

14 April 2021 | [Nature & Environment](#)

Corona crisis slows rhino poaching

Cases of poaching have decreased in the past year - pangolins traded “the most”

More than 300 people were arrested last year for wildlife crimes against high-value species. The lowest number of reported cases is related to rhino poaching and the highest number related to pangolin trafficking.



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While many countries have reported a sharp increase in wildlife crime in view of the corona crisis, the opposite has been recorded in Namibia. “No overall increase in poaching of high quality species was reported in 2020. But there has been an increase in antelope poaching for meat,” reads the recently published report on combating wildlife crime in Namibia, published by the Ministry of the Environment. The report covers the period from January 1 to December 31, 2020.

According to this, a total of 304 people were arrested for crimes against wild animals against high-quality species, and a total of 113 cases were reported. The lowest number of cases is related to rhino poaching (25 cases in total) - however, the highest number of arrests were reported in this context. A total of 191 people were arrested either in connection with rhino poaching or the attempt to hunt a rhino. "In the case of rhinos, there are many 'preventive cases' in which the animals are rescued and perpetrators could be caught before the act. These preventive arrests have saved the lives of many rhinos," it said. "More nasal horns than usual were seized in 2020,

But there is a strong contrast when trading or killing pangolins. In this area, not only the highest number of cases (59) was reported, but also the highest number of animals that were found either dead or alive - a total of 74 animals. Although pangolins are described as "by far the most targeted high-quality species", the animals were often confiscated alive. "Many pangolins have been released back into the wild," they say.

In connection with ivory, however, it is "seldom possible" to link seized tusks with a specific carcass, but "there are many cases in connection with the ivory trade". The ministry estimates that the 62 tusks seized will come from at least 32 poached elephants in 2020. "This number is not directly related to the number of elephants killed in Namibia, as the tusks may come from elephants killed in other countries. It is estimated that eleven elephants were poached in Namibia in 2020," it says.

Antelopes, on the other hand, are poached for the meat and the biodiversity is very large: it is from the dik-dik to the eland. "Compared to 2019, the number of all reported cases of poaching and arrests fell by 31 percent last year," it said. The number of cases in connection with high-quality species, be it rhinos, elephants or pangolins, even fell by 39 percent compared to the previous year.