

Living in Harmony with Baboons...

By Wendy Dewberry



Despite all the negative press around baboons, it is quite easy to live in harmony with baboons and monkeys. People who choose to live in areas where baboons forage for food benefit from acquiring a mind-set that supports peaceful co-existence.

People who refuse to follow the few basics will suffer baboon problems. It is as simple as all that.

Food is the single crux of all things baboon being good or bad. Here are the basics:

1. Baboons will climb on your house

Baboons are foragers and will hunt everywhere for food because their lives depend on that success. If your home is in an area where baboons and monkeys roam for food, they are going to climb on your house. You cannot change that. Even electric fencing will let you down over time. You can, however, change outcomes by making your home benign to damage. Choose flush light fittings and set wires and dishes in ways that are not clambering spots onto your roof. Baboons will play on garden furniture. Whether that is a delight or a nightmare is up to you. We have robust stuff that cannot suffer from being chewed or moved. They love playing with cushions. If you leave soft furnishings outdoors, they will get chewed. We chase baboons off our house but not from our garden. It seems that the older baboons understand as they idly watch naughty juveniles being chased, sometimes screaming, from the roof.

2. Educate your fellows

One weak link can leave you with endless trouble. If a neighbour or tenant allows a baboon to enter a house and steal food, this is the beginning of high stress for both the baboon and the human. And the neighbours! Homeowners would find huge benefit in educating their fellow humans before any such wildlife destruction occurs. Feeding "cute" baboons, or using food to lure baboons is, in essence, a murderous gesture. And it is illegal.

3. Lock up

Keeping your house closed is not an option. Its imperative. People who are not prepared to keep their homes closed are not suited to living in wild areas. If baboons were lions, people would not think twice about keeping things closed. It should be the same for all wild animals. Keep them out. Clearbar on all opening windows affords one the luxury of leaving windows open unattended. Leaving doors open unattended, even for a minute, is not smart. Because baboons have opposable thumbs, we do not just close doors but keep all doors locked all the time.

4. Keep food out of view

Baboons will not stop trying to get at food they can see. Baboons have been known to take sliding doors off their trolleys to get at fruit bowls on tables. They have sheared opening mechanisms off windows with their strong fingers to get to food they could see. The choice is simple. Keep food out of view or be broken in and be raided.

5. Remove access to food

Leaving food outdoors under any circumstances is the start to your baboon troubles. Do not leave food anywhere, like left-over plates at parties and luncheons. This includes accessible rubbish bins. Even food off your property at so called "feeding stations" is not a good idea since baboons should forage for wild food. Children should never be left with food unattended.

Following these simple basics will help keep baboon troops in the area as they should be - wild. Wild baboons are not pests but delightful animals one is privileged to observe. I love our wild baboons and they provide me with hours of photographic opportunities.

