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Anti-poaching initiatives pay dividends

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arare - Anti-poaching initiatives instituted by Zimbabwe are bearing fruits as the country recorded a 78 percent decline in rhino poaching incidents in the first six months of 2020 compared to same period last year.

Statistics from the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) show that four rhinos were poached from January to June 2020. The figure for January-June 2019 was 19.

“Zimbabwe has a zero-tolerance stance against poaching and only the daring ones that do not care if they lose their lives proceed on their trip of doom to plunder our vulnerable wildlife resources.

“We recorded a decrease in the number of rhinos poached between the first six months of 2020 when compared to the same period in 2019. Nineteen rhinos were poached in the first half of 2019 and only four have been poached from January to June 2020,” ZimParks said.

The parks authority said it had put in place several measures to curb poaching, including intelligence-led strategic deployments, aerial surveillance to compliment ground patrols, strengthening informer networks at local and regional level, and making use of patrol and tracking dogs.

Drones are being used to widen monitoring and joint patrols with law enforcement agencies have also been credited with the decrease in poaching.

Zimbabwe’s Bvumba Valley registered 13,8 percent growth in the black population in the first half of 2020.

Mr Langton Masunda, a conservationist based in Matabeleland North Province, said anti-poaching activities required more resources than were presently available.

“Funds to protect the Amazon forest come from the international community because forests benefit everyone. The same should happen with the protection of wildlife in Africa,” Mr Masunda said.

The Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust says Africa’s black rhino population has seen a small increase to 5,630 from 5,500 in 2019. The white rhino population is estimated at around 18,000.

However, the rhino population is still far below the 65,000 black rhinos recorded in 1970.