

Old-Growth

Fact Sheet

The Rescue Mission

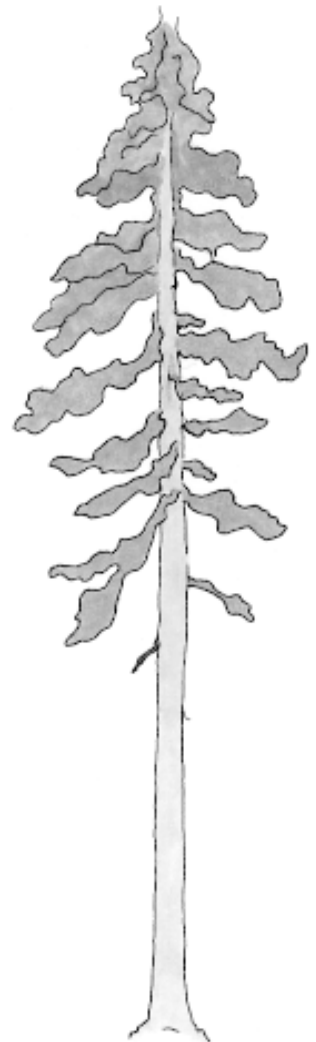


What is old-growth?

- An old-growth forest is more than just a group of old trees. It is a complex of interconnected species of plants, mammals, birds, insects, bacteria, fungi, soil micro-organisms, lichens and other living organisms.
- Old-growth is better defined by features of the forest other than by age. These features include large sized trees, fallen trees, buried wood in various states of decay, and a high diversity of species.
- Old-growth in Alberta is younger than the west-coast but is still biologically diverse. It is this species diversity that is important to maintain.
- As old-growth forests get older, individual trees die and are replaced, creating a diverse habitat for many plants and animals.
- It takes 80 to 150 years for a forest community to grow adequate amounts of lichen for Alberta's Woodland Caribou.

Why is old-growth important?

- Old-growth forests are important for water conservation, flood control, soil development, carbon storage, fish and wildlife habitat, etc...
- Many species in old-growth forests prey on tree eating insects. Therefore, old-growth forests likely benefit the forest as a whole in terms of helping to control the insects people consider harmful.
- Certain species are dependent on old-growth habitat. Some examples of old-growth dependent species are the Woodland Caribou, Northern Flying Squirrel and the pileated woodpecker. It is no coincidence that many of the old-growth dependent species are on the threatened or endangered species list.
- Once an old-growth forest is clearcut, there's no way to get it back. We would risk losing the species diversity that old-growth offers before we even know what we are losing.





Current reality for old-growth in Alberta.

- Alberta Forest Management methods target old-growth first for cutting. Many proposed cutblocks in Alberta's Foothills forest are threatening to destroy unfragmented old-growth this winter of 1999.
- The Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy recommended that "A policy should be developed for the designation and management of old-growth forest ecosystems...This policy should address conservation and preservation strategies".
- Alberta government publically committed to maintaining biodiversity but have not begun the work to accomplish this.

