

## Natural wealth

The location, complex topography, climate and evolutionary history of our country have resulted in a great richness of environment, fauna and flora, and this has put us among the top five places in the world. This great natural diversity has been presented to us and offers many development opportunities while giving us a great responsibility as custodians of nature.



**Hotspots.** Mexico contains portions of three of the 34 "hotspots" on the planet. These hotspots are regions with at least 1500 endemic species of vascular flowering plants (more than 0.5 percent of the total species in the world) which have lost at least

70% of the original extent of their habitat. "Hotspots" have some features of isolation that differentiates them from their neighbouring regions.

In Mexico the "hotspots" are: the **Pine-Oak Forests of the Sierra Madre** (including the Sierra Madre del Sur and the Neovolcanic axis); **Mesoamerica** (including Southeast Mexico, the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and the Balsas river basin); and the southern portion of the **California Floristic Province**.

**Wilderness areas.** Mexico has three of the 37 "Wilderness Areas" of the planet. These areas retain **70%** or more of their original habitat in good condition, and cover at least **10,000 km<sup>2</sup>** with a density of less than **5** inhabitants per square kilometre.

The wilderness areas of Mexico are: The **Chihuahuan Desert**, which covers part of the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila and Nuevo Leon; the **Sonora Desert**, which occupies Sonora State and the **Baja Californian Desert**, located in both states of the peninsula.

**Centres of Plant Diversity.** Along with Brazil, Mexico is the American country with the largest number of Centres of Plant Diversity. These centres were selected due to their great diversity of plant species, high number of endemic species, high diversity of habitats, high proportion of species adapted to special conditions of soil, and also because of the degree of threat of deterioration.

Of 75 centres in the Americas, 13 are in Mexico: Lacandon Jungle, Chiapas; Uxpanapa-Chimalapas, Oaxaca / Veracruz / Chiapas; Sierra Juárez, Oaxaca; Tehuacán-Cuicatlán, Puebla / Oaxaca; Cañón del Zopilote, Guerrero; Sierra of Manantlan and lowlands of Jalisco; Upper basin of the Rio Mezquital, Durango; Gómez Farías Region, Tamaulipas; Cuatro Ciénegas, Coahuila; Sierra Madre Occidental, Chihuahua; and central and northern Baja California.



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**Endemic bird areas.** Of the 10,000 species of birds in the world, more than 2500 species have restricted ranges of less than 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>; an area roughly the size of the state of Campeche or Costa Rica. 218 regions (Known as **Endemic Bird Areas**, EBAs), containing two or more of these restricted species, have been identified worldwide. Due to their limited distribution, over half of these species are considered at risk.

In Mexico, **22 EBAs** have been identified: California, Baja California, Guadalupe Island, Socorro Island, the Pacific Northwest slope, coastal scrublands of southern Veracruz, Sierra Madre Occidental and the Neovolcanic axis, Southern Mexican karst forests, Wetlands of Central Mexico, Eastern Yucatan, Balsas region and the interior of Oaxaca, Clarion Island, Sierra Madre del Sur, Northern Sierra Madre Oriental, Northeast slope of the Gulf of Mexico, Southern Sierra Madre Oriental, Los Tuxtlas and Uxpanapa, Isthmus of Tehuantepec, coastal scrublands of the Yucatan Peninsula, Cozumel Island, Pacific coast of Northern Central America, Central American and the Northern Central American highlands. **Birdlife.**

**Marine wealth.** The Gulf of California, at **1200 km** long by **150 km** wide and with depths of up to **4000 m**, is

one of the most diverse seas in the world. Known as "the aquarium of the planet," it is unique in the Americas. Its high productivity is due to upwelling currents which circulate nutrients from the bottom to the surface.

In the Gulf, **875** fish species, **580** marine birds and 35 marine mammals have been documented, including the Gulf of California harbor porpoise (*Phocoena sinus*), the

cetacean with the narrowest and most threatened distribution in the world. Several species of whales, including the largest animal on earth, the blue whale and other species like fin, humpback, grey and minke whales, visit the tropical waters of the Gulf each year. More than 900 islands and islets are home to a large number of endemic species of plants, reptiles, birds and mammals.

Located at the other end of the country is the **Mesoamerican reef**, which is the second largest barrier reef in the world. This barrier

extends from Mexico (Yucatan and Quintana Roo) to Honduras with a length of about 1000 km. In this reef are about 60 coral species, 350 molluscs and 500 species of fish. The largest coral reef is the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Northeast Australia, which has a length of about 2000 km.

