

ROBIN DES BOIS

ON_{the} TRAIL

Information and analysis bulletin on animal poaching and smuggling
n°16 / Events from the 1st January to the 31 of March 2017
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Rhinoceroses



The circus and the rhinoceros. 1955. Bernard Buffet.

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*.

“On the Trail” n°16
The value of horn on the black market,
according to media or official sources

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Ref.
Africa	Namibia	5900	31
Asia	Hong Kong (China)	25,770	38
	Hong Kong (China)	25,732	39
	Thailand	10,000	50

EASTERN AFRICA

KENYA

January 5, 2017

Lac Nakuru National Park, Nakuru County, Kenya

Poaching of one. Two others were killed on 31 December 2016 in the neighboring Ngulia sanctuary (see “On the Trail”, n°15 p. 75). Nothing is working anymore, the helicopters broke down, so did the cars. “Sometimes for the love of our heritage, we use our own cash to hire motorbikes or beg for lifts from tourists to respond to incidents” explains a ranger. Lack of means prevent legal forces from protecting endangered species. The poachers take complete advantage of this. Their cars don’t break down.¹

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

REPEATED OFFENSE

FAMILY AFFAIRS

January 7, 2017

Makhado, Limpopo Province, South Africa



There was a high-speed chase between a police car and a pick-up truck with bull bars. There were 3 men, 2 white and 1 black inside. A plastic bag had been tossed overboard. The fugitives were stopped not far from by the roadblock. The plastic bag was recovered. There was inside a big rhino horn. It would come from a recent poaching trip in the Witpoort sector. Two of the suspects have a dirty record. Brothers Gideon and Nicolaas van Deventer have already been sentenced to 8 years and 2 years and 5 months in prison. Gideon, on his own, had killed 22 rhinoceros between 2005 and 2006. “You don’t need a saw. It’s quick, and the entire horn comes off clean, just like a bottle cap,” he told a National Geographic journalist. In a letter apparently destined for his family that Julian Rademeyer, author of “Killing for Profit” had consulted in legal files, van Deventer confided that “The rhinos that I shot were shot clean. It was a shot to the brain every time and they fell to their knees and not on their sides. They did not suffer. I took off the horns in the right way with a knife. Woep-wap, and the horn is off. That is how I operate,” and he signed the letter “Rhino”.

With his brother Nicolaas, he poached in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park and Kruger Park. They used, separately or together, arrows and bullets. The gang was headed by Clayton Fletcher, a hunting safari organizer and a businessman in the Free State.

These 2 repeat offenders, therefore, were a great prize for the Makhado police, the Public Order Police members, and the Limpopo Endangered Species Unit.

Gideon van Deventer, 48, nicknamed Deon, and Nicolaas van Deventer, 51, nicknamed Nick, were accompanied by Onward Muchangowa, a Zimbabwean national. It remains to be seen if the Limpopo justice will be as diligent as the police and resists the repeated requests for bail for these 2 bad brothers and their accomplice.²

**Beginning of January, 2017
Polokwane Game Reserve, Province of Limpopo,
South Africa**

A rhino shot dead was discovered by a hiker. The horn had been taken. There are only 9 left in the reserve.³

**Early January 2017
Upington, Northern Cape Province, South Africa**
One more poached.^{3bis}



Still life, 2017. A rhinoceros on dead wood.

**January 14, 2017
Madikwe Game Reserve, North west Province,
South Africa**

Another one poached approximately 4 days earlier (see "On the Trail" n°6 p.66 and n°10 p.48).⁴

**January 14, 2017
Hazyview, Province of Mpumalanga, South
Africa**

Discovery of 6 horns cut into pieces, 3 long and 3 short, in an icebox in a house under construction.⁵

Mid January, 2017



Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa

- **Malelane;** Six arrests. Seizure of a large caliber fire arm and ammunition.
- **Hazyview.** Seizure of 6 horns (see "On the Trail" n°9 pages 63, 64 and 66).
- **Satara, Kruger National Park.** Three arrests. Seizure of 2 fire arms, ammunition and poaching equipment.
- **Stolsnek, Kruger National Park.** Two arrests after the discovery of a recently poached rhino, a fire arm, ammunition and a full poaching kit.⁶

