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MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2008

## Bird Hits a Window

Have you heard people talk about this? At the hospice place where I work, I sometimes hear a nurse, or even a family member say, "A bird hit the window this morning, I'm sure mom's getting ready to go soon." In fact, it's not unusual to have a day when several rooms have a constant barrage of tapping from birds flying into the glass.



I was surprised to see how entrenched this symbol of the bird is in our culture. In case it's a new idea for you let me explain:

"Bird flies at the window, Death knocks at the door" is a phrase that has been repeated by kids for centuries. The roots of this reach far back. Because of their ability to fly, birds have eternally been connected with the heavens/afterlife. Birds aren't just associated with death, but life as well, as in the common story that a Stork delivers new babies into this world.

There really is no culture exempt. In Egypt, China and Japan the Phoenix symbolizes rebirth, from



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Pallimed: Arts & Humanities was founded in 2008 as a complimentary blog to the original Pallimed.

Amber Wollesen, MD and Amy Clarkson, MD are section editors.

Drew Rosielle, MD is Editor of Pallimed.

Learn more about Pallimed: Arts & Humanities.

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Our disclaimer.

RECENT COMMENTS

Dr. Pam on buried alive

It's interesting how this fear has been pervasive... (more)

Christian Sinclair, MD on scrubs

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ancient myths of the bird

constantly being reborn. In Syria, Eagles are on tombs to lead the souls in the afterlife. In the Jewish and Christian culture, it is the dove that represents the soul. Both the Celts and Greeks believed the soul would reappear as a bird after death. There is an Islamic tradition that believes that dead souls remain as birds until judgment day, whereas the Hindu's use birds to symbolize the form the soul takes in between earthly lives.

With so many cultures viewing birds as the representation of human souls, you can guess when a bird suddenly acts strangely, we take notice. Before there were glass windows, the superstition was that if a bird flew into your house and perched on someone's chair, then a death would occur within that home in a year's time. Now, not too many birds make it inside, but all it takes is the unusual event of a bird trying to get in, hitting the glass pane, and then when an untimely death occurs the two events become connected.

Such was the case for Lucille Ball, who at the age of 3 recalled that a bird flew in her house and became trapped the day her father died. She was so convinced of this superstition that she refused to stay in hotels that had bird wallpaper or pictures of birds on the walls.

Some may wonder is one type of bird more ominous with this superstition? It seems there are several to worry about. In the Cherokee tradition it is a red bird that provides the connection with the deceased. The [Red Bird Center](#) provides the story behind this belief. The other birds to be leery of if they are trying to fly in your house are the sparrow, the robin and the raven.

Anyone with stories of their own?

[and palliative care](#)

Good pick up on the song Amber. I am thinking of writing that one up soon for the blog. "Dibs!"

[Christian Sinclair.](#)

[MD on scrubs and palliative care](#)

Yeah, as soon as I watched that (on DVR) last...  
[\(more\)](#)

[Amber Wollesen.](#)

[MD on scrubs and palliative care](#)

Ty, I saw the Scrubs episode last night. It was...[\(more\)](#)

[Ty Meyer, MD on](#)

[scrubs and palliative care](#)

I agree that Scrubs is the most realistic  
[\(in...\)\(more\)](#)

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