

# POWER ANIMALS – Their Messages for Us

In my last talk on Shamanism, we learnt that many people have reported learning from the animals by making contact with the animal's '*Spirit*,' (its life-force) and that these animal '*Spirits*' have responded back—by delivering messages that the individual needed to hear and then heed. In this last talk, we noted that the word '*Silent*' is an anagram for '*Listen*.' By remaining *Silent*, we *Listen* and *Hear*. Thus '*Silence*' is the key to understanding and relating to the 'Power Animal.' As the Indian author of British descent, Ruskin Bond (b.1934) so beautifully put it: "To live in harmony with nature we must become good listeners."<sup>1</sup>

Today, we shall talk about how the concept of '*Power Animals*' can assist us to heal the earth— of which '*Power Animals*' are naturally a part of—and to heal ourselves.

The term, *Power Animal*, is defined as:

An internal helper, companion and guide, in the form of a natural or magical animal, which possesses qualities you need in this world...Your power animal helps you access higher wisdom, either your own or that of a higher power<sup>2</sup>

I think that what is meant here is that by tapping into the world around us, both the *Seen* and the *Unseen*, qualities that are most likely dormant within us, are brought forth to our conscious self and this by our 'Power Animal.' The Animal may be, to my thinking, also external to self.

Others use the term '*Spirit Animal*' or '*Totem Animal*' or, as one Druid Priestess styles them, '*Animal Allies*.'<sup>3</sup> This can become a bit confusing as we may be thinking, for example, of the animal '*Spirits*' that are believed to inhabit the *Beyond* world of the Spiritualists. Of course, I do not mean to discount this concept but mainly we are looking at animals as they teach us or come to us via other channels – Dreams, Tarot, Stories, Meditation and Visualization, etc.

As each of the 'Power Animals' has their own unique attributes we are able to tap into these attributes as we open up our hearts and minds to a particular '*Power Animal*.' This allows us to experience many ways of dealing with a multitude of issues that may be occurring in our lives. Some methods, apart from visualization techniques, can be taking note of our dreams and employing a divination technique, such as the Tarot or Oracle Cards.

One thing that I notice is that a lot of books refer to '*a Power Animal*' singular as opposed '*Power Animals*' plural. Giving this some thought, it is my own belief that we are able to tap into a multitude of these '*Power Animals*,' and not just one. Another point worth noting is that the animal is called, for example, Dog (singular) for Dog contains the essence of all dogs, not just the one visiting you.<sup>4</sup>

Power Animals are not only animals as we know them, but can also be what we would term mythological animals such as Garuda, Griffin, Unicorn or Dragon. Two excellent books for learning more about these types of animals are A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art (1875)<sup>5</sup> and Fictitious and Symbolic Creature in Art. (1906)<sup>6</sup>

In today's world, it is unfortunately true to say that most people seem to live very much in the '*Here and Now*,' but pay hardly any attention to the world around them; the world of nature and of animals—I include here the birds, insects, fish etc. We should not forget that there is also the hidden life found within rocks, water, rivers, trees, trees, plants and so forth, that we have lost touch with. Indeed, one of the main methods for contacting these animals or entities, it to visualize ourselves entering deep into the otherworld via trees such as the Oak or even through caves.

John Vinycomb writes in his book, Fictitious and Symbolic Creature in Art:

In all ages man has sought to explain by myths certain phenomena of nature which he has been unable to account for in a more rational manner. *Earthquakes* were the awakening of the earth tortoise which carried the world on its back; *the tides* were the pulses of the ocean; *lightning* was the breath of demons...

In the old Norse legends we read of *waterspouts* being looked upon as sea serpents, and wonderful stories are related of their power and influence. The Chinese imagine *eclipses* to be caused by great dragons which seek to devour the sun.<sup>7</sup>

The point I am trying to make is that centuries ago, we humans paid respect to animals by relating the things of Nature back to them. Today we have explanations that do away with such veneration and such has destroyed a lot of the ‘Wow!’ factor; done away with ‘Awe!’