**Mid-January 2017
Hoedspruit, Limpopo
Province, South Africa**
Arrest of 5 poachers. One of them is a police officer.⁷



**January 20, 2017
Limpopo Province, South Africa**
A poached rhinoceros.⁸

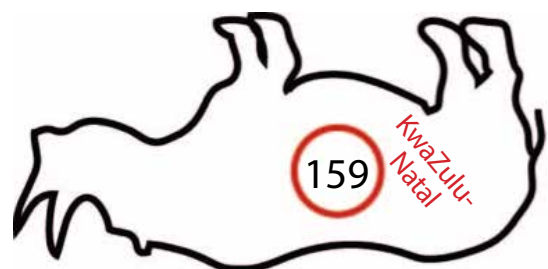
**The weekend of January 21-22, 2017
North West Province, South Africa**

Poaching of 5 rhinoceros on a private reserve. Four were dehorned. The following night, a new one was shot in another reserve in the Province.⁹



**Sunday, January 22, 2017
Paulpletersburg, KwaZulu-Natal Province,
South Africa**

Poaching of a rhinoceros. Rhinoceros poaching is on the rise in the Province. In 2015, there were 97 cases counted. 159 in 2016. 129 poachers have been questioned in 2016.¹⁰



January 22, 2017

Mokopong Reserve, North West Province, South Africa

Poaching of a rhinoceros. Tyre prints led police forces to 3 Mozambican immigrants, ages 39, 40, and 42, in possession of 2 horns and a rifle.¹¹



January 25, 2017

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Caught for poaching, carrying of horns, and rebellion in 2011 in Kruger Park, Simon Ngubane was sentenced to 33 years in prison. 28 years still remain, since Ngubane has been in prison for 5 years. Two accomplices succeeded in getting away.¹²



**January 27 and February 3 and 5, 2017
Lephalale, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

-January 27

Supplied with a search warrant, the police discovered 7 hoofs and meat, 7 rhinoceros tails, and 2 skins in a salt room and a cold room.

Antonio Xavier Freitas, who goes by Tony Freitas, a South African citizen of Portuguese origin, had a secret rhinoceros slaughterhouse on his farm. The pachyderms, still of unknown origin, arrived by van in November 2016. According to information yet to be confirmed, the horns of at least 7 rhinoceroses were taken from Freitas's property by helicopter. Freitas was released on a bail of \$18,500 US on February 3.

-February 5

With the help of an excavator and a metal detector, the police discovered bones and 20 other remains of rhinoceros, riddled with bullets.¹³



End of January 2017

Hluhluwe Umfolozi Game Reserve and Nongoma, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

Arrest of 6 men, ages 27-40. They are suspected of poaching in an organized group. Five were arrested in a Bed and Breakfast in Nongoma, and one close to the fence of the Reserve. Their arms were banned and weapons seized.¹⁴

February 4, 2017

Limpopo Province, South Africa

Poaching of two orphans. One died. The other is under therapeutic obstinacy, comparable to that endured by Hope (cf. "On the Trail" n°15 p. 79).¹⁵

February 6, 2017

Polokwane Hunting Reserve, Limpopo Province, South Africa

New poaching of a rhinoceros in the Reserve.¹⁶

February 13-19, 2017

Pongola, KwaZulu-Natal Province and Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Ten suspected of poaching, ages 24 to 51. Rhino hunting has been passed down through generations and is practiced in organized groups. Great numbers of firearms, silencers, munitions, and axes were seized. The arrests occurred all over Kruger National Park.¹⁷

February 20, 2017

Thula Thula Rhino Orphanage, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

