

2024

NATIONAL REPORT



Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement

Photo courtesy Wildscapes Namibia Research & Enhancement
© 2025

SPECIAL FOCUS: Ten years of crisis-level poaching in Namibia



in Namibia

for the Year **2024**



NATIONAL REPORT

Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia

for the Year **2024**

This report covers the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024



Criminals are members of the public –

when the public is vigilant and reports suspicious behaviour and openly condemns all crime, criminal activities become very difficult.

Crime becomes near impossible when good people from all sectors work together to fight it.

Report wildlife crime via sms at this number: 55 555

[all messages are strictly confidential]



Ministry
of Environment, Forestry and Tourism

Namibian
Police Force

Office
of the Prosecutor General



Contents:

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Wildlife protection and law enforcement – milestones 2015–2024	4
3.	Wildlife protection and law enforcement – the numbers for 2024	6
4.	Wildlife protection and law enforcement – status summary for 2024	8
5.	Key characteristics, activities and events summary for 2024	10
6.	Key sectors and noteworthy cases summary for 2024	18
7.	Challenges faced in 2024 ... and how they are being addressed	26
8.	Wildlife crime statistics summary 2020–2024	28
9.	General wildlife crime trends 2015–2024	30
10.	Meat-poaching and trafficking trends 2015–2024	50
11.	Pangolin poaching and trafficking trends 2015–2024	56
12.	Elephant poaching and trafficking trends 2015–2024	62
13.	Rhino poaching and trafficking trends 2015–2024	70
14.	Plant poaching and trafficking trends 2015–2024	80
15.	Emerging wildlife crime sectors – trends 2024	94

Additional contents

A1.	Special focus: Ten years of crisis-level poaching in Namibia	41
A2.	Special focus: Ten years of prosecuting wildlife crimes in Namibia	87
A3.	Understanding and using wildlife crime data	96
A4.	Important notes on interpreting Namibian wildlife crime data	97
A5.	List of current partners	98
A6.	Abbreviations and acronyms	99
A7.	Notes and references	100

Information Boxes

B1.	Financial investigations – the key to locking away the proceeds of crime	13
B2.	Namibia's dedicated Environmental Crimes Court	16
B3.	Repeat offenders – caught in a web of wildlife crime	24
B4.	Prosecuting rhino crimes – a fundamental challenge for rhino conservation in Namibia	35
B5.	International crime webs targeting indigenous and endemic Namibian plants	37
B6.	Can we control our hunger for meat?	39
B7.	Are we still underestimating the wide-ranging impacts of wildlife crime?	48
B8.	Status update – general wildlife protection in Namibia	55
B9.	Status update – pangolin protection in Namibia	61
B10.	Status update – elephant protection in Namibia	67
B11.	Status update – rhino protection in Namibia	77
B12.	Status update – plant protection in Namibia	83



I. INTRODUCTION

IT HAS BEEN TEN YEARS since the sudden, massive spike in rhino and elephant poaching drastically altered the wildlife protection and law enforcement landscape in Namibia. In 2015 99 rhinos were recorded as poached; in 2016 the number of elephants recorded as poached spiked at 101. Poaching and trafficking of pangolins also began to escalate alarmingly, as did meat poaching. More recently, poaching and live trafficking of indigenous plants has become yet another sector of major concern. There are indications that trafficking of live reptiles is also widespread, but remains mostly undetected.

The pressure of illicit exploitation on our natural resources over the past ten years is unprecedented in independent Namibia, and can without exaggeration be considered crisis-level. We have lost well over 700 rhinos over the past decade. For one of the last two countries left on Earth with a national rhino population of over 1,000 animals of each African rhino species, this must be considered a conservation crisis – not only for Namibia, but for African rhinos and global biodiversity.

Namibia's national elephant population is much more secure, having tripled since independence to over 24,000 animals. While the poaching spike of 2016 undoubtedly had an impact, elephant poaching in Namibia has been curbed to low levels. Less than 15 elephants a year are known to have been lost to poaching for the past six years.

The impact of losing at least 650 pangolins over the past decade (includes seized scales attributed as individual animals) is much more difficult to assess, as the national distribution and numbers of this secretive nocturnal mammal remain poorly known. Other human-induced impacts such as electric fencing have become widespread, and pangolins are likely to be under significant pressure in many parts of their range.

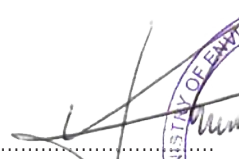
Namibians have not taken the crisis lightly. News articles and social media discourse already drew public attention to the brewing storm in 2014, when 50 rhinos

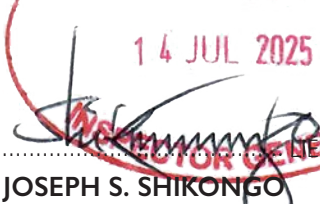
were recorded as poached. Conservation-oriented civil society immediately demanded action. A large public demonstration was held along Independence Avenue in the capital. The onslaught had not come out of the blue. South Africa had been suffering massive losses to its large rhino populations for over five years. Recognising the imminent threat, Namibia had swiftly organised strategic rhino-security workshops as early as 2010, but proposed measures had not been implemented effectively enough to ward off the plunder of 2014–15.

The government responded by creating new departments, including the Wildlife Protection Services Division and the Intelligence and Investigation Unit in the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, the Environmental Crimes Unit in the Office of the Prosecutor General, and the Blue Rhino Task Team, an interagency collaboration between the MEFT and the Namibian Police Force, which has since grown to embrace much broader collaboration. National security forces were deployed to priority areas in an anti-poaching capacity, and legislation was revised to enable more appropriate prosecution and sentencing.

Namibian non-government entities and the international community also responded to the rhino poaching crisis with determination. Wide-ranging funding support from international partners significantly boosted Namibian government and community conservation capacities, and continues to do so. Substantially increased anti-poaching patrols and public awareness campaigns in community conservation areas quickly began to limit poaching losses here. Private reserves also drastically increased their security measures in attempts to ward off incursions.

The measures produced results, evidenced by sharp increases in registered cases and arrests, and seizures of illicit goods, firearms and vehicles after 2015, as well as temporary reductions in poaching losses. As registered case numbers began to rise, efficient case finalisation resulting in appropriate sentences presented a massive


12 JUN 2025
SIKONGO HAIHAMBO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,
FORESTRY AND TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR


14 JUL 2025
JOSEPH S. SHIKONGO
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL
INSPECTOR GENERAL: NAMIBIAN POLICE FORCE
NAMIBIAN POLICE
WINDHOEK



hurdle. A judicial system already facing systemic challenges was being overwhelmed by a surging wildlife crime sector. The Prosecutor General responded by initiating temporary special courts for wildlife cases in wildlife crime hotspots to reduce court-case backlogs. A more permanent intervention to expedite case finalisation is the dedicated Environmental Crimes Court, inaugurated at Otjiwarongo in 2024.

All of this comes at incredible cost – to international funding partners, to the Namibian government, to non-government entities – and to the people of Namibia. The funds that have been directed towards wildlife protection and law enforcement over the past ten years might instead have been used to further national development and prosperity.

Wildlife crime is a highly faceted sphere. Uninformed global consumers from diverse cultures with an appetite for natural products continue to drive demand and thus illicit exploitation, with little or no understanding of potential conservation consequences. The ability to offer illegal products for 'legitimate' sale to global markets via the internet has become a huge factor.

The world of criminal actors is similarly complex. Limited access to natural resources or their benefits continues to alienate parts of society, while impoverished communities are drawn into illicit activities to survive. Low wages and limited capacity building in the wildlife protection and law enforcement sectors create vulnerabilities to criminal collusion and corruption. Direct countercrime initiatives cannot be seen as the sole answer to the illegal wildlife trade, but must work in tandem with socioeconomic reform and a widespread understanding of environmental threats.

Ten years on, it is important to assess what has been achieved, and what challenges might lie ahead. This report remains an annual report, providing statistics and context for the past year, yet also features a special focus on impacts and challenges of the past decade, woven into the report content. All of this information must be actively used by all stakeholders to enhance wildlife protection and law enforcement in Namibia for the next year, the next decade, and beyond.

Namibia's strength lies in partnerships. We work together to achieve results. Namibian Partnerships against Environmental Crime continue to be strengthened, with three government agencies forming the integrated focal points of wildlife protection and law enforcement:

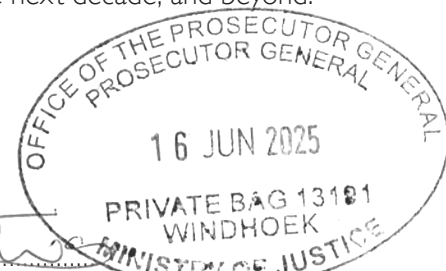
- The **Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism** is the custodian of wildlife and other terrestrial natural resources, and has wildlife management and protection as a core mandate.
- The **Namibian Police Force** is mandated with maintaining law and order, including laws related to wildlife, and the investigation of offences related to those laws.
- The **Office of the Prosecutor General** is responsible for prosecuting suspects in the name of the state in criminal proceedings, including those related to wildlife crimes.

To counter the unprecedented threat of relentless, highly organised poaching, the **Namibian Defence Force** continues to play a unique role within its mandate of defending the state and its resources against threats.

Other government agencies are playing an ongoing role in countering wildlife crime and bringing perpetrators to book. These include the Financial Intelligence Centre and the Namibia Revenue Agency. Wildlife crimes aim to gain illegal income that is laundered into the legal economy – which the FIC is able to uncover. Through Customs, NamRA forms the last (or first) line of defence for illicit products leaving (or entering) Namibia. NamRA also ensures that due taxes are paid.

Numerous funding partners and other non-government entities are making vital contributions to protecting Namibia's natural resources and supporting law enforcement. While individuals cannot be mentioned within the limits of this report, all contributions are gratefully acknowledged. The cumulative impacts of all these sectors and entities are elaborated on in this report.


Adv. OLYVIA M. IMALWA
 PROSECUTOR GENERAL – REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA





Public protest in Windhoek in 2014.

Photo courtesy Wildscapes Namibia Research & Enhancement
 © 2025



2. WILDLIFE PROTECTION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT MILESTONES 2010–2015–2024

- 2010 • First rhino security meeting held in Namibia in response to escalating rhino poaching in South Africa
- 2011 • Rhino Ranger Incentive Programme to appoint & train local rhino rangers initiated in Erongo–Kunene by SRT, IRDNC, NNF & Minnesota Zoo
- 2012 • First rhino & elephant poaching cases registered in Namibia in more than a decade; initial disjointed efforts by private sector, NGOs & government
 - Various civil society initiatives started, some with limited stakeholder engagement & mixed results
- 2013–15 • Exploration of technical measures, information networks & innovative actions to counter wildlife crime by MEFT & NGOs with Google funding
- 2014 • First large public demonstrations held in Windhoek in response to rhino poaching uncovered in Etosha NP
- 2015 • 99 rhinos recorded as poached in Namibia (50 in 2014)**
 - MEFT urges NGOs & civil society to collaborate to coordinate anti-poaching efforts
- 2015–17 • Waterberg Law Enforcement & Training Centre established, with technical support provided through MEFT's GEF-funded PASS project
- 2016 • 101 elephants recorded as poached in Namibia (+ older carcasses discovered)**
 - National security forces Joint Anti-poaching Units deployed in key elephant & rhino ranges
 - Development of MEFT law enforcement strategy in consultation with NGOs
 - Cabinet creates National Wildlife Security Committee (9 ministries represented)
 - National needs assessment identifies gaps & results in funding to support government & NGO activities
 - WWF secures INL funding for projects & activities, incl. Combating Wildlife Trafficking in Namibia, & Countering Wildlife Trafficking in Namibia & KAZA; project aims include strengthening investigations & prosecutions, improving forensics capacities & the criminal justice system
 - MEFT helicopter purchased through private-sector funding
- 2016–17 • Wildlife Protection Services Division & Intelligence & Investigation Unit created within MEFT
- 2017 • Combating Wildlife Crime Project initiated with USAID funding via WWF; focus on KAZA & Namibia
 - Kunene Rhino Pride Campaign initiated in Erongo–Kunene by SRT, IRDNC & Minnesota Zoo to engage with rural communities
 - WWF, NNF & LAC partner to support investigations & prosecutions with INL-2 funding
 - National wildlife laws revised to significantly increase penalties for serious wildlife crimes
 - Pangolin reward scheme initiated by NCE
 - Establishment of specialised dog unit, MEFT K9 Unit, begins with external funding support
- 2018 • Rooikat Trust established to support investigations & prosecutions with Wildcat Foundation funding
 - Operation Blue Rhino initiated, formal collaboration between NAMPOL–PRD & MET–IIU, endorsed by NAMPOL IG, with dedicated staff seconded to operations & support from NDF, FIC, NamRA
 - NNF, SRT, WWF & Rooikat support anti-poaching, investigations & prosecutions with INL-3 funding
 - Rooikat supports dedicated state prosecutors for wildlife cases with Wildcat Foundation funding
 - Patrol effort of Erongo–Kunene Rhino Rangers & partners increased to 1,200% of 2012 levels, suppressing poaching losses in community conservation areas to low levels
- 2019 • 1,105 suspects arrested for wildlife crimes in Namibia**
 - **130 poached pangolin seized in Namibia (88 in 2018)**
 - **177 suspects arrested for pangolin crimes in Namibia**
 - **265 meat poaching cases registered in Namibia (94 in 2018)**
 - **587 suspects arrested for bushmeat crimes in Namibia**
 - **129 suspects arrested for elephant crimes in Namibia (13 elephants poached)**
 - **82 pre-emptive arrests in rhino cases save numerous rhinos**
 - **20 yrs prison term for 4 Chinese for rhino horn trafficking (2014)**
 - Development of the Integrated Wildlife Crime Database of Namibia initiated
 - Environmental Crimes Unit established within Office of the PG
 - Internal weekly wildlife crime reports circulated to key stakeholders for every week of 2019
 - Weekly wildlife crime reports submitted to media outlets from mid-year



- 2020**
- **COVID-19 declared a pandemic, affects all countries, results in massive loss of human life & widespread suffering; national & global security & travel restrictions result in reduced wildlife crime**
 - **154 suspects arrested for rhino crimes in Namibia, incl. several high-tier national & international kingpins (48 rhinos poached)**
 - COVID-19 Relief Fund with KfW funding on behalf of German Development Cooperation begins via MEFT to lessen pandemic impacts on protected areas & wildlife protection, with support from NGOs & private sector
 - Integrated Wildlife Protection Project with KfW funding on behalf of the German Development Cooperation begins via MEFT with WWF guidance, strengthening wildlife protection through support for MEFT–WPSD
 - *First Annual Report on Combatting Wildlife Crime in Namibia* (2019) published
 - Department of Forestry shifted from Ministry of Agriculture to Ministry of Environment
 - Namibian Pangolin Working Group established to more effectively protect pangolins
 - Namibia participates in Interpol Operation Thunder 2020, countering wildlife crime across 103 countries
- 2021**
- **42 perpetrators convicted for elephant crimes in Namibia**
 - *Revised Strategy on Wildlife Protection & Law Enforcement 2021–2025* launched
 - Wildlife Crime Working Group established to coordinate & align activities of stakeholders to national strategy
 - Blue Rhino Task Team strengthens active collaboration with all relevant agencies
 - Namibia Rapid Reference Guide on Investigation & Prosecution of Wildlife Crime launched with INL funding
 - Predator Task Team established to more effectively counter crimes related to predators
 - Integrated Approach to Proactive Management of Human–Wildlife Conflict & Wildlife Crime in Hotspot Landscapes in Namibia project begins, funded by GEF through UNDP Namibia, implemented by MEFT
 - Increasing transboundary collaboration on law enforcement with neighbouring countries bears fruit
 - Increasing global collaboration & information exchange strengthens local & international countermeasures
 - Namibia participates in Interpol Operation Thunder 2021, countering wildlife crime across 118 countries
- 2022**
- **More than 3,000 live succulent plants recorded as poached in Namibia**
 - **First special courts dedicated to wildlife cases held in Namibia**
 - **248 wildlife court-cases finalised in Namibia**
 - **65 perpetrators convicted for pangolin crimes in Namibia**
 - **12 yrs prison term for 1 Namibian for ivory trafficking (2019)**
 - **9 yrs prison term for 1 Namibian for pangolin trafficking (2020)**
 - First national Basic Ranger Training for 36 MEFT–WPSD rangers
 - Strengthening of Namibian Police Forensic Science Institute capacities, incl. development of Wood Identification & Screening Centre, with support of USDA Forest Service & INL
 - First meeting of National Stakeholder Forum on Wildlife Crime & Law Enforcement; over 100 participants
 - Namibia participates in Interpol Operation Golden Strike, resulting in 32 arrests & various seizures
- 2023**
- **42 suspects arrested for plant crimes in Namibia (1,311 plant products seized)**
 - **16 perpetrators convicted for rhino crimes in Namibia**
 - **22 yrs prison term for 4 Namibians for rhino crimes (2016)**
 - Countering Wildlife Trafficking in Namibia & Angola Project begins with INL funding via NNF to support broad range of law enforcement activities
 - Strengthening Partnerships to Combat Wildlife Crime Project begins with Re:wild & EU funding via NNF to support broad range of law enforcement activities
 - Several projects to support rhino rangers & rhino protection on communal land initiated via NNF, SRT, MEFT & community conservancies, with Rhino Recovery Fund, Wildlife Conservation Network & B2Gold funding
 - Agreement reached between OPG, MoJ & Judiciary to develop dedicated Environmental Crimes Court
 - Plant Task Team established to more effectively counter poaching & trafficking of live plants
 - Zambezi Anti-poaching Support Team, partnership between MEFT & private sector, established to encourage reporting of wildlife crimes in Zambezi Region
 - 487 rhinos dehorned, most animals dehorned in a single year in Namibia
- 2024**
- **Environmental Crimes Court inaugurated in Namibia, through collaboration between government & local NGOs with funding from INL & Wildcat Foundation**
 - **8 perpetrators convicted for plant crimes in Namibia**
 - Namibian Financial Handbook on Money Laundering & Terrorist Financing developed & launched
 - National Rhino Custodianship Strategy formulated through close collaboration between MEFT & key stakeholders
 - **After 10 years of countercrime, government, NGOs, communities, private sector & international funding partners remain committed to fighting wildlife crime in Namibia.**



3. WILDLIFE PROTECTION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT THE NUMBERS FOR 2024

344 wildlife crime cases registered

529 suspects arrested

244 individuals' wildlife crime court cases finalised

231 perpetrators convicted

22 elephant cases finalised

26 perpetrators convicted

16 pangolin cases finalised

22 perpetrators convicted

5 plant cases finalised

8 perpetrators convicted

4 rhino cases finalised

7 perpetrators convicted

X rhinos saved through **44** pre-emptive arrests
in **13** conspiracy-to-poach-rhino cases

83
rhinos
poached

78 arrests in rhino cases



9 arrests in kobas plant cases

465

**kobas plants
poached**

of 2 species, *Cyphostemma bainesii* & *Cyphostemma uter*

9

**elephants
poached**

32

arrests in elephant cases

mostly for trafficking ivory that originated from outside Namibia

31

elephant tusks seized

mostly from elephants killed in other countries

Note:

- Namibia's rhinos are closely monitored & the carcasses of most poached rhinos are discovered, although in some cases long after the poaching incident; this affects annual totals retroactively.
- The carcasses of most poached elephants are also discovered, although a higher number may be overlooked due to lower monitoring effort.
- Numbers of poached pangolins are based purely on seizures; it is believed that few pangolins are currently smuggled out of the country, yet this can't be verified.
- Numbers of poached kobas plants (protected, highly-localised endemic plant species) are based purely on seizures; it is not known how many plants may be being smuggled out of the country unnoticed.

51+*
**pangolins
poached**

* 50 pangolins (live animals & skins)
& 312 scales originating from at least
1 additional pangolin were seized

64

arrests in pangolin cases



4. WILDLIFE PROTECTION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT STATUS SUMMARY FOR 2024

4.1 The year 2024

‘Wildlife trafficking persists worldwide despite two decades of concerted action at international and national levels’ – this message from the UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024¹ applies to Namibia, where some illicit sectors showed a decline during the year, while others persisted unabated. The global political and economic climate remained volatile during 2024, and Namibia registered slower economic growth than in 2023². Severe drought created acute human hardships and impacted biodiversity³. The Namibian tourism industry continued to strengthen post-COVID, regaining 2019 occupancy levels⁴, which in turn strengthened interlinked conservation initiatives. In November 2024 Namibia elected a new president – H.E. Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah is the first female President of the Republic, ushering in a new era in Namibian governance.

4.2 Status of fundamental pillars

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

The effectiveness of Namibia’s conservation systems and approaches has long been recognised as an international example of sustainable use and protection of biodiversity. Yet the impacts of illegal activities and inappropriate development are eroding many previous gains, and are exposing increasing vulnerabilities. Habitat fragmentation and destruction are advancing, while illegal exploitation continues to impact individual species. Innovation and adaptive action are required to counter relentless impacts, some of which may be irreversible.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Severe poaching impacts on rhinos, pangolins and indigenous/endemic plants, and ongoing challenges in other key sectors, are highlighting continued vulnerabilities in Namibia’s ability to effectively protect its natural resources. Efforts to improve awareness of issues amongst key stakeholders, strengthening of wildlife protection mechanisms, law enforcement and prosecution, and international collaboration in countering wildlife crime are achieving only limited results. More innovative and integrated approaches are clearly needed to safeguard Namibia’s natural resources.

WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT

During 2024 most key wildlife crime indicators again showed a slight drop. Registered cases continue a

steady year-on-year reduction from an overall peak in 2019, down $\pm 14\%$ since 2023 to a total of 344 cases. The total number of arrests dropped to 529, down by $\pm 21\%$ from arrests in 2023. Despite the reductions, the backlog of wildlife cases on court rolls continues to grow – only 244 individuals’ cases were finalised during 2024. The inauguration of a dedicated Environmental Crimes Court during 2024 is a major milestone in addressing this challenge. Combined with further special courts dedicated to wildlife cases in key regions, this can have the needed impact on pending cases. Many local, national and global trends¹ remain deeply concerning and require ongoing adaptation and innovative countermeasures (see details throughout this report).

INTERSECTORAL COOPERATION

Close liaison and active collaboration between MEFT, NAMPOL, NDF, FIC, NamRA, ACC, OPG and other government and non-government entities continue to enable important gains in countering criminal activities. The Blue Rhino Task Team continues to represent the focal point for law enforcement collaboration countering wildlife crimes, while numerous regional initiatives play a vital role.

4.3 Status of key species

ELEPHANT

Namibia’s national elephant population, estimated at over 24,000 animals¹, remains unaffected by poaching in Namibia. Yet the dynamics and vulnerabilities of Namibia’s four partly interlinked sub-populations vary. Elephants in the Kavango East and Zambezi regions undertake significant seasonal transboundary movements and, while they are the most numerous, are also the most susceptible to poaching impacts – in neighbouring countries and Namibia. The fragmented population of desert-adapted elephants in the Erongo–Kunene Community Conservation Area is experiencing extreme calf mortality and overall decline. Prolonged drought and human-induced influences may be contributing to this. National security forces deployed in an anti-poaching capacity in elephant ranges continue to deter poaching, with losses reduced to levels that are currently considered negligible. Regular and accurate monitoring to assess population health is nonetheless vital. After near record-level tusk seizures during 2023, with most tusks confirmed as originating from elephants



poached in neighbouring countries, seizures in 2024 dropped to the lowest level since 2016. Arrests in 2023 may have contributed to this decline. Human–elephant conflicts continue to impact the population, with some elephants shot during the year by rural people protecting their livelihoods (see also pp. 62–69).

RHINOS

Rhinos were once again the primary target for poachers in 2024, with 83 animals recorded as poached (total of both species). Monitoring activities during the year also uncovered a substantial number older, previously undetected carcasses, raising the total losses for earlier years (see p. 42). Poaching statistics are based on the estimated date of death related to discovered carcasses (only updated figures are presented in this report). Despite best efforts to protect rhinos and reduce crime, high losses continue to be incurred in national parks, community conservation areas and private reserves. Poaching has the most severe impacts on small, isolated rhino sub-populations across the country, with the smaller white rhino population, re-established over the past half-century after local extinction in the 1800s, most vulnerable. The national population numbers of both species currently appear viable at a combined total of around 3,600 animals², but ongoing poaching pressure on fragmented sub-populations is having increasing impacts (see also pp. 70–79).

PANGOLIN

Pangolin seizures dropped from 73 animals in 2023 to 51 during 2024 (includes seized scales attributed as additional animals). Seizures of live pangolins dropped to the lowest level since 2016 (five live animals seized in 2024), but it is unclear whether this represents a shift in strategies. Pangolin protection in the wild is extremely difficult in Namibia, as the national distribution, habits and human impacts on these small, secretive nocturnal mammals remain poorly known. No reliable estimates of national population numbers currently exist, and no targeted protection strategies have been implemented. Localised research, community awareness creation and reactive law enforcement are currently the main interventions (see also pp. 56–61).

MEAT-POACHING

During 2024 registered cases of poaching for meat (defined in the data of this report as giraffe, buffalo, zebras, antelopes and wild pigs, although other species are also poached for meat) continued the steady decline recorded since a 2019 peak, down to 136 cases from

265 in 2019. Meat-related cases still made up around 40% of all registered wildlife crime cases in 2024. It is believed that this sector is prone to substantial under-reporting, as many cases provide insufficient evidence to identify suspects. While most historically occurring wildlife in Namibia is still present in healthy populations in suitable habitat in some parts of the country, human influences including poaching are having increasing impacts (see also pp. 50–55).

PLANTS

Live-plant trafficking is a massive threat to Namibian succulents and pachycauls. Large numbers of live plants were again seized during 2024, although arrests and seizures are lower than in 2023. How many consignments evade detection is unknown, yet preliminary research indicates that numbers are substantial. The impacts on localised endemics are severe, and great effort is being made to replant seized specimens in the wild. Illicit exploitation of forest resources for timber, charcoal and firewood remains challenging, with far-reaching and long-lasting impacts on Namibia's limited timber and non-timber forest resources (see also pp. 80–85).

OTHER SPECIES

All species of indigenous fauna and flora with a financial or subsistence value are being targeted for illicit gain, or to provide food to eat and resources for impoverished communities. The protection of Namibia's biodiversity against crime and other diverse human impacts is increasingly challenging, as the combined impacts of legal use, illicit exploitation and inadvertent destruction continue to expand.



Pangolin poaching and trafficking continues to fluctuate.



5. KEY CHARACTERISTICS, ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS SUMMARY FOR 2024

5.1 Characteristics of the year

REGISTERED CASES, ARRESTS AND SEIZURES

Registered wildlife cases and arrests again decreased for most categories, compared to data of the previous year. This may indicate a decline in criminal activity, or it could be due to a decline in crime detection. The total number of registered cases dropped by 14%, while arrests dropped by 21%. Registered cases related to high-value species fell by 8%, with cases related to rhino showing the only increase (17% more). High-value-species cases made up 30% of all registered cases.

The number of rhinos known to have been poached in Namibia during 2024 increased by 6% from 2023. The number of rhino horns seized by law enforcement remained comparatively low. While 83 rhinos were poached, 14 horns were recovered (positive DNA matching of carcasses and horns takes time; not all horns have been matched to particular poaching incidents). Rhinos continue to be saved by pre-emptive interventions that intercept would-be poachers before they manage to kill an animal. During 2024 pre-emptive action in 13 cases led to 44 arrests (out of a total of 78 rhino-related arrests in 104 cases).

The number of elephants known to have been poached remains low at 9 animals (compared to 8 the previous year). Seizures of elephant tusks fell by 70% in 2024, to the lowest level since 2016, while the number of registered cases related to elephant dropped by 21%. This reflects few tusks seized per case in 2024 (average less than two tusks per case) compared to the large numbers of tusks per case in 2023. Transboundary investigations had shown in 2023 that several large seizures (more than 10 tusks each) had originated from elephants poached in neighbouring countries.

Pangolin seizures also showed a decline, from 70 to 50 animals (29% reduction), which was also reflected in the lower number of cases related to pangolin being registered (38 in 2024 compared to 60 in 2023). The annual fluctuations in pangolin cases and seizures indicate complex drivers of this sector.

Registered cases related to meat poaching continue their slow decline, with an 11% drop over the past year, and a six per cent drop in arrests. Yet meat-poaching cases continue to dominate wildlife crime law-enforcement, making up 40% of all cases registered in 2024.

FINALISED CASES AND SENTENCES

When comparing the number of finalised court cases to the number of registered crime cases, it is important to emphasise that not every registered crime leads to a court case. For example, when a poached rhino is discovered a criminal case is opened, but a court case can only be initiated once a suspect has been charged. Conversely, in a case that involves multiple suspects, a separation of trial may lead to several court cases. Such aspects tend to skew statistics on case finalisation – which remains one of the central hurdles in wildlife protection and law enforcement in Namibia.

In 2024, a total of 344 wildlife crime cases were registered, of which 243 were registered as court cases with accused suspects. During the year a total of 144 court cases were finalised, although many of these were older cases registered in previous years. Most cases involve more than one suspect, resulting in a total of 244 individuals' cases being finalised.

The ratio of registered versus finalised court cases remains a matter of concern, as substantially more court cases are registered than are finalised in any given year. During 2024, that ratio was 1.7 court cases registered for 1 finalised. This is substantially lower than the ratio in 2019, the peak of court cases registered, when the ratio stood at 3.5 to 1. It is also a much better ratio than that of 2023, when 3.4 times as many court cases were registered as finalised (327 court cases registered, 96 finalised). With 529 suspects arrested during 2024, the number of arrestees also far exceeded individual suspects' cases finalised. No year since the beginning of the current wildlife crime crisis has seen more court cases finalised than registered, with the result that the backlog of court cases continues to grow.

Dedicated special courts for wildlife cases, held in priority locations since 2022, have been pivotal in substantially reducing the gap between registered and finalised cases. During 2022, 121 of the 248 finalised cases were completed during special court sessions, which decreased the ratio of annually registered to finalised court cases to 1.5 to 1 (372 court cases registered, 248 finalised).

It must be noted that these ratios do not include cases in which a crime was discovered, but no court case was initiated, as no suspects are known (for example, discovery of a poached rhino). Including those



A photograph of a dead lion lying on its back on a light-colored, textured rock surface. The lion's head is at the top right, and its body extends towards the bottom left. There are visible wounds on its hindquarters and legs. A dark shadow is cast to the left of the lion.

*Lion shot in a human-wildlife-conflict incident,
Zambezi Region, July 2024.*

Wildlife conservation, protection and law enforcement in Namibia continues to present a range of challenges; high wildlife numbers in proximity to people routinely lead to conflicts, especially with problematic species such as predators and elephants.

cases changes the 2024 ratio of cases registered to cases finalised to 2.4 to 1. Of the 244 individual's cases finalised in 2024, 231 were convicted, a commendable conviction rate of 95%.

The inauguration of a dedicated Environmental Crimes Court during 2024 represents a milestone for Namibia, one that will facilitate systematically addressing low rates of case finalisation. In combination with targeted special courts in wildlife crime hotspots, effective measures have been created to permanently reduce backlogs on court rolls.

The challenge of case finalisation is often magnified by court case delays. The time between case registration and verdict varies substantially depending on the species involved, the severity of the charges, and other factors. Slow finalisation of rhino cases is particularly alarming: Since 2015, a total of 256 rhino cases have been registered (excludes cases of poaching without any arrests), but only 34 of these (13%) had been finalised at the end of 2024. Numerous cases involving other species dating back to 2015 also remain ongoing.

The current legal status of individual suspects arrested for rhino crimes since 2015 is especially concerning: Of the 855 suspects arrested between 2015 and 2024, only 59 (7%) have been convicted to date. Effective finalisation of rhino cases is a unique challenge with complex causes, including congested court rolls, expert private defence lawyers, regular postponements, a need for further investigations and forensic evidence, and absconding of suspects who are on bail. Rhinos remain the most-targeted wildlife in Namibia, and appropriate penalties for rhino crimes are a vital deterrent, which needs to be prioritised.

Variability of sentences also remains an issue of concern. Average jail sentences during 2024 in pangolin and elephant cases were at their highest since 2015 (52 months in pangolin cases; 55 months in elephant cases), while average jail sentences in rhino cases dropped from 163 months in 2023 to 52 months in 2024. The great variability between the highest and lowest sentences during the year is portrayed in the relevant graphs in each section.

5.2 Activities

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Human–wildlife conflict

As long as people and wildlife coexist, some human–wildlife conflict will take place. Yet convergence between human–wildlife conflict and wildlife crime

may occur at several levels¹. Protected species killed during human–wildlife conflict incidents include elephant, predators and hippo. While people have the right to defend their lives and property against wild animals, there are strict parameters and reporting requirements, and neglect of these may contravene wildlife legislation. Human–wildlife conflict-mitigation measures are thus a priority for conservation initiatives in Namibia, while wildlife protection and law-enforcement activities must recognise the complexity of the issues and ensure a judicious approach.

Species management

Management interventions for priority species that are rare and vulnerable to human impacts, have specific habitat preferences or other special conservation needs, continue to be carried out. This includes research into species threats and needs, and the formulation of species management plans. Resultant actions from management plans include translocations, range expansion, protective measures and other activities.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Unacceptably high rhino losses to poaching, as well as diverse other wildlife crime impacts, continue to expose shortcomings in the protection of high-value species, and wildlife in general, in Namibia's vast landscapes.

Rhino protection across all of the country's rhino ranges remains extremely challenging. A great range of measures has been implemented, including APUs, CCTV surveillance, electric fencing, and security checkpoints. Rhino dehorning continues to be carried out at great cost to reduce the incentive for poaching, with 398 animals dehorned in 2024.

The protection of Namibia's endemic succulents against the escalating onslaught of live-plant poaching has emerged as an urgent but complicated priority. Strategies to protect rare and localised endemic plants against poachers are still in their infancy, with work during 2024 having focussed mainly on awareness creation and monitoring, as well as replanting seized specimens in their natural habitat, rather than in situ protection. Dedicated plant rangers (comparable to rhino rangers) may prove effective in some areas.

Wildlife protection and other countercrime measures are continually being intensified, but at extreme costs – and until now with only limited success. The escalating cost of wildlife protection, and specifically rhino protection, is a massive additional impact and burden of wildlife crime that is too often overlooked.



WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Investigations and prosecutions

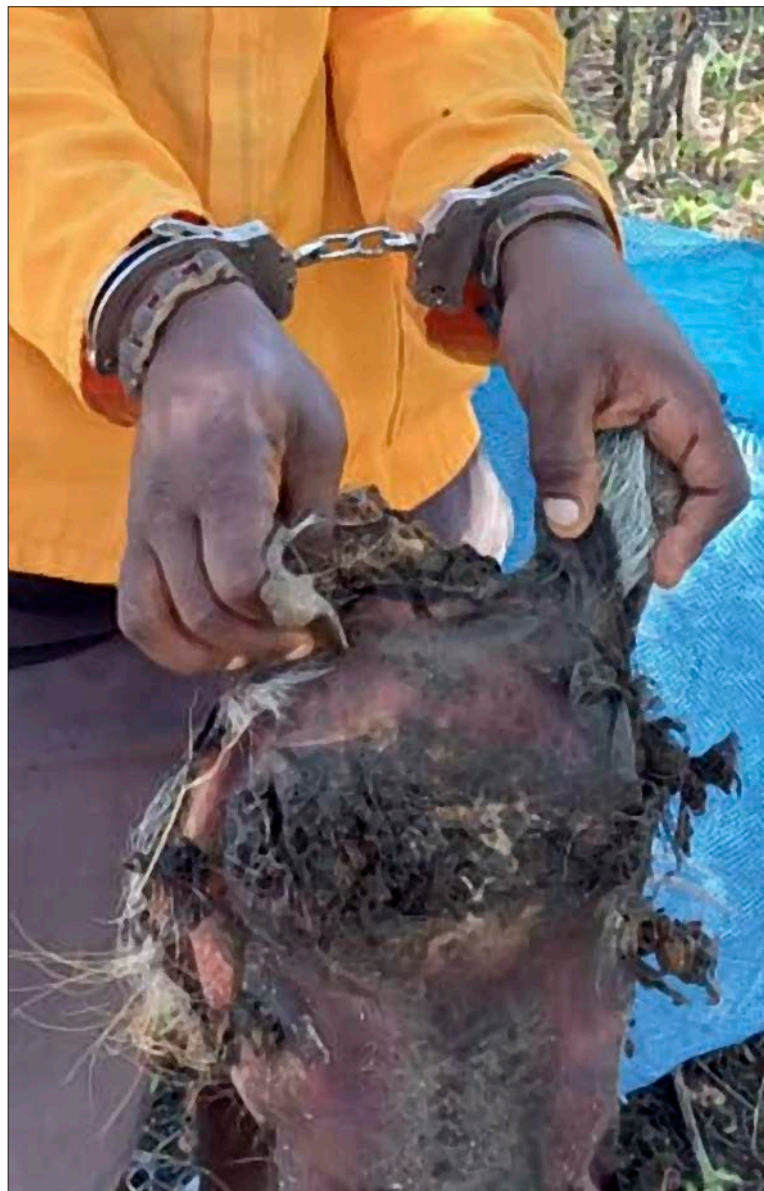
The primary focus of this report is to provide comprehensive data and interpretive information on investigations, arrests, seizures and prosecutions, as well as other pertinent aspects of countering wildlife crime. The Integrated Wildlife Crime Database of Namibia (see pp. 96–97) enables the presentation of detailed data, which is used to improve public understanding of the complexities and challenges of law enforcement, and successes achieved in countering crime. Detailed results of various law-enforcement interventions are presented throughout this report.

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

Active collaboration between the MEFT, NAMPOL, NDF, OPG, FIC, NamRA, Namport, NGOs and other key partners is ongoing, and consolidated through funding agency support. Regional MEFT–WPSD, NAMPOL–PRSD and Stocktheft Units, NDF and OPG units responsible for wildlife protection and law enforcement play a particularly important role in ensuring that countermeasures are effective right across the country.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Namibian law enforcement personnel regularly engage with counterparts in other countries, sharing information and collaborating during transboundary investigations and countercrime initiatives. During 2024, collaboration took place with a number of countries, including Angola, Liberia, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia.



Wildlife protection and law enforcement is the primary focus of this report; arrested suspect, Oshikoto Region, April 2024.

BI. Financial investigations – the key to locking away the proceeds of crime

‘We will follow you into your bedroom’ – at the 2024 Stakeholder Forum Meeting, the Prosecutor General, Adv. Olyvia M. Imalwa, promised that financial investigations and prosecutions would seek out and seize the proceeds of crime, no matter in what form or place they may be hidden. The important principle is that perpetrators will no longer get away with hoarding proceeds of crime. Revisions to POCA legislation during 2023 created provisions for dealing with money laundering and unexplained wealth¹. These include:

Section 6A: When dealing with money laundering, there is no need to prove that a person committed a predicate offence; the mere inability of a person to prove that money is from a legitimate source is sufficient to seize such proceeds.

Section 50A: In the past, the State was limited to seizing assets directly linked to committed crimes; that approach has been broadened, allowing the PG to apply to the High Court for an unexplained wealth order to declare any other property belonging to the suspect(s) as unexplained asset(s).

The burden of proof has been shifted to the suspect(s) to demonstrate the legitimacy of the asset(s) in question. This will have a broad positive impact, as the State is no longer limited when pursuing assets obtained from unlawful proceeds.

During 2024 urgent civil applications by the Office of the Prosecutor General to seek unexplained wealth orders led to the forfeiture of substantial funds and property, including motor vehicles.



CAPACITY BUILDING

Ensuring appropriate capacities for mandated agencies to carry out their duties is a vital component of effective conservation, wildlife-protection and law-enforcement. Capacity-building interventions during 2024 included:

Tools, technologies and equipment

Latest technologies and equipment, combined with a range of modern and traditional tools, continue to be used to facilitate detecting and countering wildlife crime in Namibia. Diverse technical support for central and regional offices is enabling improved interventions by law-enforcement personnel. The availability of vehicles, digital technologies and tactical gear remain central to proactive law enforcement throughout the country.

Training

Training events during 2024 related to various aspects of wildlife protection and law enforcement included:

Wildlife Protection

- Regular induction training of MEFT, NAMPOL, NDF personnel deployed in APU capacity [all personnel]
- SMART training and problem-solving workshop for key NAMPOL, NDF, MEFT and NGO personnel
- Capacity development training in EarthRanger for key personnel.

Investigations and prosecutions

- Data analysis and software trainings for key personnel
- Law enforcement training for MEFT personnel to gain necessary knowledge and skills to achieve peace officer accreditation
- UNODC workshop on financial investigations for

FIC, NamRa, OPG, NamPol, MEFT personnel, as well as additional targeted financial investigations and anti-money-laundering trainings, based on the Namibian Financial Handbook on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing

- Awareness training on protected plants for key stakeholders
- Strategic planning to counter poaching in Namib–Naukluft NP for NAMPOL and MEFT personnel
- OPG prosecutors' learning and sharing workshop for selected prosecutors, focussing on digital evidence presentation, corruption and bribery charges, and money laundering and asset forfeiture
- Training of Namibian Police Forensic Science Institute personnel at USDA Forest Service Wood Identification & Screening Centre in Oregon, USA.

Information materials

Relevant, up-to-date information underpins sound wildlife protection and law enforcement. A variety of information materials were produced and distributed during the year.

5.3 Events

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AND EXCHANGES

Global/Regional

Inaugural SMART Global Congress held in Windhoek

The Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) was created in 2011 through a collaborative partnership of global conservation entities, and has been implemented in more than 100 countries at more than 1,200 sites. SMART provides 'protected area management solutions, offering an integrated suite of powerful tools and services to help conservation practitioners improve management effectiveness and better protect wildlife'. SMART has been used by MEFT in some of Namibia's national parks since 2016, and has been expanded to various other protected areas. The inaugural SMART Global Congress, bringing together technical experts, users and other stakeholders, was held in Windhoek in early 2024. Over 300 personnel from over 50 countries attended the event and shared information and experiences.

Southern Africa

Workshop on Wildlife and Timber Case Convergence

A regional workshop on 'Wildlife and Timber Case Convergence and International Cooperation between



The inaugural SMART Global Congress was held in Windhoek during 2024.



Angola, Namibia and Mozambique' was held in Cape Town, South Africa. The two-and-a-half-day event provided a platform for key stakeholders to exchange knowledge, foster partnerships and explore innovative solutions. Aims included building a comprehensive understanding of regional wildlife and timber trafficking methods and trends, identifying opportunities for international cooperation, establishing points of contact across jurisdictions and sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches to combating wildlife and timber crime. The event concluded with a summary of activities and actionable recommendations, underscoring the importance of regional synergy in combating wildlife and timber crimes.

Namibia

UNODC–ICCWC Indicator Framework

Stakeholder engagement under the auspices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) was held in Windhoek during the year. The main focus was on providing an overview of the ICCWC Indicator Framework for combating wildlife and forest crime, and use of the ICCWC Toolkit for additional tools at a national level. The ICCWC Indicator Framework consists of a comprehensive set of 50 indicators, arranged against eight desired outcomes of effective law enforcement to combat wildlife and forest crime. It is a self-assessment framework, best completed through a collaborative process involving all relevant law enforcement agencies. The indicator table showed that Namibia has improved in several aspects, including proactive enforcement, crime detection, intelligence, special investigations, legal basis, prosecution, penalties, and the judiciary.

Second National Stakeholder Forum Meeting

The Revised Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement 2021–2025 includes the establishment of a national stakeholder forum to facilitate collaboration and information sharing amongst a wide range of stakeholders from government, NGOs, funding partners and communities, as well as various international experts. The second meeting of the National Stakeholder Forum on Wildlife Crime and Law Enforcement was held in Windhoek during 2024. The forum brought together around 130 national and international experts and stakeholders, representing over a dozen government agencies and projects, over a dozen NGOs and funding partners, and numerous

community representatives, including conservancy associations and rhino custodians. During the event, the National Report on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia for 2023 was launched. The forum meeting was once again a resounding success, with key outcomes including:

- improved common understanding of current wildlife crime dynamics and countermeasures
- renewed focus on strategy action plan objectives, achievements and gaps, and priority actions to address these, as well as new challenges
- strengthened relationships, improved communication and collaboration amongst all stakeholders.

National rhino custodianship strategy

The Namibia Black Rhino Custodianship Programme is a pioneering approach to wildlife conservation, involving communities and the private sector to achieve conservation outcomes. In Namibia, black rhinos belong to government, whereas in other countries they can be privately owned. The BRCP was established in the early 1990s by MEFT. The program is a collaboration between government, NGOs, private landholders and communal conservancies. Suitable landholders can become custodians of black rhinos, taking on the responsibility to establish new breeding populations and protect rhinos relocated from national parks and other areas with high population densities. It is a model of how collaborative efforts can lead to the successful protection and recovery of endangered species. The programme has contributed to a steady increase in rhinos, currently accounting for almost 50% of the Namibian black rhino population.

The objectives of the programme include:

- Population growth – to increase the population of black rhinos through strategic relocations and breeding programs
- Habitat expansion – to expand the range and habitats where black rhinos can thrive, ensuring they have enough space and resources
- Community involvement – to involve local communities and private landowners in conservation efforts, providing them with incentives to protect and manage black rhino populations.

While the custodianship programme has been running for around three decades, the rhino poaching crisis of the past ten years has motivated new approaches to rhino security and law enforcement. During 2024, this led to the formulation of a National Rhino Custodianship Strategy through a close collaboration between MEFT and key stakeholders.



B2. Namibia's dedicated Environmental Crimes Court

One of the biggest milestones in countering environmental crimes in Namibia was achieved in August 2024 with the inauguration of the Otjiwarongo Magistrates Court for Environmental Crimes. The court has generally become known simply as the Environmental Crimes Court (ECC), and was officially opened by Her Excellency Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, at the time Vice President, and since 21 March 2025 President of the Republic of Namibia. This is said to be only the second dedicated court for environmental crimes in Africa.

The extreme escalation of poaching since 2015 quickly resulted in annually growing backlogs of wildlife cases on court rolls across the country. As it became increasingly clear that the courts were unable to effectively process the rapid influx of new cases, the Office of the Prosecutor General, with broad support from various partners, initiated temporary special courts for wildlife cases from 2022 onwards, with the choice of locations based on crime prevalence data. The special courts were highly effective, but broader, more permanent countermeasures were clearly required. This motivated stakeholders to collaborate on the establishment of a permanent court dedicated to hearing environmental crimes.

The ECC provides the 'missing cornerstone' in Namibia's structures, systems and approaches to counter wildlife crime. Together with special courts that will continue to be held, the ECC will make a substantial difference in expediting case finalisations. The ground-breaking achievement is the result of exceptional collaboration between government and local NGOs, made possible through the generous support of international funding partners. The court was developed in a remarkably short time:

- April 2023 – agreement between OPG, MJLR and Judiciary regarding the need for a dedicated, permanent wildlife court; identification of a potential site and infrastructure in a suitable location in the town of Otjiwarongo
- May 2023 – initial discussions regarding court needs and funding options
- June–October 2023 – clarification of funding and procurement requirements
- November 2023 – site meeting with OPG, MJLR, Judiciary and NGOs to sign off on site plans
- January 2024 – final refinement of building needs; selection of quotations and signing of contractor agreements; ordering of special materials and equipment; construction site hand-over

The Environmental Crimes Court was established through collaboration between government and local NGOs, with generous support from international funding partners.



- January–July 2024 – construction
- August 2024 – inauguration
- November 2024 – officially gazetted as Otjiwarongo Magistrates Court for Environmental Crimes.

The ECC features the use of latest technologies, including recording and transcribing equipment, and cameras and screens to enable virtual appearances of witnesses. The ECC, dedicated to handling cases related to flora, fauna, and other environmental crimes, is expected to streamline and expedite the resolution of wildlife cases. Its development reflects the government's firm commitment to combating environmental crimes and assuring the public that such offences will not be tolerated. It is a legacy investment that will significantly enhance the nation's efforts in protecting its rich natural heritage. Key aims include:

- Efficient Case Resolution: to expedite the handling and finalisation of environmental cases, ensuring quicker delivery of justice.
- Specialised Adjudication: to provide a focused legal platform where cases involving environmental violations are presided over by judges with expertise in environmental laws.
- Alleviating Court Backlogs: to relieve the burden on general courts by diverting environmental

cases, thus improving the efficiency of the overall judicial system.

- Deterrence of Environmental Crimes: to serve as a deterrent to potential violators by establishing a specialised court that swiftly and effectively prosecutes offenders, showcasing the seriousness of environmental protection in Namibia.
- Strengthening Environmental Protection: to reinforce Namibia's commitment to protecting its natural heritage by ensuring that those committing environmental crimes are held accountable.

