



Expository Nonfiction

Genre Study

Expository nonfiction explains information and ideas. Look for

- illustrations that support the facts.
- details to help you learn about a topic.

What I Know

What I Read


What I Learned

Comprehension Strategy



Ask questions if you are confused about what you are reading.

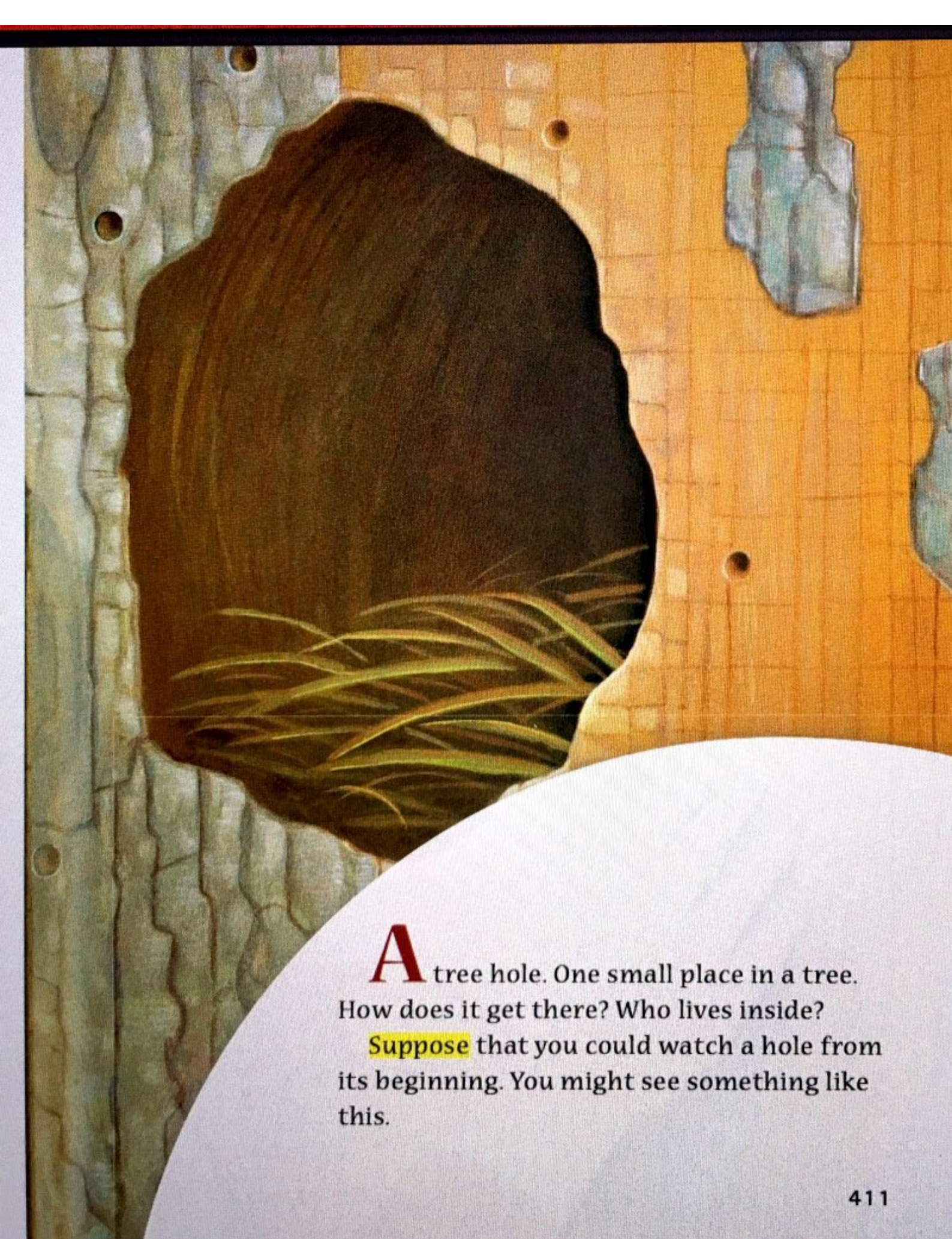




One Small Place in a Tree

by
Barbara Brenner
illustrated by
Tom Leonard

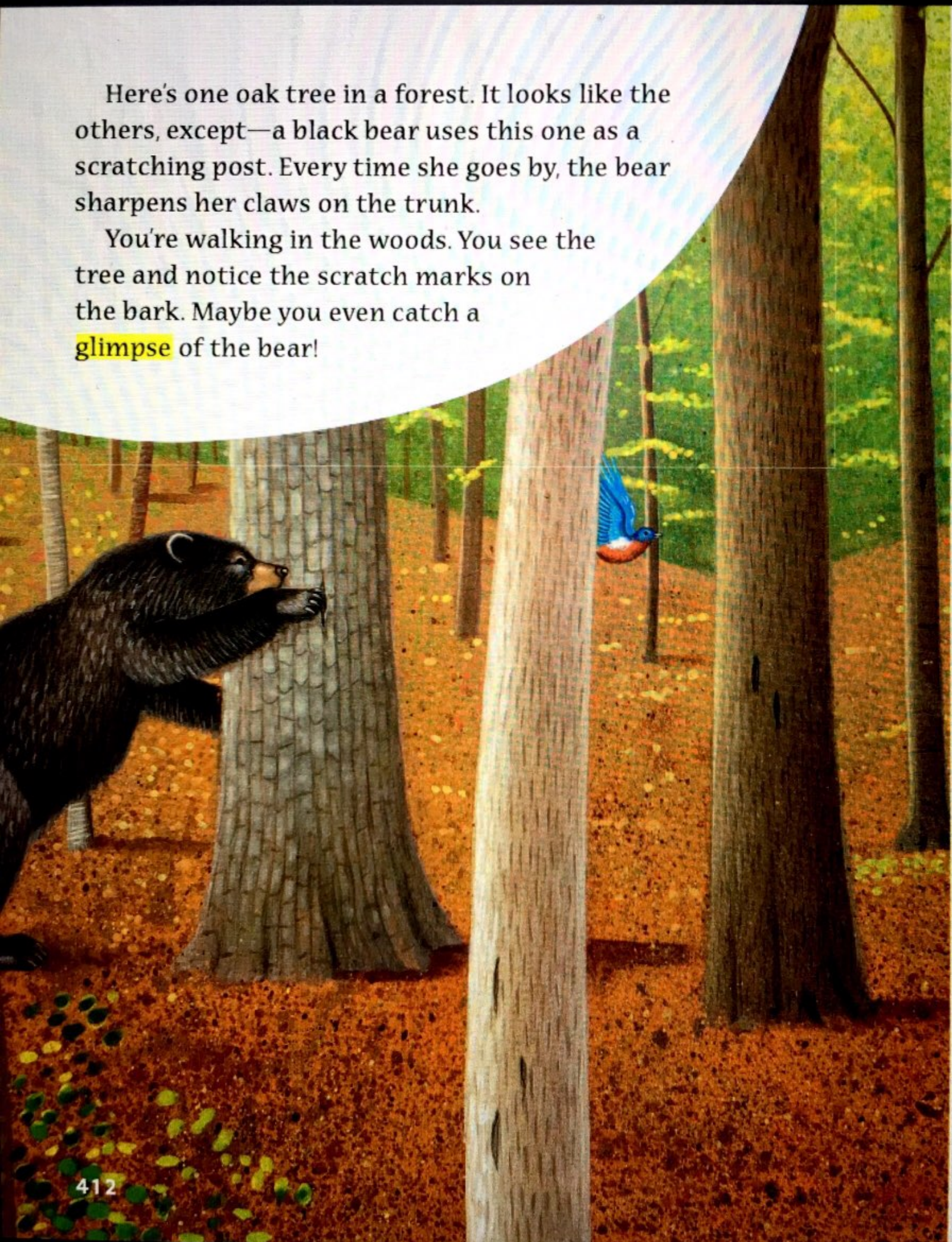


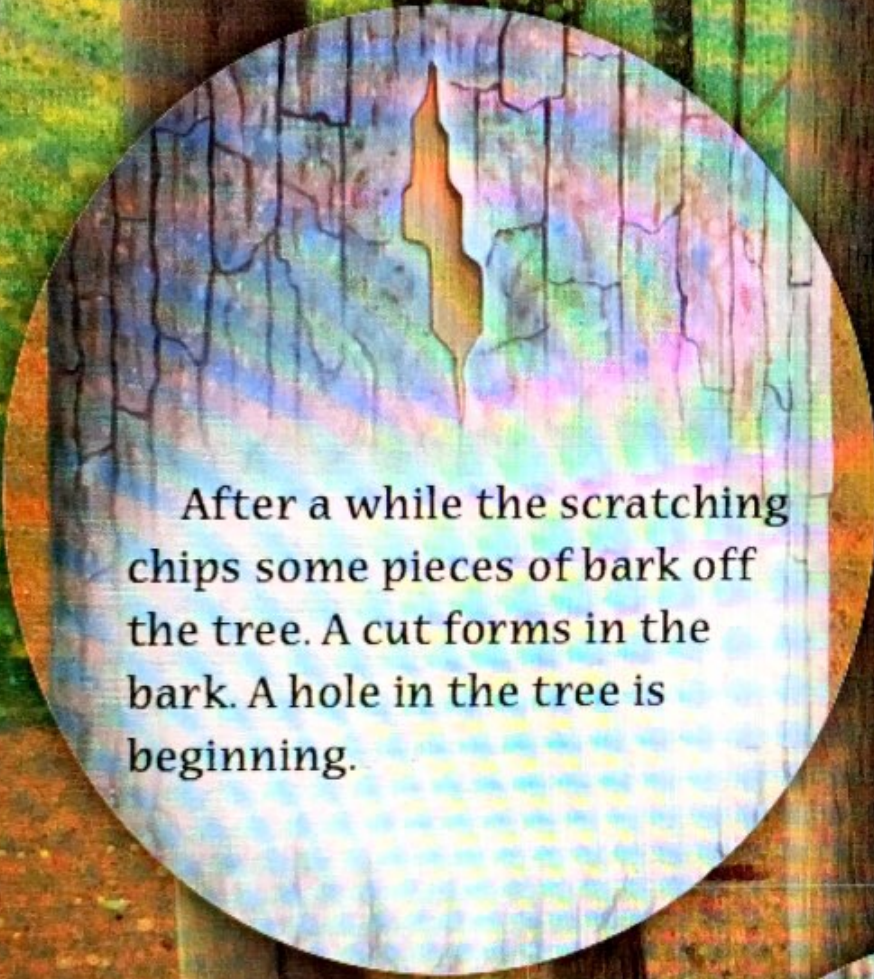


A tree hole. One small place in a tree. How does it get there? Who lives inside? **Suppose** that