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2nd June 2025

URGENT CEASE AND DESIST RE CAPE PENINSULA BABOON MANAGEMENT JOINT TASK TEAM PROPOSED REMOVAL OF BABOONS FROM THE CAPE PENINSULA

Introduction

The Wildlife Animal Protection Forum of South Africa (WAPFSA) is a national network of twenty-eight South African environmental and conservation organizations established in 2017 with a particular emphasis on wild animal protection expertise.

WAPFSA is explicitly designed as a vehicle to engage with governments on the issue of the conservation, wellbeing and protection of wild animals and the natural environment in which they live.

Our policy positions are based on robust science, ethical and compassionate conservation practices and harmonious co-existence within nature. WAPFSA's activities are underpinned

by an understanding that the inter-relationship between environmental protection, animal well-being, conservation and the values of dignity, compassion and humaneness are foundational to our constitutional democracy. WAPFSA also advocate for the concepts of UBUNTU, the intrinsic value of wild animals and an integrative policy approach.

The WAPFSA non-human Primate Working Group has a particular interest in the management of chacma baboons in South Africa and has engaged with the Western Cape Provincial Government and with the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment on several occasions. WAPFSA comments on the Cape Peninsula Baboon Strategic Management Plan are reflected and published on the SANParks website.

Members of WAPFSA are 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 former Minister Barbara Creecy, to consult organizations focused on best practices for the protection of wildlife, with the view to implement the provision of animal well-being in conservation practices. The Ministerial Wildlife Well-Being Forum Primate Task Team is chaired by a member of WAPFSA.

Baboons are complex agentic beings, analogous to humans. They have the capacity to suffer, share a common evolutionary and biological history, have their own unique cultures and form their own sovereign communities. Studies clearly show that other animals have rich inner lives, including languages[1] and cultures,[2] and recent work in political philosophy shows that they not only form their own communities, but often actively co-shape communities, habitats, and relations with humans.[3]

The notion of flourishing, when it comes to non-human primates, does not necessarily mean 'in a strictly natural setting' as is the case with many other wild mammals. Baboons are able to adapt and flourish in urban or quasi-urban settings and thrive in anthropogenically modified habitats. Like humans, they are inquisitive, socially complex and flexible with enough manual dexterity to navigate new sources of food, like rubbish bins and houses.

When it comes to issues of management strategies, baboons warrant a very different approach from the one currently carried out by the CPBMJTT which: perpetuate settler

[1] Eva Meijer, *Animal Languages: The Secret Conversations of the Living World* (London: Hachette, 2019).
[2] Andrew Whiten, 'The Burgeoning Reach of Animal Culture', *Science*, 372(6537), 2021, p. eabe6514.
[3] Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Eva Meijer, *When Animals Speak. Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2019).

coloniality; currently reflect a strictly utilitarian mindset - as seen from the application of lethal and pain aversion baboon management interventions[4]; and deliberately act to *'invizibilize'* baboons.

Through social science and ethology human understandings about animal cultures and communities are changing fast, but incredulously it seems that the CPBMJTT is totally unaware of this. A huge shortcoming in the thinking and policy formulation of the CPBMJTT is the alarming and total exclusion of major social science, humanities and legal concepts and thinking, easily accessible in numerous peer-reviewed journals and books. The CPBMJTT is legally obliged to urgently address this defect.

In addition, ecologists and government agencies must urgently gain a fundamental understanding of wild animal welfare and wellbeing and the negative effects that their current interventions have. Conservation often focuses on management of species and populations, emphasizing the importance of numbers of animals. Welfare focuses on the condition and subjective experience of the individual, emphasizing the importance of well-being of individuals within the population.

Human and nonhuman agencies are entangled.[5] Decision-making structures must develop more just and sustainable systems and structures, be less anthropocentric, engage in respectful dialogue and respect baboons' agency.

