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The suspects were found with 1.3 kilograms of ivory pieces, 14 warthog teeth, 19 pieces of sperm whale teeth, four ivory carvings, two hippo teeth, 47 ivory chopsticks and 15 elephant tusks with a street value of approximately R400 000. Picture: Supplied/Hawks

## **Two suspects arrested in posh Zimbali Eco Estate for dealing in elephant tusks**

By Thobeka Ngema 42m ago

DURBAN - Two suspects were arrested in the posh Zimbali Eco Estate, on the north coast of KwaZulu-Natal, for dealing in elephant tusks.

Hawks spokesperson Captain Simphiwe Mhlongo said on Tuesday Hawks members from Port Shepstone serious organised crime investigation unit assisted by crime intelligence arrested two suspects aged 27 and 57 for possession and dealing in elephant tusks.

Mhlongo said it is alleged that members received information about suspects who were selling elephant tusks. An undercover operation was conducted at Zimbali Eco Estate and members swooped in on the suspects' residence.

“Upon searching the premises, members found 1.3 kilograms of ivory pieces, 14 warthog teeth, 19 pieces of sperm whale teeth, four ivory carvings, two hippo teeth, 47 ivory chopsticks and 15 elephant tusks with a street value of about R400 000,” Mhlongo said.

He said the suspects were arrested and charged accordingly.

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Mhlongo said the suspects were expected in the KwaDukuza Magistrate's Court on Wednesday.

However, Mhlongo could not be reached by the time of publication for information on the outcome of the appearance.

Earlier this year, a presentation on the poaching of South Africa's biodiversity by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) revealed that while elephant populations in many other African countries have been hit hard as a result of poaching, SA has managed to effectively combat the threat.

DFFE said it was difficult to trace poachers once they were outside of the Kruger National Park.

Under the illegal trade in elephant ivory, DFFE said between 2015 and 2019, 72 products, tusks or pieces of ivory were seized.

DFFE said the highest sentence for cases which were successfully prosecuted was a fine of R100 000 or six years imprisonment of which half was suspended for five years on conditions.

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