

# **WHERE HAVE ALL THE RHINOS GONE?**

## **A SOUTH AFRICAN RETROSPECTIVE RESEARCH REPORT**

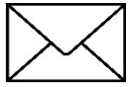


**DECEMBER 2021**



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In this Research Report *Where Have All the Rhino Gone*, we have presented and analysed previously published media reports and excerpts from previously published media reports. We have also presented and analysed reports and presentations previously published by wildlife trade organisations, scientific reports published by pro-sustainable use wildlife organisations and wildlife conservation organisations. We have presented and analysed previously published reports presented by government and criminal justice departments in South African and abroad. We have presented previously published reports written by investigative journalists, scientists and researchers. We have re-published information including images that are all available on the world wide web and social media platforms.

The facts, and in some instances, the analysis presented in this report are sustained in documents and interviews all previously exposed in the mass media. Judicial records related to criminal networks have been published in this document. There is no primary factual information contained in this report.

Where names have been mentioned, quoted or referenced on indictments the presumptions of innocence in observance of individual rights is always preserved.

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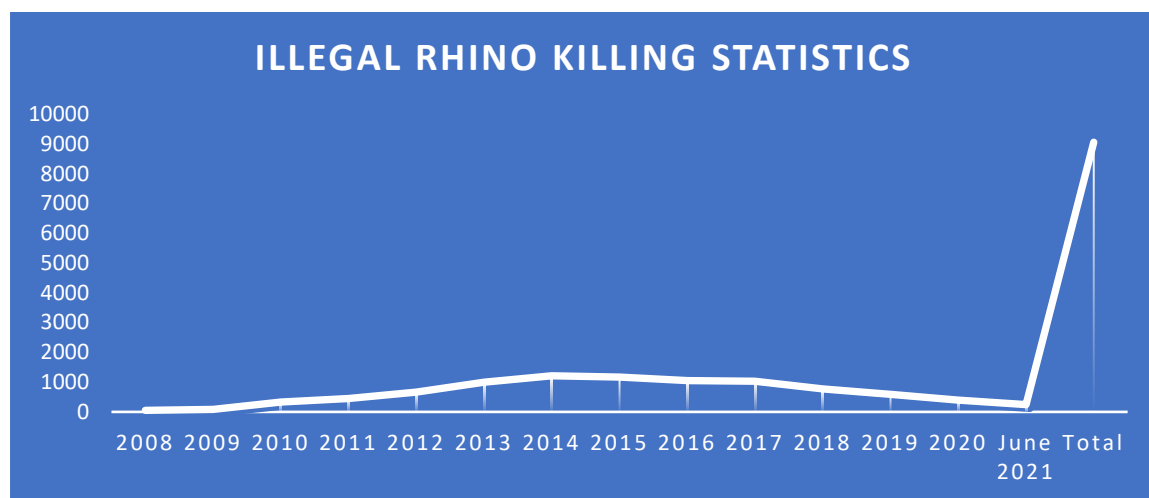
## PREFACE

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2021–World Rhino Day–the acting head of South African National Parks, [Dr Luthando Dziba](#), said that there may be [fewer than 3000 rhinoceroses left in the Kruger National Park](#). Dziba also confirmed that South Africa's rhino population had declined by nearly two-thirds in just ten years.

The primary threat to rhinos is human demand for their horns which are sold on the black markets of Southeast Asia as aphrodisiacs, so-called traditional medicine or as a [status symbol](#).

Only a decade ago South Africa was home to the world's largest population of White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) and Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*), this equated to approximately 90% of the global population of southern white rhino and 36% of the world's black rhino population.

Since 2008 there has been a cataclysmic increase in the number of rhinos killed for their horn. The [reported](#) number of rhinos killed for their horn in South Africa since 2008 is [9067](#).



The number of white rhinos living in South Africa's flagship national park, the Kruger National Park declined by 60.42% in just a six-year period, from an estimated 8,968 in 2013 to an estimated 3,549 in 2019, while the black rhino population fell by 57.25% in a 10-year period, from an estimated 627 in 2009 to an estimated 268 in 2019.<sup>1</sup>

The data contained in the first chapter of this report illustrates the confusing and in concise figures regarding the official rhino population figures that have been reported and repeated over the past twenty years.

What happened to the *Biodiversity Management Plan* (BMP) for white rhino—a draft of which was [gazetted for comment in March 2015](#)? The announced [target](#) was aligned to the escalating poaching statistics. The world was informed by the South African government that a realistic achievable goal of a meta-population of at least 20 400 white rhinos in South Africa was entirely achievable for the year 2020, this bearing in mind that [1349 rhino were poached in 2015](#).

*Where Have All the Rhino Gone*, is a compilation of, and expansion on, the work previously carried out by researchers and investigative journalists over the past two decades. The Information contained in this retrospective report sets out to illustrate the questionable decisions that have been made over the past two decades regarding the protection and conservation of South Africa's rhino.

The content of this report is limited to the past two decades, the time period that will forever be marked by a magnitude of government corruption and the capture and destruction of the South African justice system. It would

<sup>1</sup> <https://pachydermjournal.org/index.php/pachyderm/article/view/8>;  
<https://www.sanparks.org/assets/docs/general/annual-report-2020.pdf>, p.96

be foolish to believe that South Africa's environmental sector and the conservation and protection of wildlife that resides within it, has remained unscathed.

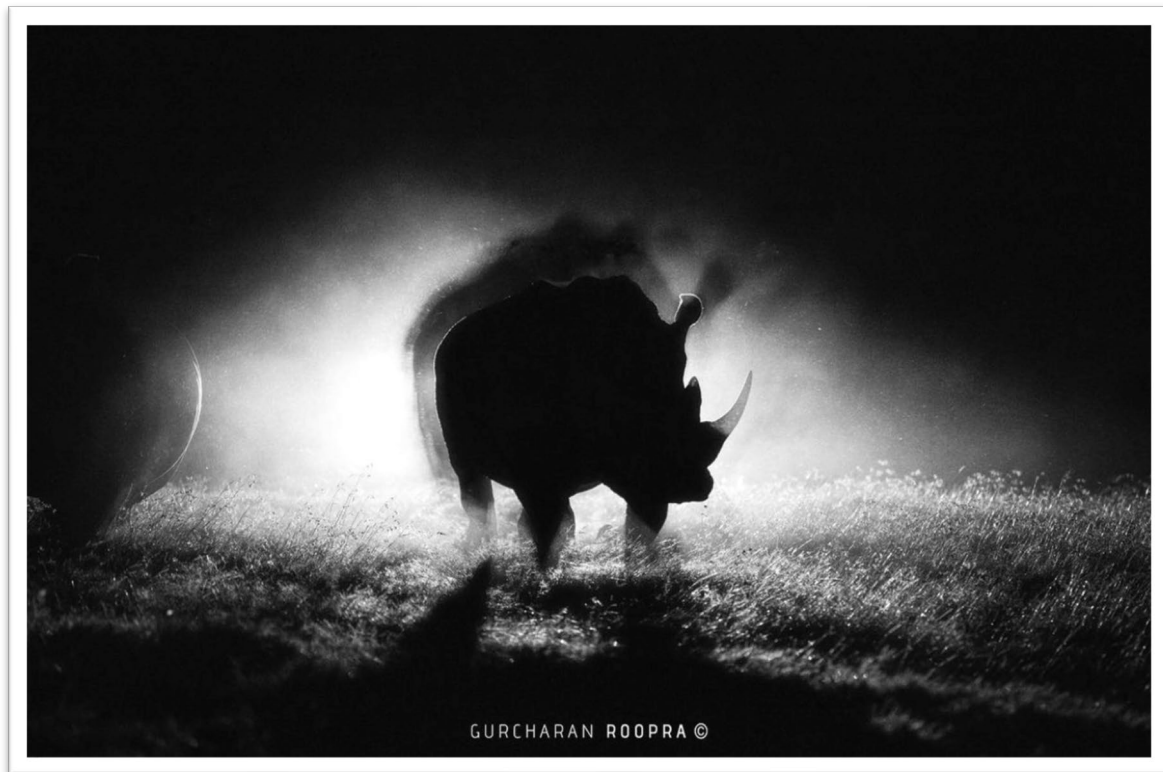
South Africa is meant to be responsible for the protection and conservation of the majority of the world's remaining rhinos. In order to establish just what the 'majority' means in a reliable numerical format we would need to obtain absolute accurate data from all the African rhino range states and South Africa as a matter of priority.

The scientific advisory organisations should be urged to recommend to the United Nations that there should be a global moratorium on the trade and hunting of all rhinos until it can be established, unequivocally, how many rhinos exist in Africa today.

There can no longer be any debate—the next decade is critical for the survival of the species, and this needs to take place within a revised policy framework which foregrounds protection, welfare, well-being and a one health approach.



## INTRODUCTION: BANKING ON EXTINCTION



[Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin](#) confirmed that the demand for illegal rhino horn has been booming in Vietnam and China since the early 2000s with black market prices peaking at about \$65000/kg in 2012.

[A 2019 study](#) of rhino horn consumers in Vietnam reveals that:

1. Consumers are more likely to be government officials, investors, and business owners;
2. Higher-income respondents cared less about legality;
3. Horns from wild rhinos over semi-wild or farmed rhinos are preferred;
4. Consumers, on average, are willing to pay an additional \$20,000/kg for wild horns.

Research published in 2020 by [Eikelboom et al](#) argues that the fixed cost of the illegal killing and supplying of illegal horns is substantially lower than providing legal horns from farmed rhinos, and the profit margin sufficiently high to make the illegal trade profitable even with confiscation of contraband.

According [to a 2020 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report](#), South Africa experienced 86% of the world's recorded illegal rhino killing incidents between 2006 and 2017.

The vast majority of these illegal rhino deaths have been recorded in the Kruger National Park. Proportionate to the declining population numbers—according to official statistics—illegal rhino killings have also declined since 2014.

Eighteen months before the devastating estimated Kruger National Park rhino population statistics were made public, and [despite being questioned on the accuracy](#) of the survey methodology in determining the South African black rhino population, the South African government put forward a proposal to increase the trophy hunting quota for black rhino at the 2019 CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) CoP18 (Conference of the Parties) meeting. Gabon, Kenya and nine wildlife conservation organisations [opposed](#) this request and raised legitimate concerns about the uncertainty of the rhino numbers in South Africa. Canada, the European

Union and the SADC (Southern African Development Community) countries voted in favour of killing more black rhinos for trophies, almost doubling the previous amount permissible.

Despite the devastating declining rhino population numbers, TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring organisation is of the belief that an increase in the allocation of hunting permits for white rhino has [helped increase](#) the population of white rhino. TRAFFIC, is [a joint programme](#) of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). TRAFFIC underscores the pro-trophy hunting narrative by stating that wildlife conservation [has benefitted from sustainable trophy](#) hunting in the past, and furthermore, they state, that until alternatives are practically viable, wildlife conservation will likely continue to benefit from trophy hunting in the future. TRAFFIC has, however said that it is important to ensure that any trophy hunting operation is conducted legally, ethically, and sustainably, and that trophy hunting must not negatively impact on wild populations of rhino.

In 2014 two [IUCN groups wrote letters endorsing](#) the licence to shoot a black male rhino in Namibia. [Dr Michael Knight](#), has been involved with rhino conservation for the past 20 years. Knight has been chairman of the SADC Rhino Management Group and chairman of the IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group and is a [proponent for the international trade in rhino horn](#).

According to CITES regulations, with the correct permit in place it is [legal to export horns as trophies](#) from a white or black rhino hunt in South Africa.

The endorsement of the trophy hunting of critically endangered white and black rhino, and [the controversial 2017 decision to legalise and promote the rhino horn trade in South Africa](#) by South Africa's department of environment, are two decisions that have continued to perplex the global wildlife protection and conservation community.

These decisions have been widely questioned, especially in light of the critical error made by the South Africa's environment department in its complete failure to recognise the fact that rhino horn was being exported to Vietnam for use in the illegal wildlife trade, thinly disguised in the legitimate trophy hunting industry. It has been suggested that a minimum of [657 rhino horns](#) were legally exported from South Africa as trophies between 2003 and 2010, and that these horns were all filtered into the illegal wildlife trade.

In 1968, trophy hunting of white rhinos resumed - on private land only. From 2003 there was a noticeable increase of non-traditional trophy hunters, especially Vietnamese nationals, who with the aid of South African professional hunters exploited the loopholes in the porous South African and CITES legislation. Perhaps the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and CITES should have been paying closer attention to the developing pattern. In 2003 CITES permits were issued for nine rhino trophies and for two rhino horns from trophy hunts [to be exported to Vietnam](#), a country that had not previously been active in trophy hunting in South Africa.

[A September 2018 article](#) published in *The Independent*, explained how enterprising criminals in southeast Asia exploited South Africa's hunting laws in order to move rhino horn legally across international borders. In 2003 ten Vietnamese hunters applied for hunting permits in order to export their hunting trophy horns to Vietnam—a country with no history of trophy hunting. By 2012 [South African investigators had identified](#) at least five Vietnamese-run criminal syndicates using trophy hunting to supply rhino horns to black markets in Southeast Asia.

An official list/register of rhino hunts/hunters, provided by the North West Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment to the Democratic Alliance (in our possession), shows that between 2009 and 2012 in the North West province alone, at least 190 of the listed 220 rhino trophy hunts involved individuals from Vietnam, Laos and Thailand—and often the same individuals. Indeed, this list includes the names of known wildlife traffickers and criminal syndicates, including individuals linked to Chu Đăng Khoa/DKC Trading/Voi Lodge) and the Xasavang Network. It also, therefore, seems to point to a likely link, connection and overlap between Chu Đăng Khoa/DKC Trading/Voi Game Lodge and Xasavang/Keosavang. It also links the rhino horn syndicates to the big cat bone trade.

Despite the information circulating about the infiltration of Vietnamese syndicates freely operating in South Africa, in July 2009, SANParks Chief Executive, David Mabunda, said in a [statement](#) that the South African rhino population was not endangered and that they could be sold or exchanged. David Mabunda, however, also said

that the South African government had made a conscious decision not to allow trophy hunting to take place in national parks. Nonetheless, the Kruger National Park sold rhino to the people who were operating the rhino hunts that were conducted to supply rhino horns to black markets in Southeast Asia.

South Africa eventually stopped issuing permits to Vietnamese nationals. However, there was an increase in hunting permit applications from other countries not historically associated with rhino trophy hunting such as the Czech Republic. It has also been [confirmed](#) that Vietnamese criminal syndicates have engaged trophy hunters to circumvent South Africa's ban on hunting permits for Vietnamese nationals.

Some conservation groups continue to support trophy hunting of rhino citing scientific evidence that they believe shows that well managed trophy hunting can be an effective conservation tool as part of a broad mix of strategies. This is a contentious position as according to scientists, rhinos prized by trophy hunters for their horns usually have the best genes. [Research published in 2017](#) predicted that by removing just 5% of the high-quality rhino males is a risk that could wipe out the entire population of a species that is already under stress. They also warned that the unfortunate focus by trophy hunting lobbying organisations such as *Safari Club International* on the size of the horn may prevent trophy hunting practises as being classified as "well managed."

In 2009, Michele Pickover, executive director of the EMS Foundation, co-authored a report called [Under Siege: Rhinoceroses in South Africa](#). The information contained in this report indicated that more rhino had been killed illegally in South Africa during 2008, 2009 and 2010 than at any other time in the previous 90 years. The overriding resounding message of this Report was that there was something deeply unethical and inappropriate about supposedly championing rhino conservation and rhino protection but at the same time allowing and championing trophy hunting, the trade in rhinos, the sale of rhino from national and provincial parks and the stockpiling of rhino horns by government and private individuals.

Despite the warnings and recommendations contained in the 2009 report, trophy hunting continued, the sale of rhino from the Kruger National Park continued, the intensive breeding of rhinos for their horns continued and in 2017 the South African government legalised the rhino horn trade in South Africa.

In order to accurately understand the total decline in numbers of rhinos in South Africa over the past two decades, we need to question the entire sustainable use policy framework which drives current management decisions. According to Article 2 of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity sustainable use means "the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations". However, according to researcher [Jared Kukura](#) its core philosophy is economic, not ecological, denying that the exploitation of wildlife through hunting and trade is a leading cause of the current biodiversity crisis.

The devastating loss of rhinos in South Africa is, as this report indicates, a result of poor and questionable management decisions, the direct involvement of South African professional trophy hunters, rhino breeders, veterinarians and nature conservation officials.

Unchecked, these rogues have orchestrated the killing of rhinos in private and state conservation areas. There have also been suspicious thefts from rhino horn stockpiles, some individuals have been involved in complex schemes that have bypassed existing conservation regulations, exploited loopholes and used legal wildlife trade channels to export rhino horn.

We question why the South African government exported live rhino from the Kruger National Park to trophy hunting farms, and why South Africa allows the export of live rhinos to China and to Vietnam, two countries who consume rhino horn.

South Africa's recent history has been marred by corruption, a structural pattern of systemic state capture, scandals and the systematic, organised breakdown of the justice system. Wild animals are also victims of corruption and state capture and it is not a coincidence that the rhino population free fall occurred during the ten-year Jacob Zuma administration (2009 – 2018).



## THE SURVIVAL OF THE RHINO SPECIES - A NUMBERS GAME

[The southern white rhino](#) is the most populous of all rhino species, its range once spanned the entire southern part of the African continent. The white rhino was almost trophy hunted to extinction and by the nineteenth century—the only surviving population was found in KwaZulu Natal in South Africa.

Successful conservation efforts restored populations resulted in the largest number of rhinos occurring in the Kruger National Park and Hluhluwe iMfolozi National Park (HiP) in KwaZulu Natal with additional numbers in other public and privately owned reserves.

According to [a study](#) conducted for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Version 2012.2 smaller populations of white rhino were reintroduced in Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique. White rhinos were also introduced outside their former ranges in Kenya, Uganda and Zambia.

Populations of [black rhino](#) were once widespread from the Cape of Good Hope to Angola through to Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan on the east of Africa and to Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire on the west and north of Africa. The killing of black rhino reduced the total number of rhino to approximately 2400 rhino by 1995. Black rhino now occupy a much smaller area in South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana and Swaziland.

From 2008 rhino populations have borne the brunt of the increased black-market demand for rhino horn.

Exact information about the size of a population of rhinos is extremely important for the determination of conservation biology and the evaluation of conservation and protection priorities.



## 1998 -2020

### 1998

The National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998, often abbreviated to NEMA, is the statutory framework used to enforce [Section 24 of the Constitution](#) of the Republic of South Africa. [This Act](#) was implemented with the intention to provide for co-operative environmental governance by the establishment of principles for the decision-making process on matters affecting the environment.

Section 24 of the Constitution states *South Africans have the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being, and the right to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that prevent pollution and ecological degradation, promote conservation; and secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.*

Ecologically sustainable development can be achieved through the use of the precautionary principle; if there are threats of serious irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty [should not be used](#) as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

### 2004

[The National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004](#) was brought about with the intention to provide for the management and conservation of South Africa's biodiversity within the framework of the National Environmental Management Act of 1998 in order to protect species that warrant national protection.

The white and black rhino were listed under schedule B1: Protected Species–Indigenous species of high conservation value or national importance that require national protection.

### 2005

The African Rhino Specialist Group [reported in 2005](#) that South Africa had 1285 Black rhinos in the wild, Zimbabwe 535 and Kenya 440. Furthermore, the group reported that there were 11 320 [Southern White rhino](#) in the wild, consisting of 379 populations located in eight different countries. The largest population of white rhino, 4890, were resident in the [Kruger National Park](#) and [HiP](#) with a population of 1900.

The authors of the aforementioned Report stated that the numbers of white rhino in the wild exceed the current recommended *minimum viable populations*.

The *minimum viable population* is [defined by Shaffer](#) as the smallest isolated population of species in a given habitat having a 99% chance of remaining in existence for a thousand years, despite the foreseeable effects of demographic stochasticity, genetic drift, random changes in the environment and natural catastrophes. Shaffer chose the percentage and the time scale to represent what most scientists considered a good chance of survival of a species.

### 2008

On the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2008 the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism included some species of wild animals—including white and black rhino—on a Threatened or Protected Species List known as the TOPS List.

Rhino hunters required a special TOPS Hunting Permit. The hunting outfitter needed to take out a TOPS Hunting Permit prior to the hunt and certain criteria had to be listed: the hunters name, physical address, farm on which

the hunt would take place, length of time. [The original signed TOPS Hunting Permit](#) was required for inspection before the hunted rhino trophy would be issued with an export permit.

According to [media reports](#) there was a huge upsurge in rhino poaching in southern Africa since January 2008. These incidents took place in the Kruger National Park and the HiP in KwaZulu Natal. The Kruger National Park said that 140 rhinos were illegally killed in South Africa in 2008/9. In the same report it states that there were [12000 rhino in the Kruger National Park](#).

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2012, an article was published on [page nine](#) of The Herald newspaper titled *The Boeremafia Connection* written by Julian Rademeyer, an investigative journalist and former Herald and Weekend Post staffer. His book *Killing for Profit* was the first in-depth investigation into the multi-billion rand global wildlife trade. [In this article](#) Rademeyer states that Dawie Groenewald bought dozens of rhinos from SANParks. "Through the years, they have been the biggest supplier of rhinos in South Africa" Groenewald told Rademeyer. "I don't believe they can make a profit without selling rhino. In 2008, SANParks made R22-million from rhino sales to private entities. The following year, the amount increased to R52-million. Many of the biggest buyers were also the biggest organisers of rhino hunts for Vietnamese clients. Dawie Groenewald also said that he bought forty-four rhinos from SANParks between 2008 and 2009. Ten bulls and thirty-four cows and calves. Prosecutors contend that at least forty-eight rhinos were bought and moved to Prachtig between June and December 2008.

## 2009

The trade in rhino horn was banned internationally in 1977. South Africa allowed rhino horn to be traded internally but the rhino horn could not be legally exported. Hunting trophies could be exported provided they met certain criteria and remained the personal property of the hunters who shot the rhino.

In response to the growing evidence that criminal networks were exploiting the domestic trade loophole to buy up loose stock of rhino horn from game farmers and smuggling the horn out of South Africa to be sold on the black market in South East Asia. Some horn was smuggled out via diplomatic pouches.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism [Marthinus Christoffel Johannes van Schalkwyk](#) announced [a national moratorium on the trade of individual rhinoceros horns](#) and any derivatives or products of the horns.

According to Pretoria High Court Judge, Francis Legodi, in 2015 the South African government failed to follow proper public consultation procedures before imposing the aforementioned moratorium.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2009 the South African government announced the definition of the [norms and standards](#) for the marking of rhino horn and the hunting of white rhino for trophy hunting which the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) [gazetted](#) on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2009 (No. 32426 in vol. 529).

All live rhino, inclusive of privately or state owned, that was sold and transported after the commencement of the norms and standards had to be micro-chipped in the horn. All individual detached rhino horns in private or state possession had to be micro-chipped according to the Threatened or Protected Species regulations (TOPS).

Specific information such as the weight, length, circumference as well as photographs of the horn had to accompany applications for the possession of such horn to the provincial conservation authority responsible for the issuance of TOPS permits. These requirements were applicable to all individual detached horns obtained after the commencement of the norms and standards.

[All rhino trophy hunts had to be strictly controlled by the means of an individual TOPS hunting permit](#) issued by the issuing authorities had to be referred to the Department of Environmental Affairs for recommendation within time frames stipulated in TOPS.

A person was only allowed to hunt and export one rhino for trophy purposes per year. The Department of Environment said they would compile a database of hunters to ensure that the hunter did not hunt more than one rhino, using the different provinces in South Africa.

The horns had to be micro-chipped on the property where the hunt took place immediately after the hunt if not already micro-chipped.

The hunting permit and copy of the professional hunting register had to accompany the rhino products when transported between destinations. The CITES export permit for the white rhino trophy had to be endorsed by a conservational official at the point of exit prior to the export of the trophy.

## 2010

### **CITES The Illegal Killing of Rhinoceros in South Africa**

At the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties held in Doha, in Qatar between the 13th and 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2010 South Africa submitted a document titled [the Illegal Killing of Rhinoceros in South Africa](#).

The document confirmed that white and black rhino in South Africa are managed in terms of the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act, and the subsequent Threatened or Protected Species Regulations and the National Norms and Standards for the Marking of Rhinoceros Horn and the Hunting of White Rhinoceros for Trophy Hunting Purposes. The International trade in rhinos would be controlled by the National CITES Regulations from the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

The document confirmed that white rhino were listed as APPENDIX II of the Convention on International Trade with the Annotation which read: for the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations and hunting trophies. South Africa, the document from South Africa stated in March of 2010, had the largest white rhino population on the continent with an estimated population of 18,000 rhino.

The document acknowledged the fact that from February 2008 to February 2010 there was a dramatic increase in the illegal killing of rhino for their horns, "current levels of illegal killing of rhino in South Africa was not endangering the white rhino population figures which were provided in the [2009 IUCN/TRAFFIC Report](#) ".

However, the document stated that if the illegal killing of rhino continued at the 2008 rate South African white rhino mortality rate would exceed the natality rate.

The net annual growth rate of the white rhino population in South Africa was measured at 6.6%.

### **Rhino Summit**

Buyelwa Sonjica, the then Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs hosted a [Rhino Summit](#), which was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October 2010 to discuss the upsurge in the illegal killing of rhino in South Africa and the implementation of the National Strategy for the Safety and Security of Rhinoceros Populations in South Africa.

[The Minister stated](#) that the net annual growth rate of the white rhino population is 6.6 percent. South Africa she said had 19000 white rhino and 1750 black rhino. The Minister also said that the rhino population in South Africa was being threatened by an upsurge in the illegal killing of rhino and the leakage of illegally obtained rhino horn stocks into the international illegal trade. The escalation of illegal killing and the leakage of both legal and illegal rhino horns held in various private and government stockpiles showed no indication of decreasing.

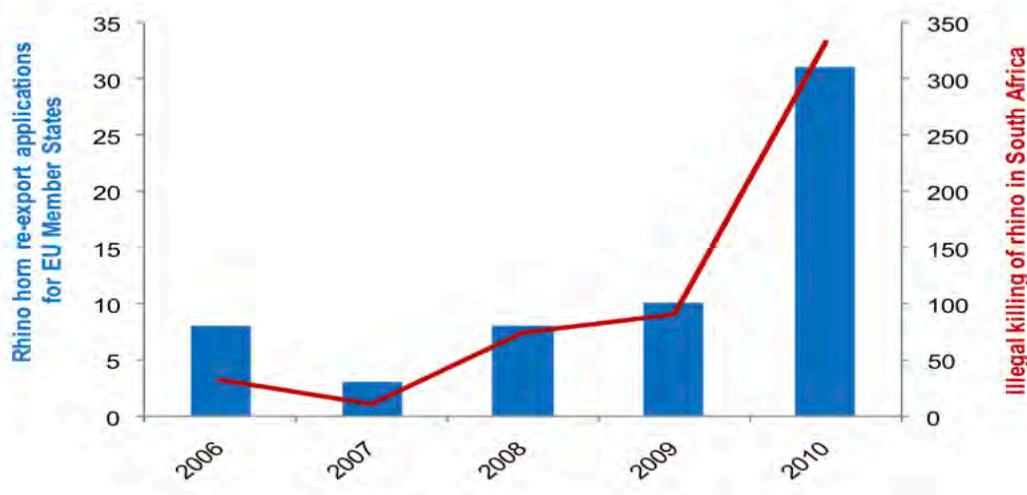
## 2011

### European Union Members of CITES highlight Rhino Hunting in South Africa

At the sixty-first meeting of the Standing Committee of CITES held in Geneva in Switzerland from the 15-19<sup>th</sup> of August in 2011 [a document was submitted by Hungary on behalf of the European Union and its Members States](#).

The document was prepared by EU and its Member States in order to bring to the attention of the CITES Standing Committee the significant increase in the number of applications for the export and re-export of rhino horn from the Member States of the European Union and the apparent correlation with the increase in the level of the illegal killing of rhino over the same period, both driven by increased market demand.

The document highlighted the fact that since 2008 there had been a significant increase in the demand for rhino horn and the illegal killing of rhino. The table below shows EU Member State applications for the re-export of rhino horn over the period 2006-2010 against the illegal killing of rhino in South Africa over the same timeframe. It can be concluded from these results that there existed a strong, positive relationship between market demand and the illegal killing of rhino.



This [diagram](#) represents the increase in application by members of the European Union for the re-export of rhino horn. This forms part of the document submitted by Hungary on behalf of the EU member states at the CITES 61<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee held in Geneva 15-19 of August 2011.

There had been a recent resurgence in the demand for rhino horn which was linked to a rise in illegal killing of rhino especially in southern and east Africa and with an associated rise in and prices paid for legitimate trophy hunting of rhinos in southern Africa but in which the client was less interested in the trophy than in the horn. Such trophy hunts had increased in price from \$19500 USD in 2005 to \$80 000 in 2008. This increased demand led to increased sourcing of rhino horns in private ownership, typically as antique specimens and as hunting trophies acquired before CITES came into effect in 1975.

These horns typically entered international trade with destinations in consuming countries in East Asia. A significant proportion of this trade is illegal; an estimated minimum of 1 500 rhino horns entered illegal international trade from Africa to Asia from 2006 to 2009.

The CITES Secretariat considered that the illegal trade in rhino horn the most serious criminal activities that CITES was facing and that this illegal trade showed signs of criminal groups, money laundering, corruption of officials and sophisticated smuggling across international borders.



At the same meeting the IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group presented [a four page document](#). They stated that despite the increased levels of illegal killing since 2008 the numbers of white and black rhino in Africa had increased to an estimated 20 160 and 4880 by the end of 2010.

South Africa, they said, remained the major white rhino range State conserving 93.2% of this species with numbers increasing to 18 800 by the end of 2010. Namibia and Kenya each had 300 rhinos. Zimbabwe rhino had dropped below 300. Numbers in Botswana, Swaziland and Uganda continued to grow and rhino had been introduced to Zambia.

Black rhino numbered 4880 in Africa at the end of 2010. With 2 200 in South Africa and 1920 in Namibia, 740 in Kenya. Black rhinos also occurred in Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Swaziland, Angola and Mozambique.

The illegal killing of rhino in certain range states continued to be of concern. However, they noted that South Africa's increased law enforcement effort, the formation of the [National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit](#).

The African Rhino Specialist Group reported that the number of rhinos being killed illegally killed in South Africa remained unacceptably high and that these numbers could negate the current population growth.

## 2013

### **Kenya's Proposal to Stop Trophy Hunting of White Rhino at CITES CoP16**

[Kenya](#) made a proposal at CITES CoP13 which was held in Bangkok between the 3 and 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2013. They stated that the illegal killing of rhino and the legally acquired horn from trophy hunting in Africa were threatening the survival of the species in Africa. Kenya was of the firm opinion that the export of white rhino trophies from hunting should not be allowed.

Evidence suggested that hunting trophies offered a legal pathway for criminal networks to obtain rhino horn legally which was then illegally sold for medicinal and ornamental purposes.

Kenya argued that the continued practise of legal trophy hunting of rhino may have been stimulating demand. This white rhino trophy hunting ban should remain in place until at least 2018 in order to reduce the infiltration of legal horn entering the illegal market.

[South Africa responded to Kenya's proposal](#) saying that South Africa was fast approaching the limit of available habitat for white and black rhino on state owned land. This meant, according to the Department of Environmental Affairs, that in order to continue to grow the species, new habitat within South Africa or the expansion of existing ranges in other states would soon be required.

South Africa listed the number of applications to hunt white rhino as follows:

2009 – 111 applications received  
2010 – 166 applications received  
2011 – 222 applications received  
2012 – 91 applications received

The South African government said that some of the reserves managed by government entities were reaching their productive carrying capacities for white rhino and there was a need to remove 'surplus' animals to maintain maximum population growth rates. Many of these white rhinos, according to the government, were removed and sold to the private sector.

[South Africa was opposed](#) to Kenya's suggestion of a moratorium on the trophy hunting of white rhino and objected strongly to the proposal. The Department of Environmental Affairs argued that if the international ban was approved conservation agencies and private rhino owners would lose considerable income which they said they needed to protect rhino populations. They highlighted the fact that South Africa was the home to the largest

number of rhinos the in world, and this was largely due to their policy of “sustainable utilisation” of wildlife, where private and landowners and conservation organisations can benefit from the sale of trophy hunts.

In an effort to combat and eradicate the illegal trade in rhino horn South Africa had enacted various laws and ratified various international conservation conventions but with more than 800 rhinos killed in 2013 it was doubtful that these laws and conventions were adequate.

A [dissertation](#) published in 2014 determined whether the South African regulatory framework related to the illegal trade in wildlife could provide the means to regulate the illegal trade in rhino horn. The author, Neil De Wet, questioned the number of wild rhinos in South Africa—whilst the government stated that there were 20 000 he stated that environmental experts estimated the number at 16 000.



## Checking population status

Survey ≈40% of Kruger using blocks.

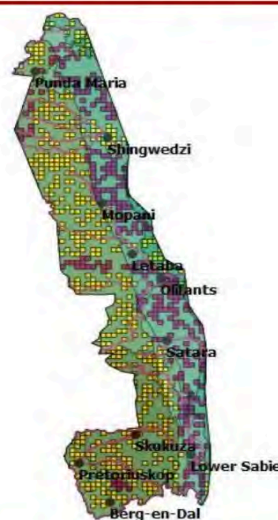
Define biases influencing estimates

Define population sizes using Jolly-Seber aerial survey estimators

Evaluate the trends in population estimates

Define optimal survey designs to detect trends

Define a survey strategy for Kruger

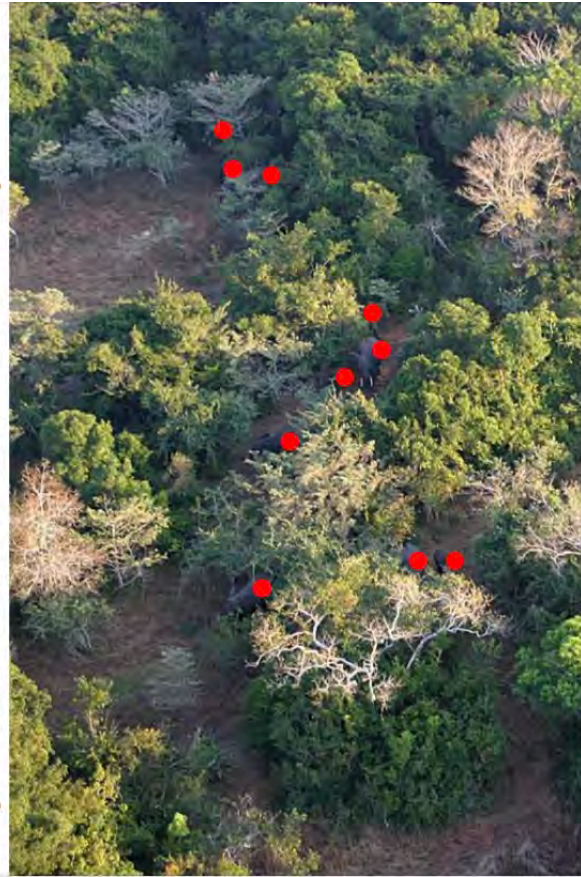


Greaver, Ferreira, Freitag-Ronaldson, Pienaar 2013

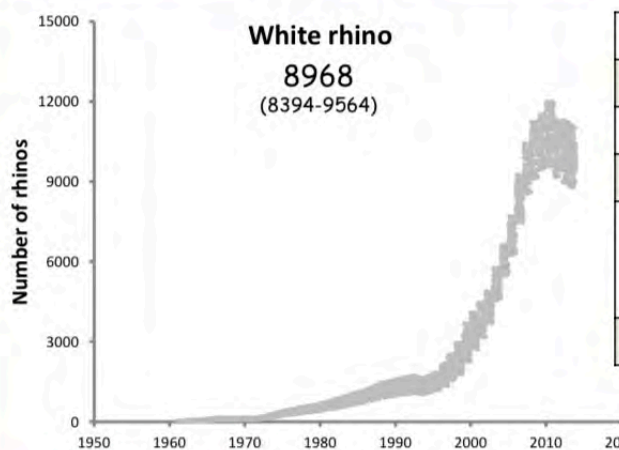
Image source: [https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/rhinopopulationstatus\\_august2014.pdf](https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/rhinopopulationstatus_august2014.pdf)

## The tenuous basis of numbers

- Observer bias
- Availability bias
- Detectability bias
- Capture bias



## STATUS OF RHINOS IN KRUGER NATIONAL PARK



YEAR	POPULATION SIZE
1960	350 (Rhino introduced from KZN)
1990s	1 000
2000s	2 000
2010	8 700 – 12 200 Predicted that by 2013 there should be 7 700 to 11 200
2013	8 400 – 9 600 (survey estimate)

Stabilization is a combination of poaching, management and ecology  
Management removals key to overall rhino population of South Africa



SECRET

5

Image Source: [https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/rhinopopulationstatus\\_august2014.pdf](https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/rhinopopulationstatus_august2014.pdf)



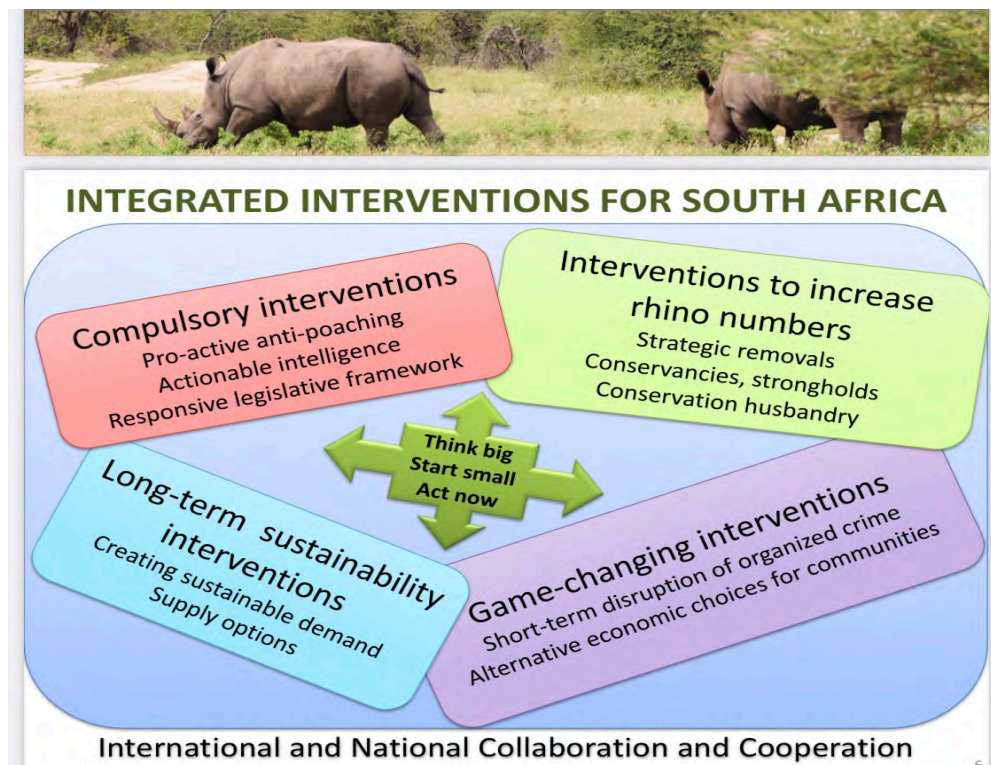


Image Source: [https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/rhinopopulationstatus\\_august2014.pdf](https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/rhinopopulationstatus_august2014.pdf)

## 2014

### The Viability of Legalising Trade in Rhino Horn in South Africa

A [technical report](#) published in 2014 stated that national populations of both white and black rhinos was increasing. The report estimated that the national population of white rhino at the end of 2011 was 19 570, with 4 971 on private land. According to this report, although the number of white rhinos in the Kruger National Park had levelled off at approximately 10 600.

