

Animal Symbolism

Celtic Mythology

"Animals in Celtic and Welsh mythology are tied in with fertility and vitality, because they are living, moving, and growing. They also provide vitality and continued life for the tribes through their meat, skins, and bones. In addition, they are a connection to the realm of spirits and the gods. This connection is seen through their use in the hunt, search for secrets and wisdom." [[Animal Symbolism in Celtic Mythology](#), Lars Noodén, 22 November 1992]

Following are various animals and their symbolic meaning in Celtic and Welsh mythology:

Birds- The transition from life to death

Boars & Sows- The boar is a symbol of masculine power. Because of this, the meat of the boar was served at Otherworld feasts. The sow is associated with some Crone/Mother Goddesses, such as Cerridwen, and with Otherworldly feasts. The pig is the archetypal symbol of plenty, healing, and shapeshifting.

Bull- The bull was a symbol of virility, sovereignty, and wealth. The famous Irish legend, The Cattle Raid of Cooley, surrounds the taking of a famous bull. In Ancient Ireland, a highly ritualized "feast of the bull" called a tabhfheis, always preceded the crowning of a new High King.

Cats- The Celts did not revere cats, though there are many references to them in Celtic mythology. They served the same guardian function as demons/angels in the Judeo-Christian myths. Three mythic references to cats which are prominent are; one, a cat which helps to guard the gates of the Otherworld; two, one who is able to shapeshift into a ball of fire; and three, one called Irusan of Knowth who stole humans like the faery. Cat-like monsters were also believed to dwell in dark caves.

Cranes- Numerous Celtic myths tell us of a heroic figure or deity who was changed into a crane such as Aife, the Lady of the Lake, or Munanna. Archetypally this bird means an apparent, rather than substantive, change A sign of, or punishment for, deception.

Deer- The doe was associated with most woodland Goddesses, such as Saba and Flidais, and is their totem animal. The stag was often seen as the incarnate form of woodland Gods such as Cernunnos. White stags were considered to be from the Otherworld and, in myth, their appearance always heralded some profound change in the lives of those in the story.

Dogs- Many Celtic myths involve dogs or dog familiars, which belonged to heroic figures or deities, and wars were often fought for and over them such as the one between Fionn MacCumhal and King Arthur. Dogs are also the archetypal symbols of shapeshifters.

Dragons- The dragon is a creature of fire and related to the Power of the Land. Another word for Ley Lines is Dragon Lines. Another name for raising power is to invoke the "Eye of the Dragon". The whole Earth was viewed by the Druids as the body of the Dragon. Menhirs and stone Circles were located at great Power nodes. The Celts also called Dragons 'Fire Drakes'.

Eagle- Eagles were the feared scavengers of Europe and were usually linked to death Gods, such as Beli, in the same way as the crow was linked to death Goddesses. In Welsh mythology, Llew was turned into an eagle at the moment of his murder.

Horses- Horses were linked to the night, the moon, mystery, and magick. Nightmares, a name which is derived from that of the female horse, were thought by the Celts to be brought by a visiting horse Goddess such as Epona or Mare. In most Celtic myths the horses are black or white.



Ousel (Ouzel)- This water bird (See image at left) is known for its tenacious and deceptive personality. While it looks harmless enough, it is revered for its ability to staunchly defend itself and its flock. In myth, the Ousel of Cilgwri once picked a smith's hammer down to the size of a small nut.

Raven or Crow- The Crow is deeply linked to Crone Goddesses such as Badb, and to Goddess of war or death like the Morrigan. The Raven is similar to the crow in that it is deeply associated with death deities. The raven has been the Otherworldly body for both Gods and Goddesses. Like the crow, it flew over Celtic battlefields as the deity incarnate.

Salmon- The Salmon is considered a source of Knowledge. The myths of Nudons and Fionn are among the many dealing with this fish. It is said to have acquired its great knowledge from eating the Nine Hazels of Wisdom that fell from the Tree of Knowledge.

Serpent- Represents the cyclic nature of life due to the annual shedding of its skin. It is a phallic symbol, a symbol of the Triple Goddess, and of the earth mysteries. It is important to the Druids, and is found on much old Celtic jewelry.