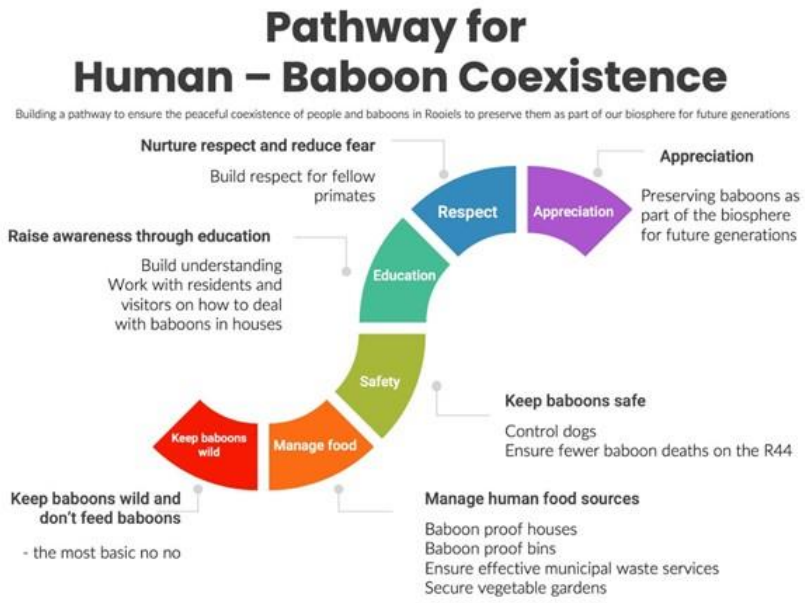
From legal and good governance perspectives ethical considerations based on sentience, flourishing, multispecies justice and shared biology must be major considerations. The onus, therefore, of the CPBMJTT and their ecologists, is to formulate ethical management practices that reflect and take cognisance of multispecies interactions, peaceful cohabitation and the need for a more responsible model of harmonious multispecies co-existence.

Key to the co-existence model is: acceptance that baboons have lived in the Western Cape for about 200 000 years, have a right to life and should be respected; acceptance, based on research (Mormile, 2023), that baboons prefer low-lying, coastal, fynbos habitat; and the recognition that baboons cannot be practically excluded (deterred) from the urban areas.

[4] Kansky, Ruth. Towards Understanding Tolerance to Damage Causing Mammalian Wildlife Dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conservation Ecology, Stellenbosch University, 2015: 149.

[5] Anthony Burke, 'Interspecies Cosmopolitanism: Non-Human Power and the Grounds of World Order in the Anthropocene', *Review of International Studies*, 49(2), 2023, pp. 201–22. Erika Cudworth, Stephen Hobden and Emilian Kavalski (eds), *Posthuman Dialogues in International Relations* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017). Stefanie R. Fishel, 'The Global Tree: Forests and the Possibility of a Multispecies IR', *Review of International Studies*, 49(2), 2023, 223–40. DOI: 10.1017/S0260210522000286.

As an example, see below the Rooiels pathway to human-baboon co-existence.



Recommendations

NOTING:

1. That the Cape Peninsula Baboon Management Joint Task Team (CPBMJTT) must facilitate the engagement of stakeholders including, scientific academic institutions, animal welfare and protection organizations, authorities, civil society including ratepayers' associations, through the development and implementation of the CPBSMP.

2. That the CPBMJTT established a Baboon Advisory Group (BAG) comprising nominated representatives of recognised community groups, such as ratepayers' associations, businesses, landowners, advocacy groups and research institutions.

3. That CapeNature's official position statement reads as follows: *The underlying conservation principle which addresses these problems is that wildlife resources effectively have prior rights in that they evolved in these areas and existed there prior to conversion of the land for urban development. A holistic approach to address these "problems" is being advocated by CapeNature and preventative measures must be put into place to address the wildlife – human conflict effectively and efficiently. This*

approach, which addresses the problem rather than the "problem" animal, is now the standard way in which such conflict between humans and wildlife in urban areas and rural areas should be addressed. This is also in line with best practice dictated by national and international protocols in this regard. Landowners and other property owners need to take reasonable steps to protect their property and other interests from being damaged or utilized by naturally occurring baboon troops. ;

4. That failure by the CPBMJTT to meaningfully and extensively consult with ourselves and more broadly with others from the animal protection and welfare sector will without doubt result in litigation.

