



WORLD
LAND
TRUST

Registered charity no 100291



A new chance for a critically endangered flora haven

How Buy an Acre supporters are helping ORCT to save some of the last 5% of South Africa's globally rare Renosterveld



Country

South Africa

Partner/Organisation

Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust (ORCT)

Biome

Mediterranean forest, woodlands and scrubs

Ecogeography

Renosterveld shrubland

Habitats

A three-hour drive east of Cape Town lies the last 5% of one of Earth's most threatened habitats. In South Africa's Overberg region, the Renosterveld ('rhinoceros open country' in Afrikaans, a reference to the Black Rhino that roamed here long ago) once rolled out in vast swathes of yellow- and magenta-flowered shrubland, a carpet fed by the Western Cape's clay soils and Mediterranean climate. Much was lost but the fragments still left harbour plant species in their hundreds, many of them threatened and unique, Endangered raptors, mammal roamers and more – a haven of life all Buy an Acre supporters can save land for, starting in 2023.

Project summary

The world has lost 95% of a critically endangered flora haven but with your support, we can start turning things around, saving the greatest tract of it left.

In South Africa's Western Cape Province, ORCT have spent years protecting 500 ha of globally rare Renosterveld habitat – the Haarwegskloof Nature Reserve – and from 2023 onwards, they can double the Reserve by acquiring a nearby, 500-ha property.

Your donations to our Buy an Acre programme will fund 150 ha of that total, but that's not all they will do. They will be the catalyst that will help ORCT leverage support from other organisations, retain but manage with conservation in mind. Once this land is secured, ORCT will follow up with restoration, management, fencing, research, education and eco-tourism actions it will fund through other sources.

This is a place so unique it falls within the smallest, and richest (relative to size) of Earth's six Floral Kingdoms. This is the home of over 500 plant species, as well as threatened birds and charismatic mammals – and this year, Buy an Acre supporters can gift it a better future.

Main threats to the area

The same soils that make Renosterveld's life possible are also its undoing. Drawn to the land's fertility, farming and cattle operations have so degraded this flora haven over the decades that today it lies split into 5,000-plus fragments, of which fewer than 50 cover more than 100 ha. And yet habitat loss has not stopped. With 479 ha gone between 2016 and 2020 alone, threats from ploughing to verge trimming, unmanaged grazing and soil trampling remain ever present. But Buy an Acre supporters can be part of a movement that puts a stop to this. In a landscape where plant species are sometimes only found in a single hillside, every hectare counts – and with your help and that of others, our partner will be saving and connecting hundreds.

Global prioritisation

Every fact about the Renosterveld underscores the global case for saving it, before it's too late. Part of a Key Biodiversity Area and an Important Bird Area (Overberg Wheatbelt), this landscape is described as "Critically Endangered" by ORCT conservationists. It sits within an area – the Greater Cape Floristic Region, a UNESCO World Heritage Site – so bountiful in flora it is classed as one of the world's six Floral Kingdoms, with an entity to rival (and a relative diversity that exceeds) that of the far bigger Boreal, Palaeotropical, Neotropical, Australian and Antarctic.

Black Harrier



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Key species¹

Critically Endangered plants

Hesperanthes kiaratayloriae,
Lachenalia barbarae, *Polhillia curtisiae*

Endangered plants

Argyrobolium pachyphyllum,
Aspalathus grobleri, *A.smithii*, *A. zeyheri*, *Drosanthemum lavisii*,
D. quadratum, *Elegia squamosa*,
Gibbaeum haartmanianum,
Gladiolus vandermerwei,
Leucadendron coriaceum,
Mesembryanthemum napierense,
Moraea debilis, *Otholobium pungens*, *O. curtisiae*, *Stoebe rugulosa*, *Xiphotheca guthriei*, *X. rosemainifolia*

Birds

Black Harrier (*Circus maurus*, EN); Southern Black Bustard (*Afrotis afra*, VU); Blue Crane (*Grus paradisea*, VU); Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*, VU); Denham's Bustard (*Neotis denhami*, NT); Martial Eagle (*Polemaetus bellicosus*, EN); Verreaux's Eagle (*Aquila verreauxii*, LC)

Mammals

Aardwolf (*Proteles cristata*, LC); Aardvark (*Orycteropus afer*, LC); Grey Rhebok (*Pelea capreolus*, LC); Common Duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*, LC); Bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*, LC); Bushpig (*Potamochoerus larvatus*, LC); Caracal (*Caracal caracal*, LC); Black-backed Jackal (*Canis mesomelas*, LC); Cape Hare (*Lepus capensis*, LC); Cape Rock Sengi (*Elephantulus edwardii*, LC)

¹The Red List of Threatened Species, maintained by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), includes categories of Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT), Least Concern (LC) and Data Deficient (DD).



- Orange: The purchases your donations will fund
- Purple: Conservation easement areas
- White: Plaatjieskraal and Luijperdskop farms
- Blue: Haarwegskloof Nature Reserve
- Green: Protected area



Biodiversity

UNESCO describes the Greater Cape Floristic Region as “one of the most special places for plants in the world” and through Buy an Acre, there is a section you can make a difference for – right now.

The hectares you fund will protect Earth's richest concentration of bulb species, from orchids to lilies and irises. More than 500 plant species have been documented here and some, like the stunning *Hesperanthes kiaratayloriae*, the *Lachenalia barbarae* cape cowslip, or the yellow-flowering *Polhillia curtisiae* legume, are Critically Endangered and only known from a handful of locations in this area.

And that's not all we can save in the last 5%. The Renosterveld acts as a crucial sanctuary for Black Harrier hawks – 10-20 pairs of this raptor, one of South Africa's most threatened, nest here – and harbours populations of various other eagle, vulture, crane and bustard species. The birds share the landscape with charismatic mammals from Caracal to Aardwolf and Aardvark.

Local communities

Almost every fragment of delicate Renosterveld shrubland left in this area falls within private land, and so engaging with this community is central to what ORCT do. Our partner does not only directly purchase land where it is sold by the area's large farms, as with the Plaatjieskraal property your Buy an Acre donations will help to secure. It also drives change by approaching farmers with Renosterveld on their land, and proposing a so-called conservation easement: a voluntary agreement where ORCT suggest a management plan – with interventions from livestock fencing to ecological surveys – that the owner considers before approval. Having signed a few of these agreements already, our partner will seek another to protect a further 100 ha near Plaatjieskraal.

Partner/Organisation

To secure the long-term conservation of the Renosterveld so that the landscape and its people can benefit through sustainable livelihoods – that is the mission of ORCT, the small South African NGO that will be protecting this flora haven with help from your Buy an Acre donations. A WLT partner since 2023, the charity launched in 2012 and has since advanced conservation through active partnerships with landowners, government authorities and other NGOs. Habitat protection aside, it runs programmes for Black Harrier conservation, awareness-raising among farmers, and research activities into landscape ecology, threatened species and other themes.



UN Sustainable Development Goals directly advanced by this project

13 CLIMATE ACTION



15 LIFE ON LAND



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



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