

The title 'ATLAS ANIMALIA' is written in a stylized, gold-colored font within a dark, ornate frame. Above the frame is a small globe. The background of the entire cover is a detailed illustration of a prehistoric scene. On the left, a large, shaggy, grey-furred creature with a long, curved tail and a small horn-like protrusion on its head stands on a rocky ledge. On the right, a large, white, shaggy creature with a yellow eye and a small horn-like protrusion on its head stands in the water. In the foreground, a large, curved, ribbed structure, possibly a fossil or a piece of ancient machinery, is partially submerged in the water. The overall style is a detailed, hand-drawn illustration with a focus on texture and shading.

ATLAS ANIMALIA

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ATLAS ANIMALIA



ATLAS ANIMALIA



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INTRODUCTION

The Beastmaster's Code

From where the land ends
And the oceans begin
From where skies soar high
And all the stars within

I am a beastmaster
And this is my code
It is an oath I swear
As I walk this road

I will protect the creatures
Of land, sky, and sea
I will study them all
Finding none beneath me

I will protect who I can
Using every skill in my set
I will pay homage to
Every beast that I've met

I will be true to my order
Dragon, Hatchling, and Drake
I will do what's best for beasts
With every breath I take

I am a beastmaster
And this is my code
It is an oath I swear
As I walk this road

A note from the author

Over my many travels I've learned much about various beasts. The Atlas Animalia is my first cohesive attempt at recording my research. In this book you will find a comprehensive list of different creatures found within the various realms, along with a number of variants connected to each species. I will also tell you about the beastmaster organization, what it means to be a beastmaster, our responsibility, and the joys of our profession. It is my sincere hope that this guide sparks your imagination and delights your sense of wonder at the myriad of breath-taking creatures out in the realms.

The Role of a Beastmaster

The role of every beastmaster is the understanding and preservation of all creatures. Often, rearing and domestication is added to the aforementioned roles, because both play an important part of many beastmaster's lives. Finally, beastmasters also provide protection from the creatures they study when needed and expert advice when situations become dire. Whatever course of study you choose as a beastmaster, it will undoubtedly dovetail into the other disciplines as the best beastmaster is a well-rounded beastmaster.

Knowledge – The study of creatures ranges from the scientific to the magical. Scholarly beastmasters spend much of their time looking into the origins of species, how they gained their special abilities, and what mutations are found in different members of the species. They look at things such as environment and diet to gauge those factors influencing a creature's development. Furthermore, such beastmasters spend hours searching for new species, new mutations, and pursuing answers through diligent observation.

Beastmasters who focus on the arcane nature of creatures do roughly the same things. They investigate the auras of creatures and test how spells can influence what color a creature it is, what abilities it has, and even where it chooses to live. They also work on developing new potions and rituals to heal creatures or even create new ones.

Preservation – Preservation of all creatures who exist in the planes is important, because each life (or sometimes unlife) is unique. While many creatures are best left alone or need to be contained, no beastmaster with their membership in good standing would ever seek



to make a species extinct. To that extent, one of the beastmaster's main missions is to make sure that humanoids and non-humanoids can peacefully cohabit with one another. This is not always successful, but it doesn't mean a beastmaster shouldn't try.

Rearing, Domestication & Training –

Many who start on the path of becoming a beastmaster do so because they want a magical creature as a companion. This isn't a bad thing, but they do not often finish their studies to become a fully-fledged beastmaster after finding a magical creature they love and want to care for.

IMPORTANT: *Not all creatures want to become someone's companion, in fact a large portion of them do not. As humanoids, we often assume our intelligence is the only kind which exists, but this is far from true. Many creatures have equal or greater intelligence than ours and therefore see becoming a pet more akin to indentured servitude than anything else. Likewise, many creatures aren't suited for domestication, which you will undoubtedly read later on in this guide.*

Protection & Prevention – One of the main benefits of learning about these various creatures is learning how to protect ourselves against them. Many creatures, such as the hydra, were first studied for this reason, and the practice continues today. It is the aim of every beastmaster to, rather than provide protection from any type of creature, to prevent any altercations from ever happening in the first place. This is done by learning what causes creatures to attack others, as well as what deters them from doing so. The ideal situation is one where a beastmaster can prevent an incident before it ever happens.

Beastmaster Ranks

The ancient organization of beastmasters have various ranks based on a being's learning and understanding of beasts. In order to pass to the next rank, one must undergo a set of gruelling tasks, which become more difficult with every new rank. Ranks are also awarded for amazing discoveries in the field of Beastiology.

Hatchling – Hatchlings are the first rank of beastmaster. This rank is given to people just starting their studies into various creatures. Each Hatching is guided by a Dragon who serves as a mentor to them and teaches them how to properly observe and care for creatures. Hatchlings are encouraged to focus on a few creatures who spark their interest along with a field of study (preservation, domestication, etc.) to focus their time as a beastmaster.

Drake – A beastmaster graduates from the rank of Hatchling to the rank of Drake when their Dragon mentor deems them ready. This is normally after a few years of study. Being a Drake means taking on more responsibilities as a beastmaster and being available for the order if ever called upon.

Drakes are no longer required to be guided by their Dragon mentor, but many still seek their advice, with the mentorship turning into a mutual respect among colleagues or even a friendship.

This rank does, however, have less responsibility than that of Dragon and therefore many beastmasters choose to stay at the Drake rank, even when they are ready to graduate into being Dragons. Many adventurers enjoy the freedom a Drake provides in comparison with being a Dragon, having the ability to move in and out of the organization and quest through the lands when they see fit.

Dragon – In order to graduate from Drake to Dragon one must contribute significantly to the field of Beastiology. The rank of Dragon is awarded by the Council of Dragons and approved by the High Dragon: the most important beastmaster of all.

Dragons work solely as beastmasters and swear their lives to the creatures they study.



They report to the Council of Dragons and sometimes perform special quests for the High Dragon when they are too busy to deal with other matters of importance.

High Dragon – The High Dragon is a title afforded to only one being, the leader of all beastmasters. This person is the most learned and skilled of all beastmasters. They are the one called when situations are most dire and entire cities are in danger. High Dragons almost always leave the running of the beastmaster order to the Council of Dragons who decides on day-to-day matters within the organization. If a High Dragon steps in, it is because the situation is extremely important, or they do not agree with the Council, which rarely happens.



High
Dragon

The Journal of Delilah B. Timpleton Beastmaster Training – Day 1

Stepping into the Great Hall of the beastmaster, my small figure was swallowed by its grandeur. Like stepping into the mouth of a leviathan, the soaring stone walls echoed with sound far in the distance. All around me the illustrious robes of Hatchlings, Drakes, and even a few Dragons hurriedly went about their business. Soon, I would earn the honored rank of Hatching and begin my journey into becoming a full-fledged beastmaster! A part of me wondered, was there place in such a big organization for such a small gnome like me?

Soaring, slithering, and sauntering along with the beastmasters was a myriad of beasts I never dreamed I would ever see. I could very nearly touch a couatl who passed me on the shoulder of an ancient half-orc beastmaster (Dragon rank obviously). As we were hurried through the halls I swear I caught the whiff of an otyugh! The Great Hall alone was better than any ranger expedition I'd ever been on.

There was nary time to doubt myself as the other recruits and I were hurried through the hall and into the High Dragon's chambers. It's hard for me to recall what happened after the door closed, as I was awestruck in her magnificence. A grizzled tiefling with giant silver wings and impressively strong arms — the High Dragon was every story I had heard and more — I think. Like I said I kind of blacked out for a moment in joy.

When I came back to my senses we were already walking towards our quarters. Hatchling robes in our hands and ready to start our duties.

Animal Companions

As mentioned above, many start on the path to becoming a beastmaster because they want an animal companion. This is understandable, the connection a beastmaster has with their animal companion is profound and deep. Finding the right animal companion means a person (or animal) has a friend for life.

Note: *Some creatures in the Atlas Animalia detailed later are not technically 'animals', but would still make great companions. We've used the word animal here for ease of explanation.*

When picking a species of animal there are three important factors to consider:

Aggression – Aggression is the first and most important factor to think of when picking a species of creature in which you are interested. Many creatures are too violent to be a person's companion and are completely unsuitable. It's important you properly research the various breeds within your chosen species, because temperaments can vary greatly depending on innate traits and magical enhancements. For example, a hunting blink dog makes an amazing animal companion, but a blink wolf is nigh impossible to train and will mostly likely kill you if you enter its territory.

Temperament – While aggression is part of a beast's temperament, it is not the only aspect of it. Once you've found a safe species to have as an animal companion it is important to look at whether or not they match your own temperament. If you're someone who doesn't enjoy being annoyed, tricked, or fooled, best not take a mimic as an animal companion.

Sometimes the animal companion you find most appealing, because it is cute or has funny habits, will suit you terribly in the long run. Sadly, once many of these creatures are domesticated, it is impossible for them to go back to their natural environment. To make matters worse they will not be

accepted in either societies either. When you decide to take a rare creature as your animal companion, realize that it is for their entire life and is not a choice you should make on a whim. Beastmasters have seen too many cases of animal companions brought to our order by owners who no longer want them. To avoid this, it is important to know what your animal's temperament will be like.

Lifestyle – Finally, it is important to look at your lifestyle when picking an animal companion. Once you bond with your companion, it is likely they will want to spend as much time as possible with you and some lifestyles don't work with certain animal companions. For example, if you often adventure in sunny, dry areas, a sludge swimmer will suffer because of the fine mucus layer on their skin, which should stay moist at all times.

Non-humanoid Sentience

Non-humanoid sentience is difficult for many beastmasters to understand, because it is hard to conceptualize thought alien to our own. We assume our ideas and preconceptions are universal, when that is in fact false. Life would be easier if we could assume we were the center of the known planes, but it would also be so much less interesting.

Many species detailed in the pages that follow are sentient, but in an unconventional manner (at least to humanoids). As beastmasters, we've attempted to describe their behaviors, thoughts, and feelings in a clear manner, but this comes with a caveat: it will ultimately be impossible to truly understand beings who are other than our own. This doesn't mean we cannot treat each other with empathy and kindness, nor does it mean we cannot forge friendships, it simply means one cannot truly understand what it is like to be someone (or something) else without first-hand experience.

Below is a short list of different types of sentience we look at in this book:

Animalistic - Many people incorrectly assume this is just primal reactions. Animals feel, think, and are able to make complex choices and therefore they are sentient. Among the beastmaster community this is still a highly contentious subject, because animals are one of our primary food sources. If animals are truly sentient, what does that mean about our eating habits and who we are? Where do we draw the line for animal rights? Do we only listen to the creatures who can speak for themselves, or is it our own fault for not being able to understand them?

Celestial - Celestial sentience is perhaps the easiest form of sentience for humanoid to grasp. This is because we've spent much of our lives worshiping the divine. In doing so, we've put in the time and effort it takes to know and understand how celestial creatures think and why they do what they do. Also, many celestial creatures are not that emotionally removed from the humanoids below them. Often their feelings are very similar to ours, but the creatures have been elevated to another plane of cognition, meaning their thoughts are very different. Sometimes, even incorrectly, we assume sentience where there is none. Just because a creature inhabits the celestial plane, because it is a higher being, does not mean it has sentience.

Draconic - Draconic sentience, most beastmasters would argue, is very similar to our own, but often ancient and warped. On the other hand, dragons find themselves very far removed for humanoids and as they are creatures of uncountable intelligence and history, we must respect their

thoughts on the matter. One piece of evidence dragons often cite is the fact that they consider many of the humanoid races non-sentient, akin to how a human sees its cat. This would suggest dragons have a deep understanding of the intricacies of the world, which we are incapable of understanding. However, it is difficult to distinguish what of the aforementioned statement is simply disdain and what has any scientific merit.

Flora - These creatures are perhaps most alien to our own way of thinking and therefore difficult to explain completely. Many flora species live connected to others of their kind in a profound way. Some function as a literal hivemind, thinking and acting as one, others have unique connection with one another. This connection extends so far that their entire selves may be combined at one point, while still retaining a sense of individuality. Myconids often miss this connection when they sprout and explore the world, never able to truly feel it again until they meet others of their kind.

Many beastmasters early in their career often assume that flora creatures are peaceful. This, to a large extent is true, but this peacefulness



does not come from the same locus as it does in humanoid creatures. Flora creatures do not exist on a higher plane of existence, nor have they reached a level of enlightenment which allows them to shrug off violence. Instead, they are motivated almost solely by community. Most species will do nearly anything to protect their people and this makes most of them extremely non-violent. However, if there is no chance to escape or work things out peacefully, flora creatures can become extremely and ruthlessly violent. Even the most sadistic creatures often feel the need to leave flora creatures alone for this reason, because facing a horde of angry treant isn't worth whatever evil scheme they've cooked up.

As beastmasters, we could write an entire anthology to itself on non-humanoid sentience, but that is not the purpose of this atlas. In fact, from reading the list above you are probably already coming to the conclusion that many philosophers have mulled over for centuries: the fact that sentience is very hard to define. Also, who gets to define it? If the answer is creatures who are sentient, that would be a very long list.

If all creatures are sentient to a certain degree what does that mean for our humanoid omnivorous diet? Do we consume things that have complex emotions just because we are hungry? Or do we try to deny our base nature because higher thought warns us against it? Where do we draw the line at what is right and what is wrong? These types of questions have plagued beastmasters since the start of our order and if you are thinking about, no matter what side of the debate you fall on, you are taking the right steps in your beastmaster journey.

I encourage you to look for signs of a creature's sentience in your studies. Ask yourself the hard questions and come up with your own answers. Here are a few to think about when asking yourself if a creature is sentient or not:

Does the creature have a sense of self?

Does it exhibit emotions and feelings?

Does the creature have intelligence?

What form does it take?

Can the creature intentionally reproduce?

What is a Magical Creature?

Creatures often fall into two distinct categories: creatures who possess magic and creatures who have natural abilities that are so fantastic they seem like magic. It is often hard for people to discern which is which, and therefore many creatures are often incorrectly labeled until they reach a learned beastmaster who can properly look at them. When you first encounter a new species of creature, it is important that you don't jump to any conclusions.

Creatures with magic are able to do things such as cast spells, perform rituals, and brew potions. For example, sorcerers of various species would be considered magical creatures. What is interesting among non-humanoid species is that often an entire species has magical aptitude rather than a few individuals. Within humanoid species, it is often only a small subset of individuals who are born with power or decide to use it. Two totally non-magical gnome parents may still have a sorcerer as a child, though sorcery often runs in a family.

In this way, humanoids are sadly less complex than other species who are able to cast magic. Where a creature's makeup seems complicated enough to pass magic among one another, teach each other, and learn... we

seem incapable. Yet another humbling fact one learns as a beastmaster.

A word of warning: magical creatures often have a very high level of intelligence and a razor sharp wit; combine this with magical abilities, and it makes them near unstoppable. We advise against angering magical creatures when you can avoid it. They tend to think of devilishly creative ways to get you back if you do.

On the other side of the coin we have creatures who have innate abilities that seem magical, but are not. These creatures, such as the treasureshell dragon turtle, appear to have magical abilities, but in fact they are quite mundane. The treasureshell, grows actual treasure on its back — casks of gold, rubies, crowns — but this is not something the beast can intentionally start or stop. Instead, it is part of who the creature is, like the claws on a cat.

Confused? That is understandable. For the sake of argument, let's look at arguably the simplest humanoid creature: a human. Let's say this human is a wizard, so he is a magical creature. What made him this way? Some people would argue what gives a human access to magic is learning, which is centered in the brain. So, then technically doesn't that make the human just a creature with an innate ability?

The answer to that question is no, because the human wizard had to learn his magic. This brings us to another great debate: if the above is true, does this mean sorcerers, humanoids born with magic, are magical creatures? I would argue the answer to that question is yes. Sorcerers are born with innate abilities they cannot get rid of. They use them to function in their daily life and ripping a sorcerer from their magic is deadly. This fits all the qualifications for a creature with innate abilities, does it not?

The Journal of Delilah B. Timpleton Beastmaster Training – Day 101

When your Dragon asks you what your favorite beast is, and you blurt out hydra, it's best not to follow their next question of, 'So that's what you'll be studying then?' with the word 'yes'. What have I gotten myself into? Don't get me wrong, I love hydras. I've literally ready every epic with them in it, even Ruesh's controversial Voyage into Hellscape, but I never considered wanting to be face-to-face with one.

Luckily, I trusted my Dragon as much then as I do now, and Rutherford is a great teacher. Funnily enough we even share the same middle name, weird how these things work out. I mean I still trust Rutherford, but as I am writing this entry he and I are sitting in a swamp far, far away from the beastmaster Great Hall. Apparently, a hydra has uncharacteristically ventured from her territory and is moving through a swampland laying waste to whatever unhappy soul enters her path.

Rutherford has told me multiple times we are just here to observe and report back, but there is a certain twinkle in his eye... something I don't completely trust. He's normally such a levelheaded kobold and has given me multiple lectures about how I should never, ever seek out the subject of my study until I am Dragon rank, but something in my stomach doesn't feel right.

Rutherford says that is just the aftereffects of the toxic cloud hydras leave behind them.

Creature Origins

Most creatures on the planes evolved from simple organisms to complex ones. Whether you think this is because of a creator god or science is left to your individual beliefs. For the sake of this guide, we will assume that whatever the case, creatures did evolve for some reason.

Aside from evolution, there are also creatures who have been created by magic or manipulated by magic. These creatures would never have ever existed in the planes if not for another shaping them, breathing life into their lungs, or mutating an existing creature so greatly they are unrecognizable from their original species. Tracing the precise routes of a creature's origin is a complex and confusing process, requiring significant efforts in both biological and anthropological research.

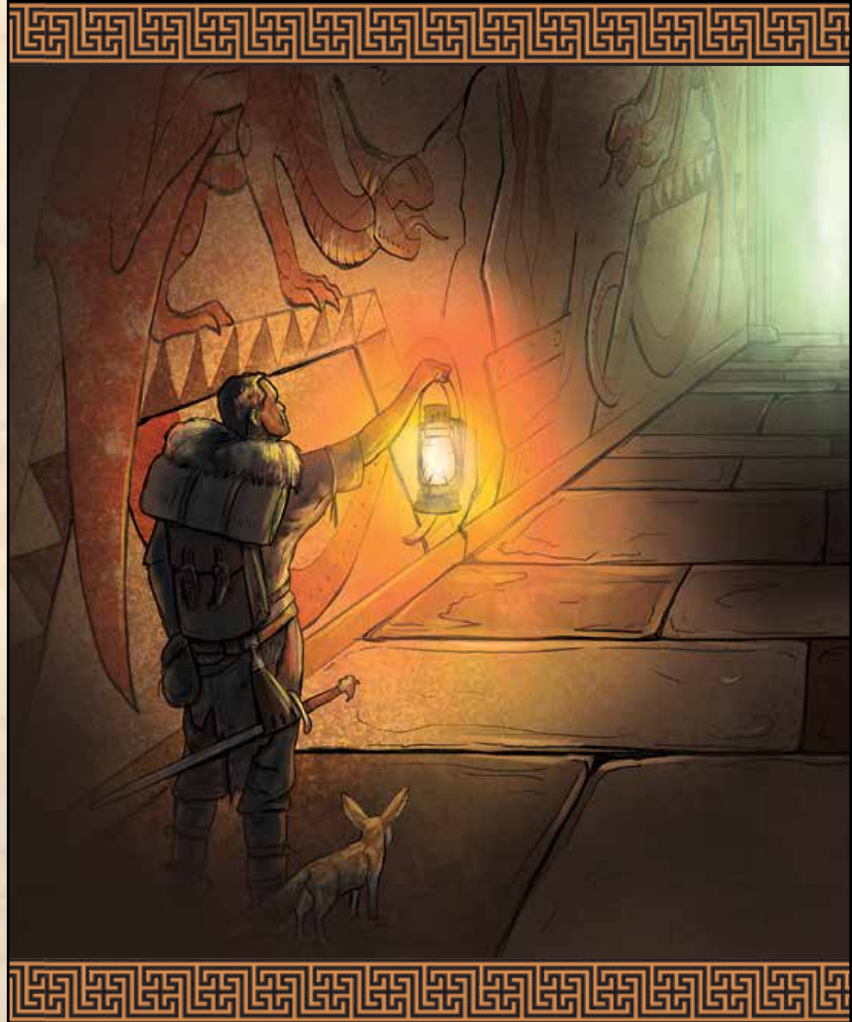
Even once a creature's origin story is discovered, it is still under scrutiny in the beastmaster field. Some tales of a creature's origins that have flourished in the wild are so ancient, they are closer to folklore than fact. In these situations, immortal and ancient beings must be found to consult with. They are the only near-reliable source to tell if a tale is true or not, and even then, they could be mistaken.

Using this Guide

Each entry in this book has either come from my own research, reviews within made by a different beastmaster, or beastmaster ally, dedicated to their chosen field of study. It reviews the basic information on each species and then looks into different variants of each species.

Beast Overview

This examines the species as a whole.



Introduction

The introduction takes you through the common conceptions of the beast and its origins. It looks into taxonomy (the classification of the beast), etymology (the origins of the name), and morphology (the shape the beast takes).

Biology

This section delves deeper into the evolution of the species. It looks at how they move and the natural protections the beast may have. Finally, it reviews a creature's special and magical abilities if it has any.

Behavior

In 'Behavior' we look at a creature's intelligence and ability. We look at whether it has any social structures in place and how the species organizes itself. Finally, we attempt to give a comprehensive look into a creature's temperament as seen through our own

perspective. Temperament will be looked upon differently depending on the person reading this book. Where an orc warrior may find an owlbear prone to violence a good thing, an elven child most likely will not.

Diet

This section looks at what the creature eats and if there is anything special about its waste.

Mating

Mating reviews how the creature selects a mate, gives birth, and raises their offspring. This section is one of the most diverse sections within the Atlas due to how varied reproduction can be in any given species. Some species don't mate at all, but split themselves instead. Likewise, not all species raise their young, and some may be born of eggs where others are carried in sacs attached to their parent's bodies.

Interactions with Humanoids

In 'Interactions with Humanoids' we look at whether or not the creature has been domesticated and how general interactions have been between humanoids and the species. We speak about conservation of rare species, and whether or not they are commonly hunted.

Variant - For each species we look at four variants.

Overview

Each variant has a short overview looking at any differences between the variant and the information mentioned about the species in general.

Rumors & Legends

In 'Rumors & Legends' I note numerous stories that I have collected over my travels but have yet been able to verify.

The Journal of Delilah B. Timpleton Beastmaster Training - Day 112

Well, I'm not dead.

Four days away from reaching the hydra, Rutherford gave me a special poultice of swampweed to eat to counteract the effects of her toxic cloud.

Three days away from the hydra, we waded through a swamp filled with dead snakes bobbing on the surface of the water.

Two days from the hydra, we heard the moaning screams of some poor swamp beast caught in the caustic aura of the hydra.

One day from the hydra, something started following us.

Thanks to Rutherford's quick footwork we managed to sneak behind the great beast. Scarfing down handfuls of extra poultice, we came upon her giant sleeping form. Three heads restlessly slept intertwined with one another and we spied the cause of the hydra's distress. A fourth neck extended from her shoulders, scratched and ragged from where she was biting in. Half of a wooden shield protruded from the stump, splintered, stunting the hydra's ability to regrow her head.

In normal cases, we'd leave the beast be, but the pain it was causing her meant she wasn't leaving anything else be and something needed to be done. Rutherford gave me two choices — thief or prey — and not wanting to try to outrun the hydra I choose thief.

More later I need to go to professor Letih'lik'li's lecture!

Beasts of the Realm



*The Journal of
Delilah B. Timpleton*

Beastmaster Training - Day 112 part 2

The back of the hydra was smooth and cold. Her giant serpentine scales were beautifully smooth and lovely to touch. At least they would be if I wasn't sure I was going to die at any moment.

Reaching the hydra's neck stump, I turned to Rutherford and nodded. With a great shout he screamed at the beast, clanging his sword against his shield. The hydra reeled upwards, rudely awoken from her slumber and ready to attack Rutherford. That's when I took my chance. Grabbing onto the wooden shield lodged in her neck and holding on for dear life, I used her own momentum to pull it from her neck.

A spray of caustic blood showered over me, but I couldn't think about the pain. Rutherford jabbed his sword at the beast, distracting it from my flight and I ran as fast as my legs could carry me. As I fled, I heard Rutherford's pained shouts and feared the worst.

By the time I stopped, my legs had given way and my chest burned. I made it to our rendezvous point, but there was no sign of my Dragon. Finally, the pain of the hydra's blood caught up with me. Half my hair was boiled from my skull and two fingers on my left hand were unrecognizable. I slathered myself in mud like Rutherford taught me and sat huddled next to a tree stump weeping for the mentor I lost.

Gasping for air through another pained sigh, I heard something move behind me. I was sure the hydra caught up and was ready for another tasty snack. Turning to face my fate, I saw no one other than my beloved mentor limping towards me. He'd survived! Together we hobbled back to the nearest town to nurse our wounds.

That was my first experience with a hydra.

I love my job.

BASILISK

The basilisk bears a menacing and harrowing reputation on account of its lethal glare. These eight-legged lizards dwell in isolated rocky areas. There are many interesting ideas that exist in the world about how the basilisk came into being. The most prominent tale of the basilisk's origin is that a chicken, specifically a rooster, laid upon the egg of a snake or serpent. As a former colleague has reported, this is obviously preposterous.

Despite their savage reputation, basilisks are still often sought out by humanoids as a target of hunting. Although they are reported to be largely solitary, further research on this beast has turned up surprising information. They are in fact a social creature that has been discovered to cannibalize its own kind when starvation finds them, as it often does when they are trapped in humanoid cities.

Biology

For speed, the basilisk has eight legs, each ending in lethal claws. Their skin is rock-hard, protecting them from the bites and claws of other basilisks. Sharp, jagged teeth are good for shearing rock while the powerful jaws have incredible crushing power. Their eyes are small and protected by hardened skin and extra layers of skin around the neck and eyes.

As myth reports, the basilisk's eyes are dangerous. They can petrify any living creature the lizard looks at and leave a trail of withering wherever they go. In some legends, their gaze may even kill upon a single glance. Although no cases of this have been confirmed, reported cases seem to indicate the basilisk in question was aged and nearly blind. This may suggest the basilisk has some control over their gaze, and as they age, they lose that control.



Behavior

Basilisks are intelligent in how they hunt and trap humans, but show no interest in formal training. When able, they hunt in groups called banks. They are based on a social order of dominance with the strongest, not always male, leading the bank. Recently, it was believed that basilisks were solitary creatures. This is because of their tendency to kill and cannibalize each other.

Squabbles for power are common and it is nothing for a bank to lose half or more of its members to fighting during a territory challenge or during mating season. They are generally aggressive, territorial, and brutal creatures that work in cohesion to frighten and corner prey before turning them to stone.

Diet

The basilisk has a very specific, very difficult diet that makes domestication nearly impossible. The lizards eat stone, but not just any stone. They need living stone, or stone that has been made from living creatures. To eat such, they hunt in their bank or in small packs to find and gaze into the eyes of anything they encounter.

A desperate basilisk will and can eat ordinary stone or rocks. These are very low in nutritional value and an adult basilisk will starve unless it can find and eat living rock. Cannibalism is not uncommon amongst the species. Several beastmasters have reported finding adult banks feeding on one of their own kind, now stone, or even eating the young they have found or shaken out of rock crevices and trees.

Mating

Basilisks mature into adults around eight or nine years of age. Male basilisks from the bank surround the female and then begin a violent display of dominance as they fight for the female. At the end of the fight, the last male remaining will claim the female. After mating, the female gestates her eggs and lays them into a hole she digs in the ground. Her eggs look and feel almost identical to rocks to keep them hidden and camouflaged on the ground. The eggs hatch some six months later.

Lizardling basilisks are small and relatively defenseless against their adult counterparts and immediately run for the tree line to avoid detection and subsequent devouring. For the first several years of their life, they will live in the trees and bushes surrounding the adult banks' territories. Here they will feed on small mammals and birds, until they are large enough to present a challenge to other basilisks.

Interactions with Humanoids

While there are noted rumors of hand-raised lizardlings being pleasant enough pets, they are few and far between. Most often, the basilisk's eggs are stolen and freshly hatched lizardlings are harvested for their precious eyes. These eyes, when used in magical potions and alchemical formulas, are a potent toxin that can kill even the most heavily enchanted.

Basilisks, in large enough banks, can take over a humanoid village or settlement with little trouble. This explains why often a sole basilisk can be found hunting and claiming the territory of humanoid ruins, as it has eventually cannibalized its fellow basilisk until only it remains. They are keen problem solvers and will spend great deals of energy to find ways to claim what they crave.

BLUE BASILISK

The blue basilisk continues to be the most threatening of its species. Its speed and fierce jaws alone would make it a threat, but the paralyzing effect of its glare continues to cause strife in nearby cities and villages. Without the aid of powerful and expensive magic, no natural cure has been found.

Despite their reputation for solitary hunting, blue basilisks are more commonly observed hunting in banks. If such a group of basilisk is to appear near your village, I highly recommend you collect your things and immediately flee the area.

The blue basilisk is the most common type seen by adventurers, as they are the only breed that will prefer ancient structures and caves to the open wild. There have been several occasions where young basilisks will be born near great structures, only to crawl in and reside happily living off vermin until they become so large that they are unable to leave. The basilisk is forced to hibernate until disturbed by explorers, at which point the basilisk takes advantage of both a newly discovered meal and the newly exposed exit.

Rumors & Legends

- An ancient treasure is guarded by a bank of basilisks, all aware of and eager to meet the prospective adventurers. As the flow of explorers has dwindled, great basilisks have started to hunt the nearby countryside causing panic.
- As part of a royal hunt, a good prince has called for the heads of basilisks, although none of his hunting party have returned when they ventured into the northern ruins.
- Only the breath of a powerful basilisk completely turns its prey into stone, preserving the soul trapped inside. If the basilisk is not powerful enough, the trapped soul will only wither and degrade leaving a mindless husk if saved.
- Within a royal quarry, miners have uncovered an ancient ruin with hungry basilisks inside. Without the mine, the kingdom will run into severe financial troubles.
- There is an ancient awakened basilisk dwelling deep in within an ancient city that holds a unique secret. The trip alone is perilous, but due to her blindness, she cannot control the power of her gaze.



CRESTED BASILISK

Deep within the rainforests of the world, the crested basilisk lives. At the edge of water, mostly rivers and small lakes and ponds, it makes its home. Unlike the blue basilisk, the crested is quite small, being under a meter long and weighing 5 - 7 ounces (141 - 198 grams). Most of this basilisk is made up of its long, thin tail. Instead of spikes along its back for protection, the crested basilisk has a fan-like crest on its head, back, and tail. It also has fringes on the toes of the feet to help with staying afloat on liquid surfaces.

Due to their small size, these basilisks can easily become prey. In moments of panic, they raise their crests and run rapidly on two feet, even across bodies of water, using their tail for balance. The crest raises to intimidate predators. The eyes stare straight ahead, stopping anything that looks into them as they attempt to flee. Unlike the blue basilisk, the crested basilisk's gaze paralyzes rather than turns to stone.

It's diet normally consists of small mammals and fish, typically rising to the surface once paralyzed providing an easy meal. When the gaze is used on humanoids, there have been several reports of short-term blindness. I can only assume the same will happen to larger creatures that attempt to harm or spook the crested basilisk. Fortunately, it is often more eager to run than to confront those who would cause it harm.

Rumors & Legends

- A wizard's errand boy was supposed to catch and deliver a crested basilisk... though it appears to have escaped (or been released) and now runs wild through the city.
- A sudden increase of political assassinations have emerged. The only clue that has circulated is that the assassin uses the basilisk to paralyze their target, but after the deed is done, the assassin just leaves the crested basilisk behind.
- A rumored cure for the sickness a crested basilisk can give someone has been reported to be found in the mountains and discovered by a harrowing witch who refuses to give the cure over until the local lord relinquishes her land back to her.
- Two young women have domesticated a crested basilisk and are attempting to breed their little monster by baiting other crested basilisks in the area, which has caused a sudden influx of basilisks to the village they live in.
- Legs of the crested basilisk are powerful ingredients for making potions of water-walking. It is also said that the eyes can be used to make paralysis-curing poultices. Beyond these two uses, the meat just tastes like chicken.



GILA BASILISK

Deep within the realm's deserts, hidden in self-created tunnels within the red rocks, hides the gila basilisk. This dust dwelling relative of the blue basilisk is mottled red and black, a perfect colour for hiding in plain sight within the sands and rock. It's body is long and wide, heavily muscled, and slow to move. Even with its eight legs, the gila remains the slowest of its species. Measuring at a meter and a half, the gila is densely built, weighing between 155 - 245 pounds (70 - 111 kilograms).

They are highly venomous, with toxin filled mouths that have few effective anti-venoms. Their eyes cause instant and intense illness in those they gaze into, before the wicked bite comes. Most creatures fall immediately, dying slowly as the gila consumes it. Humanoids caught as prey may have several long, pain-filled minutes before succumbing to death. Before consuming, the gila waits until its victim is fully immobile with no chance of recovery. It's slow body means it is a patient and clever hunter.

Not unlike its blue cousin, the gila can, if needed, eat rock. Unlike the blue basilisk, however, it appears this is done more for digestion than for any nutrients. This ability has lead the gila to create its own elaborate caves and tunnels within rock faces for protection, reproduction, and for feasting upon prey. Finding a gila in the wild can be nearly impossible unless one is willing to venture into their black caves beneath the desert's surface. They are, however, solitary creatures, so if one is encountered, an adventurer can be reasonably certain it is the only hazard they face.

Their breath is said to be able to kill a man. Luckily, its sluggish nature means that it rarely gets close enough to breathe on humanoids, unless they stare into its eyes and fall immediately ill. These dangerous lizards are often sought by locals for the healing power of their hides.

Rumors & Legends

- An aged healer has spent her life domesticating a family of gila basilisks to be able to harvest the venom in their mouths, and has created a small apothecary and visitation center for the basilisks.
- Great desert wyrms have begun to make the wastes impossible to navigate after all the basilisks in the region were hunted down and killed by the local noble's soldiers, allowing the desert wyrms to take over without a natural predator there.
- A small girl has disappeared from her village home, and was last seen heading into the desert where she crawled into gila tunnels to escape a dust storm, but none are brave enough to go find her.



GLIDING BASILISK

Native to temperate climates, the smallest of the basilisk family lives in the forests of the world. These tiny and deadly lizards live in the canopies and tops of trees, spending their days feasting on insects. The fastest of all the basilisks, gliders move about rapidly through the trees, using small hooks on the pads of their toes to cling to the bark. When they are startled or see prey in the distance, these basilisks release their wing-like flaps and glide.

Although they are sometimes called the flying basilisk, they do not fly. The wing-like flaps of skin stretched over extended ribs allow them to glide from tree to tree or from tree to ground. There is a small fold of tissue under the chin called a dewlap. The brightly colored dewlap is used to make the basilisk appear larger than it is, and to startle or confuse predators. Unlike its larger cousins, the gliding basilisk cannot eat rock, and lacks the sharp teeth common to the other breeds. Instead, it has a flat mouth and sticky tongue designed for catching insects.

The powerful blue eyes of the gliding basilisk paralyze those who gaze into them. Paralysis sets in rapidly, though the effects will only last for a few minutes unless eye contact is maintained. As a secondary defense, the gliding basilisk has a powerful venom. Those bitten will feel a prickling heat over their skin that slowly becomes a muscle spasm until they can't control the movement of their bodies. Pain wracks the body. It is recommended victims of the gliding basilisk sit or lay down before the full paralysis sets in to prevent further injury. Pain slowly dissipates after several hours.



Rumors & Legends

- A sacred glider has been lost in the palace and the regent demands that none leave until his most precious pet be found and recovered safely.
- A sudden flush year has caused an increase in the insect population which has in turn caused a dramatic increase in the glider population. Those wandering the jungle are getting attacked so often that travel is becoming impossible.
- Thought of as non-threatening, a group of starving gliders have banded together to hunt and kill larger prey, killing dogs, a cow, and recently believed to have killed a small child.
- The gliders of Myangang Jungle have been appointed the guardians of a sacred hollow, but the gliders are being systematically killed by a group of treasure hunters in the jungle, causing the jungle's magic to fade and decay.

BLINK DOG

An overview by Gabriella Loosden, human blink dog trainer

Blink dogs are similar in size and shape to other canine species, but with magical abilities. Their temperaments match those of dogs, but their actions are influenced by a high level of intelligence, which surprises many trainers who are not used to working with blink dog breeds. Over the years, the term 'blink dog' has become a blanket term for any canine with magical abilities, but originally it only referred to what we now call the hunting blink dog.

The earliest tales of blink dogs was that they were born from a litter of puppies blessed by a forest sprite. Earlier in the year, a hunter had saved the forest sprite's tree from a group of traveling bandits who wanted to plunder it for treasure. The hunter leapt to the sprite's defense with his pack of dogs and successfully fended off the scoundrels. Sadly, one of the dogs was lost in the fight, unable to dodge a fatal sword blow to the head. When the hunter's dogs had a litter that fall, the sprite blessed the dogs in thanks for their heroic efforts. Each dog was able to blink in and out of existence, ensuring that none of the pack would never again be caught by a fatal blow.

Biology

Blink dogs' physiology matches that of common canines, but blink dogs tend to live up to a decade longer than 'normal' dogs. Beastmasters are not entirely sure why this is, but most assume it is related to the magic infused into their beings, which slows the aging process and accounts for their higher intelligence. Blink dogs also have sharper reasoning skills than their canine counterparts and can read intent and purpose behind a person's actions.

How smart a blink dog is, is largely dependent on the dog's breed and individual personality, but there are some commonalities between all species. One of the most noticeable signs of intelligence in blink dogs is their ability to recognize themselves and communicate this to others. This fact alone places them as one of the smartest animal companions a beastmaster can have.

Behavior

Most blink dogs have genial, kind personalities and make excellent companions. They are loyal, considerate, and once bonded with their beastmaster will do nearly anything for them. The creatures also get along extremely well together and enjoy travelling in packs like other canine species. Lone blink dogs are rare and they can suffer deep depression without companions to travel with.

However, blink dogs do prefer being among their own kind rather than being with humans. Given the choice, a blink puppy will choose to run free with other blink dogs rather than live with a human owner (though once they are bonded, their love is unbreakable). Most beastmasters assume this is because of the blink dog's increased reasoning skills compared to those of a normal dog. With the ability to understand motivation removes a cloud of ignorance, which allows most dogs to stay with their owners – even if those owners perform despicable acts. Blink dogs living among their own kind is a form of self-preservation, allowing them to live and thrive in a kinder, more community-focused group of like-minded creatures.



Diet

If you want to keep your blink dog healthy and happy, it is best to feed them meat. Blink dogs are carnivores, but can handle eating various vegetation if no meat is available to them. If the blink dog eats something that upsets its stomach, it will often eat a large amount of grass to help pass whatever is bothering their system.

Reproduction

Blink dog ladies (females) give birth to roughly 4-6 pups and gestation takes 65 days. Ladies stay with their puppies for roughly 12 weeks, before kicking them out of the nest to live with the rest of the pack. Afterwards, it is common for mothers to still look out for their pups, but from afar – only stepping in if the pups are in danger.

Most lords (male blink dogs) and ladies are polygamous, but blink dogs do have favorite mating partners. This is often a friend they like

to play or hunt with. It's clear blink dogs have mate preferences, just like humanoid species, but don't encounter jealousy in regards to sex or mate choice. A blink dog is much more likely to act out, because they are excluded from a fun playing session than if they see their favored mate with another romantic interest.

Interactions with Humanoids

How well a blink dog interacts with humanoids is entirely down to their breed. Hunting blink dogs are often seen at the side of hunter and beastmasters alike, however, they get along terribly with phase cats, and even the most seasoned beastmaster is unable to keep the two creatures together (without one eventually killing the other). Blink wolves are hardly ever seen with humanoids, except for a few dark elves who've managed to tame the creatures.

HUNTING BLINK DOG

Hunting blink dogs are descended from the original litter of puppies blessed by the tree sprite centuries ago. Each hunting blink dog is able to 'blink' in and out of reality at will, and how long they are able to stay away is based entirely on how old the dog is and also how closely related they are to the original line of blink dogs. Elderly blink dogs are able to stay 'out of reality' for the longest periods of time and have the most control over their abilities.

When elderly hunting blink dogs die, it is common for their bodies to slowly fade out of existence, never to be seen again. No one is sure where they go, although rumors abound as to the possibilities. One thing is certain though: wherever blink dogs go, it is the same place phase cats go as well; this seems to be the seed of their often deadly issues with one another.

Beastmasters who've been around blink dogs long enough will notice that when they sleep (and dream) they fade out of existence for long periods of time. These periods are always accompanied by long, low howls- the same type of howl a blink dog emits when they see a phase cat. Sometimes, when the blink dog returns, they will have one or two scratches on their bodies, matching that of phase cat claws.

Rumors & Legends

- Some say when a hunting blink dog dies they do not die at all, but transition to another realm. This realm has been described as a land of endless fields and forests, with flocks of prey that one can hunt to their heart's content. There are so many similarities to this realm and that of the Great Huntress' realm, one can only imagine that they could be linked.
- Although blink is noted in a wizard's capacity of manipulating the weave, it has been observed that some blink dogs have far more control over their abilities, enough so that some wizards would describe them as haste or even time stop.
- Large groups of blink dogs are able to escape fights by blinking out for lengthy periods of time and reappearing far from their original starting place. It is generally assumed the more blink dogs in one place, the more powerful their abilities. Beastmasters posit that with a large enough group of blink dogs, the creatures would even be able to transport other species with them by harnessing their combined magical powers.



LAUGHING FOX

Laughing foxes are the only known vulpini canines who possess magical abilities. Laughing foxes do not blink in and out of existence, but are able to temporarily blink into other creatures' minds, playing on their most dire fears and often mocking them. Once inside a creature's mind, they assault their victim's fears with what has been described as a dark onslaught of foxes laughing at them.. Victims who fall prey to the laughing foxes, and survive, often add the laughing fox to their list of fears.

Unlike other blink dogs who hunt for food or attack to protect themselves, laughing foxes tend to antagonize other creatures for fun. They enjoy scaring others and delight in becoming another creature's greatest fear. These creatures also tend to live more solitary lives, only making friends with other laughing foxes who show them the respect of trying to scare them first.

Ladies will often refuse a mate if the lord hasn't tried to terrify them at least once. Their initial attempts often fail, and so if a lord's desired mate is still unimpressed with him, he will go through great lengths to win her over. A common tactic is to lead a parade of confused and terrified adventurers past her nest. If he can convince her that he is an adequate companion, the lady will allow him into her nest to mate.

Rumors & Legends

- Many believe that one can confront their deepest fears in the face of a laughing fox and learn to conquer them.
- Laughing foxes are favored by the Goddess of Luck and therefore it is incredibly unlucky to kill one of them.
- It is said that one can gain kinship with the laughing fox if they can successfully scare it, though so far I have yet to see even the most skilled illusionist succeed.



HERDING BLINK DOG

Herding blink dogs are by far the most docile of the blink dogs, even if they are not the most numerous. Unlike the other species, herding blink dogs prefer being around humanoids and are more intensely loyal than others of their breed. These creatures are also slightly less intelligent, but still far surpass a normal non-magical canine. As their name suggests, they are mostly used for herding, but also as companionship animals.

Rather than blinking in and out of existence, herding blink dogs are able to make exact duplicate copies of themselves, all of which are controlled by the original dog. When the dog is finished using their copies, it can disperse them at will. The copies are not physical clones, but more minor illusions of the dog and therefore, if they are hit, it does not damage the herding blink dog themselves, but does dissipate the illusion. How many copies a herding blink dog can make of themselves is based on training and not natural ability. The more your herding blink dog is kept mentally stimulated, healthy, and happy – the more copies they will be able to make of themselves.

Another name for the herding blink dog is the ‘baby blink’, because the canines make excellent babysitters, considering their owner’s children to be their own pups. Baby blinks use multiple copies of themselves to watch babies and even keep a copy active while they are slumbering – to protect the infants.

Rumors & Legends

- It’s said herding blink dogs were originally bred by pixies who needed war mounts, but didn’t want the mess of keeping hundreds of dogs in their villages. Instead, they infused the dogs with the ability to split and re-collect themselves at a moment’s notice. The pixies bred ultimate obedience into their steeds and thus herding blink dogs are extremely susceptible to pixies, often blindly obeying their commands.
- There is a halfling legend of a resident blink dog named Tharin (which coincidentally is the name of their town) who defended their community from an oncoming goblin invasion by presenting so many copies of himself that it scared the invaders off.



BLINK WOLF

Blink wolves are much like hunting blink dogs, but with more powerful builds and an aversion to humanoid contact. Blink wolf packs prefer the peace and quiet of nature and have been known to attack humanoids who encroach on their territory. These creatures are not outwardly evil, but they are not afraid to take offensive action when it comes to protecting their land.

Blink wolves are able to protect their homes by creating what is known as a “howl barrier”. By blinking into trees, rocks, and other natural features, they leave a trace of their howl in the object. When an uninvited guest crosses a threshold between the two objects, a low, deadly howl is released.. This howl serves two purposes. First it warns the wolf that a potential enemy is near. It also is likely to frighten the intruder away, avoiding an unnecessary confrontation. The blink wolves’ howl is a sorrowful, deep tune which can scare even the bravest of warriors.

Blink wolves fall somewhere between a normal and dire wolf in size. They are very agile and much stronger than they appear, with their biting strength matching that of a dire wolf. They are able to handle a wide range of temperatures and are not negatively affected by extreme heat or cold.

Rumors & Legends

- The surface-dwelling dark elves of the west are the only group that has successfully integrated with the blink wolves. Elves who venture from this tribe are always accompanied by a companion wolf.
- As blink dogs can jump through realms, some believe that the blink wolf is a creature linked to the shadow realm, some even going so far as to say that blink wolves can even jump through shadows.
- It is said a legendary tracker named Kaelswik is accompanied by a blink wolf, though this has not been officially confirmed yet.



BULETTE

An overview by Lorelai Kendall, human beastmaster

Bulettes, often times called 'land sharks', swim through the ground as well as their seawelling ancestors did the oceans. Taking their prey by surprise, they thrust up with sharp teeth and powerful jaws. With a penchant for humanoid flesh, they are dangerous to observe and even more so to train.

In addition to sharks, bulettes share their ancestry with the more docile giant turtle. The bulette has a hardened, natural armor that protects the creature from the rocks, roots, and bones under the ground through which they travel. They have sharp, thick claws on each leg, good for angling upwards and tearing aside ceilings of grass, sand, ice, and even stone.

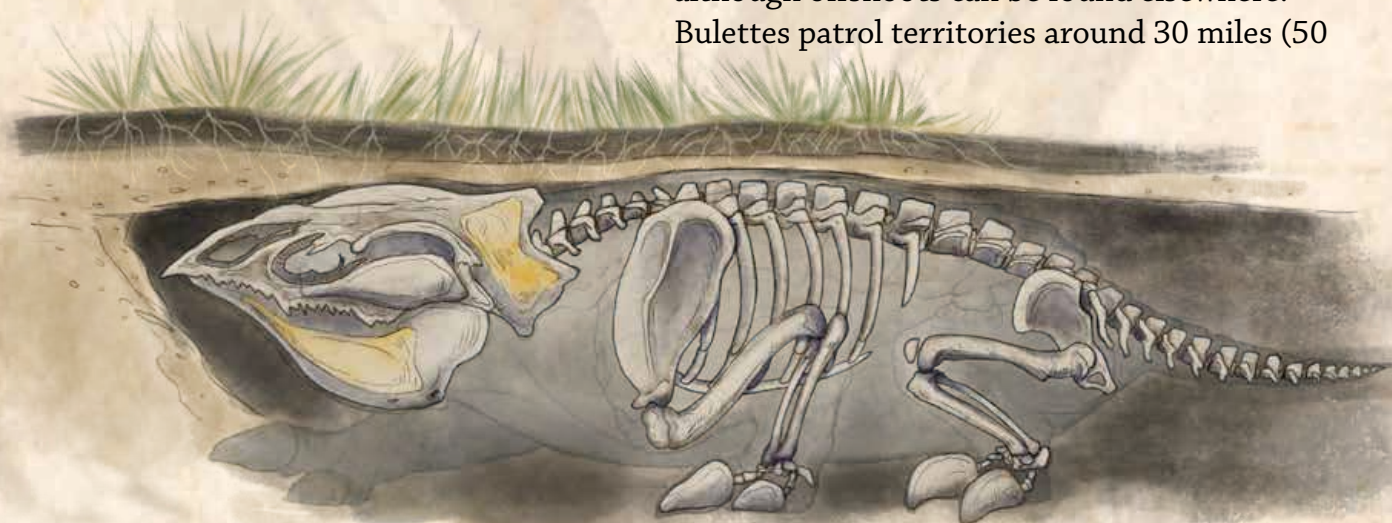
The most common tale of the origin of the bulette is that it was the product of a hermit wizard's experimentation. After many grotesque failures, and with the rumored help of a demon, he finally succeeded in creating the huge, fierce animal with an insatiable appetite. Some say the wizard's success was too perfect, as the moat of bones near the lair kept adventurers away; without prey, their instincts led them to escape to hunt in other lands.

Biology

The bulette grows between a terrifyingly 15 - 20 feet (4.5 - 6 meters) long; the smallest billy was recorded at one-and-a-half feet long and weighed around 100 pounds (45 kilograms) at birth. They see in the dark and sense vibrations to know when prey is near. With a sectioned, overlapping bony carapace, leathery hide, and a fin that helps them travel and break ground, bulettes look bulky and slow; however, they can leap with all four clawed legs leaving the ground. Impressive, as the adult bulette can weigh over 2,000 pounds (910 kilograms). Adventurers, surprised at the huge creature gracefully sailing through the air as effortlessly as it slices through the earth, have on occasion, had that be the last thing they ever saw. In addition to their foul tempers, and their original diet of humanoid flesh, their constant hunger is another factor that makes them quite difficult to study without great preparation (and protection)!

