



# The Succulent Karoo

## Succulent Karoo Biodiversity Hotspot

CEPF INVESTMENT PLANNED IN REGION  
\$8 million

### QUICK FACTS

The Succulent Karoo is one of only two arid regions recognized as biodiversity hotspots.

Only 2.5 percent of the hotspot is formally conserved.

Dwarf shrubland dominated by leaf succulents is found throughout the hotspot, a unique vegetation among Earth's deserts.

More than one-third of the floral species of the region are unique to the hotspot, such as the stone plant found in the Namaqualand region (see photo, overleaf)

Other notable plant species found in this hotspot include the botterboom, a stem succulent that has glossy leaves in winter and red flowers in summer, and the halfmens, a stem succulent that can grow up to four meters tall.

Stretching along the Atlantic coast of Africa, from southwestern South Africa into southern Namibia, the Succulent Karoo biodiversity hotspot covers 102,691 square kilometers of desert. It is one of the 34 richest and most threatened reservoirs of plant and animal life on Earth. These biodiversity hotspots cover only 2.3 percent of the planet yet contain 77 percent of all terrestrial species diversity.

The Succulent Karoo boasts the world's richest succulent flora, as well as high reptile and invertebrate diversity. Compared to other hotspots, the vegetation remains relatively intact. A sparse population (only 300,000 people) and the fact that more than 90 percent of the hotspot is used for natural grazing have eased the conversion pressures on this region. However, only 30,000 square kilometers of the original vegetation remains in a relatively pristine state.

### THREATS

The hotspot is vulnerable to several land-use pressures, particularly overgrazing on communal lands, ostrich farming in the southeast, mining, and the illegal collection of plants and animals for trade. Climate change is expected to have a serious impact on the region's biodiversity.

### CEPF STRATEGY

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund's strategy for this hotspot is based on the results of the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Planning (SKEP) process. Conservation International's Southern Africa Hotspots Programme facilitated this comprehensive and participative process as part of CEPF preparations to expand to the hotspot. The project team included special advisers and four



CEPF focuses on seven geographic priority areas in the Succulent Karoo Hotspot.

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coordinating organizations: the Botanical Society of South Africa, Eco-Africa Environmental Consultants, the Institute for Plant Conservation, and the National Botanical Institute.

SKEP, which means “to serve” or “to create” in Afrikaans (the predominant language in the hotspot), involved more than 60 scientific experts and more than 400 local stakeholders representing government, academia, nongovernmental organizations, private sector interests, and local communities. SKEP developed an overarching framework for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the hotspot.

The CEPF strategy focuses on catalyzing activities in under-funded priority areas to achieve biodiversity conservation by involving specific land users such as the agricultural sector, mining companies and communal authorities.

The investment strategy, called an ecosystem profile, will be funded for five years, beginning in 2003.

#### STRATEGIC FUNDING DIRECTIONS

The CEPF strategy for the Succulent Karoo ensures funding is directed where it is needed most and where it can do the most good.

CEPF investments in the Succulent Karoo Hotspot are guided by six strategic directions. Each project must be linked to one of these to be approved for funding:

1. expand protected area corridors through public-private-communal partnerships in the priority areas of Bushmanland Inselbergs, Central Namaqualand Coast, Namaqualand Uplands, Knersvlakte, Hantam-Roggeveld, Central Little Karoo, and Sperrgebiet
2. engage key industrial sectors in meeting conservation objectives identified by SKEP
3. retain and restore critical biodiversity in areas under greatest land-use pressure
4. mainstream conservation priorities into land-use planning and policy-making
5. increase awareness of the Succulent Karoo Hotspot
6. create the capacity to catalyze the SKEP program



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#### ABOUT US

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a global program that provides grants to nongovernmental organizations and other private sector partners to protect critical ecosystems.

CEPF is a joint program of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank.

CEPF acts as a catalyst to create strategic working alliances among diverse groups, combining unique capacities and eliminating duplication of efforts for a coordinated, comprehensive approach to conservation challenges.

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#### HOW TO LEARN MORE

For more information about CEPF and how to apply for grants, visit [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net). Further SKEP details are also available on the site.

