

## **Honorable Mention #2**

### **We Are Not a Myth!**

#### **Rainbow Medicine-Walker, Maple Falls, WA**

Thunderbird was pissed, and she stomped around the nest a bit, just so there was no doubt she was upset and to make sure everyone else knew for miles around.

First off, she was fed up with the silly humans continuing to insist *she* was a generic *he*. What part of “female Thunderbirds are bigger and more dominant” did they not get? Really, it wasn’t hard. All they had to do was open their eyes and look around at eagles, owls, and hawks. Wouldn’t it be logical to assume that Thunderbirds would follow a similar pattern to other meat-killing, live-prey-grabbing, sharp-clawed raptors?

Sometimes she wondered if those big heads with those big brains just made humans exponentially dumb. She would like to vent her irritation upon them, but The Powers That Be had decreed that Thunderbirds were to withdraw to the between places, giving the humans a chance to grow and dominate the planet. Bad decision in her opinion, because now humans believed that Thunderbirds were some kind of quaint and primitive myth.

What did they think pterodactyls were, for skies’ sake! They even had fossil records of numerous giant, feathered birds they kept “discovering.” And what about the modern-day sightings of larger than ordinary birds from credible witnesses? Did the so-called experts really think the numerous Thunderbird stories throughout North and South America were all just made up?

Thunderbird was ready to go on a rampage, but she couldn’t. It was so unfair. The humans were puny and fragile and could not tolerate the full force of her displeasure. She longed for the good old days when she could let loose an epic superstorm just to clear the air. She stomped a few times more and heard her mate calling in the distance. *He* could come and sit on the eggs for a while; *she* was going to visit Raven.

As Thunderbird winged her way towards Raven’s nest, she felt quite pleased with herself. She might not be able to act directly against the humans, outside of a relatively minor storm here and there, but Raven was the acknowledged master of manipulation and could get away with all sorts of mischief. She began calling as she neared his home tree. Raven soon appeared but kept a wary distance, as Thunderbird in a temper was not to be trifled with.

“Raven!” boomed Thunderbird without preamble. “I want you to go into the human world and convince the wingless two-leggeds that we supposed “mythological” birds are NOT, in fact, mythological at all!”

Raven cowered and bobbed his head because he knew there would be no arguing with Thunderbird in this mood. She had once blown the feathers clean off him, and while they had soon grown back, it was still embarrassing and he shuddered in memory. That experience was not to be repeated, so if Thunderbird said jump, well then, Raven would ask how far. Of course he would jump his own trademark Raven way, which was always quite spectacular in his own mind.

Raven’s fertile brain was already busy with plans when he hopped into the human realm. He would start with the stuffy pundits who decreed what humans were allowed to believe. If the prestigious ornithologists at major universities announced that Thunderbirds were real, the well-trained populace would soon follow along. Raven thought this mass media manipulation stuff would come in quite handy, and he wondered if he had been remiss in not jumping full on into the virtual unreality game a bit sooner.

It was easy to locate a professorial conference of bird experts, slip inside, find a computer, and do a bit of hacking to sabotage the next presentation. Just a few pecks here and there, a tweaking twig or

three, and when the next speaker walked up to the podium, a giant Thunderbird image appeared on the screen behind him with a recommended link for the audience to follow along with.

When the speaker opened his laptop to read his research, he became quite confused. It appeared he had written an entire paper, published in a highly regarded journal, on the existence of real Thunderbirds. The room became a buzz of startled exclamations as others connected with the link.

The professor was about to deny any knowledge of this strange paper when he noticed that several top names in the field had lavishly praised this research as “groundbreaking” and other accolades. It took about 10 seconds for him to realize he was on to a good thing. Swallowing his protests, he began to read aloud to his peers about the real lives of Thunderbirds.

Raven was well pleased. Sure, the pundits would argue and there would be plenty of doubters, but the door was open again for humans to acknowledge the existence of Thunderbirds. Eventually they would have to re-evaluate their opinions on all the other “mythological” birds as well.

Raven strutted back into the bird realm and preened himself on a job well done. Spotting him, Thunderbird roared down from her eyrie in a swirl of feathers and claws. Raven nonchalantly hopped sideways when she took a swipe at him.

“Raven,” she hissed, “you could not possibly have completed the task I set for you this soon!”

“Oh, but I have,” he replied smugly. “The AI technology humans have invented makes it even easier to trick them, and soon humans will collectively agree that you are real because their devices will tell them it is so.”

Thunderbird was delighted and thanked Raven most graciously.

As she flew back to her eggs, Raven chuckled to himself. What he hadn’t told her was that he had made certain that every human reference to Thunderbird from here on out was going to remain a *he*, not a *she*. Raven really was quite brilliant at getting back at those who bullied him.

**Rainbow Medicine-Walker** is an enrolled member of the federally recognized Cherokee Nation. She is an elder, veteran, and ceremonial leader and the granddaughter of Cherokee Admiral JJ Clark, Chief Water Dweller, and Chief Thunderbird.