



Two nabbed in Northern Cape for possession of protected plants

Two were apprehended for possession of bags of conophytum bilobum plants on the R382 road between Steinkopf and Port Nolloth. Picture: SAPS

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The Springbok SAPS Stock Theft and Endangered Species Unit (STESU) arrested two men who were driving a vehicle loaded with bags of [conophytum bilobum plants](#) on the R382 road between Steinkopf and Port Nolloth.

Police spokesperson, Lieutenant Colonel Sergio Kock, said that the two suspects, aged 37 and 40, were arrested at a vehicle checkpoint (VCP) for alleged [possession of endangered plants](#).

Kock said that on October 4, 2023, at about 12am, SAPS members conducted a VCP on the R382 road between Steinkopf and Port Nolloth.

"A white Isuzu Double Cab bakkie was stopped and searched, and police confiscated ten 50-kg bags containing 4485 conophytum bilobum plants," Kock said.

Kock further said the two male suspects were arrested and charged under the Northern Cape Nature Conservation Act 9/2009, sections 50 and 51, for alleged illegal possession of endangered plants. Police also confiscated the Isuzu bakkie as it was utilised in the commission of a crime.

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Kock also confirmed that the two suspects, aged 37 and 40, will appear in the Springbok Magistrates' Court soon.

The investigation continues.

Meanwhile, the Namakwa District Commissioner, Brigadier Schalk Andrews, commended the SAPS members for the vigilance and professional conduct that led to the outstanding arrests and confiscations.

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (Sanbi) Red List of South African Plants reported that conophytum pageae is the most widespread species from the genus conophytum.

It grows in southern Namibia and Namaqualand.

Sanbi maintained that the [conophytum genus](#) is in high demand in the international horticultural trade. One known population makes this species highly vulnerable to population loss and is threatened with over-collection.

Between 5,000 and 10,000 specimens have been removed from habitat since March 2019, with rates and volumes of harvesting increasing constantly.

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