

See the forest for the trees...



A different kind of RPG



eco



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ECO

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What is *eco*

eco is a different kind of RPG. Rather than delving into lost dungeons, crossing the vast emptiness of space or stopping dangerous foreign spies, players in *eco* take on the roll of ordinary animals. Well, not quite ordinary. The PCs of *eco* are Aware, granted sentience and an ability to learn far beyond normal animals.

eco was designed with two types of players in mind. The first are typical gamers accustomed to fantasy, sci-fi and horror games who are simply looking for something different, something unusual, to play between their normal games. The second are those new to roleplaying, younger players who are just discovering this hobby. *eco* is an excellent introduction to roleplaying as well as being an educational game that will help younger players learn about the world around them: zoology, ecology, pollution, habitat destruction, teamwork, problem solving and other valuable skills. Welcome to the world *eco*.

Please Note: *eco* requires the *Omni System*™ core book to play.



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Chapter One

Gaia's Call

So, what makes you think humans are special?

Is it because humans are the dominant species on the planet? They haven't always been, and it wasn't long ago that they were all cowering in caves. Besides, there are other creatures who claim to rule the Earth. Ask the ants. They outnumber humans, and a world without them would be a very different place.

Is it because humans use tools? They're not the only ones. There are more than a few creatures—crows and chimpanzees come to mind—who can improvise solutions with sticks or rocks. Give an animal the right limbs, and it might even use man-made devices. You haven't lived until you've seen an octopus open a jar.

Is it because humans form complex societies? Look at a beehive, where thousands of individuals work together for the good of the colony. Look at dolphins, who form alliances to fight wars. (No one said all animals are pacifists.)

Is it because humans have a unique capacity for destruction? You may have a point, there, but it's nothing to be proud of.

Here's the truth: For whatever reason—call it luck, call it evolution, or call it providence—humans have acquired the power to reshape the Earth in their own image. Maybe that's why they don't notice they aren't very different from the creatures of the animal kingdom. Maybe that's why they don't see the millions of animal civilizations that rise and fall beneath their noses.

Make no mistake, though. The animal world is as intricate, beautiful and terrifying as anything humanity has to offer....

Animalia

What does it mean, that animals aren't very different from humans?

It means that the pigeons waddling along the sidewalk, cooing to one another as they

peck at bagel crumbs, are chatting and gossiping and arguing over who's eating too much. It means that the neighborhood cats who hiss and howl into the night are cursing and threatening their enemies, and that their daytime naps are interspersed with lazy plotting. It means that bears dream during hibernation, and feel sad or angry when they awake to see their forest homes being cut down. It means that rats watch from the walls of apartment buildings, trying to understand how humans work microwaves and sinks and refrigerators. It means that whales have a mythology and religion all their own, recounting stories of the Leviathan and his many children. It means that a wolf can feel excited when killing a rabbit and mourn when a packmate dies. It means a rabbit can hate wolves, even knowing that wolves are just trying to survive.

It doesn't mean that animals think like humans. There's a reason why rats never do figure out how to use microwaves—it's because they're rats, and rats aren't bred or raised to work with machines. A bear doesn't know why loggers come to his forest, and can only guess that it's part of how humans expand their territory. A dog doesn't know why her human owner kicks her when he comes home from work, or what "abuse" is.

Animals don't even think like other animals, most of the time. A fox might recognize a spider as a fellow predator, but not understand why that spider puts so much effort into her web. An owl might see a bat flying through a dark forest and assume that the bat has excellent night vision, not realizing that the bat augments sight with sonar. Social animals are forever confused by the behavior of loners, and loners are taken aback by the coordination of packs and flocks.

Migratory animals can't understand how non-migratory animals can remain in one place, and nonmigratory animals see migratory animals' long journeys as suicidal.

Besides, almost every animal thinks his or her species is the best—the greatest species the world has ever seen. More than anything, this explains why different species rarely communicate with one another. Sure, nothing stops a bird from learning the language of dogs, but why would a bird want to? A bird cares about bird things, while a dog cares about dog things. When animals do learn other species' languages, it's usually out of necessity: Pets abandoned by their master might need to communicate to survive, rabbits and deer competing for land might need to talk to reach a peace agreement, and an oxpecker might want to speak with the rhinoceros he uses as a perch and feeding ground. Even then, it's easy for animals to misunderstand one another.

In older times, before humans began covering every square foot of the planet with concrete and steel and asphalt, animals from different species were even less inclined to communicate. The rise of humanity has changed things, though. Communication isn't common, but an animal trying to talk to a member of another species won't be seen as freakish or bizarre. Animals trapped in cities have a common foe, and they take whatever comfort they can from that fact. Friendships and alliances form across species lines in the face of adversity, while some animals learn lessons from human society and try to trade with—or tax—their brethren. It's a different world, these days.



The Aware

Yet there's an exception to all these rules about the animal world. There are animals who not only think and feel and dream, but who understand. Animals who are blessed with the ability to look at other species and to empathize, to learn. Animals who—for lack of a better term—are Aware.

You can't recognize one of the Aware by looking at him or her. Most of them were born and raised like any other animal, and took years (or months, or days, for short-lived species) to realize they were different. Growing up, the

Aware find it hard to ignore the other animals living and working and dying all around them, and they become curious about other species. They don't necessarily learn new languages (though many do); instead, they learn how other animals live. A wolf doesn't refuse to hunt, but he learns to view the world through the eyes of his prey. A squirrel comes to appreciate the craftsmanship of a bird's nest. A jellyfish accepts a crab's need for shelter and a seagull's need for open skies.

The Aware aren't passive observers, though. They adapt, and take on other animals' skills as their own. They can be linguistic prodigies, fluently speaking the tongue of any spe-

Animal Names

Every species has its own customs when it comes to names. Some animals receive a name from their parents when born or hatched, and retain that name forever. Some species don't bother to name their young, allowing a youth to choose his or her own name upon reaching a certain age. Some animals change their names as they age to reflect their position in life. A few species—mostly insects—don't bother with names for anyone but extraordinary individuals; a worker termite might go without a name, but the queen would still receive one.

Animal names generally fall into three categories. Most common are descriptive names: names which say something about an animal's appearance, attitude, or job. "Stripe," "Chief," "Sings," "Swift," "Fang," and "Cruel" are examples of simple descriptive names. Some species use more complex descriptive names, such as "Whitewing," "Long Spit," "Barkeater," and "Great Mother."

The second major category of animal names is species names. Many animals—particularly Aware animals—call themselves by a word for their species in a human tongue. A turtle might be named "Turtle," "Tortue," "Kame," or "Kasa." Some animals say that early humans chose words for species based on the names animals called themselves, and that this is how species names entered human language. Other animals say that species names were learned from humans. It's not an argument likely to be resolved any time soon. There are a few eccentric animals who call themselves by human scientific names, such as "Macroclemys Temminckii;" no one doubts where these names come from.

The last major category consists of human names. Animals who live in cities or among humans—whether wild or as pets—sometimes take the names of people and places they hear about, either directed at them or just as background chatter. "Mike," "Washington," "Bad Dog," and "Hey Babe" are only a few examples from a very wide range of possibilities. A vocal minority of animals considers taking a human name to be, at best, a sign of oppression, and at worst, traitorous. Mostly though, human names are accepted like any others.

cies they encounter. They can adopt the subtle body language and nonverbal signals of other species, blending in with foreign civilizations and walking freely down city streets. Some even learn to use human tools and machines, amazing other animals and confounding human witnesses.

As they grow older, animals who are Aware almost invariably feel a responsibility to use their abilities for the greater good. Most animals don't have the vision or resources to care for creatures beyond their immediate family, but the Aware realize that all things are connected. The tree of life is fragile, and if one branch becomes sick—if a habitat is destroyed, or if predators over hunt, or if a species reproduces beyond its ability to support itself—then the sickness can spread to the entire tree. When one species is troubled, every species that feeds upon it or is eaten by it or shares habitat with it or cooperates with it is troubled, too. And every species that relies upon those species is troubled, as well. The Aware know that to protect one's kin, one must protect the ecosystem as a whole.

Other animals often don't appreciate the views of the Aware, but they can still recognize something profound in an Aware creature's wisdom. A family of animals raising a young member of the Aware may tell the youth stories and legends about Aware beings of the past. The Aware appear in many animal folktales, and are used to explain how certain customs began: Beavers say that it was an Aware who stole the knowledge of architecture from wasps and the knowledge of carving from woodpeckers, and who gifted beavers with the ability to build dams. Frogs say that it was an Aware tadpole who first walked on land, who made a bargain with the Earth itself so that all

frogs thereafter would be amphibious. Hawks and vultures say their species were once at war, but an Aware bird (each species claims the bird was one of its own) brought peace by promising living prey to the hawks and dead prey to the vultures.

Not all stories about the Aware are from mythology, though. Many animals and their families have been directly affected by the Aware in recent memory—often Aware from other species. The Aware warn animals about forest fires and toxic spills, forge treaties between competing groups, protect endangered habitats, keep watch on human activity, and more. Even animals who mistrust the intrusions of the Aware recognize their status as guardians of the animal kingdom.

Upon reaching adolescence, most Aware animals leave home to seek others of their kind. Only other Aware can understand their burden, and only the Aware can teach what it means to see the Earth as a single organism. And just as ordinary animals have myths about the Aware, the Aware have myths of their own....

The Legend of Gaia

Long ago, the Aware say, the Earth was as conscious and awake as any animal. The Earth's name was Gaia, though her children—the birds and beasts and insects of that primitive world—called her Mother Nature. There were fewer creatures then, and fewer species, and they lived in perfect harmony with one another and with their land. It was not a time without

bloodshed or death—predators hunted, disease culled the infirm, and age eventually claimed all—but worldly ills ensured that new generations could prosper and grow as their forbearers had.

At first, Gaia kept a close watch on her children. Soon, though, she was astonished to see them change and evolve, adapting to new circumstances more quickly than she could aid them herself. She rested the rest of a proud mother, believing her children could care for themselves. Perhaps that was a mistake, but even Gaia couldn't anticipate the disaster to come.

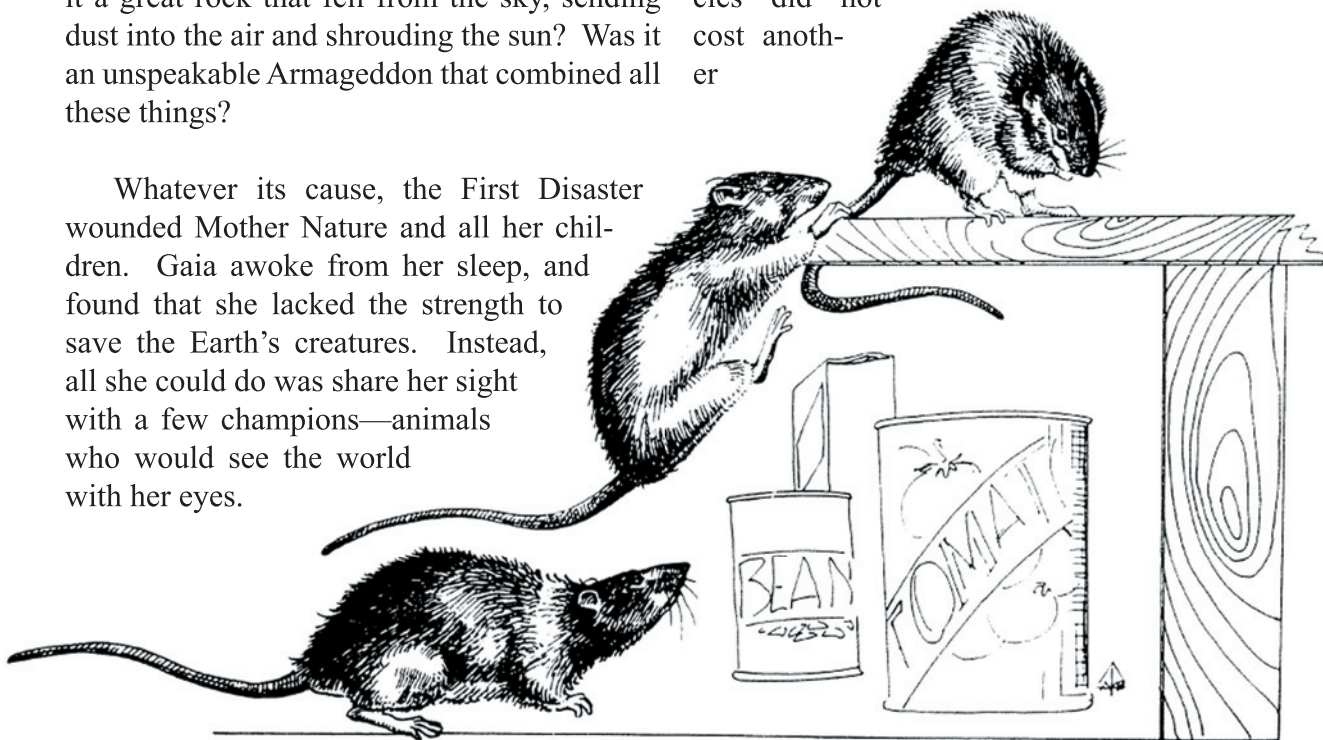
No one remembers what the First Disaster was. The Aware have many theories. Was it a flood that covered the Earth, drowning creatures by the thousands and leaving ruin in its wake? Was it the dawn of an ice age, changing the climate the first animals relied upon? Was it a great rock that fell from the sky, sending dust into the air and shrouding the sun? Was it an unspeakable Armageddon that combined all these things?

Whatever its cause, the First Disaster wounded Mother Nature and all her children. Gaia awoke from her sleep, and found that she lacked the strength to save the Earth's creatures. Instead, all she could do was share her sight with a few champions—animals who would see the world with her eyes.

The champions would nurture the survivors, heal the wounded, and prepare for the day the next disaster occurred.

In this, Gaia's wisdom failed her for the second time. The consequences of the First Disaster went beyond the immediate devastation. Where a predatory species was decimated by the disaster, prey species once held in check became free to run amok. Where a species that nourished a forest was decimated, all the animals living in that forest scrambled to remake the environment as they saw fit. Gaia's children didn't just need protection from tragedy—they needed protection from one another.

So Gaia again reached out to her champions, and gave them the power to learn from the animal kingdom. They would be responsible not simply for keeping their kin alive, but for keeping the ecosystem in balance. Their task would be to ensure that the success of one species did not cost another



species its existence—not if such a fate could be avoided. What made their task more difficult was Gaia’s insistence that her children be allowed to grow and evolve. The world would change, but its balance could not.

Once Gaia chose the first of the Aware, she fell asleep again. She has not woken since.

For millennia, the Aware went about their work and honored Gaia in all their actions. Not every species could be preserved, nor every disaster mitigated, but the Aware stayed true to their creator and helped the Earth grow and change. The legend of Gaia was passed down from animal to animal, and although ordinary creatures forgot the story, the Aware kept it alive.

Then the *humans* came.

The Age of Humanity

For a long while, no one perceived humans as a problem. They were clever and creative, but that was something to be proud of—not feared. When they left their caves, when they planted fields of grains and vegetables and fruit trees, animals were startled—but not worried. Humans were still few in number, and it’s in the nature of many animals to alter their habitat. Some animals profited from human activities, and some gladly allied themselves with human settlements.

The human population kept growing. Villages became cities. Humans cut down forests

for wood, redirected the course of rivers, and continued to turn grassy fields into farmland. The first sparks of concern flared among the Aware. Would humanity stay under control? Would human actions ultimately show reverence for Mother Nature, or would they disrupt the Earth’s balance?

By the time the Aware had their answer, it was too late.

Humanity grew and expanded and grew and expanded. Human cities got bigger. Human roads got longer. Human machines got more complex. Soon, humans sailed the oceans and sought to explore every place on Earth. Not all the cultures of humanity lived in the same way, of course—some altered their land in different ways than others, or revered Gaia in their own fashion—but they fought and mingled until their differences ceased to matter to the animal kingdom.

The industrial age seemed the peak of human progress. The Aware watched the erection of smog-spewing factories, the construction of railroads, the spread of city infrastructure and sewers and pollution, and believed that the situation could get no worse. Instead, they were shocked to find that the industrial age was the start of an avalanche that would bury the Earth. Humans even began to move through the air and under the sea, places once protected from all land animals.

The Aware were not powerless, but they were overwhelmed. What could a few animals do, now that humans had conquered the planet? Some creatures hoped that Aware humans might lead the way toward a solution, but no Aware humans were ever found. So the Aware did what they could, and watched their failures

accrue. They watched habitats disappear and species die. They watched pollutants seep into every unspoiled land. They tried to save what they could.

Today, the Aware agree that humans impact Gaia's creations more than any other species. The Aware agree that the balance of the ecosystem has tilted. The Aware agree that the fate of all creatures depends on the fate of humanity. What they don't agree on is what they should do about it.

The Words of the Wise

The Aware can be divided into five distinct groups, based on their philosophical ap-

proach to the human threat. These groups aren't organized factions or mystical callings; instead, they're a loose way of categorizing Aware animals by their goals and their methods. An Aware animal probably wouldn't see him or herself as belonging to any group at all.

Aware animals living in unspoiled wilderness tend to focus on preserving their own land. They look at what humanity has done elsewhere, and believe that trying to change human nature or recover human-controlled territory is a waste of resources. All they can do now, they say, is retreat to and defend the wilds that remain: rainforests, tall mountains, arctic tundra, uninhabited desert, and whatever other locations humans haven't overtaken. These preservationists—particularly animals who fled from human lands to reach their current homes—often react violently to human intruders, and are cautious about admitting foreign animals who might disrupt the local ecosystem. They resist logging and

development efforts, trace water-borne pollutants upstream to their sources, and care for hidden species that humanity has never discovered. Many preservationists hope that humanity will eventually destroy itself, and that the habitats they protect will be the start of a new world. Older preservation-



ists tend to be more pessimistic, and fear their lands must one day fall to the human siege.

In contrast to preservationists, revolutionaries believe that Gaia will die if humanity isn't overthrown. Many Aware come to this conclusion after suffering a trauma: they witness the destruction of their homes, the death of their families, or the cruelty of animal research labs. Revolutionaries aren't common, and they aren't all violent. Although some try to destroy factories and corporations, waging a guerilla war in urban landscapes, others seek to prove to humans that human civilization is unsustainable. They study famine and plague, and direct humans to their findings. These revolutionaries believe that if humans see they're running out of forests and oil and food and clean water, then they'll voluntarily curb their population growth and return territory to the animal kingdom.

While revolutionaries are seen by many Aware as extremists, they're nonetheless respected. Apologists for humanity, on the other hand, are scorned and disdained. This small group of Aware believes that there's no turning back, and that human dominion of the Earth should be embraced. For better or worse, the ecosphere has changed, and it's the responsibility of the Aware to help species fit into the new order. Species unable to adapt to city life must be honored and allowed to fade away with dignity. Apologists normally live in cities, take advantage of human institutions and technology, and are more likely than other Aware to keep abreast of events outside their territory. They study how urban animals have adapted to their environment and how endangered species have "failed." No one understands the science of pollution better than apologists, and apologists are constantly struggling to make pollut-

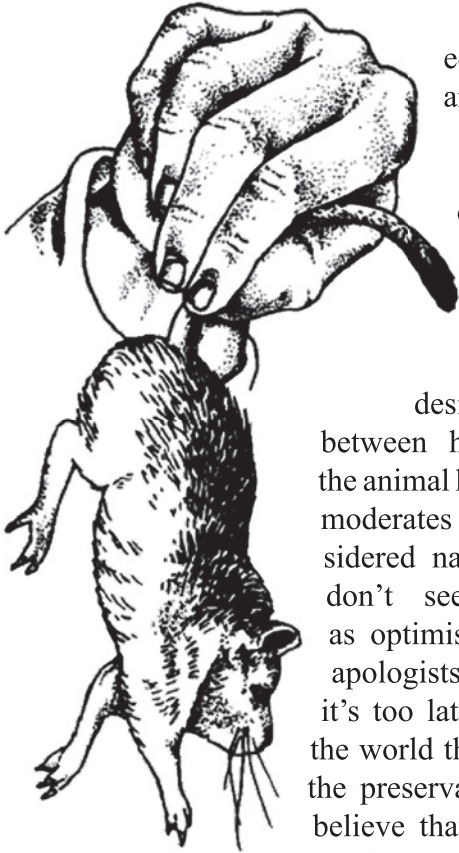
The Others

By default, *eco* assumes that any creature with a brain—no matter how small—can think and converse and be Aware. Any creature without a brain, however, is assumed to lack consciousness.

These assumptions do restrict some avenues of exploration. For a complete understanding of the Earth's ecosystem, one has to consider plants, microorganisms, and even viruses. A creative Gamemaster could say that every living creature can communicate with the Aware, and expand *eco*'s focus from the animal kingdom to the interaction of all life. A virus might not make a very good Player Character, but it could make an intriguing villain who believes its purpose is to reduce population levels. A rare plant might be able to share insights about the balance of life in a forest.

Such a change to the setting can be drastic or subtle, depending on how often the Gamemaster brings non-animal life into play. GMs interested in this idea but uncertain about the consequences might want to try a "test run" by introducing a single Aware non-animal organism as an NPC, and making ordinary mindless organisms unable to communicate.





ed food, water, and air safer.

Apologists occasionally find allies among Aware moderates who

desire a balance between humanity and the animal kingdom. The moderates are often considered naive, but they don't see themselves as optimists. Like the apologists, they believe it's too late to return to the world that was. Like the preservationists, they believe that Mother Nature's creations are worth saving. So what choice is

there, besides trying to reach an understanding with humanity? Moderates encourage human conservation efforts and pollution control, and try to ensure that human land use doesn't harm animal habitats. They fight the worst of human extremes and permit lesser evils in the interests of a greater good. A moderate has a tricky path to climb, and the path's end isn't even in sight.

Last, there are the outcasts—Aware who no longer abide by the wishes of Gaia and who use their power to fulfill their own dreams. Some once fought the human threat, but decided the battle was hopeless. Some never learned the legend of Gaia at all, and never developed the need to help other species. Outcasts are shunned by the Aware and feared by ordinary animals. Each outcast is different, dangerous

and unpredictable. While one outcast might have no greater desire than to protect his family, another outcast might want to rule the animal kingdom or become accepted by human society. The Aware occasionally try to bring outcasts back into the fold and convince them to rejoin Gaia's champions, and sometimes, they're successful—but just as often, outcasts become dangerous enemies.

Many animals straddle the line between groups, and many divisions exist within groups, as well. Even dedicated believers in a philosophy can make exceptions or change their minds. In the end, there are as many unique viewpoints and methods as there are Aware!

Tomorrow's Dawn

This is the shape of things as they are now. No one can say, however, what tomorrow's dawn will bring.


The Aware are old and young; thoughtful and rash; peaceful and violent; hopeful and gloomy. What links them together is the scope of their vision and their special understanding of the Earth and Mother Nature. The Aware know that the modern age is an age of flux, when success or failure can mean life or death for hundreds of species—including humanity.

Their task is difficult. They'll do everything they can to see it through.



Chapter Two

eco Characters



Unlike most traditional roleplaying games, the players in *eco* do not take on the roles of heroic knights, doughty dwarves or wily halfling rogues. In *eco*, the players instead take on the roles of everyday animals, be they wildlife or domesticated pets. Well, everyday is a bit of a misleading word. The player characters are not quite the same as the deer in the forest or the dog under your dining room table. Player character animals in *eco* are not unlike these animals in physical appearance and abilities but they have been granted the gift of sentience by Gaia (or Mother Nature if you prefer that name). That is to say, they are able to think and feel as humanity does. So yes, the player character dog cannot necessarily drive a car or hack into the mainframe of Halibroken Corp., but he may be able to read, understand language and maybe even turn a doorknob or start a car.

As characters gain experience, they may spend XP to improve their natural skills and talents or they may use them to gain more and more “human” skills. Therefore, as the game progresses, that Dog character may actually learn how an automobile works and might be able to learn to control the steering wheel

(Drive skill) while his companion operates the gas and brake. Or an Owl may have spent some time studying human writing and may learn to actually read (Literacy skill). From there, the Owl would be able to pick skill ranks in skills otherwise alien to animal-kind like Computers or Science skills.

Unlike other Omni System games, there are no real Callings in *eco*. Players begin play as one of several animal Species. Since they are Aware, they are special and have skills and Talents above and beyond a normal animal of their species but they do not have training or occupations as humans, elves or dwarves do in other RPGs. Character creation is therefore somewhat simplified in *eco*. A player need only select a Species, modify his character’s Attributes as desired, select skills and talents and start playing.



New Omni System™ Rules

Attributes

eco uses most of the usual Attributes found in all Omni System™ games. These include INT, PER, WIL, CHA, STR, DEX, CON, SPD, CR and REN. Since true magic and psionics are not present in *eco*, the MR and PSI attributes are not required.

Blend Attribute (BLD)

eco also introduces a new Secondary Attribute unique to this game: the Blend attribute.

BLD indicates an animal's ability to blend into human society without notice. Cats, Dogs and Pigeons for example are quite common in human settlements and thus they have a high BLD. In other words, they may walk among humans without humanity taking much notice of them. A Bear or Porcupine, on the other hand, are rarely seen by most city-dwelling humans and therefore their BLD scores are low. Should a Bear character decide to take a stroll along Main Street, she is very likely to cause a great stir among the humans.

Gamemasters should require BLD checks whenever a character is among humans to see if humanity has taken notice of the Character. These rolls are modified by the type of action the Character is attempting. A Cat walking through a crowded market might receive no penalty or bonus to their roll while an Owl flying through the same crowd would take a hefty penalty to their roll. Similarly, if the action being performed is highly unusual for an animal, a Cat using a computer in front of a group of school children for example, a penalty to the BLD roll is warranted.

Failed BLD rolls could lead to any number of results. The Humans may react in fear and attempt to flee or they could attack or try to capture the Character. The GM is always the arbiter of failed BLD rolls.

Players should note: BLD is not the same as the Stealth skill. BLD is used when characters act in plain view while the Stealth skill is used to perform actions in secret. Blending is important to all *eco* Characters and players would do well to always keep the consequences of their actions in mind.

BLD is determined at character creation by the player's selection of Species. It may not be increased or decreased.

Starting Attributes

Each Species has a base rating for each of the primary attributes. To make your character different from other characters of the same Species, increase any Attribute (or Attributes) by a total of up to two points, and reduce any Attribute (or Attributes) by a total of two points. For example, a player creating a scrappy fighter might decide to increase their character's CON by +2, and decrease his INT and CHA by -1 each.

Skills

eco introduces a new skill to the *Omni System*™ that is really only required in the *eco* game. Other skills are also explained below in the context of the *eco* game.

The following skills are used in *eco*:

Acrobatics	Aerial Combat
Aquatic Combat	Balance
Brawling	Climb
Command	Computers ¹
Concentration	Contortion
Cryptography ¹	Deception
Deduce Motive	Diplomacy
Disable Mechanism	Drive
Engineering ¹	Etiquette
Evade	Heal
Intimidate	Investigate
Literacy	Lore
Manipulate*	Navigate
Perform	Science ¹
Social Science ¹	Search
Sleight of Hand*	Speak Language*
Stealth	Survival*
Swim	Tracking*
Weapon*	

1. Characters may never have more ranks in these skills than they do in the Literacy skill.

** Changes to these skills are detailed below.*

All starting player characters receive 24 CP to spend on Skill ranks. Remember, ranks in Brawling and Weapon skills costs twice the normal amount (i.e. 4 for the first rank and 2 for each subsequent rank).

Manipulate

Humanity dominates the planet and animals live largely in their shadow. It is often necessary for the Aware to use humanities tools and the manipulate skill is required for all such attempts. Some animals like Squirrels and many primates have a natural ability to use their fore-paws in a manner that mimics humanities hands. Without an opposable thumb

however, such attempts are often clumsy.

Benefit: Ranks in the Manipulate skill reflect either an animals natural ability to use human tools or a time spent practicing to use these tools. This could be pecking buttons or levers with a beak, nudging a door handle with a nose or the actual use of paws to operate human inventions. Anytime a character attempts to use a human designed tool or item, a Manipulate roll is required. In some circumstances, another Skill roll may be required but the Manipulate roll always occurs prior to other Skill rolls.

