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POACHING DECLINES, ARRESTS INCREASE (NAMIBIA)

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Ellanie Smit, The Namibian Sun

See [link](#) for chart.

Over the past five years, there has been an overall decline in rhino and elephant poaching, with a major increase in arrests. This was shared yesterday by environment minister Pohamba Shifeta during his 2020 opening speech.

Last year, a total of 45 rhinos were poached in comparison to 74 in 2018 and 55 in 2017. In 2016, 61 rhinos were poached, and 97 in 2015. According to Shifeta, two rhinos have been poached to date this year.

As for elephants, 12 were poached last year, 27 in 2018 and 50 in 2017. In 2016, a total of 101 elephants were poached and 49 in 2015. "No elephant has been recorded poached this year," Shifeta said.

He added that for these illegal hunting activities and the illegal possession of game products, 87 cases were opened last year, with 201 people being arrested. Of the 201 suspects arrested, the majority are Namibian (182), while the rest of the group are from Zambia (nine), Angola (seven), France (two) and Mozambique (one).

Meanwhile, a total of 115 cases were opened in 2018 with 138 suspects arrested. In 2017, 76 cases were opened with 123 arrested. Comparatively, in 2016, 135 cases were opened and 82 people were arrested, while 2015 saw 91 cases opened with 96 people arrested. Shifeta added that 26 firearms were seized and 27 vehicles were impounded last year.

"The number of arrests is significantly higher than in previous years, which also had a lower percentage of arrests related to rhino, elephant and pangolin. "Arrests and seizures related to rhino have remained relatively stable, while a high number of pre-emptive arrests continued

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most alarming rise. A range of capacity-building for wildlife management staff was undertaken last year, he said.

This included training on financial investigations, lifestyle audits, intelligence and international exchanges, as well as capacity- and trust-building among law enforcement agencies, support for those on the ground doing daily patrols, surveillance and detection, and providing incentives to communities.

“Many of the recent successes in fighting wildlife crime in Namibia are the result of improved patrols and rapid, proactive responses to incidents. This is enabled through flexible funding from government and specific organisations,” Shifeta said.

He added that ongoing funding of this nature is vital to ensure continued success.

<https://www.namibiansun.com/news/poaching-declines-arrests-increase2020-02-06/>

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