

Fishing expedition stumbles on elephant tusks

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Fishermen on a fishing expedition stumbled upon a bag containing four elephant tusks hidden in shallow waters between Ondangwa and Ongwediva over the long Africa Day weekend. A group of village boys between Opoto and Shipepe locations near Ongwediva were fishing in the water channel near the road when they made the elephant tusks discovery.

Oshana police regional crime investigations coordinator Deputy Commissioner Hilya Haipumbu confirmed the group of boys found a tied bag hidden near a water channel.

The origin of the elephant tusks remains a mystery and is not known.

“The boys were catching fish in the Oshana near the road. They stepped on something hard and they discovered it was a tied bag. They untied the bag and found four elephant tusks,” Haipumbu told New Era upon enquiry yesterday. The boys alerted some parents who called the police. She said the police arrived at the scene and took the tusks to Ongwediva police station for safekeeping.

“At this point, there is no indication as to where the tusks came from or who hid them in the water. No one knows how long these elephant tusks have been in the water. The police investigation is still ongoing at this stage, ” said the regional police crime coordinator. She said the value of the elephant tusks is yet to be determined.

There were unconfirmed reports the bag was dumped in the water by a person in a bus driving from Rundu on its way to Oshakati. The bus apparently broke down and the driver hid the bag in the water as he proceeded to drop off customers to their destination with the intention to retrieve it later.

However, Haipumbu dismissed the report as an unfounded rumour.

“We initially received reports that the bag was dumped there by a bus coming from Rundu. But it’s not true, the incident has nothing to do with the bus that broke down,” Haipumbu asserted. There is a feeling from some members of the public that the anti-poaching unit has somehow dropped its guard and is a bit dormant because of the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some residents of the area claimed the poaching of elephants and rhino is on the increase.

However, environment and tourism spokesperson Romeo Muyunda said the public should note that anti-poaching activities will continue unhindered to protect the natural resources of the

country even during the period of the coronavirus pandemic.

“Those intending to take chances in this regard are therefore warned that the ministry together with the law enforcement agencies are on full alert and ready to deal with any illegal activities within and outside our national parks,” cautioned Muyunda.

Muyunda says the ministry of environment has already anticipated some people will want to exploit the outbreak and engage in illicit poaching. For this reason, he said the ministry and law enforcement officials have intensified their operations, which have led to the arrests of many suspects countrywide. “Wildlife crime, in particular poaching is a priority to the ministry and we will not relent in trying to stop it,” he assured the public.

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