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War on Rhino Poaching in Kruger: 4 Arrests, 1 Fatality, 1

Rhino Killed, 1 Suspect Sentenced to 19 Years

By

SAPeople

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4 suspected rhino poachers were arrested over the weekend. Photo: iStockPhoto

Four suspected rhino poachers were arrested over the weekend (15-18 October) in the Kruger National Park, thanks to the brave efforts of members of the Rangers Corp, assisted by the K9 Unit and the Aviators of the Airwing. The arrests – as well as one fatality – took place in the Stolznek section of the Park, South African National Parks (SANParks) said in an announcement today.

The first incident happened on Friday (15 Oct). Rangers followed up on a spoor and startled the suspected poachers who were sitting under a tree. Their attempt to flee was thwarted as rangers quickly rounded up and successfully apprehended them.

A high calibre hunting rifle, ammunition and poaching equipment were seized at the scene. The suspects will appear in court in due course while investigations continue.

The second incident was on Saturday (16 Oct). Rangers followed up after hearing gunshots, and stumbled upon two suspected poachers. One of the suspects, who had a rifle, was fatally wounded during the altercation; whilst the second managed to evade arrest.

The suspects had killed a rhino, hacked off its horns

A backpack with two rhino horns was recovered next to the body of the suspect as well as a high calibre rifle and poaching equipment. Sadly, the suspected poachers had already killed a rhino.

The carcass of a male black rhino was found nearby, indicating that the horns in the backpack had been hacked from this particular animal.

19 years for poacher who killed and dehorned a rhino

Meanwhile the [Skukuza Regional Court](#) sentenced rhino poaching suspect Simon Lubisi to an effective 19 years in custody for killing and dehorning a rhino in 2014.

Lubisi had been arrested in the Crocodile Bridge Section together with three co-accused while busy dehorning the rhino. One suspect was fatally wounded when he shot at the Rangers and the three accused were apprehended and granted bail upon their appearance before a Magistrate.

They all absconded but fortunately Lubisi was arrested again in the Park and stood trial, resulting in the conviction and sentencing on Thursday, 14 October 2021.

Anti-poaching and prosecuting teams commended

Kruger's Managing Executive, Gareth Coleman, congratulated the anti-poaching teams for their weekend success and the prosecuting team on the conviction and sentencing of Lubisi. "We are saddened to have lost a rhino over the weekend but are encouraged by the brave actions of our multi-disciplinary anti-poaching teams who successfully took out two rifles from the system and apprehended suspects who are now in custody.

"We also appreciate the heavy sentences that the Skukuza Regional court have been handing down recently, it gives motivation to all those who work tirelessly to arrest the suspects found in the park. The kingpins are still out there and we hope they get arrested soon to face the might of the law for their criminality," said Coleman.

Latest rhino poaching stats at Kruger National Park

For the latest report period, Jul – 28 Sept 2021, there has been:

- an increase of 29.41% in the number of poachers arrested (22) as compared to (17) for the same period in 2020.
- an increase of 85.71% in the number of poacher firearms recovered (13) as compared to (7) for the same period in 2020.

The KNP Management says it is confident of getting on top of the situation with all the security updates that have been put into commission.

WATCH Award-winning STROOP rhino documentary

Stroop, Journey into the Rhino War is a gripping and award-winning documentary which looks at the slaughter of the world's diminishing rhino population. It examines the heroic efforts being made to stop poachers, and looks at the seedy underworld that buys rhino horn from locals in SA to crime syndicates parts of Asia like China and Vietnam. Watch [STROOP on Showmax](#) now (**also available [internationally](#)** in most countries except North America).