

Wildlife in peril as poachers' net spreads

As the war rages against rhino poachers, experts are warning about the dangers faced by other animals to meet local and international demand for products.



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The Endangered Wildlife Trust's Adam Pires said despite the concerns about rhino poaching, the organisation was troubled by the increases in the poaching of lions, vultures and pangolin, and the smuggling and illegal trade of reptiles.

He said the poaching of lions and vultures was for perceived medicinal purposes, with the poisoning of vultures being "extremely serious and devastating, given the small populations of vultures".

Pires said despite tackling criminal syndicates and providing more education to communities, he believed that the fight against poaching was hampered by the perceived "low risk of detection versus high profits or rewards for trading illegally in wildlife".

"When we start levelling this out we will be heading in the right direction.

"Although some cases have seen good sentencing there are many more cases that don't get the necessary attention," he said.

The SA Predators Association's Carla van der Vyver said the industry had seen a big increase in poaching incidents, with lions targeted in particular.

"I believe it is to meet the demand for the local market. They were very specific in going for the heads and paws. If it was for the international market, I believe they would utilise more of the carcasses," said Van der Vyver.

She said the association was concerned that as levels of lions dwindle other predators might also be targeted.

Zebra, giraffe and porcupines are also being targeted, Department of Environmental Affairs spokesman Eleanor Momberg said.

Pires said: "Many resources have been allocated to tackle the illegal trade of rhino horn and rightly so.

"The illegal trade of other animals and plants has always been taking place and it's difficult at this point to draw any correlations whether since the increase of rhino poaching there has been an increase in the illegal trade of other species."

Source: The Times

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