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Four rhinos were poached for the horns at KZN's Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park last week. File Picture: Armand Hough / African News Agency / ANA

Poachers evade KZN park's high-tech security and kill four rhinos for their horns

By Thobeka Ngema  8h ago



Durban - THE artificial intelligence (AI) cameras installed in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park failed to detect poachers after four dehorned rhinos were found last week.

The carcasses were found on different days and appeared to have been killed a few days earlier.

The park is remote and a large wilderness with no management tracks which makes patrols difficult.

However, infra-red trap cameras were installed and linked to the park's operational centre.

The cameras use AI to identify people and send an immediate alert to the operations centre which then quickly alerts and activates the relevant reaction units.

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife spokesperson Musa Mntambo said: "They (cameras) did not pick them up. The park is huge and the cameras do not focus on every spot within the park at the same time."

He said they did not know where the poachers entered the park and were unaware of any cut fencing.

"However, there are many ways the park can be accessed without cutting the fencing, for example, poachers can enter the park as a paying guest."

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (Edtea) have made great strides in trying to protect the rhino population yet the continuous attack on rhino populations left Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife worried.

"It's hard to swallow but we are not about to give up," said Mntambo.

He said the relaxing of lockdown restrictions resulted in an increase in rhino poaching as people and poachers began to travel inter-provincially.

In June, former Edtea MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube said they were exploring the use of drone technology to strengthen anti-poaching efforts in their game reserves.

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