

CEDERBERG COMPLEX NATURE RESERVE

Contact numbers

RESERVE OFFICE
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RESERVATIONS
087 087 8250

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Gate times

07:30 to 18:00
01 May to 31 Aug.

07:30 to 19:00
01 Sep. to 30 Apr.

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The Cederberg Wilderness

lies some 250km north of Cape Town, stretching from the Middelberg Pass at Citrusdal to north of the Pakhuis Pass at Clanwilliam and encompassing some 71 000ha of rugged, mountainous terrain. It is renowned for its spectacular landscapes and rock formations as well as the increasingly rare Clanwilliam cedar tree, from which the area got its name. The 12 000ha Matjiesrivier Nature Reserve, obtained in 1995 with the assistance of the

Climate



The Cederberg Complex is located in the winter rainfall zone so winters are cold and wet while summers are warm and dry. Most rain falls occur between May and September and it often snows on the higher parts. In winter, night temperatures drop sharply and heavy frost may occur, while in summer temperatures reach as high as 40°C. Lightning is the most common cause of periodic veld fires during summer months.

Flora



The Cederberg Complex is located in the Cape Floral Kingdom. Vegetation in the Cederberg is predominantly mountain fynbos. The lower slopes support protea, silky cone-bush, sand olive and Clanwilliam daisies, with wild olives and mountain maytenus on the rocky outcrops. Waboom veld also occurs at lower altitude.

The eye-catching purple-blue ridderspoor, rooibos tea and buchu grow against the lower cliffs while higher up one finds fynbos restio veld, with red disas along streams on the plateau.

The Clanwilliam cedar grows in rocky areas at altitudes of more than 1 000m above sea level. In the wetter ravines, red and white alder, yellowwood, hard-pear and Cape beech occur, while wild olive, silky bark and spoonwood prefer dryer kloofs. The endemic snow protea is perhaps the most attractive plant on the highest peaks - it is very scarce and only found at a few sites in the wilderness.

Matjiesrivier Nature Reserve falls in a transitional zone between the fynbos and succulent Karoo vegetation types. The drier conditions and fine-grained clay soils of the western slopes of the reserve also support central mountain renosterveld, which is dominated by members of the asteraceae family. Growing on more fertile soils than fynbos, renosterveld is believed to have once supported herds of large game and predators such as lion.

Fauna



Baboons, dassies, grey rhebok, klipspringers, duiker and grys-bok are fairly common in the Cederberg. Porcupine, honeybadger, Cape clawless otter and aardvark also occur although they are seldom seen. The leopard is the Cederberg's largest predator and is fairly common although very shy. Smaller mammals include African wild cat, lynx, bat-eared fox, aardwolf and Cape fox. The small grey mongoose and striped polecat are often seen. Various interesting rodents occur, including the spectacled dormouse.

More than 100 bird species occur here, with black eagle, rock kestrel and jackal buzzard being the most common raptors. About 16 snake species are found in the Cederberg, the most common being berg adder, puff adder and Cape cobra. The armadillo lizard is one of the endemic reptiles found here.

History



San and Khoi people inhabited the Cederberg area from earliest times. European settlers began stock farming here in the early eighteenth century and from 1903 to 1973, exploitation of natural products was rampant and large amounts of cedarwood, rooibos tea, buchu and rockwood bark were harvested. Fires added to the destruction and cedar trees are now on the brink of extinction. The Cederberg was proclaimed a wilderness in 1973 and received World Heritage status in 2004. Since the 1840's Matjiesrivier was a livestock farm until proclaimed as a Nature Reserve in 2000. It received World Heritage status in 2015.

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-SA), is situated on the drier eastern boundary of the Cederberg mountains. These two protected areas are managed as a Complex and are an integral component of the Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor. Geologically, the Cederberg is part of the Cape Fold Belt and consists mainly of Table Mountain sandstone. Weathered sandstone formations, most notably the Wolfberg Arch, the Maltese Cross and Stadsaal cave, are typical of the Cederberg.

Activities



The solitude and wild grandeur of the Cederberg Complex offers unsurpassed opportunities for recreation. Activities such as hiking and rock climbing are permitted as long as rock surfaces and the vegetation remain undamaged. Management paths and hiking trails criss-cross the wilderness and hikers may explore at random. A 1:50 000 topographical map is available from the CapeNature office at Algeria.

Rock art



The Cederberg features hundreds of rocky overhangs and caves with fine examples of rock art dating back between 300 and 6 000 years. Matjiesrivier offers easy access to magnificent rock formations and rock art at Truitjieskraal and the Stadsaal cave with its famous elephant paintings.

The interpretive trail at Truitjieskraal will take visitors on a historical journey through the San and Khoekhoe cultures spanning thousands of years. Permits are required to visit the Stadsaal cave and Truitjieskraal, available for purchase from any tourism office in the Cederberg. Rock art is very sensitive to damage and is protected by the National Heritage Resources Act no.25 of 1999. Vandals who deface rock paintings face severe penalties.

Facilities



The peaceful atmosphere of the Algeria campsite has broad appeal. Here, 48 camp sites are situated along the banks of the Rondegat River. Algeria also offers 13 chalets, ranging from fully-equipped to comfortable basic accommodation, all close to the Rondegat River and its swimming holes.

The more basic Kliphuis campsite is located on the Pakhuis Pass on the flower route to Biedouw Valley and Wupperthal. This campsite has 14 spots under shady trees along the Kliphuis River. Accommodation is also available in three refurbished chalets. Set against the backdrop of the famous Rocklands bouldering site, it is the perfect spot for climbing enthusiasts. The wilderness is divided into utilisation zones, which helps to maintain the unspoilt atmosphere and limit the impact of visitors. Groups are limited to a minimum of three and a maximum of 12 persons per group. Visitors are urged to book well in advance to avoid disappointment.

Conservation

The Cederberg Complex is located in the winter rainfall zone so Clanwilliam cedar tree numbers are declining despite past protection efforts. These trees are being actively cultivated and each year volunteers assist in the planting of seedlings at suitable places within the Cederberg Wilderness.

The Cederberg Complex forms the core of a leopard management area established in 1988. This area includes neighbouring private land and is managed in collaboration with landowners and researchers. The aim of the initiative is to promote the existence of leopards by minimising conflict between stock farming and nature conservation, and to look at alternative means of managing so-called problem leopards.

DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY

All persons entering this conservation area and using its facilities, do so entirely at their own risk. The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board and/or its employees and/or agents and/or its successors in title shall not be liable for any damage, loss, theft, injury, accident or death suffered by any person, howsoever caused. Right of Admission Reserved.

Stay safe when venturing outdoors

- Wear comfortable walking shoes, sunscreen and a hat
- Don't hike alone
- Carry enough food and water for the trip
- Make sure you know what the weather conditions are before you depart
- Take a warm jacket/raincoat in winter
- Make sure you have a map of the area
- Take a field medical kit along for emergencies
- Obey all signage
- Stay in a group and keep to marked trails

PLEASE HELP US KEEP OUR PROTECTED AREAS PRISTINE



CEDERBERG COMPLEX

LEGEND

- Reserve boundaries
- National road
- Roads
- Jeep track
- Trails
- Rivers
- Towns
- Places
- Geological features
- Mountain peaks
- Information

PLEASE NOTE: A detailed hiking map is available for sale at the reserve office.