Behavior

The only thing truly short about a bulette is its temper. They travel underground, but don't spend most of their time there. They prefer temperate zones, and are at ease in caves, although offshoots can be found elsewhere. Bulettes patrol territories around 30 miles (50





kilometers) in diameter. They do not typically travel or shelter in packs, as their surly nature extends to their own kind. Even their mating rituals are solitary. Patrolling their domain, hunting and consuming prey is their primary drive. They usually have the element of surprise when attacking. If their prey survives the initial strike, leaping or bull-rushing is always a good follow-up. If surrounded by enough forces, or the 'prey' is tougher than they are, some retreat underground to fight another day. Others take down as many as they can before falling.

Diet

It might take less time to list what a bulette won't eat. It takes tremendous energy to move through the ground at the speed they do, as well as to leap as they may once above ground. Bulettes are constantly hungry. Their jaws are wide enough to swallow prey whole: clothes, armor, weapons, and all. Some scholars speculate that since the bulettes don't eat elves, that their creator might have been one. Stories tell of the bulettes rebelling by escaping their creator. However, not ingesting elf flesh

doesn't mean the bulettes won't attack them. Bulettes have killed both elves and dwarves. They just don't consume most of those kills.

Halflings, however, are definitely on the menu.

Mating

A female releases a clutch of eggs and a trail of pheromones for the male (bull) to follow. The male finds the eggs and fertilizes them. He carries the eggs in a pouch near the end of his tail. This is one time a bulette tolerates other predators in his territory, as he can still menace them away, but allow them to drive off other potential intruders. Throughout the 16-18 month gestation period, a number of new creatures enter the area. Once the strongest billy emerges (after consuming the others), the male leaves. Often he then goes on a hunting spree as he seeks out a new territory to dominate.

Interactions with Humanoids

There are a few verified accounts of beastmasters raising and training young billies. The relationship between beastmaster and beast adds a layer of complexity to the bulette. Given that hatchlings are left to devour one another at birth, most billies aren't familiar with affection. However, those trained from birth by a caring, intuitive beastmaster may bond with them. This is the exception. Bulettes in the wild will hunt and kill any humanoid they find. They may not always eat their kills, but the majority have no hesitation following their instincts. They stay away from towns and only occasionally come near farms, if they have livestock that wander or stray.

ROCK BULETTE

The most common, originally created bulette prefers temperate zones, preferably those with hills and caves. Though they are usually on the move, they do sleep and stop to eat, and they prefer to do so away from prying eyes. They do not keep hoards, as anything their prey might have been carrying usually ends up eaten as well. Bulettes, in general, are not terribly picky eaters, although I had an elven beastmaster once tell me that when the bulette they encountered took their leg, they actually spit it out. I do believe she was offended.

One of the few stories heard of beastmasters obtaining a billy to raise was of one found shortly after birth. The bull had run into an adventuring party, and though he fought to protect his clutch, it was right at the time the hatchlings were fighting for dominance. It made for quite the spectacle, and the adventurers had enough skill and luck to kill it. They had a beastmaster among their companions who captured and raised the billy. It never quite became tame, but it did protect its keeper and listened to him... most of the time.

From time to time, rock bulettes have ventured close to populated areas, and not quietly. A rock bulette traveling under farmland can destroy a season's crops, topple trees, and damage homes.

It is difficult to say just how long a rock bulette can live, as no one has found one that has died of old age. They have no social structure to speak of, most likely due to the specific purpose of their creation. Some have evolved to fit into and accommodate other ecosystems, and though difficult, some can be trained from birth to show restraint and loyalty. Who is to say that they may not one day develop further?

Rumors & Legends

- A group of con-artists has gotten their (remaining) hands upon a female bulette's pheromones. They lure the bulette to cause damage to settlements, then swoop in, masquerading as retired beastmasters who can solve their problem... for a modest fee of course.
- Legend tells of a particular grove where newborn bulettes do not fight for dominance. The number surviving billies from each clutch ranges between 3 to 5. As they grew older, they developed a pack-family mentality, much like wolves. Beastmasters and scholars alike are curious about this fabled grove; as it could contain great knowledge of how magic can directly influence the creature's instincts.



ARCTIC BULETTE

Bulettes are tough, durable creatures. They have a strong survival instinct and it serves them well, particularly those of the arctic offshoot. It tunnels through the frozen tundra and glaciers, taking down other arctic creatures. It is somewhat larger than the rock bulette, as it has developed a firm layer of insulating fat over its muscle. They have also grown a thick, shaggy pelt that follows their spine to their tail. It adds another layer of warmth under their bony shell and spills out over their pale, leathery hide. Their claws are thicker, but no less sharp than their cousins'.

The arctic bulette relies more on the species' ability to eat inanimate objects and gain some form of sustenance from them. They've eaten rocks, and even the permafrost that covers the tundra, as it contains decaying organic materials frozen along with the dirt and minerals. They are more likely to engage with powlbears (arctic owlbears) than other denizens of the cold lands are, but they are both such deadly creatures, it is anyone's guess which one would prevail. The only surety is the clash will be loud and messy, frightening away smaller, meeker animals (and people). Still, the victor is sure to eat well for some time.

Like all bulettes, their burrowing through the ground acts, as strange as it may seem, as a cleaning mechanism, as the rough stone and rocks they pass through dig out dirt from crevasses. They sometimes pass through mountains to get a thorough cleaning. The arctic bulette has fewer particles to clean from itself, however, as there are fewer pests and parasites in the frozen lands.

Rumors & Legends

- A frozen lake is a popular area for some of the local children. The cold lands are unforgiving, and they find joy in sliding across the lake and playing. A nearby bulette has taken to stalking the lake for distracted prey.
- Wizards bordering the northern tundra have discovered latent magical properties imbued in a bulette's hide and bony plating. If given to the right craftsman, to make the armor, and enchanter, to draw out its magical properties, it would be a formidable suit of armor.



MARSH BULETTE

Particularly cynical folk who live near the swampy areas call these bulettes 'swamp toads' for two reasons. One, it's a coping mechanism to call something so devastating by a diminutive name. Two, it's a fun way to mess with strangers in town; particularly those who style themselves adventurers. The marsh bulette is smaller than those originally created. Moss and algae decorate its plating, sometimes growing in the crevices. Its hide mixes well with the murky swampland, adding a degree of stealth to its hunt. Their lung capacity is larger than other versions of the creature, and it moves swiftly through muddied and waterlogged areas.

Their diet, perversely enough, does include alligators, and giant toads, and sometimes getting into scuffles with boggy dragon turtles. As the swamp bulette tends to be a solitary creature, they don't always win those fights; the swamp snappers have an equally foul temper, and their size often leaves the lone bulette at a disadvantage. They will, however, give them more than one scar as a memento of the fight if they lose. And, as always, they have absolutely no problem exploding from the

swampy muck to attack any humanoids who dare to enter.

Swamplands have many plants and animals with alchemical value, so there are plenty of reasons for adventurers and wizards to brave the dangers, even from bulettes. Some say that the churned up wetlands, the mineral-rich soil that bulettes travel through the most often in this area are also prized as having magical properties ranging from making your crops grow strong, to beauty masks, to creating explosives. These could, however, just be tales from charlatans and folk wanting to make some coin off those who aren't native to the area. Perhaps.

Rumors & Legends

- There is a rumor that bandits, who robbed a local barony, are hiding in the nearby marshland. Those chasing them to recover the treasure are puzzled at how the bandits are not yet dead, as the area is near the center of the territory of a known marsh bulette. After the last skirmish, a survivor swore that the bulette that attacked them did so at the behest of the bandit leader, who some say may be a disgraced beastmaster.
- A retired adventurer who lives near the edge of the swamplands has sponsored a contest. The prize? Riches from his adventuring career. The challenge? Wrestle and pin down a marsh bulette by hand. You're allowed to wear armor but magic and weapons are prohibited. Some say that the adventurer is nearing their last days and may be a bit mad; others believe that they wish to see young, brash adventurers attempt the impossible, to remind them of their glory days.



PYGMY BULETTE

Not possessing the ability to survive in more extreme climates, the pygmy bulette tends to stay in the most coastal temperate zones. The smallest of the species, rarely weighing in at more than 1000 pounds (453 kilograms), it is no less fierce or territorial than its relatives. Though one could call it 'cute' relative to the other bulettes, I would do so from a distance. Its size simply means it cannot eat you whole, not that it won't try to. Like the others, it doesn't like elven-flesh, but will (and has) swallowed gnomes whole. They are mostly muscle, and their plating overlaps more than the others' do, creating a more solid armor as they burrow underground. They have fewer openings for adventurers to try to find a weak spot as well.

Their mating rituals are in accordance with the parent line, save for they produce fewer eggs. Therefore, these are the least populous of the species. Because of that, it sometimes isn't identified as a bulette immediately, much to the chagrin of some adventurers. These smaller bulettes also are the exception to not tolerating others of their kind, and mating pairs have targeted prey in tandem, increasing the surprise and lethality of their attacks. Scholars among the beastmasters have theorized that this offshoot could be the most likely to develop a social structure in its further evolution. Some mages are keen on studying

this phenomenon, and possibly helping it along with magic as well. Pygmy bulettes benefit from allowing more of their kind in the same territory, if they are to defend it as well as their parent line and cousins. They have fewer offspring, so it also benefits them to protect them for at least a time, before they either leave for another territory, or force their young to leave.

Rumors & Legends

- In a coastal chaparral forest, there is a story of the smallest of the pygmies hunting from up in the sturdy branches of the elder trees. This is not to say that they live there, but the fact that they can and do spend time up there and are able to leap down on their prey means they can attack from above as well as below. Some say they attack as a team, enabling them to take down larger prey when using a two-pronged attack. One acts to surprise their quarry by bursting from the ground while the second leaps down upon its head.
- Rumors abound of a sorcerer looking to 'improve' the pygmy bulette. Their liege has a vast expanse of untamed territory, and they are conducting an experiment with captured male-female pairs. They wish to tame the beasts into tolerating others of their kind around them, others to which they are not bound. If true, and they could tame this type of bulette, it could mean this offshoot could develop quite a different temperament than the other species.



CHIMERA

Rare, bizarre, and fierce, the chimera is a creature awash in story and legend. This fabulous-looking creature has become renowned for its ferocity and danger. Found the world over, the chimera is a three-headed creature with fiery breath that makes it one of the most dangerous beasts to attempt to study. Several beastmasters have tried and have nearly always become a meal or a victim of the chimera's wild temper.

It is obvious that the chimera comes from a magical background and defies all attempts at explaining how it may have evolved. Several sources in historical documentation have noted the creation of the chimera by some sort of divine being. This, given the animal's appearance, seems the most likely. Whether the chimera was a grand experiment or a deliberate creation is unclear. The efficacy with which the chimera's system handles the needs of all its heads seems to suggest it was a deliberate creation rather than a mistake.

Biology

All chimera have three animals combined into one. Sometimes more, but never less. Chimera are easily one of the most difficult creatures to understand because of their inherent discordance. It isn't until the chimera is well into adulthood that their heads begin to work in full unison. It makes for a shaky beginning, and thus makes their young easier to hunt.

Chimera are rumored to have a variety of special abilities, including fire-breathing, the summoning of doom, and the calling of winter. The only one that can truly be confirmed is fire-breathing, which is said to be seen in older, established chimera who have lived beyond a decade. Whether or not chimera can truly be the portents of ill fate, however, is debated amongst scholars as it is obviously a creature

of magical construction. Several kingdoms have told of their downfall being heralded by a chimera, although how much of that is coincidence is unclear.

In the wild, without humanoid interference, the chimera is a creature of grace that covers large expanses of territory. Based on stories, we know that they used to intersect quite often with people, although over time, they have become more and more isolated to avoid interacting with us. Chimera are generally solitary creatures, unless a paired couple are raising a cub together. The chimera is one of the only non-life-bonding beasts that spend years together to raise offspring. This unique bond begins with bloodshed, as all chimera fight for the best territories.

In captivity, a chimera has a keen mind that is easy to train if they have trusted and bonded with the trainer. They are otherwise wily and often dangerous to those attempting to tame them. Their overlapping territories mean that chimera can and do regularly encounter one another. If they are almost equally matched in size and strength, a show of skill will result. To outsiders, this looks like a desperate fight. But after the creatures demonstrate their speed, cunning, and strength, one will be winner. The other accepts this and must move territories.

Diet

Chimera have a very broad diet with respect to the kind of meat it will eat. They are ravenous in their hunger and adept hunters when it comes to feeding themselves. Both the dragon or serpent head and the predator head (the lion, the tiger, etc) will work together to hunt. The prey head will not participate unless the body is starving. Even then, the herbivore is barely useful in a hunt, but will remain silent and avoid getting in the way. It will, however,

graze in order to find valued nutrients that may not be consumed by the other two heads.

Chimera hunt by stalking their prey, following them throughout their territories. They use their size and powerful limbs to sprint and suddenly land upon them. The chimera immediately suffocates their prey, and once it is dead, carries it to its den and there consumes it. Bones are removed from the den regularly by the beast. The chimera grazes its herbivore head at least once a day, preferring somewhere open.

Mating

During mating season, chimera abandon their territories to reach the mating grounds. These grounds are usually a clear open space near mountains for protection. Males and females fight for the prime partners. The strongest pair off and retreat to continue their courtship. Courtship is tender, with mutual grooming and hunting until the female is in heat. They return to her hunting grounds and territory after copulation to prepare her den for their future cub.

Gestation lasts for nearly six months before the cub is born. The cub is fully weaned at 18 months but begins hunting at around 3 to 6-months of age. Both parents remain with the cub until it is nearly three years old and considered an adolescent. The parents and cub return to the mating grounds then, allowing their fledgling to observe but not participate. The parents do participate, and then leave the now-adolescent cub to find its own territory after.

Interactions with Humanoids

Once, humanoids hunted and widely killed chimera on sight, as they were considered evil and a portent of doom. This belief still holds today, although the number of chimera that exist is drastically lower than it once was. Hunting has been the primary reason the chimera has become rare, hardly being found near any significantly populated area. They now live deep within the mountainous forested regions in an attempt to remain unseen.

It's unclear just how many of these beasts remain. There have been multiple attempts by fringe groups to domesticate them, or by royalty looking for a grand creature to add to their menagerie. These attempts have almost always failed, except in one case of a young queen who bonded quite strongly with a chimera cub she raised by hand after the parents were slain by local knights. As goes the superstition, her kingdom fell to ruin, as all chimera are considered omens of destruction.



DESERT CHIMERA

These unique chimera are perhaps the only one of their kind known that do not possess an obvious draconic head. Instead, they feature a cobra as their tail while displaying a dominantly feline body. Long, delicate ears on the feline head help with hearing soft movements in the desert sand that make finding prey much easier. The cobra tail allows for deadly venom to enter into prey, killing them rapidly.

The goat's head in the desert chimera has stunning, long, spiral horns evolved for defense and clashes over territory. The long, widely padded feet allow for fast and silent movement over desert sands. It is fascinating that no draconic head is attached to the desert chimera, owing perhaps to the fact that deserts are much too warm an environment for most dragons to survive in. Instead, the cobra tail is perfectly suited to desert life, allowing the body to sense and taste prey in the air and confirm what the ears of the feline head are hearing. These unique adaptations have made the desert chimera a perfect hunting machine.

Within local folklore, it is said that the desert chimera is a guardian of the dead. It is true that nearly all of their territories tend to overlap with a tomb or a long-forgotten ruin that holds the remains of the dead. They haunt sites of trauma and war, protecting these places from poachers and treasure hunters. Of course, as adventurers have become more and more common, these beautiful creatures have nearly vanished.



Rumors & Legends

- In the sandy region of Rhe'dima, it is said that whenever a king of old is raised from the dead, it is accompanied by a desert chimera, promising a terrible fate to those who stand before them.
- A great and honored queen has died suddenly and tragically in battle. The kingdom needs a chimera to bind to her tomb in order to protect her final resting place from future tomb raiders.
- Earthquakes have begun in the desert, driving the chimera out of their homes and into the nearby cities, settling in the castles and palaces of the local kingdoms, causing fear that something terrible is afoot.

SWAMP CHIMERA

Within the fetid swamps of the world, the most dangerous of all chimera can be found. The swamp chimera is the second-largest of its kind, consisting of a tiger, a bongo, and a black dragon. By far the most clever of its kin, the swamp chimera is an expert in hiding and stalking. Very solitary, these chimera do not stay together once mating has happened. Rather, a male ranges over several female territories and mates with those females. The offspring remain with their mother for nearly four years before they go in search of their own territory.

Of all the chimera, this subspecies is the most aggressive, hunting down any potential threats or predators to their flock's prey. It is said that swamp chimera bring ruin to any kingdom they approach. The creature's mere presence seems to result in increased aggressive behavior, provoking fights that have been known to escalate to war. Several beastmasters have noted the slight changes in their own personalities while studying these creatures, and it must be noted that regions, where swamp chimera thrive, are almost always in conflict.

It may be that this is a defense mechanism to ensure that the humanoid population avoids where the chimera breed and live, as kingdoms mired in war have little time to patrol its uncontested lands. The musk that these creatures give off is what, in theory, causes the anger and rage to rise in local humanoid populations. When one is in the presence of a swamp chimera, an overwhelming sense of fear and terror washes over the witness. They are often hunted as they flee at the sight of the creature.



Rumors & Legends

- A single female swamp chimera has taken up residence between two normally peaceful villages and her presence is being used to excuse the feuds that have turned into a war between the two communities.
- Due to a recent drought, the swamp begins dry out, driving its resident chimera further from its home. It has taken a liking to preying on the local farmsteads, cattle and residents alike.
- A mad king is attempting to train and breed swamp chimera to be ridden into battle. I can't imagine how this could go wrong.
- There is a request out for the black dragon's head of the swamp chimera. If you ask me, I think he just wants the trophy to say he's slain dragons.

UNDERSEA CHIMERA

Perhaps the most elusive and mysterious of its kind, the undersea chimera is a strange amalgamation of sea life that is both terrifying and awe-inspiring. The undersea chimera consists of the heads of a dolphin, angler fish, and eel, with the elongated boneless body and long, grasping tentacles of a giant squid. It is a voracious hunter, playful, alluring, and deadly. Bioluminescence from the angler head and along the squid's long tentacles create beautiful dancing lights in the water as it lures its prey.

During the day, or when the undersea chimera hasn't descended into the deepest depths, their playful nature becomes obvious. They move wistfully through the waves, finding others of its kind to form pods and go on group hunts. Once nightfall hits, these pods dissolve and the chimera return to deeper depths where their hunting continues by luring other creatures to their demise. It is commonly said that these creatures help guide sailors when they have lost their way. The bright lights from

the tentacles will glow through the water and help those at the helm find their way.

Although they can be aggressive, most seafarers note the undersea chimera to be a symbol of good fortune and clear sailing. It is not uncommon for them to feed the chimera in order to earn its good will and guidance during storms or when the stars have failed them. In turn, the chimera will often accompany boats until they are safe. It is considered ill luck to kill an undersea chimera, and those ships that have committed such a crime often find themselves struck from the sea by a vicious storm.

Rumors & Legends

- A pod of chimera continues to bump into and antagonize a ship, seeming to want to lead the ship into the depths of the undersea, perhaps in an attempt to show them something important and forgotten.
- One wizard has managed to capture and contain an undersea chimera, keeping it in a giant bubble of water that floats in his foyer. The creature's distress has caused it to begin calling its pod to it, and now the waters around the island kingdom are impassable.



FOREST CHIMERA

Within the forests of the world, the largest of the chimera lives, indomitable and giant. The forest chimera is nearly twice the size of its common cousin and is virtually impossible to slay. Made of the largest bear, the fiercest dragon, and the great buffalo, this chimera's presence demands a wide space and avoidance. Known for being the guardian of forests and villages alike, it is considered a greatest offense to kill one and has led to revolts by peasants against such lords who are foolish enough even to try.

Unlike other chimeras, the forest chimera mostly forages for its food. It feeds on fruits, berries, plants, fish, and occasionally the carcass of someone else's kill. It is opportunistic, and will eat meat if presented it with it, but largely favors plants and berries over carrion. The great wings that grow from its back allow for some flight, though its massive size prevents it from attaining any significant altitude. Instead, the wings are used as powerful weapons to ward off any assaults.

As fierce as the forest chimera can be, it is a fairly passive creature. It holds a wide territory and is more likely to find humanoids unworthy of its notice than it is to attack them.

It fears nothing, given its size. Disputes between two forest chimera can cause large territory damage, and so the creatures tend to avoid one another, except for in spring when the thaw comes. It's then that almost all the chimera can be found by the rushing rivers, hunting for fish and other fresh life, as well as finding mates. Cubs are born two at a time and fiercely protected by their mother. These are perhaps the only chimera not currently in danger of being eradicated, partially due to their size and partially due to their inherently calm nature.

Rumors & Legends

- It is said that when river sphinx travel overland, they do so upon the backs of forest chimeras.
- The first domesticated forest chimera was seen as the companion to a local ranger, and everyone has come to witness the only forest chimera they've ever been able to pet and see up close, but something's not quite right.



COCKATRICE

As told by Bogdan, human beastmaster and carrot farmer

Even the common cockatrice is a sight to behold; its diverse origins blend to form an elegant, lithe body with plumage that seamlessly flows into the scales that protect its torso and back. Its colors, temperament, and even abilities are varied, depending on the creature who incubated the egg. Cockatrices produce their own eggs, but often will sneak their eggs into nests of other creatures for incubation, resulting in different variations of cockatrices.

The origins of this species is still a matter of debate among academics and mages; many of whom are more than willing to talk about where they “actually” came from in exchange for space by the tavern fire and a few complimentary ales. The only thing they can indeed agree upon is that magic had to be involved to bring together the parts into a working whole.

Though there are some who posit that birds and reptiles are not so far apart that breeding did not play a role in its creation. They point to the successful experiments of a few who have brought forth variants of the species not in existence until recent years.

Some say that the creature originated from a rooster’s egg, and others point to the symbiotic relationship between some giant swamp lizards and a type of bird that sustains itself from the bits of remains stuck in their large teeth. Whatever the case, these strange and deadly creatures are truly a sight to behold... if they don’t petrify you with their gaze.

Biology

Their reptile heritage means that cockatrices are cold-blooded creatures, so they stay away from caves and dungeons. They prefer

temperate plains regions, and though they make dens in which to roost, spend a good deal of time outside of them. The creatures enjoy sunlight, and their ability to petrify predators several times their size means that some strut with impunity through their favored territory. Most can fly, though not quickly, which gives them some maneuverability.

The cockatrice is well-known for its petrifying stare. Its bite will cause a less damaging hardening of flesh, but will ultimately lead to the same result. Although it would seem that its gaze means instant and deadly petrification, the cockatrice can control this ability. How and why cockatrices use their ability is a topic of much debate in many scholarly circles, with many agreeing that perhaps cockatrices select their targets at random.

Note: *mongooses, weasels, and of course cockatrices themselves are immune to the cockatrice’s petrifying ability.*

Behavior

Cockatrices are simple beasts but can be clever, as I have observed them stalking their prey and timing their gaze attacks, so their victims are in interesting (and probably uncomfortable) poses when they strike. My own observations contradict this. I believe the creatures have a preference towards prettifying targets, and even demonstrate a sense of comedic timing.

They are mercilessly territorial and move in flocks. While hunting flocks move seamlessly as one terrifyingly coordinated unit, but when it comes to eggs all bets are off. Cockatrices are so fond of devouring one another’s eggs that mothers are forced to leave their own eggs hidden away in the care of other species.

Diet

In addition to other cockatrice eggs, cockatrices also eat small mammals, usually petrifying them first — for texture. Trackers look for partially digested petrified remains when carefully searching out these creatures and their dens. When neither insects nor other cockatrice eggs are available, the creatures have been known to consume eggs of other creatures, knowing that they may contain cockatrice eggs among them.

A cockatrice's cannibalistic nature, while brutal, serves an important purpose. As these creatures are also voracious breeders, their appetites serve as a form of population control. If cockatrices were not to consume each other's eggs, the population would swell and soon the known worlds would have an epidemic on their hands.

Mating

Cockatrices mate often, due to the loss of eggs to other cockatrices and environmental hazards; though not as often as fowl, they do more often than reptiles. Females are ready for mating at 6 months old and choose their mates by assessing the wattle and comb of the available males.

Cockatrices can incubate their own eggs or leave them in nests of other creatures for incubation. If a cockatrice mother leaves her eggs with another creature, she instinctively knows when to return for her hatchlings, petrifying the creature caring for them before taking the babies back to the flock.

Once a cockatrice is born, the chick's gaze is not as lethal as that of their parents, but it is still wise to not make eye contact. Although there is a market for cockatrice chicks, there is little evidence that anyone has ever been able to domesticate an adult.



Interactions with Humanoids

No one has ever said that cockatrice meat is a delicacy; their venom — and some say their dispositions — make the meat bitter and dangerous to ingest. If they are hunted, it is for their poison, or their eggs, usually to sell to the highest bidder. There sits more than one statue of a foolhardy townsman or inexperienced adventurer who thought they could become a cockatrice poacher.

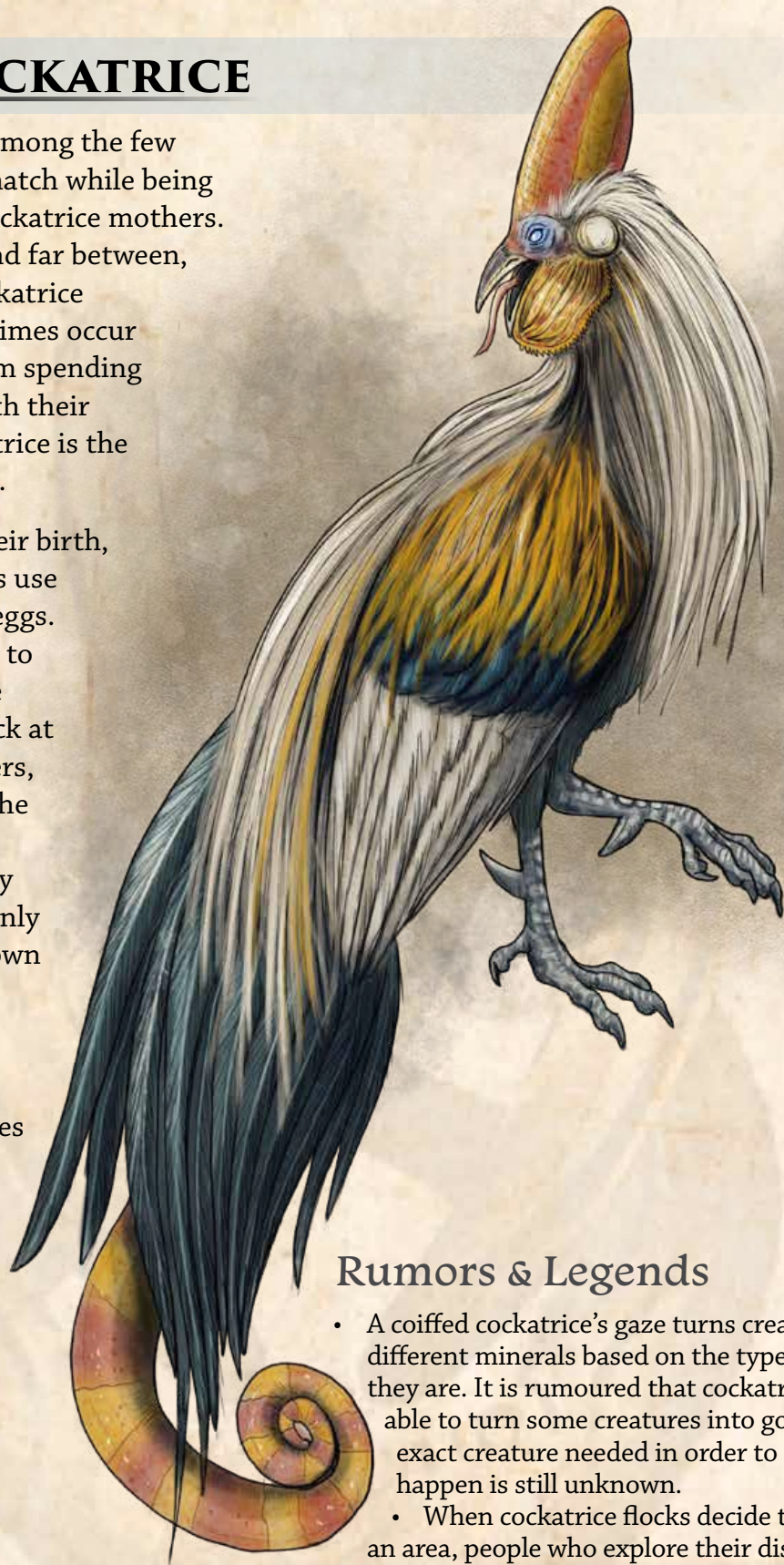
Some academics wish to preserve the cockatrice because of its transformative abilities, and because it has a stable place in some ecosystems. However, they are few and far between. Most people agree the only thing these creatures are good for is as an ingredient in alchemical experiments. Alchemists prefer to buy and breed them because they can extract their venom to transform organic material into various minerals.

COIFFED COCKATRICE

Coiffed cockatrices are among the few whose babies manage to hatch while being incubated by their own cockatrice mothers. These creatures are few and far between, mostly because of the cockatrice appetites, but does sometimes occur in nature. Benefitting from spending every waking moment with their mother, the coiffed cockatrice is the most vicious of their kind.

From the moment of their birth, mother coiffed cockatrices use their young to help hunt eggs. Her hatchlings are sent in to other nests to distract the awaiting mother. They peck at her feet, pull at her feathers, and when she runs after the hatchlings, their mother swoops in and devours any eggs in the nest, leaving only the barest scraps for her own hatchlings.

Through this game of hunting, pestering, and thievery, coiffed cockatrices learn to become self-sufficient, to only look out for themselves, and to viciously attack any creature who dares get in their way.



Rumors & Legends

- A coiffed cockatrice's gaze turns creatures into different minerals based on the type of creature they are. It is rumoured that cockatrices are even able to turn some creatures into gold, but the exact creature needed in order to make that happen is still unknown.
- When cockatrice flocks decide to leave an area, people who explore their discarded territory often find eerie stone graveyards filled with humanoids and creatures who crossed their paths. Since the bird's gaze only turns their flesh to stone, any items or treasure they may have had on their persons would still be there.

SHOEBILL COCKATRICE

Shoebill cockatrices are larger than their coiffed cousins and are the result of eggs left with crocodiles and other large reptiles for incubation. These beady-eyed creatures have two long, powerful legs, and a giant crocodile's tail. Their mouths are filled with jagged teeth and, unlike other cockatrices, they have a taste for flesh.

Often when a cockatrice mother returns to steal her shoebill hatchlings back, she is in for a cruel surprise. Managing to successfully petrify the crocodile, she turns her back to signal to her hatchlings that they should jump on and be carried back to the flock. Instead, they attack their mother, tearing her to pieces and feasting on her flesh. From then onwards, the shoebill hatchlings hunt together as a flock until they come of age and strike out on their own.

Some adult shoebill cockatrices will join a flock of coiffed cockatrices, occasionally eating one of the flock to satisfy their hunger. However, this is a rare occurrence, because though shoebill cockatrices enjoy meat, they are also lazy. Often, the migratory, frantic life of coiffed cockatrices is too much for a shoebill cockatrice and the creatures live lazy lives, only fighting and hunting when it can no longer ignore the hunger in its belly.

Rumors & Legends

- Theoretically, the feathers of a shoebill cockatrice can be used in a potion to remove cockatrice petrification from a creature. They must be boiled for three days straight and mixed with dragon's tears. Once the potion is ready, it should be poured over the petrified victim and with any luck they will become un-petrified and be very much alive.



PEACOCKATRICE

Peacockatrices are a rare breed of cockatrice, which are now forbidden in many rearing and wizard circles. The first was bred only fifty years ago by a gnomish king who believed he could use the creatures as crime deterrents in his kingdom. His royal beastmaster incubated cockatrice eggs with a peacock resulting in this oddly beautiful creature, which was also seemingly very loyal.

For a time, the king's plan worked. Peacockatrices, as he dubbed them, wandered the palace gardens with golden blinders preventing them from unintentionally petrifying someone. When people were accused of a crime, they were brought before the king, and when they were found guilty, promptly petrified by the creatures. Petrified criminals were placed on the palace walls to deter any more crime.

Sadly, the king's plan was not to last, as one night all the peacockatrice's blinders were removed and they set about petrifying the entire palace. By daybreak the creatures were gone and everyone had been turned to stone. Today, beastmasters are on high alert any time a peacockatrice flock is spotted, as they are drawn to towards cities and seem to delight in turning people into stone.

Rumors & Legends

- In their creation, it is believed that the beastmaster who first bred them was behind the fall of the kingdom, because his body was not found in the palace. Before these creatures turned on the palace they were known as incredibly well-trained creatures who were even friendly at times. Those who visited the castle while the creatures were there could not believe they would do something like this unless ordered to by someone they trusted
- Peacockatrice are shrewd judges of character, and individuals may sometimes be found 'serving' a minor warlord or bandit king.
- Since the peacockatrice is a 'new' creature, many enchanters and alchemists are looking to get their hands on alchemical components of the creature to discover its unique magical properties. Some may even pay a high price for a captured one.



AQUATIC COCKATRICE

Aquatic cockatrices are created by a cockatrice egg being incubated by any type of penguin. Rather than a petrifying gaze that turns a creature into stone, their stare will turn a creature into solid ice. Because of the close nature many penguins have with their eggs and babies, female cockatrices are often rejected by their hatchlings when they come back for them. Refusing to go with their cockatrice mothers, if an aquatic cockatrice hatchling is lucky, they will be able to stop their cockatrice mother from petrifying their penguin parents. If they are unable to stop their cockatrice mother, they live with the remaining non-petrified parent, or are adopted by another penguin.

Like their penguin parents, aquatic cockatrices primarily eat fish. They spend hours each day diving into deep waters for tasty morsels and huddling with other penguins for warmth. Because the creatures are still part cockatrice, many have difficulties blending in with other penguins. They have outbursts of anger, tendencies to steal eggs, and can be ostracised from penguin society if they cause too many issues.

If an aquatic cockatrice is ostracized from other penguins, it becomes extremely dangerous. With no social structure to keep it in line, the cockatrice turns into a brutal hunter and uses its icy gaze to freeze anything that comes in its path. If the cockatrice manages to stay in the good graces of other penguins, it becomes a fearsome warrior for the other penguins and makes sure their family is never bother by predators or poachers.



Rumors & Legends

- Currently unverified, but it has been observed that twin cockatrices share a close bond, perhaps being facilitated by some sort of telepathic link. If true, these would make them ideal hunting pets — if it was ever possible to train them.
- The aquatic cockatrice has been seen to be a favored pet by some unsavory characters who use them to freeze less edible creatures. Those frozen remains are commonly used to keep various foods and goods cold.
- Aquatic cockatrices have learned from penguins that a collection of pretty rocks can help impress a prospective mate. Perhaps related to its ability to freeze, aquatic cockatrices seem to enjoy crystalline patterns and tend to collect small piles of gems and crystals.

COUATL

Couatl have maintained an active presence within civilizations near their homelands over centuries of recorded history. Their aid and guidance are not only tales of legend, but memories of recent decades. My research led me to the expertise of one Amiko kaj Zorgo, a bold-hearted half-orc druid from the southern continent. By the time I met him, Amiko had spent nearly two decades of his life in the service of various couatl mates. His personal experience and academic knowledge made him an invaluable guide, and certainly my research would not have been so complete without his expertise.

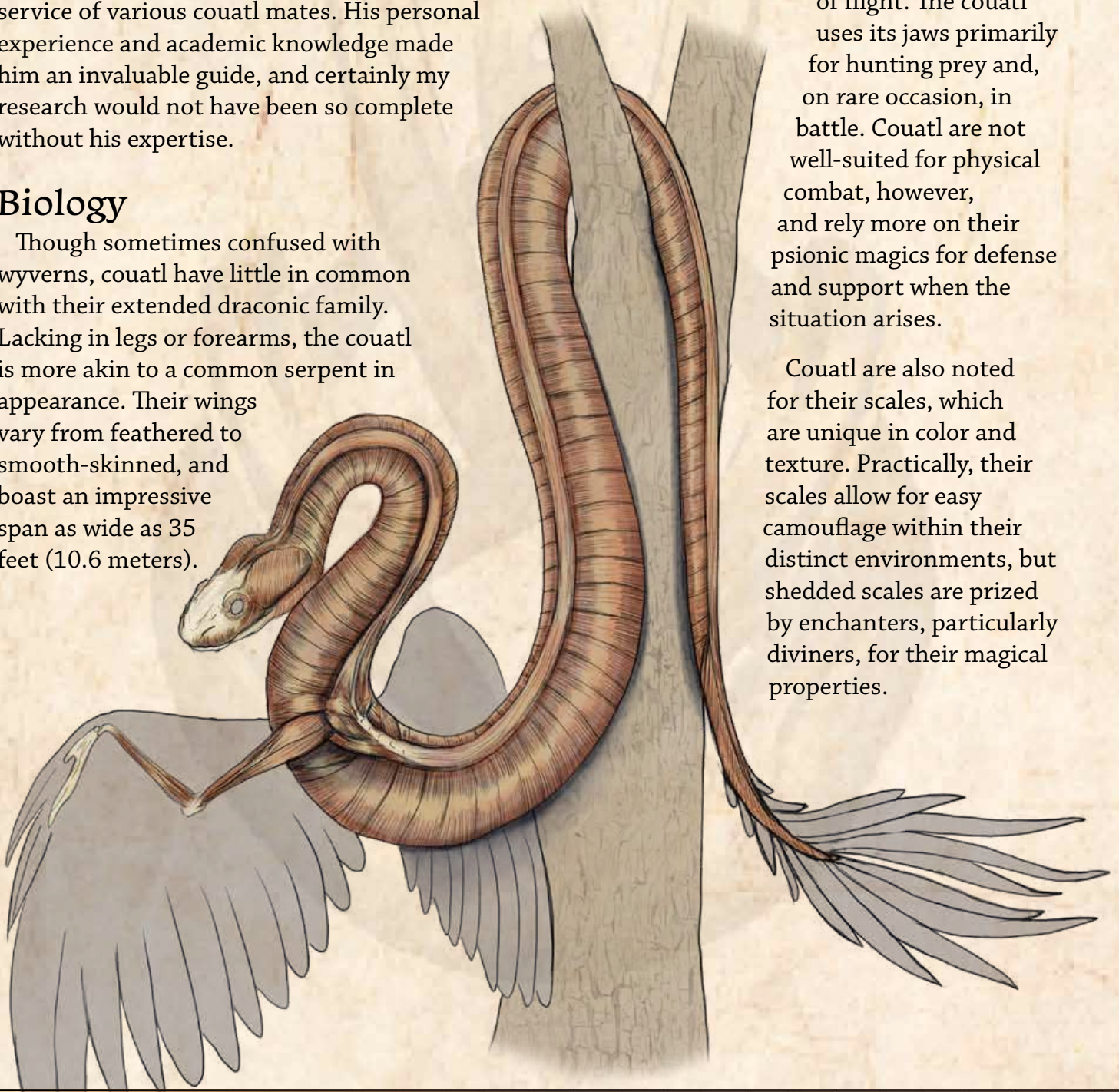
Biology

Though sometimes confused with wyverns, couatl have little in common with their extended draconic family. Lacking in legs or forearms, the couatl is more akin to a common serpent in appearance. Their wings vary from feathered to smooth-skinned, and boast an impressive span as wide as 35 feet (10.6 meters).

Despite its size, the couatl is a surprisingly light creature, due to the hollow bones that make up its large spine and thin ribbing. The chest and shoulders are supported by the musculature that powers the creature's flight. Vital organs, protected in the upper torso area, are perfectly adapted to regulate air- and blood-flow throughout the entire body, all of which work together to support long periods

of flight. The couatl uses its jaws primarily for hunting prey and, on rare occasion, in battle. Couatl are not well-suited for physical combat, however, and rely more on their psionic magics for defense and support when the situation arises.

Couatl are also noted for their scales, which are unique in color and texture. Practically, their scales allow for easy camouflage within their distinct environments, but shedded scales are prized by enchanters, particularly diviners, for their magical properties.



Behavior

Couatl species live in close-knit communities, but as a race they are intimately connected. Those like Amiko who are trusted to serve couatl mates relate that little, if any, violence between or within clans occur. Disagreements are overseen in meetings between the concerned parties, and compromise is typically settled as solemnly as a judge's court. Though he was never allowed to attend any meetings, Amiko said he had witnessed only one banishment in his twenty years of service, with all other disputes resolved peacefully.

Couatl communicate telepathically, and I inquired to Amiko if they 'spoke' Common or their own language. He replied, "It was not Common that I heard, nor Orcish, yet I understood." My impression is that it is a language of images and ideas, interpreted innately by all intelligent creatures.

Diet

Though their specific diets depend on their environment, couatl as a whole are carnivores. Less active couatl feed only occasionally on large creatures to sustain their slower metabolisms, while others hunt several times a week for small to medium prey. Adult couatl are expected to hunt for themselves, and mated pairs will rotate the duty of delivering food to their young, as neonates require feeding until they are fully fledged, about a year after birth.

Many creatures in the draconic family are notorious livestock poachers for local farmers. Couatl, however, hunt exclusively wild animals, and are even known to protect herds and crops, making them welcome neighbors for farms and towns.

Mating

When couatl reach the age of ten, they make their first flight to what scholars refer to as the Gathering, a meeting of couatl from across the

world. Couatl change mates every twenty years, and only those seeking a partner attend the Gathering. There, in a hidden mountain valley, males and females alike perform intricate aerial dances. When two couatls' dances join together, they are considered bonded, and will bear eggs together for the next twenty years.

Couatl attending the Gathering are purposed with more than seeking a mate, however. The Gathering is a time of networking, and couatl of every variant will exchange news from their homelands. The Gathering is the keystone of fostering their connections, strengthening their clans, and empowering each other to protect their corners of the world.

Interactions with Humanoids

Couatl presence over their homelands is intertwined closely with nearby settlements, although direct contact is rare. Cooperation and understanding between these villages and their mythical neighbors goes back centuries, with the earliest recorded history in such areas mentioning giant serpents driving back orc raids, aiding lost travelers, and teaching a chosen few how to live harmoniously in their new home.

The few people privileged to learn from the couatl are often tasked with helping to raise their neonates, or young. Some will spend several seasons with the couatl before returning to their homes, gifted with new connections and knowledge. Others, like Amiko, will travel beyond their homelands to serve and learn from other clans.

Interaction with the couatl cannot be forced; they are creatures of wisdom and thoughtfulness, and choose carefully to whom they will pass on their knowledge and, in some cases, their power.

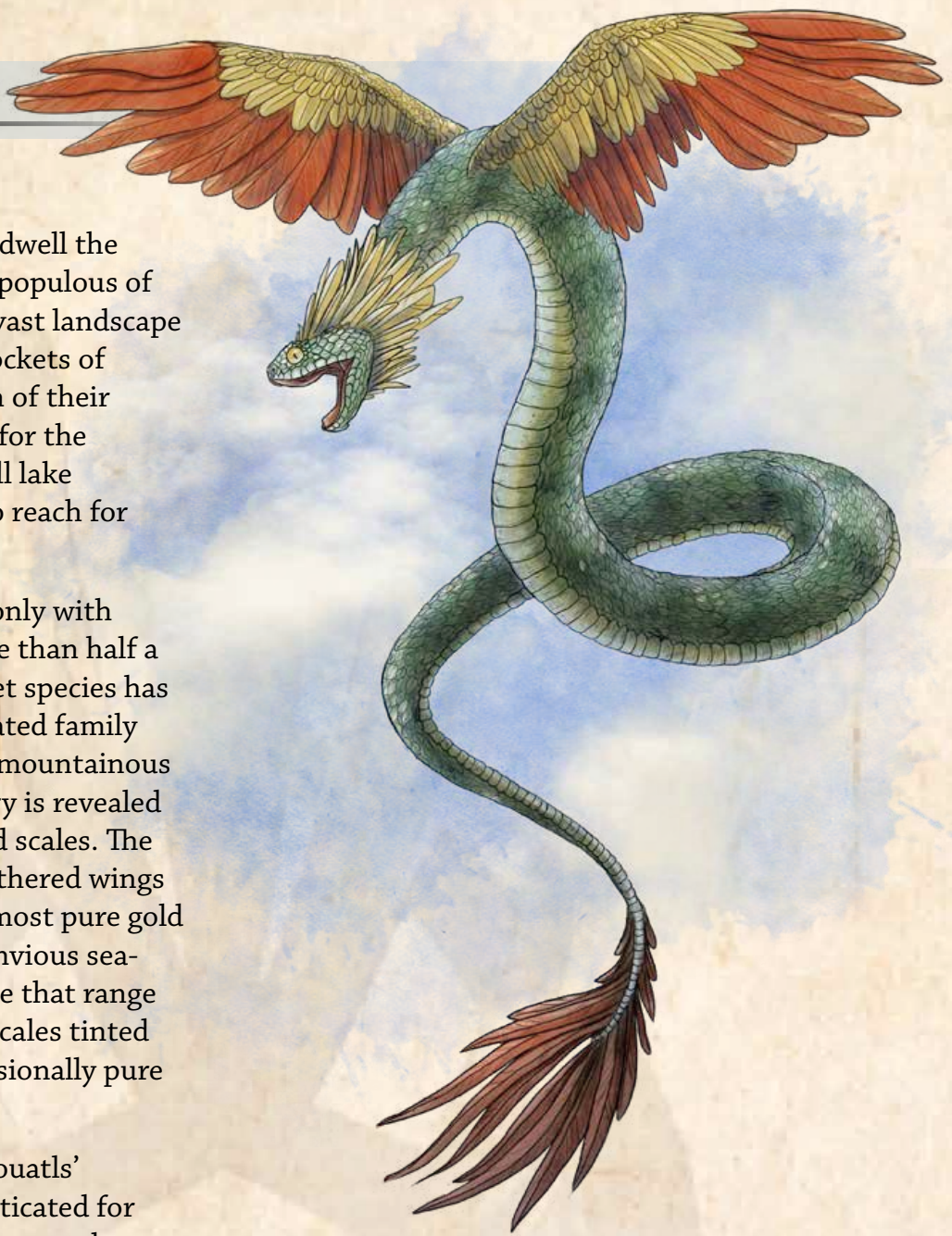
SUNSET COUATL

Along the expansive Cloudrise Mountains, with snow-capped peaks and verdant green valleys, dwell the sunset couatl. They are the most populous of their kind, aided perhaps by the vast landscape thriving with flora, fauna, and pockets of civilization. The natural seclusion of their mountains is also the ideal place for the Gathering, hidden away in a small lake valley that is nearly impossible to reach for travelers and monsters alike.

While most couatl species live only with their mates or in clans of no more than half a dozen creatures in size, the sunset species has an extensive network of complicated family trees spread throughout various mountainous regions. A sunset couatl's ancestry is revealed in the coloring of its plumage and scales. The most ancient bloodlines have feathered wings with fire-red tips melting into almost pure gold in color, and their scales are an envious sea-green. Lesser couatl have plumage that range in warm oranges and reds, with scales tinted in more green or yellow and occasionally pure royal blue.

Though the differences in the couatls' bloodlines is too minutely sophisticated for most scholars to comprehend, the couatl keep strict accounts of their family trees. Clan hierarchies are determined primarily by ancestry, but ranking is malleable by merit as a couatl grows and contributes to its society.

The sunset couatl are the only ones of their kind known to leave their homelands in the name of defending just causes, and they have a notable proficiency in fighting. While most couatl specialize in defensive magics, the sunset variant makes strategic use of its psionic abilities to aid their allies in battle. There are historical accounts of couatl aiding sovereigns in battle against invading armies and monsters.



Rumors & Legends

- In the mountain ranges, there is a rumor that the overarching clan is led by a single elder, called the First. Some believe the First is truly the first living sunset couatl, kept alive by the blessings of the gods, while others say it is a title passed down to worthy couatls.
- It is said that the Sir Cuthbert of Riven was aided by sunset couatl to retake his homeland. Upon his death, the couatl attended his funeral and took his shield back to their home, in the mountains.
- Local rumor is that there have been sightings of an exiled sunset couatl whose feathers are slowly turning black.

GLASS COUATL

In the jungle climes of the world, the glass couatl remains more aloof than its brethren. They remained hidden in the misty cloud forests for so many centuries that their existence is relatively new knowledge. Early adventurers wrote accounts of flying skeletal serpents, not realizing they were a tropical breed of the couatl with which they were more familiar. As communication between adventuring guilds and the tribes who call the tropical forests home improved, so did academic understanding of the glass couatl.

These couatl do not seek the aid of others in raising their neonates, so much of what I learned — thanks as always to Amiko's expert connections — came from the jungle tribes' personal experiences. Called crystal couatls by locals, these creatures are almost entirely transparent due to their clear crystal scales. Their wings resemble those of a bat - bony, with translucent skin. Due to their appearance and the near-constant fog of the cloud forests, glass couatl are nearly impossible to spy in the nests they build in the tree canopies. Their scales, however, are littered throughout the mossy floor of the jungle, glittering and sharp.

The tribal leaders with whom I spoke said the glass couatls are not civilization's protectors, but rather guides who taught the tribes survival in the jungle centuries ago. Violence in the cloud forests is nearly unheard of, as the tribes rely on each other for survival in the harsh environment. The couatl tolerate the tribes and travelers so long as no harm comes to the forest itself. Their presence even dampens some magics, in particular illusionary, necromantic, and enchantment. Both strict and aloof, the glass couatl protect a harsh yet captivating world, where only the hardest adventurer may travel to catch a brief glimpse of their crystalline beauty.



Rumors & Legends

- Folklore from the cloud forest tribes claims anyone who holds a glass couatl scale in their hand cannot tell a lie, as lies are a form of deceit or illusion, and thus are intolerable to the couatls' nature.
- Legend states that Kralick Na-nikot, a tribal leader in ancient times, was the first human to gain audience and aid from the glass couatl. The forest had begun to decay and Kralick required the couatls' assistance to hunt a warlock who defected from his tribe and was spreading a great rot.
- On nights with strong moonlight, groups of glass couatl will sing an unearthly song in chorus. This charms beasts into their woods for food, though it has been known to inadvertently also lure in children and those with sensitive dispositions. The couatl will not harm them, but the lured beasts can be a hazard.