As such, one of the issues that I see contributing to our problems, both as individuals and communities, is that we now talk about ‘*Nature*’ in environmental terms, and as something now distinct from us as ‘*the human species*’ and distinct from ‘*Animals*’ to some degree. If we see ourselves as separate from nature then we are able to abuse nature for our own ends; if distinct from animals, then even more so, for no longer are animals dependent on nature.

A good example here would be the current fad to either do away with the traditional back and/or front yard or replace natural grass with man-made Astroturf (or such like). Then we don’t have to water our lawn, no insects live in it—possibly an insect or two live on it—and therefore there is no food; no attraction for birds to visit. How do we honestly expect to relate to Mother Nature; be Her Children, if we make ourselves so distant from Her? If, however, we see humans as are a part of ‘*Nature*,’ as too animals, then I believe we are more likely to want to protect nature for all its varied life-forms, for every living thing is dependent on each and every other life-form.

In an article that appeared in Newsweek magazine, entitled, *The Ravaged Environment*, we find the following description of what we, as humans, have done to the planet that we live on:

It seems the curse of modern man continually to confront new possibilities of self-destruction. He emerged from World War II armed with nuclear weaponry that soon gave him power to obliterate all human life. His population has since grown at a rate that could threaten disaster on a global scale. And now he has come face to face with a new man-made peril, the poisoning of his natural environment with noxious doses of chemicals, garbage, fumes, sewage, heat, ugliness and urban overcrowding.

Nearly unnoticed, the scourge of pollution has already spread so far that a few scientists say only a drastic cure can prevent devastation as thorough as that of nuclear holocaust. Even to less doleful prophets, the danger seems sufficient to warrant a sudden boom in the science of ecology, which examines the precarious relationships between living things and their surroundings<sup>8</sup>

A pretty grim picture is outlined in this *Newsweek* article. This article appeared back in January 1970, yet it could have been written only yesterday, proving that things are still the same—or so it would seem—in 2017.

It is also interesting to note that this article was written in the same year that ‘*Earth Day*’ was officially inaugurated on April 22, 1970, as founded by U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson.

Commenting on Earth Day, an Indian woman journalist, Sushmita Dutta, explains how:

The Sun with its family of eight planets – now that the distant ice-covered Pluto is no more a ‘planet’—make our galaxy, the Milky Way; but of all the planets the Earth turned out to be the luckiest. This is because it is the only planet where life became possible, at least far as our knowledge goes. Life in its most beautiful forms developed here, be it humans, animals, plants or marine life. The one thing that made Earth unique was the presence of a superb form of intelligent life called the human race. But somewhere on the way the human race lost its humanity, forgot to acknowledge the planet that gave it life; and used its resources ruthlessly. The world now marks the Earth Day to make the human race realise the importance of the Mother Earth<sup>9</sup>

So you may be wondering how is it that Power Animals may assist us here? It is my belief that they can help us if we listen to their messages and reconnect with them and, by extension, return to being a part of the truly Natural World. Many messages have been recorded that attest to the Truth that these ‘*Power Animals*’ are attempting to teach us just this. And not all of these animals are necessarily appealing to all folk.

For example, A mosquito informs us that:

Human beings often hate what they do not understand. If you do not understand it, and it annoys you, you attempt to control or destroy it. Your solution to problems often revolve around killing, be it plants, insects, animals or humans. We (the mosquitoes) do not feel this is what love is all about. Our message (to you humans) is to see things from a different point of view. Each one of us—no matter how small or large—has a part to play in the scheme of things. Begin to trust that there is more in the world than you can understand in a lifetime.<sup>10</sup>

This reminds me of the saying, '*It to moves, shoot it; if it doesn't, chop it down.*'

In the Qu'ran we learn that: "Allah is not ashamed to make an example of a mosquito or of an even smaller thing. As for those who believe, they know it is the truth from their Lord. But as for those who disbelieve, they say, 'What does Allah mean by this example?' He misguides many by it and guides many by it. But He only misguides the deviators. (2:26)

So the humble mosquito can teach us much about life.

