ANIMAL TOTEMS

A collection of animal totems from around the world.
One of my favourite books!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! And this says it all so well.

Nearly all shamanic cultures believe in Animal Allies or helpers. These creatures have the appearance and many of the characteristics and behaviour patterns of ordinary animals, birds, and fish, but they can communicate with the shaman. Sometimes these animals become protectors and guides for the shaman, both while she/he is journeying in the Otherworlds and in the physical realm.

The Celts believed in individual Animal Allies or helpers, as shown by their legends, but they also had clan animals. Many of the Celtic clan names reflected this. Among the Native Americans these would be called totem animals. The Celtic clans had banners on which were displayed the picture or symbol of their clan animal, as with the banners of the Fianna. Individual devices were painted on shields and sometimes tattooed on the body. This may well be the origin of the heraldic devices that became so popular in later times.

Clan animals, like the individual Animal Allies, choose you; you do not choose them. The ancient shamanic way of finding an Animal Ally was to go on a journey to the Otherworld. There, the shaman watched it carefully; when she/he saw an animal, bird, fish, or other creature three or more times during the journey, the shaman knew she/he had been accepted by that creature. Although a shaman usually has one very important Animal Ally who is a close companion and protector during journeying, it is common to have several others who help with certain kinds of problems.

The following list gives many of the animals known to the Celts and told of in their legends and myths. By reading about their specific helping gifts, the shaman can understand why an animal may make an appearance during a meditation or journey. The animal may appear because the shaman needs help with a particular personal problem or trait, an immediate shamanic problem, or some event that will occur in the future. Animal Allies come and go, sometimes without explanation.

Read through the following list to become acquainted with the animals known to the Celts. Don’t try to memorize anything. As a shaman, you are only trying to get an over-all picture so you will know what to look for on a journey. And don’t be surprised if some animal not on the list shows up. This animal may be connected with a racial memory and be quite valuable to you.
Adder, Snake (Nathair): The snake has long been associated with wisdom, reincarnation, and cunning. The poisonous adder of the British Isles has the same reputation. The Druids were known in Wales as Nadredd; in the Fold of the Bards, Taliesin says "I am a wiseman, I am a serpent". The Druids carried an amulet called gloine nathair (serpent glass); although they said that this was formed by snakes, it was probably really an adder stone or blown glass. In the Scottish Highlands, the adder symbolized the Cailleach's power. When you see a snake while on a shamanic journey, prepare to shed something in favor of something greater and better.

Badger (Broc): This animal is unyielding in the face of danger and is noted for its tenacity and courage. In the Welsh tale of Pwyll's courting of Rhiannon, a badger is mentioned as a guide during dreaming. The badger will teach you to fight for your rights and defend your spiritual ideas.

Bat (Ialtag): Associated with the Underworld; as the bat's radar helps it to avoid obstacles and barriers, so it can teach you to do the same thing.

Bear (Arth): Although the bear was native to the Isles, it is now extinct there. Evidence of its being a totem animal is found in many Celtic designs; although it is not mentioned in the legends. The word "arth", which means "bear", is the root word for the name Arthur. The bear was noted for its strength and stamina. It can help you find balance and harmony in your life, and the strength to do what is necessary.

Bee (Beach): The bee is usually mentioned in connection with honey and mead, which was made from honey. The bee is industrious, single-minded when performing a task, and fearless when defending its home.

Blackbird (Druid-dhubh, Lon Dubh): Legend says that the birds of Rhiannon are three blackbirds, which sit and sing in the World Tree of the Otherworlds. Their singing puts the listener into a sleep or trance which enables her/him to go to the Otherworlds. It was said to impart mystic secrets.

Boar (Bacrie, Torc): Important to the art and myths of the Celtic peoples, the boar was known for its cunning and ferocious nature. Once common throughout the British Isles. A famous Irish legendary boar was Orc Triath, which the Goddess Brigit owned. In the Arthurian tales of the Mabinogion the boar Twrch Trwyth was a terrible foe to Arthur. The White Boar of Marvan sent inspiration to its master to write music and poetry.
Bull (Tarbh): A common animal-figure in Celtic mythology, the bull symbolized strength and potency. Certain divination rituals required the sacrifice of a white bull. In the tale of the Tain Bo Cuilgne (Cattle Raid of Cooley), two special bulls are coveted by two rulers. The Taroo-Ushtey (Water Bull) is said to haunt the Isle of Man.

