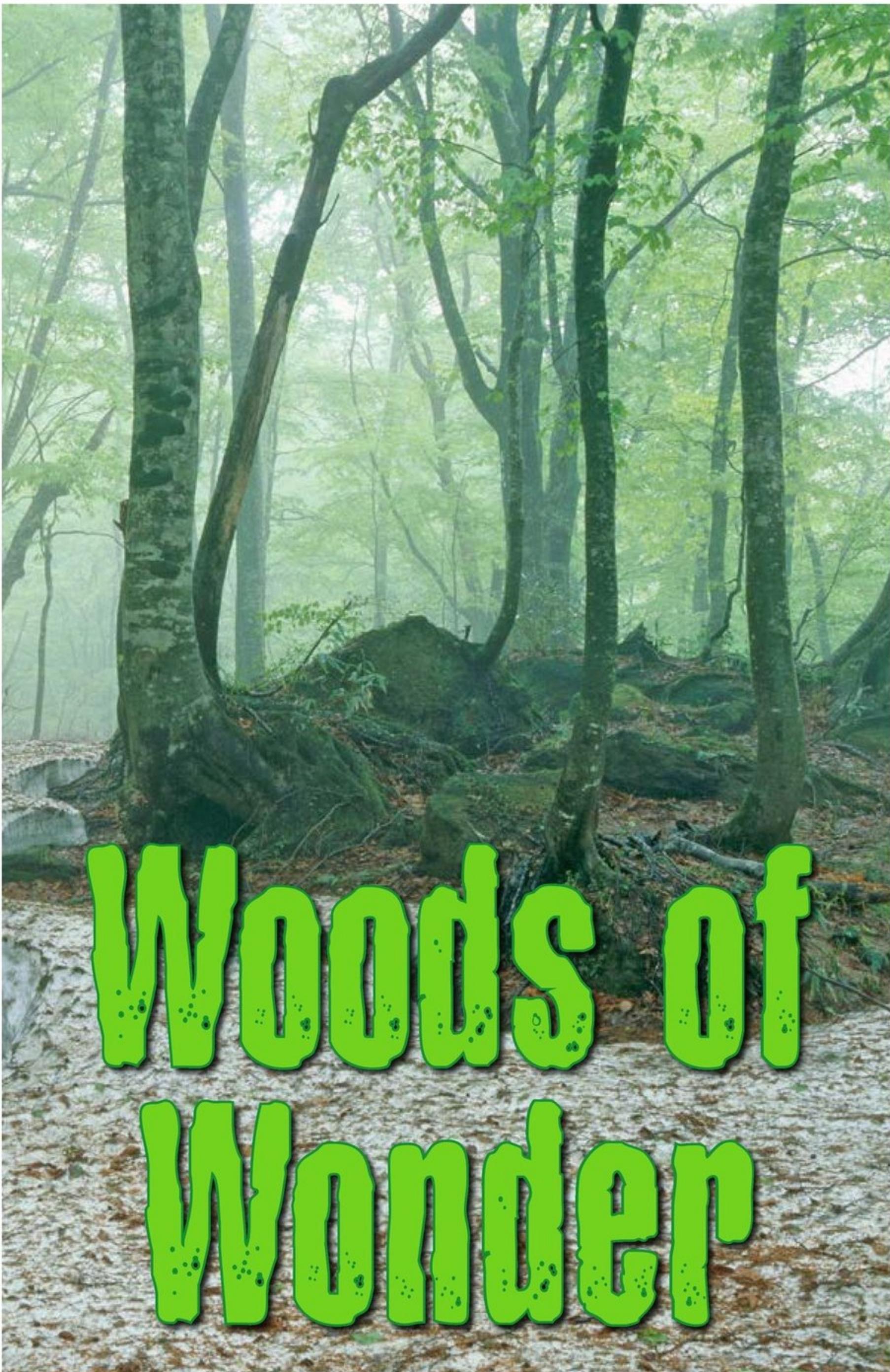


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# Woods of Wonder

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Written by Rus Buyok