For example, opening a closed door is a straight Manipulate roll. Typing an email into a computer, on the other hand, requires two rolls, once to see if the animal is able to manipulate the keyboard and a second roll against the character's Computer skill. A mishap or failure on the Manipulate roll means the character was unable to operate the keyboard and no Computer roll would be required. A Partial Success might necessitate a penalty to the subsequent Computer roll.

Training period: 10 weeks

Modifier: DEX



Sleight of Hand

Only characters with paws (or other appendages capable of grasping) may take ranks in this skill.

Speak Language

Each broad class of animals have their own language. For example, all Cat species from domestic cats to lions and tigers speak Feline, while all Rodents from the smallest Shrew to the largest Capybara speak Rodent. Some animals may speak more than one Animal Tongue. The more common languages used in *eco* include: Feline (cats), Canine (dogs), Rodent (mice, rats, rabbits, etc.), Ursine (bears), Mustelid (raccoons), Amphibian (frogs & toads), Piscine (fish), Cetacean (whales & dolphins), Avian (birds), Cervid (deer, elk, moose), simian (apes, monkeys, lemurs, etc.).

Aware animals are also able to learn Human languages like English, French and Spanish as normal. In these cases, the animals *understand* human language, they cannot however speak it. With the Literacy skill, they may be able to somehow write though.

All Aware animals also speak Gaian. This is a special language that only Aware animals understand and it facilitates cooperation amongst the Aware.

Survival

All wild animals receive free ranks in the Survival skill of their native habitat. Domestic animals receive free ranks in Survival (urban). See the relevant Species description for more information.

Weapon

The Weapon skill will rarely be used in *eco* (except perhaps by Human NPCs). Instead, the vast majority of animals will use the Brawling skill with their natural weaponry like fangs and claws. Occasionally though some types of Aware creatures may attempt to use Weapon (hafted) to use club-like weapons or Weapon (thrown) to throw rocks and other such objects. Very rarely will an animal be able to take ranks in Weapon (pistol) and only by animals with superior manual dexterity like Chimpanzee's and other primates.

eco Talents

Many of the Talents found in the core *Omni System™* book are usable in *eco* while others are not practical for animal characters.

All Talents fall under the Open talents tree in *eco*, effectively meaning there are no Talent Trees.

Talent Trees

Because there are no Talent Trees, *eco* players may spend their XP to acquire new Talents with the following costs:

First Talent	0 XP
Second Talent	5 XP
Third Talent	10 XP
Fourth Talent	20 XP
Fifth Talent	30 XP
Sixth Talent	40 XP

Each subsequent Talent costs an additional 40 XP. *Please note: All player characters receive one free Talent at character creation.*

Talents

Talents found in the core Omni System book that are appropriate for *eco* include:

Acute Hearing	Acute Vision
Adrenaline Rush	Amazing Dodge
Animal Sense	Attribute Boost
Augury	Aura of Wisdom
Blend In	Break Away
Cheap Shot	Close Quarters Fighting
Cold Endurance	Coordinate
Danger Sense	Darkvision
Dead Shot	Death's Door
Deep Breath	Defensive Fighting
Defensive Roll	Diehard
Diligent	Driven
Duck & Cover	Elusive Target
Extraordinary Dodge	Find Weakness
Fleet of Foot	Folk Remedies
Force of Personality	Forester
Frenzied Attack I	Frenzied Attack II
Gossip	Heat Endurance
Highly Mobile	Improvised Weapons
Inconspicuous	Intimidation Tactics
Linguistics	Low Blow
Motivated	Mountain Goat
Mountain Man	Nasty Reputation
Natural Remedy	Natural Talent I
Natural Talent II	Naturally Charming
Negotiator	Night Vision
Non-Lethal Force	Obsessed
Opportunist	Poison Resistance
Precognition	Radiation Tolerance
Rage	Rally
Run Like the Wind	Scavenger
Scent	Salt Spray
Second Wind	Self Sufficient
Shadow	Social Chameleon
Smite	Sneak Attack
Speed Climb	Street Cred

Strong as an Ox	Sudden Strike
Sure-footed	Survival of the Fittest
Taunt	Tech Savvy
Thick Skin	Tough as Nails
Tough Skin	Tough Trail
Trackless I	Trackless II
Trackless III	Trailblazer
Urban Tracker	Voice of Command
Well Travelled	Xeno-Friendly

New Talents

Animal Hacker

You have studied the human computer tool a great deal and know how to access information using it.

Benefit: you receive a +4 bonus to all Computer rolls on the Omni Table.

Prerequisite: Manipulate +2, Literacy +4

Bolt Hole

You have a natural knack at finding a safe place to hide when confronted with harm.

Benefit: You may triple your PER when it is used as an Omni Table modifier to locate a safe hiding place.

Prerequisite: None

Bounce Back

You have an uncanny ability to bounce back from a fall or after being knocked down.

Benefit: You may regain your footing immediately after a fall or being knocked down. This is a free action and does not count towards the multiple action penalty.

Prerequisite: DEX +1

Burrow

You have the natural ability to burrow through the earth.

Benefit: You may move at half your normal SPD through loose packed earth, loam and sand. Harder ground may reduce your SPD at the GM's discretion.

Prerequisite: Species Talent Only

Crafty Critter

You have the bizarre ability to understand human invention and, if given enough time, can create tools yourself.

Benefit: The vast majority of animals have no use for the Handicraft skill, it is normally not used in the *eco* game. Creatures with the Crafty Critter Talent may use the Handicraft skill as per the normal *Omni System*[™] rules.

Prerequisite: INT +2

Dive Bomb

Your skill in the air is unsurpassed.

Benefit: As long as you have room to gain at least 40 feet of altitude, you may make a dive bomb attack against any target on the ground once every 3 rounds. Your attack does double normal damage but a Mishap could prove very dangerous.

Prerequisite: Aerial Combat +4

Formidable Appearance

You have mastered the art of intimidation by making an outrageous display.

Benefit: You may double your CHA score as a modifier to the Intimidation skill.

Prerequisite: None

Gaia's Empathy

Because of Gaia's gift, you have a natural sense of the mood and emotions of any animal you encounter.

Benefit: You receive a +4 bonus to all Sense Motive rolls when dealing with animals.

Prerequisite: PER +2

Improvise

You are a genius at making do with the materials you have at hand as best you can.

Benefit: You may use the Handicraft skill even without having all of the proper materials required. You may use strange and unusual items to create items. Articles created may not be pretty but they will be functional.

Prerequisite: Crafty Critter Talent

Incredible Evasion

Your agility is legendary and you avoid dangers that other are unable to.

Benefit: Whenever you are required to make a DEX check to avoid being hit by an object or attack, it is assumed you automatically succeed and need not actually roll the die.

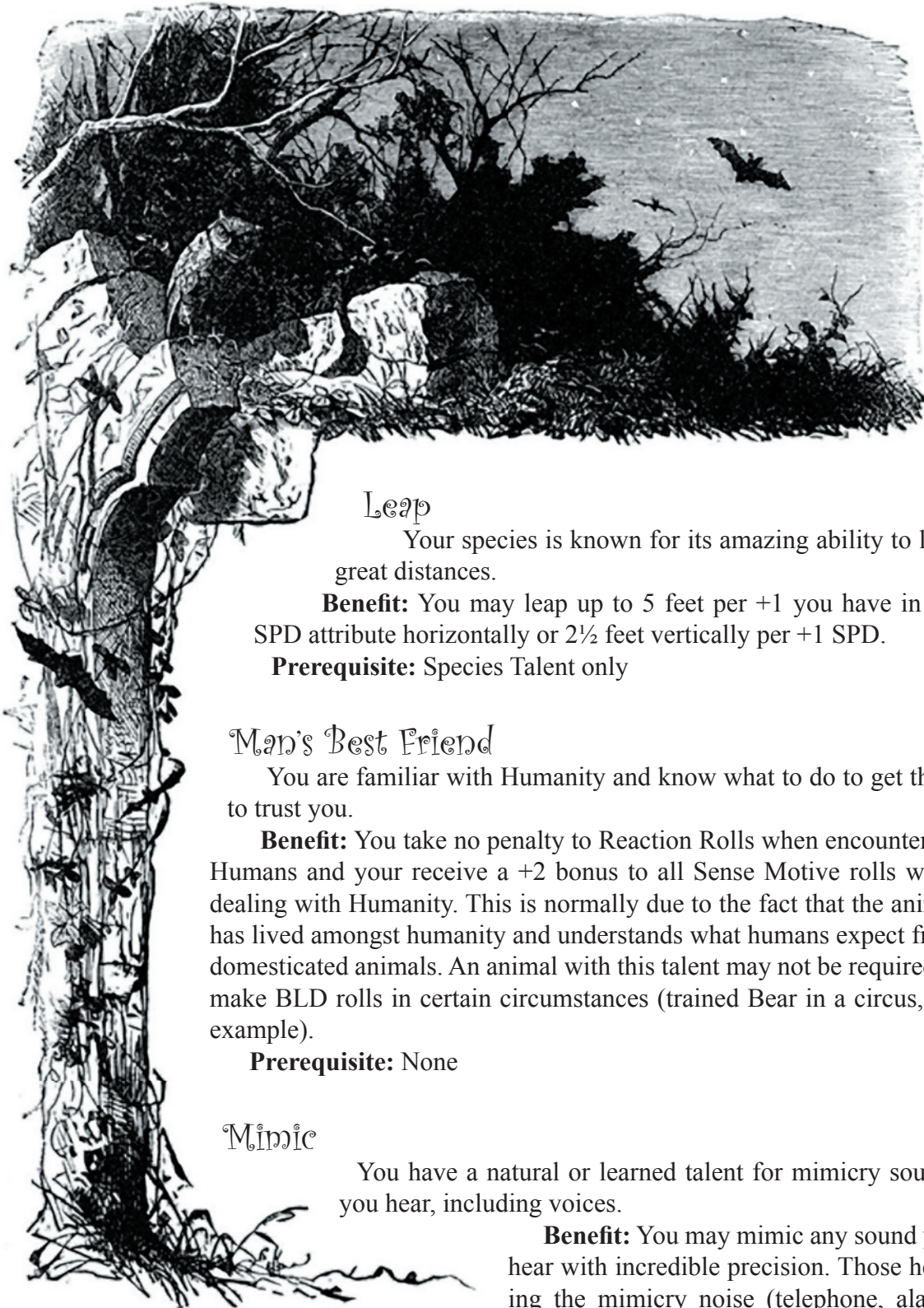
Prerequisite: DEX +3, Evade +4, Amazing Dodge

Industrious Engineer

You have the knowledge and skill to use the environment to your advantage.

Benefit: You receive 4 free ranks in the Engineering (Structural) skill which you may use to construct shelter or defensive works as required. The length of time it takes to construct a structure is at the GM's discretion and it based on the Species involved and the materials at hand.

Prerequisite: INT +3 or Species Talent



Leap

Your species is known for its amazing ability to leap great distances.

Benefit: You may leap up to 5 feet per +1 you have in the SPD attribute horizontally or 2½ feet vertically per +1 SPD.

Prerequisite: Species Talent only

Man's Best Friend

You are familiar with Humanity and know what to do to get them to trust you.

Benefit: You take no penalty to Reaction Rolls when encountering Humans and your receive a +2 bonus to all Sense Motive rolls when dealing with Humanity. This is normally due to the fact that the animal has lived amongst humanity and understands what humans expect from domesticated animals. An animal with this talent may not be required to make BLD rolls in certain circumstances (trained Bear in a circus, for example).

Prerequisite: None

Mimic

You have a natural or learned talent for mimicry sounds you hear, including voices.

Benefit: You may mimic any sound you hear with incredible precision. Those hearing the mimicry noise (telephone, alarm,

animal call, voice, etc.) must make a PER roll with a -5 penalty to notice the sound is not genuine.

Prerequisite: None

Quick Thinking

Every once and awhile you react with incredible speed.

Benefit: Twice per day, you may double your SPD rating for the purposes of determining initiative.

Prerequisite: None

Survival Smarts

You have studied the art and science of wilderness survival.

Benefit: Rather than using your CON as a modifier to the Survival skill, you may instead use your INT.

Prerequisite: INT +3

Veterinary Medicine

You have studied long and hard and your knowledge can help many a sick or injured animal.

Benefit: Under normal circumstances, the Medicine skill is not used in *eco* except perhaps by Human NPCs. Animals with the Veterinary Medicine Talent may use the Medicine skill as per the normal *Omni System*™ rules but only on other animals (never humans).

Prerequisite: None

Vorpal Talons

Your claws of talons are particularly sharp.

Benefit: You do an extra +1 damage whenever using your claws of talons.

Prerequisite: None

Wild Charge

You are adept at using your size and speed to overcome opponents:

Benefit: You may Charge a single target once every 5 rounds if you have at least 30 feet to build up speed. Your charge attack is at +2 to the Omni table roll. Damage done equals your size (Tiny=1B, Small=2, Medium=4B, Large=8B) plus 2 times your STR (minimum 1).

Prerequisite: None

Without A Trace

You are a shadow, a ghost and next to impossible to see when you want to avoid detection.

Benefit: Those who attempt to see or hear you while you are using the Balance, Climb, Disable Mechanism, Sleight of Hand or Stealth skills receive an additional -4 penalty to their roll along with the normal penalty associated with the opposed action.

Prerequisite: DEX +1

You and What Army

You are a social creature and have lots of friends that you can call upon.

Benefit: Once per day, you may call upon the aid of a number of creatures of your Species equal to your 2 times you CHA. Your friends will appear within 5 rounds of your call.

Prerequisite: None

Gaia's Favor

Since *eco* is not a typical RPG and players are sometimes taking on the roles of tiny and normally insignificant creatures such as mice, rats and squirrels, the Aware character needs some way to avoid a quick and senseless death.

Being champions of Gaia all player characters start play with at least 3 Favor Points (FP). These points should be treasured and used very carefully because they could save the life of your character.

Favor points provide characters with the means to affect game play in significant ways. A character may spend a favor point at any time in the game to alter a single Omni Table roll. The effect of the Favor Point bumps the degree of success up or down by one degree of success.

For example, when making a CON roll to resist the poison of a rattle snake's bite, the player may spend an FP to bump a Failure to a Partial Suc-



cess. Conversely, the player may bump an opponents Partial Success attack to a Failure, thereby escaping all damage.

Players may only spend one FP per round so players are advised to spend the Favor Points wisely.

Size

In most Omni System games, players take the rolls of humans or humanoid sized creatures with a few exceptions here and there. In *eco*, players can literally be as small as a mouse or as large as an elephant and anything in between.

This changes the dynamic of the game and thus the introduction of Size rules for combat.

The smaller the animal, the more difficult it is to hit in combat for bigger animals. Therefore, it is harder for a Black Bear to hit a mouse in combat than it is for the Bear to strike another Bear or even a German Shepherd.

Each animal is given a size category from Tiny to Huge. Whenever animals of differing size categories are engaged in combat, consult the following table to determine the Attack penalty of the larger animal:

		Defending Animal Size				
		Tiny	Small	Med.	Large	Huge
Attacking Animal Size	Tiny	0	0	0	0	0
	Small	-1	0	0	0	0
	Medium	-2	-1	0	0	0
	Large	-4	-2	-1	0	0
	Huge	-6	-4	-2	-1	0

Tiny: Less than 1 foot in length or height (mice, rats, squirrels, etc.)

Small: between 1 and 4 feet in height or length. (cats, small breed dogs, skunks, owls, crows, etc.)

Medium: between 4 and 6 feet in length or height (humans, large breed dogs, pigs, etc.)

Large: between 6 and 8 feet in length or height. (bears, mountain lions, dolphins, etc.)

Huge: over 8 feet in length or height (elephant, rhinos, whales, etc.)

Hit Points

Players in *eco* can play animals as big as bears to as small as a Rat. In most other Omni System™ games, all player characters start out roughly the same size and therefore their Hit Points are all roughly the same.

To use the same design in *eco* would make for wildly different Hit Point totals among player characters and, more importantly, would mean some characters could be accidentally killed in their first encounter that turned bad. Now while this is realistic, it certainly doesn't make for a fun game and in effect, would server only to reward players for playing larger, more formidable animals, leaving animals like rats, Squirrels and Skunks rarely played.

In *eco*, a characters hit points are determined by their Size. So, while a Bear will still have more HP than a Skunk, the difference is not so great that a Skunk cannot hold his own, at least until he finds a non-violent solution to a an encounter or at least an escape route.

Players should consult the following table to determine the starting Hit Points for their character:

Size	HP
Tiny	10
Small	14
Medium	20
Large	30
Huge	40*

* GM discretion

Fear

The vast majority of animals, especially those who have not been domesticated have a natural sense of fear when dealing with Humanity and even human made tools and devices.

While this natural instinct is not as strong with the Aware, it is still present and Aware must constantly struggle to overcome their fear of Humanity.

Whenever a character encounters a Human or human device with which they are unfamiliar, they must make a WIL Omni Table roll to resist Fear. Failure means the character must attempt to flee the Human or device by the quickest possible path. (Degree of Difficulty varies with GM discretion)

Similarly, Humans must make a WIL roll to resist Fear whenever they encounter a non-domesticated animal. Failure means they flee by the quickest escape route (although they will likely return with reinforcements).

When to make a Fear roll is always at the discretion of the GM and as the player character becomes more and more accustomed to Humanity the frequency of Fear rolls will decrease. Basically any time the character encounters a strange Human or human device, a Fear roll *may* be warranted.

Species

Probably the most important decision a player has make in *eco* is the selection of Species. There are several sample Species in this book and players and GMs are free to create more using these a guides.

A player's Species will determine a number of things. First, and perhaps most importantly, it will determine the character's Attributes, including the new Blend Attribute. This Attribute will determine how well the player character is able to work within the framework of society created by Humanity. Wild animals generally have a lower Blend Attribute than domesticated ones meaning their ability to work within human society is more difficult and may require other skills and talents to succeed (such as stealth).

All Species listings consist of an animal's species description, attributes, preferred skills, bonus skill ranks and Talents as described below:

Traits

Size: See page 18 for information on animal sizes

Weight: Average weight of an adult of the Species.

Color: The normal coloration of the Species fur, skin, feathers or scales.

Diet: What the animal eats. Carnivores eat meat (i.e. other animals), herbivores eat plants, omnivores eat either plant or animal matter and insectivores eat insects. Carnivorous sometimes make other animals nervous and suffer a -2 penalty to reaction rolls with herbivorous animals smaller than they are.

Activity: This section tells you when a Species is active and when it sleeps. Diurnal

animals are active during the daylight hours and like to sleep at night. Nocturnal animals prefer to be active by night and sleep during the daytime. All animals suffer a -2 penalty to all actions taken outside their normal period of activity. I.E. nocturnal animals suffer a -2 penalty during the day and diurnal animals suffer a -2 penalty at night. Animals whose activity is listed as Either suffer no penalty at night or during the day.

Habitat: An animals preferred places or places to live.

Instincts: This section lists any bonuses or penalties a Species may have due to deep-seated instincts.

Attribute Adjustments

Unlike other *Omni System*™ games, players do not need to roll their starting Attributes. All animals of the same Species start play with the same Attribute ratings. To differentiate their characters, players may modify their Species starting *Attributes* as described under the Attributes section of this chapter. The Blend Attribute may not be altered in this way.

In *eco*, the Combat Rating attribute has been determined by assessing the overall ferociousness and battle ability of an animal. CR is not a derived Attribute as it is in other *Omni System*™ games. Players may increase their CR with XP as they do primary Attributes (see *The Omni System*™ Core book page 10)

Preferred Skills

As explained in the chapter on Skills (*Omni System*™ Core book), each character will have a list of Preferred Skills. Players may not purchase ranks in skills not on their Preferred list. Characters receive one free rank in any Species skill they select as preferred from their Species list at character creation.

Bonus Skills & Talents

Some Species receive additional bonuses or penalties such as natural weaponry or bonus Talents. These are listed in this section.

BAT

Bats are mammals, however, unlike any other mammal, they have the power of flight, sporting wings instead of forelimbs with paws.

Not all bats spend their days roosting in caves. Many make their homes in trees, buildings or under bridges. Bats are highly opportunistic and have adapted to their environment in creative ways.

All bats can see, but some also use a special sonar system called echolocation. These bats make high frequency calls either out of their mouths or nose and then listen for echoes to bounce from the objects in front of them. They are able to form pictures in their brains by listening to reflected sounds just like humans form pictures in their brains by interpreting reflected light with their eyes. In this way, Bats are able to comfortably move around at night, avoiding obstacles, locating their food and capturing insects in total darkness.

Bats have a high metabolism and the types of bats found around The City are insectivorous, that is, they eat insects, some are known to have eaten more than a thousand mosquito-sized insects in an hour.

Contrary to popular myths, bats are not blind, do not become entangled in human hair, and seldom transmit disease to other animals or humans.



Traits

- Size:** Small **Weight:** 1-3 lbs.
- Color:** Brown fur, black skin on wings
- Diet:** Insectivore **Activity:** Nocturnal
- Habitat:** The City (everywhere)
- Instincts:** Most humans find Bats revolting and therefore suffer a -2 penalty to all WIL rolls to resist Fear when dealing with Bats.

Attributes

- | | |
|--------|----------|
| INT +0 | PER +3 |
| WIL +0 | CHA -2 |
| STR -7 | DEX +5* |
| CON +3 | SPD +6** |
| CR +1 | BLD +0 |

* While flying otherwise -4 on the ground

** Flying SPD, ground SPD -3

Preferred Skills

All Bats begin play with the following preferred skills: *Aerial Combat* +4, *Lore (The City)* +4, *Speak Language (rodent)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Survival (urban or forest)* +6.

Starting Bat characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Evade*, *Intimidate*, *Navigate*, *Stealth*, *Survival (urban or forest)*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Bats receive the Dark Vision bonus Talent.
- ✦ Bats are incredibly dextrous flyers and can turn on a dime. All Bats receive a +4 bonus to Evade Omni Table rolls.
- ✦ Bats may use their teeth (DR 1T) as natural weapons.

BEAR

Fairly common in forested areas, Bears are not a common sight in The City. Normally preferring to stay as far away from Humanity as possible, some Bears have taken to living near The City and have learned to raid garbage dumps, gain access to buildings where feed is stored, kill livestock or destroy bee hives (honey is a favorite treat for Bears).

Black bears have large canine teeth typical of meat eaters, but their diet is mostly fruit, berries and nuts, with the majority of their meat being insects and carrion.

Bears have poor eyesight but have an extraordinary sense of smell and are one of the more intelligent creatures of the forest.



Traits

Size: Large **Weight:** 200-500 lbs.

Color: Black

Diet: Omnivore

Activity: Diurnal

Habitat: Forest

Instincts: Though wary of Humanity, Black Bears receive a +2 bonus to resist Fear when dealing with Humanity. This is largely a result of their great size.

Attributes

INT +0	PER +1
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR +7	DEX -2
CON +4	SPD +0
CR +2	BLD -5

Preferred Skills

All Bears begin play with the following preferred skills: Brawling +2, Intimidation +2, *Speak Language (bear)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Survival (forest)* +5.

Starting Bear characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Climb*, *Evade*, *Navigate*, *Stealth*, *Search*, *Swim*, *Tracking*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Bears receive the Night Vision bonus Talent.

✦ Black Bears have an uncanny sense of direction and receive a +4 bonus to all Navigate rolls regardless of whether they possess this skill or not.

- ✦ Bears receive a +2 species bonus to all Swim

Omni Table rolls whether they have the skill or not.

- ✦ Because of their large, clumsy paws, Bears take a -6 penalty to all Manipulate rolls.
- ✦ Bears may use their claws (DR 8S) and teeth (DR 8T) as natural weapons.

CAT (domestic)

The domestic, or house, cat is descended originally from the African Wild Cat and was originally domesticated thousands of years ago by the ancient Egyptians. In The City, it is one of the most popular domesticated pets and Cats generally get along well with Humanity (although usually not as well as Dogs do).

There are dozens of breeds of Cat from hairless and tailless varieties to many coat coloration varieties. Cats are excellent hunters and are amongst the most stealthy of animals in eco. Cats have a strong instinct to hunt and may not get along well with smaller animals that are its traditional prey (mice, rats, songbirds, etc.)

Cats are highly intelligent and are able to learn to manipulate simple tools such as lever door handles, toilets, etc.

There are various breeds of Cat including the Siamese (+1 DEX, -1 CHA), Himalayan (+1 INT, -1 DEX) and Persian (+1 INT, -1 DEX).

Traits

Size: Small **Weight:** 5-16 lbs.

Color: Variable

Diet: Carnivore **Activity:** Either

Habitat: Domesticated

Instincts: Cats must make a Full Success WIL roll on the Omni Table to cooperate with any rodent or small bird. Failure indicates the Cat will not follow any suggestion or advice provided by the creature. If a Cat character succeeds on 3 consecutive WILL rolls, they need never make another WIL roll with that creature. Cats also suffer a -2 penalty to WIL when dealing with Dogs.

Attributes

INT +1	PER +2
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR -5	DEX +4
CON +0	SPD +3
CR +1	BLD +8

Preferred Skills

All Cats begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (neighborhood)* +6, *Lore (City)* +1, *Speak Language (feline)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Speak Language (human)* +3.



Starting Cat characters, regardless of breed may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Balance*, *Brawling*, *Climb*, *Contortion*, *Evade*, *Stealth*, *Speak Language (any)*, *Survival (urban)*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Cats receive the Night Vision bonus Talent.
- ✦ All Cats receive a +3 species bonus to Balance rolls.
- ✦ All Cats suffer a -4 penalty to Swim rolls on the Omni Table.
- ✦ Cats may use their claws (DR 2S) and teeth (DR 2T) as natural weapons.

COATI

The Coati is a raccoon-like carnivore but is more slender and possesses a longer snout. It is a nosy, busy little creature with an insatiable appetite. The Coati is gregarious and noisy as it travel about in groups of from 6 to 24, holding its tail almost erect and chattering with others.

The Coati has a long snout that is white near the tip and around the eyes, which often have dark patches above. The Coati has small ears, dark feet and a long, thin tail (as much as 2 feet long) with 6 or 7 dark bands. Their forepaws are quite dextrous although not as sensitive as those of the Raccoon.

Coatis spend most of their days foraging for food, which includes insects, lizards, roots, fruits, nuts and eggs. They especially enjoy any kind of fruit they can get their paws on.

Traits

Size: Small **Weight:** 10-25 lbs.

Color: gray-brown with black patches over eyes and banded tail

Diet: Omnivore **Activity:** Diurnal

Habitat: Forest, some have been domesticated as exotic pets.

Instincts: Like Raccoons, Coati are very inquisitive animals. As a result, they suffer a -1 WIL penalty whenever confronted with a mystery. For example, a Coati faced with an open window on a human house would need to succeed on an WIL roll at -2 penalty to resist the urge to see what was on the other side.

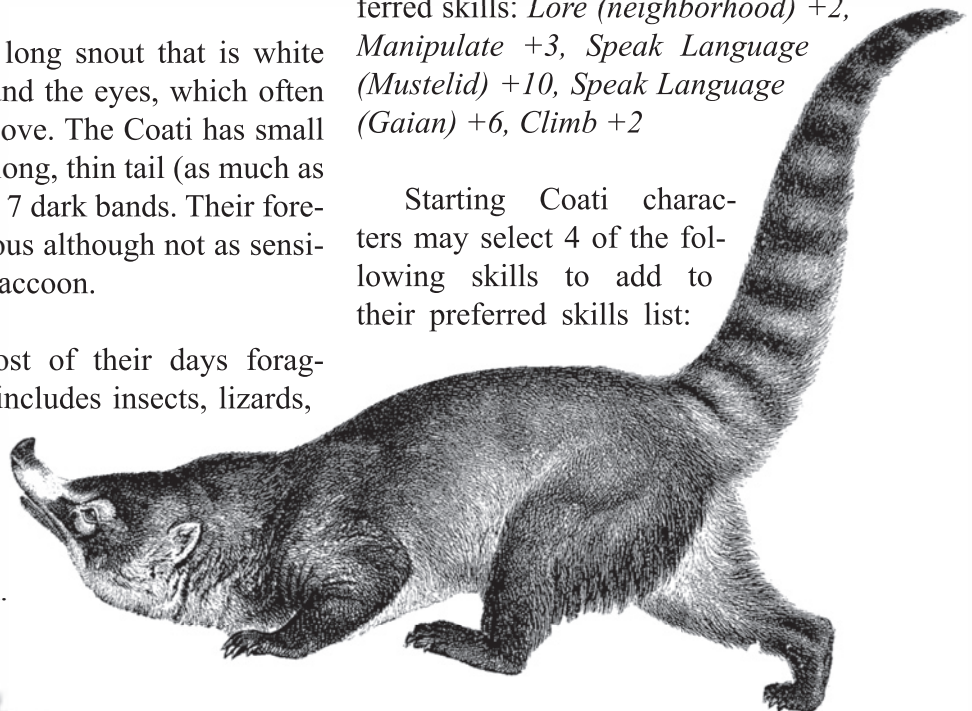
Attributes

INT +0	PER +1
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR -4	DEX +5
CON +3	SPD +1
CR +0	BLD +1

Preferred Skills

All Coati begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (neighborhood)* +2, *Manipulate* +3, *Speak Language (Mustelid)* +10, *Speak Language (Gaian)* +6, *Climb* +2

Starting Coati characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list:



Brawling, Contortion, Deception, Evade, Search, Speak Language (any human).

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Coati receive the Night Vision bonus Talent .
- ✦ All Coati receive a +2 species bonus to Manipulate checks.
- ✦ Wild Coati also receive Lore (The Forest) +6 and Survival (forest) +2 but lose Speak Language (human) as preferred skills.
- ✦ Coati may use their teeth (DR 2T) as natural weapons.

COYOTE

The coyote is a member of the dog family. In size and shape the coyote is like a medium-sized Collie dog, but its tail is round and bushy and is carried straight out below the level of its back.

One of the most adaptable animals in the world, the coyote can change its breeding habits, diet and social dynamics to survive in a wide variety of habitats.

Alone, in pairs or in packs, coyotes maintain their territories by marking them with urine. They also use calls to defend this territory, as well as for strengthening social bonds and general communication. Coyotes can easily leap an

8 foot fence or wall. They have been spotted climbing over a 14 foot cyclone fence.

The coyote's hearing is very acute and is used for detecting prey and avoiding danger. Movement and position of the ears are used to communicate mood and rank.

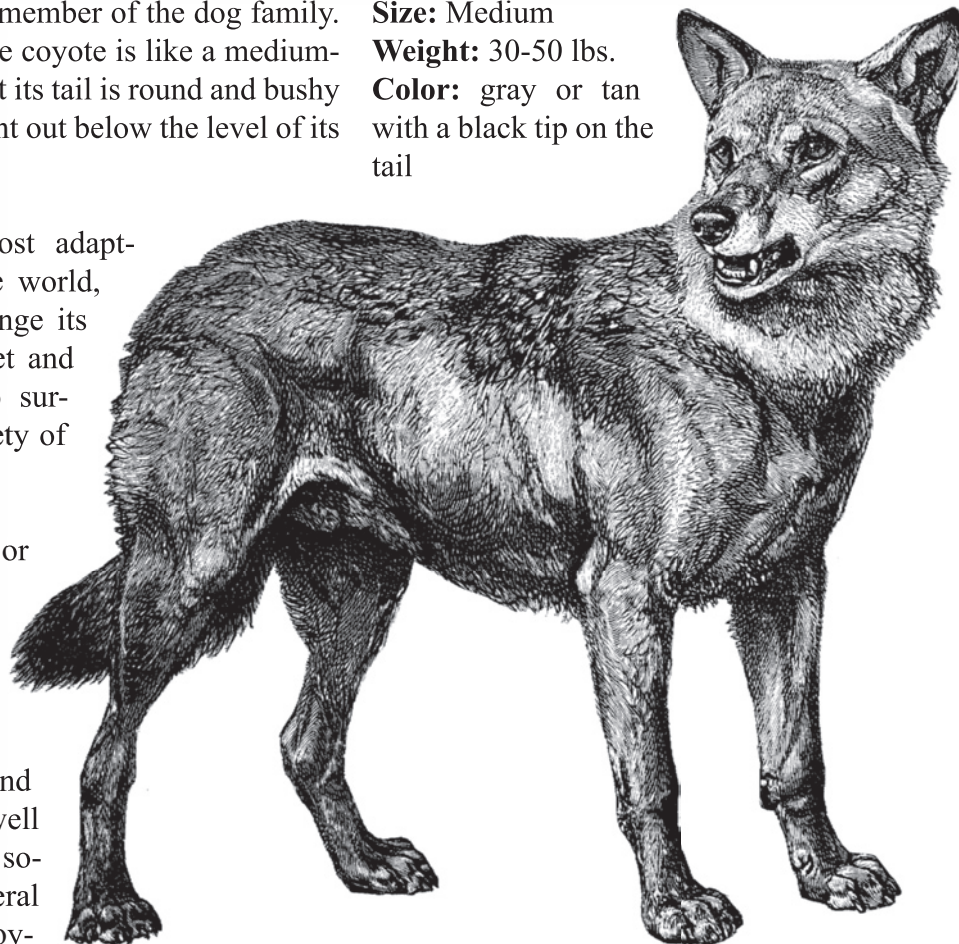
The coyote is one of the few wild animals whose vocalizations are commonly heard. At night coyotes both howl (a high quavering cry) and emit a series of short, high-pitched yips. Howls are used to keep in touch with other coyotes in the area. Sometimes, when it is first heard, human listeners may experience a tingling fear of primitive danger.

Traits

Size: Medium

Weight: 30-50 lbs.

Color: gray or tan with a black tip on the tail



Diet: Omnivore (prefers meat)

Activity: Nocturnal

Habitat: Forest, some live on the fringes of The City

Instincts: Coyotes are a natural enemy of Foxes and they receive a +2 bonus to all attacks against Foxes. They also suffer a -4 penalty to reaction rolls when dealing with Foxes.

Attributes

INT +0	PER +2
WIL +0	CHA -1
STR -1	DEX +1
CON +3	SPD +5
CR +2	BLD -1

Preferred Skills

All Coyotes begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (The Forest)* +10, *Lore (City)* +2, *Speak Language (canine)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Survival (forest)* +5

Starting Coyote characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Brawling*, *Navigate*, *Survival (urban)*, *Swim*, *Tracking*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Coyotes receive the Night Vision bonus Talent .
- ✦ All Coyotes receive a +4 species bonus to Tracking checks.
- ✦ All Coyotes suffer a -2 penalty to Manipulate Omni Table rolls.
- ✦ Coyotes may use their teeth (DR 4T) as natural weapons.

CROW

Crows are some of the most conspicuous and best known of all birds. They're intelligent, wary and adapt well to human activity. A Crow is a big black colored bird approximately 17 to 20 inches long with a strong stout build and a compressed bill.

Crows have extremely keen senses of sight and hearing. They are wary and usually post sentries while they feed. Sentry birds watch for danger, ready to alert the feeding birds with a sharp alarm caw. Once aloft, crows fly at 25-30 mph; with a strong tail wind, they can hit 60. These skillful fliers have a large repertoire of moves designed to throw off airborne predators.

Crows are social birds and throughout most of the year, they flock in groups ranging from family units to several hundred birds. During winter, crows may gather by the tens of thousands in areas where food is plentiful. Later, these flocks break up as mate selection takes place.

Crows are both predators and prey. As predators, they rob nests of songbirds and waterfowl, killing and eating newly hatched young, or cracking eggs. As prey, young crows and unhatched crow eggs are eaten by raccoons, opossums and tree-climbing snakes. Hawks and owls kill fledgling and adult crows. Crows are especially vulnerable to night attacks by great horned owl.

If crows locate an owl during the day, they will mob it—swooping low, calling excitedly and attracting other crows, and generally harassing the bigger, less-maneuverable bird. They also mob hawks. In turn, crows are often mobbed by smaller birds.

Shiny objects fascinate Crows, and they have been known to fly off with bits of glass, rings, keys, etc. Crows exhibit their intelligence by imitating a large number of sounds, including whistles, cats, machines and the human voice. Crows have a good vocabulary—a wide range of caws, crowing noises, coos, and other soft, melodious sounds they use to communicate with each other.

Traits

Size: Small **Weight:** 2-3 lbs.

Color: Pure black plumage

Diet: Omnivore **Activity:** Diurnal

Habitat: Forest, Suburbs, Parks

Instincts: Crows are bold as birds go. They receive a +4 bonus to all WIL rolls when resisting Fear of humanity.

Attributes

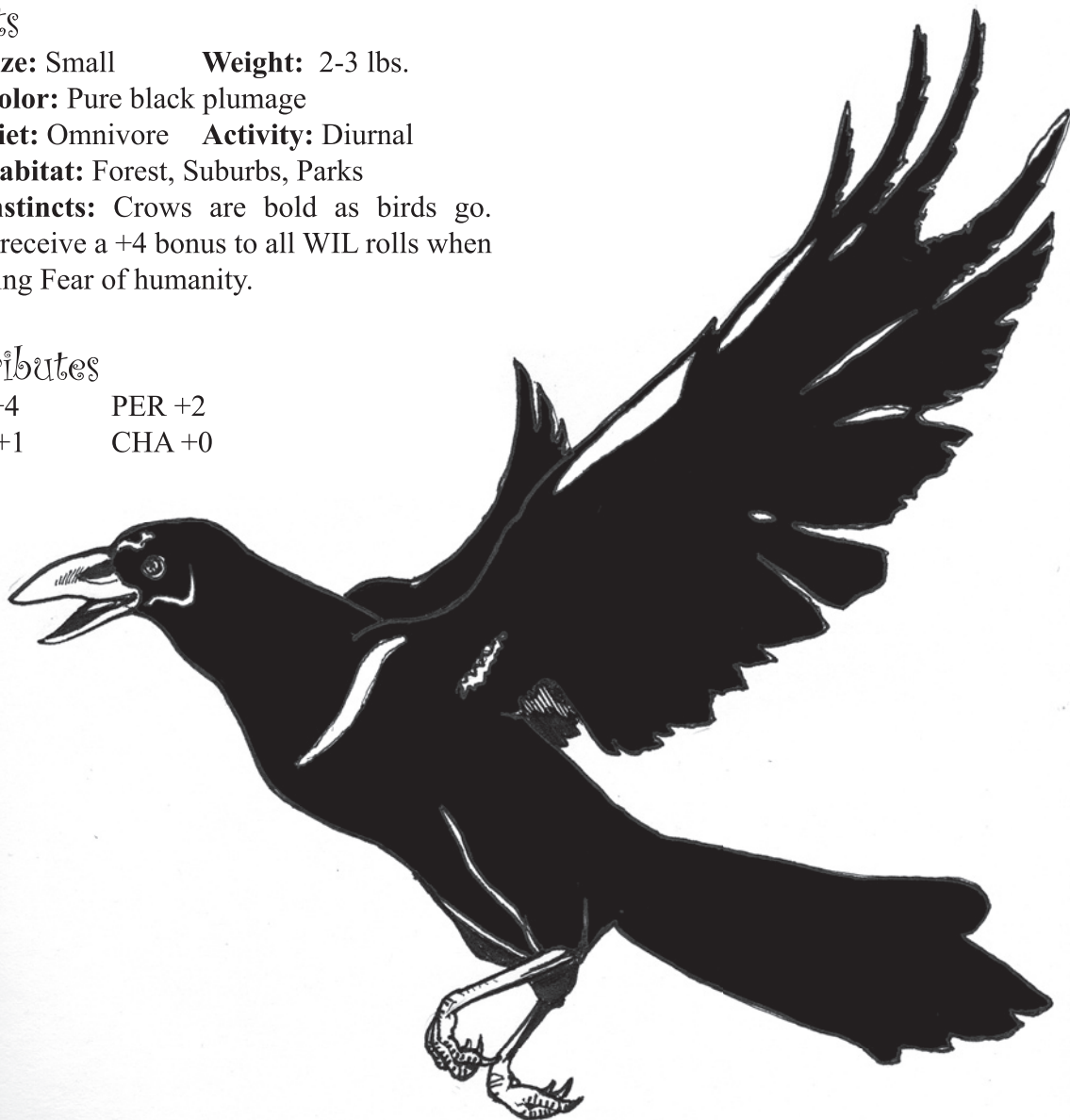
INT +4 PER +2
WIL +1 CHA +0

STR -7 DEX +0
CON +2 SPD +8*
CR +0 BLD +5

* Crows fly at this SPD. SPD on the ground is -4.

Preferred Skills

All Crows begin play with the following preferred skills: *Balance* +4, *Aerial Combat* +1, *Speak Language (avian)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Survival (forest or urban)* +4.



Starting Crow characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Concentration, Deception, Evade, Investigate, Navigate, Search, Speak Language (any), Survival (any)*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ Crows receive a +2 bonus to all Attack rolls against birds of prey.
- ✦ All Aware Crows receive the Mimic bonus Talent.
- ✦ Crows are quite clever and find interesting solutions to problems. They take no penalty to Manipulate rolls.
- ✦ Crows may use their talons (DR 1S) as natural weapons.
- ✦ All Crows receive the Dive Bomb bonus Talent and receive a +2 bonus on all attack rolls vs. Birds of Prey like Owls, Hawks and Eagles.

DOG (domestic)

Man's best friend. Dogs were one of the first animals domesticated by humanity and they come in a near endless of array of sizes, colors and shapes. Because of this trusted place, Dogs are able to navigate human society with little notice.

Dogs are generally loyal to their masters when treated well and fearful of them when they are cruel. Dogs protect those they love; that is their main purpose in life. All dogs have a superior sense of smell and hearing. They can track by scent alone and some breeds excel at this skill. Some breeds have been bred to work and are strong and robust. Others are small but feisty and energetic like the Chihuahua and Terrier breeds.

On the mystical side of things, Dogs have the ability to sense death and will often howl to warn of a pending death in the immediate vicinity. Unlike most other animals, they can actual see the spirit of death as it approaches.



While there are many breeds of domestic dog, three are given here for use in any eco game. GMs and players are encouraged to customize their own breeds as needed.

The vast majority of domesticated dogs fall into the mixed breed category. What that means is the parentage of the Dog has not been carefully documented by humanity. These Dogs are common in all areas of the world and many are also found as strays in The City.

A couple of sample Dog Breeds are presented as well. Creative players and GMs can use these as guidelines to modify the Dog species to take the many dog breeds into account.

Traits (Mixed Breeds)

Size: Sm to Med **Weight:** 8-120 lbs.

Color: Variable fur

Diet: Carnivore

Activity: Diurnal **Habitat:** Domesticated

Instincts: Dogs have a strong sense of loyalty which may be a hindrance or a benefit depending on the situation. Whenever given a command by a Human, a Dog must make a successful WIL roll on the Omni Table to resist following the command. In the case of the Dogs master, this WIL roll suffers a -3 degree of difficulty penalty. In terms of the Dogs animal companions, they receive a +3 bonus to WILL rolls when defending their friends from harm.

Attributes

INT +0	PER +2
WIL +3	CHA +4
STR -2	DEX +0
CON +0	SPD +5
CR +1	BLD +5

Preferred Skills

All Dogs begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (neighborhood)* +5, *Lore (City)* +1, *Speak Language (canine)* +10, *Speak Language (galian)* +6, *Speak Language (any one human language)* +4.

Starting Dog characters, regardless of breed may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Brawling*, *Diplomacy*, *Etiquette (Human)*, *Navigate*, *Seduction*, *Survival (urban)*, *Swim*, *Tracking*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Dogs receive the bonus Talent Night Vision.
- ✦ All Dogs receive a +2 species bonus to Navigate checks.
- ✦ All Dogs receive a +4 species bonus to Tracking checks.
- ✦ All Dogs take a -2 penalty to Manipulate Omni Table rolls.
- ✦ Dogs may use their teeth (DR 4T) as natural weapons.

German Shepherd

Obviously originally bred in Germany as a sheep herding dog, the German Shepherd is known for its easy-going nature and strong protective instincts. It is wary of strangers, though once one is accepted by him he is a friend for life. A large breed Dog, the German Shepherd is often seen as intimidating by humans and many of this breed find service with police forces and security firms. German Shepherds are strongly loyal to their masters and will take a -5 penalty to any WIL roll on the Omni Table to resist a command from their owner.

Traits

Size: Medium **Weight:** 90-100 lbs.

Color: Medium length brown and tan coat

Diet: Carnivore **Activity:** Diurnal
Habitat: Domesticated
Instincts: Same as Mixed Breed Dogs

Attribute Adjustments

As Dogs, German Shepherds start with the same Attributes as Mixed Breed Dogs with the following adjustments: +2 to STR, +1 to CON, +1 to CR, and a -2 penalty to CHA.

Preferred Skills

All German Shepherds begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (neighborhood)* +5, *Lore (City)* +1, *Speak Language (canine)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Speak Language (any one human language)* +4.

Starting German Shepherd characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Brawling*, *Concentration*, *Etiquette (Human)*, *Intimidate*, *Navigate*, *Search*, *Swim*, *Tracking*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ German Shepherds receive the same bonus skills and talents as Mixed Breed Dogs.
- ✦ German Shepherds receive an additional +1 bonus to all Intimidate Omni Table rolls.
- ✦ German Shepherds may use their teeth (DR 6T) as natural weapons.

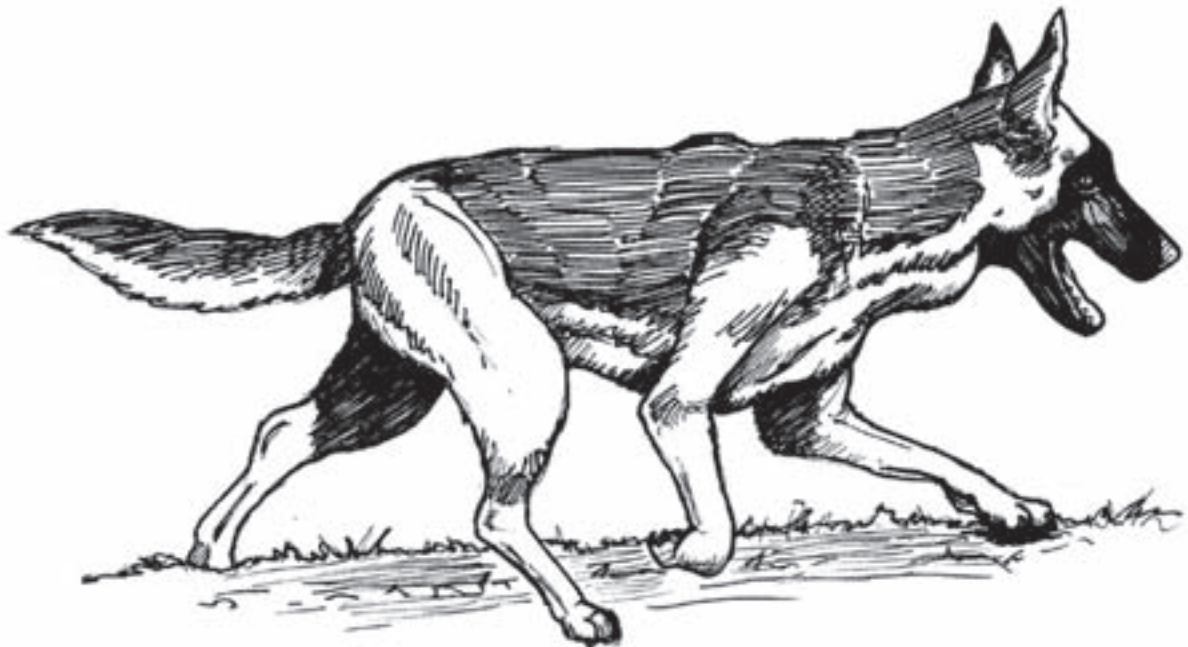
Basset Hound

The Basset Hound is a gentle, devoted and peaceful breed of Dog commonly found as a pet but originally bred for hunting. It's long ears sweep the ground as it walks brushing grass and earth and bringing scent to its powerful nose. While not a fast animal, Basset Hounds have one of the most powerful senses of smell in the animal kingdom.

Traits

Size: Small **Weight:** 50 lbs.

Color: Short, black, white and tan mottled fur.



Diet: Carnivore **Activity:** Diurnal
Habitat: Domesticated
Instincts: Same as Mixed Breed Dogs

Attribute Adjustments

As Dogs, Basset Hounds start with the same Attributes as Mixed Breed Dog with the following adjustments: +2 to PER, +2 to WIL, a -1 penalty to DEX, -1 penalty to CR and a -3 penalty to SPD.

Preferred Skills

All Basset Hounds begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (neighborhood)* +5, *Lore (City)* +1, *Speak Language (canine)* +10, *Speak Language (galian)* +6, *Speak Language (human)* +4.

Starting Basset Hound characters may select 2 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Diplomacy*, *Etiquette (Human)*, *Investigate*, *Navigate*, *Search*, *Seduction*, *Swim*, *Tracking*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

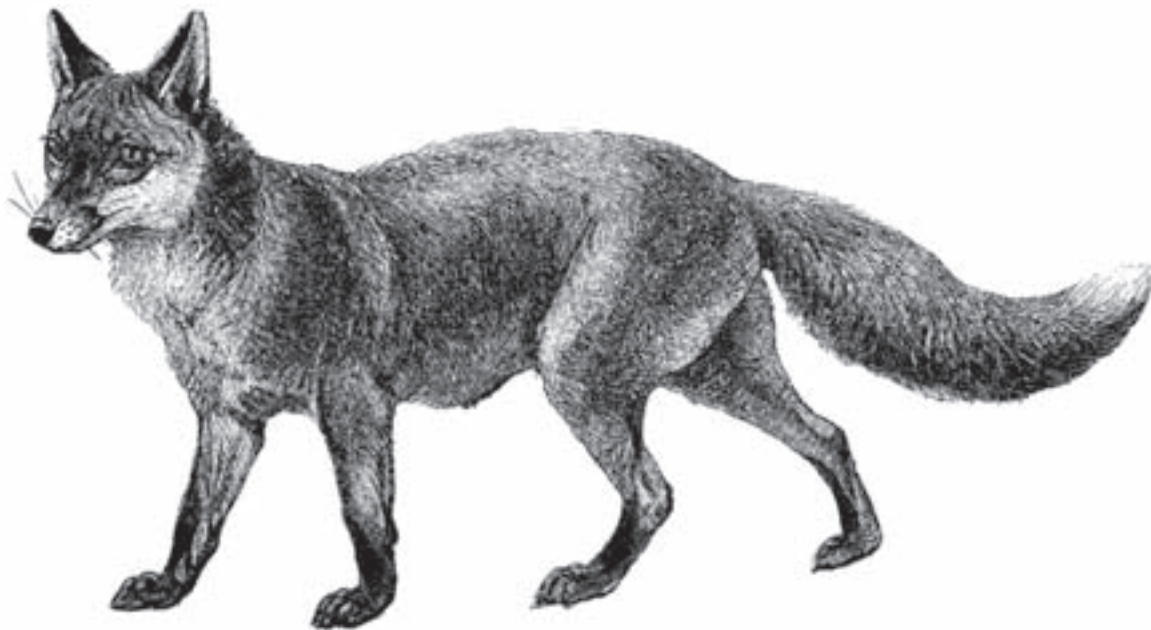
- ✦ Basset Hounds receive the same bonus skills and talents as Mixed Breed Dogs.
- ✦ Basset Hounds receive an additional +3 bonus to Tracking checks (+7 total)

FOX

The Fox resembles a small, slender dog and it is a shy, nervous animal. It is also highly intelligent.

Foxes often sleep in the open curling their bushy tails around themselves for warmth. When breeding, they dig their dens in sandy or gravelly soil with two or three different entrances for making a hasty escape. They are conscientious parents and fiercely protect their pups until they are able to care for themselves.

Their winter diet consists mainly of small mammals such as mice, squirrels, and rabbits. In the summer months, insects, crayfish, and



vegetable matter play a more important part in their feeding habits.

Aware Foxes are smarter than normal Foxes and many are often able to learn to read Human writing.

Traits

Size: Small **Weight:** 7-18 lbs.

Color: Red-orange fur, white underneath, black legs and feet, bushy tail

Diet: Omnivore **Activity:** Nocturnal

Habitat: Forest, sometimes in Suburbs.

Instincts: Foxes are very cautious animals, particularly around Humanity. They receive a -2 penalty to resist Fear (WIL) when dealing with Humanity. Foxes are also the natural enemy of Coyotes and they receive a +2 bonus to Evade when dealing with Coyotes.

Attributes

INT +3	PER +2
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR -3	DEX +1
CON +1	SPD +5
CR +2	BLD +0

Preferred Skills

All Foxes begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (neighborhood)* +1, *Search* +2, *Speak Language (canine)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Survival (forest)* +4.

Starting Fox characters may select 2 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Brawling*, *Deception*, *Evade*, *Stealth*, *Survival (urban)*, *Tracking*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Foxes receive the Dark Vision bonus Talent.

- ✦ Foxes hear low-frequency sounds very well. Fox characters receive a +3 bonus to PER (or PER related skills) checks when trying to hear small animals digging underground .
- ✦ All Foxes take a -2 penalty to Manipulate rolls.
- ✦ Foxes may use their teeth (DR 4T) as natural weapons.

GROUNDHOG

The Groundhog is a mammal about 20-26 inches long, including a bristly, six-inch tail. It is also known by the name Woodchuck.

Groundhogs don't generally have to move far to find food, as they eat a wide variety of vegetation—including green grasses, weed shoots, clover, alfalfa, corn, dandelion greens, garden vegetables such as beans, peas and carrots and, in the fall, apples and pears. These feeding habits often get them in trouble with farmers and gardeners. In the summer, woodchucks feed most actively during early morning and late evening.

Groundhogs live in many types of terrain, from farmland and old, overgrown cemeteries to orchards and suburban areas. Ideal habitat might be a thick, almost impenetrable fence-row bordering cultivated cropland. Orchards, especially if the spaces between trees are not mowed frequently, provide good habitat; woodchucks dig burrows under dead stumps or at the bases of the trees, where the roots protect den entrances. In stony areas, dens are often dug under large rocks.

A Groundhog may dig its burrow in the center of a field or pasture, but usually the ani-

mal chooses a more-protected location such as a field edge, fence, hedgerow or under a stone wall. Groundhogs do not require ground water sources as many live far from streams, lakes, creeks, and other bodies of water. Like rabbits, they get moisture from succulent plants, dew and water left standing after rainfalls.

Groundhog burrows are highly sought after real estate in the animal world. Skunks, raccoons and foxes remodel vacant burrows and use them to bear and raise young. Foxes may claim a burrow after killing its Groundhog owner. Rabbits often seek shelter in the dens especially during winter while the Groundhogs are hibernating below. Animals pursued by predators or hunters also use the burrows as escape hatches.

A woodchuck has keen senses of sight, hearing and smell. When feeding, a Groundhog usually raises its head every ten seconds or so to check for danger.

A muscular body, short powerful legs and sturdy claws make the Groundhog an excellent digger, and the critter spends much of its time underground. It piles excavated dirt at its burrow's main entrance and often sits on this mound to look about. The burrow descends at a sharp angle below the entry hole and then levels off into a narrower tunnel. Woodchucks often dig many side tunnels

and two or three back entrances. These *drop holes* are inconspicuous—they aren't marked with dirt mounds—and Groundhogs use them as lookouts or to get underground in a hurry when danger threatens. Burrows are usually located in well-drained, sloping areas and rarely get flooded. In digging, groundhogs use their strong forefeet to loosen the soil, then their hind feet to kick the earth behind them.

Even though a groundhog has short legs, it can run at a fairly fast clip for a short distance. An adult is a fierce fighter; dogs, coyotes and foxes are about the only enemies it has, although young Groundhogs are preyed upon by owls and hawks. Groundhogs climb well, ascending and descending trees head first. They have good balance and frequently walk along wooden fence rails. They use their front paws much as people use their hands, to clutch stems of clover or hold apples while feeding.

Woodchucks can produce several sounds. They often let out a sharp whistle for an alarm call. When feeding, they may make a



“chuck-chuck” sound, and when angry or cornered may chatter their teeth.

Traits

Size: Small **Weight:** 5-10 lbs.

