

# **Animal Totems of the Four Directions**

**Lupa**

**Self-Published, 2007**

## **Animal Totems of the Four Directions**

**By Lupa** © 2008

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To my mate Taylor, to the totems and other spirits, to my friends, family and guardians, and to all those who have given of themselves to feed me, clothe me, shelter me, protect me, teach me, and heal me—thank you for helping me become the person I am today.

## Also By Lupa

### From Immanion Press/Megalithica Books

*Fang and Fur, Blood and Bone: A Primal Guide to Animal Magic* (2006)  
*Magick on the Edge: An Anthology of Experimental Magick* (Contributor, 2007)  
*A Field Guide to Otherkin* (2007)  
*Kink Magic: Sex Magic Beyond Vanilla* (with Taylor Ellwood, 2007)  
*DIY Totemism: Your Personal Guide to Animal Totems* (Autumn 2008)  
*Talking About the Elephant: An Anthology of Neopagan Perspectives on Cultural Appropriation* (Editor, Autumn 2008)

### Self-Published

*The Lupa Liturgy* (2007)  
*Shifting, Shamanism and Therianthropy: Magical Techniques  
For Your Therioside* (2007)



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# Introduction

1 December, 2007: This booklet is comprised of a set of four articles that I wrote for a hardcopy pagan magazine, Circle Magazine, produced by Circle Sanctuary<sup>1</sup> in the first half of 2006. “Animals of the East” appeared in the Spring 2006 issue, while “Animals of the South” was in the Summer 2006 issue. Then another issue didn’t appear until Winter of 2006. Apparently the good folks at Circle Sanctuary were busy enough with fighting the good fight in getting a pentacle on Sgt. Patrick Stewart’s grave<sup>2</sup> that there was no time to get a Fall issue out.

When the Winter 2006 issue came out, neither of my articles was in there.<sup>3</sup> Still, I knew there had been people who had wanted to read the other two articles, “Animals of the West” and “Animals of the North”.

I thought about it a bit, and asked the folks on my Livejournal friends list for their opinions. A couple of folks recommended doing another ebook, which I thought was a fantastic idea! I wanted to make the articles free to whoever wanted them anyway, and I enjoy making ebooks of things that are too long to be articles, and too short or of the wrong content for regular books.

I will warn you—this is very much totemism 101 from my perspective. I wrote the first article two years ago, and I generally don’t do anything nearly that basic these days with rare exceptions. So if you’re expecting material on par with what’s in *Fang and Fur, Blood and Bone: A Primal Guide to Animal Magic*, or *DIY Totemism: Your Personal Guide to Animal Totems*, you’ll probably be disappointed. It’s also a bit dated; there are some details that I don’t agree with as much as I did back then, based on experiences I’ve had in the past two years.

However, I like to think that even with the basic level that these articles are written at, that I managed to add some unique twists to them. What I’ve presented here are my ideas for different totems that could be associated with the four cardinal directions and the corresponding traditional Western elements. Rather than sticking to just Big, Impressive North American Birds and Mammals (BINABM) I’ve also drawn on lesser known animals around the world, as well as mythological beings.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.circlesanctuary.org>

<sup>2</sup> For the full story, please see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick\\_Stewart\\_\(soldier\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Stewart_(soldier)).

<sup>3</sup> Not long after the first edition of this ebooklet came out, what should I receive but the Winter 2007 issue of Circle with the Animals of the South article! Hence this slightly revised second edition. Apologies to Circle for any confusion!

I've mostly kept the articles intact in their original forms. However, I've edited them a bit to make this flow better as a booklet. Additionally, the rest of this introduction was originally the first piece of "Animals of the East".

## Getting Started

Traditional imagery for the four quarters called in a neopagan circle usually ends up derived from the ceremonial magic-based Watchtowers, or Paracelsus' Gnome, Slyph, Salamander and Undine. When I first started casting circles in my early explorations of magic, I wanted something closer to my budding animal magic practice. Aided by books (of varying qualities) on Native American and neopagan totemism, I gained the acquaintance of the animals that guarded my four cardinal directions. As my circles eventually evolved into spheres, I never felt the need for animals to guard above and below. However, those who wish to use more than four directions can certainly extend the information from this booklet to as many directions as they see fit.

The process of finding directional animals involves a mixture of intuition and choice. Unlike a personal totem which is intimately linked to you, you may work with any directional animal you see fit, depending on what qualities you associate with the direction. Any animal is potentially a directional animal. This leaves us with a wide variety not only of wild and domestic creatures but even fantastic ones as well! If you have a few in mind, try researching the behavior and environment of their physical counterparts as well as mythology and folklore associated with them. Modern totemism is also a good source of information.

Start by studying correspondences associated with (in this case) East and then selecting a few animals that particularly resonate with your idea of what East is. Use your intuition to determine which one to choose. You can even communicate with each animal by way of meditation to help make your decision. Sit in the Eastern quarter of your ritual area, quiet your mind and call to the animal you want to speak with. When you sense his presence, ask him if s/he would like to work with you as guardian and representative. In this manner you can essentially "interview" each one—just be sure to thank all of them for their time and consideration, not just the one you ultimately choose!

