

Getaway

SANParks records a 78% decrease in Rhino poaching

Posted on 4 September 2023 By Tsoku Maela



Building on last year's donation of four Bat Hawk surveillance aircraft to South African National Parks (SANParks) to aid surveillance, conservation and anti-poaching efforts in the Kruger National Park, Anglo American Platinum this morning donated another Bat Hawk that will be going to SANParks' Addo Elephant National Park in the Eastern Cape. In addition, a Bat Hawk aircraft will be donated to Mapungubwe National Park, which is located on the border of South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe.

Picture: Supplied

The Kruger National Park's experience with the four Bat Hawks Anglo American Platinum donated last year has been positive.

- For instance, this time last year, the Malelane section of the Kruger National Park had lost 23 rhinos to poaching. As of today, the number has decreased to 5 rhinos since January this year.
- Beyond this, the Bat Hawks have further contributed with ongoing research in the park. They are equipped with repeaters that pick up the tracking signals of animals that roam where there is no cell phone coverage. This signal is then relayed to the various research stations.
- Furthermore, they have been used in locating wounded or snared animals that require medical attention, identifying the entry points that poachers use, providing aerial visible policing, as well as water point and soil erosion monitoring in the park.

Anglo American Platinum strengthens collaboration with SANParks through additional Bat Hawk light aircraft donations

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Speaking at the event to hand over the aircraft to Addo Elephant Park, Anglo American Platinum's executive head of projects Prakashim Moodliar said, "I am pleased that our relationship with SANParks is growing from strength to strength with this donation. The Bat Hawks we have donated to Kruger National Park has been put to great use, assisting the SANParks team with rhino dehorning work, ongoing research, aerial visible policing, and water point and soil erosion monitoring. This work speaks directly to the healthy environment pillar of our Sustainable Mining Plan and our ambition to have a net positive biodiversity impact – an ambition we can only achieve in partnership with key stakeholders such as SANParks.

Addo Elephant National Park, which spans over 293,000 hectares, is home to one of the densest populations of African elephants in the world and is the only park in the world that can lay claim to the Big 7 (Elephant, Rhino, Buffalo, Lion, Leopard, Southern right whale and the Great white shark in the Addo Marine Protected Area). The Bat Hawk aircraft, which is assembled in Nelspruit, presents an affordable and safer alternative to helicopters and will go a long way in assisting with the Park's conservation objectives. Other benefits of the aircraft include the cockpit's great visibility, even during adverse weather conditions, and their light undercarriage, which can easily manoeuvre through bush terrain.

SANParks Managing Executive of Parks, Property Mokoena said: 'We are immensely grateful to Anglo American Platinum for yet another donation to SANParks and to Addo Elephant National Park and Mapungubwe National Park. They join a number of other international and local corporations and individuals who work with SANParks to conserve and protect our natural and cultural heritage and our threatened species. These Bat Hawk aircraft will go a long way in being a visual deterrent to would-be poachers. These ultra-light aircraft will also assist us in carrying out aerial patrols as well as monitoring and effectively managing the environment, not just over our terrestrial footprint, but over the Addo Marine Protected Area as well. We wish to thank Anglo American Platinum for their faith in us yet again to put their donated equipment to good use in the protection of our country's rich and varied biodiversity.'