

ROBIN DES BOIS

ON_{the} TRAIL

Information and analysis bulletin on animal poaching and smuggling
n°5 / 1st April - 30th June 2014

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Introduction

Numerous messages have been sent to Robin des Bois from Africa, Asia, Europe and the American continent. They come from Custom officers, CITES delegates, governmental institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations and from the general public. They all testify to the usefulness of "A la Trace" and the English version "On the Trail".

The closer that species with substances considered to be of value come to global or local extinction, the more the means to attack and to defend them turn murderous. The total of human mortality in this war on wildlife is increasing.

Thefts of seizures, including from governmental safety vaults, are multiplying. These hold-ups yield, for those who organize them, more money than bank and cash transportation robberies.

Smuggling of live felines and monkeys are increasing as well as the smuggling of skulls and bones, notably of gorillas and elephants.

There is a general tendency to more severe sentences on traffickers, as well as harder judgments but release on bail is still common.

Archaic practices such as the use of poisoned arrows and trap jaws clash with modern techniques used by criminal police. Analyses of DNA are used to confuse tiger hunters in India and trace horns and ivory seized by African custom officers.

"On the Trail" n°5: 506 events at the heart of smuggling and poaching endangered species on land and at sea.

Rhinoceroses

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

The 3 Asian rhinoceros species are in Appendix I: *Rhinoceros unicornis*, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, *Rhinoceros sondaicus*.

555 rhinoceros killed
in South Africa, Namibia, Kenya,
Nepal and India
since the 1st January 2014



New threat:

Social networks and blogs with geotagged photos give poachers additional information about the location of the rhinoceros and other targeted animals. It is therefore necessary to disable the geotagging function of your devices and not provide the location and date of the shooting.

AFRICA

Poaching of 2 white rhinos

Windhoek, Region of Khomas, Namibia

April 1, 2014



Namibia's horns ache. The event happened after the big news of attempting to export to China 14 rhino horns. 2 white rhinoceros who had lived on a farm for a long time, after their mother's death or disappearance, were killed by bullets. The bodies were found 100m away from each other, quite far from the main farm. Poachers were careful enough to lure their victims away. The workers and residents of the farm did not hear the gunshots.

Poaching of a rhinoceros

Hluhluwe Imfolozi Park, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

April 1, 2014

One rhinoceros in the 360 km² park. "We're happy that in this particular incident we could recover the horns of the rhino," said the spokesman of the Department of Environmental Affairs. What will happen to them? 20 rhinos have died since the beginning of the year in the province..



Arrest of 3 person suspected of rhino poaching

Tembe Elephant Park, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

April 1, 2014

3 new candidates for dehorning rhinos were stopped on their way inside the Tembe Park, unless their targets were elephants and their teeth.

Poaching of a black rhino

Nakuru National Park, County of Nakuru, Kenya

April 2, 2014

Chaos at the national park of Lake Nakuru, one of the jewels of Kenya with 300 bird species and UNESCO recognition. The KWS staff confirmed that a black rhinoceros had just been shot while the Park management denies the event. A third version claims that it is a buffalo that was shot and not a black rhino. At the national park, park rangers admitted quietly that it is a rhinoceros, and that they were asked to not speak about it.

Already, in "On the Trail" version 4, there are accounts of 6 rhinos poaching in Nakuru National Park.

Poaching of a rhinoceros

ISimangaliso Wetland Park, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

April 2, 2014

Dead for nothing. The white rhinoceros was riddled with bullets but poachers did not have time to dehorn him.

Until April 3, there have been 243 violent deaths of rhinos in South Africa.



Arrest of 2 men suspected of attempted rhino poaching

**Gravelotte, Limpopo Province, South Africa
April 5, 2014**

A car, 3 AM. Close to the Kruger Park. A machete, an ax, ammunitions. 2 men. A large caliber rifle. There were 2 suspects. The National Environmental Biodiversity Act includes conspiracy to commit a crime of rhino poaching.

Arrest of 2 employees of the Kruger Park suspected of rhino poaching

**South Africa
April 7, 2014**

Is something rotten in Kruger Park? A tour guide and a water controller are suspected of rhino poaching. They were arrested at their homes. A first hearing was held before the court of White River. They remain in custody. South African National Park said in a statement that the 2 individuals were not part of the Ranger Corp.

Poaching of 4 rhinoceros

**In a private reserve in Mogwadi / Mara, Province of Limpopo, South Africa
April 2014**

4 rhino carcasses were found during the Easter weekend, including that of a 3-month-old baby lying next to its mother. The owners of the private farm wish to remain anonymous. They fear negative consequences for their lodging and safari tourism business. We only know that poaching series was several months ago and it took place in the north of South Africa in the region of Mogwadi / Mara. All horns disappeared.

Arrest of 2 men suspected of rhinoceros poaching

**Kruger National Park, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa
April 10, 2014**

The 2 suspects were near the Crocodile Bridge. Probably some guys from Zimbabwe. They apparently moved away from Park empty handed with a G3 rifle with a silencer and a good stock of ammunition.

"The public can report incidents of poaching and give tip-offs to the anonymous tip-off lines 0800 205 005, 08600 10111 or Crime Line on 32211."



Type G3 rifle

Arrest of a person suspected of rhino poaching Kruger National Park, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa

April 11, 2014

Ammunition, poaching equipment, a .458 rifle, 2 suspects. One managed to escape in the area of Kingfisherspruit.



