

Restored forests ignore history

Forests in central Europe were once dominated by conifers, not the broadleaf trees that restoration efforts have focused on growing.

Péter Szabó at the Institute of Botany of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Brno and his colleagues examined fossil pollen from six sites in the central highland region of the Czech Republic, as well as data from a taxonomic survey conducted between 1787 and 1789. They conclude that spruce had been the dominant forest tree since 7,000 BC. This is at odds with the current restoration practice of growing beech and other broadleaf trees, which have long been assumed to be the native trees of the region.

Historical data should be taken into account when restoring forests, the authors suggest.

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