

MEDIA RELEASE - 4 February 2003

MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH FOR KRUGER NATIONAL PARK ANTI POACHING TEAM

After three month's careful investigation, a team of Kruger National Park (KNP) rangers arrested the four kingpins of a commercial poaching operation near Pretoriuskop this weekend.

Together with SANParks Corporate Investigation Service (CIS) investigators, Stoltznek area ranger Mr Rob Thomson and his team have carefully watched the group of poachers since November last year.

"After we were satisfied that we knew their modus operandi, we waited for the ideal time to apprehend the suspects," he explained.

With assistance from CIS, Thomson and his team of field rangers were able to identify the group and, using observation posts set on the high ground in the Mojolospruit area of the southern KNP, the team waited until the poachers struck again.

They didn't have to wait too long as the poachers appeared on Sunday night (February 2, 2003) with a bakkie-load of poached carcasses. The team confronted the poachers and, in the ensuing fight, one of the poachers was injured in the arm.

Although two poachers escaped on foot, four - including the leader - were arrested.

Thomson and his team confiscated the poachers' bakkie, six firearms (which included two .22 rifles, one .303 rifle, a shotgun and two 9mm pistols), spare ammunition for all the firearms, a cellular telephone and various knives, pangas and axes.

The poachers' haul on this occasion included one male impala, five female impalas, one week old kudu calf and two duikers. These animals were hunted for their meat.

The suspects will appear in court this week. They will face various charges including trespassing, illegal hunting in a National Park, bringing in weapons into a National Park without the necessary permission, removing animals from a National Park without the necessary permits and possession of wild animals without a permit.

Any member of the public who have information about poachers or poaching activities in the Kruger National Park should contact CIS at the following telephone numbers: 082-804-7895 (Ken Maggs), 083-486-8711 (Kobus de Wet) or (013) 735-5109 (Sandra Bloem).

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