

Nutcracker and the Whitebark Pine

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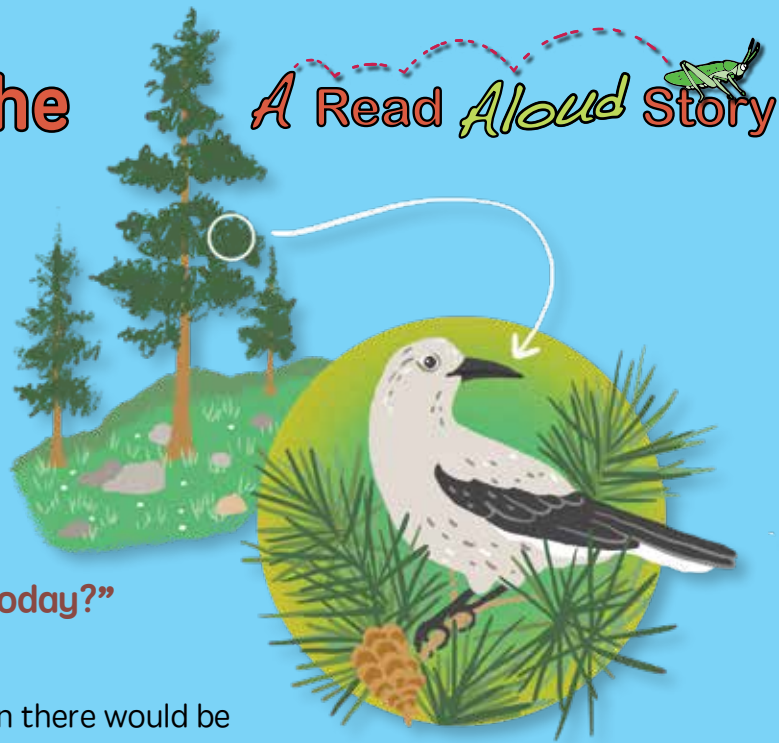
Nutcracker liked pine seeds. He especially liked the seeds from the Whitebark Pine. With his strong beak he pried open the cones and ate the seeds. All summer long he liked nothing more than eating pine seeds. Every day he said,

“Hello, Pine Tree. What have you got for me today?”
And it was always pine seeds. **“My favourite!”**

But summer was ending. Winter was coming and soon there would be no more seeds for him to take from the cones.

Nutcracker was a clever bird and he had an idea. **“I’ll collect some seeds now and hide them away to last me through the winter,”** he said.

He spent all day picking out seeds, one at a time and flying off to hide them.



A Read *Aloud* Story



He hid them in
between tree roots,



he hid them
behind stones,



he hid them in
hollow logs,

and he hid them
under fallen leaves.

**“They’ll be safe
there, and I shall
have a lovely feast
when winter comes.”**

But other animals liked
pine seeds, too. Very soon
Squirrel, Chipmunk,



and Mouse had snuffled them out and whisked them away. When Nutcracker came back to eat one, they had all gone!

“Oh!” said Nutcracker. **“Perhaps I’m not as clever as I thought.”**

Every day he flew back to the pine tree to see what it had for him. But every day, there were fewer and fewer seeds. Very soon, they would all be gone.

“Time is growing short,” he said. **“If I’m to hide enough seeds for winter, I must carry more than one at a time, but I don’t see how. My beak is only so big.”**



He flew back to the pine tree and picked out a seed, then he tried picking out another one. He discovered he could carry more than one at a time. It turned out that he had a special pouch underneath his tongue just right for carrying seeds. He crammed his pouch full of seeds and flew off.

“But,” he thought, **“I need to find a better hiding place.”**

“I will bury the seeds in the ground where they can’t find them. And I am going to bury them in a place where the snow will cover them. I will be the only one who knows where they are.”

He jabbed little holes in the soil with his sharp beak and placed a seed in each one. Then he flew back to the Whitebark Pine and did it all over again. And again. And again.

When the cold weather came, whenever he was hungry, he went to one of his hiding places. **“Hello, hiding place, what have you got for me to today?”** he said. And it was always pine seeds. Result? Nutcracker was never hungry.



In fact, he hid so many seeds he did not need to eat them all. So when spring came, those seeds started to grow and grow. One day they would become tall trees which would make more pinecones full of tasty seeds.

So maybe Nutcracker was even cleverer than he knew.



Note: In Manning Park, Clark’s Nutcracker and the Whitebark Pine have a very special relationship in which each depends upon the other for survival. This is described by Dick Cannings, BC’s foremost bird expert, in his book *An Enchantment of Birds: Memories from a Birder’s Life*, © 2007.

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