

## LESSON NOTES

# Japanese Culture Class #18

## Animals and their Meanings Part II

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- 2 Vocabulary
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# **18**

# VOCABULARY

Kanji	Kana	Romaji	English
猫	ねこ	neko	cat
狸寝入り	たぬきねいり	tanuki neiri	feigning sleep
蛙	かえる	kaeru	frog
お犬様	おいぬさま	oinusama	very polite way of referring to dogs
生類憐みの令	しょうるいあわれみのれい	shōrui awaremi no rei	Edicts on Compassion for Living Things
蜻蛉	とんぼ	tonbo	dragonfly
蛍	ほたる	hotaru	firefly
狐	きつね	kitsune	fox
狸	たぬき	tanuki	raccoon dog
犬	いぬ	inu	dog
蝉	せみ	semi	cicada

## SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>黒猫が横切っていく。 くろねこがよこぎっていく。</p> <p>The black cat is walking across the screen.</p>	<p>テーブルの下にねこがいます。 <i>Tēburu no shita ni neko ga imasu.</i></p> <p>There is a cat under the table.</p>
<p>僕は、電車で席を譲りたくないので、狸寝入りをした。 <i>Boku wa, densha de seki o yuzuri takunai node, tanuki neiri o shita.</i></p> <p>I pretended I was asleep because I didn't want to give up my seat on the train.</p>	<p>蛍が麦畑の上を飛びまわっている。 <i>Hotaru ga mugibatake no ue o tobimawatte iru.</i></p> <p>"The fireflies are flying over the wheat field."</p>

狸は、化けると言われている。

*Tanuki wa, bakeru to iwarete iru.*

They say that raccoon dogs can change themselves into something else.

毛足の長い犬がボールを追いかけている。

けあしのながいいぬがボールをおいかけている。

The shaggy dog is running after a ball.

## GRAMMAR

蝉・せみ・*semi* - cicada

The sound of the cicada is one that is very familiar to the Japanese. In fact, there is a word often used in poetry to describe this - 蝉時雨・せみしぐれ・*semi shigure*, or "cicada shower". Depending on the species, cicadas spend 13 or 17 years under the ground before emerging for only about a month and then dying (<http://magazine.audubon.org/truena-true/truena-true0005.html>)

とんぼ・*tonbo* - dragonfly

According to legend, the first emperor of Japan was bitten by mosquito, after which a dragon fly flew in and ate it. This legend references the good reputation of the dragonfly in Japan. Don't miss Yoshi-san's rendition of the popular song 赤とんぼ・あかとんぼ・*aka tonbo*, as well as Chigusa-san's technique for catching dragonflies in the lesson.

猫・ねこ・*neko* - cat

Cats are quite popular in Japan. At one time cats had a less favorable reputation, seen as a bad omen and even thought to transform into monsters. In recent times, though, their reputation is much better, as evidenced by the often-seen auspicious 招き猫・まねきねこ・*maneki neko*, or beckoning cat.



蛙 ・ かえる ・ *kaeru* - frog

Frogs have been a part of Japanese culture for a very long time. Tadpoles are especially popular with children. The frog is the subject of the Japanese proverb 井の中の蛙、大海を知らず ・ いのなかのかわず、たいかいをしらず ・ *i no naka no kawazu, taikai o shirazu*, or "the frog in the well has no knowledge of the ocean."

狸 ・ たぬき ・ *tanuki* - raccoon dog

*Tanuki* are nocturnal animals that live only in East Asia. They resemble a badger, or a mix between a raccoon and a dog, hence the translation "raccoon dog". The *tanuki* is the subject of the Japanese phrase 狸寝入り ・ たぬきねいり ・ *tanuki neiri*, which means "feigning sleep". This phrase is derived from the fact that *tanuki* will feign death when very surprised.



狐・きつね・*kitsune* - fox

The reputation of the fox in Japan is similar to that in many places. The fox is often perceived as cunning and deceitful. On the other hand, there are shrines in Japan that revere the fox as a messenger of the gods. These shrines are called 稲荷神社・いなりじんじゃ・*Inari jinja*.



螢・ほたる・*hotaru*

Although their numbers have decreased recently because of urbanization, the firefly has long been a companion to the Japanese. There is a popular song called 螢の光・ほたるのひかり・*Hotaru no hikari*, or "glow of the firefly". This song is often played at school graduations in Japan, and is sung to the tune of Auld Lang Syne. (<http://www.d-score.com/ar/A02111104.html>)

生類憐みの令・しょうるいあわれみのれい・*Shōrui awaremi no rei* - Edicts on Compassion for Living Things

In 1687, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi enacted a number of edicts protecting living things, especially dogs, known as *Shōrui awaremi no rei*. These edicts prohibited the killing of dogs, as well as compassion for all living things. There are two prominent theories as to the reasoning behind the shogun's decision.

The first is that because the shogun was born in the year of the dog, superstition drove him to release these edicts. The second theory is that because the shogun still did not have an heir, his Buddhist beliefs, as well as distress, drove him to believe that perhaps in a past life he had killed a dog. In hopes of making up for this transgression, the shogun released these edicts protecting dogs. (<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/生類憐みの令>)