

## 'Preacher poacher' inquiry

August 11 2014 at 09:27am

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Harare -

A Namibian, who claims to be part of a regional evangelical group, is being investigated on charges of poaching in Zimbabwe last week.

The police and the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority say they are investigating whether Gerhard Burger, 62, shot at, and wounded an elephant on July 31.

Mwenezi district locals say elephants from the Kruger Park and the Gonarezhou National Park migrate north in the dry months and are regulars in the area.

Burger said he was legally on a ranch in the district on July 31 with a licensed weapon and was going to hunt on land with a permit.

But he was shooting on land used by rancher Brian Cawood, who said Burger had no right to shoot and wound an elephant on his property.

Cawood said Burger was with a man wearing a World Vision T-shirt. "After receiving a report that rifle shots were heard near a water point, I proceeded to investigate.

"I came across fresh vehicle tracks and noticed they were following fresh elephant tracks. I soon came across two elephant bulls; one had blood oozing from behind the right shoulder.

"I spotted a vehicle speeding off. I followed it. I sped past it and blocked it. I approached Burger and asked what he was doing."

Cawood said Burger was "extremely aggressive. He grabbed my arm and drove over the fence line speeding off with me dangling on the side of the vehicle. I managed to free myself and fell down and the vehicle drove over my left leg. I returned home and reported the matter to the police.

"Early the next day, National Parks arrived. Investigations showed six shots were fired at the place where the two bull elephants were seen. Burger was found hunting in an adjacent area and questioned. "Burger produced a Bible and spoke about the importance of Jesus."

The police at Mwenezi said they could not discuss the incident on the phone but investigations were continuing.

A National Parks investigation has begun. “We were told he was doing target practice at a cardboard box,” said a wildlife employee who is investigating the case.

Farmer Namaya Muzorori said: “My workers told me they saw this man shooting at the elephant.”

Burger said: “Yes, I was there. What is wrong with hunting? I hunt.”

Independent Foreign Service

