

PATHFINDER[®]

CAMPAIGN SETTING[™]



MYTHICAL MONSTERS

REVISITED

Jonathan H. Keith, Jason Nelson, and Anthony Pryor



FACES OF MYTH AND LEGEND



CHIMERA

Fearsome, lion-bodied creature with huge wings and the heads of a hunting cat, a giant ram, and a savage dragon.

Source: Greek mythology



KRAKEN

Intelligent and utterly evil squid-bodied sea monster that rules the deep ocean trenches with its foul magic.

Source: Norse mythology



COUATL

Feathered serpent that acts as a messenger of benevolent gods, protecting and teaching fledgling cultures.

Source: Aztec mythology



MEDUSA

Snake-haired woman with the ability to turn heroes to stone with nothing but a glance at her terrible visage.

Source: Greek mythology



GRIFFON

Powerful and intelligent aerial predator with the body of a lion and the head, wings, and talons of a majestic eagle.

Source: Greek mythology



PHOENIX

Massive, intelligent bird with mastery over fire and the ability to resurrect itself from its own ashes.

Source: Greek, Egyptian, Persian, and other myths



HARPY

Feral humanoid woman with wings and a beguiling song capable of luring adventurers to their shrieking dooms.

Source: Greek mythology



SPHINX

Intelligent creature with the body of a lion, the wings of a falcon, and the head of another creature.

Source: Greek and Egyptian mythology



HYDRA

Many-headed serpent that regrows two new heads for each one it loses, unless certain precautions are taken.

Source: Greek mythology



WENDIGO

Ravenous and predatory cannibal spirit of the frozen north, ever seeking new victims.

Source: Algonquian mythology

MYTHICAL MONSTERS REVISITED

A Pathfinder Campaign Setting Supplement

This book works best with the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*. Although suitable for play in any fantasy world, it is optimized for use in the Pathfinder campaign setting.



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INTRODUCTION

Real-world myths and legends have always been the best places to draw monsters from—or at least, that’s how we at Paizo feel. While it can be fun to make up brand-new monsters, to guide a heretofore unseen creation through its growing pains and tailor it specifically to its environment or role, there’s an entirely different sort of fun that comes from playing with monsters established by hundreds or thousands of years of tradition.

Sometimes the fun is in the familiarity. Your players already know mummies and vampires, and have been enjoying them for years in films, literature, and campfire ghost stories. When players conquer these adversaries, they’re connecting with a tradition they already love, and half the fun is in joining your own story with that vast tapestry of storytelling.

At the same time, there are a million historical monsters that you’ve probably never heard of before, and researching and running these less iconic enemies can be as much fun for the GM as the players. (Certainly we at Paizo spend plenty of hours scouring the internet and books of mythology for new and unusual beasts to add to our arsenal.) In addition to sometimes being stranger than your own creations—a lot of those old legends are *weird*—these borrowed monsters can add unique cultural flavor to your setting. And learning about a culture’s monsters—what people fear, what they tell stories about—is one of the most fun ways to better understand a real-world culture different from your own.

Whether they’re old hat or hidden treasures, all of the monsters discussed here have been around for generations, and have left an indelible mark on our collective imaginations—which is what made it so hard to put this book together.

IN THIS BOOK

After much debate, the crew here at Paizo was finally able to narrow the list of iconic mythological monsters down to a manageable 10—but it wasn’t easy. Some monsters got a bye on account of having been covered elsewhere (such as the minotaur, trolls, and other creatures covered in *Classic Monsters Revisited*, and the vampires and werewolves of *Classic Horrors Revisited*). Others were edged out because, as famous as the Greek monsters tend to be (on account of the ancient Greeks being fond of writing down and publishing their legends), we wanted some cultural variety. In the end, though the Greek monsters still have a powerful presence, this book also ventures

as far as the sands of Egypt (sphinxes), the Aztec Empire (couatls), and the ancestral lands of the Algonquians of North America (wendigos). Presented below is a brief overview of the creatures that made the cut, and the authors who undertook the intimidating task of adding their own unique spins to the most classic of monsters.

Chimera: A chthonic creature of Greek origins, the chimera of Pathfinder retains its trademark multiple heads while taking on the role of a fearsome and crude beast. Jason Nelson details the proud and ignoble qualities of the chimera, as well as its monstrous origins, powerful ancestors, and base kin, the orthrus.

Couatl: Drawn from the myths of Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent god of ancient Mesoamerica, the couatl of the Pathfinder universe is a warrior and guardian of peace and justice, a servant of the gods and guide to young or developing cultures. Anthony Pryor takes us inside the century-spanning lives of the Feathered Ones, exploring their solitary natures and passionate faith in the potential of humanoids.

Griffon: The legend of the honorable griffon stems from Greek mythology and European heraldry. Michael Kenway gives us a vivid account of the creatures, including how the winged beings choose their riders and protect their valuable eggs from greedy thieves.

Harpy: Jonathan H. Keith brings to life the squawking, fierce culture of the Greek harpies, feral winged women whose beguiling songs lead heroes to their doom.

Hydra: The Greek terror known as the hydra regenerates its heads as soon as they’re sundered, giving adventurers a run for their money when they expect to swiftly slay the serpentine beast. Jason Nelson details the inner workings of these forked-tongued monsters and tells of numerous variants, including the powerful venom-spewing miasma hydras and the treasure-guarding warden hydras.

Kraken: Dwelling at the bottom of the darkest oceans trenches, the enormous squid known as the kraken saw its roots in Norse mythology, but its myth still permeates popular culture to this day. Anthony Pryor goes over the Pathfinder rendition of this mythological being, a creature whose incredible intelligence is exemplified by its mysterious machination from the floor of the perilous seas.

Medusa: One of the three gorgon sisters of Greek myth, Medusa was cursed with snakes for hair and turned anyone she looked at to stone. Jason Nelson tells of these avaricious and twisted beguilers of the Pathfinder universe and how they control both swampy lairs and vast

networks of illicit activities in urban centers.

Phoenix: An enormous hawk hailing from various Mediterranean mythologies, the phoenix is given its proper tribute by Jesse Benner, who writes about the amazing firebird's ability to rebirth itself from its own ashes.

Sphinx: From the sands of ancient Egypt, the dangerously intelligent sphinxes spring forth on powerful leonine legs, ready to rend and tear those who can't meet their esoteric demands. Guardians of the highest caliber, sphinxes come in several varieties, from the high-minded and riddle-obsessed androsphinx and gynosphinx to the lusty criosphinx and vengeful hieracosphinx. Jonathan H. Keith explores the ins and outs of these ancient beasts and their strangely interconnected biology and cultures, and offers tips to those who seek their aid and advice.

Wendigo: Greg A. Vaughan describes the terrifying wendigo, a creature of Algonquian folklore that plagues northern travelers' dreams until they succumb and cannibalize their friends and families.

MORE MYTHIC MONSTERS

In addition to the creatures presented in this book, the first *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* has a whole host of friends and foes from the pages of myth and legend. Presented below is just a sampling.

Monster	Source
Barghest	English
Basilisk	Greek
Bugbear	English/Irish
Centaur	Greek
Cockatrice	English
Cyclops	Greek
Doppelganger	German
Dragon turtle	Chinese
Dryad	Greek
Duergar	Norse/German
Gargoyle	French/Various
Genie	Arabian
Goblin	European/Various
Golem	Jewish
Gorgon	Greek
Hell hound	Greek/European/Central American

Hobgoblin	Scottish
Kobold	German
Lamia	Greek
Linnorm	Scandinavian
Lycanthrope	Greek/European/Native American
Manticore	Persian
Minotaur	Greek
Mummy	Egyptian
Naga	Indian/Tibetan
Nymph	Greek
Ogre	French
Oni	Japanese
Pegasus	Greek
Pixie	British
Rakshasa	Indian/Cambodian
Roc	Arabian/Persian
Satyr	Greek
Tengu	Japanese
Troll	Scandinavian
Unicorn	Greek
Vampire	European/Various
Wraith	Scottish
Wyvern	British
Yeti	Tibetan
Zombie	West African/Haitian





CHIMERA

THE DIM LIGHT OF DUSK WAS TRICKING MY EYES, AND AT FIRST I TOOK THE CREATURE FOR A MERE STRAY LION. THAT WAS UNTIL IT HURLED A LINE OF ACIDIC BILE AT RORGEMIR NEXT TO ME, AND I SAW TWO PAIRS OF BEADY RED EYES NEXT TO THE THING'S OWN. I CALLED TO MY OTHER COMPANIONS IN THEIR TENTS TO COME AND AID ME, AND THE THING, SEEING OUR NUMBERS, HISSED IN THREE GUTTURAL VOICES, "YOUR LUCKY DAY, HUMAN." THEN THE BEAST TOOK FLIGHT, ITS LEATHERY WINGS CARRYING IT FAR ABOVE THE HILLS IN WHICH WE STOOD. I WAS SURE I'D NEVER SEE SUCH A THING AGAIN IN MY LIFE. BUT I WAS WRONG.

—FROM THE JOURNAL OF PATHFINDER BORREK KRESHUG



The chimera is an evil creature of mysterious origin, resembling a great lion with its head flanked on one side by the head of a chromatic dragon, and on the other by the head of a goat. Upon its shoulders, a chimera possesses a pair of scaly leathery wings, and its tail is similarly scaled, matching the color of its draconic head. The chimera's legend is possibly even more powerful than the strange beast itself, perhaps because tales about it always grow in the telling. The creature is so strangely stitched together that seemingly any story about it is believable. Rumors, myths, fireside stories, and travelers' tales fill in gaps about what a chimera might be or what it could do, and none seem impossible or unlikely for a beast of such bizarre qualities. It has so many and such varied features that each one gains its own embellishment, until the creature becomes an epic tapestry of monstrous menace and brutal hatred, ideas which in and of themselves are not entirely divorced from the reality of the chimera, regardless of how inaccurate the specifics may be. Its name has become a byword among doubters, skeptics, and naysayers, who refer to anything that seems impossible, fanciful, or overly embellished as chimerical, for surely nothing in the world could possibly be all the dubious things perpetrators of the chimera myth claim the monster to be. Nonetheless, lingering in the back of even the most cynical individuals' minds is the knowledge that whatever the chimera is, it must be a truly horrifying beast to garner such extravagant fables.

Skeptics are correct in thinking that the tales of the chimera do in fact outstrip the reality. A chimera can speak, but it is only barely intelligent, able to do little more than curse, bluster, threaten, or (when tamed by a mightier power) complain. Chimeras are cunning enough to set rudimentary traps and create ambushes, but, while effective, their tactics are crude at best. They can fly, but clumsily and without grace. They are fierce in battle when they have the advantage, but if bloodied are apt to retreat in search of easier prey. They are not so much cowardly as they are indolent, content to scavenge rather than hunt if easy food does not present itself. Chimeras graze and gnaw plants down to the ground, despoiling fertile lands with their great hunger when they choose not to do so with their caustic breath. A chimera is always on the prowl for bigger and better prey, however, and when hungry will attack just about any creature smaller than itself.

Despite all these coarse qualities, a chimera is highly adaptable, able to survive in the midst of desolation, and in possession of a hateful cunning. Its savage brain is just bright enough to remember an attacker and seek revenge, clever enough not to fall for the same trick twice, and social enough to gather together in prides when overwhelming an enemy is the best way to win a fight.

ECOLOGY

Chimeras are born of primordial evil, not the result of accidental creation but rather the mad design of a chthonic mother of monsters who knit together the first chimera within her own womb. She sought to create a hunter, but one that would survive on green grass and dry thorn bush when prey was scarce. It would both fly and run. It would spot enemies from afar and slink stealthily through the grass. It would be smart enough to outwit any animal, and fierce enough to outfight any humanoid, with voice enough to taunt and berate those foolish enough to hunt it. She melded the hungry lion, the fecund goat, and the raging dragon into a single beast, a deranged composite that included everything it would need to survive wherever it went. She even created them to be hermaphroditic, alternately male or female as the situation demanded, birthing eggs of hard stony shells; any egg-hunter would think these eggs were merely unappetizing rocks, but heated beneath their parent's burning belly, the eggs would incubate until they cracked open, revealing winged, many-headed cubs slathered in dark amniotic fluid.

While chimeras habitually hunt from the air, they are not strong or agile flyers, and thus typically avoid high and windy mountains where the air is cold and thin, as well as heavily forested areas filled with obstacles to hinder their movement. However, chimeras thrive in jagged and craggy badlands rife with plunging canyons, soaring natural arches and spires, and broken terrain carpeted with scrub—lands in which they can take cover and lie in ambush. Bursting from its hiding place, a chimera feels no shame in fighting dirty, whipping sand and grit into a blinding storm while blasting prey with its magical breath. Should any survive its initial onslaught, a chimera tries to isolate one victim to carry off for later feasting, taking maximum advantage of the terrain by flying across ravines and over cliffs so enemies cannot follow. Chimeras are also clever enough to create crude traps for their victims, preparing landslides or deadfalls to unleash onto travelers below their aeries, afterward swooping down to pick off survivors as they dig themselves out. Though savage and cruel, chimeras are generally more interested in a good meal than a hard fight, and would rather disable a single opponent and fly off with the spoils than divide their efforts between multiple targets.

While it has three heads, a chimera has only a single consciousness that links them. Chimeras are no more resistant to mind-affecting effects than other creatures, and their heads speak with a single mind and voice, never arguing with each other. While the damage dealt by a chimera's breath weapon depends upon the color of its dragon head, it can disgorge this deadly emission from any

CHIMERAS IN MYTHOLOGY

In Greek mythology, the Chimera was a unique fire-breathing beast that terrorized the kingdom of Lycia in Asia Minor. Described by Hesiod and Homer as a tripartite creature melded from goat, lion, and serpent, she was one of the many Greek monsters spawned by Echidna and Typhon. Depending on the specific source, legends state she was either the sister or mother of the Sphinx and the Nemean lion.

The Chimera figures most prominently in the legend of Bellerophon, who was commanded to hunt the beast by King Iobates of Lycia. This hunt was intended as an impossible task that would kill the hero, but after he tamed the flying horse, Pegasus, Bellerophon was able to fly out of reach of the Chimera's bite and breath, though he was still unable to wound the monster with his weapons. Feeling the monster's inner heat, Bellerophon mounted a block of lead on the end of his spear (in some versions of the story covering it with fat to entice the monster to bite and swallow it), and then lodged the weapon in the Chimera's gullet—the lead melted in her windpipe and suffocated her.

of its three mouths. Chimeras can live up to 200 years, but most are slain by their own kind or by more powerful creatures before well then.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Chimeras are social creatures, living in leonine prides led by a single dominant female that rules over a pack of male hunters. While chimeras were created to be true hermaphrodites, with mating leaving both partners pregnant, over time their social ordering has led to sexual dimorphism, with the dominant member of each pack assuming a female role and the other pack members acting as males. When the female pack leader dies (perhaps killed by a male challenger), chimeric biology enables a surviving pack member—usually the most powerful male—to change from male to female. The reverse is also true when a deposed female chimera survives its loss of position or when a female chimera alone or in a mated pair joins an existing pride.

While fearsome of aspect, chimeras are largely lazy, petty, and cruel creatures. Their limited faculties of speech are primarily dedicated to crude threats and boasts about their ferocity, but in truth they prefer to feed their appetites and their egos with the least amount of effort required. While capable of hunting, the dominant chimera in a pride is happier to have others do the hunting for her, taking the choicest spoils for herself. In a similar fashion, a lone chimera or mated pair prefers to frighten others

into paying tribute whenever possible, saving the trouble of seeking and catching its own prey. While chimeras consider humans and their ilk delicious, they also savor the taste of fear itself, and delight in accepting helpless sacrifices to devour, bloodily feasting in full view of their cowed vassals, but always leaving one head vigilantly and eerily watching onlookers while the others eat.

Chimeras may cultivate humanoid allies when they think far enough ahead to do so, usually when local humanoids fear the twisted creature so much that they pay homage to it out of awe. Kobolds especially gravitate toward chimeras because of their shared draconic heritage. Powerful creatures that have no reason to fear the powers of the chimera sometimes keep the monsters as pets or mounts. However, chimeras are untrustworthy companions, prone to sulking if their egos are not continually stroked. Their stupidity, boastful dishonesty, and casual cruelty make them dangerous to their masters' allies and property, as they are prone to thoughtless acts of impulsive destruction if not kept under a tight rein, and if they are too tightly controlled, they will try to turn on their masters whenever an opportunity for treachery presents itself.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

As chimeras are often the crude leaders of lesser creatures, they make excellent capstone monsters for low-level adventures. Their versatility in combat makes encounters featuring them viable for a variety of parties of the right level, as their flight and ability to hover allow them to counter ranged attacks, and their breath weapon makes them a threat even at a distance. If threatened by multiple party members, a chimera can focus all its violence on a single target or spread its attacks against multiple foes, making melee fighters think twice before rushing in all at once.

Chimeras are often most effective when they are foreshadowed before being encountered. As chimeras' traits are often exaggerated, it is fitting for villagers plagued by chimera attacks to make hyperbolic remarks about the monster that seem slightly askew or at least unlikely. Tribes or cults may offer a chimera tribute in exchange for its protection or simply to avert its wrath, leaving offerings and making sacrifices on crude altars. While a chimera encounter should not be so built up that the final reveal seems anticlimactic, the beast and its influence on the people around it should feel eerie and mysterious. It thus becomes a legendary monster that is heard of before it is ever seen, living somewhere apart from the creatures that venerate it or try to buy its loyalty. A chimera can be brought in at a strategic moment during a battle, making a dramatic entrance on the scene to aid the PCs' foes just as the party feels it has won, and the



beast's cruelty and dim wit can be emphasized by having it injure its supposed allies or subjects with friendly fire.

Chimeras are simple creatures, usually content with a cave or similar location as a lair. They seek out lairs that suit their abilities, without narrow bottlenecks that would restrict their movement and with high enough ceilings to facilitate flight, especially favoring caves atop or in the middle of cliff faces and nests among rocky spires. Where possible, they set up rockfalls or even acquire nets or similar items to drop on creatures climbing to their lairs, using their breath to destroy ropes and other climbing gear as pesky adventurers make their ascent, making the approach toward the chimera as dangerous as the fight itself.

A chimera may keep a number of cowed servants at its lair to groom it and fawn over it (or for the monster to eat when the mood strikes), but any such unfortunates need to accommodate themselves to the chimera's choice of lair, as it is unlikely to go out of its way to make them comfortable. Such servants often keep ranged weapons or polearms to attack creatures approaching their bestial master's home, or they may be sent as raiders to capture tender humanoid victims and bring them to a sacrificial spot for the chimera to mutilate and devour.

At high levels, chimeras do not present much danger to PCs as solitary enemies, but when encountered in groups, they concentrate their breath weapon attacks on a single target, and thus can still constitute a significant threat. All chimeras in a pride need not have the same type of breath weapon, so PCs focusing their magical defenses to protect against fiery breath may be blindsided when the rest of the pride barrages them with acid, cold, and lightning. Chimeras are usually durable enough to survive at least 1 round of high-level attacks, and as long as they keep moving and spread out to avoid area and multi-target effects, they can swoop in and out of cover, returning to the assault as their breath weapon recharges. Chimeras also make dramatic and impressive mounts for high-level NPCs, able to contribute meaningfully while their riders do the heavy lifting in combat.

