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Overstrand

Monthly Report

December 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This monthly report covers the period from 1 December to 31 December 2024.

Overall, the behaviour of managed troops in the Eastern Overstrand during December was very good. All troops were absent from the urban area, with only members of the Voëlklip troop being present in town during the month. These individuals spent significantly less time in town than during the previous month (seven days in December as opposed to 13 days in November). Likewise, there was a significant decrease in the number of incursions, from 41 to 22. The most notable decrease was seen in the number of unoccupied house incursions, with only one such case being recorded during December. Unfortunately, there was an increase in the number of occupied house incursions, but the overall number of these incidents ($n = 2$) remained low.

As with the previous month, there were fewer patrols conducted for the Hamilton-Russel Troop due to the elevated activity of the Voëlklip Troop near the urban edge. As a result, the Hamilton-Russel Troop was observed very infrequently, mainly in the Volmoed Valley area of their home range.

The Onrus Troop spent a large portion of the month foraging in the Hawston Gorge area. This activity may be linked to the fire that recently burnt through a large portion of the Onrus Troop's home range, with the troop potentially traversing a larger area in search of available food sources. Immediately after a fire baboons often forage on the burnt ground where underground bulbs and tubers are easier to locate than before the fire.

The Vogelgat Troop were seen sporadically, with the thick vegetation on the mountain slopes north of the R43 often concealing the troop as it foraged through the fynbos and *Eucalyptus* patches. Most often seen around Pennant 9 and Stillwaters, the Vogelgat Troop heavily utilized the eastern portion of its home range, with isolated entries into rural properties along the R43.

OVERSTRAND EAST TROOPS

VOËLKLIP TROOP

IN TOWN STATISTICS

- Troop time out of town remained at 100% during December.
- Time out of town for individuals increased from 94.8% in November to 97.4% in December.

	% Out of Town	% Up or Down from Previous Month	Days Entered	Total Time in Town	Avg Time in Town per day	Max Daily Time in Town	Min Daily Time in Town
Troop	100.0	0.0	0	0:00	00:00	00:00	00:00
Individuals	96.7	+1.9	7	14:41	2:05	03:57	00:46

Table 1. In Town Statistics for the Voëlklip Troop for December 2024. Time is expressed in hours and minutes. Average daylength in December was 14 hours and 25 minutes.

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

- Individuals from the Voëlklip Troop were present in town on seven days during the month, six less than during November.
- Two occupied house incursions were recorded during December; one in Voelklip and one in Hermanus Heights. These incursions were attributed to an unidentified female and an unidentified male on 3 and 24 December respectively. Additionally, there was only one unoccupied house incursion during the month, a significant decrease from the six unoccupied house incursions that were recorded in November.
- One hotline call reported a case of breaking and entering, whereby a male baboon broke a sliding door onto a kitchen while trying to access the house. This report originated from the farmhouses on the Hamilton-Russell Vineyard.
- During December the troop spent the majority of its foraging time in the central and western portion of its home range and slept on the mountains above Hermanus Heights for approximately two thirds of the month. Subsequently, the majority of hotline calls received during December were from the suburbs below these sleep sites.

HWS: TROOP MONTHLY REPORT																																	
SECTOR										CLASSES OF BEHAVIOUR																							
OVERSTRAND										1 In urban area	4 Attacking pets							7 Threatening behaviour/ attacking/ stealing food															
BABOON TROOP: Voëklip					VOËKLIP					2 Raid bins			5 Raid unoccupied house or vehicle				8 Breaking & Entering/Damaging property																
MONTH: December										YEAR: 2024										3 Non malicious damage			6 Raid occupied house or vehicle				9 Nocturnal Raiding						
BABOON ID	Sex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	TOTAL
Troop																																	
UNKM1 GREEN TAG	M																																1
VKF4 YELLOW TAG	F			1																													2
VKF5 RED TAG	F		1	1																													1
VKF1 GREEN TAG	F		1																														1
VKF6 ORANGE TAG	F																																2
VKF7 PINK TAG	F																																5
UnID Sub-Males	M		1	1																													2
VKM7	M		1	1		1,5	1																										5
UnID Males	M																																2
UnID Male	M																								1,6								2
VKM6U	M						1																										1
UnID Females	F		1																														1
UnID Female	F			1,6		1																	1										4
UnID Individuals					1		1																										2
UnID Juveniles			1																														1
		%	TIME SPENT IN TOWN (Minutes)																												HRS		
Troop		0.0																															0.00
Individuals		3.3	206	237	73	82	180																										14.68
Roost:	AM	6	6	6	9	6	6	3	4	4	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	
Roost:	PM	6	6	6	6	6	3	4	4	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	
Roost Sites		1	6	11	16	21	26	1	6	11	16	21	26	1	6	11	16	21	26	1	6	11	16	21	26	1	6	11	16	21	26	1	6
ID Features of Baboons																																	
General remarks																																	

Figure 1. The Voëklip Troop incident sheet for December 2024.

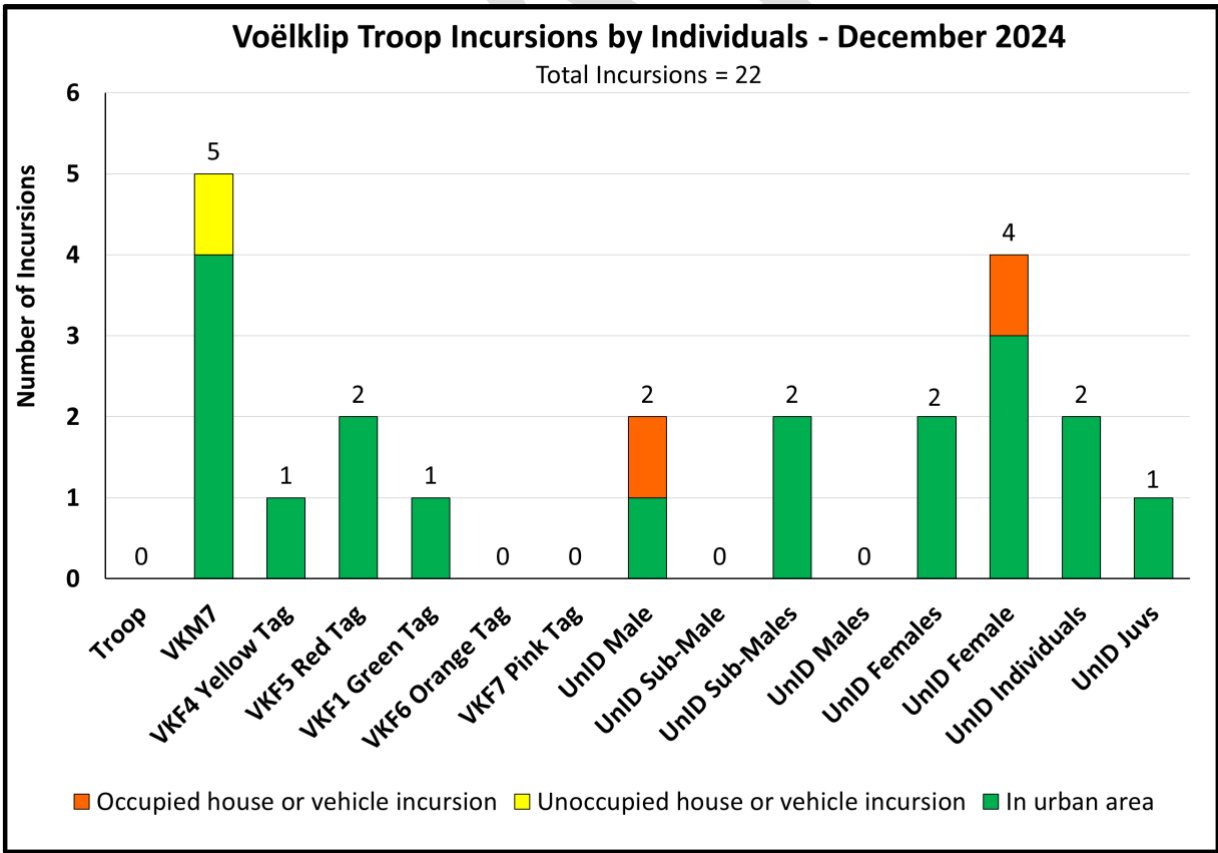


Figure 2. The Voëklip Troop Incursion summary graph for December 2024.

