



WILDLIFE ANIMAL PROTECTION FORUM SOUTH AFRICA

LIMPOPO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM (LEDET)

Biodiversity Officer

Lyle Wiggins

WiggingsLR@Ledet.gov.za

Gannie Rodgers Monama

Member of the Executive Council

NhemoCS@ledet.gov.za

KhorombiA@ledet.gov.za

Blyde River Botanical Reserve

Homeowners Association NPC

Attention Chairperson L Van Heck De Vries

C/o Directors:

A Botha

G Cloete

S De Witt

brhoa@tiscali.co.za

CC: Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment

Honourable Minister Barbara Creecy

minister@environment.gov.za

NLeontsinis@environment.gov.za

llevendal@environment.gov.za

06 May 2024

Dear Sirs,

CEASE AND DESIST LETTER RELATIVE TO THE PLANNED CULL OF A TROOP OF BABOONS ON THE BLYDE RIVER BOTANICAL RESERVE, IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

The [Wildlife Animal Protection Forum South Africa](#) (WAPFSA), a collective of thirty organisations, has a history of interest in the protection and conservation of wild animals in South Africa, sharing a body of expertise from different sectors including but not limited to scientific, environmental, legal, welfare, rights, social justice, climate, indigenous and public advocacy backgrounds.



WILDLIFE ANIMAL PROTECTION FORUM SOUTH AFRICA

Members of WAPFSA are also part of the Ministerial Wildlife Well-being Forum, instituted by the Department of Forestry, Fishery and the Environment (DFFE) in May 2023, by special request of Minister Barbara Creecy, in order to consult with organisations focused on best practices for the protection of wildlife.

We have been contacted in relation to an apparent plan to cull an entire troop of baboons on a private reserve in Limpopo. It seems that no proof of any damage has been provided and no preventative nor mitigation measures have been implemented before this drastic and inhumane strategy has been chosen to manage the situation.

The contact we received pertains to an apparent plan unfolding from today within a private reserve in Limpopo, involving the proposed culling of an entire troop of baboons. What's distressing about this is not just the gravity of the action itself, but the apparent lack of substantial evidence provided to justify such a drastic measure.

Culling, if applied at all, which we question, should indeed be considered a very last resort, implemented only after properly and diligently exhausting all alternative strategies and rigorous assessment of the actual behaviour and conditions creating the problem, if a problem is effectively in place. What's more troubling is the absence of any efforts towards prevention or mitigation before resorting to such a severe and inhumane approach.

Before embarking on a decision as irreversible as culling, it's imperative to engage in a thorough evaluation of the situation. This includes implementing preventative measures like deterrents or barriers to limit baboon access to sensitive areas. We question if all of this has been done.

Furthermore, the ecological impact of removing an entire troop from the ecosystem is devastating and we question how can this be proposed.

Prior to committing to the irreversible step of culling, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the circumstances at hand. This entails the implementation of preventive measures such as deterrents or barriers to restrict baboon access to vulnerable areas. We raise doubts as to whether all necessary steps have been taken in this regard.

Removing a troop is a cruel and ineffective solution because it fails to address the root causes of the problem. In addition, baboons live in complex social groups characterized by hierarchical relationships and intricate social bonds. Removing a troop disrupts these social dynamics, leading to instability and potential conflicts among neighbouring troops vying for territory or resources.

Transparency and accountability are paramount in situations like these. Without clear evidence of the baboons causing significant damage, the decision to cull them appears arbitrary and ethically questionable. Stakeholders, including conservationists, local communities, and wildlife experts, should be involved in the decision-making process to ensure that all perspectives are considered and that the chosen course of action is both justified and humane.



WILDLIFE ANIMAL PROTECTION FORUM SOUTH AFRICA

NEM:BA amendments came into effect on 30 June 2023. The Honourable Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, is currently in the process of implementing a legislative mandate to prohibit activities that may have a negative impact on the well-being of wild animals and to make regulations in relation to the well-being of wild animals, as per Section 2 of NEM:BA.