.458 rifle

Arrest of a person suspected of rhino poaching Kruger National Park, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa

April 12, 2014

Tshokwane rangers apprehended 2 suspects. One managed to escape to Mozambique. The other was left behind with a 375 rifle, ammunition, and basic tools for dehorning.

Arrest of 2 men suspected of rhinoceros poaching

Kruger National Park, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa

April 13, 2014

At Stolsnek, a group of 5 was spotted. 3 fled. 2 were arrested with the help of the canine unit and a helicopter.

April 15 : full moon

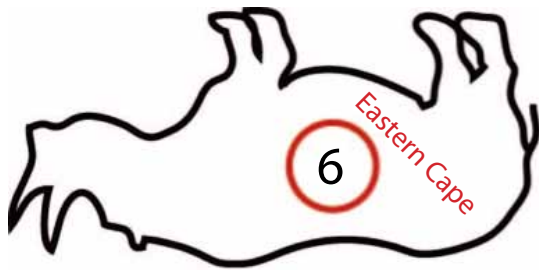


Poaching of 3 rhinoceros

Pumba Reserve, Province of Eastern Cape, South Africa

April 2014

All the way south in South Africa, 500 km from Cape Town, 3 rhinoceroses are slaughtered. There have been 6 victims since the beginning of the year.



**Poaching of one rhinoceros
Somkhanda Reserve, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
April 2014**

The Somkhanda Reserve is within the 320 km² territory managed by the Gumbi community. Somkhanda is the name of one of the founders of the community. The reserve is the pilot project of the "South African Green Economy Modeling". It employs 75 people, all recruited from the community. Some of them work on the maintenance of fences and the chief of the reserve himself organizes his teams of guard for patrolling. The Gumbi rangers work in silence with whistles, hand and voice signals. Nevertheless, one of the few white rhinos introduced into the reserve was poached and his horns were stolen.

**Court hearing for rhino poaching
Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa
April 15, 2014**

It was September 10, 2010. The soldier in uniform was inside the fence of Kruger Park. His accomplice was outside. The scene remains engraved in the memory of a ranger who testified anonymously. It was 3:45am a night of full moon. One of the rangers opened fire in self-defense according to him. The soldier-poacher was wounded in the shoulder. The 2 accomplices claimed to be motivated by peaceful intentions. They were looking for the lost cattle and gathered fodder. 2 rhino horns were found nearby, and the soldier was armed.

During the trial, 4 years after the event, the prosecutor of Nelspruit announced that according to the inquiry, the 2 suspects could be responsible for the poaching of 6 additional rhinos. The trial was adjourned to September 8 of this year.

**Poaching of a black rhino
Palmwag concession, Kunene Region, Namibia
April 16, 2014**

Things are getting rough for rhinos in Namibia. Several poachers struck a black rhino with 5 bullets. The Palmwag Reserve is home to the largest population of black rhino in Africa. The horns are gone. In response to the resisting accusations, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) has issued a statement. "It is important to note that the Government of Namibia is not and will never be secretive about the cases of illegal killing of wildlife and illicit trade in wildlife products." MET states that investigations are underway and that some discretion is required

as long as they have not been successful and that the suspects are not brought before the courts. The Palmwag reserve covers 4500 km² of land.

**Court appearance for rhinoceros poaching
Nelspruit, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa**

April 17, 2014

He had just shot a rhino and cut one horn while he was still alive. Put in custody, he will be judged by the law before the end of May. His accomplice managed to flee to of Mozambique.

Kruger Park rangers deliberately killed the dying rhino to end his suffering.

**Arrest of 2 men suspected of attempted rhino poaching
Letsitele, Province of Limpopo, South Africa**

April 19, 2014

2 young people between the ages of 22 and 24 years were stopped in their car. The police had blocked all the roads around Letsitele after being informed of an attempted attack on the rhinoceros. On the car, they found the usual arsenal without license, ax, knives, and ammunition.

The 2 suspects appeared herewith the first time before the Court of Tzaneen. They were released on bail of 2000 R each or 200 US\$. The trial is expected to take place in May.

**Poaching of one rhinoceros
Dinokeng Reserve, Province of Gauteng, South Africa**

April 2014

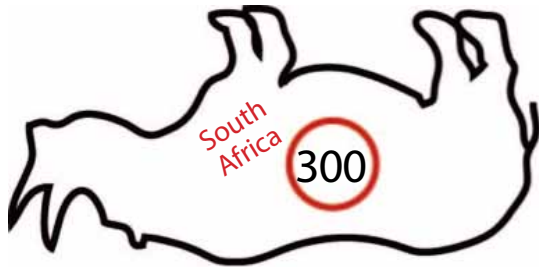
The Dinokeng Reserve is in the large suburb of Pretoria. An expressway and a slum border its 200 km² area of land. The Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant, rhino) live alongside the squatters. Dinokeng is also an area of poverty and exclusion. A rhino had just been shot and dehorned. In Vietnam, a horn can be worth up to 100,000 US\$.

It's been a year since the Park management decided to inject some indelible and toxic pink dye into the horns, a substance used to get rid off ticks on horses and sheep. Those who consume the horn powder will fall ill and pink dye is detectable by customs scanners and border police.



This remarkable and costly operation was implemented thanks to private sponsors. It was presented as a deterrent precaution. Since the opening of the park in 2011, no rhino poaching had been found. The injection requires anesthesia for the animals.

