

---

# NEWS & VIEWS

---

## THE RESCUE OF APOLLO: OUR SEVEN MONTH JOURNEY



On Friday evening, April 27th 2018, a couple from Hout Bay came across a snake in their garden home. The couple managed to successfully capture and contain the animal in a suitable and secure container. They were then able to positively identify the snake as a Cape Cobra (*Naja nivea*), said to be one of the most venomous cobras in the world. Certainly, the most venomous in Africa. It's venom, in fact, is more potent than that of a Black Mamba. The couple's bravery should be commended, as any injured animal should be considered dangerous, due to the compromising state it finds itself in. They brought the animal to the Kommetjie Snake and Reptile Rehabilitation Centre where Shaun, a curator, met them.

At first glance, it appeared that the animal was beyond any kind of rehabilitative care and/or treatment. What we assume happened here, as evidence was plain to see, was that the snake had moved its body through the open top end of a cold drink can - the area which one would drink through or insert a straw. Again, looking at the situation, this carelessly discarded piece of tin had become a firm and permanent fixture midway on the snake's body. The tin had cut into the snake's body over a period of time.

Estimating that the course of this process may have lasted from anything ranging six months to a year; how this animal managed to survive is absolutely remarkable. The snake, now known as "Apollo" actually grew into and around the restrictive section of this tin, cutting through layers of tough skin, muscle tissue and eventually exposing the coelomic cavity and internal organs, therefore exposing the lung. Although "Apollo" had suffered a great deal, his will to survive was obvious. Showing signs of almost defeat and defensive behaviour, he stood his ground. Showing signs of extreme exhaustion, due to the inability to forage or hunt adequately, he still showed signs of great will to live. Again my first thought was that "Apollo" may need to be euthanised. This decision is either made on site or with the valued assistance of a veterinary surgeon. A choice was made to save "Apollo". The piece of tin, then almost a constant part of his body, was carefully removed. In the interim, veterinary procedures were initiated within the first twelve hours. "Apollo" received extensive care in terms of pain killers, the removal of dead tissue, disinfection, and the cleaning of the wound and muscle, and oral antibiotic treatments. In addition to this, the wound was sutured and "Apollo" survived yet another ordeal. He was introduced to the rehabilitative program which lasted seven months. During these seven months, his eating plan included introducing him to small amounts of food which progressively became larger as his health improved. His living quarters were cleaned and disinfected every second day and Apollo received a disinfection soak every second day. The purpose of the rehabilitative period was (A) to allow the wounds to heal, (B) allow for three full sheds before the stitches and sutures were to be removed, and (C) to allow him to pick up weight and regain energy. We are now at a point of release, his stitches have been removed and from an animal which weighed 0.43kg upon admission, now weighs 1.35kg - almost three times his initial weight. The release will be conducted in conjunction with National Parks, hopefully free from pollution and within a safe environment.