



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 feature in the Western Upper Peninsula is considered to be of fair or good condition over most of the region (~95%).

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.

Boreal Chickadee (*Poecile hudsonica*)

MAMMALS

silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*)

northern bat or northern myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

eastern pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus subflavus*)

American marten (*Martes americana*)

northern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*)

southern red-backed vole (*Clethrionomys gapperi*)

deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus gracilis*)

Associated Threats

CONSUMPTIVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE USE

- Forestry practices: Safety requirements encourage the removal of potentially dangerous standing dead wood. Forestry practices that clear cut all standing trees reduce the abundance of snags and cavities.
- Removal of non-timber flora: Collection of firewood reduces the availability of standing dead wood on the landscape.

EDUCATION

- Lack of scientific knowledge: More information is needed on the characteristics of natural snag and cavity abundance to be able to mimic this on a managed landscape.

Conservation Actions Needed [Threats addressed]

LAND, WATER, & SPECIES MANAGEMENT

- Develop and enforce forestry best management practices that recognize the value of snags and cavities to wildlife and retain their functionality. [Forestry practices; Removal of non-timber flora]

Research and Survey Needs

- Evaluate whether there is a difference in the value to wildlife 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?
- 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.