# The use of 'altitude' in ecological research


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Altitudinal gradients are among the most powerful 'natural experiments' for testing ecological and evolutionary responses of biota to geophysical influences, such as low temperature. However, there are two categories of environmental changes with altitude: those physically tied to meters above sea level, such as atmospheric pressure, temperature and clear-sky turbidity; and those that are not generally altitude specific, such as moisture, hours of sunshine, wind, season length, geology and even human land use. The confounding of the first category by the latter has introduced confusion in the scientific literature on altitude phenomena.

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