



Society has a Moral Obligation to Address the Ongoing Cruelty Shown Towards Baboon Families in Pringle Bay

Media Statement

The mission of the EMS Foundation is the advancement and protection of the rights and general welfare of wild animals, children, elderly persons and other vulnerable groups in South Africa and Africa, for the purpose of alleviating suffering, disrupting inequality in all its forms, raising public awareness, empowering, and providing dignity.

The EMS Foundation has publicly [challenged](#) the currently held provincial attitude that Chacma baboons are of the lowest conservation concern and our research points to the fact that the continued existence of this species is being threatened.

Intensive research of the management of baboons in the Cape Peninsula and the Overstrand over the past decade has highlighted the fact that the protocols established to manage baboons were instituted by a baboon management company and adopted without a public participation process by the City of Cape Town Municipality, CapeNature and the Overstrand Municipality. Tens of millions of rands of taxpayers' money has been spent on attempting to manage baboons using these protocols, which according to the available data and expert and public opinion, have not been successful for baboons or humans. These protocols to their very core must now be closely examined. Baboon management at the very least requires a flexible, dynamic and compassionate approach.

In order to find appropriate and alternative solutions the EMS Foundation has formed a think tank of experts and concentrated their efforts on studying and monitoring the dynamics of humans living with a troop of baboons in the town of Pringle Bay in the Overstrand, in the Western Cape of South Africa.

Pringle Bay is registered as a Conservancy and is part of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO Heritage Site. The Kogelberg is considered the heart of the Cape Floral Kingdom. The municipality, residents, visitors, property and business owners have a [critical responsibility](#) to protect and preserve the flora and fauna within this pristine natural environment.

"It is essential that all community members work together to keep baboon's out of harm's way by not allowing certain attractants in and around your home. For instance avoid planting fruit trees, close windows and doors during the day if you do not have burglar bars, install baboon-proof burglar bars where possible of 8cm apart, and do not feed birds. Ensure that you have lockable bins, all bins used in baboon-affected areas should be baboon proofed and locked. Refuse bags should not be left lying open easily available to baboons. Store you bin in a lockable refuse room, garage or shed. Warn your

neighbours when baboons are in the vicinity so that they can close their doors and windows, when a baboon is in your garden or house, back away slowly do not block its escape route. Recognise that living in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve is a lifestyle choice that involves certain responsibilities.”

This was the content of a statement [published](#) by the Overstrand Municipality for the residents living in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve.

In order to find appropriate, alternative solutions in the promotion of living harmoniously with baboons, undeterred by criticism, the EMS Foundation has selected to concentrate our efforts on monitoring the Pringle Bay chacma baboon troop as a study mode. This is because these baboons need to frequently pass through the village as part of their natural passage to and from their sleep and foraging sites.

The central business district of Pringle Bay was built in the middle of their range and the baboons have adapted accordingly. The troop is now considered an urban baboon troop which has adapted due to the exponential densification of the area over the years. The urban area offers great rewards, in terms of food, but also great risk such as injury and loss of life to the baboons.

Real-time data obtained from a locally based non-governmental environmental organisations, has been analysed by experts. The data, for example indicates that the Pringle Bay baboon troop spends the majority of their time during their visits to the town in the same areas. Areas where there are non-baboon proofed shops, alleyways with non-baboon-proof bins, the contents of which are a wide variety of left-over food from restaurants and pubs. The failure by Overstrand Municipality to enforce bylaws regarding animal proof bins and to eliminate human derived food sources is currently one of the main causes of human/baboon conflict in Pringle Bay.

All data is received with supporting photographic and video evidence. This verifiable evidence brings into question of the contradictory content of posts [published](#) on social media and in WhatsApp groups by some residents, residents who are openly not partial to the conditions and prerequisites of living harmoniously in Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve with the baboons.

It is unfortunate that the DA run Overstrand Municipality has chosen not to hold public consultation on the human baboon conflict in Pringle Bay since October 2022. In our view this is in direct contravention of the Municipality's Constitutional and statutory duty to provide transparent, democratic and accountable government for communities and to encourage the involvement of community organisations.

Besides the ongoing daily problems with non-compliance with regards to refuse removal and storage, some residents refuse to baboon proof their homes and some forget to secure their homes. The current situation in Pringle Bay is confounded by the [appointment](#) by the Overstrand Municipality of untrained Eco Rangers. The Eco Rangers [published](#) mandate is to warn residents that the baboon troop has entered the central business district so that residents are warned to close doors and windows timeously. However, the Eco Rangers have taken it upon themselves or have been purposefully tasked to harass and chase the troop across the public beaches, across the lagoon and up the mountains towards the villages of Betty's Bay and or Rooiels.