Taken in part from <http://www.joellessacredgrove.com/Celtic/animals.html>

Animals- Combining all symbolism

The following animals appear in a variety of cultures and represent a variety of things. In one case an animal might symbolize something good, while in another culture might consider it representative of evil. Each animal below is followed by symbols from different cultures and religions.

Alligator - Aggression, survival, adaptability. Cunning, deceptive.

Ant - Group minded, perseverance, self-discipline, group effort, teamwork, industriousness, orderliness, virtue. Strength, stamina, honor.

Antelope - Lunar animal, associated with the Mother. Grace, beauty.

Ape/Monkey - Mischief, mimicry, cunning, benevolence. Humanity, nurture.

Baboon - Hailer of the dawn.

Badger - Supernatural power, mischief, playful. Other world, wisdom, caring.

Bat - Guardian of the night, cleaner, obscurity, messenger, double nature, happiness, good luck, longevity, peace; also - hypocrisy, melancholy, revenge, wisdom.

Bee - Immortality, rebirth, industry, order, purity, soul, chastity, messengers between worlds, secret wisdom, Mother and priestesses. Community.

Birds - The soul, transcendence, spirits of air, ascent, communication, freedom, sight.

Bear - Primal power, mother, cunning, healer, gentle strength, dreaming, sovereignty, intuition married with instinct. Nurturing, protective.

Bear Paw - Power, direction, connection to creator.

Beaver - Builder, gatherer.

Blackbird - Enchantment, the Gateway, the inner call. Guide, illumination.

Boar - The warrior spirit, leadership, direction, lust, gluttony, fertility, prophecy, magic, protection, hospitality.

Buffalo - Sacredness, life builder. The buffalo provides all good things for living, and bestows great curing powers.

Bull - Wealth, potency, beneficence, generative force, male procreative strength, kingship, taming of the masculine and animal nature. Destructive force.

Butterfly - Metamorphosis, carefree, transformer, immortality, rebirth, resurrection. Grace, light, soul.

Cat - Guardianship, detachment, sensuality, stealth, desire, liberty, pleasure, magic, lust, pride, vanity.

Cock - Solar, courage, vigilance, supremacy, passion, pride, the underworld.

Cougar - Leadership, courage, power, swiftness and balance.

Cow - Nourishment, motherhood, power of Earth, plenty, procreation, gentleness, nurturing.

Coyote - Prankster, insight, playful. The coyote symbolizes duality and the ability to present both sides of an issue. Clowning and humor, perhaps sarcastic.

Crane - Solitude, independence, messenger, communion, higher state of consciousness, wisdom, knowledge.

Crocodile - Devourer, liberation, guardian, dual nature, conscious and unconscious, fertility, brutality, viciousness, deceit, treachery.

Crow - Messenger, death, wisdom, communication, the underworld.

Deer - Love, gentleness, kindness, gracefulness, sensitivity, purity of purpose, walking in the light, swift, nimble, meek, gentle, meditation, love, longevity, wealth.

Dog - Guidance, protection, loyalty, fidelity, faithfulness, watchfulness, the Hunt.

Dolphin - Kindness, play, savior, guide, sea power, swift, intelligence, communication, breath control, awareness of tone.

Donkey - Humility, patience, peace, stupidity, stubbornness, lewdness.

Dragon - Power of Earth, combining bird and serpent as matter and spirit, breath of life, supernatural power, magic, strength, wisdom, knowledge, guardian.

Dragonfly - Flighty, carefree, swift, activity, shamanistic, supernatural powers.

Eagle - Divine spirit, air, the sun, power in battle, protection from evil, clear vision, success, prosperity, wealth, intelligence, renewal, courage.

Elephant - Strength, fidelity, memory, patience, wisdom, intelligence, power.

Elk - Strength, agility, freedom, power, nobility.

Fox - Cunning, provider, intelligence, feminine magic, diplomacy, wildness.

Frog - Power of water, sensitivity, medicine, hidden beauty, power.

