

## Facts About Snags



Nearly two-thirds of all wildlife species use snags or woody debris during some time in their lives.



In North America, over 85 species of birds use cavities in dead trees.



Over 300 species of mammals, including flying squirrels, bats, raccoons, opossums, gray foxes, chipmunks, white-footed mice and mink use cavities in snags for food, shelter or nesting.



Snags provide hunting perches for raptors such as hawks and insect-eating birds, like flycatchers.

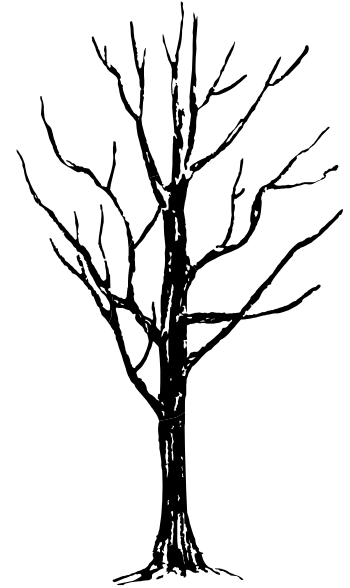


Some butterflies and moths will use cavities or loose bark on a snag to hibernate or metamorphize.



Even while it decomposes, a snag's roots help anchor the soil and prevent erosion.

# Not Just A Dead Tree

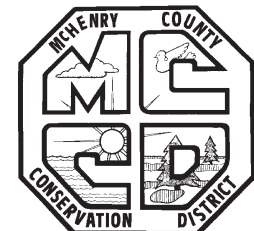


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## There's Life in Dead Trees

Healthy living trees provide wildlife with a variety of food and shelter, but what about dead trees? Standing dead trees (called "snags") are a natural and vital part of a healthy forest ecosystem. Snags provide food and housing to numerous plants and animals as well as adding nutrients to the soil and preventing erosion. Depending upon the tree species and environmental conditions, dead trees may stand for hundreds of years offering shelter and important habitat diversity.



## The Role of Snags

When a tree dies and starts to decompose, it is quickly colonized by fungi and invertebrates that help speed the decay process. This activity attracts



species like woodpeckers, which forage on the larvae. The woodpeckers then excavate cavities in the softened wood for nesting and roosting. Other animals later use these cavities for nesting, shelter or food storage. As the

bark loosens and starts to fall off the tree, birds like nuthatches and brown creepers forage along the trunk for insects hiding on and under the bark. Creatures like bats, salamanders, snakes and mice use the area under the loosened bark for cover. When the tree falls, other species use it until it is completely decomposed and cycled back into the system.

## Creating a Wildlife Tree

You can never have too many snags to suit your wildlife neighbors! Of course, if a snag is likely to fall and hit



your home, your neighbor's home or any other personal property, it should be removed. But if you are able to leave a portion of a dead tree standing (at least 15 feet is recommended), you can greatly improve the wildlife habitat on your property and create a spectacular observatory for yourself and your family. If the sight of a dead tree isn't as appealing to you as it is to your wildlife neighbors, you can decorate it by planting climbing vines around the trunk, hanging flower baskets or feeders



on the branches, or planting a bed of wildflowers around the base. With a little planning and some creativity, a dead tree can become a unique focal point in your landscape.