



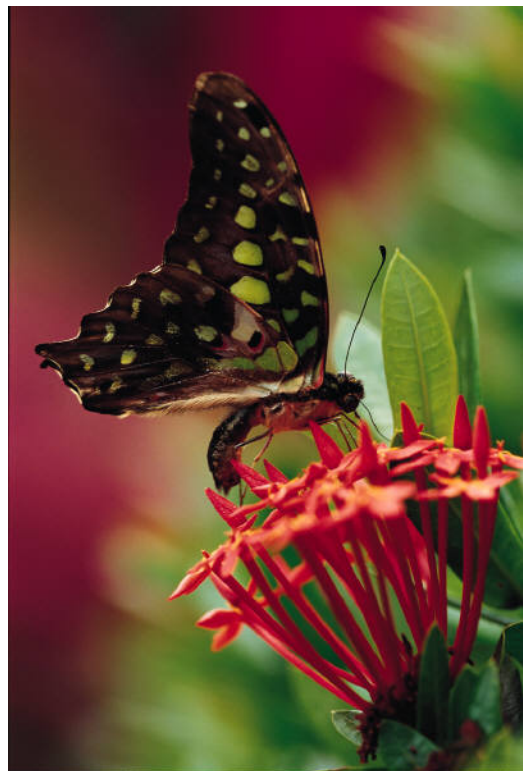
# **Southeastern Mixed Forests**



**A Disappearing Ecoregion**

# Characteristics

This ecoregion ranks among the top 10 in the United States in number of native reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, and mammals. There are more than 3,600 endemic varieties of herbs and shrubs, the highest in North America. The most dominant force in shaping both composition and structure of the Southeastern Mixed Forests ecoregion, prior to European settlement, was fire. Fire disturbance favored the growth of oaks and provided good seed beds for pines, which were a much more dominant part of these forests back then.



# Plants

Pines and hardwood trees such as oaks and hickories spread their canopies over cedar and holly trees. Dogwood and redbud fill the understory and add color in spring and fall. Blackberries, elderberries, huckleberries, and other fruiting plants provide sustenance to birds and other animals. Magnolia, hickory, and black cherry are other trees found in this region.



Clockwise: Dogwood, blackberry, and black cherry

# Animals

White-tailed deer, black bears, and box turtles explore the woods, while luna moths and flying squirrels glide quietly through the evening forests that are filled with the sounds of crickets and other nocturnal animals. Damp areas provide homes to a variety of frogs and toads.



Clockwise from left: flying tree squirrel, box turtle, and luna moth

# Threats

The Southeastern Mixed Forests ecoregion is the most heavily settled ecoregion along the east coast of the United States, with an estimated 99 percent of the natural habitat having been logged early in the last century and converted to crops and other uses. Only small blocks of highly fragmented habitat are left in national forests and rocky outcrops. These fragments face threats from continued logging, conversion to pine plantations, and lack of fire management.



This is the area of Louisiana that is considered part of the Southeastern Mixed Forest ecoregion.

