

DOGS HELP IN WINNING THE FIGHT AGAINST POACHING

Rustenburg – Kruger National Park, South Africa's biggest and best-known game park, has been the epicentre of rhino poaching for decades.

New technologies are constantly being unleashed to combat poaching, but using hunting dogs, a method thousands of years old, is also proving effective.

Southern African Wildlife College chief executive officer Theresa Sowry spoke about the role of dogs in preventing poaching today.

She said: "We have to develop and design new tools and what is nice about a dog is that it's an old tool, it's just been applied in a new sense and they are having a fantastic impact on poaching today."

These dogs have become the foot soldiers in the fight against poaching. Anne Kruger, who works in the K9 Conservation Unit, described how the dogs react positively to their work.

"They find great joy out of doing what they are born and meant to do, which is hunting. And they love having that bond with a handler as well, they need to have a purpose."

The dogs are proving to be extremely effective and the team are considered the best anti-poaching unit on the continent.

Kruger National Park communications and marketing manager Ike Phaahla, stresses the effectiveness of the hunting dogs: "Over 90% of the arrests that have been affected thus far in the Kruger National Park since 2011 have been through the assistance of the canine unit."

Special training facilities have now been established

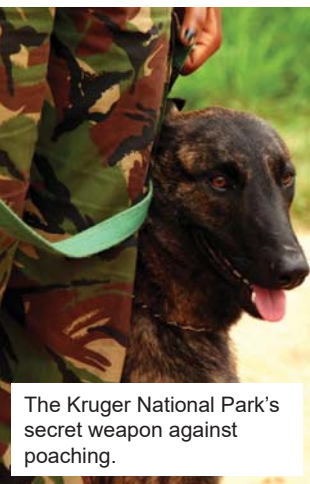
around the country to equip canines with the skills they need to help the conservation effort.

Paramount Group senior vice president Eric Ichikowitz explained the wide-reach of his company's training facility in Rustenburg, "Our canine training facility has deployed dogs right throughout the African continent, both in law enforcement as well as anti-poaching operations. We've deployed dogs as far afield as Malaysia, so our footprint is quite wide and diverse."

The story of dogs in what is now Kruger National Park goes back almost 150 years to 'Jock', perhaps the most famous dog in Southern Africa. His true story was immortalised in the book "Jock of the Bushveld" by South African author Sir James 'Percy' Fitzgerald who told of his travels with the dog in the late 1800s. Jock Safari Lodge manager Lazarus Mkhonto, talks about the book's legacy Lazarus Mkhonto, "The dog became the main character with its braveness, and it saved Fitzpatrick on so many numerous occasions out here, Jock Safari Lodge is the actual location where they used to stop."

As the battles continue in the war on poaching, the dog handlers are optimistic about the project's chances, with one telling CNN: "The issue of predicting that this war will end, I don't know. But we are one step, I think we are ten steps even, ahead of the poachers now, I think we are winning."

These dogs were also featured on Inside Africa when CNN International met with the dedicated canine unit on the frontlines of the fight to protect wildlife.



The Kruger National Park's secret weapon against poaching.



The dogs are trained to track poachers.



Dogs are playing a vital role in the fight against rhino poaching.

30-YEAR SENTENCE FOR CONVICTED RAPIST

Rustenburg – A 28-year old man will spend at least 30 years behind bars after he was convicted of robbing and raping a woman in the Rustenburg central business district (CBD) in 2018.

The Rustenburg Magistrates' Court found Bikie Molefe guilty of two counts of robbery and two counts of rape and he was sentenced on Tuesday 3 March.

The state successfully proved that during the early morning hours of 12 August 2018, Molefe approached a woman who was walking along Bethlehem Street.

He demanded the woman's cell phone before he forced her to a secluded area and raped her.

Eyewitnesses, who did not intervene as they feared for their lives, assisted the woman to report the incident to the police.

Rustenburg Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS) captain



Rustenburg FCS captain Mokgathe Mokgathe (left) is congratulated by lieutenant colonel Mosidi Mabuza.

Mokgathe Mokgathe investigated the case.

He followed up on evidence provided by the eyewitness and Molefe was eventually apprehended.

Said police spokesperson sergeant Ofentse Mokgadi: "Molefe is also linked to a separate incident in which he raped a victim after spiking her drink."

DIS WEER TYD VIR MASSA-PATROLLIE

Rustenburg - Misdadigers regoor die land gaan die wind van voor kry wanneer AfriForum se nasionale massa-patrollie afskop om gemeenskappe veiliger te maak.

Die Rustenburg gemeenskap kan op Vrydag 13 Februarie 'n bietjie rustiger slaap siende dat verskeie patrollie groepe die strate van Rustenburg deurnag sal patrolleer.

Die massa-patrollie wat deur AfriForum Rustenburg-tak Buurtweg aangebied word is 'n pro-aktiewe benadering om misdaad te voorkom deur maksimale sigbaarheid.

Spanne sal by die Gereformeerde Kerk Rustenburg-Wes by 260 Kloppe Straat bymekaarkom en van 16:00 tot die volgende oggend 06:00 in twee-uur skofte roteer.

Hul wil ook die gemeenskap uitnooi om deel te neem aan die massa-patrollie. Raak betrokke en maak Rustenburg veiliger vir almal.

Vir meer inligting kontak AfriForum Rustenburg-tak Buurtweg voorsitter Dawie Odendaal op 072 074 9620 of Marlene Odendaal op 082 679 0718.



HITCHHIKING HITS TAXI OPERATORS IN THE POCKET

Rustenburg – Taxi operators in Rustenburg are worried by the prevalence of hitchhiking, which is now harming their businesses.

Although hitchhiking is illegal on national freeways in South Africa, an increasing number of travellers still opt to flag down vehicles along busy highways as they look to cut down on the cost of using a taxi.

The dangers and risks of hitchhiking, which are too ghastly to contemplate, do not seem to be deterring those in the habit of this practice.

In May of 2019, a man who committed various crimes to hitchhiking passengers in his car was sentenced to 38 years in jail by the Bafokeng Regional Court in Tlhabane.

Boiphelo Jele was handed a heavy sentence after he was convicted of three counts of rape, four of armed robbery and one of housebreaking.

Before his arrest, Jele had become notorious for offering lifts to hitchhikers travelling from Rustenburg to Mafikeng before raping and robbing the unsuspecting passengers.

In one instance, a woman he had given a lift had to throw herself out of the moving car to escape after realising she was in danger of being raped.

However, South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) chairman for the Bojanala region Herman Sebego told *Platinum Weekly* that these and other harrowing incidents have done little to reduce the incidents of hitchhiking.

"Hitchhiking is a very serious concern to us because when our customers opt for private vehicles, it negatively affects our businesses," Sebego said.

"Additionally, this inconveniences other customers who have to wait for a longer time for the taxi to fill up," he added.

He said hitchhikers can often be seen lining up along the Rustenburg-Swartruggens and the Rustenburg-Pretoria routes.

"We have put some of our members out to monitor the area to prevent hitchhiking," he said.

"Taxis are licenced to operate along various routes. They are a safe option and community members must never compromise their safety by hitchhiking," Sebego concluded.

Police in the North West province has often warned motorists in the habit of picking up hitchhikers, saying they risk being victims of crime.

This follows numerous instances in which motorists have also been robbed by criminals whom they offered lifts to.



Taxi operators monitor a hitchhiking spot along the Rustenburg – Swartruggens road.

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