



# THE MPANGA GORGE CYCAD

Globally, there are approximately 334 cycads species in ten genera. Currently 64% of the global cycad species are listed as threatened (IUCN 2010)

The origin of cycads dates back to the carboniferous period 300m year ago. They are important as they represent a link in evolution from ferns to flowering plants. There are 69 cycad species are recognized in Africa, where the largest genus *Encephalartos* is endemic.

Uganda is home to five (5) cycad species (Zamiaceae) and Mpanga falls is the only area with the largest population (estimated at about 8000 individuals) of endemic and critically endangered species of *E. ncephalartos whitelockii*.

## Threat to Mpanga gorge cycads

The Mpanga cycad (*E. Whitelockii*) are clearly threatened with extinction. The most important threats:

1. Habitat loss/modification
  2. Fire and
  3. Illegal trade.
- Separation between males and females may increase the risk of decline. A picture of decline: Matched photographs of cycad population (right).

## HOW DO CYCADS LOOK LIKE?

- Rosette Leaves ever green, grow directly from trunk with new leaves in the center and emergent leaves may be covered with prickles
- Trunks cylindrical with no branches, woody in appearance may be buried (subterranean) making leaves appear like emerging from the ground or emerge from the ground and be trunk like
- They are seed plants , dioecious with either plant being male (smaller cones) or female (larger cones) thus proximity is important for successful reproduction to take place. Pollination is by insects
- They differ from palms in that cycads bear large cones



April 2016



February 2017

Credit: Peeters

## DEALING ILLEGALLY IN CYCAD IS A SERIOUS OFFENCE

*Encephalartos* cycad species trade (ornamental plants) is regulated (CITES: Appendix 1 ).

- When sentencing offenders , due thought should be given to the value of cycad species.
- Consideration should be give to the fact that poaching cycads is an offence
- Poachers, buyers and collectors of poached cycads are depriving current and future generations of seeing these ancient plants

## WHAT DO THE LAWS SAY

Kamwenge district bylaws protecting cycads are in place and any person or entity requires a permit issued by conservation authority to buy cycads. The bylaws further prohibit the following activities:

- Stealing, Burning, cutting of cycads

There is need to wider coverage of the bylaws to include:

- Translocation, exercising physical control, donate, dispose,

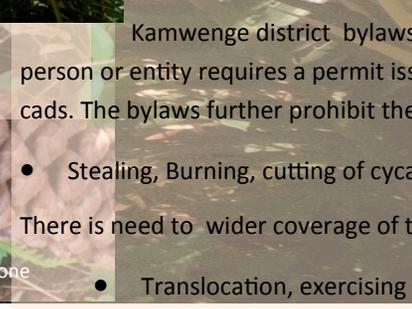
destroy and establishment of Plant Protection Reserve.



Trunk



Female cone



Male cone