

SITES OF CONSERVATION SIGNIFICANCE ■

LENJANE CONSERVATION AREA – 92ha

The farm Lenjane is owned by NCT. It comprises a grassveld river valley surrounding the Black Mfolozi river, at an altitude of approx. 1100m dropping to a broad gorge which reaches to about 850m. The systematic conservation plan was used to determine the conservation value of the area. The vegetation types are as follows:

Eastern Mistbelt forest of about 60 hectares, which is adjacent to about 32 hectares of bush. This forest is contiguous with another 300 hectares of forest/bush on the neighbouring property which is owned by a Community Property Association resulting from a land claim. There are about 213 hectares of Paulpietersburg Moist Grassland (Gm15) which is listed as VULNERABLE (Mucina and Rutherford, 2006). These grasslands are tall closed grasslands rich in forbes (Mucina and Rutherford, 2006). The dominant grass species are *Tristachya leucothrix*, *Themeda triandra* and *Hyparrhenia hirta*. The forest/bush area are typified by a high diversity of trees species.

Key management issues

The grasslands on the site are in moderate to good condition with no signs of soil erosion and moderately high forbe diversity. Some cattle do access the area but there are no obvious signs of overgrazing. Use of this area for grazing must be closely monitored. The forest and bush area are relatively intact with little signs of disturbance. Alien species encroachment needs to be monitored and controlled. The forest area contains an extensive colony of Natal cycads. *Encephalartos natalensis*, estimated to comprise of well over 100 individuals. These plants need to be monitored and protected.

TREWERGIE – 195ha

It is a superb example of the very threatened Natal Mistbelt vegetation type, and is situated in the Richmond area of KZN. The farm has exceptional conservation values at the species, ecosystem and landscape level. A mosaic of forest patches in moderate condition, and extensive grasslands. 28 threatened species have been sited on the property. The value of the property is further enhanced by the fact that the neighbouring farms have large unplanted areas under conservation.

Key management issues

Active monitoring of Blue Swallows is carried out by the Seele's as part of the blue swallow Working Group. Observational monitoring is carried out on the Hilton daisy population and there is not sign of deterioration. Extensive grassland areas are burned in on a rotational system. Cattle graze occurs at sustainable levels. Bark harvesting in indigenous forest is evident but control is proving difficult.

FRIEDHEIM TIMBERS – 30ha

Situated near Vryheid, this is a rocky grassland patch in pristine condition with an exceptional diversity of flowering plants. The vegetation type is the Piet Retief Sourveld, which is listed as vulnerable. There are plans to incorporate this into a reserve with the neighbouring farm and apply to have it declared as a site of conservation significance.

Key management issues

Grassland is currently burned in a bi-annual mosaic. The time of year that grassland is burned should be varied as much as possible. It is not grazed.

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ENON – 206ha

It is a superb example of the very threatened KwaZulu-Natal mistbelt vegetation type. This Richmond farm has exceptional conservation values at the species, ecosystem and landscape level. It has one of the largest patches of mistbelt forest under private ownership and areas of high altitude mistbelt grasslands. The value of the property is further enhanced by the fact that the neighbouring farms have large unplanted areas under conservation. It is contiguous with the NCT oribi reserve called Minerva.

Key management issues

Take care to burn away from indigenous forest patches. Monitor for harvesting of *Scilla natalensis* and *Eucomis autumnalis*. There is some evidence of poaching of blue duiker and this is being monitored. Ginger lily is spreading in much of the area and replacing the understory and inhibiting recruitment. A report on this issue is attached to the ENON report.

BAYNESFIELD ESTATE - 400ha

The grasslands of Baynesfield Estate, between Richmond and Pietermaritzburg form part of a large complex of grasslands and forest patches that form one of the largest relatively intact mistbelt grassland landscapes in KZN. It has a population of the endangered blue swallow, grey crowned crane and a number of other rare and threatened bird species. The grasslands are rich in threatened plant species.

Key management issues

The Baynesfield trust runs cattle on the site, but currently well within the carrying capacity of the grasslands. Monitoring of the blue swallow nests takes place by EWT. There has been an alarming decline in blue swallow numbers, but this is a trend throughout South Africa and the subject of research been undertaken by the EWT.

VERGELEGEN – approximately 350ha

The grasslands on this farm in the Melmoth district are part of the vulnerable northern midlands moist mistbelt grasslands. Several threatened plant species have been recorded there including the rare *Helichrysum woodii*.

Key management issues

A field assessment was undertaken in 2013 and identified control of illegal grazing and correct fire management as key issues. The SANBI grasslands ecosystem guidelines are used by the forester to guide management practices.

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