



WILDLIFE

Most rhino poaching happens in SA

THE picture painted by conservationists on World Rhino Day wasn't pretty.

Celebrated annually on September 22 to spread awareness about the critically endangered species and the danger they face, it's safe to say that rhinos in Africa are under siege.

About 82 rhinos were poached in Kruger National Park alone this year.

Poaching and illegal trade in rhinos remains a concern in Africa. According to a report published on August 22 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, from 2018 to 2021, 2 707 rhinos were poached across Africa, 90% in South Africa.

While the Covid-19 pandemic was good news for rhinos, trafficking resumed just after lockdown restrictions were lifted last year, according to a report by green economy and environment website Afrik21. The African rhino population has declined by 1.6% a year, from 23 562 rhino in 2018 to 22 137 at the end of 2021, it said.

Severe climate change and extreme disturbances to their natural ecosystem have also been blamed for the drop.

Conservationists say more needs to be done to protect rhinos. | Tribune Correspondent

SHARK SANCTUARIES

Scientists drum up support

LAYLAA TEIXEIRA SAMPAIO

EFFORTS to preserve sharks and rays are for the most part stuck in the past while laws intended to preserve them lack bite.

That's according to shark expert Dr Jennifer Olbers who reckons these boneless fish are facing high noon.

Olbers has called for a multi-pronged defence, including better policing of the shark-fin and product trade, giving conservation officials the resources and tools to do their job, improving the capacity of law enforcement, including prosecutors, and more vigorous patrols of marine protected areas.

Also vital to the survival of these threatened species were efforts to increase the public's awareness of the pivotal role sharks and rays play in preserving the natural order.

With this in mind and to share some thoughts on what South Africans can do to help, Olbers will be speaking at the upcoming Ocean Stewards Science Session, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) Howard College campus in Durban this week from Tuesday to Thursday.

Olbers is a marine conservation scientist with not-for-profit WildOceans (a programme of the WildTrust) which is organising the three-day event.

South Africa, says Olbers, has an obligation to the world to preserve its seas, which are among the most biodiverse globally. This includes ensuring sharks and rays are protected and that the country's fisheries, fishing methods and permit conditions ensure fishing is sustainable.

She is presenting on actions taken by WildOceans, its partners and collaborators to better conserve sharks and rays. These actions include the creation of shark sanctuaries with specific regulations in place targeting the fishing of sharks, with the overarching goal of reducing shark mortality.

Over the past two years, Covid-19 has forced the annual Ocean Stewards Science Session online, but this time around a hybrid event has been planned.

Leading marine scientists have



THE blue shark is listed as near threatened as populations have declined in the Atlantic and Indian oceans. | STEVE BENJAMIN

been lined up to address delegates in person and via the web, updating them on progress made and some of the difficulties faced in protecting the country's marine protected areas.

There will also be talks and presentations on local and international campaigns to raise ocean literacy and leadership among communities living near these important areas.

Some 90 delegates, including presenters, representatives from industry, NGOs and the government, students, and leading WildOceans representatives are expected to attend.

Organisers believe the session will be of particular value to young and emerging science students enrolled in the WildOceans Ocean Stewards

project to get hands-on experience of marine conservation, guidance on career pathways and the chance to grow their professional networks.

Launched in 2015, the project has brought together 126 mostly young students or early-career scientists from eight South African and Comoros universities. The students come from a range of academic backgrounds, spanning marine biology, environmental sciences, geography, zoology and the social sciences.

Maxine Kater, a young marine biologist interning at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, says her induction to the Ocean Stewards programme in 2019 was a day she will never forget.

"I was a third year marine biology student at UKZN. Nikki Chapman, a WildOceans project manager, gave a presentation. My goodness, she filled that dim and always chilly lecture room with endless wonder. We all applied to be Ocean Stewards that very day," says Kater.

"The opportunity was indescribable," she adds. "Meeting phenomenal scientists such as Dr Jean Harris and being aboard the research vessel (RV Angra Pequena) was truly remarkable."

