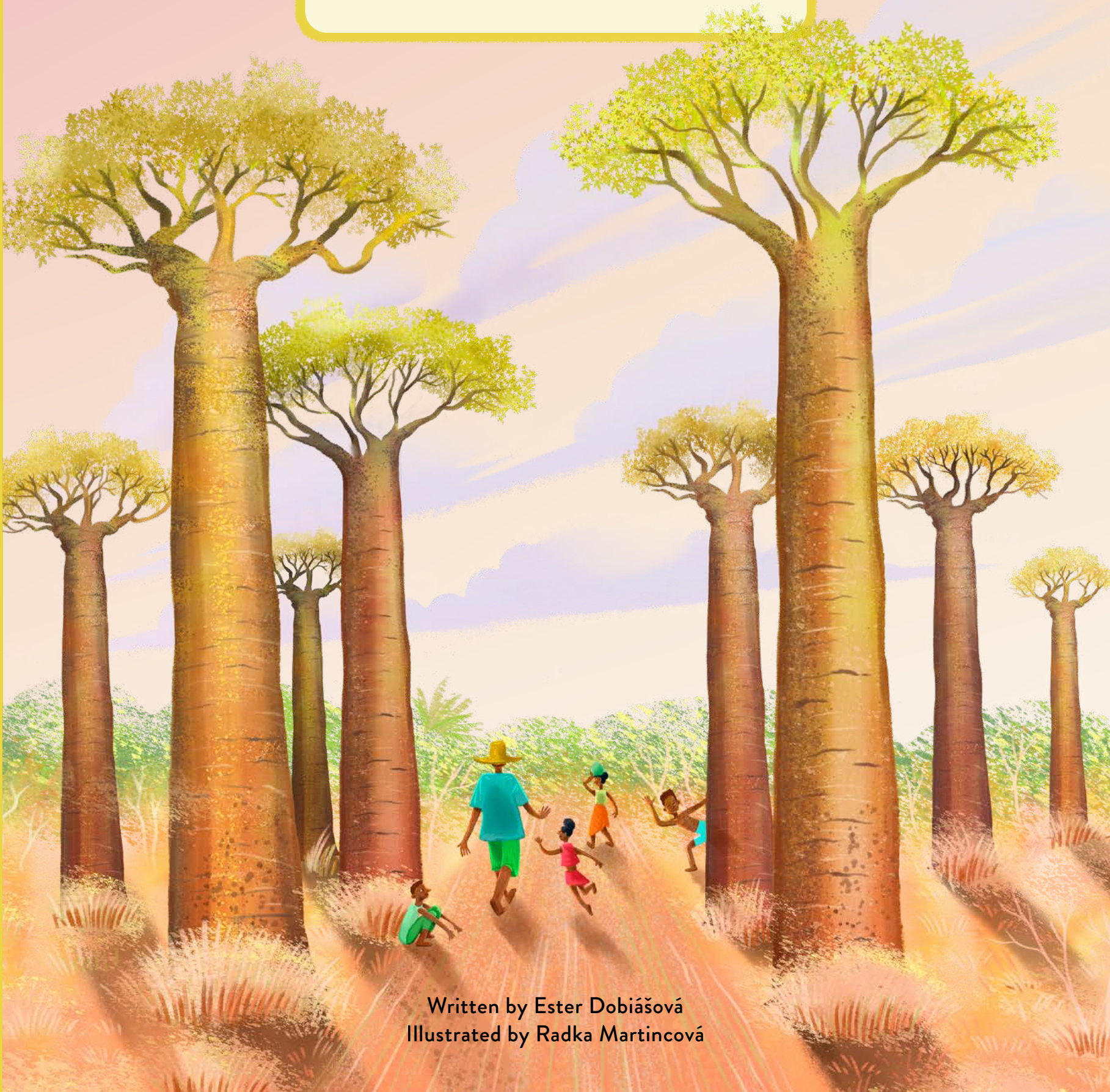
AROUND *the World in* 40 TREES



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Ester Dobiášová • Radka Martincová

albatros

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If you count well, you will find out that there are 39 chapters about great trees in this book. Why is it titled "Around the World in 40 Trees" then? Dragon Twins (page 18) are two separate trees growing next to each other!

