

Station 14: Wolf Trees

This large sprawling eastern white pine tree (*Pinus strobus*) is an example of a wolf tree. White pine wolf trees are mature, often solitary trees that stand out in the landscape due to their size and age. Wolf trees provide essential habitat and resources for wildlife, including birds, mammals, and insects. Their expansive canopies and thick trunks offer nesting sites and shelter. These trees play a vital role in forest ecosystems by supporting biodiversity and contributing to soil health through leaf litter.

The relationship between pine weevils and wolf tree formation is an interesting aspect of forest ecology. Young eastern white pines growing in full sunlight are often infected by the white pine weevil. The white pine weevil is a beetle that lays its eggs in the bark of the terminal shoot of the tree. When the eggs hatch, the larvae feed on the tree eventually killing the terminal shoot. As a result, multiple lateral branches take over the role of the main trunk. The size and sprawling nature of wolf trees in the forest provide evidence that they once grew in full sun, perhaps in a pasture or in a gap in the forest. In many regions, preserving wolf trees is important for maintaining ecological balance and honoring the natural history of the landscape.