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Slight decline in rhino poaching in South Africa



In 2022, 124 rhinos were killed in the Kruger National Park. File Picture: Armand Hough/African News Agency (ANA)

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Durban — The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DFFE) has reported that relentless pressure has forced rhino poachers to abandon parks in 2022.

That was according to DFFE Minister Barbara Creecy, who said that 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.

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

However, she said that the poaching threat moved to KwaZulu-Natal, which lost 244 rhinos 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 rhinos. The number of rhinos killed in the past year represents a slight decline (of 3) compared to the 451 rhinos poached in South Africa in 2021.

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“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 de-horning programme,” Creecy said.

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

“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,” Creecy said.

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The DFFE said that 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 for rhino poaching were affected during 2022 - 23 in the Skukuza area in Mpumalanga, 49 in KwaZulu-Natal and the balance in Limpopo.

It said that the recent focus on money laundering and international cooperation with other law enforcement authorities saw the arrest of 26 rhino horn traffickers and 13 people for money laundering and bribing of rangers.

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“To support anti-poaching efforts in KwaZulu-Natal, special interventions were introduced in collaboration with the DFFE, non-governmental organisations 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 DFFE said.

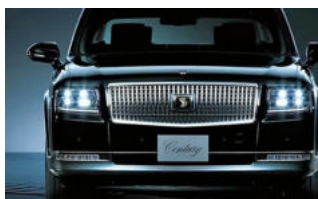
It said that the work of the department’s Environmental Enforcement Fusion Centre enables authorities to track information pertaining to wildlife crime at a national level and understand trends and changing modus operandi while supporting the investigative and tactical teams.

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

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DFFE said that as part of continued efforts to ensure the survival of the rhino species, SANParks is in the process of identifying suitable safe habitats across South Africa for the introduction of new rhino communities.

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

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