

Ivory and Rhino Horn Smuggling in Africa

Police in Richards Bay, northern Natal, South Africa, have reported a sharp increase in ivory and rhino horn smuggling into the country across the border from Mozambique. Between December 1992 and September 1993, 13 smugglers were arrested and 11 elephant tusks and seven rhino horns were confiscated. According to Lieutenant Stanislav Tuketti of the Richards Bay branch of the South African Narcotics Bureau, "the smuggling of rhino horns and ivory from Mozambique is increasing all the time ... Richards Bay policemen now probably make more of these type of arrests than police anywhere else in Natal." He said that smugglers from Mozambique walk through the bush at night carrying tusks and horns across the border and then use taxis or waiting cars to move them around South Africa.

Mogadishu, in Somalia, has reportedly become a major clearing centre for poached ivory. Gangs of poachers regularly leave the capital on month-long hunting expeditions. With a depleted elephant population in a country devastated by drought and three years of civil war, poachers are believed to be travelling into northern Kenya and returning with their booty through the lightly guarded border. The ivory is then sold to middlemen in Mogadishu who export it to the Far East and Europe; to increase its value, the ivory may also be carved into trinkets and jewellery. Allegedly, several former gamekeepers with the Somali Government's wildlife department have turned to poaching. One, who worked for an anti-poaching group set up in the 1980s, claims he has little choice but to use his skills to earn money in a dishonest way to survive. "There is no law here anymore," he said. "It is easy".

Sunday Times (South Africa), 12 September/7 November 1993



Rhino Poaching in Kruger National Park

The available figures for rhino poaching incidents in Kruger National Park, South Africa, for 1990 to date, are presented below. These figures are provisional as information related to a few incidents is still under investigation.



1 April-31 March:	1990/1991	1
	1991/1992	3
	1992/1993	11
1 April 1993-January:	1994	6

The poaching is attributed to local, South African-based poachers, as well as to incursions from Mozambique. During 1993, game wardens made contact with poachers on two occasions and three poachers were killed. No arrests have been made directly associated with any of these incidents. Four pairs of horns have been recovered over the four-year period: one pair from one of the poachers who was killed, one pair from an animal that had been wounded by poachers and died later, and two pairs from confiscations carried out by South African Police. In only one case was the meat removed by poachers.

The area currently most affected by rhino poaching is between the Crocodile and Sabie rivers, and to a lesser extent between the Letaba and Shingwedzi rivers.

Dr G.A. Robinson, Chief Executive Director, National Parks Board, in litt., 31 January 1994.

Leo in the Descendent in Botswana

A combination of poaching and inadequately controlled hunting for sport trophies is blamed for a steep decline in the number of Lion *Panthera leo* in the Linyanti area of northern Botswana, reports *CatNews* (No. 19, September 1993). Observations over a six-year period by film maker Derek Joubert and his wife show that few hunts are carried out legally with the appropriate licence and in the permitted area. Joubert says that every year over the study period almost all the available pride males were shot along the Linyanti river front and as a result good trophy males are becoming scarce. Female lions are left alone to fend off hyaenas from their kills and this has led to the stability of the pride breaking down and a drop in breeding. Additionally, some male Lions have become habituated to the presence of vehicles, making them easy targets for sport hunters. Buffalo *Syncerus caffer* have also declined as a result of overhunting. Joubert estimates that various safari companies have on occasion shot up to 25% more than their quota if one takes into account those specimens that are wounded but not caught, and which later die.