

# Environmental Story Database

Compiled by Kevin Strauss [www.naturestory.com](http://www.naturestory.com)

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## NATURE EXPLANATION STORIES

### Why Wolf Lives in the Forest (Aesop)

Keywords: wolf, dog, forest

Summary: Wolf is so hungry that he goes to a farm looking for food. There he meets a Dog. The Dog tells Wolf that he works for his food and never goes hungry. Wolf thinks of asking the farmer for a job, until he notices that Dog doesn't have fur around his neck because the farmer ties him up with a rope during the day. Since that day, wolves have lived in the forest and dogs have lived with people.

"The Dog and the Wolf" on page 70 in Joseph Jacobs, ed. *The Fables of Aesop* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002). 196pp. \$2.50pa. ISBN 0-486-41859-6pa.

"The Domesticated Dog and the Wolf," on page 50 in Jack Zipes, *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

Also check out Kevin Strauss, *The Song of the Wolf*. (Wever, IA: Quixote Press, 2005). 182pp. \$9.95pa. ISBN 1-57166-273-1pa.

### A Foolish Wolf Learns from His Mistakes (adapted from Finland)

Keywords: wolf, beaver, ram, deer

Summary: Wolf is hungry and goes hunting. Each animal that he meets (beaver, ram and deer) tricks him and escapes. After than Wolf has to be more clever about his hunting techniques.

"The Foolish Wolf," on page 450 in Aleksandr Afanas'ev, *Russian Fairy Tales* (New York: Pantheon, 1945). 662pp. ISBN 0-394-73090-9.

"The Stupid Wolf," on page 251 in James Cloyd Bowman and Margery Bianco, *Tales from a Finnish Tupa* (Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 1964). 273pp. ISBN 8075-7756-1pa.

"The Stupid Wolf," on pages 116-117 in Mary Lou Masey, *Stories of the Steppes* (New York: David McKay Co., 1968). 142pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT:

Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

Also check out Kevin Strauss, *The Song of the Wolf*. (Wever, IA: Quixote Press, 2005). 182pp. \$9.95pa. ISBN 1-57166-273-1pa.

### **Song of the Wolf (Finland)**

Keywords: wolf, dog, wedding, howl

Summary: Hungry Wolf met Dog and learned that Dog was going to a wedding. Wolf begged to go and even promised to act like a dog while he was there. The two entered the wedding house and sat under the table eating. Wolf drank some mead and got tipsy and decided to sing. So he stuck his nose in the air and howled. All the music and dancing stopped and men with sticks began chasing and beating Wolf. He finally leap out a window and ran into the woods. After that, wolves have made sure to they are far from people before they start to howl, and they don't attend weddings anymore.

Carpenter, Frances. *Wonder Tales of Cats and Dogs*. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955.)

Strauss, Kevin. *The Song of the Wolf*. (Wever, IA: Quixote Press, 2005). 182pp. \$9.95pa. ISBN 1-57166-273-1pa.

### **Wolf Is Outfoxed By Ram (African American)**

Keywords: wolf, fox, ram, trick

Summary: One day Fox convinced Wolf to go up a hill and catch a Ram for dinner. But when Wolf arrived, Ram pretended he was stomping a Lion and this frightened Wolf. So Wolf ran back to Fox. Fox agreed to tie himself to Wolf and they would both go catch Ram. But when Ram saw them tied together, he called out, "Good job Fox, I thought Wolf had gotten away from me, but now I see you caught him." That frightened Wolf so much that he ran off, dragging Fox behind him. After that, Wolf and Fox only hunted lambs.

Harris, Joel Chandler. *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1955).

Strauss, Kevin. *The Song of the Wolf*. (Wever, IA: Quixote Press, 2005). 182pp. \$9.95pa. ISBN 1-57166-273-1pa.

### **Why Bear Has a Stumpy Tail (Sweden)**

Keywords: bear, fox, tail

Summary: Bear sees that Fox has a lot of fish and hopes that Fox will share. Instead, Fox tricks Bear by telling him that he caught the fish by breaking a hole in the ice and "fishing" with his tail. Bear tries the same thing, but his tail freezes in the ice and when he tries to get up his tail breaks off.

"How the Bear Got His Stubby Tail," on page 5 in Lone Thygesen Blecher and George Blecher, *Swedish Folktales and Legends* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993). Pantheon Fairy Tale & Folklore Library. \$25.00; \$17.00pa. ISBN 0-394-54791-8; 0-697-75841-0pa.

"Bear Goes Fishing," on page 13 in Kaarina Brooks, *Foxy: Finnish Folk Tales for Children* (Beaverton, ON: Aspasia Books, 2002). \$12.95pa. ISBN 0-9689054-7-1pa.

"Why the Bear's Tails Is Short," on page 11 in Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *More Tales of Faraway Folk* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963). 93pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Why Bear Has a Black Coat (adapted from Finland)**

Keywords: bear, fox, fur

Summary: Bear wants a new color for his fur and wants a coat like Fox's beautiful red coat. Fox tricks bear into taking a "sauna" in a log to turn his coat red. Fox lights a fire in the log (or a haystack) and the fire burns bears fur black.

"The Vain Bear," on page 250 in James Cloyd Bowman and Margery Bianco, *Tales from a Finnish Tupa* (Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 1964). 273pp. ISBN 8075-7756-1pa.

"Bear's Beautiful Fur Coat," on page 27 in Kaarina Brooks, *Foxy: Finnish Folk Tales for Children* (Beaverton, ON: Aspasia Books, 2002). \$12.95pa. ISBN 0-9689054-7-1pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

#### **Why Bear Sleeps Through the Winter (African American )**

Keywords: bear, hibernation, rabbit

Summary: Smaller animals like Rabbit fear that if Bear is awake all winter, he will eat up the little food that will be left once the snow flies, so they plan a way to trick bear into a log full of food and then seal it with mud. That way when bear wakes up from his sleep, he will think it is still night and go back to sleep. Bear enjoys his rest so much that he decides to hibernate every winter.

"Why the Bear Sleeps All Winter," on page 123 in Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, *Firelight Stories: Folk Tales Retold for Kindergarten, School and Home* (Springfield, MA: Milton Bradley, 1907). 192pp.

"Why Bear Sleeps All Winter," on page 73 in Maria Leach, *How the People Sang the Mountains Up: How and Why Stories* (New York: Viking Press, 1967). 160pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

#### **Deer's Antlers (Aesop)**

Keywords: deer, antlers, legs, adaptations

Summary: One day a Deer walked to a pond for a drink of water. He looked at his reflection and praised his beautiful antlers, but bemoaned his skinny legs. When a hunter appeared, the Deer turned to run, but his antlers got stuck in the branches of a tree. He pulled and pulled until the branches broke and he ran off. The next day when he went to the pond, he said to himself, "Look at my beautiful legs."

"The Hart and the Hunter," on page 65 in Joseph Jacobs, ed., *The Fables of Aesop* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002). 196pp. \$2.50pa. ISBN 0-486-41859-6pa.

"The Stag at the Pool," on page 259 in Jack Zipes, ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

#### **Why Deer Has Split Hooves (adapted from the Philippines)**

Keywords: deer, turtle, race, hooves

Summary: Deer (or Water Buffalo) ignores Turtle, so Turtle challenges Deer to a race over seven hills. Deer scoffs, but accepts the challenge. But as they race over the hills, Turtle always seems to be in the lead. When Deer gets to the finish at a river and sees that Turtle is already there, he is so angry that he jumps up to crush Turtle under his hooves. But Turtle pulls in his head and legs. Deer comes down so hard on Turtle's shell that he cracks the shell and he splits his own hooves in two.

"Why the Carabao's Hoof Is Split," on page 58 in Elizabeth Hough Sechrist, *Once in the First Times: Folktales from the Philippines* (Philadelphia: Macrae Smith Company, 1949). 215pp.

"The Tortoise and the Reedbuck Run A Race," on page 95 in W. F. P. Burton, *The Magic Drum: Tales from Central Africa* (New York: Criterion Books, 1961). 127pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Why Fox Has a White on His Tail (Germany)

Keywords: fox, tail, color

Summary: Fox tricked a woman into hiring him as a shepherd and then proceeded to eat two lambs for dinner, blaming the loss on a Bear. The woman feels sorry for Fox and takes him a bucket of cream to cheer him up. When she saw Fox dining on a lamb, she ran at him and hit him with the bucket of cream. Some of that cream stuck on his tail, making it white to this day as a reminder to farmers who want to hire a fox as a shepherd.

"Fox," on page 24 in Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures*. (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

"Why the Fox Has a White-Tipped Tail," on page 17 in Kaarina Brooks, *Foxy: Finnish Folk Tales for Children* (Beaverton, ON: Aspasia Books, 2002). \$12.95pa. ISBN 0-9689054-7-1pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### How Rabbit Got Her Long Ears (African American)

Keywords: rabbit, fox, tail, ears, adaptation

Summary: Rabbit used to love eating fish. One day she saw Fox with a lot of fish. Fox told Rabbit that he caught them by breaking a hole in the ice and putting his long, furry tail into the water. Rabbit tries to do the same thing but her tail freezes in the ice during the night. She calls for help and Owl comes to her aid. Owl grabs Rabbit by her short ears and starts pulling and pulling and pulling her. Finally Rabbit's tail snaps. Owl carries Rabbit to the snow bank. There Rabbit realizes that she lost most of her tail in the ice, but Owl pulled her ears so hard that now she has long ears.

"Why the Rabbit Has a Short Tail and Long Ears," on page 200 in Susan Kantor, *One Hundred and One African American Read-Aloud Stories* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1998). 416pp. \$12.95. ISBN 1-57912-039-3.

"Why Brer Rabbit Is Bob-Tailed," on page 11 in Joel Chandler Harris, *The Favorite Uncle Remus* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1948). 310pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Stretching Rabbit's Ears (adapted from Europe)

Keywords: rabbit, owl, long ears, adaptation

Summary: Long ago, when humans began taking over the forest, Owl called all of the animals together to tell them about this problem. Owl knew that it would take all of the animals working together to drive people from the woods. All the animals came, except for Rabbit. Owl hooted again, but Rabbit still ignored her. Owl warned Rabbit to come right away or "he'd be sorry." Rabbit was enjoying his clover dinner too much. The angry Owl flew thorough the forest, grabbed onto Rabbit's little ears and carried him to the meeting. When Rabbit landed, his ears had stretched to the length they are today, and from then on, Rabbit listened when Owl spoke.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures*. (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

Nixon, Kathleen Irene. *Animals and Birds in Nature*. (London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1969).