Butterfly (Dealan-Dé: Many cultures call butterflies the souls of the dead and the keepers of power. No negative energies will be experienced in any Otherworld area where you see butterflies. They will teach you to free yourself from self-imposed restrictions and to look at problems with greater clarity.

Cat (Caoit, Cat): Many of the Celtic legends pictured the cat as a ferocious, evil creature, but that may have been because cats at that time were untamed. However, it was considered a potent totem animal of several clans: Caithness was named after the clan of the Catti. In Ireland Finn mac Cumhail was said to have fought a clan of "cat-headed" people, probably Celts who wore cat skins on their helmets. The cat is a strong protector, especially when facing a confrontational situation.

Cock (Coileach): In several Celtic legends, the cock chases away ghosts and other night terrors by his crowing at dawn. It represents the power of the word to dispel negativity.

Cow (Bo): Once so important to the Celts that it was considered a form of currency or monetary exchange. Ancient Irish lords were known as bo-aire or cow-lord. The cow was sacred to the Goddess Brigit. The cow symbolizes contentedness, defending the inner child, and providing for daily needs.

Crane (Corr): At one time the crane was a common animal in the British Isles. One late Celtic tradition, apparently originated after the arrival of Christianity, is that cranes are people who are paying a penance for wrong-doing. The crane is associated with the Cailleach and Manannan mac Lir, who made his crane bag from its skin. The crane, with its colors of black, white, and red, was a Moon bird, sacred to the Triple Goddess. Magic, shamanic travel, learning and keeping secrets, reaching deeper mysteries and truths.
Crow (Badb, Rocas): This animal is to treated with care. Along with the raven, the crow is a symbol of conflict and death, an ill-omen associated with such Goddess as Macha, Badb, and the Morrigan. The Irish word for crow is badb, which is also the name of a Celtic war Goddess. Although the crow was ill-omened, it was also considered to be skillful, cunning, single-minded, and a bringer of knowledge. It is of value when trickery is needed. It also teaches you to learn from the past, but not hold onto it.

Deer (Fiadh) or Stag (Sailetheach, Damh): In its form of the White Doe or White Stag, the deer was often a messenger and guide from the Otherworlds. Following such an animal led the unsuspecting human into contact with supernatural beings. The antlered headdress of Cernunnos may have been copied by Celtic shamans as apparel in their rituals. THe deer represents keen scent, grace swiftness, and gentleness. There are ways of reaching your goals other than force.

Dog (Abach, Madadh) or Hound (Cù): Devoted hounds are often mentioned in Celtic myths, such as Bran and Sceolan which belonged to Finn mac Cumhail. Underworld hounds, such as the Welsh Cwn Annwn belonging to Arawn, are always white with red ears. The Underworld Hounds run down and punish the guilty. Dogs represent tracking skills, the ability to scent a trail, and companionship.

Dolphin: This creature was associated with sea deities. It deals with dreams and harmony, and recognizing an balancing the rhythms of your body with those of nature.

Dragon (Piastras (payshtha), Horm): The dragon in Celtic-British mythology has more varieties than the standard legged form; it is sometimes represented as a water serpent or worm-shaped beast. There are many references to serpents or dragons in Celtic myths. On many occasions the Fianna fought huge dragons in lakes. One likely center of the serpent (dragon) was the sacred site of Kildare, under the protection of the Goddess Brigit. Most cultures considered the dragon a benevolent dweller of caves, lakes, and the inner Earth. It was an ancient symbol of wealth. The dragon symbolized the power of the Elements, especially that of the Earth, but also of the treasure of the subconscious mind. It may appear at initiation.

Eagle (Iolair, Fireun): A bird noted for wisdom and long life in Celtic stories. The eagle represents swiftness, strength, keen sight, and the knowledge of magick. It helps you to see hidden spiritual truths.
**Eel (Eas-Ganu):** The eel is mentioned in several Celtic legends, one of which is the story of the two swineherds who battled through a variety of shape-shifting forms. In their final form as eels, the swineherds were swallowed by cows who later gave birth to magickal bulls. Cu Chulainn’s spear Gae-Bolga got its name from the eel. The Morrigan took on the form of an eel when she had a magickal battle with the hero. The eel symbolizes adaptability, wisdom, inspiration, and defense.

