

2021 Report

IUCN SSC Southern African Plant Specialist Group



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NUMBER OF MEMBERS

42

Mission statement

To assess the conservation status of plants endemic to Southern Africa and to ensure their sustainable use and adequate protection through mainstreaming of information pertaining to threatened plants into government policies and development planning.

Projected impact 2021–2025

In the current quadrennium, the Southern African Plant Specialist Group aims to inform and enable effective conservation and land use planning through the identification of critical species and ecosystems through multi-country Red Listing programmes and the documenting of critical sites for this important biodiversity, through identifying and promoting Key Biodiversity Areas and Important Plant Areas. We will deliver targeted in situ and ex situ conservation and sustainable use programmes for species identified as at particular risk from habitat change and over-exploitation across the southern African region.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-001 Complete assessments for 50 endemic and near endemic plant taxa in Mozambique.

T-002 Initiate assessments of ca. 100 endemic and near endemic plant taxa in Malawi.

T-003 Initiate assessments of 180 endemic and near endemic plant taxa in Namibia.

T-004 Complete assessments for 213 *Conophytum* taxa in South Africa.

T-006 Complete assessment of Important Plant Areas for Mozambique.

T-007 Complete assessment of Important Plant Areas in South Africa.

T-008 Complete Red List of Ecosystems assessment and second iteration Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) network for Mozambique.

T-018 Map ecosystem types for Namibia in preparation for Red List assessment.

T-020 Develop a priority list of Southern African threatened species for ex situ cultivated plant collections of recalcitrant and

priority critical habitat species that can't be banked.

ACT

T-005 Develop a new area of work on sustainable use focusing on selected medicinal plants that are traded across borders in southern Africa.

T-010 South Africa seed banking programme: (1) develop priority list of South African threatened species for seed banking; (2) bank 1,000 seed collections of South African spp. of which 700 are new to the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership (MSBP); (3) seed bank illegally harvested succulent species – 45 target spp. and 50 spp. from habitat.

T-011 Mozambique seed banking programme: (1) develop priority list of Mozambican threatened species for seed banking; (2) bank 700 seed collections for ex situ conservation of which 600 are new to the MSBP.

T-012 Pilot involving citizen members of the South African Botanical Society to restore priority degraded Important Plant Areas.



Collection of seed for succulent plants experiencing significant declines due to illegal collection
Photo: Ismail Ebrahim

T-013 Develop an in situ conservation project on the *Icuria*-dominated coastal forests in Northern Mozambique.

T-014 Contribute to in situ conservation planning in the Licuati and Chimanimani Important Plant Areas of Mozambique, to support improved protection for key habitats and their species.

T-015 Develop a species recovery programme: (1) develop a template for species recovery plans; (2) implement selected species recovery projects.

COMMUNICATE

T-009 Promote citizen science monitoring via the iNaturalist platform by providing training and participating in the global City Nature Challenge and Great Southern Bioblitz events.

Activities and results 2021

ASSESS

Red List

T-001 (KSR 6)

Number of new global Red List assessments completed: 17

Result description: Seventeen assessments were published in 2021; a further 17 were reviewed and passed and are pending publication in 2022. Thirteen assessments were finalised in 2021 but are awaiting review.

Research activities

T-006 (KSR 6)

Number of new Key Biodiversity Areas confirmed in the World database of KBAs (WDKBA): 57

Result description: Fifty-seven (57) Important Plant Areas were identified, mapped and documented across Mozambique; text was submitted in November 2021 for a book that will be published in English and Portuguese in 2022. The headline results are that the sites together occupy fewer than 3% of the total land area of Mozambique, but together support important populations of over 80% of



A species of *Conophytum*, one of the most threatened genera of plants due to illegal collection
Photo: SAPSG archives

Mozambique's threatened plants. However, fewer than half of the sites are currently afforded any formal protection.

T-008 (KSR 6)

Number of Key Biodiversity Areas in the World Database of KBAs (WDKBA) updated after reassessment for species: 0

Result description: As part of the ongoing KBA assessment of Mozambique, a revised version of the mapping and description of ecosystems of Mozambique has been drafted in 2021 and is being readied for publication in 2022. When the map of ecosystems is completed, a Red List assessment of the ecosystems will be carried out.

Policy

T-007 (KSR 6)

Number of national plans incorporating Key Biodiversity Areas in their spatial planning: 0

Result description: Important Plant Area criteria have been applied nationally in South Africa, led by Kaveesha Naicker of the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW) team, with over 7,700 sites initially identified as having met one or more of the criteria. Kaveesha is now working on the prioritisation of sites within this long-list to identify focal sites for monitoring and management. The results are to be published in 2022.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-010 (KSR 10)

Number of threatened species benefited directly or indirectly by sustainable use programmes: 595

Result description: Species were collected April–December 2021.

T-011 (KSR 10)

Number of threatened species benefiting from ex situ conservation: 27

Result description: Seed collections of 27 species: 15 species collected under the Threatened Biodiversity Hotspots

Programme, and 12 species collected under the Global Tree Seed Bank Programme.

T-013 (KSR 10)

Number of threatened species benefiting from in situ conservation action: 3

Result description: Alice Massingue of Universidade Eduardo Mondlane has secured funding from the Mohammed Bin Zayed Fund to carry out research and conservation work on the *Icuria dunensis* forests, together with surveys of the associated Critically Endangered species *Warneckea sessilicarpa*. Fieldwork will commence in 2022. Surveys also continued at the Mulimone *Icuria* forest near the Kenmare Moma Titanium Minerals Mine, leading to the discovery of the globally threatened species *Brachystegia oblonga* and *Scorodophloeus torrei* at this important site. However, significant encroachment into the forest from local farmers was also noted and Instituto de Investigação Agrária de Moçambique (IIAM) are working with Kenmare to try to reduce this impact and better protect the remaining forest.

T-015 (KSR 10)

Number of threatened species benefiting from in situ conservation action: 3

Result description: A *Marasmodes undulata* recovery programme is in progress. A Silver Tree (*Leucadendron argenteum*) species recovery research project is in progress. A Mulanje Cedar (*Widdringtonia whytei*) and companion species restoration project is in progress. Funding is secured for the Botanical Restoration Unit.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-009 (KSR 13)

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: As of 16 February, iNaturalist southern Africa reached 1,193,565 plant observations. These were submitted for 19,652 species by 12,263 observers with 4,906 identifiers ([https://](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?place_id=113055&subview=map&iconic_taxa=Plantae)

www.inaturalist.org/observations?place_id=113055&subview=map&iconic_taxa=Plantae). South Africa alone has 22,000 taxa, of which 88% are already on iNaturalist.

We successfully participated in the Great Southern Bioblitz (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/great-southern-bioblitz-2021-southern-africa-umbrella>) where City of Cape Town, Overstrand, Garden Route and eThekweni all contributed over 5,000 observations, for a southern African total of 60,753 observations by 1,000 observers, featuring over 7,238 species. Worldwide, South Africa achieved three out of the top five places in the Bioblitz. Earlier in the year we participated in the City Nature Challenge (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-southern-africa-2021>) where five South African and two Botswana cities participated. Just under 1,900 observers contributed 113,124 observations featuring 8,155 species. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City Nature Challenge was not a competition, yet Cape Town topped the global charts.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 17

Geographic regions: 17 Africa

Actions during 2021:

Act: 3 (KSR 10)

Communicate: 1 (KSR 12)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

