

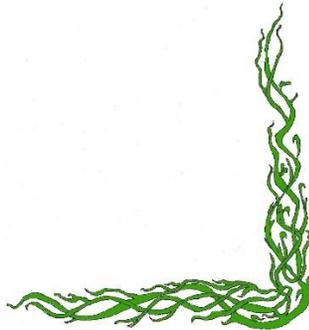
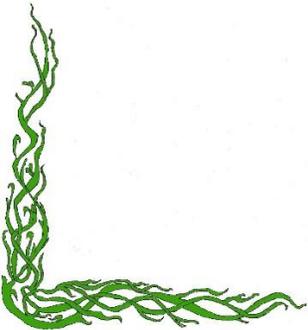
Ander's Anthology Of Animals

*A Tome on the Kingdoms of Animals
by Ander Cumbridge, Zoologist of Dorn*

Animals fascinate me. Their unique mixture of traits that lead to the development of habits and skills scintillates my mind, and I get giddy just thinking about how a bixi drake learns to hunt and how a worble practices sleeping upside down hanging from a tree. There is so much to learn, and what a wonderful setting to learn it in, all brought together by kingdoms of animals that have no idea that they are being studied. It's quite marvelous.

May this tome aid you in learning how to engage with creatures well so that you can minimize your trouble with them in life and perhaps make a friend that will aid you in times of trouble, and may you be taken to new worlds and see your surroundings with new eyes through what you read in these pages.

Dr. Prof. Master Ander Cumbridge



Chapter I: Animal Classification

Animals have been classified into subsets that we call “phyla” (singular: “phylum”). This is done by looking at their traits and placing those that are most similar in the same phyla, which is then broken down into classes, orders, and smaller subsets as needed.

We do this to aid in studying them, though we also admit that not all creatures easily fit into their phylum. They may be radically different from other organisms that they are associated with, and that is a limitation that comes with desiring to streamline schemes of classification for the ease of consideration.

In this chapter, we will briefly introduce you to our process of classification, and what you can expect in each phylum. From there we will consider each phylum and the creatures within it in the following chapters.

The Six Phyla

There are six creature phyla: the avian, reptilian, mammalian, fish, amphibian, and insect phyla. These creatures are distinguished from the sentient races, possessing a different soul that lacks the reasoning and higher functions of sentient beings (though sentient beings typically share traits with one of the six phyla), so sentient races will not be studied in this work.

The phyla group creatures in their most basic forms: their skin, blood systems, and bone structure. Within the phylum creatures are further divided into **classes**, which are then broken down into **orders**, **families**, **genuses**, and finally **species**. There is some variety within species, but we do not classify beyond species. You can easily remember the order of the classification scheme by

remembering the phrase, “**K**ing **P**tolemisses **C**ried **O**ut, ‘**F**or **G**lory, **S**lay!’” Which, it is worth noting, he said many times. The scheme uses the same first letters: Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, and Species.

Purpose of Classification

Classification schemes provide a basis for biological study. If you want to learn more about a tyrannosaurus, you can study an allosaurus (which is much smaller), as it is closely related. A study of an elephant, while close in size to a tyrannosaurus, would yield virtually nothing useful by comparison as they are only related through the animal kingdom. And yet the elephant will yield useful information about a mammoth. So we group creatures to make it easier to study their biology, as we share information from one creature to another closely classified.

Now of course, there is a reason why these creatures are not the same, and those differences must also be noted. An allosaurus carries its embryos in eggs within its body until they are born, while the tyrannosaurus lays eggs and guards them in a nest.

Classification schemes aid in tactical **planning**: if a creature is dangerous, building a plan for a creature will generally mean a level of effectiveness against other creatures that are similar. If an insect is vulnerable to fire, for example, it is likely that other insects like it will have a weakness to fire. Reptiles don’t do well in cold weather, and birds and amphibians are generally easier to pierce than other creatures due to their softer feathers and skin.

Classification schemes also aid in practicing **medicine**. If a remedy works on dogs it will likely work on wolves, because their bodies are very similar. This is partially why some students of animals will specialize in a specific phylum or lesser classification level to aid them in their work with animals, as it makes it easier to practice and gain proficiency in the medicinal arts.

So classification is far more than putting creatures in boxes for the sake of “order.” It’s a means by which we can understand the world around us, make assumptions, and test them to learn more about the world around us and how we can live effectively in it.

Animals and the Sentient Races

Naturally sentient races are part of the Kingdom Animalia, but for the purposes of this work I will not be addressing them in the classification phyla below. Their souls, the metaphysicians tell us, are different from that of the non-sentient beasts, and thus I will not lump them in with the rest of the beasts.

Magic scholars over the centuries have also discovered that there is evidence of this variation in souls, as beasts do not seem to be affected by direct damage or magic missile spells that strike the heart, soul, or spirit.¹

Conclusion

The animal kingdom is fascinating. It may not have the variety of the plant and fungal kingdoms, but I find them much more interesting because of their semi-sentience, which grants them far more antics. Each phylum has its own feel, much like the various flowers of the field or the clouds in the sky. Add to this the natural ecosystems that develop from mixes of creatures all in one locale, and the complexity and interconnectedness is beyond words.

But let us not delay: the creatures await!

¹ Roleplayers reading this text should assume that all creatures in this work have the *Animal Soul* description: the creature is immune to damage that does not target the Strength stat.

Chapter II: The Avian Phylum

The avian phylum is comprised of all bird-like creatures, both great and small. Avians are distinguished by their hollow bones and feathers on their bodies, often accompanying talons and beaks as the primary means of interacting with the world. Avians also have wings, though not all of them can fly.

Avians generally have long lifespans, and tend to live in family groups. We will subdivide them by their classes below, as created by the elves in the Elder Days. Each entry below has subdivisions, leading to a plethora of genuses and species.

Maiwe

The maiwe avians are the “sea birds,” often living near the water. Their feet, beaks, and body features are designed for hunting fish and navigating the water, and are very adept at it. Many also have dense feathers to insulate them from the cold of the water, and while they are more commonly found in warmer climates, some (like the penguin) inhabit harsher, colder waters as well.

Albatross (Tier 2 Pet): A massive bird with a vast wingspan that can hunt fish for miles while remaining in flight, the albatross is commonly considered a sign of good luck for seamen as they mean land is nearby, and can be easily seen and followed to shore due to their white feathers and large wings. Albatrosses are

STR+2D to flying rolls, and have the following profile: STR3D FIN4D CRM3D LOR1D.

Cormorant (Tier 1 Pet): A small bird capable of diving over 150 feet into the water to hunt fish, the cormorant is an adept swimmer, using its webbed feet to chase down its prey. While large fish have no fear of the small beaked cormorant (that weighs less than a pound soaking wet), the cormorant is a terror to smaller fish and water sprites. Cormorants are STR+1D to swimming rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN4D CRM3D LOR1D.

Crane (Tier 1 Pet): Long-legged birds commonly associated with herons, cranes are similar to herons but with smaller beaks and longer bodies. They are adept at hunting, and their smaller beaks make them more adept at tracing their prey, commonly eating small mammals, fish, birds, small lizards, and sprites, though they also commonly eat seeds, fruit, and roots as well. They also tend to be more beautiful than herons, and have more dramatic displays of affection when wooing a mate. Cranes are FIN+1D to search/detect and melee to-hit rolls, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN5D CRM3D LOR1D.

Duck (Tier 1 Pet): A water fowl commonly hunted for food, ducks are decent swimmers that can feed on both seeds and small fish. Ducks provide 2 food rations and 1 set of feathers, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN3D CRM3D LOR1D.

Great Penguin (Tier 2 Pet): Large birds that live in glaciers and frozen tundra, great penguins live in large family groups that share warmth for survival. They fish for food, and are also adept swimmers. Great penguins are STR+1D to swimming rolls and to resist the elements, STR-1D to running rolls, and are immune to cold damage. Great penguins have the following profile: STR2D FIN4D CRM2D LOR3D.

Great Swan (Tier 2 Mount): A massive swan capable of pulling chariots, carts, or wagons, the great swans of the western sea are prized mounts across Zurn. Standing seven feet tall with a sixteen foot wingspan, they are impressive and elegant, whether in the air, on the land, or on the seas. Great swans are STR+2D to flying and swimming rolls, FIN+1D to dodge rolls, grant a CRM+1D bonus to Impression rolls and with Court, mounts and riders are STR+2 to damage rolls on the charge, and great swans have the following profile: STR4D FIN3D CRM4D LOR2D.

Gull (Tier 1 Pet): A small bird that feeds on seaweed and small fish, gulls stay close to land and often live among crags to protect their young. Gulls are STR+1D to flying rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN3D CRM2D LOR3D.

Heron (Tier 2 Pet): Long-legged freshwater birds with long beaks, herons are known to spear their prey, and commonly eat fish, small lizards, amphibians, crustaceans, mollusks, insects, and sprites. With their wide wings and dexterous necks, a heron pulls its head back like a snake before it strikes, adding power to the attack. Herons perform attacks with the beak at a STR3D (FIN6D if necessary), and have the following profile: STR2D FIN5D CRM1D LOR3D.

Pelican (Tier 1 Pet): A sea bird known for its massive beak that works much like a net, pelicans swoop toward the water and open their beaks, swooping up their prey. Pelicans may perform attacks against Tiny or smaller creatures as *Stomp* attacks (*the to-hit roll is automatically successful, may not be parried, but may be dodged on a Difficulty: 20+*), are FIN+1D to search/detect rolls, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN4D CRM2D LOR1D.

Penguin (Tier 1 Pet): Smaller and more maneuverable than the great penguin, penguins live in frozen areas and fish for food.

Penguins are STR+1D to swimming rolls, and are immune to cold damage. Penguins have the following profile: STR1D FIN5D CRM2D LOR1D.

Swan (Tier 2 Pet): A large, beautiful, white bird known for its beauty, swans are commonly associated with beauty and grace by both rulers and bards alike. Swans and their owners are CRM+2D to Impression rolls and with Court, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN3D CRM4D LOR2D.

Soron

The soron avians are hunters of the air, ranging in size from small hawks to great eagles. They are distinguished by their talon and beak structure, designed to pierce and haul away their prey. Among the avians, these are considered the most dangerous class.

Cockatrice: A chicken-like creature about ten feet tall that has excellent eyesight that can also petrify those who lock gazes with it. Its feathers are thick and its skin hard, making it difficult to puncture. And since it has limited flight, even those in the air above it are not fully safe. This is a dangerous creature in all respects, and is among the most formidable avian predators.

Eagle (Tier 2 Pet): A predatory bird honed for hunting small creatures, the eagle is a symbol of strength and power for good reason. Eagles are larger than hawks, and strike with ferocity from above. Eagles are FIN+1D to melee to-hit rolls and STR+1D to damage rolls, and have the following profile: STR4D FIN5D CRM0D LOR2D.

Frost Phoenix (Tier 3 Familiar): A bird only 2-3 feet long but with a latent connection to the Lore of Heavens and tears that are

known to heal, the phoenix is said to turn to ash when it dies, only to be reborn again. Phoenixes grant a LOR+1D bonus to cast Fire spells, and can remove a *Dying* result from a target at close range by rolling a D6: on a 5+ the result is removed. Phoenixes have the following profile: STR3D FIN5D CRM1D LOR4D.

Great Eagle (Tier 3 Mount): An eagle with a wingspan of over twenty feet, the great eagle has been used by forest dwellers as a war and hunting mount, using its keen eyes and agile movements to great effect. Great eagles are STR+2D to flying rolls, mounts and riders are STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge, great eagles are STR+1D to melee damage rolls, FIN+1D to melee to-hit rolls, FIN+1D to dodge rolls, and have the following profile: STR5D FIN7D CRM0D LOR3D.

Hawk (Tier 2 Familiar): A hunter with excellent eyesight, a latent connection to the Lore of Air, and sharp beaks and talons, the hawk is a dangerous predator against small game and livestock. Hawks grant a LOR+1D bonus to cast Air spells, is STR+1D to damage rolls, FIN+1D to all to-hit rolls, and have the following profile: STR3D FIN5D CRM1D LOR3D.

Jubjub: A vulture-like creature with teeth, the jubjub can do everything the culture does, but with the ability to tear flesh as it eats. This makes it an effective creature for purging a landscape of disease, as a congress of them (which is the word for a group of jubjubs) can tear apart a deer's carcass and consume it in a matter of hours. They do not typically attack living creatures unless they are disturbed, preferring to feast on things that cannot hurt them.

Phoenix (Tier 3 Familiar): A bird only 2-3 feet long but with a latent connection to the Lore of Fire and tears that are known to heal, the phoenix is said to turn to ash when it dies, only to be reborn again. Phoenixes grant a LOR+1D bonus to cast Fire

spells, and can remove a *Dying* result from a target at close range by rolling a D6: on a 5+ the result is removed. Phoenixes have the following profile: STR4D FIN5D CRM1D LOR3D.

Red Hawk (Tier 1 Pet): A small hunting bird used for hunting small creatures, the red hawk is fast and agile with good eyesight. Red Hawks are FIN+1D to melee to-hit rolls and have the following profile: STR2D FIN6D CRM0D LOR1D.

Roc: Even larger than the great eagles, rocs are the largest of the flying birds. With a wingspan of over forty feet and talons as long as spears, rocs are only rivaled in the sky by dragons and skrill. They are most commonly found in mountainous terrain where they can build nests far above other creatures, and commonly feed on large beasts (though errant adventurers and random townsfolk have also been known to be taken by these creatures if their young are hungry).

Vulture (Tier 2 Pet): A carrion bird that eats the flesh of dead creatures, vultures do not fall sick to the diseases that come from dead animals, making them a useful creature to have around (even if they are not particularly beautiful or noble beasts). Their beaks are sharp, but cannot tear, so they only feed through holes already in the creature. Vultures are STR+1D to flying rolls, CRM-1D to Court and Impression rolls, FIN+1D to search/detect rolls, are immune to diseases from dead creatures, and have the following profile: STR3D FIN4D CRM0D LOR4D.

Telco

The telco avians use their legs for movement instead of wings, often with underdeveloped wings that cannot fly, or cannot fly far.

These birds tend to be either fast moving to escape their predators, or very small to avoid being noticed on the canopy floor.

Kiwi: A small bird with tiny wings that are little better than aids in balancing, the kiwi moves about the ground hunting insects with its long beak. Due to its small size and relatively slow movements it relies on cover from local foliage for survival, avoiding contact with larger creatures if possible. Kiwi are FIN+1D to hide/sneak rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN4D CRM2D LOR2D.

Ostrich (Tier 2 Mount): A large flightless bird capable of being ridden and moving quickly, ostriches are domesticated by wealthy patrons, often for recreational games and races. Ostriches are STR+1D+2 to running/jumping rolls, FIN+2D to detect rolls, mounts and riders are STR+1D to attacks on the charge and CRM+1D to Court rolls, and ostriches have the following profile: STR4D FIN5D CRM3D LOR1D.

Roadrunner: A small bird that runs at a very quick pace, the roadrunner prefers arid climates where it has easy access to insects for food and can see predators from a good distance away. The rest of the roadrunner's senses are not strong, so it relies heavily on its eyesight to protect itself from predators. Because of this, its eyes are set to the side instead of forward, giving it a wider range of vision.

Tuilindo

The tuilindo avians are the “singing birds,” often sporting beautiful colors on the underside of their wings that they use in their mating rituals. They tend to have small beaks and talons, but when it comes to sounds and appearance, they are unmatched.

Dove (Tier 2 Familiar): A white bird commonly associated with purity and beauty, the bird also has a latent connection to the Holy Lore, and is among the most precious of birds. Doves are CRM+1D to Impression rolls, grant a LOR+1D bonus to cast Holy spells, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN3D CRM4D LOR2D.

Luan: A beautiful bird that sings spellbinding music that entrances its listeners, luans are highly prized among wealthy patrons, and are very rare. It is said that the luan has a fairer voice than a siren, but since luans live in temperate and mountainous terrain it is difficult to tell. While its beak is sharp, it uses it mostly for hunting insects and picking grains, as it typically uses the magic of its voice to enchant predators.

Nightingale (Tier 2 Pet): A bird with a wonderful voice most commonly heard at sunset, the nightingale is renowned across Zurn as one of the best singers in existence. Nightingales are CRM+1D to Impression and Perform rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN3D CRM5D LOR2D.

Robin (Tier 1 Pet): A small bird with a red breast that almost exclusively eats seeds, robins are prized among farmers because they scatter seeds and chaff to aid in the growing of crops. Robins grant a STR+1D bonus to farming rolls in places where they eat, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN3D CRM3D LOR2D.

Swallow (Tier 1 Pet): A small bird with a forked tail that excels at aerial feeding, swallows are fast, agile creatures that prey almost exclusively on flying insects. Swallows are STR+1D to flying rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN5D CRM2D LOR1D.

Turtle Doves (Tier 1 Pet): Beautiful singing birds with sweet voices, the turtle dove may not be the equal of the nightingale, but it has a charm of its own that is nonetheless pleasant to listen to. Turtle doves are CRM+1D to Perform rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN2D CRM4D LOR2D.

Wilin

The wilin avians are smaller birds that typically feed on nuts, grains, and insects. They are the most common avians, and have been used for various purposes over the centuries.

Chicken (Tier 1 Pet): A poultry bird that is good to eat and lays eggs regularly for consumption, chickens are quite docile and have been heavily domesticated across the world. Chickens grant a FIN+2 bonus to Detect rolls, lay 1 egg each day, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN3D CRM4D LOR1D.

Hummingbird (Tier 1 Pet/Mount): Small birds with long bills useful for getting nectar from flowers, hummingbirds beat their wings at a staggering speed, creating the humming sound in its name. Used as a mount by sprites and commonly kept as pets by Big Folk, hummingbirds are beautiful and peaceful creatures that make gardens grow and flourish. Hummingbirds are STR+1D+1 to movement rolls, grant a STR+1 bonus to damage on the charge when a rider is mounted on it, and grants a CRM+1D bonus to Court and Market rolls. Hummingbirds have the following profile: STR2D FIN6D CRM2D LOR1D.

Pigeon (Tier 1 Pet/Mount): A small bird with a good sense of direction and mottled feathers, pigeons have been trained to carry messages due to their skill in navigation. Sprites also ride them for long distance travel (albeit at slower speeds than on other mounts).

Pigeons are STR+1D to flying rolls, grant a CRM+1D bonus to Impression rolls and with peasants, and pigeons have the following profile: STR1D FIN4D CRM4D LOR2D.

Raven (Tier 2 Familiar): A bird that can be taught to speak and has a latent affinity for the Dark Lore, ravens are commonly kept as pets and informants. Ravens grant a LOR+1D bonus to cast Dark spells, LOR+1D to language rolls, and have the following profile: STR3D FIN5D CRM0D LOR3D.

Snark: A small bird with a relatively broad beak that is known to bite and nip at creatures that it finds dangerous, snarks live in jungle and forest places where cover is abundant, as they are relatively fragile creatures. It has been recorded that they love soup, and are more likely to treat a tamer with kindness and curiosity if offered soup with a smile, as they also love smiles. If you do not make friends with a snark, its clan will drive you off, nipping and pecking at your face and arms until you flee.

Sparrow (Tier 1 Familiar): A bird with good eyesight, a love of grains, and a latent connection to the Lore of Light, sparrows are cute, agile birds commonly found in temperate regions. Sparrows grant a FIN+2 to Detect rolls, LOR+1D to cast Light spells, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN4D CRM1D LOR3D.

Thrush (Tier 1 Pet): A small bird commonly found in warmer climates and wooded areas, thrushes have speckled bellies and small beaks, ideal for eating insects, worms, snails, and fruits. They make tree nests comprised of both twigs and mud, which is unique among the wild avians. Earth and Druidic mages love thrushes as they do not eat seeds and commonly spread seeds as they fly, causing plants to grow. Thrushes are FIN+1D to all to-hit rolls against tiny creatures, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN4D CRM3D LOR1D.

Woodpecker (Tier 2 Pet): A bird with a highly developed beak for boring through wood to find insects, woodpeckers present no real danger to sentient races save sprites, as they are large enough to consume a leafman or gobsken with a single peck.

Conclusion

Avians are among my favorite creatures. Their bodies are built to do two things really well: move effortlessly across the landscape, and hone all of their strength into a single tipped beak. I wonder sometimes if we will not make incredible scientific developments due to our study of them, as their biology is so different from ours, but offers so much in potential. Time will tell.

Chapter III: The Reptilian Phylum

Reptiles: cold-blooded creatures with scales to protect it from danger, almost universally using teeth as their primary weapon. The reptile phylum is filled with some of the most dangerous creatures in Zurn, and their pelts sell well in markets across the world.

Like in Chapter II, we will use the elvish naming scheme of classes within the phylum to organize them for our discussion.

Ango

The class of reptiles we call dragons, the angos are the most feared of all the reptiles. Whether they are small or large, the angos sport agility, armored scales, a variety of slicing and piercing weapons, and their signature breath attacks. Most commonly this is a fiery deluge formed either by casting magic or gouting flame from their gullets, but it can also take other elemental or magical forms, depending on the type of dragon. Many have been known to speak, and that means that dragons have been sported with centuries of practice casting spells, praying to Kurnonus or another avatar or deity, or prophesying what is to come. While I fear them more than any other class of creature, I am truly fascinated by how they have adapted and honed their traits to meet their needs.

Aether Volans (Tier 3 Familiar): A small draconic lizard only 8-9 inches long that possesses a latent connection to the Lore of Aether. Aether volanses grant a LOR+1D to cast Aether spells, FIN+1D to Detect rolls, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN5D CRM3D LOR3D.

Blue Serpent (Tier 3 Familiar): A small serpent with arms, legs, wings, and a latent connection to ancient magic, blue serpents are adept spies, casters, and combat companions. Blue serpents grant a LOR+1D bonus to cast Arcane spells, FIN+1D to tracking rolls, is STR+1D to resist damage, and have the following profile: STR3D FIN5D CRM2D LOR3D.

Coast Dragon: A dragon around fourteen feet in length that are closest to the crag dragons in lineage, though their time near the coast has led to adaptations that favor agility over size. The result is a smaller dragon (though larger than the ice dragon) that relies on precision over strength, and a propensity to breathe lightning rather than fire. Seamen fear the crags of the coasts, not only because their ships may run afoul of rocks and reefs, but also because of the dragons that may live in the caves, waiting to carry off men or animals on the ship. And with armored scales and deft movements, ship-board weapons are of little use against a coast dragon, let alone a clutch of them.

Crag Dragon (Tier 3 Mount): A dragon about fifteen feet in length, crag dragons are domesticated by brave beastmasters for use as war mounts, carrying knights into battle with great speed. Crag dragons are STR+1D to running and flying rolls, mounts and riders are STR+2D to damage rolls on the charge, crag dragons are STR+1D to resist damage, can breathe fire (dealing a 7D elemental hit to the targets), and have the following profile: STR7D FIN5D CRM0D LOR3D.

Feral Dragon: The largest of the reptiles and the terror of the skies, feral dragons are vast creatures, honed by adaptation for size, strength, and speed. Dragons do not fear the weapons of mortals, and yet they have developed a strong affinity for dodging attacks in case a danger presents itself. Add to this their cleverness, desire

to learn, and centuries-long lifespan, and you have the makings of arguably the most deadly creature on the planet.

Garden Dragon (Tier 3 Mount): A dragon only around 3-4 feet long, garden dragons are the kings of their small kingdoms, which at times are merely a farmer's garden. Armed with sharp fangs, strong claws and fiery breath (but all on a miniature scale), the garden dragon is a terror to small things and a delight to Big Folk who are mostly safe from its terrors. Garden dragons are STR+1D to flying rolls, FIN+2D to dodge rolls, start with two Tier 1 creature upgrades (*scales, teeth, limbs, wings, tail, fiery breath, or spines*), mounts and riders are STR+1D+2 to damage on the charge, and garden dragons have the following profile: STR4D FIN5D CRM3D LOR3D.

Ice Dragon (Tier 3 Mount): One of the smaller dragons at 10-12 feet in length, the ice dragon breathes an icy blast against its foes and fear no cold. Ice dragons are STR+2D to movement rolls, STR+1D to melee damage rolls, STR+1D to resist damage, breathes an icy blast (striking all targets in one arc up to medium range away with an elemental cold damage roll of 8D), mounts and riders are STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge, and ice dragons have the following profile: STR4D FIN6D CRM0D LOR5D.

Jabberwocky: A gangly creature with eyes of flame that whiffles and burbles as it moves, the jabberwocky is known for its thick hide and deadly tongue. Possessing both a saliva-based toxin and cunning words, the jabberwocky incapacitates its prey before it feasts on them. While its hide is thick and known for breaking weapons, the jabberwocky is said to be particularly susceptible to vorpal weaponry: consecrated weapons forged for monster hunter guilds to aid in killing aberrations like the jabberwocky.

Midnight Dragon: A relatively small but powerful dragon, the midnight dragon may only measure up to fifteen feet long, but it is fast and hard to see at night. Add onto this the mystical cloud of darkness that it spews from its mouth, and seeing it is impossible without great skill and aid. Midnight dragons live in mountainous regions where they can take their prey from above, and hunting them in their lairs is virtually impossible due to the dark, close passages. There is no escaping such a creature in a place like that.