**Fox (Madadh-Ruadh, Sionnach):** In *Taliesin’s Song of His Origins*, the Bard says he assumed the shape of a satirizing fox, a reference to the cunning, slyness, and ability of the fox to make fools out of those who chase it. The ability to watch the motivations and movements of others while remaining unobserved yourself.

**Frog (Losgrinn):** In many cultures, the frog is a symbol of shamanism and magick. It can teach you to leap swiftly from one level of consciousness to another, from this world to the Otherworlds. The frog can also help you find the courage to accept new ideas, nurture yourself, and find connections between ideas.

**Griffin:** This mythical beast has the head and wings of an eagle, and the body and tail of a lion. It teaches the shaman to combine various positive traits in strength, yet maintaining discretion and seeing the truth. The protective griffin symbolizes great magick and power.

**Hare (Gèarr) or Rabbit (Coinean):** An animal sacred to the Goddess Andraste in particular. Its movements were sometimes used for divination; Boadicea used a hare this way just before her last battle with the Romans. Associated with transformation, the receiving of hidden teachings, and intuitive messages.

**Hawk (Seabhag):** Celtic oral tradition lists the oldest animal as the hawk of Achill. As with other birds, the hawk is a messenger between the Otherworlds and this world. However, it is of greater skill and strength than other birds. It symbolizes clear-sightedness and far-memory. If you hear a hawk cry during a journey, be alert to upcoming situations that need boldness and decisiveness to keep from being thrown off balance.

**Hedgehog:** This prickly little creature often shows a need for less defensiveness and seriousness. Appreciate life more.
**Heron (Corra-Griothach):** Many of the myths and attributes of the crane are shared by this bird.

**Horse (Each):** A popular totem animal of the Celts; sacred to the Goddesses Epona and Rhiannon. The horse was considered to be a faithful guide to the Otherworlds. It symbolizes stamina, endurance, and faithfulness.

**Lizard (Dearc):** One of the few reptiles recognized as helpful to the shaman. It symbolizes the shadowy plane of manifestation where events are constantly changing shapes and patterns. If you see a lizard on a journey, be alert to all below-the-surface activities going on around you.

**Lynx:** This creature is the keeper of deep secrets and hidden knowledge. It can help with divinatory skills and the development of psychic senses. Sometimes it symbolizes the need to look deeper within yourself and see what is hidden.

**Magpie (Pioghaid):** This bird deals with omens and prophecies; the mysteries of life and death.

**Mouse (Luch):** The mouse is often mentioned in Celtic folklore. In one Welsh story concerning Manawydan and Pryderi, a mouse is portrayed as the shape-shifted wife of the magician Llwyd. The mouse represents secrets, cunning, shyness, the ability to hide in times of danger. Its appearance often signals a need to pay attention to small details, such as the fine print in contracts or the double meaning in words.

**Otter (Cù-dubh or Dòbhran):** These animals were considered very magickal by the Celts. During the voyages of Maelduine, Brendan and others, these traveling Celts were met by helpful otters. The otter is a strong protector who helps with gaining wisdom, finding inner treasures or valuable talents, faithfulness, and the ability to recover from any crisis. Enjoy life instead of just enduring it.

**Owl (Cailleach, Oidhche, Comachag):** These birds were most often associated with the Crone aspect of the Goddess. The word "cailleach" in the Scottish-Gaelic means "owl". The owl is often a guide to and through the Underworld, a creature of keen sight in darkness, and a silent and swift hunter. It can help unmask those who would deceive you or take advantage of you.
**Pig (Muc):** It was considered to be the magickal, sacred food the Tuatha de Danann and an animal of Manannan mac Lir. In the *Mabinogion* Pwyll received a gift of pigs from the Underworld god Arawn. The writings of Merlin say that he spoke with a little pig in visions. Symbolic of the spiritual food necessary to the shaman.

**Rat (Radan):** Rats are not mentioned in a favorable light in Celtic folklore, but hey have their place in shamanic journeys. Rats are sly, sometimes aggressive, creatures who can track down whatever they seek, defending themselves with great ferociousness.

