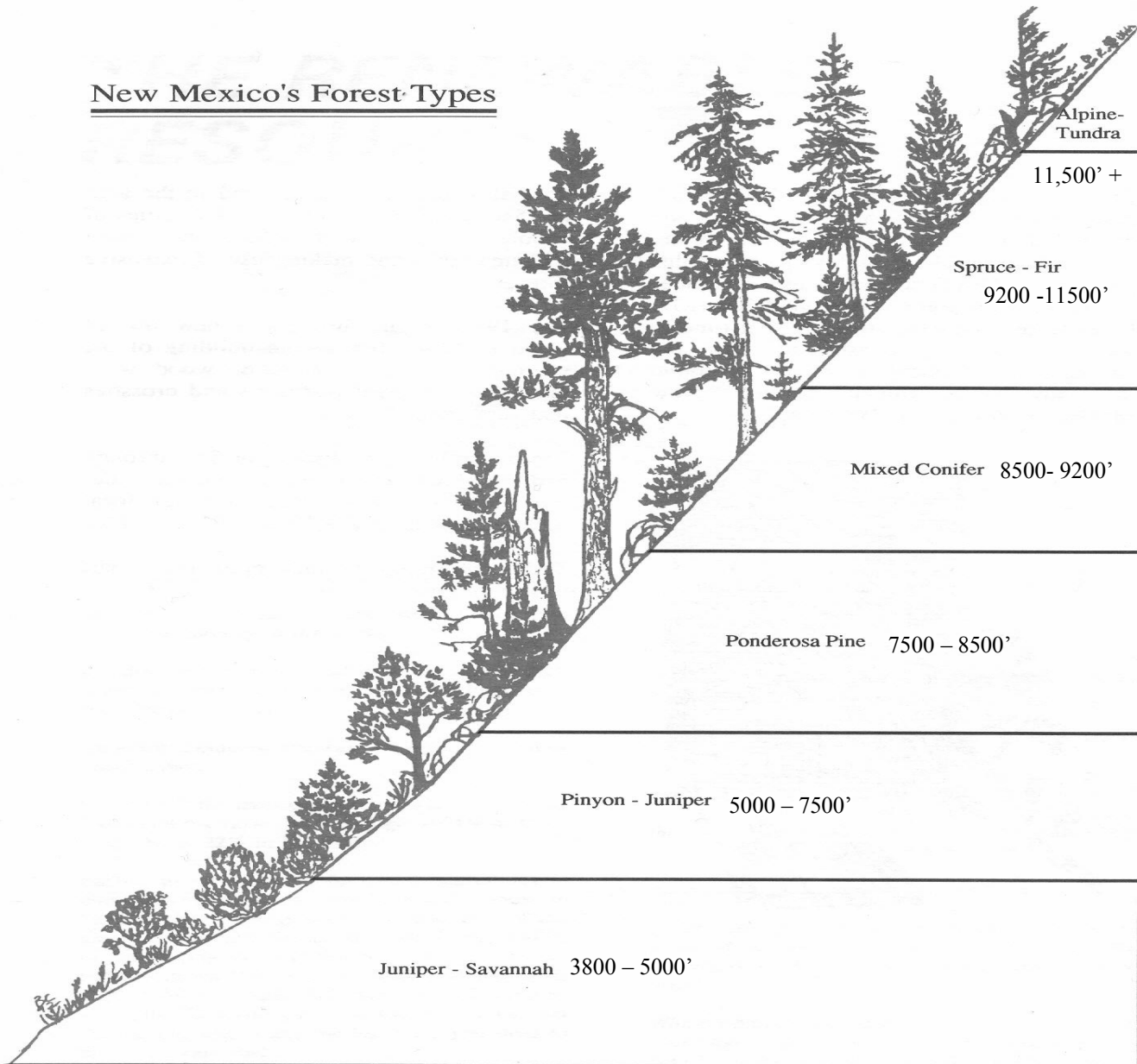


Plant Life Zones

New Mexico's Forest Types



Arctic-Alpine Life Zone:

Also termed the Alpine Tundra Zone, it is above 11,500 feet and may receive over 33 inches of precipitation per year. This zone occurs above treeline. Plant life in this zone includes herbs, grasses, sedges, rushes, mosses and lichens. Subalpine fir, bristlecone pine, limber pine and Engelmann spruce are the only trees that survive in this zone, usually in bizarre, gnarled forms.