Color: brown to black fur

Diet: Herbivore **Activity:** Nocturnal

Habitat: Forest, Fields, Suburbs

Instincts: Groundhogs are skittish animals and suffer a -1 penalty to all WIL rolls to resist Fear.

Attributes

INT +0 PER +3

WIL +0 CHA +0

STR -6 DEX +1

CON +2 SPD +0

CR +0 BLD -1

Preferred Skills

All Groundhog begin play with the following preferred skills: *Balance* +2, *Speak Language (rodent)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Survival (plains or forest)* +3.

Starting Groundhog characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Brawling*, *Climb*, *Evade*, *Engineering (structural)*, *Search*, *Survival (urban)*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ Groundhogs receive the Night Vision and Burrow bonus Talents.
- ✦ Groundhogs have fairly dextrous forepaws and receive a +1 bonus to Manipulate rolls.
- ✦ Owls may use their sharp front teeth as a natural weapon (DR 1T)

OWL

Owls are birds of prey, occupying by night the hunting and feeding niches which the hawks hold by day. Superb, specialized predators, owls are adapted to find, catch and kill prey quickly and efficiently. And they’ve been doing it for ages; owl fossils found in Midwestern United States in rocks of the Eocene period date back about 60 million years.

The plumage of owls is dense and soft, making them look heavier than they actually are. Their drab-colored feathers blend into the background of shaded daytime roosts and the darkness of night; the feathers on owls’ legs provide insulation and protect against bites by prey. Both sexes are colored essentially alike, but females are usually larger and heavier than males of the same species.

Some unusual and highly effective adaptations help owls survive. Extremely large retinas make their vision 50 to 100 times more efficient than human sight at distinguishing small objects in dull light. An owl can’t distinguish colors well, but it possesses binocular vision: each eye views the same scene from a slightly different angle, thus improving depth perception. Eyes are fixed in the skull; to look to the side, an owl moves its head, and some species can twist their necks over 270 degrees—almost all the way around.

An owl’s head is large and broad to accommodate two widely spaced and highly developed ears. Owls hear sounds well below the threshold of human hearing; even in complete darkness a barn owl can catch prey by using its hearing alone.

The leading parts of a Owl’s wings have

soft, serrated edges. These soft leading edges, lightweight wings and a large wing surface area let an owl fly and glide in total silence. As its flight is noiseless, an owl easily hears other sounds while hunting. It descends to its target in a silent, glide.

Owls are amongst the smartest animals of the forest and are quite often full of knowledge on any number of topics.

Traits

Size: Small

Weight: 2.5-5 lbs.

Color: Mottled brown, grey, white, black

Diet: Carnivore **Activity:** Nocturnal

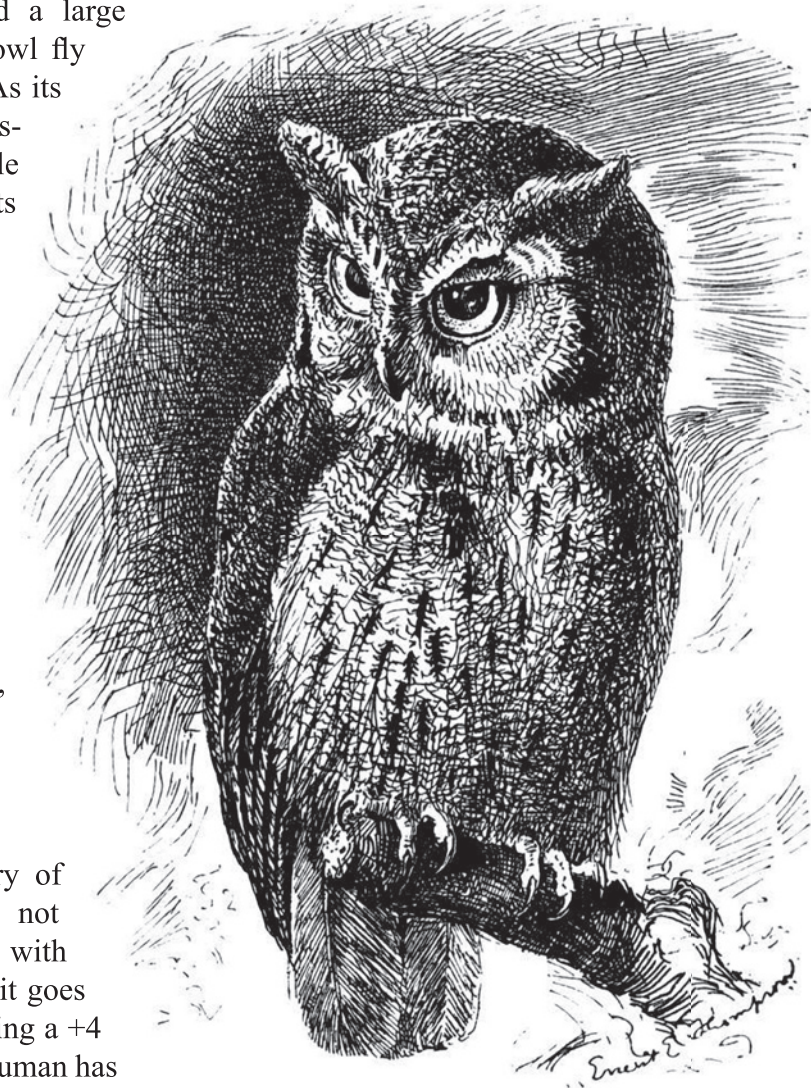
Habitat: Forest, Fields

Instincts: Though wary of Humanity, the Owl does not normally flee when struck with Fear of Humanity. Instead it goes totally still and silent, gaining a +4 bonus to Stealth until the Human has left the area. If attacked, the Owl will flee as per the normal Fear rules. Owls live almost exclusively on small rodents and must roll a success on a WIL roll with a DoD of -4 to avoid attacking any small rodent (like Squirrels) they encounter. PC rodents are exempted.

Attributes

INT +5	PER +4
WIL +1	CHA -1
STR -4	DEX +0
CON +0	SPD +8*
CR +2	BLD -1

* Owls fly at this SPD. SPD on the ground is -4.



Preferred Skills

All Owls begin play with the following preferred skills: *Aerial Combat* +4, *Balance* +2, *Speak Language (avian)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Survival (forest)* +4.

Starting Owl characters may select 2 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Command*, *Deduce Motive*, *Diplomacy*, *Evade*, *Lore (any 2)*, *Stealth*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ Owls are at their prime in the Dark. All Owl characters receive the Dark Vision bonus Talent and additionally receive a +2 bonus to PER checks when in the dark.
- ✦ An Owl's flight is near silent granting them a +3 bonus to Stealth rolls when flying.
- ✦ Owls are unable to manipulate tools that require dextrous handling. They take a -4 penalty to all Manipulate rolls.
- ✦ Owls may use their talons (DR 4S) and beak (DR 4T) as natural weapons.

PIGEON

Perhaps the most common wild animal in The City is the ubiquitous Pigeon. Pigeons prefer ledges of buildings, warehouses, rafters, beams, bridges and sites where it can build a nest of sticks, twigs and grasses as its home. They are found in all areas of The City, sometimes alone but often in great flocks. Humanity sees them as a nuisance and are constantly trying to cull the Pigeon population of The City.

While the vast majority of Pigeons are of the wild variety a few may be the domesticated variety or perhaps an escaped domestic bird. The domestic variety of Pigeon are often used in races and this type have a highly developed homing sense, able to find their way home from hundreds of miles away.

While not particularly intelligent, because of their familiarity with Humanity, many Pigeons are able to learn to manipulate Human-

ity tools, primarily by pecking things with their beak.

Traits

Size: Tiny **Weight:** 1-1.5 lbs.
Color: Variable. Bluish-gray, reddish, silver, white, etc.
Diet: Omnivore **Activity:** Diurnal
Habitat: The City
Instincts: Pigeons used to living amongst Humanity and are never affected by Fear when dealing with Humanity. Cats on the other hand terrify Pigeons and they suffer a -3 penalty to resist Fear when dealing with Cats.

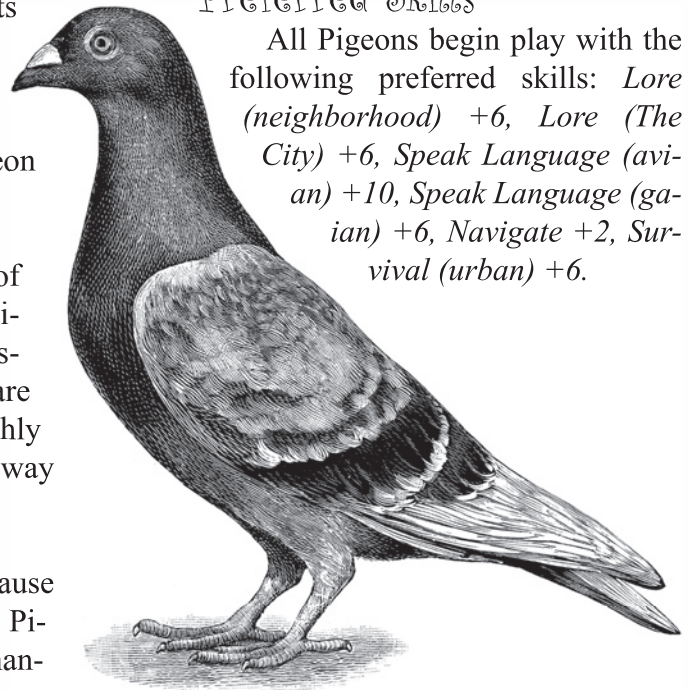
Attributes

INT -2	PER +0
WIL +2	CHA -1
STR -5	DEX +0
CON +4	SPD +10
CR -2	BLD +5

* Pigeons fly at this SPD. SPD on the ground is -2.

Preferred Skills

All Pigeons begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (neighborhood)* +6, *Lore (The City)* +6, *Speak Language (avian)* +10, *Speak Language (galian)* +6, *Navigate* +2, *Survival (urban)* +6.



Starting Pigeon characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: Balance, Deception, *Evade*, *Lore (herb lore)*, *Navigate*

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ Pigeons have an uncanny sense of direction and receive a +4 bonus to all *Navigate* rolls regardless of whether they possess this skill or not.
- ✦ Pigeons do not inspire any Fear in Humanity, nor do they suffer Fear of Humans.
- ✦ All Pigeons receive the Gossip bonus Talent.
- ✦ Pigeons suffer a -2 penalty to *Manipulate* rolls.

RACCOON

The word raccoon is derived from the Algonquian word meaning “scrubs with hands” and is a very apt name for this animal. Unlike most other animals around The City, Raccoons have very dextrous fore paws which they put to good use inspecting potential food. Awakened Raccoons are often able to use human tools and can operate things like light

switches, open doors and even operate computers.

Raccoons are omnivorous. This means they eat a tremendous variety of food, both vegetable and animal matter, including wild cherries and grapes, raspberries, blackberries, persimmons, apples, bechnuts, acorns, melons, corn, grass, leaves, earthworms, crickets, grasshoppers, beetles, grubs, fish, frogs, crayfish, mice, carrion, eggs, etc. Raccoons are a common sight around The City, often venturing well into its confines in search of tasty garbage and other treats from human homes.

Raccoons are adept climbers, and, being nocturnal, they spend most of their daylight hours in trees. On warm, bright days they like to sun themselves while lying flat on horizontal limbs, in squirrel leaf nests or curled up in the crotches of trees. Then at night, they descend in search of food. They travel, feed and hunt almost exclusively on the ground. Most raccoons have central home dens as well as others scattered about their feeding ranges. Adult home ranges are about a mile in diameter, greater when food is scarce. An ideal den or nesting site is a hollow in a large tree trunk or limb, but raccoons also use old groundhog burrows, caves, rock crevices and abandoned farm buildings.

A raccoon makes a variety of sounds, including barks, hisses, a wailing tremolo, a churr-churr noise often given while the animal is feeding, and a piercing scream of alarm or fear.

Raccoons often find their natural talents lend themselves well to the role of infiltrator, spy and thief. Humanity struggles constantly to find new ways to keep Raccoons out of their garbage can, sheds and houses.



Traits

Size: Small **Weight:** 10-30 lbs.

Color: Reddish-grey & Tan fur, striped tail, mask

Diet: Omnivore **Activity:** Nocturnal

Habitat: Forest, Marsh, Suburbs.

Instincts: Raccoons are a courageous and inquisitive lot. As such, they receive a +2 bonus to resist the Fear generated by humans and but also suffer a -2 WIL penalty whenever confronted with a mystery. For example, a Raccoon faced with an open window on a human house would need to succeed on an WIL roll at -2 penalty to resist the urge to see what was on the other side.

Attributes

INT +2	PER +1
WIL -1	CHA +1
STR -3	DEX +5
CON +1	SPD +1
CR +1	BLD +3

Preferred Skills

All Raccoons begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (neighborhood)* +2, *Manipulate* +4, *Speak Language (mustelid)* +10, *Speak Language (galian)* +6, *Survival (forest)* +2, *Swim* +2.

Starting Raccoon characters

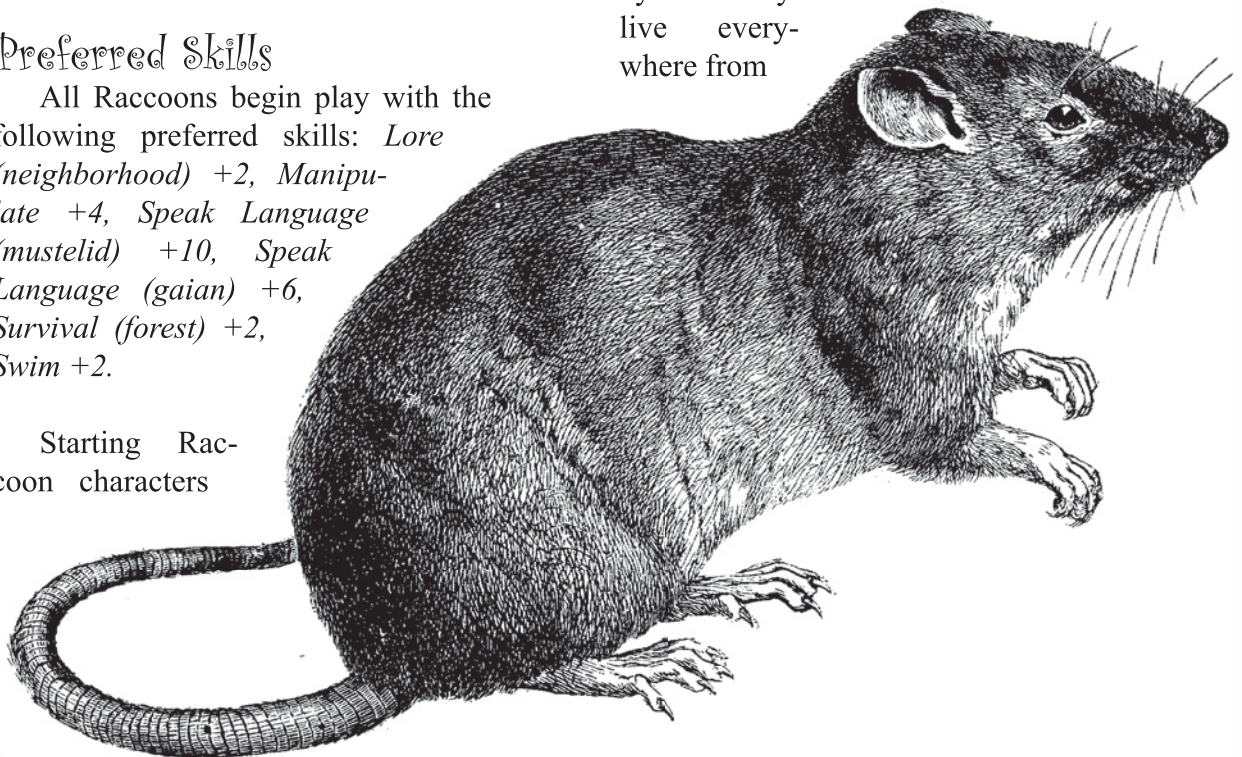
may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Balance, Brawling, Climb, Deception, Search, Stealth, Survival (urban, marsh or forest).*

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Raccoons receive the Night Vision bonus Talent.
- ✦ All Raccoons receive a +3 species bonus to Search checks.
- ✦ All Raccoons receive a +2 bonus to PER when they are able to handle an object with their fore paws.
- ✦ Raccoons may use their teeth (DR 4T) as natural weapons.

RAT

Known by Humanity as carriers of plagues and diseases Rats are nearly as common in The City as Pigeons but are tolerated far less by Humanity. Rats live everywhere from



suburban gardens, sheds and basements to streambeds, the edge of forests, parks and even sewers and garbage dumps.

They are able to adapt to almost any environment and are capable of eating almost anything. They have strong limbs and are able to leap distances up to 4 feet (vertically or horizontally) and are astute climbers as well.

As rodents, Rats have a need to continually gnaw to keep their teeth at a reasonable length.

Traits

Size: Tiny **Weight:** 0.5-1.5 lbs.
Color: Black or brown, scaly pink tail
Diet: Omnivore **Activity:** Diurnal
Habitat: The City (everywhere)
Instincts: Rats are quite bold and never suffer Fear from Humanity. Rats also cause Humanity to suffer a -2 penalty to resist Fear.

Attributes

INT +0	PER +1
WIL +0	CHA -2
STR -7	DEX +2
CON +5	SPD +3
CR +1	BLD +3

Preferred Skills

All Rats begin play with the following preferred skills: *Climb* +6, *Lore (sewers)* +4, *Lore (The City)* +4, *Speak Language (rodent)* +10, *Speak Language (gaian)* +6, *Survival (urban)* +6.

Starting Rat characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Brawling*, *Contortion*, *Evade*, *Manipulate*, *Navigate*, *Stealth*, *Search*, *Swim*.

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Rats receive the Night Vision bonus Talent.
- ✦ Rats are notoriously resistant to disease and poisons and they receive a +4 bonus to all CON rolls to resist the effects of disease and poison.
- ✦ Rats receive a +2 species bonus to all Swim & Stealth Omni Table rolls.
- ✦ Rats may use their teeth to gnaw through almost any substance. A hole can be gnawed through wood in less than 5 minutes. Rats can even gnaw through aluminum siding, plastic or even lead pipes, though this could take a day or more.
- ✦ Rats may use their teeth (DR 2T) as natural weapons.

SKUNK

One of the most feared animals of the forest, Skunks are feared not for their ferocity or battle prowess but rather for their unique defense mechanism (*see below*).

By nature, skunks are placid and sluggish. They move at a deliberate walk, slow trot or clumsy gallop; their top speed is about 10 miles per hour. They can swim, but are poor climbers. Their senses of sight, smell and hearing have been judged poor to fair compared with those of other wild mammals; their sense of touch, however, is excellent.

Skunks are armed with a potent defensive weapon: a pair of large scent glands found beneath the skin on either side of the rectum. These glands have nozzle-like ducts, which protrude through the anus. Skunks discharge their scent, or musk, through these nozzles,

powering the stream with a strong hip muscle contraction.

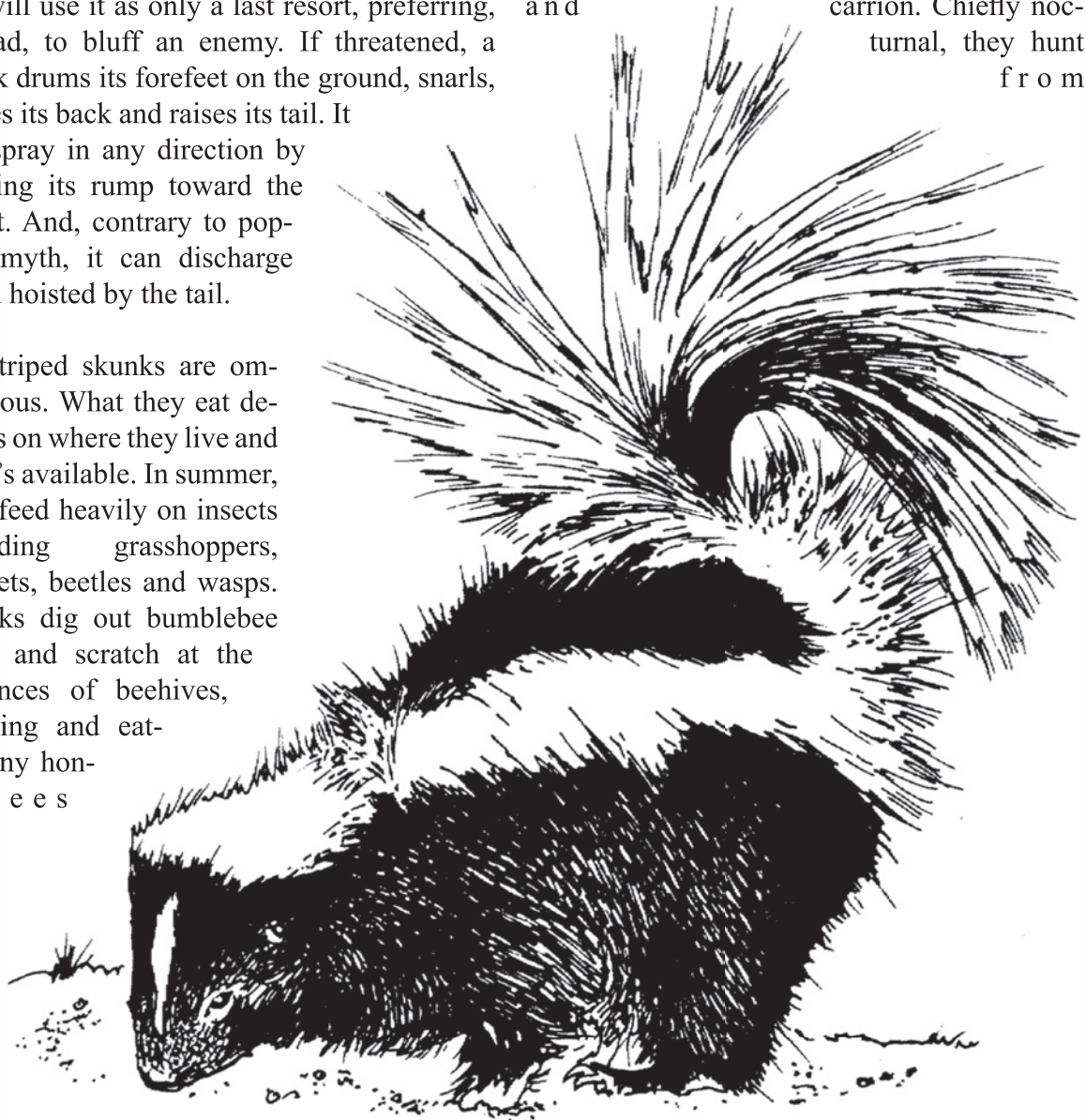
Musk is an oily liquid, creamy or yellowish in color. Human field guides refer to the musk as “highly repellent to all mammals.” In short, it stinks. It stinks bad! Musk can make a predator sick or, if the skunk has been able to direct the substance into the animal’s eyes, temporarily blind.

A skunk can shoot musk about twelve feet, but will use it as only a last resort, preferring, instead, to bluff an enemy. If threatened, a skunk drums its forefeet on the ground, snarls, arches its back and raises its tail. It can spray in any direction by twisting its rump toward the target. And, contrary to popular myth, it can discharge when hoisted by the tail.

Striped skunks are omnivorous. What they eat depends on where they live and what’s available. In summer, they feed heavily on insects including grasshoppers, crickets, beetles and wasps. Skunks dig out bumblebee nests and scratch at the entrances of beehives, catching and eating any honey bees

that fly out. Frequently they leave evidence of their feeding: small, cone-shaped holes in the soil, pine needles, leaf duff or suburban lawns mark where they’ve dug for grubs. Other summer foods: spiders, toads, frogs, lizards, snakes, mice, chipmunks and the eggs of turtles and ground-nesting birds.

In fall and winter, skunks eat fruit such as wild grapes and cherries; small mammals such as moles, mice, voles and shrews; plant items such as grasses, leaves and buds; and carrion. Chiefly nocturnal, they hunt from



dusk until dawn.

They den in ground burrows, beneath buildings, stumps, wood and rock piles and overhanging creek banks. Often a skunk will use an abandoned Groundhog burrow, although if none is available it will dig its own.

Although Skunks live primarily in the forest but often enter suburbs looking for tasty grubs in the gardens and lawns of Human homes.

Traits

Size: Small **Weight:** 3-10 lbs.

Color: Black head with a white stripe between the eyes and two broad white stripes which meet at the shoulders of its black back. The tail is black with a white tip or fringe.

Diet: Omnivore **Activity:** Nocturnal

Habitat: Forest, Suburbs

Instincts: Skunks are often hunted by birds of prey whose fast attacks often make them immune to the special defense of the Skunk. Skunks may not use their spray attack on Birds of Prey during the first round of combat and suffer a -2 penalty to resist Fear when confronted by birds of prey such as owls, eagles and hawks.

Attributes

INT +0	PER -2
WIL +2	CHA +0
STR -5	DEX -1
CON +2	SPD -1
CR -1	BLD +1

Hit Points: 10

Preferred Skills

All Skunks begin play with the following preferred skills: *Lore (neighborhood)* +2, *Speak Language (skunk)* +10, *Speak Language*

(*gaian*) +6, *Survival (forest)* +4, *Survival (urban)* +1

Starting Skunk characters may select 4 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Evade*, *Intimidate*, *Search*, *Stealth*, *Swim*,

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Skunks receive the Night Vision bonus Talent.
- ✦ Skunks have the unique ability to spray a fetid, oily, yellowish musk up to 12 feet. It can be used as an Attack (+4 on Attack rolls, use the Skunk's DEX as a modifier) and on a Full Success blinds the target for 1d20 rounds. Targets so struck suffer a -6 penalty to all rolls until the musk has been removed (a difficult task at best). This penalty is increased to -10 for all Stealth rolls. The musk can take up to a week to dissipate unless the creature is immersed in some deodorizing liquid (humans often use tomato juice).
- ✦ Skunks cause humans to suffer a -4 penalty to all Omni table rolls to resist Fear of the skunk. Humans have a great aversion to the scent of the Skunk's musk.
- ✦ Skunks may use their teeth (DR 2T) as natural weapons.



SQUIRREL

There are several different species of Squirrel but the one most commonly found in The City is the Gray Squirrel (their Red cousins are smaller and much less friendly than the Grays). Gray Squirrels come in many colors. Shades of gray are the most common followed by shades of brown. There are also pure white and pure black squirrels, but both are variations of the gray squirrel.

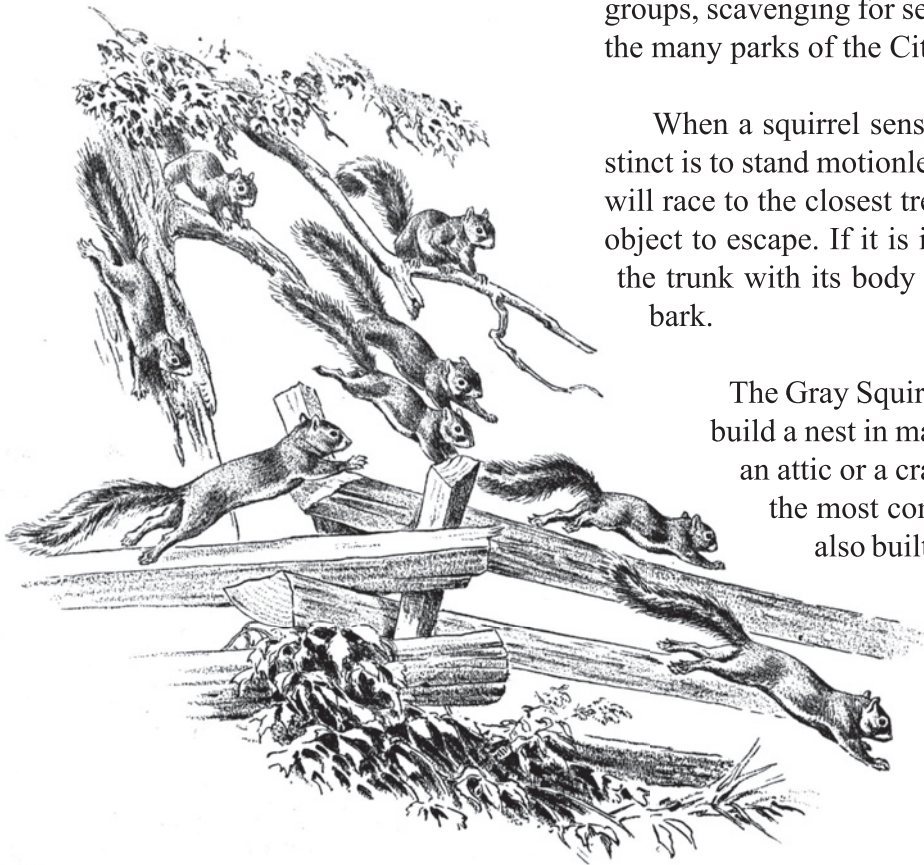
Squirrels see only in shades of black and white, but their eyes are sharp and detect movement well. They have keen senses of hearing and smell. They are most active in early mornings and late afternoons.