They estimated the national population of black rhinos at the end of 2011 at 2 011, with an estimated 468 on private land.

	Estimated number of white rhinos	% of total
Parks and provincial reserves (excluding Kruger NP)	3,978	20.3
Private land	4,971	25.4
Kruger National Park	10,621	54.3
<b>Total in South Africa</b>	<b>19,570</b>	

[The estimated number of white rhino](#) on state, provincial and private land in South Africa at the end of 2011

On the other hand, according to the data provided by the African Rhino Specialist Group the total population of white rhinos in South Africa was 18 796 in December 2010. Assuming an average national population growth rate of 6.5%, the estimated African Rhino Specialist Group growth rate over the previous ten years, and subtracting the number of rhinos poached in 2011 which was 448. The sum would look like this:  $18\,796 \times 1.065 - 448 = 19\,570$ .

It should be noted that this could be an overestimate because according to Sam Ferreira, SANParks, *the population in the Kruger National Park, which comprises half of the national herd, was not growing.*

	Estimated number of black rhinos (2011)	% of total
Black Rhino Range Expansion Project custodian land	117	5.8
Privately owned land	351	17.5
Provincial reserves	721	35.8
SANParks (including Kruger National Park)	822	40.9
<b>Total in South Africa</b>	<b>2,011</b>	

[The estimated number of black rhino](#) on state, provincial and private land in South Africa at the end of 2011

The black rhino is listed as Critically Endangered under the international IUCN red List of Threatened Species and remains on CITES APPENDIX I with all international commercial trade in live animals and their body parts prohibited. With the exception of the approval of CITES allowing trophy hunting.

Illicit ways of obtaining rhino horn allegedly started in 2003 through trophy hunting which continued despite the TOPS regulations, which were introduced in 2007. Norms and Standards were introduced in 2009, nonetheless the killing of rhinos for their horns continued. In 2012 the norms and standards were amended. Applications for the hunting of white rhino decreased.

The second illicit method of obtaining rhino horn involved Asian nationals purchasing horns directly from private rhino owners with or without permits. Many of these horns were exported illegally.

The amount of illegal trade in rhino horn that occurred without provincial permits, before the moratorium, has not been accurately established. But by 2008 there was a potential shortfall of 1 800 kg between the amount of rhino horn that should have been in registered private stockpiles and the amount that was officially recorded in private stockpiles.

The aforementioned [report](#), titled *Sustainable Rhino Horn Production at the Pointy End of the Rhino Horn Trade Debate*, concluded that there was no simple solution to the illegal killing of rhino which had started in earnest in South Africa in 2008. The authors concluded that the South African government should insist that all private rhino owners be compliant with the TOPS regulations as well as the current norms and standards before considering the lifting of the national moratorium or making an approach to lift the international trade in rhino horn.

### Kruger National Park Rhino Sales

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2014, the [Sunday Times](#) published a report stating that the SANParks board had decided to sell rhino on auction and that they would start moving them to safety as soon as possible. [SANParks confirmed](#) this decision even though the chairperson had [denied](#) that the rhinos would be sold and moved three months earlier.

According to a [media report](#) the Kruger National Park invited written bids for groups of rhinos numbering 20 or more, in a plan to move 500 rhinos to safety to counter a wave of illegal killing for their horns.

Foreign media reports were less forgiving and said that by advertising to auction-off the rhino, the management of the Kruger National Park had [publicly admitted](#) that they were unable to protect the rhino from being killed by poachers.

## 2015

### The Kruger National Park Rhino Numbers in Crisis

In an article published by [Oxpeckers](#) on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2015, a respected wildlife veterinarian stated that he had calculated that there were more than 1500 but less than 3000 white rhinos left in the Kruger National Park.

At the time of this article, the number of white rhinos left in the Kruger National Park was a hotly contested issue and was meant to have come under scrutiny during the High Court matter about the lifting of the moratorium on the domestic trade in rhino horn.

Official numbers of white rhino in the Kruger National Park were estimated at between 8000 and 11 000 however [Dr Kobus du Toit](#) a rhino expert, wildlife veterinarian and biologist said that these numbers were impossible.

In his book titled *The Story of the White Rhinoceros*, [he said](#) that according to historical evidence, the white rhino populations in the Kruger National Park were extirpated in 1986 and were reintroduced from Hluhluwe-iMfolozi between 1963 and 1974. Du Toit calculated the current number of white rhinos using a normal mathematical growth formula. Births and natural mortalities were considered, resulting in a net growth of the population that was never more than 8% in the past. The resulting figures were drastically less than the official figures issued by SANParks. Du Toit argued that the implication for conservation is that the Kruger National Park should not risk selling rhinos to the private sector as there was no guarantee that these would not be hunted.

The reason for the discrepancy between the official numbers and his numbers, he stated, was because of incompetence and corruption.

Paul Daphne, SANParks head of communications at the time, disputed these figures, he said that regular counts were conducted and that the most recent was in 2014. The results of the 2014 survey provided an estimation of 8001 to 9290 white rhinos in the Kruger National Park. SANParks he said had full confidence in the integrity of their rhino counting methodology and the experienced team of scientists who implemented the count.

WHITE RHINO POPULATION KRUGER NATIONAL PARK								
YEAR	CALCULATED TOTAL POPULATION		AERIAL SENSUS	NUMBER SOLD	NUMBER POACHED	NUMBER REMOVED	POPULATION GROWTH	
INTRODUCTION	6%						7%	8%
1963/4*	82			0	0	0		
1968**	104			0	0	0		
1968/9*	43			0	0	0		
1969	147			0	0	0		
1972**	176			0	0	0		
1972/3*	204			0	0	0		
1973	380			0	0	0		
SENSUS	7%	8%						
1980	620	665	598	Population growth 6.4% (1973 – 1980)				
1985	880	992	919	Population growth 7.4% (1973 – 1985)				
1990	1249	1480	1381	Population growth 7.5% (1973 – 1990)				
LIVE REMOVAL								
1997	2039	2592		10	0	10	2029	2582
1998	2176	2797		24	0	24	2152	2773
1999	2279	3004		13	0	13	2266	2991
2000	2430	3240		62	0	62	2368	3178
POACHING								
2001	2540	3443		95	4	99	2441	3344
2002	2618	3623		56	20	76	2542	3547
2003	2726	3842		79	14	93	2633	3749
2004	2824	4061		80	7	87	2737	3974
2005	2935	4305		71	10	81	2854	4224
2006	3061	4576		100	17	117	2944	4459
2007	3211	4830		98	10	108	3103	4722
2008	3328	5115		98	36	134	3194	4981
2009	3426	5396		252	50	302	3124	5094
2010	3351	5518		137	146	283	3068	5235
2011	3290	5671		107	252	359	2931	5312
2012	3144	5754		73	425	498	2646	5256
2013	2838	5637		27	606	633	2205	5004
2014	2365	5420		9	827	836	1529	4585
2015	1529	4585			290 ***			
TOTAL				1391	2424	3815		

\* Introductions Natal Parks Board  
 \*\* Calculated 6% population growth (sex ratio 1:1)  
 \*\*\* 30 April 2015  
 Maximum founder population in 1973 = 380

Image source: <https://oxpeckers.org/2015/06/kruger-rhino-numbers-in-crisis-says-expert/>



## The Biodiversity Management Plan for White Rhinos

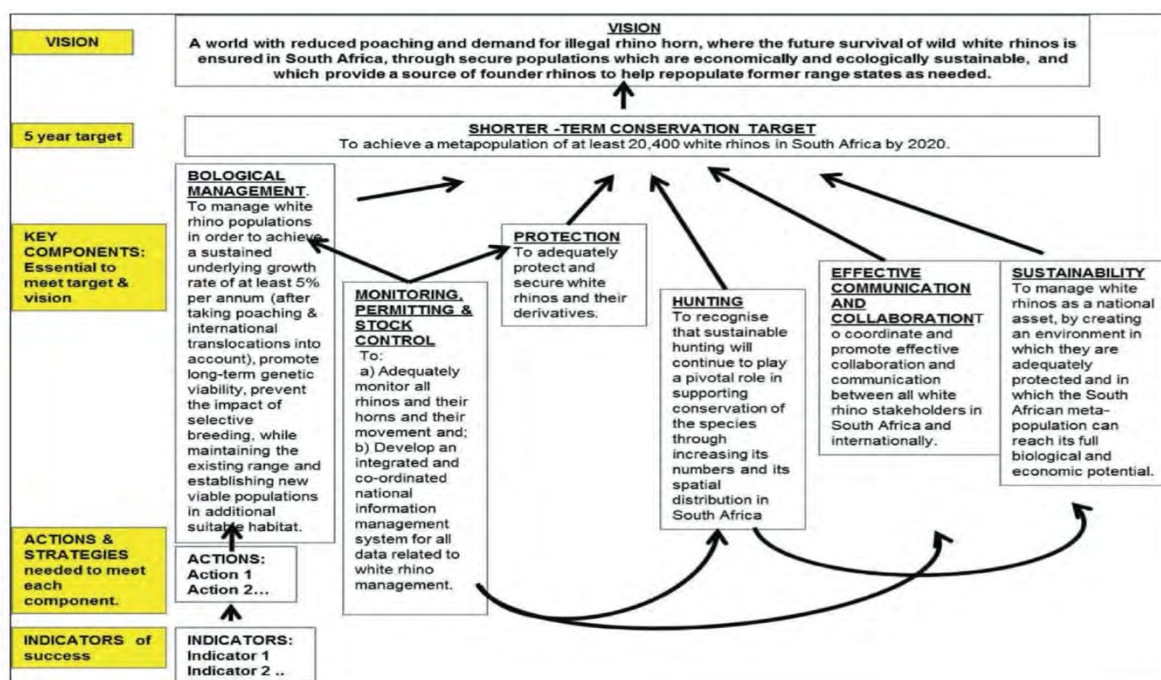
The then Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, [published](#) the Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) for white rhinoceros for public comment on the Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015. This plan allowed for the monitoring and review of actions taken to conserve species in the wild amidst a changing environment. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2015 the BMP was [gazetted](#). This plan was compiled by Knight, Emslie and Balfour.

It stated that by the beginning of 2012 the South African population of white rhino had increased to represent 93% of Africa's wild white rhinos. The Kruger National Park and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park accounted for an estimated 53% and 13% respectively of white rhino in South Africa. White rhino in the private sector represented 24% or 4520 of the national population of rhino. The South African white rhino population had increased by 6.6% per annum between 1991-2012.

The increased levels of illegal killing of rhino since 2008 was noted as a major concern *"if poaching rates continue to escalate year on year as they have been doing then this could result in numbers starting to decline in just a few years."*

The authors referenced the Rhino Summit held in 2010 and stated that development of a BMP would enhance conservation efforts with regards to the species. The development of this plan came about in response to an instruction from the Environment Parliamentary Portfolio Committee in reaction to the upsurge in illegal killing.

The declared aim of the BMP was to ensure the long-term survival in nature of the species to which the plan relates. The plan would set out key actions and strategies.



The South African white [rhino Biodiversity Management Plan structure](#) Published in the aforementioned management plan the short-term conservation target, given the poaching statistics at the time, was to achieve a national meta-population of at least 20 400 by 2020.

2016

## CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP17), Johannesburg, South Africa

In 2015, preparation for CITES CoP17, the IUCN Species Survival Commission (IUCN SSC), African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups and TRAFFIC, compiled a Report– [African and Asian Rhinoceroses – Status, Conservation and Trade](#)– for the CITES Secretariat pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP15).

According to the report—see table below— in 2015 there were a total 20 378 white rhino and a total of 5250 black rhino in Africa. The report also stated that South Africa holds 79% of Africa's rhino but that 88% of the illegal killings since 2010 took place in South Africa. They concluded that both species in the Kruger National Park were most likely declining.

**Table 1: Estimated numbers of African rhino species by country in 2015 with revised totals for 2012\* (AfRSG data in collaboration with range States).**

Estimates as of 31 Dec 2015	White Rhino <i>Ceratotherium simum</i>			Black Rhino <i>Diceros bicornis</i>				Both Species	Both Species
	Southern	Northern	Total White & Trend	Eastern	Southern-central	South-western	Total Black & Trend	Total 2015	% of Continental Rhino
	<i>C.s.simum</i>	<i>C.s.cottoni</i>	<i>C.simum</i>	<i>D.b.michaeli</i>	<i>D.b.minor</i>	<i>D.b.bicornis</i>	<i>D.bicornis</i>		
Botswana	239 ▲		239 ▲		48		48 ▲	287	1.12%
Kenya	441	3	444 ▲	678			678 ▲	1,122	4.38%
Malawi					26		26 ►	26	0.10%
Mozambique	29		29 ▲ ?		2		2 ▲	31	0.12%
Namibia	822		822 ▲			1,946	1,946 ▲	2,768	10.80%
South Africa	18,413		18,413 ▼ ?	79	1,560	254	1,893 ▲	20,306	79.23%
Swaziland	76		76 ▼		20		20 ▲	96	0.37%
Tanzania				129	4		133 ▲	133	0.52%
Uganda	15		15 ▲					15	0.06%
Zambia	10		10 ►		32		32 ▲	42	0.16%
Zimbabwe	330		330 ▲		472		472 ▲	802	3.13%
<b>2015 Total</b>	<b>20,375</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20,378</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>2,164</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>5,250</b>	<b>25,628</b>	-
2012 Total	20,604	4	20,608	799	2,061	1,959	4,819	25,427	
Diff 2012-15	-229	-1	-230	87	103	241	431	201	
Average % change/yr 2012-15	-0.4%		-0.4	+3.5	+1.6	+3.9	+2.9	+0.3	

▲ = Increase; ► = Stable; ▼ = Decline ? = Degree of uncertainty as to significance of suspected trend \* = in light of additional new information

Image Source: <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/WorkingDocs/E-CoP17-68-A5.pdf>

## 2017

### The Status of Rhinoceros in South Africa's National Parks

An [article](#) published in *Koedoe* in January 2017 stated that SANParks is the custodian of 49% of South African white rhinos and 31% of the black rhino populations. Information on rhino populations sizes were collated from 2011 – 2015 in seven national parks.

According to the article's findings, the illegal killing in the Kruger National Park disrupted the ability of SANParks to achieve its contribution to South Africa's rhino conservation targets for 2020. In order to try to achieve targets it was suggested that SANParks continue to implement compulsory anti-poaching and innovative biologically management interventions in the Kruger National Park.

The authors argued that it was imperative that SANParks undertakes annual assessments of the rhino population status in order to detect trends in population growth. Ear notching, genetic markers and technology-based observations were suggested for black rhino and aerial counts for white rhino. SANParks needed to ensure that funding was available to undertake these surveys and that they had the capacity to perform the analysis of the findings.

## 2018

### Scientific Authority of South Africa Non-Detriment Finding Assessment for Black Rhinos

[The notice](#) issued by the Minister of the Environment, Forestry and Fisheries on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2019 states that black rhinos occurred in 69 state, private and communal reserves and game farms in South Africa. According to the African Rhino Specialist Group the total number of black rhino was 1893 at the end of 2015. 1382 (73%) and 511 (27%) occur on state-owned and private land respectively.



While black rhino populations in most other African range states had declined over the last three generations (43.5 years) the numbers of black rhinoceros in South Africa have been increasing.

The illegal killing of rhino is the most immediate threat to South Africa's black rhino population. On average 2.4% of the black rhino population was being illegally killed at the time of this report and was considered sustainable.

Black rhinos were exported to Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe as part of a conservation expansion program driven by the SADC Regional Rhinoceros Conservation Strategy and the African Rhinoceros Conservation Plan.

According to this scientific assessment, conservation revenues could be improved by allowing the trophy hunting of additional black rhino bulls. Furthermore the scientists stated that the legal hunting of black rhinoceros is beneficial to the conservation and protection of the species in South Africa. There are surplus males that could be hunted, CITES quota of five hunting trophies could be increased.

## 2019

### Scientific Authority of South Africa Non-Detriment Finding Assessment for White Rhinos

In August 2019 the Minister of the Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Barbara Creecy, gazetted the [consultation notice](#) for her intention to repeal the 2016 non-detriment findings (NDFs) for white rhinos and to publish new NDFs. According to the 2019 Draft NDF:

- the South Africa population of white rhino is included in APPENDIX II of the CITES for the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in live specimens to appropriate and acceptable destinations and the export of hunting trophies.
- The IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group confirmed that the total number of white rhinos in South Africa was 17 208 individuals at the end of 2015. 12 273 (72%) and 4 735 (28%) occurred on state-owned and private land respectively.
- The largest population occur in the greater Kruger National Park and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. The Kruger National Park population is estimated at 8875 in 2015.
- An additional 1517, as of 2017, white rhino reside at John Hume's captive breeding facility under semi-intensive management.
- The future trend in the population was noted as being unpredictable due to the illegal killing of rhino. According to the scientists very good population estimates were in existence.
- Between 2005 and 2016 a total of 774 live white rhino were exported from South Africa, 27% of these exports were to zoos and 26% to breeding facilities, 33% for exported for re-introduction purposes. The main destination countries were Namibia, China and Botswana.
- Trophy hunting removes surplus males, whilst generating important conservation revenue. 1115 rhino trophies were exported between 2005 and 2015 to the USA, China, Poland and the Russian Federation.
- Trophy hunting poses a low risk to the survival of the white rhino and incentivizes the conservation and protection of the species in South Africa.

The authors of this notice were of opinion that income derived from the sale of rhino horn could be used to protect the species. They mentioned that there was a plethora of peer-reviewed papers published in support of the legal international trade of rhino horn.

### CITES CoP 18, Geneva, Switzerland

A 2019 CITES Standing Committee and Secretariat [Report](#) for CoP stated that:

- The annual number of rhinos killed illegally in South Africa continued to decline since the peak in 2014.
- South Africa remained as be the country implicated in the highest number of rhino horn seizures.
- Rhino trophy hunting continued to play an important role in the conservation of white rhino through the revenue it generates.

- There were very large accumulated discrepancies regarding the data on exports of rhino trophies reported by the South Africa to certain countries, in particular the Russian Federation and the United States of America. The report further states that other such discrepancies continue to note for Canada, China, Denmark, Hungary and Spain.
- Trophy hunters from Kuwait seemed to have engaged in hunting in South Africa but that export of the trophies had not been reported.

**Table 1: Estimated numbers of white and black rhino by species and subspecies/genetic management cluster and by country as of the end of 2017, with continental totals for end of 2012 and 2015\*.** (Based on AfRSG data in collaboration with range States. Country trends are over the five-year period 2012-2017.)

Species/ Subspecies/ Management Cluster	White rhino (WR) <i>Ceratotherium simum</i>				Black rhino (BR) <i>Diceros bicornis</i>					Total
	<i>C.s.cottoni</i> (Northern)	<i>C.s.simum</i> (Southern)	TotalWR	Trend	<i>D.b.bicornis</i> (South-western)	<i>D.b.michaeli</i> (Eastern)	<i>D.b.minor</i> (South-eastern)	TotalBR	Trend	
Botswana		452	452	Up			50	50	Up	502
(Côte d'Ivoire) **		1	1							1
Kenya	3	510	513	Up		745		745	Up	1,258
Malawi							28	28	Up	28
Mozambique		29	29				1	1		30
Namibia		975	975	Up	1,857			1,857	Up	2,832
Rwanda						19		19	Up (New )	19
(Senegal) **		3	3							3
South Africa		15,625	15,625	Down	331	83	1,632	2,046	Up	17,671
eSwatini		66	66	Down			21	21	Up	87
Tanzania						155	5	160	Up	160
Uganda		22	22	Up						22
Zambia		14	14	Up			48	48	Up	62
Zimbabwe		367	367	Up			520	520	Up	887
End 2017 total	3	18,064	18,067	Down	2,188	1,002	2,305	5,495	Up	23,562
End 2015 total*	3	20,053	20,056	Down	2,212	887	2,115	5,214	Up	25,270
End 2012 total*	4	21,316	21,320	20,165 in 2010	1,968	799	2,078	4,845	4,880 in 2010	26,165

\* In light of information obtained since CoP17, 2015 totals have been revised slightly down (white rhino -1.6%, black rhino -0.7%), while 2012 totals have been revised slightly up (white rhino +3.5%, black rhino +0.5%). 2010 estimates remain as reported in CoP16 (Doc 16.54.2A2). \*\*Countries out of native range.

Image Credit: <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/18/doc/E-CoP18-083-01.pdf>

Responding to feedback by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) held in November 2019, to interested stakeholders on the outcomes of proposals submitted by South Africa to CoP18, the EMS Foundation published an article titled [South Africa's Positional Play at CITES is Poor Form](#) in which we noted that South Africa had succeeded in changing the way in which the quota for black rhino trophy hunting is determined in South Africa. Instead of being fixed at 5 animals per year the number was reset to 0.5% of the total black rhino population, which at the time based on estimated figures, relates to about 10 animals.

### Offer to Purchase Black Rhino from the Kruger National Park

In May 2019, SANParks [publicly advertised](#) and invited prospective bidders to submit offers to purchase "some or all of the Black Rhino from SANParks".

### African Rhino Specialist Group Chair Report

The [African Rhino Specialist Group Chair report for 2019](#) stated that the illegal killing of rhino in South Africa had continued to decline and drew attention to the 15% decline in estimated white rhino numbers over five years 2012-2017, a decline that had largely occurred in South Africa's Kruger National Park. It was explained that this, coupled with some carcasses going undetected, meant that the relative percentage of the white rhino population poached in the KNP remained at unsustainably high levels despite significant declines in reported absolute poaching. The report also noted that the South Africa had successfully changed its black hunting quota from its previous quota of five rhino to not exceed 0.5% per annum.

## South African Government Report Back on Rhino Poaching, July 2019

On the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019 DEFF [released a report](#) stating that the Integrated Strategic Management of Rhinoceros was continuing to deliver successes. This integrated approach was adopted by Cabinet in 2014 and it is implemented through collaboration between the Departments of Environmental Affairs, Justice and Correctional Services, Defence, State Security, and the SA Police Service alongside institutions such as SANParks, SARS and the National Prosecuting Authority.

The report described the *Intensive Protection Zones* for their key rhino populations which were established with the support of the Peace Parks Foundation. These IPZ's were operated with Tactical Operations Centres with sensor technology that gives immediate notification to reaction teams. We are aware of such zones in KwaZulu-Natal, are these IPZ's and Tactical Operations Centres also operational in the Kruger National Park?

The report noted the arrests of poachers and the high-profile rhino poaching cases on the current court roll.

The report referred to the decline in rhino numbers recorded at the end of 2017. White rhinos in South Africa declined by 51% in the Kruger National Park and 26% in other state-owned parks and game reserves from 2012-2017. Precise estimates were not available for the number of rhinos on private land, available data suggested that the number of rhinos on private land in South Africa increased by 27%.

As part of interventions to ensure long term sustainability of rhinos South Africa recommended the export of a total of 105 live rhino from South Africa between January 2018 and March 2019. These exports were for both zoological purposes and for the reintroduction to range states which includes Botswana, Namibia, the Kingdom of eSwatini and Zambia.

How many of these rhinos are still alive?

## 2020

### SANParks Annual Report 2019/2020

On page 98 of the 264-page [SANParks Annual Report for 2019/2020](#), is a section titled *rhinos*. According to the report:

- South Africa has adopted an integrated rhino management strategy.
- SANParks has implemented anti-poaching and biological management operations in several national parks
- SANParks has contributed to the South African Rhino Management Group and African Rhino Specialist Group, and the review of policies, legislation and practise on matters relating to handling and management, breeding, hunting and trade of rhino.
- During 2019/2020 rhino monitoring and rhino surveys were conducted and the findings were provided to the African Rhino Specialist Group for international reporting.
- SANParks contributes 34.4% and 34.9% respectively of South Africa's black and white rhino populations.
- Primarily due to poaching in the Kruger National Park, one black rhino sub-species and the white rhino species have declined over the past decade.

The 2019 estimates for the rhino population in the Kruger National Park were 268 black rhino and 3549 white rhinos.

The Report concluded with this sentence: "With births equalling combined natural and poaching deaths for the first time in five years, this bodes well for future population growth."

According to [Professor Keith Somerville](#) the 2019 figures released in the aforementioned Report confirm that since 2011 the white rhino numbers have dropped from 10 621 to 3 549 and black rhino numbers have dropped from 415 to 268 in the Kruger National Park.

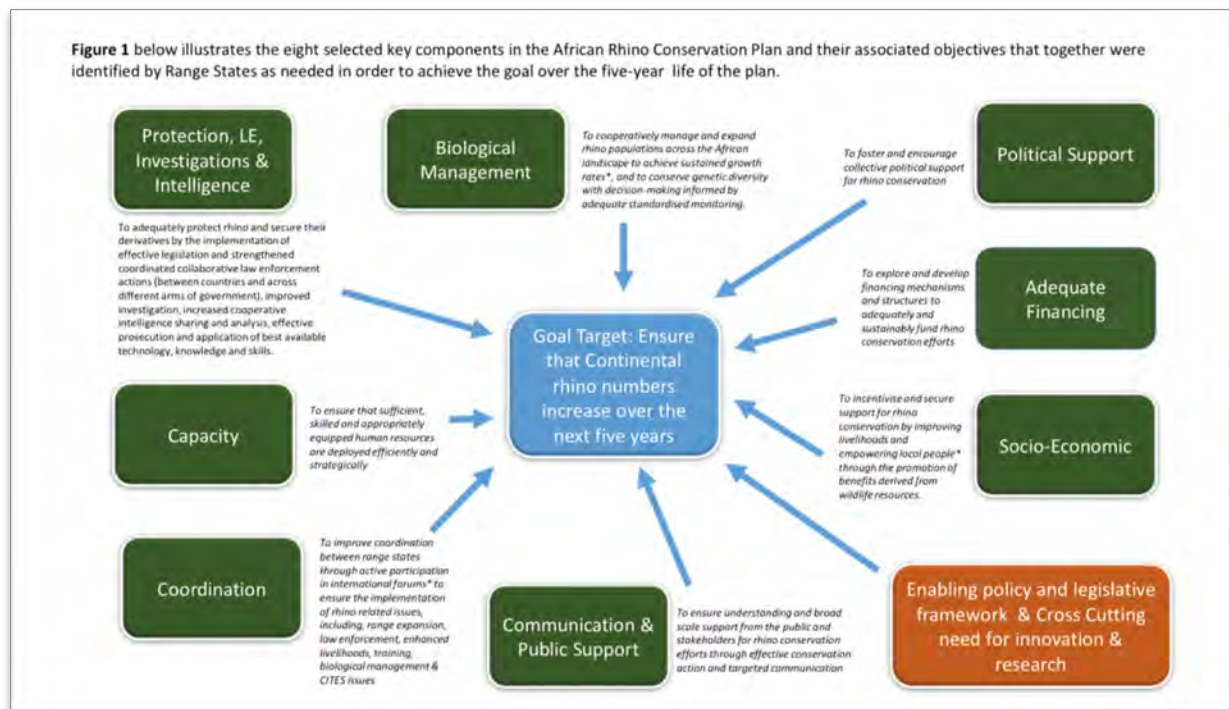
[The official figures in 2017](#) showed 5142 white rhinos and 507 black rhinos. That means that over the past two years there was a significant decline in rhino numbers despite the rate of illegal killing of rhino supposedly having fallen.

In 2017 the IUCN estimated the total world population of white rhino, all of Africa was 18064. A drop of 1593 rhino in the Kruger National Park, the area where most of the white rhino live, suggests that the total number of wild white rhino may have fallen to under 16 500.

The fall in black rhino in the Kruger National Park amounts to 2.5 percent of the world's black rhino numbers and according to Somerville this is cause for serious concern.

## Rhino Range States

African rhino range States attended meetings held in 2014 and 2015 in South Africa to develop a continental rhino conservation plan. [African Range State's African Rhino Conservation Plan](#). The plan sought to identify and focus on areas where collective co-operative work would enhance rhino conservation which included the sharing and analysis of intelligence information, boosting of political will and support for rhino conservation across the African continent.



[African Range State's African Rhino Conservation Plan](#) - South African Department of the Environment

The target goal of at least 5% per annum was the agreed optimum figure however the upsurge of illegal killing made this an unachievable goal and adjusted target for the African range states was to increase black rhino and white rhino numbers over the following five years until 2021.

This plan was developed and drafted by the IUCN African Specialist Group. On Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2016 IUCN announced that African rhino conservation received a major boost with [the launch of the continent wide African Rhino Conservation Plan](#), led by South Africa and the International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission's African Rhino Specialist Group.

The range states included: Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe and previous range state Angola.

## Summation

The Kruger National Park was considered the stronghold of Africa's white rhino and also the epicentre of the unabated illegal killing spree since 2008.

Official transparency surrounding the exact rhino population figures has been problematic. Historically the Department of Environmental Affairs has preferred to release figures related to the number of rhinos illegally killed.

The illegal killing of rhino in the Kruger National Park has slowed down considerably in recent years, there are far fewer rhinos left to be killed. It is more difficult to find the remaining rhino in the vast Kruger National Park, the killers are more at risk of being caught the longer they are active in park.

The global pandemic COVID-19 resulted in the closure of provincial and international borders which would have acted as a deterrent for the killers and traffickers. The EMS Foundation has suggested in an open public forum to Minister Creecy that some of the monitoring measures in place during the pandemic lockdown should become permanent, these would offer better security for rhino and all South Africans and at the same time create much needed employment.

Unfortunately, as this report highlights we cannot ignore the fact that the very people who should be protecting our wildlife are in fact their greatest enemy.

The SANParks Annual General 2019/2020 Report, released at the beginning of 2021, included information about the *estimated number of surviving rhinos* in the Kruger National Park. The global outcry was not unexpected.

The reliability of the benchmark population counts for the wild black and white rhino in the state- owned National Parks in South Africa needs to be questioned, we have offered information which raises important questions about the accuracy of historic population numbers.

The African range state Botswana, once heralded as a safe haven for South African rhino has suffered enormous losses of rhino due to the onslaught of illegal killing. Their government continues to deny this fact.

Institutionalised state corruption in South Africa repurposed the country's government institutions towards individual enrichment. We would be naive to believe that state capture did not negatively affect South Africa's wildlife environment. Not only do we have to question whether the collapse of the criminal justice system influenced effective prosecution in the wildlife sector, we need to examine carefully, and retrospectively the decisions related to the management of wildlife. Why did South Africa ignore the interventions of the EU and Kenya at CITES with regard to trophy hunting?

Can we deduce, in hindsight, with some degree of certainty that the government exaggerated the rhino population in the Kruger National Park?



## LICENSED TO KILL

The information contained in this report has been compiled from previously published journals, reports and articles. This is a showcase of previously completed work by investigative journalists, which has been unearthed and sewn together with a common cause of dedication to exposing the whole truth.

### Peter Thormahlen

In 2010, the then Deputy Director of Environmental Affairs and Tourism [Sonja Meintjes believed that trophy hunting would be helpful to the conservation of the black rhino species](#). A controversial submission, on behalf of South Africa, to secure permission to hunt five black male rhinos per year, was made at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora which was held in Bangkok in 2004. The submission was successful.

One of the first legal black rhino hunts, organised after the 2004 CITES decision, took place on Mauricedale, a farm owned by rancher and rhino breeder John Hume. He had bought [six black rhinos](#) from the KwaZulu Natal Wildlife authority in 1996.

Mauricedale is located in Mbombela, the capital of Mpumalanga Province in South Africa. The 6,600-hectare farm is situated south of the Kruger National Park. According to the [website](#) John Hume bought this, his first game farm, in 1992.

[Mauricedale was advertised for sale on auction](#) in September 2019 but apparently not a single [bid](#) was received. Mauricedale, according to the auction advert, offers a twenty-six room lodge and a variety of wild animals, including buffalo, nyala, giraffe and hippo. The property has extensive farm structures including workshops and a fully equipped abattoir.

According to John Hume's website, he started breeding rhinos in 1993. In 2008 he relocated some of the rhino from the Mauricedale farm to a second farm located in the North West Province of South Africa. This location is situated further away from the Kruger National Park and Mozambique, an area, he believed offered better security options for his rhinos. In 2009 he registered the Buffalo Dream Ranch which is, according to the website, is located on Elandslaagte Farm in Klerksdorp, and described as the first registered captive breeding facility for white rhino in South Africa.

Thormahlen and Cochran Safaris South African concession is located on the Mauricedale Game Reserve. Described as a Professional Hunter, Peter Thormahlen began his hunting career in 1996, Charlie Cochran, a client, approached Peter with a partnership agreement which led to the establishment of *Thormahlen and Cochran Safaris*, [www.africatrophyhunting.com](http://www.africatrophyhunting.com) advertises that their head-office is situated in Nelspruit, in Mpumalanga Province and their Namibian operational headquarters are situated in Windhoek.

Peter Thormahlen, [procured a client from the USA](#) and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2005 the first recorded black rhino was killed by a trophy hunter since the ban had been lifted in South Africa.



First Black Rhino Trophy Hunt July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005, in South Africa. Image source: Peter Thormahlen Facebook Page, photo section <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=139406029772324&set=a.139406056438988&type=3>

According to *Africa Geographic*, [Thormahlen was prosecuted](#) for organising hunts that supplied the illegal rhino horn trade. In 2006, his Vietnamese trophy hunting client confessed that he did not know how to shoot when questioned at the Loskop Dam Nature Reserve. There was a second prosecution involving Thormahlen in Limpopo province in 2008. According to [reports](#), Tom Dreyer, [defended Thormahlen](#) and this particular charge was dismissed.

Thormahlen, [according to an article in Bloomberg](#) Businessweek in 2010, led hunts for one or two black rhinos at Mauricedale and government reserves in KwaZulu Natal for years. He promoted black rhino hunts at both Dallas Safari Club and Safari Club International Conventions.

In 2012 [Namibian conservation circles were outraged](#) over Thormahlen's rhino hunting activities, which according to the *Mail & Guardian*, included hunting for black rhino with a Russian client using a permit that had expired the previous year. He also apparently used a proxy which allowed him to circumvent restrictions on non-Namibian companies obtaining hunting concessions. According to the same article he was also accused of hunting a collared black-maned lion in the Etosha.

## Christiaan Frederik van Wyk

On the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2011 professional hunter Christiaan Frederik van Wyk from Mossel Bay paid a fine of R30,000 for [illegally shooting a white rhino](#) without a permit on a farm in the Limpopo Province. Van Wyk had two prior convictions for the illegal trade and transportation of rhino horn and elephant ivory in the Free State and for rhino horn in the Western Cape.

The conviction stemmed from a hunt expedition with a Vietnamese client, Nguyen Tien Hoang which took place in April 2006. Nguyen Tien Hoang was also one of the traffickers on the North West list, who used CITES trophy hunting permit loopholes to export rhino horn for trade - the killing of the rhino took place at *Shingalana* (close to Voi) on 10 October 2010 and Frikkie Jacobs was listed as the "professional" hunter.

Christiaan (Chris) Van Wyk did not have a permit to hunt the rhino and was not registered in Limpopo as a 'professional hunter'. It [was alleged](#) that the taxidermist and professional hunter had illegally had hunted a white rhino on behalf of a Vietnamese smuggling syndicate. According to News24, Van Wyk organised the hunting trip through professional hunter Tienie Bamberger, the owner of *Warthog Safaris* in Ellisras, and was subsequently introduced to his Vietnamese client in Naboomspruit. Bamberger received permission for the hunting trip from the owner of *Leshoka Thabang*, Johan van Zyl.<sup>2</sup> Bamberger was not present on the day of the hunt, his wife Ananya and his father accompanied Van Wyk and Nguyen. Bamberger's wife, her father-in-law and Van Wyk shot the rhino four times.

Van Wyk was also the person who organised rhino "hunting" for Chu Dang Khoa in Kwa Zulu Natal - the first documented legal hunt by a Vietnamese citizen in South Africa in 2003.

## Nicolaas and Gideon van Deventer



Nicolaas and Gideon van Deventer <https://www.iol.co.za/news/boere-rhino-mafia-pair-arrested-again-7368392>

Nicolaas and Gideon van Deventer, from Bronkhorstspuit, admitted that between the months of December 2005 and August 2006 [they killed 19 white rhinos](#) in the Kruger National Park, in the Hluhluwe iMolofzi Game Reserve and on private wildlife farms.

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<sup>2</sup> Leshoka has been involved in several controversies. In April, 2013, 66 rhino horns worth almost \$3 million were stolen from the farm. In addition to hunting rhinos on the property, 4 white rhinos were also poached in 2013. In 2014 Van Zyl sold off 45 rhinos. In 2002 a woman was mauled by a captive lion at Leshoka. In May 2017 the head and legs of 2 Bengal tigers were cut off at Leshoka after being poisoned.



[They were arrested at the gates](#) of the Hluhluwe iMolofzi Game Reserve on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2006. Deon van Deventer was out on bail after being arrested in Kroonstad a few months earlier for possession of rhino horn from rhino he poached in Bela Bela.

According to the brothers, they were recruited by well-known members of the trophy hunting community because of their marksmanship and tracking skills. They admitted that a light aircraft was used to spot the rhinos on private land. Due to a plea bargain agreement, they received reduced prison sentences.

The Van Deventer's [accused](#) George Clayton Fletcher the owner of *Sandhurst Safaris* and Gerhardus Saaiman, the owner of *Saaiman Hunting Safaris*, *Saaiman Game* and *Saaiman Aviation* of being the buyer of the horns.

Douglas H. Fletcher grew up in the Kalahari where he purchased a piece of land which he named Sandhurst and established *Sandhurst Safaris* in 1980. His son George Clayton Fletcher (aka Clayton), a professional hunter started *Tinashe Outfitters*.

Gerhardus Bartlomeus Saaiman a hunter from Pretoria was accused of being the middle man and the accusation included the fact that his aircraft were used to transport horn. Frans Andries Deventer, a professional hunter, employed by Saaiman was also accused. Piet Johannes Swart, Kumaran Moodaly from Port Elizabeth and Johannes le Grange from Kroonstad were also arrested, accused of being part of this syndicate.

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2010 [Clayton Fletcher, Gert Saaiman and Deon Van Deventer appeared in the High Court in Pretoria](#). Charges were withdrawn against Kumaran Moodaly of Port Elizabeth, the accused faced charges of racketeering, money laundering, various counts of theft, malicious damage to property and contraventions of various provincial conservation acts as well as the Aviation Act. The charges were all related to 17 rhinos killed between December 2005 and August 2006 in the Kruger National Park, the Hluhluwe iMfolozi National Park and game farms in Bela and Komatipoort districts.

Gideon and Nicolaas van Deventer were respectively sentenced to ten and five years in prison and another alleged member of the syndicate who had pleaded guilty, Pieter Swart was fined R50 000.00. Swart is the son of the owner of Boskoppie, a predator breeding facility in the Free State province.

Gideon van Deventer [received several threats](#), he was warned not to continue to testify against the syndicate, he was visited several times in prison where he was according to the State Prosecutor, persuaded not to continue to give evidence. The [case was struck from the roll by Judge Nomonde Mngqibisa](#).

## Dawie Groenewald and Janneman Groenewald



Janneman Groenewald. Image source: <https://www.netwerk24.com/netwerk24/nuus/aktueel/skok-na-skielike-dood-van-bekende-in-jagkringe-20181227>



Dawie Groenewald. Image source: <https://www.getaway.co.za/travel-news/update-alleged-poaching-kingpin-dawie-groenewald-to-appear-in-court/>

In an article called [The Boeremafia Connection](#) written by [Julian Rademeyer](#) and published on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2012 in the Herald, it states that Dawie Groenewald and his brother Janneman both became members of the South African Police Services after finishing high school. According to the article, they were assigned to the narcotics bureau, in 1993 the brothers left SAPS under a cloud and according to Rademeyer, "There were whispers that they were linked to a syndicate that smuggled stolen cars across the border into Zimbabwe". In 1997 they started *Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris*. Glen Janse Van Rensburg and Nico Janse Van Rensburg were, apparently part of the [four member](#) *Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris* start-up. [Today](#), Glen Janse van Rensburg is the director of [African Wild Safari](#) and this business address is listed as Plaas Prachtig 538 Musina, Limpopo Province. Nico Janse van Rensburg and Glen Janse van Rensburg are both directors of [Matsuri Safaris](#).

## The Zimbabwe ZANU-PF Connection

[Constantine Chiwenga](#) is the current Vice President of Zimbabwe. He was also the Commander of the Zimbabwean National Army while Robert Mugabe was Prime Minister of Zimbabwe. Chiwenga was also the commander of Prison Services, Central Intelligence Organisation, Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Air Force of Zimbabwe. According to Zimbabwean media reports, he actively participated during the Zimbabwean land reform programme, and is a beneficiary of the land seizures with a thriving farm near Harare.

Chiwenga and his wife at the time, Jocelyn Chiwenga, were sanctioned and not allowed to enter the European Union in 2003. The USA Treasury Department blocked the assets belonging to Jocelyn Chiwenga and established a list of penalties for anyone who carried out business with her. According to [Newsweek](#), Jocelyn Chiwenga earned the title as a vicious enforcer for Robert Mugabe and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Popular Front. In 2003 she won an auction for a coveted lease on a 220 square-mile tract of Zimbabwean bush, owned by Zimbabwe's Parks and Wildlife Authority, located outside of Hwange National Park.

[Chiwenga's property became the choice destination for professional hunters, particularly American trophy hunters.](#) Whilst the Zimbabwe's economy was in free fall, trophy hunting remained a thriving industry.

In September 2005, top officials of ZANU-PF were accused of using fake hunting permits to illegally kill wildlife in the *Intensive Conservation Areas* in Matabeleland, established to protect rhino, elephant and lion. The most controversial trophy hunting operator in Zimbabwe was named as *Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris* founded by four former South African policemen.

[Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris](#) a trophy hunting organisation was registered in South Africa and in Overland Park in Kansas City, in the USA. As previously mentioned, two of the founders of this organisation were Dawie Groenewald and his brother Janneman Groenewald.

*Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris* was subsequently banned from operating in Zimbabwe because of their unscrupulous behaviour which included trophy hunting on several ranches that were seized by [ZANU-PF war veterans](#), using poorly trained hunting guides who endangered the lives of their clients, they also allegedly hunted in violation of Zimbabwean hunting rules, showing no respect for the environment in pursuit of unsustainable quotas.

As a result of their unscrupulous behaviour in Zimbabwe, in 2006, Dawie Groenewald and his brother Janneman, were expelled from the Professional Hunters Association of South Africa. "[The PHASA distances](#) itself completely from the practices and actions of which the Groenewald's stand accused", the organisation's chief executive Adri Kitshoff said in a statement.

When questioned, [Kevin Anderson, Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris' attorney](#) said that the Zimbabwean allegations had never been substantiated, but that it had simply become too difficult to continue to organise hunts in Zimbabwe.

[David Coltart](#), a Zimbabwe cabinet minister and well-known conservationist described "*Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris as a cruel organisation which has no respect for the environment*".

Kevin Anderson, from Kansas City was appointed to the board of Directors of Safari Club International in 2002 and in 2010 [Kevin Anderson](#) held the title of President-Elect of Safari Club International and Safari Club International Foundation, Chairman of the Legal Task Force of Safari Club International and a member of the Executive Committee of Safari Club International.

The *Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris* was also linked to another official in Mugabe's party, Home Affairs Minister Kembo Mohadi. According to [reports](#) Minister Mohadi was allegedly responsible for facilitating the release of suspected South African rhino poachers when they were arrested in Zimbabwe.

According to reports, despite being banned, the Groenewald's hunting activities allegedly continued in Zimbabwe. The findings of an [investigation](#) by [Beeld](#) newspaper were published on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010. It was revealed that South African hunters and safari-operators continued to plunder Zimbabwe's wildlife which included the trading in rhino horn.

A hunter, by the name of Johan Roos, was identified by the investigators as a supplier of hunting rifles to rhino poachers. [According to sources](#) in Musina, Roos and Groenewald were apparently close associates.

It was reported that a Zimbabwean national was arrested during a rhino poaching incident in 2009 in the Buby River Conservancy in Zimbabwe. Three weapons were recovered, including a 9mm pistol and two hunting rifles. Of particular interest was the Winchester .375 which was traced back to a violent farm attack in Limpopo Province in South Africa. This weapon had vanished during the aforementioned attack in Limpopo, the weapon had been modified, it was fitted with a silencer before being given to rhino poachers.

Johan Roos was arrested during this particular poaching incident where [a guard was killed and another guard was seriously injured](#). Roos was detained for two nights in police cells in Beitbridge he was controversially prematurely released despite being accused of being in possession of the aforementioned stolen rifle which had been modified

and fitted with a silencer, which is illegal in Zimbabwe, the weapon linked to a brutal murder in South Africa and had been smuggled into Zimbabwe.

According to [media reports](#) two Limpopo gun shop owners have been linked to the so called "Musina mafia". Mentioned in an article published in [The Daily News](#) in Zimbabwe in 2011 was a business called Noorde Wapens based in Louis Trichardt in Limpopo Province. According to [reports](#), illegal hunts were allegedly carried out in the Gwaii Conservancy throughout 2003.

Johan Roos was [described by the Chief Superintendent](#) of the Beitbridge Police in 2010 as the man behind a South African poaching and smuggling syndicate.

Robert Mugabe ZANU PF officials were linked to international syndicate that was allegedly specialising in the trafficking and illegally killing Zimbabwe's wildlife. According to the Daily News in Zimbabwe, Dawie Groenewald, and *Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris*, facilitated the illicit sales of rare animals from Zimbabwe.

According to [reports](#) Groenewald continued to work in Zimbabwe despite being banned, using his Zimbabwean partners. These partners, allegedly included [Ed Kadzombe](#), the chairman of the Zimbabwean Wildlife Advisory Council and the owner of *E.K. Safaris*. Kadzombe was closely aligned to ZANU PF and allegedly had representatives working on the West Coast of the United States of America promoting hunting in Zimbabwe.

Attorney Leo Grizzaffi of Torrance in California, was according to reports, closely linked to Ed Kadzombe, Grizzaffi reportedly [told the media](#) that the controversial land redistribution in Zimbabwe had not negatively affected trophy hunters visiting Zimbabwe.

Another alleged partner of the Groenewald's was [Jacob Mudenda](#), the former ZANU PF governor of Matabeleland who was apparently governor during the time when over 20 000 people were allegedly killed. Four black rhino were killed and [linked](#) to Groenewald, E.K. Safaris and a company owned by Mudenda. Jacob Francis Mudenda is the current Speaker of the National Assembly of Zimbabwe.

The aforementioned, Edison Kadzombe, a Zimbabwean citizen is a resident in South Africa and according to a [high court application](#) was the sole shareholder of Nkwazi Resources Investments (Pty) Ltd, a private South African company with a registered office in Fourways in Johannesburg.

[Ed Kadzombe](#) was also linked to South African Agriculture Minister, Tina Joemat-Pettersson, who [according to media reports](#), tried to smooth the way for an irregular importation into South Africa of rare sable antelope from Zambia.

Janneman Groenewald marketed and advertised *Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris* trophy hunting in Africa in the USA. He advertised his safari organisation to the Flint Safari Club Chapter in Michigan in the United States of America in the late 1990's. [According to a media report](#) more than 30 hunters, including the author of the report, from Flint had travelled to Africa to hunt with the Groenewald's trophy hunting organisation.

Big game hunter, Dale McClelland, the founder of Financial & Tax Planning Inc. and Financial Planning Advisory Corporation of Flint [purchased a game farm near Messina in Limpopo in South Africa](#) in 2001. Their company called *African Safari Hunting Adventures Inc.* McClelland, during an interview, said that he had hunted with and had carried out business with Dawie Groenewald. He also said that he had a number of lawsuits against Dawie Groenewald and his associates including a South African restraining order against him for threatening his life. McClelland notified Safari Club International ethics committee about Groenewald's unethical behaviour.

## USA Leopard Trophy Hunting Arrest and Conviction

In January 2010 [Dawie Groenewald was arrested](#) by US Fish and Wildlife agents when he visited his brother Janneman Groenewald, who at that time, ran the American sales and marketing division for their hunting organisation. On this occasion Dawie Groenewald was arrested for shipping a leopard trophy into the USA that

had been shot and killed in South Africa without a hunting permit in 2006. Groenewald pleaded guilty and was sentenced to time served and he was ordered to refund the trophy hunting client the fee and was fined a sum of \$30 000.

In 2010 [SANParks confirmed](#) that Dawie Groenewald had purchased between 20 and 30 rhinos from the Kruger National Park. Dr Karel Toet, a vet who allegedly acted as a go-between for Groenewald, also purchased rhinos from the Kruger National Park. According to SANParks they had stopped selling wild animals to Groenewald when they were informed that he was found guilty in an American court of exporting an illegally hunted leopard.

## Project Cruiser

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2010, the South African police believed that they had closed down an important poaching and rhino horn trafficking ring which they said they had been investigating for fifteen months. The syndicate, they alleged, included South African trophy hunters who were supplying Vietnamese and Chinese syndicates with rhino horn.

The Prachtig farm was raided by the South Africa's Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation—the HAWKS. According to reports, during this raid they discovered that all twenty-nine live rhinos on Prachtig, were dehorned. Investigators also unearthed several burial locations where the remains of rhinos were found in pits all with their horns removed. The rhinos that were discovered diseased, were dehorned in such a way, according to the consultant wildlife veterinarian, that the animal's welfare would have been severely compromised. See: [Dawie and Sarette Groenewald of Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris and professional hunter Tielman Erasmus were arrested at a farm near Louis Trichardt. Wildlife veterinarians Karel and Mariza Toet and Manie du Plessis were also arrested.](#) A number of these rhino were from the Kruger National Park.

According to the National Prosecution Authority [media statement](#) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2010 the eleven suspects were part of a syndicate and involved in rhino poaching, killing, selling of the horns, as well as disposing of the carcasses of the rhinos. The syndicate members were named as Dewald Gouws, Nardus Rossouw, Tielman Roos Erasmus, Leon van der Merwe, Paul Matomela, Dawie Groenewald, Sarette Groenewald (Dawie's wife), veterinarian Karel Toet, veterinarian Manie du Plessis, Mariza Toet (Karel's wife) and Martinus Pronk. The charges ranged from "assault, defeating the ends of justice, fraud, corruption, malicious injury to property, illegal possession of firearms and ammunition, contravention of the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act, No 10 of 2010 (NEMBA), contravention in terms of the Medicines and Related Substances Act, No 101 of 1965; as well as contravention of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act, No 121 of 1998."

The syndicate members were originally charged with 1872 charges. Groenewald was set the highest amount of bail of R1million, his wife R100 000.00, Karel Toet R50000.00 and his wife Mariza Toet R20 000.00; the other accused were released on R20 000.00 bail each and Paul Matomela on a bail amount of R5000.00.

## Hunting Permit Scandal

According to a [media report](#) Dawie Groenewald was issued with 44 permits to hunt, convey, import and export rhino within the first six months after his arrest.

Desiree van der Walt, leader of the Democratic Alliance in Limpopo Province posed questions to the province environment MEC, Pitsi Moloto. The question was how many hunting permits had been issued to Dawie Groenewald since the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008 by the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET).

According to a media report, [Pitsi Moloto said](#) that the Magistrate involved with the arrest of Groenewald had prohibited him from engaging in any activity related to rhino on his farm, the period of time set by the magistrate had expired and he was allowed to conduct his business as usual.



### LEGISLATURE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q6: The Honourable D van der Walt to ask the Honourable MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism**

1. How many hunting permits have been issued to
  - (a) Mr. Dawie Groenewald and,
  - (b) Any guiding and outfitting business owned by him since 1 January 2008 by the Department, and in each case;
    - (i) What was the date the permit was issued and
    - (ii) The species of animal for which the permit was issued?

**RESPONSE:**

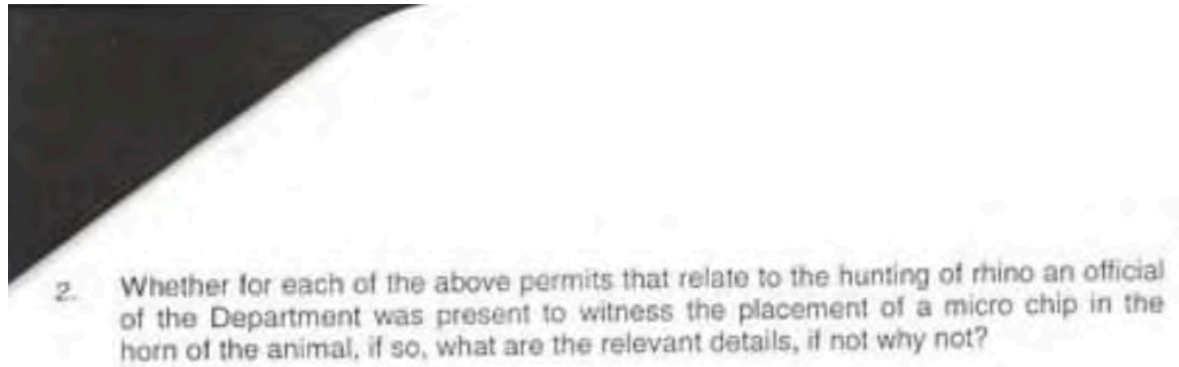
- 1(a) Mr Dawie Groenewald was issued with 102 permits.
- 1(b) Yes, he is acting as a Hunting Outfitter permit number CPM-004-00113 and professional hunter permit number CPM-004-00270;
- 1(b) (i) & (ii) refer to Table Below:

PERMIT DATE	PERMIT DETAIL/SPECIES
08/08/2008-08/09/2008	Hunt 1 crocodile
10/09/2008-10/10/2008	Convey White rhino
10/09/2008-10/11/2008	Import white rhino
24/08/2009-24/09/2009	Hornbill
22/08/2009-22/09/2009	Hunt 1 African wild cat
21/10/2009-21/11/2009	Hunt 1 Baboon
21/10/2009-21/11/2009	Hunt 1 African wild cat
09/07/2009-09/08/2009	Hunt 1 Tsessebe
22/07/2009-22/08/2009	Hunt 1 Roan antelope
24/07/2009-24/08/2009	Hunt 1 Roan antelope
31/07/2009-31/08/2009	Hunt 1 Tsessebe
11/08/2009-11/09/2009	Hunt 1 Tsessebe
20/07/2009-20/08/2009	Hornbill
11/11/2009-11/12/2009	Hunt 1 leopard
13/05/2009-13/06/2009	Import 4 white rhinos
16/03/2009-16/04/2009	Convey 8 white rhinos
28/08/2009-28/09/2009	Buck
11/08/2010-11/09/2010	Hunt 1 Sharpe's grysbok

PERMIT DATE	PERMIT DETAIL/SPECIES
01/10/2010-01/11/2010	Hunt 1 Sharpe's grysbok
13/08/2010-13/09/2010	Hunt 1 White rhino
06/09/2010-06/10/2010	Hunt 1 White rhino
06/09/2010-06/10/2010	Hunt 1 White rhino
06/09/2010-06/10/2010	Hunt 1 White rhino
26/08/2010-26/09/2010	Hunt 1 White rhino
26/08/2010-26/09/2010	Hunt 1 White rhino
18/08/2010-19/09/2010	Hunt 1 White rhino
05/10/2010-05/11/2010	Hunt 1 Tsessebe
04/11/2010-04/12/2010	Hunt 1 Tsessebe
26/04/2010-26/05/2010	Hunt 1 Serval
01/08/2010-01/09/2010	Hunt 1 leopard
26/04/2010-26/05/2010	Hunt 1 Serval
13/05/2009-30/04/2010	Hunt 1 Baboon
28/07/2009-30/04/2010	Hunt 1 Baboon
28/07/2009-30/04/2010	Hunt 1 Baboon
29/07/2009-30/04/2010	Hunt 1 Baboon
29/07/2009-30/04/2010	Hunt 1 Baboon
25/06/2010-25/07/2010	Hunt 1 African civet cat
28/06/2010-28/07/2010	Hunt 1 African civet cat
28/06/2010-28/07/2010	Hunt 1 African wild cat
11/08/2010-11/09/2010	Hunt 1 African civet cat
10/01/2011-10/02/2011	Convey three white rhino bull
19/01/2011-19/02/2011	Convey twenty crocodiles
08/03/2011-08/03/2011	Convey sable
20/01/2011-20/02/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Export two white rhino cow
15/02/2011-15/03/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
17/01/2011-17/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
10/02/2011-10/03/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
10/02/2011-10/03/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
21/02/2011-21/03/2011	Convey one white rhino bull and two cow
07/03/2011-30/04/2011	Hunt Baboon
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
11/03/2011-11/05/2011	Convey of five white rhino cows

PERMIT DATE	PERMIT DETAIL/SPECIES
05/04/2011-05/06/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
10/03/2011-10/05/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
17/02/2011-17/03/2011	Convey two white rhino
10/01/2011-10/02/2011	Convey three white rhino bull
19/01/2011-19/02/2011	Convey twenty crocodiles
08/03/2011-08/03/2011	Convey sable
20/01/2011-20/02/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Export two white rhino cow
15/02/2011-15/03/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
17/01/2011-17/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
28/01/2011-28/02/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
10/02/2011-10/03/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
10/02/2011-10/03/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
21/02/2011-21/03/2011	Convey one white rhino bull and two cows
07/03/2011-30/04/2011	Hunt Baboon
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
07/03/2011-07/04/2011	Hunt one white rhino bull
11/03/2011-11/05/2011	Convey of five white rhino cows
05/04/2011-05/06/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
10/03/2011-10/05/2011	Convey one white rhino bull
17/02/2011-17/03/2011	Convey two white rhino
18/06/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
25/06/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
30/06/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
18/02/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
18/02/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
01/05/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
18/02/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
05/03/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Vervet monkey
16/03/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
07/09/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
10/09/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon
07/03/2010-30/04/2011	Hunt 1 Baboon





2. Whether for each of the above permits that relate to the hunting of rhino an official of the Department was present to witness the placement of a micro chip in the horn of the animal, if so, what are the relevant details, if not why not?

**RESPONSE:**

Not all the hunts could be monitored due to the high number of hunts taking place in the province, however, since the arrest of Mr Groenewald the department has been monitoring all the rhino hunts by accompanying the hunting party when the hunting was in progress, taking photos of the client and of the trophy as well as witnessing the microchipping of the horns.

3. Whether since the arrest in September 2010 for allegedly illegally killing rhinos he has been prohibited from applying for any further hunting permits, if so, what are the relevant details if not; why not?

**RESPONSE:**

Mr Groenewald was prohibited by the magistrate to conduct any activity related to the rhinos that were on his farm (This may include translocation, selling, hunting etc). However, after the period that was set by the magistrate expired; he was allowed to conduct his business as usual.

After the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 he did apply for permits and 67 were issued.

4. Whether any action has been taken against the individual for illegally exporting a hunted leopard trophy in 2008, an offence for which he was found guilty in a US court, if so, what are the relevant details, if not why not?

**RESPONSE:**

Currently South Africa (Polokwane Organized Crime Unit and the Hawks) is investigating the illegal hunting and exporting of the leopard that took place in 2008.

Images of the written questions and answers

<https://m.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150236540046400.331382.64146191399&type=3>

## USA Department of Justice Indictment of Dawie and Janneman Groenewald

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014 the [US Department of Justice indicted](#) Dawie Groenewald and his brother, Janneman Groenewald, and their company Valinor Trading CC (d/b/a Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris) with conspiracy, Lacey Act violations, mail fraud, money laundering and structuring bank deposits to avoid reporting requirements.

The brothers were charged with conspiracy to sell illegal rhino hunts in South Africa in order to defraud American hunters, money laundering and secretly trafficking in rhino horns. According to the 18-count indictment:

*"from 2005 to 2010, the Groenewald brothers travelled throughout the United States to attend hunting conventions and gun shows where they sold outfitting services and accommodations to American hunters to be conducted at their ranch in Mussina, South Africa. During the time period covered by the indictment, Janneman Groenewald lived in Autauga County, Alabama, where Out of Africa maintained bank accounts and is accused of money laundering and structuring deposits to avoid federal reporting requirements. Hunters paid between \$3,500 and \$15,000 for the illegal rhino hunts. The defendants are charged with selling illegal rhino hunts by misleading American hunters. The hunters were told the lie that a particular rhino had to be killed because it was a "problem rhino." Therefore, while no trophy could be legally exported, the hunters could nonetheless shoot the rhino, pose for a picture with the dead animal, and make record book entries, all at a reduced price. Meanwhile, the defendants are alleged to have failed to obtain necessary permits required by South Africa and cut the horns off some of the rhinos with chainsaws and knives. The indictment alleges that the defendants then sold the rhino horn on the black market. Eleven illegal hunts are detailed in the papers filed in federal court, including one in which the rhino had to be shot and killed after being repeatedly wounded by a bow, and another in which Dawie Groenewald used a chainsaw to remove the horn from a sedated rhino that had been hunted with a tranquilizer gun."*

As a result of the US indictment, Interpol executed an international warrant of arrest and on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2017 professional hunters Dawie and Janneman Groenewald arrested in Polokwane in Limpopo 17<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi confirmed the arrest of the brothers, the process has been initiated to facilitate the US government's request for the brother's extradition to face charges there.

Dawie and Janneman Groenewald could not be extradited to the USA to face these charges until the South African trial is complete.

Dawie Groenewald is apparently connected to [another wildlife breeding farm](#) called *Mataka*, which is situated 125 miles south of Prachtig. Visitors to Groenewald's Mataka, describe helicopters, a stable of Arabian horses and exotic game which includes rhino.

[He also established a new hunting business called Wild Africa Hunting Safaris](#) to replace *Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris* after his arrest in 2012.

According to information freely shared in [an interview](#), Dawie Groenewald said that he bankrolled the civil lawsuit that challenged the South African government's ban on the trade of rhino horn. Johan Kruger, a game breeder and colleague of Dawie was the co-applicant with John Hume in the matter.

By using proxy hunters, [the South African business called Out of Africa](#), allegedly run by Dawie Groenewald, used the loophole in South Africa's laws on non-commercial hunting of protected wildlife. Rhino horn, was taken from South Africa to the Czech Republic with trophy hunting documents. Customs officials at Prague's Vaclav Havel International Airport became suspicious In July 2013 after the seizure of 24 rhino horns. This led to a high-level investigation and then the subsequent arrest of 16 suspects in the Czech Republic. In 2014 this investigation uncovered a well organised scam which involved at least sixteen [Czech proxy hunters who travelled to South Africa and began killing rhino from 2011](#). An indictment against 10 people showcased the initial large-scale investigation into the illegal trade in white rhino horns. [The preparatory proceedings in this case were conducted by the officers of the Department for Economic Crime of the Provincial Police in Opole under the supervision of the First Investigation Department of the District Prosecutors Office in Opole.](#)

According to [Save the Rhino International](#), in 2013, Vietnamese citizens have hunted more than 400 rhino legally on privately-owned properties in South Africa since 2003. In April 2012, South Africa formally suspended the issuance of hunting permits to Vietnamese citizens, however authorities became aware of an increase in hunting permit applications from other countries not historically associated with rhino trophy hunting including the Czech Republic and Poland.

It has also been [confirmed](#), in a matter thus far unrelated to Groenewald, that since 2009, hunters travelled from Poland to South Africa to participate in the legal hunting of white rhino. The hunters were sponsored for these

hunting trips by a group Vietnamese citizens living in Poland. 38 cases of illegal trade in rhino horn and 33 people were investigated. It must be noted that the manipulation of exports of rhino trophies from South Africa and the failure of the relevant CITES management authorities to properly scrutinized trophy horn exports and imports is a significant factor in the overall demise of the rhino population in South Africa.

Dawie Groenewald allegedly used a [loophole](#) in the law on non-commercial hunting of protected wildlife. The horn was taken from South Africa to Czech Republic with what may have been falsified trophy hunting documents. Czech customs officials caught the horn being shipped to Vietnam.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2018, [it was reported](#) that, Janneman Groenewald, aged only 48, had passed away in his sleep of a suspected heart attack. He was staying at Dawie Groenewald's farm in Polokwane while, according to the media report, Dawie Groenewald was in Mozambique. Community members that we interviewed expressed surprise and disbelief at Janneman Groenewald's untimely death.

If Dawie Groenewald was in Mozambique when his brother passed away, this would indicate that he did not have to surrender his passport when he was arrested in 2010 or when he was arrested with his brother by Interpol on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2017 in Polokwane after being [indicted in the USA](#).

A [decade after](#) the South African arrest, Groenewald and the co-accused appeared in the Gauteng High Court in February 2021. Sixty of the original charges were dropped because of the Constitutional Court ruling confirming the lifting of the South African moratorium on the domestic trade of rhino horn in South Africa.

In February 2021, Pretoria High Court Judge, Bert Bam, [demanded](#) to know why the trial had been delayed for so long. "This case has been dragging its heels for very long. I want to know what the delays are and what is going to be done to streamline the process. I have no idea what is going on it is very peculiar that this case is not moving forward. If I find that anyone has delayed this matter on purpose I will consider making an appropriate order in that regard."

In the meantime, Nardus Rossouw, a professional hunter who was charged with Dawie Groenewald in 2010 has appeared in the Mokopane Regional Court after spending a year in custody for illegally trafficking rhino horns without permits. He was the first of Groenewald's co-accused to be convicted and sentenced for illegally trafficking rhino horn. Rossouw chose to pay the fine rather the alternative five-year prison sentence. He was, however, not released because he had violated bail conditions relating to the 2010 arrest.

The alleged syndicate's advocate, Piet van Wyk SC, passed away from COVID-19 and a new advocate, Jaap Cilliers SC has been appointed. The latest update on this matter is that the accused Paul Matomela has died and all charges have been withdrawn against Sarette Groenewald.

Marnus Johannes du Plessis was arrested on suspicion of being involved with an alleged rhino poaching ring. According to our sources his legal representations were successful and after more than a decade he has cleared his name.

## **The 2021 South African Arrest**

On Wednesday 21st of July 2021 Dawie Groenewald and Schalk Abraham Steyn [were arrested for the alleged illegal possession and selling of 19 rhino horns](#). Groenewald and Steyn were released two days later on a bail amount of R50 000.00 bail each at the Nelspruit Magistrate's Court.

According to *The Lowvelder* article published on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2021, Schalk Abraham Steyn and Dawie Groenewald were released on R50 000.00 bail each. The bail conditions stipulate that they report to their local police stations once a week, that they do not communicate with any witnesses. Steyn had to surrender his passport, apparently Groenewald had surrendered his in 2010 at the Nelspruit Police Station.

Steyn and Groenewald were arrested for the illegal possession and selling of rhino horn. According to reports they were in possession of nineteen rhino horns.



Dawie Groenewald and Schalk Abraham Steyn. Image Source: <https://lowvelder.co.za/741967/ab-steyn-and-dawie-groenewald-released-on-bail-at-the-nelspruit-magistrates-court/>

According to a July 2021 [article](#) in the *Mail and Guardian*, the matter was ruled to fall under the ambit of schedule 5 offences. Schedule 5 offences include among others, treason, murder, corrupt activity involving amounts of more than R500 000 for an individual and R100 000 if it is alleged that the offence was committed by a person, group of persons or syndicate acting in common purpose or conspiracy.

Since Dawie Groenewald was [sentenced](#) in an American District Court to “time-served” and issued with a \$30 000 criminal fine in connection with the importation of an unlawfully hunted leopard in April 2010, he has managed to avoid being convicted for any of the alleged crimes he has committed in South Africa and the USA.

Schalk Abraham Steyn and Dawie Groenewald made a brief appearance in the Nelspruit Magistrate’s Court on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Their case has been postponed until 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022. According to a [media report](#): *“Their bail conditions have been relaxed, they no longer have to sign-in at the local police station as they are both professional hunters and their jobs require them to be in the bush for sometimes a week at a time.”*

## Johan Kruger

As previously mentioned in this report, the domestic trade of rhino horn was permissible in South Africa until 2009. [According to Colonel Johan Jooste](#), from the Directorate for Priority Crime, Dawie Groenewald flouted the National Environmental Management of Biodiversity Act rules including the fact that separate permit applications had to be tendered to dehorn a rhino, to transport rhino horns and as well as the permission to possess rhino horn. Dawie Groenewald was arrested in 2010 after a fifteen-month investigative operation called [Project Cruiser](#).

According to the original [published charges](#) against Dawie Groenewald “charge 850 to 956 mentions Johan Kruger, the owner of Chattaronga Safaris on the farm Concordia located at Alldays, in the district of Musina. The charges alleged that during the period October 2009 to June 2010 he entered into two transactions with Dawie Groenewald. These transactions describe how rhino were moved from the farm Prachtig owned by Dawie Groenewald to his farm Concordia.

The first transaction (Incident 47) states that Mariza Toet, on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2009 in the name of Karel Toet, applied for a transport permit for fifteen white rhino, ten rhino cows and five rhino bulls from farm



*Prachtig to Chattaronga Safaris at Alldays; and subsequently permit number 011805 on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009 issued by Leon de Jager in the name of Karel Toet for the capture and transport of fifteen white rhinos, ten cows and five bulls, from the Prachtig to Chattaronga Safaris at Alldays; and the said permit was issued was subject to a special condition, that Leon de Jager, the local authorised nature conservationist, had to be notified and present during the capture of the rhino.*

*Four white rhino cows and three white rhino bulls in terms of permit number 011805 were moved from Prachtig to Chattaronga Safaris at Alldays which included three dehorned rhino cows and one dehorned rhino bull each was sold to Johan Kruger for R200 000.00 excluding VAT.*

*The second transaction: (Incident 48) According to permit number 011893 on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010 issued by the permit office in Louis Trichardt in the name of Karel Toet for the transport of eleven white rhino consisting of nine cows and two bulls from the farm Prachtig to Chattaronga Safaris on the farm Concordia in Alldays.*

*Seven white rhino female and two white rhino bulls using permit number 011893 were moved from Prachtig to Chattaronga Safaris in Alldays and all nine of these rhino horns were delivered to the farm Concordia.*

*The purchase price for four of the female rhinos was R300 000.00 each excluding VAT including tax and the purchase price of the remaining five rhinos was R200 000.00 each excluding VAT."*

The aforementioned charges related to the laws governing the domestic trade in rhino horn and National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act No.10 of 2004.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2009, the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Martinus van Schalkwyk, had promulgated a domestic moratorium on the trade in individual rhino horn and rhino horn derivatives in South Africa. This moratorium was promulgated for the purpose of addressing the alarming escalating incidence of rhino poaching in 2008 and 2009 and was implemented as a temporary measure to afford the minister time in which to investigate a long term solution to rhino poaching.

In 2012, Johan Kruger formally [alleged](#) that the South African Minister of Environmental Affairs had acted without a proper consultation process when imposing the 2009 rhino horn moratorium by launching a legal application on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

The Minister had in fact [published a notice in the National Gazette](#) (Government Gazette 31301 Notice 835 of 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008) but apparently had failed to publish the same notice in any nationally distributed newspapers as required by law, inviting the public to comment.

It was also considered that the aforementioned notice was worded vaguely and with without reason for the action, such that no reasonable person could have raised any meaningful objection. Kruger's argument was that the moratorium was a *taking of property without just compensation* and that it was taking away of the right to engage in the trade of rhino horn, a decision of their own choice.

According to the centre of [Criminology at the University of Cape Town](#), in an affidavit, Kruger charged that the moratorium had "*precisely the opposite effect of endangering the conservation and survival of the rhino in South Africa as poaching of rhino has increased dramatically since such measures were introduced, and the implementation of the moratorium makes it difficult, if not impossible for rhino farmers to afford their rhino farming operations*"

According to investigative journalists, Johan Kruger did not breed any rhinos at the time that he launched the legal application against the Minister of the Environment. Dawie Groenewald [has boasted](#) in interviews, that he was behind Johan Kruger's legal application.

In an [interview with Brian Christy](#), which was published in *NatGeo Traveller Magazine*, Dawie Groenewald said Johan Kruger was not paying any of the legal bills, he was referring to the aforementioned Kruger and Hume legal application to lift the moratorium on the domestic trade of rhino horn in South Africa. According to this article, "*Dawie Groenewald and Johan Kruger were in the buffalo business together, they hunt together, Kruger's photograph has appeared in Groenewald's hunting brochures and they share the same lawyer.*"



The relationship between Dawie Groenewald and Johan Kruger was publicly highlighted on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2014 in an article published in [Die Vryburger](#) which stated that Dawie Groenewald used one of his helicopters to search for rhino poachers on the Concordia farm owned by Johan Kruger.

It was [reported](#) by [Izak du Toit](#), John Hume's attorney, that the Private Rhino Owners Association and Wildlife Ranching South Africa apparently conducted extensive negotiations with Minister Molewa in order to find a solution to the rhino poaching crisis in South Africa while still affording the private rhino owners their constitutional rights. It was regretful, he stated, that the aforementioned negotiations did not result in the alleviation of rhino poaching and that the private rhino owners were burdened with escalating cost of anti-poaching measures.



Image Source: <https://wildafricansafaris.co.za/gallery.html>

In an [article on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2014](#) in the Northern News, Philip Kruger, the son of Johan Kruger, echoed his father's opinion that the lack of legal international trade of rhino horn was driving the escalation of rhino poaching. The South Africa law stipulated that it was illegal to hunt rhino and sell rhino horn.

According to Izak du Toit, the negotiations between the Minister and John Hume failed and as a result John Hume, the Private Rhino Owners Association and Wildlife Ranching South Africa were forced to intervene in the pending court battle to support Johan Kruger with his application against the Minister. This intervention application was served at the end of May 2015, the Minister opposed the intervention but three judges found the intervention appropriate.

After the Constitutional Court ruling in 2017, upholding South Africa's lifting of the moratorium on the domestic rhino horn trade, the State dropped sixty charges against the defendants, and an amended charge sheet was served on the eight accused. There are still 1600 charges ranging from racketeering and money laundering to illegally hunting rhino, dealing in rhino horn and contravening the Biodiversity and Prevention of Organised Crime Acts.

[Chattaronga Safaris](#) is a trophy hunting business specialising in bowhunting. Johan Kruger is listed as the owner and founder and is described as an avid hunter and conservationist and a senior ranking policeman for eighteen years. According to the information on the website he was involved in the security industry before starting Chattaronga Safaris, which he operates with his son Philip Kruger.

Johan Kruger's hunting business is situated on a farm called [Concordia](#) which is located 200km from Polokwane Airport and 20km from a town called Alldays. [Alldays](#) is a small town in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, a town that services a large area of private game and hunting farms.

Chattaronga Safaris, offers trophy hunting safaris in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. Neil Summers, an avid bowhunter for more than thirty years, is an international consultant who [promotes Chattaronga Safaris](#)

In July 2018, following an outcry after the killing of a lion at Hwange National Park, the Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management is working towards introducing a Statutory Instrument to prohibit trophy hunters posting images of hunts in Zimbabwe. This was as a result of a hunting company called GrizzlyStik posting images of a lion hunt which had been organised by Chattaronga Safaris. According to [the report](#) the lion was younger than three years.

Chattaronga Safari's was mentioned on World Lion Day in 2019, when an eleven-year-old male lion called Seduli, popular with wildlife photographers was killed by trophy hunters in Zimbabwe. He was allegedly lured out of the Hwange National Park. The hunt was linked, according to [reports](#) by Chattaronga Bow Hunting Safaris.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2021, in an [article in the London Telegraph](#), it was stated that a second well-known Zimbabwean lion, known as Mopane, had been killed by a foreign big game hunter just yards from where Cecil the Lion was killed in 2015. Whilst trophy is legal in Zimbabwe, and this hunt was legal, critics contend that bow hunting causes unnecessary suffering. Zimbabwean wildlife experts believe that Zimbabwean professional hunters would not have killed Mopane. The two tourists involved in hunting Mopane bought their hunting trip from Chattaronga Safaris.

