

Fight against elephant poaching bears fruit Law enforcers arrest offenders

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Elvira Hattings - Although no one has yet been arrested in connection with the four elephants poached in Namibia this year, Namibia has shown a sharp decline in poaching of these forest giants over the past eight years.

According to figures maintained by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, elephant poaching appears to be declining annually. While in 2016 up to almost 101 elephants were poached, in 2019 and 2020 there were only 13 and 12 elephants respectively.

Also in 2014, 78 elephants were poached, with 2017 in which 50 elephants were poached.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of the Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Mr. Romeo Muyunda, says the decline is due to the fact that law enforcers are taking stricter action when it comes to wildlife crime - in collaboration with various law enforcement agencies.

"The arrest of suspects also serves as a deterrent. There is currently good co-operation with the public - which constantly informs us about planned crimes or where poaching has already taken place.

"In general, the country stands together against poaching. However, there is still a lot to do to get these numbers to zero or to keep them low, given that poachers will be forced to become more innovative in working against us.

"However, we strive for it and promise to stay one step ahead of poaching syndicates.

"Poachers and those who make such plans must take note that Namibia is up against poaching and that they will be handed over to the court," Muyunda warned.

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This year, four elephants were poached in the Otjozondjupa and Kavango East regions, while nine rhinos have been poached so far in 2021 - three black rhinos and six white rhinos.

It is less clear whether rhino poaching is also declining, although figures have also been declining over the past four years.

In 2018, 81 rhinos were poached. The figure dropped to 54 in 2019 and to 32 in 2020.

Muyunda has previously said in connection with rhino poaching and other wildlife crimes, Namibia has also intensified its fight "to the point where an arrest has been made for every rhino poaching case".

In terms of rhino poaching, 2015 was the bloodiest in nine years when 97 rhinos were poached.

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