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Just like you and me, birds can talk to one another but they use their own special words. I know, because my pet jay taught me their secrets. Now, I will tell you all about it.



If you ever hear a swallow twitter, listen carefully, it's not just bird talk, and she is really giving advice to her young. "Keep off the edge of the nest," she will twitter, or tell them, "Don't shout at me, take your turn with the food!" Or maybe she will be saying, "Look out! It's the cat!" And you will see all their tiny heads disappear deep down into the nest.

If you hear the beautiful notes of the nightingale on moonlit nights, remember that she sings to call her love, and the sparrow twittering on the hedgerow is warning the other birds to beware of the hawk.

The chaffinch and the blue tit were talking in the garden.



“Listen!” says the chaffinch. “That tapping is the woodpecker.” “Tap! Tap! Tap! Why is he tapping?” asked the blue tit. “He is looking for the squirrel,” replied the chaffinch, “listen, and I’ll tell you how it came about.”

The blue tit settled himself more comfortably on the branch and his friend began the tale.

One day, a squirrel found some little nuts. Ripping off the leafy jacket, he bit into the nut inside. It was juicy and sweet. Nothing tasted quite like his first hazelnut. In the autumn, he would fill the hollow of the tree with hazelnuts, so he would not have to search for food in winter.





During the sunny autumn weather, he collected the hazelnuts, storing them carefully in a big pile until he had enough to last the whole winter.

Then one morning, when he was checking his store, he trod on a shell. What! An empty shell! But he had not touched the hazelnuts. Not one, though he had often longed to crunch one. What had happened?

As he moved the covering twigs, he was horrified to see that most of his store had gone. Someone had stolen his winter food! The squirrel was so upset that for a while he just sat on the branch of a tree and wept. And now he



would go hungry in the cold winter. He must catch the thief before he took all that were left in the tree. He did not know it was the greedy woodpecker who ate his food.

At last the squirrel devised a plan. He would hide right at the back of the hollow tree and catch the thief when he arrived.



Next day, as the squirrel hid, along came the woodpecker, ready for his lunch. What a surprise he

had! The squirrel jumped out and cried, "Got you, you thief!"

But the woodpecker was too quick, and turned round to fly away. In a flash, the squirrel pounced, catching the woodpecker's tail feathers in his claws.

"Please let me go," begged the woodpecker, twisting and turning to free himself.

"No," said the squirrel.

At last the woodpecker managed to free himself, leaving his tail feathers in the grip of the squirrel. He ran for his life and did not look back.

"Oh dear, what a fright I look without my tail," said the poor woodpecker.



Bravely he went back to the hollow tree to beg the squirrel to return his lovely tail to him. This time he did not enter the hollow



tree, but tapped gently on the bark of the tree with his beak. But the squirrel had gone, taking the rest of the nuts with him. He would find a safe hiding place, out of reach of the greedy woodpecker. Tap! Tap! Tap! went the woodpecker, knocking at every tree, but there was no answer. To this day he does it, but no one ever answers. And that is where the woodpecker lost his tail.

The little blue tit had listened carefully to the story the chaffinch told him.

Then he said, "I don't think you are right, after all. I think the woodpecker taps the trees to dislodge the grubs from the inside, so that

he can eat them. I don't think he is looking for his tail at all."

Who do you think is right?





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