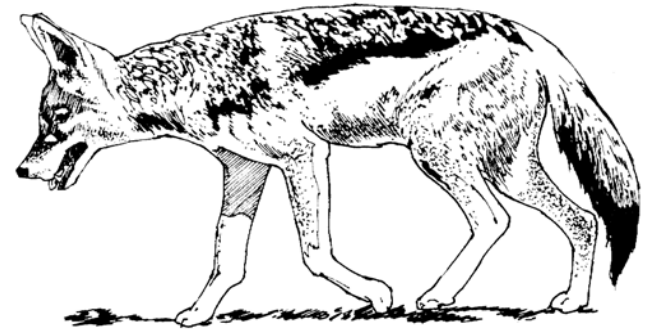
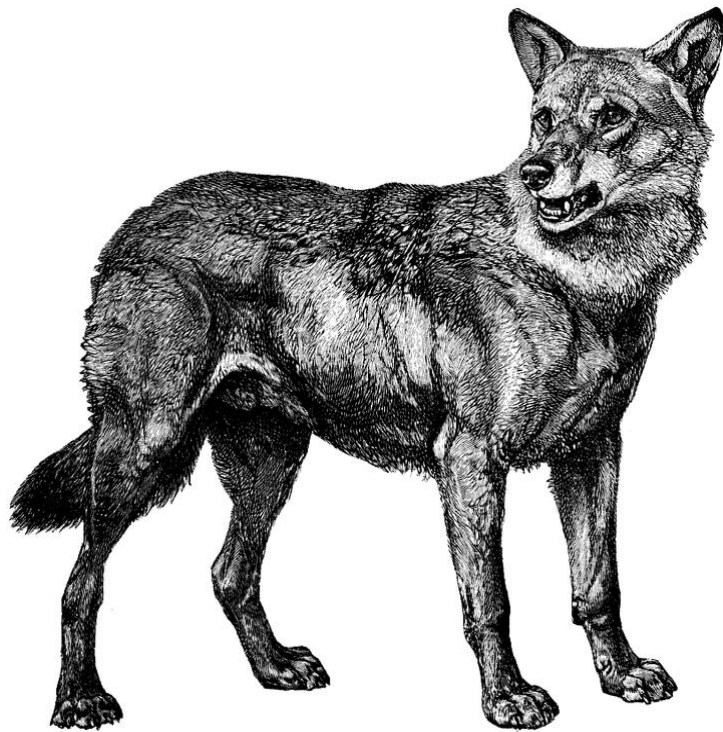


food to eat and I would not take it. Now I am very hungry."

Then he went out in search of food.

Coyote Indian Tales

Southwest Indian Tales about the Coyote



by Katharine Berry Judson

A LearningIsland.org
Tales of Old Book

Editor: Caitlind L. Alexander

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Arizona Indian Tales/Katherine Berry Judson

Summary: A brief look at several myths and legends of the Indians of Arizona.

1. Myths. Juvenile Literature. 2. Legends. Juvenile Literature. 3. Hopi Indians. Juvenile Literature. 4. Navajo Indians. Juvenile Literature. 5. Walpi Indians. Juvenile Literature

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The snake took some corn pollen, but he pretended to be afraid of Coyote and stood off some distance. Coyote said, "Come nearer and place it on top my head."

Snake replied, "I am afraid of you."

Coyote said, "Come nearer. I am not bad."

Then the snake came closer and put the pollen on top of Coyote's head.

But Coyote did not have the long tongue of the snake and he could not get the pollen off the top of his head. He put out his tongue first on one side of his nose and then on the other, but he could only reach to the side of his nose. His efforts made the snake laugh. The snake put his hand over his mouth so Coyote should not see him laugh. Really, the snake hid his head in his body.

At last Coyote went home. As he left the snake's house, he held his tail in his hand and shook the rattle.

Snake cried, "Oh, friend! I am so afraid of you!" But really the snake shook with laughter.

When Coyote reached his home he said to himself, "I was such a fool. Rattlesnake had much

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snake might do. So he made a small rattle by placing tiny pebbles in a gourd and fastened it to the end of his tail. He shook it a while and was much pleased with it.