**Raven (Fitheach):** Take care when dealing with this bird. An important totem animal of the Celts. In Ireland the raven was associated with the battlefields and such goddesses as the Morrígan or later Welsh Morrigan, just as was the crow. The bird was connected with Bran the Blessed; in Welsh *bran* means "raven". Although its reputation is dubious, it is an oracular bird. It often represents the upsets and crises of life that are necessary for anything new to be created.

**Salmon (Bradan):** A very wise, magickal creature in Celtic lore. A salmon of great knowledge is said to swim in the Well of Segais, eating the mystical hazelnuts that fall into the well. This salmon is said to be as old as time itself and knows everything past and future. When the Irish hero Finn mac Cumhail burned his thumb on a salmon and then put the thumb in his mouth, he gained shamanic knowledge. The salmon teaches you how to get in touch with ancestral knowledge and put it to practical use.

**Seagull (Faoilleann):** Seagulls do not figure in Celtic legends. However, they are connected to sea deities, such as the god Manannan mac Lir and the goddess Don. Like other birds, they are messengers from the Otherworlds.

**Sow (Airc, Muc):** The Goddess Cerridwen is known as the White Sow. The sow was considered a very powerful creature in the Otherworlds, particularly the Underworld. As a creature of Cerridwen, it was associated with the Sacred Cauldron and the granting of inspiration; also a creature of death and rebirth.

**Squirrel (Feòrag):** This creature is always preparing for the future; it can show the shaman how to do this in a practical way. Sometimes its appearance heralds changes, even adversities. Plan ahead so that you have time, resource, and energy stored.

**Swan (Eala):** A mystical bird who figures in several Celtic stories. Its feathers were often used in the ritual cloak of the Bards. Swans are connected with music and song. Swans also help with the interpretation of dream symbols, transitions, and spiritual evolution.
**Turtle:** The turtle is a slow-moving, methodical creature, carrying its protection constantly with it. It can teach the shaman to be grounded, how to stay in tune with Earth energies, the wisdom of flowing with the cycles of life, and to be gentle with the body's needs.

**Unicorn (Briabhall):** This mythic animal had the body of a white horse, the legs of an antelope, and the tail of lion; a single horn was on its head. It is the symbol of supreme magickal power. It teaches that every action is creation, so make every day counts. It also helps to understand the relationship between physical and spiritual realities.

**Wolf (Madadh-alluidh):** The wolf is a cunning, intelligent creature, capable of out-thinking hunters. It can teach you how to read the signs of Nature in everything, how to pass by danger invisibly, how to outwit those who wish you harm, and how to fight when needed. Sometimes the world, seen on a journey, will lead you to a spiritual teacher and guide.

**Wren (Dreathan-Donn, Dreòlan):** A sacred bird to the Druids, its musical notes were used for divination. As with many other birds, the wren was considered a messenger from the deities.
Aside from Celtic totems there are of course, animals world-wide:

Alligator: Maternal power, revenge, quickness, aggression, basic survival instincts

Ant: Determination, industrious nature, hard-working, following a group mentality, action, patience, being a team player

Anteater: Lethargy, curiosity, nosiness

Antelope: Action, agility, sacrifice, jumpiness

Armadillo: Safety, boundaries, medicine shield, being grounded

Badger: Courage, aggression, healer, energy conduit, earth knowledge, having problems relating to others

Bat: Rebirth, longevity, secrecy & initiation, good listener, viewing past lives, letting go of our fears of or misinformation that no longer serves us

Bear: Watcher, world-guardian, giver of strength, courage/willpower, self-preservation, introspection, going inside yourself for answers, studying the importance of dreams, instinct, healing

Beaver: Overseer, strong will, determination, builder, protector

Bee: Organizer, productivity, wisdom, fertility, defensiveness, having an obsessive nature

Boar: Exemplary of the life-giving energy of the sun

Buffalo: Abundance, gratitude, strength, prayer

Bull: Insight into the past, fertility, rushing into things without proper preparation

Butterfly: Balance, transformation/metamorphosis, successful project, grace, ability to accept change

