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Plant poachers arrested for illegally harvesting indigenous plants in Cape Town

16 July 2022 12:11 PM

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Field rangers at the Tygerberg Nature Reserve managed to apprehend poachers who were illegally removing bulbs and indigenous plants from one of the hiking trails.

On Tuesday, 12 July 2022, the Tygerberg Nature Reserve staff were alerted by a visitor to three individuals who seemed to be removing plants from one of the hiking trails.

Two field rangers responded to this call and managed to apprehend three individuals carrying more than 800 bulbs (geophytes) from the western slope of Tygerberg Nature Reserve.

The Platteklouf Neighbourhood Watch arrived on the scene to assist the field rangers in stopping the suspects while waiting for SAPS. Police arrested the three suspects upon their arrival at the scene.

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The suspects are charged with contravening the City of Cape Town's Nature Reserve By-Law 2020, as they entered the nature reserve illegally and were caught in the possession of protected plant species.

The 800 bulbs consisted of five plant species, *Drimia elata*, *Drimia capensis*, *Tulbaghia capensis*, *Dicrothamnus rhinocerotis* (commonly known *Renosterbos*), and *Helichrysum patulum*.

Most of these species are targeted and poached as they are believed to have medicinal use.

The illegal harvesting of geophytes and other indigenous plants is a real biodiversity threat and has led to plant species loss, habitat destruction, and has increased the vulnerability of the natural veld to invasion by emerging weeds.

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I would like to thank all the role players involved in this effort, namely the helpful visitor who reported the individuals, the local neighbourhood watch and our reserve staff and rangers. This was a joint effort which was well executed by all.

Eddie Andrews, mayoral committee member for spatial planning and environment

Earlier in July, Tygerberg Nature Reserve replanted 500 bulbs that were confiscated by CapeNature officials from poachers on one of the neighbouring wine farms.

Tygerberg Nature Reserve was identified as the best suitable location, being a protected area within close range of where the bulbs were removed.

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The City's conservation officials are always on the lookout and have increased patrols to keep an eye on the reserve. We would like to encourage our visitors and surrounding communities to continuously support our efforts in curbing these illegal acts, which threaten our biodiversity.

Eddie Andrews, mayoral committee member for spatial planning and environment

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The rescued geophytes will be planted in the previously ploughed areas, which are currently disturbed and in need of rehabilitation.

The Tygerberg Nature Reserve remnant is an important green lung for Cape Town, and a critical node in the BioNet, creating connectivity with surrounding open spaces and reserves, allowing genetic interchange, and providing for species with a relatively large home range.