Upland Wildlife Habitat Management -Snags

Implementation Requirement ***NH- 645***

Practice Lifespan --- 1 year

Photos Kelly Boland (left, far right) Heather Grybas (center)

Definition

Provide and manage upland habitats to benefit upland wildlife.

Background

Tree snags provide a supply of dead and dying trees that provide loose bark for roosting bats, cavities for birds and mammals, nesting and feeding sites for a variety of species, even some pollinators. When girdled snags fall to the ground, they provide important large woody material that provides cover for salamanders, travel ways for mammals, drumming sites for grouse, feeding sites for black bear (carpenter ants) and builds forest soils and retain moisture.

Additional information on snags including species specific diameters can be found in *Good Forestry in the Granite State Chapter 6.2 'Cavity Trees, Dens and Snags'.*

Snag trees are considered a hazard and may snap at the girdle, particularly in cases with a very deep girdle cut. Therefore, avoiding trails, roads and other areas frequented by landowners may be wise.

Requirements

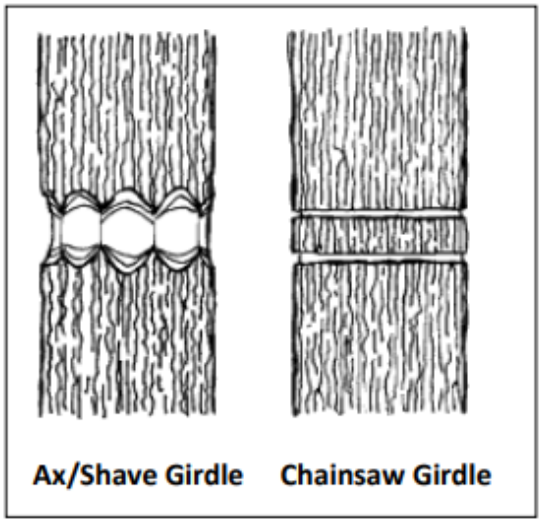
- Retain minimum of 6 cavity/snag trees/ac. One >18" diameter at breast height (dbh), and three >12 inch dbh if present.
- Create at least 2-4 snags per acre with the end goal of 6-8 snag or cavity trees per acre spread between 6-24" dbh size classes.
- If the site already has 6 snag trees per acre, then identify ways to improve by adding a missing size class.

Snag Guidelines

- ✓ Larger diameter snags >16-18” are less common, maintain and or create these when possible.
- ✓ Do not girdle trees during June/July
- ✓ Do not girdle live den or nest trees or trees that provide important mast (food) like healthy beech or oak trees.
- ✓ Do not girdle aspen as it is a valuable tree that snaps after girdling.
- ✓ When managing for bats, grouping snags into clusters of 6-8 trees around existing snags is beneficial for roosting.
- ✓ When choosing locations for snags, field edges, near forest gaps, forest openings and water can focus the work and will benefit wildlife that forage in openings, some birds/bats.
- ✓ Do not girdle beech trees with claw marks and which are relatively free of beech bark disease.

Techniques to create snags

Clear a safe work space around the tree and cut any low branches that may be a hazard. Most girdling is completed with a chainsaw although an ax may also be used. Girdling cuts are typically done within two to four feet of the ground and involve removing a band of wood and bark all the way around the trunk. Using a chainsaw, make two separate, encircling and connecting cuts to a depth of one to two inches depending upon size of the tree and thickness of the bark. Be sure each individual girdling cut connects and is deep enough to cut about a half to one inch of wood. The two girdling cuts should be about six inches apart. While some trees will be killed by a single girdle with a chainsaw, two girdling cuts will kill nearly all. While ax girdling is uncommon, it can be accomplished by removing about a half to one inch of wood.



Double girdling (chainsaw) – 2 encircling and continuous cuts to 1-2 inch depth • Caution: deeper cuts may lead to breaking off at girdle.

Shave girdling is acceptable – at least ½” depth of wood and 2 inches wide • This option may limit breakage at girdle.

Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)
Snags Implementation Requirement

Producer: **Town:**

Farm/Tract #: **County:**

Designed by: **Date:**

Snag Tree Creation			
Tract/Field	**Number of snags created or acres (specify)**	**Species of snag trees**	**Approx Diameter at breast height (DBH) of snag(s)**

Additional Specifications:

Plan Meets NRCS Standards and Specs

Planner Signature: Date:

Participant Agrees to the outlined plan

Participant Signature: Date:

Record of Completion and Check out Certification:

trees or extent certified:
Remarks:
Certification Statement: I certify that implementation of this conservation practice is complete, meets criteria for the stated purpose(s), and meets the NRCS conservation practice standard and specifications Planner Signature: Date: