



# Opening up for aspen

The Forest Service is enhancing openings for aspens by removing the evergreen trees that overshadow them. The sun-loving aspens respond quickly with new sprouts reaching for the sky.



Historically, frequent fires kept pines and firs from overtaking the aspen. Following a century of fire suppression, few aspen stands remain in the Prescott area. Aging stands like the one in this photo, shaded by competing trees, are unable to reproduce. Without management they will soon be overgrown and disappear.

Aspen stands add an important forest element—variety. More diverse plant life provides habitat for a richer variety of wildlife. This diversity enriches our enjoyment of the forest as well. We are treated to the whispering of aspen leaves in the spring and summer, and vibrant splashes of gold in the fall!



Aspen stands in Arizona are small, but the *ecotones*, edge areas created where aspens meet ponderosas, benefit all kinds of wildlife.

Mule deer graze on the variety of grasses, sedges and other plants in these edge areas. Succulent young aspen sprouts also provide deer with critical winter food.

Deer mice find cover on the aspen forest floor, feeding on insects in the summer and seeds in winter.

Gray fox and flammulated owls forage for insects, mice, and other small prey beneath the aspens.

Red-naped sapsuckers drill sap wells for food. In mature aspen trees, they make cavities, which are holes used for nesting.

Western bluebirds and other cavity-nesters that are unable to drill their own holes often move into abandoned sapsucker nests.