Gray squirrels eat mast -- acorns, hickory nuts, walnuts and beechnuts. Other foods include berries, mushrooms, pine seeds, corn (only the germ at the base of the kernel is eaten), and dogwood, wild cherry and black gum fruits. In early spring, squirrels eat buds, a high-energy food. They eat the buds and flowers of red and sugar maples in April, and later may feed on the winged fruits of red maple. These foods have a high moisture content that supplies squirrels' water needs, although grays will drink from available ground water sources. Grays smell out nuts which they bury for winter food. Unrecovered nuts may sprout and grow into trees. In this way, squirrels help ensure continual forest growth.

Gray squirrels are sociable and don't seem to be territorial, and several are often found in groups, scavenging for seeds and nuts amongst the many parks of the City.

When a squirrel senses danger, its first instinct is to stand motionless. If on the ground it will race to the closest tree, or other climbable object to escape. If it is in a tree, it will circle the trunk with its body pressed tightly to the bark.

The Gray Squirrel has been known to build a nest in many unusual places, in an attic or a crawl space seems to be the most common. Squirrels have also built nests in automobiles, chimney's, barbecue grills and under porches.



Traits

Size: Small **Weight:** 1-1.5 lbs.

Color: Silver gray with white undersides

Diet: Herbivore **Activity:** Diurnal

Habitat: Forest, Suburbs, Parks

Instincts: Squirrels have a natural Fear of any large predator like cats, dogs, foxes and birds of prey. When encountered, Squirrels take a -4 penalty to resist the effects of Fear.

Attributes

INT +0	PER +4
WIL -1	CHA +0
STR -5	DEX +5
CON +0	SPD +4
CR -1	BLD +4

Preferred Skills

All Squirrels begin play with the following preferred skills: *Balance +4, Climb +6, Lore (neighborhood) +3, Lore (City) +2, Speak Language (rodent) +10, Speak Language (gaian) +6, Survival (forest) +3, Survival (urban) +2.*

Starting Squirrel characters may select 2 of the following skills to add to their preferred skills list: *Acrobatics, Contortion, Evade, Stealth, Search.*

Bonus Skills & Talents

- ✦ All Squirrels receive the Dark Vision bonus Talent.
- ✦ Squirrels receive a +2 species bonus to all Acrobatics Omni Table rolls whether they have the skill or not.
- ✦ Because of their small size, Squirrel characters receive a +4 bonus to all Stealth checks.
- ✦ A Squirrels forepaws are quite dextrous and Squirrel characters receive a +2 bonus to all Manipulate checks.



Chapter Three

The City



THE CITY

The game of *eco* is set in the City. No animal calls the City by its human name—to animals, all human cities are alike, and the name of any one is unimportant. The City isn't huge, as human cities go, but it's large enough to leave a hole in the natural landscape. Skyscrapers and houses and docks and highways and railroads fill the gap left by nature's removal, but it's hardly a fair trade.

The City stands on the coast, looking out to the sea. Beyond the county line, beyond the suburbs, forests and hills stretch toward mountains. The climate is mild: Summer is warm, and rarely unbearably hot; winter is cool, and snowfall is ordinarily light; spring is rainy; autumn is windy. Most humans find it a pleasant place to live. Before the modern era, it was a land fit for many species—even animals used to a different environment could find a niche here.

But the City's been around longer than any living animal can remember. Every day,

it gets a little bigger, and older creatures have watched it change over the years. Skyscrapers grow taller and taller over time, placing more of Gaia's body in the City's shadow. Highways split and grow like the roots of trees, covering land and feeding the City with cars and trucks and people. Even the air has changed, as new and different chemicals pour out of factory smokestacks.

A few animals doubt there was a time before the City. It's all they've ever known, and they've forgotten any stories they had about an earlier age. They, too, know that the City is changing, but say that everything in the world grows and changes. Why should the City be any different? They wonder less about the past, and more about what the future will bring.

Human activity defines the ecology of the City and its surrounding lands. Local animals spend their lives adapting to the urbanization of their habitats and looking for new niches in which they can thrive. Sometimes, they even succeed. Where Mother Nature's legacy hasn't disappeared, it's usually because humans have chosen to preserve it in the form of a park or



garden. There's no escaping human influence, though some animals use ignorance as a shield.

Relations between urban and rural animals around the City are often strained. Many urban animals have little empathy for their brethren in the forest and in the ocean, figur-

ing that if they could adapt to life in the City, why can't everyone else? In turn, rural animals frequently see their urban counterparts as sellouts, abandoning their traditional lifestyles to appease humans. This mutual resentment isn't normally enough to keep urban and rural animals from working together, but it can slow progress down when cooperation is needed.



Animals passing through the City or visiting from distant places sometimes speak of the world's other cities. Birds talk about lights and the shape of buildings, while dogs talk about smells and the food left on sidewalks. Mapping the wider world isn't really a priority for anyone, though, and most animals see cities as places to be avoided, not sought. One is enough.

As with stories of foreign cities, stories of foreign wilderness are given little heed by local animals. What good is a forest in a faraway land if it's ruled by another group of humans? The creatures of the City have enough trouble surviving at home, and seeking a new habitat doesn't feel worthwhile. Even legends of one lost paradise or another—legends of enormous forests, plains of ice, and ocean depths untouched by humankind—are discounted by most animals. The City is what they know, and the City is where they'll stay.

The City can be divided into six different environments: downtown, the industrial dis-

trict, the slums, the waterfront, the suburbs, and the forest. Each environment has its own sources of food, water, and shelter, utilized by a unique animal population. Many animals never stray outside their home environment, and know only rumors about other places. Each environment is described below.

Downtown

The heart of the City beats downtown. Humanity's great works stand manifest in modern steel skyscrapers and old brick landmarks. Workers and students and tourists rush to and fro, traveling by car, bus, subway, bicycle, and foot. Yet for all the life and vibrancy downtown, there's little that's green: Trees grow alongside the street at perfectly spaced intervals, tiny sanctuaries within humanity's bustle. A few rooftop gardens spot the cityscape for those who know where to look. The City Park fills several city blocks, artificially re-creating a miniature wilderness.

Don't think that a lack of greenery means a lack of animal life, though. The animals who live downtown are clever, streetwise, and adaptive. (At least, they like to think so.) To live downtown, you need to know how to find a home, how to avoid cars and traps and Animal Control officers, and how to scrounge for food in an environment where little grows. It's a tough life—lonely, sometimes—but it's rewarding. For one thing, animals living downtown worry a little less about losing their land than animals living in the wild. For another, animals downtown can take advantage of human institutions—beneath human notice, some animals ride the metro, listen to public concerts, and even sneak into university lectures!

Of the many species of birds that live downtown, pigeons are the most numerous and (arguably) the best adapted. Downtown pigeons build nests on ledges, on rooftops, under bridges, and pretty much anywhere else they can. They mostly eat discarded human food—either fed directly to them, or snatched up from sidewalks and garbage cans—and drink from gutters, pools, and decorative fountains. Other downtown birds search out grubs and worms in the City Park and nest in the scattered trees, scraping out a more difficult living.

Small mammals downtown include squirrels, rats, mice, raccoons, and bats. Although much less visible than birds (and much more wary of humans), they find food and water in the same ways. The animals humans view as the worst pests—particularly rats and raccoons—try to avoid coming out in the daytime, foraging in dumpsters once night falls.

Animals foreign to the City must also be very careful when moving about. City councilors are apt to take an active role if bears,

Where is the City?

In order to help Gamemasters and players customize eco to suit their own preferences, we've chosen never to specify a location for the City. In other words, the City is wherever you need it to be.

The animals, plants, and geographic features mentioned in the City's description are all found in multiple parts of North America. By changing a few species here and there, a Gamemaster could make the City fit in several other continents, too. Switching out some of the City's locations can provide even more freedom—there's no reason a Gamemaster can't change the ocean to a lake, a swamp, or a desert, or the forest to mountains or tundra.

By customizing the City in this way—or simply by picking a location for the “default” version of the City—players and Gamemasters might feel constrained by a certain level of realism, but also may appreciate the ease of using real-world source material. Choose any location on the planet, and you'll quickly discover an array of special problems experienced by the local animal population, along with locations, characters, and social concerns ready to be dropped into a game. Whether the City is in a foreign country or based on your hometown, it undoubtedly has something to make it stand out.

Day and Night: Light Pollution in the City

One kind of pollution that goes largely unnoticed—and is, in fact, largely beneficial to humans—is the nighttime lighting in the City. Streetlamps, signs, digital billboards, and indoor lights shining through windows all give the City an unnatural glow and blot out the stars. Most people consider the tradeoff well worth it.

Animals, however, are often confused by artificial lighting. Migratory birds can be thrown off-track and even crash into lighted buildings. Land- and sea-dwelling creatures ordinarily base their activity cycles on the presence of light, and their schedules may change for the worse. Many animals either are drawn to light (which, in the City, can be very dangerous) or instinctually avoid light (and therefore lose territory and feeding grounds as the City grows brighter).

Light pollution is rarely disastrous for any one species, but it's one of many aspects of City life that animals aren't prepared for. An Aware animal could spend a lifetime tending to the problems caused by light pollution alone, and still be overwhelmed.

cougars, or eagles are spotted on the government's home turf, demanding protection for businesses, tourists, and themselves. The media, too, is always eager for stories about animals loose downtown. Therefore, the wise

outsider keeps out of sight. Rooftops, subway tunnels, and the sewer are all viable corridors, if not always easily accessed.

The Aware of the City often have reason to travel downtown. Many important human decisions are made in government offices and expensive restaurants, and discovering human plans for development, environmental regulations, and waste disposal can be vitally important. Urban animals can be very useful for this sort of spy work; pigeons, in particular, have earned a reputation as “the eyes of the city” for their ubiquity and excellent sight. Other circumstances requiring Aware intervention arise when humans attempt to exterminate colonies of rats or other “pests,” when alterations to the park force animals onto the street, when improper disposal of tainted food sickens hungry scavengers, and when natural disasters rock the foundations of the City.

Places

Downtown

Downtown exhibits all the great achievements of human society, and some of the worst. Historical sites and museums recall the City's past, libraries and the university are a testament to human knowledge, and shops and restaurants offer every good and service imaginable.

City Park

The City Park fills over a dozen square blocks and several hundred acres on the edge



of downtown. It sounds like a lot, but it's barely adequate for many of the animals who live there. It certainly doesn't leave room for newcomers, and the park's residents cling to their territory like downtown's human residents cling to their apartment leases. Stands of trees share space with fields of grass, decorative gardens, and fountains, and paved paths wind through the entire area. A wall surrounds the park, and gates lock out tourists at night.

Visitors are a mixed blessing for the park. Although donations from visitors supply much of the park's funding, wear and tear from foot traffic, thoughtless sabotage by visitors who pick flowers or carve trees, and litter all contribute to environmental decay. The park officials have their territory's best interests at heart, but they're few and overworked.

In addition to offering a comfortable home for the City's typical animal residents, the park also contains more unusual species. Butterflies are drawn to the flower gardens in late spring, and frequently carry news from the distant lands they pass through during their migration. A half-dozen peacocks strut down the paths and enjoy attention from tourists, all the while

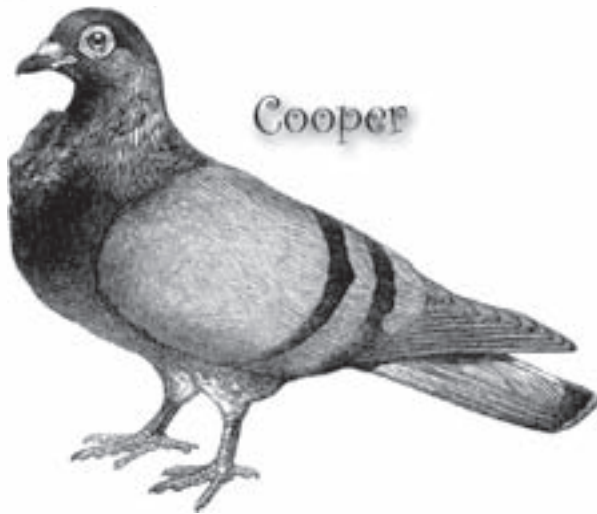
gossiping about the other park residents and desperately trying to keep newcomers away; beneath their snobbery, however, is a real fear of what could happen if they're driven out of the park and forced to fend for themselves in the unfamiliar city. Finally, a small pond serves as home to a group of very well-fed ducks. These ducks, once welcome, have become increasingly demanding and aggressive toward visitors bearing food, and park officials are debating action.

A local legend declares that, somewhere within the bounds of the park, an Aware groundhog once buried a precious treasure. Upon learning of the legend, animals occasionally dig up the park, much to the dismay of the park's caretakers. If there is a map or clues to the treasure somewhere, however, that knowledge was lost long ago.

Cooper Pigeon's Rookery

No species sees more of the City than pigeons. However, it's a rare pigeon who knows what to look for—who can tell one human apart from another and identify buildings by name and function. Even if that pigeon isn't always correct about the conclusions he draws, he's still a good creature to call a friend.

Cooper Pigeon was once an eager and ambitious spy. Although not Aware himself, he knew that other species had their own societies and ways of doing business. (He didn't understand them, but he knew of them.) He could find out anything about anyone, human or animal, in the City, and did so for the sheer thrill of it. Sometimes, Aware animals asked for his



help; sometimes, he offered his aid because he had nothing better to do.

Those days are over. Nowadays, the elderly Cooper lives on a spire atop the City's highest skyscraper, and enthusiastically meets and greets visiting birds. His home has become a launching pad for tours of the City, in which he points out various landmarks and intriguing sights—everything from City Hall to the alley behind the City's busiest steak house. He never talks about his previous life.

That's not to say he couldn't be convinced to take on another job. Cooper still thinks fondly of the old days, even if he's content to play tour guide. If someone came to him with an intriguing enough offer, well....

Cooper Pigeon

Size: Tiny

INT -5	PER +1
WIL -1	CHA +4
STR -8	DEX -1
CON +1	SPD +8

Ability Level: 8

Attacks/Damage: Peck DR 1T

Special Abilities: Flight; encyclopedic

knowledge of The City (*Lore (Region: The City) +14*); immune to Fear of humans

Armor: PR 0/0/0

Hit Points: 4

The Metro

The City's subway system (known locally as the Metro) is small, fast, and used primarily by low-income residents who can't afford to drive. It's also dark, damp, and a perfect habitat for a select group of creatures. Mice, rats, bats, and a few cats lurk underground, living in maintenance closets, incomplete tunnels, and niches just beyond the tracks. Pigeons nest in the subway stations, and are occasionally spotted on the trains themselves.

The subway's rats are causing concern among the animal world. Although individually small, the rats have numbers on their side. Where one rat is visible, it's almost certain that a dozen more wait in the shadows. Ordinarily, this wouldn't be a problem; most species would willingly cede the subway tunnels to the rats, and the flying bats don't worry about their brethren on the ground. But several groups of animals have developed a habit of riding the subway, and the rats are now demanding tolls. The rats are inconsistent about what payment they accept—or perhaps different factions of rats demand different items—but they usually take food, shiny objects, or actual subway tokens.

For the human world, it's the cats and bats who pose a problem. The cats are spending more time in the subway stations and less in the tunnels, presumably because they're being forced out by the rats. These are feral cats, however, and regarded as dangerous by subway travelers. The bats, on the other hand, aren't a problem in and of themselves; the issue is their droppings, which have been accumulating in

one uptown station. As it dries, bat guano can become dusty and carry disease through the air, potentially harming humans and animals alike.

Subway Rat

Size: Tiny

INT -6	PER +1
WIL +0	CHA -2
STR -7	DEX +2
CON +5	SPD +4

Ability Level: 1-3

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 2T

Special Abilities: Night Vision; +4 bonus vs. disease & poison

Armor: PR 0/0/0

Hit Points: 4

Feral Subway Cat

Size: Small

INT -5	PER +2
WIL +0	CHA -3
STR -5	DEX +4
CON +2	SPD +3

Ability Level: 3-7

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 2T; Claws DR 2S

Special Abilities: Night Vision; +3 bonus to Balance rolls.

Armor: PR 0/0/0

Hit Points: 9

Metro Bat

Size: Tiny

INT -6	PER +3
WIL +0	CHA -2
STR -7	DEX +5
CON +3	SPD +6

Ability Level: 1-3

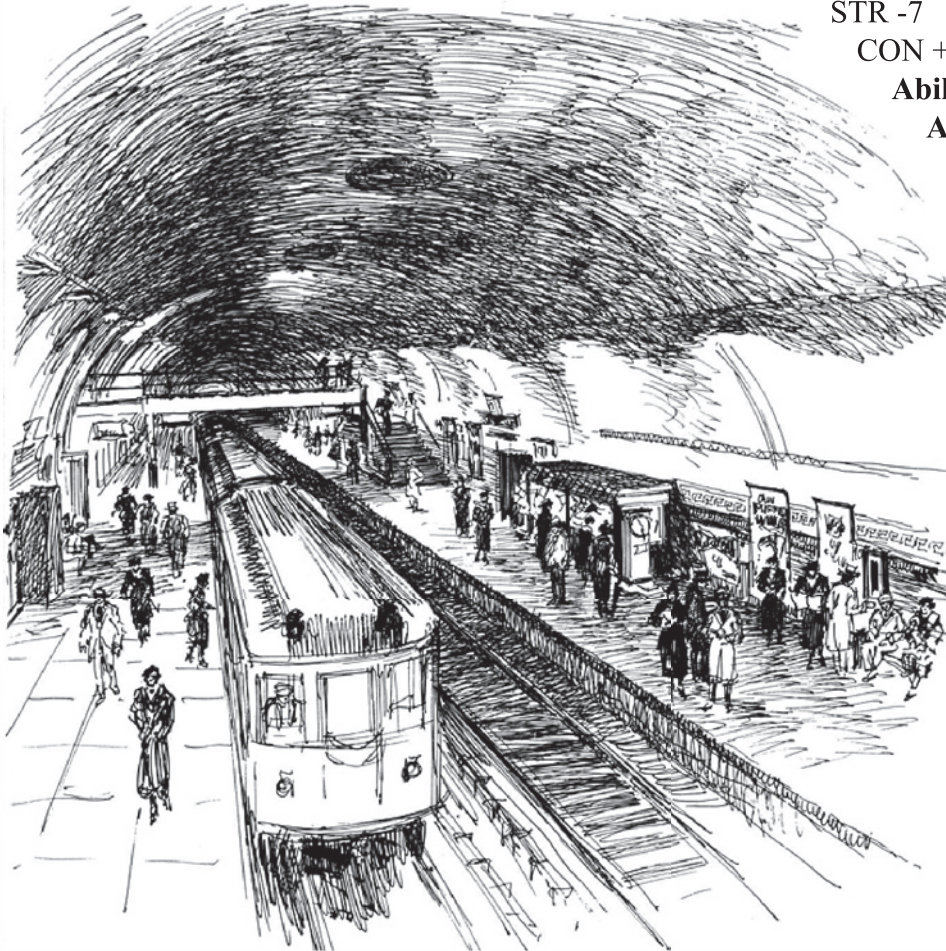
Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 1T

Special Abilities:

Dark Vision;

Armor: PR 0/0/0

Hit Points: 4



Office of Animal Control

The City's Office of Animal Control is charged with investigating complaints, enforcing ordinances such as leash laws, tracking disease, capturing stray or wild animals, and educating the public. Most officers are dedicated and caring, though some exceptions are jaded and disgruntled after too many years on the job. Animal Control officers are dispatched quickly to trouble spots downtown, and are capable of handling most situations. They are less quick to respond to problems in other areas of the City, but their territory extends as far as the suburbs.

The fate of animals captured by Animal Control varies depending on species and attitude. Domesticated animals, along with most calm or endangered wild animals, are brought to the Animal Control shelter. If an animal bears a tag (traditional or electronic), the officers attempt to contact an owner. Untagged animals are put up for adoption. In order to make room for newly rescued animals, officers euthanize older animals who have not been adopted after a certain period. Depending on the time of year, an animal may have as long as a few months or as little as a week before being killed. No one is happy with the situation, but no clear solution exists.

The Animal Control offices and shelter exist in separate, adjacent buildings. The office is one of many suites in a squat, concrete government building. It is an unremarkable branch of bureaucracy. The shelter is significantly larger than the suite, and is divided into three main sections: private offices for the employees, the main pound, and veterinary facilities. The

shelter offices contain all the equipment the officers use in the field (such as work clothes, nets, and tranquilizer guns), as well as working areas and a break room. The pound consists of several large hallways lined with cages; the sounds of barking and shrieking here can be deafening, and the combined smell of disinfectant and animal waste is very strong. The veterinary facilities include both an examining room and a quarantine area for sick animals.

Wild animals typically view Animal Control officers as enemies, and have little sympathy for the humans who kidnap and kill them. When inside the shelter, though, many animals become conflicted as they witness the compassion of their captors. Aware animals sometimes tell stories of daring raids on the Animal Control shelter to free their brethren, but these stories are usually more bluster than truth.

Animal Control Officer

Size: Medium

INT +1 PER +0

WIL +0 CHA -3

STR +0 DEX +0

CON +0 SPD +0

Ability Level: 2-6

Attacks/Damage: Tranquiliser Gun DR 2T + poison (CON roll at -10 or fall asleep for 2 hours)

Special Abilities: None

Armor: PR 0/0/0

Hit Points: 20

The University

The City's university sits across downtown from the park, its walled campus mirroring the enclosure of wilderness. The grounds mix open spaces, modern dormitories, and Victorian-style lecture halls, and teem with students and faculty at all hours. Trees and well-kept

lawns attract a small number of birds, squirrels, chipmunks, groundhogs, and other creatures, most of whom are well regarded by campus residents (and by campus security).

The university has small but vocal groups of devoted animal rights activists and environmental conservation advocates. On occasion, the Aware turn to these individuals as a way of encouraging political action; even though they can't be spoken to directly, sometimes students who mysteriously receive a set of factory blueprints or proposed industrial regulations can do a lot of good.



At the other end of the spectrum, the university's science department keeps a small store of frogs, chickens, and mice on hand. The mice are usually used for relatively innocent experiments (often involving mazes), but the chickens and frogs are given to classes to dissect—much to the dismay of the animal rights activists. No serious medical research is performed at the university, but graduates occasionally go on to work at Nationwide Genetics (see p. XX).

The most notable animal living at the university is undoubtedly "Professor" Warren, an Aware mouse who has educated himself by quietly attending lectures and availing himself of the university library. Although clearly brilliant, Warren is disliked by many other animals for his beliefs. Warren has concluded that humanity earned its unique position in the world, and that the failure of other species to adapt is an unfortunate, but natural consequence of evolution. He regularly holds sparsely attended lectures to promote these ideas, but he's respectful toward those who disagree. For all his arrogance (he would call it confidence), Warren isn't above helping animals who come to him for information and advice—but such animals would be wise to keep in mind Warren's apologist tendencies.

Professor Warren

Size: Tiny

INT +5

PER -1

WIL +4

CHA +4

STR -9

DEX -1

CON +0

SPD -1

Ability Level: 6 (see Spec. Abil.)

Attacks/Damage: None

Special Abilities: Brilliant and knowledgeable +15 to all Knowledge or Science skill rolls; Memory Training & Quick Learner Talents.

Armor: PR 0/0/0

Hit Points: 4

The Industrial District

West of downtown awaits the industrial district, a wasteland of steel, rust, toxic fumes, and poisoned water. It's a blight on the City, a place most animals instinctively turn away from. There are few trees, and the plant life that does exist is often sickly or coated with strange white soot. Smog taints everything, and water is spoiled by smokestacks and chemical spills. Without pedestrian traffic and restaurants and foliage, food is scarce.

Every day, workers converge on factories and warehouses, returning at night to their homes across town. Not even humans live in the industrial district. But a few animals—the toughest, the most urbanized, and the most foolhardy—do. Rats and cockroaches are kings of the industrial district, living as if they were designed for the

environment and sneering at outsiders. A few mice and squirrels and lizards endure as best they can, trudging each day across the dangerous landscape. Last are those animals who wind up in the industrial district by mistake—stray pets, confused birds, and curious burrowers. These animals quickly become wary and paranoid as the world around them becomes an enemy. Illness brought on by tainted food and water contributes to this mind set.

Moving through the industrial district is, in some ways, easier than moving through the rest of the City. There are few enough people on the streets that smaller animals aren't likely to be spotted, and Animal Control officers rarely turn up. More problematic are the traps and poisons planted by exterminators around building perimeters and on factory floors. In addition, since most animals avoid the district, few know its layout. Without an aerial view, it's easy for a creature to become lost.

The dangers of the industrial district are also a reason for the Aware to travel there. Sometimes, an animal feels a need to understand the extent of human pollution—to see the worst firsthand. Sometimes, an animal enters the district to act, hoping to sabotage a factory



or obtain evidence of improper waste disposal. Sometimes, a journey into the industrial district is a rescue mission. And sometimes, such a journey is a test—a ritual undertaken to harden the soul and to draw wisdom from the well of darkness.

Places in the Industrial District

Manufacturing businesses and their partners dominate the industrial district. Chain-link fences and barbed wire surround factories, chemical plants, warehouses, fleets of trucks, and abandoned properties. Some buildings are locked up tighter than forts, while others are easily penetrated through broken windows or unsecured basements.

The Death Factory

To the animal world, the largest factory in the industrial district is known as “the Death Factory.” If it produces anything of value, the animals don’t see it. They see the thick, sooty smog that pours out of its smokestacks, the poorly sealed barrels of waste that sit for months in its parking lot, and the foul-smelling water it pours into the sewers, and they know that all the factory creates is doom. Animals who venture inside—sneaking in through the sewers or stowing away in vehicles entering the garage—never return. Nowhere else in the City is there a place so cursed.

A variety of legends surround the factory, from the plausible to the absurd. Among the City’s stray cats, rumor has it that barrels of waste are shipped to the factory, then brought

inside for nefarious purposes. Crows say that the factory creates fuel and parts for other factories; that the Death Factory is, in a way, the mother of all lesser factories. A few of the Aware whisper of the possibility that one of their own—perhaps even an Aware human—runs the factory in the pursuit of a sinister agenda. If anyone knows the truth about the factory, it might be the cockroaches... but they’re not the sort to share.

Protestors march at the factory gates every few years, but nothing changes in the long run. The factory remains in business. It is a symbol of both humanity’s corruption and humanity’s invincibility—an insurmountable bastion of plague. Any creature able to return alive from the factory, let alone bring about its downfall, would surely win fame and respect throughout the City, but few animals are foolish enough to volunteer for such a task.

Doctor Speck’s Laboratory

Even if Doctor Speck weren’t Aware, he would still be extraordinary. A gray, 6-inch-long lizard, his species is native to the wilderness beyond the City proper. Somehow, he found his way to the industrial district and discovered the perfect feeding post: At night, he perches atop a street lamp, devouring the hundreds of insects lured in by the glow. By day, he lives within a pile of wooden crates in a paved lot.

Speck is Aware, however, and his story is even stranger. He considers himself a scientist, and is fascinated by the biological effects of the pollution produced by the district’s

factories. With a primitive set of laboratory equipment—sewing needles, rubber bands, eyedroppers, and so forth—he conducts experiments to further his understanding. He claims he's searching for a cure to the many ailments found within the district. Other animals say he's insane, and that he poisons creatures so he can watch them wither away.

