



FIGURE 5.2. Trees and shrubs are an important part of developing an excellent wildlife habitat in and around ponds.

## How to Encourage Wildlife in an Existing Pond

**I**F YOU would like to design your pond to attract the most wildlife, you can create special habitat features by:

- Planting diverse trees, shrubs, and other native plants in and around the pond
- Creating “microhabitats”—small areas designed to offer shelter for some forms of wildlife
- Placing large basking rocks and logs around the pond edge
- Adding artificial nesting structures.

Trees and shrubs provide food, shelter, nesting areas, and a shading effect around ponds (figure 5.2). Since many kinds of woody plants cannot tolerate the wetness of a pond edge, select and plant only those recommended for pond areas. Do not plant trees or shrubs on the pond dike, if there is one. Species of native woody plants that grow well around most ponds are red maple, highbush cranberry (viburnum), alder, poplar, swamp white oak, red-twig dogwood, willow, water tupelo, buttonbush, and elderberry. Even small clumps of cattails, sedges, and rushes will attract wildlife with low cost and effort.

Not all pond plants attract wildlife. If you plant new vegetation, try to select aquatic vegetation native to your



FIGURE 5.3. Even a simple snag in a pond provides shelter for fish, a foraging site, and a molting platform for dragonflies.

region. These plants will have the seeds and other parts that are appropriate for wildlife in the area. They are less likely to become a nuisance and will help restore habitats that have been lost elsewhere.

Pond vegetation tends to prefer certain zones for optimal growth. For example, water lilies require continuous water cover, whereas rushes grow well in shallow water that periodically dries down for a short duration. When you are planning your wildlife plantings around a pond, ask for tips about what plants match the water-level fluctuation at the edge of your pond. Draw an overhead diagram of your pond and plot out where you intend to plant the various forms of vegetation, based on the depth or nearness of standing water.

### *Wildlife Pond Microhabitats*

Many pond creatures rely on microhabitats—small areas in and around the pond that are especially shallow, deep, or concealed. Microhabitats have a distinct structure that is slightly different from the engineered shape of the pond. If you create these areas during construction, you will be rewarded with lots of interesting wildlife as your pond fills and matures over the years.

In existing ponds, use a shovel to dig coves and holes along the pond edge. These areas attract insects, frogs, turtles, and small fish. Small islands or mounds near the shore also add diversity and create spaces for wildlife. Shallow pools separated from the pond by a submerged ridge are especially attractive to frogs, because they provide protection from fish that might prey on them.