



Northwest winning poaching war

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Rhino poaching in the northwest of Namibia has declined by 80% since it peaked in 2013.

This is according to the CEO of Save the Rhino Trust (SRT), Namibia Simson Uri-Khob, who said that even though rhinos are still under threat, the organisation has been making great strides in protecting them in the northwest of the country.

“Our tracking teams are dedicated and our intelligence unit is relentless in its pursuit of information that can be used to safeguard our rhinos, while our donors are supportive, which makes the statistics we have to share with you possible.”

According to Uri-Khob, since the surge in rhino poaching started with the first incident in 2012, overall patrol efforts have increased by 360% in the northwest.

Verified rhino sightings have increased by 380% and the percentage of known individual rhinos seen on average each month has risen from about 20% to nearly 80%.

Uri-Khob says the number of trained and equipped conservancy-based rhino rangers have also grown from zero to 55 across the 13 conservancies, which means the field force has tripled.

“The amount of income generated and distributed back to local communities directly from rhino tourism has increased substantially.”

According to him six separate poaching attempts were foiled by law-enforcement officers, who received voluntary pre-emptive intelligence from local informants last year.

A gang of poachers responsible for killing a rhino in 2017 were caught red-handed and remain in police custody.

Rhino monitoring efficiency, which is measured by total cost per verified rhino sighting, has decreased by over 50%, says Uri-Khob.

“To put our patrol efforts into context, our foot patrols have covered 15 059 km from 1 January to 31 July this year.”

Vehicle patrols covered 41 562 km during the same period.

Uri-Khob said the terrain they are working in is extremely harsh and destructive on boots, uniforms and tyres. He, however, added that the threat of poachers is bigger than ever and therefore they simply cannot decrease their efforts.

“Through open and honest communication with our valued stakeholders, partners, donors and supporters, we have solidified our support base both locally and internationally. Without our donors we simply cannot continue protecting the desert-dwelling rhinos.”

ELLANIE SMIT



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/assets/winning-poaching-war2018-08-220.jpg>)

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT: Rhino poaching in the northwest of Namibia has seen a decline of 80%. Photo: ELLANIE SMIT