### How Rabbit Lost Her Tail (China)

Keywords: rabbit, turtle, tail

Summary: Three Rabbit sisters wanted to cross a river to reach a new field of clover, but couldn't think of an easy way across. Then the oldest Sister tricks Turtle into bringing all of Turtle's children to the river so the Rabbits could see if there are more rabbits or turtles in the world. The Sisters ask the turtles to line up for counting and then hop across the river on their backs,

laughing at their trick. When Turtle realizes what the Rabbit sisters were doing, she sneaked onto the shore with some children and when the Rabbits weren't paying attention, the angry turtles bit off their tails.

"Rabbit's Tails Tale," on page 49 in Pleasant DeSpain, *Eleven Nature Tales: A Multicultural Journey* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1996). 91pp. \$10.75; \$4.50pa. ISBN 0-87483-447-3; 0-87483-458-9pa.

"Rabbit Counts the Crocodiles," on page 54 in Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss, *How & Why Stories: World Tales Kids Can Read & Tell* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1999). 96pp. \$24.95; \$14.95pa. ISBN 0-87483-562-3; 0-87483-561-5pa.

"The Sad Tales of the Rabbit's Tail," on page 33 in M. A. Jagendorf and Virginia Weng, *The Magic Boat and Other Chinese Folk Stories* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1980). 236pp. ISBN 0-8149-0823-3

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Rabbit's Short Tail (Nigeria)**

Keywords: rabbit, squirrel, tail

Summary: Long ago, Rabbit and Squirrel were brothers-in-law. One day Squirrel noticed how beautiful and fluffy Rabbit's tail was. "Could I borrow your tail, just for a moment?" After weeks of pleading, Rabbit finally agreed to let Squirrel borrow his tail. "O.K., but you have to return it in eight days. Squirrel put on the tail and scampered off. On the ninth day, Squirrel looked over at Rabbit and said, "I think I'll just keep this tail." Rabbit chased Squirrel to try to get back his tail, but Squirrel scampered up a tree, never to return. Because Rabbit was so ashamed of losing his tail, he spent the rest of his life hiding in the tall, tall grass.

Abrahams, Roger D., *African Folktales* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1983).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: naturelegends@wcoil.com

### **Rabbit Builds A House (Russia)**

Keywords: rabbit, ram, house, ears

Summary: Long ago, when animals lived in houses, Rabbit and Ram decided to build a house together. Ram knocked trees down with his hard head and Rabbit cut the trees into shape with her sharp teeth. But Rabbit wanted to knock down trees as well. So one evening after dinner, she ran at a tree, just as Ram had done. There was a loud "crack." Luckily for Rabbit, that tree had been partly rotten, but now her head was stuck inside it. Ram grabbed Rabbit by her short ears and pulled and pulled and pulled until Rabbit's head popped out. Unfortunately, after ramming the tree, Rabbit had driven her head into her shoulders and when Ram pulled Rabbit out of the tree, it stretched her ears to the length they are today.

Carrick, Valery, *Picture Folk-tales* (New York, NY: Dover, 1992)

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: naturelegends@wcoil.com  
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### **Rabbit's Thirst (Ghana)**

Keywords: rabbit, well, grass

Summary: Long ago, a drought and famine struck the land and all the animals put their money to buy a hoe so they could dig a well. The animals dug the well and began drinking the water. But at night, Rabbit snuck up to the well and drank water and muddied the water with his paws. The animals made a dummy with sticky birdlime to catch the thief. Rabbit tried to hit the dummy to frighten him away, but his paw stuck to the dummy and he couldn't get loose. When the animals found him in the morning, they his him and yelled at him and chased him into the tall grass and that is where you find rabbits today.

Abrahams, Roger D., *African Folktales* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1983).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: naturelegends@wcoil.com

### How Chipmunk Got Her Stripes (adapted from Mongolia)

Keywords: chipmunk, bear, stripes

Summary: Bear awakes one spring and is hungry. He grabs Chipmunk and is about to gobble her up when she tells him that she could bring him a lot more food if he lets her go. Bear doesn't want Chipmunk to run off, so he makes her leave her fur coat behind. Then Chipmunk brings armful after armful of seeds and nuts for Bear out of her burrow. When Bear eats the last of Chipmunk's seeds, he burps and thanks Chipmunk. But before he hands Chipmunk back her coat, Bear scratches lines on the fur. Those lines help Chipmunk hide from her enemies in the woods.

"How the Chipmunk Got Its Stripes," on page 77 in Hillary Roe Metternich, *Mongolian Folktales* (Boulder, CO: Avery Press, 1996). 131pp. \$19.95pa. ISBN 0-937321-06-0pa.

"How Chipmunk Got His Stripes," on page 75 in Maria Leach, *How the People Sang the Mountains Up: How and Why Stories* (New York: Viking Press, 1967). 160pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Wolf and Mouse as Farmers (adapted from Egypt)

Keywords: wolf, mouse, race, farming, hunting

Summary: Wolf used to be a farmer, but was too lazy. So he makes Mouse his partner, hoping Mouse will do most of the work. They divide the crop half and half, but the first year, Mouse gets the underground half of the crop and collects potatoes. The next year, Mouse gets the top of wheat plants. Wolf is furious when he realizes he has been tricked twice. He challenges Mouse to a race for all the crops they have grown. But as they run, Mouse is always ahead of Wolf. Finally Wolf gives up and quits farming to become a hunter. Mouse, who had his friends and family helping him in the race, still farms to this day.

"The Partnership Between Wolf and Mouse," on page 192 in Hasan M. El-Shamy, ed., *Folktales of Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). 347pp. ISBN 0-226-20624-6.

A similar "tops and bottoms" story can be found in several other sources, including: "Sharing Crops," on page 127 in Sharon Creeden, *Fair Is Fair: World Folktales of Justice* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1994). 190pp. \$19.95pa. ISBN 0-87483-400-7pa. Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*.

(Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

Also check out Kevin Strauss, *The Song of the Wolf*. (Wever, IA: Quixote Press, 2005). 182pp. \$9.95pa. ISBN 1-57166-273-1pa.

### Why Squirrels Live in Trees (Finland)

Keywords: wolf, dog, bear, fox, squirrel, cat

Summary: Wolf and Dog used to be friends, but they got into an argument and it got so bad that they challenged each other to a battle. They each gathered their friends for the fight. Dog gathered the farm animals like Cat, Pig and Sheep and Wolf gathered forest animals like Bear, Fox and Squirrel. Dog made a plan and had Cat climb a tree and wait for the forest animals and pounce on Bear. When Cat pounced on Bear, Bear yelled and rolled on his back. When all the other forest animals saw that something had stopped Bear, the other forest animals ran from the battle. Squirrel climbed up into a tree and decided if a Cat can beat a Bear, the world must be upside down, and he would live in a tree from then on.

"Why the Squirrel Lives in Trees," on page 249 in James Cloyd Bowman, and Margery Bianco, *Tales from a Finnish Tupa* (Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 1964). 273pp. ISBN 8075-7756-1pa.

"Old Sultan," on page 116 in Jacob Grimm and William Grimm, *Grimms' Complete Fairy Tales* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993). 628pp. ISBN 0-76070-335-3.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Why Cats Seem To Smile (China)

Keywords: cat, cats, people, speech

Summary: Long ago, cats ruled the world. They could talk just like people do now. They named the animals and planned the planting and harvest of crops. But it wasn't long before cats got tired of so much work. So they taught humans how to speak and taught them how to do all of the things that cats had done. After that, they just stopped talking, at least where humans could hear. From then on, cats just lived in our houses, resting in the sunshine and eating food we give them, truly the life of a ruler.

Mercatante, Anthony S., *Zoo of the Gods: Animals in Myth, Legend and Fable* (Berkeley, CA: Seastone, 1999). \$15.95. ISBN 1-56975-160-9.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### **Why Dogs Chase Cats (African American)**

Keywords: dog, cat, meat

Summary: Once Dog and Cat were friends and one day, they decided to pool their money and buy a large ham. But as they walked home, Dog sang a song about "our ham," while Cat kept singing about "my ham." That bothered Dog, but what bothered him even more was when Cat grabbed the ham and climbed up a tree with it. Dog yelled up, "You may have gained a ham, but you have lost a friend!" After that, Dog chased Cat up a tree every time he got the chance, and their kids do the same thing today.

Hamilton, Martha and Mitch Weiss. *How and Why Stories: world tales kids can read & tell.* (Little Rock, AK: August House, 1999). 96pp. ISBN 0-87483-561-5pa.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Mules and Men* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990). 291pp. \$29.50; \$13.95pa. ISBN 0-25333-932-4; 0-25320-208-6pa.

### **Bat's Debt (Siberia)**

Keywords: bat, hawks, fox

Summary: One day Bat was flying when Hawk stopped him and asked him to pay his bird taxes. Bat landed and said he was a mammal, not a bird. Not much later, Fox asked him to pay his mammal taxes. Bat flew into the sky and claimed he was a bird. After that, Bat decided that if he wanted to avoid taxes, he had better live in a cave and only come out a night when the birds are asleep.

"Bat," on page 9 in Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

"The Bat," on page 7 in Babette Deutsch, *More Tales of the Faraway Folk* (New York: Harper, 1963). 93pp.

"The Bat, the Birds and the Beasts," on page 62 in Joseph Jacobs, ed., *The Fables of Aesop* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002). 196pp. \$2.50pa. ISBN 0-486-41859-6pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Bat's Feathers (Zimbabwe)**

Keywords: bat, rat, rats, feathers, beak

Summary: Long ago, Bat had beautiful feathers and a beak. But when a drought came, the rats gathered all of their food in one place and dug a well for water. Bat tried to join the rats, since the rats had a lot of food. At first the rats were skeptical, but when Bat showed them his paws and how much they were like Rat paws and the fur on his belly, they decided that he might be related. But Bat wasn't content to just eat his ration of food during the day. He sneaked out and ate extra food at night. One night a Rat caught him. The other rats awoke and pulled out Bat's feathers. After that, Bat fled and hid in a cave and only came out at night. It was hard to perch in the cave and when he tried to grab on to rocks with his beak, his beak wore down, until it was the mouth that bats have today.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

Savory, Phyllis. *Lion Outwitted by Hare.* (Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman and Co., 1971).

### Hawk's Sewing Needle (Kenya)

Keywords: hawk, chicken

Summary: Long ago, mother birds had to sew feather suits for their children. Unfortunately, Chicken lost her needle, so she borrowed one from her friend Hawk. But when she forgot to return the needle, Hawk came looking for Chicken, but Chicken and her children hid every time that Hawk came by. Finally the angry Hawk yelled into the forest to tell Chicken that from now on, since she couldn't sew feather suits for her children, then she would take the feather suits from the chickens. That's how it is to this day. Hawks hunt chickens and chickens scratch and peck at the ground in search of Hawk's sewing needle.

I learned this story from a college friend, Chrissy Watson, when she was teaching English in Kenya with the Peace Corps in 1991. As a class project, Chrissy had her students collect traditional stories from their family members and then translate them into English.

"Hawk and Grouse," on page 31 in Kevin Strauss, *Loon and Moon: and other animal stories* (Ely, MN: Raven Productions, 2005). 48pp. \$12.95pa. ISBN 0-9766264-3-8pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Eagle's Hunt, Crow's Sorrow (Aesop)

Keywords: eagle, crow, lamb, sheep, failure

Summary: One day, Crow saw Eagle swoop down and snatch a lamb, carrying it off to a cliff for dinner. Crow thought, "That doesn't look so hard." But he was really hungry, so he looked for the biggest sheep in the field. He swooped down and grabbed it with his claws. Not only did the sheep not move, Crow got his claws tangled in its wool. Crow flapped so hard that the shepherd soon discovered him. The shepherd clipped the Crow's wings, untangled his feet from the wool and took him home for a pet. After that, the Crow warned all the other crows to stay well clear of living sheep, and that's how it is today.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### The Birds Choose a King (India)

Keywords: owl, crow, eagle

Summary: When Owl started getting old (an some say, lazy) he started plotting how to get the birds to bring him food. He decided to get them to choose him as their king. But during the discussion, a Crow arrived and told the birds how foolish they would be to name Owl their king, since he is only awake at night and couldn't protect them during the day. After that, owls and crows have been enemies.

"The Birds Elect a King," on page 104 in Krishna Dharma, *Panchatantra* (Badger, CA: Torchlight Publishing, 2004). \$12.95pa. ISBN 1-887089-45-4pa.

"How the Birds Picked a King," on page 304 in Arthur W. Ryder, *The Panchatantra* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925).

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Condor As King of the Birds (Bolivia)

Keywords: condor (vulture), hawk, eagle, contest

Summary: On day, the birds decided they needed a king and decided that since flying was the thing that birds do best, the bird who could fly the highest should be their king. Early the next morning the birds gathered in a clearing and when Owl hooted "go" they leapt into the sky. As the birds climbed and climbed, it wasn't long before the smaller birds tired. Soon only Condor, Hawk and Eagle were still in the race. But the sun was so hot that Hawk turned back. The sun's heat was so great that it began scorching Condor and Eagle's head feathers, turning them white. Finally Eagles couldn't take the heat and turned back. But Condor kept on flying, even after his feathers burned away. That is why Condor is the King of the Birds and why he and all his children, have bald heads.



Jagendorf, M. A. *Treasury of Latin American Folk Stories*. (New York, NY: Vanguard, 1960).

Miller, Candace R., ed. *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Birds*. (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### Why Owls Hunt at Night (Puerto Rico)

Keywords: owl, rooster, birds

Summary: Back in the days that birds held parties, Owl didn't want to go to the dance because she didn't have any feathers to wear. But the other birds each shared a bright-colored feather with Owl, as long as she would give them back at the end of the party. But when the party was winding down, Owl slipped out without giving back the feathers. But she was worried that other birds would see her with her bright-colored feathers, so she rubbed her feathers with wood ashes and dirt to make them dull.

"How Owl Got His Feathers," on page 69 in Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss, *How & Why Stories: World Tales Kids Can Read & Tell* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1999). 96pp. \$24.95; \$14.95pa. ISBN 0-87483-562-3; 0-87483-561-5pa.

"Owl Feathers," on page 20 in Anne Rockwell, *The Acorn Tree and Other Folktales* (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1995). 40pp. \$16.00. ISBN 0-688-10746-X.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### The Outlaw Owl (Brittany, France)

Keywords: owl, wren, eagle, nocturnal, feathers

Summary: Long ago, when the people and animals were cold, brave Wren flew to the sun to get some fire, but in the process, she burned all her feathers. Once she landed, all the forest birds gave Wren some of their feathers. All the birds shared feathers except Owl. "I need all my feathers to stay warm," complained Owl. Eagle, the king of the birds, was furious. He banished Owl to the night, telling all the other birds that if they ever see Owl in the day, they can pluck out his feathers as punishment for Owl's stinginess. And that is how it is to this day.

Miller, Candace R., ed. *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

Olcott, Frances Jenkins. *The Wonder Garden: Nature Myths and Tales From All Over the World* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1919).

### Why Owl Hunts Rat (Hawaii)

Keywords: owl, rat, farmer, hawk

Summary: Long ago, when animals lived like people, Owl was a successful sweet potato farmer, that was until on day when he discovered that someone was stealing his potatoes. It seemed like someone was eating his potatoes from below. Soon Owl was at the brink of starvation. Hawk heard about the problem and suggested that Owl kill the thief. Between the two of them, they caught the huge Rat and tore him to pieces. That is why rats are so small today and why they still run from Owl, who eats rats instead of sweet potatoes.

Miller, Candace R., ed. *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

Pukui, Mary Kawena. *Tales of the Menehune* (Honolulu, HI: Kamehameha School Press, 1960).

### Robin's Red Breast (Ireland)

Keywords: robin, red breast, fire, wolf

Summary: Once there was only one fire in the world and two people cared for it. But one night, the people fell asleep and a Wolf came in and kicked dirt on the fire to put it out. But a Robin noticed that the fire was going out, so she gathered the embers and laid some sticks on top and fanned them with her wings until they burst into flame. The fire also burned the bird's chest red and that is the red color we see on the every robin today.

"The Robin," on page 165 in Richard Adams, *The Unbroken Web: Stories and Fables* (New York: Ballantine, 1980). 182pp. ISBN 0-345-30368-7pa.

"Robin," on page 58 in Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries

Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

#### **Why Robin Has a Red Chest (Guernsey, France)**

Keywords: robin, fire, red, feathers

Summary: Long ago, there was no fire in the land of Guernsey. All the people were cold there. Brown Robin took pity on the people and flew up to the sky to steal fire from the sun. But as she carried the fire down to earth, it burned her chest until the feathers glowed red, turning it the red color it is today.

Mercatante, Anthony S., *Zoo of the Gods: Animals in Myth, Legend and Fable* (Berkeley, CA: Seastone, 1999). \$15.95. ISBN 1-56975-160-9.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

#### **Mockingbirds Beautiful Voice (Mayan Legend)**

Keywords: mockingbird, cardinal, song

Summary: Long ago, Mockingbird wanted to be a singer, but her family had no money for lessons. To earn money for lessons, she took a job working in old Cardinal's house. Old Cardinal's daughter was lazy and vain, so when her singing teacher arrived, she didn't work very hard. But Mockingbird followed Cardinal to her lessons every day and hid in the bushes nearby. She practiced her songs every chance she got. One day Cardinal noticed Mockingbird following her and thought of a wonderful plan. When it came time for her to give a concert, Mockingbird would do the singing and Cardinal would just mouth the words. The plan worked fine, until Old Cardinal discovered the trick and chased Mockingbird off. To this day, mockingbirds are great singers and female cardinals can't sing a note.

Bowes, Anne LaBastille. *Birds of the Mayas*. (Big Moose, NY: West of the Wind Publications, 1964).

Miller, Candace R., ed. *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Birds*. (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

#### **The First Woodpecker (Romania)**

Keywords: woodpecker, insects, adaptations

Summary: Once there was a nosy woman that was always poking into other people's business. A man offered a bag of gold if she would carry a mysterious bag to the shore and throw it into the sea. She took the job, but when she was out of sight, she opened the bag and released all the world's insects. The woman tried to grab the insects and throw them back into the bag, but soon she noticed she was changed. Her arms turned into wings, her long nose into a long beak and the red kerchief on her head turned into red feathers on her head. She became the first woodpecker and to this day, woodpeckers try to gather up all of the world's insects.

"The Woodpecker," on page 48 in Richard Adams, *The Unbroken Web: Stories and Fables* (New York: Ballantine, 1980). 182pp. \$3.95pa. ISBN 0-345-30368-7pa.

"Woodpecker," on page 75 in Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

"Why the Woodpecker Has a Long Beak," on page 544 in Robert Nye, ed., *Classic Folk Tales from Around the World* (London: Leopard, 1996). 605pp. ISBN 1-85891-330-6.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Why Blackbird is Black (Italy)

Keywords: adaptation, color, blackbird, fire, smoke

Summary: Long ago a flock of small birds lived in the marsh. They liked living there, but one fall, winter came early, before they had gone south. The birds knew that people had warm fires in their houses, so they flew to a village and perched on the chimneys. Before long the chimney soot covered their feathers and that is why they are black today.

Ingersol, Ernest. *Birds in Legend and Folklore* (New York, NY: Longmans, Green & Co, 1923).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### Buzzard's Bald Head (Nicaragua)

Keywords: buzzard, turkey vulture, bald head, rabbit, feathers

Summary: Buzzard decided to play a trick on clever Rabbit by telling him there was a part in skyland and that he would give Rabbit a ride there. Rabbit grabbed his guitar and climbed on Buzzard's back. But once they were in the air, Buzzard tried to shake Rabbit off, so he would fall to the ground. The angry Rabbit hit Buzzard over the head with the guitar, jamming Buzzard's head in the instrument and stunning him. Rabbit opened Buzzard's wings and glided to a landing. When Buzzard tried to pull off the guitar, it scraped all the feathers off of his head and that is why he is bald today.

Jagendorf, M. A. *Treasury of Latin American Folk Stories* (New York, NY: Vanguard, 1960).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### Rooster's New Home (Gabon)

Keywords: chicken, fire, humans, people, birds

Summary: Long ago, the birds saw how the people used fire and wanted some, so they sent their best speaker, Rooster to negotiate for some fire. But once he arrived at a village, Rooster ate cooked food and slept by a warm fire and quickly forgot his mission. He decided to stay living with the people and even forgot how to fly. Since the birds had no better spokesperson, they never got fire.

Leach, Maria. *How the People Sang the Mountains Up: How and Why Stories* (New York: Viking Press, 1967). 160pp.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### Why Rooster Calls the Sun (adapted from China)

Keywords: rooster, sun, call, song

Summary: Long ago, a hunter was tired of the bright sun, so he shot arrows at Sun, wounding him. Sun ran for cover and hid in a cave. Everything went dark. The darkness and cold lasted so long that the animals finally decided that someone should call back the sun. Many animals tried to call out Sun, but their voices were too quiet or they gave up too soon. Finally Rooster tried to call. His voice wasn't as beautiful as Nightingale, but Rooster kept calling again and again and telling Sun that the animals can capture the evil hunter. Finally the Sun came out again, but he made Rooster promise to watch for hunters from then on. That is why Rooster always calls to the Sun in the morning, to let him know that it is safe to rise into the sky.

Leach, Maria. *How the People Sang the Mountains Up: How and Why Stories*. (New York: Viking Press, 1967). 160pp.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds*. (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### Rooster and Grouse's Running Race (Sweden)

Keywords: rooster, grouse, race, farm

Summary: Long ago, a farmer came to the birds and told them that he had room on this farm for one family of birds, but he would let them decide who would live on his farm. Any bird that lives on a farm wouldn't have to worry about food or predators. The birds decided they would run a race to see who would live on farms. As the birds ran through the woods, soon Rooster and Black (Spruce) Grouse were in the lead. As the birds approached the finish line, Grouse was in the lead. So Rooster yelled out to him, "Hey Grouse, what's that white spot under your tail?" Grouse stopped and turned around to look under his tail. Rooster ran past him to win the race. Grouse was so upset about losing that he flew off to the woods where he lives today. But Rooster and his family went to live with people on farms.

Blecher, Lone Thygesen. *Swedish Folklore and Legends*. (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1993).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds*. (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### How Birds Got Their Colors (African American)

Keywords: bird, birds, colors, rainbow, feathers

Summary: When Noah saw land, the birds on the ark got excited and flew into the sky. When they were up there, they saw the rainbow and flew through the colors, painting their feathers with Cardinal turning red and Blue jay turning blue and Goldfinch turning yellow.

Branner, John C. *How and Why Stories* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., 1921).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### Why Loons Dive (adapted European folktale)

Keywords: loon, bat, thorn bush, storm, diving

Summary: Long ago, animals and plants dressed and acted like people. One day, Loon, Bat and Thorn Bush decided to go into business. Bat borrowed money from a bank and they bought fine wool cloth to see at a distant land. But as they were sailing, a storm came up and wrecked their ship. On the shore where they landed, the three partners settled. From that day on, Bat only came out at night, because he wanted to avoid his creditors. Loon stayed in the water, diving and hoping to find their lost ship and Thorn Bush still grabs at people's clothes as they walk by, hoping to collect all the wool cloth that he lost in the storm.

Pellowski, Anne. *Hidden Stories in Plants* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1990). 93pp. ISBN 0-02-770611-7.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### Why Cuckoo Calls His Name (Friesland)

Keywords: cuckoo, meadowlark, nightingale, song

Summary: Long ago, a small brown bird loved the sound of his own song, so he began asking around about what bird had the sweetest song. Unfortunately, none of the other birds mentioned his name when talking about beautiful bird songs. "I'm sure they've just forgotten my name," thought the bird. "I'll remind them of my name." So after that day, this little bird calls his name over and over again, "Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo."

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

Olcott, Frances, Jenkins. *The Wonder Garden: Nature Myths and Tales From All Over the World* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1919).

**Why Hummingbird Humms (American South)**  
(And its not because "they don't know the words")

Keywords: hummingbird, flowers, bird song

Summary: Long ago, Hummingbird had a beautiful singing voice. But she loved flower nectar so much that she drank and drank and drank so much that she coughed and choked on the sweet drink. What's more, she spent some much time looking for flowers that she didn't practice her songs. After years and years of coughing and choking (and not practicing), Hummingbirds voice began to shrink and shrink until it disappeared completely. And that is why hummingbirds hum.

Ingersol, Ernest. *Birds in Legend and Folklore* (New York, NY: Longmans, Green & Co, 1923).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

**How Swallow Lost Her Song (Germany)**

Keywords: swallow, song, people, city

Summary: Long ago, Swallow had a beautiful voice, but she thought it was being wasted in the woods. So she gathered her family and moved to a city, where people would hear her singing. But when they got there, they had to find a way to build their houses without the sticks and twigs they used in the forest. After a rain, they found plenty of mud for building nests. But the people in the city didn't listen to Swallow's song, they were far too busy to listen and the city was too loud to let anyone listen Swallow's voice. For a while she tried to shout over the noise, but this wore out her voice and soon she got hoarse and later forget her songs, and that is how it is today.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

Pitre, Giuseppe, *The Story of the Swallow Told in Legends, Fables, Folk Songs, Proverbs, Omens and Riddle of Many Lands* (New York, NY: American Book Co., 1912).

**How Birds (Sort of) Learn to Build Their Nests (England)**

Keywords: behavioral adaptation, nest building, robin, magpie, swallow

Summary: All the birds knew that Magpie was an expert nest builder, so they asked her to teach them how to build a nest. First Magpie built a nest of sticks. Some birds saw that and left. But Magpie said, "I'm not done yet." Then she wove grass into the nest. Then more birds left, but Magpie said, "I'm not done yet." Then she added mud to her nest. That is why to this day, all birds make their nests differently, since most of them, like robin and swallow, only heard part of the lesson.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

Shaw, Richard. *The Bird Book* (New York, NY: Frederick Warne & Co., 1974).

**The Flying Turtle (adapted from Aesop)**

Keywords: turtle, eagle, adaptation, cracks in shell

Summary: Long ago, Turtle would watch the birds soaring overhead and dreamed of being able to fly. "If I could just get airborne once, I'm sure I could fly as well as any hawk," thought Turtle. Turtle tried jumping off some rocks, but he just couldn't get enough "lift," he thought. Of course, Turtle was smart enough to know he should learn from an expert, so he went to Eagle and promised him all the treasures of the sea of Eagle would teach him how to fly. "Turtle, you may not realize this ... But you're a turtle!" said Eagle. "You don't have any feathers or wings and that's what you need to fly." But Turtle insisted, so finally, Eagle agreed to carry Turtle into the sky and try to teach him to fly. But when Eagle let go of him, Turtle plummeted to the ground. He hit the ground with a "smack," cracking his shell. And that's why turtles have cracks in their shells today and why they don't spend their days leaping off of rocks.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### The Talkative Turtle (adapted from India)

Keywords: turtle, goose, shell, adaptations, hibernation, cracks in shell

Summary: Once a talkative Turtle wanted to fly south with his goose friends when they migrated. He worked out a plan where he would hold on to a stick with his jaws while two geese would carry the stick into the air. But when Turtle rose into the air, he couldn't stop talking and he fell right out of the sky, cracking his shell. After that, instead of trying to migrate, turtle sleeps through the winter.

"The Talkative Turtle," on page 55 in Krishna Dharma, *Panchatantra* (Badger, CA: Torchlight Publishing, 2004). \$12.95pa. ISBN 1-887089-45-4pa.

"The Turtle Who Couldn't Stop Talking," on page 49 in Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss, *How & Why Stories: World Tales Kids Can Read & Tell* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1999). 96pp. \$24.95; \$14.95pa. ISBN 0-87483-562-3; 0-87483-561-5pa.

"The Wild Geese and the Tortoise," on page 45 in Lucia Turnbull, *Fairy Tales of India* (New York: Criterion Books, 1959).

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries

Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Turtle Wins at Tug-of-War (adapted African American tale)

Keywords: turtle, bear, moose

Summary: One day, Turtle tried to talk with Bear, but Bear ignored him because Turtle was a "small, weak animal." That made Turtle angry so he challenged Bear to a tug-of-war contest. Bear couldn't back down, so he agreed. They met at a river and Turtle sat in the water. He tied his end of the rope to a boulder underwater. Bear pulled and pulled, but he couldn't pull Turtle out of the water. The spectator animals cheered the "strong" Turtle. But Moose wasn't happy. He challenged Turtle to a tug-of-war, but he wanted to stand in the water this time. Turtle agreed, but the next day he waited on the far side of the river on a cliff. He tied his rope to a tree behind the cliff and won the contest again. Both Bear and Moose asked Turtle to live with them, but Turtle said some of his children would live on land and some in the water.

"How the Tortoise Overcame the Elephant and the Hippopotamus," on page 9 in Robert Nye, ed., *Classic Folk Tales from Around the World* (London: Leopard, 1996). 605pp. ISBN 1-85891-330-6.

"Take up the Slack," on page 95 in Joel Chandler Harris, *The Favorite Uncle Remus* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1948). 310pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### How Turtles Got Their Shells (African American)

Keywords: turtle, shell, fire, shells

Summary: In the long-ago times, turtles had smooth leaf-green skin and beautiful black hair on their heads. They would picnic on the river banks every weekend. But even though parents warned little turtles to be careful with fire (which turtles got from people), some young turtles set the river grass ablaze. The slow turtles got burned from the flames and dove into the water to escape the heat. The flames burned their hair and darkened their skin and when they dove into the water, their hot skin shrank and hardened into the shells they have today.

Branner, John C. *How and Why Stories* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., 1921).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: naturelegends@wcoil.com

### Alligator Learns What Trouble Is (African American)

Keywords: alligator, rabbit, trouble, fire

Summary: Long ago, Alligator was beautiful, with emerald skin and red and yellow stripes down his body. He would spend all day long napping the tall meadow grass. But one day, Alligator awoke as Rabbit ran right over him. Rabbit explained that he was "running from Trouble." Alligator had never met Trouble before, so he asked Rabbit to show him Trouble. Rabbit agreed and ran off to light the meadow grass on fire. The flames burned Alligator's skin dark green and when he dove into the water to quench the flames, the cool water made his hot skin crack. Ever since that day Alligator has been grumpy and has stayed in the water. To this day an alligator sees a rabbit, he eats it for lunch.

Hurston, Zora Neale, *Mules and Men* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990). 291pp. \$29.50; \$13.95pa. ISBN 0-25333-932-4; 0-25320-208-6pa.

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: naturelegends@wcoil.com

#### How Snake Got Her Poison and Rattles (African American )

Keywords: rattlesnake, poison, rattles, God, snake, reptile

Summary: Animals used to trample Rattlesnake by mistake. When Rattlesnake complained to God, the creator gave Rattlesnake fangs and poison to defend himself. But then the snake was killing everybody. So God called the snake back and gave him some rattles for his tail so he could warn animals before biting them.

"How the Snake Got His Rattles," on page 22 in Julius Lester, *Black Folktales* (New York: Grove Press, 1969). 110pp. \$9.95pa. ISBN 0-8021-3242-1pa.

"Snake, Rattlesnake," on page 49 in Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: naturelegends@wcoil.com.

