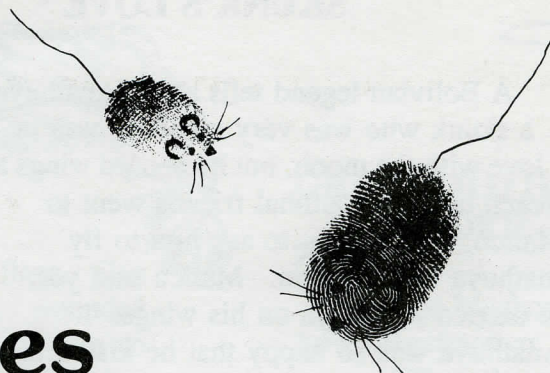




Nature Detectives



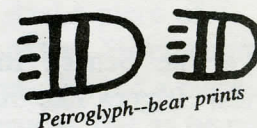
Winter
1991



Who's been here? What were they doing and why were they doing it? When did it happen? Nature detectives try to answer questions like these by looking for clues and evidence of the activities of creatures in the outdoors.

Have you ever wondered about teeth marks on the trunk of a tree, or strange footprints in the snow or mud? If you have, then you are already a nature detective.

THEME:

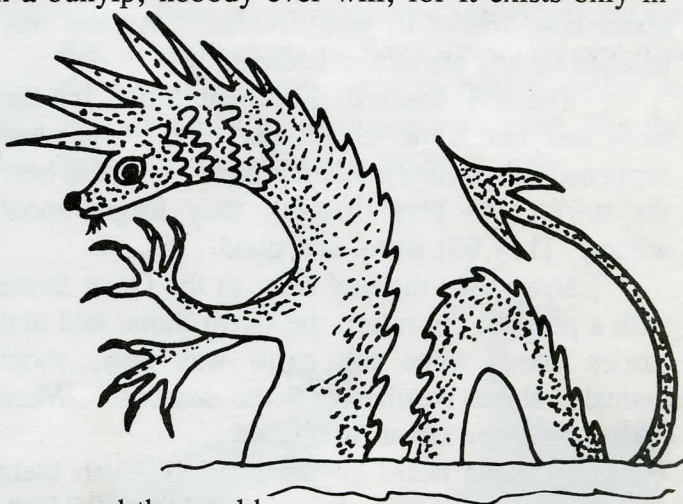


STORY TIME!

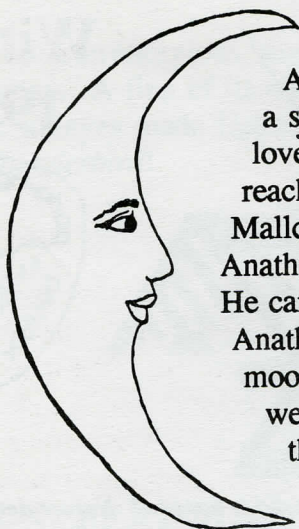
"Beware of the fearsome bunyip," the Aborigines told the first explorers in Australia. "Never camp near a water hole. The bunyip will get you." But what was a bunyip? Nobody seemed to know. Some stories said the bunyip was a huge, brightly colored snake that lived deep in the water hole, or billabong. It had a wild mane and a beard. It attacked any strangers that went near its home! Some early drawings, made by Aborigines, pictured the bunyip as a strange flightless bird rather like an emu. For sure we'll never know! Nobody has ever seen a bunyip, nobody ever will, for it exists only in aboriginal story-time.

What do buniyps, thunderbirds, and lazy coyotes have in common? They are all characters in folk stories. All around the world, people tell stories about the animals that are important to them in their lives. Some are true and practical stories. They tell of the hunt, of where to find game, and of ways to catch it. Some are fantasies. They weave amazing tales about how animals got to be the way they are, and how animals helped to create the world. Yet other stories describe magical adventures of imaginary animals.

Read on--for animal myths and folktales from around the world.



SKUNK'S LOVE



A Bolivian legend tells about Anathuya, a skunk who was very sad. He was in love with the moon, but he needed wings to reach her. His animal friends went to Mallcu, the condor, to ask him to fly Anathuya to the moon. Mallcu said yes. He carried Anathuya on his wings. Anathuya was so happy that he kissed the moon. Bolivians tell us that the smudges we see when we look up at the moon are the marks left by Anathuya's kisses!



THE STORY STONE

The Seneca Indians have a story about stories! It goes like this:

Long, long ago there were no stories. Life was hard for people, especially in winter when icy winds blew, and the people were cold.

One day a boy went hunting for food. He shot several birds with his bow and arrows. Then he stopped to rest beside a great stone. Suddenly he heard a voice say,

"I shall now tell a story." The boy looked all around, but saw no one. It was the Great Stone talking!

"Tell me your story," the boy said.

"First you must give me a present," said the Great Stone. So the boy placed one of his birds on the rock. The Great Stone told a wonderful tale about how the earth was created. As the boy listened he felt warm and content.

