

Three rhino carcasses found in Kunene

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by Staff Reporter

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THREE carcasses of black rhino were discovered in the Kunene region this week, two weeks after another carcass of a black rhino bull was found in Etosha.

This discovery brings Namibia's official total loss of rhinos to poachers this year to a record high of 18, including 15 black and three white rhino. Some claim the number could be higher.

Police deputy Commissioner Edwin Kanguatjivi confirmed yesterday that an "aerial tracking team spotted three rhino carcasses . . . The ground team was dispatched to the area and they confirmed that three rhinos had been poached. Their horns had been removed" this past week.

Kanguatjivi added that the find was made in the Anabeb conservancy but other reports placed the carcasses within the Palmwag concession. Dismissing allegations that four rhinos had been found without their horns in the Palmwag area, Kanguatjivi said the Namibian Protected Resources Unit had only reported three carcasses, and that any other carcasses found could be because of natural causes.

By late yesterday, officials at the Ministry of Environment and Tourism had not yet confirmed the incident.

Although not confirmed by MET, a look at recent statistics shows that at least 26 rhinos, black and white, have been poached in Namibia since 2009, the large majority in 2014.

The decision to dehorn Namibia's rhinos, in an attempt to combat the rhino poaching crisis in the country, has met a mixed response.

The strategy's costs, its effectiveness and the opportunity for corruption have all been cited as challenges. Furthermore, a source with close ties to rhino conservation in Namibia said law enforcement probes into rhino poaching "leave much to be desired".

At an official event in Etosha National Park last week, environment minister Uahekua Herunga spoke out strongly against poachers, and encouraged Namibians to "be a police officer, to be a soldier against poaching in this country".

The minister strongly felt the reward for any information on poachers and their movements should be increased, referring to a recent N\$30 000 being offered in the Etosha poaching case.

Moreover, he said that laws should be changed in order to ensure lifelong sentences for poachers.

He explained that Namibia's tourism industry is the third largest contributor to the country's GDP and the killing of iconic wildlife negatively impacts Namibia's reputation as a tourist destination, decreasing tourism's contribution to the national purse.

Anyone who has information of a wildlife crime being committed is urged to SMS the toll-free and confidential wildlife crime alert number 55555.

Anyone with information can also contact the Protected Resources Unit's detective chief inspector Barry de Klerk at 081 129 0054, or inspector Louretha Tsuses at 081 268 6646.

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