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Overstrand

Monthly Report

December 2023

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INTRODUCTION

This monthly report covers the period from 1 December to 31 December 2023.

The Voëlklip Troop entered the urban area for the first time in a four-month period during December, making incursions into town on two days during the month. Unfortunately, members of the troop were also responsible for four occupied house incursions in Hermanus Heights.

The Vogelgat Troop remained out of town for the entirety of December, with no recorded incursions during the month. This is the sixth consecutive month that this troop has remained out of town. The troop spent the majority of its time foraging on the mountains to the north of the R43, moving between the Vogelgat River and the Hermanus Yacht Club.

The Onrus Troop members were observed quite frequently during December with their movement patterns focused primarily on the area surrounding the pig farm where they were often observed foraging during November. Two hotline calls reporting Onrus baboons in the urban area were also received from Chanteclair and Owl Rock Road. Both calls reported seeing baboons in town. No other incursions were reported from this area. The Hamilton-Russel Troop was also observed several times during the month in the area around La Vierge Winery and Bosman Farm.

OVERSTRAND EAST TROOPS

VOËLKLIP TROOP

IN TOWN STATISTICS

- Troop time out of town decreased from 100% to 99.2% during December.
- Time out of town for individuals decreased from 99.7% to 95.4% 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 | 99.2 | -0.8 | 2 | 3:46 | 1:53 | 03:11 | 00:35 |
| Individuals | 95.4 | -4.3 | 7 | 20:33 | 2:56 | 08:26 | 00:26 |

Table 1. In Town Statistics for the Voëlklip Troop for December 2023. Time is expressed in hours and minutes. Average daylength in December was 14 hours and 24 minutes.

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

- Two individuals, UKNM1 and a sub-adult male, were the most frequently observed and entered town on seven days during December. The troop entered town on two days.
- The most frequently entered areas of town were Hermanus Heights and Fernkloof suburbs.

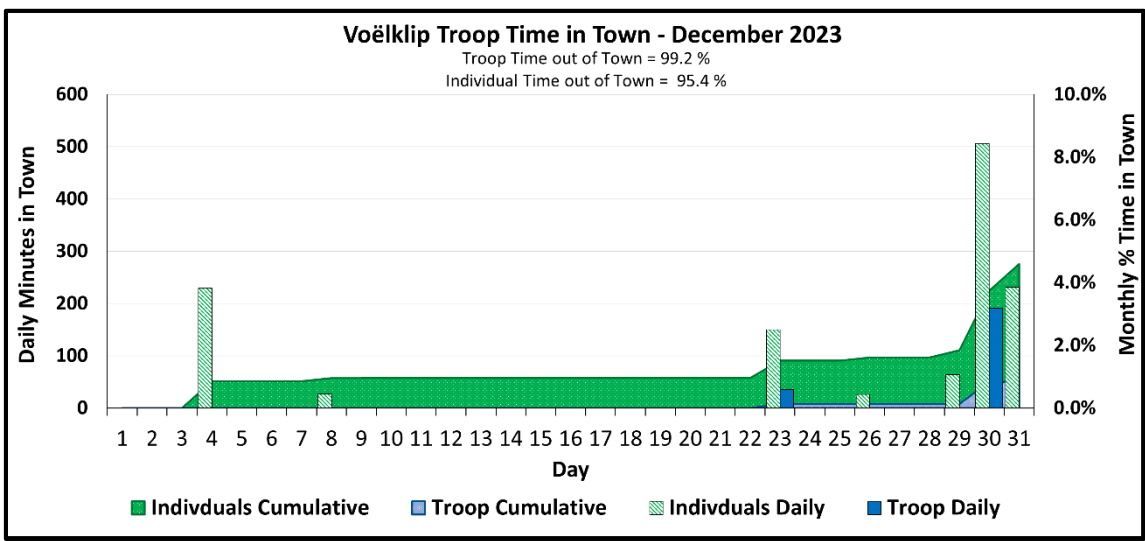


Figure 3. Graph showing time out of town percentages for members of the Voëlkliip Troop during December 2023.

