

Three Years of Blue Rhino in Namibia **Special Report 2021/01**



Intelligence and Investigation Unit
Wildlife Protection Services Division
Wildlife and National Parks Directorate
Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism



Protected Resources Division
Criminal Investigations Directorate
Namibian Police Force
Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security





blue rhino

stop crime – protect nature

the BLUE RHINO vision

eradicate wildlife crime ...

... to support the permanent protection ...

... of Namibia's diverse natural heritage

stop crime – protect nature

Three Years of Blue Rhino

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1. Introduction

The introduction ...

... to Three Years of Operation Blue Rhino should acknowledge that Blue Rhino has become a game changer in the fight against wildlife crime in Namibia.

Namibia has long been blessed with a cohort of dedicated – and visionary – conservation and law-enforcement personnel, as well as a progressive constitution and related legislation. A foundation of sound conservation systems has been established, which has allowed wildlife populations to be rebuilt. As a result, Namibians have been able to benefit from wildlife and other natural resources through tourism, conservation hunting and other uses.

The extreme poaching onslaught that Namibia has experienced over the past decade represents a massive challenge for a young nation that faces a multitude of social and economic hurdles. Despite its current capacity constraints, the Namibian government has implemented a range of countermeasures, including legislation revisions, the establishment of new divisions and the deployment of security forces to spearhead wildlife protection in state parks.

A simple concept was initiated to ensure robust operations related to wildlife-crime law enforcement by bridging government capacity gaps. A pilot project, started in late 2016 in collaboration with regional MEFT staff, provided direct, flexible funding and technical support to dedicated government personnel and produced immediate results. International networking created the link to the Wildcat Foundation, which in 2017 agreed to provide seed funding that enabled the registration of a Namibian NGO, the Rooikat Trust, as a technical partner and funding

facilitator for government. In 2018, Wildcat committed to further support, supplemented by INL and other partners. This has enabled ongoing core funding for Operation Blue Rhino. While the funding is external, the work to counter wildlife crime is done by Namibians through established government institutions – yet in a new synergy of intersectoral collaboration between law enforcement and conservation agencies. Blue Rhino was a catalyst for this synergy and remains its focal point.

Operation Blue Rhino has catalysed a transformation from reactive to proactive wildlife-crime law enforcement. Yet Blue Rhino is not an elite unit, but rather a synergy of key role players. It is based on ensuring four fundamental ingredients of effective law enforcement:

- 1) Dedicated, well-trained personnel
- 2) Adequate funding
- 3) Access to the latest technologies and equipment
- 4) Active interagency cooperation

Even with these ingredients, law enforcement will not succeed in the long run if it is carried out in isolation. It is only one part of the four pillars that create a sound wildlife-protection framework:

- 1) Effective conservation systems
- 2) Active anti-poaching initiatives
- 3) Stringent law enforcement, including prosecution
- 4) Local, regional and international collaboration

Over the past three decades, the Namibian government has created these parameters, based in some cases on innovative initiatives that were started in the years leading up to Namibia's independence.



Namibia generally has healthy wildlife, including the largest black rhino population left on Earth


By securing funding from the Wildcat Foundation, INL and others, the Rooikat Trust is supporting government personnel with the key ingredients of flexible finances, technologies and equipment. This is being coupled with ongoing capacity building and an overarching approach of interagency cooperation.

The investments in field operations, surveillance and other technologies, data management and analysis, and staff capacity building have yielded great results. Proactive law enforcement is making life very difficult for criminals – who are regularly caught even before they manage to carry out their intentions.

The achievements of Blue Rhino are clearly illustrated by the information presented in

this report. They are the results of the broad collaboration taking place amongst personnel from key agencies, all of whom can be equally proud. Operation Blue Rhino represents the core of a wide network of partners – which depends on each individual contribution to be effective (even if many contributions will remain anonymous).

While all partners can be proud of the turnaround that has been achieved in protecting our natural resources, there is no room for complacency. The fight against wildlife crime is ongoing. As long as Namibia has valuable wildlife, and as long as there are international markets for illicit wildlife products, attempts to poach valuable animals and traffic their products will take place.



S.H. NDEITUNGA, OMS
 INSPECTOR GENERAL: NAMIBIAN POLICE FORCE





TEOFILUS NGHITILA
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM



2. Blue Rhino Brief

Operation Blue Rhino ...

... is a formal cooperation between the Protected Resources Division of the Namibian Police Force within the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security and the Intelligence and Investigation Unit within the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism.

Operation Blue Rhino was initiated on the 30th of July 2018 as a three-month intervention to counter the surge in wildlife crime – and particularly rhino poaching – in Namibia. Motivated by its ongoing success, the operation has been repeatedly extended. An agreement has been reached to continue the operation for another five-year period, until mid-2025. Operation Blue Rhino is facilitated through active collaboration and sharing of information and resources amongst numerous partner organisations.

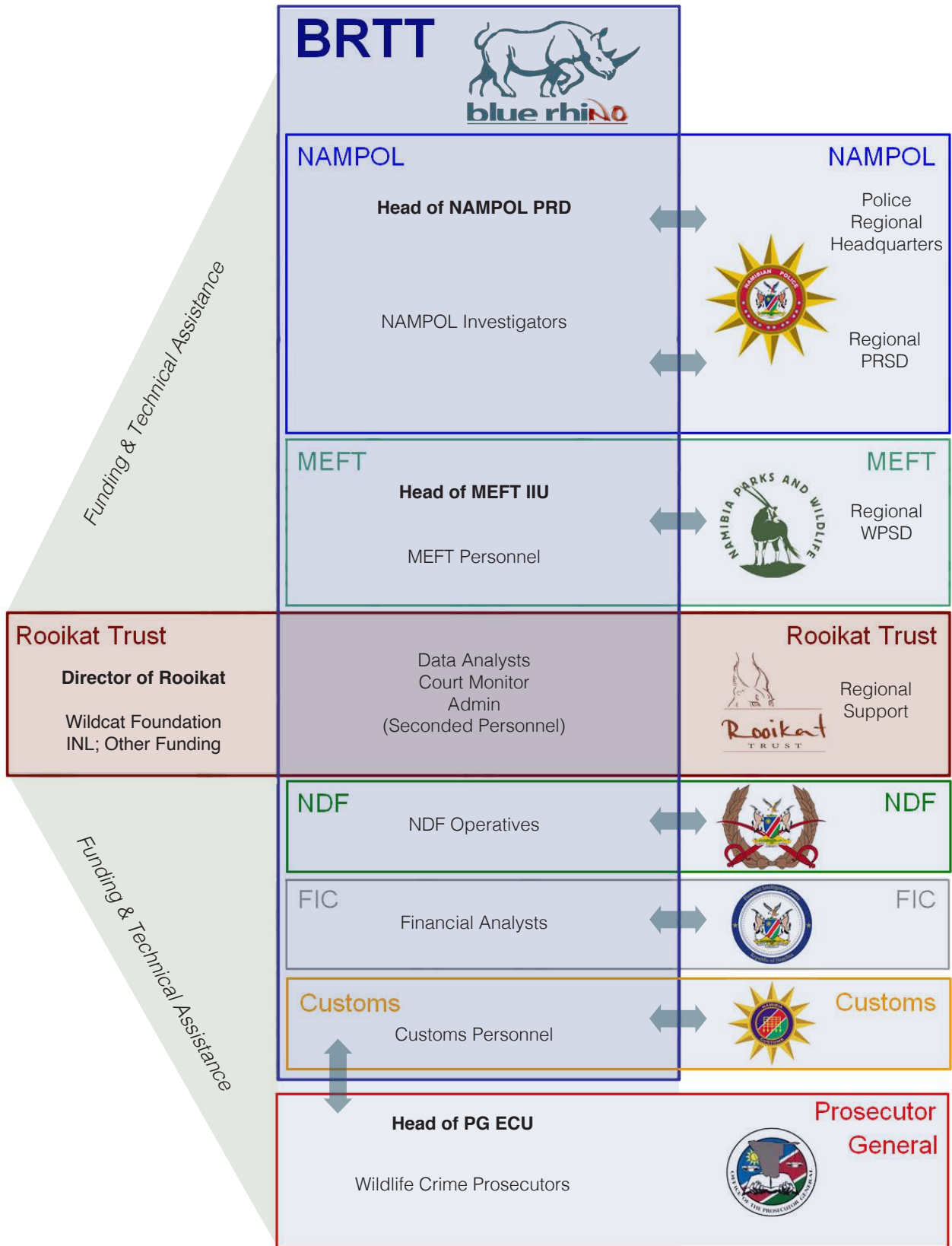
Effective conservation systems that enable healthy wildlife populations form the foundation of biodiversity protection in Namibia. Anti-poaching initiatives guard against criminal impacts on vulnerable wildlife. Law enforcement and prosecution thwart criminal activities to safeguard national objectives. Operation Blue Rhino works within this framework to eradicate commercial poaching and trafficking of illegal game products, thus supporting the protection of our country's biodiversity.

*The **Blue Rhino Task Team** is a dedicated task force that runs Operation Blue Rhino. The task team is made up of NAMPOL investigators from different divisions and regions and members of the MEFT IIU, with additional members seconded from other agencies. Operational funding is supplied by the Rooikat Trust. Dedicated vehicles are provided by the MEFT, NAMPOL and Rooikat. Blue Rhino builds on the foundations and ongoing efforts of the regional Protected Resources Sub-Divisions of NAMPOL and the regional units of the Wildlife Protection Services Division of the MEFT.*

*Rooikat began as a pilot project in April 2017. Immediate results motivated the registration of the **Rooikat Trust** in early 2018 as a local NGO that enables the rapid, flexible and targeted dispersal of funds from international agencies, including the Wildcat Foundation and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, USA. Rooikat provides direct, wide-ranging support for law enforcement and logistics. This enables rapid responses to incidents of any nature in the fight against wildlife crime in Namibia.*

For more information, see: Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism & Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security. 2020. *Operation Blue Rhino – Who We Are and What We Do.* MEFT & MHA/ISS, Windhoek

Eradicate wildlife crime to support the permanent protection of Namibia's diverse natural heritage



Simplified Blue Rhino Task Team organigram

3. The current status of wildlife and crime in Namibia

The status of wildlife ...

... in Namibia has been influenced significantly by the prevalence of poaching and trafficking.

Namibia has actively rebuilt wildlife populations over the past five decades. Priority has been given to rare and valuable species. Some species have been returned after local extinctions caused by excessive exploitation and wanton killing prior to Namibia's independence. While severe droughts continue to periodically reduce wildlife populations substantially, Namibia's wildlife generally remains healthy in suitable habitat.

Habitat is provided in three land-tenure and wildlife-management systems: state-protected areas (\pm 17 per cent of Namibia), community conservation areas (\pm 22 per cent of Namibia), and private reserves and freehold farms. High-value species are unevenly distributed – most elephant occur in state parks and community conservation areas, rhinos in all three systems, with the largest numbers in state parks. All sectors seek to collaborate to achieve landscape-level conservation and wildlife protection across land-tenure boundaries.

Despite the massive commercial poaching onslaught on its wildlife over the past decade, Namibia has been able to reverse the alarming poaching trends related to high-value species. Losses have been curbed to below natural growth rates. Elephant numbers in Namibia continue to increase substantially. National rhino numbers remain stable, with steady increases in the larger populations.

Status of key species:

- **White rhino** reintroduced after local extinction in 1850s; now healthy populations in state parks and private reserves; second-largest white rhino population on Earth after South Africa
- **Black rhino** increased from drastic population lows in 1960s to '80s; now healthy populations in various parts of Namibia; largest black rhino population on Earth; due to successful protection, IUCN changed conservation status of *Diceros bicornis bicornis* from Vulnerable to Near Threatened in 2020, i.e. the Namibian subspecies is now at less risk of extinction
- **Elephant** gradually increased from population lows prior to 1900s; experienced widespread poaching and displacement in decades prior to independence; more than tripled since 1995, now around 24,000 animals
- **Pangolin** population currently poorly known due to limited research in Namibia; most-trafficked mammal in Namibia and worldwide; of great conservation concern; MEFT and NAMPOL coordinating with Namibian Pangolin Working Group to ensure rehabilitation and release of pangolins confiscated alive wherever possible, and further research of national population to enable effective conservation
- **Other species**, including giraffe, lion, leopard, cheetah, hyaenas, crocodile, hippo, zebras and most antelopes with healthy populations.

Namibia's wildlife populations are healthy – but crime can have a massive impact!



Namibia generally has healthy wildlife, including the largest black rhino population left on Earth

The status of wildlife crime ...

... in Namibia is influenced significantly by external demand, particularly in Asia.

Wildlife crime has escalated significantly in Namibia over the past decade. Extreme impacts on rhinos and elephant were experienced in 2015–2016, while pangolin trafficking expanded rapidly from around 2014. Other species, including large cats and reptiles, are increasingly targeted. Meat poaching is a growing problem wherever large herbivore populations occur across the country.

To counter these trends, Namibia has implemented a variety of measures:

- **Security Forces** are deployed in Etosha and northeastern parks to protect wildlife, especially rhinos and elephant
- **Rhino Rangers** are appointed in Erongo–Kunene, coordinating with community game guards and security forces to intensively patrol all rhino ranges

- **Community awareness** and involvement is maximised through various initiatives
- **Regular de-horning of rhinos** shifts the risk-reward ratio in favour of wildlife protection
- **Dog units** are deployed throughout Namibia as needed to counter threats
- **Security and surveillance** has been increased in all rhino ranges, including private reserves
- **Revised wildlife legislation** has enabled appropriate penalties for wildlife crimes
- **Dedicated agencies and personnel** are ensuring targeted law enforcement
- **Rapid responses and flexible funding** are maximising law-enforcement impacts
- **Effective prosecution and appropriate penalties** are ensuring perpetrators are convicted and appropriately punished, deterring further crime

For more information, see: Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism & Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security. 2021. *Combatting Wildlife Crime in Namibia. Annual Report 2020.* MEFT & MHAISS, Windhoek

Demand for illicit wildlife products in Asia and elsewhere is driving wildlife crime in Namibia!