5. Noting that this letter is endorsed by 34 animal welfare and protection organizations

WAPFSA therefore requests that the CPBMJTT:

1. Cease and desist from any planning of the removal of baboon troops or individuals from the Cape Peninsula.
2. Urgently reform current baboon management policies which are outdated, fails to recognise the precautionary principle, and are non-compliant with legislation and Constitutional Court decisions.
3. Implement previously discussed mitigation measures, including baboon-proof bins, signage, and enforcement of bylaws.
4. Undertake meaningful consultation with the Baboon Advisory Group and other stakeholders.
5. Provide independent and transparent scientific data for review, including comprehensive comparative baboon troop census and troop dynamics from 2005 to the present.
6. Must include representatives from the animal welfare and protection sector in any panel of experts established by the CPBJTT.
7. Must include social scientists, ethologists and other academics selected by the animal welfare and protection sector in any panel of experts established by the CPBJTT.
8. Formally incorporate into decision-making processes recommendations from the animal welfare and protection sector.
9. Initiate restorative ecological strategies, including indigenous reforestation of sleeping sites.

10. Shift to a humane, inclusive, and ecologically coherent management plan aligned with the NEM:BA well-being clause.

General Response to the CPBMJTT Proposal for the Forced Removal of "Splinter" Baboon Troops from the Cape Peninsula

Representatives from SANParks, CapeNature and the City of Cape Town hosted their second meeting with the Peninsula Baboon Advisory Group on the 27th May 2025. According to the CPBMJTT the welfare of the Cape Peninsula baboon troops has severely regressed in the last three years, the population of baboons have apparently increased and has allegedly put pressure on available resources.

The CPBMJTT proposed that five splinter troops be removed from the Cape Peninsula as according to the CPBMJFTT baboons have limited access to low-lying natural land with plants of high nutritional value for foraging; the low-lying areas are too small apparently to sustain them; rangers have very little success in keeping the baboons out of the urban areas leading to an over-reliance on aversion techniques; the health and welfare of the troops are allegedly severely compromised; and escalating conflict between baboons and residents is being recorded.

The CPBMJTT relies upon the two reports from 2011 and 2012 both were referenced in the Cape Peninsula Baboon Strategic Management Plan (CPBSMP) 2023/24 to 2033/34.[6]

How these troops should be removed will apparently be reviewed by a panel of external international and local experts and will be open for comment by the CPBAG. The options include translocation for rewilding, capture and removal to an existing sanctuary or to a newly established sanctuary, humane euthanasia, or a combination of these options.

The forced removal of baboons from their natural historical foraging range areas is archaic and a gut-wrenching, ill-advised decision which we oppose in the strongest possible terms. The decision to 'remove' entire baboon troops is euphemistic at best. It is wagered that they will not be relocated to a new 'wild' area, there are no 'rehabilitation' sanctuaries in the

[6] Hoffman, T.S., 2011. The spatial ecology of Chacma baboons (Papio ursinus) in the Cape Peninsula, South Africa: towards improved management and conservation strategies; Hoffman, T.S. and M. Justin O'Riain, 2012. Monkey management: using spatial ecology to understand the extent and severity of human-baboon conflict in the Cape Peninsula, *South Africa. Ecology and Society* 17(3): 13.

Western Cape and no other entities elsewhere that can take them, thus removal simply means that the CPBMJTT will kill them. Let us not mince our words.

WAPFSA nominated a representative to the BAG and we are advised that the BAG has only met twice and that at its second meeting, the plan to remove baboons was presented as a fait accompli. This violates the stated purpose of the BAG: to foster inclusive, transparent consultation and to enable collaboration with communities and experts.

WAPFSA notes with concern that the CPBMJTT agencies, the City of Cape Town, SANParks, and CapeNature have announced the proposed removal of two entire baboon troops, as well as additional individuals across the Cape Peninsula in the media. These announcements appear to have been made unilaterally by the Joint Task Team (JTT), with no substantive prior engagement with key stakeholders, including the welfare and environmental organisations represented on the Baboon Advisory Group (BAG).

WAPFSA member, *Green Group Simonstown*, was cited in media communications as having been consulted. This is false. *Green Gro*up, which ran a successful 18-month non-lethal management initiative with the Seaforth troop, was not consulted before this decision. Their work was actively obstructed by CapeNature. Other welfare-focused members of the BAG likewise confirm that they were not consulted. The inclusion of their names in official communications as though they had endorsed the removals is misleading and unacceptable.

