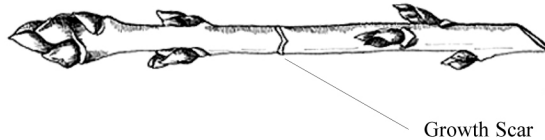


The Cottonwood Tree and the Secret of the Hidden Stars



The Old Naturalist

Did you know if you break a cottonwood at a growth scar there is a “star” hidden in the branch? You won't find a star in every branch that you snap because it may be too green or too old. But it is a very fun and addicting project.

In addition to finding the stars, it is important to know about the Cheyenne and Arapaho cottonwood legend:

All things come from Mother Earth. The stars are no exception. They form in the earth and then drift along just under the surface until they find the roots of the magical cottonwood tree. They enter the roots and slowly work their way up through the tree. They finally come to rest in the small twigs at the end of the branches. Here they wait until they are needed. When the spirit of the night sky decides that she needs more beautiful stars, she calls on the wind spirit. The spirit of the wind sends his blustery gusts in all directions. The wind shakes the magical cottonwood trees and the twigs begin to break off. As they break off, stars are released and more escape when the twigs break again, hitting the ground. The new stars race up into the night sky where they are each carefully put in a special place. When she has enough new stars, the spirit of the night sky tells the wind spirit to stop and the wind settles down to a gentle night breeze. Now the spirit of the night sky wants to thank the wind spirit for his help, so she has all the new stars twinkle. In this way the wind spirit can see where all the new ones have been placed.

Give yourself 2 points if you looked for the stars in the cottonwood.

Give yourself 2 points if you found at least one cottonwood star.

Total possible points: 4

Total points for you: _____