TREASURE

Chimeras often hoard shiny baubles, though they are not the obsessive collectors that their partly draconic nature might imply. To a chimera, appearance is more important

than value, and the more ostentatious a trophy the better. They recognize the value of coins, though any coin is much the same to them as another, and the same is true with gems and jewelry. They are far less interested in appraising the true worth of an object than they are in how it looks, and are only too happy to adorn themselves with various trinkets if the items would make them look more frightening. Even though they cannot use most weapons or armor, they take great pleasure in commandeering such novelties, using them for simple bartering with more powerful creatures or for luring unsuspecting victims to their lair. Chimeras particularly enjoy items gilded or bejeweled with spectacular gems or enchanted with magic to enhance their appearance, especially those that shed light or produce dramatic music or sounds. Even if such items would ruin a chimera's element of surprise in battle, the beasts are only too happy to forfeit stealth if only to temporarily frighten or alarm their foes.

Chimeras are arrogant and prideful creatures, and so their favorite trophies are ones that memorialize their triumphs in battle.

While chimeras' primary motivation in carrying off dead enemies is to feast on the corpses without being disturbed, their secondary purpose is almost always to collect and organize the belongings of their victims. Chimeras show unusual punctiliousness in arranging the spoils of won battles, and an individual will use these relics to decorate its lair or fashion them to itself in hopes of inspiring fear and loathing among those who see it or its home. Such possessions often lead to rivalries and sabotage within a chimera pride, as one chimera may steal the trophies of another only to destroy or hide them, or worse, claim the items as their own. Chimeras accusing others in the pride of stealing their things are generally regarded as sore losers by their kin, for true hunters never lose their prey. Their brutish and careless demeanors result in the foul beings breaking their toys more often than not, however, so chimeras are always searching for new trinkets and playthings.

CHIMERAS ON GOLARION

On Golarion, chimeras are the creation of Lamashtu, the result of an apocalyptic experiment to birth a



THE FIRST CHIMERAS

It's said that when the first chimera prototypes were created, their kind was made up of what eventually became legendary chimeras (one such creature is detailed at the end of this section) and orthruses. The legendary chimeras were all female, and orthruses were exclusively male. When the two mated, they occasionally produced chimeras and orthruses; more often, however, their offspring resembled neither parent, and were instead wicked, single-headed abominations. While their maker was satisfied with the wretched progeny, the chimeras grew malcontent and angry that their children were so deformed, hideous, and unlike them. They turned on their mates and began to devour them and their children alike. Seeing this, their creator decided to make the chimeras less headstrong, more adaptable, and able to see to their own reproductive needs. Orthruses quickly found themselves no longer needed and thus even further hated by these new chimeras, and so most retreated to the farthest reaches of the world, where the cruel chimeras would not hunt them down. There some still lurk, licking their wounds and seeking the occasional lone chimera to force themselves upon and mate with, spawning more of their kind and waiting for the day they can rise against their oppressors.

An orthrus lacks wings and possesses a body that resembles a two-headed hound or wolf with a draconic head sprouting from its tail. Orthruses are CR 7 magical beasts, and possess the same stats as chimeras with the following exceptions.

An orthrus does not have a fly speed, and replaces the Hover feat with Power Attack and the Fly skill with Survival. An orthrus's blunt paws make unsuitable weapons, but each of its bite attacks deals a number of points of damage equal to 2d6 plus 1-1/2 times the chimera's Strength bonus, and one of the heads gains the trip special ability. It also gains the rend special attack (2 bites, 2d6+6), and the placement of its heads grants it all-around sight.

monster that was a little bit of everything—the ultimate expression of deformed amalgamation. It's said that she worked through various experimental versions, many of which never survived the world beyond her fetid womb, to determine the precise admixture of forms before settling on the creature that would become the chimera. Artistic depictions and fossil remains have shown chimeric creatures blended with other beasts, including gorgons and hydras, but no such crossbreeds have ever been seen alive, and many sages dismiss them as mere exaggerations or fabrications.

Chimeras dwell within parts of southern Avistan and Casmaron, and throughout much of Garund. First known in the isles of Iblydos, the eldest chimeras roamed far from their ancestral home toward the World's Edge Mountains and beyond, carving out homes in lost ruins on both sides of the Inner Sea. The beasts then spread their kindred first along the northern shores of the Inner Sea, through what is now Taldor, Andoran, and Cheliox, north to Galt and the River Kingdoms and west to the Arcadian Ocean. A menace to villages and their cattle throughout these lands, chimeras are hunted in some places, but in others the locals make accommodations for them. Many ancient Taldan nobles adopted the chimera as a heraldic device, some going so far as to acquire the beasts as status symbols. Centuries later, the same families—now Chelaxians—actually introduced chimeras to Sargava during their conquest of the region as magically bound war machines. The chimeras took to the climate immediately. Soon some broke free and fled into the wild; their descendants now rule swaths of the Bandu Hills and the southern savannas of the M'neri Plains and beyond. There chimeras are known to gather prides of ordinary and dire lions under their sway. These prides of Sargavan chimeras quickly migrated through the Mwangi Expanse.

In Osirion, chimeras were at first welcomed, believed to have been some distant relation of the sphinxes native to land of pharaohs, but residents quickly realized their error, and began to root out the menaces as quickly as they had let them in. Some chimeras make their hunting grounds along the borders of Osirion, raiding the nearby small desert settlements on occasion, but most have long since migrated west and south, and can be found nearly everywhere throughout Garund.

VARIANTS

Chimeras can easily be modified to resemble great cats other than lions, or horned beasts other than goats, especially if they're placed in an environment consonant with their specific features. For instance, a mountain- or arctic-dwelling chimera with a white dragon head could also have the head of a mountain goat, bison, or musk ox and the head of a cougar or snow leopard, while one dwelling in a marshy jungle with a black dragon's head could have the features of a tiger, jaguar, or black panther and of a shaggy black ram or goat. Such variants would most likely have bonuses on Stealth checks while in their local environs, as well as natural attacks befitting the size and shape of their bestial parts. Other variants of chimeras include ones with less or more heads, or heads located on different parts of the body (see the orthrus description in the sidebar or the legendary chimera on page 9).



SAMPLE CHIMERA

This abomination has the head and foreparts of a great lion, an additional head and hindquarters of a ram, and a red dragon's head sprouting from its tail.

LEGENDARY CHIMERA

CR 13
XP 25,600

CE Huge magical beast

Init +4; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +20

Aura frightful presence (60 ft., DC 18)

DEFENSE
AC 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (+18 natural, –2 size)

hp 178 (17d10+85)

Fort +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8

DR 10/cold iron and magic; **Immune** bleed, death effects, disease, fire, poison; **SR** 24

OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +23 (2d8+8/19–20 plus grab), bite +23 (2d6+8 plus burn), 2 claws +23 (1d8+8), gore +23 (2d6+8)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (60-ft. cone, 13d8 fire damage, Reflex DC 23 for half, usable every 1d4 rounds), burn (2d8, DC 23), swallow whole (2d6 bludgeoning plus 8d8 fire damage, AC 19, 17 hp)

STATISTICS
Str 27, **Dex** 10, **Con** 21, **Int** 5, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +27 (+31 grapple); **CMD** 37

Feats Cleave, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Vital Strike

Skills Perception +20, Stealth +2 (+6 in scrubland or brush); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth in scrubland or brush

Languages Draconic

Legendary chimeras are among the eldest of their race, the long-lived descendents of the initial attempts by Lamashtu to create what eventually became the common chimera. Relatively few legendary chimeras remain on Golarion, many having

been killed over the ages either by brave heroes or during their own perilous endeavors. Those legendary chimeras still left are shunned and feared by their lesser kin, the common chimeras, and so the great beings reside only in the deepest expanses of wilderness, where they nurse their grudges and unleash terrible rampages upon nearby settlements and meddlesome intruders who awaken them from their dark dreams of what could have been.

Legendary chimeras rarely breed, and when they do their offspring inevitably echo their unfinished forms—chimeras with the heads of other beasts, or lacking wings or other limbs, the mark of both their pride and their shame. Such creatures can remain in good health for well over a millennium, and thus, while they are only a little smarter than their common brethren, these illustrious beasts can live to see whole civilizations rise and fall, and possess an innate melancholy and dire wisdom few humanoids can fathom. And indeed, even if humanoids could, the legendary chimeras rarely humor beings they regard as inferior to themselves.


 ART BY
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COATL

HEAR US, FEATHERED LORD. HEAR OUR PRAYERS AND ACCEPT OUR GRATEFUL TRIBUTE. THE KNOWLEDGE YOU HAVE GIVEN US AND SECRETS YOU HAVE SHARED HAVE BORNE US INTO THE LIGHT OF WISDOM AS SURELY AS YOUR RAINBOW-FEATHERED WINGS. LONG DID WE LIVE IN FEAR UNTIL YOU SHOWED US THE WAYS OF PEACE AND LEARNING. MAY THE GODS SEE US AND KNOW THAT YOUR WORK WAS GOOD, AND THAT WE PAY YOU TRIBUTE—WITH THE BOUNTY OF THE JUNGLE, AND WITH OUR BLOOD AND SWEAT IN BATTLE AGAINST THE FALLEN ONES. HEAR US, FEATHERED LORD, AND KNOW THAT WE ARE YOUR PEOPLE.

—PRAYER OF THE UTALA TRIBE

Couatls are among the most beautiful of creatures—great serpents covered in iridescent blue and green feathers, sporting vast, rainbow-colored wings and penetrating, intelligent eyes. Yet it is not the serpents' beauty that makes them magnificent. Rather, the feathered serpents are most valued for their keen intellect, their close connection to the gods, and their fierce defense of all that is good and righteous.

Because of couatls' rarity and their tendency to travel while invisible, only a fortunate few ever see a couatl in all its feathered glory. Fewer still are actually offered a chance to speak or interact with one of the great serpents, though those who do often speak of the experience as transformative. Creatures of great good who act either independently or as messengers of the gods, bringing knowledge and wisdom to those in need or struggling against extraplanar evil, couatls are a powerful but benevolent race whose true motivations are cloaked in mystery.

The Plumed Ones—one of the many names given to them by their friends and disciples—take the most interest in guiding young or developing civilizations, for these societies are still malleable enough that their roots may be molded into a firm and just foundation for the generations to come, while older civilizations are often too large, corrupt, or set in their ways for a single voice (even the voice of a divine servitor) to make an impact. It is not surprising, then, that most tales of couatls and their works come from such cultures—jungle dwellers building their first city, nomadic tribes, burgeoning agrarian kingdoms, and the like. These cultures invariably see couatls as benevolent bringers of knowledge and guidance, and build temples and shrines in their honor, or portray the feathered ones in colorful frescoes or towering statuary. Some even come to worship the couatls as gods themselves, developing their own mythologies around the flying serpents. Though most couatls are deeply embarrassed by such veneration—especially when acting on behalf of an actual god—their code of ethics is rarely so stiff-necked that they feel compelled to dismiss the myths, instead seeing their deification as simply another tool they can use to steer the worshipers onto the path of justice and light. Peace and cooperation are two of the greatest goods a couatl can promote, and for such committed and upstanding creatures, couatls can sometimes be surprisingly flexible on tactics when it comes to advancing the greater good.

Members of more technologically advanced—or bloated and culturally stagnant—cultures rarely encounter couatls, and those who do are less likely to meet them as free agents searching for good to do in the world, and more likely to meet them in their roles as messengers, heralds, and servants of various good-aligned deities. Despite their impeccable reputation for honor and justice among

those who know such things, the extraplanar serpents' strange appearance and sometimes stern moralizing—as well as the fact that they're often bearers of bad tidings or divine warnings and admonishments—mean that older and more corrupt civilizations are more likely to see the serpents' arrival as a mixed blessing.

Peaceful and soft-spoken, couatls rarely engage in violence against mortals, and then only in self-defense, seeking to disable and redeem their attackers rather than kill them outright. Some legends hold that this is due to couatls' reverence for natural life, and that when dealing with evil outsiders and undead, their pacifism transforms into a methodical and determined pogrom of fearsome effectiveness.

ECOLOGY

Couatls are known to be extremely long-lived—the same couatl may visit a tribe or fledgling nation as it develops over hundreds or even thousands of years. They show no significant effects of aging, though occasionally stories tell of especially large or wise couatls who are older than others of their race. As a result, many people on the Material Plane (especially those who directly venerate the winged serpents) believe couatls to be immortal, created by a fertility goddess in the distant past or immaculately spawned from the energy and soulstuff that make up Heaven's foundations.

The truth is more prosaic. As native outsiders, couatls have a deep connection to the good-aligned planes, yet remain fundamentally denizens of the Material Plane, where they do the majority of their work. Though exceptionally long-lived—to the point where no existing tome or bestiary can say precisely how long the oldest couatl has existed—they still die regularly from crusades against evildoers or in defense of their friends and favored wards. Moreover, couatls must eat, and like the snakes they resemble, they prefer small mammals and birds, though they aren't averse to consuming the remains of a fallen foe if the mood strikes them. Though couatls possess a reverence for all living things, this means only that they strive to make their hunts, whether for unintelligent animals or even their enemies, as swift and painless for their targets as possible, with their poison introducing a pleasant lassitude even as it sucks victims toward paralysis and death. Couatls gladly accept tribute in the form of game animals such as wild pigs and birds—as these are gifts of the natural world—yet they don't like to deprive others of food, and so tend to reject domestic livestock or anything offered during a time of famine, returning it with thanks and urging their supplicants to share these offerings with their entire community.

Couatls are sexless—a quality that more prurient humanoids sometimes hold up as evidence of their clear



COUATLS IN MYTHOLOGY

Couatl is a word in the Nahuatl language spoken by the Aztecs that simply means “serpent.” The great god Quetzalcoatl (feathered serpent) was known throughout ancient Mesoamerica, and was called Kukulcan by the Maya. Strongly associated with agriculture, wind, warfare, and the morning star Venus, Quetzalcoatl was also the patron of the Aztec priesthood, and thus of learning and knowledge. Some tales even claim that Quetzalcoatl created humans from the bones of previous races after a catastrophe destroyed the world. A popular story, now largely discounted by historians, claims that the Aztec emperor Moctezuma at first mistook conqueror Hernán Cortés for Quetzalcoatl, an error that supposedly led to the destruction of the Aztec Empire.

The Aztecs and other cultures that worshiped the Feathered Serpent viewed Quetzalcoatl as having several forms, and in addition to anthropomorphic avatars (such as that of Ehecatl the wind god), he was known for the dragonlike feathered serpent form that fantasy gaming drew from to create the Pathfinder couatl.

superiority over lesser mortals, though the snake people themselves care little about the mating habits of other creatures as long as they’re consensual. Couatls do not mate, and though they may create partnerships that last for hundreds of years, these are arrangements of love and friendship rather than lust. A couatl may be induced to reproduce by a variety of factors, the most common being a suspicion that its own death is approaching (and thus the need for a new couatl to take up its place and responsibilities) or the conviction that a given area or task is too great for it and its companions. Under these circumstances, a couatl spontaneously generates a shining, iridescent egg that disintegrates almost immediately upon touching the air, disgorging a perfectly formed new serpent a few feet long (treat as having the young simple template). This serpent is born with all the powers and intelligence of an adult couatl, as well as a portion of its parent’s memories (most notably those relating to its responsibilities). Some accounts tell of couatls who, upon birthing their children, choose that point to voluntarily disincorporate, vanishing in bursts of golden light and passing their life energy on to the new generation. More often, however, the parent couatl simply throws itself into its dangerous task with the certainty that, should it fall, another will take up its burden. Though couatls can and do perform this birthing several times over the course of their lives—with the young free to pursue their own agendas once the burdens they were born to bear have been handled—it’s rare for one of the feathered serpents to procreate more than once in a given century.

While most couatls have roughly equivalent abilities, some older couatls learn and grow in power over the centuries, gaining new abilities such as the talent for casting magic as sorcerers or the secret of polymorphing at will (sometimes disguising themselves in order to better walk among those they protect or oppose). Older couatls are highly respected by their fellows, and their opinions are almost universally followed, though in most cases these couatls prefer to let others find their own path, and offer their wisdom only if the situation is extremely urgent or it is otherwise important that they do so. Elder couatls are rarely larger than their companions, yet have significantly more Hit Dice and spell-like abilities (including the ability to disguise themselves as other creatures using *polymorph* or *alter self*).

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Couatls are both solitary and nomadic creatures, normally dwelling in hidden places of great natural beauty or spiritual importance, and gathering only to consider matters of extreme importance, such as the death of one of their number. Though they are at home on all planes of good alignment, especially those of a lawful or neutral disposition, their true home is the Material Plane, and most couatls serving the gods in person relish the opportunity to return to the wild chaos of the mortal realm.

As they normally dwell in isolation, couatls have no real organized society. Though they may sometimes band together in the face of particularly difficult challenges, they prefer to seek allies from among the mortal races they serve and protect—doing so spreads couatls’ influence wider and allows the outsiders to help lesser creatures (like humans) take charge of their own destinies, training them up to be bastions of goodness among their own kind.

Couatls appear to have been created with a driving (some would say obsessive) desire to see both law and good triumph, as well as to see knowledge disseminated throughout the universe. One indication of this compulsion is couatls’ perceived duty to educate and guide what they consider to be “primitive” or “undeveloped” cultures. In this effort, couatls seek to show other people the benefits of righteous behavior before other, less benevolent forces can affect matters. Strangely enough, this education tends to be solely of a moral sort—because of their reverence for nature, couatls see no reason to help societies “advance” economically or militarily, and indeed see a shift away from the natural rhythms of agriculture or hunting and gathering as a dangerous downhill slide into the corruption of an idle society.

An unfortunate side effect of couatls’ desire to lift up other races, however, is their patronizing, paternal attitude toward others, which often comes across as arrogant. That this hubris is usually couched in warm and friendly terms

does not lessen its impact—some individuals approached by a couatl reject its offers of assistance out of hand, offended by the feathered one's blatant condescension.

Best known as teachers, advisors, and guides, couatls approach potential beneficiaries carefully, observing from hiding for years or even decades before revealing themselves. Couatls are a proud race, and prefer to appear in their native form, as dramatically and impressively as possible, for in addition to their better qualities, most couatls are also quite vain. The appearance of a creature as magnificent as a couatl, framed by the rising sun or descending from a stormy sky, is enough to get almost anyone's attention, providing the couatl with the time and consideration it needs to offer aid and friendship to its chosen people. Older couatls, however, are usually more socially adept and less obviously proud, and have been known to appear in the guise of the race that they are contacting, especially if they are concerned about frightening or driving off their would-be beneficiaries.

Couatls are exceptionally intelligent, and guide their people patiently, as slowly or quickly as they deem necessary. Most of the time, the secrets they pass on pertain to utilitarian pursuits such as agriculture, animal husbandry, astronomy, architecture, sailing, fishing, and hunting, though most couatls are well read and willing to share far more esoteric knowledge as long as they believe it'll be put to positive use. Couatls also stress harmony and peace, making certain their gifts do not disrupt or damage the environment, or cause undue social upheaval.

Once a group has received a couatl's wisdom and is well on its way toward prosperity and civilization, the couatl usually departs, often with a promise to return one day should its people need assistance. In these cases, a couatl will sometimes leave a few of its feathers behind, magical talismans that may recall the couatl if needed. These feathers are also sometimes shared with the couatl's friends and allies in other worlds as well.

Though couatls often act as servitors for specific gods, they are strangely not particularly religious. Instead of worship—which, as many of them have seen firsthand, can be misdirected—they tend to view their patrons as valued (if distant) friends, and their service as a working relationship. Despite their rather rigid lawful alignment, couatls sometimes even serve chaotic good gods, though they may question the wisdom of their assigned duties—such things are, after all, the responsibility of a friend, and a couatl's arrogance can easily extend to doubting the gods themselves.

