

Snare Mitigation Symposium entrenches greater collaboration to address the snaring crisis

Collaboration and partnerships are key in addressing the negative impacts from the illegal snaring of wildlife.

This was among the takeaways from the inaugural two-day national Snare Mitigation Symposium in Pretoria. The meeting of 140 delegates delved into the impacts, drivers and solutions to this increasing threat to wildlife and the economy.

Co-led by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), the Cape Leopard Trust (CLT), the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and South African National Parks (SANParks), the inaugural Snare Mitigation Symposium was held at DFFE Environment House on 10 and 11 September 2024.

It brought together leading experts in wildlife crime, government officials and representatives of numerous stakeholders across the sector to examine the multifaceted aspects of the snaring crisis. The purpose was to understand existing and potential new complexities, and to share experiences and knowledge to reduce the problem both inside and outside conservation areas, in order to identify and co-create workable solutions for the benefit of people and the environment.

Snaring is motivated by complex socio-economic and cultural drivers and the symposium explored snaring from a myriad of angles and viewpoints. Information gained highlighted that animals are snared largely for personal or commercial use and is occurring at unsustainable rates across all provinces and in diverse landscapes. Sadly, many species including leopard, lion, hyena and other predators are killed as by-catch in snares originally set for bushmeat.

A key insight from the symposium is that we need less 'fortress' mentality and more community and sustainable use interaction amongst stakeholders towards achieving positive outcomes for this threat to wildlife. Communities living with wildlife, and those linked to snaring, need to form an integral of the solutions being proposed, and to be undertaken, to address snaring.

No solution will be credible without the involvement of the relevant community voices in co-development of solutions. Solutions need to be diverse, purposely inclusive and tailored to, and by, the people living in the affected areas. Technological advances were showcased to improve snare detection and data collection.

Among the key decisions adopted as outcomes included further research on the drivers and alternative livelihood solutions, more cohesive legislation to address snaring and other wildlife crimes, more centralised reporting and monitoring to ascertain the extent of the problem, and creating a greater understanding of the impact of snaring not only on biodiversity, but also on the economy and well-being of communities.

At a workshop following the event, the host organisations strategised next steps related to key themes and action points identified during the symposium that will include a wide range of stakeholders. Looking to the future, greater teamwork and communication between State, private sector and civil society will be cultivated to find sustainable long-term solutions for both people and wildlife.

Jointly issued by the DFFE, the CLT, the EWT, SANBI and SANParks

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