

ON_{the} TRAIL

The defaunation bulletin
n°38. Events from the 1st October to the 31th December, 2022



Quarterly information and analysis report on endangered
animals poaching and smuggling
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ON_{the} TRAIL

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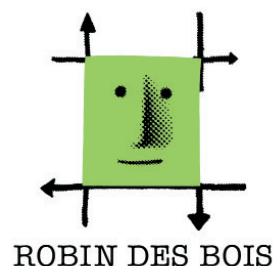
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NOTE AND ADVICE TO READERS

"On the Trail", the defaunation magazine, aims to get out of the drip of daily news and to draw up every three months an organized and analyzed survey of poaching, smuggling and worldwide market of animal species protected by national laws and international conventions. "On the Trail" also relates ongoing trials and the evolution of regulations and sanctions.

• A single event may refer to several species (e.g. simultaneous seizure of ivory, bear bile and snake skins); it is then analysed in the "Multi-species" chapter, with the exception of events that bring together the following species and which have their own chapter:

- Pangolins + elephants / rhinos
- Elephants + rhinos / hippos / felines
- Marine and freshwater multispecies (simultaneous seizure of several aquatic species)
- Multi-species reptiles (simultaneous seizure of several reptile species)

• Geographic regions at the continental scale are based on the UN classification.

• The US\$ conversion rates used are those applicable during the month of the event.

• The main sources are indicated at the end of each event. Each event reported and/or analysed is from a recension of one or more articles or press releases. This critical review eliminates inconsistencies in date, price and quantity if necessary, and if possible mistakes or looseness about the description of the species. The original source(s) are enriched by cross-checking and additional information from previous issues of "On the Trail", by Robin des Bois' investigations and archives, and by international bibliography and iconography. Details of the sources are available on request by email to contact@robindesbois.org indicating the "On the Trail" issue number, chapter and reference of the event.

Robin des Bois thanks the Species Survival Network, the NGO Save the Elephants and the Eagle Network for their alerts which enrich the daily monitoring carried out by the "On the Trail" team.

• When a species is CITES-listed at the time of the event, the Appendix is specified after its scientific name.

CITES APPENDICES

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (182 Member States).

Appendix I : species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances and under import and export permits.

Appendix II : export permit required in order to avoid utilization incompatible with the species survival. Import permit if required by national law.

Appendix III : species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade. In the case of trade from a State that included the species in Appendix III, an export permit of that State is required.

PICTOS



Human death. Guard, ranger, policeman, poacher... by firearm or other means.



Judgment and sanction. Condemnation, acquittal, fine...



Trapping. Poaching by jaw trap, snare, net ...



Poisoning. By chemicals, pesticides and medicines: cyanide, carbofuran, diclofenac, M99 ...



Full moon. Moonlight poaching

ACRONYMS

EAGLE : Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement

ENV : Education for Nature – Vietnam

IBAMA : Instituto brasileiro do meio ambiente e dos recursos naturais renováveis

KWS : Kenya Wildlife Service

LAGA : Last Great Ape Organization

PROFEPA : Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente

SAPS : South African Police Service

SPCA : Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

SSB : Sashastra Seema Bal

SVW : Save Vietnam Wildlife

SWT : Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

USFWS : United States Fish and Wildlife Service

WCCB : Wildlife Crime Control Bureau

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ELEPHANTS, RHINOS / HIPPOS / FELINES

AFRICA

ANGOLA

Thursday, December 1st, 2022

Quatro de Fevereiro International Airport, Luanda Province, Angola

45 kg of ivory and 4 kg of big cat teeth seized from the luggage of 2 Vietnamese passengers bound for Dubai via the United Arab Emirates.

Jornal de Angola, December 3, 2022; Na Mira do Crime, December 3, 2022.¹

KENYA

November 16, 2022

Nairobi, Nairobi County, Kenya

Following a missing person report filed at the Muthangari police station, Yang Changgui's house was searched and his lifeless body was discovered, along with 78 sections of elephant tusk and some carved ivory, 2 rhinoceros horns, 65 lion teeth and 160 lion claws (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), stamps in the name of Hua Xoang Development Limited, Stanbic Bank chequebooks, 2 cell phones (Huawei and Lenovo), a printer and an electric saw. The body was taken to the morgue for autopsy.