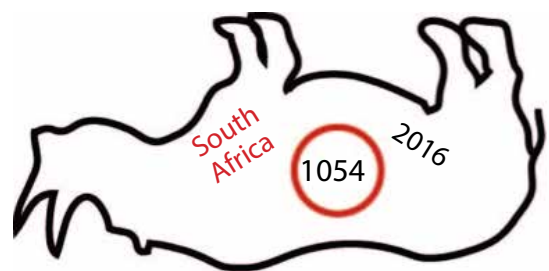
In the night, 5 barbarians neutralized the security systems and invaded the refuge for young rhinos and hippos whose parents have fallen victim to poaching. Two young white rhinoceros were mortally wounded by firearms and then dehorned. One of the two was alive while being mutilated. One of the members of the international team of healers was raped. The culprits escaped.¹⁸



February 27, 2017

South Africa

Official numbers: 1054 rhinoceros killed in 2016. 680 poachers and traffickers arrested. Robin des Bois adds that 1 ranger and 13 poachers were killed in 2016.¹⁹



**February 27 and March 15, 2017
Nelspruit, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa**

Mandla Chauke was sentenced to 77 years in prison, the heaviest sentence ever given to a horn or ivory trafficker (cf. "On the Trail" n°6, p. 62). He made an appeal. His appeal was accepted and his sentence was much better, both for him and for the corporation of poachers and traffickers. He was released on the modest bail of 15,000 rand (\$1165 US), even though the public prosecutor's claimed a sum of 100,000 rand.²⁰



Kruger National Park put under video and dog lookout

March 4-28, 2017

The Park spans 20,000 km². For comparison, the entire island of Taiwan is 38,000 km², Switzerland is 41,000 km², Denmark is 43,000 km², the Falkland Islands are 12,200 km², and Puerto Rico is 9,104 km². Kruger is surrounded by fences. The animals and intruders break through going over or under to enter or leave. 1.6 million people visit Kruger every year, and entry is paid. Trips can last from a couple hours to a few days. There are 11 official entryways.

From the north to the south of the Park, 16 rhinoceros carcasses have been found between March 4-22. On 3 carcasses, the horns remained, probably wounded animals running away from some poachers. If the crime scenes are found 2 to 3 days later, tracks or other evidence left by poachers will be impossible to detect, since lions, hyenas, and vultures will have been there. At best, a ballistics investigation can still take place.

During a press conference and a site visit, the Park management explained these problems and presented solutions to the increase in horn thefts.

The gateways are weak points. Poachers that are working in an organized group can enter as a lambda visitor. When their car enters, it's full. When it leaves the driver is the only one to remain, maybe one other passenger. For the next month, a new admission protocol will be implemented on the southern gates, which are the most frequented.

The canine squad is useful. It's composed of 53 dogs. They've contributed to 168 of the 200 arrests last year. "We can't do the job without the dogs." They are already trained when they arrive. A good tracking dog costs between 35,000 and 50,000 rands (\$2700 to \$3900 US). The Park doesn't have the financial resources or the skills to train the dogs.

The Park management also believes that military-inspired technical innovations will control intrusions or suspicious movement. The Wide Area Surveillance System (WASS) is made up of an easily deployable and transportable radar connected to electronic sensors, cameras, and screens. WASS is also called MEERKAT, after the animal. Meerkats are known for their constant appearance of vigilance.

At the end of March, 13 poachers were arrested in 24 hours in an area covered by MEERKAT. Mr. Funda, the director of anti-poaching teams in the Park, believes in this new technology. "At present, the criminals own the night. These systems will help us take it back." The system was developed thanks to a partnership between SANParks, the Peace Parks Foundation, and the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).²¹

Northwest Province, South Africa

- March 8, 2017. Madikwe Game Reserve. This is the seventh poaching since the beginning of the year. Its nasal horn was cut off. Female rhinoceros no. 202 was anaesthetized in September 2016 to remove her DNA to implant it in a microchip. She caught the attention and admiration of her veterinarian and her team. She was accompanied in the bush by three young adolescent rhinoceros, almost adults. The only explanation possible is that she had adopted at least 2 orphans. She also surprised the healers by adopting a hyperprotective attitude towards her youngs. When the helicopter was approaching, she steered the three into a vegetal shelter before returning alone out into the open. She has since passed away.

