

OPEN LETTER TO THE CPBMJTT HIGHLIGHTING POSSIBLE, REPEATED, FALSE REPORTING OF DAMAGES ALLEGEDLY CAUSED BY CHACMA BABOONS IN THE SOUTH AREA OF SIMON'S TOWN



Via electronic correspondence

Attention:
Cape Peninsula Baboon Management
Joint Task Team (JTT)
cpbmjtt@capenature.co.za
CapeNature Permits
kbeda@capenature.co.za

03 December 2024

Dear Representatives of the JTT,

Introduction

[Green Group Simonstown \(GGST\)](#) is a registered non-profit organisation committed to fostering human-wildlife civil coexistence, through innovative, locally-driven solutions that prioritise the ethical and holistic preservation of our natural heritage and biodiversity, for the benefit of all forms of life, in present and future generations.

GGST is a proud member of the [Wildlife Animal Protection Forum South Africa \(WAPFSA\)](#), a collective of thirty organisations dedicated to promoting animal well-being in conservation. Through our collaboration with WAPFSA members, we have, together, made significant contributions to shaping policy amendments and advocating for the inclusion of animal well-



GREEN GROUP SIMONSTOWN

Registered NPC number 2024/168449/08, 25 Wilfred Street, Simon's Town, Cape Peninsula of South Africa. Contact: Mobile: 082 561 1111 – email admin@greengroupsimonstown.org
<https://greengroupsimonstown.org/>

being provisions in the [National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act \(NEM:BA\)](#). This collective effort has been instrumental in driving positive change and ensuring a stronger focus on wild animal survival in South Africa's environmental policies.

The Executive Director of GGST has developed specific [Standard Operational Procedures](#) relative to implementing the consideration of Well-being in conservation practices, consistent with NEM:BA. She has been elected to serve on the [Cape Peninsula Baboon Advisory Group](#) and she looks forward to contributing, as scheduled, from February 2024.

Background on the Simonsberg Troop and GGST's Rehabilitation Efforts

CapeNature, one of the representatives of the JTT, is aware that Green GGST is leading a Baboon Monitoring and Civil Coexistence [Pilot Project](#), a community initiative launched in October 2023 in Simon's Town. The objective of this project is to protect a small baboon troop that separated from the Smits troop in 2022. Initially, this troop spent considerable time in Simon's Town, particularly in areas such as Seaforth and Boulders.

Since June 2024, data collected through our efforts indicate a significant shift in the troop's behaviour. They now spend most of their time on the mountain, foraging on natural resources and avoiding human waste. Notably, the baboons appear to be in excellent health and exhibit calm, relaxed behaviour. In recognition of their consistent presence on the mountain, we have named them the Simonsberg Troop.

Concerns about Possible, Repeated False Reporting

We have noted recent dramatic media reports regarding an alleged increase in baboon intrusions into houses in Simon's Town and across the Peninsula.

These uninformed and sensationalistic articles and TV segments collating images from different incidents across the years and presenting them as if this all happening at the same time, indeed contribute to the spreading of misinformation and the increase of violence towards chacma baboons, a protected, indigenous species.

1. <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/offbeat/as-baboons-become-bolder-cape-town-battles-for-solutions-animals-latest-update-sPCA/>
2. <https://youtu.be/0tRv52wYBRs?si=vJp5N-GuAT7lQaJd>
3. https://youtu.be/vKA_p1PPI6U?si=Oepf_iQV4UTUDj9C



GREEN GROUP SIMONSTOWN

Registered NPC number 2024/168449/08, 25 Wilfred Street, Simon's Town, Cape Peninsula of South Africa. Contact: Mobile: 082 561 1111 – email admin@greengroupsionstown.org
<https://greengroupsionstown.org/>

Given the potential for such statements to negatively influence public perception of chacma baboons—a protected species—could the JTT address this campaign and provide accurate data to confirm or refute these claims?

