



Rhino poaching toll hits 79

20 November 2015 | Environment

Another two black rhinos have been found poached in the Etosha National Park, and a rhino calf is still missing, after poachers struck again this week. This brings the total number of rhinos that have been killed in the country to 79 for the year so far. Police spokesperson Inspector Slogan Matheus confirmed that two black rhinos had been found dead at Etosha with their horns hacked off. The first rhino carcass was found on Monday and the second a day later. Both were discovered in an area between the Otjovazandu Strip and Renostervlei at Etosha. On Monday a rhino cow, which had already been dehorned by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism earlier this year, was discovered. Although it had been dehorned, poachers still managed to hack off the remainder of the horn, said Matheus. According to him the rhino cow's calf had also gone missing and authorities are still trying to trace it. Meanwhile a black rhino bull was also discovered poached on Tuesday. It has also been dehorned by the ministry, but poachers hacked off the horns entirely. No suspects have been arrested and police investigations are continuing. The second phase of the anti-poaching operation in the Etosha National Park and the Palmwag Conservancy started in September, under the command of Kunene Police Commissioner James Nderura. It will run until the end of this month. Before the latest two poaching incidents, Environment and Tourism Minister Pohamba Shifeta said recently that out of the 77 rhino that had been poached in Namibia so far this year, only five rhinos were poached after June, when the anti-poaching operation was in full swing. He gave a breakdown of the poaching incidents and arrests, saying that numbers indicate that 94% of rhinos were poached before the operation started and only 6% were poached during the operation, which indicates a high success rate. According to Shifeta, 49 of the suspects arrested were in areas surrounding the Etosha National Park and 42 of these suspects have been charged with the illegal hunting of rhinos. The remaining seven suspects were released due to a lack of evidence. Among the suspects is an Angolan national. Most of the suspects were arrested in the Onamutanga, Uutsathima, litapa and Otyenoa areas in the Omusati Region. Shifeta also said a total of 59 rifles had been confiscated, as well as a large amount of ammunition. He said 32 rifles that are potentially linked to poaching have been confiscated at Etosha and its surrounding areas and 23 of these rifles were sent for ballistic testing. ELLANIE SMIT



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/asse>