

Caracals Under Seize From Poachers Infiltrating Noordhoek Wetlands

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Caracals living in Noordhoek wetlands are under siege from all sides, facing considerable threats to their survival.

This nocturnal and elusive wild cat native to Africa has become a prime target for ruthless poachers who capture them for bushmeat or sell their body parts on the illegal wildlife black market. Caracals also face increased habitat loss and lack of habitat connectivity.

While the animals' tracks are still found along the wetlands, their numbers have plunged. However, the actual number of caracals in Noordhoek is unknown, so a thorough assessment of their population status is not possible.

According to Urban Caracal Project, poachers are wreaking havoc on the ecosystem – putting precious wetlands under fire. They are resorting to burning areas of the seaside town in the Western Cape as a way to attract caracals to set snares.

Fires unearth seeds that small mammals feed on once the fire has passed. For the first couple of weeks after a fire, there will also be green shoots that the grysbok, which is a favorite caracal prey, like to graze.

Traps are typically made from electrical wire, nylon rope, or fishing lines. They are then positioned on game trails to catch an animal by the foot, paw, leg, or neck, often disguising with vegetation.

According to the Project, several snares have been found close to residential areas like Fish Hoek, Kommetjie, the Noordhoek wetlands, sports field area, and Tafelberg Road.

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The Project further added that poachers sometimes also use dogs to hunt caracals. When conservation authorities remove snares from an area, the poachers move to the next area, making it increasingly difficult to track and monitor them.

Last year, the Noordhoek Environmental Action Group and the Urban Caracal Project noted some disturbing and tragic occurrences surrounding the caracal population in Noordhoek, including the horrific discovery of a young caracal kitten's skin. As if this heinous incident wasn't enough, two caracals – one of which was just a baby of only a few months old – were also killed by vehicles on Ou Kaapse Weg, and another died on the road in Glencairn.

More recently, two caracals were successfully rescued from poachers' traps, while another three were killed. When conservation authorities remove snares from an area, the poachers move to the next area, making it increasingly difficult to track and monitor them.

"Not many people are aware that caracals (sometimes called rooikats) still roam areas across Cape Town, with many inhabiting Table Mountain. Caracals are shy and seldom cause any danger to humans. They are hardly ever seen as they usually only come out at night to prey on rodents and birds. Although they pose absolutely no threat to people, people pose a huge threat to them. These beautiful creatures are more vulnerable now than ever before," said David Barritt of Network for Animals (NFA).

"Experts estimate that there are only about 60 Caracals left in this area but the numbers could be less. Sadly, many have died from poisons put down by urban residents for rodents, poaching, and exposure to diseases carried by domestic animals. We must protect the remaining caracal population, or these beautiful animals might completely disappear from the Cape Peninsula."

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They Say It Takes A Village, But It Took The World To Save The Life Of Kaavan – The World's Loneliest Elephant
(<https://networkforanimals.org/news/they-say-it-takes-a-village-but-it-took-the-world-to-save-the-life-of-kaavan-the-worlds-loneliest-elephant/>)

The world's loneliest elephant has finally escaped a torturous life of abuse and cruelty inside a dilapidated zoo in Islamabad and is ready to live



Government Plan to Allow Lion Meat for Humans In South Africa Has Been Vetoed, But Other Endangered Wildlife Still In The Firing Line
(<https://networkforanimals.org/news/government-plan-to-allow-lion-meat-for-humans-in-south-africa-has-been-vetoed-but-other-endangered-wildlife-still-in-the-firing-line/>)

South Africa may have barred the commercial sale of lion meat, but other wild animals are still on the chopping block of species that can