

## CHEROKEE LEGENDS

Cherokee legends make use of many animals. Sometimes the animals seem much like the Cherokee people with their own chiefs and council houses.



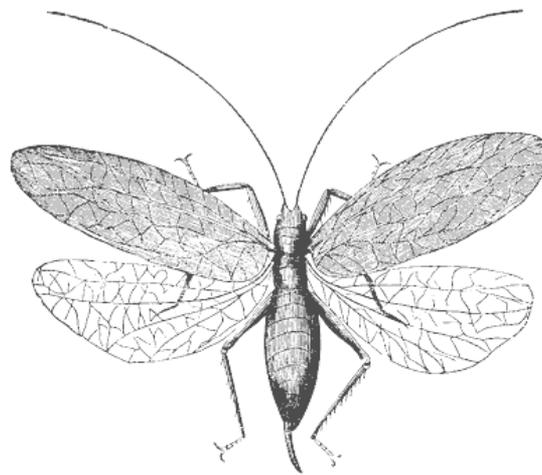
The bears were once part of the Cherokee people but were magically transformed into a race of bears. These bears had their own council houses and villages and chiefs. There are several Cherokee legends that involve bears.



The Cardinal (Red Bird) is said to have been helped by Wolf to get his red color. Another story describes how the spirit of the daughter of the Sun entered into the Red Bird.



The Cougar is featured in one Cherokee legend where a hunter was led to their underground village and danced with the cougars before returning to his own village.



One night as two Cherokee hunters camped, one of them made fun of the Katydid as it sang its song. But the Katydid spoke and predicted the death of that hunter, which happened unexpectedly the next day at the hands of enemies!



The Eagle was much respected in Cherokee legends and in everyday life. An Eagle could not be killed by anyone except an "Eagle Killer", usually from the Bird Clan. Eagle killers were trained by medicine people and had to go through complex rituals in the process of killing an eagle. The feathers and bones of the eagles were deemed to possess the same "Eagle Medicine" of the live bird. Eagle feathers were not worn into battle, but were used in the sacred ceremonies to impart spiritual power into them.



The Owl, if seen in the daytime and near a lodge or village, could be a bad omen of death. Nevertheless, a whole system of Owl Medicine emerged which was possessed by a few people. Those with Owl Medicine were helpful when there was a death in the family or danger of death. One with Owl Medicine can also see more clearly into dark mysteries and into the future.



The legend of the Uktena, a huge monster snake is prominent in Cherokee mythology. Uktena possess a bright red or multi-colored sparkling flashing crystal on its forehead. Anybody who kills Uktena and gains possession of the Ulunsuti (crystal), has special powers. The only way to kill Uktena is to shoot an arrow into the 7<sup>th</sup> spot down from the head, where lies a weak spot and also its heart. There are several Cherokee stories that feature the dreaded Uktena. Other Native American cultures have similar legends of a similar monster snake with special powers. "Snake Medicine" can be a good thing, however. # # #