you could watch a hole from its beginning. You might see something like this.

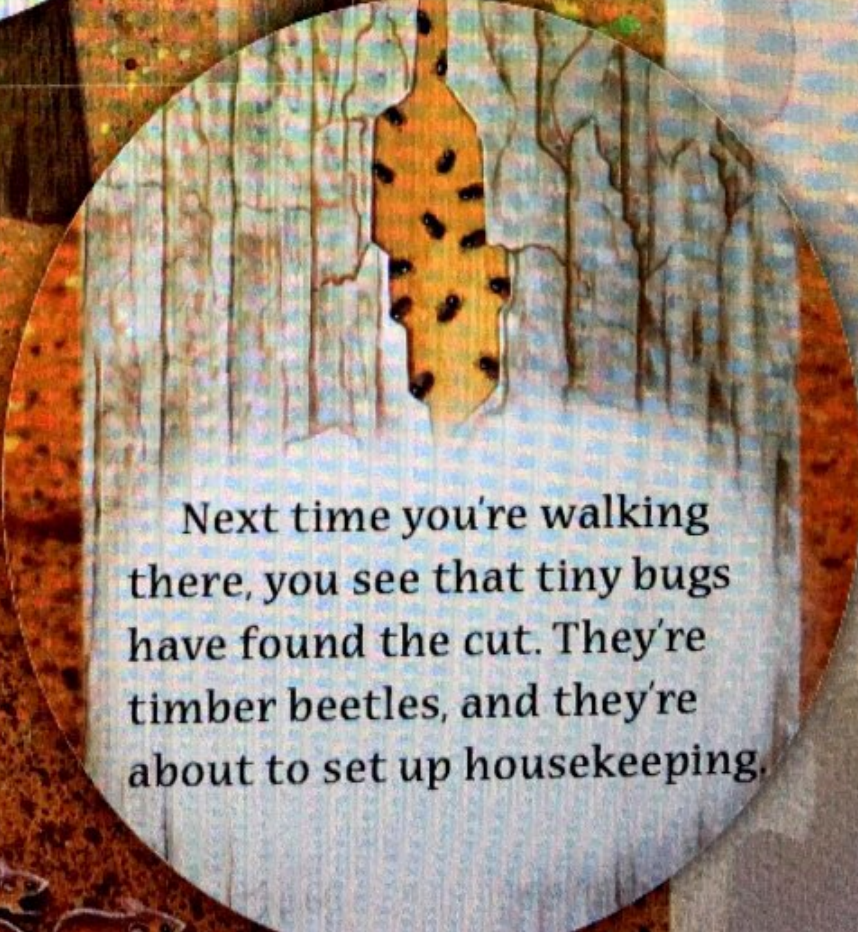
Here's one oak tree in a forest. It looks like the others, except—a black bear uses this one as a scratching post. Every time she goes by, the bear sharpens her claws on the trunk.