ARCTIC COUATL

Couatl are known for connecting the corners of the world, so the solitary arctic couatl is an oddity of its kind. When I attended the Gathering, I observed not a single arctic couatl was present. Amiko informed me that the arctic couatls live self-exiled in the unforgiving northern climes of the world, where few other benevolent forces dare to tread.

Amiko traded favors for a teleportation circle to the northern city Kot'ulaar, where a couatl nest is tucked just ten miles outside the city limits. Fully interested were the couatl mates in my research, and for an entire spring season, they generously offered their roost to us, so long as we aided in caring for their young. Thus was I able to observe and inquire when I was not caring for the couatl neonates alongside Amiko.

I soon learned their hospitality was not unusual, as arctic couatl are generous towards travelers and locals alike. Records debate when couatl settled in the arctic, but even ancient travel journals mention the mystical creatures' presence across the northern landscape. Their wisdom informed the founding of the region's cities, and their watchful eyes keep the few major roads safe from bandits, powlbears, or bands of ice giants that wander down from the mountains.

In appearance, the arctic couatl are most famously known for their auroral wings. Like lighthouses along a coast, arctic couatl are the beacons of the north. During blizzards, their shimmering wings are the only visible



landmarks for miles. An arctic couatl can withstand the frigid wind and ice of a blizzard for days on end, their wings outstretched for any lost travelers seeking shelter. During fair weather, the greens, blues, and purples of the arctic couatls' wings are often spotted streaking across the sky during their patrols.

Rumors & Legends

- Old records kept in Kot'ulaar claim that hordes of frost giants descended from the mountains barely a decade after the city's founding, protesting the new civilizations in the north. On that day, legend says the arctic couatls' auroral wings blanketed the sky as the creatures rallied to fend off the frost giants and protect the cities. The couatl were successful, and the frost giants retreated back to the mountains, but northerners fear that the giants have never forgotten — or forgiven — their failure.

CRYPTIC COUATL

Underneath the earth in the deepest woods of Swórettung Holt, the cryptic couatl dig a network of tunnels that intertwine harmoniously with the roots of the forest. This eerie couatl is completely blind, and uses its scales as sensory nodes to navigate underground. Their rough hide, having the appearance and texture of rough tree bark, also provide excellent camouflage in the open-air forest.

Smallest in mass but longest in length compared to their cousins, the cryptic couatl leave Swórettung Holt only for the Gathering. One must assume the Gathering's magical pull guides them safely to and from the mountain valley, as scholars are otherwise unsure how they travel such a long distance without sight.

With elongated snouts and wide wings that fold perfectly against their bodies, the cryptic couatl is more suited for extended stretches of precision gliding than flight. Their wings attune to air movement for the nighttime hunting of bats and ground rodents. From the top of the canopy, the cryptic couatl winds itself into a tight coil from which it launches into flight, sometimes hundreds of yards into the air. Once airborne, the creature controls the speed of its descent while traveling and hunting before eventually returning to the forest below, expending energy for ascending wing movement only when necessary.

Despite little direct interaction with village-folk and adventurers, the cryptic couatl shows a protective nature much like its cousins. As I traversed Swórettung Holt, Amiko showed me a distinctive swirl shape in the earth that pointed to the nearby river. The couatls' green-tinged bark scales, shed often, were also laid along the ground forming a trail that guided us back to the main road. Though one might never set eyes on the cryptic couatl, even the loneliest traveler in its forest is never forgotten.



Rumors & Legends

- “Swórettung Holt” roughly translates to “breathing wood,” a name coined by ancient travel journals that claimed the ground around the oldest trees would swell like the rise and fall of a breathing chest. Rumor spread that the forest was alive until scholars learned of the cryptic couatls’ presence. Superstitious folk still believe a malevolent spirit is buried in the heart of Swórettung Holt.
- Before my field studies with Amiko, I scoured the historical records of the cryptic couatl’s forestland and the surrounding hillsides dotted with villages. I discovered that the villages within a several-mile radius of the forest have never once suffered from drought or famine, even when cities and towns within reasonable distance experienced crop blight or dry spells. Though no definitive causation has been drawn to the cryptic couatls’ presence, locals sometimes refer to them as “druid couatl,” and believe the creatures magically enrich the land’s water and soil.

DRAGON TURTLE

As told by Fethirel D'nanonil, matriarch of the Elven Seafolk

The word dragon not only denotes a species of creatures, but has an ancient weight, a meaning. It represents something great and powerful, something to be feared, but most of all to be respected. It is not surprising the subjects of this entry have many names with one commonality: the word dragon. They swam in the oceans of the earth when it was still young; before folk much smaller than them came into being, before thoughts were given a voice and immortals were called gods. They are as eternal as the waters of the earth. In my elven tongue they are known as ear'loki, or sea dragons, but for the sake of the many readers who many peruse this book I shall keep to their name in the common tongue: dragon turtles.

Biology

For clarity's sake I would like to state early in this entry that dragon turtles biologically have very little to do with dragons. At best, they can be considered very distant cousins, much as a monkey resembles a human. This is not a comment on relative intelligences, but rather on the biological incompatibilities. Most dragon turtles are able to breathe and live on both land and underwater, save for the desert dragon turtle mentioned later in this entry.

Two traits shared by all sub-species of dragon turtle is their inability to vocalize, and the hard shell each carries on their back. Dragon turtles measure roughly 50 feet (15 meters) in length and have a various number of scaletones based on their natural environment. A dragon turtle's maw has adapted to the diet available to them. Some have a mouth filled with serrated teeth for tearing flesh, whereas others have a complex set of plates that allow them to filter various fish from the water.

Finally, dragon turtles live impossibly long lives. Other scholars in my field are remiss to say the creatures are immortal, as they visibly age and grow larger throughout the years. However, no dragon turtle is known to have died of natural causes. If you ask me, it sounds a lot like immortality, does it not?

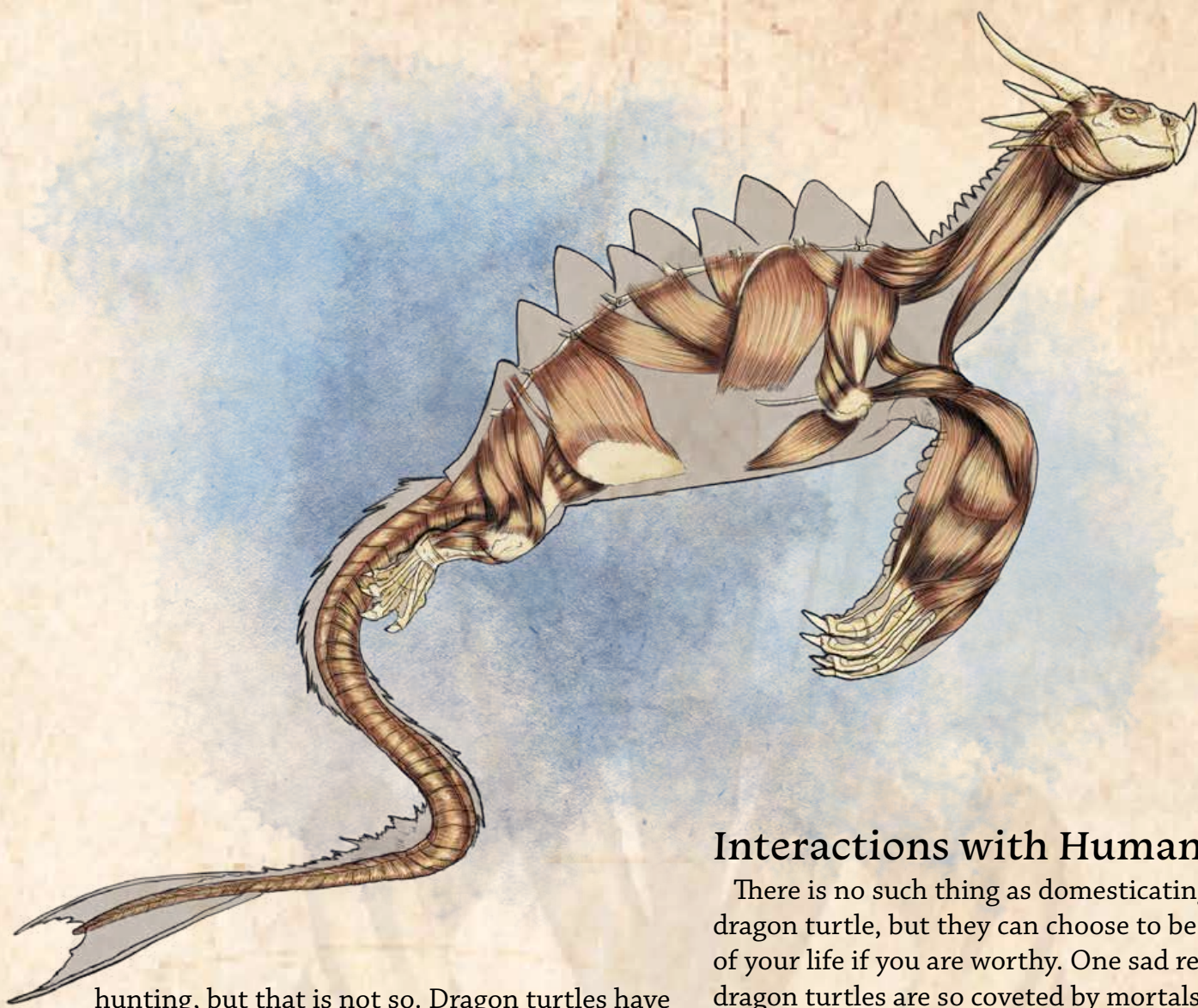
Behavior

It is impossible to gauge the true intelligence of dragon turtles, because they do not communicate in a language we understand. I once spoke to a (traditional) dragon on communication with dragon turtles and her answer was simple, "They are busy with far many greater things than you small folk need language to express." She also explained that dragons were able to communicate with (or at least understand) dragon turtles in some manner, but the exact intricacies were not explained.

These immense creatures live solitary lives, but are extremely social. One easily observed trait is how dragon turtles make friends. While each may live alone in its own territory, a dragon turtle who has made a friend will swim leagues each day to visit, play, and spend time with them. And it should be noted that who a dragon turtle considers a friend is not limited to its own species. They have an amazing capacity to love and care for others, a bond that transcends species. The patron ear'loki of my clan not only graces us with his presence, but also has an otter pup he found and cares for.

Diet

While active, dragon turtles eat hundreds of fish per day. Their giant bodies require massive amounts of energy and many would assume this means they spend most of their day



hunting, but that is not so. Dragon turtles have a natural ability which allows them to draw schools of fish towards them. They send out a psychic pulse allowing them to lure meals from far and wide without having to leave the task they are currently attending to.

Mating

Dragon turtles may mate many times in their lives, but females produce a singular egg only twice in their lives. Some scholars believe females of the species are able to choose when they conceive an egg, only doing so when they find a mate they truly wish to have a child with. Once the wyrmling is born it stays with its parents for upwards of a century. Often parents will enlist the help of their best friends or former lovers to help care for the child, all of the dragon turtles swimming in a pod for a time to raise one baby.

Interactions with Humanoids

There is no such thing as domesticating a dragon turtle, but they can choose to be a part of your life if you are worthy. One sad reason dragon turtles are so coveted by mortals is because of their supernatural ability to bring wealth to those they care for. Mortals who find a dragon turtle patron will find themselves increasingly wealthy over the years. For example, they may find boxes of treasure, a gold necklace around their neck when they wake, or a golden nest their dragon turtle made for them as a present.

Though as mortals we are unable to understand how it is that a dragon turtle communicates, the presents the great creatures lavish on their mortal counterparts are a show of their affection. Dragon turtles adore treasure themselves and all beauty in the world, so they attempt to make our world more beautiful to show they care. However, they only choose to share these gifts with the truly worthy: those of a good, strong, and kind heart.

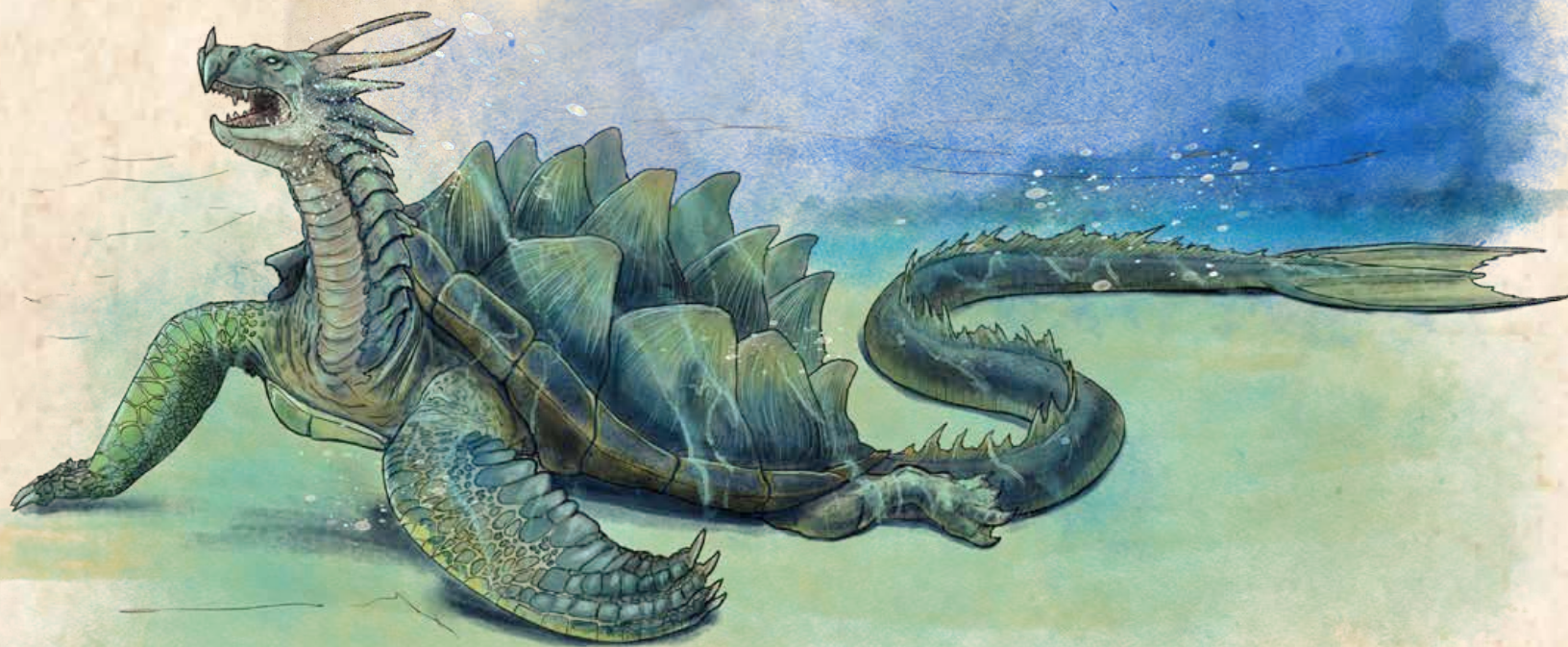
EMERALD DRAGON TURTLE

The emerald dragon turtle, known in elvish as earcalen'loki, is what many would consider the most common type of dragon turtle. Though 'common' is not a fair word to describe this species as there are not many in existence in the world. Since it can be millennium between a dragon turtle female laying her two eggs, these creatures are a rare sight, even more rare than dragons. However, if one were to look at pure numbers, emerald dragon turtles would be in the most abundance, with their numbers in the hundreds.

Emerald dragon turtles are also the most playful of their species. They are curious, love to explore new places and to meet new creatures. Anything beautiful and unique draws their attention and they love sharing new experiences with others. These majestic creatures have the ability to share in another's experiences, to see the world through their eyes and live in another's feelings. Seeing something they love with someone experiencing it for the first time means they get to see it through a set of fresh eyes, and this brings them joy.

Rumors & Legends

- My folk have a tale of earcalen'loki. One day many moons ago our patron grew lonely; he'd experience all the world had to offer and the others of his kind were far away. In his loneliness he created the seafolk, my people, so he could experience the world through our eyes, fleeting and beautiful. Our patron loves the short-lived folk and will grant a great boon to anyone who brings him a unique story.
- If a mortal spends enough time with a emerald dragon turtle, it is said they start speaking as one with the creature, as if they can understand it or they share the same thoughts.
- If the theory that emerald dragon turtles are immortal is true – does the same go for their eggs? I've heard deep within the ocean is an egg lost by two parents who were killed by a forgotten god. If the egg were to be retrieved, I wonder, would it still hatch?



SWAMP SNAPPER DRAGON TURTLE

Swamp snappers, more formally known as boggy dragon turtles, or nandaeear'loki in elvish, are smaller than their emerald cousins, measuring around 33 feet (10 meters) in length when fully grown. They live in swamps and bogs, feeding off a diet of small reptiles and swamp plants. Unlike the mild temperaments of of emerald dragon turtles, swamp snappers are often in a foul mood and enjoy snapping at others who displease them — hence their name.

While swamp snappers are by no means evil, they prefer to be left alone. It takes these dragon turtles a long time to trust somebody, and even longer to make friends, and you can only imagine how long that must be for a creature who experiences a decade in the blink of an eye. However, when a swamp snapper does make a friend, it is a friend for life and rather than living alone they often travel with one another for the rest of their time on earth.

Also, unlike their brethren, swamp snappers have found subtle ways of communicating with the small folk. Most scholars surmise this is because of their overwhelming wish to be left alone. They developed a slow rumbling speech out of necessity, so they could tell people to leave them be, rather than having to dirty themselves with violence.



Rumors & Legends

- If a mortal manages to make friends with a swamp snapper, the dragon turtle will reward the person not with treasure, but with knowledge. The mortal will find lost scrolls, ancient tomes, and runic inscriptions wherever they travel, as the swamp snappers prize knowledge above all else.
- The swamp snapper has vast territories they frequent and care for. If flora or fauna is harmed in their territory, terrible luck befalls the person who caused the harm.
- Swamp snappers are particularly fond of songs. If you wish to appease a local swamp snapper while traveling through its territory, it is advised to sing a low, beautiful song.

DESERT DRAGON TURTLE

The desert dragon turtle, anfauglir'loki in elvish, is unable to swim or breathe underwater like its aquatic brethren. Instead, this gigantic beast is perfectly suited for arid environments. The desert dragon turtle is also the largest of its species, measuring around 164 feet (50 meters) high with a shell roughly as broad. Under its shell, the desert dragon turtle is able to store untold liters of water, much like a camel, which means the creature can go up to a year without eating or drinking.

Desert dragon turtles act as mobile homes for desert-dwelling folk, making it unique amongst others of its kind. While the desert folk are unable to speak to the desert dragon turtle, any family living atop it has a basic understanding of the dragon turtle's wants and needs. Desert folk care for the desert dragon turtle, keeping its shell clean and its eyes free from sand. In return, the dragon turtle gifts the riders with the most precious gift of all in the desert: protection and routes between oases, never allowing anyone to go hungry.

Rumors & Legends

- Rather than care for their eggs themselves, it is said desert dragon turtles lay their eggs in a secluded oasis in the desert where a large city of desert folk families care for the eggs. When an egg hatches, the new desert dragon turtle chooses their family, and they venture off together. I've heard terrible rumors that a band of mercenaries has been looking for this hatching ground in recent years.
- Desert dragon turtles are believed to have the power to summon rains and thunderstorms in times of great need. Whenever a dark cloud rumbles over the desert, it is a desert dragon turtle crying to the heavens to help someone in need.
- There exists a spot hidden away in a vast desert where the shell of an ancient desert dragon turtle, long since dead, has become a haven for travelers that have become stranded amidst the sands.



TREASURESHELL DRAGON TURTLE

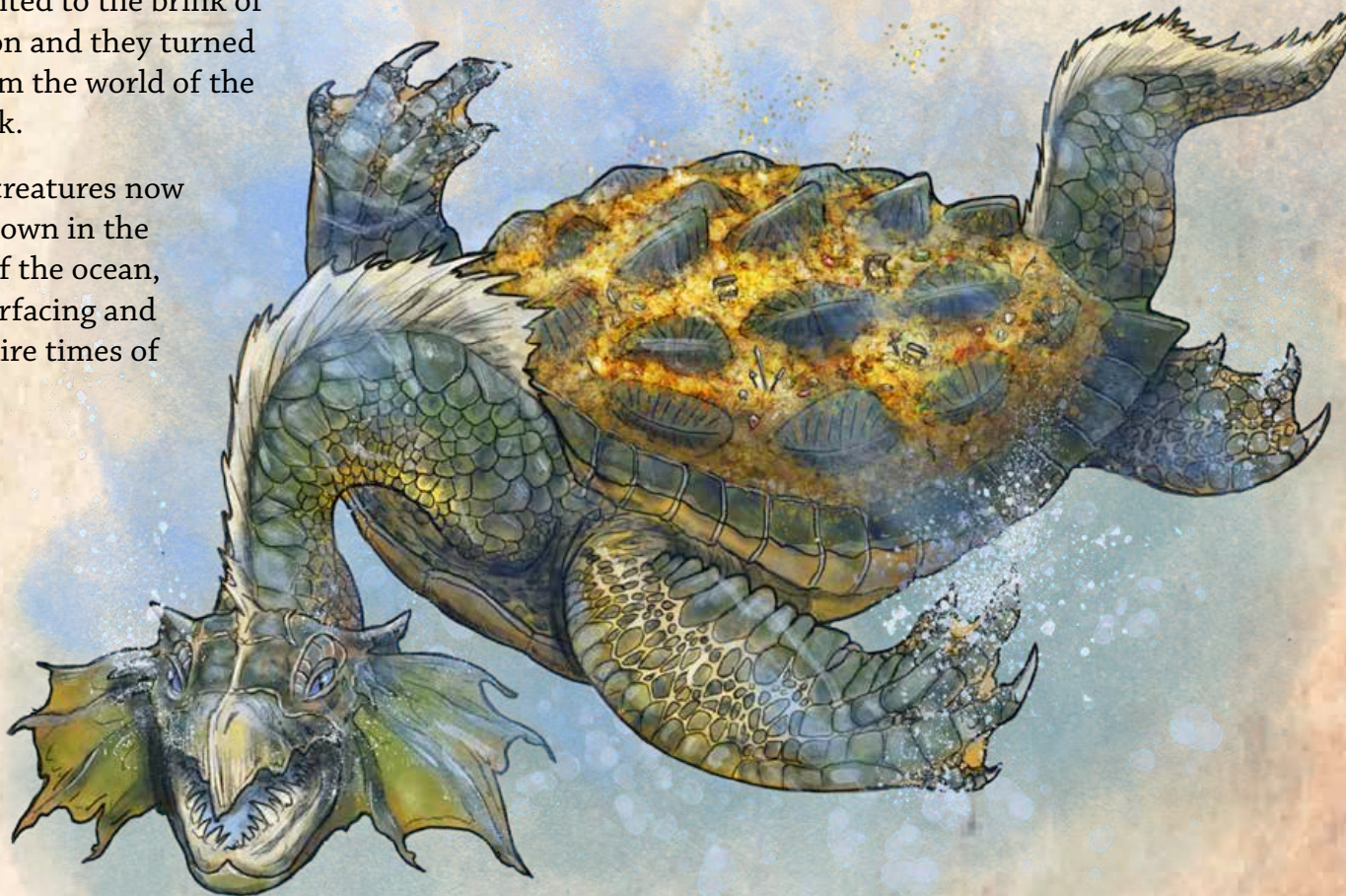
Treasureshell dragon turtles, or araneer'loki, are the rarest of all dragon turtles and only a handful are known to still exist. This sad fact is not because the treasureshell are more hesitant to breed than their more numerous brethren, but because they have been hunted to near-extinction. Like the emerald dragon turtles, treasureshell dragon turtles were once friendly and curious creatures. This was long before the world knew greed and strife.

Treasureshell dragon turtles are unique, because treasure literally grows on the giant shell on their back. Gold coins sprout, ruby necklaces, golden chalices... all the treasures one could think of would sprout, and these magnanimous creatures once happily shared with all who knew them. Then man turned greedy and began to hunt the turtles. They wanted more than what fell from the shell, but the shell itself to preserve with magics and exploit for riches. Slowly, the treasureshells were hunted to the brink of extinction and they turned away from the world of the small folk.

These creatures now live far down in the depths of the ocean, rarely surfacing and only in dire times of need.

Rumors & Legends

- An ancient treasureshell dragon turtle is said to still float on the surface of the ocean with its head and limbs far under water so only its shell appears as a floating pile of treasure. If a person can resist plundering the treasure, the treasureshell will reveal herself and reward the person.
- Somewhere deep within a mine is the tomb of an ancient dwarven king who was buried with an enchanted shell taken from a treasureshell dragon turtle. To this day the shell continues to pour forth riches and gold, an ever-expanding pile of treasure ripe for someone to find it.



FAERIE DRAGON

*Long-stepp'd traveler, 'ware the court
Ancient halls of kings and queens
Its marbl'd paths lead nowhere fast
And take you further yet from me.*

Excerpt from "The Faerys' Fortune,"
original author unknown, as performed by the
half-elf bard Renn Far'lel.

Adventurers often associate the fey with sprites, nymphs, dryads, and the like. Strange creatures who, though in appearance seem almost humanoid, have customs and cultures far unlike our own. But the presence of fey goes far beyond shy nymphs in woodland ponds. Faerie dragon courts are scattered throughout the world, spreading their mischief in towns and countrysides, or leading travelers off well-beaten paths into magical secrets and dark shadows from which they might never emerge.

Biology

Faerie dragons compensate for their physical weakness by displaying exemplary camouflage in their habitats of choice. The first faerie dragon scholars believed the creatures were smooth-skinned, but closer observation has proven their skin is covered in countless miniscule scales, each one individually capable of shifting in color tone. This allows the faerie dragon to remain unobserved by passers-by for days on end, as their many scales alter to match the changes in light and color depending on the environment's time of day and weather conditions. Faerie dragons with wings are capable of flying, though flight is more essential for varieties that migrate alongside the change of seasons or their mating period.

Adventurers should beware that nearly all faerie dragons possess a stinger on the end of their tails, used for defense should an unwanted creature approach. The pain resulting from a single sting has been described

as: "a dozen wasps armed with fish hooks instead of needles." Faerie dragons' stingers are also full of euphoric venom that not only dulls the immediate pain for its poor victim, but also reduces them to drunken antics that can be highly amusing for nearby witnesses.

Behavior

Like other small fey creatures, faerie dragons compensate for their small size by living in colonies. Though shy, they are more cautious than insular. Curiosity is a trait shared by all faerie dragon species, and that curiosity can manifest into harmless mischief or deadly encounters for travelers depending on the variant. The contrasting natures of innocence and ill-intent have allowed scholars to classify the different faerie dragon species as 'seelie' and 'unseelie', respectively. Although their curious and mischievous nature is well-documented, very little is known about the inner society of the faerie dragon courts, and most theories are unique to their respective variants.

Diet

The faerie dragon's diet depends greatly on its size. Smaller species, typically the size of small house cats, are primarily insectivores. Larger faerie dragons along the lines of medium to large dogs shift towards a more carnivorous diet that includes rodents and small mammals. As these are the most common faerie dragon diets, they are typically not regarded as a threat, and in many cases even beneficial as pest control. More dangerous varieties have long since retreated to hostile parts of the world, so little is known of their diet beyond the recommendation that travelers avoid them.

Mating

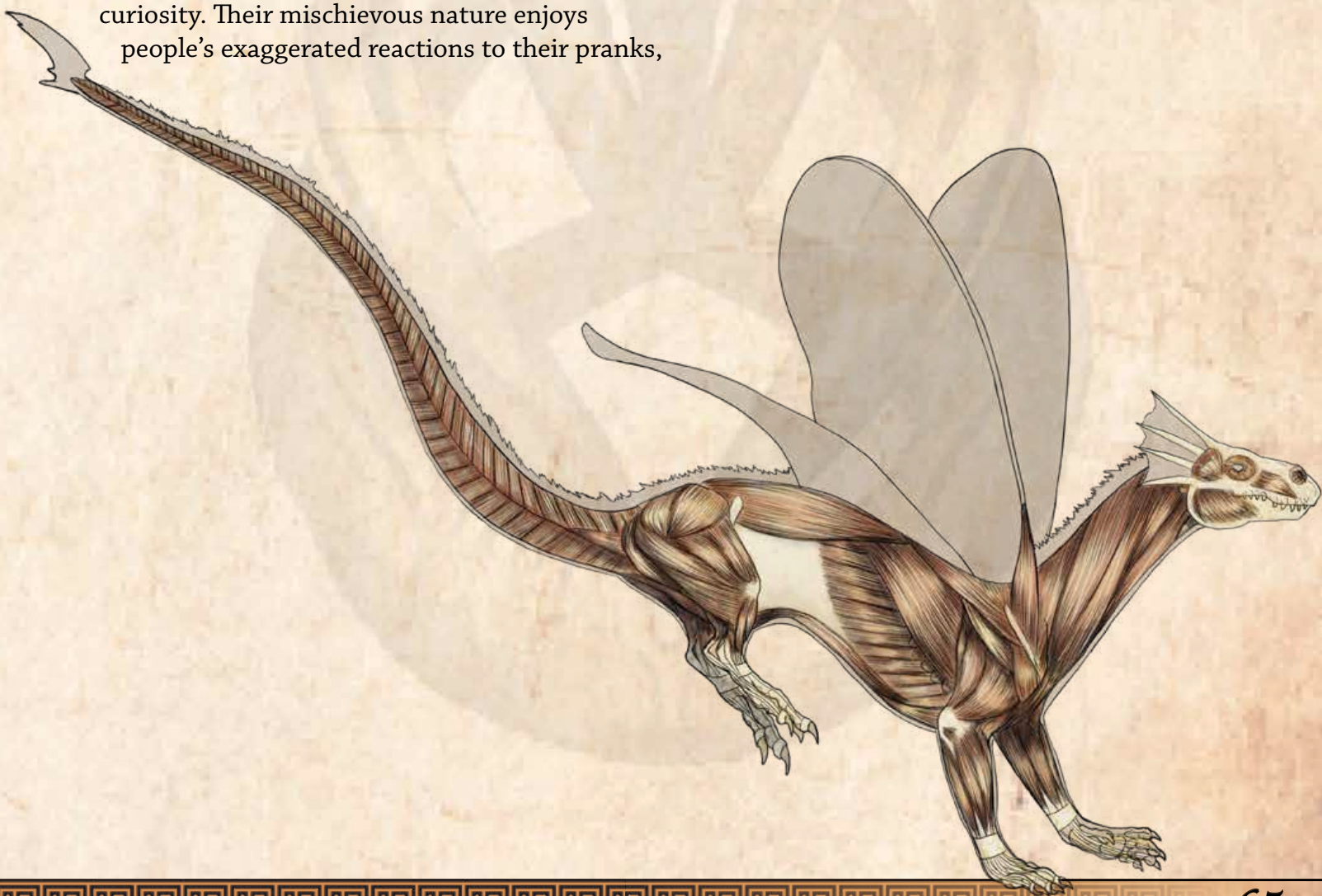
Faerie dragons' elaborate courtship displays should come as no surprise, given the creature's generally flamboyant personality. Both males and females display courting attempts, but their traditions have more rigamarole than most creatures' do. To impress potential mates, faerie dragons display feats of cleverness that are often inscrutable to the non-fey observer, and even highly disruptive where large courts gather. Faerie dragon neonates mature quickly after hatching, and are old enough to mate the following season. As they live up to fifty years, and typically birth two clutches annually, a female can raise around four hundred offspring in a lifetime.

Interactions with Humanoids

Faerie dragons approach city-dwellers and rural-folk with a mixture of caution and curiosity. Their mischievous nature enjoys people's exaggerated reactions to their pranks,

which vary from annoying and amusing to deadly, depending on the type. People have been known to welcome the presence of seelie faerie dragons in their towns and even their homes, as faerie dragons, like pseudodragons, can serve well as familiars and companions when trained.

Exposure to townsfolk has proven faerie dragons display intelligence and wit, though they lack long attention spans. They are telepathic, but can only communicate in simple ideas and concepts, thus requiring great patience to train properly. Elves, with their understanding of fey culture, are often amused by faerie dragon antics from a distance, while humans are wont to contract druids to remove nearby pestering courts. Halflings and gnomes, however, are known as excellent faerie dragon handlers, perhaps due to their similarly mischievous natures.



MONARCH FAERIE DRAGON

The monarch faerie dragon is known as the 'kitten dragon' for more reasons than its feline size. Vain and playful, a monarch faerie dragon that enters a household will empty drawers, scatter toys, and tear into sealed boxes in the attic until it finds an item the exact hue of its scales. If unable to find an object which satisfies its finicky judgment, the monarch dragon will prank the residents of the household before moving on. Its pranks are rarely dangerous and tend towards that of a bored and magical school-child, such as: brief rain showers indoors, clouds of strange smells, and shimmering faerie lights that hover through the house before bursting like fireworks. Commonfolk on the receiving end of these pranks would prefer to classify the monarch faerie dragon as 'unseelie,' but scholars agree the creature's harmless nature does not warrant the same warning as that of its swallowtail skink or will-o-wisp cousins.

Monarch faerie dragon courts are migratory, settling in northern rural climates during the warm months and moving south when the first nip of autumn appears. Entire courts will migrate together and swarm on a seemingly random town in their path, wreaking several days of madness before making the final leg of their migration.

Neonates are low in court hierarchy, and can improve their standing by satisfying expectations that are inscrutable to outside observers. Early in her studies, Clarisa Speckle-cheeked once studied the antics of a wild court: "I saw a younger male approach an elder lord. He whistled impressively, and balanced acorns on his back as he strutted upward through the air. He then twisted on his side, allowing the acorns to fall one by one and land squarely on other dragons observing the show. The elder monarch chirped, then smacked the youngling squarely across the face with his tail, while the



onlookers trilled in unison before going on their way. I've no notion if he was accepted or rejected, but it was entertaining, at any rate."

Rumors & Legendss

- Monarch faerie dragons have traveled the same migratory path for centuries, and towns and cities along their route have several names for what has become a biannual event-the Week of Colors or Rainbow Festival being the most common terms. Druids follow monarch faerie dragon courts along the migration routes and estimate in which town or city the faerie dragons will enact their mad search for colors. During this time, families leave out knick-knacks in a swath of colors on their windowsills, hoping their home will remain unscathed if a court arrives.
- Local folklore states a household ransacked by a monarch faerie dragon will have an abundance of laughter for a year, while a home lucky enough to satisfy the creature will have monetary fortune in the new season.

STRAY SOD FAERIE DRAGON

In the heart of deep woods, where the dense trees keep out even daylight, stretch swaths of forest which druids call 'graveyard groves.' These are not groves of skeletons and undead, but rather a natural part in the life cycle of the stray sod faerie dragon, a seelie creature that leaves a floral legacy after its passing.

Stray sods mate for life, sealing their pact by exchanging a seed with each other. These seeds are sometimes from trees like oak or fir, but can also be from large bushes such as lilac or myrtle. The gifted seed is tucked into a pouch on its back, and grows simultaneously with the sod. At the end of the creature's life, it will come to rest in the graveyard grove of its court. The plant will almost entirely consume the sod's body, and grow rich and fertile long after the sod has passed on. Mates typically rest beside one another, and botanical scholars have noted that stray sods always choose mates whose marriage seed is a plant complementary to their own.

Stray sod faerie dragons are the only variation that remain flightless. They use highly sensitive appendages around their nose to dig for insects and worms underneath the damp earth and crayfish

along riverbanks. The slow and deliberate movement of the stray sod allows it to move undetected between the trees, while the quickness of its mouth and nose catches prey off guard.

Stray sods have little interaction with civilization, but observing druids have noted that mischief is common in their courts. Young sods will set foul-smelling or strange objects in the paths of their kin for a nasty surprise during a hunt. They can also stand so still as to perfectly camouflage themselves against foliage, allowing them to scare passers-by and then melt out of sight into the woods.

Rumors & Legends

- Respassers of a graveyard grove seem to be dizzied and put to sleep by a sweet-smelling cloud, only to then be moved out of the forest with their pockets filled with all manner of seeds and cleverly placed plants.
- A stray sod faerie dragon's gifted seed has sprouted into a venus fly trap that has shown to be sentient and it appears to be looking for something.



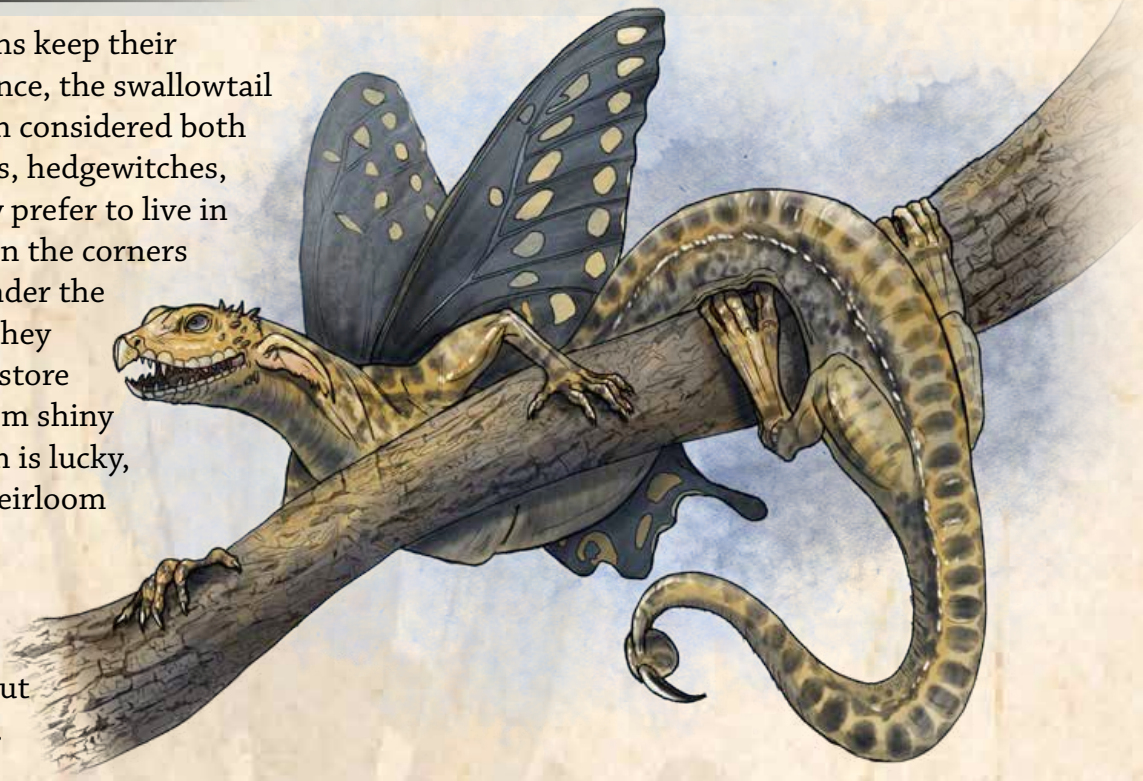
SWALLOWTAIL SKINK FAERIE DRAGON

Though most faerie dragons keep their curiosity at a cautious distance, the swallowtail skink faerie dragon has been considered both pest and friend by gardeners, hedgewitches, and hags for centuries. They prefer to live in populated areas, burrowed in the corners of tidy gardens or tucked under the eaves of houses. Wherever they make their home, they also store their 'hoard': everything from shiny buttons and stones if a town is lucky, to enchanted crystals and heirloom rings if they are not.

The swallowtail skink's greedy nature has led to its classification as 'unseelie', but it is not wittingly malicious. Shrewd hedgewitches have even learned to coexist with these faerie dragons, satiating them with intriguing but useless objects for their hoards. In return, the creatures take residence in their gardens, feasting on insects that might harm the rare and magical plants. Not a particularly powerful fey, the swallowtail skink's residence also provides it with protection from predators like hawks and foxes.

Swallowtail skink faerie dragons can be trained into dangerous mischief, however, as hags are known to use the creatures to lure travelers to their huts. Small and quick as they are, swallowtail skinks can easily snatch items of interest, such as magical pendants and coin bags, from adventurers. They then spew small bursts of euphoric gas, stored in fleshy pockets inside their cheeks, to confuse the traveler and lead them to their mistress' home.

Their mischief is minimal during child-rearing, as they focus on protecting and hunting for their young. Swallowtail skinks, like most faerie dragons, mature quickly, and do not remain long in their parents' nest.



Rumors & Legends

- Clarisa Speckle-cheeked, a halfling druid, breeds and raises them for interested parties at her cottage on the southern edge of Swórettung Holt. Some druidic circles whisper that even hags bargain for one of her expertly trained swallowtail skink faerie dragons.
- The swallowtail skink faerie dragon population was once nearly endangered. Adventurers realized that looting their nests, though often filled with nothing but knick-knacks, sometimes led to objects of great value; it's like looting a chromatic dragon's hoard, but with far less risk. Huge swaths of swallowtail skinks were killed, until the druidic guilds, led by an ancestor of Clarisa Speckle-cheeked, released a protection edict against the unchecked hunting. Since then, traveling druids ease the swallowtail skink's peskier tendencies by retrieving stolen valuables and relocating those which are particularly troublesome.

WILL-O-WISP FAERIE DRAGON

The marshlands of Luz'mala are eerily silent. Though locals say countless skeletons of lost travelers are buried deep in the damp earth, no restless spirits wander. Only the eerie glow of the will-o-wisp faerie dragons betray the life—and death—in these vast swamps.

Tiefling scholar Erudite writes in his book, *Unseelie Courts: The Observance of Mischief and Malice*, that the will-o-wisp faerie dragon is: “particularly malign in its interactions with the unlucky lost traveler.”

For unlike other faerie dragons, the will-o-wisp variety lures victims with alluring dark magics and natural toxins for the sole intent of consuming them. The creature's body is scored with deep gouges that are filled with mucus. The secretion reacts with a toxin in the marsh air to create an eerie, ghostly glow that charms travelers.

Lost travelers are particularly susceptible to the will-o-wisp faerie dragon, bewitched by the false promise of lamplight and aid. More keen adventurers claim to observe rock-like formations in the swamp that glow when observed peripherally, but appear normal when looked at directly. Erudite explains this is due to the caution of the court. Young and old work together to lure a victim, and the expended energy must be worth a successful kill. His writings, though disturbing in their detail, paint a clear picture:

“Young scouts keep watch over the court's borders and select potential victims, often fresh-looking travelers who are less wary of



the danger. These dragonlings produce brief flashes, enough to catch the victim's curiosity. The deeper the victim traverses the swamp, the older the faerie dragon—and the stronger the allure of the lights—becomes, until they are brought to what one must presume is the center of the court. It is there the victim's light is extinguished, and the energy of their spirit feasted upon by the entire community.”

Rumors & Legends

- Fey experts are divided on labeling the will-o-wisp faerie dragon as an undead creature. Though most agree the dragon feasts upon their victims' souls rather than their flesh, there remains the question if such behavior, typically found in undead creatures, outweighs their fey nature.
- Townsfolk near the Luz'mala marshlands claim that the number of travelers disappearing in the area has increased over recent decades, and that the glow from the marshlands pulses brighter than before on the darkest nights of the year.

GRIFFIN

Griffins are honorable and majestic creatures, with the forelimbs, wings, and head of a bird, and the body of a cat. Unlike manticores, their closest relatives, they are respected by humans and even capable of cooperating with them at times. Griffins are quite intelligent with a strict sense of justice, and will not hesitate to attack anyone who violates their principles.

Biology

With feline hindlimbs and avian forelimbs, griffins are not well-adapted to fast running, but are remarkably effective climbers and fliers. Griffins will often climb large trees, either to swoop directly at its prey, or to get above tree cover before opening their large wings and taking off. Griffins have keen vision and can spot small prey from over a mile away. When diving from a high perch, griffins can reach

speeds of up to 200 mph (322 kph). While learning to hunt as juveniles, griffins will hide in snow or leaf piles, while others dive after them into the snow. Juveniles on the outskirts of villages have been known to interrupt children's snowball fights by diving to grab the snowballs in their talons. Parents are advised to be cautious in allowing their children to play with juvenile griffins, as the griffins do not yet understand how human strength and physiology differs from their own.

Behavior

Griffins are highly intelligent, and can even understand the common tongue, although they cannot respond in any comprehensible language. Griffins sometimes interact with humanoids individually, but do not interact much with their society, and do not show



interest in entering towns or cities. Juveniles are more curious than adults, and those that live near settlements will sometimes venture to the edges of their territories to observe them.

Unpartnered griffins are generally solitary creatures, usually marking a small hunting territory, with a cave to sleep in. They will occasionally leave their territories to venture in search of a mate. This is a long and haphazard process, as griffins are very choosy. Once a griffin is partnered, it mates for life, and will not seek another mate even if its mate dies.

Diet

Most griffins prey opportunistically on any game that they come across, mostly hares, rodents, livestock, and deer. They occasionally chase game down from the ground, but prefer to swoop down on their prey from the air. After making a kill, the griffin will drag or fly its meal back to its cave to consume it, burying any leftovers for later. If the griffin has any young, it will regurgitate a portion of its meal into the mouths of its offspring.

Griffins are meticulous about their dens. Leftover bones are stacked neatly next to the den, and often even organized into stacks by size. Waste is buried away from the den, to prevent contamination of buried meat.

Mating

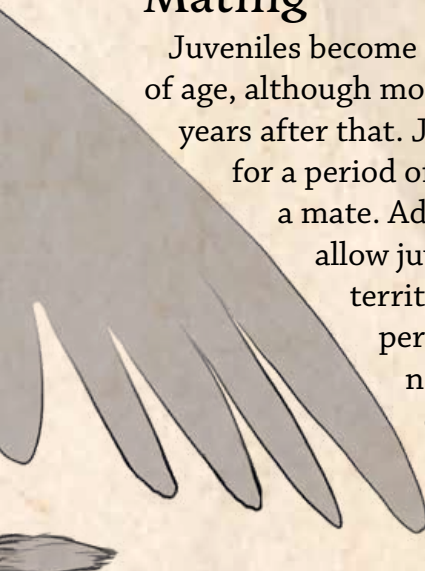
Juveniles become sexually mature at 1 year of age, although most do not find a mate until years after that. Juveniles will roam freely for a period of two years, searching for a mate. Adult griffins will generally allow juveniles to invade their territory and hunt during this period. If the juvenile does not find a mate by 3 years of age, or full maturity, it will choose a more permanent territory, and only venture in search

of a mate on occasion. If a male griffin finds a potential mate he is interested in, he will perform a mating display, flapping and diving in a complex pattern. If the mate accepts the offer, they find a permanent territory together, and find a large cave mouth to use as a den. Once partnered, griffins rarely leave their territories.

Interactions with Humanoids

Griffins are as intelligent as any humanoid creature, and have refused all attempts at domestication. However, it is not unheard of for individuals to form co-equal partnerships with griffins. These partnerships are often based around a specific goal, such as guarding a location from an evil force. Once the task is complete, the griffin usually leaves abruptly to return to its territory.

The griffin is respected and even revered for its majestic appearance and devotion to love and honor. For this reason, many noble houses feature griffins on their heraldic symbols. It is considered a grave misdeed and extremely unlucky to kill a griffin. Townsfolk will rally to punish those who commit this atrocity by carving the shape of a griffin's talon into the delinquent's palm using the talon of the dead beast. Those who bear this scar will be turned away from all but the seediest taverns.



COMMON GRIFFIN

Common griffins are the majestic and well-known combination of lion's hindquarters and eagle's head, forelimbs, and wings. They live among the hills and valleys that are especially suitable for human settlement. As a result, they come into contact with humans fairly often, and have become accustomed to their presence. Most common griffins respect human-claimed territory, and will never hunt livestock or intrude on human lands. In return, they demand respect of their hunting grounds, and will attack humans who poach from their land. Griffins mark their territory by spraying bordering trees, but only a trained ranger can detect which trees are marked. If you are traveling near griffin territory without a trained ranger or naturalist, I highly recommend bringing a tracking hound to help you avoid crossing territorial boundaries.

Storytellers sometimes describe griffins that take a particular interest in humans, and in particular, the pursuit of human justice. Some say that griffins believe that humans are too ineffective to carry out justice, and require a griffin's help. Adventurers who wish to quest alongside a griffin should bring an offering of meat (griffins are quite fond of raw mutton), and should be prepared to explain their quest and why it

is righteous. If the griffin is unmoved by the cause, it is likely to be insulted by the request, and to attack without warning. However, if the griffin is convinced, it will bow its head in acceptance, and may even consent for a human to ride it. It is almost impossible to predict for sure if a griffin will approve of a quest, but they seem to be particularly moved to protect the vulnerable and avenge unjust deaths.

Rumors & Legends

- In one town, a griffin known as Judgment became interested in the everyday affairs of the town. Townsfolk bring their disputes before Judgment, who scratches a mark in front of one party to find in their favor. If Judgment finds that one party was dishonorable or untruthful, she flies back to her cave with them, where they are presumably killed. Despite this, the townsfolk utterly trust Judgment, and say that quality of life has improved since she arrived.
- Bards have begun to sing new tales of the great warrior, Astor. They say he has befriended a griffin atop whom he rides in service of justice and glory. The songs tell of battles that seemed hopeless, only for Astor and his griffin companion to fly in and turn the tides.



LESSER GRIFFIN

The lesser griffin, also known as the pygmy griffin, is about the size of a large house cat, with the hindquarters of a Pallas cat and the forelimbs, head, and wings of a rock Ptarmigan grouse. This species behaves much like the common griffin, honor-bound and closely guarding its roost, but lives solely in bamboo forests. Unlike other griffin species, it eats very little meat, instead eating insects and bamboo shoots. Researchers believe that this diet evolved after the species diverged from other griffins, since it retains the ability to digest meat, and will hunt small rodents if other food sources are scarce.

