Austrian legislation, in accordance with European privacy standards, strictly limits the distribution of such sensitive data under threat of heavy penalties, thereby affirming the primacy of the protection of personal rights over property or usage rights to the land.

In terms of categorisation, camera traps fall into the category of camera systems. The Office for Personal Data Protection in the Czech Republic has adopted this classification in its methodological guidelines.<sup>15</sup> As a monitoring device, a camera trap captures a lot of information about a person, which is considered personal data for personal data protection.<sup>16</sup> Camera traps capture images of natural persons in the shot, as well as information about their movements and

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<sup>14</sup> S. van Gilder Cooke, *Wildlife Cameras Capture Austrian Politician Having Forest Sex*, "TIME" 17 June 2012, <https://newsfeed.time.com/2012/06/17/wildlife-cameras-capture-austrian-politician-having-forest-sex/> [accessed 20 March 2025].

<sup>15</sup> See: Office for Personal Data Protection of the Czech Republic, *Methodology for the design and operation of camera systems from the perspective of personal data processing and protection*, <https://uoou.gov.cz/media/clanky/dokumenty/metodika-kamerove-systemy-webpdf.pdf> [accessed 29 September 2025].

<sup>16</sup> Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons regarding the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) defines personal data in Article 4 (1) as "any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person."

whereabouts at a given time and place. In the Decision of the Supreme Administrative Court of the Czech Republic of August 23, 2013, no. 5 As 158/2012, the purpose of camera systems was pointed out and stated: “The purpose of camera recordings is precisely to identify persons captured on video. The entire camera system must therefore be considered as processing of personal data, even though some of the persons captured cannot be identified in practice.”

Based on the above classification, it can be analogously concluded that the legal basis and conditions established for camera systems are also applicable to the operation of camera traps. The installation, operation, and handling of recordings obtained from camera traps are subject to strict regulation under European Union and national law. The main legal framework is Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons concerning the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (hereinafter: GDPR) and the provisions of Act No. 18/2018 Coll. on the protection of personal data and on amendments to certain as amended.

In this article, we will provide a detailed analysis of the individual legal conditions set out in the GDPR that apply to the operation and use of camera traps. Specifically, we will focus on identifying the individual provisions relevant to the processing of personal data obtained through this monitoring tool.

According to Article 5(1) of the GDPR, when processing personal data, it is necessary to comply with the principle of lawfulness, which requires processing personal data in a lawful, fair, and transparent manner in relation to the data subject. Only processing of personal data for which the controller has a valid legal basis can be considered lawful. The operator of a camera trap is required to have a primary legal basis for each purpose of processing personal data. The GDPR regulates six legal bases: consent, performance of a contract, legal obligation, protection of the vital interests of the data subject or another natural person, public interest, and legitimate interest of the controller. According to M. Mesarčík, when defining the legal basis, it is necessary to assess whether the processing is not necessary for the performance of a contract, or whether it is a legal obligation or a task in the public interest.<sup>17</sup> The legal basis for processing is necessarily linked to the qualification of the entity that has the status of a monitoring device operator, whether it is a natural person or a public authority. In this article, we will focus on public authorities and the legal basis for installing and operating camera traps.

In cases where the controller is a public authority, processing is generally necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority. In this article, we have highlighted the

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<sup>17</sup> M. Mesarčík, *Ochrana osobných údajov*, C.H.Beck, Bratislava 2020, p. 75.

Slovak Environmental Inspectorate as one of the public authorities that uses camera traps to detect perpetrators of environmental crimes. However, this authority is not the only public authority that uses these modern tools. Recently, we have seen an increase in the installation of camera traps in cities and towns. Local authorities use camera traps to monitor illegal waste, improve security, and detect offences in areas with inadequate camera coverage.<sup>18</sup> These camera traps are mainly located in public spaces, with the key factor in their operation being the discreet surveillance of these publicly accessible areas.

When operating camera traps, it is essential to apply the principles of proportionality and data minimisation. In accordance with these principles, the operator is obliged to ensure that the camera trap only covers the area necessary to achieve the objective. At the same time, monitoring is associated with the operator's obligation to inform the subjects.<sup>19</sup> Under Articles 12 and 14 of the GDPR, controllers are required to inform data subjects about the processing of personal data. At the same time, data subjects have the right to be informed about the processing of personal data. In practice, this obligation to inform is met by placing a visible information board or pictogram at the entrance to the monitored area. The label must include information on monitoring, together with an information sheet or information on the overall processing of personal data. At the same time, it is neither required nor recommended to place these notification elements at the camera trap's actual installation site. In our view, such a procedure would be contrary to the purpose of the innovative monitoring tool, which is based on discreet monitoring. Given the size and nature of the monitored area, it is not possible to establish a uniform and precise specification for the placement of these notification signs.

