

# IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT LIONS...

Team work between partners combatting wildlife crime

The lion rangers found fresh footprints and followed them slowly and cautiously. Noises ahead alerted them to the fact that not all was well. Then they moved forward vigilantly from bush to bush in the sparse semi-desert landscape, searching intently ahead. Their sharp eyes soon picked out a group of three young men with thirteen dogs over the lifeless form of a freshly killed kudu calf.



The area just south of the veterinary fence in Namibia's Kunene Region, that separates commercial farms from the free ranging wildlife in communal areas, is critical for the survival of lions and rhinos. The area is patrolled by lion rangers coordinated by IRDNC: Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, one of 12 partners in the Combatting Wildlife Crime Project supported by USAID.



Landscape in Kunene



Kudus in the Kunene landscape

Linus, who works for IRDNC, took several photos with his phone for evidence purposes before shouting at the unsuspecting group. The young poachers started to run. Linus and his team immediately contacted law enforcement and were able to track the poachers until the police arrived.



Namibian Police investigating the poaching of a kudu calf

Teamwork between the partners combatting wildlife crime is vital. The Namibian Police responded swiftly, and arrested the young men and laid formal charges against them.

In this case, one of the poachers was out on bail and had been associated with the killing of a rhino some time before this incident. The US funded initiative to combat wildlife crime includes training for prosecutors and magistrates, making it less likely in future for wildlife crime suspects to be released on bail.



Linus joined IRDNC Human Wildlife Support and Response team in 2018. His involvement in community conservation started when his father worked as a community game guard, and he followed in his footsteps. In his own words: “I love nature and being in the wild. I like lions, and I don’t want wildlife to disappear from our area

As it is often the case in conservation, while the focus may be on a single endangered species, the outcome may benefit another species and conservation as a whole. As Linus said, “it’s not only about lions...”



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