

# New animal rehab centre for CT

By [Lyndon Jaftha](#)

25 May 2012

The Cape of Good Hope SPCA opened its first short-term wildlife rehabilitation centre in May, and can now offer 24-hour emergency service and short term care, all year long, to animals in need.



Willow the honey badger was the first resident of the new rehab centre, and will reportedly be released soon.

(Images: [Lewis Rugh](#))

Rehabilitation centres are a safe haven for injured and sick animals, and in a country rich with wildlife, there will always be a need for such centres. They allow animals to recover from trauma before being released back into the wild, or offer them a safe place to live the rest of their lives should they not be able to be returned to their natural habitat.

The Cape of Good Hope (CoGH) SPCA, is the largest and oldest SPCA in South Africa, and is situated in the Cape Flats area of Grassy Park. For this bustling area, a short term rehabilitation centre was just the thing to provide emergency treatment and short term care for an ever-increasing number of displaced, injured and sick animals.

Because of urban spread, animal exploitation and the ever-present desire for exotic pets, CoGH SPCA has been dealing with animal emergencies since 2000 and was sorely in need of such a facility.

The organisation did some research into international procedures and sought advice from numerous experts before approaching the designers, Rondebosch-based 4th Dimension Studios. The centre was then built by leading construction and renovation company R+N Masters Builders next to the SPCA inspectorate offices.

With the bulk of the funding coming from the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund, as well as CoGH SPCA's reserve funds, the building costs amounted to R4.6-million (US\$559 000).

## Making a positive difference

The official opening took place on 2 May and was attended by, among other dignitaries, Marjorie Letoaba, a senior manager at the National Lotteries Board, and Lewis Pugh, a well-known environmental campaigner, motivational speaker and adventurer who's also the ambassador for the wildlife unit of the CoGH SPCA.

"We now have one of the best registered facilities in the world, capable of making a positive difference to the lives of just about every wild creature that we are likely to encounter," said CoGH CEO Alan Perrins in his opening speech.

The Cape Town area is well known for its wealth of natural resources, with several reserves, a national park and a long coastline falling into the greater Cape Town metropole. This results in an increasing number of human/animal conflicts.

Between April 2010 and March 2011 - just one year - CoGH's wildlife unit responded to 230 cases involving over 1 000 animals.

Investigators delved into 183 cases of cruelty and dealt with 476 issues of conflict between humans and animals. There are also plans to inspect 14 facilities for captive wildlife.

"Often all that the displaced animal needs is somewhere safe, warm and quiet to recover before being released back to the wild," said wildlife unit supervisor Brett Glasby, speaking at the opening ceremony.

"For those with injuries, such as burns or wounds, or those that are emaciated and dehydrated, we now have the facilities to provide specialist treatment and care."

## **Top-class facilities for wildlife**

While CapeNature, which focuses on biodiversity conservation in the Western Cape, is able to provide some assistance, this is inadequate because the establishment's wildlife management programme is more focused on research and science.

The CoGH SPCA's new facilities have been endorsed and welcomed by all relevant parties, including local and provincial environmental authorities as well as the national SPCA body.

As well as saving animals in distress, it will serve as an educational centre where young people starting out on a career in wildlife management can learn the correct techniques.

The rehabilitation centre accommodates all animals, and has aquapens, reptile rooms, aviaries and outdoor enclosures, as well as quarantine rooms, an operating theatre and a kitchen, because different animals eat different types of food. It also has two fully equipped emergency vehicles.

Some of the animals currently in care include a honey badger - the centre's first resident, named Willow - a bearded dragon, a puff adder, a Cape cobra and a black crow. Pugh was very taken with Willow and kept his Twitter followers and Facebook likers up to date with the animal's progress. His latest note revealed that Willow would be released soon.

"...our task now is to secure support from individual, trust, foundation and corporate donors who care as much as we do about the welfare and conservation of our wildlife," Perrins said.

Donations of supplies such as straw, blankets, lawn and soil, shade cloth, or kitchen items as well as volunteers to clean enclosures and monitor the animals would be welcomed by the CoGH SPCA.

They can be contacted on +27 21 700 4158/9 or +27 83 526 1604 after hours.