You're walking in the woods. You see the tree and notice the scratch marks on the bark. Maybe you even catch a glimpse of the bear!





After a while the scratching chips some pieces of bark off the tree. A cut forms in the bark. A hole in the tree is beginning.



Next time you're walking there, you see that tiny bugs have found the cut. They're timber beetles, and they're about to set up housekeeping.

The timber beetles get under the bark and bore into the tree. They make a **maze** of tunnels. They create spaces called cradles for their eggs. And they "plant" fungi for the colony to feed on. Imagine that you can look inside. You see something like this.





Soon the fungi spread and are growing all over the walls of the tunnels. The beetle eggs have hatched into grubs. The grubs are feeding on the fungi. The fungi are feeding on the soft wood inside the tree.

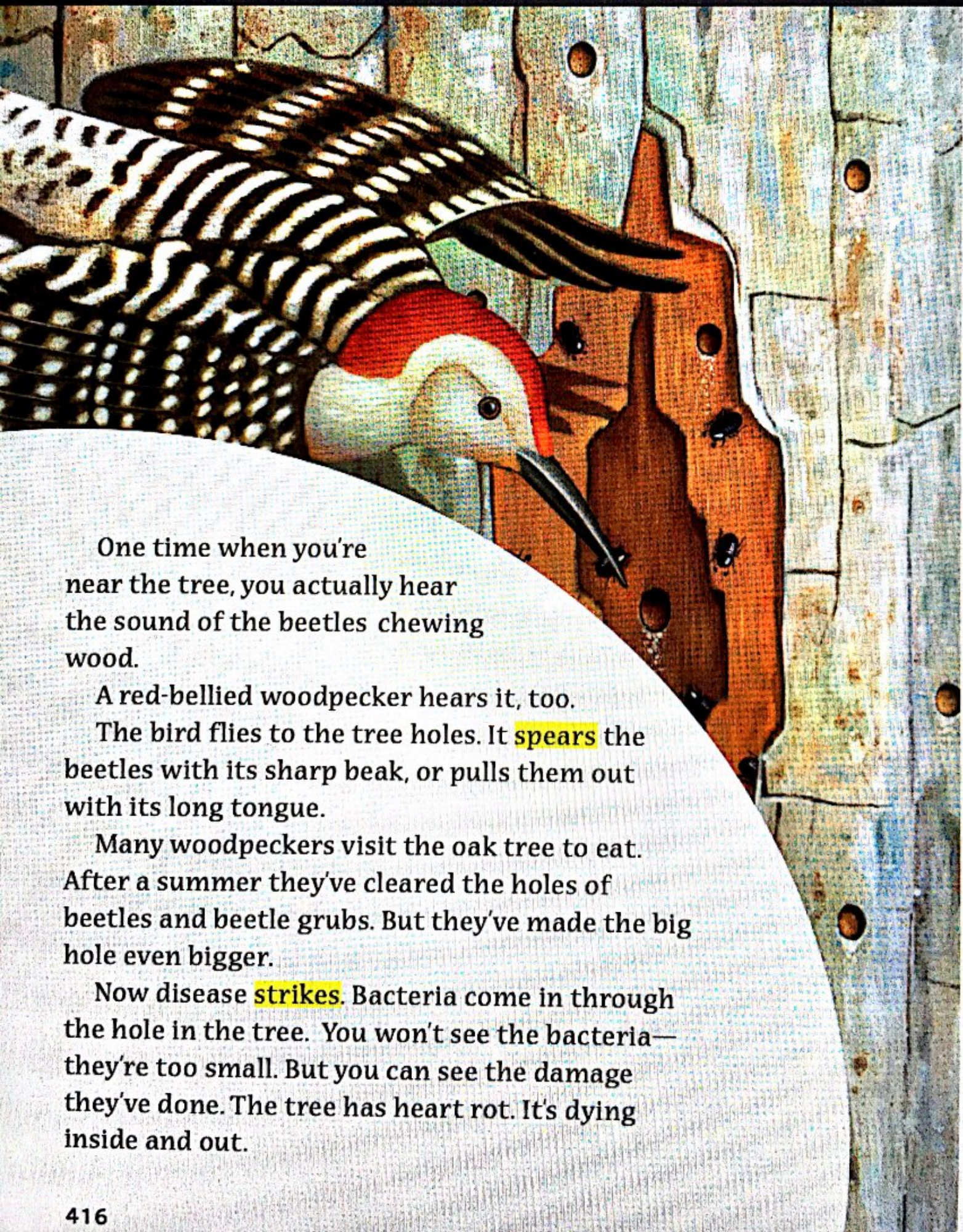


The beetle grubs become full-grown timber beetles.

They eat their way out of the chambers and make more holes in the tree.



On your next visit you count more than ten holes. But the first one is the largest.



One time when you're near the tree, you actually hear the sound of the beetles chewing wood.

A red-bellied woodpecker hears it, too.

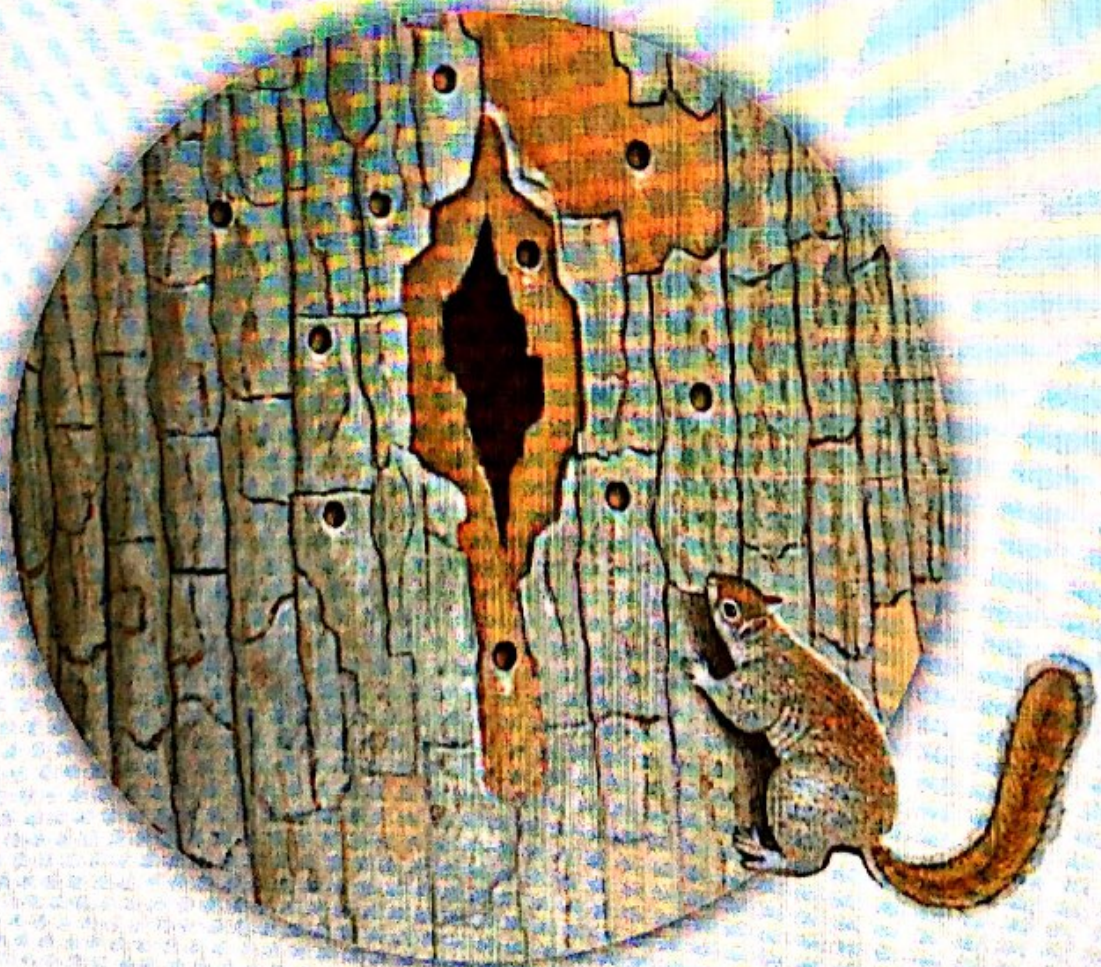
The bird flies to the tree holes. It **spears** the beetles with its sharp beak, or pulls them out with its long tongue.

Many woodpeckers visit the oak tree to eat. After a summer they've cleared the holes of beetles and beetle grubs. But they've made the big hole even bigger.

Now disease **strikes**. Bacteria come in through the hole in the tree. You won't see the bacteria—they're too small. But you can see the damage they've done. The tree has heart rot. It's dying inside and out.

Bark begins to loosen and fall off.
The hole is now so large that you can
actually see inside.

It has become a hollow place
that looks as if it could be home for
something.



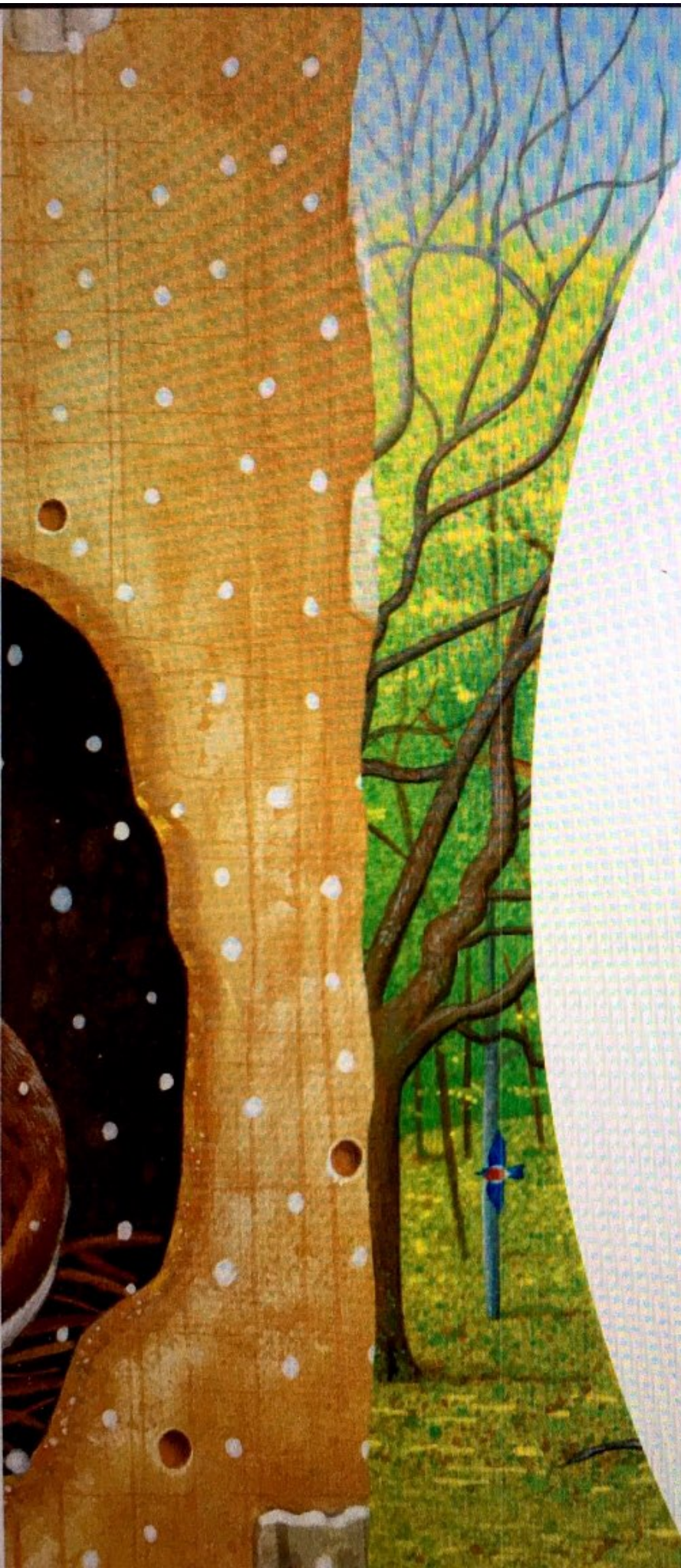
The first animal to use it is a flying squirrel. You find the squirrel 'holed up' in there one winter day. You notice that it has stored some nuts under the loose bark around the hole.

