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Informanté

Wildlife crime registered every day

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WILDLIFE crime has become one of the central conservation challenges in Namibia, with a total of 174 wildlife species poached in the country last year alone.

This number signifies an increase, as 115 were poached in 2018.

This was revealed in the Ministry of Environment's 2019 wildlife crime annual report.

The report also noted that on average, a new wildlife crime case was registered somewhere in Namibia each day during 2019.

Nearly half of them were related to high-value species.

According to the report, the pangolin accounted for most cases, arrests and seizures, after 123 animals were poached.



UNDER THREAT: A total of 45 rhinos were poached in Namibia in 2019, with no convictions made on perpetrators to date. Photo: Contributed

The report cited that more than half of all cases related to rhinos were preemptive arrest cases.

Ivory seizures continue to be significant as tusk seizures stem from at least 58 dead elephants.

The report, however, stated that the number of elephant tusks seized does not relate directly to the number of elephants killed in Namibia, as some tusks may originate from elephants killed in neighbouring countries.

Only 12 elephants are estimated to have been poached in Namibia during 2019, compared to the 45 rhinos that were poached.

Perpetrators convicted in high-value species cases registered in 2019 include 21 individuals doing time for pangolin poaching or trafficking, 7 for elephant poaching or trafficking and zero persecutions for rhino poaching or trafficking.

With regard to challenges faced, the report summarised that the high rate of new wildlife crime cases often threatens to draw attention and resources away from ongoing investigations into complex cases.

The Ministry of Environment stated that attempts to deal as quickly as possible with new cases as they arise results in more resources being applied to 'fresh' cases than to older, often extremely complex cases.

Such allocation of time and financial resources enables rapid successes in many cases, but slows the rate of success during intricate follow-up investigations.

"It is thus important to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to enable effective, ongoing follow-up investigations," the ministry said.

The rate of horn seizures compared to arrests in poaching cases thus remains low.

Improving search effort at strategic border points may increase success, and first training initiatives were undertaken during 2019.

"Increased incentives for suspects to disclose the whereabouts of horns may also be effective," the report summarised.