

Rhino poaching surges in Asia, Africa

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Rhino poaching worldwide is on the rise, according to a new report by TRAFFIC and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The trade is being driven by Asian demand for horns and is made worse by increasingly sophisticated poachers, who now are using veterinary drugs, poison, cross bows and high caliber weapons to kill rhinos, the report states.

Since 2006 the majority (95 percent) of the poaching in Africa has occurred in Zimbabwe and South Africa, according to new data.

"These two nations collectively form the epicentre of an unrelenting poaching crisis in southern Africa," said Tom Milliken of TRAFFIC.

The report, which was submitted to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) ahead of its 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP15) in March, documents a decline in law enforcement effectiveness and an increase in poaching intensity in Africa. The situation is most serious in Zimbabwe where rhino numbers are now declining and the conviction rate for rhino crimes in Zimbabwe is only three percent. Despite the introduction of a number of new measures, poaching and illicit horn trade in South Africa has also increased.

"Concerted action at the highest level is needed to stop this global crisis of rampant rhino poaching," said Amanda Nickson, Director of the

Species Programme at WWF International. "We call on the countries of concern to come to COP 15 in March with specific actions they have undertaken to show their commitment to stopping this poaching and protecting rhinos in the wild."

The report also raises concerns regarding the low and declining numbers as well as the uncertain status of some of the Sumatran and Javan rhino populations in Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

"Sumatran and Javan rhino range countries need to increase efforts to better assess the current status of many of their rhino populations - to enhance field law enforcement efforts - prevent further encroachment and land transformation in rhino areas - and improve biological management of remaining rhinos to ensure the few remaining Sumatran and Javan Rhino numbers increase," said Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Chair of the IUCN/SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group

Most rhino horns leaving southern Africa are destined for medicinal markets in southeast and east Asia, especially Vietnam, and also China. The report highlights Vietnam as a country of particular concern - noting that Vietnamese nationals operating in South Africa have recently been identified in rhino crime investigations. In addition, concern has been expressed about the status of Vietnam's single Javan rhino population.

However, the report does note that in some areas populations of [rhinos](#) are increasing.

"Where there is political will, dedicated conservation programs and good [law enforcement](#), rhino numbers have increased in both Africa and Asia," said Dr Richard Emslie, Scientific Officer of IUCN's African Rhino Specialist Group.

Source: World Wildlife Fund

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