

Video: UBC GEOG 102 TA Interprets The Forest Structure and Signs of Change

So, when we look around at the understory, the first thing that we notice is the tree species there are different than those in the canopy. The understory trees are needle leaf trees, whereas the canopy were broadleaf trees. These needle leaf trees grow in the understory because they're adapted to shade. Whereas the broadleaf trees are not well adapted to shade. These needle leaf trees also grow very tall, taller than the broadleaf trees. So, if we want to project what happens to the forest in the future, we can just identify the species in the understory. Eventually these understory trees will grow up taller than the broadleaf trees, and they'll become the dominant species. But there's another way to predict what happens to this forest in the future, and that's to go to a forest that we know to be older, and to see what it looks like. So, toward the end of this tour, we'll go to a needle leaf forest, which is over 100 years old, and we can look at what we see there, and compare it to what we expect from looking at the understory trees here. It'll be interesting to see whether what we get from this narrative of succession, the young trees here becoming the old trees and overtaking the canopy, is similar to what we see there.