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[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[NEWSROOM](#)[SERVICES](#)[DOCUMENTS](#)[JOBS](#)

[Home](#) » [Newsroom](#) » [Media Statements](#)

Minister Barbara Creecy on fight against rhino poaching in national parks

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Relentless pressure forces rhino poachers to abandon national parks in 2022, says Creecy

South Africa's relentless fight against rhino poaching in the Kruger Park and other national parks saw a decline in poaching numbers across the country.

In 2022, 124 rhino were killed in the Kruger National Park. No rhino were poached in any other national park. The number of rhino poached in the Kruger National Park represents a 40% decrease compared with those killed for their horn 2021.

Unfortunately the poaching threat has shifted to KwaZulu-Natal, which lost 244 rhino to poaching last year. Of these, 228 were killed in provincial parks and 16 in privately owned reserves. The Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park was specifically targeted.

In total across the country private rhino owners lost 86 rhino. The number of rhino killed in the past year represents a slight decline (of 3) compared to the 451 rhino poached in South Africa in 2021.

"The steady decline in rhino poaching in national parks is related to the relentless war that has been waged by our fearsome anti-poaching machinery as well as a comprehensive dehorning programme." Said Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Barbara Creecy.

“This year’s outcome shows that collaboration between conservation authorities, the South African Police Services, revenue authorities and international agencies works,” the minister added.

“We believe that if provincial authorities in KwaZulu-Natal follow our model, they will be able to significantly curb rhino poaching in their provincial parks before it is too late,” said Minister Creecy.

In 2022 a number of successful arrests and prosecutions were recorded, adding weight to the integrated work of the law enforcement agencies, including the SAPS, Hawks, SANParks, Environmental Enforcement Fusion Centre, the Environmental Management Inspectorate or Green Scorpions, customs officials, provincial park authorities, and the National Prosecuting Authority.

A total of 132 arrests were effected during 2022 for rhino poaching: 23 in the Skukuza area in Mpumalanga, 49 in KwaZulu-Natal and the balance in Limpopo.

The recent focus on money laundering and international co-operation with other law enforcement authorities saw the arrest of 26 rhino horn traffickers and 13 people for money laundering and bribing of rangers.

To support anti-poaching efforts in KwaZulu-Natal, special interventions were introduced in collaboration with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), non-governmental organizations and the South African Police Service (SAPS) which resulted in four key arrests of syndicate members who were focusing their illegal efforts in KwaZulu-Natal. These agencies will continue to collaborate this year.

The work of the Department’s Environmental Enforcement Fusion Centre (EEFC) enables authorities to track information pertaining to wildlife crime at a national level and understand trends and changing modus operandi while supporting the investigative and tactical teams.

During 2022, the NPA in collaboration with the DFFE established a Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Environmental Working Group. The purpose of this group is to foster closer collaboration between the provinces working on wildlife trafficking cases and helps identify repeat offenders moving around the country.

As part of continued efforts to ensure the survival of the rhino species, SANParks, is in the process of identifying suitable safe habitat across South Africa for the introduction of new rhino communities.

****** Members of the public can report any suspicious activities around wildlife to its environmental crime hotline which is 0800 205 005 or the SAPS number 10111

To access a recording of Minister Creecy's statement, click below:

The audio:

https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/media/creecy_2023feb.rhinoupdate.m4a

The video:

https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/media/creecy_2023feb.rhinoupdate.mp4

For media inquiries contact Albi Modise on 083 490 2871

EDITOR'S NOTE: The provincial and national breakdown for 2022 (in comparison to 2021 and 2020) is as follows:

PROVINCES AND NATIONAL PARKS	2020	2021	2022
SANParks	247	209	124
Gauteng	2	2	2
Limpopo	18	38	25
Mpumalanga	13	39	21
North West	19	32	24
Eastern Cape	0	0	0
Free State	1	24	4
Northern Cape	1	1	4
Kwa-Zulu Natal	93	102	244
Western Cape	0	4	0