



# OVERBERG RENOSTERVELD TRUST

*Management Strategy*  
2026-2031



# STRATEGIC CONTEXT

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Lowland Renosterveld vegetation types are among the most threatened habitats on Earth. Forming part of the Cape Floristic Region – the smallest floral kingdom in the world – they only occur on the fertile lowlands of South Africa’s Western Cape. Renosterveld soils are highly suitable for agriculture, and over centuries this landscape has been extensively transformed.

Today, less than 5% of renosterveld remains. What survives exists as small, isolated fragments scattered across a working agricultural landscape – islands of biodiversity in a sea of monoculture.

Despite these significant losses, the extant fragments support an extraordinary diversity of plant species, many found nowhere else on Earth. It also provides critical habitat for threatened wildlife, including the Endangered Black Harrier.

Almost all remaining renosterveld occurs on privately owned land, making conservation both challenging and collaborative. The future of this ecosystem depends on partnerships with landowners, science-based management and long-term conservation solutions that work within a productive agricultural landscape and build ecological and climate resilience.

These remaining fragments now sit on a knife edge. Without urgent conservation action, one of the world’s most unique ecosystems could be lost within our lifetime.

# ABOUT THE OVERBERG RENOSTERVELD TRUST

Established in 2012, the Overberg Renosterveld Trust (ORT) works to secure and restore the last remaining renosterveld fragments in the Overberg region.

The Trust partners with landowners to formalise conservation agreements, improve land management practices and protect critical habitats and ecological corridors across a working agricultural landscape.

Through conservation easements, land acquisition and restoration, the ORT focuses on long-term, landscape-scale conservation that benefits biodiversity, strengthens ecological resilience and supports sustainable livelihoods.

## OUR TRACK RECORD

The Overberg Renosterveld Trust is the only organisation dedicated solely to protecting renosterveld and renosterveld-associated species in the Overberg. We do this through implementing science-based, landscape-level strategies and by building strong partnerships, particularly with the farmers that own the last renosterveld remnants.

Today the ORT is custodian and co-owner of the largest remaining connected stretch of lowland renosterveld on Earth (1 300 ha). This growing conservation corridor spans multiple farms and provides a critical refuge for a suite of endemic and threatened species.

Among these is the Endangered Black Harrier – southern Africa's most threatened endemic bird of prey. With fewer than 1 300 individuals remaining, this species relies heavily on renosterveld for breeding and foraging. Land secured by the ORT currently supports around 40 pairs of Black Harriers, the equivalent of about 8% of the global breeding population.

The ORT has also pioneered innovative approaches to conservation on privately owned agricultural land, including the use of conservation easements (servitudes) – a flexible, collaborative tool that enables landowners to voluntarily protect biodiversity while continuing to farm productively. These easements also qualify as candidate Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) contributing to South Africa's Global Biodiversity Framework commitments under Target 3 to conserve 30% of biologically meaningful land- and seascapes by 2030.



### VISION

Renosterveld landscapes are sustainably managed to integrate biodiversity, ecosystem function and livelihoods.