The next morning he started for the snake's house. He shook the rattle on the end of his tail and smiled, and said to himself,

"This is good. When I go into Rattlesnake's house, he will be very much afraid of me."

Coyote did not walk into Snake's house, but moved like a snake. But Coyote could not shake his rattle as the snake shook his. He had to hold it in his hand. But when he shook his rattle, the snake seemed much afraid, and said, "Friend, I am afraid of you."

Now Rattlesnake had a stew of rats on the fire, and he placed some before Coyote. But Coyote said,

"I do not understand your food. I cannot eat it because I do not understand it."

Rattlesnake insisted upon his eating, but Coyote refused. He said, "If you put some of the flower of the corn on my head, I will eat. I understand that food."

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Coyote and the Tortillas

From the Pima of Arizona

Once upon a time, a river rose very high and spread all over the land. An Indian woman was going along the trail by the river side with a basket of tortillas on her head, but she was wading in water up to her waist. Now Coyote was afraid of the water, so he had climbed into a cottonwood tree. When the woman came up the trail, Coyote called,

"Oh, come to this tree and give me some of those nice tortillas."

The woman said, "No. I can't give them to you; they are for somebody else."

"If you do not come here I will shoot you," said Coyote, and the woman really thought he had a

frightened. The movements of the snake and the rattle frightened him. Coyote had a pot of rabbit meat on the fire, which he placed in front of the snake, saying, "Friend, eat."

"I will not eat your meat. I do not understand your food," said Rattlesnake.

"What food do you eat?"

"I eat the yellow flowers of the corn."

Coyote at once began to search for the yellow corn flowers. When he found some, Rattlesnake said, "Put some on top of my head so that I may eat it."

Coyote stood as far off as he could and placed the pollen on the snake's head.

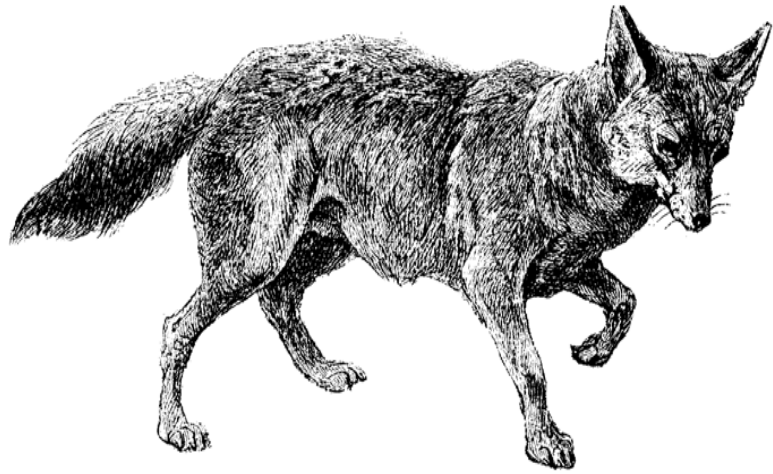
The snake said, "Come nearer and put enough on my head so that I may find it."

Coyote was very much afraid, but after a while he came nearer and did as he was told.

Then the snake went away, saying, "Friend, tomorrow you come to my house."

"All right," said Coyote. "Tomorrow I will come."

Coyote sat down and thought about the morrow. He thought a good deal about what the



Coyote and the Rattlesnake

From the Sia of New Mexico

Coyote's house was not far from Rattlesnake's home. One morning when they were out walking together, Coyote said to Rattlesnake,

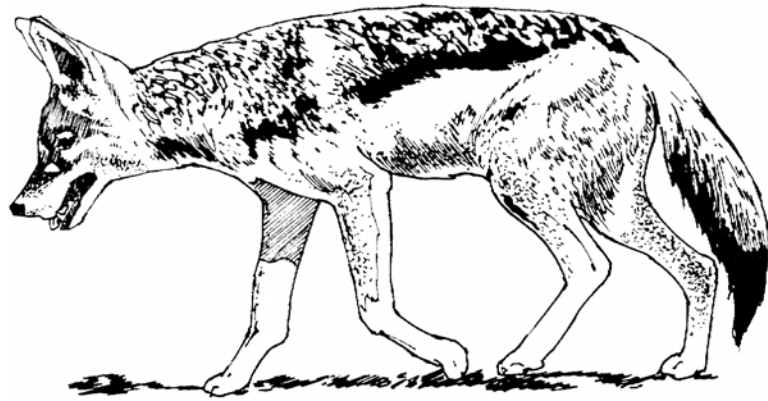
"Tomorrow come to my house."

