



## Terrestrial characteristics: Snag/cavity

### Description

A snag/cavity is a standing dead tree or other structurally similar cavity that is available to wildlife (e.g., under live shag-bark hickory bark). Snags are an important structural component to many wildlife species. Snags also provide important food sources for many insect species and the species that subsequently prey upon them.

### General Condition of Feature

The status of snags or cavities as a habitat feature in the Northern Lower Peninsula is considered degraded or very degraded over much of the region (~60%). Most of the remaining areas are considered to be in fair or good condition with regard to snag or cavity habitat features.

### Associated Natural Communities

N/A – No defined natural communities

### Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need

#### INSECTS

zigzag darner (*Aeshna sitchensis*)

#### BIRDS

Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*)

Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)

Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*)

#### BIRDS cont.

Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*)

#### MAMMALS

silver-haired bat (*Lasiorycteris noctivagans*)

northern bat or northern myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

Indiana bat or Indiana myotis (*Myotis sodalis*)

American marten (*Martes americana*)

northern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*)

southern red-backed vole (*Clethrionomys gapperi*)

deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus gracilis*)

### Associated Threats

#### MODIFICATION OF NATURAL PROCESSES

- Altered fire regime

#### HABITAT CONVERSION

- Incompatible natural resource management: Short rotation management prevents trees from maturing to the point where they may develop cavities or become snags.

#### CONSUMPTIVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE USE

- Forestry practices: Careless logging and whole tree harvesting may result in the harvest of cavity trees or snags. Forestry practices which leave single snags standing after harvest increase the vulnerability of those snags to blowdown and other environmental stresses.
- Removal of non-timber flora: Firewood cutting eliminates standing dead wood.

#### EDUCATION

- Social attitudes: There is a lack of understanding and appreciation of the value of snags and cavities, especially among loggers and private landowners.

### Conservation Actions Needed [Threats addressed]

#### LAND, WATER & SPECIES MANAGEMENT

- Manage to approximate natural disturbance regimes using prescribed fire. [Altered fire regime]
- Work with land managers to develop priorities for creation and retention of snags and cavities. [Incompatible natural resource management; Forestry practices; Removal of non-timber flora; Social attitudes]
- Develop and implement forestry best management practices that address the value of snags and cavities to wildlife. [Forestry practices; Removal of non-timber flora]

#### EDUCATION & AWARENESS

- Create awareness in the commercial logging industry and the general public of the value of snags and cavities to wildlife. [Forestry practices; Social attitudes]

### Research and Survey Needs

- Evaluate whether there is a difference in wildlife value between natural and artificial snags and cavities.
- Evaluate the prevalence and condition of snags and cavities in the ecoregion.
- Determine the longevity of snags. Does this depend on the tree species or the feature type of the surrounding matrix? Are there other factors that affect the longevity of snags?

**MICHIGAN'S WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN**  
**TERRESTRIAL SYSTEMS: NORTHERN LOWER PENINSULA**

- Identify the characteristics of snags and cavities that provide benefits to wildlife and which species may be affected by changes in these characteristics. Is there an optimal number, density, or location of snags and cavities which may be incorporated into forestry prescriptions?

Monitoring

- Track the density and distribution of snags and cavities with attention to individual characteristics such as tree species and height.
- Track the use of snags and cavities by bats, owls, and hawks.