At the end of April, the overall rhino death toll since the beginning of 2014 reached 300 for all of South Africa.



**Theft of 112 pieces of rhino horns
Mpumalanga Province, South Africa
April 20, 2014**

The hold-up of the century. 15 million US\$ according to the South African press. The bank was poorly protected. The burglars took advantage of the weekend to go through a window and break into 2 safes, which obviously was not safe enough. They left with 112 rhino horns. Total weight 80.135 kg. The spokesperson of Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency or MTPA's (where the break-in took place) confirmed that the stolen horns came from seizures in the neighboring province of KwaZulu-Natal. "Some of the pieces of rhino horns on the MTPA premises were micro-chipped, DNA-sampled and photographed according to the National Norms and Standards" "The pieces taken were kept in our storage for purposes of registering them, record keeping and later move them to another secure location where a bulk of stock is kept." But things are somewhat messy. Other sources say that the missing horns had been as a precaution voluntarily cut from live rhinos to prevent poaching.

3 suspects were arrested in June. They are not staff members of the MTPA. Their contradictory statements show a good knowledge of poaching. A trip to Mozambique the next day of the horn theft poses hints of their responsibility. A jackpot of 130,000 R (12,500 US\$) was found buried near the latrines of a suspect's sisters home. "It is my savings since 2001." The same suspect confessed to the court of Nelspruit that he was an informant to rangers on the poachers' incursions inside the Kruger Park. Whatever the result of the investigation is, the case casts confusion and doubt on the rigor of the Province and the federal government in the management of the Rhinoceros file.

**2 black rhino poaching
Palmwag concession, Kunene Region, Namibia
May 2014**

Palmwag returns to the front stage. 2 carcasses were near a place in which a black rhino was shot in April. The horns and poachers have vanished. Results so far: 6
In 2013, the overall balance was 4 rhinos slaughtered.



**Poaching a white rhino
Hluhluwe Imfolozi Park, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
May 2014**

2 poachers died. Self-defense. The white rhino had just been killed. "The guards had no choice but to protect themselves." The ax, the gun and the 2 horns were seized.

**Poaching of a white rhino
Kwaggashoek Reserve, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
May 3, 2014**

-1

**Crossfire between guards and rhino poachers
Zululand Rhino Reserve, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
May 10, 2014**

On the same day that took place the auctioning of live rhinos organized by Ezemvolvo, guards of the Zululand reserve opened fire on 3 rhino poachers. The human toll of the altercation has not been officially disclosed. There could be casualties on both sides. The death count on the rhino side is also uncertain.

**Arrest of 3 suspected rhino poachers
Kruger National Park, South Africa
May 10 and 11, 2014**

A busy weekend in Kruger Park. 5 suspected poachers were intercepted. Ammunition, rifle caliber 416, another 458 weapons were seized. A suspect was injured. 2 others managed to escape towards Mozambique.



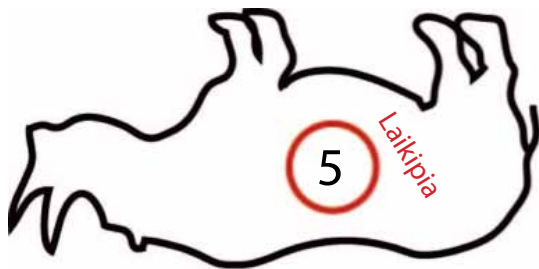
© SANParks

Discovery of 2 rhino carcasses
Tembe Elephant Park, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
May 2014

Tembe, the Big Five Park (elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo, rhinoceros). There are 2 less.

Poaching of rhinos
Oi Jogi Ranch, Laikipia County, Kenya
May 13, 2014

Thermal cameras, electric fences, radio collars. Nothing works. This is the fifth rhino since the beginning of the year. Poachers are very familiar with guards and rhinos little ways.



376 rhinos killed to this day in 2014 in South Africa, with 245 in the Kruger Park. 106 suspected poachers were arrested.



Auction 36 live rhinos
Durban, South Africa
May 14, 2014

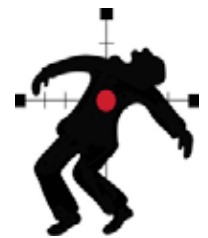
Strengthening the protection of national parks pushes the poaching mafia to refer to private reserves whose main activity is to provide naturalists and tourists the vision of wildlife in a peaceful and unspoiled ecosystem. The director of Ezemvolo is concerned about this new trend. Ezemvolo "on nature" in Zulu language, is a government organization. Its objective is to develop ecotourism and local jobs through the maintenance and development of

wildlife and to ensure distribution of animals in national parks and private reserves. To this end, Ezemvolo has auctioned 36 rhino to reserve managers in Zululand, the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga. The 36 pachyderms were sold for about U.S. \$ 1 million, including horns so to speak. "I urge all those who will buy rhino do their utmost to protect them," solemnly declared Bandile Mkhize at the opening of the auction.

Other animals were offered for sale. Ezemvolo thus conforming to naturalists' advice wishes to avoid degradation of ecosystems overpopulating species and improve the genetic heritage of each protected public or private area.

According to Ezemvolo, profits from the auctioning (26 since the early 90s) are devoted for the most part to the environmental management of parks of which Ezemvolo has responsibility.

Arrest of a poacher
uMkhuze Game Reserve, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
May 14, 2014



Times are tough. Night clashes are becoming more violent between poachers and anti-poaching patrols. A poacher was mortally wounded. 2 others fled. A big gun with silencer was found. A helicopter flew over the reserve 360 km², more than 3 times the size of the city of Paris (105.4 km²), in search of a possible rhino victim of the trio before contact with the guards.

Conviction for poaching a rhino
Mtubatuba, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa
May 16, 2014



The Mozambique poacher held in South Africa has made amends. "What I have done is illegal and goes in the wrong direction." The charges against his 2 companions were not considered sufficient by the judges. Antonio Sendes Langa was sentenced to 8 years in prison for poaching a rhino in Imfolozi Park managed by Ezemvolo. In April, a rhinoceros had already been poached in the park. 37 to this day in KwaZuluNatal.



3 white rhino poaching

Tala Private Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

May 17, 2014

2 rhinos aged 30 and 20 years will be buried on Monday, May 19. A small third whose horn had been cut while he was alive is being healed. He might get better. The 3 animals were hit by anesthetic-guns, a veterinary tool normally used to sedate wild animals before surgery and that turns into a weapon if doses or injected products are lethal. The sale of anesthetic-guns is free. They are not considered weapons and their possession does not involve permits. They are easy to carry but the presence in the team of poachers or connivance of a veterinarian or medical professional is strongly suspected. Targeted rhinos or elephants weigh several tons and simply lying on one side for several hours or days can cause fatal complications unrelated to the toxicity of injected products.



Rhino poaching 2

Private Reserve, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

May 2014

-2.

Present death toll: 385 in South Africa



Seizure of a pair of rhino horns

Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

May 20, 2014

The exchange of fire took place near Crocodile Bridge in the Kruger Park. A poacher escaped. 2 horns and a firearm were recovered.

Poaching of 2 white rhinos

Hluhluwe Imfolozi Park, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

May 2014

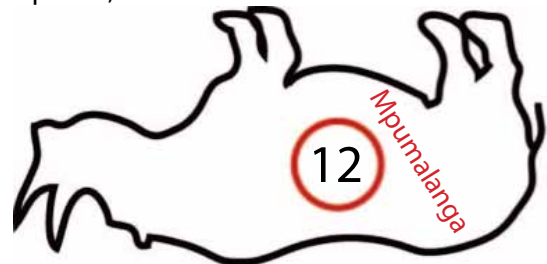
The female and the male had been dead and dehorned for several days.

Arrest of 4 poachers

Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

May 22, 2014

Is the quartet a virtuoso in rhino slaughter? It could be involved in the dehorning of the rhino still alive on April 17, 2014.



Court appearance for possession and illegal trade of 14 rhino horns and a leopard skin (*Panthera pardus pardus*)

Katutura, Khomas Region, Namibia

May 22, 2014

Their request for release on bail was denied. 3 Chinese citizens who had tried to export no less than 14 rhino horns and a leopard skin at the end of March (see "On the Trail" No. 4 p. 66) remain behind bars. DNA tests showed that the profiles of the horns were on the Rhino DNA Index System (RhODIS) database which indicated that all the rhino horns were from the region. During the hearing, the 3 defendants told tall tales and gave implausible explanations. They claimed that they hardly knew each other. They also claimed to have come to Namibia to sightsee or to explore future business in the construction sector. One of them said that if he was caught carrying a suitcase with horns, it was to help a fellow citizen. The suitcase was very heavy. A Chinese citizen living in Zambia had given 3000 US\$ to Li Zhibing to deliver 2 bags to China, a simple service. He did not know what was inside. He did not have the keys.



After hearing the accused and their lawyers the judge said he was convinced that despite their denials, the defendants knew each other and acted together, they took the same flight Beijing/South Africa, had spent 2 days together in Zambia, had crossed the border post Wenela in the Zambezi region, Namibia, together and had stayed together in Namibia. Noting also that someone had paid the airfare and the hotel costs for the 3 accused, the judge said there was no doubt about the involvement in the attempted export of other branches of the illegal. He felt that if the trio were released on bail there was no guarantee that they would stay in Namibia awaiting their trial which will be held in August.

The transfer of the accused to the Windhoek Central Prison was ordered. The 3 accused complain about prison conditions, aggressions by other prisoners in the cells at the central police station in Windhoek. Beware of an escape.

**Poaching of a rhino
Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province,
South Africa
May 27, 2014**

South African authorities are eager to accuse Mozambicans of having a strong presence in the ranks of rhino poachers in the Kruger Park. This incident shows that the rangers or former rangers and park police officers are not above suspicion.

The official police van concealed a large caliber rifle with silencer, cartridges and typical poaching equipment. The 2 policemen could not give a plausible explanation. They were arrested with the former ranger who accompanied them. The vehicle was stopped and the search was carried out by HAWKS, a special body for the fight against environmental crime in cooperation with the direction of the Kruger Park. The interception took place inside the Park not far from the place where had been discovered the body of a black rhino.

**Arrest of 5 poachers
Gravelotte, Limpopo Province, South Africa
May 28, 2014**

5 suspects were going aboard a Volkswagen Polo to the private reserve of Letsitele. The intention to poach pachyderms is supported by the discovery in the vehicle of a Sako 375 caliber rifle with silencer, a butcher knife, an ax, cartridges.

2 men suspected of poaching had been arrested in April 2014 in the reserve.