And can flies too, have something to teach? It has proved extremely difficult for these creatures for generally they are viewed as ugly, dirty and the spreaders of disease. Though

"...the benefits which man derives from flies far outweigh their nuisance value and the damage they may do to crops. There are a great many species of flies that are active pollinators of plants. The parasitic flies are continually controlling the numbers of destructive insect pests. Many of the aquatic flies form the major item of food for fish, particularly stream-inhabiting fish such as trout and young salmon. Although we do not like to see a dead animal seething with countless thousands of white maggots, nevertheless, in this regard, the flies are performing a useful function in reducing such dead organic matter to a form which can eventually be utilized by plants. From a purely aesthetic point of view, if man destroyed all flies then many of the birds that brighten the countryside with their cheerful songs and brilliant colours would also vanish.<sup>11</sup>

By the way, it has been calculated that a single pair of flies are potentially capable of producing 191, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000 (191 quintillion) offspring in just six months. If they all survived, the earth would be covered to a depth of 47 feet. However, they are kept in check by natural laws as opposed to man-made chemicals.<sup>12</sup>

Ergo, a dead fly is not necessarily better than a fly that lives

There is a beautiful relationship between man and fly, which J. Allen Boone [1882-1965] describes in his 1954 book, Kinship with All Life. In this book he tells of how he developed a relationship with a fly—which he consequently named ‘*Freddie the Fly*.’ When Boone asked the fly why his species annoyed humans, Freddie asks why is it that humans treat flies so bad. Boone writes:

The more I was able to see beyond the physical form of Freddie the Fly, the easier it became to recognize him as a fellow expression of the Mind of the Universe. I could then listen with him as well as to him. And again I realized that all living things are individual instruments through which the Mind of the Universe thinks, speaks and acts. We are all interrelated in a common accord, a common purpose and a common good. We are [all] members of a vast cosmic orchestra, in which each living instrument is essential to the complementary and harmonious playing of the whole<sup>13</sup>

Boone informs us that he would pose a question to Freddie and then give "careful heed to all [the] freshly arriving mental impressions" that he received.

So here we have two insects—the Mosquito and the Fly—which are generally considered as pests who, if we listen to the message that they wish to share, may be able to teach us something as to how our lack of respect affects them and by extension, we humans.

I wish to concentrate on a few ‘*Power Animals*’ so that we do not become lost in a host of different species. We shall look briefly at each of these, if possible, as represented in Dreams, Tarot, and Symbolism. Under each entry I will list some of their Healing qualities. But first, in attempting to connect with ‘*Power Animals*,’ we may need to think over some questions which have been posed by Madonna Gauding, in her 2006 book, Personal Power Animals.

These questions have been developed so that we can understand why some animals may appeal to us; yet other animals may repulse. I shall give you my own responses to these questions in the hopes that it may generate your own personal responses.

**Q. Remember the last time that you visited a zoo, a safari park [or a sanctuary]. Which animals did you really want to see? Which animals held the most fascination for you and why?**

I can recall two separate occasions. One was when I visited London Zoo. The main reason for my going there was to see the alligators—alas, I did see them but they were more contented to lie perfectly still, floating in the water with the snouts peeking above the water. They took no notice of me which was terribly rude on their part, I have to say. However, I came across a tank containing a Paddlefish, from the Mississippi River. This fish has a long snout that gives rise to its name.

As I was standing there, looking at it through the glass, it swam tight up to me—as if extending a ‘Welcome’ to a friend. When I moved, it followed me. As I leant down and it came to the bottom of its tank; when I stood up, it swam back up to me and stared into my face. The whole experience was truly wonderful and this fish has become just another proof that animals wish to commune with us.

