

## A dead tree is much, much more than a nursery!

Gillian Martin. The Cavity Conservation Initiative

You may already know that a dead tree is a nursery for more than eighty birds in North America, but have you observed its usefulness to birds in other ways? Thanks to our wildlife photographer partners, now you too can see a dead tree for all its untold virtue. Well, that's not true exactly. Just for this occasion, we're setting aside mention of how other organisms as well as ecosystems benefit from a tree's demise. These examples may deliver some surprises.



They're not competitors, and not exactly friends, but this Osprey and Peregrine Falcon agree on one thing. A tree with an unobstructed view gives them an edge in hunting and guarding their territory.

Joe Chandler



When you've evolved to breed and travel in colonies, a preferred convention site is one that accommodates everyone and keeps them in view. Individuals can then track and learn from the foraging success of others.

Joe Chandler



Think about this. How detectable are you if you look like wood? Perhaps the screech-owl chose a doorway in this dead tree so she could sleep more soundly!

Joe Galkowski



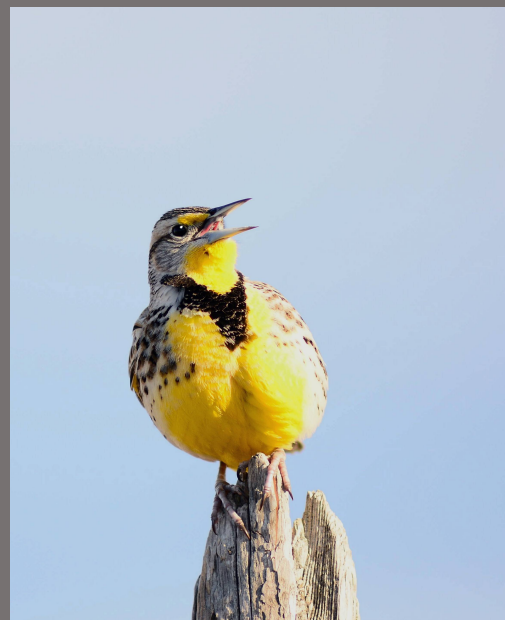
A resting perch with a view over a river serves a dual purpose for the Belted Kingfisher---a dining table. While enjoying his meal, he can maintain surveillance so he too, doesn't become someone's lunch.

Andrew Morffew



By choosing this tree, these vultures praise it for its high, elbow-wide spaces. So do deep diving birds like cormorants who have water-absorbing feathers. Why? It is here these sun worshipers can warm and dry their wings to make them better flyers.

Sandrine Biziaux Scherson



To lure the lady nearby, the best advertising post is high and has no leaves. This Western Meadowlark knows he can be seen from all directions the moment he unfurls his heart in song.

Rich Bohn



It takes numerous small snacks to make a meal. The Downy Woodpecker, like many other insectivorous birds, knows that foraging in a dead tree is a good strategy. Humans have a term for this---‘economy of effort.’

Peggy Honda

When decay reshapes wood into small saucers and grooves, a bird recognizes a handy anvil---just the kitchen tool it needs for crushing large seeds and the exoskeleton of its victims. It also doubles as a place to store them!

ParadiseBirding.com



A bird needs to wipe, clean and shape its bill. When it’s time, a dead limb is a good napkin, scrub brush and file. But that’s not all. It is a substrate for spreading scented preen-oil to lure a mate!

Peggy Honda





Whether birds take a wet or dry bath, yoga positions seem part of the routine. Wings, necks and legs need ample room to lift and stretch so birds can clean every nook and cranny and keep their feathers flight-ready.

Joe Chandler



No tax deductions apply in Nature. A dead tree freely donates all its remains to the wildlife community. Specific residents above and below ground are designed for different jobs: to dismantle, re-purpose or convert its nutrients to humus.

FotoRequest





If a stream or lake is its final resting place, a prostrate tree offers a couple of benefits. It's a dry spot to nap when your tummy is full, and you can cuddle with mom at the same time.

FotoRequest

Though the grasshopper and field mouse wish the American Kestrel no hunting advantages beyond what he already possesses, this handsome falcon shows why even the last remnants of a tree stump is better than removing it completely.

Don Mammoser



What's true of us as we age also applies to trees. Beauty becomes less about appearance and more about the intrinsic value we retain. For safety and other reasons many of us have to leave our home, but like old trees, sometimes we just need a little extra care to remain.

Perhaps you have an advance directive for your health care provider? Well, we have something like that for a dying tree---[a decision guide](#). Please consider it before you cut a tree down and haul it away completely.

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