Pteradon (Tier 3 Mount): A winged dinosaur with a long beak, pteradons are not commonly considered "dragons" but they share a lot of the same traits: ability to fly, legs (albeit very small legs that they mostly use only to pick up prey or perch in their nests), and good eyes and sense of smell, but they lack many of the traits that make dragons as fearsome as they are, most notably a lack of a large tail and deadly breath. But pteradons are still dangerous, especially to fishermen (and their cargo) out at sea. Pteradons are STR+3D to flying rolls (and FIN+3D to dodge rolls), mounts and riders are STR+1D+2 to damage rolls on the charge, pteradons gain the *Flying* adjective for free, and may perform an attack (counts as a dual-wielding attack, granting two attacks as a single action once per beat) with *Rending* (opponents are STR-1D to their armor value) when using their claws or they may make a single attack with the beak with a STR+2D bonus to the damage roll, and have the following profile: STR6D FIN6D CRM0D LOR3D.

Wyvern (Tier 3 Mount): A draconic creature with wings and hind legs for perching and grabbing prey as it wings overhead, the wyvern is only around fifteen feet long but it strikes fear into the hearts of herdsman and hearthguard alike. With powerful fangs and a propensity for breath attacks, wyverns are generally more nimble than their crag dragon cousins and far quieter in their movements. Wyverns are STR+2D to flying rolls, STR+1D to resist damage, FIN+1D to dodge rolls, riders and mounts are

STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge, and wyverns have the following profile: STR6D FIN7D CRM0D LOR2D.

Fenume

Reptiles with legs but no wings, the fenume reptiles are quite common but generally not as deadly as the ango and leuca cousins in the phylum. That being said, the fenume are also among the most diverse, with highly divergent orders and genres.

Alligator/Crocodile: A large reptile capable of swimming with great speed, waiting patiently for hours, and a swift bite, these large creatures come in both saltwater and freshwater species and are most commonly found in arid and jungle locations. A creature built with a great deal more heft than a fish or other water creature, alligators and crocodiles use their greater mass to haul land-based prey into the water, drowning them as they thrash them around, making it nigh impossible to escape their grasp. While also at home on the shore, alligators and crocodiles are far slower when walking due to their short legs, and thus they tend to hunt from the water almost exclusively.

Ankylodon (Tier 2 Pet): A relatively large armored reptile with a tail that culminates in a massive ball, the ankylodon has adapted itself heavily for defense. With small ridges and bumps to deflect a blow away from its body, a tough exterior, and spikes and bumps along its side to keep creatures from getting under it, the ankylodon is a wonder of defensive adaptations, with its only weakness being its softer underside. Ankylodons are STR+1D to resist damage, may perform attacks with the tail as *Stomp* attacks, and have the following profile: STR6D FIN3D CRM0D LOR2D.

Brontosaurus (Tier 3 Mount): A long-necked reptile with a strong tail and legs to carry its ponderous body across the land, the brontosaurus is not fast, but it makes up for slowness with mounds of muscle. Brontosauri are STR-1D to running/jumping rolls, STR+2D to damage rolls with its legs (which may be performed as *Stomp* attacks), or STR+3D to damage rolls with the tail (with a FIN-3D penalty to parry or dodge the attack), resolved like a ballista (if it hits and damages the target, the brontosaurus may roll for the next target in range and deal damage to that target as well), STR+4D to resist damage, and have the following profile: STR8D FIN3D CRM1D LOR3D.

Cave Drake: A tall reptile with a long neck, long face, and short legs (which keeps its vital organs close to the ground), a cave drake has the thick scales and sharp fangs that you would expect from a reptile, but adds to it silent, swift motions on rocky terrain. This makes them excellent hunters in caves and caverns, practicing their cunning as they trap and devour their prey.

Fire Drake: A drake with the ability to breathe fire from its mouth, fire drakes are slightly smaller than their cave-dwelling cousins. They still sport long necks and short legs, making it hard to get to their critical organs while maximizing their ability to strike. Fire drakes are said to be born in fire, with flames erupting from the eggs as they burst open, and that their immunity to fire stems from both a magical blessing and elemental resilience gained from literally their first minutes after birth.

Forest Baloth: An ox-like reptile with massive claws, horns, and teeth, the forest baloth is one of two creatures in the Fenume class that routinely has horns. Occasionally you find horns on a hydra, tannen, or drake, but most theorize that this comes from hydras, tannens, or drakes that have some baloth lineage, as baloths have been known to mate beyond their species. With the ability to

grow up to forty feet if they live long enough, baloths couple an incredible size with an enhanced sense of smell, able to track with a target for miles purely off of scent alone. This makes them some of the most dangerous predators in the forest, capable of taking on even great dragons who stoop too low to fight them.

Gharial: Smaller than an alligator and crocodile and with a far slimmer snout, gharials hunt fish, and thus their thinner nose and smaller body aid them in moving faster and more accurately in the water. While it typically hunts fish smaller than a tuna, they have been known to attack land creatures that threaten their territory, especially during spawning periods. Commonly found in jungle and mountainous terrain near the shore, gharials tend to stay in large family groups, relying on each other to protect their nests as they lack the size and crushing grip of their larger cousins.

Hydra: Six-headed creatures that regenerate their heads when lopped off, hydras are dangerous creatures that can attack many foes at once, and since they have a low center of gravity, getting to their vital organs is nigh impossible, making them hard to kill. It is known that attacks made with fire suppresses the hydra's ability to regenerate, and thus Fire mages are commonly brought with teams of warriors hired to fight off hydras.

Nyert Hydra: A hydra with fins and front legs, the nyert hydra was first discovered and domesticated by the Nyert merfolk clan, and has been present in many great water battles in recorded history. Much like their land cousins, nyert hydras use their multiple heads to slaughter their enemies, regrowing new heads when the old ones are lopped off. Unlike their land cousins, fire is less common underwater, thus closing the wound is harder to do, making them more dangerous to most adventurers.

Salamander: A snub-nosed reptile resembling an alligator that belches fire and utilizes spells from the Lore of Fire due to its latent connection to the element, salamanders are sometimes tamed for use as war mounts for shock cavalry, devastating shieldwalls with their fire before their riders tear into them with their lances. Stocky with thick scales, salamanders keep close to the ground to protect their softer underbellies.

Tannen: Arguably the strongest water monster of the seas, the tannen (or "leviathan") is the mightiest of the sea hunters. With two strong forelegs for walking on land, four webbed fins to push it through the water alongside a dorsal and several ventral fins for steering, and a strong, nimble tail for added propulsion, tannen are fast and dangerous predators. Unlike other sea monsters, though, the tannen is also telepathic and telekinetic: it can read and send thoughts, and can control inanimate things with its mind. This has led to the theory that tannen have tentacles, as various sailors have reported seeing tentacles grasp and attack the ship when a tannen is nearby, but my study suggests that the tannen ripped a set of tentacles off of a squid and controlled them with its mind to attack the ship. This keeps the tannen from being harmed while the crew fights off the tentacles. They are cunning foes, and while they have the gift of speech are not known for reasoning with weak creatures.

Tove: A small badger-like lizard that secretes a natural mucous coating that helps it evade predators by slipping through their jaws and claws, the tove is small and lithe, nimbly moving through marsh and mountainous pass alike. It digs for its prey by going around in a circle while it digs its long, sharp beak through the ground, pulling up small grubs, mammals, or lizards for food. They are not particularly dangerous, though when riled their beaks will hurt, so it is best to wear sufficient leg protection if you encounter a tove in the wild.

Triceradon (Tier 3 Mount): A large herbivorous reptile that protects itself with three horns on its face and a massive frill to protect its neck, triceradons are extremely hard to injure from the front, even with a host of pikes and crossbows. To protect its flank, it also sports a spiked tail that it swings to great effect against those that come too close. Triceradons are STR+2D to resist damage (or STR+3D if resisting damage from the front, due to the frill), STR+1D to running/jumping rolls, STR+1D to damage rolls with its horns (and FIN+1D to the to-hit roll) which may be performed as a *Stomp* attack or it may attack with its tail, gaining a STR+3D bonus to damage with a FIN-3D penalty to parry and dodge attempts against the tail, mounts and riders are STR+2D to damage rolls on the charge, and triceradons have the following profile: STR7D FIN3D CRM0D LOR5D.

Hyalma

Reptiles with hardened shells, the hyalma reptiles always have a place to retreat from danger. Most commonly used for defense, some also use their shells to lure enemies in, blending in with rock formations near them to take their prey unaware. These shells are used by sentient races for shields, bowls, cauldrons – anything where a hardened, rounded object is needed.

Bixi Drake: A drake with a hard, flat shell, the bixi drake lives in mountainous and swampy terrain, allowing its shell to blend in with the environment around it to aid in ambushing its prey. Many stories involving bixi drakes tell of the ground cracking around the adventurers as if an earthquake was occurring, only to discover that they were on the back of this creature unwittingly, now at its mercy as its long neck whipped around to reveal a sharp row of teeth.

Sea Turtle: A turtle with fins instead of legs and a smoother shell for ease in gliding through the water, sea turtles live for many years among the reefs. With a sharp beak skilled at breaking coral and an armored shell to protect it should trouble come near, sea turtles lack the speed and agility of predator and prey creatures due to their adaptations. Merfolk and nymphs have tamed sea turtles for use as beasts of burden in the past, as their slow speed does not indicate a lack of strength, making them ideal for carrying cargo that could be broken by a quick maneuver.

Snapping Turtle: A terror of the fey world that lives near bodies of freshwater, the snapping turtle has a sharp beak that can tear clean through the hands or feet of a Big Folk, so it can easily snap clean through a sprite. Surrounded in a thick shell and leather skin, snapping turtles are not fast, but once they take up residence in a given locale, sprites are hard pressed to remove them. Of course, they are less of a problem for those of us who are larger, but even at that a healthy caution is advised.

Tortoise: A land turtle with a more bumpy shell and short, stocky legs, tortoises walk about well protected from many threats due to its shell, but otherwise lacks substantial defenses. With slow movements and poor abilities to turn, tortoises are only dangerous from the front where their beaks can reach, making them easy to approach if you move laterally. Able to live over a hundred years, tortoises tend to live in more arid and temperate climates where they can get ample access to sunlight and warmth.

Turtle (Tier 2 Familiar): A small reptile with a rounded shell that has a strong connection to the Lore of Stone. The turtle grants a LOR+1D bonus to casting spells from the Lore of Stone, and has the following profile: STR4D FIN3D CRM1D LOR3D.

Leuca

Serpentine creatures with no legs or wings, these creatures often crawl or burrow to move, chasing their prey through sidwinding movements using the strong muscles of their torsos. Their fangs are strong and sometimes venomous, and are among the most feared of all the reptiles.

Basilisk: A large creature distinguished from wyrms by the ability to spit a deadly toxin, basilisks tend to prefer dark and moist environments where they can stay cool and make use of their excellent eyesight. With frills and large fangs to instill terror into their prey, basilisks also possess a petrifying gaze capable of turning anything that looks it in the eye to stone.

Cloud Dragon: Cloud dragons lack the avarice and greed commonly found among other dragons, and while it lacks the wings and legs of other dragons, it soars through the air with its snake-like body at great speeds, blowing clouds from one place to another. Some say that it is the magical connection to the Lore of Air that cloud dragons possess that give them this ability, while others say that it is due to invisible wings that no one can see. They also have whiskers and a beard even though they have scaly bodies, making for a unique and fantastical creature.

Minor Basilisk: A smaller version of the basilisk, the minor basilisk lacks the frill and venomous spit that basilisks possess, but still possess the petrifying gaze and venomous bite of their larger cousins. With a smaller body and lesser mass, minor basilisks tend to be more cunning, trapping and downing their prey quickly, addressing issues differently from other basilisks.

Sea Wurm: Very close in biology to their wurm cousins, sea wyrms possess gills and small fins on their bodies to aid in

propelling them through the water. Armed with massive jaws and striking from below, sea wyrms attack ships and swimmers with cunning, dragging them down to the depths.

Snake: Snakes come in a wide range of sizes, using their long, slim, strong bodies to weave back and forth to move across the land, and in some cases through water and into trees. Snakes typically either strangle their prey to death or have a deadly bite accompanied by a toxin, and come in a variety of forms. While not naturally aggressive, snakes tend to be territorial and resort to an aggressive display to protect themselves when they feel threatened.

Wurm: A massive snake-like reptile that is known to burrow underground to attack its prey from below, wyrms have an incredible ability to feel the movements of creatures even through hundreds of feet of earth and stone. Wyrms use a massive set of jaws with multiple rows of teeth to rend and tear its prey. Add onto this a body over forty feet long and more than seven feet wide, and you have an immensely powerful predator that is hard to stop once it is in motion.

Loce

Serpentine creatures with wings but no legs, loce (pronounced “Low-say”) reptiles are swift and slim, making them hard to strike. While not as well known as the ango and leuca reptiles as they are generally less common, the loce are no less dangerous, with armored scales and deadly fangs.

Skrill: A massive winged reptile with no legs, the skrill are most well known for their razor-sharp wings that can decapitate a target when moving at full speed. Skrill are primarily cave dwellers as their wings don’t generally cut through rock, though Mornir of Gonwed

was said to have had wings strong enough and large enough to cut through stone pillars, as relayed in the destruction of Goldothrim by the gnomes of the western coast. Some skrilk have even been known to live underwater, keeping only their nostrils above the waves and waiting with its agile body for unsuspecting sailors or creatures to pass by. Masts stand no chance against a skrilk, and even if the skrilk does not get its fill of sailors when it swoops past, no seamen will move quickly if their mast is gone and their will to row is shaken.

Worble (Tier 3 Mount): Slender yet strong hunters of the forest and mountains, worbles have a powerful venom in their blue fangs that causes paralysis in most beings. With a thick set of scales encased in a slimy mucous coating, they are extremely hard to pierce, as arrows and swords slip harmlessly off of its scales. Trained by brave beastmasters as war beasts, worbles make for deadly and quick mounts in battle. Worbles are STR+1D to melee damage rolls, apply *Worble Venom* poison upon successful damage rolls, STR+2D to flying rolls, STR+1D to resist damage, mounts and riders are STR+2D to damage rolls on the charge, and worbles have the following profile: STR5D FIN7D CRM0D LOR3D.

Hloce

These large two-legged reptiles are often tall carnivores, using their speed and agility to track down prey. They live in caves and forests, using darkness and natural cover to hide them before they strike. Some prey on small creatures or eggs, while others prey on large and vast creatures in the region. Either way, their traits are all honed for hunting: good eyesight, smell, reflexes, and bursts of speed to catch its prey.

Allosaurus: A large bipedal reptile that is smaller than the ferasaur and tyrannosaurus and a shy bit bigger than a megalodon, the allosaurus is unique among its class (and most reptiles, for that matter) in that it holds its young in its belly until they are born. The allosaurus still uses eggs, mind you, but they do not lay them in nests. Instead, a female allosaurus will hold 1-4 eggs in its belly, and when the eggs are ready to hatch she lays them and the drop aids in breaking the babies free. It is truly fascinating, and quite useful as it allows allosauruses to move as they wish, not being tied to a nesting ground.

Ferasaur: Ferasaurs stand over thirty feet tall, making it hard to keep them out of a village or town (as walls, moats, and rivers must accommodate their towering height). More commonly those who live near ferasaurs rely on subterranean dwellings, as ferasaurs cannot dig. Its double row of teeth on each jaw makes it adept in tearing through flesh and armor alike, and since the females secrete a potent pheromone, it is not uncommon to find whole groups of males in a small region, lured there by a single female.

Megalodon (Tier 3 Mount): A large war mount smaller than a ferasaur and tyrannosaurus but no less ferocious, the megalodon lacks the size of larger members of its class but still terrifies mortals in its path. Interestingly, though, they have a soft spot for dogs: they will not eat dogs if at all possible. Megalodons are STR+1D+1 to running/jumping rolls, STR+2D to jaw damage rolls (which may be performed as a *Stomp* attack), STR+2D to resist damage, riders and mounts are STR+2D+2 to damage rolls on the charge, and megalodons have the following profile: STR8D FIN4D CRM0D LOR3D.

Raptor (Tier 2 Pet/Mount): A bipedal carnivore with a good compliment of jaws and claws, the raptor has been domesticated as a scout and pursuit mount capable of tracking down fast-moving

ground creatures and tearing them open with its long claws. Raptors are STR+2D to running and jumping rolls, FIN+2D to Dodge rolls, STR+1D to melee damage rolls (counts as a dual-wielding attack, with one attack action granting two attacks as a single action each beat) with *Rending* (the opponent is STR-1D to armor rolls), opponents are FIN-2D to parry and dodge rolls against the raptor, mounts and riders are STR+1D+1 to damage rolls on the charge, and raptors have the following profile: STR6D FIN5D CRM0D LOR2D.

Tyrannosaurus: The largest hloce reptile, the tyrannosaurus has short arms like many of the hloce, but makes up for it with long legs, a wide body, and a large set of teeth. And with a long tail to provide balance and a potential swiping attack from behind, the tyrannosaurus is often referred to with the title, “Rex,” or “King,” due to its preeminence. While perhaps not as dangerous as a dragon or a wurm, the tyrannosaurus is still a terrifying creature, hard to kill with conventional means, difficult to trap due to its height and agility, and fast moving to close distance with ranged attackers. It is truly a fantastic creature, well designed to hunt and fight whatever enters its territory.

Conclusion

Reptiles are among the mightiest of all creatures on earth, and as I study them I am constantly reminded of my own frailty. While not all reptiles should be feared, there is a great wisdom in being cautious when meeting one for the first time.

Chapter IV: The Amphibian Phylum

Amphibians often look like reptiles, but trade their protective scales for a softer fleshy exterior. This gives them access to poison sacs, better camouflage patterns, and better ability to manage heat.

The amphibian phylum is a smaller phylum, but it has a host of unique creatures that make for fascinating areas of study. You don't see too many pure amphibian students, but almost everyone studies at least one during their time in school because of their unique properties.

Cabor

The largest of the amphibians, the cabor class involves four-legged, long-bodied amphibians like skinks and newts. Armed with a host of protective toxins, bladed tails, slimy coatings, and in some cases short, sharp spines along their bodies, cabor are hard to hold onto and swallow. This leads most creatures to keep their distance from them unless they are ready for a fight.

Bladed Skink: A skink with a double-edged tail for slicing would-be assailants, the bladed skink lives in marshy areas feeding on small fish, crustaceans and the occasional frog. Adapted to ambush its prey by burrowing in the mud and jumping out at the unsuspecting creature, bladed skinks have gills for breathing underwater as well as pores that can open and close rapidly to collect oxygen from the air.

Blind Newt: A newt with no eyes that lives in subterranean caves, the blind newt feeds on small fish and insects that live deep

underground. Relying primarily on its sense of smell, blind newts are flat and wide, growing up to two feet long, about eight inches wide, but only about six inches tall. They are not particularly dangerous to most sentient races, though coblynaureu miners have had issues with them when working near their nests.

Crested Newt: A newt with a protective set of sharp spines on its back, the crested newt lives in more arid locations and is adept at burrowing into sand, mud, and dirt alike. Using this ability to burrow for defense, a crested newt will leave only its spines above the surface when it burrows, presenting a hedge of spikes to anyone who wants to feed on it.

Giant Skink: A skink that can reach up to ten feet long, the giant skink is by far the largest of the amphibians, and is a terror to those in jungle areas. Able to sink small boats, overturn rafts, and drag its prey under the waterline in lakes and rivers, the skinks are agile and naturally camouflaged in the murky water. And with sticky feet that allow it to traverse walls and ceilings, you never know where you'll find one of these when near a large body of freshwater.

Quace

Small amphibians with sticky tongues, quace creatures rely on natural camouflage and stillness to catch insects. Some live in wet climates, others in dry climates, but all provide a check against insect populations in the region.

Bull Frog: A relatively large quace with a loud voice, bull frogs croak loudly from the cover of brush and lily pads around lakes and streams. It is said that bull frogs are quite tasty, though they

also have some deterring toxins in their skin that cause the skin of the target to blister with warts.

Horned Toad (Tier 2 Pet): A small toad with armored scales, the horny toad has both been a pest to sprites and a pet to others. The coblynaureu love to train them as pets, filling a role much like a hunting dog for some sprite lords. Some species of horny toads can even breath fire, and rely on an excellent sense of smell to hunt their prey. Horny toads are either STR+1D to melee damage rolls or may perform a breath attack to strike a single 5D elemental damage hit each beat against a target, STR+1D to resist physical and magical damage to the head, STR+1D to running rolls when burrowing, and has the following profile: STR

Poisonous Tree Frog (Tier 2 Pet): A small frog with poison pores in its skin that it uses for defense against predators, tree frogs live in moist climates where their skin can remain damp, and are so small that they are hard to see unless they move. Tree frogs are STR1D FIN6D CRM1D LOR3D.

Conclusion

Amphibians are perhaps the most adaptive of all the phyla. With the ability to live in the water or on land, to blend in or to dominate their surroundings, to rely on camouflage or to burrow and withstand the storm of a predator's attacks, amphibians have developed in such fascinating ways.

Chapter V: The Fish Phylum

Fish are distinguished by the lack of calcified bones in their body. They all live in the water, though some can survive for at least a time on land. They are rare, but they do exist.

I confess, I do not particularly like fish. By this I do not mean that they are uninteresting or less unique than the creatures of the land; I merely mean to indicate that I don't like how they taste, not to mention all of the tiny bones.

There are less classes of fish, mostly because their traits are generally very similar. Their exteriors and modes of movement tend to be the divergent traits: exoskeletons, cartilaginous bones, and suction-covered skin are only a few of the unique features. So for those who like larger, broader categories, this chapter is for you.

Lingwe

Flat fish with jaws on the bottom of their bodies, the lingwe fish look like they are flying through the water. While not a fast means of transit, it is reliable and does not attract much attention. And since it involves gentle movements of a skin flap, it can be used close to the sea floor to hunt small creatures.

Giant Stingray (Tier 2 Mount): A larger version of the manta ray, the stingray possesses a strong toxin in its tail that can stop the heart of many creatures in the water. Giant stingrays are STR+2D to swimming rolls, STR+1D+1 to damage rolls dealing stun damage, mounts and riders are STR+2 to damage rolls on the charge, and giant stingrays have the following profile: STR5D FIN4D CRM3D LOR1D.

Manta Ray (Tier 1 Mount): A fish that glides through the water using flaps that look a lot like wings, manta rays have been domesticated to carry persons through the water. Manta rays are STR+2D to swimming rolls, may perform an attack each beat with its tail dealing stun damage with a STR+2 bonus, and have the following profile: STR4D FIN3D CRM2D LOR2D.

Hala

Generally the smallest class of fish, the hala clean coral reefs (and at times other fish), migrate in large numbers from spawning places to feeding places, and serve as food for larger fish. They fill an essential part of the ecosystem, caring for the plants of the sea while also providing food for larger fish and sentient races alike.

Lionfish (Tier 2 Familiar): An ugly fish covered in spines, the lionfish carries a powerful venom and has a latent connection to the Tethys Lore (or Lore of the Sea). Lionfish grant a LOR+1D to cast Tethys spells, are STR+1D to melee damage rolls (and inflict the *Lionfish Venom* poison effect when they deal damage), and have the following profile: STR3D FIN4D CRM0D LOR4D.

Salmon (Tier 1 Pet): A small, edible fish commonly found in rivers and seas, salmon are a staple meat source in mountainous regions where large lakes and swift streams are plentiful. Salmon are STR+1D to swimming and jumping rolls, provide 1 food ration when eaten, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN3D CRM3D LOR1D.

Sea Horse (Tier 1 Pet/Mount): The sea horse is a unique creature used as a mount by sprites when underwater, but also used by other races as pets because they are very efficient at cleaning

water. Sea horse males also carry babies to maturity, holding the eggs of the females in their stead. Sea horses grant a CRM+1D bonus to Impression rolls, are STR+1D+2 to swimming rolls, FIN+1D to dodge rolls, and has the following profile: STR1D FIN6D CRM3D LOR1D.

Tuna (Tier 2 Pet): A large fish that serves as an excellent source of food for island and coastal communities, tuna swim in large schools in seas and oceans. Tuna are STR+2D to swimming rolls, provide 2 food rations when eaten, and have the following profile: STR3D FIN3D CRM4D LOR1D.

Nixi

Long-bodied sea creatures with limb-like appendages, the nixi are among the strongest of all the fish, able to live at far depths and move quickly through the water.

Bladed Eel: An eel with a sharp, slashing edge on the top and bottom of its tail that contains a neurotoxin designed to addle the target, the bladed eel can tear the flesh of a predator with relative ease if it gets too close. While it may have a killing weapon adapted in its tail, bladed eels are generally docile, and have been trained for use as weapons by some of the sea folk. The Aitonui merfolk clan have an elite guard that they train to use two of these eels at a time, their bodies wriggling and thrashing, making it hard to know where the attack will land.

Giant Squid: A massive invertebrate of the nixi class with ten long tentacles that it uses to draw in its prey, the giant squid is little more than a tentacled mass with two large eyes, a larger beak, and a system of folds that push it through the water. Though it lacks a skeletal structure, the giant squid sports exceptional strength, able

to crush ships or creatures with ease, or squeeze them until their lungs give out and they lie helpless in the squid's embrace. All of its tentacles are designed to bring things to its large beak, where it can ingest and then dispose of them.