Lesser griffins were once thought to be less intelligent than the other griffin species because of their small size and reclusive ways. Its association with majesty and honor were weakened by its somewhat comical appearance, with its small grouse head and bushy fur. As a result, lesser griffins were hunted for fur and sport for decades. Lesser griffin pelts were considered highly fashionable among nobility for a time, and some families still have collections of cloaks and small rugs made from these pelts. Fortunately, this practice has subsided in recent years, but the damage has been done, and it is increasingly rare to see a lesser griffin in the wild. The sport hunting is all the more disturbing, since my own research suggests that beliefs about the species' inferior intelligence were misguided. I have documented patterns of talon marks scored into bamboo stems that are highly non-random. The same pattern appears with greater frequency as one approaches a griffin den, suggesting a kind of signature. Other,



more complex markings appear other places, particularly near the outskirts of settlements. I believe that these markings constitute a simple written language, and that the markings outside settlements constitute a warning to others of their kind.

Rumors & Legends

- Not everyone has stopped hunting this species. Baroness Bianca is said to be planning a great hunt, to add to her trophy room. However, the griffins seem to have become aware of her intent. Many of her horses have been found dead in their stables, covered in claw marks. It is possible that the griffins are banding together to defend against the impending hunt.
- When winter ends and the spring months arrive, the lesser griffin sheds its white feathers in favor of a brown summer coat. The molted feathers have powerful healing properties, and may be brewed into a rather disgusting tea that can cure blindness. Interestingly, feathers plucked from a pelt do not have this same property.
- Some forest-dwelling gnomes have taken a group of lesser griffins as pets in order to protect them. After a bit of time spent with these folks, it seems more likely that the griffins are the ones in charge, but they both benefit from the relationship.

SNOW GRIFFIN

The snow griffin has the hindquarters of a snow leopard and the head and forelimbs of a lammergeier, or bearded vulture. As its name suggests, this species resides in cold, snowy regions, including mountaintops and glaciers. Although it occasionally supplements its diet with rodents and hares, it subsists primarily on the bones of carrion. Its beak is so sharp that it can crack all but the largest bones, allowing the snow griffin to consume the edible marrow inside. Adults do not regurgitate their food like other griffin species, and instead give smaller bones to their offspring. Experts believe that this practice strengthens the jaw muscles and toughens the beaks of the chicks. Properly cracking bones to access the marrow is a challenging task, and it may take the young as much as two years to master.

Snow griffins are notable for the deep bonds they form with their mates. This species does not have a traditional mating display, and instead has something more like an extended courtship that lasts for a period of months. Potential mates bring each other gifts of food

or small ice sculptures, carved with their beaks and talons. Mates signal their lasting bond by making a carving in a large block of ice together. The pair will return to the ice block repeatedly throughout their lives, carving an increasingly elaborate sculpture together. The sculptures are quite abstract, and some experts suggest that they depict places and things that are important to them, such as eggs, nests, or the surrounding landscape.

Rumors & Legends

- Legends speak of a snow griffin whose partner died shortly after their first carving together. It is said that this griffin returned to the carving at the top of the mountain every day, screeching in mourning at her lost mate. Now known as the Mountain of Lost Love, widows and widowers make pilgrimage to this place, and leave tokens of the ones they have lost.
- At the peak of a long-inactive volcano, Kane the Wanderer reports seeing a highly realistic griffin-carved ice sculpture of the volcano erupting, with lava flows spilling into valleys currently occupied by villages. Sages cannot agree on what this means. Some insist that it is a hoax, some say that it has no real meaning, and some insist that it foretells a massive natural disaster, perhaps even to occur within the next few years.



TIGER GRIFFIN

The tiger griffin is the largest griffin species, reaching approximately 800 pounds (363 kilograms) at maturity, with the head and forelimbs of a harpy eagle, and the hindquarters of a tiger. When grounded, their orange and black hindquarters strike a contrast to the solid black of their folded wings. But viewed in the air from below, the tiger stripes blend seamlessly into the striped underside of the feathers.

Tiger griffins' broad wings are adapted to slow gliding rather than speed, and during the day, they ride thermal air currents in order to flap their wings as little as possible. They are commonly found in warm regions with large cliffs and other rocky outcroppings, such as jungles and badlands. The tiger griffin will climb the rocks for height before leaping into the sky. The sight of a tiger griffin soaring above the mesas and buttes is both majestic and terrifying.

Tiger griffins have powerful claws and talons, and can hunt a variety of prey. Their bulky, muscular frames afford them power rather than speed. When hunting on the ground, they use their bulk to knock down prey in a single powerful leap, but do not give extended chase to prey who manage to avoid the initial attack. They are particularly well-adapted to hunting armored and shelled prey, including turtles, armadillos, heavily armored adventurers, and bulettes. To crack the prey's armor, a tiger griffin takes to the sky with the prey in its talons or beak, and, once it reaches soaring height, drops it onto rocky terrain, allowing the force of impact to break it open for consumption. Adventurers who wear plate mail should be aware that the glint of metal armor will attract the tiger griffin's eye, and may act as a lure rather than protection from this species.



Rumors & Legends

- Tiger griffins are said to guard the ruins of ancient cities. Adventurers who have come across abandoned structures or statues in the jungle will often tell how they were quickly chased away from their discovery by a pair of tiger griffins. Reports consistently state that the griffins will attack any who come too close to the ruins, but immediately disengage once the intruders back away.
- Tiger griffins seem to lay their eggs in the most precarious locations: usually in pockets along the face of a cliff, or balanced on the tip of a butte. They never lay more than one egg in any given location, and always place a nugget of gold next to the egg, even though the nugget does not seem to be necessary for the egg to incubate or hatch. Sharma the Daredevil travels on expeditions to climb to the nests and collect these gold nuggets, and is looking for fellow adventurers to help explore a particularly promising region.

HARPY

The harpy was long thought to be one of the most understood magical creatures in the material plane. Recent observations by myself and other scholars in the last several decades have revealed more accurate information, discrediting long-held beliefs preached by travelers and villagers alike. It should be noted, however, that no discredited rumors have made the harpy less dangerous than before, and the fearless adventurer is still advised to take extreme caution when encountering these melodic — but deadly — creatures.

Biology

Though their appearance most resembles that of a bird, anatomically the harpy shares little with common avians. Their bones are solid, like a human's, requiring strong musculature in the upper torso — in particular the shoulder and back area — to carry them in flight. Though harpies are capable of landing and walking on their talons, they are more comfortable in flight and perching. Harpies' talons are longer and sharper than those of other birds of prey; even the claws of a child are capable of slicing the pelt or skin of prey.

The most widely known characteristic of the harpy is her voice. The harpy weaves calls and songs via anatomy almost identical to that of the common avian. Like some birds, a single harpy can lateralize her calls and create either harmonious or discordant melodies. Scholars have found that the harpy's vocal organ is surrounded by additional musculature to increase the power, and thus the range, of their cries. Their music functions similarly to bardic magic, the effect of which depends on how they synchronize their notes. Though harpies typically sing alone for their personal needs, they have been known to flock together and increase the strength of their magic through concordant performance.

Behavior

Harpies are solitary creatures, with few ties even between themselves. They will nest near each other if food is plentiful, but are more apt to spread themselves across a wide territory in order to avoid treading on each other's sustenance and mating resources. Self-awareness of their thin numbers may make them reticent to attack one another. Powerful harpies called 'matrons' maintain order by exerting dominance over lesser harpies, who gift the matron trinkets and help protect her nest.

Harpies use varying screeches for communication, and the sound is often described as a human scream mixed with a bird call. These eerie cries are heard on the rare occasions harpies hold a meet. A gathering of harpies is a notable sight indeed, for it can mean the approach of some power worthy of concern. Dragons, elemental attacks, and natural disasters are often preceded by the assembly and mass exodus of a harpy flock from their territory.

Diet

Most harpies are predators, feasting on the flesh of creatures slightly smaller than themselves, and will kill only for herself and any daughters she may have. The lack of strength in numbers forces harpies into opportunistic hunting, sometimes spending an entire day scouting potential prey before determining if it is worth the risk of attacking or not. Larger harpies have been known to attack humans and orcs, while smaller variants prefer rodents and large insects. Despite rumors to the contrary, harpies prefer to eat fresh kills when at all possible, only scavenging carcasses when food is scarce.

Mating

Scholars believe the harpies were once part of a larger avian race that was separated from their home plane. As harpies are unable to reproduce among themselves, they are forced to single out human males to reproduce and sustain their flocks. A harpy will only mate

burgeoning settlements. In response, many mercenary groups specialized in harpy hunting and defense to protect village crops and merchant caravans, leading to a major decrease in the harpies' numbers. Harpies have, since then, largely avoided direct encounters with settlements outside of calculated hunting and mating, indicating a fierce awareness of their own mortality and the importance of maintaining what remains of their numbers.



every five years or so, with young harpies reaching sexual maturity at about ten years old. Most harpies seek out a different male each time she wishes to procreate, but some have been known to seduce and capture men with their songs for extended periods of time, to the detrimental health — and eventual death — of the man.

Interactions with Humanoids

As harpies lack language outside of their own kind, little to no accounts of peaceful or positive communication between harpies and other cultures exist. They are a predatory creature wary of others, particularly those they deem more powerful than themselves. Harpy activity was higher when villages and cities first infringed on their territories centuries ago, as they had no qualms attacking

EGYPTIAN HARPY

Egyptian harpies have lived along rocky coastlines for centuries, long before modern port cities and fishing towns were founded. They are less apt to rely on their magical nature than their cousins, instead making clever use of their natural surroundings for hunting and survival.

Although Egyptian harpies use their musical vocalizations to raise their young in the breeding season, their cries are more commonly for communication. They are adept at mimicking the cries of other animals, and are able to cast their voices for long distances. Travelers or creatures lost in harpy territory in the mountains should not trust their hearing, as Egyptian harpies will mimic the sounds of people or the lost creature to further confound their prey and make them susceptible to attack.

Egyptian harpies are opportunistic hunters that rarely attack large or well-armed groups, and even against more vulnerable prey find means of giving themselves advantage in combat. Travelers along coastal mountain paths must beware of seemingly accidental rockslides often caused by Egyptian harpies seeking to lower the caravans' defense before initiating their ambush. Attacks tend to increase in the late winter, when food is scarcer along the coastlines, and are all but nonexistent in early summer through autumn. The pillaging of livestock was more common in the early founding years of coastal towns, before regular guard posts were established to keep the harpies at bay.

Locals have learned to read weather patterns by harpy activity in their area. Adults scouting cliffsides often indicate an incoming fogbank, as the fog provides ideal cover for the acquiring of the Egyptian harpy's preferred meal — the eggs of large birds and griffins nested along the cliffs. When they grow silent and hidden in their nests, a storm is often not far away.



Rumors & Legends

- Egyptian harpies are notable for their visible hunting strategies that involve long periods of flying in grid and circle patterns around an area. Ancient texts often cited the circling of harpies as an ill omen, a warning of death approaching. Modern scholarship discredits these texts as merely a misunderstanding of the harpies' hunting tactics, but common travelers, and even some adventurers, still find the sight of a flock of harpies circling high above an ill portent.
- It is said harpies were once immortal creatures; when the veil between the realms of their gods and the material realm was thinner. As these veils strengthened, and the gods became more removed from our realm, the lifespan and power of the harpies decreased.

ELYSIUM HARPY

Dwelling high in jungle canopies, the elysium harpies attract adventurers who seek to fill their books with observations of beauty; scholars even describe them as “the adventurer’s bird of paradise” due to their colorful plumage. Local tribes are not fooled by beauty, however, and speak fervently of the distinct enmity between the harpies and the glass couatl with whom they share territory. These tribes make charms from elysium harpy feathers as protection against their alluring melodies, but many a traveler refuses to heed their warnings and is lost to the harpy’s song.

The elysium harpy’s most powerful weapon is its voice. Unlike other harpies, the elysium variant does not seduce men outside their territory to kidnap children borne of their union later. Instead, they lure males to their nest with their captivating songs and enrapture him for years until the magic wears him too weak for the harpy’s use. Elysium harpies are fiercely territorial of their mates, as some females have been known to snatch prize men from their sisters. For this reason, only the strongest of their kind mate.

Scholars once believed that females and other animals lured by the elysium harpy’s song were captured for food, but more recent findings have shown these harpies prefer to feast upon fruit, preferably overripe to almost rotting. While women report the usual “out of body” sensation when seduced by a harpy’s song, they are not enchanted like men.



Because elysium harpies are barely tolerant of each other, they do not flock together except when another force threatens their home. They are proud creatures that prize baubles and trinkets, adorning their nests and themselves with items plucked from lured travelers. The more jewelery and ornaments an elysium harpy adorns herself with, the more powerful and dangerous she is likely to be.

Rumors & Legends

- Although females are not entranced by the elysium harpy’s song, they can be persuaded to do a harpy’s bidding while under her spell. In mild cases, travelers in harpy territory may find themselves suddenly miles down their path and missing a treasured trinket and with no recollection of having walked that far. More concerning accounts have women disappearing into the jungle, where they are rumored to be kept as the harpies’ servants. Most of the local tribes believe these women are as good as dead, as none have returned.
- The hostility between the elysium harpies and glass couatls goes back time immemorial, with various legends as to its beginning.

PIXIE HARPY

Though the existence of pixie harpies has been known almost as long as their Egyptian cousins, the species' shyness keeps them well out of the public eye. Their knoll homes are hidden amongst the underbrush of hilly grasslands and the root knots of trees along the forest border. Unlike other harpies, pixie harpies are communal dwellers, with a queen overseeing their nests. Should you ever spot a tiny harpy with a magnificent head plume and colorful bands dangling from her neck, ears, and ankles, you have likely been graced by a rare appearance of a queen.

Pixie harpy flocks likely exist due to their relatively minute size, small enough to sit in the palm of a human man's hand. Though their songs carry the same magics as their larger cousins, the lessened volume renders lone harpies powerless against larger creatures. When a flock's songs are combined, however, they form a symphonic trill capable of knocking even half-giants into a daze. Indeed, the pixie harpy is more apt to avoid conflict than incite it. A creature suspected of wishing harm — or simply wandering too close to their settlements — is treated to their harmonies and charmed into meandering away from the harpies knoll, with no recollection of their original intent.

As pixie harpies are too small to breed with larger males, scholars have been unable to ascertain how they reproduce. Local superstition states they are born from meadow flowers, but most scholarly writing concerning the matter agrees they likely mate with male sprites much like larger harpies breed with men.



Rumors & Legends

- The nectar from flowers enriched by a pixie harpy's song is imbued with magical properties. Healers use the nectar to create potent healing potions, while village hedge witches brew poultices to soothe sore throats and infections. Pollen of a pixie harpy's flower, however, is illegal for harvesting, as it has been known to produce drugs that can temporarily hinder a person's mental faculties. In large doses, permanently so.
- The pixie harpies ferment a potent honey mead from their flowers which, in addition to its intoxicating flavor, is also prized for its medicinal and alchemical properties. The mead stores are often jealously guarded by their faerie folk, allies, and fey watch-beasts.

PHOENIX HARPY

During my research, I stumbled upon the first volume of a travelogue by gnome scholar Ayva Quickens, which touched upon a creature she called a 'phoenix harpy.' Unable to locate the second volume or any mention of such harpies in other tomes, I sought out the retired adventurer at her home along the coast.

While tracking the nests of Egyptian harpies across multiple continents, Ayva discovered a cluster of inhabited islands that the harpies had passed over during a long-ago migration. Expecting to find more Egyptian harpy flocks along the island peaks, she instead discovered an inactive volcanic site where the veil between the fire plane and the material plane is thin. There, a small contingent of Egyptian harpies had rested, and their magic was twisted by the fire plane's influence, transforming them into phoenix harpies. Ayva spent a decade living amongst the island peoples to record the fascinating creatures' life cycle.

Her crowning achievement was discerning their means of reproduction. As a phoenix harpy ages, her fiery wings and tail feathers dull, and she resembles a common harpy, excepting eyes that yet burn like with fire. During this time, she secretly courts her chosen mate: typically a sailor docked on the isles or a local villager. She lulls him to sleep with songs interwoven with the magic of primal fires. The next child borne of the man's lover is marked with the symbol of the Lord of Flames on her forehead, and is swept away in fire to her mother harpy. Over the course of a decade, the mother weakens as the child



grows strong, feeding on her mother's fire-soul. Eventually the harpy's spirit is given over completely, and her body turns to ash, allowing her daughter to fully take wing in a burst of power and flame.

Rumors & Legends

- Though the volcano the phoenix harpies call home is considered inactive, locals tell of twenty years ago when the ground rumbled, and the volcano spewed steam. Those who remember the event swear that melodious yet primal screams cut through the rumbling, as if dozens of voices beseeched the volcano. Soon the terrifying event passed, and the air grew silent. Some say the phoenix harpies calmed the volcano back to its restful watch, while others fear they were performing a ritual to encourage its eruption.
- If a phoenix harpy grows ill, it is said the ashes of their mother can be used to help nurture them back to quick health. It is unknown whether it is this or the emotional attachment that will lead a phoenix harpy to tirelessly hunt those who may take those ashes.

HIPPOCAMPUS

Once the villains of children's nightmares, the hippocampus now features in bardic tales of heroic ocean quests. Fishermen of the southern seas popularized the name "hippocampus" centuries ago, combining the words for "sea monster" and "horse." An understandable mistake, given the creature's eerily similar yet dissimilar appearance to the horse. My own research and observations, compiled after a year amongst the sea-elf fishing tribes south of the Pocaenan wildlands and the Tide-dancer merfolk, however, revealed attributes more reminiscent of whales and dolphins.

Biology

The hippocampus is a warm-blooded creature that breathes through lungs rather than gills. Some hippocampus species hold their breath for days while in states of hibernation, though even non-hibernating variations can remain underwater for impressive stretches of time.

During my sojourn with the Tide-dancer clan, I observed a lethargy in the hippocampi in late fall through early spring. The onset of icy surface waters makes oxygen less easily obtainable, and hippocampi are obliged to conserve their oxygen stores for the oncoming winter hibernation. As much of the hippocampus' power comes from its chest musculature, which provides power to the creature's legs and leg-fins, the oxygen shortage in turn slows the creature's movement. Once the ice thaws and oxygen is readily available above the surface, the hippocampus slowly returns to its usual energy levels.

Regular intake of oxygen is necessary for the hippocampus to maintain its fast-moving lifestyle, particularly for strong movements of the appendages that sport fins. Its movement relies heavily on the design of its front legs,

which initially resembles a horse before ending in one of several fin varieties. It should be noted that their spine is stiffer than a fish's, emphasizing stability and control during swimming.

Behavior

Rarely is the hippocampus seen alone, as its alert and anxious temperament encourages communal living in hierarchal "pods" ranging in size from half a dozen to over fifty individuals. Pods with long-established hierarchies display little inter-pod aggression, as hippocampi are protective of their own and suspicious of strangers.

Wild hippocampi rely on "fight-or-flight" instinct, but those bred in captivity display more adaptive intelligence. The protective nature of the hippocampus makes it an invaluable companion in the hands of a master handler, who can focus its hypersensitive alertness.

Diet

Spring and summer are the most active seasons for hippocampi, as their preferred food, typically kelp or small fish, is most plentiful. One similarity in all hippocampi is a love for bitter flavors. Their slow digestive system breaks down poisonous plants and fish with little issue; indeed, they seem to prefer poisonous food for its bitter flavors. Thus it is safe to assume that anything a hippocampus eats is not safe for your average adventurer to partake in.

Mating

Hippocampi reach mating maturity between the ages of three and four, and have different mates from breeding season to breeding season. During the spring thaw, mares perform

Interactions with Humanoids

None but the merfolk have mastered the art of taming wild hippocampi, indispensable partners that enable survival in actively treacherous waters. Breeders are highly respected, and their intimate knowledge of hippocampus behavior is a well-guarded tradition that I was honored to witness during my sabbatical.

Enchanters claim charms infused with hippocampus hair will imbue their users with bravery. Such charms, worth a pretty gold bit given the difficulty of obtaining the ingredients, are good for young adventurers setting out on their first quest, as well as grizzled knights defending their realms from invaders.

Interestingly, alchemists claim that fins or hair stolen from a poached hippocampus lose their magical properties entirely.

intricate dances underwater, utilizing both wing and leg fins to create patterns of waves. Stallions observe the dances and join the mare that most impresses him.

Foals are considered an investment of the entire pod, and they are fiercely protected. The southern sea-elf fishing tribes recounted witnessing a mare's ferocity driving away even dragon turtles. Their breeders believe hippocampi view their handlers as members of their pod, as otherwise they would be similarly attacked before ever approaching a newborn foal.

Foals are considered mature at the age of two; stallions are permitted to remain with a pod until they reach full maturity, when they are cast out and must join another pod, while mares are typically integrated into their existing pod. In the instance of an overpopulated group, a beta male and several females will break off into their own pod.

When I mentioned such superstitions to the Tide-dancer riders, they showed me their own charms carved from the bones of steeds stretching back generations. "The hippocampus' freedom is his power; his bond with his tribe, his courage," a powerfully-built young woman named Ba'hyo intoned. "Deprived of both, they are merely husks. As we have learned, so the earth-walkers must learn."

KELPIE HIPPOCAMPUS

The kelpie hippocampus dwells in a limbo area between the mid- and southern-seas, where the waters are cool enough in winter to ice over without freezing entirely and many merfolk make their homes, including the Tide-dancer clan.

The spring thaw is the best time of year to catch glimpses of the kelpie hippocampus. Sea ice melting into the warming southern waters triggers the blooming of the oceans' rich ecosystems, enticing hippocampi out of their winter hibernation for the mating season. During this time, entire pods of hippocampi will graze the fresh kelp growth.

This variety is the most easily tameable. Their lower dorsal fin makes them ideal for riding, and domesticated kelpie are bred with stronger backs than their wild cousins in order to support a rider. Hippocampus handlers are often adventurers themselves, leading expeditions, fighting monsters and enemy merfolk, and participating in festival games and races. Their risky lifestyles appeal to the hippocampus' quick-minded and energetic nature.

To work around the kelpie's nature to hibernate, merfolk migrate into northern waters that remain unfrozen and adapt their hippocampi to a variant diet during the winter. Of particular note is the phantom fungus that thrives along the hydrothermal vents throughout mid-ocean ridges. Before they domesticated the hippocampus, merfolk avoided the vents and the monsters which thrived in its nutrient-rich waters. The kelpie hippocampi have a particular love for phantom fungus, however, making quick work of the grasping plant with their sharp fins and strong jaws.



Winter migration is a treacherous time for merfolk, as the mid-seas are plagued with monsters. Bands of grindylows are known to ambush migrating mer-clans, but the hippocampus' hypersensitive fins, particularly the dorsal, are superb at detecting the grindylows' erratic swimming patterns in nearby water. Their attunement to oceanic movement allows them to sense oncoming disaster, be it natural, magical, or monstrous.

Rumors & Legends

- Merfolk legend speaks of an undead kelpie hippocampus that haunts the mid-ocean ridges, looking for its lost rider who was torn to pieces by phantom fungus. Ba'hyo scoffed that this was a just a story used to warn young merfolk to stay away from the hydrothermal vents.
- While the hair or fin of a hippocampus is said to imbue a charm with strength and courage, anything taken from a hippocampus foal — even without harming the child — is said to curse the wearer to stormy waters.

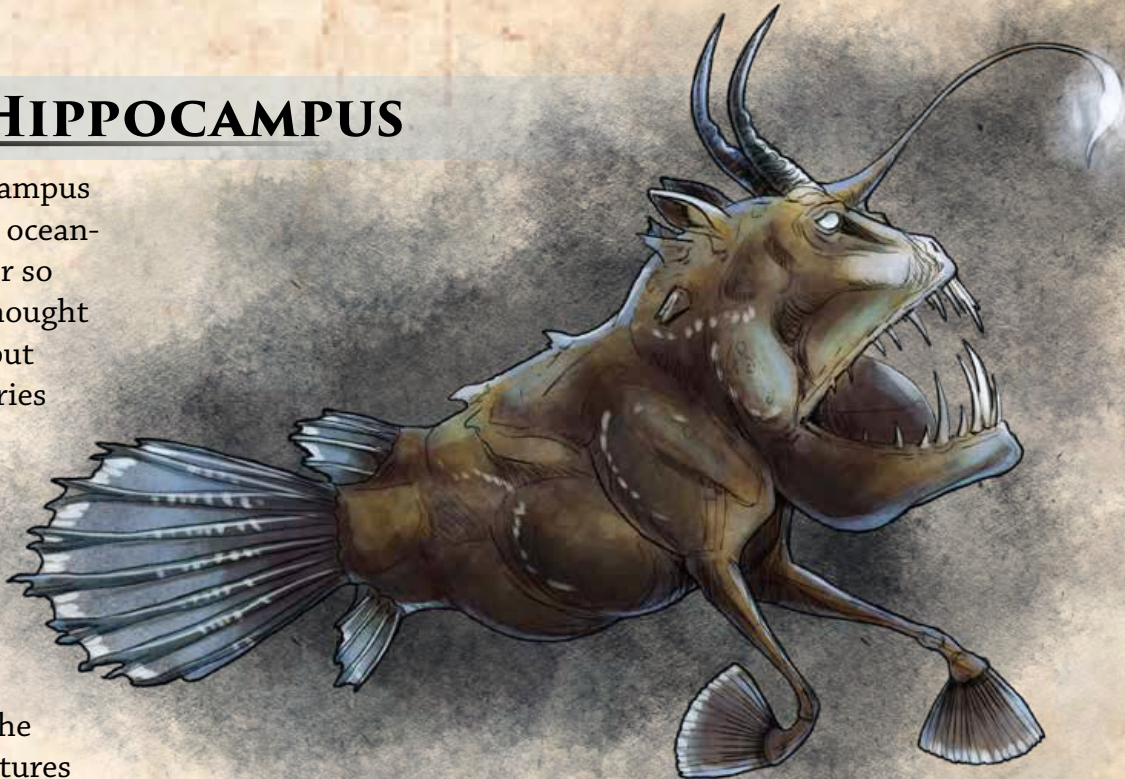
ANGLER HIPPOCAMPUS

The angler hippocampus remained unseen by ocean- and land-dwellers for so long that scholars thought it was pure legend, but sailors have told stories about the creatures for centuries.

The angler hippocampus lives primarily in underwater caverns along rocky coastlines. Born in the darkness, these creatures are completely blind, and shun daylight entirely. While kelpie hippocampi use their fins to sense nearby danger, the angler's smaller and more sensitive leg-fins sense changes in water currents in order to navigate cavern tunnels.

During my studies, I stumbled upon the ancient tome "Néðan ahn Diegol" by the gnome druid Andefan. Considered an eccentric by her peers, Andefan would purposefully follow rumors of beasts without any enticement for reward or treasure. Her ventures have been called into question by scholars since her death, but she was the first to illustrate and comment on the angler hippocampus in its deep-sea cavern environment.

Andefan noted that, unlike other hippocampi, the angler variant is a lonely creature from birth. The mare hides her egg in the deepest rock cover along the cavern floor. The egg emits an eerie glow after several weeks, and once entirely lit, the immature hippocampus emerges. The baby's lure entices miniscule organisms until it is capable of hunting, and grows until the angler reaches full maturity, around 3 - 4 feet (1 - 1.2 meters) in length in a span of six months.



Once the angler reaches maturity, it must venture outside its cave at night to attract larger fish. As the creature is not built to expend high amounts of energy in chase, it uses the light of its lure to entice curious prey. Some anglers will hover unmoving for hours before nature rewards them with a meal.

Despite their incredible endurance, I doubt philosophers will write adages extolling the angler hippocampus' patience any time soon.

Rumors & Legends

- Alchemists prize the glowing lure of the anglerfish hippocampus as highly as any jewel. Un'wyr, a sea-elf alchemist who worked closely with Andefan, described the creature's lure as "Seduction incarnate in crystalline form; a light which dooms the mind to blind acquiescence." Though it could just be a charlatan's ploy.
- The creature's light is visible by land-dwellers when it comes briefly to the surface for oxygen during its nightly hunts. Sailors with smaller vessels have been known to mistake the angler's glow for a lighthouse and crash along the shallow rocks in foggy weather.

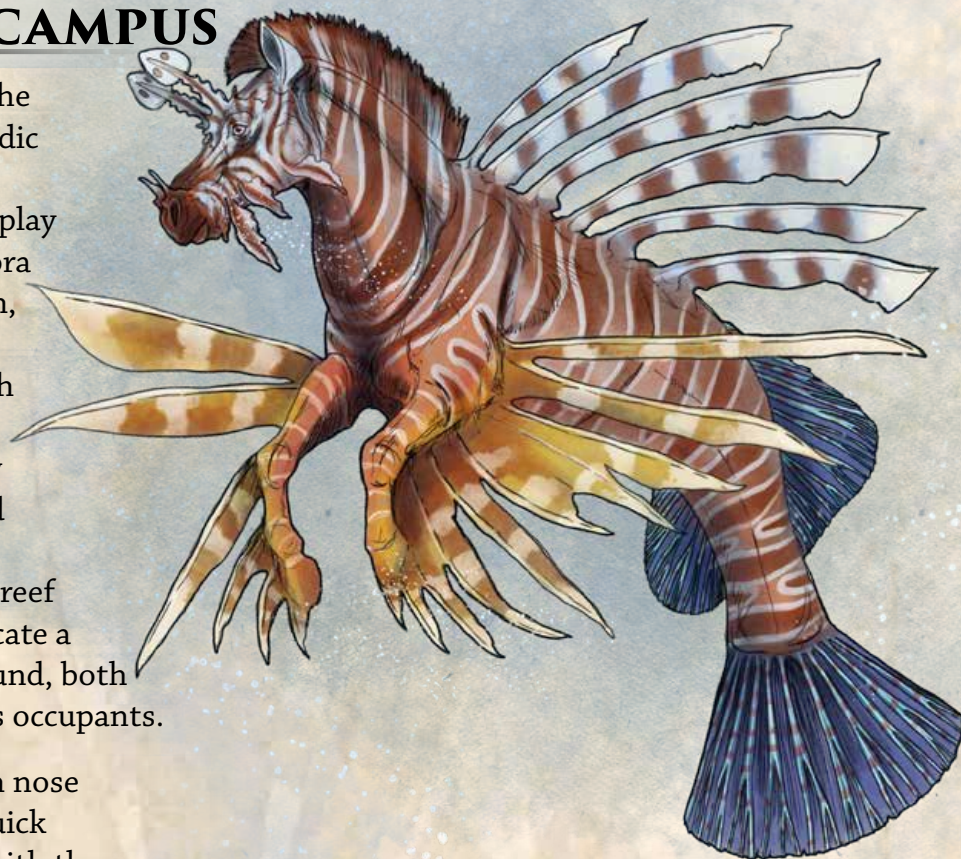
LIONFISH HIPPOCAMPUS

On the island of Mars-Caylin off the eastern coast, the Rising Dawn druidic circle welcomes travelers with open arms, in particular scholars who display genuine fascination with oceanic flora and fauna. For my personal research, the warm coastal reefs surrounding Mars-Caylin are home to the lionfish hippocampus, called the “sunrise seahorse” by the island druids. They offer the same advice to visitors and travelers: Give any steady lines of bubbles you spy emerging from the reef beds a wide berth. The bubbles indicate a nearby lionfish nest or hunting ground, both of which are fiercely protected by its occupants.

Peaking at only two feet long from nose to fin, this variant is not built for quick movement, but rather for drifting with the ocean currents. The creature undulates its smaller fins for balance, while its large tail is capable of maneuvering outside the stream if it wishes to switch directions.

The lionfish hippocampus is the most territorial and ill-tempered of its kind. Each of its spines are sheathed with a dagger-like stinger that injects venom into its prey. Though lethal to small beasts, minor amounts of the venom will cause only temporary paralysis in medium-sized creatures (and a great amount of pain, as I learned only too intimately during my first week with the Rising Dawn clan).

Despite its painful sting, the lionfish hippocampus is prized for its beauty. When the dawn skies are clear, dozens of lionfish hippocampi rise to breathe in the crisp morning air. The red and orange stripes of their hide and fins dance with the glistening water’s surface, mirroring the fiery sunrise on the horizon. Only too soon the illusion dissipates, and the sunrise seahorses disappear amongst the reefs.



Rumors & Legends

- Due to the prolific numbers of the lionfish hippocampus, Mars-Caylin, as well as other nearby islands and fishing villages, hunt and sell freshly-caught hippocampi freely. Inns and restaurants in port cities often purchase large quantities, but less savory customers buy them to harvest the dangerous spine-spears.
- The story goes that Eldra lived in a village, near starving from years of waning fish populations in their hunting grounds. One day, she spotted a single lionfish hippocampus, red as an apple, stranded in the shallows. She approached to give the creature aid and it stung her, but in her compassion, Eldra did not kill the creature. The next day, after casting the creature back into the open water, schools of fish returned to the region. Estmere fishers say the careful hunting practices they observe today are inspired by Eldra’s repaid kindness.

SAILFISH HIPPOCAMPUS

Easily the largest of its cousins, the sailfish hippocampus is noted for its sail-like dorsal fin and tail reminiscent of a rudder. When I first discovered an illustration of the creature, I connected the creature's name with its anatomy. The Mars-Caylin druids, however, instructed me that the name has a dual-meaning, referring not only to the animal's appearance, but also to its common use throughout the islands.

As the eastern isles lacked sufficient wood supplies for building ships, the druids domesticated pods of sailfish to pull narrow vessels across the water, much as a horse pulls a cart. The idea was no doubt inspired by the sailfish hippocampi themselves, as they are active hunters noted for their agility in the open water. While ships are ideal for long ocean journeys, island peoples find sailing an inefficient means of traveling between the islands. Self-sufficient boats are unlikely to replace domesticated hippocampi, despite increased timber imports in recent generations.

The sailfish hippocampus is by nature a performer, and can be trained to perform acrobatic feats. Much like the kelpie hippocampus mare performs an underwater dance to attract a mate, so the sailfish stallions compete in underwater races. Once a stallion has a mare's

attention, he will then further impress her by leaping out of the water upwards of three to six feet in the air. Should the mare find his display adequate, the two will bond as a permanent couple, unlike other hippocampi species which change their mates from one mating season to the next.

Healthy sailfish hippocampi range in color from royal to sky blue, sometimes accompanied by a striking accent of orange or tan, though these colors can temporarily dull when the hippocampus tires, or during the cooler months when food is not abundantly available.

Rumors & Legends

- The Salei islanders pride themselves on their domesticated hippocampi, and competitions displaying their skill feature heavily in their annual summer festival. Breeders who pride themselves on the brilliant, healthy colors of their charges display their most handsome stallions and mares, while handlers demonstrate masterful acrobatic feats with their hippocampus partners. Winning any of the sailfish hippocampus competitions at the summer festival is considered a great honor.



HIPPOGRIFF

Said to be the offspring of a horse mare and a griffin, two natural enemies, hippogriffs are supposedly proof that love matters above all other things. Whether this is true or not, it is certain that hippogriffs have one of the most gentle and caring natures of most fabulous monsters.

Initially one of the most plentiful and fascinating creatures in the sky, the hippogriff has been domesticated so long that many do not know its origin or that there are still some left in the wild. Originally, several of the eastern kingdoms used hippogriffs for royal mounts. These hippogriffs had been stolen, as eggs, from nests and raised by an official trainer. Training, then, was grossly abusive and most hippogriffs became sullen, plucking their feathers out before eventually dying. Nowadays, the hippogriff is a common enough mount that most have forgotten their wild ancestry.

Biology

The hippogriff stands striking and substantial, much larger than most horses. Its claws and beak are razor sharp to rip into flesh. It is unclear whether the first hippogriffs were born from the mating of a mare and a griffin or eagle, or if they were in fact magically created. They share obvious biological and physiological traits from both, however, and it is a commonly held belief that specific breeding practices have led to the creatures we know today.

Each griffin subspecies is made up of its own unique mix of horse and bird-creature. If we examine these parts, more evidence suggest that they are, in fact, part bird rather than part griffin. The feathers in the tail help with aerodynamics and let the hippogriff increase or decrease their speed as necessary. The fine horse hairs throughout the feathers on the

front half of the creature increase warmth when flying in high altitudes for long periods of time. Due to their size, hippogriff need a running start to achieve flight.

Behavior

Hippogriffs are playful, loving, and oddly empathic creatures. Many trainers have noted their astute intuition when it comes to the emotions of their riders. They seem to listen intently and give affection when it is needed most. In the wild, their wily playfulness is easily observed. Domesticated hippogriffs, especially those bred over generations, seem to have lost some of this playfulness and instead seem demure. This could be due to training and also due to generational abuse of the animals to tame them.

In the wild, they travel in herds of seven to thirty female adults. They live by a social hierarchy determined by age, wisdom, and social connections. The matriarch guides the herd from watering space to resting space, the herd trusting her decisions. Males are solitary and roam the territories of females, sometimes joining them while they rest, play, or drink, only to be sent away again when the females return to travel. Young, fit females guard the herd, while older mares tend the foals.

Diet

These beasts hunt largely from the air. They circle high above and use their keen vision to find prey on the ground below. Due to their immense size, prey animals are often deer, boar, antelope, or other herbivores. Because hunting takes such a great amount of energy, hippogriffs will rarely attack anything too small. Herds of females have several young mares who handle hunting with the guidance of one of the older mares. Skill is often more important than strength.

All kills are shared by the herd and they feed at the same time. Youngsters are allowed to feed first to ensure they get enough to eat, but otherwise, the females eat together. Afterwards, they preen and clean each other in a bonding experience which strengthens the herd's social community.

Mating

When the mating season begins, mares find a nearby wooded area with a clear lake or pond near cliffs. The males begin to build their nests into the cliffsides, then display their wings and fight with the other males to show prowess and ability. After selection, they return to the male's nest and mate. The female lays eggs with her partner and rests atop them. Once mated, the pair is bonded for life and will return to this spot year after year to raise their young.

The young remain in the nest with the parents until they are able to fly. At first this is done by flitting from one part of the cliff to another, until finally they take to the air fully. The foals will remain with the female once the rest of the herd departs. The father will return to solitary wandering, although will often follow the herd for a time to offer further protection. Foals become adolescents at about a year of age and will be separated from their mothers at the next mating season.

Interactions with Humanoids

The hippogriff has been domesticated for many generations. They have developed a series of vocalizations that wild hippogriffs lack, stemming from the need to communicate with their owners. Because domestication has taken generations, hippogriffs captured in the wild are used almost exclusively as breeding stock, as to truly tame

such a beast is prohibitively expensive and time consuming.

For true hippogriff riders, their mounts are a part of them. They may spend both of their adult lives together and become thick as thieves. Hippogriffs have a keen intuition that makes them ideal companions and excellent mounts. They are protective of their owners and will guard them on a battlefield or in the wild. They require a lot of care and affection, including grooming and bonding from an owner. They say hippogriffs come to see their owners as their mates, in as much as they love their riders.



COMMON HIPPOGRIFF

The common hippogriff has the dark, mahogany feathers of its eagle ancestor and the soft chestnut coat of its equine family. The browns of both blend beautifully together as the feathers shorten and end abruptly where horse hair takes over. These common hippogriffs are by far the most domesticated breed and have been so for many, many generations. Their keen hunting instincts make them ideal for aerial attacks and as war mounts.

These beautiful creatures congregate around the great mountains of the world, always in valleys near cliffsides. Where hippogriffs live feels different. There's an air of joy to the mountains and valleys they call home. Their playful natures mean that most humanoids feel safe entering their territories. There are very few reports of them attacking humans, despite the amount of times humans have and continue to capture them from their natural homes. Although parents will be aggressive when protecting young, they never attempt to kill so much as drive off those who would interfere with, harm, or steal their children.

Said to be the symbol of the divine and the mundane, hippogriffs are often the first to notice a shift in magic or reality around them. They are especially adept at feeling when magic is influencing the world around

them. Often, they are sought out as mounts for those attempting to fight dark wizards and necromancers because of their inherent immunity to magic cast against them. This unique ability makes them a very large and dangerous version of an alarm canary. For several kingdoms being terrorized by magic, hippogriffs have become their personal, very effective alarm systems.

Rumors & Legends

- A group traveling together happen upon an abandoned hippogriff, tied to a tree and tangled amongst vines attempting to strangle the life out of it, its owner lost within the woods.
- Large congregations of hippogriffs have been appearing outside of an abandoned ancient kingdom, and local wizards have studied the ruins believing the hippogriffs to herald a return from beyond.
- When a massive war leaves one kingdom conquered, their hippogriff mounts are released in an act of sabotage to prevent their enemies from killing their beloved pets, leaving a domesticated herd to roam, lost and in need of guidance.



HOATIZIN HIPPOGRIFF

Deep within swamps, fumbling from vegetation to vegetation, is the hippogriff that has yet to be truly domesticated. Although the odd collector may claim one or two, these strange hoatizin hippogriff are known mostly for their laziness and their awful smell. Commonly referred to as the swamp hippogriff, it is known to have an odor not unlike cow manure or wet, moldy hay. When one walks through the swamplands, it is always easy to tell when you approach a hoatizin hippogriff. This smell is a result of their unique diet.

Hoatizin hippogriff are herbivores. This mostly comes in the form of eating leaves from the trees on the banks of the swamps. They travel in packs of ten to fifteen beasts. Hoatizin hippogriffs have unique wings featuring special claws that allow them to pull themselves up branches of trees in order to reach better leaves that grow higher up. Despite their wings, they rarely fly. They are easily the least graceful of their kind, preferring to lumber around land, easily falling out of the trees they explore. Fortunately, they are excellent swimmers.

Their oafishly large bodies make these unusual hippogriffs unafraid of anything. Their size means they lack many natural predators. Local humanoids generally leave them alone because of the potent smell that emanates from them. These hippogriffs lack the cunning and grace of their cousins. Despite some best intentions to

domesticate them, hoatizin hippogriffs are largely left alone to eat the leaves and strip the swamps bare of foliage. Their eggs are laid in large trees and often fall, learning to swim at a young age to safety.

Rumors & Legends

- Hoatizin hippogriff have been flooded out of their home from the destruction of an upstream dam, resulting in several dying and even more running into the local villages to find shelter from the ever-rising water.
- In desperation, a group of refugees have taken shelter within the jungle and have dared to kill and consume one of the swamp hippogriffs, leaving the refugees sick and the hippogriffs aggressive whenever humanoids come near.
- Deep within the western swamp, mass amounts of hoatizin hippogriffs live, breeding rapidly, and becoming aggressive and deadly as a local wizard attempts to use magic to command them.



PEREGRINE HIPPOGRIFF

Living in the highest places in the world is the peregrine hippogriff. These delicate and cunning creatures live in castle towers, high mountaintops, and giant trees if they can find them. Unlike their common cousins, peregrine hippogriffs live in mated pairs, building their nests together high above anything else. Young peregrine hippogriffs learn to fly quickly, as a sudden fall could easily lead to their death. Several castles with high-enough towers boast a peregrine hippogriff pair. It has become popular enough that some nobles build high towers with these hippogriffs in mind.

Slender and built for speed, the peregrine hippogriff hunts primarily from the skies, killing other birds and bringing them back to their nest. Both adults hunt and incubate the eggs. The pair work tirelessly to find enough prey to feed themselves and their youngsters, eventually travelling farther and farther to find food. Because of their lithe form and slender bodies, peregrine hippogriff can take fast turns, dive bomb trespassers, and fly faster than any other hippogriff. Their traditionally playful nature is replaced with a more serious one, focused intently on hunting for survival. They are far too small to be a mount, but can make fine pets.

Considered to be a creature sensitive to celestial magic, the peregrine hippogriff is often sought out for its feathers which can be used to summon from the celestial realm or to open gates to that plane. It is not clear whether or not the hippogriffs know they bear this innate talent, but it may explain why their



prey can be rather odd from time to time. It is theorized that the hippogriffs can exist in both planes, taking food and prey from both. For this reason, some call this hippogriff guardian of the celestials, or possibly killer of the celestials.

Rumors & Legends

- There are recent accounts of several hippogriffs losing their feathers at an extreme rate, leaving many unable to fly.
- A tyrannical king once captured dozens of hippogriffs, but when his kingdom was overthrown, the animals stayed and have overtaken the ancient, treasure-filled castle as a permanent aerie for their flock.
- A young woman is raising a pair of fledgling hippogriffs after their parents were killed in a recent war, but their strange celestial powers are starting to manifest in the woman and she's uncertain how to control them.

COCKATOO HIPPOGRIFF

Loud, precocious, and sometimes called ridiculous, the cockatoo hippogriff lives in jungles amongst the canopies of the trees. They can be heard for miles around as they make loud, almost laughter-like sounds. Their black feathers with yellow and red stripes and dots make them one of the most stunning of the hippogriff to look at. They are the only hippogriff who has learned to mimic humanoid speech and will “talk” to those who visit their homes. Of course, the more isolated their communities, the less likely they are to know any humanoid words at all.

Living in the treetops, cockatoo hippogriff hunt for small mammals such as monkeys and share them amongst each other. They play with their food, throwing it wildly about, before finally eating it. They will also eat nuts and fruit gathered from the various trees. As a hunt begins, the hippogriffs try to catch as many passing monkeys as they can by loudly screeching as they fly into the air. It’s a cacophony of noise as the small furred creatures are snatched from the branches. Many escape, but not so many that the hippogriff starve. It’s a cacophony of noise as the small furred creatures flee. Many escape, but not so many that the hippogriff starve.

Long believed to be guides of the dead, cockatoo hippogriff are often seen flying randomly and solitarily through the skies. Some say this is because they are escorting a dead soul to its next destination. Others say these creatures simply are easily frightened and confused. Many of the indigenous local population revere the hippogriff as guardians of their deceased, and will shame any wanderer who comes to try to capture or kill them.

Rumors & Legends

- A flock of cockatoo hippogriffs have chosen to settle in the palace garden. The king is unsure what to make of the entire situation.
- The pearly feathers of a cockatoo (the ones with spots on them) are extremely valuable to clerics who wish to inquire upon the dead or resurrect someone.
- One sorcerer has managed to domesticate and tame a wild cockatoo hippogriff to create his own war mount, which raises the souls of the dead wherever they fall on the battlefield, making her and her hippogriff almost unstoppable.



HYDRA

As written by Rutherford B. Smallstone, kobold researcher

*H*ydra (plural: hydrae) are large serpentine creatures with several heads and a caustic breath. They are often used as guard animals for treasures, tombs, or other places no living thing is meant to tread. Many assume hydra are evil, or have evil intent in mind, however, one of my sole purposes of this entry is to dispel the myth.

Like many other creatures in this world, hydrae have no form of sentience. They are predators yes, but their hunting style and natural abilities have nothing to do with malice and everything to do with survival. Like how basilisk hunt their prey, the hydra hunt those that succumb to its poisonous breath.

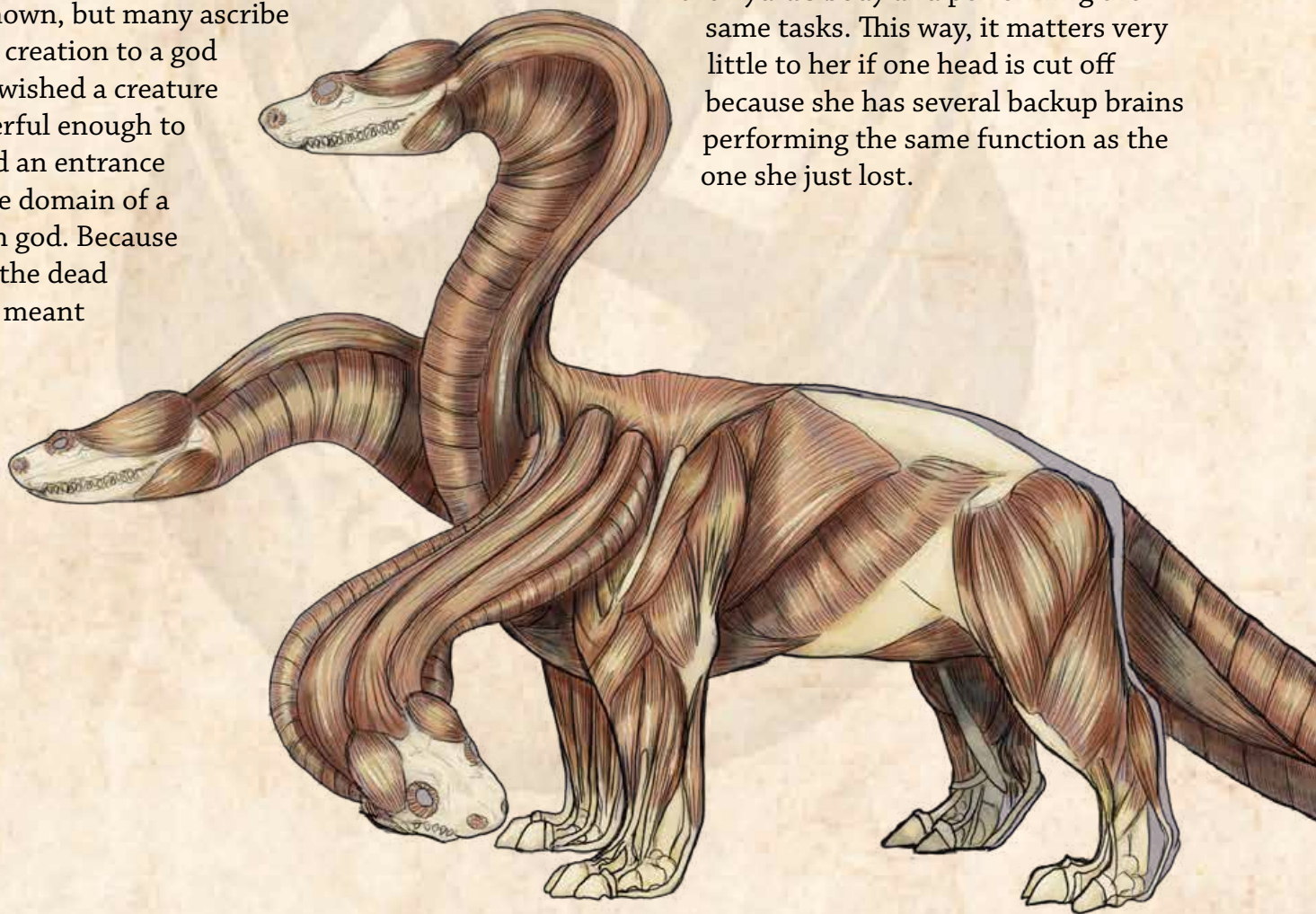
The exact origins of the first hydrae are unknown, but many ascribe their creation to a god who wished a creature powerful enough to guard an entrance to the domain of a death god. Because only the dead were meant

to enter, she gave the hydra a breath that causes any living creature around it to die. So the gates to the Planes of Death were never breached, that is, until the hydra spawned a child who explored the world.

