

Animals and the Worldview Inside Them

Extension Document 003

A first deep dive into Salish animal names as root-family fields, patterned ways of being, and worldview-bearing structures.

Purpose

To show that a familiar public question like “What is the word for bear?” can open into root families, animal categories, behavior, body patterning, and Salish ways of recognizing life.

This document is for

learners, teachers, and curious readers who want to move beyond one-to-one animal labels and begin seeing how animal names connect to relation, repeated observation, cultural importance, and worldview.

Why begin with animals?

Animals are often among the first words learners ask for because they seem easy to match from English into Salish. A person can point to a bear, a bird, a duck, or a fish and expect a single equivalent. That makes animal names feel familiar and approachable, but it can also hide how much structure they carry. The words do not only identify creatures. They often recognize how a being moves, how it appears, how it lives, what part of its body stands out, whether it travels alone or in groups, and whether that animal has a high cultural profile in daily life.

This document starts with that familiar doorway and opens it wider. The goal is not to replace usable animal words with abstraction. The goal is to show that the names themselves already carry orientation, relation, and close observation. In several cases, root analysis also helped reveal what older entries were really describing, especially where English labels had become uncertain or flattened.

How to read this document

Each section presents animal words as more than labels. The entries look at the root-family field around the name, the observable pattern that appears to ground it, selected related forms or structural parts that help widen the field of meaning, and a worldview bridge that helps make the pattern understandable in clear public-facing language.

The animal arc in brief

Taken together, the entries in this document show a meaningful progression: a broad word for animals as beings that habitually go about, a small-animal form that narrows that field, birds as beings known through repeated rise and return, bears named not by a single generic label but through solitude, body profile, or visible contrast, deer and elk receiving finer naming because of repeated close relation, ducks revealing a remarkable behavior-based naming system, snakes named through birth pattern, vibration, or dramatic land presence, fish terms extending outward into people and place identity, and lizard named through its characteristic side-to-side advancing movement.

Animals as categories of movement and relation

Animals — $x^w y x^w \acute{y} u \acute{t}$, $x^w i x^w e \eta y u \acute{t}$

Habitually going about; a broad category built from patterned motion

Element	Gloss	Function in this animal name
$x^w y$	go, course	the broad field of going, movement, or coursing through the world
$-x^w$	outward configuration	gives the animal field visible outward form
$-\acute{y}$	outward expression	marks the pattern as outwardly manifest
$-y$	transforming, continuative	keeps the field active and ongoing
$-u \acute{t}$	typifying / habitual traversability	profiles the name as a characteristic kind

The general word for animals is already a strong worldview word. Rather than beginning from taxonomy in the modern scientific sense, the form points to beings recognized through their characteristic way of going about. The word gathers motion, outward form, and habitual pattern into a single category. That makes the broad animal field feel dynamic rather than static.

- $\acute{t} x^w y x^w \acute{y} u \acute{t}$ — bird; small animal. The same broad field narrowed by \acute{t} -, which marks a smaller or earlier-structured form.

Birds — $s x^w \acute{t} x^w e \acute{t}$, $s x^w e x^w \eta e$

Those that rise into the air yet return again to the ground

Element	Gloss	Function in this animal name
$x^w e \acute{t}$	raise, lift	the core field of upward movement or lift
reduplication	distributed pattern	marks repeated or characteristic realization across the class
s-	nominal	holds the form as a recognized category

The bird word is especially elegant because it does not merely point to feathers or wings. It profiles a cycle: rising into the air and returning again. That repeated lift-and-return pattern gives birds their category here. The word is not only about what birds look like. It is about the recognizable motion by which they belong to the world.

Worldview bridge: Animal categories in Salish often grow outward from lived patterns of motion, posture, and repeated behavior. The category itself already carries meaning before any narrower species term appears.

Bears — not one word, but multiple ways of being

Many learners and public readers ask, “What is the word for bear?” That question reveals a major difference between English expectation and Salish naming. English often assumes that one generic word should sit above the whole category. The Salish material here shows something different. There are multiple bear words, and each one profiles a different way of being. Solitude, body profile, visible surface, or contrastive coloration can each become the naming center.

Black bear — *nłamqǵ, nłamqe?*

Solitary bear; one recognized through separateness and inward isolation

Element	Gloss	Function in this animal name
n-	inside	frames the animal through an inward or interior orientation
łam	detached, separated, isolated	profiles solitary or segregated being
-q	extent, forth, fore	extends that isolated profile outward
-ǵ	outward expression	makes the profile visible and manifest

The black bear name is said to refer to its solitary nature. Instead of a generic zoological label, the name appears to recognize how the animal lives: separated, isolated, often alone. The inward prefix strengthens that reading, so the name feels like a being held within its own separate way and then outwardly recognized from that pattern.

