

BETTY'S BAY CONSERVANCY (BBC)

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO THE BBC SURVEY ON THE PREDATOR-DETERRENT FENCE AT STONY POINT. SEPTEMBER 2026



On 9 June 2026, CapeNature hosted a Community Engagement Session in Crassula Hall. SANCCOB and CapeNature presented research and motivation for a predator-proof fence.

At the BBC AGM on 27 July 2026, members requested a meeting or place to discuss their concerns and raise questions. The BBC Survey was compiled for Betty's Bay residents to note and submit their responses. It was completed by 170 residents.

There was a delay in submitting the survey results to CapeNature.

CapeNature has since hosted two further Information sessions for the community. This has allowed residents to raise some of the concerns expressed in this survey. CapeNature has engaged in the discussions and adjusted its initial proposal.

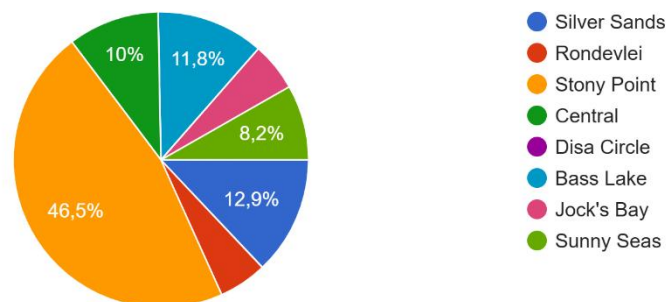
SECTION ONE:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Question 4: ZONES IN BETTY'S BAY

Please indicate in which zone of Betty's Bay you reside. See the picture below.

170 Antworten

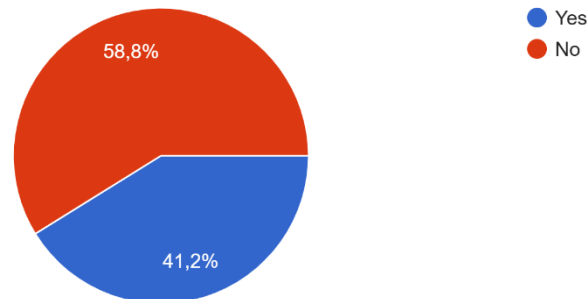


1. 46.5% of responders resided in the Stony Point zone – the zone closest to the penguin colony and the residents most affected by changes at Stony Point.
2. 12.9 % were based in Silver Sands, 11.8% in Bass Lake, and 10 % lived in the Central area.
3. Sunny Seas, Jocks Bay (both further from the colony at the east end of Betty's Bay), and Rondevlei each had less than 10% of responders.

Question 5: MEMBERS OF THE BBC

Are you a member of the BBC?

170 Antworten



About 41.2% of responders indicated that they were members of the BBC. This was not 100% accurate, as a few residents who aren't 'paid-up' BBC members selected 'yes'. They might have assumed that owning property in Betty's Bay automatically made them a member of the BBC. Perhaps the question should have been "Are you a paid-up member of the BBC?". It is good to see that many "non-BBC" members completed the survey.

Question 6: PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICAN PENGUINS

The responses to prior knowledge about the African Penguin, listed from most to least known:

1. In 2024, the IUCN listed the African Penguin as Critically Endangered. If the population continues to decline as in the past years, it may be listed as Extinct in the Wild in about 10 years' time.
2. Stony Point is one of the two land-based colonies. The first pair of penguins landed, of their own accord, at Stony Point around 1982.
3. Organisations such as SANCCOB, CapeNature and Birdlife South Africa are working together to try and save the species
4. Penguins used to live and breed on islands. In prior years activities such as penguin egg harvesting and guano harvesting, contributed to the fall in population and breeding habitat on the islands (142)
5. Land-based colonies face threats from sea and land. Mongoose eat eggs and chicks; kelp gulls prey on eggs; seals and sharks are marine predators. Each of the colonies has their specific threats.
6. Penguins are not adapted for land threats. They have no defence mechanisms against predators; e.g., they can't fly or run away.
7. Food availability has been a very large threat for the African Penguin. In 2025, SANCCOB and Birdlife SA won a court victory to secure island closures around the colonies for 10 years.
8. CapeNature took over management of the Stony Point colony around 2014
9. If one of a breeding pair is killed, this affects their offspring in the current years, plus this has further impact in years to come of loss of breeding for them and all their "lost offspring".
10. In the past 18 months, there has been a serious increase in caracal predation at Stony Point.