While the ECC is a major milestone, an extreme backlog of wildlife cases remains on court rolls across the country, with 1,738 outstanding cases at the end of 2024. Addressing this requires a focussed strategy that ensures a similar number of cases is finalised as is registered each year, while at the same time reducing the backlog in targeted steps (e.g. finalising an additional ± 200 older cases per year would allow the backlog to be cleared over ± 10 years). Annually registered wildlife cases have shown a steady decline over the past five years, and the special courts have shown that a high number of cases can be finalised in a short period. Coordinating the work of the ECC, general courts and targeted special courts can achieve a new balance.

The Environmental Crimes Court was officially opened by H.E. Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, and attended by key representatives from government, NGOs and funding partners.



Photo courtesy WWF Namibia
© 2025



6. KEY SECTORS AND NOTEWORTHY CASES SUMMARY FOR 2024

6.1 Investigations and arrests

PRE-EMPTIVE ARRESTS

During 2024, 13 pre-emptive cases resulted in 44 arrests of suspects conspiring to poach rhinos, but where the would-be poachers had not managed to kill a rhino yet. These are vital interventions that reduce rhino losses, while still dismantling poaching gangs and trafficking syndicates. Rhino ranges in different parts of Namibia continue to be targeted, with Etosha National Park and a number of private reserves being the focus of poachers' attention. Arrested suspects are prosecuted on charges of conspiracy to poach rhinos, illegal possession of firearms, illegal entry into protected areas, and other transgressions. The Prevention of Organised Crime Act categorises the intent to commit a crime with the same degree of seriousness as actually committing the crime, but this is currently not sufficiently weighed during judgements. Courts dealing with rhino-conspiracy cases need to be sensitised to the potential losses that are averted through pre-emptive arrests, as well as the relevant sentencing provisions in the legislation. Pre-emptive arrests are rarely possible related to a conspiracy to poach other species.

ARRESTS IN OLD CASES

Suspects continue to be arrested in old cases, as investigations remain ongoing in all open cases. During the year, a total of 22 suspects were arrested in relation to 16 cases registered prior to 2024. These involved the arrest of 12 suspects in 8 rhino cases dating from 2023, 2022 and 2018. An illegal trophy hunting case from 2023 involved the arrests of two additional suspects. The arrests highlight that criminal offences are not forgotten and that the law will catch up to perpetrators.

ARRESTS OF INSIDERS

The people entrusted with protecting valuable wildlife and other resources at times become involved in poaching or trafficking such resources. Insiders regularly provide vital information to syndicates about poaching targets and wildlife-protection measures, or assist in smuggling contraband through checkpoints. Insider involvement and collusion is an unfortunate reality of criminal activity all over the

world¹, and the success of crimes often depends on such collusion. The use of positions of privilege for personal gain is generally highest in countries with high levels of corruption and involvement of state actors in crime². Numerous insiders have been arrested in Namibia, also during 2024, giving a clear message that collusion will not be tolerated. Training, background checks and surveillance add another layer of security to reduce the risks of insider involvement in wildlife crime.

SEIZURE OF VEHICLES AND FIREARMS

Vehicle and firearm seizures are an important component of wildlife crime law enforcement. Vehicles used to carry out crimes are regularly forfeited to the state as part of a guilty verdict. The loss of an expensive vehicle represents a significant further penalty in addition to fines and prison terms, and thus acts as a crucial crime deterrent. Seized firearms form part of vital evidence presented in poaching cases, such as proving criminal intent, or enabling forensic investigations and ballistic matches with evidence retrieved from carcasses. The removal of illegal firearms from circulation amongst the criminal sector is another important aspect. During 2024, 36 vehicles and 67 firearms were seized.

6.2 Prosecution and sentencing

SPECIAL COURTS

Special courts reduce court case backlog

Special courts dedicated to wildlife cases were held at Katima Mulilo and Rundu during 2024 to facilitate a steady reduction in the large backlog of cases in the Zambezi and Kavango East regions. The courts were held for almost two months to enable the finalisation of as many older cases as possible, with these results:

- 90 court cases involving wildlife concluded
- 142 individual suspects' cases finalised
- 135 individuals convicted (95% conviction rate)

A two-month special court was also held at Oshakati in the Oshana Region, although this heard a range of cases, not only related to wildlife. Results in wildlife cases were as follows:

- 13 court cases involving wildlife concluded
- 14 individual suspects' cases finalised
- 11 individuals convicted (85% conviction rate)



Pre-emptive arrests of intending poachers – usually on their way to a national park or private reserve for a poaching incursion – are a vital component of effective law enforcement against rhino syndicates; the interventions save some targeted rhinos, at least for that moment, while also apprehending culprits; importantly, the courts must treat the intent to poach with the same seriousness as actual rhino poaching.

Typical poaching paraphernalia and inconspicuous vehicle (usually with dedicated drop-off and pick-up driver); intercepted poaching gang, 2024.



These successes underscore the value of special courts as strategic interventions in priority locations. It is important to continue with special courts to assist in resolving the severe backlog of cases, irrespective of the establishment of the Environmental Crimes Court at Otjiwarongo in the Otjozondjupa Region.

CASE FINALISATION AND SENTENCES

During 2024, the court cases of 244 individual suspects were concluded, resulting in 231 convictions (95% conviction rate). Of these, 144 cases with 140 convictions were related to meat poaching (97% conviction rate), while 62 cases with 55 convictions were related to high-value species (89% conviction rate), and 9 cases with 8 convictions were related to plants (89% conviction rate). Noteworthy sentences delivered as part of these cases are described below.

Strong deterrent sentences in ivory trafficking cases

Sentences handed down at Rundu during the special courts sent a strong deterrent message to would-be ivory traffickers, not just in Namibia but across the KAZA region. Sharing such outcomes for future special courts and across the broader Namibian judicial landscape will add strength to the deterrent value.

Court case: Rundu CRM 2510/2022

- 1 Namibian suspect
 - arrested on 01 March 2021
 - found guilty on 10 May 2024
 - 1,166 days between arrest and verdict
- Charges:
 1. Trafficking of ivory (4 elephant tusks)
 2. Disguising unlawful origin of property (POCA)
- Sentence:
 1. 144 months direct imprisonment
 2. 18 months direct imprisonment.

Court case: Rundu CRM 6348/2023

- 1 Namibian suspect
 - arrested on 13 January 2023
 - found guilty on 13 May 2024
 - 486 days between arrest and verdict
- Charges:
 1. Trafficking of ivory (2 elephant tusks)
- Sentence:
 1. 96 months direct imprisonment.

Mixed sentences in pangolin cases

Data on registered cases reflected a significant drop in pangolin trafficking in the Kavango and Zambezi

regions following the special courts held in 2022. The stern sentences in pangolin cases during those court sessions are believed to be a substantial contributing factor. Despite this, another spike in pangolin cases was observed during 2023. Stern sentences during the first half of 2024 may again have contributed to the reduction in registered cases last year. While there was a great variation in sentences related to pangolin trafficking, the verdict remains at the discretion of the court, with leniency often based on the circumstances of the accused.

Court case: Oshakati CRM 10019/2023

- 1 Namibian suspect
 - arrested on 06 October 2023
 - found guilty on 29 August 2024
 - 328 days between arrest and verdict
- Charges:
 1. Trafficking of pangolin
 2. POCA charges
- Sentence:
 1. N\$ 4,000 or 12 months imprisonment
 2. Discharged.

Court case: Rundu CRM 2292/2024

- 1 Namibian suspect
 - arrested on 12 December 2023
 - found guilty on 24 May 2024
 - 164 days between arrest and verdict
- Charges:
 1. Trafficking of pangolin
- Sentence:
 1. 72 months direct imprisonment.

Court case: Katima Mulilo CRM 5717/2023

- 4 Zambian suspects
 - arrested on 09 October 2023
 - 3 suspects found guilty on 27 June 2024
 - 262 days between arrest and verdict
- Charges:
 1. Trafficking of pangolin
 2. POCA charges
 3. Illegal immigration
- Sentence:
 1. 36 months direct imprisonment
 2. 60 months direct imprisonment
 3. 12 months or N\$4,000.

Inappropriate sentences in live-plant cases

A high degree of 'plant blindness' remains a significant issue in court cases related to poaching and trafficking



of indigenous and endemic Namibian succulents, which are smuggled as live plants to supply the booming global ornamental plant trade. The sentences handed down in the below examples stand in no relation to either the value of the plants being trafficked, or the seriousness of the crime in impacting rare and endemic Namibian biodiversity. A revision of existing forestry legislation is urgently needed, as is sensitisation of the judiciary to the serious impacts of live-plant trafficking.

Court case Kahenge CRM 1379/2024

- 3 Namibian suspects
 - arrested on 15 March 2024
 - all suspects found guilty on 23 May 2024
 - 69 days between arrest and verdict
- Charges:
 1. Transporting of protected plants
 2. Charges under the Forest Act and POCA
- Sentences (all suspects):
 1. N\$ 500 or 1 month imprisonment
 2. No verdict or sentence.

Court case Opuwo CRM 1379/2024

Background: A Tanzanian national was arrested in November 2023 for her involvement in recruiting Namibians for illegal plant harvesting; two Namibians were also arrested and 46 *Adenia pechuelii* plants were seized as part of the case. The Tanzanian suspect pleaded guilty to the charges; her case was thus separated from that of her co-accused.

- 1 Tanzanian suspect
 - arrested on 10 November 2023
 - found guilty on 08 May 2024
 - 180 days between arrest and verdict
- Charges:
 1. Possession of protected plants
 2. POCA charges
 3. Conducting business in Namibia without permit
- Sentences:
 1. N\$ 4,000 or 12 months imprisonment
 2. N\$ 20,000 or 60 months imprisonment
 3. N\$ 4,000 or 12 months imprisonment.

Namibian forestry laws are not considered stringent enough to serve as effective deterrent for live-plant trafficking, yet the sentences on all counts in this case were well below maximum penalties, which are:

1. N\$ 8,000 or 24 months imprisonment, or both
 2. N\$ 100 million or 360 months imprisonment, or both
 3. N\$ 12,000 or 36 months imprisonment, or both
- Tellingly, the magistrate imposed substantially higher sentences on all three counts than those proposed by

the prosecution. The motivations for the sentences were well-considered in terms of the circumstances of the accused (first offender, single mother, sole breadwinner), the interests of society, and the severity of the crimes (foreign national entering Namibia with the purpose of trafficking protected plants), and clearly articulated in his statement, which included a number of profound, insightful remarks. More clearly needs to be done to sensitise prosecutors to the impacts of plant trafficking.

Mixed sentences in rhino cases

Sentences for rhino crimes continue to vary from year to year, with most of the sentences imposed during 2024 below those of 2023. Average jail term in 2023 was 163 months, compared to 52 months in 2024.

Court case Katima Mulilo 06/2022

- 2 Namibian suspects
 - arrested on 10 Jan 2020, later released on bail
 - one suspect absconded in April 2022
 - rearrested on 28 Feb 2024
 - both suspects found guilty on 15 Mar 2024
 - 1,526 days between first arrest and verdict
- Charges:
 1. Trafficking of rhino horns
- Sentences (both suspects):
 1. N\$ 100,000 or 60 months imprisonment
 2. Mercedes Benz sedan and Kia 7-seater minibus used during crime forfeited to state.

A notable sentence related to rhinos was for accused intercepted while on a poaching mission in Etosha NP:

Court case: Tsumeb CRM 3144/2023

- 5 Namibian suspects
 - 2 suspects arrested on 16 June 2022
 - 1 suspect found guilty on 13 August 2024
 - 789 days between arrest and verdict
 - 1 suspect arrested on 23 June 2022
 - suspect found guilty on 13 August 2024
 - 782 days between arrest and verdict
 - 2 suspects arrested on 19 November 2022

Note: Separation of trials may prolong case finalisation.

- Charges:
 1. Illegal possession of firearm/ammunition
 2. Nature conservation ordinance transgressions
 3. Conspiracy to poach rhino
- Sentences (both convicted suspects):
 1. 6 months imprisonment or N\$500
 2. NA
 3. 60 months direct imprisonment.



Stern sentences for meat poaching

Sentences for meat poaching tend to vary considerably, based on the species involved (seriousness of the crime) and on the circumstances of the accused. One of the most noteworthy sentences in a meat-poaching case finalised during 2024 involved two Zambian suspects, who entered Namibia illegally and poached a warthog and a monitor lizard.

Court case Katima Mulilo CRM 6328/2023

- 2 Zambian suspects
 - arrested on 07 November 2023
 - found guilty on 20 May 2024
 - 195 days between arrest and verdict
- Charges (both suspects):
 1. poaching of warthog & monitor lizard
 2. POCA charges
 3. Illegal immigration
- Sentence suspect 1:
 1. N\$ 20,000 or 36 months imprisonment
 2. N\$ 20,000 or 24 months imprisonment
 3. N\$ 4,000 and 12 months imprisonment
- Sentence suspect 2:
 1. N\$ 20,000 and 45 months imprisonment
 2. N\$ 20,000 and 24 months imprisonment
 3. N\$ 4,000 and 12 months imprisonment.

Rapid conclusion of court cases

While the courts are often criticised for slow case finalisation, a number of cases completed during 2024 were concluded in a matter of days, showing how effective the Namibian judicial system can be.

Court case Tsumeb CRM 917/2024

- 1 Namibian & 1 Angolan suspect
 - arrested on 09 April 2024
 - found guilty on 10 April 2024
 - 1 day between arrest and verdict
- Charge:
 - Poaching of huntable game – warthog
- Sentence (both suspects):
 - N\$ 5,000 or 10 months imprisonment.

6.3 Targeted species

MEAT POACHING

Registered meat-poaching cases continued the steady decrease experienced since the 2019 peak of 265 cases, with 136 registered cases making up 40% of all cases registered in 2024. Anecdotal information during 2024 continues to indicate that a substantial number of cases

are not reported, mainly due to lack of evidence¹. Meat poaching presents a complex challenge with significant variations regarding the motivations and methods for poaching. The data currently does not distinguish between subsistence and commercial meat-poaching for financial gain. As markets for poached meat are almost entirely local, it is important to identify and understand poaching motives and market drivers to better counter this problematic sector. Holistic interventions that reach beyond law enforcement are urgently required (see also pp. 50–55).

HIGH-VALUE SPECIES POACHING/TRAFFICKING

Rhinos

Rhinos were again the most-targeted high-value species in Namibia in 2024, comprising 29% of all registered wildlife cases. Losses have remained consistently high despite concerted protection and law enforcement efforts. The threat to Namibia's rhinos is likely to remain high unless international market demand can be reduced. The rhino populations in South Africa ($\pm 16,000$ animals, totals of both species combined²) and Namibia ($\pm 3,600$ animals, totals of both species combined³) are the largest left in Africa. This makes the two countries the primary focus of poaching syndicates. Rhino protection is more challenging than ever, as diverse initiatives and huge investments are unable to reduce losses to low levels, and the perseverance of all stakeholders to continue protection efforts continues to be severely tested. Effective law enforcement resulted in 78 arrests related to rhinos, over half of which were pre-emptive arrests that saved a considerable number of animals. Court-case finalisation and sentences stand out as an increasingly problematic component of the challenge to protect rhinos. Only four cases related to rhinos were finalised during 2024, most with lower than average prison sentences. These factors continue to impede rhino protection and related law enforcement in Namibia (see also pp. 70–79).

Pangolin

Pangolin cases of continue their fluctuating peaks and troughs. The dynamics of this sector are clearly complex. A significant drop in cases during 2022 (36 cases) was attributed in part to stern deterrent sentences of special courts, and the renewed escalation in 2023 (60 cases) to waning deterrence. Registered cases dropped again to 38 cases in 2024. While some significant sentences were imposed for pangolin trafficking during the year, various other factors are likely to be contributing, including



pangolin densities, rainfall influencing pangolin visibility, law enforcement effort, and the possibility that pangolins are increasingly being successfully trafficked out of the country (see also pp. 56–61).

Elephant

During 2024, ivory seizures in Namibia dropped to their lowest levels since 2016, while recorded elephant poaching incidents remained negligible at nine animals. Elephant cases made up seven per cent of targeted species during the year. Although Namibia's national elephant population consists of four only partly linked subpopulations with different dynamics, these and the national population are considered secure. The latest population data, using statistics from the KAZA Elephant Survey 2022, estimates Namibia's overall elephant numbers at well over 24,000, with 21,000 in Namibia's KAZA area alone (see also pp. 62–69).

Large predators

Big cats were the target for two per cent of registered cases during 2024, with seven cases registered. Seizures included a lion skin, two live leopards and five leopard skins, and four cheetah skins. The live leopards were seized during investigations into transgressions in the legal trophy hunting industry. The high value of leopards as trophy targets is leading to wide-ranging infringements, as operators attempt to ensure successful 'hunts' by various means – many of them illegal. Legal hunting of wildlife is subject to stringent controls, and clear permit and reporting requirements. Infringements are not tolerated, and have led to in-depth investigations and arrests during 2023 and 2024. Despite illegal killings, populations of lion, leopard and cheetah are currently healthy in suitable habitat across Namibia. Human–wildlife conflict and resultant killing of predators is likely to have a much more severe impact on predator populations, particularly in commercial livestock-farming areas, and on vulnerable populations such as the desert-adapted lions of the Erongo–Kunene Community Conservation Area.

Human–wildlife conflict incidents

High-value species continue to be killed during conflicts over resources between people and wildlife, or when animals present a danger to human safety. Rural communities faced with a direct danger to their lives or the potential destruction of their crops, livestock or infrastructure may resort to preventative or retaliatory killings of elephants, predators, hippos and other wildlife. The killing of protected wildlife in such scenarios

is subject to clear reporting requirements to the MEFT. A number of conflict incidents resulting in the killing of high-value wildlife took place during 2024. The cases at times involve unregistered firearms, which results in separate criminal cases. Human–wildlife-conflict cases are investigated by law-enforcement personnel and the decision on whether an offence has taken place and prosecution is justified is usually referred to the OPG.

PLANT POACHING AND TRAFFICKING

Some of Namibia's rare and endemic plants can easily be considered the most sought after poaching targets in the country. According to seizure records, elephant's foot, *Adenia pechuelii*, was the most-targeted individual species in 2023 (326 plants seized). During 2024, the focus shifted to kobas (*Cyphostemma bainesii* and *C. uter*), with a total of 465 plants seized. All these plants are slow growing and sparsely distributed in localised ranges. All are classified as endemic or near-endemic to Namibia⁴. The loss of so many specimens is likely to have a massive impact on population viability. In total, 7 plant cases were registered resulting in 13 arrests, and the seizure of 700 plant products (includes live plants, timber and devil's claw products). Global demand and transnational syndicate operations are driving poaching targeting stem succulents with interesting growth forms (also called pachycauls), and leaf succulents, particularly of the genus *Lithops* (also known as stone plants). Illicit harvesting and trafficking of Namibian timber also remains prevalent, with kiaat, *Pterocarpus angolensis*, Zambezi teak, *Baikiaea plurijuga*, and ushivi, *Guibortia coleosperma*, the most-targeted species. Devil's claw can be legally harvested in Namibia under strict permit conditions, with illegal harvesting and laundering an intermittent challenge. During 2024, one bag of illegally harvested devil's claw was seized (see also pp. 80–85).



Namibia's rare and endemic pachycauls have become the most-targeted species for traffickers.



B3. REPEAT OFFENDERS – CAUGHT IN A WEB OF WILDLIFE CRIME

“They just get out on bail and do it again” – this is a widespread public sentiment regarding crime in Namibia, and wildlife crime in particular.¹ The quote from a 2020 newspaper article on ‘Wildlife Crime and the Law’¹ is as relevant as ever. Recidivism – the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend – is a global challenge in countering crime². Recidivism is particularly high amongst Namibian rhino syndicates, but is also prevalent in other sectors such as meat-poaching. Importantly, most cases involve suspects that have been arrested and charged for wildlife crime offences, but have not yet been convicted. While court cases are ongoing, the suspects are released on bail – and are rearrested and charged for similar offences committed while on bail. The issue was already flagged in the first annual report, *Combating Wildlife Crime in Namibia* in 2019, with the pronounced aim that ‘Detailed statistics on recidivism in Namibia will help to counter bail applications of potentially dangerous suspects.’³

Five years later, statistics show that repeat arrestees in rhino crimes at times make up over half of all arrested suspects. Some suspects have been arrested up to eight times over the course of the past ten years, yet in most scenarios, none of their cases have been finalised. During 2022, for example, repeat arrests made up 60% of total arrests, with some suspects arrested up to seven times over the course of the previous eight years. The statistics for 2022 further show that –

- 40% of suspects (31) were arrested for the first time
- 32% of suspects (25) had been arrested twice
- 14% of suspects (11) had been arrested three times
- 5% of suspects (4) had been arrested four times
- 6% of suspects (5) had been arrested six times
- 3% of suspects (2) had been arrested seven times

The statistics are particularly concerning, as about 35% of arrestees in rhino cases since 2015 are currently out on bail, while another 14% have been trialled without being convicted. Many of the arrestees clearly continue to be involved in suspected criminal activities.

Absconding while on bail is not uncommon, with a number of suspects turning fugitive, and some leaving the country to evade the law. A rhino horn trafficker, who was arrested in January 2020, but absconded in April 2022 while on bail and was finally rearrested and convicted in 2024, is a recent example.

That new people are constantly being recruited into criminality is also clear – during 2024, some 61% of arrested suspects were first offenders. It is vital to demonstrate to such first offenders through swift prosecutions and appropriate sentencing that wildlife crime does not pay.

The rhino poaching crisis in Namibia is being compounded by the reality that there are seldom serious consequences for rhino crimes. At the end of 2024, only about seven per cent of all arrested suspects had been convicted. An alarming percentage of suspects had been discharged, and only a small number

B3.1 Frequency of REPEAT ARRESTS (rhino)

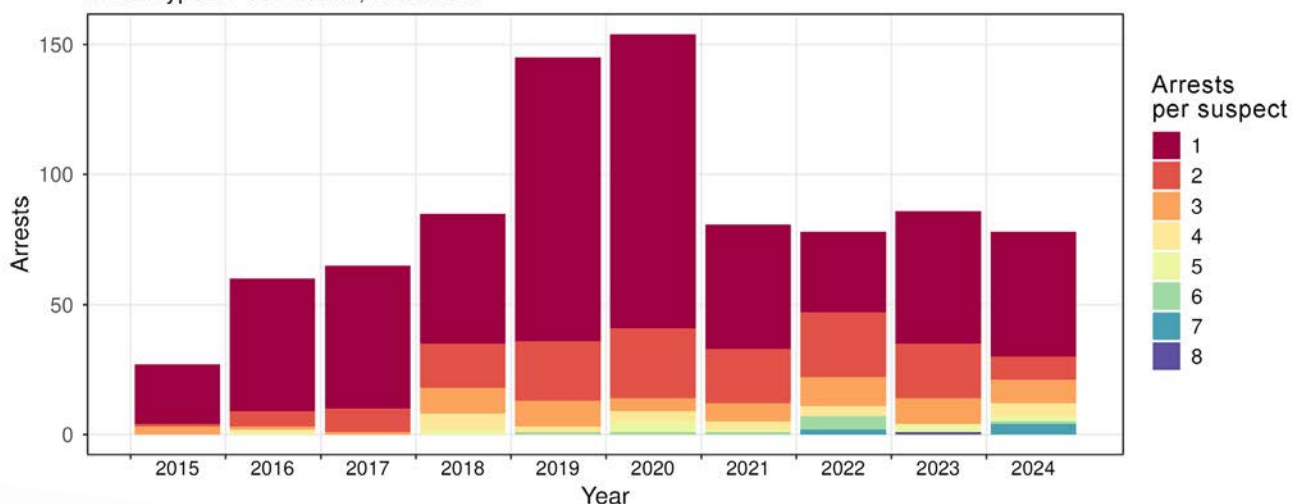
Number of arrests per year by arrests of the same suspect

Period: 2015-01-01 until 2024-12-31

Case category: Any

Species: Rhino

Arrest types: Post factum; Preventive



of convicted perpetrators had received deterrent prison sentences. The low percentage of horn seizures (about nine per cent of all horns stolen from rhinos poached over the past ten years) indicates that financial flows from successfully trafficked horns are taking place. Potential illicit gains from rhino poaching and horn trafficking thus outweigh potential consequences, while the far-reaching impacts of rhino poaching⁴ are not receiving due attention.

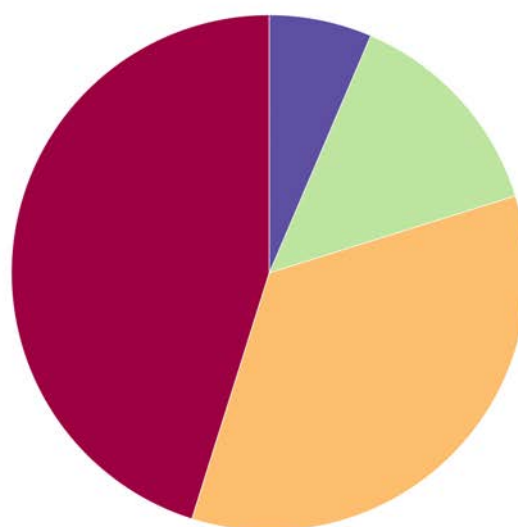
Cumulative arrests compared to convictions, i.e. the steadily increasing total number of arrests, compared to the total number of convictions, show that at the end of 2024, most suspects in rhino cases were awaiting trial. While numerous arrests continue to be made in line with ongoing rhino crimes, convictions have remained stagnant (repeat arrests and convictions are included). Factors enabling timeous case finalisation include thorough investigations, effective prosecutions, and an efficient judiciary. The data highlights shortcomings that can be improved if the courts –

- deny bail to repeat arrestees to inhibit recidivism
- treat repeat offences as aggravating circumstances
- ensure swift case finalisation and delivery of justice
- serve appropriate sentences in relation to crimes.

B3.2 Current SUSPECT STATUS (rhino)

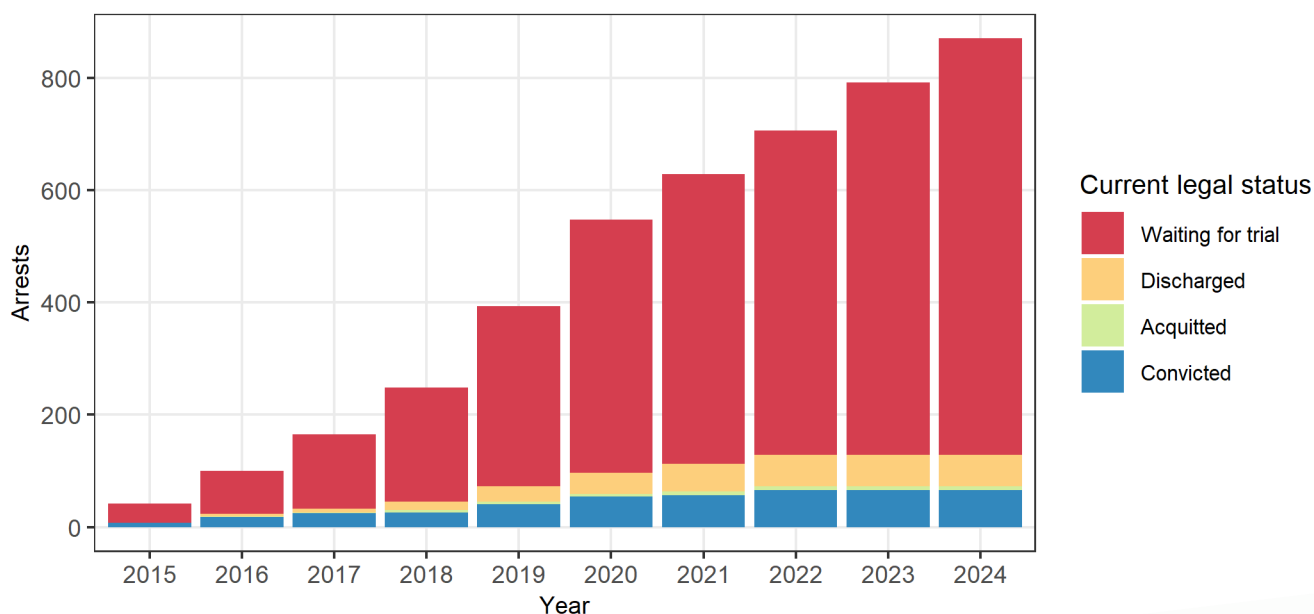
Number of accused individuals by current status in court case

Period: 2015-01-01 until 2024-12-31
Case category: Any
Species: Rhino
Arrest types: Post factum; Preventive



B3.3 Cumulative ARRESTS and CONVICTIONS (rhino)

Cumulative number of rhino-related arrests since 2015, disaggregated by current legal status



7. CHALLENGES FACED IN 2024

... and how they are being addressed

7.1 Organised wildlife crime

RELENTLESS RHINO POACHING –

Despite concerted efforts to disrupt rhino crime syndicates and deter rhino poaching through effective protection and law enforcement, 83 rhinos are known to have been poached in 2024. Rhino poaching has decimated Africa's populations of the charismatic pachyderms and numbers have dwindled across most rhino ranges. Namibia and South Africa are the only countries left with populations of more than 1,000 animals of each of the two African rhino species¹. As long as market demand remains high, this keeps Namibia as a primary target for trafficking syndicates, who keep recruiting local poachers despite numerous arrests. Improving deterrence through swift case finalisation with stern prison sentences is a vital component of limiting rhino losses, together with adaptable rhino protection and law enforcement actions.

... being addressed

The large number of arrests in rhino cases (78 arrests in 2024, including high-tier participants) indicates effective investigations, yet shortcomings continue to be exposed in rhino protection, as well as prosecution and case finalisation. Innovative initiatives are continuously being explored to improve all aspects of protection, investigations, prosecution and sentencing. These include measures to limit insider involvement in rhino crimes, improved monitoring and coordination of security measures, use of cutting edge technologies and approaches during investigations, more compelling court case presentation (particularly in conspiracy-to-poach cases) and ongoing sensitisation of the judiciary to the seriousness and wide-ranging impacts and harms from rhino crimes to motivate appropriate sentences.

7.2 Wildlife protection

INDIGENOUS PLANT PROTECTION –

Protecting natural resources in Namibia's remote, inaccessible and sparsely populated wildlands will always be a challenge. Protecting isolated stands of indigenous and in many cases endemic plants with very localised distributions is exceedingly difficult. This has been suddenly brought to the fore through the extreme escalation of live-plant poaching for the global ornamental plant market. Market demand is

largely being driven via the internet, where sellers and buyers can connect effortlessly. Many of Namibia's targeted plants are currently afforded only limited legal protection in Namibia – and in many cases no international protection once they have been smuggled out of the country. The complexity of this problem is exacerbated by 'plant blindness' – the reality that plants do not inspire interest or awe in the way that animals do. Many of Namibia's localised endemic succulents are at risk of rapid extinction and urgent steps are required to safeguard the plant populations through integrated protection, law enforcement, prosecution and sentencing.

... being addressed

The national Plant Task Team was created in 2024 to coordinate responses to the diverse challenges facing Namibia's indigenous plants. First steps have been taken to revise currently weak legislation and increase maximum penalties. The urgent need for CITES listings of vulnerable species has been identified. Systems to protect plants in situ through plant rangers and other mechanisms are being explored, and proactive law enforcement related to plant crimes is being prioritised. Effective systems have been created to rehabilitate seized specimens in their natural habitat and monitor their progress.

7.3 Investigations and arrests

REPEAT OFFENDERS –

Recidivism, the tendency of criminals to re-offend, is a well-known problem in most criminal sectors, in Namibia and around the world. Data analysis on recidivism has revealed a particularly high prevalence of repeat offenders related to rhino crimes, while other sectors such as meat poaching are also exhibiting this issue.

... being addressed

Namibian laws, and particularly those under the Prevention of Organised Crimes Act, clearly portray repeated offences as aggravating circumstances that deserve higher penalties. Investigators and prosecutors are collaborating to actively oppose bail applications of repeat offenders, and to highlight multiple offences during case presentations and motivation of appropriate penalties. The Integrated Wildlife Crime Database is used to track recidivism amongst arrested suspects.



7.4 Prosecution and sentencing

INCREASING COURT CASE BACKLOG –

Special courts dedicated to wildlife cases, held at priority locations since 2022, have substantially reduced the gap between annually registered and finalised cases. Nonetheless more cases continue to be registered than finalised in any given year. In combination with the massive backlog of cases that has built up over the past ten years, this presents a daunting hurdle. There were 1,738 unresolved cases at the end of 2024, and new cases are continually registered as wildlife crime persists.

... being addressed

Special courts will continue to be used to reduce court case backlogs in wildlife crime hotspots. A permanent Environmental Crimes Court dedicated to wildlife cases was inaugurated in 2024, and will facilitate a faster rate of case finalisation. Wildlife protection and law enforcement efforts have contributed to a steady decline in annually registered cases since 2015, which has enabled the gap between annually registered and finalised cases to be narrowed. By coordinating initiatives to expedite case finalisation with efforts to reduce crime, Namibia is now in a position to overcome the hurdle of massive court case backlogs.

FINALISATION OF RHINO CASES –

The low rate of case finalisation related to rhino crimes continues to represent one of the most pressing wildlife protection and law enforcement challenges in Namibia. Slow case finalisation, and sentences that do not reflect the seriousness and wide-ranging impacts of rhino crimes, enable recidivism and hamper crime deterrence.

... being addressed

After ten years of limited progress, new approaches to address this issue include dedicated special courts for rhino cases, and prioritising complex rhino cases in the Environmental Crimes Court, while concomitantly strengthening investigations, case preparations and prosecutions to minimise delays and technical shortcomings that impede convictions. Awareness of the dire impacts of rhino poaching and the urgency of deterrence, including the recognition that the intent to poach is as serious as poaching a rhino, remain paramount to success.

7.5 General

CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS –

Wildlife crime targets, strategies and activities are

continually forced to change through wildlife protection measures, law enforcement pressure, changing markets, and other initiatives. Unrelenting long-term commitment is required to ensure unwavering capacities for sound wildlife conservation, protection and law enforcement.

... being addressed

Namibian Partnerships against Environmental Crime are continually striving to address funding constraints and capacity gaps through wide-ranging intersectoral cooperation, and external funding and technical support. Ongoing international collaboration remains a vital component of the partnership. The vulnerable status of most sectors makes it clear that further expansion of capacities is required, while new approaches are also needed to facilitate lasting gains.



Protecting highly localised indigenous plants in their natural habitat is extremely challenging.



Experienced and well-equipped repeat offenders are being arrested in various wildlife crime sectors.



8. WILDLIFE CRIME STATISTICS SUMMARY 2020–2024

Key wildlife crime indicators

- 'Wildlife crime cases registered' include some cases in which only the carcass of a poached animal was discovered, but no arrests or seizures were made; this is particularly relevant for rhino cases, which often start with the discovery of a carcass without any suspects.
- Old rhino carcasses may be ascribed as poached in a previous year, but criminal cases are registered in the year of discovery of the carcasses.
- Individual totals for pangolin, elephant and rhino 'cases registered' and 'suspects arrested' may add up to more than the totals in the 'high-value-species cases' categories, because a number of cases and arrests may have involved more than one of the above species.
- 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 and annual reports.
- The number of elephant tusks seized does not relate directly to the number of elephants poached in Namibia, as tusks may originate from elephants killed in other countries.
- Cases finalised in 2024 may have been registered in previous years; individuals convicted in 2024 may have been arrested in previous years.

* Meat species are defined in this report as giraffe, buffalo, zebras, antelopes and wild pigs.

** High-value species are defined in this report as elephant, rhinoceroses (black and white rhinos combined) and pangolin.

*** One ground pangolin has between 345 and 415 scales¹; juvenile and adult pangolins have the same average number of scales.

8.1 Key wildlife crime indicators during 2023:

INDICATOR	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Cases registered (all categories):	431	458	443	399	344
meat-poaching* cases	219	208	208	152	136
high-value species** cases	152	198	174	181	166
pangolin cases	60	71	36	60	38
elephant cases	33	57	34	33	26
rhino cases (total of both species)	63	73	105	89	104
conspiracy to poach rhino cases (pre-emptive)	8	7	15	12	13
plant cases	0	2	12	18	7
Suspects arrested (all categories):	888	880	720	673	529
in meat-poaching* cases	492	497	415	310	292
in high-value species** cases	315	300	195	243	170
in pangolin cases	105	129	56	106	64
in elephant cases	64	99	64	57	32
in rhino cases (total of both species, all cases)	154	81	78	86	78
in conspiracy-to-poach-rhino cases (pre-emptive)	50	24	48	45	44
in plant cases	0	4	27	42	13
Products seized:					
pangolin – live animals	8	22	12	17	5
– dead animals/skins	67	66	28	53	45
– scales***	926	186	873	905	312
elephant – complete tusks	62	111	55	102	31
rhinos – complete horns	23	15	5	15	14
plants	0	4,693	4,287	1,311	700
Rhinos dehorned:	195	115	145	487	398
Estimated number of animals poached:					
elephant	12	10	4	8	9
rhinos	48	53	94	78	83
Instrumentalities seized:					
firearms	78	55	61	69	67
vehicles	49	33	37	51	36



INDICATOR	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Comments 2024
Individual's cases finalised in court (all categories):	307	378	515	200	244	
meat-poaching* cases	192	259	296	117	144	
high-value species** cases	87	95	144	48	62	
plant cases	0	0	2	9	9	
Individuals convicted (all categories):	243	303	386	174	231	95% conviction rate
in meat* poaching cases	152	213	215	102	140	97% conviction rate
in high-value species** cases	65	68	113	42	55	89% conviction rate
in plant cases	0	0	2	5	8	89% conviction rate
Convictions resulting in custodial sentence (total):	213	265	375	164	228	average 22 months
in meat* poaching cases	127	176	211	97	137	average 13 months
in high-value species** cases	62	67	108	42	55	average 53 months
in plant cases	0	0	2	3	8	average 14 months
Convictions resulting in monetary fine (total):	235	288	351	156	218	average N\$ 8,979
in meat* poaching cases	147	205	209	99	140	average N\$ 8,038
in high-value species** cases	63	63	87	27	42	average N\$ 15,258
in plant cases	0	0	2	5	8	average N\$ 5,188

Targeted species

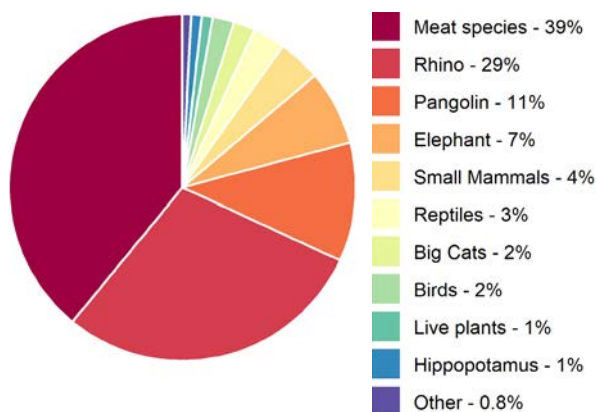
- *Meat species are defined in this report as giraffe, buffalo, zebras, antelopes and wild pigs (other species may also be poached for meat, but appear in categories such as Small Mammals, Reptiles, Birds, or Other).*
- *The majority of targeted animals is comprised of meat species, although registered cases have shown a decline in recent years.*
- *Rhinos (both species combined) are the specific species with the most cases registered; this includes pre-emptive cases where targeted animals were saved, as well as cases of discovered carcasses without arrests.*
- *Pangolin trafficking decreased during 2024, making up 11% of registered cases.*
- *The number of elephant cases has decreased considerably for 2024; few animals are known to have been poached in Namibia, while seizures of ivory also decreased (investigations have revealed that many tusks originate from elephants killed in other countries).*
- *Ratios are calculated using the number of cases registered per category, not the number of individual animals involved.*

Nationality of suspects

- *Most wildlife crimes in Namibia are being carried out by Namibians.*
- *Suspects from neighbouring countries make up the majority of other nationalities.*
- *Contrary to widespread beliefs, Asians only make up a very small proportion of suspects arrested in Namibia.*
- *The composition of nationalities will obviously differ substantially as one moves up the crime chain to international middlemen, dealers and kingpins.*

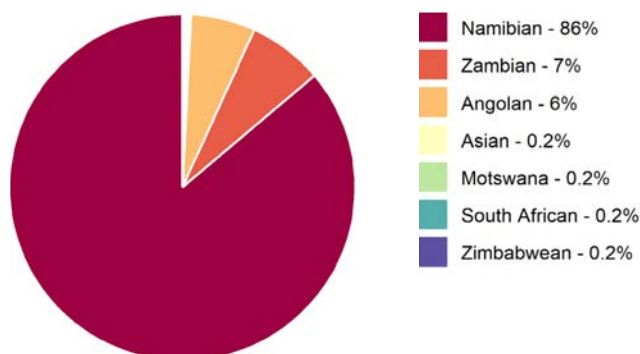
8.2 Ratios of targeted species:

for all registered cases recorded in 2024



8.3 Ratios of suspects' nationalities

for all arrests recorded in 2024

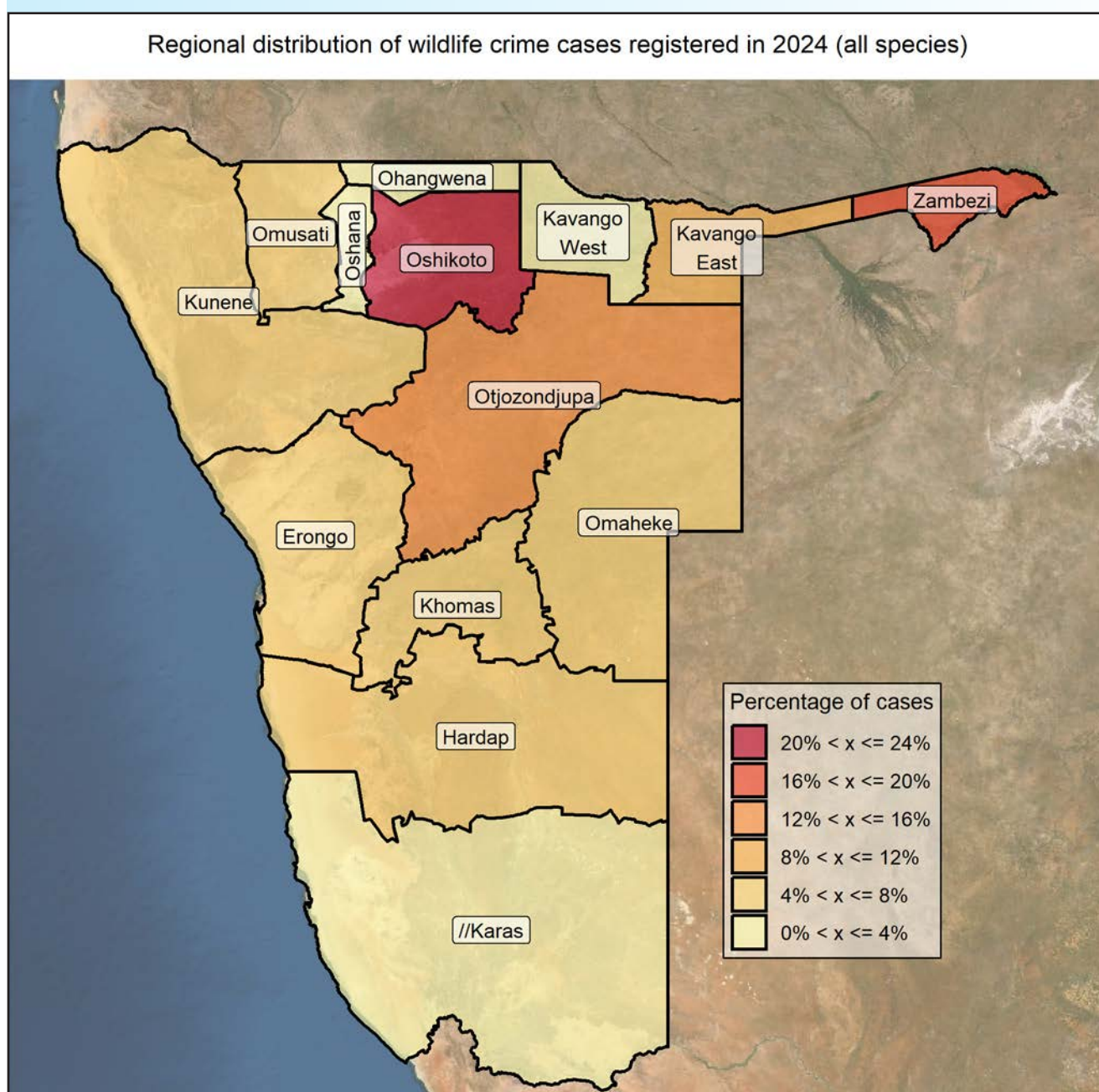


9. GENERAL WILDLIFE CRIME TRENDS 2015–2024

9.1 REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION of ALL REGISTERED CASES during 2022

Regional distribution of registered cases

- The map shows the total number of wildlife crime cases registered during 2024 and includes all types of wildlife crime.
- While some cases were registered in all regions of Namibia during 2024, the highest number of cases was registered in the Oshikoto Region; the majority of these cases were related to rhino poaching.
- The map indicates the regions in which cases were registered, not necessarily where the crime was committed. Cases are generally registered at the police station nearest to the place of arrest, which may be in another region than where an incident occurred.
- Cases may involve poaching, possession, trafficking and other transgressions, or a combination of offences.
- Wildlife densities are generally lower in the south and central north than other parts of the country, resulting in fewer opportunities for poachers.
- Trafficking of high-value-species products is generally more prevalent in the north of the country; this is influenced by the proximity of the northern borders, which represent known trafficking routes for smuggling contraband in or out of the country.





*Seizure of evidence in a
giraffe poaching case,
Otjozondjupa Region,
October 2024.*

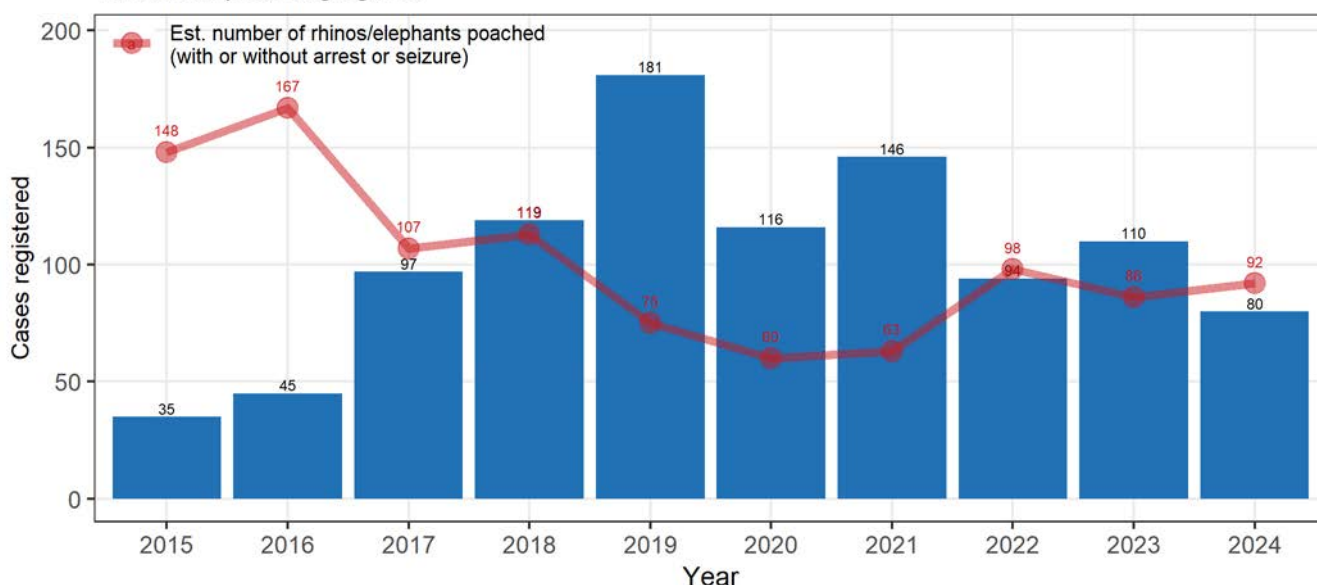
The total numbers of wildlife crime cases registered and suspects arrested continue to decline each year from a peak in 2019; yet some sectors, such as pangolin and rhino poaching and trafficking, continue to exhibit fluctuations marked by repeated spikes.

