



## ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON STUDENT LEADERS

*A division of the Association of Washington School Principals*

### Greetings from Joe | May 18, 2020

Joe Fenbert, Program Director – Association of Washington Student Leaders

[Suzanne Simard](#) is a pioneer scientist studying how trees in a forest talk with each other. She even uses the term “communicate” in her scientific writing because the complexity of the things that are happening in the forests are best described using human behavior as the metaphor. It has been shown that an old stump in a forest is receiving nutrients far beyond its ability to gather them with the remnant of life that remains inside.

It appears the forest is keeping all of its members alive for as long as possible. They shift nutrients along an underground labyrinth of fungi based on which trees need it. The healthier trees give up more of what they can gather from the sun and soil to trees that might be experiencing an insect infestation or recovering from broken branches after a windstorm. They use this network to warn each other too about impending dangers, so trees not experiencing an environmental stress have time to prepare for it. Trees seem to be connected deeper along kin lines, often to one giant matriarch in a patch of forest. They also are connected across species within a forest network. Trees don't just take care of their own kind.

I think there are some lessons and questions for us in the trees.

- Who is a part of your Covid network of support?
- How do you support one another?
- What resources do you have that can be given to others that might need it more?
- Who either intentionally or un-intentionally has been left out of the Covid support networks?
- How can you bring them into your support network?
- Besides Covid, what other stresses might be impacting people in the near future? How can you help shift resources to these people so they will be ready when the stress hits?
- How can we expand our thinking from our local Covid support network to the global Covid support network?



Who can you reach out to thank for the support they have given you in the past?

For those unable to get into the forest, I'll leave you with some photos of the trees behind our house all taken at around 11:30 a.m. last Thursday. We are lucky enough to border the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and even luckier to have a surviving 20 acre stand of old growth forest to roam around. The farm across from us is the last remaining intact Homestead Act ranch in Lewis County. For more than 100 years the water rights from the creek running into the farm kept the trees in their natural state. According to [Native Lands](#) which overlays traditional indigenous lands and languages on a present day map, they are the same trees that were around when the Yakamas, Chehalis and Cowlitz tribes all shared this area of the world for seasonal food gathering.

Enjoy a cyber walk among the trees...





**Welcome** to the patch of forest with **Old Growth Characteristics** at 775 Silverbrook Road, Randle, Washington.

Gifford—the 5 month old wonder-puppy—will be our guide.

For more research on old growth forests in Western Washington, look here.

[Identifying Mature and Old Forests in Western Washington](#)

It is estimated that only 7% of the forests in the United States are classified as Old Growth Forests.



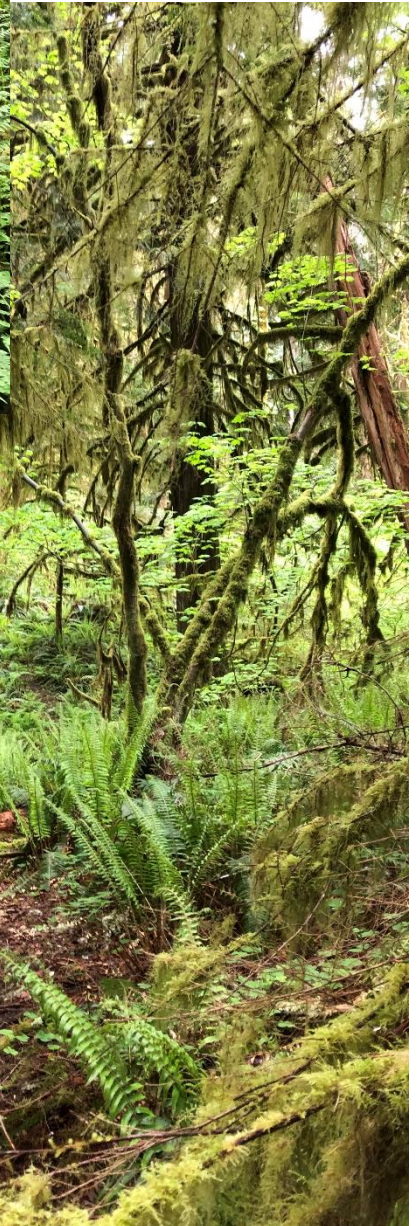




**OLD GROWTH  
CHARACTERISTIC:**

***Really oldddddddddddd  
Forest.***

An old-growth forest — also termed primary forest, primeval forest, late seral forest— is a forest that has attained great age without significant disturbance while producing unique ecological features.







