



Coexisting with Baboons in Rooiels through Shared Responsibilities

Engaging residents and stakeholder in taking action

(8 May 2022)

About this document

This document was prepared by the Rooiels Baboon Coexistence Task team to inform discussions at the 2021 Rooiels Baboon Coexistence Indaba and to encourage follow-up implementation activities by the Rooiels Rate Payers Association (RERA), the Rooiels Conservancy (REC), through engagement of residents and stakeholders in Rooiels.

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Executive Summary

Key messages

- Rooiels is one of four Conservancies located in the transition zone of the UNESCO-designated Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, an area of pristine environment with unique and globally recognized plant diversity.
- For many decades, Rooiels citizens and baboons have coexisted in Rooiels. In September 2021, the Rooiels troop comprised a total of 27 baboons. The troop is still being observed to keep track of their life history, particularly births and deaths.
- Baboons are listed as “threatened” species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and protected in the Western Cape by law. It is illegal to harm, hunt, poison, paintball gun or feed baboons.
- Baboons interact with humans primarily for one reason: food. Incidents occur in Rooiels where baboons raid unprotected waste bins, or enter homes of residents in their quest to search for food.
- Diverse lessons have been learned on how coexistence with baboons in Rooiels is possible. Key factors include, but are not limited to: responsible human behaviour; baboon proofing of homes; effective waste management; and targeted awareness and education.
- While baboons have never done physical harm to anyone in Rooiels, incidents have created tension, or even trauma. Open communication and recognizing the feelings of individuals affected, can help develop a better understanding of the situation.
- The influx of new residents and tourists to Rooiels, as well as the construction and renovation of buildings, create particular challenges for human/baboon coexistence because not all newcomers and stakeholders are fully aware of the Rooiels coexistence model, and the shared responsibility it brings along.
- RERA and REC are committed to a foster a solution- and action-oriented process to maintain the coexistence model with minimized incidents. This needs engagement of all residents and stakeholders, including residents, visitors, new owners and businesses, as well as of architects, constructors and builders, and estate agents.
- A Rooiels Baboon Coexistence Indaba took place on 20 November 2021 and was open to all community members and stakeholders. The vision of the Indaba was to enhance coexistence with baboons in Rooiels, by creating awareness, dialogue, and scaling-up action through shared responsibility by all concerned residents and stakeholders.

Proposed priority implementation activities

Proposed implementing activities recommended to RERA and REC include the following:

1. Take further **action to limit the time baboons spend in the Central Business District** particularly during peak season. This can build on and institutionalise good practices developed by RERA and REC over the past years.

2. **Disseminate information on coexisting with Baboons** and reach out to real estate agencies, builders and construction workers active in Rooiels. This is particularly important given the many ongoing and planned constructions in Rooiels.
3. **Develop and disseminate guidelines when encountering Baboons** in nature, on a property, and at home as articulated in the [Discussion Document](#). Full buy-in and ownership of the Rooiels community is desirable in implementing the guidelines, recognising that there will always be differences of opinions.
4. **Work with the Overstrand Municipality** to establish a system to ensure that prospective and new property owners are aware of the challenges and the benefits of living with nature in Rooiels.
5. **Develop a strategy to market Rooiels as a Conservancy** in a Biosphere Reserve (“attracting conservation-minded people”). This activity would inform potential buyers and residents as early as possible that Rooiels is a Conservancy in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve. At the Indaba it was proposed that Rooiels has several marketing experts who may be willing to assist with this.
6. **Establish a small volunteer support group** to provide assistance to residents when incidents occur using the many respondents that volunteered to support coexistence with baboons

Implementation and considering further issues

At the Indaba it was recommended that small teams could be established to support implementation of the recommended activities, recruited from the survey respondents who indicated their willingness to volunteer support (more than 50). The teams could take into account work already initiated by RERA and REC, the Discussion Document, and ideas generated at the Indaba captured in the [working group notes](#). These activities would support dissemination of information, promoting the safety of baboons, securing of human food sources and marketing Rooiels as a conservancy.

While the 2021 Indaba process featured detailed discussions on many topics and issues, some topics came up during the process, where the current state of science or knowledge does not provide a clear or simple answer. This includes, for example, the question whether or not, or to what extent the behaviour of baboons has changed over time. Some of these topics may merit further consideration in the future, including what the concept of “rewilding” means for Rooiels.

1 Introduction

- Background and role of the Task Team
- Purpose and timing of the Rooiels Baboon Indaba
- Purpose of the Discussion document

Background

[Rooiels](#) is one of four Conservancies located in the transition zone of the [UNESCO](#)-designated [Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve](#), an area of pristine environment with unique and globally recognized plant diversity [1]. For many decades, Rooiels citizens and baboons have coexisted in Rooiels and diverse lessons have been learned on how co-existence is possible. At the same time, incidents occur where baboons raid unprotected waste bins, or enter homes of residents in their quest to search for food. In some cases incidents have occurred involving baboon and human confrontation.



The [Rooiels Ratepayers Association](#) (RERA) and [Rooiels Conservancy](#) (REC) are committed to foster a solution- and action-oriented process to maintain coexistence of humans and baboons in Rooiels with minimized incidents. This requires engaging the entire community and stakeholders. There are many new residents in Rooiels who bought, rent or renovate property. Furthermore, an increasing number of people visit the village as short stay or day visitors. These newcomers and various groups may not be fully aware of Rooiels' conservancy status and good practices to coexist with baboons, creating issues such as feeding of baboons, or not managing waste properly. Taking comprehensive and responsible action is important and urgent.

Purpose and timing of the Rooiels Baboon Indaba

In 2021, the combined Executive Committee (EXCO) of RERA and REC decided that baboon matters fall in the REC Wildlife portfolio and that the REC Wildlife Team should proceed with preparations to arrange a participative/consultative Baboon Indaba in 2021. The Indaba was based on the successful outcomes of two stakeholder workshops held in 2018 (Rooiels Voices) and 2019 (Cascades). The idea of the Indaba was informed by the need to address the above coexistence challenges and a request by a number of residents that a Baboon Indaba is needed and timely.

The Baboon Coexistence Indaba was scheduled to take place on 20 November 2021 and was open to all community members and stakeholders. The vision of the Indaba was to enhance coexistence of baboons in Rooiels through shared responsibility. Specifically, it sought to identify what further measures may be needed to create awareness and action by all concerned residents and stakeholders. The process leading to the Indaba was used to gauge current feelings and opinions about living with a baboon troop in a village where humans and their pets are on the increase.

To prepare for the Indaba, a survey was conducted that included all RE property owners and permanent residents. This Discussion Document was being prepared as part of the process. These activities were meant to ensure that the community at large is informed and has an opportunity to voice their opinion and give input. An important outcome from the Baboon Indaba could be a Baboon Coexistence Strategy for Rooiels.

Role of the Baboon Coexistence Task Team in preparing the Indaba

To prepare and inform a structured and solution-oriented discussion at the Indaba, an open, participatory and time-bound Task Team was established by RERA and REC. A draft [Terms of Reference of the Task Team](#) was presented at the Open RERA Committee meeting on 5 June 2021 and residents were subsequently invited to join the Team in July via an announcement in RECA.

The Task Team consisted of 14 members. Working closely with RERA and REC, and co-led by two community members, it was engaged in various aspects of preparing the Indaba, including background documentation, agenda, identification of stakeholders, etc. An important aspect of the work of the Task Team was to capture existing knowledge and elicit suggestions from community members, stakeholders and experts through the preparation of a Discussion Document.

2 Coexisting with baboons in Rooiels: Background and context

2.1 Rooiels and the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

- What is the global importance of the Kogelberg Biosphere for conservation in Rooiels?
- What does the designation of Rooiels as a Conservancy in the vicinity of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve mean for conservation?

The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve (KBR): A unique ecosystem

Rooiels is described by many as the gateway to the [Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve](#) (KBR). The KBR itself covers 100 000 hectares, was established in 1998, and was the first Biosphere Reserve proclaimed in South Africa. An important management goal of the KBR is to establish ecological corridors, and, specifically in the case of Rooiels, linking the mountains and core areas to the sea. These provide vital links between different habitats and protect migration routes for animals that will move seasonally between these habitats. This development directly addresses 2 of the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) of the United Nations, namely: #14 Life below water, and #15 Life on land. Rooiels is uniquely situated to link both of these biomes.



What is a Biosphere Reserve?

According to UNESCO: Biosphere reserves are “learning places for sustainable development [1].” They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. They are places that provide local solutions to global challenges. Biosphere reserves include terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. Each site promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.

Biosphere Reserves involve local communities and all interested stakeholders in planning and management. They integrate three main "functions": Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity; Economic development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable; and Logistic support, underpinning development through research, monitoring, education and training



The three zones of a Biosphere Reserve

Core Areas: Are securely protected areas for conserving biological diversity, monitoring minimally disturbed ecosystems, and undertaking non-destructive research and other low-impact uses(education) e.g., national parks, nature reserves, world heritage sites and Ramsar sites.

Buffer Zones: Usually surround or adjoin the core areas, and are used for cooperative activities compatible with sound ecological practices, including environmental education, recreation, ecotourism and applied basic research.

Transition Area: The transition area is where communities foster socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable economic and human activities. It contains a variety of agricultural activities, settlements and other uses in which local communities, management agencies, scientists, non-governmental organizations, cultural groups, economic interest and other stakeholders work together to manage and sustainably develop the area’s resources.

Rooiels falls within the [Cape Floral Kingdom – a World Heritage Site](#)

The Rooiels River catchment area is mostly undisturbed and extends from the mountains to the sea. It is virtually unique in that the bulk of the catchment area falls within the core zone of the KBR. The river and the estuary are almost totally free of any man-made pollution. In addition, because Rooiels falls within the Cape Floral Kingdom, we can probably boast that we have the greatest diversity of plant life of any village in South Africa. In other words, the estuary and area around Rooiels has hardly any need for restoration, and just needs to be kept as unspoilt as possible! A serious word of appreciation here to our happy hackers; they have an extremely important part to play in this!

All in all, this means that Rooiels is imminently suitable as part of an “eco-corridor” and the proposal has been supported and endorsed by [CapeNature](#) who manage the core zone of the KBR as well as the [Hangklip Ecological Corridor](#), and by the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve Company (KBRC). Once established and proclaimed, the corridor would be recognised as a [Contract Nature Reserve](#), managed by CapeNature, allowing for greater legal protection.

Rooiels has a huge diversity of wildlife

In Rooiels we have the privilege of living with a huge diversity of wildlife such as otters, leopards, honey badgers, mongoose, dassies and seals. Then the amazing diversity of birds including Verreaux’s Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Cape Rock Jumper and many others, without even mentioning what is under the water! Along with all the other wildlife, and just as important in their role in the ecosystem, are the baboons. According to the South African Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Chacma baboons play an important role in aerating the soils and spreading seeds. They are a source of food for many animals and thus play an integral part in the local food web. However, we have little knowledge of how many insects and small animals they consume.

Rooiels status as a Conservancy

When considering any wildlife in the Rooiels village, we must bear in mind that we are on the border of the core area of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve. In fact, whether officially regarded as a “buffer zone” or “transitional area,” thanks to a lot of dedicated work, the village was registered as a conservancy in 2004. It is part of the biosphere and we have a responsibility and commitment to take care of the biodiversity present. Apart from our obvious locality within the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, we border the [Kogelberg Nature Reserve](#) and the [Cape Floral Kingdom World Heritage Site](#).

Quotation from the letter sent by CapeNature CEO on the registration of the Rooiels Conservancy on 04 March 2004

“I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate your members on making this joint commitment to the promotion of nature and environmental conservation on their properties. We are confident that the conservancy concept will grow and prosper in the Western Cape Province. The combined commitment and effort of groups of landowners, such as yourselves, will ultimately play a significant role in the conservation of our natural heritage for the benefit, well-being and enjoyment of present and future generations.”

A long-term vision for research and learning

The long-term vision is that Rooiels will become a centre for research for the KBR, and for the marine environment which is part of it. Already important research has been done and is continuing to be done on the baboons and their interactions with residents – human/wildlife interaction is a very hot topic internationally -- hence the significance of this discussion. There is also ongoing monitoring of the leopards by the Cape Leopard Trust, and the Rooiels cameras are an important part of that. All this means that Rooiels is fairly unique in the fact that humans are living among the “wild animals” who also call this home. It presents unique opportunities to observe and to study both plants and animals.

CapeNature and South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) Stewardship Programme

Particularly in the transitional and buffer areas, there are many privately owned properties, which is where the concept of stewardship comes in. Stewardship is basically the management and use of natural systems so as to maintain or enhance biodiversity for current and future generations. CapeNature and the Botanical Society of South Africa (now: South African National Biodiversity Institute SANBI) launched the “[Stewardship programme](#)” in 2002. The vision of the Stewardship Program is threefold [2]:

1. To ensure that privately owned areas with high biodiversity value receive secure conservation status, and are linked to a network of other conservation areas in the landscape.
2. To ensure that landowners who commit their property to a stewardship option, will enjoy tangible benefits for their conservation actions.
3. To expand biodiversity conservation by encouraging commitment to, and implementation of, good biodiversity management practice, on privately owned land, in such a way that the private landowner becomes an empowered decision maker.

2.2 What do we know about the Rooiels baboon troop?

- What is the current size and composition of the troop?
- How has the troop evolved over time?
- What are feeding patterns of the troop?
- Which other baboon troops live in the transition zone of Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve?
- What broader ecosystem considerations are important?

About the Rooiels baboon troop

The first survey ever done of the Rooiels river estuary in 1948 noted the presence of baboons living where the village is located today. In September 2021, the Rooiels troop comprises of a total of 27 baboons: 3 Adult males (alpha male Benji); 12 Adult females (alpha female Regina); 1 Sub adult male; 4 Juvenile males; and 7 Juvenile females. The troop size has varied between 22 and 29 over the last 5 years of research. The baboons are individually named for research identification purposes. The troop is still being observed to keep track of their life history, particularly births and deaths.



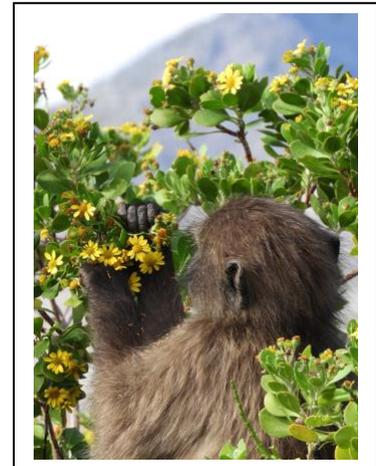
There is no “loner baboon” in Rooiels. The status of adult male baboons does fluctuate and the alpha currently accepts a small sub-group within the troop led by Indy. Challenges between the males can occasionally be heard, especially as the younger males grow into their prime.

Extensive research has been carried out on the Rooiels troop. A GPS collar was fitted to the previous alpha male and then the alpha female, in order to study their movement throughout their range. Their diet while in the village was also studied.

Feeding behaviour

Baboons have flexible ranging areas and are not territorial. They are prey animals and not predators. Baboons are an interlinked part of the ecosystem, distributing fynbos seeds as they forage. The females remain where they were raised, with most adult male baboons dispersing to other troops. They have been here for around 200 000 years!

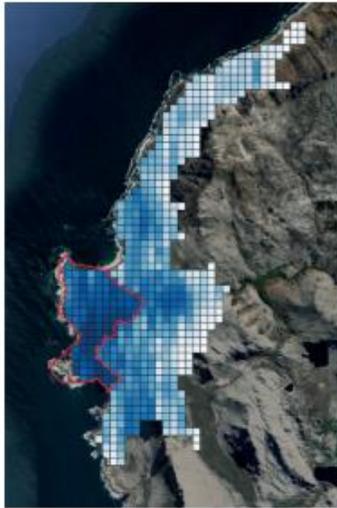
The Rooiels troop forages along the coastal plains from 2 km south of Rooiels village to as far as Sparks Pools, a distance of 9 kms. They also forage in the intertidal zone of the sea, though this accounts for a very small portion of their overall diet it provides valuable protein. Although the Rooiels troop spends over half their time in the urban area, research covering the period March 2017 to February 2018, revealed that their diet included very little human food, due to limited opportunities(6).



Baboons come into Rooiels because (6):

- Baboons prefer low lying land - this is an innate behaviour
- Vegetation in the village is very productive
- There is a specific type of fynbos that occurs only in the Rooiels area that the troop favours
- Lawns serve as dense areas of grass, a fall-back food during winter when the fynbos is less productive.

Because of resident vigilance and baboon-proofing, human food (i.e., from homes, cars, bins) accounted for less than 5 percent of their diet over a 12-month period in 2017-2018, but baboons remain alert to human food opportunities that arise on any given day.



▲
The image on the left shows the estimated home range of the Rooiels baboon troop, with darker blues indicating a higher frequency of use by the baboons. The red outline indicates the boundary of the Rooiels village. The image on the right shows all of the erven in Rooiels (with the roads divided for analysis). The darker blues indicate a higher frequency of use by the baboons.

Other baboon troops in the vicinity

The neighbouring baboon troops are the Gordon's Bay troop and the Pringle Bay troop. Baboons predominantly frequent and forage on the coastal plains and occupy available space that provides for their needs in terms of food, water and sleep sites. The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve highlands are devoid of baboon troops, but the Pringle Bay troop has been seen in the Buffelsdam area, due to activities of the monitoring company, as well as in the Rooiels river valley and in the town of Rooiels on several occasions, which is unnatural.

2.3 Which policies and governance structures guide interaction with Baboons?

- What is the legal/conservation status of baboons?
- How does the status of Rooiels as a Conservancy in the transition zone of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve affect cohabitation (coexistence?)?
- Which public/scientific bodies play a role in managing interaction with baboons? What are their respective roles?

Baboons are listed as “threatened” species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). It is [illegal](#) to harm, hunt, poison, paintball gun or feed baboons. There are [fines](#) for doing so. Details are specified in the [Western Cape Nature Conservation Laws Amendment Act 2000](#), the Nature Conservation Ordinance 19 of 1974, and the Animals Protection Act 71 of 1962)

The management of baboon issues in Rooiels, Betty’s Bay, and Pringle Bay falls under the authority of the [Overstrand Municipality](#) under delegated authority from the Western Cape Government. In Betty’s Bay and Pringle Bay baboons are kept outside the village by baboon monitors. This has created a number of controversies. Rooiels has followed the coexistence model for decades.

The Overstrand Municipality may issue fines for offenses related to baboons. For example, in Bettys Bay, a fine of R500-00 may be issued if "baboon-proof bins" are not used, when placing their refuse out for collection [3]. Furthermore, Overstrand Municipality has issued building guidelines which specify that baboons visiting a building site are not to be harmed (but may be dispatched by yelling and chasing). The use of firearms is illegal. Staff must be informed not to feed baboons [4].

