



VICTORIA FALLS ANTI POACHING UNIT SNARES NEARLY 400 POACHERS IN 2014

THE Victoria Falls Anti Poaching Unit has completed another successful year, catching nearly 400 poachers, including ivory poachers.

Victoria Falls Anti Poaching Unit (VFAPU) operations co-ordinator Charles Brightman said 13 mammal poachers were apprehended in 2014, while 19 animals were discovered poached, including 7 elephants.

“It was shocking to experience our first case of cyanide poisoning, where poachers placed this poison in a mineral lick and sadly, five elephants lost their lives,” Mr Brightman said.

“It’s a new method of poaching, the use of poisons rather than shooting, with the main object being to get tusks for black market sale.”

Arrests have been made and court cases are pending, following the “brazen” incident in Zambezi National Park in July, he said.

The investigation was a joint effort by the Environmental Management Authority, Zimbabwe Republic Police, National Parks and Wildlife Management, VFAPU and the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust, he said.

Other animals discovered poached were six warthog, five buffalo and a kudu, which were killed to be sold as bush meat, Mr Brightman said.

Four injured animals – a buffalo, a kudu and two warthogs – were saved by VFAPU scouts after being darted, treated and returned to the wild, Mr Brightman said.

The 398 people apprehended last year also included 358 wood poachers, 11 fish poachers, one thief, eight illegal miners, two bush meat dealers and five persons entering the parks estate illegally.

“Bush meat poaching is still a bit of a problem, even though unprocessed and improperly prepared meat can pose health risks,” Mr Brightman said.

A total of 158 snares were recovered last year, a dramatic drop from the more than 4000 found in 1999, when VFAPU was formed, proving its active patrolling was effective, and served as a deterrent, he said.

There are 17 scouts working with the unit and these men often face great adversity, as they actively patrol the bush surrounding Victoria Falls.

Their operations expand further afield too, as VFAPU offers logistics, manpower and equipment to assist in joint operations with the appropriate authorities.

Africa Albida Tourism, a Zimbabwe-owned hospitality group, which operates hotels and restaurants in Victoria Falls and Chobe, Botswana, co-founded VFAPU and remains a key supporter.

For more information visit vfapu.com or to make a donation e mail cat@yoafrica.com