



Photo: Wian van Zyl

Human Wildlife Solutions

Overstrand Assessment Report

October 2019

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1 INTRODUCTION.

This monthly report covers the period from 1 to 31 October 2019. This month was an assessment period, during which an HWS manager attempted to find the Voelklip Troop on a daily basis and monitor its daily activity patterns. In addition, the troop composition and age and sex structures were determined. Attempts were also made to determine how and where management should be focused in the future. HWS did not attempt to manage baboons during this month.

The Vogelgat Troop was also observed for a few days to determine the likelihood of it being a serious urban raiding troop, and how far into Hermanus it might raid. This troop appeared to be very skittish of human observers.

Poor waste management seemed to be a major attractant for baboons into the urban environment. A lack of baboon-proofing, open doors and windows, lack of burglar bars and a significant lack of baboon-proof bins was observed. These are all features that attract baboons into the urban area.

2 VOËLKLIP TROOP

2.1 IN TOWN STATISTICS

- The Voelklip Troop was observed for a total of 181 hours over a 20-day period during October 2019.
- Seven incursions into the Voelklip suburb were recorded. The troop also entered Hermanus Heights on two occasions and the Golf Course on five occasions.
- The Voelklip Troop predominantly slept at the Voelklip and Three Dams Sleep Sites (seven nights at each sleep site), on the Hermanus Golf Course (four nights), on the cliff faces above Hermanus Heights (two nights) and the cliff faces East of Fernkloof Nature Reserve Visitor's Centre (two nights) (Figure 1).
- The troop therefore spent 90% of its time sleeping in, or on the outskirts of Hermanus.



Figure 1: Voëlkliip Troop sleep site locations from 1 to 31 October 2019.

2.2 INCIDENTS TO POTENTIALLY AFFECT MANAGEMENT

2.2.1 HERMANUS HEIGHTS

- Majority of houses leave doors and windows open and have no burglar bars.
- About 40% of houses use dustbins with no locks and some houses just leave refuse bags on the sidewalk. No specific houses were targeted regularly.

2.2.2 GOLF COURSE

- Estate residents were found often to leave doors and windows open.
- It was noted that there are no lids or covers over dustbins within the Golf Course. Open, rounded cement dustbins are used.
- Baboons cause damage to course greens by jumping on flags which rips the hole out of the green.
- Lush lawns and fruiting pine trees attract the troop to the golf course.

2.2.3 FERNKLOOF VISITOR'S CENTRE AND NURSERY

- The Voëlklop Troop forages on flowering pincushions and other fynbos vegetation, in Fernkloof Nursery.
- Baboons also raid bins at the visitor's centre.

2.2.4 VOËLKLIP

- Some members of the public shoot at baboons with paintball and pellet guns (no specific individuals were identified).
- Some dustbins do not have locks.
- No specific houses are targeted regularly.

2.3 BIRTHS AND DEATHS

- No births were recorded.
- An adult female in oestrus has been missing from the Voëlklop Troop since the 12th of October.



Figure 4: GPS locations of the Voëlklop Troop as determined by GPS tracker carried by HWS manager during October 2019.

3 VOGELGAT TROOP

3.1 IN TOWN STATISTICS

- The Vogelgat Troop was observed for a total of 19 hours over a period of three days during October 2019.
- On 25 October 2019 the troop was located on the corner of 9th Avenue and 9th Street.
- On 26 October 2019 the troop was located just east of the urban area.
- On 28 October, the Troop was located north of Hermanus Yacht Club.

3.2 INCIDENTS TO POTENTIALLY AFFECT MANAGEMENT

- The troop is extremely skittish of vehicles and humans on foot approaching them.

3.3 BIRTHS AND DEATHS

- Unknown.

4 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

- The Voëlklip Troop size at the end of October 2019 was 28. The Vogelgat Troop size was 18. The compositions of the troop age and sex structures can be seen in the Table 1 below.

Troop	Adult Male	Adult Female	Sub-Adult Male	Juveniles	Troop Total
Voëlklip	1	12	3	12	28
Vogelgat*	1	9	2	6	18

Table 1: Troop compositions of the Voëlklip and Vogelgat troops. *Based on two counts.

5 CONCLUSION.

This assessment highlighted a few very surprising features regarding baboons in Hermanus. The first, was that for an area in which baboons are an acknowledged problem, there was a surprising lack of compliance or awareness in terms of residents not closing house doors and windows or having burglar proofing to prevent baboons from accessing their properties. Similarly, the golf course is an area which is used as a favourite sleep site by baboons (particularly in winter), and yet it has open bins throughout the course. These bins should either be removed or made baboon proof. At present they are just an open attractant to baboons to visit Hermanus.

On the positive side, the baboons also spent a surprising amount of time voluntarily foraging outside the urban area. A major contributing factor towards this, is no doubt the season. At present the fynbos is flourishing during early summer, so there is an abundance of natural forage available to the troop within the Fernkloof Reserve. On most days the troop did visit town, but there were a few days when the troop foraged in the Mossel River Valley for an entire day without attempting to visit the urban area.

This is a good sign for future management, because it highlights the fact that the troop is used to foraging on indigenous vegetation and is also capable of doing so. Early summer is the prime time in which to implement a virtual fence, so that by the time the hardships of winter arrive, the troop should be well used to foraging full time in the fynbos, and not try too hard to break into town.

Dr Phil Richardson

HWS Virtual Fence