Grizzly bear — *smǵeyčń, smǵe*

Bear profiled by a differing back hump and changing visible orientation

Element	Gloss	Function in this animal name
s-	nominal	holds the being as a recognized animal
mǵ	differing	marks visible difference or change in profile
-ey	be the transforming	gives the difference a living, changing presence
-čń	back, outer reverse side	locates the profile at the back or hump area

The grizzly term is glossed here through the changing back hump, especially as fur changes orientation and light reflects differently. It does not just name a species. It notices the changing outward profile of the back, the way difference becomes visible on the animal’s upper body.

Polar bear — *čpqłpumćǵ*

Bear recognized through whiteness and full visible furred surface

Element	Gloss	Function in this animal name
č-	elevative, purpose	sets the form off as a profiled being
pqł-	white	marks whiteness as the dominant visible field

pum	fur	anchors the animal in furred bodily surface
-čʼ	all over outward	extends the surface profile across the whole outer body

The polar bear form is a surface-rich name. White fur spread all over the outward body becomes the center of recognition. This shows another important naming path in Salish: not all animal names rely on motion or behavior first. Some profile a strongly visible bodily condition that dominates how the being appears in the world.

Panda bear — čʼqʷyqʷayxñʼ

Panda bear, literally black ear on white; a contrastive patterned body

Element	Gloss	Function in this animal name
č-	elevative, purpose	brings the profile into focused recognition
qʷay	black	names the dark coloration
reduplication	distributed pattern	spreads the marked contrast
-x̣	two-state interaction	profiles contrast or interaction between visible states
-ñʼ	act at / outwardly	finishes the patterned outward recognition

The panda form makes visible contrast the naming center. Black against white, especially at the ear, is not incidental detail. It is the identifying relation. People can immediately understand how the name notices patterned contrast on the body rather than defaulting to a generic super-category.

Worldview bridge: The bear section shows clearly that Salish naming does not require a single generic label before it can see the world. Different bears are recognized through different dominant patterns of living, appearing, and standing out.

Higher-profile game animals receive finer naming

The deer and elk material shows another major principle. Animals that matter repeatedly in subsistence, observation, and cultural life often receive more specialized naming. Sex distinction, visible body marking, antlers, circling behavior, herd pattern, and meat-body profiling all become available naming paths.

White-tailed buck — *sx̣^wleščn, sx̣^wle*

The white-tailed buck is profiled through visible outward patterning. The combination of exposed patterned reversal with active and completed marking suggests a being whose outer display has become strongly recognizable.

White-tailed doe — *čwulyx^w, ču?ú*

The doe form is often used for deer in general. The root field of singling out or making distinct, together with typifying and continuing expression, gives the sense of a recognized real-deal deer form.

Black-tailed buck — *p^welščn, puwe*

The black-tailed buck is especially revealing because of the noted tendency to circle back when encountered and to maintain repetitive movement patterns. The root field of recurrent return gives the naming center.

Black-tailed doe — *stulč^í, stulce?*

Here the naming center appears to be bodily profile, with the form extending outward across the whole visible being. The same term also reaches into mule and donkey, suggesting a wider field of characteristic recognition.

Cow elk — *sneč^íč^í, sné*

The root neč is glossed as herding or migrating, which is a striking fit for elk. The name recognizes a patterned way of being together and moving together.

Bull elk — *tšec*

The bull elk stands out through toughness, directed integrity, and precedence. The brevity itself feels appropriate for a high-profile being recognized quickly and strongly.

Worldview bridge: The closer the repeated human relationship, the finer the naming can become. Deer and elk show that cultural importance often produces more detailed lexical attention.

From birds to hawks — narrowing the field

The bird material lets us watch categorization narrow in a distinctly Salish way. We begin with birds as a broad lift-and-return class. From there the field narrows into hawk, falcon, osprey, and duck patterns. The narrowing happens through repeated salient behavior, bodily action, and visible form.

Hawk (general) — *ćlćłšmul, ćlćłšmu*

The gloss notes scratch-grab behavior. That fits a hawk beautifully. Distributed outward fixation plus directive action and typifying realization gives a strong sense of a raptorial bird known through repeated seizing action.

Falcon — *ʔatʔt, aátat*

The falcon is described here as one of pronounced poised stillness. That is an excellent example of how naming can center on characteristic posture or felt presence.

Fish hawk / osprey — *ćix^wćx^w*

The osprey is summarized as distributed surfaced gripping hold. The bird is memorable through clutching, gripping, and seizing in visible outward action, and the same profile can even bridge naturally to nest-building as bounded outer form.

Worldview bridge: The movement from birds to hawks shows a category system that narrows through observable life-patterns. The class is broad first, but the narrowing happens through what the animals characteristically do or show.