"How the Snake Got Poison," on page 131 in Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990). 291pp. \$29.50; \$13.95pa. ISBN 0-25333-932-4; 0-25320-208-6pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

#### How Snake Lost His Legs (Ghana)

Keywords: snake, legs, spider

Summary: Long ago, all the animals farmed just as people do now. At first all the animals agreed to work together to raise food, but short snake said his legs hurt and he couldn't work. When the other animals discovered the trick, then Snake tried to boss animals around, so they would be happy when he left, and then he would sneak off for a nap. Soon the crops grew, but someone was stealing the food. Anansi Spider said he would deal with the thief. He spread tar around the best gardens and the next day, Snake was stuck in the tar. The animals hit Snake with sticks and tried to pull him out of the tar. They pulled and pulled and when they finally pulled him loose, he body was stretched out and his legs were gone. They had stayed in the tar.

Appiah, Peggy. *Tales of an Ashanti Father* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1967).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: naturelegends@wcoil.com.

#### Wide Mouth Frog (United States)

Keywords: frog, beaver, bear, great blue heron, question

Summary: A Wide Mouth Frog was wondering why frogs eat flies, so she asked animals in the forest why they ate what they eat. That worked well until she ran into a Great Blue Heron who ate "wide mouth frogs." The Frog used his fingers to make his mouth really small. When the surprised Heron looked closer at him, the frog leaped into the cattails and disappeared.

I first heard this story as a joke when I was working at a nature center in California. Since that time, I have heard several storytellers perform the story and seen it in a picture book. My version is rooted in a particular ecosystem and makes a point of teaching listeners about the foods that wild animals really eat. For other print versions, check out:

"The Big-Mouth Frog," on page 83 in Margaret Read MacDonald, *The Parent's Guide to Storytelling: How to Make Up New Stories and Retell Old Favorites*, 2d ed. (Little Rock, AR: August House, 2001). 120pp. \$21.95; \$11.95pa. ISBN 0-87483-619-0; 0-87483-618-2pa.

"Wide-Mouth Frog," on page 74 in Hiroko Fujita, *Stories to Play With: Kid's Tales Told with Puppets, Paper, Toys, and Imagination* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1999). 96pp. \$12.95pa. ISBN 0-87483-553-4pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### How Frog Lost Its Tail (Ashanti)

Keywords: frog, tail, tadpole, water, greed

Summary: Frog once had a long tail and a job, guarding the Sky God's well. But soon Frog stopped letting other animals drink from the well. That made the Sky God angry and he cut off Frog's tail with a bolt of lightning. That's why frogs always lose their tails as they grow older.

"Tadpole Loses His Tail," on page 65 in Roger D. Abrahams, ed., *Afro-American Folktales: Stories from Black Traditions in the New World* (New York: Random House, 1985). Pantheon Fairy Tale & Folklore Library. 327pp. \$17.00; \$11.95pa. ISBN 0-394-52755-0; 0-394-72885-8pa.

"Nyame's Well," on page 93 in Harold Courlander, *The Hat-Shaking Dance: And Other Ashanti Tales from Ghana* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1957). 115pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Why Fish Are Silent (Finland)

Keywords: fish, speech, Vainamoinen

Summary: At the start of the world, the Wizard Vainamoinen sang the world into existence. But no creature could talk until the wizard called them together and let them choose their speech. The only problem was that the fish could see people's mouths moving underwater, but couldn't hear what they said. So they just decided they will open and close their mouths like everyone else and not make any noise.

Deutsch, Babette, *Tales of Faraway Folk* (New York, NY: Harper, 1952).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

### Where Butterflies Come From (African American)

Keywords: butterflies, flowers, God, colors

Summary: At the beginning of time, God made all the plants and most of the animals. But the Flowers were lonely and were complaining. The tired God was tired of the complaining, so he cut bits off of the flowers and put them together into the colorful Butterflies. To this day, Butterflies keep the flowers company.

"How God Made Butterflies," on page 157 in Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990). 291pp. \$29.50; \$13.95pa. ISBN 0-25333-932-4; 0-25320-208-6pa.

"Butterflies," on page 11 in Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

"How God Made the Butterflies," on page 3 in Julius Lester, *Black Folktales* (New York: Grove Press, 1969). 110pp. \$9.95pa. ISBN 0-8021-3242-1pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.



### Why Ants Are Everywhere (Burma)

Keywords: ant, rabbit, lion, worm

Summary: When King Lion held a party, he invited everyone to the party. But when little Ant arrived, the other animals made fun of her, so she left. But the next morning, Lion awoke with a pain in his ear. All the other animals tried to reach whatever it was in Lion's ear. But then Lion noticed that Ant wasn't there. So Lion sent Rabbit to ask Ant to come and help him. Ant agreed and climbed into Lion's ear to remove a Worm that was biting his eardrum. Lion offered Ant whatever she wanted for her help and Ant asked that she wanted her children to be able to live anywhere and that is how things are to this day.

"Why Ants Are Found Everywhere," on page 28 in Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss, *How & Why Stories: World Tales Kids Can Read & Tell* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1999). 96pp. \$24.95; \$14.95pa. ISBN 0-87483-562-3; 0-87483-561-5pa.

"Why Ants Live Everywhere," on page 105 in Maria Leach, *How the People Sang the Mountains Up: How and Why Stories* (New York: Viking Press, 1967). 160pp.

"Ants," on page 5 in Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Who Has the Sweetest Blood? (Jewish)

Keywords: gnat, mosquito, swallow, snake, frog, tail

Summary: Snake wanted to find the tastiest food to eat. He asked Gnat to bite all the animals. Gnat decided that Humans taste best. But before he could tell that to Snake, Swallow swooped down and bulled out Gnat's tongue so all he could do was buzz. Swallow told Snake that Frogs taste best, but the suspicious Snake tried to bite Swallow, instead. The bite put the V in a Swallow's tail.

"Swallow," on page 65 in Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Bird Kingdom: More Than 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Birds* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com).

Another retelling can be found on page 139 in Anthony S. Mercatante, *Zoo of the Gods: Animals in Myth, Legend and Fable* (Berkeley, CA: Seastone, 1999). \$15.95. ISBN 1-56975-160-9.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### The Hobgoblin's Revenge (Japan)

Keywords: mosquito, hobgoblin, hunter, bood

Summary: A Hunter accidentally wandered deep into the forest and found himself near a one-eyed Hobgoblin's cave. The Hobgoblin tried to grab the Hunter, but the Hunter shot an arrow into the Hobgoblin's one eye. The blind Hobgoblin chased the Hunter along the cliffs. He tripped and fell to his death, swearing to drink human blood. The Hunter climbed down the cliffs and burned the monster's body. But after the Hunter left, the ashes from the Hobgoblin's body blew into the wind and became the first mosquitoes and biting flies.

"Mosquitoes, Horseflies, Gnats," on page 34 in Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories About Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

a similar tale from the Ojibwa people of North America can be found in Douglas Wood, *The Windigo's Return: A North Woods Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's, 1996). 32pp. ISBN 0-689-80065-7.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Bees Get Their Sting (Aesop)

Keywords: bee, Zeus, stinger

Summary: Queen Bee got angry that people kept stealing the bee's honey so she went up to Mount Olympus and asked Zeus for help. When she fed Zeus some of her honey, he was so pleased that he offered her anything she wanted. She asked for a stinger that would kill anyone that it stung. Zeus realized the danger of this request. So he gave bees stingers, but the stingers don't kill people. And while the stingers will hurt humans and other animals, any bee who wants to sting has to give up her life to hurt someone else.

"The Wages of Malice," on page 137 in S. A. Handford, *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

"Jupiter and the Bee," on page 124 in Jack Zipes, ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

#### **How Spider Learned to Weave (Ashanti, West Africa)**

Keywords: spider, web, turtle, adaptation

Summary: Turtle and Spider decided to be fishing partners. Turtle told Spider that he could either make the nets or get tired. Spider didn't want to get tired, so while Turtle sat and gave directions, Spider wove the fishing nets. Then when it came time to fish, Turtle told Spider the same thing. Spider didn't want to get tired, so he threw in the nets and pulled out the fish. Then Turtle told Spider that he could either eat the fish or feel full. Spider wanted to feel full, so he sat by while Turtle devoured the fish. But then he realized that he had been tricked and stomped off. After that, Spider decided to still use a net to catch food, but now he weaves his nets in bushes and trees, so Turtle can't steal his catch.

Courlander, Harold and George Herzog. *The Cow-Tail Switch and other West African stories*. (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1947).

Kimmel, Eric. *Anansi Goes Fishing*. (New York, NY: Holiday House, 1992).

#### **Why Spider Hides in Dark Places (Ashanti, West Africa)**

Keywords: spider, lion, eagle, flying, feathers, contest

Summary: One day, King Lion was bored, so he asked his subjects who was the most clever. Anansi the Spider boasted so much that that Lion was about to declare his most clever, until the birds noted that Anansi, for all his cleverness, couldn't fly. "Yes I can," said Anansi. Lion ordered Anansi to fly, or else. So Anansi went home and trapped some birds. He stuck their feathers to his body with latex glue from a rubber tree. Then he climbed a tree and jumped off. To everyone's amazement, Anansi could fly! But Eagle challenged Anansi to fly higher into the sky, as high as Eagle could. Anansi took the challenge, but as he flew higher, the hot sun melted the latex glue and the feathers floated to the ground. Anansi dropped like a rock, landing in some bushes. He was so embarrassed that spiders stay hidden in bushes and trees to this day.

Appiah, Peggy. *Anansi the Spider: Tales from an Ashanti Village*. (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1969).

Miller, Candace R., ed., *Tales from the Creature Kingdom: More Than 160 Multicultural Legends and Pourquoi Stories about Mammals, Insects, Reptiles and Water Creatures*. (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 94pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com)

#### **Why Wasp Has a Small Waist (African American )**

Keywords: wasp, mosquito, anger

Summary: Mosquito and Wasp were once walking down the road when Wasp made a joke about Mosquito and laughed so hard and he held his belly so tightly that he almost split himself in half. After that, Wasp didn't make jokes any more because he was worried that if he laughed any more, he would break in two. That is why today, wasps have a very short temper and don't laugh at jokes.

"What Makes Brer Wasp Have Short Patience," on page 119 in Roger D. Abrahams, ed., *Afro-American Folktales: Stories from Black Traditions in the New World* (New York: Random House, 1985). Pantheon Fairy Tale & Folklore Library. 327pp. \$17.00; \$11.95pa. ISBN 0-394-52755-0; 0-394-72885-8pa.