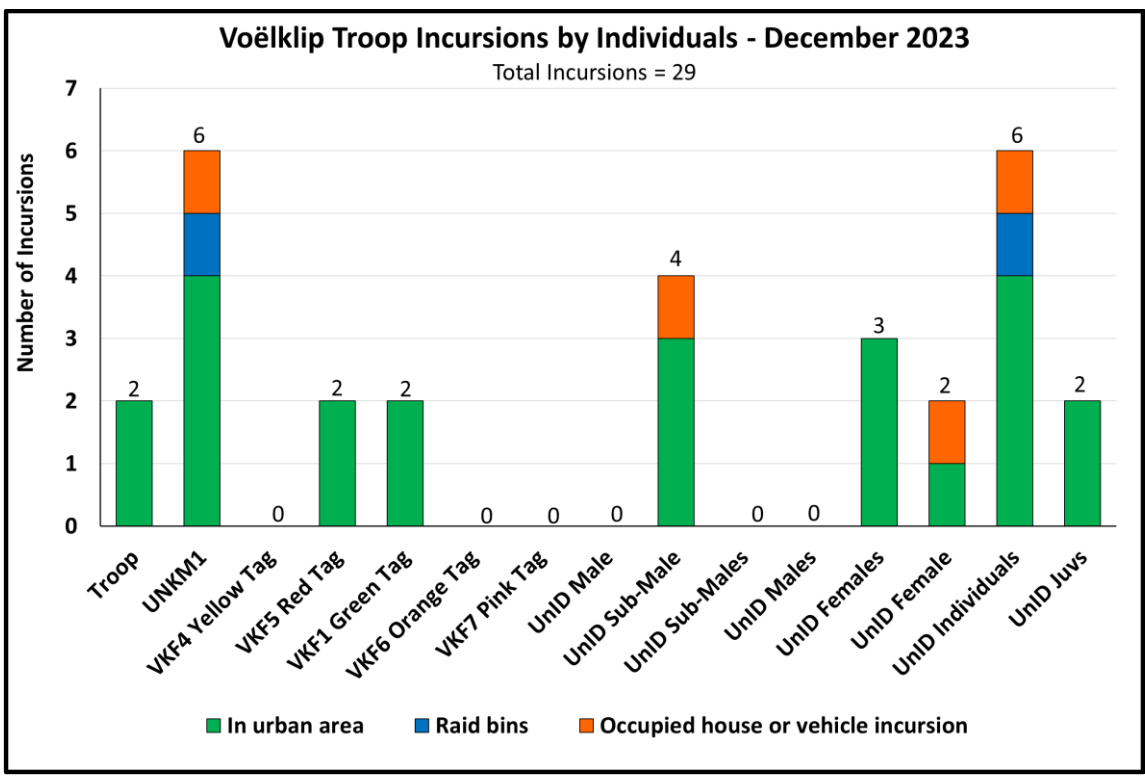


Figure 4. Graph showing incursion behaviour for members of the Voëlkliip Troop during December 2023.

VOGELGAT 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 2. In Town Statistics for the Vogelgat Troop for December 2023. Time is expressed in hours and minutes. Average daylength in December was 14 hours and 24 minutes.

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

- No members of the Vogelgat Troop entered the urban area during December.
- The troop spent the majority of its time foraging on the mountainside above the R43, between the Yacht Club and Maanskynspruit.