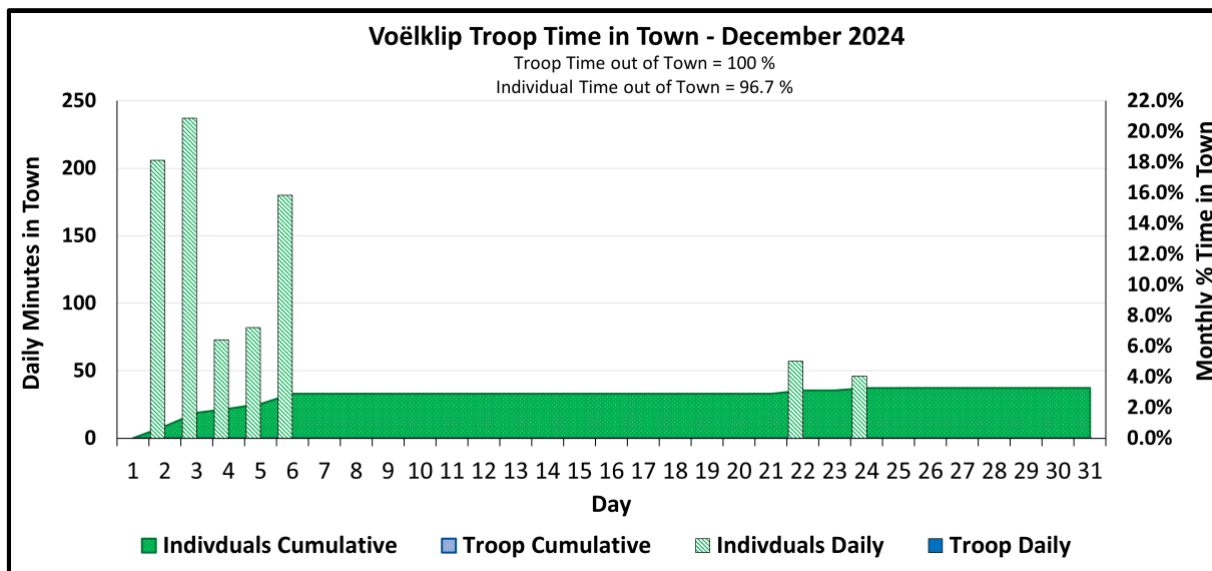


Figure 3. The Voëklip Troop Time out of Town summary graph for December 2024.

VOGELGAT TROOP

IN TOWN STATISTICS

- Time out of Town for the troop remained at 100% during December.
- Time out of Town for individuals increased from 95.1% during November to 100% during December.

	% Out of Town	% Up or Down from Previous Month	Days Entered	Total Time in Town	Avg Time in Town per day	Max Daily Time in Town	Min Daily Time in Town
Troop	100.0	0.0	0	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
Individuals	100.0	0.0	0	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00

Table 2. In Town Statistics for the Vogelgat Troop for December 2024. Time is expressed in hours and minutes. Average daylength in December was 14 hours and 25 minutes.

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

- The Vogelgat Troop was absent from town for the entirety of the month, foraging extensively in the core area of its home range.
- Members of the Vogelgat Troop were either heard or seen on 27 days during the month, most commonly in the area around Stillwaters. The troop was frequently observed foraging in the dense *Eucalyptus* thicket near Pennant 9.
- A newborn was observed with the troop on 18 December.

ONRUS TROOP

IN TOWN STATISTICS

- Time out of Town for the troop remained at 100% during December.
- Time out of Town for individuals remained at 100% during December.

	% Out of Town	% Up or Down from Previous Month	Days Entered	Total Time in Town	Avg Time in Town per day	Max Daily Time in Town	Min Daily Time in Town
Troop	100,0	0,0	0	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
Individuals	100,0	0,0	0	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00

Table 3. In Town Statistics for the Onrus Troop for December 2024. Time is expressed in hours and minutes. Average daylength in December was 14 hours and 25 minutes.

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

- The Onrus Troop was entirely absent from the urban area for the whole month.
- The troop was absent from the eastern portion of their range, near the pig farm, from 13 to 23 December. During this time they were observed infrequently in the Hawston Gorge area, foraging deep in the mountains. The troop returned to the pig farm area on 23 December.
- The fire that burnt a large part of the Onrus Troop's home range during November influenced the behaviour of the troop during December. The troop was more fragmented as it moved across the landscape searching for food. Most of the riparian vegetation in the ravines and drainage lines within the mountains was also burnt, removing a reliable source of food and shade for the troop.
- It should be noted that the troop did not appear to seek out human derived foodstuffs (HDF's) when they came down the mountain towards the urban area. It seems that the troop only went as far as the upper streets of Leopard Rock Estates, where residents do not generally notify the hotline of the presence of baboons.