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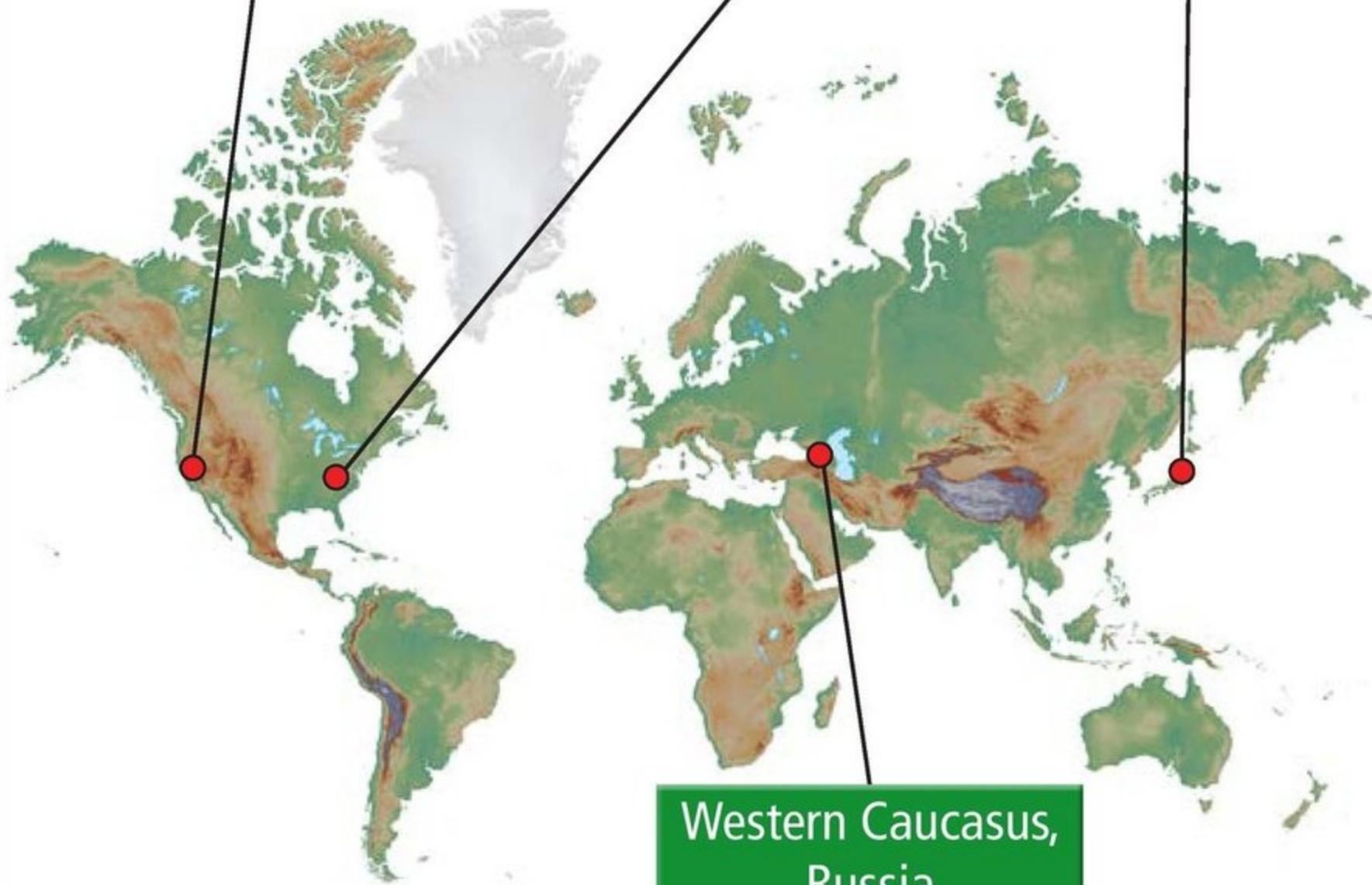
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## Four Old-Growth Forests Around the World

Sequoia and Kings  
Canyon National Parks,  
United States

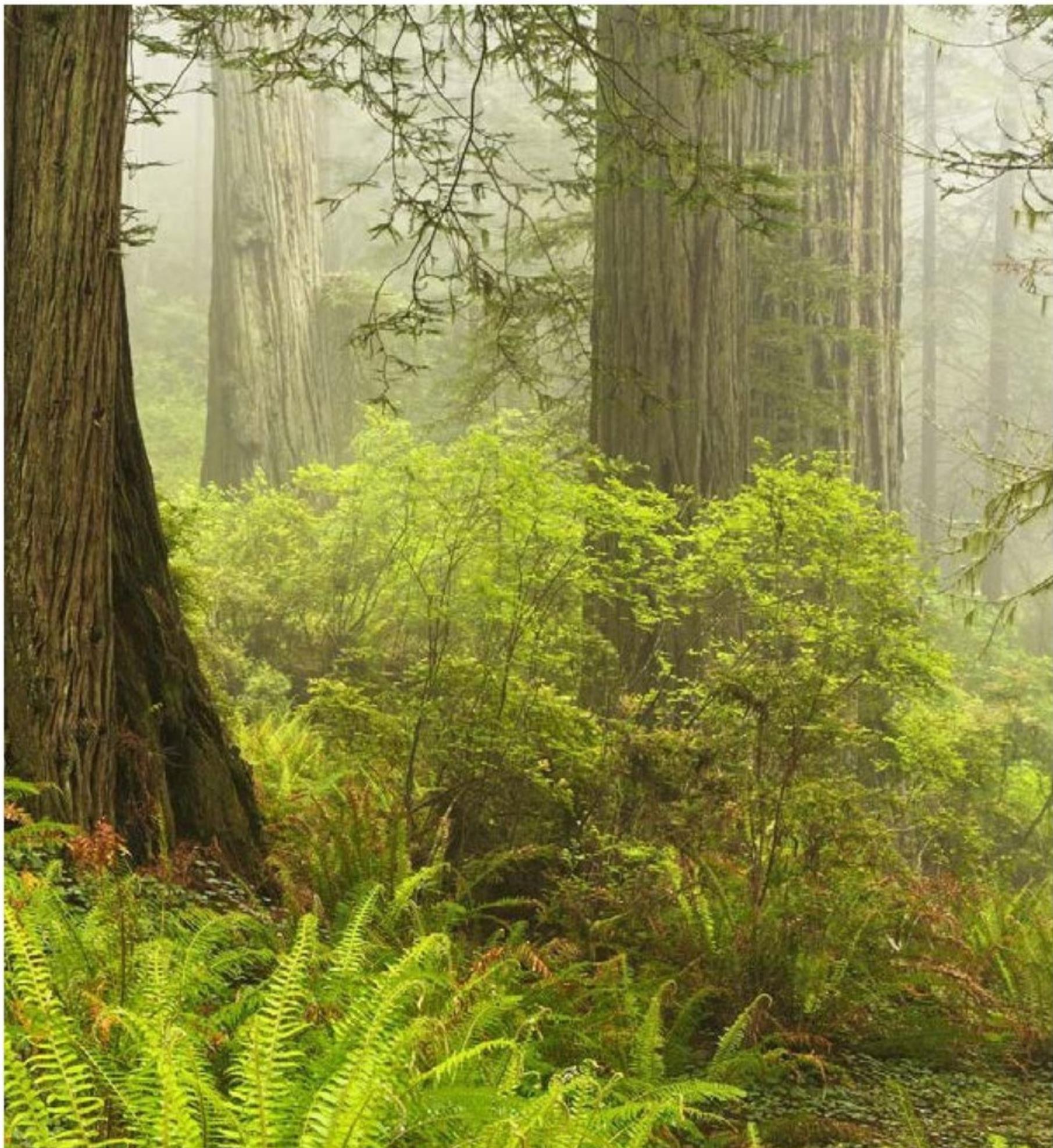
Great Smoky  
Mountains National  
Park, United States

