

Crackdown on poaching: Joint operation leads to arrest of 2 known suspects

Signal Hill/Lions Head robbers arrested by park rangers, K9 unit and cyclists. Park urges visitors to be vigilant and report crime.



A joint operation has resulted in the arrest of two known criminals with connections to multiple robbery cases in the Signal Hill and Lions Head area, after the suspects were tracked by Table Mountain National Park's (TMNP) Sea, Air and Mountain (Seam) team with canines and the help of vigilant cyclists who pursued the suspects.

Other organisations taking part in the operation were South African National Parks (SAN Parks), South African Police Service and the City of Cape Town law enforcement tourism unit.

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“Following the surge in criminal activities, specifically along Lions Head and Signal Hill, TMNP recognises the potential for crime displacement when allocating additional resources focused on specific zones,” said SANParks Cape Region spokesperson Lauren Howard-Clayton.

“To counter this, the Seam team executes targeted special operations. These initiatives combat crimes against visitors and environmental crime such as abalone [poaching](#) and bark stripping.

“These operations hinge on information shared with and analysed by the Seam operations room.”

Howard-Clayton said while SANParks fully supported the freedom of visitors to explore and enjoy the park, “we strongly urge all park [visitors] to actively engage in efforts aimed at curtailing criminal activities”.

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Park users are urged to travel in groups, avoid night-time activities in the park and report any suspicious behaviour immediately. Survivors of crime are urged to open a case at their nearest police station in order to assist in building up evidence against repeat offenders.

Meanwhile, SANParks has congratulated the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) in Mpumalanga, after the Skukuza Regional Court convicted and sentenced a rhino poacher on various charges.

Friday Ngoveni was arrested in 2017 in the Stolznek section of the [Kruger National Park \(KNP\)](#). He was found in possession of a 458-calibre hunting rifle, ammunition, and an axe,” said KNP spokesperson Ike Phaahla.

“He and his co-accused successfully applied for bail and never returned for their trial on the appointed day. A warrant of arrest was then authorised.”

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Ngoveni was arrested earlier this year and appeared in the Skukuza Regionald Court yesterday, where he was handed the following sentences after pleading guilty:

- Trespassing in a national park – two years' imprisonment;
- Possession of a prohibited illegal firearm – six years' imprisonment;
- Conspiracy to commit a crime – four years' imprisonment;
- Possession of unlicensed ammunition – two years' imprisonment; and
- Possession of a dangerous weapon – one year imprisonment.

ALSO READ: [No improvement: Rhino population struggles to recover from poaching](#)

Ngoveni was also declared unfit to possess a firearm in terms of Section 103 of Act 60 of 2000. Oscar Mthimkhulu, the managing executive of the KNP, said the continuous successful prosecution and sentencing of poachers was a boost to morale of the hard-working men and women of the Rangers Corps.

“They patrol the bush, day and night chasing after criminals to protect our natural heritage. We are grateful to the NPA for compiling a foolproof docket and the court for imposing the sentence,” said Mthimkhulu.

“We hope other criminals will learn from this experience as we have eyes and ears everywhere. We will catch them and ensure they are put behind bars for a very long time.”