Nation (Kenya), November 17, 2022.²

MOZAMBIQUE

December 6, 2022

Maputo, Maputo Province, Mozambique



Seizure of 10 kg of rhinoceros horns, 280 kg of raw ivory, 340 kg of bones, claws and skulls (12) of lion (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II) in the hands and home of a Mozambican man. According to SERNIC (Serviço Nacional de Investigação Criminal), the loot, which the man says he "kept" on behalf of a Vietnamese who has not given him any news for over a year, was awaiting shipment to Asia via Maputo airport.

The trafficker is believed to be linked to a Vietnamese gang arrested in May in Nigeria (see "On the Trail" n°36 p.10).

Notícias (Mozambique), December 6, 2022; MMO, December 8, 2022; Stephen Carmody (Wildlife Justice Commission), December 16, 2022.³

UGANDA

November 5 and 22, 2022

Nansana and Kampala, Central Region, Uganda



- Katushabe Patrick, a high-ranking army officer, was arrested in a guest house. He possessed 28.9 kg of raw ivory and 2 hippopotamus teeth (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) weighing 1.65 kg. His accomplices fled the scene.

- He was fined 10 million shillings (2,640 US\$) or 6 years' imprisonment for illegally possessing protected animal parts and 5 million shillings or 5 years' imprisonment for conspiring to commit a crime.

KFM, November 15, 2022; Uganda Wildlife Authority, November 30, 2022.⁴

TOGO

October 13 and 14, 2022

Lomé, Maritime Region, Togo

Arrest of 3 thugs well versed in trafficking and with well-filled address books. They include Moazu Kromah, alias Kampala Man, extradited to the USA and sentenced to 63 months in prison (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.38). Moustapha Seck, the Senegalese jeweller, Oumarou Kamara and Mamoudou Kamara,



who it is unclear whether they are from Guinea or Liberia, or both, were caught in possession of 50 carved ivories, an elephant tail and 11 lion teeth (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II). The lion teeth used to make pendants came from Ghana and Nigeria, and the elephant hair used to make bracelets from Cameroon. The operation is credited to OCRTIDB (Office central de répression du trafic illicite des drogues et du blanchiment) and MERF (Ministère de l'Environnement et des Ressources Forestières), with support from EAGLE Togo.

EAGLE, October 21, 2022; EAGLE Togo, October 2022.⁵

ZIMBABWE

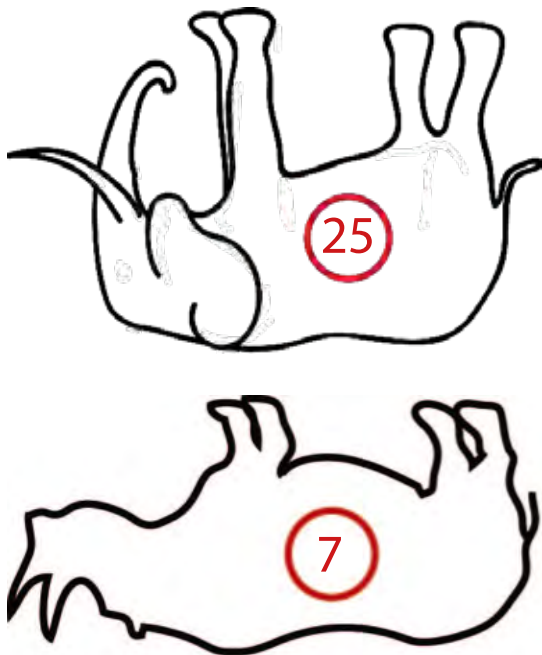
Year 2022

Zimbabwe

Official toll for the year 2022.

- Poaching of 25 elephants, 7 rhinoceros and 4 lions (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II).
- Seizure of 123 elephants tusks or tusks sections, 3 rhino horns, 25 firearms and 174 rounds of ammunition.
- 5,530 traps dismantled.
- 167 poachers convicted.

NewZimbabwe.com, January 31, 2023.⁶



AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 17, 2022

New York, State of New York, United States of America

The Kenyan citizen named Mansur Mohamed Surur, alias Mansour, was sentenced to 54 months in prison. He committed a crime punishable by 45 years in prison. For a summary of all his run-ins with the US justice system, see "On the Trail" n°25 p.81, n°29 p.42, n°30 p.41, n°31 p.42 and n°36 p.43. Inner City Press, October 17, 2022.⁷



December 14, 2022

New York, State of New York, United States of America



A Guinean citizen named Amara Cherif, alias Bamba Issiaka, was sentenced to 57 months in prison. He was accused alongside Moazu Kromah (alias Ayoub), alias Ayuba, alias Kampala Man, and Mansur Mohamed Surur for organising the transport, smuggling and sale of 190 kg of rhinoceros horns and over 10 tonnes of elephant ivory. The horns retail for 3.4 million US\$ and the tusks for 4 million US\$. Between March and July 2018, the African crime syndicate shipped 2 "test packages" containing one black and 2 white rhino horns to New York State in the United States.

