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Abstracts

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**THE ROLE OF FORAGING WOODPECKERS IN THE DECOMPOSITION OF
PONDEROSA PINE SNAGS**

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Abstract. We investigated the relationship between foraging woodpeckers and the decomposition of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) snags in the central and southern Cascades of Oregon and northern California. Our main objectives were (1) to compare the relative sapwood density of 4-year-old pine snags receiving varying levels of woodpecker foraging; and (2) to determine if woodpeckers were carriers of wood-inhabiting fungi. Snags used as foraging sites by woodpeckers had lower wood densities than snags that did not exhibit foraging sign. Additionally, wood-inhabiting fungi were recovered in significantly greater frequencies from the bills of woodpeckers than a comparison of non-cavity-nesting species. These results suggest that woodpeckers may contribute to the mechanical degradation of wood through foraging activities and the dispersal of a collection of fungi that likely participate in the process of decay for ponderosa pine snags. The complexity of these ecological interactions should be considered when planning snag management in coniferous forests.

Key words: cavity nesters, fungi, *Picoides*, *Pinus ponderosa*, sapwood, snags, woodpeckers.