As messengers, couatls may bring news, bits of wisdom, prophecies, or even warnings to evil rulers, sternly cautioning them against particularly destructive courses of action. In extreme cases, couatls may even be dispatched to aid the forces of good in combat, for the presence of a feathered one on the field of battle provides hope and encouragement to even the most dispirited soldier.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

In most cases, couatls work best as creatures kept in the background, occasional patrons for the players or allies against particularly powerful foes. Good-aligned adventurers rarely find themselves in outright conflict with a couatl, though just because both the couatl and the PCs are essentially good doesn't mean they necessarily see eye to eye. A couatl, for instance, might look down on chaotic PCs' plans (or lack thereof), or it may see urban PCs' agendas as unintentionally harmful and corrupting toward the innocents it protects. If PCs in a campaign are outright evil, cruel, or reckless, of course, the feathered servant may take a more active role against them, recruiting defenders or facing them itself.

In low-level games, couatls are best used as either quest objects—with the PCs seeking out rumors of the feathered serpents in an effort to utilize their esoteric knowledge and wisdom—or mentors, providing the PCs with support, advice, and healing while suggesting potential missions that can aid the couatl in its conflict with evil forces.

At higher levels, couatls can be treated more as the PCs' equals—allies or companions sent by the gods to aid a party with particularly difficult or important endeavors. When not actively advising a culture, couatls normally dwell in great forests, on islands in the center of vast lakes, or in other beautiful and natural places of isolation, and this remains true even on other planes. High-level adventurers may encounter them during planar travel, where the feathered ones may provide advice and assistance or act as guardians and emissaries for the true masters of the plane.

It's exceedingly rare to encounter more than a single couatl at a time, though couatls sometimes travel with companions of various races, sworn companions who aid them in their missions. The presence of more than one couatl in a given area is a sure sign that a catastrophe is looming, or that the forces of evil are particularly strong and dangerous there.

TREASURE

Couatls have no use for treasure, and in fact are quick to point out material wealth as one of the surest roads to



corruption and damnation. At the same time, they're not above utilizing magical items to further their cause, and will sometimes keep items of tribute with the intention of eventually returning them, redistributing such wealth as rewards to allies or stockpiling the treasures in anticipation of a coming crisis.

Couatls' best-known treasure, however, is one that they produce themselves. Ordinary shed couatl feathers are exceptionally beautiful and can be sold for up to 100 gp, but a freely gifted couatl feather can be easily be worth 10 times that or more. A gifted feather is imbued with magical energy that ties it to the couatl, and if used as an additional material component for the *planar ally* spell, this feather allows the spellcaster to conjure the specific couatl without providing the typical payment required by such spells. (Of course, this presumes that the couatl approves of the requested service, and finds the bearer worthy of its aid.) These feathers are given only to valuable or loyal allies, or to innocents who may need the couatl's aid in the future. Each of these feathers can be used only once, and is destroyed in the process.

COUATLS ON GOLARION

Couatls have been active on Golarion for millennia, yet most societies know little more than vague myths about them. Some legends hold that couatls brought the secrets of agriculture to the lost empire of Azlant, and that the ascended mortal Aroden was accompanied by one or more couatl servants when he helped reclaim civilization after Azlant's fall. The elves in particular speak of how the feathered serpents helped to teach primitive human bands how to survive and prosper (an idea which, to some elves, calls couatls' wisdom into question).

Today, couatls are rarely seen in Avistan, as the nations' densely settled (and all too often corrupt or exploitative) population leaves few places where the couatls feel truly at home. The exception to this is in frontier regions like Varisia, where couatls have managed to find vast and untouched plots of wilderness, and have cultivated a long-standing positive relationship with the native Varisians. This association began back in the dark times following the fall of Thassilon, when the newly freed Varisians were lost and struggling to make their way in a harsh and unforgiving world, and the couatls came to their aid. Since that time, the Varisians have quietly worked with or told legends of the winged serpents, even going so far as to include them as a card in the harrow decks they use to predict the future.

Garund has a far richer tradition regarding the winged serpents. Thanks to its huge expanses of jungle, particularly in the Mwangi Expanse, the southern continent is a haven for the reptilian outsiders. Here as well, they also find large numbers of people living relatively close to a state of nature, with hundreds or thousands of families and tribes living in the Mwangi Jungle alone, each the perfect size for a couatl to

guide and nurture. Even more attractive, in its way, is the city of Usaro and the horrible demonic minions of the demon lord Angazhan—with the presence of the monstrous ape-men a constant thorn in the side of all that is good, couatls never lack for an obvious enemy to work against.

A prime example of couatl interactions in the Mwangi Expanse is the Utala tribe of the Ocota River. Here, village shamans and storytellers still tell the legend of an old man who visited their chieftain, bringing with him the secrets of agriculture, metalworking, and song and dance. When the tribe was threatened by an evil necromancer known as Malihi Mzogi, the Corpse King, the old man led the tribe's warriors against the necromancer's forces and was slain. Miraculously, the old man's fallen body transformed into a mighty winged and feathered serpent, who helped the Utala drive off the Corpse-King's zombie army. Rather than slay the Corpse King, the couatl, now revealed as Mola Jushujaa, or Lord Sun-Warrior, showed the necromancer the error of his ways, sparing his life in exchange for a promise of service. The man once known as the Corpse King became Jua Mfuasi, or Sun Follower, and began a mission of penance alongside his couatl mentor, spreading wisdom and knowledge across countless worlds, and standing against those who serve evil and threaten the good. The Utala believe that should they ever be threatened once again by such an obviously evil force, both couatl and warrior will return to lead them to victory—perhaps even driving the evil ape-men of Usaro from their hideous capital.

Couatls have appeared and carried out their sacred missions all across Golarion, not just in the Inner Sea region, and rumors hold that the feathered snakes are most numerous in the distant land of Arcadia, where they tend to take a more active role in guiding their chosen societies.

SAMPLE COUATL

This brilliantly colored couatl radiates a palpable air of peace and wisdom.

LORD SUN-WARRIOR		CR 15
XP 51,200		
Unique couatl		
LG Large outsider (native)		
Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., <i>detect chaos/evil/good/law</i> ;		
Perception +32		
DEFENSE		
AC 28, touch 13, flat-footed 24 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +15 natural, -1 size)		
hp 230 (20d10+120)		
Fort +14, Ref +17, Will +19		
Immune mind-affecting effects		
OFFENSE		
Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)		
Melee bite +26 (2d6+10 plus grab and poison)		

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks

constrict
(2d6+10)

Spell-Like Abilities

(CL 9th;
concentration +15)
Constant—*detect chaos*,
detect evil, *detect good*,
detect law

At will—*alter self*, *detect thoughts* (DC 18),
ethereal jaunt (CL 18th), *invisibility*, *plane shift* (DC 23)

1/year—*wish* (CL 20th)

Sorcerer Spells Known (caster level 12th; concentration +18)

6th (4/day)—*chain lightning* (DC 22)

5th (6/day)—*breath of life*, *flame strike* (DC 21)

4th (7/day)—*charm monster* (DC 20), *freedom of movement*,
lesser geas

3rd (7/day)—*gaseous form*, *hold person*, *magic circle against evil*,
summon monster III

2nd (8/day)—*cure moderate wounds*, *eagle's splendor*,
glitterdust (DC 18), *scorching ray*, *silence* (DC 18)

1st (8/day)—*endure elements*, *mage armor*, *obscuring mist*,
protection from chaos, *true strike*

o (at will)—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*,
light, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *stabilize*

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 17, **Con** 22, **Int** 19, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +28 (+32 grapple); **CMD** 42 (can't be tripped)

Feats Alertness, Diehard, Dodge, Empower Spell, Eschew

Materials^B, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative,
Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Acrobatics +26 (+22 when jumping), Bluff +19, Diplomacy
+29, Fly +24, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (planes) +17,
Knowledge (religion) +17, Perception +32, Sense Motive +32,
Spellcraft +27, Survival +25, Use Magic Device +26

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Polyglot;
telepathy 100 ft.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Injury—bite; *save* Fortitude DC 22; *frequency* 1/
minute for 10 minutes; *effect* 1d4 Str; *cure* 2 consecutive
saves. The DC is Constitution-based.

Spells Sun-Warrior casts spells as a 12th-level sorcerer, and
can cast spells from the cleric list as well as from those
normally available to a sorcerer. Cleric spells are considered
arcane spells for couatls, meaning Sun-Warrior does not
need a divine focus to cast them.

Best known as the ancient guardian of the Utala tribe in the Mwangi Expanse, Mola Jushujaa (whose name means "Lord Sun-Warrior") has appeared in many different lands and guises. He is a couatl of great age, and his pronouncements



are well respected among the feathered serpents. Because of his venerable status, Jushujaa has a number of powers that lesser couatls do not possess, including the ability to change his appearance, create terrifying fire and lightning storms in combat, and even grant *wishes* (though only ever in service to the greatest possible good). He often takes the guise of an extremely old or young human, inoffensive and peaceful, visiting powerful rulers, priests, and nobles to either offer guidance or dissuade them from the path of evil.

Lord Sun-Warrior acts independently of any deity, though he maintains positive relations with all of the good-aligned ones. His agenda is complex, but involves fostering the development of peaceful cultures and nations throughout many different worlds, and the discouragement or outright destruction of evil ones. In this he frequently recruits adventurers and other agents, dispatching them on quests that may not immediately make sense, and providing them with guidance and assistance as he is able. He is aided in his efforts by his champion, **Jua Mfuasi** (LG male human paladin of Iomedae 10), who was once a necromancer known as the Corpse-King until he was killed and returned to life by Sun-Warrior, after which he renounced his evil ways and abandoned arcane magic to become a paladin.



GRIFFON

“JUST WHEN WE HAD STARTED TO RELAX, THINKING OURSELVES HOME FREE, THEY HIT US. THEY SWOOPED IN FROM ALL SIDES, SLASHING AT US WITH THEIR RAZOR-SHARP TALONS AND SNAPPING WITH THEIR SAVAGE BEAKS. BORIM DIDN’T HAVE TIME TO REALIZE WHAT HAD HIT HIM BEFORE ONE OF THE BEASTS CRUSHED HIM AND HIS HORSE TO THE GROUND. LOREL SAW WHAT WAS GOING ON, BUT DIDN’T HAVE TIME TO REACT—THE GRIFFON TORE HER FROM HER SADDLE BEFORE SHE COULD DRAW HER SWORD. THOSE OF US WHO SURVIVED HAD TO DROP THE LOOT AND RUN, BARELY ESCAPING, WHILE OUR COMRADES WERE RIPPED APART. WE NEVER SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THOSE EGGS.”

—MERINDRA THAVESSEN, TALDAN PATHFINDER

Scholars and adventurers alike have long considered the griffon a creature that combines grace with power, one that possesses both the power of the lion and the captivating majesty of the eagle. Those who wield a banner bearing the likeness of a griffon admire the beast for its pride, stubbornness, and regality, and usually claim themselves to be harbingers of good.

In actuality, while intelligent, griffons are far less concerned with such vague abstractions as honor, and are more akin to the base animals they resemble in terms of motivations. Their love of horsemeat and their territorial natures often put the creatures at odds with civilized races, though for the most part griffons keep to themselves. Those who do find themselves in contact with humanoids may decide to join ones whose goals coincide with their own, casting themselves as mounts for particularly compatible riders or as protectors of treasure for those who bribe them with gifts. New riders are often surprised at how reluctantly their mounts respond to both spoken and unspoken commands, and it quickly becomes apparent to the uninformed that griffons are no mere beasts, but rather highly protective predators with intricate systems for interacting with others.

While unable to speak, griffons that grow up in the vicinity of humanoids quickly learn the local tongue, understanding even complex arguments and discussions, though the creatures themselves can only communicate via gestures, grunts, and cries. Griffons' intelligence becomes even more apparent in the heat of battle as they execute complex maneuvers and basic tactics in order to gain the advantage against their enemies. Similarly, griffons possess a keen awareness of the more discreet plots taking place around them, and remain a figure representative of both silent strength and powerful insight.

ECOLOGY

Young griffons reach maturity after 4 to 5 years, at which point males leave their homelands and seek out mates. A male griffon may travel as far as several hundred miles before encountering a potential female partner, but when he does find one, he is steadfast in his determination to win her favor. The courting ritual for griffons differs depending on region, but most such courtships take anywhere from 6 months to 6 years to complete, during which time the male familiarizes himself with the land, builds a suitable nest, and discovers herds of animals to prey upon, favoring horses above all other creatures. The male brings gifts of raw meats and rare fruits to his object of desire, and the gift of horsemeat is seen as an outstanding display of skill and admiration. A griffon suitor who slays a particularly large or powerful steed and presents it to his potential mate frequently gains her

favor more quickly, and such a show of mettle is often used to settle disputes between rival suitors.

When a female griffon accepts a male's courtship, she engages in an elaborate mating ritual with her suitor, leading the dance as the two perform various cartwheels, swoops, and somersaulting descents, at some point locking talons and plunging toward the earth at high speeds, only to release each other just before they would hit the ground. Should the male fail this final test and fumble one of the complex maneuvers involved in the dance, his chances of mating with the female are effectively nullified, and the female rejects the suitor. However, should the dance succeed, the griffons are thereafter considered united. Griffons mate for life, and should one of a mated pair die at any point, the survivor lives out the remainder of its days alone. Mated griffons who are separated for extended periods of time—either by natural happenstance or forced capture—ardently look for one another, often forgoing food and safety for days in order to find their missing mates.

Female griffons tend to be larger and heavier than males; the additional weight aids brooding individuals in keeping their eggs warm, a task that can be difficult during winter months in the hilly regions griffons inhabit. A pair of griffons typically produces one to four eggs per year. During the incubation period, the female griffon fervently watches over the nest and the male hunts for food, the latter giving much of his own share of the prey to his mate so she can keep warm while roosting. When an egg hatches, a young griffon the size of a small dog emerges; this youth requires large amounts of food and attention in order to develop. While raising a nest of young griffons, the mother becomes even more aggressive toward possible intruders, and the father must take down larger and more dangerous prey in order to feed his family. Young griffons typically learn how to fly 6 to 9 months after hatching, at which point they become dangerous creatures capable of taking care of themselves, often guarding their younger siblings from threats. Griffon families are in a constant state of flux; new hatchlings emerge every year, and matured sons and daughters continually leave to find their own mates. Griffons can live for up to 50 years, though most individuals in the wild are lucky to live past 20.

Griffons' love of horsemeat is a well-known trait of the mythical creatures, and one that causes much distress to ranchers who find their herds straying too close to griffon hunting grounds. Hunting horses often leads griffons into fatal trouble with particularly protective herders who have the means to fend off such huge creatures, but horsemeat can also be used to bribe and train griffons. Good-natured breeders and ill-intentioned thieves alike find reason to tempt griffons with such meat,

GRIFFONS IN MYTHOLOGY

The griffon (also spelled griffin or gryphon) is a mythological creature that has roots in Greek and Middle Eastern mythologies, though it also played a prominent role in European heraldry throughout the Middle Ages. The griffon was considered the king of all creatures because of its combination of the king of beasts—the lion—and the king of birds, the eagle. Many cultures regarded griffons as powerful guardians of treasure and other priceless possessions. Ancient Persians thought of the noble beasts as protectors from evil, witchcraft, and secret slander, while yet others thought of griffons as symbols of divine power.

Regardless of these cultures' differing interpretations of the griffon myth, nearly all saw the creatures as signifiers of strength, wisdom, and power, and thus griffons were commonly featured on coats of arms and in heraldry even up until the Renaissance. Though the griffon is a well-known mythological creature, few ancient stories mention heroes encountering any specific griffons, a fact that in and of itself aptly captures the elusive nature of such legendary beings.

as the beasts are voracious in their appetites, and can consume as much as half their weight in a single day. That hippogriffs resemble flying horses with beaks is a point of contention griffons hardly care to acknowledge, regarding the beasts as mere flying horses for the purposes of determining prey.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Griffons are highly territorial, and once a male and female have established a nest and family, they passionately drive any other creatures away from their territory. In purely territorial disputes between two groups of griffons, most acts of aggression rarely move past threat displays, as griffons share an innate understanding that land is only worth so much, and rarely is it worth the price of blood. However, should a griffon continue to harass a rival or turn its threats toward a nest, youths, or a brooding female, confrontations quickly become deadly.

Since griffons make their homes in hilly regions with moderate climates, they come into contact with humanoids and other civilized creatures often, and are used to such creatures in their lands. This does not mean griffons take kindly to these races, of course, as they know that such intelligent creatures are often after their eggs or young. Because of this, griffons have a reputation for being violent toward humanoids, since males and females alike attack any who come within a mile or so

of their nests. While they don't actively hunt humans as sources of food, a griffon that slays a human sees the body as a fresh kill nonetheless, and will bring the corpse to its nest to feed its family.

Griffons prefer to make their homes in isolated mountainous areas with plenty of cliffs, bluffs, and crags to confuse intruders and protect their homes. Ideally, griffons situate their nests on tall peaks so humanoids and creatures that cannot fly must climb unforgiving pinnacles in order to reach them. These locations are easy to defend, as a griffon can spot intruders while they're still at a distance, and the defensive griffon then mercilessly harries her foes throughout their approach to the nest, whether that approach is a climb or an ascent through magical means. Griffons first meet intruders by swooping in to attack, resorting to fighting on the ground if doing so would allow them to maneuver opponents to cliff edges or other perilous positions.

An unmated griffon is much less aggressive toward humanoids than one that has established a nest and family. Such an individual is also typically more receptive to becoming a mount, and will dedicate itself to a particular rider if that creature proves worthy. Griffons are always proud, and so demand shows of strength and superiority before submitting themselves to being saddled. Those who fail to impress a griffon are rebuffed and ignored, but should a potential rider prove his worth to a griffon, the creature will bow its head in a show of submission, allowing the humanoid to mount it. A griffon that has partnered with a particular rider long enough often regards the humanoid as its charge and treats her much like it would a frail mate, fervently protecting her in battle. Griffons do not regard riders as their masters, instead viewing them as partners with similar goals. When a griffon's rider dies, the creature does not take any other rider for the rest of its lifetime, and most such individuals flee back to the wilderness to spend the rest of their lives alone.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Griffons are sometimes incorporated into campaigns as potential allies to the PCs, and can aid them as mounts (either temporarily or permanently, depending on the particular griffon's agenda) or fight alongside them in combat. Of course, as all griffons possess unique motivations, they are equally suitable enemies for PCs to face off against, either as the beasts they are or as mounts for powerful NPCs. The threat of a villain's mount is heightened exponentially when the creature in question is as intelligent and loyal as a griffon. While an ordinary mount would flee upon its rider's death, a creature as stalwartly dedicated to its rider as a griffon is only made more dangerous when its partner is slain,

as it will immediately seek bloody vengeance for its loss. Griffons are also commonly used by wealthy individuals as guardians for their treasure hordes, which can make for interesting encounters with griffons alongside other vault guards. Since much of the challenge in fighting a griffon relies on the fact that the creature can fly, placing one as an enemy in different terrains can dramatically alter the difficulty of the combat. While a griffon encountered in a dungeon might be easier to corner or sneak past, griffons in their natural environments can pose a serious threat—especially if encountered as a group—as they drive PCs onto precarious terrain alongside steep precipices.