- March 9, 2017. OSCAP and WAR reported that in 24 hours, 13 rhinoceros had been poached: 4 in the Northwest Province, 3 in l'Etat-Libre, 2 in Limpopo, 2 in Kruger National Park, and 2 in KwaZulu-Natal Park.

- March 10, 2017. Madikwe Game Reserve. One poached.

- March 12, 2017. Mahikeng Game Reserve. Two females poached. One injured orphan was taken in.²²



March 13, 2017 South Africa

Poaching of Wozani, a rhino that became famous because of a crazy interpretation by the press and the public that he was sending kisses. Insensitive to this would-be loving behavior, poachers targeted and killed him and cut off his horns, his tail, his ears, and his hoofs.

A Taiwanese media outlet took hold of this poaching to denounce the myth of the curative properties of rhinoceros horn.²³



March 16, 2017

Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province, South Africa

Injured but not killed, the mother and her calf are likely to make a full recovery.²⁴

March 19-20, 2017

Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

- "The worst came 2 days crowned with the arrest of 10 presumed poachers and the seizure of 4 large firearms." It happened in the area covered by the Lower Sabie rangers. Poachers were immobilized. The SAPS, the South African Police Service, arrived to proceed with the arrest. One of them disarmed a suspect of his rifle thinking it was unloaded. He aimed the gun in the floor. One last bullet has been fired inadvertently. It ricocheted on cement and hit the body of George Mdaka, 30, a Kruger Park ranger. He died hours later in a clinic in Nelspruit.



- **Pretoriuskop.** Three poachers were arrested with the help of the K9 unit. A .358 caliber rifle, along with a silencer, munitions, and dehorning tools were seized.

- **Stolznek.** Close contact between rangers and a pair of poachers. Once again, seizure of a rifle calibre 358 with a silencer, ammunitions and a dehorning kit. One arrest. One run away.

- **At the border of the Park, near Crocodile Bridge.** Four arrests. There were two horns found in their bags. One accomplice was arrested a little later with a big caliber rifle and ammunitions.²⁵

March 28, 2017

Kruger National Park, South Africa

Anti-poaching operations happened in multiple sectors. There were 12 arrests and a death:

- Pretoriuskop. A nighttime dispute. One poacher was mortally injured, and his accomplice was arrested. One ranger was wounded by gunfire.

- Paul Kruger Gate. Five arrests, including one police officer.

- Phalaborwa Gate. Six arrests, including one SAN-Parks employee.²⁶



March 31, 2017

Vanderbijlpark, Province of Gauteng, South Africa

A professional hunter was spared. Should the law have 2 punishments, one heavy for nomadic poachers, another lighter for professional hunters? Adrian Van Staden was only sentenced to 12 months of correctional supervision out of jail and 12 months of community service. He was supplied with horns or slices of horns from his dealer, near Polokwane.²⁷



NAMIBIA

REPEATED OFFENSE

January 10, 2017

Gobabis, Omaheke Region, Namibia

Court appearance of Domingo Justice Moma, 32, Erwin Tjiteere, 37, and the ex-Namibian soccer team doctor Gerson Uakaerera Kandjii, 51, for the poaching of 4 white rhinoceros in December 2016 (cf. "On the Trail" n°15 p. 84). During the trial, the suspects were calm. Domingo made faces as if it were all a big joke, and Kandjii skimmed the newspaper and smiled until journalists filmed the trio. He then got irritated and used his cap to cover his face. The enquiry is not finished, as the police are still searching for 2 other accomplices. Until then, bail is refused.²⁸

January 20, 2017

Windhoek, Khomas Region, Namibia

Lu, 41, and Chen, 29, are in a pickle. Police officers discovered poaching equipment and 5.5 kg of horns in their home. They denied that they were poachers. Others had keys to the apartment. The court case took place in April 2017. Their lawyer objected the translator into Mandarin. "He understands nothing." Release on bail was refused.

