

A HOME FOR CAVITY-NESTING BIRDS

Holes may be created in dead trees by natural conditions but many are made by woodpeckers. About 40% of bird species in North America depend on cavities excavated by woodpeckers to raise their young. Over time these cavities are used by a great variety of birds and animals. A shortage of natural cavities results in lower breeding opportunities and in fierce competition between species.



Woodpeckers excavate homes that are later used by many other species

Photo by Tom Grey

A NURSERY FOR INSECTS



Beetles bore holes in dead trees to lay eggs

After hatching, beetle larvae eat the decaying wood on their way to becoming adults. Birds and small mammals eat the larvae and adult beetles. Many other insects depend on dead trees.



Nesting birds find food inside and on the bark of dead trees

Photo by Tom Grey

A PURPOSE FOR FUNGI

Fungi produce enzymes and chemicals that help to break down wood fibers. This process enables the decaying tree to return nutrients to the soil. Fungi also become food for some foraging animals.



Fungi help the decay process

Photo by Jim Champion



Downed wood provides habitat for many wildlife species.

Photo by Peter Griffin

THE PROBLEM

Development often requires the removal of dead or damaged trees for safety reasons, especially when they are at risk of endangering people or property. They are also removed because of the perception that dead trees are unattractive in our yards, parks and public areas.



THE SOLUTION

A tree can often be safely retained by reducing its height and removing its weakest branches. Just ten feet of trunk, even without branches, can provide many years of value to wildlife. Planting a shade-bearing tree or shrub nearby can make a wildlife tree more pleasing and offer needed shelter to birds.

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN HELP



Attach an interpretive sign to a dead tree.

Encourage local parks and land managers to retain dead trees and downed wood.

Encourage children to observe wildlife using dead trees.

Share what you know.

Donate a tree and designate it to be retained as a wildlife tree when it dies.

To learn more:
www.socalbluebirds.org

DEAD AND DYING TREES

Why we need to keep more of them



Photo by Tom Grey

DISCOVER THEIR HIDDEN VALUE TO WILDLIFE AND TO HABITATS

The Southern California
Bluebird Club
A non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization