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Rhino poaching rises in Namibia as population falls in South Africa

Bloomberg NEWS

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Poachers have increasingly targeted rhinos in Namibia.
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The number of rhinos being poached in Namibia, home to the world's second-biggest population of the animals, is surging with the government and environmental non-profits suspecting that international syndicates are shifting their focus from South Africa.

In the 12 months to the end of August, 74 rhinos were killed illegally, compared with just 16 in the first eight months of 2021, according to government statistics.

"The main concern is that South African gangs are moving here, there is quite a bit of sophistication in their ways," Jaco Muller, the chairman of non-profit Help Our Rhinos Now, said in an interview. "They hit five properties in about two weeks."

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The rhino population in neighbouring South Africa has been decimated over the past decade with gangs of poachers killing thousands of the animals to satisfy demand from East Asia where ground up rhino horns are believed to increase virility and cure diseases such as cancer.

The South African government has partnered with the private sector in rhino conservation. According to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, rhinos on private sector land have grown from 30% in 2012 to 60% currently.

"Our rhinos are declining drastically, the demand for horns is high," said Romeo Muyunda, a spokesman for Namibia's environment ministry. "There are dynamics in poaching activities, they are always changing."

Namibia is home to about 6 000 of the animals, with most of those being the more common white rhinos. Globally there are just over 26 000 rhinos of all species, a 3.7% decline from 2017, according to Save The Rhino.

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