

TONGASS

Family Field Guide

Discover common plants and animals
in the Tongass National Forest



**EXPLORE
TOGETHER!**



Are you ready to explore the Tongass National Forest?

Black Bear

Jennifer Seely

Take this guide outside on your next adventure and see how many plants and animals you can find. You can discover different plants and animals across the Tongass National Forest. This booklet only includes the most common of each.

FUN FACTS

The Tongass...

... is the largest national forest

... has two icefields

... has 5,000 miles of rivers and streams that support wild salmon



Jen Christopherson

Safety First

...so plan and prepare before you go.

- Be prepared for changing weather conditions.
- Help may be very far away so prepare before you go.
- Always be aware of your surroundings and give wildlife plenty of space.

As you explore the Tongass National Forest, try to figure out how different plants and animals might be connected. Plants and animals depend on each other and the places they live. Look for this symbol to discover these connections.



Find a plant or animal not included in the book? Check out the back page to add your own notes and drawings.

Arctic Tern

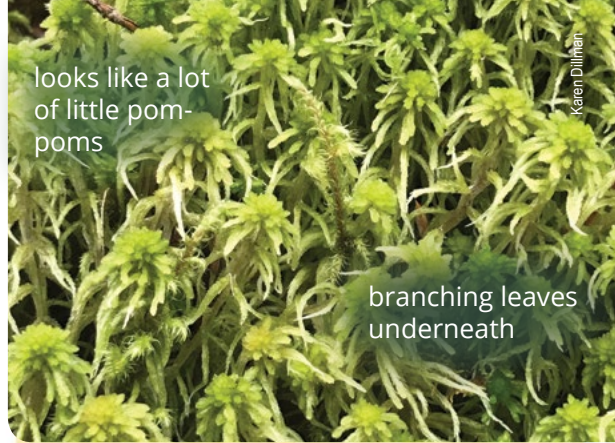
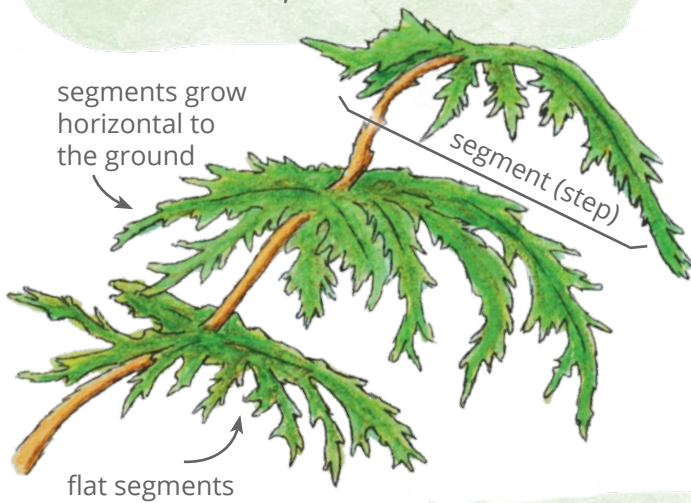
Brian Logan



MOSS & LICHENS

Stair Step Moss

The flat parts (segments) grow off of each other like steps on a staircase. This moss grows one new step each year. How old is the moss that you see?



looks like a lot of little pom-poms

branching leaves underneath

Karen Dillman

Peat Moss/Sphagnum Moss

Feel the moss. Do you notice how soft it is? Peat moss can absorb A LOT of water, like a sponge.



hangs from trees

pale yellow-green

looks like tangled string

Karen Dillman

Lung Lichen

Lung lichen grows on trees in really wet forests. Gently touch the lichen - does it feel like stiff leather?



about the size of the palm of your hand

loosely attached

looks like a leaf

These lichens don't like polluted air. If you find lots of them, what does that tell you about the air around you?

Common Witch's Hair

There's no surprise how this lichen got its name... it looks like a witch got her hair caught in a tree! Not only is it great for Halloween costumes, Sitka black-tailed deer eat this lichen in the winter to survive.



WILDFLOWERS

Nootka Lupine

Lupines take nutrients in the air and put them in the soil, which helps other plants grow.

pea-shaped flowers are purple with white accents

long clusters of flowers



clusters of 5-8 narrow oval leaves

USDA Forest Service

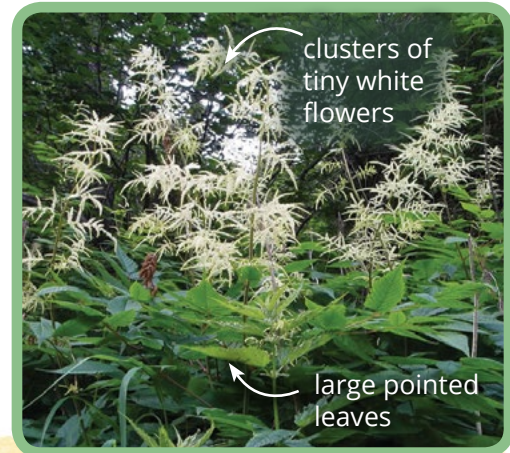


dark pink to purple flowers

flowers grow in clusters up the red stem

Fireweed

Flowers bloom at different times on the stem, starting at the bottom and ending at the top. Locals know the end of summer is coming when the fireweed finishes blooming.

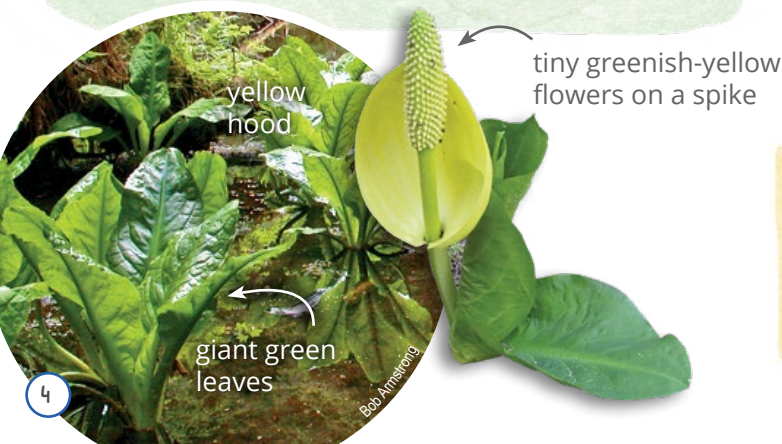


clusters of tiny white flowers

large pointed leaves

Skunk Cabbage

Pee-yew! It smells bad like a skunk! Why the gross smell? The flower attracts pollinators, like flies, and keeps some animals from eating it.



yellow hood

tiny greenish-yellow flowers on a spike

giant green leaves

Bob Amisano

Goatsbeard

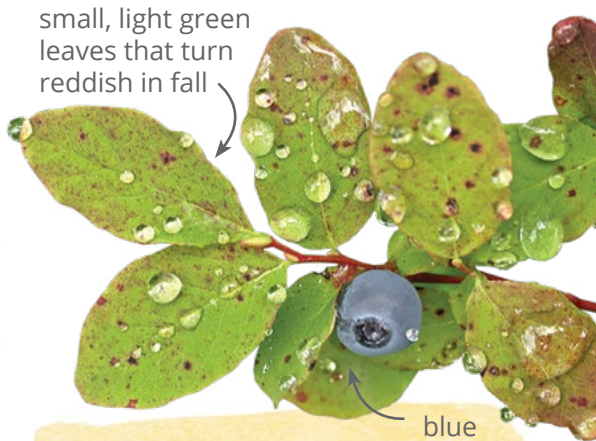
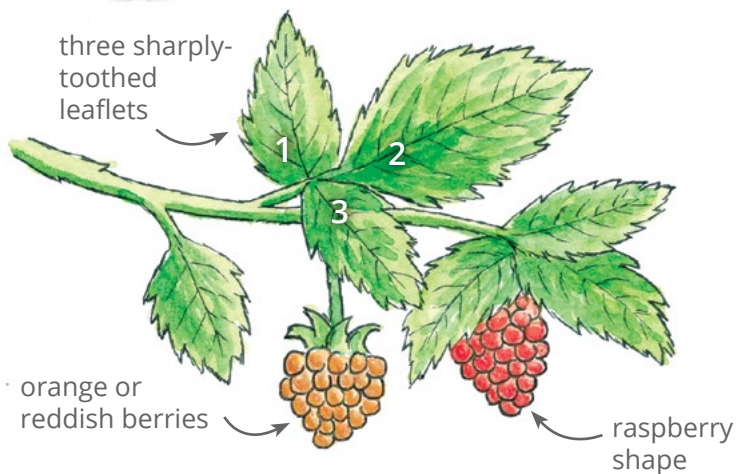
It can grow up to 6 feet tall! If you see goatsbeard, is it shorter or taller than you are?

BERRIES

WARNING: Do NOT pick or eat anything without an expert's permission. Some berries in the forest are poisonous.

Salmonberry

Look familiar? They are related to raspberries but come in red and golden orange.



Blueberries

Berries from different bushes can taste differently, so sample a few bushes before you choose your picking area. Watch for bears, who love blueberries, too!



Red Elderberry

While elderberries are only edible for humans if they've been cooked, crows and other birds love eating them raw.



Berries start green and ripen to red or white.



Baneberry

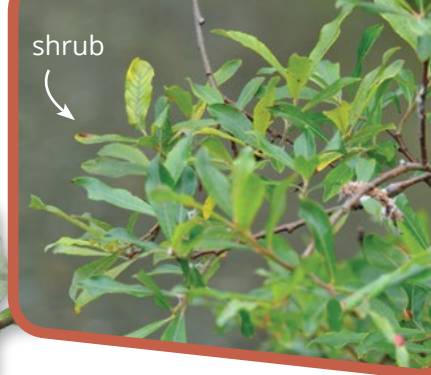
These berries are **POISONOUS**. Berries, leaves, and roots can make you throw up and die!

DECIDUOUS TREES

Q: WHAT DOES DECIDUOUS MEAN? (Answer at bottom of page.)

Willow

Willows are a good place to find wildlife. Look for birds hopping between willow branches searching for bugs to eat.

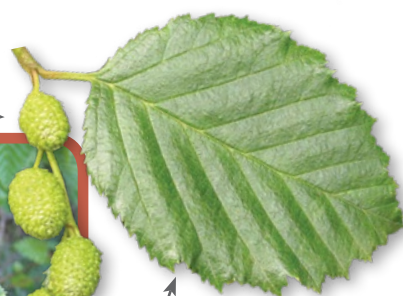


Willow seeds hidden in thick fluff

long leaves



small green cones are often mistaken for berries



oval leaf

pointed tip and serrated edges

Black Cottonwood

Black cottonwood like to grow near water. Feel the flattened leaf stalks, which catch the wind and make the leaves flutter back and forth on a breezy day.

seed pods covered in white, fluffy hairs



heart-shaped leaves with sharply pointed tips

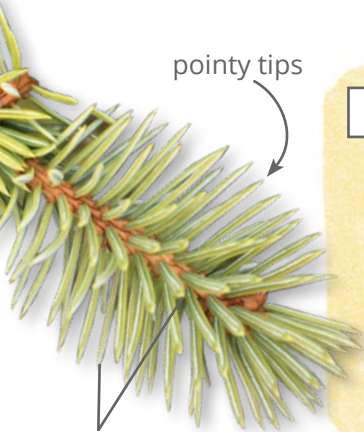


thick, bright green leaves

Alder (Sitka and Red)

The Sitka alder is a shrub and the red alder is a tree. Alders need open space to grow, so you often find them along trail edges and road shoulders. Can you find any along a trail?

NEEDLE-LEAF TREES



pointy tips

needles stick out in all directions

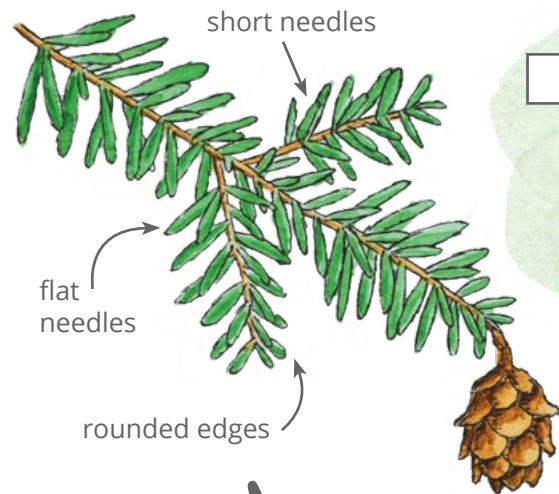
Sitka Spruce

If you shake hands with a spruce, beware of its spiky needles! Despite its prickly reputation, spruce is a good food source for many animals, especially red squirrels who eat the seeds found between the scales of the cones.



Spiky Spruce!

Laurie Lamm



short needles

flat needles

rounded edges

Hemlock (Western and Mountain)

If you shake hands with a hemlock, you'll be happy to find its flat needles have rounded ends. Many animals hide in hemlock's shady branches. These branches make good places for animals like squirrels to build nests.



 Happy Hemlock!

Cedar (Alaska Yellow-cedar and Western Redcedar)

Cedar needles look and feel more like scales. These scaly cedar branches are a winter food source for Sitka black-tailed deer.



Scaly Cedar!

flat and scaly leaves

MAMMALS & FISH

BEAR SAFETY

1. BE A NOISY HIKER

Hike in a group and sing or talk so you don't surprise a bear. Make up a fun song!

2. GIVE BEARS SPACE

Don't approach a bear - watch from a distance.

Sitka Black-tailed Deer

Deer eat many different kinds of plants, including some that other animals don't like to eat, like skunk cabbage.

shorter than most other black-tailed deer



deer track

black tail

stocky body

bright red body

green head

spawning adult

USDA Forest Service

Brown Bear

Their strong shoulders allow them to dig for bugs, plant roots and other food.



Black Bear

Black bears use their short, sharp claws to climb trees. Sows also send their cubs up trees as a babysitting strategy.

Both black bears and brown bears vary in color from blonde to brown to black.

Sockeye Salmon

Sockeye salmon are one of five types of salmon found on the Tongass. The other four are Chum, King, Silver, & Pink.

Salmon are born in fresh water, migrate to the ocean, and then return to freshwater to spawn.

Beaver

Beavers are the largest rodent in North America and, like all rodents, their teeth never stop growing. Gnawing on trees and branches helps file down their teeth.



Porcupine

Porcupines are rodents, too! Their quills are modified hairs that are soft when they are born, but then quickly harden. One of their favorite foods is willow leaves.



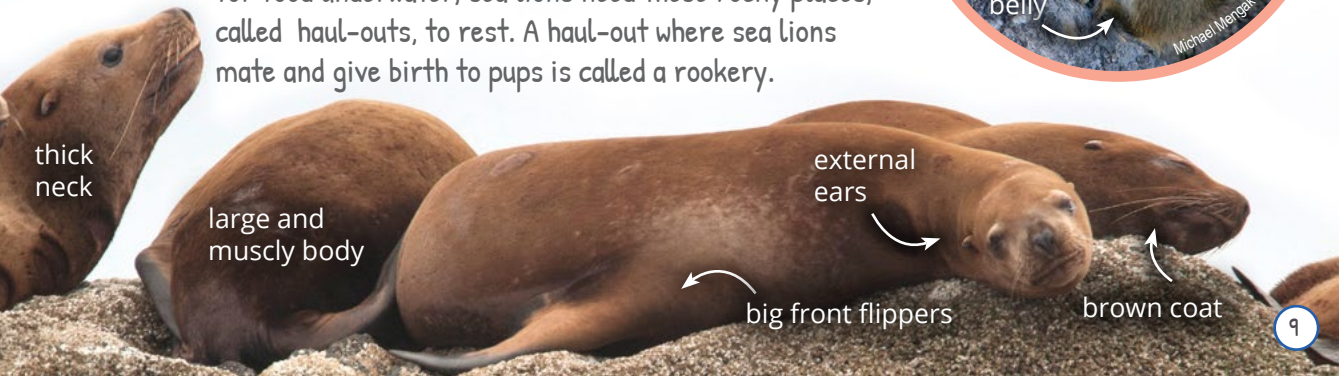
Red Squirrel

Find out where red squirrels have been hanging out by finding one of their middens.



Steller Sea Lion

Look for large groups of sea lions lounging on rocky outcrops along the shores of the Tongass. After looking for food underwater, sea lions need these rocky places, called haul-outs, to rest. A haul-out where sea lions mate and give birth to pups is called a rookery.



BIRDS

thick beak

black body

Bald Eagle

Immature (young) eagles are dark brown. A bald eagle doesn't have bright white head feathers until it is about five years old. There are more bald eagles in Alaska than in anywhere else in the US.



Ravens are larger than crows

Raven

Ravens are scavengers, and will eat just about anything. They love elderberries in late summer! Ravens are playful and very smart. They are able to solve complex problems.



dark brown body

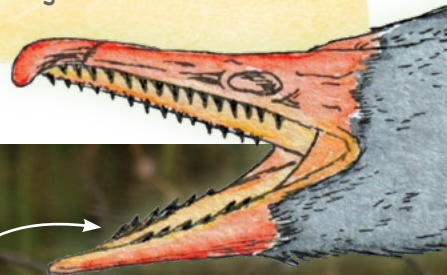
wing span up to 7.5 feet

white tail

white head

Common Merganser

Mergansers have a serrated (toothed) bill to catch aquatic insects and small fish while diving.



Adult Male

green head

white body

black back

serrated bill (on both female and male)

maroon 'mohawk'

Adult Female

grey and white body



black cap
white cheeks
chestnut back
grey body

Bob Armstrong

Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Chickadees are tough little birds! They gather together in flocks to survive cold Alaskan winters. In the spring, they use animal fur to make cozy nests for their young.



red head and chest

white stripe on side

medium sized body

Red-breasted Sapsucker

Have you seen any tree trunks with holes drilled in a neat row or grid? Sapsuckers drill holes in tree bark and let the sap ooze out. They love licking the sap and eating insects that are attracted to the sap.



immature (young) gull

grey wing tips, unlike most gulls whose wing tips are black or white

Jen Christopherson

Glaucous-winged Gull

Glaucous-winged gulls eat just about anything. They will often steal food from other birds and swallow large prey whole, even sea stars!

Steller's Jay

Steller's jays are smart, noisy birds and great imitators. They can give a perfect imitation of a red-tailed hawk to make other birds scatter. They can even sound like a marmot.



dark head

blue body

Bob Armstrong

NATURE NOTES

Find a plant or animal not included in the book? Add it on this page.
This is your field guide so add notes, thoughts, and sketches.



*Interested in discovering
even more plants and
animals in the Tongass
National Forest?
Forest Service rangers
are happy to suggest more
in-depth field guides for the
area.*



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