



CITY of BEVERLY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

191 Cabot Street
Beverly, Massachusetts 01915
Phone (978) 921-6000
Fax (978) 922-0285

Mayor

Michael P. Cahill

Chairperson

Christine Berton

Members

Robert Buchsbaum

Stephanie Herbster

Anthony Paluzzi

Paul Knight

Robert Russo

William Squibb

Tree Removal Request Protocol

Introduction:

Whether it's standing dead or dying trees (snags) or dead and downed wood (logs and root wads), these structural features provide valuable wildlife habitat to a great diversity of species from primary decomposers to mammal predators. These uses are wide-ranging from nesting, perching, feeding, to cover and foraging functions utilized by a wide range of species including a variety of woodpeckers, cavity nesting birds and raptors, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals. In addition to these values as habitat, snags and logs are provide both nutrients to the surrounding soil and an energy source to a complex food web that serves different species as it goes through the decomposition process. (*Referenced in part per the attached: Association of Massachusetts Wetland Scientists Newsletter, No. 22, By C. Diane Boretos, pages 6 & 7*)

The Commission is charged with protecting the many functions performed and values provided by the wetland resource areas in the City of Beverly pursuant to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Beverly Wetlands Protection Ordinance. Wildlife habitat is an interest protected and function provided by wetlands. Trees, snags, dead and downed wood are integral parts of these habitats and wetland ecosystems. Therefore removal or alteration of these structural features needs to be considered in relation to their impact to the habitat.

The Commission also recognizes the potential hazards that dead, dying and compromised trees can pose to safety and property. Therefore, the Commission has established the following protocol to address instances where a single tree, or perhaps a small number of trees, may pose a hazard to safety and property.

Tree Removal Request Protocol:

In compliance with the steps outlined below, removal of said trees may be warranted to avoid personal injury, property damage or even damage to other healthy preferably preserved trees and vegetation.

1. The homeowner/landowner/applicant must provide the following to the Conservation Commission:

- a. A written diagnosis of the tree(s) provided by a certified arborist or equivalent qualified professional that includes each of the following:
 - i. Overall condition (i.e. disease, infestation, rot, splits in trunks etc...);
 - ii. Photos of the trees slated for removal;
 - iii. Proximity to wetland resource area, proximity to dwellings, other structures and healthy native trees or vegetation on the property;
 - iv. Rationale for removal;
 - v. Proposed methods of removal;
 - vi. The subject trees must be flagged or marked in the field for inspection by the Conservation Commission or its Administrator
2. The tree removal request materials shall be submitted at least 7 calendar days prior to the target meeting date of the Commission and placed on the agenda for the Commission's review and discussion;
3. The Commission will vote on whether to approve or deny the request, setting forth its grounds and any conditions of approval. It should be noted that nothing in this protocol is intended to circumvent, prohibit or discourage established formal application procedures; and
4. The Commission will issue a letter permit/decision within 5 business days of its vote.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SNAGS IN HABITAT EVALUATIONS OR ... DEAD WOOD IS GOOD WOOD

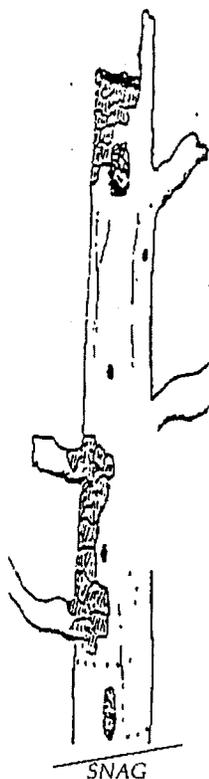
BY C. DIANE BORETOS

Whether it's standing dead and dying trees (snags) or dead and down wood (logs and root wads), these structural components provide valuable wildlife habitat to a great diversity of species from primary decomposers to mammalian predators. Their uses are wide ranging from nesting, perching, feeding and cover functions to courting display areas. Snags and logs are ecosystems themselves, providing both nutrients to the surrounding soil and an energy source to a complex food web that serves different species as it goes through decomposition succession. Unfortunately, this specialized habitat has been greatly reduced in sections of New England due to past logging practices of clear-cut forestry and manicured landscaping practices in urban and suburban areas. Snags are particularly valuable as wildlife habitat when they are located near wetland resources. Science is just beginning to understand the significance of these forest elements, and as wetland field professionals, we are in a good position to protect them by identifying and calling attention to them in wildlife habitat evaluations. The following are just a few examples

of how wildlife utilize

is physically stable. There are primary cavity excavators such as pileated woodpeckers, northern flickers, yellow-bellied sapsuckers and hairy woodpeckers who, in turn, provide habitat for secondary users of the cavities such as wood ducks, great horned owls, red-breasted nuthatches and tree swallows. Beech, hickory and maples can provide long lasting hard snag habitat in New England. In general, the larger the diameter of the snag, the more species can use it. Hard snags are used for cover by birds and mammals during extreme weather and for vulnerable periods such as during molting (e.g. snakes) and they are important perching

Soft snags are more decomposed and the wood is punky. Because punk wood is able to hold more moisture it provides good habitat for insects which, in turn, provides foraging and excavating feeding habitat for many species of birds that are insectivores during all or part of the year. Such insectivores are downy and hairy woodpeckers, white-breasted nuthatches and brown creepers to name a few. However, because soft snags hold more moisture, they are generally not as desirable as hard snags for nesting and rearing young.



