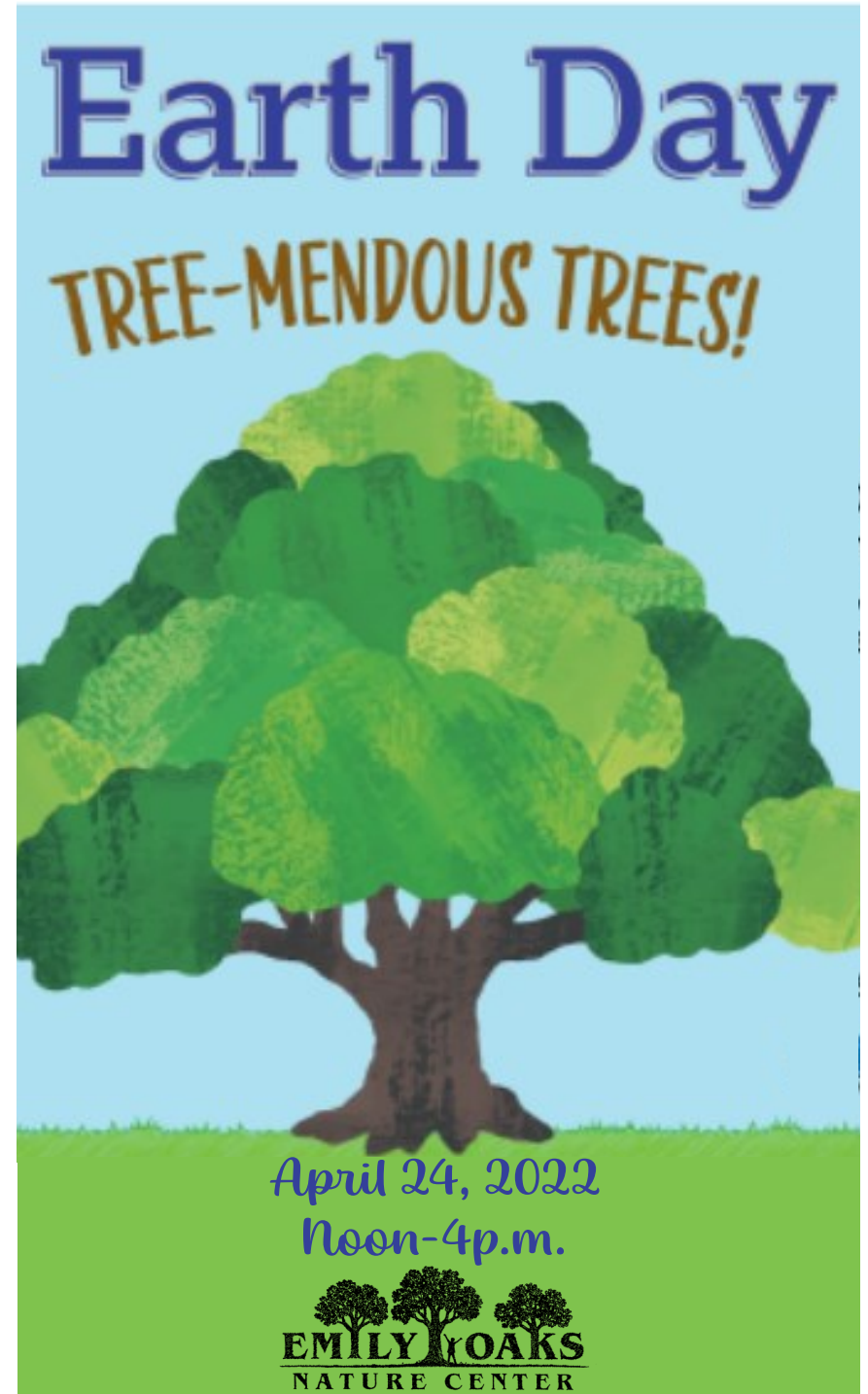


**Thank you for  
celebrating  
Earth Day with us!**



**See you around  
the trails!**

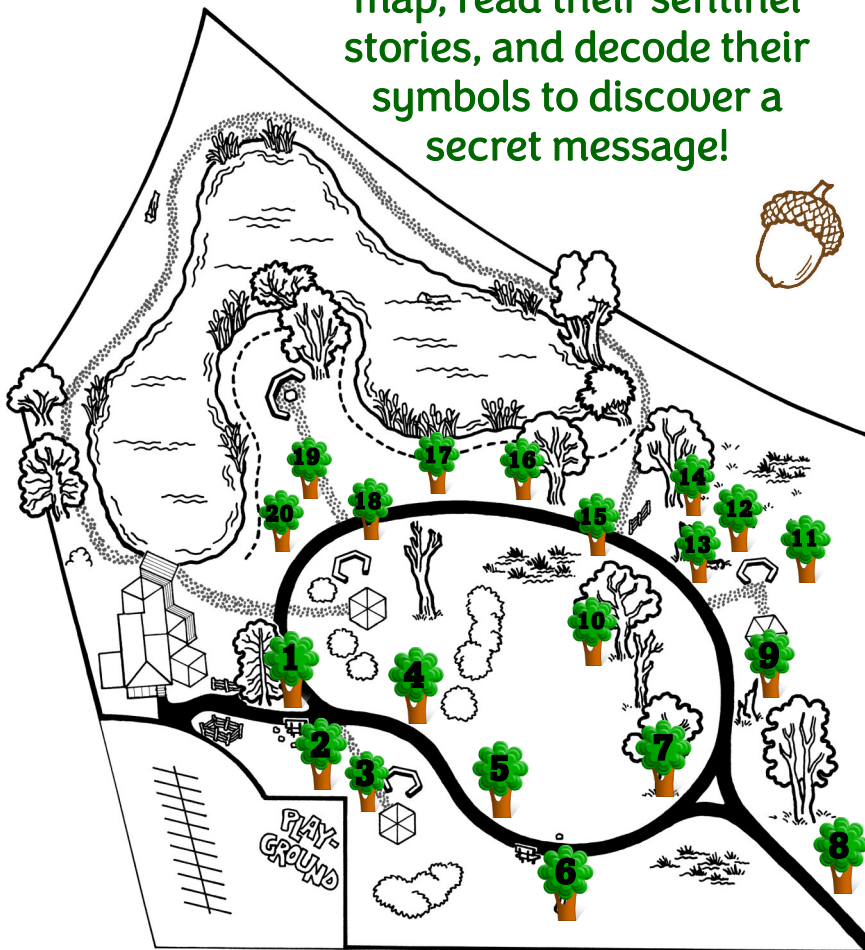




Oak trees are the sentinels of  
Emily Oaks Nature Center.

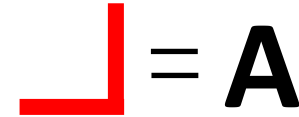
A sentinel stands guard and watches  
over things. The sentinels of Emily Oaks  
are some of the oldest and grandest trees  
at the nature center, and each  
has a story to tell.

Find the 20 different trees marked on the  
map, read their sentinel  
symbols to discover a  
secret message!



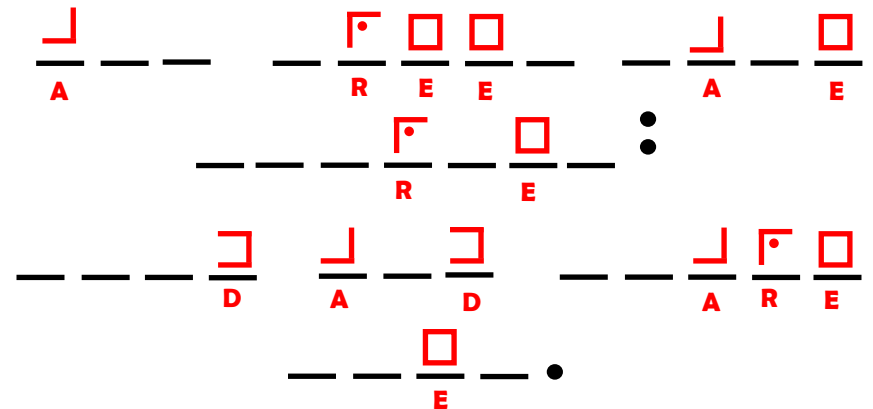
Assemble all of the symbols you have seen in the order  
they are found in the booklet. Some letters have  
already been provided and decoded for you.