HAMILTON RUSSELL

- The Hamilton Russell Troop was directly observed on four days during the month.
- The Hamilton-Russel Troop was mainly encountered near the Volmoed Village Trust and Volmoed Valley area. On two days they were observed eating feed left out for cattle on the farms in the vicinity of the Volmoed Valley.
- On 21 December two females were observed carrying two infants.

VIRTUAL FENCE

- The virtual fence was used on seven days during December.
- Activations were used to deter the Voëlklip Troop (n = 4) and the Onrus Troop (n = 3).

GENERAL COMMENTS

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

There were four births recorded in the managed troops during December, two in the Hamilton-Russel Troop, one in the Vogelgat Troop, and one in the Voëlklip Troop. No deaths or migrations were recorded. During December the six-monthly detailed counts of troop population sizes were made. The troop sizes remained constant apart from a significant drop in the Hamilton Russell Troop from 27 to 20 individuals. An accurate count of the Vogelgat Troop was not possible because although the troop was often heard, it was never seen in open vegetation nor crossing the R43. Given the thick vegetation in most areas where the troops were observed, it was only possible to get a detailed age structure count for the Voëlklip Troop. This troop now has two adult males, one sub-adult male, 19 adult females, 21 juveniles and infants under the age of one year.

It is worth noting, that during the five years since baboon management in the Overstrand East began, the population of the Voëlklip Troop has increased by 48%. This increase has been characterized by a complete absence of human induced deaths, which by contrast had previously occurred regularly with motor vehicle accidents and shootings (one collared alpha male was shot directly above Fernkloof) causing numerous fatalities. During the construction of the R43 between Hermanus and Stanford there were also several road deaths recorded in the Vogelgat Troop, but these deaths have dropped dramatically since the completion of the road (Table 6).

Troop	Oct	Jun	Jun	Jun	Jun	Jun	Dec	December 2024			Total observed Births (1 July 2024 to 31 December)	Total observed Deaths (1 July 2024 to 31 December)	Total observed Migrations (1 July 2024 to 31 December)
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2024	Births	Deaths	Emigration / Immigration			
Voëlklip	29	29	27	37	39	43	43	1	0	0	3	2	0
Vogelgat	N/A	22*	29	27	27*	23	23*	1	0	0	1	1	0
Onrus	N/A	N/A	25*	24*	24*	25	24	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hamilton Russel	N/A	N/A	21*	25	25*	27	20	2	0	0	2	0	0
Total	29	51	102	113	115	118	111	4	0	0	6	3	0

Table 4 . Population data for the managed troops in the Overstrand in December 2024. Emigration and Immigration figures show animal movements between troops. * Troop sizes were estimated when accurate counts were not feasible. Note: **Troop numbers are counted twice a year in December and June.** Troop numbers are not updated during the year by just counting births and deaths, because these may occur without being observed by field rangers.

Troop	July 2023/ June 2024	July 2024/ Dec 2025	Total Deaths
Voëlklip Troop	3 Infanticides	2 Infanticides	5
Vogelgat Troop	2 Unknown	1 Vehicle Collision	3

Table 5. Causes of recorded deaths of individuals in managed troops in the Eastern Overstrand for the periods July 2023 to June 2024 (12 months) and July 2024 to December 2024 (6 months).

Deaths	2019/20 (October - June)	2020/21 (July - June)	2021/22 (July 2021 - June 2022)	2022/23 (July 2022 - June 2023)	2023/24 (July 2023 - June 2024)	2024/25 (July 2024 - June 2025)	December 2024	TOTAL (since October 2019)
Management	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Human Induced (HID)	1	2	9	9	0	1	0	22
<i>Direct *</i>	1	2	8	8	0	1	0	20
<i>Indirect **</i>	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Natural	2	7	7	5	3	3	0	27
Unknown	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	6
TOTAL DEATHS	6	9	19	16	5	4	0	59

Table 6. Causes of baboon deaths since October 2019; *Deaths caused directly by humans, such as motor vehicle accidents, shooting, poisoning and dogs. **Deaths caused indirectly by humans such as electrocutions and fire. Note: This table includes deaths from the managed troops in the Western Overstrand up until June 2023 when management by HWS ceased. Thereafter deaths recorded are only those from the Overstrand East.

HOTLINE DATA

A total of 33 hotline calls were received during December, with all but one call attributed to the Voëlklip Troop. The majority of hotline calls were made to report the location of baboons in the urban area (n = 27). Three house incursion related calls were received, just over half the number received during the previous month (n = 5). Notably, one call was made reporting breaking and entering behaviour, with the caller reporting a baboon breaking a sliding door to try and access the fridge at a house in Hamilton Russel. One call was received concerning an unmanaged troop; baboons were reported in the urban area in Constantia, Cape Town.