The public, as well as political figures, worry about the implication of a part of the Chinese community in Namibia in poaching and smuggling. Pohamba Shifeta, Minister of the Environment and Tourism, is blaming the Chinese embassy for not calling their citizens to order. The Minister wants all foreigners convicted of poaching charges to be deported after they serve their time and classified as persona non grata. According to the director of the national police, a crackdown on crime should not take into account the diplomacy. Qiu Xuejun, the new Chinese ambassador to Namibia, declared that his government strongly supports Namibia's efforts to protect their exceptional environment and fight against poaching and smuggling to the Parliamentary Commission on the Environment in the beginning of the year. "It should be noted that offenders are just a few in number, and the isolated cases should by no means be exaggerated and jeopardize the deep friendship and close cooperation of our two countries and two peoples." Over 100,000 Chinese nationals have moved to Namibia. This number is uncertain.²⁹

January 21, 2017

Otjiwa Game Ranch, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

Poaching of a 20-year-old pregnant female white rhinoceros. Her horns were removed. A reward of \$10,000 Namibian dollars (\$740 US) is offered for any information assisting the capture of those responsible.³⁰



Very big calibre.

Since 2014
Namibia

451 rhinoceros were preventatively dehorned in 4 national parks: Etosha, Namib-Naukluft, Nkasa Rupara, and Waterberg. The total cost of this operation is 14.5 million N\$, about a million US\$. 932.05 kg of white and black rhinoceros horns, an average of 2.066 kg per rhinoceros, were gathered and stored in confidential locations. Their estimated value is 74 million N\$, about \$5,440,000 US or \$5900 US/kg (local value). The Ministry is satisfied, but is complaining about the number of veterinarians in the country. As a reminder, rhinoceros, before being dehorned, have to be anaesthetized and then reawakened and brought on their feet again. The operation must be repeated every 2 to 3 years. Private ranches also practice dehorning.³¹

March 15, 2017
Grootberg, Kunene Region, Namibia

This is the third rhinoceros to die this year in the Kunene desert and even the fourth since one gravely injured in December 2016 around Gobabis (cf. "On the Trail" n15 p. 84), died in February 2017. This one is a young black rhinoceros. His "horns" were cut with a sharp-edged tool. A bullet was found in the body with the help of a metal detector.³²

Death toll for the past 4 years, according to Pohamba Shifeta:

- 9 in 2013
- 56 in 2014
- 95 in 2015
- 59 in 2016



Late March 2017
Selela, Zambezi Region, Namibia

Seizure of 2 horns. One arrest.³³

SWAZILAND

February 25, 2017
King Mswati III International Airport, Swaziland
Seizure of 24 pieces of horns hidden in boxes of fine wines. Arrest of 2 Taiwanese smugglers, ages 30 and 54.³⁴

ZIMBABWE

March 14, 2017
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
A search warrant has been posted for Nhamo Kufakunesu. He was released on bail for \$100 US. He failed to appear in court. January 1, he had been stopped in the Bubyee Conservancy, in the southern Matabeleland Province, in possession of a high-caliber firearm and munitions. He is suspected to have shot in the direction of rangers after having escaped. Two of his accomplices have fled.³⁵

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FAMILY AFFAIRS
February 21, 2017

New York City, New York State, United States
One brother, Joseph Chait, had been sentenced to one year and one day in prison in June 2016 (cf. "On the Trail" n13, p. 77). This time, Jacob Chait has been charged with smuggling with conspiracy of 15 horns of which a pair from a black rhino in his luggage in the course of a personal journey in China. Jacob Chait, in 2012, was an animator for the reality show Final Offer on the Discovery Channel, centered on antiquities sellers. The value of the trafficked goods is estimated to be \$2.4 million US. The Chait Gallery and its auctioneers were founded by the father of Jacob and Joseph Chait. Rhinoceros horns and ivory were not the only thing to have been brought to the Chait house under dubious conditions. Three years ago, Nicolas Cage had bought a dinosaur skull from them. After an investigation, it was proved that this prehistoric vestige had been stolen in Mongolia and bought by the Chait Gallery. Nicolas Cage has agreed to return it to its country of origin.³⁶

