

Floral Zones in the Mountains of Southern Mexico

A. C. Noé

University of Chicago
Illinois State Geological Survey

ABSTRACT

During a collecting trip in southern Mexico in September, 1935, I had an unusual opportunity to observe the zones of the living floras of those regions. I went by bus from Mexico City to Puebla and Tehuacan in the state of Puebla, hired a Ford car in Tehuacan and went in it as far as Huajuapam in the state of Oaxaca, from where I proceeded, on horseback, to the former property of the Oaxaca Coal and Iron Company on the Rio Consuelo. This locality had been visited before in 1909 by G. R. Wieland, who made an extensive collection of fossil plants in the state of Oaxaca. During this trip it was possible to pass through cultivated tropical vegetation in the valleys (about 5000 feet above sea-level), through extensive cactus forests at an elevation of 6,000 to 7,000 feet above sea-level, to oak forests at 7,000 to 8,000 feet altitude, to a tropical alpine zone between 8,000 and 11,000 feet. The cultivated tropical vegetation in the valleys consisted primarily of banana trees, sugar cane, rice, avocado pears, bamboo, pineapple, cocoa nut palm, and tropical garden flowers. In the cactus zone we find a great variety of species of *Opuntia*, *Cereus*, *Cephalocereus*, *Echinocactus*, *Euphorbia*, *Yucca*, *Prosopis*, and *Beaucarnea*. The oak zone is primarily occupied by *Quercus mexicana*, near rivers also *Taxodium mucronatum*. Mixed with these are *Arbutus* and various species of ash tree. In the pine zone the predominance is of *Pinus montezuma*, often with *Tillandsia tricolor*, a Bromeliaceae, growing on it.

Of the fauna I saw comparatively little in the mountain land of southern Mexico. There were plenty of lizards on the ground, but I saw no snakes. Coyotes could be heard during the night, and I saw, at short distance, a big wolf. One night a lynx crossed the road in the automobile lights. Among birds was noticeable the *Scolecopus fornosus*, with a back of emerald color, belly of dark blue, and throat of bright orange. There were also blue jays and turkey buzzards.