### MISSION

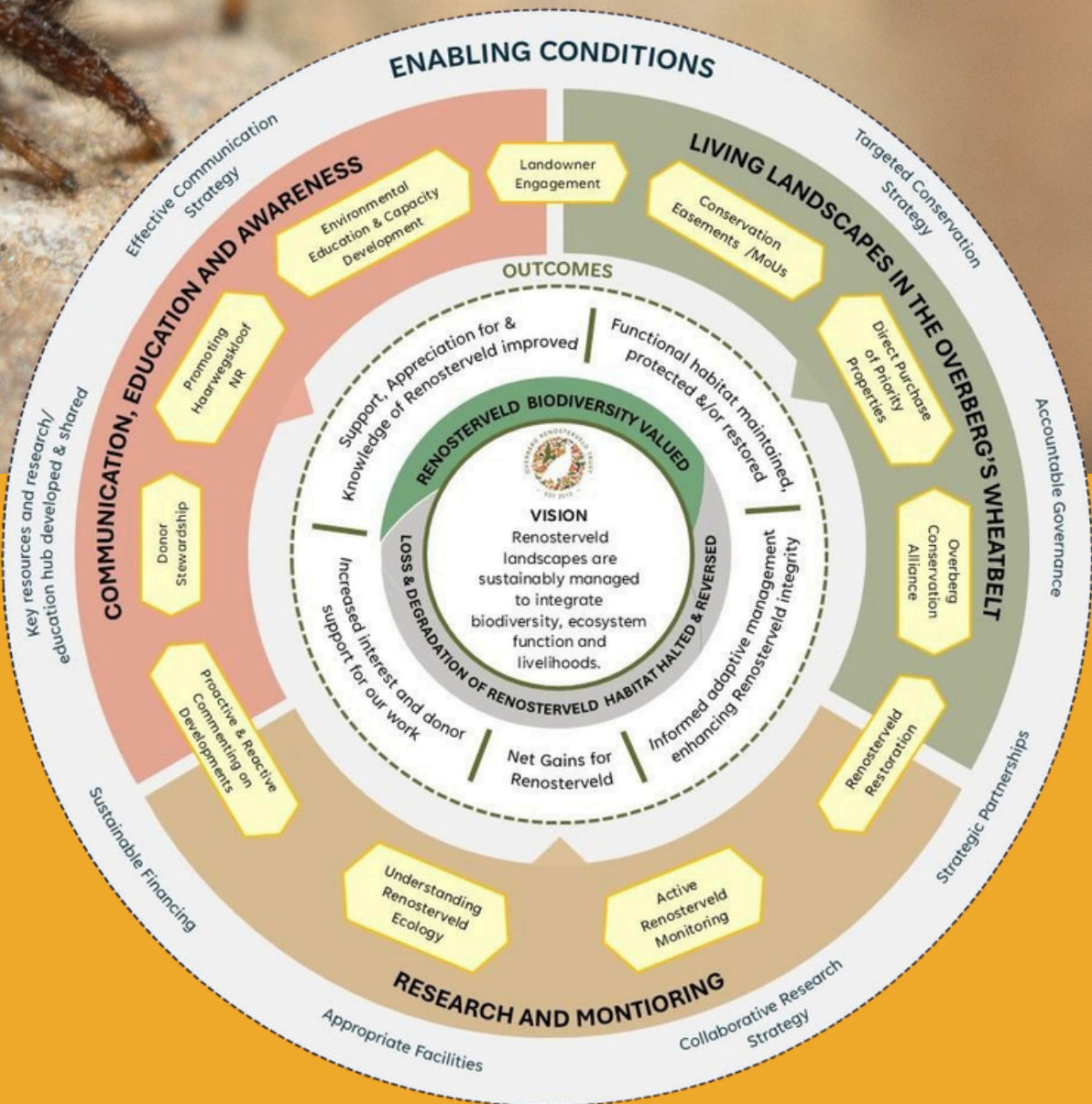
To collaborate and foster partnerships with landowners and other stakeholders to implement sustainable land management practices in the renosterveld, enhancing connectivity and landscape resilience.

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

The Overberg Renosterveld Trust operates according to a concise Theory of Change that guides our work, strategies and investments. This helps ensure our actions are focused, measurable and aimed at long-term conservation success.

We work closely with landowners, researchers and partners to protect and restore renosterveld, improve habitat connections and support sustainable land use. Our work is tracked and measured so we can show real results and stay accountable.

This also gives donors and partners a clear way to support conservation and see the impact of their contributions over time.



## 1) LIVING LANDSCAPES

Securing and restoring renosterveld across priority landscapes by:

- Halting further habitat loss
- Securing key remnants and ecological corridors
- Restoring degraded habitats
- Supporting landowners with best-practice management

## 2) ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & AWARENESS

Inspiring long-term conservation through:

- Building partnerships with landowners
- Delivering immersive learning through the Veld School hosted at Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve
- Raising public awareness and support for renosterveld conservation
- Building a comprehensive biodiversity database that guides priorities

## 3) COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

Strengthening science-based conservation through:

- Coordinating and where possible, supporting priority research
- Collaborating with universities and specialists to address priority research as per the ORT's research strategy
- Advancing species-specific research of keystone or flagship species (e.g. Black Harrier) as well as improving our understanding of key ecological processes and how these relate to the management of remnant renosterveld

## 4) HAARWEGSKLOOF VISITOR CENTRE & GUESTHOUSE

Developing Haarwegskloof as a flagship conservation site by:

- Maintaining infrastructure (accommodation and shared research / learning spaces) and securing our investments in the property
- Growing visitor and learning opportunities in a way that supports Haarwegskloof with covering its own running costs
- Building a comprehensive renosterveld herbarium

## 5) OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT, FINANCING, GOVERNANCE & SUSTAINABILITY

Ensuring long-term impact through:

- Strengthening financial sustainability and endowment growth
- Maintaining strong partnerships
- Upholding governance, accountability and operational excellence

# OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2012 - 2026

Since our establishment in 2012, the Overberg Renosterveld Trust has grown into the leader on renosterveld conservation, delivering measurable impact across one of the most threatened ecosystems on Earth.