**OLD GROWTH  
CHARACTERISTIC:**

**Down wood in various stages of decay and presence of canopy openings due to tree falls.**

Fifty-year old Douglas Fir falling between 150ish year old Big Leaf Maples (left) and an old, fallen, 300ish year old Douglas Fir (below) surrounded by Viney Maple (and protected by Gifford!)





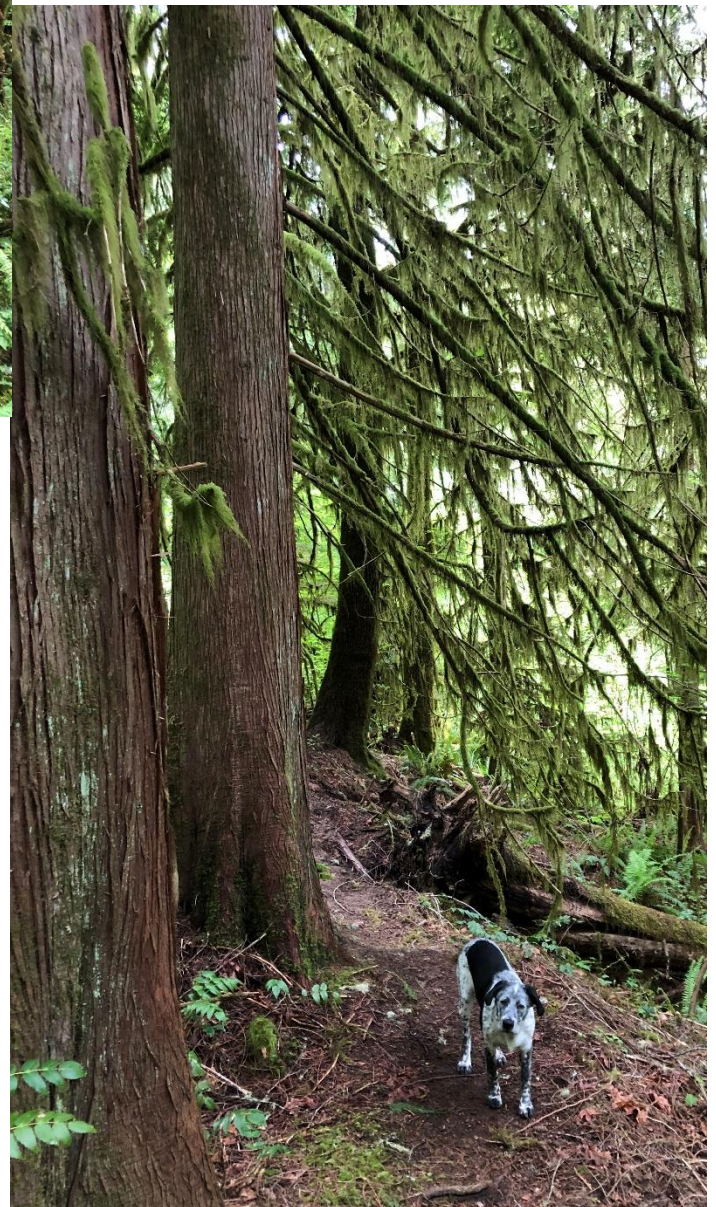


## OLD GROWTH CHARACTERISTIC:

### *Climax forest*

Forest succession is the change in species composition as plants grow, die and are replaced over time. A tree that thrives in a sunny opening (Alder) may not be able to reproduce in the shady environment of a mature forest.

Western redcedar (in photos) and Western hemlock will be the last trees to dominate this patch of forest. The Alders are rare now only growing in sun patches, the Douglas Fir are around 300 years old and in 700 more years, the forest will have reached a steady-state of equilibrium.







**OLD GROWTH  
CHARACTERISTIC:**

*Diverse tree and plant species  
in multilayered canopies*

**Spot the...**

Big Leaf Maple

Douglas Fir

Western Redcedar

Viney Maple

Alder

Salal

Sword fern

Lady fern

Vanilla leaf

And more!

Gifford sampling the local tree  
cuisine.