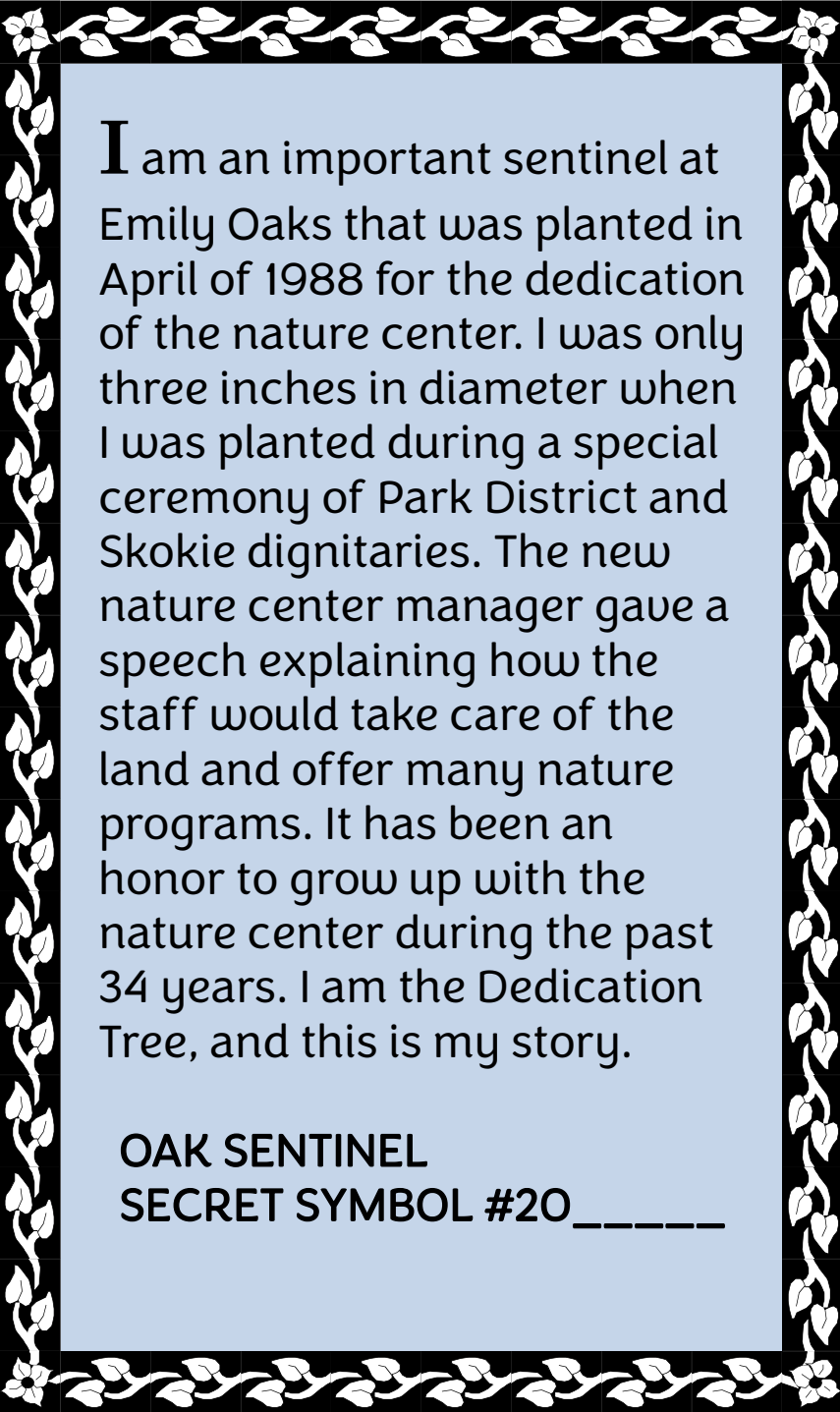
A	B	C
D	E	F
G	H	I



Use the key to decode the cypher and learn the secret  
message of the trees of Emily Oaks!

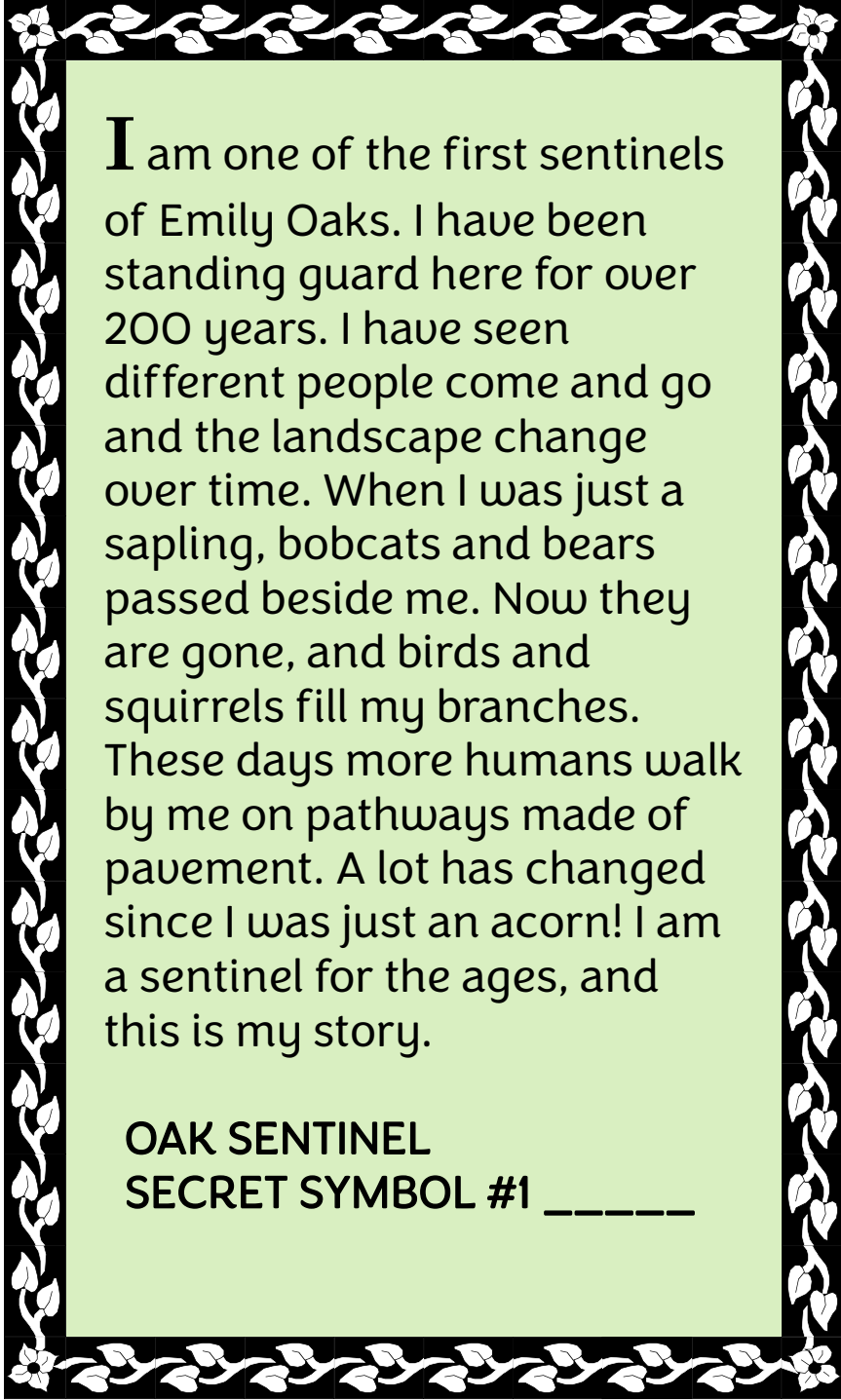
A	B	C	J	K	L
D	E	F	M	N	O
G	H	I	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z				





I am an important sentinel at Emily Oaks that was planted in April of 1988 for the dedication of the nature center. I was only three inches in diameter when I was planted during a special ceremony of Park District and Skokie dignitaries. The new nature center manager gave a speech explaining how the staff would take care of the land and offer many nature programs. It has been an honor to grow up with the nature center during the past 34 years. I am the Dedication Tree, and this is my story.

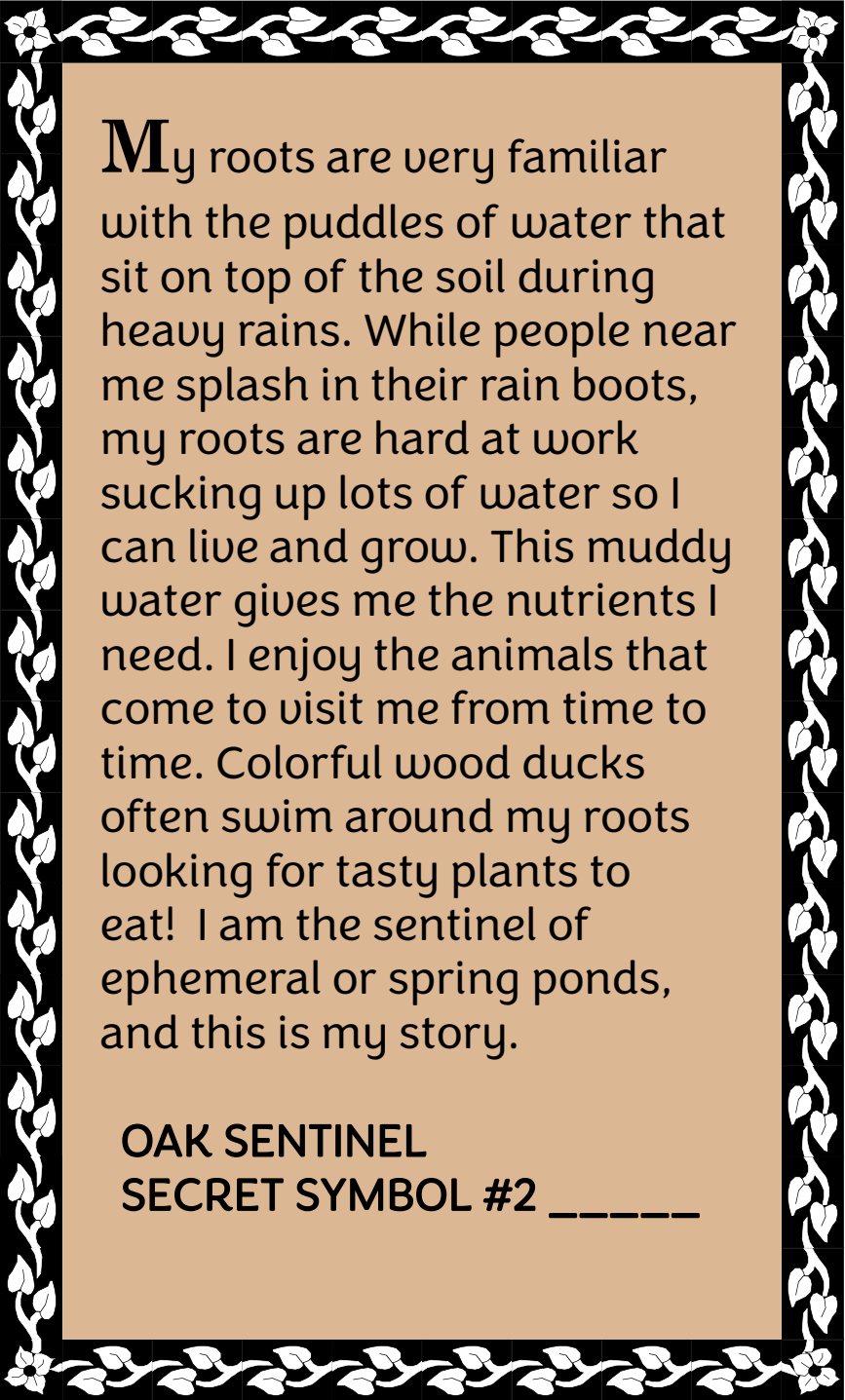
OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #20 \_\_\_\_\_



I am one of the first sentinels of Emily Oaks. I have been standing guard here for over 200 years. I have seen different people come and go and the landscape change over time. When I was just a sapling, bobcats and bears passed beside me. Now they are gone, and birds and squirrels fill my branches. These days more humans walk by me on pathways made of pavement. A lot has changed since I was just an acorn! I am a sentinel for the ages, and this is my story.