Chattaronga Safaris website states that they operate from a 25 000 acre privately owned game reserve in Limpopo Province of South Africa and from a concession granted by the Zimbabwean government they have exclusive hunting privileges in the prized [Matetsi Units](#) 1, 3 and Gwayi in Zimbabwe. [Vexford Safaris](#), is Chattaronga's partner business in Zimbabwe, Fidelis Muchenje is the owner of Vexford Safaris.

According to cursory searches on the internet Johan and Philippus Kruger are the [directors](#) of Chattaronga Skaarswild which was registered on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007 on the farm Vlakpan in Alldays, [Chattaronga Safaris International](#) was incorporated on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016 and the director is Phillipus Kruger.

## Schalk Abraham Steyn

Schalk Steyn, also known as AB Steyn, is photographed **below** with [Kendall Jones](#) who, in 2014, was the centre of an international social media storm for posting images of herself and the animals that she has killed in Africa. In this image from her Instagram account posted on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019, she describes AB Steyn as the man who took her on her first hunt when she was thirteen.

An [article](#) published in the *Lowvelder* on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2018, stated that Schalk Steyn had appeared in the Pretoria criminal court on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2018. Christopher John Herbst, Ian Herbst and Paul Nel had apparently laid charges against Steyn. The charges related to an alleged agreement in 2015. Steyn apparently acted as a middleman in a transaction for the procurement of twenty buffalo cows and one buffalo male. Apparently, an amount of R1, 2 million rand had been paid to Steyn and he had not delivered the buffalos.

Steyn is the owner of [AB Steyn Safaris](#), based in Nelspruit and it conducts trophy hunts in the North West, Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces.



Image Source: [https://www.instagram.com/p/B2Af40vAcgN/?utm\\_medium=copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/B2Af40vAcgN/?utm_medium=copy_link)

[A statement by the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation](#) (HAWKS) said on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 that professional big game hunter Schalk Steyn and Dawie Groenewald had appeared in Nelspruit magistrate's court. They were apprehended while transporting 19 rhino horns in two vehicles and charged with the illegal possession and selling of the horns.



Image Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/DeuP5ykoDu5NZQ5c8>



## Hugo Ras



Image source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/4WN96xeQ46cKM9rR8>

In 2004 the [Mail and Guardian](#) reported the Hugo Ras, a professional hunter had bought a bull elephant from the Kruger National Park. This elephant was killed by an American trophy hunter at Orion Safari Lodge, which is located near Rustenburg. The hunt took place shortly after his arrival from the Kruger National Park. Gavin Hulett from Sabi Sands, an associated nature reserve and part of the Greater Kruger National Park, said that the Kruger National Park had agreed to sell four bull elephants to Hugo Ras on the condition he did use them for hunting. Ras had obtained hunting permits from the North West Province authorities to shoot the elephant before their arrival on the farm.

Hugo Ras made the news again in South Africa in 2005 when a contract worker named Petrus Bushy Malgas [was killed by two lions](#) on the Zeerust farm in Rietfontein.

In August 2011 South African Police Service questioned Ras about the murder of a [Russian stripper, Lana Muratava](#) who had disappeared in November 2010. Her body was found in a ditch between Garankuwa and Soshanguve in January 2011. Ras denied any knowledge of the death of Lana Muratava, however [he admitted](#) that she had acted as an interpreter for him.

In 2012, the South African Police Services raided the home of Hugo Ras, in Magalieskruin in Pretoria. They confiscated an illegal firearm and five crates of the controlled and potent veterinary immobilising drug, M99. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2012 three veterinarians, including the Kruger National Park, ex-head of "game" capture, Douw Grobler, Johannes Gerdus Kruger and Buti Chibase appeared in the Pretoria North Magistrate's Court.

The three vets appeared with Hugo Ras and Matthys Scheepers, Riaal Booysen, Johan Heydenrych and Christoffel Naude. [The vets were charged with the possession and distribution of M99.](#) M99 has been used in numerous rhino poaching incidents in recent years.

[Douw Grobler had been fired](#) from the Kruger National Park in 2001 for the unauthorised sale of animals from the park's disease-free buffalo breeding project, an event which was described as "disappointing and embarrassing".

In June 2012 charges against five of the suspects arrested for possession and distribution of the tranquillising drug used by rhino poachers were [withdrawn](#) due to insufficient evidence.

According to the [National Prosecuting Authority](#), in May 2013, Hugo Ras was at an establishment where gambling took place and which was reputed to deal in drugs. During a raid by the South African Police Service the police searched [Ras](#) and they allegedly found him to be in possession of a firearm and ammunition which belonged to his wife.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2014 Lieutenant General Anwar Dramat of the South African Police Services, the HAWKS, told members of Parliament that a suspected rhino poaching kingpin would be arrested soon. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014 ten members of a suspected ["rhino killing syndicate"](#) were remanded in custody for seven days, their formal bail application was held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014. The alleged syndicate had been arrested on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September.

The suspects had allegedly illegally obtained [84 rhino horns](#) and killed 22 rhinos on state owned and privately owned wildlife reserves in South Africa.

The suspects included Hugo Ras, his wife Trudie Ras, his brother Anton Ras and brother-in-law Abraham Smit, Warrant Officer Willie Oosthuizen from South African Police Service HAWKS based in Pretoria, a pilot from Ficksburg David Jacobus Steyn, a lawyer Joseph Wilkinson, Christoffel Scheepers, Mandla Magaula and Willem van Jaarsveld. The alleged [syndicate operated](#) in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, the North West, Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal. [This arrest came after a year-long investigation](#) which involved the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Department of Home Affairs, South African Police Services, Crime Intelligence, Protea Coin Security, National Prosecuting Authority and the Forensic Science Laboratory. The HAWKS investigating team arrested Ras, who was believed to have headed up the syndicate's activities for nearly five years.

[318 charges were laid against the suspects](#). Some of the people arrested were repeat offenders, including Hugo Ras's brother in law Abraham Smit, who had allegedly been on the run for more than three years and was [wanted by Interpol and the FBI](#). According to a media report, the FBI's public information officer, Special Agent Gina Swankie confirmed that Abraham Johannes Smit was wanted by Interpol and the FBI.

According to a [media statement](#) from the National Media Centre Corporate Communication South African Police Service SAPS the killing of rhino for their horn had taken place between 2008 and 2012, twenty-four rhinos were known to have been attacked, twenty-two of these rhinos were darted with M99 the powerful anaesthetic the remaining two were shot. 34 horns were either stolen or obtained through other devious means.

[It was alleged](#) during the bail hearings that Trudie Ras was the paymaster who laundered the proceeds made from the sale of the rhino horn. Allegedly Magagula was the person on the ground who spotted, poached and helped remove the horns from the rhino. Smit, who faced 34 charges, is alleged to have played a direct role during the aforementioned hunt. Van Jaarsveld was alleged to have transported the poachers to various locations and exported the horn.

[HAWKS Warrant Officer Willie Oosthuizen](#) and Mandla Magagula were granted bail on the 24<sup>th</sup> December 2014. On the 29<sup>th</sup> December 2014 [Trudie Ras](#), Steyn and Van Jaarsveld were granted bail. Matthys Scheepers and Anton Ras were released on bail in January 2015.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2015 it was reported that Hugo Ras had [lost](#) his renewed bid for bail. Judge Bert Bam, acting in the High Court of Pretoria, dismissed an earlier appeal by Ras against a February ruling by a Pretoria magistrate that he was not entitled to bail. By this time, eight of the ten members of the alleged syndicate arrested, were out on bail, only Ras and his brother-in-law, Abraham Smit, remained in custody. Smit was, apparently, wanted in the US on six counts of wire fraud, Ras was facing 248 charges, including a charge of racketeering, the unlawful possession of scheduled medicine, the receipt of two elephant tusks and a large number of charges relating to rhino poaching.

According to Colonel Johan Jooste, it was general knowledge that Ras had instructed members of the [Macs Gang](#) to [assault](#) and [intimidate](#) people. State Advocate Joanie Spies argued that Ras was convicted on no less than 20 charges between 2000 and 2009, including nature conservation charges, numerous charges involving illegal hunting and importing game, crimen injuria, assault and the possession of an unlicensed firearm.



[The trial of all ten members](#) of the alleged syndicate was due to start on the 27<sup>th</sup> July and run until the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2016. However the trial was [delayed](#) until February 2017 after Joseph Wilkinson and David Steyn [issued a constitutional challenge](#) in July 2016. The focus of the challenge was the lifting of the moratorium on the possession and transport of rhino horns in South Africa.

The alleged syndicate believed that the lifting of the seven-year ban on the trade of rhino horn in South Africa [could potentially influence](#) the charges against them as suspected poachers.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2016 Hugo Ras was [denied](#) bail again. However, in February 2018 Hugo [Ras was granted bail of R25000.00](#) following a successful bail appeal to the Appeal Court in Bloemfontein. On the 8 December 2018 the bail of all the accused in the alleged aforementioned syndicate was [extended](#) including that of Hugo Ras, except for the bail of Mandla Magagula. A warrant was authorised for the re-arrest of Mandla Magagula.

The trial of the alleged syndicate was postponed until November 2019 pending the outcome of Wilkinson and Steyn's constitutional challenge to the environmental regulations underpinning charges relating to the illegal possession, sale and transport of rhino horn. In 2019 Pretoria lawyer Joseph Joshua Wilkinson and pilot David Jacobus Steyn asked Judge Daisy Molefe to declare the reverse onus provisions contained in the legislation in terms of which they were charged, unconstitutional or invalid in June 2019. Judge Molefe [dismissed](#) their argument. She stated that the criminal trial had not started yet and the charges were yet to be adjudicated upon.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2021, the National Prosecuting Authority Lumka Mahanjana said that [Hugo Ras](#) and Willem Andries van Jaarsveld have been sentenced to a collective forty-one years of imprisonment for fraud and theft, for the sale of a boat. Ras was also found guilty of being in possession of an illegal firearm and ammunition, Van Jaarsveld was found guilty of forgery.

## Nardus Rossouw



Image source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/fy2eEsoaHeWM6q8P7>

[Nardus Rossouw](#), was charged along with Dawie Groenewald in 2010. He is regarded as being central to the Groenewald investigation. Groenewald allegedly lured wealthy American trophy hunters to hunt rhinos at his farm called Prachtig. He apparently also sourced rhino horns from other farmers for the illegal international black market.

After spending a year in jail, Nardus Rossouw, appeared in the Mokopane Regional Court on a separate matter and on the [14<sup>th</sup> November 2018 and was fined R100 000 for illegally trafficking rhino horns without permits](#). He was the first of Groenewald's co-accused to be convicted and sentenced for illegally trafficking rhino horn. Rossouw chose to pay the fine rather the alternative five-year prison sentence. However, he was not released because he violated bail conditions relating to the 2010 arrest.

Rossouw [designed a scheme](#) to try and outwit Limpopo conservation officials in order to sell rhino horns on the black market. According to the charge sheet, a number of rhinoceros were legally dehorned on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at *Lephalale Game Farm* belonging to Adriaan du Plessis, according to permits he was the registered owner of 11 rhino horns. At the time of dehorning, the micro-chip scanner was faulty and Rossouw took the horns to be scanned at a veterinarian. After scanning and checking the micro-chips the Limpopo Environment Department entrusted Rossouw to take the horns back to Adriaan du Plessis.

[Acting on a tip-off](#) less than a month later, an under-cover operation was arranged by the Directorate of Priority Crimes, the HAWKS. Three people were arrested with eighteen horns, further investigation established that seven of the horns originated from the dehorning at Du Plessis farm. Du Plessis acknowledged that he unlawfully "gave" eleven rhinos to Rossouw without him being in possession of a valid permit. Du Plessis received a R200 000.00 fine.

In the Groenewald matter, Rossouw allegedly conspired with Du Plessis in 2009 to dehorn rhinos illegally and sell the horns at a profit.

## Dr Walter Ward

In May 2011, the founder of the MediCross group, Walter Ward and his farm manager, Saki Kekana, were arrested on charges of illegal possession of firearms. [According to reports](#), Dr Walter Ward had agreed to sell nine rhinos to Dawie Groenewald.

Despite the charges against him it is alleged that Dawie Groenewald was [issued with permits](#) to purchase, sell, transport and hunt rhino. There was a public outcry after *The Star* disclosed that the Limpopo Economic Development, Environment and Tourism Department (LEDET) had issued Groenewald with [a dozen permits](#) to hunt white rhino on his farm despite the fact that he was facing a *plethora* of charges relating to rhino poaching.

[According to further reports](#) a person called [Salome Maritz](#) had agreed to be a caretaker for Dr Ward's nine rhino at her rhino sanctuary, [the Palala Rhino Sanctuary](#) in the Waterberg.

Apparently, Groenewald was in the process of buying Ward's nine rhinos in a deal with John Hume. Groenewald was purchasing three bulls and Hume was purchasing six cows. Pelham Jones from the Private Rhino Owners Association said: "We cannot simply stand back and allow for illegal or legal hunting of rhino under the guise of trophy hunting."

Dr Ward finally agreed to sell six rhinos to John Hume and three rhinos to Dawie Groenewald.

## Tom Fourie and Jan Karel Els

In 2010, Tom Fourie, a wildlife farm manager at *Maremani Game Farm*, owned by a Danish consortium, situated in the Musina district of Limpopo Province in South Africa [allegedly sold 30 rhino horns](#) to a game farmer from Thabazimbi called Jacques Els. The 30 rhino horns were removed while the rhinos were sedated, no rhinos were killed, apparently.

At the time of the arrests, investigators working on the alleged Groenewald Syndicate matter said that Fourie and Els were not part of the syndicate, the *Beeld* newspaper however reported that they were.

The [Green Scorpions arrested](#) Tom Fourie in September 2010, he was released on R5000.00 bail and was due to appear in court on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

Els was arrested in October 2010 and he was released on R30000.00 bail. [Tom Fourie committed suicide](#) by shooting himself with a hunting rifle on or around the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 after phoning a friend.

Els [was found guilty of possession and dealing in rhino horn](#) without the required permits and, as a result of a plea bargain in March 2012, he was sentenced to eight years in jail with an additional suspended sentence as well as a fine of R1 million to be paid to the Green Scorpions.

In his plea bargain, Els explained that he had bought the rhinos horns with the intention to sell them later if the ban on dealing in rhino horn was lifted. He also said that he planned to obtain permits later but before he could that the horns were stolen from his home in Thabazimbi during September 2010.

However, according to a [statement made by the Department of the Environment](#) on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2012, assets to the value of R11 million were acquired from convicted game farmer, Jan Karel Pieter Els from Thabazimbi in Limpopo. Furthermore, the DEA stated that Els dehorned five rhinos without a permit in Musina and moved some of the rhino without horns. Els bought thirty horns from Tommy Fourie who was the manager at *Maremani Nature Reserve* in Musina.

The Department said Els was sentenced to 10 years of which 2 years was suspended for five years for illegally dealing in 38 rhino horns between 2009 and 2010. He did this when he bought seven rhinos from Limpopo Valley Conservancy in Musina informing government that he was taking them to Thabazimbi.

Els transported all the horns to Thabazimbi without a permit, he claimed that all the rhino horns were stolen from his farm. Els was convicted for purchasing, possession and transportation of all 38 rhino horns.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018, it was reported that Jacques Els who was found guilty of possession and dealing in rhino horn without the required permits as a result of a plea bargain in March 2012 appeared in the Louis Trichardt Regional Court on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018 to receive his final sentence.

After hearing Els's case the Appeal Court Judges agreed that the Louis Trichardt Regional Court had made an error. According to them, the magistrate had accepted that the rhinos had been illegally hunted and killed for their horns rather than being tranquilised. ["The Reginal Court made a mistake in handling Jacques Els as if he was a poacher that killed rhinos for their horns, which he was not."](#) They reduced his sentence to four years and repealed the R1 million fine to the Green Scorpions.

Even though the Appeal Court Judges did not agree with Magistrate Pat Cloete, who stated that, regardless of whether people killed rhino for their horns or possessed their horns illegally to make a profit, this behaviour was reprehensible and contributed to the destruction of South Africa's wildlife. "Illegal activities such as those that Jacques Els took part in fuels the illegal international trade in rhino horn" added the Appeal Court Judges.

Jacques Els spent five months in the Sinthumule–Kutama Maximum Prison, he was then let out on bail of R4 million in December 2012. He appeared in the Louis Trichardt Regional Court on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2015 to receive his final sentence. The National Prosecuting Authority brought an application ordering Jacques Els to begin serving the balance of his sentence, but his defence team requested time until the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 to bring the needed documents to the court. Magistrate PV Mudau accepted their request and said that bail would be left in place as a lower court could not overturn a High Court judgement.

Jacques Els told the media that he was very relieved that he did not have to go straight back to jail.

## Pieter van Zyl



Image Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/2h5GFkSRibjMkR2Q9>

On the 10<sup>th</sup> August 2016, Pieter van Zyl, Marco Swanepoel and Stephan Mylie were arrested in Equestria in Pretoria for [allegedly intending to sell five rhino horns](#). The three men attempted [to sell rhino horn](#) to an undercover agent, according to a South African Police HAWKS spokesperson.

The men were rounded up by the HAWKS and taken to Pieter van Zyl's house which was searched and [three more rhino horns](#) were discovered.

The following day the HAWKS team went back to the same house as part of the investigation and found a further 105 rhino horns.

Pieter van Zyl alleged that he was the legitimate owner of the rhino horn. At the time of the official statement from the HAWKS, they were in the process of validating the alleged permits and the DNA samples of all the horns in order to compare the information to the information recorded on the Rhodis database.

The three suspects appeared in the Pretoria Regional Court Van Zyl was granted R20 000.00 bail and Swanepoel and Mylie were granted bail of R10 000.00. The case was remanded for further investigation.

A year after the arrest for illegal rhino horn trading, on August 20<sup>th</sup> 2017 [Pieter van Zyl](#) and his wife Tilla van Zyl [were found dead](#) in their home on the Kalkpoort Game Farm. Pieter sustained seven gunshot wounds and Tilla had been shot once. [Eight people were arrested in](#) and around Hazyview. One of the suspects a Zimbabwean named Vision Mbongwe had worked for the Van Zyl's for 24 years. He was allegedly fired because he had colluded with a group of illegal rhino killers who were arrested in Kalkpoort in 2016. Investigators apparently linked the accused to an alleged rhino poaching kingpin, [Big Joe Nyualungu](#). *The Lowvelder* reported that eight people were arrested SAPS reported that there were seven suspects and all seven suspects were charged with murder.

Due to the death of Pieter van Zyl the entire case was [dismissed](#).



## Harry Claasens

[Harry Claasens Safaris](#), according to the website, was founded in 1992 and operates mainly in Southern Africa. A year after the first arrest in May 2011, [Harry Claasens](#) was arrested and added as the fifth suspect with Thai nationals, Chumlong Lemtongthai, Punpitak Chunchom, Tool Sriton and South African Marnus Steyl, [according to court documents](#).

It was alleged that between October 2010 and May 2011 Chumlong arranged licensed hunts where about two dozen rhinos were killed on the private game reserve of South African Marnus Steyl, [according to court documents](#).

According to the US Department of State, "The [Xaysavang Network](#), an international wild animal trafficking syndicate, facilitated the killing of endangered elephants, rhinos, pangolins, and other species for products such as ivory and rhino horn. Vixay Keosavang, a Lao national, is believed to be the leader of the network.



(Harry Claasens in the brown leather jacket).

<https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/state-seeks-scalps-of-suspected-rhino-horn-smugglers-1311595>

Xaysavang associates smuggle illegally taken wild animals from countries in Africa and Asia into Laos, and then export them to countries such as Vietnam and China. Affiliates are suspected to be active in South Africa, Mozambique, Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, Vietnam, and China. The Xaysavang Network has been linked to several major seizures of wildlife products. The U.S. Department of State is currently offering a reward of up to \$1 million for information leading to the dismantling of the Xaysavang Network."

Chumlong Lemtongthai a senior Xaysavang boss and a Thai citizen were arrested at the beginning of June 2011 at a house in Edenvale in South Africa.

The syndicate recruited young Thai women and paid them to have a holiday in South Africa, the syndicate obtained hunting permits in their names. The women did not hunt rhino but posed for images at the rhino hunts.

In November 2012 prosecutors dropped the charges against South African Marnus Steyl, two farm labourers Patruis Mattuys and Obene Koba and hunter Harry Claasens.

The charges were dropped despite the fact that the Mail and Guardian [published an article](#) on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012 which included [a video](#) filmed in January 2011 showing Harry Claasens and Marnus Steyl and a Thai national called Punpitak Chunchom. The video showed Steyl and Claasens repeatedly shooting a rhino.

In November 2012 Lemtongthai was sentenced to 40 years in prison after he confessed to ordering 50 rhinos for hunts in South Africa and the illegal killing of a further 26 rhinos. He appealed the sentence which was reduced to



30 years in 2013. He appealed again in the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein and the sentence was reduced to 13 years.



Chumlong Lemtongthai. Image Source: <https://oxpeckers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Chumlong-and-rhino.jpg>

In November 2012 Lemtongthai was sentenced to 40 years in prison after he confessed to ordering 50 rhinos for hunts in South Africa and the illegal killing of a further 26 rhinos.

[Magistrate Prince Manyathi](#) said he wanted to send a shout to the community and the Asian block that these actions will not be tolerated. *"I don't want a situation where my grandchildren will only see a rhino in a newspaper. We have to protect our flora and fauna."*

Harry Claasens was granted immunity after turning state witness.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2012, following the public outcry and objections by the members of Parliament's oversight committee on water and environmental affairs because of the withdrawal of charges against game farm owner Marnus Steyl and Harry Claassen, it was reported that Chumlong Lemthongthai was due to appear with another accused in the Vryburg Magistrate's Court on fresh charges, however Punpitak had left the country on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November. Several Ministers of Parliament and conservation organisations called for an investigation [into possible corruption and collusion](#) of conservation officials and employees in the department's permitting office.

Lemtongthai appealed the sentence which was reduced to 30 years in 2013. He appealed again in the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein and the sentence was reduced to 13 years.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 [it was reported](#) that he was released from the Kgosi Mampuru prison, after serving under six years in jail. The Department of Correctional Services and the Parole Board approved Lemtongthai's request for early release and he was deported back to Thailand.

## Marthinus (Marnus) Philippus Steyl

[The South African captive lion industry](#) originated in the late 1990's to provide inexpensive trophy hunting experiences allowing hunters to kill lion in captive situations. Following restrictions on the import of trophies from such hunts commonly known as canned hunts, the owners of such lion farms turned their attention to breeding lion for the purpose of exporting their bones to Asia.

This industry was supported by the South African government as an example of sustainable utilisation of natural resources. The lion bones are sought after ingredient used to make lion bone wine, [a substitute for the traditional Asian cure all](#) tiger bone wine.

According to [reports](#) between 2009 and 2010 16 consignments of lion bone equating to the skeletons of 320 lions was exported to Laos. Nine of these consignments were destined for Vixay Keosavang of the Xaysavang Network.

In the same [report](#) dated 21 June 2011, Marthinus Steyl, known as Marnus, is the owner of businesses in the Free State, North West Province, Eastern Cape and Abu Dhabi, contributed to these aforementioned lion bone exports.

[It was reported](#) on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2011 that a South African lion breeder and safari operation had emerged as a key supplier of millions Rands worth of rhino horn to a ruthless southeast Asian wildlife trafficking syndicate. Marnus Steyl allegedly agreed to supply 50 sets of rhino horns to a Laotian company which was fronting for the Xaysavang syndicate.



Image source: <https://rhinofriendlyriders.wordpress.com/2011/11/09/rhino-files-iii-carte-blanche-documentary/>

In July 2011 it emerged that a director from a company linked to Marnus Steyl signed a requisition to supply the Xaysavang Trading Export/Import Company with 50 sets of rhino horn. According to [media reports](#) the requisition stated: *"I can shoot 15 rhino per month"*. Steyl denied the media reports. However, investigative journalists had obtained affidavits, invoices, letters and dozens of photographs detailing Steyl's business dealings with Lemtongthai and Punpitak Chunchom from the Xaysavang Syndicate.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011 he appeared in the Kempton Park Magistrates Court on charges related to fraudulent rhino hunting permits, his case joined that of alleged syndicate kingpins Chumlong Lemtonghai and Punpitak Chunchom.

It was [alleged](#) that Steyl paid Thai prostitutes to apply for hunting permits and it was alleged that Steyl supplied the rhino which were hunted, totalling 26 sets of rhino horns.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012 the [Mail & Guardian reported](#) that disturbing video footage of a bloody rhino hunt on a North West game farm raised the question about the South African National Prosecuting Authority controversial decision to withdraw criminal charges against wildlife farmer Marnus Steyl and Thai national Punpitak Chunchom. The video shows Marnus Steyl accompanied by professional hunter Harry repeatedly shooting a rhino.

Charges against Claasens, Steyl, Chunchom and two of Steyl's farm were withdrawn by prosecutor Allen Simpson. No reasons were provided.

[According to a 2015 article](#) in the *Citizen* on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2015, Steyl applied for a court order to permanently stay his criminal prosecution charges which ranged from illegally trading in rhino horn and contravening the Customs and Excise Act to money laundering.

Steyl testified that he had bought the rhinos hunted on his game farm between 2010 and 2011 from other farmers, nature conservation organisations and on auctions. He said that many rhinos were surplus and would in any event no longer have been here today.

Steyl testified that discussions between prosecutor Allen Simpson his attorney and legal representatives of the other accused had resulted in an agreement the charges against him and others would be withdrawn after Lemtongthai had pleaded guilty. He was however arrested on the same charges a month later.

Steyl [maintained](#) the original charges were permanently withdrawn against him and that the reinstatement of the same charges was unfair. Prosecutor Allen Simpson said he did not have the authority to permanently withdraw the charges. Senior state advocate Joanie Spies conceded had it not been for queries from Parliament and the media, she would not have re-instituted prosecution.

Judge Cynthia Pretorius [found](#) there had been an ex-press agreement that Lemtongthai would plead guilty on condition the case was withdrawn against the others. She said *"the interest of justice was not served when it was decided to prosecute Steyl once more on basically the same charges."*

*This decision that has not been taken lightly as it pertains to the heinous crime of poaching of rhinoceros, where our wildlife heritage is being decimated on a daily basis. However, the court cannot make decisions in an emotional manner and has to consider the facts of the case.*

*The National Prosecuting Authority cannot enter into agreements and then, due to public outcry, renege on the agreements."* [she said.](#)

## Alexander Steyn



Image source: <https://www.steynsafari.com/portfolio/rhino/>

In August 2014 *Oxpeckers* reported that in late 2013 SANParks had signed contracts to sell 260 rhinos to three hunting operators in the Northern Cape. One of the buyers was [Steyn Safari](#) owned by Alexander Steyn and his brother Marius. The other buyers were Wintershoek Safaris and Chapunga Safaris. All three outfits are members of local and international professional hunting organisations. Images of hunted rhino were displayed on their websites.



[SANParks sold 120 rhinos to Alexander Steyn](#) and, according to the *City Press* at a "massive reduced fee" of about R220 000 per rhino. Steyn started buying rhinos from the Kruger Park as early as 2004.

Alexander Steyn was [mentioned in the investigation](#) into Dawie Groenewald, where he allegedly acted as middleman between Groenewald and the Vietnamese syndicate and was the safari outfitter for various Vietnamese rhino hunts.

## Wiaan van der Linde

[Wiaan van der Linde](#) is the former president of Wildlife Ranching SA, he was the manager of *Wintershoek Beleggings* in 2000, which according to the website was one of the first large game farms established in 1988.

Wiaan van der Linde is the managing director of [Wintershoek Wild](#) described as a high value game breeding group situated in the Northern Cape. [Wintershoek Safaris](#), according to the website, own and operate several of the top hunting areas within Africa.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2013 [an article](#) in the Sunday Times stated that the fifty-four rhinos set to be transported from a private game reserve in KwaZulu Natal to a hunting farm in the Northern Cape were going to be hunted.

Wiaan van der Linde denied this allegation. He said that if the rhinos were hunted in future, he would only retain 15% of the profit and the rest would go to the [Magudu Game Reserve](#).

In 2013, Wiaan van der Linde had a contract with the Kruger National Park to buy 140 rhinos. Van Der Linde was a member of the Executive Committee of PHASA (Professional Hunter's Organization South Africa) from 2008 – 2012. According to their website, Wintershoek Safaris owns and operates 5 hunting areas with luxury lodges in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. They offer rhino hunts and they proudly display images of their rhino hunts.

According to [reports](#) Wiaan van der Linde hosts four rhino hunts per year on his privately owned wildlife reserve. His rhino are apparently protected and in order to protect his rhino he requires funding which he obtains from these hunts the same report [states](#) that some of his rhino stock is from the Kruger National Park.



Image source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/cTXju4tyBg8dcarY9>  
<http://hunting-operator.com/51-wintershoek-safaris.html>



## Christo Wiese and Jacques Hartzenberg



Image source: <https://www.highadventurecompany.com/location/south-africa-kalahari-oryx/>

Christo Wiese and game breeding partner Jacques Hartzenberg are co-owners of a farm called Kalahari Oryx. Northern Cape game breeder and professional [hunter Jacques Hartzenberg](#) is the owner of [Chapungu Safaris Africa](#) which includes the Kalahari Oryx Game Reserve.

SANParks signed contracts with three hunting outfits based in the Northern Cape in 2013 to translocate 260 rhinos from the Kruger National Park. The three outfits that contracted to purchase the rhino were Chapungu Safaris Africa, the aforementioned Wintershoek Safaris and Steyn Safaris.

[SANParks confirmed](#) the sale of 92 rhinos in March 2015 and 2016 by SANParks to Kalahari Oryx for R18 million. The agreement stated that no rhinos were allowed to be hunted for a three-year period.

In November 2017 it emerged that Kalahari Oryx Game Breeding had sold 13 rhino bulls, which it had purchased from the Kruger National Park, [to a private hunting farm in Namibia](#) owned by Russian billionaire Rashid Sardarov. [Nine of these rhino have apparently died.](#)

Sardarov's farm called [Marula Game Ranch](#) is located near Windhoek's Hosea Kutako International Airport. Sardarov is a trophy hunter and allegedly has three rhino trophies adorning his walls including that of a Black Rhino.

According to an article which included details of the investigation carried out by *Oxpeckers* and the *Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project* published by [Corruption Watch](#) on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

The article stated that SANParks and Wiese were involved in a dodgy Namibian rhino deal.

The South African Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) laws prohibit the export of rhino for anything but breeding or broader conservation purposes and also prohibit hunting of any rhino within a three year period. Namibian rhino specialist, Dr Pierre du Preez, stated in the investigative report that these regulations are not legally enforceable by South Africa, this loophole has apparently been exploited.

A number of rules stipulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) govern the cross-border trade in rhino between Namibia and South Africa, including local regulations stipulated by each country.

Selling excess rhino bulls to be hunted is nothing new in the trophy hunting industry. Through special auctions and carefully curated and regulated sales the Kruger National Park, and others, are allowed to sell rhinos explicitly for hunting.

According to documents obtained by OCCRP from a private investigator the deal with breeders appears to have been personally negotiated by Magome, rather than proceeding through the SANParks board as is required for sales of over R10 million rand.

Among the three South Africa breeders, who were offered preferential access to the Kruger National Park rhinos, were South African billionaire Christo Wiese and his game breeding partner Jacques Hartzenberg. Wiese and Hartzenberg bought an unknown number of rhino for amounts that were well below average market-value. Wiese then made the deal to sell some of these rhino to Marula hunting farm.

According to [Corruption Watch](#) close examination of the deal made between Kalahari Oryx and Sardarov brings to light anomalies that seem to have been overlooked in order to facilitate the Russian billionaire's acquisition of the rhino.

According to the same report 130 of the 260 rhinos sold by the Kruger National Park died in the relocation processes. These rhinos were replaced by the park as specified in the sales agreement between Magome, the then SANParks official, and the breeders.

## John Hume



[Rasid Sardarov in the pith helmet poses with a black rhino he shot at John Hume's Mauricedale's Game Reserve. Photo: Thormahlen & Cochran Safaris](#)

John Hume started breeding rhino in 2008 when it was still legal to trade with rhino horn in South Africa. In 2009 Hume [reported](#) a huge loss of approximately 60 rhino that he had purchased from the Kruger National Park. These rhinos died at his farm *Buffalo Dream Ranch*, apparently due to cold weather, capture stress and lack of adaptation to the local grass. Hume requested compensation for the rhino and some of the rhino were replaced by SANParks.

The horns of the dead rhino were not recovered by SANParks [as stipulated](#) in the sale agreements. According to an investigative report carried out by *Oxpeckers* and *Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project* there appears to be no evidence as the fate of the horns of dozens of the dead rhinos, worth around \$3 million.

While SANParks vetted Hume as a responsible owner, as it does for all potential buyers, his questionable choice of business partners at the time apparently did not set off any alarm bells. Of Hume's rhinos that survived, six ended up on the farm of Dawie Groenewald.

A moratorium on the trade of rhino horn was announced in South Africa in 2009 in response to the rising number of poaching incidents in the country. The 2009 ban was opposed by certain private individuals including John Hume and Johan Kruger.

Dawie Groenewald has been accused of hunting numerous rhinos illegally on his farm Prachtig. It has been widely reported that Groenewald procured live rhinos and rhino horns from other rhino farmers and from the South African National parks authority. [John Hume's name is included as a supplier to of live rhino to Groenewald.](#)

John Hume and Johan Kruger, who was apparently [bankrolled by Dawie Groenewald](#), successfully legally challenged the moratorium on the rhino horn trade in South Africa.

The international trade in rhino horn is regulated by *the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species* and has been banned since 1977. Individual countries are able to determine their own laws to allow or prohibit the sale of rhino horn locally.

John Hume, is generally regarded as the private owner of the largest amount of rhino in the world. One of his farms is called *Buffalo Dream Ranch*, which is located in Klerksdorp in the North West Province of South Africa. In 2018 it was [reported](#) that he had 1626 Southern white rhino.

## **Stephen Maqoboza and Motsami Wells Masigo**

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment issued a media statement on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021. [IOL](#) released more information on the same day stating that an official from the North West department of economic development, environment, conservation and tourism and the owner of a security company had been arrested on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 in connection with the alleged illegal trade of 17 rhino horns.



Image source: <https://oxpeckers.org/2021/10/north-west-case/>



Image source: <https://oxpeckers.org/2021/10/north-west-case/>

On the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021 a report [was published](#) on the *Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalists website*. The report revealed the names of the two men and the fact that Motsamai Wells Masigo is an ex-policeman. It is alleged that they transported 17 rhino horns from a large, well-known game farm near Upington in the Northern Cape, to the North West Province.

*According to the report "wildlife industry insiders have indicated that Stephen Maqoboza, the DEDECT official, enjoyed inappropriate relationships with some game farm owners in the district and that several investigations by the department were either quashed or quietly swept under the carpet."*

*The report also stated "A list of rhino hunts conducted in the province shows that Maquoboza attended and witnessed several trophy hunts by Vietnamese, Laotian and Thai "hunters" where the horns cut from the slaughtered animals were later supplied to the illegal trade in Asia as hunting trophies. These hunts include hunts by Chumlong Lemtongthai, Punpitak Chunchom and Tool Sriton."*

Investigations are continuing, the accused were granted bail of R50 000.00 each.



## THE LACK OF POLITICAL WILL 1999 – 2021



Image source: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/08/victory-rule-law-south-africa>

The relevance of this section is to illustrate that when the rule of law is purposefully disrupted, to such a catastrophic extent as it has been in South Africa, over an extended period of time, criminals have been allowed to take advantage of the untenable situation and have acted with impunity.

South Africa's natural environment has not escaped State Capture and it has suffered as a result of heightened criminal activity, from corruption and from the lack of political will to act against such crimes. The criminal utilization of the natural environment has spread like a plague from the highest vestibules of power, polluting the air, the rivers, the oceans and killing wildlife indiscriminately.

The illegal killing of wildlife, the corruption of the legal wildlife trade, the corruption within the trophy hunting and wildlife breeding sectors and well documented wildlife trafficking is not only symptomatic of an environmental crisis it is also indicative of a political crisis.

In an address in 2000, [former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan](#) said that corruption remains the key enabler of wildlife trafficking. Environmental crime is the world's fourth largest crime sector, environmental and wildlife crime is enabled by corruption.

It is now an undeniable fact that the former president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma enabled the justice system with his loyalists and that he [manipulated government institutions](#) including the National Prosecuting Authority for his own purpose. The public testimonies at the [Zondo Commission on State Capture](#) held in South Africa over the past three years, have clearly and definitively showcased the fact that organised crime in South Africa has penetrated not only state owned companies and organs of the state including the criminal justice system.

In return for protecting politically corrupt individuals, investigative resources were diverted away from corruption investigations. Vast resources have been spent on witch-hunts in order to silence those speaking out against crime and corruption. People have been murdered whilst trying to expose corruption in the environmental sector. The political crisis started when Jacob Zuma, Deputy President of South Africa became embroiled in a controversial situation when his financial advisor, Schabir Shaik was charged with corruption and fraud.

Bulelani Ngcuka, the National Director of Public Prosecutions investigated both Jacob Zuma and the Chief Whip of the African National Congress, Tony Yengeni after allegations of the abuse of power were levelled against them. These allegations alluded to the improper influence in the controversial [1999 arms deal](#) and the question of financial benefit as a result of such influence.

[The arms deal](#) known as the *Strategic Defence Package* was a multi-billion rand military acquisition project finalised in 1999 by the South African government. The arms deal is massively flawed and it is where many people are of the learned opinion that the African National Congress lost its moral compass.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2003 Deputy President [Jacob Zuma was questioned](#) by the [Scorpions](#) publicly via a publication in a South African Sunday newspaper, the questions were in relation to his relationship with Schabir Shaik.

The *Directorate of Special Operations*, known as the Scorpions, were an independent multidisciplinary agency that investigated and prosecuted organised crime and corruption in South Africa.

Schabir Shaik was charged with corruption, fraud and tax evasion relating to alleged bribes and payments from himself and numerous companies to Jacob Zuma. In an attempt to divert these serious allegations away from Zuma, the National Director of Public Prosecutions, Bulelani Ngcuka was accused of being an apartheid spy.

In September 2003 President Mbeki appointed the *Hefer Commission of Inquiry* to investigate the allegations and fitness of Bulelani Ngcuka to hold official office. [Four members of the Shaik family](#) form an intricate part of the [Hefer Commission of Enquiry](#). Chippy Shaik the former head of the South African Arms Procurement Committee, Shabir Schabir's companies which allegedly received a percentage of the [\\$US 4.8 billion arms deal](#), Mo Shaik the former ANC intelligence operative who constructed the report claiming Bulelani Ngcuka was a spy and Yunis Shaik a director of the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration.

