

## Miscellaneous ecological notes

VARIOUS AUTHORS

### NOTES ON THE USE OF THE TERM "RENOSTERVELD"

These notes have been compiled to clarify and standardize botanical reference to the vegetation referred to as Rhenosters bosch (Van der Stel in Waterhouse, 1932), Rhenosterveld (Marloth, 1908; Bews, 1916; Levyns, 1929, 1935 & 1972; Acocks, 1933, 1953 & 1975), Rhenoster-veld (Adamson, 1938), Renosterbosveld (Jordaan, 1946; Acocks, 1953 & 1975), Rhenosterbosveld (Acocks, 1953 & 1975) and Renosterveld (Smith, 1966; Taylor, 1978).

In 1685, Simon van der Stel found that the Olifants River Valley "... is bewassen met Rhenosters bosch alhier so genaemt om dat de selve daer gemeenlyck in legeren, ..." (Waterhouse, 1932). This passage has been translated by Waterhouse (1932) as: "The above-mentioned valley is overgrown with rhinoceros wood, so-called here because these animals are usually found in it." This is therefore the first reference to the vernacular name for "renosterveld". The unit "bosch" having been replaced by "veld" and the Afrikaans spelling "renoster" for the rhinoceros having been introduced.

Levyns (1972), in contrast, suggests that the grey, uneven appearance of a "rhenosterveld" community, when viewed from a distance, resembles the wrinkled hide of the rhinoceros.

Although the vernacular name "renosterbos", for the plant, *Elytropappus rhinocerotis*, is an undisputed fact, Smith (1966) has wrongly referred to the above passage in Van der Stel's journal as the first use of this name for the plant, while Van der Stel was, in fact referring to the vegetation unit. Smith, quoting Waterhouse (1932), has wrongly spelt "Rhenosters bosch" as "Rinocerbosch" (sic).

The recent tendency to refer to this vegetation as "rhenosterbosveld" or "renosterbosveld" might result from *E. rhinocerotis* often becoming dominant following disturbance of the vegetation. The absence of any rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*), through their extinction in this habitat, may be a contributing factor to emphasis being placed on the renosterbos plant instead of on the rhinoceros itself. Acocks (1975), however, uses the terms "rhenosterveld" and "rhenosterbosveld" indiscriminately.

The term "renosterbosveld" could be misconstrued as "renoster-bosveld". Bushveld or "boschveld", the parklands of the northern Transvaal (Carpenter, 1938), are absent in the Cape Province.

It is proposed here that the original and most widely used concept be retained using the correct Afrikaans spelling "renosterveld".

I thank Mr M. J. Wells and Dr D. Edwards for providing the stimulus for this note and Mr H. C. Taylor and Mrs M. F. Rand for their valued comments.

### REFERENCES

- ACOCKS, J. P. H., 1933. *Vegetation of a portion of the Cape Flats and a list of the plants so far found there*. Unpubl. M.Sc. thesis, Univ. Cape Town.
- ACOCKS, J. P. H., 1953. Veld types of South Africa. *Mem. bot. Surv. S. Afr.* 28: 1-192.
- ACOCKS, J. P. H., 1975. Veld types of South Africa. *Mem. bot. Surv. S. Afr.* 40: 1-128.
- ADAMSON, R. S., 1938. *The vegetation of South Africa*. London: British Empire Vegetation Committee.
- BEWS, J. W., 1916. An account of the chief types of vegetation in South Africa with notes on plant succession. *J. Ecol.* 4: 129-159.
- CARPENTER, J. R., 1938. *An ecological glossary*. New York: Hafner.
- JORDAAN, P. G., 1946. Plantegroei van die distrikte Bredasdorp en Caledon. *Tydskr. Wetensk. en Kuns*, nuwe reeks 6: 47-58.
- LEVYNS, M. R., 1929. The problem of the rhenoster bush. *S. Afr. J. Sci.* 26: 166-169.
- LEVYNS, M. R., 1935. A revision of *Elytropappus* Cass. *Jl S. Afr. Bot.* 1: 161-170.
- LEVYNS, M. R., 1972. The rhenosterbush. *Veld & Flora* 2 (1): 7-9.
- MARLOTH, R., 1908. *Das Kapland*. Jena: Gustav Fischer Verlag.
- SMITH, C. A., 1966. Common names of South African plants. *Mem. bot. Surv. S. Afr.* 35: 1-642.
- TAYLOR, H. C., 1978. Capensis. In M. J. A. Werger, *The biogeography and ecology of southern Africa*. The Hague: Junk.
- WATERHOUSE, G., 1932. *Simon van der Stel's journal of his expedition to Namaqualand 1685-6*. Dublin: Longmans, Green.

C. BOUCHER