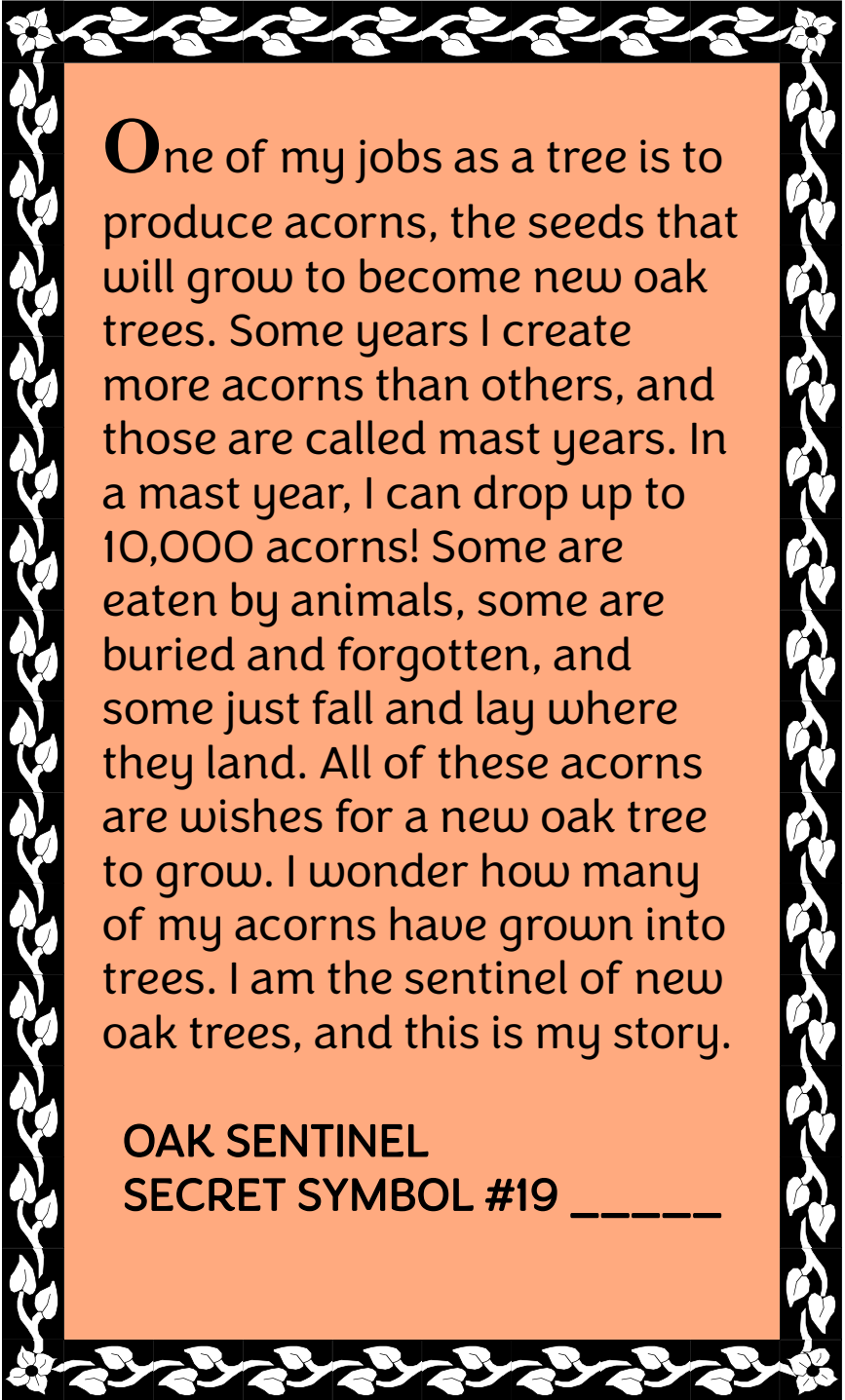
OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #1 \_\_\_\_\_





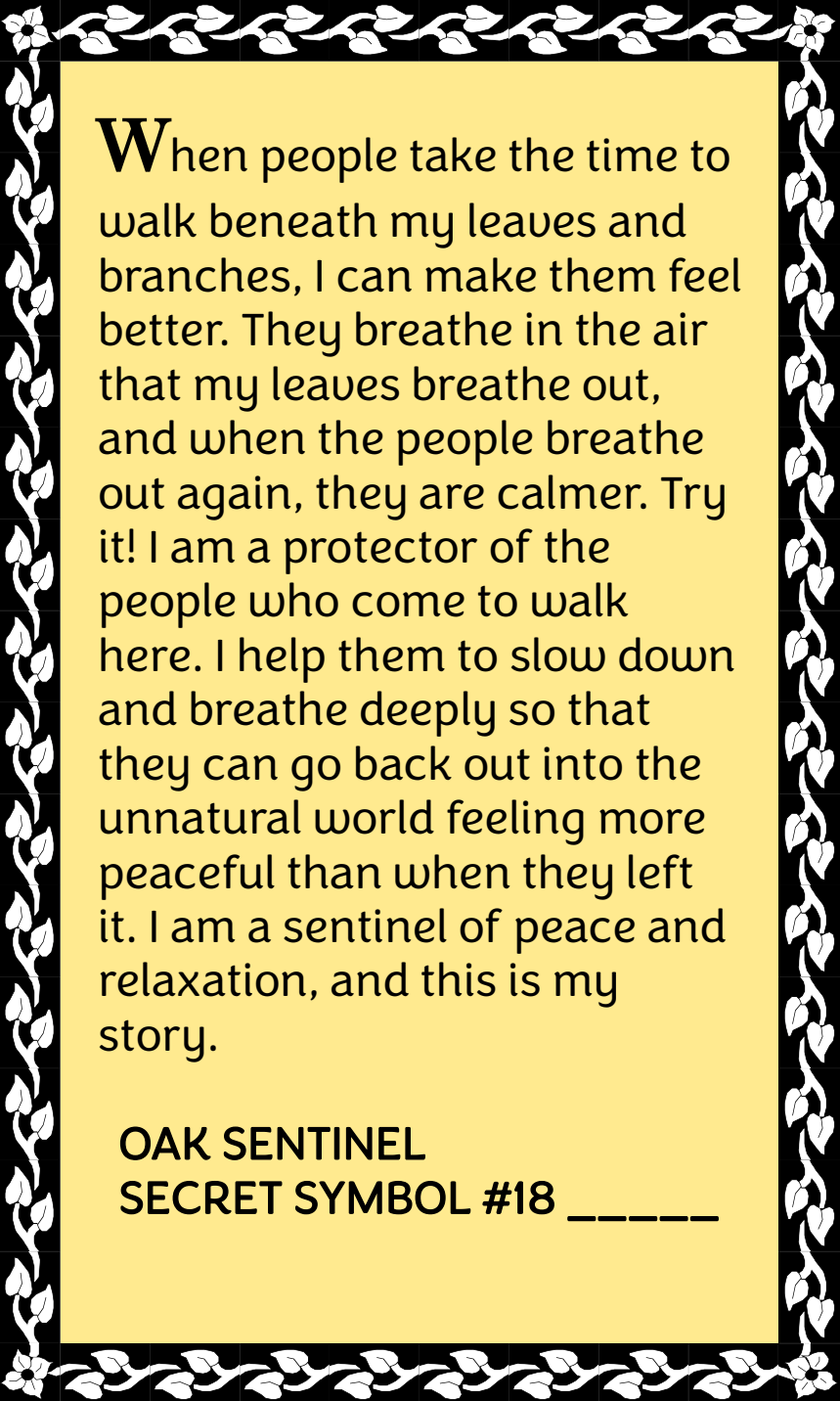
**M**y roots are very familiar with the puddles of water that sit on top of the soil during heavy rains. While people near me splash in their rain boots, my roots are hard at work sucking up lots of water so I can live and grow. This muddy water gives me the nutrients I need. I enjoy the animals that come to visit me from time to time. Colorful wood ducks often swim around my roots looking for tasty plants to eat! I am the sentinel of ephemeral or spring ponds, and this is my story.

**OAK SENTINEL**  
**SECRET SYMBOL #2** \_\_\_\_\_




**O**ne of my jobs as a tree is to produce acorns, the seeds that will grow to become new oak trees. Some years I create more acorns than others, and those are called mast years. In a mast year, I can drop up to 10,000 acorns! Some are eaten by animals, some are buried and forgotten, and some just fall and lay where they land. All of these acorns are wishes for a new oak tree to grow. I wonder how many of my acorns have grown into trees. I am the sentinel of new oak trees, and this is my story.

