

Coyote Decides to Eat Gophers (North Fork Mono)

They belonged here [North Fork], the people who were hunting at Pakadidikwe, a place near the headwaters of the San Joaquin River. They hunted, hunted deer for five days. After they had hunted five days, they ate the deer meat with acorn soup. After they had eaten, they told Coyote to get water. “When we drink water, we shall fly, all of us,” they said.

So Coyote got water in a basket. He went over the hills for it. The others flew and they named themselves: eagle, prairie falcon, and all sorts of birds. When Coyote returned, he saw his friends flying. He threw down his basket. He started to fly. He was going to be an eagle, he said. He fell to the ground. Then he climbed a tree and started to fly from the top, but fell again.

He saw a gopher (müi) coming from under some leaves. He thought he would catch that gopher. He said to himself, “This is a very fine life. This is what I shall do all the time. I’ll catch all the gophers. I’ll never get hungry. This is my meat.”