APPENDIX D OF THE 2025 ACTION PLAN

WATERFALL TROOP (WF) BRIEF

THE CAPE PENINSULA BABOON MANAGEMENT JOINT TASK TEAM

v.1
FINAL
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D1 BACKGROUND

The WF troop formed as a splinter of the Smitswinkel Bay troop approximately twenty years ago. The troop has never had access to large areas of natural land below 230m (Figure 1) and has thus always foraged in urban areas with resultant low welfare and conservation value. For the first seven years, is troop had no management and was allowed unfettered access to the urban area. During this time they frequented a home for indigent people where they were hand-fed by residents.

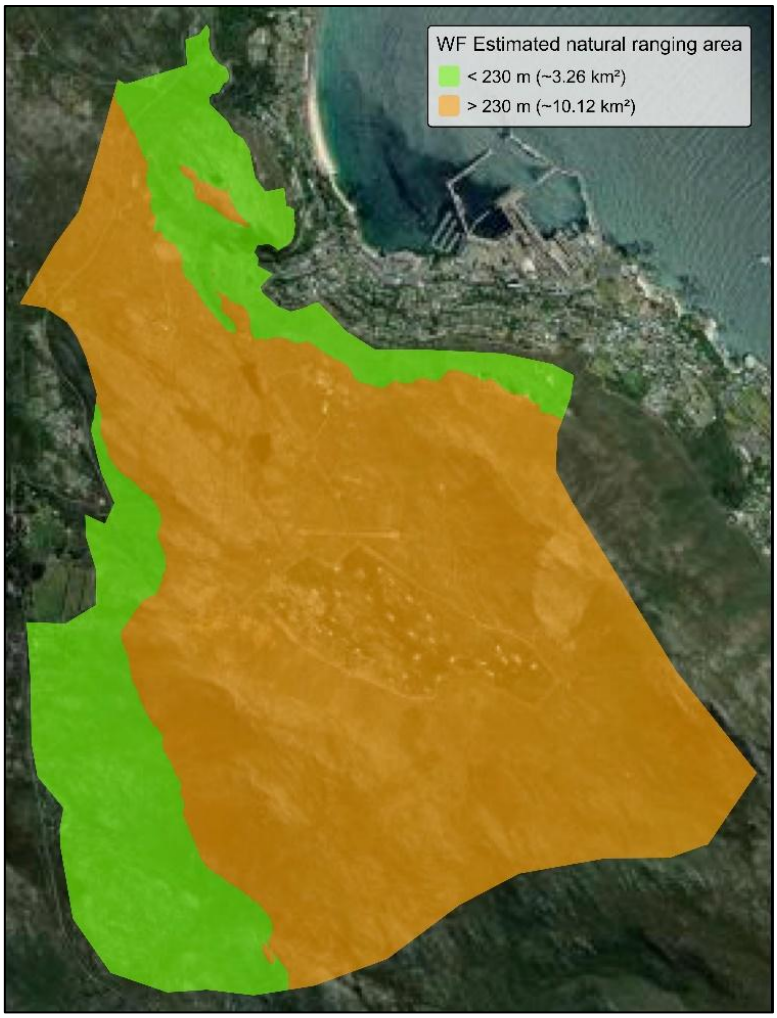

Figure 1: Estimated natural ranging area (km²) for the Waterfall Troop. Green shading indicates low-lying natural land (< 230 m).

D2 TROOP SIZE & MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

According to the 2024 population census, this troop consists of 42 individuals (Urban Baboon Programme Annual Population Census, 2024). A team of 8 field rangers and 1 field manager are assigned to the troop from sunrise to sunset every day with the aim of preventing the troop from entering the urban area.

D3 LOCAL LANDSCAPE

Due to the small area of productive, low-lying natural habitat within their range, this troop pushes to spend considerable time within the low-lying urban edge. These transformed areas offer extensive food attractants such as exotic and indigenous vegetation in gardens including fruiting trees, lawns, vegetable patches, compost areas, intentional feeding by residents and waste from unprotected bins on public, private and government property. While seeking much improved waste management by the Simon's Town community including the SA Navy is desirable, the management of waste to prevent baboon access will not stop the baboons from coming into the urban area (Mormile, 2024) as is commonly misunderstood. The troop will continue to be attracted to the urban area, as they have limited access to productive natural low-lying land within their range and the urban area will continue to offer numerous attractants.

D4 MANAGEMENT LIMITATIONS

The field team has limited success in maintaining the troop in the natural space due to the minimal amount of productive, untransformed low-lying land in the troop's ranging area within which to hold them. Although natural food resources above 230m are present within their current ranging area, this vegetation requires extensive foraging and handling time. The costs imposed by deterrents are thus outweighed by the benefits of foraging in urban areas where higher caloric foods with reduced handling time are abundant.