**OAK SENTINEL**  
**SECRET SYMBOL #19** \_\_\_\_\_



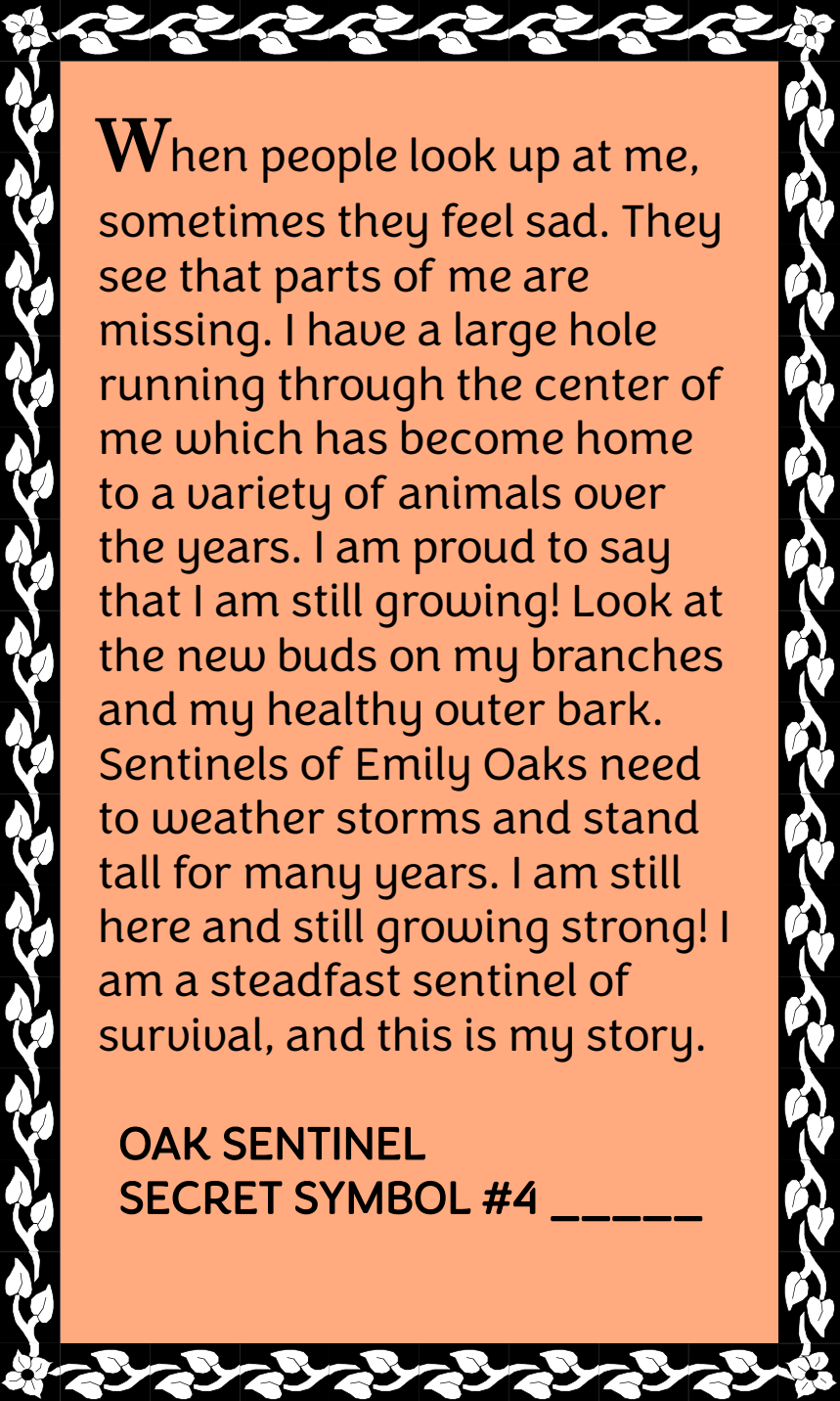
**W**hen people take the time to walk beneath my leaves and branches, I can make them feel better. They breathe in the air that my leaves breathe out, and when the people breathe out again, they are calmer. Try it! I am a protector of the people who come to walk here. I help them to slow down and breathe deeply so that they can go back out into the unnatural world feeling more peaceful than when they left it. I am a sentinel of peace and relaxation, and this is my story.

**OAK SENTINEL**  
**SECRET SYMBOL #18** \_\_\_\_\_



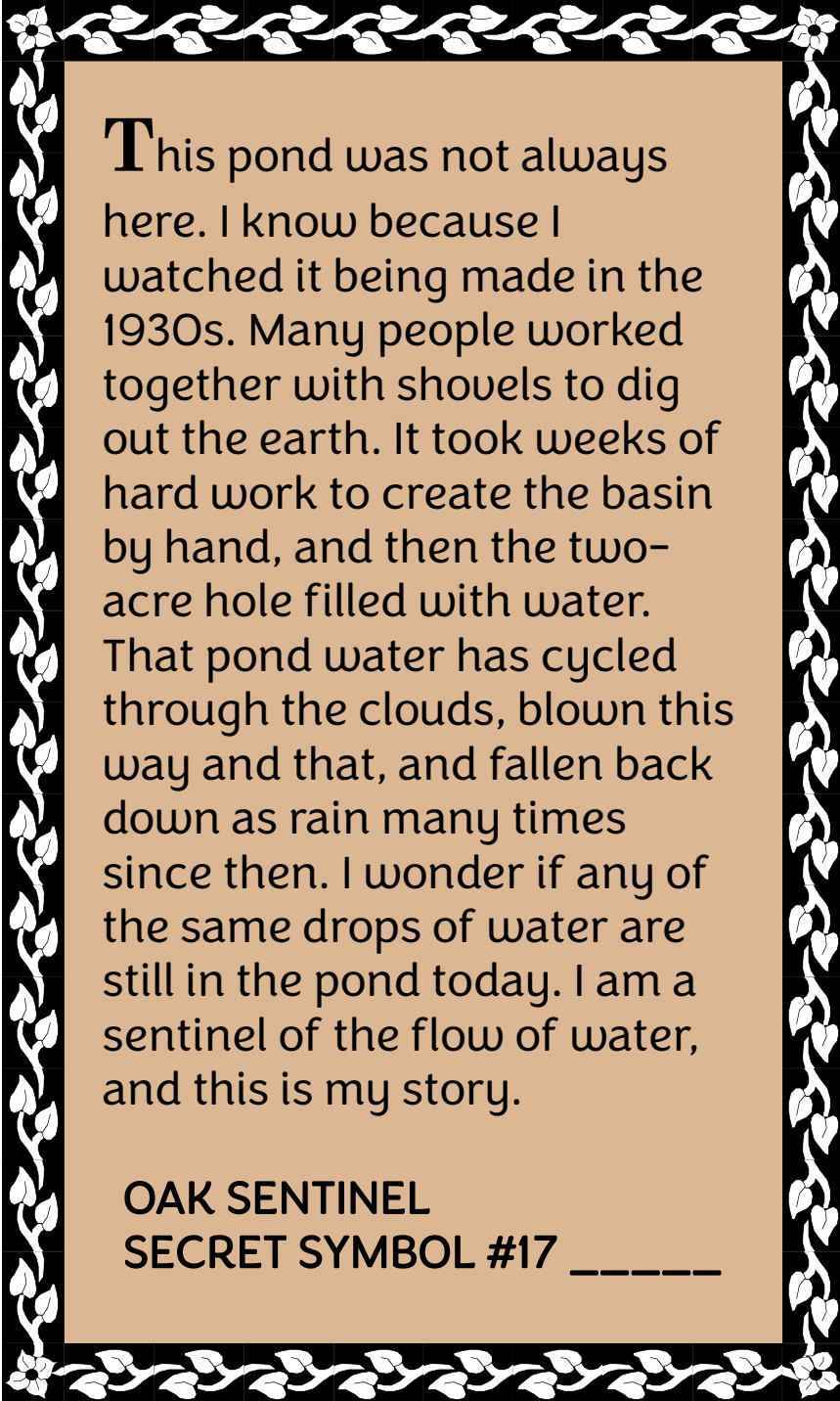
**I** am an exceptionally large tree! In the spring, I grow 1000's of leaves on my branches that make a dense canopy or covering and provide a great amount of shade from the hot sun. After running around during the summertime, kids love to sit beneath me to cool off. I enjoy their company. They thank me for protecting them from the sun by wrapping their arms around my trunk and giving me a hug! I am a sentinel for the children at play, and this is my story.

**OAK SENTINEL**  
**SECRET SYMBOL #3** \_\_\_\_\_




When people look up at me, sometimes they feel sad. They see that parts of me are missing. I have a large hole running through the center of me which has become home to a variety of animals over the years. I am proud to say that I am still growing! Look at the new buds on my branches and my healthy outer bark. Sentinels of Emily Oaks need to weather storms and stand tall for many years. I am still here and still growing strong! I am a steadfast sentinel of survival, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #4 \_\_\_\_\_



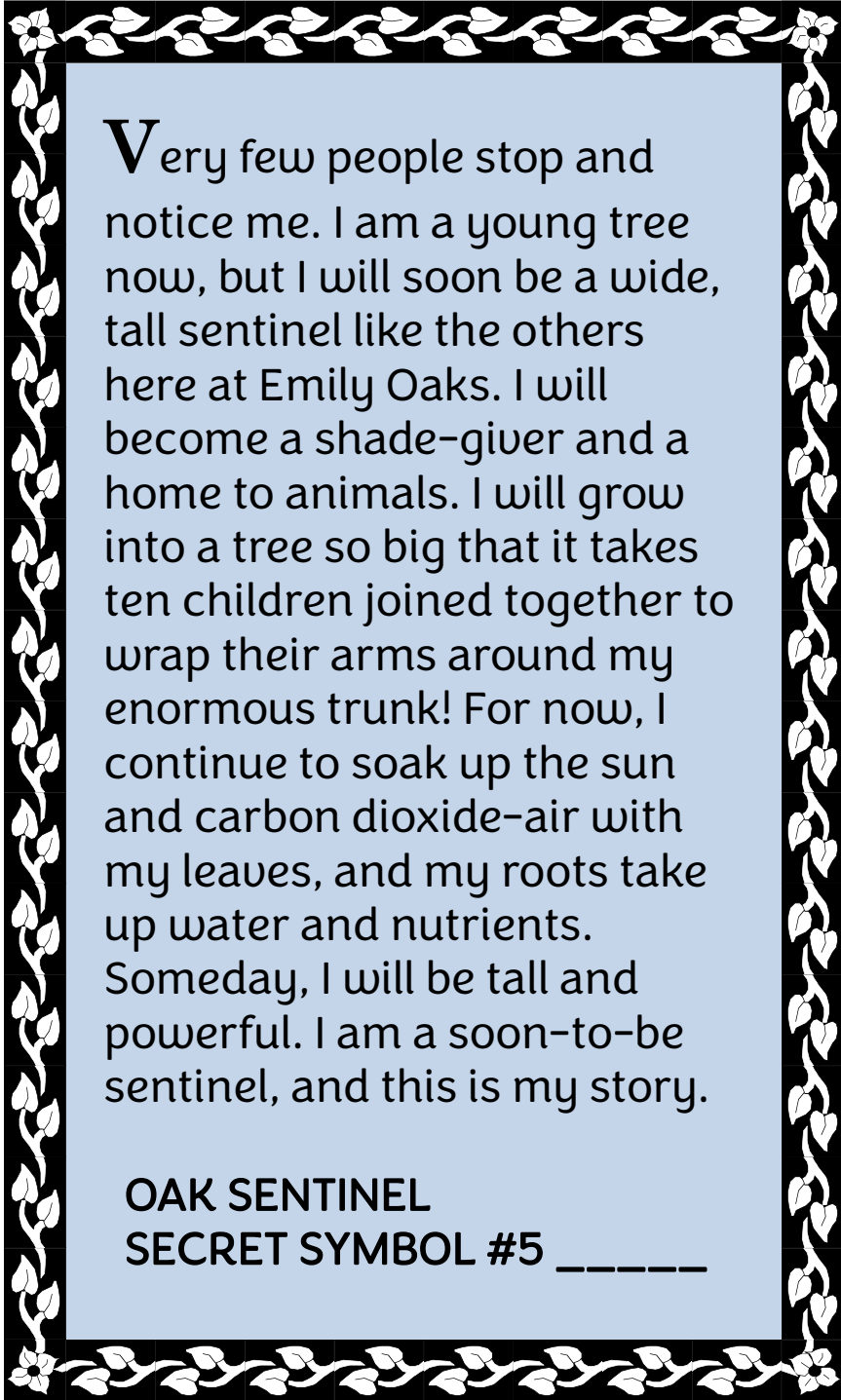
This pond was not always here. I know because I watched it being made in the 1930s. Many people worked together with shovels to dig out the earth. It took weeks of hard work to create the basin by hand, and then the two-acre hole filled with water. That pond water has cycled through the clouds, blown this way and that, and fallen back down as rain many times since then. I wonder if any of the same drops of water are still in the pond today. I am a sentinel of the flow of water, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #17 \_\_\_\_\_