"Why Brer Wasp Never Laughs," on page 121 in Susan Kantor, *One Hundred and One African American Read-Aloud Stories* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1998). 416pp. \$12.95. ISBN 1-57912-039-3.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **The Little Pine Tree (Denmark)**

Keywords: pine tree, branches, needles, adaptations

Summary: A little Pine Tree once wanted to be different. He wanted the other trees and animals to notice him. Once he saw a rich nobleman's coach roll by. The tree wished and wished for gold needles. Perhaps a fairy or magician heard the wish, because the next day, the pine had gold needles. But a peddler came by and took them to sell in town. Then the tree wished for glass needles, but these broke when the wind blew. Then the tree wished for maple leaves. But those leaves made the tree dry out. Finally the tree remembered how wonderful its ordinary needles had been and wished for those. Luckily it had one wish left and the next day it had regular pine tree needles.

"The Pine Tree," on page 3 in Rose Dobbs, *One Upon a Time: Twenty Cheerful Tales to Read and Tell* (New York: Random House, 1950). 117pp.

"The Tiny Pine Tree's Wish," on page 107 in Mildred L. Kerr, and Frances Ross, *First Fairy Tales* (San Francisco: Charles E. Merrill Books, 1946). 128 p.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Why Trees Are Evergreen (Denmark)**

Keywords: birch tree, maple tree, oak tree, fir tree, spruce tree, pine tree, cedar tree, juniper tree

Summary: One winter, a Redwing bird hurt its wing and couldn't fly south. When the wing blew and the snow started to fall, the bird asked birch, maple and oak for help, but those trees wouldn't bother to help. But the evergreens offered assistance. When the South Wind returned, it cast a spell on the trees. Now the rude broadleaf trees lose their leaves every fall and the evergreens keep their needles, so they can keep helping other birds.

"The Trees' Perpetual Penance," on page 43 in Time-Life Books, ed., *Magical Justice* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1986). Enchanted World Series. 143pp. ISBN 0-80945-269-3.

a similar story about evergreens receiving their year-round leaves for helping someone else (in this case baby Jesus) can be found in "The Trapper's Tale," on page 109 in Ruth Sawyer, *This Way to Christmas* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952). 165pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **The Columbine Crown (adapted from Persia)**

Keywords: lion, tiger, bear, leopard, wolf, hyena, king, columbine

Summary: Long ago, Lion, Tiger, Leopard, Bear, Hyena and Wolf were arguing about who should be "King of the Animals." Each had a claim. The animals, tired of the fighting, told the contestants that wise Owl would choose the king the next day. But that night, each contestant made himself a crown, so he would look like a king when the animals met the next day. When Lion, who thought he was the only one with such a clever idea, saw the other crowns, he turned furious. He knocked the crowns from the other animal's heads and chased them into the woods. When Owl arrived later, and saw Lion with his crown, she assumed that the animals had settled the argument and proclaimed Lion as king. Wherever an animal's crown fell, it turned into a crown-shaped columbine flower and Lion eats columbine to this day to give him strength.

Miller, Candace R., ed. *Tales from the Plant Kingdom: Over 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 110pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com).

### **Mistletoe (Norway)**

Keywords: mistletoe, Norse gods, Balder, Loki

Summary: Long ago the goddess Freya wanted to protect her son Balder, so she got most everything in the world to promise not to harm her son. It became a game among the Norse gods to throw things at Balder and see them drop at his feet. But Loki, the mischief maker looked for a chance to get back at bright Balder. He crafted a dart out of Mistletoe (a plant too small and harmless to be noticed). He got blind Hodur to throw the dart and it killed Balder. All the world grieved Balder's death. Mistletoe pledged that it would never harm anyone again. It shriveled up even smaller and grew high in the trees.

Cotterell, Arthur. *Norse Mythology* (London: Lorenz Books, 2000). 96pp. ISBN 1-85967-998-6.

Miller, Candace R., ed. *Tales from the Plant Kingdom: Over 160 Legends and Pourquoi Stories* (Lima, OH: Pourquoi Press, 1996). 110pp. \$20.00pa. E-mail: [naturelegends@wcoil.com](mailto:naturelegends@wcoil.com).

### **Alice Algae and Freddie Fungus (United States)**

Keywords: adaptation, symbiosis, algae, fungus

Summary: Long ago there was a fungus named Freddy. Now Freddy Fungus was very good at building houses, but he wasn't a very good cook. Alice Algae was a good cook, but not so good at building. Freddy Fungus blew right over there and people say that Freddy Fungus and Alice Algae took a lichen (liking) to each other. They decided to get married. And from then on, Freddy Fungus would make a house and Alice Algae would make food and they could live wherever they wanted, as long as there was sunlight. That's why to this day, when we see a lichen plant, we tell the symbiotic story of a fungus and an alga that fell in love. Keep that in mind the next time you see lichen on a rock.

I first heard this story working at a nature center in Minnesota. It is a well-known piece of environmental education folklore.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Why Sun and Moon Live in the Sky (Efik-Ibibio, Nigeria)**

Keywords: sun, moon, water, day, night

Summary: Long ago, Sun and Moon were married and lived in a house on earth. But one day Sun invited his friend Ocean to visit and while he added extra rooms to his house, Ocean took up so much space that the water rose to the rooftops. Finally Sun and Moon had to leap into the sky to avoid the flood. Moon got so angry at what Sun did to flood their house that she vowed not to share a house with him again.

"A Home for Sun and Moon," on page 29 in Susan Kantor, *One Hundred and One African American Read-Aloud Stories* New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1998). 416pp. \$12.95. ISBN 1-57912-039-3.

"Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky," on page 41 in Paul Radin, ed., *African Folktales* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983). 322pp. ISBN 0-8052-0732-5pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Why the Sea is Salty (Korea)**

Keywords: hand mill, thief, salt, boat

Summary: Long ago a king owned a magic hand mill (like a hand coffee grinder) that would grind out anything if you used the right magic words. One day a thief visited the king, dressed as a foreign nobleman. He asked the king about the mill and the king showed him how it worked. The thief remembered the words to start and stop the mill. Later, he stole into the castle palace and stole the mill. Then he climbed into a boat and sailed for his home village to hide from the king's guards. But as he was sailing he decided to start the mill. He couldn't mill gold, because that would be suspicious, so he decided to be a salt merchant. He started the mill grinding and it grinded all thought the night as he slept. But it ground so much salt that the boat sank, drowning the thief. And to this day the magic mill is still grinding out salt and that is why the sea is salty.

Hamilton, Martha and Mitch Weiss. *How and Why Stories: world tales kids can read & tell*. (Little Rock, AK: August House, 1999). 96pp. ISBN 0-87483-561-5pa.

Leach, Maria. *How the People Sang the Mountains Up: How and Why Stories* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1967). 160pp.

### **The First Fire (Zaire)**

Keywords: fire, stars, interdependence, cooperation, adaptation, spider, woodpecker

Summary: Long ago, people had no fire. The animals agreed to help people get fire from the sky. Woodpecker pecked a hole in the sky and spider spun a web to that hole and a brave woman climbed up to get fire out of the sky. That is how people first got fire.

"Starfire," on page 69 in Pleasant DeSpain, *Eleven Nature Tales: A Multicultural Journey* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1996). 91pp. \$10.75; \$4.50pa. ISBN 0-87483-447-3; 0-87483-458-9pa.

"The Gift from a Star," on page 36 in Paola Caboara Luzzatto, *Long Ago When the Earth Was Flat: Three Tales from Africa* (New York: Collins, 1979). 44 p.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPT STORIES

### The Tinker's Clock (© 2005 Kevin Strauss)

Keywords: interdependence, connections, clock, tinker, pieces

Summary: Long ago, but not so long that we can't remember, there was a man who was a Tinker. He was a man who was always fixing things—broken pots, pulleys and damaged knife blades. His house was always full of bits and pieces of gears and pulleys and boxes of parts. People always brought the tinker things to fix.

One day after working all day in his workshop, the Tinker walked into his living room and noticed the loud "Tick-Toc, Tick-Toc, Tick-Toc" from the mantle clock on the shelf above the fireplace.

The Tinker thought to himself, "I bet I could fix that." He took the clock into his workshop and unscrewed the back and began taking out gears and springs and moved things around until he thought that he fixed the problem. As he was putting the clock back together, he had a couple gears left over.

"Oh well, I probably don't need these anyway," said the Tinker and he threw away the gears.

When he finished putting the clock together, he wound it up and listened to it. It didn't make that "Tick-Toc, Tick-Toc, Tick-Toc" noise. The Tinker smiled to himself and went on with his work until late in the night.

The next day, when the Tinker looked at the clock, he noticed that the hands no longer moved.

"The first law of intelligent tinkering is to save all of the parts." —Aldo Leopold

I developed this story 10 minutes before a beaver ecology class when I wanted a story to talk about the importance of species in an ecosystem. I got the idea for the story from the Aldo Leopold quote that ends the story. Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### The Frog Hunt (Zaire)

Keywords: interconnections, everything is connected, frog, mosquitoes

Summary: In a village there was a Chief and one night the croaking of the frogs was keeping him awake at night. He ordered the frogs to be quiet, but they didn't listen. So the next day he ordered the villagers to kill all the frogs in the valley. An old woman told him not to do that because "everything is connected." The Chief ignored her. Once the villagers killed all the frogs, things were quiet for a while, but then they started hearing the buzz of mosquitoes. Soon the mosquitoes were biting people all through the night. The next day the Chief ordered the villagers to kill all the mosquitoes in the valley. But the people knew that was impossible, so they left the village. Then the Chief realized what the old woman meant by "everything is connected."

"All Things Are Linked," on page 103 in Harold Courlander, *The Crest and the Hide* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghehan, 1982). 137pp. ISBN 0-698-20536-7.

"All Things Are Connected," on page 13 in Pleasant DeSpain, *Eleven Nature Tales: A Multicultural Journey* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1996). 91pp. \$10.75; \$4.50pa. ISBN 0-87483-447-3; 0-87483-458-9pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **The Parable of the Stomach (Aesop)**

Keywords: everything is connected, interdependence, stomach

Summary: Once there was a body and the Eyes, Ears, Hands, Legs and Mouth all got angry because it seemed like they did all of the work and the Stomach just sat around all day doing nothing. So they decided to go on strike and stop feeding the Stomach. But soon the Eyes started feeling blurry and the Hands and Legs started feeling weak. So they decided to feed the Stomach once again, and then everything was O.K. again.

"The Belly and the Members," on page 72 in Joseph Jacobs, ed., *The Fables of Aesop* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002). 196pp. \$2.50pa. ISBN 0-486-41859-6pa.

