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[TRAVEL](#)

[SPORT](#)

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Rhino Poacher in Kruger Park Handed 53 Years Jail Sentence

By

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Rhino poaching South Africa. Photo: Pixabay

South African National Parks (SANParks) today, 19 March 2022, welcomed the sentence meted out by the Skukuza Regional Court to a man convicted on 12 counts associated with poaching. The accused, Mike Nyathi, a 39 year old Mozambican man with a South African citizenship, faced 14 charges relating to two separate cases of rhino poaching.

He was first arrested on 17 September 2017 by Rangers in the Kingfisherspruit Section of the Kruger National Park after a limping rhino, which had been shot by the accused and later died from its injuries, was found by Rangers following the spoor of the accused and his accomplice.

Both the accused and co-accused were found hiding not far from the injured rhino. They were arrested and given bail but both failed to appear in court and absconded. Nyathi's co-accused is still at large.

On 13 May 2019, Satara Rangers noticed a spoor of suspected poachers which they followed. They first found a high calibre rifle which had been dropped by the fleeing suspects and found the suspect Mike Nyathi hiding nearby. He was detained and handed over to the South African Police Services (SAPS) for processing.

During the police investigations it was found that he was wanted in connection with the 2017 incident and both cases were combined for trial. The court found him guilty on 12 of the 14 charges he was facing and sentenced him to 53 years imprisonment in total but he will only serve 23 years as some of the sentences will run concurrently as per the judgement.

Some of the charges included trespassing (3 years), illegal possession of firearm (6 years), possession of firearm (6), killing of an endangered species (10 years), possession of a dangerous weapon (1 year) and conspiracy to commit a crime (5 years), amongst others.

The Managing Executive of the Kruger National Park (KNP), Gareth Coleman commended the Rangers, National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and the SAPS for a job well done.