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Office of the Premier
For the Attention of Premier Alan Winde
Per Email: Premier.Winde@westerncape.gov.za

30th October 2020

Dear Honourable Premier Winde,

Open Letter: The Ill Treatment of Kataza (SK11) is the Tipping Point for the Need to Reconfigure the Protection of Chacma Baboons and their Natural Habitat in the Western Cape

Cape Town, with all its natural splendour, including the dramatic mountain and coastal landscapes, the world-class wineries and the spectacular beaches is a favoured destination of South Africans and travellers from all over the world. Voted as the best city in the world for seven years in a row by the London Telegraph, named the most beautiful city in the world by Buzzfeed and selected by the world's top travel professionals to be seventh amongst the fifty of the most beautiful cities in the world.

In July 2020 [Anton Bredell](#), Minister of Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning announced that 72% of the municipalities in the Western Cape are in good financial health. "It's simple. These reports show that taxpayers money is going where it is meant to go and not to lining the pockets of friends and families of politicians or corrupt officials. Managing money well, not wasting or stealing it, is critical if you want to deliver the services needed to make the province a better place for all who live in it".

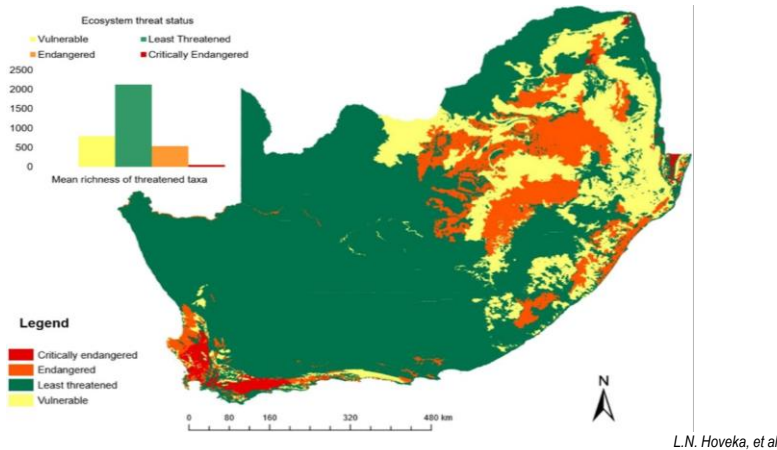
South Africa is the world's third most biologically diverse country. The Cape Floristic Region is one of the Biodiversity Hotspots. The extraordinary endemism displayed by its flora, combined with a growing human population, rapid development, habitat loss, overexploitation, the introduction of alien species and the unforeseen effects of climate change, is contributing to a major conservation crisis. The rapid rate of urbanisation and development in Cape Town specifically, but also elsewhere in the Western Cape, is negatively affecting and placing extensive pressure on ecosystems, nature and wildlife.

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The [Responsible Tourism Charter](#) states that all Cape Town destinations are closely integrated with the environment. This charter emphasises that Cape Town is committed to sustaining and supporting its immediate surroundings, with strong environmental management practices in full swing. However, despite the assurances about the protection of Cape Town's environment, the protection of the [eleven troops of chacma](#) baboons over the past two decades continues to draw much negative publicity both locally and abroad. The management protocols for these baboons is now openly being questioned by primate experts and the public alike. During this interrogation process the functionality, accountability and the possible lack of transparency of local government and associated organisations is being highlighted. Important, uncomfortable questions are being raised about the effectiveness of the right and freedom to access public information.

Brief Background

Chacma baboons are found in the Table Mountain National Park which stretches the full length of the peninsula. Baboons, with their adaptability, intelligence, agility and complex social structures presents the need for ingenuity and collaboration to mitigate human and baboon interaction.

In 2001, a contract was granted to Jenni Trethowan, founder of Baboon Matters Trust, to monitor baboons on the Cape Peninsula. The Baboon Matters trustees include Professor John Cruise, Wynter Worsthorpe, Dr Elisa Galut and Dr Paula Pebsworth. In [an interview](#), Trethowan stated that there was little funding to encourage effective waste management in the urban areas situated closest to the baboons natural habitat. Little attention, she said, was paid to the implementation of bylaws to protect the baboons and the monitoring process, she said, focused on herding the baboons away from urban areas by using human monitors.

In 2008 there were [twenty-nine](#) recorded human induced deaths of baboons. A year later, Esme Beamish submitted a [study](#), as part of her master of science in zoology degree, to the University of Cape Town on the causes and consequences of mortality and mutilation in the Cape Peninsula baboon population.