The field team also has limited success in restricting the troop to the higher lying natural portion of their range due to the regular use of artillery at the South African Naval Armament Depot (SANAD) that scares the troop. A further concern is that the troop occasionally enters and sleeps within poorly maintained SANAD buildings that have military ordinance, as well as SA Navy residential buildings (Figure 2). The proximity of baboons to both ordinance and people poses a significant safety and health hazard to SA Navy staff, baboons and the Simon's Town public.

D5 CONFLICTS FOR RESIDENTS

As a result of extensive time spent in urban areas, this troop shows extremely high levels of habituation to people and the developed landscape. On a daily basis the troop crosses busy roads, forages on residential properties, and sleeps almost exclusively within the urban space on roofs of private property or inside derelict SA Navy buildings (Figure 3). The considerable amount of time the troop spends in the urban environment is linked with extremely high conflict with residents including, extensive ongoing damage to property, trauma to pets, children and adults when baboons enter gardens and houses, loss and soiling of food within houses and damage to cars. Numerous troop members routinely enter houses by breaking windows and doors through biting, twisting and pushing window frames, as well as removing roof tiles and sheeting (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Additionally, large quantities of baboon excreta are deposited on buildings and sidewalks in Simon's Town CBD compromising the health of residents, business owners and tourists (Drewe et al., 2012).

Figure 2: Individuals from the WF troop climbing out of a dilapidated SA Navy building (left). Baboon resting inside the building amongst heaped garbage (right, photo provided).

Figure 3: One of the WF troop's frequently used sleep sites inside another derelict SA Navy building.

Figure 4: Still image from a video of a male baboon from the WF troop prying open a boarded-up window to gain access to a house (left). The same window was broken by baboons the previous day. Still image from a video of a male baboon removing roof tiles from a house (right).

Figure 5: Kitchens damaged by the WF troop after they broke windows to gain access.

D6 URBAN-CAUSED MORTALITIES

By living and sleeping in the urban area, the troop is exposed to numerous health and welfare risks. Over the last 5 years, the troop has experienced numerous urban-related deaths (Figure 6), most notably from direct human action in the form of pellet gun shootings by irate residents (Figure 7). It is also worth noting that many of the mortalities of 'unknown' cause in this area were likely the result of human action, however this could not be determined definitively as the corpses were discovered in advanced states of decomposition.

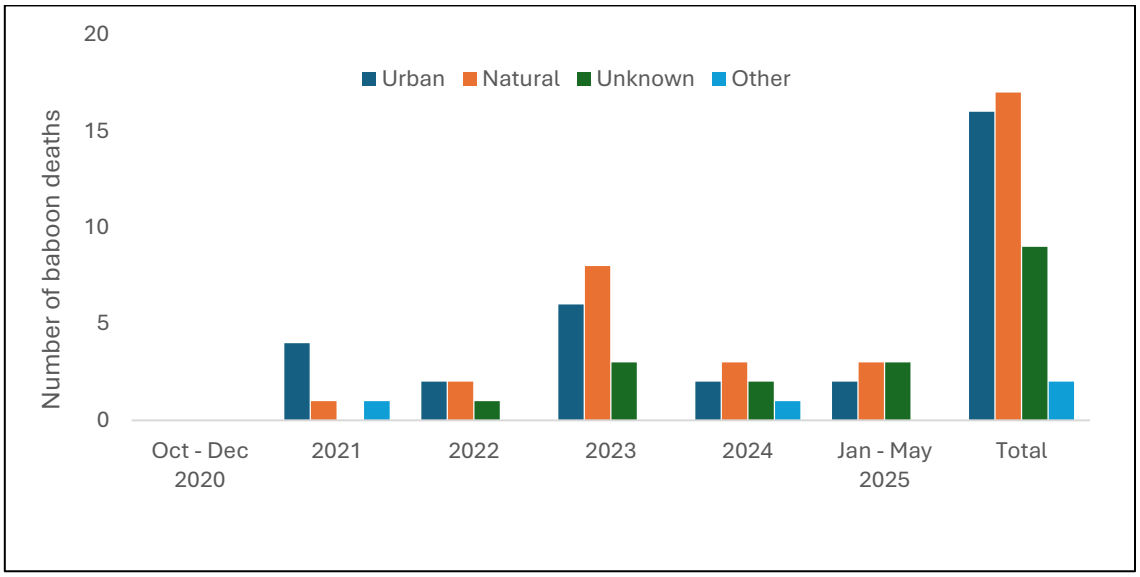

Figure 6: Causes of baboon death between October 2020 and May 2025 for the WF Troop