Similar actions to force the baboons into an area which could cause suffering and possible loss of life were carried out by the baboon management company *Human Wildlife Solutions*. Cullinan and Associates, environmental lawyers, acting for the EMS Foundation, [previously reminded](#) the Overstrand Municipality that such actions that cause the disturbance of ecosystems and loss of biological diversity should be avoided in terms of section 2 of the National Environmental Management Act, 107 of 1988. Concerns are being raised as why the baboons are being chased across the public beach which are frequented by residents, visitors and unaccompanied children.

Furthermore, and of great concern, residents of Pringle Bay are being encouraged by a disinformation campaign published on social media that *“it is permissible to discharge a weapon to prevent harm to property damage, that it is deemed a justifiable reason and is not in violation of the law. It is important to note that the Animal Protection Act of 1962 does not pertain to wild animals”*. The incitement of violence towards humans and nonhumans cannot be tolerated in any form whatsoever.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child [recently addressed](#) children’s rights to freedom from all forms of violence (art. 19, sections 35 and 36) in particular environmental violence, climate structural violence and psychological violence from exposure to domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals. Every nation under the binding UN convention, signed by almost every country in the world including South Africa, is now under a strict and binding obligation to address and prevent any tradition or practice which involves violence against an animal which could be seen by a child.

According to verifiable data the violence towards the Pringle Bay troop has notably increased.

Residents of Pringle Bay were also unreliably informed on social media that wildlife activists prevented a baboon capture cage from entering Pringle Bay on the 20th of September 2023. Verifiable photographic evidence confirms that the vehicle containing the baboon capture cage was parked with all the numerous official Overstrand Municipality and Law Enforcement vehicles and canine units at the community hall for the duration of the attempted capture.

On the 19th October 2023 the EMS Foundation received a copy of a Report entitled [*Perpetuating the Endless Cycle of Cruelty Against Baboons in the Overstrand – A 30 Day Study of Incidents in Pringle Bay During September and October 2023*](#). The detailed Report reiterates the fact that living in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve is a lifestyle choice and the Cape Floral Kingdom is one of the world’s most threatened hotspots and the important role the baboon plays to protect this pristine environment.

The content of this Report also raises critical questions about the expiration and therefore the validity of the Compactum, the Overstrand Municipality Strategic Baboon Management Plan, the Baboon Liaison Groups and the permit issued by Cape Nature to attempt to remove a baboon from Pringle Bay on the 20th of September 2023.

On the subject of the attempted removal of Kanye, an ill-advised decision taken by the Overstrand Municipality to capture and relocate a male baboon from Pringle Bay, the Municipality has confirmed, in its response to an access to information request by the EMS Foundation, that it has no scientific data or research relating to the baboon population in Pringle Bay. Therefore, in our view, the decision to relocate Kanye, is not based on robust, or any, scientific evidence that the relocation will promote conservation, avoid the loss of biodiversity and promote the well-being of both Kanye and his current troop.

The decision to relocate Kanye is not backed by robust scientific reasoning especially because the latest available real-time verifiable data suggests that not only has Kanye fully reintegrated into the Pringle Bay troop, he has formed an alliance with the alpha male, fathered an infant and has not attempted to snatch any food from anyone in the central business district of Pringle Bay for months.

In our learned and experienced opinion, the decision to remove baboons in this manner is designed to de-stabilise a baboon troop, decrease its genetic diversity and lead to the death or capture of a perfectly healthy male baboon. Such a decision should not be taken without very good scientific and ethological evidence that this is the best practicable environmental option.

Whilst Mayor Rabie stated in a comment on a Facebook post that no community group met the tender requirements for baboon management in Pringle Bay it is an undisputed fact the EMS Foundation and other NGO's wildlife and baboon experts, scientists and primatologists have a wealth of local knowledge and expertise and therefore they have an important role to play in the decision-making process regarding the protection, well-being and welfare of the baboons in Pringle Bay. The EMS Foundation is currently a member of the Ministerial Forum on Wildlife Well Being. Submissions by these kinds of organisations should not be ignored in favour of narrow private interests.

We have requested an official criminal investigation into the current situation in Pringle Bay where violence towards baboons is incited and perpetuated.

The world is on the tipping point of climate catastrophe. The Western Cape is [particularly susceptible](#) to climate shocks and the ever-worsening climate crisis. It is crucial, therefore, that the primary role of conservation must be to ensure that the ecological systems and processes which are essential to life in all its forms and to sustaining and enhancing the wellbeing of humans and other forms of life, are respected, protected and where necessary, restored.

It is not optional - local policies must now urgently reflect a progressive vision and policy based on compassion, harmonious coexistence, the ethic of Ubuntu and the recognition that humanity can only flourish in the long-term by conserving the natural systems and wild species that support all life.