

How to Recognize Old Ponderosa Pine Trees that Have Seen Lots of Fire (Because they aren't necessarily the biggest ones!)

by James P. Riser II

Old trees are typically characterized by:

- ▶ Twisted thick trunks and thick limbs
- ▶ Sparse, relatively open crowns
- ▶ Often dead leaders with flat topped crowns
- ▶ Lower branches pruned to above ground level by fire (often charcoal present on them)
- ▶ Presence of scar surfaces (“cat faces”) with multiple fire scars at base of trunk



◀▲ Photos from Huckaby et al. 2003 RMRS-GTR-109 and RMRS-GTR-110

Often the oldest fire history record is preserved on old, fire-scarred stumps and logs:

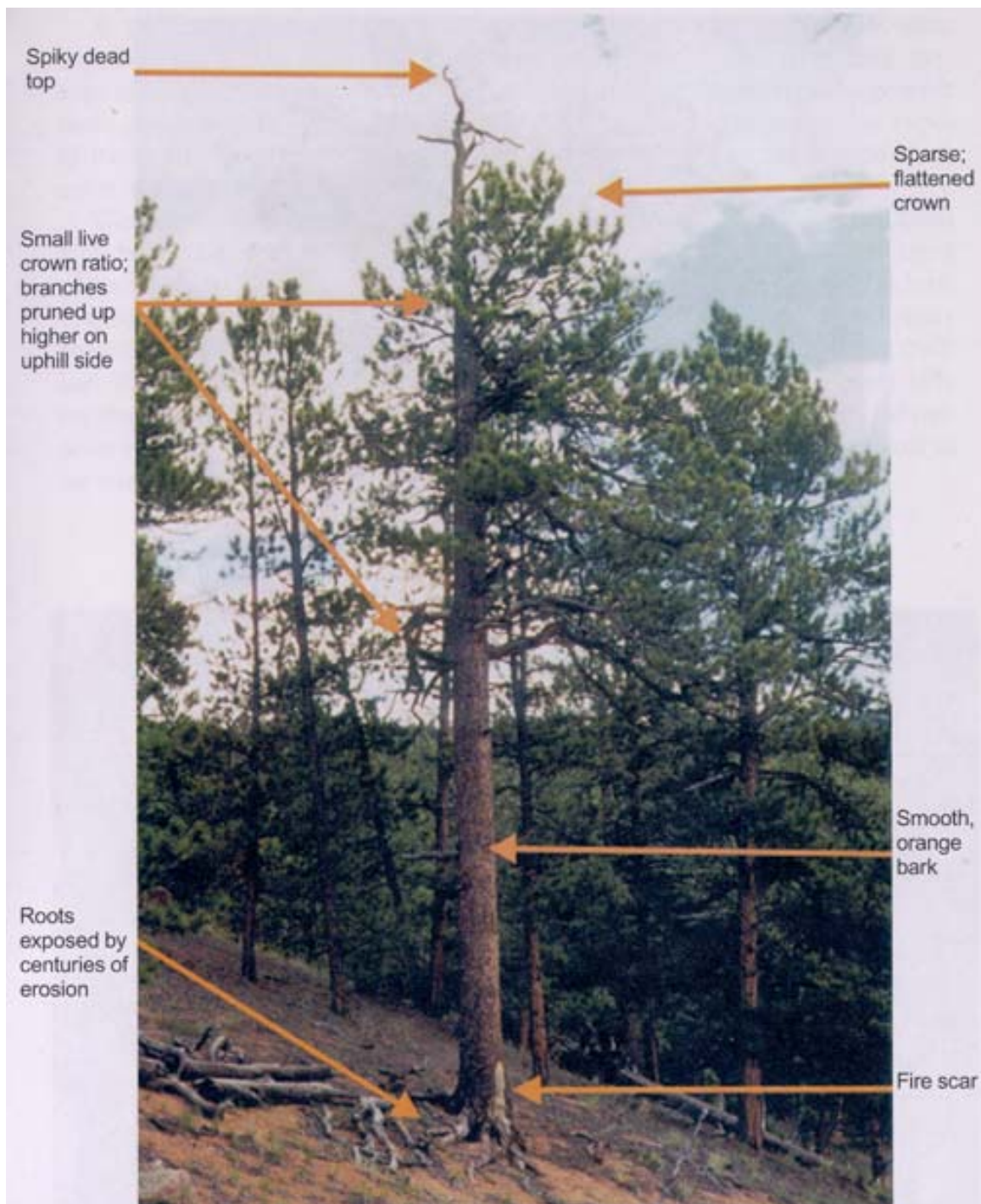
- ▶ “Cat faces” preserved by resin and resistant to rot
- ▶ Majority of stump may be rotted, but scars are often intact
- ▶ Fire-scarred logs, snags, and old stumps often contain well preserved fire history records

Small, highly decayed stump containing well preserved “cat face” with many fire scars ▼



Sampling a fire-scarred ponderosa pine log (individual scars appear as long ridges) ▼





▲ Photo of representative old growth ponderosa pine from Huckaby et al. 2003 RMRS-GTR-109

References:

Huckaby, L. S. et al. 2003. Field Guide to old ponderosa pines in the Colorado Front Range. USDA Forest Service RMRS-GTR-109 (available online: http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr109.html)

Huckaby, L. S. et al. 2003. Identification and ecology of old ponderosa pine trees in the Colorado Front Range. USDA Forest Service RMRS-GTR-110 (available online: http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr110.html)