Moazu Kromah was sentenced to 63 months in prison on August 18, 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.38).

In the context of overwhelming evidence presented in the indictment, strong links between wildlife and heroin trafficking, and the means used to obtain their extradition, the sentences handed down by New York's Southern District Court seem light.

For a summary of the case, see "On the Trail" n°25 p.81, n°29 p.42, n°30 p.41, n°31 p.42 and n°36 p.43. U.S. Attorney's Office - Southern District of New York, December 14, 2022.⁸

ASIA

INDIA

December 29, 2022

Vadodara, Vadodara District, State of Gujarat, India

Officials seized 5 carved ivories and 2 rhinoceros horns from a store and its operators' home, a first in Gujarat.

The Times of India, December 31, 2022; WCCB, December 31, 2022; Wildlife SOS, January 6, 2023.⁹



RHINOCEROSES



White rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*). Photo Wynand Uys

The white rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* and black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* ranging in Africa are listed in Appendix I, except for the white rhinoceros populations of Eswatini and South Africa which are listed in Appendix II for trade of live animals and hunting trophies.

The 3 Asian rhinoceros species are in Appendix I: the Indian rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*, the Sumatran rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, and the Javan rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus*.

On the Trail n°38

Black market horn quotation from media or official sources
The values were estimated at the time of the seizures

1kg of raw horn

Continent	Country	US\$	Ref. (year)
Africa	South Africa	3,500	15 (2022)
America	United States of America	10,000	29 (2019)
Asia	Singapore	25,300	31 (2022)

CENTRAL AFRICA

ANGOLA

End of November 2022

Quatro de Fevereiro International Airport, Luanda, Luanda Province, Angola

Over the weekend, a Chinese woman flies to Dubai with 13 horns in 2 suitcases. She was intercepted at the last minute in the departure lounge.

Novo Jornal, November 21, 2022.¹

EASTERN AFRICA

MOZAMBIQUE

October 5, 2022

Maputo, Maputo Province, Mozambique



Sentencing of 2 Massingir nationals to 30 years in prison for possession of a clandestine firearm and ammunition, breaking into the Twin City private reserve, and attempting in conspiracy to poach rhinos to extract their horns for lucrative trafficking in September 2021. This is the third time in Mozambique that the 30-year sentence has been imposed for poaching or attempting to poach rhinos.

Twin City extends over 1,379 km² to the north of the Greater Lebombo Conservancy, the Kruger Park's cross-border buffer zone between South Africa and Mozambique.

Integrity Magazine, November 11, 2022; The Zimbabwe Independent, November 16, 2022.²

ZIMBABWE

October 12, 2022, January 11 and February 21, 2023

Chipinge Safari Area and Chipinge, Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe



The black rhino was riddled with bullets as he quenched his thirst at the Chidimayi watering hole. "A trail of blood was seen emanating from the watering hole along the river to the place where the carcass was discovered," says the police spokesman. On January 11, following a tip-off, ZimParks ranger Johane Guzha was arrested at his home.

On February 21, in court, he claimed to have shot the rhinoceros in self-defence. He was nevertheless sentenced to 10 years in prison for shooting the animal and 10 years for taking his horn. The sentences will run concurrently. The horn has not yet been found.

Rhinos poached at Chipinge, see "On the Trail" n°8 p. 61, n°10 p. 46 and n°25 p. 76.

The Manica Post, October 28 2022 and February 24 2023.³

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

Beginning of October 2022

Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province, South Africa

Rhino dehorning in Pilanesberg continue to protect rhinos from poaching, but the dehorned horns are not always protected from trafficking.

Trafficking in preventively dehorned horns, see "On the Trail" n°6 p. 68, n°17 p. 73-74, p. 75 and n°29 p. 46.

Poaching of preventively dehorned rhinos, see "On the Trail" n°7 p. 70, n°8 p. 61, p. 62, n°10 p. 47, n°11 p. 59, p. 65, n°12 p. 68, n°15 p. 83, n°18 p. 70, n°22 p. 81, n°29 p. 48, n°31 p. 45, p. 46, p. 47, n°32 p. 60, n°33 p. 67, n°34 p. 51 and p. 55,

Perry Steve Dell, October 8, 2022.⁴

REPEATED OFFENCE

October 18, 2022

Sannieshof, North West Province, South Africa

The International Rhino Poaching Squad was driving a white Polo on National Highway 14. It was made up of an ex-policeman from Botswana and 3 nationals from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. It was stopped in its tracks by the Vryburg flying squad and canine squad, and the Sannieshof police. Inside the car were 2 rhino horns and a firearm silencer. Marumo, the ex-police officer, had already been arrested for trafficking horns and was released during the Covid-19 court paralysis. The quartet is behind bars.

Save the Beasts, October 19 and 21, 2022; SAPS, October 21, 2022.⁵

October 20, 2022

Middelburg Toll Plaza, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

On National Highway 4, a Toyota minibus was inspected at a tollbooth. Under the hood were 2 suspicious packages. They contained 2 rhinoceros horns valued by the authorities at 2 million rand (111,625 US\$) on the local market. The driver and sole occupant of the minibus was taken into custody. According to him, the rhino had been poached 2 days earlier in the Kruger.

Middelburg Observer, October 20, 2022; SAPS, October 20, 2022.⁶



October 23, 2022
KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa



The Zululand Rhino Orphanage welcomed a 105 kg, 6-week-old rhinoceros whose mother fell prey to poaching.

Zululand Conservation Trust, October 24, 2022; African Wildlife Vets, October 27, 2022; Helping Rhinos, October 30 and November 16, 2022.⁷

November 15, 2022
Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



Sentence of Silvester Sidney Zitha, age 40, to 25 years in prison, 2 for breaking and entering, 5 for illegal possession of a caliber 458 firearm with a silencer, 2 years for the illegal possession of ammunition, 10 years for poaching a rhinoceros, 2 for carrying a dangerous weapon (ax), and 4 for conspiracy to commit a crime. Some sentences are running concurrently and the effective prison sentence is 17 years. In October 2018, he had been caught in the act of poaching after a 3 km chase with rangers from the Tshokwane section of the Kruger. He was in possession of 2 horns. He was accompanied by an accomplice who was released on bail, failed to respond to court summons, and is now presumed dead.

SAPS, November 16, 2022; myLOWVELD.net, November 17, 2022.⁸

November 18, 2022
Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga, South Africa



At age 34, Sipho Titus Khosa is the rhino desperado. He was sentenced to 54 years in prison. As some sentences are running concurrently, the actual period of incarceration will be 37 years. In September 2016, in the Stolzne section of the Kruger, he had been surrounded in the bushes by a patrol. Between him and a partner, authorities seized a firearm with a silencer, 2 magazines with 33 rounds of ammunition, an axe, a survival bag, and 2 fresh horns. They were released on bail and did not respond to any further court summonses. Four months later, Khosa was at it again. He was with 2 new partners, still in the

Stolzne section of the Kruger, and after a chase by helicopter and on land, they had once again been surrounded by rangers. They had a firearm with silencer, an axe, and 3 rhino horns. This time, he was denied bail, unlike his 2 accomplices Francisco Mlambo and Sam Lejane.

Arrest of rhino poachers in the Stolzne section, see "On the Trail" n°16 p. 69, n°28 p. 94, n°33 p. 65, n°34 p. 5 and p. 54, n°36 p. 48.

SAPS, November 19, 2022; myLOWVELD.net, November 20, 2022; SA-People, November 20, 2022.⁹

November 22, 2022
Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



Sentencing of 2 Mozambican nationals to 6 years in prison. They had entered the Tshokwane section of the Kruger with the intention and means of poaching one or more rhinos (see "On the Trail" n°36 p. 46).

SAPS, November 22, 2022; News24, November 23, 2022.¹⁰

November 24, 2022
Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



Sithlangu had been spotted with an automatic weapon slung over his shoulder in the Stolzne section of the Kruger by a helicopter flyover. Arrested by a ground patrol, he was also found to be in possession of ammunition and other useful hulling tools. He was released on bail and never again responded to court summonses. In February 2022, he was caught up in a raid and sentenced by the specialized court to 14 years in prison for breaking and entering the Kruger, possession of a firearm, prohibited ammunition and a dangerous weapon (an axe), and premeditated rhino poaching. The sentences are combined for a total of 11 years.

TimesLIVE (South Africa), November 24, 2022; SAPS, November 25, 2022.¹¹

Beginning of December 2022
South Africa

The Aspinall Foundation team urgently dehorned 4 rhinos in a private reserve where poachers were spotted.

