

Ponderosa Forests of Yesterday



Yesterday...

The park-like ponderosa forest October 18, 1903.



... and Today.

Today's forests are overgrown and unhealthy.

Park-like Vistas

Over a century ago, our landscape looked much different than it does today. Forests had an open park-like feel where an acre might contain 20-40 large healthy trees and only a few scattered smaller trees. Trees grew in clumps interspersed with expanses of thick bunches of native grasses.

Sustainable Healthy Ecosystem

Early forests had healthy ecosystems. Ash produced by frequent, low-intensity fires helped recycle nutrients into the ground. Plants and soil organisms flourished providing habitat and food for small

mammals such as squirrels and mice; large animals like deer, elk and antelope; and many bird species.

Fire: Nature's Clean-up Crew

In the past, ponderosa pine forests evolved with fire. Frequent, low-intensity fires burned through the grassy understory every 2-14 years. These fires helped maintain the openness of the forests by clearing away small, unhealthy trees and brush. Larger trees, protected with thick, insulating bark, escaped serious harm.



Courtesy of Ecological Restoration Institute/Northern Arizona University



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Scarlet Bugler (Phoradendron Eschscholzi), Gene Bazar

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Blue Flax (Linum lewisii), Gene Bazar

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Adult's Squirrel, Sylvester Akhmed

Red Tail Hawk, Courtesy of The Abominable at Flagstaff

