

30. America – flora and fauna

Flora

North America

Taiga (boreal forest) = coniferous trees (*pin*es, *spruce*, *fir* and *larch*) = covers most of southern and central CAN and extends into Alaska.

Mixed forest = E USA, dominated by deciduous trees, in the west coast of the continent, forests are primarily associated with mountain ranges => coniferous trees are dominant, e.g. firs in the Pacific NW may live 800 yrs. California = *redwood* (giant sequoias) grow to enormous size.

A great mixture of species characterizes the *tropical forests of Mexico*.

Arid regions = mainly *grassland* and *shrubland*. The dry areas of the W USA and N Mexico are sparsely covered with a variety of *shrubs* and many kinds of *cactuses*.

The central plains and prairies of the USA and S CAN were originally grass covered, but much of the natural flora has been replaced by *commercial crops*.

Beyond the tree line in the far north is a region of *tundra*, containing a mixture of *low-growing grasses, mosses and lichens*.

South America

Vegetation zones correspond closely with the climatic zones => dense cover of *rainforest* = the largest forest area in the world (tropical hardwoods, palms, bamboos and lianas).

Between drier areas and the rainforest are *zones of tall grass* (savannas). *Deciduous forests* = S Brazil and along the slopes of the Andes. The flat *pampas* of east central Argentina is the largest mid-latitude grassland of South America.

Fauna

North America

Mexico = wide range of animals: *tropical fish, deer and mountain lions, rattlesnakes, lizards* and *prairie dogs*. Cattle ranchers raise beef cattle in these northern deserts.

American bison (Great Plains) exists primarily in game reserves and ranches.

Coyote = the most widespread relative of the wolf in North America, includes all American states except Hawaii.

In general, the fauna of North America is similar to that of the northern areas of Europe and Asia = *large mammals* (*bears – grizzly and polar bear, buck caribou, moose* – called elk in Europe).

Large carnivores include the *puma* and *jaguar*, many *reptiles* are poisonous, vipers and many fish species (salmons, trouts, sturgeons).

South America

Llama is still an important animal in the Andes, they are also kept as pets and for their wool. *Blue and yellow macaw* (parrot family), *anaconda* (rainforests) reaches the length of up to 6m => 1 of the 2 largest species of snake in the world (besides python).

Is it venomous?

No horses or related animals, giant anteater, great variety of birds (condor), caiman and crocodiles. The *Galápagos Islands* are notable as the habitat of large *turtles* and other reptiles and birds that are unknown elsewhere.

American bison



Coyote



Llama



Rattlesnake



Condor



Puma