4. Namibia's framework for countering wildlife crime

The framework ...

... for countering wildlife crime must embrace all relevant government and non-government entities.

Wildlife crime is not a simple matter of a poacher killing an animal. Wildlife crime is often intertwined with other criminal activities and reaches freely across international borders. It is a global criminal sector, carried out via a complex web of perpetrators, aiders and abettors, who source wildlife products in countries of origin and sluice them to end markets around the world, particularly in Asia. Asia is home to about 60 per cent of the world population and has deeply entrenched traditional uses for myriads of wildlife products. This creates huge, lucrative and mostly illicit markets.

To counter this complexity requires a powerful network of local, national and international partners who work together to identify, arrest and prosecute perpetrators, and thereby disrupt and dismantle the various levels of the wildlife crime chain. A sound basis must exist in source countries such as Namibia, which have healthy wildlife populations and are primary poaching targets.

*The **Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism** is the custodian of wildlife and other terrestrial natural resources in Namibia, and is mandated with their conservation and protection. The **Namibian Police Force** is mandated with maintaining law and order, including laws related to wildlife. The **Namibian Defence Force** is tasked with defending the state and its resources against*

*threats. Additional safeguards are provided by the Directorate **Customs and Excise** within the Ministry of Finance, which controls the movement of goods in and out of Namibia. The **Financial Intelligence Centre** is an independent body mandated to assist with combatting money laundering, the financing of terrorism and the proliferation of financial crimes. The **Anti-Corruption Commission** is another independent body with the function of combatting corruption.*

*By creating productive synergies between these agencies, Namibia has laid the foundations for what have become effective wildlife protection and law-enforcement systems and approaches. The **Blue Rhino Task Team** works within this framework, co-opting members from various agencies to ensure suitable technical capacities, while liaising with all agencies as needs dictate. Field operations are central to BRTT activities and regional NAMPOL, MEFT and NDF units create the foundation for countrywide impacts.*

*The **Judiciary** is independent, with the role of administering justice by interpreting and applying the law through the courts. The Office of the **Prosecutor-General** is responsible for prosecuting suspects in the name of the state in criminal proceedings. By collaborating closely with the Office of the PG, the BRTT seeks to ensure that wildlife-crime cases are well prepared and that the judiciary is cognisant of the seriousness and complexity of wildlife crime – and is thus able to deliver appropriate sentences.*

Wildlife crime is a powerful and complex global criminal sector



Field personnel create the foundation of wildlife protection and law enforcement in Namibia

Local and international NGOs and funding agencies recognise these government structures as the mandated authorities and channel funding and technical assistance to them. Wide-ranging and important additional support is provided by **local communities and the private sector**.

All of these entities operate within the **Revised Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement 2012–2025** and contribute in various ways to create the four main pillars of a sound wildlife-protection framework.

Conservation systems consist of:

- sufficient conservation cover
- healthy wildlife populations
- protection of rare and high-value species
- parallel wildlife management in
 - state-protected areas
 - community conservation areas
 - private reserves and freehold farms

Anti-poaching consists of:

- dedicated anti-poaching units
 - security forces in national parks

- rhino rangers in conservancies
- additional security and surveillance
 - K9 Unit
 - private sector security
 - de-horning of rhinos
- community awareness

Law enforcement consists of:

- appropriate wildlife legislation (revised as needed)
- dedicated agencies and personnel
- rapid response and flexible funding
- prosecution and penalties

Intersectoral cooperation consists of:

- national wildlife protection strategy
- local and national stakeholder collaboration
- international cooperation
- international funding support

For more information, see:

Republic of Namibia. 2020. *Revised Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement 2021–2025*. Republic of Namibia, Windhoek

Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism & Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security. 2021. *Combatting Wildlife Crime in Namibia. Annual Report 2020*. MEFT & MHAISS, Windhoek

Namibia has developed a sound framework for protecting wildlife and countering crime

5. The role of Operation Blue Rhino

The role ...

... of Operation Blue Rhino is to act as the national focal point for intelligence, investigations, arrests and prosecution related to high-value-species crimes.

The Blue Rhino Task Team should not be seen as an elite unit, but rather as the nucleus of a broad law-enforcement and conservation coalition, informally titled Namibian Partnerships against Environmental Crime (N-PaEC). The core of this alliance embraces NAMPOL, the MEFT Wildlife Protection Services Division and the NDF. Regional NAMPOL, MEFT and NDF units provide the countrywide foundation for the partnerships.

The primary focus of the BRTT is to investigate high-value-species crimes, determine ill-gotten assets, identify and apprehend perpetrators and dismantle criminal syndicates. To this end, the BRTT is the central hub for evidence gathering, analyses, surveillance, information sharing and any other aspects of investigations related to high-value species crimes. As law enforcement is the mandate of the Namibian Police Force, the BRTT fields a significant number of police officers specialised in wildlife-crime investigations. The BRTT nonetheless emphasises a multi-agency approach and comprises a diverse squad with a rich skills base. Members include NAMPOL, MEFT, NDF, FIC and Customs personnel, as well as technical and administrative staff seconded by the Rooikat Trust. The task team actively cooperates with regional NAMPOL, MEFT and NDF units, the Office of the PG, and other agencies. The team remains dynamic

and is restructured as needs dictate in order to stay ahead of criminals through ongoing innovation.

The primary objectives of Blue Rhino are to:

- thoroughly investigate wildlife crimes related to high-value species, including cases registered prior to the inception of the operation
- compile, manage and analyse wildlife-crime data through the Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia
- liaise with international agencies regarding transboundary wildlife crime
- arrest perpetrators of crimes related to high-value species and dismantle criminal syndicates
- ensure contraventions are charged under POCA and other relevant legislation
- prevent criminal activity through pre-emptive interventions and deterrence
- support the prosecution of high-value wildlife-crime suspects to ensure appropriate penalties for all perpetrators of high-value wildlife crimes
- support conservation systems through active law-enforcement input
- support anti-poaching activities through active law-enforcement input
- ensure responsible information dissemination related to high-value wildlife crimes
- ensure regular reporting of wildlife crime statistics, trends, achievements and challenges to all relevant stakeholders
- ensure broad wildlife-crime awareness creation through active communication
- form and strengthen partnerships at all levels and across boundaries

Operation Blue Rhino enables rapid action through sharing of information and resources



Operation Blue Rhino focusses on countering high-value-species crimes

The operational principles of Blue Rhino include:

- *the task team works in line with the national vision and the national wildlife protection strategy*
- *the task team works within clear institutional arrangements*
- *the task team is diverse, with a multi-agency approach and a rich skills base*
- *the task team is dynamic and can be restructured as needs dictate*
- *active cooperation with regional NAMPOL, MEFT and NDF units forms the basis of operations*
- *active cooperation with FIC and Customs is emphasised*
- *investigations are intelligence-led, using innovative technologies and information networks*
- *decision-making is evidence based and data driven*
- *operations are adaptive and responsive to changing needs and circumstances*
- *crime prevention is prioritised through early detection of illegal activities*
- *collaboration and communication are actively promoted*
- *harmonised operations and constructive internal and external relationships are actively promoted*
- *critical thinking and personal initiative are actively encouraged*
- *approaches are guided by experience and lessons learnt, shared amongst team members and partners*
- *all contributions in the fight against wildlife crime are duly acknowledged*
- *the task team works to ensure justice*

Operation Blue Rhino started as a three-month initiative in 2018. The vital role that Blue Rhino has played in transforming wildlife-crime intelligence, investigations, arrests and prosecution in Namibia is demonstrated by the fact that the operation has been running for three years. Blue Rhino remains as relevant today as when it started – and has been extended for another five years, enabling the strengthening and entrenchment of systems and approaches.

Evidence-led investigations form the basis of law enforcement

6. The role of Rooikat, Wildcat, INL and other funding partners

The role ...

... of funding partners in Namibia lies within the national framework of wildlife protection and law enforcement, supporting government agencies and activities.

Public-private partnerships are recognised around the world as an important tool that combines government and private-sector strengths to overcome capacity limitations through innovation. As a young nation with a legacy of colonial oppression and development neglect, Namibia still faces a broad range of social and economic challenges. After two-and-a-half decades of economic growth, the country experienced an economic recession in 2016 from which it has struggled to recover. Severe droughts in recent years have compounded the socio-economic strain and deepened inequalities. Education and health, rural water and electricity supply all face major hurdles. Unemployment rates are high, particularly amongst the youth and in rural communities. All of these issues are being severely exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organised wildlife crime at its current levels is relatively new in Namibia, which already faced high rates of homicide, rape and domestic violence, fraud, burglary, stock theft and other crimes. Wildlife crime has brought a massive additional burden to bear on already limited government budgets, conservation systems, law-enforcement capacities and an overstretched judiciary. Recognising the need for immediate

external assistance to counter escalating rhino and elephant poaching, numerous international support agencies have provided funding and technical assistance.

External funding support requires effective dispersal mechanisms in the target country to maximise on-the-ground impacts. Bureaucratic hurdles and administrative burdens can result in only a portion of funds being available for the practical activities that will make a tangible difference. To overcome some of these limitations, an innovative structure was created through the establishment of the Rooikat Trust.

Rooikat Trust

Rooikat is a registered Namibian trust enabling fast and flexible funding for government agencies to counter wildlife crime by securing support from a number of international partners and channelling it directly into government activities. The nexus for support is formed by the Blue Rhino Task Team. Rooikat supports the entire anti-trafficking spectrum from investigation to prosecution, and places emphasis on strengthening the capacities of regional MEFT, NAMPOL and NDF units, as well as those of the national structures.

While Rooikat staff possess decades of experience and technical capacities in countering wildlife crime, the trust does not engage directly in anti-trafficking or conservation activities. Rooikat enhances the initiatives of its partners through funding and technical support

Partnerships enable law enforcement at a level that makes crime increasingly difficult



Fast and flexible funding for field operations forms the core of Rooikat support

by working as a very small, effective entity with minimal overheads. Rooikat focuses on supporting government agencies mandated with countering wildlife crime, yet also works within a wider network of non-governmental entities and international partners.

The Rooikat partnership with the BRTT focusses on three main areas of support:

- *fast and flexible funding*
- *technologies and equipment*
- *staff capacity building*

Specific details of assistance are dictated by BRTT needs and not stipulated by Rooikat or its international funding partners

Wildcat Foundation

The Wildcat Foundation is a low-key NGO based in the USA, funded by a single philanthropist. The foundation's purpose is to help save and provide for the long-term conservation of endangered wildlife and wild places in Africa. Wildcat supports innovative projects that strengthen conservation

and law-enforcement in a number of African countries. Wildcat is the primary funder of BRTT operations.

INL

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the United States government works to counter the worldwide drug trade and other major crimes by supporting partner countries and NGOs to ensure competent criminal justice systems and transboundary law-enforcement. INL supports a variety of BRTT needs.

Other Partners

Numerous other partners have provided important support to the BRTT over the past three years. The Namibian Chamber of Environment, the African Wildlife Conservation Trust and B2Gold have all provided substantial support that has enhanced BRTT operational efficiency. The Namibia Nature Foundation plays an important role by leveraging additional funds and support. A number of Namibian businesses have provided donations or important discounts on sales and services.

Fast and flexible funding enables rapid and pro-active law-enforcement responses

7. The importance of collaboration at all levels

Collaboration at all levels ...

... is a vital aspect of countering wildlife crime, as the criminal sector operates across all boundaries and outside all laws.

Criminals have a distinct advantage, as they ignore laws, social norms, time schedules, park boundaries and international borders, while relying on an intricate web of enablers that connect illicit products to consumers, from the poacher to the buyer of wildlife products. On the other hand, government staff operates according to rules, regulations and procedures, which can inhibit flexibility and rapid action. Non-government entities may have more flexibility, yet all activities must remain within national and international laws and boundaries.

The criminal advantage can only be eliminated by countering perpetrators from all angles, i.e. ensuring strong conservation systems and active anti-poaching measures, exercising all applicable laws with input from all relevant agencies (where necessary through international collaboration), and ensuring effective prosecution and appropriate penalties – with all aspects being boosted by broad community support. Such a holistic approach is in many instances only possible through external funding and technical assistance.

While agencies create important administrative and procedural structures, it is the individuals carrying out the work who facilitate collaboration and efficient action. This requires cascading trust at all levels, from field personnel to government leaders to NGO and funding agency directors.

The achievements of Operation Blue Rhino are based on contributions from wide-ranging agencies and individuals within the Namibian Partnerships against Environmental Crime. The degree of collaboration may vary, depending on circumstances and needs. Yet all partners need to be aware of the complexity and seriousness of wildlife crime – and the importance of each individual contribution. While some contributions may seem inconsequential, all represent critical parts of the overall endeavour to minimise wildlife crime.

