

Rhino poachers get prison time

Joint efforts of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and game rangers have resulted in 18 suspects being arrested in Skhukuza, Hluhluwe, Barberton, KwaMsane, Nongoma and Gluckstadt.



Image source: www.pixabay.com

Five suspects were found guilty of poaching and sentenced to a collective 30 years and nine months imprisonment. One suspect was fatally wounded during arrest operations.

Police recovered two rhino horns, eight unlicensed firearms, ammunition, two silencers, a scope, an axe, a knife, two cell phones and two motor vehicles.

“Most of the suspects have since appeared in various courts on charges of unlawful possession of arms and ammunition, possession of dangerous weapon, trespassing, hunting a protected animal, kidnapping, assault, possession of rhino horns and/or possession of suspected stolen properties,” police spokesperson Brigadier Vishnu Naidoo said on Friday, 22 September.

Five other accused were found guilty and sentenced in the Skhukuza Regional Court this week. Maphoyisa Mahlaule was found guilty of hunting a protected animal, possession of unlicensed firearm, unlawful possession of ammunition and trespassing. He was sentenced to an effective 20 years imprisonment.

Three accused - Dumisani Mathebula, Paul Julio Mhibiri and Paul Ubisi -- were convicted and sentenced to two years for trespassing, two years for possession of an unlicensed firearm, three years for possession of firearm with intent to commit a crime, four years for conspiracy to commit a crime, 18 months for unlawful possession of ammunition and three months for illegal immigration.

Bukani Mbele was found guilty and convicted for illegal hunting and possession of rhino horns. He was sentenced to six years' imprisonment, three years for each case.

"The partnership of the police and park rangers in this continuing challenge is vital and has borne results once again," said Naidoo.

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