The Aspinall Foundation, December 13, 2022.¹²

Saturday 3 or Sunday 4, December 2022
Khamab Kalahari Reserve, North West Province, South Africa. Border with Botswana.

The reserve's oldest male black rhino was poached and stripped of his horns by raiders who, despite the mobilization of a helicopter, drones, several anti-poaching teams and canine units, managed to escape to Botswana.

Baby Rhino Rescue, December 7, 2022.¹³

December 6, 2022

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



Kruger rangers Hendrick Experience Silinda and Archie Musa Mlambo sentenced to 7 years in prison. In their camp, the SAPS had seized in 2019 a large-calibre firearm with the number erased, with the ammunition to go with it, and 3 hunting knives. It is not known whether they themselves intended to poach, or whether they had introduced all the necessary equipment into the park for accomplices from outside. At the bar of the special rhinoceros court, they said they were the victims of a frame-up.

The Citizen (South Africa), December 7, 2022; Independent Online, December 7, 2022.¹⁴

December 8 and 14, 2022

Ermelo, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



The Toyota Fortuner was on the radar. It was stopped by the SAPS. Two men tried to escape. Four horns were found under the hood in the presence of the 2 suspects. Junior Chauke was released on 10,000 rand (590 US\$) bail, subject to conditions. Prince Ntsako Letswele remains in custody. The horns weigh 14.6 kg. They are valued at 876,000 rand or 3,500 US\$/kg, which in market conditions seems artificially undervalued and likely to dissuade would-be poachers!

SAPS, December 13 and 15, 2022.¹⁵

December 9, 2022

Leyden, Limpopo Province, South Africa



After the poaching of 2 rhinos, the hunt for information began. SAPS, private security guards and witnesses were mobilized, and 5 men were eventually arrested. Aged between 25 and 40, they were in possession of firearms with silencers, ammunition and 2 butcher's knives, and the SAPS have every reason to believe that the horns seized from their red Volkswagen came from the night's carnage. DNA confirmation is awaited. SAPS, December 10, 2022.¹⁶

December 9, 2022

Limpopo Province, South Africa



Arrival at the orphanage, blindfolded and ear plugged, of a new little resident, 4/5 months old, an orphan, dead set against humanity, throwing everything away, refusing bottles and approaches from the caretakers, fortunately agreeing to drink from a soup tureen and eat a little grass.

The Rhino Orphanage, December 10, 11 and 18, 2022.¹⁷

**FAMILY AFFAIRS / REPEATED OFFENCE
December 12, 2022**

Bronkhorstspuit, Gauteng Province, South Africa



- A new trial for Gideon van Deventer, who is already serving a 10-year prison sentence (see "On the Trail" n°36 p.48). A whistleblower who deciphered court records informed the courts in June 2022, 8 years after the events, that Gideon, brother of Nicklaas van Deventer, who is serving a 15-year prison sentence, had escaped prosecution and conviction thanks to the complicity of the prosecutor at the time, Solly Leballo, for illegally possessing 2 firearms with silencers and 46 rounds of high-calibre ammunition able to penetrate the brains of rhinos. In 2018, Leballo was caught by elite police officers negotiating the dropping of charges against a murderer for the sum of 100,000 rand (7,000 US\$). He immediately resigned from his prestigious post before "being resigned".

.../...

His corruption trial has not yet been held. The amount of the bribe Leballo received from Gideon van Deventer for dropping the charges of possessing and transporting firearms and ammunition is not known. At the end of 2006, all managers of private reserves and national parks housing rhinos in South Africa were sent "High Alert" posters with portraits of Gideon van Deventer, his brother Nicklaas and Gert Saaiman, helicopter pilot and director of Saaiman Hunting Safaris. The 3 men were wanted for poaching 22 rhinos in the Kruger Park, the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park and in private ranches in Komatipoort and Bela-Bela. They were considered armed, dangerous and likely to shoot to evade arrest. "Be on the alert if you see a low flying helicopter or fixed-wing aircraft over the parks." Arrested in 2006 and sentenced in 2007 to 10 years in prison, 2 of which were suspended, Gideon van Deventer had been released on parole in 2011. Prosecutor Leballo therefore knew in 2015 that he was protecting a serial rhino killer.

- Gideon van Deventer is sentenced to 8 years in prison for illegal possession of 2 firearms and ammunition and 8 years for transporting 2 firearms and ammunition. The 2 sentences run concurrently.

See "On the Trail" n°16 p.65, n°17 p.77 and n°36 p.48.

