

CITES Conservation of and Trade in African and Asian Rhinoceros

Swaziland Country Report

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This document has been submitted by Swaziland.

1 STATUS

White Rhino

Swaziland has two populations of Southern White Rhino (Ceretotherium simum simum) located at Mkhaya Game Reserve and Hlane Royal National Park. These animals were confined in 1991/2 to high security areas following the salvage of the last surviving animals from rampant poaching. These populations are thus not truly wild.

Black Rhino

One population of Black Rhino (Dioceros Bicornis Minor) exists on Mkhaya Game Reserve following two re-introductions in 1987 and 1995.

Shortly after the rampant poaching of the 1980's and 1990's. Swaziland's rhino security systems were transformed and Swaziland's current national security policy dictates that all rhino numbers are considered as classified information. However, the white and black rhino populations are reproducing well, but suffer from unfavourable sex ratios in favour of males, which cause intra-specific conflict and resultant mortalities.

2. ILLEGAL HUNTING

During this period, no incidents of illegal rhino poaching have been recorded, nor have any rhino-directed incursions into the rhino sanctuaries been detected.

3. ILLEGAL TRADE

No new incidents of illegal trade concerning rhino products have been recorded during this period. We have, however, had one case where a South African adult male businessman and a Swazi adult male had their 5 year and 7 year sentences, without option of a fine, confirmed by the Court of Appeal for possession and trafficking of 2 white rhino horns respectively. A third adult Mozambican male has had his appeal on a 7 year conviction upheld by the same court.

At present, Swaziland still has one case involving two Swazi adult males for the trafficking of one white rhino horn pending before the courts.

No internal legal trade in any rhino products exists in Swaziland.

4. LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MONITORING PROGRAMMES

The sanctuaries containing both black and white rhino have a 24-hour, 7 days a week guarding policy in place. Rangers who are armed with automatic assault rifles and equipped with radios maintain day and night patrols and observation points.

The majority of patrols are conducted on foot, while 4x4 vehicles, motorbikes and bicycles are used for patrol deployment, reaction procedures, and extended national operations. Further, the same organization is responsible for national law enforcement of the Game Act, and maintaining an active informer network in the towns and around all the country's rhino parks, which has proved to be a very effective first line of defense.

All rhino populations are monitored by patrols on a daily basis and details of daily sightings are reported and recorded.

5. NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND CONSERVATION PLANS

In response to the rampant poaching of the 1980's and 1990's, Swaziland amended the Game Act in 1991 and 1993, to give rangers and police officers sweeping powers of search and arrest, and the use of firearms. These new measures and their diligent and zero tolerance enforcement policies have brought rhino poaching to a dead stop with the last rhino poached in Swaziland on 4 December 1992. There has also been a reduction in general poaching of 90%. Mandatory minimum sentences were enacted and poaching of specially protected species (rhino – all species, elephant and lion), carries a prescribed 5 – 15 year sentence without the option of a fine, plus the replacement or compensation of any poached animal to its fully-gazetted value, failing which an additional 2 year sentence is imposed. Additionally, no part of any sentence may be suspended. Further, protection was enacted for any police officer or game ranger acting in the course of duty.

This law is intended as PREVENTATIVE, rather than REMEDIAL legislation, and is among the strongest anti-poaching laws in existence.

The national rhino conservation action plan incorporates the security of rhino areas as a fundamental principal. It also states that the rhino populations should be managed to increase by at least 5% per annum and that founder populations be re-established in former rhino range, which has suitable habitat and is judged to be adequately protected and secure for rhinos, by the Management Authority.

Meta population management within Swaziland is practiced to maximize genetic diversity.

Swaziland also participates regionally in this regard and accordingly has provided two black rhino bulls to South Africa during this reporting period.

6. RHINOCEROS HORN STOCKS

All rhino horn stock, including those recovered from natural mortalities and law enforcement operations, are marked and are securely stored.