



## 5 How to positively manage your tree for wildlife

For wildlife, the most important feature of a veteran tree is the habitat it creates in the dead wood found in the canopy, on the trunk, or on the ground. Basically, the more dead wood the better!

All trees develop their own habitats eventually, so creating artificial deadwood habitats on a veteran would not be necessary. Here are

a few methods to consider when managing younger trees that can boost biodiversity...

### **Coronet Cutting**

This technique imitates what would happen to a tree branch if it was to fall naturally. Simply lopping the limb off with a chainsaw would leave a flat surface, which would never be found in nature and would

simply heal. Coronet cutting makes the surface rough and jagged (like a snapped pencil) which leaves pockets or niches for fungi and invertebrates to colonise, creating more dead wood habitat. This method doesn't cut flat to the trunk, but instead leaves as much of the branch as possible. Once the material is removed, the branch is cut again by taking out three wedges that cross in the middle of



*Coronet cutting*  
© David Humphreys



*A beech after coronet cutting*  
© David Humphreys



*Monolith in Windsor Park*  
© Ted Green

the original wound like a star. Alternatively, more wedges can be cut out to give the wound a more irregular appearance and provide more surface area to form dead wood habitat.

### **Monoliths**

Standing dead trees can be retained by creating 'monoliths'. This is where a decaying tree is made safe by reducing its height and spread, but left to decay in a standing position. These trees will then continue to support a range of species that are dependent on decaying wood and help to

provide continuity of dead wood habitat until younger trees mature to a veteran status.

### **Dead Wood**

Dead wood which has either fallen or been removed from the tree should be left intact or in large pieces close to the parent tree. If this is not possible (for aesthetic or management reasons), the creation of timber piles or chipping the wood and leaving a layer of mulch around the base of the trunk still creates a habitat for birds, small mammals,



*Standing dead wood*  
© John Durkin

fungi and invertebrates. Another alternative is to create a loggery, where large logs with bark still attached are partially buried or sunk up to 60cm into the ground. These can provide suitable habitat for a range of invertebrates.

### **Cracks and crevices**

Ensure that there are plenty of holes, cracks and crevices, for bats, birds and invertebrates. If there are a lack of holes, crevices or you wish to provide decay features in younger trees the following methods can be used to create some:



*Dead wood log pile*

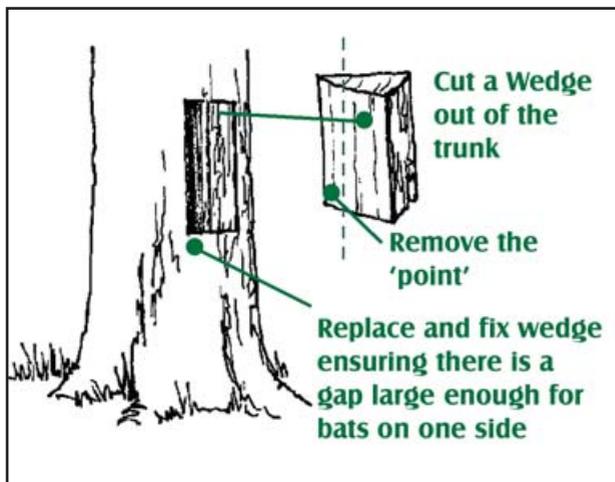
© Amy Lewis



*Bird and bat boxes*

© Ted Green

- Bat roosts can be created by cutting a wedge out of the main trunk, then removing the tip of the wedge and cutting or drilling a hole through the wedge large enough for bats to make their way in (diameter of an inch and a half or 3.75cm)
- Bird boxes can be made from stumps by cutting a ring or disc off the top that is at least 3 inches (7.5cm) thick. A wedge then needs to be cut out of the stump under the removed disc with a small



*How to create a bat roost*

© Natural England



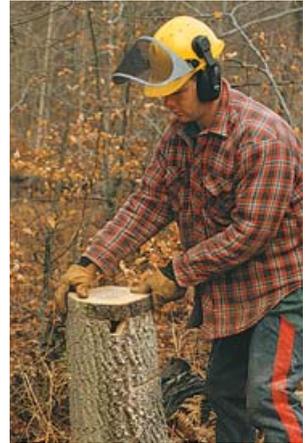
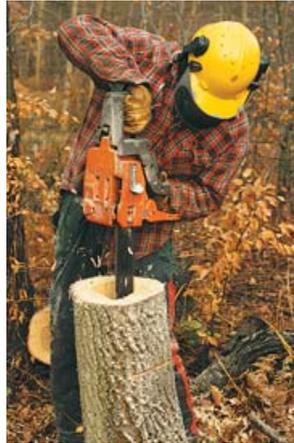
*Finished bat roost*

© David Humphreys

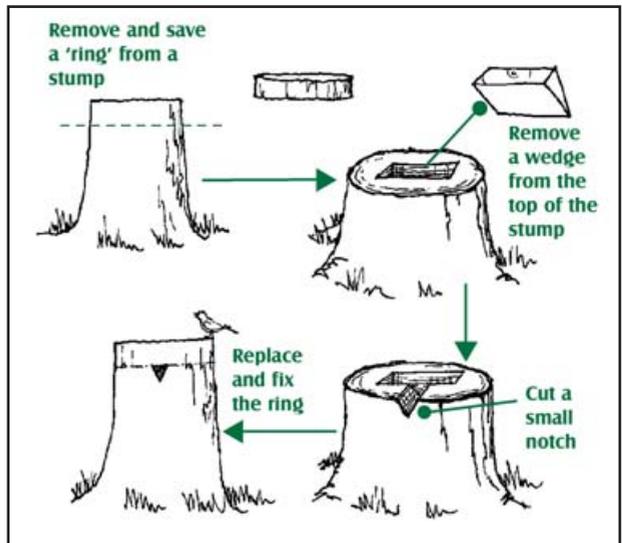
notch about 2 inches (5cm) deep linking the shallower end to the outside. The removed disc then needs to be placed back on top of the stump (the dimensions can be made larger for other species of birds)

- Rot holes and invertebrate, fungi and moss habitats can be created from a stump. The stump can be cut into sections, each section hollowed out, then replaced in the order that they were removed and the aligned holes can be filled with sawdust, manure, compost or carcasses to provide food and habitat for thousands of tiny organisms that are the basis of all woodland ecosystems.

Other cracks and crevices can be added to trees to boost habitat, but this needs to be done carefully as too many can kill the tree. When holes are made to the trunk, rather than drilling the whole way through the stem, it is preferable to create two or three connected holes, allowing a larger habitat without making the tree too exposed to wind or sunlight. The tree will heal itself over time, and while this wouldn't fill the holes, it might weaken the timber, so if more holes are to be made, they should be in a different part of the tree to reduce the risk of collapse.



*Cavities can be cut into old tree stumps to create bird boxes*  
© Ted Green



*How to create bird boxes in a trunk*  
© Natural England

It needs to be understood that none of the above techniques should be undertaken by anybody other than highly skilled professionals. If you would like to positively manage your tree for wildlife, please contact the Arboricultural

Association (or other official bodies also mentioned in the folder) as well as your local authority. Tree work should only be done by professionals that come recommended by legitimate and professional arboricultural organisations.