Doctor Speck is happy to discuss his work, but he's reluctant to show his laboratory to strangers. He occasionally hires other animals

to obtain new tools or chemicals, and also happily accepts such items in trade. The very desperate might come to Speck for medical treatment, but who's to say a patient won't end up worse off?

Doc Speck

Size: Tiny

INT +6

WIL +2

STR -9

CON +0

PER +2

CHA +/-3

DEX +0

SPD +0

Ability Level: 10

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 1T

Special Abilities: *Good:* Brilliant, +10 to all Science rolls; has Medicine and Heal skills at +4; Brew Elixir Talent. *Evil:* Brilliant, +10 to all Science rolls; has Medicine and Torture skills at +4; Create Poison Talent.

Armor: PR 0/0/0

Hit Points: 3



The Junkyard

The junkyard encompasses four whole blocks at the far northern edge of the industrial district. Surrounded by concrete walls and razor wire, it's easily mistaken for a prison or a military encampment. Inside, fences divide the yard into sections for vehicles (everything from automobiles to bulldozers), vehicle parts, appliances, and so forth. Without the assistance of someone who knows the lay of the land, finding anything is virtually impossible. With help, it's merely very difficult.

The Pits

Three factions of animals live within the junkyard. The most visible residents are the rottweilers kept by the junkyard owners; they are well cared for and well fed, and they watch for intruders when the yard is closed. Toward humans, they aren't especially vicious, but they pounce on most animals without hesitation.

A large group of rats also lives within the junkyard, using the scrap piles as a warren. The rottweilers have long since adjusted to the rat presence, and a cautious peace exists between the two parties. Unlike many of the rats in the industrial district, the junkyard rats aren't especially unfriendly or territorial—exposure to the dogs and humans has made them comparatively social. The rats will guide visitors through the junkyard and away from the rottweilers, so long as any items taken from the yard are replaced with items of equal or greater value.

The last faction is disliked by both the rottweilers and the rats. A family of voles has burrowed under the junkyard walls, apparently attracted to the grass patches within the yard and the fungi growing beneath the ground. The voles don't seem interested in the bounty of the junkyard, and it's probably a good thing—if they took to stealing junk, or even to granting passage to visitors through the tunnels, the dogs and rats would hunt them relentlessly.

Despite its troubles, the junkyard is commonly seen by animals as the best source for human artifacts in the City. There's little that can't be found in the yard or made from parts within. So long as this remains true, the dogs will stay busy and the rats will reap a profit.

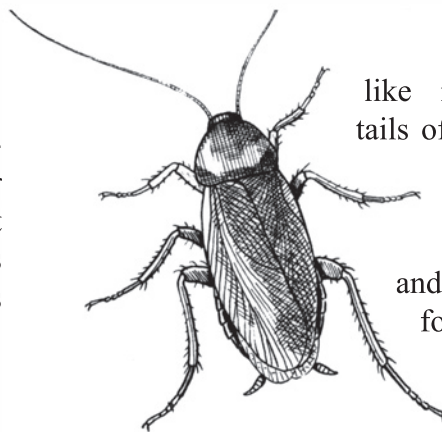
Cockroaches are survivors. In the wild, they're nature's cleaners, feasting on the debris and carrion and waste left behind by animals and plants. In the industrial district, their choices are more limited, so they adapt. They evolve. The Pits are their



home.

What are the Pits? From what the roaches describe, they're a network of enclosed spaces within factory walls where cockroaches reign supreme. The Pits lead to—or may even be saturated with—chemical waste, and this waste is the staple of the roach diet. Other creatures might find the chemicals poisonous, but the cockroaches derive nutrients from the noxious organic stew.

Of course, it's hard to be sure if this description is accurate. The cockroach mind is very different from the minds of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians, and discussions with roaches are always tough to understand. The industrial district cockroaches are also very secretive, and don't



like revealing details of their lives or their homes. They need no one else, and care nothing for "lesser" species. They've found their

ecological niche, and fully intend to remain there. What does it matter if other creatures are dying?

Some animals argue that cockroaches have allied themselves with humanity, and that they ought to be considered a foe. Most creatures aren't swayed by this absolutist attitude, but are cautious when approaching roaches anyway. After all, the cockroaches may genuinely be better off in a place where larger animals can't survive to prey upon them, and humans aren't having much success at eliminating them, either.

Pit Roach

Size: Tiny

INT -5

WIL +4

STR -12

CON +15

PER +1

CHA -5

DEX +0

SPD -2

Ability Level: 1

Attacks/Damage: None

Special Abilities: Immunity to poisons & disease.

PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 1

The Rathouse

In most areas of the City, the rat population is kept under control by predators and exterminators. In most of the industrial district, lack of food prevents rats from dominating the region.

But one abandoned warehouse sits beside three dumpsters used by nearby factories.

This warehouse is the perfect shelter and sanctuary for hundreds of rats, providing them with warmth and darkness by day and a place to launch scavenging expeditions by night.

The Rathouse (as it's known to local animals) is vile and dangerous, even for its inhabitants. Different families of rats claim ownership of different piles of abandoned boxes, rafters, and gaps between the walls. Wars among the families are not uncommon, and the rats even resort to cannibalism when the food supply is low. Although rats pride themselves on their personal cleanliness and grooming, the Rathouse is filthy from years of accumulated waste and tracked-in garbage. Nonetheless, the families share a



common interest in defending their home, and will work together to keep outsiders away.

Scouts from the Rathouse families keep a close eye on goings-on throughout the industrial district. Indeed, the families see themselves as rulers of their entire portion of the City, and the Rathouse as merely their capital. Although their real influence over the majority of the district is minimal, their knowledge is vast. Visitors looking for information could do worse than to turn to the families for help, so long as they're prepared to deal with inter-family rivalries and politicking; striking a bargain with the wrong rat could make a creature some nasty enemies.

Pauly Eastsider - Eastsider Enforcer

Size: Tiny

INT -5	PER +1
WIL +1	CHA -3
STR -7	DEX +1
CON +5	SPD +3

Ability Level: 3

Attacks/Damage: Bite 1T

Special Abilities: Immunity to poisons & disease;

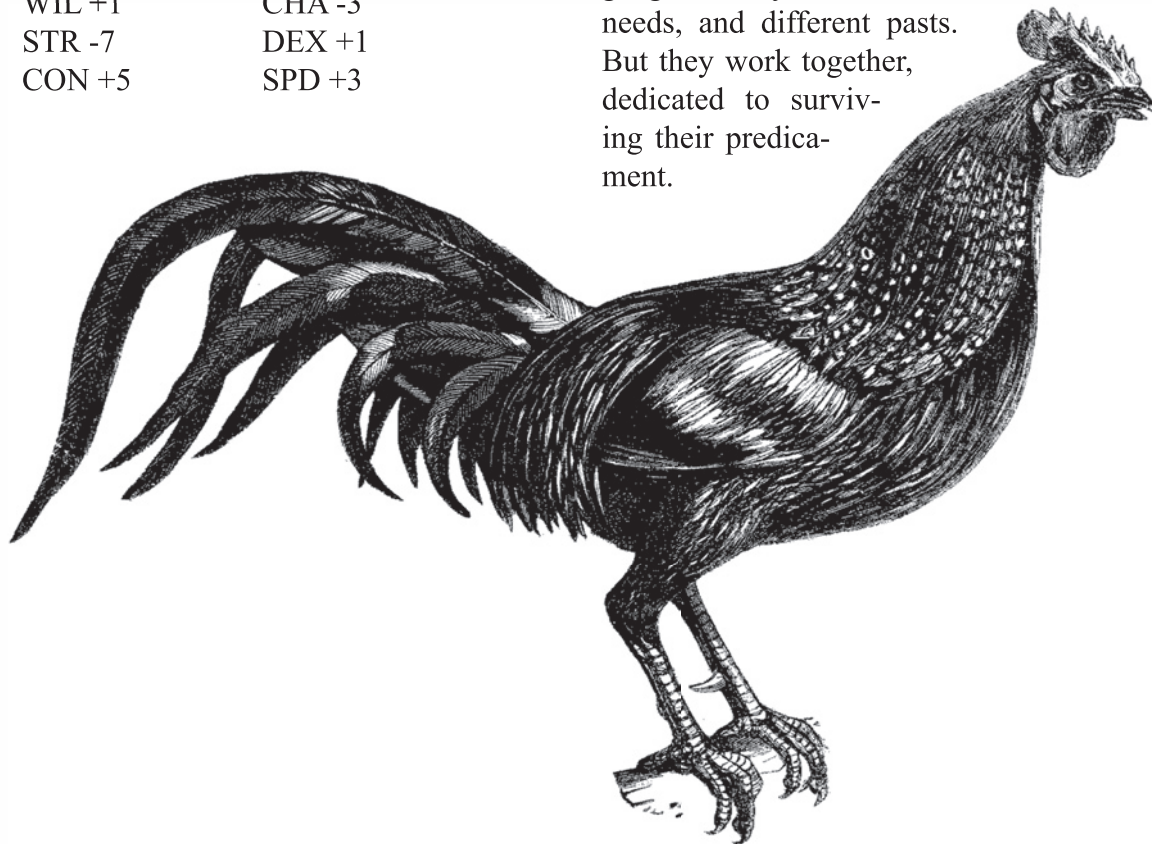
PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 7

The Spring Street Gang

Spring Street runs through the center of the industrial district, barely more than an alley squeezed between brick and concrete buildings. It's not much of a place to live, but for several animals, it's the only home they have.

The Spring Street gang consists of a half-dozen stray pets and semi-domesticated animals who found themselves, through various circumstances, lost in the industrial district. They are not Aware. They speak different languages. They have different needs, and different pasts. But they work together, dedicated to surviving their predicament.



The gang's roster has changed over the years, as some animals die or venture off on their own and others join. Currently, the gang includes a greyhound, a pug, a mixed-breed cat, a rooster, and a rabbit. The gang is openly distrustful of anyone it encounters, human or animal, and extremely protective of its territory. However, the gang members are essentially kind-hearted, and their trust can be won. In particular, they're apt to sympathize with other animals lost and far from home.

Once in a while, members of the gang debate whether to try to escape the industrial district and flee to greener pastures—somewhere where every day isn't spent searching through garbage and peering into gutters, where cancer or starvation or a run-in with a truck isn't inevitable. Although tempers can flare and individuals sometimes depart, the older gang members believe they have an obligation to younger animals who may stray into the district, who need someone to take them in. This is why the gang exists.

Argyle - Greyhound

Size: Medium

INT -5	PER +0
WIL +1	CHA +0
STR -1	DEX +2
CON +0	SPD +8

Ability Level: 4

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 4T

Special Abilities: Nigh Vision; can run at SPD +12 for short bursts

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 18

Tug - Pug

Size: Small

INT -5	PER +0
WIL +2	CHA +3

STR -5	DEX -1
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CON +1	SPD +2
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Ability Level: 3

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 3T

Special Abilities: Nigh Vision

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 14

Tiny - Cat

Size: Tiny

INT -5	PER +3
--------	--------

WIL -1	CHA -1
--------	--------

STR -7	DEX +3
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CON +1	SPD +3
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Ability Level: 5

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 3T; Claws DR 2T

Special Abilities: Night Vision

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 13

Big A - Rooster

Size: Small

INT -5	PER +4
--------	--------

WIL +1	CHA +0
--------	--------

STR -7	DEX +0
--------	--------

CON +2	SPD +3
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Ability Level: 4

Attacks/Damage: Peck DT 2T; Spurs DT 2T

Special Abilities: Danger Sense Talent

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 12

Bugs - Rabbit

Size: Small

INT -5	PER +3
--------	--------

WIL +0	CHA +1
--------	--------

STR -7	DEX +1
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CON +0	SPD +6
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Ability Level: 3

Attacks/Damage: None

Special Abilities: Leap Talent

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 12

The Slums

The City's slums are proof that, for all humanity's grand successes, humans still can't adequately take care of one another. It's not just animals whose plight is ignored and whose homes grow smaller and more dangerous. It's not just animals who lack the resources to acquire the food and shelter they really need. It's not even just animals who are subjected to experimentation, whether through social policy or medical malpractice. And as with its treatment of animals, humanity's mistreatment of its own isn't usually malicious; it's the product of ignorance and apathy.

The slums fill the eastern quarter of the City, and contain everything from crime-ridden urban disasters to quiet immigrant neighborhoods crammed with houses and shops. A few tiny parks dot the landscape, along with vacant lots and condemned buildings. Metro stations are spaced far apart, but bus stops are available for residents commuting downtown.

More animals live within the slums than anywhere else inside City limits. Backyards and playgrounds aren't exactly ideal habitats, but they provide enough green space for small, urbanized mammals to survive without too much trouble. In addition, people and cars don't pack the streets day and night like they do downtown, so animals can ex-

plore and forage with greater freedom. Birds tend to prefer the tall buildings downtown, but still have a place in the slums.

Domesticated animals are also common in the slums. Many residents own a dog, a cat, a fish, or a bird, and a few keep more exotic pets. Sadly, many pets are either lost or abandoned, and become strays. Feral cats are an increasing problem, as many cat owners neither spay or neuter their pets nor keep them indoors.

The animal residents of the slums tend to relate well to their human neighbors, sympathizing with the humans' plight. Even those animals in conflict with humanity—rats, raccoons, and the like—tend to see humans as competitors, not enemies. Some animals, such as former pets who escaped from abusive masters, view humans less kindly—but these creatures are exceptions. Overall, there's a sense of shared struggle in this part of the City. This bond doesn't extend to animals from outside the slums, however, whom locals see as naive intruders.



When the Aware go to the slums, it's usually to contact or aid other animals directly. Helping strays, negotiating treaties between wild animals, resolving problems between humans and their pets, and other minor tasks are all part of improving the basic quality of life in the City (at least, when residents of the slums will accept outsiders' assistance). The Aware also sometimes venture into the slums in search of allies; the animal communities there may not be eager to help, but there's strength to be found in numbers.

Places in the Slums

The neighborhoods in the slums are primarily residential, with just enough businesses to support the local communities. Schools, churches, parks, and other social institutions proudly endure in the midst of everything, despite a lack of adequate funding.

Grizzly's Lot

Grizzly's Lot isn't much to look at. It's an abandoned footprint of land about the size of a small house, paved with asphalt shattered by grass and weeds. There's not even a fence to separate it from the sidewalk. But to the animals of the slums, the lot has special significance.

Grizzly was a golden retriever who was beloved throughout the slums. She was a stray whose owner had died, and some animals claim she was Aware. Either way, Grizzly always advocated peace between species, and literally raced to interfere with any conflict that began. Her home was this lot, and she welcomed visitors whenever she could.

Feral Cat Gangs

The slums have a gang problem, but it's not humans who are the worst danger. It's the cats. Gangs of feral cats lay claim to street after street, prowling every night and hiding in bushes and alleyways during the day. Any animal discovered in gang territory after sunset is liable to be harassed, attacked, or—if the right species—eaten. A wise traveler always listens for feline howls (or better yet, avoids gang territory altogether).

An average gang claims an area of a few square blocks. Observant creatures can find the borders of gang territory based on urine markings. Gangs sometimes fight over territory, but the cat population is still small enough that there's plenty of room for expansion. In another few years, the situation may change—Animal Control hasn't had much success at population reduction—and many of the gang leaders know this. Some are even preparing for war, or stockpiling food and weapons.

The gangs relate to humans in a variety of ways. Some have human benefactors who put out food and water, who are accorded due respect. Some have an antagonistic relationship with humans, after one too many encounters with irate neighbors and Animal Control officers. Some brazenly ignore humans, strutting about during the day and relaxing in lawns and under cars. A few consider themselves affiliates of human gangs—or claim that human gangs were inspired by them.

No one knows just how Grizzly died. Neighborhood cats spotted humans carting Grizzly's bloody body out of the lot one day, and that was that. Tensions ran high for a while, but the killer was never identified, and—for a time—Grizzly's Lot became a meeting place for animals who wanted peace.

Years passed. Nowadays, only older animals remember the story of Grizzly, and no one bothers to visit the lot anymore. Periodically, someone suggests gathering there to reunite the animals of the slums... but nothing ever comes of it.

Old Pete's Shack

There may be nowhere in the slums as crowded with dogs and cats as Old Pete's shack. It's barely larger than a trailer, but Pete still manages to house dozens of animals inside and in the yard. Bowls of food and water cover every surface, and soiled newspapers are piled in stinking corners. Each animal within is a stray Pete's taken in and rescued—but Pete may not be in a condition to rescue anyone.

No one doubts Old Pete's good intentions. The elderly retiree has a good heart—it's just his house and his wallet that are too small. He can't afford enough food, he isn't fit to be constantly cleaning up, and he certainly doesn't have the resources to take thirty animals to the vet. Animal Control has visited Pete and taken away his strays several times, but the man persists.

For animals, the choice to go to Pete for help is a difficult one. The shack may seem better than the streets, but it's easy to get lost

in the crowd or attacked by strays protective of Pete's limited food supply. On the other hand, Pete will do whatever he can for any animal who comes to him. His understanding and capabilities are limited, but in desperate times, you take what you can get.

Old Pete

Size: Medium

INT -1	PER -2
WIL +0	CHA +3
STR -3	DEX -4
CON -1	SPD -1

Ability Level: 5

Attacks/Damage: None

Special Abilities: None

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 16



The Playground

The schools of the slums don't interest animals much. Animals don't find much useful in classrooms and gyms, and children—the worst children, anyway—have opportunities to be cruel that most adults lack. Playgrounds are different, though. Playgrounds have grass, trees, garbage cans, and dropped snacks. Older playgrounds have equipment that can be turned into nests. Newer playgrounds sometimes have bird feeders.

The best-known playground in the slums is built in the southern part of town, attached to the second-largest district school. The playground has few permanent residents. Instead, the animals of the area treat it as neutral territory, where any animal can come to forage. Squirrels and sparrows are the boldest visitors, not shying away from humans. At night, an opossum ambles into the playground from his nearby nest, enjoying whatever detritus has been left behind. Once or twice a year, a predator (such as a feral cat or hungry badger) tries hunting at the playground, but the human presence usually drives the creature away.

The playground is also notable for supporting the largest ant colony in the City. The main anthill is hidden beneath a plastic tube used for play by the children. It's not the safest habitat, especially given the tendency of children to intentionally kill worker ants, but it's one the colony has maintained (in one form or another) for nearly a decade. The ants' communication network keeps them well informed about where and when humans and other animals are active, and new eggs hatch swiftly enough to replenish any losses.

In a somewhat unusual circumstance,

the colony lost its original queen a year ago and managed to transition to life under a new queen—the daughter of the first, who had not yet departed to found her own colony. Although the colony workers are completely devoted to their new ruler, the queen is concerned about proving herself and differentiating her policies from those of her predecessor. She rules with a military mentality, but she's also interested in interacting more with other animal species. At the very least, she wants to determine if other species have something to offer—or if they're merely a threat.

The Resting Place

Most animals don't dwell on death. Even those who feel grief carry on with their lives, knowing that they don't have time for reflection—not so long as nests need to be built, food needs to be gathered, predators need to be evaded, and so on. Living among humans, though, some animals learn human customs. The mice of the Resting Place are such creatures, devoted to memorializing the departed and preserving the serenity of the dead.

The Resting Place refers to the small graveyard and smaller church that humans use, as well as the crawl space beneath the church claimed by the mice. The graveyard has been full for years, and many of the tombstones are cracked and illegible. The church, too, is in poor condition; however, while it is no longer used for services, it has several human caretakers. The crawl space is barely a foot high, floored with dirt and hidden by grass and rocks. Within the crawl space are long lines of pebbles, bottle caps, paperclips, lost earrings, and other small items, each representing a death the mice have been asked to remember.

There are about a dozen mice, total, and even they don't remember how their traditions began or how many generations have carried them out. The mice wait for other creatures to come to them with the name of a dead animal, then place a marker under the crawl space in the animal's honor. The mice memorize the markers and the names of the deceased so that they know which marker corresponds to

which animal (although the assignment seems arbitrary). They take their duty extremely seriously, and spend many hours rearranging the markers to make more room and recovering markers swept away by rain. Since few animals actually come to see them—no more than one a month, these days—they're eager to discuss their work with the few visitors they have.



The mice don't get much respect for their deeds. Normally, this is merely irritating, but several snakes have been stalking the graveyard lately, confident in the knowledge that the mice won't flee. So long as the mice don't reveal their hiding place under the church, they may be able to endure—but at this point, discovery seems inevitable.

Scotland's Yard

In a small yard outside a gray house in a quiet, residential neighborhood, an old bloodhound known as Scotland lives out his remaining years. Scotland's owner is a retired police officer, and Scotland is a retired police dog. There's no one in the City who's a better tracker. At least, that's what Scotland will tell you.

Scotland's nose isn't what it used to be, but he can still follow a trail and identify food, drugs, or chemicals. Although he enjoys the retired life, he'll occasionally slip away from his owner to do favors for other dogs. He can find a stray friend or a buried bone, or even locate a human's wedding ring. Scotland is equally happy just telling stories about the old days and explaining the organization of human criminals (usually wildly inaccurately). He also claims to have made some enemies whom he still watches out for, but what kind of enemies could a dog make?

During his time downtown on the force, Scotland had a few run-ins with Cooper Pigeon (see p. XX). Neither has given details of these encounters, but it seems that they were at odds more than once. Nonetheless, the two animals have a grudging respect for each other, and each would no doubt be interested if the other came out of retirement.

Scotland

Size: Medium

INT +1 PER +3

WIL +3 CHA +0

STR +0 DEX -1

CON +0 SPD +1

Ability Level: 12

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 4T

Special Abilities: Danger Sense, Scent & urban Tracker Talents

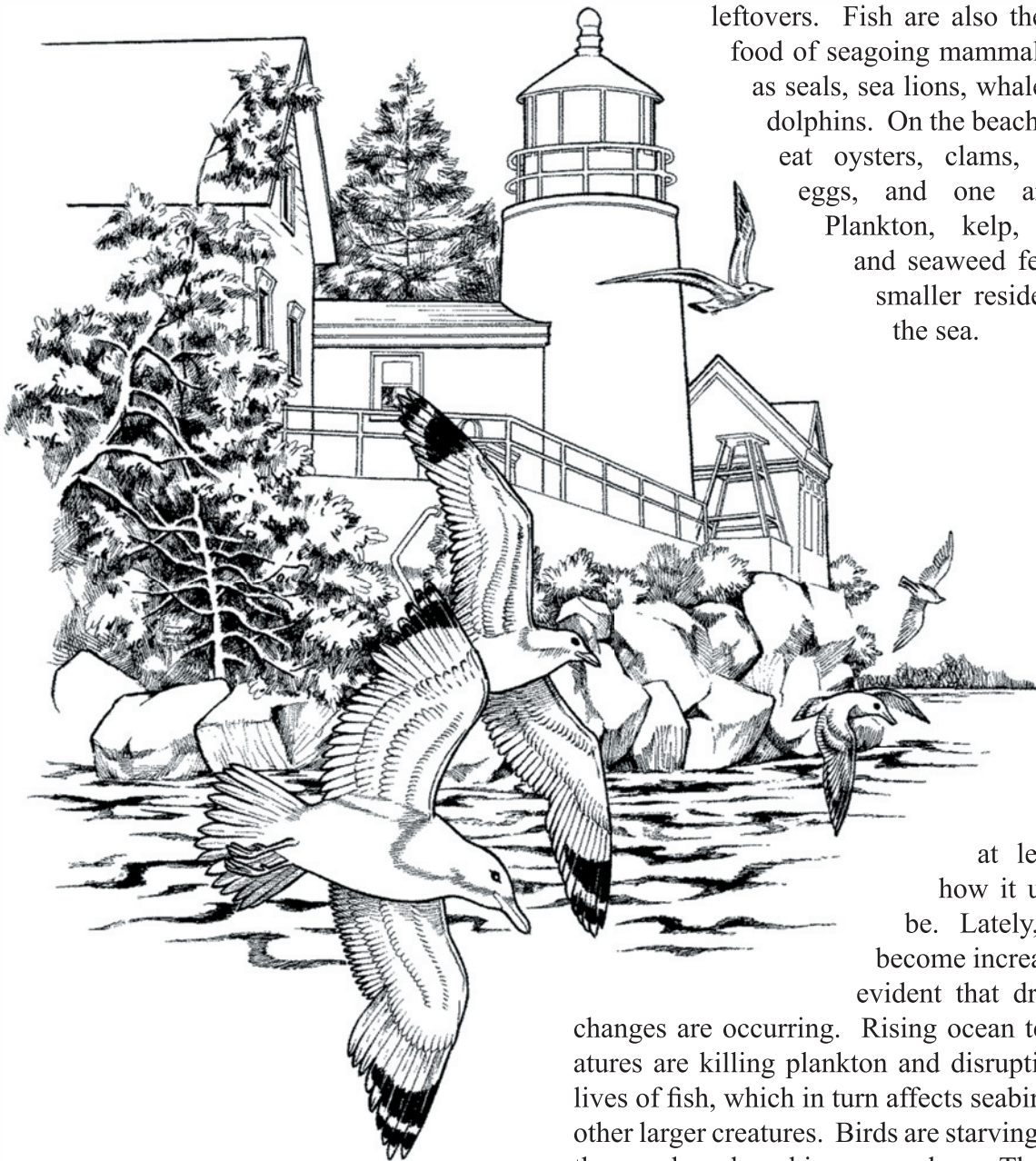
PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 18

The Waterfront

The waterfront is a sprawling mixture of the old and the new on the southern edge of the City. The maritime industry once overshadowed all else here, and cargo ships and fishing boats still crowd the City piers. The waterfront has changed over the last few decades, though, and now trendy restaurants and boutiques line the beach, and tour boats sail the waters. Grizzled dock workers pass idle dilettantes on their way to work. There's a tension between tradition





leftovers. Fish are also the main food of seagoing mammals such as seals, sea lions, whales, and dolphins. On the beach, crabs eat oysters, clams, snails, eggs, and one another. Plankton, kelp, algae, and seaweed feed the smaller residents of the sea.

This, at least, is how it used to be. Lately, it has become increasingly evident that dramatic

changes are occurring. Rising ocean temperatures are killing plankton and disrupting the lives of fish, which in turn affects seabirds and other larger creatures. Birds are starving by the thousands and washing up on shore. The cause of the temperature change is debatable, but many scientists believe human activity is the root. Pollution, too, is having severe effects. Regulated waste accumulates while ships off shore illegally dump oily ballast water or garbage. Even animals who have no trouble finding food risk poisoning themselves.

and novelty, poor and rich, and even the animals notice.

The beach and ocean have an ecology all their own, as vibrant as that of the inner city or the forest. Gulls, puffins, eagles, and other birds feed on fish, crustaceans, and human

For now, however, life endures, and the animals of the waterfront are proud of their world. It's the crustaceans and the amphibians who transmit some understanding of humanity to the ocean-dwellers, and who must find some meaning in the City's chaos. In turn, migratory fish and birds carry stories from around the world—often sad stories, but stories nonetheless. An animal versed in enough languages could gain quite an education from hanging out at the beach.

Although waterfront residents recognize humanity as a problem, they tend to relate to individual humans fairly well. Most people who come to the shore enjoy the sight of a gull, a crab, or a jellyfish, and won't actively disturb them. This leaves waterfront animals with a more nuanced view of humanity than that of many of their neighbors, and local animals can get into fierce arguments with visitors from elsewhere in the City. Still, even that's not common. The locals don't tend to pick fights with their fellow animals.

The Aware recognize the waterfront as a major conflict zone in the battle between nature and humanity, and visit often to assess the situation and help however they can. Of course, some of the Aware call the ocean home, and thus take the battle personally. Animals driven to anger sometimes attack fishermen or cargo ships, and the Aware aren't known for their willingness to police their own.

Places on the Waterfront

Between the docks and the tourist traps, between the cargo ships and the sand castles,

there are a lot of places for a curious animal to explore. The primary attraction of the waterfront is, of course, the water, but there's more than just the open sea.

City Aquarium

The City's sizable aquarium is built on the waterfront, and contains a microcosm of the larger ocean ecology. Hundreds of species live within the aquarium's glass tanks and habitats, including some rare and endangered animals. While the aquarium lacks the openness of the outdoors, most of the residents are content with their lives; in exchange for a degree of freedom, they gain security, regular meals, and the companionship of one another and their human caretakers.