When you come by in the spring, the flying squirrel is gone. The hole is empty, but not for long. A pair of bluebirds moves in. The hole is just right for blue birds—high enough off the ground for safety.

The bluebirds line the hole with weeds and grass. Soon there are six bluish eggs in the nest hole.

Next time you look inside, there are six bluebird chicks. The chicks stay safe in the nest until they're old enough to fly.





By this time the oak tree is no longer sending out leaves. Almost all of its bark is gone. But the hole-dwellers don't seem to care.

For the next three springs, the hole in the tree is a nest for the same pair of bluebirds.

For the next three winters, it's home to a family of white-footed mice.

In all those three years, the tree hasn't grown at all. This oak tree is dead. But—the hole is full of life.

A hairy woodpecker
sometimes comes
to **roost** there.

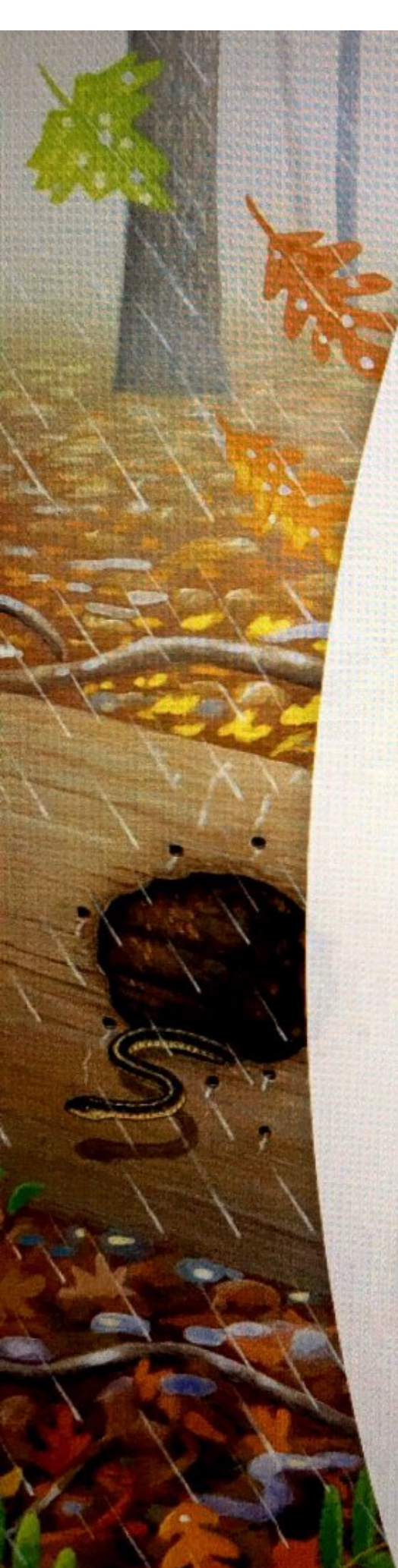


A gray squirrel
often uses the hole
as a hiding place.



When the hole has
water in it, you can
sometimes see a
tree frog there.





One day lightning, or a high wind, or heavy rain, or snow will bring this dead tree down. Many years later all that may be left will be a log with a hole in it.

