

# OVERBERG LOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST

*Saving Critically Endangered renosterveld habitats from extinction*



## *Your Farm, Your Veld* *Fairfield*



**FEEDBACK FROM OUR SURVEYS ON YOUR FARM**

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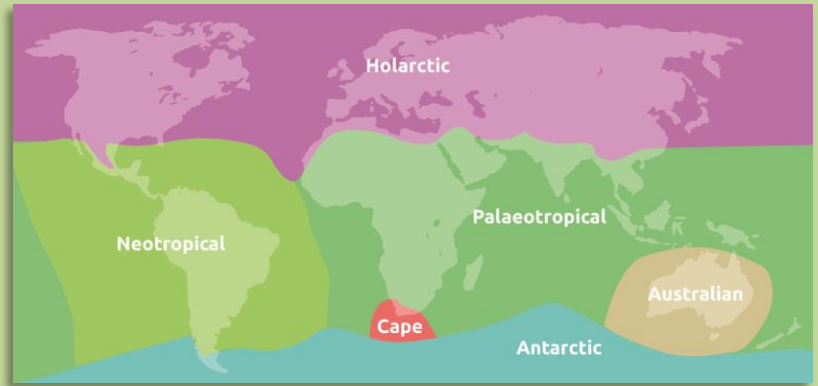
**WEBSITE:** [www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za](http://www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za)

# Background

Terms in **BOLD** are defined on second page

## Did you know that you own a piece of the richest plant Kingdom on Earth?

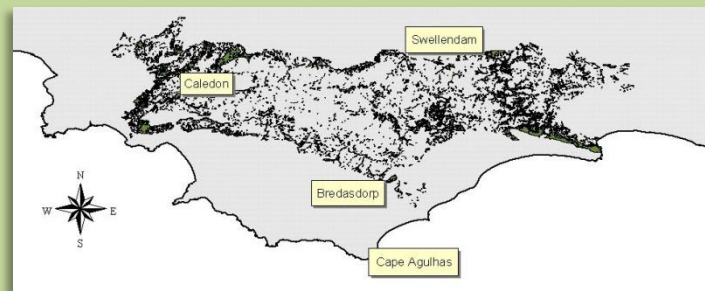
Of the six **Floristic Kingdoms** on Earth, the South African Kingdom is the smallest and is the only Kingdom held within a single country. It is also the only Kingdom to be subdivided into just a single **Floristic Region** - the Cape Floristic Region or CFR. Much of the CFR is covered by the fynbos biome which can be roughly divided into mountain and lowland vegetation types. Renosterveld falls under the lowland fynbos category but differs considerably from proper fynbos in that it contains almost none of the three defining fynbos plant families (Proteas, Restios, and Ericas). Renosterveld is instead defined by its diversity of bulbs, and abundance of grasses and asteraceous shrubs (which includes renosterbos). Renosterveld is home to more bulb species than anywhere else on Earth and harbors hundreds of Threatened plant species.



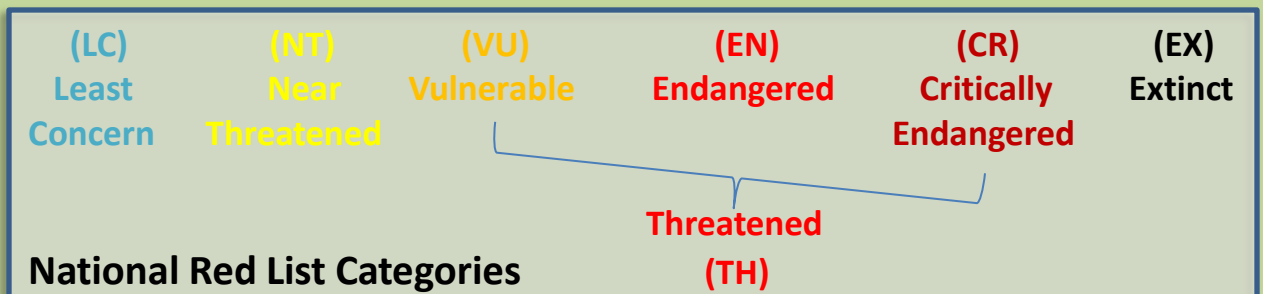
Floristic Kingdoms of the world

## Did you know that all renosterveld is **Critically Endangered**?

Renosterveld is one of the most Threatened vegetation types within the fynbos **biome**. Due to its fertile nature, the vast majority of lowland fynbos habitats have been ploughed leaving only 10-15% of these Critically Endangered habitats intact, almost all on privately-owned land. Renosterveld has been reduced to an alarming 4-6%; of this, even less is healthy and maintains its original plant diversity. Due to the high plant diversity, high levels of **endemism**, and Threatened existence, *renosterveld is of global conservation significance.*



Distribution of renosterveld historically and in present day



## Why is renosterveld conservation important?

In addition to providing **refugia** for many Threatened plant species, renosterveld remnants like yours provide habitat for a suite of wildlife (including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and birds). Most notably, this is critical habitat for Black Harrier (an endemic and Threatened bird of prey), Secretary Bird, Southern Black Korhaan, Cape Spurfowl, Greywing Francolin, Agulhas Clapper Lark, and many more. Also, these habitats are essential for maintaining healthy populations of some of the most important animals on Earth: the pollinators. Monkey beetles, long-tongued flies, bee-flies, bees, and other pollinators rely on these small patches of renosterveld to survive parts of the year when they're not pollinating commercial crops like canola.



