

**POPULATION, RIVERS, LAKES, MOUNTAINS, GEOGRAPHY OF THE USA.
NATURAL RESOURCES, FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE USA.**

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Annotation: *The health of our nation depends, in many ways, on the vitality of our nation's forests and grasslands. These natural resources contribute a variety of essential elements to our well-being, including clean air, water and soil. Shades of Green is one in a series of videos that how the Tongass National Forest protects natural resources.*

Key words: *Population, landscapes, dense wilderness, national bird, environment and ecosystem, national parks.*

The United States of America is the world's third largest country in size and nearly the third largest in terms of population. Located in North America, the country is bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean and to the east by the Atlantic Ocean. Along the northern border is Canada and the southern border is Mexico. There are 50 states and the District of Columbia.

More than twice the size of the European Union, the United States has high mountains in the West and a vast central plain. The lowest point in the country is in Death Valley which is at -282 feet (-86 meters) and the highest peak is Denali (Mt. McKinley) at 20,320 feet (6,198 meters).

The landscape varies across the large country from tropical beaches in Florida to peaks in the Rocky Mountains, from rolling prairie lands and barren deserts in the West to dense wilderness areas in the Northeast and Northwest. Interspersed throughout are the Great Lakes, the Grand Canyon, the majestic Yosemite Valley, and the mighty Mississippi River.

The wildlife is as diverse as the landscape. Mammals such as bison once roamed freely across the plains, but now live only in preserves. Black bears, grizzlies, and polar bears are the largest carnivores. There are over 20,000 flower species and most came from Europe. There are more than 400 areas which are protected and maintained by the National Park Service, and many other parks in each state. The bald eagle is the national bird and symbol of the United States and is a protected species.

Mountains host a rich assortment of terrestrial and aquatic habitats, which vary across elevations within mountain ranges, and across south-to-north latitudes among

mountain ranges. The diversity of habitats are home to a wealth of plants, animals, and other biota. Mountains contribute disproportionately to the Earth's diversity of life relative to the area they occupy. While mountains account for about 25 percent of the land area on Earth, they are home to more than 85 percent of the world's amphibians, birds, and mammals, many entirely restricted to mountains. Mountain ecosystems face numerous threats. The most significant include air pollution, climate change, invasive species, altered fire regimes, and habitat fragmentation outside of parks.

At both the state and federal level, the key laws protecting wildlife are those governing when and where hunting is permitted. Some states have also begun also to prosecute people who commit acts of cruelty against wild animals.

A handful of other federal wildlife laws are in effect. These include the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. But these laws protect only a small number of animals, and even for these animals the protections are not robust.

Wild animals experience pain and pleasure just the same as the dogs and cats who share our homes, and who enjoy far more expansive legal protections. Wild animals also play a key role in our environment and ecosystem. And they are affected by all facets of human behavior: where we build, and what we do on developed land.

Factory farming not only affects the lives of the 9 billion animals a year who are raised for food, but also the wild animals who drink from bodies of water and live on the land polluted by these agricultural activities. The Animal Legal Defense Fund is dedicated to pursuing better legal protection for wildlife.

The fauna of the United States of America is all the animals living in the Continental United States and its surrounding seas and islands, the Hawaiian Archipelago, Alaska in the Arctic, and several island-territories in the Pacific and in the Caribbean. The U.S. has many endemic species found nowhere else on Earth. With most of the North American continent, the U.S. lies in the Nearctic, Neotropic, and Oceanic faunistic realms, and shares a great deal of its flora and fauna with the rest of the American supercontinent.

An estimated 432 species of mammals characterize the fauna of the continental U.S. There are more than 800 species of bird and more than 100,000 known species of insects.[3] There are 311 known reptiles, 295 amphibians and 1154 known fish species in the U.S.[4] Known animals that exist in all of the lower 48 states include white-tailed deer, bobcat, raccoon, muskrat, striped skunk, barn owl, American mink, American beaver, North American river otter and red fox. The red-tailed hawk is one of the most widely distributed hawks not only in the U.S., but in the Americas.

Huge parts of the country with the most distinctive indigenous wildlife are protected as national parks. In 2013, the U.S. had more than 6770 national parks or protected areas, all together more than 1,006,619 sq. miles (2,607,131 km²).[5] The first national park was Yellowstone National Park in the state of Wyoming, established in 1872. Yellowstone National Park is widely considered to be the finest megafauna wildlife

habitat in the U.S. There are 67 species of mammals in the park, including the gray wolf, the threatened lynx, and the grizzly bear.

Because of its remote location, diversity among the terrestrial species is low. The archipelago has a huge variety in animals and more than 9,000 acres is a national park: National Park of American Samoa. The park stretches over three of the six islands in the archipelago: Tutuila, Ofu-Olosega and Ta'ū. Eight mammal species have been recorded at American Samoa, of which none of them are critically endangered. The mammals include several species of native bats, including the Samoa flying fox and insular flying fox. The avifauna includes 65 species of bird where the more unusual distinctive ones are the blue-crowned lorikeet, the spotless crane, the many-colored fruit dove, the wattled honeyeater, tropical pigeons, the samoan starling, white tern, black noddy and the red-tailed tropic bird.

Unlike Australia and Canada, the United States had temperate climates combined with fertile soil. The early settlers found rich soil on the Great Plains. This is a more than 290,000-square-mile area between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains.³

The Plains was a huge basin sculpted out by glaciers during the Great Ice Age. As a result, mountain streams from the Rockies deposited layers of sediment. These streams then cut through the sediment to create plateaus. These large flat areas were untouched by erosion. That created thick sod and productive agriculture. But the Great Plains is semi-arid, experiencing periodic droughts. The Plains became the breadbasket of the world only after irrigation was put into place. The water came from streams fed by the Rockies.

Lakes, rivers, and streams provide 87% of the water used in America. The electric power industry uses an astonishing 133 billion gallons per day. Water cools electricity-generating equipment, but it is returned. Agricultural irrigation uses 118 billion gallons per day, but it is not returned. Families, businesses, and industries use the rest.

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