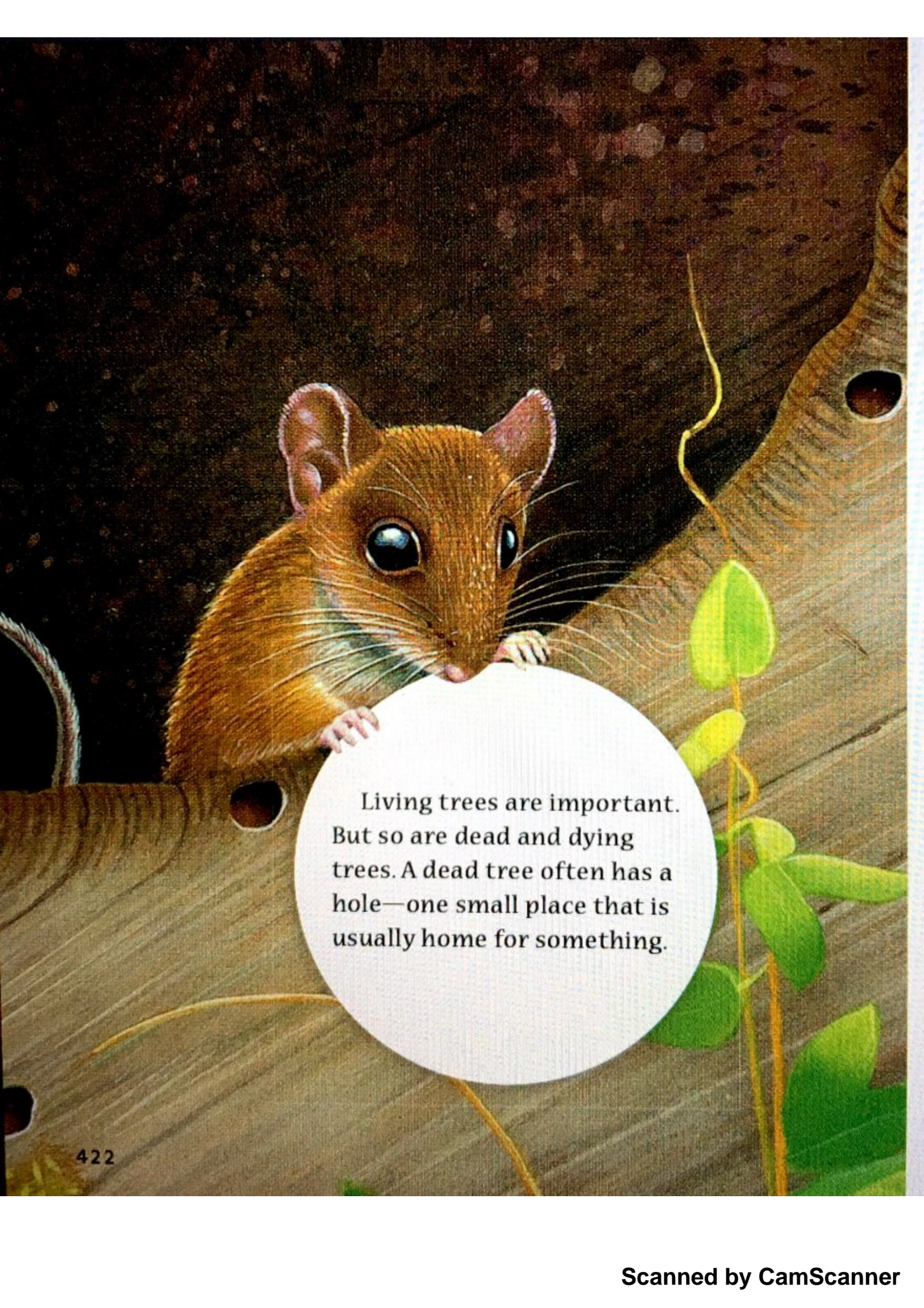
But the hole will still be a place for living things. A small garter snake may cool off in there.



A redback salamander may lay its eggs there.



Or maybe a hammock spider will make a web across the hole to catch swarming insects.



Living trees are important.
But so are dead and dying
trees. A dead tree often has a
hole—one small place that is
usually home for something.

Think Critically

- ① What do you think was the author's purpose in writing "One Small Place in a Tree"?



AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

- ② What important events happen after the bear scratches the tree? SEQUENCE

- ③ What information surprised you most as you read the selection? EXPRESS PERSONAL OPINIONS

- ④ How can you tell that the author thinks trees are useful, even when they are dead? DRAW

CONCLUSIONS

- ⑤ **WRITE** How is the tree helpful to other living things? Give examples from the story to support your answer.  SHORT RESPONSE

Meet the Author



Barbara Brenner

Barbara Brenner loves everything in nature, especially reptiles. She once got a snake as a birthday present. Later, she had 23 reptiles and amphibians as pets! She used to bring her pet boa with her when she visited schools.

When Barbara Brenner needs an idea for a new book, she thinks about books she has read and about things that interest her. She likes to write books about science that have more than just facts. She says that mixing stories with science makes science even more interesting.



Meet the Illustrator Tom Leonard

Tom Leonard has been drawing pictures since he was a boy. He started by drawing the characters from his favorite cartoon strips. After he went to art school, he had jobs drawing for newspapers and magazines. Then he began to illustrate children's books.

Before Tom Leonard begins work on the pictures for a book, he spends a lot of time doing research. His illustrations are known for being realistic and colorful. Someday he would like to write and illustrate his own books.



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