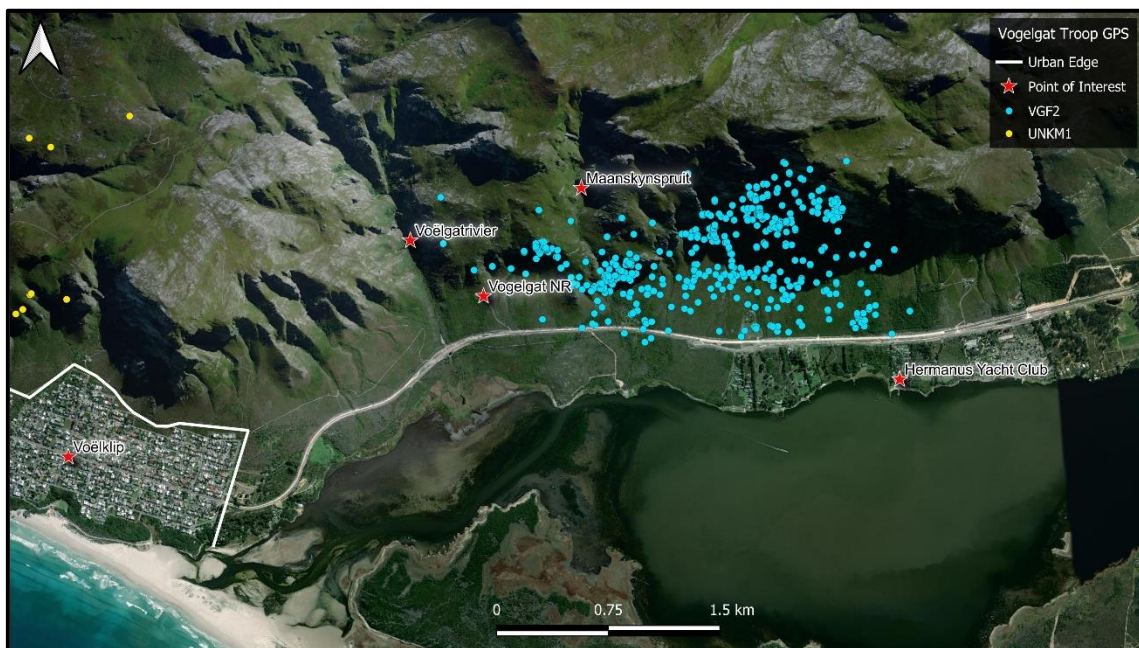


Figure 5. Map showing the movements of the Vogelgat Troop in December 2023 based on the GPS collar fitted to VGF2.

ONRUS TROOP

- The Onrus Troop was first observed on 3 December close to the pig farm. The troop was observed in the vicinity of the pig farm on twelve other days during the month.
- Two hotline calls regarding the Onrus Troop was received during December. On 11 December the Onrus troop was reported on the mountain above Owl Rock Road, with an adult male walking amongst the houses. Once field staff arrived, the troop was observed out of town moving in a north-easterly direction towards the pig farm. On 30 December a hotline call was received from Chanteclair. When the field team arrived in the area the baboons had already moved out of the urban space.

HAMILTON RUSSELL

- The Hamilton-Russell Troop was observed on five days during the month.
- The troop was most commonly seen in the vicinity of La Vierge Winery and de Bos Dam.

VIRTUAL FENCE

- The virtual fence was used on three days during December, with all activations used to discourage the Vogelgat Troop from moving closer to town.

GENERAL COMMENTS

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

No births or deaths were recorded in managed troops in the Eastern Overstrand during December. Additionally, no migration activity was noted during the month. During December the population of each managed troop was counted and is displayed below (Table 3). This mid-year count was included this year, so that management may have a better idea of what population trends may be occurring in each troop. In the past HWS has struggled to determine the exact size of some the troops because they were very seldom seen, and a primary objective of management was that the troops remain as unhabituated as possible. However, this year HWS has managed accurately to count the four managed troops while still maintaining that objective.

Several trends in the mid-year population count are evident. The first, is that since June 2021 the population of the Voëlklip Troop has dramatically increased by 17 individuals (63%) over two and a half years. This is ascribed to active management of the troop keeping it out of town for an average of over 97% since July 2021 (97% since October 2019) and hence the incidence of human induced deaths which had been regular occurrences prior to management beginning no longer limiting population growth.

| Troop | October | June | June | June | June | December | December 2023 | | | Total observed Births (1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023) | Total observed Deaths (1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023) | Total observed Migrations (1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023) |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------|----------|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2023 | Births | Deaths | Emigration / Immigration | | | |
| Voëlklip | 29 | 29 | 27 | 37 | 39 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Vogelgat | N/A | 22* | 29 | 27 | 27* | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Onrus | N/A | N/A | 25* | 24* | 24* | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hamilton Russel | N/A | N/A | 21* | 25 | 25* | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 29 | 51 | 102 | 113 | 115 | 110 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 |

Table 3. Population data for the managed troops in the Overstrand in December 2023. Emigration /Immigration figures show animal movements between troops. * Troop sizes were estimated, because they were not seen enough to get accurate counts. 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.

By contrast, the Vogelgat Troop has suffered a substantial decline in numbers (loss of 10 (37%)) over the past two years. This decline can largely be ascribed to road accident deaths along the recently upgraded R43 to the east of Hermanus. In fact, the only recorded death of a managed baboon over the past six months, suffered such a death.

