

Publication

The cold range limit of trees

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At high elevation or latitude, trees reach low-temperature range limits. In attempting an explanation, the range limits of individual tree species (set by freezing tolerance) and the general limit of the life-form tree (set by thermal growth constraints) need to be distinguished. The general cold edge of the fundamental niche of trees is termed the treeline, by definition, the lower edge of the alpine belt, a most important bioclimatological reference line. Trees can be absent from the treeline due to disturbances or biotic interactions. The actual local edge of tree distribution, the delineation of the realized niche, is driven by stochastic effects. Therefore, treeline theory and hypothesis testing is inevitably tied to the fundamental niche concept.

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