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231 rhinos killed in South Africa since January

1 August 2023, 4:17 PM |  Pearl Magubane | [@SABCNews](#)



Image: Reuters

Rhino eyes covered at a reserve

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment says 231 rhinos have been killed thus far this year in South Africa. This figure is from 1 January to 30 June 2023.

The department briefed the media at the [SANParks](#) head office in Pretoria.

A constant target for their horn, the large endangered species faces death daily in various nature reserves across the country.

The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, Barbara Creecy says this is a slight decline from the same period last year.

“These figures represent an 11% decrease, a decline of 28 animals killed for their horn compared to the same period last year. Poaching trends also continued to show a move away from the Kruger National Park to provincial and private reserves. 42 rhinos were poached in the Kruger National Park and 143 in KwaZulu-Natal Province from January to June 2023. Unfortunately, rhino poachers have continued to target the Hluhluwe/uMfolozi game reserve in KwaZulu-Natal where Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, supported by the Department and iSimangaliso Wetland Park, continues to implement a number of measures to combat rhino poaching.”

As the demand for rhino horn continues, Creecy says they have tightened efforts to counter poaching.

“In order to effectively address the organised nature of rhino poaching and wildlife trafficking, is Cabinet's recent approval in May this year of the National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking (NISCWT). This strategy aims to break the illicit value chain of wildlife trafficking in South Africa and beyond its borders. It represents a commitment by government to direct law enforcement ability and effort and mobilise society support to address the threat wildlife tracking poses to national security and the country's rich biodiversity. Although currently our main focus is rhino, the strategy also aims to address the illegal trade in, and poaching of, other species that are threatened by trafficking syndicates, like abalone.”

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Integrity Management Plan

In rooting out collusion between ranger services and criminal syndicates, the Kruger National Park has developed a holistic Ranger Services – Integrity Management Plan.

Some rangers have been nabbed for being part of the crime syndicate, as SANParks CEO Hapiloe Sello explains.

“It's a minority of rangers that are colluding with corruption and there are material things that motivate them. Most of them live in communities with the criminals and they take bribes and they are threatened. So, we try and strengthen their morale so they don't fall into the trap.”

SANParks has also established a polygraph system for new recruits and to support anti-corruption investigations.

In the first six months of this year 31 people have been convicted for rhino poaching.

Kruger National Park bolsters anti-rhino poaching measures 15 February 2022:

