



Knysna

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Solution to the Human / Baboon conflict sought

The ongoing baboon problem experienced in parts of the Hunters Home / Rexford areas has escalated during the last few weeks with a big troop frequenting the area regularly.

Acting Municipal Manager Mr Dawid Adonis said although wildlife management is a Cape Nature responsibility, proactive solutions must be found to deter baboons coming down into the urban areas. "The Knysna Municipal Wildlife Monitoring Committee has approached Cape Nature to discuss a solution and cooperation to the baboon conflict in the area. We work hand-in-hand with the Knysna Baboon Action Group, Cape Nature and SANParks, always looking for ways to further enhance the co-existence between humans and baboons."

He said with proper understanding of the factors that make coexistence possible from both human and baboon perspective, the human-baboon conflict can be minimised. "Baboons are protected under the Nature Conservation Ordinance 19 of 1974, which states that it is illegal to feed or hunt baboons without a permit. Anybody caught feeding baboons could face a year's imprisonment, a fine of up to R5 000 or both. Shooting at baboons with paintball guns or any other weapon without a permit could result in a two year's imprisonment, a fine of up to R10 000, or both."

"Residents should be mindful of what might encourage a troop of baboons to enter our urban areas, and what can be done to keep the baboons off their property. "Responsible human behaviour is the key to human-baboon coexistence. In areas where people diligently and effectively store their food waste in baboon-proof bins and baboon-proof their homes, baboons have minimal access to human-based food. Baboon-proof window fixtures are especially effective as they allow people to keep their windows open during summer."

"According to the Institute for Communities and Wildlife in Africa (ICWild), baboon troops will still visit urban areas, despite baboon-proof measures, but instead of coming into conflict with people over prized human food items – they spend the majority of their time peacefully foraging in the abundant fynbos vegetation on resident properties and road verges," said Adonis.

This advice is confirmed by the non-profit organisation Baboon Matters (www.baboonmatters.org.za) that plays a vital role in managing troops in the Cape Peninsula. "The best plants to have in your garden are those that occur in the natural surrounds of your area. If you garden is full of plants that are the same as the ones outside the residential areas, there will be no reason for baboons to come into your garden."

Residents are therefore encouraged to:

- Install night bolts into sliding doors;
- Ensure that windows, particularly those that are top-hung, have a latch at each end of the opening edge to prevent baboons from pulling the frame and breaking the glass;
- Install burglar bars with gaps smaller than 8cm, including sides and tops of bars on windows that are usually kept open;
- Establish indigenous gardens in open areas, road verges and in their gardens that baboons can frequent;
- Never leave any food or seeds on display that can encourage the baboons to enter the property, as will unfenced (preferably by electric fencing) or uncaged planted fruit trees, vegetable gardens and compost heaps;

- Secure both waste bin latches with padlocks or clips at all times, and secure the bin's lid with a strap, rope or chain. Another good way to secure the bin off the ground is to attach it to a pole secured in the ground. Leaving your locked bin on its side is also a great deterrent.

Adonis concluded by saying that other areas in the Western Cape have found a way to co-exist with the baboons frequenting urban areas. "It is not impossible to co-exist, but needs input and commitment from all parties involved."

ENDS

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