A similar occasion took place at Healesville Sanctuary that I visited in the hopes of seeing a koala—the koalas were hiding that day but I was rewarded by a Tasmanian Devil rushing out of his den, as if to say, ‘Here I am, folks, glad to make your acquaintance.’ A friend from America was with me and for her, it was magical for the Devil is the one animal that she was hoping to see.

**Q. Which animals intrigued you as a child? Did you have a special interest in the bear, the rabbit, the horse or the hippopotamus? Which animals fired your imagination?**

I do remember liking the bear but this was mainly due to Fred Bear and Humphrey Bear, which is interesting for the bear is recognized as a protector of children. The rabbit was fascinating given its association with Easter and the chocolate eggs that I consumed as a child. My only contact with the hippopotamus is that it was the first word that I learnt to break down into syllables.

The one that first fired my imagination was the Crocodile—and it still fires my imagination. Their look, their independence and their overall personality are, at least to me, outstanding. The female is a good and worthy example of the love and care of a mother for her children.

**Q. List any other animals that elicit an emotional excitement when you think about them or see them [on TV, in books, zoos etc]. Why is this?**

**The Giraffe**—due to its graceful movements, its height and its long eyebrows. They seem to be most gentle unless attacked.

**The Rhinoceros**—due to its power and because of its exploitation for its Horn. A sad fate seems to be their lot in life.

**The Cassowary**—again, due to its power and its contribution to keep other species alive, be they other animals, birds or plants.

**The Cockroach**—Its ability to scuttle about in the dark.

**The Camel**—its ability to be most independent, some would say, obnoxious. These animals can be friendly and protective.

**Q. Now list any animals the very thought of which makes you recoil and evokes revulsion. This animal may make your skin crawl. What is it about them which provoke this repulsion in you?**

My first choice would have to be *the maggot*. As these seem to be in plentiful supply when located, they literally do repulse me and make more skin crawl. I think it is the way that they squirm that repulses me and their colour. My second choice is the *Huntsman Spider* as they rush about and have no need for a web. Thirdly is the *millipede* with all those legs and the way they move quickly.

**Q. Which animals frighten you and why? Did you have a traumatic experience with the animal in the past?**

When I was about 13 years old, a Huntsman Spider, which I had mistaken for a frog, jumped on to me and ever since, I cannot abide being around them.

As you may appreciate, by taking time to reflect on and then answer these questions, you will be in a better position to gain deeper insights into your loves and hates for the animals around you.

Now let move on to a few '*Power Animals*' to see what they may be trying to teach us. There are a lot of books out there which give the author's own interpretation. Therefore, the following comments are designed to generate ideas and, as such, should not necessarily be taken as the '*end all, be all.*' Remember, this is Your Personal Journey.

### **Dog / Coyote**

In dreams, Dog appears to represent loyalty, service, protection, compassion and companionship. In his book, Dream Sight, Dr. Michael Lennox, records the following dream:

A man had a dream in which a puppy is one of the dream characters. When asked to make an association for puppy, he told a story about when he was a boy and he had kept a puppy under the porch for three days before his mother found out and made him give it away. Since dogs represent loyalty and enthusiastic affection in the Universal Landscape of Dog, the dream clearly involved these qualities in the dreamer's life. By adding the personal association of a sad moment when he had to give up love and affection, which the puppy provided, the man was able to dramatically access more potent material with which to work. In this way, he could apply what he discovered to the circumstances in his current life situation.<sup>14</sup>

Here we can see that the Power Animal could be the '*puppy*' attempting to stir the first feelings of love and affection that the Dreamer may have '*suppressed*' over the years. This could cause this man to be distant from family and friends, not able to share emotions, a lack of trust – '*nothing is permanent.*'

