

GEOGRAPHICAL RANGES

One of the first things that people noticed as they started to study and write about the world was that when they visited different parts of the earth they found different species. In fact, most species have limited distributions. Giraffes, for example, are found only in Africa, koalas only in Australia, and lemurs only in Madagascar. If we choose a particular species, plot a point on a map of the world for every place in which it is found, and then draw a line surrounding all of the points, we will have delimited its geographical range. Figure 7.1 is a range map for three species found in the United States. Some species, such as the Devil's Hole pupfish that only lives in one particular desert spring, have a geographical range of just a few square meters; others (e.g., human beings) range over most of the land area of the earth. Most species, though, have intermediate-sized distributions, as does the bighorn sheep.