Biology

All hydrae are female and have roughly seven heads. Because a hydra is able to regenerate and the creatures are known to bite off their own heads if one is sick or injured, the exact number of heads a hydra should have is unknown.

Each head of the hydrae possesses a brain, which is linked to each other brain. Each brain works in tandem, sending identical signals to the hydra's body and performing the same tasks. This way, it matters very little to her if one head is cut off because she has several backup brains performing the same function as the one she just lost.



Hydrae also have a caustic breath that spreads and lingers around them like a poisonous fog. This breath is a natural ability she has and is not something she can 'turn off' or control. It is toxic to all warm-blooded creatures and most cold-blooded creatures except dragons. Hydra are obviously immune to the breath and so are most types of plant life.

Behavior

Hydrae have a basic intelligence and rely mostly on instinct in order to direct them in day-to-day business. The rumors of hydrae being used as guards is not a myth, but in fact a reality (though I can't speak to the veracity of the species being created by a god to guard the Plane of Death). No known predator exists for hydrae and their caustic breath means prey often pose very little threat. If led to a location where they are met with prey who will fight back and pose a challenge, for example a treasure horde that needs guarding, they are more than likely to stay there. It's not that hydrae are blood thirsty, but hunting provides mental stimulation that they enjoy.

Diet

Hydra feed off any creatures who are trapped in the aura of caustic breath surrounding them. They prefer living creatures rather than dead ones and are able to be picky about their food as they only need to feed roughly once a week.

Mating

Hydrae do not need to mate, producing fertile eggs on their own. When a hydra wishes to reproduce she lays an eggs, covers it in her own poisonous blood, and leaves it behind. If a baby hydra is born, she is left to fend for herself; something which suits the newly born creature just fine. Hydrae enjoy living alone and many choose not to reproduce, spending their entire lives enjoying the swamps and bogs they call home. Because of this, there is a very small population of hydra in the world today. If I were to take an educated guess, I would estimate the population to be below 50 creatures, I would estimate the population of any given hydrae to be below 50 individuals, with storm hydrae being the rarest of them all.

Interactions with Humanoids

Humanoids rarely survive an encounter with hydrae, if not because of the creature's caustic breath, then because of her enjoyment of a living snack. My personal recommendation would be to stay as far away from these creatures as possible. Not only for your own well being, but because there is no evidence to suggest the species as a whole wishes for humanoid contact. They are solitary creatures and it is best to leave them that way.



HOODED HYDRA

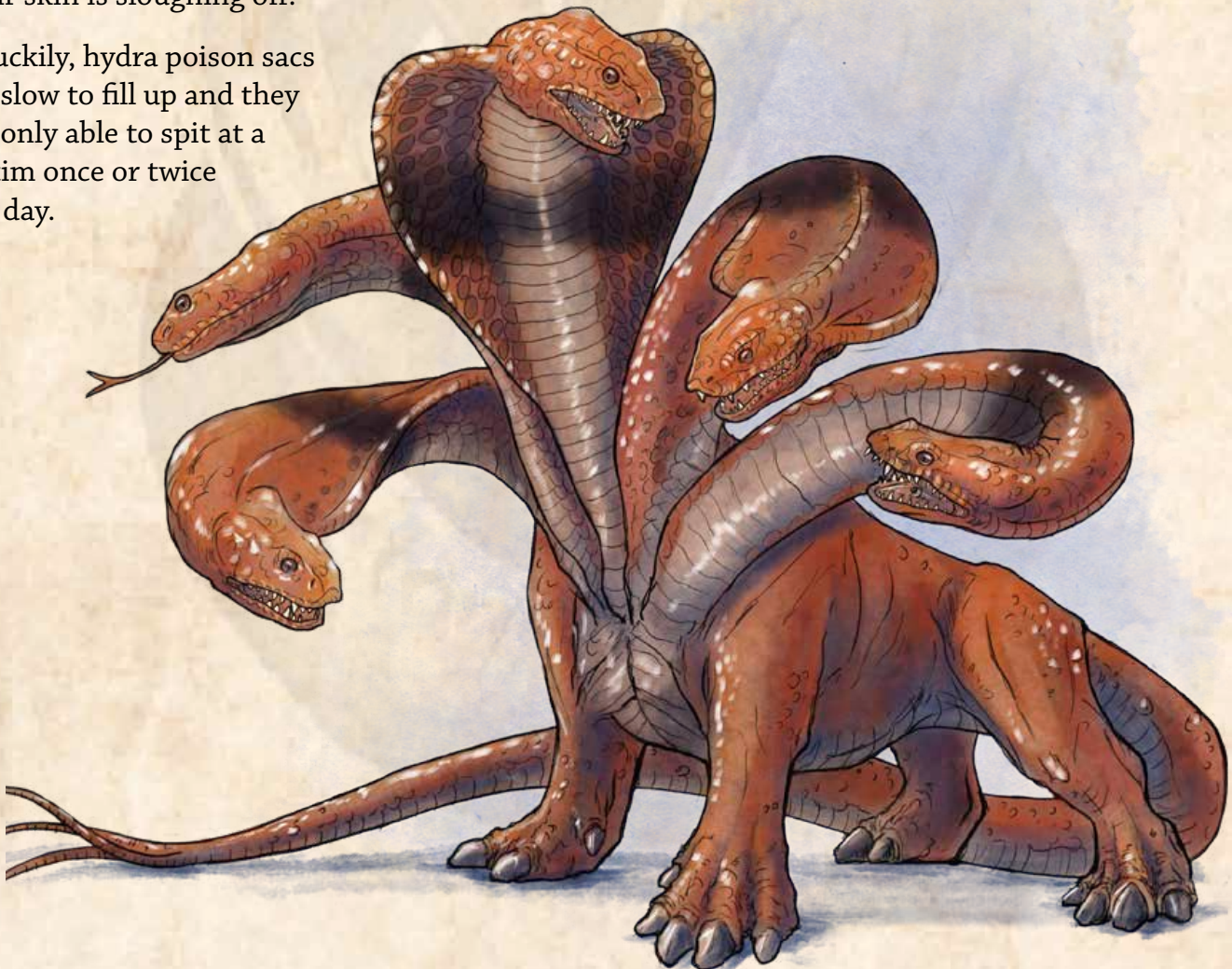
Of all the hydra you are likely to encounter in the world, it is most likely you will encounter the hooded hydra. These are the most numerous of their kind, and also the most likely to produce an egg. Hooded hydra have the unique ability, besides their caustic breath, to spit acidic poison far distances to hit a target they wish to consume.

When a hydra's poison hits a victim, their flesh instantly beings to melt and tenderizes them. The only way to halt the acidic poison is to thoroughly wipe it off and even then, victims who are lucky enough to survive this attack must wrestle with weeks of illness as their body fights against the poison that seeped into their skin. During this time the person is in excruciating pain, as until the poison is out of their system, it still feels as if their skin is sloughing off.

Luckily, hydra poison sacs are slow to fill up and they are only able to spit at a victim once or twice per day.

Rumors & Legends

- The barbarian Lux, who slew the seven-headed hydra in the Plane of Bones, was aided by a flos mortis (flower of death), which she was known to weave into her hair before a battle. When one of the hydra's heads swept down to remove Lux's head from her body, she dodged out of the way and it only managed to bite off one of her braids. The beast swallowed her braid and, much to Lux's surprise, the flos mortis nullified the hydra's caustic breath. This allowed her to cleave the beast's heart from its chest.
- Hooded hydrae aren't known to purposefully keep treasure from the snacks who happen to pass their way. However, one hydra known as Pentdarin wears a brilliant golden necklace around her central neck. A skull hangs on the necklace and has the ability to talk and taunt Pentdarin's enemies.

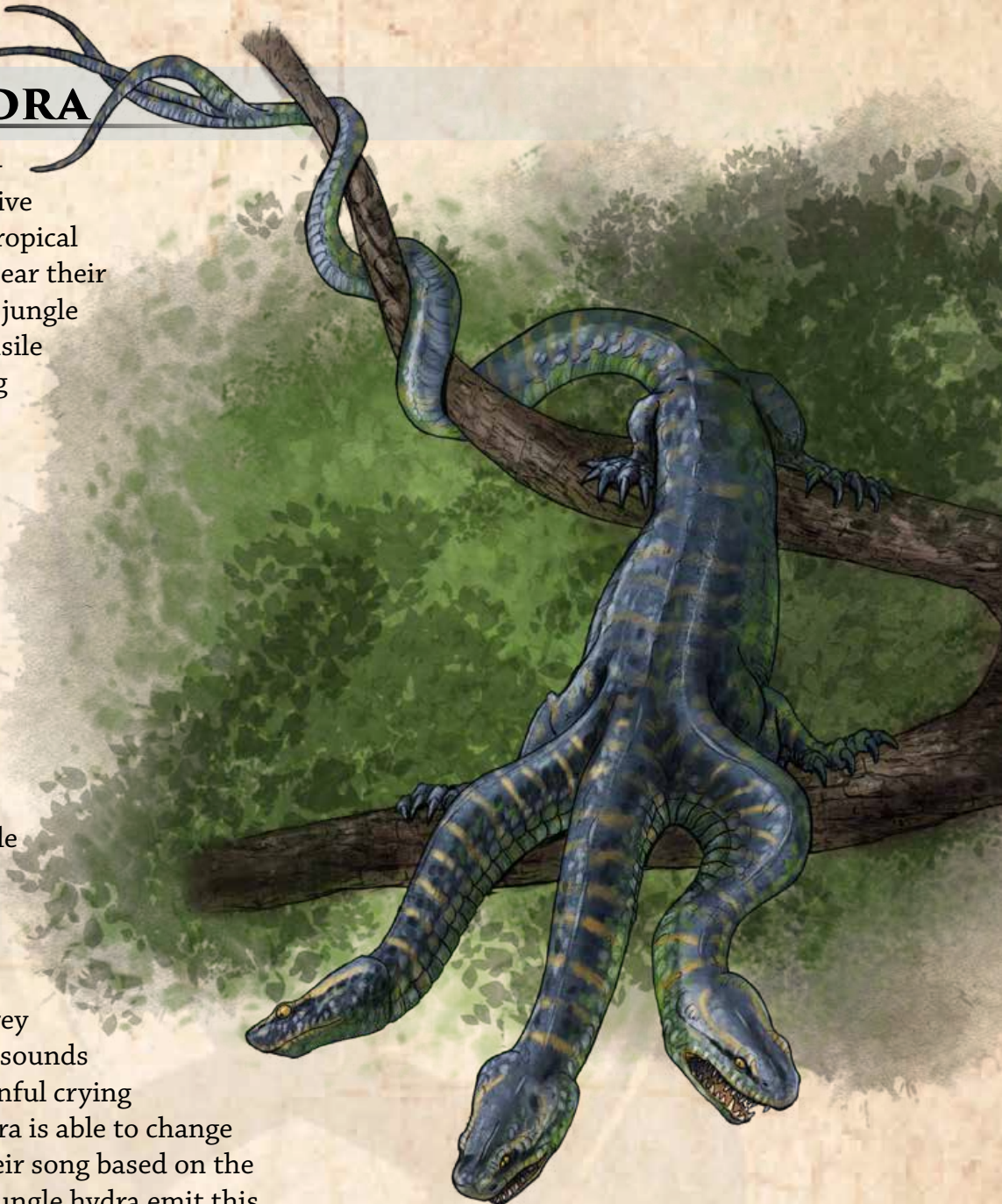


JUNGLE HYDRA

Jungle hydrae are tree-dwelling creatures who live in ancient forests with tropical trees strong enough to bear their impressive weight. Each jungle hydra has a long, prehensile tail they use for grabbing onto trees and victims who mistakenly walk below where they are perched. These creatures are fantastic climbers and are faster moving through the trees than on the ground.

Jungle hydrae do not have the same caustic breath as their hooded counterparts, but are able to spit poison. Despite this ability, the jungle hydra's favored hunting method is a whistling song they use to draw prey towards them. The song sounds much like the soft mournful crying of an infant and the hydra is able to change the pitch and tone of their song based on the prey they are hunting. Jungle hydra emit this sound by taking in large gusts of breath and reverberating them through emptied poison sacs in their throats.

Along with being able to regenerate its heads, the jungle hydra is also able to regenerate its tail, though that regrows at a slower rate than the beast's head does.



Rumors & Legends

- A cult of kobolds called the Followers of Shall'tress are known to worship a jungle hydra who they believe is a reincarnation of the deceased dragon they failed to care for. While I can tell you assuredly hydras and dragons have little to nothing in common, the kobolds seem to think otherwise.
- A hydra was thought to first have been placed in the jungle to guard a lost elven treasure stolen by the dread orcish pirate, Brand.

EEL HYDRA

The aquatic eel hydra lives deep in the ocean. Nesting between large fissures in the earth or making their home in the murkiest part of a coral reef where no fish dare to swim, these lurking creatures bide their time until unlucky prey cross their paths. Rather than breathing a poison cloud, the eel hydra has a reservoir of poisonous ink it can excrete at a moment's notice. Naturally blending in with its surroundings, the eel hydra lays in wait until its prey is within range and quickly spews forth an inky cloud of deadly darkness. Then, the hydra feeds happily on its hard-won feast.

An often overlooked fact about the eel hydra is how they take down singular ships all by themselves. No one ever survives an eel hydra attack, but subsequent beastmaster studies on wreckage showed telltale eel hydra bite marks and ink stains. Slowly, as we build up our knowledge of these deep-sea dwelling creatures it becomes more apparent that many attacks on ships attributed to merfolk, krakens, and the like were most likely carried out by eel hydra.

Rumors & Legends

- The merfolk of Atlantis kept an eel hydra as a pet. They kept it sated deep below their kingdom with sharks and other prey they would lure into its coral home. When anyone would wish to do Atlantis harm the merfolk released their hydra on the foolhardy aggressors and watched her make short work of them.
- There is a thriving black market for eel hydra ink because of its deadly toxicity and difficulty to harvest. One eel can hold upwards of 16 gallons (60 liters) of ink, which is worth a tidy sum on the mainland.
- Once a year, all eel hydrae meet in one location in the middle of the ocean. They swim in concentric circles until they form a giant whirlpool powerful enough to pull even the largest ship underwater. After one full moon of performing this strange ritual the eel hydra go their separate ways until the same time the following year. This phenomena baffles researchers who love speculating what this strange occurrence could be – a way of communication, or a show of affection? Only the eel hydra truly know.



STORM HYDRA

Storm hydrae are the rarest breed of their kind and only two unique individuals have ever been identified. Rather than exuding a caustic breath, they are shrouded in giant storms. These violent tempests are carried great distances by the winds, taking their storm hydrae with them. When the storm nears a populated area, the hydra breathes out lightning bolts showering the ground in electricity. Any creature fried by the beast's breath is swept up in the storm and consumed in a whirling terror of dark clouds, lightning, and rain.

Fortunately for us, storm hydrae primarily roost atop high cloudy mountains, typically for centuries at a time. During this period the tempest around it quiets to a low rumble. However, when she awakes, the storm picks up to its normal violent heights and she resumes her hunt.

When a storm hydra lays an egg she does so in the middle of her own tempest. Rather than leaving the egg as her other sisters would, she cares for the egg until it is time for it to hatch. When the egg is ready, she breathes a blast of lightning over the egg, cracking it open and allowing her child to free-fall downwards. If the child uses her wings to fly, her mother sweeps the hatchling up and rears her for a time before releasing her into the world. If the hatchling is unable to fly, the mother allows her to fall to her death, the creature proving too weak to survive.



Rumors & Legends

- Kentirl'netzin is the storm hydra of the northern hemisphere. Her storm carries her all places cold and dark. Her coming is heralded by three days of storms: first rain, then sleet, then hail. When she finally arrives, she cover the land with thunder and lightning.
- Lasnou'netzin is the storm hydra of the southern hemisphere. She loves any place warm and bright. Before she arrives in an area, the days are dry, drought spreading across the land... and then a light rain. The folk below welcome her storm cloud only to realize too late it has come to consume them.
- Kentirl'netzin and Lasnou'netzin were born from the same egg. When they hatched, they worked together to consume their mother and after, turned their hungry eyes upon each other. Unable to best one another they split the world in two, each keeping to their respective half and out of her sister's way. If the two were to ever meet again the result would be catastrophic for any poor souls caught beneath their fight.

LIZARDFOLK

The lizardfolk are some of the most insular creatures I have observed, which only encourages the many misunderstandings surrounding their tribes. It is said the lizardfolk were once ancient monsters more akin to serpents than lizards, but received the gifts of legs and intelligence from long-forgotten gods. Eventually their tribes spread and evolved with their environments, leading to the four major variations of lizardfolk encountered throughout the material realm today.

Biology

All lizardfolk have similar stature, usually standing between 6 -7 feet (1.8 - 2.1 meters) tall, with a tail of 3 - 4 feet (0.9 - 1.2 meters) long. Their specific musculature varies, but all lizardfolk are strong-bodied. Their tails are particularly powerful and more akin to a fifth limb than a normal tail, servicing in both movement and combat. The tail is also a key component in their bipedalism, as lizardfolk with stunted tails have trouble walking and often do not live past young adulthood.

All lizardfolk, even those dwelling in more arid environments, require higher amounts of water for survival. Their skin and scales thus adapt to soak in or store water, depending on its accessibility.

Behavior

Lizardfolk tribes are guided by generations of tradition, and they care little for outside influence. For the lizardfolk, life is a clear and straight path determined by their specific clan's focus. Thus, anyone from outside their clan is met with suspicion, as they were not raised with the innate knowledge and way of life to which most lizardfolk hold.

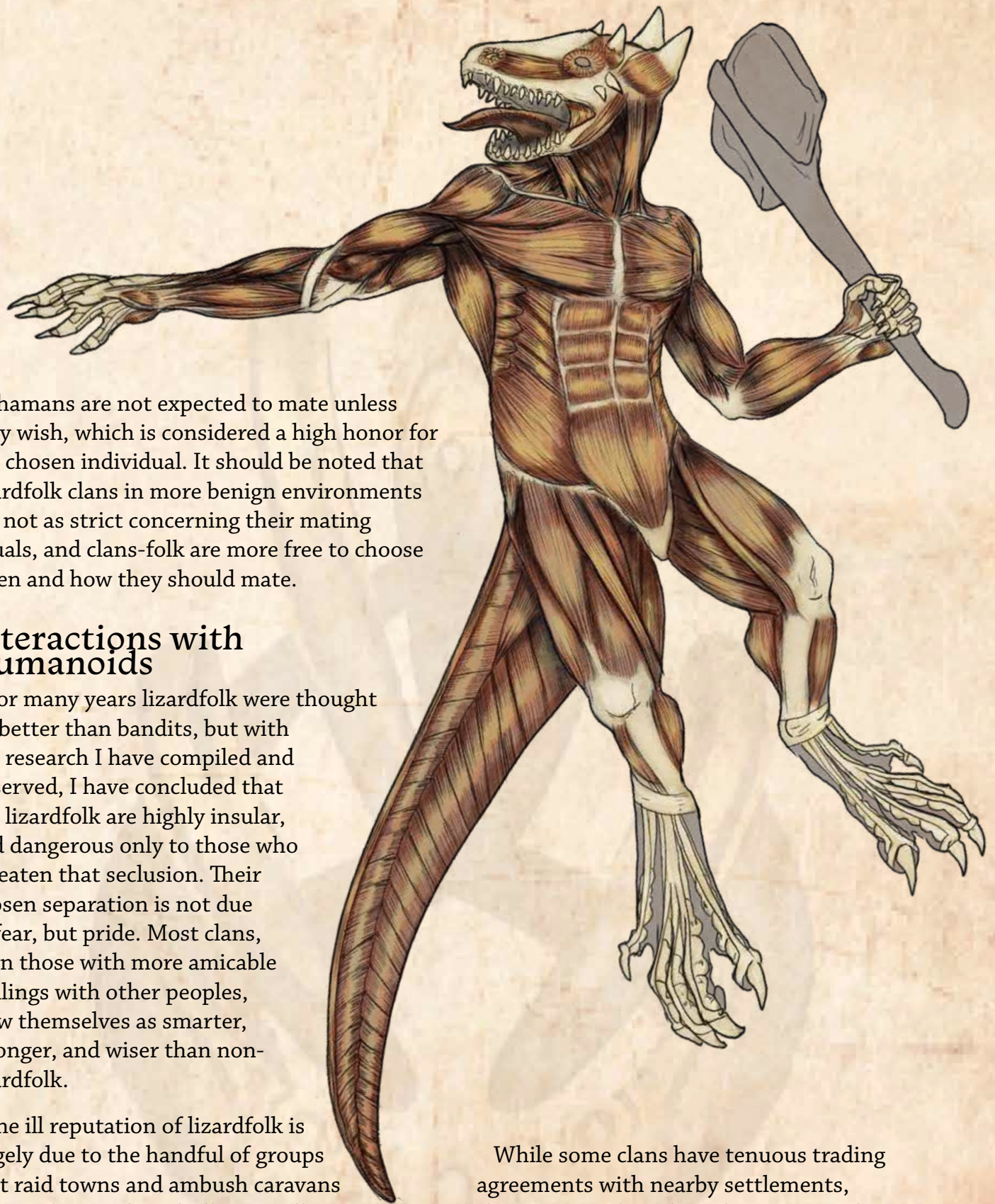
As there is little difference in thinking within tribes, most infighting is put down swiftly and with little repercussion. Their cut-and-dry tribal hierarchies encourage little charity for the weak or sickly, who are left to their own devices and thus rarely live long. The physically strongest lizardfolk always hold the highest places of power, deferring only to the few clans-folk revered as shamans. These religious or spiritual leaders are often set apart by some physical characteristic, and are raised from birth for their designated role.

Diet

The lizardfolks' highly inclusive diet has helped them adapt to many different environments. They enjoy a wide range of sustenance, including meat, fish, and even large bugs, according to what is most plentiful in their immediate area. They take great sport in hunting for their food, and will often celebrate when a hunter presents a particularly dangerous kill. As hunted food is distributed in a hierarchical fashion, lower clan members often fend for themselves to eat, and can on occasion suffer crueler, stronger members of their clan stealing their scraps.

Mating

Lizardfolk will mate year-round, though most often in the spring. In more patriarchal tribes, males will impress females through feats of strength that range from deadly hunts to brawling with other males interested in the same female. Tribes that live in harsher environments and focus strictly on survival above all else expect their females to mate with the most physically powerful male who approaches them, and are often ostracized if they do not.



Shamans are not expected to mate unless they wish, which is considered a high honor for the chosen individual. It should be noted that lizardfolk clans in more benign environments are not as strict concerning their mating rituals, and clans-folk are more free to choose when and how they should mate.

Interactions with Humanoids

For many years lizardfolk were thought no better than bandits, but with the research I have compiled and observed, I have concluded that the lizardfolk are highly insular, and dangerous only to those who threaten that seclusion. Their chosen separation is not due to fear, but pride. Most clans, even those with more amicable dealings with other peoples, view themselves as smarter, stronger, and wiser than non-lizardfolk.

The ill reputation of lizardfolk is largely due to the handful of groups that raid towns and ambush caravans for supplies. As lizardfolk generally view themselves above others, they have little qualms taking what they deem necessary for survival. These groups are hunted by local guards and sometimes mercenaries, sadly gaining a bad reputation for all lizardfolk clans, most of whom simply desire isolation.

While some clans have tenuous trading agreements with nearby settlements, these treaties have been known to end in bloodshed when a tricky wording or loophole betrays a clan's trust. Lizardfolk desire straightforwardness almost as much as survival, and feel justified in their distrust of city-dwellers and townspeople who often have hidden intentions.

WETLAND LIZARDFOLK

Wetland lizardfolk are the most easily recognized of their kind, with scales of dark earthy tones. Their only physical vanity are their head crests, ranging from bright green to golden hues, which often mark their standing in a tribe. Their bodies and tails are thick and powerful, likely due to their harsh living conditions.

Their tribes are scattered throughout the realm's marshes and swamplands, and while some are cautiously willing to parley with other cultures, most consider outsiders weak and therefore of little import. Thus, relations can vary anywhere from tenuous trading agreements to raiding nearby villages and caravans.

These interactions lead most towns to label lizardfolk as "brutes," and most scholarly circles disregard the creatures' innate cleverness. I spoke with one lizardfolk named Ussairs who had been

separated from his home as a young whelp when city guards attacked his tribe. A passing traveler rescued the young Ussairs and raised him on the road, showing him all the ruins and treasure a freelancing adventurer might encounter in their lifetime.

Ussairs is now a bright-eyed young man in Summer's Reach, earning his living tinkering with any odd contraptions and gizmos adventurers bring him. His house lies at the end of a damp alley that left me shivering, though he seemed to like the seclusion. We sat down to barley water, bread, and dried fish, and he recounted what he remembered of his origins.

He explained that lizardfolk find "the complications" of other cultures distrustful. A treaty of double-speak, the unspoken rules of combat, social expectation, all without clear purpose. "To the lizardfolk, life is a clear straight path. It is simple." Within minutes he repaired my compass, recently broken during my travels, to better than new, and grinned toothily. "Battle, simple. Food, hearth, the earth itself: simple. That is survival. That is lizardfolk."

Rumors & Legends

- Lizardfolk keep their religious practices mostly hidden from outsiders, though from what is known, they tend to create monuments near places of great danger: sinkholes, quicksand, and alligator nests. Courage and bravery being core pieces of lizardfolk life and survival.
- It is rare for lizardfolk to develop innate magical abilities. This could be due to their natural resistance to magical effects and influences.



CHAMELEON LIZARDFOLK

The chameleon lizardfolk are the most elusive of their kind, as they dwell high in the trees of deep forests, hidden by the camouflage of their scales and their homes. They actively avoid contact with outsiders, and are more apt to hide than confront travelers.

Due to the lack of encouraging contact with these tribes, I commissioned scrying spell scrolls from the Summer's Reach mage guild to view the chameleon lizardfolk on my own. With my sight hovering above the trees, I observed that their homes are constructed from slabs of bark, vines, and leaf mixtures. Thicker branches provide space for larger platforms where they hold community events and ceremonies, but generally their rough homes are spread widely throughout the forest canopies.

The most athletic of their kind, they appear to have feet, hands, and a long tail ideal for gripping onto the bark and branches of trees. The chameleon lizardfolk body is surprisingly muscular, perhaps to accommodate the strength needed to maneuver expertly through the trees. Their bodies are built for deliberate rather than quick movement, ideal for disappearing from sight among the brush and bark when the need arises. I also observed that their skin — covered in small, rough bumps rather than scales — could take on the subtle coloring of the flora in which they hid, further supporting the illusion of sudden disappearance.

I count my blessings that the chameleon lizardfolk are more apt to hide than fight, as their skill with their roughly hewn longbows could easily challenge that of a wood elf ranger. By using their camouflage and steady movement to avoid detection, I watched them approach prey as large as bloody boars and pierce their hearts with a single thick arrow. To imagine that skill turned on an unaware adventurer is enough to make this scholar shudder.

Rumors & Legends

- In my studies, I stumbled upon a brief article by Terrun Wyldson speculating that the lizardfolk were once ostracized from the wetland lizardfolk who made their way from their swamplands into the drier woods.
- There are many wives' tales in the towns on the outskirts of chameleon lizardfolk woods that warn children away from the forest at night, for fear they may be "snatched" by the tree-dwellers. More benign rumors suggest the lizardfolk may rescue lost travelers in the woods, though what the fate awaits these travelers is anyone's speculation.



AXOLOTELEAN LIZARDFOLK

Compared to their aloof brethren, the axolotlean lizardfolk are hospitable enough to be almost unnerving. I sought out a clan that, like most of their kind, makes their home on the shoreline of a large freshwater lake. The axolotlean tribes practice caution with visitors, and I was accompanied at all times by a young warrior named Vresslyn, who watched me with such sharp black eyes that I had no doubt she could kill me without qualm.

Though much of their village is constructed in the sandy brushland just offshore, the tribe leader — a female called Ahlss ess Blansch — assured me much of their community lies deep in the lakebed, as they are capable of breathing both above and underwater. They have long, smooth, darkly-colored bodies flecked with a

mosaic of coppers and golds, and long frilled gills matching their complementary colors. ess Blansch was among a minority who are golden albino in coloring, and I noted that these few folk were adorned with necklaces of shell and fang, implying some importance, possibly religious, within the clan.

Axolotlean lizardfolk have little need for common coin, so their wares are obtained exclusively through trade; during my stay, I saw iron and glassware, books, rare magic components, and finely-crafted weapons, far unlike any possessed by other lizardfolk clans. The axolotlean tribes offer their exceptional healing items in exchange, and I was allowed to browse their enchanted river rocks and various healing potions for everything from a sore throat to limb regeneration.

Rumors abound of the incredible healing power the axolotlean lizardfolk harness, but I would never have imagined holding a vial of their most powerful elixir in my hands and realizing such legends were true. Ahlss ess Blansch emphasized that their potions are not traded lightly, and travelers can pay a high price for such powerful healing magics.

Rumors & Legends

- Though the surface of the axolotlean lizardfolk community is welcoming for the respectful visitor, the deeper details of their way of life and beliefs are held tightly shut. I inquired further about the community beneath the lake, but was told only that it is a holy site for meditation and magic. As each lizardfolk clan I have studied often adorn their holy sites with monoliths, I suspect there are similarly impressive structures in what might be called the “soul” of their community.



KOMODO LIZARDFOLK

In the desert regions of the world roam the komodo lizardfolk, the most aloof of their kind. Most speculation concerning the komodo lizardfolk comes from distant observation and inspection of their migration paths. Known to drive people away on sight, they prefer to avoid conflict when possible and no known treaties with their kind exist.

In battle, the komodo lizardfolk use arrows and spears, which are coated in the creature's own venom, stored internally and secreted through their fangs. Their distrust of strangers largely stems from hunters who seek to harvest this venom, which can be sold to unsavory folk for a pretty gold bit or used for one's own dubious purpose. Such trade is, of course, banned in most nations, but there is no accounting for the dark underbelly of the world.

When left alone, the komodo lizardfolk make their peaceful living mostly through the raising of herds of peccaries, goats, camels, and horses specially bred to endure the unforgiving desert clime. They lead their animals across the desert during the cooler rainy season, resting at oases tucked among the dunes and hidden underground caverns.

I discovered one of their caves during my own trek along a section of their desert path. Hieroglyphic art decorated the cave walls, further down than even I dared to venture. Though I am illiterate in lizardfolk glyphs, my research in similarly intelligent creatures leads me to conclude that they are creatures with a vast mythology and history.

As the rainy season departs and the weather turns hot and dry, the komodo lizardfolk retreat to greener cultivated land. The flora thrives on these floodplains, making them ideal land during the dry season for the tribes to raise their herds, always preparing for their nomadic trek across the desert.



Rumors & Legends

- Between the desert oases and caverns, the komodo lizardfolk mark their path with fantastic megaliths, their stones carved with symbols and images. From what I could conjecture from the glyphs carved into the rock slabs, I believe the tribes bury their most revered clans-folk — spiritual leaders, patriarchs and matriarchs, celebrated warriors, and the like — in these great standing stones whose complex carvings are beyond my limited understanding of their culture.
- From distant observation and study of their glyphs, I have concluded that the komodo lizardfolk are a proud group, unafraid to boast their skills through feats of cleverness and strength. It is believed that, once in the heart of the desert, they hold a days-long festival in which members of the clan show off their skills in battle, hunting, and animal handling. Such festivals are often rites of passage, but some adventurers speculate an outsider who proves their skill here might also begin to earn the komodo lizardfolks' trust.

MANTICORE

Some say they are the result of horrible magical and alchemical experiments that escaped the laboratory to hunt. Some say all of the evil, violent thoughts in the world coalesced one day to form them. Whatever the origin, the manticore is a monstrous beast. It has the body of a large cat and the wings of a bat, with spines down its back which ends in the tail of a scorpion. Its face is monstrous yet also vaguely human, and rests in a contorted expression of rage.

Manticores seem to have a deep-seated hatred of humans and humanoids. They seek the taste of human flesh, and seem to enjoy the suffering of their victims. One should be very wary when seeking to slay a manticore, for even victory may be pyrrhic when you walk away with their poison in your veins.

Biology

A unique feature of the manticore's physiology are the spear-like spikes at the end of its tail, found directly next to the scorpion stinger. It attacks by firing spikes one at a time, with enough force to pierce through leather and mail. These spikes are poisonous, and sometimes tinged with paralytic or weakening compounds. A manticore's tail may contain between 10-20 spikes at one time, but they regrow remarkably quickly. A healthy specimen's tail spike will be completely replenished over the course of a single day.

Behavior

The manticore typically lives a solitary life in a lair, either a cave or an abandoned dungeon. Manticores do not clear out their lairs, and so they are often dank places smelling of rotting



meat and littered with crushed bones. They are known to accent their lairs by carving pockets in the walls, and filling them with trophies of the creatures and humanoids they have slain. The beasts clearly take care with the display of these items, carving out individual spaces for each weapon, jewel, or skull on display. From the lairs I have studied, manticores seem to display not the most valuable item the person possessed, but the most meaningful to that person. I have found inherited pocket-watches displayed alongside magical weapons of great power. No one knows how the manticore selects these items, or even how it arranges them with its large paws, but it is said that the beasts obsess over their collections, stalking from item to item, and glowering at each in turn.

Diet

Manticores prefer eating humans, although they will hunt other game if none are available. Because of the valuable trophies collected in their lairs, they often have no shortage of adventurers to hunt. When it has taken down its prey, the manticore gorges itself, then sleeps for up to two days, depending on the size of the meal.

If adventurers or other prey do not readily present themselves, manticores will eventually emerge from their lairs to hunt. With giant flaps of their wings, they fly above the treeline to survey the territory, following human-made hunting and trade paths, and descend to attack their prey. If a person is traveling alone, a manticore will happily grab its prey and fly back to its lair. If there is a group of people, a manticore can rarely resist the chance to hunt them all, and will shoot tail spikes from the air, resorting to aerial strikes with its stinger and claws if its spikes are depleted. After gorging, most manticores will not bother to bring any spare meat back to their lairs, preferring to bring back trophies of those they have slain.

Mating

Mating behaviors vary by species, but there are a few common characteristics. All manticores live solitary lives, and adults only interact during the mating process. At one year, the age of maturity, manticores will visit other territories to seek out mates. The male will perform some kind of display, or make some kind of offering to the female, and after the completion of mating, most species will simply depart for their original territories, and have no further contact. Females have sole care of the young, which they raise in their territory until the young reach sexual maturity.

Interactions with Humanoids

Unsurprisingly, civilized cultures despise manticores as much as the beasts despise them. Knowing that manticores keep trophies of those they have killed, people will attack lairs in bands, either for wealth, or to retrieve tokens of their ancestors and friends. It is a prestigious feat to retrieve a fallen friend's token, and though some have succeeded, many more have lost lives and tokens of their own in the attempt.

Although it is not widely known, manticores are quite intelligent, and can speak human language. They use this talent sparingly, speaking only to taunt and insult their foes. They may engage in some nasty verbal sparring before attacking, but will shut down any attempt at negotiation or empathy with a flurry of tail spikes.

LION-HEADED MANTICORE

Lion-headed manticores are those most often described in stories to scare small children: a humanoid face with a lion's body, bat's wings, and dark red scorpion's tail. The species is highly sexually dimorphic. The male has a great lion's mane, with many small spikes in its tail, and plain reddish wings. The female lacks the mane, but has black striping along its wing bones, and possesses fewer, though larger and more poisonous, tail spikes than the male.

The sexes differ in behavior as well as appearance. The males typically inhabit single territories their whole lives, while females roam from place to place, stopping only when they have chosen a mate. After mating, the female shoots a paralyzing spike into the male's neck, then devours him and claims his territory. She lives in the lair only during gestation and rearing of her young, but she clears it of all remnants of its previous owner, rotting carcasses and tokens of conquest alike. During gestation, she does not seek out human prey, preferring safer game such as wild boar.

Once she has given birth, however, she aggressively seeks out human flesh for herself and her cubs, giving them discarded armor, weapons, and items to play with. Few have dared to perform any studies of wild manticore matrons and their cubs, so little is known about this stage in the beast's development. Naturalists speculate that the matron must teach them to speak the common language, although it is possible that they possess this talent innately, through some unknown magic.

Rumors & Legends

- The vain and eccentric Duke of Mansfield keeps a manticore at his estate. The beast is a horrible sight, shackled with gold-plated chains and draped in jewels and bangles. Those who cannot pay the Duke's heavy taxes are fed to his pet. His taxes continue to increase to fund his exorbitant lifestyle, and the manticore has become fat on his subjects.
- One breeder claims to have raised a manticore that is of no danger to humans. The beast does seem to prefer mutton and cattle to the taste of its owner. Though I suspect powerful magic is being used to keep the beast subdued.



DESERT MANTICORE

The desert manticore may appear small, and even cute, but do not be fooled by its size. This species is vicious and extremely dangerous, all the more so because it can so easily hide from view. The desert manticore lives in sandy desert burrows, and will often kill foxes to take over their homes. Its large ears and delicate albino wings allow it to wick away the oppressive heat of the desert sun, while its fur allows it to tolerate cold desert nights. The spikes in its tail contain a highly concentrated poison, and a single spike is enough to kill the average person within an hour.

Weighing in at 20 pounds (9 kilograms), desert manticores are unable to gorge themselves on entire adventuring parties like the larger species, but they still prefer to eat human flesh. When they make a kill, they will eat to satiation, then bury the rest under the sand, and consume the carcasses over the course of days. Some manticore burrows have been found with large pits already dug in the earth, likely in preparation for burying leftover kills. Because relatively few cultures travel the desert, desert manticores frequently hunt for other game. Its other prey are usually its size or smaller, such as rats, snakes, and desert foxes. It hunts by night, swooping down on prey and stunning them with sharp strikes of their claws.

Rumors & Legends

- The desert manticore's large ears allow it to pick up any sound of travelers. Experienced travelers recommend bringing a supply of rats for any travel through the desert. By keeping quiet and releasing an occasional rat as a distraction, travelers may hope to avoid the manticore's notice.
- I have heard several tales of a manticore that lives in the very middle of a desert. The details vary, but all agree that the manticore has lived for over two hundred years and that it spends its days sitting atop a pile of bleached bones and weapons of the many adventurers who have tried and failed to slay it. Though small, it is lightning fast and will shoot its deadly spikes into adventurers even before they realize they are approaching its territory. Anywho successfully slays it would be rewarded with as many riches as they can carry home.
- Some say that the desert manticore's blue tail contains a poison that, brewed with a unicorn's tear, may make a body invulnerable to any attacks for a full day. Some alchemists would pay handsomely for even a small vial.



FEATHERED MANTICORE

Some have speculated that the feathered manticore is related to the griffin, with its feathered wings and mammalian tail. I once even met a sage who suggested that the feathered manticore was created by a powerful lich, in a twisted mockery of the majestic griffin. I have found no concrete evidence to back up these claims, and suspect that it is more closely related to other manticore species. For instance, all griffins have a cat-like tail, and though the feathered manticore has the body of a cheetah, its tail is rat-like and coated in poison. This species has been seen to apply this coating itself, chewing on toxic barks and herbs, then licking the mixture onto its tail fur, which wicks up the poison.

Like other manticores, it seeks out human prey, but hunts mostly from the air. Its broad, feathered wings are well-suited to low-air gliding, and it is capable of keeping altitude by beating its wings only once every 10 seconds or so. The feathered manticore has a distinctive flight pattern, which involves rocking back and forth as it rides air currents. When it finds humanoids to attack, it circles around them, spitting taunting words in an attempt to lure them into wasting their resources while it is out of reach. When it tires of this game, it flies to the ground, sprinting toward the weakest in the group and tackling them. If it is successful, it carries off its prey, deterring any others from following by flicking poison at them.



Rumors & Legends

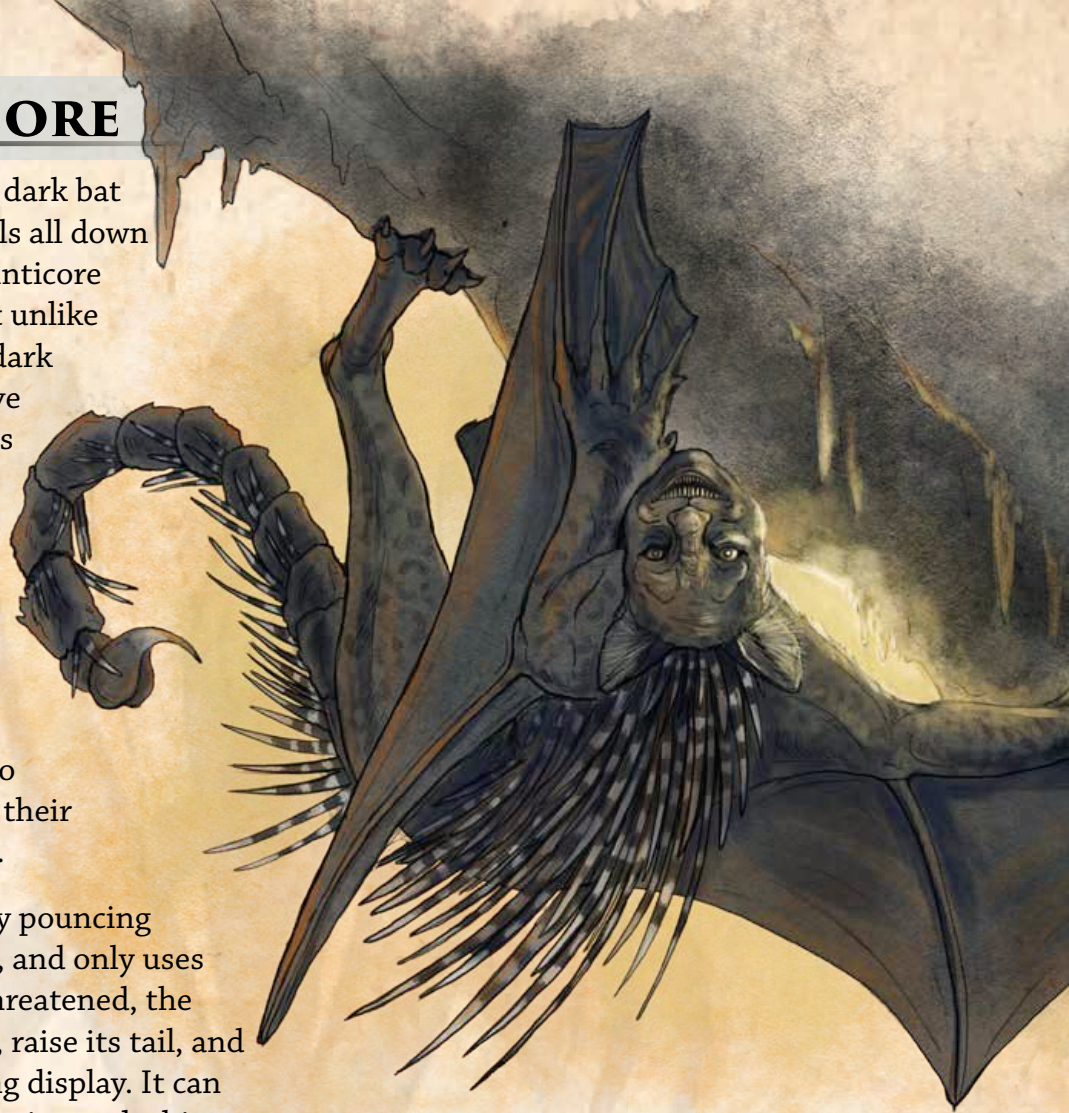
- I once happened upon an apothecary that sold feathered manticore spit for a steep price. When I inquired further, the wizened shopkeeper informed me that the manticore's saliva contains a substance that dissolves anything it eats, and that this substance works remarkably well to prepare food for those who are short a few teeth, and also as an all-purpose cleaning solution. I cannot confirm the veracity of this claim, but the solution certainly smelled unpleasant enough to come from a manticore.
- In studying the connection between griffins and feathered manticores, I have shown friendly griffins etchings of the manticore species. Without fail, the griffin has shrieked and destroyed my etching. Perhaps griffins are simply offended by the sight of the evil beast, but perhaps the connection runs deeper. In any case, I suspect that a griffin would make a staunch ally when fighting one of these beasts.

DARK MANTICORE

With the body of a panther, dark bat wings, and the porcupine quills all down its spine and tail, the dark manticore appears deadly and fierce. But unlike other manticore species, the dark manticore is neither aggressive nor outwardly evil. Individuals typically live alone in cave complexes, feeding on fish, bats, and other cave-dwelling animals. They behave more like bats than cats, hanging upside down to sleep, and emitting high-pitched shrieks as they fly, which is believed to allow them to somehow “see” their surroundings in the darkness.

The dark manticore hunts by pouncing or swooping down on its prey, and only uses its quills for self-defense. If threatened, the manticore will open its wings, raise its tail, and hunch its back in a threatening display. It can fire quills from its tail, but may instead whip its tail at its foe, leaving several spikes behind. Unlike other manticores, its quills and stinger are not poisonous, although they are still sharp and painful. I suspect that the beast’s relatively unvaried and benign diet prevents it from producing poisons found in other manticores.

Most dark manticores have a brooding temperament, and can even be heard singing dirges to themselves as they hang from the ceiling. No two beasts have been heard singing the same melody, and it is believed that each manticore composes a unique dirge over its lifetime. A male dark manticore’s mating display consists of hanging from the ceiling, spreading its wings, and singing its dirge, punctuated with displays of its quilled tail. If the female is interested, she responds with her own song, and they interweave the tunes as they mate.



Rumors & Legends

- Ardyn the Bard famously earned the trust of a dark manticore by bringing it fish and playing it sad songs from his homeland. He learned the manticore’s own songs, and can imitate its low melodic snarls with terrifying accuracy. The songs cause all who listen to collapse into tears, and Ardyn himself must play with earmuffs on, lest he break down in the middle of his own performance.
- Dark manticore quills are apparently sturdy enough to be used after being fired. Once, I spoke with a rogue who had outfitted a crossbow to fire the quills. They are difficult to acquire, so they would not do as standard ammunition, she explained. But because the quills are hollow, she was able to fill them with potions and stopper them with wax. By piercing a hole in the tip of the quill, she could administer a large dose of any tincture she wished, from simple poisons to truth serums. When I asked her how she planned to use them, she only chuckled.

MYCONID

An entry by Bertram le Forge, beastmaster Botanist

There has never been a more important time to speak about myconid preservation than today. As more species become aware of one another, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand each other. This can be doubly said for the mighty species of myconids who are not animal life, but plant life.

What makes conservation, or better put, preservation, so difficult with the myconids is the common misconception that because one can sprout from the ground centuries old they are ancient and wise. While these two descriptors may be totally true in reference to their own ways and their own kind, newly sprouted myconids are naive to the ways of our world. We should set realistic expectations for these alien creatures and perhaps learn better how to communicate with them, rather than expecting them to adapt to us.

Biology

Myconid biology echoes that of their non-sentient fungal relative: the mushroom. However, myconids are sentient, self-aware, and from what we can understand, highly intelligent. Myconid are genderless creatures and, while above ground they do have heads, arms, and legs, that is where their humanistic features end. Some myconids have what dwarves have dubbed 'beards' or humans call 'hair', but neither of these are outward markers of gender. Instead, the hair that grows on the creatures is a signal of age; older myconids often have soft fungal fur which hangs from their heads like hair.

Likewise, myconid do not have names or pronouns. Above ground the creatures accept names from their animal traveling companions, but need no name among themselves. Because myconids spend much of their life connected

with the others of their kind, they are able to sense who another myconid is when they meet them and when they speak about another of their kind. Each of them is unique in how they act and who they are, and therefore no names are needed.

These fungal creatures do not feel pain and are able to grow back limbs by resting and nourishing themselves. Many myconids are also able to emit different auras, which can help, harm, or hinder others around them.

Behavior

It is difficult to speak about myconid behavior without anthropomorphizing their actions, which would be incorrect as their culture is totally alien compared to the more populous species like dwarves, humans, elves, etc. However, it is also difficult to understand a subject if one is unable to relate to them. Therefore, I humbly request you take the below description with a rather large grain of salt.

Below ground myconid do not live as a singular entity, but one small part of a large colony of myconid. Their thoughts, feelings, and emotions are shared via fibrous tendrils, which link every member of the colony with one another. While a myconid possesses their own identity, within the earth, their 'self' is spread over thousands of others of their kind.

Above ground, many people like to ascribe the words 'altruistic' to myconid behavior, which, from my personal human perspective, may indeed seem so. However, I must also temper my observations and those of my peers with the scientific method. Suffice to say, myconid rarely act selfishly and always act in the way they view is best for their community. If you find a myconid hoarding treasure, they

are most likely hoarding it to get a party member out of jail rather than because they like how pretty it is.

Diet

Myconid need very little to survive and do not 'eat' as animals do. What myconids need to survive is water and once in a while to consume non-living organic matter. The species prefers to consume vegetation, but will make do with an animal carcass if necessary.

Mating

Myconid only leave their underground colonies and come to the surface when they are ready to find a mate. This need to procreate isn't based on the age of the myconid, but a more abstract need to find a mate, much like what some humans experience when wanting to find a partner. Above ground, the myconid wanders the earth until they find their perfect partner (or partners). This could take only a year, or it could take centuries.

When a myconid finds their mate or mates, they bond (in a private ritual not totally understood by anyone out of their kind), and then die. Their genetic material falls to the ground and fertilizes it for their offspring, which grow from their decomposing bodies.

