

Project Update: October 2017

This survey is guided by the following major uncertainties:

1. Species of *Aeranthus Africana* were historically recorded from more than one subpopulation.
2. This orchid has not been properly studied and little is known about its ecology, its life cycle, species of phorophytes with which it is associated, the real status of its population/s and the actual territorial area occupied by the taxon.
3. Lack of knowledge on the best recovery technique for the species
4. The nature of illegal networks of poaching of this orchid and other rare plant species from this region

In light of the above and many other uncertainties, the research team has been another phase of field work. As shown in figures below the researchers are touring the Vumba botanical garden green house with a Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority warden. The idea was to see if they had the *Aeranthus africana* in their greenhouse and generally inspect the state of their greenhouse and hear more on the conservation status of this and like plants in the province.





Researcher viewing the Vumba Botanical Garden Nursery



From inspecting the greenhouse, we embarked on a journey, where the parks official was explaining to us the places where we could find the rescued plant in the garden.



Mapping survey routes with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority Warden

Random photos of Inspections of phorophytes of interest during a field survey



Phase findings:

- The first phase of ground based survey did not yield positive results in terms of finding wild populations in some of the areas visited.
- Key informant interviews yielded that *Aeranthus africana* were historically recorded from more than one subpopulation and there is still uncertainty if all the subpopulations are still existent and if they are genetically distinct.

Trees and shrubs where the *Aeranthus africana* species grow as epiphyte and the actual territorial area occupied by the taxon are generally still unknown with.



Conclusion

The research team continues the study, this time widening the scope of the survey to find out the existence of wild populations and about its ecology, its life cycle, species of phorophytes with which it is associated, the real status of its population/s and the actual territorial area occupied by the taxon. From this stage we will go on to evaluate aspects related to pollination and seed dispersal, integrating studies of reproductive phenology, floral biology, reproductive systems as well as pollinator and seed disperser effectiveness.