What is a snag?

(All Seasons | Grades 2-8) • **Map Stop 7** • From the picnic table, look towards the back of the Twelve Hills, for a nearby, big, almost dead tree with a bat house on

What fraction of this particular tree is alive and what fraction is a snag?

WARNING: Please do not leave the trail to see the snag up close, the area surrounding the snag has poison ivy

Background Information:

A tree that is still standing, but is dead or dying is called a **snag**. In urban environments, these trees are usually removed by humans, so that they don't hurt anyone when they do eventually fall.

However, it is often best for the environment to leave snags where they are if they don't pose a safety risk. A snag can benefit the environment in many different ways, including:

1. **A place to live** for animals like birds, bats, squirrels, mice, and insects that love to nest in its cracks and crevices
2. **A source of food** for bugs, lichen, mosses, and fungi living in snags (and any other wildlife who eat *them* in turn!)
3. **A temporary shelter** from weather
4. **A lookout perch**, where birds can look for prey, rest, or sleep for a bit
5. **A soil refresher**; as it decays, the snag will eventually return nutrients to the ground for new plants to use

Parts of this tree were broken off by strong winds in a storm several years ago. There are two limbs up high that are dead, but much of the rest of the tree is alive. Walk around the tree and look closely at them. There is at least one **hole** and cavity in each dead limb that has been made by a **red-bellied woodpecker**. Those woodpeckers (at right) can often be seen on the tree's limbs.

For the Activity:

Take a close look at the snag near the Picnic Table tree. What **organisms** can you see on it, whether **animals**, **plants**, or **fungi** like mushrooms and lichen? What do you think they're doing there?

Do you have an ANSWER ? We tend to spot woodpeckers, squirrels, lizards, and insects, often searching for food, like lichens and tiny organisms, and hide food (or themselves!) in crevices.

What **percentage** of the snag near the picnic table is dead wood? To make an estimate, use the grid below - walk around the tree until you're looking at the same side as the picture, and then shade in any squares that you think contain dead material on the tree. **Green leaves** indicate that that section is still living.

Since there's 100 squares, and percentages are just **a fraction out of 100**, the total number of shaded squares when you're done will be your estimated percentage!