Interactions with Humanoids

Myconid often warn one another to stay away from humanoids. To them, we are strange, selfish creatures who take years to understand. Sadly, myconid are also very curious creatures and this means that more often than not, many of their kind encounter us. When they do, they often meet swift ends at the point of

an adventurer's sword who does not realize the creature reaching for him is only trying to understand him. The lucky few myconids who survive these first encounters are able to learn the common tongue and other more complex languages, so these misunderstandings do not happen too often to them.



AMANITA MUSCARIA MYCONID

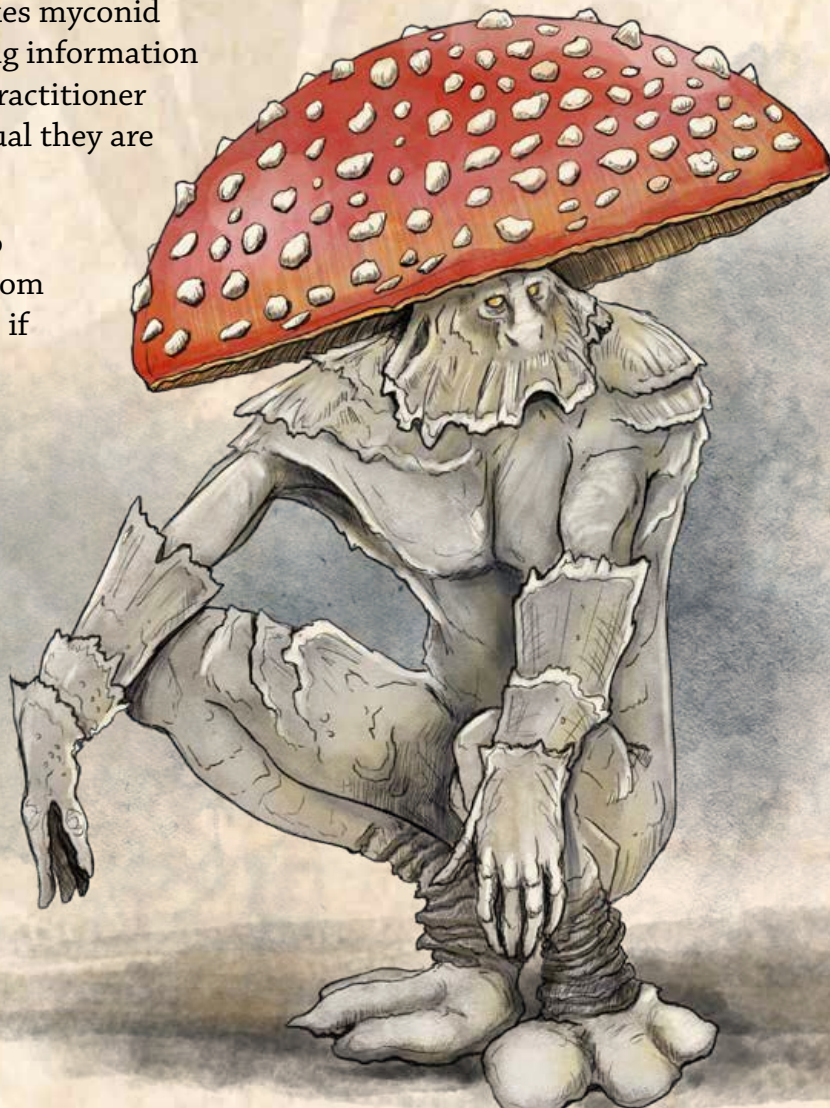
The amanita muscaria myconid is identified by the red cap atop their head, which is dotted with with flecks of fungus. The bright red color serves as a warning to any creature who would try to eat the myconid's cap, as they are extremely poisonous if ingested. They have long, white, willowy bodies and often pop from the ground without any limbs, growing them as they start to explore the world.

Capable of conveying information and meaning, when two myconids meet they reach out to one another with tough, intertwining filaments and instantly begin to know and understand each other. This is known by many as 'the bond'. Myconids may also extend the bond to humanoids, but many creatures cannot handle the instant influx of information the myconid transfers to them. It takes myconid many years to perfect transferring information to humanoids and an unskilled practitioner could end up putting the individual they are trying to connect with in a coma.

There may also be a person who wishes to hide a part of herself from the myconid, which isn't possible if she bonds with them. A myconid would never bond with someone who didn't wish it, but they are often perplexed by those who refuse the bond. To bond is to understand one another totally, who and what they are and give utter context. There is no better way to understand someone.

Rumors & Legends

- Some say the tiniest piece of an amanita muscaria myconid's cap can cause psychic hallucinations in a person. Consuming the cap allows a person to see into other people's minds so much so that it appears as if their psyche plays out before the person.
- Many say myconid colonies are all interconnected, stretching from one end of the world to another. Therefore, if someone wrongs a colony of myconids it is impossible to escape their justice, because as soon as the crime is committed it is felt by every other colony all over the globe.
- Goblins have a strong taste for brewing with the amanita muscaria myconid's cap. This has led to the two cultures being bitter enemies, as goblins aren't exactly ones to ask nicely.



MOSSY MYCONID

Unlike many myconids who will eventually pop out of the ground to find a mate, mossy myconids are very happy to spend their years below ground without ever feeling the need to procreate. I once spoke to a mossy myconid who explained to me that mossy myconid colonies are extremely tightly knit, both literally and figuratively. The bond they have with one another makes it extremely difficult for them to leave home.

When mossy myconids do leave home, they struggle with an intense feeling of loneliness as they wander the world. These feelings can become so overwhelming they stop their search for a mate, sinking into the ground to slumber. Far from the colony, and with no mate in sight, these creatures sleep for the rest of their life alone in the dark.

Naturally, the prospect of falling into a slumber is quite terrifying to them, and so many decide not to leave home. The mossy myconid who do decide to travel away from the colony often quickly meet up with a surrogate family they can travel with; sometimes with an adventuring party or traveling merchants. One would expect mossy myconids to be clingy or awkward, because of their fear of being alone, but that could not be farther from the truth. In fact above ground they act the most 'human' of all myconids. Many are charismatic creatures who can speak hundreds of languages, and always have a clever story when times get rough.



Rumors & Legends

- Treants supposedly have the ability to find slumbering mossy myconids. By carrying the myconids on their bark for a time, the mossy myconid is able to awaken and find their way back to their colony.
- Mossy myconids are known to craft small trinkets from their flesh to gift to those they would consider trustworthy and a friend. Despite the macabre-sounding nature of the gift, these are extremely useful for scrying the myconid and making sure they have not succumbed to the slumber. Bearers of these trinkets are also able to find favor easily within druidic circles and mossy myconid communities.

BEARDED TOOTH MYCONID

Bearded tooth myconid often pop out of the ground in small clusters, rather than traveling the world alone. Protecting others of their kind, rather than just themselves, makes them more hostile than other myconids. Bearded tooth myconids are wary of others who are not members of their cluster or former colony.

Rather than being bipedal like most myconids, bearded tooth myconids walk on all fours. They have a singular tentacle-like vine growing from their back that they use for joining with a mate. The vine is also used when the myconid wishes to convey complex emotions to another of its kind that cannot be expressed through words.

Their mistrustful nature means they stay far away from other species when they can, and if other species get too close they use their aura of sickening to keep them at bay. The aura they exude makes most who enter it violently ill and allows the bearded tooth myconids the

chance to run away. If you have an extremely high constitution — and manage to hold in your dinner long enough, — the bearded tooth myconid cluster may speak to you, but more often than not they will attack.

Rumors & Legends

- Most botanist beastmasters such as myself assume that bearded tooth myconids in fact mate with the members of their cluster rather than trying to find a mate elsewhere. They pop from the ground, because they are curious to experience all the beautiful flora the world has to offer; and when they are sated, they die in one another's arms to create new life.
- In less reputable circles there is a rumor that bearded tooth myconids are extremely delicious. So much so that entire clusters are being trapped and murdered for their delicious flesh. Perish the thought.



MORRELL MYCONID

Morrell myconids grow larger than the others of their species. Growing to roughly 6.5 feet (2 meters) in height, these gentle creatures exude an aura of peace wherever they go. If they choose to learn to speak, many morrell act as mediators between aggrieved parties, because of their natural ability to calm moods. Even the most vicious barbarians note feeling calm in a morrell's aura, and that is rare indeed.

Because of these friendly creatures' nature, they are often followed by animal companions. These animal companions make their home in the honeycomb structure of their caps. The animal companion who spends an extended time with the morrell slowly begins to bond with the myconid. After only a short amount of time, the myconid is able to telepathically speak to the animal and vice-versa.

While bonding with small animals is a handy way of having a horde of messengers and spies, it also comes at a great cost to the morrell. Everything that the myconid's animal companions feel, the myconid does too. This can be shockingly difficult for the morrell at times when their animal companion is in pain or feels sadness.

Rumors & Legends

- Morrell myconids are said to be able to restore function to any damaged or lost part of the body, but this is typically accomplished through hybridization, where they fuse other living tissue (animal, plant, or fungal) with the affected area, often with unusual side effects.
- While most morrell myconids choose small animal traveling companions, one by the name of Septentrionalis bonded with a baby dragon it found abandoned deep within the earth. Septentrionalis is known as the myconid with a wreath of golden honeycomb fungus atop his head.



OTYUGH

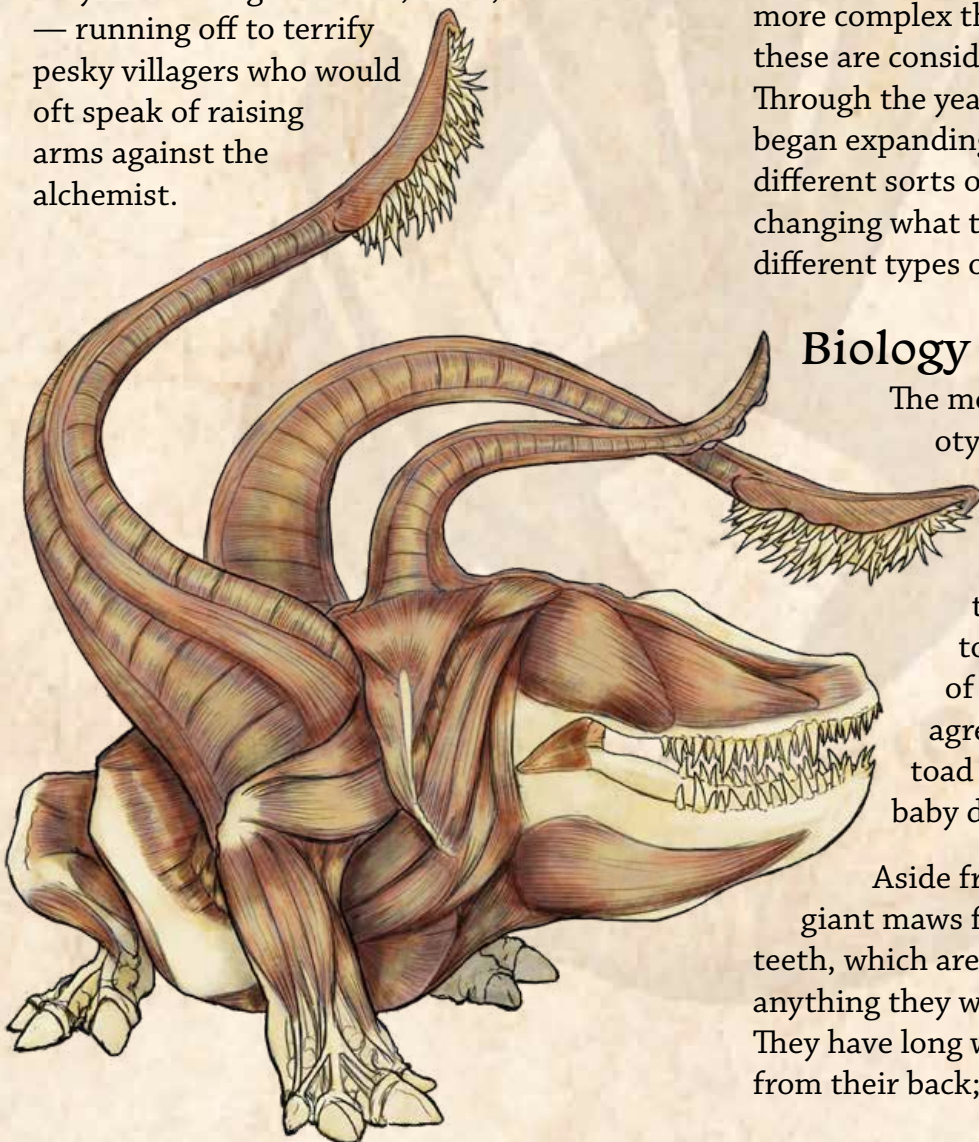
Analysed by the esteemed gnollish beastkeeper, Nubkub.

Putrid mounds of walking refuse is often the first thought a person has when thinking of the noble otyugh. What most fail to see in these olfactory-sense-assaulting monsters is that they are not monsters at all, but creatures perfectly designed to live as one in their natural environment: garbage.

A great many creatures in the realms were created by wizards, but the otyugh species is one of the only ones 'enhanced' by an alchemist. Many years ago, an alchemist whose name was lost to time needed something to help clean up her experiments. If left alone, they tended to grow claws, teeth, and feet — running off to terrify pesky villagers who would oft speak of raising arms against the alchemist.

The alchemist discovered the otyugh and set about collecting a few to live in her manse. With her ability to smell being burned away by chemicals many years past, she had no problem with the putrid scent of the otyughs. Her only problem with the beasts was they were unable to discern the difference between her active experiments and her trash. While this may say more about the alchemist's experiments and less about the species, she decided to change what she believed was inherent stupidity in the otyugh.

Through many trials and alchemical formulas she bred a type of otyugh which was capable of more complex thought, even speech, and today these are considered the 'common' otyugh. Through the years these complex creatures began expanding their appetites, eating different sorts of refuse and fundamentally changing what they were, resulting in the many different types of otyugh known today.



Biology

The most startling thing about an otyugh is the way it smells. An adult otyugh's scent is so overwhelming it fills an entire well-insulated house with all the doors closed. It is difficult to adequately describe the scent of an otyugh, but beastmasters agree it is something akin to dead toad and sick with the after-notes of baby diapers and musk.

Aside from their scent, otyughs have giant maws filled with diamond-sharp teeth, which are perfectly suited for gnawing anything they wish to eat into a fine paste. They have long winding tentacles protruding from their back; two tentacles contain any

number of eyes the otyugh develops while growing up, and the others are covered in gentle pads to carefully feel what the creature is about to eat to make sure it doesn't digest anything living.

Behavior

Otyughs are instinctively non-violent scavengers. They root out disgusting refuse and consume it; happily sharing with any other otyugh in the vicinity. The few humans who can stomach close proximity to the creatures liken their general temperament to a dog's: happy, loyal, playful.

When two otyughs meet they turn their eye tentacles away from one another as a show of respect and trust. Extending their feeler tentacles out, they embrace one another and, as long as no ill intent is sensed, the two become fast friends. If you want get to know these creatures, close your eyes, hold out your hands, and wait for the slimiest, most putrid, genuine hug you are likely to experience in your life.

A surprising facet of otyugh behavior is their ability to speak the common tongue. While the creatures do not speak to each other in such a manner, they will often call out in the common tongue to humanoids if they are scared, worried, or even happy. Humanoids who have spoken to an otyugh surmise their intelligence to be roughly equal to a human child of six years old.

Diet

Otyugh can sustain themselves on almost anything, but they love anything others would traditionally think of as disgusting: trash, mold, and feces. They don't eat living matter and are able to eat magical refuse without a problem, making them a popular sewer pet for many wizards. Strangely, otyugh have a sixth sense about trash and, at times, rather than indiscriminately eating what is set in front

of them they will choose something different or more difficult to consume. If you see this happen make sure to watch closely! After consuming this bit of 'trash' the otyugh will transform in some way, grow a new eye, sprout a new feeler, or even learn a new language.

Mating

Otyugh reach sexual maturity around roughly two years of age. They are born with the ability to both lay and fertilize an egg, but have no gender and each parent picks a role when they are ready to have a child. Eggs are laid in wet, warm, places and don't need much care aside from protection from scavengers, which rarely happens.

The creatures aren't monogamous and after a few months of the scrap (baby) being born, parents leave one another and their child. Scraps become self-sufficient a few weeks after birth, but packs of otyugh are known to be protective over scraps as old as one year.

Interactions with Humanoids

Otyugh generally keep a wary distance from humanoids when they can. They are peaceful creatures and prefer not to engage with humanoid species who often have violent tendencies. That said, if an otyugh is approached carefully by a person (or small group of people) it will likely be more curious than anything else. If a humanoid is lucky, an otyugh might even speak with them, asking where they are from and the types of treasure (garbage) they have seen.

If you wish to keep an otyugh as a companion, you will have to get around its smell. It is possible to minimize the creature's scent by bathing it three times a day and keeping it dry, but this causes the creature a small amount of discomfort. To minimize its discomfort, make sure to rub the otyugh with salves to keep its skin moist and provide it with lots of snacks to keep it happy.

UNDERCITY OTYUGH

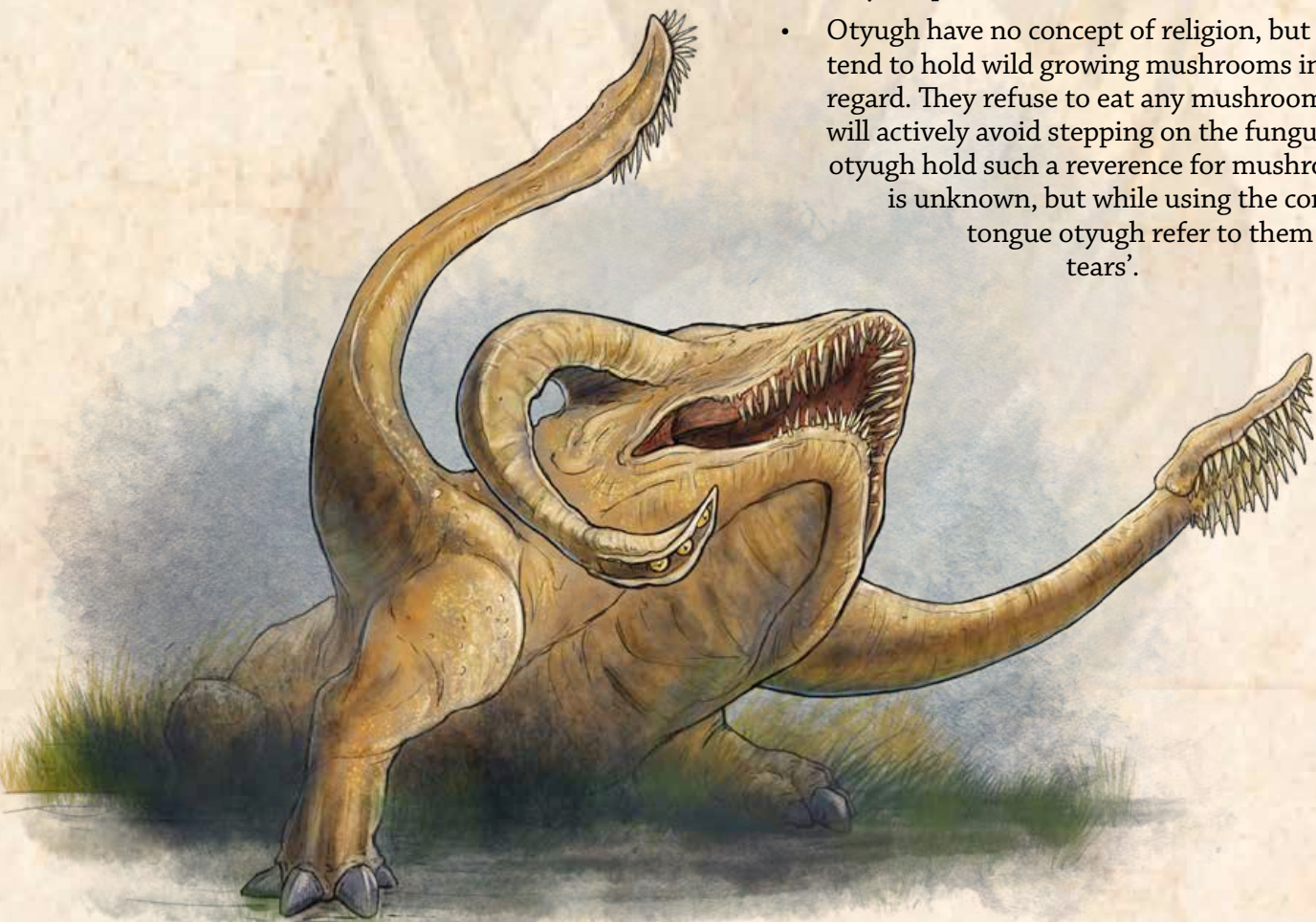
The common undercity otyugh lives in dark swampy places where it can find an abundance of what it loves: trash! Cities with large enough sewer systems are known to employ packs of otyugh to keep their sewers clean. Otyugh desire nothing but good company and good food, so they are an attractive creature for many city planners.

When not eating or sleeping, otyugh love to play with others of their kind. Packs of otyugh will often participate in a hide-and-seek type game. Each otyugh takes a piece of trash and hides it somewhere in the sewers (for example) where they live. It is then up to the other otyugh to run about and find as many pieces of their compatriots' garbage as possible. The winner with the most pieces of hidden trash is allowed to eat everything that was hidden — though otyugh often share with their pack members who lost.

Other species would find the otyugh's game impossible to play, as finding one specific piece of trash in an entire mountain of trash gives new meaning to the saying 'finding a needle in a haystack'. However, this game is a testament to how keen the common otyugh's senses and memory is. Otyugh are sticklers for details, are able to see in low light, and have a sense of smell which far surpasses many species in the planes.

Rumors & Legends

- Some criminal organizations employ otyugh for body disposal and being intelligent enough to know what they are being ordered to do: this job drives the otyugh mad. The sad creatures are unable to marry the idea of being loyal to their compatriots, while also participating in unsavory activities. Some become so twisted they are unable to discern living from dead and go on a bloody rampage through cities and villages until they are put down.
- Otyugh have no concept of religion, but they tend to hold wild growing mushrooms in high regard. They refuse to eat any mushrooms and will actively avoid stepping on the fungus. Why otyugh hold such a reverence for mushrooms is unknown, but while using the common tongue otyugh refer to them as 'god's tears'.



SLUDGE SWIMMERS

Sludge swimmers are otyugh who live in swampy areas. They have a subtler scent than their 'common' brethren, smelling of dirt and rotting leaves rather than dead flesh. Sludge swimmers have giant mouths they use to suck in swamp water, filter out any impurities to feed upon, and exhale clean water back into the swamp. They spend hours a day filtering water in this way to gain enough nutrients to survive, often consuming food equal to their own body weight in one sitting.

It takes so much energy to find food that sludge swimmers are slow, plodding creatures. They never go anywhere in a hurry, and if they speak, it is in a drawn, tired tone. Sludge swimmers are still otyugh though, so they do love a good game. However, their exercise is mental rather than physical. Sludge swimmers love to tell riddles and some of the greatest riddles told today come directly from the greasy lips of a sludge swimmer.

Rumors & Legends

- Many years ago a sludge swimmer rescued a genie's bottle from its filter, its keen sense of taste knowing the difference between dead plant matter and a precious bottle. To thank the sludge swimmer, the genie gave the creature one wish and the otyugh wished to become the largest and most impressive of its kind. When the genie immediately left, the otyugh assumed it had been duped, but the next day it discovered it was a little bit larger, and the day after that, and so on. The only way to find this otyugh is to look for a perfectly clear pool of water in the middle of a dark, muddy swamp. That is where the otyugh stays, happily filtering the swamp around it.
- To strike down a sludge swimmer will quickly bring the ire of any intelligent creatures that live nearby, as they loathe to lose their source of pure water (and good riddles)!



BENTHIC OTYUGH

Benthic otyugh smell of rotting fish and dead kelp. They are able to hold their breath for over half-an-hour under water and prefer to lazily float on the surface of lakes, rivers, and even oceans. These amazing creatures transition easily from fresh to salt water and covet any stagnant pools of water they can find to submerge themselves in. To protect the delicate skin on their backs from sunlight they collect kelp, driftwood, and other natural waste to pile high on their backs. This provides the creatures with much-needed protection and also handy snacks throughout the day.

Underwater, benthic otyugh are graceful swimmers. When swimming, their long tentacles trail behind them in the water and on the ocean's floor help to drag the creature's body along as it explores. Their heady scent carries many miles underwater and keeps natural predators away as no one wants to eat what they think is a rotten meal.

Rumors & Legends

- Aquatic otyugh are very tidy creatures and tend to think very differently about what is treasure and what isn't. To them, anything rotting and dead is treasure, while gold, silver, and the like is terrible trash polluting their home. To this effect, aquatic otyugh horde any 'traditional' treasure they find in large underground caverns to keep the ocean tidy. Anyone who was to find one of their dumping grounds would be wealthy beyond their wildest dreams.
- Benthic otyugh have been known to attack small vessels, overturning wooden boats to spill the passengers and goods into the water, and even biting straight through rafts and hide-covered canoes.
- Usually solitary, groups of benthic otyugh may be found around a large carcass, such as that of a whale or leviathan, where they will also prey on others who come to scavenge the remains.



VINE TRAPPER

Unlike other otyugh, vine trappers are incapable of speech and are extremely ferocious. Vine trappers will eat refuse if they must, but they'd much rather eat fresh food. When the trapper is feeling a bit peckish, it finds a small clearing in the jungle (its natural habitat) and it lays there perfectly still with its mouth wide open. The putrid scent the vine trapper releases of rotting corpses and other dead things draws scavengers towards the otyugh and when the curious creature is right within its maw, the trapper springs its jaws closed, slowly munching its victim down to a sludgy paste before swallowing it whole.

Many assume, based on the limited intelligence these creatures possess, that they are the origin species for all others of their kind. The vine trapper may indeed be the 'proto' otyugh. If it is, then based on the often poor decisions the trapper tends to make, the species was truly lucky to have an alchemist tinkering with it. Despite their danger, vine trappers are easy to fool and can often be tricked into swallowing their prey whole, especially if the prey puts up a fight. If this happen it is often deadly for the vine trapper as their delicate intestinal system cannot handle large chunks of food, hence the creature's large maw of serrated teeth.

Rumors & Legends

- Deep within the jungle, there is one bearded vine trapper; it is the only one that can speak and only after it is fed. When fed, the bearded vine trapper will tell the story of its kind and other otyugh.
- Vine trapper musk is a wanted commodity in many black markets. It must be harvested through an otyugh's feeler tentacles when two trappers are together, as they prepare to mate, as this is when their scent is at its most pungent. One small dose of this musk placed on someone can make them violently ill for days. One drop can also be distilled a thousandfold in alcohol and water to form the base of many expensive perfumes.



OWLBEAR

As told by Hilli Underbrook, Longfeather beastmaster

Owlbears are often perceived as a simple species; violent beasts who originated as a botched experiment by a foolhardy wizard. And while I cannot deny the creatures' violent natures, owlbears are far more complex creatures whose various forms of nonverbal communication allow them to convey a wealth of knowledge between one another. Many incorrectly assume owlbears are birds because

of their avian features. However, like the platypus, owlbears are considered mammals, if not with the caveat that they came into creation by way of magical means.

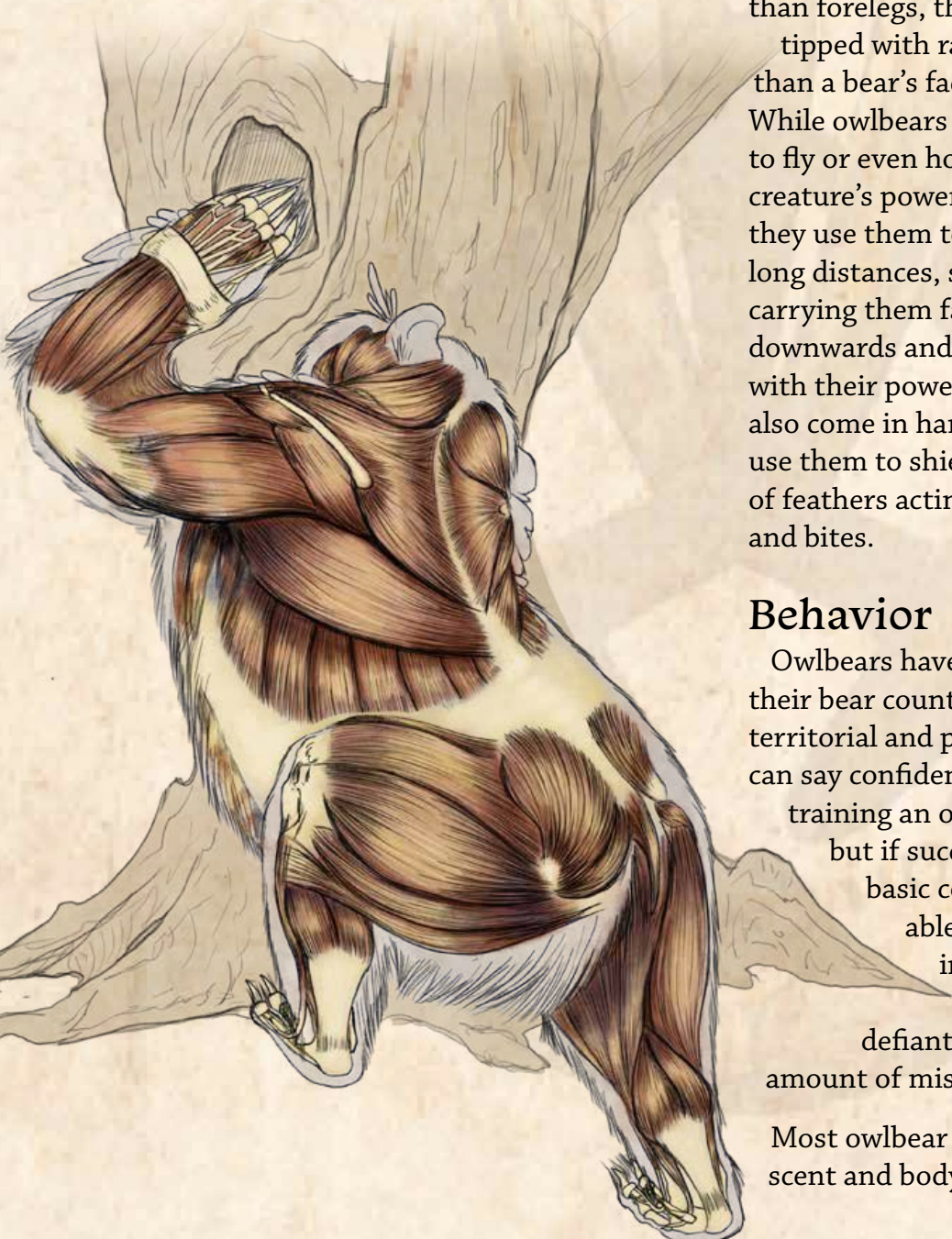
Biology

Giant, hulking creatures of impressive stature, owlbears are roughly 8 - 13 feet (2.5 - 4 meters) tall with the body of a bear. Rather than forelegs, the creatures have giant wings tipped with razor-sharp claws, and rather than a bear's face they possess that of an owl. While owlbears do have wings, they are unable to fly or even hover in the air. However, the creature's powerful wings are a great boon as they use them to help them jump fantastically long distances, summoning a gust of wind to carrying them farther as they flap their wings downwards and propel themselves forward with their powerful legs. The creature's wings also come in handy during a fight, where they use them to shield themselves, the thick layer of feathers acting as a barrier for shallow cuts and bites.

Behavior

Owlbears have an intelligence akin to their bear counterparts. They are ferociously territorial and protective of their own kind. I can say confidently from personal experience, training an owlbear is nearly impossible, but if successful, the creature may learn basic commands. Well, not so much able, but willing, as owlbears are intelligent enough to know when they are intentionally defiant, and seem to take no small amount of mischievous joy in it.

Most owlbear communication occurs through scent and body cues. Owlbears are able to



secrete various scents, rubbing them on the trees of their territory to convey messages to others of their kind. These messages can be anything from general warnings to stay away, to a signal that the owlbear is ready to mate.

One of the most inexplicable owlbear behaviors I've experienced was when one of these great creatures neared death. In the days leading up to his death, he rubbed his scent against all the trees in his domain. Owlbears from far away lands smelled this scent and traveled to the dying owlbear's territory. Rather than the normal hostilities occurring when these creatures meet, they were all passive and nonviolent. On the day of the owlbear's death, the other of his kind, who were drawn to the area, gathered around and watched the owlbear's passing, as if their peaceful gaze carried him into the next life.

Diet

Owlbears will try to eat anything smaller and weaker than them. Luckily, they are also lazy and prefer an easily won meal over a tough fight. If provoked, the creatures will try to eat anything that attacks and fails to kill them. If left to their own devices, owlbears subsist on a diet of rodents, berries, and the occasional deer.

Mating

Owlbears reach sexual maturity around the age of five, and these furry, feathery creatures mate for life. Mating rituals are simple and, in my opinion, rather romantic. Male and female owlbears spread their scent in different areas of unclaimed (owlbear) territory. If an owlbear likes the scent they smell on a tree, they rub against it too. Then, the owlbear searches far and wide to find their mate—the one smelling like them; the one that smells like home. When the two owlbears finally meet they stay together for the rest of their days.

When an owlbear finds their mate they take over a large swath of land, which normally borders other owlbear territories. Truly powerful owlbear couples, known as alphas, often take a few smaller owlbear territories for themselves, allowing weaker couples to live on their land and patrolling the borders for intruders.

Owlbears carry their eggs for varying amounts of time based on weather conditions, and female owlbears are able to lay their eggs exactly when weather conditions are optimum for her offspring's survival. Once the eggs are laid, baby owlbears hatch within a week.

Interactions with Humanoids

Owlbear interactions with humanoids are spotty at best. The creatures are violently territorial and resent poaching of owlbear cubs because of their 'cuddly' appearance has done nothing to improve the creatures' reactions to humans. Likewise, many human lords have taken to hunting owlbears as a form of sport, which has severely hurt the owlbear population.

Because of the hunting of this species, the Longfeather Rangers, a group I am personally affiliated with, have begun conservation efforts of these great creatures. Armed with the ability to speak to animals, we've made great strides towards a deeper understanding of owlbears, discovering what is known as 'dens'. Dens seem to be territory neutral caves which owlbears frequent, leaving bits of prey, wood, and even their own feathers. Each item in the den has a scent, which conveys a story, or feat, the owlbear is particularly proud of.



GREAT HORNED OWLBEAR

The great horned owlbear is the most common owlbear, which most people think of when they hear stories of these remarkable creatures. They have rough brown fur and grey/brown feathers. Normally, great horned owlbears are found in moderate climates with frigid winters. During most winters, owlbears go into hibernation unless the winter is warm enough for them to find ample, easy prey.

It is said when the wizard crossed a bear and an owl many years ago, the great horned owlbear was the result. As the creatures learned to adapt to various environments and diets, they bred



with other creatures to create the other variants known today. Strangely, this theory is supported by documented interactions great horned owlbears had with others of their species. While most owlbears are violent when meeting one another, other owlbear species react submissively to great horned owlbears; either cowed by the great beasts or fleeing at the sight of them.

I once spied the most peculiar scene in relation to this phenomena: If I were to give the creature halfling attributes, which is perhaps a faulty principle to start with, I would say a sun owlbear somehow realized it was in the presence of its progenitor species. Immediately, the sun owlbear bowed its head to the great horned owlbear and lay down. I feared for what I would see next, but rather than attacking, the great horned owlbear let out a ferocious roar over the sun owlbear, stood over it for a moment, and simply walked away. It was much like a queen, albeit a beastly one, greeting a subject.

Rumors & Legends

- One of the greatest great horned owlbear dens was plundered. I and the other Longfeather Beastmasters are looking for someone to find out by who and why. The only problem is, since the den was plundered, the owlbears visiting the area have been notably more violent than normal.
- Elf lore says somewhere deep in the earth is a giant sleeping owlbear so large it once tried to eat the moon so it could sleep in total darkness.
- Many years ago, it is said, an orc village developed magical bridles to control owlbears. In honor of their new companions, the tribe renamed themselves the Wingriders. The fearsome Wingriders fought atop owlbears, carrying out many vicious raids over the plains, and rumors of the Wingriders are still whispered today.

SUN OWLBEAR

Sun owl bears are smaller than their great horned cousins. They have dark black/brown fur and long tongues that extend roughly half a meter out of their mouths. These giant tongues are used by the creatures to eat insects and get to their most favored treat: honey.

Unlike the great horned owl bears, sun owl bears subsist mostly on a diet of insects, fruit, and honey. They are unique in the owl bear family in that they often live solitary lives. However, within large territories, sun owl bears live in groups known as 'hugs'.

Hugs are loyal to one another and viciously protect their territory. Rather than living a monogamous life, sun owl bears mate with various members of their hug and children are raised by their mothers. When the children come of age, they leave their birth hug to find one of their own.

The most important function of a hug is taking down a beehive. This is one of the only times sun owl bears are seen together in large numbers, working to draw away bees, knock down a hive, and enjoy the delectable treat within. After their hunt, bellies full of delicious honey, the sun owl bears pass out, cuddling with one another in a food-fueled slumber, which is how the Longfeathers' decided on the name 'hug' for their grouping.

Rumors & Legends

- In some human circles, sun owl bear flesh is a delicacy—namely that of a sun owl bear which regularly feed off beehives. 'Honey Hunters' are employed to find hugs who have recently feasted upon the sweet honey, as they claim they taste best when they've recently fed.
- A tribe of my kind (halflings), who do not wish to interact with the outside world, have learned to carefully cultivate beehives on the borders of their lands. The beehives draw a ring of hugs around the halflings' homes and keep intruders out. Because the halflings are an accustomed sight to the sun owl bears and leave them alone, they are able to pass through the hug's territory without being mauled.
 - Halfling legend says there is a hug of albino sun owl bears. These are celestial creatures who turn any liquid they drink into mead (honey wine) and I've undertaken many an unfruitful quest to find the fabled 'Honeywine River' to prove the legend true.



PANDAWL

Pandawls, like the sun owlbears, are also smaller than the great horned variety and have black and white fur and feathers. These creatures are found anywhere there is an abundance of bamboo and temperate climates. Like the great horned owlbears, pandawls are monogamous and live with one mate for their entire life in a territory of their choosing.

What makes pandawls unique is the fact that they are completely non-violent. While pandawls do have their own territory, and do not encroach on others of their species, this is more out of practicality and laziness than anything else. However, pandawls also don't seem to mind anything else going through their territory either.

Part of a pandawl's pacifism comes from the copious amount of bamboo they consume on a daily basis. While the creatures need bamboo in order to survive they are particularly fond of the moss found growing around the base of the plant, which elicits the same high in pandawls as pipe-weed does in halfings. Pandawls eat the moss early in the day and ride the high they get from it through their daily activities of eating, sleeping, and cuddling with their mate.

Unlike other owlbears who are able to survive if they lose their mate, pandawls have a startlingly deep connection with their life partner. Perhaps, I would argue, deeper than the connection felt by halfings, elves, or the like. If a pandawl's partner dies, the other follows quickly after. This is even known to happen to pandawl parents who lose a cub too soon. Pandawls are quick to form bonds with anyone who is nice to them, so adventurers are warned not to spend too much time with pandawls lest they wish to adopt a constantly stoned traveling companion (or companions in the case of pandawls who are already mated).

Rumors & Legends

- Deep within a bamboo forest to the north is a monastery dedicated to the pandawl. The monks care for the local pandawl population and revere them as teachers of life.
- I am unsure whether they are related, but there have been sightings of smaller pandawls that sport a reddish fur with a foxy appearance.



POWLBEAR

The powlbear, known to many scholars as the arctic owlbear, gets its colloquial name from arctic locals who believe that by naming something you fear comically, you take away its power. Sadly, this tradition has not made the creatures any less deadly. For many years, powlbears have been the bane of many arctic communities, using remote villages as their personal hunting grounds. Powlbear populations have caused entire villages to become nomadic, out of fear of attack from these ferocious creatures.

Just as large as their great horned cousins, powlbears are five times more vicious. They live in the coldest parts of the world and can go months without feeding. When a powlbear does find prey, they hunt it relentlessly over snow, through sleet, and across ice.

Once they've cornered their prey, it uses its huge claws, startling agility, and terrifying strength to make short work of it. To people unfamiliar with an arctic environment, these creatures are essentially invisible to the naked eye, their snowy white coats perfectly camouflaged in the snow. Even in more rocky areas these cunning creatures manage to camouflage themselves, rubbing into itself a thick coat of mud and dirt in order to gain the upper hand when hunting their prey.

Powlbears use their powerful wings for jumping, but also for swimming. Their wings allow them a superior agility in the water and help them to swim and hunt prey under water. Powlbears are able to hold their breath under water upwards of five minutes through sheer force of will and brutal determination.



Rumors & Legends

- After creating the Orb of Seeing, the Lich Hr'naxss retired to the far north reaches of the world. Using the orb, she could spy on any lost arcane knowledge she wanted and had no need of mortal nuisances to interrupt her study. Her home is said to be guarded by a legion of undead powlbears. She chose members of her army from only the most bloodthirsty of the species, creatures with a need to cause pain and suffering.
- If a person hears the cry of a powlbear's victim, many believe that person will be the next victim of the creature. The only way to stop the powlbear from hunting you is to find their victim and give them a proper burial in the tradition of their kind.
- The people who gave the powlbear its comical name, believe that if a person is able to hunt, kill, and wear the skin of an arctic owlbear, they will be invisible to others of its kind.

PEGASUS

Created by magic and inspiring the imagination of all, the pegasus remains one of the most well-known and beloved of the mythical beasts. Were it not for the magic infused in the beasts, their wings could not truly hold them up. Known mostly as some of the most notorious mounts for heroes, pegasi are elusive and difficult to find in the wild. Their impressive powers of wind control and flight means they can live nearly anywhere, making it hard for humanoids to reach them when they do not want to be found.

Many breeders now live scattered throughout the kingdoms, selling their stock. These pegasi are overbred and because of eugenics, now have multiple health problems and temperament concerns. While there may be one or two decent breeders left, overall these once fashionable beasts have fallen out of favor for more exotic and less ill-behaved mounts.

Biology

Pegasus wings are large and impressive. They manipulate the wind with every movement and can easily knock a person back and to the ground. This ability to summon and control the wind around them means pegasi can drift for days on the currents of air they create for themselves. They are, by all means, a horse with wings, and biologically have all the same anatomy as any equine. Their wings are well-muscled and the pegasus can control them with ease.

One of the most dazzling abilities these beautiful creatures have is creating flowing water. Wherever a pegasus paws at the ground and wills it, a natural spring of water will appear. There are many stories on how several of the world's most strangely located water sources are due to a pegasus family calling that place home. The spring will disappear once the

pegasus does, unless they live there for years, making it a permanent fixture.

Behavior

Once regarded as a keenly intelligent and majestic beast, the commonly domesticated and bred pegasus has lost much of its grandeur. Instead, domesticated breeds tend to be simple-minded and more like overbred horses, displaying behavioral issues and an inability to be properly trained. Those in the wild still hold that almost human-like awareness that makes them easy communicators and challenging mounts.

In the wild, they roam in small herds of seven to fifteen pairs of beasts and their offspring. Each pair remains together while they raise their foals with the herd. They maintain local territories in high, removed places to avoid predators and humanoids. These places hold their own magic and all pegasus find peace there. Naturally curious and contemplative, pegasi are gentle and inquisitive by nature, but have long ago learned to avoid humanoids after too many of their kind were stolen for breeding and domestication purposes.

Diet

Like most equines, pegasi forage and graze regularly in fields open enough, they can see danger approaching. These fields often have a combination of different grass-like plants to provide a wide nutrient base for them. They eat nearly constantly in order to keep their digestive tract working properly, meaning any pegasus herd will have a large expanse of land they wander in search of adequate nutrition. Domesticated pegasi will eat hay, as any other horse would, but require more of it due to the energy required to fly.



Mating

Pegasi wander large territories in bands. Each territory may have several bands on it that make up the entirety of the herd. A band consists of a lead mare who guides the group, and a lead stallion. During mating season, the lead stallion will mate with the females and the band will travel with their new foals immediately. Foals travel with their band until they reach adolescence, when they may leave the band to join a different part of the herd.

If the colts and fillies refuse to leave the herd, the lead stallion will drive them out. This helps ensure inbreeding does not happen and allows for growth of the herd. Foals are protected fiercely by the herd. The lead mare ensures they travel to safe locations, often choosing a more isolated spot during the first few weeks of the foaling season to prevent the foals from being killed or stolen.

Interactions with Humanoids

Domesticated for several centuries, the modern pet pegasus is vacant, complacent, and easily spooked. Gone is the majesty and keen intellect that once defined these creatures. There are a few select breeders who have been found to have pegasi bearing a slight resemblance to the wild ones, but this deterioration of health and faculty has led the pegasus to fall out of favor as both a mount and a pet.

In the vast wild, pegasi have learned that humanoids mean harm and now mostly live in places out of reach for most of them. While they don't generally attack people, they have been known to flee on sight. When their young are threatened, however, a pegasus can make a powerful foe and isn't afraid to trample anything in its young's way to safety.

TORNADO PEGASUS

With an inherent ability to summon the wind with each wing stroke, the pegasus learned quickly that the strongest amongst them, usually the lead mare, could summon great wind storms to protect their herds. The magic of these lead mares (and sometimes lead stallions) has yet to be seen in domesticated breeds, although some feral pegasi have been captured who seem to maintain the ability. Pegasi bred in captivity do not seem to grey out, as it is called, as their wild ancestors do.

Those few who have seen the mares in the wild that can summon the wind to staggeringly destructive speeds, swear they have lost their once-white coat and have begun to go dapple grey and even black in some areas. This stormy appearance marks them as leaders of the herds. Their herds ride the wind always with the storm at their heels and are some of the healthiest herds still remaining. As they age and seem to grow more adept at harnessing the wind, they earn respect amongst their herds.

Although this unique ability has never been reported to be weaponized, it has been theorized that tornadoes are not in fact a natural phenomenon. The wandering great herds of pegasi may be responsible for the great storms that sweep the land, wiping out settlements as they go. Several pegasus breeding stables have been destroyed this way. Originally it was thought the pegasi at the stables perished, but now it may be assumed they joined their rescuing herd. This may be the reason for the sudden rise in pegasus populations around specific parts of the kingdom.

Rumors & Legends

- A local revolutionary has found a way to calm and summon the tornado pegasi, using their unique powers to fight against the lord, who wishes to have the pegasi killed to prevent further damage by their storms.
- A breeder has caught a wild tornado pegasus and is breaking it to make it a mount, except the pegasus' herd continues to hunt for their lost friend, destroying villages as they go.
- Tornado pegasi are dying out rapidly in one of their territories, causing the winds to no longer blow and rendering the windmills still.



WILDFIRE PEGASUS

Deep within the volcanic lands of the West, the wildfire pegasus finds a home. Massive and destructive, these pegasi use the power of flame and heat to soar the skies around their toxic homes. The forest and field fires that plague the lands around their homes are made by the pegasi themselves, which has made them a local pest. A sort of war has started between the local kingdoms and the fiery steeds.

Flames lick off of their hooves, mane, tail, and wings. The heat radiating off of them is enough to help lift them up rapidly. They soar the air off their own heat, lowering and extinguishing the flames as they need to descend to the ground. When grazing, the equine creatures appear as any normal winged horse, but when startled or threatened, the flames emerge from the wispy hair that clings to their bodies. Somehow, it appears they are not flammable themselves, but that they can control the flames within them.

Their shy and skittish nature means they are quite dangerous to approach. While they rarely attack, their flames catch the ground easier than any normal fire. These fires spread rapidly, often burning those nearby alive in their inferno. They are capable of immolating almost anything, and only water from a pegasus spring can quench their thirst. These rare creatures have never been domesticated. It took very few fires for humanoids to learn they were indomitable, although they have been captured and used as weapons against warring nations by those who live near their territories.



Rumors & Legends

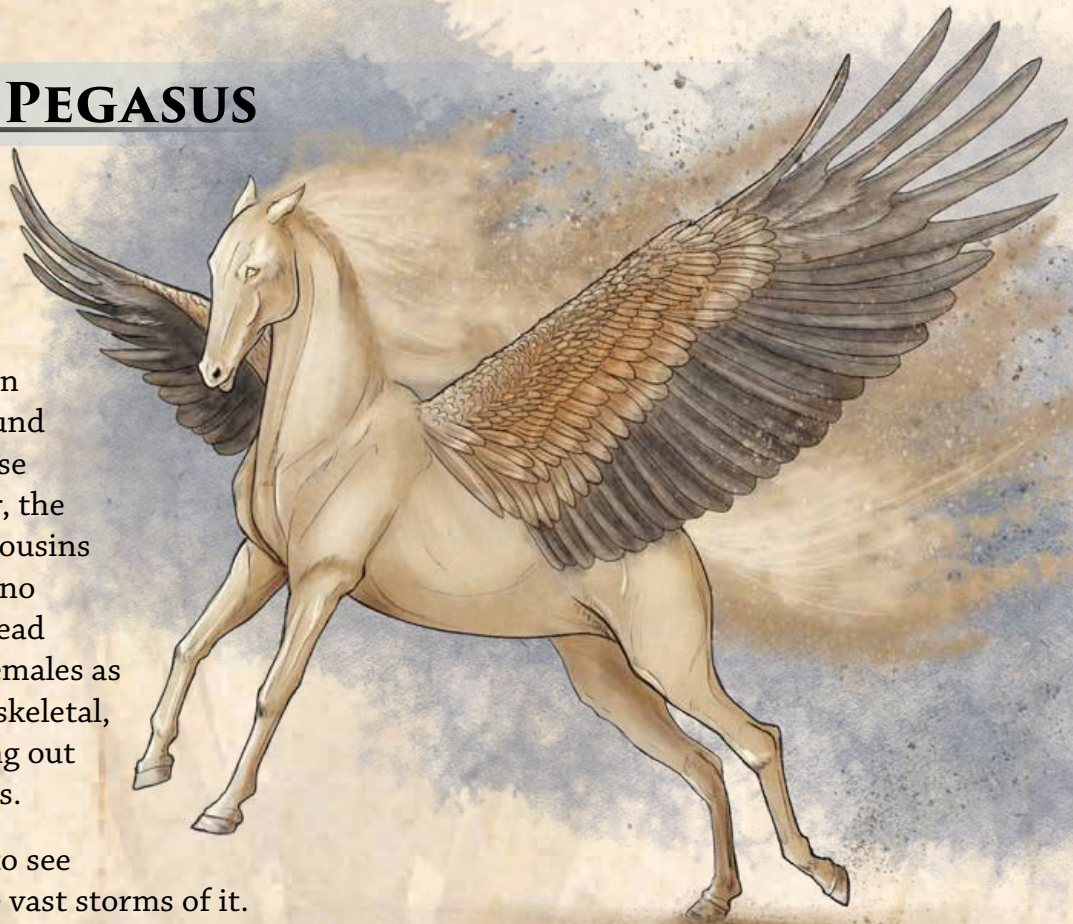
- A foal has become panicked after becoming separated from its herd. A farming village's fields are in danger of being burned to the ground by the scared pegasus. Everything the villagers do to try to calm it only seems to make it more frightened.
- Several of the wildfire pegasi have been taken from the skies near their volcano home and the volcano has begun to cool rapidly, which is causing shifts in the earth and threatens the surrounding kingdom.
- Two warring nations have unleashed wildfire pegasi at each other in an attempt to burn the other to the ground, but in their battles, the pegasi have created great fire fields and seem to be forming a new volcano where before there was none.
- A young boy had domesticated a foal wildfire. Now grown and adults, the two are being hunted by a noble's soldiers in an attempt to take the domesticated pegasus from the young man and claim it as their own.

