

South African Motorists Baboon-Jacked

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

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A shrewd troop of baboons caused havoc along South Africa's Cape peninsula over the weekend when they hijacked motorists' cars to get at picnic food, local media reported Monday.

Tourists feeding the primates in the popular holiday destination are being blamed for the behaviour, as curious motorists stopping to watch the baboons fell prey to their antics, causing a huge backup of cars on the coastal road.

The Cape Times reported a group of American tourists got out of their car to photograph the animals, and their children tried to pet them, when several members of the troop jumped into their car and started eating their food.

A large male baboon also accessed a separate car through an open window, removing food from the cubbyhole.

Tour operators exacerbated the problem by throwing food to baboons to provide perfect picture opportunities for their clients, the newspaper said.

Environmental groups have met with local officials to determine whose responsibility it was to manage the baboon populations, amid fears the animals might hurt someone, a spokesman for regional organization CapeNature told the paper.

"We say the responsibility for managing so-called problem animals is the responsibility of the landowner or the manager of the land but... we're having a meeting at the end of the month to see if we can't resolve this," said spokesman Fanie Bekker.

"We will also be holding a baboon summit soon." Baboon harassment occurs frequently in the area, where humans feed the animals despite road signs warning them not to.

Source : Sapa-AFP /yj/GJ

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