

The Sperrgebiet Namibia's gem

FUTURE POTENTIAL

Despite historic and recent impacts, large stretches of land remain virtually untouched, providing vast wilderness areas. Historic sites such as the mining "ghost" towns of Pomona and Bogenfels, seal and bird colonies along the coast and attractive mountain landscapes offer many superb opportunities for future tourism. Why conserve this global asset? Many known and as-yet-undiscovered riches of plant and animal diversity provide essential services to maintain healthy ecosystems for the well-being and sustainable development of humankind.

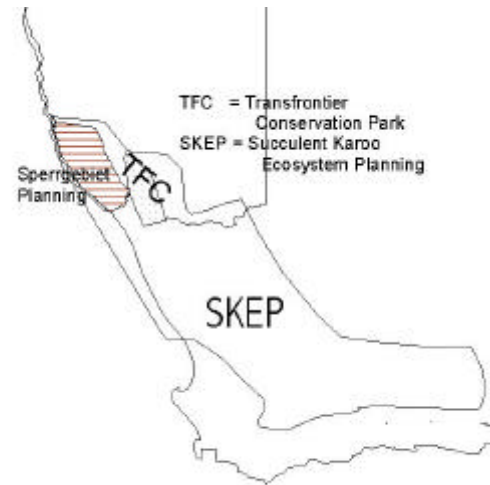


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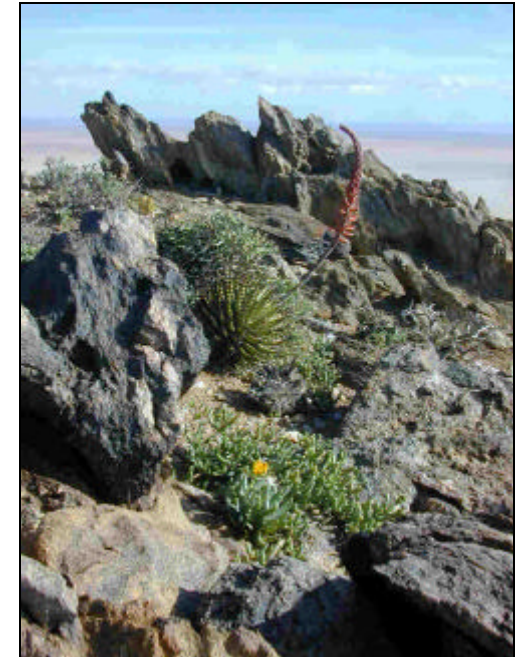
Linked conservation planning activities



SKEP The Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Planning aims to identify and prioritise conservation needs in the greater Succulent Karoo Biome of southern Africa. It is supported by the Namibian and South African Governments and facilitated by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund of Conservation International.

TFC The Transfrontier Conservation Park initiative facilitates the development of Namibian – South African joint management of the newly established Ais-Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park. This initiative is supported by the Namibian and South African Governments and facilitated by the Peace Park Foundation.

SPERRGEBIET PLANNING The Sperrgebiet Conservation Planning (this project) aims to provide an implementation plan for conservation and research activities in the Sperrgebiet (Diamond Area 1). This process is supported by the Namibian Government and facilitated by the Global Conservation Fund of Conservation International and other major financiers.



SPERRGEBIET
CONSERVATION
PLANNING

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Why focus on the Sperrgebiet?

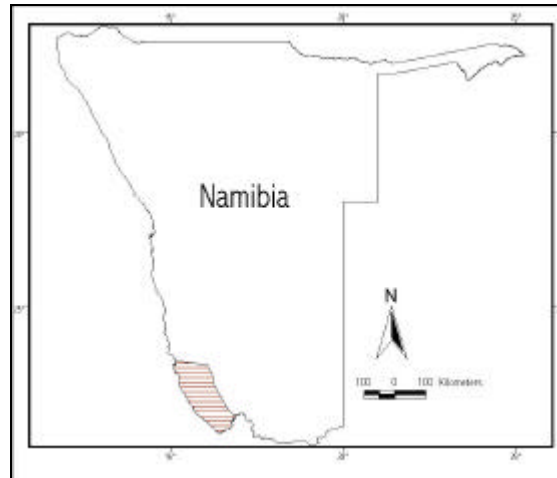
The "Sperrgebiet" or 'forbidden area' is the vast, scenically beautiful and fragile southwestern corner of Namibia which has been the source of most of the country's diamond revenues for nearly a century. It is the northern tip of the Succulent Karoo Biome, an area recognised as a globally outstanding "hotspot" of unique biodiversity. The Succulent Karoo is the world's only arid biodiversity hotspot.

Careful planning in this fragile desert environment is important since inappropriate development could easily result in irreparable damage and thus destroy all opportunities for future generations. The Namibian Government has recently assumed management control over a buffer zone outside the restricted area of active diamond mining. The draft Sperrgebiet Land Use Plan recommends the proclamation of the area as a multiple land use National Park. A detailed management plan for the sustainable development of this fragile desert area is now urgently needed.

What are the most precious assets?

The list is long:

- Wilderness character
- Intact ecosystems
- Diamonds
- Base metals
- Scenic desert landscapes
- Historic sites and monuments
- High diversity and endemism among plants and insects
- Threatened predators
- Coastal and seabird breeding colonies
- Biodiversity hotspots within the area
- Marine sanctuaries



BIODIVERSITY STATISTICS

Nearly 10 % of plants in this area only occur in the Sperrgebiet (i.e. are endemic). Even more are restricted to the Succulent Karoo Biome.

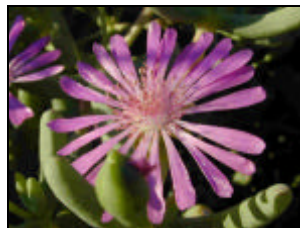
The area contains over 15 % of Namibia's plant diversity – on only 3 % of the country's land surface.

The Orange River Mouth supports thousands of wetland birds of some 60 different species.

More than half of Namibia's red-listed Brown hyena live in the Sperrgebiet.

The horticultural potential of plants in some parts of the area exceeds N\$ 1.5 million per km².

The Sperrgebiet is a sanctuary for birds of prey due to abundant rodent and reptile populations and absence of agricultural poisons.



How does this study contribute?

The current Sperrgebiet conservation planning process forms a continuation of the Sperrgebiet Land Use Plan.

The main activity will thus be a review and refinement of the Land Use Plan's proposed management zoning.



The final goal:
Implementation strategy for sustainable land use in the Sperrgebiet.

Mechanisms and tools:

- ☞ Assessment of stakeholder interests
- ☞ Identification of environmental planning domains
- ☞ Review and refinement of the Land Use Plan's proposed management zoning

The final output of this study will provide a workplan for implementation of biodiversity conservation in the area and mechanisms for continued funding of activities.



CURRENT AND PAST LAND USE

- No more than 5 % of the vast 26000 km² of land is actively mined at present.
- Yet current mining and prospecting licences cover more than 1/3 of the land area.
- The scars of veld degradation due to emergency grazing until the 1980s are still evident in the eastern part of the Sperrgebiet.

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