

Our Viewpoint | KZN must take action against poaching

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OPINION:

KwaZulu-Natal is slowly turning into a poachers' paradise with everything from rhinos to pangolins and even warthogs butchered in different parts of the province. A recent parliamentary response by the KZN department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (Edtea) revealed that while 97 rhinos were poached in the province in 2021, a startling 61 rhinos were killed between January 1 and March 25 this year. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife blames budget constraints for the inadequate resources to curb this scourge.

READ | [KZN Wildlife in crisis as 60 rhinos poached in 3 months](#)

While the killing of rhinos often grabs national headlines, the poaching of the other endangered species in smaller nature reserves, such as Karkloof and Bisley reserves, rarely grabs the attention of the authorities, leaving the illegal hunters and other poaching syndicates to prey on these animals. KZN farmers, as well as the conservation groups like Snare Aware and Friends of Bisley Nature Reserve are doing their best to try and protect these living treasures, but they cannot win the battle if the government does not start channelling substantial investment towards the protection of South Africa's wildlife.

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The laws on animal conservation and hunting are already in place, but there has been a glaring lack of enforcement because many government leaders still do not view poaching as a threat to the country's heritage. With the police already grappling with the high crime rate, the fight against poaching must be led by rangers' need to be equipped with vehicles, rifles, drones and tracking devices. They can also be supported by local security companies.

The approach to poaching must be changed, and should be treated as a societal problem rather than just as a conservation issue. This must include public activation campaigns where communities living around nature reserves are brought in to be part of the wildlife protection strategies. The private sector can also sponsor incentives for information that lead to the arrest and prosecution of leaders of poaching syndicates. Time is running out to save the endangered wildlife that is being poached to the brink of extinction.

If we don't act now, future generations will never see animals like the oribi, and that would be a grave injustice.