Justice Hefer's [scathing findings](#) about the credibility of the spurious allegations and exonerated Bulelani Ngcuka from all blame: *"I find that Messrs Maharaj and Shaik's allegations of spying have not been established. Mr Ngcuka probably never acted as an agent for a pre-1994 government security service, in view of this finding whether Mr Ngcuka has misused the National Prosecution Authority falls away."*

[Judge Hilary Squires](#), a retired South African judge, was appointed to preside over the Schabir Shaik fraud and corruption trial in Durban. He sentenced Schabir Shaik to 15 years imprisonment for corruption. In November 2006 the Supreme Court of Appeal turned down Schabir Shaik's appeal against his fraud and corruption convictions.

Jacob Zuma was [implicated](#) in corruption during the aforementioned Durban High Court trial of his former financial advisor, Schabir Shaik. Judge Hilary Squires elaborated in detail on the numerous transactions that transpired between Zuma and Shaik, summarising with the statement: "all the accused companies were used at one time or another to pay sums of money to Jacob Zuma."

President Thabo Mbeki relieved Zuma of his duties as deputy president on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005, Zuma consequently resigned as a member of parliament.

[According to Mbeki](#) the National Executive Committee of the ANC agreed to accept Jacob Zuma's decision to temporarily stand down as deputy president of the ANC due to allegations of corruption and fraud related to the \$US 4.8 billion weapons acquisition deal by the South African government in 1999.

In December 2005 Jacob Zuma was [charged with raping a 31 year old woman](#) at his home in Gauteng. Zuma denied the charges and claimed that the sexual encounter was consensual. He was acquitted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2006.

Despite the overwhelming [allegations against him](#), on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2007, Jacob Zuma was elected President of the ANC. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 2007, the Scorpions served Zuma an indictment to stand trial in High Court on various counts of racketeering, money laundering, corruption and fraud.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008 [Judge Chris Nicholson](#) ruled that Zuma's corruption charges *were unlawful on procedural grounds*. The announcement of the withdrawal of charges against Zuma was made by the acting head of the National Prosecuting Authority, Mokoethedi Mpshe.

Zuma was sworn in as President of South Africa on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2009 after the ANC won the National Election of 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2009. The Directorate of Special Operations known as the Scorpions, an independent multidisciplinary agency that investigated and prosecuted organised crime and corruption [was disbanded in January 2009](#) by President Jacob Zuma. The Scorpions staff consisted of some of the best prosecutors, police, financial, forensic and intelligence experts in South Africa.

In 2013 President Jacob Zuma was accused of having a corrupt relationship with members of the Indian-born [Gupta family](#) and letting them interfere in ministerial appointments. Brothers Ajay, Atul and Rajesh Gupta relocated to South Africa from Saharanpur, India in 1993.

Legal challenges involving Jacob Zuma with regard to the original 2005 charges continued until finally on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April in 2016 the High Court in Pretoria said the decision taken by former NPA head Mokotedi Mpshe to drop corruption charges against President Jacob Zuma in 2009 was irrational.

South Africans gathered peacefully around the country to demonstrate against President Jacob Zuma in April 2017. The firing of Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan in a cabinet reshuffle on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2017 outraged Zuma allies and opponents alike, he had undermined his authority and rifts he had caused in the ANC were becoming increasingly more obvious.



Image source: <https://time.com/4810488/south-africas-graft-scandal-jacob-zuma/?amp=true>

Jacob Zuma was forced to resign on February 14, 2018 following public outrage about perceived runaway corruption under his presidency.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018 it was confirmed by the director of public prosecutions that Zuma would face 18 charges of corruption, including more than 700 counts of fraud and money laundering.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 the KwaZulu Natal High Court in Pietermaritzburg ruled that Zuma and the French arms company Thales could be criminally tried for alleged activities of illegal arms dealings.

The Gupta name dominated the Zondo Commission of Enquiry into State Capture which has taken place over the past three years in South Africa. The Gupta's have been accused of using their close friendship with the former president Jacob Zuma to wield enormous political influence. [They are implicated in massive corruption](#). Atul and Rajesh Gupta and their wives Chetali and Arti are wanted on charges of fraud and money laundering relating to a R24 million [criminal case in the Free State Province](#).

Jacob Zuma was taken into custody on Wednesday July 7<sup>th</sup> 2021 to begin a fifteen-month prison sentence. [The Constitutional](#) Court, South Africa's highest judicial body ordered his arrest after finding him guilty of contempt of court for failing to appear before the Zondo Commission of Enquiry into State Capture.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2021, prison authorities at the Estcourt Correction Centre in KwaZulu Province, confirmed that [Jacob Zuma had been released from prison on medical parole](#). The Department of Correctional Services stated that they were impelled by a medical report: "Apart from being terminally ill and physically incapacitated, inmates suffering from an illness that severely limits their daily activity or self-care can also be considered for medical parole."

It is impossible not to draw similarities, Shabir Shaik, Jacob Zuma's financial advisor, who was convicted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2005 of corruption and fraud was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, two years and four months later he was released on medical parole. It is uncertain whether Jacob Zuma will [attend court at the KwaZulu High Court](#) in Pietermaritzburg in person with French arms company.



## FROM NKANDLA HOMESTEAD TO THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK



Nkandla Homestead, Northern Zululand 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Image Credit: Licensed to the EMS Foundation

The term *State Capture* has become an internationally recognised term. The buzzword describes a form of corruption in which businesses and politicians conspire to influence a country's decision-making process in order to advance their own interests.

The originators of *State Capture* simultaneously, purposefully weaken the state's law enforcement mechanisms making it impossibly difficult to address complicated networks of corruption.

Corruption involves individual politicians taking kick-back payments for preferential treatment in the outsourcing of contracts.

There is a noteworthy SANParks contract that has been [directly linked](#) to Jacob Zuma the first contract was signed at same the time that his alleged involvement with the infamous *arms deal* and the payment for his controversial homestead called *Nkandla* was being exposed.

The aforementioned SANParks contract lasted for more than a decade, from 2002 to 2016 and in order to fully evaluate the moral and financial implications of this questionable association, the background information contained in this chapter might be helpful.

In 2000 Jacob Zuma started developing a homestead called *Nkandla*, it is situated 24km south from the town of the same name in the uThungula district of Northern KwaZulu Natal.

The construction and then the renovations of this homestead has been the subject of [much controversy](#) in South Africa. The freehold lease of land was obtained from the Nxamalala Tribal Authority.

Tasker & Schumann Architects were requested to draft drawings for the original Nkandla development. [According to documents on hand](#), in a letter dated the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2000, Tasker thanked a person by the name of [Nora Fakude Nkuna](#) for approaching them with the development proposal for the Nkandla homestead project.

A contractor estimated that the original construction at a cost of R2.4 million excluding VAT. Jacob Zuma negotiated with the contractor and the final price was [set at R1.340 million](#). The developer was called Ethekwini Industrial Plumbing and Supplies CC trading as Eric's Industrial Plumbing, the sole member of the Closed Corporation was named as Eric Malengret.

The money for the construction was not paid by Jacob Zuma himself, instead it was paid by various third parties, which are all listed in the aforementioned document. One of the payees was director of *Bohlabela Wheels*, *Nora Fakude Nkuna*. Payments were made in her personal name and the name of her business.

Bohlabela Wheels was incorporated on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1998 and commenced trading on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1999. According to the auditors of Bohlabela Wheels, the main shareholder of the company was Nora Fakude-Nkuna.

According to extensive forensic investigation, included in the aforementioned document, it was clear that the payments made by Nora Fakude Nkuna and Bohlabela Wheels were not treated as a loan or donations. In the financial statements for Bohlabela Wheels for the year ended 28<sup>th</sup> February 2001 the amounts were recorded as *improvements to leasehold property*.

## The Vuswa Wheels and SANParks Contract

Two years after making payments for Jacob Zuma's homestead, on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2002 the Kruger National Park [announced](#) the outsourcing of the management of its vehicle fleet to *Vuswa Fleet Services*. Vuswa Fleet Services, joint venture between Avis Fleet Services and a black empowerment company called Bohlabela Wheels. [The contract](#) was expected to run for five years. Vuswa would supply and manage the Kruger National Park's fleet of about 220 vehicles, a contract which was valued at R50 million.

[Nora Fakude-Nkuna](#) was described in numerous media articles as South Africa's only female head of an armaments company.

The aforementioned SANParks contract was extended, in a [media release from the Kruger National Park](#) on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009 the acting Executive of the Kruger National Park, Mr Abe Sibiya, was photographed receiving a new fleet of vehicles in the Kruger National Park, at the Paul Kruger entrance.

*"The vehicles included one Toyota Hilux double cab, four Toyota Hilux bakkies, one Land Cruiser pick-up, two Toyota Hilux nine-seater game viewing vehicles, one Isuzu bus. These vehicles were to be used for various conservation and tourism related functions in the Kruger National Park.*

*This hand-over formed part of the original contracted originally forged in 2002, the vehicles will join those previously delivered and will be maintained by the KNP's outsourced fleet management company Vuswa Fleet Services".* said Mr Abe Sibiya, who spoke of the continued relationship between South African National Parks and Vuswa Fleet Services, saying that this delivery as was part of a consignment of vehicles worth R50 million.

The expanded contract, which has been renewed for the next five years, includes the supply of additional 200 vehicles which will be used in all National Parks and SANParks administered properties across the country.

Mr Sibiya concluded his address by speaking about the working relationship between Vuswa Fleet Services and the Kruger National Park. Vuswa Fleet Services has three fully accredited workshops in the park which will maintain the vehicles according to the contract. Vuswa also manages the Kruger National Park's emergency break down service.

The Kruger National Park's extensive vehicle fleet managed by Vuswa Fleet Services includes 270 vehicles, which range in six from golf carts and light commercial vehicles to heavy commercial vehicles and construction plant equipment.

## Vuswa Fleet Services (Pty) Ltd

[Vuswa Fleet Services](#) (Pty) Ltd was established in 2002 with 60% of the company owned by Zeda Car Leasing (Pty) Limited trading as Avis Fleet Services and 40% by Bohlabela Wheels (Pty) Ltd.

Bohlabela Wheels (Pty) Limited, according to their website, is a 100% Black Female owned company situated in Nelspruit. According to their website information, the company was initially established to enable Vuswa Fleet Services (Pty) Ltd to put in a tender for the Kruger National Park's fleet of vehicles.

[Jacob Zuma's nephew Kusa Raymond Zuma](#) and his late brother Michael Zuma worked for Bohlabela Wheels.

## The Armscor and Vickers OMC Contracts

*Bohlabela Wheels* was reputed to be the only African armament company headed by a woman, who had used its black empowerment credentials [to win lucrative contracts](#) with the SANDF and Armscor as well as the Namibian and Ugandan armies, and British arms company Vickers.

16<sup>th</sup> November 1999 Multinational armoured vehicle giant Vickers OMC signed its first black empowerment deal in South Africa with a woman. The contract was awarded to Nelspruit entrepreneur Nora Fakude-Nkuna, chief executive and chair of Bohlabela Wheels, in what Vickers said was the first in a series of suitably qualified black empowerment deals in the coming months.

[The contract was signed in Benoni](#) within a month of the acquisition of Reumech OMC by Vickers. It allows for the complete maintenance and repair of a full range of the company's armoured vehicles, excluding armour plating. The range includes the Casspir, Nyala, Scout and Samil.

Jacob Zuma gave a keynote address at a function held to celebrate [Bohlabela Wheels](#) being granted status as agents for Vickers.

Within the first eleven months of its existence, *Bohlabela Wheels* secured contracts worth R6million from [Armscor](#). *Bohlabela Wheels*, the Nelspruit company which manufactures and repairs military vehicles and mobile field kitchen equipment, is reportedly the first company in South Africa to be accredited by the aforementioned state arms-acquisition organisation.

*Bohlabela Wheels* was accredited by the Department of Defence procurement agency [Armscor](#) with a R12.1 million contract to upgrade engines and gearboxes for army vehicles.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2002 [an article](#) entitled South Africa: *SA's Iron Lady in Hot Water Over Debt* was published in the African Eye News Service in Nelspruit. Nora Fakude-Nkuna, narrowly missed having her multi-million Rand company's assets auctioned on Monday after forgetting to pay a bad debt.

R30 000.00 debt to *Klipfontein Panelbeaters* was incurred when Fakude-Nkuna forgot to pay for sub-contract work performed on her behalf for the South African National Defence Force. The contract involved renovating SANDF armoured vehicles as part of a larger supply contract between the army and Fakude-Nkuna's Bohlabela Wheels.

*Bohlabela Wheels* was reputed to be the only African armament company headed by a woman, has used its black empowerment credentials to win lucrative contracts with the SANDF and Armscor as well as the Namibian and Ugandan armies, and British arms company Vickers.

The website also states that *Vuswa Fleet Services* secured the business for all SANParks nationally, and also manages service and maintenance plans on behalf of General Motors South Africa.



According to the same website, the Management Team of Vuswa consists of the Chairperson and Director Norah Fakude. Norah Fakude is also the Executive [Chairperson on Buscor \(Pty\) Ltd.](#) She was the Director of Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency Honorary Secretary for Aerospace Maritime and Defence Industries.



Image source: <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2011-09-30-disgraced-nkuna-mulls-top-offer/>

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2013, investigative journalist Phillip de Wet from the Mail & Guardian [wrote an article](#) entitled *Belly-up Nkandla Company Linked to Bizarre SANParks Deal*. The payments made towards the development of Deputy President Jacob Zuma's Nkandla homestead by the same company and individual that had a multi-million Rand vehicle tender deal with SANParks was thoroughly discussed in this article. Included in the article is this diagram:

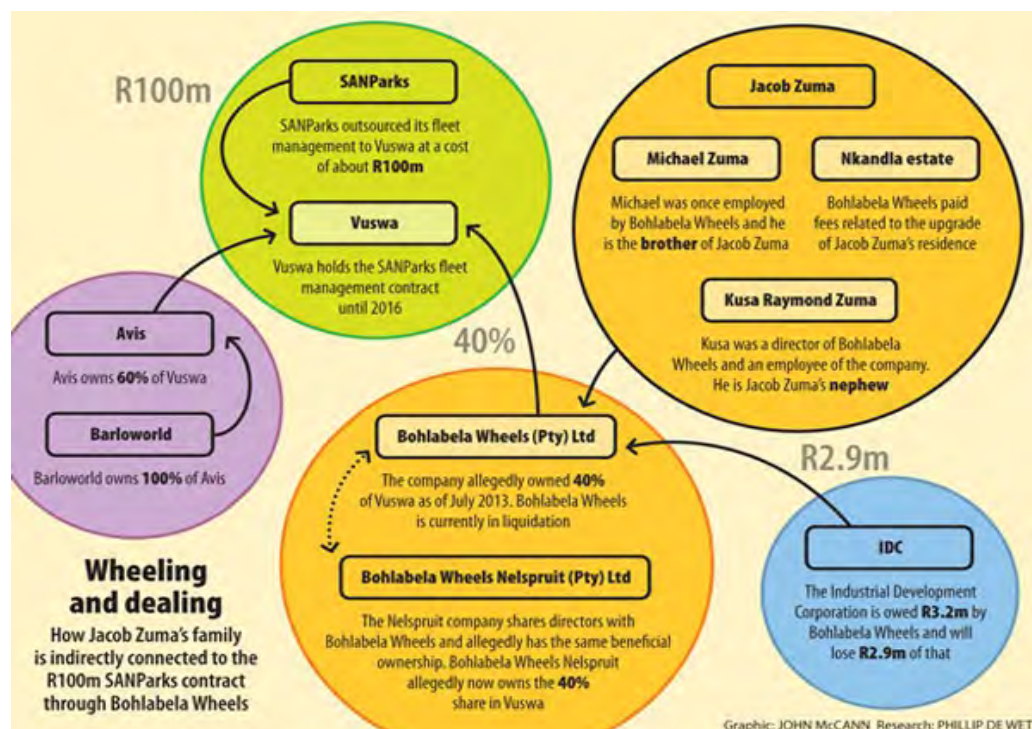


Image Credit: Mail & Guardian. Graphic by John McCann Research Phillip De Wet  
<https://mg.co.za/article/2013-11-14-belly-up-nkandla-company-linked-to-bizarre-sanparks-deal/>



## Mpumalanga Economic Empowerment Corporation (Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency)

The Kruger National Park is bordered by the Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces.

The Mpumalanga Economic Empowerment Corporation's mandate was to decrease poverty through job creation and empowerment, by [extending loans](#) to promising start-ups, or by providing business services.

Two years after the first Vuswa Wheels deal was signed with SANParks, Nora Fakude-Nkuna, a director of the Mpumalanga Economic Empowerment Corporation [was investigated](#). This investigation concerned a R2.8 million loan from the Mpumalanga government in 2004.

According to numerous reports, Fakude-Nkuna, a director of the MEEC, granted a family member a low-interest loan for a vehicle dealership. The dealership called *Interstate Clearing* lists its business address at Shop 55 in the Promenade Centre in Nelspruit. The same address of an optometrist practise belonging to Dr Moriameng Modipane, Kakude-Nkuna's daughter.

Upon further investigation, by forensic auditors PriceWaterhouseCooper, it was discovered that Interstate Clearing's actual business address is in Phalaborwa which falls out of the jurisdiction to qualify for such a Mpumalanga government loan.

The loan was approved Fakude-Nkuna's own name, with her business ID Bohlabela Wheels stating that she was a 100% shareholder in Interstate Clearing. [According to media reports](#) Fakude-Nkuna has never repaid the loan, the loan was written off by the provincial government and no action was taken against Fakude-Nkuna.

According to numerous media articles when the Scorpions started investigating the MEEC, they apparently discovered that Fakude-Nkuna had apparently granted loans of R4 million to companies which are owned by members of her family.

In 2007 Nkuna resigned as deputy head of the Mpumalanga Economic Empowerment Corporation.

Despite the aforementioned allegations in 2011 the Mpumalanga government led by Premier David Mabuza, [approved the nomination](#) of Nora Fakude-Nkuna to serve as a board member of the economic development agency.

## Buscor

In 2005 Nora Fakude Nkuna was the executive chairperson and chief accounting officer of Buscor, Mpumalanga's largest bus fleet. It was reported that a task team of 30 members of the Scorpions raided Fakude Nkuna's home, personal offices and the Buscor premises in April 2005.

The Scorpions were searching for evidence of [alleged embezzlement totalling R102 million over seven years](#).

## Close Relationships

The construction of the R200 million shopping complex in Mpumalanga in Marite village near Hazyview was halted when [a family refused](#) to relocate their graves. "We have tried in vain to communicate with them, so we are now waiting for the government officials to negotiate with them. We are adamant that the government will find a way of compelling them to allow the construction to take place."

There can be no denying the close relationship between Fakude-Nkuna and Jacob Zuma.



## GovernmentZA

PRO

### President Jacob Zuma opens Dayizenza Shopping Plaza, 4 Jul 2015

President Zuma, First Lady Sizakhele Zuma and owner of Dayisenza Mall Nora Fakude Nkuna unveil the plaque at the opening of the Dayizenza Shopping Plaza in Mahushu village, between White River and Hazyview in Mpumalanga. (Photo: GCIS)

Image source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/governmentza/18841614873>

Forensic investigations have provided the proof that she procured the services of the architect and made payments during the development of the Nklandla homestead in her own name and in the name of her business Bohlabela Wheels, two of Zuma's family members, were also according to company records were employed in her business of the same name.

In 2003, when the [Scorpions asked Jacob Zuma questions](#) about his role in the billion rand *Arms Deal* in the [Sunday newspaper](#) Fakude-Nkuna's [name](#) has been [recorded](#) as a witness.

Advocate Kessie Naidu was selected by Jacob Zuma to answer the 35 questions posed by the Scorpions on his behalf. [Investigative journalists](#) pointed out that Advocate Naidu was connected to Fakude-Nkuna in three different empowerment consortia: namely the Isiyalu consortium, the Harambee consortium and the Coal Energy Power Resources consortium.

On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2015 Jacob Zuma [officially opened Dayizenza Shopping Plaza](#), belonging to Nora Kakude-Nkuna. During the official opening of the centre, he told guests that Fakude Nkuna's relationship was forged during the anti-apartheid struggle. Jacob Zuma's presence at the opening of the shopping mall was [questioned](#) by various opposition political parties including the Economic Freedom Fighters leaders in Mpumalanga.

## THE OFFICIAL CUSTODIANS OF SOUTH AFRICAN RHINO



Image source: <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/zuma-praises-rangers-their-efforts-rhino-poaching>

Wildlife rangers and police men and woman risk their lives every single day whilst protecting South Africans and South Africa's biodiversity. Numerous corrupt wildlife rangers, policemen, veterinarians and elected government employees and high-ranking officials have made a mockery of the sacrifices they make and of South Africa's young democracy.

There is not a single South African state-owned entity that does not seem to have been tarnished by the ramifications *State Capture* and the disembowelment of the criminal justice system.

The questionable behaviour and decisions have been taken by custodians of rhino that have directly and negatively impacted their populations in South Africa over the past two decades.

### The Disbanding of the Scorpions

The Directorate of Special Operations, known as the Scorpions, was established by former President Thabo Mbeki in 1999 to fight high-profile corruption cases in South Africa. They proved to be an efficient crime-fighting unit, tackling complex criminal investigations, reporting directly to the National Prosecuting Authority. The Scorpions were extremely effective, with very high arrest and prosecution records.

The Scorpions were [unpopular](#) with supporters of Jacob Zuma and National Police Commissioner and President of Interpol, Jackie Selebi so much so that in 2008, ANC delegates passed a resolution to disband the unit.

At the time the unit was dissolved they were investigating Jackie Selebi. The unit had raided also properties belonging to Jacob Zuma and his lawyer in 2005 as part of their corruption investigation into his role in the *arms deal*.



Since the disbanding of the Scorpions, South Africa has witnessed a surge in corruption. The [Constitutional Court stated in 2011](#) that the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation known as the HAWKS were not adequately insulated from political influence in order to be effective.

Ten years after the Scorpions were disbanded it is hoped that [Advocate Godfrey Lebeya](#) will bring much needed stability and motivation to the HAWKS after his appointment in 2018.

The South African economy has suffered greatly due to the high levels of corruption, each South African has been disadvantaged by the criminal activities of the custodians of the country.

## **Questionable Decisions taken at the Kruger National Park**

At a Board meeting held in October 2013, [SANParks decided to sell](#) and move rhinos out of the Kruger National Park for their own safety as part of a comprehensive rhino-management strategy.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2014 the [Sunday Times published an article](#) about the relocation of 500 rhinos from the Kruger National Park, SANParks denied these allegations.

However, on the 12<sup>th</sup> August 2014 the [South African government announced](#) that it planned to translocate up to 500 rhino from the Kruger National Park to safer locations. Of these 500 rhinos 260 [would be sold to private buyers](#) and despite the earlier denial it was confirmed that cabinet had approved this decision on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

During parliamentary questioning the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, confirmed that 354 rhinos had been sold from the Kruger National Park since 1 January 2010 for a total of R81 million.

At the time Dr Richard Emslie, the Scientific Officer of the IUCN SSC Rhino Specialist Group explained this low price that was obtained for the rhino could be due to the fact that the poaching crisis had led to drop in monetary value of rhino. Minister Molewa confirmed that the funds would be spent on numerous conservation-related projects.

In April 2014 [SANParks scientists said](#): "The establishment of intensively protected rhino conservancies outside national parks under a poaching siege serves as a final strategic task to manage rhinos and improve their conservation status in the donor and recipient sites."

On the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2014 [Oxpeckers](#) Investigative Environmental Journalists published [a report](#) stating that the bulk of the rhinos that South African National Parks wants to move out of the of the Kruger to protect them from poachers will go to private game reserves in the Northern Cape. SANParks signed contracts with three hunting outfits based in the Northern Cape reserves in 2013 for the translocation of 260 Kruger National Park rhinos. The three trophy hunting organisations contracted to buy the 260 rhinos were Chapungu Safaris Africa, Wintershoek Safaris and Steyn Safaris. According to the report all three hunting organisations apparently advertised rhino hunts on their websites.

[Dr Hector Magome](#) the head of Conservation at Kruger National Park was also the Regional Vice-Chair for IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas for Southern Africa from 2004-2009, he also served on the South African WWF Advisory Committee. [Dr Magome was suspended](#) from duty in June 2014, [said that](#) he acted with full authority and that he had been involved with numerous sales of rhinos over the years and the board had never objected.

According to [reports](#), a review of Dr Magome agreements by auditors Sizwe Ntsaluba Gobodo in February 2015 revealed that these agreements were unprocedural and indicated that he had, at in once instance, started negotiations two months before any official notice of SANPark's intention to sell of large numbers of rhinos was published.



The review also mentioned missing rhino horns removed from rhinos who died during the translocation process, in terms of the sales agreements between Dr Magome and the buyers, the rhinos which perished during translocation would be replaced but the rhino horn from the deceased rhino would be returned for safe-keeping by SANParks.

Dr Hector Magome is presently a member of the North West Park's Board and the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, he is a trustee of the Pilansberg Wildlife Trust, [Deputy Chairman of Resource Africa](#). *Resource Africa* supports the sustainable use of wildlife.

## SANParks Employees Charged with Rhino Killing

The Minister of Environmental Affairs, Mrs Edna Molewa, the South African Police HAWKS and SANParks welcomed the [arrest of a former SANParks](#) field ranger and two SAPS members based at Skukuza police station the Kruger National Park took place on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

Four months later [three SANParks employees](#) were apprehended for rhino poaching in the Kruger National Park on the eve of World Rhino Day on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Two were caught in the act of killing and dehorning a rhino. The third suspect was the section ranger of Lower Sabie who allegedly supplied the rifle which was used to kill the rhino. The arrests were made when SANParks officials in the same area heard gunshots and investigated.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020 it was reported that [three staff SANParks officials](#) had been arrested with rhino horn in a joint intelligence-driven operation carried out by SANParks, the South African Police Service in Sabi Sands and Skukuza, a Crime Intelligence unit, and a stock-theft unit.

The three staff members were arrested when they were found in possession of fresh rhino horn after a car chase outside the Kruger National Park. The employees held positions of security guards and technical services at one of the rest camps.

[Minister of Environment, Barbara Creecy](#) said, in response to a Parliamentary question about the involvement of SANParks staff in rhino poaching in March 2021, that forty SANPark employees have been found guilty of being involved with rhino poaching and been dismissed since 2009. Criminal charges for poaching of rhinos were lodged against all 40 employees and one has since been convicted with a sentence of four years imprisonment.

## Wildlife Veterinarians Questionable Behaviour

1. [The owners of the Nylstroom Animal Clinic](#) and Limpopo Wildlife Game Capture, were well known veterinarians from Modimole in Limpopo. They were arrested on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010 [after five rhinos were killed](#) in the North West Province over the prior weekend. The SA Veterinary Council said at the time that any veterinarian found guilty of disgracing the profession through improper conduct may be barred from practising.
2. A veterinarian from Boksburg, [Dr Johan Hendrik Meyer](#) was found guilty after an eight month internal investigation by the South African Veterinary Council SAVC in 2011 of unprofessional conduct after he dispensed 26 bottles of M99 between July 2008 and July 2009 to an individual [not qualified](#) or authorised to use the drug. This amount of tranquiliser was enough to disable 390 rhinos. He was fined R25 000.00 by the South African Veterinary Council. [He was also suspended](#) for a period of six months.

[The use of M99](#) is strictly controlled. It is meant to be kept locked up and each use recorded in a register. M99 had become the drug of choice of rhino poachers. The use of a tranquiliser gun is much quieter than a firearm.

3. Dr Douw Grobler was the head of game capture at the Kruger National Park and was world renowned for large-scale wildlife relocation programmes which included elephant and rhino. He was fired for the unauthorised sale of animals from the Kruger National Park's disease-free buffalo breeding project.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 [it was reported](#) that three veterinarians, Douw Grobler, appeared in court this week on charges relating to the illegal use of tranquillising drug favoured by rhino poachers. Grobler was arrested in November 2011 in connection with the possession and distribution of scheduled veterinary medicines. Five crates of medicines were confiscated during a police raid on Ras's home, which led to the arrest.

Grobler appeared with Johannes Gerhardus Kruger a private vet, and Buti Chibase, a state vet from Klerksdorp. They appeared with professional hunter and game farmer Hugo Ras and Matthys Christoffel Scheepers, Riaal Booysen, Johan Carl Heydenrych and Christoffel Francois Naude.

4. On Friday the 24 January 2011, a wildlife veterinarian in South Africa was arrested for illegally removing the horns of 15 rhinos. [Dr Andre Charles Uys](#) allegedly dehorned rhinos in the Maremani Game Reserve, located in Limpopo Province. Dr Uys was caught trying to sell the 30 horns. Dr Uys was released on R30 000.00 bail at the Musina Magistrates Court.

## Tarnished Members of the South African Police Service

On World Rhino Day in 2018, [Andrea Crosta](#), one of the founding members of the Wildlife Justice Commission in the Netherlands and Executive Director and co-founder of Earth League International [stated the following](#): *"The South African government's astonishing level of corruption, short-sightedness, and incompetence represent formidable obstacles to fighting the rhino killing crisis and the international trafficking of rhino horn."*

According to Crosta the rhino killing syndicates have hundreds of government officials involved in the national parks on their payroll including those working in the Kruger.

The recent high-profile arrests shows that there are people willing and capable of taking action in South Africa.

These are some of the high-profile rhino killing cases involving members of the South African Police Services. Every single one of these matters mentioned here involves an ongoing investigation.

1. The most infamous suspected South African rhino poaching syndicate leader and orchestrator of fake rhinos hunts is [Dawie Groenewald a former police official](#) and his brother Janneman Groenewald who were allegedly suspended from the South African police for committing fraud.

They were, according to reports, also suspended from the South African Professional Hunters Association in 2006.

[Oscar Nkala](#), a Zimbabwean journalist and wildlife crime researcher wrote an article about Groenewald stating that the Zimbabwean nature conservation authorities Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority [expelled him](#) and his company called *Valinor Trading CC and Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris* for apparent illegal activities in 2005.

The alleged activities included poaching and hunting on farms belonging to evicted white Zimbabwean farmers and acting suspected cahoots with war vets and [Zanu-PF officials](#).

Dawie Groenewald was [charged and convicted in the USA](#) for illegally importing a leopard in 2010. 2014 Dawie Groenewald was indicted for violating the Lacey Act which provides for the protection of endangered species

In 2011, Groenewald was [charged with 1872 counts](#) in South Africa ranging from illegal rhino hunting to racketeering, permit violations, illegal trade in rhino horn, money laundering and violation the Biodiversity Act and the Act on the Prevention of Organised Crime.

The Limpopo farming community was not shocked at his arrest in 2010, they grew suspicious of the [former policeman's new-found wealth](#).

In 2014 Dawie Groenewald and his brother were indicted in the USA for violating the Lacey Act which provides for the protection of endangered species.

In July 2021 Dawie Groenewald [was arrested whilst transporting](#) 19 rhino horns, they were charged with the illegal possession and selling of rhino horns.

2. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014 ten members of a suspected rhino killing syndicate were remanded in police custody. Amongst the suspects was Willie Oosthuizen a warrant officer of the HAWKS in Pretoria.
3. The Minister of Environmental Affairs, Mrs Edna Molewa [announced](#) on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2014 that a SANSPark field ranger and two South African Police Service members based at Skukuza Police Station were arrested.
4. [It was reported](#) on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017 that Warrant Officer JP van Zyl Roux was fired after being suspended in 2015 pending a two-year investigation for the shooting of people alleged to be involved with criminal activities involving rhinos. His lawyer Jacques Botha told *The Witness* that the alleged rhino killers were shot by members of the Special Task Force, that these criminals were armed. "There was no case, my client did not shoot anyone dead" he said. Van Zyl Roux appeared before a disciplinary inquiry, his conduct had put the South African Police Service into "disrepute and embarrassment". The Van Zyl Roux appeal was unsuccessful. HAWKS spokesperson Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi said the matter was "one for employer and employee and not for public consumption."
5. Phenias Lubisi, a former station commander in Skukuza, Xolani Lubisi a former officer at Calcutta, Constable Thembisile Mhlanga from Skukuza appeared in the White River Magistrate's Court [in September 2018](#) on charges of theft, conspiracy, illegal buying and selling of rhino horn, corruption and money laundering.
6. [According to a media report](#), Constable Sizwe Buthelezi, was charged for the unlawful possession of a firearm; unlawful possession of ammunition; of a protected endangered species (rhino horn) and of a dangerous weapon. Constable Buthelezi, a member of the SAPS Tactical Response Team station at Kwamasane was caught with two rhino horns on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018. The case was pending follow further investigation.
7. In 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2018 the police arrested [a well-known ex South African Policeman](#) Joseph Nyalunga, previously mentioned in this report. According to [reports](#) four Kruger National Park staff members, an ex-policeman and seven Mozambicans were arrested.
8. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September [2021it was reported](#) that two alleged rhino killers, a police officer and a Chinese interpreter appeared in the Palm View Magistrates Court and were released on bail, the accused Warrant Officer Stephanus Peter Peters was granted R5000.00 and Lina Zhang was granted R20000.00 bail. They are facing charges of dealing in rhino horn and contravening the Customs Act. The next court appearance is on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021.
9. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 it [was reported](#) that former policeman Motsami Wells Masigo was arrested by police in Mahikeng he was arrested with Stephen Maquoboza an employee of the North West Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism. It is alleged that they

illegally transported 17 rhino horns from a well-known game farm near Upington in the Northern Cape to the North West Province. They were granted R50 000.00 bail each.

10. On Thursday the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 one of our sources was contacted by a member of the South African Police Services with the news that a Lieutenant Colonel in the South African Police Service stationed at Multi-Dimensional Crimes, Crime Intelligence, head office in Pretoria had been arrested and charged with corruption and defeating the ends of justice. What is interesting about this arrest is the part he played in a questionable 252A operation used to "trap" an alleged rhino poaching kingpin that took place in December 2014 in KwaZulu Natal.

## The Curious Closure of the Skukuza Regional Court

The late Minister of Environment, Edna Molewa, [welcomed the opening of the Skukuza Regional](#) Court in the Kruger National Park in April 2017. *"Having a Regional Court in Skukuza will ensure that the case turnaround times for rhino poaching and related cases are expedited which will make a contribution to tackling the illicit trade in rhino horn"* she said.

Mpumalanga Regional Court President, Naomi Annette Engelbrecht closed the Skukuza Regional Court and referred all the cases to the Mhala Regional Court in Bushbuck Ridge, which is situated about 100km from Skukuza in August 2019. When questioned about the closure [Naomi Engelbrecht](#) responded in an email, *"Choose to ignore the directives and you will hear from me"* sent to Judge President Francis Legodi of the Mpumalanga High Court.

Judge Legodi, her superior, tried to convince Engelbrecht to reopen the court.

It has been widely reported that the court had played a vital role in the fight against rhino poaching and bringing poachers to justice.

In February 2020 a motion was brought before Judge Bernard Ngoepe, Judge Cynthia Pretorius and acting Judge Moira Mankge. In a unanimous verdict the judges ruled that the court in [Skukuza was legitimate](#) that Legodi's instruction to Engelbrecht was valid and binding and that her decision to close the Skukuza Regional Court was invalid.

Engelbrecht [appealed](#) the decision but her appeal was rejected. She appealed to the Supreme Court of Appeals in Bloemfontein where it was once again rejected by a bench of five judges. In a final effort to get the judgement reversed she applied to the Constitutional Court for leave to appeal.

Nine judges of the Constitutional Court said that: "leave to appeal is dismissed as it bears no reasonable prospect of success."

Skukuza Regional Court was reopened on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 after what was [described as](#) *a lengthy and suspiciously sinister legal battle*.

## Allegations about a South African Government Minister

Mr David Mahlobo the former provincial HOD of co-operative governance and traditional affairs was named as the minister of state security by President Jacob Zuma on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

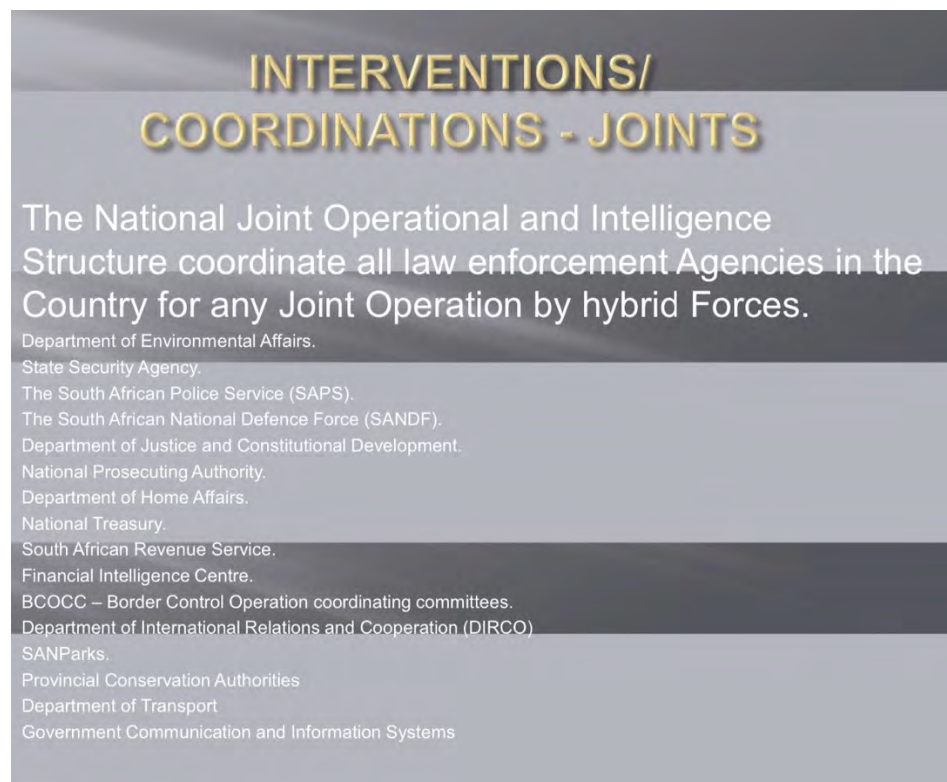




Mr David Mahlobo, Minister of State Security, appointed by Jacob Zuma in 2014. Image source: <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-05-20-i-was-never-zumas-henchman-and-did-not-collect-cash-for-him-or-myself-claims-david-mahlobo/>

According to a document, entitled the [\*Protection of the Rhino Species\*](#) presented by Lieutenant General E Mawela of the South African Police Service on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2013:

*Operation Rhino had been launched in May 2011 under the NATJOINTS to co-ordinate and consolidate all the combating efforts and resources in the fight against rhino poaching. The National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure co-ordinate all law enforcement Agencies in the Country for any Joint Operation by hybrid Forces*



[The State Security Agency was listed as the second in this coordinated structure](#)

In 2016, the Minister of the State Security Agency, appointed by Jacob Zuma, was at the centre of an international media firestorm about his alleged ties to a Chinese rhino horn trafficker, Guan Jiang Guang, who has openly boasted about bribing justice and immigration officials in South Africa.