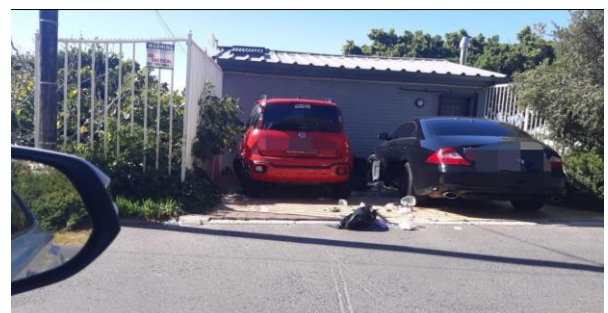
Based on our observations, this trend aligns with similar patterns seen during the same period in 2022 and 2023, coinciding with a rise in tourism and the influx of residents renting properties in Simon's Town. Temporary visitors often overlook basic waste management guidelines, unintentionally attracting baboons to residential areas.

Incident at Murdock Valley, Simon's Town Property

We have noted reports of repeated intrusions attributed to the Simonsberg Troop targeting certain properties, situated in Murdock Valley.

While we are aware that baboons have been in recent days more present on the edge between the mountain and Murdock Valley (including Rocklands) we have records confirming that the baboons go across private gardens that they use as corridors but don't effectively enter any house.

We became aware of the reporting from a Murdock Valley resident, known for persistently refusing to comply with waste management bylaws. This individual frequently leaves her waste bin outside, unsecured, for extended periods. Evidence of this [noncompliant and unlawful behaviour](#) has been documented across multiple incidents over the past months and years.



Irresponsible waste disposal at a Rocklands property



GREEN GROUP SIMONSTOWN

Registered NPC number 2024/168449/08, 25 Wilfred Street, Simon's Town, Cape Peninsula of South Africa. Contact: Mobile: 082 561 1111 – email admin@greengroupsimonstown.org
<https://greengroupsimonstown.org/>

This resident was approached also in early December 2024 by one of our monitors offering to clean her waste on the pavement and secure her bin. She refused any help and advice and asked the monitor to leave.

This resident is known to have repeatedly resorted to using paintball guns against the baboons (SPCA will have records about these events) and has repeatedly claimed extensive damages to her property. However, she has not provided any evidence to substantiate these claims. Additionally, the damage costs she reports are inconsistent with the current value of the items she alleges were affected by the baboons.

As you know, the effects of paintballs on baboons are horrific. GGST has summarised the dangers of such extremely invasive deterrents [here](#). The use of paintball by residents is illegal and punishable under criminal legislation.

It is also important to note that this resident walks her dogs off-leash, perhaps if she leashed them it would assist in reducing the chances of interactions with wildlife.

Mischaracterisation of Baboons as a Threat to Wildlife

This same resident, concludes her report by claiming that baboons pose a threat to other local wildlife. Such uninformed assertions are not only misleading but can also perpetuate a negative and scientifically inaccurate perception of baboons. It is essential to recognise that chacma baboons are, in fact, a keystone species, playing a critical role in maintaining ecological balance.

Baboons contribute to seed dispersal, vegetation control, and the overall health of the ecosystems they inhabit. By portraying them as a threat, these statements risk undermining conservation efforts and the public's understanding of their ecological importance. Such narratives can also fuel antagonism toward baboons, leading to actions that harm these protected animals, such as illegal and punishable deterrence measures, or worse.

Way forward

Given that there are currently no recordings from baboon hotlines reflecting the trends of reported incidents, and recognising that these data are now managed by the official Service Provider under the JTT, we request that the JTT kindly share the following with the public:

- a. **Official data and trends comparing reports from November and December of the years 2022, 2023, and 2024;**
- b. **Guidelines for accurate and verifiable reporting of baboon-related incidents.**



GREEN GROUP SIMONSTOWN

Registered NPC number 2024/168449/08, 25 Wilfred Street, Simon's Town, Cape Peninsula of South Africa. Contact: Mobile: 082 561 1111 – email admin@greengroupsimonstown.org
<https://greengroupsimonstown.org/>

In addition, we urge the JTT to respond to this kind of reporting by addressing harmful and illegal actions as well as uninformed statements and providing accurate information about baboons, while highlighting their essential role in the local environment. A measured, evidence-based response would not only counter misinformation but also help promote a more informed, legally -compliant, and constructive dialogue about coexistence with wildlife.

Such actions are critical to ensuring that public narratives are shaped by facts rather than misconceptions, fostering a deeper understanding of baboons' ecological importance and the shared responsibility of living harmoniously with them.

Thanks for your attention to this matter and your collaboration,

Kind regards,



Green Group Simonstown
Monitoring Program Team
admin@greengroupsimonstown.org
<https://greengroupsimonstown.org/>