



The Lake We Share

In partnership with Cape Nature and Gift of the Givers

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Report 2

Community and Circular Conservation

This lake is a resource. The people who live here know it. They depend on it. And they're the ones restoring balance and bringing it back to life.

With the help of conservation organization Cape Nature, in collaboration with NGOs like Gift of the Givers, the Western Cape Province has pioneered an innovative approach to invasive species management. The goal: not just to remove carp (*Cyprinus Carpio*), but to repurpose and build a people focused circular economy around the threat. By transforming carp into nutritious meals, the community is turning an environmental crisis into a critical opportunity.

How does this work? Field teams and local fishermen head out from the first light of the sun to begin netting the carp in targeted hotspots across the lake. Scientific data—tracking fish weight, age, and reproductive capacity—as well as local knowledge guide each strategic removal. Once caught, the carp are tested for food safety, then distributed by local leaders and NGOs to residents in need—sometimes feeding entire families at risk. According to Gift of the Givers, over 644,000 people have benefited from the project to date, with dishes like fish curry emerging as community favorites. The strength of this effort lies in the passion and lived insight from the residents themselves, selflessly dedicating their time to serving others and often making out of pocket contributions to keep the mission going. Because so long as the carp stay invasive and the need remains, they'll keep showing up for each other.

This circular economy approach exemplifies how waste—often a design flaw—can be reimaged. By feeding people and creating jobs through conservation, the project addresses food insecurity, reduces crime, and supports both biodiversity and ecosystem restoration. Soup Kitchen leader Erica Kordom captured this impact beautifully when she said, "I hate being sick, because when i'm sick, my people don't eat. My reward is the smiles on their faces-- so humble and so grateful." It also underscores the deep connection between climate and social action—each reinforcing the other. What we're finding here is not just a scientific intervention; it's a story of shared purpose, resilience, and practical creativity.



This Darwin Leader project was made possible by:



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