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Activists raise alarm over spike in rhino poaching cases since Covid restrictions lifted



Concerns over rising poaching cases. Picture: Armand Hough/African News Agency (ANA)

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Cape Town - [Anti-rhino poaching activist](#) Wayne Bolton has called for stronger collaborative action from the government amid concern over rising rhino poaching cases.

According to Bolton, rhino poaching across Africa saw a significant decrease during strict Covid-19 lockdowns, but as the restrictions loosened, poachers intensified their onslaught on the species, with South Africa being hardest hit.

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Speaking to eNCA, Bolton said the [fight against rhino poaching](#) has seen poaching figures increase. He said there were 259 poached animals since June this year, equalling 2019 figures before Covid.

“One would expect a dramatic decrease, you’ve got a place like Kruger National Park that is sitting with 75% fewer white rhinos than they had 10 years ago and 51% fewer black rhinos, so we are in serious trouble as far as rhino conservation is concerned,” he said.

Bolton also said they wished more could be done to prevent rhino poaching in terms of government interventions, as they are the custodians of natural heritage.

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"The government has been working on this for many years and the animals are really in serious decline based on what we have seen in the Kruger National Park, which holds 30% of the world's rhino.

"They will be extinct in the Kruger in the next four years unless something is done by the government and it takes the lead.

"We need drastic measures now and we are at a critical point unless the government gets fully involved and pumps more funding into state reserves and private reserves, because we are at that point where we will see these animals extinct," he said.

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He added that there's a need for decisive action, like moving rhinos out of the vulnerable areas into safe areas or sanctuaries where they can be kept safe, or dehorning projects to support private reserves that are doing exceptionally well in conservation.

"At this stage there's a lot of talk but nothing really is happening," he added.

Bolton highlighted that they are [fighting a war that is costing a lot of money](#) and one of the immediate things they can do to save these rhinos is to dehorn them and it is very costly.

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