2.4 What is the nature and magnitude of the challenge of human-baboon interaction?

- What do we know about specific incidents (where, when, how)? What is an incident?
- Has the behaviour of the troop, or individuals, changed over time?
- How have we documented and currently document incidents? Is it done in a way to capture lessons learned?

There is a long history of living with baboons in Rooiels. Baboons interact with humans primarily for one reason: food. Previous surveys in Rooiels have shown incidents have always occurred in the village. These include interaction of dogs and baboons which have created challenges, although for the most part problems are avoided [5]. To minimize incidents and to enhance tolerance and enjoyment in the community from living with baboons, awareness-raising campaigns were implemented.

While baboons have never done physical harm to anyone in the more than 60-year history of Rooiels, some incidents with baboons have created tension, even trauma. Experience has shown that open communication and recognizing the feelings of individuals affected can help develop a better understanding of the situation.

Incidents are not systematically documented; including what factors caused the incident. Nor does a definition exist of what constitutes a “baboon incident”. A book is available in the Rooiels Shop, where people can fill in their contacts when an incident happens. Furthermore, OM has a phone number where baboon related issues can be reported.

Opportunities exist to clarify what type of information should be reported, how this information is to be used, and what needs to be done to avoid similar situations in the future. For example, it could be valuable to have information to help spot areas/properties that require some improvement on reducing attractants/baboon-proofing on individual properties.

The 2021 Rooiels Baboon Coexistence Survey provides an opportunity to learn from Rooiels residents experience with baboons. The results have been made available in a separate report. Some key results and highlights are presented below.

2.5 What does coexistence mean for Rooielsers and how are they ready to engage?

- What are the perceptions of Rooiels residents concerning baboons?
- What innovative ideas do residents have to address challenges?
- Are residents ready to contribute to supporting coexistence?

About the 2021 Rooiels Baboon Coexistence Survey

The 2021 Rooiels Baboon Coexistence Survey took place in October 2021. It was widely shared via RECA, VP and emails. There were 163 separate households who reside or own in Rooiels that completed the survey. The responses to the quantified (check box) components of the survey were analysed using Microsoft Forms which automatically produced the final graphs and charts and provided Excel spreadsheets of the complete results. Both the quantitative results and written comments made by respondents were valuable in developing the questions and actions presented in Chapter 3. The [Survey Results Report](#) is available on the Rooiels website.

When encouraged to complete the survey, participants were assured that their confidentiality would be maintained. The Baboon Coexistence Task Team therefore did not share the raw survey data beyond the Task Team, RERA and REC. The qualitative answers were informal and aimed at identifying key discussion topics for the Indaba. Those questions were a compilation of all the questions every member of the Babco Task Team wanted to see asked.

Furthermore the survey had no requirement to answer all the questions and it would not be possible to carry out a scientific analysis of those written perception responses. The survey was not intended to meet the stringent requirements of a scientific survey, more particularly one on perceptions. Further in-depth scientific analysis of the qualitative (written) responses was therefore not considered.

Summary of survey results

The survey results show that the majority of Rooiels residents support coexistence with baboons. Most respondents (83%) consider that baboons should be free to “forage on the fynbos in Rooiels” with 77% saying that the baboon troop “is part of Rooiels and needs to be accepted and respected”. Almost half of respondents (47% of those that answered the question) indicated a willingness to volunteer to participate in activities to support coexistence in Rooiels.

On the whole the written comments received supported the evidence that came from the data out of the survey, with the majority of Rooielsers being strongly in support of biodiversity and wildlife and aware of the need to protect their homes, manage their waste and remain vigilant to reduce baboon access to human food. However there were also detailed comments from those who had been negatively affected by baboon incursions and these were used to identify discussion topics at the Indaba. Ten percent of respondents did not consider wildlife or biodiversity to be a factor in their decision to live in Rooiels.

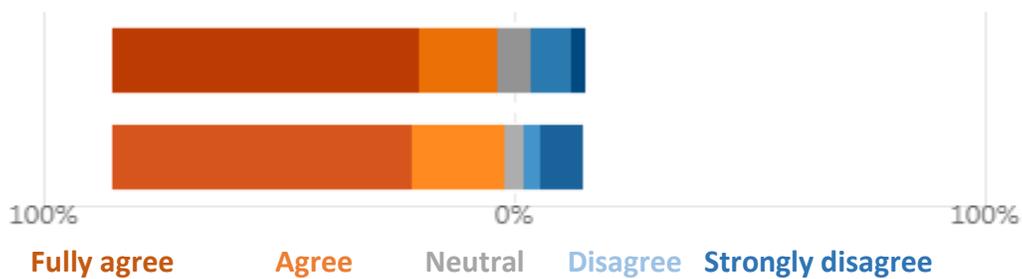
Many residents suggested that there needs to be ongoing attention paid to waste management by the Overstrand Municipality and residents, with stronger sanctions for feeding baboons, and that more education and information should be made available – especially to new owners and residents. Seventy percent (70%) take no action to discourage baboons accessing their plot. Sixty-three (63%) consider that it is a resident’s fault if the baboons get into a house with 8% strongly disagreeing.

There are, as in the past, residents that consider the baboons to be a problem (33% in 2021, 27% in 2018 and 46% in 2001). This applies even to some of those who enjoy the baboons and are prepared to make the adjustment needed to live with baboons. The feelings are reflected in the comments where some residents share their experiences. A number of these concerns relate to incidents which occurred, pointing to the need for intensifying action and shared responsibility to minimize such incidents within the coexistence model. There are many residents that enjoy having the baboons in Rooiels which is also reflected in the written comments.