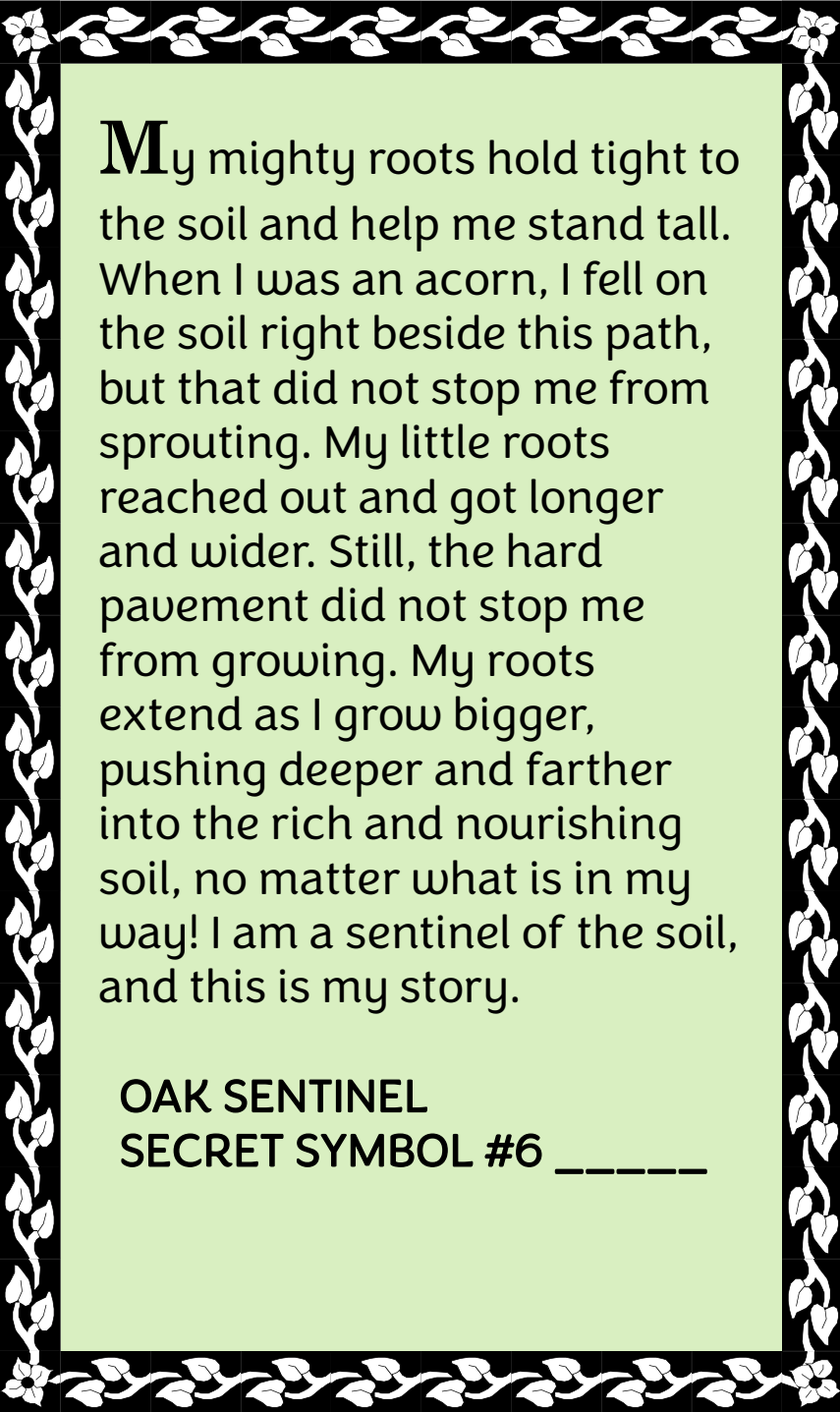
I am home to a family of raccoons. Stare up my trunk towards the sky. Can you spot the large hole in my branch on the left? After nightfall, you can spot raccoons peering out of the hole and climbing down the trunk to go out for an evening hunt. Raccoons travel to the pond to find a supper of frogs and crayfish. Before sunrise, they make their way back to this hole in my trunk and sleep all day until the sun sets again. As a sentinel, I am a safe home for raccoons, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #16 \_\_\_\_\_



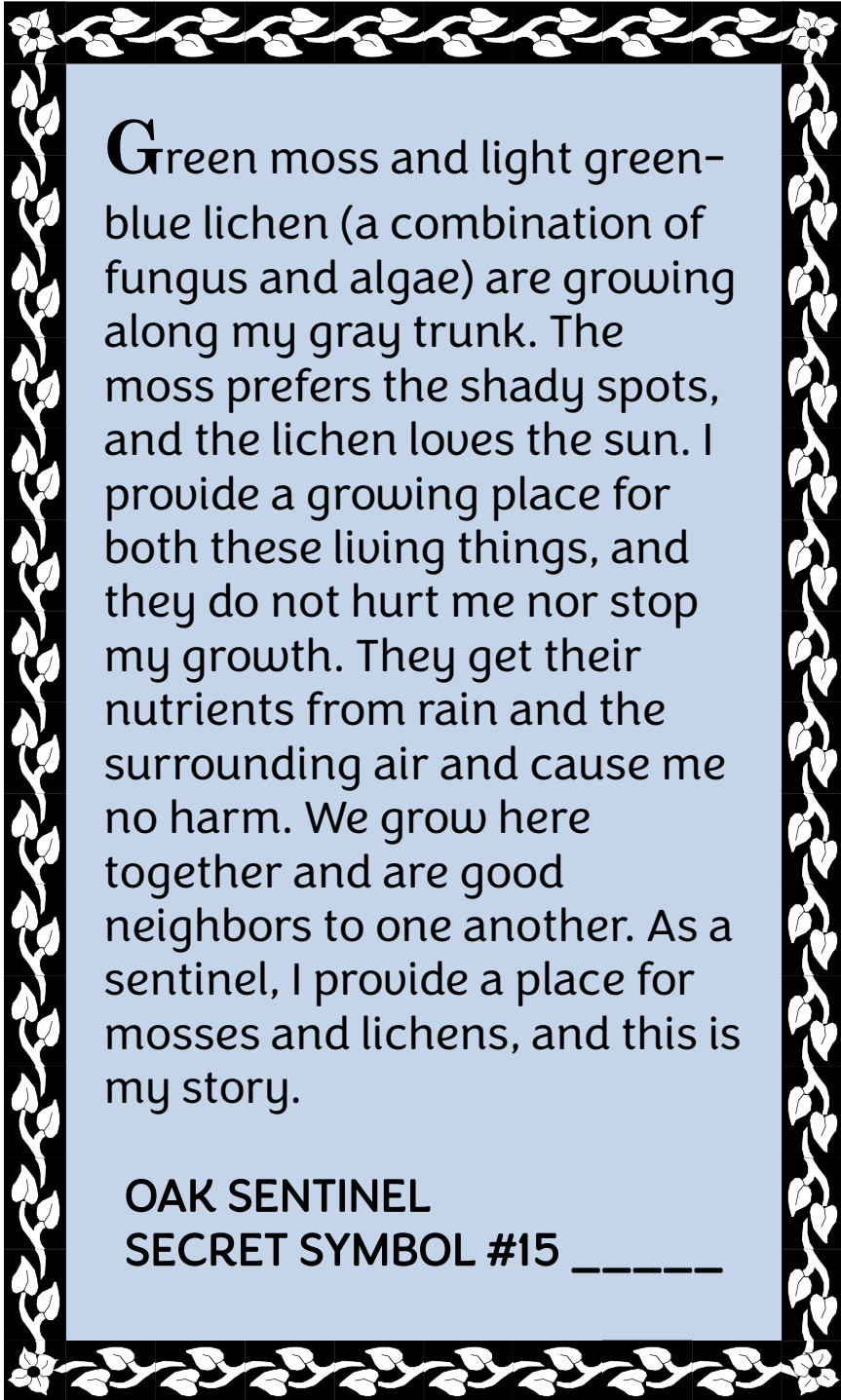
Very few people stop and notice me. I am a young tree now, but I will soon be a wide, tall sentinel like the others here at Emily Oaks. I will become a shade-giver and a home to animals. I will grow into a tree so big that it takes ten children joined together to wrap their arms around my enormous trunk! For now, I continue to soak up the sun and carbon dioxide-air with my leaves, and my roots take up water and nutrients. Someday, I will be tall and powerful. I am a soon-to-be sentinel, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #5 \_\_\_\_\_



**M**y mighty roots hold tight to the soil and help me stand tall. When I was an acorn, I fell on the soil right beside this path, but that did not stop me from sprouting. My little roots reached out and got longer and wider. Still, the hard pavement did not stop me from growing. My roots extend as I grow bigger, pushing deeper and farther into the rich and nourishing soil, no matter what is in my way! I am a sentinel of the soil, and this is my story.