But what if one dreams of a '*dog or puppy*' when, in the waking state, there is fear attached to this animal? Maybe, and I am just throwing the idea out there for others to think upon, maybe such a canine visitation might be a warning of something bad, thus Dog may '*bar the way*' to something that might otherwise be more frightful or, at this period of the Dreamer's life, the person may not be emotionally or mentally able to confront as an underlying issue at this time. As such, the so-called negative dream-character of Dog might still be viewed benevolent even though the Dreamer may not at first feel it to be so. The dream of a black dog or to see the likeness of a dog in the fire are both signs that a friend is near, say the gipsies.<sup>15</sup>

In the Tarot, the first card of the Major Arcana is *The Fool*. He is often pictured with a small dog at his heels. In the *Rider Waite* deck, we see the Fool or Joker looking away from the dog who appears to be desirous of warning the Fool of some calamity ahead. In Jung and The Tarot, we read that:

The Fool is in such close contact with his intellectual side that he does not need to look where he is going in the literal sense; his animal nature guides his steps.<sup>16</sup>

In The Ultimate Guide to the Rider Waite Tarot, we are told that the dog is:

An alert watchdog. Either The Fool himself is awake and aware in the intensity of the moment, or the dog calls a warning and shows what the human next to him has missed.<sup>17</sup>

In another set of Divination Cards, Animals Divine, the author, Lisa Hunt, explains that her:

Goal [is] to help inspire [us] to look at animals in a different light by gazing upon the art and seeing myriad ways these animals can be portrayed, rendered, and celebrated. In doing so, perhaps this will enable [us] to see [ourselves] in new and refreshing ways<sup>18</sup>

Her card corresponding to *The Fool* shows a coyote on a rocky path with six birds flying above him. I will share now her explanation of the various symbols found within the card as it may help us to better appreciate the use of such divinatory tools as a means of tapping into the world of our 'Power Animal' friends.

The coyote's journey takes him on a rocky path covered with entwined roots. *The roots* represent the obstacles that the unwary traveler will most likely encounter. *The rocks* contrast the roots with their stabilizing properties—but one must be careful not to trip on these earthly protrusions. *The six birds* flying overhead represent changes and protrusions. *The raven* in the foreground is beckoning the coyote to continue. The coyote must pass *the bones*, symbolic of stagnation, in order to explore new opportunities of self-awareness. *The dead trees* are reminders that all things must pass and new paths should be made in order to promote new growth.

*The spirals on the rocks* are reminders that life is a continual journey to be explored. *The dragonfly* represents our goals and dreams and the penetration of veils of deception. *The necklace of feathers* and beads represents flight and the continuous pursuit of truth. *The subtle winding snake* is ever changing and merging with the tree roots, a reminder that we have to activate all of our senses while travelling on the path.<sup>19</sup>

By focussing deeper on the various symbols, these will "*activate all of our senses*" so that we can make contact with the Power Animals—be they Dog or Coyote—and thus receive guidance on how we may need to change our situation to live in the world in a more happy, healthy and spiritually-uplifting manner.

Turning to mythology, we find many tales depicting dogs. For instance, dogs served many underworld gods such as Yama [*the God of the Dead*] in India who had two dogs, Shyama and Shabala. The Indian Vedic thunder-god, Indra, is often shown with a dog called Sarama, as his supreme companion.

In the Mahabharata, dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., we find the story about Yudhisthira and his '*adopted*' dog, both of which finally stood at Indra's chariot. Note the transformation of this Dog.

Indra loomed over Yudhisthira—a noble and skilled man—and his trusty companion, an ugly dog that had joined him one day as he trekked up the Himalayas.

The story goes that Yudhisthira and his brothers had been searching for Indra's chariot on the mountain to take them the final way to the gates of heaven. Yudhisthira and his brothers had heard that finding this place, this paradise, would bring them peace. They were brave men and many believed they could make the journey through the treacherous mountains but in the end it was Yudhisthira alone, with his trusted dog, which had made it

Yudhisthira was resting under a tree at the time of the dog's appearance, Yudhisthira being alone and tired. He had lost his brothers, one by one, on the journey—one by one they died—from starvation, the bone-chillingly cold nights and the brutality of the heat during the day. It was when his last brother perished that the dog appeared to him and never left.