Selected graphs featuring additional quantitative results

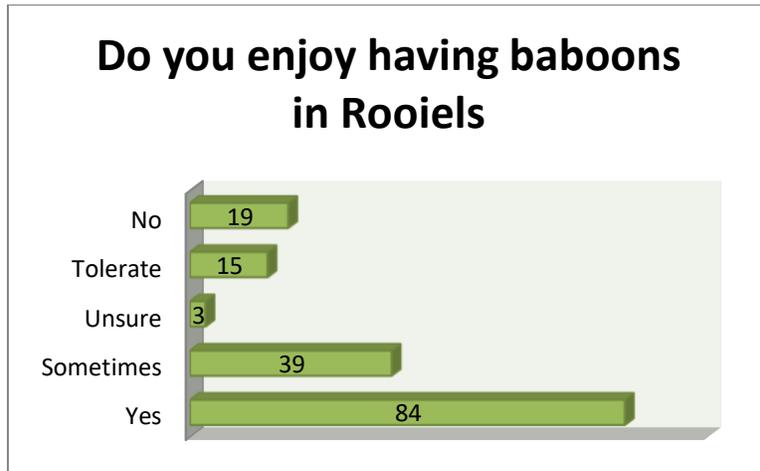
A few of the graphics generated from the quantified (check box) questions are included below. Some additional charts were generated from the data and shared at the Indaba. They can be accessed on the Rooiels website in the [Survey Report](#) and also in the Indaba Presentation powerpoint.

Fig 2.5.1 Biodiversity and wildlife were a factor in my/our decision to buy/move here



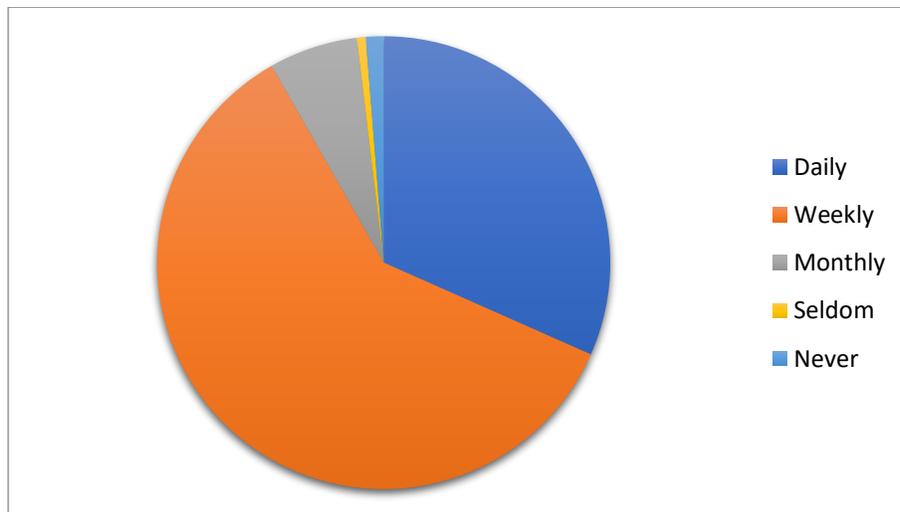
Ninety-five (95%) of respondents indicate that wildlife is important to them and 77% are concerned with the conservation of baboons in Rooiels. Forty-four percent (44%) feel that baboons have restricted the way they live in Rooiels to some extent – including some who enjoy the baboons.

Fig. 2.5.2 Do you enjoy having baboons in Rooiels



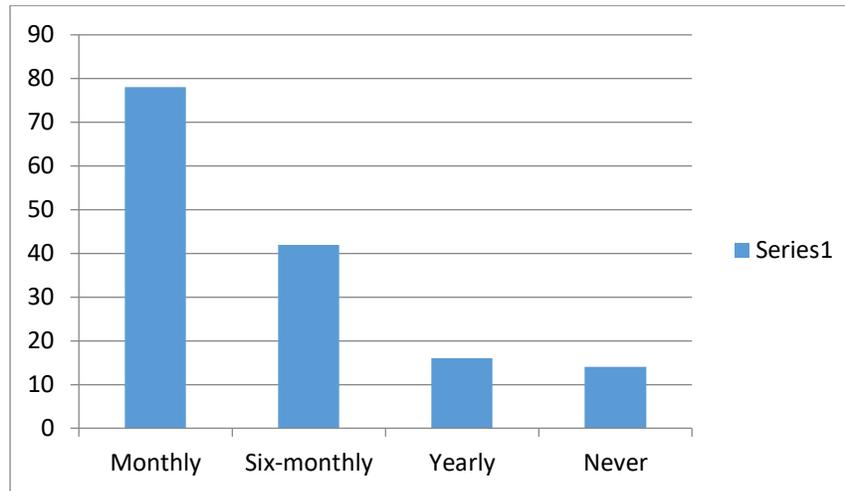
Surveys carried out in earlier years showed similar results on comparable questions concerning enjoyment of baboon. In 2001 the results showed that 61% like the baboons, 20% were neutral and 19% dislike the baboons. In 2018 tolerance increased slightly with 62% like, 22% neutral. In 2021 60% like the baboons, 30% tolerate them and 10% dislike the baboons.

Fig 2.5.3 How often do baboons visit your Erf (plot)



2021 Survey results show that 60% of respondents estimate that baboon visit their erf weekly and 32% daily.

Fig. 2.5.4 How often would you like to receive information about baboons



3 What has been done in Rooiels and what are the lessons learned?

Baboons have been part of Rooiels since its beginnings in 1948 when early residents reported their presence. From those pioneer days, the key lesson for residents, visitors and municipality has never changed: to secure waste, baboon proof homes, and discourage the feeding of baboons.

3.1 What action has been taken to date in Rooiels?

Residents, visitors, new owners and businesses

There is a long history of engagement on baboons by our community both amongst its residents and with other stakeholders. Over decades, RERA and REC have provided residents with occasional talks by experts, articles in The Breeze magazine and more recently on the [Rooiels website](http://www.rooiels.org/baboons) (www.rooiels.org/baboons).

Visitors have been exposed to posters, signage, leaflets, the ECO-centre, volunteer information officers at the CBD in the season, even one-on-one approaches to cycling groups and hikers picnicking in the CBD. Examples of the range of posters and leaflets are included in the addendum illustrating their clear message. The current “Rooiels Wild” magazine is available in the shop. Samples of these efforts are illustrated in Addendum 1.

A few years ago, the R44 working group negotiated with the municipality for traffic slowing and increased signage to prevent wildlife (and human) death at the bridge and the Porter Drive entrance. Difficulties at Provincial Government level meant these changes were not forthcoming.

Commercially, we have always had a tiny, but engaged, hub, and communication remains ongoing and fruitful, primarily around waste disposal, baboon proofing and education.

