

Species Are Sacred

A Stó:lō world view on Species At Risk in S'ólh Téméxw (Fraser Valley)

Hiháwt [heewahwt] Pacific Water Shrew



Water shrew was playing by a creek with his siblings, spring was turning to summer and the leaves of the skunk cabbage were getting big, and the smell was growing stronger.



Water shrew's sister stepped on a maple seedling that was budding from the previous year's seed, she shrieked in pain and began to cry. Water shrew brother ran to her side and picked up her little foot to examine it. Forest snail was crawling past and grew curious about the cause of the shrieking sound and went to investigate.

Sister shrew had been poked by a fuzzy golden hair that stuck out from the winged maple seed. Brother shrew was looking for it while sister was holding her foot, when Forest snail arrived next to her.

Looking up at sister shrew, forest snail asked what had happened. Sister shrew took a deep breath from her sobbing and explained that she was running along a wet log to keep up to her brother, when she slipped and her foot landed on a maple seedling. She had one of the hairs from the seedling in her foot and it hurt.

Forest snail looked back at the log sister shrew had fallen off of, and then at the slow quiet creek that the log laid over. Forest snail looked back at sister shrew, and back at the creek. When Forest snail spoke, sister shrew heard the concern in his voice, "do you often fall off of logs when crossing creeks my girl?" To this sister replied that she did, and all her siblings did for they had poor eyesight. Forest snail wanted to help. He asked sister shrew if she knew any other ways to cross the water. She explained that her family knew how to hold their breath and dive underwater, but the only way they crossed the top of the water was to run on sticks and logs. Snail slowly nodded his head, and told the shrews he wanted to help. He would go home and pray on a way he could assist them both.

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Pacific Water Shrew

Stó:lō Legend

Brother shrew noticed a rash on forest snail's sides, when he pointed to it and asked forest snail what it was, snail didn't know. Brother asked if it was itchy, and snail nodded. Brother asked if the rash ever went away and snail shook his head. So brother offered snail some of his alder bark and told forest snail to make a tea and drink the tea, the tea would make the rash disappear.



That night forest snail drank the alder bark tea, and sat quietly praying on a way to help the shrews. He closed his eyes to rest, in his vision he saw stiff black hairs on the hind feet of the shrews. With them they were able to run quickly across the creek. Snail knew what he had to do.

Before the sun came up following morning, snail made his way back to the log where he had seen the shrews, he quietly entered the home of the shrews and crept up next to the brother who had helped him the day before. Forest snail plucked the fine hairs from his own shell, rubbed them until they became stiff and placed them on the feet of brother shrew, he then turned and did the same for sister shrews feet.

Forest snail left that morning and never returned to the place where he had met the shrews. He was grateful for the medicine brother shrew had shared with him and pleased he had something to share in return. The shrews carried on living nearby the slow quiet creek, and from then on they were able to run swiftly across the water on their hind feet, with the stiff black hairs that forest snail gave them.

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