Mail & Guardian (South Africa), October 27 and December 17, 2022.¹⁸

December 20, 2022

Bronkhorstspuit, Gauteng Province, South Africa

Onward Muchangowa is sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment for conspiracy to commit rhino poaching, 8 years' imprisonment for rhino poaching, acting in common purpose with the van Deventer brothers, and 5 years' imprisonment for the joint possession of 2 rhino horns. The sentences run concurrently. He had been arrested in January 2017 with the van Deventer brothers (see "On the Trail" n°16 p.65) and remained in custody awaiting trial. Muchangowa is said to have acted as a commercial agent for several poaching gangs. He was a horn seller. He sold some of them on WhatsApp. Sometimes 7 or 8 people would fight over the privilege of winning the sale.

Mail & Guardian (South Africa), December 22, 2022.¹⁹



South Africa Year 2022 toll. Official sources

Provinces and national parks	2020	2021	2022
SANParks	247	209	124
Gauteng	2	2	2
Limpopo	18	38	25
Mpumalanga	13	39	21
North West	19	32	24
Eastern Cape	0	0	0
Free State	1	24	4
Northern Cape	1	1	4
KwaZulu-Natal	93	102	244
Western Cape	0	4	0
Total	394	451	448



Comments:

Slowing down in the Kruger.

Overspeed in KwaZulu-Natal: 228 in provincial parks, 16 in private reserves.

"This year's outcome shows that collaboration between conservation authorities, the South African Police Services, revenue authorities and international agencies works. We believe that if provincial authorities in KwaZulu-Natal follow our model, they will be able to significantly curb rhino poaching in their provincial parks before it is too late," said Minister Creecy

Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (South Africa), February 6, 2023.²⁰

NAMIBIA

October 4, 2022

Otjiwarongo, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

A black rhinoceros was dehorned for preventative purposes in a Kunene region reserve. The 12 kg horn was then placed in a batch with 5 other horns but soon after disappeared. A PRU (Protected Resources Unit) agent named Salatiel Simon was sent on Friday, September 30 to submit the batch to the Otjiwarongo police station, but only handed over 5 horns. After failing to explain why the 6th was missing, he was put in prison. On Friday, October 28, the head of the PRU revealed that the horn was found in Angola and that the policeman had resigned on Wednesday, October 19. Against the advice of the public prosecutor's office, Simon was released on Thursday, December 1 on a 590 US\$ bail - a puny sum compared to the value of a kilo of horn.

The Namibian, October 4, 2022; Namibia News Digest, October 6, 19, 29 and December 1, 2022.²¹

October 17, 2022

Windhoek, Khomas Region, Namibia

Wang Hui, leader of the Windhoek gang that made the headlines in "On the Trail" between 2014 and 2019, fled this Monday at around 11 a.m. Along with other convicts, he was enrolled in a supervised work camp outside the prison north of Windhoek. He pretended to want to go to the toilet and disappeared.



Some say he took off in a Mercedes, others say in a pick-up truck. He was serving 20 years in prison for attempting to smuggle 14 horns and rhinoceros and a leopard skin in March 2014. Wang Hui and his 3 henchmen were sentenced in September 2016 to between 9 and 11 years in prison. They appealed and were sentenced to 20 years in prison (see "On the Trail" n°4 p. 66, n°5 p. 73, n°6 p. 65, n°9 p. 62, n°10 p. 47, n°11 p. 65, n°14 p. 68 and n°25 p. 78).

The Namibian, October 17, 2022; Erongo, October 18, 2022.²²

October 20, 2022

Groot Gamsberg Farm, Khomas Region, Namibia

The carcass of a male white rhinoceros, shot dead and stripped of his horns, was discovered. This rhino's economic value is estimated at 450,000 Namibian dollars (25,000 US\$).

Allgemeine Zeitung (Namibia), October 24, 2022; Namibian Sun, October 27, 2022.²³

Between October 21 and 24, 2022

Otjisauona Farm, Khomas Region, Namibia

Two slaughtered male white rhinoceroses, both stripped of their horns, are discovered. Their collective economic value is estimated at 660,000 Namibian dollars, or 36,720 US\$.

Informanté, October 26, 2022; Namibian Sun, October 27, 2022.²⁴

October 25, 2022

Farm Otjisauona, Khomas Region, Namibia

The carcasses of 2 white rhinoceroses stripped of their horns are discovered. Authorities estimate that they were poached between October 21 and 24. The economic value of the rhinos is estimated at 660,000 Namibian dollars (36,700 US\$).

