

- Conduct field investigations of the most likely looking areas in spring and early summer when birds are singing and defending their territories.

5.4.2.2 Forests providing a high diversity of habitats

Forests with a variety of vegetation communities and dominant tree cover are most likely to have the highest diversity of plant and wildlife species. Complexes of upland and wetland habitats also may have high diversity.

Many species of wildlife such as squirrels, and cavity-nesting birds like pileated woodpeckers, barred owls, and wood ducks use large trees with hollow cavities to bear and raise young. These trees can also provide resting or loafing habitat for mammals like raccoon and porcupine. Refer to the habitat matrices in Appendix G for the habitat preferences of species that depend on tree cavities. Older forest stands usually have more cavity trees and support a higher diversity of species than young stands. Best sites contain a mix of large and small tree cavities. Cavities in living trees are generally better than those in dead trees because they last longer. Some tree species make better cavity trees than others do. For example, species such as red pine or white birch break down very quickly and are of limited use for cavities.

Very tall trees, such as white pine, that grow above the main canopy (supercanopy trees), provide important habitat for birds of prey, that may use these trees for nests, roosts, and hunting perches.

Forests with numerous vertical layers of vegetation also contribute greatly to site diversity because of the many microhabitats they provide for wildlife. In addition, an abundance of ground structure such as large fallen logs and leaf litter further enhances a site's ability to support wildlife. Fallen logs are essential habitat for some salamanders, members of the weasel family, certain woodpeckers, and many invertebrate species.

How to find

- Examine FRI maps for older forest stands (average tree age greater than 100 years old or the oldest stands in the planning area), forests with several stand types, and stands with composition consisting primarily of trembling aspen, largetooth aspen, beech, basswood, white cedar, and white pine. These tree species readily form cavities that are important to wildlife.
- Use aerial photographs to locate the largest, contiguous forests in the planning area. In addition, forest stands that are closely associated with other forest stands usually provide greater diversity than isolated stands.

5.4.2.3 Old-growth or mature forest stands

Although definitions of old-growth forest vary depending on tree species, generally these sites are characterised by having a large proportion of trees in older age classes, many of them over 120 to 140 years old. Other features include: a broad spectrum of tree sizes