PCs might possess any number of reasons to visit a griffon's nest, which almost always results in an encounter with such a creature. As mated griffons are highly aggressive toward trespassers who get too near their nests, many innocents have met with untimely ends at the talons of these beasts, and local townsfolk or farmers may recruit the PCs to solve the problem once and for all. Alternatively, a messenger or courier carrying a valuable item or military orders might be slain and dragged back to a griffon's nest for food. Griffon eggs are also highly sought after, and PCs with more flexible ethics may find themselves in the business of snatching such items. On the flip side, PCs who apprehend an egg thief would gain a grateful avian ally should they return the egg to its proper nest.

TREASURE

Armor, weapons, and magical items can often be found in griffon nests among scattered bones and other humanoid remnants, as griffons typically kill any trespassers and haul their bodies back home to eat, casting aside scraps of clothing and metallic items in their ravenous feasts. Small, indigestible items such as rings and amulets make their way to dung piles near the nest, and some male griffons courting a female will decorate their nests with various shiny baubles found this way. In areas where there is a higher amount of humanoid traffic, particularly intelligent griffons have been known to leave equipment from past intruders on the borders of their territories as warnings to others who would seek to trespass on their lands. Those who do not take the hint quickly find themselves assailed by griffons seeking to protect their domains, but bold

treasure hunters know that if a griffon leaves treasure, there is almost always more near its lair.

Of course, a griffon's most valuable treasures are its eggs. Unborn griffons are highly sought-after commodities, as many see the benefit of having a flying griffon as a mount. Griffon youths are in even greater demand, and though difficult to transport, can fetch prices twice as high. Undamaged eggs sell for up to 3,500 gp apiece, though it is imperative that the egg dealer keeps the eggs warm for the entire incubation period (about 5 weeks). The largest markets for griffon eggs are usually among cultures in lands where griffons' flight capabilities would be particularly beneficial, such as in mountainous regions, sandy deserts, or dry plains. The benefit of having one's own griffon raised from an egg is often offset by the difficulty of reaching an egg in the first place, as well as fending off the parents long enough to escape. Griffon parents pursue thieves with fervent ferocity, and only give up on a chase after several days of searching for the bandits, viciously attacking any creatures that resemble them in the slightest. It should also be noted that, as valuable as griffon mounts are, their intelligence makes buying or selling eggs the equivalent of participating in child slavery in many deities' eyes.

The rulers of small kingdoms and other wealthy individuals sometimes seek to obtain griffons to protect their hordes of treasure, so renowned are the creatures for their steadfast protection of their eggs. Because of this, griffons in more civilized areas are often used as guards.

VARIANTS

The most common griffon possesses the hindquarters of a lion and the head, forelegs, and wings of an eagle. Variants can be made by combining other felines and avian creatures, and an individual's relative strength often coincides with the power and size of its disparate parts. The sand-colored griffons of the deserts tend to resemble mountain lions mixed with chicken hawks, and those who dwell in rainforests have qualities similar to panthers and colorful macaws. Such qualities are largely based on a griffon's heredity, and while such mishmashes as raven-headed white tigers have



been known to exist, these rare cross-breeds are often shunned by both parents and left to fend for themselves, ensuring that relatively few of such anomalies exist throughout the world.

While most griffons possess wings, there exists a lesser-known variety of the creature that lacks the power of flight, known as the alce. Alce griffons often dwell in the same regions as their winged kin, but choose to form families of their own kind instead of intermingling.

Alce Griffon (+0 CR): A griffon egg that is brooded by its father instead of its mother results in an alce griffon. An alce griffon is similar to a normal griffon save that it has no wings and therefore must hone its speed on land in order to survive. Alce griffons are looked down upon by most other griffons, including those in their own nests, and so resent many of their own kind. An alce griffon loses its fly speed and gains a land speed of 40 feet. Its talons deal an amount of damage equal to 1d8 plus 1-1/2 times the alce griffon's Strength bonus.

GRIFFONS ON GOLARION

While griffons can be found throughout the entire Inner Sea region, they are far more common in the hilly areas dividing nations, including the Storval Plateau in Varisia, the Shattered Range in the eastern Mwangi Expanse, and the Aspodell Mountains in Andoran and Cheliox. Griffons in southern Avistan tend to have brown fur and tawny and white feathers, while griffons in other parts of the world can possess a wide variety of colorations. In the desert regions of northern Garund, they often have black fur and plumage, while in the depths of the Mwangi Jungle there are said to exist striped griffons with black and gold markings, as well as even stronger individuals with black and white markings.

In the western Bandu Hills of Sargava resides an alce griffon of local Bekyar legend, a ruthless beast that the natives call Plankeye, so named for the wooden orb that rests in one of his eye sockets. A thick scar running along the beast's face hints at the cause of this disfigurement, but who fashioned the item for the alce is a mystery. While wingless, Plankeye is widely feared for his massive bite and seeming ability to perceive enemies' actions before they are made. The local Bekyars claim that someone who could take down Plankeye would indeed be a strong warrior, but someone who could tame the beast as a mount would be stronger still.

A proud female griffon with feathers the color of beaten gold, Paishnia of the Shining Mountains can often be seen basking in the sun on promontories overlooking the Asp and the River Sphinx. Many locals regard the congenial griffon as a kind and patient guardian of the hills in which she resides, though skeptics believe she is simply waiting in a prominent spot for a mate to find

her and propose. Nevertheless, Paishnia has been known to attack those who trespass too deeply into the Shining Mountains in search of gold or other riches, though it is thought that she can be temporarily distracted with offerings of horsemeat. Exactly what the griffon is protecting remains a mystery, but adventurers speculate that the treasure must be of great value to her.

On the outskirts of the Barrowood in Cheliox, near the settlement of Dekarium, a druid rider and his griffon mount patrol the land in search of devil-worshippers who hope to make sacrifices to their dark lords within the forest. Though the rider is feared by locals for his stalwart morals and aggressive persecution of evil, the steed on which he rides is also renowned, not only for her silver fur and gray wings, but for her complete trust in her rider and the resolute manner in which she protects him from danger. For these reasons the griffon is known as Ironwing Kazi by those who know to fear her; her talons are as sharp as the most masterfully forged sword, and she can often be found without her rider as well, seeking out evildoers on her own and slaying them with savage might.

SAMPLE GRIFFON

This red-eyed griffon has black fur and a set of wicked ebony wings springing from its back. Its front half resembles that of a great raven, while its hindquarters resemble those of a lean panther.

KARADOON	CR 6
XP 2,400	
Male half-fiend griffon	
NE Large outsider (native)	
Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +17	
DEFENSE	
AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+4 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)	
hp 47 (5d10+20)	
Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +5	
DR 5/magic; Immune poison; Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; SR 17	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)	
Melee bite +10 (1d6+5), 2 talons +9 (1d6+5)	
Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.	
Special Attacks pounce, rake (2 claws, 1d4+7), smite good 1/day	
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +5)	
3/day—darkness	
1/day—desecrate, unholy blight (DC 14)	
STATISTICS	
Str 20, Dex 19, Con 18, Int 9, Wis 15, Cha 10	
Base Atk +5; CMB +11; CMD 25	
Feats Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (bite)	
Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +5, Fly +14, Perception +17, Stealth +8;	
Racial Modifiers +4 Acrobatics, +4 Perception	
Languages Common (cannot speak)	

The malevolent beast known as Karadoon stalks the northern highlands of the Five Kings Mountains, preying on caravans traveling to and from the dwarven city of Tar-Kazmukh. While superstitious locals regard Karadoon as a messenger from some evil, vengeful god, most dwarves recognize the being as a minion of the infamous nascent demon lord Treerazer, which escaped from his master's prison in Tanglebriar to the north. The dwarves of Tar-Kazmukh lambaste the elves of Kyonin for their failure to keep the beast within its prison, for with his journey to the Five Kings Mountains, Karadoon has developed a keen taste for dwarven flesh, causing many of the Blue Warders and other stout inhabitants of the dwarven city to fear straying too far from the settlement's protective walls. Even horseflesh and hippogriff meat do not tempt the savage griffon, whose demonic taint has turned him wicked, powerful, and hungry.

Every time some brave dwarven warrior decides to lead a mission to kill the foul beast, the party's equipment—along with the members' bones, completely stripped of meat—is returned to the entrance of Tar-Kazmukh. If there is one thing Karadoon enjoys more than the taste of dwarven meat, it is spreading fear of his name among those who know it, and much of his harassment of the local folks takes the form of taunting caravans repeatedly before actually attacking. Oftentimes he will circle a band of caravans for miles before swooping down to attack, simply to magnify his targets' fear before landing amid them, and he always picks

off the weakest individuals in a group first to further lower morale.

However, there is one temptation that can lure Karadoon away from attacking even dwarves—the opportunity to attack his own kindred. For whatever reason, the ebon beast abandons all other prey if he spots even the shadow of a griffon, mauling the creature until its blood runs thick between his claws, at which point he devours what meat remains. Locals are not sure what drives the tainted griffon to feast upon his relations in this way, but they speculate such meals serve to remind the beast of what he once was before his corruption. Particularly ignoble caravan leaders around Tar-Kazmukh have begun to bring along captive griffons and release them to distract Karadoon should he assail the wagons, thereby driving up the price of griffon eggs in the black markets around the dwarven city exponentially. The robbed griffons in the surrounding lands have noticed where their eggs are going, and some have even led their own assaults against such dastardly individuals, seeking to free their doomed kin before the sinister Karadoon slays another of their kind.





HARPY

“WE WERE OUT ON A PATROL FOR THE COUNCIL—NOW I KNOW WHY THEY BOTHERED HIRING OUT INSTEAD OF USING THEIR OWN SOLDIERS. THAT AWFUL SMELL PERMEATED EVERYTHING. IF I’D BEEN PAYING ANY ATTENTION AT ALL, THAT WOULD HAVE TIPPED ME OFF THAT THERE WERE HARPIES ABOUT. I WASN’T PAYING ATTENTION, THOUGH, AND BY THE TIME THE SINGING STARTED IT WAS TOO LATE. NEXT THING I KNOW I’M ON MY BACK, GETTING HEALED AND SCOLDED BY OUR CLERIC. WE LOST THREE GOOD PEOPLE THAT DAY—THEY FOLLOWED THOSE HARPIES RIGHT OFF THE DAMN CLIFF.”

—MARCELLUS CARANIAN,
LOST COAST FREE MERCENARY COMPANY

Harpies are cunning and vile creatures, an amalgam of feral human woman and bird. They have wings and claws, and often have feathers and down across their bodies, but are otherwise humanoid. The plumage of harpies differs by environment and tends to match local bird-life—typical phenotypes include birds of prey and scavenger birds such as vultures, but variety abounds. A harpy's face is similar enough to a human's at a passing glance, but close inspection shows a carnivore's teeth and the dead eyes of a remorseless predator. Harpies wear their evil and cruelty on their sleeves, taking delight in the pain and suffering of others and generally making no effort to hide their enjoyment. Even a harpy with reason to be friendly will flaunt her wickedness and make it clear that she's keeping score for later. Conversely, a harpy attempting to seem caring and virtuous is an unnerving sight.

In their natural state, harpies care nothing for hygiene—between the odors of the gory remains of their victims and of their soiled, guano-covered aeries, harpies can usually be smelled before they are seen, at least in close environments. The rare harpies who live in urban environments can be exceptions to this rule, and knowing both their species' reputation and natural tendencies, are often obsessively fastidious about their appearances. Harpies are so paired with stench and offal in the public imagination, however, that tales of urban harpies are often dismissed out of hand, to the benefit of those villains capable of recruiting and maintaining urban harpy servants.

Harpies have an innate talent for understanding the minds of others, and in addition to their captivation abilities make excellent torturers and spies. While they are sometimes used for these purposes by more powerful evil creatures, most harpies are on their own, living in small tribes and family groups and preying on the outskirts of civilization. They will eat almost any creature, but prefer to prey on sentient ones, so they generally haunt trade routes and other such sources of fresh victims.

In parts of the world where they are common, harpies are well recognized for the threat they present to people and property. Children are taught never to stray too far from home or linger anywhere with a smell of refuse or rot, and filth-haunting harpies are used as fodder for terrifying bedtime stories that can make going to the latrine after dark a nightmare. (Other parental fairy tales include tales of filthy children being mistaken for harpy young and carried off to join the tribe—thus explaining the need for said children to bathe regularly.)

ECOLOGY

Harpies can live almost anywhere, though they don't do well in extremely cold environments. They especially like marshlands and mountainous regions where they can lure powerful prey into bogs or over cliffs. Harpies

prefer sentient creatures for their nourishment. Some naturalists believe that harpies' captivating song relies at some level on an advanced sense of empathy—an ability to sense and share the feelings of others, thus playing to their mood and desires. If this is true, then at some point in their evolution the harpies' empathic abilities became twisted, with the irony being that today harpies enjoy the complex “taste” of a sentient creature's fear and pain more than the bland panic of an unintelligent animal. A harpy's favorite meal is human or elf, but hungry harpies welcome almost all humanoids. While goblin meat doesn't taste particularly good to a harpy, the manic fear of harpies that goblins possess is irresistible to most of the feathered predators, and a harpy will almost always go out of her way to eat a goblin, first taking the time to terrorize it and enjoy its mad scramblings.

Harpies are generally on the lithe end of the humanoid spectrum—even with hollow bones and large wings to keep them aloft, harpies must remain light, and are rarely larger than an average human woman. Harpies can tuck their wings fairly snugly at need, and in bad light or elaborate costumes may even pass as human women—at least until their prey is lured close enough to smell their stench and note their feral faces and clawed limbs. Harpies have life spans similar to those of humans, usually dying of old age around 60 if given the chance. This chance, however, is rare, as angered harpies are often just as savage toward each other as they are toward other races.

Harpies tend to bear children about once every 2 years over the course of their twenties. Since there are no male harpies, they use humanoid males to reproduce. These men are only barely luckier than other victims, since after frantic and frequently sadistic copulation they are almost always immediately devoured. Harpies tend to look for physical power and aggression in such genetic donors, and warriors tend to be chosen over farmers, artisans, and magic users. An urban harpy will occasionally mate with an impressive human male even if she will not be in a position to kill him afterward, but only if he's so impressive that the advantage of bearing his progeny is greater than the shame of not having devoured her mate. To court such a prize, the harpy can be charming, but never sweet. Men who accede to such dalliances are usually either extreme thrill-seekers, masochistic deviants, or so confident in their own abilities that they see bedding a harpy and walking away as another conquest to add to their list of achievements. Because of their need to mate with humanoids, no harpies stay entirely away from civilized lands, and the presence of harpies in the deep wilderness is sometimes a sign of a hidden aboriginal tribe or isolated village.

Harpy babies are born with the ability to chew and at least partially digest meat, though they are often not strong enough to rip it off a carcass, in which case their mothers

HARPY MUSK

Goblins have an extreme and entirely justified fear of harpies. They are sensitive to signs of harpy presence, and can smell harpies from a long way off. Rangers sometimes use this fact to their advantage—when traveling in goblin-infested areas, they apply specially treated harpy musk to their armor, or use it to guard their camps and caches. Any goblins who get close enough to smell the musk assume there's a harpy in the area and quickly flee. The musk is a combination of old sweat, aged filth, and unique pheromones exuded by a harpy, and a typical harpy has enough of these on her person to create 1 vial of harpy musk per month (provided she doesn't bathe). Typically, the crafter scrapes the congealed sweat and muck from a dead harpy and boils it down with water; doing so requires a successful DC 15 survival check. A character who has never seen the process done must succeed at a DC 25 survival check to fumble through it.

HARPY MUSK

Price 100 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

This vial contains a single application of harpy musk. When the greasy liquid is rubbed onto any surface (including armor or clothing), it smells strongly enough like a harpy that goblins can smell it from up to 60 feet away; goblins who smell it must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or flee for 1 round and avoid the area thereafter, believing the odor is evidence of a real harpy. If a goblin knows the scent a ruse, it receives a +5 bonus on this save. The DC of the Will save decreases by 1 each day, with a given dose of musk losing its effectiveness entirely after just over 2 weeks. This is a scent-based, mind affecting fear effect. Once a goblin has successfully saved against harpy musk, it can no longer be affected by that particular dose.

rip victims into bite-sized chunks before giving the tidbits to their hungry young, even going so far as to regurgitate partially digested morsels for newborns. Harpy mothers have a duty to care for their young until the offspring can fend for themselves, but if the mother is killed, the entire tribe shares those duties.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Harpies live in small family and tribal groups, from a single pair to a dozen individuals, and multiple groups may join together into loud, squabbling rookeries. Harpies are highly social creatures, at least among their own kind—a harpy on her own is either an outcast or on a specific mission that takes her away from her family.

Harpies worship Pazuzu, the demon lord of winged creatures, and harpy haunts usually have an elaborate

shrine to Pazuzu upon which matings are conducted and severed tongues and eyes of victims are laid in sacrifice. The shrine is usually made up of several smaller pieces for easy transport if the harpies have to move quickly. As Pazuzu is also King of the Wind Demons, harpies worship not only through sacrificial killings but also by going aloft during violent windstorms, flying recklessly in an ecstatic dance.

Harpies like to play with their victims. Torture is the norm, though harpies don't take chances—if there is any risk that their prey might break their mental hold and pose a threat, they'll cut their play short rather than risk vengeance. Particularly cruel harpies who aren't very hungry may play with victims over weeks or even months, keeping them alive by feeding them the leavings of other victims.

Harpies aren't very trustworthy, and other evil creatures allying with them need to have contingency plans and fail-safes to keep from falling victim to the harpies once their current engagement ends, as harpies love irony. When more powerful creatures dominate them, harpies may deign to work with other creatures, but the reverse can also be true: harpies sometimes form lasting alliances with creatures that aren't very intelligent and don't taste very good, and occasionally coexist with creatures like ettins or ogres in this way, provided the latter maintain their utility.

Harpies that live near a human settlement sometimes try to moderate their predations, keeping attacks at a level that won't result in the settlement banding together to drive them off. Harpies are adept at this calculation and can haunt a village for years, taking just enough victims that they don't become a priority for the local authorities. Harpies preying on trade routes use a similar calculus to avoid bringing armed expeditions to their aeries. Harpies are fierce but practical and avoid confrontations with more powerful forces; overwhelmingly punitive expeditions often drive harpies to migrate elsewhere rather than fight to the death.

While harpies usually live in tight family or tribal groups, their greater communities can't be reasonably called "harmonious." Harpies do not cooperate well as equals, and usually have a clearly established pecking order, enforced by intimidation and petty violence. The highest ranks of a harpy flock are filled by a combination of the strongest and most cunning harpies, since both of those traits help them keep the rest of their flock in line. Magic users, typically sorcerers or clerics of Pazuzu, often ascend to high positions, though they sometimes opt to support a more physically powerful harpy and set themselves up as the power behind the throne. Harpy social structures can be chaotic, and higher-level harpies are often brought down by a coalition of their social inferiors, who then immediately fall upon each other in an attempt to come out on top. For this reason, adventurers may find it useful to attempt to parley with a harpy if they can do so safely. Offering one

harpy or family unit a chance at betrayal and advancement can distract and neutralize an entire multi-family flock.