Hudsonian Life Zone:

Also called the Spruce/Fir Zone because the dominant plant species are Engelmann spruce, blue spruce, bristlecone pine, corkbark fir and shrubby cinquefoil. The elevation range for this life zone is between 9,200 feet and 11,500 feet. Annual precipitation for this zone is 26 inches or more per year. The red-breasted nuthatch, olive-sided flycatcher, blue grouse and red crossbill are birds that can be seen in this zone. Mammals include marmot, pocket gopher, porcupine, and big horn sheep.

Canadian Life Zone:

Because this zone includes a mixture of conifer trees it is also called the Mixed Conifer Zone. It is usually in the mountainous areas of the state and includes dense, shady forests. The dominant plant species in this zone are Douglas fir, white fir, ponderosa pine, aspen, water birch, Rocky Mountain Juniper, southwestern white pine and narrowleaf cottonwood. Annual precipitation is between 20 and 26 inches per year and the elevation is at or above 8,500 feet and at or below 9,200 feet. The birds and mammals that inhabit this zone are mule deer, bobcat, elk, black bear, tassel-eared squirrel, yellow-bellied sapsucker, Clarks's nutcracker, and the sharp-shinned hawk.

Transition Life Zone:

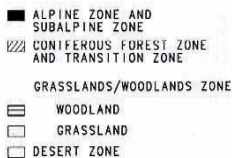
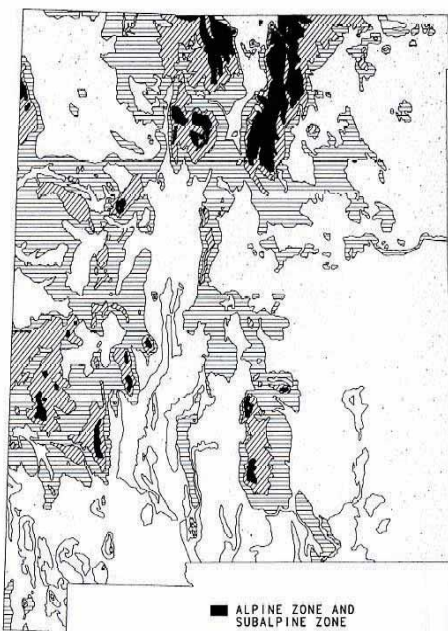
Also called the Ponderosa Pine Forest Zone, it receives 16 to 20 inches of precipitation per year. Its range in elevation is from 7,500 feet to 8,500 feet. Trees in this zone are primarily Ponderosa pine in an open forest with grassy openings. Other plants in this zone are Gambel's oak, oregon grape, western chokecherry, wildroses, New Mexican locust and cliffrose. Wildlife in this zone includes Hairy woodpecker, turkey, Steller's jay, hoary bat, bobcat, mountain lion, elk, gray fox, mule deer, black bear and the blacktail rattlesnake.

Upper Sonoran Life Zone:

Also called the Pinyon/Juniper Zone this zone has small scattered trees with grasslands in between. It receives between 12 to 16 inches of rainfall per year. The elevation range is between 5,000 feet and 7,000 feet. The dominant plant species is piñon pine, juniper, apache plume, mountain mahogany and saltbush. Birds that live in this zone include the piñon and scrub jay, mountain chickadee, mockingbird, and the ash-throated flycatcher. Rock squirrels, spotted skunks, the piñon mouse, badgers and mule deer also inhabit this zone. Reptiles in this zone include the skink, fence lizard, striped whipsnake, gopher snake, and the blacktail rattlesnake.

Lower Sonoran Life Zone:

Also called the Chihuahuan Desert Zone. In New Mexico the elevation range of this area is 3,800 feet to 5,000 feet. It receives 5 to 6 inches of rain per year and has extreme temperature fluctuations. The dominant plant species is yucca, mormon tea, sotol, creosote bush and mesquite. Gambel's quail, roadrunners, cactus wren and the horned lark are birds that live in this life zone. Mammals include the kangaroo rat, blacktail jackrabbit, ringtail cat, bobcat, coyote and the pronghorn. It is also home to the horned toad, bullsnake, the western diamondback rattlesnake and the whiptail lizard.



Life Zones of New Mexico