



APPENDIX E OF THE 2025 ACTION PLAN SEAFORTH TROOP (SF) BRIEF

THE CAPE PENINSULA BABOON MANAGEMENT JOINT TASK TEAM

v.1
FINAL
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E1 BACKGROUND

The SF troop is a splinter troop that formed from the Smitswinkel Bay troop in late 2022 during a period of substandard management (i.e. failure of authorities to implement the Baboon Management Guidelines and remove the individuals driving the splinter). This troop has a very small ranging area with limited access to suitable natural low-lying land (Figure 1). Neighbouring troops which range to the north, south and west prevent access to additional natural space, and the troop is thus locked into a small patch of mountain slopes and residential areas which meet the coastline. Of great conservation concern is the presence of the Simon's Town African Penguin colony within the troop's urban ranging area.



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

E2 TROOP SIZE & MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

According to the 2024 population census, this troop consists of 16 individuals (Urban Baboon Programme Annual Population Census, 2024). A team of 3 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.

E3 LOCAL LANDSCAPE

Due to the marginal size of the productive, low-lying natural habitat within their range, deterrents seldom overcome the nutritional benefits of foraging in urban areas. 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 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.

E4 AFRICAN PENGUIN CONSERVATION

Baboons are opportunistic generalist foragers and have a strong penchant for eggs (Allan et al., 2022). This troop, which routinely visits the portion of coastline home to the Simon's Town African penguin colony, thus poses a reasonable threat to the critically endangered species. Baboons that have been previously recorded consuming African penguin eggs in this location (Figure 2) have been removed. Given the precarious state of all penguin colonies, a precautionary principle to penguins and baboons must be taken and baboons fully excluded from entering the Simon's Town rookery.



Figure 2: A still image from a video of a baboon consuming African penguin eggs in Simon's Town (left) and remnants of additional penguin eggs from the same incident (right).

E5 ALPHA MALE BABOON CONCERNS

Numerous reports, eyewitness accounts and video footage of physical negative interactions with the troop's alpha male baboon have been documented (Figure 3). The troop as a whole is exceptionally habituated to people and poses a risk to the health and safety of the public, especially beach-goers along the stretch of coast. However, the highly assertive alpha male poses a particularly significant threat to the safety of the public in that he routinely threatens humans in response to perceived threats. While it is typical behaviour for the alpha male to defend his troop or individuals against

threats, this male routinely perceives benign actions ubiquitous with people in the urban area (e.g. a young child playing in a garden, a beachgoer moving a handbag) to be threatening and worthy of a defensive response. These responses cause emotional distress for the people involved and have the potential to cause physical injury to both the people and the baboon. Under the present Baboon Management Guidelines, humane euthanasia of this male has been supported.



Figure 3: Still images taken from a video on a beach in Simon's Town. The alpha male of the SF troop runs to challenge beach-goers (left) in response to an adult female baboon's scream. The female baboon screamed at the beach-goers in response to them removing remnants of food remaining on the sand after the troop accessed their bags. The male baboon visually threatens two men (middle) prior to physically challenging them by lunging forward and attempting to grab them. In response to the baboon's lunges, the man on the left holds out a stick and shouts to deter the baboon's attempts to grab him (right). After several failed attempts to make assertive contact with the men, the baboon retreated.

E6 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, the vegetation present at these elevations requires extensive foraging and handling time, and is thus not preferable to baboons, particularly in juxtaposition to the abundance of easily accessible food rewards in the transformed areas below. Additionally, their natural range is very small, and the troop has a limited ability to shift or expand this natural range given the presence of two much larger troops that range in the immediate vicinity.

E7 HUMAN CONFLICT

As a result of time spent in urban areas, this troop shows high levels of habituation to people and developed landscapes. The troop routinely crosses a busy road, forages on residential properties, and occasionally sleeps in the urban space on roof of the SA Navy properties, including the Fleet Command Headquarters. The considerable amount of time the troop spends in the urban environment is linked to high conflict with residents as a result of property damage and negative lifestyle impacts, as well as negative interactions with the public, including tourists, along a busy stretch of popular beaches.

E8 URBAN-CAUSED MORTALITIES

Such close proximity between baboons, people and urban areas exposes the troop to numerous health and welfare risks. Over the last 2 years, this small troop has lost 5 baboons (Figure 4). Four of these deaths were definitively urban-related, including vehicle collisions and shootings (Figure 5). The fifth death was strongly suspected to be linked to an urban-related cause (e.g. poisoning, septicaemia from a projectile), but this could not be concluded due to decomposition.

