

Zimbabwe dehorns rhinos to curb poaching

Wildlife authorities in Zimbabwe have begun dehorning the country's 700 adult rhinos to curb rampant poaching, a conservation group said on Tuesday, 30 August.



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"Our target is to dehorn every single adult rhino and to ear-notch the young ones for record-keeping," Lisa Marabini, director for the Aware Trust Zimbabwe (ATZ) conservation group, told AFP.

"Poaching is a very serious problem in this country. This (dehorning) will act as a dissuasive measure and reduce the potential reward for poachers."

ATZ, which includes veterinarians and conservationists, is working with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority on the dehorning project.

The authority was not immediately available to comment.

ATZ declined to give exact numbers of how many rhinos had been dehorned for security reasons.

Rhinos are among the most poached animals in Zimbabwe and their population has been dwindling over years due to illegal hunting, prompting authorities to keep them in protected areas.

But Marabini said at least 50 rhinos were killed by poachers in Zimbabwe's game reserves last year.

Rhino horns are worth thousands of dollars due to demand in East Asia for their supposed medicinal qualities, fuelling a boom in poaching and trafficking in Zimbabwe and neighbouring South Africa.

The animals are targeted by armed gangs due to the belief in Vietnam and China that ground-up horn cures diseases, including cancer.

Also believed to be an aphrodisiac, the horn is composed mainly of keratin, the same component as in human nails.

Source: AFP

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