Shirakami-Sanchi,  
Japan



## Table of Contents

Oh, That's Old! . . . . .	4
United States . . . . .	7
Japan . . . . .	11
Russia . . . . .	13
Conclusion . . . . .	15
Glossary . . . . .	16



## Oh, That's Old!

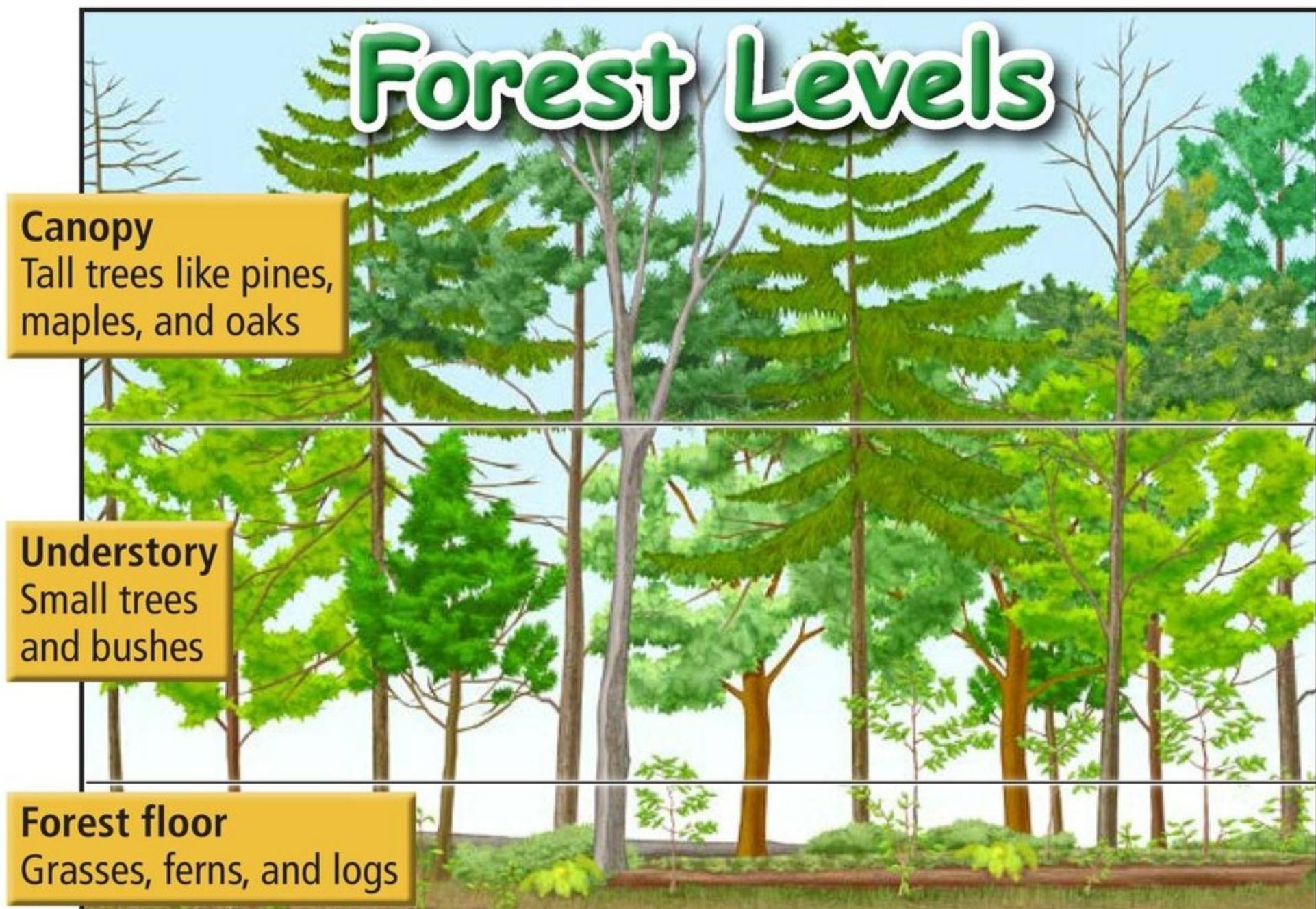
**Old-growth** forests look very different from one another. Some have only one kind of tree. Others have many kinds of trees. Some may have very tall trees. Others have trees that are short.