Wildlife crime involves:

- illegal exploitation of natural resources
- illegal use of firearms and potential violence
- illegal entry into protected areas
- illegal entry into Namibia
- illegal possession of and trade in wildlife parts
- illegal export of wildlife products
- human and animal welfare
- conspiracy and proliferation
- economic crimes and money laundering
- organised crime and corruption

Collaboration enables:

- dedicated, well-trained personnel
- shared resources
- shared information
- comprehensive data management and analysis
- sufficient funds and suitable equipment
- rapid action and pre-emptive interventions
- effective conservation
- effective wildlife protection
- effective law enforcement
- effective prosecution and appropriate penalties

Collaboration at all levels removes the criminal advantage



Intersectoral collaboration creates powerful synergies that can effectively counter wildlife crime

NAMPOL–MEFT–NDF

These three agencies form the core of Namibia’s wildlife protection and law enforcement initiatives. Security forces deployed to national parks work together with conservation staff to create the front line of anti-poaching efforts. While Operation Blue is a formal cooperation between NAMPOL and MEFT, NDF personnel are also integrated into the Blue Rhino Task Team. Together, the three agencies create a trinity of field operations.

Office of the Prosecutor-General

The Environmental Crimes Unit in the Office of the PG places great emphasis on wildlife-crime prosecution and is a vital BRTT partner. Close collaboration ensures that the prosecution in each case is well prepared and that the courts are in a position to hand down appropriate penalties.

Customs

Customs plays a vital role in preventing the illegal import and export of illicit goods and is the last line of defence against trafficking. Close collaboration with the BRTT ensures a sound understanding of wildlife laws amongst customs officials.

FIC and ACC

The FIC and ACC play important roles during BRTT investigations into financial crimes and corruption. Close liaison ensures that such offences are properly prosecuted.

Transboundary cooperation

Namibia liaises closely with neighbouring countries at various levels to exchange information and ensure transboundary law enforcement. The BRTT also works with a number of international NGOs, some of which are based in destination countries in Asia.

Funding partners

Close collaboration with Rooikat and its funding partners has enabled the BRTT to operate effectively. A long list of additional funding partners has provided wide-ranging support to Namibia.

Civil society support

Local communities play an essential role by reporting illegal activities and exerting public pressure to ensure that wildlife crime is taken seriously.

Collaboration reduces wildlife crime to levels that do not threaten species

8. Key interventions and achievements 2018–2021

Interventions and achievements:

... describe overarching actions and stand-out achievements that have had a significant impact in countering high-value-species crimes.

Since the inception of Blue Rhino:

- law enforcement is pro-active and evidence-led
- wildlife-crime data from all relevant agencies is timeously consolidated in the Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia, and managed and analysed for a range of uses
- effective information networks have been created
- arrests of suspects and seizures of illicit goods have increased significantly
- pre-emptive arrests have saved numerous rhinos
- high-level dealers and kingpins have been arrested, including international kingpins attempting to operate in Namibia
- follow-up investigations into old pre-Blue Rhino cases have led to numerous additional arrests
- collaboration with counterparts in neighbouring countries has led to various successes
- investigations have been broadened to enable all relevant charges to be laid against perpetrators, including crimes under POCA,
- collaboration with the Environmental Crimes Unit in the Office of the PG has significantly strengthened the prosecution of perpetrators
- poaching of elephant and rhinos has been significantly reduced
- regular reporting and information sharing have led to a significant increase in media coverage, an improved understanding of the complexity of wildlife crime, and increased public support

Strategic operations

*Operation Blue Rhino began as a temporary, three-month initiative. Immediate successes catalysed developments far beyond initial expectations and repeatedly led to the extension of the operation. A regular revision of aims and clear strategies have enabled the operation to grow and adapt, and remain focussed and relevant. BRTT aims and objectives are closely aligned with the national vision and Blue Rhino now forms an integral part of the **Revised National Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement**, valid until 2025.*

Law-enforcement transformation

Over the past three years, wildlife-crime law enforcement has shifted from reactive to proactive actions. Surveillance and other technological capabilities and related information networks have been vastly improved. The early detection of criminal activity has enabled pre-emptive arrests and rapid responses to incidents. Systematic investigations continue to produce results in old cases, with perpetrators still being arrested years after incidents. The swift arrest of insiders, including members of Namibia's security forces who have become involved in wildlife crime, has made it clear that nobody is above the law. Improved case management, court preparation and court monitoring have resulted in increased conviction rates and more appropriate penalties. Together these interventions have transformed wildlife-crime law enforcement in Namibia.

Ideal law enforcement stops criminals before their intended crime can be carried out



Arrests of perpetrators from all levels of the wildlife-crime sector have effectively disrupted syndicates

Evidence-based Investigations

The combination of a variety of surveillance technologies and information sources has enabled successful investigations and interventions based on tangible information. Active monitoring and anti-poaching patrols, particularly in rhino ranges, is allowing law-enforcement personnel to act extremely swiftly to apprehend perpetrators and confiscate contraband in a matter of days or even hours after an incident. Information gathering is also enabling regular covert operations that lead to the arrest of traffickers and the confiscation of contraband. This proactive law enforcement forms the backbone of the Blue Rhino Task Team.

Data management and analysis

The Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia has revolutionised data compilation, management and analysis. The development of the database, the integration of disparate datasets and sharing of data between the MEFT, NAMPOL and the Office of the PG, and the active use of the data for investigations and reporting represent a key achievement of the past three years.

Intersectoral integration

The deployment of security forces to national parks in 2016 laid the foundation for collaboration between MEFT, NAMPOL and NDF field personnel. This was further formalised by the inception of Operation Blue Rhino in 2018. From the outset, the BRTT placed particular emphasis on collaboration between all relevant agencies, fostering a sense of inclusiveness and recognition of all contributions. The approach of transparency and collaboration has removed barriers and facilitated wide-ranging integration of activities and information sharing amongst all relevant sectors. This has made a major contribution to law-enforcement successes.

Arrests of poachers, middlemen and kingpins

Poachers are the obvious interface between criminal networks and the source of wildlife products. Yet they are the most easily replaced link in the crime chain. Arresting only poachers generally has a limited effect on the overall prevalence of wildlife crime, as new poachers are quickly enticed by promises of rewards from higher levels. The BRTT has focussed significant investigative effort on

Catching criminals is half the battle; prosecution and appropriate penalties are the other

establishing linkages between poachers and the various enablers, abettors, dealers and kingpins active in Namibia. This has enabled arrests at all levels, from poachers to international kingpins, and is dismantling entire crime syndicates, wider criminal networks and trafficking routes, rather than just arresting a few poachers.

Investigation of pre-Blue Rhino cases

One of the first tasks of Operation Blue Rhino was to investigate and finalise as many open cases from pre-Blue Rhino poaching incidents as possible. The BRTT managed to arrest two dozen suspects and confiscate a range of illicit wildlife products and firearms, and seize a number of vehicles within the first month of operation. The focus on ensuring ongoing investigations into old cases has become part of the culture of Blue Rhino and arrests in old cases continue to be made. These reach back more than five years and include the apprehension of suspects who have skipped the country for several years to evade the law.

Pre-emptive arrests in rhino cases

Pre-emptive arrests that apprehend perpetrators while they are planning or attempting to carry out a crime, but have not yet been able to kill an animal, represent an ideal law-enforcement outcome. At the beginning of the poaching surge, law enforcement was mostly carried out in reaction to the discovery of dead animals, or the opportunistic seizure of wildlife products. Through proactive investigations, inter-agency cooperation, use of the latest surveillance and analytical technology, and community information and support, poachers are now regularly being arrested and charged with conspiracy to poach before they manage to kill an animal. This is saving numerous rhinos while still apprehending the perpetrators, resulting in a combination of law-enforcement successes and positive conservation outcomes.

Reduction in rhino and elephant poaching

Pro-active, country-wide law enforcement has achieved a clear reduction in elephant and rhino poaching in Namibia. Verified rhino and elephant losses have been reduced by about 60 per cent in the past three years. In the case of rhinos, pre-emptive arrests have played a major role in reducing losses from the peak experienced in 2015 (see also pp 22–31).

Transboundary interventions

The end markets for illicit wildlife products are located far from Namibia. Trafficking routes pass through neighbouring countries, making active collaboration at cross-boundary and broader international levels vital. The BRTT has engaged in numerous international exchanges and operations, involving Angola, Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, China and Vietnam. Collaboration with international agencies has included UNODC, INTERPOL and a number international NGOs. Good relations that already existed between Namibia and neighbouring countries have been further strengthened and direct transboundary collaboration is now central to counter-trafficking operations. Information sharing with counterparts in Botswana and Zambia has enabled a number of important arrests and disrupted syndicates operating between Zambia, Botswana and Namibia. Liaison with South African counterparts has resulted in closer collaboration, sharing of information and important arrests.

Ensuring all relevant charges

Wildlife crime is extremely complex and often involves transgressions against a wide range of Namibian legislation and international protocols. In the past, many of these contraventions were overlooked. Investigations now seek to apply all possible charges that may be applicable to a case, particularly those under the Prevention of Organised Crimes Act. In liaison with the Financial Intelligence Centre and other

An arrests is only constructive if it leads to the prosecution and punishment of the criminal

agencies, financial investigations have become part of all complex high-value species cases. A member of the FIC has been seconded to the BRTT and acts as liaison between investigators and FIC analysts to facilitate investigations.

Prosecution support

Close liaison between the BRTT and the ECU in the Office of the PG is leading to more effective prosecution and appropriate sentencing of perpetrators in many cases. Well-prepared case dockets with compelling evidence are proving the required basis. Docket management works in conjunction with well-informed prosecutors who are able to motivate appropriate sentences. Additional momentum is provided by targeted initiatives such as docket clean-up operations initiated by the Office of the PG. Active court monitoring has improved case preparation and proven extremely valuable. Sensitising magistrates to the seriousness of wildlife crimes is helping to achieve suitable judgements. Close collaboration has also facilitated the development of the Namibia Rapid Reference Guide on Investigation and Prosecution of Wildlife Crime, a UNODC initiative launched in 2021. These activities have received BRTT over the past three years. A number of further initiatives were undertaken to increase collaboration between law enforcement and the judiciary, strengthening prosecutions and improving court case outcomes.

Ongoing capacity building

Ongoing capacity building is the foundation of efficient, dedicated personnel. Capacity building is thus a central focus of the BRTT. Regular training in the use of all technologies is prioritised, while a wide range of other training and awareness initiatives have also been carried out. Ongoing liaison with stakeholders from across the sector is strengthening capacities, with specific training being provided as needed, for example to customs officials or FIC personnel. The Rooikat

Expertise Enhancement Fund was launched in November 2020, supported by AWCT. It is aimed specifically at the law enforcement sector, to provide support for academic fees, research costs, the costs of short courses and similar expenditure that currently inhibits individuals from realising their full potential.

Communication and awareness creation

The BRTT approach of actively sharing statistics and information with partners and the public as appropriate was identified as an early priority. A 'Weekly Wildlife Crime Outcomes Report' was initiated in early 2019 and initially shared internally amongst relevant agencies. This has been extended to the media since mid-2019, resulting in regular media articles and vastly increased public awareness. The first 'Combatting Wildlife Crime in Namibia Annual Report' was published in early 2020. These materials have reached a broad audience and increase cognisance of wildlife crime amongst important stakeholders, while strengthening collaboration and information sharing at national and international levels. They also aid decision-making by providing easy access to important information. Effective communication with partners and the public has significantly facilitated BRTT operations at many levels.

Ongoing funding support

The success of Operation Blue Rhino has enabled significant external funding to be secured by the Rooikat Trust to not only maintain the operation, but allow it to expand capacities, activities and focus areas. The Wildcat Foundation has been the key funding agency from the beginning and in 2021 committed funds for several more years. INL funding has made a very important contribution to Blue Rhino and the agency continues to provide support. Public awareness of Blue Rhino success and needs has also motivated significant support from Namibian NGOs, businesses and individuals.

Crime must be difficult and dangerous; criminals should not feel safe anywhere, anytime

9. Challenges and threats for the future of Blue Rhino

Challenges and threats:

Hidden drivers of poaching and trafficking

A central challenge in countering wildlife crime in Namibia is the reality that end markets for illicit wildlife products are outside the country, and thus beyond the control of Namibian counter-trafficking measures. The local drivers of poaching and trafficking in Namibia are often obscure. Pangolin trafficking represents a particularly complex challenge, as protective or pre-emptive measures are extremely difficult at a national level. Awareness creation amongst local communities, resolute seizures and high penalties are creating deterrents, yet a better understanding of wildlife-crime drivers is required to counter trends more effectively.

Poaching and trafficking of diverse species

While the current focus of the BRTT is on elephant, rhino and pangolin poaching, the range of rare species being targeted by criminals is growing. This is exposed by increasing seizures of the parts of large predators, rare reptiles and a variety of small mammals. Bushmeat poaching is also a growing challenge that can cause substantial wildlife disruptions. The expanding range of target species has an impact on livelihoods and economic sectors such as tourism and conservation hunting. All of these elements draw limited law-enforcement resources away from the current investigation focus and create a compounded challenge.

Forensics capabilities

Forensic analyses are an important tool in wildlife crime investigations. DNA analysis can

link seized rhino horns or ivory to a particular carcass; Ballistic analysis can link bullets recovered from a carcass to firearms; in some cases human DNA from a crime scene can be matched with the DNA of a suspect. Such clear, incriminating evidence can help decide the outcome of court cases. Capacity limitations in forensic analyses present a significant challenge for investigations and prosecution. The upgrading and streamlining of the Namibian Police Forensic Science Institute should alleviate this hurdle in the foreseeable future.