In addition to its public exhibits, the aquarium contains a research center for the study of marine life. The center specializes in rescue and rehabilitation of injured animals—particularly at-risk local species such as sea turtles and sea otters. During their time at the aquarium, rescued animals are often nervous and frightened; creatures who try to communicate with them may find them too traumatized to respond. The aquarium sometimes tags rescued animals so that they can later be tracked, but the creatures of the waterfront don't yet understand the tags' purpose.

No discussion of the aquarium would be complete without a mention of Osminog, a 100-pound giant octopus who has lived in captivity for just over a year. Osminog is smart. Even for an octopus—a notoriously intelligent species—he's smart. Even for an Aware octopus, he's smart. No one seems to know exactly how Osminog ended up in the aquarium, but



Invasion Beachhead

A new species of crab has found its way to the waterfront. It's a species not native to the City's waters, or even to this continent. It's a species that's faster, more adaptable, and maybe even a little smarter than the native crab population. The invading crabs are quickly reducing the population of clams, oysters, snails, worms, and similar small creatures, and making life difficult for other crabs and birds who must survive off those species. Humans are also affected by the invasion, as crab and oyster fishermen find their hauls reduced.

rumor has it he arranged his own capture and that he's exactly where he wants to be. Osminog doesn't respond to such rumors; in fact, he doesn't say much at all. His great plan doesn't require the comprehension of underlings.

Yes, Osminog does claim to have a plan—at least to those animals who can pry a word out of him. He's been spotted climbing out of his own tank late at night, crawling about the aquarium and treating other creatures as midnight snacks. But food can't be his only goal. A pair of angelfish says they saw Osminog in the research center, and that he's tampering with the tracking tags. Whatever he's up to, Osminog may just have the smarts and the manual dexterity to pull it off.

Osminog

Size: Medium

INT +8 PER +0

WIL +2 CHA -1

STR +3 DEX +6

CON +1 SPD +4*

* *swimming. SPD -3 on land.*

Ability Level: 7

Attacks/Damage: Constriction DR 3B/rd

Special Abilities: +3 to Manipulate & Computer rolls; Diligent, memory Training & Animal Hacker Talents

PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 12

The crabs call themselves the Brachyuran Army, and see one section of the waterfront as the beachhead of their invasion. The beachhead—a sandy, seaweed-laden area of beach—is also home to the invaders' leader, an Aware crab named only "the General." The General has led his people for nearly five years, and is presumed to be the one who brought the invaders to the City. He won't talk much about the crabs' origin, though human scientists suspect the crabs stowed away in a ship's ballast water or hid in seaweed used as packing material for imported seafood. The General does claim that the invasion is "necessary," but it's unclear what he means. Are the invaders fleeing predators or polluted waters and desperately in need of a new home, or are they simply trying to expand their power base?

Human attempts to reduce the crab population through trapping haven't worked especially well, and no animals have organized opposition to the Brachyuran Army thus far. Still, the General has prepared thoroughly for any counterattack. He's drawn maps in the sand of hiding places, food sources, supply lines, and more. He's dedicated to the protection of

his people, and isn't concerned about the invasion's larger ecological impact. The native crabs have even heard rumors that he's looking to ally with other foreign, invasive species.



The General - Crab

Size: Tiny

INT +2	PER +0
WIL +5	CHA +4
STR -7	DEX -1
CON +3	SPD -1*

* same speed on land or water.

Ability Level: 12

Attacks/Damage: Pincher DR 2B

Special Abilities: Rally, You And What Army & Natural Tactician Talents

PR: 0/2/1 **Hit Points:** 6

Naval Base

The US Navy's presence in the City is small in size, but large in impact. The naval base has stood since the 1940s, unfazed by budget cuts and shifting defense priorities. The City's political leaders have debated for years about whether the base is ultimately a burden or a boon to the population, and never come to any firm conclusion—but for the animal world,

there's no doubt that the base is a cause of suffering.

Although so far as anyone knows, the base does abide by all relevant environmental laws, those laws are often generously loose when they come to regulating the military. The total mass of the foreign elements dumped into the water (both intentionally and accidentally) by the Navy is greater than that dumped by all the City's waterfront businesses combined. The sonar systems used by Navy vessels interfere with the sonar of sea creatures such as whales and dolphins, disrupting their navigation and sometimes leaving them beached and dying. Local officials aren't interested in tracking these problems, nor fixing them, and are being given no compelling reason to change their policy.

Yet it isn't fair to say that the Navy has done nothing positive for the environment. The naval base observes weather patterns closely, and occasionally partners with the university downtown to study underwater phenomena. The data obtained are vital to understanding the City's changing ecology, as well as the effects of those changes on other regions.

The New Reef

Few natural reefs exist on the coastline around the City. But reefs are beneficial for several reasons—they provide a habitat for fish and mollusks, offer fertile fishing grounds for humans, and appeal to divers and tourists. So over the past few years, the state has been constructing an artificial reef. The reef is being built out of a variety of materials, ranging from decommissioned ship hulls to steel bridge parts to subway cars. Portions of the reef have been in place long enough to be covered in mussels

and anemones, and supporters are claiming success.

Not everyone agrees that the construction of the reef is a good thing, though. Some protestors voice concern over the materials used, saying that the state is more interested in convenience and cost than environmental safety—even arguing that the state is using the reef as a way to dispose of unwanted scrap metal. They point to other artificial reefs using limestone and concrete, and say those construction materials are preferable and practical. Other detractors are more cautious, citing suspicions that while reefs do attract sea life and encourage human economic growth, they don't necessarily increase or protect animal populations in the long run.

The opinion of the animal world, too, is split. Those creatures who recognize the reef's components often distrust human motivations and decry animals who take advantage of the reef as naive. More forgiving (or credulous) creatures see the reef as a peace offering, and fully support its creation.

One of the more colorful animals to fre-



quent the new reef area is Jonathan. Johnny as he's called by his friends is an Aware Seagull who used to spend most of his days along the waterfront protecting other creatures from careless or callous humans along the stretches of beach. Recently, he's been spending a lot of time bobbing ont he waves in the the vicinity of the reef. What he's been up to is anyone guess.

Jonathan - Seagull

Size: Small

INT +2	PER +0
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR -7	DEX +2
CON +4	SPD -1*

** on land. Fly at SPD +6. Swim at SPD -3.*

Ability Level: 6

Attacks/Damage: Beak DR 2T

Special Abilities: Scavenger, Deep Breath & Taunt Talents

PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 12

The Ocean and Beyond

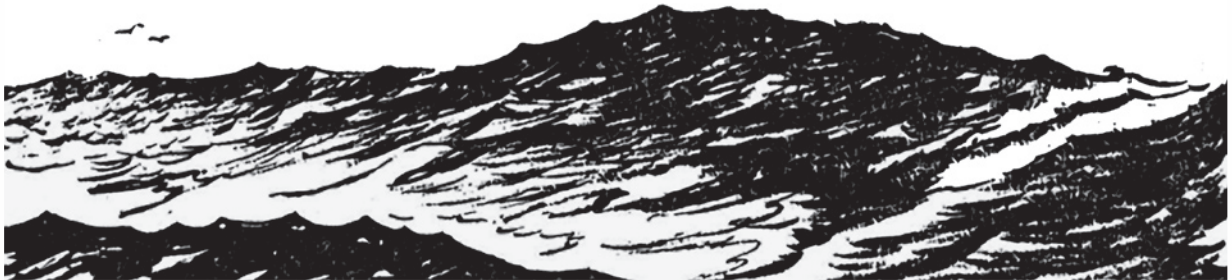
There's a whole different world waiting beyond the coastline. Often, all the City's animals see of the deep ocean are the mysterious creatures who wash ashore: Enormous sperm and orca whales who lie dying on the beach, reciting stories from their decades-long lives before being rescued by humans or passing away; by-the-wind-sailors—tiny, jellyfish-like blue blobs composed of polyp colonies—who once rode the sea surface and followed the breeze, only to be stranded on land; and the corpses of giant and colossal squid, revealing undersea life unlike anything terrestrial.

But there are sights in the ocean that demand a firsthand viewing. Oil rigs stretch out of the water, miniature islands in their own right that threaten to leak their toxic contents at any time, while also attracting schools of fish and hungry sharks. Coral reefs await near shallow foreign beaches, enormous and beautiful formations that house hundreds of animal species—and that are slowly dying due to human activity. The lowest depths of the ocean are, perhaps, the last places on Earth unseen by humankind; not even submarines can enter the greatest underwater chasms.

Exploring the ocean is a difficult task for

creatures of the City, but it isn't impossible. An Aware beaver once compiled maps and navigation charts from the wisdom of seabirds and fish, then set off into the sea on a raft of his own creation. Stowing away on a Navy or research ship is a surmountable challenge for the stealthy and clever. Other animals might be befriended and assist with short journeys, if an explorer doesn't fear riding whale-back or in the claws of a pelican.

As for returning to the City, well... that would be an adventure of its own.



The Suburbs

Outside the City, the world seems more tranquil. Instead of the ultra-dense landscape of tall buildings and streets, you can find houses and office buildings surrounded by greenery and patches of forest. The sounds of cars and radios and human chatter fade away, so that nighttime is truly peaceful. The stars and the moon peak out of the sky, less affected by the light pollution of streetlamps like the more urban areas of The City.

This apparent tranquility is a lie. Animals seduced by the lure of the suburbs face a different set of dangers than those in the City, but the dangers are no less real. The glades of trees and fields of grass are deceptively small, penned in by dangerous roads and new con-

struction. Food is plentiful at the best of times, but dwindles to nothing in the winter, when too many animals desperately compete. Humans appear kind and caring one moment, then plant poison in their lawns the next. The beauty of the suburbs is no more than an illusion.

The animal population in the suburbs is large and diverse, reflecting the composition of the forest as much as the City. Mammals of all shapes and sizes play a decisive role; rabbits, foxes, skunks, groundhogs, mice, chipmunks, squirrels, and deer are all commonplace. Deer, in fact, are rather too commonplace, and townships struggle to control the deer population by authorizing yearly hunts. Reptiles conceal their presence well, and few humans ever notice the lizards and snakes who play under their eyes. Birds flock to shrinking stands of trees, to ponds, to bird feeders and bird baths, and to

The Wandering Wolf

No one's sure where she came from, but she's not an urban legend anymore—there's a wolf in the suburbs, and humans and animals alike are afraid.

Large predators haven't lived in the suburbs for a long time. This causes some problems (such as the uncontrolled deer population), but humans prefer it to the alternative; no one wants to feel threatened by the world around them. When media reports regarding sightings of an unidentified large animal began a few months ago, the reaction was akin to hysteria. Parents pulled their children out of school, pets were kept indoors, and drivers were urged to stay watchful. Although bears have been known to wander out of the forest from time to time, they had never come so close to the City.

It wasn't too long before experts identified the creature as a wolf. Attempts to capture her have failed, so—faced with no other option—suburbanites have mostly returned to their normal routine. Evidence of the wolf still turns up every few weeks, when she marks her territory, leaves behind a half-eaten carcass, or scares neighborhood pets with her howl. She hasn't yet attacked a human—wild wolves generally don't—but no one knows what she might be thinking. If she was raised by a local who treated her as a pet, she may not fear humans at all.

Aside from the practical concerns that living near a wolf raises, the case of the wandering wolf has inspired a few animals to think about how much they could affect humans if they tried. After all, if one wolf is enough to cause a panic, how much would it take to shut down the area entirely?

Akela - Wolf

Size: Medium

INT +1

PER +2

WIL +1

CHA +0

STR +1

DEX +0

CON +0

SPD +4

Ability Level: 8

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 6T

Special Abilities: Highly Mobile, memory Training & Motivated Talents; Ability Level +4 on all Literacy, Speak Language (English), Investigate & Social Science (sociology) skills.

PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 20



backyards filled with prey. Spiders and insects find special contentment in moving between the moist outdoors and cool, dry houses, despite humans' best efforts to be rid of them.

As in the slums, pets are plentiful in the suburbs. In addition to typical domesticated animals such as dogs, cats, gerbils, parrots, and so forth, some suburban residents keep less common creatures such as iguanas and pot-bellied pigs. Unlike in the slums, there's definite friction between domesticated and wild animals; the wild animals claim pets don't understand life's true hardships, while the pets tend to see their wild brethren as savages.

Animals moving from one place to another aren't likely to be seen as peculiar by humans, but travel is slow and difficult. Many roads need to be crossed to get anywhere, and the distance between any two suburban locations can be many times the distance between locations downtown. If an animal does manage to garner attention by disrupting human life, Animal Control or private trappers will soon be on the case.

Although many of the Aware treat the suburbs as merely a bridge between the forest and

the City, they're needed in the suburbs as much as anywhere. The first signs of urbanization are found here, wherever trees are cut down and condominiums built. Animals trying to migrate out of the City and the forest become refugees here, searching for open space to call their own. Territorial disputes, between different animal species and between humans and animals, are par for the course. Any assistance or relief is welcome.



Places in the Suburbs

Individual neighborhoods, office complexes, and shopping centers are strewn about the suburbs seemingly randomly, along with parks, playgrounds, and strips of forest. Security isn't usually a problem, although many buildings have alarm systems or motion detectors connected to floodlights.

Alliance Construction Development Site

About a half-hour's drive beyond the City limits, the suburbs begin to give way to fields and forest. Alliance Construction is dedicated to solving this problem by opening up a wide swath of land on which it can build overpriced, closely spaced houses. Never mind that the trait many homeowners find appealing about the area—the fact that it retains a touch of the wilderness—is being destroyed; investors are happy, and buyers are already lining up.

The construction has driven many animals out of the area, sending them fleeing toward the forest or into more densely populated regions. Once the foundations are laid and effort shifts to erecting the houses themselves, many more animals will be forced to leave. Birds and burrowing animals are being particularly hard-hit due to their direct loss of habitat, but



creatures who feed on these animals must go elsewhere, as well.

An Aware rabbit named Kevrisk has decided to take a stand against the construction. Kevrisk and her revolutionary family have been sabotaging the site nightly, doing everything from stealing keys to tearing apart machinery. She's succeeded in being an annoyance, but little more, and she's searching for a way to put a permanent end to the building. In the meantime, the construction workers have been making complaints, and an investigation into the sabotage may be forthcoming.

Kevrisk - Rabbit

Size: Small

INT +0	PER +2
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR -7	DEX +2
CON +0	SPD +6

Ability Level: 7

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 2T

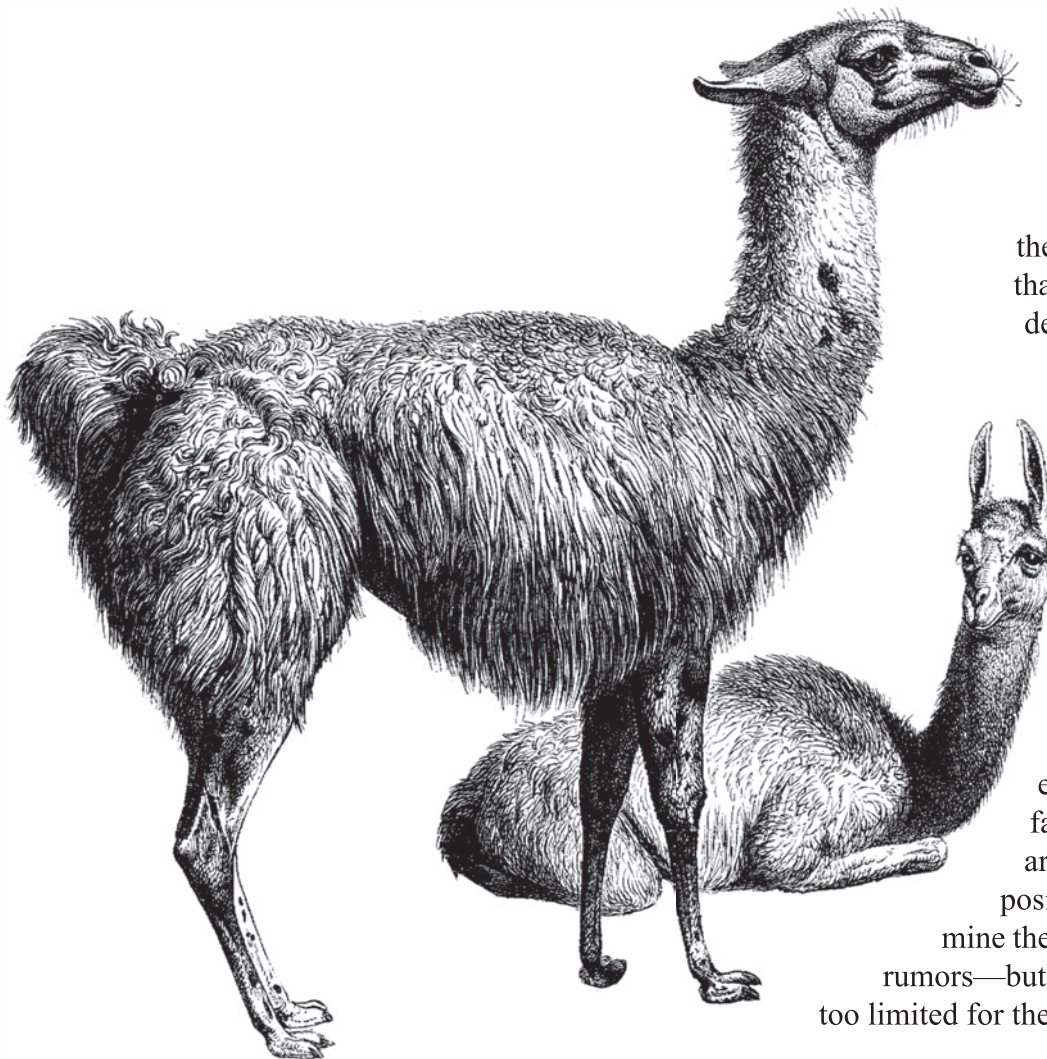
Special Abilities: Leap, Acute Hearing, Amazing Dodge & Coordinate Talents.

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 10

The Hobby Farm

Although true farmland is nonexistent for many miles around the City, a few wealthy residents run animal farms as a hobby. The largest of these farms is concealed by a thin line of trees and protected by secure metal gates in the heart of the suburbs, and consists of a mansion, a barn, several grazing pastures, and a set of stables. It is not open to the public, and most locals don't even know it exists.

The animals on the farm are ignorant of the world around them, raised and cared for in the



over the estate and spend some time with his pets. Animals outside the farm believe that the owner deals with many businesses in and around the City, and that he may be a major investor in housing development or logging operations. The farm animals are in the best position to determine the truth of these rumors—but their world is too limited for them to care.

lap of luxury. Horses, sheep, goats, farm cats, mice, a dog, a chicken, and a pair of llamas all live happily together. They neither work nor compete for their food; the workers hired to maintain the farm provide for all their needs. Only the chicken has any idea of what the outside world is like—her conversations with wild birds clue her into the truth, but the other farm animals refuse to believe the stories she passes along. At her best, she's a firebrand, and at her worst, she's dismissed as a kook.

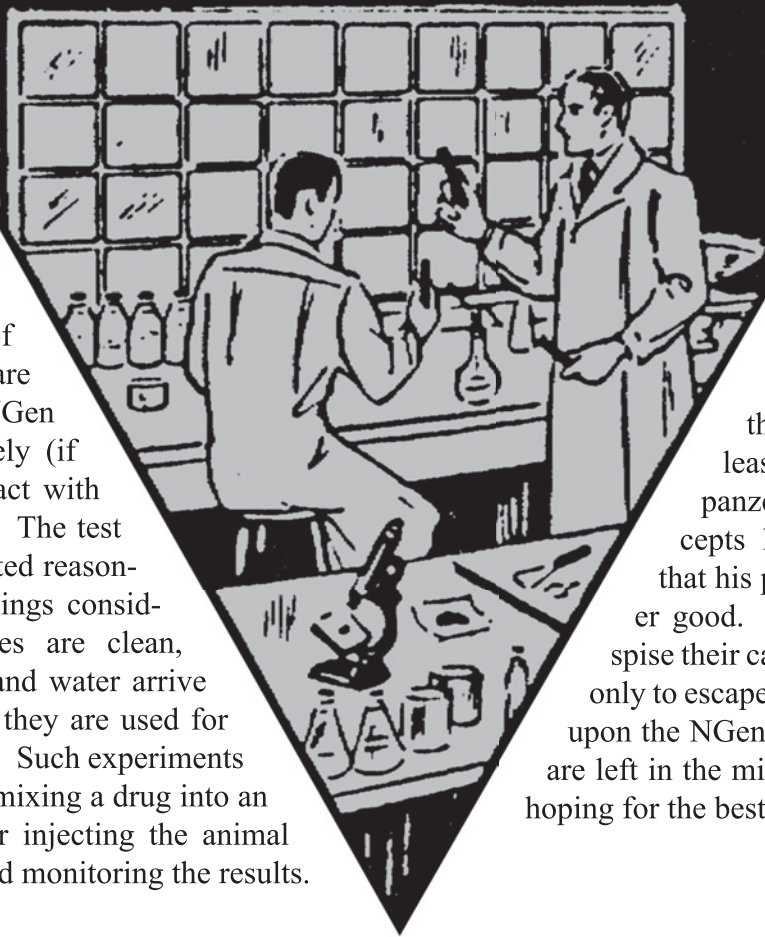
The farm's owner lives elsewhere most of the time, only occasionally visiting to look

Nationwide Genetics

Nationwide Genetics is based in a small office complex not far from the city line. It looks perfectly innocent—just another place of human business—but there are few other locations that are so feared by the City's animals. To those seeing it from the outside, NGen is a place of almost primal terror, exemplifying the cruelest of human behaviors.

The company specializes in pharmaceutical research. One part of that research is ani-

mal testing, using everything from fruit flies to rats to chimpanzees. All of these animals are held inside the NGen offices, and rarely (if ever) have contact with animals outside. The test subjects are treated reasonably well, all things considered—their cages are clean, and fresh food and water arrive regularly—until they are used for experimentation. Such experiments usually involve mixing a drug into an animal's food or injecting the animal with a serum, and monitoring the results.



The test subjects react to their confinement in accordance with whichever of these answers they believe. At least one of the chimpanzees stoically accepts his fate, believing that his pain serves a greater good. Other animals despise their captors, and seek not only to escape, but to get revenge upon the NGen workers. The rats are left in the middle, confused and hoping for the best.

Outside animals tell many stories about what the test subjects experience. Some say the subjects suffer ghoulish deterioration, while others say the animals gain increased vitality and appetite. Most likely, different experiments bring about different results—some good, some bad. Similarly, there's much debate over why the humans do what they do. Less urbanized animals assume it's pure sadism, but animals with a better understanding of humans realize that the NGen scientists are looking for something.

What's Nationwide Genetics looking for, then? What's the end result of all the misery? Only the NGen employees know if they're making life-saving vaccines, "lifestyle drugs," veterinary medicines, or all three.

Darwin - Chimpanzee

Size: Medium

INT -3 PER +0

WIL -3 CHA +1

STR -1 DEX +6

CON +1 SPD +2

Ability Level: 1

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 6T or per weapon employed

Special Abilities: None

PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 18

The Ring

Dogfighting is illegal, but that doesn't always stop people. In fact, dogfighting is a "sport" with a nationwide following. Therefore, it shouldn't be a surprise that the City has its own dogfighting ring, based in a medium-sized suburban home out in the middle of nowhere. Here, no one notices the howls and barks that echo late at night and into the dawn. No one except the spectators, at least.

Gamblers and dog trainers come to the Ring from as far as a hundred miles away, participating in fights every few weeks. Huge sums of money are bet, and the Ring's owner—known to the animal world as "Chain"—reaps a hefty profit from providing the kennels and the fighting pit. The spectators are young and old, urban and rural, professionals and casual enthusiasts. They harbor little fear of the law, as attending a dogfight is only a misdemeanor (though running one is a more egregious offense). Many of the spectators claim to be dog lovers, despite the abuse they put animals through.

The dogs bred by Chain are mostly pit bulls, but dogs brought to fight by other participants come from a variety of breeds. All the fighting dogs wear ugly scars from previous fights, and most are also

marked by brands and bruises inflicted by their owners. Although prohibited by the Ring's rules, a few dogs have been dosed with steroids, as well. The dogs are vicious and mistrustful, and most have known no other life beyond combat. They'll fight anyone who comes near, and the Ring's dogfights can last for hours at a time. If the Ring were ever broken up by Animal Control, there's a strong possibility that the dogs would be put to death; trying to rehabilitate them would be too difficult and dangerous for most potential owners.

Besides the dogs, a few other animals are aware of what takes place inside the Ring. A pair of crows observes the fights regularly, hoping to eat the flesh of the dead. They're never allowed—Chain burns the corpses of dead dogs—but they remain hopeful, and are



reluctant to talk about what they view as a food source. A domesticated dalmatian who lives down the road from the Ring also suspects that something is amiss. He frequently wanders into his house's yard early in the morning, and his keen ears pick up the sounds of the fighting. His owners, unfortunately, are oblivious to their neighbor's hobby.

"Chain"

Size: Medium

INT +0 PER +0

WIL +1 CHA -5

STR +0 DEX +0

CON +0 SPD +0

Ability Level: 6

Attacks/Damage: Cane DR 6B or Pistol DR 8T

Special Abilities: None

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 22

Pit Dog

Size: Medium

INT -5 PER +0

WIL +4 CHA -5

STR +1 DEX +1

CON +4 SPD +4

Ability Level: 2-8

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 6T

Special Abilities: Frenzied Attack I Talent;

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 16-22

Chief - Dalmatian

Size: Medium

INT -3 PER +2

WIL +0 CHA +1

STR -1 DEX +0

CON +0 SPD +4

Ability Level: 3

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 6T

Special Abilities: None

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 17

The Forest

Travel long enough, travel far enough, and even the City fades away. Follow the highway north through the suburbs and soon, a canopy of green overtakes the world. Streams weave their way between centuries-old trees, spilling out of distant hills and more distant mountains. Waterfalls pour across mounds of rock, echoing in the peaceful air. Rain, snow, and fire have all left their marks on this land, embedded in plants and in stone.

But the forest hasn't escaped humanity's hand. Roads wind around the perimeter of the old growth lands and plough through areas stripped of vegetation. Hikers, kayakers, and campers forge trails through the grass, never entirely hiding all traces of their passing. Loggers make their living off the forest, bound to the same landscape they alter.

The forest is a haven to animals. For some, it's the last home they have. Bears, deer, elk, cougars, wolverines, and other large mammals wander freely, protected by their isolation. Smaller mammals are abundant, and rabbits, foxes, bobcats, chipmunks, and mice share roles of predator and prey. Salmon, bass, and trout swim in the rivers, and snakes, toads, and lizards wait on the muddy banks or lurk on branches overhead. Birds, many from species not seen beyond the forest (and owls and eagles in particular), flock to the tall trees and thick brush. Even the insects and arachnids of the forest have great variation; some have never been catalogued by scientists.

The threatened species of the forest enjoy a variety of protections in human law—regulations on pollution, restrictions on wilderness

development, and so forth—but these protections rarely help the animals repopulate. Parts of the forest have also been designated parkland, placing them under control of the Park Service. Nonetheless, attempts by corporations to repeal protections have had some success; no species is guaranteed safety.

Many forest animals understand their predicament, and fear the day that humans decide the forest isn't worth preserving. Other animals interpret the situation differently, and assume that humans must fear the forest—that otherwise, humans would have conquered it long ago. Lastly, there are those creatures who aren't aware of the human threat at all; creatures who live and die in places no humans go, and who don't listen to the stories of their kin. If and when these creatures encounter humans, they will be the worst-prepared of all.

The animals of the forest keep to their own kind more than the animals of the City; it's particularly rare for an animal to learn the language of another species. It may be that forest animals don't see themselves as a single, oppressed community the way City-dwellers do, and so don't bother forming inter-species relationships. It may be that the desire to learn about and interact with

other species is a trait urban animals picked up from humans. Or it may be that single-species societies in the forest are large enough and rich enough that inter-species relationships are considered unnecessary. When interaction between species is necessary, it's usually an Aware animal who serves as ambassador.

