Woodpeckers leave signals that a tree is of value to them and to other species. Freshly exposed wood suggests recent use by wildlife. Look for evidence as is illustrated here. Consider these trees for retention and special management.

When evaluating trees with dead wood please remove only as much as is necessary for safety.

The unseen world of a dying tree reveals nature’s master plan to keep habitats in balance.
This is ideal management of a dead tree with dangerous limbs. Even a 6’ tree stump is of value. A dead top of a live tree provides an unobstructed view for hunting, courtship, and territorial defense. A hollow trunk provides shelter for small mammals.

Rotting trees and limbs, called snags, provide vital habitat for wildlife. Trunks and limbs as small as 12” and 8” in diameter respectively are sufficient for cavity excavation. Very short, dead sections on otherwise live, native tree species also offer shelter, nesting habitat and prey for many species.

A jagged cut hastens tree decay and suitability for excavation and foraging. A dying tree with most of its bark intact is preferable. The bark increases nest-cavity safety. Such trees also typically remain standing longer and offer extended usefulness to wildlife. Riparian habitats are preferred by many species.

Willows, alders, cottonwoods, and sycamores near creeks or bodies of water are highly preferred by some snag-associated wildlife.

To ensure a long-term supply of habitat for snag-associated wildlife leave trees in different stages of decay. Some species prefer clusters of trees that have rotting wood. Others accept trees that are widely distributed. Retain both conditions as often as you can.