In the aforementioned section of NEM:BA, it is specified that all procedural activities that constitute biodiversity management, conservation and sustainable use of wild animals, including the issuing of permits, must consider the well-being of animals.

Section 9A of NEM:BA in particular, refers to any activity where there is reasonable evidence of a *potential* negative impact on animal well-being, using the wording “*that may have a negative impact*” which means that it is not required to have absolute proof of a negative impact to prohibit any activity. It implies that a precautionary approach, in line with the NEMA principles, must prevail.

Section 24 of the Constitution highlights that the environment must be protected, for the benefit of present and future generations.

WAPFSA members have [evidence](#) that there is no reliable data available in relation to primate populations in any of the nine provinces.

There is no evidence, despite extensive research by members of WAPFSA, of verifiable data collected by any of the provinces in relation to damage or threats to humans or pets from baboons, or evidence of effective and non-violent measures to prevent human conflict with these primates.

Often, in response to anecdotal reports or complaints linked to lifestyle considerations rather than real conflict, authorities have been known to issue very broad questionable permits to allow invasive and cruel management procedures instead of insisting upon non-lethal solutions.

When issuing permits for the culling of baboons, did LEDET rely on any professional assessment of the various troop dynamics in order to mitigate impacts and positively influence the behaviour of the troop?

Primates are not vermin, they have a historical presence in South Africa, are part of our heritage and have cultural value. In addition, their role as seed dispersers in the conservation and regeneration of indigenous animals and plants is substantial. The important role they play particularly after fires, has been scientifically and empirically observed.

Human-induced climate change poses many potential threats and risks to nonhuman primate populations, including the ranges available to primate species. Many of these primates are already threatened by human activities such as deforestation, habitat destruction, hunting, persecution and extirpation.



WILDLIFE ANIMAL PROTECTION FORUM SOUTH AFRICA

The members of WAPFSA urge this property to cease and desist this planned cull.

Some WAPFSA members are seeking legal advice on this matter.

Kind regards,

Stefania Falcon

stefania@wapfsa.org

Mobile: +27 (0)73 3012107

ON BEHALF OF WAPFSA

<http://wapfsa.org/>



SIGNING MEMBERS OF WAPFSA

AllRise	CEO -Director	Attorney Kirsten Youens
Animal Talk Africa	Founder	Wynter Worsthorne
Ban Animal Trading	Director	Smaragda Louw
Beauty Without Cruelty -South Africa	Chairperson	Toni Brockhoven
Betty's Bay Baboon Action Group	Co-Founders	Renee Bish and Peter Oxford
Centre for Animal Rehabilitation and Education	Director	Stephen Munro
Community Led Animal Welfare	Founder	Cora Bailey
Co-Operative and Policy Alternative Center	Co-Founder and Board Chair	Prof Vishwas Satgar
Dzomo La Mupo	Founder – Director	Mphatheleni Makaulule
EMS Foundation	Executive Director	Michele Pickover
Future 4 Wildlife	Co – Founder	Stefania Falcon
Gifted for Good	Env. Education	Jabu Myeni
Global White Lion Protection Trust	CEO Founder	Linda Tucker
Green Group Simonstown	Founder	Laura Pasanisi
Institute for Critical Animal Studies (Africa)	Director	Les Mitchell
Kogelberg Villages Environmental Trustees	Chairperson	Liezl Smith
Monkey Helpline	Co-Founder	Steve Smit



WILDLIFE ANIMAL PROTECTION FORUM SOUTH AFRICA

Ocean Not Oil	Founder	Janet Solomon
Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary	Co-Founders	Liz and Cathrine Cornwall-Nyquist
Parliament for the People	Founder	Vivien Law
Rhinos in Africa	Founder	Megan Carr
Southern African Faith Communities' Env. Institute	Executive Director	Francesca De Gasparis
South Peninsula Khoi Council	Senior Chief	Stephen Fritz
Southern African Fight for Rhinos	Director	Lex Abnett
Vervet Monkey Foundation	Founder	Dave Du Toit
Wild Africa Fund	Director	Guy Jennings
Wild Law Institute	Director	Cormac Cullinan