

Taita Hills forests are an ecological island within the arid and semi-arid Tsavo plains and are the northern-most part of the Eastern Arc Mountains in southeast Kenya. They are highly fragmented forests embedded in a mosaic of human settlements and farms on the slopes and hilltops. Despite their intensive degradation, they exhibit a high degree of plant diversity and endemism, and therefore are regarded as a biodiversity hotspot.

However, floristic studies in these hills have been finite. Through repetitive floral expeditions, East African Herbarium (EA) records, GBIF and iDigbio databases, as well as literature and monograph records, we recorded 1594 taxa representing 159 families and 709 genera. Out of these, 75 are range-restricted, 59 are exotic, and 83 are of conservation concern as evaluated in the IUCN Redlist. A checklist of all recorded species is provided, with an additional description of their habit, habitat, elevation, location, conservation status and collector(s).

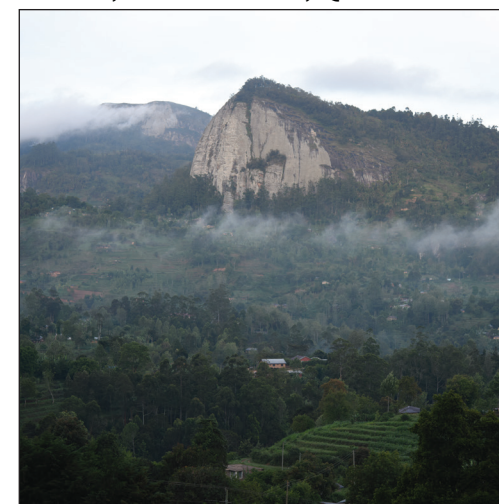
These findings validate Taita Hills as a floristically important area with a high diversity of plants as well as rare and endemic plant species. More community-based conservation programs coupled with appropriate policy measures will promote the sustainable utilization and conservation of this resource.



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AN ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF THE VASCULAR PLANTS OF TAITA HILLS, EASTERN ARC MOUNTAIN

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Mist covered Taita Hills ranges.

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