

# Why the Owl Has Big Eyes

Iriquois

Raweno, the Everything-Maker, was busy creating various animals. He was working on Rabbit, and Rabbit was saying: "I want nice long legs and long ears like a deer, and sharp fangs and claws like a panther."

"I do them up the way they want to be; I give them what they ask for," said Raweno. He was working on Rabbits hind legs, making them long the way Rabbits had ordered.

Owl, still unformed, was sitting on a tree nearby and waiting his turn. He was saying: "Whoo, whoo, I want a nice long neck like swan's, and beautiful red feathers like Cardinal's, and nice long beak like Egret's, and nice crown of plumes like Heron's. I want you to make me in to the most beautiful, the fastest, the most wonderful of all the birds."

Raweno said: "be quite. Turn around and look the other direction. Even better close your eyes. Don't you know that no one is allowed to watch me work?"

Raweno was just then making Rabbit's ears every long, the way Rabbit wanted them.

Owl refused to do what Raweno said. "Whoo, whooo," he said replied, "nobody can forbid me to watch, Nobody can order me to close my eyes. I like watching you, and watch I will."

Then Raweno became angry, He grabbed Owl, pulling him down from his branch, stuffing his head deep into his body, shaking him until his eyes grew big with fright, pulling at his ears until they were sticking up at both sides of his head.

"There," said Raweno, "that'll teach you. Now you won't be able to crane your neck to watch things you shouldn't watch. Now you have big ears to listen when some one tells you what not to do. Now you have big eyes--but not so big that you watch me, because you'll be awake only at night, and i work by day. And your feathers won't be red like cardinal's, but gray like this" and Raweno rubbed Owl all over with mud---"as punishment for your disobedience." So owl flew off. pouting: 'Whoo, whoo, whoo.'

Then Raweno turned back to finish Rabbit, but Rabbit had been so terrified by Raweno's anger, even though it was not at him, that he run off half done. As a consequence. only rabbit's hind legs are long, and he has to hop about instead of walking and running. Also, because he took then, rabbit has remained a friend of most everything, and he never got the claws and fangs he asked for in order to

defend himself. Had he not run away then, Rabbit would have been an altogether different animal.

As for owl, he remained as Raweno had shaped him in anger--with big eyes, a short neck, and ears sticking up on the sides of his head. On top of everything, he has to sleep during the day and come out only at night.