As harpies are single-gendered and generally devour those humanoid males used for mating, their species does not recognize anything close to marriage. Outside of filial attachment, the closest thing harpies have to romance is the concept of pair-bonding, by which two harpies with respect for each other's abilities will cleave together for mutual defense, shared parenting duties, and non-reproductive physical pleasure. Though not common, these pairs are often the heart of family groups, and represent one of the few bonds in harpy society not easily thrown aside in the name of temper and ambition.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Harpies make great villains for low-level adventures, since in addition to being evil and remorseless, they tend to live near humanoid habitations and do the sorts of things that cause people to send out adventurers (e.g., kidnapping and eating villagers or teamsters). Harpies are clever about assessing foes, however, and are unlikely to attack the adventurers directly if they perceive them to be a physical threat. They may attempt to pick off the adventurers one by one, or attract stronger monsters to try to finish off the adventurers before they pose true danger. Adventurers who wish direct combat with harpies are advised to disguise their strength and pose as easy kills, or stealthily track the harpies to their lairs. When defending their homes, harpies take considerably greater risks than when simply raiding, especially if they have young to protect.

Harpies prefer to lair in caves and ruins on cliffs and mountainsides where they are hard to reach without flying, yet their desire to come and go unseen makes them equally likely to select deep ravines or spots below the tree line. A harpy's lair generally consists of a large central chamber or ledge where she keeps a shrine to Pazuzu, along with shiny treasures. Harpies spend most of their time in these larger chambers, with smaller chambers being used for storage, privacy, or confinement of prisoners. If the entrance is large enough to fly through, it may be riddled with pressure plates, trip-wires, and other ground-based traps to catch intruders while leaving harpies free to fly in and out. Their dwelling places are notoriously filthy, with all the bones, shed feathers, and droppings of any dense bird rookery, but at a hideous humanoid scale.

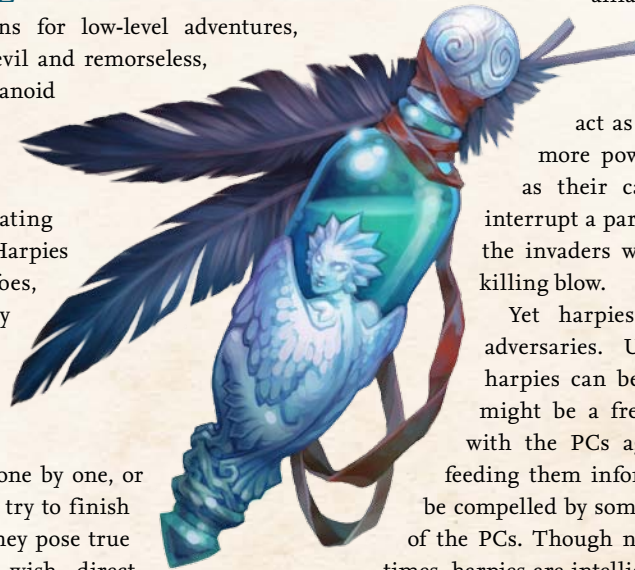
For higher-level campaigns, harpies make good front-line villains, working at the behest of a more subtle and far-reaching threat. In this scenario, harpies have been either unwittingly set up as a screen, attracting all of the heat while worse actions take place elsewhere, or hired for a specific task. If the harpies know their role, they may turn on their employers in exchange for their lives or even for treasure, though their price would be steep, since hunting from under the umbrella of a more powerful evil is an attractive position for any flock. If the harpies aren't aware they've been set up, just telling them the truth might make them take vengeance on the villain, though the revelation won't make them any less dangerous for the party. (On the other hand, it might also prompt them to forge an explicit

alliance with the villain, if the villain is willing to make a sufficient offer to gain their support.) Harpies also

act as excellent combat support for more powerful monsters and villains, as their captivating song can quickly interrupt a party's plan of attack and stymie the invaders while their master prepares a killing blow.

Yet harpies don't always need to be adversaries. Under many circumstances, harpies can be useful NPCs. Such a harpy might be a free agent, working in concert with the PCs against a common enemy or feeding them information for a price, or might be compelled by some more powerful friend or foe of the PCs. Though never nice, even at the best of times, harpies are intelligent creatures, and more than capable of allying with good PCs if there's something in it for them. (Of course, in her heart, a harpy likely still wants to kill her allies, and will happily turn on the PCs if the opportunity presents itself and she thinks she can get away with it. But the same could be said for any number of purely human rogues and lowlives.) Under extreme circumstances, an entire rookery in fear of being annihilated by an overwhelming force might reluctantly agree to guard a location, trade route, or city, preying solely on monsters and travelers who don't have the proper clearance.

GMs should note that harpies pose more of a danger for low-level parties than their CR suggests, since if everyone succumbs to their captivating song, the party won't be able to defend themselves, and may be slaughtered like livestock. This risk can be mitigated by including only a few harpies among other types of threats, or giving the party some sort of advanced warning or magical protection against the threat. Alternatively, having some of the harpies forgo the use of their captivation powers in favor of regular attacks or magic items can prevent a terrible end to a new campaign.



HARPIES IN MYTHOLOGY

In Greek mythology, harpies were born of Thaumias, a minor sea god, and Electra, a sea nymph. There were only two or three of them, and they were sometimes portrayed as agents of the gods in meting out punishment. The most well-known instance of this was their torment of Phineas, whom Zeus had put on an island with a great feast. Whenever Phineas tried to eat the food, the harpies would fly in and steal or defile it. Jason and the Argonauts eventually drove the harpies away and rescued Phineas. Harpies were also known for carrying people off to Tartarus, torturing them as they went. The word harpy comes from the Latin *harpeia*, meaning “snatcher.” Harpies were originally portrayed as beautiful women with the wings or bodies of birds. Later they were portrayed as ugly, to avoid confusion with the sirens, who were originally said to be ugly but are now portrayed as beautiful—it’s this same confusion that inspired harpies’ captivating song ability in fantasy gaming.

TREASURE

Harpies love shiny things, and tend to wear much of their best treasure on their persons. Their lairs are full of items that they’ve taken from their victims but that aren’t appropriate for wearing—coins, goods, and heavier art objects. Especially pretty objects and mirrors are the pride of harpies, while more valuable but uglier items are shoved into corners. For all but the most attractive treasures, harpies enjoy the taking more than the having, and the most successful harpy tribes are likely to have piles of coinage, armor, weapons, and other items piled away in a storeroom. For this reason, harpies may be willing to trade mundane and ugly treasure for visually attractive pieces.

Harpies sometimes modify their treasures to make them more wearable; it isn’t uncommon for a harpy to be adorned with strings of coins pierced through the middle and hung as necklaces, anklets, or bracelets. Harpies who are thus adorned can be heard a ways off, and so they strip off the noisiest items when they need stealth more than vanity. Harpies enjoy singing, and it is one of the few forms of artistic expression they commonly engage in (and the only one they’re any good at). Instruments that can be easily used to accompany them are generally well cared for and preserved, so a typical harpy lair will have at least a couple of lutes, harps, or mandolins propped up in the less filthy corners.

HARPIES ON GOLARION

Harpies exist all across the Inner Sea region and beyond. While they are believed to have first arisen in Iblydos and

other parts in the east, they are highly adaptable, and nearly any warm or temperate region can accommodate them. Harpies dislike cold and aren’t generally seen north of Varisia. They also don’t do well in highly built-up areas—in addition to the natural claustrophobia common to creatures of the open skies, most harpies can’t be bothered to keep low profiles, so harpies lairing in cities are rare. Varisia and Katapesh have plenty of wilderness areas with inadequate governance, as do the western coast of Garund and the various mountain ranges around the Inner Sea, and harpy communities there are less likely to be dealt with severely by the iron fist of civilization.

The Pactmasters of Katapesh rarely exert themselves to any great extent beyond the city, so harpies prey on outlying communities and trade caravans with relative impunity. The harpies of Katapesh generally grab a caravan’s slaves first, since Katapeshi traders are likely to see lost slaves as merely a cost of doing business, not worth mounting risky armed responses. Some traders passing through noted harpy territory take the additional precaution of prominently displaying some of their less expensive slaves decked out in shiny but cheap jewelry to make them more attractive than the rest of the caravan. Desert harpies across Garund have been known to maintain several lairs in different areas, which they migrate between according to the trading seasons, in contrast to their northern brethren, who tend to remain settled. Consequently, many perfectly good caves in the southern deserts are full of harpy leavings and offal, unusable by all but treasure-seekers with the fortitude to dig through layers of refuse looking for forgotten trinkets while simultaneously keeping an ear out for returning harpies.

In Avistan, harpies are most common in Varisia, where the lack of a centralized government and the large stretches of unclaimed territory make it easier for them to prey on small communities. They stay away from Korvosa and its environs, as the Hellknights stationed there have a standing policy of using overwhelming force against the creatures. The area around Magnimar and the coastal swamps are more to their liking, and significant numbers make their homes on the Storval Rise, lairing in caves on the enormous cliffs that separate the highlands from the lowlands, or venturing inland to pick off the occasional Shoanti. Varisian harpies are especially fond of Thassilonian ruins, fouling the high nooks of ancient towers and colossal statues. Treasure hunters and adventurers often run afoul of harpies for that reason, and adventuring parties who specialize in tomb raiding know how to spot the presence of harpies and avoid them. Varisia also has a large goblin population, which harpies hunt for sport—goblin meat is a poor substitute for more civilized human flesh, and goblins rarely have much worth stealing, but tormenting goblins is highly satisfying to harpies.

SAMPLE HARPY

This fierce and feral-looking woman has huge wings and clawed hands and feet, and carries a wicked-looking longbow.

UNDRELLA CR 11

XP 12,800

Female harpy
ranger 7

CE Medium
monstrous
humanoid

Init +5; Senses

darkvision 60 ft.;
Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 17, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor,
+1 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural)

hp 118 (14 HD; 7d10+7d10+42)

Fort +12, Ref +15, Will +9

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)

Melee mwk morningstar +15/+10/+5 (1d8)

Ranged +1 frost longbow +21/+16/+11
(1d8+1/x3 plus 1d6 cold)

Special Attacks captivating song, favored enemy (evil
outsiders +2, humans +4)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 4th; concentration +6)

2nd—*wind wall*

1st—*resist energy* (2)

STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 19

Base Atk +14; CMB +14; CMD 31

Feats Dodge, Endurance, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude,
Manyshot, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill
Focus (Bluff), Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Bluff +24, Fly +22, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +1,
Perception +19, Perform (sing) +6, Stealth +9

Languages Common

SQ favored terrain (desert +2), hunter's bond (companions),
track +3, wild empathy +11, woodland stride

Gear +3 studded leather armor, +1 frost longbow, masterwork
morningstar, amulet of natural armor +1, belt of incredible
dexterity +2, ring of protection +1, 7 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Captivating Song (Su) A harpy's song has the power to infect the minds of those that hear it, calling them to the harpy's side. When a harpy sings, all creatures aside from other harpies within a 300-foot spread must succeed at a DC 17 Will saving throw or become captivated. A creature that successfully saves is not subject to the same harpy's song for 24 hours. A victim under the effects of the captivating song moves toward the harpy using the most direct means

available. If the path leads it into a dangerous area such as through fire or off a cliff, the victim receives a second saving throw to end

the effect before moving into peril. Captivated creatures can take no actions other than to defend themselves.

A victim within 5 feet of the harpy simply stands and offers no resistance to the harpy's attacks. This effect continues for as long as the harpy sings and for 1 round thereafter. This is a sonic mind-affecting charm effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Undrella is something of an anomaly: a harpy who grew so used to living alongside the other monsters in the ruined town of Kelmarane that she remained when a group of heroes from the civilized races moved in and resettled the area. When the region was later plagued by a powerful efreeti named Jhavhul, she found herself thrust from her adopted home and community, and swore bloody vengeance with a fury that only a harpy can muster. Though those events are now in the past, she still wears the scars of the conflict—both physically and emotionally—and is now nearly as alien to her own kind as she is to all others.

A crack shot with her longbow—enhanced with the powers of frost during her quest for vengeance against the efreeti—Undrella is a terror on the wing, both for her well-placed missiles and her dangerously enchanting song. When confronted in person, Undrella quickly displays the narcissism that defines her personality, and is tolerant of others only so long as they flatter her, while at the same time turning every phrase into a sexual innuendo. As far as she's concerned, she's irresistible to creatures of all species, and though she may not kill all of the creatures she mates with, any who dare refuse her are quick to learn that the only thing more dangerous than a harpy's affection is her wrath.

For more information on Undrella, see the Legacy of Fire Adventure Path.



HYDRA

THE MANY-HEADED SERPENT KNOWN AS THE HYDRA IS A FOUL SPECIMEN INDEED, FOR WITH ITS PERPETUALLY REGENERATING NECKS AND UNIQUE MODE OF REPRODUCTION, IT SEEMS TO BOTH REPRESENT AND MOCK THE ENDLESS STRUGGLES OF CIVILIZATION TO ENCAPSULATE AND CONTROL THE ELEMENTS OF NATURE. HEROES MAY TRY TO DECAPITATE THE BEAST, BUT IT WILL ONLY RETALIATE WITH TWICE THE VIGOR; LIKE RAKING THE SEASHORE'S SANDS AMID AN ADVANCING TIDE, BATTLING THE HYDRA IS A FOOL'S TRIAL, AND LIKE THE TRAGIC DOMINATION OF THE WILDS, ONE THAT CAN ONLY BE TRULY FINISHED WITH BLADE AND FIRE.

—DEROMA LILEKTAS, MYTHOS OF THE WILD

The legendary hydra is a beast of vicious hunger and amazing regenerative powers, renowned for its ability to sprout two new heads when one is decapitated. Resembling a collection of snapping serpents atop a thick, coiling lower body that can run up to 20 feet long, the hydra is an imposing and brutish menace, lairing in the clammy backwaters of the world and devouring any creature smaller than itself. Its scales are as varied in hue as those of any species of snake, from glossy to dull and from greenish black to crimson, often marked with patterns of stripes, diamonds, and patchworks of color. Some hydras have heads that are more fanged and viperlike, with smooth and supple scales, while others have rugged hides that are leathery in texture, and elongated crocodilian or even draconic visages. Regardless, most hydras possess brightly colored frills or crests, traits they take great pride in and use to intimidate prey as well as to scare off potential predators.

Experienced marshwalkers and fisherfolk living in backwoods bayous tell many stories of the hydra, most of which are cautionary tales of lost friends or distant relations who ran afoul of the creature while in search of a secret fishing hole. According to these stories, the few survivors of such encounters typically abandoned the water and took up farming in the dry hill country, far, far away. While the tales are often told with a wink of humor, a deadly serious moral always underlies them: The hydra is not a creature to be trifled with. The only thing worse than meeting one by chance is attempting to turn the tables and actively hunt the hydra. While too dim to understand the human thirst for revenge, a hydra is all too willing to welcome a foolhardy hunter into its coils, adding its prey's remains to its own stock of grisly trophies hung from the branches around its swampy home. It is only the blessing of the gods that such a terror is not made worse with a sharper mind.

ECOLOGY

Hydras reproduce by asexual budding, with neck rootlets constantly sprouting inside the submuscular fossae at the base of their necks. Each larval rootlet contains yet more endodermal sprouts, and if not released by decapitation, these sprouts begin to grow and mature within the hydra's neck as though it were a serpentine womb. Sometimes these larvae are dislodged into the hydra's throat and hacked up in slimy, leathery cysts, which the hydra collects and places into swampy nests as if they were eggs until they burst open and release their maturing brood. If neck rootlets instead hatch and mature within the neck, however, the hatchlings actually tear the parent's neck asunder, bursting out of the flaccid tissue like elongated tadpoles. The

largest tadpole grafts itself onto the hydra's body and becomes a new head, while the rest of the serpent-spawn are ejected into the surrounding swamp to fend for themselves. Interestingly, larval hydras are not cannibalistic, and instead teem in dangerous swarms for mutual protection. They continue to bud and grow as they consume prey until the largest mature enough to set out on their own, leaving the weaker remnants vulnerable to predation.

Hydras favor temperate or warm climes and are primarily marsh-dwellers; however, rumors abound of rare hydras that live among coastal reefs and plague the seas, and the dreaded pyrohydras and cryohydras are known to take up even stranger environs as their homes. While primarily carnivorous, hydras are not above eating carrion or even sluicing snails, worms, frogs, and the like out of the muck when larger prey is scarce. Because of their highly efficient mode of reproduction, hydras require huge amounts of food in order to sustain themselves and their bodily functions. Displaying eating habits similar to those of snakes, hydras typically prefer to devour huge meals all at once and digest them for long periods of time; the average hydra can consume as much as half its weight in a single day, subsequently fasting for nearly a week before needing to eat again.

Thanks to their size and the juicy tenderness of their fat and flesh, humans and other bipedal creatures—especially stocky ones such as dwarves—are a highly sought after meal for hydras, which will go to great lengths to devour such beings if given the opportunity. Though they can survive off vermin, vegetation, and plant creatures, hydras always prefer red meat if given the choice. In times of desperation, hydras may resort to cannibalism, battling one another in exhausting brawls that only escalate as the rivals sever each other's heads, the victor consuming every scrap of its competitor's remains after the battle is won. Hydras are immune to one another's acidic bile, and those with fiery breath such as pyrohydras make formidable foes against others of their kind, cauterizing necks en masse after numerous severing blows.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Hydras are by nature solitary creatures; whatever urges they have for interaction are sufficiently addressed by the constant slither and hiss of their multiple heads. Lacking any need or desire to mate, they have little reason to seek out the kinship of their own species; if anything, hydras typically drive out others of their own kind that would compete with them for food, though if resources are plentiful, they may tolerate the presence of another hydra nearby, if only so the two can take down bigger prey and defend themselves from more powerful predators.

PATHFINDER CAMPAIGN SETTING: MYTHICAL MONSTERS REVISITED

A hydra often lives in symbiosis with small vermin, which crawl over the creature's scales and scrape off and consume algae growing on its skin. These vermin also eradicate even smaller vermin that burrow into the hydra's flesh and feast on its ever-replenishing subcutaneous cells; while the hydra's regenerative powers ensure that the host takes no lasting harm from such parasites, they do irritate the hydra. It thus welcomes the larger verminous scavengers, sparing them its hungry attentions as they scratch its constant itch. Virtually anything else that moves is fair game for the hydra's monstrous appetite.

The dim intellect and eternal hunger of hydras make them friends to none. Though they possess an aggressive demeanor by nature, hydras can be tamed by a hunter of sufficient courage and skill, and the application of magic or wild empathy is a great aid in this endeavor, as is the use of fire or acid in particularly brutal training regimens. Giants are known to train pyrohydras and cryohyras as guardian beasts, though such hydras are not so much trained as they are simply captured and confined in a space where their anger and hunger will lead them to savage any unfortunate intruder. Alchemists, witches, and wizards occasionally capture hydras for their magical experiments, as the beasts' rapid tissue replication makes them ideal subjects for tests meant to harness their regenerative powers. Some eccentric scholars claim that within the biological makeup of hydras lies the secret to eternal life, though more sensible sages dismiss these hypotheses as absurd and unfounded.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Hydras can fit into any adventure wherein PCs must pass through a lonely or desolate place or into a forgotten ruin or dank set of labyrinthine caves. Because of its high number of attacks, a hydra is often miscast as a hard-core combat brute, but it actually fills the niche of an ambush monster much more effectively. Its animalistic intelligence—while entirely primitive—is equivalent to that of a dolphin or whale, and while it is not smart enough to be a villain per se, a hydra is bright enough to employ strategies in combat that work to its advantage. This includes utilizing cover, such as by attacking

creatures near the water's edge from underwater, or by trapping unwary foes in narrow bottlenecks separating one cavern from another. A hydra knows that its body is more vulnerable to permanent damage than its multiple heads, so a particularly clever individual might hide its torso behind cover and attack with its necks exposed, distracting opponents from its body and making them concentrate on its perpetually regenerating heads. A hydra also knows when it is advantageous to retreat and heal (including regrowing new heads) before returning to the attack, charging in and using its pounce ability. A hydra's lair should include varied terrain it can use to hide in, especially interconnected pools and bogs where it can submerge itself entirely and ward off fiery assaults or impede ranged attacks while it hides, heals, and prepares its next ambush from another direction.

