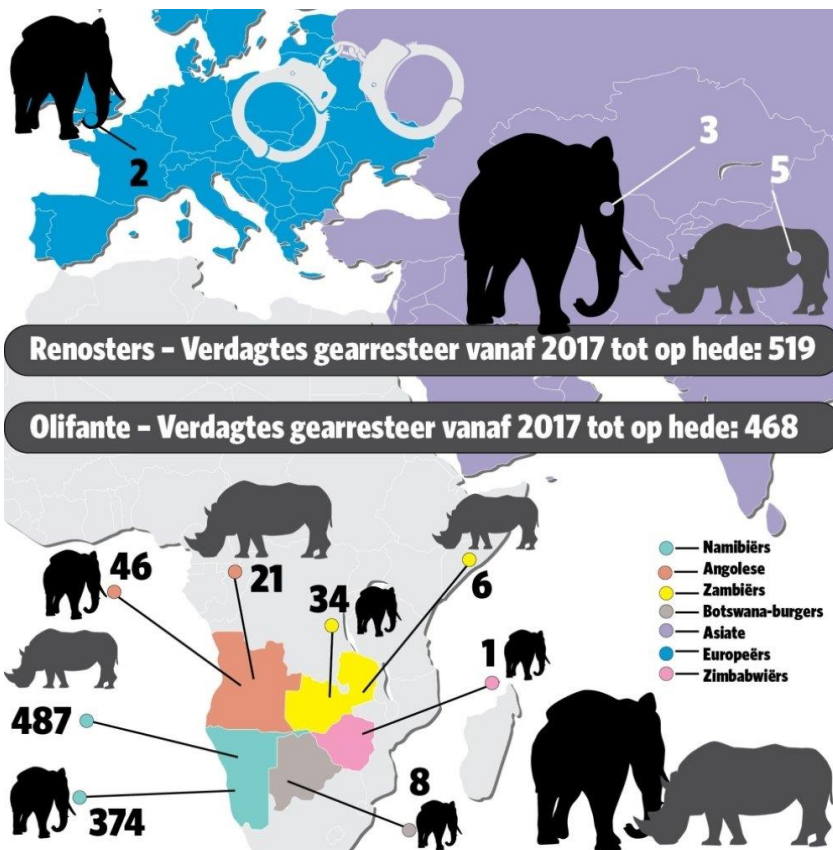


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142 CONVICTED IN FIVE YEARS OF POACHING

Fewer elephants killed

Statistics show a total of 131 wildlife crime cases involving rhinos have been registered from 2017 to date.

Ellanie Smit

- 1 DAY AGO - 2022-06-17 00:00:00

More than 40% of the 987 suspects arrested since 2017 for elephant and rhino wildlife crimes have been released on bail.

Statistics show 415 of those suspects are currently on bail, while only 142 have been convicted. In addition, more than 87% are Namibians.

The head of the unit for protected resources and the Blue Rhino task team, adj.comm. Barry de Klerk, shared these statistics at the National Stakeholder Forum on Wildlife Crime and Law Enforcement.

He said since 2017, 291 firearms have been seized, 18 of which have been confiscated; and a total of 152 vehicles were seized, with 17 this year.

According to De Klerk, the latest discovery of 11 black rhino carcasses in the Etosha National Park has pushed the number of poached rhinos to 21 by 2022.

"Four black rhinos under the ministry's conservation program were stripped this year as well as six privately owned white rhinos. Poaching and its challenges are in our midst. "The poaching of game may still increase," he said.

Statistics show a total of 131 wildlife crime cases involving rhinos have been registered from 2017 to date. Only four cases have been registered this year.

A total of 93 cases are currently pending, 16 have been settled (with conviction), nine have been provisionally withdrawn, eight have been struck off the roll, two have been settled without conviction, two are unresolved and one case is indefinite.

The regions Kunene (26), Otjozondjupa (25), Omusati (16), Oshikoto (16) and Erongo (12) registered the most rhino poaching.

A total of 519 suspects have been arrested for rhino poaching in Namibia since 2017, of which 487 were Namibians, 21 Angolans, six Zambians and five Asians.

De Klerk said of the arrested suspects, 243 were released on bail, while 132 were awaiting trial, 32 cases were withdrawn, 30 were released under section 174, 30 were convicted, 29 were

released, nine were killed, eight fled, five were acquitted and one was not prosecuted.

He stressed there should be more convictions. In 2020, 145 suspects were arrested for rhino poaching, but only 8 were convicted. Last year, 80 suspects were arrested with two convictions.

According to statistics, 56 rhinos were poached in 2014, 97 in 2015, 66 in 2016, 55 in 2017 and 83 in 2018. Poaching then began to decline with 56 rhinos killed in 2019, 40 in 2020 and 43 last year.

ELEPHANTS

Meanwhile, a total of 232 wildlife cases involving elephants have been registered since 2017, of which 21 were opened this year.

A total of 468 suspects were arrested during this period, including 374 Namibians, 46 Angolans, 34 Zambians, eight Botswana citizens, three Asians, two Europeans and one Zimbabwean.

The majority of these suspects (172) are free on bail, while 128 are awaiting trial, 112 have been convicted, 21 cases have been withdrawn, nine suspects have fled and eight suspects have been acquitted. Eight suspects were also released, six were released on warning, three were released and one was killed.

Only two elephants were poached this year. This is a huge drop from the 78 elephants that were poached in 2014, followed by 49 in 2015, 101 in 2016 and 50 in 2017.

Elephant poaching dropped in 2018 with 27 elephants poached, 13 in 2019, 12 in 2020 and eight last year.