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ANIMAL TALE

1. The taunting Grouse,
2. the blue Cuckoo,
3. a Swallow with love
4. and the forsaken Bat.

Finnish animal fairy tales provided by
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Footnotes and links:

[Explanation](#), [artist's note](#) and [hard to translate](#).

1. The taunting Grouse,

[Grouse](#), sat sadly at the base of a spruce branch and listened with his head tilted as prizes were handed out to others. It wondered what would be available for it, the unfortunate one. Grouse's fate was hard. Once, a long, long time ago, [Tapio and Mielikki](#), the forest elves, had ridden their horse along a dirt road. Seeing them, the grouse decided to try out how awesome it was. At that time, the grouse was still the size of a bull. It sprint from the gloomy spruce with such force that the ground shook, the horse bolted and began to gallop into the rocks and thicket, cutting off its legs. Tapio and Mielikki were horrified by what the grouse had done, and now they had to punish the grouse.

Because the grouse had done his work out of pride and arrogance, disregarding other creatures, the punishment was harsh. Sadly, Tapio and Mielikki told the grouse that it had to shrink, to the end of the world, as long as it could fly through a ring without touching the edges with its wings. It has become a saying that **the grouse is shrinking as before the end of the world¹** and therefore the grouse is a quiet bird of the gloomy, mournful wilderness.

The fox granted the grouse the permission to eat catkin from the trees, as well as a small whistle with which the grouse was slowly playing his sad tunes. The fox still gave to the [willow ptarmigan](#) a white winter coat and a variegated summer skirt, as well as permission for the [capercaillie](#) to eat the top needles and the great skill of dancing and singing, that it fainted at times.

The day had already progressed well into the evening, when the fox had handed out even the last prizes.

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¹ Old Finnish proverb: "pienenee kuin pyy maailmanlopun edellä". Need to verify the translation.

2. the blue Cuckoo,

Cuckoo, grayed, colorful side, flies to the top of the birch, singing in a graceful voice: COO-coo, COO-coo!

The animals immediately began to demand an explanation from it as to why it did not come to make the road, already there were few lazy people. Cuckoo said beautifully:

- Let me tell you. And the cuckoo started:

- In the old days, I was not a cuckoo, but a beautiful daughter of a king with a beautiful voice. Once I sigh how wonderful it would be if everyone could listen to my voice. And the elf heard my desires and turned me into a cuckoo, and the king's daughter is now flying and everyone is listening to me and I will bring the summer message to you all. But when I diligently fly from tree to tree all day, the little birds have to take care of my chicks in the meantime. I no longer have to build my own nest, but lay my eggs in the nests of small birds. They hatch my eggs and feed my chicks until they grow big. Because of such haste, I did not have the time to make the road, but I will sing to you even more, as long as you have mercy on me. COO-coo!

And the cuckoo was pardoned, and it was ordained that as long as it stayed still in one place, until finally coughed up, it did not need to go to every tree. So still to this day, the cuckoo ends it singing: COO-coo, COO-coo, ???-??-??!²

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² "kah-ka-ka!" Need to verify. It's about how the cuckoo ends its singing.

3. a Swallow with love

A [swallow](#), a scissor tail, circled and curved in the air. After hearing that the fox would soon begin to distribute punishments to the animals left out building the road, it decided to tell its own story.

- Before you give me the punishment, dear fox, listen to my story!

- Well tell me, sighed the fox, starting to get tired of eternal explanations.

- I haven't always been a swallow, but as a child, a lovely maiden, I grew up once in this beautiful land. I got to the marriageable age, got grooms and went to be the best one's spouse to the proud house of [Ilmola](#)³. But poor I did not know what trouble I would get into! I got such a vicious and mean mother-in-law that you wouldn't believe it without experiencing it yourself. I had barely slept one night in my new home when he drove me up, early in the morning, and made me weave the fabric. Well, I weaved. It was hard work, and my mother-in-law always cut the fabric I weaved and claimed I stole the scissors and threads, even though she knew she had hidden them herself. I finally got the fabric woven after soaking it in my tears throughout the day.

