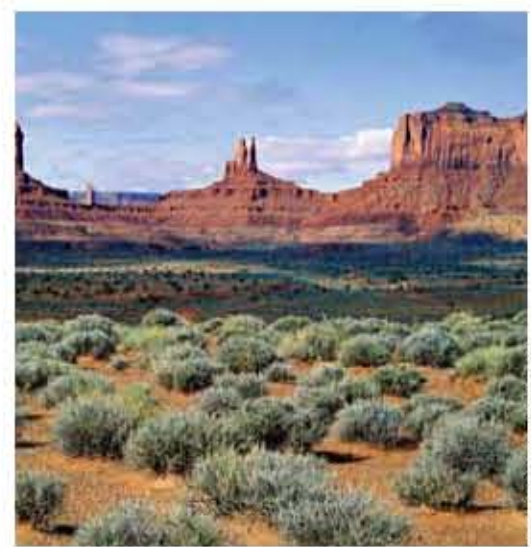


# Ecological Divisions of the United States

Ecological divisions are major landscape features that determine the biogeography of a region. Source: National Geographic Society's National Geographic Explorer.



**Pacific Maritime**  
Dense coniferous forests of western redwood spruce and giant Douglas fir—among the tallest trees on Earth—dominate the steep rugged ranges that stretch from central Oregon to southern Alaska. The coastal moderating influence and the high coastal mountains produce a damp climate with mild winters and cool summers. The foothills give way to a narrow coastal plain punctuated by slender bays, alluvial fans, and mudstone and deltas. The ecological and cultural value of the region's most famous fish have led some to call this land "salmon nation."

**Mediterranean California**  
A Mediterranean-style climate—with rainy mild winters and dry summer—coupled with an exotic geologic history has produced a greater variety of plant and animal species in this region than anywhere else in the nation. Inferred to an "island called California" for its distinctive ecology, the Golden State harbors more than 1,200 unique species. Rampant development has consumed large areas of native habitat, imperiling dozens of these plants and animals.

**Warm Desert**  
Cutting a vast swath across the nation, Southwest each of the warm deserts—Mojave, Sonoran and Chihuahuan—has its own distinct vegetation and character. The region includes the iconic "sky islands"—isolated mountain ranges rich in biological diversity. Through modern engineering marvels—dams, irrigation systems, and air conditioning—society has defied the desert and built upon it a series of boomtowns (Las Vegas, Phoenix, Tucson). With increasing population and water scarcity, can the lifestyle survive as the tap runs dry?

**Intermountain Basins**  
This vast and topographically diverse region is bounded on the west by the Rockies and on the east by the Cascades and the Sierra Nevada. In the "rain shadow" landscape, geology is made visible as an ever-present force that has written Earth's history, layer upon layer. The Intermountain Basins include the dramatic red rock canyons of the Colorado Plateau, the Great Salt Lake, thousands of square miles of sagebrush terrain, and some of the nation's greatest wilderness areas and national parks.

**Rocky Mountains**  
Mountaineer Lewis, upon first sighting the spine of the continent on May 28, 1805 wrote "These peaks of the Rocky Mountains were covered with snow and the sun shone on it in such manner as to give me the most plain and satisfactory view." Visitors have marveled ever since at these jagged peaked ranges separated by green covered valleys. Hardwood pine forests at lower elevations, montane grasslands, subalpine forests of spruce fir or lodgepole pine, and alpine tundra are all characteristic of the greatest North American range.

**Madron Semidesert**  
Covering south Texas and a substantial part of northern Mexico, the Madron Semidesert is a landscape of hot, dry scrublands where spiny cacti, and thorny shrubs such as mesquite are the dominant vegetation. The desert is home to many birds, reptiles, and amphibians rarely seen in the U.S. but common in Mexico and Central America. Even in this lightly populated region, small farms and development along the Rio Grande have left little habitat truly intact.

**Western Great Plains**  
Despite the promise of boomtowns, rain did not follow the plow to these open prairie parklands. In fact, evaporation usually exceeds precipitation in these semi-arid plains, where drought, wildfire, and grazing help curb the spread of woodlands. Prairie parklands in the northern plains serve as the continent's waterfowl factory. Towards the west, burrowing like prairie dog and the black-footed ferret that prey on them, share the short grass prairie with North America's forest land animal, the pronghorn.