Some may prefer to be a more passive participant in this process instead, allowing the animal to choose you. If you fall into that category, meditate on the qualities of the East, and then ask the direction to reveal its animal to you. Don't worry if you get the same animal in two or more directions—some animals may carry energy appropriate to more than one quarter. Horse, for example, is one of these. Hoofed mammals that depend



on their ability to run quickly across the ground are often associated with Earth, and the horse's speed also ties him to wind and therefore Air. The wild spirit even in domestic horses evokes Fire, and the Horse crops up in Water mythos quite a bit, the creation of the species by the ocean God Poseidon being a prime example.

It is quite possible to repeat this process for every act of magic you create. After all, different animals bring different energies to the circle. If you're doing protection magic you may want to work more with predators or prey animals with excellent defenses, while healing magic may call for more gentle, parental animals. I personally like to create long-lasting relationships with the same animals. For instance, I've had Wolf in the North, Hawk in the East and Bear in the West for about seven or eight years [more like a decade now in 2007], since I first started using this setup. South has hosted several animals, not surprising as I associate it with Fire and therefore change. I tried changing all four animals at once a few years into my practice and found it to be completely disruptive, so I've let them make the calls as to any changes in the ranks. But either approach works well; it's all a matter of what you and the animals are comfortable with.

The manner in which directional animals may be evoked varies as much as magical people themselves. I have a simple prayer that I say to them, and as they each enter the circle I allow them to use me as a conduit from the spirit world to the physical, causing a sort of temporary spiritual shapeshift. For a brief moment I feel my body as that of a wolf or bear or whatever animal I call, and I carry that energy with me throughout the entire ritual, releasing it when I say farewell to them at the end. While I don't leave offerings to them, some people may find that doing so helps increase the bond. Food works (though keep human food away from real animals!)

All of the information and techniques above work for any direction, As for elements, for my purposes I will be using the East-Air/South-Fire alignment, though those who prefer to reverse those may most certainly use this information as they see fit.

Lupa

# Chapter One: Animals of the East

## Wings and Feathery Things

The most obvious creatures associated with East, and therefore Air, are those with wings. Most people's first thought lights upon birds. In neopaganism larger predatory birds tend to get a lot of press. Eagles, hawks, owls and falcons feature prominently in our modern mythos. Ravens and crows are also highly popular. You may not necessarily need—or want—such aggressive avians, though. Waterfowl, while equipped to deal with predators and rivals, tend to be more placid energetically overall (though anyone who's ever run afowl—err—afoul of a goose knows this can be deceiving!).

Songbirds are another often overlooked group. They're small, but they can be tough. Blue jays, true to their corvid natures, can mob larger raptors such as hawks that threaten their nests. Some, such as doves, are renowned for their gentler natures. Opportunistic parasites such as starlings, while they may not be welcome additions to the North American landscape, can lend an air of determination and the increase of possibilities to a magical working.

Most of us are familiar with North American and European birds, but a quick trip across the globe reveals a plethora of both familiar and unfamiliar species. The well-known ostrich is a fierce guardian of his young. Most people have never heard of a bower bird, though, a species in which the male constructs a ground dwelling for his mate, complete with assorted natural and manmade found objects for decoration—perfect for a house blessing! And then there's the kiwi, a bird with wings so tiny as to almost be nonexistent! Such a creature may be useful in teaching how to use what resources we have available to us.

It's not just the wild birds that can aid you, either. Chickens may be the farthest from your mind, but if you want to work fertility magic a hen may be exactly what you need. And roosters are quite known for their pugnacity and their ability to alert their flock to danger; a rooster in the East can be excellent when your personal security is at stake. Homing pigeons can help with magic designed to find something, whether it's a lost object or a new job. (In fact, all migratory birds, which depend on the Earth's magnetic field for navigation, can be of use in finding things).

Bats were often grouped with birds in medieval bestiaries. Obviously, we know better now, but these unique flying mammals are just as able to represent Air as any other. Flying squirrels, while technically gliders, are also good choices. The same goes for several species of snake that are able to

flatten their bodies out and ride wind currents from tree to tree. Arboreal species in general are acquainted with Air by their environment.

Insects outnumber birds, both in numbers of species and sheer counts of individuals by many thousands of times. You'll find the same roles here that are reflected in the vertebrate world. Dragonflies and ladybugs are two of the many predatory insects that can bring a definite protective or aggressive feel to the East. Butterflies symbolize grace and beauty, but also deception—that fluttering flight means a tougher catch for predators, and some butterflies and moths have eye-like spots on their wings for further confusion.

Pegasus is one of many winged beasts that inhabit world mythology, along with the Greek Sphinx. Winged dragons and gryphons are also popular and make excellent protective guardians. The Phoenix represents the eternal life-death-rebirth cycle, and so would be good to call upon for renewal or change magics.

Essentially, any winged animal is quite appropriate for East. If you work primarily with this attribute, try hanging a feather at the Eastern quarter, or making an offering of feathers.

## **All in Your Head**

Since the East is associated with the mind and mental processes, all animals that are known for their cleverness are perfect for this quarter. All members of the corvid family—crows, ravens, jays and so forth—fall into this category. Ravens in particular are known for their feats, such as opening zippered bags or using tools to extract food from crevices. Raven, of course, is a famous mythological trickster, as well as the animal that represents Thought (Hugin) and Memory (Munin) to Norse heathens. And while wisdom is a different permutation of intelligence, the owl at least symbolizes this quality even if s/he doesn't necessarily possess more wisdom than any other bird.

