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# The Potential Future Range of Anatolian Kasnak Oaks (*Quercus vulcanica* Boiss. & Heldr. ex Kotschy) in the Face of Climate Change

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## Introduction

Anatolian Kasnak oaks (*Quercus vulcanica* Boiss. & Heldr. ex Kotschy) are unique to the mountainous regions of southwestern Turkey, where they play a crucial role in local ecosystems and have cultural significance. These oaks, part of the Fagaceae family, thrive in Mediterranean climates characterized by hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters, with their largest populations found in areas such as the Isparta and Burdur provinces. However, as global climate patterns shift and temperatures rise, the survival of Kasnak oaks in their current range is uncertain. Climate change poses significant threats to species around the world, impacting not only their geographical distribution but also their ecological dynamics, interactions with other species, and genetic diversity. For Kasnak oaks, this threat is intensified by their limited distribution and specific ecological requirements. This article explores the potential future range of *Quercus vulcanica* under climate change, the factors influencing its survival, and the implications of range shifts for conservation efforts [1].

The sensitivity of Anatolian Kasnak oaks to climate changes stems from their adaptation to specific environmental conditions, particularly soil moisture levels and temperature. As temperatures rise and precipitation patterns shift, these conditions could alter dramatically, impacting both Kasnak oak seedlings and mature trees. Projected climate scenarios suggest increases in temperature and decreases in precipitation, leading to drier and hotter conditions across the Mediterranean region. Consequently, the existing habitats of *Q. vulcanica* may become unsuitable, reducing the availability of water and increasing the risk of drought stress, which Kasnak oaks are not highly tolerant of. Kasnak oaks may therefore need to shift their range to higher altitudes or latitudes, where temperatures are cooler, and moisture levels may be higher [2].

## Description

Climate change models, such as those from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), offer several scenarios for future warming, depending on global emissions levels. Under the most severe scenario, which assumes continued high greenhouse gas emissions, the global temperature increase by 2100 could be substantial enough to make current Kasnak oak habitats entirely uninhabitable. Even under moderate warming scenarios, the species may face significant habitat reduction. As temperatures increase, areas with suitable climatic conditions for *Q. vulcanica* are expected to move northward and upward in altitude. This shift could lead to the species' local extinction in some lower-altitude areas, while higher elevations may become more favorable. Such range shifts, however, are not always feasible for plants, as they depend on a range of biotic and abiotic factors and are influenced by the capacity of species to disperse and establish in new areas [3].

The primary climatic factors influencing the future distribution of Kasnak oaks are temperature, precipitation, and soil moisture. In the case of *Q. vulcanica*, optimal growth occurs under moderate temperatures and sufficient soil moisture, which climate change could drastically alter. As the Mediterranean region is expected to experience pronounced warming and decreased rainfall, particularly in summer months, these changes could lead to lower soil moisture availability. This trend poses a risk for the Kasnak oak, which relies on stable soil moisture levels for nutrient uptake and survival. Higher temperatures increase evapotranspiration, reducing water availability in the soil and potentially stressing Kasnak oak populations [4].

Shifts in Kasnak oak distribution due to climate change are likely to have profound ecological consequences. As a keystone species, Kasnak oaks support diverse plant and animal communities. The trees provide habitats and food resources for numerous organisms, including insects, birds, and mammals. If the distribution of *Q. vulcanica* changes, the species dependent on it may also be forced to relocate, adapt, or face population declines. Additionally, Kasnak oaks contribute to soil stability and water regulation in their ecosystems. The trees' deep root systems help prevent soil erosion and maintain soil structure, which is especially important in mountainous regions. The loss or reduction of Kasnak oak populations could lead to increased soil erosion, landslides, and reduced water retention in soils, impacting downstream water availability and quality [5].

## Conclusion

Education and community engagement are also crucial components of conservation strategies for *Quercus vulcanica*. Local communities in southwestern Turkey have a close relationship with Kasnak oaks, utilizing them for timber, food, and other resources. Educating these communities about the importance of Kasnak oaks and the threats posed by climate change can foster support for conservation initiatives. Encouraging sustainable resource use, implementing agroforestry practices, and involving local people in conservation efforts can create a sense of stewardship, increasing the likelihood of successful long-term conservation outcomes.

In conclusion, the potential future range of Anatolian Kasnak oaks (*Quercus vulcanica*) is threatened by climate change, particularly by rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and increased drought risk. The shift in suitable habitats to higher altitudes and latitudes highlights the need for proactive conservation strategies to ensure the survival of this species. While in-situ conservation, assisted migration, genetic approaches, and community involvement offer potential solutions, each strategy requires careful consideration of ecological, social, and genetic factors. The fate of *Q. vulcanica* in the face of climate change serves as a reminder of the complex challenges that climate change poses to biodiversity worldwide and the importance of innovative, multi-faceted approaches to conservation.

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By addressing the unique needs of Kasnak oaks, conservationists can help protect not only a species of cultural and ecological value but also the ecosystems and communities that depend on them.

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## Conflict of Interest

None.

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