



Media release:

South African Animal Sanctuaries Alliance, 16 March, 2021

Innovative campaign will transfer control of land to the animals that live in this award-winning primate sanctuary near Plettenberg Bay.

\$5 (R90) buys land for Plett's primates

In a move that could be the first of its kind, Monkeyland has asked its supporters to help the animals in its care to buy the land on which they live in order to secure their own future.

"The crisis in tourism caused by the current pandemic has opened our eyes to the possibility that future generations of shareholders might not have the same passion for the animals that we do," said Tony Blignaut, the sanctuary's founder and CEO.

He explained that, while Monkeyland operates on land belonging to a proprietary limited company, the welfare of its animals remains the responsibility of the South African Animal Sanctuaries Alliance (SAASA) -- a PBO and non-profit organisation that also oversees the wellbeing of the residents of Birds of Eden and Jukani Wildlife Sanctuary in Plettenberg Bay, and MonkeylandKZN in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal Province.

"If future generations of shareholders don't

feel as passionately as we do, there's nothing stopping them from selling off the land for development, and leaving the animals with nowhere to go," he said.

MONKEYLAND: THE DREAM

When Monkeyland opened its gates to the public in April, 1998, the founders saw their role as providing a safe environment where previously captive primates -- monkeys, lemurs, gibbons -- could live out their lives in comfort and relative freedom, and in conditions under which they're able to find their own companions and mates, and form their own family groups (if that's in their nature).

Given that the primates held here originated mostly from the pet trade, and since they aren't indigenous to South Africa, it wasn't practical to release them locally into the wild.

But the alarming rate of habitat destruction around the world has added a second focus to Monkeyland's purpose: to protect the future of the species in its care in the event they're needed for repopulating natural wildlands. ("We will not under any circumstances trade any creature with private

individuals, zoos or institutions unless it's for reintroduction into the wild," said Mr. Blignaut.)

Achieving these lofty ideals -- and, indeed, simply meeting the day-to-day needs of the animals -- is, of course, a costly business, which is why tourism has always been a vital part of the Monkeyland formula: the income it generates keeps the animals fed and in good health.

Or it did before the pandemic hit.

AWARD WINNING SANCTUARIES

The idea of being able to see wild animals close at hand without actually interacting with them proved a winner for visitors and animals alike, and as a result, Monkeyland and the South African Animals Sanctuary Alliance have featured prominently in an array of awards for responsible tourism and sustainable tourism -- including, most recently, being named the Leading Major Tourist Attraction in Skål International's 2019 Sustainable Tourism Awards. <https://www.skal.org/sta-winners/2019-2>

LAND FOR PRIMATES

"Having set the bar as high as we have, we felt we had to find a way to ensure we don't falter -- and one way to do this is literally to give the animals rights over their own land," said Mr. Blignaut.

"And we'll do this by putting those rights in trust with SAASA."

To achieve this aim, the owners of the farm have agreed to sell the land to SAASA, and SAASA in turn has set up its 'Buy a square

metre of land for primates' campaign so that members of the public can help fund the purchase by donating as little as a single square metre to the cause - at a cost of only \$5 (or R 90.00) per square metre. (See map at <https://www.monkeyland.tv/map/>)

"With a total of 216,000 square metres available, the campaign will raise more than the required amount, and the balance will go into an emergency fund to protect the animals' food bill until such time as tourism returns to normal," said Mr. Blignaut.

Since SAASA has both PBO and NPO registration numbers, donations are tax deductible in terms of section 18A of the Income Tax Act 58 of 1962 -- and SAASA plans to sweeten the deal by offering anyone who pays for fifty square metres or more a free safari after the sale has been concluded.

"We see giving the animals at Monkeyland rights to their own land in this way as a pilot project that will hopefully be rolled out to the other sanctuaries in the SAASA stable," said Mr. Blignaut.

"So far, though, it seems our public loves the idea, and we're more confident knowing that the animals can look forward to a secured future."

For more information -- or to purchase a square metre on behalf of the primates -- visit <https://www.monkeyland.tv/buy-a-square-meter-of-forest/>

Media enquiries: Lara Mostert, lara@monkeyland.co.za +27(0)82 979 5683