When collecting and processing personal data, the operator is obliged to comply with the principle of minimising the storage of personal data. Under this principle, storage is permitted only for the period necessary to fulfil the purpose of their processing. After this period has expired, the controller is obliged to ensure the proper disposal of the data. Personal data may be stored for longer than would otherwise be required if it is processed for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research, or for statistical purposes. However, in such cases, appropriate technical and organisational measures must be taken.<sup>20</sup> The Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic, in its

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<sup>18</sup> Waste Portal, *The city wants to eliminate illegal dumps. Dozens of camera traps and fines are supposed to help*, <https://www.odpady-portal.sk/Dokument/106894/mesto-chce-eliminovat-nelegalne-skladky-pomoc-maju-desiatky-fotopasci-a-pokuty.aspx> [accessed 2 October 2025].

<sup>19</sup> The Decision of the Supreme Administrative Court of the Czech Republic of August 23, 2013, no. 5 As 158/2012 stated: "The possibility of surveillance by a camera system must be communicated in every monitored area."

<sup>20</sup> M. Mesarčík, *Ochrana osobných údajov*, C.H.Beck, Bratislava 2020, p. 98.

ruling of January 12, 2011, no. 1 Sžo 410/2009, stated in this regard: “The controller cannot evade the obligation to destroy personal data after the purpose of processing has been fulfilled by pointing to the fact that personal data cannot be destroyed due to the controller’s lack of technical capacity.”

The legitimacy of camera trap recordings as evidence before administrative authorities or law enforcement agencies is strictly conditional on compliance with all legal requirements for their acquisition and operation. In practice, there are repeated cases, especially when camera traps are operated by natural persons, where the camera trap recording clearly confirms the commission of an unlawful act, but the camera trap was not operated in accordance with the law, resulting in illegal evidence. Despite this, established case law in matters of administrative punishment, specifically the Decision of the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic of January 14, 2020, no. 3Asan/32/2019 allows for an exception to the principle of legality of evidence. In this decision, the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic noted: “If evidence in the form of an audiovisual recording was obtained in violation of the law, it is necessary, before performing a proportionality test, to first assess whether the use of such evidence is capable of interfering with the personal rights of the person concerned, and this must be assessed about the specific factual circumstances of the case.” If the recording, which was made unlawfully, demonstrably violates the rights of the person concerned, it is necessary to consider the entity that made the recording. If the entity that made the recording and the data subject are in an equal position, namely, it is not a relationship between a state authority and a natural person, the possibility of its use cannot be automatically ruled out, even though it was not made in accordance with the law.<sup>21</sup>

The use of evidence in the form of a recording made by a private individual without the consent of the person whose speech is captured on it may be admissible, considering the factual circumstances of the case. This admissibility is linked to the existence of relevant aspects that must justify the public interest outweighing the right to privacy. These aspects include, for example, the intensity of the expression, the public place, or identifiability of the person concerned. Finally, it should be noted that the key prerequisite for the use of such a recording as evidence remains the application of the proportionality test by the competent administrative authority.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The Decision of the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic, of January 14, 2020, no. 3Asan/32/2019.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

## 7. Conclusions

This article provides a detailed analysis of the use of camera traps in the fight against environmental crimes. From a technical point of view, these are fully automated digital devices that are resistant to extreme weather conditions. Camera traps use sensors that detect motion or heat, minimising unwanted recordings and optimising energy consumption. These devices were originally designed for wildlife monitoring but are now used to detect environmental crimes. They are equally effective in other areas, such as securing property and buildings or detecting illegal activities. As we pointed out in the article, given the discretion of camera traps, they can be useful in detecting illegal waste disposal, illegal logging, and poaching. Their key benefit lies in their ability to provide discreet, long-term monitoring, effectively overcoming the obstacles associated with the impossibility of continuous human surveillance in remote locations with a low probability of direct supervision.

