

Old Growth Forest by Rebecca Lexa

What is an old growth forest? It's a forest that's at least 150 years old, that has many old trees both live and dead, with a very diverse selection of animals, plants, fungi and other living beings. And there aren't very many old growth forests left today.

Old growth forests support wildlife and plants that may not be found in younger forests. Because these forests have trees of many ages and species, they're able to provide more shelter and food to more wildlife. Some of the animals that prefer old growth forests include marbled murrelets, northern spotted owls, red tree voles, martens and fishers.

One place where you can see an old growth cedar forest is on Long Island at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. The Don Bonker Cedar Grove is the jewel of the island, made of 274 acres of ancient cedars that may be a thousand years old. Getting to Long Island can sometime be a challenge because it can only be reached by boat. If you want an easier trip, head to the Teal Slough trail just up 101 from the Refuge headquarters. This trail isn't very long, but it features a small remnant of old growth cedar forest. Both of these special places are great ways to see what this part of the Pacific Northwest looked like just a couple of hundred years ago.

When you visit our local old growth forests, take the time to really appreciate the majesty of the immense old trees. Look up into their branches and think of how long it took them to grow that tall.