The boy thanked the Great Stone for the story and ran home to tell his people what had happened. Everyone gathered round the fire to hear the story. As they listened, they forgot about winter. They felt warm and good.

Every day the boy went to the Great Stone with a present. In return the Great Stone told him stories about when the earth was new, about animals, about weather and the seasons. When spring came the Great Stone said,

"You've heard all the stories. Keep them for your people. Pass them on to your children. New stories will be added over the years, because where there are stories, there will always be more stories."

LAZY COYOTE

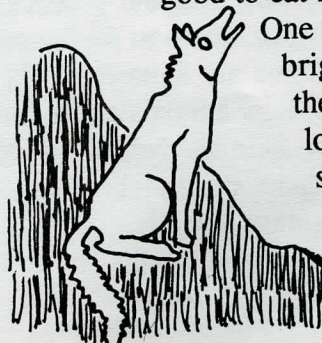
In American Indian stories, coyotes are sometimes crafty, sometimes comical, sometimes wise. Here is a Hopi story about a lazy coyote:

Before people came to the earth, the animals were busy making and arranging things; that is, all the animals except coyote. Lazy coyote! He just watched while others worked. The animals placed the rivers and mountains, the flowers and trees. They made deserts and painted the rocks beautiful colors--yellow, pink, and red. Finally they made hundreds and hundreds of bright, shiny objects. But they couldn't decide where to put them. So when night came, they left the shiny things in a pile on the ground, and all went home to bed.

Coyote came out while the animals slept to see what they had done. He came upon the shiny objects and picked one up. What's this for? he wondered. He sniffed it. It wasn't

good to eat so he threw it in the air.

One by one he sniffed the bright things, then tossed them in the air. When he looked up he was surprised to see them high in the sky, bright dots in the darkness. That is how the stars came to be in the night sky.



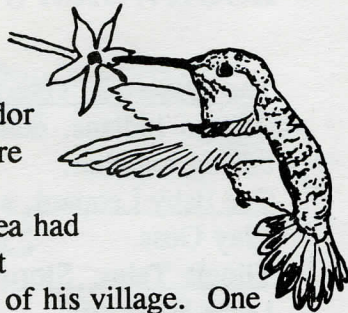
Lazy old coyote put them there!

BIRD OF FIRE

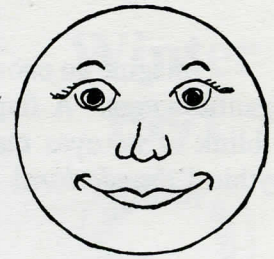
The people of Ecuador have a legend about how fire came to their country:

A man named Taquea had the secret of fire, but didn't want to share it with others of his village. One day, his wife brought home a wounded hummingbird. She set him before the fire so that his powerless wings could dry and grow strong. Quinde, the hummingbird, rolled in the hot ashes as if he were taking a bath in the waters of health. Then Quinde flew off into a tree. He carried some hot ashes on his green tail. People came running to this tree to collect some fire from Quinde's tail. This is how Quinde, Bird of Fire, helped spread fire to the people of Ecuador.

Even today, Hummingbird's green tail holds a remaining spark of fire on its tip that gleams like a diamond in the sunlight when Hummingbird flits from flower to flower!



GRANDMOTHER SPIDER



The Muskogee Indians tell this tale about how Grandmother Spider stole the sun:

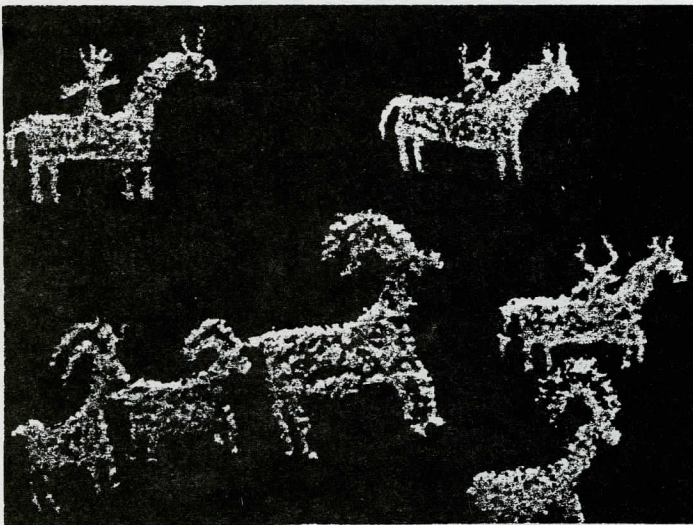
When the earth was first made, animals and people lived in darkness. Life was very hard. The animals decided something should be done. Bear said he had heard of something called the sun which was kept on the other side of the world. But the people there were stingy and refused to share the sun. All the animals agreed that they should steal a piece of it.

Fox was the first to try. He crept quietly to where the sun was kept. He put a piece of it in his mouth and ran away as fast as he could. But the sun was very hot. It burned Fox's mouth, and he had to spit it out. (That's why foxes today have black mouths--because first fox burned his mouth trying to steal the sun!)

