

Meerkat will keep its eye on Kruger Park humans

STAFF REPORTER

A WIDE area surveillance system, known as the Postcode Meerkat, was launched in Kruger National Park last night.

South African National Parks (SANParks), Peace Parks Foundation and the CSIR have partnered to research, develop and manufacture this innovative system.

The Postcode Meerkat comprises a suite of radar and electro-optic sensors that will detect, classify, monitor and track humans moving in the park over a wide area.

In addition, the system has been designed to be mobile so that it can be rapidly deployed to prevent poaching crisis zones from developing.

This is the first time that this kind of technology is being

applied in a counter-poaching role in a bushveld environment, which makes the system unique.

Smart thinking in its development allows it to differentiate between humans and animals, while its application will guarantee early warning and rapid response capabilities.

This will augment ranger reaction times, allow for better preparation and support the proactive apprehension of poachers, which could save the lives of both humans and animals.

It also has the future potential to be used in a conservation role, for example to better understand animal behaviour.

The Postcode Meerkat will significantly increase Kruger Park's ability to protect rhino and other vulnerable species.

It will enhance the capacity

to combat wildlife crime, along with the many other systems already put in place, such as improved ranger skills and support, increased aerial and ground mobility, gate access control and zones with increased wildlife protection.

Apart from developing and manufacturing the system, the CSIR will also provide on-going technical and administrative support to the national park.

Funding for the development and deployment of the Postcode Meerkat was secured by Peace Parks Foundation from the People's Postcode Lottery of the UK, made possible by the lottery players.

Funding the Postcode Meerkat is the People's Postcode Lottery's first support of a project at the national park.

A visiting delegation of the UK People's Postcode Lottery, the Department of Environmental Affairs, Peace Parks Foundation, SANParks and CSIR staff members at the launch of the Postcode Meerkat wide area surveillance system.

