

BFA SEMINAR SERIES NO. 7

Plant Red Data Lists

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Held on Thursday 7th June 2001 at 130 Josiah Tongogara Avenue, Bulawayo.

Jonathan mentioned what Red Data Lists are and their use in setting conservation priorities. They are lists of taxa that have been evaluated, at whatever level, for conservation threat. The process helps to determine not only which are threatened taxa, but also the nature and cause of the threats. Red Data Lists can be carried out at various scales, both global and national. The process is scientific and rational, and ensures consistency.

He mentioned the various threat categories - Extinct, Extinct in Wild, Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable - and the two lesser categories, Lower Risk (near threatened and least concern). There are five criteria (A to E) used to determine what the threat is, eg population reduction, reduction in extent of occurrence.

Red Data Listing has recently been done for plants in Zimbabwe, and preliminary results and lessons from this exercise were given. **521** taxa were evaluated, with over **200** considered to be in a threat category. The number of endemic taxa is **205**, with **62** in Chimanimani, **29** on the Great Dyke and **16** in Nyanga. Areas with high numbers of threatened taxa are the forests of the Rusitu Valley, Chirinda Forest, forest patches in the Eastern Highlands and dry hills of the Limpopo Escarpment.

The main conclusions provisionally drawn are : (a) lack of data on distribution and population status for many taxa; (b) many taxa under threat in Zimbabwe are also threatened globally as they are species of restricted distribution; (c) that having such data in a consolidated and accessible electronic format opens up new uses; (d) that analysis of threats to date has often been fraught with emotion; (e) that much of our botanical knowledge on status is in a couple of "greyheads" and is over 20 years old.