Together he and the dog had passed over jagged rocks that cut them, hot sand that burned, painful thorns from unwelcoming bushes, and deep mud that threatened to suck them in and not let them go.

When they found food—sometimes Yudhisthira finding it, sometimes the dog—they always shared it. When neither found food, they starved together. And as sometimes only loneliness can bring to two creatures, it brought Yudhisthira and his dog love. He trusted the dog with his life and the dog repaid him with devotion.

They finally made it to the place they were searching. His dog was looking up at him and he patted his head, and Indra's voice bellowed out to him, "Oh, you finally arrived! I have been waiting for you so long! It's a pleasure to have you here in my chariot, let's fly to heaven."

Yudhisthira and his dog took a few steps toward the chariot when Indra raised a hand, "But... the dog can't come, look at it, it's old and thin. It's not worthy of my heaven." The dog stopped and Yudhisthira looked down at him. The dog laid down at Yudhisthira's side, resting its head on its cracked paws. Yudhisthira looked back up at Indra, "I'm sorry, if the dog can't come with me, we will turn around and go back whence we came. I thank you for your invitation, but I cannot leave this animal. He has been my faithful companion during this journey." Yudhisthira headed back down the mountain, down the long hard path he and the dog had just left.

"Stop," Indra cried out.

Yudhisthira turned and discovered not his dog on the ground where it had been, but the dog transformed back into its real shape: the God Dharma, Yes. 'Dharma'. Righteousness, Truth, Goodness and Duty.'

"Now you can come, this was your final test and you showed that you deserve to come with me." Indra opened the doors to the chariot and Yudhisthira stepped in. Indra closed the door and off they went.

***The lesson.*** We should always treat everyone and every animal with respect, for we don't know which form God will take when he comes. Or in the words of Bhagavan Ramana<sup>20</sup>: "We do not know what souls may be tenanted in these bodies and for finishing what part of the unfinished karma that they may seek our company."

The Celts had their Cù, [Coo] or Dog, who is perceived as being protective, loyal and an able guide. Celtic ambassadors were accompanied by dogs which acted as bodyguards and chiefs and warriors had their names prefixed by Cù—for example, Cù-Chulainn.<sup>21</sup> When a mere lad, he was known as Setanta. But he killed a ferocious hound of a King and, to make amends, he decided to guard the King's castle. This King was called Chulainn, and in honour of the boy, Setanta's name was changed Cu-Chualinn, meaning the '*Hound of Chullain*.'<sup>22</sup>

In the Druid Animal Oracle, we are told that "The time may come when you need to act with the spirit of Cù—to defend your values and to protect that which you hold sacred."<sup>23</sup>

As a healer, Dog heals the heart, can detect cancer and heart disease. See the excellent article, '*Using Dogs as Healers*.'<sup>24</sup>

## **Bear**

In an article by David Legg found on the website of the *Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids* (UK) we read that:

The bear has been worshipped, probably as a brother, for many thousands of years. In this it can probably be said to be the oldest human-animal relationship. It can be seen why the bear is regarded as a Brother—they can walk on two legs, are omnivorous and like the same food as humans—honey, salmon, fruit, nuts and meat.

