



What Animals Guide You?

When I was very young (about three years old) I had a dream that repeated quite often. I was myself looking inside a box filled with cute little kittens. I would start petting them and enjoy watching them roll around with each other inside the box. At one point in the dream the all black kitten would jump out of the box and start to grow. It grew so much I became uncomfortable and started to run away from the now large cat, getting more and more frightened as this newly formed Black

Panther chased after me. At this point I would wake up from my dream screaming, "CAT!!!" This continued until one night I summoned up my young and inexperienced courage, turned, and asked Cat why he kept chasing me. His answer was a complete surprise when he clearly said, "I am not chasing you, I am trying to run along with you."

Cat has been with me since then. He is the one I called to my side (always my right side) appearing when I needed strength, bravery, courage, and my inner warrior. It wouldn't be until many years later that I read about animal guides.

Around the same young age (again before school age) a sparrow would land on the windowsill of my bedroom each morning and reassure me that I was loved. Each day, never fail, during rain, snow, or fair weather my sparrow would always show up with the same message. This comforted me greatly. Once my family moved out of the apartment when I was ten, the actual bird with its messages of love switched to a feeling of a sparrow's light presence on my left shoulder whenever I needed that loving reassurance in my life. When I was experiencing times of change, when I had self-doubts, or just feeling down and unloved there was the feeling of her little presence on my shoulder, never failing to bring me love and help me learn to adapt to my situation.

By the time I started school I had not just one but two animal guides in place to support and guide me. Fast forwarding decades later to a time when I was astonished to find information on animal guides. Now, I knew they were there for *me* but I don't think I got the classic "aha" moment until I read about Native Americans discovering their animal guides. There were other people who recognized that animals were by their side to help them!

I discovered that the first animal you meet according to many Native American tribes' tradition is your right side animal guide and represents your "male side" who teaches you how to summon your courage and warrior spirit. The second animal that appears for you is your left side animal guide and represents your "female side" who teaches you about all facets of nurturing (for yourself and others). Needless to say this information intrigued me. Here were two very different animals that showed up in my very young life but are now just a thought away when I need their supportive input.

So how do you rediscover these two important animal guides (there are actually a total of nine that complete your personal animal guidance picture); or maybe have never forgotten. Maybe you had experiences like mine when you were young. An animal kept appearing in a dream; or an animal showed up repeatedly to you whether you felt a pull to it or not. Think back as far as you can go in your memory. The first animal is your "right side" guide; the second is your "left side" guide. Still don't have a clue? To help remember ask yourself some of the following:

- Do you have any affinity to a certain animal that has persisted through your life?
- Did you ever have multiple dreams about one particular animal?
- Have you had an actual animal keep showing up when you are young? Has it continued through your lifetime?
- Did you always like the same animal character and children's books, TV, or movies no matter what part it played?
- Was there a particular animal that you had to be "dragged away" from when you went to the zoo because you loved watching it, even if it was just sleeping!
- Is there a certain kind of animal that just speaks to you?

Remember these tips:

1. Don't reject any animal that presented himself to you even though he may have frightened you, attacked you, bitten you, or you think the animal is not the right fit to your personality.
2. Don't neglect any segment of the animal world: mammals, fish, reptiles, birds, insects etc.

Once you know your "right and left" animal guides, then and only then, start investigating the qualities. They really pick you, you don't pick them.

With Gratitude,

Kai