#### **OLD GROWTH CHARACTERISTIC:**

***Multiple tree-related structures that provide diverse wildlife habitat that increases the biodiversity of the forest ecosystem.***

*Note the bird holes in the snag and the animal burrow within the root clump of a group of Western redcedars*

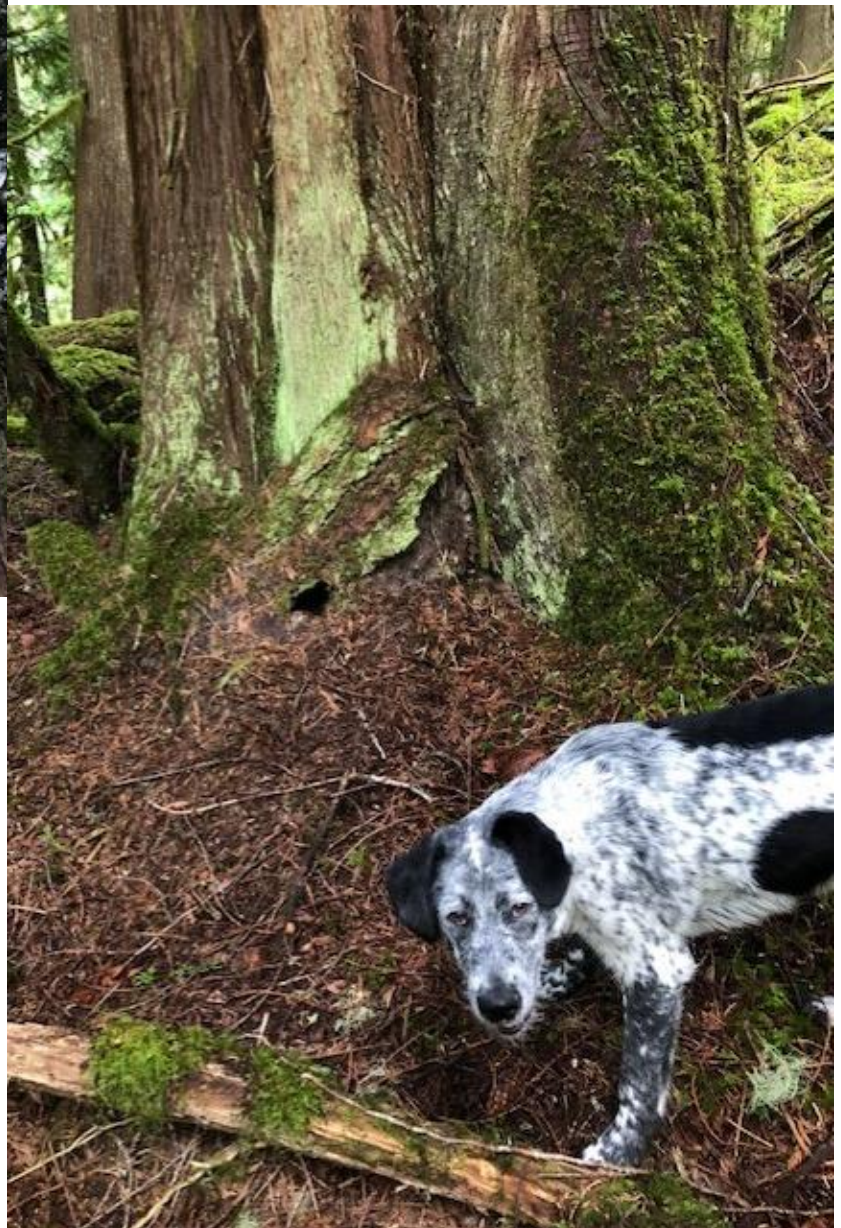
#### **Animal sightings:**

*Frequent guests:*

Elk, Coyotes, Hawks, Eagles, Deer, Turkey Vultures, Various birds, Raccoons, Moles, Tree frogs, Salamanders

*Rare guests:*

Mountain Beaver, Weasel, Opossum, Pacific Rubber Boa (snake), Bear (scat), Cougar (skeleton, died 20 feet from our house)







**OLD GROWTH CHARACTERISTIC:**

*Pit-and-mound topography  
and intact soils with well-  
defined horizons.*

I'm still researching what the  
above characteristics mean and  
how to identify them in  
photographs.

But, enjoy another cool picture  
of the forest...and Gifford in his  
"Majestic Woods" pose.







**OLD GROWTH  
CHARACTERISTIC:**  
*Minimal signs  
of human  
disturbance*