



**ENDANGERED
WILDLIFE TRUST**
Protecting forever, together.

13 July 2018

EWT Conservation Canine Annie nabs three poachers in one day!

Start

The Endangered Trust (EWT), in support of the fight against rhino and elephant poaching, provides trained dogs to reserves to assist in their anti-poaching operations. These EWT-owned dogs are trained to either track humans or detect wildlife contraband like rhino horn and ivory as well as ammunition. One such dog is Conservation Canine Annie. She has been trained to track and is used to follow up on poacher sightings, fence incursions and to follow poachers away from crime scenes. This week, the EWT Conservation Canine Project got this very excited message from Colin who handles Conservation Canine Annie:

“During the early hours of the morning I received a call from one of our neighbouring reserves. One of their night observation posts thought they had seen a poacher walk past. I was asked to go and assist in the follow up with Annie. The poachers had unfortunately walked in the same area as the field rangers making it difficult for me to indicate to Annie which tracks I wanted her to follow. We therefore followed the tracks visually until we found where the poachers had split away into the bush. The poachers were wearing socks over their shoes which made visual tracking very difficult. It became almost impossible once they had turned off into the bush but this is where Annie’s tracking skills came into play. For her, them wearing socks had no effect on her tracking ability.

I put her on the tracks and she immediately started to pull on the trail. Over time I have learnt to read Annie’s body language and I see she can read mine. It seems that we can both read when one of us are serious. In this case I could see that her full focus was on the tracks. This was a good sign.

Annie tracked through various terrains until I got a visual of the two poachers lying in long grass. They were arrested and a rifle with silencer, ammunition, axe and other poaching equipment were recovered. Undoubtedly the life of a rhino was saved today because of this team’s tracking skills and the many hours spent in observation posts and patrols by the field rangers employed by the reserve to protect their rhino.

Unbelievably the action was not over for the day! In a later follow up operation by the SAPS to arrest the poachers' pick up team, one suspect was arrested by the SAPS and another fled the scene on foot into a neighbouring reserve. I was again asked to track the suspect with Annie. As there were numerous people at the scene contaminating the area, I placed Annie in the vehicle driven by the suspect and gave her the command to follow up. This enables her to know who we are looking for and when she exited the vehicle it did not take her long to get on track. We tracked for about 1 km through very thick bush, made contact and arrested a very tired and demoralised suspect who thought he had evaded the law. Overall a good day for Conservation Canine Annie and her team!"

The EWT is very proud to be associated with this excellent team who have been involved in seven arrests this year alone. With this kind of talent, dedication and team work, poachers are not going to be safe in Colin and Annie's neighbourhood. We further commend all role players who were involved in the collaboration that resulted in these arrests including the South African Police Services, anti-poaching units, reserve owners and managers. We hope that appropriate sentences are handed down that make a real conservation difference.

The EWT Conservation Canine Project is supported by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust, Relate Bracelets, Royal Canin and several individual donors. Conservation Canine Annie was trained at the Southern African Wildlife College.

If you would like to support these crime busting dogs, please contact Dr Kelly Marnewick on KellyM@ewt.org.za.

Ends

About the Endangered Wildlife Trust

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), champion of conservation in Africa, has worked tirelessly for over 45 years to save wildlife and habitats, with our vision being a world in which both humans and wildlife prosper in harmony with nature. From the smallest frog, to the majestic rhino; from sweeping grasslands to arid drylands; from our shorelines to winding rivers: the EWT is working with you, to protect our world.

The EWT's team of field-based specialists is spread across southern and East Africa, where committed conservation action is needed the most. Working with our partners, including businesses and governments, the EWT is at the forefront of conducting applied research, supporting community conservation and livelihoods, training and building capacity, addressing human wildlife conflict, monitoring threatened species and establishing safe spaces for wildlife range expansion.

A beacon of hope for Africa's wildlife, landscapes and communities, the EWT is protecting forever, together. Find out more at www.ewt.org.za

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