Woodpeckers create many "starts" to nest cavities.

A recently excavated cavity

Woodpecker foraging holes

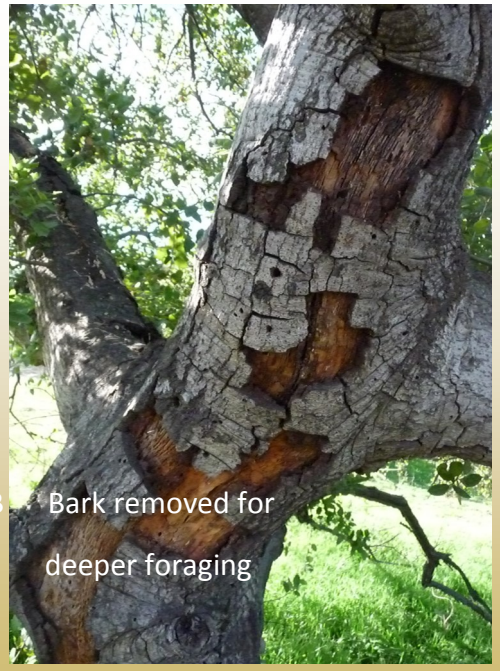
A QUICK GUIDE

TO SELECTING WILDLIFE TREES

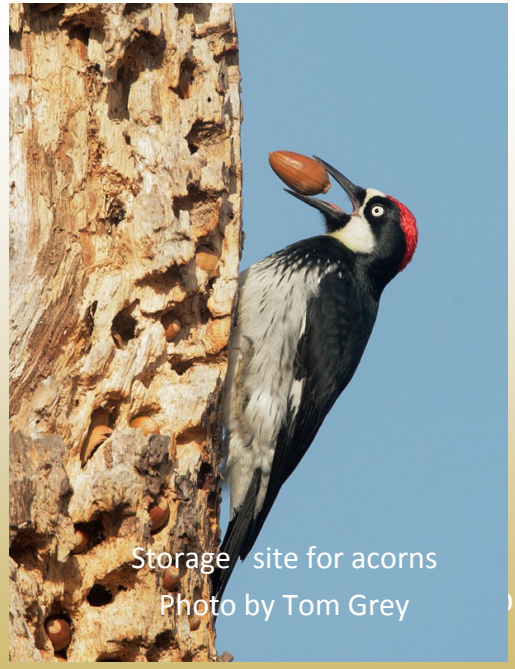
Woodpeckers leave signals that a tree is of value to them and may be to other species. Freshly exposed wood suggests recent use by wildlife. Look for evidence as is illustrated here. Consider these trees for retention and careful management.

When trimming trees with dead wood please remove only as much as is necessary for safety.

The unseen world of a dying tree reveals nature's master plan to keep habitats in balance.



