



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

SPATIAL PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

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Conservation Wise

Conserving Biodiversity for Future Generations

January – March 2026: REPORT OF THE MILNERTON RACECOURSE

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



From left to right: Peregrine Falcon; Cape Grysbok; Cape Honey Bee; Red-Faced Mousebird

Funded by the **Royal Ascot
Master Property Owners'
Association** (RAMPOA) in
partnership with the City of
Cape Town and Nature
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NATURE CONNECT
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Cape Honeybee (*Apis mellifera capensis*) Hive Removal

On the 26th February 2026, the CCT apiarist and staff conducted the removal of a bee nest located beneath the footbridge in the northern section of the reserve. This was done to prevent pedestrians from being stung.

When bees perceive a threat, they release an alarm pheromone known as isopentyl acetate from a gland near their stingers. To ensure safe removal, a smoker was used to disrupt and mask these pheromones. Four layers of honeycomb were successfully removed. Diesel was subsequently applied to the footbridge, in the area where the hive had been situated, to deter bees from returning to the same location to establish a new hive. Diesel was applied to the wood using a cloth and thoroughly rubbed into the surface. Since the diesel was not introduced to the surrounding natural vegetation or soil, it poses no adverse impact on the conservation area.

Hive layers are constructed in a teardrop shape, which is one of the most structurally stable forms bees can create. Each layer of the honeycomb serves a distinct function. The uppermost layer, which was attached to the footbridge, is lighter in colour and consists of honey cells used for food storage. The darker cells located beneath this layer are brood (nesting) cells, where eggs are laid and larvae develop. As the bees mature, they emerge from these cells, leaving them available for reuse.



Figure 1: Cape Honeybee hive layer (26th February 2026).

Investigation of rust coloured water in lower detention pond:

On the 6th March, the Site Manager of the Table Bay Nature Reserve responded to reports of unusual discolouration in the lower detention pond along Milnerton Drive. Upon arrival, a foul odour was detected, and an oily film was observed across the water's surface.

To determine whether the substance was naturally occurring, the water surface was disturbed. Normally, if the film breaks into smaller droplets, it indicates a natural process where enzymes break down nutrients in the soil, producing a light oil sheen. In this case, however, the film did not behave in that manner, raising concerns about its origin.

The Site Manager immediately contacted Suretha Dorse, Senior Environmental

Professional for the City of Cape Town, and shared images of the site. After reviewing the evidence, she identified the discolouration as biofilm — a layer produced by bacteria decomposing excessive nutrient inputs into the system. This biofilm consists mainly of algal scums and dead protozoan material.

Further observations revealed the presence of green bubbles, which Suretha Dorse explained as an algal response to decomposition. This again pointed to high nutrient levels within the pond, a condition that can disrupt ecological balance and affect water quality.



Figure 2: Biofilm in lower detention pond (6th March 2026).

Fence Removal Opens Wildlife Pathways

The Table Bay Nature Reserve has recently taken an important step in its conservation work by opening new pathways for wildlife in the southern section of the reserve. The process began with the careful removal of a one-metre section of the rehabilitation fence. This initial opening was created to allow grysbok and other small mammals to begin exploring the restored area. To monitor their movements, a camera trap was installed at the site, providing valuable insights into how animals respond to the newly accessible habitat.

Following this first stage, staff then dismantled the remainder of the rehabilitation fence in the southern section. The removal of the barrier now enables grysbok and other small mammals to roam freely, expand their feeding grounds, and strengthen biodiversity across the reserve. With the fence gone, conservation teams can also conduct mammal counts more easily, ensuring accurate monitoring of population health and guiding future management decisions.



Figure 3: Reserve Staff removing the fence (27th February 2026)

Tackling Litter at Milnerton Racecourse Conservation Area

Litter is cleared on an ad hoc basis by the reserve team. The regular discovery of litter highlights that some people don't care about where they drop their rubbish! They have no concern about the ongoing challenge of keeping natural spaces free from pollution.

Alcohol containers and related waste was found near the first bench along the northern footpath. Some of this litter was partially **buried beneath the seating structure**, showing how waste can accumulate unnoticed and impact both the environment and visitor experience.



Figure 4: Litter found in the reserve.

Littering, from discarded suitcases to glass bottles, not only spoils the beauty of the reserve but also poses risks to wildlife. They may ingest rubbish or become hurt or entangled in discarded materials. It also undermines the efforts of conservation teams working hard to protect and restore the area's biodiversity for current and future generations.

Visitors are reminded that the reserve is a shared space for people and wildlife alike. By disposing of your waste responsibly and respecting the environment, everyone can help ensure that Table Bay Nature Reserve remains a safe, clean, and thriving sanctuary for all.

Protecting Wildlife: Addressing Domestic Cat Impacts at Milnerton Racecourse

Milnerton Racecourse is a small, isolated and closed system, which leads to a magnified impact of domestic animals on the natural space. There has been a notable increase in domestic cat activity across both the northern and southern sections of the reserve. Domestic cats, being skilled hunters, pose a threat to various species within the conservation area, including birds like laughing doves, rodents such as the four-striped mouse, and reptiles like skinks and chameleons. Additionally, their presence can disrupt the behavioural patterns of local fauna, impacting breeding cycles and increasing stress levels among wildlife, potentially forcing them into less hospitable urban environments.



Figure 5 & 6: Domestic cats found in the reserve.

In accordance with the Operational Environmental Management Plan and the Environmental Management System of Royal Ascot, domestic and feral cats are prohibited from both the northern and southern areas of the reserve. Body corporates are required to maintain boundary fences around their developments to prevent domestic animals from entering the reserve. Residents and tenants within Royal Ascot must ensure proper pet control to prevent them from straying into the conservation area. Additionally, residents adjacent to the reserve must comply with the no-pet policy outlined in their estate rules or leasing agreements.

However, compliance with these regulations has been lacking. Therefore, the reserve management, in collaboration with the Environmental Management Committee (EMC), will implement a humane cat trapping project in accordance with the "Policy on Domestic Dogs & Cats" if the issue persists. Any cats captured within the reserve will be transferred to the SPCA. If the owner can be identified, they will be notified and provided with photographs of the trapped cats, to ensure transparency and accountability in the process. Owners wishing to claim their cats can do so by contacting:

Cape of Good Hope SPCA on [021 700 4140](tel:0217004140), Corner 1st Avenue and First Road, Grassy Park, Cape Town.

The applicable SPCA rate will be charged to release the cat back into the care of their owner.

PLEASE LOOK AFTER YOUR CATS BY KEEPING THEM SAFELY AT HOME

**** This plea has been given regularly since the inception of development adjacent to the Milnerton Racecourse Conservation Area***