

News Release: Biodiversity Hotspots Detailed in New Website

<http://ens-news.com/ens/oct2002/2002-10-03-09.asp>

WASHINGTON, DC, October 3, 2002 (ENS) - The Center for Applied Biodiversity Science (CABS) at Conservation International (CI) has launched a new website, "Biodiversity Hotspots."

The site - <http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org> - is intended to provide comprehensive, up to date information on the world's biologically richest and most threatened ecosystems. The website, funded by Intel Corporation, will be a resource for conservationists, regional planners and government policy makers.

The website showcases extensive information about each of the 25 hotspots including a rich array of photographs, ecosystem descriptions, as well as the unique species, threats and impacts and conservation actions in each area. An interactive map allows visitors to find information geographically and features downloadable maps and lists of threatened species. A glossary of terms explains biological and conservation terminology.

"The site will assist decision makers in government agencies, non-profit organizations, academic institutions and the conservation community in making informed decisions in the hotspots," said Carlos Galindo-Leal, senior director of the State of the Hotspots Program at CABS. "The site is dynamic and will be updated regularly with data gathered by experts working in these imperiled ecosystems."

The biodiversity hotspots are 25 biodiverse areas around the world that cover just 1.4 percent of Earth's land surface, but contain more than 60 percent of all terrestrial species. The hotspots are all threatened, many of them with less than 10 percent of their original habitat remaining.

"Conservation International focuses its work on biodiversity hotspots where the need is greatest and we can have the most impact," said Gustavo Fonseca, CI's senior vice president for science and executive director for CABS. "The collection, analysis and integration of hotspots data enable us to design the most effective strategies to avoid species extinctions, protect critical areas within the hotspots and ensure biodiversity survival over time."

Since the hotspots are dynamic places with political, social and biological changes taking place, they require continual assessment and monitoring. Monitoring the hotspots provides an opportunity to predict trends or anticipate threats before they occur.

This is the essence of an early warning system being developed by CABS that would enable the conservation community to take proactive measures. The site is a product of an ongoing initiative by CABS to gather, analyze and synthesize data on biological diversity, threats and conservation responses in these 25 ecosystems.

"We are proud to be a part of CI's effort to save global biodiversity for future generations," said Terry McManus of Intel Corporation's environmental health and safety division. "The 'Biodiversity Hotspots' web project is part of a larger initiative by CI and Intel to use computer and Internet technology to advance conservation science around the world."

Intel is also supporting the development of a network of scientists and institutions in the Philippines to monitor trends in biodiversity and socio-economic pressures in the hotspot.

The "Biodiversity Hotspots" site is the latest addition to CI's family of websites about biodiversity conservation with topics for many different audiences. To see all of the sites, visit: <http://www.conservation.org/xp/CIWEB/about/fastfacts.xml>. To learn more about the state of the hotspots, visit: <http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org>

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