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Authorities issue a stern warning to protea poachers on Table Mountain

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Flora poaching remains a concern. PHOTO: City of Cape Town

- Protea poaching on the slopes of Table Mountain remains a concern and local authorities are calling on the public to report perpetrators.
- There has been a slight increase in the number of protea poaching incidents in the Vredehoek area this year compared to previous years.
- The Table Mountain National Park has partnered with the Devil's Peak Vredehoek Watch Group, police and various safety structures to conduct patrols to curb flora poaching and other illegal activities.

Protea poaching on the slopes of Table Mountain remains a concern and local authorities are calling on the public to report perpetrators.

Table Mountain National Park (TMNP) has confirmed that there has been a slight increase in the number of protea poaching incidents in the Vredehoek area this year compared to previous years.

Babalwa Dlangamandla, public relations officer for TMNP, says for this year seven J534 fines, amounting to R2 500 each, (fines paid for less serious environmental offences in terms of Section 56 of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977) were issued for protea poaching.

Dlangamandla adds that three people were arrested for protea poaching and four warnings were issued as the suspect was found with gum leaves, not proteas.

“The suspects target the area as it has an easy escape route to town. Our rangers do vehicle patrols in the area and respond to all complaints from the residents when reported.

“The residents are a great help as they are our eyes and ears on the ground and we appreciate their assistance in reporting these incidents,” explains Dlangamandla.

Oliver Barnett, Devil's Peak Vredehoek Watch Group (DPV) member, says flora poaching is a continual challenge.

“It happens particularly on the lower slopes of Table Mountain. We are asking the residents to report suspicious activity. We have started neighbourhood WhatsApp groups to try and stop this.”

Capt Ezra October, Cape Town Central Police Station communications officer, says TMNP has partnered with the DPV Watch Group, police and various safety structures to conduct patrols to curb flora poaching and other illegal activities.

Francine Higham, Ward 77 councillor, says a meeting was held recently with various stakeholders to address the concerns regarding flora poaching.

“Following a detailed discussion about the legal framework applicable to this matter, we identified who the responsible enforcement entities are and how they can all work together to address the issue.

“Key also was sharing information about the collection, buying and selling of any flora whether indigenous or endangered. Essentially, no-one is allowed to collect or sell flora without a permit from Cape Nature. A permit is required even for the clearing of alien vegetation.”

Higham encouraged people not to buy plants from anyone if they are unable to provide evidence of a permit for the sale of flora.

If you suspect that the flora being sold is indigenous or endangered, then please also call law enforcement on the City's emergency number: 021 480 7700. To report any suspicious activity/flora poaching incidents call SANParks emergency number on 086 110 6417 or 021 422 1601 (during office hours).