**Eastern Great Plains**  
Wheat, corn, and soy now dominate the sprawling plains and deep black soils where tall grass prairie once thrived. The belief of Hubert, America's westward expansion planted the nation's grainery farms, converting to agriculture a blanket of bluestem grasses and wildflowers that extended toward Texas to the Canadian border. Efforts to preserve remaining fragments often allow wild fires to burn and enable to graze, mimicking natural patterns that maintain the grassland's open character.

**Laurentian and Acadian**  
Aurora are gorgeous and winters harsh in the region that entered a broad arc from the northern Great Lakes through Pennsylvania's Allegheny highlands, upstate New York, northern New England, and adjacent parts of Canada. The rest of the glaciers is sealed in the uncounted thousands of small lakes that define the landscape. These cooler northern forests, often dominated by conifers, are dotted with marshes, northern white cedar swamps, and other wetlands.

**Central Interior and Appalachian**  
The ancient Appalachians, rounded and folded by 200 million years of geologic history, define much of the region. Often dominated by oak and hickory, the Eastern deciduous forests are a highly diverse mix of tree species and tree types. As these forests have recovered over the past century, oak has the rich wildlife they shelter—black bear, wild turkey, deer. The southern Appalachians include a remarkable diversity of freshwater species and the greatest collection of salamanders on Earth. Despite their centuries of settlement, surprising pockets of wilderness remain.

**Gulf and Atlantic Coastal Plain**  
Stretching from Cape Cod south through Florida and west to the Texas Gulf Coast, the Coastal Plain includes such prominent features as the Chesapeake Bay, long chains of Atlantic and Gulf barrier islands, and the lower Mississippi River with its fragile delta. Much of the southern eastern Coastal Plain was once covered by a vast longleaf pine forest long since transformed by logging and agriculture.

**Caribbean**  
Water defines the low-lying lands of South Florida and the Keys, which share a subtropical flora and fauna with the Caribbean. The population boom here has increasingly altered natural flows, consumed riparian lands, and booted down water, raising the threat to the region's rare natural systems—the Everglades. Barbed wire impales the water for this vast wetland, creating the unique "street flow" of water over broad shallow marshes that led Major General Douglas to dub it a "river of grass."

## www.landscape.org

Landscape America is a new online resource for the land protection community and the public. Bringing together maps, data, photography, and stories, it helps people explore natural lands and waters and conserve the places they love.



# LandScope America

# Natural States of America

The American landscape is incomparably rich and varied. From the Gulf Coast to the Great Plains, Atlantic to Pacific, Arctic tundra to Hawaiian islands, our natural heritage is captured in song and story in the national imagination. This map focuses on these great places and how we the people are protecting them.

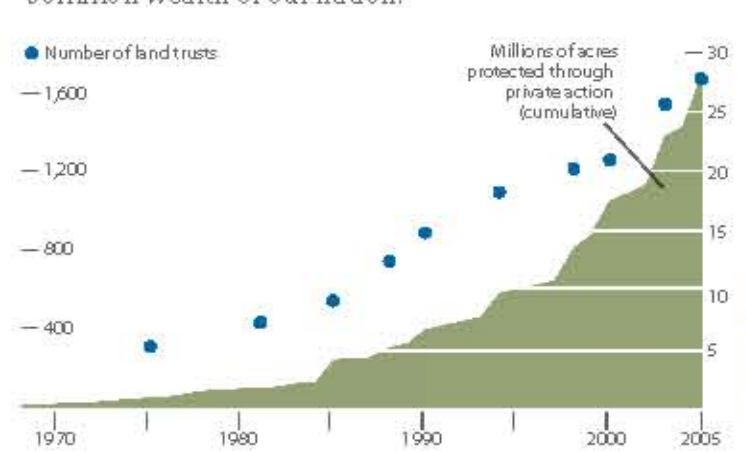
Over the past two decades, America's approach to conservation has changed. Once mainly the responsibility of the federal government, land protection is increasingly about partnerships among communities, land trusts, private landowners, sportsmen, corporations, and public agencies.

The land trust movement has grown into a mighty force. Through 1,700 land trusts large and small, citizens have united to conserve the places they love. Fueled by volunteer energy, land trusts are the ground troops of conservation, conserving wildlands, urban parks and green spaces, rivers and trails, and the open spaces of our farms, forests, and ranches.

While people are acting locally, they are thinking and planning at ever larger scales. Through sound science and landscape scale planning, they are addressing the most complex issues, including the challenges posed by climate change.

Funding sources and conservation methods have also changed. Conservation easements—voluntary protection agreements—have grown dramatically. Tax credits and incentive programs encourage private landowner action. And voters across the country have sent a clear message: conservation is a good investment.

Why? Because healthy natural ecosystems sustain human health and economic well-being, providing clean air and pure water. Parks and natural areas give us room to roam and places to hunt, fish, hike and play. They enrich our lives and nourish our spirit. They are the common wealth of our nation.



The first century of U.S. bird conservation was marked by federal designations of national parks, forests, and refuges, but over the past few decades so far has shifted to the state and local level. Between 1990 and 2005, states invested \$1.5 billion in land conservation, while the federal government spent just \$1.5 billion. The number of private land trusts has grown steadily, and protected through acquisition and easement exceeds 30 million acres as of 2005. Source: National Land Trust Alliance, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and The Trust for Public Land.

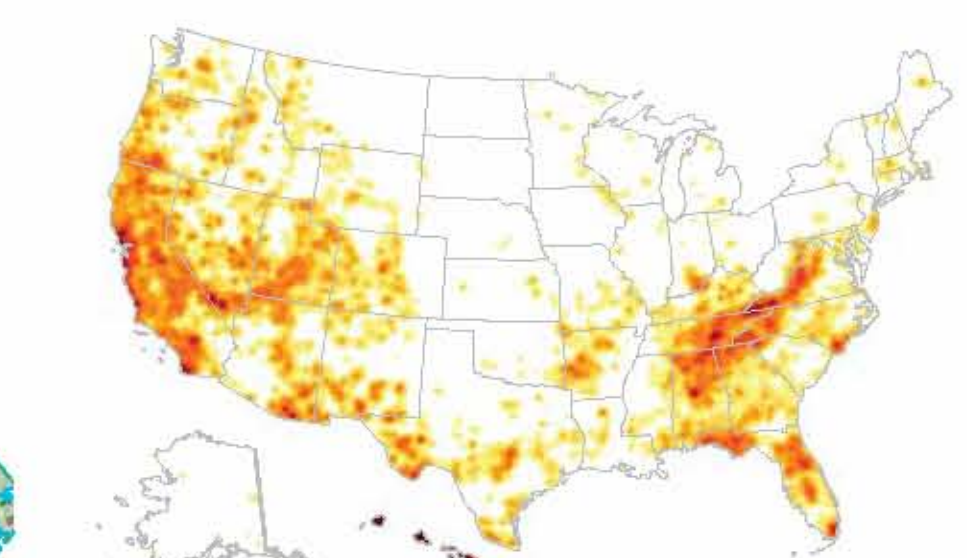
Design: Alan Carroll, Tim Robb, Bruce Breen, Ryan Cooper. Project director: Frank Bial. Photo manager: Darin Bergstrom/Henry Jones. GIS: Frank Bial, Dennis Rybak, Andy Wilson, David Lee, Jon W. DeLorenzo. Photo credit: Ken Calvert, Mike McElwain, Photo editor: Martin Stern, Text editor: David Steiner.

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## This Land is Our Land

America's beautiful, here is a continent as diverse as our people. From the principles of Daniel to the Mississippi Delta, the land spans tundra and hillside, forest and plain, mountain and shore. We are rich with freshwater land, salt, grasses and silent ponds, moody meadows and swamps low with binding. This land contains our past and with care, will replenish our future.

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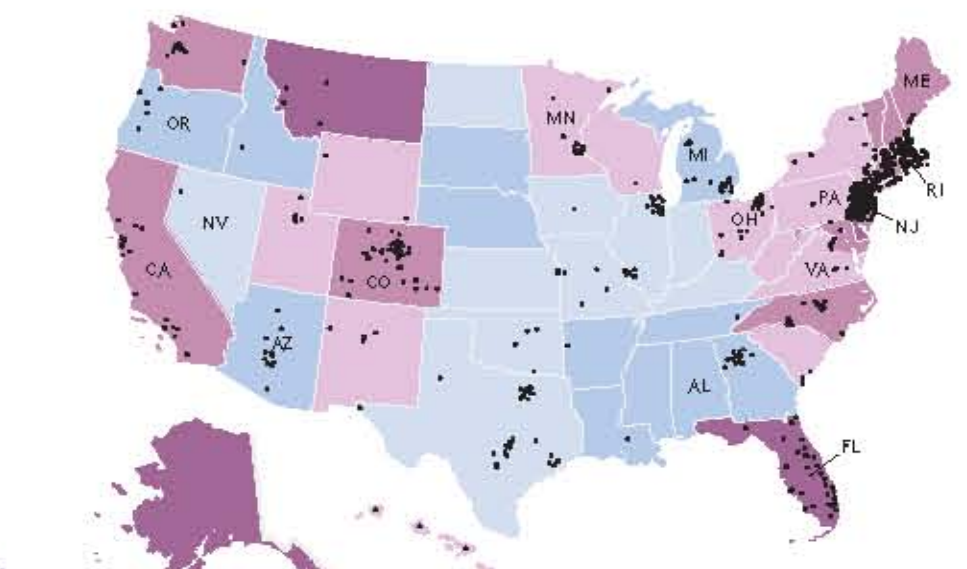
**Impaired Species Hotspots**  
The nation's rarest species cluster in certain regions, which have suffered centuries of evolutionary activity, as well as areas that have suffered considerable habitat loss. Using a mapping approach that highlights our most narrowly restricted plants and animals reveals the biological importance of places such as the Hawaiian Islands, the southern California coast, and the southern Appalachians.

Source: NatureServe, based on 2006 natural heritage data.



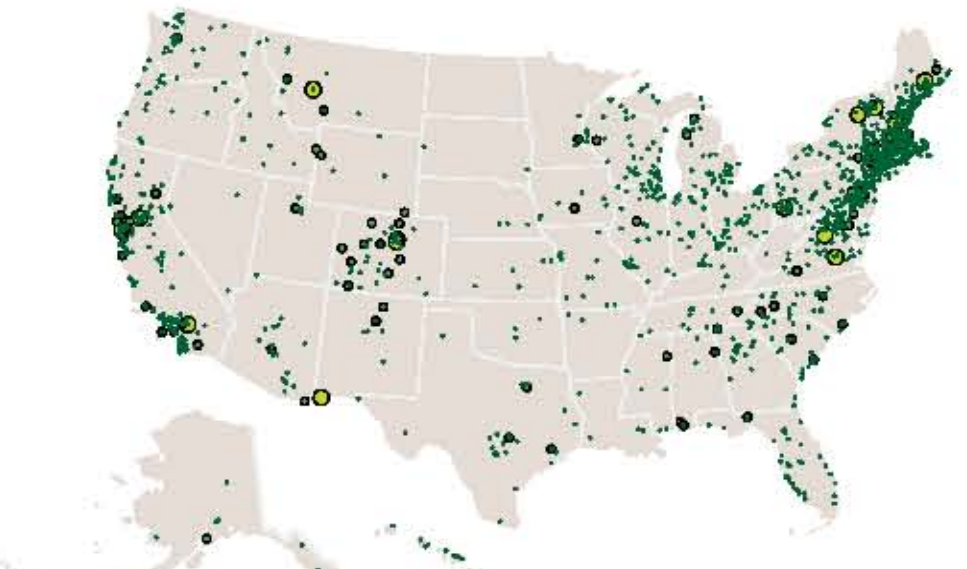
**Vertebrate Species Diversity**  
Understanding the distribution of life across the United States provides important context for targeting conservation efforts. Considering the overall diversity of vertebrate members—all 1,500 native species of bird, mammal, reptile, and amphibian—illustrates the influence of southern and coastal climates and habitats on species richness.

Source: NatureServe.



**Land Protection Investments**  
In the past decade protection of open space and natural areas by state and local government has dramatically increased, thanks primarily to voters who supported nearly 1,200 state and local ballot initiatives since 1995. In 1996 success rates in Florida, California, and Colorado have been leaders in the state level. Localities use an array of methods to fund conservation—bonds, sales taxes, lottery funds, development fees and more. State conservation spending per capita varies widely across the nation.

Source: The Trust for Public Land.



**Land Trust Activity**  
Born in the Northeast over 100 years ago, the land trust movement has accelerated in the past 20 years and spread nationwide. There are now more than 1,700 state and local land trusts; most are small, many are all-volunteer. Together they conserve more than one million acres a year. California has the most land trusts (150), followed by Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Source: 2007 National Land Trust Census. Photo: Matthew.