419 so far in South Africa. And still going up!



Sako 375

**Arrest of 3 suspected rhino poachers
Kruger National Park, South Africa
May 2014**

Elements of the 1st Parachute Battalion have stepped in after rangers discovered traces of poachers inside the Kruger Park. 3 suspects were finally "caught" and a fourth was shot.

**Seizure of 3 rhino horns
Frontier Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and Mozambique
May 2014**

Soldiers from the 10th Infantry Battalion were on patrol along the border between KwaZulu-Natal and Mozambique. They spotted and intercepted 3 men carrying 3 rhino horns. The trio fled running and dropping 3 horns that were handed over to the police Manguzi.

**Arrest of 4 people suspected of poaching
Zulu Nyala Game Lodge, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
June 3, 2014**

The 4 suspects accused of rhino poaching were arrested near the Reserve with a firearm and a silencer, ammunition and 3 axes. They hadn't had the time to use them. Yet in South Africa, to have the intention, the means and to be in position of poaching rhinos is assimilated to poaching. The gang of 4 is aged 18 to 30. They had started to cut open the fence. One of the accused is the half-brother of the director of Imfolozi, the largest reserve for protected animals in KwaZulu-Natal. He apparently put forward this family relationship at the time of arrest in an attempt to escape it. The 3 other accused are from Mozambique.

**Seizure of 2 rhino horns
Alldays Animal Farm, Province of Limpopo, South Africa
June 6, 2014**

The 2 presumed rhino poachers requested to be let out on bail. They face charges for illegal possession of firearms, ammunition, poaching, possession of rhino horns and breaking and entering through the fence of the Alldays private reserve. Their request was refused.

Poaching of a black rhino

Kenya

June 2014

10 gunshots in the dark. At noon, the body of the female rhino was found. Her baby managed to escape and was filmed the next day by a camera set up in the park. All night and until morning, 22 rangers from KWS were on the alert to catch the poachers during their retreat. In vain.



Arrest of 3 poachers

Polokwane, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

June 13, 2014

The 3 suspects were equipped with the essential tool kit: large caliber rifles, axes and saws. They were marauding around Vaalwater. Investigators are searching for ties with previous cases. Profiling of the 3 is being done. They were refused bail.



Fusil calibre 416

Death of one poacher

Kruger National Park, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

June 2014

Gun play in the Park. Death of a poacher. 2 others escaped. The gang had been chased by rangers for 48 hours. The Kruger National Park covers over 20,000 km².



Seizure of a rhino horn

Atteridgeville, Prov. of Gauteng, South Africa

June 17, 2014

6 o'clock in the morning. One car. One horn. 3 suspects.

FAMILY AFFAIRS

Conviction for poaching one rhino

Naphuno, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

June 23, 2014

Horn by horn, the Hawks, the Kruger Park criminal police unit, had succeeded in tracking down through the network and nabbed the 2 Mathebula brothers aged 49 and 37. They had escaped after crossfire with rangers in the park. 3 accomplices had been killed and a machine gun, 2 hunting rifles and a hand gun had been picked up by their dead bodies and kept as evidence.

The 2 brothers from Mozambique were sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Poaching of 2 black rhinos

Uukwaluudhi Conservation zone, Region of Omusati, Namibia

Bodies found on June 26, 2014

The priority wildlife protection zone covers 1437 km². It has quite recently been founded with agreement from the traditional kingdom of Namibia and the present government. Black rhinos were entered to this land. They are part of the traditional natural heritage of the State and local communities benefit from eco-tourism. Unfortunately this optimistic scenario has just been tarnished by a massacre. 2 of the 4 prehistoric herbivores have just been found, their horns removed. The third body was not mutilated. He maybe died of natural causes. A poisoning is not excluded. A fourth rhino was voluntarily put to death by veterinarians. His bullet wounds could not be healed. 3 others who were hit less severely and one who remains unharmed were captured and taken to a new location kept secret.



A black rhino in Uukwaluudhi

Counting of the dead, the agonizing and the survivors was fulfilled by Jaco Muller responsible for Help Our Rhino Now Namibia (HORN Nam). After being warned of the fact that the group of black rhinos had not been seen by anyone for some time, he flew over the area in a ULM. The first attacks occurred apparently some months ago, the last one only a few days ago. At least 9 rhinos have been killed by poachers in the country since the beginning of the year. The eco-tourism dream is becoming a nightmare.



AMERICA

OPERATION CRASH

Conviction of 2 people for smuggling rhinoceros horns

Las Vegas, State of Nevada, USA

April 3, 2014

The sale took place in a Las Vegas palace hotel on March 19, 2014. When the transaction stalled, the sellers were exchanging 2 black rhino for 55,000 US \$. The buyers were agents of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2 sellers, the 63-year-old N. Levine and W. Quan alias Lu, live in California. Levine was the boss of Lu, a big boss with a choice pedigree. In 1989, Levine became involved with Pablo Escobar, head of the Medellin drug cartel. He served as a cocaine distributor in California, a thriving market. Already at that time, drugs and wildlife went hand in hand. The first was hidden in the second. South American traffickers stuffed condoms full of cocaine in boa constrictors who were supposedly transported for the pet market in Florida.

After his first indictment of the last century, Levine had disappeared from the circuits, but the FBI found here and there in safety deposit boxes rented in banks and other secure locations under the name Michael Stark nearly 6 million US\$ in cash. Stark was a pseudonym for Levine.