Proliferation of crime

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating effect on individual livelihoods and personal health in Namibia. The temporary standstill of the tourism and conservation-hunting industries has had massive impacts, and the national economy has been adversely affected. Increased poverty and widespread economic hardships caused by the pandemic are likely to result in an increase in wildlife crime. A significant overlap of criminal activities in different spheres is also being recorded, with criminals actively involved in various criminal sectors. The proliferation of firearms through wildlife crime is a further cause for concern. All of these aspects are likely to significantly increase pressures on Blue Rhino.

Prosecution constraints

Organised wildlife crime at its current levels is relatively new in Namibia and represents only

Criminal sectors often overlap and countermeasures must be holistic to achieve results



Pangolin trafficking continues to represent a major law enforcement and conservation challenge

one component of serious criminal activity. The Namibian judiciary faces diverse hurdles and the capacity of Namibia's courts is often severely stretched. A variety of additional issues, including legal representation of suspects, translation needs, forensics analyses delays and the availability of witnesses may cause further prosecution constraints. As a result, wildlife-crime court cases may take months or even years to finalise. This causes a significant lag between arrests and the prosecution of suspects, and a build up of court cases. Current sentences in wildlife-crime cases do not always recognise the seriousness of the offences and are at times too lenient. Repeat offenders committing new crimes while on bail in current court cases are becoming a significant additional challenge. More effective prosecution has been achieved through improved case preparation with sufficient incriminating evidence and appropriate charges. Close liaison with the Environmental Crimes Unit of the Office of the PG and the sensitising of magistrates to the seriousness of wildlife crime is addressing some of these issues.

Government funding constraints

Government funding constraints caused by a variety of economic forces in recent years have been severely exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This is creating growing challenges for conservation and law-enforcement initiatives, where resource shortages for field operations are inhibiting important activities. An increasing government reliance on external funding support is likely in the foreseeable future and requires strategic planning and operations by Rooikat, the BRTT and funding partners.

Sectoral and individual discord

Collaboration, a joint sense of pride, commitment and recognition for all contributions reduce the risk of 'inside jobs' and are key elements of the conservation and law-enforcement successes achieved in Namibia. This status can be threatened by individual disharmony that may escalate into sectoral discord. Positive leadership, recognition of individual contributions and an active policy of collaboration are safeguarding against these threats.

A joint vision pursued with commitment and pride by all forms the basis for success

10. Vital statistics 2018–2021

Vital statistics ...

... are indicators of both criminal activity and law enforcement effort and success.

Many factors influence criminal activity, as well as its detection and prosecution.

Statistics are complex and require expert interpretation to be meaningful. Please refer to the interpretive notes in this section as well as on p 34.

10.1 Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia

The Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia is a powerful data management and analysis tool to assist in combatting wildlife crime. The database is the repository for all Namibian wildlife crime data. This includes data on wildlife mortalities (MEFT), law enforcement (NAMPOL) and prosecution (Office of the PG). Much of the data is entered on a near real-time basis, as it is being reported by regional personnel. Historic data has been verified and entered into the database retroactively. All data is carefully cross-referenced to avoid duplication.

The comprehensive database enables the analysis of a range of impacts and trends over time, as well as their geographical distribution. Links between known suspects/perpetrators, firearms, crime scenes and wildlife carcasses, the most-targeted species and areas of crime prevalence, and the nationalities of perpetrators can all be identified and interpreted. Database information directly assists with investigations, law enforcement and prosecution, while also enabling accurate reporting of crime statistics on a weekly, monthly, annual or ad hoc basis.

Interpretation

- **The indicator table at right covers only those indicators in which members of the BRTT were directly involved; as emphasised throughout this report, countering wildlife crime in Namibia is a collaborative effort between numerous agencies.**
- **The indicators cover the time periods from: 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019 (Y1), 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020 (Y2) and 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021 (Y3)**
- *Statistics are aggregated from all parts of the country, resulting in some cases being incorporated after the publication of a particular report. There may thus be minor differences in numbers between weekly, monthly, quarterly, annual and other periodic reports.*
- **A range of impressive statistics have characterised three years of Operation Blue Rhino:**
 - **Suspects from all levels have been arrested, resulting in the effective disruption of entire syndicates** (a small number of high-level kingpins coordinate a large number of low-level poachers and enablers, meaning that the arrest of one kingpin has a huge knock-on effect)
 - **137 suspects were arrested while conspiring to poach rhino – but before a rhino was killed** (pre-emptive arrests are the most successful law enforcement intervention related to rhino poaching)
- *Further statistics are provided on pp 24–33.*
- **Special note – the number of elephant tusks seized does not relate directly to the number of elephants killed in Namibia, as some tusks may originate from elephants killed in neighbouring countries.**

10.2 Summary of statistics from 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2021

INDICATOR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Total
Wildlife crime cases registered with BRTT support:	76	72	74	222
related to pangolin	24	18	18	60
related to elephant	10	10	18	38
related to rhinos	26	30	18	74
Conspiracy to poach rhino (pre-emptive cases): (all with BRTT support)	19	12	4	35
Individuals arrested with BRTT support:	205	229	175	609
Level 1	86	63	72	221
Level 2	113	153	84	350
Level 3	4	9	18	31
Level 4	2	2	1	5
Level 5	0	2	0	2
Pre-emptive arrests in conspiracy-to-poach-rhino cases: (all with BRTT support)	62	62	13	137
Wildlife products seized with BRTT support:				
Pangolin – total number of seizures (excl. scales)	36	29	17	82
– live animals seized	10	7	1	18
– dead animals or skins seized	26	22	16	64
– scales seized	0	2	182	184
Elephant – complete tusks seized	19	14	25	58
– total weight of seized ivory	141	222	74	437
Rhino – complete horns seized (total both species)	8	24	11	40
Firearms seized with BRTT support:	35	38	17	90
Vehicles impounded with BRTT support	26	29	12	67
Wildlife crime cases finalised in court (includes cases registered prior to start of Blue Rhino)	6	12	18	36
Individuals convicted	13	18	22	53
high-tier (tier 3-5) perpetrators	0	0	1	1
Conviction of individuals resulting in custodial sentence	13	16	21	50
Conviction of individuals resulting in monetary fine	13	15	18	46

DEFINITION OF POACHING AND TRAFFICKING LEVELS

LEVEL 1: Subsistence poaching; opportunistic poaching; opportunistic finding/selling of products (e.g. pangolin, snakes etc.); poachers hired to poach on behalf of others, but without specialist knowledge; low-level participants assisting syndicates as porters etc. (e.g. for groups entering Botswana, assisting with poaching in Etosha or on private reserves).

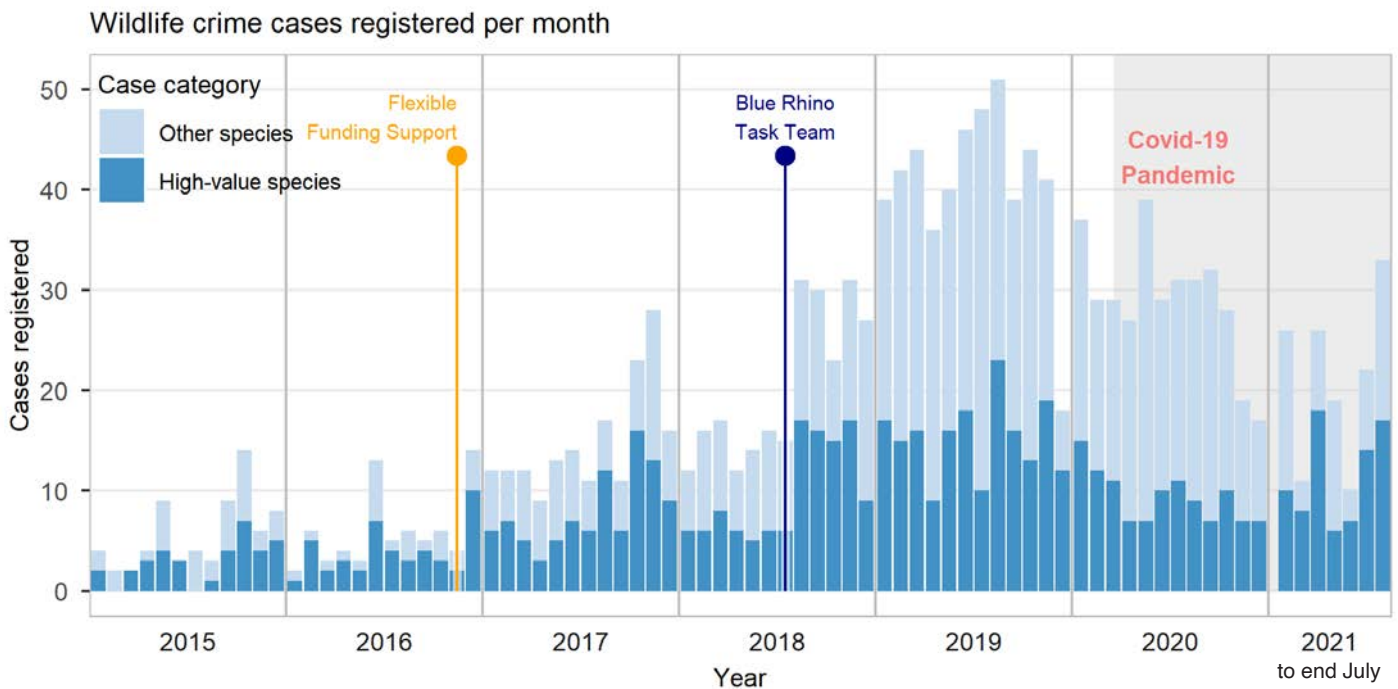
LEVEL 2: Poachers with specialist tracking skills, knowledge of area etc. working for syndicates (typically 'hired guns' for high-value species); people providing 'insider knowledge' (e.g. insider of state-protected area or private reserve providing information to syndicates); insiders play a pivotal role for syndicates; people providing transport/logistics/firearms to local syndicates/poachers.

LEVEL 3: Managing/coordinating different elements of poaching syndicates or traffickers; providing transport/logistics/firearms to trans-boundary syndicates; creating links to regional markets for illicit wildlife products (e.g. dealing with foreign buyers in neighbouring countries); any suspect charged under the Protection of Organised Crime Act (POCA); foreign couriers smuggling wildlife products out of Namibia.

LEVEL 4: Any foreign suspect organising trafficking of wildlife products to final destinations/foreign buyers (e.g. responsible for shipping/selling products to international, not regional, destinations; actual couriers carrying goods are level 3); any foreign suspect who coordinates international trafficking of wildlife products.

LEVEL 5: International kingpins (more likely to be arrested in foreign destinations); government officials facilitating illegal wildlife trade through their position of authority; only includes people using privileged position to execute trafficking of wildlife products (e.g. customs official purposefully facilitating export of illegal wildlife products).

10.3 Wildlife crime cases registered (start January 2015 to end July 2021)



High-value species: Elephant, rhinos (both species combined), pangolin

Interpretations and notes

Total number of wildlife crime cases

- The above statistics represent all cases registered, which may be related to any species of wildlife and any type of wildlife crime infringement, registered anywhere in Namibia.
- High-value species represented in the graphs are elephant, rhinos (both species) and pangolin
- Other species consist mainly of antelopes, giraffe, zebra, etc. killed for meat, but also include reptiles, predators, etc.
- Infringements include both actual poaching and the intent to poach; trafficking (i.e. trading) of illegal wildlife or parts thereof; possession of illegal wildlife or parts thereof; and other infringements such as possession of illegal firearms, and unlawfully entering a protected area.
- Cases do not always include arrests.

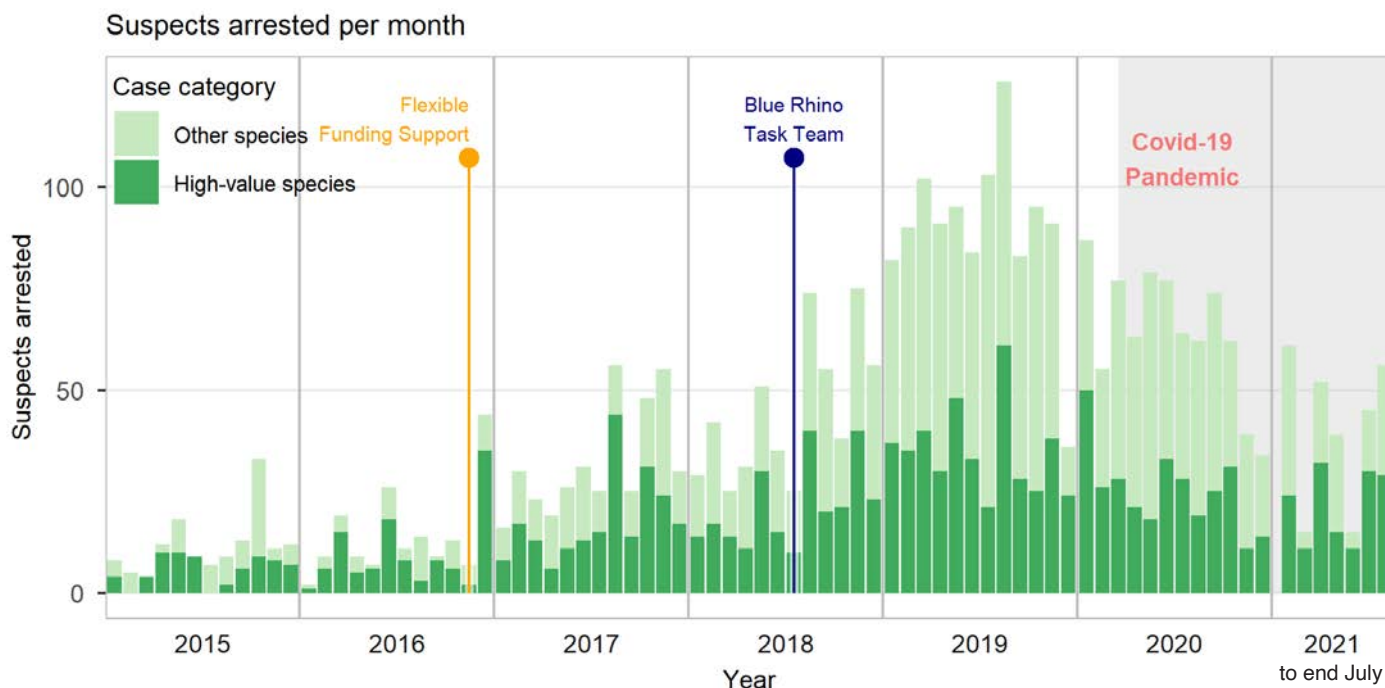
Changes in the number of registered cases from year to year

- Many factors influence the number of wildlife crime cases registered. These can include changes in law-enforcement effort, and changes in the number of crimes being committed.
- Suspects may be charged with a number of offenses, sometimes under separately registered cases.
- The same suspects may be re-arrested in new cases over time (having been released or acquitted).
- Wildlife crime in Namibia has undoubtedly increased significantly in recent years, but there have also been significant increases in the effectiveness of law enforcement, especially over the past three years.

