

1.2 AT5 Sundays Noorsveld

This succulent thicket occurs mainly in dry areas of the Fish and Sunday rivers valleys (Low & Rebelo 1996). The number of succulents and endemics is high, although species richness is low compared to other thicket types. It is normally found in flat lowlands where the vegetation is a dense, usually 1-2 m tall succulent thicket consisting of a mosaic of noors (*Euphorbia caerulescens*) and low karoo shrub vegetation (dominated by *Pentzia incana* and *Rhigozum obovatum*). The vegetation is also characterised by solitary trees and shrub groups with *Pappea capensis*, *Euclea undulata*, *Rhus longispina* and *Gymnosporia polyacantha*. Almost 15% statutorily conserved in AENP and some 3% in private game ranches (Mucina & Rutherford 2006). Vlok & Euston-Brown (2002) also classify this vegetation as Sundays Noorsveld.

STEP (Vlok & Euston-Brown 2002): Sundays Noorsveld

This unit is restricted to the arid zone along the bottom of the inland basin of the Sunday River. Here the soil does have a high clay content, as they are derived from shale, mudstone and sandstone of the Eccia Group. It is easily recognised by the local dominance of *Euphorbia coerulescens*. It differs from the Sundays Valley Thicket in having the tree component sparse, with mostly *Boscia oleoides*, *Euclea undulata*, *Pappea capensis* and *Rhus longispina* present. Woody shrubs such as *Gymnosporia polyacantha* and *Rhigozum obovatum* are abundant, with *Nymania capensis* occasionally present. Spekboom (*Portulacaria afra*) probably did occur sporadically in this Noorsveld, but never in dense stands as is typical of the local Spekboomveld. When in a pristine condition and especially after good summer rain, a grass component of *Cenchrus ciliaris*, *Digitaria argyrograpta*, *Fingerhuthia africana* and *Panicum maximum* is well developed, but this condition is now rare. Only short-lived grasses, e.g. *Aristida adscensionis*, *Aristida congesta*, *Cynodon dactylon* and *Enneapogon desvauxii*, are abundant in sites where the perennial grasses have been removed by overgrazing.