

The Witness

7h ago

SANParks welcomes sentences for rhino poaching related crimes

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Witness Reporter
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SANParks has welcomed sentences imposed for rhino poaching related crimes
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South African National Parks (SANParks) has welcomed sentences imposed for rhino poaching related crimes in two separate cases that have been finalised in Mpumalanga.

The trials were concluded in the Mhala regional court in February and March.

In one matter three people who were arrested in August 2018 were convicted of rhino poaching related charges including possession of two sets of rhino horns, a high calibre hunting rifle, ammunition and trespassing in a national park with the intention of committing crime as well as the illegal hunting of an endangered animal.

The main accused, Peter Mathebula was given an effective sentence of 23 years behind bars while his two co-accused, Mustard Mathebula and Artur Valoyi were sentenced to an effective four years each in jail.

The three were arrested by SANParks Rangers in the Houtboschrand Section of the Kruger National Park who had reacted to shots that were fired.

This month the court concluded another long running rhino poaching case dating back to 2016, said SANParks.

Two people - Bennet Martin Lubisi and Bennet Johannes Bendane - were each sentenced to an effective eight years behind bars for poaching related charges.

They were found guilty of trespassing in a national park, possession of an unlicensed fire arm, ammunition with the intention to commit a crime. SANParks said the two were arrested before they could kill an animal.

“Although it has taken some time, we are proud of the work done by the rangers, the investigating and prosecuting teams under very difficult circumstances,” said managing executive of the KNP, Gareth Coleman.

“Successes of this nature show the importance of co-operation between the various state agencies to help combat the assault on the rhino population in the Kruger National Park. We hope that the many outstanding cases can be concluded as soon as possible so as to act as a clear deterrent to those involved,” said Coleman.

SANParks said it has also been confirmed now that cases will resume at the Skukuza Regional court as from April 1 onwards.