SUNLAND BAOBAB

African baobab

The spacious hollows of baobabs are irresistible to people. The Sunland Baobab of Limpopo, South Africa, is a great example. A door had been installed in its trunk—and what was inside? A bar! It once served beer, wine, and lemonade and even hosted a party for 30 people. Sadly, a few years ago, the tree split apart, bringing an end to the festivities.



Dried and ground baobab fruit can be used as medicine.

The large, white hanging flowers of the African baobab are rich with nectar and strong in scent.



Baobabs can hold up to 30,000 gallons of water in their trunks.

The tree's circumference was last recorded at 154 feet.

Baobab leaves consist of five to seven finger-like leaflets, hence the species name, *digitata*.



AVENUE OF THE BAOBABS

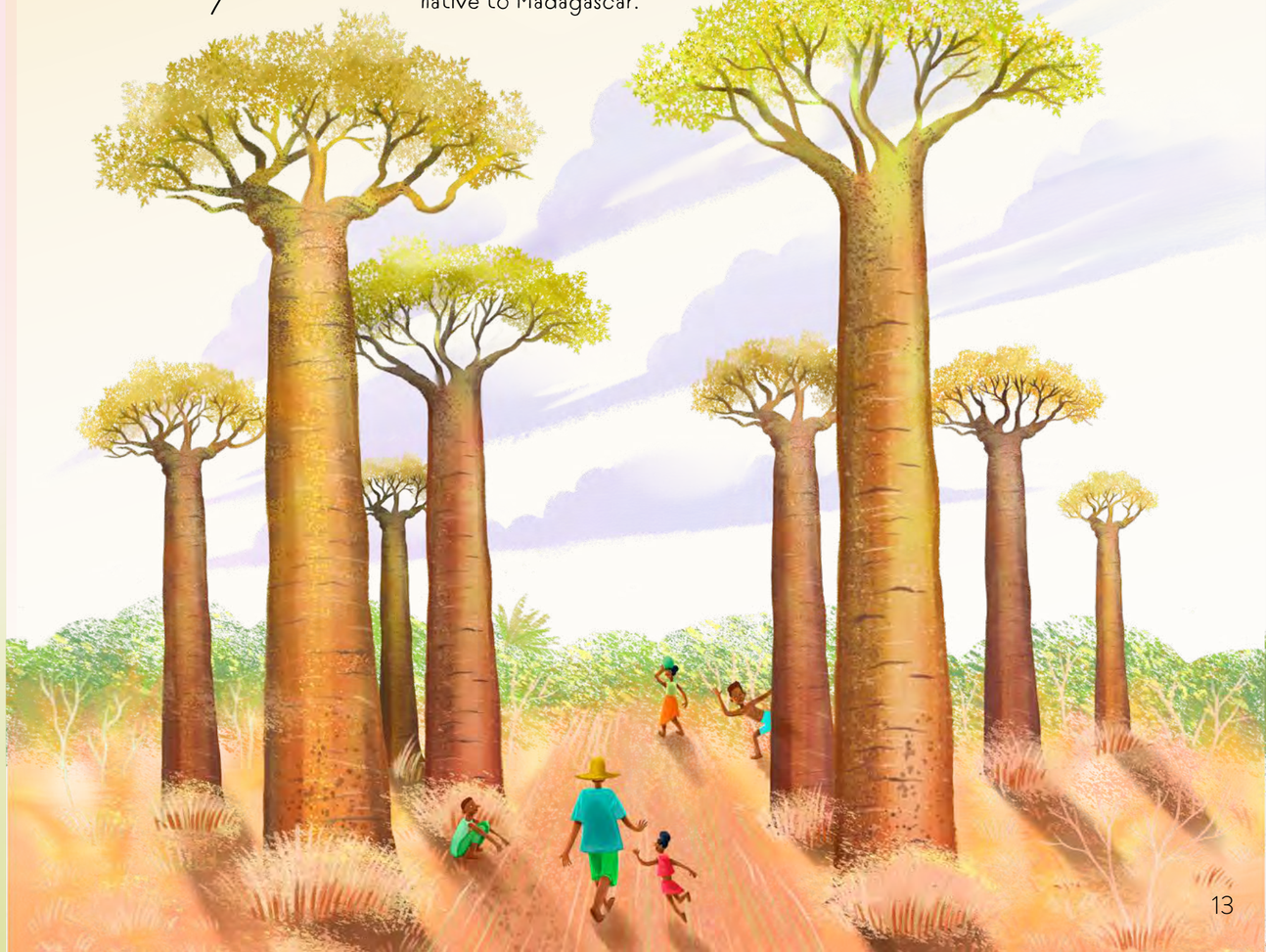
Grandidier's baobab

Grandidier's baobabs are among the tallest baobabs in the world. With towering trunks reaching more than 82 feet and stubby branches up top, they look like they've been planted upside down! For centuries, several of these magnificent trees have lined the dirt road between the settlements of Belon'i Tsiribihina and Morondava on Madagascar. And these baobabs are steeped in legend: One tale says that a baobab envied the palm tree's figure, the fig's fruit, and the bottletree's flowers. It complained so much that the gods lost patience, pulled it from the ground, and replanted it upside down.



Verreaux's sifakas enjoy feasting on baobab fruit, which is why it's called "monkey bread."

Scientists agree that all baobabs originated in Madagascar and spread via seeds floating in the ocean. Currently there are eight species (sometimes considered nine) with six native to Madagascar.



DRAGON TWINS

Canary Islands dragon tree

In the Spanish town of Breña Alta on the island of La Palma, there's an old tale of tragic love tied to a pair of dragon trees that have been growing there for centuries. According to the legend, twin brothers fell in love with the same woman. When she couldn't decide which of them to marry, they chose to duel for her hand, and both died in the fight. They say the heartbroken woman planted both trees on the site of the brothers' death. Now, resin excreted from the trees' bark resembles blood, and their wide crowns give the impression of two sad bodies huddled together. Of course, the shape of the trees was actually formed by wind and shallow, arid soil, and red resin is typical for Canary Island dragon trees—but you never know . . .

Dragon tree branches resemble the many necks of the mythical hydra. Each one grows for 10 to 15 years before forking again.

