

Mokonyane reports progress made on curbing rhino poaching

Minister of Environmental Affairs Nomvula Mokonyane has shared the department's results following the implementation of the Integrated Strategic Management of Rhinoceros Approach covering the period 1 January to 31 December 2018.



© Marietjie Opperman – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

2018 recorded a decrease in rhino poaching incidents to 769, making it the third consecutive year that South Africa has seen a decline in rhino poaching, particularly in the national parks. This is a decrease of 259 rhino compared to 2017 when 1,028 rhino were killed for their horns. It is also the first time in five years that the annual figure is under 1000.

The Integrated Strategic Management of Rhinoceros approach was adopted by Cabinet in 2014 and draws together the work of the Department of Environmental Affairs together with the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster Departments and Agencies.

“The decline is not only indicative of the successful implementation of the Integrated Strategic Management of Rhinoceros Approach countrywide, but also a confirmation of the commitment and dedication of the men and women working at the coalface to save the species,” said Mokonyane.

Breakdown of poaching incidents is as follows:

PROVINCES AND NATIONAL PARKS	2017	2018
SANParks	504	422
Gauteng	4	2
Limpopo	79	40
Mpumalanga	49	51
North West	96	65
Eastern Cape	12	19
Free State	38	16
Northern Cape	24	12
KwaZulu-Natal	222	142
Western Cape	0	0
TOTAL	1028	769

A total of 421 rhino were poached in the Kruger National Park, 16.5% less than the 504 poached in 2017, and one was poached at the Marakhele National Park.

“Combating rhino poaching remains a national priority, and as such, all the relevant government departments will continue their close collaboration to ensure that this iconic species is conserved for generations to come. Although we are encouraged by the national poaching figures for 2018, it is critical that we continue to implement collaborative initiatives to address the scourge of rhino poaching,” said the minister.

From 1 January to 31 December 2018, a total of 365 alleged rhino poachers and 36 alleged rhino horn traffickers were arrested nationally. A total of 229 alleged poachers were arrested inside and adjacent to the Kruger National Park, 40 more than the 189 arrested in 2017.

There are currently 318 rhino poaching-related cases on the court roll involving 645 accused and 897 charges. 275 of these cases are trial-ready.

From January to December 2018, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) obtained convictions in 78 of the 82 cases that went to trial. This represents a 95.1% conviction rate. The 78 cases involved 135 accused, all of whom were convicted of rhino poaching and related matters and this translated into sentences of over 500 years imprisonment in respect of these guilty verdicts.

Elephant poaching, however, is also on the increase. A total of 71 elephants were poached in the Kruger National Park between 1 January and 31 December 2018. Specific risk areas have been identified and strategies to address the threat

are being adapted and implemented. One elephant was killed in KwaZulu-Natal which brings the total for South Africa to 72 elephant for 2018.

Government has acknowledged that international cooperation remains a critical component of its overall response strategy (both at a regional and international level) to halt rhino and elephant poaching, and all related wildlife crime.

"As South Africa, we continue to engage countries where rhino horn seizures take place in order to request that samples of the rhino horn DNA be sent to South Africa for analysis in line with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) resolutions. This enables us to link these seized horns to poaching cases and live rhino or rhino horn stockpiles, thus providing key information to further support investigations and understand transit routes."

Report any suspicious activities around wildlife to the environmental crime hotline 0800205005 or the SAPS on 10111.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>