## The Poachers Pipeline

On 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016, the South African State Security Agency issued a [statement](#) in which [former Minister Mahlobo](#) denied involvement in the rhino horn trade.

"The Minister of State Security refutes these ludicrous allegations with all the contempt that they deserve and reserves his rights in respect of those making such false claims."

The allegations to which [the Minister](#) refers were contained in a documentary by Al Jazeera called [The Poachers Pipeline](#) which aired on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Investigative journalists linked Minister Mahlobo to the rhino horn trade via the self-confessed criminal [Guan Jiang Guang](#).



Image source: <https://www.news24.com/amp/ews24/southafrica/news/more-pictures-of-mahlobo-with-massage-therapist-surface-20161114>

Guan Jiang Guang has subsequently vanished. The [Jin Lu Chinese Massage and Beauty Salon](#) at Sonpark Shopping Centre closed temporarily after the release of the documentary. Guan Jiang Guang [stated](#) that the Minister frequented the massage parlour every week or at least twice a month. According to reports, Guang is a level three [rhino horn trafficker](#).

Minister Mahlobo [frequented the beauty spa](#) located in Mbombela owned by Guan Jiang Guang, but according to the Minister he was not aware that Guang was involved in criminal matters.

The documentary [focused](#) on rhino poachers in South Africa and the middle man and the buyers in China and Vietnam. The investigators focused on level four of the chain and they explained the chain as follows:

- level one, low-level poachers on the ground;
- level two are the locally based gang masters who orchestrate the killing of rhino on the ground and provide weapons, financing and transportation;
- level three and level four are traffickers who are mostly Asian nationals from China and Vietnam who have the ability, the wherewithal, the money the skill and the influence to be able to move the horn from Africa to Asia. Level four traffickers are based in the Far East with access to rhino horn locally and they have contacts who are located at airports and are able to get the horn through customs.

The investigators also [discovered](#) that members of the Chinese President's delegation went on an illegal spending spree in South Africa to purchase ivory and rhino horn and smuggled [these products](#) back to China.

The team [filmed](#) a [Chinese businessman](#), based in South Africa, who described his dealings in rhino horn and how he escapes prosecution.

Despite the evidence contained in the documentary, the South African Police Service HAWKS spokesperson Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi [confirmed](#) that no police docket had been registered, he said that the HAWKS were definitely not investigating the Minister.

Brigadier Mulaudzi also confirmed that Guan Jiang Guang had disappeared. According to the Institute of Accountability director, Paul Hoffman, there was nothing the police could do if the man had disappeared. *"The allegations were damning, but in the absence of a witness there is no way that you can prove a criminal case beyond a reasonable doubt."*

## The Pathfinder Corporation

The Minister for State Security, Mr David Mahlobo, [strongly denied](#) that he played a role in the termination of the Pathfinder Corporation's contract with SANParks on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2014.

Founded in 1998, by CEO Marius Roos, [Pathfinder Corporation](#) is described as a highly specialised private intelligence-based security organisation which provides custom define solutions to highly sensitive projects or operations within unstable environments.

Pathfinder Corporation worked closely with Major General Johan Jooste in the research, planning, management and implementation of all environmental asset protection strategies across the [twenty national parks in South Africa](#).

The Department of State Security and the Department of Environmental Affairs apparently believed that Pathfinders direct links to the USA could prove a security risk for the country. Mr Nigel Morgan, chairman of the foundation called Focus Africa, head of the Pathfinder Corporation at the time, confirmed that the USA link to the Kruger National Park was a financial contribution made to the Pathfinder Corporation by American financier Mr Warren Buffet, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway.

## Zondo Commission of Enquiry into State Capture

More recently when questioned at the [Zondo Commission of Enquiry](#) into State Capture in South Africa, former Minister of State Security, Mahlobo denied direct involvement in several alleged State Security Agency projects.

Ten witnesses gave evidence to the effect that former Minister Mahlobo had been actively involved in covert SSA projects aimed to protect former President Jacob Zuma.

## Kruger National Park and the Warren Buffet Grant

It is was [announced](#) on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014 that a R255 million grant was set up to fight rhino poaching at the Kruger National Park by the Howard G Buffet Foundation.

The funds would be used to test anti-poaching tactics that can be applied in other regions of Africa, to create an *Intensive Protection Zone* using sophisticated detection and tracking equipment and infrastructure on the ground and in the air.

David Mabunda, SANParks chief executive described the gesture as follows: *"The scale, complexity and strategic value of this initiative is truly unprecedented for SANParks, and we believe will be transformative in our ongoing efforts to address poaching and decimation of the rhino population in the Kruger National Park."*

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 the late Minister Molewa gave a speech about a [grant received for the combatting of rhino poaching in the Kruger National Park](#).

*"Today we are gathered to say thank you for identifying rhino poaching as an arrest that warranted your intervention. I am sure that I am also echoing President Zuma's message in the State of National Address when he said, I quote, thank the business community and all South African who participate in the campaign to save the rhino."*

A R255 million grant to fund a three year campaign in which new methods of anti-poaching which were to be [tested for the efficacy](#) and possible deployment elsewhere in Africa, seemed like a gift at a time when rhino poaching was seemingly out of control in the Kruger National Park.

It is bitterly disappointing to read [Reflections on a Historical Commitment to Combat Poaching in South Africa's Kruger National Park](#), written by Howard G. Buffet, contained in the Howard Buffet Foundation financial report from the Chairman page 45- 47.

*"Today, more than three years after our original commitment, we are deeply disappointed in the results. There is a long list of things that went wrong, many of which did not surprise me. As we knew going in poaching hotspots are volatile and plagued by corruption. When Jooste informed us that some rangers had been helping poachers and had been arrested and relieved of their duties, I appreciated being told, and did not put the blame on SANParks.*

*The real disappointment was SANParks inability to execute at even the most basic level. By the time we gave notice to SANParks in April 2016 that we were suspending further use of funds for non-performance and repeated violations of the grant terms and policies only about \$9 million of the funds had been expended.*

*Three months later, we opted to terminate our outstanding commitment to SANParks after determining they had violated our grant agreement in a number of ways:*

- *failing to abide by the mutually agreed approval process*
- *failing to deliver status reports on time*
- *violations of key man clauses*
- *misappropriating grant funds for unapproved uses*
- *apply grant funds to expenses that were never part of the approved use of funds*
- *obligating grant funds towards expenses that were not yet approved and/or would need to be incurred after June 30 2016 grant conclusion date*
- *failing to accurately account for interest earned*
- *failure by SANParks to ensure staff adhered to the terms of grant agreement*
- *utilizing time-consuming and inefficient product specification, supplier sourcing and procurement processes.*

*We were prepared to provide SANParks with additional funds to cover the obligations they had already made without proper approval; however, SANParks and the government of South Africa failed to respond to our offer in full, forfeiting the additional funds. In the end, SANParks failures meant \$14.6 million of the \$26.2million we had planned to provide to combat rhino poaching was never invested.*

*Today, Kruger National Park's rhino's remain under attack and poaching activities continue to increase. SANParks believes our investments have made a difference. We don't have the confidence in SANParks to agree. This project is a great illustration of what we find is a common phenomenon in development: you can have the best ideas, well-meaning individuals and the full commitment of resources but none of it matters if you cannot implement those ideas. We learnt this lesson quickly with SANParks, it was enough of a lesson to completely end our engagement in anti-poaching efforts."*

Buffet's sentiments are echoed in an article written in 2015 titled [R440m Spent but Rhinos Still Slaughtered](#) questions were raised about the amount of money that was being funnelled into the Kruger National Park. [Concerns](#) were raised about the efficiency of the *Berlin Wall* around the intensive protection zone in the south of the Kruger National Park.

Two senior SANParks officials said that late Minister Molewa's poaching figures were inaccurate. Scientists warned that the figures she released about the number of surviving rhinos in the Kruger National Park were questionable.



## Failure to Act - Did Anyone Bother to Follow the Guns?

A four-year long investigation which started in 2014 was carried out by Kathi Lynn Austin founder of the [Conflict Awareness Project](#) (CAP) uncovered evidence that an international gunrunning network funnelled thousands of high-calibre hunting rifles from Europe and the US to poaching kingpins in southern Africa.

CAP identified members of a gunrunning network which operated over five countries and three continents which they referred to as the Rhino Rifle Syndicate. This syndicate equipped rhino poaching teams in Mozambique and South Africa with rifles manufactured in the Czech Republic. These rifles were designed to kill big game and have wrecked devastation across the Kruger National Park.

As already explained in this report the criminal justice system in South Africa was politically compromised due to mechanics of State Capture. Law enforcement agencies were not operating correctly.

[The cameraman witnessed](#) Kathi Lynn Austin attempting to hand-over the evidence of this investigation to various law enforcement agencies.

"90% of the weapons recovered in the Kruger National Park were produced by Ceska Zbrojovka Uhersky Brod, Czech Republic's biggest gunmaker. Commonly referred to as CZ's, these rifles were chosen by the Rhino Rifle Syndicate because they were chambered to fire .375 or .458 calibre rounds, cartridges powerful enough to kill big game with a single piercing shot. Some of the recovered CZ rifles bore trademark engravings from CZ-USA, CZUB wholly-owned American subsidiary, located in the state of Kansas. The CZ-USA rifles were ostensibly made for the American market but were diverted to Africa for use by rhino poachers" Kathi Lynn Austin

This report is based on a four-year-long CAP field investigation that tracked the illicit flow of CZ rifles across three continents. It presents evidence of gun trafficking, wildlife crime, racketeering, corruption, bribery and fraud."

## NOTORIUS UNLICENSED RHINO KILLERS



GURCHARAN ROOPRA ©

[The United Nations banned](#) the international trade in rhino horn in 1977 in order to save the rhino species from extinction. The demand fell away and rhino poaching became negligible. From 1990 to 2007 South Africa lost an average of 13 rhinos per year to poaching.

The trophy hunting of rhino, as discussed in this report, was permissible in South Africa and Namibia. However, the trophy hunting permit system was used by unscrupulous professional hunters from about 2002 and this undoubtedly stimulated the market for rhino horn in Vietnam.

Well-structured criminal syndicates specialising in the illegal trafficking of rhino horn, ivory, pangolin scales and lion bone across international borders began to operate in earnest in South Africa.

Within the same time frame corrupt activities were taking place within the government of South Africa. The foundations of corruption and state capture were being laid for what would become the political landscape in the country for the next twenty years.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 the Department of Environmental Affairs released a [document](#) co-authored by the South African Police Services HAWKS and SANParks. The content of document confirmed that the impact of rhino poaching in South Africa was being felt in all nine provinces and the Kruger National Park. The poaching activity was being driven by an international illegal trade and demand for rhino horn. That the criminal activities were being co-ordinated by both international and locally based organised criminal networks. The document noted the following and described these as criminal activities:

- Illegal Hunting
- Pseudo Hunting
- Illegal Dehorning
- Permit Violations
- Smuggling of rhino horn and horn derivatives
- Fraud and Corruption
- Money laundering

South Africa has reported a decline in the number of rhinos being killed by poachers in the national parks. This must, in part, be due in part to the fact that there are less rhinos to kill. The illegal hunting of rhino is a dangerous business. These hunters would not want to spend unnecessary lengths of time in the national parks such as the Kruger National Park where they could be apprehended or killed.

During the hard Covid-19 lock-down it was virtually impossible to get into the Kruger National Park unnoticed, human movement were heavily restricted. Road blocks around all national parks and road closures made access to national parks difficult. As soon as the restrictions were lifted the killing of rhino started again.

Below are some of the more notorious rhino killers and rhino horn dealers that have made headline news over the past decade.

## Ashraf Cassim

[On Christmas Day in 2008](#) conservation officials stated that they believed that they had *broken the back* of illegal rhino poaching in South Africa. In a narrative that has been used subsequently in other dramatic media accounts of rhino killing arrests, according to SANParks investigators 80% of rhino poached in South Africa might have been handled by Ashraf Cassim.

Ashraf Cassim, a taxidermist and curio shop owner was arrested with 15 other people on charges related to killing rhino and smuggling rhino horn. He was granted bail of R75000.00 at the Middelburg Regional Court.

The arrest of Ashraf Cassim apparently followed a SANSPark investigation which started in April 2008. David Mabunda said that there were about 12000 rhino in the Kruger National Park, 36 rhinos were poached in 2008. Mabunda said that the curio shop in Hartebeespoort Dam is allegedly part of an organised international syndicate.

*Just Africa* owner Ashraf Cassim and fifteen other people appeared in the Middelburg Regional Court.

His arrest took [months of planning](#), an agent arranged the sale of three rhino horns at the shop. When Cassim paid the agent the South African Police Service could make the arrest.

## Mike Peega

[In a joint operation](#) carried out by various disciplines of the South African Police Services including the Mpumalanga, Limpopo and North West Organised Crime Units, the Gauteng Provincial Task Team and with representatives from the South African National Parks, 11 suspects were arrested and charged in connection with the killing of black and white rhino on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2009.

According to the official report from the South African Police Services, five Mozambiquean nationals, three Chinese nationals, two Cape Town based businessmen and a medical doctor from Bruma Lake in Gauteng, were arrested. Two AK-47 rifles and four .303 rifles and R16000.00 in cash were recovered.

The [suspects were arrested](#) and charged with the illegal hunting of game within national parks, the unlawful possession and dealing in rhino horn and unlawful possession of firearms.

One of the suspects, [Mike Peega](#), was a former South African special forces soldier, was apprehended in a roadblock in Modimolle, north of Pretoria, the person in the vehicle with him apparently fled the scene.

Peega was arrested when a .303 hunting rifle was found in the vehicle. He confessed to having been hired by a rhino killing syndicate because of his shooting skills. This confession was apparently repudiated later.

Mike Peega, a South African Revenue Services employee, was charged with hunting wildlife without a permit and illegally possessing a firearm. Peega, was [fired from SARS](#) as a result of the arrest. He subsequently, apparently, claimed that he was a victim of a sting operation, SARS denied that this was true.

After Peega's arrest an explosive "intelligence" document relating to sensitive information about covert SARS investigations landed in the hands of ANC Youth League president Julius Malema.

Curiously, Peega was then relieved of any responsibility in his role in the aforementioned rhino syndicate arrest. The official South African Police documents, known as dockets, detailing the evidence against Peega [appear to have vanished](#).

According to Peega, the sensitive SARS information he supplied in [reports](#), was obtained whilst he was working for a secretive SARS unit. The unit was officially known as the National Research Group.

The group was covertly investigating trafficking of drugs, cars, abalone, cigarettes and rhino horn. Sunday Times investigative journalists gathered further evidence suggesting that SARS was engaged in illegal covert intelligence gathering.

Years later, it has been firmly established that the aforementioned Unit at SARS was indeed legitimate, a this was confirmed by five High Court judges and an Appeal Court Judge.

In 2015, a journalist declared in an affidavit, that the Sunday Times articles and [allegations were false](#).

In October 2019 in a [statement from SARS](#) revealed that the aforementioned secret and disputed report by the Inspector General of Intelligence into the South African Revenue Service investigative unit, which was released by Julius Malema, leader of Economic Freedom Fighters is a travesty of justice.

This report apparently relied on information obtained from Mike Peega.

It is contended that [Mike Peega](#) was intent on revenge for being dismissed from SARS, and that he embarked on an orchestrated effort to sow havoc at SARS. Peega was apparently funded by people close to Jacob Zuma. His targets were Pravin Gordhan, Ivan Pillay and Johann van Loggerenberg. Peega gave his file of evidence to Julius Malema who was himself apparently in trouble for alleged tax evasion.

## **Patrick Nkuna**

Patrick Nkuna was arrested on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015 in the Pretoriuskop section of the Kruger National Park during an extended ground and air follow-up operation after a black rhino had been killed.

The suspects were sighted and realising they had been seen, one of killers the pointed a rifle at the helicopter. According to reports, a shot rang out and the rangers returned fire.

Patrick Nkuna, an illegal immigrant was [sentenced to 33 years](#) in prison for attempted murder, trespassing in a national park and the possession of an illegal firearm. and related offences in the Skukuza Regional Court on November 9<sup>th</sup> 2018.

The [South African National Parks](#) welcomed the sentencing. [Glenn Phillips](#), who was the Managing Executive of the National Park, commended the court for the stiff jail term, saying it sends a clear message to would be rhino killers: *"This is a huge victory and deterrence factor in the ongoing anti-poaching campaign. We warmly welcome this ruling as it will provide the much-needed boost to the anti-poaching teams who endure harsh conditions for the protection of our parks"*.



## Joseph “Big Joe” Nyalungu

[Joseph Nyalungu](#), a former South African Policeman, was arrested in February 2010 when it was alleged that he and Elvis Mulimi had [kidnapped](#) and murdered a person by the name of Willey Shipalana. It was believed that they abducted him and beat him to death before discarding his body in the Inyaka Dam. His body was discovered with concrete blocks tied to his feet.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2011, [it was reported](#) that Joseph Nyalungu was arrested with Constable Conrad Nkuna who was stationed at Hazyview Police Station in Mpumalanga. They were on their way back to Middleburg from Gauteng when they were stopped by the South African Police in a roadblock.

Police officials found R3.2 million in cash, it was suspected that they had sold rhino horn in Gauteng. According to reports, DNA from rhino was also found in his possession.

This DNA matched that of a rhino that was poached in the Stolsnek area of the Kruger National Park earlier the same year. Nyalungu and Nkuna were released on bail.

[According to the National Prosecuting](#) Authority, two undercover police operations were carried out in 2012. On the 27<sup>th</sup> February members of the South African Police Organised Crime Unit in Mpumalanga sold two rhino horns to Nyalungu.

A Vietnamese national, Mr Ngoc Cuong Pham, was arrested in Bedfordview an affluent suburb situated close to Johannesburg in May 2012. He had 10 rhino horns, R4 million in cash and an elephant tusk. Two of the horns were positively identified as those allegedly sold to Nyalungu during the aforementioned undercover police operation.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 an undercover policeman allegedly sold four horns to Nyalungu he was arrested after the second undercover operation was completed. Timothy Ngcobe was apprehended during the same transaction. Constable Thabang Shakoane, from the Kaapmuiden Police Station was arrested in September 2012.

After Nyalungu's arrest on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012, the police escorted him to his residence where they seized various items including R5 069 800.00 in cash. Happy Sello Zitha, David Lazarus Singanque, Calisto Joe Gulaigu Massoda, Zeka Fransico Mindu Santos, Checo Someone Cassa and Sam Mashaba were also taken into custody.

Whilst the Police were searching his home [they discovered a camera](#). There were allegedly images of a person tied to a chair who had been assaulted. At the time they suspected the person on the chair was Willey Shipalana.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012 an amount of R3 280 800.00 in cash, a Range Rover motor vehicle and Toyota Fortuner motor vehicle were seized that belong to Nyalungu.

In September 2018 Nyalungu appeared in the White River Magistrate's Court with Petros Sydney Mabuza. The pair were [allegedly charged](#) with the theft of seven white rhino horns from Kruger National Park ranger Donald Michael English.

They were also charged with using a motor vehicle without the consent of the owner, fraud, obstruction of justice, possession of an unlicensed firearm and of being in possession of stolen property.

There has been a delay in the legal proceedings in the finalisation of this complex matter due to the fact that the investigation officer Lieutenant Colonel Leroy Bruwer, a member of the Directorate for Priority Crime had been [gunned down](#).

On Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 Lt Col Bruwer was shot dead in his car at 6.30am in an apparent assassination using a heavy-calibre rifle.

Bruwer, a seasoned and respect investigator, played a pivotal role in a number of rhino killing investigations.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 during a joint intelligence driven operation by the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation Mpumalanga, Tactical Response Team, Special Task Force Unit, Mpumalanga Tracing Team, Crime Intelligence Unit, Local Criminal Record Centre and Detectives, Joseph Nyalungu and his accomplice Elvis Mulimi were arrested for the alleged [kidnapping and murder](#) that took place in 2010 in Hazyview.

On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Selby Nyalungu was charged with murder after he [handed himself to](#) the Nelspruit HAWKS Serious Organised Crime Investigative team. Selby Nyalungu had evaded arrest in July 2020 when his co-accused Joseph Nyalungu and Elvis Mulimi were arrested in Hazyview in connection with the aforementioned alleged kidnapping and murder of Willy Shiplane.

More than a decade after Joseph "Big Joe" Nyalungu's first arrest in February 2010, his trial is set to begin on the [14<sup>th</sup> February 2022](#) at the Skukuza Regional Court.

## **Jabulani Ndlovu, Sikhombuzi Ndlovu and Forget Ndlovu**

The Eastern Cape Provincial Commissioner, Lieutenant General Liziwe Ntshinga welcomed the sentencing of [three rhino poachers](#) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019.

Three men were sentenced for 55 counts of rhino killing in the Grahamstown High Court in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The rhino killing took place between 2013 and 2016. Each man will serve 25 years in prison.

The arrest took place as part of [Operation Full Moon](#) in June 2016. The suspects were identified as a group and they were initially arrested for the killing of a rhino at Buckland's Private Game Reserve. It was believe the rhino was darted with M99. At the time of the arrest SAPS believe that the three men could be linked to as many as 10 rhino killing incidents in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and the KwaZulu Natal.

The three accused launched an appeal but this appeal was [dismissed](#) by a full bench of the Makhanda High Court on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Whilst the three men have the same surname they are not related. The last rhino that they killed was the one at Bucklands Farm in Albany in 2016. They were arrested with the horn from their last kill, a dart gun, darts, tranquilliser, a saw, 22 blank ammunition, knives a set of pliers, a drill, six cell phones and a SIM card.

The following rhino crime scenes were forensically linked to the killers, four rhinos were killed on Koffielaagte in Jansenville in 2013, six rhino were killed in three incidents between 2014 and 2015 on Mount Camdeboo, two rhino were killed on the farm Klein Doornberg near Cradock and another three on Spekboomberg. Most of the rhino died from a high dosage of M99.

## **Rodney Landela**

Rodney Landela, an award winning [ranger from the Kruger National Park](#) worked his way up the ranks from field ranger to section ranger to regional manager. Landela worked for SANParks for fifteen years, won many awards including an Individual Achievement Award in 2012.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2016 Rodney Landela and his co-accused Kenneth Motshotsho from the Kruger National Park veterinary science department, were arrested near Satara in the Kruger National Park after a white rhino was killed in the Kingfishersput area, both horns had been removed.

A bullet from a Kruger National Park weapon discovered in the rhino and blood from the dead rhino on his shoes linked him to the killing scene. He was charged with

illegal hunting, theft of a rhino horn and disposing of evidence and escaping from custody.

SANParks rangers were on a normal patrol in Satara when they heard three gunshots close to Kingfisherspruit.

According to [Cathy Dreyer](#), the first female head ranger of the Kruger National Park, between 2009 and 2021 [42 staff from the Kruger National Park](#) have been caught for being involved with rhino killing related offenses.

[Ken Maggs](#), heads up the Specialized Corporate Operations at the Kruger National Park, points out that these are only the number of people who have been caught. Ken Maggs has worked on the [problems of rhino killings](#) at the Kruger National Park since 1994.

South African Parks spokesperson stated all employees undergo a standard vetting and integrity testing process. According to Iqiniso Forensic Investigations, basic lie detector tests can be manipulated.

The arrest of Landela sent shockwaves through the conservation community, as an executive member of the Game Rangers Association of Africa, he had been trained to pilot a drone during anti-poaching operations and was in charge of the Mopani North Region of the Kruger National Park.

## **Lawrence Baloyi, Andre Mabunda and Shakes Baloyi**

[Three SANParks employees](#) accused of poaching in the Kruger National Park were remanded in custody when they appeared in the White River Magistrates Court on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

Andre Mabunda, a field guide and Shakes Baloyi, a gardener, were arrested after rangers spotted a fresh rhino carcass near Lower Sabi. They were arrested with a hunting rifle, ammunition and a vehicle with poaching equipment.

Lawrence Baloyi, a game ranger, was apparently the mastermind behind the killing. Lawrence Baloyi had been outspoken against the illegal killing of rhino and had been interviewed by media from abroad before his arrest.

## **Freitas Antonio Xavier**

The police [received information](#) about seven rhino that were allegedly killed and dehorned on a farm in November 2016. The rhino carcasses were transported to a farm in the Lephalale area.

A Lephalale businessman was arrested in January 2017 on a charge of illegal hunting of a protected wild animal, after a police search [uncovered seven rhino tails](#), eight portions of lower legs and meat all packed in the fridge on Ringbult Farm, in Steenbokpan situated near Lephalale.

[Antonio Xavier Freitas](#) was sentenced on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2018 to a R1 million rand fine or ten years imprisonment.



2018/05/09

**Media Statement from Limpopo Media Centre  
Corporate Communication  
South African Police Service**

**LEPHALALE** - The Provincial Commissioner of the South African Police Service in Limpopo, Lieutenant General Nneke Ledwaba is elated by the sentence meted out to the convicted Rhino poacher, Freitas Antonio Xavier aged 57, who was on Monday 2018-05-07 sentenced by Lephalale Regional court to R1 million fine or ten (10) years imprisonment.

This sentence emanates from a case that was investigated by the Endangered Species Unit of the South African Police Service. The case was reported in Lephalale in January 2017. The meticulous detective work that was carried out by members of this unit ensured that the accused ended up pleading guilty to the charges.

Prior to the apprehension of the said game farmer, the investigating team was led to the scene at his farm in a well-coordinated operation. On arrival the following were recovered:

- eight (8) rhino feet in a cold room
- seven (7) carcasses in a cold room
- one (1) decomposed rhino carcass
- two (2) rhino hides (skins) and some bones dug from the ground at the same farm.
- two (2) rhino heads in a cold room

The accused was convicted and sentenced on charges of hunting of specially protected animals without permit, Possession/donation of rhino parts without permit and selling of rhino meat without permit.

The Provincial Commissioner has commended all members who were involved in these investigations and urged them to leave no stone unturned until all those who received the rhino horns are also arrested.

The police are still following up on the information that a helicopter was seen in the vicinity which raised the suspicion that the rhino horns might have been taken to other destinations. Anyone with information is requested to contact Warrant Officer Johannes Jurgengs van Heerden at 0828144300.

**Media Enquiries:** Brigadier Motlafela Mojapelo - 0828766429

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Image source: <https://www.saps.gov.za/newsroom/selnewsdetails.php?nid=15609>



## Petros Sidney Mabuza

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021 [alleged rhino killer](#), Petros Sidney Mabuza, was sitting in his Ford Ranger double-cab pick-up truck parked near a shopping complex in Hazyview in Mpumalanga when a group of three armed drove past his car and opened fire on him. He died before he reached the hospital. The incident was caught on camera, but no arrests have been made as yet.

Major General Thulani Phahla [strongly condemned](#) the incident and called for the swift arrest of the suspects. "No one has the right to take another person's life regardless of the reasons. [Project Broadbill](#) a joint operation between [the HAWKS](#), SANParks, the Mpumalanga Provincial Police, Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units, Counter Intelligence, Special Task Force and Forensics from the South African Police Services, participated in the arrest of 7 high profile suspects which included police officials. Petros Sidney Mabuza was amongst the people arrested.

In June 2018 Petrus Mabuza was arrested and charged following lengthy investigations, searches and an undercover operation during which he allegedly bought two rhino horn from police members in a [252 entrapment operation](#).

According to reports, Petrus Mabuza and Nozwelo Mahumane, Moshe Thobela and Romance Khoza were arrested in a sting led by the HAWKS. HAWKS spokesperson said the pair appeared briefly in the Hazyview Magistrates Court where they were charged with contraventions of the Firearms Control Act, conspiracy to commit crime and various Credit Act contraventions.

Furthermore, it was stated by the spokesperson that the two are also accused of trafficking rhino horn in Mpumalanga. Mabuza was remanded in custody and Mahumane was given bail of R 20 000.00, Moshe Thobela and Romance Khoza withdrew their bail applications.

At the [bail hearing](#) on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at the White River Magistrates Court, Mabuza was denied bail. He appealed the decision and was [released on bail](#) of R250 000.00 at the Nelspruit High Court.

Moshe Thobela and Romance Khoza who previously withdrew their bail applications were released on bail of R10 000.00 each on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

Mabuza's funeral was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2021, his funeral was live-streamed on YouTube by two production companies. His casket arrived by helicopter. Mabuza was allegedly involved in the taxi industry and he was apparently a loan-shark.

Lieutenant Colonel Leroy Bruwer was the lead investigator on the Petrus Mabuza matter when he was assassinated on the R37 between Mbombela and Lydenburg. He was attached to the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigations HAWKS. His death has been described as a huge loss by General Khelha John Sitole, the National Commissioner of the South African Police Services.

## Elliot Sindane, Elvis Mlimi and Mabuthi Khoza

In a [statement by the South African Police Services](#) on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2021, the investigation into the murder of Lieutenant Colonel Leroy Bruwer has resulted in the revival of old cases against the three people who appeared in the Nelspruit Regional Court on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

Elliot Sindane, Elvis Mlimi and Mabuthi Khoza were arrested over a decade ago after they were implicated on charges of illegal hunting, illegal possession of firearms, illegal rhino horn dealing and trespassing at the Kaapmuiden Dalton farm.

These cases were previously investigated by Skukuza South Africa police detectives. The two outstanding cases that were registered in August and September 2011 respectively were, [according to reports](#), consequently struck off the court roll in 2012 under dubious circumstances.

The relentless investigation into the death of Colonel Bruwer saw the aforementioned people being served with summons to appear in court.

Kaapmuiden, is a small farming village located on the N4 route between Nelspruit and Malelane situated 25 kilometers away from the Kruger National Park.

To date one person has been [arrested in connection](#) with Lieutenant Colonel Bruwer's murder.

## OUT OF AFRICA: THE INTERCEPTION OF THE FLOW OF RHINO HORNS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

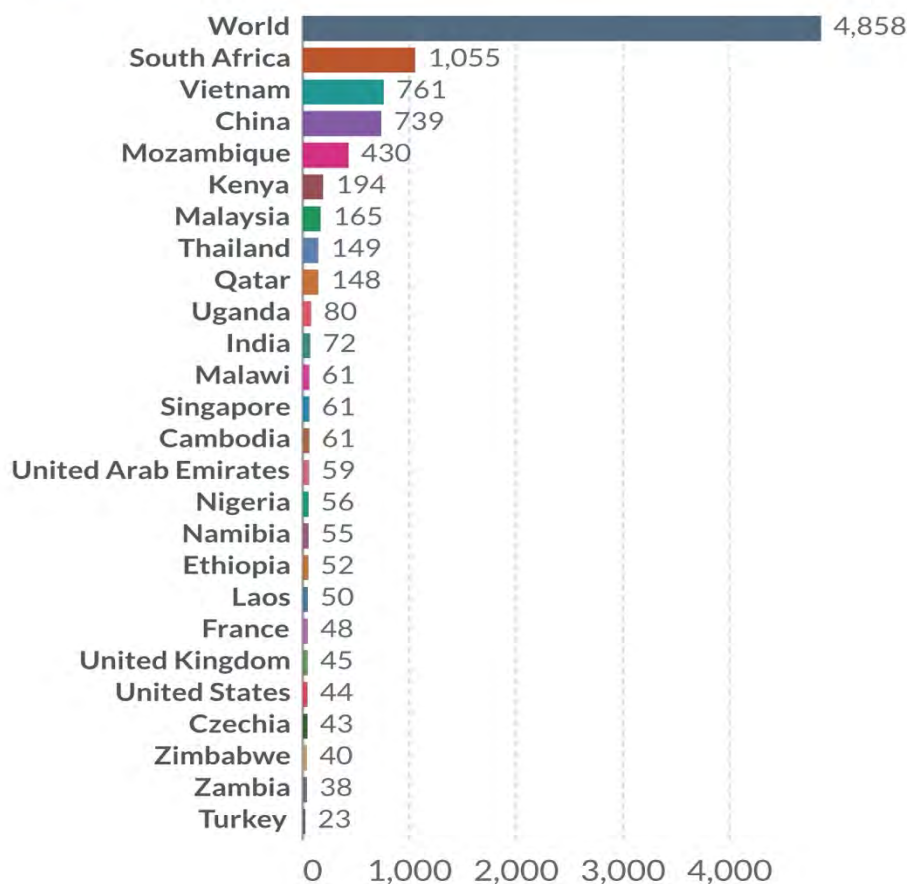
Estimates of rhino horn and pieces seizures are collected and published periodically by the African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups and TRAFFIC groups.

### Number of seized rhino horns and pieces, 2018

Our World  
in Data

Shown is estimates on rhino horn seizures over the period from 2009 to September 2018. An average rhino horn weighs approximately 1 to 3 kilograms.

+ Add country



Source: African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups (AfRSG) & TRAFFIC  
CC BY

This table shows the number of seized rhino horns and pieces over the period 2009 to 2018. Source:  
<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/number-seized-rhino-horns>



Image source: <https://www.traffic.org/news/south-africa-national-rhino-poaching-tally-falls-for-fifth-year-running/>

According to TRAFFIC over the same period of time 2009 – 2018 7816 rhinos were killed in South Africa.

## Vietnam

Although rhino horn has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for hundreds of years a significant demand for rhino horn over the past twenty years has been driven from Vietnam.

At first wildlife trafficking in Vietnam served the demand from China. However, over the past two decades the Vietnamese standard of living has improved, Vietnam now not only serves as a link in the international trafficking rings but has itself become a consumer of wildlife body parts.

A significant article published in [Time Magazine](#) in 2012, highlighted the rise in rhino poaching and the increasing demand for rhino horn from Asia, from 2003 onwards Vietnam began rapidly emerging as the leading destination for the illicit trade in rhino horn.

The rhino horn trade in Vietnam has been illegal since 2006, the law carries the threat of fines and up to seven years in prison but there seems to be little actual enforcement in Vietnam.

A *Wildlife Justice Commission* [public hearing](#) held in the Hague in November 2016 revealed the scale of the illegal trade of rhino horn in Vietnam. During the eighteen month long investigation called *Operation Phoenix* investigators uncovered for instance in one village of Vietnam that 579 products of rhino horn, 220 tiger parts, and almost 1000 pieces of ivory were being sold quite openly.



A variety of campaigns have been designed by wildlife conservation organisations to reduce the demand for rhino horn in Vietnam. [A study](#) was conducted in 2019 in Vietnam to determine why consumers bought rhino horn. It was established that consumers preferred wild rhino over harvested rhino horn, the consumers were not concerned about the extinction of rhino or the stigma attached to using rhino horn.

Vietnam's growing consumption of South African rhino horn was and still is driving the catastrophic killing of rhinos. Apart from the Vietnamese pseudo rhino trophy hunters and Vietnamese government officials posted to South Africa, Vietnamese citizens have been and are still being caught and apprehended in their attempts to traffic rhino horn from South Africa.

Numerous shipments of rhino horn bound for the Vietnamese market have been, and continue to be intercepted in South Africa and in Vietnam.

### **The Vietnamese Diplomatic Service, a Conduit for the Illegal Rhino Horn Trade**

In 2006, the Vietnamese Embassy in Pretoria, in South Africa confirmed that commercial attaché Nguyen Khanh Toan was caught trafficking rhino horn. [Vietnamese government officials](#) were acting as conduits for rhino horn between Africa and Vietnam.

In 2008, Vu Moc Anh, the first secretary was [filmed selling rhino](#) horn to a South African trafficker in front of the Vietnamese Embassy building in Pretoria. She was [recalled](#) after a South African television network aired images of her in conversation with a rhino horn trafficker, he handed her a horn and she headed back into the embassy. According to reports, Vu Moc Anh denied purchasing rhino horn but acknowledged that she had received rhino horn on behalf of two other Vietnamese nationals.

The television crew [accompanied government investigators](#) in order to [film](#) the rhino horn trafficker handing over the horn.

South African Environmental Affairs [Minister Edna Molewa](#) said that the Vietnamese government had confirmed that no steps had been taken against the diplomats.

Cao Duc Phat Vietnam's Minister of Agricultural and Rural Development said in 2012 that his country had already started increasing the resources available to fight the rhino horn trade.

In December 2012 South Africa and Vietnam [agreed to sign a five year memorandum of agreement](#) to work together and collaborate to protect the rhino and other areas of biodiversity.

In March 2013, [Do Quang Tung](#), the acting head of Vietnam's wildlife trade authority dismissed accusations that his country was the driving force behind the illicit trade in rhino horn.

### **Vietnamese Rhino Horn Trafficking in South Africa**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 [a report](#) revealed that a Vietnamese man had appeared in the Hatfield Magistrates Court in Pretoria after his house in Nicolson Street, Brooklyn had been searched. A spokesperson for the Tshwane metro council's Department of Community Safety said the raid was carried out after the SPCA received information of animals being slaughtered illegally at the house.

It was suspected that animals were trucked to the large house in the upper-class suburb which was being rented by Nguyen Van Hai and two other Vietnamese citizens.

Nguyen van Hai was charged with the illegal possession of endangered species. The South African Police Services discovered an illegal abattoir in which the body parts of rhino and the heads of thirteen lion were discovered. An investigation carried out by the EMS Foundation and Ban Animal Trading led to the publication of

[The Extinction Business Report](#) in July 2018 included in the report is this excerpt: a Vietnamese wildlife trafficker, Nguyen van Hai, appeared in the Hatfield court in April 2009 after the police raided what the press called an “illegal abattoir” in Brooklyn, an upmarket suburb in Pretoria. The Vietnamese Embassy is also located in Brooklyn. Police found ‘lion’ bones and rhino horn “all over the house” while more was hidden in containers and bags. They also confiscated foreign currency of about ZAR1million. At the time this story was reported nationally in the media. Alarming, a year later the South African CITES authority in the North West province issued Van Hai with a CITES permit (No. 17115, dated 07 July 2010) to hunt rhino. According to Douglas Hendrie, Director of Enforcement and Investigations at Education for Nature-Vietnam, Van Hai is currently a major wildlife trafficker in Vietnam.

It was then reported in May 2009 that Nuyen Van Hai was considering entering into a [plea bargain with the state](#).

At a routine roadblock in the Western Cape of South Africa, on the [30<sup>th</sup> November 2010](#) two Vietnamese suspects were arrest with 15 rhino horns wrapped in plastic bags and concealed in their luggage in South Africa.