In the morning Rattlesnake went to Coyote's house. He moved slowly along the floor, shaking his rattle. Coyote sat at one side, very much

bow. So she came to the tree and said, "You must come down and get them. I can't climb trees."

Coyote came down as far as he dared, but he was afraid of the deep water. The woman laughed at him. She said, "Just see how shallow it is. It's only up to my ankles." But she was standing on a big stump. Coyote looked at the water. It seemed shallow and safe enough, so he jumped. But the water was deep and he was drowned. Then the woman went on up the trail.





Coyote as a Hunter

From the Sia of New Mexico

Coyote traveled a long distance and in the middle of the day it was very hot. He sat down and rested, and thought, as he looked up to Tinia, "How I wish the Cloud People would freshen my path and make it cool."

Blue Fly said, "Go to Sun and get some of the fire which he keeps in his house," So Coyote scampered away, but he was sure the people were trying to get rid of him so he kept looking back.

Then Blue Fly made the first fire drill. Taking a stick like an arrow he twirled it in his hands, letting the lower end rest on a flat stick that lay on the ground. Soon smoke began to arise, and then fire came. The people gathered fuel and began their duty.

But Coyote, looking back, saw fire ascending. He turned and ran back as fast as he could go. When the people saw him coming, they formed a ring, but he raced around the circle until he saw two short men standing together. He jumped over them, and seized the heart of Rabbit. But he burned his mouth doing it, and it is black to this day.

"If any one bothers you," he said, "bite him."

That very evening Ta-api, Rabbit, came to Soft Child as he had done before and scratched him. Soft Child raised his head and bit Rabbit. Rabbit was angry and scratched again. Soft Child bit him again. Then Rabbit ran about saying that Soft Child was angry and had bitten him. Then he went to Rattlesnake again, and twice more he was bitten.

The bites made Rabbit very sick. He asked for a bed of cool sea sand. Coyote was sent to the sea for the cool, damp sand. Then Rabbit asked for the shade of bushes that he might feel the cool breeze. But at last Rabbit died. He was the first creature which had died in this new world.

Then the people were troubled because they did not know what to do with the body of Rabbit. One said, "If we bury him, Coyote will surely dig him up."

Another said, "If we hide him, Coyote will surely find him."

And another said, "If we put him in a tree, Coyote will surely climb up."

So they decided to burn the body of Rabbit, and yet there was no fire on earth.

In just a little while the Cloud People gathered over the trail Coyote was following and he was glad that his path was to be cool and shady.

After he traveled some distance further, he sat down again and looking upward said, "I wish the Cloud People would send rain. My road would be cooler and fresher." In a little while a shower came and Coyote was contented.

But in a short time he again sat down and wished that the road could be very moist, that it would be fresh to his feet, and almost immediately the trail was as wet as though a river had passed over it. Again Coyote was contented.

But after a while he took his seat again. He said to himself, "I guess I will talk again to the Cloud People." Then he looked up and said to them,

"I wish for water over my road-water to my elbows, that I may travel on my hands and feet in the cool waters; then I shall be refreshed and happy."

In a short time his road was covered with water, and he moved on. But again he wished for something more, and said to the Cloud People,

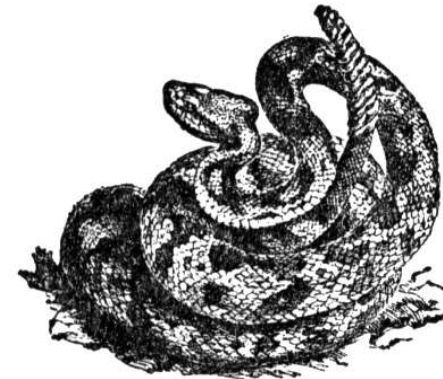
"I wish much for water to my shoulders. Then I will be happy and contented."

