

Two found guilty of poisoning lions in Queen Elizabeth National Park

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Africa-Press – Uganda. Court in Kampala has convicted two men who were arrested last year in connection with poisoning six lions in Queen Elizabeth National Park in Kanungu District.

The convicts; Vincent Tumuhiirwe and Robert Ariyo were convicted after the court heard evidence from 14 witnesses who pinned them over the killing of wild animals and being in unlawful possession of a three-litre jerrycan of lion fats.

The two who have been standing trial on five wildlife-related offences since March last year before the Standards, Utilities and Wildlife Court sitting at Buganda Road were also convicted in regards to killing 10 vultures and for hunting a kob without a licence.

Chief magistrate Gladys Kamasanyu found the duo guilty of entering a wild conservation area, killing wild animals and being in possession of protected species.

While convicting them, Ms Kamasanyu concurred with the prosecution's evidence that upon their arrest, the duo led the team to the place where the remains of the animals were buried.

“Unless Tuhuhiirwe and Ariyo were the lion killers, there is no way they would know the crime scene, have in their possession lion body parts and the same poisonous pesticide

which was found in the liver, heart and stomach of the dead lions after postmortem,” she reasoned.

The prosecution led by Ms Joan Keko asked the court to give the duo a deterrent custodial sentence reasoning that the killed lions bring in an estimated revenue of more than Shs795 million from tourism thus killing them was a selfish act at the expense of the national economy.

The prosecution said that between March 17 and 19, 2021 the convicts illegally entered Habugombwa Kob Mating Ground, Ishasha Sector in Queen Elizabeth National Park, Kanungu District. They allegedly hunted and killed six climbing lions and 10 white vultures through poisoning.

According to the prosecution, the suspects were found in possession of four heads of lions, fifteen legs of lions, one tail of a lion, fifteen paws, a three-litre jerrycan of lion fats and an agricultural pesticide which is harmful to animals, without a valid wildlife use right.

The court relied on circumstantial and pictorial evidence from the prosecution witnesses including police officers, game rangers, waders, laboratory attendants and the scenes of crime officers.

Court set August 30 for sentencing.

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