Goat - Vitality, fertility, creativity, virility, abundance, lust.

Goose - Guardian, watchful, wind, the sun, war, inspiration, swift, happiness, providence.

Grizzly Bear - Mother, nature's pharmacist

Hare - rebirth, rejuvenation, resurrection, intuition, balance, fertility, fire, madness, transformation.

Hawk - Nobility, recollection, cleansing, messenger, observer, Solar, clarity, discrimination, inspiration, the soul.

Heron - Vigilance, quiet, power of water, the underworld, tact, delicacy, renewal, life, transformation.

Horse - Stamina, mobility, strength and power, coping under difficult circumstances, love, devotion, loyalty, the land, travel. Life and death symbol, intellect, wisdom, power, nobility, energy, freedom, wildness, divination, prophecy, fertility.

Hummingbird - Messenger, stopper of time, optimism, sweetness.

Jackal - Guide of souls, associated with cemeteries.

Jaguar - Messenger, forest spirits, power.

Kingfisher - Beauty, dignity, speed, calmness, serenity.

Leopard - Ferocity, aggression, intrepid, Great Watcher, courage, activity, speed.

Lion - Solar, splendor, power, majesty, strength, courage, nobility.

Lizard - Conservation, agility, promotes dreaming.

Moose - Headstrong, unstoppable, longevity, value, integrity.

Octopus - The spiral, water, unconscious.

Otter - Laughter, curiosity, mischievous, feminine power, grace, empathy, joy, play, helpfulness.

Owl - Wisdom, truth, patience, darkness, a death messenger, divination, solitude, detachment, wisdom, change, totem of clairvoyants and mystics.

Python - Darkness, feminine, power of Earth, wisdom.

Rabbit - Alertness, nurturing.

Ram - Sacrifice, breakthrough, achievement, virility, creativity, the Sun, solar power.

Raven - Trickster, teacher, hoarder, healing, initiation, protection, shaman's power, transformation, change in consciousness, mark of a shape shifter.

Salmon - Instinct, persistence, determination, wisdom, inspiration, rejuvenation.

Seahorse - Confidence, grace.

Serpent - Life, rebirth, resurrection, wisdom, passion, healing, poison, preserver, destroyer, malice, fertility.

Shark - Hunter, survival, adaptability.

Snake - Shrewdness, transformation, life, death and rebirth, rain, fertility.

Spider - Creative, pattern of life, connects the past with the future, creating possibilities.

Stag - Pride, independence, purification.

Swan - Grace, balance, innocence, faithfulness, solitude, retreat, poetry, sincerity.

Tiger - Creator, destroyer, strength, ferocity, power, anger, power of Earth.

Turtle - Self contained, creative source, Earth, informed decisions, planning, adaptability.

Unicorn - Chastity, purity, dreams, virtue, strength, integrity, magic, healing, freedom.

Whale - Power of Water, regeneration, death, rebirth.

Wolf - Loyalty, success, perseverance, stability, thought, pathfinder, teacher, intuition, learning, the shadow.

Wolf Print - Tracking, movement.

Woodpecker - Prophecy, magic, power, guardian of trees, Heralds rain and storms.

Wren - Spirit, witchcraft, the Oak King.

Native American Animal Symbolism

The following animal symbols come from a variety of tribal nations and may be different from nation to nation.

Alligator - Stealth, Aggression, survival, adaptability.

Ant - The ant represents self-discipline and a group effort or teamwork, patience, diligence and Work

Antelope - Taking Action

Armadillo - Boundaries, Self Protection

Badger - Aggressiveness, Passion and Drive

Bat - The bat is the guardian of the night, cleaner, Death and Rebirth on Personal, Spiritual Level

Bear - Power, mother cunning, healer, gentle strength, dreaming, Gentle Strength, Introspection and Dreaming

Bear Paw - Power, direction, connection to creator.

Beaver - The beaver is a builder or gatherer, Accomplishing Goals

Buffalo - Abundance, Survival Needs Met, Good Fortune, Healing, Sacredness, life builder. The buffalo provides all good things for living, and bestows great curing powers.