"And attending my first Ocean Science session in a room with so many experts talking about their passion for marine life is something I will always cherish."

Earlier this year, WildOceans,



OCEAN Stewards Wesley Dalton, Bianca Tree and Mphilonhle Nyawo collecting zooplankton samples on board the Angra Pequena. | IKELVIN TRAUTMAN



ZODIDI Gwayise on the WildOceans research vessel, Angra Pequena, studies zooplankton under a microscope. | IKELVIN TRAUTMAN

launched On the Brink, a campaign that aims to highlight the value of sanctuary areas for shark and ray species on South Africa's coastline.

This involves finalising and providing legal and technical support for the planning and implementation of proposed protection areas.

It also aims to support the development of management plans, demarcation and law enforcement, infrastructure, and technology.

Ultimately, the project hopes to change legislation to better protect sharks and rays, and establish more sanctuary areas for the conservation of these species, says Olbers.

Laylaa Teixeira Sampaio is a UKZN marine biology Masters student taking part in Roving Reporters Coastal Resilience Reporting Project – a journalism training initiative supported by the Henry Nxumalo Foundation.

PROPERTY

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RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Renovating with a view to saving the planet

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IN SOUTH Africa, green features in the home are becoming increasingly popular among buyers, especially as a result of load shedding and the prevalence of droughts in the country.

It is not just in the home. Eco-friendly habits are being adopted in all spheres of life. Bringing it to your home will mean you can do more good than bad for your environment.

Not only will green enhancements to your home contribute positively to the world around you but they could also increase the value of your property.

Upgrading what you have

Nest Seekers International's chief economist Erin Sykes says some examples of upgrades that will add value to your home include solar panels, reclaimed hardwood accents, impact-resistant and dual-pane windows, and smart thermostats and lights.

While reclaimed and repurposed wood gives a sense of history and texture to a space, she adds that smart thermostats and lights are not just eco-friendly – they're energy efficient too. "Being able to adjust thermostats and lights remotely is a big win for busy folks or those who travel often."

If you install impact-resistant or dual-pane windows, these will not only lower your insurance premiums in high-wind areas, but have a "substantial impact" on lowering your energy bill.

"The gas between the two panes serves as insulation, thus trapping warmer air in the winter and cooled air in the summer, lowering your heating and cooling expenses."

Building green



GREEN enhancements could increase the value of your property. | ZAK WOLF Unsplash

While most businesses and households are doing a "fair bit" to curb the effects of a rapidly heating planet, Hermann Haupt, the vice-president of CHEP sub-Saharan Africa, says it is evident that "we need to do more in order to slow down the effects of environmental change".

"Behavioural change now goes even further than the noble act of recycling waste and turning off power sources not in use. We need to

scrutinise every business activity and consult the relevant industry specialists to find ways to implement these in a smarter, environmentally sound way, thus saving our planet for the generations to come."

He says the use of raw materials is often overlooked.

"Wood is renowned for being one of the most eco-friendly and sustainable materials available. It enjoys its hierarchical spot in the sustainability chart, given its ability to absorb carbon dioxide while growing.

"However, choose wisely when it comes to using wood. You want to look out for a brand that doesn't only prioritise quality but also prioritises the environment and its commitment to sustainability."

Glass is also infinitely recyclable. "Made from all-natural sources such as sand, soda ash and limestone, it never loses its purity, regardless of how many times it enters the recycling chain.

In terms of metals, Haupt says: "It has been reported that the roof on the Chrysler Building in New York is nearly 100 years old and has been cleaned only once. It is expected to perform well for at least another century. Zinc roofs in Paris have held up since the Napoleonic era."

He explains that almost all metals are recyclable, and the process does not impact the materials' properties.

"This means that the use thereof proves sound as far as eco-friendliness is concerned.

"According to the American Iron and Steel Institute, steel is the most recycled material on the planet.

"Other highly recyclable metals include aluminium, copper, silver, brass and gold which makes this raw material ideal for consideration."

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