

## Clark the Nutcracker

Once upon a time... there lived, in a remote pine forest in the mountains



of BC, a little bird named Clark. Clark wasn't just any bird; he was a very *important* bird with a very *important* job in the forest. Clark didn't really know he was so important. He just knew that he liked his life there in the forest. Everything that he needed was there. The beautiful, clear-blue streams that ran off the mountain-sides and through his great wide forest gave to him all the water that he needed to drink and bathe in. This clean water also fed the other plants and animals in the forest. He had seen the big black bear splash around in the streams; he saw the bright red salmon in the fall make their long journey home in these streams; and he saw how bear fed on these same salmon. Clark knew that the water made him, the salmon, the bear and all the other plants and animals of the forest happy.

Clark also was happy for his home in the forest because he had plenty of trees in which he could make a comfy nest for himself. He liked to put his nest at the tops of trees in their branches and make nice, cup-like nests that would make perfect homes for his babies in the spring. Clark saw that others like Squirrel, Flicker and Bluebird liked to nest in the trees too. Clark noticed that one tree in particular was quite well liked. This tree was big and bushy and had tons of yummy seeds inside of its cones – the *People* called it



Whitebark Pine. He really liked these seeds, as did the other animals of the forest, and Clark was grateful that this special tree lived in his forest. Clark knew that the other animals were grateful for this tree as well because he always saw Squirrel scurrying around, collecting the cones and hiding them away in big piles (*middens*). He noticed Bear stealing from Squirrel sometimes, and saw that many benefited from the cones and nesting places in this special tree.



And little did Clark know that the Whitebark Pine was just as grateful for Clark, as Clark was to him! Whitebark pine had a little problem that Clark was able to help her with. Whitebark's seeds weren't able to get out of the cones and into the ground to grow without Clark's help. When Clark took the seeds out of her cones, and left them hidden in the dirt, only then could these seeds grow.



Clark hid these seeds because he knew that sometimes food was hard to come by, and if he put them in a hiding place he would always have food. Clark had an incredible memory for his hiding places and was almost always able to find them, but sometimes he just didn't need them and these seeds were left to grow in the dirt. And that's how his little piles of seeds grew in clumps of trees. Clark didn't know it, but it was because of him that the pine forests grew and spread about.



Lately, however, Clark had noticed many of his favourite trees were dying. They turned bright red and then just dried up! Clark suspected that it was because a tiny little Pine Beetle was making its home in the tree. It was having a bad effect on the trees and this sent the forest into a panic! Without the pine's nutritious seeds, without its lofty branches and big roots to suck up the water, many of the animals were left without food and shelter. In time the forest changed drastically. The streams flowed out of control and everything seemed out of balance. Some of the animals decided to move to other parts of the forest, parts where they could find this special tree, the Whitebark Pine. This made Clark very unhappy, as he loved so much

his mountain forest and did not want to move.

But move he did. Clark was dependant on the Whitebark Pine and those yummy seeds were too good to go without. He packed up what little belongings he had and headed out across the range. The big beautiful blue sky accompanied him on his journey, while the streams sang to him as he flew. He didn't mind too much to move, but he wondered about the other animals. Clark knew that his forest was shrinking and he worried about bear and her cubs who couldn't move their den into another bears habitat. He knew that this would be difficult for the other animals.

Clark thought about his special tree and hoped that it was able to survive; for he knew that so many animals, and indeed the whole forest, depended on this tree to keep things right. He hoped that the humans that hiked through his beautiful forest might notice this problem and do something about it. These clever people could do something - he was sure of it!



**What do you think?**