Trends in the number of high-value-species cases registered

- It is important to note that the registered cases in the below graphs include only those cases in which arrests or seizures were made; all discovered carcasses of rhinos and elephant are investigated, and are indicated separately on the graphs to reflect overall poaching prevalence.
- While poaching of elephant has clearly decreased from a peak in 2016, rhino poaching continues to exhibit new spikes.
- The number of cases registered per year has fluctuated since a peak in 2019; this may be influenced by a variety of factors, including law enforcement effectiveness and crime prevalence.
- Meat-poaching cases made up around half of all registered wildlife crime cases since 2019.
- High-value species are defined in this report as elephant, rhinoceroses (black and white rhinos combined) and pangolin.
- Meat species are defined in this report as giraffe, buffalo, zebras, antelopes and wild pigs.

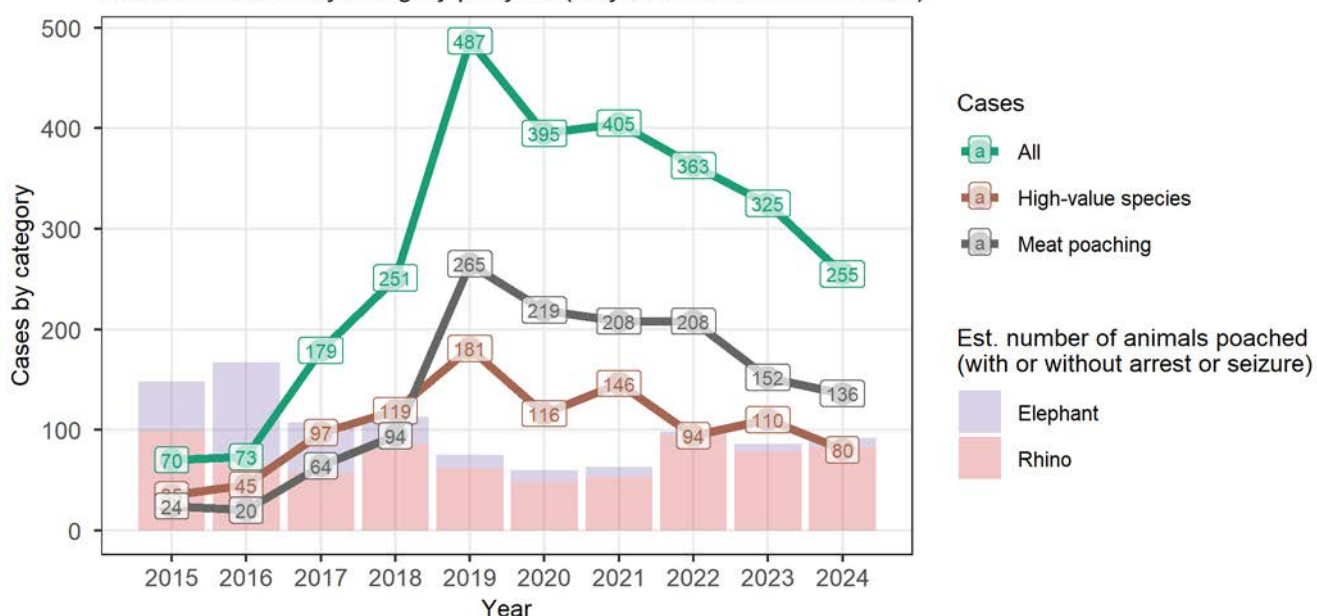
9.2 Wildlife crime CASES REGISTERED (high-value species)

Annual wildlife crime cases registered (high-value species cases only) vs. annual poaching figures



9.3 Wildlife crime CASES REGISTERED divided BY GENERAL CATEGORIES

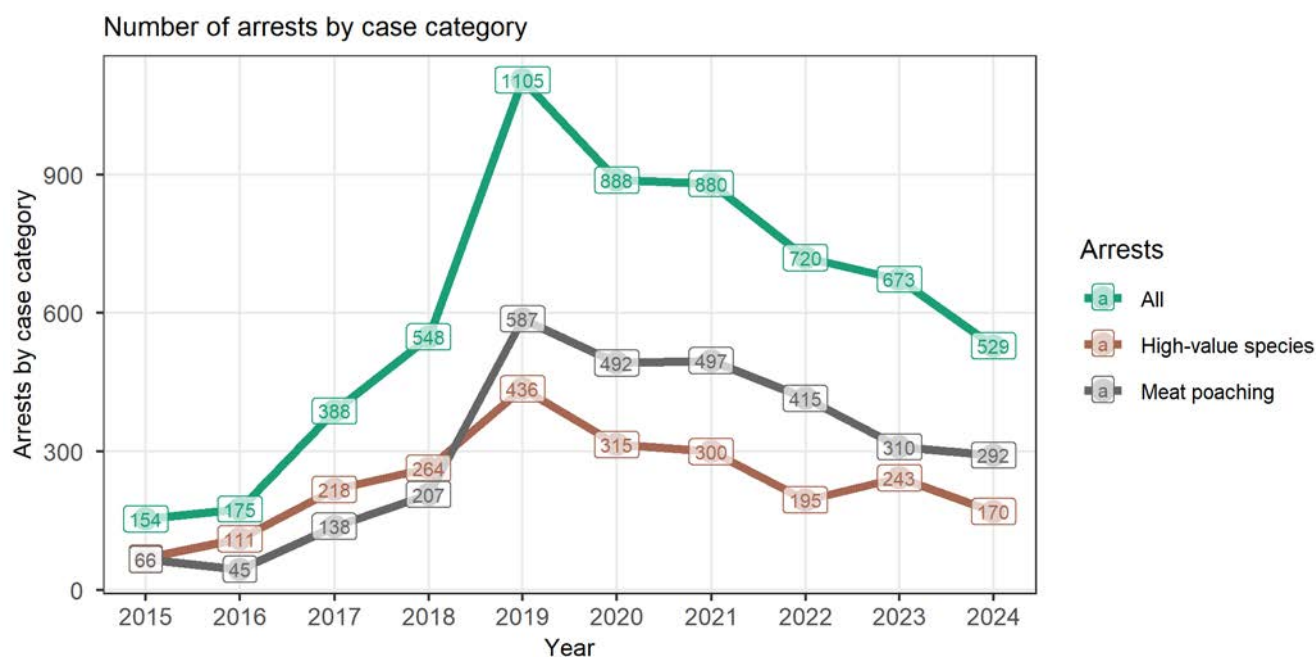
Number of cases by category per year (only cases with arrests made)



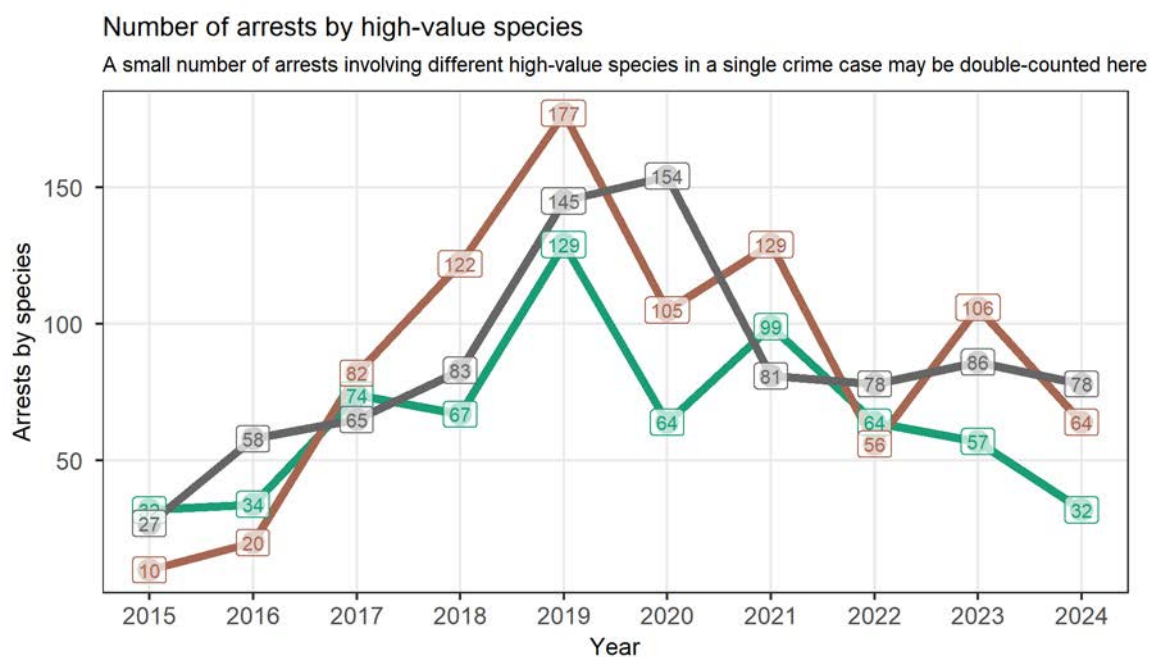
Trends in the total number of wildlife crime arrests

- Annual arrests have dropped gradually in all of the below categories from a peak in 2019, with arrests related to high-value species exhibiting the biggest fluctuations; this may be influenced by a variety of factors, including law enforcement effectiveness and crime prevalence.
- High-value species are defined in this report as elephant, rhinoceroses (black and white rhinos combined) and pangolin.
- Meat species are defined in this report as giraffe, buffalo, zebras, antelopes and wild pigs.

9.4 Wildlife crime ARRESTS divided BY GENERAL CATEGORIES



9.5 Wildlife crime ARRESTS divided BY HIGH-VALUE SPECIES CATEGORIES



Seizures of firearms and vehicles

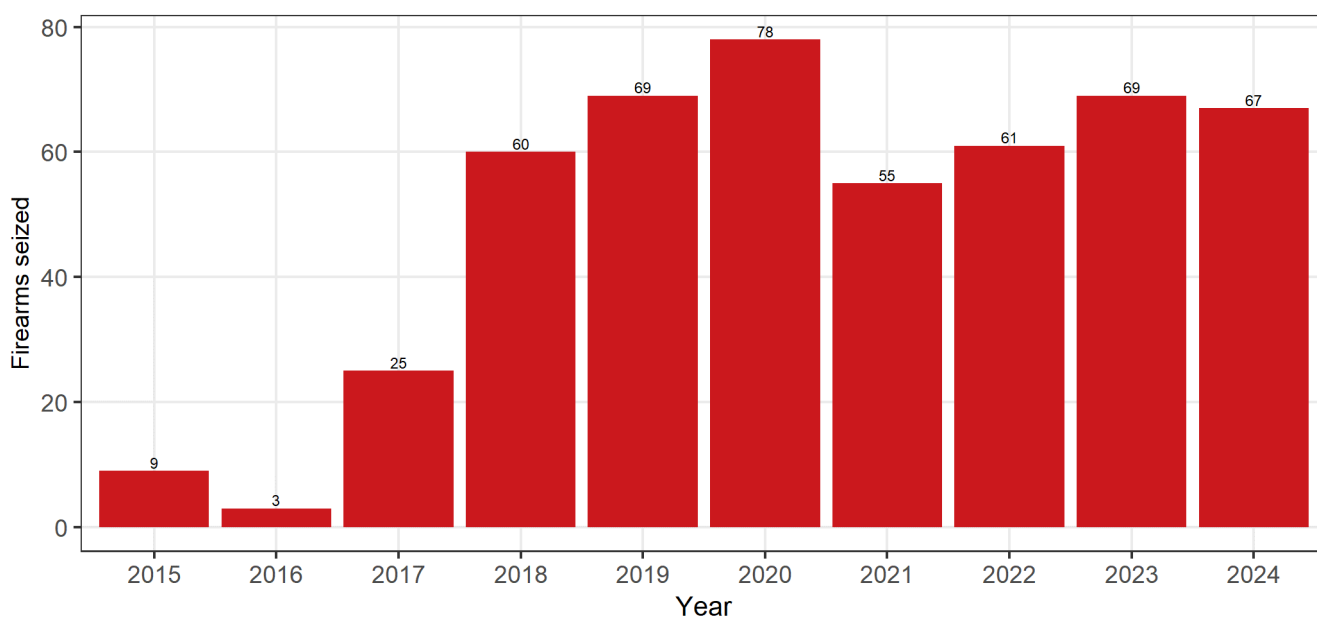
- When suspects are found in possession of contraband such as illegal wildlife products, firearms or ammunition, the items, as well as the vehicles in which the items were transported, may be seized as **instrumentality** in the commission of an alleged offence.
- If suspects are convicted as charged, vehicles or other property that has been impounded in relation to the charges may be forfeited to the state.
- The forfeiture of expensive vehicles represents a significant additional punishment for criminals.
- Fluctuations in the number of firearm and vehicle seizures are influenced by the complexity of registered cases in any given year.

Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) charges

- Wildlife crime can be categorised as organised crime under POCA when it is carried out by two or more people repeatedly working together, and when it includes any of the following organised-crime categories: racketeering; criminal gang activity; money laundering.
- The escalation of transnational organised crime since 2015 has led to a steep increase in the number of suspects charged under POCA.
- The fluctuation of POCA charges after a peak in 2020 may be due to a range of factors related to the complexity of crime cases.

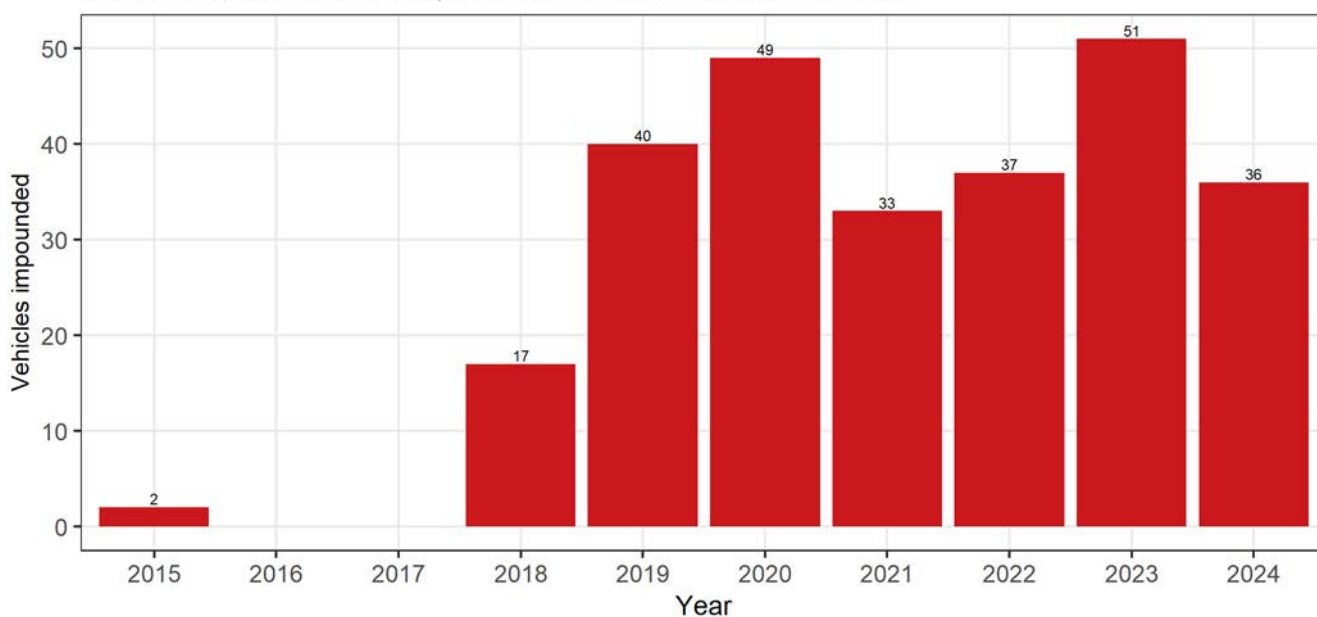
9.6 Wildlife crime FIREARM SEIZURES (all categories)

Annual number of firearms seized in line with wildlife crime cases



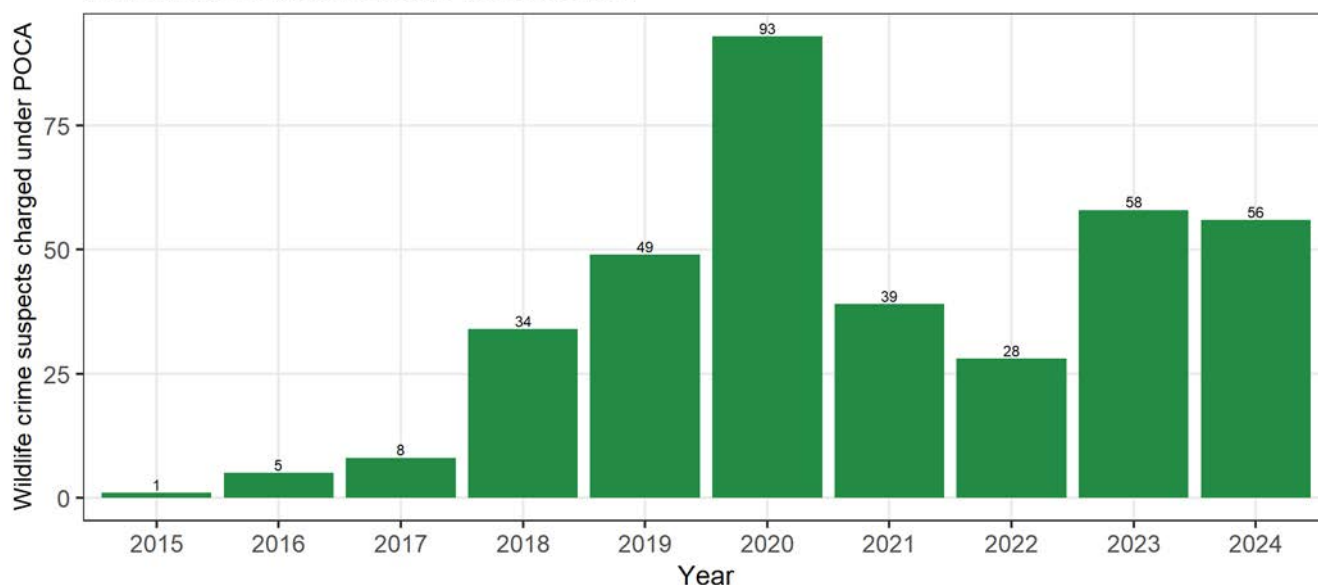
9.7 Wildlife crime VEHICLE SEIZURES (all categories)

Annual number of vehicles impounded in line with wildlife crime cases



9.8 PREVENTION OF ORGANISED CRIME ACT (POCA) CHARGES (all categories)

Annual number of wildlife crime suspects charged under the Prevention of Organized Crime Act 29 of 2004



B4. Prosecuting rhino crimes – a fundamental challenge for rhino conservation in Namibia

Barely seven per cent of all suspects arrested for rhino crimes over the past ten years had been convicted by the end of 2024.

Since 2015, when the current rhino poaching crisis first peaked, 726 rhinos have been recorded as poached in Namibia. Proactive law enforcement has resulted in 855 arrests of suspects related to rhino crimes. Of these, 319 arrests were pre-emptive, where would-be poachers were intercepted while on a poaching mission, but before they had managed to kill a rhino. This has inhibited poaching losses by averting the killing of numerous rhinos. Law enforcement is clearly doing a commendable job in achieving these results.

Yet over the past ten years, only 59 perpetrators have been convicted of rhino crimes, while less than nine per cent of the horns stolen during poaching incidents have been recovered as part of investigations. The other 91% have presumably been smuggled out of Namibia and trafficked on the black market. Illicit income has presumably been gained by a complex network of shooters, middlemen, kingpins, and a large number of aiders and abettors.

The lack of serious consequences for rhino crimes clearly represents a fundamental challenge for rhino conservation and protection in Namibia. A high number of arrested suspects are known repeat offenders – seasoned criminals with previous arrests related to rhino crimes, out on bail in ongoing court cases, or discharged after being trialled.

Some suspects in rhino cases have been arrested as much as eight times, and in some years repeat offenders make up more than 50% of total arrests. Bail applications should be denied as a preventative measure whenever there is a risk of suspects reoffending, and all means to expedite case finalisation should be employed.

Numerous factors can influence the finalisation of rhino cases and the conviction of perpetrators, including –

- errors during investigations can lead to suspects being discharged
- evidence in pre-emptive arrests is circumstantial, as no rhino was killed
- multiple suspects are arrested in most cases, which complicates trials
- many suspects hire expert defence lawyers, who use delay tactics and legislative loopholes
- the need to conclusively establish guilt or innocence can make judicial processes cumbersome.

Namibia has seasoned investigators and prosecutors, and the forensic capacities to secure ballistics, DNA, and diverse additional digital and physical evidence to conclusively incriminate perpetrators. Namibia now has a dedicated Environmental Crimes Court. If rhino crimes continue to go unpunished, high numbers of rhinos will continue to be lost, and the statistics will increasingly tarnish Namibia's conservation, wildlife protection and law enforcement image.



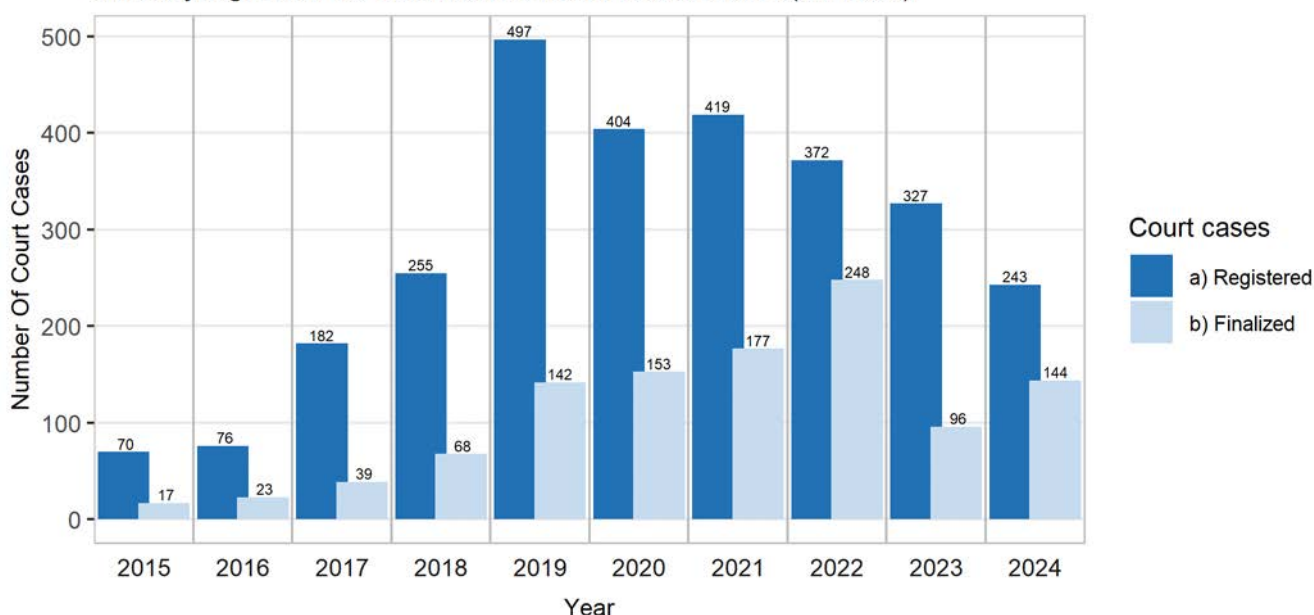
Annually registered versus finalised cases, annual arrests versus current conviction status, and annual conviction rate

- **Registered vs. finalised cases** indicates how many cases are registered in a particular year, and how many cases are finalised in the same year (irrespective of when they were registered); as cases may take years to finalise, links between registered and finalised cases are not made in this graph; while the rate of case finalisation is improving, more cases continue to be registered than finalised each year, which keeps increasing the overall backlog of cases waiting to be finalised. Special courts held during 2022 and 2024 reduced the gap between registered and finalised cases in these years; for each case finalised in 2019, 3.5 new cases were registered; in 2022 the ratio was reduced to 1:1.5 and in 2024 it stood at 1:1.7.
- **Arrests vs. conviction status** shows that less than 40% of suspects arrested in any year since 2015 had been convicted by 11 March 2025. *Note: Convictions are shown in the year of arrest, not the year of conviction.*
- **Annual conviction rate** refers to the percentage of suspects in finalised cases who have been convicted; the annual conviction rate is near or above 75% for all years since 2016, and above 80% in 2024, indicating that appropriate charges were filed and that the cases were well-presented in court; indeterminate indicates that the status has not yet been defined in the database.

9.9 ANNUAL CASES REGISTERED versus ANNUAL CASES FINALISED (all categories)

Cases are shown by year of registration and finalisation, respectively; finalised cases may have been registered in previous years.

Annually registered vs. finalized wildlife crime court cases (all cases)

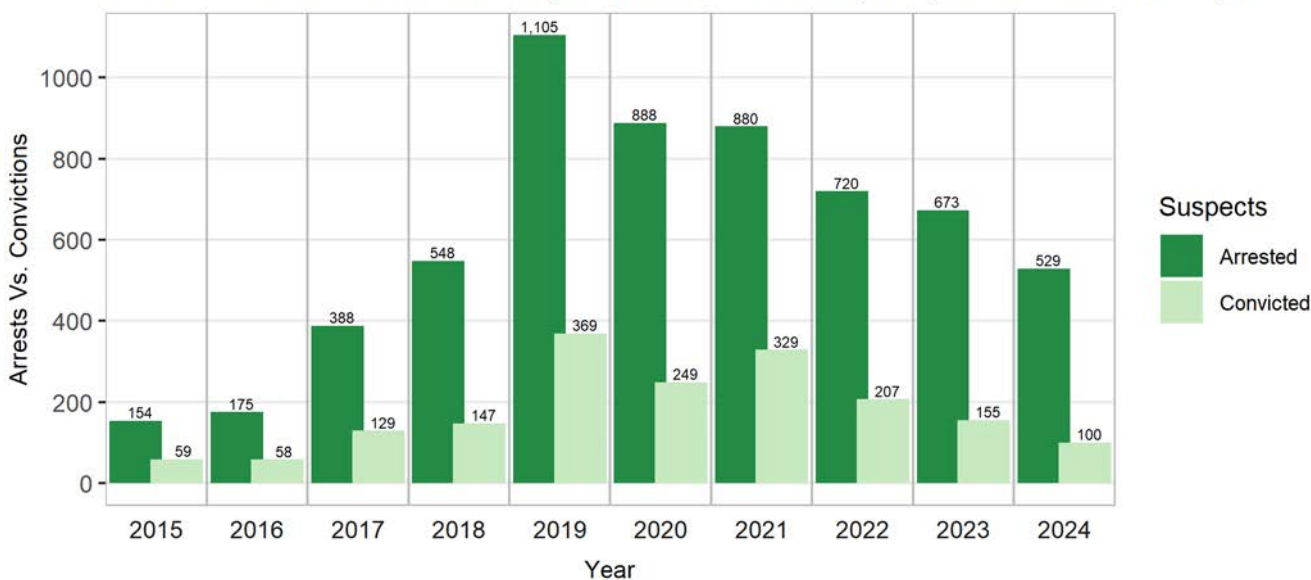


9.10 ANNUAL ARRESTS versus CURRENT CONVICTIONS (all) [current status 11.03. 2025]

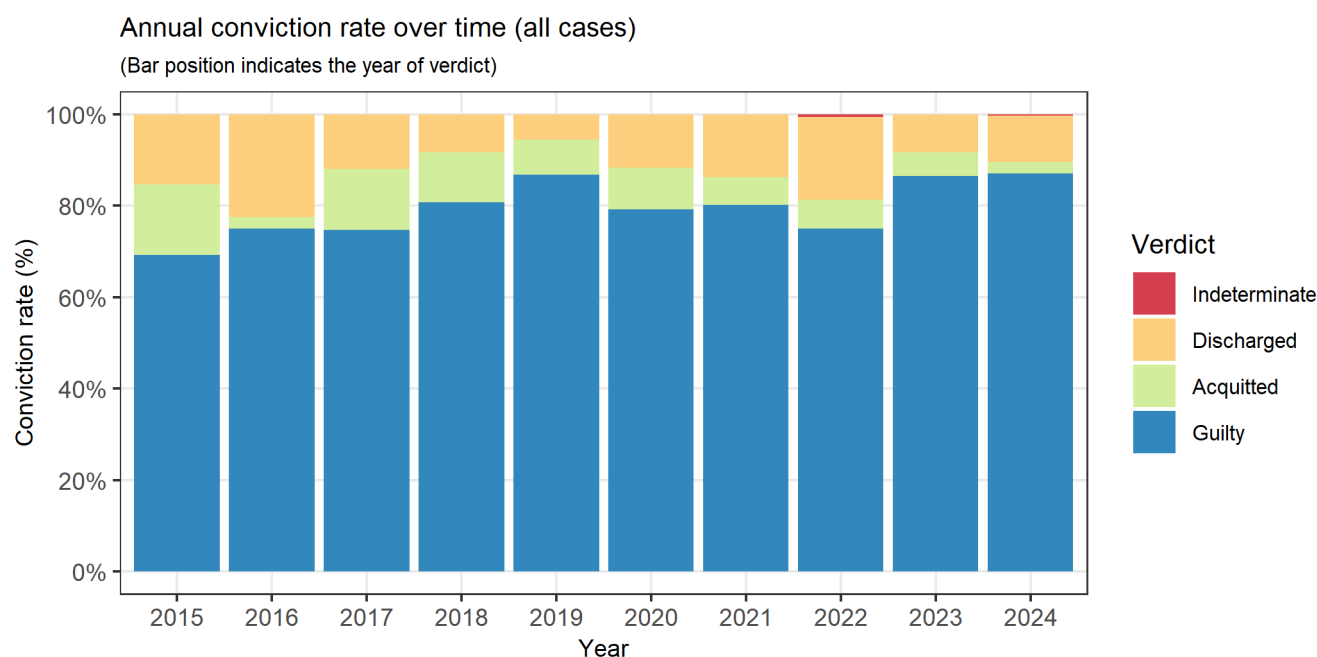
Arrests and convictions are shown by year of arrest; many convictions are achieved years after arrest, but are shown in the year of arrest.

Annual arrests vs. their current conviction status (all cases)

The bars "Convicted" indicate the number of suspects who were arrested in the respective year and have been convicted by now.



9.11 ANNUAL CONVICTION RATE (all categories)



B5. International crime webs targeting Namibia's indigenous plants

The full extent of the far-reaching transboundary networks involved in driving the poaching and trafficking of indigenous/endemic Namibian plants for the global ornamental plant market is still being uncovered through concerted investigations and international collaboration. The obvious global demand and value of the plants, driven largely via the internet and social media platforms, is precipitating a rate of local extraction that is posing an imminent threat of massive population decline and potential extinction. Many of the targeted species occur in isolated stands and have highly restricted ranges.

The arrest of a Tanzanian woman during 2023 triggered wide-ranging investigations that provided important insights into the connections and modus operandi of well-organised transnational syndicates. By tracing financial transactions, investigators were able to identify transnational networks (as well as some convergence between plant trafficking and rhino horn trafficking). The Tanzanian was recruiting Namibians for plant harvesting, and then selling the plants to international markets. Operating across Namibia, Tanzania and Madagascar, she utilised multiple social media accounts to connect with international buyers. The investigations resulted in the arrest of 11 suspects, mostly local harvesters, and the seizure of over 100 elephant's foot plants. The Tanzanian decided to plead guilty and was sentenced in 2024 (see p. 21).

Namibia is working with several countries to combat plant trafficking on a regional scale. By fostering international information-sharing and alignment of legal frameworks, Namibia is pioneering a model for transnational cooperation that can be replicated in other regions. Namibia is not the sole victim of plant trafficking by Tanzanian nationals, and the collaborative model could be extended to other affected countries.

Despite its obvious impacts, combating plant trafficking faces unique challenges. Unlike iconic wildlife species, plants often receive little attention – a phenomenon known as 'plant blindness'. To address this, Namibia has initiated active awareness creation amongst various stakeholders.

Local seizures of large volumes of live plants over the past three years have provided startling insights into the extent of the trade, as well as its devastating biodiversity impacts. Preliminary findings of a recent analysis of the sector using various tools indicate that, considering the volume of plants being trafficked, the social media activities of syndicates, and the number of illegally issued permits, the financial impact of the plant trade may exceed that of the rhino horn trade.

Namibia endeavours to rehabilitate recovered plant specimens in their natural habitat at secure and suitable sites. The success of the rehabilitation process is being actively monitored to guide future initiatives.



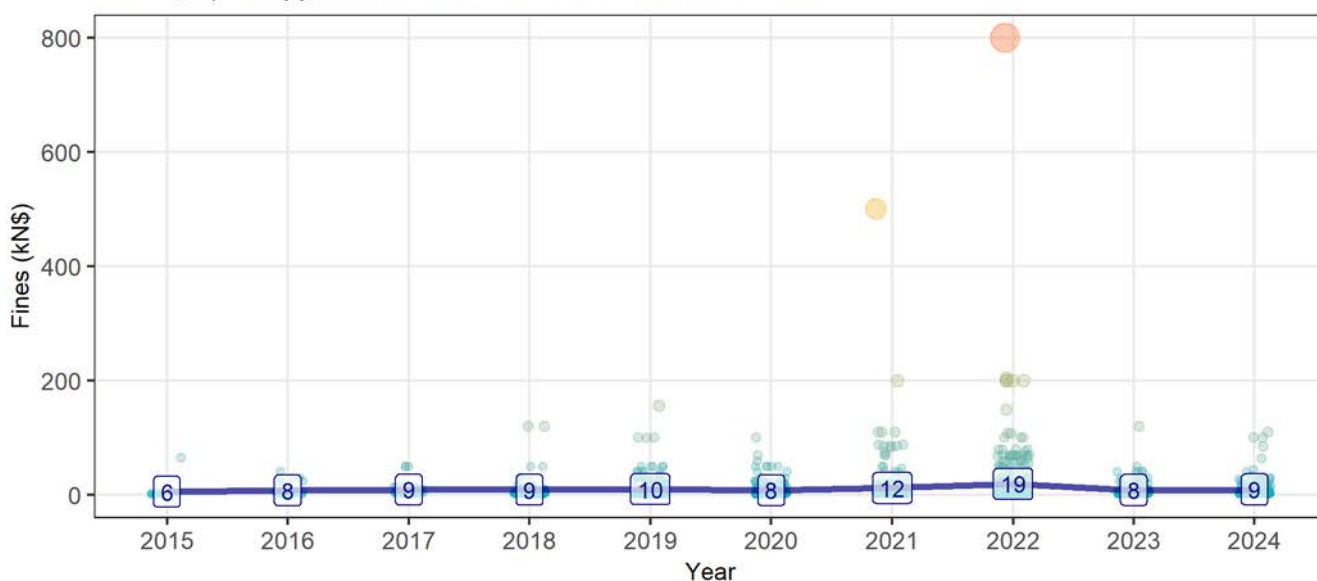
Wildlife crime fines and prison sentences, and time between arrest and case finalisation

- **Fines and prison sentences** show the changes in the height of sentences over time; the time line (x-axis) indicates the date of sentencing; the colour and size of the dots vary according to the height of the sentence; small blue represent the lowest and large orange the highest; the blue line indicates the annual average; the graphs include all registered wildlife crime cases and all related charges against perpetrators.
- The 2022 fine of N\$ 800,000 was in a pangolin trafficking case registered in 2021, involving an Angolan national.
- The 2023 prison terms of 264 months (some sentences suspended) were in a rhino poaching case registered in 2016, involving 4 Namibians.
- The average height of sentences increased for prison terms during 2022 and 2023, influenced in part by some exceptional sentences.
- **Time between arrest and case finalisation** may vary considerably, with some cases finalised in a matter of days, while others have taken 10 years to complete; the reasons for case duration and the causes of case delays are complex; the finalisation of very old cases in any given year increases the average for that year; this does not mean that case finalisation is getting slower; the finalisation of very old cases should in fact be seen as a positive trend.

9.12 Wildlife crime FINES (all categories)

Distribution of fine amounts (thousand N\$) per year

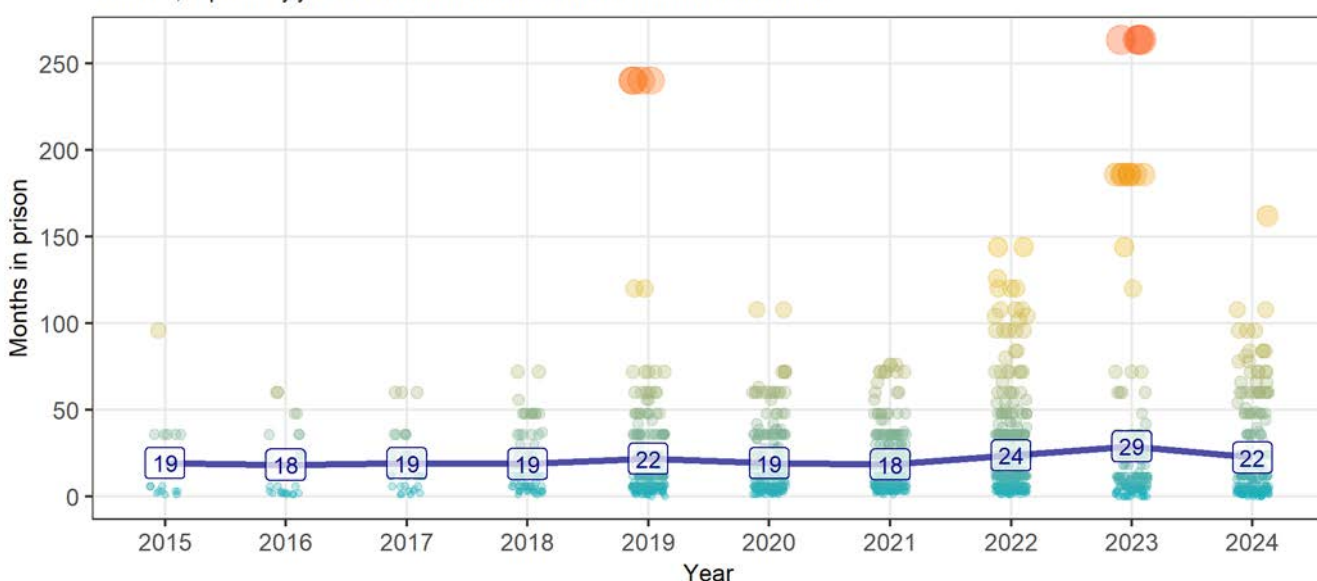
All cases; depicted by year of conviction. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



9.13 Wildlife crime PRISON SENTENCES (all categories)

Distribution of jail sentences (months) per year

All cases; depicted by year of conviction. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



9.14 TIME BETWEEN ARREST and CASE FINALISATION (all categories)

More and more old cases are being finalised in recent years, creating the false impression that case finalisation is getting slower.

Distribution of months passed between individuals' arrest and case finalization (all cases)

The position of a data point indicates the year in which a case was finalized. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



B6. Can we control our hunger for meat?

The impacts of the 'bushmeat' trade on wildlife populations can be devastating. Across much of Africa, it is considered a driver of wildlife declines¹. The most recent study of bushmeat characteristics in Namibia was done in 2007², a decade before the 2019 peak in registered criminal cases. That assessment was general, and the dynamics of the sector have substantially changed; new and detailed research is urgently needed to guide effective countermeasures.

Meat is a Namibian culinary staple, enjoyed as fine fillets in restaurants and tourist lodges, as regular dinners on farms, as the chop on the *braai* or *kapana* in the street, or as the famous biltong snack from the *padstal*. Demand for meat is high amongst rural and urban communities across the country.

Yet meat from the supermarket is expensive. Access to meat in any form varies significantly depending on demographics, and on where you are in the country. Many livestock herds are bred for lucrative meat exports, while others are held as a form of personal security. Much of the wildlife is protected for tourism and trophy hunting. Off-takes for affordable meat are limited. A decision by government in 2024 to provide drought relief for rural communities by distributing game meat harvested from state-owned wildlife caused an outcry amongst some of the 'conservation-minded' public³.

The rural poor tend to have the least access to affordable meat. Yet under conditions of economic hardship, the temptation to secure meat for the pot is significantly

magnified, as are attempts to sell meat for sorely needed cash⁴. This is manifest in opportunistic picking up of fresh roadkill, retrieving antelopes trapped in fences, or capturing edible animals that cross one's path. More premeditated is the use of snares, or hunting with dogs and spears to target wildlife. Finally, the infamous *jagter van die lang plaas* is a well-equipped and resourced, organised poacher using motor vehicles, spotlights and rifles to target wildlife along the verges of public roads. Clearly, Namibia's bushmeat sector has many layers. Poached game meat is consumed directly by subsistence poachers and their families, sold informally amongst local communities for quick cash, or laundered into legal sales outlets in urban centres for calculated profit.

Registered criminal cases show national parks, community conservancies, private reserves and farmland are all affected by bushmeat poaching. While small volumes of game meat are exported as a delicacy, the majority of the market lies in Namibia. Much of it is informal and too much of it is illicit. The question is – how do we effectively suppress the illegal game-meat sector and ensure legal access to affordable meat, especially for impoverished communities? In theory, Namibia has enough meat for everyone. Great herds of cattle, sheep, goats – and game – are spread across much of the land. Namibia also has the legal framework to enable much more equitable wildlife access and benefits. Innovation is needed to effect tangible change.



After more than a decade of severe poaching impacts, criminals continue to find ways to evade rhino protection measures, to kill rhinos and traffic their horns out of the country.



*Poached white rhino,
private reserve,
Otjozondjupa Region,
June 2024.*

The year 2015 saw the most massive spike in rhino poaching in independent Namibia, after more than two decades of few losses. This was quickly accompanied by escalating elephant and pangolin poaching. In response, wildlife protection and law enforcement have been strengthened, with diverse results. General wildlife crime indicators are showing a steady decline in registered cases and arrests, but sectors such as rhino and pangolin poaching and trafficking continue to fluctuate between temporary reductions and new spikes. Meanwhile, entirely new sectors such as live-plant trafficking present more challenges.

TEN YEARS, MANY ACHIEVEMENTS, MORE CHALLENGES

Countercrime initiatives are addressing the symptoms, but seldom the causes. Namibia is in the difficult position of being rich in natural resources, but having no real control over illicit international demand for those resources. This means that wildlife protection and law enforcement must be extremely effective – and ongoing – as the underworld continues to target our protected species to supply illegal markets for self-enrichment. Global attempts over the past decade to change attitudes and reduce demand for illicit wildlife products have shown only limited impact in some sectors; in most, the onslaught continues unabated¹.

Protecting the last of the rhinos – cliché or crisis?

Unless international market demand for rhino horn can be significantly suppressed, Namibia's rhinos will remain a primary target for poachers – until they are gone. Namibia holds the second-largest African rhino populations left on Earth (next to South Africa)². The threat to Namibia's rhinos is unrelenting, and rhino protection in Namibia will remain extremely challenging, requiring constant adaptation and innovation to counter evolving criminal strategies.

Succulent plants under siege

Over the past five years, a seemingly unlikely new threat to Namibia's biodiversity has emerged – rare succulents are being dug up in the wild, smuggled out of the country as live specimens, and sold globally to enthusiasts as ornamental plants. Due to Namibia's unique geomorphology and climate, many of the succulents occur only in very isolated locations with ideal conditions. The current levels of poaching could cause rapid extinction of some of the targeted species³.

Poaching and the pangolin – an immeasurable challenge

While global declines have been recorded⁴, pangolins remain amongst the most-trafficked wild animals – for two purposes: their scales used in traditional medicines, and their meat served as a delicacy. Namibia's pangolins remain poorly known, and the dynamics of the local pangolin trade remain unclear. In contrast to other high-value species, no local markets, trafficking networks or routes have been identified. Poaching appears to be driven by the rural poor without a clear understanding of market demands.

Elephants and ivory – a Namibian dilemma

Namibia's national elephant population is considered secure, and poaching impacts in Namibia are regarded as negligible. Yet regional ivory trafficking continues to impact Namibia through ivory being smuggled into the country for sale, or in transit to other destinations. Heavy poaching in neighbouring countries will also affect Namibia's transboundary elephant population, which depends on seasonal movements across KAZA⁵.

Meat for money, or meat to eat?

'Bushmeat' is deeply entrenched in many rural African livelihoods⁶. Namibian conservation systems have attempted to provide legal access to game meat for rural communities (and other diverse benefits from wildlife) through various policies, including limited ownership over some wildlife species, and 'own-use' quotas⁷. While these systems are making important contributions, they clearly do not suffice to minimise demand for illicit meat and related cash income.

Ten years on – what does the future hold?

Wildlife crime keeps evolving. New and unexpected sectors continue to emerge, poaching and trafficking tactics keep adapting, and markets keep changing. Namibia has achieved diverse successes in shifting from reactive to pre-emptive law enforcement. Some intending poachers are being arrested even before they can kill an animal. Yet law enforcement alone will not stop wildlife crime. Parallel interventions are needed to address drivers and obstacles, including poverty alleviation and broader legal benefits from wildlife⁸.



A1.1 Protecting the last of the rhinos – cliché or crisis?

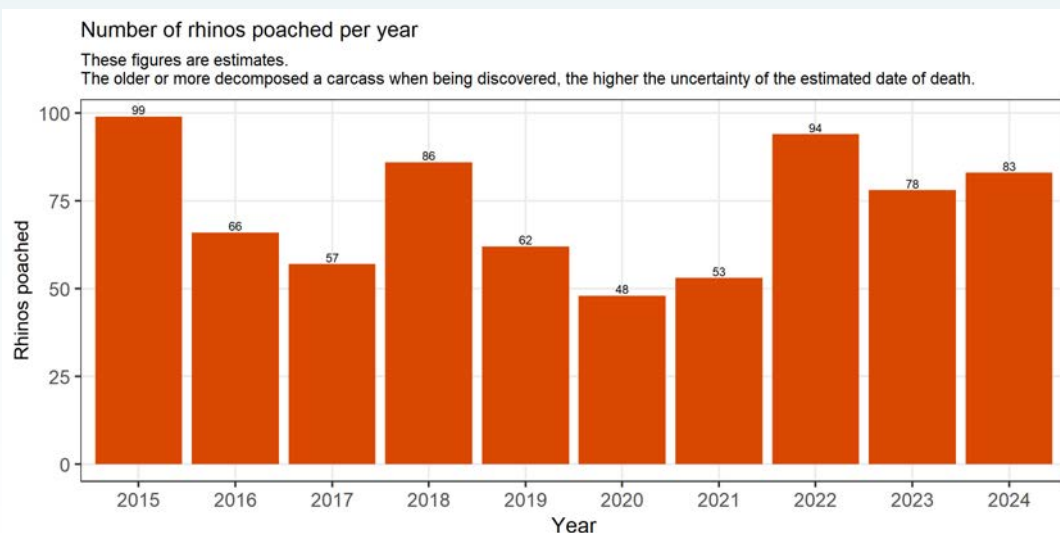
Namibia is today the only country other than neighbouring South Africa that preserves national populations of more than 1,000 rhinos of each of the two African rhino species¹. The two countries are very literally the last rhino strongholds in Africa – all other former rhino range states have seen their rhino numbers dwindle below that threshold². This puts Namibia under massive pressure from an undiminished demand for rhino horn. ‘The last of the rhinos’ is no cliché – it is a fundamental crisis!

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- Namibia was unprepared for the poaching onslaught of 2014–15, despite years of warning signs from South Africa, and early initiatives to strengthen protection.
- After Namibia became a primary target, government undertook wide-ranging actions, assisted by numerous stakeholders and funding partners; the actions inhibited escalation of losses, but each reduction in poaching since 2015 has been followed by a new spike; the past three years have seen more than 75 rhinos poached per year.
- Only 9% of horns from poached animals have been recovered – despite arrests, horn trafficking is successful.
- The high number of arrests of participants in rhino crimes (including pre-emptive arrests of would-be poachers) indicates effective investigations, yet inadequacies clearly exist in protecting rhinos in most rhino ranges, in recovering horns of poached animals, and in deterring rhino crimes through effective prosecutions, appropriate penalties and other measures.
- The extremely low number of convictions for rhino crimes indicates inadequacies in case preparation and prosecution, and systemic judicial challenges.
- Rhino poaching and horn trafficking continue to present some of the biggest wildlife conservation, protection and law enforcement challenges in independent Namibia.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Rhino protection is being strengthened through better integration with law enforcement and parallel initiatives at local and national levels.
- Law enforcement is being strengthened through more diligent evidence collection, better court case preparation and presentation, and more resolute prosecutions.
- Case finalisation with appropriate penalties will be significantly expedited by prioritising the most serious and complex cases, and addressing obstacles to finalisation.
- Financial investigations and sweeping seizures and forfeitures of unexplained wealth under POCA are being used as a substantial additional deterrent.
- Closer international collaboration will improve disruption of transnational trafficking chains.
- The serious and far-reaching impacts of rhino poaching and trafficking can be emphasised more at all levels.
- Any successes in reducing global market demand will alleviate local poaching pressure.
- Further elevating rhino poaching as a very serious crime with global impacts, rather than merely ‘the death of a protected wild animal in Africa’ will strengthen all countermeasures.



