

THE CONTINUUM ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

# ANIMAL SYMBOLISM IN ART

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Alaska to the Rocky Mountains, and formerly throughout the Great Plains. Exceedingly strong, the normal gait of these bears is slow, but they can move very rapidly. Diet varies according to area, consisting mostly of vegetation, although in the Canadian Rockies the grizzly is quite carnivorous. Yellowstone male grizzlies do not reach full size until ten or eleven years of age, and females live as long as twenty-five years (Nowak II:1089ff.).

Northwest Coast clan crests depict totemic ancestors with which people interacted in the distant past. In one instance, however, the grizzly bear crest of the Stikine Kaskakwedi resulted from an encounter within the historic period, as recorded in 1904 by Swanton:

At the time of the flood the Nanyaa'yi were climbing a mountain on the Stikine river, called Seku'qle-ca, and a grizzly bear and a mountain goat went along with them. Whenever the people stopped, these two animals stopped also, and whenever they moved on the animals moved on. Finally they killed the bear and preserved its skin with the claws, teeth and so forth, intact. They kept it for years after the flood, and as soon as it went to pieces, they replaced it with another, and that with still another up to the present time. This is why they claim the grizzly bear.... They were very proud of owning this bear and did all kinds of things toward it. That is why all Alaska speaks of the Nanyaa'yi as the chief ones owning the grizzly bear. Very many songs were composed concerning it, with words such as these, "Come here, you bear, the highest bear of all bears" (quoted in Holm 192).

The replacement of the skin described above by Chief Katishan likely refers to the bearskin worn over the performer's body, since the mask still wears its original skin. See also the \*bear-ornamented house partition screen, which

once stood in the home of the Shakes Dynasty who owned the grizzly bear mask.

Among the Kwakiutl, members of the Grizzly Bear Society wore bear paws complete with claws, or full bearskin costumes. In dances, the Grizzly Bear frightened the audience with his power, but his role was to act as a policeman to enforce proper behavior (Jonaitis 81).



## GROUNDHOG

*Right: Tlingit mask with a human face and rodent incisors. The mask was originally identified as a beaver mask, but that creature is not among the clan crests of the Stikine Nanyaa'yi, the original owners of the mask. Swanton mentions the groundhog in a list of Nanyaa'yi masks (Holm 204), 19th century. Burke Museum, University of Washington, Seattle.*

**Groundhog.** The groundhog or **marmot** (probably *Marmota monax*) played a role in Northwest Coast mythology, and thus appeared in dramatizations of myths, such as those of the Tlingit. The Shakes Dynasty of Nanyaa'yi chiefs owned such masks. Holm writes that the creature was appropriate since the ancestors of the Nanyaa'yi migrated from the interior to the coast, but retained a trade monopoly with the Athapaskan people of the interior. The groundhog, mountain goat, and grizzly bear all were said to have travelled with the people from their original homeland (Holm 204).

**Grouse.** Five species of the North American grouse family (*Tetraonidae*) are called grouse. Most are ground-dwelling birds, although some live in trees.