

(<https://nmh.my.na/advert/track/1745/35380492/>)

HOME (/) / REP AGRIMONITOR / GROWING NUMBER OF LEOPARD-HUNTING GUIDES ARRESTED



HUNTING: Steps are being taken against illegal leopard hunting. Photo: FILE

(<https://cdn.nmh.com.na:2083/S3Server/mynamibia-eu/nmhwebimages/2024/3/19/20240319286645.jpg>)

3682)REP AGRIMONITOR

# GROWING NUMBER OF LEOPARD-HUNTING GUIDES ARRESTED

## Ministry, police work together

Too many Namibian hunting guides are actively contributing to the downfall of a sector that seems unable to clean up its collective bad act.

**Ellanie Smit**

4 DAY AGO - 2024-03-19 00:00:00

A handful of hunting guides have been arrested in various parts of the country over the past few months, each charged with separate illegal activities related to leopard hunting.

The ministry is working very closely with the police and has decided that if the industry cannot rid itself of illicit practices, then rigorous law enforcement is the only option.

19° | 36° Eenhana: 24° | 36° Oshakati: 26° | 34° Ruacana: 19° | 36° Tsumeb: 21° | 33° Otjiwarongo: 18° | 31° Omaruru: 17° | 31°

Modern information and surveillance techniques enable effective investigations in places where hunting operators have felt untouchable – in their own remote or inaccessible hunting ranges.

Ardent supporters of the conservation benefits of the legal hunting industry are reaching a point where they are unable to defend the sector – even in Namibia, which has long been held up as a shining example of good practice and fair chase.

### Illegal actions

This is trophy shooting – rather than trophy hunting – because what is being practiced here has nothing to do with the concept of hunting. Too many Namibian hunting guides are actively contributing to the downfall of a sector that seems unable to clean up its collective bad act.

Leopard hunting is a very lucrative business. The Namibian trophy fee for a single leopard varies widely depending on the operator, but mostly lies well above N\$ 150 000.

That excludes accommodation, meals, guiding and other fees. However, leopards, though relatively common in Namibia, are extremely secretive and elusive.

Rarely seen even in national parks, they are exceedingly difficult to bag in a 'fair chase' hunt outside protected areas.

Yet clients like guarantees of success for their spending, and so operators are employing any means to get the cats – and make that money. Illegal practices include hunting at night, hunting with dogs, which will chase a leopard up the nearest tree to be shot like a sitting duck, capturing and keeping the cats alive in inappropriate enclosures until the next overseas client wanting to kill a leopard arrives, and in particularly morbid scenarios, even freezing illegally shot leopards to 'launder' them into the legal domain.

### 'Dubious pursuit'

The environment ministry requires a stringent permit and reporting system, and issues only a limited number of 'tags' for leopard hunts each year. But out in the countryside, the system is not always easy to monitor or enforce.

Trophy hunting of leopards has long been a dubious pursuit.

In most instances, the leopard is 'pre-baited', meaning meat is set out for it as bait well in advance of the 'hunt'.

Low-value meat from donkeys, horses, zebras, etc. is hung in a tree where other predators can't get at it, but a leopard can feed on it with ease. Once the animal has been habituated to the bait site, it's time for the hunting client to sit in a 'blind' and shoot the cat as it arrives for its daily meal.

Yet leopards are wary animals and often come to a bait only at night. So all manner of technology is used to enable an already unscrupulous kill, such as camera traps to see if the cat makes a good trophy, sensors that signal its arrival at the bait, night-vision optics and special spotlights to see it through the rifle scope, etc.

To give the Namibian trophy-hunting industry the opportunity to differentiate itself from all the unsavoury and often illegal practices highlighted by the media in other countries, the ministry has for the past decade promoted conservation hunting.

Far too few Namibian operators have taken up the concept, and too many think that out in the bush they can act with impunity because it is difficult or impossible to monitor them there.