



YOUNG REPORTER

In the Battle of Rhino and Poacher Who will Win? Zach Rogers, Wilson's School

3 hrs ago

Share

[2 Comments](#)

A young rhino without its parents in the wild. (*Image: Archant*)

Extinction is probably a rarely used term in your vocabulary - perhaps only in primary school when referring to the dinosaurs - and certainly never applied to the modern day. But subtly, slowly our rare fauna are being erased and some have even already disappeared: although not as drastic as a meteor, we are witnessing extinction.

The act of poaching is defined as the illegal capturing or killing of wild animals and is a prominent practice in South Africa, particularly due to the wildlife that can be found there. An abundance of mammalian, tusked animals - such as elephants - creates a large market for ivory, which hunters will aim to supply. Ivory is not the only resource that poachers find however, as rhino horns are equally sought after for their keratin; the estimated price of an african rhino horn is £20,000 per kg, but asian rhino horns can fetch a shocking £400,000.

Unsurprisingly, the effect this has on the rhino and elephant population is devastating, and Save the Rhino International reports that rhino poaching peaked in 2015, with the number of hunted rhinos being between 1000-1500. Thankfully, poaching has remained on a downward trend since then as under 500 rhinos were killed in 2021. Yet the damage has already been done. Currently, there are only two female northern white rhinos left in the world - the last male died in 2018, leaving the females alone at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya.

So how does poaching occur and why can't we stop it? If we examine how the practice began, the first target of poaching gangs was actually Zimbabwe - South Africa was only targeted from 2009. It appears that these hunter groups are migrating after eliminating the majority of the population in each area; this does not bode well for the future of South African rhinos. Whilst it does mean it will eventually stop, we can expect it to end only once more species are pushed to extinction, which the northern white rhino is now facing.

Indeed, this could already be happening: the downward trajectory of South African poaching is potentially yet another poacher gang migration as rhino populations fall - sadly meaning we could expect neighboring countries to suffer the same fate. But the situation is not entirely without hope: South Africa introduced new legislation in February 2022, increasing the quota of animals allowed for trophy hunting.

Recommended by

Although this may seem strange at first glance, the law could be introduced in the hopes of making the illegal act of poaching mainstream, so that the government can effectively mediate the scale of animal hunting - as opposed to the rampant poaching we see today. The populations of rhino and elephant species are at a fundamental tipping point, and it is how we act now that could either save, or bring about, their extinction.