

THINKSDAY

Pussy Willows

April 30, 2026

*“Everything that anyone would ever look for is usually where they find it.” —
Margaret Wise Brown*

Most of us may think of *Good Night Moon* when we think of Margaret Wise Brown. But she wrote hundreds of other books and stories, including *Pussy Willow*, about a young cat who calls himself Pussy Willow because he too is soft and gray and lives by the riverside full of pussy willows. Self-referential cat, I'd say, since the cute spring catkins got their name because they look like sweet gray kittens. The curious young cat eagerly explores the world around him until he's lost and begins a new search back to his beloved pussy willows. Don't we all sometimes search not for what is new, but what we knew? We lose sight of who we are or where we came from and need to search to find our way back. Having a name helps us in this searching.

Here's a curious thing: In Ukraine, parts of Russia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Austria, Finland and other Eastern European lands, people often carry pussy willows on Palm Sunday instead of palm branches. According to Polish legend, Jesus visited a forest on Palm Sunday which was still in barren winter conditions. Jesus commanded his angels to gather up pussy willow (an early harbinger of spring and returning life). I don't know, maybe it's a translation issue.

In Exodus 3:14 God answers Moses' question about God's name with: “Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh” – “I AM WHO I AM.” Perhaps God is declaring self-existence and an eternal and unchanging nature—that God is not lost or separated from where God came from or what/who God loves. God is not defined, as we are, by a name, place, or time. Perhaps Ms. Brown is reminding us of our invitation to look to God when we are lost and separated. Or, maybe it's just a kid's book and we shouldn't read much more into it than appears on its face.

Growing up, my younger sister, Ellen, was allowed to adopt a cute gray kitten that she named Pussy Willow. The cat immediately ditched Ellen and claimed Dad's lap as his personal resting place. Dad was a good sport, but he was also a product of his time and culture. Dad approved of both adoptions, but for the next 12 years he only ever referred to the cat as "Will." Names and places matter.

Happy Thinksday