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Dehorning target yields results

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DESPITE a new syndicate targeting dehorned rhinos at Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP) threatening to derail the war against poaching, ongoing efforts are yielding positive results.

Despite a significant decrease in rhino poaching figures across the country, KZN remains a hot spot – losing 232 rhinos last year.

This is, however, a notable decline from the 325 lost in 2023.

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poaching incidents in HiP’.

This is according to Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Minister Dr Dion George, who released the latest figures last week.

“The significant reduction can largely be attributed to the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife dehorning programme implemented in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park from April to October 2024.

“The World Wide Fund for Nature-funded programme had an immediate impact, with monthly poaching numbers dropping from 35 in April to fewer than 10 per month between May and September,” said the minister.

“In October, however, poaching syndicates adapted their tactics and began targeting dehorned rhinos, leading to a sudden spike in incidents in HiP, with the province losing 27 rhinos in that month alone.”

George commended the swift action of the provincial anti-poaching team that intercepted the new syndicate, preventing further losses.

“The considerable efforts resulted in the province ultimately achieving a 67% decline in rhino poaching over the eight months,” said George.

Overall, the country lost a total of 420 rhinos last year; 320 on State properties and 100 on privately-owned parks, reserves or farms.

This was a decrease of 79 on 2023’s total of 499. There are, however, several initiatives being undertaken to counter the threats in hot spot areas.

In welcoming the decline in poaching figures, Save the Rhino CEO Dr Jo Shaw said, although dehorning alone is insufficient to protect rhino populations, ‘this initiative combined with other efforts has been crucial in achieving a poaching decline of nearly 30% in KZN’.


“Organised crime remains a serious threat to rhinos, other wildlife, and the people who protect and live alongside them.

Syndicates continually adapt their tactics and areas of focus, and co-ordination is key to ensure we can get ahead.

“We must keep up the pressure to protect rhinos and derail the organised crime cartels profiting from this crisis,” said Dr Shaw.



Rhino poaching remains a major concern in KZN

 Dave Savides