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## 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



© Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust

## Country

South Africa

## Partner/ Organisation

Overberg Renosterveld  
Conservation Trust  
(ORCT)

## Biome

Mediterranean forest,  
woodlands and scrubs

## Ecoregion

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

In South Africa's Western Cape Province, 95% of a haven for Critically Endangered plants has been lost. But, with your support, we can save the largest tract of Eastern Rûens Shale Renosterveld habitat left in the world.

Since 2012, ORCT have managed 500 ha of globally rare Renosterveld habitat through the Haarwegskloof Nature Reserve. In 2023, our Buy an Acre programme helped to double the reserve with the purchase of the adjoining 500-ha Plaatjieskraal farm. Following this incredible success, our Buy an Acre programme will support ORCT in securing a further 300 ha of Renosterveld habitat within the Goeresoe farm. Surrounded by the commercial crop fields of the Overberg Wheatbelt, the proposed extension is covered with indigenous shrubs and is a critical breeding habitat for the Endangered Black Harrier, one of South Africa's rarest birds.

Your support will not only help secure this land and the more than 500 plant species that thrive within Renosterveld habitat. It will also help fund the full-time management, including biodiversity surveys and monitoring, and restoration of the new extension. This purchase, together with Haarwegskloof, Plaatjieskraal, and several other protected areas will create a large cluster of protected Renosterveld, totalling over 2,200 ha. In the future, ORCT hopes to form a biological corridor connecting this cluster to the De Hoop Nature Reserve, allowing wildlife, including the Cape Leopard, to move freely through the landscape.

## 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



© Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust

### Key species<sup>1</sup>

**Critically Endangered plants**  
*Hesperanthera kiaratayloriae*,  
*Lachenalia barbarae*, *Polhillia*  
*curtisiae*

### Endangered plants

*Argyrolobium 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*

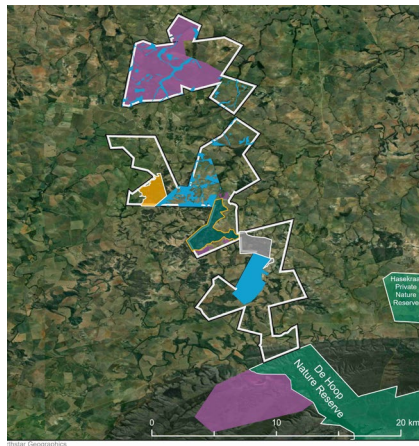
### Birds

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)

<sup>1</sup>The 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).



Proposed Goereesoo  
 Renosterveld subdivision  
 for WLT-support  
 WLT-supported  
 Renosterveld Reserve  
 Conservation easement  
 areas

Established  
 Renosterveld reserves  
 Luiperdskop  
 Renosterveld (under  
 negotiation)  
 Other protected areas  
 ORCT wider vision



## 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 *Hesperanthera 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.

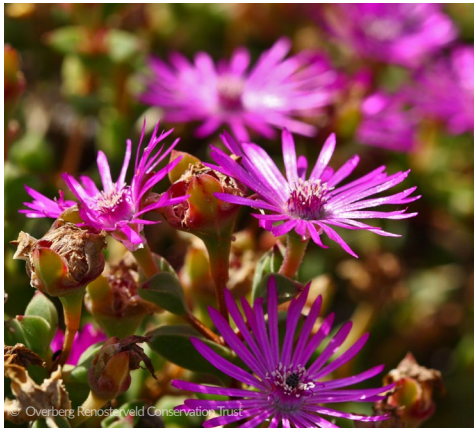
## Local communities

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 Goereesoo 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. Through the Haarwegskloof Reserve's education programme, ORCT raises awareness of the significance of Renosterveld to global plant biodiversity, local wildlife, and South African heritage, and the importance of conserving it.

## 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



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