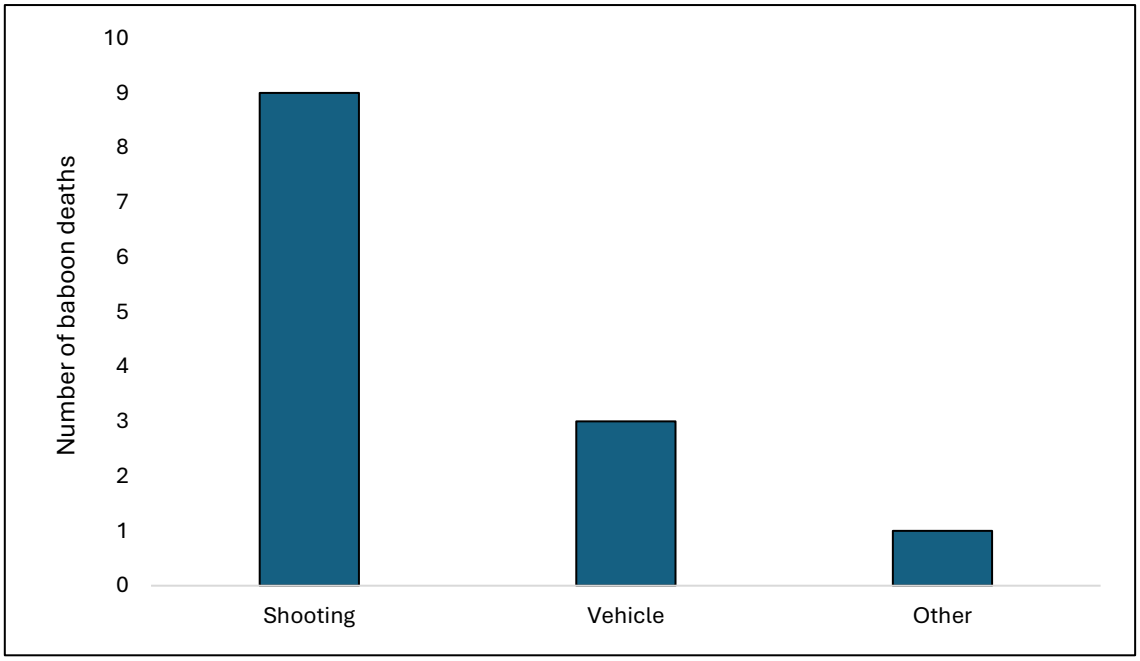

Figure 7: Causes of urban-related deaths between October 2020 and May 2025 for the WF troop.

D7 FENCING LIMITATIONS

The establishment of a baboon-proof strategic fence in this troop's ranging area would likely be ineffective at maintaining the troop within their natural ranging area. While previously proposed as a potential management strategy in this region, expert opinion considers it unfeasible to fence the core of the troop's ranging area around Admiral's Kloof due to the rugged, steep terrain, waterfall and stream. If this section was left unfenced, experience tells us that rangers will not be able to 'man the gap' because the terrain is too rugged and the baboons with their superior agility and speed over rugged terrain, can readily outflank rangers. Additionally, the funding for the proposed fence would only be available in several years' time, which would require the residents to continue to live with the troop and sustain damage for a considerably longer period. Lastly, the lack of suitable low-lying land available to this troop means that if they were successfully fenced out, they would move laterally along the fence line until they found access to low lying land and so displacing the management challenge to another transformed area.

Fencing the Simon's Town area is estimated to cost in excess of R40 million and would take a minimum of four years to achieve when considering environmental authorisations and tender processes. These high costs and time constraints for delivery alongside the highly likely poor outcome (i.e. baboons likely to move to the next suburb) makes fencing in Simon's Town a low outcome option against very high expenditure, and is thus not viable.

D8 SUMMARY

Due to the troop's lack of access to suitable low-lying natural habitat, extremely high levels of habituation to people and urban areas, health, safety and lifestyle impacts on people, welfare risks to baboons and the limited efficacy of approved non-lethal methods to deter the troop from urban areas, the WF troop is planned for removal.

D9 REFERENCES

Drewe, J. A., O'Riain, M. J., Beamish, E., Currie, H., & Parsons, S. (2012). Survey of infections transmissible between baboons and humans, Cape Town, South Africa. Emerging Infectious Diseases, 18(2), 298.

Mormile, J. (2024). An interdisciplinary study on the human-baboon interface in Rooiels, South Africa [PhD thesis, University of Cape Town].

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