Dragon trees usually bloom once a year, and the flowers are pollinated by bees.





The fruits are round and orange, measuring about 1.5 inches across.

The oldest known dragon tree is El Drago Milenario, the Thousand-Year-Old Dragon. A symbol of the Canary Islands, it once appeared on the 1,000 peseta bill.





When cut, these trees ooze translucent, blood-red drops of resin known as "dragon's blood." It's used as a dye and in varnishes for musical instruments, and islanders collect it for its healing properties.

MAJOR OAK

English oak

In the heart of England's Sherwood Forest stands a mighty oak with a history that stretches back centuries. Local legend says the famous outlaw Robin Hood and his companions once took shelter beneath its expansive boughs. In the thirteenth century, Sherwood was a royal forest governed by strict laws. Hunting and gathering firewood were forbidden, and the Sheriff of Nottingham brutally enforced those laws. Robin and his band had other ideas. "Take from the rich and give to the poor" was their mantra as they planned their raids. Today, people from around the world come to embrace the massive trunk of the Major Oak, and even though the tree has been in bad condition for many years and is now considered dead by experts, its rustling leaves still whisper stories of knights and outlaws.



The oak eggar moth lays its eggs on oak leaves, while the purple hairstreak butterfly searches for food in the canopy.

The Major Oak is named after Major Hayman Rooke, a tree lover and historian.



Oak barrels are used to store and age wines and whiskeys. The wood gives these drinks their distinctive flavors and aromas. Oak is also excellent for smoking food, as it adds a rich, bitter smokiness. It's also an extremely durable wood, used to build beams, floors, crates, and furniture. And which is the most resilient kind of wood used for the log piles that support the "Floating City" of Venice, Italy? Oak!



Oaks withstand storms and fierce winds. Their deep roots give them stability, which is why they're planted along dams and riverbanks to reinforce the soil.



Small, round lumps called oak galls form on leaves and twigs—the result of wasp eggs laid in the tree. People once used galls to make ink.



Struggling to light a fire? Crushed oak wood catches easily and burns well.

Roasted acorns can be ground into flour or used to brew acorn "coffee."



Acorns from oak trees are an important food source for animals like red squirrels and wild boars.

Larvae of the stag beetle—Europe's largest beetle—develop inside rotting oak wood.



