

## **Floristic survey of the Stormberg**

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The definition of a “priority area” is not obvious from the funding documentation. However, for the purposes of this application, it is considered to be an area which is under-collected or under-represented by specimens in major herbaria. The objective, scientific identification of such areas requires an analysis of existing data, as well as a prediction of which areas may house unexpected diversity. Such an analysis was conducted by Robertson and Barker (2006; SAJSci 102: 77-84), who indicate that much of the country is under-represented in herbarium collections, and in particular the montane regions of the Great Escarpment. Concomitant with this finding is the fact half of the centres of plant endemism occur in montane regions. This project will document the floristic diversity and endemism, important habitats and rare species of the Stormberg mountains of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. These mountains, which form part of the Great Escarpment, were identified by Robertson and Barker (2006) as severely under-collected (see Fig. 1 of attachments). Indeed, there are only a couple of minor localised studies and none which could be considered sufficiently detailed for any conservation of biodiversity purpose. The Stormberg is of added interest as it comprises a range of geologies and hence edaphic diversity (unlike most of the other regions of the great escarpment). It is thus expected that plant diversity will be high, and that many range extensions will be identified and even new species collected. Using traditional means of botanical collection, as well as the gathering of abundance data by means of the establishment of long-term monitoring quadrats, this project will address this lack of data, provide baseline data for long-term monitoring and enable a more refined assessment of the region as a centre of plant endemism, and explore the role that edaphic factors play in creating and maintaining floristic diversity.