"Belly and Members," on page 85 in Jack Zipes, ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Just Enough . . . (Jewish)**

Keywords: recycling, reuse, everything goes somewhere, tailor, coat

Summary: There once was a tailor who sewed himself a beautiful winter coat. But as the years went by, the coat wore out, so he turned it into a blazer and when that wore out, into a vest and then a scarf and then a button and when that wore out, all that was left was this story.

"The Tailor," on page 2 in Nancy Schimmel, *Just Enough to Make a Story: A Sourcebook for Storytelling*, 3d ed. (Berkeley, CA: Sisters' Choice Press, 1992). 58pp. \$14.75pa. ISBN 0-932164-03-X.

"The Tailor's Jacket," on page 94 in Margaret Read MacDonald, *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About* (North Haven, CT: Linnet Books, 1999). 162pp. \$26.50; \$17.50pa. ISBN 0-208-02416-6; 0-208-02426-3pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Even Stones Go Somewhere (Jewish)**

Keywords: everything goes somewhere, stewardship, making a difference

Summary: Once a rich merchant ordered his workers to clear a place for a garden next to his house. He had the workers throw the rocks they dug up over the garden wall. When a rabbi came by and told him that the stones were falling on the road and that he shouldn't throw stones from "non yours" to "yours," the merchant slammed the door in his face. But a few weeks later, his businesses failed and he had to become a poor laborer. One day he was carrying a burden and stubbed his foot on a stone. He realized it was a stone from his garden, so he began picking up the stones and throwing them off the road.

"Don't Throw Stones from Not Yours to Yours," on page 99 in Harold Courlander, ed., *Ride with the sun; an anthology of folk tales and stories from the United Nations* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1955). 296pp.

"Don't Throw Stones from 'Not Yours' to 'Yours'," on page 112 in Margaret Read MacDonald, *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About* (North Haven, CT: Linnet Books, 1999). 162pp. \$26.50; \$17.50pa. ISBN 0-208-02416-6; 0-208-02426-3pa.

"Throwing Stones," on page 109 in Josepha Sherman, *Rachel the Clever and Other Jewish Folktales* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1993). 171pp. \$19.95; 10.95pa. ISBN 0-87483-306-X; 0-87483-307-8pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Putting Feathers Back in the Pillow (Jewish)**

Keywords: everything goes somewhere, pollution, gossip

Summary: There was a gossip in a village and the rabbi went to talk with him. To teach the man a lesson, he asked the man to bring him two torn feather pillows the next day. When the man brought them, he saw that the feathers were spilling out all over town. Then the rabbi asked the man to collect the feathers. "That's impossible," said the man. "Exactly," said the rabbi "the same way it is impossible to take back the gossip and evil that you put into the world. It is far better to prevent a problem than clean up afterward."

"The Gossip," on page 143 in Ed Brody et al., ed., *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope: Stories, Storytelling and Activities for Peace, Justice and the Environment* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2002). 281pp. \$24.95 pa. ISBN 0-86571-447-9pa.

"Feathers," on page 59 in Corinne Stavish, ed., *Seeds from Our Past: Planting for the Future* (Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith Center for Jewish Identity, 1997). 96pp. \$10pa. ISBN 0-910250-31-6pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Why the Sky Is up So High (Nigeria)

Keywords: no such thing as a "free lunch," everything is connected, sky, work, waste

Summary: Once upon a time, people didn't have to work for food, they just reached up and broke off a piece of the Sky. But as time went by, people became wasteful. They would take more than they needed and leave the rest on the ground. So Sky got angry and rose up ten feet, so it was harder to reach. For a while people were careful again. But then they got lazy and wasteful. So Sky rose up to where it is today, high in the sky and people have to work for their food.

"Why the Sky Is Far Away," on page 80 in Jill Brand, *The Green Umbrella: Stories, Songs, Poems and Starting Points for Environmental Assemblies* (London: a & C Black, 1991). 106pp. \$17.95pa. ISBN 0-7136-3390-5pa.

"Why the Sky Is High," on page 17 in Michael J. Caduto, *Earth Tales from Around the World* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997). 192pp. \$17.95pa. ISBN 1-55591-968-5pa.

"Too Much Sky," on page 101 in Margaret Read MacDonald, *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About* (North Haven, CT: Linnet Books, 1999). 162pp. \$26.50; \$17.50pa. ISBN 0-208-02416-6; 0-208-02426-3pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Beetle's Revenge (Aesop)

Keywords: eagle, hare, beetle, no such thing as a "free lunch," everything is costs something, everything is connected

Summary: Beetle and Hare were once good friends. But one day, Eagle swooped down to catch Hare. Hare dove into Beetle's nest for shelter. "In the name of Zeus, king of the gods, please spare my friend," said Beetle. But Eagle flicked away Beetle and ate Hare, right then and there. When Eagle flew off, Beetle followed him to his tree nest. When Eagle left her nest again, Beetle smashed the eggs. Next, Eagle moved her nest to a high cliff. But Beetle once more destroyed the eggs. Eagle didn't know what to do, so she flew up to Mount Olympus and laid her eggs on the lap of Zeus himself. Beetle gathered up a ball of dung (animal droppings) and carried it up to the home of the gods. He dropped it on Zeus's lap and the god sat up so quickly that the eggs went flying. Zeus called Eagle and Beetle before him to explain their actions. But when Beetle explained his side, Zeus ruled that they each had a reason for anger. He tried to make peace between the animals, but when Beetle would not give in, he used his magic to let Eagle lay her eggs at the time when Beetles are sleeping, and that's how it is to this day.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### Four Who Made a Lion (India)

Keywords: no such thing as a "free lunch," everything costs something, lion, foolish

Summary: There once were four men who went off to get an education. They met back five years later to talk of their education. As they walked though the forest they came across the bones of a lion. "Let us demonstrate our skills," said the first scholar. He assembled the bones into a skeleton. The second scholar created muscles and fur for the lion. The third offered to breathe life

into the lion, but before he could do that, the fourth scholar climbed a tree. When the third scholar breathed life into the lion, it leapt up and ate three scholars. The fourth scholar waited for the lion to leave and then climbed down and was much more careful with his learning.

"The Four Wise People," on page 147 in Ed Brody et al., eds., *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope: Stories, Storytelling and Activities for Peace, Justice and the Environment* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2002). 281pp. \$24.95 pa. ISBN 0-86571-447-9pa.

"Four Who Made a Tiger," on page 161 in Michael J. Caduto, *Earth Tales from Around the World* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997). 192pp. \$17.95pa. ISBN 1-55591-968-5pa.

"The Scholars Who Revived a Lion," on page 180 in Krishna Dharma, *Panchatantra* (Badger, CA: Torchlight Publishing, 2004). 201pp. \$12.95 pa. ISBN 1-887089-45-4pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **The Goose That Laid the Golden Egg (Aesop)**

Keywords: no such thing as a "free lunch," everything costs something, sustainability, renewable resources

Summary: One day a farmer discovers that he has a goose that lays golden eggs. He takes the first egg to town and sells it, buying building materials for a new house. But since the goose only lays one golden egg a month, the farmer finally gets frustrated and decides to cut open the goose to get the rest of the gold out of it. But when he butchers the goose, it just looks like a regular goose on the inside and he never got another golden egg again.

"The Goose with the Golden Eggs," on page 134 in Joseph Jacobs, ed., *The Fables of Aesop* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002). 196pp. \$2.50pa. ISBN 0-486-41859-6pa.

"The Goose with the Golden Eggs," on page 145 in Jack Zipes, ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **The Hedge and the Vineyard (Aesop)**

Keywords: no such thing as a "free lunch," everything costs something, sustainability, renewable resources, everything is connected

Summary: One day, a foolish young man inherited a vineyard. The first thing he did was tear out all of the hedges because they didn't produce any grapes. He then planted those spaces with more grapes. But as soon as grapes started growing, people and animals fed on the grapes. Even though brambles don't grow grapes, they do guard a vineyard.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### **Flies In The Honey (Aesop)**

Keywords: flies, honey, no such thing as a "free lunch," everything costs something

Summary: One day, a man knocked a jar of honey onto the floor. Flies smelled the sweet honey and landed to drink it up. But in the process, their feet stuck to the floor in the sticky goo. "What fools we are," said the flies. "We have given up our lives for the sake of some pleasure. Dead animals never glue us to the ground."

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.



### **Big Daddy Frog (Aesop)**

Keywords: frog, ox, no such thing as a "free lunch," everything costs something, expansion

Summary: One day a young frog sees an Ox in the field. When the frog tells his father about the Ox, his father puffs himself up, "Was he this big?" The young frog says "He was bigger." So the big frog keeps puffing and puffing himself up until he pops. That's what happens from making yourself too big.

"The Frog and the Ox," on page 57 in Joseph Jacobs, ed., *The Fables of Aesop* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002). 196pp. \$2.50pa. ISBN 0-486-41859-6pa.

"The Frog and the Ox," on page 45 in Jack Zipes, ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **Hen's Aren't Factories (adapted from Aesop)**

Keywords: hen, food, nature knows best

Summary: A woman once had a hen that laid a wonderful egg every morning. She thought to herself, "If I double my hen's food, she'll lay twice as much." So she did, and the hen got so contented that she stopped laying. The angry woman kicked the prized chicken and it fell down dead and there were no more excellent eggs.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### **The Farmer's Sons (Aesop)**

Keywords: farmer, sons, garden, nature knows best, no such thing as a "free lunch," everything costs something, expansion

Summary: A farmer lay on his deathbed, talking to his lazy sons. "My sons, I have buried a great treasure in the garden, but I have forgotten where it is. But if you find it, you will live well." After their father died, the sons just spent the money and ate the food that their father had gathered. But when that ran out, they tried to find the treasure by digging up the garden. They didn't find a treasure, but once the garden had been turned over, it was ready for planting. So they planted a crop and grew vegetables to eat and sell in the market. The next year they searched the garden again, and planted it after digging it up. Year after year they did this, until they looked at their full money jar on the kitchen counter and realized that their father had been right. There was a treasure in the garden, if they knew where to look.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### **The Sun's Marriage (Aesop)**

Keywords: sun, frog, birds, beasts, marshes, drought, no such thing as a "free lunch," everything costs something

Summary: One very warm summer day, word spread among the animals that the Sun was getting married. The birds and beasts celebrated the occasion until an old Frog reminded them. "This is a tragedy, not a celebration. Just imagine what will happen to our marshes and watering holes of the Sun should give birth to a dozen little suns like itself?"

