

Southern Appalachian Mountains as 'Sky Islands'

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine whether high elevation Southern Appalachian Mountains can be considered 'sky islands.' Data were compiled by analyzing the literature of other studies performed. Most of these studies used plot sampling of plants to gather data. The first study analyzed rare plant species on isolated Southern Appalachian mountaintops. Its results showed many rare species only live on certain isolated mountains, supporting the Southern Appalachian 'sky island' hypothesis. The second study consisted of a species richness analysis. The data gathered from this study also supported the hypothesis. The third set of data analyzed compared the environments of isolated mountain ranges with a northern mountain range. This data also supported the 'sky island' theory. It was then concluded that some isolated Southern Appalachian mountains function as 'sky islands.'