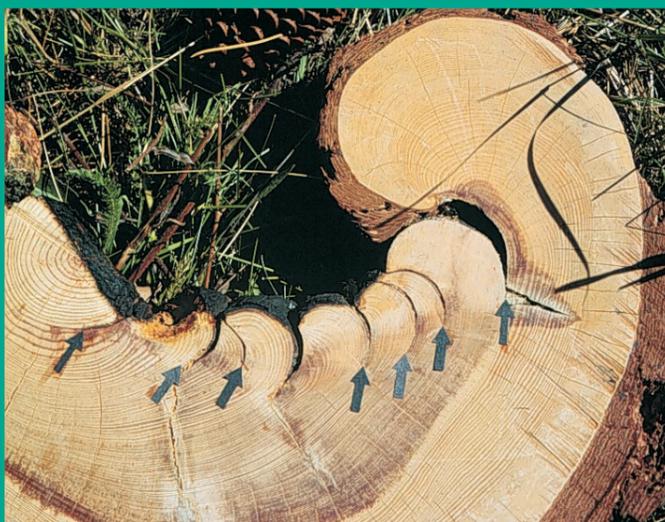




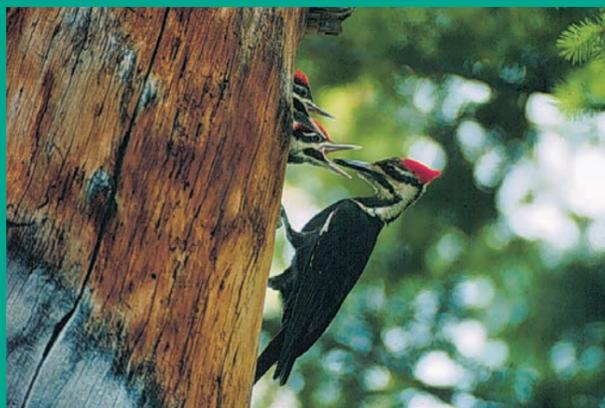
In the past, most fires in these forests were underburns. They burned dead pine needles, fallen tree branches and trunks, grasses, and bushes on the forest floor.



Fires used to occur every few years in these low, dry forests.



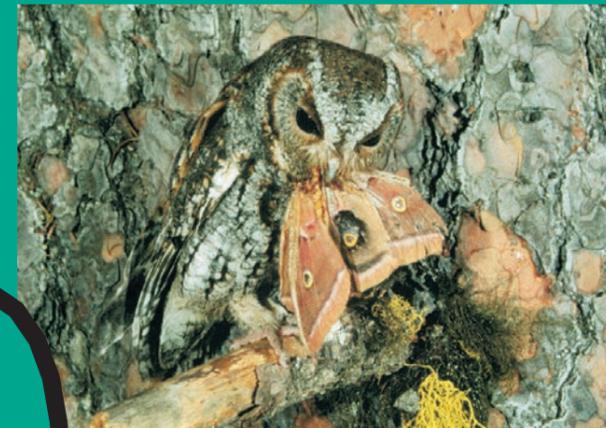
Old growth forest at low elevations have both big and small pine trees. They have some fir thickets and many grassy openings.



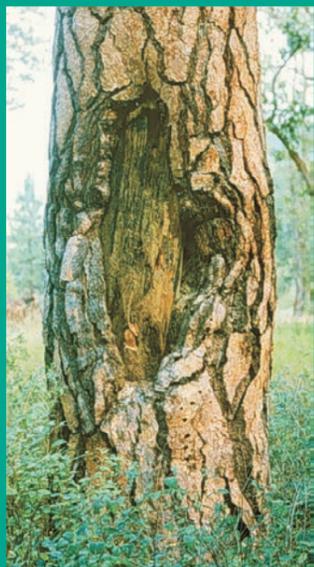
Pileated woodpeckers need very large trees with rotten centers for their nests. They excavate their nest holes high above the ground. Male and female birds take turns incubating their eggs. After the eggs hatch, the parent birds feed insects to the hungry nestlings.



Ponderosa pine



Flammulated Owls nest in the forest's biggest trees. They often use nest holes made years before by pileated woodpeckers. These tiny owls eat moths from the tree tops and grasshoppers from openings and meadows.



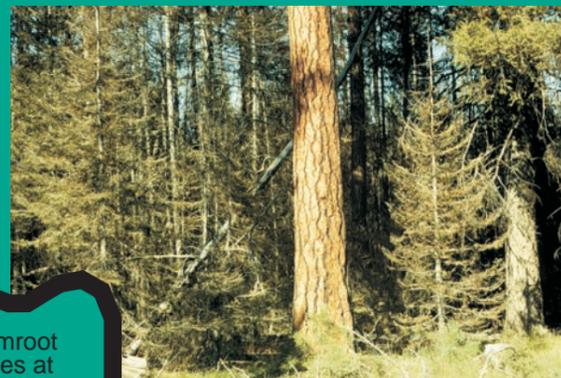
This tree is on a valley bottom, where spring comes early even when snow in the mountains is still deep. About a hundred years ago, Native American women visited this tree in spring. They peeled off a long, wide strip. Then they scraped the cambium from inside the thick bark. This was a sweet treat to eat through the year.



Elk visit low elevation forests and meadows early in spring. There they find the first green grass of the year.



Arrowleaf balsamroot colors the hillsides at low elevations in springtime. If burned, it grows back the next spring from a large bulb.



Douglas-fir grows well in low-elevation forests. It can grow in shade, where young pine trees can't grow.



Armillaria root disease, the fungus that makes these mushrooms, is one of the largest living things in the world. Its underground parts cover hundreds of acres. Armillaria kills Douglas-fir trees of all ages and creates large, open patches where pine trees grow well.