

For Creative Minds

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Pileated Woodpecker Food and Nest Holes



Pileated woodpeckers drill holes in snags to find ants, beetles, and other insects to eat. These holes are usually longer than they are wide.

They also drill holes to make nest cavities. These holes are usually round.

Can you find one of each kind of hole in the snag on the left?

Birds & Snags: Did You Know?

Birds that eat insects, like woodpeckers and nuthatches, depend heavily on snags as a source of food. These birds help to control unwanted insect pests.

Over 85 species of North American birds use cavities in dead or deteriorating trees.

All woodpeckers lay white eggs. Because they are hidden inside the tree, the eggs don't have to be camouflaged.

Birds that nest in cavities tend to nest earlier in the spring than other birds. Their eggs are well protected from the cold, snow and rain.

There are two kinds of cavity-nesting birds, primary and secondary. Primary cavity nesters, including all woodpeckers, excavate their own cavities. Secondary cavity nesters do not excavate their own cavities—they use those made by primary cavity nesters.

Which Animals Use Snags?

Dead trees provide habitat for more than 1,000 species of wildlife in the United States. Which of these animals find food, shelter, or a resting place in snags?



beetle larva



long-tailed weasel



salamander



red-tailed hawk



honeybees



spider



black bears



barred owls



wood ducks

Answers: all

How Might These Animals Use Snags?

Animals may use snags for several reasons. How do you think these animals use snags?

nest

roost (sleep)

perch (rest)

hibernate

hide

find food



screech owl



bald-faced hornet



double-crested cormorant



eastern chipmunk



mourning cloak butterfly



spider

Possible Answers: Screech owl-roost, nest, perch; Bald-faced hornet-hibernate; Double-crested cormorant-perch, roost; Eastern chipmunk-hide, find food; Mourning cloak butterfly-hibernate; Spider-hibernate, find food

Nests in Snags



Many birds nest in snags, including swallows, herons, owls, and even ducks!

Deep inside this snag a female wood duck has laid her eggs. She sits on them to keep them warm until they hatch.

The young ducklings must jump out of the snag (fledge) when they are old enough to join their mother.

If the snag is standing in water the ducklings land in the water when they jump.

If the snag is in the woods the ducklings bounce like tennis balls on the forest floor when they land and then follow their mother for up to a mile to find water.

True or False?

1. Trees can provide more habitats for wildlife dead than when they are alive.
2. In total, more than 100 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians need snags for nesting, roosting, shelter, denning, and feeding.
3. Hollow snags are very valuable in winter as they are used by many species like squirrels, raccoons, owls, and bears for denning and roosting.
4. Many snags are formed when trees break during strong windstorms.



Answers: all are true