

Be a friend of the Cederberg

Take pride in the Cederberg and the cedar tree

CLANWILLIAM CEDAR FACT SHEET

- It only grows in the Cederberg mountains - and nowhere else in the world!
- It is endangered and is facing extinction.
- It is one of 43 conifer species worldwide facing extinction.
- Scattered trees grow at high altitudes between 800m to 1 650m, on rocky outcrops and cliffs where they are protected from fire.
- It is one of nine conifers indigenous to southern Africa.
- Though not a true "cedar", but rather a "cypress", it shares characteristics such as durable, fragrant wood with cedars like the "cedars of Lebanon", *Cedrus libani*.

Did you know?

Most of the world's 630 slow-growing conifer species grow in the northern hemisphere. Conifers are an ancient group of plants that evolved 65 to 225 million years ago.

Why is the cedar facing EXTINCTION ?

The numbers and sizes of cedar trees that were recorded over 200 years ago are now seldom seen, if ever. The cedar tree is facing extinction and needs special management strategies to ensure the long-term survival of the species.

What has caused this problem?

- Scientists used fossilised pollen to make assumptions about why the cedar has declined over the past 14 600 years. They found that the tree never grew in exceptionally dense forests. This is possibly due to warmer and drier climates that caused regular veld fires to be too severe for the cedar to survive.
- Although early Cape colonists sent regular expeditions to the north of Cape Town in the mid-17th century, they did not venture into the rugged Cederberg mountains. The limited but valuable cedar timber resources were therefore protected from exploitation until farmers settled along the Olifants River in the mid 18th century. The durable cedar wood was the only suitable source of timber that could be used for furniture, fences and telephone poles. This led to excessive harvesting. For example, more than 7000 poles were made in 1879 for the telephone line between Piketberg and Calvinia! Woodcutting is now outlawed.
- The practice of indigenous people like the Khoi to use fire to stimulate grazing and to flush out game destroyed many seedlings. The cedar grows in the fynbos biome, where fires often occur. Although the cedar is killed by fire, it also depends on fire for regeneration. The tree produces its first cones after 12 years and optimal seed production takes place after 30 years. This period is far longer than the interval between veld fires in the Cederberg, which occur on average every 11 to 15 years. If fires occur too often, seedlings and young trees are unable to grow into adult trees that can produce seeds.

What is a wilderness?

A wilderness is a vast protected, pristine environment that is so large that natural processes, such as the migration of animals, can occur freely. Scientists use these unspoilt areas to research ecology, geology and other sciences. People find spiritual inspiration from these places. It also holds educational, therapeutic, cultural, aesthetic and historical value and is important for the production of water and clean air.

TAKE CARE of the Cederberg

The Cederberg Wilderness is managed by the Western Cape Nature Conservation Board. In the surrounding conservancies, members manage their properties in order to conserve biodiversity. These areas are also at risk and are under threat because of insensitive human behavior and practices.

What can you do?



Prevent veld fires

- Only make a fire in designated places, and do not make it in the natural veld.
- Do not throw cigarettes out of your car window.
- Join your local Fire Protection Association.



Protect our natural plants and animals

- Plant indigenous plants in your garden.
- Remove alien invasive shrubs and trees.
- Report trade in protected species.
- Encourage best farming practices.
- Report illegal hunting.



Control erosion

- Follow footpaths and do not take shortcuts when you hike.
- Rehabilitate areas like unused farming land, paths and overnight areas.
- Encourage best farming practices to avoid erosion.
- Discourage developments in sensitive areas or along steep gradients.



Take care not to pollute or litter

- Don't use agricultural chemicals near water sources such as dams or rivers.
- Use environmentally sensitive waste control methods.
- When hiking please adhere to "Leave no Trace" principles.



Over-harvesting

- Harvesting of any plants in the Cederberg Wilderness is illegal.
- Report illegal activities in the surrounding conservancies.

The Cederberg RICHES

The Cederberg region is home to:

- More than 1800 fynbos and succulent plants.
- Many threatened plants, including the Clanwilliam cedar tree.
- Various reptiles and frogs only found in South Africa, including the Armadillo girdled lizard and the black spitting cobra.
- Eight endemic fish species, that only occur in the Olifants River system and nowhere else in the world.
- Various large and medium-sized mammals such as the leopard and grey rhebuck.
- An important water catchment area.
- A rock art gallery.

Share in the conservation of our Clanwilliam cedar

The Clanwilliam cedar, as a flagship species, ensured that the broader community has become involved and shares the responsibility of taking care of the Cederberg environment.

Be part of these efforts.

- Seed collection and seedling plantings by volunteers will be extended to local schools and other interested parties.
- A new cedar nursery was established at Matjiesrivier Nature Reserve, thanks to the support of the Botanical Society and Fauna and Flora International. It is managed by the Western Cape Nature Conservation Board in partnership with the Cederberg Conservancy and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry: Forestry Western Cape. The seedlings will be planted in the wilderness, on private properties, as well as on community land. This will be done by community members and volunteers. The nursery forms a base for educational and awareness programmes, and can play a part in boosting the local tourism industry.
- Two satellite cedar nurseries will be established in two communities to assist in the local economic development of previously disadvantaged people.

More info ?

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