Hydras are enticing and exciting monsters for the PCs to face near the end of low-level adventures. While the bestial intellects of hydras do not make them viable fixtures for heroic PCs to pursue and destroy as harbingers of evil, the creatures' enormous size and unique combat style do provide for thrilling and dramatic random encounters. Conversely, hydras can also be implemented as servitors for more powerful NPCs and villains, and are thus particularly well suited for the role of a monster leading up to the final fight in an adventure. A hydra's regenerative powers make it a viable recurring monster, as the creature might run away after taking a certain amount of damage or having so many of its heads cauterized, letting itself heal before once again taking on the PCs. The many variants presented both in the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* and in this section also make for interesting encounters should the PCs be in an area especially rife with the multi-headed creatures or should the PCs infiltrate the lair of a mad wizard who favors the hydra as a subject for various kinds of experiments.

TREASURE

As creatures with animal-level intelligence, hydras have little interest in collecting treasure for the purposes of accumulating wealth; they do, however, dimly understand its usefulness as an attractant for prey, knowing that shiny trinkets and inedible objects are things some creatures prize enough to run heedlessly into danger to acquire them. As a hydra consumes its prey, tearing it limb from limb between several jaws, it uses the teeth of its other heads to pry off items carried or worn, especially



those that glitter and shine, and places these sparkling enticements around the fringes of its domain to be discovered by foolish passersby, hopefully emboldening them to explore the marshes, caves, and ruins where the hydra lurks in waiting.

Hydras have learned to recognize common humanoid containers such as saddlebags for what they are, and when a hydra devours a set of riders or stumbles upon a deserted carriage, it sends its many heads into the dark nooks and crannies of such vessels in search of hidden baubles and goods, which it may then drag into the light for display. Explorers are often puzzled by the valuables scattered haphazardly on the ground and hung from tree branches near a hydra's lair, still adorning the rotted or skeletal body parts of their former owners. Large or fragile items are often broken by the indelicate jaws of the hydra, as it lacks hands to handle items carefully, yet as long as the rubble sparkles, the hydra is content to display it. Drab items are ignored by a hydra and left where they lie, usually close to the remains of their former owners.

HYDRAS ON GOLARION

Hydras are highly adaptable creatures that can proliferate in any kind of aquatic or wetland environment. Though their iconography is found most prominently on the painted pottery of ancient Iblydos near Casmaron, hydras can be found in virtually every corner of Avistan and Garund as well. There are legends aplenty of multi-headed serpents from Vudra and Tian Xia too, though whether these are truly hydras or some spawn or kin of nagakind or the imperial dragons remains unclear.

Hydras have long menaced the delta of the River Sphinx in Osirion. Outside of the fertile rivers and oases of Garund, pyrohydras are known to roam the deserts and the barren, wind-carved foothills surrounding them, and are a dangerous menace to caravan trade. The desert druids of Duwwor in Thuvia, however, have managed to befriend and train more than a dozen of the beasts, and some of the rulers of the city-states have considered enlisting the aid of these beasts in safeguarding their shipments of the *sun orchid elixir*. Farther to the southwest, the inundation of the Sodden Lands brought with it an infestation of swamp-dwelling hydras, which quickly and easily took to the new landscape. Adventurers who have journeyed to the Sodden Lands tell of warden hydras that guard huge vaults of Lirgeni and Yamasan treasures, lairing in dank caverns and flooded grottoes that were once home to countless wonders from both the astrological philosophers and the primitive tribespeople.

In Avistan, hydras are common in the coastal forests as well as the Mushfens of Varisia, with pyrohydras populating large caverns in the Cinderlands. More

HYDRAS IN MYTHOLOGY

The Hydra was an otherwise nameless water serpent in Greek mythology, spawned by Typhon and Echidna and raised by the goddess Hera to destroy Heracles. Called the Lernaean Hydra because of its lair (Lake Lerna near the city of Argos, a body of water fed by a sacred healing spring and said to cover a gate to the Underworld), the Hydra's breath and blood were deadly poisonous, and even the spoor of its passage was lethal to those trying to track it.

Destroying the Lernaean Hydra was the Second Labor of Heracles, who used flaming arrows to flush the serpent out of its cave by the spring that fed the lake. He covered his face with a cloth to protect against the Hydra's poison, but as he fought, each head he destroyed grew back as two. His nephew Iolaus came up with a plan to scorch each neck-stump with a burning branch to prevent it growing back, allowing Heracles to defeat it. Heracles used the Hydra's tainted blood on his arrows thereafter; the poison was so potent it polluted the entire river where he killed Nessus the centaur and even brought death to Heracles himself when he donned a tunic soaked in Nessus's hydra-contaminated blood.

yet inhabit the well-watered woodlands of the River Kingdoms, including a hydra of legend that the natives call Ladonica, a beast thought to be enchanted with powerful fey energies after it accidentally stumbled upon a gateway to the First World in the heart of the Wilewood in Sevenarches. The magic bestowed upon the creature is said to have given it the cunning of a common humanoid, and to have made it a kind creature, if a bit mischievous. Those who seek out Ladonica, however, either come back empty-handed or are never heard from again, and the few who claim to have seen the hydra say it is as elusive and capricious as any fey creature, only bolstering local belief in the myth.

Hydras also dwell in the other heartlands around Lake Encarthan, from Numeria to Galt. In Ustalav, grave hydras are particularly prevalent, with one such being, dubbed Yargouth the Ebon Fury by the locals, having plagued the forests and groves of Varno for some time. The Ebon Fury is thought to enjoy the taste of undead in particular, and legend says that the foul slime it leaves in its wake causes the grass to wither into ash. Though few have ever even seen the beast—leading many to believe it nothing more than an urban legend—those who have claim that it resides in a sinkhole in the Forest of Veils to the west, and that its hair-raising howls can be heard at night in early autumn, especially when the Harvest Moon pours its ruby light over the rolling vales of the sleepy county.

HYDRA LARVAE

The larvae of a hydra can be just as imposing foes as the matured brute itself. The noxious eggs and writhing tadpoles are placed by their parent in shallow bog holes and trenches, and in these lairs, hydra larvae prey upon those creatures that fail to watch their step as they cross the marshy terrain. Creatures that succeed at a DC 15 Perception check or Knowledge (nature) check notice hydra larvae swimming in a bog hole. Hydra larvae can detect creatures outside of their pit, and burst from beneath the water to feast upon prey. Any creature within 5 feet of a larva-infested bog hole must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save or become infested with hydra larvae. A creature that becomes infested takes 1d2 points of Constitution damage and becomes sickened. Hydra larvae can be detached from a creature they dig into by prying them out with a slashing weapon (which requires a DC 20 Heal check that deals 1d6 points of damage regardless of whether or not the check succeeds) or by dealing acid damage to the larvae at any time, which deals half damage to the creature the larvae are infesting. *Remove disease* or a similar effect kills any hydra larvae on the host.

VARIANTS

Simple hydra variants are easy to create by adding thematically appropriate special abilities, such as all-around vision, pull, or rend (requiring two bites), or by extending the hydra's reach in creative ways, such as allowing it to ignore partial cover or allowing heads to provide flanking for each other, increasing its CR by +1 for every two such abilities added (minimum CR +1). Thanks to their naturally diverse nature and the foul experimentations of wizards, hydras already have numerous variants throughout the world.

Schism Hydra (+0 CR): A schism hydra possesses only three heads (but still has 5 Hit Dice), and its unique makeup makes it more akin to an ooze-like creature than a serpent—its body is capable of splitting into two identical copies. A schism hydra does not possess the rules for sundering or regenerating heads, and instead gains the split (piercing or slashing, 9 hp) defensive ability. After combat, a schism hydra's strongest remaining body swallows the others in order to heal itself. A schism hydra's split ability is not affected by acid or fire as a normal hydra's is, and the only way to stop it is to drive it below the specified number of hit points.

Warden Hydra (+2 CR): Warden hydras are guardians of cultic sites and great treasures, either trained to protect such areas or simply drawn to the mystical energies therein. Their keen senses give them blindsense 60 feet and Blind-Fight as a bonus feat, and they automatically

disbelieve illusions. Warden hydras also have all-around vision and a racial bonus on Perception checks equal to their number of heads (rather than +2). A warden hydra gains a +4 bonus to its Dexterity. Mind-affecting effects do not affect a warden hydra unless they can affect as many targets as the hydra has heads.

Grave Hydra (+3 CR): These vile hydras are the result of dark wizardry, imbued with necromantic energies that fill them with hatred and taint them with evil. A grave hydra has an alignment of neutral evil, possesses negative energy affinity and DR 5/magic, and has an unnatural aura of 30 feet. In addition, a creature struck by a grave hydra's bite attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 the hydra's Hit Dice + the hydra's Con modifier) or take 1 point of Constitution damage.

Miasma Hydra (+9 CR): These powerful hydras are found only in the most polluted or dangerous swamps. They have four legs and 12 heads, and their blood flows with a burning toxin. A miasma hydra is immune to disease and poison, and its bite carries an agonizing venom (*save* Fort DC 10 + 1/2 the hydra's Hit Dice + the hydra's Con modifier; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Str damage and sickened for 1 minute; *cure* 2 consecutive saves). A creature that sunders one of a miasma hydra's heads, deals bleed damage with a melee weapon, or confirms a critical hit with a slashing or piercing melee weapon is sprayed with its poisonous blood as if bitten. Each of a miasma hydra's heads has a breath weapon identical in effect to *cloudkill* (Fort DC 15 + the hydra's Con modifier for partial damage) that affects a 15-foot cone but with an instantaneous duration, usable every 1d4 rounds. A creature in the area of multiple breaths in the same round must make multiple saves, but can only be affected once per round.

A miasma hydra gains Toughness and Snatch as a bonus feat, a +7 natural armor bonus to its AC from its additional heads, DR 10/cold iron, and a +2 bonus to all its ability scores except Intelligence.

SAMPLE HYDRA

This massive hydra has black and green scales, and caustic purple venom drips from its numerous sets of fangs.

DHIRGISKA

CR 13

XP 25,600

Miasma hydra

N Huge magical beast

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent;

Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+2 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)

hp 138 (12d10+72); fast healing 12

Fort +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +7

DR 10/cold iron; **Immune** disease, poison

OFFENSE**Speed** 20 ft., swim 20 ft.**Melee** 12 bites +14 (1d8+4 plus poison)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Special Attacks** breath weapon (15-ft. cone, *cloudkill*, Fort DC 21 partial, usable every 1d4 rounds), pounce**STATISTICS****Str** 19, **Dex** 14, **Con** 20, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 30 (34 vs. trip)**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness^B, Snatch^B**Skills** Perception +12, Swim +21; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Perception**SQ** bloodspray, hydra traits, regenerate head**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Bloodspray (Ex)** Whenever a creature sunders one of a miasma hydra's heads, strikes it with a melee attack that does bleed damage, or confirms a successful critical hit against the miasma hydra with a melee piercing or slashing weapon, the creature must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or be affected by the miasma hydra's poison as though it had been bitten.**Breath Weapon (Ex)** A miasma hydra's breath weapon is identical in effect to *cloudkill*, except that it has a duration of instantaneous, covers a 15-foot-cone area, and is usable every 1d4 rounds by each of the miasma hydra's heads. A creature in the area of multiple breaths in the same round must make multiple saves, but can only be affected by the *cloudkill* effect once per round.**Fast Healing****(Ex)** A

miasma

hydra's

fast healing

ability is equal to its

current number of heads

(minimum fast healing 12). This fast

healing applies only to damage dealt

to the miasma hydra's body.

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 21; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Str damage and sickened for 1 minute; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

West of Kokutang in the Sodden Lands, there lies the remains of a once-proud and now-nameless village, destroyed when the massive Eye of Abendego consumed the gulf and buried the young nation of Yamasa and its secrets more than 100 years ago. Within

the flooded ruins of this small settlement, the miasma hydra known to local Koboto tribespeople as Dhirgiska scavenges the wreckage and makes its lair in the vast caverns carved out of the marshy earth beneath the village. Attacking any who dare to near the destroyed village, the hydra has made it impossible for the people of Kokutang to fully explore the ruins and discover what importance the site once held for their people, if any. It is unknown what drives Dhirgiska to protect its lair so fervently, and some think that the beast was left by the deceased people of the village in order to protect their secrets and treasures. Whatever the case, it is well known that those who dare face the ruins and the beast that dwells within rarely come back alive.

Though it is generally known that any foreigners who try to interact with the people of Kokutang will be met with ravenous hostility, it is thought that should some brave adventurer bring the heart of the treacherous Dhirgiska to them, she would be praised as a hero in their eyes.



TARLE
2011



KRAKEN

BENEATH THE CEASELESS WAVES THERE ARE SAID TO DWELL BLASPHEMOUS BEASTS OF IMMENSE POWER, LEGENDARY CREATURES WHOSE VERY BEING SEEMS TO DEFY ANY LOGIC LAND-DWELLERS MIGHT SUMMON IN OPPOSITION. MOST INCONCEIVABLE, PERHAPS, ARE THEIR ALIEN FORMS, THOSE OF BEHEMOTH SQUIDS; IF NOT THESE, THEN THEIR COLD, CALCULATIVE REASONING, FOR VOID ARE THEY OF COMPASSION AND PITY. REGARDLESS OF WHO MAY DOUBT THEIR EXISTENCE, THE DREAD KRAKENS ARE AS REAL AS THE BLOOD THEY SPILL, AND THE TIME OF THEIR ASCENT MAY BE FAST APPROACHING...

—ILIA COLIDAR, *BENEATH THE MARBLE TIDES*

Few creatures cause such fear among mariners as the dreaded krakens—gargantuan squidlike beings that dwell in the deepest and darkest trenches of the ocean, emerging only to spread mayhem and horror among sailors and land-dwellers alike. While those who know little of the sea and the terrors it contains refer to krakens as mythical creatures, experienced mariners know such talk only amounts to the wishful musings of the unenlightened, and that krakens are far from mere legend.

Most land-dwelling folk know of krakens only from stories, where the creatures are usually allegorical representations of the primal forces of nature, symbolic of mortals' follies and their futile attempts to defy the natural will of the ocean. These folk regard such tales as parables, lessons to be considered but still regarded as mostly fictional. Those who earn their living at sea know better. While actual sightings of krakens are rare, and those who encounter the monsters rarely live to tell their tales, krakens' habits and appearance are well known among fisherfolk and nomadic seafarers alike. Traditions passed down through families of mariners tell which seas are regarded as most dangerous, when krakens are likely to be encountered, and what activities attract their attention. Shamans and priests of seafaring tribespeople know to invoke the aid of the gods and spirits before individuals venture into the wild and unforgiving ocean, asking their deities for help in warding off the evil krakens. Some barbaric peoples take a different approach entirely, throwing various sacrifices and offerings into the sea in order to placate those who dwell below, and particularly perverse clans have gone so far as to give themselves up to the worship of krakens, believing them to be agents of ancient gods, or perhaps even gods themselves.

Even the bravest captain quails in the face of a kraken attack, and most sailors sailing through known kraken territory carefully consider the fact that this voyage may be their last, and make peace with their gods before setting sail across the briny deep. Superstitious mariners deal with krakens by avoiding them as much as possible, and the cowardly consider even the slightest mention of the creatures to be bad luck. Woe to the unwary traveler who mentions krakens in conversation with an irrational captain while aboard her ship—at the very least he will be shunned, and at worst he will be thrown overboard in an attempt to ward off ill fortune or as a sacrifice to keep the lurking terrors away. However, there do exist tales of brave warriors fighting back against the treacherous krakens, summoning their courage and giving the beasts nothing until they are either driven off or slain outright. Such tales inspire bravery within sailors in times of peril, but if there's one thing the hateful krakens actively punish, it's resistance from those they consider their inferiors.

ECOLOGY

A kraken's strength and cunning develop over the course of centuries, and the beings can reach up to 2,000 years in age before even being considered elderly. Because of their lengthy lifespans, krakens formulate their plans on a scale hardly fathomable by mere mortals, working on evil plots for decades before ever setting them into motion. The size of a kraken is not a particularly reliable way of determining its age, as most individuals reach their adult size after the first century of life and remain massive until death. Instead, the colorful markings on a kraken signify its age, with each streak along its mantle denoting a century that it has lived. Older krakens take pride in displaying these markings, and construct ornamental crowns that accentuate the sheer number of stripes on their bodies. While most krakens who dwell in temperate waters range in color from crimson to pink and have navy blue markings, this coloration is largely dependent upon which ocean the kraken in question resides in. Those who live in markedly warmer seas are known to have flesh of orange hues with green markings, while krakens in icy oceans typically possess a deep purple base and bright blue stripes.

A female kraken becomes fertile when she reaches sexual maturity at about 200 years of age. When she goes through estrus once every 10 years, she begins emitting mental emanations as a signal to potential mates, and her mantle changes color, pulsating slowly between light and dark. Male krakens possess a unique sense that can detect the presence of a fertile female from hundreds of miles away via these mental emanations; if they are detected, males who wish to reproduce leave their territories and congregate on the female. Should more than one male wish to breed with the female, the suitors engage in combat, an epic struggle that may last for weeks and span vast distances as the giants wreak havoc in the isolated depths of the ocean or near the populated shore. Though these battles are long and violent, a suitor who knows he has been beaten will usually surrender before the fight becomes fatal, humbly withdrawing to his territory to tend to his wounded ego and flesh.

After mating with the victorious suitor, a female kraken lays a clutch of more than 100 fertilized eggs, which she guards fervently until they hatch 6 months later. As soon as they emerge from their amniotic encasing, however, the tiny kraken larvae are left on their own, and only the strongest survive in the perilous oceanic world they are born into. Only one in 100 hatchlings survives the first year after hatching, and of those survivors only one in 10 actually lives to full adulthood. Infant krakens are largely indistinguishable from common squids; by 10 years of age, however, a kraken has grown to a considerable size and its supernatural powers have begun to emerge. A

KRAKENS IN MYTHOLOGY

While tales of massive octopuses and squids have been told for countless years, the mythos of the kraken has a particular flavor about it that implies not only monstrosity in size, but also a sinister nature revealed in violence against sailors and deep-sea mariners. Numerous tales over the centuries claim that not only has the kraken crashed into formidable ships with devastating results, but it devours the vessels' inhabitants as well. Norse sailors of the twelfth century related heroic sagas that included the terrible kraken, said to be a monster that could drag entire ships beneath the waves to their doom, and such legends permeated the surrounding culture for hundreds of years to come, with authorities ranging from naturalists to religious leaders all declaring its existence.

While many beasts of myth are based purely on ancient folklore and have little standing in the world we live in today, the kraken has proven a remarkable exception in the past couple centuries, as discoveries of mammoth squids washing ashore have lent an amount of credibility to the kraken legend rarely seen elsewhere in mythology. Only in the past decade has photographic evidence of these elusive creatures finally been obtained—first filmed by Japanese scientists in 2004, the giant squid (and its even larger cousin, the colossal squid) may well be the inspiration for the legend of the kraken.

kraken's intelligence at 50 years is equivalent to that of the average land-dwelling human, and by the time it reaches its first centennial, it has reached its full size and has the wisdom of the most learned sage.

