

Republikein

Jou land. Jou taal. Jou koerant.

- [HOMEPAGE](#)
- [ENVIRONMENT](#)
- ENDEMIC PLANTS IN DANGER



dr Antje Burke is worried about the future of the endemics. • Photo: Private

- [ENVIRONMENT](#)

ENDEMIC PLANTS IN DANGER

'Plant poaching a major threat'

The Sperrgebiet is a national park with a high diversity of plants and a large number of endemic species.

Wazon guest editor, Tanja Bause

- 20 HOURS AGO - - 2023-07-18 00:00:00

Tanja Kipke – An environmental scientist expressed her concern about the survival of the endemic plants in the Tsau //Khaeb National Park (Sperrgebiet).

Dr. Antje Burke has been involved in the Sperrgebiet for almost 30 years and advises Namdeb, the Ministry of the Environment, Forestry and Tourism and other stakeholders in the region on biodiversity and nature conservation plans and environmental management.

"Plants are my passion," she said at the beginning of her lecture at the Scientific Society of Namibia.

"Plants are always an indicator of other habitats."

The Sperrgebiet is a national park with a high diversity of plants and a large number of endemic species – that is, plants that only occur in the region.

"In total, there are 31 plant species that only occur in this area, 11 of which have an extremely limited distribution area," explained Burke.

"Sometimes they only grow on one of the mountains and nowhere else."

THREATS

Burke compiled a list of threats that hinder the survival of the plants in the Sperrgebiet.

First, Burke mentions climate change, "we don't know how the plants are going to react to it.

"However, it is clear that they will be exposed to greater stress factors in the future. Mining also destroys habitats. However, it is thanks to diamond mining that this diversity could survive in the limited area at all."

For some time though, a part of the restricted area was also opened to the public. At the Aurus Saddle there is a hiking trail and a lookout point for tourists.

"This is a core area of rare plants," Burke said.

She requested a pathway with demarcations and a viewing platform. She also recommended that a camera be installed so that people are monitored, but nothing came of it apparently due to a lack of money.

"Everyone wants to take a picture and that way they don't stay on the path and then step on the plant."

If this continues, this endemic core area will be lost in a few years, predicts Burke.

Not only is sustainable tourism a threat, but for Burke, plant poaching is one of the biggest threats.

"The endemic plants are sold in Asian markets to collectors or for medicinal purposes."

The last issue that Burke touches on is the "green hydrogen project".

"Should wind farms expand in the future - planning is already underway - it will also affect areas that are home to numerous endemic plants. We can no longer speak of green development.

"They will be lost if they are destroyed."

To save these plants from extinction, Burke calls for more intensive environmental management and an increase in the ministry's staff numbers.

"Endemic plants only stand a chance if their status is recognised, protection measures adopted and followed in planning, development and implementation," Burke concluded.

–republikein@republikein.com.na