

# New biodiversity hotspots questioned

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Five years ago, conservationists identified 25 worldwide sites where plant and animal species are most abundant -- but now there reportedly are six more.

Since life on Earth isn't evenly spread, conservationists decided to create a list of so-called hotspots -- areas where species diversity is greater than normal, the Independent reported Wednesday.

The theory was if conservation efforts were focused on such areas, the rate of species extinctions might be slowed or stopped, the newspaper said.

But the first detailed global map of the world's bird species indicates areas in which most avian species can be found do not always overlap with areas in which they are most threatened, the Independent reported.

Professor Ian Owens of Imperial College London, who led the study published last month in the journal Nature, says the world's bird "hotspots" are in the mountains of South America and Africa. But in terms of extinction risk, they are in Madagascar, New Zealand and the Philippines.

"Different types of diversity don't map in the same way," Owens said. "A variety of mechanisms are therefore responsible biodiversity, and this points to the need to base conservation on more than one measure."

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