

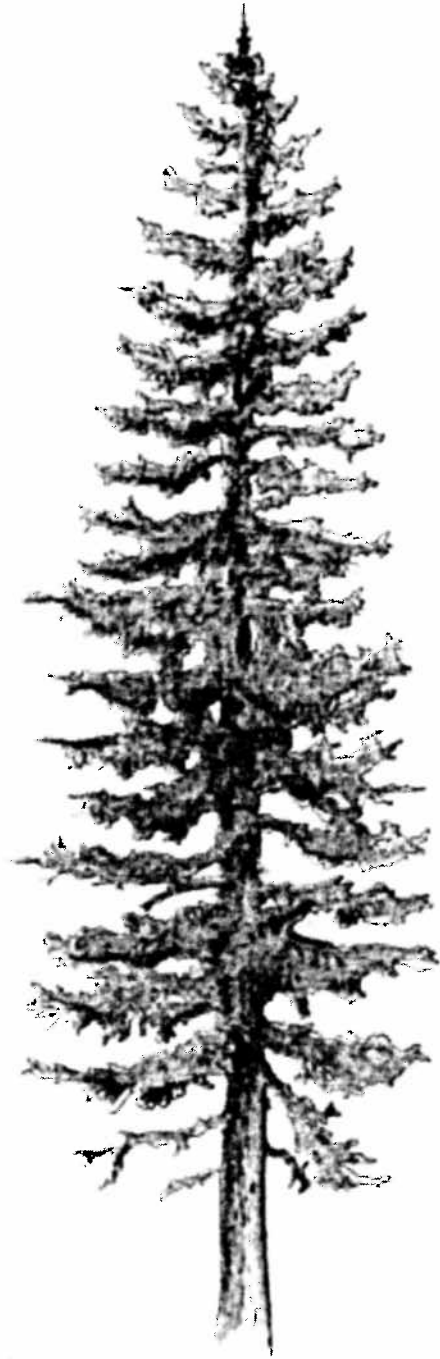
Identifying Stages of Decay

Throughout its life cycle, a tree will serve as habitat for different species of wildlife, and as time goes by, the value of a wildlife tree to a particular animal will change.

If a tree is still living but diseased, it can be of value to a Red-tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle or Osprey which often use the dead, upper branches as hunting perches. But by the time the tree has completely broken apart and rotted to crumbling woody debris on the forest floor, the Red-tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle and Osprey will have moved on, followed by a succession of woodpeckers, bats, squirrels and salamanders. Each of these will, at some stage, find food, shelter, or make a nest or den in the decaying tree.

The following illustrations show representative examples of species that use wildlife trees during different stages of decay. Remember that literally hundreds of species depend upon wildlife trees and that some species use wildlife trees during more than one stage.