Informanté, October 26, 2022; Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, October 26, 2022.²⁵

November 17, 2022

Namibia

Libonelo Sobozi is indicted for an attempted rhinoceros poaching on October 9.

The Namibian, November 23, 2022; Namibian Sun, November 24, 2022.²⁶

November 18, 2022

Okahao, Omusati Region, Namibia

Jonas Gerhard, 25, Petrus Kalenga, 36, and Tangeni Jesaya, 22, are arrested for purportedly attempting to poach a rhino on September 26.

The Namibian, November 23, 2022; Namibian Sun, November 24, 2022.²⁷

November 19, 2022

Oshivelo, Oshikoto Region, Namibia

Festus Amunyela and Mekondjo Tsillinus, both 23, are arrested for allegedly attempting to poach a rhino on June 16.

The Namibian, November 23, 2022; Namibian Sun, November 24, 2022.²⁸

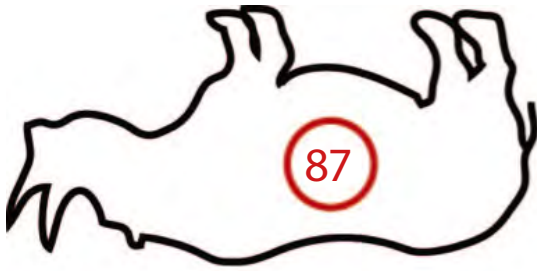
End of 2022

Düsternbrook Farm, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

HoRN.nam, a group connecting rhino breeders with outside stakeholders, is offering a reward of 100,000 Namibian dollars (5,770 US\$) to anyone who can provide helpful information in identifying a rhinoceros poacher.

The Namibian, February 16, 2023.²⁹

Namibia
Year 2022 toll. Official sources



The 2022 official report lists 61 black rhino poachings and 26 white rhino poachings. After the lull of 2020 and 2021, the peaks of 2019, 2018 and 2017 were again reached. Etosha National Park remains a major concern for Minister Romeo Muyunda.

Allgemeine Zeitung (Namibia), January 13, 2023; The Brief, January 30, 2023; The Namibian, January 31, 2023.³⁰

ASIA AND AMERICA

**THAILAND AND
 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

October 7, 2022 and September 19, 2023

Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok, Thailand and New York, State of New York, United States of America



"On the Trail" has been tracking Teo Boon Ching since 2015. Despite all his precautions, such as his looks and his alibis of travelling for pleasure between Africa and Asia, "Godfather" was hooked by 2 special agents of the US wildlife services, one of whom claimed to live in Manhattan, New York, trafficking in Madagascar radiated tortoise (*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I) and spotted pond turtle (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*, Appendix I), and having a good knowledge of the smuggling manners and a desire to diversify into rhinos. During the summer of 2019, the American justice system accumulated enough photos, videos, telephone and email exchanges for the Malayan or Thai police to take an interest in this elusive character. Godfather was arrested in Bangkok on June 29, 2022. It was in the Thai capital that on August 23, 2019, one of his partners in wildlife trafficking delivered 12 African rhino horns (2 black rhino, 10 white rhino) weighing 26 kg. The day before this transaction, Godfather, who was in Malaysia, or claimed to be, had received transfers in yuan via a Bangkok-based Chinese bank unknown to the tax authorities. The 12 horns were bought by the pseudo-buyer in Manhattan for 259,000 US\$ (i.e. around 10,000 US\$/kg) and Godfather demanded to be paid in yuan to better conceal the trafficking. To complete the picture, he planned to smuggle and transport around 73 kg of horns to the United States with American pseudo-clients on the basis of 725,500 US\$, i.e. nearly 10,000 US\$/kg.

- On October 7, 57-year-old Teo Boon Ching, who also used the aliases Zhang and Dato Sri, was extradited and placed under escort by at least 2 US special agents on a scheduled flight to New York. On arrival, he was brought before the US Attorney for the Southern District of New York and charged with trafficking in endangered species and money laundering.

- On September 19, 2023, Teo Boon Ching was sentenced to 18 months in prison, which the prosecutor said was a "substantial sentence" and proof of "the resolve of this Office to use every tool at our disposal to ensure the protection of endangered species." He was liable to 20 years' imprisonment. The investigation finally proved that Teo Boon Ching had conspired to smuggle, sell and transport to the United States at least 219 kg of rhino horn worth approximately 2.1 million US\$. Teo Boon Ching, see "On the Trail" n°8 p.81 and n°36 p. 195.

