

# Birrin

## Traveller Race

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The Birrin are a sentient hexapod (six limbed) species from a planet approximately the size of Venus. This individual, gaudily attired, lives (and sometimes works) in the tropical regions of their world, bordering the uninhabitably hot equatorial zone many birrin call the 'Kiln'. Low employment, high temperatures and generally harsh conditions mean that narcotic use is high among many of the population here. This birrin, after ending a work cycle and with no further hive duties, uses and deals in most of the local low end narcotics. The three clasped in the beak offer an enjoyable combination of flavours when partaken together. Other mixes are stored in plain view under a strap on the head for sale or later use. As there is no substance control in this region, they can be shown in plain sight. Potentially quite profitable, this individual has found much use for the money brought its way through the sale of longneck cigarettes. Either through trade or purchase, he has adorned himself with plenty of flaunted accessories, include a wrist mounted multimedia device, which feeds headphone cables to the auditory receptors at the tip of the upper two eyestalks; the device was likely traded illegally, or purchased from a wholesale shipment moving from the deep water docks on its way inland. Completing his accoutrements are an old cigarette lighter, a wallet strapped to the forearm, and a few rolls of personally selected drugs to his personal taste bound to his neck.



The Birrin are an egg laying species, and clutches typically contain 3 or 4 eggs which hatch within days of each other to reveal small, hungry and fuzzy chicks.

The young birrin have several adaptations evolved to aid their survival in the humid and life filled swamps in which the species first evolved. The short hair covering their small bodies is a dense mat of fibers designed to keep the myriad nest parasites from gaining access to their skin, while the conspicuous stripes allow birrin parents to immediately locate their young on foraging trips. This fur, while useful, poses an overheating problem in the tropical climate and so the undersides of the large dorsal 'wings' are highly vascular and by holding them out from the body the young can cool themselves.

The fur is shed in stages, first falling away from the lower limbs to prevent mud from the wet forest floor fouling the fibers.

The other major adaptation youthful birrin possess are large patterned plate-like growths around the base of each eye stalk, and covering part of the breathing apparatus: These plates not only help deny access to certain parasites but are also used to elicit feeding behavior from the adults when displayed around the open mouth.

Most modern birrin, having long since industrialized, rarely brood traditionally but often use communal incubators or hired nannies to warm eggs during gestation. Indeed the fur, once useful for parasite control, is now a hindrance in the hot modern climate of Chriirah and in some regions is shaved off soon after birth to keep the chicks cool.

Depicted here are two young birrin recently out of the nest and already engaging in the boisterous play behaviors that will prepare them for their often dynamic, active lives.



The floatforest is a constantly shifting sea of drifting plant covered islands, in some areas so dense as to be almost indistinguishable from land. Millions of Birrin call this tropical, dynamic world home, from sophisticated city dwellers to nomadic tribes with limited contact with the global civilisation.

The Birrin discovered that, when dried, the heavily compacted masses of dead plants that constitute the older larger islands can be burned as a very efficient fuel. In a short period of time mining began and factories sprung up in the old forest, large areas of vegetation being destroyed to supply fuel for cooking and industrial steam boilers. Soon steam powered ships plied the channels of the float forest , using the forest itself as fuel as they travelled, or purchasing high grade and dried peat from retailers.

As seen here, some more enterprising groups combined the two and use huge ships to transport peat for sale in towns across the forest. The tall hull of this vessel contains racks of high grade peat, being dried on the go and kept warm via heat diverted from the steam ships' own boilers. To counter balance the height of the ship, much of the vessel lies under water in an expanded hull filled with ballast. This added mass also gives the ship the inertia needed to ram through sections of forest, using the blade like prow to first life and then cut the mats of vegetation floating on the water's surface. The flared disk built out around the bow catches vegetation and forces it downwards, keeping it from impacting against the front and sides of the vessel.