Further to our understanding the City of Cape Town, SANParks, CapeNature and representatives of the CPBMJTT have not had any meaningful consultation with those involved in managing the Seaforth or the CT2 troops of baboons regarding their methodology and how it could be successfully replicated. None of the representatives from CPBMJTT have the depth of knowledge or experience earned on the ground and acquired by those managing these two troops. Therefore, the decisions are inherently biased against such methodologies and have, instead, been based on a leaning towards resolving the complaints of uniformed and intolerant residents.

Both the Seaforth and the CT2 baboon troops have been 'managed' successfully - and improving - by volunteer NPOs with no use of aggressive techniques and with a level of keeping baboons out of the urban area that equals or exceeds that which is contractually required by a service provider. The lack of expensive tool use, fewer, highly skilled monitors further illustrated the lower costs involved to rate payers should the methods have been adopted officially.

In terms of Section 9A of NEM:BA, any activity that may negatively impact animal well-being must be subjected to precautionary measures. Furthermore, Section 24 of the Constitution guarantees the right to an environment that is not harmful to health or well-being, for both present and future generations. These legal provisions are binding on all public authorities.

In November 2020, Sir David Attenborough a world renowned naturalist lent his support to the Betty's Bay Baboon Action Group who were advocating to allow the resident baboons to roam freely. "The problem has been created by people attracting these intelligent creatures close to human habitation by leaving refuse and discarded food easily accessible, so there is surely a moral duty to find a humane solution to the problem."

Primatologists have confirmed that baboons play a significant role in plant dispersal and reproduction, that they keep scorpions, snakes and rats out the areas in which they roam. Research carried out in the Overstrand indicated that baboons play an important role in the ecosystem and that it is imperative that they forage in the fynbos. However, it was noted that high-calorie foods are tempting alternatives. The call for better resourced and better policed waste management is reverberating around the Western Cape, recently in the suburb of Kommetjie on the Cape Peninsula a situation escalated when animal activists attempting to protect the baboons clashed with the residents and a baboon was seriously injured.

The Chacma baboon has been assessed by the IUCN as a species of Least Concern. However baboon numbers are decreasing, the species is especially vulnerable to climate change. According to studies the Chacma baboon will be the worst affected species and it has been recommended that more focus is placed on biogeographical tools as a means of exploring vulnerabilities in this seemingly resilient species. In South Africa, including the Western Cape, no comprehensive national census, or analysis of baboon populations over time, has been undertaken. This is essential and should be obligatory before any sweeping management interventions, such as those put forward by the CPBMJTT can even be considered.

The proposal to remove and kill baboons from the Cape Peninsula has not carefully noted the valid concern about the sustainability of the Chacma baboon species in the Western Cape. A study carried out in the Western Cape noted the importance of future research due to the lack of knowledge on the source populations or localities for Chacma baboon harvesting.

The important results of this study to quantify wildlife use for cultural traditions has relevance for setting conservation priorities and should assist in effective policy development inclusive of ecological sustainability priorities as well as cultural demands.

Tens of millions of rands of taxpayers' money has been spent on attempting to manage baboons in the Cape Peninsula and the Overstrand over the past two decades using protocols which, according the available data, and expert and public opinion, ignore baboon sentience and well-being and have not been successful for baboons or for humans.

The Cape Peninsula Baboon-Strategic-Management-Plan sanctions controversial and violent aversion tactics, including the use of paintball guns against the 16 indigenous baboon troops historically present on the Peninsula as a management technique. Perhaps, encouraged by this support of violence and this violent management strategy, some residents have taken up arms such as pellet guns, and other lethal means, resulting in the death of numerous baboons this year.
Intensive research of these management practices in the Western Cape, has highlighted the fact that the protocols established to manage baboons were instituted by a baboon management company and adopted without a rigorous public participation process by the City of Cape Town Municipality, CapeNature, SANParks and the Overstrand Municipality.