### What are the threats to renosterveld?

With less than 6% of the original habitat remaining, renosterveld fragments lie in a matrix of wheat and pasture and are further threatened by:

- *Inappropriate fire regimes*
- *Overgrazing*
- *Illegal ploughing of virgin land*

The only way to move forward to a healthy and sustainable future is to work together. Lowland fynbos habitats **can** be used and grazed sustainably; the OLCT was established to help farmers shape their management practices in a way that maximizes both farm productivity and environmental sustainability.

### **Golden Rules for Renosterveld Management**

(We understand that these guidelines are not always easy to follow, but here are the golden rules for renosterveld management; something to work towards. Please visit our website for simple management guidelines to help your farm contribute to a sustainable future (also available in Afrikaans):

[www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za](http://www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za)

- Never graze immediately after burning. Allow a minimum of two years rest before grazing veld after a fire.
- Burn renosterveld during late Summer / early Autumn (Feb – April), roughly every 10 years (depending on rainfall).
- Avoid grazing during winter and spring months. This damages the palatable grasses and bulbs.
- Ideally, renosterveld should be fenced-off and managed as a separate camp.



**DEAR Valerian van der Byl,**

Thank you for allowing us the privilege of surveying your renosterveld / fynbos. We would like to express our appreciation by giving you feedback on what we found. Please feel free to contact us should you have any queries, or if you should like to discuss conservation opportunities on your farm.

Below is a summary of what we found, followed by some pictures taken on your farm.

<b>Farm name:--</b>		
Owner:	Valerian van der Byl	
Date(s) visited:	Most spring seasons since 2003	
Observed threats to the veld:	Lack of fire	
General comments on the veld:	The renosterveld on Fairfield is in exceptional condition, due to a long-standing family history of caring for these critical patches and watercourses.	
Helpful management recommendations:	It would be useful to do some more active fire management on the renosterveld remnants, as there are many threatened bulb species (many of which are only found on a handful of farms) which depend on fire for reproducing (fire stimulates flowering). A very important factor related to burning is to keep livestock off the veld for a minimum of two years and thereafter to only graze occasionally and never during winter and spring.	
<b>SPECIES of INTEREST (i.e. rare and threatened species) recorded on your farm</b>		
Species name	Red Data Status ( <a href="http://www.sanbi.redlist.org">www.sanbi.redlist.org</a> )	
Black Harrier – <i>Circus maurus</i>	<b>Endangered</b> (an estimated 2000 adults of this species remain... this species breeds on Fairfield)	
		
<i>Moraea elegans</i>	<b>Endangered</b>	
		

SPECIES of INTEREST (i.e. rare and threatened species) recorded on your farm

Species name

Red Data Status ([www.sanbi.redlist.org](http://www.sanbi.redlist.org))

*Drosanthemum striatum*



Endangered

*Trichodiadema cf pygaeum*



Vulnerable

*Babiana montana*



Endangered

*Aristea teretifolia*



Endangered

SPECIES of INTEREST (i.e. rare and threatened species) recorded on your farm

Species name

Red Data Status ([www.sanbi.redlist.org](http://www.sanbi.redlist.org))

*Gladiolus abbreviatus*

Vulnerable



*Aspalathus rosea*

Endangered



*Moraea melanops*

Endangered



*Moraea tricolor*

Endangered



# Species found on your Farm



# Species found on your Farm





# Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust



Working with Partners to Manage Farming Landscapes



## Who We Are

The Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust was established in 2012 for the sole purpose of conserving the threatened and neglected lowland habitats of the Overberg, with a focus on renosterveld. We are looking to develop long-term partnerships with farmers to find ways in which we can ensure the long-term preservation of living landscapes across the Overberg's wheat belt, together. Through sharing information about our findings in the veld, we hope to encourage you, the landowner, to become a true custodian of the little jewels of veld that you currently have under your care.

## Our Vision

To secure the long-term conservation and management of the remaining fragments of threatened natural vegetation in the lowlands of the Overberg through active partnerships with landowners, conservation authorities and NGO's thereby improving the overall quality of farms, sustainable livelihoods, and landscapes in the region.

### List of Terms

Biome -	A major regional group of distinctive plant and animal communities best adapted to the region's physical natural environment, latitude, elevation, and terrain.
Endemism -	The proportion of species in a given area that do not occur outside of that area.
Fire regime -	The pattern, frequency, and intensity of wildfires within an area – an integral part of the ecology of fire-dependent ecosystems like lowland fynbos.
Floristic Kingdom -	A geographic area with a relatively uniform composition of plant species; the largest natural units that flowering plants can be divided into.
Floristic Region-	A subdivision of the six Floristic Kingdoms. There are 37 Floristic Regions on Earth.
Refugia -	A location of an isolated or relict population of a once more widespread species which allows that species to survive through periods of unfavorable conditions.