[The declining wildlife habitats](#) accelerated by actions such as the harvesting of the pine plantations on Table Mountain and the ever expanding human sprawl has resulted in a forced increase of contact between people and baboons. Furthermore, habitat degradation and fragmentation has decreased the quality of available food and water for baboons. Coupled with the mismanagement of human food waste in the areas situated closest to where the baboons are, has attracted baboons to forage for food in urban areas.

Like humans, baboons are adaptable and they will forage for food in houses, in waste bins, in restaurants, shops and even from people's hands. Despite warnings not to feed baboons, tour operators have encouraged baboons with food in order for better sightings and photographic opportunities for their customers.

According to Professor Justin O Riain, as a result of the Beamish's study in 2009, the Baboon Research Unit was established. A management plan was devised by the unit and a baboon technical team made up of scientists from the University of Cape Town and CapeNature and National Park officials was appointed. Various baboons were tracked with GPS collars and after a time period, according to the data analysed by the technical team, it was decided that the baboons had grown accustomed to the baboon monitors clapping and shouting. In 2010, a [protocol](#) for reducing the frequency and severity of raiding behaviour was implemented and a decision was made that all male baboons who were deemed a problematic were to be trapped and killed. In 2011, the Baboon Research Unit hosted a workshop attended by city officials, representatives of South African National Parks and international experts. Following the workshop the city awarded a nine million rand per year contract to a company called Human Wildlife Solutions. Furthermore, the SPCA approved the use of [paintball](#) guns and bear bangers.

Habitat loss and habitat degradation pose the greatest threat to baboons in the Western Cape of South Africa, and whilst limiting human wildlife conflict situations is a priority for all conservationists and wildlife activists, not everyone agreed with the protocols set out by Human Wildlife Solutions. To further exacerbate the situation, in 2015 the Western Cape suffered an usually devastating [fire season](#), major fires burned across the Cape Peninsula from the beginning of March until April, a total of 6900 hectares of land was burnt. According to reports six baboons died as a result of the fire and some of the more seriously injured baboons were at risk of euthanasia.

Julia Wood, the City of Cape Town's Environmental Resource Manager [stated in 2016](#) that their protocols for keeping baboons out of urban areas was effective. "The removal of raiding males generally has a very dramatic effect of reducing raiding in the previously affected areas, these cases are clearly documented. The baboon management program is undertaken for the benefit of residents living in, or visitors moving through, baboon-affected areas in the southern Cape Peninsula."

In a [report](#) written by Professor Justin O Riain and published on the 8th November 2017, he stated that rubbish bins were the most raided item and that more time and resources should be devoted to ensure that these are managed correctly. Improved waste management has proven to mitigate human wildlife conflict. Another method of decreasing baboon raiding efficiency would be to build baboon proof fences around the urban edges, whether these be actual structures or virtual structures.



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In October 2017, Klein Constantia and Buitenverwachting wine farms applied for permits to hunt baboons after suffering from regular raids by baboons and damage to their crops and infrastructure. Marietjie Engelbrecht from CapeNature confirmed the farmers had been issued with permits. The permits were valid from the October 2017 to October 2018. During that time period, it was reported that at least seven baboons were killed. This information was brought to the public's attention by Karen Watkins of the Constantiaberg Bulletin. The [SPCA confirmed](#) in a radio interview that they had not been informed about the permits given to Constantia wine farms to hunt and shoot baboons. The chief executive Mqabuko Ndukwana said that hunting of baboons was [not a methodology](#) for baboon management that the SPCA would ever support.

The public's faith in the authorities was further eroded when the well-being of the baboons was severely undermined as a result of these hunting permits being issued. Furthermore, the complete lack of transparency was brought to light. No subsequent report has ever been publicly issued with regard to the amount of baboons that were actually killed in Constantia, the number is believed to be as high as forty baboon deaths.

Present Day

The controversial management of baboons in the Western Cape was highlighted once again when [residents in Kommetjie](#) noticed that a well-known baboon called Kataza, also known as SK11, went missing on the 25th of August 2020. Residents were outraged that he might have been euthanised or taken by the Human Wildlife Solutions.

It was eventually confirmed by the City of Cape Town that Kataza had been removed from Slangkop in Kommetjie and relocated him to Tokai. The reasons for his forced removal were to reduce the dispersing of the troop from Slangkop to the village of Kommetjie and that there were better breeding opportunities for Kataza in Tokai. It was decided to relocate Kataza because he was compromising the welfare of the Slangkop troop [according to Julia Wood](#) the City of Cape Town's Biodiversity manager.