The Onrus and Hamilton Russell Troops have been infrequently seen over the past two years, and seldom to get accurate counts. Thus, although the Onrus Troop has declined, and the Hamilton Russell Troop has increased in numbers, there are no specific causes one can ascribe to these changes.

| 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) | December 2023 |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Management | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Human Induced (HID) | 1 | 2 | 9 | 10 | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Direct *</i> | 1 | 2 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Indirect **</i> | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Natural | 2 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Unknown | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL DEATHS | 6 | 9 | 19 | 16 | 1 | 0 |

Table 4. Causes of baboon deaths since December 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.

HOTLINE DATA

A total of 23 hotline calls was received during December (**Table 5**), almost double the number received during the previous month. Seventeen calls originated in managed areas, with fourteen concerning the Voëlklip Troop and one concerning the Onrus Troop. The remaining three calls were either enquiries or comments from the public. Six calls were received from unmanaged areas, including Pringle Bay and areas in the Cape Metropole.

| Troop | Number of Calls received | Area | Types of Call |
|------------------|--------------------------|--|---|
| Voëlklip Troop | 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voëlklip (2) Hamilton Russell Farm (1) Hermanus Heights (11) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baboons in urban area (11) Occupied house incursion (2) Comment (1) |
| Onrus Troop | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onrus (2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baboons in the area (2) |
| Unmanaged Troops | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pringle Bay (1) Cape Town (3) | |

Table 5. Overstrand hotline call data for December 2023.

RECORDED INCURSIONS

Members from the Voëlklip Troop entered the urban area on seven days during December. During their time spent in town there was a total of four occupied house incursions and two bin raids. Members of the Onrus Troop were reported in the urban area on two days during December.

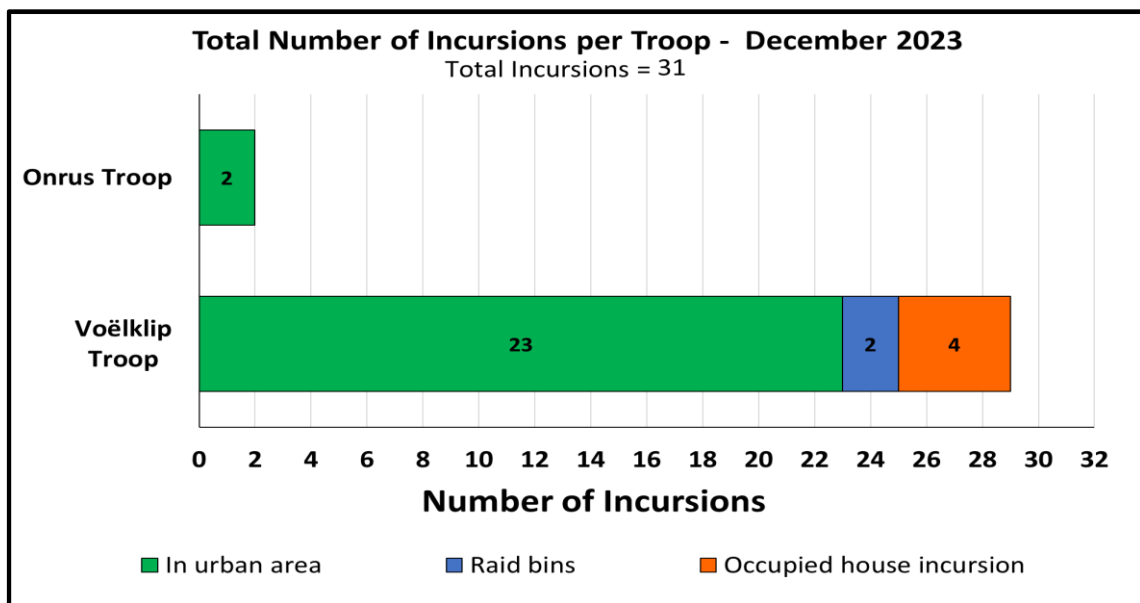


Figure 6. Graph showing the total number of incursions (for individuals and the troop) recorded for managed troops in the Overstrand East.

