

Preface

For in order to care deeply about something important it is first necessary to know about it. So let us resume old-fashioned expeditions at a quickened pace, solicit money for permanent field stations, and expand the support of young scientists—call them “naturalists” with pride—who by inclination and the impress of early experience commit themselves to deep knowledge of particular groups of organisms.

—E.O. Wilson, “On the future of conservation biology”

This book represents our current knowledge and understanding of the diversity of plants found on the Nyika Plateau, and draws on both published and unpublished information. The checklist was started in 1999, to aid plant collectors on a SABONET-funded regional plant collecting expedition to the Nyika Plateau in March–April 2000; subsequently, the list has been refined, based on the collections made during the expedition.

One of our main aims was to make the final publication as useful to as broad an audience as possible. It had to be accessible, not only to taxonomists and plant diversity specialists, but also to research staff working in the Nyika National Parks and tourists interested in the Nyika Plateau’s plant diversity. To this end, an illustration of every plant genus in the list has been included, making the task of identification easier. Where possible, diagnostic characters of specific genera have been indicated in the drawings. Photographs of landscapes and plants will assist readers in recognising some of the Nyika Plateau’s diverse landscapes, habitats, and flowering plants.

We believe that this publication will make a significant contribution towards documenting the Nyika Plateau’s diverse floral heritage. It is a continuation of work done by botanists and plant collectors, some more than a century ago. We recognise that this checklist may be incomplete, and trust that it will be expanded and improved upon as knowledge of the Nyika Plateau flora increases. Furthermore, it is our hope that this checklist will be used to assist conservation authorities and planners in safeguarding the Nyika Plateau’s flora and its associated life forms for both present and future generations.

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