The impact of flexible funding and Operation Blue Rhino

- The distinct rise in the number of registered cases from late 2016 is attributed in part to the start of flexible funding secured via the Rooikat Trust.
- The distinct rise in the number of registered cases from mid-2018 onwards is attributed in part to the inception of Operation Blue Rhino, which facilitated collaboration and enabled more rapid, targeted interventions.

10.4 Suspects arrested (start January 2015 to end July 2021)



High-value species: Elephant, rhinos (both species combined), pangolin

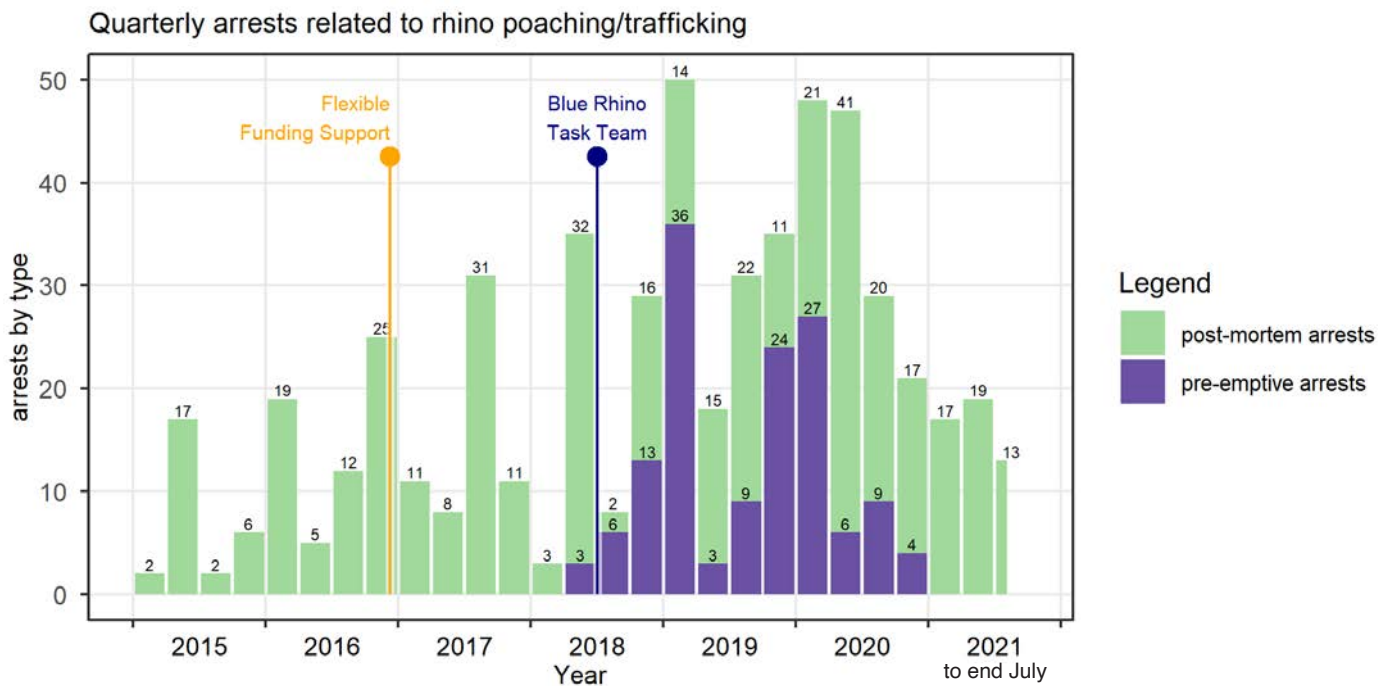
Interpretations and notes

Monthly wildlife crime cases and arrests

- There are clear fluctuations in the number of wildlife crime cases and arrests registered each month. The causes for these fluctuations are complex.
- Cases registered are based on the date when the case was opened; some cases may be ongoing for several years and arrests may be carried out at any time during this period.
- Law enforcement may involve a number of government agencies, and usually includes NAMPOL, MEFT and NDF personnel. These often collaborate during the investigation of wildlife crime cases.
- Government law enforcement personnel are often assisted by community game guards and private-sector anti-poaching staff, as well as members of the public, who provide information and other support.
- All wildlife crime cases are registered with NAMPOL by opening a crime register with a unique, traceable CR number.
- A case may be opened at any police station in Namibia.
- Wildlife crime has undoubtedly increased in Namibia, yet the significant increase in registered cases and arrests coinciding with the start of flexible funding and the inception of Operation Blue Rhino clearly portrays the importance of Rooikat support and the effectiveness of the Blue Rhino Task Team in countering wildlife crime.
- The reduction in registered cases and arrests from early 2020 may be partly attributable to law enforcement effectiveness, as well as to increased security controls and restrictions on people's movements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

10.5 Arrests related to rhino (start January 2015 to end July 2021)

Note - pre-emptive arrests indicate poachers arrested before they could kill a rhino



Interpretations and notes

Total number of arrests related to rhino

- Total arrests related to rhino include both the actual poaching of rhino and the intent to poach rhino; as well as trafficking (i.e. trading) of rhino parts; and possession of rhino parts.
- There are clear fluctuations in the number of arrests each quarter. The causes for these fluctuations are complex.
- Some cases may be ongoing for several years, and arrests may be made at any time during this period.

Pre-emptive arrests conducted by the Blue Rhino Task Team

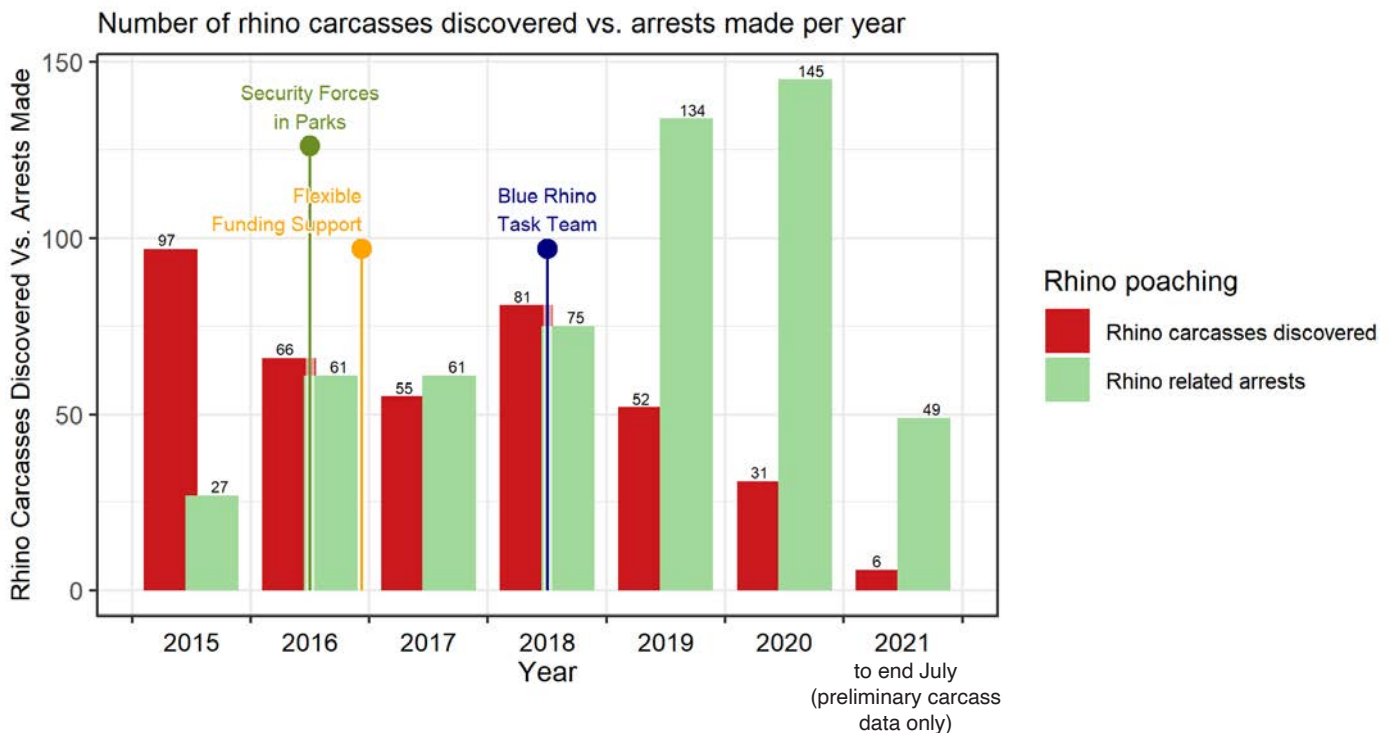
- Since the inception of Blue Rhino, pre-emptive arrests have made up a significant portion of arrests related to rhino.
- Pre-emptive arrests are those arrests where poachers are arrested while planning or attempting to poach a rhino, but have not yet killed a rhino.
- Suspects in pre-emptive arrests are charged with conspiracy to poach rhino (also known as intent to poach).
- Charges in pre-emptive arrests are based on a variety of incriminating evidence, which may include unlawful entry into a game park, possession of illegal firearms, carrying of firearms in a game park etc.
- Through the effective use of a range of monitoring, surveillance and forensics technology, as well as other information, the Blue Rhino Task Team has been able to make a significant number of pre-emptive arrests.
- The percentage of pre-emptive arrests has decreased over the past year.

The impact of pre-emptive arrests

- Pre-emptive arrests are considered the most successful law enforcement intervention related to rhino poaching.
- Pre-emptive arrests save the lives of targeted rhinos, but still lead to the conviction of the criminals.
- The knock-on effect of the disruption of syndicates means that a considerable number rhinos are saved through each pre-emptive arrest.
- Under Namibian legislation, the laws and penalties regarding the conspiracy to commit an offence (in this case rhino poaching) are applied in the same manner as if the perpetrator had committed the actual offence.

10.6 Rhino carcasses discovered compared to arrests made (start 2015 to end July 2021)

NOTE - STATISTICS REPRESENT ESTIMATED DATE OF DEATH, NOT DATE OF DISCOVERY OF CARCASS



Interpretations and notes

Carcasses discovered versus arrests made

- The massive increase in the number of arrests related to rhinos compared to carcasses discovered is a clear indicator of the systematic dismantling of rhino syndicates
- In 2015 less than one arrest was made for every three rhinos poached; in 2020 an average of 5 arrests were made per rhino poached