From 1989 to February 1995 Levine used the name Joel Walmick in Oregon where the cops busted him. He pleaded guilty to cocaine selling and spent 2 years and 8 months in prison.

Almost 20 years later Lu, Levine's sidekick, for some months had been in contact with the USFWS fake buyers.

These 2 arrests are to be credited to the Operation Crash that "On the Trail" has been following step by step from the first issue and has so far led to 17 arrests and 9 convictions including a member of Rathkeale Rovers, and the Chinese art dealers in New York. "Crash" is the English word for a rhinoceros herd. From the United States, the horns were exported to Hong Kong, China and Vietnam. They often came from stuffed rhino heads stolen from museums or acquired at the edge of the law. Taxidermists are good suppliers and it is an email sent by Lu that caught investigators' attention as recounted by the very good National Geographic article. "This is Lu I got the giraffe from you."

The 2 black rhino horns are safe in a vault near Denver (Colorado) together with ivory and other animal preciousities confiscated at the border or in the United States. They will be destroyed under new governmental rules.

OPERATION CRASH

Conviction for rhino horn and ivory trafficking United States

May 2014

OPERATION CRASH

70 months of prison. That is the maximum penalty in the United States for wildlife trafficking. Zhifei Li is at the head of a network that has landed in Asia 4.5 million US\$ worth of rhino horns and ivory sent from the US. Mr. Li was director of the Overseas Treasure Finding in Shandong, a Province in East China bordering the Yellow Sea and the boss of 3 Asian deal seekers who would go about finding the precious raw material on American soil. One of them, Qiang Wang had been sentenced to 36 months imprisonment in December. He was also in charge of packing, camouflaging and securing the group's exports.

Mr. Li, 30 years old, pleaded guilty to 11 charges. He attempted to soften the judges' harshness by telling of his 4-year-old little girl in China who suffers with illness. He was sentenced to 3.5 million US\$ in damages. Identified as early as 2011, Mr. Li was definitely over when he was photographed and filmed while buying a black rhino horn for nearly 60,000 US\$... from an American police officer in a Miami hotel.

OPERATION CRASH

Court appearance for trafficking in rhino horns and objects made of horns and elephant ivory Frisco, State of Texas, United States

June 24, 2014

« I am pleased that the state of Texas is doing its part in Operation Crash and that the suspect is pleading guilty. » « Congratulations to investigators for their work. » These words come from the General Attorney. Qiu, 43 years old, has been an expert in Asian antiques for 7 years. He is also a personal assistant to Zhifei Li who as we know was sentenced in May to 70 months in prison. Qiu met Li in 1989 at an auction. Since then he has been traveling the United States to buy rhino horns and elephant tusks at a good price. He then would take care of their illegal export to Hong Kong. In all 10 kg of horns were packaged and hidden in porcelain vases exported as antiques. Arriving in China, the horns were then transformed into libation cups known to professionals as « Zuo Jiu », that in Mandarin literally means "as if it were old". To drink tiger wine or another drink in a libation cup made of rhino horn or to own one ensures good health and all possible prosperity. Fragments of the horn carved off were ground into powder. Keratin that the horn is made of, the same substance as human fingernails, is supposed to have medicinal and aphrodisiac properties. After transactions were completed, Mr. Li would transfer substantial commissions to Mr. Qiu's bank accounts in the United States and China. A 25 months prison sentence and 150,000 US\$ in fine are requested against him.

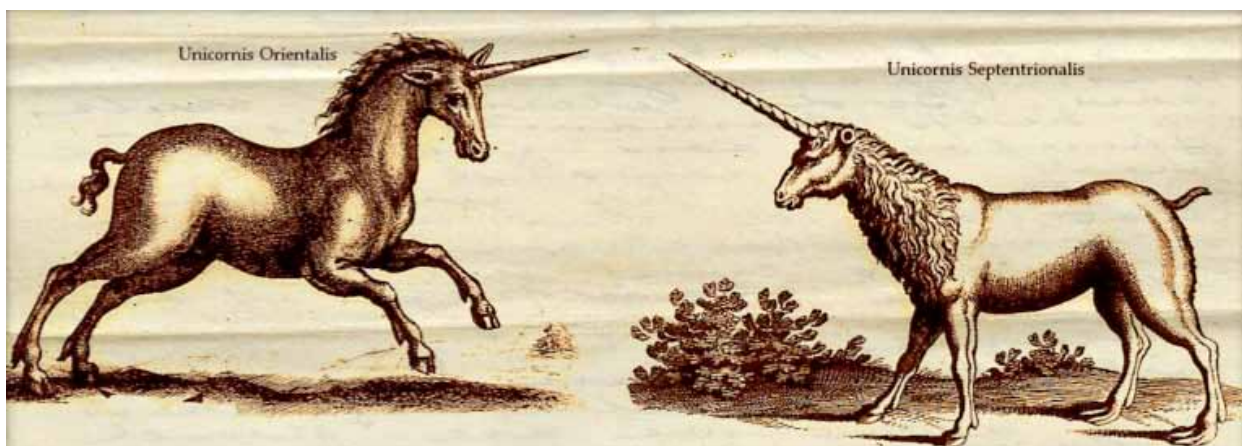
Unicorns Are Real



The Works of M. Ambroise Paré, ... : with figures & portraits both of anatomy and many surgical instruments, & several beasts. Paré, Ambroise (1509?-1590). Edited by Gabriel Buon in Paris in 1575.

