

# Snag Trees 101: Info for Hunters



## WDFW CONTACTS

### Region 1 – Eastern

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### Region 2 – North Central

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### Region 3 – South Central

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### Region 4 – North Puget Sound

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Mill Creek, WA 98012  
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### Region 5 – Southwest

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### Region 6 – Coastal

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*Your local WDFW Regional Office can put you in contact with someone who can answer your questions about legal protections, hunting rules, habitat, wildlife, and wildlife rehabilitation centers.*

## What are snag trees?

A snag tree, or snag, is any dead or dying standing tree. At some point, all trees will die of natural causes, including fire, lightning strikes, insect or fungal infestation, or disease. These dead trees will remain standing in the forest until they break or fall over due to natural decay processes.

## How do snags benefit hunters?

Snags are a critically important part of a healthy forest ecosystem. Over 100 species of Washington's native wildlife use dead trees for nesting, foraging, roosting, and denning.

When a snag falls to the forest floor, it becomes habitat for terrestrial amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. As the log decays, it releases valuable nutrients into the soil that help other plants grow, which deer, elk, and other wildlife eat.

Birds that nest in snags eat insects that are harmful to trees and crops. A Swiss study revealed that in a single year, one woodpecker can eat over 670,000 bark beetles (a lethal tree pest)!

Snags improve forest health and provide better habitat for game species including deer, elk, and grouse.

## Are snags protected by law?

YES – Snags are legally protected on publicly owned lands.

- Ø WAC 220-500-230 requires you to obey posted notices on WDFW land, and posted notices state: "Do not cut live or standing dead trees under any circumstance." Violation of this can result in a civil infraction with a \$150 penalty or a misdemeanor charge under RCW 77.15.160.
- Ø WAC 332-52-135 prohibits the cutting of live and dead standing trees on DNR land. Any violation of this is an infraction with a \$99 penalty under RCW 7.84.
- Ø The U.S. Forest Service prohibits the cutting of snags with bird cavities (holes), nests, broken tops, signs of animal habitation, or wildlife tree signs.

Lands under other types of ownership will have their own laws and protections – check with the agency whose land you are hunting or camping on to learn more.

## What can I use to make a campfire?

On both WDFW and DNR lands, you may collect downed wood 12" or less in diameter at the largest point for on-site campfires. Collection of firewood for off-site use is allowed by permit only.

*Learn more about snags and how to identify snags with cavities by visiting <https://youtu.be/EviIMA3ihNO>*