A1.2 Succulent plants under siege

Namibia's succulents are being poached at levels that can quickly wipe out entire species – for a global ornamental plant market largely unaware of such impacts. It's an entirely new crisis, complicated by the fact that people don't hold plants as dear as they do charismatic animals. 'Plant blindness' means that neither local conservation, protection and law enforcement actions, nor global countercrime initiatives, nor the market dynamics of the plant sector receive comparable attention to rhino or elephant poaching.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

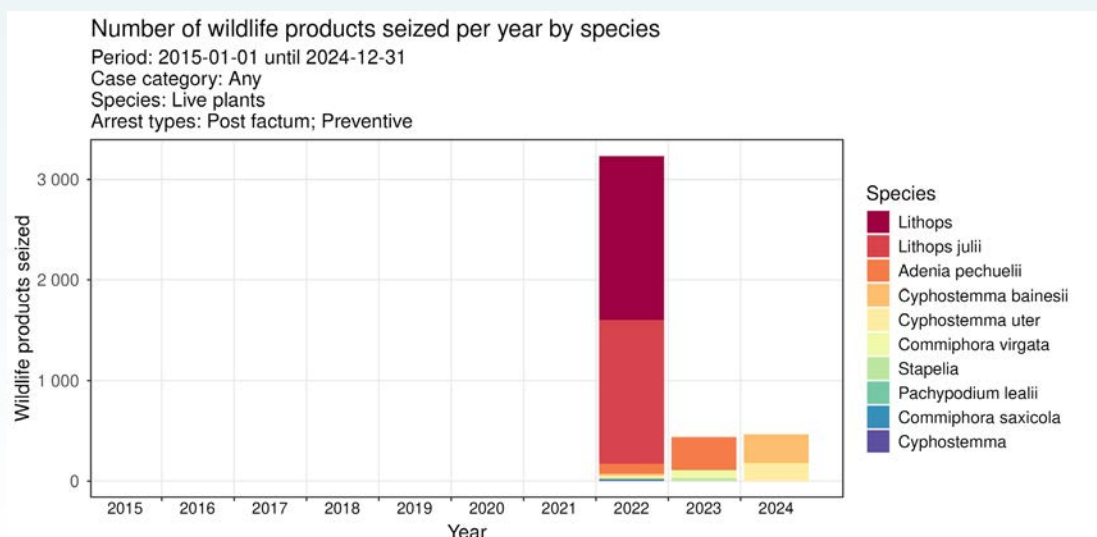
- News of rapidly escalating live-plant trafficking in neighbouring South Africa¹ motivated investigations into this sector in Namibia, which quickly led to identification of trafficking operations, arrests and seizures from 2022 onwards, uncovering a new conservation and law enforcement challenge for Namibia
- Seizures of thousands of individual *Lithops* spp. specimens from southern Namibia dominated seizures in 2022; since then traffickers have targeted rare pachycauls in western Namibia, indicating that any succulents that may be suitable as ornamental plants could be targeted.
- Some of Namibia's highly localised endemic succulents appear to be under greater threat of extinction than black rhinos, as the plants occur in isolated locations in very limited numbers that can be quickly wiped out.
- Legal sales of indigenous plants propagated in nurseries from seed create opportunities where specimens poached in the wild can be laundered into the legal sector.
- Weak forestry legislation and low maximum penalties in Namibia inhibit the ability of the courts to apply appropriate sentences, even if prosecutions are successful and convictions are achieved.
- Lack of international protection of many of the targeted species means that very limited legal action is possible

once the plants have left Namibia.

- The global ornamental plant market is driven by internet sales and social media exchanges amongst enthusiasts.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Namibian forestry legislation is being strengthened as an urgent priority to facilitate appropriate local protection, and enable effective countermeasures and suitable penalties for transgressions.
- Achieving CITES listings for all targeted species to enable international legal action is another prime concern.
- Identifying and profiling trade networks and end markets is a major step in understanding the dynamics of the sector and facilitating targeted countermeasures.
- Stringent controls related to sales of indigenous plants by legal nurseries will inhibit laundering of poached plants.
- Proactive and targeted awareness campaigns countering 'plant blindness' highlight threats posed by plant poaching amongst communities, law enforcement and the judiciary.
- Innovative protection measures for plants could include plant rangers who monitor threatened populations, much like the very successful rhino rangers.
- Global campaigns amongst consumers, especially via social media, can improve awareness of the severe impacts of plant poaching and reduce market demand.



A1.3 Poaching and the pangolin – an immeasurable challenge

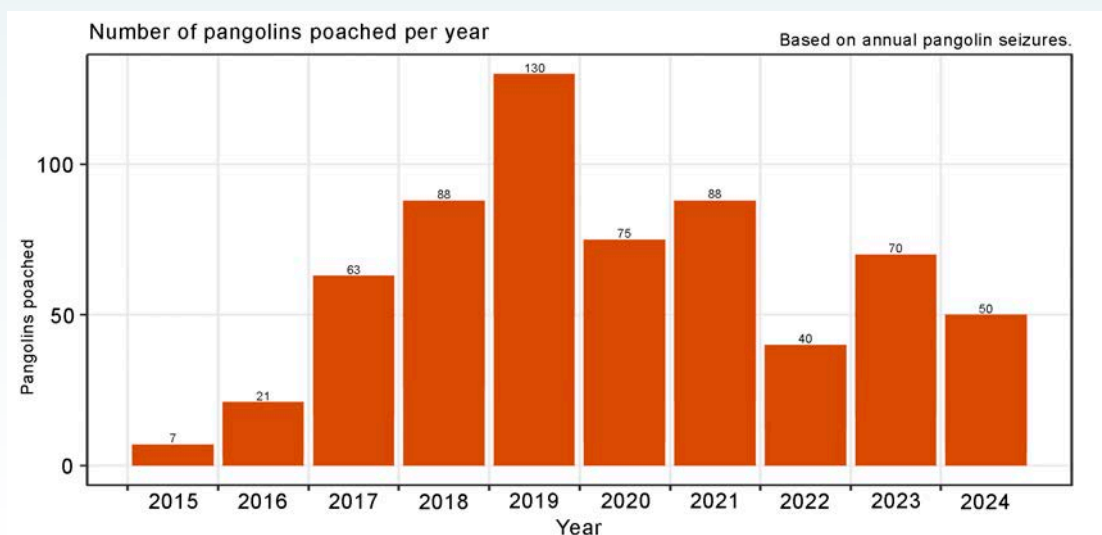
The impacts of pangolin poaching on the Namibian population of these secretive animals remain unknown. That the combination of poaching and other human influences such as electric fencing and habitat degradation must be having severe impacts appears beyond doubt. While pangolin poaching and trafficking in Namibia experienced a rapid increase over five years from 2015, it has fluctuated since then. Global trends are showing declines in both market values of pangolin products and volumes of pangolin seizures, but again with fluctuations¹.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- Media coverage of the high value of pangolin products, combined with misinterpretation of an early pangolin awareness campaign offering cash rewards – rather than actual, in-country demand – is believed to have driven the initial spike in pangolin poaching in Namibia.
- Pangolins are small, secretive and largely nocturnal, making both research and protection difficult; knowledge of the national status of the Namibian pangolin population remains limited, complicating targeted interventions.
- Pangolin populations are being adversely affected by a range of human impacts, not only poaching.
- Pangolins are slow breeding, making them more susceptible to impacts; they are also harmless, slow-moving and defenceless against humans.
- Awareness of the specific conservation needs of Namibian pangolins remains limited; few actions are being taken to limit human impacts other than poaching.
- A national management strategy for pangolins has not yet been finalised or implemented.
- While it is believed that misperceptions amongst rural communities, rather than in-country demand, continue to drive Namibian pangolin poaching, undetected trade networks may exist, and impacts of illicit trade may be much higher than seizure statistics suggest.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Stern deterrent sentences delivered by the courts during 2022 and 2024² (accompanied by media coverage of the sentences) are believed to have contributed to declines in registered cases in those years; consistent, ongoing deterrence could thus facilitate lasting suppression of pangolin poaching in Namibia.
- The COVID-19 pandemic created a sharp global focus on the transmission of wildlife pathogens to humans; this included indications that some pangolin populations may have acted as intermediate hosts to the virus³; these factors could have contributed to the global decline in pangolin trafficking; addressing global health risks should continue to constitute a priority in countering wildlife crime.
- Ten years of arrests and seizures related to pangolins in Namibia have not identified in-country trade networks; opportunities exist to counter local drivers and suppress the establishment of external trade links by implementing a pangolin management strategy that seeks to:
 - assess the status of the national pangolin population
 - assess drivers of pangolin trafficking in Namibia
 - change community perceptions related to pangolins
 - reduce inadvertent human impacts on pangolins
 - ensure more targeted pangolin protection.



A1.4 Elephants and ivory – a Namibian dilemma

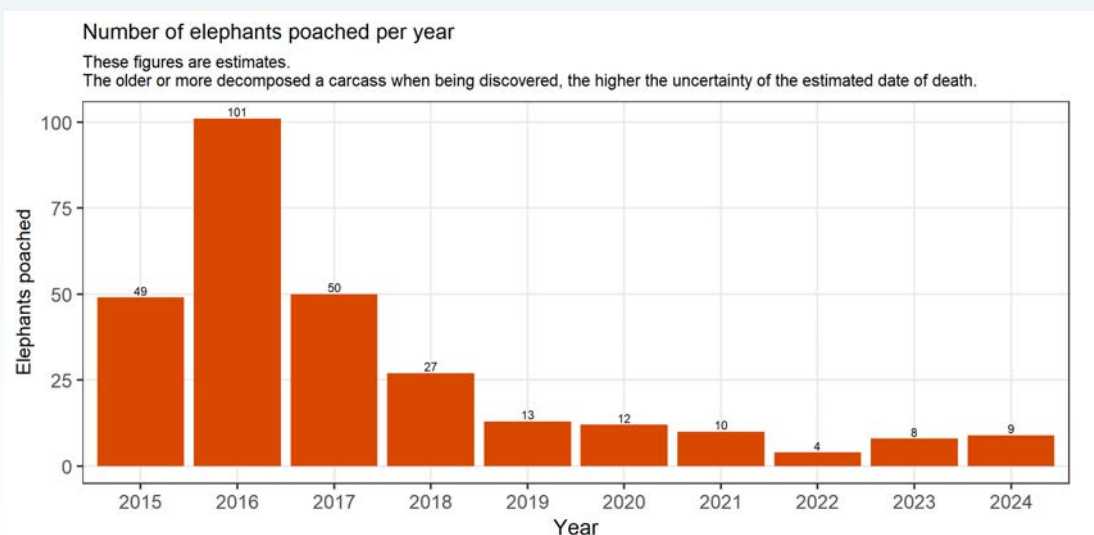
While elephant populations in many parts of Africa have been decimated, Namibian elephant numbers are at their highest in more than a century¹. After the sharp spike in 2016, poaching losses were rapidly suppressed to low levels, and have remained so over the past five years. While cases of ivory trafficking continue to be registered in Namibia (mostly from elephants poached elsewhere), human–elephant conflict exacerbated by high elephant numbers and human encroachment is currently considered a more pressing issue than elephant poaching.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- Namibia's elephant population is made up of four only partly interlinked sub-populations, each with different conservation and protection needs and challenges.
- While poaching losses in Namibia are currently believed to be inconsequential, a large proportion of Namibia's elephants are part of the transnational KAZA population, which is susceptible to regional poaching impacts (the most recent KAZA survey of 2022 assessed the overall population as stable²).
- Global studies show a clear decline in ivory prices and elephant poaching between 2015 and 2021³, and fluctuations at lower levels from 2021 to 2024⁴, yet there are some indications of a resurgence of ivory trafficking⁵; elephants continue to be poached for ivory in southern Africa, and ivory trafficking continues to be recorded in Namibia, although registered cases are showing a steady decline from the last peak of 2021; the ivory of several large seizures in Namibia was confirmed as originating from elephants killed in neighbouring countries.
- A number of elephants are killed in Namibia each year by rural communities in incidents of human–elephant conflict; mitigating such conflicts is currently considered to be the greatest challenge for elephant protection and law enforcement in Namibia.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Namibian protection and law enforcement initiatives related to elephant crimes have been effective – the deployment of national security forces Joint Anti-poaching Units (JAPU) in key areas has suppressed poaching losses, while investigations, prosecutions and deterrent penalties related to ivory trafficking are believed to be contributing to the decline in registered cases, arrests and seizures in Namibia; continuing undiminished with these initiatives is considered vital to prohibit a resurgence of poaching and trafficking.
- Increasing transboundary collaboration with neighbouring countries will facilitate wider disruption of ivory trafficking nodes and flows across the subcontinent.
- More effective mitigation of human–elephant conflicts, including maintenance of elephant movement corridors and proven mitigating measures for crops and waterpoints, will minimise killing of conflict elephants.
- More tangible benefits from wildlife for rural communities, especially those affected by human–elephant conflicts, will facilitate elephant conservation.
- Effective management of tourism activities related to desert-adapted elephants of the Erongo and Kunene regions will improve conservation of this population.



A1.5 Meat for money, or meat to eat?

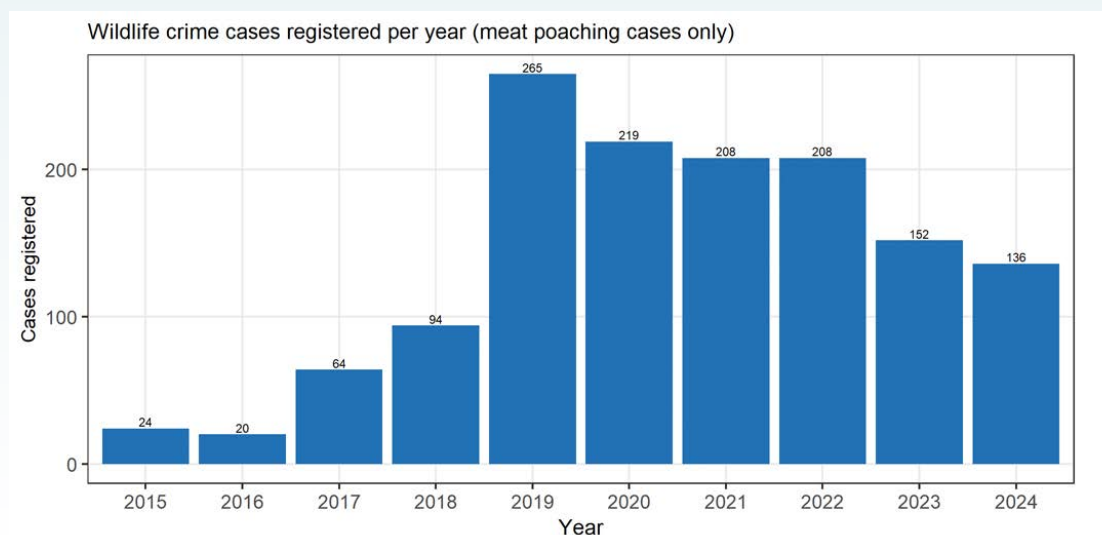
Poaching for meat remains one of the central challenges in Namibia's efforts to protect wildlife and counter crime. Since a 2019 peak, meat species as a group have consistently topped targeted species, in some years accounting for half of all registered wildlife cases. A steady decline in registered meat poaching cases over the past five years is contributing to an overall decline in registered wildlife cases. Yet the sector continues to dominate law enforcement efforts, impact wildlife populations, and adversely affect wildlife economies and rural livelihoods.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- Bushmeat poaching in Namibia encompasses a broad spectrum of motives from the simple survival strategies of impoverished communities to organised crime by well-resourced perpetrators intent on illicit profits.
- While bushmeat has been shown to contribute to rural livelihoods in the short term through both food supply and cash income¹, it ultimately undermines legal wildlife economies and erodes legitimate livelihood options.
- Commercial-level bushmeat poaching is a typical organised-crime sector, using well-established criminal networks to poach, transport and launder meat into legal markets, with effective tactics to evade law enforcement.
- Law enforcement currently disproportionally focusses on bushmeat poaching amongst impoverished rural communities, where detection is easier; cases involve fewer suspects, and trafficking networks are more limited.
- The bushmeat sector is prone to substantial under-reporting, as many cases go undetected, incriminating evidence is often minimal, and reporting is seen as futile.
- Bushmeat poaching targets wildlife wherever it occurs in proximity to people predisposed to poaching; in combination with rapid human population growth, habitat fragmentation, land degradation and other impacts, this can induce drastic wildlife declines.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Because the markets for illegal game meat lie almost exclusively within Namibia (in sharp contrast to other wildlife crime sectors), the opportunity exists to address market demand and other drivers, rather than only countering criminal activity.
- Nuanced law enforcement and prosecution can differentiate between cases driven by livelihood hardships, and cases driven by lust for illicit profits –
 - ensure uncompromising law enforcement related to highly organised poaching and laundering of bushmeat through legal sales outlets in urban centres
 - ensure firm but appropriate law enforcement related to cases involving impoverished communities.
- Broader strategies to reduce the bushmeat trade include:
 - improving legal access to, and benefits from, wildlife –
 - strengthen wildlife economies in community conservancies, and improve own-use game meat access and distribution
 - increase tangible benefits for park neighbours
 - improve conditions for freehold farm workers
 - alleviating poverty and unemployment in rural areas and informal urban settlements
 - ensuring affordable legal access to protein for impoverished communities.



A1.6 Ten years on – what does the future hold?

The illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products is booming like few other global economic spheres, with environmental crime the fourth-largest criminal domain worldwide¹. Local, regional and global efforts to counter wildlife crime have shown only limited results. Poaching and trafficking tactics continually adapt, and international markets keep evolving, including the growth of new sectors. With such powerful global forces at play, what can Namibia do to safeguard its valuable natural resources against illicit exploitation?

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

- Namibia is rich in diverse natural resources that are in high demand, making this country a prime target for environmental crimes; wildlife conservation, protection and law enforcement will need to be unwavering.
- After ten years of crisis-level poaching and wide-ranging countermeasures in Namibia, a number of sectors are showing steady declines in registered criminal cases, yet global assessments warn that countercrime initiatives must continue to avoid resurgence², which is indicated for some sectors by recent studies³.
- Reptile trafficking is a major component of the global illegal wildlife trade⁴; despite Namibia's reptile diversity and endemism⁵ – and clear indications that illicit trade is taking place⁶ – the sector is not receiving due law enforcement attention.
- The internet is rapidly becoming the preferred platform for an increasing component of the illegal wildlife trade, even for products such as ivory, previously sold on Asian markets⁶; law enforcement must take increasing cognisance of this shift to remain effective.
- Insiders, people who are familiar with the location of wildlife/products and measures to protect them, are a key enabler of wildlife crime⁷; suppressing insider involvement can be an effective strategy to inhibit wildlife crime.

WHAT INNOVATIONS MIGHT TURN THE TIDE?

- Criminal activity is based on the assumption that the rewards will outweigh the negative consequences of a crime; shifting that balance more heavily towards consequences will facilitate deterrence and reduce crime; important aspects include:
 - improvement of rural livelihoods and economies
 - more rewarding and accessible legal alternatives
 - diverse and tangible benefits from wildlife
 - sense of ownership over and pride in wildlife
 - high likelihood of getting caught for crimes
 - rejection of crime by communities
 - diminished social status through guilty verdict
 - dire consequences of legal penalties for crimes
- All wildlife crime consists of securing wildlife products through illicit means to supply those products to people who place a high value on them; enabling sustainable and affordable legal access to as many wildlife products as possible will reduce illicit demand.
- The internet and social media enable new avenues to reach global audiences and create awareness of the severe and far-reaching impacts of wildlife crime on Namibia's biodiversity, governance, economy and society; this presents unique opportunities to influence international demand in innovative ways.



Photo courtesy Wildscapes Namibia Research & Enhancement © 2025



B7. ARE WE STILL UNDERESTIMATING THE IMPACTS OF WILDLIFE CRIME?

After ten years of crisis-level poaching in Namibia, are the wide-ranging impacts of wildlife crime receiving the attention and action that they deserve? Wildlife crime is so much more than just the illegal capture or killing of an animal (or plant) for money. The impacts of wildlife crime can touch all aspects of human life, from personal health to national security to global economies.

A dedicated publication was produced for target audiences in 2022 to summarise the key impacts of poaching high-value species in Namibia¹, and the UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report first included an analysis of 'impacts and harms' in its 2024 edition (absent from the two previous editions), as 'better understanding of these harms can shape perceptions of wildlife crime's significance and inform both policy responses and prioritization of actions.'²

Shortcomings at various levels of countercrime initiatives show that much broader awareness of the issues can still be achieved, in Namibia and worldwide. The cascading impacts of wildlife crime are intricately interlinked, compounding their complexity.

"Wildlife crime inflicts untold harm upon nature, and it also jeopardizes livelihoods, public health, good governance and our planet's ability to fight climate change," Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the UNODC, is quoted as saying in the press release for the World Wildlife Crime Report 2024³. The report highlights the categories of harm under three headings.

Environmental harms

- species overexploitation
- ecosystem impacts
- climate impacts
- dispersal of invasive species

Social and economic harms

- well-being and livelihoods
- private sector costs and losses
- health risks
- harm to environmental defenders

Governance harms

- undermining the rule of law
- loss of government revenues
- financial costs of enforcement
- harms from wildlife crime responses⁴.

Yet in order to receive due attention and suitable interventions, the impacts must be understood not as broad categorisations, but in high detail, and at all levels at which actions are conceived, planned and carried out. Even when the threats, impacts and harms are analysed in detail, this information is rarely transferred into countermeasures, or only in limited ways.

Namibian responses to wildlife crime continue to focus mostly on transgressions against environmental legislation, and more recently transgressions under the Prevention of Organised Crimes Act, with emphasis on illicit financial rewards accrued by participants. Yet transgressions against national laws are only one level of infringement and impact; others include –

Environmental crimes have impacts far beyond the death of individual animals.



- violations of international protocols
- threats to sound governance and national security
- threats to individual, national and global health
- cost of wildlife protection and law enforcement
- erosion of conservation investments
- impacts on wildlife economies and livelihoods
- impacts on social structures and cultural values

To compound matters, Namibian law enforcement tends to target the lowest tiers of participants in wildlife crime, a scenario that is mirrored by global findings – ‘... there is mounting evidence from studies in different countries that lower-level participants are disproportionately targeted for criminal enforcement in comparison to higher-level participants and those operating across jurisdictions.’⁵ While important arrests of high-level, transnational participants in rhino crimes and live-plant trafficking have been achieved in Namibia, these make up a very small proportion of total arrests.

‘The ‘cascade of harm [...] is rarely represented in legislation, policy or enforcement responses.’⁶ The brief outline of impacts and harms provided in this section, and the more extensive evaluations in reports and media articles make it clear that ‘law enforcement alone will not end wildlife crime [...] a more holistic approach that is more solution-oriented rather than problem-oriented will reduce Namibia’s environmental, human and economic costs of wildlife crime, while including more rural Namibians in the wildlife economy.’⁷

Community conservation has delivered notable results in enabling tangible benefits from wildlife and forest resources for Namibians living in communal

areas, yet conflicting land-use priorities, governance failures and systemic shortcomings continue to limit fundamental improvements for rural communities. Campaigns to raise awareness and change attitudes amongst communities have achieved important successes, but awareness must be linked to meaningful livelihood options and tangible benefits that outweigh the costs of living with wildlife.

There is clearly an interface between wildlife crime harms and wildlife crime drivers. Many facets of wildlife crime, including many of its drivers and impacts, are intricately interlinked. Addressing one aspect can have a positive cascading effect.

- Ensuring sound governance and minimising corruption suppresses a key enabler of crime.
- Not only safeguarding wildlife, but significantly strengthening legal wildlife economies, legal access to wildlife, and tangible legal benefits from it, reduces incentives for wildlife crime.
- Addressing some of the harms from wildlife crime responses, for example by shifting the law enforcement focus to dealers and kingpins and away from impoverished communities, avoids eroding positive attitudes to wildlife established over many years through community conservation.
- Balancing some of the currently very high investments in wildlife protection and law enforcement with interventions that address socioeconomic needs amongst rural communities living in proximity to wildlife reduces incentives for wildlife crime.

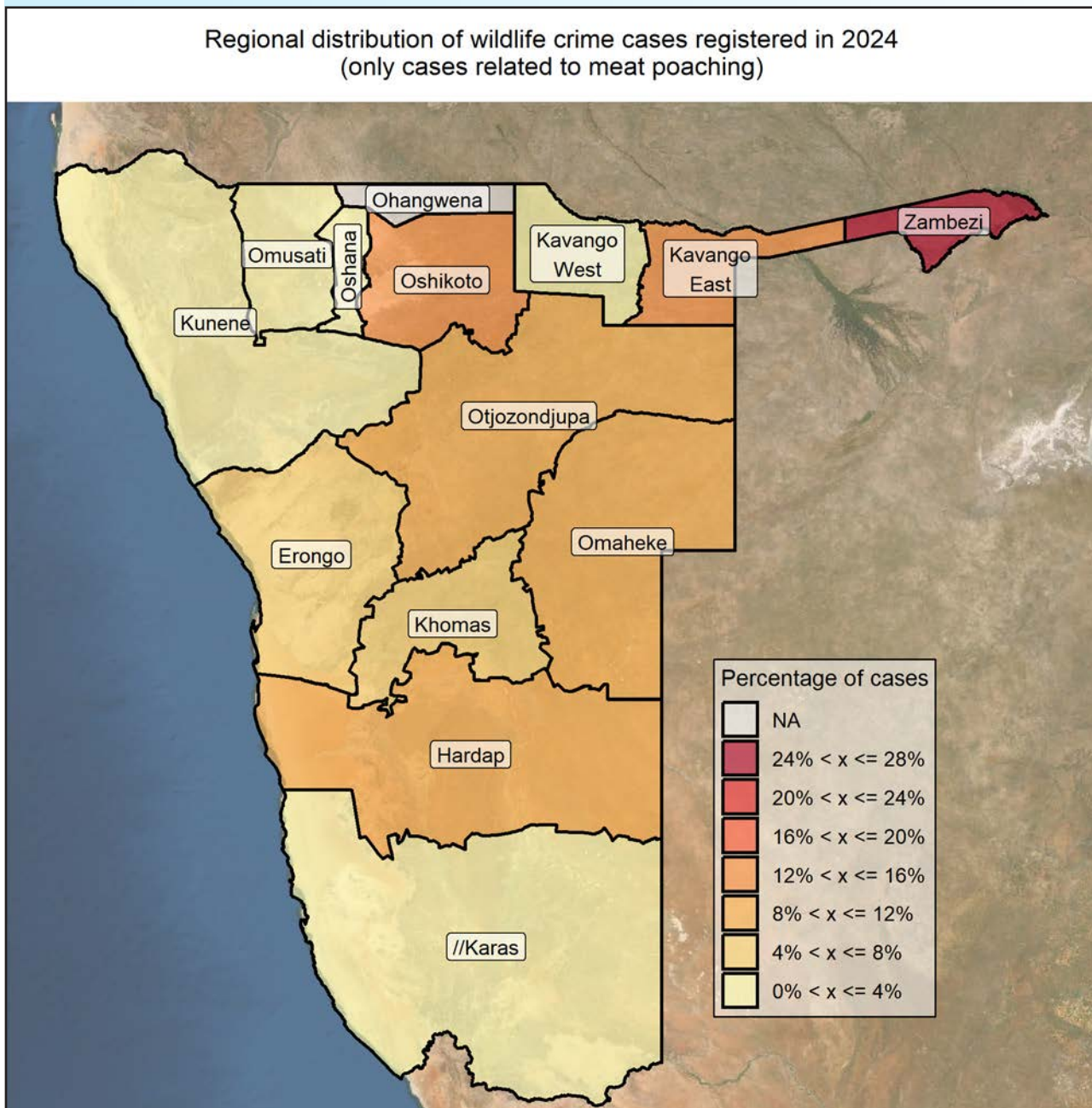
Tangible benefits from wildlife for rural communities are a vital aspect of wildlife conservation and protection.



10.

10.1 REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION of REGISTERED CASES related to MEAT POACHING during 2024

- Statistics in the category meat poaching encompass giraffe, buffalo, zebras, antelopes and wild pigs.
- Meat poaching is prevalent right across Namibia, but case registration during 2024 was most prolific in the Zambezi Region.
- The map indicates the regions in which cases were registered, not necessarily where the crimes were committed.
- Significant differences in the number of cases registered in various regions may be influenced by a range of factors, including:
 - Wildlife densities are generally lower in the southern and central-northern regions than other regions of the country, resulting in fewer opportunities for meat poachers
 - Different regions have varying degrees of wildlife protection; in some regions local landholders work more closely with law-enforcement personnel to report and follow up on poaching incidents than in other regions
 - It is believed that there is a significant degree of under-reporting in meat-poaching cases, with registered cases giving a skewed reflection of the actual prevalence of meat poaching.



Meat poaching includes a range of motives, from commercial sale to obtaining food to eat; species range from springhare to giraffe, with gemsbok (pictured) amongst the most popular targets; current meat-poaching data reflects only cases involving giraffe, buffalo, zebras, antelopes and wild pigs, although other wildlife, including birds, reptiles and small mammals, is also poached for meat.



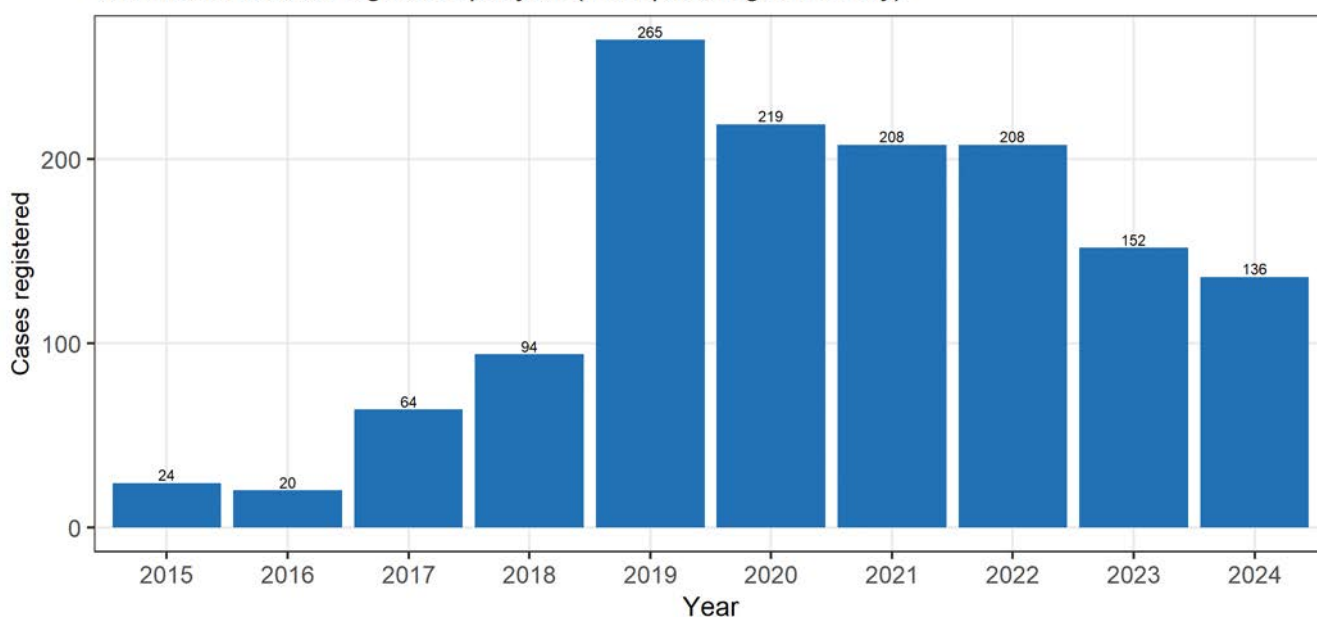
*Typical evidence of a meat-poaching case:
severed head, hooves, skin and entrails
of a poached gemsbok,
Namib-Naukluft National Park
Hardap Region, February 2024.*

Meat poaching cases, arrests and convictions

- **Cases registered related to meat poaching** have escalated alarmingly from 2015 onwards to a massive spike in 2019; the downward trend since then is likely the result of a variety of factors, including an improved law-enforcement response to the escalation, a more concerted response by landholders who are working closely with NAMPOL and MEFT, and the effects of heightened police checks; anecdotal evidence indicates that there may be a high degree of under-reporting in this sector.
- **Annual arrests vs. current conviction status** (on 11 March 2025) indicates that the very high number of arrests has exceeded the ability of the judiciary to finalise cases and convict perpetrators; of the 3,049 suspects arrested since 2015, only 1,078 (35%) had been convicted by 11 March 2025; *Note: Convictions are shown in the year of arrest, not the year of conviction.*

10.2 CASES REGISTERED (meat poaching)

Wildlife crime cases registered per year (meat poaching cases only)

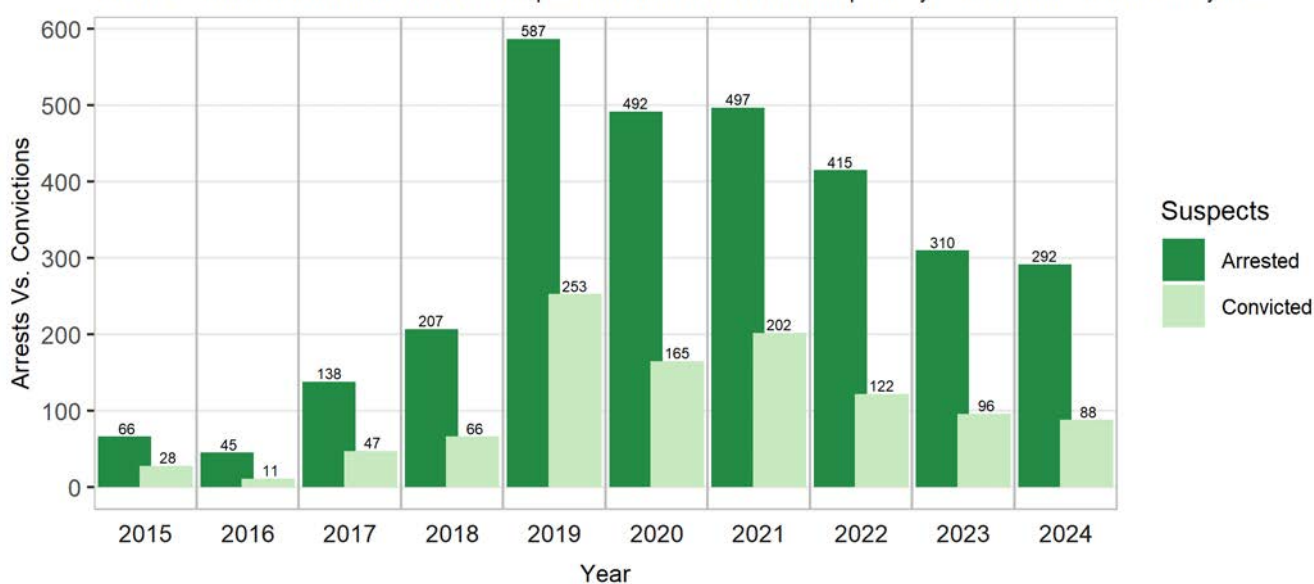


10.3 ARRESTS versus CURRENT CONVICTIONS (meat) [current status 11 March 2025]

Arrests and convictions are shown by year of arrest; many convictions are achieved years after arrest, but are shown in the year of arrest.

Annual arrests vs. their current conviction status (meat poaching cases)

The bars "Convicted" indicate the number of suspects who were arrested in the respective year and have been convicted by now.



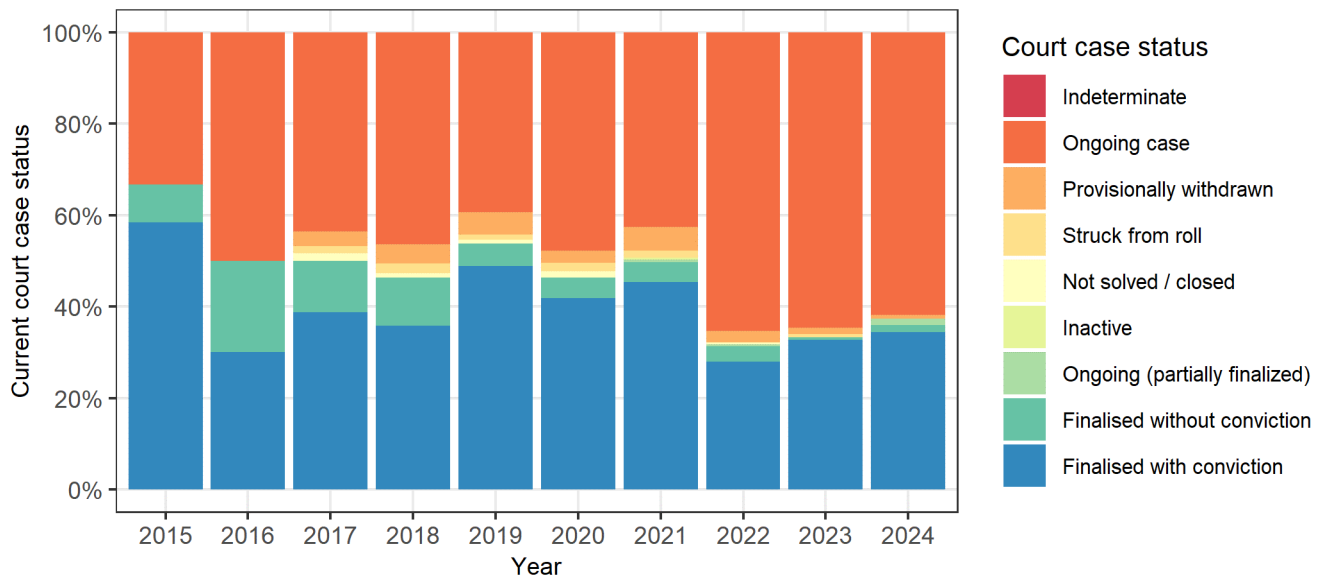
Current case status and time between arrest and case finalisation in meat-poaching cases

- **Current case status** (on 11 March 2025) is shown as a percentage of cases registered per year; for example, of all cases registered in 2015, 58% had been finalised with convictions by 11 March 2025, 8% had been finalised without a conviction, and 34% of cases were ongoing; ideally the percentage of finalised cases should increase with time, so that earlier years should have no or very few ongoing cases; indeterminate indicates a current status that has not yet been defined in the database.
- **Time between arrest and case finalisation** is generally shorter in meat-poaching cases than other wildlife crime categories, as this involves more limited trafficking chains and fewer intermediaries; cases are on average finalised within a year; the finalisation of very old cases in any particular year obviously increases the average for that year, in some instances significantly; extremely lengthy cases, such as those finalised more than 120 months after the arrest, are isolated cases in which failures within the justice system occurred.
- The increase in the annual mean for 2022 was produced by a significant number of old cases being finalised by special courts during that year.

10.4 CURRENT CASE STATUS (meat poaching) [current status 11 March 2025]

Current court case status as percentage of cases registered per year (meat poaching cases)

(Bar position indicates the year of case registration)

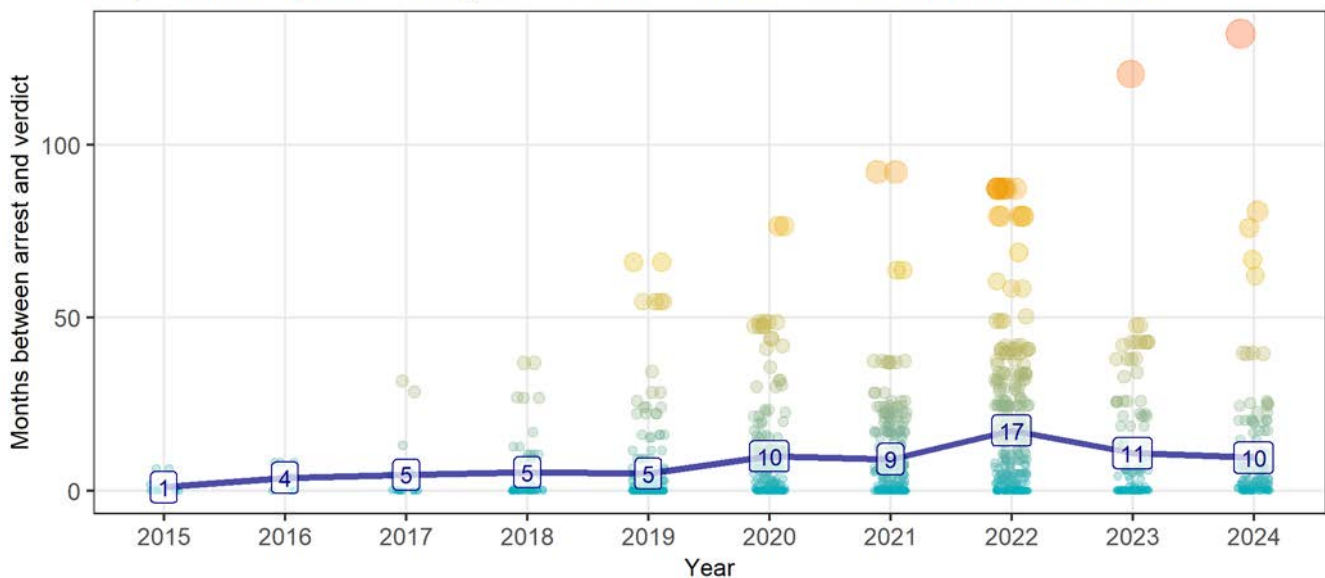


10.5 TIME BETWEEN ARREST and CASE FINALISATION (meat poaching)

More and more old cases are being finalised in recent years, creating the false impression that case finalisation is getting slower.

Distribution of months passed between individuals' arrest and case finalization (meat poaching cases)

The position of a data point indicates the year in which a case was finalized. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



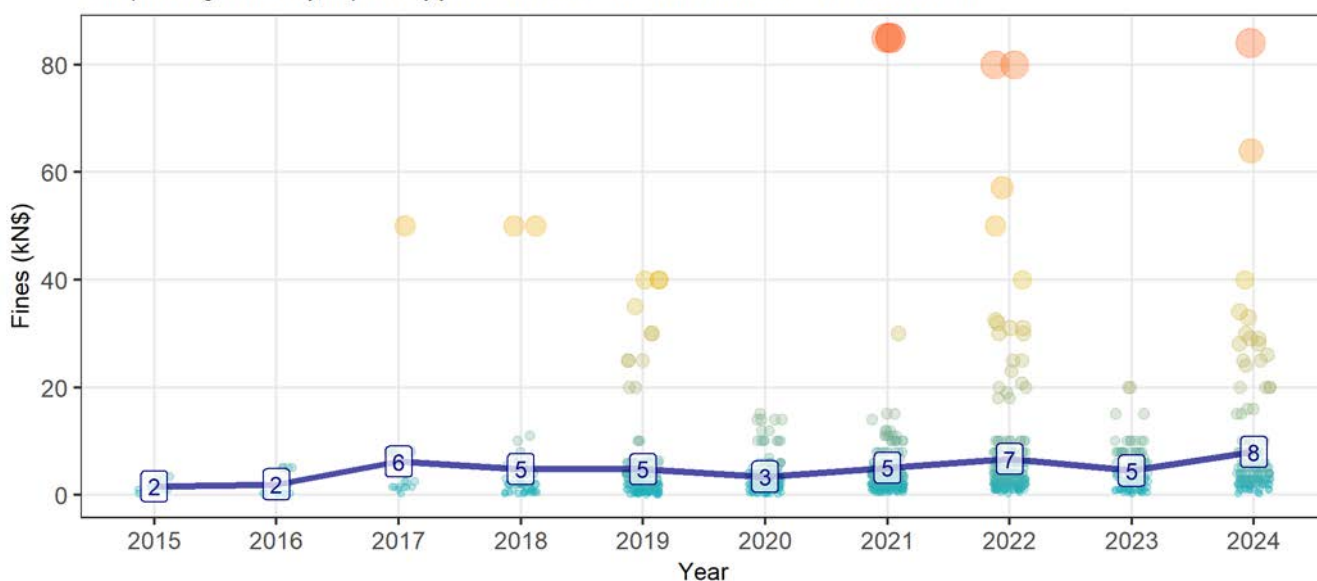
Sentences for meat poaching

- The category meat poaching encompasses giraffe, buffalo, zebras, antelopes and wild pigs; different species in this category have different conservation statuses; for example, three antelope species, kudu, gemsbok and springbok, are currently classified as huntable game, as are warthog; poaching of these species carries lower maximum penalties than poaching of protected or specially protected species.
- The circumstances of the accused play an important role in sentencing; some perpetrators are rural poor with limited means, who may have been driven by hunger to poach for meat.

10.6 FINES (meat poaching)

Distribution of fine amounts (thousand N\$) per year

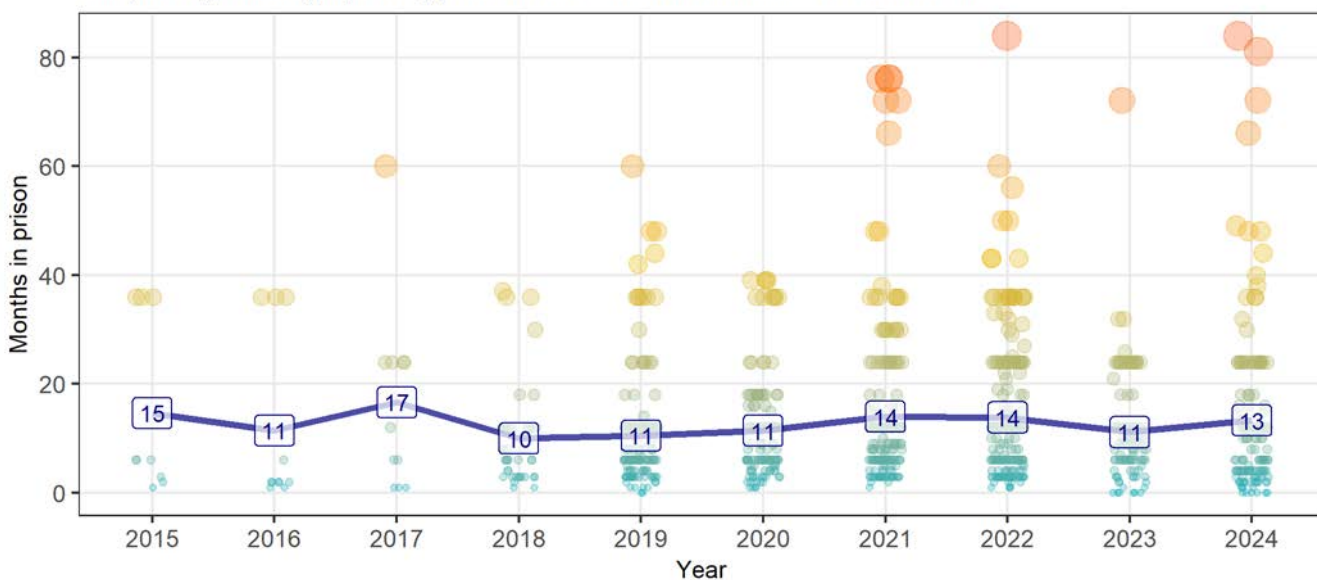
Meat poaching cases only; depicted by year of conviction. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



10.7 PRISON TERMS (meat poaching)

Distribution of jail sentences (months) per year

Meat poaching cases only; depicted by year of conviction. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



B8. STATUS UPDATE – GENERAL WILDLIFE PROTECTION IN NAMIBIA

Namibia is internationally renowned for its conservation approaches and successes. How much of that is still justified in 2025, after ten years of significant wildlife crime impacts? There is a widespread public perception that wildlife in Namibia is declining due to overutilisation and poaching. Declines are confirmed in some areas by annual game counts, yet it is often overlooked that droughts can result in massive wildlife population fluctuations, and as long as nucleus populations remain, most species, being adapted to such climatic variations, will rebound.

Fundamental differences regarding wildlife dynamics exist in different parts of Namibia, and between state-protected areas, communal land and freehold land. Communal and freehold lands further have many, often diverging land-use priorities. All of these aspects influence wildlife protection, wildlife numbers and wildlife population health.

The high value of wildlife, particularly for trophy shooting, is motivating increasingly widespread game-proof fences across freehold land, to keep in valuable animals, allow the introduction of exotic species, and enable selective game breeding. While this may increase local game diversity, it is not indigenous biodiversity, and is counterproductive to Namibia's biodiversity health and conservation aims. Fences have disrupted the ability of indigenous wildlife to move in response to rainfall, and have cut off natural genetic exchange. Past initiatives at enabling landscape-level wildlife movement and management through freehold conservancies have mostly been abandoned. This is fundamentally altering wildlife dynamics on freehold land.

Wildlife populations in community conservation areas are free-roaming, and generally continue to follow natural movement patterns in response to food availability and other pressures. Wildlife is a central component of community conservation benefits, particularly from tourism. This is being threatened by conflicting land uses and priorities, including fencing of communal land for private gain, inappropriate mining, and human encroachment. In much of the Erongo–Kunene CCA, prolonged drought has induced extensive wildlife declines, though nucleus populations remain.

Namibia's state-protected areas generally have healthy wildlife populations, including some of the highest wildlife densities in the country. Improved tourism facilities and products could increase tourism revenues in a number of state parks, and diversify benefits for park neighbours.

All wildlife in Namibia is at some risk of being poached, with meat poaching being a potential threat wherever wildlife

occurs in proximity to people predisposed to poaching. The drivers of meat poaching, widely termed 'bushmeat hunting' are complex. 'Rural African communities suffer high levels of unemployment and poverty, and the quick income possible from selling meat is a common incentive for bushmeat hunting ... Marginalizing local people from benefits of wildlife can create strained relations with the wildlife sector, which are often worsened by human–wildlife conflict, heavy-handed anti-poaching and historical grievances over land. In such instances, bushmeat hunting may be a form of protest.'¹

Since a sudden peak in 2019, there has been a steady decline in registered meat-poaching cases in Namibia, to 136 cases in 2024, representing a 49% reduction in annual cases. Protection initiatives by landholders, including anti-poaching units, surveillance cameras along roads, and closer collaboration with law enforcement have undoubtedly improved crime prevention and deterrence, with stern sentences in some court verdicts likely contributing.

The UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024 found that 'profit-related motives may not always predominate, with basic livelihood imperatives and other social and cultural factors [...] also relevant. For example, prevention or mitigation of human–wildlife conflict can play a critical role in reducing poaching motivations for some species for which local communities may feel they are bearing too great a share of conservation costs.'² Livelihood imperatives are undoubtedly a foremost consideration for many rural Namibians, while human–wildlife conflict remains a central issue.



Photo courtesy Wildscapes Namibia Research & Enhancement
© 2025

The widespread introduction of wildlife into unsuitable habitat is undermining Namibia's biodiversity aims (e.g. lechwe in the Central Highlands).



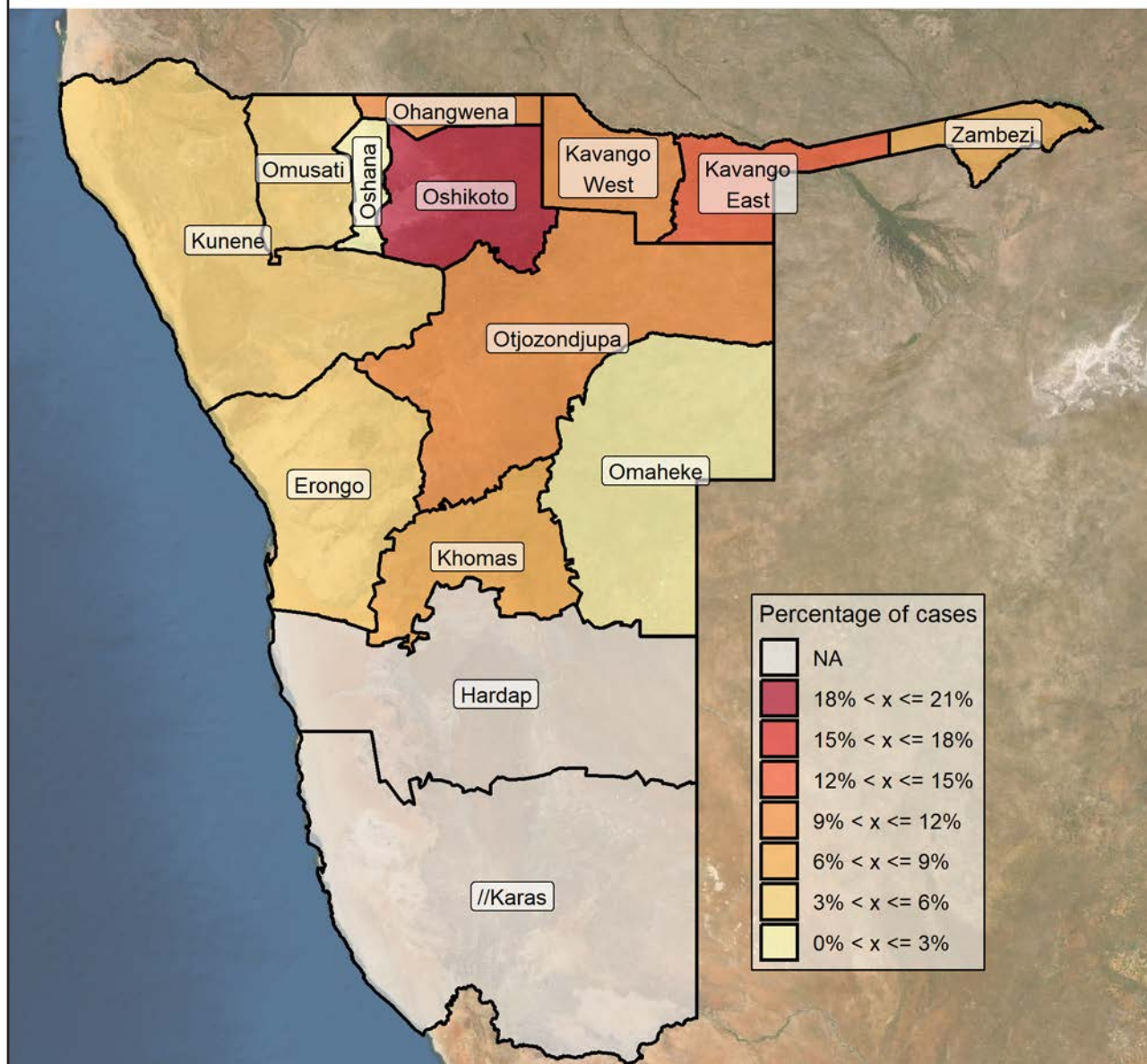
II. PANGOLIN POACHING AND TRAFFICKING TRENDS 2015–2024

II.1 REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION of REGISTERED CASES related to PANGOLIN during 2024

Regional distribution of pangolin cases

- Pangolins are believed to occur in all regions of Namibia, although there is currently only limited knowledge of population densities.
- The map indicates registered cases of pangolin trafficking, which do not necessarily reflect pangolin distribution in the regions.
- Pangolin scales, skins or live animals may have been transported over large distances after the animals were poached; seizures may regularly occur in different regions to where the animals or products were first collected in the wild.
- The shift in the highest prevalence of pangolin trafficking from the Kavango regions in 2023 to the Oshikoto Region in 2024 may represent community misperceptions regarding markets for pangolin products, although other complex drivers may also be involved (see also p. 61).
- The prevalence of pangolin trafficking in regions bordering Angola and Zambia is influenced in part by some products being brought into Namibia from neighbouring countries for intended sale, as some instances of this have been recorded.

Regional distribution of wildlife crime cases registered in 2024
(only cases related to pangolin poaching/trafficking)



The drivers of the pangolin trade in Namibia remain speculative; most pangolin product seizures are an outcome of police sting operations that result in local community members being arrested for attempting to sell products to undercover law-enforcement personnel.



*Partial pangolin skin and scales
offered for sale to undercover
law enforcement,
Omusati Region,
February 2024.*

Arrests, convictions and seizures related to pangolin

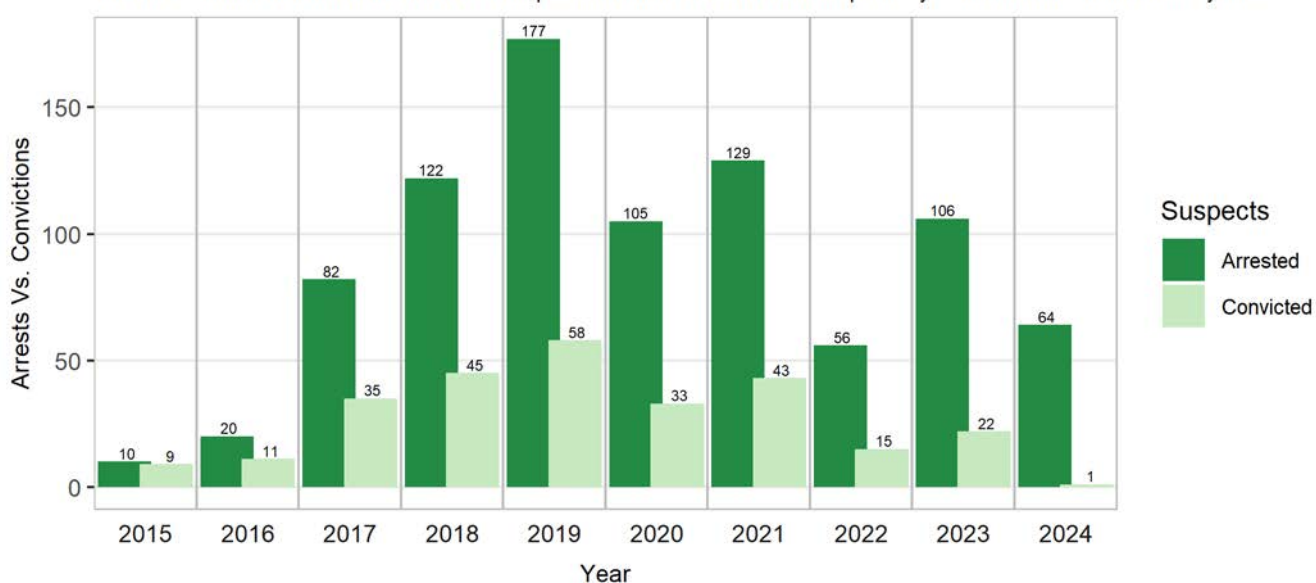
- **Annual arrests vs. current conviction status** (on 11 March 2025) indicates that convictions in pangolin cases continue to lag behind arrests, although convictions are gradually increasing as cases are being successfully finalised; cases as far back as 2016 are still ongoing, with 55% of suspects arrested in 2016 and 40% of suspects arrested in 2017 having been convicted by 11 March 2025; while not all cases result in convictions, the conviction rate of finalised cases is high (see 11.4, opposite); *Note: Convictions are shown in year of arrest, not year of conviction.*
- **Seizures** of pangolins skyrocketed between 2015 and 2019, mirroring international trends¹; a reduction in seizures during 2020 is attributed in part to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, while the significant reduction in arrests and seizures during 2022, and another drop in 2024 are likely to have been driven at least in part by substantial deterrent sentences handed down by special courts in these years; the increase in seizures in 2023 indicates the complex drivers of the sector.
- The year 2024 saw the lowest percentage of live seizures (11% of total seizures); arrests are almost always related to seizures of pangolin products during attempts to sell these to undercover law enforcement personnel; trends of arrests and seizures are thus closely linked.

11.2 ARRESTS versus CURRENT CONVICTIONS (pangolin) [current status 11 March 2025]

Arrests and convictions are shown by year of arrest; many convictions are achieved years after arrest, but are shown in the year of arrest.

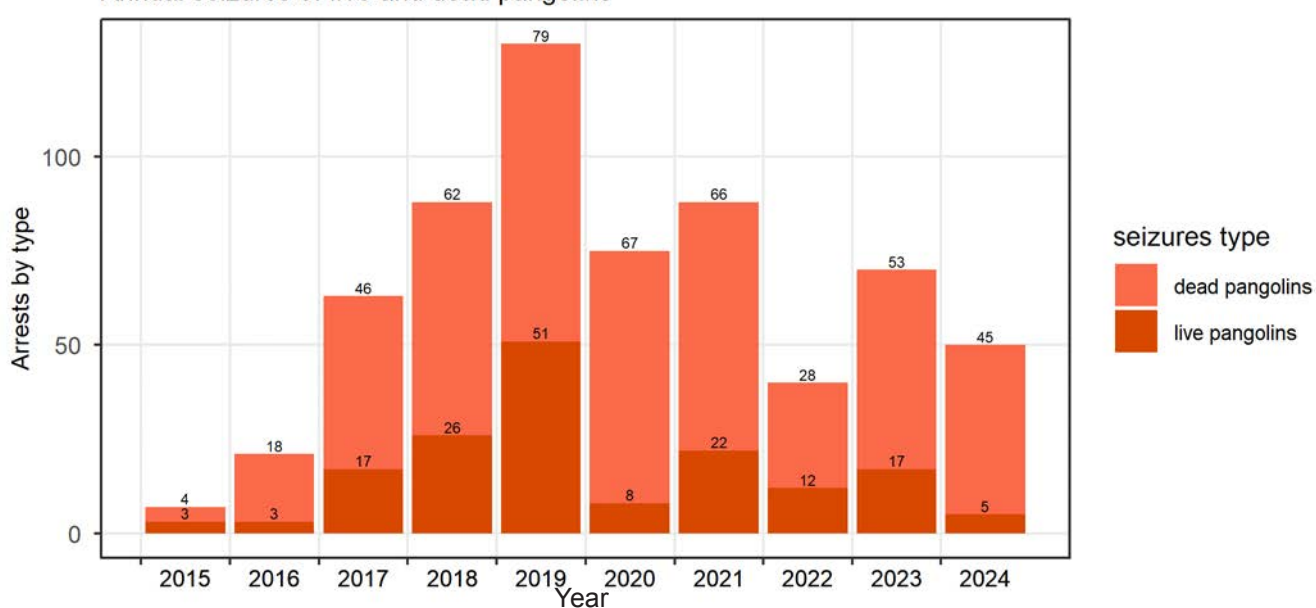
Annual arrests vs. their current conviction status (pangolin cases)

The bars "Convicted" indicate the number of suspects who were arrested in the respective year and have been convicted by now.



11.3 SEIZURES (pangolin)

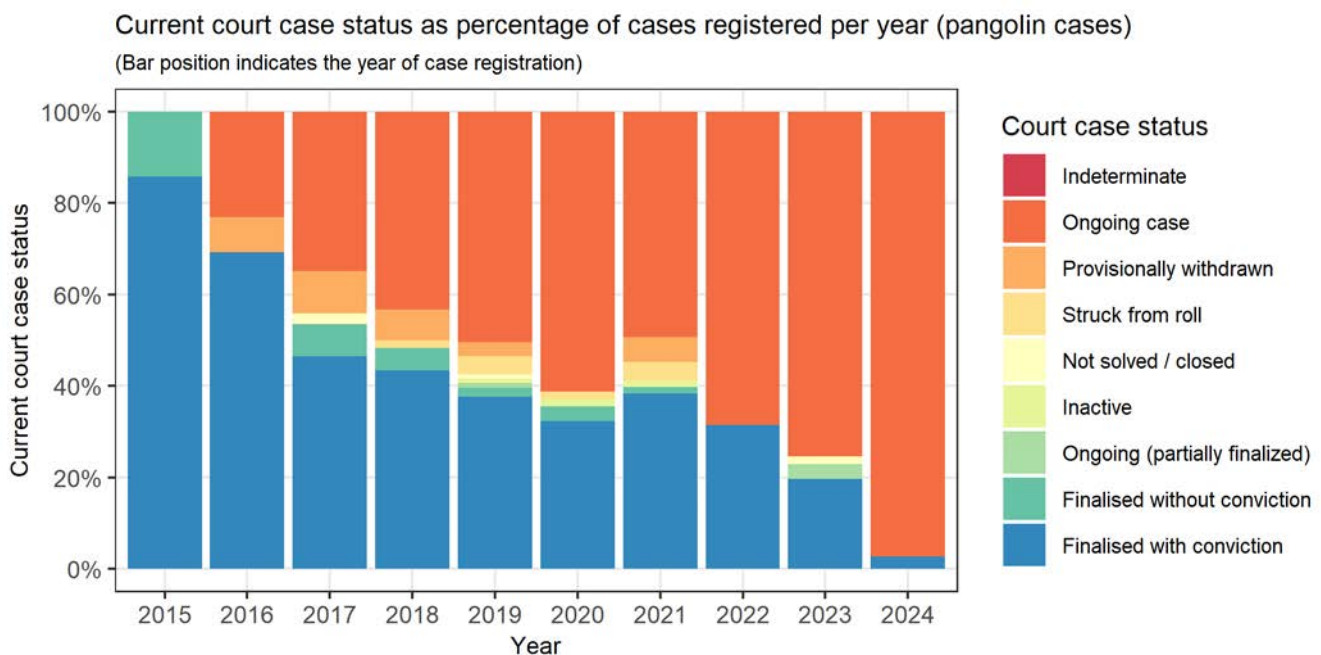
Annual seizures of live and dead pangolins



Current case status and time between arrest and case finalisation in pangolin cases

- **Current case status** (on 11 March 2025) shows a slow but positive trend for pangolin cases; all cases registered in 2015 have been finalised, 86% with convictions; more recent years have progressively lower finalisation rates, as cases take a long time to be completed; the percentage of convictions remains high for all finalised cases; indeterminate indicates a current status that has not yet been defined in the database.
- **Time between arrest and case finalisation** has varied significantly in recent years, though this is generally shorter than for cases involving elephant and rhino; the finalisation of very old cases in any given year increases the average for that year; this does not mean that case finalisation is getting slower; the finalisation of very old cases should in fact be seen as a positive trend; the extremely drawn-out cases finalised in 2022 are anomalies in which failures within the justice system occurred.
- Once the considerable backlog of cases has been reduced and all long-running cases have been finalised, the average time between arrest and case finalisation should ideally remain below 12 months.

11.4 CURRENT CASE STATUS (pangolin) [current status 11 March 2025]

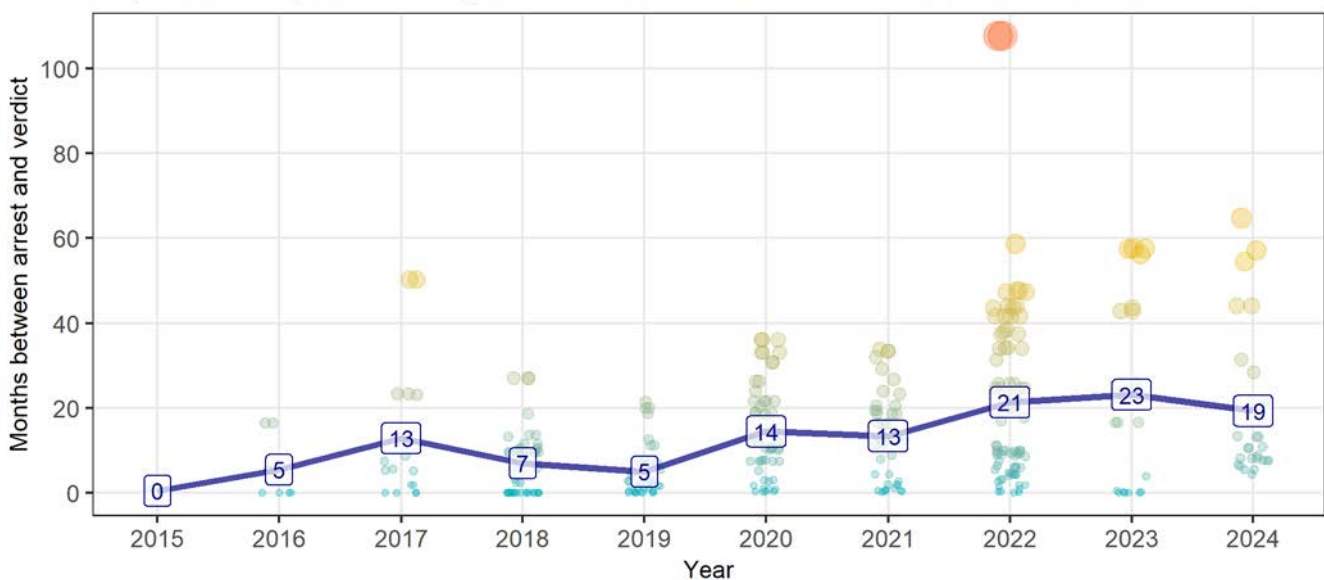


11.5 TIME BETWEEN ARREST and CASE FINALISATION (pangolin)

More and more old cases are being finalised in recent years, creating the false impression that case finalisation is getting slower.

Distribution of months passed between individuals' arrest and case finalization (pangolin cases)

The position of a data point indicates the year in which a case was finalized. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



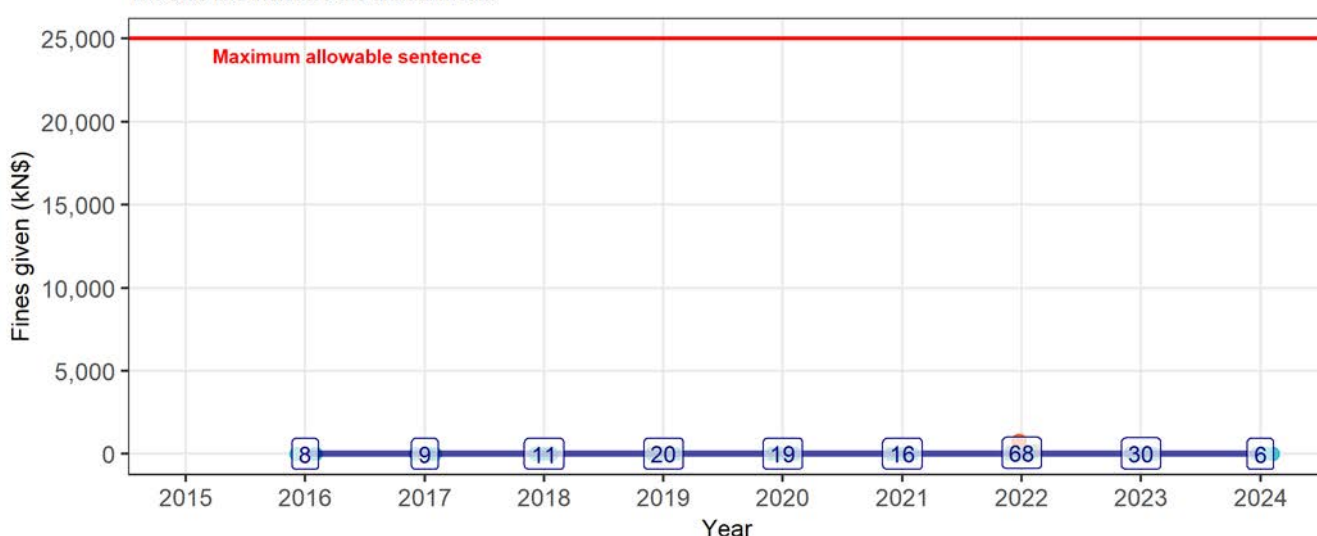
Maximum versus actual sentences for pangolin trafficking

- Namibian laws stipulate maximum penalties for all defined transgressions; the graphs show the gap between maximum sentences as stipulated in the relevant legislation, and actual sentences handed down by the courts; penalties may consist of a fine, a prison term, or both.
- Most perpetrators of pangolin trafficking are rural community members with extremely limited financial means; high fines in these cases are ineffective, as the perpetrators are generally unable to pay even a relatively modest fine.
- Prison terms of between four and six years are already significant punishment for a rural community member attempting to escape poverty; during 2022 and 2023, fines of up to N\$ 800,000 and prison terms of up to ten years were pronounced.
- The significant deterrent sentences raised the annual mean of fines and prison terms substantially; generally high jail sentences passed in 2024 have raised average imprisonment above four years, while fines have dropped to their lowest level in ten years.
- The maximum sentences of N\$ 25,000,000 and 25 years imprisonment have never been applied; these are generally reserved for complex crimes perpetrated by ruthless transnational criminals, not local community members.

11.6 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL FINES (pangolin trafficking)

Distribution of fines (N\$) issued for illegal possession and dealing of pangolin products

Charges were laid under Section 4 (1)(a) and (1)(b) of the Controlled Wildlife Products and Trade Act 9 of 2008, as amended Act 6 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable fine as per the Act. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



11.7 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL PRISON TERMS (pangolin trafficking)

Distribution of imprisonment (months) issued for illegal possession and dealing of pangolin products

Charges were laid under Section 4 (1)(a) and (1)(b) under the Controlled Wildlife Products and Trade Act 9 of 2008, as amended Act 6 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable imprisonment as per the Act. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



B9. STATUS UPDATE – PANGOLIN PROTECTION IN NAMIBIA

Effective protection of one of the most-trafficked wild animals on Earth is extremely difficult – pangolins are small, secretive and mostly nocturnal. Their dynamics in the wild remain poorly known, as does their distribution and density across Namibia. Pangolins face numerous anthropogenic threats, including habitat destruction and fatalities caused by electric fences and roadkill. Dedicated scientific study of Namibia's pangolins over the past decade is providing important information, although study sites remain localised. Critical work has been done on health assessments and release protocols for live pangolins seized from traffickers, as well as post-release behaviour and survival rates¹.

Pangolins remain amongst the main poaching targets in Namibia, though registered cases display annual fluctuations. For the past five years, Kavango East Region consistently registered the most cases. This shifted to Oshikoto Region during 2024, while Kavango East remained second. Human population densities and pressures on resources are higher in Oshikoto², and the high prevalence of cases is likely due to a perception of better prices for pangolin products (rather than higher pangolin density). This may be fuelled by a degree of local demand, with some instances being recorded³.

Most pangolin cases consist of police undercover operations that lead to the arrest of suspects attempting to sell pangolin products. Very few pangolin products in Namibia are seized in transit to international markets, or in other scenarios that indicate local trafficking networks. It appears that pangolin poaching in Namibia is driven mostly by the hope of quick cash, rather than actual market linkages, although undetected transnational trade may exist.

At 11% of total seizures, confiscations of live pangolins (five in 2024) dropped to the lowest recorded since pangolin trafficking escalated in Namibia. Poachers appear not to be motivated by requests to supply live pangolins, and are choosing to try to sell pangolin skins, or occasionally scales. Pangolin scales (used in traditional medicines and sometimes ornamentation) and fresh pangolin meat (served as a rare delicacy) are the two products in demand at end markets, yet in Namibia, cumbersome complete skins are the most-trafficked item, another indication that poaching is based more on misperceptions than external market drivers. It is believed that some skins and scales originate from pangolins killed for food, while seizures of small numbers of scales may be of found scales. Some purported 'pangolin rescues' by community members are being recorded⁴, which may be attempts to collect rewards for live pangolins, based on

limited sales opportunities. Significant dips in registered cases have been attributed in part to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020, and to deterrent sentences handed down by special courts dedicated to wildlife cases in 2022 and 2024⁵. The interpretations remain speculative, as no definitive information has been gathered to support them. Similar downward trends have also been registered globally⁶.

Pangolins are assumed to be particularly threatened in communal areas with extensive land degradation and high human densities. People in communal areas often rely on subsistence strategies, and acute poverty is widespread⁷. The resultant combination of habitat destruction and a dire need for alternative income is likely to drive pangolin declines. A system of pangolin guardians is being established in some community conservancies to facilitate pangolin monitoring and protection, while also raising community awareness⁸.

On private land, pangolins are assumed to be adequately protected in private reserves and conservation-oriented lands. Yet one of the greatest threats to pangolins are electric fences on private land, and the boundary fences of some protected areas. No dedicated sanctuaries that focus on pangolin protection currently exist in Namibia, although some private reserves prioritise pangolin research and conservation. It is assumed that state-protected areas provide adequate protection for resident pangolins, as seizures or trafficking related to national parks have not been substantial.

These complex dynamics indicate that much can be done to protect pangolins from various threats, that the local drivers of pangolin poaching can be influenced, and that urgent research is needed to better guide interventions.



Pangolin guardians are being deployed in some communal areas to facilitate pangolin protection and community awareness.

Photo courtesy Pangolin Conservation & Research Foundation
© 2025

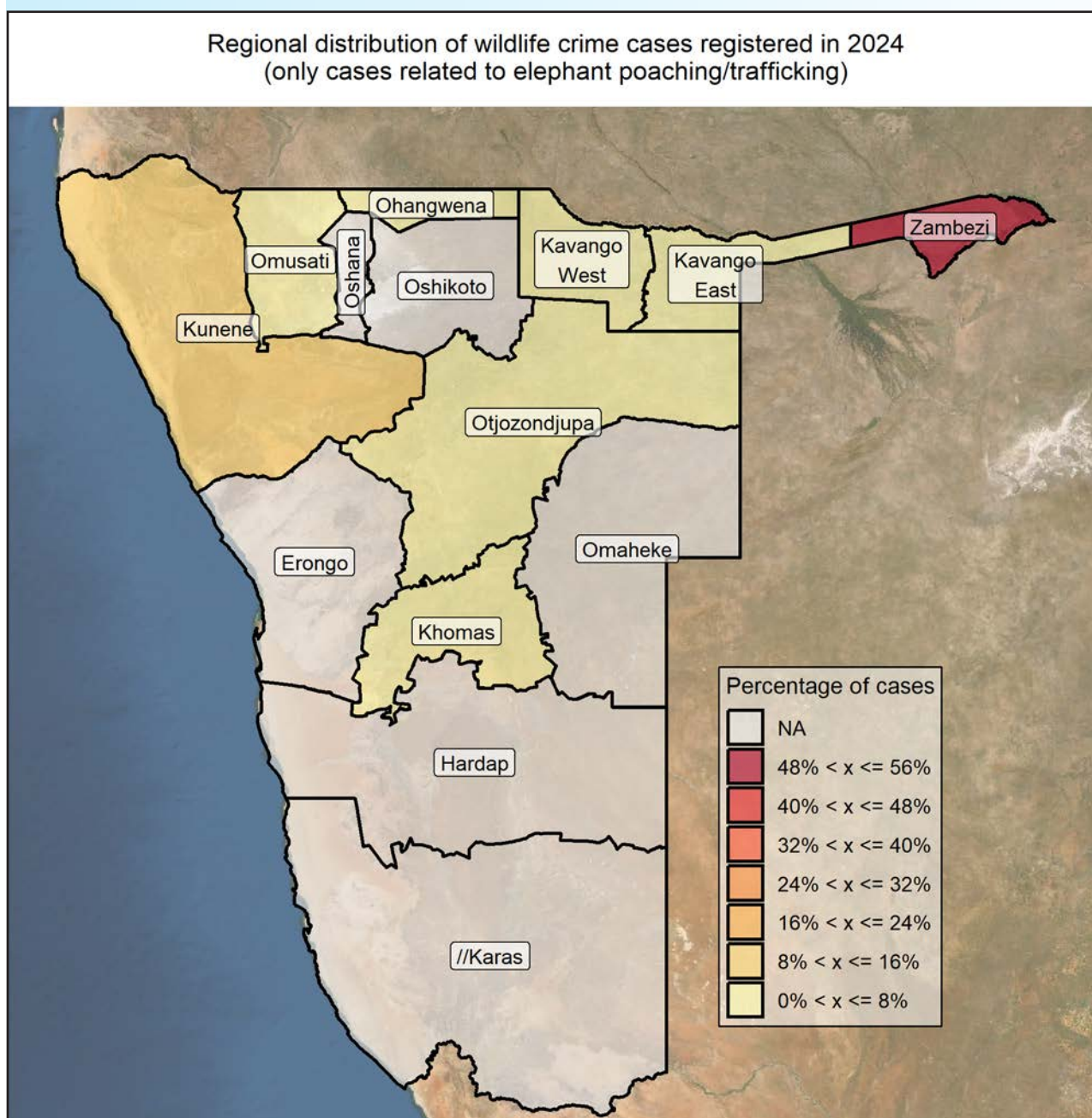


12.

12.1 REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION of REGISTERED CASES related to ELEPHANT during 2024

Regional distribution of elephant cases

- Elephants occur mainly in the northern half of Namibia in four partly interlinked sub-populations:
 - *Bwabwata, Mudumu and Nkasa Rupara national parks and adjacent community conservancies and communal farming areas (this population exhibits significant seasonal transboundary movement)*
 - *Khaudum National Park and adjacent community conservancies and communal farming areas*
 - *Etosha National Park and adjacent community conservancies and communal and freehold farming areas*
 - *Erongo–Kunene Community Conservation Area and adjacent communal and freehold farming areas.*
- *The number of elephants poached in Namibia has been reduced to very low levels, yet ivory trafficking remains prevalent.*
- *Significant amounts of ivory originate outside Namibia and are brought into the country for attempted illicit sale or onward trafficking.*
- *The map indicates where cases of elephant crimes (mostly ivory trafficking) were registered, and does not reflect elephant distribution.*
- *Ivory trafficking is currently most prevalent in the Zambezi Region.*



*Seizure of elephant tusk pieces,
Zambezi Region, October 2024.*



In 2024, ivory seizures in Namibia dropped to their lowest level since 2016; substantial annual fluctuations have however been a feature of seizure data for the past ten years; global seizure data also shows a fluctuating trend in ivory trafficking, after a low in 2020¹.

Arrests, convictions and seizures related to elephant

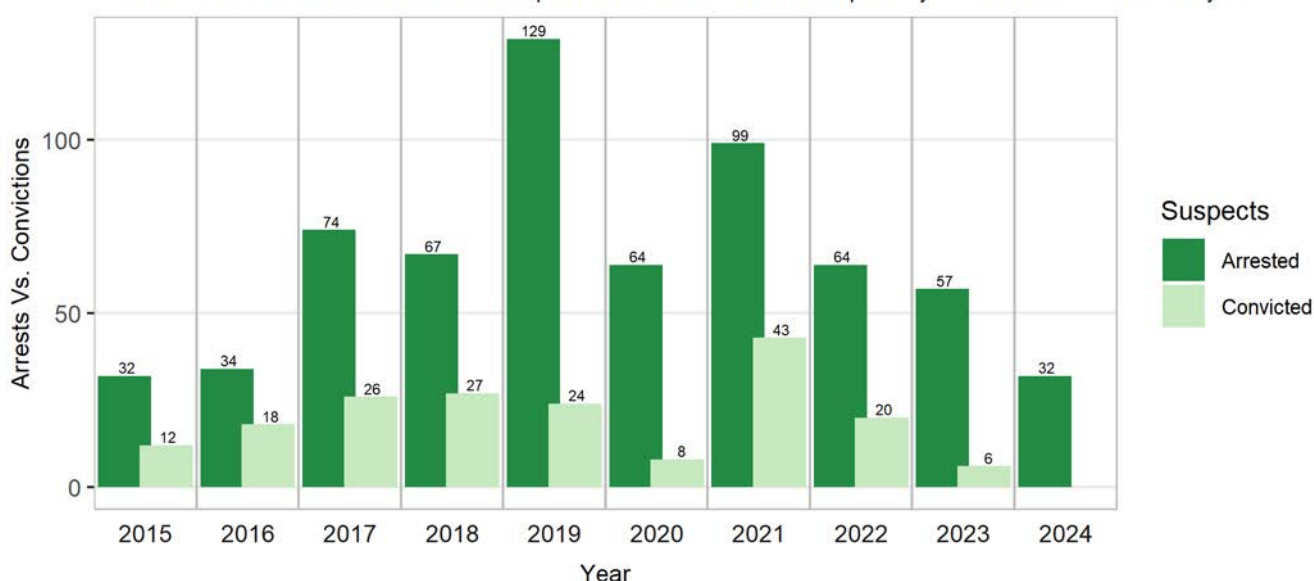
- **Annual arrests vs. current conviction status** (on 11 March 2025) shows that convictions in elephant cases lag far behind arrests, with some cases from all years since 2015 still ongoing; spikes in arrests in 2019 and 2021 have increased the backlog and strained the judiciary; while arrests have declined in the past three years, so have convictions; arrests in recent years have in most cases been linked to ivory seizures; few poaching incidents have been recorded over the past four years, though arrests related to isolated poaching incidents have taken place; *Note: Convictions are shown in the year of arrest, not the year of conviction.*
- **Seizures** of ivory have dropped to the lowest level since 2016, although substantial fluctuations have been a feature of recent years; temporary reductions in 2020 (likely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic) and 2022 (likely influenced by deterrent sentences of special courts) were followed by spikes in 2021 and 2023; while it is often difficult to trace the origin of ivory, most tusks seized in Namibia are believed to be brought into the country from animals killed elsewhere; collaborative transnational investigations as part of large ivory seizures in the Zambezi Region during 2023 confirmed neighbouring countries as the origin of the tusks.

12.2 ARRESTS versus CURRENT CONVICTIONS (elephant) [current status 11 March 2025]

Arrests and convictions are shown by year of arrest; many convictions are achieved years after arrest, but are shown in the year of arrest.

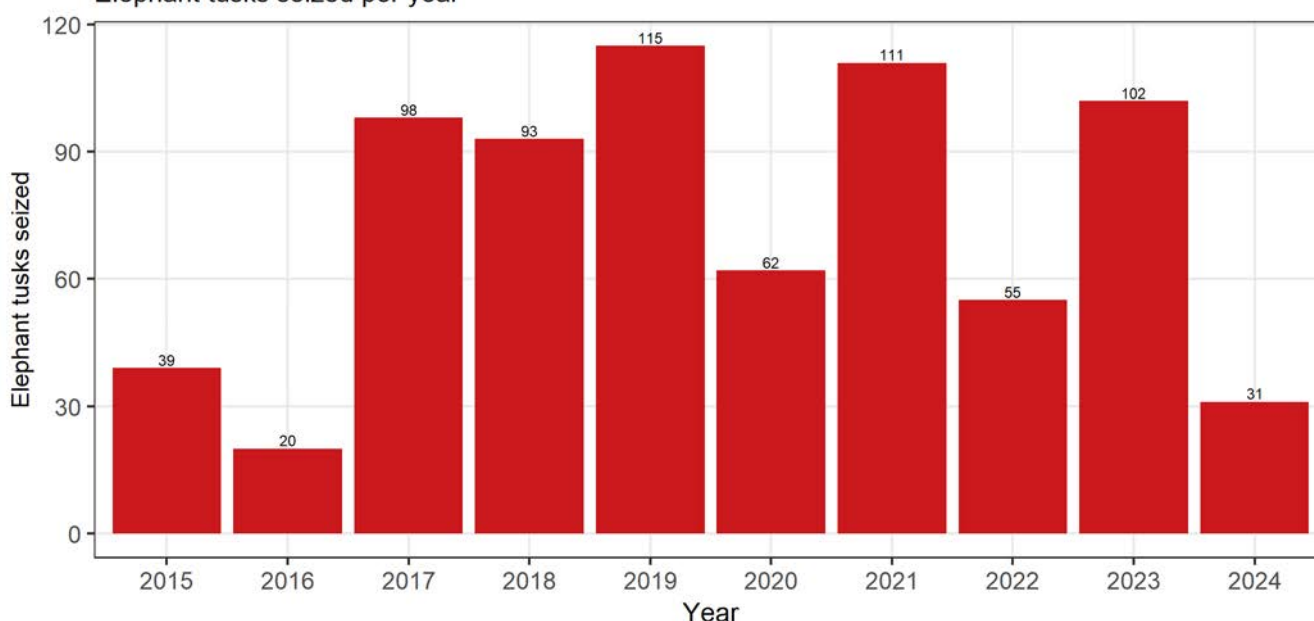
Annual arrests vs. their current conviction status (elephant cases)

The bars "Convicted" indicate the number of suspects who were arrested in the respective year and have been convicted by now.



12.3 SEIZURES (elephant)

Elephant tusks seized per year



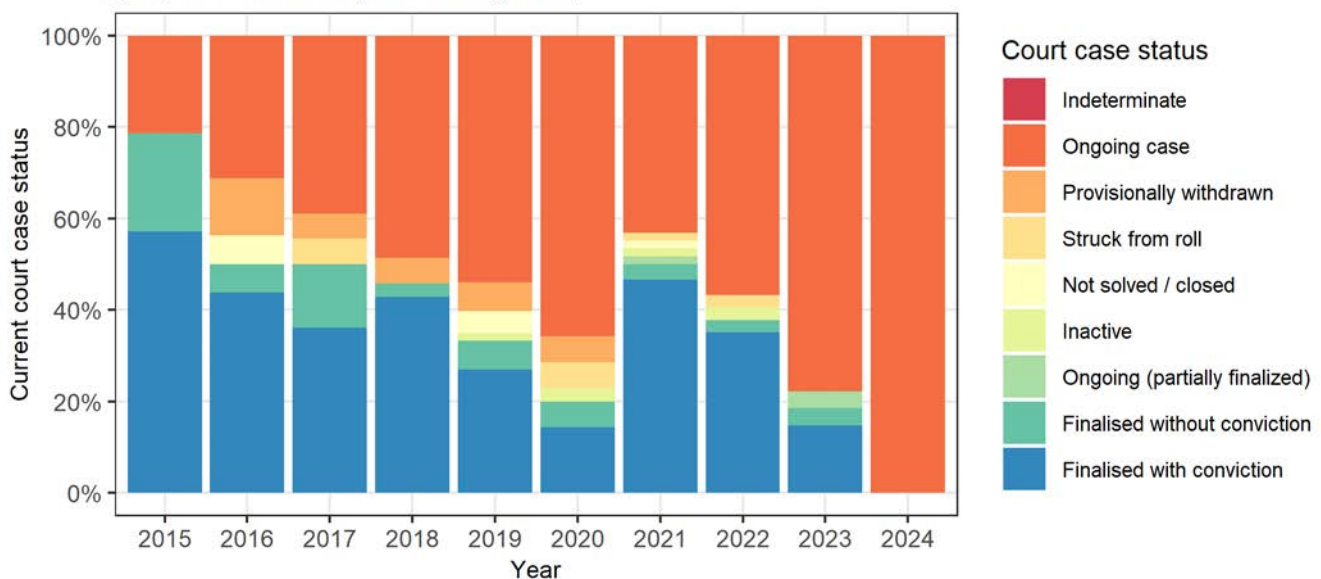
Current case status and time between arrest and case finalisation in elephant cases

- **Current case status** (on 11 March 2025) generally shows a slow but positive finalisation trend in elephant cases; 79% of cases registered in 2015 have been finalised (73% with conviction, 27% without), while 21% were still ongoing; more recent years have progressively lower finalisation rates, as cases take time to be completed, yet the conviction rate of finalised cases remains relatively high; indeterminate indicates a current status that has not yet been defined in the database.
- **Time between arrest and case finalisation** has varied substantially for elephant cases, with some cases having taken six or more years to complete; the finalisation of very old cases in any particular year obviously increases the average for that year, in some instances significantly.

12.4 CURRENT CASE STATUS (elephant) [current status 11 March 2025]

Current court case status as percentage of cases registered per year (elephant cases)

(Bar position indicates the year of case registration)



12.5 TIME BETWEEN ARREST and CASE FINALISATION (elephant)

More and more old cases are being finalised in recent years, creating the false impression that case finalisation is getting slower.

Distribution of months passed between individuals' arrest and case finalization (elephant cases)

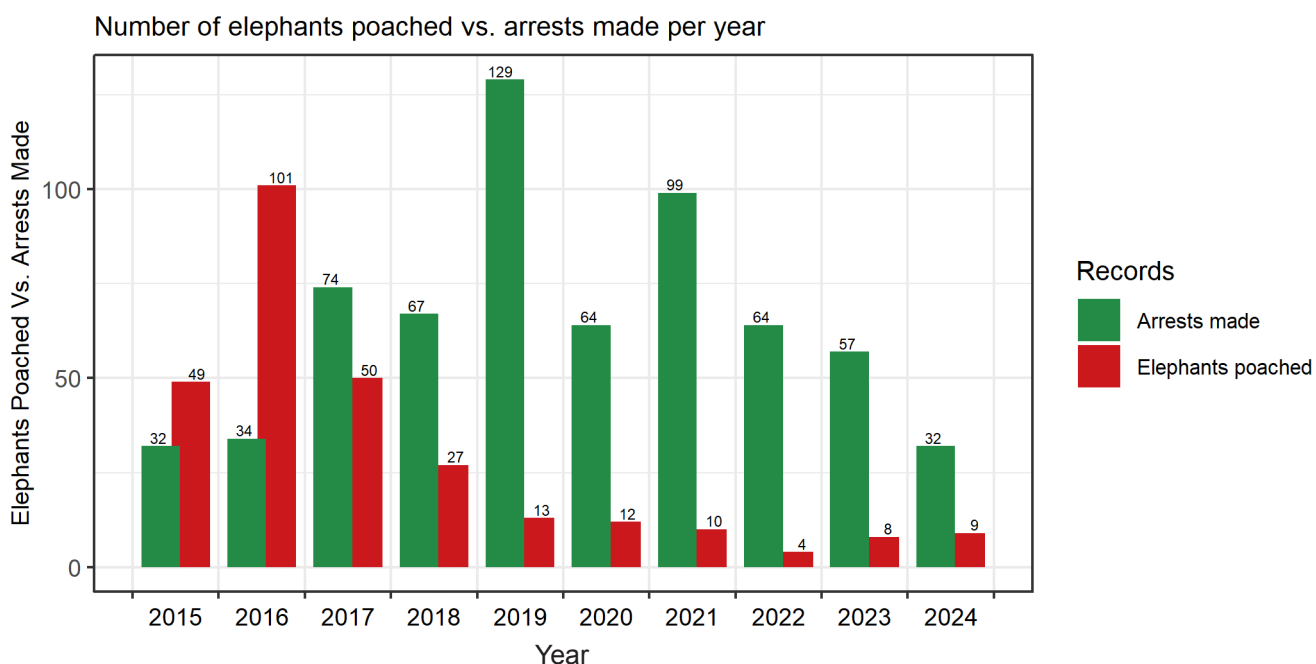
The position of a data point indicates the year in which a case was finalized. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



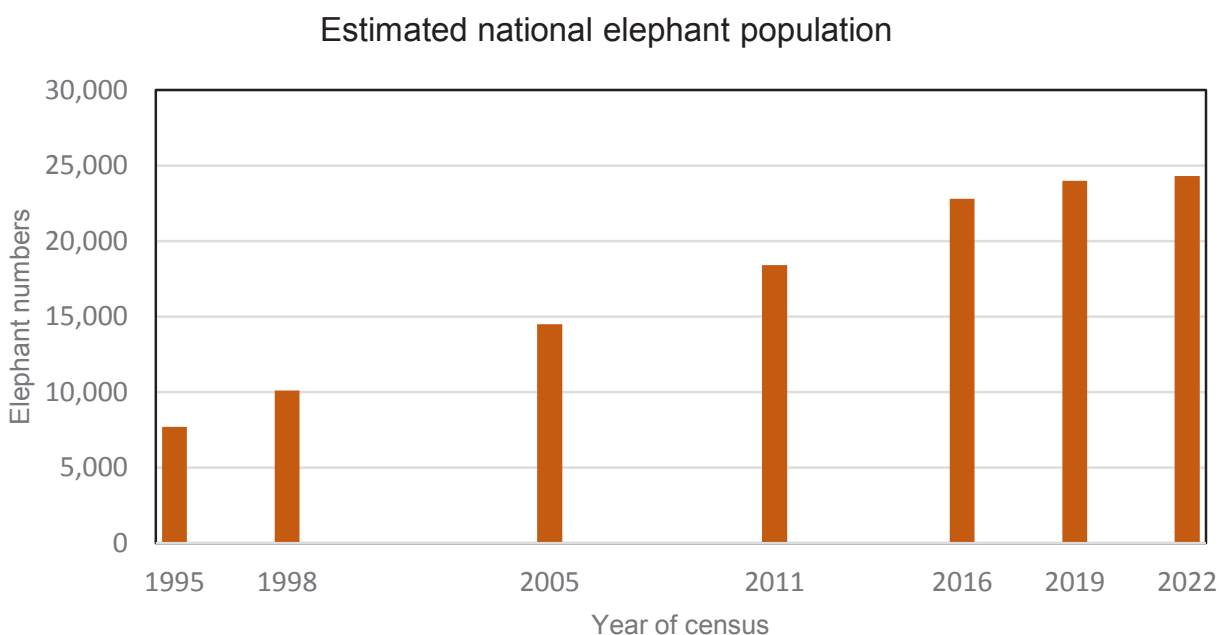
Proactive law enforcement and conservation trends related to elephants

- **Poaching estimates vs. arrests** clearly show that while poaching incidents in Namibia have been successfully curbed to low levels, arrests remain comparatively high; the number of arrests per year has been closely related to seizures of ivory, rather than elephants poached in Namibia (see ivory seizures graph p. 64); much of the ivory seized in Namibia is believed to originate from elephants killed in other countries, with the ivory smuggled into Namibia for sale or onward trafficking.
- **Increase in Namibia's elephant population** has been recorded through aerial surveys carried out in the years shown in the graph; most of Namibia's elephant sub-populations have shown significant increases; the sub-populations in the eastern parts of the Erongo-Kunene Community Conservation Area, as well as those in Khaudum, Bwabwata, Mudumu and Nkasa Rupara national parks and adjacent communal farming areas have shown the greatest increases; while the population in Bwabwata, Mudumu and Nkasa Rupara moves freely across international borders, the other populations are relatively sedentary, with more localised, seasonal movements; the small number of desert-adapted elephants of the western parts of the Erongo-Kunene CCA are most susceptible to human influences.