Caribou: Traveler, mobility, preference to be nomadic, adaptability to adversity

Cat: Hunter, meditation, independence, quick recovery, freedom of thought, seeing that the physical and spiritual realms are one

Cheetah: Swiftness, insight, focus

Cougar: Leadership, loyalty, courage, taking responsibility for your life, foresight
Cow: Moveable wealth, value, providing for daily needs, the power of community sharing

Coyote: Stealth, mischief, recognizing your mistakes, ability to laugh at yourself, bedevilment, clowning around, enforcer of karmic laws

Crane: Solitude, justice, longevity, vigilance, intelligence

Crocodile: Ensuring your emotions are displayed accurately/appropriately

Crow: Justice, balance, releasing past beliefs, greed, resourcefulness

Deer: Compassion, peace, gentleness, sensitivity, kindness, unconditional love

Dog: Loyalty, friendship, nobility

Dolphin: Wisdom/happiness, depth of emotions, playfulness, harmony, intelligence, communication, helper with dream interpretations, childlike, sexual

Dove: Cross-world communication, spirit messenger, peace, gentleness, love

Dragon: Riches/Prosperity (can be intuitive/spiritual rather than material), knows the answer to riddles, ancient wisdom, longevity, infinity

Dragonfly: Instruction on breaking through illusions (especially those that are self-created), gaining power through dreams, imagination, higher aspirations, carefree nature

Duck: Water energy, helper of seers, can clearly see/deal with emotions

Eagle: Rising, sun-circling, potency, freedom, illumination, connection to the soul/creator

Elephant: Importance of discernment, affection, loyalty, caring for young/old/sick, peaceful strength, wisdom, royalty, regality

Elk: Power, majesty, pride, agility, honoring your gender

Falcon: New beginnings, adventure, leadership, healing the soul

Ferret: See "Weasel"

Fish: Gracefulness, slyness, open-minded, quick to change one's mind

Fox: Cleverness, discretion, cunning, quick wit, camouflage
Frog: Emotional healing, cleansing, peace, change, adaptability, jumping from the material to the spiritual, water energy, poor character judgment

Gazelle: The soul, aggressiveness

Giraffe: Communication, intuition, attaining the unreachable, seeing the future

Goat: Surefootedness, stubbornness, independence, diligence, lack of foresight

Goose: Demanding of oneself, reliable, rigid, love of home, safe return, ever-searching nature

Gorilla: Family-oriented, intelligence, strength, environmental protector, keeps peace through aggression

Grouse: Personal power, self-teaching, intuition, enlightenment

Hawk: All-seeing, observation, truth, awareness, perceptiveness, representative of primal life force

Hedgehog: Defensiveness, self-preservation, abrasive personality, possessing a solitary nature

Horse: Freedom, beauty through strength, movement, mobility, stamina, mobility, message-carrier, astral travel, sharing power with others

Hummingbird: Fierce warrior, pleasure, feathers bear love magic, job, ability to see beauty, easily distracted

Iguana: Patience, understanding

Jaguar: Chaos, shape-shifting, psychic empowerment

Lion: Royalty, sun-symbol, courageous guardian, protector, pride, leadership, wisdom, power, family, the power of feminine energy

Lizard: Vision, letting go, self-protection, brings forth subconscious hopes and fears, conservation, letting go of the ego, dream recall, hidden defenses, knowing when to back off

Llama: Comforting others

Loon: Serenity, good orator, judgmental, can come across as uncaring or unsympathetic
Lynx: Secret-keeper, guardian, guide, listener, manifestation of spiritual force and controlled power

Manatee: Gentleness, loving, childlike

Monkey: Ability to change the environment, health, success

Moose: Headstrong, longevity, steadfastness, wisdom, self-esteem

Moth: Transformation, movement into shadows, finding the light

Mouse: Eye for detail, noticing the little things, scrutiny, organizer

Nightingale: Soft-tempered, easy demeanor, soothing speaker, graceful movements, keeper of the night

Octopus: Protection through distraction, intelligence, getting past negative barriers, multifaceted, skilled in many areas

Opossum: Diversion, deceit, strategy, sensibility

Otter: Joy, laughter, Lightness, dynamic energy, playfulness and the importance of playtime, freedom from jealousy or suspicion, feminine power and nurturing

