



Elephant poaching escalates

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The Ministry of Environment and Tourism yesterday confirmed that 33 elephants have been poached in Namibia this year. In the most recent case, two suspects were arrested in the Divundu area of the Kavango East Region on Friday. They were arrested when they tried to sell elephant bone as ivory to unsuspecting people. Ezekiel Manda Enock and Alfrieda Mufenda Kapawa, both unemployed, were denied bail by the Rundu Magistrate's Court. Ministry spokesperson Romeo Muyunda yesterday told Namibian Sun that illegal hunting of elephants is growing at a frightening rate in the north-eastern areas such as the Bwabwata, Mudumu and Nkasa Rupara national parks and in the eastern flood plains of the Zambezi Region. The more than 30 elephants killed so far this year is a huge number when compared to previous years, and received relatively little press coverage in comparison to the 12 cases of rhino poaching. At the beginning of last month the ministry still reported that only ten elephants had been poached this year. That means that within one month more than 20 elephants have been killed by poachers. A total of 78 elephants were poached in 2012 and 38 in 2013. From 2005 until 2013, a total of 222 elephant tusks worth N\$1.3 million were confiscated and 105 people were prosecuted for poaching. The financial loss of the 28 elephants poached in national parks during 2012 amounted to N\$3.8 million. WINDHOEK ELLANIE SMIT