

Cycads Bark Harvest in Limpopo Province in South Africa: A Negative Practice Contributing to Biodiversity Loss

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Abstract : Cycads are the most threatened plant species in the world. In South Africa over 70% of cycads are threatened with extinction with 60% of them as a result of bark harvest of these highly endangered species for medicinal purposes. 3 cycads species in South Africa have gone extinct due to bark harvest for medicinal purpose. This practice keeps increasing biodiversity loss within the nation and this has generated concern for conservationists on different way to discover how people go about this practices and how it can be discouraged. Studies have revealed this practice to be common practice in provinces like Kwazulu natal, Eastern cape, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, but studies in the past have not really focused on cycads bark harvest in Limpopo province. In this study we use the indigenous knowledge to discover a particular location within the Soutpansberg Montane (a major biodiversity hotspot in Limpopo Province in South Africa) in Vhembe district in Limpopo province not yet conserved where we have a highly disturbed population of cycads. Several individuals of cycads species have been highly damaged due to bark harvest in this location. We are about proposing that such areas needs attention for conservation to prevent the loss of these species endemic to this particular location. Our study hereby reveals that cycads bark harvest which is a major threat to African cycads is also a common practice in Limpopo Province in South Africa. Rigorous conservation action is required to discourage this practice in order to prevent further biodiversity loss in this region.

Keywords : bark harvest, Cycads, conservation, extinction, Limpopo

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