



Crack the whip on poaching

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How long before rhino, pangolin and even elephants are wiped out in Namibia?

An avalanche of poaching stories, of arrests and deaths, continue to flood the frontpages of Namibian newspapers.

Even for hardened journalists who on a daily basis have to step knee deep into public relations smokescreens, human rights abuses, crime and corruption, the death of yet another rhino creates a doomed sense of hopelessness and helplessness.

Each story contains similar facts.

Another dead rhino, another desperate poacher, whose greed or poverty motivates him to risk a life behind bars, and these days, even death, to brutally kill an animal.

In return, they are paid a fraction of what horns, tusks or scales are worth.

And as long as the money flows, volunteers will always step up. The long list of Chinese nationals arrested for poaching, smuggling and corruption creates the sense that Namibia's resources are viewed as ripe for looting, picking and plunder. And, if the rumours are true, many Namibians are more than willing to exchange these precious resources in exchange for a share of the ill-gotten treasure chest. How can the arrogant and unstoppable market for horns, tusks and whatever else trends in the Chinese aphrodisiac market at the moment, ever be stopped if the names of these middlemen, the Namibians and the Asians, remain outside the spotlight? If the names of the real hoodlums responsible for poaching in the country continue to evade our news stories, our social media rants, and our official press statements, then our poaching crisis will continue unabated. Who cares about the death of a rhino, or elephant, when millions are on the line? And who cares if a poacher is killed or arrested, his family left bereaved and destitute, if another will step forward to fill his shoes immediately? What about the men and women in law enforcement, who work tirelessly to trap and arrest the poachers and smugglers, risking their lives? Do they know the more senior people involved and are they actively threatened to hold back? These questions deserve answers.

Until the real big fish behind poaching are behind bars, poaching will continue to ravage our country and our wildlife.