Architects, constructors and builders, estate agents

Communicating with these groups has been more challenging. Documents and leaflet distribution and site visits by REC members have been the approach, by which to offer guidelines for both site management and baboon proof home construction and waste management. Attempts at distributing illustrated documents with guidelines to these parties have been ongoing for years with only moderate success, and an updated document aimed at these parties has just been produced. There is a wealth of tried and tested advice for architects and builders on the website.

Many estate agents often prefer not to mention baboons, fire and wind issues to prospective clients, and approximately 40 percent of current sales are privately negotiated from internet offers. Historically real estate agents were provided with copies of Living the Vision to attract conservation-minded buyers but this was not always well received by the agents.

Bakkie builders and a constant flow of subcontractors are a particular challenge to building site management where workers leave food accessible and feed the baboons. With a Covid-inspired spike in building projects, this needs a more structured response.

Baboon Surveys

There have been two: 2001 and 2018, the latter designed by a PhD student who spent several years in Rooiels observing the baboons and humans. The 2018 survey showed increasing acceptance of baboons by residents who reported a sharp rise in dustbin and home security. These surveys are on the Rooiels website.

3.2 Which information and outreach materials exists and are they fit for purpose?

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What materials have been prepared in Rooiels for what purpose and by whom?• How have they been distributed, and do we know if they have been effective?• What other relevant materials exist? |
|---|

During the process of developing this document, a wealth of awareness-raising materials were identified. An overview of [Existing Material](#) can be accessed on the baboon coexistence web pages. There is an opportunity to assess which of the materials should be used for future awareness-raising.

3.3 What are lessons learned and what has worked well?

This section covers what has worked in Rooiels to ensure long-standing coexistence of humans and baboons in Rooiels. Many of the key insights featured below are informed by research undertaken in 2017 and 2018 by Joselyn Mormile, from the University of Cape Town's Institute for Communities and Wildlife in Africa. She is currently writing up her PhD thesis on the topic of human-baboon coexistence in Rooiels.

Responsible human behaviour is the key to human-baboon coexistence

In her study, Joselyn found that, during 2017 and 2018, baboons had minimal access to human-based food because people had baboon-proofed their homes and stored their food waste in baboon-proof bins. Despite this lack of access to human-based food, the baboon troop still visited the Rooiels village on most days but spent most of their time foraging in the fynbos vegetation, on lawns and along road verges [6].

Effective waste management is an imperative

There is unanimous agreement that responsible household and municipal waste management is key to reducing unwanted human-baboon interactions [7]. A bylaw in the Overstrand Municipality that requires residents to dispose of rubbish in baboon-proof bins is also in place, and almost certainly contributes to the responsible behaviour. However, it is arguably the culture and social norms of the Rooiels Conservancy that make this community so receptive to the education and awareness campaigns.

Targeted awareness and education campaigns can stimulate responsible human behaviour

Safety of Baboons. Rooiels baboons have been killed in road traffic accidents and as a result of attacks by dogs and/or humans. The R44 bisects the village and "authorities still need to ensure that measures are put in place to ensure animal welfare and human wellbeing [6]".

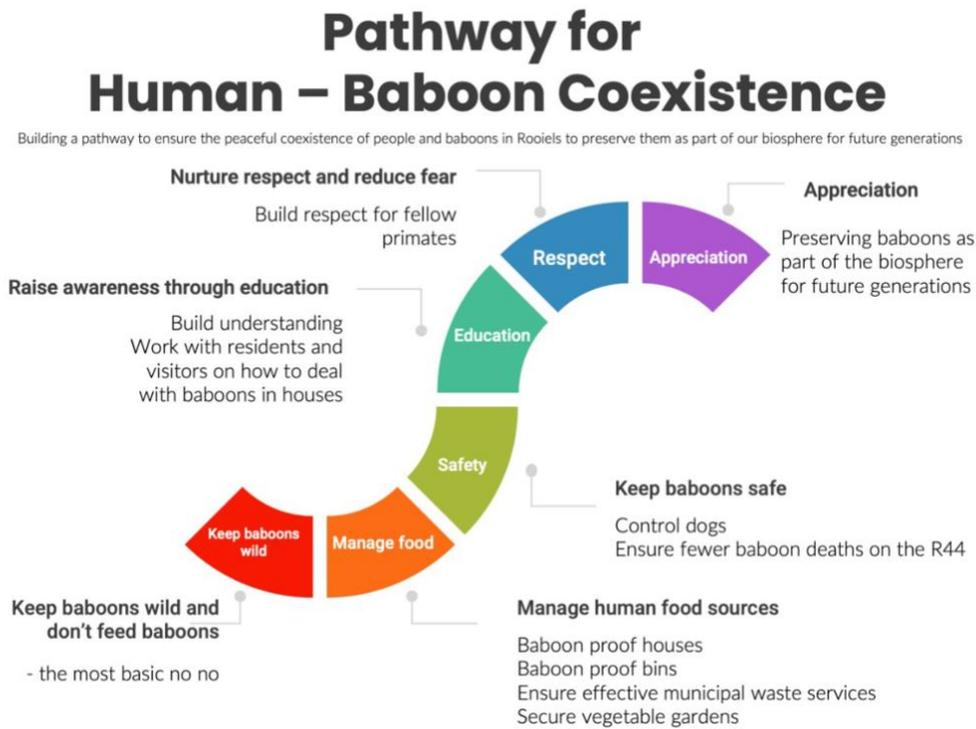
Education. Rooiels residents continue to raise awareness and share knowledge with new residents, visitors and builders regarding sharing space with baboons. Successful baboon-proofing strategies and the dispelling of myths regarding baboon behaviour are routinely shared by word of mouth, on community social media groups, as well as on the community website [6].

Reduced fear of baboons. Joselyn found in her study that informing a new resident about baboon behaviour, reduced or removed the fear of baboons and that "most become tolerant of or embrace living with baboons [6]." The overall lesson learned is that this must be an ongoing process of factual information sharing about baboons and their behaviour with residents, the immediate following up of any incidents that do take place to gather the facts, and the prevention of spreading of false information.

Appreciation of these primates. We anticipate that the co-existence model will lead to a deeper appreciation of living harmoniously with these fascinating primates.

A Pathway for Human-Baboon Coexistence

To guide the development of community based action to support coexistence and minimize incidents, the Task Team developed a framework referred to as a “Pathway for Human-Baboon Coexistence”. Key elements of the Pathway include: keep baboons wild; manage food; safety; education; respect; and appreciation.



4 What further action is needed for coexisting with baboons in Rooiels?

4.1 What are priority themes for action?

Taking into account the input provided by residents in the 2021 Baboon Coexistence Survey, the action areas below are proposed. Each area is briefly introduced and questions are provided to stimulate discussion at the Indaba. For some of the topics solutions featured in existing documentation has been compiled. The 9 areas include:

- Minimizing and managing waste
- Baboon-proofing homes

- Guidance when near baboons in nature, on the property, or at home
- Supporting businesses that are active in Rooiels
- Supporting the CBD during holiday periods to minimize incidents
- Marketing Rooiels as a biosphere reserve conservancy
- Developing a communication package and strategy
- Fostering our civic responsibilities as residents of Rooiels

4.2 Minimizing and managing waste

Baboons are attracted by food. Unsecured public and private waste bins in Rooiels continue to be a problem.

- What further action is needed (and by whom) to ensure that waste in Rooiels does not attract baboons?
- How will this be incorporated into Rooiels systems to ensure continuing attention in future years?
- What are ways to hold non-complying residents, Airbnb owners, etc. accountable?
- How can OM be held accountable to ensure effective waste management systems and schedules are maintained? How can OM waste collection schedules for public and private bins be widely shared?
- How can by-laws on waste and related enforcement help with baboon proofing?

Options for action for home owners for effective waste management include the following:

- Ensure outside bins are baboon proof or take your waste elsewhere.
- Ensure baboon-proof bin is firmly attached, cannot be overturned and is baboon proof. Baboon proof bins are obtainable from [information to be added].
- Consider separating waste and take recyclables (plastic, glass, metal and paper) and other waste to Pringle Bay. Overstrand Municipality is expected to start a recycle waste collection system from Rooiels again but no dates have been given.
- Support the new initiative for a 3 Villages organic waste collection service [add link].
- If waste is stored the container needs to be sealed and in a safe place (e.g. inside a garage and not outside).

4.3 Baboon-proofing homes

A range of options are available for homes owners and residents to ensure that baboons cannot enter a home.

- What can be done to enhance information sharing about various baboon proofing options available, including advantages and possible drawbacks?
- How can this information be effectively shared with architects, builders, and owners who build or renovate their homes?

- How can Overstrand Municipality be engaged to ensure that new owners are given information on baboon proofing and contacts in Rooiels that can assist? Is there a way that info can be attached to transfer deeds? Is there a way to hold Real Estate agents accountable (e.g. whereby the owner signs a document affirming they have been informed)?
- Can the building inspector's office be encouraged to attach baboon proofing information to building plans when they are signed off? Architect/builder/contractor/owner could acknowledge receipt of such information.

Options for action for builders, home owners and residents to baboon proof homes include:.

Building measures

- Add clear bars to windows with spacing less than 7 cm.
- Limit window openings using commercially available devices/locks.
- Ensure that Trellidoors are baboon proof with gaps <7cm (same for shutters).
- Use extra-strength mesh-sliding doors to allow light and air come through while keeping baboon and other wild animals (e.g. snakes) out.
- If building a new house, consider providing internal access from your garage to unload your car.
- Take into account vulnerability of external features that can be damaged (e.g. roofs, gutters).

Behavioural measures

- Keep unprotected doors and windows closed and locked.
- Store food in closed places where the baboons cannot see it.
- When eating outside, it is better to serve inside to reduce the food on display.
- Lock car doors as baboons can open doors and climb into the car to search for food.

4.4 Guidance when encountering baboons in nature, on the property, or at home

Newcomers or visitors may not be familiar with how to behave when coming close to baboons in nature, on their property, or in their home. This may create potential conflict and trauma. There may be an opportunities to develop further guidance, conduct outreach, and foster learning. In many cases a brief chat with a person familiar with baboons is all it takes.

- What further action could foster learning of newcomers and visitors about baboons and what to do when facing them, e.g.
 - Development of a learning package
 - Training of trainers (e.g. volunteers to engage with new residents or visitors)
 - List of individuals to provide support when an incident occurs?

- Other innovative action (e.g. interesting talks, children's baboon info-activity during holidays?)
- Etc.

Measures when encountering baboons in nature, on a property or in the home include the following.

Encountering baboons in nature

- Don't walk around carrying food. If walking with food from the shop, or to the beach, put it into a backpack.
- Remain calm – provided you have no food on you the baboons will just ignore you.
- Don't purposefully get too close.
- It is not good for the baboons or for coexistence if baboons access human food. But if you are in that situation – then you must let the food drop and move away.
- If walking with your dog (dogs have to be on leashes at all times) provided the dogs do not chase them, they will be ignored by the baboons.

Dealing with baboons on your property

- Remain calm. Be sure that the doors/windows are secure to prevent entry.
- If you are sitting out there and the baboons come, provided the doors into the house are secure, just sit quietly. They will move away when they don't see food.
- If you have food outside with you – take the food inside.
- Lift and display a walking stick, before they reach the door or even the veranda.
- If you are having a meal, throw a cloth over the food to conceal it.

Dealing with baboons within the home

- Stay calm and allow the baboon to keep whatever food is in its hands. If you panic, you may panic the baboon and it may defecate.
- Remove your dogs and keep them calm.
- Allow the baboon to take whatever it may have, then raise your arms and chase it out but don't scream.
- Provide an exit route for the baboon (preferably the way they came in). Firmly encourage it to leave. No!
- Be seen to be in control. Baboons read body language and react accordingly.
- If the baboon bares its teeth ("fear grimace"), it is scared. Continue to chase it out.
- If the troop is in your house and you become nervous, call someone to assist.

Respecting what is illegal

- Under no circumstance should baboons be harmed in any way, including firing crackers at them. They are a protected species in the Western Cape and harm of any kind is illegal.

4.5 Supporting businesses that are active in Rooiels

Many professional entities are engaged in Rooiels. The Village Shop and restaurants sell food. Architects and builders design houses. Builders and other service providers (e.g. gardeners) and their workers come to Rooiels during the day. There is potential to further engage them and brief/train workers.

- What action could be taken to further engage businesses and their workers to raise awareness and provide support?
- Who could be engaged to undertake such action? What systematic approach can be introduced to ensure that engagement continues?

Measures for businesses and professional entities to consider include the following.

Restaurants and shop owners

- Ensure that staff are well educated on dealing with baboons
- Install slam-locks on all doors to be used by patrons
- Baboon notes on menus “Do not feed baboons”. “Do not fear baboons”

Rental and Airbnb Owners

- Stress good behaviour very strongly. People just don’t believe you if you are too gentle in your conveying the message.
- Use the presence of baboons as a marketing tool, rather than an impediment to letting opportunities.
- Install a chart on how to deal with baboons inside and outside of house.
- Consider installing a lock on fridge doors
- Consider advising clients that you will withhold the damage deposit if waste is not properly disposed of so that baboons do not access it.

Real estate agencies

- Supply potential buyer with information pack on living in a Biosphere, special emphasis on baboons
- Include some kind of clause in the deed of sale stating that the purchaser has been informed and supplied with information.

Architects and builders

- Design homes that can be easily baboon-proofed. Make it part of the design, rather than trying to baboon-proof it afterwards.

Builders and contractors

- All food should be kept inside a locked vehicle.
- Do not allow staff to leave waste food lying around the site.
- There needs to be a baboon proof bin used.
- Teach workers not to act aggressively towards the baboons and avoid eating their lunch while baboons are on site.

4.6 Supporting the CBD during holiday periods to minimize incidents

Visitors flock the CBD during the holiday period, increasing the risk of incidents with baboons.

- How could community-based action help minimize incidents in the CBD during the holiday periods?

Measures in the CBD to minimize incidents with baboons include the following.

- Education of visitors is a high priority. During peak periods, Shop Assist Volunteers (SAV) will be stationed in the CBD to support shops and restaurants to raise awareness of baboons. For particular peak days a local assistant will be recruited and trained by REC.
- The SAVs would inform people in the vicinity that baboons are present and to point out the information signage on display. Information flyers can also be handed to visitors.
- Volunteers will be trained in baboon behaviour, with emphasis on calm techniques to keep the baboons moving away from the area.
- The SAV would shepherd baboons away from the shops using an unloaded “catty” and/or body gestures as required.
- A WhatsApp group will be the alerting media. If baboons are seen approaching the shop area, a message will alert volunteers to respond. Shop owners and waiters can assist in alerting.
- The jackets for the volunteers will be marked: Shop Assist Volunteer, Rooiels Baboon Coexistence Initiative

4.7 Marketing Rooiels as a Conservancy in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

Attracting new residents who appreciate biodiversity and interaction with baboons to Rooiels could be valuable to reinforce support for coexistence into the future.

- What are ways to raise awareness and ensure that potential buyers, new residents and visitors understand that Rooiels is a Conservancy that is directly adjacent to the core protected area of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve and has baboons freely wandering in the village?
- What practical action should be taken and by whom?

4.8 Developing a communication package and strategy

A lot of awareness raising materials has been prepared. A potential exists to do more and to engage with specific target audiences. A targeted efforts is needed taking into account the following question:

- What could be the scope, topic and elements of a baboon communication package (e.g. providing signage and education leaflets; social media, website)
- How could it be developed, distributed and updated?
- How should it be delivered?

4.9 Fostering our civic responsibilities as residents of Rooiels

While organizations such as RERA and REC do a lot, engagement and action of all residents is needed to address baboon challenges in Rooiels and minimize incidents.

- What can we as residents of Rooiels do to minimize incidents with baboon?

Measures of civic engagement and action include the following.

- Encourage neighbours to acquire proper baboon-proof waste holders with good clips if they don't have one.
- Visit new residents/renters to inform and sensitise them. Provide them with a baboon poster with tips, offer to help if needed.
- Perhaps arrange talks on the baboons, presented by experts either local or imported. Not many, perhaps two per year. Keep the message alive.
- Is it feasible to arrange baboon walks during Christmas holidays – also Easter?
- Fun children's info-shops as part of the Christmas holiday programme
- Regular baboon news on VP and other sites – just what is happening right here in RE, nothing controversial.

4.10 Fostering knowledge sharing and providing feedback

Currently, many baboon-related issues are discussed in groups such as VP or other fora. There may be an opportunity for more structured interaction and communication.

- How can we organize discussions and feedback from the community on baboon issues?
- How can we document incidents and learn from them without endangering baboons?
- What should be taken into account in developing an information system to support coexistence? E.g.
 - be clear about the purpose
 - develop guidance on what constitutes an incident
 - define what information should be provided and shared
 - communicate what will be done with the information
 - ensure that the information is not used to cause harm to baboons

5 Proposed priority implementation activities

Proposed implementing activities recommended to RERA and REC include the following:

1. Take further **action to limit the time baboons spend in the Central Business District** particularly during peak season. This can build on and institutionalise good practices developed by RERA and REC over the past years.
2. **Disseminate information on coexisting with Baboons** and reach out to real estate agencies, builders and construction workers active in Rooiels. This is particularly important given the many ongoing and planned constructions in Rooiels.
3. **Develop and disseminate guidelines when encountering Baboons** in nature, on a property, and at home as articulated in the [Discussion Document](#). Full buy-in and ownership of the Rooiels community is desirable in implementing the guidelines, recognising that there will always be differences of opinions.
4. **Work with the Overstrand Municipality** to establish a system to ensure that prospective and new property owners are aware of the challenges and the benefits of living with nature in Rooiels.
5. **Develop a strategy to market Rooiels as a Conservancy** in a Biosphere Reserve (“attracting conservation-minded people”). This activity would inform potential buyers and residents as early as possible that Rooiels is a Conservancy in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve. At the Indaba it was proposed that Rooiels has several marketing experts who may be willing to assist with this.
6. **Establish a small volunteer support group** to provide assistance to residents when incidents occur using the many respondents that volunteered to support coexistence with baboons.

Implementation and considering further issues

At the Indaba it was recommended that small teams could be established to support implementation of the recommended activities, recruited from the survey respondents who indicated their willingness to volunteer support (more than 50). The teams could take into account work already initiated by RERA and REC, this final Discussion Document, and ideas generated at the Indaba captured in the [Working Group notes](#). These activities would support dissemination of information, promoting the safety of baboons, securing of human food sources and marketing Rooiels as a conservancy.

While the 2021 Indaba process featured detailed discussions on many topics and issues, some topics came up during the process, where the current state of science or knowledge does not provide a clear or simple answer. This includes, for example, the question whether or not, or to what extent the behaviour of baboons has changed over time. Some of these topics may merit further consideration in the future, including what the concept of “rewilding” means for Rooiels.

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