

Brachylaena huillensis | Laeveldvaalbos

The leaves of this untidy small tree are clustered towards ends of branches, obovate to broadly elliptic in shape, glossy olive-green above and white-felted below, and have a bristle-like tip. The flowers are creamy white and small; the fruit small, with tufts of stiff hairs.

A single specimen (SWA3/169) from the Omavanda Mountains, just south of the Kunene River (1713AA), was brought in as the Tree Atlas was going to press. This is the first record for Namibia, and represents a disjunct range extension. There is another, unidentified *Brachylaena* species (cf *discolor*) from the same area.

HOT OFF THE PLANT PRESS

Trees of the Omavanda Plateau, Baynes Mountains

The Baynes and Otjihipa mountains cover a large, rugged area in north-western Namibia that is inaccessible by vehicle, making it virtually unknown territory from a botanical perspective. During the time of the TAP a total of at least twenty new records has been collected from a few brief trips into the area. Ernst van Jaarsveld and his colleagues have carried out three collecting trips over the past three years. Each trip has brought back new records, either for Namibia or for the Kaokoveld, as well as some unidentified trees and shrubs, and some interesting variants on known species. The senior author had the privilege of joining the latest trip in January 2005, just before this book went to the printers. As a result, some new species and records have been squeezed into the book, noticeable by the fact that their format is slightly different and they are not shown on the maps.

The Omavanda is a plateau of over 1800 m in the southern section of the Baynes Mountains (1713AA). It is a fascinating area and, judging by the plant growth there, it apparently has a much higher rainfall locally than the rainfall map for Namibia suggests. Being inaccessible by vehicle, it requires a long hike, and a steep climb up a scree slope and a cliff to get to the top. But it is well worth the effort. The diversity of woody vegetation is amazing with over 100 species recorded. Of these, six are new records for Namibia, and a further five represent range extensions for species in Namibia. There are an additional six species which have not been positively identified yet, which probably also represent new records for the area. Most of these newly recorded species probably come down from higher rainfall areas in Angola. For *Cussonia angolensis*, the Omavanda represents the southern-most extent of its distribution. For *Ficus bubu*, *Nuxia congesta*, *Brachylaena huillensis*, *Schrebera alata* and *Pleurostylia capensis*, the Omavanda represents a disjunct range extension to the west of their previously known distribution in the eastern parts of the sub-continent.

It is highly likely that even more new records will be found if the area were to be more comprehensively sampled. Many of the unusual forms of well-known species could also prove to be other species, either from Angola or new to science. This is definitely an area worthy of more attention.