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Informanté

More rhinos poached than elephants

Maria David

THE Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism (MEFT) has recorded 63 rhinos poached since the start of the year, of which 41 are black rhinos and 22 are white rhinos.

Spokesperson Romeo Muyunda said this year's poaching cases include 15 rhinos poached on custodianship farms, another 22 on private farms, and 26 in the Etosha National Park.

In previous years, 44 rhinos were recorded poached in 2021, 42 in 2020, 57 in 2019, 83 in 2018, and 55 in 2017.

"The rhino poaching situation requires the involvement of all stakeholders especially members of the public in reporting suspected perpetrators to the authorities," he said.

He added that, the country also recorded a decrease in elephant poaching, with only four elephants poached this year compared to ten elephants poached in 2021.

In 2020, a total of 12 elephants were poached, 13 in 2019, 27 in 2018, and 50 in 2017.

Muyunda indicated that the perpetrators of these crimes live within society, and therefore people should report suspicious activities to the authorities.

"We must stand against the illegal plundering of our resources by rejecting and condemning wildlife crimes in our beautiful country," he said.

With the surge of poaching in 2014, numerous interventions have been put in place across the country, under the leadership of the MEFT to fight wildlife crime.

Muyunda explained that wildlife crime threatens not only the survival of the species but the reputation of the country's conservation, socioeconomic, and tourism development.

He stated that Namibia's growing tourism sector is hugely dependent on wildlife.

"Even though we continue to record successes in our fight against wildlife crime, poaching of high-valued species remains a concern," he noted.

Muyunda said the MEFT and its partners in wildlife protection and law enforcement would step up efforts against wildlife crime in the country during this year's festive season.

He stated that in the past, they have observed that poachers take advantage of the festive season to undertake criminal activities of poaching rhinos, pangolins, elephants, and other species.

He continued saying that their collaboration with law enforcement efforts has led to the arrest of 106 suspects of which 44 were arrested for crimes related to rhino poaching and 62 for crimes related to elephant poaching.

"It is disturbing to note that the highest number of 93 suspects arrested are Namibian citizens who in our view should be at the forefront of the fight against poaching," he said.

He added that other suspects include eight Angolans and five Zambians.

Thus far, at least 9 people have been convicted, seven for elephant poaching-related cases and two for rhino poaching-related cases.

"This festive season, our anti-poaching teams will not relent as may be expected; to the contrary, more personnel and officers will be dedicated to conducting patrols and law enforcement," he stressed.

Muyunda stated that those intending to take chance must be warned that this festive season will be business unusual.