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New approach against poachers pays off

2013-02-03 21:43

Siphiwe Nyathi

Skukuza - Despite the number of rhino poached in the Kruger since the beginning of January, the South African National Parks (SANParks) is happy with the number of arrests made after changing the style of their anti-poaching operations.

Rhino poachers took advantage of the floods that ravaged the Kruger in the past two weeks, braving extreme weather to attack rhino for their horns.

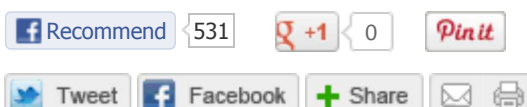
"To date, 57 rhino have been killed by poachers in South Africa, with 42 of these in the Kruger National Park in January alone.

"Of the 18 suspected poachers arrested since 1 January, eleven were arrested in the Kruger National Park and three were fatally wounded," said SANParks spokesperson Wanda Mkutshulwa.

SANParks chief executive officer David Mabunda said the recent spate of poaching was characterised with floods, thick vegetation, two weeks of a full moon and "incursions" of suspected Mozambican poachers.

"We bled in December, but as of 1 January there has been a change in strategy from a conservation management system to greater law enforcement, and this is working. Our operations are more militaristic. The number of poachers arrested has increased inside and outside the Park.

"Despite the floods that have left large parts of the [Kruger] inaccessible to vehicles and rangers on foot, and totally destroyed the camp at Shingwedzi, the area was still being patrolled with the assistance of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft," said Mabunda.



KNP ranger

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