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Rhino poaching update shows KwaZulu-Natal now target of choice

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Forestry, Fisheries and Environment

Minister Barbara Creecy.

Nationally South Africa lost 259 rhino in the first six months of this year – 10 more than in the corresponding period last year – with concern expressed about the amount of poaching in KwaZulu-Natal and private game reserves.

Forestry, Fisheries and Environment Minister Barbara Creecy maintains the “trend” away from what has long been poacher target number one – the Kruger National Park – makes it “important for national government to shift its focus to supporting provincial authorities and private reserves in the war on rhino poaching”.

A Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) statement issued on Monday, a day after World Ranger Day (31 July) gives the rhino poaching tally for the first six months of the year. The statement, attributable to DFFE spokesman Albi Modise, is the first

official rhino poaching one of the year and a far cry from previous ministers Edna Molewa, with monthly statistics and Nomvula Mokonyane regressing to quarterly updates.

More than half the rhino poached – 133 – between January and end June were shot in KwaZulu-Natal, with no indication of numbers lost in provincial game reserves such as Hluhluwe-IMfolozi and others managed by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. This is more than three times the number of rhino poached in the province in the first six months of last year. Forty-nine rhino were killed on private game farms and reserves.

On the credit side of the ledger, Creecy reports 69 arrests in connection with rhino poaching and rhino horn trafficking in the first six months of 2022. Thirteen of these are apparently poachers arrested in the Kruger National Park.

Elaborating on the work done by rangers, the statement has Creecy saying it changed “from a general focus on conservation of species to a more militant way of operating against well-armed criminal gangs entering national parks, private and state-owned conservation areas to poaching rhino, elephant and other species”.