Grandmother Spider was the next to try. When she reached the sun she wove a little bag out of her silk and put a piece of the sun inside. She carried it back in the bag without burning herself. All the animals and people cheered when she returned. But where should they put the sun? Grandmother Spider said,

"Put it high in the sky, so everyone can feel its warmth."

Because Grandmother Spider brought the sun, it makes rays of light across the sky like the rays of her web. The sunbeams remind us that all things on earth are connected, like the strands in Grandmother Spider's web.

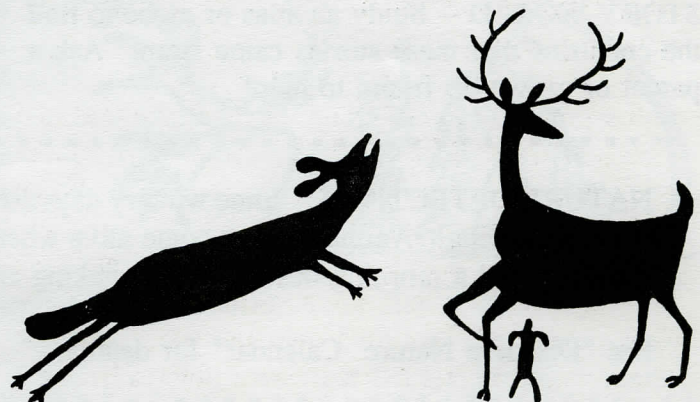


READ ME A STORY

We have thousands of printed books to choose from when we want to read a story.

Many peoples in the past didn't write their stories down. They had no written language, no books. Generation after generation they told stories aloud. They also "wrote" their stories as petroglyphs (pictures carved in rock), or pictographs (pictures painted on rock).

Can you "read" the stories being told in these sketches of rock art?



THUNDERBIRD

Imagine an enormous, supernatural bird with gigantic wings. A flap of its wings made thunder. A blink of its eyes made lightning. That was the mythical *thunderbird*!



PRINCE ALBERT PUMPKIN BREAD

(from Native American Cookbook by Edna Henry)

This recipe is from the Catawba Indians of North and South Carolina. They used to trade animal skins and plants to get baking soda to bake this delicious bread.

3 cups wholewheat flour	1 tbsp baking soda
2 cups brown sugar	1 tbsp salt
2 cups pumpkin	3 tbsp cinnamon
1/2 cup crushed pecans or walnuts	

Place these ingredients in a large bowl. Mix well. Let rest for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°. Grease two loaf pans with butter. (Use your fingers!) Make a well in the center of the pumpkin mixture. Pour into the well:

1 cup corn oil	2 eggs, beaten
a few raisins	

Stir just enough to blend. Pour into loaf pans and bake for one hour. Yum! Delicious!

STORY WORLD -- Study an atlas or globe to find the countries that these stories came from. Ask a parent or grown-up friend to help!

NATURE DETECTIVES: Some wintery days are made for staying indoors. And indoor days are great for story-telling! Animal stories come alive when you create animal masks for the story characters to wear. Spend a morning designing and making animal masks, and share some animal stories, too.

See "Discover Nature Calendar" for details.

BOOKWORM'S CORNER

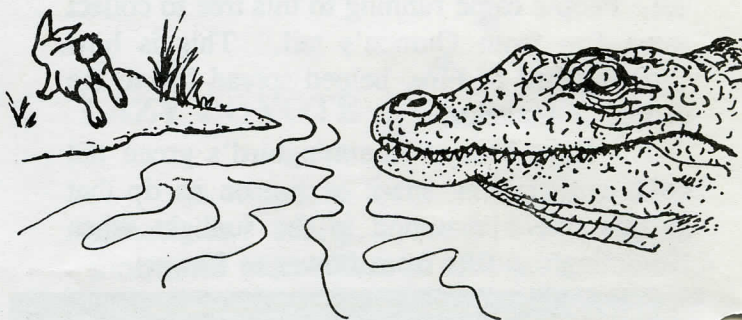
The Desert is Theirs by Byrd Baylor, a story of Papago Indians, desert animals, and how they all belong together.

The Baby Leopard, an African legend by Linda and Clay Goss.

Tlingit Tales: Stories of Potlatch and Totem by Lorle K. Harris.

The Boy Who Made Dragonfly, a Zuni Myth Retold by Tony Hillerman.

Petali and Gurigoo or How The Birds Got Their Colors by Francois Raoul-Duval.



CROCODILE AND RABBIT

Why do crocodiles stay close to the river? And why do rabbits never go near rivers if they can help it? This folktale from Congo tells why:

Crocodile was lying and sleeping on a plant that rabbit wanted to eat. Crocodile would not move. So rabbit made a circle of leaves and grasses around Crocodile and set it on fire. When Crocodile finally woke up, he jumped through the flames and rushed to the river to cool off. His skin was so thick that it hardly burned. But Crocodile was angry. He said to Rabbit, "Don't you ever come down to the river, or I'll gobble you up."