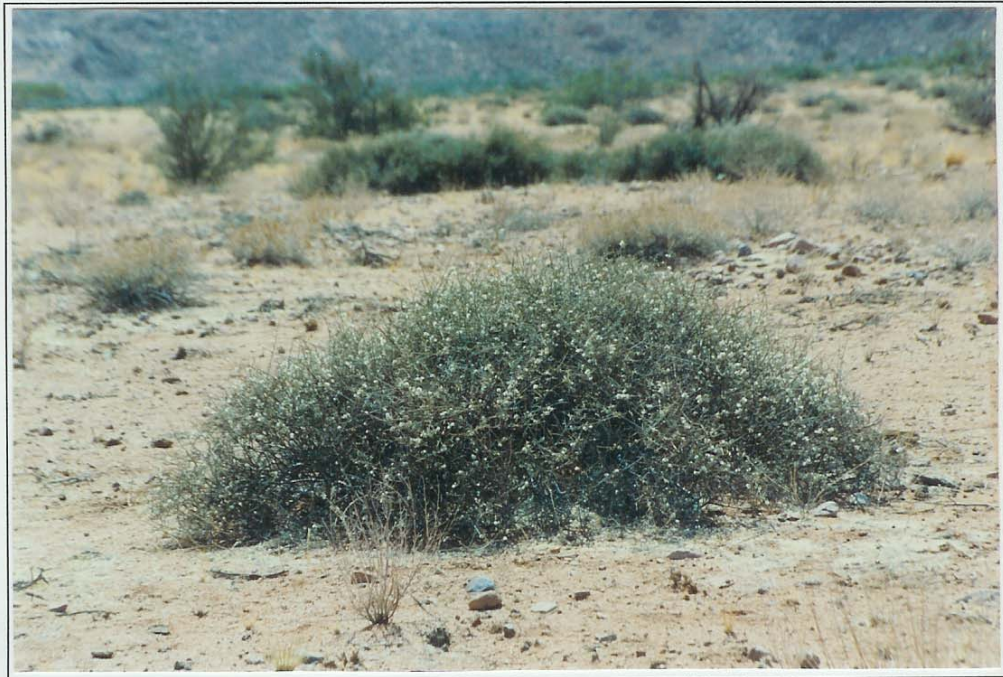


Calicorema capitata

Star of the Namib

Family: Amaranthaceae



Collection Number:

Description: A woody, perennial shrub growing up to 1m in height, it is usually leafless and blue-grey in colour. When leaves are present they are minute and scale-like. The plant has an attractive white, woolly flower, which has a deep pink star pattern of petals in the centre. This is where the common name, which may be very local and not widely used, is derived from.

Habitat: *Calicorema capitata* is widespread over the nature reserve, in areas of rocks or stones, and the gravel plains. It is distributed throughout the Namib desert and adjacent areas, from the Northern Cape to Angola.

General information: This plant is adapted for reducing moisture loss. It is usually leafless, and when it does bear leaves, they are leaves. In this way the plant reduces the surface area of the leaf, and therefore reduces the number of stomata through which a plant usually loses water in the form of water vapour. In the absence of leaves, The stems have taken over the photosynthesising function and are therefore green. The bush usually has a very blue appearance (in Afrikaans it is sometimes known as 'bloubossie'), this is due to a type of wax that the plant is covered with, which can be scraped off by very gently using a fingernail. This wax also prevents water loss. *Calicorema capitata* is browsed on by springbok and gemsbok.