Troop	Number of Calls received	Area	Types of Call
Voëlklip Troop	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voëlklip (4) Fernkloof (12) Hamilton-Russel (3) Hermanus Heights (14) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting Baboon location (27) Non-urban baboon location (2) Occupied House Incursion (1) Breaking/Entering (1) Accidental damage (1)
Other Troops	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constantia (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting Baboon location (1)

Table 7. Overstrand hotline call data for December 2024.

RECORDED INCURSIONS

A total of 22 incursions were recorded during December, approximately half the number of incursions recorded during the previous month. The Voëlklip Troop were responsible for all 22 incursions, continuing the trend started in the previous month. The majority of recorded incursions were baboon entries into the urban area (n = 19), with the remaining three incursions being two occupied house incursions and one unoccupied house incursion.

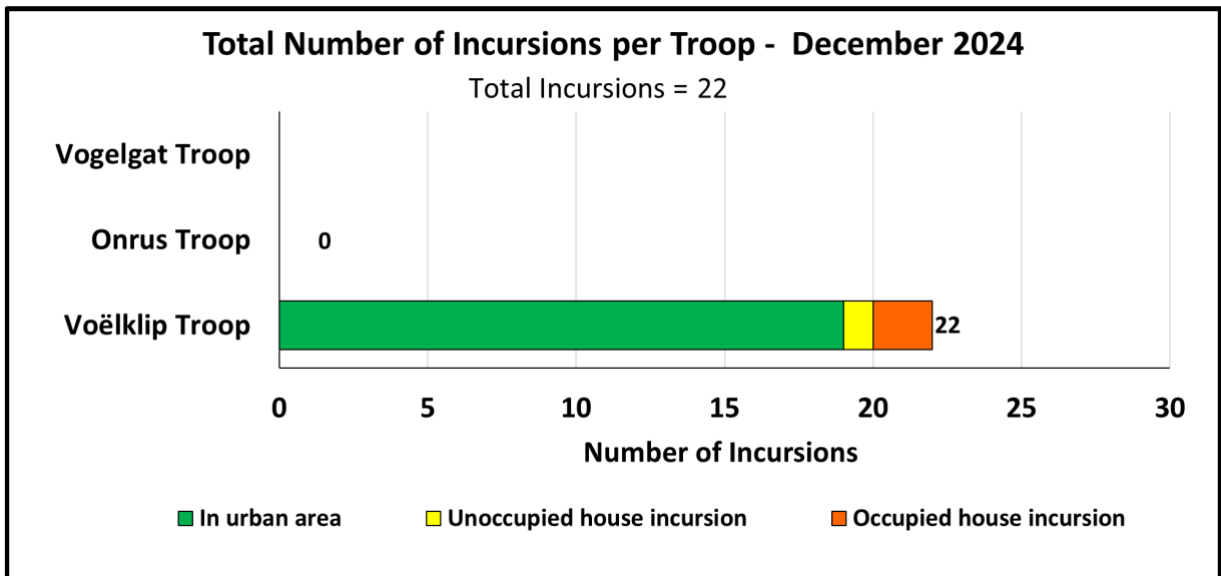


Figure 5. Graph showing incursion behaviour of managed troops in the eastern Overstrand in December 2024.

PERCENTAGE TIME OUT OF TOWN

The average time spent out of town by troops in the eastern Overstrand during December remained at 100%, with all four managed troops absent from urban areas. Individual time out of town increased from 98.7% to 99.4% with only some members from the Voëlklip Troop recorded in town during the month.