In a moment the waters arose as he wished, yet after a while he looked up and said, "If you will only give me water so high that my eyes, nose, mouth and ears are above it, I will be happy. Then indeed my road will be cool."

But even this did not satisfy him, and after traveling a while longer he implored the Cloud People to give him a river that he might float over the trail, and immediately a river appeared and Coyote floated down stream. Now he had been high in the mountains and wished to go to Hare Land.

After floating a long distance, he at last came to Hare Land and saw many Hares a little distance off, on both sides of the river. Coyote lay down in the mud as though he were dead and listened. Soon a woman ka-wate came along with a vase and a gourd for water.

She said, "Here is a dead coyote. Where did he come from? I guess from the mountains above. I guess he fell into the water and died."



How the Rattlesnake Learned to Bite

From the Pima of Arizona

After people and the animals were created, they all lived together. Rattlesnake was there, and was called Soft Child because he was so soft in his motions. The people liked to hear him rattle and little rest did he get because they continually poked and scratched him so that he would shake the rattles in his tail. At last Rattlesnake went to Elder Brother to ask help. Elder Brother pulled a hair from his own lip, cut it in short pieces, and made it into teeth for Soft Child.

than the first. Then a third and a fourth, each tiny, and all he threw away. "I do not care for the smaller ones," he said. "There are so many here, I will not eat the little ones." But he hunted and hunted in the mound of ashes for the hares. All were gone.

He said, "That woman has robbed me." Then he picked up the four little ones and ate them. He looked about for Ka-wate but did not see her because he did not look up. Then as he was tired and lay down to rest, he looked up and saw her, with the cooked hares piled beside her.

Coyote was hungry. He begged her to throw one down. She threw a very small one. Then Coyote became angry. And he was still more angry because he could not climb the rock. She had gone where he could not go.

Coyote looked up and said, "Come here, woman."

She said, "What do you want?"

Coyote said, "I know the Hares and other small animals well. In a little while they will come here and think I am dead and be happy. What do you think about it?"

Ka-wate said, "I have no thoughts at all."

So Coyote explained his plan. . . .

So Coyote lay as dead, and all the Hares and small animals saw him lying in the river, and rejoiced that he was dead. The Hares decided to go in a body and see the dead Coyote.



Rejoicing over his death, they struck him with their hands and kicked him. There were crowds of Hares and they decided to have a great dance. Now and then a dancing Hare would stamp upon Coyote who lay as if dead. During the dance the Hares clapped their hands over their mouth and gave a whoop like a war-whoop.

Then Coyote rose quickly and took two clubs which the ka-wate had given him, and together they killed all of the Hares. There was a great number and they were piled up like stones.

Coyote said, "Where shall I find fire to cook the hares? Ah," he said, pointing across to a high rock, "that rock gives good shade and it is cool. I will find fire and cook my meat in the shade of that rock."

So they carried all the hares to that point and Coyote made a large fire and threw them into it. When he had done this he was very warm and tired. He lay down close to the rock in the shade.

After a while he said to Ka-wate, "We will run a race. The one who wins will have all the hares."

She said, "How could I beat you? Your feet are so much larger than mine."

Coyote said, "I will allow you the start of me." He made a torch of the inner shreds of cedar bark and wrapped it with yucca thread and lighted it. Then he tied this torch to the end of his tail. He did this to see that the ka-wate did not escape him.

Ka-wate started first, but when out of sight of Coyote, she slipped into the house of Badger. Then Coyote started with the fire attached to his tail. Wherever he touched the grass, he set fire to it. But Ka-wate hurried back to the rock, carried all the hares on top except four tiny ones, and then climbed up on the rock.

Coyote was surprised not to overtake her. He said, "She must be very quick. How could she run so fast?" Then he returned to the rock, but did not see her.

He was tired and sat down in the shade of the rock. "Why doesn't she come?" he said. "Perhaps she will not come before night, her feet are so small."

Ka-wate sat on the rock above and heard all he said. She watched him take a stick and look into the mound for the hares. He pulled out a small one which he threw away. But the second was smaller