THE WHISTLER TREE

Cork oak

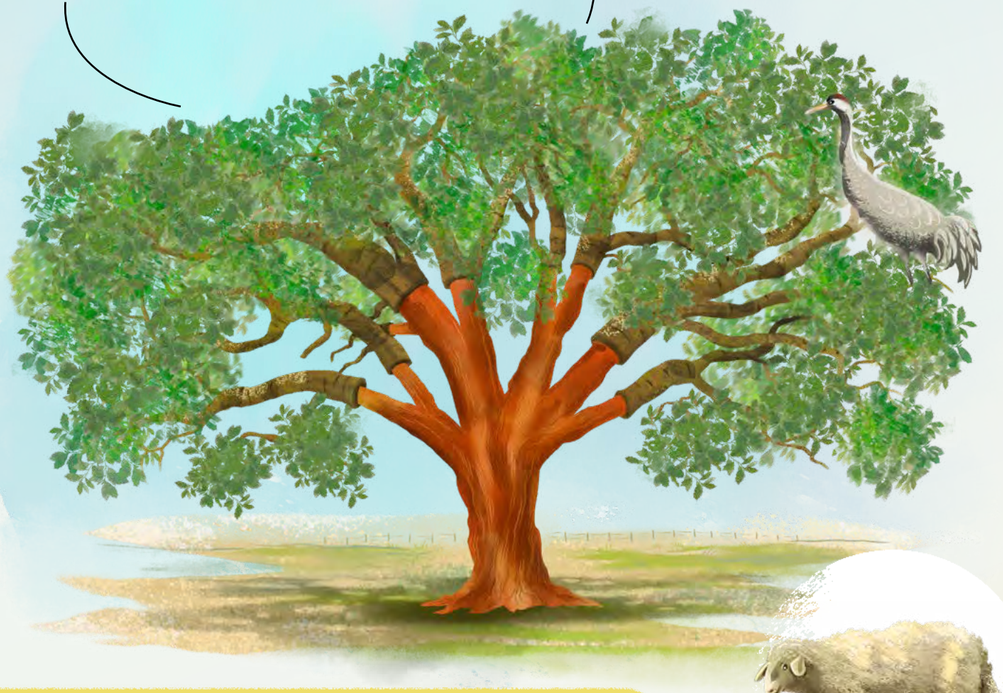
Meet the Whistler Tree, named for the many songbirds that take refuge in its branches. It's one of the world's largest and most productive cork oaks—at least according to the Guinness World Records. In 1991, the Portuguese harvested 2,650 pounds of cork from it. That's enough to make 100,000 bottle stoppers!

The tree's canopy provides shelter for wood pigeons and common cranes.



Its bark, up to 5 inches thick, is peeled off in large sheets every 10 years, after which it grows back.

The Whistler Tree was planted in 1783 in Portugal.





Sheep, turkeys, and pigs graze in cork oak groves, feeding on fallen acorns.

Cork stoppers are full of tiny pores that act like suction cups, keeping them snug in bottles. Corks have even been found in ancient Egyptian and Greek jars.



EMANCIPATION OAK

Southern live oak

Many older trees have "witnessed" historical events, but some have even helped influence them. In 1861, during the American Civil War, near Fort Monroe in Virginia, teacher Mary Peake secretly taught children of formerly enslaved people to read and write—which was illegal at the time. They would gather beneath the branches of a huge oak tree, and two years later, a crowd gathered under the same tree to hear the first public reading of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.



The red-headed woodpecker feeds on insects beneath the bark.



Fox squirrels collect and bury acorns in preparation for winter.



Local Indigenous groups were known to use oak bark for dye and acorns for food and oil.



The Emancipation Tree is now more than 200 years old.

Spanish moss hangs from the branches like lacy curtains.



The wood of southern live oaks was once used for building ship hulls.

THIMMAMMA MARRIMANU

Banyan

According to legend, there once lived a woman named Thimmamma. When her husband died, she was so overcome with grief that she threw herself onto his burning funeral pyre. They say that an enormous banyan tree grew out of the pyre and that it houses the soul of the grieving woman. Thimmamma's banyan tree, located near Kadiri, India, has become sacred to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, and other religious groups of the region. Couples hoping to have a child gather under its huge branches, believing that praying to the tree will help them conceive.



The banyan begins life as a seed in the branches of another tree, deposited there by an animal that has eaten a banyan fig. The banyan seed then sends aerial roots downward, which eventually reach the ground and take hold.



Banyan leaves are about 8 inches long and glossy. They shift in color as they grow, transitioning from a reddish hue to light green.

