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Anti poaching rangers

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ANTI-POACHING RANGERS GRADUATE

Equipped to protect natural resources

Poaching "is a war we are fighting every day, and it is a war we fighting against an enemy that is highly organised and one that is becoming increasingly devious and bold," the environment ministry's executive director said.

Ellanie Smit

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A group of 36 anti-poaching rangers graduated at the Waterberg Law Enforcement Centre last week after receiving basic wildlife protection and law enforcement training.

Environment ministry executive director Teofilus Nghitila said the main objective of this training was to equip newly recruited staff with specific and specialised skills that will enable them to protect our precious species and natural resources.

"Training and development of staff is essential to the success of all businesses and operations everywhere. It is even more essential in the area of wildlife crime and broader environmental crimes, where the threat becomes more sophisticated and complex by the day."

He added that the ministry is under no illusion when it comes to poaching and the illegal trade of wildlife.

"This is a war we are fighting every day, and it is a war we fighting against an enemy that is highly organised and one that is becoming increasingly devious and bold."

Nghitila said in 2016, when poaching cases began to spike, Cabinet approved the establishment of the Wildlife Protection Services Division within the ministry with the intention of preventing wildlife crime and enhancing law enforcement when it comes to wildlife-related crimes.

"It is pleasing that we have seen an overall decline in many areas since the spike in poaching we experienced around 2015 and 2016," he added.

Encouraging figures

A total of 43 rhinos was poached in 2021 compared to 40 in 2020 and 56 in 2019 and a record 97 in 2015. Two rhinos have been poached so far this year.

Elephant poaching continued to decline with eight poached in 2021 compared to 12 in 2020 and a record 101 in 2016.

The country has also recorded a total of 320 cases of crimes involving pangolins in the last five years since 2017. This includes 43 in 2017, 62 in 2018, 96 in 2019, 59 in 2020 and 60 in 2021.

“Taken as a whole, these figures are encouraging and showing an overall decline in cases of poaching of our high-value and endangered species.

“This is a sign that we are winning the war, but there are so many other issues that we need to be mindful of before we make any pronouncements. And for us the target has already been set to completely eradicate poaching of our wildlife,” Nghitila said.

The rangers’ training focused on forest protection, human resources, species conservation and smart approaches to data collection, he added.