12.6 Comparison of POACHING ESTIMATES versus ARRESTS (elephant)



12.7 INCREASE in NAMIBIA'S ELEPHANT POPULATION



B10. STATUS UPDATE – ELEPHANT PROTECTION IN NAMIBIA

'Based on the latest estimates, [Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe] are home to more than half of the remaining elephants in Africa.'¹ This assessment uses the results of the KAZA elephant survey of 2022 together with comparative surveys from other parts of Africa. While elephants have experienced severe declines across much of Africa, the KAZA elephant population is considered stable with localised fluctuations². The elephant populations in Namibia's portion of KAZA, i.e. in the Kavango East and Zambezi regions, make up over 85% of total elephant numbers in Namibia. The health of Namibia's elephants is thus directly linked to the overall health of KAZA's elephants. Regional poaching impacts and other influences will affect the elephants in Namibia, with the population in the Zambezi Region more susceptible than the one in Khaudum National Park and adjacent areas.

Namibia's overall elephant population has significantly increased and expanded in range over the past three decades, which must be considered a clear conservation success. The biggest increases have come in communal lands and state-protected areas, particularly in the northeast. Few elephants occur on freehold land in Namibia, mostly in very small, isolated groups that constitute a very limited component of the national population.

At a national level, Namibia's elephants occur in four only partly interlinked sub-populations, which all have their particular dynamics, protection needs and challenges³. The small, fragmented population of desert-adapted elephants in the Erongo and Kunene regions is exhibiting high calf mortality and some local population declines. High levels of disturbance and harassment through inappropriate tourism activities are problematic, exacerbated by human–elephant conflicts with local communities. A number of initiatives seek to mitigate these issues, but more needs to be done. Human–elephant conflicts constitute the central challenge for the populations of the Elephant Highlands and areas west of Etosha National Park in the Kunene Region. The Etosha population is at carrying capacity and direct management interventions may be required to avoid further habitat degradation, especially in the vicinity of waterpoints.

The decline in poaching in Namibia over the past five years is attributed largely to national security forces Joint Anti-poaching Units (JAPU), which continue to be deployed in key elephant ranges. The detection of elephant carcasses through monitoring programmes is proving effective, and it is assumed that only a small number in remote areas may be

overlooked. A dozen or less elephants lost to poaching per year over the past five years, from a total population of well over 24,000, can be considered insignificant.

Law enforcement continues to register important results, particularly in countering ivory trafficking between neighbouring countries and Namibia. Some particularly large ivory seizures of recent years have been proven to originate from elephants poached in other countries. Seized ivory also includes tusks of unknown origin, some of which may be Namibian, as well as found ivory that has clearly weathered in the wild. Ivory seizures and related arrests in Namibia continue to show a steady decline since the most recent peak in 2021.

According to the UNODC Wildlife Crime Report 2024 (covers the period 2015–2021) 'All evidence appears to point to a general decline in African elephant poaching over the last decade ... By 2020, prices appeared to be dropping to new lows in both Africa and most of Asia. While reversals are always possible, it appears progress has been made in reducing the flow of illegal ivory'⁴. A more recent study of open-source seizure data to the end of 2023 indicates that ivory trafficking has again increased from the 2020 low; although annual seizure numbers are fluctuating, the average weight of shipments is increasing⁵. As is the case with many criminal sectors with continued market demand, apparent declines are usually followed by renewed escalation. Countermeasures must clearly continue without letup.



Photo courtesy Wildscapes Namibia Research & Enhancement
© 2025

Irresponsible behaviour by the tourism industry exacerbates human–elephant conflict, particularly for local communities living with those elephants.



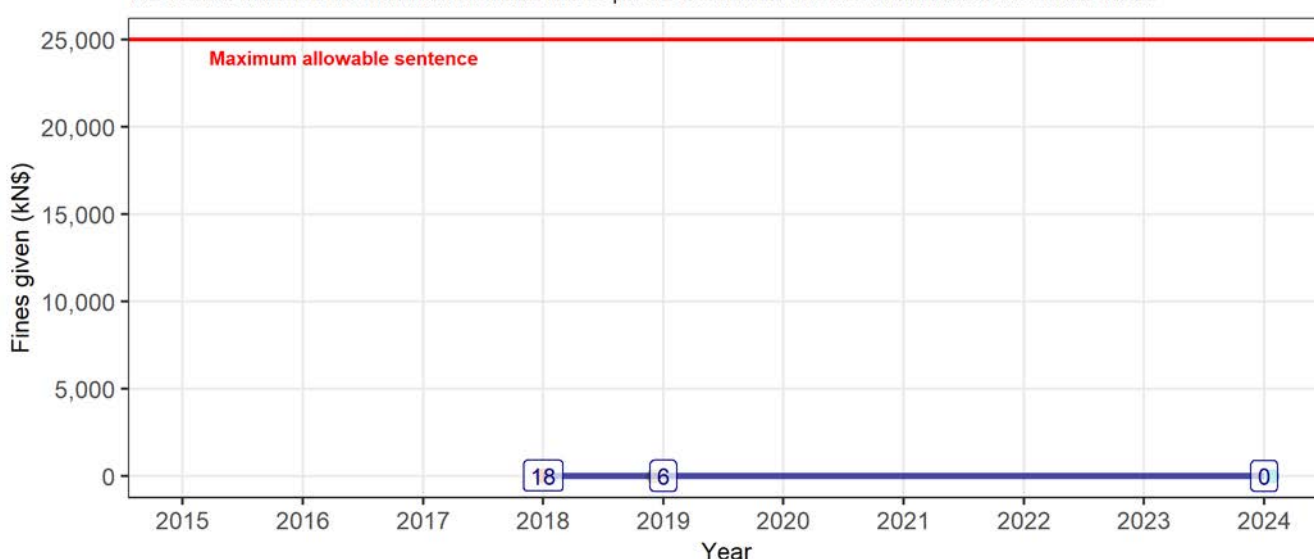
Maximum versus actual sentences related to elephant poaching

- Namibian laws stipulate maximum penalties for all defined transgressions; the graphs show the gap between maximum sentences as stipulated in the relevant legislation, and actual sentences handed down by the courts; penalties may consist of a fine, a prison term, or both.
- Very few perpetrators have been convicted of elephant poaching in Namibia; a case in 2024 stands out with a prison sentence of eight years.
- The maximum sentences of N\$ 25,000,000 and 25 years imprisonment have never been applied; these are generally reserved for complex crimes perpetrated by ruthless transnational criminals, not local community members.

12.8 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL FINES (elephant poaching)

Annual distribution of fines (kN\$) issued for illegal hunting of elephant

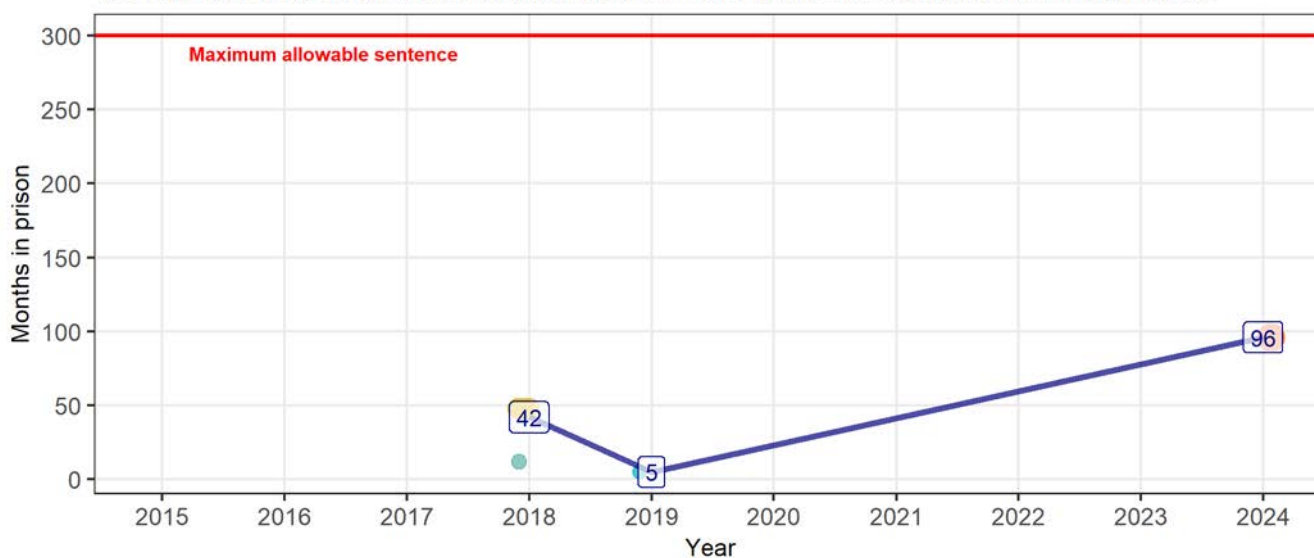
Charges were laid under Section 26 of the Nature Conservation Ordinance 4 of 1975, as amended Act 3 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable fine as per the Ordinance. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



12.9 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL PRISON TERMS (elephant poaching)

Annual distribution of imprisonment (months) issued for illegal hunting of elephant

Charges were laid under Section 26 of the Nature Conservation Ordinance 4 of 1975, as amended Act 3 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable imprisonment as per the Ordinance. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



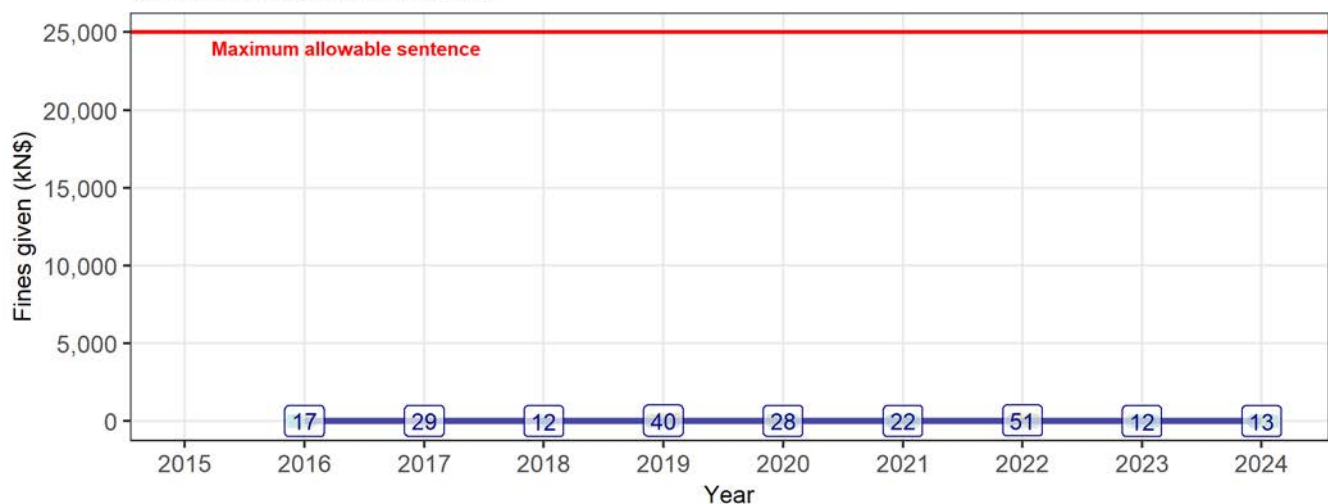
Maximum versus actual sentences related to elephant trafficking

- Namibian laws stipulate maximum penalties for all defined transgressions; the graphs show the gap between maximum sentences as stipulated in the relevant legislation, and actual sentences handed down by the courts; penalties may consist of a fine, a prison term, or both.
- Elephant crimes prosecuted in Namibia consist mostly of ivory trafficking; much of the ivory is smuggled into Namibia from neighbouring countries for attempted sale; the origin of the ivory can only be ascertained in some cases.
- Many perpetrators of ivory trafficking arrested in Namibia are rural community members with limited financial means; high fines in these cases are ineffective, as the perpetrators are generally unable to pay even a relatively modest fine.
- While prison terms as high as 10 years have been pronounced, most sentences prior to 2022 have been much lower; the special courts held during 2022 delivered significant deterrent sentences, which raised the annual mean of fines and prison terms substantially; these have dropped again during 2023 and 2024.

12.10 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL FINES (elephant trafficking)

Annual distribution of fines (kN\$) issued for illegal possession and dealing of elephant products

Charges were laid under Section 4 (1)(a) and (1)(b) of the Controlled Wildlife Products and Trade Act 9 of 2008, as amended Act 6 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable fine as per the Act. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



12.11 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL PRISON TERMS (elephant trafficking)

Annual distribution of imprisonment (months) issued for illegal possession and dealing of elephant products

Charges were laid under Section 4 (1)(a) and (1)(b) under the Controlled Wildlife Products and Trade Act 9 of 2008, as amended Act 6 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable imprisonment as per the Act. The blue line indicates the annual mean.

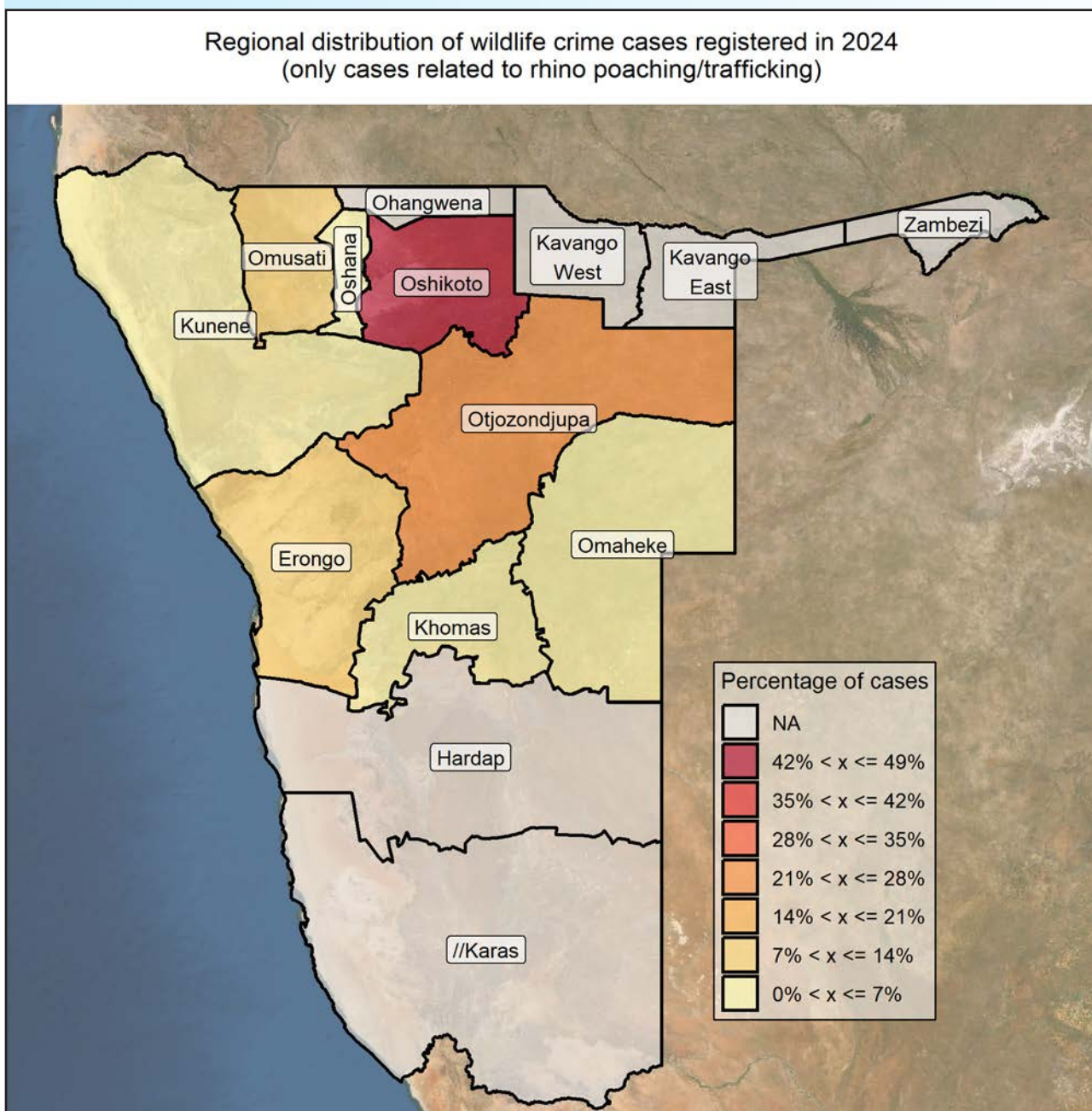


13.

13.1 REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION of REGISTERED CASES related to RHINO during 2024

Regional distribution of rhino cases

- The largest rhino populations are found in Namibia's national parks, yet rhinos occur in smaller populations in many parts of the country.
- The map indicates registered cases of rhino crimes, which may consist of rhino poaching, horn trafficking or a variety of other offences related to rhinos; the map does not reflect rhino distribution, nor necessarily where crimes occurred (cases are usually registered at the nearest police station to the arrest, seizure or carcass discovery; this may be in another region to where the original crime occurred).
- The Oshikoto Region showed the highest prevalence of rhino crimes during 2024, largely influenced by cases related to rhino poaching in Etosha National Park; proximity to trafficking nodes and routes for rhino products is likely an additional influence
- The prevalence of rhino crimes has shown regional shifts from year to year, based largely on shifting tactics and targets of criminals; during 2024, rhino crimes were recorded in 8 of Namibia's 14 regions, highlighting the widespread nature of rhino crimes.



Rhino poachers continue to be intercepted during their poaching missions; during 2024 poachers were intercepted on more than a dozen different occasions, mostly before they had managed to kill a rhino, which has saved numerous animals; on other occasions, the poachers were intercepted before they could escape with the stolen horns.



Hacked-off rhino horns seized together with diverse poaching paraphernalia; 2024.

Arrests, convictions and seizures related to rhinos

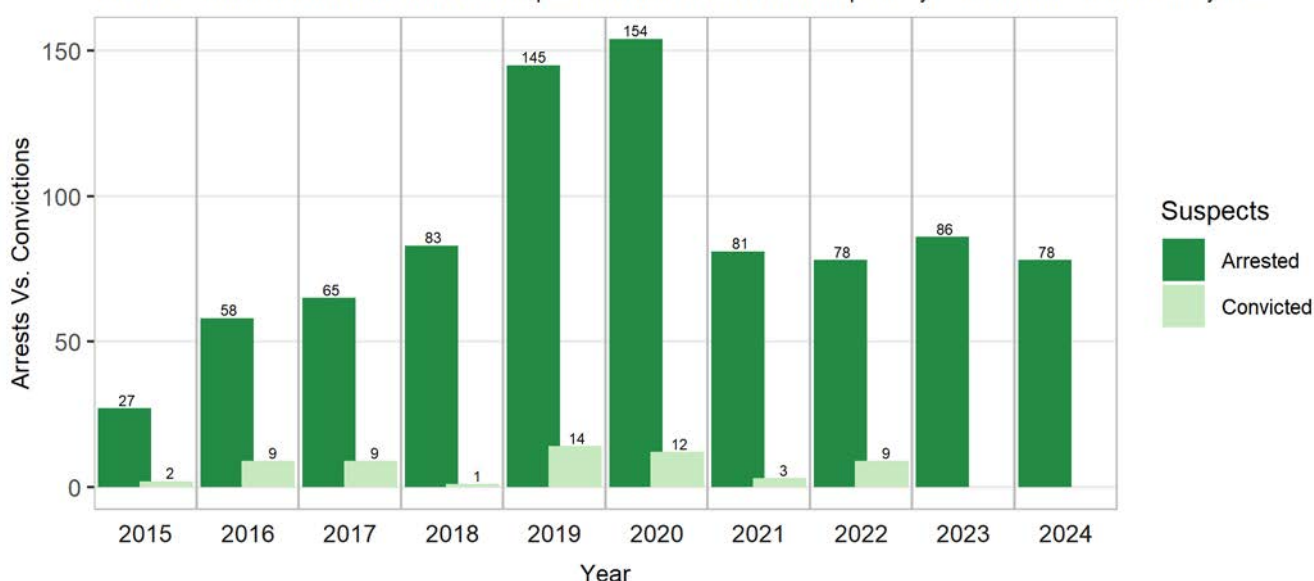
- **Annual arrests vs. current conviction status** (on 11 March 2025) highlights the challenges of achieving convictions in rhino cases; of 855 suspects arrested since the start of 2015, only 59 (<7%) had been convicted by 11 March 2025; the causes for this are complex – all rhino cases require PG guidance prior to prosecution, which lengthens the duration of the cases; pre-emptive arrests, as well as the arrests of aiders and abettors, are based largely on circumstantial evidence, making convictions more difficult; many suspects who have been arrested for rhino horn trafficking are able to secure excellent legal representation that seeks to block rapid convictions; linkages between rhino carcasses, used firearms and confiscated horns require forensic evidence, which takes time to secure; other factors also play a role; *Note: Convictions are shown in the year of arrest, not the year of conviction.*
- **Seizures of rhino horns** were low in 2024 compared to the high poaching losses; this indicates that the majority of horns from poached rhinos are quickly and successfully trafficked out of the country; low global rhino horn seizures further indicate that many horns successfully reach end markets¹, and that illicit financial flows continue to drive poaching in Namibia.

13.2 ARRESTS versus CURRENT CONVICTIONS (rhinos) [current status 11 March 2025]

Arrests and convictions are shown by year of arrest; many convictions are achieved years after arrest, but are shown in the year of arrest.

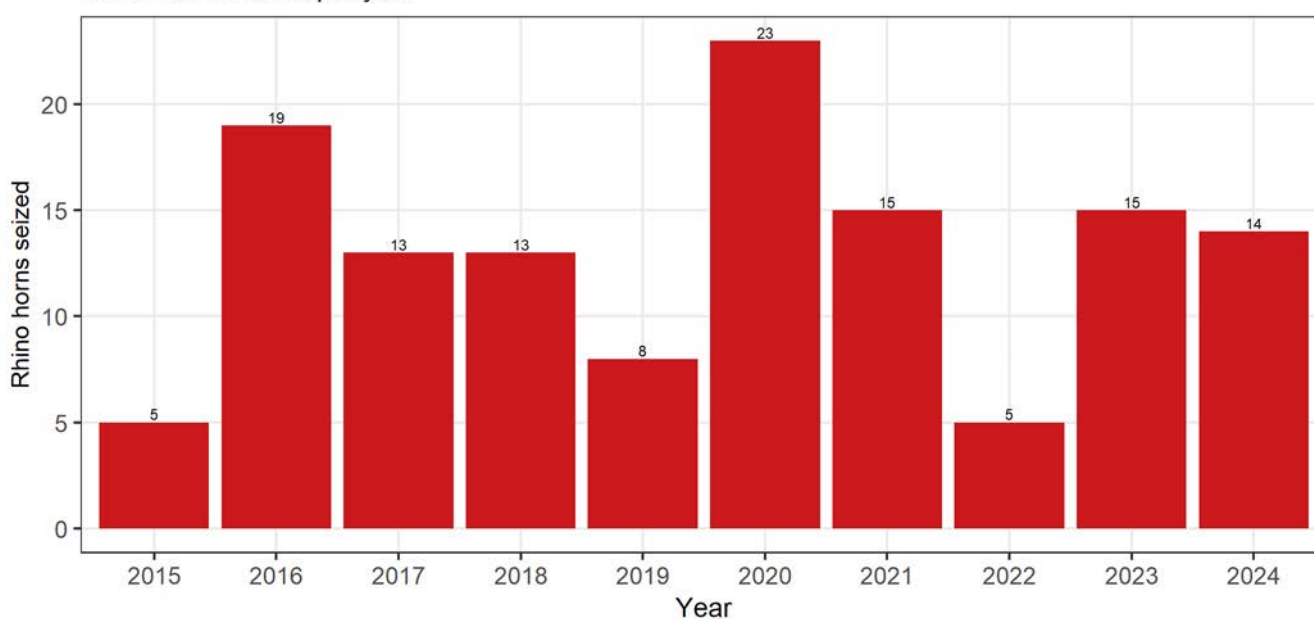
Annual arrests vs. their current conviction status (rhino cases)

The bars "Convicted" indicate the number of suspects who were arrested in the respective year and have been convicted by now.



13.3 SEIZURES (rhinos)

Rhino horns seized per year



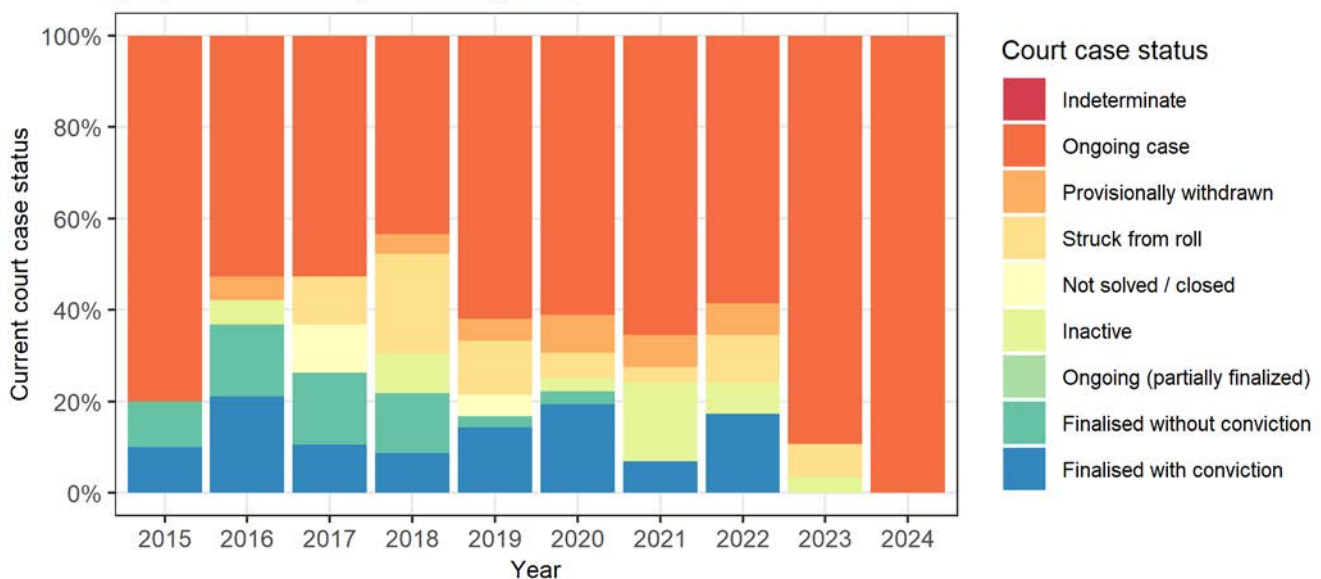
Current case status and time between arrest and case finalisation in rhino cases

- **Current case status** (on 11 March 2025) remains ongoing for well over 50% of cases registered in most years (see notes on opposite page for details on causes) reflecting the complexity of cases; rates of finalisation and conviction remain low; less than 25% of cases registered in any year have been finalised with convictions; a substantial percentage of cases have been provisionally withdrawn, struck from the roll or finalised without conviction; indeterminate indicates a current status that has not yet been defined in the database.
- **Time between arrest and conviction** shows the complexity of rhino crimes and the drawn-out nature of these cases; a case finalised in 2023 that took more than 6 years to be completed represents the drawn-out case of 4 Namibians arrested in 2016 for poaching white rhinos.

13.4 CURRENT CASE STATUS (rhinos) [current status 11 March 2025]

Current court case status as percentage of cases registered per year (rhino cases)

(Bar position indicates the year of case registration)



13.5 TIME BETWEEN ARREST and CASE FINALISATION (rhinos)

More and more old cases are being finalised in recent years, creating the false impression that case finalisation is getting slower.

Distribution of months passed between individuals' arrest and case finalization (rhino cases)

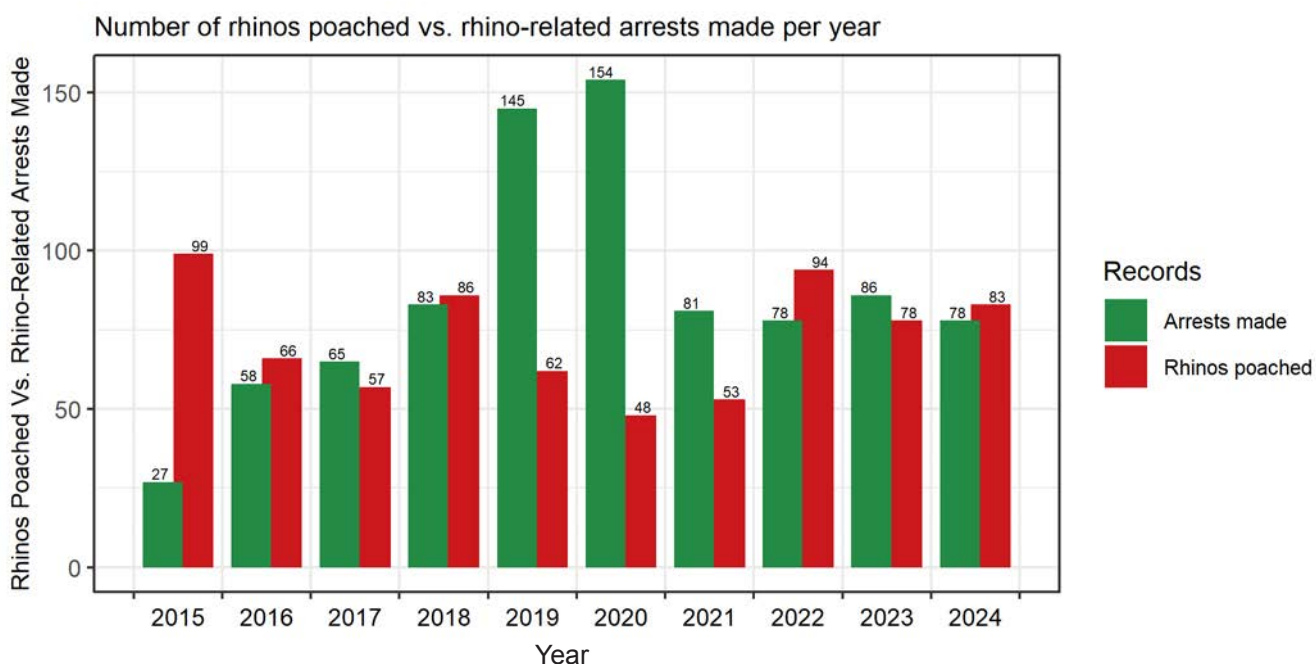
The position of a data point indicates the year in which a case was finalized. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



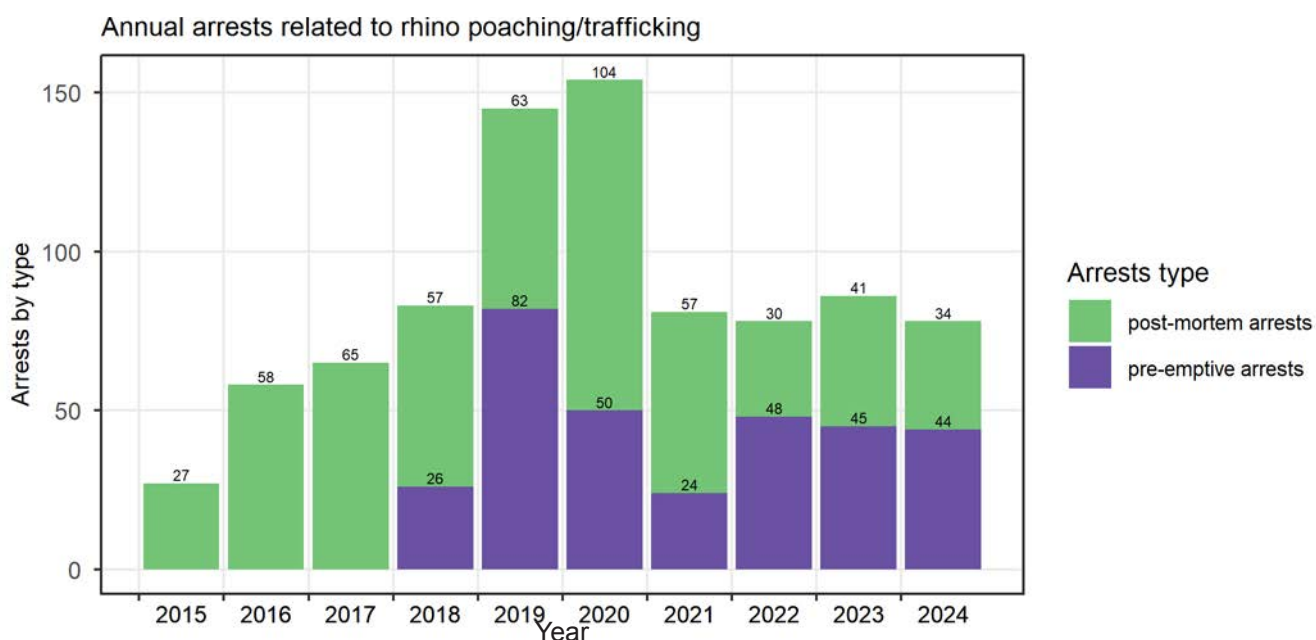
Proactive law enforcement and anti-poaching interventions related to rhinos

- **Poaching estimates vs. arrests** indicate the undiminished threat of rhino poaching, despite high numbers of arrests; the past three years have experienced continuously high poaching losses, despite similar numbers of arrests.
- **Proportion of pre-emptive rhino arrests** is a good indicator of the effectiveness of law enforcement; pre-emptive arrests are based on intelligence-led investigations that apprehend poaching gangs while they are conspiring to poach, but before they are able to kill a rhino; this saves the lives of numerous rhinos while still catching the would-be poachers.
- **Dehorning of rhinos** is used to make the animals uninteresting to poachers by shifting the risk-reward ratio in favour of law enforcement (the risk of arrest becomes much higher than the small reward of a rhino horn stub); dehorning must be repeated at regular intervals, as the horns grow back (similar to human fingernails); dehorning is extremely expensive, requiring expert teams and usually the use of helicopters and spotter aircraft; rhinos in high-risk areas are thus prioritised for dehorning.

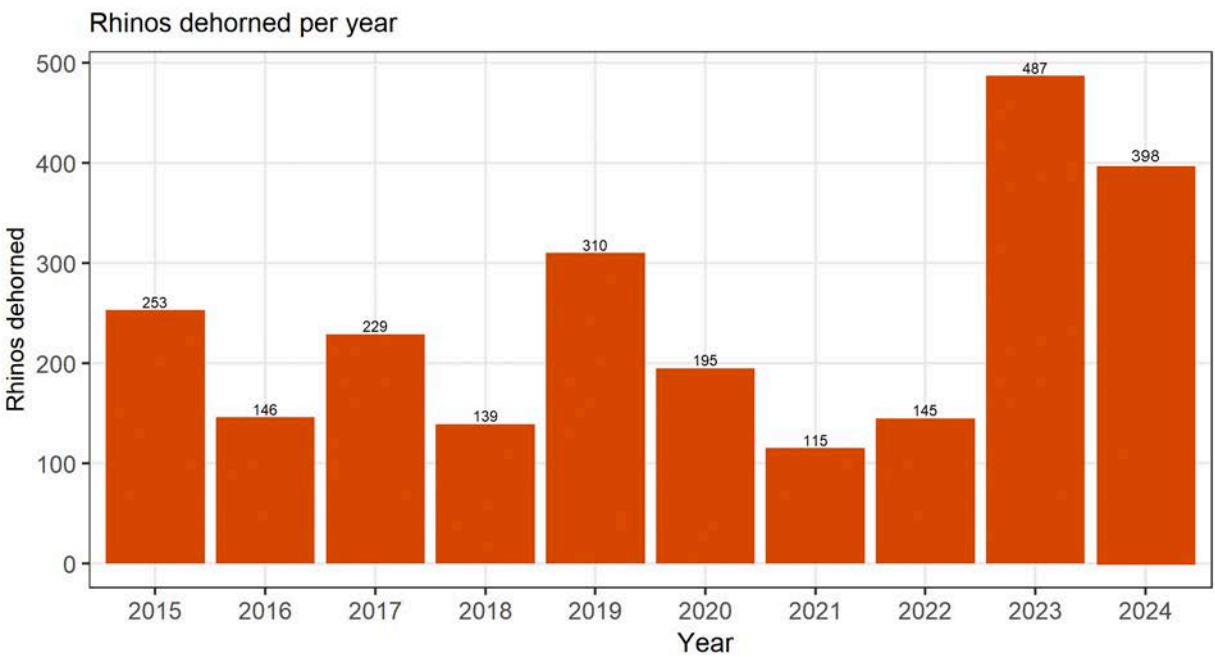
13.6 Comparison of POACHING ESTIMATES versus ARRESTS (rhinos)



13.7 PROPORTION of PRE-EMPTIVE ARRESTS (rhino cases)

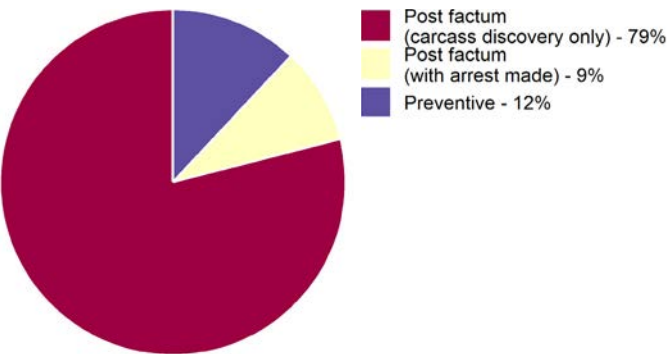


13.8 DEHORNING of RHINOS



13.9 Ratios of rhino case types:

for rhino cases registered in 2024



Rhino case types

- **Rhino cases** are complex, ranging from horn seizures without link to a carcass, to discovery of carcasses without arrests, to discovery of carcasses with arrests, to pre-emptive arrests of intending poachers without a rhino being killed; all categories may involve arrests of various accomplices, aiders and abettors.
- **Carcass discoveries** may include old carcasses that are ascribed in the data as poached in a previous year
- **Criminal cases** related to old carcasses are registered as per date of discovery of the carcasses, and are ascribed as such in the data.
- **Arrests related to old carcasses** may be impossible.
- These factors can lead to confusing statistics.

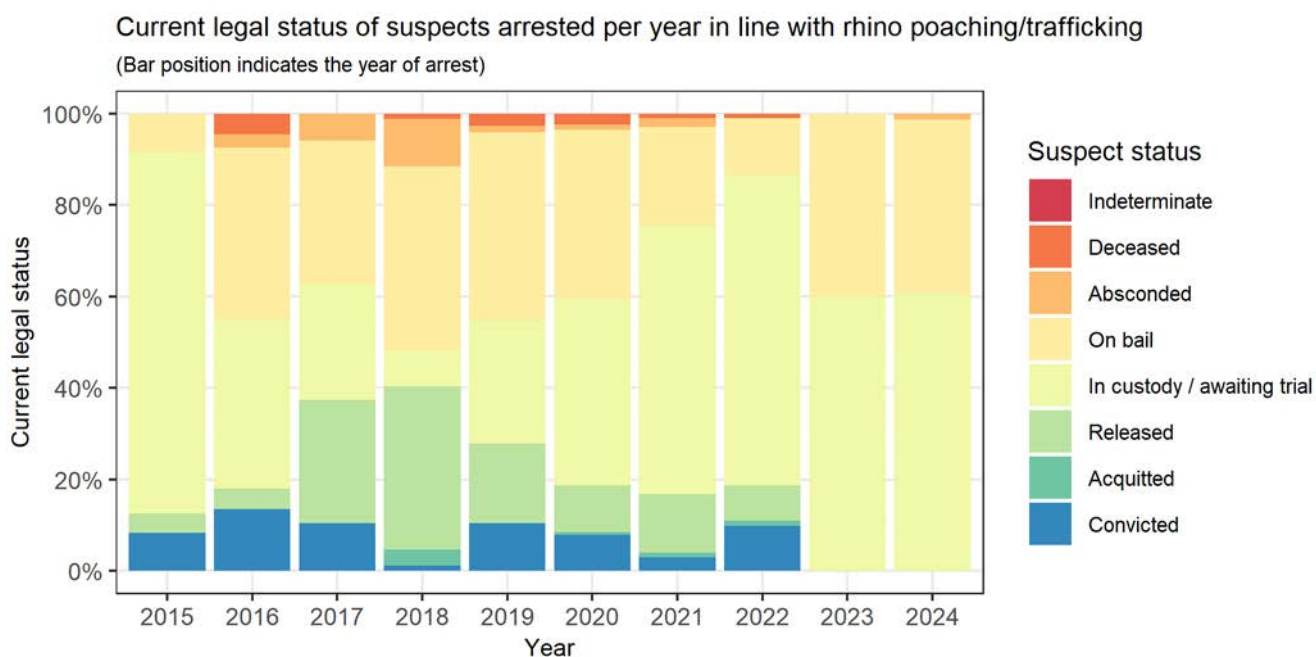
Financial gain from rhino poaching and horn trafficking continues to drive poaching.



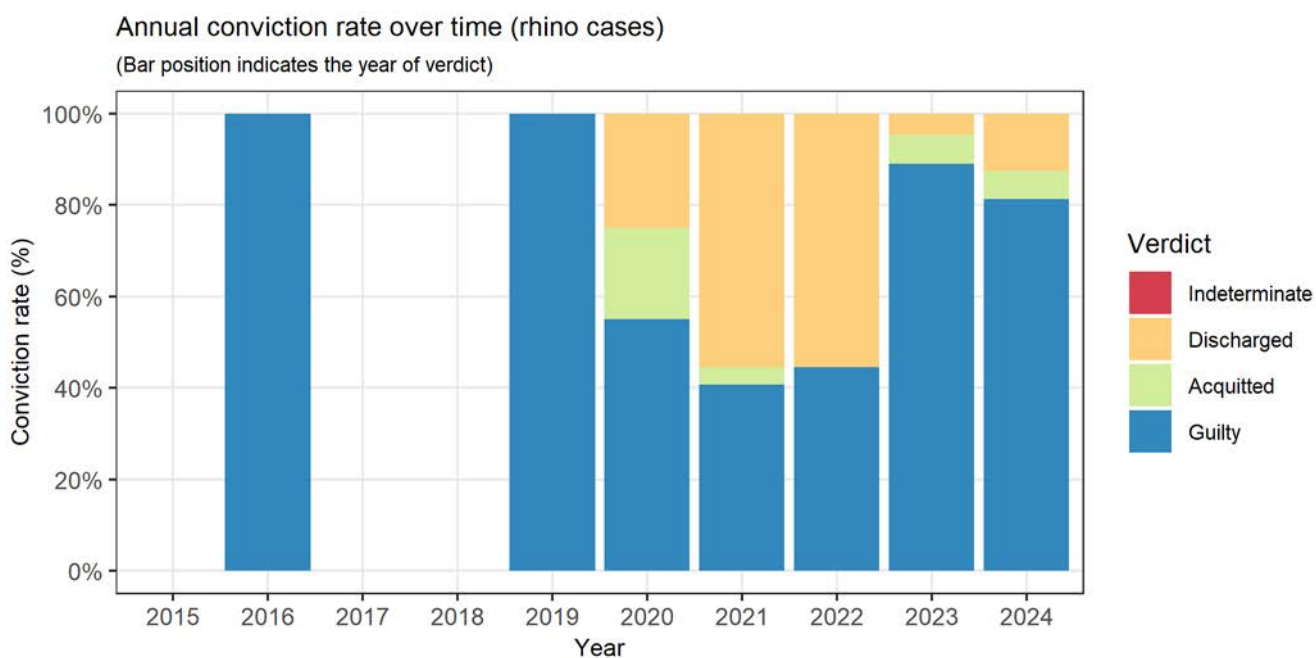
Current legal status of suspects and annual conviction rate in rhino cases

- **Current legal status of suspects** (on 11 March 2025) in rhino cases is highly alarming; of all suspects arrested in any year, less than 20% had been convicted by 11 March 2025; of suspects arrested in 2015, only around 8% had been convicted, 9% were on bail, 79% were still in custody, while 4% had been released; over the years, a number of suspects have absconded or died; causes for the challenges in prosecuting rhino crimes are discussed in the notes on p. 72; indeterminate indicates a current status that has not yet been defined in the database.
- **Annual conviction rate** refers to the percentage of suspects in finalised cases who were convicted per year; this has varied considerably in rhino cases, with a 100% rate for 2016 and 2019, almost 90% in 2023, but less than 50% in 2021 and 2022, when over 50% of suspects were discharged; no convictions were achieved in 2015, 2017 and 2018 (the convicted status for suspects indicated for these years in the 'Current legal status of suspects' graph was achieved in subsequent years); it must be emphasised that very few rhino cases have been finalised (see 'Current case status' graph, p. 73) and the resultant small dataset can create skewed perceptions.

13.10 CURRENT LEGAL STATUS of SUSPECTS (rhino cases) [current status 11 March 2025]



13.11 ANNUAL CONVICTION RATE (rhino cases)



BII. STATUS UPDATE – RHINO PROTECTION IN NAMIBIA

Global seizure statistics between 2015 and 2021 (based on a standardised seizure index) show rhinos as the animals most-affected by the illicit wildlife trade, comprising 29% (pangolins second at 28%, elephants third at 15%)¹. In Namibia, rhinos once again featured as the most-targeted wildlife during 2024 (statistics for both white and black rhino combined). During the year, 83 rhinos were recorded as poached and 104 crime cases were registered, resulting in 78 arrests. Most registered cases consisted only of the discovery of the carcass of a poached rhino, as yet without an arrest. Only 22 new court cases, in which arrests were achieved, were registered. This included 13 conspiracy-to-poach cases, in which intending poachers had not yet managed to kill. While 166 horns were stolen from poached rhinos, only 14 horns were seized. Four court cases were finalised during 2024, all of which stemmed from cases registered in 2022 or earlier. The conviction rate for cases finalised in 2024 was 80%.

Poaching losses, cases and arrests have remained consistently high over the past three years. Current interventions are managing to suppress losses, but are not making any clear gains in terms of minimising impacts. Intermittent aerial surveys and other monitoring efforts continue to lead to the discovery of carcasses of poached rhinos, some a year or more old. For example, rhino dehorning operations in Etosha National Park led to the discovery of 22 carcasses of various ages in early 2024.

Rhino protection clearly remains highly problematic. Few rhino ranges in Namibia are impervious to poaching incursions. The areas are simply too large and complex to enable impenetrable security. Insider information on security measures and rhino localities are concomitant challenges. Highly active monitoring by rhino rangers is generally providing strong protection in community conservation areas (CCAs), although some rhinos were lost to poaching in the Erongo–Kunene CCA during 2024. Rhino protection on private reserves varies, based on factors including reserve size and accessibility, rhino numbers, and security investments. Cutting edge technology is continually being deployed to improve protection and law enforcement, both in situ and remotely. Yet temporary gains are repeatedly eroded through adapted criminal tactics.

Investigations continue to deliver important results, which during 2024 included 44 pre-emptive arrests in conspiracy-to-poach cases. These undoubtedly saved a number of rhinos from being poached. Additional arrests through ongoing investigations in complex cases registered in previous years represent important successes and a clear

sign of law enforcement determination. Seizures of vehicles and firearms used during crime are critically important, as are subsequent financial investigations, particularly related to the Prevention of Organised Crimes Act (POCA). The resultant forfeiture of unexplained wealth, including vehicles and large sums of cash, is becoming an important additional deterrent to rhino crimes.

Poor results in rhino prosecutions and case finalisations are undoubtedly contributing to the status quo. Very few of the hundreds of suspects arrested have been convicted with appropriate sentences, while numerous repeat arrestees, discharged or free on bail, are acting with apparent impunity.