Worshipping a bear may have been a religion among the ancient hunter tribes in Eurasia and even of Neanderthal man. Drawings of bear worship have been found in caves in Southern Europe dating back tens of thousands of years.<sup>25</sup>

As a dream symbol, Bear represents soul, introspection, inner vision, strength and transformation.<sup>26</sup> Whilst others see Bear of not only introspection, but depression,<sup>27</sup> or, to kill Bear in a dream means freedom from present troubles.<sup>28</sup>

There was a belief of old that bear cubs were born without form, so the mother licked them into shape, creating order out of chaos. As such, bears were seen as a symbol of creation.<sup>29</sup>

In the Animals Divine Deck, Bear is allocated to the *Nine of Pentacles* of the Tarot. Here we are told that: "The bear is a powerful symbol of the cycle of life, motherhood and protection. The bear helps us to harness internal energy as a means of connecting with the external powers of the physical world" and "the pentacles represent illuminating power."<sup>30</sup>

Bear as a '*Power Animal*' symbol can be perceived as one who can help bring balance to those experiencing internal unrest with their external world as they learn to integrate the two components together.

In the Pocket Guide to Spirit Animals,<sup>31</sup> Bear could be telling you to:

- Set clear boundaries and don't compromise, even if presumed.
- Ask what you want whether or not you'll get it.
- Get going on that creative project you have in mind.
- Take some time out from your usual routines and spend time in solitude.
- You may be in need of physical or emotional healing.
- Be gentle, and show your love to those you're close to.
- To find answers to your questions, go inside rather than reading or consulting others.

The Guide is designed to carry with you in your knapsack or bag and when you come across a particular animal, (in this instance, a bear), you open the Guide to the appropriate page and then Bear will speak to you whatever message you are in need of.

In mythology, there are numerous references to the Bear. Go to the website of the UK-based 'Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids' to learn more about the various myths surrounding Bear.<sup>32</sup>

As healers, bears are associated with promoting balance and harmony. The bear can be seen as promoting 'Herbal Medicine,' as it too seeks out plants for its own healing.

One organization that I know of is Good Bears of the World (GBW), founded in 1969. They have given hundreds of thousands of teddy bears to those in need of love and a hug—The Oklahoma City bombing, the crash of TWA flight 800, events of September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina, Kansas tornados and floods and the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster.

Firemen, policemen, emergency workers, psychologists, and grief counselors have discovered the teddy bear's magical healing power is invaluable when given to children and their families in traumatic situations.<sup>33</sup>

## **Birds**

In Dreams, birds, being plentiful, each particular species has its own meaning. Flying birds denote joy and prosperity and a wounded bird as a symbol of coming sorrows through offspring.<sup>34</sup>

To cite some examples, Raven can be interpreted as a symbol of mysticism, death and rebirth, transformation and awakening. As a bird of prey, it teaches us about death and the natural cycle of life.

Eagle symbolizes a messenger, authority and spiritual power. To kill an eagle in a dream is to be able to overcome all obstacles.

To dream of Dove is to be interpreted as peace, emotional release, innocence and birth. I would add here *faithfulness* as it was Dove who returned to Noah with an olive leaf in its mouth whilst Raven did not return – no doubt feeding on the dead animals that would be floating in the abating water. See Genesis 8:7-11

Owl of course would relate to wisdom, as also to mystery, magic, secrets and is linked to astral projection. For instance, Gypsy-lore believes that an Owl hooting closely after dawn, believe that the bird is calling a soul from a human body.<sup>35</sup>

There are many birds mentioned in numerous tarot decks or oracle decks—for example, in the Wild Wood Tarot, the Animals Divine Deck and the Druid Animals Oracle Deck. Each of these decks comes with a book/companion guide which delves further into each bird and its meaning for us. As there are so many, I will just pick the Owl from the last named deck.