These forests are so different that scientists do not have one definition for old-growth forests. Yet many old-growth forests do have things in common.

Many scientists think that an old-growth forest must be at least 150 years old. Not every tree in the forest has to be that old, though.



Looking up in an old-growth forest can make you dizzy!



The **canopy** should have more than one layer. The tallest trees form the top layer. Fallen trees make holes in the canopy where sunlight gets through. Young trees can grow in these holes. Dead trees give food and shelter to many living things.

Old-growth forests are home to plants and animals that can't live anywhere else. If we study and care for these forests, we can learn a lot.

# United States

California has many great national parks, some with old-growth forests. In Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, **coniferous** trees make up most of the old-

growth forests.

Giant sequoias grow here, and one of these giants is the largest tree in the world.

A sequoia can live for more than 3,000 years.



The General Sherman Tree is the largest tree on the planet.

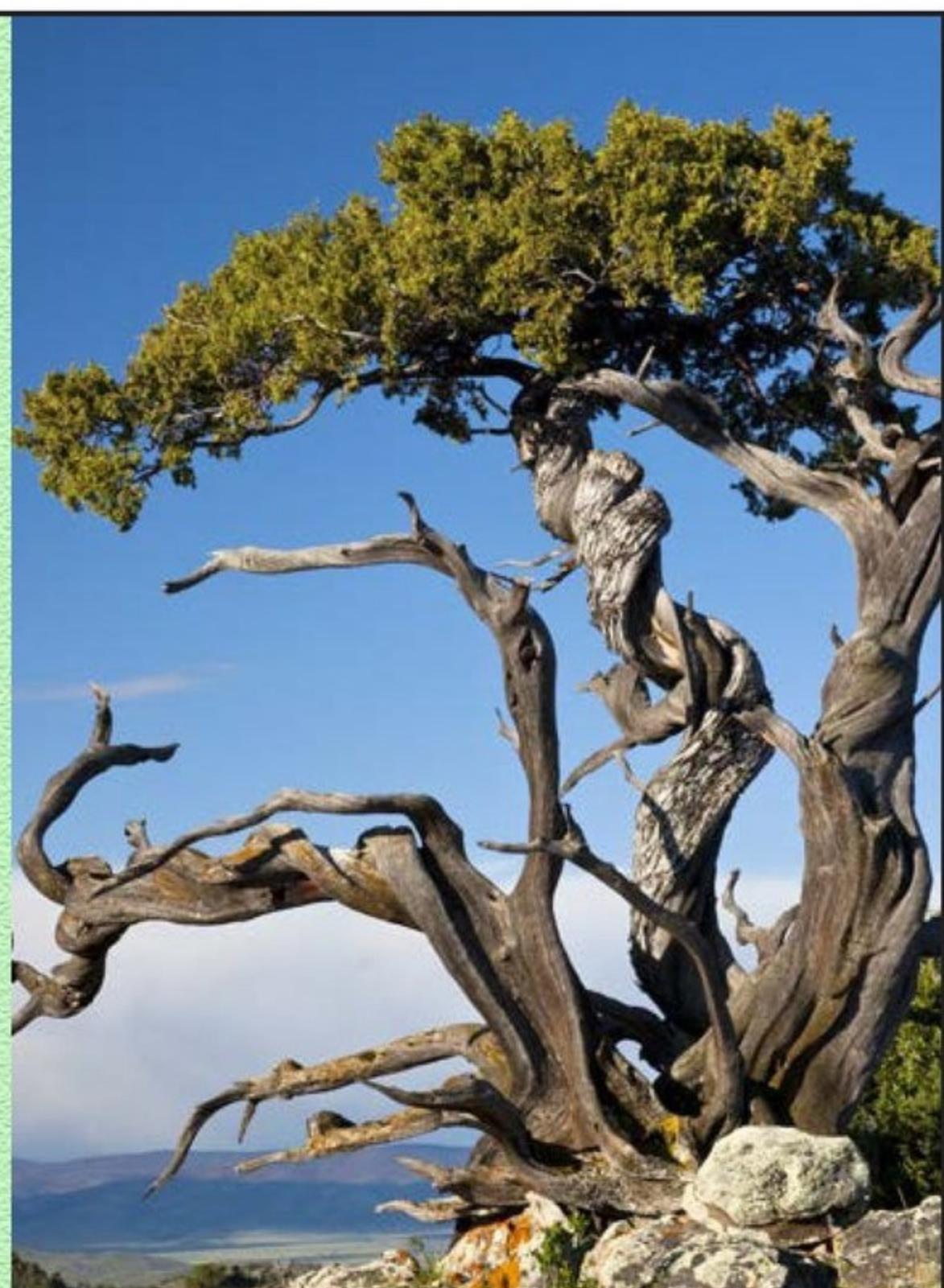


Fisher

The Pacific fisher also lives in the park. Its favorite meal is porcupine. Because it only lives in old-growth forests, some states are trying to protect it.

