

The Sacramento District Review

4 Lost Lodge Rd, Cloudcroft, NM 88317

575-682-2551

The Story of our Understory



Yarrow plant in its full summer splendor.

est height level below the forest canopy. Plants in the understory include a variety of seedlings and saplings of canopy trees together with forbs, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers.

-Stephanie Lopez
Often times interest in forests is focused on trees since they classify a forest and are of great economic value. Yet, a large amount of plant diversity occurs in the understory (ground-layer plants).

This type of vegetation, to the highest degree, can manipulate ecosystem functions like nutrient cycling and have important effects on nearby trees. For that reason, characteristics of the understory impact future species' abundance and competition of the canopy.

Understory is the term for the area of a forest which grows at the low-

The forest understory is a heterogeneous and dynamic habitat substrate for many kinds of animals such as birds, reptiles, mammals, amphibians including threatened or endangered species.

For example, Gambel oak and alligator juniper provide extra structural diversity, food, cover, and nest sites for several species.

Areas of brush and sprouts may provide important fawning grounds for deer as well as cover and foraging habitat for rodents. The productivity of understory vegetation is an important resource for both wildlife and livestock.

Understory vegetation can be restored in various ways. For instance, naturally occurring fire favors understory vegetation by reducing tree competition for sunlight, moisture, and nutrients by killing trees. Additionally, understory plant species appear to benefit from the reintroduction of fire as a natural ecological process by accelerating the nutrient cycling of soils.

Management practices carried out by the USDA Forest Service to assist in understory growth include prescribed burning, mechanical thinning, management of livestock and reseeding with natives species i.e. meadow restoration. Incorporating the management of livestock grazing regimes following silvicultural activities allow the understory to grow and reproduce.

Happy 4th of July!



In the truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed; it must be achieved.

~Franklin D. Roosevelt



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The Story of our Understory cont.



Sideoats grama flowers showing off their purple color.

Variations in climate and soil characteristics also contribute to the diversity and composition of understory species. Understanding how ecosystems function within the forest understory is critical to forest management.

Three common plants found in the understory on the Sacramento Ranger District are Western yarrow, Sideoats grama, and Mullein (Velvet Plant).

The Common Yarrow is one of best known of all mountain flowers. The long, lacy, fernlike leaves are helpful in identifying this plant species. Yarrow generally grows up to 2 to 3 feet tall.

The yellowish-white flowers appear in flat-topped clusters, often forming several auxiliary clusters below the top. The flowering season starts from late May to September.

It is frequently found throughout the West from Ponderosa forest to timberline, on disturbed soils of open forests and grasslands, and along roads and paths. Yarrow leaves can be used as an effective first aid to stimulate clotting in cuts and abrasions.

Sideoats grama grass has blue-green foliage with purple flowers. The small oat-like seeds develop on the side of the stalk. It is a warm-season grass growing 12 to 40 inches tall.

Sideoats grama is found on rocky open slopes, woodlands, drainages, south-facing slopes and forest openings up to an elevation of about 7,000 feet. It is consid-

ered good forage for livestock and is also good for erosion control.

Mullein is a plant that is sometimes considered a weed and is usually found in open areas where the ground has been disturbed. Other places it grows include fields, roadsides, drainages, and forest openings.

Mullein flowers are yellow with five petals. They bloom from June to September. Mullein produces huge numbers of seeds. One mullein plant may produce over 100,000 seeds in a year. Seeds can survive almost any conditions and can last up to 100 years.

Mullein plant in full bloom.



Evening Lecture Series

Our Evening Lecture Series continued with a great crowd on June 14th for a presentation on OHV Regulations on Public Lands.

The July Lecture Series topic is “ Feral Hog Biology, Behavior, and Impacts on NM Resources.”

To gain a better understanding about the problems feral swine create and how USDA/Wildlife Services are working with other state and federal agencies to manage this environmental and economic issue please join us at the Sacramento Ranger District from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. at the district office, #4 Lost Lodge Road in Cloudcroft on July 12th.

Upcoming Lecture Series dates:

August 9th - ‘Mapping’ the History of the Area Railroad

For additional information please call 575-682-2551.

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Volunteers Help Control Noxious Weeds



Dedicated volunteers removing weeds.

-Ralph Fink

Recently, the Sacramento Ranger District partnered with the Otero Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Otero County Master Gardener Association and Native Plant Society of New Mexico for a volunteer day.

Volunteers and employees from these organizations teamed up in May to assist the Lincoln with noxious weed control. The team concentrated its efforts where Clayton Canyon joins with Cox Canyon off Highway 130. This area is located within Sacramento Mountains Checkerspot butterfly habitat.

Due to concerns of non-target species being

negatively impacted by herbicides, the Sacramento Ranger District does not currently spray noxious weeds

in these locations, and it is for these reasons that the team selected this area to concentrate its efforts. The team focused on mechanically removing musk thistle from the area and enjoyed a beautiful day in the Sacramento Mountains.

Musk thistle is a noxious weed native to southern Europe and western Asia. This plant is capable of invading western range and pasture land and out-competing native vegetation by producing dense stands comprised solely of musk thistle.

On a side note, not all thistles are "bad" and native thistles play an important role as pioneer species, reclaiming disturbed soil until other species can gain a foothold at the site.

The Sacramento Mountains are also home to the Sacramento Mountains thistle, a threatened species that can only be found here in the Sacramento Mountains.

The Sacramento Ranger District would like to thank the volunteers that participated, and the Otero Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS for coordinating this event.

If you are interested in other volunteer opportunities like this on the forest or in the community, please feel free to contact the Lincoln National Forest 575-434-7200, Otero Soil and Water Conservation District or NRCS (both can be contacted at 575-437-3100).

Non-native musk thistle

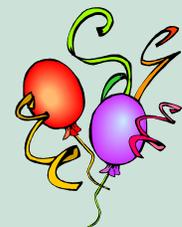


Join us for Smokey Bear's 68th Birthday Party!!!

Sacramento Ranger Station
Saturday, August 11th
10:00am-1:00pm

Activities will include:

- Meet Smokey
- Sign the BIG birthday card to Smokey
- Sing to Smokey & cut the birthday cake at 10:30
- Coloring contest
- Wildfire prevention giveaways



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The Ranger's Report



James Duran, District Ranger

I would like to thank everyone who showed their support and joined us in celebrating two great events on the Lincoln National Forest.

Recently, we came together as a community and as friends to celebrate the completion of the Mexican Canyon Trestle Restoration effort. What a perfect day! The celebration was scheduled on National Trails Day in order to celebrate and enjoy the trail systems that enhance the trestle experience.

The event recognized teamwork, partnerships and collaborative efforts that led to the

accomplishment of a team goal.

In the late 1800's when the trestle was constructed there were many tales of great leadership and stories of great unity within a community to build a railroad system in mountainous terrain. This effort to establish a railroad system was definitely not an easy one, but it was accomplished.

One hundred years later, the trestle was at risk of collapse. Again, there was a need for a community to come together and work towards a common goal.

Once more, the task was not easy and some may argue that in the modern era this type of project is even more complex, but it was accomplished.

It was accomplished through hard work, great unity and collaboration amongst all partners. I want to thank everyone who gave their support to the project and helped to ensure the trestle is part of our lives for future generations to enjoy.

I look forward to continued collaboration and teamwork in the journey to accomplish other challenging tasks on the Sacramento Ranger District. With your support and teamwork, many goals can be achieved.

Write a letter to the Ranger

If you've ever wondered about timber harvests, endangered species, off-road vehicle use, or other natural resource management topics, this is your opportunity to get your answer.

Individuals aspiring to acquire knowledge about the US Forest Service are encouraged to escape the fast-paced world of technology and write a good old-fashioned letter to the Ranger.

If you would like to write a letter to James Duran, Sacramento District Ranger, please mail it to: P.O. Box 288, Cloudcroft, NM 88317.