11. This increased loss to predation, currently 110 adults in 18 months, places an additional large stress on the breeding success and sustainability of the population at Stony Point.
12. **In 2025, caracals killed 50 adults. In 2026, to date, caracals have killed 60 adults. The caracal don't just kill what they eat, they "surplus kill" and leave the carcasses.**

Responders knew the least about caracal predation over the past 18 months and the long-term impact it has on the penguin population of the Stony Point colony. This is a core motivation of SANCCOB and CapeNature for a predator- deterrent fence, but more than 50% of respondents were unaware of the increase in this threat.

SECTION TWO:

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS — MOST TO LEAST PROMINENT

1. The fence may not actually solve the predator problem

- Caracals will find ways around, over, or under the fence.
- Mongoose and other smaller predators may also gain access.
- The fence cannot effectively close off the coastline because predators can potentially use the beach at low tide.
- A damaged gate, drainage channel, rocks, or other access point could render the fence ineffective.
- If a caracal gets inside the enclosure, concentrating penguins in one area could make predation worse, creating a "captive meal".
- There is insufficient evidence demonstrating that the proposed fence will achieve its intended purpose.

Underlying concern: The proposed fence is an expensive intervention, without convincing evidence that it will work.

2. The decline in food availability is regarded as a much greater threat

- Depletion of sardine/anchovy stocks.
- Commercial fishing and overfishing.
- Illegal fishing and poaching.
- Climate change and changing fish distribution.
- Insufficient enforcement of the Marine Protected Area.
- Penguins being rehabilitated and returned to an environment where adequate food may still not be available.

Several respondents essentially argue: Protecting more penguins from caracals is of limited value if there is insufficient food to sustain them.

Underlying concern: The fence addresses a symptom rather than the underlying causes of population decline.

3. Penguins' natural movement and choice of nesting sites could be restricted

- Prevent penguins from choosing their preferred nesting locations.
- Restrict movement between nesting areas and the sea.
- Force birds into an artificially designated colony.
- Reduce available breeding habitat.
- Cause overcrowding.
- Increase stress and potentially reduce breeding success.
- Prevent penguins nesting outside the existing designated area.
- Fragment or split the existing colony.

Several respondents emphasise that African penguins are wild animals and should be allowed to choose where they breed.

There is particular concern that the existing colony area may no longer provide sufficient suitable vegetation/burrowing habitat.

4. Human disturbance is seen as a major and immediate threat

- Tourists getting too close to penguins.
- Selfies and photography.
- People blocking penguins' routes.
- Children screaming or touching birds.
- People walking around barriers.
- Dogs being brought too close or being off-leash.
- Bicycles being ridden close to penguins.
- Large tour groups and buses.
- Noise, singing and dancing.
- Insufficient staff presence to enforce rules.

There is strong support for:

- Better visitor education.
- Trained guides/rangers.
- Controlled visitor routes.
- Better signage.
- Greater separation between people and penguins.
- Active enforcement rather than simply relying on signs.

5. Poor management and insufficient CapeNature presence

- Gates allegedly not being properly closed.
- Insufficient staff on site.
- Little or no night-time monitoring.
- Poor maintenance.
- Overflowing bins and litter.
- Inadequate enforcement of rules.
- Inadequate monitoring of predators.
- Poorly maintained fencing.

- Insufficient cleaning and sterilisation.
- Poor vegetation management.
- Staff spending too much time in offices rather than interacting with visitors.
- Lack of properly trained conservation personnel.

A recurring sentiment is: "The problem is not simply the absence of a fence — it is the absence of effective management."

6. A preference for active predator monitoring and targeted removal

- Camera traps.
- Thermal/infrared cameras.
- Live CCTV.
- GPS tracking of caracals.
- Monitoring predator movements.
- Night patrols.
- Trained rangers.
- Rapid-response teams.
- Professional trapping.
- Capture and relocation of individual problem caracals.
- Monitoring relocated animals.

There is particularly strong support for dealing immediately with identified problem caracals, rather than waiting several years for a fencing project to be completed.

Some respondents support removal/culling; others specifically reject killing predators and prefer deterrence or relocation.

7. The proposed fence could harm the penguins rather than protect them

- Construction disturbance.
- Stress during construction.
- Destruction of fynbos/vegetation.
- Concrete foundations.
- Restricted movement.
- Overcrowding.
- Disease and parasite transmission.
- Disruption of breeding.
- Changes to natural behaviour.
- Other wildlife being prevented from moving through the area.
- Fire-management problems if animals or firefighters are restricted by fencing.

Several respondents refer to the previous fencing experience at Stony Point as evidence that fencing may have had negative consequences.

8. Insufficient scientific evidence and monitoring

A major theme is essentially: "Facts first."

Respondents want to know:

- How many penguins have been killed by caracals?
- How many individual caracals are involved?
- Is there camera evidence?
- Are the statistics specifically for Stony Point?
- What evidence distinguishes caracal predation from other causes of mortality?
- What happened with previous fencing?
- Are there independent scientific studies?
- Have successful comparable projects elsewhere been properly evaluated?
- Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been undertaken?
- Has a population viability assessment been conducted?
- What does the African Penguin Biodiversity Management Plan say?
- Have independent experts and conservation organisations been consulted?

There is considerable concern that the decision may have been made before the consultation, with consultation perceived by some as being retrospective.

9. Lack of transparency and inadequate public consultation

- Where is the detailed Phase 3 plan?
- Where is the proposed fence map?
- Why has the public not been given the complete proposal?
- Were neighbouring property owners adequately consulted?
- Was proper public participation undertaken?
- Why are informed local experts allegedly not being listened to?
- Is the public being presented with a decision that has effectively already been made?

There is a recurring perception that the process lacks transparency.

10. Cost, maintenance and value for money

Many respondents question whether the money could be spent more effectively.

Concerns include:

- High construction cost.
- Long-term maintenance costs.
- Corrosion from the marine environment.
- Wind damage.
- Repair costs.
- Potential vandalism or poaching damage.
- Whether the fence will still be maintained if penguin numbers decline.
- Whether the expenditure has a demonstrated cost-benefit justification.

A recurring suggestion is: Use the fence money for resources, monitoring, predator control, and marine conservation instead. Building a boardwalk along the coastal path to the east is another suggestion.

11. Anti-poaching and protection of the marine food web

Poaching is repeatedly identified as a major concern.

- Illegal fishing.
- Perlemoen poaching.
- Removal of marine life.
- Fishing line, hooks, and lures.
- Damage to the marine ecosystem.
- Inadequate enforcement of the Marine Protected Area.

There is a strong argument that protecting the penguins' food supply should receive substantially more attention and funding.

12. Aesthetic and environmental impact of a large fence

- Ugly.
- Intrusive.
- Prison-like.
- Unnatural.
- Detrimental to the character of Stony Point.
- Destructive of the natural coastal landscape.
- Spoiling ocean views.

There is particular concern about a two-metre fence in front of coastal properties and its effect on the seascape.

13. Loss of public and residents' access to the coastal path

- Residents losing traditional access.
- Residents having to pay to access an area they previously used freely.
- The pathway being important for walking and recreation.
- The pathway being particularly valuable as a safe walking route.
- Restricting access during evenings or outside operating hours.
- The fence potentially cutting off traditional coastal access.

Some support free or discounted access for residents and/or residents' gates.

14. Impact on neighbouring properties and property values

- Loss of ocean views.
- A large fence directly in front of properties.
- Reduced property values.

- Difficulty selling properties.
- Historical rights/access to the coast.
- The effect of fencing on residents who bought properties partly because of the natural environment and penguins.

15. Other predators and ecological interactions

Although the caracal is the primary predator discussed, respondents raise:

- Mongoose.
- Domestic cats.
- Domestic dogs.
- Kelp gulls.
- Baboons.
- Fur seals.
- Leopards.
- Other wildlife.

Some respondents specifically report seeing seals taking penguins and question whether seal predation has been adequately quantified.

There is also concern that removing caracals could have unintended effects on the wider ecosystem.

16. Disease, parasites and colony health

- Parasite transmission.
- High density of penguins.
- Potential disease outbreaks if birds are concentrated within a fenced area.
- Poor vegetation conditions.
- The deteriorating condition of the breeding habitat.
- The need for better monitoring of penguin health.

17. Fire and broader ecosystem impacts

- Restrict animal movement during fires.
- Hamper firefighting.
- Affect baboons and other wildlife.
- Interrupt ecological movement through the Stony Point area.
- Affect the wider Kogelberg/Biosphere ecosystem.

18. Concern about the tourism/commercialisation model

- Large numbers of tourists/ Busloads of visitors.
- Restaurant/bar activities.
- Entrance fees.
- Commercialisation.
- Money potentially being prioritised over conservation.

