



## A Letter from Karin...

*Dear Friends,*

*Thank you so much. Your donations really do help.*

*Although I didn't plan to get involved with primate rehabilitation again - after moving to The Craggs from the Magaliesberg in 2001, I was horrified to discover the extent to which baboons and monkeys were being widely persecuted along the Garden Route. Unlike the Cape Peninsula, this area desperately needed some educational input with regard to what residents are doing to troop structures and the manner in which primates are harmed on a daily basis.*

*When confronting residents with "baboon problems" that first year, I realised that shooting any baboon that entered a property - whether the baboon threatened anyone or not - was considered normal. Most local residents told me that when they called Cape Nature, they were told they could shoot the offensive primate. No questions were asked. No investigation was done.*

*When I started to investigate these cases myself, I discovered that almost all the so called problem baboons were young - always fearful and gentle - sub-adult transient males trying to make their way into new troops. These males were labelled as old "rogue" baboons that have been "kicked out of the troop".*

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*Baboon behaviour in this area is vastly different to how it is on The CP (Cape Peninsula) as nonhuman primates have not been forced to compete with humans in the same manner. Baboons here generally do not take bags or steal food out of people's hands. They are shot simply for entering the properties that are created along their ancient foraging paths.*

*Back then residents were allowed to shoot baboons and monkeys in unlimited numbers, every day of the year without a permit under the Hunting Proclamation. This has recently been reduced to five and then two a day, all year round.*

*For six years I followed one baboon troop with an adult male to female ratio of one to fourteen. I started to notice - in 2005 - that most troops in this area had a severe skew in adult male to female ratios. Today this skew seems to have rectified to some extent which I believe is a direct result of the education we have brought to the area.*

*I live on 17 hectares of rented land - indigenous forest bordering on the Tsitsikamma - that has proved to be perfect for the rescued monkeys which I release as far as possible, to freely roam here. Unfortunately the land is zoned as agricultural land and is surrounded by farmers who pose a threat to all nonhuman primates. In spite of this challenge, our presence does act as a constant reminder of the damage caused by human intervention. We also have two squatters living on the land who regularly set traps for the wildlife.*

*I feel that this work is extremely important, especially as there is no other official primate centre in the Western Cape now that The Manger in Barrydale has closed down. I am regularly called by people wanting me to help either*

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orphaned monkeys or baboons. Every person who calls tells me that they have been advised to shoot the orphan in the head - by conservation officials - as there is nowhere for them to go.

The fact that the DPG is based on rented land makes our project especially vulnerable as we are unable to promise the animals in our care life long protection. To solve this problem, we either need to find land which we can lease long term or raise funds to buy this property or another suitable one.

The Darwin Primate Group has been an official registered non-profit for four years now.



On the whole, this work has been most rewarding in that it is a delight to see a cohesive troop of monkeys, made up of orphans, enjoying their life as a happy free roaming group in indigenous forest. Wild monkeys have joined the troop, giving them important lessons about surviving in the wild and the constant stream of predators (caracal, raptors, leopard, honey badgers and snakes) does the same.

We have also erected a large enclosure (6 m x 15 m x 5 m) next the forest where our unreleasable vervet monkeys reside while interacting daily with the wild troop, baboons, raptors and others. Thank you for your support to ensure these unreleasable monkeys a life long sanctuary.

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## **You Donations now and in the future will go towards:**

- > *Help with buying a reliable vehicle.*
- > *Food, medicines and supplies for wounded and orphaned animals.*
- > *Assist with the purchase of land for safe, controlled release of rehabilitated wildlife where troop monitoring can also occur regularly.*
- > *Provide local and regional training and public awareness programs on how to interface safely and effectively with wild primate populations.*

### **1. The Vehicle**

*The most pressing problem that is certainly keeping our project from moving forward at the moment, is the unreliable vehicle that I have been using for the last two years. It is a 230E 1987 Mercedes that breaks down constantly, needing new parts and requires an enormous amount of petrol (as Mercedes' tend to do).*

*This vehicle has been sapping our funding instead of acting as a strong backbone to the project. It has also proved to be dangerous on a number of occasions when I have had no other option to transport a baby baboon or monkey - for example, I have broken down on the highway at night after fetching a baby baboon and have been forced to wander into the bush with the baboon to find safety while we have waited for help.*

*Replacing this vehicle with a more reliable one has increasingly become a matter of urgency but I have not been able to sell it and certainly would not be able to buy anything remotely reliable with the money I could get for it. At present, I have been advised that I would be lucky to get R10 000 for it.*

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*To rectify this particular problem, my only hope lies in raising enough funding to buy a reliable vehicle...particularly a light weight van that will not use much petrol and be able to transport monkeys safely.*

## **2. Electrical Issues**

*Another issue that presently challenges our progress are our electricity needs. I cut off the electricity pylon (photo above) on this property about 2 years ago because it was killing monkeys. Although I contacted Eskom about this some years ago, and they insulated the wires, monkeys continued to be killed.*

*At the moment we have 2 solar panels and a generator to run the computer and get the fridge cold (for one hour a day) but have no hot water as yet. This makes life very difficult for any visiting volunteers (who sometimes bring in important skills and funding), especially in winter. It also makes the daily cleaning of enclosures, bowls and blankets more difficult. In winter, I boil water to heat up hot water bottles for any ill monkeys every two hours. (I have attached an article that appeared in the local newspaper at the time).*

*Bringing in a solar geyser for hot water is our second wish on the list. The quote I have received for this would be about R20 000.*

### 3. Food and Medicine

*Our third wish would be to have a regular food/medical donation for the many times we are without any donated food and pressurised by expensive vet bills. To know that we could receive R5000 a month to cover some of the expenses would take an enormous load off the project as well.*

*We presently have 40 vervet monkeys and 5 baby orphaned baboons here. A lot of the time we collect waste/vegetables and fruit from Pick and Pay on a Friday. We buy sunflower seeds, bread, eggs and rice to adequately supplement this fruit diet. We also buy baby formula and Pronutro for at least six months of the year to provide any babies with adequate nutrition. Other expenses include phone bills, internet airtime, baby bottles, vet bills, enclosure materials and the biggest one - petrol.*

*Even the smallest donation can go a long way to improving the lives of these primates.*

*They are a symbol of Africa's great past as well as being our genetic primate cousins - their continued presence in the wilds provides hope for Africa's future.*

*Thank you for your time and contribution.*

*Best Regards,*

*Karin*



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