In June 2010 a Vietnamese tourist named Xuan Hoang was sentenced to ten years in jail at a South African court for trafficking rhino horn. He was arrested in March at O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg when he attempted to smuggle 7 rhino horns from South Africa to Vietnam.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2011 two Vietnamese nationals were [arrested](#) at O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg as they attempted to smuggle rhino horn and elephant ivory out of South Africa.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014, two Vietnamese men were arrested at Johannesburg’s O.R. Tambo airport with [18 rhino horns](#) during a stopover flight from Maputo in Mozambique to Hanoi in Vietnam.

On the [14<sup>th</sup> June 2017](#) a Vietnamese passenger was arrested en route to Hong Kong, China with Cathay Pacific flight. He was found with 5 rhino horns in in his check-in baggage.

On the [20<sup>th</sup> of January 2018](#) a report was published stating that Police had arrested a suspected wildlife trafficking kingpin said to be behind much of the illegal trade in Asia for over a decade. The arrest of Boonchai Bach, a Thai of Vietnamese descents cracked open the [largest wildlife crime case ever](#). Boonchai was arrested with 14 rhino horns which were being transported from Africa to Thailand in December 2017 which implicated an airport official and a Chinese and Vietnamese courier.



Image source: <https://www2.gulf-times.com/story/578776/Thai-police-arrest-kingpin-in-Asian-wildlife-traff>

Boonchai allegedly ran a large trafficking network on the Thai-Lao border that spread into Vietnam. According to the report his family played a key role in the syndicate that smuggled poached items including rhino horn, pangolins, tigers, lions and other rare and endangered species.

On [Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019](#) two people were arrested with 10 pieces of rhino horn in their luggage at O.R. Tambo International Airport on route to Vietnam.

### DKC Trading – Voi Game Lodge

[Michael Chu](#) also known as Chu Dang Khoa, is a wealthy Vietnamese business who registered a company in South Africa in 2005. He owns Voi Game Lodge, a farm in North West Province where tigers, lions and rhinos were kept in captivity. In 2011 after being convicted for illegally possessing five rhino horns Chu was fined R40 000.00 US\$ and deported.

The image below of Chu Dang Khoa was taken in 2006 at Voi Lodge the first legal hunt of a rhino by a Vietnamese national recorded in Limpopo province according to a 2016 Global Initiative Transnational Crime report entitled [Rhino Tipping Point](#).



Michael Chu an alias, for Chu Dang Khoa. Image source: <https://www.businesslive.co.za/fm/fm-fox/2016-07-15-the-crooks-behind-rhino-slaughter/>

According to the Rhino Tipping Point report, an [excerpt](#) of which was published in the *Financial Mail* on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2016, Chu emerged as a key player in a company supplying wildlife from South Africa to Vinpearl Safari Park, situated on the Vietnamese island in the Gulf of Thailand. The same report states that the Department of Environmental Affairs issued permits to export 130 animals to Vinpearl Safaris or Phu Quoc Tourism Development between September 2015 and February 2016. This allegedly included 20 tigers, 23 lions, 12 monkeys and two hyenas. These animals came from Voi Lodge.

It has been reported that Chu exploited the fact that because tigers are not indigenous to South Africa, they are classified as [exotic](#), and as a result a permit is not required in most provinces of South Africa. However, you cannot trade with tiger parts internationally therefore the tiger bones would need to be disguised and exported as lion bones from South Africa. [TRAFFIC](#) called for an investigation into Voi Lodge



According to hunting records the first two rhinos shot at Voi Lodge were shot by Vietnamese. Hunting records identify the professional hunter who accompanied them as Frikkie Jacobs from Shingalana Game Breeders and Hunting Safaris.

Jacobs allegedly conducted 48 hunts with suspected Vietnamese pseudo-hunters between June 2009 and July 2011 according to North West province records.

Voi Lodge is mentioned on page 51 of a report sent to the CITES Secretariat by the [EMS Foundation and Ban Animal Trading](#) twenty months later, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2018.

Voi Lodge, [they reported](#) had more than fifty tigers and was linked to criminal syndicates in Vietnam. The report highlighted the fact that South Africa was incapable of regulating the lion bone trade and the facilities where this industry was taking place. The Report was taken seriously and as a result an official investigation was instigated.

## Services | SAPS (South African Police Service)

Media Statement from Directorate for Priority Crime  
HAWKS  
South African Police Service

North West – An intelligence driven operation conducted by the Hawks' North West Serious Organised Crime Unit assisted by Crime intelligence, Klerksdorp TRT, Potchefstroom flying squad and the Department of Nature Conservation has led to the arrest of eight suspects aged between 22 and 60 yesterday for the alleged illegal possession of game products.

The team intercepted two vehicles at the intersection of N12 and Dominionville driving in a convoy headed to an unused farm in Mareetsane. A search of both vehicles the team recovered lion bones, lion meat, a tiger skin, gas cylinders, gas burners, containers, a saw, knives and other equipment which is believed to have been used to process the lion bones.

The suspects took the team to another farm approximately 30km from Klerksdorp where the lions were allegedly slaughtered. At the farm, a lion skin was found dumped in the bush and large machines which are believed to have been the instruments for cutting the bones were also found in the garage.

The eight suspects are expected to make their first court appearance tomorrow at the Klerksdorp magistrate's court to face a charges of Illegal possession of game products and without a permit, carrying out restricted activities involving a specimen of a listed, threatened or protected species.

-End-

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Source: <https://www.saps.gov.za/newsroom/msspeechdetail.php?nid=18255>



An investigation resulted in an intelligence led operation carried out by the South African Police HAWKS North West Serious Organised Crime Unit, assisted by Crime Intelligence, Klerksdorp TRT, Potchefstroom flying squad and the Department of Nature Conservation led to the arrest of eight suspects on Sunday [25<sup>th</sup> November 2018](#) for the alleged illegal possession of game products.

The team intercepted two vehicles driving in convoy headed to a unused farm in Mareetsane. During a search of both vehicles the team discovered lion bones, lion meat, a tiger skin, gas cylinders, gas burners, and other equipment.

[The Vietnamese nationals](#) Nguyen Huu Son, Nguyen Van Tuan, Dao Thang, Pham Khur, pham Xuan Chanh, and QuolThang with South Africans Johagem Louis Fouche, Michael Frederick Fouche and Lourens Pretorius Chu Due Thang appeared in court on the following Tuesday.

The case was postponed for a formal bail hearing. [They were charged](#) under the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act for the illegal possession of game products and carrying out restricted activities involving specimens of a listed threatened or protected species.

[The South Africans were granted bail of R10 000.00 each and the Vietnamese citizens were refused bail.](#)

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2019 it was reported that the South African National Prosecuting Authority [withdrew charges](#) against the North West residents. At the end of June 2019, after spending seven months in police custody the Vietnamese nationals were sentenced and fined to the total amount of R68 000.00 and [ordered to leave South Africa](#).

On the [26<sup>th</sup> of November 2019](#) , according to reports, the HAWKS working with other police units recovered 100 rhino horns, four tiger carcasses, a tiger skin, weapons and rounds of ammunition during a raid on two farms in the North West province.

The raids took place in Klerksdorp and Hartebeesfontein during an intelligence-driven operation by the Organised Crime Unit and illicit mining team, three suspects were arrested for the illegal possession of firearms and ammunition. The raids were apparently part of the police's ongoing investigation into illicit mining.

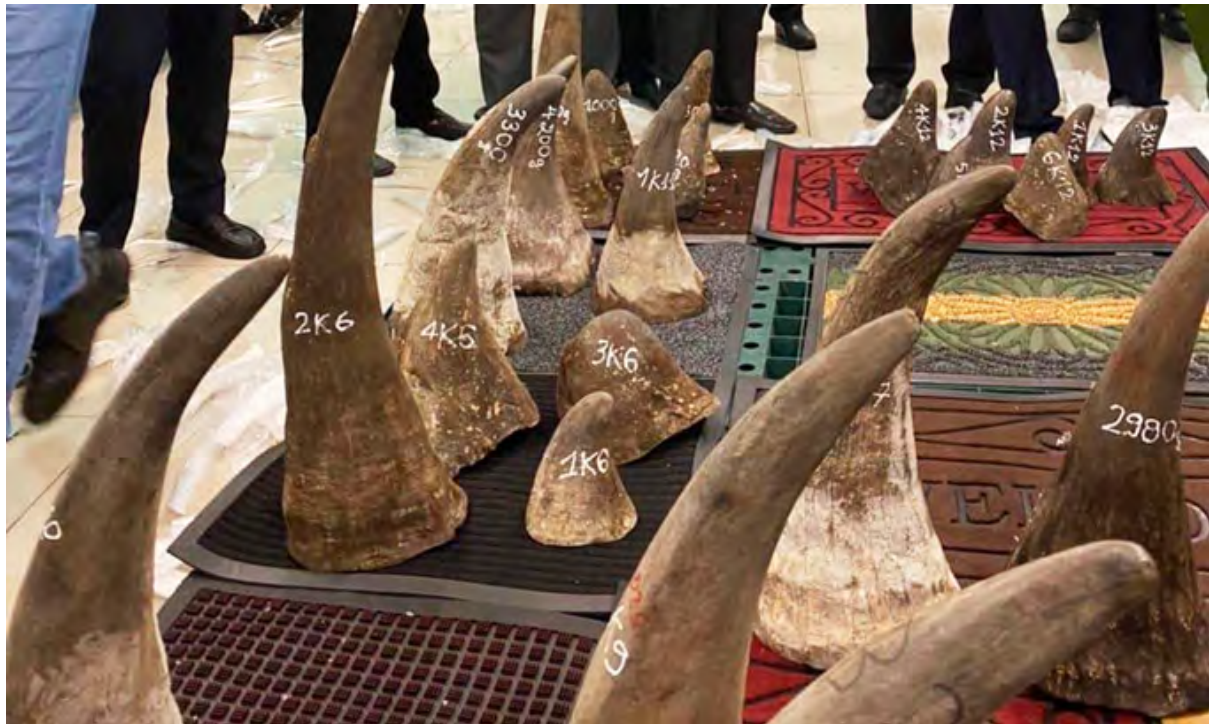
The first suspect was arrested at a farm near Klerksdorp. He was found in possession of a hunting rifle, a shotgun, a revolver, a pistol and a large quantity of empty cartridges and live ammunition.

[Further probing](#) into the discovered firearms led the investigative team to Voi Lodge situated near Hartebeesfontein, where two additional suspects were arrested after an assortment of firearms and ammunition were found which included a rifle, a hunting rifle, a pistol and a revolver. Additionally, 100 rhino horns were found, four tiger carcasses and \$US1000. The three suspects would face charges of the illegal possession of firearms and the contravention of the National Environmental Management-Biodiversity Act.

According to the [Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries](#) report on rhino poaching in South Africa 2019, this matter would continue in 2020.

According to the [Education for Nature – Vietnam](#) Facebook Page The Vietnamese nationals were named as Nguyen Huu Dong and Chu Duc Thang and the South African Michael Fouche. A [local news](#) agency confirmed the names of these suspects.

## Examples of Vietnam Rhino Horn Shipment Seizures



93kg rhino horn HCMC warehouse Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Vietnam. Image source: <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/93-kilos-of-suspected-rhino-horns-found-in-saigon-warehouse-4210405.html>

The continued seizures at airports and in warehouses of rhino horn shipments underscore the fact that although considerable efforts have been devoted to reducing the demand for rhino horn in Vietnam, through a variety of campaigns which have focused on the fact that rhino horn is made of keratin and that there are so few rhinos left due to poaching, the demand continues unabated.

If you examine the limited information available from the reported seizures one can recognise that there are facilitators, shippers and front companies in place assisting with the packaging, mislabelling and the transport of the rhino horn. The illicit rhino horn is often hidden with other commodities and less valuable licit goods that pass unnoticed through customs and across numerous borders.

On the [13<sup>th</sup> August 2015](#) a shipment of 700kg of elephant ivory and rhino horn from Mozambique via Malaysia on its journey to Hai Phong, in Norther Vietnam was intercepted. The shipment contained 142kg of rhino horn believed to have been from the Kruger National Park and smuggled into Mozambique.

According to an [article](#) in Los Angeles in 2016, in the United States of America, Vietnam had become the biggest hub in the world for trafficking in rhino horn. Although Vietnam signed the London Declaration on the illegal wildlife poaching and reducing the demand for illegal wildlife products in 2014, an investigation by the Dutch based *Wildlife Justice Commission*, a year later, identified the Vietnamese village of Nhi Khe as a major trafficking hub for illegal wildlife products. According to these investigators they found rhino horn which accounted for the death of 573 rhinos.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2017 Thai customs discovered 21 rhino horns in luggage in Suvarnabhumi Airport, the traveller was from Vietnam.

14<sup>th</sup> March 2017 46 rhino horns were seized at Noi Bai International Airport in two suitcases.



Image source: <https://theasianpost.com/article/rhino-horn-seizure-thailand-leads-major-trafficking-syndicate>

13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 customs officers in Ho Chi Minh City seized nearly 4kg of rhino horn from two Vietnamese nationals at Tan Son Nhat Airport travelling back from Africa.



12 rhino horn Entebbe Airport. Image source: <https://observer.ug/news/headlines/54481-vietnamese-man-arrested-with-23kg-of-rhino-horn-at-entebbe.html>

It was reported on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2017 that a Vietnamese man was arrested with 12 rhino horns weighing 23kg rhino horn at Entebbe Airport in Uganda. Thai Xuan Tuan travelled through Kenya via Doha to [Hanoi](#) on Qatar Airways.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2018 authorities at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia discovered 50 pieces of rhino horn at a postal aviation centre. The horns were packed in boxes that also contained nine whole carnivore carcasses, all were bound for Ha Noi Vietnam.





50 pieces of rhino horn Malaysia August 2018. Image source: <https://theconversation.com/rhino-horn-must-become-a-socially-unacceptable-product-in-asia-103498>

On the [14<sup>th</sup> of February 2019](#) Hong Kong customs seized 40kg of rhino horn which was on its way from South Africa to Vietnam. Two male passengers travelling from Johannesburg were arrested.

On Thursday [25<sup>th</sup> of July 2019](#) 125 kilograms of rhino horn was discovered at Hanoi's Noi Bai airport. The fifty-five pieces of rhino horn were found encased in plaster.



125kg rhino horn encased in plaster Noi Bai Airport. Image source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/29/vietnam-seizes-125kg-of-smuggled-rhino-tusks-worth-75m>

On [Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021](#) a Hanoi court sentenced Do Minh Toan to 14 years imprisonment for trading and trafficking rhino horn. Toan made false customs declarations to avoid checks and brought 55 pieces of rhino horn weighing 126.5 kilograms from the United Arab Emirates into Vietnam in July 2019 disguised in thick plaster.

On [the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019](#) Nguyen van Pho, a construction worker in Angola, was caught with two black rhino horns in his luggage at Noi Bai International Airport.



On the [2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020](#) 11 rhino horns were seized at Can Tho Airport in Can Tho City, in Vietnam. The flight was meant to land in Saigon but had been diverted, he was travelling from South Korea.

On the [6<sup>th</sup> March 2020](#) 12 pieces of rhino horn were seized at Tan Son Nhat Airport in HCMC in Vietnam. Nguyen Anh Duong claimed that a Chinese acquaintance in Mozambique had paid him to transport the rhino to Vietnam.

On Tuesday [22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020](#) police seized 93 kilograms of rhino horn at a warehouse near HCMC's Tan Son Nhat International Airport in Saigon, Vietnam. The shipment was made via the Philippines in twelve packages.

On the [17<sup>th</sup> July 2021](#) Da Nang Customs in Vietnam, seized a container holding more than 138 kg of rhino and 3.1 tons of animal bones from South Africa.

According to an [article](#) in Los Angeles in 2016, in the United States of America, Vietnam had become the biggest hub in the world for trafficking in rhino horn.

Although Vietnam signed the London Declaration on the illegal wildlife poaching and reducing the demand for illegal wildlife products in 2014, an investigation by the Dutch based *Wildlife Justice Commission*, a year later, identified the Vietnamese village of Nhi Khe as a major trafficking hub for illegal wildlife products. According to these investigators they found rhino horn which accounted for the death of 573 rhinos.

Vietnamese wildlife traffickers are still very active in South Africa. On the [16<sup>th</sup> August 2021](#) South African Police Services arrested a Vietnamese man and seized wild animal parts following a four month investigation into wildlife trafficking. He was arrested in possession of an illegal firearm and when the police raided a Vietnamese owned farm near Bela-Bela in Limpopo Province and two storage units in Pretoria they seized wildlife parts.

## North Korean Embassy in South Africa

A high-ranking North Korean diplomat was accused of abusing his diplomatic immunity and his embassy's diplomatic bag to smuggle rhino horn out of South Africa. Park Chol-jun also known as Pak Chol Chun was [expelled](#) from South Africa on the 11 December 2015.

Park Chol-jun was [arrested](#) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May in Maputo in Mozambique after 4.5kg of rhino and cash were discovered in the diplomatic vehicle in which he was travelling. The vehicle was registered to the North Korean embassy in Pretoria. His passenger was Kim Jong-su a taekwondo master and martial arts teacher was also arrested. The [North Korean ambassador](#) to South Africa flew to Mozambique, paid \$30 000 and within hours both men were released. Kim Jong-su left South Africa in November and Park Choi-jun left South Africa in December.

## Examples of Rhino Horn Seizures in Hong Kong

On the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011 [33 rhino horns were seized](#) by customs in Hong Kong. Colonel Jooste of the HAWKS, said that a container allegedly containing waste, parings and scrap plastic had been cleared at a South African Revenue Service office in October 2011 transported to Cape Town and shipped to Hong Kong. The horn was returned to South Africa so that an investigation could be carried out.



November 15<sup>th</sup> 2011 - Acting Head of Ports and Maritime Command. Image source: <https://today.line.me/id/v2/article/3gginE>

A shipment of [illegal ivory, rhino horn and leopard skins](#) worth \$US 5.3 million was seized in Hong Kong in August 2013. There were 13 rhino horns, hidden in a shipping container declared as wood from Nigeria.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2018 Hong Kong customs reported that they had seized [2.04kg of rhino horn](#) from a passenger at the airport who was travelling from Maputo in Mozambique via Ethiopia. The horn was found in his jacket and in socks in his luggage.

It was reported on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2019 that [Hong Kong Customs](#) at Hong Kong International Airport had seized a [record haul of carry-on](#) rhino horn from South Africa. 24 rhino horns were shipped from Johannesburg on route to Vietnam was discovered in check-in carton boxes, two men were arrested.

Customs officials at the Hong Kong International Airport confiscated 82.5kg of rhino horn was smuggled from South Africa in [April 2019](#). The shipment was marked as vehicle parts and was destined for Malaysia. Officials at the airport received a tip-off, South African authorities are concerned that this consignment was not detected in South Africa.

It was reported that there was an investigation underway linking the aforementioned seizure in [Hong Kong and the Kruger National Park](#).

## Examples of Rhino Horn Seizures in Malaysia

On Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2021 it was reported that authorities near the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, in Sepang Selangor in [Malaysia](#) seized 50 units of rhino horn pieces. Two Malaysian nationals were arrested. This was the largest seizure of rhino horn in the past five years.

According to the report there have been five cases of rhino horn seizures in the past ten year involving 96 units of rhino horn.



Image source: <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/09/15/rm30mil-worth-of-rhino-horns-seized-at-klia>

## Examples of Cape Town Harbour Seizures

[Cape Town](#) emerged as a port from which at least [two large shipments](#) of ivory and rhino horn were shipped in 2012. Malaysia seized elephant tusks worth \$760 000 from South Africa which were discovered during inspections at Port Klang in Malaysia. The shipment was from Cape Town.

## Examples of Seizures of Rhino Horn at O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg

There have been a number of interceptions, and in some instances arrests, at O.R. Tambo Airport of people attempting to smuggle rhino horn from South Africa in their luggage.

The seizure of the larger quantities of rhino horn which have also found at O.R. Tambo Airport and surrounding warehouses could indicate that this rhino horn is from stockpiles. It is unlikely that poachers would store large amounts of rhino horn before exporting it from South Africa.

Whilst the authorities must be congratulated for intercepting and seizing the rhino horn these attempts to traffic rhino horn, highlight the fact that there are any merits for a legal domestic trade in rhino is questionable. The examples listed below illustrate the regularity with which the attempts to smuggle rhino horn continue.

Three rhino horns were seized after a passenger's luggage was screened by customs at O.R. Tambo International Airport on the [24<sup>th</sup> of September 2016](#).

On the [23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016](#) a Chinese National was arrested at O.R. Tambo International Airport for concealing 18 rhino horns in his luggage. He was traveling from Namibia to Hong Kong.

On the [17<sup>th</sup> May 2017](#) 8 pieces of rhino horn wrapped in foil, the shipment declared as tea bags was destined for Hong Kong via Qatar, Doha.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017 ten rhino horns were seized in two bags by customs officials at O.R. Tambo Airport from the cargo hold of a plane bound for Turkey. Two passengers on Turkish Airlines were removed from the flight which was flying to Hong Kong via Istanbul.

On the [14<sup>th</sup> June 2017](#) customs officials at O.R. Tambo International Airport seized 28.7kg of five rhino horn from a traveller's check-in bag. The horn was coated in wax and wrapped in newspaper.

Eleven rhino horn were confiscated at O.R. Tambo International Airport on the [25<sup>th</sup> July 2017](#) and a Chinese woman was arrested trying to smuggle the rhino horn to Hong Kong.

After receiving a tip-off in [September 2017](#) five rhino horns wrapped in foil were discovered in a bag, a passenger bound for Hong Kong was arrested.

**Media Statement from the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS)**

**Pretoria:** Over thirty pieces of rhino horns were seized at the OR Tambo International Airport this morning during an on-going operation into ridding the airport of criminal activities. Recent reports of the detection of Rhino Horns in the East originating from Southern Africa led to increased enforcement interventions on outbound flights at the Cargo area of ORTIA. The multi-disciplinary team at OR Tambo International Airport which comprises of various government departments including members from various disciplines in the South African Police Service, Customs and Excise, ACSA Security and other stakeholders are on alert and continue to work tirelessly to stop contraband including rhino horns from being smuggled through this port of entry.

It's reported that whilst performing K9 searches at several cargo warehouses, the K9 members arrived at certain warehouse where export consignments were packed to be shipped out. The K9 detector dog reacted positively to a shipment destined to destination in the Middle East. Upon physical examination the consignment was found to be containing door mats as well as cut and laminated ply wood. Further examination revealed over 30 pieces of rhino horn wrapped in plastic concealed under the laminated wood pieces.

Successes such as this, are a culmination of efforts that form part of the new revised strategy that has been implemented at the O R Tambo International Airport under the leadership of Major General Dimakatso Ndaba which involves the South African Police Service's Crime Intelligence, Directorate for Priority Crimes Investigation, Airports Company South Africa, O R Tambo International Airport, State Security Agency and other role players.

People may call our Crime Stop number [0860010111](tel:0860010111) with such information. Callers may remain anonymous and all information will be treated with strictest confidence. We urge the people of South Africa to continue supporting police efforts in the fight against crime.

**Ends.**



Image source: <https://www.saps.gov.za/newsroom/selnewsdetails.php?nid=18780>

10<sup>th</sup> January 2019, thirty pieces of rhino horn were seized at the cargo section of O.R. Tambo International Airport during an on-going operation into ridding the airport of criminal activities.

On Tuesday [29<sup>th</sup> January 2019](#) two people were arrested with 10 pieces of rhino horn in their luggage at O.R. Tambo International Airport.

[14<sup>th</sup> July 2020](#) 41 pieces of rhino horn were found in six boxes, concealed in carbon paper and foil wrapped in traditional material and disguised as fine art, at a South African customs warehouse inspection at O.R. Tambo International Airport the shipment was destined for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A 42 year old man, [a shipping agent](#) was arrested in Edenvale and was expected to appear before the Kempton Park Magistrates Court for allegedly dealing in rhino horns and committing perjury.



4<sup>th</sup> February 2021 Customs officials, during a routine search at a courier facility, seized 18 rhino horns worth an estimated \$US 3.5 million worth of rhino horns disguised as printing accessories at O.R. Tambo International Airport, this shipment was destined for Malaysia.



Image source: <https://ewn.co.za/2021/02/04/rhino-horns-worth-over-r53-million-seized-at-or-tambo-airport>

On the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021 customs officials seized 32 pieces of rhino horn wrapped in bubble wrap declared as live plants in the cargo transit shed at O.R. Tambo International Airport, the shipment was on route to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia.

## Examples of Rhino Horn Stockpile Thefts

In May 2019 the EMS Foundation [submitted a request](#) in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) no. 2 of 2000. In response the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries revealed that the government was hold 27 tonnes of rhino horn through SANParks and other government bodies. This consists of 15 003 horns. 18 884 rhino horns were being held privately which amounted to 22 tonnes.

Rhino horns, including horns recovered from rhino deaths from natural causes, dehorning for the protection of rhino or from the seizure at criminal source.



Image source: <https://www.iol.co.za/technology/sas-rhino-horn-ban-lifted-2025473>

The horns in stockpiles in South Africa should be easily identifiable and each piece should be registered. There should be security at the premises where the stockpile is housed.

### Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks

[112 rhino horns](#) were stolen from a South African provincial park safe, thieves broke into the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency in Nelspruit in April 2014. Rhino horn was the target of the robbery, [weapons and ivory](#) stored in the safe were left behind. The CEO of the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, Jacques Modipane, was [controversially suspended](#) shortly after the robbery.

The [four accused](#), Gideon Mtshali, Leonard Sizwe Malatjie, Velly William Zwane and Selby George Khoza faced charges of theft and housebreaking were granted bail of R20 000.00 each.

### Motola, Maputo, Mozambique

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015 12 rhino horns were stolen from a strong-room in a police provincial headquarters in Matola, Maputo. A number of arrests, including government personnel had been made in connection with the theft. These rhino horns were part of a significant seizure of 1.1 tonnes of elephant ivory and 65 rhino horns on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015.



Image source: <https://mq.co.za/article/2015-05-28-thieves-raid-huge-rhino-horn-haul/>

### Thaba Manzi Lodge

[In late October 2010](#) an armed gang reportedly [broke into a game lodge](#) near Bela in Polokwane and confronted wildlife veterinarian Jana Pretorius and game capturer Hans Kooy. The gang stole 7 rhino horns, cash, laptops, cell phones and guns.

According to Pretorius and Kooy very few people knew that rhino horns were being kept on the property. They had obtained [permits](#) from LEDET to keep the horns on the property.

Faan Coetzee from the Endangered Wildlife Trust [was critical](#) of keeping rhino horn.

## SanWild Wildlife Sanctuary



Image Provided

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 reports surfaced that 8 rhino horns and four semi-automatic rifles and ammunition were stolen from a safe on SanWild Wildlife Sanctuary in Gravelotte. According to the report three armed men entered the premises and broke into the walk in safe where the rhino horn and assault rifles were kept locked up. There is no information available on the permits, the micro-chip details or whether the local authorities had records of the DNA samples of each of the horns.

## Leshoka Thabang Game Lodge

[66 rhino horns](#) were stolen from the office safe of Leshoka Thabang Game Lodge. The owner of the lodge Johan van Zyl, applied for permits to have the horns of his rhino removed and was waiting for the authorities to implant the micro-tracking-chips inside them. Two hunting rifles and computers and cash were also stolen.



Image Source:

<https://ewn.co.za/2013/04/06/Police-hunt-for-rhino-horn-thieves>



## Gondwana Game Reserve

12 pieces of rhino horn were stolen from a locked safe the [Gondwana Game Reserve](#) on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018. The horns originated from rhino who died of natural causes on the reserve according to Mark Rutherford, the director of the reserve. All the rhino horns had permits, they were all micro chipped, DNA sampled, photographed and officially marked by Cape Nature.

## Rhino Horn from South African Rhino Breeders - Seizures During Transportation Between Provinces

The regulations for the South African domestic trade in rhino horn include the following: Permission to dehorn rhino must be granted; the horns must be weighed, measured, photographed, marked and microchipped; samples of the horn must be submitted to RhoDIS, the Rhino DNA Indexing System which is run by the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory of the University of Pretoria, for DNA analysis and entry on the eRhODIS database.

On Saturday the [13<sup>th</sup> of April 2019](#) two men were arrested in the Hartbeespoort Dam area in the North West Province, South Africa when they were intercepted with more than 167 rhino horns.

This arrest was part of an intelligence-led police operation, the police received a tip-off that a vehicle registered in a coastal province was carrying a large amount of rhino horn destined for South East Asia.

Petrus Steyn and Clive John Melville, residents of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape, had permits which specified the transport rhino horn from one location in Gauteng Province to another in Gauteng.

John Hume confirmed that he sold 181 rhino horns to a buyer in Port Elizabeth and his lawyer confirmed that the two men arrested were transporting the horns to the buyer.

There is a discrepancy between the number of rhino horn that John Hume sold and the amount of rhino horn that was been transported.

It has subsequently been reported in the media that John Hume was going to [court to recover](#) the 181 horns that were confiscated. He claimed that everything was above board on his side with the deal. Clive John Melville and Petrus Steyn were arrest on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019 in Skeerpoort about 20km from Hartbeespoort Dam in North West Province.

Melville, apparently related to John Hume, also pleaded guilty to a further charge of forgery with regard to the authorisation to transport the 181 horns.

## Statement by Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment 31st July 2021

Minister Barbara Creecy [released a statement](#) on World Ranger Day, on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021 in which she stated that the national COVID\_19 global pandemic and the forced lockdown curbed the movement of people which led to a decrease in rhino poaching in 2020.

The Minister confirmed that numerous confiscations of rhino horn have taken place this year in South Africa and at O.R. Tambo Airport. "The cohesive collaboration between South African and the Vietnamese authorities has resulted in one of the largest seizures of rhino horns and other wildlife products, thereby disrupting syndicate activities."



## THE EXPORT OF LIVE RHINO FROM SOUTH AFRICA



South African rhino in China. Image Credit: Smaragda Louw

[Bomo Edith Edna Molewa](#) was appointed to the position of Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010 as part of a cabinet reshuffle by President Jacob Zuma.

According to the government in 2014, the SANParks [survey conducted in 2013](#) confirmed there were between 8400 – 9600 white rhinos in the Kruger National Park.

In May 2015 [Minister Edna Molewa said](#) that there had been a 3% increase in the white rhino population in Intensive Protection Zones, she also said that a Biodiversity Management Plan for white rhino gazetted at the end of March 2015 had set short-term or five-year targets with a long-term vision aimed at ensuring the successful management and growth of the species.

Minister Molewa's [target](#) was aligned to the escalating poaching statistics she set a realistic goal of a meta-population of at least 20 400 white rhinos in South Africa by 2020. [1349 rhino were illegally killed in 2015.](#)

Minister Molewa also stated that the 192 rhinos had been translocated to different locations both locally and internationally had generally integrated well at their new destinations. Minister Molewa said that a tender process for the further purchase of rhino from the Kruger National Park was at an advanced stage. Minister Molewa said that 200 white rhinos were expected to be sold to private buyers as a result of this tender process.

Over and above this, South Africa is a major exporter of white rhinos into ex situ captivity. The EMS Foundation obtained official information from the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment via the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) pertaining to rhino exports for the period 2016 – August 20121 [from one South African port of exit](#) where the exports were endorsed by members of the national Environmental

Management Inspectorate. The EMS Foundation cannot guarantee the completeness of the information contained herein or eliminate the possibility of anomalies having regard to system limitations and third-party inputs. For all intents and purposes, we must assume that these are the least amount of rhino that were trophy hunted during this time period.

The data obtained revealed the following.

Between March 2016 and January 2020, **239 live white rhinos**, through 58 permits, were exported from the Free State, North West, Gauteng, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal provinces to the following countries as follows:

- 2 to an unknown country
- 8 to Bangladesh in 2016
- 59 to Botswana during 2017 and 2018 from the Free State and KwaZulu Natal
- 75 to China from North West and Free State
  - 10 in 2016
  - 46 in 2017
  - 17 in 2018
  - Two in 2019
  - The principal exporter was Mafunyane (North West province), accounting for 86.6% of the live rhino exports to China - <http://www.mafunyane.com/>
- 2 to Guatemala in 2019
- 11 to Japan between 2017 and 2019
- 25 to Thailand – 24 in 2017 and one in January 2020
- 10 to the United Arab Emirates in 2017
- 18 to the United States of America in 2016 and 2017
- 29 to Vietnam between 2017 and 2019

It is concerning to note that rhino horn consumer countries accounted for 71.6% of the exports from South Africa to *ex situ* destinations.

## China

In 1993, China implemented several policies that shut down its domestic rhino horn trade. The Chinese State Council issued a circular to:

- Explicitly ban the import, export sale, purchase, transport, carrying, and mailing of rhino horn.
- Abolish all rhino-related medicinal standards and prohibit further medicinal use.
- Promote the use of rhino horn substitutes.
- Mandate that all horn stocks be registered.

CITES-listed taxa were added to the Directory on Special State Protection of Wildlife People's Republic of China, placing rhino under the scope of the Law on the Protection of Wildlife ([People's Republic of China 1989](#)).

In 1994 [the Government of China publicly burnt](#) more than a quarter of their 1 tonne cache of seized rhino horn as a demonstration of its resolve to stop the trade. China invited the Secretary General and the Chairman of the CITES Standing Committee to the burning and China TV broadcast the event to hundreds of millions of Chinese viewers.

News of a Chinese state funded proposal for the use of rhino horn in traditional Chinese Medicine emerged in 2008. The proposal was from the Institute of Science and Technology Research in Beijing and was entitled *Proposal for Protection of the Rhinoceros and the Sustainable Use of Rhinoceros Horn*. This was funded by the State Soft Sciences Project, Development for Traditional Chinese Medicine Research.

A rhino farm referred to Sanya City Centre for artificial propagation of the rhinoceros was reported to be situated in Hainan Province and apparently rhino from Africa had already been introduced.

In November 2009 IUCN/SSC and TRAFFIC published a report called *African and Asian Rhinoceroses – Status, Conservation and Trade*. The [report revealed](#) that South Africa has exported 141 live rhinos to China since 2000. During the years 2006 and 2007 South Africa reported sending 61 rhino to China, China apparently reported that they had received 117 rhino to an [article published](#) by Peter Dickinson, an independent zoo consultant and writer.

[In the report](#) *African and Asian Rhinoceros – Status, Conservation and Trade*, it states that the trade in live rhinos was highlighted in the IUCN/TRAFFIC CoP15 report with China's acquisition of large numbers of live rhinos from South Africa requiring clarification. Since then, it has been reported that most of these rhinos were to be used as part of an undisclosed commercial rhino farming venture of a private pharmaceutical company for the future production of rhino horn medicine for domestic consumption. UNEP-WCMC CITES data indicate that live sales between South Africa and China have continued.

Over a decade from 2000 to 2010 China had imported 141 live white rhinos from South Africa. The rhinos were exported to breeding farms in Hainan and Yunnan Provinces to build an industrial base.

This relates back to the aforementioned 2008 report that was written by Jia Quin, a high-profile traditional Chinese medicine researcher, he proposed the sustainable use of rhino horn and the legalisation for medical use.

According to an [article](#) called *Can China Help Save the Rhino* published on the 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012, the Long Hui Pharmaceutical Co has imported rhino from South Africa to farms in Hainan and Yunnan provinces with goal of building a rhino industrial base.

According to [an article](#) published on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 by the *Yale Environment 360 part of the Guardian Environment Network*, the aforementioned Jia Quin, is employed by Long Hui Pharmaceutical Co is a subsidiary of a large Chinese firm, a weapons manufacturer, called the Hawk Group. This article confirmed that Longhui has set up at least two rhino farms in China and stocked them with dozens of South African rhinos. Longhui is controlled by powerful Communist Party politicians.

In 2010 it was confirmed that South African rhino were not going to the Hangzhou Zoo for captive breeding. Instead, these rhinos had ended up at the Long Hui base in Hainan, which is owned by the same parent company as the zoo, an arms manufacturer called the [Hawk Group](#) run by the China's National People's Congress.

According to TRAFFIC there were proposals from the Chinese Institute of Technology and Research ordered the rhino from South Africa.

According to further investigative reports, the South Africa rhino were flown to China and kept at a breeding farm owned by a Chinese medicine company, called Long Hui Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd. The horns of the rhino would be harvested regularly with a purpose-built tool providing rhino horn for Traditional Chinese Medicine.

[Apparently](#) the rhino harvesting scheme in China was not very successful, rhino had fallen ill from poor living conditions, they would not breed and the demand reduction campaign in China is more successful than in Vietnam especially in Beijing and Shanghai.

However, there seemed to be no doubt that South Africa rhino were exported to China with the intention of building a rhino industrial base. The South African pro rhino horn traders were up in arms "We are extremely anti the export of live rhino to any community that does not have a credible wildlife protection history." said Pelham Jones.

[Media reports on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2012](#) stated that conservation control failures and abuses are condemning hundreds of South African rhinos to zoos and breeding programmes feeding into the Far East's traditional medicines industry.

These exports were in defiance of the protocols set by CITES which sought to ensure that rhinos were only exported to zoological institutions with adequate facilities, a strong conservation agenda and with no connection to the trade in animal body parts and derivatives.



On the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018 the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China announced that they had authorised the trade and use of rhino, tiger and related products for scientific, medical and cultural purposes.

In a new circular the Chinese government outline nuanced parameters within which a legal domestic trade is to be reopened; activities beyond these parameters are to remain illegal.

A shocking [official announcement](#) was made by the People's Republic of China in October 2018 lifting of the twenty-five-year ban of the use rhino horn and tiger parts for certain medical and cultural purposes.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2018 [the acting Minister of Environmental Affairs](#), Mr Derek Hanekom, made a statement to say that he had taken note of the aforementioned announcement by the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China. Furthermore, he stated that he became aware of the lifting of the ban through the media.

Two weeks after the Chinese government said it would allow limited use of rhino and tiger parts for medical and scientific purposes, a senior Chinese official said that the [strict bans on their usage remain in force](#). The international wildlife community [had criticised the decision](#) describing it as chilling, devastating and baffling.

A brief examination of the CITES live trade of rhino [database](#) for the years 2000 – 2016 is confusing. According to the importer China a total of 217 rhino were imported. According to the exporter South Africa 291 rhino were exported to China.

The EMS Foundation and Ban Animal Trading carried out extensive research about the legal trade of live wildlife between South Africa and China. [The report](#) entitled *Breaking Point: South Africa's Shameful Live Wildlife Trade with China* was published on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

South Africa has become the largest exporter of live wild animals to Asia, countries where wild animals are killed in order to extract specific body parts for human consumption.

