



Per Electronic Communication:

CapeNature Permits

permits.fax@capenature.co.za

Helene Van Der Westhuyzen

hvdwesthuyzen@capenature.co.za

Khungeka Beda

kbeda@capenature.co.za

Monday 21st October 2024

Dear CapeNature Colleagues,

Concerns re Importation of Hyenas into Captivity

The [Wildlife Animal Protection Forum South Africa](#) (WAPFSA) is a community of South African-based organisations who share similar values, knowledge, and objectives. WAPFSA collectively comprises of 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.

WAPFSA members hereby express their concern about the possible importation of four hyenas into the *George Water, Lion and Reptile Park* located on the Garden Route region of the Western Cape of South Africa.

Background

South Africa is preparing to assume the [G20 Presidency](#) next year. [Minister Dion George](#), Department Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment believes there is a unique opportunity to showcase South Africa on the global stage. Minister George would like to position South Africa as a premier destination for future global dialogues on sustainability and conservation driven economic development.

A few years ago, there was [concern](#) directed at CapeNature and questions were raised about the necessity of the opening of a wildlife park in George, a city in South Africa's Western Cape, situated on a coastal stretch known as the Garden Route. "South Africa has a great network of world-famous national parks protecting significant biodiversity and heritage and we should be encouraging people to visit these wilderness areas."

The Spotted Hyena

The Spotted Hyena is listed under the Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS). This means that the 'sustainable use' of this species should be controlled and well-regulated. According to SANBI's last [assessment in 2016](#), the species is highly persecuted and its population is in decline.

SANBI recommends prioritising research and developing a Biodiversity Management Plan to frame the trade in Spotted Hyena. CapeNature, as the issuing authority, should never bypass essential assessments or evaluation processes which ensure environmental protection and responsible decision-making.

[Hyenas](#) are intelligent animals and the nocturnal, secretive nature of hyenas presents unique challenges for exhibit in captivity. The complex social structure of hyenas dictates that these animals be housed in compatible groups. All hyenas should be provided with adequate space, ends and specific stimulation to prevent stereotypical behaviour.

Concerns About George Water, Lion and Reptile Park

Representatives from Animaltalk Africa Trust, members of both [WAPFSA](#) and the Ministerial appointed [Wildlife Wellbeing Forum](#) visited the George Water, Lion and Reptile Park on the 7th October 2024. It is the understanding of Animaltalk Africa that the George Water, Lion and Reptile Park, may have applied for permits from CapeNature for the importation of four Spotted Hyenas from the North West Province.

There is concern that the intrinsic worth and wellbeing of these sentient beings cannot be adequately catered for or addressed in this facility.

There are also concerns that the special conditions that CapeNature advocates, i.e. "CapeNature does not authorise any form of non-essential human/wildlife contact or direct physical interaction" are currently not adequately adhered to.

During the Animaltalk Africa visit to the facility it was clear that the lions were fearful when the "guide" shouted at them commanding them to come to the fence to be near the visitors.

There are also concerns that the current conditions may infringe animal welfare legislation where these animals must be afforded the freedom to express normal behaviour, and freedom from fear and distress.



Images:

<https://local-info.co.za/listing/lion-park-george/>

Important Considerations

The NSPCA [considers](#) the housing of wild or captive bred lions is perceived as the domestication of this iconic species. There are fears that facilities such as these cause damage to the reputation of the Western Cape and South Africa's tourism industry.

The amendments of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004 (NEM:BA) came [into force in June 2023](#). Section 2 of NEM:BA determines that the well-being of animals is one of the 'Objectives' of the Act and 'well-being' must be considered in any management, conservation and sustainable use procedure.

This amendment confirms that it is the responsibility of the *George Water, Lion and Reptile Park* and CapeNature, as the permit issuing authority, to consider the well-being of the lions.

Following the recommendations from the [High-Level Panel Report](#), former Minister Barbara Creecy initiated a process [for the prohibition of certain activities](#) involving African Lion. In this [document, on page 5](#), the government recognised that “*lions are sentient and social animals and as such, more consideration needs to be given to promoting their well-being [...]. Consideration of lions’ well-being also includes providing opportunity for complex social interaction such as the ability to interact naturally with other lions [...]. This requires sufficient space for groups of lions to choose to be together in a group or to move separately, at a sufficient distance, to provide for a refuge from the group. Artificial behavioural enhancement may not be sufficient to substitute these highly evolved needs*”.

Of importance, in his first 100 days in office, Minister George has taken a clear and decisive stance against the captive lion industry.

The Garden Route has been named a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. This world-renowned status shines a light on the region’s importance to South Africa and its rich coastal, marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Conclusion

WAPFSA requests that CapeNature carefully considers the application for the importation of hyenas into a captive facility in the Western Cape. In our opinion this facility does not meet the minimum standards required for hyena.

WAPFSA looks forward to your urgent response.

Yours sincerely,



Megan Carr
WAPFSA Administrator
Email: administrator@wapfsa.org
mobile: +27832511978
website: <http://wapfsa.org/>



On behalf of the following members of WAPSA:

On behalf of the following members of WAPSA:

Michele Pickover Executive Director **EMS Foundation**

Megan Carr Founder **Rhinos in Africa**

Ross Harvey Director of Research and Programmes at **Good Governance Africa**

Cormac Cullinan Founder **Wild Law Institute**

Chad Cupido Executive Officer **Beauty Without Cruelty**

Vishwas Satgar Founder and Chair **Co-Operative and Policy Alternative Centre**
Charles Simane **Communications Climate Justice Charter Movement**
Wynter Worsthorne Founder **Animal Talk Africa**
Stefania Falcon Founder **Future for Wildlife**
Luana Pasanisi Founder **Green Group Simonstown**
Guy Jennings Consultant **Wild Africa Fund Southern Africa**
Linda Tucker Founder and CEO **Global White Lion Protection Trust**
Vivien Law Founder **Ancient Earth Farm**
Kirsten Youens Chief Executive **AllRise Attorneys for Climate and Environmental Justice**
Francesca deGasparis Executive Director **South African Faith Communities Environmental Institute**
Sairusha Govindsamy Youth Activist Network **African Climate Alliance**
Smaragda Louw Founder Director **Ban Animal Trading**
Stephen Munro Director **Centre for Animal Rehabilitation and Education**
Samantha Dewhirst **Centre for Animal Rehabilitation and Education**
Pete Oxford and Rene Bisch Founders **Betty's Bay Baboon Action Group**
Cora Bailey Founder **Community Led Animal Welfare**
Mphatheleni Makaulule Director **Dzomo La Mupo**
Liezl Smith Chairperson **Kogelberg Villages Environmental Trustees**
Jabu Myeni Founder **Gifted for Good**
Les Mitchell Director **Institute for Critical Animal Studies**
Janet Solomon Founder **Ocean Not Oil**
Steve Smit Co-Founder **Monkey Helpline**
Liz Cornwall and Catherine Nyquist Co-Founders **Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary**
Lex Abnett Director **Southern African Fight for Rhinos**
Dave Du Toit Founder **Vervet Monkey Foundation**