Bark removed for deeper foraging



Storage site for acorns
Photo by Tom Grey

A large natural cavity is used by some species

CAVITY CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

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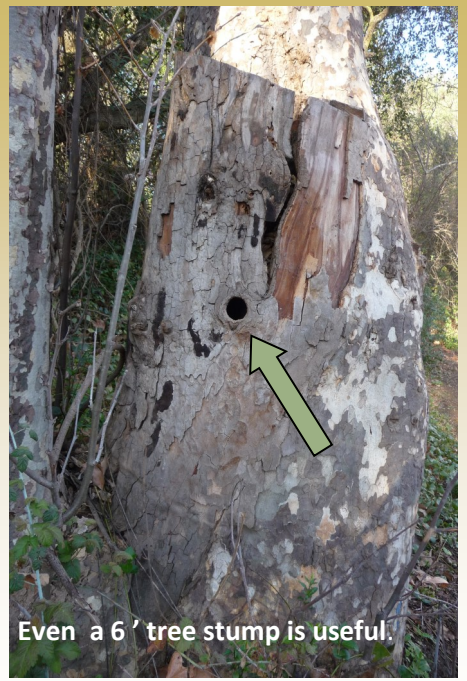
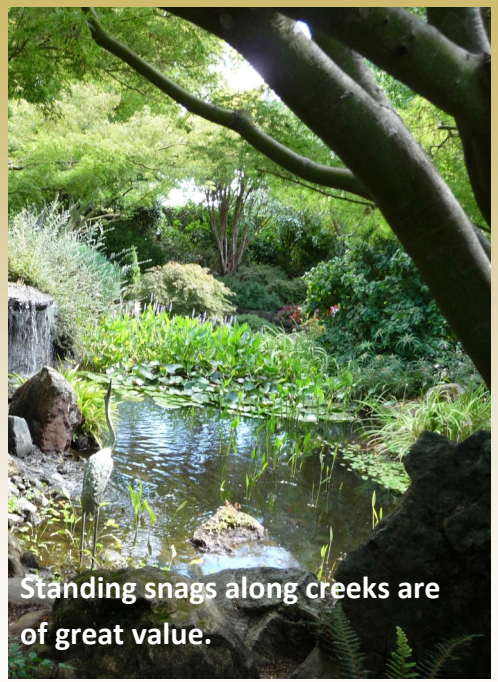
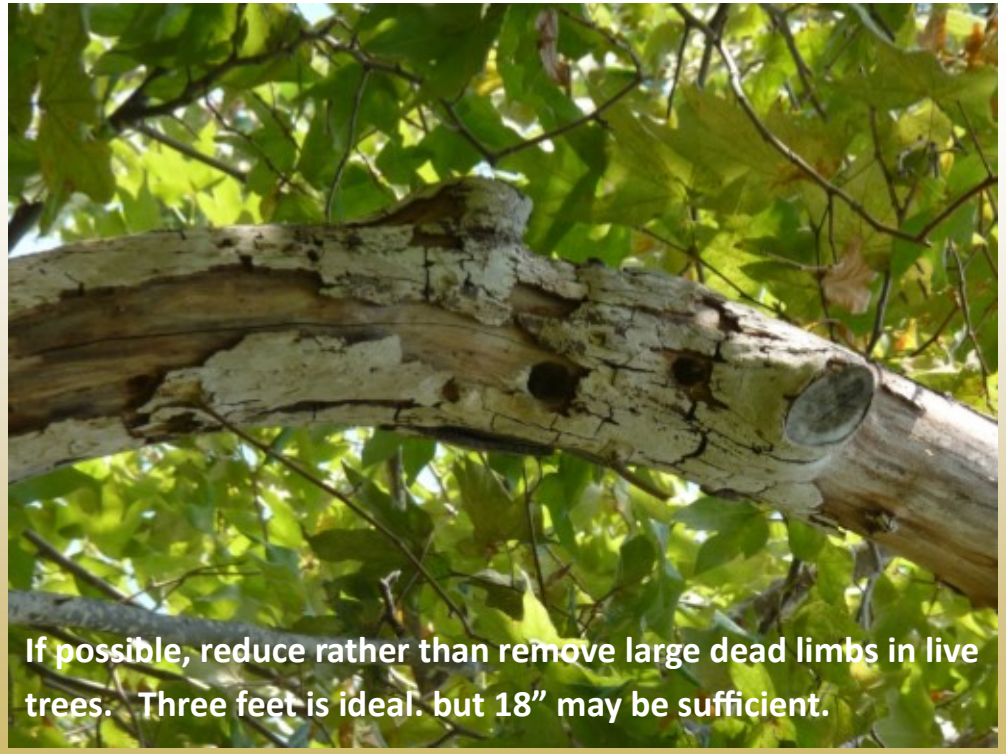
Shorten and reduce limbs for safety. Monitor regularly


Even a 6 ’ tree stump is useful.


Standing snags along creeks are of great value.


A hollow trunk provides shelter for small mammals.

Rotting trees and limbs, called snags, provide vital habitat for wildlife. Trunks and limbs as small as 12” and 8” in diameter respectively are sufficient for cavity excavation. Very short, dead sections on otherwise live tree species also offer shelter, nesting habitat and prey for wildlife.


If possible, reduce rather than remove large dead limbs in live trees. Three feet is ideal. but 18” may be sufficient.


Create a jagged top

A dying tree with most of its bark intact is preferable. The bark increases nest-cavity safety. Such trees may also remain standing longer and offer extended usefulness to wildlife. Habitat edges and locations near creeks and ponds are preferred by many species.

To ensure a long-term supply of habitat for wildlife, leave trees in different stages of decay. Some species prefer clusters of trees that have rotting wood. Others accept dead trees that are widely distributed. Retain both conditions as