Bumblebee - Honesty, Pure Thinking, Willingness and Drive

Butterfly - Self Transformation, Balance, Grace, Metamorphosis, Carefree, Transformer.

Caribou -Travel and Mobility

Cougar - Leadership, courage, power, swiftness and balance.

Coyote - The Trickster, Humor, Charm, Folly of Self-Deception and Survival, Prankster, insight, playful. The coyote symbolizes duality and the ability to present both sides of an issue. Clowning and humor, perhaps sarcastic.

Crane - Water, End of Summer, Migration, Solitude, independence.

Cricket - Singing, Spring, Fertility

Crow - Sacred Law, Gateway To Supernatural, Shape Shifting, Illusion

Deer - Love, gentleness, kindness, gracefulness and sensitivity. Deer carries the message of purity of purpose, and of walking in the light.

Dog - Protection, Loyalty, Companionship

Dolphin - Joy, Harmony, Connection with self, kindness, play, bridge man to ocean, Intelligence, Self Connection. Dolphin brings us teachings from the water. Breath control and the awareness of tone is also Dolphin power.

Dove - Love, Gentleness and Kindness

Dragonfly - Dreamtime, Illusion, Spring, Water, Flighty, carefree. Dragonflies symbolize whirlwind, swiftness and activity. The dragonfly is an important insect in Zuni legend, where they are shamanistic creatures with supernatural powers. In Hopi rock art, the dragonfly is symbolized by a vertical line with two or sometimes one, horizontal cross line. Skill, Refinement, Relentlessness

Eagle - Spirit Connection to Higher Realms, Courage, Divine spirit, chief of all the creatures in the air, the primary servant of the sun. Powerful in battle, the eagle protects the people from evil. Eagle medicine attributes include clear vision and soaring spirit. The eagle is associated with success, prosperity and wealth. In the Zuni Tradition, the Eagle symbolizes the direction Up. Potency, Healing, Power, Illumination

Elk - Strength, agility, freedom, power and nobility. Pride, Power, Majesty

Feather - Spirit

Firefly - Communication, Illumination

Fish - Water, Current, Flow of Life From the Earth

Fox - Camouflage, Adaptability and Integration, Cunning, provider, intelligence. Fox represents twilight and feminine magic. Cleverness, Subtlety, Discretion

Frog - Fluidity, Water and Rain, Cleansing, Tears, Peace, Emotional Healing, Connection with water element.

Goat - Tenacity, Diligence

Goose - Safe return, Love of home

Grizzly Bear - Mother, nature's pharmacist.

Hawk - Awareness, Truth, Foresight, Messenger of the sky, observer.

Hedgehog - Self-preservation

Heron - Patience, Grace

Horse - Carrier Of Burdens, Stamina, mobility, strength and power. The horse was introduced to the plains tribes by the Spanish. Shamans are often pictured flying on mythical horses. Horses can symbolize coping under difficult circumstances. Horse is love and devotion, loyalty, Freedom.

Hummingbird - Pure Love and Joy, Celebration of Life, Beauty, Wonder, Agility, Messenger, stopper of time. It represents optimism and sweetness. Being able to roll with the punches is an attribute of Hummingbird.

Kokepeli - Joy, Fertility

Ladybug - Delight, Trust

Lion - Pride, Nobility, Cunning, Courage

Lizard - Dreaming, Foresight, Ancient Secrets, Letting go, Illusiveness, Conservation, agility. Lizard promotes dreaming.

Loon - Peace, Tranquility, Generosity, Communication, Serenity

Lynx - Keeper of Mystical Secrets

Moose - Self Esteem, Assertiveness, Unpredictability, Spontaneity, Headstrong, unstoppable longevity. Moose represents value and integrity.

Mouse - Scrutiny, Attention to Detail, Illusion, Charm

Opossum - Strategy and Diversion

Otter - Joy, Lightness, Laughter, curiosity, mischievous, Earth and Water, Balanced Feminine Energy. Otter is a feminine power, and the symbol of grace and empathy.