Thimmamma Marrimanu is 650 years old.

Covering nearly 5 acres and sporting around 4,000 roots by itself, Thimmamma Marrimanu boasts the largest crown in the world.



Strangely, banyan flowers are hidden inside the fleshy structures that become the tree's figs. The flowers are pollinated by one particular species of fig wasp, which lays its eggs directly into the fleshy structures.

Banyan trees can form extensive forests.



The banyan's aerial roots help support the tree's weight, propping it up as it spreads over a large area.

LUNA

Coast redwood

Living in a tree isn't easy for humans, especially when your home is a small platform, about 6 feet long and 6 feet wide. But that's exactly what young activist Julia Butterfly Hill did in order to save the 1,500-year-old redwood called Luna from being cut down. She stayed in the tree, 177 feet above the ground, for more than two years. Her courage drew global attention to the issue, and she only climbed down after Luna and the forest around it was promised protection.



Julia Butterfly Hill (born 1974) lived in Luna's crown for 738 days, from 1997 to 1999. She remained up there through wind- and snowstorms, Thanksgivings and spring blossoms, and threats from logging companies. Hill used a solar-powered phone and spoke with many influential people. She continues to advocate for the protection of trees to this day.

Cool coastal air and fog keep the forest moist all year.

The coast redwood is one of two state trees of California, along with the giant sequoia.

Redwoods, unlike other sequoias, rely on a mild climate with high humidity, which is why they grow close to the ocean.

Loggers marked trees meant to be cut down with bright blue paint.





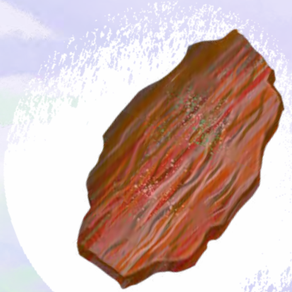
The northern spotted owl is known to nest in redwoods.

The deep canopies of redwoods can hold entire ecosystems in their branches. Piles of fallen needles and bits of bark create rich soil, allowing ferns, berries, mosses, and lichens to grow. These spaces can be more than 130 feet high and support various animals, including the rare clouded salamander.



Redwoods are able to pump water hundreds of feet, from their roots all the way to the tops of their crowns, through a process called transpiration.





The name "redwood" likely comes from the reddish rust color of the trees' bark, which can grow up to 12 inches thick, helping them withstand fire. Redwoods, unlike many other trees, also don't produce any flammable resin.



The black bear and the mule deer both enjoy eating young redwood shoots.



GENERAL SHERMAN

Giant sequoia

Giant sequoias grow naturally only on the western side of California's Sierra Nevada mountain range. These ancient trees are so impressive that they're often named after legendary historical figures. In the Giant Forest of California's Sequoia National Park, you'll find towering trees with such names as Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Hamilton, though the largest tree in the region is General Sherman, which stands at a proud height of 275 feet, its trunk measuring an incredible 100 feet around.



General Sherman is named after William Tecumseh Sherman, a Union commander in the Civil War.



Inside sequoia cones are seeds that the wind can carry as far as 600 feet.

General Sherman is estimated to be around 2,200 years old.

Because of their shallow root systems and great weight, sequoias often topple.

GENERAL NOBLE TREE

Giant sequoia

Mammoth trees, as giant sequoias are sometimes called, have amazed people for centuries—but that hasn't always been beneficial to them. In 1892, the misfortunate General Noble Tree was cut into 46 segments so that it could be "reassembled" and displayed at the Chicago World's Fair. But when the tree pieces were finally fit back together and displayed, no one believed that it was authentic, even nicknaming it the "California Hoax." Similarly tragic ends came to other giant sequoias, including the Mother of the Forest, whose bark was stripped in 1852 for exhibitions in New York and London. The tree itself dried out and later burned, though its fate rallied conservationists to push for protections for these great trees.

In the past, people made shingles, fences, and matchsticks from sequoia wood.





After the General Noble Tree was chopped up, some individual sections weighed more than 4 tons, and they were transported on specialized wagons pulled by 16 mules. The trip between states required 11 railroad cars.



The tree was named after U.S. Secretary of the Interior John Willock Noble, who recommended the establishment of a national park.

The General Noble Tree stood 300 feet tall, with a circumference of 95 feet.

