
Tara Gedam

The forest of Tara Gedam is extensive covering both sides of a mountain ridge. The species composition and forest structure is highly variable probably as a result of many large trees. For instance, apart from half a dozen specimen near the church, all *Juniperus procera* have been removed. Removal of forest undergrowth and top soil is the main current threat.



Name: **Tara Gedam**

Status: monastery
Site Code: GD03
Floristic Region: GD
Region: 3 (South Gondar)
Altitude: 2320 m
Latitude: 12° 08' N
Longitude: 37° 44' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: relict

Size: > 50 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Bersama abyssinica*, *Celtis africana*, *Olea europaea ssp cuspidata*
shrub/ground: *Dovyalis abyssinica*,
Myrsine africana, *Teclea nobilis*

No of woody species: 43

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 3

Threats: removal of forest soil

Photograph: The large Tara Gedam forest runs on either side of the summital ridge. To the left on the hill there is another separate church woodland.

Tara Gedam lies along one of the main ridges of a small and narrow mountain range laying to the West of Lake Tana. This monastery consists of a substantial area of natural forest on the mainly steep slopes.

The forest is spatially very variable both in structure and species composition (both canopy and shrub layer species). This is probably due to a combination of microtopography and past human uses and disturbances.

In the surrounding countryside there is a substantial amount of scrub and in the close vicinity there are a number of plantations. There are also a couple of small churchyards with relatively species rich woodlands (see site account for Zelalem Silasse). Only to the south of Tara Gedam is population pressure of any importance. On the other three other cardinal points the forest is buffered from human settlements by unproductive land.

History

This monastery has long been established. Today the number of monks resident monks is low. The outer structure of one of the churches has recently been demolished to be rebuilt using locally harvested timber.

Conservation status

The size of this forest makes it of great conservation importance. Also, although heavily

disturbed by human activities (especially logging), and probably because of this disturbance as well as catena effect, the forest is composed of contrasting habitat types often harbouring markedly different dominant species. Because the biodiversity assessment was carried out in only one area of forest the total number of species recorded is less than that observed in other surveys.



Following the cutting of all forest undergrowth the top soil is scraped and removed to be sold to government tree nurseries. The best parts of the forest are being targeted for soil removal.



The outer part of the church has been removed to be rebuilt. Construction material is obtained from local timber. In the foreground one of the few remaining large *Juniperus procera* has been cut to provide the necessary timber.

Threats

Harvesting of top soil following the removal of all under-storey and ground vegetation is the main threat to confronting the forest environment. This activity is carried out on steep slopes and in the most pristine parts of forest. This is a source of revenue and the top soil is sold to the Department of Agriculture to be used in tree nurseries.

Timber harvesting is a problem for some species. Some of the few remaining mature *Juniperus procera* were cut down in 2002 to provide the necessary timber to rebuild one of the churches. Although situated next to a main road the forest, at present, suffers from little outside illegal wood harvesting.

Management

Besides the termination of top soil removal little management is needed with any urgency. Favouring the regeneration of some tree species, such as mature *Juniperus procera*, using adequate silvicultural technique may be worth considering in the medium term.