

Rhino poaching returns after pandemic-induced lull

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2 Aug 2021

Rhino poaching in South Africa rose by 50% in the first half of 2021 compared to a year earlier when poaching plummeted due to Covid-19 restrictions, the environment ministry said on Saturday, 31 July.



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From January to the end of June 2021, 249 rhino were poached in Africa's most industrialised economy, home to the largest white rhino population in the world, compared with 166 during the same period in 2020.

"While this is higher than the number of rhino killed for their horns in the same period last year, at 166, it is less than the 318 rhino that were poached in the first six months of 2019," the ministry said.

In 2020, 394 rhinos were poached, the lowest yearly tally since 2011, after strict limits on travel, including international travel, kept poachers at bay.



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During the first half of the year, the majority of the recorded rhino poaching was in South Africa's vast Kruger National Park, with 132 rhino and one elephant poached during the period.

Rhino poaching often involves both local poachers and international criminal syndicates that smuggle the high value commodity across borders, often to Asia where demand is high.

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