

Reward offered for info

The police are on the lookout for an unknown male suspect in his 20s

Charl Pienaar

SABIE - A 49-year-old woman was allegedly sexually assaulted during a morning jog by an unknown male on New Year's Day.

The provincial police spokesman, Brig Leonard Hlathi, said in a statement that the woman went for her usual morning jog at 07:00, when she was grabbed from behind by her assailant, a male in his 20s.

"He allegedly dragged her forcefully into the nearby bush and instructed her to obey his instructions or risk being killed. He

then had non-consensual sex with her. The suspected sex offender did not take any of her belongings," Hlathi said.

Walter Comley, the co-owner of Merry Pebbles Holiday and Caravan Park, confirmed that the woman and her husband were vacationing at their resort. "It happened on the Loerie Hiking Trail, across the river near the Castle Rock Municipal Caravan Park. It did not happen on our property; I only got word of it through the Sabie-Be-Safe WhatsApp group," Comley explained.

"I did not see or talk to her. She allegedly

walked back to our resort after the despicable incident. Her husband then took her to the Sabie Police Station and my sister-in-law assisted in taking her to the nearest hospital. Lesley Froud Turner, the owner of Two Falls View Accommodation, got involved. She is part of the Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism (KLCBT) aftercare programme for tourists in distress," Comley said.

Tom Vorster, spokesman for the KLCBT, stated that it was a local tourist who fell victim to this horrendous act. "It is a tragedy and unfortunate that law and order in this

country is falling apart."

He also confirmed a number of incidents that involved tourists being terrorised by criminals over the festive season.

"There was a restaurant robbery on December 26, but it was clearly an opportunistic thing, as a shop owner was also shot in the leg following the restaurant robbery. A tourist's vehicle was also broken into at Pilgrim's Rest, but other than that and the rape incident, nothing else serious happened.

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Tom Vorster, the KLCBT spokesman.

"Various police operations around the Sabie, Graskop and Hazyview area, with a massive roadblock in Hazyview, contributed to a decline in criminal occurrences in the area, which is good news for the tourism industry. We from the KLCBT are also issuing a R50 000 reward for any information that could lead to the arrest and prosecution

of the alleged sex offender who attacked the Sabie woman," Vorster said.

"We do not recommend that anyone, especially women, go on the hiking trail alone; albeit for walking, jogging or even bike riding. It is advisable to always travel in a group when you enter the forest for a hike. We sell permits to the hikers on behalf of another entity, because we are open on weekends and public holidays. We now also provide pepper spray on payment of a deposit to solitary hikers," Comley stated.

The Loerie Trail is a travel route along the Sabie River that takes you through patches of indigenous forest and grassland.

According to Hlathi, no arrests have been made. He appealed to anyone with information to contact the investigating officer, Capt Nkentshane Noppie, immediately on 079-499-8809.

Turner could not be reached for comment at the time of going to press.



Brig Leonard Hlathi, the provincial police spokesman.