

Don't Judge a Bird by the Feathers

By Donna Bishop

The spring-like weather aided the cherry blossom tree outside the window to begin to show early signs of renewed life. Slowly the brown bare branches took on a light hue of green as small budding leaves began to emerge. Soon the branches were swaying their green skirts in step with the warm breezes. The tree, home to an active family of squirrels, was full of motion. Pairs of squirrels racing up and down branches and tree trunks in games of tag or some mating ritual known only to them. Mostly, however, all the squirrels seem to be very busy with the serious business of storing up food for the months ahead. All summer and into the fall they scurried about, stopping to dig here and then over there. Once their cheeks could hold no more they would disappear under the surrounding evergreens to appear shortly and continue their search.

With the passing of summer the tree began to drop its leaves throughout the fall and the bare branches were inviting to the large black crows of the neighborhood. The crows kept a close watch on those busy squirrels and wondered what they could possibly be doing.

Winter came without warning. The temperature dropped below freezing and snow followed. It snowed for days with no letup in sight. The crows were hungry but the snow was too deep for them to find food. Perched on the bare branches of the cherry tree, they dreamed of warmer days and fuller tummies. Meanwhile, the squirrel family in the tree seemed content and well feed.

One of the wiser old crows remembered how busy the squirrels had been and decided to take a look under the heavy low branches of the evergreen tree. There he discovered a buried treasurer of food. Calling to his hungry friends, they feasted on their ill-gotten gains. The squirrels shrieked and flapped their tails in protest but the fine-feathered thieves were not deterred. Fortunately the squirrels had many hiding places for their food, the snow melted, the birds flew away. The squirrels did learned that fine feathers do not make a friend.