



## What good are dead trees?

On any walk by the river you will encounter dead and dying trees. To most people the litter of dead trees is not attractive, and can be a nuisance for hikers, hunters, homeowners, maintenance staff, or even canoeists on small streams clogged with snags. So what good are those dead trees?

Dead trees perform several valuable functions:

- **Dead trees provide habitat.** A variety of birds and small mammals live in dead trees exclusively. These include ospreys, woodpeckers and wood ducks. Along the Red River in Fargo-Moorhead, and elsewhere, you will find nesting structures that have been placed on living trees to replace habitat that has been lost to human removal of those dead trees. Within the river itself, dead trees that have fallen into the river provide habitat for fish and other small animals.
- **Dead trees provide food.** A dead tree is food for a variety of grubs and microorganisms. Mammals, such as bears, and birds, such as woodpeckers, seek out these insects for their food. In rivers and especially the Red River, dead trees are the primary home for insects which are then eaten by fish.
- **Dead trees recycle nutrients.** A dead tree was built of essential nutrients: carbon, nitrogen, sulfur and phosphorus. When a fire passes through a forest, these nutrients are released more quickly than through natural decay, and new trees began to grow.

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### For more information:

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