Great Eel: A long eel that typically lives among reefs or deep sea caves, great eels can remain still for hours before finally moving to grab fish passing by. With sharp teeth and lithe movements, the great eel lacks a sharp or pulsing tail like other eels, but what it lacks in unique appendages it makes up for with cunning and patience. Great eels have a locking jaw, not letting go until it tears the flesh from the target. And after pulling off piece after piece, the prey eventually succumbs, providing a feast for the eel.

Krait Eel: A black and white striped eel that uses nematocysts in its tail to stun its prey, krait eels maneuver through coral reefs in search of small fish and water fey. Though they are not generally lethal to larger sentient persons, if a school of eels is hungry enough and comes across one of the Big Folk they have been known to attack, stunning their target until they can tear its flesh to pieces with their fangs.

Nautilus: A unique nixi that propels itself through the water with tentacles while protecting itself in a calcified shell, the nautilus sports many traits that make it adept at deep sea and even tethys-level sea travel. With tentacles that can withstand great pressure and grab small particles for nourishment, the nautilus can go to far depths to pursue food. It also has a means of attracting food to it to reduce its need to travel, with an ability to glow with some sort of bioluminescent light, attracting things to it as it glides through the water. Those fortunate to find a nautilus shell will also speak to their beauty, both in texture and color.

Octopus (Tier 2 Pet): An eight-legged mollusk with a strong beak and powerful suction cups on its lower side, octopuses are truly incredible creatures. They have been known to understand the thoughts of people near them, have good external senses, and can squirt an ink behind them when in danger to make following it hard. Octopuses are FIN+2 to tracking rolls, FIN+1D to hide rolls and blocks line of sight with its ink, and octopuses have the following profile: STR3D FIN5D CRM2D LOR1D.

Torchal

Large predatory fish, the torchal fish are the hunters of the sea, chasing their prey with their exceptional sense of smell. With rows of teeth and sometimes natural adaptations to ambush and disable their prey, torchal fish are tamed by some of the bravest tamers in the world, taught to use their speed and strength for martial gain.

Copperfish: A shark-like creature with sharp serrated teeth and quick movements underwater, the copperfish hunts its prey in a whole new way, taking advantage of its flat body and wide mouth. The copperfish burrows under the sand at the bottom of the sea, and when a fish (or person) swims above it the creature darts up from its hiding place, latching on and thrashing until it gets its fill. And at eight to ten feet in length when fully grown, there are few things that a copperfish does not consider prey.

Dogfish: A small shark capable of breathing on land for short periods of time, the dogfish makes small leaps to move on land, almost skipping across the landscape to reach the next body of water. While in water they are fast and agile swimmers, searching the shoals for small fish and crustaceans.

Great White Shark (Tier 3 Mount): The largest of the sharks, the Great White often hunts independently but can hunt in groups. Its rows of teeth are adapted for grabbing and tearing flesh, and its fins make it surprisingly agile for its size. Sharks are STR+1D to swimming rolls, STR+1D to resist damage, STR+1D to melee damage rolls, may perform attacks either normally or as *Stomp* attacks, mounts and riders are STR+2D+2 to damage rolls on the charge, and sharks have the following profile: STR6D FIN4D CRM3D LOR2D.

Hagfish: Arguably the ugliest creature in the sea, the hagfish also deeply fascinates me because of its unique properties. First, it is not naturally aggressive beyond grazing on fish in a reef or along the ocean floor, though it becomes aggressive when provoked. Second, it has a unique mucous secretion that it releases when it is threatened, making it nigh impossible for fish or persons to breathe or move when caught in it, giving the hagfish either time to flee or to fight as it desires. Third, it possesses a powerful tail that it uses to addle and stun its target, again allowing for a chance to flee or fight. Thus you have a reef predator that is tactful and measured, complete with developments and adaptations to give it the time it needs to assess the situation. It's truly a fascinating fish, and far more versatile in its array of options than other members of the trochal class.

Pike: A carnivorous fish that can grow anywhere from 2-6 feet in length depending on its diet, pike are extremely aggressive with swift movements and sharp, tearing teeth. While sharks are often larger than pike, pike make up for their lack of size with sheer ferocity, ambushing its prey with lightning speed. Pike are even known to eat their own kind, and are among the few cannibalistic species of fish. Pike live in reefs, lakes, and shallow or murky water, an ideal setting to setup their ambushes. Water fey tend to treat

pike in their legends much like how humans and nymphs speak of sea serpents and water gorgons: terrifying beasts that test the soul.

Shark (Tier 2 Mount): The “wolf of the seas,” sharks can hunt independently or in groups, have several rows of teeth for grabbing and tearing flesh, and various fins to aid in agility underwater. While not every shark is aggressive, they all present a danger to mortals under the waves, as they are quite fast and channel all of that speed into a single, powerful bite. Sharks are STR+1D to swimming rolls, STR+1D to damage rolls, may perform attacks either normally or as *Stomp* attacks, mounts and riders are STR+1D+2 to damage rolls on the charge, and sharks have the following profile: STR5D FIN4D CRM2D LOR2D.

Swordfish: A fish with a long skewer-like nose and an even longer dorsal fin on its back, the swordfish lives in the open ocean off of coral reefs, allowing it to prey on schools of fish or stragglers on a reef, whichever is most convenient. While they can go head to head with a shark they generally avoid it, and are more patient than most fish when it comes to hunting. Scrimshaw craftsmen have often used their bills for swords, sometimes taking shark teeth and embedding them into the sides of the sword bill to enhance the slashing capabilities of the weapon.

Syalma

Armored creatures commonly referred to as a group as “crustaceans,” the syalma class is comprised of fish that rely on an exoskeleton rather than cartilaginous bones for structural integrity. They are often small in size, and they rely on tensile muscular strength to move. Some fully surround themselves in their armored shell while others only cover a portion of their body, but the end

goal is the same: preservation and structural form due to external supports rather than internal bone structures.

Clam: A small fish that lives inside of an armored shell, the clam is a source of food for sentient races, birds, and even other syalma fish. Using a unique form of locomotion and living in large groups (called “beds of clams”), clams open their two shells to let water and food in. Fishermen have discovered that clams are not only good for food, but their shells also make excellent spoons and cups, capable of withstanding great temperature changes.

Crab: A small crustacean with a protective shell and small claws for grasping prey and defending itself, crabs use a host of legs to move, and often burrow in sand to wait for prey to come to them. Because of the oblong shape of their bodies they tend to have faster lateral movements than forward movements.

Giant Crab: Like a normal crab, but over five feet tall. Giant crabs still burrow under the sand, save that they are able to trap far larger prey thanks to having claws that are almost five feet in length with a crushing power enough to snap armor and bone. Giant crabs still have the softer underside of other crabs, so some have theorized that the best way to fight a giant crab is to jump under it and stab it from below. Stories tell of persons who attempted this maneuver and were crushed under the crab as it attempted to burrow back into the sand. So attempt this at your own risk.

Hermit Crab: A small crustacean that lives in a shell, hermit crabs tend to live on rocky outcroppings where the sea brings them food without having to travel far. With small pincers and slow speed, they are also a favorite food of gulls and other sea birds, as the shells are not enough to protect hermit crabs from the thin beaks of sea birds.

Lobster: A larger and longer version of the shrimp, lobsters are bottom feeders that eat small fish by catching them in their claws. They are not particularly bright, and can be easily trapped as they move with their legs across the sea floor and have no ability to jump.

Oyster: Much like a clam, oysters use a slightly different system for opening its shells and commonly create pearls of various colors. Oysters are also food for larger creatures, with their shells also serving as tools for fishermen and coastal communities.

Shrimp: Small crustaceans that float in the water, shrimp are a food source for various fish and persons. Shrimp have a durable exterior skin that is not a shell per se, and thus are more vulnerable than other animals.

Conclusion

The depths of the seas are vastly unexplored, and some have theorized that there are yet more strange, terrifying, and fascinating creatures in the Tethys region of the oceans. I will not live to see these regions explored, but I do so wish that I could see them. Fish are not my favorite creatures, but they are so fascinating I cannot help but become excited with the prospect of *whole new sets of fish* that we have not even fathomed due to not fathoming the depths of the sea. Who knows: perhaps the explorer to find and document these creatures may be you.

Chapter VI: The Mammalian Phylum

Mammals have three primary distinctions from the phyla that have come before it. First, mammals have fur to cover their bodies, which serves as both a defensive layer and a means of warmth. Second they have a layer of fat under that fur that serves as padding and yet another layer of insulation against the elements. And third they tend to carry their young to term within their bodies instead of laying eggs.

Now naturally some creatures in other phyla carry their young to term within their bodies, and some mammals do lay eggs. But what distinguishes the mammals is their fur, and is conveniently also their most apparent trait.

Andamunda

The large, elephantine mammals are the largest mammals on the planet, and yet surprisingly they are herbivores. They don't even supplement their diet with small creatures: they only eat plants. This has led them to be domesticated by local warlords and clans, as they make for excellent beasts of burden and mounts for war, using their great size to great effect.

Elephant (Tier 3 Mount): A large four-legged creature found in arid and jungle climates, elephants have tough, leathery skin that protects it from bows and slings while also keeping it cool in the heat. While not as large as some of the other andamunda mammals, elephants are very strong and have a devastating charge, as their great mass is very hard to stop when it is in full motion. Elephants are CRM+1D with peasants, STR+2D to damage rolls and FIN-

1D to all to-hit rolls on the charge, may perform melee attacks as *Stomp* attacks, and have the following profile: STR6D FIN4D CRM3D LOR2D.

Mammoth: A thick furry elephantine creature with long tusks, a decent portion of its size is thick fur and the insulating layer of fat. They hail from harsh, frozen climates, and because of their size and pelts they are commonly hunted or domesticated by sentient races in the vicinity. But mammoths are not easy to fight: their only weak spot is their throats, and getting to the throat is very hard to do (and even then it is their “weakest” spot, but not “weak” *per se*).

Mastodon: Commonly confused with mammoths, mastodons are far larger with different tusk structures. They also hail from different climates: mammoths have thick, long fur, living in cold climates exclusively, while mastodons have shorter fur and prefer temperate climates. In truth, were a mastodon to be found in a cold climate, it would likely freeze to death in a matter of days as its hair is not nearly thick enough to keep it warm. Their tusks are longer, though, and are very hard to evade.

Andalango

Long-necked creatures with knobby legs, the andalango tend to live in arid and desert climates where their bodies allow them easy surveillance of the landscape and displacement of weight when walking in difficult terrain.

Alpaca (Tier 2 Pet): The shortest of the andalango class, alpacas have soft fur that is used for high-end fabrics, and can carry goods with skill across mountainous terrain. Alpacas are STR+1D to running and climbing rolls, STR+1D to hauling rolls, and have the following profile: STR3D FIN3D CRM3D LOR3D.

Camel (Tier 1 Mount): A desert mammal with a leg structure and foot structure ideally adapted to traveling on sand, camels also have two humps on their backs to store water for long journeys. Camels are STR+1D to running/jumping rolls, opponents on horses must pass a Willpower test (at a LOR-2D penalty) to charge, the mount and rider are FIN+1D to all to-hit rolls on the charge, and camels have the following profile: STR4D FIN3D CRM2D LOR2D.

Dromedary (Tier 2 Mount): A desert mammal with a leg structure and foot structure ideally adapted to traveling on sand, dromedaries have one hump on their backs to store water for long journeys. Dromedaries are STR+1D+1 to running/jumping rolls, opponents on horses must pass a Willpower test (at a LOR-2D penalty) to charge, the mount and rider are FIN+1D+2 to all to-hit rolls on the charge, and camels have the following profile: STR4D FIN4D CRM2D LOR3D.

Giraffe (Tier 3 Pet): A large, long-necked creature with spots that aid it in blending in with its environment, giraffes are popular with all levels of society, but especially the lower classes. Giraffes are FIN+1D to sight-based search/detect rolls, FIN+1D to hide rolls, CRM+1D with peasants, and have the following profile: STR4D FIN3D CRM3D LOR2D.

Okapi: An herbivore about the height of a gazelle that grazes the grasses of the jungle floor, okapis have a striped pattern like a zebra and the facial features of a mule with a slightly longer neck for grasping grasses. Their legs are strong, and while they are not particularly fast creatures (due to their stocky frame) they can kick with great force, especially against creatures that are behind them.

Fanto

Marine mammals that can hold their breath for hours at a time, the fanto mammals are massive, rivaling the fish in size, and often coming in far above the length of water reptiles.

Dolphin (Tier 2 Mount): A water mammal that uses a hole on its back to breathe, dolphins share amazing traits with dogs, able to bark, jump, and tear flesh with its teeth. Dolphins are STR+1D to swimming rolls, STR+1D to melee damage, FIN+1D to melee to-hit rolls, can communicate accurately in Dolphin language up to far range away, mounts and riders are STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge, and dolphins have the following profile: STR4D FIN4D CRM2D LOR3D.

Hippopotamus: A rotund but surprisingly fast creature of the rivers and streams that can also get along well on land, the hippopotamus (or “hippo” for short) has massive jaws that can crush a crocodile with a single bite. Combine this with very large, flat teeth, and you have one of the most dangerous herbivores near freshwater sources in the desert. When they have been tamed (which takes a skilled beastmaster), they make for excellent mounts and showcases for commoner and royalty alike.

Platypus (Tier 2 Pet): An aquatic mammal that is very unique among the fanto mammals (and all mammals, for that matter) in that it has a bill, lays eggs, and has a bone spur on its feet that releases a toxin. Platypuses inflict the *Blistering Skin* and *Nausea* effects to targets they damage, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN4D CRM3D LOR2D.

Whale: A massive sea creature that surprisingly eats small creatures for its size, whales can hold their breath for hours, using a hole on its back to breathe when it comes to the surface of the

water. Whales vary in size and temperament, with the black and white killer whales being more aggressive, and the massive blue whale being more docile unless provoked.

Hala

Equine creatures with four legs and non-split hooves, the hala mammals are strong and commonly domesticated as mounts and beasts of burden.

Alicorn (Tier 3 Mount): A unicorn with wings (or a pegasus with a horn – who knows), the alicorn is a powerful steed, trained and bred for the best of riders. Alicorns are FIN+1D+2 to dodge rolls, STR+2D to running rolls, STR+3D to flying rolls, and the mount and rider are STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge. Alicorns are also STAT+1D to resist magical damage, opponents are LOR-1D to cast spells against alicorns, and have the following profile: STR5D FIN5D CRM2D LOR3D.

Hippocampus (Tier 2 Mount): Water horses with the top half of a horse and the bottom half of a mermaid, hippocampi are fast and reliable mounts both on and below the waves. Hippocampi are STR+2D to swimming rolls, STAT+1D to resist magical damage, opponents are LOR-1D to cast spells against hippocampi, and hippocampi have the following profile: STR4D FIN4D CRM3D LOR2D.

Hippogryph (Tier 3 Mount): A mix between an eagle and a horse, the hippogryph is one of the strongest mammals of the air. It trades agility for sheer size, being far larger than a pegasus and not as deft in its movements as a great eagle. Hippogryphs are STR+2D to running and flying rolls, mounts and riders are STR+2D to damage rolls on the charge, hippogryphs are STR+1D

to melee damage rolls and FIN+1D to melee to-hit rolls, and have the following profile: STR7D FIN4D CRM2D LOR2D.

Horse (Tier 1 Mount): A reliable mount with good strength and speed, horses are not the bravest of creatures, but they will get you where you need to go, and are strong enough to pull a wagon or other vehicle. Horses are STR+1D+2 to running/jumping rolls, the mount and rider are STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge, and have the following profile: STR4D FIN3D CRM2D LOR2D.

Pack Mule (Tier 2 Mount): Mules are strong like horses but more easy going, making them ideal beasts of burden. Mules may carry a rider and a passenger, are STR+1D to running/jumping rolls, suffer no movement penalties for carrying a mulepack, mounts and riders are STR+2 to damage on the charge, and ponies have the following profile: STR4D FIN4D CRM2D LOR3D.

Pegasus (Tier 2 Mount): A flying horse with wide wings, the pegasus is a beautiful creature commonly used by knights as swift mounts for war. Pegasii are FIN+1D to dodge rolls, STR+1D+2 to running rolls, STR+2D+2 to flying rolls, the mount and rider are STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge, and have the following profile: STR4D FIN5D CRM1D LOR3D.

Pony (Tier 1 Mount): A horse that is good at carrying loads but not as tall or fast as a horse, making them more amenable to shorter persons. Ponies may carry a rider and a passenger, STR+1D+1 to running/jumping rolls, only suffer a STR-1 penalty from mulepacks (instead of the normal penalty), mounts and riders are STR+2 to damage rolls on the charge, and ponies have the following profile: STR3D FIN3D CRM4D LOR1D.

Unicorn (Tier 2 Mount): A horse with a long horn protruding from its skull, unicorns have magical blood that has known healing

qualities. Unicorns are STR+1D to running/jumping rolls, the mount and rider are STR+1D+1 to damage rolls on the charge, and can remove a *Dying* result from a target at close range by rolling a D6: on a 5+ the result is removed. Unicorns are also STAT+1D to resist magical damage, opponents are LOR-1D to cast spells against unicorns, and unicorns have the following profile: STR5D FIN3D CRM2D LOR3D.

Miue

Feline creatures with four legs, padded paws, long claws, and dexterous tails, the miue mammals have excellent reflexes and are honed hunters.

Barn Cat (Tier 1 Pet): A small cat bred for hunting and stealth over beauty, barn cats are the fear of small mammals and sprites near Big Folk dwellings. Barn cats are FIN+1D to hide/sneak rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN5D CRM1D LOR2D.

Caracal: A the “lynx” of the savanna, caracals are less than five feet long, very thin, and hunt small game across the grasslands. Not typically a threat to non-sprite sentient races, caracals fight with ferocity if their den is disturbed, and thus have been known to attack larger persons on rare occasions. They make their dens in rocky outcroppings, so be careful if you approach a mountain or rocky hill, as there may be caracals lurking there.

Cheetah (Tier 2 Pet): A thin, long cat with a long tail and explosive speed, cheetahs lack the size and strength of other savanna cats, but no land mammal matches the cheetah for speed and agility. Cheetahs are STR+2D to running/jumping rolls and have the following profile: STR3D FIN5D CRM2D LOR1D.

Chimera: Some disagree with the placement of the chimera in the Miue class, but I’ve placed it here because it shares the most traits with creatures of this class. Chimeras blend the traits of various predators, most commonly large cats like lions with snakes and eagles, adding enhanced strength, eyesight, and venoms to their already impressive traits. The result is a mighty, strong-willed killer, capable of challenging an army, let alone beasts or farmers.

Griffon (Tier 3 Mount): A massive lion-like creature with eagle wings, griffons are mighty predators often living in crags and ambushing their prey from above. Some are domesticated as well, making for powerful mounts that fear nothing. Griffons are STR+2D to running and flying rolls, mounts and riders are STR+1D+2 to damage rolls on the charge, may reroll failed dodge rolls, are STR+1D to damage rolls and FIN+1D to melee to-hit rolls, and have the following profile: STR6D FIN5D CRM1D LOR3D.

Large Cat (Tier 2 Pet): Big cats with large claws and strength enough to take down cattle, large cats are often kept as pets by wealthy patrons, and sometimes used for sport fighting. Large cats grant a CRM+1D to Court and Market rolls, the cats are STR+1D to running, jumping, and climbing rolls, and large cats have the following profile: STR4D FIN4D CRM0D LOR3D.

Lion (Tier 3 Pet): The king of the savanna, lions are dangerous foes in the wild and commonly tamed for guard duty or sport fighting for wealthy patrons. Lions are STR+1D to resist damage, STR+1D to melee damage, CRM+1D to Intimidate rolls, and have the following profile: STR5D FIN4D CRM3D LOR2D.

Lynx (Tier 1 Pet): A small predator in mountainous and forest terrain, the lynx has dappled fur and padded feet, allowing it to

blend in with the environment and sneak up on its prey. Much like the larger big cats, the lynx combines sharp claws with sharp teeth, but adds exceptional hearing through specially adapted ears to aid in finding prey and detecting threats. Lynxes are FIN+1D to hide/sneak rolls, and have the following profile: STR3D FIN5D CRM0D LOR1D.

Manticore: The larger cousin of the griffon, the manticore mixes the strength and padded feet of the lion with the wings of a bat and the stinging tail of a scorpion. While its underbelly is always coated in a thick, matted fur, its back and front legs are commonly covered in scales with sharp, poisonous spines for keeping away predators. Some manticores have also been known to breathe fire, making it even less likely that someone willingly closes distance with a manticore. They lack good eyesight in low-light conditions, but do have good hearing, making them hard to surprise.

Mountain Lion: A mountain predator capable of jumping with great accuracy and force, mountain lions keep a low profile until they are ready to pounce. With strong forward motion and agile movements, mountain lions are dangerous predators of the mountains, capable of taking down larger creatures with their tearing claws and strong jaws.

Panther: Large black cats that are hard to see or hear in the dark, panthers hunt the forest and jungle floors with an astounding skill in climbing. This makes it hard to escape them, and hard to track them down should they flee from a creature that proves too strong.

Saber-Cat (Tier 2 Pet): Big cats with large claws and fangs used for piercing the hide of animal and warrior alike, saber-cats are sometimes domesticated for use as hunters and sport fighters. Saber-cats are STR+1D to running, jumping, and climbing rolls, FIN+1D to hide/sneak rolls, and have the following profile: STR4D FIN5D CRM0D LOR2D.

Sphinx: A large lion-like creature with wings and the face and neck of a woman, sphinxes are cunning and alluring creatures who use their minds and charms to bring prey to their jaws and claws. Known for telling riddles as a means of escaping their grasp, the sphinx is feared not because of its great size or speed but because of her sagacity.² So read up and prepare your mind along with your body should you journey in sphinx territory. I recommend poems.

Small Cat (Tier 1 Pet): A small cat that is more for show than utility, small cats are beautiful creatures with small claws, small fangs, and good eyes and ears. Small cats grant a CRM+1D bonus to Court and Market rolls, and have the follow profile: STR1D FIN3D CRM3D LOR2D.

Morco

Carnivorous mammals that use their front appendages like arms to forage and fight, the morco mammals also include omnivores who will graze fruits and nuts along with meat. The morco sometimes share traits with sentient races (the crude ability to use tools, for example), but are animals: they lack the higher level reasoning and craftsmanship of serpents, for example, though they may use tools to procure food.

² In many ways, sentient creatures caught by a sphinx feel resigned to death when they lose the riddle game, as they have a chance to save themselves and

failed. So unlike other ambush creatures, sphinxes often have willing victims, making them very unique.

Bear: A large mammal with big paws that it uses to knock down trees and foes alike, bears amble across the landscape and have the ability to climb (which is uncommon for their size)

Capuchin Monkey (Tier 1 Pet): A small monkey with quick hands and a cute face, the capuchin is trained as a thief by spies across the world. Capuchin monkeys are FIN+1D to Mischief rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN4D CRM3D LOR1D.

Gorilla: A massive ape with long arms and large hands, gorillas live in jungle and temperate climates and are among the most aggressive of all mammals. With large fangs and strong hands, the gorilla moves quickly across the jungle floor with quadrupedal motions, tearing through brush and creatures alike. They like bananas, and can be placated with training and a bit of luck, but be mindful of the males: if you are male and in their territory they may not care what gifts you bring them.

Lemur (Tier 1 Pet): A monkey that is good at climbing and leaping through trees to reach its food, lemurs spend very little time on the ground, preferring the trees to avoid predators. Lemurs are STR+1D to jumping and climbing rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN5D CRM2D LOR1D.

Three-Toed Sloth (Tier 2 Pet/Mount): An extremely slow mount that is even slower on the ground than in a tree, sloths are used for moving large amounts of goods for sprite merchants. Sloths are STR-3D to “running” rolls in trees (or STR-4D to “running” rolls on the ground), STR+2D to resist damage, STR+4D to lifting rolls, gain a +3 modifier to the Damage Table, and have the following profile: STR5D FIN2D CRM4D LOR2D.

Muin

The mammals that we commonly refer to as “cattle,” the muin are mammals that have been domesticated as livestock and beasts of burden, you can technically ride them. They just don’t tend to move as quickly or be as amenable to commands as the hala. We love them anyway.

Cow (Tier 1 Mount): A stocky beast of burden domesticated for moving things (get it? *Moving* things? Okay, I’ll stop), meat for eating, milk for drinking, horns for weapons and tools, bones for broth, and hides for leathermaking, cows are among the most versatile of all muin, and that’s saying something. Cows are STR+1D to hauling rolls, STR+1D to resist damage, mounts and riders are STR+2 to damage rolls on the charge, and cows have the following profile: STR4D FIN2D CRM3D LOR2D.

Deer: One of the smaller members of the muin class, deer have quicker and lighter feet for added agility and jumping. The males grow horns that are used both for mating duels and protecting a herd from dangers, but even male deer are “flight creatures” not “fight creatures,” preferring to flee a predator than face it.

Elk: Larger than a deer or stag but smaller than a moose, elk are mountain and forest dwelling muin that have wide antlers and thick hides, ideal for protection in the wild. Their sense of hearing is their strongest sense, followed by their eyesight and then sense of smell. Unlike moosen, elk also move in small family groups, relying on each other to watch for predators as they feed or drink.

