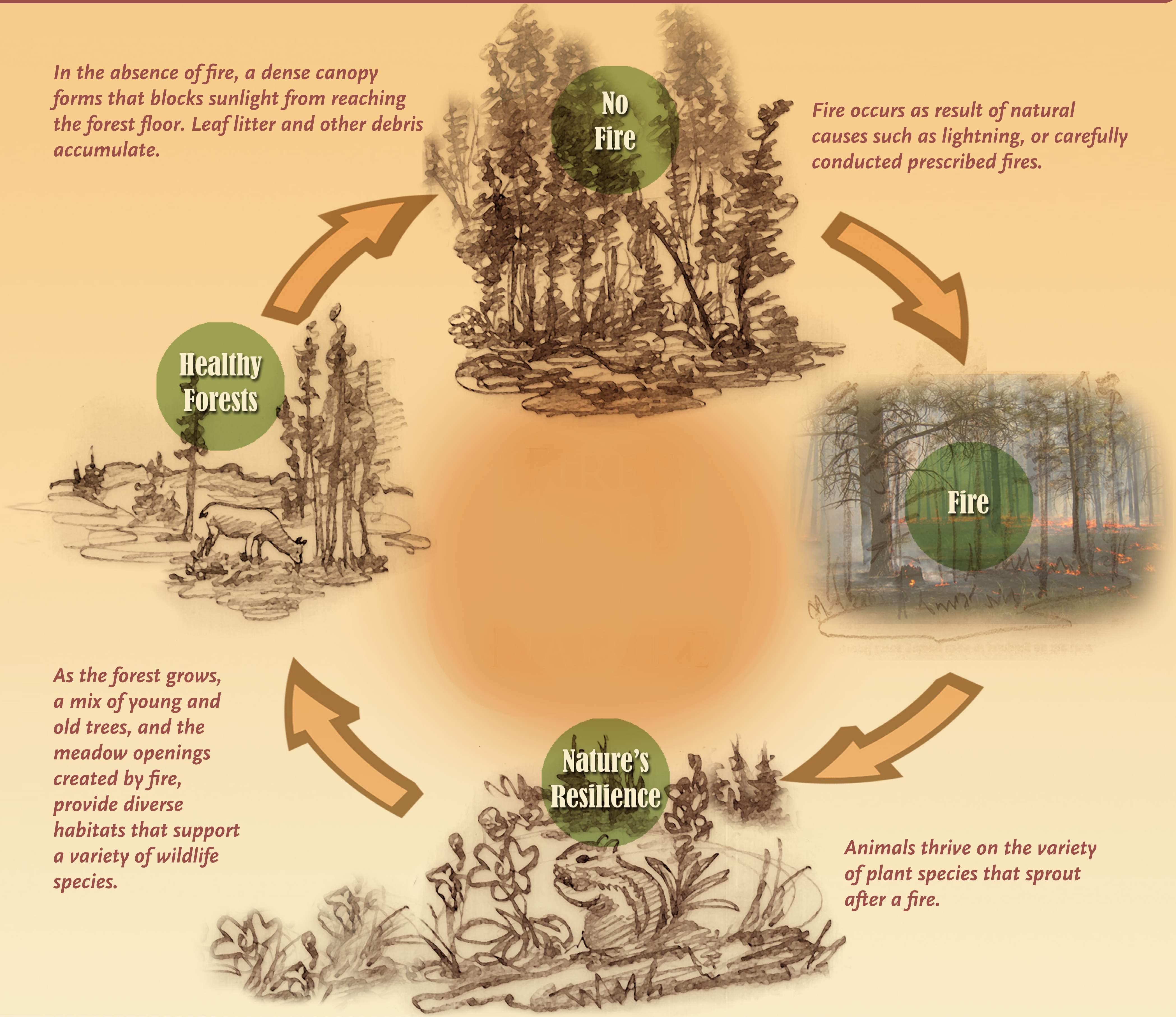


Fire Has a Role



The landscape around Sedona depends on fire. Most of the plants and animals that live in the forest are able to survive low-intensity wildfires, and some species actually need periodic fires to thrive. Cavity-nesting birds, like the northern flicker, excavate nest holes in the trunks of standing dead trees killed by fire. The thick bark of a ponderosa pine protects it from heat, while widely spaced branches high off the ground prevent most fires from reaching its crown. The seeds of some plants, like the pointleaf manzanita, only germinate after being scarred by fire.

Natural fires (caused by lightning) and prescribed fires (carefully set by firefighters) thin the forest by burning

excess vegetation and opening the canopy. This makes more space for trees and allows sunlight to reach the forest floor where grasses and wildflowers can grow. Regular, low-intensity fires actually improve habitat by cleaning up the forest, adding nutrients to the soil, and encouraging new growth. The absence of fire creates dense growth and buildup of dry and dead plants, which leads to more severe fires.

As you explore, look at the forest surrounding you. Does the sunlight reach the forest floor? Do you see new growth? Are the trees crowded close together or spaced well apart? These signs speak to the health of the forest.

The seeds of some plant species like the pointleaf manzanita do not germinate until they are heated in a fire.

The thick bark of a ponderosa pine protects it from heat, while the absence of low branches prevents most fires from reaching its crown.



Coconino National Forest

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