



De Hoop of Hope
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In Partnership with CapeNature

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Report 3

Objective 3: What more could be done to make the future better for Bontebok? (300 words)

The conservation of the Bontebok has historically been considered a major success. However, recent data indicates a worrying trend: the population has declined from 226 individuals in 2023 to an estimated 160 in the most current count (CapeNature, 2025). This suggests a significant and ongoing decrease in numbers.

Understanding these population trends requires systematic data collection on Bontebok population dynamics—an area CapeNature is currently exploring to identify the most effective approach. Updated and accurate information on the drivers of population decline, alongside data on health status and genetic diversity of the existing population, will be essential to assess, prioritize, and respond to the threats facing the species.

In my proposition for a more targeted and effective conservation strategy, I propose a three-phase approach that could be of benefit for the short and long-term conservation of the Bontebok populations:

1. Phase One: Compile a comprehensive and up-to-date database on the health, population trends, and genetic composition of the Bontebok. This foundational data will provide insights into population viability and resilience.
2. Phase Two: Conduct focused and intensified research to identify and rank the primary drivers of population decline. Understanding which threats pose the greatest risk—whether environmental, ecological, or genetic—will allow for more informed decision-making. Notably, De (w) Hoop last recorded its highest Bontebok population of approximately 700 individuals in 1996, highlighting the scale of the current decline.
3. Phase Three: Develop and implement a landscape-level management plan, including the creation of ecological corridors to connect fragmented and isolated Bontebok populations within the Western Cape. Enhancing habitat connectivity will reduce the risk of genetic bottlenecks and support more robust population growth.

The Bontebok, just as several other species that coexist in the De(W)Hoop reserve and surrounding areas, face similar threats. The story of the Bontebok is a mirror image of what needs to be done for other species such as the ostriches, eland, zebras among others. I believe that the availability of up to date information would provide a starting point for the monitoring and necessary intervention for the species and the landscape.



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