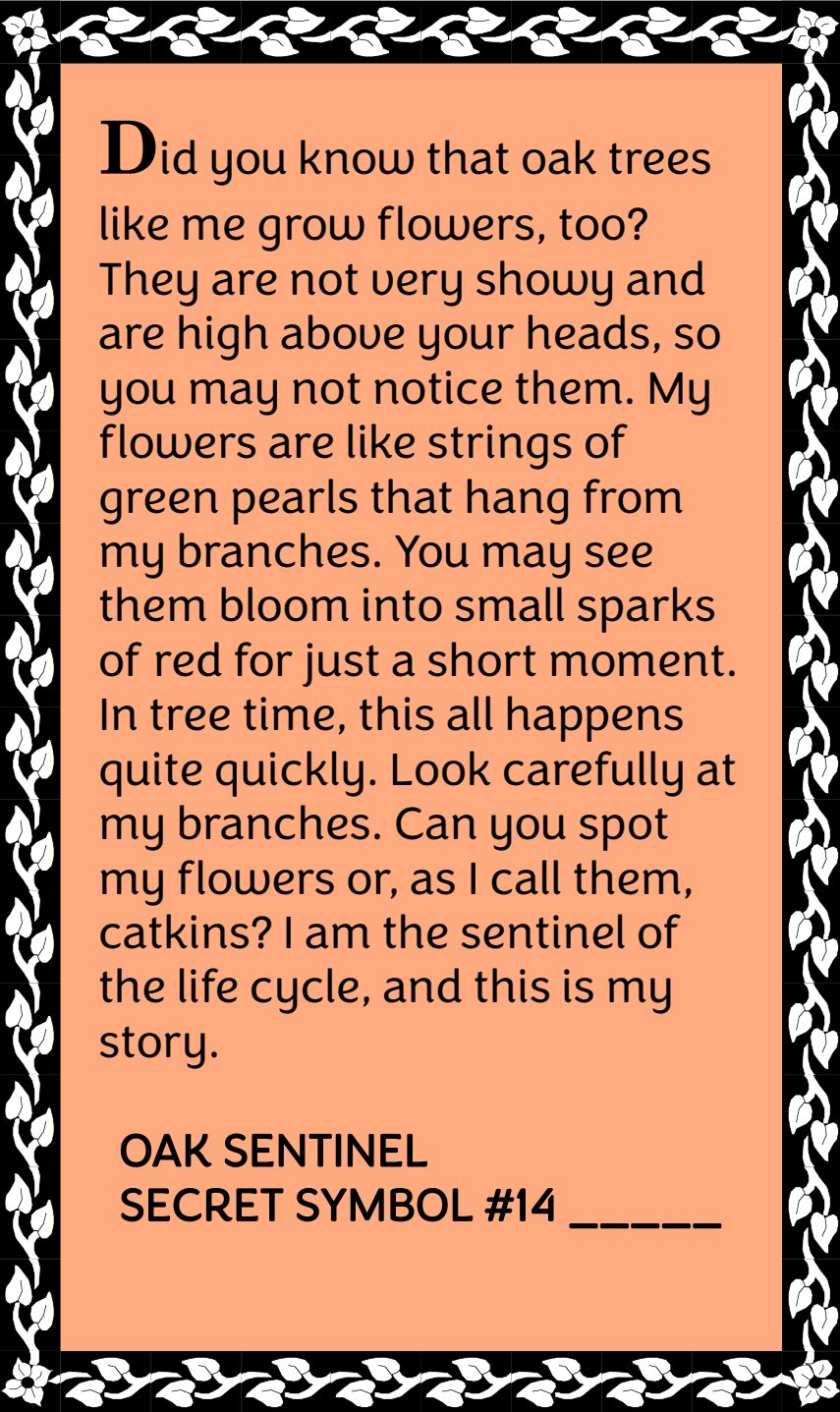
OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #6 \_\_\_\_\_



**G**reen moss and light green-blue lichen (a combination of fungus and algae) are growing along my gray trunk. The moss prefers the shady spots, and the lichen loves the sun. I provide a growing place for both these living things, and they do not hurt me nor stop my growth. They get their nutrients from rain and the surrounding air and cause me no harm. We grow here together and are good neighbors to one another. As a sentinel, I provide a place for mosses and lichens, and this is my story.


OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #15 \_\_\_\_\_





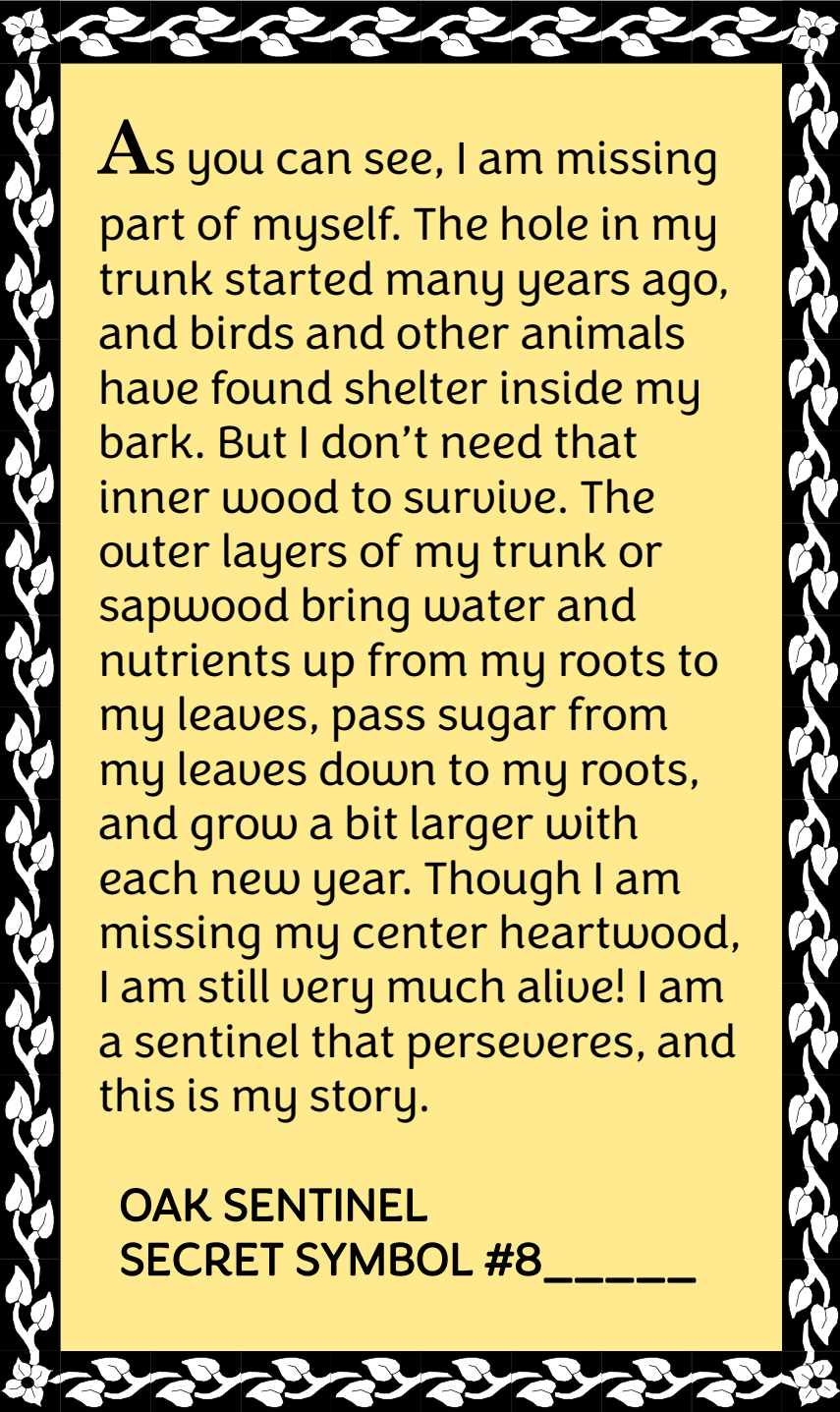
**D**id you know that oak trees like me grow flowers, too? They are not very showy and are high above your heads, so you may not notice them. My flowers are like strings of green pearls that hang from my branches. You may see them bloom into small sparks of red for just a short moment. In tree time, this all happens quite quickly. Look carefully at my branches. Can you spot my flowers or, as I call them, catkins? I am the sentinel of the life cycle, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #14 \_\_\_\_\_