These protocols must be recast. Baboon management, at the very least, requires a flexible, dynamic and compassionate approach which is compliant with the Constitution Court decisions, NEMA and PAJA.

These violent aversion management techniques are encouraged in the Overstrand Municipal area by CapeNature who permit such strategies. In Pringle Bay for example, the Overstrand Municipality has armed entire teams of individuals, employed via the extended Public Works Programme, with paint ball markers and other weapons to shoot the baboons out of the village. This violent approach ignores the fact that the Chacma baboon depends upon foraging areas within the village in order to survive. There is evidence that this violent strategy in Pringle Bay has encouraged residents, including young adults to take up arms and to do the same with dire consequences for the welfare and wellbeing of the Chacma baboons.

When continuous encounters between humans and wildlife leads to negative results, this is described as human-wildlife conflict. According to a report entitled *A Conservation Assessment of Papio Ursinus* the most severe threat to chacma baboons is human- wildlife

conflict. The current mismanagement of baboons in the Western Cape may eventually drive this wildlife species to extinction. As we well know, the long-term survival of some of the world's most iconic species is at risk from this significant and escalating threat: human-wildlife conflict. The current violent and retaliatory control methods used on this species is not based on any independent scientific assessment that we are aware of.

155 experts from 40 organisations based in 27 countries contributed their expertise on so-called "human-wildlife conflict" and its management in a report published by the WWF and UNEP. This in-depth study was published in a report entitled *The Need for Human-Wildlife Coexistence*. The content of the report acknowledges that within the complexity of human-wildlife conflict, human activities and land use changes have pushed many species to the brink of extinction, "*In a crowded world where HWC is accelerating this rate of loss and pitting people against wildlife, humans must find pathways to coexist."*

The time has come to step back and rethink how we can work together to reduce and manage conflicts between people and wildlife and foster coexistence for the benefit of both.

Moreover, the baboons are protected by law in the Western Cape and shooting at them with a pellet gun or other weapons can lead to prosecution, imprisonment, and the implementation of fines.

There are many ways in which these seemingly problem troops can be assisted with a win, win, win for all beings, including humans, baboons and penguins. Over the last 20 years proposals have been made by animal welfare and wildlife conservations groups to assist with baboon/human management. These proposals have mostly been ignored for a seemingly quicker and easier route which involves money, violence and killing, the preferred options of the decision makers. This route has proved to be unsuccessful, hence the current proposal for removal.

The main reasons for the proposed removal of the splinter troops and individuals makes no logical sense, claiming it is for the welfare of the whole. The reasons for the baboons' decreasing welfare is directly because of human behaviour, mass development and the violent management methods that have been used over the last decade or more. Promoting a change in human behaviour, assisting people in understanding baboons better and

working with a more compassionate respectful way will lead to easier relationship between baboons and humans.

At least two of the splinter troops have been successfully managed by community NPO's. This needs to be recognised and their methods incorporated into current management policies.

In 2020 the last few remaining baboons in Scarborough were removed to "sanctuary". The well-known baboon Kataza was also removed to the same sanctuary. These wild baboons were removed to Limpopo province to a sanctuary that has since had questioned raised about its reputation. No public follow-up has ever been made. We do not know the current state of the Scarborough baboons and Kataza, they could well be dead. It is also extremely unethical to place wild animals into a life-time of captivity with no-hope of release. Is this a solution? Out of sight out of mind seems to be the reason for the proposed removal of the baboons.
Over the 5 years since their removal more baboons have arrived in Scarborough showing the vacuum effect of removing entire troops and not addressing the cause of conflicts. The same thing will happen if these 5 "splinter troops" are removed.

Removing the problem is no solution. This is an incredible opportunity to create positive transformation for all involved, working with a heart-based management system, which finds compassionate, respectful solutions through on-the ground knowledge, observation and understanding of the situation from the perspective of the baboons and the humans.

As a case study of a baboon management methodology that can be replicates see *Appendix 1 - Green Group Simonstown - Submission of Comments and Recommendations, Statement to the Joint Task Team (JTT) Simon's Town Baboon Insights and Recommendations*.

We look forward to your urgent response to this letter.

Yours faithfully,

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This letter is endorsed by the following forums and organizations:

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