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Why the Stork loves Holland

William Elliot Griffis

Of all the countries in Europe, the Stork loves Holland the most. This bird, with its wise head and long legs, flies all the way from Africa to Holland. It feels at home among the dikes and windmills. Sometimes the Storks even walk through the streets and they are not afraid. They make their nests between the roof tiles and chimneys and on church towers, where they also raise their young.

If a cart wheel lies flat on a treetop, the Stork sees it as an invitation to come. After their long flight, they first smooth their feathers and comb their plumage. Then they start collecting hay and twigs to build a nest. They do this at their own pace. Storks use the same nest year after year. They repair it when needed in the spring. The return of the Stork to Holland is always a celebration.

The meadows are a paradise for the Stork. It catches frogs and mice, worms and insects. In doing so, it also helps to keep the populations of these animals in Holland in check. When the work is done, it returns to its nest. It then hides its long beak between its thick breast feathers and takes a nap on one leg high up in the air. By evening, it shakes its wings, flaps them a few times, and takes a leisurely walk. Storks are never in a hurry. They feel at home both in the countryside and in the city.

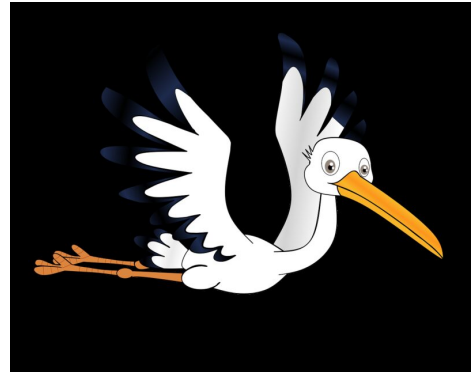
In the Netherlands, the Stork is also called "the bringer of good luck". When the Stork leaves its old nest on a roof, the family thinks that their luck has left with it. But when the Stork has chosen a new roof, the family living there is happier than ever. Because in Holland they say: "Where nesting birds are on the roof, babies will be in the house." Both the nesting birds and the babies are warmly welcomed.

To explain why the Stork loves Holland, we first have to go back to the Africa of a million years ago. There we will ask the fairies why Holland has become so beloved to Storks and why these wise birds fly to a cold country, a thousand miles away, at the same time every year.

Centuries ago, Holland did not exist yet, the land was still under the sea. The Stork also lived in India, where it lived in pools of warm water. The number of Storks grew so fast that sometimes there was not enough food for everyone. When the land of a million islands was created on the coast of the North Sea, the frogs went there first. Some frogs were so big and croaked so loudly that they

drowned out the fairy music and kept everyone awake with their croaking. There were also snakes and toads on the land who did not behave properly and thought that the land was specially made for them.

The Dutch fairies did not like the reptiles at all. When they went dancing in the meadow by moonlight, there was always a big bullfrog who made fun of them. When they heard that the Storks from Africa were crazy about these animals, they decided to invite them to Holland. The fairies knew nothing about the habits of this bird and could hardly imagine what it looked like. But they heard that the Stork had a good character. It was a wise bird with an excellent reputation, not only because it took good care of its young, but also because it took good care of its parents when they were old.



A couple of fairies went to Africa to invite the storks. In Africa, messengers were immediately sent to all birds with red legs living in the river or sitting on the pyramids or temple roofs. These river birds mainly ate frogs, fish, and mice, while city birds mostly ate crumbs from the street. The invitation was discussed in the stork meeting and was accepted. Only a few old grandpas and grandmas voted against it because they were afraid there might not always be enough food in a foreign land. It was agreed that only the strongest birds would try to fly to Holland. Those who were too afraid or weak to fly that far would stay behind to take care of the old storks.

When storks travel, they fly in flocks. Thousands of them left Africa. They flew high in the sky with their wide wings spread and their long legs stretched behind them. They reached Europe in a few hours. It was agreed that each bird would find its own home. When the cold autumn came, they would gather again and fly back to Africa.

The fairies, the frogs, and the people watched in amazement as these snow-white birds walked through the fields and stood in the ditches. The frogs and snakes were less happy with the arrival of the storks. For the fairies, it was good news that they could dance safely without the danger of the frogs, who now dared not venture into the grass. The frog dads could do nothing, and the frog moms dared not take their eyes off their little ones. No frog or snake was safe from their long beaks that they stuck in the mud.

The fairies also laughed at the storks because they discovered that they could not sing. They seemed to talk to each other by clapping their bills. Their white

plumage with red legs was admired by everyone. At first, the fairies thought the storks were wearing long red stockings. The funniest thing was when a Mr. Stork was in love. To impress his beloved, he made many crazy gestures and jumped around. Then he spread his wings as if he wanted to embrace his love and danced around her. All the while, he clapped his beak like a sort of love song. And it was a wonder that these delicate-looking, snow-white graceful birds could eat so many snails, snakes, frogs, and toads.

There is also a story about the frog ponds in Holland:

"A tadpole once begged his frog mother to let him travel to the red poles in the water. He could go when he was big enough and could jump far enough, but his mother warned him not to get too close to the strange red poles. They did not yet know that this red thing was the stork, taking a nap, but the old frogs suspected danger. Unfortunately, this young tadpole got too close to the red pole. He wanted to show how brave he was and sniffed at the red pole. Immediately, the stork woke up, and in an instant, the wriggling tadpole disappeared into the stork's stomach. Immediately there was a loud splash because a whole row of frogs had jumped into the pool, fleeing. From that moment on, the frogs no longer ruled Holland."

People were very happy with the stork because now there was less vermin. The stork was declared the savior of the land. Knights painted a stork on their coat of arms. The birds were also allowed to live in a posh city pond. To this day, people tell beautiful stories about the stork.

In the countryside, poles were planted as an invitation for stork families to come and live with people. The farmers also left delicious snacks for the birds in the field. There are many songs and verses written about the stork. In the past, children in Holland used to tie small notes to the legs of storks, which would then take the notes to Africa and return with a message in the spring. Even today, storks are called "bringers of luck."

This is why storks love Holland so much.

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