Gazelle/Antelope: The “deer” of the savanna, antelopes (or “gazelles” in some languages) have long, prong-like horns that they use for defense and ritual mating fights. They provide tasty meat

for sentient creatures and large savanna predators, and often move in large groups across the grasslands for protection, relying on the strength of numbers to stay safe.

Great Stag (Tier 3 Mount): A large, powerful creature of the forest, stags are slightly smaller and lighter on their feet than their elk cousins, but with far greater antlers and fearlessness than a deer. Great stags are STR+2D+2 to running/jumping rolls, FIN+2D+2 to Dodge rolls, gain the *Resistant to Magic* adjective for free, may perform attacks with its horns as a *Stomp* attack, mounts and riders are STR+2D to damage rolls on the charge, and great stags have the following profile: STR5D FIN6D CRM2D LOR2D.

Hippotauros (Tier 3 Mount): The bull-like creature of the sea, hippotauren are domesticated and bred for hauling power and martial prowess by the greatest stables of the merfolk. Hippotauren are STR+1D to swimming rolls, STR+2D to melee damage (performed as a *Stomp* attack) with *Rending* (opponents are STR-2D to armor rolls), STR+1D to resist damage, mounts and riders are STR+1D to damage on the charge, and hippotauren have the following profile: STR6D FIN4D CRM2D LOR3D.

Karkadann: A zebra-like creature with a magical horn known to cure diseases and ailments, karkadanns are almost completely blind, relying on hearing and smell in part (though their hearing is also not that great), but primarily relying on their sense of touch through their feet, allowing them to tell when something is moving, where it is moving to, and how far away it is. This has led karkadann hunters to attack them from the air, using flight to give them an advantage in taking the karkadann off-guard.

Moose: The largest of the deer-like muin creatures, the moose is a mountain of flesh that eats plants exclusively. Moosen are more solitary than their deer and stag counterparts, and only come in

groups when mating or raising young. With a wide set of antlers with round tips, moosen have an impressive set of horns that do not catch on briars and foliage, allowing it to roam the forest floor in peace without difficulty. But don't assume that the absence of points means its horns are impotent: when it strikes it is like a dozen staves all thrust into your body at the same time, knocking the wind (and possibly the soul) out of a person with ease.

Mountain Yak (Tier 2 Mount): Large steppe oxen capable of carrying items and people far distances, mountain yaks have thick fur and massive horns. Yaks are STR+2 to running/jumping rolls, STR+1D to melee damage rolls, mounts and riders are STR+2D to resist the elements, and yaks have the following profile: STR6D FIN3D CRM2D LOR2D.

Peryton (Tier 2 Mount): A mix between an eagle and an elk, the peryton is slower but more dangerous on the charge than a pegasus. Perytons are STR+1D to running and flying rolls, mounts and riders are STR+2D to damage rolls on the charge, perytons are STR+2D to melee damage rolls generally, STR+1D to resist damage, and have the following profile. STR4D FIN4D CRM1D LOR4D.

Rhinoceros: A large herbivore with horns on its face and thick skin for protection, rhinoceroses (or "rhinos" for short) are hard to stop once they get moving as their stocky bodies pick up speed and maintain it. Stampeding rhinos have been known to destroy rock formations, plant life, and persons that may be in their way.

Shadhavar (Tier 3 Mount): An elk-like creature with holes in its horns, causing the wind to make a flute-like sound which is soothing to nearby creatures. Shadhavars are STR+2D to running and jumping rolls, STR+1D to climbing rolls, FIN+2D to footing rolls (including dodge rolls), mounts and riders are STR+1D to

damage rolls on the charge and CRM+3D to Taming rolls, and shadhavars have the following profile: STR5D FIN4D CRM4D LOR2D.

Stag (Tier 2 Mount): An herbivorous creature of the forest, stags are larger than deer but smaller than shadhavars, great stags, elk, and moosen. Stags are STR+2D to running/jumping rolls, FIN+3D to Dodge rolls, gain the *Resistant to Magic* adjective for free, mounts and riders are STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge, and stags have the following profile: STR4D FIN6D CRM2D LOR1D.

Narmo

Dog-like mammals with distinctive skulls and body types, the narmo mammals are commonly considered to be the best friends of the sentient races, as their excellent senses, explosive strength, and dogged loyalty make them excellent allies in hunting and war.

Argus (Tier 3 Pet): A two-headed dog with keen senses of smell and hearing, the argus is a powerful hunting pet and guard dog. Arguses are FIN+2D detect rolls, may perform two attacks as a single action each beat (or one attack with a FIN+2D to the to-hit roll), and has the following profile: STR5D FIN5D CRM0D LOR3D.

Bristlewolf: A wolf that has grown a sharp set of bristly spines mixed in with its thick fur, bristlevolves live in magical forests where the latent magic works its spell over the wolves to create the adaptation. They still hunt in packs like other wolves, but the added spines make it harder for larger predators to eat them, adding to their survivability and numbers.

Cerberus (Tier 4 Pet): A larger version of the argus that has three heads instead of two, the cerberus gains all of the bonuses of an argus, but may perform three attacks as a single action (or reduce the attacks by -1 to add FIN+2D to the to-hit roll), and has the following profile: STR 6D, FIN 5D, CRM 0D, LOR 4D.

Direwolf: A wolf the height of a horse, direwolves can stand as tall as seven feet in height, and are more than capable of stealing cattle and larger livestock from farmers who live near their haunts. In legends they are most well-known in the stories of the Vale Matriarch, a particularly bloodthirsty she-wolf of immense size that commands a pack of almost a hundred direwolves.

Fangling:

Fox (Tier 1 Familiar): Quick and cunning creatures with good hearing, agile movements, and a latent connection to the Lore of Earth, foxes are commonly kept as pets and/or hunted for sport. Foxes grant a FIN+2 bonus to Detect rolls, LOR+1D to cast Earth spells, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN4D CRM1D LOR2D.

Haunthound: A black dog-like creature with blood-red eyes (or bright blue eyes in the case of females), haunthounds have a poisonous drool designed to paralyze their targets, making it easier to take down their prey. And since they tend to drool on what they eat, their claws are often also coated in drool, making it hard to escape their toxin if they catch you. Add onto this the ability to see just as well at night as it can during the day, and you have a night predator honed for hunting.

Hellhound: A dog-like creature that burns with an abyssal fire, hellhounds are kept by demons to guard their domains and do their bidding. With a burning bite and an intense ferocity, hellhounds

hunt in packs and work as a unit, making it hard to escape them, softening up a body of soldiers for the coming demons.

Howler: Howlers are unique among the narmo class, as they do not have fur. Instead they have thick, leathery skin with spikes protruding from the spine and shoulders. In most other respects they much resemble wolves and wild dogs, hunting in packs and living in family groups. They tend to frequent mountainous, forest, and swamp terrain, as they are filled with creatures that provide ample supplies of blood for their diet.

Huohuli: A fox less than a foot long, the huohuli possesses a magical ability to create fire whenever its tail strikes the ground. They primarily hunt at night and can create fire by striking their tails on the ground. Like their fox cousins, huohulis mate for life, and move around in family groups. They are known to have up to a dozen litters in their lifetimes, though their young tend to go off on their own within the first 2-3 years.

Hyena (Tier 2 Pet): A stocky hound of the desert with a thick hide and a terrifying laugh, hyenas may not be as large as lions, but they are still ferocious and known to drive off lions when they come in large enough packs looking for food. Hyenas are STR+1D to resist damage, CRM+1D to Intimidate rolls, and has the following profile: STR4D FIN4D CRM2D LOR1D.

Jackal/Wild Dog: While some see the jackal (or “wild dog” in some cultures) as the “wolf” of the desert, that is an inaccurate portrayal. Yes, they tend to hunt in packs and rely on numbers over raw strength, but they are carrion creatures, preferring to scavenge off a lion’s kill rather than hunt it down themselves. While they are carrion creatures they do still possess skill in hounding down prey, and have been known to hunt when pushed to it.

Kitsune: A fox-like creature with a very long life, kitsunes are easily distinguished by their larger size (easily growing up to 3-4 feet long), the presence of multiple tails, and their ability to fly. A kitsune grows a new tail every ten years, so it is also possible to tell the age of a kitsune upon seeing it by how many tails it has. They are not naturally aggressive, are said to be a sign of good fortune, and some have been recorded as having prophetic abilities.

Large Dog (Tier 2 Pet): Large dogs used to hunt and guard masters, they are a diverse group of beasts respected across the world. Large dogs grant a FIN+2D bonus to Detect rolls, and have the following profile: STR4D FIN3D CRM1D LOR3D.

Small Dog (Tier 1 Pet): A small dog with good smell and hearing, but lacking the size of a larger hunting dog, small dogs are more for show than use. Small dogs grant a CRM+2D bonus to Court rolls, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN3D CRM3D LOR1D.

War Wolf (Tier 1 Mount): A wolf domesticated and trained to carry a warrior into battle (albeit a slim and trim warrior), war wolves add the quickness and coordination of their pack to the weapons of their riders, making for an effective pairing. Wolves are STR+1D to running/jumping rolls, FIN+2 to hide/sneak rolls, mounts and riders are STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge, and war wolves have the following profile: STR4D FIN5D CRM0D LOR2D.

Wolf: A communal carnivore species that works as a group to bring down larger beasts, wolves live in temperate, mountainous, and tundra terrain as mid-range carnivores. Far smaller than most predators in their region, few carnivores can match a wolf in its coordination and group tactics, with members threatening attacks to open up a creature to an unexpected attack from another pack

member. Wolves primarily hunt at night, communicating over far distances with each other through a series of howls.

Nengarmo

Small mammals that are considered vermin by most, nengarmo mammals eat a mix of small animals and insects. This causes both consternation and joy from farmers, depending on what they are eating at the moment.

Bunoceros (Tier 3 Pet/Mount): A rabbit-like creature with hooves and a sturdy horn on its nose, the bunoceros is a sprite mount used when a heavy charge is needed. While it is only about ten inches long from tip to fluffy tail, bunoceroses have no fear against hordes of gremlins. Bunoceroses are STR+1D+2 to running/jumping rolls, STR+1D to melee damage rolls, FIN+1D to melee to-hit rolls, STR+1D to resist damage, mounts and riders are STR+2D to damage on the charge, and bunoceroses have the following profile: STR3D FIN6D CRM3D LOR3D.

Ferret (Tier 1 Pet): A small rodent often trained to hunt small birds and vermin, ferrets have small teeth and fast movements, making them ideal harriers to spook a creature for its master to pierce with arrows. Ferrets grant a FIN+1D bonus to tracking rolls to both the ferret and its master, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN5D CRM0D LOR2D.

Field Mouse (Tier 1 Pet): A small mouse that is no stranger to scurrying as it is commonly preyed upon by small carnivores. Field mice are FIN+1D to hide/sneak rolls, and have the following profile:

Firebat: A bat that has glowing red eyes and the ability to breathe fire, firebats attack in swarms, unleashing little goutts of flame to pepper those who would threaten their peace and safety. Subsisting on insects, fruits, and small birds, firebats do not hunt larger creatures, even if they burn them with fire.

Jerboa (Tier 1 Familiar): A small rodent with long legs that can jump very high, move quickly, and has a unique connection with the Desert Lore. A jerboa grants a LOR+1D bonus to casting spells from the Lore of Desert, is STR+2 to running/jumping rolls, and has the following profile: STR1D FIN3D CRM3D LOR2D.

Hare (Tier 1 Familiar): A small, cute rabbit with long ears that is attuned to the power of the druids, hares grant a LOR+1D bonus to cast Life spells, are FIN+2 to detect rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN5D CRM2D LOR1D.

Otter (Tier 2 Familiar): A water mammal with long fangs, a limber body, and a playful attitude, otters are pleasant creatures that possess a latent affinity for the Lore of Water. Otters grant a LOR+1D bonus to cast Water spells, are FIN+1D to all to-hit rolls when in water, may perform two melee attacks as a single action when on the charge, and have the following profile: STR4D FIN3D CRM2D LOR2D.

Pika (Tier 1 Pet): Pikas are small rodents that live in mountain crags that share burrows with finches, guarding their eggs (as they are herbivores) in exchange for signals of danger coming. Pikas love herbs and fruits, which causes them to fight with local farmers (especially sprite farmers) who see them as pests. Pikas are STR+1D to running, jumping, and burrowing rolls, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN4D CRM3D LOR1D.

Rock Badger (Tier 2 Pet): A large rodent that is good at digging and biting, rock badgers are often kept as pets for those who traverse the wilderness as low-maintenance protectors. Badgers are LOR+1D to willpower rolls, STR+1D to melee damage rolls, and have the following profile: STR 3D, FIN 4D, CRM 1D, LOR 3D.