February 22, 2017
New York City, New York State, United States



He was demanding \$20 million US from Bloomberg Business Week for defamation and emotional distress. The weekly magazine, in an investigation into Rathkeale Rovers and the theft of horns from European museums, had named O'Brien senior as the "king of nomads" and painted him as the project manager or instigator of this museum and collections pillaging epidemic. The article made reference to horns found in the O'Brien family's caravans during the search of one set's camp.

The plaintiff and his lawyer are pressing the fact that the horns were fake. The Supreme Court justice recalled that the certificates of non-authenticity were produced in July 2015, while the press article was dated to September 2013. O'Brien has made an appeal.³⁷

ASIA

CHINA

Hong Kong International Airport, China
- **March 8, 2017.** Seizure of 7 kg of entire horns or fragments in the bags of a 21-year-old man, estimated to be worth 1.4 million HKD (\$ 180.392 US). They were wrapped in aluminum foil and covered in adhesive paper. The man had travelled from Maputo, Mozambique through Addis Abeba, Ethiopia.
- **March 22, 2017.** The "coffee" came from Namibia. The two express packages had a value of 1.3 million HK\$ (\$167,507 US). X-rays uncovered the truth. Rhino horns, cut into 12 pieces, underwent genetic



testing. Already, having come from Namibia, a trafficking hotspot, their authenticity is supported. The man who came to pick up the packages was apprehended and then was released on bail. This is shocking facing the imminent

extinction of wild rhinos and the value of the loot. Unfortunately, those responsible face only 2 years' maximum in prison.³⁸

**March 29 and 30, 2017
Hong Kong International Airport, China**

Seizure of 2 horns (2.5 kg) estimated to be worth 500,000 HKD (\$ 64,331 US), or about \$25.73 US per kilogram. One arrest. The express parcel had come from Mozambique.³⁹



INDIA



**REPEATED OFFENSE
January 25, 2017
Jakhalabandha,
Assam State, India**

Arrest of 2 poachers, Riful Ali and Lhoisha Sema, responsible for the poaching of a female rhinoceros on June 18, 2016 (cf. "On the Trail" n°13 p. 75). Photos of the men with automatic rifles with silencers at the

scene of the crime allowed them to be shown up.⁴⁰

**February 14, 2017
Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India**

Poaching of a female rhinoceros. 14 empty cartridges were found near the body. One arrest.⁴¹

**March 14, 2017
Baihata Chariali, State of Assam, India**

Three deaths after an accident involving a car and a bus. The victims were not only human. In the broken up carcass, the rescuers found a fresh 400 gram rhinoceros horn with fragments of nasal bone, tendons, and shreds of bloody muscle. The accident occurred at daybreak. The poaching had happened in the night in Kaziranga Park. In the car wreck, weapons, heroin, and tranquilizers were also seized.⁴²



**March 17, 2017
Orang National Park, State of Assam, India**

"It was a full grown male rhino," said Park officials. His carcass was found near the Pichola anti-poaching camp.⁴³

**March 23, 2017
Kamargaon, State of Assam, India**

Arrest of 2 poachers, one of whom was a student. They were breaking into the Agoratoli area. According to their own statements, this was not their first time. They gave the names of forest rangers who served as accomplices. They denied any involvement in trafficking to foreign countries. Their sponsors are based in the Nagaon and Karbi Anglong districts.⁴⁴

NEPAL

**January 2, 2017
Gauri, Western Development Region, Nepal**

A rhino is found dead, he wasn't mutilated. The Forest Office Chief is on the case. He indicates that the rhino was electrocuted outside the Chitwan National Park. The horn and hoofs were removed in the presence of the National Park officials, the army, police and veterinarians. One suspect is being questioned.⁴⁵