19. Cellphone/5G tower concerns

- A relatively small number of respondents raise concerns about the nearby telecommunications tower and possible effects on wildlife.
- This is much less prominent than the food, predator, visitor-management and fencing concerns and should probably be treated separately from the main evidence-based conservation concerns unless independently substantiated.

20. Relocation of penguins / alternative colonies

- Moving penguins to offshore islands.
- Relocating birds to another colony.
- Establishing additional colonies.
- Using Dyer Island or other sites.

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

1. The five dominant concerns are:

- Will the fence stop caracals and other predators?
- Are we addressing the real underlying cause of penguin decline — especially food shortages, overfishing and marine ecosystem degradation?
- Will fencing restrict penguins' natural movement, nesting choices and breeding success?
- Why isn't more being done about human disturbance, visitor control, poaching and day-to-day management?
- Has the fence been adequately justified scientifically, transparently and economically before committing to it?

2. The strongest alternative emerging from the responses is:

A professionally managed, evidence-based predator-response system rather than relying primarily on a large perimeter fence, combining:

- 24-hour/after-dark monitoring
- thermal and camera surveillance
- targeted identification of individual predators
- professional capture and relocation where appropriate
- trained rangers/night guards
- rapid response to predator detections
- better visitor control and education
- domestic dog/cat control
- anti-poaching enforcement
- protection of marine food supplies
- improved penguin nesting habitat
- transparent publication of monitoring and mortality data.

B: SUMMARY OF SUPPORT - MOST TO LEAST

1. A fence is seen as necessary to protect penguins from human disturbance

- Visitors getting too close to penguins.
- Selfies, touching, children, bicycles, and people blocking penguin routes.
- Dogs and vehicles creating additional risks.
- Busloads of tourists and uncontrolled visitor behaviour causing stress.

2. Protection from predators, particularly caracals

- Several respondents believe a fence is the only practical way to protect the colony from caracals and other predators.
- Some specifically say the fence should prevent predators from entering while allowing penguins to move freely.
- Others favour fencing in combination with immediate predator management, rather than seeing the fence as the sole solution.

3. Physical separation of penguins and people

- A fence could create a defined protected breeding area.
- It could prevent people from walking into nesting areas and give penguins uninterrupted routes between nests and the sea.
- One respondent specifically proposes isolated, demarcated penguin walkways.

4. Protection from dogs, bicycles and other human-related hazards

- Unleashed dogs, bicycles and vehicles are repeatedly mentioned.
- Some respondents regard keeping these threats away from the colony as a major reason for supporting fencing.

5. Better control of visitors and tourism

Some respondents accept that Stony Point is an important tourist attraction but believe visitor numbers and behaviour need to be controlled.

Suggestions include:

- controlled entry;
- moving the entrance hut;
- better signage;
- staff presence;
- controlled access for buses;
- keeping visitors at appropriate distances.

6. Better management alongside fencing

A particularly strong pro-fence response does not regard fencing alone as sufficient.

It calls for:

- a full-time conservationist;
- better-trained and more visible staff;
- effective signage;
- properly maintained gates;
- controlled access;
- defined penguin pathways;
- improved visitor communication;
- professional conservation infrastructure.

7. The fence as an immediate protective measure while longer-term solutions are developed

- Some respondents appear to regard the fence as a temporary or precautionary intervention, buying time while other conservation measures are addressed.
- One comment explicitly supports Phase 1 as a test but not necessarily the later phases.

8. Concern about penguins being killed by vehicles or other human activity

- Some respondents specifically identify keeping penguins safe from vehicles and unleashed dogs as their principal concern.
- This is related to human disturbance but is sufficiently concrete to stand separately.

9. Closing or controlling access during sensitive periods

- One detailed response proposes closing gates at 16h30 and controlling vehicles remaining inside.
- This reflects a broader view that fencing should form part of a managed protected area, rather than simply being a physical barrier.

10. The principle that the endangered species should take priority

A small number of respondents express the position in essentially absolute terms:

- “We must do whatever we can to save penguins from extinction.”
- “None, save the penguins!”
- “A fence is the only way to save the penguins from people not adhering to rules...”

These comments provide the strongest conservation-principle argument for intervention, although they do not necessarily establish that fencing itself is effective.

IN CLOSING

Overall, the responses do not simply represent "pro-fence versus anti-fence."

The broader message is to:

- save the penguins
- demonstrate scientifically that the proposed fence is the best, most effective, and least damaging way of achieving this
- address the other threats at the same time.

The Betty's Bay Conservancy Team

September 2026