Wildlife advocates who are familiar with Kataza and the troop from Slangkop disputed these claims, stating that Kataza had recently fathered offspring and was not dispersing. Calls for his return to Slangkop have met with resistance from the City of Cape Town.

On the 7th of September in a [radio interview](#) the City of Cape Town's Biodiversity manager Julia Wood told John Maytham that the baboon management by HWS followed best global practise. In the same interview Wood confirmed that seven baboons were killed per year. She stated that CapeNature makes the final decision in the process and issues permission and permits to kill.

The relocation of Kataza has obviously caused him much emotional distress, this is blatantly obvious from the daily sightings of him with an uncomfortable tracking collar and outsized tags pinned to his ear. The relocation has outraged local residents, local businesses, members of civil society and has, once again, brought to light the unsustainable practises of the City of Cape Town's baboon management. Importantly, in the statement



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Cape of Good Hope SPCA confirmed that according to their assessment Kataza has not integrated with the troop of baboons in Tokai.

On the 9th of September, Francesca de Gasparis the executive director of Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute, [wrote a letter](#) to the Mayor of Cape Town Dan Plato. The contents of the letter highlighted the organisations concern about the aggressive protocols used to manage baboons in the Western Cape.

On the 16th of September a zoom meeting was held between interested stakeholders and the City of Cape Town. Minister Bredell confirmed that a workshop would be organised by the Ministry of Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and CapeNature to engage in discussions on scientific research and animal protection principles that will underpin the protocols for the treatment of baboons and their co-existence with their human counterparts going forward.

On the 17th of September a letter from the [Wildlife Animal Protection Forum](#) a group of conservation and wildlife protection organisations was published in the Daily Maverick.

On Sunday the 27th of September a silent protest was held in Tokai in support of Kataza. [Neil Greenwood](#), the regional director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare stated that Kataza would not thrive in Tokai, that he was suffering extreme distress and loneliness after officials literally dumped him to fend for himself in a new and unfamiliar environment.

On the 21st October an article appeared in the media stating that court papers had been filed in the Western Cape High Court on Friday 2nd October by animal rights activist Ryno Engelbrecht. Engelbrecht alleges that the relocation of Kataza (SK11) by the City of Cape Town is a violation of the Animal Protection Act, an abject failure and he has challenged the City's presumed authority to manage baboon the urban edges of the Cape Peninsula.

Engelbrecht requested an order from the court to replace the GPS tracker from Kataza's neck and remove the ear tags and return him to his home range on Slangkop in Kommetjie. This court action followed a letter of demand to the City of Cape Town. CapeNature and SanParks are cited as the second and third respondents the South African Navy and Human and Wildlife Solutions are cited as fourth and fifth respondents.

On October the 26th, the Cape of Good Hope SPCA released a press statement confirming that they had been monitoring Kataza from the time they were notified of his relocation from Kommetjie to Tokai. They also stated that they had made an application to the City of Cape Town to ask for permission to capture Kataza and relocate him to a rehabilitation centre in Limpopo. It was confirmed in the statement that the Cape of Good Hope SPCA has applied to CapeNature for the necessary permits to capture Kataza. The EMS Foundation has filed a complaint with the NSPCA regard to the application to remove Kataza from the Western Cape.



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On the 27th of October 2020 CapeNature confirmed in an affidavit that Julia Wood made the decision to move Kataza. We believe that during this legal action, the controversial internal decision making process spanning decades will finally be made public.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Over and above the destruction and fragmentation of their habitat, and despite being listed as a [CITES Appendix II](#) threatened species, baboons are offered very little protection in the Western Cape. Baboons are shot and poisoned, illegally captured and traded, hunted and used by traditional healers for medicinal purposes. In addition, they are also vulnerable to such hazards as power lines pylons, veld fires and road accidents.

The Western Cape government seems to have pretended to offer protection to its baboon population but it is becoming apparent that deliberate attempts have been made to conceal unpleasant and incriminating facts about these so called protection methods. Over the past two decades the City of Cape Town has spent vast amounts of ratepayers money on trying to keep the baboons out of the urban areas whilst very little attention has been paid to the loss of the baboons natural habit due to human encroachment, fragmentation and degradation, pollution, climate change and invasive species. Moreover, waste management and human behaviour interventions have also been largely lacking.