Owl - Wisdom, Vision, Insight, truth, patience, Magic, Astral Projection. The Mescalero believe that Owl carries the souls of the recently deceased, a death messenger. Owl is the totem of clairvoyants and mystics.

Parrot Feather - Bringer of Essential Rain and Seed

Peacock - Pride, Recognition, Self-Assurance

Pelican - Abundance, Plenty

Pheasant - Warning, Concealment

Porcupine - Innocence, Humility, Trust

Quail - Protectiveness, Group harmony

Rabbit - Conquering fear, Safety, Alertness, nurturing, Overcoming Limiting Beliefs

Raccoon - Curiosity, Inquisitiveness

Ram - Strength, Determination

Raven - Bringer of Magic and Light, Creation and Knowledge, Trickster, teacher, hoarder, Mystery, Exploration of the unknown. To Pacific Northwest Coast tribes, Raven represented the shaman's powers and a belief in transformation between human and animal spirits. Raven symbolizes change in consciousness and is the mark of a shape shifter.

Roadrunner - Speed, Agility

Salmon - Instinct, Determination, Persistence, Dependability and Renewal

Sandpiper - Quickness, Foraging, Scavenging

Scorpion - Defense, Self-protection, Biting Truth

Seagull - Carefree attitude, Versatility, Freedom

Seahorse - Confidence, grace, Nourishing, Fathering

Seal - Contentment, Inquisitiveness, Organization

Shark - Hunter, survival, adaptability.

Skunk - Perseverance, Determination, Reputation, Respect, Caution

Snail - Perseverance, Determination

Snake - Power, Life force, Sexual potency, Shrewdness, transformation, Life, death and rebirth are represented by the shedding of skin. Among the Pueblo Indians snakes and lightning are equated with rain and fertility.

Spider - The Web of life, Interconnectedness, Industry, Creative, pattern of life, Weaving, Symbolism. Spider connects the past with the future, creating possibilities. Spider-woman is a major Pueblo goddess.

Squirrel - Gathering, Preparation, Trust, Thrift

Swan - Elegance, Nurturing, Grace, balance, innocence, Surrender to the Universal Plan.

Tadpole - Fertility and Renewal, Transformation

Turkey - Give Away, Sacrifice of Self and Others

Turtle - Love & Protection, Healing, Knowledge, Self contained, creative source. Turtle represents Mother Earth. Informed decisions, planning and adaptability are attributes of Turtle.

Weasel - Stealth, Information Gathering

Whale - Historical Record Keeper, Traveler, Guardian, Creativity, Intuition

Wolf - Teaching skill, Loyalty, Interdependence, Loyalty, success, perseverance, stability and thought. Wolves are also regarded as pathfinders and teachers. Wolf is represented by the constellation Sirius, the Dog. In the Zuni tradition the Wolf symbolizes the direction East. Wolf Print--Tracking, movement.

Woodpecker - Change, Persistence

Symbols of the Chinese Horoscope Cycle

The Twelve Earthly Branches and Their Attributes

RAT: intelligent, enterprising, has devotion to purpose, but can be devious and scheming at times.

OX: strong, steadfast and dependable, but not necessarily stupid; faithful to the end, slow to anger, but can be very forceful.

TIGER: loyal, courageous, energetic, strong, cunning. The tigress tends to be shrewish.

RABBIT: modest, fast mover, has delicate senses, and is a good listener.

DRAGON: benign, embodies wisdom, strength and goodness. Protector of the weak.

SNAKE: observant, quick to anger, usually possesses great physical beauty and is not necessarily venomous except when protecting the family.

HORSE: strong and powerful, usually vain if a woman, warlike and chivalrous.

SHEEP: proud, domineering, strive to help and guard their fellows, and are sometimes excellent doctors.

MONKEYS: quick and keen of wit, highly observant, curious, loving, a good parent, and excellent in small enterprises.

ROOSTER: quick to fight, single-purposed and persistent.

DOG: loyal, steadfast, persistent in adversity. Sensitive to feelings.

PIG: highly intelligent, scholarly, easily angered, easily swayed and affected by emotions.

See [more on animal symbolism](#)

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