**January 30, 2017
Bhaktapur, Central Development Region, Nepal**

Two suspects, ages 21 and 23, were transporting a horn. They were stopped and accused of smuggling.⁴⁶

FAKE HORNS

**March 21, 2017
Lalitpur, Central Development Region, Nepal**

Arrest of 5 derelicts, ages 18 to 25. They had fake horns in their bags. They gave the name of the counterfeiter, Ghimire, a 48-year-old man. The tools and materials used to make fakes were seized.⁴⁷

**March 31, 2017
Nepal**

An arrest was made by the army and Chitwan National Park agents. Durga Rana Magar had been on the run for 7 years. Her poaching partner, Khadak Bahadur Mahat, was arrested in 2009 and sentenced to 15 years in prison. About 100 people are researched by the Park services for acts of poaching.⁴⁸

PHILIPPINES

**February 27, 2017
Manila, Philippines**

6 rhinoceros horns seized in 2012 were given by customs to the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB). The horns were hidden in a cashew container, which came from Mozambique. It is not impossible the horns be back soon to Mozambique. The other options, according to Ms. Lim, director of the BMB, are to treat them as well as possible or to destroy them.⁴⁹

THAILAND

March 10, 2017

Bangkok International Suvarnabhumi Airport, Thailand

Seizure of 21 horns totaling 50 kilograms or \$500,000 US en route to East Africa, according to a press release from the Minister of Justice. A 56-year-old woman was apprehended by the police, 14 days after the seizure. She was wanted after fleeing from the airport after police was on the way to check her suitcase that she was carrying on a trolley. Another woman that was with her is still on the run. Two police officers and the vice prosecutor of the Saraburi Province are on the list of suspects. They were coming to meet the two traffickers at the airport.⁵⁰



VIET NAM

March 14, 2017

Noi Bai International Airport, Viet Nam

After the arrival of a Kenya Airways flight from Nairobi, 2 unclaimed suitcases, without indication of weight, owner, or sender, caught the attention of customs officers and the anti-smuggling task force. Upon opening, the two suitcases revealed horns that exactly resembled rhinoceros horns. Genetic analysis confirmed it. The suitcases were shipped in Malawi. CCTV footage shows suspicious handling of both suitcases by members of the Kenya Airways flight Q870. Agents of the Nairobi International Airport will also be questioned by investigators. Upon arrival in Hanoi, the blue and brown suitcases contained 102 kg of horns according to the Vietnamese press, or 119 kg according to the Kenyan press.⁵¹



EUROPE

FRANCE

March 7, 2017

Thoiry zoological park, Yvelines, France Poaching in the most famous zoo of France

The front horn of a 4-year-old male rhinoceros is stolen. "Vince" was killed by 3 bullets in the head. In the following weeks, rhino horns in the Dvur-Kraloveen Zoo, Czech Republic, were cut as a precaution. A Vietnamese mafia of ivory and horn is very active in Europe (see "On the Trail" n°4 p.4, n°5 pp.103-104, n°6 pp.95-96, n°13 p.96, n°14 p.97). Its hard cores are in the Czech Republic, Germany and France. Those who have killed and dehorned a rhinoceros near Paris have certainly already done it elsewhere or organized it.



In France, some directors of zoos are also planning to practice preventive dehorning without specifying what will be done with the horns. If carried out, these operations should be done under State control and the horns should be destroyed to avoid trafficking from zoos. The director of the Safari in Peaugres (Ardèche) in southern France claims that it is better to have "a dreadful rhinoceros than a dead rhinoceros". Consequently, she wishes to dehorn as if the horns were only a decorative element on the rhinoceros forehead.