Owl: Wise, watcher, fate-seer, riddler, silence, vision, insight, seeing hidden motives in others, clairvoyance

Ox: Sacrifice, self-denial, chastity

Panda: Importance of slow, determined pace, adaptability

Panther: Protection, hidden emotions, introspection, caution, careful decisions

Parrot: Communication, beauty, guide for wisdom, mockery, thinking before speaking

Peacock: Immortality, dignity, self-confidence

Penguin: Father-nurturing, patience, astral projection, sexes working together, family orientation

Pig: See "Sow"

Polar Bear: Solitude, overcoming adversity, rebirth, patience, spirit communication, strength, breaking through emotional barriers

Porcupine: Innocence, trust, companionship, humility
Possum: See "Opossum"

Prairie Dog: Swiftness, industrious, constructive, preparedness

Puma: Companion on journeys to other worlds, grace, silent power

Quail: Group-work, team play, creator of harmony and group tolerance, protectiveness (especially toward children)

Rabbit: Fertility, fear, timidity, humility, hidden skills, borrower

Raccoon: Curiosity, cleanliness

Rat: Fertility, stealth, scavenging, intelligence, enjoys luxury

Raven: Trickster, introspection, self-knowledge, wise in oracles/omens, messenger, mystery, otherworldly travel, watcher for the gods, need to make changes in the way you perceive things

Rooster: Vanity, likes to be showered with gifts and attention, early riser, settling for nothing less than the best

Salamander: Hidden things or traits, camouflage in the face of adversity

Salmon: Determination, persistence, pride, intensity, trusting but not trustworthy

Seagull: Versatility, loud, easy-going nature, creativity, laziness

Seahorse: Confidence, grace, male energy, good at dealing with emotions, courtship posturing, beauty of the ocean

Seal: Contentment, lucid dreaming, protection from danger, creativity, listening to our inner voice, gentleness, adaptability, talkative, playfulness

Shark: Survival, hunter, adaptability, power, danger, senses injury, ever-moving

Sheep: Group comfort, warmth, patience, fertility, rebirth

Skunk: Presence, reputation, self-respect, expression of the self without ego

Snail: Perseverance, tender nature (sometimes despite a cold façade)

Snake: Transformation, sexual potency, prophecy, life-force, letting go the things that no longer serve you, impulsiveness
Sow: Earth magic, intelligence, things sacred, ancestral knowledge

Spider: Fate, creativity, seeing how things you do in the present affect your future, balance between past and future

Squirrel: Anticipation of future, planning ahead, being prepared, swiftness

Stag: Forest-lord, masculine regeneration, giver of bounty and beauty, mystical signs

Stork: Messenger of rebirth

Swan: Guide into dreams, handling change with grace and dignity, dream interpretation, divination, spiritual growth

Tiger: Passion/sensuality, silent solitary power, heightened sense of touch, valor

Toad: Altered state of consciousness, changing luck, adversity, longevity, courtship via the use of sound

Tortoise: Feeling at home anywhere, grounding, patience, peaceful nature, ancient wisdom, feminine energy and healing, psychic protection

Turkey: Generosity, sharing, patience, attentiveness, following the group, challenge

Turtle: Shyness, nurturing, mother energy, protection, healing, knowledge, grounded, earth magic

Unicorn: Making dreams come true, virtue, beauty, weather patterns, connection with the woodland and the beings within

Walrus: Trickster, solitude, appreciates individuality and creativity, can be disrespectful of others

Weasel: Seeing beneath the surface for intent/meaning, developing clairaudience, ingenuity, paying attention to inner voice, keen, tricky, revenge, cunning, playful, observant

Whale: Wisdom of the ages, provider, intelligence, kindness, gentle nature, highly psychic and intuitive, telepathic, clairaudient, record-keeping

Wolf: Pathfinder for the human spirit, knowledge, teaching skill, helping in finding the life-path, loyalty, cooperation, free spirited, mating for life, facing death with dignity, perseverance, fighting only when necessary, taking advantage of change

Woodpecker: Sensitivity, protection, devotion
Yak: Ancient wisdom, understanding of higher purpose, self-doubt, lack of control over emotions

Zebra: Seeing things in stark contrast, certainty, individuality amidst a crowd, balance, trusting your path