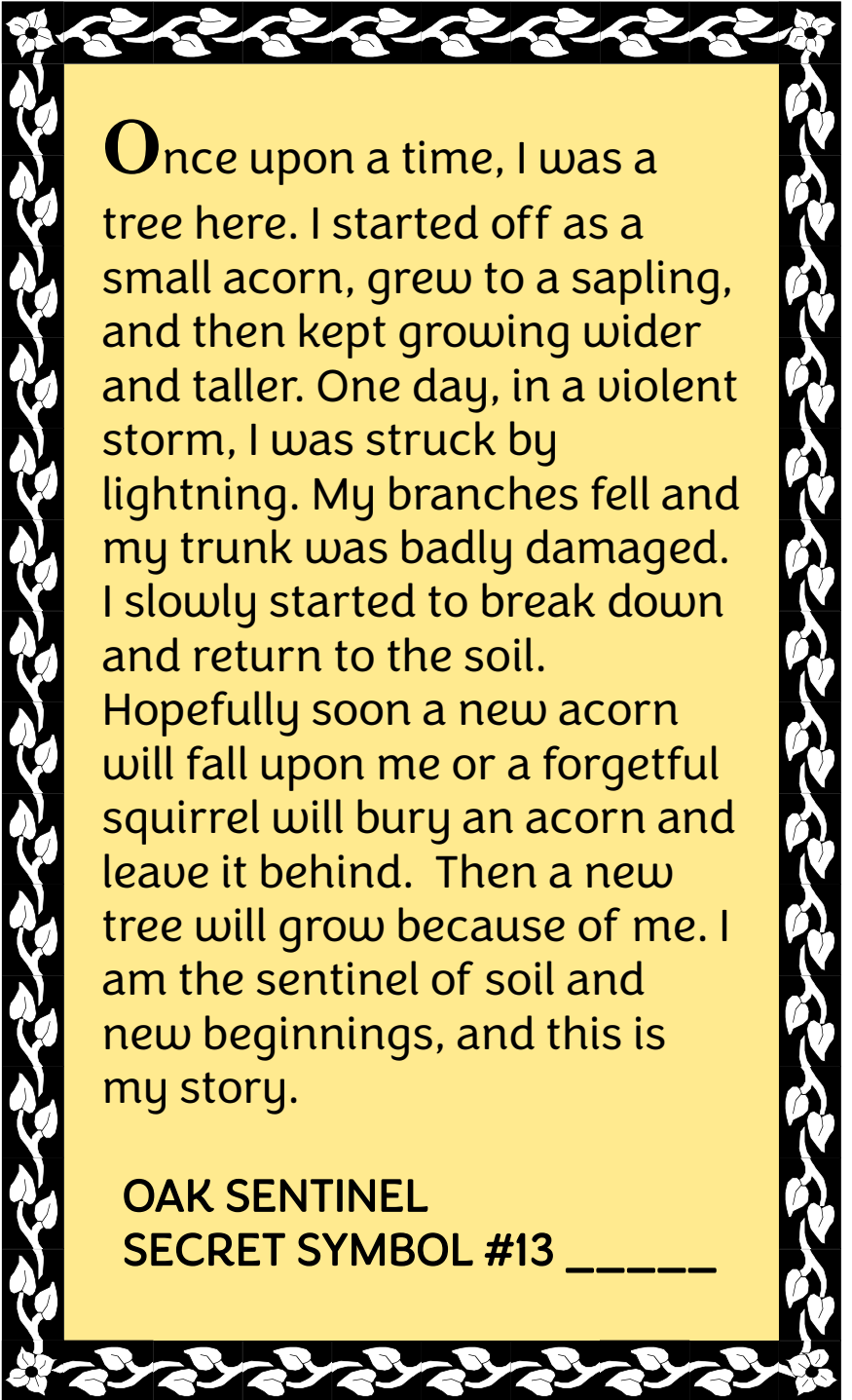
**H**ere I have stood for well over 200 years! Recently some of my branches became weak and were a danger to folks who hike and explore nearby. Some of these fell in mighty winds and some were cut down to protect the people who walk this trail. I am still growing, but my branches which were once a danger are now an invitation to play. Balance on my logs and climb on my branches! I am a sentinel of safety and play, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #7 \_\_\_\_\_



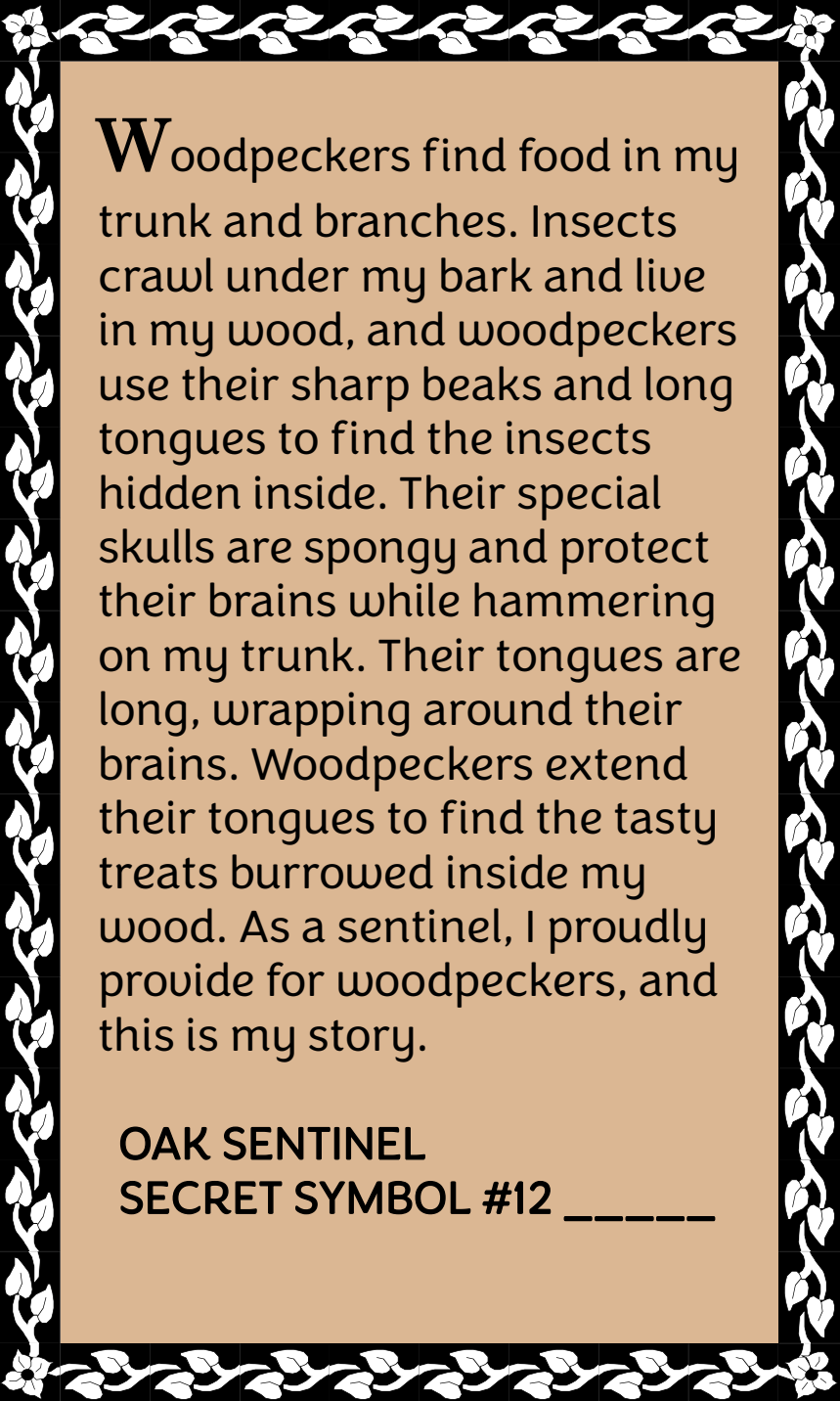
As you can see, I am missing part of myself. The hole in my trunk started many years ago, and birds and other animals have found shelter inside my bark. But I don't need that inner wood to survive. The outer layers of my trunk or sapwood bring water and nutrients up from my roots to my leaves, pass sugar from my leaves down to my roots, and grow a bit larger with each new year. Though I am missing my center heartwood, I am still very much alive! I am a sentinel that perseveres, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #8 \_\_\_\_\_



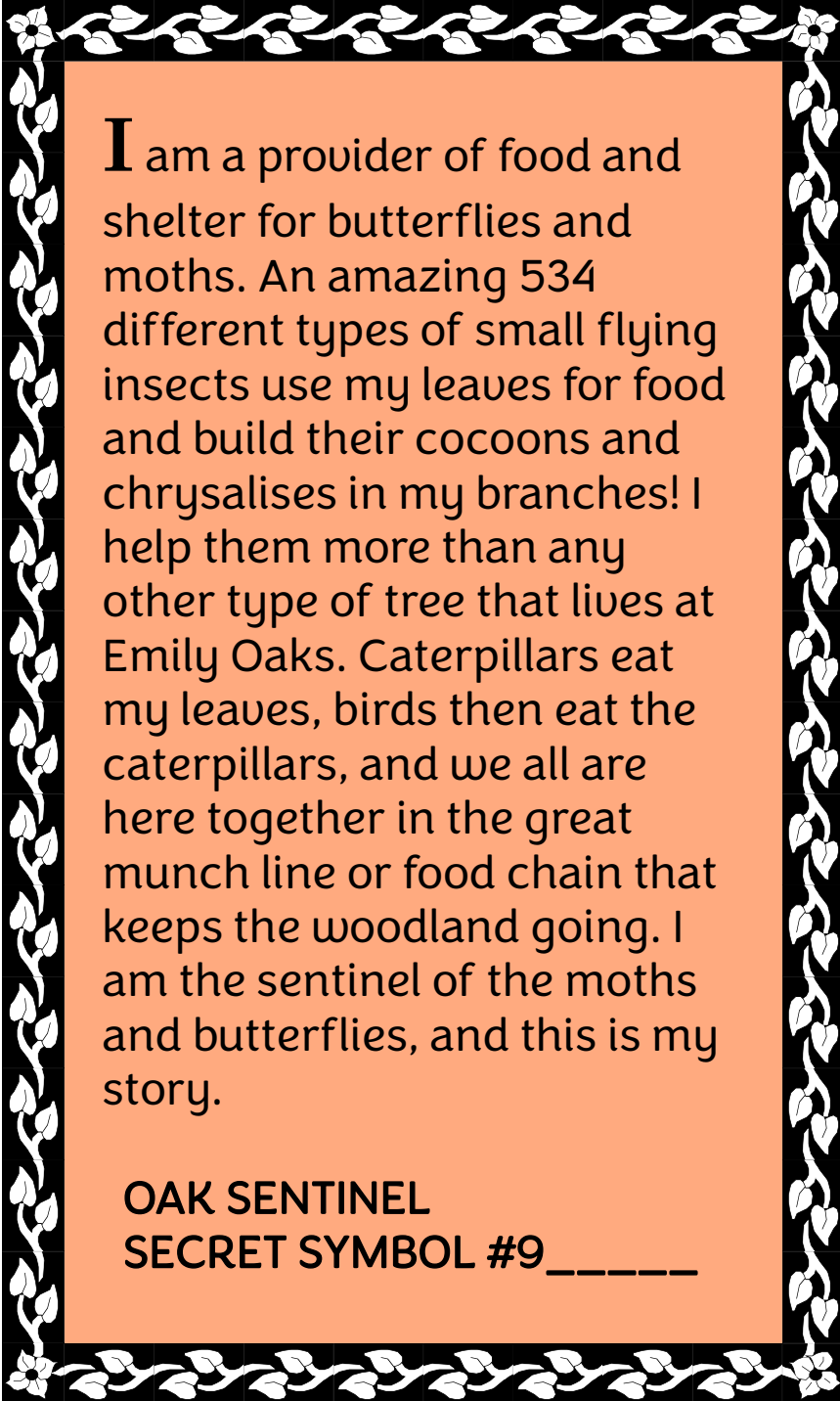
Once upon a time, I was a tree here. I started off as a small acorn, grew to a sapling, and then kept growing wider and taller. One day, in a violent storm, I was struck by lightning. My branches fell and my trunk was badly damaged. I slowly started to break down and return to the soil. Hopefully soon a new acorn will fall upon me or a forgetful squirrel will bury an acorn and leave it behind. Then a new tree will grow because of me. I am the sentinel of soil and new beginnings, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #13 \_\_\_\_\_



