As the summer season winds down, Field Rangers remain full of energy and enthusiasm as they lead final campground programs of the year. Last Saturday, Field Rangers gathered at Wyeth Campground to demonstrate how the rain shadow effect influences habitat composition and wildlife in the Gorge. Visitors are invited to join upcoming programs at Eagle Creek Campground on September 13th and Skamania Lodge on September 20th. See details below.

As summer comes to a close, the start preparing for autumn by gearing up for cooler weather!

AUTUMN CAMPGROUND PROGRAMS

Join Forest Service Rangers for evening talks on upcoming Fridays at locations below to learn about the natural wonders of the Columbia River Gorge!

SKAMANIA LODGE
September 20 | 6:00PM
Wild & Scenic History of the Gorge

EAGLE CREEK CAMPGROUND
September 13 | 6:30PM
Wildland Fire Ecology

Campground programs are free and open to the public.
Unlike the labor and investments required to reopen human-created infrastructure, the forest has its own mechanisms for rebuilding itself after a forest fire. Two years after Eagle Creek Fire, here are some patterns of forest rebirth visible on the landscape. First, regrowth mirrors the burn mosaic, the variation in the burn severity of trees, under-story plants, and soil. The mosaic creates habitat variation with stands of differing ages and composition through the forest as it grows back, supporting greater biodiversity.

In most areas, understory vegetation is greening back up so the forest floor is markedly different that last year, when bare rocks were exposed even in the lightly burned areas. Wildflowers are among the first to emerge, to the benefit of birds and pollinators. Altitude is another factor that affects how quickly burned areas regenerate, with higher altitudes greening up more slowly.

As you hike through burned areas, look for trees with weeping sap. Called "pitching out", this is a mechanism trees use to compartmentalize damage in order to survive. Surprisingly, the amount of black char on tree trunks isn't the only predictor of tree survival. Factors such as the root damage, size of tree, condition of the crown, and species help determine whether a tree will survive. For example, Douglas firs are generally more resilient than Western Hemlock. Even burned trees that don't ultimately survive can drop viable cones that aid in the emergence of new seedlings.

What to expect: Severely burned areas will grow back more slowly, as seen in the standing dead trees on the ridge lines. Over the next 5-10 years, dead trees will fall and larger dead trees will fragment, losing their crowns. This leaves a dead snag that produces habitat and food for birds and mammals, as insects burrow into decaying wood. Meanwhile saplings and berries emerge at ground level, providing easy forage for deer and elk.

Spanish Webpage Launched!
The Forest Service is making strides towards creating more resources for residents and visitors who speak community languages other than English. We recently launched a new trip planning page in Spanish. Find it at www.fs.usda.gov/crgnsa by looking for the Planifica Tu Viaje link!

Last weekend, we also tested out some newly translated materials in Russian at the Slavic Festival in Portland. We hope to launch a Russian trip planning page soon.