Scrutinising Namibian and international rhino crimes data can give a broad indication of horn volumes potentially being trafficked successfully, and thus illicit cash flows likely available to Namibian criminal networks. In 2022, 94 rhinos were recorded as poached in Namibia, while only five horns were seized. Over 400 rhinos were poached in South Africa², while total known global seizures amounted to the horns of approximately 86 rhinos during 2022³. Most horns, including those from Namibia, likely reached end markets.

Because Namibia's rhino populations are fragmented in numerous sub-populations of different sizes, poaching impacts everywhere are significant. Losses are having severe effects on population growth, and some small populations have been wiped out. Current losses can not be sustained. Namibia's status as the country with the second-largest rhino population left on Earth is on the one hand a sign of success, yet on the other hand it makes Namibia a primary target – and the success is becoming increasingly precarious.



Very few of the horns from poached rhinos are ever recovered, either locally or globally; illicit financial flows from successfully trafficked horns continue to drive poaching.



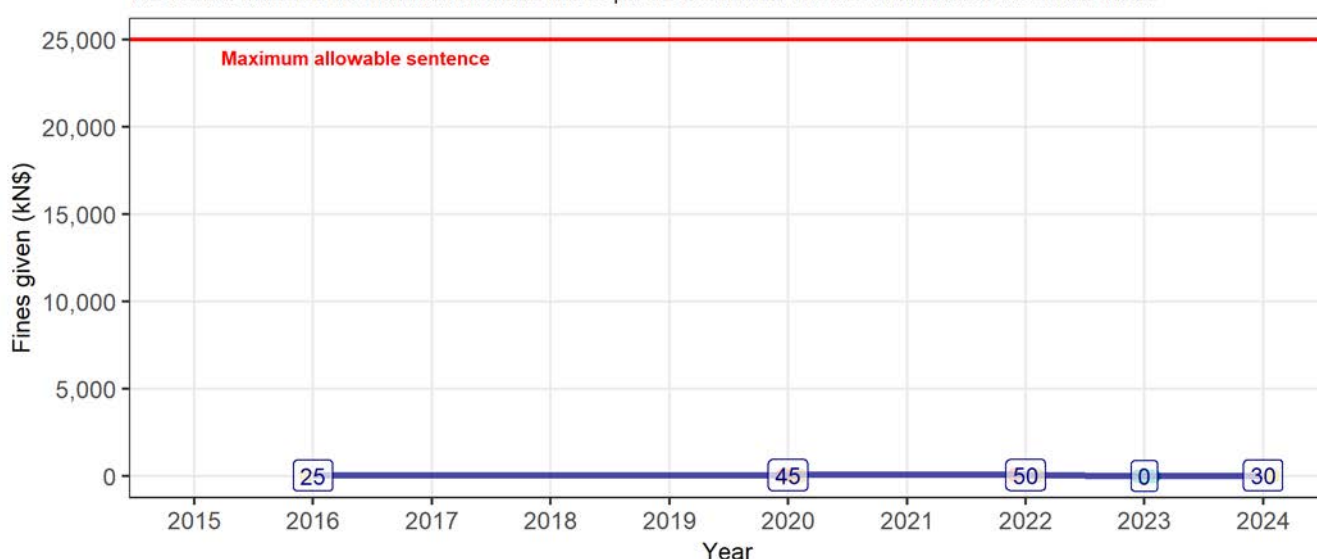
Maximum versus actual sentences related to rhino poaching

- Namibian laws stipulate maximum penalties for all defined transgressions; the graphs show the gap between maximum sentences as stipulated in the relevant legislation, and actual sentences handed down by the courts; penalties may consist of a fine, a prison term, or both.
- Few perpetrators have been convicted of rhino poaching in Namibia; causes for the challenges in prosecuting rhino crimes are discussed in the notes on p. 72.
- Rhino poachers are mostly part of poaching gangs that have links to more extensive criminal syndicates; the aiders and abettors regularly arrested as part of a poaching incident may be prosecuted for charges other than rhino poaching.
- Rhino poaching often leads to a range of transgressions, including illegal entry into a protected area, the use of illegal firearms, criminal gang activity, trafficking, racketeering and money laundering; additional charges and the related sentences may not all be reflected in the below graphs.
- The significant jail terms imposed on 11 rhino poachers in two separate cases finalised in 2023 are reflected below.

13.12 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL FINES (rhino poaching)

Annual distribution of fines (kN\$) issued for illegal hunting of rhino

Charges were laid under Section 26 of the Nature Conservation Ordinance 4 of 1975, as amended Act 3 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable fine as per the Ordinance. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



13.13 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL PRISON TERMS (rhino poaching)

Annual distribution of imprisonment (months) issued for illegal hunting of rhino

Charges were laid under Section 26 of the Nature Conservation Ordinance 4 of 1975, as amended Act 3 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable imprisonment as per the Ordinance. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



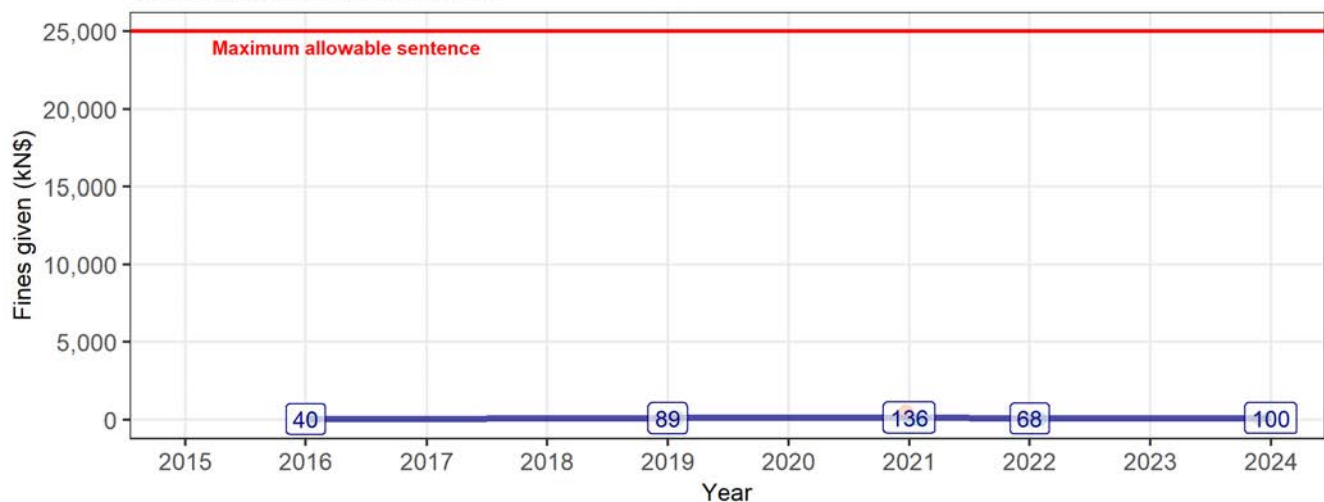
Maximum versus actual sentences related to trafficking of rhino horns

- Namibian laws stipulate maximum penalties for all defined transgressions; the graphs show the gap between maximum sentences as stipulated in the relevant legislation, and actual sentences handed down by the courts; penalties may consist of a fine, a prison term, or both.
- Very few perpetrators have been convicted of rhino horn trafficking in Namibia; causes for the challenges in prosecuting rhino crimes are discussed in the notes on p. 72.
- The 20-year prison terms imposed on four Chinese in 2019 remain the most significant sentences for rhino horn trafficking.
- Rhino crimes are complex and often include a range of charges other than illegal possession and dealing of rhino products; additional charges and the related sentences may not all be reflected in the below graphs.
- The sentences for possession of or dealing in rhino horns imposed during 2024 included fines of N\$ 100,000 and jail terms of 60 months (five years).

13.14 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL FINES (rhino trafficking)

Annual distribution of fines (kN\$) issued for illegal possession and dealing of rhino products

Charges were laid under Section 4 (1)(a) and (1)(b) of the Controlled Wildlife Products and Trade Act 9 of 2008, as amended Act 6 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable fine as per the Act. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



13.15 MAXIMUM versus ACTUAL PRISON TERMS (rhino trafficking)

Annual distribution of imprisonment (months) issued for illegal possession and dealing of rhino products

Charges were laid under Section 4 (1)(a) and (1)(b) under the Controlled Wildlife Products and Trade Act 9 of 2008, as amended Act 6 of 2017. The red line indicates the maximum allowable imprisonment as per the Act. The blue line indicates the annual mean.



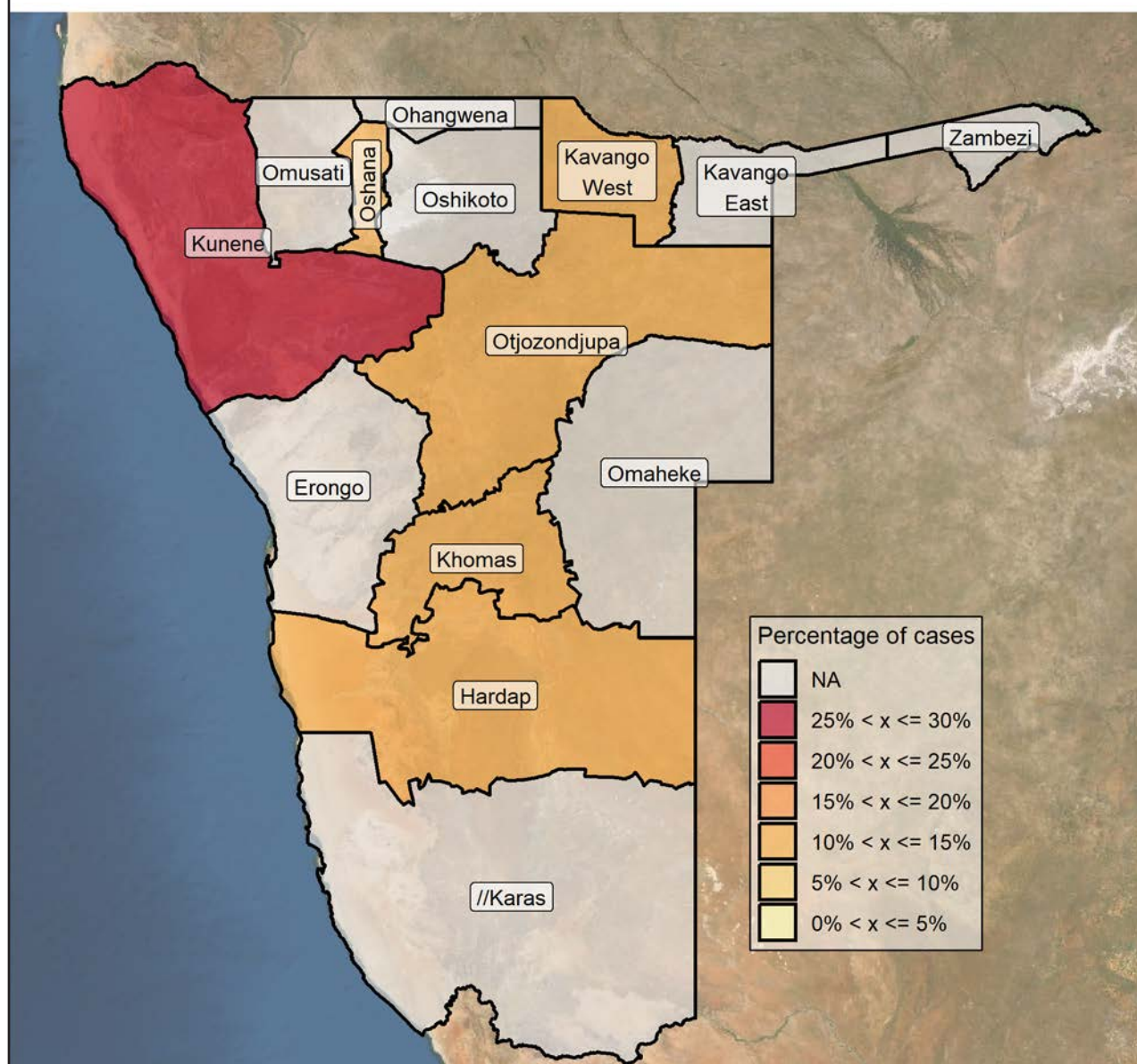
14. PLANT POACHING AND TRAFFICKING TRENDS 2015–2024

14.1 REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION of REGISTERED CASES related to PLANTS during 2024

Regional distribution of plant cases

- Plant cases can currently be divided into three categories:
 - timber (occurring mostly in the far northeast, especially in the northeastern Otjozondjupa, Ohangwena, Kavango and Zambezi regions)
 - live plants (mostly rare and endemic succulents, occurring in the arid west and south)
 - devil's claw (used for medicinal purposes, occurring in sandy soils across much of Namibia except for the arid west)
- The map indicates registered cases of plant crimes, which may consist of illegal harvesting of plants, trafficking of plant products, illegal possession of plant products or other offences related to plants; the map does not reflect plant distribution, nor necessarily where crimes occurred.
- Regional distribution of cases varies significantly from year to year, although the very small number of currently registered cases (seven cases registered across six regions in 2024) skews the apparent prevalence in any one region.

Regional distribution of wildlife crime cases registered in 2024
(only cases related to plant poaching/trafficking)



Namibia's indigenous pachycauls (plants with distinctly swollen stems) generally occur at very low density in isolated locations, and are extremely slow-growing; when these plants are poached in large numbers, the impact on the population is severe; susceptible species can be poached to extinction in a short time.



*Seized consignment of kobas
(Cyphostemma spp.)
Khomas Region, December 2024.*

Arrests, convictions and seizures related to plants

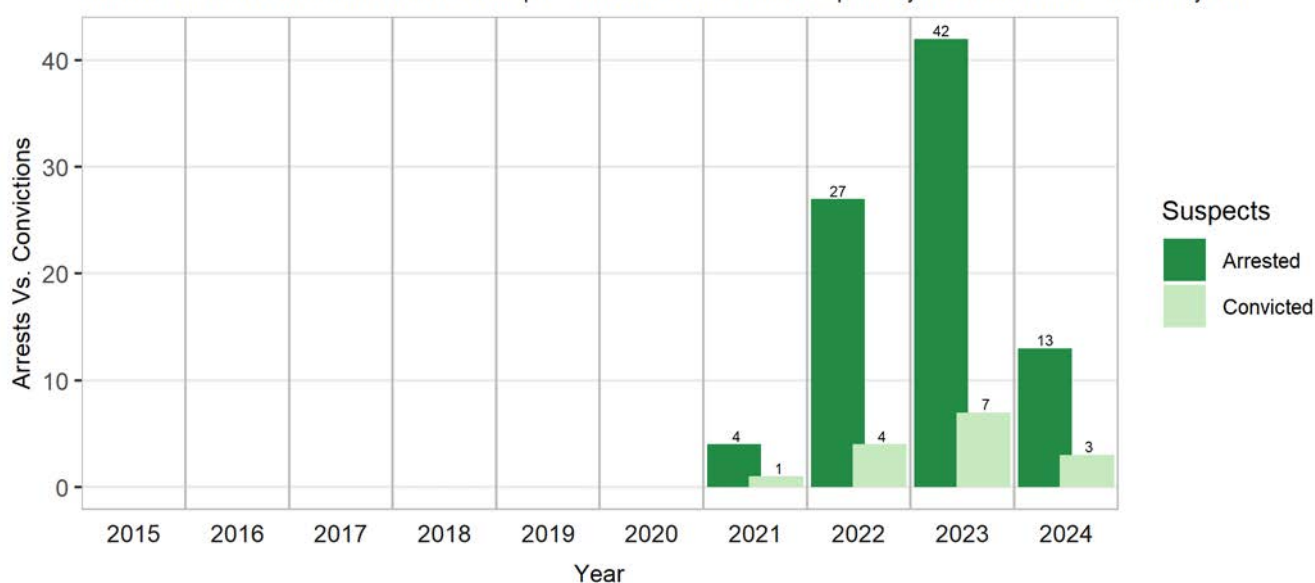
- **Annual arrests vs. current conviction status** (on 11 March 2025) shows that arrests have only been recorded since 2021, and only 15 convictions out of 86 arrests had been achieved by 11 March 2025; the rapidly increasing number of arrests per year indicates that this is an expanding sector of major concern; *Note: Convictions are shown in the year of arrest, not the year of conviction.*
- **Seizures of plant products** have been significant; clearly, plant products are being illicitly harvested and trafficked in large volumes, which can have a rapid impact on plant populations, especially those of rare species with a localised distribution.
- The data only indicates cases that have been registered by law enforcement; how many consignments are being trafficked undetected is unknown, but believed to be considerable, particularly in the live plant and timber sectors.

14.2 ARRESTS versus CURRENT CONVICTIONS (plants) [current status 11 March 2025]

Arrests and convictions are shown by year of arrest; many convictions are achieved years after arrest, but are shown in the year of arrest.

Annual arrests vs. their current conviction status (plant poaching/trading)

The bars "Convicted" indicate the number of suspects who were arrested in the respective year and have been convicted by now.



14.3 SEIZURES (plants)

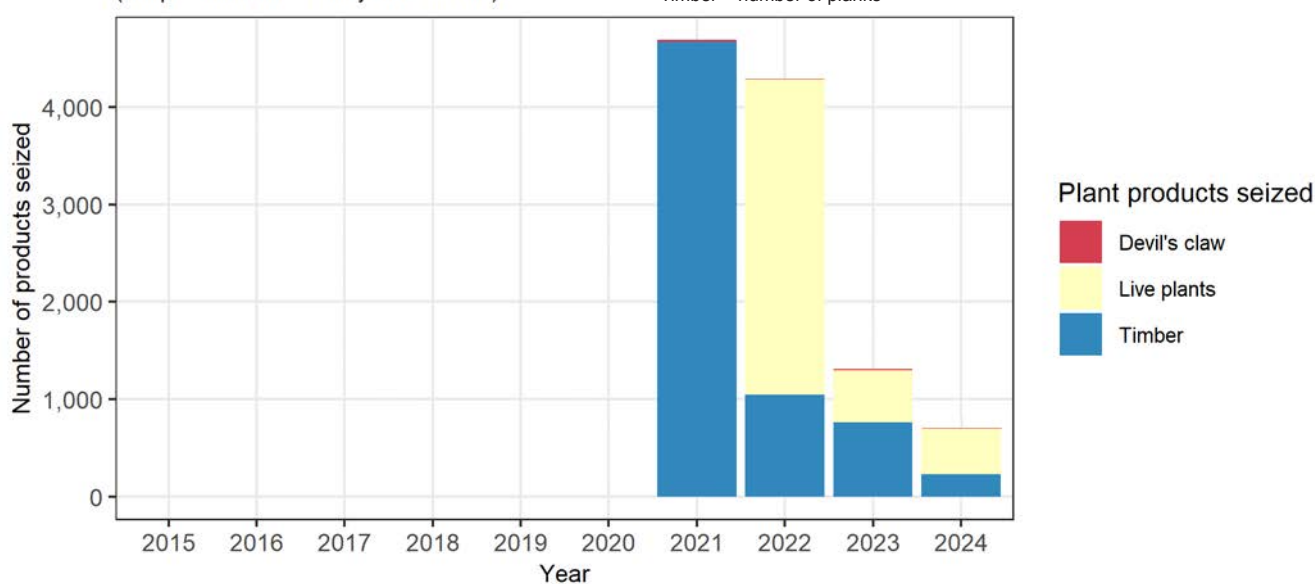
Plant products seized per category per year

(Bar position indicates the year of seizure)

Devil's claw – number of bags of dried pieces

Live plants – number of individual plants

Timber – number of planks



B12. STATUS UPDATE – PLANT PROTECTION IN NAMIBIA

Protection of Namibia's threatened plants remains highly challenging. The overall forestry sector is split into several distinct subsectors, each with its own unique dynamics. The poaching of live plants for the global ornamental plant trade is perhaps the most pressing, as some highly localised endemics face a real threat of extinction.

The highly concerning trend of escalating live-plant poaching and trafficking continued in Namibia during 2024. While seizures and arrests were far below 2022 and 2023 levels, cases nonetheless indicated an ongoing diversification, with new target species, broader participation and transboundary links, and a variety of trafficking routes and methods. In-depth investigations continue to reveal intricate transnational networks enabling overland smuggling of consignments to East Africa and onwards to end markets. An expanding range of pachycauls (plants with thick, succulent stems) are being targeted, including elephant's foot (*Adenia pechuelii*), kobas (*Cyphostemma bainesii*, *C. uter*), and corkwood (*Commiphora* spp.). The largest seizures of live plants in Namibia, achieved during 2022, were of 'living stone plants' (*Lithops* spp, part of the ice plant family Aizoaceae). To date, seizures have included around a dozen different succulent species. Two large consignments of live kobas plants were intercepted during 2024, one at a routine police checkpoint in the Kavango West Region, and one through a community tip-off in the Khomas Region. While law enforcement is achieving important successes, preliminary research indicates that larger volumes are being trafficked out of the country undetected. Protection in the field, through plant rangers and other mechanisms, is a pressing priority (see also p. 37).

The transnational timber trade continues to be dogged by corruption and poor enforcement of laws. Despite a 2018 moratorium on harvesting timber in Namibia (motivated by excessive exploitation), investigations have shown that illegal timber harvesting in Kavango East and West, as well as transboundary trafficking of timber, are ongoing. Issues include abuse of permit systems and complicit forestry officials, highlighting the need for refinement of the permit system and thorough audits of all existing timber stockpiles.

Charcoal production has skyrocketed in Namibia, with exports to dozens of countries reaching a total of more than 180 million kilogrammes in 2023¹. Between 2009 and 2023, the sector contributed more than N\$ 4 billion to foreign exchange earnings². Charcoal production provides thousands of jobs and is an important tool for dealing with

large scale bush encroachment³. The related firewood trade similarly caters for local consumption and export, with more than 28 million kilogrammes of firewood exported in 2023⁴. Unfortunately, the value of the industries entices illicit exploitation of wood resources, including protected camel thorn and mopane trees. Officials from MEFT and NAMPOL reported ongoing harvesting of mopane wood on private farms, despite a temporary suspension of all commercial harvesting of mopane for charcoal and firewood (the suspension was lifted during 2024 after negotiations with stakeholders). Investigations revealed that farmworkers often operate with inadequate supervision, cutting trees indiscriminately and contravening legal guidelines (for example, legislation prohibits cutting mopane trees with a diameter exceeding 18 cm without explicit authorisation). Monitoring of the sector remains limited, and current practices continue to result in illegal harvesting, placing a massive burden on Namibia's forest resources.

Harpagophytum species, commonly known as devil's claw, are indigenous Namibian plants with tubers that have medicinal properties, used in the treatment of arthritis and other ailments. Namibia is historically by far the largest global producer, although neighbouring countries are increasingly harvesting⁵. The legal trade in devil's claw is an important livelihood sector for rural Namibians⁶, but illegally harvested devil's claw is being laundered into legal markets. The extent of illegal harvesting is extremely difficult to assess. During 2024, only a single bag of dried tuber slices was seized.

The development of a Wood Identification & Screening Centre at the Namibian Police Forensic Science Institute, which has included training of personnel in the USA, has strengthened key forensic capacities. This will assist in verifying forest-product species and origins, and facilitate identification of illegal consignments.



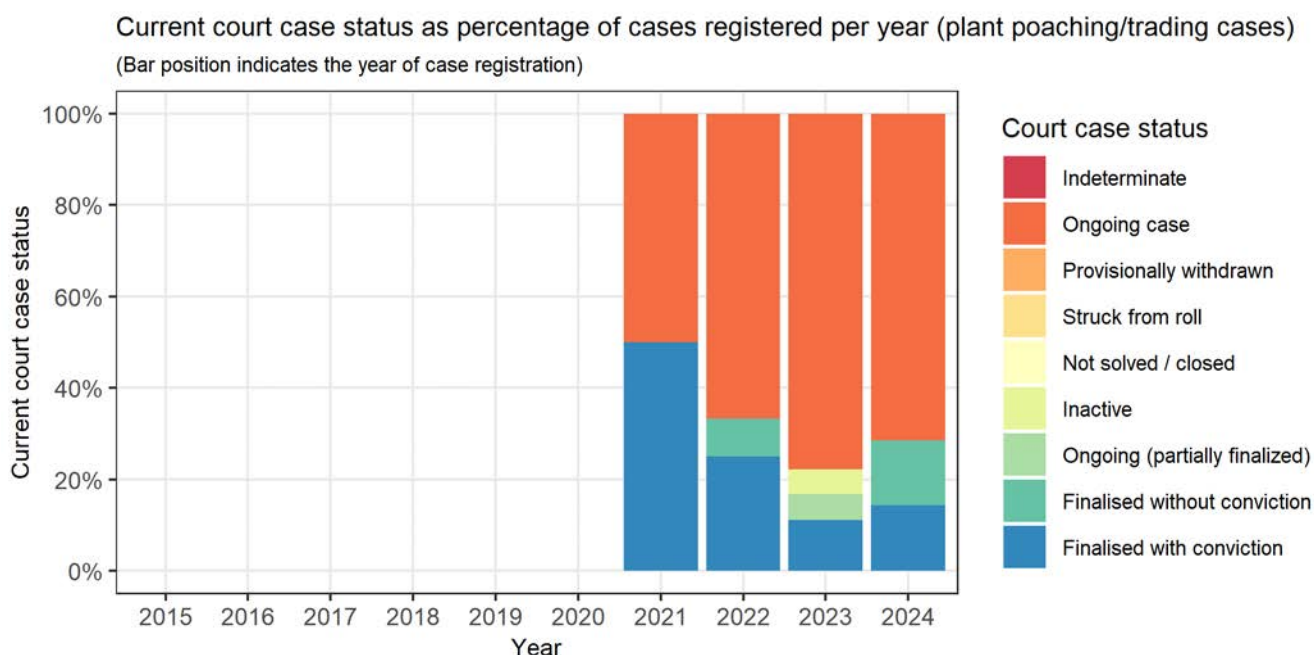
Illegal harvesting of wood for the Namibian charcoal and firewood sectors is widespread, and enforcement of laws is currently ineffective.



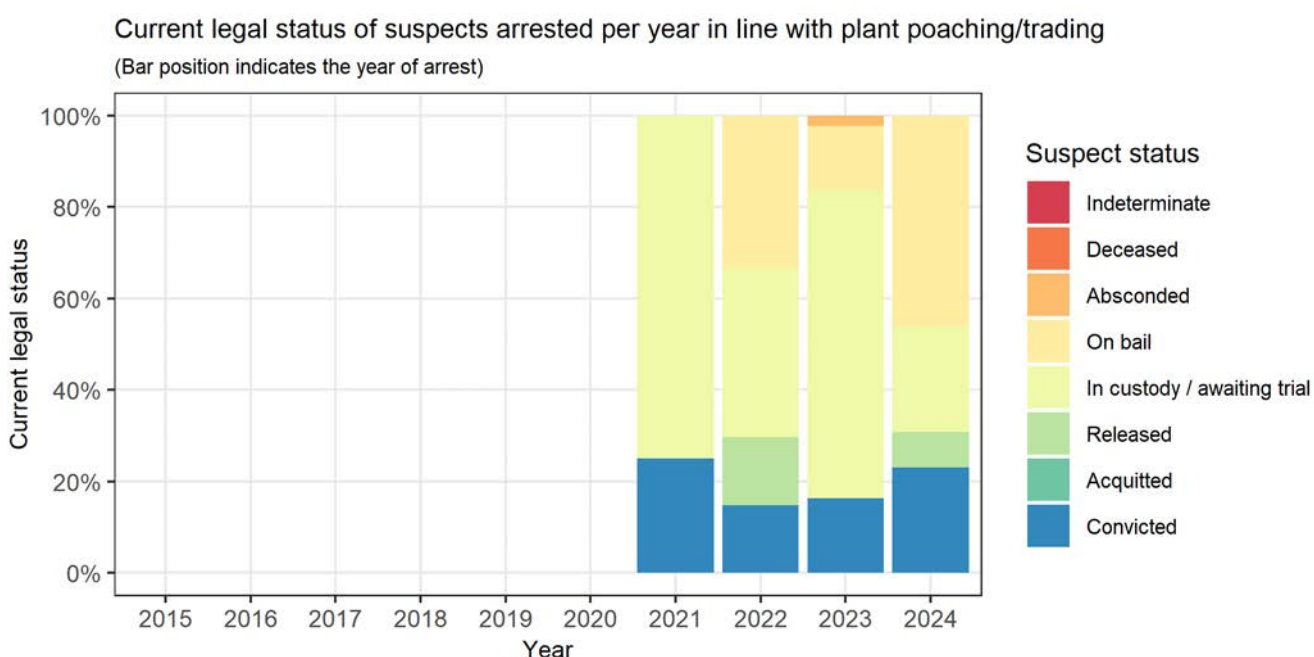
Current case and suspect status in plant cases

- **Current case status** (on 11 March 2025) shows that the first plant cases were only registered in 2021; of the seven cases registered in 2024, one had been finalised with convictions and one without convictions by 11 March 2025.
- **Current legal status of suspects** (on 11 March 2025) shows most suspects are currently on bail, or in custody awaiting trial.

14.4 CURRENT CASE STATUS (plants) [current status 11 March 2025]



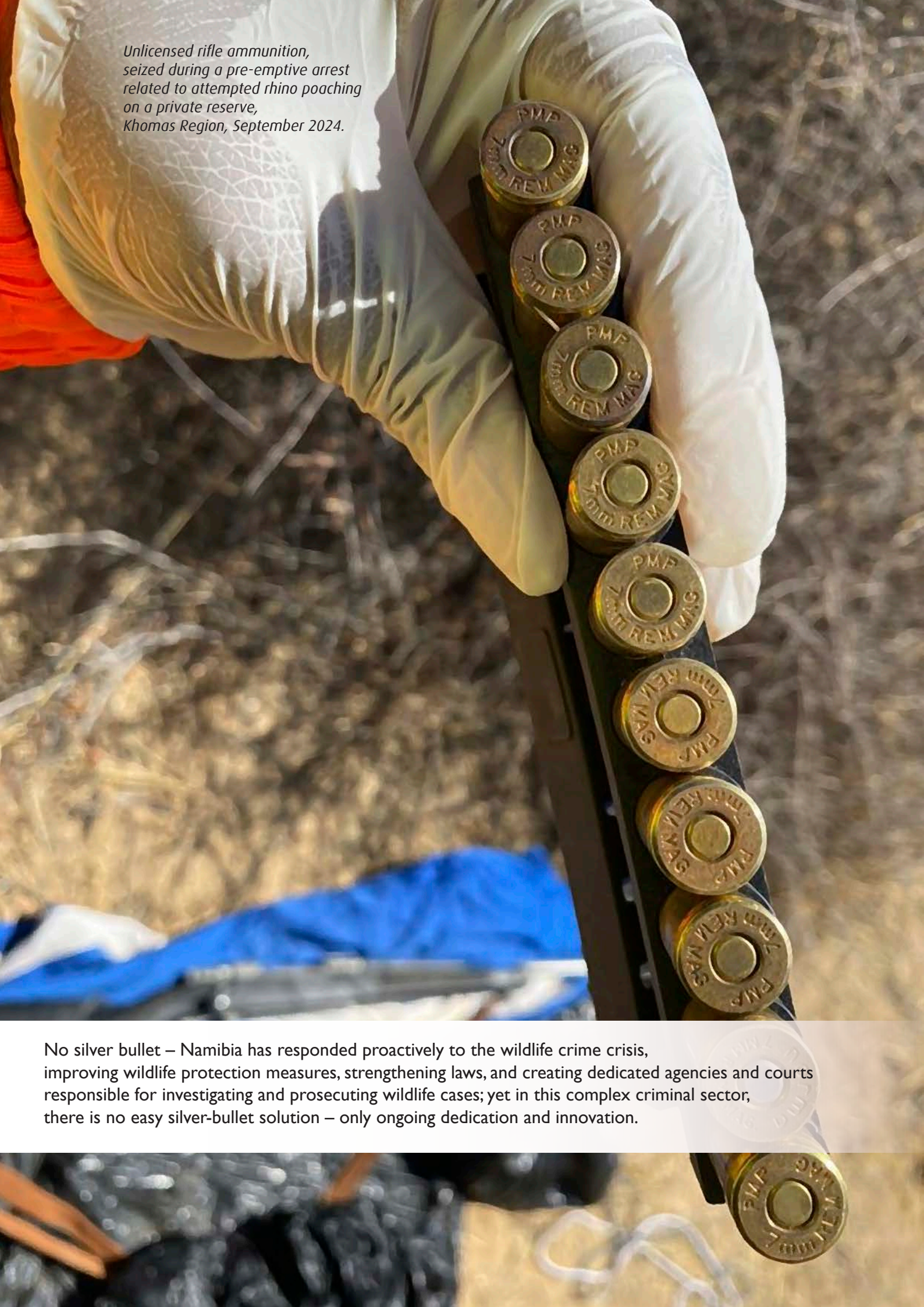
14.5 CURRENT LEGAL STATUS of SUSPECTS (plants) [current status 11 March 2025]



Illegally harvested timber continues to be laundered via legal stockpiles of timber harvested prior to the 2018 moratorium; shortcomings in forestry legislation, permit systems, inspections and law enforcement hamper effective control of the sector, resulting in ongoing depletion of resources.



*Timber stockpile
Kavango East Region, January 2024.*



*Unlicensed rifle ammunition,
seized during a pre-emptive arrest
related to attempted rhino poaching
on a private reserve,
Khomas Region, September 2024.*

No silver bullet – Namibia has responded proactively to the wildlife crime crisis, improving wildlife protection measures, strengthening laws, and creating dedicated agencies and courts responsible for investigating and prosecuting wildlife cases; yet in this complex criminal sector, there is no easy silver-bullet solution – only ongoing dedication and innovation.

An arrest is vital in apprehending a suspect in a crime – but the arrest only becomes truly meaningful once the perpetrator has received an appropriate penalty after being found guilty in a court of law. In every single year for the past decade, the number of suspects arrested for wildlife crimes has far exceeded the number of suspects convicted. Out of a total of 6,060 arrests since 2015, only 1,802 convictions have been achieved. Clearly this indicates shortcomings in securing incriminating evidence during investigations, in effectively proving guilt during prosecutions, in efficient case finalisation by the courts, and ultimately in delivering justice.

AT THE END OF 2024, OVER 1,700 WILDLIFE CASES WERE UNRESOLVED

The high number of unresolved wildlife crime cases in Namibia places a massive burden on all aspects of law enforcement and prosecution, on the judiciary, and on detention facilities.

At the end of 2024, 1,738 of the 2,845 wildlife crime cases registered since 2015 were unresolved. What has been done over the past ten years to improve the complex process of criminal investigations, prosecutions and case finalisations? What additional options exist to expedite law enforcement and judicial processes, and ensure the delivery of justice?

Arrests are only half the task

Identifying and charging the suspect(s) is the vital first step in delivering justice for a committed crime. Then begins the arduous task of securing sufficient incriminating evidence and preparing the case for trial. The ultimate aim of an arrest is to ensure a conviction with an appropriate sentence for the committed crime. To achieve this, investigations and prosecutions need to work closely together, and the courts must recognise the seriousness of the crime.

What's the point of prosecution?

Arrests are widely celebrated as ultimate successes, yet arrests of perpetrators are meaningless if they do not lead to appropriate sentences. The point of criminal prosecutions is to ensure justice is served, by demonstrating the guilt of charged suspects and convincing the court of a suitable sentence to fit the committed crime. While conviction rates in finalised cases were above 70% for all years since 2016, the rate of case finalisation has been far below the rate of case registration.

New agencies, more players, more challenges ...

The sudden, massive spike in wildlife crime from 2015 onwards motivated the creation of new government agencies dedicated to wildlife protection and law enforcement. NGOs, international funding partners, local communities and the private sector all sought to collaborate to counter the scourge. Yet after ten years the threat of wildlife crime remains undiminished. To compound matters, new challenges keep arising.

Strong laws and systems, ineffective application?

Namibia is known for innovative conservation approaches, and strong laws and systems, all of which were further strengthened in the wake of the 2015 and 2016 peaks in rhino and elephant poaching. Ten years later, crime prevalence and poaching losses remain high, particularly for rhino. Are the laws and systems being applied as effectively as they could be? What other innovations are needed to shift the balance in favour of conservation?

Special courts for special cases

In 2022, the Prosecutor General initiated proactive interventions to reduce the widening gap between registered and finalised wildlife crime cases. Special courts dedicated to wildlife cases were held in a number of priority locations for limited periods. These made substantial contributions to expediting case finalisation, yet only reduced the rate at which case backlogs were increasing, rather than reversing the ratio. Systemic changes are needed to truly address the issues.

Balancing the backlog, recognising the severity

The relentlessly increasing backlog of wildlife cases on court rolls motivated the establishment of a dedicated Environmental Crimes Court in Namibia, inaugurated during 2024. The court represents a major milestone that changes the Namibian wildlife crime sphere. In combination with targeted special courts and other initiatives, it should be possible to balance the backlog of cases – if the severity of wildlife crimes is fully recognised.



A2.1 Arrests are only half the task

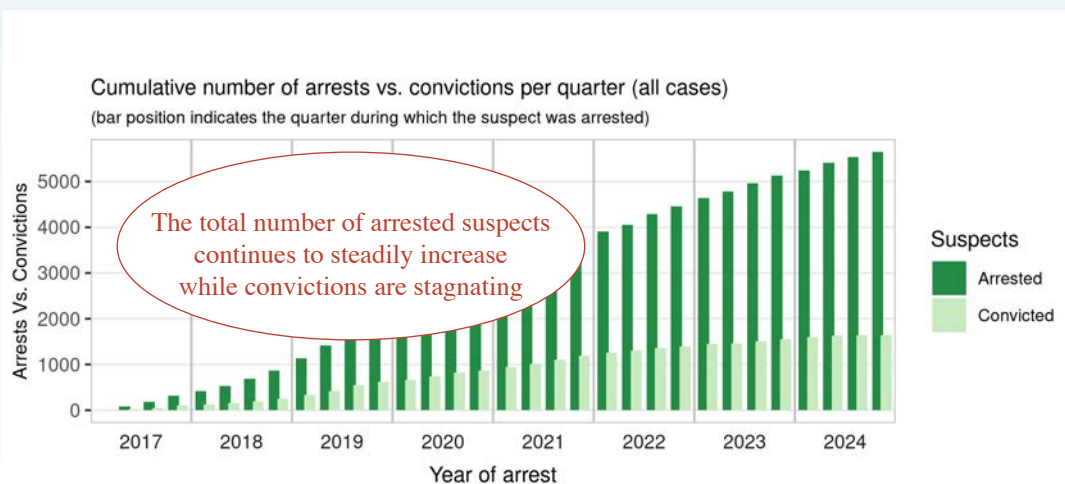
Catching the culprit is the foremost priority in a criminal case, but once this vital step has been achieved, the real work starts – ensuring sufficient evidence to convict the perpetrator with an appropriate penalty. Investigative techniques being used and charges being laid have evolved substantially in Namibia, as understanding of the complexity and far-reaching impacts of wildlife crime has grown. As crime continues to adapt, law enforcement will need to continue to evolve – with the clear and constant aim of delivering justice.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- It has taken time for Namibia to recognise the full complexity and far-reaching impacts of organised wildlife crime, and shortcomings continue to persist.
- Arrests are too often celebrated as the main success, when a guilty verdict with an appropriate penalty – and thus the delivery of justice – is the actual aim.
- Law enforcement tends to focus disproportionately on low-tier participants, many of whom are attempting to escape economic hardship; higher-tier participants, who are key drivers of crime, are often able to evade justice and enjoy copious proceeds of crime.
- Admissible evidence must be collected according to clear procedures; lack of incriminating evidence and procedural failures may result in dismissal of cases.
- The charges being laid against suspects do not always cover the full spectrum of infringements that have been committed; charges related to transgressions under POCA are particularly important.
- Criminal investigations and prosecutions are intricately interlinked, but are at times treated as separate domains under the mandate of different government agencies.
- Minor or inadvertent transgressions may not warrant charges or arrests; written warnings that avoid an unnecessary burden on the judiciary can be used more.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Namibian laws include a system of official warnings for inconsequential infringements that do not merit criminal charges; a nuanced approach to both the seriousness of contraventions and circumstances of accused during initial investigations, which differentiates between trivial transgressions and serious crimes, will facilitate ongoing community commitment to conservation and avoid overburdening courts with menial cases.
- Collaboration between investigators and prosecutors from case registration to finalisation enables holistic handling of incriminating evidence, applicable charges, follow-up investigations, opposition to bail applications, case presentation, and motivation of suitable penalties.
- Collaborative investigations involving all relevant agencies and focussing on the full spectrum of criminal transgressions, as well as the diverse proceeds of crime, are proving particularly effective in disrupting syndicates and high-tier participants.
- A focus on financial investigations and transgressions under POCA is elevating many cases, particularly related to rhino crimes and live-plant trafficking; a clear law enforcement distinction between organised crime and opportunistic or inadvertent transgressions is necessary to prioritise countercrime actions.



A2.2 What's the point of prosecution?

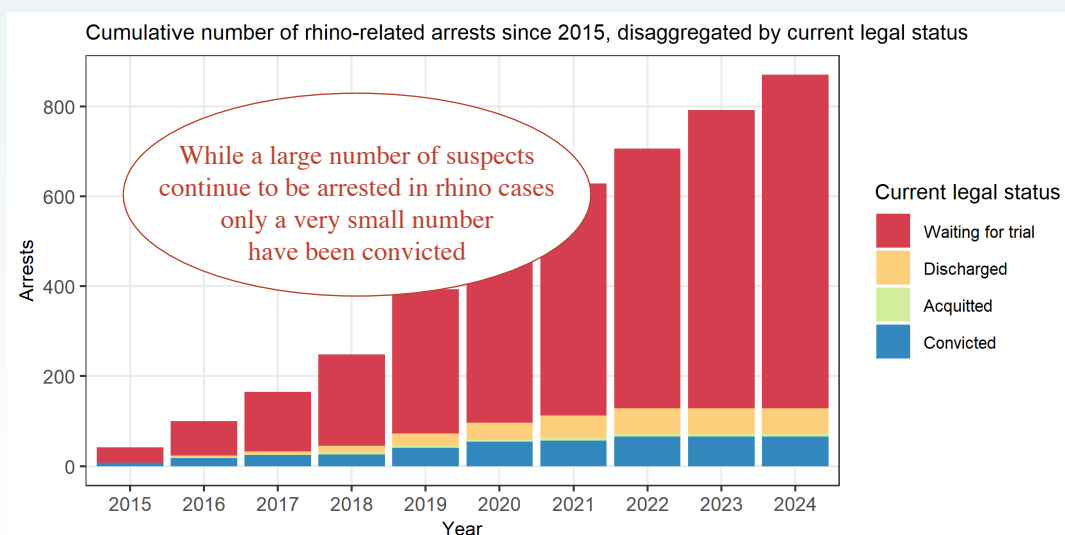
The fundamental aim of criminal proceedings is to prove the guilt of a perpetrator through prosecution in a court of law, to achieve a suitable sentence for a committed crime, and thus to deliver justice to the perpetrator and the victims. While a commendable number of suspects are being arrested for wildlife crimes, arrests are only the first step in enabling criminal proceedings against suspects. Prosecution, sentencing and case finalisation continue to present considerable challenges that need to be addressed.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- Successful prosecutions rely on presenting compelling evidence that an accused suspect has committed the crime for which they are charged, and convincing the court of a suitable penalty.
- Shortcomings during investigations may result in weak or inadmissible evidence, or poor case presentations.
- Systemic challenges in the judiciary often result in lengthy delays in court cases.
- Slow case finalisation, with suspects granted bail, is leading to high rates of rearrest; repeat arrestees are particularly common in rhino crimes.
- The ratio of registered to finalised cases lies at 2.5:1 for all wildlife cases; for rhino cases it is 7.5:1.
- Evidence in pre-emptive arrests in conspiracy-to-poach-rhino cases is circumstantial, as no rhino has yet been killed; Namibian legislation nonetheless treats the intent to commit an organised crime with the same seriousness as actually committing the crime; this is often not recognised by the courts during judgements.
- The final verdict in a case lies at the discretion of the court, yet the sentence must recognise the seriousness of the crime, the circumstances of the accused, and the interests of the public; different interpretations by the courts lead to substantial variations in sentences.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Aiming to prove guilt and achieve suitable sentences in all registered wildlife crime case will ensure focussed case preparation and finalisation, with actions including –
 - Identifying and arresting all suspects
 - Laying all applicable charges
 - Securing sufficient admissible incriminating evidence
 - Preparing the case for strong presentation in court
 - Prosecuting the suspect(s) to achieve a guilty verdict
 - Motivating appropriate penalties
 - Delivering justice to perpetrators and victims.
- Focussed case preparation and targeted special courts for rhino cases will improve rates of case finalisation.
- Denial of bail for known repeat arrestees and suspects presenting a risk of absconding will reduce recidivism.
- Sensitising investigators, prosecutors and judiciary to the POCA provision that intent to commit an organised crime should be treated with the same seriousness as committing the crime will ensure meaningful sentences in conspiracy-to-poach-rhino cases.
- Forfeitures of unexplained wealth through civil applications under POCA create a massive deterrent.
- Sensitising the judiciary to the full range of harms and impacts of wildlife crimes will facilitate appropriate and consistent sentencing.



A2.3 New agencies, more players, more challenges ...

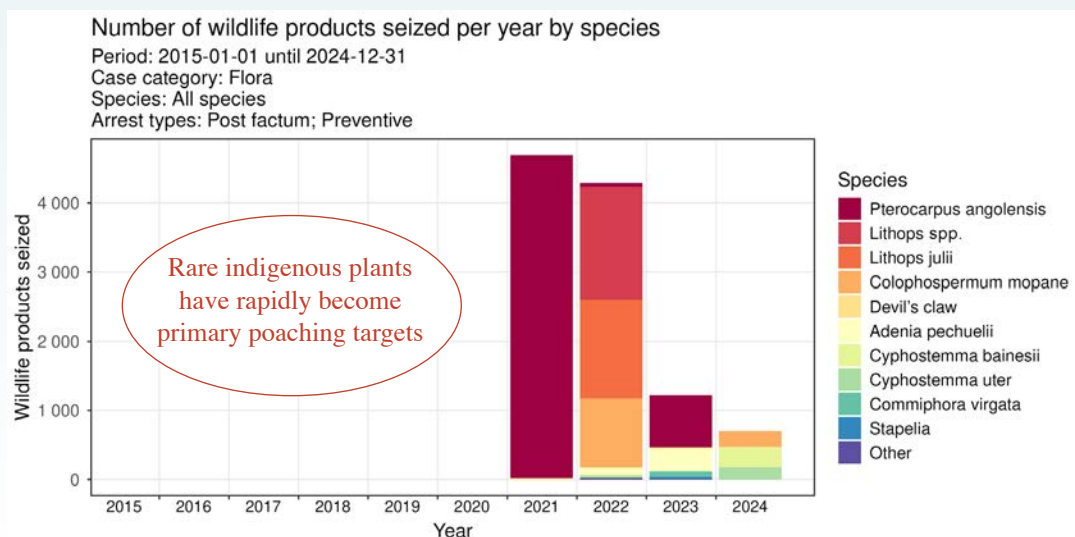
When the serious threat and dire impacts of high-value species poaching first hit Namibia, government created dedicated new agencies, and engaged in wide-ranging collaboration to deal more effectively with the crisis. Over the past two decades, environmental crime has escalated worldwide to become one of the largest global criminal sectors, alongside drugs, weapons, human trafficking and counterfeit crimes¹. Countermeasures have had limited effect, in Namibia and globally². New challenges keep arising.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- Namibian conservation and law enforcement agencies were not equipped to effectively counter the sudden escalation of rhino and elephant poaching in 2015–16.
- In response, government created the Wildlife Protection Services Division and Intelligence and Investigation Unit in MEFT and Environmental Crimes Unit in OPG; national security forces Joint Anti-poaching Units were deployed to key rhino and elephant ranges.
- Insufficient funding and technical support for active law enforcement presented a major initial obstacle, overcome by channelling flexible international funding through Rooikat Trust to mandated government agencies and Blue Rhino Task Team, an interagency collaboration between MEFT–IIU and NAMPOL–PRD.
- NGOs, funding partners, communities and private sector all engaged to help protect wildlife and counter poaching; newly created agencies and diverse role players took time to establish clear roles and responsibilities, yet soon began to achieve wide-ranging successes such as minimising elephant poaching and suppressing rhino and pangolin poaching.
- Yet despite ten years of active countercrime in Namibia, wildlife crime remains prevalent, with new sectors and challenges constantly arising.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Namibia has an excellent track record of interagency and intersectoral collaboration; BRTT is entrenched as the national focal point for high-value species crimes and coordinates collaboration with other agencies including PG–ECU, FIC, NamRA, ACC and NDF; this vital cooperation between dedicated international funding partners, a local NGO and Namibian government agencies continues to enable unique law enforcement fortification.
- New sectors and challenges, such as the extreme escalation of live-plant poaching and trafficking, and transgressions in the legal game-use sector, are being met with proactive responses; the Predator Task Team and Plant Task Team are playing important countercrime roles in these sectors.
- Countercrime initiatives must continually adapt to changing criminal targets, tactics and activities, and require ongoing financial and technical resources, particularly in the wildlife protection and law enforcement spheres, but also in parallel efforts to influence key drivers and markets of wildlife crime.
- Namibia's strong conservation systems and approaches must continue to provide a stable foundation for wildlife protection and law enforcement efforts.