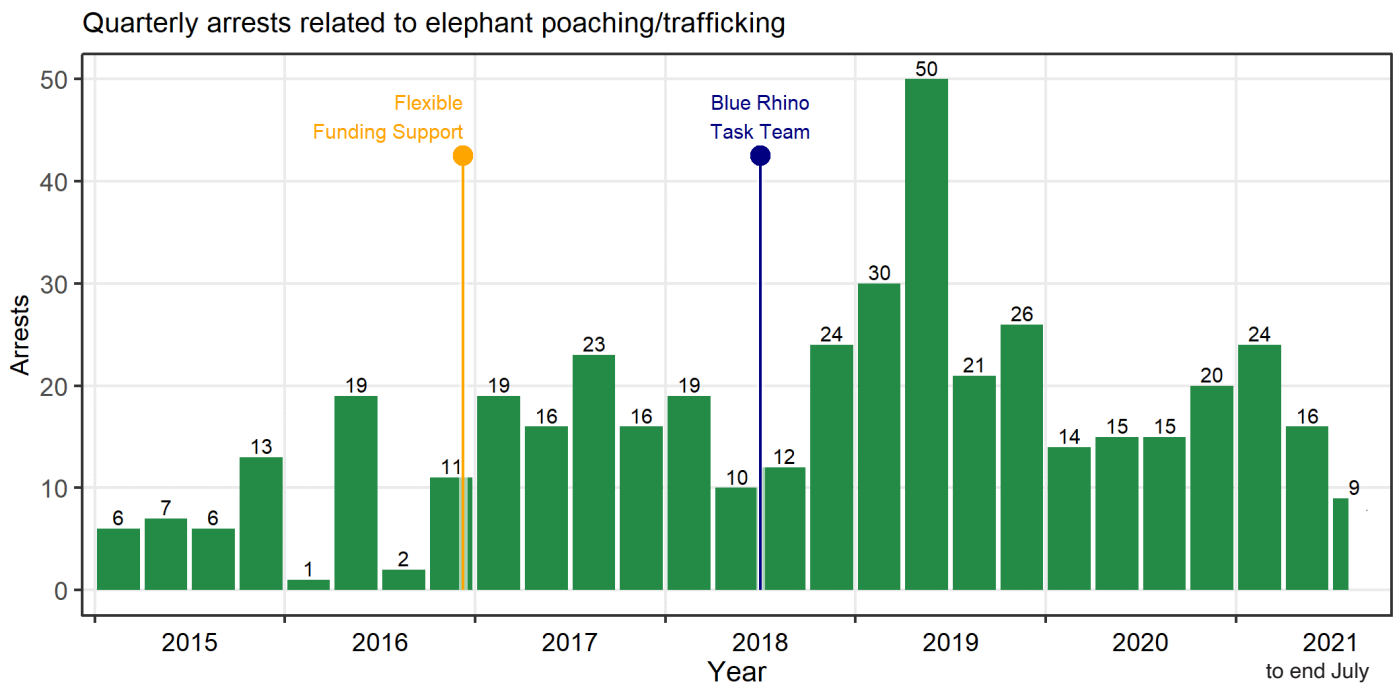
Carcasses of rhino

- **Special note – all carcass data presented as part of current wildlife crime reporting is based on estimated date of death of the animal, not date of discovery of the carcass. This means that annual carcass numbers may increase after the end of a year, if very old carcasses are discovered later in remote locations.**
- Statistics on rhino carcasses generally present a number of problems:
 - carcasses may be discovered a long time after the death of the animal (sometimes years)
 - the date of death of the animal may be difficult or impossible to determine
 - some rhino carcasses may never be discovered.
- Presenting statistics on rhino carcasses based on estimated date of death is thus problematic, as statistics need to be adjusted retroactively when carcasses that are estimated to be quite old are discovered.
- Finding animal carcasses in vast bushland (e.g. Etosha National Park), or remote, inaccessible terrain (e.g. Erongo-Kunene Community Conservation Area) can be extremely difficult or impossible, even with the aid of helicopters and other modern technology.
- Fluctuations in numbers of discovered carcasses are thus influenced by search effort as well as poaching intensity.

Poaching impacts on rhino

- Since 2016, there has been a significant decline in the number of carcasses discovered in national parks.
- Since 2016, carcasses discovered in community conservation areas have declined to negligible levels.
- Since 2016, carcasses discovered on freehold land have increased, partly neutralising declines in other areas.
- In total, 382 rhino carcasses have been found from the start of 2015 to the end of 2020.

10.7 Arrests related to elephant (start January 2015 to end July 2021)



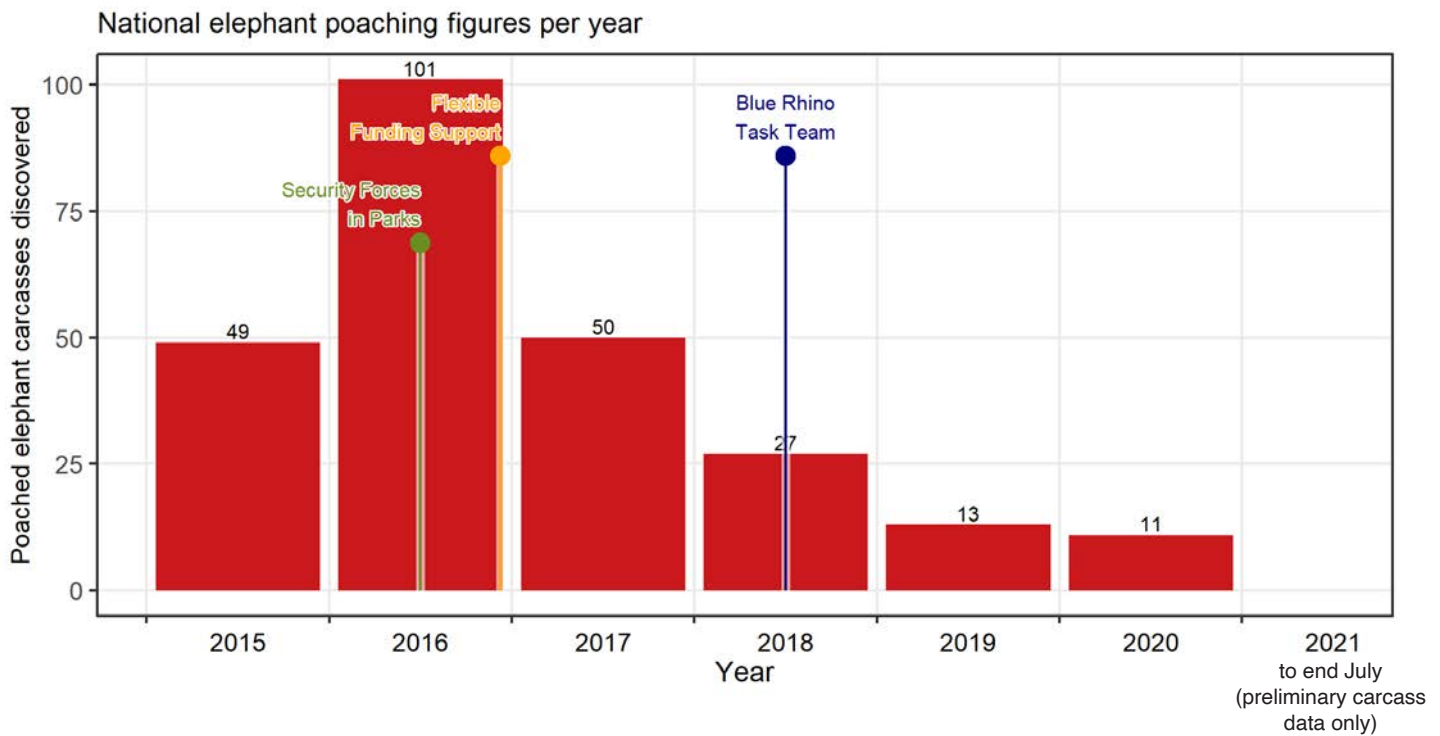
Interpretations and notes

Total number of arrests related to elephant

- Total arrests related to elephant include poaching of elephant (and in very rare cases the intent to poach elephant), as well as trafficking (i.e. trading) of elephant parts and possession of elephant parts.
- There are clear fluctuations in the number of arrests each month. The causes for these fluctuations are complex.
- Most arrests are linked to possession or attempted sale of ivory in northeastern Namibia. In many cases the ivory has been smuggled into Namibia from neighbouring countries. The origin of the ivory can rarely be determined; animals may have been poached in Namibia or in neighbouring countries.
- Some cases may be ongoing for several years, and arrests may be made at any time during this period.

10.8 Elephant carcasses discovered (start January 2015 to end July 2021)

NOTE - STATISTICS REPRESENT ESTIMATED DATE OF DEATH, NOT DATE OF DISCOVERY OF CARCASS



Interpretations and notes

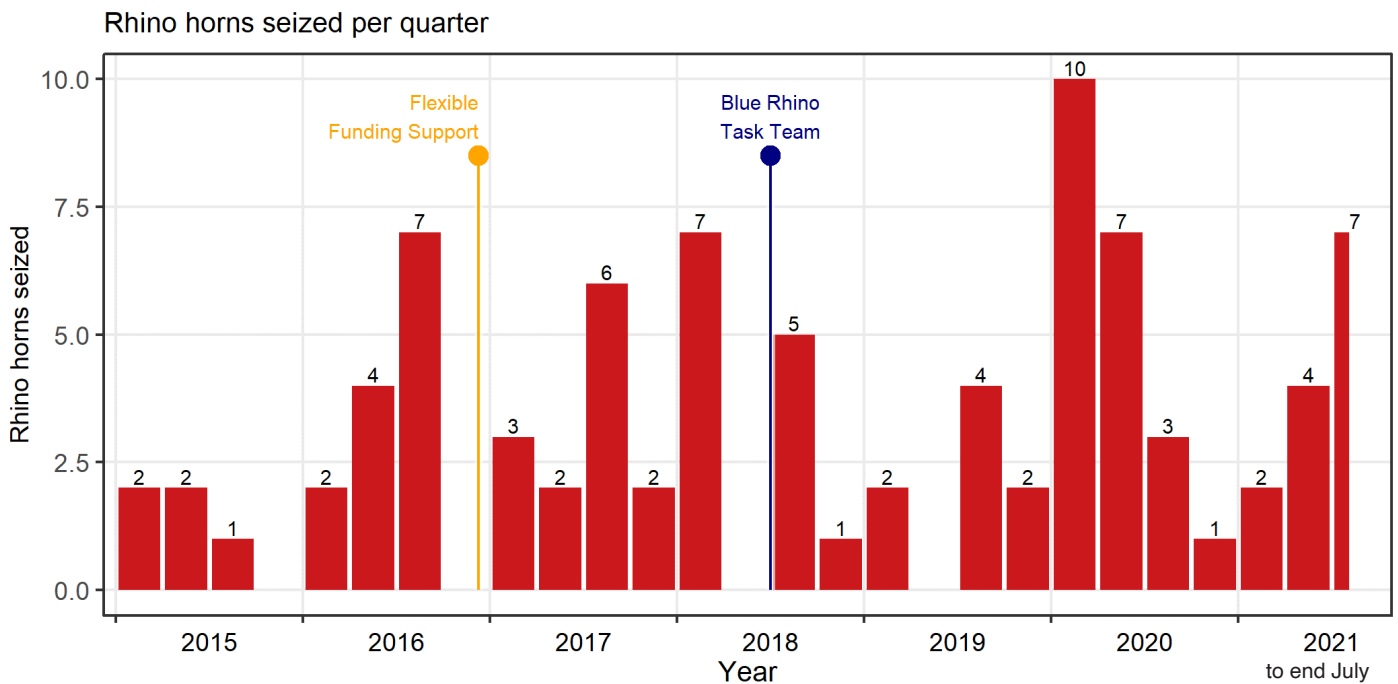
Carcasses of elephant

- **Special note – all carcass data presented as part of current wildlife crime reporting is based on estimated date of death of the animal, not date of discovery of the carcass. This means that annual carcass numbers may increase after the end of a year, if very old carcasses are discovered later in remote locations.**
- Statistics on elephant carcasses generally present a number of problems:
 - carcasses may be discovered a long time after the death of the animal (sometimes years)
 - the date of death of the animal may be difficult or impossible to determine
 - some elephant carcasses may never be discovered.
- Presenting statistics on elephant carcasses based on estimated date of death is thus problematic, as statistics need to be adjusted retroactively when carcasses that are estimated to be quite old are discovered.
- Finding animal carcasses in vast bushland (e.g. Etosha National Park), or remote, inaccessible terrain (e.g. Erongo-Kunene Community Conservation Area) can be extremely difficult or impossible, even with the aid of helicopters and other modern technology.
- Fluctuations in numbers of discovered carcasses are thus influenced by search effort as well as poaching intensity.

Poaching impacts on elephant

- Since 2016, there has been a significant decline in the number of elephant carcasses discovered in Namibia.
- In total, 251 elephant carcasses have been found from the start of 2015 to the end of 2020.

10.9 Rhino horns seized (start January 2015 to end July 2021)

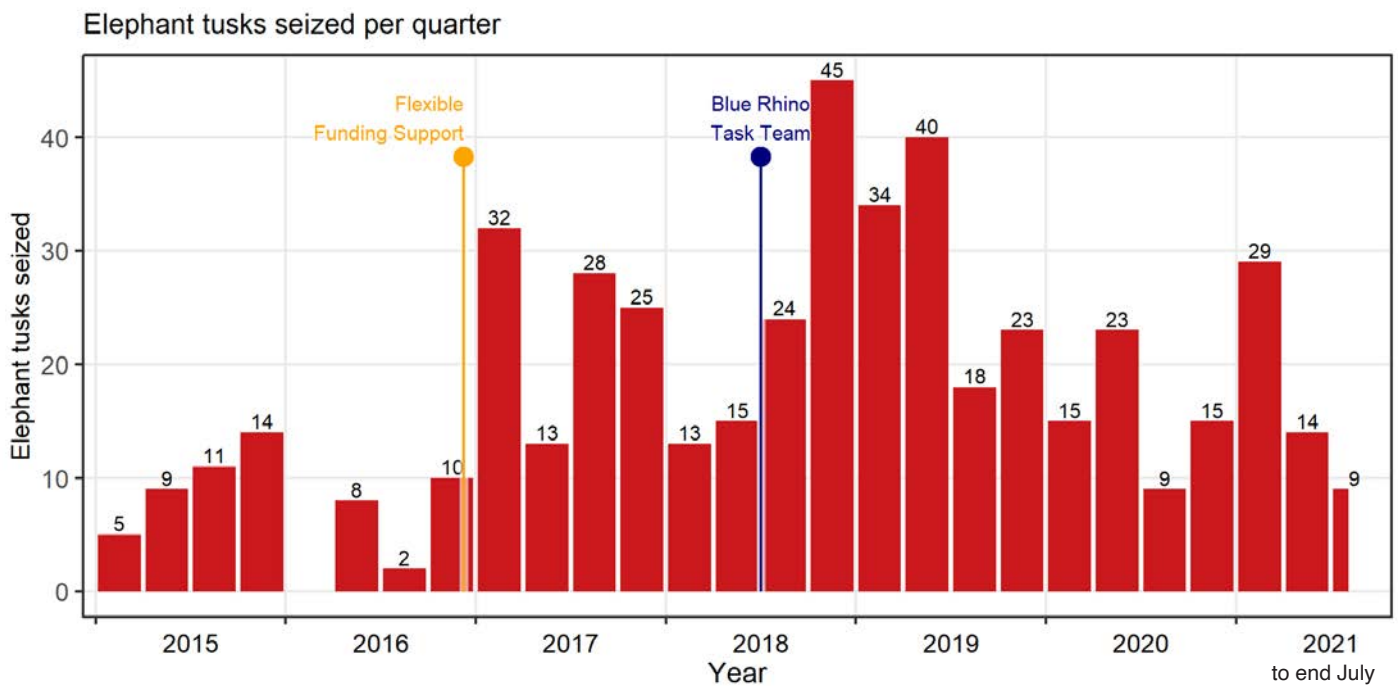


Interpretations and notes

Seizures of rhino horn

- Since 2015, the ratio of rhinos poached to rhino horns seized has been significantly reduced. While 97 rhinos are known to have been poached in 2015 with only 5 horns seized, in 2020 the number of horns seized had increased to 21, while 31 rhinos are known to have been poached last year.
- Evidence from investigations indicates that moving rhino horns out of Namibia appears to be the first priority for criminals involved in poaching and trafficking rhino.
- While in the past intricate trade routes existed for the rapid movement of rhino horns out of Namibia to neighbouring countries and destinations further afield, these have been largely disrupted through the arrest of influential kingpins, including foreign nationals.
- Improved monitoring, surveillance and rapid responses to incidents are now enabling the arrest of suspects and the seizure of rhino horns within days or even hours after a poaching incident.
- Through effective monitoring, surveillance and forensics technology, investigators are now regularly able to arrest suspects in possession of fresh rhino horns before a rhino carcass has been discovered; the location of the poaching incident is then determined through further investigation.