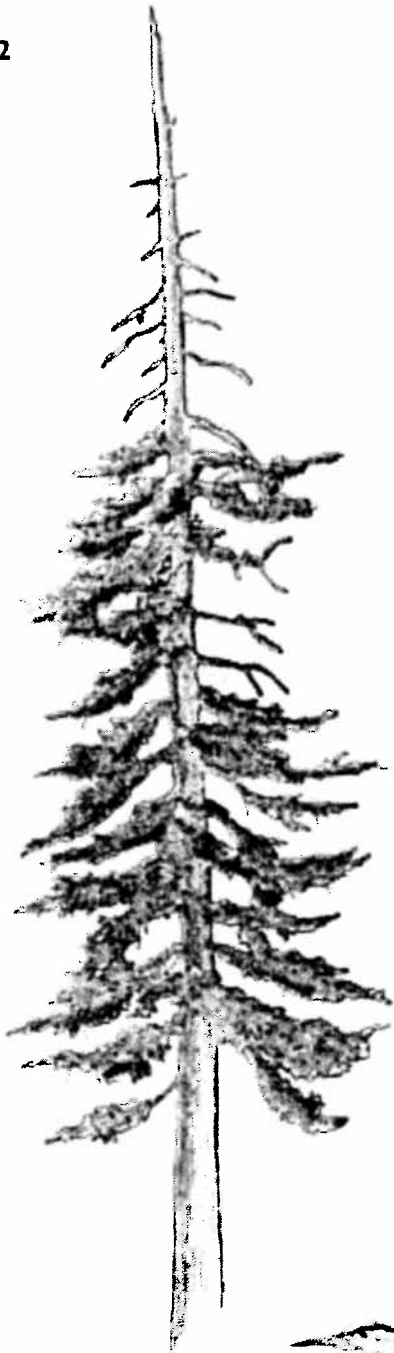
Stage I



Bald Eagle

Tree Description:
Live and healthy

Stage 2

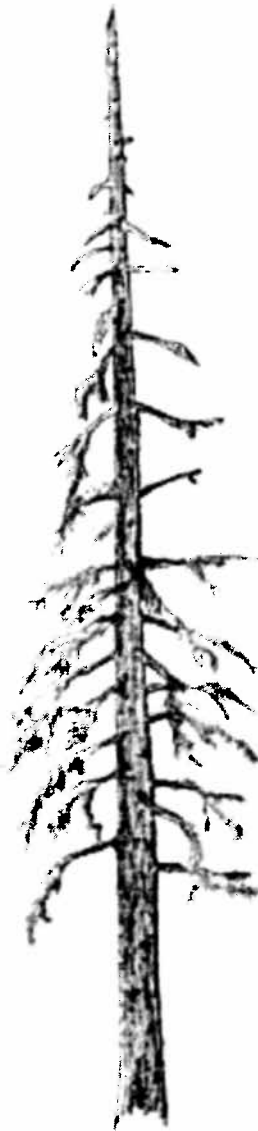


Tree Description: Live but unhealthy due to insect or disease damage



Great Blue Heron

Stage 3

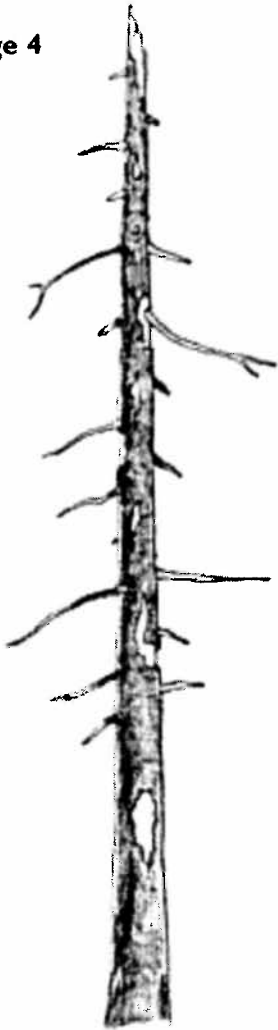


Tree Description: Dead but still has a hard heartwood



Pileated Woodpecker

Stage 4



Tree Description: Dead; loose bark, leaves gone, half of branches lost and top usually broken



Little Brown Myotis

Stage 5

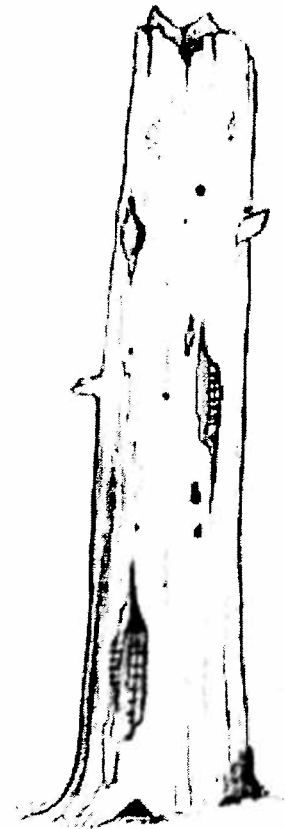


Tree Description: Internal decay, heartwood soft, and most of branches are gone



Black-capped Chickadee

Stage 6

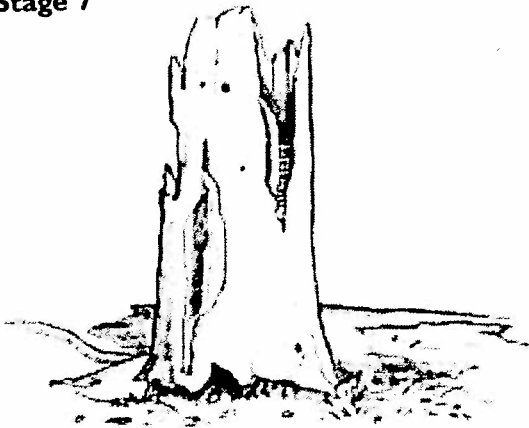


Tree Description: Tree is getting shorter as decay process continues and large pieces of bark are sloughed off

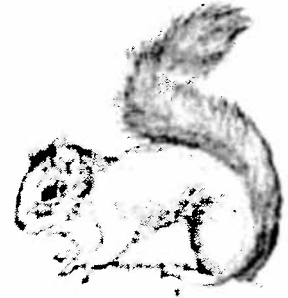


Chipmunk

Stage 7

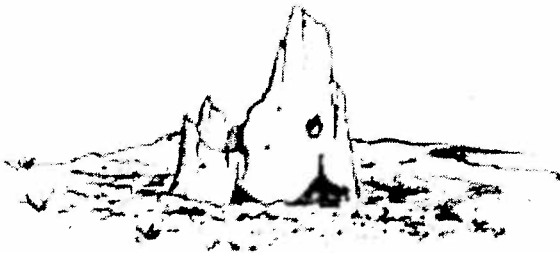


Tree Description:
Hard outer shell but
hollow inside and
roots decomposed



Red Squirrel

Stage 8



Tree Description: A
short stump with an
accumulation of
woody debris around
base



Clouded Salamander

Stage 9



Tree Description:
Woody debris



Carpenter Ant



Spiny Longhorn Beetle

