

Pearl-flowered legume a surprise new find in the Cape Snowy Mountains, South Africa

July 27 2011



This is a specimen of *Psoralea margaretiflora*. Credit: V.R. Clark

A pearl-flowered legume collected in 2005 by Ralph Clark & Nigel Barker (Rhodes University) in the Sneeuwberg, South Africa, was determined by taxonomists Charles Stirton & Muthama Muasya (University of Cape Town) to be a distinct new species. *Psoralea margaretiflora* is the latest endemic species from the Sneeuwberg Centre of Floristic Endemism. The discovery highlights the importance of the poorly explored Great Escarpment in South Africa. The study was published in the open access journal *PhytoKeys*.

The Sneeuwberg Centre of Floristic Endemism, Eastern Cape Province, and South Africa's newest Centre of Endemism, was recognised by Ralph Clark, Nigel Barker and Laco Mucina as recently as 2009 (Clark, V.R., Barker, N.P. & Mucina, L. 2009. The Sneeuwberg: A new centre of floristic endemism on the Great Escarpment, [South Africa](#). [South African Journal of Botany](#) 75: 196-238).

The recognition of the new Sneeuwberg Centre arose out of the doctoral studies of Ralph Clark. The Great Escarpment Biodiversity Research Programme co-ordinates new research in the region and is lead by Prof. Nigel Barker at the Department of Botany, Rhodes University. The research effort is a response to the increasingly obvious lack of baseline biodiversity studies on the species-rich Great Escarpment in southern Africa. So far comprehensive biodiversity research work has been undertaken on the Sneeuwberg, with further work currently being undertaken on the Nuweveldberge, Roggeveldberge and Great Winterberg-Amatolas, and in future further afield in collaboration with other biodiversity scientists.

The Pearl-flowered Psoralea was one of several new [species](#) discovered on the first two botanical expeditions to the Sneeuwberg by Rhodes University in the 2005-2006 summer season. It is one of 27 endemic species confined to these remote mountains. Many of these endemics have only recently been discovered, and some have very restricted distributions. Ralph Clark is collaborating with taxonomic experts from around the world to ensure that these new species are described and recognised in a reasonable time frame so that their conservation can be ensured.

Charles Stirton, an expert on the genus Psoralea, was one of several biodiversity scientists on a [biodiversity](#) blitz of the poorly-studied Kamdeboorge in January 2011 (organised by the Southern African Society for Systematic Biology as their Post-Congress Tour). He was

able to see *Psoralea margaretiflora* in the field and confirm its status as a new species. Material collected on this expedition was used during the expedition to draft the technical details needed for the species' description and publication.

More information: Stirton CH, Clark VR, Barker NP, Muasya AM (2011) *Psoralea margaretiflora* (Psoraleae, Fabaceae): A new species from the Sneeuwberg Centre of Floristic Endemism, Eastern Cape, South Africa. *PhytoKeys* 5: 31-38. [doi: 10.3897/phytokeys.5.1585](https://doi.org/10.3897/phytokeys.5.1585)

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