

How Bluebirds and Coyotes Got Their Colors

a Native American Pourquoi Tale

Long ago, Bluebirds did not have the beautiful blue feathers they have now, and Coyote's coat was bright green.

One morning two dull Bluebirds were flying and chasing each other. They found a lake they hadn't seen before. It was like a giant puddle and it was a beautiful blue colour. From up in the sky the water looked so cool and inviting they dived down into it.

The Bluebirds bathed, splashing and singing "This water is so blue and we are in it. We will be blue too." They came back to the lake the next three mornings, bathed and sang the song again. On the next morning after that, when they flapped their wings under the water, their dull feathers came loose and dropped out. New shiny blue feathers grew in their place.

When the Bluebirds came back to the tree they usually rested in, Coyote was dozing under a nearby rock. He was very surprised to see their blue wings. "What have you done to your feathers?" he asked.

The Bluebirds twittered "We've renewed them and they'll always be blue now." Coyote wanted his coat to be blue too. "I hate my ugly green coat. How did you make your feathers blue and beautiful?" he said. "I want to be blue too."

The birds told Coyote about the blue lake, and how he needed to bathe on four mornings and sing the magic words - "This water is blue and I am in it. I will be blue too." They said "On the fifth morning your coat will turn blue. Be careful, Coyote. You must follow the rules and bathe each morning."

The next morning Coyote went to the lake and bathed. He was impatient. "I want my coat to be blue today" he said. "I'm not going to wait four mornings." So he jumped back in the water four times that morning.

On the fifth time, the hairs in Coyote's coat came loose and floated away, and new blue hairs grew in their place. He was very excited.

He ran out of the water and raced back along the track to show his beautiful new blue coat to the Bluebirds. But he was admiring his coat while he ran and wasn't looking where he was going. Because his feet were wet, he slipped and fell, rolling over and over in the dust and dirt.

He got up, shook himself and howled when he looked at his coat. It was no longer blue, but dirt-colored all over.

And that is why Bluebirds have shiny blue feathers and Coyote's coat is the color of dirt. He was impatient and didn't do as he was told.