

Basswood Trees and Wildlife



Bees Swarming Around Hole in Hollow Tree **Pileated Woodpecker Nest Hole in Hollow Basswood**

How do animals use basswood trees?

Because of their softer wood, basswoods tend to become hollow more often than some other trees. Pileated and other woodpeckers can easily make nesting holes in them. Holes in the hollow trees furnish dens for squirrels, raccoons, porcupines and owls.

Swarms of bees move into hollow trees to start new colonies. They fill their wax combs with honey that is often collected by both people and animals. Such trees are known as bee trees.

The fragrant blossoms attract honeybees that collect the sweet nectar and produce honey with a unique flavor. Beekeepers located near many basswood trees can collect basswood honey in their hives. It is sold as a very special kind of honey.

Deer and rabbits browse on the twigs and buds, especially in winter. Ruffed Grouse, Bob Whites and Prairie Chickens eat buds and seeds.

The small nutlike edible seeds, only about a quarter inch in diameter, are not too important as food for large mammals or people, but some small animals such as squirrels, chipmunks, flying squirrels and deer mice enjoy them.

While some insect larvae feed on the leaves, they rarely do major damage to the trees. Powder post beetles may live in a downed tree or basswood log and hasten their decay.

Things to Do

When a basswood tree is in bloom, look and listen for bees attracted to the blossoms.

Look in stores or specialty shops for basswood honey. Compare the flavor of that with other honey.

Read the story of Pa and the bee tree in the chapter on "Summertime" in Little house in the big woods by Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Look for evidence of insects that have fed on the leaves of a basswood tree.

Crack open a ripe basswood seed. Find the small nutmeat inside of it.

Collect basswood seeds. Put them near a place where squirrels and chipmunks usually come to feed. See which animals feed on or collect the seed.

Look for holes in the trunks of mature basswood trees. What animal may have made them? Is there any evidence of an animal living in the cavity?