PERCENTAGE TIME OUT OF TOWN

The average time out of town by troops in the eastern Overstrand during December declined from 100% to 99.8% (Figure 5). No individuals from the Vogelgat Troop were present in town during the month, however the Voëlklip Troop accessed Hermanus Heights on two days in December. The average individual time out of town was 98.8%, a decrease of 1.1% from the previous month. Members of the Voëlklip Troop were responsible for the majority of this decrease, however one baboon from the Onrus Troop was reported in town on two days during the month. The Hamilton-Russell and Vogelgat troops were entirely absent from the urban area during December.

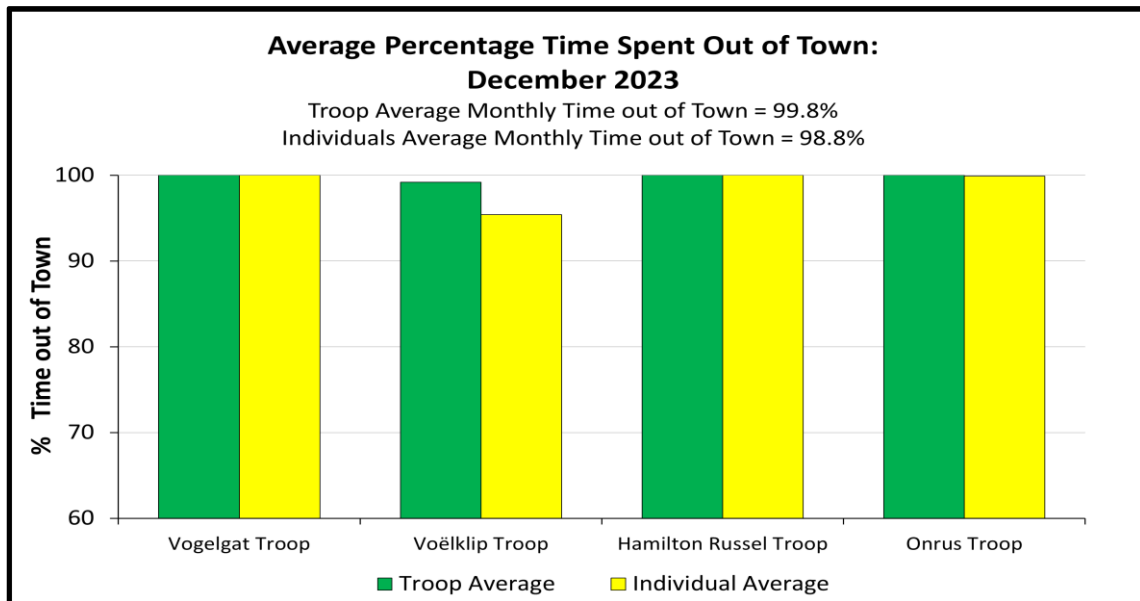


Figure 7. Percentage time the managed baboon troops and individuals spent out of town during December 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Waste and recycling collection should be prioritised** to take place in the early mornings and starting on the edge of town and working 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 open 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.
- 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

The Voëlklip Troop deviated from the positive trajectory that we have observed over the past few months. Not only did the troop enter the urban area twice during December, but a few individuals were also responsible for four occupied house incursions and two bin raids. The last time there was a recorded occupied house incursion by a member of the Voëlklip Troop was in June 2023, while the last bin raid was recorded in July 2023.

The increase in the number of incursions during the festive season is not uncommon. Given the influx of baboon-naïve holiday makers the likelihood of baboons exploiting houses that are unaccustomed to them increases. It is vital that this behaviour is prevented from reoccurring in the new year in order to avoid the accumulation of bad habits in the troop.

The Vogelgat Troop, has now spent the past six months without entering the urban area. The troop spent the majority of its time foraging on the mountains above the R43, with very few instances of movement towards town. On the rare occasion that the troop moved towards the urban edge, the virtual fence was successfully used to turn the troop back towards the centre of its home range.

During December both the Onrus and Hamilton-Russell Troops were observed more frequently. The Hamilton-Russell Troop moved to forage in an area far to the north of Hermanus, potentially foraging on ripening grapes in the La Vierge vineyards. The Onrus Troop spent a large proportion of its time foraging in and around the pig farm situated at the southern end of the Hemel en Aarde Valley. The troop was also observed there frequently during November. During December the troop also forage further south towards Onrus, and individuals from the troop were reported in the urban area on two days during December.

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