

Legend of The Storm Bird

Illini Tribe

Long ago, when only animals walked the earth, the Storm Bird lived in a cave by the river. He would swoop down upon a buffalo herd and drive his terrifying claws into the fattest one, carrying it off to his cave to eat. His cave was lined with buffalo bones.

The beast had the head of a bear, horns of an elk, the body of a fish and bear's legs ending in eagle's claws. His tail was at least fifty feet long and wound three times around his body.

After the Illini people arrived on the earth, Storm Bird captured one of their warriors. From that day on, the tribe was threatened by his existence. A loud screech and the sound of flapping wings warned them that Storm Bird was coming out of his cave. Everyone knew that they had to do something to destroy this monstrous beast, but no one had an answer.

Ortega was the great Chief of the Illinis. He announced to his people that he was determined to find a way to kill the beast. As part of their tribal ritual, he withdrew in solitude to fast and seek a vision. He prayed to the Great Spirit to show him a way to conquer the Storm Bird.

When Chief Ortega returned, he directed his people to hide in their teepees. He then dispatched his best warriors to the brush surrounding an open point of land, directly opposite of Storm Bird's cave.

Dressed in his war bonnet, Ortega took his stand upon the point of land. He held carried no weapons. Storm Bird watched the Chief for a long time. He then began to screech and roar louder than ever before. Eyeing the Chief with his huge clenched teeth, he opened his huge web-like wings and charged at him.

Ortega stood his ground, chanting the death song. Instantly, the hidden warriors let their arrows fly. The Storm Bird was struck from all sides with a hundred arrows and fell dead.