Horns are used as bumpers. While grazing, the rhinoceros continually clears the ground with its nasal horn. In case of danger, the cub does not follow his mother, he precedes her and he would be protected from an attack by the nasal horn which can serve as a dagger. The rhinoceros can use his front horn and back horn as pincers to uproot the mtombati (*Spirostachys africanus*) which tender leaves he enjoys. The horns are used to dig the salinas, to play, to practice horn against horn in battle simulacra and even to massage the bellies of the mothers before parturition. The horn is the Swiss knife of the rhinoceros.⁵²

SWITZERLAND

Early February 2017

Bern, Canton of Bern, Switzerland

Appointment of a rhinoceros horn trafficker to a prestigious and strategic post as the Ambassador of Bern, Swiss Confederation. Han Tae-song was evicted from Zimbabwe in 1992 for trafficking horns using his diplomatic position. Switzerland authorized the north-korean diplomat. Switzerland is regularly suspected of being a refuge and financial reservoir for important Pyongyang public figures.⁵³

Rhinos and Elephants

OCEANIA

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

January 11, 2017

Zevenwacht Mall, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Transparency! Seizure inside a sedan with tinted windows of a rhino horn, 10 ivory balls and a lion tooth. Three arrests, a 27-year-old Zambian and 2 Congolese ages 25 and 32.¹

January 30 and February 2, 2017
Hout Bay and Wynberg, Western Cape Province, South Africa

After having dined Sunday night in a restaurant, they forgot their backpack. They went back to retrieve it Monday afternoon. The problem is that the backpack contained ivory and rhinoceros horns that had been taken by the restaurant owner to the nearby police station. The two Chinese young adults, ages 24 and 27, were immediately arrested and given a 5-year suspended prison sentence and a fine of 35,000 rands (\$2574 US) each. The seizure is estimated to have a value of \$4,413 US. It's made up of pieces of rhinoceros horn, jewels, and sticks of ivory.

Tracey Brits, an animal rights activist, is outraged at the leniency of the sentence. "It's a travesty of justice."²

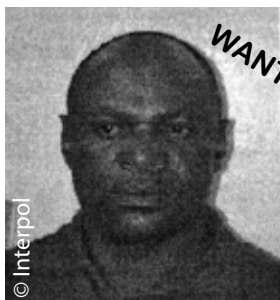


ZIMBABWE

January 2017

Zimbabwe

Dumisani Moyo. Wanted by Interpol. Sought after by the justice in Botswana for rhino poaching. He was born in Zimbabwe and has Zimbabwean citizenship. He sought asylum in Lusaka, Zambia. He is one of the international poachers of the High Valley of the Zambezi River. According to Caroline Washaya-Moyo spokesperson of Zimparks, they are very organized and cooperative. They exchange information on cyanide and good business plans, they learn the basics of local dialects to assimilate into the populations, as well as a precaution, they are in with lawyers to ensure they'll be well represented in case of arrest. Caroline Washaya-Moyo sees the lawyer-poachers connexion as a sign of well-structured and well-financed gangs.³



AUSTRALIA

January 2017

Australia

The Leonard Joel House - managing director John Albrecht- and the Mossgreen House -managing director Paul Sumner- are the two first market providers for the ivory and horn trade in the country. John Albrecht has announced he would put an end to ivory and horn sales within the next 2 years, beginning with an immediate ban on modern ivory. The Leonard Joel company owns 300 auction houses and will yet continue to sell musical instruments, cutlery and "certified" antiques made partly or entirely in ivory. "This is going to make me loose close to 400.000 US\$ but it must begin somewhere" says Mr. Albrecht. Paul Sumner for his part has described his competitor's position as "flagrant opportunism" and announces that his business will continue to sell horn and ivory because "it is a natural material alongside shells". He conceals nevertheless that restrictions must be imposed regarding modern ivory.

According to an IFAW study carried out over a period of 9 months, 2400 carved ivory pieces and 7 horns were offered for sale in 17 auction houses. The certification documents in most cases were incomplete and exposed buyers to the risk of illegal purchases. The other main auction rooms to provide ivory are Lawsons, David Barsby, Aalders, Vickers and Hoad, Raffan, Kelaheer and Thomas, Bonhams, Bargain Hunt and Sotheby's Australia (cf. "On the Trail" n°7, page 117).⁴