Krakens typically feed on smaller sea animals during their juvenile stages, but upon reaching maturity they develop a peculiar taste for the flesh of magical game as well as for land-dwelling creatures that travel across the surface of their waters. While they despise aboleths and attack them on sight, krakens do not consume the flesh of these beings, viewing it as utterly repellent and worthy of providing sustenance to only the basest bottom feeders. Their desire for the flesh of humanoids and other land-dwellers is driven primarily out of rage and hatred rather than necessity, as krakens by nature develop an immense loathing for all other forms of life upon reaching adulthood, particularly the so-called "civilized races." This malevolence stems at least in part from their brutal struggle to raise themselves and survive into adulthood, though some scholars speculate that the root cause behind their characteristic aggression may be buried deep in the kraken's psyche, some piece of their

collective history embedded in their being that drives them to despise every other living creature. Certainly, part of the issue seems to be the ability of lesser creatures to accomplish great works through cooperation—to the staunchly individualistic and power-hungry krakens, several weak creatures working together to match the deeds of a single greater individual is cheating the natural order of things, in which the strongest individual rules over all lesser creatures. As some of the smartest and strongest creatures on land or sea, krakens naturally place themselves at the top of this philosophical pyramid, and see the success and independence of pitiful humanoids as an insult and a challenge.

Whatever the root cause, the lust for power—and, lacking that, destruction of that which they cannot control—is a primary motivation for most krakens, who see themselves as the rightful inheritors of the oceans and regard any other beings as mere cattle.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Because of the general sparseness of their populations and the ruthless way in which they must fend for themselves as they develop, krakens are solitary and distrustful creatures who view themselves as more powerful than all other beings, especially foolish land-dwellers, whom krakens view as undeserving of the lands on which they reside. While krakens can sometimes work together toward mutual goals—a hypocrisy that few other creatures are brave enough to point out—they are largely a solitary race, being altogether too megalomaniacal and paranoid to remain in each other's presence for long.

Though krakens are capable of extremely complex crafts—and indeed, often live near torrid hydrothermal vents at the bottom of the ocean, where they can use the heat to forge rare metals into the incredible magic torcs and crowns with which they adorn themselves—they generally find such pursuits to be beneath them, preferring instead to take what they desire from someone else. They almost never construct their own lairs, but instead move in and dominate existing settlements of weaker creatures, whether deep-sea sahuagin or coastal humanoids, setting their new minions to work in furtherance of the krakens' grand schemes.

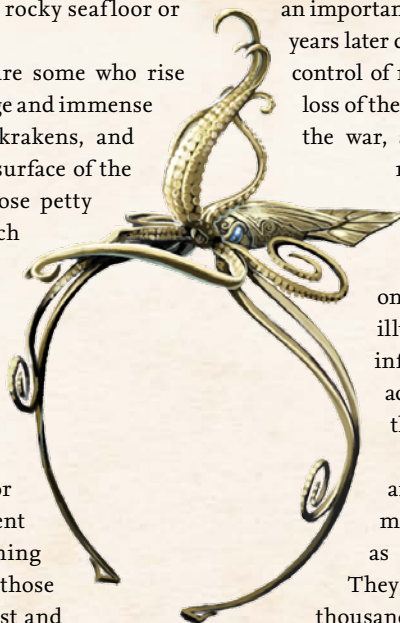
Though krakens are sometimes found in sunken and ancient undersea cities, strange fallen metropolises positioned in trenches or on the sides of oceanic ridges the size of terrestrial mountains, these are not kraken cities. Rather, krakens are often fascinated by the tools and artifacts of their ancient rivals, the aboleths, and thus eager to search through lost aboleth structures for artifacts and knowledge that may advance their personal power.

That krakens seem to be at constant odds with the enigmatic aboleths is hardly surprising, as both races

of oceanic beings regard themselves as the rulers of the world beneath the waves. While the massive krakens are certainly more powerful than aboleths, they are not nearly as fecund, and thus the two forces find themselves evenly matched rivals, a fact that constantly enrages both parties. Even to this day, should a hardy explorer brave the depths of particularly barren oceanic valleys, she might find the remains of these ancient wars between the two monstrous races, the skeletons of aboleths and krakens alike sitting untouched on the rocky seafloor or fossilized in its sediment.

As powerful as krakens are, there are some who rise above the others, achieving both great age and immense magical power. These are the elder krakens, and though they remain deep beneath the surface of the ocean, rarely bothering to conquer those petty races on the shore, their might is such that cultic land-dwellers sometimes worship the things as great earthbound deities, knowing that their own time is limited should the immense beings set eyes on the inhabitants of land.

Though their physical strength is incredible, most krakens avoid outright combat unless they feel their honor demands it. Instead, they are intelligent enough to realize that their long-running schemes and careful manipulation of those servitor races they conquer are the safest and most predictable roads to success, and any terrestrial foes are easily dispatched by the krakens' magical ability to control wind and weather, their foes' ships foundering without the krakens ever bothering to lift a tentacle.



CAMPAIGN ROLE

A kraken is an ideal candidate for the thrilling conclusion of a high-level seafaring adventure or campaign. Few things provide as much challenge and excitement for the commanders of a sea vessel as the threat of a Gargantuan kraken, especially if the PCs have known about the beast for much of the campaign or have seen its mark during their voyages.

Despite its disdain toward other creatures, a kraken often maintains an extensive network of minions, who either worship the being as a god or simply adhere to its commands out of fear, respect, or magical compulsion. Such influences extend to both the inhabitants of the ocean—including merfolk cultists, sahuagin drudges, and even sea serpent companions—and those who dwell on the surface. A corrupted seafaring captain may lure unsuspecting passengers through kraken-inhabited waters, offering sacrifices to the evil beast in the deluded hope of being granted safe passage in exchange, or the

ruler of a coastal nation may foolishly seek the partnership or patronage of a kraken in order to destroy her enemy's navy. Such individuals can serve as a party's initial foes until evidence later reveals their true masters, building up to the final encounter later in the campaign.

Ancient and malignly wise creatures, krakens hatch schemes that can take decades or even centuries to unfold. Evidence of a kraken's doings may take form in seemingly unrelated incidents—a kraken may sink a boat carrying an important artifact, with the loss only coming to light years later during a war between two island nations for control of merchant waters. Few may realize that the loss of the important artifact is what initially spurred the war, and that the destruction of one island's military forces is all the kraken needs in order to garner absolute control of its inhabitants. While a plot need not be so subtle as this to incorporate a kraken into one's campaign, laying out groundwork that illustrates a kraken's cunning and extensive influence can provide fuel for numerous adventures and make the final encounter all the more thrilling.

Krakens are infamous for their isolation and the inaccessibility of their lairs, and can make for interesting encounters underwater as well as amid the crashing waves above. They typically dwell at the bottom of the ocean thousands of feet beneath the surface of the water in caves, rifts, or volcanic vents. Some krakens reside in the ruins of ancient aboleth cities, plundering the crumbling remains of their enemies' vanished splendor. Krakens need not take great pains to keep their lairs secret, as few would think to visit the inhospitable realm at the sea floor, but those intruders who do manage to find their way to a kraken's domain are promptly greeted with the being's rage and hatred.

TREASURE

A kraken accumulates its treasure horde over the course of centuries, and such a haul usually includes items of great antiquity and power. Though they may have differing areas of interest, krakens tend to value magical items above all others, amassing mundane treasures such as piles of gold and jewels only for the purposes of acquiring components they need or bribing surface-dwellers when doing so is easier than dominating them outright. Items that contain knowledge—such as tomes of lore and scrolls rife with arcane might—are especially valuable to krakens, who take care to treat these perishable materials with special unguents in order to preserve them, often containing them in waterproof lockers for added insurance. What more magically minded krakens

value more than anything else, however, are exotic raw materials that can be used to power their crafted items, magical ores and gems that can be shaped to fit into the crowns and armlets they attach to their gigantic, alien bodies. Though most often portrayed simply as oversized squids, most krakens with the means to do so take care to adorn themselves in various pieces of mystical jewelry that enhance their powers.

Those krakens who dwell in the tumbled undersea ruins of aboleth cities sometimes stand watch over strange artifacts that were built in the early days when their enemies were at the height of their power. Most of these vast and incomprehensible devices lie dormant, and thus krakens who happen across such finds seek to restore the engines to their workable state, that they might turn the strange magics to their own ends. Those who successfully face down a kraken and gain possession of one of these artifacts may find their prize a two-edged sword, for though the contraptions are full of valuable materials, they can also have strange effects on those who do not understand them.

KRAKENS ON GOLARION

Krakens can be found in the depths of all of Golarion's oceans, and are known to be a problem for coastal capitals and small fishing settlements alike, for any who send ships into the vast expanses of the ocean risk being assailed by a deadly kraken. Such beasts care little for nationalities or motives, and attack trading ships heading from Almas to Absalom as readily as slaving ships departing from Katapesh to Casmaron. Ships making voyages across the Steaming Sea, Arcadian Ocean, or Obari Ocean typically see the majority of known kraken attacks, as the beasts tend to dwell in the darkest reaches of the waters. Even so, those wise sailors traversing the relatively shallow waters of the Inner Sea know that they are not immune to the tyranny of krakens, for such creatures know no boundaries. In distant Tian Xia, an elder kraken known as Zhanagorr rules the nation of Wanshou from his seaside throne, populating the once-prosperous nation with his monstrous minions and inspiring a cultural hysteria of massive proportions among the remaining people, driving the post-apocalyptic swampland to even further ruin.

A vile kraken known as Jegradin plagues the Obari Ocean near the coast of Katapesh, where he watches over a hydrothermal vent deep below the surface of the water. Using the vent's heat to melt precious ores into various alloys, Jegradin constructs numerous relics and magic-empowering accessories which he uses to arm and armor his various minions, and even sells to other krakens of the Obari. His irrefutable skill at smithing overrides the pride that normally restrains krakens from purchasing crowns and armlets rather than making the items themselves, and he guards the secrets of his craft

jealously. While not a particularly intimidating kraken as far as looks are concerned—his baggy flesh and sunken eyes revealing a distinct lack of raw muscle—Jegradin possesses a cunning wit that even other krakens have a difficult time deciphering. In addition to the ornaments and lesser items he constructs for his minions, the kraken smith also sells magical weapons and suits of armor in the bazaars of Katapesh via land-dwelling proxies. Exactly who these proxies are remains a mystery, though spiteful krakens (most of whom regard him as a traitor to his own kind) claim that he maintains a tentative treaty with the Pactmasters of the bustling port city. That Jegradin holds a peculiar fascination for Katapesh's metal golems, the aluums, is a well-known fact, and some speculate that he is biding his time until he can master the art of creating such technological wonders. Yet others believe that the whole process of trading with land-dwellers—a normally shameful prospect for a kraken—is actually all part of a ruse to get tainted items into the hands of powerful rulers and adventurers, and at some point Jegradin will complete a final incantation which enslaves all who hold one of his items, binding them to his will.

In Orv—the third layer of Golarion's lightless underbelly, the Darklands—an elder kraken of immense size and power dwells near the center of the Sightless Sea, not far from where the column of rising water known as the Braid connects the largest of Orv's Vaults to the Arcadian Ocean. Her flesh is of a vibrant vermilion hue, and the markings upon her mantle the color of adamantine. Though she is mute and would have little reason to speak to lesser creatures anyway, those who know of the massive monster call her Thrikritar, though they only speak of her in hurried whispers. Said to possess powers over not only the waters of the Sightless Sea but even over time itself, Thrikritar stands as the lone guardian of an ancient kraken machine at the bottom of the black ocean. While no one has been able to catch more than a glimpse of the machine before facing the silent guardian's mind-warping powers, most of the legends offer similar descriptions, namely that the device is constructed out of dimly luminescent sapphires and rare calcite crystals. While scholars remain uncertain, the insane individuals who fall victim to Thrikritar's far-reaching magic often mumble of the machine's ability to control the flow of the Braid, raving that when the time is right, the "Indigo Engine" will halt the magical current, draining a portion of the Arcadian Ocean into the Darklands and creating a cataclysm of previously unknown proportions both above and below the surface of Golarion.

Recently, the arrival of 13 eyeless kraken corpses washing up on the shore of the Isle of Kortos in 4700 AR created a significant stir, but so far no one has been able to decipher what—if anything—the event portends.

SAMPLE KRAKEN

This massive scarlet squid has dark blue stripes and wears various gold ornaments, its tentacles glistening with blue energy.

QWOSHOKK

CR 20

XP 307,200

Male unique elder kraken

NE Gargantuan magical beast (aquatic)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; Perception +32

DEFENSE

AC 36, touch 6, flat-footed 36 (+30 natural, -4 size)

hp 348 (24d10+216)

Fort +23, **Ref** +14, **Will** +13

Immune cold, mind-affecting effects, poison; **Resist** electricity 30; **SR** 31

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., swim 40 ft., jet 280 ft.

Melee 2 arms +31 (3d6+11/19-20 plus 1d6 electricity), bite +31 (2d8+11), 8 tentacles +29 (1d8+5)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (60 ft. with arm, 40 ft. with tentacle)

Special Attacks constrict (tentacles, 1d8+10), ink cloud, rend ship

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 19th; concentration +24)

3/day—*chain lightning* (DC 21), *dominate person* (DC 20), *summon monster IX* (1d4+1 dire sharks only)

1/day—*call lightning storm* (DC 20), *control weather*, *control winds*, *dominate monster* (DC 24, animal only), *greater teleport*, *resist energy*

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 10, **Con** 29, **Int** 21, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +24; **CMB** +39; **CMD** 49 (can't be tripped)

Feats Bleeding Critical, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat

Expertise, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (arm), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (arm), Improved Trip, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike

Skills Intimidate +29, Knowledge (geography) +29, Knowledge (nature) +29, Perception +32, Stealth +15, Swim +46, Use Magic Device +29

Languages Aquan, Common

SQ tenacious grapple

Qwoshokk is an ancient elder kraken who dwells northwest of Cheliaz, 2 miles beneath the surface of the water in the Arcadian Ocean's Gartanica Trench. He has laired there for over 3,000 years, excavating the remains of an aboleth palace buried beneath a thin layer of sediment. In addition to uncovering the relics of his enemies, Qwoshokk devotes much of his time to restoring an aboleth machine called the Cholcorite Mechanism, using a rare kind of agate found off the Chelish coast to repair the engine. Once he has completed his work on the device, he believes it will grant him immortality and the power to dominate all the



denizens of the sea, at which point he will take his ambitions to the surface world.

While Qwoshokk's work on the Cholcorite Mechanism is almost finished, he fears he needs one more item to complete the device—an artifact of great power that will jump-start the Mechanism's arcane energies. Qwoshokk knows that to the north of the Gartanica Trench once stood the empire of Thassilon, and he has constructed a plan to excavate great chunks of the Fenwall Mountains of southern Varisia, seeking whatever unknowable treasures may lurk beneath the stone. Already, he has procured the aid of several influential land-dwellers who have promised to help him find the artifact, frightened into submission when the immense kraken appeared at the shore of their seaside towns promising destruction to all those who did not obey him.

Having worked on the Cholcorite Mechanism for millennia, Qwoshokk was able to extract several unnecessary parts out of the device for his personal use. Among them are his crown and armlets, items which he's bonded to his flesh to give him power over lightning as well as to enhance his ability to summon and control creatures with weak minds.



MEDUSA

THE ADVENTURERS LOOKED AT ME AS THOUGH I JUST HAD COME BACK FROM THE DEAD. INDEED, I FELT AS IF I HAD BEEN REBORN INTO AN ENTIRELY NEW WORLD. THE BEAUTIFUL MARBLE COLUMNS THAT ONCE ADORNED THE HOME I FOUND MYSELF IN HAD ERODED INTO RUBBLE, AND ALL OF THE VASES AND ORNAMENTS DECORATING THE PLACE HAD EITHER BEEN TAKEN OR DESTROYED. MY SAVIORS FILLED ME IN ON THE STATE OF MY GOD AND MY NATION AND ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED DURING MY STONY SLUMBER. THEY ASKED WHAT HAPPENED TO ME, AND I TOLD THEM WHAT I COULD REMEMBER: “I MET A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, HER FACE HIDDEN BEHIND A VEIL...”

—FROM THE JOURNAL OF CRYSSIAS BERYLIA, PATHFINDER

The ultimate outcasts, medusas are hated, loathed, and feared by members of every race vulnerable to their abilities. At a distance, a medusa resembles a shapely woman with supple skin that ranges from alabaster to ebony and sparkling eyes as hard as diamonds. However, the reality of the deceptive being becomes all too apparent as one nears her, for one discovers that the beautiful woman's hair is actually composed of dozens of writhing serpents, and her captivating gaze is capable of turning the casual onlooker to stone. Medusas' horrific visages and destructive powers mark them as monsters in most cultures, and their status as exiles drives them to despise their persecutors in return. While not innately evil, medusas are driven to pursue their dark desires out of spite, scornful of those who shun them for their curse. It is no wonder that medusas as a rule do not pursue more wholesome endeavors, for they are confined to the outskirts of society, forced to victimize innocents and formulate underhanded schemes in order to simply get by. Unfortunately, for most medusas, simply getting by isn't nearly enough.

Medusas are avaricious, lustful, and driven by the need for vengeance. They make their lairs far from the societies that shun them, preferring to adopt as their homes either labyrinthine cave systems or neglected structures in remote marshes and jungles, and often construct underground passages that link both such realms in order to bolster their mobility. Though they reside in places of squalor, medusas take pride in how they ornament their abodes, filling each room with resplendent jewels, masterfully crafted works of pottery, and unique pieces of beautiful art. To acquire such decorations, a medusa will sometimes journey to nearby settlements with a veil drawn over her eyes and a hood over her hair, seducing vendors and private collectors alike with her charming wiles or stealing the items while they have their backs turned. When a medusa has a target with particularly desirable wares in a vulnerable position, she may unleash her petrifying gaze, turning her victim to stone and allowing her to plunder his goods at her whim. Of course, the medusa is sure to dispose of the evidence of her crime—destroying her newly created statue and hiding the rubble—lest the surrounding populace become aware of her presence.

ECOLOGY

A medusa's diet reflects her environment; one who spends most of her time dwelling in her marshy lair will make her meals out of the other denizens of the swamp, preferring the raw meat of crocodiles, giant frogs, and boggards. Since their appetites are largely carnivorous, medusas often become experts at stealthily hunting down their prey and killing it from afar so as not to petrify

their meal before it can be consumed. A medusa's stony gaze doesn't discriminate, and neither birds nor vermin are immune to her curse. Thus, for a marsh-dwelling medusa, any bugs that may have acted as pollinators and seed-bearers are often accidentally turned to dust and gravel, and though medusas are fond of wine and fresh fruit, most must travel away from their lairs in order to acquire such luxuries, the plant life having become neglected by the because of their accursed presence. While it is partly true that medusas have an affinity for lonely and bleak places far from those who despise them, this is primarily so because medusas create bleakness and desolation wherever they linger, and even if they establish new homes, it is not long before bleakness and desolation follow them once more.