Short-Tailed Shrew (Tier 1 Pet): A small voracious mammal with a toxin behind its fangs, shrews feast on small insects of all kinds. Shrews inflict the *Neural Fog* effect to targets they damage (or the *Paralysis* effect against Tiny creatures), and have the following profile: STR1D FIN3D CRM3D LOR2D.

Solenodon (Tier 1 Pet): Slightly larger than a shrew and capable of eating both insects and small amphibians and reptiles, solenodons also possess a toxin that they secrete from glands behind their teeth to disable their prey. Solenodons inflict the *Loss of Balance* effect to targets they damage (or the *Convulsions* effect against Tiny creatures), and have the following profile: STR1D FIN4D CRM2D LOR2D.

Polca

The class of lesser livestock that are typically shorter than a man's waist, the polca mammals have been domesticated for centuries, providing food and goods for sentient races. Many species still remain feral, though, living off the land in both harsh and kind environments.

Boar: A large hog with large tusks and a thick hide, boars that survive in the wild must be tough and canny. Moving in large groups and trusting to natural defenses and sheer numbers, boars have been known to tear hunters and soldiers alike to shreds,

trampling and sometimes even eating what remains in the wake of their fury. Their meat is good and their hides are useful to making leather items, with scrimshaw craftsmen valuing their tusks for their crafts.

Crag Goat (Tier 1 Mount): A large goat with large horns, the crag goat is not necessarily the fastest of mounts but it hits hard with its horns while maintaining good balance on its deft hooves. Crag goats are STR+2 to running and jumping rolls, may reroll failed footing rolls, mounts and riders are STR+1D+1 to damage rolls on the charge, and crag goats have the following profile: STR5D FIN4D CRM0D LOR2D.

Goat (Tier 1 Pet): A small mammal with short, thick horns and steady legs, goats have thick fur that can be shaved for making clothing (albeit very coarse clothing, so it is more commonly used for satchels and belts), produce milk for drinking, horns for sword hilts and drinking horns, and meat for eating. Goats are STR+1D to damage rolls on the charge, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN5D CRM1D LOR1D.

Momerath: Green pig-like creatures that sneeze incessantly and roam the countryside with a primal fury, tearing up trees and houses alike in their path. They move in large herds, using their tusks to tear flesh, earth, young trees, and any creature that stand in the way. Momerath are not particularly smart, with their rage at times leading them to fall into ravines, drown in rivers – it's actually quite sad to watch. But at some point the herd discovers the hazard and turns course, continuing on their rampage with a redoubled fury. It is best to attack momeraths from behind, as it takes a while for a herd to turn around, giving you time to escape after engaging them with arrows or javelins.

Pig (Tier 1 Pet): Stocky creatures that will eat almost anything, pigs are raised not because they provide pelts or milk or horns, but because they are an effective creator of sinew and muscle. Raised to become meat for eating and sinews for bows and other ranged weapons, pigs are a growing industry in towns and villages because of their relatively low workload and high reward in resources. Pigs are STR+1D to mass rolls, and have the following profile: STR3D FIN2D CRM2D LOR2D.

Sheep (Tier 1 Pet): Sheep are like goats, but they have thicker (and softer) fur, stubbier legs, and a kinder disposition. Their fur is used for clothing (especially blankets and cloaks, as their fleeces lock in heat very well), their horns for weapons and tools, and their meat for eating. Sheep are STR+1D to resist the elements, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN3D CRM3D LOR1D.

War Hog (Tier 2 Mount): Large, squat beasts commonly used by orcs, goblins, and dwarves as war mounts, war hogs have thick hides, large tusks, and pick up speed with alarming skill. War hogs can carry two persons (a rider and a passenger), are STR+1D to resist damage, are STR+1D to running/jumping rolls, mounts and riders are STR+1D+2 to damage rolls on the charge, and war hogs have the following profile: STR7D FIN4D CRM0D LOR2D.

Conclusion

While not as large or predatory as the reptiles, mammals are a huge part of any ecosystem, possessing the largest number of both herbivores and vermin for cleaning up the environment. They are also generally found in more climates, ranging from the freezing cold, to the sweltering heat, to the sticky jungles near the coast. And at every turn there are more adaptations that make mammals essential to the world around them.

Chapter VII: The Insect Phylum

Insects are commonly forgotten, as the larger creatures tend to be the ones that evoke more wonder, but we would be hopelessly lost without insects. They provide food for many species, cause plants to grow, and are sometimes used as mounts and pets by fey across the land, and so we end our discussion of creatures with a look at these fascinating creatures.

The elves posit four classes of insects.

Liante

Insects possessing many legs with no wings, the liante tend to be the ones that people (especially females) fear the most. They use their many legs for locomotion and grasping prey, often with pincers near the face to aid in bringing food toward the mouth and holding it there. And that is all we shall say about them here.

Cave Spider: A small spider that lives in a cave or other dark, damp setting, cave spiders are small and little danger to Big Folk, though they have been known to ambush and feast on leafmen, brow, and gobskens among the fey. Using its eight legs to walk on walls, ceilings, and floors, cave spiders also have the ability to make a thin, strong webbing for catching tiny creatures for future meals.

Centipede: An insect with many legs and a bite that stings with a mild but painful venom, centipedes live near the ground in caves and homes alike. Centipedes have a tough chitinous exterior and an amazing agility due to its many segments.

Styx Spider: A spider that bites with a venom enhanced by magic to burn like the fires of the abyss. Still small with eight legs and the ability to spin webs from its abdomen, styx spiders are feared due to how easily they can slip in and out of an area without being noticed. This makes them a favorite of assassins who can drop them into a room or hall that would be treacherous for them to enter themselves.

Pi

Small insects that lack wings, the pi are the smallest creatures we know of, and are commonly food for other species. They tend to live in large groups, reproduce rapidly, and often live in rigid hierarchical structures.

Ant: A small creature with an incredible amount of strength, I have seen ants lift things far larger than themselves. Ants live in colonies of thousands, taking turns scouting for food and danger. They also have a rudimentary understanding of tactics, and employ them in defense of the colony. Some ants have been found to have wings, and some have enlarged abdomens that explode, sending a toxin on other insects nearby to kill them.

Aphid: Small insects that eat plants (and thus are not beloved by farmers), aphids are near the bottom of the food chain, and serve as food for many insects, birds, and reptiles.

Dire Scorpion: A scorpion about a foot long (so much larger than a standard scorpion), the dire scorpion possesses the pincers and stinger you expect from a scorpion, only it is large enough to give trouble to fey and small animals even without its venom.

Giant Mantis: A mantis about 8-10 inches long, giant mantises are not only far larger than praying mantises, they also come in a wider array of colors. They have a latent connection to the magical realm (especially the males), and thus they are commonly kept by Big Folk as pets, and are commonly treated as equals by the fey.

Giant Scorpion: Massive scorpions the size of a centaur, the giant scorpion reaches to about six feet tall when its stinger is raised and about eight feet long. With a hardened exterior, two crushing pincers, and a long tail culminating in a stinger, giant scorpions live in mountainous regions where dens and caves abound for shelter and cover. All of their offensive weaponry faces forward, so they tend to move in groups when hunting to protect the flanks, rears, and tops of each other.

King Scorpion: While only about six inches long (and thus among the smallest of the scorpions), king scorpions have the deadliest venoms of all scorpions, resulting in death rather than just paralysis or lethargy. This is why they are referred to as “King Scorpions,” highest in potency and using their small size to slip into places others cannot reach without being easily noticed. Thus the king scorpion is commonly employed by desert assassins who milk them for their venom or employ them directly to end a target.

Mantid: The tallest of the insects (though with less mass than a giant scorpion), mantids reach up to seven feet tall, wielding two massive arms with barbed claws adapted to club and tear in a single motion. With long legs and incredible lateral quickness, mantids can circle their targets and bypass attacks with ease, making them hard to take down in close combat. And with a hardened chitinous shell that is rounded to deflect attacks, striking it from afar is hard.

Tsette

Small insects with wings, the tsette are commonplace in all environments, though they will take different forms. Some tsette are harmless, while others are quite harmful to creature and crop alike. In some regions whole fey clans exist purely to drive back the evils of a specific tsette creature in the region.

Bee: A pollenating flying insect armed with a stinger on its abdomen, bees are naturally curious and defensive, reacting to intruders and driving them away from their hives. Producing honey gathered from the nectar of flowers, bees have been cultivated by farmers for centuries, using smoke to make the droning bees sleepy and slow, allowing for easier handling.

Dark Spinner: A butterfly-like creature that uses webs from its abdomen to catch its prey, dark spinners are really only feared by flying sprites, as they are far too small to catch anything larger.

Firefly: A small flying insect whose abdomen glows with a bioluminescent light, fireflies are special among the fey and highly prized. Fireflies grant a LOR+1D bonus to cast Fey spells, shed light within striking range, and have the following profile: STR1D FIN4D CRM3D LOR1D.

Giant Dragonfly: A dragonfly around 6-8 inches long, the dragonfly has been trained by the sprites to carry two persons for long distance travel. Giant dragonflies are STR+2D to flying rolls, riders and mounts are STR+2 to attacks on the charge, and have the following profile: STR2D FIN5D CRM2D LOR2D.

Hornet: A lot like a bee but sleeker, faster, quieter, and packed with more punch in its venom, hornets live in nests rather than hives and tend to come in smaller numbers (due to the smaller

nature of the nests). Hornets move in family groups, though, so if you find a larger number of hornets, it is likely that it is a mother and her brood.

Horsefly: A small fly with a surprisingly sharp bite, horseflies are not particularly dangerous, though their bite has a sting that will break the concentration of the target. Named because of their preference for creatures of the Hala class in the mammal phylum to bother, horseflies are mostly considered a nuisance, and many stablemasters keep birds on-hand to eat the horseflies.

Rhino Beetle: A beetle named because of its horn on its face, rhino beetles are relatively large insects capable of carrying burdens for fey merchants, and in a few cases have been used as mounts for war. With large wings that fold under a protective chitinous shield and a low profile to protect its softer underbelly, the rhino beetle is little more than a nuisance or novelty to Big Folk.

Scarab Beetle: Scarab beetles are about five inch long flying beetles with stubby front legs well designed for digging in sand and dirt, and foldable wings protected by a thin exterior shell. Scarabs (both male and female) also have horns, used for personal protection and males use them for mating duels in the summer. Scarabs feed on fruits, plants, slime from snails (when they can get it), and most commonly the dung of herbivores. This makes them essential to the ecosystem, but also pests to farmers in an environment where crops do not easily grow.

Wembe

Insects with no legs or wings, the wembe tend to have interesting approaches to locomotion, digestion, and everything, really. Some of these insects are even blind – as far as we know

they have no sight at all. But what they lack in some respects they compensate for with unique and fascinating adaptations.

Death Worm: Growing between a few inches and a few feet in length, death worms sport a wicked venom that can paralyze or kill a person, death worms are found in mountainous regions where rocky crags provide protection against predators. Death worms lack eyes, relying on a strong sense of smell to find their targets – a useful feature in dark caves and tunnels.

Inchworm: A small worm that turns plants into earth, worms are an integral part of the ecosystem, caring for the land and being food for other creatures. Fishermen use them for bait, farmers use them for compost piles, and shamans use them for poultices and concoctions, and are thus one of the most useful of all insects.

Conclusion

Animals are excellent teachers. By studying them we learn vast amounts about who we are and why we are the way we are. The beasts do not ask whether it is right to kill another: they kill to eat and defend their lairs, and ask no questions. So what distinguishes us as sentient races from the beasts is our asking of questions and our inclination toward the “oughtness” of something.

So care for animals (and persons, for that matter), because you are the only one asking those questions. Be mindful of their homes, food, and lifestyles, as one who cares for a garden.

About the Author

Ander Cumbridge resides in the city of Dorn, a Wild Man walled settlement in The Wilds. The son of an Ardenite merchant and an Amazon woman, Ander traveled to many kingdoms and ecosystems to learn about animals of all shapes and size. He has sat under many beast masters and tamers, learning the secrets of each creature.

Ander has been recognized by various monarchs for his service to their realms, including the Faun Federation for aiding in the removal of a fire drake, the Vale of Tears for removing a sphinx infestation, and the giants of Starkeberg for capturing a dragon. But the one he is most proud of is his extermination of the cave spiders in his dwelling on what he calls, “The Night of a Thousand Horrors,” where he slew a thousand spiders in a single night that wanted to enter his home for warmth.

Ander lives with his wife and six children in Dorn. He runs the local aviary, tending to flying creatures brought in by travelers. He is also brought to various schools on occasion as a guest lecturer, especially in the spring season. If you are interested in securing him as a speaker, you can send a request to his residence in Dorn.



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