## Securing renosterveld landscapes

- Launch of the conservation easement programme in 2016, now protecting priority landscapes across the Overberg
- Over 6 200 hectares secured for conservation, representing approximately 20% of all remaining renosterveld
- Establishment of Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve – the largest connected stretch of renosterveld left on Earth, declared a Nature Reserve in 2025
- Expansion of the Haarwegskloof reserve through land acquisition, including Plaatjieskraal and Goeresoe, with further expansion planned for 2026

## Advancing science and conservation knowledge

- Discovery of multiple species new to science, including *Polhilia curtisiae*, *Otholobium curtisiae*, *Aspalathus microlithica*, *Hesperantha kiaratayloriae*, *Ficinia overbergensis* and others
- Collaboration with universities and researchers on renosterveld ecology, with an emphasis on relating this back to best management practices
- Black Harrier research programme, including GPS-tagging of 35 individuals
- Leadership of the Black Harrier Task Force and supporting the development of a species conservation action plan

## Creating a conservation hub at Haarwegskloof

- Establishment of the Haarwegskloof Research & Visitor Centre in 2014
- Development of a renosterveld herbarium representing over 1 000 species
- Hosting of researchers, students, conservation practitioners and visitors

## Raising awareness of renosterveld

- Annual Veld School programme, bringing hundreds of rural school learners into nature
- Publication of the Renosterveld Field Guide, later expanded into an app featuring over 1 700 species
- Using our Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve as a training ground for young field guides via FGASA-training courses, building skills and knowledge in the tourism sector to align nature-based tourism products within renosterveld landscapes

## Recognition and partnerships

- WWF South Africa Living Planet Award (2025) in recognition of conservation impact
- CEO Odette Curtis-Scott was awarded the Botanical Society of South Africa Flora Conservation Medal, followed by the Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE) Fynbos Conservation Award – both in 2014
- Two CapeNature partnership awards in 2023: Most valuable partner for our renosterveld conservation, and a special award for the Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve for its contribution to conservation
- Partnerships with World Land Trust, WWF South Africa, BirdLife South Africa, the Ford Wildlife Foundation and many other conservation organisations operating in South Africa and around the world
- Strong partnerships with landowners, peer NGOs, researchers and conservation partners across the Overberg



# OUR ROADMAP

2026 - 2031

Building on over a decade of conservation impact, the Overberg Renosterveld Trust's next five years will focus on consolidating gains, expanding protected landscapes and growing long-term partnerships.

## Strengthening protected landscapes

- Consolidate and actively manage hectares secured through conservation easements
- Strengthen partnerships with landowners and support best-practice veld management
- Secure additional hectares in priority clusters and ecological corridors guided by the ORT conservation strategy
- Play a proactive role in the Overberg Conservation Alliance: an NPC bringing together the ORT, Nuwejaars River Nature Reserve, Grootbos Foundation, the Fynbos Trust and Re:wild to scale up landscape conservation in the Overberg

## Expanding Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve

- Consolidate purchased properties centred around Haarwegskloof into a single, expanded reserve
- Implement ecological management including invasive alien plant clearing, fire and grazing management
- Expand research, learning and visitor opportunities
- Open additional areas of the reserve for low-impact hiking and nature experiences

## Growing conservation knowledge & species protection

- Roll out the Black Harrier Task Force's Conservation Action Plan, following the species' selection as Birdlife South Africa's Bird of the Year (2026)
- Expand and support more collaborative research to guide conservation priorities and management practices
- Strengthen biodiversity monitoring across priority landscapes

## Inspiring the next generation

- Expand the Haarwegskloof Veld School to reach more rural school learners
- Grow environmental education programmes and partnerships in a way that supports integrating renosterveld conservation into Model C school curricula
- Publish a children's book highlighting the fragility of renosterveld networks, centred around the Black Harrier

## Building long-term sustainability

- Grow strategic partnerships with landowners, funders and collaborators
- Strengthen awareness and engagement around renosterveld conservation
- Expand opportunities for supporters to experience renosterveld landscapes firsthand
- Grow the ORT Endowment Fund (target: R60–80 million) to secure long-term financial sustainability, retain key staff to implement core functions and projects, and ensure lasting, tangible impacts



# OUR MOST IMPORTANT ALLIES

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The Overberg Renosterveld Trust works closely with donors, landowners, researchers and conservation partners to deliver meaningful, measurable conservation outcomes across one of the world's most threatened ecosystems.

Our work is built on long-term relationships, with donors who support our vision and partners who help us achieve conservation impact at a landscape scale. Together we are protecting some of the last remaining renosterveld landscapes on Earth, while enabling opportunities for science, education and sustainable land management.

## **Join us in securing renosterveld's future**

The next five years represent a critical window for renosterveld conservation. With less than 5% remaining, the decisions we make today will shape the future of this globally significant ecosystem.

We invite you to partner with us as we expand protected landscapes, strengthen long-term stewardship and build a sustainable future for renosterveld.

**Together we can protect this incredible ecosystem – before it's too late.**



# DONORS & PARTNERS

## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



And other incredible philanthropic donors who wish to remain anonymous

## Overberg Conservation Alliance partners



## Other key partners



## Partners supporting Black Harrier research



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