


*Elephants quench their thirst at Lake Kariba near Songo wildlife area in Zimbabwe. Picture: The International Anti-Poaching Foundation (IAPF)*

## Poachers nabbed, elephant tusks recovered in Kruger National Park operation

By Zainul Dawood  6h ago



Durban - THREE suspected poachers were arrested near the Crocodile Bridge Section of the Kruger National Park (KNP).

The South African National Parks (SANParks) said it was a well-executed operation which led to the arrest on Wednesday evening. SANParks spokesperson Isaac Phaahla said a high-calibre hunting rifle, ammunition and poaching equipment were seized.

He said rangers detected spoor of three individuals early on Wednesday morning. The Airwing Unit was called in to support the ground teams using a helicopter and a fixed-wing airplane. Phaahla said one person was arrested. Rangers kept following other tracks and later arrested two more.

“It was another long day in the field for our anti-poaching teams in difficult conditions. They displayed tenacity and excellent teamwork. The arrests bring the number of those arrested in the past five days to eight. This time three rifles, ammunition and hunting equipment were seized boosting the morale of the rangers, aviators and K9 Unit in the battle to protect and conserve rhinos in the KNP which has borne the brunt of attack from international rhino-poaching syndicates,” Phaahla explained.



*The South African National Parks (SANParks) rangers arrested three suspected poachers near the Crocodile Bridge Section of the Kruger National Park (KNP). Picture SANParks*

Meanwhile, the International Anti-Poaching Foundation (IAPF) seized a record 62 elephant tusks during the first three months of 2021 compared to 90 for the entire 2020. The IAPF arrested 148 poachers for a variety of offences.

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The poachers have been arrested in the wildlife areas patrolled by the all-female Akashinga anti-poaching teams in the Zambezi Valley, in northern Zimbabwe.

IAPF CEO Damien Mander said the 62 elephant tusks were recovered in 19 separate ivory operations through the organisation's investigation work and 37 arrests were made.

"While it was often difficult to determine exactly when the ivory was poached, there was evidence some had been taken in the past few months, but some could also be older stockpiles, perhaps unable to be exported due to the Covid lockdowns," said Mander.

In addition to the elephant tusks, in January, three live pangolins, which were listed as a vulnerable species, were recovered.

Five weapons have also been recovered this year as well as five animal skins (two kudu, one leopard, one lion and a crocodile), nine pairs of fake rhino horn and in a narcotics operation, cannabis and whole plants seized. During the first three months of 2021, through the IAPF's investigations work, 58 poachers were arrested.

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