DUST DEVIL PEGASUS

Pale, drawn, and angular, the dust devil pegasus lives within the hissing wastelands. Its harrowing, bone-like appearance is often hidden by the swirling sands around it, whistling in anger. These rarest of pegasi are, by far, the most aggressive of their cousins and live in small herds of no more than five, with the lead stallion claiming all the females as his own. They are almost skeletal, with dust storms whipping out from their manes and tails.

This dust is impossible to see through when they create vast storms of it. It seeps into everything and the storms are enormous and consuming. They can irritate a humanoid to death rapidly, while inhaling the dust will cause a lung sickness and kill whomever breathes it in. The dust storms are electrically charged from the arid land in which the pegasi live, and can cancel out magic and other elemental work with their static. These dangerous storms were first discovered when the dust devils were forced from their desert homes by invading armies. They destroyed the armies, leaving nothing but sandblasted skeletons in their wake

Since that first discovery, many have studied these elusive beasts. It is clear they eat desert plants and may be responsible for the creation of oases because of their water drawing powers. Within these havens are where the dust devils mate and live during times when they are being hunted. These places are often hidden behind an ongoing dust storm with the oasis in the eye of the storm. Very few have ever seen an occupied oasis, but their remains have been found throughout the desert wasteland.



Rumors & Legends

- A community who has lived in harmony with the dust devils finds itself under attack by the equines after outsiders appear but can't figure out why the dust devils have suddenly turned on them.
- Within a desert oasis guarded by dust devils lies a great treasure, although what remains unknown. A local authority claims to need it for their community.
- Local populations of dust devils are being eradicated by humanoids, leaving the desert suddenly without regular oases and watering holes, which begins to impact those few who live within its sands.
- Nomadic desert wanderers have taken to befriending and communing with the dust devils, going so far as to raise and herd them, but fall under attack of a warlord wishing to eradicate them and their dust devil steeds.

SNOW SQUALL PEGASUS

The coldest parts of the world have been known to hold the snow squall pegasus, a dangerous and brutal creature living within the snowy landscape. They nest in cliffside caves, killing any animal that lived there before them. They are black like the mountains they live in, with icy white and blue manes, tails and wings. Snow drifts down from them gracefully and silently, unless they are afraid or attempting to attack in the dark of a storm.

Unlike any other pegasus, these snow squall equines are omnivores and specialize in eating carrion, scavenging off of dead bodies found in the white world around them. Their front teeth are slightly sharper than other pegasi, and they use these to shred the bodies of what they find. Powerful back molars and jaws allow them to crush bone. They roam in family units of a breeding pair and their offspring, often having two foals at one time. These foals remain with them until a mate is found for them as adults. Several breeding families exist in the same territory.

Immune to the cold, they claim large territories and come down from their homes only if prey is hard to find and scavenging turns up nothing. These excursions out result in villages being hit hard by a blizzard, and often, livestock, grain reserves, and even some pets or people go missing. These unfortunate souls become frozen in the sudden shock of cold that the snow squall pegasi bring with them, and are soon prey to the equine creatures. There are almost no natural predators of the snow

squall pegasus, resulting in an increased population and making them one of the most hunted pegasus of all their cousins. Despite this, they are nearly impossible to find.

Rumors & Legends

- An unnatural spring thaw comes early to the mountains and begins to melt more of the snow than it should, threatening the lives of the snow squalls who begin to break into fights over territory when pressed together.
- A recent avalanche has left a hunting party stranded in the mountains and the snow squalls are beginning to hunt and stalk them, eliminating them one by one, as hunger and desperation push the pegasi to extremes.
- A strange illness has spread through the snow squalls, causing sudden snow storms and unending winter in the kingdom, although no cure has been found and the pegasi prove impossible to subdue.



PHASE CAT

Although superficially similar to other cat-like beasts, phase cats originate from another plane entirely. An old bardic tale tells of how a litter of young phase cats appeared from nowhere, and how the farmers watched in confusion as the cats appeared to tussle and play, while a nearby herd of sheep was devoured one by one. There are several stories like this, and it is possible that small populations have phased into our plane over many generations. Little is known about the plane from which they originate, except that it was also the former home of blink dogs. Phase cats and blink dogs are natural enemies, and phase cats will roar and whip their tendrilclaws wildly at the sight of a blink dog.

Biology

Phase cats are lithe, muscular hunters, with four forelimbs and two hindlimbs. In addition, they have four tendrilclaws protruding from their backs, with sharp, tooth-like spikes jutting out of the flattened tips. As distinctive as the appearance is, the most notable feature of the phase cat is its ability to detach its body from its own visible image, allowing it to move invisibly while its image moves independently. It is possible to tell if its body is attached to its image by listening closely; the body makes noise, but the image does not.



Behavior

Phase cats are generally solitary creatures, maintaining large territories that they hunt in and defend. These territories are much larger than those of most other territorial beasts, and indeed, phase cats seem to have unusually quick metabolisms. It appears that maintaining an image separate from its body requires additional energy. A phase cat that is old, sick, or injured may become unable to detach its body from its image. A healthy individual spends much of its time patrolling its territory for rivals or prey, scouting invisibly with its body, while its image lurks in the shadows, flickering in and out of sight to keep intruders away from its body.

Diet

Hunting strategies vary somewhat by species, but all species use their images to frighten and confuse their prey. A common technique is to stalk ahead with its body and leap out at prey with its image from behind, startling the prey directly into its invisible jaws. Although they primarily hunt large mammals, phase cats are opportunists, and supplement their diets with smaller rodents and reptiles. These smaller game are easily dispatched with a slap of a tendrilclaw, though phase cats often like to play with their prey, lightly lashing and herding it with its tendrilclaws until it grows bored and snaps it up whole.

Mating

Though individuals live alone, large numbers of phase cats congregate for a period of ten days every couple of years to mate. During these mating periods, males display by moving the tendrilclaws of their images in elaborate patterns, while their bodies stalk around, searching for interested females. The mating locations never stay the same, but are easy to find by the cacophonous shrieks that accompany the mating displays. No one knows how the phase cats choose these locations, or

even how individual phase cats learn of them. Experts believe that mating only occurs when populations decline enough for territories to become available.

After mating, the individuals return to their territories, with females providing the sole care of their offspring. Gestation occurs over a period of sixteen weeks, with the mothers giving birth to litters of five or six kittens. For the first several months, they are not entirely in control of their images or tendrilclaws, and the mother must often untangle the knotted pile of kittens, as their images flail and jump around erratically. Once the kittens are old enough to hunt, the mother expands her territory to match the needs of her litter, until the cubs are fully grown and may defend territories of their own.

Interactions with Humanoids

Because of their ability to hunt almost invisibly, people have long associated phase cats with rogues and the art of stealth. Rare materials traders will sometimes claim to sell phase cat blood, promising that a draught will make the drinker harder to detect. Whether or not this claim is true, I must warn against the purchase of phase cat blood since, like the cats themselves, the blood may randomly phase out of its vial, leaving only an image in its place. Some superstitious thieves will keep a domesticated phase cat as a companion. Although no one has successfully trained these animals to follow commands, it is hoped that the presence of the phase cat will confer some of its stealthiness onto its owner.

PHASE PANTHER

The common phase cat, usually known as the phase panther, is well-adapted to the dense, dark jungles in which it resides. Its dark coloration makes its image almost as invisible as its body during its nighttime hunts. It uses its especially large claws to climb trees, lashing a tendrilclaw into the bark of especially slippery trunks. Phase panthers sometimes hunt by stalking their prey, but also passively hunt while they sleep by dangling their tendrilclaws among the hanging vines, and flaying the unsuspecting prey that brushes past them. They can even set traps in two trees simultaneously by leaving their image in one tree and their body in another, then phasing to their image if they sense any movement near it. Reaching up to 500 pounds (227 kg) at maturity, they tend to favor large old-growth trees from which to rest in and hunt.

Phase panthers often seem to have an unnatural ability to sense what is around them, detecting even the stealthiest animals (and adventurers). When prowling wooded locations, a phase panther will phase in and out of its body repeatedly to scout the area. To check what's behind it, it will fan out its tendrilclaws along the length of its body, and skim them against the trees like extended whiskers. This leaves small nicks in the tree trunks that can be used to track them, but be wary; the phase panther is likely to attack you with its invisible body just as you're catching up to its image.

Rumors & Legends

- Many believe that sighting a phase panther is a bad omen, fortelling an attack from the shadows. Those who have seen such an omen may refuse to leave their houses except in broad daylight.



- Some assassin's guilds require initiates to hunt a phase cat and bring back its head as a final test of tracking and stealth ability. Some wear a spike from a tendrilclaw on a chain, as a mark of guild membership.
- The bard, Sigrid Bitterlute, travels from tavern to tavern, singing to all who will listen of three enormous phase panthers who guard a cave at the foothills of a mountain. She insists that they are guarding a portal to the dimension they came from, and that some few have entered in search of knowledge or riches, but none have returned.

TABBY PHASE CAT

Tabby phase cats are domesticated, but they are by no means unthreatening. Though smaller than phase panthers, they can still reach about 4 feet (1.2 meters) in length and 125 pounds (57 kilograms) in weight. They retain a strong hunting instinct, and will keep a farm free of mice, foxes, and coyotes. Unfortunately, they will often also keep the farm free from chickens and sheep. They may refrain from attacking farm animals if trained to do so as a kitten, but some owners like to spray their flocks with bitter or spicy oils. Once the phase cats associates the farm animals with the unpleasant flavors, it will spend its efforts hunting pests and burglars instead.

Wealthy landowners have begun to take an interest in the breeding of domestic phase cats with particular features. If you visit a phase tabby breeder, you may see cats with unspiked tendrilclaws, others with long, luxurious fur, and still others with striking patterns of spots or stripes. Phase tabbies with unspiked tendrilclaws are tame enough to be kept indoors, and are among the rarest and most sought-after breeds. They are particularly rare because they are incapable of reproducing without the assistance of a breeder. Evidently, the spikes perform some unknown purpose during the mating process.

Rumors & Legends

- Phase tabbies sometimes form very strong bonds with their owners, and will invisibly follow them while appearing to nap several feet away. It is unwise to get on the bad side of an owner with a loyal phase cat, since it may strike out, even against the owner's wishes.
- If you are thinking of bringing a phase tabby into your home, be sure to notify the local butcher. I know of several cases where a phase tabby was brought into a village, only for the butcher to begin seeing steaks and sausages dragged away and devoured by "invisible spirits."
- The alchemist, Grimmarim, claims to have concocted a powder that, breathed in by a phase cat, will prevent it from detaching its image from its body. If this is true, it would be of great value to phase tabby breeders.



PHASE CHEETAH

Phase cheetahs are the fastest-running creatures known in any plane. They use their highly developed legs to take them up to 85 mph (137 km/hr). For an extra burst of distance, they instantaneously “cast” their bodies up to three cat-lengths forward from their images. This allows them to take down even the fastest prey. Their tendrilclaws are thin and aerodynamic, and stream behind the phase cheetahs as they run. The spines are not just sharp, but slightly hooked. When they are close enough to their prey, they whip all of their tendrilclaws over their heads in a powerful arc, bludgeoning their prey and latching onto it with its hooked spines. This species is adapted for sprinting, not endurance; phase cheetahs expend all of their energy in a single chase, rather than herding or confusing their prey like other phase cats.

Phase cheetahs are intelligent hunters, and have learned to cast their bodies not just forward, but up. If you are observing phase cheetahs, watch for birds of prey to suddenly plummet to the ground. I have once even seen

a phase cheetah take down a griffin. From the movement of the griffin itself, I suspect the enterprising creature cast itself into the sky, tendrilclaws and claws up, then twisted in the air so that it landed atop the griffin. This species could make excellent hunting animals if domesticated, but I would not assign the task to anyone who cared overmuch for their own life.

Rumors & Legends

- Many believe that the phase cheetah can travel fast enough to become the wind itself. Those who worship the nature gods revere the phase cheetah as a messenger of the gods, and release a horse every year into a phase cheetah’s hunting grounds, as an offering to the gods.
- Phase cheetah fur seems to retain some of the animal’s special abilities. A rider with a cloak made from phase cheetah fur may be able to cast her horse forward an extra couple of horse lengths. However, these abilities are unpredictable, and the rider may occasionally cast herself and her mount in the wrong direction, or at an inopportune moment. Some say that it is easier to control the effects of a cloak made from juvenile fur, but such an item would be quite difficult to come by.



ARCTIC PHASE CAT

The arctic phase cat is the most imposing of the species. It is large and lumbering, reaching up to 1200 pounds (544 kilograms) at maturity. This is primarily due to the heavy layer of fat surrounding its body and tendrilclaws, which allow it to retain heat even in the frozen mountains where it resides. Its short tail and dense mane likewise serve to trap as much body heat as possible. Unlike other species, arctic phase cats hunt in small packs of up to five. Using their images to herd and bewilder their prey, packs can take down large prey such as mammoths, yetis, and even juvenile ice dragons. Their oversized fangs and large tendrilclaw spikes allow them to puncture through protective fat and into vulnerable muscle. After a successful hunt, the pack will gorge on its kill, then retreat to shelter to sleep and digest for days at a time.

Because of the harsh mountain climates, Arctic phase cats live at low density and do not maintain clear territories. Instead of coalescing around mating locations, they mate opportunistically with other packs. Packmates are usually closely related, and will not mate within the pack unless presented with no other options for a period of years. Packmates work together to provide for offspring, but at 5-6 months, the juveniles venture off in a pack of their own, to hunt small game. Juveniles commonly hunt for fish, keeping their images far from the edge of the water, lashing their prey with invisible tendrilclaws. They learn to hunt as a pack as they grow,

first hunting seals and walruses before taking on more dangerous game. Adventurers should be especially wary of juveniles at this stage of growth. Although fully grown Arctic phase cats prefer larger meals, adventuring parties make juicy and appealing targets for packs of juveniles.

Rumors & Legends

- The spikes on arctic phase cat tendrilclaws are extraordinarily sturdy, with jagged edges that pierce or crush most types of armor with ease. The dark knight, Ser Karnack, is rumored to wield a mace studded with these spikes, which he uses to bludgeon any who dare challenge him.
- Although packs of arctic phase cats make a formidable enemy, there can be great reward for those who dare to track them. One adventurer claims she was able to follow a pack for weeks, always staying a day or two behind. When she reached a small dragon's lair, she found the pack sleeping next to a half-eaten dragon carcass, and made off with a knapsack full of riches before they awoke.



RUST MONSTER

As told by Leanna de Troi first Mineral Keeper of the Dul'nurr Dwarven Mines.

They are known by many names -- metal menaces, ore ogres, "by the gods, quickly, hide all the broadswords!" -- but the most common name for the voracious insectoid creatures who love consuming metal is the rust monster. There are other creatures that share similar traits, to which we call this family of creatures mineral devourers, but due to the cultural popularity, they're almost all known as rust monsters. Most rust monsters are not outwardly violent, but nonetheless are a plague on any adventurer who crosses their path. If an adventurer does not deal with a mineral devourer properly, they could wake to find their entire set of plate mail eaten right off their chest or their prized family sword gobbled up.

Mineral devourers are characterized by their true loves: corrosion and minerals. They live their entire lives searching for any metal to chow down on and are particularly fond of rust. Their exact origins are unknown, but beastmasters agree the creatures have lived on different planes for millennia. Some say these creatures are as old as the mountains they roam and that is ancient indeed.

Biology

Most mineral devourers have a chitinous exoskeleton, which protects them from most attacks, and large mandibles, which they use to cut through rusted metal. They keep their feathery antennae lightly coated in saliva, which helps break down and rust metal, making it easier to consume.

Rust monsters vary in size from a large to small dog, depending on the species you are dealing with. They live off ferrous materials and will consume anything with metal around them. Regardless of environment, they live solitary lives scraping metal from the rocks

deep within the mountain. Because it is often a few months between meals, a mineral devourer's digestion is highly sophisticated and flexible. You can tell how well a mineral devourer is feeding by the size and shape of its droppings: loose and gravelly means it hasn't fed in a while; perfectly round spherical metal balls means it is feeding very well.

Behavior

WARNING: *Rust monsters of any sort have an infinite appetite and find it nearly impossible to resist eating metals and rust. If all metals are not kept at least 45 feet (15 meters) away from the creatures, they will find it impossible to focus on anything else until they consume it. Any behavior mentioned later in this chapter assumes metal is being kept at a safe distance from these creatures so they are able to focus on other activities.*

Rust monsters live solitary lives and prefer areas with an abundance of natural ore. While they tend to remain in places where there is no one around for miles, they may regrettably venture into cities with large armories, called by the overwhelming scent of iron. When not searching for food, rust monsters exhibit play-like behavior, such as rolling around their metal droppings and bouncing them off mountain walls to run and catch them.

Diet

Mineral devourers eat many types of mineral material and very rarely drink. The type of mineral the creature enjoys, or must eat, is dependent on their species, but the most common mineral in any mineral devourer's diet is iron. However, many an adventurer have been dismayed to find that a mineral devourer made no difference between their ultra-rare mithril armor and the basic iron chainmail of

their compatriots. They garner their name from the rust powder secreted through their pores that falls through the chitinous plates.

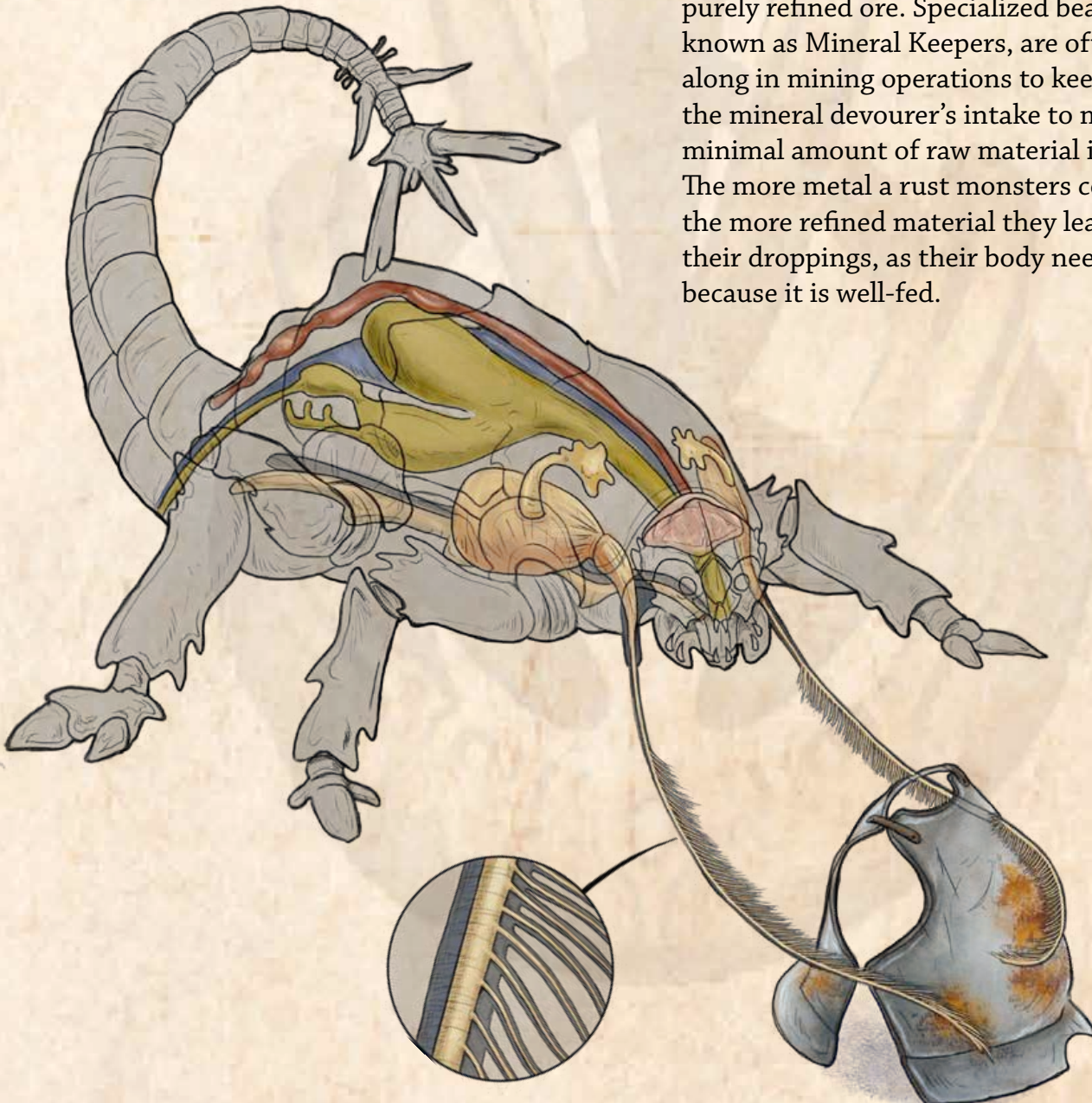
Mating

During mating season, rust monsters give up their solitary existence and migrate to a common location to breed with others of their kind. Once at the mating grounds, various males will perform for a female they find attractive by tapping their feet on the ground in an entertaining dance. When a female finds a dance that pleases her, she copies the male's dance to signify to her other suitors she has found her mate.

The male then gives his sperm to the female, the female being able to choose when her eggs are fertilized and where. Once the female mineral devourer returns home, she creates a rust ball the size of an ogre's head and then lays a dozen eggs inside. Once her eggs hatch, she shoos her weevils from the nest to go find mountains and metals of their own.

Interactions with Humanoids

Rust monsters are often used by miners who wish to process their ore. Keeping the creatures extremely well-fed, and then additionally feeding them unprocessed ore, causes the creatures to defecate perfectly round balls of purely refined ore. Specialized beastmasters, known as Mineral Keepers, are often brought along in mining operations to keep track of the mineral devourer's intake to make sure a minimal amount of raw material is consumed. The more metal a rust monster consumes, the more refined material they leave behind in their droppings, as their body needs less overall because it is well-fed.



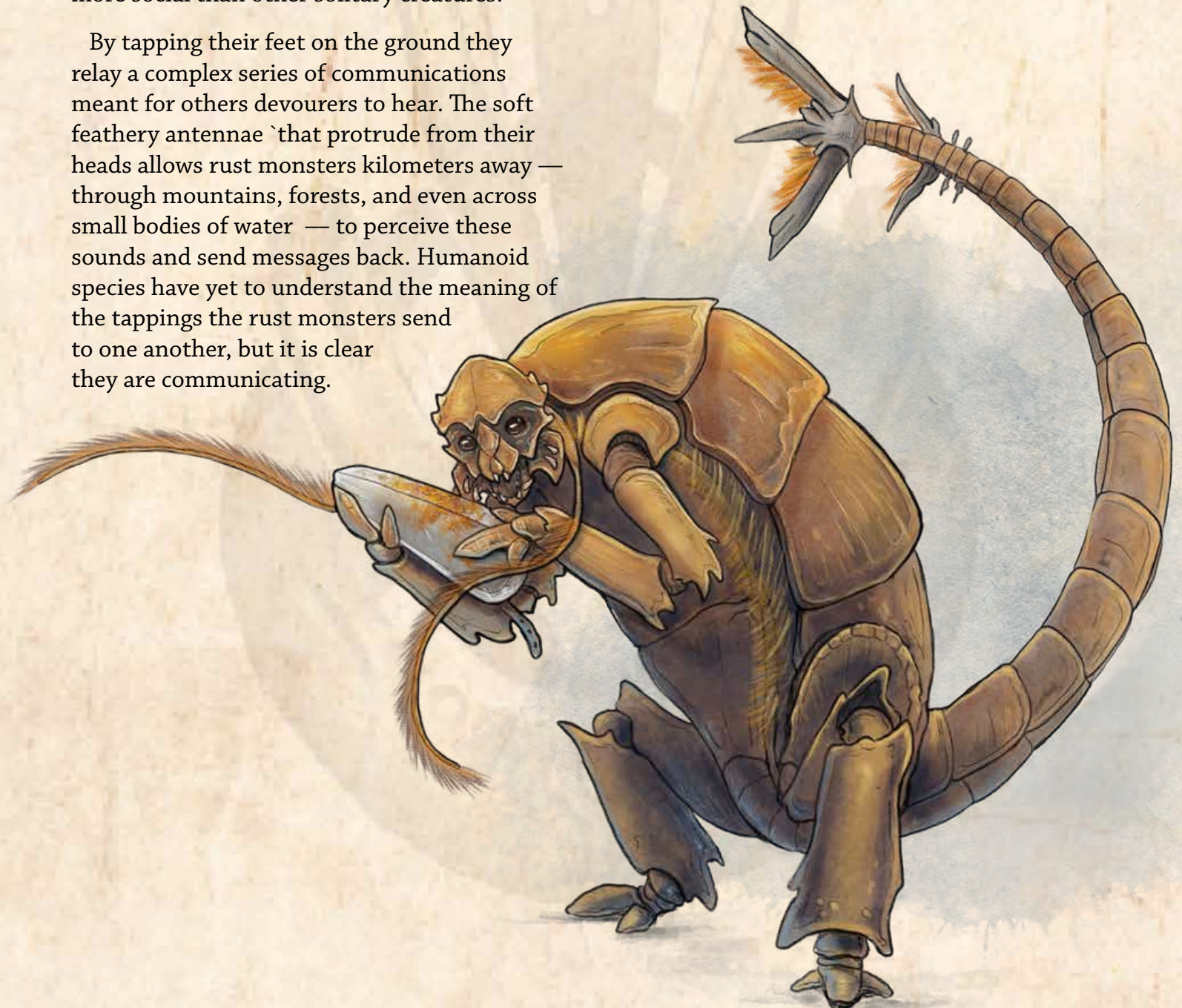
COMMON RUST MONSTER

Rust monsters are the most common mineral devourer and are found all over the globe. For many years it was assumed that rust monsters lived solitary lives, because they did not actively seek out others of their kind. Later studies proved this to be false. The common rust monster prefers living alone, but they are almost always in contact with at least one of their kind. In fact, there is rarely a moment when common rust monsters are not moving to communicate with each other, making them more social than other solitary creatures.

By tapping their feet on the ground they relay a complex series of communications meant for others devourers to hear. The soft feathery antennae that protrude from their heads allows rust monsters kilometers away — through mountains, forests, and even across small bodies of water — to perceive these sounds and send messages back. Humanoid species have yet to understand the meaning of the tappings the rust monsters send to one another, but it is clear they are communicating.

Rumors & Legends

- Legends say if you mimic a rust monster's tapping exactly back to it, the creature will show you to a it's favorite deposite of ore.
- Some beastmasters believe the rust monster's rhythmic tapping shows a complex form of communication. If this is true, rust monsters are smarter than commonly assumed.
- More often than not primitive dwarven clans that forsake smithing have a few domesitcated brown rust monsters.



JEWEL MANTIS

The mantis mineral devourer, also known as the jewel mantis, has a beautiful, elongated green body with a shiny, lime-colored outer shell. Two long antennae hang next to their mandibles like a long moustache, and they are able to stand on two legs if they wish. Unlike the others of its kind, the mantis does not feed off of metal, but precious gemstones, making it even more dangerous to cities than the common mineral devourer.

A single mantis is able to lay low a well-stocked treasury in a matter of days. It seems that the more precious a gemstone is, the more delectable a jewel mantis finds it. If need be, jewel mantises are also able to consume metals, but need the nutrients of at least one precious stone a year to survive.

The jewel mantis shares much in common with the mating practices of other mineral devourers, with one significant difference. Once the male has inseminated the female, she turns to her mating partner, rips off his head, and pulls a single precious stone from his corpse.

This stone is anything from a diamond to a sapphire and each is unique to the male carrying it. The stones are created within the male mantis as a byproduct of what they consume. A female mantis carries this precious stone home and once she lays her eggs and they hatch, in the same way as other mineral devourers, she feeds the precious stone to her weevils as their first meal.

Rumors & Legends

- Mantis mineral devourer males never live past the age of three due to mating. However, it is said if one were able to live longer it is said the precious stone inside them would grow to such an amazing, he would begin to develop magical abilities - based on the stone's attunement.
- While it is illegal in most civilized societies, mantis squads were once used by desperate rulers seeking to cripple their opposition. They'd send a highly trained pack of mantis mineral devourers into a kingdom and allow them to wreak havoc on the other kingdom's finances. Only when the kingdom was on its last legs, its people starving, its larders impoverished, would the rulers call back their mantis squads — sweeping in to take over the kingdom.



AQUATIC RUST LICE

Aquatic rust lice are tiny compared to their common counterparts, measuring roughly 6 inches (15 cm) in length when fully grown. They live in saltwater environments, and are often found close to shore in large schools, preferring to live together rather than alone. Finally, rather than feeding on metal, which they are still able to do in times of need, the favored meal of aquatic rust lice is wood, and schools feed off driftwood that has fallen into the oceans.

The only thing aquatic rust lice love more than driftwood is the wood on the hull of a ship. While there is empirically very little to suggest this wood tastes better, most beastmasters assume aquatic rust lice are so voracious in their pursuit of ships, because of the sheer amount of wood it takes to build a vessel. One two-mast ship is able to sustain a school of aquatic rust lice for weeks. If sailors ignore the warning signs of a school of aquatic rust lice attached to their ship, they may find out too late, in the middle of the ocean, when their ship starts to sprout leaks all over.

Most sailors who knowingly near aquatic rust lice territory memorize a simple poem to keep away from the lice:

*Beware ye' the tide of rust,
O'er the waves it swims,
To the sun sail ye' must,
Lest in the waters yer life dims.*



Rumors & Legends

- When aquatic rust lice attach themselves to a ship, it is said that the waters around the ship turn a rusty color. During the day, the rust lice hide under the ship, because of a sensitivity to light.
- Merfolk often keep aquatic rust lice as pets in order to keep 'surface folk' away from their colonies. Because no ships survive aquatic rust lice attacks, the rust-colored waters surrounding the merfolk's homes keep sailors at bay.

HORNED RUST MONSTER

Horned mineral devourers are the largest and most dangerous of their kind. While common rust monsters do attack creatures in their path of a delectable meal, they much prefer dodging and avoiding humanoids. This is not the case for the horned mineral devourer. When these rust monsters spy a mineral deposit, they head straight for it becoming unusually aggressive. Creatures that end up challenging its path tend to get speared by its horn.

While my general advice was to keep metals at least 45 feet (15 meters) away from common rust monsters, I advise keeping no metal visible at all around a horned rust monster, because if it sees even the hint of ore, it will head straight for it. These creatures also have a mean streak about them and even if you aren't carrying any metal on your person, they are likely to attack if you come too close. With their chitinous hide and large size, the best advice I can give you is to give these creatures a wide berth.

Unlike the common rust monster, horned rust monsters are purists and only consume iron or copper ore. Any other metal they consume either gets excreted, or stored in their horn, causing it to grow. Rust monster's horns can consist of gold, adamantine, silver, or any other type of precious metal, all covered in an unassuming thin layer of ivory, making them attractive to poachers.

Rumors & Legends

- Five giant horned rust monsters are said to guard the throne of the god of ore. The giant throne is the largest known ore deposit in all the realms and these creatures are loyal solely to their god. Their outer shells are inscribed with magic runes and if read aloud will light up maps to the most precious materials on the god's throne.



SPHINX

Guarding the most ancient of spaces across the world, the sphinx has become an almost universal symbol of death, destruction, and of course, riddles. These mysterious creatures roam the most aged of places, preventing would-be looters from entering their homes. They say the gods bind them to these places, trapping them until death. There's no proof there is a mystical binding to the sphinx, except it has been reported that upon being released from their duty, the animals die.

As one of the most intelligent beasts, sphinx are adept magic users and astute intellectuals. Their riddles are crafted to test all who would enter their homes. Between their ferocity and their innate magical talent, most adventurers choose to battle their wits rather than their razor claws.

Biology

Sphinx are easily recognizable by their feline bodies, great wings, and humanoid faces and heads. Most are known to be female, although this is because the males wander large expansive territories and the females maintain singular locations. They have human faces, necks, shoulders, and upper chest, with the feline legs and paws beginning at the end of the deltoid muscle. The human torso ends mid-rib cage and continues into the feline body.

Each sphinx subspecies differs based on their local culture and wildlife. This results in some minor variations in body. Overall, the sphinx is powerful, both mentally and physically, with terrifyingly long claws. Their large wings allow for minimal flight, as they are heavy creatures, but more serve to help with balance and fighting.

Behavior

Unlike most mythical creatures, the sphinx is extremely intelligent. Their intellect is barely matched by most humanoids, although the odd genius may give them a run for their money. They are highly intellectual and creative, spending vast amounts of time exploring and accumulating knowledge and studying the universe. Once their thirst for knowledge is quenched. They return home to digest their discoveries.

Though they are solitary due to their bondage, sphinx do seek the company of their own kind in mating season. Because they are solitary, they are often willing to engage travelers who do not threaten their homes. They are sociable, clever, and always several steps ahead of anyone interacting with them. While they mean us no harm, they forbid anyone from entering their sacred homes.

Diet

In line with their feline nature, sphinx hunger for and devour meat. Because of their isolated locations, sphinx mostly rely upon hunting and foraging for food. They are well known to enjoy and delight in fruit. When travelers wander through their land, the sphinx rely upon trade and games of intellect to get as many unique and different foods they can.

Their tastes are diverse, though they avoid many vegetables; such foods are indigestible, as their feline stomachs cannot handle roughage. The fruit, while delightful, is a rare treat that sphinx enjoy selectively. They are obligate carnivores and therefore primarily rely on their hunting, eating raw meat as any wild feline would.

Mating

Mating occurs infrequently due to the rarity of the creatures and the size of the territory the males roam. Males wander vast areas, becoming guardians of specific cultures instead of holy sites or cities. When they happen upon a female, a grand courtship begins. For months the two explore each other's strengths and weaknesses, testing intellect, physical prowess, and mental fortitude against one another. These games become a regular part of each day, concluding in a hunting excursion.

When both parties are satisfied, they mate. Six months later, the female gives birth to a kitten. The two raise the kitten until about nine months of age. From there, one of the parents will take the kitten. The parent will educate and teach the offspring magic, improve their mind, and raise them to be the deadly killer they will ultimately become. Once the kitten reaches maturity, it will leave its parent, knowing instinctively where it is needed.

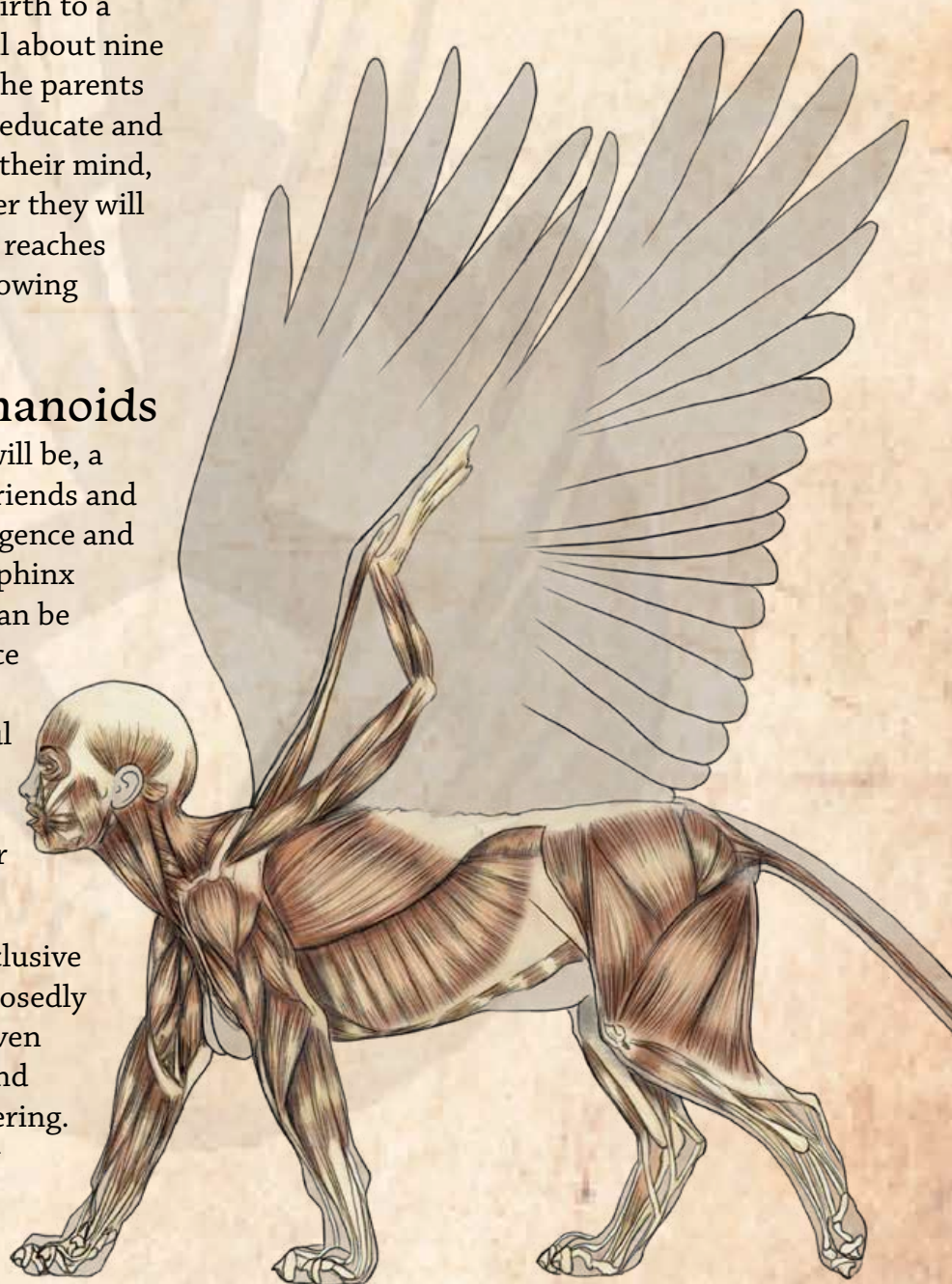
Interactions with Humanoids

There has never been, and never will be, a domesticated sphinx. They can be friends and companions, but their astute intelligence and powerful physique ensure that no sphinx can be domesticated, though they can be enslaved. Their advanced intelligence means they suffer deeply when captured and often become vengeful or deeply depressed. It is not uncommon for a palace to purchase a stolen sphinx kitten and name her protector of their home.

These captured sphinx become reclusive and aloof, ignoring those they supposedly serve. More than one sphinx has given the answer to her riddle to a hero and then begged them to end their suffering. Several rituals have been created by mages to ensure the servitude of a sphinx and to bind her to her

captor's home. These rare wizards specialize in bondage magic and often sell sphinx they have procured through horrible means.

In some cultures, the sphinx is revered and seen as a guardian as sacred as the places she guards. They often will bring her food, albeit cooked meat, and jewelry or decorative clothes. To these cultures, the birth of a baby sphinx is welcomed with a celebration, and often the sphinx family will remain and raise their youngster to join part of the city. This is rare, but has been reported.



DESERT SPHINX

Bearing the body of a lion, the head of a human, and the wings of a great roc, the desert sphinx is by far the most common and well known. Within the deserts, ancient civilizations have risen and fallen, and the sphinx remembers them all. She wanders her temples, still wearing the garb and jewellery of a time long since past. In the sphinx is the cultural memory of a people now gone.

Deep within the deserts are temples and sacred sites to ancient gods no longer remembered or named. The sphinx can speak their language and read the names on the wall, although few dare stop to ask of her knowledge. The males wander vast deserts, taking shelter in rocky homes they've discovered from migrant people. They spend their days with a mate, learning what she knows and keeping the knowledge of their ancient homes alive.

These sphinx know riddles of the stars, the cosmos, the ancient ways, and of the gods themselves. Their questions are about lore so long past that none have entered the temples in an eternity. Their magic is of life and death, revolving around the cycles of memory and forgetting within the desert. Each riddle they have bears its answers from within a culture long since destroyed.

Because of their ancient and immortal nature, these sphinx are rarely ever killed or defeated because of their death magics and because their riddles have unknowable answers. They are extremely proud, and they are quite dismissive of ignorant travelers. Few ever seek these sphinx out, although many have happened upon them in the desert, surprised to see them at those long-forgotten, aged relics.



Rumors & Legends

- An aged god, still alive and craving new worshippers, has been summoning the last remaining desert sphinx to it. The god is trying to enslave them, sending them back out into the world to bring more followers to its tomb in the hopes that one will release it.
- A young sphinx offers to let the explorers enter their temple in exchange for finding a mate for her, or at least a companion. Being bound to a temple so far removed from anything has left them incredibly lonely.
- One sphinx offers the answer to her riddle to any who pass her home in hopes that one will want to enter. She believes she will be free to live as she wants, not realizing that she will only become bound to another vestige of the past.

QUOLL SPHINX

Teetering on the brink of extinction, the rare quoll sphinx is one of the most elusive of its kind. Rare and dying rapidly in the wild, the quoll sphinx has a spotted body; long, thick tail; and unlike other sphinxes, has hands. They also have large, white, feathered wings. Their versatile hands allow them to use weapons, start fires, and live more akin to the local humanoids than the desert sphinx.

Unlike its desert cousin, the quoll sphinx is not seen as a blessing when appearing in a ruin or city. Rather, it is seen as a curse, a source of evil. This is mostly because the quoll sphinx makes it's home at watering holes found sparsely throughout the desert. Though remaining populations of quoll sphinxes are being slowly and painfully being erased by other local humanoids.

These watering holes have always been the most important place to the indigenous peoples. Their belief that the water is the most sacred place and the land is made up of the gods themselves. Once, the quoll sphinx were protectors of the waters. Though with the change in settlements and expansion of civilization, there is less regard to the old gods and prospective individuals have begun to demonize and hunt quoll sphinxes.

Still loyal to the old ways, their riddles are old and focused on the land and its history. Those they guard the water for, however, are being forced out by settlement-driven cultures and has overtaken their territory. Because of this, the sphinxes are dwindling in numbers, methodically and quickly, with only a few remaining.

Rumors & Legends

- A sphinx has been captured by a beast collector who is offering to sell the creature and its ancient secrets to anyone with enough coin, but has beaten the creature into submission and its spirit is broken.
- When a war threatens the region, blood and poison begin to taint the watering holes. A small hunting group of quoll sphinx go after the nobles conducting the war in an attempt to protect the land and free it from the taint of these destructive humanoids.



RIVER SPHINX

Within jungles, living in its waters and rivers, is the river sphinx. These sphinx are so different from their land-loving cousins that many have challenged the belief that they are to be counted as sphinx. Their bodies are that of an otter; large, velvety, and beautiful. They have webbed paws and a general sense of playfulness and gentleness. While they do have wings like other sphinx, theirs are far too small to be used for flight and instead are used only for show.

Unlike other sphinx, the river sphinx live in communities of up to twenty adults and multiple young. They have a central territory they hunt and explore within. While they eat some mammals, mostly the river sphinx hunt fish and other aquatic life. They hunt in packs and spend a great deal of time playing in the water together. There is a dominant pair that guides the group, but most decisions are made communally.

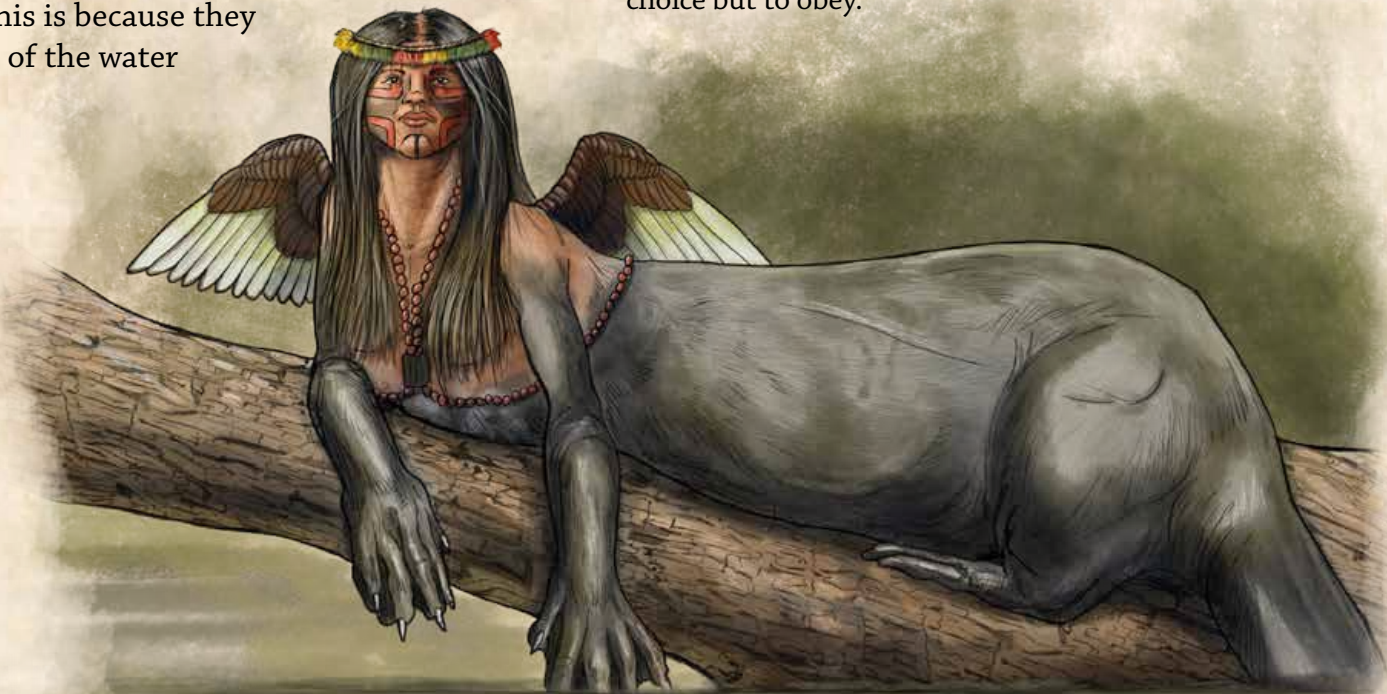
They are just as protective as their land-bound cousins, spending vast amounts of time antagonizing the local humanoids by destroying fishing nets, removing fish from traps, and stealing catches. When pressed, they say this is because they are spirits of the water

and are bound to protect it. This has caused no small number of them to be killed by local fisherman, and as a result, their population is on the decline.

Once, they were playful and curious members of the river wildlife. Now, they seem almost afraid of the fisherman who hunt their waters. More and more of their families have been hunted and killed by local humanoids. While they have limited control of most magic, they do have astounding magical abilities with water. Still, this magic is neither enough to stop the hunters from poaching them for their soft pelts, nor to stop the fishermen that compete for food.

Rumors & Legends

- Several large fishing communities have started coming together to hunt the remaining river sphinx in their area, as they grow weary of their nets being destroyed and their fish being set free by the playful sphinx.
- A malevolent and angry river god has enlisted the help of the river sphinx to remove the humanoids from his water and to destroy the homes that have been created by their communities; enslaved, the sphinx have no choice but to obey.



ARCTIC SPHINX

The arctic sphinx dwells within the coldest lands far to the north. Their bodies are perfectly designed for living within the cold. A thick, heavy fur covers them, with large padded paws for walking on the snow. They move soundlessly, disappearing into the trees and snow around them. This is how they hunt, and how they remain an unseen guardian of their wintry world.

They say the arctic sphinx has eyes that can see the truth beyond. They are keepers of the unseen world and guardians of secrets. While they ask riddles, it is not to keep a sacred place protected, but rather, to withhold knowledge until the traveler proves themselves worthy. The keen eyes of the arctic sphinx can see the truth in any question or situation, and thus, they are sought out by anyone who needs to find an answer that no one else can provide.

Once found amongst the many snowy regions of the world, the influx of humanoids into their territories has greatly damaged their population. As a solution to the hunting that was happening, several regents had the animals captured and moved far to the north, where the land was inhospitable but safer from humanoids. The sphinx haven't flourished, but their population maintains.

These solitary sphinx are beautiful and wise. They lack the ancient civilizations of their cousins or the playfulness of the river sphinx, but they have wisdom and grace like no other. Several kingdoms have taken to capturing them to use as advisors during fraught times. These sphinx have said to grow depressed and eventually, bring a kingdom to ruin so they may be freed from their bonds.



