



CAPETIMES NEWS

## WWF concerned about transnational organised crime targeting iconic rhinos



WWF notes decline of 124 rhino killed compared to 2021 but says transnational organised crime networks targeting large conservation areas remain a serious concern. File Picture: Armand Hough/African News Agency (ANA)

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### Cape Town - The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) says the transnational organised crime networks targeting large conservation areas across Southern Africa remain a serious concern.

The WWF was reacting to the 2022 rhino poaching statistics which saw a 40% decline compared to 2021 in the Kruger Park and other national parks across the country.

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The poaching threat has shifted to KwaZulu-Natal, which lost 244 rhino to poaching last year. Of these, 228 were killed in provincial parks, with the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park specifically targeted.

Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Minister Barbara Creecy attributed the decline in poaching statistics to the department's anti-poaching machinery as well as a comprehensive de-horning programme.

"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," she said.

A total of 132 arrests were made during 2022 for rhino poaching.

WWF Africa Rhino lead, Dr Jo Shaw said transparency and regular communication were vital to understand the threats, and the best solutions to conserve them.

“Over the last year, several positive security interventions have been proven in disrupting wildlife criminals including de-horning programmes, multi-agency law enforcement collaborations including financial investigations and efforts to build ranger morale and integrity.

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“However, the transnational organised crime networks targeting large conservation areas and important rhino populations across southern Africa remain a serious concern.

“At the same time as targeting the criminals involved in wildlife trafficking, we must continue our parallel platforms of rhino population management to grow numbers as quickly as possible and building relationships with communities around protected areas for the long-term benefits of people and nature,” said Shaw.

Cape Times

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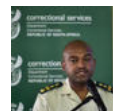
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