The Khorat Cuesta and its modern vegetation

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Abstract

The Khorat Cuesta is one of the longest cuesta systems in the world, with a length of more than 1,700 km. The cuesta reaches an altitude greater than 1,000 m, although within the boundaries of Khorat Geopark, the altitude ranges from approximately 400 to 700 m. Because of the higher altitude, local climate, and soil types, the dominant forest type, dry evergreen forest, is distinct from the deciduous dipterocarp forest common at lower altitudes. In a study at the nearby Sakaerat Environmental Research Station, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, 33 out of 48 species, or 69%, of the trees in the dry evergreen forest were restricted to that forest type. Within the Khorat Geopark, the dominant species on the cuestas include Hopea ferrea, Shorea henryana, Irvingia malayana, Dialium cochinchinense, Hydnocarpus ilicifolia, and Memecylon ovatum. Tinospora siamensis is a climber found only on cuestas at nearby Sakaerat. The fauna in the dry evergreen forest on the cuestas also differs from that in the lower elevation forests. The distinctive elevation, soil type, and climate allow agricultural crops uncommon elsewhere in the area to be successfully grown on the Khorat Cuesta, including a low caffeine coffee, macadamia nuts, and mangosteen.