



363 arrested for wildlife crimes in 2019

Pangolins are the most poached and trafficked animal species in Namibia, crime statistics show.

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A total of 174 wildlife crime cases involving high-value species were registered last year and more than 360 suspects were arrested.

According to the 2019/2020 annual progress report of the environment ministry, 92 of these cases related to pangolin, 54 related to elephants, 32 related to rhinos and 17 to conspiracy to poach rhinos.

Of the 363 suspects, 160 were arrested for pangolin poaching, 100 for elephant poaching, 112 for rhino poaching and 69 were pre-emptive arrests involving conspiracy to poach rhino.

Most of these suspects are Namibians (69%) and the remainder is made up of Angolans (5%), Zambians (3%), Zimbabweans (0.6%) and Botswana nationals (0.3%), while 2% are undetermined nationalities.

Few convictions

According to the report 21 perpetrators were convicted for pangolin poaching or trafficking and seven for elephant poaching or trafficking. "For rhino cases, 77% of suspects remain in custody, while 21% were released on bail, and 2% absconded. Similarly, for elephants 76% remain in custody, while 13% were released on bail, 2% were acquitted, 7% convicted, and for 2% of cases the status still needs to be determined." For pangolins, 66% of suspects remain in custody, 12% were released on bail, 13% were convicted, 1% of cases were withdrawn and for 8% of cases the status still needs to be determined.

Several high-value wildlife products were seized during 2019. These included 49 live pangolins and 74 dead pangolins or skins, 116 elephant tusks and 8 rhino horns.

Furthermore 29 firearms were confiscated and 25 vehicles were impounded.

Otjozondjupa hotspot

The report says the highest incidence of wildlife crimes was in the central, eastern and north-eastern parts of Namibia, with the highest number of incidents recorded in the Otjozondjupa Region.

Furthermore, a total of 564 fines were issued amounting to more than N\$1.03 million for contravening rules and regulations in protected areas and regions during 2019/2020. The enforcement of rules and regulations continued in all protected areas and regions as a standard procedure during the financial year. This included inspections at butchereries to ensure that they are in possession of valid permits to trade in game meat.

At the Etosha National Park 197 fines were issued amounting to N\$237 090, while 189 fines were issued in central parks amounting to N\$382 420. These were the areas where the majority of fines were issued.