

'No staff involved in poaching' Fewer rhinos poached in parks

24 February 2021 | [Ministeries](#)



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The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism confirmed that none of its staff were involved in poaching and poaching has decreased in national parks.

The spokesman, Mr. Romeo Muyunda says according to the investigation into the firearms confiscated in the Etosha National Park and sent for ballistic tests, no staff member has been linked to any poaching case.

The head of the Blue Rhino task force, Comm. Barry de Klerk, confirmed this to Republikein.

"None of the firearms sent for ballistic tests could be positively linked to a staff member of the ministry," he said.

Muyunda added "if there is such a case, we will take action and file a criminal complaint against a staff member".

As for poaching in national parks, according to the ministry, only 38 of the 81 poached rhinos were poached in parks in 2018 with 43 outside parks.

"In 2019, 21 rhinos were poached in parks compared to the 31 outside parks. In 2020, 13 rhinos were poached inside and 18 outside parks," Muyunda said.

He says so far this year, only one rhino has been poached outside a national park and no inside parks.

"The Namibian army (NDF) and police are in our national parks where there is a decrease in poaching."

The spokesperson says that with regard to elephant poaching, national parks, especially Bwabwata National Park, were initially severely poached, "but due to interventions by the NDF, police and the ministry, it has decreased significantly."

According to the ministry's statistics, 101 elephants were poached in 2016, the majority of which were in Bwabwata.

"In 2020, only 11 elephants were poached - 5 of them in Bwabwata."

FIRE

According to the ministry, wildfires raging in parks did not cause much damage, "except for a fire in 2011 that claimed two rhinos in Etosha".

Muyunda says in the "controlled veld fire" last year in Etosha, no rhinos died.

"It was a good fire and the grazing improved in those areas, especially with the current good rains."

He says that although there are concerns about the impact of the drought on the rhino population in the Kunene region, the situation in the region has also improved with the recent rains.

"Namibia still has a healthy rhino population that continues to grow. "We must all play a role in the conservation of our rhinos," Muyunda said.

He says the ministry will launch a new conservation and management strategy for the conservation of white and black rhinos, as well as elephants, this year.

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