The relevance of camera traps in practice is confirmed by research conducted by a team of researchers in South Asia. Researchers have recorded an increase in the detection of illegal activities in protected areas using camera traps, significantly strengthening environmental protection.

Camera traps are used by state authorities in the performance of their supervisory and environmental protection duties. Their installation and the subsequent relevance of camera trap recordings in legal practice are subject to strict legal regulations. The activation of sensors and the subsequent creation of recordings pose an unavoidable risk to the processing of personal data of persons in the monitored area. Due to the nature of this device, the Office for Personal Data Protection of the Czech Republic categorises it as a camera system, which means that its operation is subject to the GDPR and national law. For legal processing, it is necessary to respect the basic principles of the GDPR, namely lawfulness, proportionality, and data minimisation, the controller's information obligation, and storage minimisation.

The legal use of recordings as lawful evidence in administrative and criminal proceedings is conditional upon compliance with all legal conditions for their acquisition and operation. Although established case law allows for exceptions to the principle of legality of evidence in the case of recordings made by private individuals, the key prerequisite for their admissibility remains the application of the proportionality test by the competent authority.

In conclusion, camera traps significantly increase the effectiveness of monitoring and the ability to hold people accountable for environmental offences. Their successful deployment represents a fundamental shift in the way inspection work is conducted and in the overall strengthening of law enforcement in environmental protection.

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## **Fotopułapki jako innowacyjne narzędzie wykrywania nielegalnych działań przeciwko środowisku**

### Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje wykorzystanie fotopułapek jako innowacyjnego narzędzia służącego wykrywaniu nielegalnych działań skierowanych przeciwko środowisku. Autorka przedstawia ich znaczenie oraz praktyczne zastosowanie, podkreślając, w jaki sposób nowoczesne technologie przyczyniają się do skutecznego uzyskiwania kluczowych dowodów przez organy administracji. Szczególną uwagę poświęca statusowi prawnemu fotopułapek i dopuszczalności wykorzystywania materiału, który one rejestrują, w monitorowaniu administracyjnoprawnych naruszeń w zakresie ochrony środowiska. Celem artykułu jest wykazanie, że fotopułapki w istotny sposób zwiększają efektywność nadzoru nad środowiskiem oraz pomagają w ustalaniu odpowiedzialności w dziedzinie jego ochrony.

Słowa kluczowe: fotopułapki, innowacyjne narzędzie, ochrona środowiska, ustalenie odpowiedzialności, administracyjnoprawne naruszenia w ochronie środowiska

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## **Фотоловушки как инновационный инструмент для выявления незаконной деятельности, наносящей вред окружающей среде**

### Резюме

В данной статье рассматривается использование фотоловушек как инновационного инструмента для выявления противоправной деятельности в отношении окружающей среды. Автор показывает их важность и практическое применение, подчеркивая, каким образом современные технологии способствуют эффективному сбору ключевых доказательств административными органами. Особое внимание уделено правовому статусу фотоловушек

и допустимости использования материалов, которые они регистрируют, в мониторинге административных правонарушений в области охраны окружающей среды. Цель данной статьи – показать, что фотоловушки значительно повышают эффективность надзора за окружающей средой и помогают установить ответственность в области ее охраны.

Ключевые слова: фотоловушки, инновационный инструмент, охрана окружающей среды, установление ответственности, административные правонарушения в области охраны окружающей среды

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### **Le fototrappolaggio come strumento innovativo per l'individuazione di attività illegali contro l'ambiente**

#### Sommario

L'articolo analizza l'utilizzo delle fototrappolaggio come strumento innovativo per l'individuazione di attività illegali contro l'ambiente. L'autrice ne illustra l'importanza e l'applicazione pratica, sottolineando in che modo le moderne tecnologie contribuiscano all'efficace acquisizione di prove chiave da parte delle autorità amministrative. Particolare attenzione è dedicata allo status giuridico delle fototrappolaggio e all'ammissibilità dell'utilizzo del materiale da esse registrato nel monitoraggio delle violazioni amministrative e giuridiche in materia di tutela ambientale. Lo scopo dell'articolo è dimostrare che le fototrappolaggio aumentano in modo significativo l'efficacia della sorveglianza ambientale e aiutano a determinare la responsabilità nel campo della sua protezione.

Parole chiave: fototrappolaggio, strumento innovativo, protezione dell'ambiente, determinazione della responsabilità, violazioni amministrative e legali in materia di protezione dell'ambiente