The Owl comes out at night with its exceptional hearing allowing it to catch its prey. To walk in the twilight can help one to better appreciate these night birds—if you happen to spot one. Walking by twilight can further aid one to develop their sensibility to the Otherworld. You may find yourself drawn to a study of esoteric lore or clairvoyancy. Working with Owl as your ally can be an excellent means of development to the end.<sup>36</sup>

Birds are great healers—depending on the species. For example, Raven has the power to draw out negative energy. Eagle is employed in healing conditions of the eye and cleansing the aura. Hawk is most useful in healing through internal cleansing and can assist in calming an overactive mind. Dove can be asked to help one overcome past emotional trauma and it does this by its soothing, meditative ‘cooing’ voice and Hummingbird can be utilized to correct blood-sugar levels and promotes metabolism.<sup>37</sup>

## **Snake**

In dreams, Snake represents wisdom, potential, awakening, transmutation, initiation, resurrection and rebirth.<sup>38</sup> This is interesting, given that another author views the snake in dreams "as an evil omen predicting danger through enemies, deceit and general misfortune. If you kill the snakes, you will overcome all obstacles."<sup>39</sup>

I would say that the Serpent in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3) is a apt symbol for the wisdom, potential awakening and initiation of this animal as a Dream Symbol. For the Mosaic account tells us that it was by the Serpent speaking to Eve and enticing her to eat of the Forbidden Fruit, that did indeed create new awareness and initiation into knowing both good and evil.

In the Wild Wood Tarot, the King of Bows (Wands) depicts a group of intertwining adders. They represent magical power, balance and the healing arts.<sup>40</sup>

In the Rider card, *Wheel of Fortune*, Snake also represents the life force descending into the material world.<sup>41</sup> However, another explanation is given: "During the late period in Ancient Egypt, the god Seth came to be seen as the personification of evil and destruction. His Greek name is Typhon. Here he is indicative of the negative or downward principle."<sup>42</sup>

In the Concise Encyclopaedia of Hinduism, we are told that:

Snake worship seems to be a very ancient custom. Images of snake-couples have been unearthed in the Indus Valley Civilization. Worship of snakes is said to have existed in ancient Greece, Egypt and Assyria...Snakes are worshipped for obtaining wealth and children, for long-life and for protection from snake-bite.

Killing of snake, that too of cobras, is considered as heinous and sinful. Dead snakes are cremated with religious honours.<sup>43</sup>

A few books about Serpent worship are Tree and Serpent Worship by J. Fergusson (1874); The Sun and the Serpent by Oldham (1905); Serpent Worship by C. S. Wake (1888) and The Evolution of the Dragon (1919). These texts should be available as free downloads in PDF via <https://archive.org>

Raymond Buckland relates how a corn snake that he and his wife had, was an excellent healer and would move to the part of their body that required healing.<sup>44</sup> As a healer, snakes can help with clearing the chakras—or Kundalini, the ‘*Serpent fire*.’

### **The Water Dragon**

This creature was known as the Stoor Worm and lived off the coast of northern Scotland. He brings to light the hidden things that reside in us—our dreams, memories and fears, that lay buried in the Unconscious.

Though fears may arise, by confronting them, we will have peace of soul and a greater sense of our connectedness with all of Life around us. Dragons originated from the Worm, hence the Water Dragon being called the Stoor Worm.<sup>45</sup>

In folklore, the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands, and the Faroe Islands came about when the Stoorworm was dying under the hand of Ashipattle, who killed the beast by setting its heart on fire. As the Stoor Worm was thrashing about in its death throes, the teeth that fell from its mouth are what gave rise to these islands. Then the Stoorworm curled up and lay still, for it was dead, and its great coils became the place called Iceland.

As we begin to pay attention to our dreams, use the Tarot or Oracle Decks for visual and inner inspiration, employ the various Visualization techniques available, and read the myths, fables and folktales depicting animals (or other creatures for that matter), then I believe that we all can eventually make contact with the ‘Power Animals.’

I can only trust that the insights gained in the talk today, may whet your appetite for learning more about 'Power Animals' and a greater appreciation as to why we should attempt to harness this alternative way to heal ourselves and, by extension Mother Nature and Her Children, the myriad life-forms that abound on our little piece of real estate, which we call Earth.

Thank you kindly for your time and attention.

Heathclyff St James-Deville

Delivered Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2017

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