## Tough, Not Tall

Not all old-growth forests have towering trees. In some harsh places with wild and icy winds, pines, spruces, and other coniferous trees grow short and twisted. These trees are called *Krummholz*, a German word meaning “crooked wood.” They are only about 6 feet (1.8 m) tall, but don’t let their size fool you. Some are one thousand years old.





Autumn is colorful in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Across the country in North Carolina and Tennessee is Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Old-growth forests make up only a small part of this park. These forests are mostly made up of **deciduous** trees.



Northern flying squirrel

**Endangered** Carolina northern flying squirrels live here. These animals do not actually fly. They use skin attached to their front and back paws to glide. These animals are in danger because people have cut down other forests where they could live.



A Japanese beech tree reaches for the sun in Shirakami-Sanchi, Japan.

## Japan

Shirakami-Sanchi is one of the last old-growth forests in East Asia. It is a small area in the northern mountains of Japan. Forests like this one once covered most of northern Japan.

The forest is home to a rare kind of serow. This goatlike animal is only found here and in two other small areas in Japan. Black woodpeckers also live here. These birds are endangered in Japan.



Japanese serow



Black woodpeckers



Fallen trees like this fir can nurse along other plants in this old-growth forest in the Caucasus of Russia.

## Russia

The Western Caucasus in Russia has many forests that are mostly made up of coniferous trees. It is home to many different plants and animals.