A2.4 Strong laws and systems, effective application?

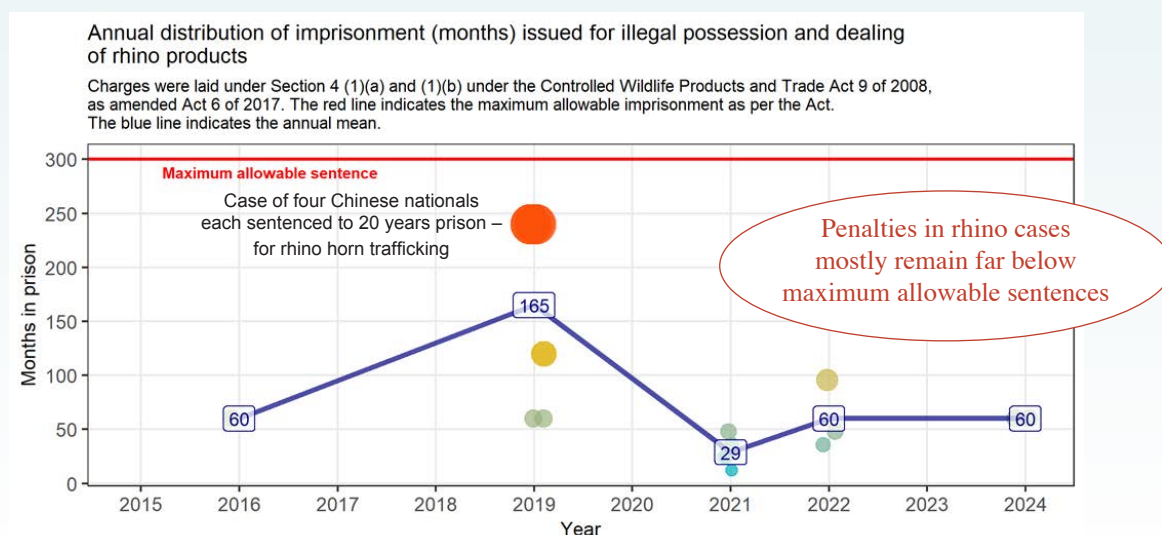
Namibian legislators swiftly strengthened laws and raised penalties to correspond to the seriousness of dramatically escalating rhino and elephant poaching – yet the revisions have not been duly applied over the past ten years. *Namibia's strong and innovative systems and approaches have long been considered a global example of effective conservation, with adaptation to changing circumstances an important component. Yet is implementation effective enough for the current onslaught of wildlife crime?*

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- Namibia has strong laws and conservation systems and approaches to protect most species of fauna and flora; laws and systems related to wild animals are stronger than those related to plants; to be meaningful, laws, systems and approaches must be successfully implemented, and must be adaptable to change.
- Namibian legislation enables limited ownership and sustainable use of resources, even of protected and specially protected species, according to clear monitoring, quota, permit and reporting requirements; this enables wide-ranging benefits from natural resources, but benefits do not always reach the people most affected by living in proximity to wildlife¹.
- Namibia revised laws in 2017 to correspond to the serious impacts of organised wildlife crime, yet the application of the revisions has been limited; one of the few sentences that came close to maximum penalties was reduced after an appeal in the High Court².
- Actual penalties for rhino crimes have mostly stayed far below maximum allowable sentences; some sentences in conspiracy-to-poach-rhino cases have been particularly lenient, and stand in stark contrast to the potential damage, as well as to the extensive law enforcement effort to save rhinos through pre-emptive interventions.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Management of forestry resources was the mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture until being shifted to the Ministry of Environment in 2020, enabling more holistic oversight over indigenous terrestrial resources.
- Forestry legislation is in the process of being revised to enable more effective management of use, and protection against illicit exploitation; this must include appropriate maximum penalties for forest crimes.
- Namibia has strong and innovative laws, systems and approaches regarding the sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of all Namibians, now and in the future, yet access to those resources – and benefits from them – must be made much more equitable, especially for communities living in proximity to wildlife.
- Maximum penalties for organised wildlife crimes need to be judiciously applied, particularly in relation to rhino crimes; penalties for high-tier participants must outweigh potential illicit gains to act as a strong deterrent.
- Appropriate penalties in conspiracy-to-poach-rhino cases are particularly important, and should be based on the POCA provision that the intent to commit an organised crime be treated with the same seriousness as committing the crime; this will also recognise the efforts of conservation and law enforcement personnel.



A2.5 Special courts for special cases

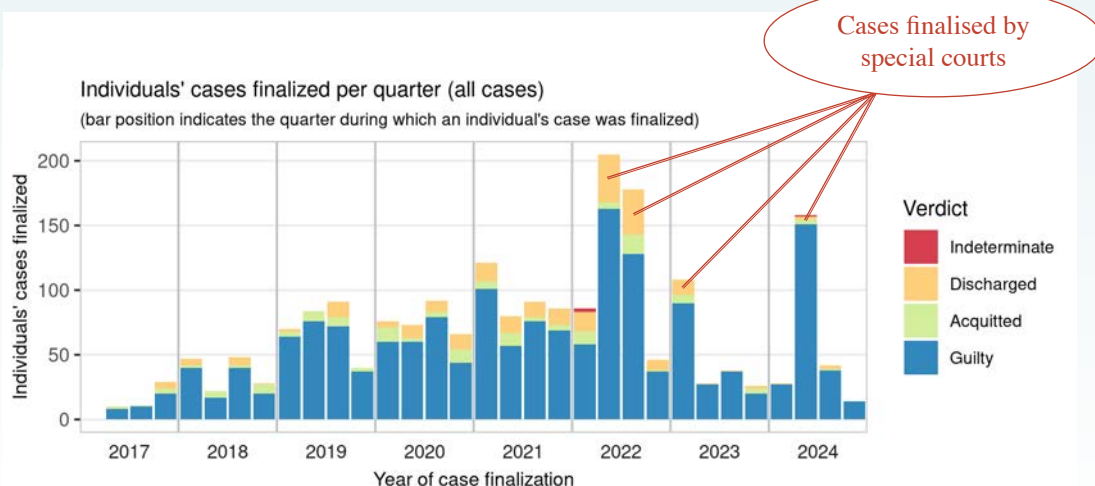
Burgeoning backlogs of wildlife cases on court rolls motivated an innovative measure – special courts dedicated to these cases in priority locations. The first special courts were held in Namibia during 2022. The month-long interventions in several locations delivered beyond expectations and proved that there are ways to enable swift case finalisation. While a permanent Environmental Crimes Court has since been inaugurated in Namibia, special courts are temporary, targeted interventions that can continue to be used in priority locations for key sectors.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- When a criminal sector escalates at the rate at which wildlife crime has in Namibia, the discrepancy between the number of criminal cases registered and the number of court cases finalised cannot be overcome through standard judicial processes.
- The very rapid escalation of registered cases in Namibia, from 70 in 2015 to 497 in 2019, was followed by a much slower increase in annually finalised cases, from 17 in 2015 to 248 in 2022; while registered cases have shown a steady decline over the past five years, annually finalised cases have also dropped considerably; this has resulted in 1,738 cases remaining unresolved at the end of 2024; as many wildlife cases involve the arrest of several suspects, the overall number of suspects awaiting finalisation of their cases is much higher.
- While special courts have been effective at swiftly finalising considerable numbers of cases in targeted locations, they have not been able to balance the ratio between registered and finalised cases, as substantial numbers of new cases continue to be registered each year.
- The finalisation of cases related to rhino crimes represents a particularly pressing current challenge regarding both case finalisation and crime deterrence.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- Namibia is known for proactive, innovative interventions and the special courts initiated by the Prosecutor General in response to the massive backlog of wildlife cases on court rolls represents another pertinent example.
- The special courts held over the past three years have proven extremely effective at reducing court-case backlogs in the targeted locations; even though a dedicated Environmental Crimes Court has been established and is now active, continuing with targeted special courts will help address build-ups of wildlife cases on court rolls wherever these occur.
- To balance the ratio of registered to finalised cases, clear targets should be set, such as ensuring that as many cases are finalised as are registered in any year to avoid increases in the backlog, while special courts are used to finalise an additional number of older cases (e.g. finalising an additional ± 200 older cases per year would allow the backlog to be cleared over ± 10 years).
- Holding special courts dedicated to complex rhino cases can ensure that these are finalised in a timely manner, while also ensuring that appropriate sentences are imposed in order to create a strong deterrent for rhino crimes.



A2.6 Balancing the backlog, recognising the severity

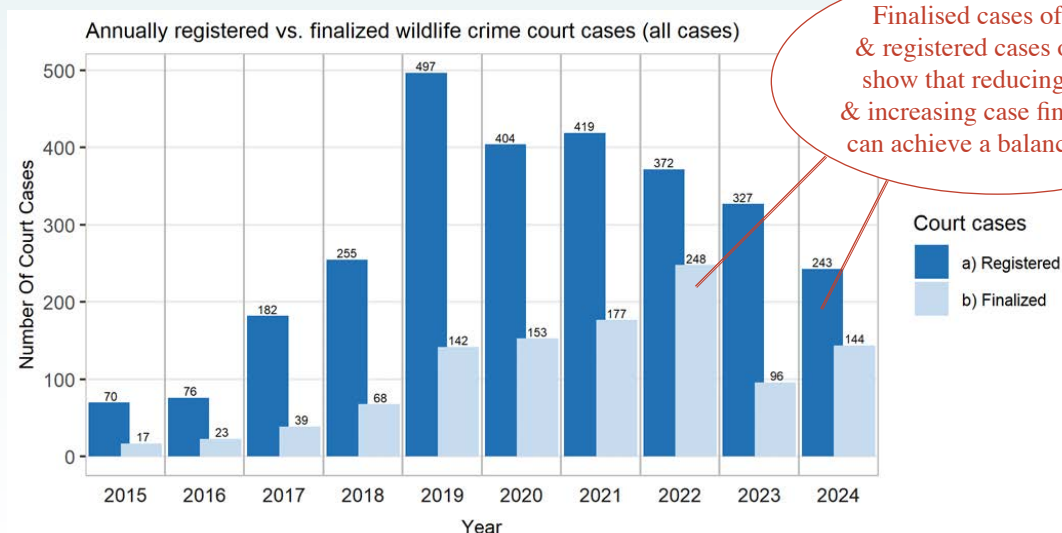
When more than twice as many criminal cases are registered as are finalised in any given year, a fundamental change is needed – Namibia has responded with a dedicated Environmental Crimes Court, only the second such court in Africa. The court is another milestone in Namibia's dedication to safeguard its natural resources. In combination with many other interventions, this can turn the tide of unresolved cases, while ensuring that the seriousness of each transgression is duly recognised with an appropriate sentence.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- The sudden escalation of wildlife crime in Namibia from 2015 onwards was met with a determined law enforcement response, which quickly led to numerous cases and arrests; dealing with the rapidly increasing number of court cases was an unforeseen challenge, one that is still not overcome ten years later.
- Once suspects have been identified, arrests and criminal case registration are rapid procedures; securing evidence, opposing bail applications, presenting cases in court, allowing for defence, witness availability, translators, etc. can be long, drawn-out processes.
- More cases continue to be registered than finalised each year, while 2022 and 2024 saw a considerable number of cases finalised by special courts, less than 100 cases were finalised in 2023.
- Temporary special courts have been effective in reducing backlogs in key locations; creating a permanent court dedicated to a sector that may not be a priority for a large part of the population is not a simple task; Namibia has promptly achieved it, and with it the parameters for balancing case registration and finalisation.
- The particular seriousness of each case must be duly recognised, and an appropriate sentence delivered, even when cases are rapidly finalised.

WHAT ACTIONS MIGHT HELP?

- In simple cases, it is possible to proceed to trial and arrive at a verdict without delays or postponements; with sufficient will, a large percentage of wildlife cases is straightforward enough to enable rapid case finalisation.
- The wildlife protection and law enforcement actions of the past five years induced a reduction in registered cases from close to 500 in 2019 to half that number in 2024; through special courts held in 2022, almost 250 cases could be finalised in one year, demonstrating that the ratio of registered to finalised cases can be balanced through strategic, integrated interventions.
- A tiered, coordinated approach to wildlife cases that –
 - prioritises complex cases, such as those involving rhino syndicates, through the Environmental Crimes Court
 - reduces large court case backlogs through targeted special courts
 - and lets lower courts handle simple casescan balance the backlog and registration-finalisation ratio.
- A thorough understanding of the complexity of wildlife crime harms and impacts will enable courts to deliver appropriate verdicts based on the seriousness of the crimes, the circumstances of the accused, and the interests of society.



15. EMERGING WILDLIFE CRIME SECTORS – TRENDS 2024

15.1 PLANT POACHING AND TRAFFICKING – no longer emerging but rapidly expanding

Over the past three years, poaching of succulent plants has exploded in Namibia. In a parallel to rhino poaching, which had been rampant in South Africa before suddenly escalating in Namibia, poaching of endemic succulents was prevalent in the neighbouring state for several years, before being uncovered in Namibia. In 2022, several thousand poached *Lithops* specimens of several species were seized in southern Namibia. In 2023, elephant's foot (*Adenia pechuelii*) was the primary target with over 300 specimens seized, while in 2024, over 400 kobas plants (*Cyphostemma bainesii* and *C. uter*) were seized. Each year, other species also featured in seizures, but not in comparable quantities. This raises the question whether poachers and local traffickers

are instructed to fill existing orders for particular species being promoted via online ornamental plant markets.

The high numbers of specimens of individual species being poached make these plants by far the most targeted and trafficked species in Namibia. Most of the plants are adapted to desert environments, are extremely slow growing, rare, and have confined ranges. They are thus particularly vulnerable to rapid extinction.

While law enforcement efforts related to live-plant trafficking have achieved excellent results, protection of the plants in the field, appropriate legislation that enables deterrent sentences, and international protection through CITES listing are needed to minimise criminal exploitation.

15.2 THE GREY LINES BETWEEN THE LEGAL AND ILLEGAL – an ever-present issue

Namibia has an active policy of sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations. The legal utilisation of all natural resources is controlled through a detailed system of resource monitoring, usage quotas, user permits and user reporting. Yet legal industries have grey areas, where legal and illegal activities are blurred, or where illegally acquired products are laundered into legal markets. In Namibia the timber, firewood, charcoal, devil's claw, game-meat, live game, trophy shooting, and seal product sectors have all been prone to illicit activities under legal guises. During 2024, criminal cases were registered in most of these sectors, some of which received high-profile media coverage.

The trophy shooting industry continued to elicit illegal activities related to leopards. The extremely high value of the elusive cats as hunting trophies has induced transgressions that led to a number of arrests, some of which were covered extensively in the media. Investigations into the use of forest resources confirmed that illegally harvested timber continues to be laundered into legal consignments, while legal firewood and charcoal production are being augmented with illegal wood. A substantial consignment of seal penises without the required permits was intercepted by customs officials. All of these sectors have legal quotas based on monitoring and reporting. Illegal activity will not be tolerated.

15.3 SECTORS GOING UNNOTICED?

A number of wildlife crime sectors are known to be globally significant, but are currently not receiving due protection and law enforcement attention in Namibia.

Reptiles made up 19% amongst the most-seized product categories globally in recent years¹. Namibia is home to many rare and endemic reptiles that are of great interest to collectors, with other species prized for their skins. While smuggled Namibian reptiles have been intercepted in Europe, few seizures have taken place in Namibia. The reptiles currently featuring in seizure data are tortoises kept locally, pythons killed for skins, and monitor lizards killed for food.

The lion bone trade is a recognised global issue, with problematic input from South Africa's legal breeding

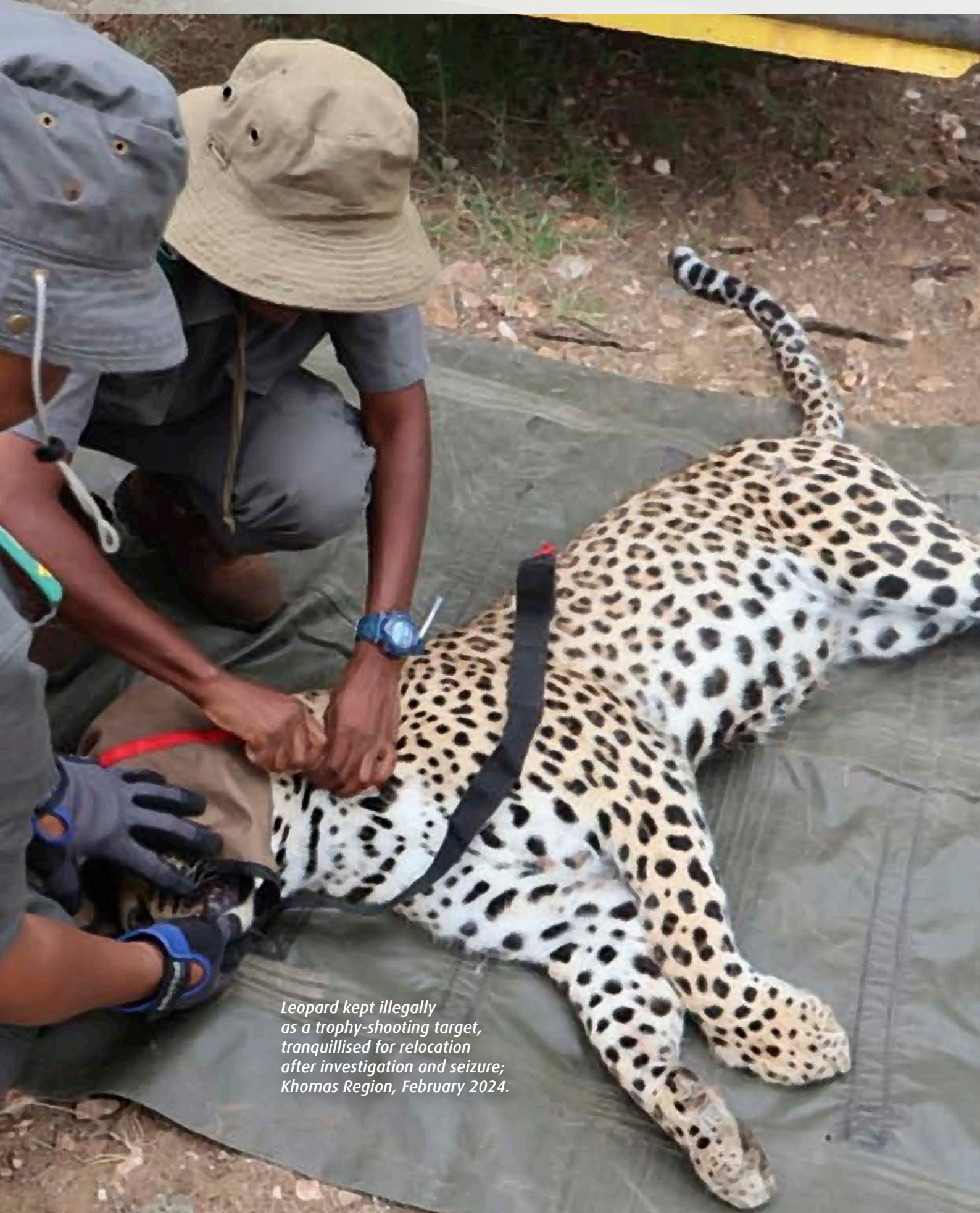
operations of captive lions². Occasional seizures in Namibia indicate that some lion bones are being prepared for trade. Though current quantities are small, it is important to monitor this sector.

Current pangolin trafficking appears to be limited to local sales, yet the possibility that transboundary trafficking is taking place unnoticed should not be ignored.

The massive expansion of criminal activity related to Namibia's natural resources is severely straining conservation and law-enforcement capacities, with the result that not all sectors or aspects of concern are presently receiving due attention. It is thus important that additional capacities are created to deal with emerging or unrecognised spheres.



The legal conservation-hunting industry is a vital component of sustainable wildlife economies in Namibia; unfortunately the high value of hunting trophies is enticing widespread transgressions, particularly related to the strictly legislated shooting of leopards.



*Leopard kept illegally
as a trophy-shooting target,
tranquillised for relocation
after investigation and seizure;
Khomas Region, February 2024.*

A3. UNDERSTANDING AND USING WILDLIFE CRIME DATA

For many decades, the Namibian environmental sector has fostered a culture of monitoring, data gathering and data interpretation, which ultimately enables informed and adaptive management. In keeping with these aims, wildlife crime data has been gathered by various agencies for many years, although in the past the information was not consistently aggregated as one national dataset.

The unprecedented surge in targeted, well-organised wildlife crime over the past decade motivated a variety of urgent countermeasures. This included initiatives to ensure comprehensive, coordinated data gathering and analysis. The idea of one national Integrated Wildlife Crime Database of Namibia was first conceived in 2018. Its focussed development began in 2019 and first outputs were achieved during that year. By the beginning of 2020, consistent outputs were being generated.

A focussed effort was made to aggregate and enter disparate historical datasets, reaching as far back as 2009, into the integrated database. While it is recognised that there are some data gaps in some of the early data, particularly regarding cases of meat poaching, the gaps are considered inconsequential.

Data is now collected from all regions of Namibia via the regional police stations, regional prosecutor offices and regional MEFT offices. In some instances, it may take time to collect and enter all regional data. This may lead to minor data discrepancies between weekly, monthly and annual reports. The data of annual reports always supersedes that of other periodical reports.

All the separately collected data from the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (wildlife data), the Namibian Police Force (law-enforcement data) and the Office of the Prosecutor General (prosecution data) is aggregated and entered into the integrated database. All data is carefully verified to avoid duplication. A wide range of comprehensive, streamlined data is now available for various applications. The primary aim of the database is to enable detailed analyses of various aspects of wildlife crime dynamics in Namibia.

The database provides superb analytical capabilities, such as identifying links between known suspects/perpetrators, firearms, crime scenes and wildlife carcasses; identifying the most-targeted species and areas of crime prevalence; and evaluating the nationalities of perpetrators. Trends over time can

be analysed in any category, and data can be mapped geographically to identify hotspots and gaps. All of this enables investigators to work strategically, based on reliable information.

The compiled data includes:

- registered wildlife crime cases
- wildlife mortalities caused by poaching
- seized wildlife products
- seized firearms
- seized vehicles
- arrests
 - nationality of suspects
 - relevant charges
 - targeted species
- areas of crime prevalence
- status and outcome of registered court cases
- legal status of suspects

The complexity of wildlife crime webs, connected via a myriad of local, national and international cohorts, requires detailed, in-depth investigations. These cannot be based on hunches or conjecture, but instead require systematic analyses of all available information. The database enables some of these analyses. It also helps investigators to focus their attention on priority areas, cases and suspects, and thus enables optimal use of limited resources.

The database can generate automated reports for different target audiences 'at the push of a button'. Internal reports are issued to law-enforcement agencies and relevant stakeholders to assist in the strategic allotment of funding, personnel and other resources.

The database has also enabled the MEFT and NAMPOL to issue detailed weekly wildlife crime reports to the media, which have formed the basis of media reporting on wildlife crime since 2019. With this, government is demonstrating its commitment to transparency and accountability.

The Integrated Wildlife Crime Database of Namibia is today the official national database for all data related to wildlife crime. The related Integrated Case Tracker of the OPG allows for detailed analysis and reporting of prosecution bottlenecks, and enables data-driven decisions to address the causes of such bottlenecks. Development of the database and related applications are ongoing. New features are added as new information and new technologies become available.



A4. IMPORTANT NOTES ON INTERPRETING NAMIBIAN WILDLIFE CRIME DATA

Please read these notes carefully to avoid misinterpretation of information:

1. Wildlife crime statistics are compiled on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis. They are generated at a given point in time from data which is continuously updated on a daily 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 with the MEFT.
6. Unless specifically noted otherwise, the number of elephants and rhinos recorded as poached in a particular reporting period 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 equally 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. Reported numbers of animals poached always constitute a minimum.
7. Statistics of registered cases related to the discovery of carcasses of poached rhinos are based on the date of discovery of the carcass, even when the carcass is very old and the poaching loss is assigned to a previous reporting period. This means that the number of cases of carcasses discovered in a particular reporting period may be much higher than the number of poaching losses assigned to the same period. As a considerable number of carcasses of poached rhinos are discovered without an arrest or seizure related to them being made, cases of carcass discovery are included in some data to reflect accurate overall case numbers.
8. Many wildlife crime cases involve complex investigations, often over longer periods of time, which may or may not lead to the arrest of suspects.
9. Suspects can only be charged with an offence if there is clear, prima facie evidence against them, which can be used in a court of law.
10. 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.
11. 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 the alleged offence.
12. Follow-up investigations may lead to the additional seizure of firearms used in particular poaching cases, or other illegal firearms kept by the suspects. This may in turn lead to new cases being registered.
13. 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.
14. Illegal wildlife products are regularly smuggled into Namibia from neighbouring countries, either for attempted sale in Namibia, or in transit to other destinations.
15. 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. This may in turn lead to new cases being registered.
16. 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). Cases involving several suspects may be separated into multiple court cases, which can result in differences between the number of registered cases and court cases.
17. Information on active cases is often extremely sensitive and can not be released to the public, as this would jeopardise investigations. All information that can be released will be made readily available to the public on request.



A5. LIST OF CURRENT PARTNERS

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.

Government

- Anti-Corruption Commission
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water & Land Reform
- Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs
 - Namibian Defence Force
- Ministry of Environment, Forestry & Tourism
 - Directorate of Forestry
 - National Botanical Research Institute of Namibia
 - Directorate of Wildlife & National Parks
 - Wildlife Protection Services Division
 - Intelligence & Investigation Unit
 - Game Products Trust Fund
- Ministry of Finance and Social Grants Management
 - Financial Intelligence Centre
 - Namibia Revenue Agency
 - Directorate of Customs & Excise
- Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety & Security
 - Namibian Police Force
 - Directorate of Criminal Investigations
 - Protected Resources Division
 - Protected Resources Subdivisions
 - Stock Theft Subdivisions
 - Criminal Investigation Units
- Ministry of Justice and Labour Relations
 - Office of the Attorney-General
 - Office of the Prosecutor General
 - Environmental Crimes Unit
 - Money-Laundering Unit
 - Asset Forfeiture Unit

NGO umbrella organisations

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

Non-government organisations

- African Wildlife Conservation Trust
- Integrated Rural Development & Nature Conservation
- Intelligence Support Against Poaching

- Legal Assistance Centre
- Namibia Animal Rehabilitation, Research & Education Centre
- Namibia Nature Foundation
- Pangolin Conservation and Research Foundation
- Rooikat Trust
- Save the Rhino Trust
- WWF In Namibia

International NGOs and funding agencies

- Bureau of International Narcotics & Law Enforcement Affairs, USA
- Global Environment Facility
- Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
- TRAFFIC
- United States Agency for International Development
- United States Department of Agriculture - Forest Service
- 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 & conservation-hunting industries

The government welcomes all constructive stakeholder engagement. 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.



A6. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission	ML	money laundering
AG	Attorney-General	MJLR	Ministry of Justice and Labour Relations
AML	anti-money-laundering	NAC	Namibia Airports Company
APU	Anti-poaching unit	NACSO	Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations
AWCT	African Wildlife Conservation Trust	NAMPOL	Namibian Police Force
BRCP	Black Rhino Custodianship Programme	NAMPORT	Namibian Ports Authority
BRTT	Blue Rhino Task Team	NamRA	Namibia Revenue Agency
CCPCJ	Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	NAPHA	Namibia Professional Hunting Association
CFT	combating the financing of terrorism	NARREC	Namibia Animal Rehabilitation, Research and Education Centre
CID	Criminal Investigations Directorate, NAMPOL	NBRI	National Botanical Research Institute of Namibia, MEFT
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora	NCE	Namibian Chamber of Environment
CPA	Criminal Procedure Act	NDF	Namibian Defence Force
CR	Crime Register	NGO	Non-government organisation
ECC	Environmental Crimes Court of Namibia, officially 'Otjiwarongo Magistrates Court for Environmental Crimes'	NNF	Namibia Nature Foundation
ECU	Environmental Crimes Unit (Office of the PG)	NPFSI	Namibian Police Forensic Science Institute
ENP	Etosha National Park	N–PaEC	Namibian Partnerships against Environmental Crime
ESAAMLG	Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group	OPG	Office of the Prosecutor General
FIC	Financial Intelligence Centre	OOJ	Office of the Judiciary
FT	financing of terrorism	PCRF	Pangolin Conservation and Research Foundation
GEF	Global Environment Facility	PG	Prosecutor General
GPTF	Game Products Trust Fund, MEFT	PG–ACU	Prosecutor-General Anti-corruption Unit
ICWC	International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime	PG–ECU	Prosecutor General's Environmental Crimes Unit
IG	Inspector General (Namibian Police Force)	POCA	Prevention of Organised Crimes Act
IIU	Intelligence and Investigation Unit, MEFT	PRD	Protected Resources Division, NAMPOL
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, USA	PRSD	Protected Resources Sub-Division, NAMPOL (regional)
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization	SADC	Southern African Development Community
IRDNC	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation	SMART	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
ISAP	Intelligence Support Against Poaching	SRT	Save the Rhino Trust
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
IWCD-N	Integrated Wildlife Crime Database of Namibia	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
IWT	illegal wildlife trade	USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
JAPU	Joint Anti-Poaching Unit	WCO	World Customs Organisation
K9	Dog units, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism	WISC	Wood Identification and Screening Centre
KAZA	Kavango–Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area	WPSD	Wildlife Protection Services Division, MEFT
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau	WWF	World Wildlife Fund
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre		
LEA	law-enforcement agency		
MAFWLR	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform		
MEFT	Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism		
MEFT–IIU	MEFT Intelligence and Investigation Unit		
MEFT–K9	Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism Dog Units		
MHAIS	Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security		
MDVA	Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs		
MFSGM	Ministry of Finance and Social Grants Management		



A7. NOTES AND REFERENCES

The information in this report is based on data compiled via the Integrated Wildlife Crime Database of Namibia, as well as related first-hand information and observations by personnel from the BRTT, MEFT, NAMPOL and OPG. Additional sources of information as indicated by the references throughout the report are listed below.

4.1 The year 2024

1. **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.** 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 11. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
2. **Bank of Namibia.** 2025. *Bank of Namibia Annual Report 2024*, p. 7. Bank of Namibia, Windhoek.
3. **Smit, E.** 2024. Droughts more and more frequent in Namibia – Shifeta. *Namibian Sun* Accessed 20 June 2025 <<https://www.namibiansun.com/environment/droughts-more-and-more-frequent-in-Namibia---Shifeta2024-12-09142968>> Namibia Media Holdings, Windhoek.
4. **Dlamini, M.** 2024. Tourism sees record occupancy in 2024, *The Namibian*, 22 January 2025. Free Press of Namibia, Windhoek.

4.2 Status of fundamental pillars

1. **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.** 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 12. Vienna: United Nations Publications.

4.3 Status of key species

1. **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.** 2022. *Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties; Panama City (Panama), 14 – 25 November 2022; The Status of Africa's Elephants and Updates on Issues Relevant to Cites*, p. 6. CITES Secretariat, Geneva.
see also:
Bussi re, E.M.S. et al. 2023. *KAZA Elephant Survey 2022, Volume I: Results and Technical Report*, p. 105. KAZA TFCA Secretariat, Kasane, Botswana
2. **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.** 2022. *Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties; Panama City (Panama), 14 – 25 November 2022; Species specific matters, Rhinoceroses (Rhinocerotidae Spp.)*, p. 3. CITES Secretariat, Geneva.
see also:
International Rhino Foundation. 2024 *State of the Rhino Report*, p. 6. International Rhino Foundation, Fort Worth.

5.3 Events

1. **SMART.** 2021. *SMART technology transforms conservation at over 1,000 of the world's most important biodiversity sites*. Accessed 19.06.2025. <www.smartconservationtools.org/en-us/News/All-Articles/ID/4/>. SMART, New York

6.1 Investigations and arrests

1. **Stinson, P.M. et al.** 2016. *Police Integrity Lost: A Study of Law Enforcement Officers Arrested*. Research Report, United States Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.
2. **International Criminal Police Organization.** 2022 *INTERPOL Global Crime Trend Summary Report*, p. 4. INTERPOL, Lyon.
see also:
Government of the Republic of Namibia. 2021. *Detailed Report: National Money Laundering, Terrorist and Proliferation Financing Risk Assessment; Period Jan' 2015 – Dec' 2019*, p. 142. GRN, Windhoek.

6.3 Targeted species

1. **Denker, H.** 2025. Personal communication, based on informal interviews with numerous stakeholders on communal and freehold land across many parts of Namibia.
2. **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.** 2022. *Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties; Panama City (Panama), 14 – 25 November 2022; Species specific matters, Rhinoceroses (Rhinocerotidae Spp.)*, p. 3. CITES Secretariat, Geneva.
see also:
International Rhino Foundation. 2024 *State of the Rhino Report*, p. 6. International Rhino Foundation, Fort Worth.
3. *Ibid.*
4. **Mannheimer, C.A. & Curtis, B.A.** (eds). 2018. *Le Roux and M ller's Field Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of Namibia*. 2nd ed. Namibia Publishing House, Windhoek.

7.1 Organised wildlife crime

1. **International Rhino Foundation.** 2024 *State of the Rhino Report*, p. 6. International Rhino Foundation, Fort Worth.

11.3 Seizures (pangolin)

1. **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.** 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 17. Vienna: United Nations Publications.

12. Elephant poaching and trafficking trends 2015–2024

1. **Centre for Advanced Defence Studies.** 2024. *Intercepted: Using Seizure Data to Evaluate Trends in Elephant Ivory and Rhino Horn Trafficking*, p. 9. C4ADS, Washington D.C.

13.3 Seizures (rhinos)

1. **Centre for Advanced Defence Studies.** 2024. *Intercepted: Using Seizure Data to Evaluate Trends in Elephant Ivory and Rhino Horn Trafficking*, p. 10. C4ADS, Washington D.C.

15.3 Sectors going unnoticed?

1. **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.** 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 14. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
2. **Elwin, A. et al.** 2024. Under the lion's paw: lion farming in South Africa and the illegal international bone trade. *Nature Conservation* 56 (2024), pp. 1–17. doi.org/10.3897/natureconservation.56.124555. Pensoft Publishers, Sofia.

A1. Special focus: Ten years of crisis-level poaching in Namibia

1. **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.** 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 11. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
2. **International Rhino Foundation.** 2024 *State of the Rhino Report*, p. 6. International Rhino Foundation, Fort Worth.
3. **Prinsloo, D. et al.** 2024. A succulent trade: the illegal and legal trade in succulent flora stemming from South Africa, p. 11. TRAFFIC International, Cambridge.
4. **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.** 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 226. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
5. **Kavango–Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area Secretariat.** 2019. *Strategic planning framework for the conservation and management of elephants in KAZA TFCA*. KAZA Elephant Survey, KAZA TFCA Secretariat, Kasane.
6. **Lindsey, P. et al.** 2013. The bushmeat trade in African savannas: Impacts, drivers, and possible solutions. *Biological Conservation* 160 (2013), pp. 80–96. Elsevier, Amsterdam.
7. **van Schalkwyk, D. et al.** 2010. The Contribution of Wildlife to Sustainable Natural Resource Utilization in Namibia: A review. *Sustainability* 2010, 2, pp. 3479–3499. MDPI, Basel.
8. **Denker, H.** 2024. Law enforcement alone will not end wildlife crime, *Conservation and the Environment in Namibia* 2024, pp. 58–63. Venture Media, Windhoek.

A1.1 Protecting the last of the rhinos – clich  or crisis?

1. **International Rhino Foundation.** 2024 *State of the Rhino Report*, p. 6. International Rhino Foundation, Fort Worth.
2. *Ibid.*

A1.2 Succulent plants under siege

1. **H bschle, A. et al.** 2025. South Africa's rare succulent plants are threatened by illegal trade – how to stop it, Accessed 19.06.2025. <www.theconversation.com/south-africa-s-rare-succulent-plants-are-threatened-by-illegal-trade-how-to-stop-it-244670> *The Conversation*. The Conversation Africa, Johannesburg

A1.3 Poaching and the pangolin – an immeasurable challenge

1. **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.** 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 226. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
see also:
Wildlife Justice Commission. 2025. *Disruption and Disarray: An analysis of pangolin scale and ivory trafficking, 2025–2024*. WJC, The Hague.
2. **Office of the Prosecutor General.** 2023. *Report on the Special Courts Dedicated to Wildlife Offences; Part 1: Katima Mulilo, Rundu, Okahao and Outapi Magistrate's Courts, April & September 2022*. OPG, Windhoek.
3. **Gupta, S. et al.** 2022. Role of the Pangolin i Origin of SARS-CoV-2: An Evolutionary Perspective. *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* (2022), 23, 9115. doi.org/10.3390/ijms23169115. MDPI, Basel.

A1.4 Elephants and ivory – a Namibian dilemma

1. **Denker, H.** 2021. *Namibia Nature Parks*, pp. 152, 206–207, 209, 213. Gondwana Collection Namibia, Windhoek.
2. **Bussi re, E. et al.** 2023. *KAZA Elephant Survey 2022, Volume I: Results and Technical Report*, p. 105. KAZA TFCA Secretariat, Kasane, Botswana
3. **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.** 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, pp. 197–206. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
4. **Wildlife Justice Commission.** 2025. *Disruption and Disarray: An analysis of pangolin scale and ivory trafficking, 2025–2024*, p. 29. WJC, The Hague.
5. **Centre for Advanced Defence Studies.** 2024. *Intercepted: Using Seizure Data to Evaluate Trends in Elephant Ivory and Rhino Horn Trafficking*, p. 9. C4ADS, Washington D.C.

A1.5 Meat for money, or meat to eat?

1. **Lindsey, P. et al.** 2013. The bushmeat trade in African savannas: Impacts, drivers, and possible solutions. *Biological Conservation* 160 (2013), pp. 80–96. Elsevier, Amsterdam



A1.6 Ten years on – what does the future hold?

1. Nellemann, C. et al (Eds). 2016. *The Rise of Environmental Crime – A Growing Threat to Natural Resources Peace, Development and Security*, p. 4. A UNEP–INTERPOL Rapid Response Assessment. United Nations Environment Programme and RHIPTO Rapid Response–Norwegian Center for Global Analyses, www.rhipto.org.
2. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
3. Centre for Advanced Defence Studies. 2024. *Intercepted: Using Seizure Data to Evaluate Trends in Elephant Ivory and Rhino Horn Trafficking*, C4ADS, Washington D.C.
4. Wyatt, T. 2020. Reptiles: one in three species traded online – and 75% aren't protected by international law. *The Conversation*. Viewed 15 May 2023 <https://theconversation.com/reptiles-one-in-three-species-traded-online-and-75-arent-protected-by-international-law-147122>
5. Atlas of Namibia Team. 2022. *Atlas of Namibia: its land, water and life*. pp. 212, 218. Namibia Nature Foundation, Windhoek.
6. Government of the Republic of Namibia. 2024. *Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia: National Report for the Year 2023*, p.76. GRN, Windhoek.
7. Eco-Solve. 2025. *Monitoring online illegal wildlife trade*, p. 13. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, Geneva.
8. Denker, H. 2020. Rhino poaching and the inside job, *The Namibian*, 19 March 2020, p.8. Free Press of Namibia, Windhoek

A2.3 New agencies, more players, more challenges ...

1. Malakouti, Z. et al. 2025. Interconnected challenges: Examining the nexus of environmental crime and money laundering in the context of energy transition. *Journal of Economic Criminology*, Volume 8, June 2025. doi. org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2025.100151. Elsevier, Amsterdam
2. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 11. Vienna: United Nations Publications.

A2.4 Strong laws and systems, effective application?

1. Kinsky, R. 2022. Unpacking the challenges of wildlife governance in community-based conservation programs to promote human–wildlife coexistence. *Conservation Science and Practice*, Volume 4, Issue 10, October 2022. doi. org/10.1111/csp2.12791. Society of Conservation Biology, Amsterdam.
2. Government of the Republic of Namibia. 2024. *Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia: National Report for the Year 2023*, pp.20–21. GRN, Windhoek.

- B1. Financial investigations – the key to locking away the proceeds of crime**
1. Government Gazette of the Republic of Namibia. 2023. No.9 of 2023: *Prevention of Organised Crime Amendment Act, 2023*. Government of the Republic of Namibia, Windhoek.

B3. Repeat offenders – caught in a web of wildlife crime

1. Denker, H. 2020. *Wildlife Crime and the Law, The Namibian*, 30 July 2020, p.7. Free Press of Namibia, Windhoek
2. Yukhnenco, D. et al. 2023. Criminal recidivism rates globally: A 6-year systematic review update. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 88 (2023). doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2023.102115. Elsevier, Amsterdam
3. Ministry of Environment and Tourism. 2020. *Combating Wildlife Crime in Namibia: Annual Report 2019*, p. 15. MET, Windhoek.
4. Environmental Crime Unit, Office of the Prosecutor General. 2022. *The Impacts of Poaching High-value Species in Namibia*. PG–ECU, Windhoek.

B6. Can we control our hunger for meat?

1. Ripple, W. et al. 2016. Bushmeat hunting and extinction risk to the world's mammals. *R. Soc. open sci.* 3: 160498. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsos.160498>
2. Vaughan, C. et al. 2007. Bushmeat, wildlife management and good governance: rights and institutional arrangements in Namibia's community based natural resource management. In *Bushmeat and Livelihoods* (eds G. Davies & D Brown), pp. 177–196. Blackwell, Oxford.
3. Brown, C. et al. 2024. *Namibia's decision to cull 723 wild animals to feed its people strikes a good balance*. Accessed 19.05.2025. <www.conservationnamibia.com/blog/namibia-animal-cull.php>. Conservation Namibia, Windhoek
4. Lindsey, P. et al. 2013. The bushmeat trade in African savannas: Impacts, drivers, and possible solutions. *Biological Conservation* 160 (2013) pp. 80–96. Elsevier, Amsterdam

B7. Are we still underestimating the impacts of wildlife crime?

1. Environmental Crime Unit, Office of the Prosecutor General. 2022. *The Impacts of Poaching High-value Species in Namibia*. PG–ECU, Windhoek.
2. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, pp. 83–98. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
3. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2024. Press Release: Despite two decades of concerted action, wildlife trafficking persists worldwide with more than 4,000 species affected, says new UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report. Accessed 27.03.2025. <www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2024/despite-two-decades-of-concerted-action-wildlife-trafficking-persists-worldwide-with-more-than-4-000-species-affected-says-new-unodc-world-

wildlife-crime-report.html> UNODC, Vienna.

4. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, pp. 83–98. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
5. Ibid, p. 97.
6. Ibid, p. 98.
7. Denker, H. 2024. Law enforcement alone will not end wildlife crime, *Conservation and the Environment in Namibia 2024*, p. 59. Venture Media, Windhoek.

B8. Status update – general wildlife protection in Namibia

1. Lindsey, P. et al. 2013. The bushmeat trade in African savannas: Impacts, drivers, and possible solutions. *Biological Conservation* 160 (2013), p. 88. Elsevier, Amsterdam
2. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 32. Vienna: United Nations Publications.

B9. Status update – pangolin protection in Namibia

1. Pangolin Conservation and Research Foundation. 2024. Assessing the survival rates and dispersal of trafficked-released ground pangolin across Namibia. Unpublished data.
2. Atlas of Namibia Team. 2022. *Atlas of Namibia: its land, water and life*. pp. 300–301. Namibia Nature Foundation, Windhoek.
3. Pangolin Conservation and Research Foundation. 2025. Personal communication.
4. Ibid
5. Government of the Republic of Namibia. 2024. *Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia: National Report for the Year 2023*, p. 51. GRN, Windhoek.
6. Wildlife Justice Commission. 2025. *Disruption and Disarray: An analysis of pangolin scale and ivory trafficking, 2025-2024*, pp. 18–19. WJC, The Hague.
7. Atlas of Namibia Team. 2022. *Atlas of Namibia: its land, water and life*. pp. 325–329. Namibia Nature Foundation, Windhoek.
8. Lutubezi, S. 2024. *The pangolin protectors*. Accessed 20.06.2025. <https://www.worldwide.org/stories/the-pangolin-protectors>

B10. Status update – elephant protection in Namibia

1. Bussière, E. et al. 2023. KAZA Elephant Survey 2022, Volume I: Results and Technical Report, p. 3. KAZA TFCA Secretariat, Kasane, Botswana
2. Ibid, p. v.
3. Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism. 2021. *Combating Wildlife Crime in Namibia: Annual Report 2020*, pp. 17–18. MEFT, Windhoek.
4. Wildlife Justice Commission. 2025. *Disruption and Disarray: An analysis of pangolin scale and ivory trafficking, 2025-2024*, pp. 18–19. WJC, The Hague.
5. Centre for Advanced Defence Studies. 2024. *Intercepted: Using Seizure Data to Evaluate Trends in Elephant Ivory and Rhino Horn Trafficking*, p.9. C4ADS, Washington D.C.

B11. Status update – rhino protection in Namibia

1. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2024. *UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report 2024: Trafficking in Protected Species*, p. 14. Vienna: United Nations Publications.
2. International Rhino Foundation. 2024 *State of the Rhino Report*, p. 8. International Rhino Foundation, Fort Worth.
3. Centre for Advanced Defence Studies. 2024. *Intercepted: Using Seizure Data to Evaluate Trends in Elephant Ivory and Rhino Horn Trafficking*, p.10. C4ADS, Washington D.C.

B12. Status update – plant protection in Namibia

1. World Integrated Trade Solutions. 2025. *Namibia: Wood charcoal exports by country 2023*. Accessed 12 June 2025 <https://wits.worldbank.org/trade/comtrade/en/country/NAM/year/2023/tradeflow/Exports/partner/ALL/product/440200> The World Bank, Washington.
 2. Ya Ngulu, F. 2023. *Charcoal exports contributed N\$ 4.1 billion to forex reserves since 2009*. Accessed 12 June 2025 <https://economist.com.na/85088/general-news/charcoal-exports-contributed-n4-1-billion-to-forex-reserves-since-2009/> Namibia Economist, Windhoek.
 3. Staff Reporter. 2024. Charcoal industry now employs some 10 000 workers. Accessed 20 June 2025 <https://newera.livelihoods.org/charcoal-industry-now-employs-some-10-000-workers-2/> New Era Publication Corporation, Windhoek.
 4. World Integrated Trade Solutions. 2025. *Namibia: Fuel wood, in logs, in billets... or similar exports by country 2023*. Accessed 12 June 2025 <https://wits.worldbank.org/trade/comtrade/en/country/NAM/year/2023/tradeflow/Exports/partner/ALL/product/440110> The World Bank, Washington.
 5. Department: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. 2015. *Devil's claw production guideline*, p. 2. Department: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Pretoria.
 6. Namibia Nature Foundation. 2021. *Devil's Claw brings financial relief amidst Covid-19 economic despair for communities in Omaheke*, Media Release. NNF, Windhoek.
- see also:
- Cole, D. 2008. *Report On The Current Status Of Cultivation And Export Of Devil's Claw In Namibia*. CRIAA SA-DC Windhoek.



© Government of the Republic of Namibia 2025. All rights reserved.

The content of this report reflects the views of its authors and does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Government of the Republic of Namibia.

This report may be reproduced for educational or related non-profit purposes without the special permission of the copyright holder; provided that the source is fully acknowledged.

Suggested citation:

Government of the Republic of Namibia. 2025. *Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia: National Report for the Year 2024*. GRN, Windhoek.

Data: Integrated Wildlife Crime Database of Namibia

Photos: Namibian Partnerships against Environmental Crime, except where noted otherwise;
photos depicting wildlife products, carcasses or seized items were taken by investigators during actual law enforcement operations and may thus have quality deficits.

Layout & Text: Blue Rhino Task Team

This publication has not been formally edited.





The production of this report was coordinated by the Rooikat Trust.

Printing was financed by
the German Namibian Development Cooperation through the German Development Bank KfW
supported by the Department of State – Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL).

2025

