



What is it?

This dead tree actually plays an important role in supporting wildlife in the Urban Bird Habitat. Known as a **snag**, the rotting trunk and branches of this tree serve as a space for nests, nurseries, storage, foraging, roosting and perching for birds, small mammals, and other wildlife in the city.

Who will live here?

Birds like woodpeckers are early residents of snags. Referred to as “primary cavity nesters,” woodpeckers excavate several holes each year and rarely reuse them the following year. This leaves space for other birds such as bluebirds, nuthatches, house wrens, and chickadees as well as squirrels who cannot create their own holes. These “secondary cavity nesters” depend on abandoned nest cavities.



How are snags made?

In nature, snags occur in trees which die for a variety of reasons such as disease, lightning, damage, or simply old age. Large conifers like this tree make great snags because their hardwood rots more slowly. A snag at least one foot in diameter and over 15 feet tall can serve as hunting perches for hawks, bald eagles, and owls.



Smithsonian Gardens

Why did this tree die? This lacebark pine (*Pinus bungeana*) suffered from a girdling root that cut off the tree’s circulatory system. Luckily, it was the perfect candidate for a snag and now serves as an important wildlife habitat in the city.

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