



RHINO AND SHAYA JOIN WAR AGAINST POACHING

12th December 2014

Start

On 6th December, two conservation dogs, *Rhino* and *Shaya*, helped game reserve staff and the local community to track down suspects in a farm house robbery near the 50,000 hectare Balule Private Nature Reserve in Limpopo province. The dogs' deployment at the reserve was facilitated by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT)'s Rhino project. The EWT's conservation dogs form part of the overall anti-poaching efforts at the reserve.

Barely a week after *Rhino* had arrived at the reserve, on the evening of 6th December, a call came from the local Farmer's Watch that a farm house nearby had been broken into and rifles stolen. *Rhino* was deployed and immediately found a track – which led straight to the suspects, who were busy trying to open the gun safe they had stolen. One suspect managed to get away whilst the other was arrested.

The suspects had thrown the hunting rifles from the gun safe into the bush, but *Shaya*, the sniffer dog, was put to work and quickly found them. The arrested suspect led reserve staff and farmers to the shack where he and his accomplices live – *Shaya* helped recover three more hand guns and a number of foreign passports and cellphones which could provide crucial intelligence to criminal investigations.

Through the dogs' combined efforts, within 12 hours of the incident, one suspect was in custody, and four hunting rifles and three hand guns had been removed from the local community. Kirsty Brebner, EWT's Rhino Project Manager said: "Both *Rhino* and *Shaya* were instrumental in tracking down the suspects. Working as a team to their individual strengths, *Rhino* did the tracking and *Shaya* found the weapons. While not directly a rhino linked crime, there is a strong possibility that the stolen hunting rifles could find their way into poachers' hands. Conservation dogs are playing an increasingly important role in tackling the scourge of wildlife crime – these animals are often the unsung heroes in this battle".

Unlike purebred Malinois *Shaya*, *Rhino* is a Mongrel rescued by Community Led Animal Welfare (CLAW), a community based welfare organisation providing primary animal healthcare in South Africa.

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The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

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He was trained and donated to the project by Greendogs Conservation. "The dogs will help towards efforts to clamp down on wildlife crime and poaching activity in the reserve." concluded Brebner.

End.

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