Summary: Evidence showed that Portuguese doctors had been in search of "rare and precious things" on the "new lands" for a long time, but never found the unicorns. The "locals" claimed that rhinoceros horns have the same virtues as those of unicorns. It is considered "as a preservative against all poisons."

Unicorns, mythical animals however described by Aristotle and Pliny the Elder as early as Ancient Greece times, crossed seas and for thousands of years settled in both the West and the East. They were known to be invincible and could cure from any poison. For lack of unicorns, legends settled for rhinoceros horns and showed in the real world in the forms of djambias, Yemen and Middle Eastern daggers and libation cups. A more recent rumour, a distant echo of the unicorn, a Vietnamese dignitary claimed that rhinoceros horn's powder cured cancer, a modern poison.



How are rhinoceros horns useful for rhino ?

- Quarrels and fights between males or between males and females precede mating, especially when the females are accompanied by their suckling offspring feeding. Their horns are part of the arsenal of the rhinoceros. In defence, the genre has developed an exceptionally heavy and thick skin, all the more padded as the species have long and slender horns;
- Horns are visual aids. In Africa, they overlook bush and emerge as an identification tag;
- Horns are dissuasive. The rhinoceros simply needs to show them, or charge up to a few centimetres and stop in front of the buffalo, to intimidate the intruder away. Again, females use this device especially when they are feeding puppies;
- The horns are used to dig ponds, dry riverbeds, and to remove tubers;
- It is well known that the horns are used to guide the young in the right direction.

ASIA

Theft of a rhinoceros horn Jaldapara National Park, State of West Bengal, India

April 2014

Fight between the rhinoceros or poaching. In any case, the horn has disappeared. Is the Jaldapara Natural Park direction trying to divert attention by speculating that the horn of one of the duelers' was broken so violently that it flew to the ground and was buried by the force of the projection and trampling? There is serious doubt. Attacks against rhinos are no news in the forest. The episode of October 2009 is still engraved of many people's minds. A gang had isolated and later shot a rhinoceros. The wounded beast had escaped from the forest and was literally lynched with stones and sticks. Terrified, he ultimately threw himself into a river. He died 2 days later.

REPEATED OFFENSE

Conviction for poaching of a rhinoceros and selling its horn

Nepal

April 12, 2014

"Yes, I did it. I did it for money." The 70-year-old man did not defend himself in front of the court. He also didn't ask for the assistance of a lawyer. In fact, he was indefensible and was sentenced to 13 years in prison and a fine of Rs 100,000 or just over 1000 US\$.

The man is a repeated offender. In 2003, he was arrested for the same offense and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Complaining of severe health problems, he had received a release to India for treatment. His family then quickly produced a death certificate to the Nepalese authorities.

The man who no longer existed was recalled to the realities of human justice when he was denounced by one of his accomplices in the dehorning of a rhinoceros shot dead in Chitwan National Park in 2011.



The resurrected poacher



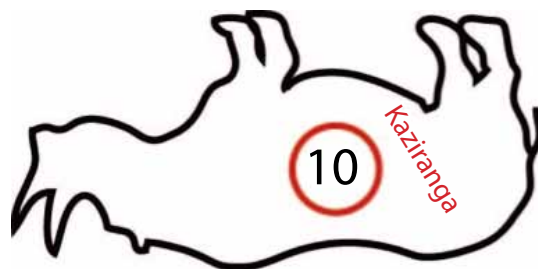
A rhino disguised as a sacred cow (in "Catalogue of anti-poaching methods rhino contemporaries hadn't thought of". It Was Better Before Press. Paris. 2035.)

© Bruno Congar / Robin des Bois

Poaching of a rhinoceros Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India May 2, 2014

And 10 in Kaziranga. 10 since the beginning of the year. The guards found some AK47 cartridges and a rhino carcass in the extreme north of the park. It was a male and his horns were cut.

3 days before, cartridges and AK47 rifle caliber were also found beside a male rhino carcass.



Poaching of a rhinoceros Chitwan National Park, Central Development Region, Nepal May 2, 2014

2013 has been a good year for the few hundreds of rhinos in Chitwan National Park. There is no sign of any of them being killed even though trafficking and transports of valuable animal parts plague the park.

At end of April 2014 a new battalion of Nepalese forces replaced the 1,100 men who had been deployed in the protected zone for the last 3 years. The Chitwan National Park covers 93,000 ha. This is the smuggling trail between India and China. Military recruits were welcomed a few days later by loud gun shots at night west of the Park. When the first soldiers arrived on site a few hours after, they could only ascertain the death of a rhino and the removal of the horn.

Poachers emphasize pressure at the time of military shifts. They want to take advantage of the lack of experience and field knowledge of new troops

dedicated to the protection of the Park. This is the first time that night shots are operated by horn-mercenaries.

The Nepalese government wants to convince the local communities living around parks that living wildlife is more profitable than dead wildlife. Sighting tourism and positive image of a region contribute to the collective economy. Poaching benefits only to those who organize it. Those who practice it take a lot of risks and little money. Despite the government's efforts, more traps are placed in the buffer zone of the park. It is said that there are more and more shotguns in the villages.