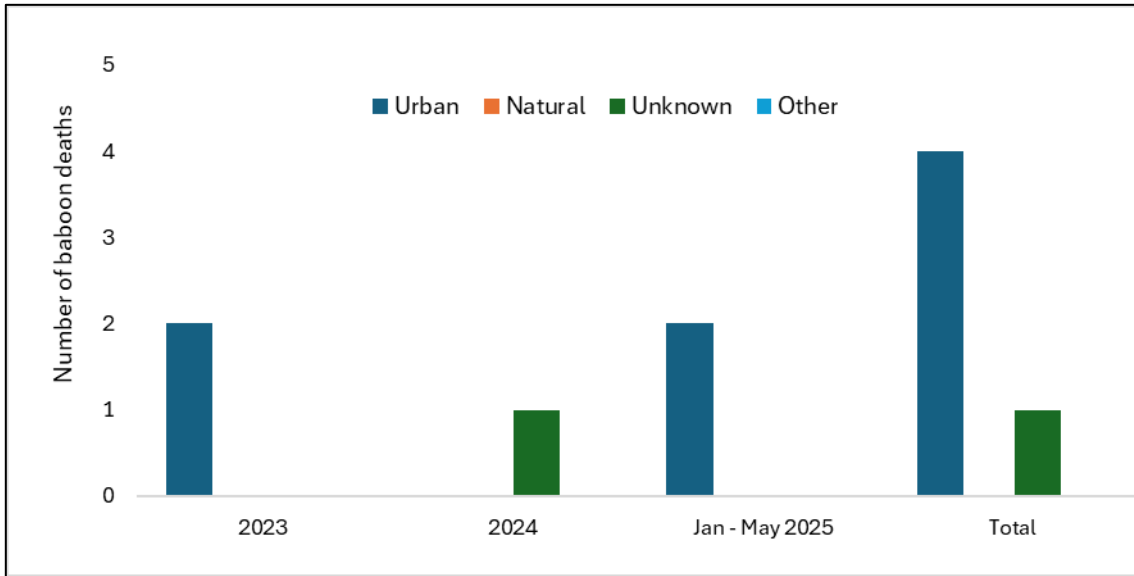


Figure 4: Causes of baboon death between October 2020 and May 2025 for the SF Troop

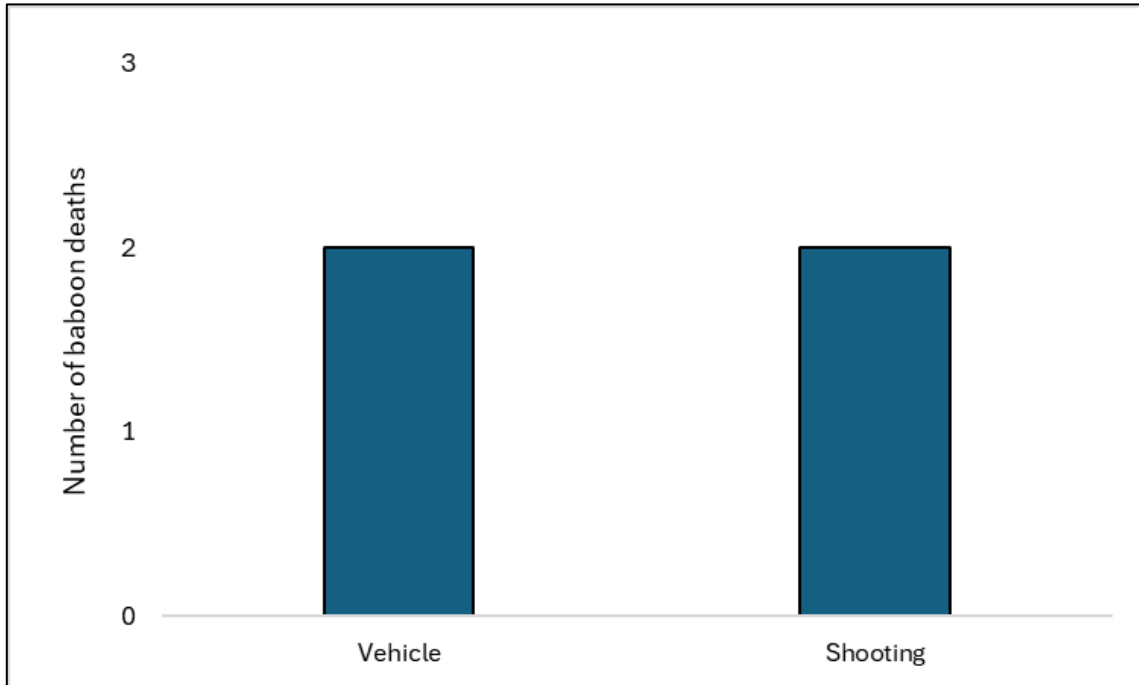


Figure 5: Causes of urban-related deaths between October 2020 and May 2025 for the SF troop

E9 LOCAL FENCING LIMITATIONS

While previously proposed as a potential management strategy that would stretch the length of the Simon's Town region blocking access to the urban area for both the Waterfall and Seaforth troops, the proposal for a strategic baboon-proof fence in this area has been withdrawn due to predicted inefficiency for the Waterfall troop, significant cost and protracted timelines (see Waterfall Troop Summary Brief for more detail). The establishment of a baboon-proof strategic fence solely within this troop's ranging area would likely be ineffective at maintaining the troop within their natural ranging area as they could readily move into the urban areas through vast opening to the north of the fence.

E10 SUMMARY

Due to their lack of access to suitable low-lying natural habitat, high levels of habituation to people and urban areas, health, safety and lifestyle impacts on people, welfare risks to baboons, potential for devastating impacts on the local African penguin colony and the limited efficacy of approved non-lethal methods to deter the troop from urban areas, the SF troop is planned for removal.

E11 REFERENCES

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