**Biogeography** meaning

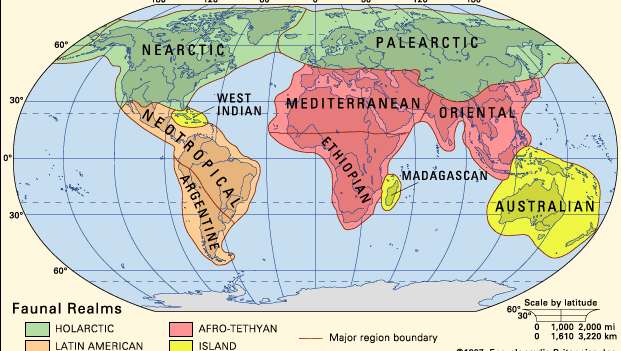
**Biogeography**, the study of the geographic distribution of [plants](https://www.britannica.com/plant/plant), [animals](https://www.britannica.com/animal/animal), and other forms of [life](https://www.britannica.com/science/life). It is concerned not only with habitation patterns but also with the factors responsible for variations in distribution.

[](https://cdn.britannica.com/62/6562-004-682A007C/kingdoms-subkingdoms-regions-world.jpg)

[**Earth's floral regions**](https://cdn.britannica.com/62/6562-004-682A007C/kingdoms-subkingdoms-regions-world.jpg)

Strictly speaking, biogeography is a branch of [biology](https://www.britannica.com/science/biology), but physical geographers have made important contributions, particularly in the study of flora. Modern advancements in the [classification](https://www.britannica.com/science/classification-biology) of vegetation and the preparation of [maps](https://www.britannica.com/science/map) of vegetation began in the 20th century with the work of American botanists Forrest Shreve, Homer L. Shantz, Hugh M. Raup, and others.

Biogeographic studies divide [Earth’s](https://www.britannica.com/place/Earth) surface—primarily the [continents](https://www.britannica.com/science/continent) and [islands](https://www.britannica.com/science/island)—into regions exhibiting differences in the average [composition](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/composition) of [flora and fauna](https://www.britannica.com/science/flora-and-fauna). It is thought that the present-day distribution patterns of plant and animal forms, as reflected in such biogeographic regions, are the result of many historical and current causes. These causes include present climatic and geographic conditions, the geologic history of the landmasses and their [climates](https://www.britannica.com/science/climate-meteorology), and the [evolution](https://www.britannica.com/science/evolution-scientific-theory) of the taxon (e.g., genus or species) involved. Investigators have found that rate of dispersal, adaptability to prevailing environmental condition have a significant impact on pattern and extent of distribution.

[](https://cdn.britannica.com/65/6565-004-91F21C31/System-regions-reanalysis-distributions-Charles-H-Smith.jpg)

[**Earth's faunal regions**](https://cdn.britannica.com/65/6565-004-91F21C31/System-regions-reanalysis-distributions-Charles-H-Smith.jpg)