Rumors & Legends

- A group of adventurers discovered an aged sphinx held captive deep within the dungeon of a dark kingdom. The beast is chained with magical bindings only a well-guarded key can unlock.
- Forseeing the destruction of the local humanoids by a dominant and powerful civilization, the arctic sphinx have begun helping the locals to prepare for war and invasion by advising them and recruiting heroes to join the cause.
- A young sphinx has disappeared after giving up her power to see the future of the world around her. Several communities have set out to find her and bring her home, but she continues to elude them.

TREANT

As told by Sylvia Te'len'thriel half-elf beastmaster.

Treants came into existence through faerie magic. Forest-dwelling fae needed trusted guardians to protect their forest homes, and each year they sang to the trees begging them to wake up. Slowly but surely the trees awoke, and so the first treants were born. The fae asked nothing from the treants but to protect the land, which pleased the treants greatly, and so it was for many years.

Part of the natural cycle of the world, the treants knew they were part of all things. Being part of all things carries with it a desire to know all things. The treants created saplings so part of them could experience as much of the world as possible. Their saplings founded new groves, protecting the life that grew within their lands; so treants spread through the realms and many different types sprouted into existence.

Biology

Treants' internal systems act much like that of normal trees and most of their bodies' movements, their speech, etc. is a blessing of faerie magic. As beastmasters, we refer to treants as creatures, but is a misnomer, as they are entirely plant in nature. They do, however, have many humanoid characteristics, and so for ease of explanation, this shorthand persists.

The older a treant is, the more abilities it develops, but fundamentally each is able to re-grow branches and make other flora around it grow. They also have the ability to speak and understand any number of languages, including being able to communicate with any animals that live in their domain. Humanoid communication is more difficult for a treant, but given time, which they have an abundance of, they are able to pick up any language they put their mind to.

Behavior

It is difficult to describe treant behavior, because they are not animals, but plants. An animal myself, my view is colored by the other creatures I have observed over the years and therefore I must apologize for any undue animalistic characteristics I attribute to this great species. To understand treant behavior one must understand their motivation: protection.

It is said from the moment the first treant woke, their sole goal in life was to protect the forests and groves they inhabit. Morality for this species is a moot point, because the concepts of good and evil do not play into their central goal. In a treant's eyes, a villager who cuts down a tree in their land is more guilty than a knight who slays a peasant; so dealing with these strange beings can sometimes bewilder humanoids who can't grasp how a treant thinks.

This is not to say that treants do not have a capacity for kindness, a distinct personality, or even the ability to feel their own type of love. However, it is too simplistic to water down their behavior to our way of interacting with the world. These plants view themselves as part of the world, and the world as part of them. They understand that all life must thrive and so they are not only the guardians of their own grove, but of all peaceful creatures who walk the realm.

Diet

All treants need sunlight, water, and soil to survive, though the length a treant can go without these things is proportional to their size. These creatures have been known to survive for years living on water alone, but this is a torturous existence for the creature and not recommended.

Reproduction

Treants are rare and technically they don't mate, but they do reproduce. Instead, treant reproduction happens in the same manner as a normal tree reproduces. More often than not, most of the seeds a treant drops will result in normal trees sprouting up around them, rather

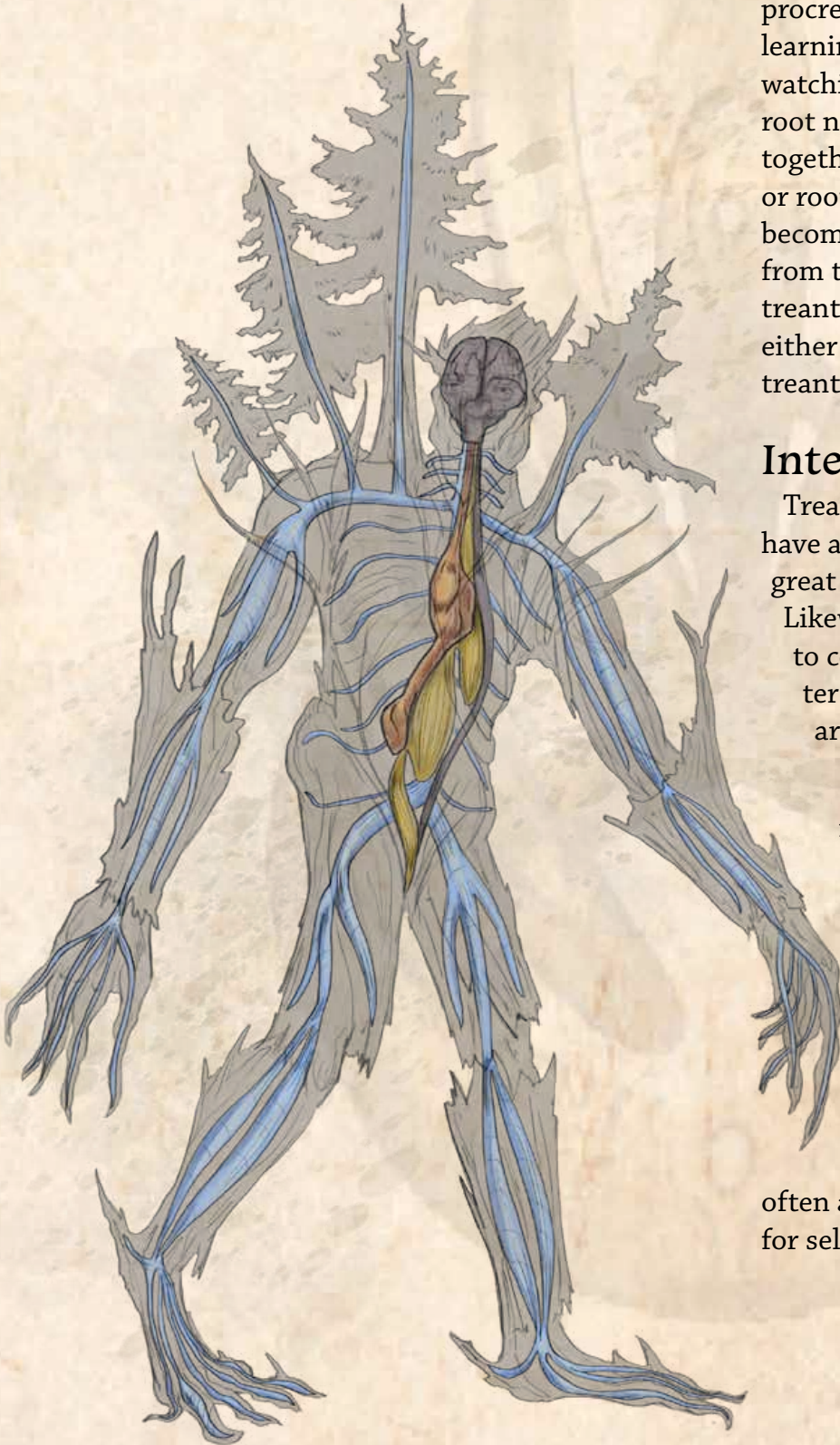
than an actual treant sapling. This is not to say that the treant does not care for any sapling it drops like its own child; speaking with it, caring for it, and raising it. Rather, most saplings will not have what we as beastmasters consider sentience.

Some types of treant are also known to procreate in a more humanoid way. Perhaps learning these techniques from years of watching humanoid behavior, two treants root next to one another and create a sapling together. By intertwining either their branches or roots for approximately a year two trees become one for a time. The resulting seeds from this bonding are more likely to yield a treant sapling instead of a normal tree, though either is truly a product of both of the paired treants.

Interactions with Humanoids

Treants are wary of humanoids, because they have a tendency to enjoy using fresh wood in a great many things: houses, bridges, carriages. Likewise, humanoids enjoy creating fires to cook or to warm themselves, and this terrifies the treants as their bark and leaves are extremely flammable.

If humanoids enter a treant grove with respect and treat the animals within it with kindness, the treant will likely allow them to pass through unimpeded. From time to time, treants have even been known to assist a wandering adventurer who is searching for a bit of forgotten knowledge or hunting a foe. They take kindly to people with a high sense of what would be considered traditional honor, and are often annoyed by people who try to trick them for selfish reasons.



OAK TREANT

Oaks were the first treants to be woken by the fae so many years ago. These ancient trees used the magic they learned to awaken other species of trees. They spread their roots deep in the ground and sent out vibrations which circled the whole grove, driving trees, flowers, and even fungi to wake from their floral slumber.

Oak treants spent so many years walking the realm that they are most like other humanoid creatures, especially elves. They know elven songs and have even been known to dance an elven jig or two. Many elven forest communities have at least one resident oak

who regales their children with stories of heroes past. These oaks are considered honored parts of the community and in return they keep elven cities vibrant and alive with flora.

Some oak treants survive so long and are cared for for so many years, they set down roots in their old age and allow their bodies to become the base for elven castles. The oak grows more branches and allows the elves to carefully mold them into rooms as needed. These oak treant castles are near impregnable and, when attacked, the treant folds in on itself to protect the people within.

Rumors & Legends

- The Lost City of Oakheart is an elven city, which was entirely made up of treant buildings. Some say this was the original site where the first oaks awoke many years ago. When orcs invaded Oakheart to try to steal elven magic for themselves, the oaks picked up their people and fled. Oakheart was never heard from again, but if it were ever to be found, many believe one would discover many ancient magicks hidden there.
- Some say oak treants have the ability to awaken smaller plants for a time to do their bidding. Some oaks mold themselves into humanoid forms and use these plants as spies, becoming information brokers. This is hard to believe as this does not conform to what is traditionally known about treant behavior, but perhaps it could be true.



GRAFTED TREANT

Grafted treants are created by other treants who wish procreate. Rather than taking the traditional method of seeding the ground, a treant may cut off small pieces of itself and graft them onto another, non-sentient, tree. If the treant is lucky, the grafted treant will awaken.

These new creatures are not clones of their makers, but individuals with their own thoughts and desires. They have characteristics of their parent tree, but by way of the fae magic they are their own creatures. Also, grafted treants come into the world with more knowledge than saplings who would be what we consider 'babies'. When a treant grafts parts of themselves onto another tree they also impart some of their knowledge. While grafted treants come into the world innocent of experience they are wise in stories and fables their 'parent' picked up along the way.

Grafting is normally a harmless procedure, but sometimes, very rarely, the process goes terribly wrong. If the parent of the grafted treant isn't careful and doesn't inspect the tree they are grafting onto, there is a chance they graft part of themselves onto a rotten tree. If this happens and the grafted treant awakens, they are a menace to their own kind. Rotting from within and with only a few short years on this realm, they seek to infect as many trees as they can with their poison before they die. Unable to believe that a treant could be so selfish; often these callous murderers are not discovered by their own kind before it is far too late.



Rumors & Legends

- Sour Fir is an ancient, rotten treant. When it awoke, like others of its rotten kind, it set about infecting as many trees as it could before it died. Through warped experiments, Sour Fir realized it could survive by hacking off pieces of other treants and grafting them onto itself. Now, Sour Fir is a hulking rotting monstrosity and it seeks yet more power—the knowledge of how to graft flesh to wood.
- Given the nature of the grafted treant, it is likely that they harbor rare and potent herbs amidst their branches.

WILLOW TREANT

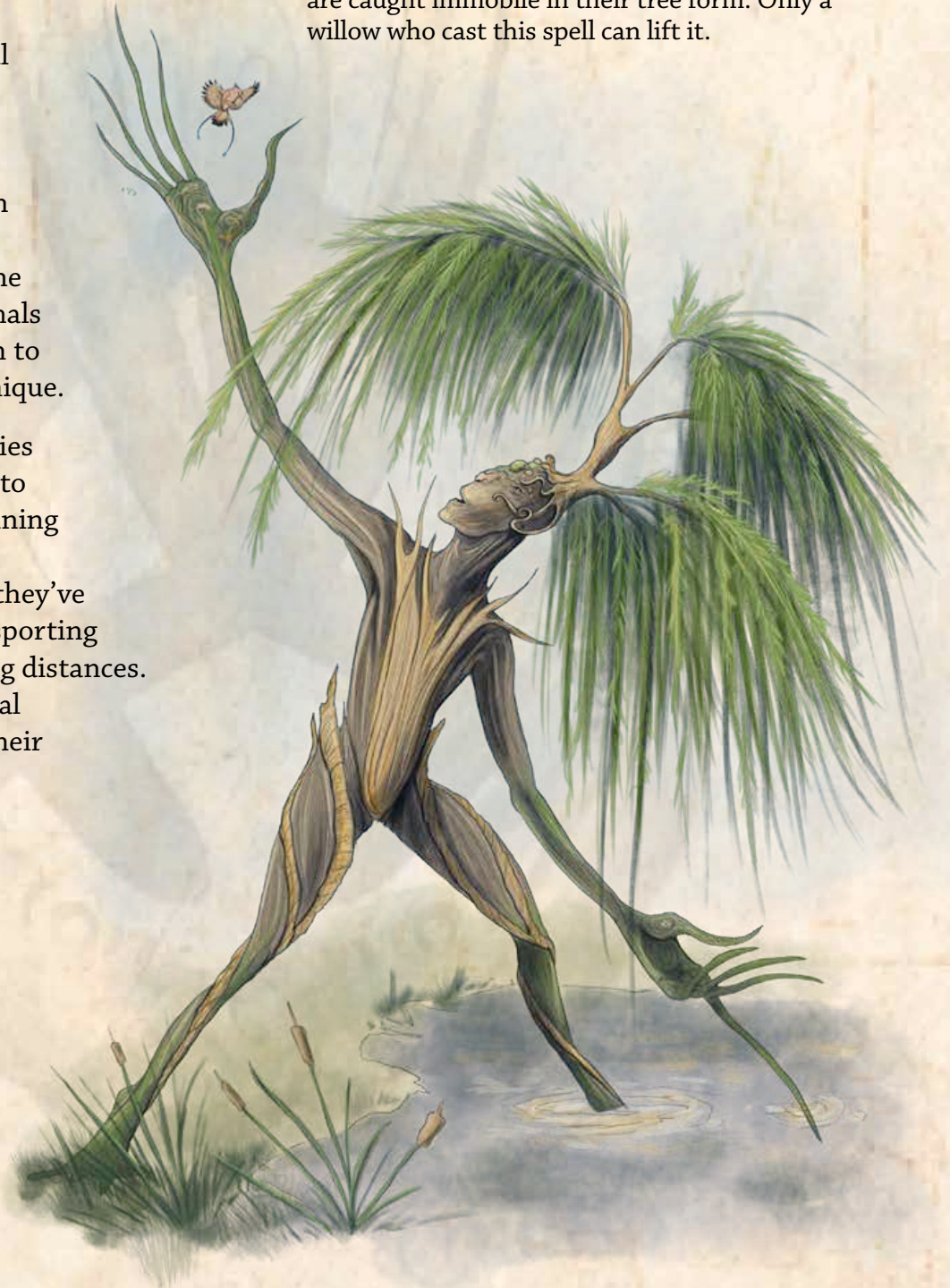
Willow treants are more playful than their oaken counterparts. They enjoy frolicking with the creatures who inhabit their lands and explore every inch of their domain with wide-eyed curiosity. Every day is a new excuse to discover the ever-changing beauty of nature. Willow treants are also the most likely to venture away from their homes in search of new experiences.

Because willows don't like being alone, many of them will band together when they go exploring. There is safety in numbers and they are much less likely to get cut down with friends by their side. When willows explore, they search the world for new plants and animals they can bring to their domain to make it more beautiful and unique.

Willows' dynamic personalities have granted them the ability to learn humanoid magic. Combining humanoid magic with their intrinsically magical natures, they've developed new spells for transporting flora and fauna safely over long distances. Also, they've developed magical techniques for protection of their domain while they are away.

Rumors & Legends

- One way willows protect their domains while they are away is to turn any harmful interlopers into trees themselves. The person who attempts to hunt on their land, or perhaps cut down a tree, springs a trap carried by flower seeds floating in the air. When the trap springs, the person is slowly turned into a tree. The transformation itself is painless and the person is still aware of their surroundings, but they are caught immobile in their tree form. Only a willow who cast this spell can lift it.



BANYAN TREANT

Banyan treants are dour creatures. They are blessed (or cursed as they would say) with the ability to feel the emotions of others, and this burden sours their view of the world. With each new treetop that sprouts from their shoulders, their mood worsens.

The older a banyan grows, the stronger its empathic powers get, until one day it is filtering through its branches thousands of emotions from thousands of creatures from all around. The banyan have complex minds strong enough to support the influx of emotions they receive on a daily basis, but they are unable to close themselves off from these feelings. The eldest banyan often go into long slumbers, sleep being the only thing that cuts off the waves of emotions.

The only thing that lifts a banyan's mood is feeling the emotions of saplings and other baby creatures. Infant emotions are so strong and pure that they overwhelm the negativity the banyan feels and allows them to focus solely on the child. Banyan are often dubbed 'the babysitting tree', because of their love for children. Many treants with a sapling, who know a banyan, will leave their saplings in their care for a few short years to help lighten their friend's mood.

Rumors & Legends

- Lying against a banyan's bark and telling it your woes will help to alleviate the pain you feel in your heart.
- Rumor is you can pick out strong individual emotions held in a banyan's leaves in the fall. Red leaves, the passions (anger, love, desire). Yellows, the anxieties. Grief crumbles and fall before they change color. Brewing with these leaves can evoke traces of the emotion.



UNICORN

Translated from elven druidess Kalimar Sylvanthe's journal Ar'rokko mor'Palurin, or Noble Equines of the World, commissioned by the druid circle of Summer's Reach.

The well-loved legend of the unicorn is shared by a variety of cultures. Their pure and compassionate nature inspires even the darkest of creatures to change their ways. Laying eyes on a unicorn is considered a blessing, and to befriend one an even greater honor, while slaying one is believed to invite seven generations of bad luck to one's family.

Unicorns possess an innate curiosity, empathy, and gift for illusion that inspire their position as muses in many cultures. People revere them as symbol of righteousness, but like many creatures, they possess a multitude of natures. Some varieties have traveled and adapted to new environments so that they are almost unrecognizable next to the white-pelted, silver-maned creature of bards' tales.

Biology

Unicorns greatly resemble other equines, save for the distinct essence of magic in their blood and the great horn spiraling outward from their foreheads. They are fastidiously clean by nature, frequently bathing in streams or lakes. Those wishing to catch a peek at a unicorn might be disappointed; their talent for illusory magic allows them to fade from non-magical sight and create mirages, shadowy creatures, and misleading paths to disorient travelers. Early scholarly conjecture claimed the unicorn's horn to be the source of its power, but more recent research suggests that is no more than myth, as the unicorn's entire essence is magical.

Despite the unicorn's dainty appearance, they are dangerous foes when their illusions fail to ward off unwanted visitors. Their legs are stronger than those of a draft horse, and their hooves are harder than adamantine. Their

horns are also viciously sharp and of the same material as their hooves, capable of impaling even enchanted armor.

Behavior

Solitary by nature, unicorns become extremely territorial as they age. Most young leave their parent's side to seek out their own forested areas to inhabit shortly after they've grown into adulthood. Upon staking their claim to an area, they will fight to keep it from any invaders who might bring harm or unwanted change to the wood or its natural inhabitants. No one knows for sure what biological drive causes these creatures to seek out and protect one location for life, but it is rare that they migrate to new areas once they've claimed one for themselves.

Natural empaths, unicorns develop deep connections with the other denizens of their domains, often possessing an innate ability to know where in the wood they are needed at any given time. Other creatures learn to depend on their protection, and even the forest itself seems to grow healthier and develop an aura of peace when under the protection of these mythical beasts. It is rumored that bathing in a lake residing in one of these forests can heal the sick or mentally ill, leaving them feeling refreshed and at peace with the world.

Diet

Like most equines, unicorns consume several pounds of grass and other vegetation throughout the day, grazing as they patrol their lands. They have a specific fondness for alfalfa and sweet clovers. They also require a mineral component to their diet, and will lick large rocks or areas of natural seepage. They do take an interest in salt blocks should they

happen to come across them, and local villagers hoping to be blessed by unicorns often leave such offerings as gifts to the mysterious guardian.

Mating

Unicorns rarely choose to reproduce during their long lifespan, focused instead on protecting the existing life within their realms. Being sexless and unable to reproduce like most creatures, their rare procreation occur through parthenogenesis. When a mature unicorn develops the desire to wander during the spring, it is eventually drawn from its home to the mountains or another area of high altitude, where they await a spring storm. The unicorn's horn attracts lightning during the height of the storm's rage, and each strike is absorbed into a new creation. Once the storm has passed, the unicorn returns to its home and painstakingly builds a nest out of various hays and grasses for ten months until the foal is born. They are fully mobile within a day, but remain with their parent for two to three years until wanderlust inspires them to seek out their own territory. Unicorns are kind and doting parents during these formative years, and even the lesser creatures in their realm rally to protect the foal.

Interactions with Humanoids

Legends paint the unicorn as the valiant rescuer or one who appears only to the pure of heart, and that is quite often true, for they are naturally attracted by good hearts and repelled by dark ones. Their empathic nature draws them to wanderers in need, and their judgment of a person's character is uncanny.



Once befriended, unicorns display childlike and puckish senses of humor, often playing pranks on their visitors. They delight in creating distractions before sneaking away with an adventurer's lunch. They never play tricks to harm, and should a prank go awry and cause injury, they show great remorse and distress, and require much reassurance from their friend before calming.

Highly charismatic people have been known to mask their true nature upon first contact with a unicorn, but their true intent is always discovered. These people are often those who seek to enslave the unicorn through magical means, as the creatures are impervious to mundane shackles. Their lies and efforts are hardly worth the prize, however, as captive unicorns wilt swiftly, losing their grandeur and affecting the appearance of an abused, dejected horse. Eventually, it will lose its horn, and its magical aura will darken forever.

LUNAR UNICORN

Lunar unicorns are found most often in deep forests, and countless travelers have related stories of catching glimpses of these silver-maned creatures out of the corners of their eyes. Their name is derived from their appearance as well as their nature, for they require little sleep and are most active during the night. Their preferred illusions involve terrain mirages and thick fog to hide their glowing silver appearance and silence their movement.

Fey scholars believe the lunar unicorn was created by the fey moon goddess, sent into the material realm as a foothold of her presence. Like their cousins, lunar unicorns are capable of speaking Common, but are also fluent in the faerie language. Popular theory states that every unicorn variant is derived from the first lunar unicorns. The sheer power of their illusion magic alone, often associated with the moon goddess, suggests the possibility of strong truth to these conjectures. Such ideas also explain the territorial alpha nature of the lunar unicorn in their habitats, for a gods-blessed animal would easily claim dominance over any lesser mundane, magical, and fey creatures in their realm.

The lunar unicorn has a lifespan of nearly a thousand years, and only shows its age in the brief weeks before its death. Only one eyewitness account exists of a unicorn's passing. According to the anonymous adventurer, the wood turned dark despite the full moon. Glowing ley lines spread across the ground, and he followed them to an ancient tree deep in the wood. There, orbs of light danced around a circle of perfectly round moonstones, and

within stood an equine figure so brilliantly white he could not gaze upon it. When he came to, he saw where the figure had stood, a pool of water so clear it looked empty. Legend says that on the longest night of the year, the moon in its trajectory reflects over the pools of lunar unicorns who have passed on, and the veil between our realm and that of the fey is thin.

Rumors & Legends

- Many of the rumors of ghosts and specters in old forests are attributable to the lunar unicorn. The Grey Lady of Vesper's Wood is one such tale, dating back from the first decades when halflings settled amongst the fertile hillsides just outside the wood. Halflings are not adventurous by nature, and sightings of the 'Grey Lady' discouraged trade between their villages and major cities on the other side of the forest. Their subsequent insulation has allowed paranormal superstition to tightly grip the community, despite several renowned druids reassuring the villagers what they fear is merely a lunar unicorn guarding the forest. The Vesper's Wood halflings, however, are not so easily convinced.



NIGHTMARE UNICORN

The nightmare is a twisted, dark creature that is everything the unicorn is not. While still basically equine in appearance, these creatures have coats the color of midnight and twisted ebony horns; their hooves are wreathed in fire and their manes comprised of flame. Where unicorns are innocent and childlike by nature, the nightmare is a warped and corrupt version of what it once was. Legend reads that these darkened creatures are the result of kidnapped foals being raised in captivity and absorbing the demonic magics used to bind them as they grow. Most foals in captivity don't survive to adulthood, lacking the strength to stand the presence of such dark magics, but those who do quickly grow in power, until they manage to escape their captors, often destroying them in the process. Unlike their counterparts, their illusory magic is long-faded, and they have no ability to fade from view or alter their surroundings. Instead, their magic is fueled by rage and a touch of insanity from years of captivity. They develop a need to seek out warmth and the ability to call fire to do their bidding. Those few who make it to adulthood crave and consume volcanic ash, most often seeking out active mountain ranges to claim as their own.

Rumors & Legends

- While there is no proof that these creatures can be saved, local myths claim that it's possible that aid can be given by their kinder counterparts, who may be able to bring light back into the twisted mind of a nightmare. There are a few scattered tales of this occurring in the past, but in recent times no one can recall any similar stories; and it seems at odds with the unicorn's nature to even approach such a chaotic and emotionally broken creature.
- At the base of one volcanic mountain range, a small town has a local legend about their summer fires. It is said that each year at the summer's warmest, the fields are cursed to catch fire and those who have done evil throughout the year will see their homes burn as well. Locals have lived this legend for the last ten years and are convinced their town is cursed. I believe a nightmare lives in the volcanic caverns within the mountains and during the warmest parts of summer feels compelled to seek out the world from long ago. The fields surrounding this farming town are ripe with food this time of year and it likely can't resist trying to graze on the foods it once loved. Unfortunately, its presence alone causes wildfires to rage through the crops, some years leaving barely enough for the townspeople to survive and occasionally spreading far enough to reach houses and outbuildings.



OKAPI UNICORN

In the open plains of desert-like areas resides an odd unicorn cousin the locals name okapi. These zebra-like equines are considered good luck to encounter and are often the ring leaders of several large traditional zebra harems. Okapi have warm brown coats, a smattering of cream colored stripes, and a single curved horn reaching toward the sky. Their eyes are a captivating blend of lightning and sky and it's rumored that the weak of will can be lost in their gaze for an eternity, adrift on the clouds of the universe.

Okapi are the rarest of all unicorn breeds and their abilities lean less toward the traditional unicorn illusions and more toward captivating the mind. While they cannot render themselves invisible, these highly intelligent, shamanistic beasts can charm others into doing their bidding. They live amid zebra harems, protecting them against the dangers of the wild, both from other beasts and from

humanoids who would cause them harm. For example, a lioness intent on making an okapi-protected zebra prey may simply discover mid-leap that she's no longer



interested and wander back to her pride with nothing to show for her time away. Hunters might wander out to acquire zebra pelts only to realize they really prefer to do something else entirely or have an overwhelming drive to return home to safety. Okapi can inspire fear, confusion, calm, and a variety of other emotions in the average mind, but are generally good-natured and never attempt to cause actual harm unless there is no other option available. Their single desire is to protect those they have taken under their care. While it is incredibly rare for this to occur, the okapi can even project their thoughts into the minds of others, allowing them to communicate their wisdom should they choose to. While they can do this with words, they more often choose to project a vision or scene of events.

Rumors & Legends

- The okapi is such a deep spiritual part of tribal lore that those training to be shamans leave on quests to search for these elusive beings as the final part of their journey. It is considered a blessing of high status if a young shaman finds one of these creatures, and even more so should the okapi choose to communicate a vision of guidance. In times of upheaval or doubt within the tribes, a wise shaman will seek out the harem leader and ask for advice, using the power of tribal belief in this wise being to unite them together.
- The oldest living shaman to date is rumored to be close with the local okapi and often disappears for days at a time to commune with her wise friend. There is speculation that this particular okapi not only leads the striped equines of the plains, but also has a heavy hand in the politics and inner-workings of the natives' lives. Using the shaman as their mouthpiece, they maneuver lives into patterns that suit some grander plan known only to the okapi.

KARKADANN UNICORN

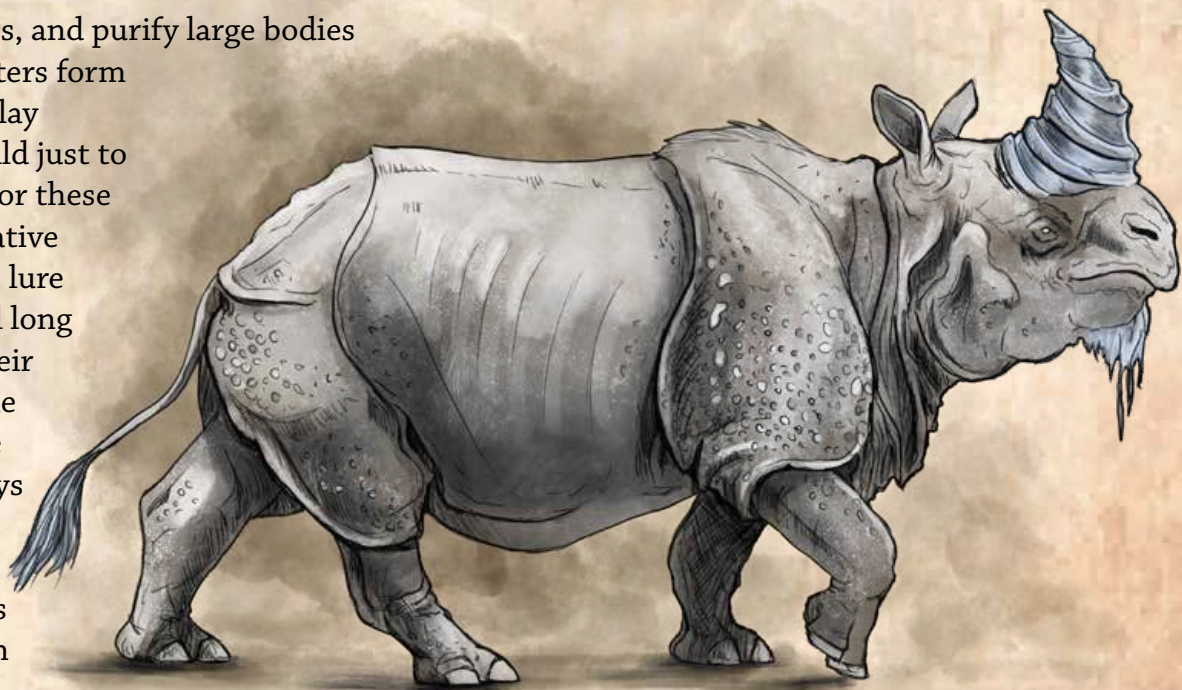
This massive stone-grey beast with a wide spiral horn and a wizened beard is often said to be the grandfather of all rhinoceroses. Loners by nature, karkadann roam the plains and are dangerous to all they encounter. They're notorious for their grumpy nature and perilous temper. To anger a karkadann is likely to guarantee your own death. Even other beasts of the plains avoid this solitary creature, as entering its vicinity causes it to charge angrily and impale the unfortunate invader. Unlike the unicorns of most areas, the karkadann is not territorial to a specific place, only the expanse in which it currently resides. It wanders the plains consuming vegetation in its path and has no attachment to a specific locale, often wandering miles at a time in any direction.

Oddly enough, while they do consume grasses and similar vegetation, it is not the grass these beasts prefer but poisonous plants and mushrooms instead. The most maddening thing about these unfriendly beings is the miraculous abilities they possess, but which are largely inaccessible due to their unfortunate personalities. Karkadann are gifted healers; the same wide horn they use to gore their unfortunate neighbors with can also eliminate poison, cure diseases, and purify large bodies of water. Brave hunters form groups to bait and slay karkadann in the wild just to obtain their horns for these purposes. More creative tribes might seek to lure one into a local pool long enough to purify their drinking source. One has to wonder if the creatures have always been so grumpy or it's the incessant bands of humanoids putting their lives in

danger that has caused their temperament. Either way, it's a war that doesn't seem to be ending any time soon.

Rumors & Legends

- Local legend speaks of a hidden lake somewhere in the vastness of the plains where the karkadann go to die. It is rumored that, upon nearing the end of their lives, they instinctively begin the long journey to this hidden pool. Shielded by great magics of illusion and mind-alteration that make unwelcome visitors redirect their paths, this lake is partially surrounded by ancient walls and features a massive fountain statue at its center, depicting four karkadann rearing on hind legs, water pouring from their mouths.
- Legend says that each karkadann who arrives here walks calmly into the pool and gives its life over to the lake, its body dissolving into energy to be reborn again later and its magical horn drifting to the dark depths below. The water here is the purest of any in the world and ancient tales speak of not only healing properties but claim that a single draught from this magical pool can cure all ailments and restore youth. Many an adventurer has wasted their life searching futilely for this oasis, but few have ever claimed to stumble upon it and none who have can ever quite recall how to return.



WYVERN

First discovered in northern mountains and forests, the wyvern has earned itself a fearsome reputation. Due to their reptilian nature and large size, they were initially believed to be dragons. This has been proven incorrect for a variety of reasons, although many in the world still seem confused by this. The wyvern is not as intelligent like it's draconic cousin, nor magically imbued with any sense of humanoid intellect. They are deadly, quick, and ravenous.

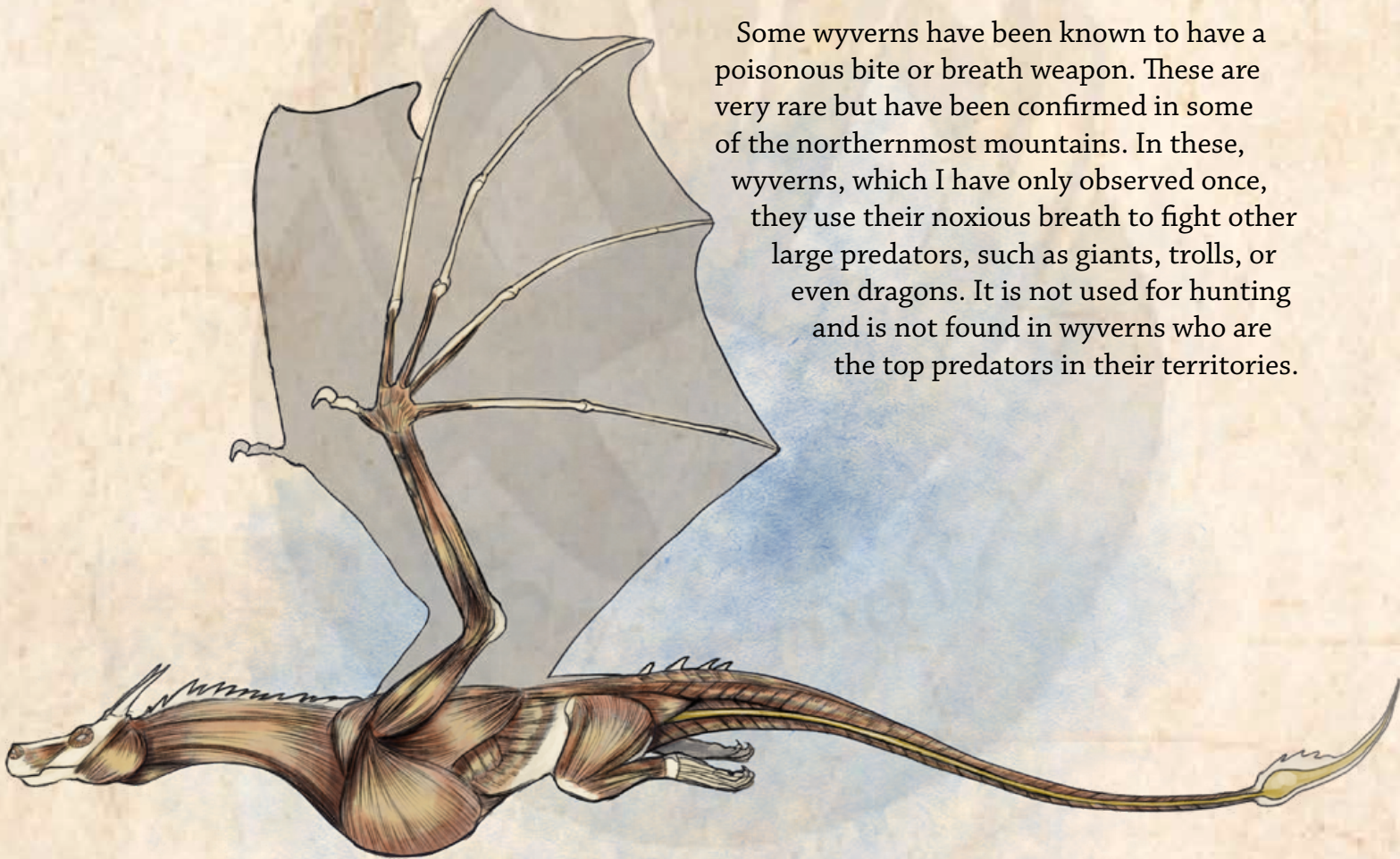
Despite being encountered more and more as humanoid territories grow, wyverns continue to be mistaken for their larger cousins. Multiple kingdoms have reported infestations of the large beasts, yet few are eager to hunt

them because of their barbed, venomous tails, and sometimes their ability to breathe a poisonous gas. They are indeed noxious creatures that are nearly impossible to hunt and kill.

Biology

Unlike common dragons, the wyvern has only two legs. It uses its large wings to counterbalance if moving about in a crawl, and although it can move on two legs, although this is rarer to behold. Large claws exist on the top of its wings to help grip the ground and trees. Along its long tail are thick, sharp barbs, which are venomous enough to easily kill humanoids. This poison has yet to be remedied and any contact is likely fatal.

Some wyverns have been known to have a poisonous bite or breath weapon. These are very rare but have been confirmed in some of the northernmost mountains. In these, wyverns, which I have only observed once, they use their noxious breath to fight other large predators, such as giants, trolls, or even dragons. It is not used for hunting and is not found in wyverns who are the top predators in their territories.



Behavior

Wyvern are violent, bloody creatures who occupy large swaths of territory. The individual wyvern needs a large territory, just enough to hunt and roam in, and their ranges overlap with one another. This often results in bloody fights. Solitary for the most part, young wyverns will form packs as they leave their nests to provide safety to one another. Otherwise, wyverns only seek each other's company during mating season.

They are not nearly as intelligent as their draconic cousins, but have their own keen wit. Natural-born hunters, the wyvern has perfected the ability to hunt humanoids, even when the humanoids travel in packs. They are vicious and volatile, slaughtering numerous humanoids simply to remove them from their territory.

Diet

All wyverns are carnivores, and eat any meat they come across. Because of their large size, wyvern generally rely on flight to travel to where they can find meat once they've stripped the local areas around them of immediate resources. They almost always exist in areas where deer and game are plentiful. They will settle for hunting birds and other small prey, for they are absolutely creatures of opportunity.

Scavenging is not something a wyvern will do. If they find a kill, they will not eat it; but rather, they will begin to hunt and find the thing that killed the carcass. This may be due to a humanoid tendency to be bait traps with dead animals in an attempt to capture the wyvern.

Mating

The mating rituals of the wyvern are macabre at best. The female gorges herself for days before she is fertile, so much so that her wings and body become flush with red. They say

this is from the blood she consumes, but it is obvious the extra consumption helps produce eggs. Once crimson, the female launches into the air and elicits a scream that can be heard for miles. Males come to her and rip each other to shreds until she has chosen one.

The two dance in the sky and mate there. They lay their eggs in large nests made of trees, foliage, and the fur of kills. Elvers hatch and remain with their mother until they can kill their own food, and then leave their mother's territory after she abandons the nest. The pack of them will wander and hunt together until aggression separates them and they find their own overlapping territories.

Interactions with Humanoids

While many attempts have been made to domesticate them, none have been successful. Beastmasters have written on their experiences stealing eggs, but few have had success in maintaining a domesticated wyvern. Their ferocity and feral nature destroys nearly all attempts. With their naturally venomous weapons, humanoids stand little chance against such marvelous beasts.

Wyvern hunts were popular years ago, until it became apparent that packs of wyvern were working together to slaughter everyone coming after them. This went on for several decades as humanoids tried to eradicate the wyvern from their lands. In the process, humanoids became a natural part of the wyvern's diet, and it was the first time in recorded observation that they worked together as opposed to being solitary.

One or two will descend to a village, steal or kill multiple livestock, and be sure to leave a bloody trail into their mountain and forest ranges. They will stalk and hunt the humanoids who enter, leaving clues and rustling bushes until their prey are well deep into their territory where there is little hope for escape. There they descend and feast.

FOREST WYVERN

The most common of its kind, the forest wyvern is by far the most brazen and aggressive of its species. It was this species that first started hunting humanoids, to the point where entire generations of forest wyvern now solely hunt them. They have become faster and stronger than their other cousins, and have become the most clever of hunters. A well-established pack, once something never seen, can survive off a single village for years. These villages live in fear, and many become expert wyvern hunters if they survive being targeted by the wyvern as prey.

It is rumored that the forest wyvern has learned how to call to humanoids in the dark. Stalking the shadows surrounding the village during the day, at night, they will call to the humanoids in the dark by imitating babies crying, dogs whimpering, or some even say calling out names.

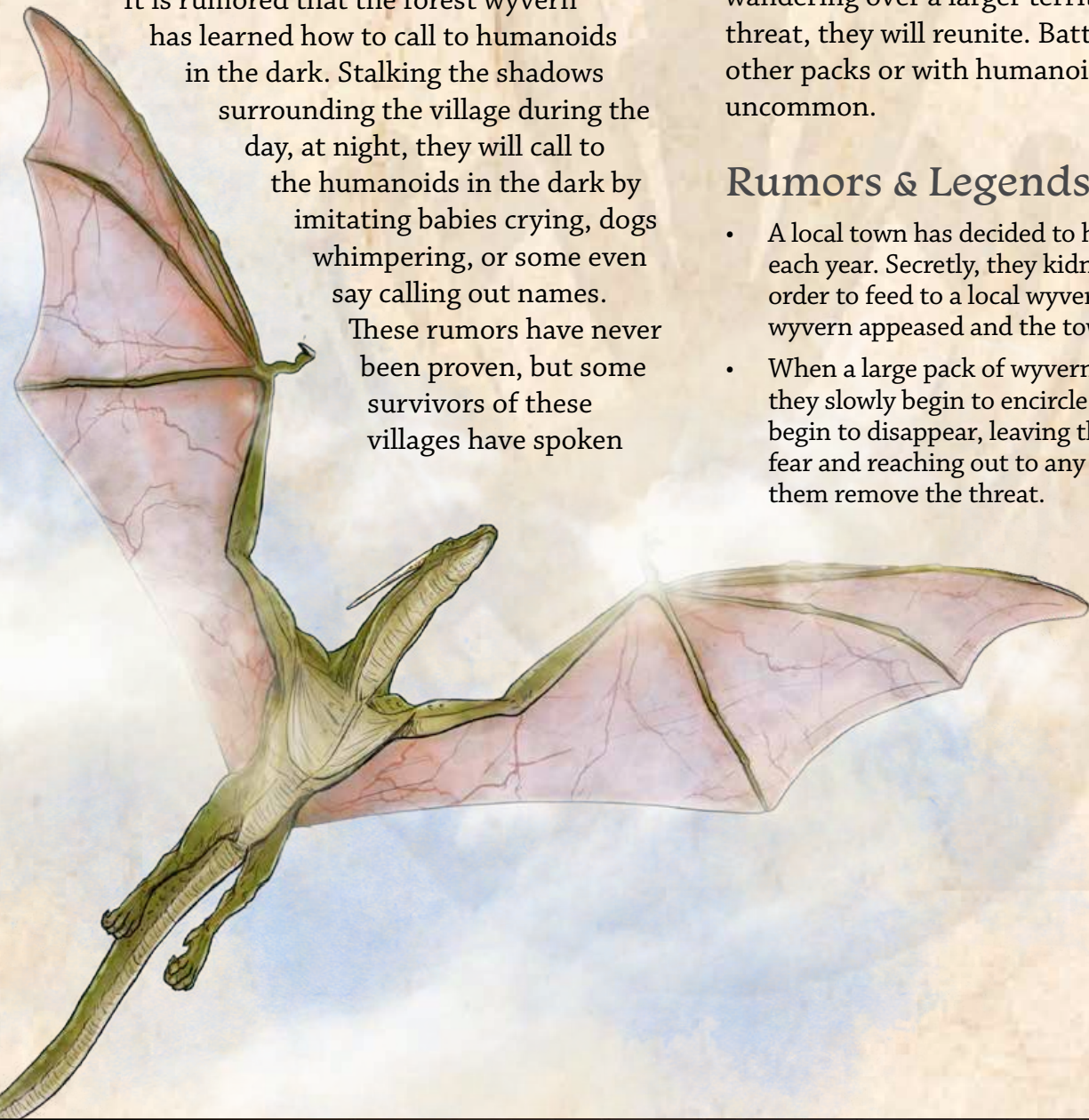
These rumors have never been proven, but some survivors of these villages have spoken

about the haunting quality of these wyverns. This keen sense of trickery and deception has demonstrated the wyvern's sharp intellect and obvious relation to its draconic cousin.

Evolving to hunt in packs instead of living in solitary locations, these wyvern can take on bigger and more powerful prey. The rarest of stories includes the wyvern hunting and successfully killing a dragon, feasting on its body for days, and taking over the dragon's territory. If they remove themselves from a humanoid village and live in the wild, the pack tends to disperse and find themselves wandering over a larger territory, but under threat, they will reunite. Battles between other packs or with humanoid hunters isn't uncommon.

Rumors & Legends

- A local town has decided to host a grand festival each year. Secretly, they kidnap attendees in order to feed to a local wyvern. This has kept the wyvern appeased and the town safe for years.
- When a large pack of wyvern move into a valley, they slowly begin to encircle a town and people begin to disappear, leaving the town living in fear and reaching out to any hero who could help them remove the threat.



DESERT WYVERN

Wearing the perfect disguise for its environment, the desert wyvern is a long, flat lizard with brownish sand-colored scales and reddish bands upon its back. The large wings are extremely thin and are used to stir up the sand around them. Their flat bodies allow them to hide almost perfectly within the sand. Stretching out, they use their wings for kicking up sand to cover them almost completely. It takes great skill to spot the exposed eyes, horns or barbed tail; the only clues to help avoid stepping upon the beast.

Along their face are whiskers that sit in the sand, feeling any movement within the area around them. It's through this that they hunt their prey, holding perfectly still until their prey is close enough that they have no way to escape. Desert wyverns primarily eat small desert prey, and are forced to spend most of their time hunting. Unlike their forest cousins, they do not hunt in packs; they prefer to hunt alone unless large prey requires cooperation. They are inherently skittish creatures, more

likely to run from anything humanoid size than to stop and fight it, but have been known to kill the odd humanoid here and there.

Desert wyverns seem to have an intrinsic hatred for magic, said to come from the creation of a desperate desert god. They can sense when something with magical properties are nearby, and will work together to track down and destroy whatever that may be. Wizards, sorcerers and the like find deserts inhabited by these wyverns especially dangerous. Even a simple cantrip can trigger a desert wyvern attack.

Rumors & Legends

- It has been observed that when an especially strong desert wyvern passes away, the sands at the site of its death become disruptive to the use of magic. Travelers can expect any attempt to cast a spell in these areas to result in wild magic.



COASTAL WYVERN

Nesting in the craggy cliffs and edges of the world, the coastal wyvern watches the world of waves beneath with sharp eyes and keen hunger. The strangely shaped wings are designed for sleekness in order to make swimming faster and easier as opposed to flying. The best it can do after it pushes off from the cliff is glide down toward the water. Long, deadly claws help it climb rock faces and boat sides with relative ease. It is an absolutely perfect hunter in the sea.

While fish is a normal food source for the wyverns, they specialize in attacking ships that moor too close to their homes. Because of this, several brazen rulers have taken to the breeding and relocation of these creatures to prevent the attacks of pirates or rival kingdoms. These so-called “domesticated wyverns” are feral, at best, but make an excellent guard system against would-be invaders. Any ships who wander into wild coastal wyvern territory are easily overwhelmed and sunk, providing a delightful food source for the wyverns.

Yet the wyverns exist peacefully with merfolk or sirens, finding their presence calming and alluring. If either ever dare threaten the nest of a coastal wyvern, though, the peace breaks and the wyvern will attack. Because of this, it is considered in poor taste to steal or kill the young of the wyvern by aquatic societies. Both sirens and merfolk have been known to lure unsuspecting ships into wyvern territory to destroy the humanoids on board.

Rumors & Legends

- The time for migration has begun, and the local numbers of coastal wyverns have skyrocketed.
- Sightings and behaviors of coastal wyverns are often interpreted by locals as signs of incoming weather incidents.



CAVE BRUISER WYVERN

Rarely seen and mostly heard of in stories that have never been substantiated, cave bruisers are the largest and most reclusive of their kind. They dwell deep beneath the earth in vast caverns, always with water, and always know their homes intimately. Living in small colonies, the cave bruiser can live for years without contact from the outside, living on a single meal for decades. Their caverns are filled with the most aged and hidden of treasure, a trap for mortals to lead them to their doom.

Giant, armored, and blind, the cave bruiser can be the size of some of the largest dragons and appear to be made of the very rock it lives in. Although it still has eyes, they see nothing, and are a milky white that doesn't reflect light in the darkness. Their ears hear nearly everything, and their sensitive feet and wings can pick up the smallest vibrations in the rock around them. Within their colonies, multiple skeletons and treasure can be found. They leave it, letting it litter the ground to lure more explorers within. Their traps are always set, for once they have eaten, they mate, and then return to their roost.

The cave bruiser is faster than it looks, and those who wander into their territory are likely to be bitten or stung with their deadly tail before they even realize they are being stalked in the dark. They move soundlessly and are likely to be mistaken for a piece of rock when travelers pass.

The young live in the deepest caves, protected by the colony's adults. Their strange sounds, combined with the sound of them playing in the bodies and gold that litter the caves, are the perfect lure to draw adventurers further in.

Rumors & Legends

- It is said there is a giant slumbering wyvern around which a city of great faith has been built. The citizens revere this magnificent creature, often singing songs to soothe the great beast. Little do they know, there is nothing but evil in its heart.





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