

This observation has led to Rapoport's rule, namely that the latitudinal extent of a species' range increases towards the poles (Rapoport 1982). Thus, peripheral populations not only provide a refuge for endangered species but also represent genetic reservoirs. Analyses of range contractions in a wide variety of animals and plants suggest that populations often collapse first in the center, however, leaving isolated fragments on the periphery (Lomolino and Channell 1995; Channell and Lomolino 2000), with these collapses being due to the variety of causes outlined by Caughley (1994).