There are plenty of intelligent mammals as well, particularly among predators. Coyotes and foxes are especially renowned for their quick minds. Whether it involves raiding traps, escaping hunters or adapting to human encroachment, both species have exhibited remarkable intelligence, and the folklore surrounding them reflects that. Squirrels and other animals that go through elaborate preparations for Winter make excellent East animals for their planning abilities. Wolves, too, are excellent animals for the East; their social structure is among the most advanced of all animals and involves a lot of organization and communication.

Communication is also key for many species of insects and other arthropods, particularly those that live in colonies. Both bees and ants have complex methods of conveying information involving the interpretation of

body language and scent. The spider's web is a supreme example of a method of receiving information—it's not for nothing the internet has been dubbed the "world wide web"! Indeed, an insect thrashing in the netting alerts the spider, which may be on the other side and may not actually see the prey.

While not usually praised for their intelligence, reptiles and amphibians can also be East animals. The striking serpent is highly symbolic of a quick wit, particularly in a conflict such as a legal battle or before giving a presentation in which you may have to answer questions. The same goes for frogs and toads, who catch prey with tongues that flick out of their mouths with amazing speed, a wonderful analogy if you're in pursuit of something that requires you to think quickly. Conversely, the tortoise represents patience and deep mental processes that may take longer to complete but which are necessary to our self-development.

Among domestic animals, certain species of dog are well-known for their ability to learn. Border collies reign supreme as consummate workers and performers possessed of seemingly endless energy. But, surprisingly, pigs are also extremely intelligent animals. They've been housebroken and even trained by those few brave enough to bring them into their homes, though reportedly the potbellied breed makes an excellent pet. Horses, too, have been revered by humanity for centuries for their trainability, though most horse owners have at least a few stories of being outwitted by their charges.

The Sphinx is one of the best animals to represent East as the mental direction, for her riddles have confounded many through the years. Dragons in Asian traditions also often represent intelligence in the form of wisdom, though their European counterparts tend to be more bestial and dull-witted. *Kitsune*, trickster fox spirits found in Japanese and Chinese folklore, make excellent East animals for those with a sense of humor!

## Other Correspondences

Since East is the direction of Spring, you may want to consider evoking the animal in his young form. Whelps and kits, foals and fawns, all exhibit the new energy of mammals. For birds, any stage from egg to fledglings leaving the nest are suitable; the same goes for reptile eggs and young. Tadpoles are wonderful representatives of the amphibian world. Insects have eggs, larvae and pupae to choose from as symbols.

Animals of certain colors can also represent East. Consider a bright yellow canary, a pure white swan, or the light blue of a robin's egg shell for this direction. You can also apply these colors to other East animals. I usually call on White Hawk, but I suppose theoretically you could have a blue wolf or a yellow ostrich!

Lupa

## Chapter Two: Animals of the South

### Dancing in the Flames

Unlike the mythical Salamander, no animal, even bacteria, is capable of living in direct contact with the vapor of fire. Extremely hot temperatures are another story. Thermophilic (heat-loving) organisms thrive in hot Springs and other areas on and beneath the Earth's surface that would quickly incinerate any other living being.<sup>4</sup> They've adapted to these conditions through specialized membranes, proteins, and DNA that retain their structure despite temperatures nearing 300 degrees Fahrenheit!<sup>5</sup> Bacteria may not be the most obvious animals to call on for help; in fact, some don't even really consider them to be animals, per se. Still, for our purposes they're perfect when dealing with the element of Fire.

Bacteria can be a little difficult to relate to, though, so some may want to look elsewhere for inspiration. Dry, sandy deserts are perfect for this, as they're subjected to some of the highest surface temperatures on the planet and in addition offer very little water to counteract the fire of the Sun and the heated air and earth. The animals that live in these arid places are supremely adapted to life there, and there is much as can learn from their skills and unique physiologies.

Take the fennec fox, for example. This fuzzy little critter has enormous ears! They aren't just there to make humans say "Oh, how cute!" Rather, they work to deflect heat through their wide surface area, keeping the fox cool. They also have extra fur on the pads of their paws to protect them from the hot sand. Since food is scarce, they are opportunistic omnivores, eating everything from eggs and insects to rodents and plants.

Gila Monsters, the largest desert lizards, are another good example of adaptability. They have tough, scaly hides to shield them from their rocky environment. They're also one of only two poisonous lizards, and their venom is a serious threat to predators. They'll also wedge themselves into a crevice and puff themselves up with air; if an animal tries to dislodge them the thick hide deflects claws and teeth. As an added bonus, Gila Monsters have fat stored in their tails for times of famine.

Many other cold-blooded reptiles love the desert. They include the sidewinder rattlesnake, western diamondback rattler, horned lizard, several

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.anl.gov/Science\\_and\\_Technology/History/Anniversary\\_Frontiers/41photo.html](http://www.anl.gov/Science_and_Technology/History/Anniversary_Frontiers/41photo.html), accessed 4 February, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> "Hot! Hot! Hot! But How?" <http://www.microbe.org/microbes/thermophiles.asp> accessed 4 February, 2006.

species of gecko, the death adder of Australia and the desert tortoise, among many others. In fact, reptiles in general are good fire animals because they rely on the heat of the sun and surface air to stay alive as, unlike birds and mammals, their bodies are not self-heating. They're also excellent for those who are a little afraid of working with fire as an element, as they can teach us how to make our own adaptations.

Besides the aforementioned fennec, numerous other mammals call the desert home. Both wild and domestic camels are a familiar sight in the Middle East where they've become indispensable to humans; feral camels also roam Australia. Coyotes, kit and swift foxes, and jackals represent the canine family. Cougars and bobcats in North America and several species of smaller cat in Africa and Asia are among the feline contingent. While elk are usually associated with more temperate regions in Canada and the United States they may venture into the southwest U.S. where they join their hooved cousins, the white-tail deer and the pronghorn antelope. Wild horses and burros, descended from domestic stock, also range here. Small mammals abound to create food for predators; they include numerous species of mice and rats, gerbils, and cottontail and jack rabbits.

Birds, too, wing their way across desert skies. Raptors such as hawks, eagles, and owls can be found here. In fact, certain species of owl make their nests in saguaro and other large cactuses. The roadrunner is a familiar sight in the Southwest United States, and ostriches may be found in African deserts.

Insects and other arthropods are incredibly common inhabitants of desert areas. Ants and termites may form colonies, while solitary insects like wasps and beetles survive there quite well. Spiders and scorpions prey on their neighbors and most carry powerful venom for the task. Various species of fly torment larger animals and feed on carcasses and other detritus, keeping the desert clean.

All of these animals demonstrate that even in the harshest conditions life abounds. Those who work with a fire animal will become aware of how to survive even in the toughest times. They remind us of the reality of life and death, that each day is precious and any moment may be our last. Through them we learn to appreciate our lives so that we don't take these gifts for granted.

## **Burning Love**

Fire is the element of passion, creativity, love, and sex. It embodies action and intensity. Fire animals from the passionate angle are usually observed in the prime of life, strong and healthy. They teach us about the conflicts that help us to grow and the euphoric joys that raise us high above our worries. But they also warn us of the deep flame of rage and can teach us to control it



so that we may use it rather than abuse it. They help us balance our intensity so that we and those around us aren't burned.

Members of the deer family are very passionate animals. Each fall the males go into rut, which results in spectacular displays of branching antlers. Noisy fights that tear up the ground, while rarely fatal, are nonetheless impressive to behold. The same Autumnal battles can be observed among wild sheep like the bighorn.

Many species of bird, too, exhibit vivid and sometimes violent behavior. While the chirping of birds is lovely music to our ears, to other birds they are fierce territorial declarations. And while we may see their sparring as amusing it's very serious to the combatants themselves. Groups of birds may mob predators to chase them off—I've seen plenty of instances where three or four crows roused a red-tail hawk from their nesting area.

Corvids are especially good birds for fire work as they're incredibly bold, brassy animals. Even the blue jay is a toughie at the feeder and will bully other birds away. Ravens and crows, while more dignified, are no strangers to drama. As with most other animals, intraspecies fights over mates, food and territory are rarely fatal, but they can certainly ruffle some feathers!

Brightly colored feathers are symbols of passion in and of themselves. Regardless of what colors are exhibited, the purpose is the same—to show off! Usually it is the male who has the bright plumage in order to attract a female. The peacock is probably the most notable bird in this category. The distinctive fan of tail feathers has inspired numerous myths and attached him to several deities. Many species of fish also use the color coding as a way of dating and mating.

Once a mate has been gained and a territory secured, the young raised afterwards often require protection. Female bears are probably the most famous example of parental ferocity. Alligators and crocodiles, though, are also attentive mothers, as are numerous species of birds. Some fish, too, care for their eggs and fry (baby fish) with great focus. The male betta, for example, builds a nest of bubbles in which he keeps the young until they're old enough to survive on their own. He'll protect them from any enemy, and carefully replaces any eggs or fry that fall from the nest.

While the actions of animals to gain mates, territory and families may not be as romantic as, say, a dozen roses, they're still noteworthy in our own passionate actions. After all, while we couch our love and sex rituals in pretty language and symbolism, the root drive is still the same as for our nonhuman companions. But the drive may also be focused on anything we're passionate about, whether it's family, creative pursuits, work, or other successes.

## From the Ashes of Our Tales

There are several fantastic animals associated with fire. The Salamander, already mentioned, supposedly makes his home in actual flames. This elemental beast is reported to be seen dancing in hearths, bonfires, and even candle flames. Earthly salamanders, small lizardlike amphibians, occasionally met painful deaths by people who confused them with their mythical counterparts and found them to be all too flammable.

The Phoenix is the premiere fire bird. Some myths surrounding the Phoenix states that only one exists, and that reproduction occurs through renewal. Every 500 years s/he builds a pyre, sets it on fire and burns himself up. Out of the ashes s/he rises, young and healthy once again. This creates not only a direct correlation to fire as an element, but also as an alchemical purifying agent. In fact, the Phoenix represents spiritual transmutation in classical alchemy, the attainment of the Philosopher's Stone.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most popular conventions in Dragon myths is fiery breath (enough that really bad breath is often referred to as "dragon breath"!)

A cousin of the Western Dragon, the Basilisk, also purportedly has fiery breath, or at least the power to scorch plant life by his very presence. While not all Dragons breathe fire, they tend to be quite intense beings to work with and therefore can work in the Fire quarter quite well. Do be aware, however, that some individual Dragons may balk at this, being more attuned to Water or another element.

While not expressly fire animals, the ominous Black Dogs often seen in graveyards or along lonely roads may have a connection nonetheless. Burning eyes are a common trait of this breed of hellhound, and a few have been seen dragging glowing red chains still hot from the forger's flame. A rare individual may even breathe fire or leave scorch marks where his paws touch the ground. A famous incident involved a black dog appearing in a church, running around the altar and then disappearing. Burns were found on the door of the church where s/he entered.<sup>7</sup>

Centaurs are beings that gain fire status primarily through their natures. Lustful and aggressive crosses between humans and horses, they have had mixed relationships with humanity, with some individuals acting as teachers while others creating havoc and violence for us.

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<sup>6</sup> "The Birds in Alchemy". <http://www.crystalinks.com/birdsalchemy.html> accessed 4 February, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> "Apparitions of Black Dogs". <http://nli.northampton.ac.uk/ass/psych-staff/sjs/blackdog.htm> accessed 4 February, 2006.

## Change and Evolution

Since so many fire animals have had to adapt to their environments, they're excellent for fire's associations with change. All the desert animals listed above fall under this category, but there are some surprising individuals in this group as well.

Butterflies and moths are one example. While all insects go through several growth stages in which their appearance may change remarkably, the most drastic developments occur among butterflies and moths. Caterpillars usually don't win beauty pageants (though the fuzzy ones are kind of cute) but once they've undergone metamorphosis they become creatures that represent the very soul itself. They're excellent to work with when you want to turn a bad situation into a good one. Animals associated with shapeshifting, both of themselves and of their environment, are another good choice. Foxes and coyotes are in this category, along with rabbits, corvids, otters, spiders, and any number of other trickster animals. Those who work with shapeshifting magic may want to associate their most common animal form with the South. This also includes the Phoenix for obvious reasons, as well as the Kitsune, who commonly changes form in order to prank unwitting humans.

Snakes and lizards make an appearance here, too. Their periodic skin shedding is representative of casting off the old to find the new underneath. In this vein, though, even seasonal molting of bird feathers and shedding of mammal fur can be representative of change. If you periodically change directional animals, almost any bird or mammal will suffice for the South during Spring and Autumn.

Another idea is to have a self-renewing animal in the South. In Spring, the animal can be a baby. As Summer progresses the animal can reach a peak or growth, and begin to decline in fall. With Winter the animal may die, but not without leaving behind some reminder of his return in the Spring again.

Notice that all these changes are internal. While some, such as certain caterpillars, may weave elements of their environment into their cocoons of change, the changes themselves come from within. So do all changes originate. Nothing short of natural causes can change externally without action from an internal source.

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## Chapter Three: Animals of the West

Well, here we are in the West as the leaves start to change and animals prepare for the long, cold Winter ahead (unless you're a jaguar in a rainforest, that is!) West brings us water and emotion, the smooth flow of creativity and preparation for trials and rites of passage

### **Glub, Glub!**

The most obvious denizens of the West are those that live in or near water. There are thousands of species of fish and other purely aquatic creatures. We may have an easier time relating to the intelligent dolphins and whales, but keep in mind that our piscine neighbors have a lot to teach us as well. Fish that swim in schools, such as herring or minnows, show the value of strength in numbers—when a predator attacks, the sheer numbers of the smaller fish can confuse the hungry attacker. These schools also often seem to employ a sort of group-mind communication, as evidenced by their tendency to all move in the same direction at once, even when that direction changes suddenly. The prey aspect of these fish also reminds us, however, of the role that prey animals play in Nature, that the food we eat and the other things we consume have to come from somewhere, including living beings.

Higher up on the food chain, but no less relevant, are animals ranging from sharks and whales to tuna and swordfish. These carnivores remind us that there is a place for violence in Nature, however ugly it may be, to maintain the balance of the underwater ecosystem. They also can teach us how to maneuver through our own environments to the best of our abilities in order to obtain what we need to not only survive, but thrive.

It's important to look at particular species to gain the best insight into their unique teachings. Clownfish, made so popular by the Disney movie "Finding Nemo", live among the poisonous tentacles of sea anemones, while wrasses will clean the teeth of much larger fish that could swallow them with an inhale. Both of these can teach how to live in harmony with what may seem at first to be a negative situation. Bottom dwellers, like catfish, which eat just about anything they can find, similarly are examples of making the best of our situations. The Portuguese Man o' War is an object lesson in symbiotic relationships, being made of multiple organisms working as one.

There are also plenty of animals that are semi-aquatic. While sea turtles live primarily in the ocean, the female come onto land to lay and bury their eggs. Otters, both sea and river, spend plenty of time splashing about, though the latter is more of a landlubber. Both show us the value of play. The hippopotamus may seem ungainly on the land, but is a dancer in the

water where s/he's buoyed up despite his weight, an example of knowing your place in your environment. Many species of bear dine on fish; grizzly and brown bears are particularly fond of the salmon that run in the Spring to spawn.

Many species of cranes and herons live in swamps or near bodies of water. Seagulls and terns and many others make their living off the ocean. Ducks and other waterfowl are good choices, as are diving birds such as loons. Many reptiles, including many species of snake and turtle, thrive in freshwater-based ecosystems. And amphibians require moisture to live; for if they dry out they suffocate as they breathe through their skin.

There are a number of fantastic aquatic animals that can also represent a watery West. Fish hybrids, such as the mermaid and Capricorn, abound. Huge monsters that include sea serpents, and the giant squid known as the kraken, can make for aggressive protectors. Mythical horses are often associated with water as well. According to Greek mythology, horses came galloping out of the sea care of the god Poseidon. The kelpie and the each-uisge are two equine fey beings that dwell in rivers and other bodies of water—but take care, as they can be malevolent tricksters according to legend!

## **The Flow of Emotion and Creativity**

Water is often associated with emotions. While animals aren't always assumed to have the same emotions as humans, my own experiences and those of others say otherwise. Granted, the execution and interpretations of these emotions differs from how we understand them, but anyone who has been around intelligent animals such as dogs, horses and dolphins can pretty easily tell how those critters are feeling, whether they're happy, sad, angry, or scared.

While the emotions more highly developed animals like mammals and birds are more easily observed, baby animals are particularly good symbols of emotion because they're even less inhibited than their elders, just like children. Puppies, kittens, calves, bunnies, foals and others all show a wide range of expression, exaggerated beyond what their later years will show. However, adults are perfectly capable of teaching emotions as well. They're particularly adept at showing how emotions translate into all communication, including and especially body language.

Creativity, like water, flows. Anyone who is an artist, a writer, a musician, or other creative type will tell you that once they really get into a project, it "flows right out from their mind through their bodies and into their work! In addition, creative pursuits are highly emotionally charged, coming straight from the heart. Each project is a labor of love, done not just for the money or the fame, but for the sheer joy of creation.

Animals are also highly creative, though in ways more suited to their natural environments, and worked straight into their everyday survival. Otters are intelligent animals with a lot of great adaptations. Sea otters will hold a rock on their belly and crack open tough shellfish to get to the meat within. River otters create slides in mud or snow to zoom down to the safety of the water in threat or play. And, as discussed in “Animals of the East”, corvids can come up with some pretty crazy ideas for work or play.

While much of animal creativity is primarily survival-based, in recent years attention has been paid to animals that exhibit more human forms of creativity. Several species of animal, most notably various primates, elephants, and domestic cats, have demonstrated the ability to create paintings for the sheer enjoyment of it. Some of their paintings have sold for hundreds or even thousands of dollars, often benefitting animal-based nonprofits. Cats have also been known to dance with their people, as shown in *Dancing With Cats* by Burton Silver and Heather Busch (who also wrote a book on cats who paint). These animals can be symbols of creative flow that bridges the unfortunate gap between the human and animal world, teaching us that we’re not so different after all.

## **I Will Survive**

West is also the direction of Autumn, of preparing for and adapting to hard times. The first animal that probably comes to mind is the squirrel, busily storing food. In fact, any animal that spends Autumn putting on as much weight as possible, like bears and deer, is appropriate, as are those who spend this time getting a nest set up for hibernation. Even wolves are a good West animal in this case. Packs often break up during the Summer when small game is plentiful and the pack structure isn’t needed for hunting. However, as Autumn progresses the wolves come back together as they’ll need each others’ help to hunt down larger prey in the months to come.

Migration is practiced by many animals, most notably birds. Species ranging from Canada geese to Monarch butterflies will travel for hundreds or even thousands of miles to warmer climates where food may be more easily procured. More localized movement may be seen in many species that don’t hibernate, as they widen their ranges to increase the availability of food. Often two or more animals or groups will fight over territory. This conflict shows us that we aren’t the only ones affected by hard times, and that we need to be mindful of the needs of others while not neglecting ourselves.

A stranger example of survival through hard times is the lungfish. This peculiar animal will encase itself in a ball of mud and can essentially hibernate until it rains again. And the walking catfish, true to his name, can walk for several miles to get to a new source of water.

Insects and other small animals often don't make through the Winter in large numbers, but their offspring in the form of eggs and young do. This makes them ideal symbols for the initiation of a death and rebirth cycle. They're also reminders that we won't succeed every time, but that we can always try again, though the circumstances may be different next time around. This also means that the West can be a time of preparation for Death, particularly if someone you know is terminally ill, or if you're confronting your own mortality.

The preparation for Death reflects the preparation for initiation. Before the initiation itself, we have to prepare to let go of our old selves so that we can make room for our rebirth. Many animals understand that they will not survive through the Winter, and so prepare by producing large numbers of young, some of which will live to see Spring. Just like them, before we can be initiated ourselves, we have to make preparations and lay the plans for what will come after that time of trial and tempering. Many insects are perfect animals to help prepare for any rite of passage.

Incidentally, the animals that represent survival need not stay in the West and Autumn. Different climates have times when life is harder, such as droughts or flooding. These can be adapted to your particular environment and placed in the appropriate season and quarter.



## Chapter Four: Animals of the North

### Grounded in the Deep, Dark Earth

The soil beneath our feet is constantly teeming with life, even when the surface is covered in snow and all is quiet. Most of these creatures we rarely, if ever, see. Countless numbers of bacteria and other microscopic life exist at between the grains, adding to the richness of the soil with their waste and bodies, as well as nourishing larger animals and, indirectly, plant life. They may also be found in the leaf litter that covers the ground. Continuing up, they cover the physical surface—and often the innards—of all living beings! Even our own bodies, inside and out, are stuffed full of microorganisms with which we have a symbiotic relationship. From the bodies of tiny animals, to our own bodies, and to the body of the Earth itself, microorganisms are a major part of the physical world.

Back to the Earth itself, though, we move onto animals we can see with our naked eyes. Insects and other arthropods form the next step of the food chain. Worms are prized by gardeners as they aerate the soil through their tunneling, allowing plants to breathe better, and their castings are superb fertilizer. Some arthropods, including ants, many species of bee and wasp, ground-dwelling spiders, and many, many others, call the Earth home.

Reptiles and amphibians often find cool shade and shelter from the sun in the Earth, and many hibernate deep below the surface over Winter, their body temperatures low enough to render them unconscious, but not to the point of freezing. They are joined by mammals like rabbits, mice, weasels, bears, badgers, and scores of other furry critters that burrow in the Earth. There are even species of birds that live underground, including the burrowing owl, African bee-eaters, kingfishers, and others.

For some people, all mammals are of Earth. This is because most do not fly or swim the majority of the time, and so are inextricably linked to solid ground. However, that grounding need not be literal. Some animals are grounded in personality. Animals of a laid-back nature may also serve as good Earth animals. Groundhogs seem to be particularly good symbols, being both burrowers and very relaxed ones at that! However, any animal that is steady rather than high-strung may be a good North animal.

### Healthy and Hale

The physical body is another realm of Earth and North. Just as we must maintain a healthy environment to sustain our lives, so must we also care for our personal environments to remain healthy.

A good start is to study any animal that exhibits habits that you can use to improve your own health. For example, if you choose to become a vegetarian or a vegan, observe herbivores and what they eat. Then adopt one (or more) as your North animal and let hir be an inspiration to you whenever you feel like cheating on your diet. Even if you eat meat and other animal products, animals are good examples to us of healthy eating. Wild animals don't eat preservatives or chemicals, other than what they happen to get ahold of by way of humanity. Your North animal can be one who reminds you to reduce the amount of artificial additives in your diet as much as possible. On the other hand, be sensible and remember that you are human with human biology and chemistry. While Deer, for example, may eat grass and leaves, we certainly can't live on that sort of food! Consult a dietary professional before making any drastic changes to your diet.

Many of us would like to get more exercise than we get. Maybe we want to lose a little extra weight, or tone up our muscles. Perhaps we just want to make sure we keep our hearts in good condition. It can be tough in our culture, when we're confined to desks and cubicles, and what little time we have outside of our jobs is often eaten up by family, friends, and other activities. It can be tough to find the time to exercise.

Again, animals lead by example. They exercise throughout their daily lives, constantly on the move in search of food, mates, territory and shelter. We can follow their lead by trying to work exercise routines into our lives. Take stairs instead of elevators. If you can, walk or bike to work. Adopt a part of the house to clean every day, even if it's just for twenty minutes. Go for a walk every day and get to know your personal environment—we miss so much by being in cars! If you like to surf the internet, try using a hand weight with one hand while clicking the mouse or navigating the page with the other. Perform stretches and other activities while watching television. The list goes on and on. Any animal can be an inspiration, but very active or athletic ones such as Cheetah, Hummingbird, and Greyhound are particularly good choices. Just remember the lesson of Otter—keep it fun, no matter what you do!

Some animals are associated with healing and maintaining health in human mythologies. Bear is revered by a number of Native American cultures as the healer. In some European lore, dogs were thought to be able to heal wounds by licking them. Horse, while not specifically a healing totem, is known for vitality and strength, as is Stag. Animals associated with longevity are also good for maintaining the health of the body; consider Elephant, Tortoise or Whale. Fantastic animals may be healers, too. Unicorn is known for being able to neutralize poison with hir horn, useful for anyone going through any sort of detoxification process. Phoenix, the symbol of renewal, is another good animal for rejuvenating health, particularly if you're

just starting on a health regimen. And Dragon is known to live a very long time—ask hir for hir secrets!

## **Hearth, Home, and Kin**

North is the direction of home and family, the safe hearth during Winter, and the grounding you have in your family, whether you're related to them by blood or not. It's our haven from the worries of the world, the place we feel safe.

There are many social animals to choose from. The animal whose social structure we most benefit from is Wolf. It's theorized that early humans observed the social patterns of wolves even before we began domesticating them into dogs, and learned from them how to hunt and how to live as a group. Even now, Wolf can teach us a lot about interacting with those we love. While a wolf pack has a definite structure, it changes over the years and adapts to the needs both of individual wolves and of the pack as a whole. However, any group animal will suffice, from the gregarious Deer to the Fox who maintains a respectable but friendly territory amid others of hir kind. Dolphins and other members of the whale family are good family animals, too. And many species of fish and bird teach the power of safety in numbers.

If you feel the need for a period of solitude, make a more lone animal your North Animal for a time. Cougar and other large cats are good examples. However, keep in mind that even they interact with others of their species, not to mention maintain their connection to the rest of the world. Animals like these advocate privacy, not cutting yourself off from everyone else for good. While Moray Eel, for example, may be good to get you away from people, it's also highly antisocial—work with Eel with caution!

As for the home itself, a lot depends on your preferred situation. Do you want to settle down? Talk to Eagle or Stork, animals that often nest in the same place for generations. Are you looking to rent, not buy? There are plenty of opportunistic creatures that live in the homes of others. Prairie dog towns are a good example—while the rodents dig out the miles of winding tunnels, other animals take shelter in them, even when the prairie dogs are still there. This sometimes includes predators like Rattlesnake and Black-footed Ferret, so keep in mind how well you treat your landfolk—and vice versa! If you're having issues with the property owners, try talking to Clownfish, who successfully lives in the tentacles of the poisonous Sea Anemone. On the other hand, if you want to live on the road or intend to move frequently, migratory animals like many species of birds, and herd animals like Buffalo, are your friends.

## **Money, Honey!**

Honey indeed! Bees carry a wealth of golden honey in their hives, the result of a lot of hard work. While we don't use honey as currency, and animals don't spend money, we can still learn financial advice from them.

Most of us want savings of some sort for the future. Squirrel, Mouse, Bee, and other animals that store food for hard times are excellent North animals in this case. However, sometimes we want that money to benefit others. Parent animals that feed their young, regardless of species, can show you how best to distribute what you have among those you care for.

On the other hand, if the beneficiaries will be through a nonprofit organization, talk to predators like Wolf and Cougar. When they leave a kill after feeding enough to sustain themselves, many smaller animals are then able to feed from the carcass. In the same way after we've seen to our own needs we can then use what's leftover to help others that we may never even meet. However, these predators are practical—they make sure not to let scavengers take away from what they themselves need to survive. What good is a hunter that is too weak to hunt?

If you're at the other end of the equation, depending on others to get by, remember the lessons of the scavengers—get resources wherever you can. Don't rely on just one source, and remember that you're not the only one looking for assistance. Be grateful to those who are helping you out, and if you end up in a more comfortable situation, don't forget those who helped you or those who are still in need. We all need each other to survive in the end—we're all connected whether we realize it or not!

Sometimes finances depend on a good source of income. Beaver and other hard workers can help with this task. Again, though, call on Otter to help find a job that's fun, and to remind you to play sometimes to balance it all out.

## Afterword

The animals and spheres of influence discussed in this series of articles are just a few suggestions to help you find the animals that represent the quarters. In the end, these are very personal relationships, and the animals you work with are unique to you. Take your time, and allow each animal to come forth as you both are ready. And if an animal should go away to make room for another, examine that change and how it affects your life. Greet each one as it arrives, and bid a fond farewell when his time with you is done.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at [whishthound@gmail.com](mailto:whishthound@gmail.com). For further reading material on totem animals, please see <http://lupabitch.wordpress.com/category/animal-magic/>.

## Biography

Lupa lives in Portland, OR with hir mate and fellow author, Taylor Ellwood, Sun Ce and Ember the resident cats, and too many books and art supplies. S/he has been a practicing pagan and magician for over a decade, and hir focus has primarily been on animal magic of various sorts. While s/he has worked within neopaganism and Chaos magic, s/he is developing hir own formalized neoshamanic path, therioshamanism; you may visit <http://therioshamanism.com> for details.

S/he is an artist, creating ritual tools, sacred jewelry and other items out of bone, fur, leather, feathers and beads. A significant part of hir spiritual path involves working with the spirits within the animal remains, working to give them a better afterlife than being a trophy on a wall.

Lupa is also the author of several books on paganism and magic. Hir first book, *Fang and Fur, Blood and Bone: A Primal Guide to Animal Magic*, is an attempt to add to the corpus of knowledge on animal magic—without resorting to a totem animal dictionary. She also wrote the first book on the Otherkin community, *A Field Guide to Otherkin*. S/he has cowritten *Kink Magic: Sex Magic Beyond Vanilla* with Taylor, and is also a contributor to *Magick on the Edge: An Anthology of Experimental Magick*. Hir current projects include editing and arranging *Talking to the Elephant: An Anthology of Neopagan Perspectives on Cultural Appropriation*, writing *DIY Totemism: Your Personal Guide to Animal Totems*, and an as-of-yet-unnamed sequel to *A Field Guide to Otherkin*. S/he has written numerous articles for both print and online magazines, and has produced several self-published ebooklets.

When s/he isn't engaged in any of the above activities, s/he enjoys hiking, going to pagan festivals, and is a voracious reader.

Lupa may be found online at <http://www.thegreenwolf.com>, <http://www.kinkmagic.com> (18+ only), <http://lupabitch.wordpress.com> and <http://therioshamanism.com>.