Ducks — one of the clearest behavior-based naming systems

The duck material may be the strongest teaching section in this whole document. It shows that duck names are not merely species labels. They can track feeding posture, body orientation on the water, color marking, pivoting drift, and the characteristic way ducks come up onto land. The more the roots were understood, the more several unclear or unidentified duck labels began to reveal themselves as behavior names.

Duck / mallard by feeding behavior — *sʔsǎx^wum, sesǎx^wum*

This form profiles the habitual feeding behavior of ducks: repeatedly tipping the head and upper body down into the water while the hind body and feet remain up and exposed. The word does not need modern species taxonomy in order to be precise. It is precise because it identifies the behavior field.

Male mallard — *q^winqn*

Here the naming center is green coloration at the fore or top. Color can therefore be enough when it is strongly diagnostic and socially noticeable.

Redhead — *sk^wl'iqin, sk^wla?qin*

The redhead duck is named through vivid coloration at the top or fore position. The language notices what stands out most clearly on the body.

Ring-necked duck — *qlepy'í, qlepye?*

This term draws on encircling or looping pattern with a beginning/base and outward transformation. It appears to focus on patterned marking rather than general category.

Words first thought to be unidentified ducks

Several duck-related forms were once treated as unidentified species labels. Once the root fields became clearer, another possibility emerged: these words were not failing to identify species at all. They were identifying recognizable duck behaviors. That is exactly the kind of discovery that shows why root work matters.

Repeated surfacing or upward-emergent duck behavior — *l'li'í, la?li*

This form names a patterned behavior of rising, surfacing, or appearing at the boundary. It may therefore apply to more than one species that shares that mode of presence, including cases where young surface and gather on the parent's back.

Duck-like pivoting drift — *tššal'í*

Rather than a species label, this seems to name floating, drifting, and pivoting without sustained directional engagement.

Duck-like coming onto land — *qá'álsul'íx^w, qa'álasúle?x^w*

This form describes the characteristic way ducks reach, climb, or settle onto land from water. It emphasizes attainment of shore or surface presence rather than species distinction.

Worldview bridge: Some duck names do not answer the English question “Which species is this?” They answer a different and equally precise question: “What patterned way of being is this animal showing?”

Snakes, fish, and other patterned beings

Garter snake / general snake — *sčfwilʹ, sčewí-leʹ*

This word is noted to refer to the way garter snakes are born live, and it can also function as a general term for snake. That is important because it shows naming through a striking life-pattern rather than only body shape.

Rattlesnake — *šfulʹxʷ, šeʹúleʹxʷ*

The rattlesnake stands out through dramatic or noticeable land-form presence. Its visibility and impact are part of the naming center.

Bullsnake / gopher snake — *sšʷnups, sšʷnu*

Literally associated with vibrating tail, this name again points straight to characteristic bodily action and sound.

Fish — *sšewʹt*

The general fish term appears to gather coursing embodied motion into a nominal form. Even the broad category remains movement-rich.

Steelhead / rainbow trout — *nxʷmenʹ*

Glossed as red or pink around the ears, this fish is recognized through a striking bodily feature. The related nominal form *snxʷmenʹ* extends into the Spokane people, showing how animal naming can radiate into people and place identity.

Bull trout / Dolly Varden — *šayččst, aáy*

This term belongs to a wider field that also reaches into a people name, again demonstrating that root families do not stay confined within a narrow natural-history box.

Salmon — *smʹič, smʹi*

As a general salmon term, this word reminds us that large, culturally central animal fields often hold older and wider relational depth.

Lizard / salamander — *ššlčewš, ššlč*

This is a movement-based name. The animal is recognized through advancing by swinging the body fully from side to side, moving forward by repeated re-engagement.

Worldview bridge: Animal words do not end at animals. Fish terms can connect outward into place and people. Snake and lizard terms can turn on birth pattern, sound, or motion. The naming system stays relational all the way through.

What this first deep dive demonstrates

First, animal names are usable public teaching material, but they are not shallow. Even a beginner question like “What is the word for bear?” opens into multiple ways of recognizing life rather than a single flat label.

Second, the document shows that Salish naming often follows patterned observation: solitude, herd movement, lift and return, scratching and grabbing, circling back, feeding posture, surfacing, vibrating, or side-to-side advancing motion. What a being repeatedly does can matter just as much as what it looks like.

Third, the related words matter. Bear, bird, duck, snake, fish, deer, elk, and lizard fields all show that root analysis can recover hidden coherence. In some cases, the roots reveal that English glosses had made a form seem vague when it was actually precise on Salish terms.

Finally, this document is only a first deep dive. The animal field can be expanded much further in later work: more mammals, water beings, birds of different kinds, insects, animal-part terms, hunting vocabulary, place-linked animal names, and the cultural stories and teachings that surround them. What matters here is the opening move: familiar vocabulary becomes a path into deeper Salish understanding.

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