## Vietnam



Vinpearl Safari Phu Quoc, Source: <https://vietreader.com/travel/49263-wildlife-time-of-separation-in-vinpearl-safari-phu-quoc.html>



[Annamiticus reported](#) on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012, in an article titled *Rhinos from South Africa to Vietnam*, South African game farmers and reserve owners may be utilizing Thailand as a transit point so that rhino exports to Vietnam can continue without scrutiny.

Documents including an export permit stamped by the Limpopo Province CITES and Permit Management office dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 2012 with the importer listed on the permit as Bangkok Bird Park Breeding and Research Centre in Thailand, the exporter is as Mystic Monkeys and Feathers Wild Animal Park in Pretoria, South Africa. The rhino arrived in Bangkok on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2012 and then continued its journey to Chi Minh City the following day.

Furthermore, Thai Cargo Air waybills dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012 suggest up to three rhinos were sent from Johannesburg to Ho Chi Minh City via Bangkok. The shipper's name was listed at Bester Birds and Animals Zoo Park CC. The receiver of the shipment is Vinh Phu CMT Joint Stock Corporation in Binh Thanh district, Ho Chi Minh City.

John Hume has been breeding rhino since 1995, [he says](#) that over a hundred of his rhinos are from Dawie Groenewald. According to Hume he owns one fifth of all the privately owned rhino in South Africa and he also said that in 2017 that he had four and half tons of rhino horn.

Hume also said that in 2016 he was [in negotiation](#) to sell one hundred rhino to [Pham Nhat Vuong](#), a wealthy man in Vietnam who owns a company called Vinpearl who has a safari park on Phu Quoc Island in the Gulf of Thailand.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2015 a representative from Vinpearl, accompanied by the Vietnamese ambassador to South Africa, met with South African authorities to urge approval of Hume's export application. In a letter, the Department of Rural, Environmental and Agricultural Development for South Africa's North West Province confirmed that Vinpearl request to import 100 rhinos.

Described as the largest *conservation* park in Asia, there are apparently 4500 individual animals and 200 species. According to the marketing information 7 baby rhino have been born there over the past two years.

On page 111 of an investigative Report published by the EMS Foundation and Ban Animal Trading in 2018 called the *Extinction Business Report – South Africa's Lion Bone Trade*. Researchers, Michele Pickover and Smaragda Louw, have said that the South African government is feeding Vietnam's insatiable demand for wild animals and their body parts.

The report confirmed that Lam is the President of South East Asian Zoos Association, previously the director of Saigon Zoo. He sources wild animals for public and private zoo throughout Vietnam.

Lam is also linked to VinPearl and DKC Trading through his involvement in the DKC trading/VinPearl animal shipment from South Africa in December 2105. He is also connected to imports of tigers from Europe and possibly South Africa, as well as rhino imports.

Vinh Phu-CMT has also directly imported live animals from South Africa, namely in July 2012 [three rhinos were sent by Bester Birds & Animals \(veterinarian Charles van Niekerk\)](#) via Thailand. And In 2009 two rhinos were exported from South Africa for Cu Chi Water Park, which is located in Ho Chi Minh City.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012 a report from The World, an American daily global news program in Boston Massachusetts reported that Veterinarian Charles van Niekerk had developed a device that injects red dye into rhino horns. [This infusion](#) measure was developed in order to render the horn useless, in an attempt to discourage poachers from killing rhino.

The infusion treatment involves the anaesthetisation of the rhino, Van Niekerk and his team drill a hole in each of the rhino's horns, using a standard drill. The red dye is pre-dissolved in a metallic cylinder that is just over half a meter high and has a diameter of about 10cm. The red dye is pumped into the horn until its fibrous structure is completely soaked from in the inside. Unfortunately, whilst demonstrating the technique a [rhino died](#). His death, it was assumed a result of underlying medical conditions.

The content of the *Extinction Business Report* resulted in a [two-day colloquium](#) held in the Parliament of South Africa in 2018 which led to the appointment of the Department of the Environment, Forestry and Fisheries [High Level Panel of Advisors in 2019](#).



Image source: <https://vietnamnet.vn/vn/kinh-doanh/chn-dung-dai-gia-dieu-cay-le-thanh-than-244299.html>

In a Vietnamese online newspaper an article titled [Breeding Wild Beasts Becomes New Hobby of the Rich](#) published on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2012 [it was stated](#) that tigers, leopards, lions and rhinos can all be found in the mini farms owned by millionaires who are ready to spend money like water on their original collections. Breeding dangerous animals is now in vogue among the rich people. They not only have to spend billions of dong, but a lot of time as well to “hunt” for the wild beasts.

According to reports one of these millionaires is Le Thanh Than who imported two rhinos from South Africa in 2009 and two tigers in 2010 from a Mike Bester who has a zoo in Pretoria and who specialises in the international translocation of non-domestic animals and birds.

## Emerging Farmers in South Africa

The gift of wild animals for community farming was announced on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017 by Minister Edna Molewa following the month-long [Rhino Laboratory](#) held in 2016.

Representatives from the Department of Environmental Affairs, Justice, Crime Prevention, the Security Cluster, Correctional Services, the South African Police Service, South African Revenue Services, SANParks, Provincial Conservation agencies, Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Tourism, Education, International Relations and Co-operation and the Department of Treasury's Financial Intelligence Centre attended the Rhino Laboratory.

Representatives from the Private Rhino Owners Association, the United Nations Environment Programme, The Worldwide Fund for Nature, the Peace Parks Foundation, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the Endangered Wildlife Trust also attended the Rhino Laboratory.

According to Minister Molewa detailed short, medium and long-term implementation plans were implemented namely:

Law enforcement

Demand Management

Management of Rhino Populations

Community Empowerment

Responsive Legislation

Plans for incentives to stakeholders and improve stockpile management

The Minister mentioned that 33 white rhino had been moved from 2014 – 2017 from high risk poaching areas with the assistance of the Peace Parks Foundation.

*“Since 1990 the translocation of rhinos to smaller farms and reserves had resulted in those rhino populations growing faster than would have been the case if they had remained in the Kruger National Park. By the end of 2016 the gains made as a result of translocations off set 25% of the rhinos lost in the Kruger National Park during the 2016 calendar year.*

*SANParks has visited the established strongholds and assessed progress. For the most part all the rhinos were doing well and have established well in their new environments. It should be mentioned however that one facility experienced an aggressive poaching onslaught and lost 15 out of 35 rhino some which originated from the Kruger National Park.”*

The Minister said that SANParks had 44 rhino orphans at various facilities.

The Minister also stated that facilitating increased economic participation for communities is in line with government’s Biodiversity Economy Strategy. The overall aim is to contribute to the reduction of poverty in rural areas through the development and optimisation of natural resources.

The donation of 625 head of game to new and emerging farmers done in co-ordination with provincial conservation authorities. The target is 300 000 head of game by 2030 in the hands of previously disadvantaged individuals.

A study visit arranged for 46 emerging farmers from Community Property Associations to learn about the biodiversity value chain.

According to [media reports](#), on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2021 354 wild animals from the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries were donated to emerging game farmers and communities as part of a government programme. In 2018, the government pledged that 3000 head of game over three years would be donated.

## **Chad**

[Minister Molewa announced](#) the planned translocation of a group of black rhinos to the Zakouma National Park in Chad.

[Africa Parks announced](#) that up to six black rhino from South Africa in May 2018 would be translocated in the Zakouma National Park. The translocation was the result of cross-collaboration between the South African Department of Environmental Affairs, the Government of the Republic of Chad as well as African Parks and South African National Park.

On Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2018 [Reuters announced](#) that four of the six endangered black rhinos that were relocated to Chad from South Africa had died possibly of starvation:

“The six rhinos were transferred from South Africa in May, re-introducing the species into Chad for the first time since it died out in 1972 due to poaching. Low fat reserves suggest that maladaptation by the rhinos to their new environment is likely the underlying cause.”



## Botswana



Manie Van Niekerk's rhinos traveling into the Okavango Delta from the Free State in South Africa. Image source: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/dangerous-work-relocating-5000-pound-rhinos-180969008/>

In an article published in on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018 the South African Department of the Environment has confirmed that since 2014 South Africa has [exported 361 live rhinos](#) to former and existing rhino range states, including Botswana, Chad, Namibia, Rwanda and Zambia.

Since 2018 there has been an upsurge in rhino poaching in Botswana, according to some reports this poaching is reaching crisis point. More than 100 rhinos have been poached in less than two years. According to [a report](#) published by the Standing Committee and the Secretariat of CITES in October 2019, Botswana had a total rhino population of approximately 502 (452 white rhino and 50 black rhino). Former Botswana president Ian Khama announced on social media that 120 rhinos have been killed in eighteen months. Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks have [denied the accusation](#). Conservationists have criticized the current government's poor conservation record.

Botswana's free-roaming rhinos were poached to extinction in the period leading up to the 1990's. The decision was taken have a zero tolerance anti-poaching policy and to re-introduce rhinos and several private and government projects have focused on bringing rhinos back to the northern part of Botswana.

A major reintroduction of rhino location started in the early 2000 between Wilderness Safaris and the Botswana government. Simultaneously, the [Khama Rhino Sanctuary](#) was established 1992 to restore historic wildlife populations. The sanctuary's rhino breeding plan was successful and they started relocating rhino to different parts of Botswana.

33 white rhino and 6 black rhinos from Zimbabwe and South Africa were located into the Wilderness Safari's Mombo reserve in the Okavango Delta in 2003. More black rhino where relocated to Mombo reserve in Okavango from South Africa and from [Zimbabwe in 2015](#).

[Rhinos Without Borders](#) a joint initiative between andBeyond and Great Plains Conservation, two tourism companies was created as a result of the high rate poaching of rhinos in South Africa. The project aimed to translocate at least 100 rhinos from [South Africa to Botswana](#), the estimated cost of the project was US\$ 5 million.



Unfortunately, Botswana has become a new focus for illicit groupings taking advantage of the hunting ban being lifted and growth of [political factionalism](#) since 2018. At least five gangs are believed to be [operating](#) in Mombo Concession in the Okavango Delta.

The Department of Wildlife and National Parks director, Kabelo Senyatso, said in March 2021, that Khama's claims were misleading but that the government could not disclose official figures and other information as it was a sensitive matter.

## The Australian Rhino Project



Board of Directors. Image source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/GDxSpEydS1wqHqYt9>

The Australian Rhino Project was established in 2013 with the aim to relocate white rhino to Australia from South Africa because of the rhino poaching crisis. At a cost of [two million dollars](#), the rhino would remain the property of the source nation and once the poaching situation stabilised the rhino would be repatriated.

The project has been sharply criticized as a neo-colonial venture, the number of rhinos under consideration for the project has fallen from 80 to 30 rhinos. Australian born researcher [Matt Hayward and named colleagues said](#): "Taking biodiversity assets, like rhinos, for safe-keeping in the West is as patronising and disempowering as the historical appropriation of cultural artefacts by colonising nations. We believe this is misdirected neo-colonial conservation."

The Australian Rhino Project has [signed an agreement with Thaba Manzi](#) Wildlife Sanctuary in South Africa to manage the selection and quarantining of rhinos for this project. The Australian Rhino Project has been working alongside the team at Thaba Manzi for several years apparently.

Thaba Manzi Wildlife Service is situated in Bela, near Warmbaths in the Limpopo Province. Thaba Manzi Wildlife Service sent two rhinos in 2009 to China. Their name appears on a list [published](#) by the Department of Environmental Affairs of the 101 rhinos that were exported to Asia between 2007 – 2011.

According to Sarah Dennis, Australia and New Zealand zoos have an exception reputation and long history in managing and successfully breeding rhino. There are apparently already 50 rhinos in captivity in Australia.

Zookeepers have fenced off a 560-hectare area at the Monarto Zoo which is situated 60km from Adelaide in Australia. Prior to their arrival the rhino would need to spend a year at the Orana Wildlife Park in Christchurch in New Zealand because of the quarantine and biosecurity requirements of the Australian government

## United States of America

On the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015 *The Lowvelder* announced that Mike Bester the founder of [Bester Bird and Animal Zoo Park](#) in Pretoria and member of the Private Rhino Owners Association sold six white rhino to a wildlife ranch and be integrated into the American Centre for Conservation Species survival programme. [Mr Albi Modise from the Department of Environmental Affairs](#) confirmed that the permit was issued in terms of Chapter 7 of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act and in compliance with provisions of both the Threatened or Protected Species regulations 2007 and the CITES regulations of 2010.

A report on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015 stated that Mike Bester runs a zoo in Pretoria and an export company specializing in the international translocation of non-domestic animals and birds.

According to [Reuters](#), *Exotic Wildlife Association Second Ark Foundation* and Charly Seale were part of an ambitious project organised by animal welfare groups in the United States and African countries to bring hundreds of orphaned baby Southern White rhino to Texas.

An [article](#) published in 2016 exposed the fact that Exotic Wildlife Association sponsors hunting programs and has in the past, argued against federal endangered species designations that would bar the trading, selling and hunting of animals.

## THE UNSUSTAINABILITY OF SOUTH AFRICA'S SUSTAINABLE USE POLICY



Image Source: <https://www.africahunting.com/threads/selling-2-white-rhino-mounts-shoulder-and-wall.43734/>

### The Harsh Reality of the Sustainable Use Industry

In order to accurately understand the total decline in numbers of rhinos in South Africa over the past two decades, we need to examine all the available data and we also need to carefully examine South Africa's current policy framework of sustainable use and how this is negatively affecting biodiversity and wildlife on the ground.

In order to accurately understand the total decline in numbers of rhinos in South Africa over the past two decades, we need to question the entire sustainable use policy framework which drives current management decisions. According to Article 2 of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity sustainable use means "the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations". However, according to researcher [Jared Kukura](#) its core philosophy is economic, not ecological, denying that the exploitation of wildlife through hunting and trade is a leading cause of the current biodiversity crisis.

The devastating loss of rhinos in South Africa is, as this report indicates, a result of poor and questionable management decisions, the direct involvement of South African professional trophy hunters, rhino breeders, veterinarians and nature conservation officials.

We have to question the decisions by the government to sell rhino from the Kruger National to trophy hunters. Many of these trophy hunters used the CITES trophy hunting permitting system to export rhino horn directly to Vietnam thus encouraging the illegal trade as has been clearly and repeatedly illustrated in this report.

Live rhino should not be exported from South Africa to captivity anywhere and certainly not out of their natural range states. Presently it is also too risky to export rhino to the historic range states.

We also have to question why the South African government allows rhino to be hunted or exported to countries whose citizens are driving the [demand](#) for rhino horn.

## Trophy Hunting – Waging War on Rhinos



Image Source: <https://www.africahunting.com/threads/selling-2-white-rhino-mounts-shoulder-and-wall.43734/>

Even in the face of extinction, the rhino continues to be hunted for the purpose of satisfying a perverse desire to display their remains. There is growing concern for the well-being of flagship megafauna which includes the rhino, which has led individuals and law makers to become informed and engaged in humanitarian non-consumptive efforts.

The myths that trophy hunting revenue is equally shared and that this industry provides [sustainable value](#) to wildlife is exactly that, a myth, and until hard evidence of such re-investment is published it is difficult to analyze.

The savage colonial sport known as trophy hunting was [invented](#) by the British empire during Victorian times. The trophy hunting of rhino is allowed in South Africa under permit, permits are granted by the in-country CITES management authorities. Trophies include taxidermized head and horns and on occasion the entire body of the rhino.





Image Source: <https://www.peterflack.co.za/peter-flack-trophy-room/>

The EMS Foundation obtained official information from the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment via the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) pertaining to rhino exports for the period 2016 – August 2021 from one South African port of exit where the exports were endorsed by members of the national Environmental Management Inspectorate. The EMS Foundation cannot guarantee the completeness of the information contained herein or eliminate the possibility of anomalies having regard to system limitations and third-party inputs. For all intents and purposes, we must assume that these are the least amount of rhino that were trophy hunted during this time period.

The data obtained revealed the following in relation to the trophy hunting of black rhinos:

- 2020 - skull, jaw, set of horns and a full skin to Hungary
- 2017 – two horns and full mount to Malaysia
- 2016 - 2 horns and foot to the United Kingdom

393 trophy hunting-related CITES export permits for white rhinos, for the period 2016 to August 2021, went through this one South African port of exit. An analysis of the permit data from this single South African port of exit, shows that 18 horns went to one individual in Belgium and that the United States of America was overwhelmingly the biggest importer of rhino body parts from South Africa. A breakdown of the number of rhino body part (including full bodies, horns, skulls, skins and derivatives were as follows:

COUNTRY AND DATES <sup>3</sup>	TROPHY TYPE								
	HORNS	FULL MOUNT <sup>4</sup>	SHOULDER MOUNT <sup>5</sup>	FULL SKELETON	SKIN	FEET	TAIL	SKULL	DERIVATIVES
Austria 2016 – 2018, 2021	10		3		7	6	1	1	1
Belgium 2016, 2019, 2020	19				3			1	
Bulgaria 2018	2				1	4			17
Canada 2016, 2018	4	1	2		4			1	
China 2016 - 2018	10		19	6	26	51	1	7	
Denmark 2017, 2020	4		1	1	3	4		1	
Estonia 2016, 2018					5	2		1	
France 2018	2					4		1	
Germany 2018 - 2021	11				3			3	
Hungary 2016, 2019 - 2020	20	1			12			12	11
Indonesia 2020	2				1	4			
Kazakhstan 2016	2								
Kuwait 2016	2								
Latvia 2018	2				1	4		1	
Malaysia 2017	4	2							
Mexico 2017, 2019 - 2020	7	1	2		13	12		4	
Norway 2020		1							
Poland 2016 -2020	12				7	4		4	8
Russian Federation 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021	18		4		8	18	1	8	
Slovakia 2106, 2018	4		2					1	6
Spain 2017 - 2021	20		3		14	32		9	
Sweden 2018 - 2019	2	2	1			1	1		
Switzerland 2018, 2021	3		1		1	8	1		
Turkey 2020			6						
Ukraine 2016, 2020	14				7	8	1	5	
United Kingdom 2016	4	1				1		1	
United States of America 2016 - 2021	225	5	33	2	106	149	12	79	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>59</b>

<sup>3</sup> Dates in the Table refer to the year of export.<sup>4</sup> With horns<sup>5</sup> With horns

## PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

The importance of written questions and answers are an established feature of parliamentary democracies, they play a [crucial role](#) in holding the Executive accountable. The series of questions below has been included in this report because their content illustrates serious concern about decisions being taken regarding the management of rhino in national parks, especially the Kruger National Park.

**Members of Parliament (MPs) can use this method to expose policy or implementation failures or to press for action.**

Research shows that opposition parties are more active in asking questions than governing parties. MPs from the governing parties tend to use informal means to obtain information.

These are some of the parliamentary questions which are relevant to this research project.

It is really important to note that an ANC member of Parliament asked very specific and important questions to their own Minister.

**1. Rhino Horn Inventories, the Legalisation of the Rhino Horn trade, establishing a National Co-Ordinator with regard to the Illegal Killing of Rhino**

Dr G W Koornhof (ANC) asked the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2011 if she had knowledge of a rhino horn inventory from the conservation agencies in South Africa, how many tons of rhino horn have been stockpiled (a) in total and (b) by each conservation agency;

Whether she had found that legalising the trade in rhino horn would be an effective means of controlling the market and preventing the illegal killing of rhino; if not what the relevant details were;

Whether she intends to legalise the trade in rhino horn, if not, why not, if so, what the relevant details are;

Whether she intends to establish a national co-ordinator to whom national and provincial conservation agencies can submit information on rhino poaching; if not, why not, if so, what are the relevant details;

Whether the functions of the national co Ordinator will include working in conjunction with the SA Police Service and the courts; if not why not, if so what are the relevant details?

[The Answers:](#)

An inventory of rhino horn that is held by conservation agencies in South Africa has been completed but due to security risks the Department of Environmental Affairs cannot publicly announce the amount of stocks being held by these agencies.

No. The feasibility assessment to investigate the viability of legalising the trade in rhino horn in South Africa as well as the global competitive market research project on market intelligence regarding rhino horn trade, as agreed at the Minister's summit in October 2010 must still be concluded. The information gathered by these two studies should enable the DEA to determine whether legalizing the trade in rhino horn will be an effective means of controlling the market and preventing the illegal killing of rhino.

We do not have the legislation of rhino horn on the cards. As indicated in the aforementioned question we are conducting a study which must be scientific and indicate the measures to be taken in protecting our rhino from being killed because of the rhino horn.

The department [established](#) the National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit (NWCURU) that include all provincial conservation authorities, co-ordinated through the South African National Parks (SANParks) and working in cooperation with the South African Police Service and other security agencies, including the National

Prosecuting Authority, Justice and Defence. Information on rhino poaching is being coordinated jointly by the NWCRU and the South African Police Service who has declared rhino poaching as a priority crime. Anybody, including provincial conservation agencies can thus provide information on rhino poaching to either the DEA or SAPS.

Yes, as reflected above, the NWCRU works in close co-operation with SAPS and the National Prosecuting Authority, in all investigations and prosecution cases related to the illegal killing of rhino and the illegal trade in rhino horn.

## **2. Trophy Hunting of Rhino the Greater Kruger National Park**

Mr N J J van R Koornhof from (COPE) asked the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2011 if the department had issued any rhino hunting permits for during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 up to the latest specified date for which information is available to owners of private land adjoining the Kruger National Park; if so (a) how many and (b) why?

### Answer:

No. The Department of Environmental Affairs do not issue permits for activities carried out on private land adjoining the Kruger National Park. The relevant provincial conservation authority issues these permits. (a)Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) indicate that one permit will be issued for a rhino hunt in Timbavati. Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism indicated that no permits were issued.

## **3. The Selling of SANParks Rhino to a Specific Person**

Mr M J Ellis (Democratic Party) asked the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011 if SANParks had consulted with the South African Police Services before selling rhino to a certain person (name furnished), if not, why not and if so why what are the relevant details;

Whether SAPS has at any time advised SANParks not to sell rhino to the said person, if not, why not, if so what was the response of SANParks;

Whether SANParks continues to sell rhino to the said person; if not why not; if so what are the relevant details;

Whether the said person continues to make requests to SANParks to purchase rhino, if so, what are the relevant details?

### The answers:

No, SANParks did not consult with the police before selling rhino to the certain person. At the time rhino were sold to this person, SANParks had no grounds for consulting the police.

No. SAPS has not advised SANParks not to sell rhino to the certain person.

No. SANParks is not continuing to sell rhino to the said person.

Yes. The said person has made applications to purchase rhino from SANParks. This has been refused because the applications did not comply with SANParks sales criteria.

## **4. The Private Sale of Rhino from the Kruger National Park, Sustainability of Hunting of in the Greater Kruger National Park, Details Related to Numbers of Rhino killed in the Kruger National Park in 2011, Can Rhino Sold by the Kruger National Park be Hunted**



Mr G R Morgan (DA) asked the following questions which were answered and published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011.

- a) Whether, considering the high level of rhino poaching in the Kruger National Park, the park management has a means to determine what the off-take level of rhinos in the park for sale to private owners is; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- b) Whether, considering that the Associated Private Nature Reserves that border the Kruger National Park had to do an environmental impact assessment (EIA) to determine whether the off-take of animals in their reserves was sustainable, the SA National Parks (SANParks) will also do an EIA on the off-take levels for animals in the Kruger National Park; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- c) (a) How many rhinos were killed by poachers in the Kruger National Park from 1 January 2011 up to the latest specified date for which information is available and (b) on what date was this figure determined;
- d) Whether SANParks places any restrictions on how soon a rhino sold from one of its parks to a private owner can be hunted; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

The Answers:

- a) Yes, SANParks have a transparent and defensible approach to define off-take rates for large mammals including white rhinos. SANParks acknowledges that carrying capacity approaches is the traditional way of exploiting wildlife, but these carry large conceptual constraints. For instance, carrying capacity approaches is embedded in production views aimed at maximizing population growth based on the amount of herbage produced, proportion of that consumed and the efficiency of conversion to animal abundance or biomass.

The application to conservation required apportioning herbage produced to different species based on a subjectively chosen benchmark of what large mammalian herbivore community composition may be. Virtually all criteria reflect opinion and is not based on robust data. In addition, the apportioning of grazing components to a species is subjective and arbitrarily adjusted depending on apparent overestimation of grazing capacity. Grazing capacity is furthermore subjectively converted to a stocking unit with an intuitive proportional make-up of a herbivore community.

Carrying capacity approaches to conservation also ignores ecological complexity as several factors are additional drivers so that a generalized succession sequence, the basis of rangeland management, is not true. Species do not respond consistently to grazing, and often several alternative states may be possible at a specific locality. Proponents of the use of carrying capacity in a conservation environment have introduced a concept of "rain use efficiency" to adapt stocking rates to local conditions usually defined as the local specific mean annual rainfall. Stocking rates derived from carrying capacity models thus predict stability at an abundance derived from regional grazing and browsing capacities adapted to local mean annual rainfall. It essentially forces dynamics across inappropriate scales that may have consequences for the maintenance of biological diversity and thus contrast the achievement of key mandates assigned to conservation agencies.

Much of the desire to make use of carrying capacity approaches to conservation stems from restrictions on the landscape imposed by history. For instance, traditional landscape interventions interferes with vital rates and fall into three categories: 1) those that affect dispersal such as fences and water provision; 2) those that affect survival such as culling and removals and water provision; and 3) those that affect fecundity such as contraception and culling that reduced densities. Conservationists can address such effects of historical legacies by restoring spatial and temporal limitations and/or mimicking the effects of spatial and temporal limitations when restoration is constrained for several reasons. This reflects a paradigm of the flux of nature which upholds that heterogeneity enhances diversity which enhance resilience. Mimicking ecological effects when landscape intervention imposition cannot be restored thus need to reflect heterogeneity to fully support conservationists key mandates.

The mimicking effect could generate financial gains, but not in a typical production environment. For an example, a herbivore may stabilize at different population sizes depending on conditions imposed e.g. naturally limited, human altered through for instance landscape interventions, and harvested for maximum yield. When landscape interventions have removed population limiting and regulating mechanisms SANParks anticipate that abundances may increase. Responding to the excess created by impeded ecological limiting and regulatory factors provide for economic gain that will also enhance biodiversity objectives. Most important is the temporal variability in this scenario that is relatively large and non-directional.

Inducing spatial and temporal variation through managing numbers of a species may be enhanced through inducing source-sink dynamics. Source-sink dynamics may lead to local instability, but regional stability, a feature desirable if conservationists wish to maintain persistent biodiversity. However, such strategies may lead to drifts in age structures that may carry long term consequences for the population specifically if removal of excess is selective. By drawing from statistical distribution randomly each year and then calculating from that the ecological removal rate directed at mimicking the variable outcomes of ecological processes that are not fully playing out, SANParks adhere to an ecosystem-based approach, but make use of opportunities to generate revenue.

In the white rhino case,  $r_{max}$  is estimated from the long-term trends in white rhino population counts as  $12 \pm 1\%$ . Ecological harvesting is then  $3 \pm 1\%$  with the 2011 allocation using the above approach equating to 337 white rhinos. However, SANParks also tone this by the anticipated present poaching effects. The trend in the last year predicted that if poaching pressures continue, 229 white rhinos would be illegally killed in Kruger during 2011. As a result only 108 rhinos were allocated for potential sales.

- b) SANParks use an adaptive management approach and explicitly evaluate the effects of management strategies on biological diversity. For white rhino, a project internally funded by SANParks focuses on:
  - i. Defining the age and sex structure of white rhino populations within historical areas of removal (sinks) as well as non-removal (sources) using individual assignments from a helicopter.
  - ii. To extract age- and sex-specific structure or individuals removed historically from veterinary records. \*To extract counts and growth rates for sources and sinks respectively from annual counts.
  - iii. To develop a source sink model for rhino dynamics in Kruger
  - iv. To extract trends in market prices from recent sale records
  - v. To evaluate the effect of future removal strategies and potential emerging diseases on ecological persistence and financial gains.
- c) Demographic profiling surveys take place every year before white rhinos are removed (February) – that help define what the sex and age-structure of proposed removals should be – as well as at the end of the removal season (November). In reality, the white rhino population is resilient and is increasing at approximately 5% irrespective of ecological management and poaching.  
(3)(a) 172 rhino - (165 white rhino and 7 black rhino) (b) 06/09/2011
- d) No. SANParks does not have any restrictions on our sales contract relating to hunting and for any activity beyond the sale, SANParks rely completely on the provincial conservation authorities in policing this and related components. It should be noted that the Department of Environmental Affairs works with Provincial Authorities in ensuring that rhino poaching problem is addressed.

##### 5. Pseudo Rhino Hunting in South Africa and Status of the Memorandum of Understanding between South Africa and Vietnam

Mr G R Morgan (DA) asked the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs the following questions which were published on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

- a) Whether she has identified any measures to end pseudo rhino hunts; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- b) Whether she has met with the Member of Executive Council (MEC) for Environmental Affairs in the (a) North West and (b) Limpopo provinces regarding the pseudo hunts that are being conducted in these provinces; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- c) Whether she intends to stop nationals of certain countries that have weak controls for implementing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) from hunting in South Africa; if not, why not; if so, what (a) is the current status of the memorandum of understanding with Vietnam on rhinos and (b) are the further relevant details;
- d) Whether she intends to meet with her counterparts in other countries regarding means to reduce rhino poaching in 2012; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

##### The Answers:

- a) Yes, these measures are contained in the proposed amendments to the norms and standards on marking of rhinoceros horns and hunting of white rhinoceros for trophy hunting purposes. The amended norms

and standards, which were developed subsequent to the public participation process, have been submitted for approval through the cooperative governance structures and will be published for public participation in a short while from now.

- b) Yes, at a meeting between myself and the Members of the Executive Council (MECs) responsible for the environment (MINMEC) on 30 September 2011, pseudo hunts were discussed and various interventions were proposed, including the provisions included in the amended norms and standards to strengthen administrative and compliance procedures.
- c) Yes. (a) The MoU will be signed as soon as the feedback on inputs by the Vietnamese is received and legal process has been finalised. (b) The proposed amendments to the norms and standards include a requirement that the issuing authority must consider whether the country of usual residence of the hunting client, where the rhinoceros horns and the rest of the hunting trophy will be imported to, has adequate legislation to ensure that the rhinoceros horns and the rest of the hunting trophy will be used for the purpose as indicated on the CITES export permit.
- d) Yes, as Minister, I have met with my counterpart from Mozambique to discuss interventions relating to rhino poaching. I also met with counterparts in the People's Republic of China to finalise the addendum to the existing MoU, which will be signed around April 2012, focusing on enforcement matters. By mid-March a departmental delegation led by the DDG Biodiversity and Conservation will visit the People's Republic of China to meet with their counterparts to discuss amongst others, the rhino poaching problem.

#### 6. Rhino Hunting Permits for the Greater Kruger National Park

Mr N JJ Koornhof (COPE) addressed the following questions to Minister Edna Molewa which were answered and published on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

- a) Whether SA National Parks (SANParks), in conjunction with provinces, has approved the issuing of permits for hunting rhino in the greater Kruger National Park since 1 January 2010; if so, (a) how many hunting permits have been approved and (b) in respect of which areas;
- b) whether there were any special conditions attached to these permits; if not, why not; if so, what conditions;
- c) whether she intends to stop the issuing of permits for hunting rhino in view of the large number of rhinos lost to poaching; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details?

#### The Answers:

- a) No permits have been issued as hunting is not permitted in National Parks.
- b) Not applicable
- c) Not applicable.

#### 7. Rhino Population in the Kruger National Park and the numbers of Rhino Illegally Killed in the Kruger National Park 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Mrs S V Kalyan (DA) asked the following questions, these and the answers were published on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

- a) (a) What is the current estimated rhino population in the Kruger National Park (KNP) and (b) how many rhinos were killed in the KNP in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 and during the period 1 January 2012 up to the latest specified date for which information is available;
- b) whether a census of the rhino population in the KNP has been conducted recently; (No) if so, what are the relevant details; if not,
- c) whether he intends commissioning such a census; (No) if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

#### The Answers:

- a) (a) White rhinos: between 9 000 and 12 000  
Black rhinos between 670 and 760
- (b) 2008 – 36 – with criminals arrested and convicted  
2009 – 50 – with criminals arrested and convicted  
2010 – 146 – with criminals arrested and convicted

2011 – 252 – with criminals arrested and convicted

1 Jan 2012 to 14 March 2012 – 45 – with criminals arrested and convicted

- b) Census surveys are carried out at 2 to 3 year intervals. The most recent survey for white rhinos was done in 2010.
- c) The next census will be conducted during the dry season of 2012.

#### 8. Rhino Hunting Permits in the Kruger National Park Associated Private Nature Reserves

Mr N J J van Koornhof (COPE) asked questions relating to the trophy hunting of rhino in the Greater Kruger National Park, these questions and answers were published on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

- a) Whether any permits have been approved for hunting rhino in the private nature reserves adjoining the Kruger National Park since 1 January 2012; if so, (a) how many hunting permits have been approved and (b) in respect of which areas;
- b) Whether there were any special conditions attached to these permits; if not, why not; if so, what conditions;
- c) Whether she intends to stop the issuing of permits for hunting rhino in view of the large number of rhinos lost to poaching; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details?

#### The Answers:

- a) The national department does not deal with permits approval at provincial level. The question should be referred to the Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provincial Governments.
- b) Refer to the above response.
- c) No. The permit process and poaching are not linked as permitting is done through a due diligence process and is legal. The issue was discussed at length with the MECs responsible for Environment in all the provinces and it was agreed not to stop the issuing of permits based on the above.

#### 9. The Export of Live Rhino to Vietnam

Mrs S V Kalyan (DA) asked questions related to the export of live rhino from South Africa to Vietnam. These questions and answers were published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2012.

- a) Whether any live rhinos were exported to Vietnam since 1 April 2012; if not, why not; if so, (a) how many, (b) what is the name of the exporter and (c) what statutory role did the Department of Environmental Affairs play in the case of each export;
- b) How can the export of live rhinos to Vietnam be justified, considering that Vietnamese nationals are not permitted to hunt rhinos in South Africa;
- c) Whether the Department of Environmental Affairs intends implementing any (a) norms and (b) standards on the export of live rhinos; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

#### The Answers:

- a) Yes, (a) seven (7) white rhinoceros, (b) the information relating to the exporter cannot be made available, (c) in terms of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Regulations promulgated in terms of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004), the provincial conservation authorities are the management authorities responsible for the issuance of CITES permits to private individuals or companies. The Department of Environmental Affairs is responsible to communicate with, among others, the management and enforcement authorities of other CITES parties on matters relating to the implementation of the Convention. In this specific case, the Department of Environmental Affairs verified the letters received from the CITES management and scientific authorities of Vietnam, confirming that the animals would only be used for the purposes as stated on the export permit (zoological purposes) and that the recipient was suitably equipped to house and care for the animals.
- b) The Department of Environmental Affairs agreed with provincial conservation authorities in February 2012 to refuse all applications for white rhinoceros hunting by foreign hunters whose state of usual residence is Vietnam until the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has confirmed in writing that white rhinoceros hunting trophies, exported from South Africa, are still in the possession of the hunters. The refusal of permits to hunt white rhinoceros is not related to the export of live animals. Vietnam complied with the requirements relating to the export of live rhinoceros to appropriate and acceptable destinations.



- c) (a) and (b) In general the regulatory provisions currently in place are sufficient to regulate the export of animals to foreign zoos. The Department of Environmental Affairs is, however, in the process of amending the additional requirement for the export of live rhinoceros to captive facilities; and it is proposed that the captive facility should be an institutional member of either the World Associates of Zoos and Aquarium (WAZA); or institutional members of association members of the WAZA; or accredited members of regional zoological associations, recognised by the CITES management authority of the state of import as a reputable association. These associations must require zoos or captive facilities to comply with specific criteria, including the high standard of husbandry and veterinary care, maintenance of record systems and contribution to conservation activities.

## CONCLUSION

The EMS Foundation is a South African based social justice NGO established in November 2016. Our key purpose is to alleviate and end suffering, raise public awareness and lobby and empower, provide dignity and promote the rights and interests of vulnerable groups, particularly children, the elderly and wild animals.

The EMS Foundation is committed to contributing to the improvement of wildlife governance. With an area of nearly two million hectares, the Kruger National Park situated in the north of South Africa is one of the continents largest game reserves. The South African government is responsible for the care and protection of the world's largest remaining white and black rhino populations. The current estimated numbers of black and white rhinos in South Africa's flagship national park are extremely concerning.

This report has highlighted the fact that hundreds of rhinos were knowingly exported from the Kruger National Park to trophy hunters, some of whom ignited the rhino horn trade in Vietnam. Rhinos were also exported to zoos whilst at the same time thousands of rhinos were being illegally killed in the Kruger National Park.

[Close examinations](#) of the agreements made with hunters, by investigators, has revealed that anomalies were overlooked in order to facilitate the acquisition of the rhinos.

Furthermore, in 2019 the National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers [accused](#) the Kruger National Park of perpetuating nepotism, corruption and maladministration. It was alleged that the outsourcing of services at SANParks was organised to enrich a few individuals.

This report has highlighted and expanded upon, what [investigative journalists](#) highlighted many years ago about *State Capture* and the Kruger National Park. They ask, as do we, what policies and procedures does SANParks have in place to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interests specifically involving holders of high political office in its spending?

We all argue that SANParks has a duty to avoid repeating the same mistakes, although an organ of government, SANParks is reliant on revenue generated from consumers. We are disheartened to learn of the large financial contribution being withdrawn because of maladministration.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021, when Minister Creecy released the High Level Panel [Report](#) –which reviewed policies, legislation and practises related to the management, breeding, hunting, trade and handling of elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros– she made the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2021, Minister Creecy released the Report of the High-Level Panel of Experts, the Minister made the following statement:

*"Despite South Africa's reputation as a global leader in conservation, there are still reported incidents and perceptions of irresponsible, unethical and unsustainable conservation practices in the management, breeding, hunting, trade and handling of elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros, especially in terms of animal welfare and well-being, that negatively affect the country's conservation reputation and do not bode well for the country's international standing and development objectives."*

Notwithstanding the alarming figures that have been released of the vastly diminished rhino populations in South Africa, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment released a government gazette notice on the proposed hunting and or export of elephant, black rhinoceros and leopard hunting trophies for the 2021 calendar year.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. Queen Elizabeth II once said:

*"To all those who have suffered as a consequence of our troubled past, I extend my sincere thoughts and deep sympathy. With the benefit of historical hindsight we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently, or not at all."*

## PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Photography

Gurcharan Roopra, an automotive engineer is also an award winning, Kenyan based wildlife photographer who has generously allowed the EMS Foundation permission to use his evocative images of rhinos for this Report.

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