Anchored and with boiler firing to dry the latest shipment, this peat-merchant paddle wheeler has stopped off at one of the larger suppliers in the oldest parts of the forest. Over the next few days it will be loaded as the crew relaxes a little, and set off into the narrow channels to deliver its wares across the inland sea, using a portion of its peat load as fuel.

A few locals, curious, look across the water towards it on their morning swim.



These ruins represent the height of Birrin pre-industrial engineering, and continue to impress tourists from more recent, technologically complex societies today.

Part city and part fortress, this gate was built to defend one of the few entrances to a lush, steep walled floatforest valley beyond, in which a society of several million inhabitants flourished for centuries.

Initially a natural stone monolith with only a narrow passageway dividing it, generations of craftspeople and slaves hammered away at the stone to perfect it into its current form, before finally coating it with a resin/sand mixture to protect it from further natural erosion.

The guardian statues warned foreign armies and traders of the power and capabilities of the valley people, who maintained a massive standing army at all times, based in a garrisons built into the gate walls.

Too heavy to themselves be created from stone, the guardian statues were built from the interlaced and cemented trunks and roots of local float-forest and other imported plants. Treated with resin to prevent decay, this meshwork was then coated in the same substance used to smooth the wall standing behind them.

Ultimately, the civilization responsible was conquered by a society that had developed steam powered warships, and who attacked from one of the seaward entrances of the valley.

Left to ruin by the conquerors for several centuries, it is now of prime interest to archaeologists attempting to reconstruct the history of the valley society.

Seen here, a small camp of nomadic locals pitch tents in the evening glow of the great gate.



Two Birrin fisher-folk ride the wind back to the coast after a mornings' hunting. Marine creatures surf the waves with them, hoping for scraps when the catch is gutted and cleaned.

The boat, a small but strong outrigger yacht, was built by the local tribes to sail relatively close to shore in low tropical seas.

Its frame is built from the tough, plant like stems of local phototrophic organisms which have been pre-stressed into strong curved shapes and bound together under a watertight leather skin. This was then coated with sap and waxes from local plants and animals to further seal it. Inside the cabin, a birrin can rest, as well as store the days' catch. If water does flood the boats' interior, it is not a concern as flotation is provided by bundles of sponge like plant tissue inside the hull.



The oceans of the Birrin homeworld are populated by vast numbers of organisms, particularly the mid-latitude tropical zones on either side of the hostile equatorial 'Kiln'; a region of intense heat and violent storms. The surface waves and currents generated by these weather events create deep oceanic mixing, bringing nutrients to nearby surface waters and supporting the assemblages of life found there.

The birrin are at home in water, and many engage in swimming recreationally with or without the aid of SCUBA systems. Diving activities are associated with risks: as in this potentially dangerous encounter with the creature seen here.

Evolved from the same land-living ancestor as the birrin the Sardu, as they are locally known, are air breathing creatures of great strength and predatory skill. They range across most regions of the ocean, hunting diverse prey depending on local resources, and adjusting their strategies accordingly. All however rely on an extraordinary ability to generate powerful electric shocks via organs housed in their huge, elongated horizontal jaws. This allows them to stun entire schools of smaller organisms to consume at their leisure, or to probe their jaws into soft mud and detect, flush out kill benthic creatures of considerable size. The electrogenic organs also have a social purpose; and mating individuals compete to show both their ability to generate electricity, and to withstand the shocks of their adversaries. The small creatures that accompany sardu as commensals must also be tolerant of this hazard, and most swim to a safe distance during the closing stages of a hunt, moving in to feast on the scraps afterwards.

The birrin diver seen here may seem in danger, however it is experienced with the local sardu and knows it is not a part of their prey search image; the constant stream of bubbles generated by the SCUBA gear and bright wetsuit look so unlike the large bottom dwelling creatures it usually hunts that it does not view the birrin as food.



Birrin societies of the float-forest were faced with unique transport challenges as they reached full urbanization: How to move large numbers of people and freight around a vast inland sea, where large stretches were chocked with constantly drifting vegetation mats and already heavy and hazardous boat traffic.

Many turned to the floatplane: Able to land in narrow lake clearings, operate in areas chocked with vegetation, and with far higher speed than shipping, aquatic aircraft manufacturing exploded across the region.

Aircraft of this type are available of many designs and configurations, often customized by the families that operate them. These unique vehicles form an integral part of life for most float-forest inhabitants.

The model here is relatively small and used by many organizations, particularly law enforcement, due to its excellent downwards visibility. A large central float provides buoyancy while two outrigger types at the tail end give stability. Used primarily for patrols or transporting small numbers of people, this models' fuselage is too narrow for heavy freight, and the stock in-line piston engine too weak for large loads. However many have been fitted with modern turboprop or jet engines to improve performance.

Seen here, two law enforcers are refueling their craft as morning breaks over one of the open stretches of water near the float-forest centre. They will spend much of their day flying lazily across shipping lanes, dropping down to inspect suspicious boats or help birrin in need.



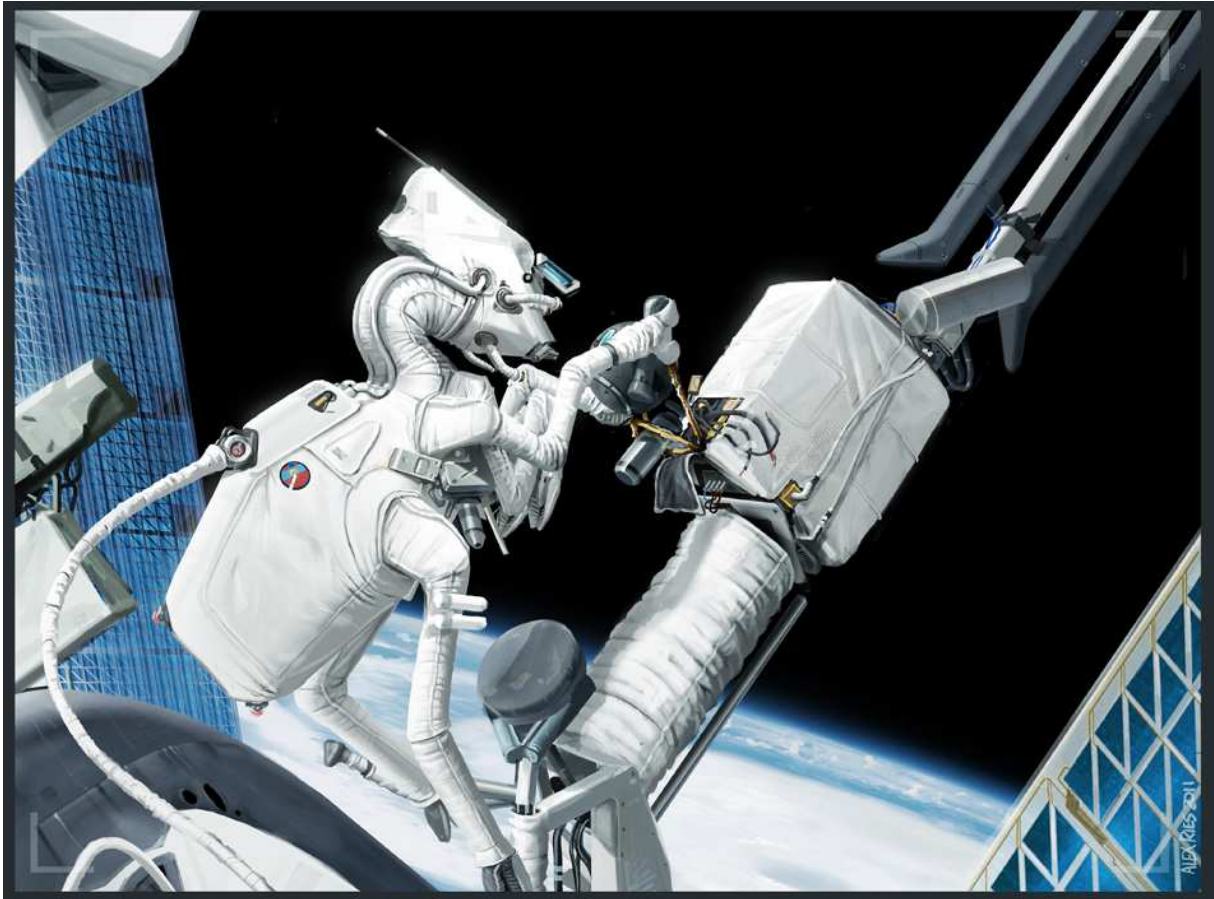


Refugees, faced with starvation and loss of livelihood by the diversion of the river that feeds the vast lakes they live upon, were shipped to uninhabited badlands in neighboring nations. The state responsible for the disruptive developments paid local poor governments, in arms and financial relief, to accept millions of displaced people inside their borders.

Ill feelings due to the destruction of their towns and habitat, anger soon erupted into large scale protests which the financially insecure and corrupt nations had trouble containing.

Seen here is a vast march from a nearby tent city; angry refugees storm an area of newly (but cheaply) build admin towers created to manage the huge displaced population.

Younger and angrier refugees quickly turned to violence, attacking understaffed riot police staff with knives and other improvised weapons.



Powerful Birrin societies have engaged in space exploration and exploitation for decades, constructing a number of orbital facilities, satellites, and launching several manned interplanetary missions. The critical orbital systems, with their relay of radio and television data, climate monitoring, GPS signal transmission and global defense, form an expensive and vulnerable investment by the major houses.

Maintenance of these systems, and the manning of interplanetary vehicles, is undertaken by a politically independent astronaut corps funded by an investment pool of nations and organizations with interests in space. Paid well, the corps construct, salvage and decommission orbital objects on a contract basis.

