



SEBAKWE NEWS

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RHINO POACHING ON THE INCREASE

There is a serious and worrying increase in the killing of the black rhino by poachers in Africa. Reports from Kenya are that 11 rhino have been killed at Solio Ranch and that most, possibly all, the black rhino introduced to Tsavo East have been killed. In South Africa's Kruger National Park, 8 rhino have been killed.

In the Conservator's Report at the November 2003 meeting of the Midlands Black Rhino Conservancy, Glen Tatham spoke of the situation in Zimbabwe:-

Over a period of 10 years, from 1993 till January 2003 there were no rhino poached in Zimbabwe. Whilst sporadic killing of elephant has continued over this period, rhinos remained secure in all protected areas and conservancies. That was until January last year.

Elephant poachers who had entered Zimbabwe from Zambia were killing elephants in the Sinamatella/Robins area of Hwange National Park. Evidently, this gang came across rhino tracks and followed a rhino for a short while and killed it, removing the horns and returning to Zambia. Since then, armed rhino poachers have begun to increase their forays and have killed 24 rhino in the Hwange National Park. One gang of three poachers were killed in a firefight with a Hwange APU earlier this year. Another gang of three were intercepted in Matusadona National Park and were similarly dealt with. Another rhino was recently poached in Matopos National Park and one in the Bubiana Rhino Conservancy. Two more were poached in Botswana recently – the culprits have been arrested.

Our population has been growing at 9% per year. This recent loss of rhino in Hwange and the other two areas is indeed a tragedy. Not only has the nation lost 26 of its precious rhino, but the breeding potential that has gone with the animals is almost incalculable. In basic terms these rhinos have been butchered by cruel and dangerous criminals who, as we have learnt in the past, will stop at nothing to obtain what they want.

This places the Midlands rhino in as much danger as all the other rhino in our beloved country. We must therefore increase our vigilance and work quickly to bring about a concerted and sustained team effort from within our community. It is therefore in the National interest and in the interest of rhino conservation throughout the world and, Africa in particular, that those who have the custodianship of the rhino populations take on their responsibilities very seriously and thus keep our rhinos safe for the next generation.