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### **Hodja and the Mulberry Tree (Turkey)**

Keywords: mulberry, tree, Hodja, nature knows best

Summary: Hodja Nasrudin was resting under a mulberry tree and wondering why Allah (God) had given the mulberry tree tiny fruit while he gave pumpkins nothing but weak vines to hold them up. Then the mulberry fell "splat" on his forehead, and the teacher understood. "Now I see, everything happens for a purpose."

"What Is It All For?" on page 165 in Indries Shah, *The Plesantries of the Incredible Mulla Nasrudin* (London: Mulla Nasrudin Enterprises Ltd, 1968). 218pp.

"Nazrudin and the Mulberry Tree," on page 22 in Susan Strauss, *The Passionate Fact: Storytelling in Natural History and Cultural Interpretation* (Golden, CO: North American Press, 1996). 152pp. \$16.95pa. ISBN 1-55591-925-1pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### **The First Wolf (Finland)**

Keywords: wolf, Vainamoinen, Tuoni, deer, predation

Summary: When the Wizard Vainamoinen made the world, he let the Wizard Tuoni (the lord of the dead) make a creature to chase the deer out of the forests in the winter. Tuoni made wolves, but the magic that he used created wolves that chase deer and "evil creatures," so the First Wolf chased Tuoni all over the world before he escaped.

"Why Is The Wolf Ferocious?" on page 135 in Denise Casey and Tim Clark, *Tales of the Wolf* (Moose, WY: Homestead Publishing, 1996). 320pp. \$14.95. ISBN 0-94397-240-X.

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"The Wolf with the Burning Eyes," on page 144 in Norma Livo and George Livo, *The Enchanted Wood and Other Tales from Finland* (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1999). 199pp. \$33.50. ISBN 1-56308-578-X.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

#### **Dutch Nightmare on Elmwood Street (©2005 Kevin Strauss)**

Keywords: Dutch elm disease, tree, trees, diversity is the key to stability

Summary: This is a narrative account of how Dutch elm disease can change a town. Depending on how old you are, you probably have memories of similar things happening in your community. First the tree leaves turn yellow early. Then leaves don't come back in the spring. Soon the tree-lined streets are just a succession of tree stumps. Luckily, many urban foresters have been smart enough to replant a diversity of trees after this disease outbreak.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

#### **The Heaviest Burden (adapted from Indonesia)**

Keywords: cooperation, teamwork, nature knows best, tree

Summary: Every part of a tree is complaining about how much work it does. The roots, trunk, branches and leaves all complain that they lievs are hard. The fruit argues that while its life seems easy, it has to get eaten. Finally the tree realizes that each part has a job to do.

"The Heaviest Burden," on page 93 in Jill Brand, *The Green Umbrella: Stories, Songs, Poems and Starting Points for Environmental Assemblies* (London: A & C Black, 1991). 106pp. \$17.95pa. ISBN 0-7136-3390-5pa.

You can find a similar tales involving a house in "Those Who Quarreled," on page 82 in Elizabeth Hough Sechrist, *Once in the First Times: Folktales from the Philippines* (Philadelphia: Macrae Smith Company, 1949). 215pp.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

#### **A Bundle of Sticks (Aesop)**

Keywords: cooperation, teamwork, farmer, sons

Summary: Once there was a farmer who had five sons who were constantly quarreling. Finally he had enough. He told them to go into the woods and bring back two sticks. He asked each son to break a stick with his hands. Each broke a stick. "That is how you are on your own," said the farmer. Then he took the five leftover sticks and tied them together in a bundle. "This is how you are together." The sons each tried to break the bundle, but the bundle of sticks were too strong.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

#### **Lion and the Three Bulls (Aesop)**

Keywords: cooperation, teamwork, lion, bull

Summary: Three bulls were once the best of friends and grazed together in the center of a field. Lion watched from the forest and knew that he couldn't attach one of them if the others were there to help him. So during the night, he began whispering to each Bull about what the others were saying about him. Soon the Bulls began to believe the lies and grew angry with each other. They began feeding alone at the edges of the field. Once the bulls were on their own, Lion could kill them one by one and had quite a feast.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### It's in Your Hands (Jewish)

Keywords: stewardship, making a difference, hermit, bluebird

Summary: Some children try to trick a wise old Hermit by asking him if the bird behind a child's back is alive or dead. The Hermit looks at the children and tells them, "The answer to that question, children, is in your hands."

"The Hermit and the Children," on page ix in Ed Brody, et al., eds., *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope: Stories, Storytelling and Activities for Peace, Justice and the Environment* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2002). 281pp. \$24.95pa. ISBN 0-86571-447-9pa.

"In Your Hands," on page 124 in Margaret Read MacDonald, *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About* (North Haven, CT: Linnet Books, 1999). 162pp. \$26.50; \$17.50pa. ISBN 0-208-02416-6; 0-208-02426-3pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Crab and Her Mother (Aesop)

Keywords: everyone can make a difference, stewardship, crab

Summary: One day a Crab mother looked at her child. "Please walk straight ahead, not sideways," she said. Crab looked at her mother. "When you show me how to walk forward and back, I will learn how to do it myself." Just then a Gull flew over and the two crabs scuttled sideways into a crack in the rocks.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### The Old Man and Death (Aesop)

Keywords: old man, death, stewardship, everyone can make a difference

Summary: One day, an old man was carrying a heavy bundle of sticks on the road. He was so exhausted that he threw his burden on the road and called for Death to take him from this miserable existence. To his surprise, the Grim Reaper appeared and beckoned to him with one bony finger. "How can I help you," said Death. The man replied, "Well, sir, could you just help me pick up my burden again?"

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### The Difference Between Heaven and Hell (adapted Jewish tale)

Keywords: cooperation, interdependence, everyone can make a difference, stewardship

Summary: When a good man dies, an angel offers to let him choose between going to heaven or hell. When he visits both places, they look the same, a grassy field with a table full of tasty food. In both places, the people wear shirts with metal sleeves that don't bend at the elbow. The difference between the two places is that in hell, people just complain that they can't bring the food to their mouths. In heaven, people feed each other. The man decides he will go to hell, and teach the people how to feed each other.

"The Difference Between Heaven and Hell," on page 80 in Elisa Davy Pearmain, *Doorways to the Soul* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1998). 138pp. \$9.95pa. ISBN 0-8298-1286-5pa.

"A Vision of Heaven and Hell," on page 82 in Todd Outcalt, *Candles in the Dark: A Treasury of the World's Most Inspiring Parables*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2002. 237pp. \$15.95pa. ISBN 0-471-43594-5pa.

"A Banquet in Heaven," on page 61 in Corinne Stavish, ed. *Seeds from Our Past: Planting for the Future* (Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith Center for Jewish Identity, 1997). 96pp. \$10pa. ISBN 0-910250-31-6pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

### Wind and Sun (Aesop)

Keyword: wind, sun, man, stewardship, convincing someone

Summary: One day Wind and Sun were talking about who was more powerful. "Let's have a contest," said Wind. "Do you see that man down there. Let's see who can get him to take off his coat." Sun agreed. Wind went first, blowing and blowing, but the more he blustered, the tighter the man held on to his coat. Then Sun shown down and smiled his warmest smile. The man started to sweat and happily took off his coat.

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### Just a Little More (Portugal)

Keywords: shepherd, king, run, greed

Summary: One day, a shepherd gave a meal to a traveler and in return, the traveler tried to pay with a coin. When the shepherd refused, the traveler pulled back his hood to show that he was the king. In payment for his generosity, the king offered to give the shepherd all the land he could run around in a single day. The man raced off, eager to get as much land as possible, he didn't bother to rest or drink when he was thirsty and collapsed and died before finishing the circuit.

Goggin, Greg. *Tales of the Old Country*. (Berkeley, CA: Creative Arts Book Co., 1985).

MacDonald, Margaret Read. *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About* (North Haven, CT: Linnet Books, 1999). 162pp. \$26.50; \$17.50pa. ISBN 0-208-02416-6; 0-208-02426-3pa.

### The Trapped Fist (Aesop)

Keywords: greed, boy, hazel nuts

Summary: One day a boy reached into a jar of hazel nuts and figs and grabbed a big handful. But when he tried to pull his hand out, the fist was too big to come out of the jar. Unwilling to let go of the treat, he burst into tears over the problem. His father came to him, smiled and suggested, "If you grab only half now and half later, you're bound to succeed."

Handford, S. A. *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Puffin, 1994). 212pp. ISBN 0-14-130929-6.

Zipes, Jack ed., *Aesop's Fables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1992). 288pp. ISBN 0-451-52565-5pa.

### Planting a Forest (Turkey)

Keywords: planting, Nasreddin Hodja, tree, trees

Summary: One day neighbors saw the wise fool Nasreddin Hodja planting tree seedlings in a field near his house. They laughed saying, "Why bother, you will be dead before these trees bear fruit?" Nasreddin looked at them and smiled. "That may be true, but I have eaten fruit planted by others, and now it is time for me to do the planting. Did it ever occur to you that I might be planting for the next generation?" Then he bent over and continued his work.

Gross, Michael. *The Fable of the Fig Tree*. (New York, NY: Henry Z. Walck, 1975).

MacDonald, Margaret Read. *Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About* (North Haven, CT: Linnet Books, 1999). 162pp. \$26.50; \$17.50pa. ISBN 0-208-02416-6; 0-208-02426-3pa.

### Moving a Mountain (China)

Keywords: persistence, stewardship, mountain, hope, farmer, scholar

Summary: Once, a scholar was walking through the countryside when he met a farmer and his family who were digging into a mountain. When asked what they were doing, the old farmer said he was moving a mountain, since it block is way to town. The scholar laughed and said it was impossible, but the farmer said, "It's a long-term project. We just have to keep at it." That night, a messenger from the Jade Emperor in heaven heard of the project and told the Emperor. The Emperor decided to help the farmer and moved the mountain for him. Both the farmer and the scholar were surprised the next day when they awoke to see a flat field between the farmers house and the town.

"Old Man Stupidity," on page 26 in Cheou-Kang Sie, *A Butterfly's Dream & Other Chinese Tales* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1970). 91pp. ISBN 0-8048-0077-4.

"The Old Man Who Moved Mountains," on page 129 in Margaret Read MacDonald, *Three Minute Tales: Stories from Around the World to Tell or Read When Time Is Short* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 2004). 160pp. \$24.95; \$17.95pa. ISBN 0-87483-728-6; 0-87483-729-4pa.

Find another version in Kevin Strauss, *Tales with Tails: storytelling the wonders of the natural world*. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006). 230pp. \$35.00pa. ISBN 1-59158-269-5pa.

(80 stories)

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