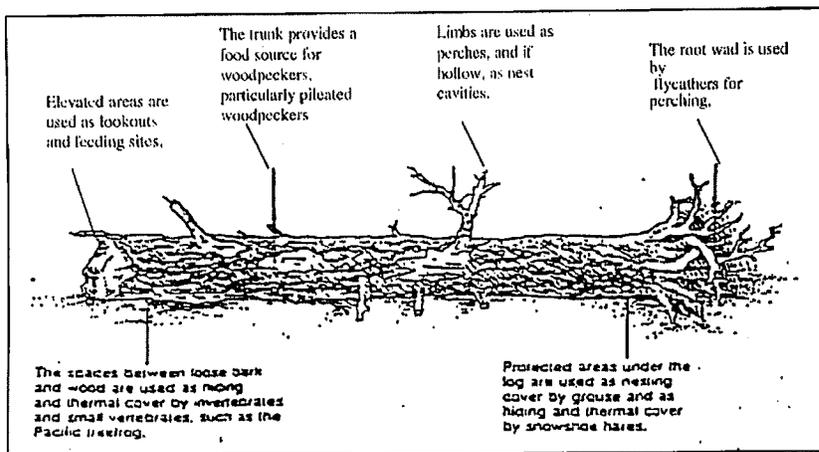
HARD AND SOFT SNAGS

Snags are classified as being either hard or soft, based on their state of decay. A hard snag may be a dead or partially dead tree with solid wood and limbs. Over time it can become a soft snag with just a trunk left standing. Hard snags provide excellent cavity-nesting opportunities for birds (e.g. black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, barred owls) and mammals (e.g. southern flying squirrel, fisher, white-footed mouse) because the wood is dry and the snag itself

LOGS

Logs are dead and down wood, including limbs and root wads. Root wads are the uprooted root systems associated with blowdown trees seen in forested wetlands and moist forests. Dead and down woody material is an essential, moist habitat for reptiles and amphibians. Logs can provide perching and displaying opportunities for ground dwelling birds such as wrens and ruffed grouse. Grouse will often use the same "drumming log" year after year. Small rodents such as red-backed voles, shrews and white-footed mice, an important component of the food web, use logs as safe cover for tunnel entrances. Root wads are used as perching areas for certain passerines birds. I have often found mammal burrows at the base of these features in forested areas. Some bird species such as slate-colored juncos nest in root wads. A colleague recently found a

Continued on Page 7



Downed logs furnish many structural features important to wildlife.

Source: Inventory and Monitoring of Wildlife Habitat by Cooperider et al.

Snags - (continued from Page 6)

vated out of the dirt in a root wad. When logs are hollow and have some diameter to them, they can provide den and cover habitat for porcupine, mink, raccoon and fisher. Some species, such as red fox will use logs as scenting posts. One can find these posts in winter, particularly in January and February when their urine scent is very strong (similar to skunk) and you can see the yellow stains easily in the snow. Down wood is also used as travel ways by fishers and mink. Logs in riparian areas that are partially submerged provide basking areas for turtles and reptiles, loafing spots for ducks, and, when touching both sides of a stream bank, bridges for small mammals.

SNAG DATA FOR HABITAT EVALUATIONS

The following is a list of information that can be collected on snags when you are doing habitat assessments:

- Species
- Hard or soft snag
- Diameter at Breast Height (dbh)
- Amount of remaining bark on trunk
- Existing cavities: diameter and height from ground
- Vegetative: structure around snag
- Other wildlife use (e.g. woodpecker borings, perching use).
- Amount of dead and down wood within site
- Logs: rodent entrances present, state of decay, other evidence of wildlife use

A note of caution: snags are also called "widow makers" by foresters. A snag that looks stable: may not be ...so, use caution when taking measurements.

So, even though snags and logs are a dead or decaying feature in the landscape you will almost always find signs of life in and around them. Dead Wood is Good Wood!

REFERENCES

- Cooperrider, A, Boyd, R. Stuart, H.1986. Inventory and Monitoring of Wildlife Habitat. U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management.
- Gutierrez, R., Decker, D., Howard, R, Lassoie, J. Managing Small Woodlands for Wildlife. Cornell Cooperative Extension. Bulletin 157.
- Safe Trees for Wildlife: Project 1997. National Wildlife Federation's Northeast Natural Resource Center.