**Poaching of a rhinoceros
Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India
May 2, 2014**

This time it is at the north of the Park where a male was killed at dawn. 11 empty cartridges of AK47, the machine gun often used for poaching, were counted at the scene.

**Poaching of a rhinoceros
Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India
May 4, 2014**

Since 1930 poachers had infiltrated the park and from 1950 rhinos were declared endangered at Kaziranga National Park. Today, the fight continues and poachers are getting ahead despite the 24/24h watch of the Indian rangers. The victim, a female, was killed south of Park 5 km from Brahmaputra.

**Death of a poacher
Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India
May 10, 2014**

A clash took place between the park guards and rhino poachers. One of the poachers was killed. His weapon and ammunition were recovered and hopefully put in good hands. Rangers riding on elephant back chased the rest of the gang.



**Poaching of a rhinoceros and death of a poacher
Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India
May 18, 2014**

A poacher and a rhinoceros died today in the park. The first was 27 years old. The second was a female rhinoceros. Her horn was found at the scene with cartridges, an ax, and some food. Poachers had infiltrated the park by boat across the river. The 5 survivors should be hiding in the forest.



**Poaching of a rhinoceros
Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India
May 23, 2014**

Kaziranga has lost its 16th rhinoceros this year. The outlaws were heavily armed. Their faces were hidden by black masks. According to some sources,

political activists of the district of Karbi Anglong organized the attack.



**Death of a poacher
Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India
May 28, 2014**

An exchange of gunfire between guards and poachers happened early in the day. A poacher was killed and another could be wounded.



.303 caliber rifles and ammunitions were recovered. The fatal encounter took place a few kilometers from the national route 37.

**Seizure of 6 rhinoceros horns
Doha International Airport, Qatar
May 2014**

The 6 white rhinoceros horns were found in a Vietnamese citizen's luggage leaving from Mozambique and in transit for Vietnam.

**Poaching of one rhino
Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India
Body found on June 3, 2014**

Dead mid-May. Found beginning of June. The horn is gone. 6 empty cartridges near the body. The victim was a male.

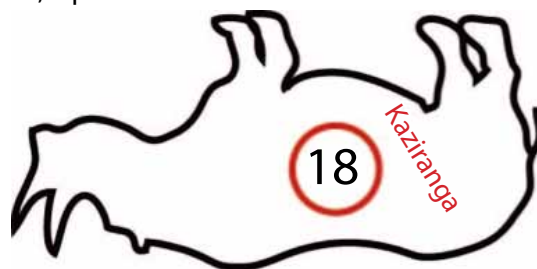
**Death of 2 poachers
Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India
June 4, 2014**

2 poachers killed. Cartridges and firearms on site. Increase in poaching activities in the last 2 years. Since the beginning of the year 18 rhinos killed, 7 poachers killed.

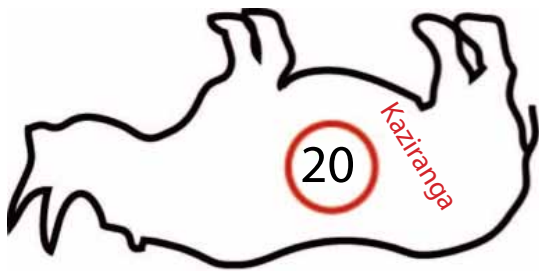


**Seizure of a rhino horn
Madarihat, State of West Bengal, India
June 6, 2014**

2 men were arrested on the road the other night. They were in possession of a horn. Police are trying to verify its authenticity. There are many fake horns on the market.



Death of one poacher
Kaziranga National park, State
of Assam, India
June 11, 2014
 - 20 to this date.
 +1 poacher killed. 8.



Seizure of 4 rhino horns
Ipsala, Region of Marmara, Turkey
June 2014

The Greek bus had just entered Turkey. The mobile customs brigade found on board 4 horns worth locally 130,000 Turkish pounds, i.e. 61,000 US\$. The bus driver was taken into custody.



© Douanes turques

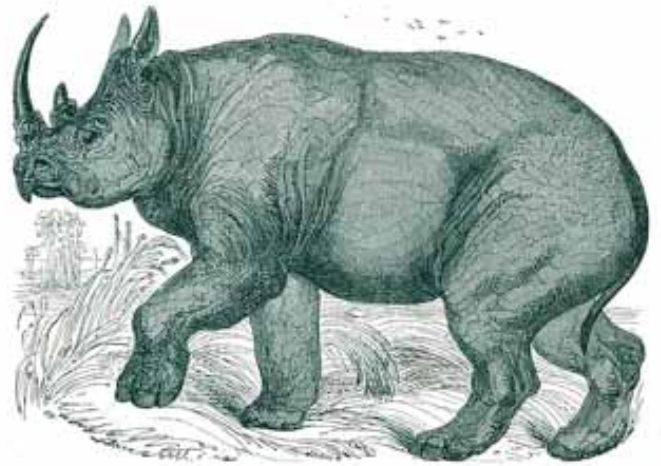
Seizure of a rhino horn
Hetauda, Central Development Region, Nepal
June 24, 2014

A young 17-year-old boy along with 3 others aged 21, 27 and 30 were in a hotel room in Lokpriya. On the table there was a rhino horn that would have changed owners by the end of the transaction. Police believe that the mastermind of this trafficking has not been arrested.



Via Twitter Rabi Acharya

Lokpriya Hotel



RHINOCEROS BICORNE, D'AFRIQUE.



RHINOCEROS DES INDES.