



Chelinda River

The Nyika Plateau, compared to the other areas of the Afromontane archipelago, has only a modest level of endemism. The level of endemism is low (1.7%) compared to Mt. Mulanje (5.3%) and the Chimanimani Mountains (8.1%), as shown in Table 6. Although the level of endemism on the Simen Mountains also seems low (about 2%), it is expected to be much higher in the light of further collecting and taxonomic treatments (Puff & Sileshi Nekomissa 2001).

In our study, some 637 genera (with 1,782 taxa, excluding pteridophytes) were recorded on the Nyika Plateau. By comparison, Mt. Mulanje has a similar number of genera (625), but only 1,317 taxa, whereas the Simen Mountains support 319 genera and only 550 taxa. There are almost three taxa for every genus on the Nyika Plateau, compared to 2.09 for Mt. Mulanje and 1.7 for the Simens. This could be because the flora of the Nyika Plateau has been better studied (that is, more taxonomic work has been done) when compared to the other areas; this is particularly the case with the Simen Mountains. The much greater size of the Nyika Plateau compared to Mt. Mulanje (3,204 km² versus 640 km²) could also account for the higher number of taxa per genus occurring on the Nyika Plateau.

The Nyika Plateau covers the largest area when compared to the other four Afromontane areas listed in Table 6. The Nyika Plateau is relatively species-poor (0.59 taxa/km²) compared to Mt. Mulanje and the Chimanimani Mountains, both of which have a diversity some four times higher (*ca* 2.0 taxa/km²). In addition, although Mt. Mulanje and the Chimanimani Mountains are both less than half the size of the Nyika Plateau, each has a higher number of endemics than the Nyika Plateau.

One surprising finding during the compilation of this checklist was the low level of monocotyledon endemism—very few endemic monocotyledons were recorded. A single endemic grass species (*Setaria grandis*) was found. Although the Cyperaceae is well represented on the Nyika Plateau—it is the sixth largest family, represented by 72 taxa—no sedge endemics were recorded. It was expected that the grasslands and dambo areas would have a considerably higher number of monocotyledon endemics. Strugnell (2002) had a similar finding on Mt. Mulanje. She attributed the unexpectedly low number of monocot endemics on Mt. Mulanje to taxonomic studies that generally tend to focus on only certain high-profile taxa, such as orchids. Further taxonomic work on the monocot families Cyperaceae, Poaceae, Xyridaceae, and Eriocaulaceae may reveal more monocotyledon endemics.

April 1976. Jean Pawek alongside Haflinger, Chosi Hill.



March 2000. SABONET Nyika Expedition, Chosi Hill.



Rukuru Bridge