Snow leopards

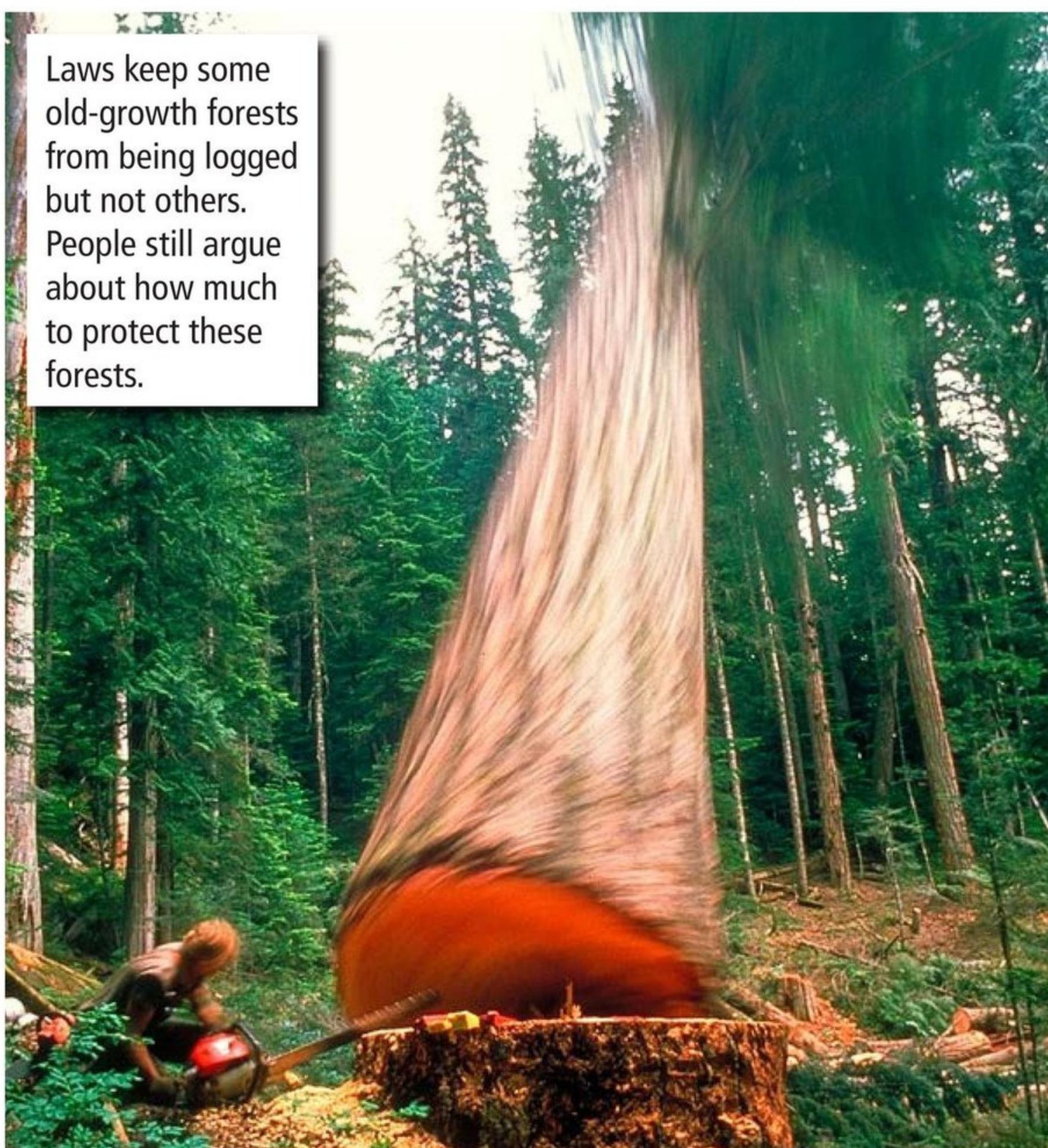
Some scientists think that a few endangered snow leopards live here. Scientists sometimes find paw prints and other signs. The endangered wisent has also been brought back into the forest.



Wisents are European bison.

# Conclusion

Old-growth forests may be hundreds or thousands of years old. Many of these places are protected, but some are in danger. Humans can damage or destroy them. Once gone, these old-growth forests may never return.



Laws keep some old-growth forests from being logged but not others. People still argue about how much to protect these forests.

## Glossary

**canopy (n.)** the part of a forest where the tops of trees form a thick layer of leaves (p. 6)

**coniferous (adj.)** of or relating to a group of plants, mostly evergreen trees and shrubs, that grow cones and have leaves shaped like needles or scales (p. 7)

**deciduous (adj.)** having leaves that drop off in the fall and grow back in the spring (p. 9)

**endangered (adj.)** in danger of dying out completely (p. 10)

**old-growth (adj.)** of or relating to very old forests (p. 4)

**protect (v.)** to guard or defend from harm or danger (p. 8)

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