

Photo Feature



Dypsis pumila

Marojejy, a 2132-m tall mountain in north-eastern Madagascar, supports the largest remaining tract of montane scrub vegetation on the island. The scrub is composed of a diversity of low shrubs, bamboos, grasses, terrestrial herbs and mosses, but scattered throughout is a beautiful miniature palm, *Dypsis pumila*, which is known from no other site in Madagascar. It occurs in large numbers throughout the scrub as far as the summit itself. The stems of the palm rarely exceed 1 m and are often buried in the deep shrubbery so that only the upper crown is visible. *Dypsis pumila* is rated as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List on account of its extremely narrow distribution. The entire population of the species falls within the Marojejy National Park and is therefore protected. However, the montane scrub vegetation is exceedingly vulnerable to damage; a wildfire, for example, would be catastrophic for the scrub and its endemic species.

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