Minister of Environment, Barbara Creecy, in a speech on the 28th October 2020 at the APPG summit on the aims and priorities for the fifteenth meeting of the conference of the parties to the convention on biological diversity, emphasised that:

1. Scientists tell us the planet and all its life forms have reached a tipping point.
2. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), 2018, indicates that biodiversity is diminishing at unprecedented rates, with current consumption and production patterns overshooting earth's carrying capacity and threatening our collective future on earth.
3. Even before the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, South Africa's 2018 National Biodiversity Assessment highlighted the need to address threats from habitat loss due to fragmentation and degradation, pollution, impacts on wetlands, climate change and invasive alien species.
4. The Assessment prioritised efforts directed at improving habitat connectivity and restoration, protection of wetlands and strategic water sources, enhancing ecosystems resilience, conservation of species most threatened and vulnerable to extinction, and towards regulating or prohibiting activities which have adverse impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems.
5. We cannot afford to ignore the predictions from the IPBES report of an estimation of about a million species that can be extinct if we do not strengthen our efforts to prevent biodiversity loss.
6. We need clear targets to put nature on a path to recovery in the next decade and beyond.
7. We need a clear plan to secure South African lives and livelihoods in harmony with nature.
8. We need to promote a whole-society approach to the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems.



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9. We need to mainstream our responses to biodiversity loss, ecosystem restoration and conservation so important on our continent.
10. Capacity building initiatives are also key to support effective implementation of the framework as well as robust processes to ensure accountability and reporting.
11. A one-health approach will result in the achievement of the 2050 vision of biodiversity of living in harmony with nature and practical solutions to unprecedented environmental challenges facing humanity and the planet.

There is global consensus that the current decline of nature is unprecedented in human history and is being driven primarily by human activities. There is urgency. It can no longer be 'Business as Usual'. There is massive biodiversity loss, land & ocean degradation, pollution, & climate change—all of which are accelerating at an unprecedented rate. We are living in the Sixth Extinction—83% of all mammals & half of all plants have been destroyed and one million wildlife species now face extinction. Not only is this causing irreversible harm to our life support systems it is increasing poverty and inequalities as well as hunger and malnutrition.

The welfare and protection of wild animals is not being addressed, and is not adequately policed or enforced – in fact it has been left up to an under-resourced NGO that has no authority or powers. The State and provinces devote no resources to wild animal welfare. The Animals Protection Act is seriously outdated and is entirely inadequate to deal with the current wildlife utilisation regime. The EMS foundation urges the Western Cape to be at the forefront of addressing these issues.

The EMS Foundation urges the Western Cape to actively support the “One Health” approach which considers environmental, animal (human and nonhuman) health holistically and where there is:

1. social and inter-generational justice
2. real transparency and accountability
3. a circular economy characterised by justice, ecological sustainability and regeneration
4. ecologically sustainable livelihoods

Furthermore, the EMS Foundation urges the Western Cape to take urgent cognizance of Constitutional and High Court judgments. The implications of these Court Judgments and statements are that animals, including baboons have intrinsic value, cannot simply be killed at a whim and treated with cruelty and that the welfare of individuals must be considered. For example, the key issues coming out of the NSPCA v Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development Con Court case in 2016 were that:

1. In terms of Animal welfare – the goal in protecting is 'placing intrinsic value on animals as individuals'.
2. Animal welfare is connected with section 24 of the Constitution.
3. The '*Integrative approach*' correctly links suffering of individual animals to conservation.
4. 'Respect for individual animals reinforces broader environmental protection efforts'.
5. Animal welfare and conservation reflect two intertwined values.
6. 'The rationale behind protecting animal welfare has shifted from merely safeguarding the moral status of humans to placing intrinsic value on animals as individuals'.



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The Constitution sets the framework within which policy must function. Section 24 of the Constitution requires a shift away from colonial and exploitative past towards animals and nature and towards Ubuntu, Respect and Care.

Maintaining key ecological processes is a strong argument for conserving biodiversity, and this should extend to preventing the local extinction of keystone species. Seed dispersal is such a process and chacma baboons (*Papio ursinus ursinus*), are key seed dispersers and their endo-zoochores role will become more important as climate change alters the distributional ranges of plant communities. This highlights the need to conserve, rather than persecute, chacma baboons who are also currently suffering range contractions in the Western Cape.

It is within these above contexts that the EMS Foundation urges the Western Cape, through collaboration, transparency, dialogue and best science, to urgently take a more humane, ethical, respectful and ecologically restorative approach where both humans and baboons will benefit. The re-considered protection of baboons and the protection of their natural habitat in the Cape Peninsula needs urgent attention.

Yours sincerely

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