

## The Yokut Indian Myth Of Creation

The Yokut Indians believed that a great flood had covered the earth with water, and that there no living creatures on the land at the time. Then one day, a giant eagle appeared in the sky with a crow riding on its back. They circled until they found a stump on which to land.

Resting on the stump, the birds could see fish which would occasionally leap from the water. The two decided to have a friendly competition to see which could catch the most fish. They always shared their catch.

While surveying the waters for fish, the birds would always wander off in search of land, but would never find it. They would always return to their home on the stump. They began to wonder how they could create land on which to live. They knew they could not dive deep to the bottom and bring up dirt, and the fish couldn't help except for being made into a meal. They pondered this every day.

One day, while sitting on their stump, a duck approached. They watched as it dove deep in the water, bringing fish to the surface to be devoured. Occasionally, the duck would surface with a bill full of mud. The birds began to wonder if the duck could bring up enough dirt to build land. They hatched a plot to catch fish for duck in exchange for dirt. After a short time, the duck realized what the birds wanted and began to exchange dirt for fish. Both the crow and the eagle began accumulating piles of mud on opposite sides of their stump, and the land began to grow quickly.

They both realized that duck was working hard and that together they were building a new land. They agreed to share it equally.

From time to time crow and eagle would wander off, searching for signs of land but never finding any. But they did begin to notice one thing . . . the water level around their stump was getting lower. They decided that the flood must be coming to an end.

One day, eagle flew off in search of land and did not return until the evening. He was pleased to discover that his mud pile had grown, but noticed that crow's pile had grown much larger while he was away. The two birds argued about the situation, but eagle finally decided to take things in to his own hands.

The next day, eagle began giving duck two fish which resulted in his getting twice as much mud as crow. All three continued to work hard for a long time. Eventually, eagle's half of the new land became bigger than crow's because of eagle's double effort to provide duck with fish. Crow never realized why eagle's half of the land had grown so much larger.

One morning, the two peered in to the water and were able to see the bottom. At last they could see land, and the mud that duck had worked so hard to bring to the surface and build the new land. They thought that they may soon have a new land on which to live.

But that night, a tremendous storm rolled in. Crow and eagle dug holes in their mud piles and crawled in for shelter. It rained all night long, washing away a large portion of their new land.

The next morning, the birds saw a rainbow arcing across the sky. Eagle flew away for a closer look, but soon returned when the rainbow disappeared. The duo decided that the previous evening's rain storm had passed, so they began re-building their two halves of the new world.

Each passing day saw the flood water receding more and more. Land became exposed, but the two birds halves of the world were much taller than the previously flooded land. Eagles continued to grow larger while crow's was smaller in size. It remained that way, creating what is now California.

The eagle's larger half of the world is now called the mighty "Sierra Nevada Mountains" on the eastern border of the state. The crow's half is known as the "California Coastal Mountain Range", which is smaller than the Sierra Nevada. Indians honor the eagle as a brave and strong creature because of his efforts, while the crow is considered to be of less stature