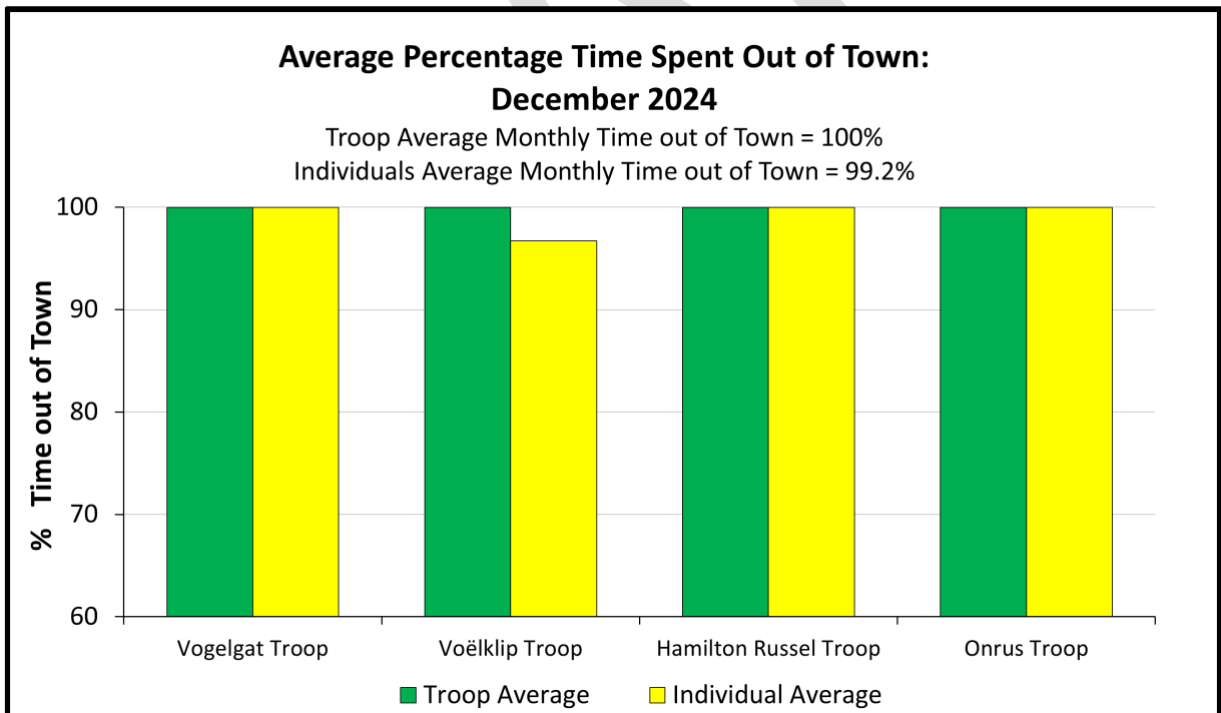


Figure 6. Percentage time the managed baboon troops and individuals spent out of town during December 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Waste and recycling collection should be prioritized** to take place in the early mornings. It should start on the edge of town and work inwards.
- Residents should **not** put out their waste **the night before** collection day because this may encourage baboons to raid that evening or early the next morning.
- **Refuse bags** should never be left lying on the sidewalk and easily available to baboons.
- All bins used in baboon effected areas should be **baboon-proof and locked**.
- **Open vegetable gardens** should be baboon proofed. Similarly, compost bins or containers should also be secure.
- Ripening fruits should be removed from fruiting trees.
- Residents are strongly discouraged from feeding wildlife, including birds. Bird seed is a powerful attractant for baboons.
- Residents are encouraged to record and report the feeding of wildlife to the municipality, CapeNature, or to the baboon hotline (072 028 0008).
- Dogs should always be on a leash when walking in an area where baboons may be present. This is mandatory in the Fernkloof Nature Reserve.

CONCLUSION

When one compares the behaviour of the managed troops in the eastern Overstrand with the December of the previous year there is a slight but noticeable improvement. The Voëlklip Troop was responsible for 29 incursions in December 2023, with four occupied house raids and two bin raids. In December 2024, they were responsible for 22 incursions, a 24% decrease, with only two occupied house incursions, one of which did not occur in town, but on Hamilton Russell Vineyards. Furthermore, the amount of time spent in town by individuals was significantly less, at 14 hrs 41 mins in 2024 as opposed to 20 hrs 33 mins in 2023.

The bi-yearly counts for managed troops were conducted during December. The populations of each managed troop have remained fairly stable, with the exception of the Hamilton-Russel Troop, which showed a decrease in population since June 2024. This decline is notable but might be the result of a group of individuals dispersing across to another troop like the unmanaged Mountain Rose Troop, which now has a population size of approximately 65 individuals.

It is notable that in the Eastern Overstrand there have been very few Human Induced Deaths (HIDs) when compared to other peri-urban baboon populations elsewhere in the Overstrand. Since 2019 there have only been seven such deaths, with all seven being due to collisions with vehicles along the R43 to the east of Hermanus. All these deceased animals were members of the Vogelgat Troop and most deaths occurred during the construction of this road. Deaths due collisions with vehicles were concentrated in the 2021/22 management year, with three such incidents recorded. The last recorded death of a baboon being struck by a car occurred in July 2024.

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