

## **Leopards Sighted along the N2 (Hluhluwe)**

### **Media and public statement by the Leader of Government Business | MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs Siboniso Duma**

14 August 2023

Pietermaritzburg: Following comments in various social media platforms about three leopards sighted along the N2 between Mkhuze - Hluhluwe and suggestions that the leopards escaped from Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park we wish to draw the attention of the media and public at large to a few facts.

My office has received report from our entity Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife as they are managing Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park.

As indicated by Ezemvelo, leopards are animals such as jackals, hyenas and snakes which are found in protected and outside protected areas.

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP), is situated in KwaZulu-Natal, and is often referred to as the 'birthplace of rhino' as it was this area where the southern white rhino was saved from the brink of extinction, over half a century ago.

We wish to also point out that the installation of infrared trap cameras which are linked directly to the Parks Operational Centre at HiP have helped a lot in terms of conservation of our animals.

These cameras using artificial intelligence (AI) identify people, activities inside our game reserves and send an immediate alert to the Operations Centre who then rapidly alerts and activates the relevant Reaction Units and associated resources

In addition, our game rangers continue to work with communities especially traditional leaders as part of the management of wildlife and eco-tourism in general.

Notwithstanding some challenges which have been ventilated through the Portfolio Committee on Conservation, we remain indebted to leaders of society for their commitment to work with management and the board of Ezemvelo.

Our view as the department is that communities living near our game reserves and parks must benefit from our operations.

We state this because we believe that nature conservation is critical for the creation of jobs and growing the local economy.

Our game reserves and parks give us with yet another avenue to confront the challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequalities.

As we approach September, the Tourism Month, we continue to receive thousands of telephone calls from tourists from different parts of the province, the country and the globe.

Ezemvelo manages more than 114 protected areas and close to 42 facilities that provide accommodation to more than 6500 guests night.

We wish to assure nature lovers and the public at large of unparalleled experience of the wildlife and eco-tourism in our Game Reserves and our parks.

Ends

**Issued by the Leader Government Business and MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs**