



NEWS SOUTH AFRICA GAUTENG

The Tembisa Regional Court has sentenced 49-year-old Ping Wu to five years direct imprisonment for money laundering linked to illegal rhino horn trading. Photo: Supplied/Hawks

Woman sentenced to five years in jail for money laundering linked to illegal rhino horn trade

By [Jonisayi Maromo](#) 7h ago

Pretoria - The Tembisa Regional Court has convicted and sentenced 49-year-old Ping Wu to five years direct imprisonment for money laundering.

Spokesperson for the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks), Captain Dineo Lucy Sekgotodi, said in April 2019, the Hawks serious organised crime investigation team based in Middelburg registered an undercover investigation into allegations of illegal trade in rhino horn.

“The scope of the project was to address a syndicate in Gauteng who were illegally dealing in rhino horns,” said Sekgotodi.

“On 23 July 2019, a search and seizure operation was conducted at Emperors Palace, in Kempton Park. Ping Wu facilitated various money laundering transactions. These included carrying large sums of banknotes into the casino after a rhino horn deal was done.”

She was arrested and detained in custody since August 2019 after her bail bid was successfully opposed.

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Meanwhile, the provincial head of the Hawks in Mpumalanga, Major General Zodwa Mokoena, has applauded the investigating team and the judiciary for the successful conviction.

Last month, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Barbara Creecy announced the quotas for the trophy hunting of black rhino, leopard and elephant in South Africa for 2022.

In a statement, Creecy said the 2022 quotas for the hunting and export of trophies from these three species is a deferral of the 2021 allocation, which was determined after the end of the hunting season. The deferral grants stakeholders the opportunity to make use of the 2021 quota in 2022. Consultation for the 2023 quota will take place during the course of this year.

“The quota for leopard has been set at 10 animals and is informed by robust data generated through a sophisticated national leopard monitoring programme. Leopard hunts will only be allowed in areas where leopard populations are stable or increasing, and only male leopards seven years of age or older may be hunted. Implementing a strict seven-year age minimum for trophy leopards dramatically reduces the risk of over-harvesting,” Creecy said.

She said a total of 10 black rhino could be hunted and 150 elephants. Only adult male black rhinos will be hunted, and only on conservation management grounds in accordance with a set of strict criteria to ensure that demographic and/or genetic conservation is enhanced (as stipulated in the black rhinoceros Biodiversity Management Plan).

The quota for black rhino is based on the national population estimates for black rhino per subspecies, all three of which show an increasing trend at present. Only a very small portion of the overall elephant population is hunted in a year – less than 80 elephant bulls, which is less than 0.3% of the total population.

South Africa's national elephant herd shows an increasing trend, and the authorities said the quota of 150 is well within sustainable limits.

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