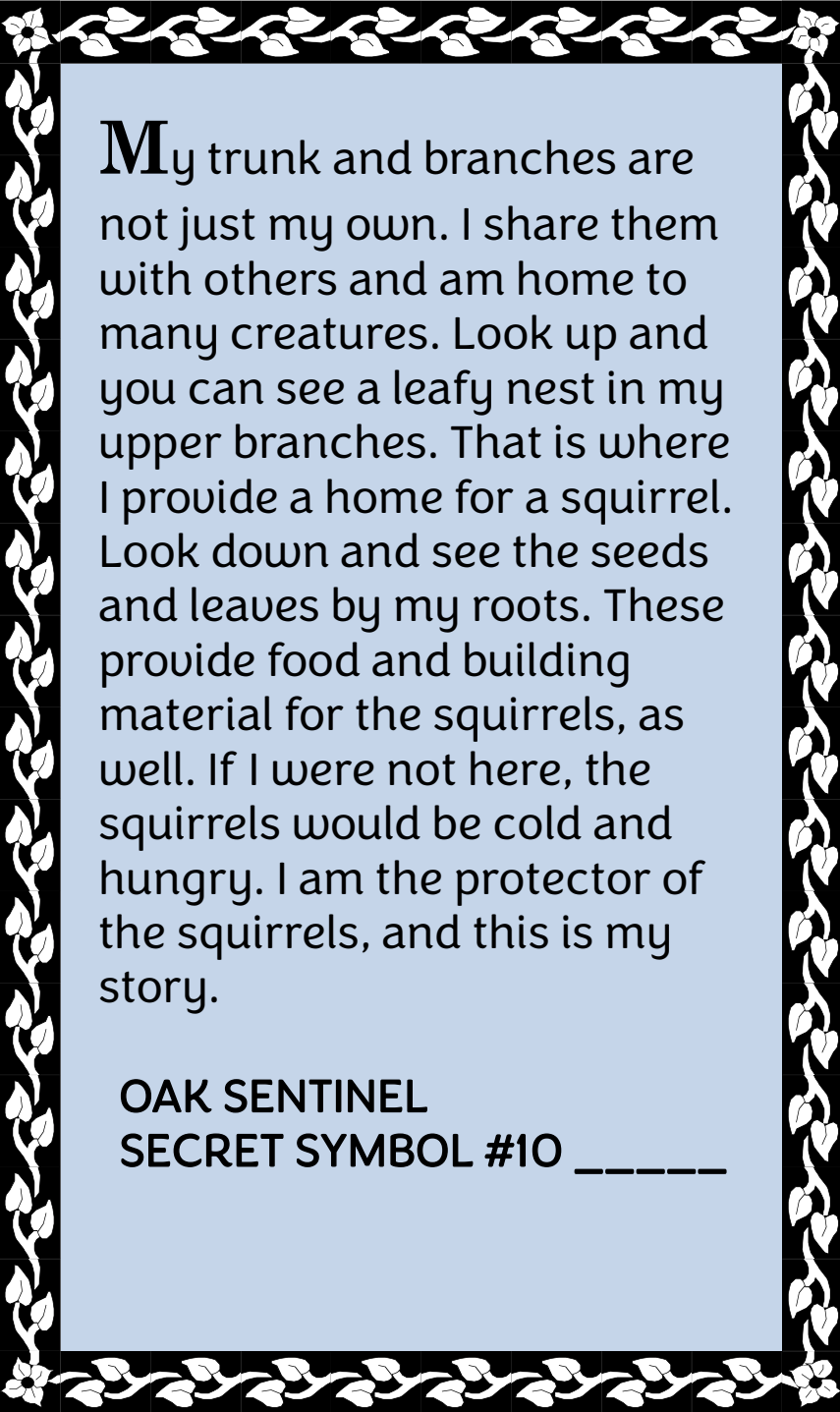
**W**oodpeckers find food in my trunk and branches. Insects crawl under my bark and live in my wood, and woodpeckers use their sharp beaks and long tongues to find the insects hidden inside. Their special skulls are spongy and protect their brains while hammering on my trunk. Their tongues are long, wrapping around their brains. Woodpeckers extend their tongues to find the tasty treats burrowed inside my wood. As a sentinel, I proudly provide for woodpeckers, and this is my story.

**OAK SENTINEL**  
**SECRET SYMBOL #12** \_\_\_\_\_



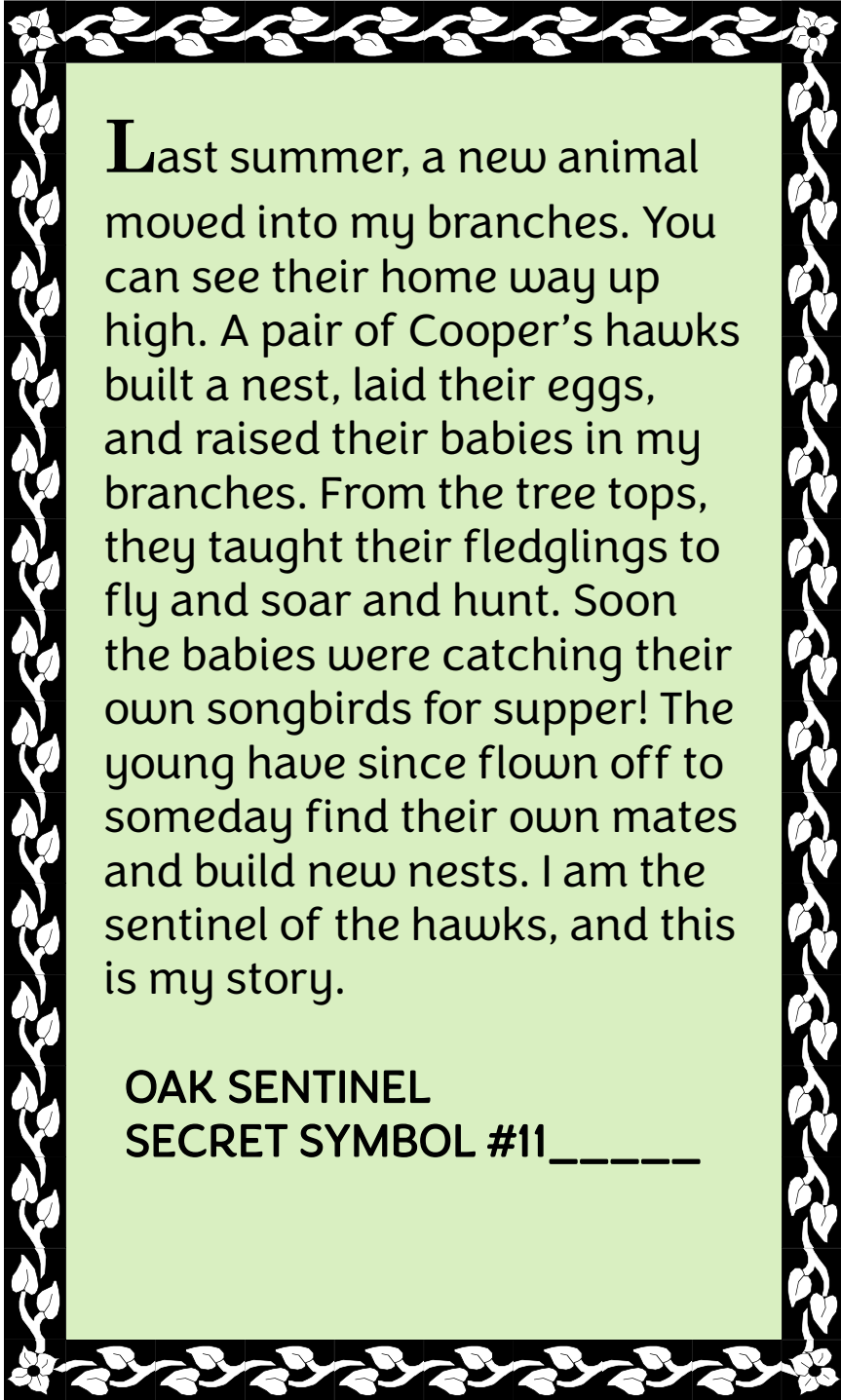
**I** am a provider of food and shelter for butterflies and moths. An amazing 534 different types of small flying insects use my leaves for food and build their cocoons and chrysalises in my branches! I help them more than any other type of tree that lives at Emily Oaks. Caterpillars eat my leaves, birds then eat the caterpillars, and we all are here together in the great munch line or food chain that keeps the woodland going. I am the sentinel of the moths and butterflies, and this is my story.

**OAK SENTINEL**  
**SECRET SYMBOL #9** \_\_\_\_\_

A decorative border of white leaves and vines on a black background frames the text.

**M**y trunk and branches are not just my own. I share them with others and am home to many creatures. Look up and you can see a leafy nest in my upper branches. That is where I provide a home for a squirrel. Look down and see the seeds and leaves by my roots. These provide food and building material for the squirrels, as well. If I were not here, the squirrels would be cold and hungry. I am the protector of the squirrels, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #10 \_\_\_\_\_

A decorative border of white leaves and vines on a black background frames the text.

**L**ast summer, a new animal moved into my branches. You can see their home way up high. A pair of Cooper's hawks built a nest, laid their eggs, and raised their babies in my branches. From the tree tops, they taught their fledglings to fly and soar and hunt. Soon the babies were catching their own songbirds for supper! The young have since flown off to someday find their own mates and build new nests. I am the sentinel of the hawks, and this is my story.

OAK SENTINEL  
SECRET SYMBOL #11 \_\_\_\_\_