

The desert is dying

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Researchers from University of Bergen have found that trees, which are a main resource for desert people and their flocks, are in significant decline in the hyper-arid Eastern Desert of Egypt.

In places more than 50% of the mature trees have disappeared between 1965 and 2003, while almost no new trees have been recruited. Despite extreme aridity the main cause of tree mortality seems not to be climate, but commercial charcoal production. This indicates that the traditional and sustainable indigenous resource management, which desert people have developed through millennia, is changing.

Desertification has been recurrently discussed and questioned since the 1970s. The focus has been on desert borderlands, while changes in sparse but important vegetation resources within the desert core have been neglected.

Source: Public Library of Science

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