
Shark Spotters CEO Says Baboon Management Will Change Starting March 1

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Waries also said Shark Spotters would develop specific strategies for communities and their increasingly habituated baboon troops based on a set of high-level conservation principles to be agreed to with key stakeholders, including residents.

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Debbie McComb (Property & Environment) | Clive Holder (CBDNHW) | Eugene Loftus (Safety & Social Development) | Alexandra Jongens (SRA)



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to prepare to take over management responsibilities. "That gives us time to get a lay of the land, seeing what we can implement."

According to Waries, Shark Spotters will hire the baboon monitors and rangers currently working for NCC and the Green Group, and also bring on additional staff. The organization's approach will focus on public protection and baboon conservation, including increased research efforts and a fresh approach to public education under the management plan adopted last year by the Cape Peninsula Baboon Management Joint Task Team comprising the City of Cape Town, South African National Parks (SANParks), and Cape Nature.

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Peter Willis Reflection on Shark Spotters/STCA Meeting

I'd like to offer a brief personal perspective by way of supplement to the report on the STCA / Shark Spotters meeting of 14 January, which I attended. I had the benefit of prior conversations with both Sarah Waries and Gregg Oelofse, the City of Cape Town's Director of Coastal Management and the main orchestrator of this transfer of baboon management out of the City's Biodiversity Management department into his Coastal Management department, where the City's long and successful relationship with Shark Spotters is held.

My observations and reflections:

- I've known Gregg more than 20 years and hold him in high regard, as do many others. While the JTT retains its formal governance role in baboon management, knowing that Gregg now oversees the operational approach in the Peninsula is a huge relief, in my view.
- Gregg was instrumental in setting up Shark Spotters some 18 years ago as a 'special purpose vehicle,' majority funded by City grants but able to raise funds on its own. He has worked closely with Sarah to grow Shark Spotters into a highly effective organization with 75 employees and a track record of tackling marine-related issues that the City needed to address but where the ponderous tender processes would make action ineffective.
- Sarah came across in the meeting with the STCA and in my calls with her as a very credible leader and a

determined problemsolver who lives by excellent community engagement and wildlife conservation values. Compared with the officials we have had to deal with in past years, she is a breath of fresh air – partly because she is not an official and is given a substantial degree of autonomy to find the best way to achieve the goals set for her by the City — and, in our case, the JTT. She also has many years of personal experience on baboon advisory groups as representative for Ocean View, where she lives, so she is fully current with the main issues.

- My only slight concern is that Shark Spotters has undertaken to start managing a situation that the authorities allowed to fester for far too many years. While I think they will turn things around and maybe even create a management system we can all be proud of, they have some mountains to climb in the coming months, especially given how habituated most of the troops have become. So...
- ...I'm inclined to give them my strong support in this transition phase over the next few months and cut them some slack while they get their arms around the many challenges they know they will face.

January 24, 2025

Statement from the Simon's Town Baboon Advisory Group Appointees

The three appointees by the Simon's Town Civic Association (STCA) to the Cape Peninsula Baboon Advisory Group (BAG) are Tom Cohen, Chris Hart, and Garth Kew.

Tom Cohen is retired after a career as an international journalist for Associated Press and CNN, and a communications specialist for Conservation International and the World Bank Group. He moved to Simon's Town in 2019, and in 2023, he compiled a report on the increasing habituation of the Waterfall baboon troop in his Simon's Town Central neighborhood. Tom is monitoring the situation with the Waterfall troop.

Chris Hart, a resident of Simon's Town since 1982, is a former chairperson of the Simon's Town Ratepayer's Association, and former principal of the Wynberg Boys' Junior School. He became provincial chief executive officer of the NAPTOSA education union in 2015 and served until he reached compulsory retirement age in 2019. He is monitoring the situation with the Seaforth and Smitswinkel baboon troops.

Garth Kew has worked for more than 30 years in game reserves in South Africa, Botswana, and Zambia, and with rural communities surrounding the game reserves. Since 1994, he has been involved in the development, marketing, and management of several luxury safari lodges in the Greater Madikwe Game reserve. Garth has been a resident and property owner in Welcome Glen, Simon's Town, since 2017, and is monitoring the situation with the Da Gama baboon troop.

Our roles as BAG members remain undefined, as the BAG has yet to be formally constituted. We expect the first BAG meeting to occur next month, and plan to report back to the community after that happens. Until the BAG is formally constituted, we as appointees have no formal platform or process for interacting with the JTT, NCC, or Shark Spotters, the NGO taking over baboon management starting March 1.

We received a Terms of Reference document for the BAG from the Cape Peninsula Baboon Management Joint Task Team (CPBMJTT). While we believe it is up to the CPBMJTT to make this document public, we are willing to quote from it below to help the community better understand some basic information about the BAG:

"2. Purpose of the CP BAG

"The purpose of the CP BAG is to advise the CPBMJTT on achieving the intended outcomes of the BSMP (Baboon Strategic Management Plan) and support its implementation within communities and at a local level, while ensuring relevant feedback between constituencies and the CPBMJTT.

“3. Objectives of the CP BAG

“The CP BAG is established as an advisory body only. The objectives of CP BAG are to:

- “3.1 Facilitate constructive interaction between the CPBMJTT and affected communities; stakeholders and key interest groups;
- “3.2 Serve as a channel for two-way communication;
- “3.3 Assist the CPBMJTT to engage with affected communities and stakeholders to identify and address both strategic and local issues and areas of mutual interest and concern, and work towards finding equitable solutions that benefit both the community and stakeholders; and,
- “3.4 Serve as a vehicle towards developing strategic partnerships with stakeholders.”

We understand there are deep divisions and growing frustration in the community regarding the complex issue of baboon management in Simon’s Town, which has deteriorated in recent months.

The urgency of the situation prompted a Jan. 14, 2025 meeting, through the STCA, with Shark Spotters CEO Sarah Waries and Research Manager Toby Rogers to establish a positive relationship and discuss the issue. For details of that meeting, please see the STCA statement of Jan. 18, 2025 (copied below).

For now, we encourage anyone wishing to report any baboon-related incidents — including home incursions by baboons and damages caused, as well as unlawful harm to baboons by residents — to first call the Baboon Hotline at +27 71 588 6540. Then please follow up by using the [Baboon Data](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeBgfyLYvRtjwibz5P_E8aVm5uYc0VKZP_h4TvAjoRFgc3B4A/viewform) Google Docs form created by Piet Potgieter and Martin Hale (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeBgfyLYvRtjwibz5P_E8aVm5uYc0VKZP_h4TvAjoRFgc3B4A/viewform) to record the incident in their database, as well as the [Baboon Photos](https://chat.whatsapp.com/GaCIK0GVKqKDn63M3ukG3Q) WhatsApp group to provide visual evidence (<https://chat.whatsapp.com/GaCIK0GVKqKDn63M3ukG3Q>).

Tom Cohen (waldohelives@icloud.com)

Chris Hart (chrisjonllo@gmail.com)

Garth Kew (krok@mweb.co.za)

Simon's Town Civic Association

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