10.10 Ivory seized (start January 2015 to end July 2021)

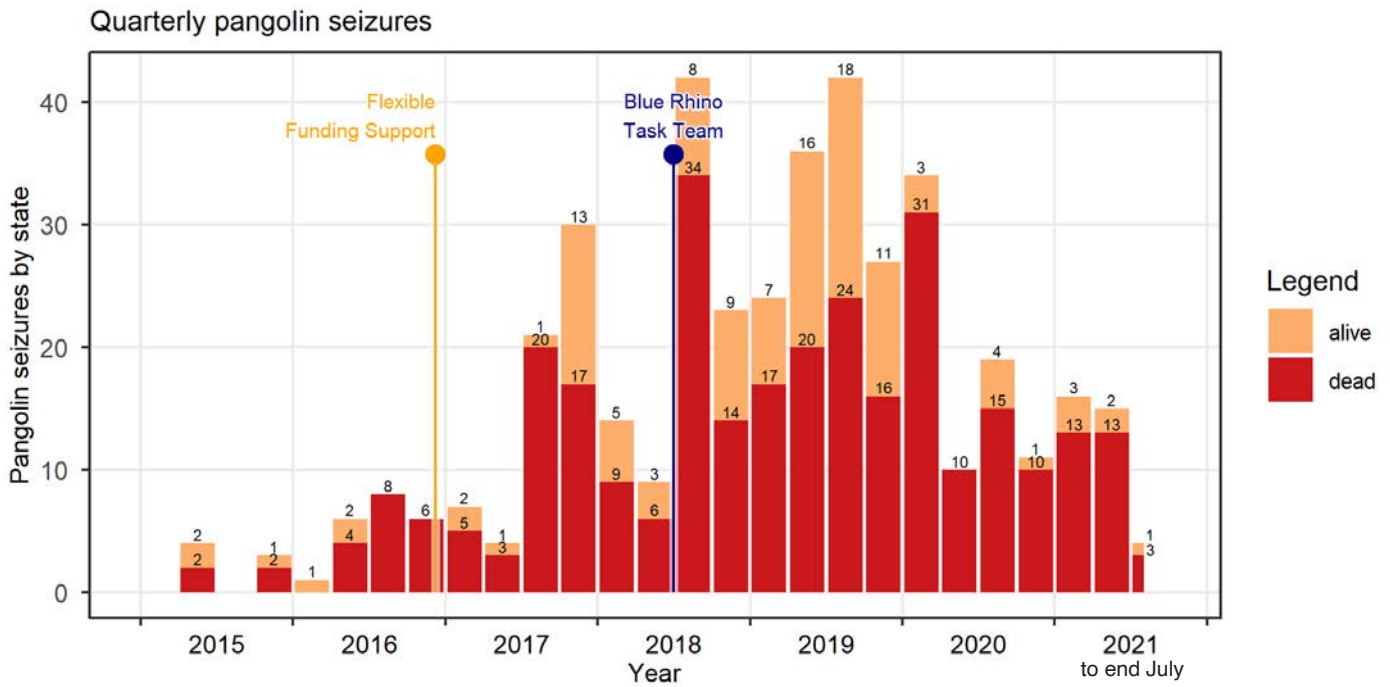


Interpretations and notes

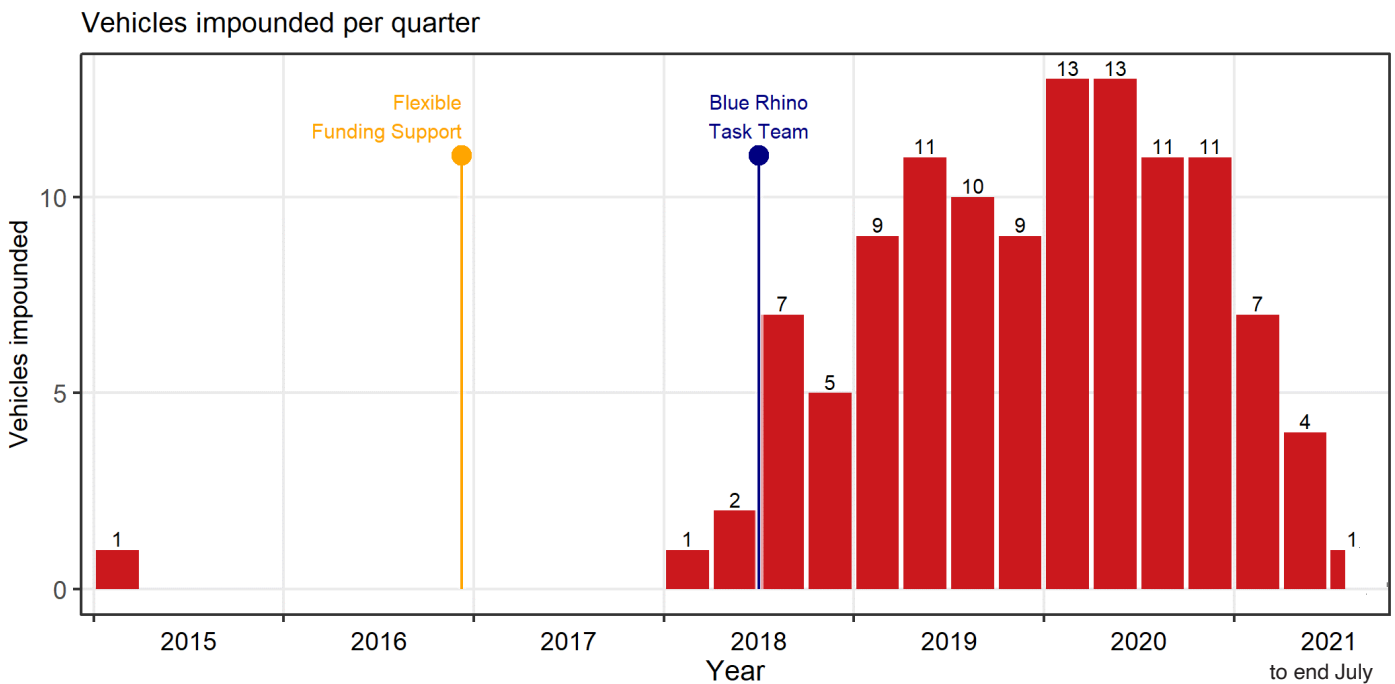
Seizures of ivory

- **Special note – the number of elephant tusks seized does not relate directly to the number of elephants killed in Namibia, as some tusks may originate from elephants killed in other countries.**
- The origin of seized ivory can not always be determined; animals may have been poached in Namibia or in other countries. This is of particular relevance in the Kavango and Zambezi regions of Namibia.
- Ivory is regularly smuggled into Namibia from neighbouring countries, either for attempted sale in Namibia, or in transit to other destinations.
- Ivory may be hidden (sometimes even buried) by criminals for longer periods (sometimes years)
- Date of confiscation of ivory can rarely be linked to the date of death of the animal. Ivory confiscated in 2019 may originate from elephants killed in 2018 or earlier.

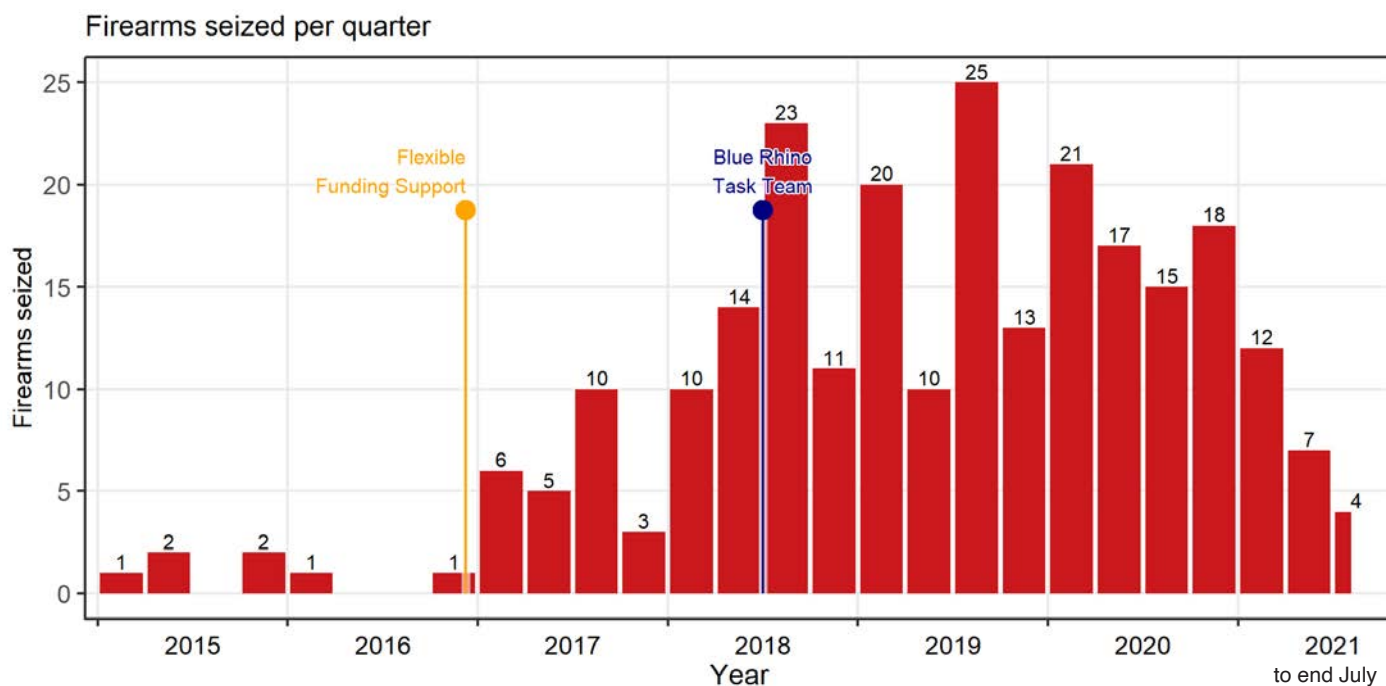
10.11 Pangolin seized (start January 2015 to end July 2021)



10.12 Vehicles seized (start January 2015 to end July 2021)



10.13 Firearms seized (start January 2015 to end July 2021)



Interpretations and notes

Seizures of pangolin

- The total number of pangolins seized has decreased substantially since early 2020; the percentage of live pangolins being seized has also decreased.
- Live pangolin that have been seized are rehabilitated whenever possible and released back into the wild at secure sites.
- Most dead pangolin are seized as dried pangolin skins, although a small number of complete pangolin carcasses have been seized.
- During periods of extreme drought, pangolin may become increasingly day-active; this may lead to unusually high numbers of pangolin sightings and incorrect assumptions regarding their abundance; it may also lead to increases in incidental pangolin poaching.

Seizures of firearms and other contraband

- Suspects are regularly arrested in possession of illegal firearms and other contraband; these are often linked to previously reported poaching incidents, or in some cases to incidents that were previously unknown, but are uncovered through the arrest.
- When suspects are found in possession of any contraband, such as illegal wildlife products, firearms or ammunition, the vehicles in which they transported those items may be seized as instrumentality in the commission of an alleged offence.
- Follow-up investigations may lead to the additional seizure of firearms used in particular poaching cases, or other illegal firearms kept by the suspects.