- After that, my mother-in-law ordered me to wash the walls of the house. I got a hard job again, because to tease me she beat the walls with an ax. I finally survived this job too, but a new one was already waiting.

- "Go heat the [sauna](#)," the mother-in-law commanded, and I went. I made a fire, but while I was going to pick up more wood, my mother-in-law went to put out the fire, throwing water into the furnace. Then she came to say that the sauna had gone out. I went to light the fire again. Again, my mother-in-law put out the fire, then entered the house angry and lied that I had put out the fire myself. I went to the sauna for the third time, made a fire and finally got the sauna heated. I, too, sowed, watched my gold ring, and wept my sad fate. My mother-in-law hated me and my groom was not protecting me. I sincerely hope to get out of this evil house.

³ Place in [Kalevala](#). [Universal place?](#)

- When I came back from the sauna to the house, I said to my mother-in-law: “I have experienced three hardships: weaving a knotted fabric, washing a loose wall and heating a sweaty stove. I don't want to suffer any more.” And so the Creator heard and saved me, turned me into a swallow. In vain did my groom try to capture me. My shirt just tore, I have a scissor tail to this day. This is how I got free from the mad house of Ilmola, and of that joy I sing and bring warmth when I come and **bring the summer with me**⁴.

After listening to the story of this swallow, the fox ordered:

- Because you're from people, you have to stay with people. You will build your nest under the eaves of houses or under timber and people will let you live in your nest in peace.

The swallow flit happily on his wings and twittered beautifully as it went.

- Is there any storyteller left, or can we quit already? would ask the fox.

When no one else appeared, the fox ordered that on the next day, for all of them who had not arrived at the roadwork, to be heard.

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⁴ Old nursery rhyme from Salajärvi, [Karelia](#):

“Kuu kiurusta kessään, puol kuuta peipposesta, västäräkistä vähäsen, **pääskyestä ei päivääkään.**”

“One month from the [lark](#) to the summer, half month from the [chaffinch](#), from the [wagtail](#) a little, **from the swallow not a day.**”

4. and the forsaken Bat.

When the fox thought that all the animals had already received their punishment, a bat, leather wing, night's nightingale⁵, flew to the scene.

- How do you get here so late? ask the fox.

The bat grimaced grimly, hanging from the tree branch head down.

- I came so late because I'm nocturnal. I only fly and prey at night and I never step on the ground with my foot. Therefore, the roads are useless to me. The explanation sounded plausible to the fox, but there was something strange about the bat, and the fox wasn't sure if this leather wing should be punished or not.

- What are you really, you look so dreary? You don't look like a bird even though you have wings and still you're flying in the air? the fox asked.

The bat grimaced again, showing his small, sharp teeth and replied:

- I'm the devil's bird. When the Creator created the swallow, gave it a black back, red under its chin, long scissors for its tail and let it fly beautifully, the devil became jealous. The devil looked at the Creator's business and said to itself, "Yes, I can do that too."

⁵ This is my own addition for affection. To me, personally, the saddest story. In e minor with forte. Deserves a grande finale.

- Then the devil started making a swallow. It sewed wings out of leather and put nails in them, placed long ears on its head like a rat, and finally tried to make its swallow fly. But it did not fly because the devil could not breathe life into his bird. So the devil asked the Creator to give it spirit. The Creator gave and so I got up and flew my way. But the devil was so disappointed in his creation that he ordered me to fly only at night, when as few as possible would see me.

The animals had quietly listened to the story of the bat and someone pointed out that the bat must be lying. But when no one knew any other explanation for its birth, the fox did not consider it to be reasonable to punish the bat any more, and let the leather wing fly in peace on its nocturnal journey of predation.

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Original:

Pirkko-Liisa Surojegin: Suomen lasten eläinsadut.

Kustannusosakeyhtiö Otava, 1997. Julkaistu toimittajan luvalla.

This rough translation with links:

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