

---

# Robit Debresina Bata

Located on a vast plain to the East of Lake Tana Robit Debresina Bata is one of the few remaining areas of native forest left in this region. The cultivation of coffee as a cash crop under the native tree canopy is the main threat to this forest, as all shrub layer as well as tree regeneration is removed in the process.



Name: **Robit Debresina Bata**

Status: church  
Site Code: GJ01  
Floristic Region: GJ  
Region: 3 (South Gondar)  
Altitude: 1865 m  
Latitude: 11° 41' N  
Longitude: 37° 27' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: relict

Size: 3 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Diospyros abyssinica*, *Milletia ferruginea*, *Mimusops kummel*  
shrub: *Clausena anisata*, *Coffea arabica*

No of woody species: 40

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 4

Threats: agriculture (coffee)

Photograph: This church forest is unusually situated on an area of flat ground to the East of Lake Tana. The emergent tree (right of centre) is the last mature *Podocarpus falcatus* left at the site.

To the East of Lake Tana there is a large plain dominated by agriculture. Robit Debresina Bata is located on this featureless landscape next to the Gondar – Bahir Dar road. The forest is roughly circular and located on a piece of land that is nearly totally flat. It has no natural boundaries or man-made feature to delimit its perimeter.

The forest contains a number of large trees including an emergent *Podocarpus falcatus* that is clearly visible from a distance. Much of the undergrowth has been removed in many places to make space for coffee plantations. Although the forest edge is not delimited, trees appear to be very slowly spreading into overgrazed grassland. The species composition is markedly different at the edge than inside the forest. Despite this lack of a distinct boundary livestock does not appear to enter the forest, thus grazing is not an issue.

The surrounding land is either used for grazing or staple crops, and the area is dotted with a few native trees. There are no exotic tree species planted in the close vicinity of the forest, however further away there are, in place, large quantities of eucalypts growing amidst the agricultural landscape.

### History

This church appears to have been established for well over a century. It caters for a small farming community. Unusually there is a family living inside the forest yard in a clearing close to the inner churchyard.

### Conservation status

This site has an average number of species but is the only remaining stand of native trees in the area. It also has one of the last remaining large *Podocarpus falcatus* in the region.



Where no coffee cultivation is carried out the ground vegetation may be rather dense, and often the tree canopy is rather open.

### Threats

Coffee growing is clearly the main threat to the forest. By clearing all ground and shrub vegetation it alters the ecology of the stand and in particular removes all natural tree regeneration. Casual observations suggest that in the process of establishing coffee the canopy appears to be open up presumably by removing some sub-canopy trees.

### Management

The regeneration of the large *Podocarpus falcatus* should be promoted. In order to maintain the biodiversity of the forest as well as keep coffee production, essential for earning money, the expansion of the forest should be considered. This could take place either via natural regeneration or planting, or a mixture of the two.