

POACHING AT RECORD PACE IN SOUTH AFRICA



The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has recently issued a warning message which states nearly 200 rhinos have already been killed by poachers this year in South Africa. This is a very high rate and local authorities are being urged to act.

Poaching has been a long-term issue in South Africa and while the country has been trying to launch stricter punishing methods to stop this horrible treatment of rare rhinos, however, this year's alarming numbers seem to cancel all the official efforts. **In comparison to last year's 333 killed rhinos, in July 2011, the WWF already reports 196 animals killed.**

South Africa appeals to poachers the most as local population of rhinos is the largest in the world. There are more than 19,400 white and around 1600 endangered black rhinos there, most of which live in the Kruger National Park. According to local rangers, many of the poachers sneak across the 186-mile long strip of border with Mozambique, very often armed with heavy rifles. They fly in helicopters and typically leave without being noticed.

The rhino horn is immediately smuggled out to East Asia, where the demand is high as it is believed the horn has healing qualities, and is often added to traditional medicine. Some claim it is an aphrodisiac. **South African authorities are trying to catch as many poachers as possible; this year alone, there have been 123 arrests and four convictions.** Longer jail penalties as well as harsher fines have been imposed in order to stop the poaching.

Hopefully, with an increasing number of arrests and convictions, the poaching will stop; however, this year's numbers are already horrifying. WWF and TRAFFIC (a joint program of WWF and the International Union of Conservation of Nature) have provided funds and an ultralight aircraft which will help the rangers patrol the park more effectively.

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