US Department of Justice, October 7, 2022; US Department of the Treasury, October 7, 2022; Chiang Rai Times (avec Bangkok Post), October 9, 2022; New Straits Times, October 9, 2022; U.S. Attorney's Office - Southern District of New York, September 19, 2023; U.S. Embassy & Consulate in Thailand, September 22, 2023.³¹

EASTERN ASIA

CHINA

October 2022

Wuhan, Hubei Province, China

A rhinoceros horn weighing around 480 grams is confiscated from a parcel from abroad. Chinese Customs, October 28, 2022.³²

SOUTHEASTERN ASIA

SINGAPORE

October 4, 2022

Changi International Airport, Singapore



Seizure of 20 rhinoceros horns, parts, and sections in the travel bags of a passenger in transit from South Africa to Laos. Weight: 34 kg. Estimated value: 1.2 million S\$ (860,240 US\$ or 25,300 US\$/kg). Channel News Asia, October 5, 2022; Mothership, October 5, 2022.³³

VIET NAM

October 23, 2022

Dong Tinh, Vinh Phuc Province, Viet Nam

Five Chinese nationals working in the Bac Ninh province travelled to buy rosewood (*Dalbergia tonkinensis*, Appendix II). Arousing suspicions, the police decided to check them out. Sure enough, the men had no documentation authorizing their presence in Viet Nam. What's more, one of them, Chen Jian Fu, was wanted by Guangzhou customs in connection with smuggling 11.3 kg of rhinoceros horn. He found refuge in Tu Son, Bac Ninh province, thanks to an acquaintance born in the same town and living in Hanoi. They were all taken to the police station.

Chen Jian Fu is not the only Chinese trafficker to have gone into exile in Viet Nam: see for example "On the Trail" n°37 p.189.

Lao Dong, October 28, 2022.³⁴

SOUTHERN ASIA

INDIA

December 15, 2022

Kacharibhetitop, Darrang District, State of Assam, India

Arrest of Abdul Matin, alias Kala. A reward of 200,000 rupees (2,450 US\$) was promised for his arrest. He was wanted for his alleged involvement in the poaching and dehorning of a rhino in Kaziranga in January 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°35 p.41-42). When Kala was arrested, he was in possession of a large-calibre weapon and accompanied by Shamshuddin, his alleged accomplice.

The Hindu, December 16, 2022; The Times of India, December 16, 2022.³⁵

NEPAL

October 13, 2022

Khairahani, Chitwan District, Bagmati Province, Nepal



Electrocuted by a DC fence next to a pigsty on the banks of a small river. He was a male between 4 and 5 years old.

myRepublica, October 13, 2022; Nepal News, October 13, 2022; Online Khabar, October 13, 2022.³⁶

Beginning of December 2022

Kalika, Chitwan District, Bagmati Province, Nepal

A hornless, hoofless rhino is discovered several weeks after being poached. Fewer patrols lead to delays in finding the carcasses.

Online Khabar, December 4, 2022.³⁷

EASTERN EUROPE

CZECHIA

December 15, 2022

Capital City of Prague, Czechia



Much ado - 24 rhinoceros horns seized in Prague in July 2013, and valued at nearly 4 million US\$ - about a judicial nothing, after almost 10 years. The Vietnamese organisers and Czech shooters who carried out the point-blank slaughter of rhinos on Dawie Groenewald's farm in South Africa in 2013 have been sentenced to 1 to 3-year suspended prison terms and derisory fines following a chaotic judicial process. Instead of being considered as hunting trophies forbidden to any national or international traffic, the horns were destined to be smuggled to Viet Nam or sold to Prague's Vietnamese community.

See "On the Trail" n°2 p.44-45, n°7 p.75, n°8 p.65-66, n°11 p.63 and n°22 p.84.

Ekolist.cz, July 24, 2019, November 20, 2020, March 22 and December 15, 2022; iDNES.cz, December 19, 2022.³⁸



The 24 horns guarded by armed men on July 23, 2013 in Prague

OCEANIA

NEW ZEALAND

Beginning of December 2022

Auckland, Auckland Region, New Zealand

A first in New Zealand. Seizure by the DOC (Department of Conservation) of 1.73 kg of horns in the form of cups, bracelets and one engraved horn. Authenticity confirmed. The Asian or African origin is not specified. Two people are being questioned by the police.

1News, December 6, 2022; Department of Conservation, December 6, 2022.³⁹