



Nearly 3 000 arrested for wildlife crimes since 2015

According to statistics, 371 wildlife crime cases were finalised with convictions in court during the five-year period and 565 suspects were found guilty, while 63 suspects were acquitted on charges.

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09 February 2021 | [Crime](#)



ENFORCE: The revised National Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement aims to ensure the effective enforcement of laws governing wildlife resources. Photo: NAMPA

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A total of 2 950 suspects was arrested in the 1 326 wildlife crime cases reported in the past five years, of which 579 cases related to high-value species.

This is according to wildlife crime summary statistics for the period 1 January 2015 until to 3 December 2020, provided in the revised National Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement.

The arrests included 504 suspects arrested for pangolin poaching and/or trafficking, 383 for elephant poaching and/or trafficking and 499 for rhino poaching and/or trafficking. This included pre-emptive arrests.

According to the strategy, 371 wildlife crime cases were finalised with convictions in court during the five-year period and 565 suspects were found guilty on wildlife-related charges, while 63 suspects were acquitted on charges.

Meanwhile, there were 2 231 court hearings in wildlife crimes cases during the five years.

Strategic programme areas

The strategy gives a brief background on wildlife protection and law enforcement in the country, including specific objectives.

It provides for strategic programme areas such as wildlife protection, anti-poaching and law enforcement, investigations and prosecutions, transboundary illicit trade, protection of rhinos, elephants and pangolins, community safety and security and also community awareness and communication.

“While Namibia has historically experienced limited wildlife crime, the rising prices of illicit ivory, rhino horn and pangolin products drive the nature of such crimes in Namibia,” the document read.

Criminal syndicates pursue wildlife products with increasing sophistication, using complex network, it added.

“Word is out in rural areas that there is serious money to be made from wildlife trade and this gives momentum to opportunistic poaching, especially of pangolin.

Animal populations

Currently, Namibia holds the second largest population of rhinos in the world and the world’s largest population of black rhinos.

In Etosha National Park, the rhino population is valued at more than N\$3 billion.

Furthermore, the world’s largest contiguous elephant population of about 250 000 elephants occur within the Kavango– Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area, which comprises Angola, Botswana, Namibia,

Zambia and Zimbabwe.

According to the strategy, about 50 000 elephants occur in north-western Zimbabwe, about 150 000 in northern Botswana, about 16 000 in north-eastern Namibia, and the balance in south-western Zambia and south-eastern Angola.

“Clearly, Namibia needs to be well prepared to deal with threats to its rhino, elephant and pangolin populations, as well as other wildlife species in the light of recent trends elsewhere in Africa, and particularly those in neighbouring countries.”

The strategy said of growing concern in Namibia is the illegal trade in other natural resources such as timber, rare succulent plants, reptiles and birds.

The Access and Benefit Sharing Legislation of 2017 and the forthcoming regulations will provide an additional means of protecting Namibia's biological and genetic resources, and the associated traditional knowledge.