11. Notes on interpreting Namibian wildlife crime data

1. *Wildlife crime statistics are compiled on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis.*
2. *Statistics released of any particular period are not exhaustive. Case reports from regions may be received after the closure of that reporting period. These are added retroactively, which influences overall statistics.*
3. *Retroactive reporting will be reflected in compounded statistics (monthly, quarterly, annual). There may thus be slight discrepancies between weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual reports.*
4. *Some duplication of data may occur between regional and national reporting. This is identified during final data entry and may lead to a reduction in some totals in some instances.*
5. *The latest reporting period will always have the most up-to-date information. Always refer to the latest report available. If a discrepancy raises questions, please enquire about it.*
6. *Unless specifically noted otherwise, elephant and rhino poaching data is based on estimated date of death of the animal, not date of discovery of the carcass. Statistics of carcasses generally present a number of problems:*
 - *carcasses may be discovered a long time after the death of the animal (sometimes years).*
 - *the date of death of the animal may be difficult or impossible to determine.*
 - *some carcasses may never be discovered.*

Presenting statistics of carcasses based on estimated date of death is problematic, as statistics need to be adjusted retroactively when carcasses that are estimated to be quite old are discovered. This means that figures presented in this report may differ from figures previously published by the MEFT.
7. *Many wildlife crime cases involve complex investigations, often over longer periods of time, which may or may not lead to the arrest of suspects.*
8. *Suspects can only be charged with an offense if there is clear, prima facie evidence against them, which can be used in a court of law.*
9. *Suspects are regularly arrested in possession of contraband, including illegal wildlife products and illegal firearms. These are often linked to previously reported poaching incidents, or in some cases to incidents that were previously unknown, but are uncovered through the arrest. All illegal items, and any other objects of relevance, are seized and used as evidence in court cases.*
10. *When suspects are found in possession of any contraband, such as illegal wildlife products, firearms or ammunition, the vehicles in which they transported those items may be seized as instrumentality in the commission of an alleged offence.*
11. *Follow-up investigations may lead to the additional seizure of firearms used in particular poaching cases, or other illegal firearms kept by the suspects.*
12. *The origin of seized wildlife products can not always be determined; animals may have been poached in Namibia or in neighbouring countries. This is of particular relevance in the Kavango and Zambezi regions of Namibia.*
13. *Illegal wildlife products are regularly smuggled into Namibia from neighbouring countries, either for attempted sale in Namibia, or in transit to other destinations.*
14. *After an initial arrest, investigations in many cases continue for longer periods of time (sometimes several years) and may lead to further arrests or seizures of contraband.*
15. *Court cases, like investigations, may be drawn out over several years. Direct links between arrest and conviction statistics for any one year should thus not be made (unless a link is specifically noted as part of a statistic).*
16. *Information on active cases is often extremely sensitive and can not be released to the media, as this would jeopardise investigations. All information that can be released will be made readily available to the media on request.*

12. Namibian Partnerships against Environmental Crime

Namibian Partnerships against Environmental Crime (N–PaEC) is a broad coalition between government agencies, NGOs, private sector, local communities, international funding agencies and the general public.

Disregard for all laws gives criminals an edge, as conservation and law enforcement agencies need to adhere to rules and regulations. By working together and creating strong partnerships across a broad range of institutions and individuals, N–PaEC can significantly reduce the criminal edge.

Through N–PaEC, the ministries of Environment, Forestry and Tourism and Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security seek to engage all concerned stakeholders in the fight against wildlife crime. The below list is not exclusive and should be continually expanded to strengthen Namibia’s conservation and law enforcement efforts.

The government welcomes all constructive stakeholder engagement.

List of current partner organisations

Government

*Anti-Corruption Commission
Financial Intelligence Centre
Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform
Ministry of Defence
 Namibian Defence Force
Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism
 Directorate of Wildlife and National Parks
 Wildlife Protection Services Division
 Intelligence and Investigation Unit
 Game Products Trust Fund
Ministry of Finance
 Directorate of Customs & Excise
Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security
 Namibian Police Force
 Directorate of Criminal Investigations
 Protected Resources Division
 Serious Crime Unit
Ministry of Justice
Office of the Attorney-General
 Office of the Prosecutor-General*

Non-Government Organisations

*Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
Intelligence Support Against Poaching
Legal Assistance Centre
Namibia Animal Rehabilitation, Research and Education Centre
Namibia Nature Foundation
Rooikat Trust
Save the Rhino Trust
WWF In Namibia*

NGO Umbrella Organisations

*Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations
Namibian Chamber of Environment*

International funding agencies

*Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, USA
Global Environment Facility
Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
United States Agency for International Development
Wildcat Foundation
WWF*

Local communities

*Communal conservancies
 Communal farmers
Freehold conservancies
 Freehold farmers
Black-rhino custodians
White-rhino owners*

Private Industry

*General business community
Mining industry
Tourism and conservation-hunting industries*

Support from Namibian companies and individuals is overwhelmingly positive and extremely wide-ranging. While it is impossible to mention all contributions here, each contribution is gratefully acknowledged.

13. Abbreviations and acronyms

ACC	<i>Anti-Corruption Commission</i>
AG	<i>Attorney-General</i>
BRTT	<i>Blue Rhino Task Team</i>
CCPCJ	<i>Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice</i>
CITES	<i>Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora</i>
CR	<i>Crime Register</i>
DC	<i>Deputy Commissioner</i>
ECU	<i>Environmental Crimes Unit, Office of the Prosecutor-General</i>
FIC	<i>Financial Intelligence Centre</i>
GEF	<i>Global Environment Facility</i>
GPTF	<i>Game Products Trust Fund, MEFT</i>
ICCWC	<i>International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime</i>
IG	<i>Inspector-General</i>
IIU	<i>Intelligence and Investigation Unit, MEFT</i>
INL	<i>Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, USA</i>
INTERPOL	<i>International Criminal Police Organization</i>
IRDNC	<i>Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation</i>
KAZA	<i>Kavango–Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area</i>
KfW	<i>Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau</i>
LAC	<i>Legal Assistance Centre</i>
MAWLR	<i>Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform</i>
MEFT	<i>Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism</i>
MHAISS	<i>Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security</i>
MoD	<i>Ministry of Defence</i>
MoF	<i>Ministry of Finance</i>
MoJ	<i>Ministry of Justice</i>
NACSO	<i>Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations</i>
NAMPOL	<i>Namibian Police Force</i>
NAPHA	<i>Namibia Professional Hunting Association</i>
NARREC	<i>Namibia Animal Rehabilitation, Research and Education Centre</i>
NCE	<i>Namibia Chamber of Environment</i>
NDF	<i>Namibian Defence Force</i>
NGO	<i>Non-government organisation</i>
NNF	<i>Namibia Nature Foundation</i>
N–PaEC	<i>Namibian Partnerships against Environmental Crime</i>
PG	<i>Prosecutor-General</i>
POCA	<i>Prevention of Organised Crimes Act</i>
PRD	<i>Protected Resources Division, NAMPOL</i>
SRT	<i>Save the Rhino Trust</i>
UNODC	<i>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</i>
USAID	<i>United States Agency for International Development</i>
WCO	<i>World Customs Organisation</i>
WPSD	<i>Wildlife Protection Services Division, MEFT</i>



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Namibia response to decision 18.111

1. What activities has Namibia conducted in terms of initiation of joint investigations and operations aimed at addressing members of organized crime networks across the entire illegal trade chain of rhino in the country.

What was the initiative? <i>Focus on key ones</i>	What was the objective?	Was the objective achieved? Yes/No/Partially	If not, why not? If so, why? <i>Key elements of success or failure.</i>	What worked and what did not work?	If needed, what could be done differently?
Develop a National Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement (2021-2025)	To establish within the country, and within the framework of national laws, common approaches to the protection and conservation of wildlife and to ensure the effective enforcement of laws governing wildlife resources	Partially. Due to this being a 5 year strategy, objectives for Year 2 to 5 within the strategy are still to be rolled out and implemented	Most targets for Year 1 outlined in the action plan of the strategy have been achieved	Increased human capacity, improved data capture, investigations & intelligence, prosecutions, reporting, stakeholder coordination, established K9 Unit, implemented Conservation fee for sustainable financing, approved species management plans, established pangolin working group. Wildlife and Protected Areas Management Bill still to be endorsed by Cabinet	Faster roll out of steps to combat wildlife crime
Establishment of the Wildlife Protection Services (WPS) Sub-Division within the Directorate of Wildlife and National Parks (including the Intelligence and Investigations Unit (IIU) under the WPS)	Establish a sub-division within the Directorate of Wildlife and National Parks dedicated to anti-poaching, law enforcement and investigations and intelligence work	Partially. The IIU was established and positions filled, however, very few of the regional WPS positions have been filled	Appointments are slow due to cumbersome approval processes and financial constraints	WPS staff recruitment process not ideal	Ensure that recruitments are done in an efficient manner
Establishment of the Waterberg APU Training School	Establish a training school for APU personnel	Yes	School established and training taking place	Training can be increased but budget constraints are a limiting factor. Funding needed for general maintenance costs of school.	A maintenance budget for the school is essential.

Training of MEFT and stakeholder personnel	Train as many people in law enforcement and wildlife crime related topics	Partially. Training is ongoing	Training is ongoing. Training: law enforcement, Scene of Crime, Prosecutor training	Financial resources are delaying training program	
Establish specialised units and purchase Squirrel B3 helicopter	Squirrel B3 helicopter purchased to increase aerial patrol capabilities and assist with security operations. K9 Units developed for Etosha National Park and North West, for the North East and for the Central regions. Horse Unit developed for Etosha National Park	Partially. Squirrel B3 helicopter purchased and operational. K9 Unit for Etosha National Park developed. Second Unit for North East currently being trained. Third K9 unit to be developed in 2 years time. Horse Unit in planning phase.	Squirrel B3 Helicopter has increased aerial presence in most of the rhino poaching areas and assisted with carcass detection rates. ENP K9 unit has had a lot of success in and around Etosha, especially during road blocks and the confiscation of illegal firearms.	Carcass detection has increased tenfold due to the the MEFT Helicopter. K9 Unit has served as a deterrent in and around ENP. The sustainability of both incentives are a problem. Currently reliant on donor funding.	
National Dehorning Program	To dehorn all the smaller rhino populations Nationally every second year, with the exception of Etosha NP, to take away incentive and to audit populations	Yes	Program ongoing since 2014 when cabinet approved National dehorning. Populations that were targeted by poaching has seen a significant drop after dehorning took place.	Dehorning effective on small populations in combination with good intelligence and boots on the ground. Less effective in larger populations such as Kunene or populations with 50+ animals. Need to at least dehorn 80% of a population to be effective. Financially costly, especially if trying to dehorn every population every 2 years. Time consuming.	Increase staff capacity to tackle the large numbers of rhino currently in the program. Namibia typically dehorn 200 – 300 rhino annually under government but need to push this number up to at least 400.

2. Is there any law enforcement cooperation between and among range and implicated States be increased through the existing international, regional and national law enforcement mechanisms and, where necessary, for example, through the establishment of treaties on extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance in criminal matters, in order to curtail rhinoceros poaching and illegal trade in rhinoceros

What was the initiative? <i>Focus on key ones</i>	What was the objective?	Was the objective achieved? Yes/No/Partially	If not, why not? If so, why? <i>Key elements of success or failure.</i>	What worked and what did not work?	If needed, what could be done differently?
<p>Implementation of the Blue Rhino Task Team (BRTT). Started in August 2018. It formalised some cooperation between specialised and hand-picked members from various ministries to investigate old and new rhino poaching cases.</p>	<p>The primary objectives were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thoroughly investigate wildlife crimes related to high-value species, including cases registered prior to the inception of the operation • compile, manage and analyse wildlife-crime data through the Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia • arrest perpetrators of crimes related to highvalue species and dismantle criminal syndicates • ensure contraventions are charged under POCA and other relevant legislation • prevent criminal activity through pre-emptive interventions and deterrence • support the prosecution of high-value wildlife crime suspects to ensure appropriate penalties for all 	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>PARTLY</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74 rhino cases were registered where suspects were arrested. A high number of suspects from old cases were arrested thanks to follow up investigations. • A comprehensive National Wildlife crime data base was created under BRTT. • many syndicates were dismantled, but new syndicate are being formed. •The POCA charges are being used on most important cases. •Over 140 suspects were arrested by BRTT, thanks to great cooperation between intel agencies and boots on the ground •BRTT Investigators are working hand in hand with State prosecutors to ensure adequate penalties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multidisciplinary task team from handpicked people was a critical factor of success. Along with fast and flexible fundings. • A Wildlife Crime data base used by all the Ministries was an important factor to unit all Namibian law enforcement agencies. • Cooperation and good channel of communication at operation level between intel agencies and operatives on the ground is crucial. • Good cooperation and communication between investigators and prosecutors is primordial. 	

	<p>perpetrators of high-value wildlife crimes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support anti-poaching activities through active law-enforcement input • ensure regular reporting of wildlife crime statistics, trends, achievements and challenges to all relevant stakeholders • ensure broad wildlife-crime awareness creation through active communication • form and strengthen partnerships at all levels and across boundaries 	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>PARTLY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •BRTT members communicate any intel information that could guide the APU on the ground. •Weekly, monthly, quarterly, annual and ad-hoc Reports are generated and disseminated to the relevant authorities and whenever requested. •WC reports are communicated to the public/press every Monday. •Partnerships are created across Namibian Ministries at every hierarchy levels. Cross boundaries partnerships are forming gradually with all neighbours. But with some countries like Angola, the cooperation is going at a slower pace, language barrier might be the main issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation and good channel of communication at operation level between intel agencies and operatives on the ground is crucial. •it is crucial to report accurately and share the credit with every single entity involved in successful operation. •Public awareness is important to get the support of the civil society and fill in the vacume otherwise occupied by negative journalism that can demoralise law enforcements •Frequent workshop and training allow stakeholder to know each other, build bridges and develop some trust. Trust is essential for every multi-agency operation. 	
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