from lower in the valley and can change rapidly, becoming dangerous.

Vegetation

The natural vegetation of the Jonkershoek area is mainly mountain fynbos. More than 1 100 plant species are known to occur, of which a number are rare and/or endemic to the area. Distinctive species are Protea repens, P. neriifolia, mountain cypress, as well as various ericas and restios. Several relic forest communities occur in narrow, moist kloofs where they are relatively sheltered from fire. Dense riparian vegetation grows along the banks of the Eerste River. Oak trees, although not indigenous, have been allowed to remain in Assegaaibosch because of their special historical value. Large pine plantations are a distinctive feature of the valley and occur on property neighbouring the Nature Reserves. The Reserves’ management programmes include control of hakea and other invasive alien plants that threaten the fynbos.

Animals

Mammals include leopard, honey badger, baboon, klipspringer, mongoose and numerous smaller animals like mice, shrews and rats. Most of these are shy, however, and seldom seen. Large raptors such as black eagle, the occasional fish eagle and spotted eagle owl occur, while kingfishers and typical fynbos birds (sugarbird, orange-breasted sunbird and protea seed-eater) are more abundant. On warm days rock agama lizards can be seen basking in the sun. Berg adder, puff adder, boomslang and Cape cobra are fairly common and hikers should be alert.

Activities

The Assegaaibosch Nature Reserve has two hiking routes: a short 3km walk and a longer 5.5km trail. Parking, picnic and braai areas, and toilet facilities are available.

The Jonkershoek Nature Reserve has a circular drive of ±10km, leading around the valley floor. Four hiking trails of varying difficulty and length lead off the circular drive and up the mountain slopes.

1. Swartboskloof-Sosyskloof: This easy scenic route ascends along the western slopes of Swartboskloof for about 2 km, passing through a patch of beautiful indigenous forest. It then traverses along a contour to Sosyskloof before winding back to the start. 5.3 km; 2 hours; circular, or 6.9 km; 2.5 hours; circular, if longer route to lookout is taken.

2. Swartboskloof Route: Ascends the steep Swartboskloof, gaining over 900 m in altitude over the first 4.5 km, but the panoramic views are ample reward. The route then traverses fairly level terrain to the top of Kurktekkrenek where there is a steep 2.5 km descent to the Waterfall Route. 18 km; 6 hours; circular.

3. Panorama Circuit: From the bridge on the hairpin bend of the Circular Drive, there is a steep climb to a contour path just below Third Ridge and Banghoek peaks. Following the contour path, you reach Bergriviernek, from where there are amazing views of Assegaaibosch. The path then winds across the Dwarberg Plateau, with its marshy areas and streams surrounded by daisies, to Kurktekkrenek. There is a short detour here, to the summit of Guardian Peak (1,227 m), with stunning views of the Cape Peninsula, from Table Mountain to Cape Point, Robben Island, False Bay, Cape Hangklip and the peaks of the Hottentots Holland range. From Kurktekkrenek the path descends past Second and First waterfalls to the starting point. 17 km; 6 hours; circular.

4. Tweede Waterval: An easy ramble along the Eerste River past Eerste Waterval (First Waterfall), followed by a steep climb along a gorge to the foot of Tweede Waterval (Second Waterfall). The dangerous ascent to this waterfall is closed. 6.4 km; 2 hours; out-and-return.