Seen here, a technician sets to work repairing damaged internal systems on an orbital antennae. The large impact-hardened diagnostic package has been integrated with the antennas' interface to root out faulty code or hardware for repair or replacement.



A soldier moves in to an area annexed by the northern recipri-nation, which is removing the Trapulli ethnic group from the territory so it may be modified and converted into farms. Reporters attempting to enter the area are shot on site, and their recordings destroyed, resulting in an information blackout. As the Trapulli villages and cities are burned, the millions of bodies are loaded on to vast trains to be dumped and burned in nearby canyons.



Many birrin, being pleurably susceptible to many of the psychoactive defense compounds found in their planets' plants, have developed complex rituals around recreational drug use.

The practices are not universally accepted, and many societies have strict controls to reduce their economic impacts. Others embrace them to such an extent that they have become an essential part of the daily ritual, as is the case with the Southern Chey nations: Before and after work many Chey stop at their local smoking bars to partake in a variety of substances both inhaled and ingested. As community focal points, smoking houses are also places for social interactions, and as a way to prepare for, or wind down from, the days' pressures.

Smoking houses have a long history. Restored by wealthy locals as civilization recovered, the interior was painted a calming blue to lend an air of tranquility. To avoid the smoke damaging their garments, many regulars wear blue smoking suits infused with years of volatile chemical scents.



Industrialization of Chriirah has had a dramatic effect on many of the planets' ecosystems. The equatorial zone of this world, dominated by a vast superheated region named the Kiln, has seen perhaps the most extreme changes as the desert continues to expand.

Agricultural needs necessitated the damming of several major rivers to provide irrigation for Kiln border areas, and the lakes these rivers once fed began to evaporate. Ultimately most of these lakes vanished, leaving behind shallow sandy basins and ghost towns.

Unable to afford relocation, or unwilling to spare the expense, shipping companies left their craft to rust on the dry lakebeds.

Hexapod

Birrin are able to carry an additional load of up to 35 kilograms on their backs.

Notable Endurance

+2

Affinity for psychoactives

All rolls to resist psychoactive narcotics (or combat chemicals which affect psyche) effects suffer -2 DM

Hot homeworld

Birrin treat all temperatures as one step lower.