Aside from facilitating communication, the Aware have any number of reasons to visit the forest. For many, it's their home, and they're dedicated to defending it from human incursions. Protecting endangered species from humans and from other animals is a priority of other Aware. Some urban Aware travel to the forest to learn the ways of its denizens or to teach them lessons learned in the City. Finally, few events tax the Aware as does a forest fire, started by a stray match or an errant bolt of lightning.



Malformed Amphibians

Incidents of malformations in amphibian species have risen sharply over the past twenty years. It's not uncommon to find one-eyed salamanders, eight-legged frogs, or toads with strange foot-webbing in the wilderness beyond the City, and no one's completely sure why. Possible culprits include parasites, pesticides, and pollution, or a combination of all three. Human scientists also aren't sure whether these malformations are unique to amphibians, or if the effects on amphibians should be seen as an early warning signal of problems throughout the animal kingdom.

Malformed amphibians are common enough that they're normally accepted as part of animal society. They may be the subject of jokes or faced with prejudice, but they're not ordinarily shunned or exiled. The exception is when a malformed creature attempts to establish a home in an area traditionally free of malformations; a few streams and ponds have reputations for being "pure," and their inhabitants reject malformed outsiders.

Occasionally, malformed amphibians form groups of their own, declaring themselves to be superior specimens and "harbingers of the future." A few animals suspect these cultish amphibians to be under the influence of one of the Aware, but it's hard to imagine to what end.

Places in the Forest

The forest contains a thousand secret places—groves, streams, trails, and burrows not marked on any map, but vital habitats for the forest's residents. There's little to impede forest travel aside from rough terrain, though animals from the City had better take precautions to avoid getting lost.

Campgrounds

The forest attracts tourists near and far: everyone from experienced hikers searching for grueling trails to locals looking for a peaceful weekend. Although there are many official paths and minor campsites, one area of the forest is designated as the central visitor campgrounds. This is partly a convenience to campers—facilities, ranger stations, and Park Service buildings are easily accessible here—but it mostly serves to contain human damage.

Campground rules are strict, though practically impossible to enforce. Visitors are asked to dispose of all garbage and waste at designated park stations or to transport refuse out themselves. Small campfires are permitted, and most campers come with their own tents. Reservations must be made for groups occupying the campgrounds, and visitors who want to camp outside the area must apply for a permit.

Despite the best efforts of park management, bears continue to seek out the campgrounds in a quest for easy food. The bears regularly approach campfires, tear open coolers, and take

what they find. At other times, they locate garbage illegally left behind by visitors. Park Service workers try to track bears who make a habit of entering the campgrounds, and move those bears to isolated locations elsewhere in the forest. If such a bear returns again, the bear may be killed.

The Caves

Far from the City, where the forest climbs hills and mountains, an extensive cave system runs underground. Carved by the same streams that lead to the ocean, and widened by the runoff from yearly snows, the caves are thousands of years old and miles long. Humans have staked out the entrances and mapped some of the interior, but visitors are not officially permitted within.

Thousands of bats from a dozen different species are the prime residents of the caves, and they make easy meals of their beetle, moth, and spider neighbors. Slugs, snails, and small colonies of rats also occupy sections. During the winter, bears often hibernate in the caves; however, Park Service personnel are attempting to discourage this practice to prevent damage to the caves' delicate structure.

Preserving the caves is, in fact, a full-time job. Air pollution, altered water composition, forest fires (or lack thereof), and human traffic can all change the caves in unpredictable ways, and several humans observe the caves year-round. There has been discussion of installing airlocks at the cave entrances for additional protection, but the project has not yet begun.

In addition to its value as a habitat and as a



unique place of natural beauty, the cave system also has historic value. Fossils of bears, bats, and even jaguars have been discovered inside, some dating back 10,000 years. These fossils have spiritual significance to certain animals, but they're also an attraction for human looters who sneak into the caves without authorization.

Gaia's Throne

A grove of ancient trees waits in the oldest part of the forest. Each tree stands hundreds of feet tall and has lived for over a thousand years. Animals say that no human has ever seen the grove, and that the forest's power is seated within it. The Aware call it Gaia's Throne.

According to Aware legend, each tree stands in honor of one great family of creatures (broadly similar to human categories of animal phyla and classes). At one time, the leaders of the Aware would gather in the grove to discuss their mission, and each would take his or her seat

before the appropriate tree. Those creatures who could not be represented (such as

ocean-dwellers) held their own moots elsewhere, but Gaia's Throne was the center of the forest and the surrounding lands. The Aware have not gathered at Gaia's Throne for many years, though—they have scattered too far, to the City and beyond, and have no way of calling for a gathering.

Ordinary animals are reluctant to enter the grove without the Aware, with one exception: A colony of bees lives in a hollow within one of the trees. The hive isn't new, but no one is sure whether it was around when the grove was used for gatherings. A few older animals say that the bees acted as messengers, carrying

news to distant parts of the forest, but today's worker bees know only their regular duties. The queen doesn't speak with outsiders, so if she knows anything more, she's keeping it to herself.



Logging Sites

Beyond the designated park lands, logging is increasingly common in the forest. Workers cut down trees hundreds of years old with immense pieces of machinery, and ship the trunks to factories for processing. The workers aren't interested in destruction; they're just trying to make a living, and say that someone needs to supply the world with wood and paper. New laws allow loggers to penetrate parts of the forest that had once been protected. In theory, the logging is meant to decrease the risk of massive forest fires, but many conservationists say that it's the young trees, not the old ones, that should be cut for this purpose.

As animals flee from logging sites, territorial disputes arise between animal refugees and their new neighbors. Even the great forest doesn't have enough room for everyone, particularly when some parts keep shrinking. In the best of circumstances, the food supply is reduced—creatures low on the food chain are over-hunted, or trees and bushes are stripped of their choice foliage. In the worst of circumstances, animals go to war, desperate to keep their habitats for themselves.

One animal in particular has suffered personal hardship in the face of logging. Gust, a six-year-old owl, hasn't seen another one of his species for four years. His kind nests exclusively in very old, very tall trees in dense ar-

eas of forest, and Gust fears he's the last. Although other such owls could live in forests elsewhere, Gust doesn't know where those forests might be—and at his age, he's resigned to his condition. Gust, in fact, is refusing to leave his current nest despite the presence of nearby loggers. He's tired of fleeing. He won't leave home again.



Gust - Owl

Size: Small

INT -3 PER +4

WIL +1 CHA +0

STR -4 DEX +0

CON +0 SPD +8*

* Owls fly at this SPD. SPD on the ground is -4.

Ability Level: 4

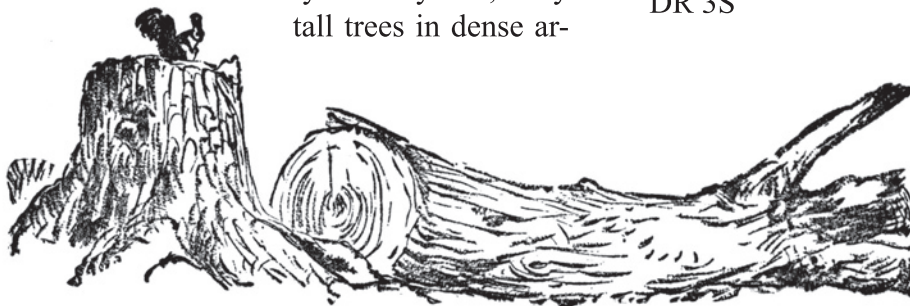
Attacks/Damage: Beak DR 3T; Talons DR 3S

Special Abilities:

None

PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 12



The Slaughter Road

A six-lane highway bisects a forested area of parkland, stretching dozens of miles in both directions. The highway interrupts the migratory paths of many forest animals—everything from skunks to deer to bears—and often becomes their doom. On average, one animal dies every day on the Slaughter Road, either swiftly killed by a vehicle or crippled and left to bleed on the shoulder. The 3-foot-high concrete barriers on either side of the road trap more animals than they keep out, and the cars often come too fast for animals to notice.

Forest animals are aware of the dangers of the Slaughter Road, but many are instinctively driven to wander and to seek new regions where they can hunt and forage. Animals who live nearby often say that the road is haunted—

that the thousands of dead creatures have left behind a spiritual footprint—and warn travelers of the risks. A number of scavengers come to the Slaughter Road to feast on carrion, often risking the same fate as their prey. The Slaughter Road also serves as a landmark and trail for animals clever enough to decipher its purpose; Aware animals seeking human settlements can always follow the highway.

Humans have noticed the many animal deaths along the Slaughter Road, and a few “collectors” regularly remove bodies from the highway. Collectors include scientists hoping to use the bodies as teaching tools in classrooms, animal lovers who wish to give the dead a decent funeral, would-be hunters who illegally collect rare animal parts (such as eagle feathers) or who cook roadkill, and at least one artist who decorates the roadside with polished bone statues.



The car accidents that result from animal collisions are also of concern to humans. Several methods have been proposed to decrease the frequency of animal encounters, though none has been implemented. One idea is to build underpasses for animals beneath the highway while raising the roadside barriers. Another idea is to install motion-activated lights alongside the highway to alert motorists when an animal is present. Until these ideas are backed with funding, however—or until the Aware implement a solution of their own—the Slaughter Road will remain a deathtrap.

Twofalls River

Twofalls River spills out of the mountains and runs for many miles until reaching the sea. It gets its name from two low, closely-spaced waterfalls about a third down its length, and it is relatively untrafficked by humans. Most of the year, the river's waters are calm, but melting snow in the spring aggravates conditions and creates white rapids. In addition, jagged rocks and tight angles make traveling the river by boat difficult at any time.

The river attracts animals who drink from the water and who fish from the banks. It also acts as a natural highway for creatures who wish to head toward the mountains or the shore. Even animals who can't swim or fly can follow the riverbank. Aware animals might be able to craft canoes of their own.

In the lowlands near the ocean, the river divides several times over. Beaver families live and build dams within these branches, and the dams provide important spawning ground for salmon and other fish. Although once driven to near-extinction by trappers, the beaver pop-

ulation is slowly recovering and is expected to continue doing so—at least, so long as human construction doesn't come too close to beaver territory.

The beavers and the fish tend to be gregarious, helpful, and observant. This attitude isn't all it seems, however—while the river's creatures are genuinely friendly, they have a low tolerance for guests who overstay their welcome. If you're not contributing to the river's ecology, then don't expect to be treated warmly for very long.

The trout population in some of the river's lower branches has become a subject of controversy among humans. Over the past few decades, the trout species native to the river have become almost extinct, unable to compete with foreign trout species introduced by humans for sport fishing. In order to help the native trout recover, some humans are proposing that a small amount of poison be dumped into the river—just enough to kill many of the foreign fish and allow the native population room to grow. Although this method has had some success elsewhere, many people fear the possibility of the poison affecting other populations—both animal and human.

Twofalls Beaver

Size: Small

INT -6	PER +2
WIL +2	CHA +0
STR -6	DEX +0
CON +1	SPD +3*

* *Swimming. SPD on the ground is -2.*

Ability Level: 1-5

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 2T

Special Abilities: Industrious Engineer Talent.

PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 12

Chapter Four

For Gamemasters

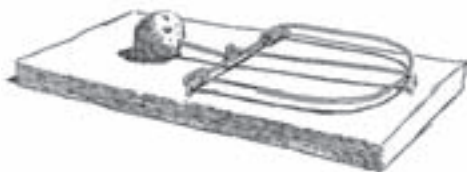


Equipment

Unlike most RPGs, there is very little need for detailed equipment lists in *eco* since the player characters are animals, and therefore have no need for human-style equipment and tools. That said, the following equipment may be of use to the Gamemasters to use as obstacles to the players. These items should be used sparingly as they can prove fatal to many player characters.

Mouse Trap

Mouse Traps are very common. They are found in many human houses as well as stores, factories and warehouses. A Mouse Trap consists of a piece of wood with a sturdy metal wire fastened to it under tension. Normally a small piece of food (like cheese) is affixed to the trap. When the food is disturbed, the metal



wire is released, slamming itself down on any unfortunate animal near the food. Mouse Traps do DR 10B to Tiny animals. Animals of Small size and above suffer only DR 2B

Rat Trap

The Rat trap is simply a larger version of the mouse trap (see above). Rat Traps do DR 12B to any Small animal caught. Because of the size of the Rat Trap, Tiny animals may make a DEX check to avoid all damage. Medium and larger animals suffer only DR 4B.

Death Trap

This trap is one of the most feared of human items. The Death Trap consists of large, serrated metal bars that quickly close upon themselves when the trap is triggered. These cruel pieces of metal cut into flesh and even bone of any animal caught within. Any animal



of Small size or larger suffers DR 10T and may not move until the Death Trap has been removed (STR roll with -10 Degree of Difficulty).

Rat Poison

Humans have devised many toxins to eliminate what they consider “pests”. Rat poison is an odorless powder, often mixed in with food used as bait. Rat Poison does DR 6 per round for 5 rounds. A CON roll per round is allowed to resist the effects of the poison.

Pesticide

A Pesticide is a type of human-made poison specifically designed to kill insects. Any creature that consumes Pesticide takes DR 2 per round for 10 rounds. A CON roll per round is allowed to resist the effects of the poison.

Tranquilizer Gun

While many Animal Control Officers and Park Rangers also carry traditional firearms, the Tranq Gun is used more often when attempting to catch an animal. Rather than firing a bullet, the Tranq Gun fires a dart. Animals struck by the dart must make a CON roll at -10 degree of difficulty. Failure means the animal is rendered unconscious for 2d20 minutes or longer at the GM’s discretion).

Disease

While some human diseases also affect animals, most do not. However, animals have their own variety of diseases and the following are presented for the GM’s use as needed. Often, finding a cure for a disease could lead to many adventure sessions.

Avian Influenza

Avian influenza is a contagious viral infection caused by virus similar to the human flu virus. Avian Influenza can affect wild birds as well as pet birds. Afflicted characters take -2 CON after 3 days and an additional -1 CON every two days for 5 days. At -5 CON, the animal dies.

Hanta Virus

Hanta virus is a viral disease of wild rodents that can be spread to humans through direct or indirect contact. The lungs fill with fluid, which can quickly lead to an inability to breathe and in severe cases, death from suffocation. Animals suffer -2 CON per day for 6 days. At -5 CON, the animal dies.

Mad Cow Disease

BSE or “Mad Cow Disease” is a progressive, fatal disease of the nervous system of cattle (and other hoofed animals). Although the exact cause of BSE is unknown, it is associated with the presence of an abnormal protein called a prion. Many believe it is the result of feeding animal matter back to animals. There is no treatment or vaccine currently available for the disease. Those afflicted with Mad Cow suffer -1 INT and -1 CON per month. At -5 CON, the animal dies.

Newcastle Disease

Newcastle Disease is a viral disease that can affect a wide variety of avian species, both wild birds and domestic fowl. It is of great concern throughout much of the world’s agricultural community because the virus is highly contagious and can cause severe disease in poultry. Strains that produce mild and moderate forms of the disease are sometimes found in domestic poultry and pigeons. The most severe forms of

the disease are also known as Exotic Newcastle disease, and are caused by “highly pathogenic” strains of the virus. The exotic form results in severe, lethal infections in birds. The normal strain results in -1 CON per week for 4 weeks. The more dangerous strain causes a -3 CON per week for 4 weeks.

Rabies

Rabies is a viral disease that attacks the central nervous system of warm-blooded animals, including humans. Once symptoms appear, rabies is always fatal in animals and people. Rabies is transmitted through saliva—primarily via bite wounds. But it can also be spread by infected saliva entering an open cut or wound.

When the virus enters the animal’s body, it spreads through the nerves to reach the brain. Once it’s in the brain it multiplies quickly, and that’s when clinical signs appear. The virus then moves from the brain to the salivary glands and other parts of the body.

Symptoms appear within a week and the animal suffers a -2 to CON and -1 to INT, DEX, STR and WIL each day for 1 week. It’s important to note, however, that an animal can be infectious (able to transmit the disease) a few days before showing clinical signs of rabies.

West Nile Disease

West Nile Virus affects wild and domestic birds and a variety of mammals including horses and humans. The Corvidae family of birds such as crows, blue and grey jays, ravens and magpies are particularly susceptible to illness and death from West Nile Virus. The virus is transmitted by insects and animals struck with West Nile take -1 to CON and DEX per week for 3 weeks.

Friends & Foes

Average Joe - Human

Size: Medium

INT +0	PER +0
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR +0	DEX +0
CON +0	SPD +0

Ability Level: 1-20

Attacks/Damage: Per Weapon employed

Special Abilities: Variable Talents (*humans need to be customized by the GM as needed*)

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 14-24

Humans come in many variety. GMs should customize any Humans they require for their games with a selection of relevant skills and Talents. Hunters for example will have ranks in Weapon skills while a friendly Baker will be decidedly average. Don’t forget children too. They can be used as friendly humans caring for animals or, just as easily, as cruel tormentors.

Armadillo

Size: Small

INT -7	PER +0
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR -6	DEX -2
CON +3	SPD -2

Ability Level: 1-5

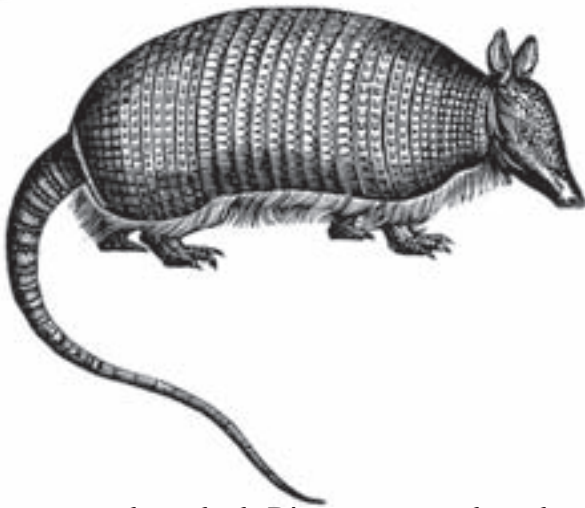
Attacks/Damage: Claws DR 4S

Special Abilities: Burrow Talent

PR: 2/2/2 **Hit Points:** 12

There are 20 species of armadillos distributed through America from Argentina to the south-eastern corner of the United States.

Armadillos are nocturnal. They live in burrows when not active, sometimes solitarily and sometimes in groups. The burrows are 2-3 feet beneath the surface and



are not branched. Rivers are no obstacles to armadillos, for although they are heavy with their coats or armor, they gain added buoyancy by swallowing air to blow up the intestine. The nine-banded armadillo is said to be able to submerge for 6 minutes.

Beaver

Size: Small

INT -6	PER +2
WIL +2	CHA +0
STR -6	DEX +0
CON +1	SPD +3*

* *Swimming. SPD on the ground is -2.*

Ability Level: 1-5

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 2T

Special Abilities: Industrious Engineer & Deep Breath Talents.

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 12

The Beaver is the second largest rodent in the world. Years ago, beavers were hunted



for their fur, musk glands and tail. Humans wore the fur, made perfumes and medicines from the musk glands and ate the tail. Beavers live in lodges which they build in rivers and streams from small trees and mud. They build a dam first, then the lodge which looks like a dome on top of a pile of wood. Beavers keep other animals out of their homes by construction the entrance below water level. Beavers can stay under water for about fifteen minutes. A beaver might live for 19 years, and weigh 60 pounds and get to a length of four feet. They mate for life and are very social animals, living and working together with other beavers. Beavers eat fresh bark, water plants, berries and fruit. Their large front teeth help them chew through the bark of trees, both to build their lodge, and to eat the bark.

Chimpanzee

Size: Medium

INT -3	PER +0
WIL -3	CHA +1
STR -1	DEX +6
CON +1	SPD +2

Ability Level: 1

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 6T or per weapon employed

Special Abilities: None

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 18

Noisy and curious, intelligent and social, the chimpanzee is the mammal most like a human. Chimpanzees fascinate humans and are favorites both in zoos and the wild. Chimps are mainly found in rain forests and wet savannas. While they spend equal time on land and in trees, they do most of their feeding and sleeping in trees. In eco. Chimps are most likely to be found in a Zoo or an animal laboratory. Of all the animals, Chimps are likely the best suited to learn and use human tools and technolo-



gy. They have incredible manual dexterity and could even learn to use guns and similar devices if given the chance. Chimps would have a very low BLD rating however as any who would escape would be highly sought after by animal control and the appearance of a Chimp in public would draw a huge crowd.

Cougar

Size: Large

INT -4	PER +2
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR +2	DEX +3
CON +1	SPD +6

Ability Level: 3-9



Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 8T; Claws DR 8T

Special Abilities: Leap Talent

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 22

The graceful cougar is the grand champion jumper of all cats. Its exceptionally powerful hind legs can propel it 30 ft forward from a stand still and up to 18 ft straight up! This jumping agilely is needed for hunting fleet animals along mountain cliffs. Attaining the weight of one to two hundred pounds, the cougar is the largest of the lesser cats. It is slenderly built with a smallish head and a long tail for good balance. It is sometimes called a mountain lion. It has a distinctive call somewhere between a cough and a snarl. Its coat is a uniform tawny color with lighter under-parts and white on the chin and throat. It sports a white moustache. Cougars are rarely seen around The City but there is the rumor of one or two living in The Forest.

Cow

Size: Large

INT -8	PER -2
WIL -2	CHA +0
STR +4	DEX -2
CON +0	SPD +1

Ability Level: 1

Attacks/Damage: Trample DR 10B

Special Abilities: None

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 28

Cows have been a domesticated breed for over 5000 years. They are quite docile and are bred by humans for both meat and milk. There are few cows in The City (see Hobby Farm) but literally thousands on the many farms out beyond the city limits.



Guinea Pig

Size: Tiny

INT -7	PER +0
WIL -3	CHA +1
STR -7	DEX +0
CON +1	SPD +0

Ability Level: 1

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 1T

Special Abilities: None

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 10

A Guinea Pig is also known as a Cavy. The term Cavy derives from its scientific name, *Cavia porcellus*. Guinea Pigs are rodents but unlike all other rodents, their young are born fully developed with a full coat of hair and eyes open. They will start wandering around an hour after birth and can take solid food a day or two later. Guinea Pigs are nocturnal herbivores and are highly social animals. They are commonly kept as pets by children of The City. Some have escaped or been discarded by their owners and now live wild in The City. These feral cavies rarely live long as they don't have the survival skills of natives like Rats, Mice and Voles.

Frog

Size: Tiny

INT -7	PER +1
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR -8	DEX +1
CON -1	SPD +0

Ability Level: 1-5

Attacks/Damage: None

Special Abilities: Leap Talent

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 6

Frogs (and their cousins: Toads) live throughout the world and are common in and around The City. They are amphibians and are therefore comfortable in and out of the water. Many Frogs make the ponds and fountains of The City Park their home and even the Industrial District has small Toad population.



Opossum

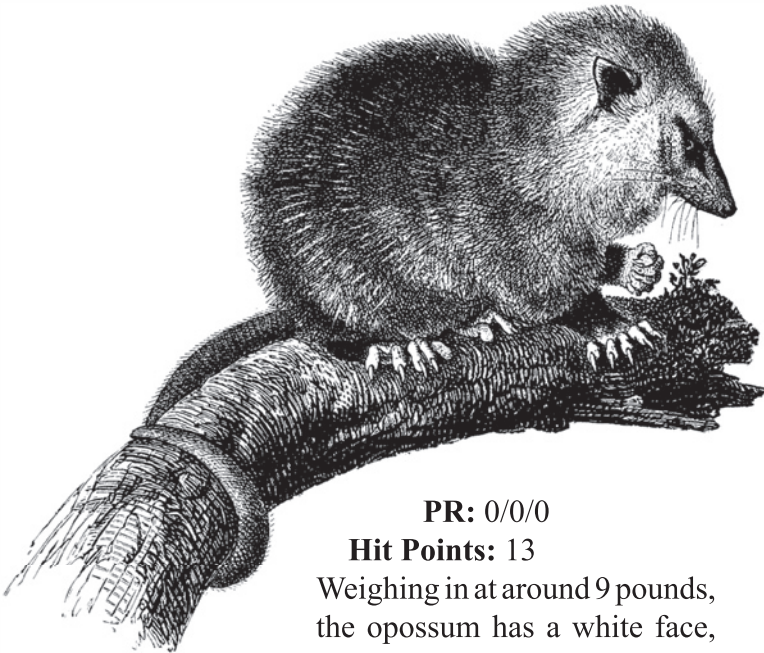
Size: Small

INT -6	PER +1
WIL +0	CHA +0
STR -7	DEX +3
CON +3	SPD +0

Ability Level: 1-7

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 1T

Special Abilities: Prehensile Tail



PR: 0/0/0

Hit Points: 13

Weighing in at around 9 pounds, the opossum has a white face, a fuzzy grey body, naked ears, and a scaly, prehensile tail.

Prehensile means that the tail is adapted for seizing, grasping, and wrapping itself around objects. Opossums are not related to rats. They are marsupials and are exceptionally clean. Opossums are extremely resistant to disease. They have a strong resistance to rabies and to snake bites, including rattlesnakes.

Parrot

Size: Tiny to Small

INT -4 PER +2
WIL -1 CHA +4
STR -7 DEX +1
CON +0 SPD +4*

Flying. On the ground SPD -3

Ability Level: 3-6

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 1T

Special Abilities: Mimic Talent

PR: 0/0/0 **Hit Points:** 9

Parrots are divided into groups such as cockatoos, lorries, lovebirds, macaws, and parakeets. They range in size from the pygmy of the South Pacific which is only 3½

inches long to the hyacinth macaw which is about 10 inches long. Much of its length is in its long tail. Parrots weigh from just a few ounces to 3½ pounds. Most parrots are predominantly green, however, parrots may have red, green, blue, purple, white, pink, brown, yellow, and even black. They have large heads and short necks. Parrots are excellent climbers. Wild parrots live in the forest of tropical zones including South America, Australia, and New Guinea but all known Parrots in The City are domesticated pets. Like crows, Parrots may imitate sounds they hear.



For more Critters and *eco* enhancements, log onto www.morriganrpg.com

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ECO

Character Name _____

Species _____

Birthplace _____

Gender _____

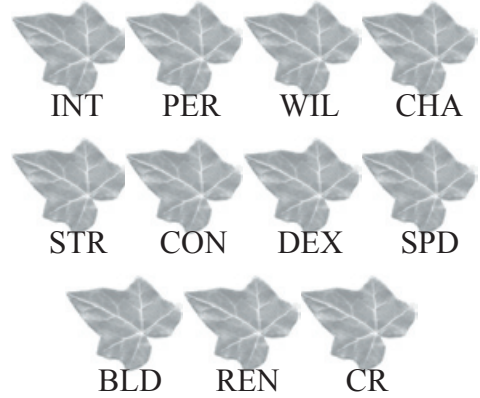
Age _____

Weight _____

Size _____

SKILLS					
SKILL NAME	RATING	SKILL LEVEL	ATTRIBUTE MOD	ATTRIBUTE	
Acrobatics				DEX	
Aerial Combat				CR	
Aquatic Combat				CR	
Balance				DEX	
Brawling				CR	
Climb				DEX	
Command				CHA	
Computers				INT	
Concentration				WIL	
Contortion				DEX	
Cryptography				INT	
Deception				CHA	
Deduce Motive				PER	
Diplomacy				CHA	
Disable Mechanism				DEX	
Drive				DEX	
Engineering				INT	
Etiquette				CHA	
Evade				DEX	
Handicraft ()				*	
Heal				INT	
Intimidate				CHA	
Investigate				CHA	
Literacy				INT	
Lore ()				INT	
Lore ()				INT	
Lore ()				INT	
Manipulate				DEX	
Medicine				INT	
Navigate				PER	
Offensive Martial Art				CR	
Parry				CR	
Perform				*	
Science ()				INT	
Social Science ()				INT	
Search				PER	
Seduction				CHA	
Siegecraft				DEX	
Sleight of Hand				DEX	
Stealth				DEX	
Survival ()				CON	
Survival ()				CON	
Swim				STR	
Tracking				PER	
Weapon ()				CR	

Attributes



Combat

Weapon	Damage
Bite	
Claws	
PR	/ /



Hit Points



XP Total

XP Spent

Talents

Talent	Benefit

Languages

The Omni Table

0 or Less	Mishap
1 - 5	Failure
6 - 10	Partial Success
11 - 19	Full Success
20+	Critical Success