

Species distribution

Depending on their history and their dispersal capabilities, species can either occupy large areas or be restricted to small regions. Human activities are constantly altering areas of species distribution, creating and destroying habitats, establishing corridors and barriers and accidentally or voluntarily transporting species to new locations. It is important to understand some of the terms related to the origin and distribution of species.



Native species. A species which is found within its natural or original area of distribution (historic or current) based on its potential for natural dispersal. This species forms part of the natural biotic communities within the area. For example, the ahuehuete (*Taxodium mucronatum*) are native to

Mexico. Native species have ecological and evolutionary relationships with other species with which they have a shared history. They are typically well adapted to local conditions.



Endemic species. A species which is restricted to one region. The term endemic is relative and is always used with reference to the region. For example, the great peeping frog (*Eleutherodactylus grandis*) is endemic in the Pedregal de San Angel, in Mexico City,

while the volcano rabbit (*Romerolagus diazi*) is endemic to the mountains around Mexico City, and the states of Mexico and Morelos..

Groups of species with low dispersal capability contain more native species. Endemic species are vulnerable to disturbance as their entire area of distribution may be altered.

Exotic species. A species introduced to an area outwith its original area of distribution. Many species of ornamental plants and domestic animals are exotic species from other continents. The jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosaeifolia*) and bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea spp.*), originally from South America, and dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) and cats (*Felis catus*), originally from Asia, are examples of exotic species. These species do not have evolutionary relationships with the species with which they come into contact in their new territory and thus can cause serious problems, transmitting unfamiliar diseases and competing with or preying on native species. [CONABIO | Exotic species.](#)

Invasive species. A species that exploits new environmental conditions to increase its population and geographic distribution. These are species with high dispersal and colonization capacities. They can be native or exotic species. In general, they cause damage to the environment, economy and human health. In fact, second only to habitat loss, they are considered a leading cause of species extinction. Rats (*Rattus rattus*) and house mice (*Mus musculus*), originally from Asia, are examples of invasive species. [CONABIO | Invasive species.](#)