While many medusas reside in distant swamp lairs, some opt to move into the dark underbellies of the societies that hate them, if only to be closer to the objects of their own depredations. Such medusas often hone their archery skills in the wild before utilizing them in urban areas, turning their mastery of the hunt into viable careers as rogues or assassins. Others pursue the arcane or divine arts, acting as oracles and seers for those bold enough to pay for such fickle beings' services. Customers who pay adequate homage to a fortunetelling medusa are often rewarded with valuable advice, while those who either overtly or inadvertently insult such monstrous sages quickly find themselves among the numerous statues of previous insolent customers decorating the medusa's parlor.

Medusas can mate with any race capable of propagation with humans, though their children are always female and always carry their mother's curse. A medusa typically chooses the finest breeding stock for her pleasures and for reproduction, manipulating her subjects with trickery and disguise while driving them into poverty with her incessant desires for expensive material goods. The hereditary curse of medusas is outwardly reflected in their gaze and hair, but less well known is that within every medusa's chest beats a heart made of literal and figurative stone. As hard as rock yet as contractile as any human heart, a medusa's heart is made up of an ever-renewing, mystic precipitate, which the blood of the creature constantly erodes and replenishes as it pulses through. Within it is said to be some lingering trace of the immortal, a chemical that extends medusas' lifespans beyond those of even elves.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

A medusa is often solitary as a byproduct of her powers, since few allies can survive around her for long, but among those who can withstand their damning gaze, medusas are quite fond of organizing heists and planning other illicit activities. Medusas often find it difficult to

work together, as individuals tend to have very particular ideas about how best to accomplish their goals; even if they agree on what those goals are, a medusa is rarely willing to submit to the authority of another, as each feels she should be in control. A particularly strong medusa may be able to recruit others to her cause and enforce a strict hierarchy and chain of command, and a cadre of medusas working in concert is truly a terrifying thing; it is far more common, however, for a single medusa to establish a network of spies and minions of other, lesser races to work for her.

Medusas who dwell in ancient ruins—especially those who fancy themselves clerics or other channelers of the divine—often ally with intelligent undead or animate skeleton and zombie servants, as beings of unlife are immune to their lapidifying gaze. For similar reasons, medusas with a more academic bent may delve into ancient secrets that allow them to control constructs that patrol and protect their lairs. Still others form oracular cults, doling out prophecies and encouraging their monstrous petitioners to wholly blind themselves and rely on their supernatural senses, forcing their subjects to wear hoods or blindfolds, or burning incense from banks of censers and hanging thuribles so as to conceal their faces amid the haze.

Medusas who choose to make their homes far from the realms of civilization have little reason to hide their collections of petrified victims, and may place them in artistic arrangements around their lairs to intimidate intruders or those they've lured to such desolate places. More cautious medusas, especially those whose homes aren't especially far from outposts or urban centers,

meticulously dispose of petrified remains in deep pits, pools, and bogs, or bury them under sand and soil to avoid alerting explorers to the danger. Even so, clever adventurers might notice the peculiar absence of vermin and small animals that normally crawl about the warm, damp environs medusas typically reside in, and even a tiny bee made of stone can be a dead giveaway of a medusa's presence.

A medusa living among humans and their ilk must be an expert at disguise or stealth, and keep her visage constantly hidden behind a veil or beneath a low-hanging hood. Such social medusas excel at creating elaborate networks of unassociated cells, each unaware of the activities and objectives of the others. A medusa usually uses different disguises with each sect of her organization to ensure that the uncovering of one will not lead to discovery of another, as well as to keep her true nature and identity hidden. While loath to sacrifice followers for no reason, medusas are ruthless in expunging those who fail to advance their objectives or who prove incompetent. Medusas can often be found as the leaders of thieves' guilds, smuggling rings, slave trafficking operations, or any other exploitive enterprise. Labyrinthine lairs in sewers or decayed slums are often the favored homes of urban-dwelling medusas, but many ambitious individuals take an entirely different tack, infiltrating the upper echelons of society through seduction, blackmail, or outright assassination. Some may steal the identity of reclusive, elderly, or sickly patricians or members of such wealthy families, living in opulence under the stony gaze of victims petrified in their own homes before smashing the evidence and moving onto another set of prey.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Medusas make excellent foes for PCs in both urban and wilderness campaigns. The snake-haired monsters can be found behind closed doors in the corrupt parts of vast metropolises as well as in the abandoned ruins of forts and citadels in boggy swamps, and how medusas intersect with both environs can create an interesting dynamic for PCs used to simply exploring one or the other. Tracking down the criminal mastermind behind a massive slave-trading operation can take an unexpected twist when the leader's home contains a secret entrance to a vast underground network of interwoven cave systems. Likewise, treasure hunters exploring the apparently empty lair of a temporarily absent medusa would be surprised to find a tunnel full of the petrified remains of countless victims leading to the slum district of a nearby town, and such events can create interesting roleplaying opportunities in addition to combat encounters.



Medusas in the wild are often the hunter rather than the hunted, and PCs who find themselves in the territory of a medusa may discover their error all too quickly when an arrow narrowly misses an adventurer's throat. Such medusas typically attack intruders they believe are getting too close to their lairs, though a particularly tactical medusa may instead set up her home to attract such intrusions, utilizing various preset traps as well as the ledges, catwalks, balconies, trenches, and pits that dot the environment. A medusa typically allows PCs to get just close enough for her to use her gaze while staying out of melee combat. Medusas with class levels will often focus on Acrobatics or Climb (or acquire magical equipment to enhance these skills) to render these strategies more effective, and when getting close enough to petrify foes is not a wise choice, they rely on their longbows to subdue ranged opponents before moving in to deal with the rest.

Medusas make excellent foes for the end of low- to mid-level adventures, and can be given class levels to enhance their prowess in combat even further. As they typically guard huge treasure troves of wealth and lore, the items an adventuring party finds upon destroying a medusa can double as strong plot hooks, as the PCs might need to return a powerful artifact to its proper resting ground in order to prevent further chaos, or might find a treasure map signifying further plunder to be found in a distant region. Thanks to both the range of possibilities granted by their greed, as well as their mid-range CR, medusas make for excellent transitional monsters when a GM wants to shift a campaign in an entirely different direction midway through a party's adventuring career.

In a high-level game, multiple medusas attacking simultaneously constitute a legitimate threat, as they are immune to each other's gazes, while PCs must continue to save every round for every medusa as long as they are within range. Their humanoid forms and ability to blend in with more mundane societies make medusas particularly viable monstrous candidates for adding class levels and developing interesting backstories. Medusas with class levels are excellent high-level opponents, especially as rogues who sneak attack enemies averting their gaze, or as foes with levels in a Charisma-based class such as bard, oracle, sorcerer, or cleric, since their higher ability scores and access to powerful magic items and spells make their Charisma-based gaze weapon even more potent. Even medusas who take levels in fighter, barbarian, or monk can prove powerful, taking PCs by surprise if they expect a less physical opponent.

TREASURE

Medusas are collectors of all forms of wealth, and because of their greedy nature some develop obsessive fixations on particular objects of art and beauty. Medusas prize jewelry,

MEDUSAS IN MYTHOLOGY

In traditional Greek mythology, it is said that Medusa was one of the three monstrous Gorgon sisters produced by the elder deities Phorcys and Ceto. Later, however, the Roman writer Ovid characterized Medusa as a lovely priestess of Minerva (the Roman incarnation of Athena), who after consorting with Neptune (Poseidon) was punished by the goddess—her hair was turned into snakes that transformed anyone who gazed upon her to stone.

Slaying Medusa, the only mortal Gorgon, was the object of Perseus's epic quest. Sent on a suicide mission by King Polydectes—who sought to marry Perseus's mother—Perseus received several gifts from the gods to aid him in his journey, including a mirrored shield he used to avoid looking directly at the monster, an adamant sword he used to strike off her head, a magic bag to carry it, and a cap of invisibility to enable him to escape Medusa's immortal sisters. On his return journey, Perseus used Medusa's head to petrify the Titan Atlas, slay his rival suitor while pursuing Andromeda, and kill King Polydectes. The drops of blood that spilled from Medusa's head whenever Perseus set it down are thought to have created the corals of the Red Sea as well as the vipers of the Sahara Desert. His mission accomplished, he returned the gods' gifts and offered Medusa's head to Athena, who mounted it upon her shield, the Aegis.

carvings, and other types of artistic possessions, and whenever possible they trade raw coin and gemstones for such works. Even finely crafted but mundane items such as lamps, furniture, and utensils appeal to the aesthetic of medusas, who see the beauty in anything that has been crafted from something raw into something functional and magnificent. Favorite magic items of medusas include all types of magical jewelry (such as necklaces, rings, pendants, crowns, and circlets), *figurines of wondrous power*, *marvelous pigments*, *rods of splendor*, and magical cloaks and robes of ostentatious design—and of course jars of *stone salve* to help them loot their petrified victims. A medusa may stow gaudy items when she requires stealth, but when she reveals herself she wants every eye drawn to her.

In some ways, the dwelling place of a medusa may be a treasure in and of itself. While medusas are rarely scholars of history and magic, their affinity for beauty extends to a fascinated appreciation for ancient architecture and weathered relics of past civilizations. Whether they sense the faded glory of these artifacts and crumbling edifices or simply enjoy the time-touched patina of the ages surrounding their collections, medusas all share a

fascination for the relics of old, and take great pride in collecting them. A medusa's hoard is often amassed in the most stunning room in her lair, and the chamber is frequently constructed out of carefully rescued and restored architectural features decorated with etchings, mosaics, reliefs, and friezes of all sorts, accented by marvelous idols, icons, statuettes, and figurines. More than a few long-lost secrets of the ancients have been uncovered as a result of piecing together the oddments of a medusa's horde.

MEDUSAS ON GOLARION

While it is said that the first medusas came from the islands of Ibydos near Casmaron, the monsters have spread throughout Golarion and made their mark on the nations of the Inner Sea so strongly as to make them seem native to the region. Their interbreeding has produced medusas of every ethnic derivation, though as they tend to favor warm, wet regions, there are notably more medusas of Garundi descent. With their keen and subtle minds, disguised medusas have risen in the ranks of such dastardly organizations as the Szarni of Riddleport and the Aspis Consortium in Port Peril. The snake-headed monsters live secretly in virtually every major city of Avistan, especially in Absalom, the marketplaces of Qadira and Katapesh, and the decadent courts of Taldor.

The pressure of living in continual disguise is wearying for many medusas, however, and some instead opt to escape to the less populated corners of the Inner Sea region. One such individual is a medusa that goes by the name of Thiralia, who began a secret mining venture in the remote parts of the Napsune Mountains in Rahadoum, recruiting monstrous laborers such as gnolls, orcs, and divs to operate her enormous machines that plow through soil and stone. While Thiralia—who wears a mask of green and blue hues that resembles a twisted night sky—has kept silent about her true motives, her keener minions suspect she is looking for ruins from the Jistka Imperium, but for what reason none know. Any drudges who suspect such things are sure to keep their thoughts to themselves, for anyone who shows so much as an ounce of questioning or dissent must witness the medusa while she unveils her face, and his statue is subsequently destroyed by the mining gear of his more obedient comrades.

South of Geb in the dreaded Field of Maidens there stand innumerable statues of Garundi warrior women, a testament to the power and impatience of the undead wizard king Geb, who turned the invaders to stone as they neared the border to his land. While few dare near the cursed land for fear of the dark energies that may still plague it, those who have seen the field claim that among the statues walks a lone medusa, whom local folklore

has named the Lonely Maiden. She is of mysterious origin, and rumors of her existence have subsisted for centuries, indicating that the monster may be no more than an urban legend. Still, daring adventurers and bold explorers occasionally go to the Field of Maidens to see if the Lonely Maiden is real, and those who come back—notably fewer than those who set out—testify that the medusa is as real as death itself.

VARIANTS

Though most medusas are essentially humanoid in form save for their monstrous locks and unearthly powers, in lands where the serpent-haired beauties are particularly prevalent there occasionally rises to notoriety a different sort of medusa, one with the lower body of a snake instead of legs. These beasts are known as brazen medusas, and their powers are just as potent as the common medusa, save that they have a hardened body of dark bronze scales and an animalistic hunger that is difficult to sate. Though it comes from the womb of an ordinary medusa, a brazen medusa is anomalous, and is usually the result of the mother mating with a particularly powerful individual of monstrous nature. Brazen medusas tend to isolate themselves in the more remote regions of the world, as their monstrous figures make it difficult for them to integrate into civilized societies. They still have the trademark greed of medusas, but they satisfy their compulsions through more primitive acts of hunting and slaughter rather than by amassing wealth, and so many brazen medusas take levels in classes that enhance their ability to stalk and kill, especially fighter, ranger, and rogue.

Brazen Medusa (+1 CR): A brazen medusa is of Large size, and gains two claw attacks and a tail slap attack in addition to her snake bite melee attack. Her tail slap attack can grab enemies, and she has the constrict special attack. In addition, a brazen medusa is immune to poison and gains DR 5/adamantine and magic.

SAMPLE MEDUSA

This monstrous, snaked-haired creature has the upper body of a bronze-skinned woman and the lower body of an enormous serpent.

EYGREAS

CR 13
XP 25,600

Female brazen medusa ranger 5

LE Large monstrous humanoid

Init +8; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 24 (+6 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 natural, -1 size)

hp 141 (13 HD; 8d10+5d10+70)


Fort +11, **Ref** +16, **Will** +8

DR 5/adamantine and magic; **Immune** poison

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +16 (1d6+2), snake bite +16 (1d6+2 plus poison), tail slap +11 (1d8+1 plus grab) or mwk scimitar +15/+10/+5 (1d8+2/18–20)

Ranged +2 *seeking composite longbow* +18/+13/+8 (2d6+4/×3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (1d8+1), favored enemy (humans +2, monstrous humanoids +4), petrifying gaze

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 2nd; concentration +3)

1st—*entangle* (DC 12), *pass without trace*

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 19, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +16 (+20 grapple); **CMD** 31

Feats Dodge, Endurance, Far Shot, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +16, Intimidate +16, Perception +21, Stealth +15, Survival +17; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception

Languages Common, Draconic

SQ favored terrain (jungle +2), hunter's bond (constrictor snake), track +2, wild empathy +8

Gear +2 *chain shirt*, +2 *seeking composite longbow* (+2 Str) with 40 arrows, masterwork scimitar, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *bracers of armor* +1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Petrifying Gaze (Su) Turn to stone permanently, 30 feet, Fortitude DC 19 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex) Snake bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 19; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Str; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

At a young age, Eygreas learned from her mother—a strong-willed medusa by the name of Litiasha—that she was the daughter of a powerful boggard priest-king. When the tribe of boggards ambushed Litiasha several years after Eygreas's birth, demanding that the medusa release her brazen daughter to them to be sacrificed on an altar to Gogunta, Litiasha barely had time to petrify more than half of the boggard warriors before she was overwhelmed and abducted by them, and sacrificed in her daughter's place. Eygreas barely escaped the onslaught; the traumatic event spurred within her a burning hatred for the froglike denizens of the swamp, and so she honed her skill with her bow and devoted her life to hunting the tribe that had killed her kin. After stealthily slaughtering all of the boggards with her arrows and gaze—and thus removing her only driving motivation—she fell into a realm of madness and bitter isolation.

Now, the brazen medusa stalks the Thassilonian ruins that dot the southern Mushfens, seeking some sort of artifact or piece of history that will once again give meaning to her life, all the while butchering any she comes across with little regard to their motives or means. Though her memory is mostly shattered, her skill at hunting remains sharp, and she seeks solace from the chaos of her mind by stalking her prey and feasting on their corpses. Still, though she does not remember why, the sight of the toady people of the swamp enrages her to no end, and the only thing that will stop Eygreas from pursuing her current target is the opportunity to hunt a boggard instead.





PHOENIX

“I WAS DONE FOR. I WAS THE LAST OF MY TROOP, AND THE UNDEAD HORRORS AROUND ME CREPT SLOWLY CLOSER, AS IF THEY KNEW THEY HAD ME CORNERED AND I COULD DO NOTHING TO SAVE MYSELF. BUT JUST AS THE LAST GLIMMER OF HOPE FADED FROM ME, AN INTENSE FEELING OF WARMTH SWELLED THROUGH MY FEET, THEN MY LEGS, AND THEN MY WHOLE BODY. OUT OF THE WELL IN THE DISTANCE, I SAW MY SAVIOR—THE PHOENIX WE ALL THOUGHT DEAD FOR SURE—BURSTING RIGHT OUT OF THE EARTH. I KNEW THEN THAT THIS WAS NO MERE BIRD OF FIRE, BUT A CREATURE BLESSED BY THE GODS THEMSELVES.”

—COMMANDER MALINA ASHIMARI



Few creatures come as close to epitomizing the ideals of good and righteousness as phoenixes. Resplendent birds with the ability to set their bodies ablaze at will and resurrect themselves after being slain, phoenixes compete with even the mightiest angels in their acts of virtue. While even the greatest celestial must occasionally turn its attention to its home plane, the phoenix remains a vigilant guardian of the Material Plane and a crusader against those who would seek to spread cruelty and malice. All the while, the benevolent creatures encourage the sowing of knowledge and wisdom, seeing education as a means to end such evils as famine and war.

In civilized lands, the phoenix is seen as a symbol of virtue, healing, strength, and eternal life. Its likeness is used to sell crafts, and its raw power is emulated in exotic, complex fighting styles. While phoenixes rarely dwell in or near humanoid settlements, the beings are known far and wide for their acts of benevolence and vast stores of wisdom. Some pilgrims trek hundreds of miles through harsh deserts and barren hills merely to solicit a phoenix's rare and ancient knowledge, always given freely and with courtesy.

ECOLOGY

Although all phoenixes are avian in form, their specific features vary greatly from region to region. In arid plains and desert lands, where phoenixes are most common, such magical beasts resemble enormous hawks and eagles with sharp, hooked beaks and piercing ruby eyes. In the dense jungles and outlying savannas of the southern continents, the mythical firebirds have the smooth-crested heads and resplendent feathers of the region's various tropical birds. In some arid lands that border close enough to vast, primeval forests, rare owl-like phoenixes with huge, violet eyes and crushing talons help elves shepherd their ancient woods. Coloration is generally more uniform among phoenixes, with the brightest plumage usually located on the crest, and feathers becoming darker in color across the bird's shoulders and on the flight feathers. While red and yellow are the most common hues among phoenixes' blazing feathers, white, green, and blue have been documented as well. Such uncommon colors are primarily found on the most powerful phoenixes, the hues directly correlated with the heat of the phoenix's flames. A phoenix's underbelly is lighter and ranges from white to yellow, though older individuals have been known to have ash-gray or jet-black stomachs.

Phoenixes grow to enormous sizes, and despite their massive wings, they are graceful, agile fliers. An adult phoenix stands 20 feet tall, has a 40-foot wingspan, and weighs about 5,000 pounds. Males and females are

roughly the same size; males possess slightly brighter feathers that they display during courtship flights, and the song of the female phoenix is higher and often deemed more melodic than that of males. Indeed, while a phoenix's song does not usually possess any mystical influence in and of itself, the cry is often as fascinating to listeners as any of its other powers. Likened to a songbird's melody combined with the harshness of a raptor's shriek, a phoenix's cry is supposedly good luck for virtuous individuals who hear it and a bad omen for would-be evildoers.

Most phoenixes are birds of prey, and although they can subsist on large quantities of fruit or plants if necessary, many prefer the taste of meat and the thrill of the hunt. They typically feed on local wildlife such as grazing gazelles or antelopes, as well as various species of deer and aurochs. Phoenixes prefer their meat raw, but the hospitable creatures are happy to quickly roast a meal for guests with more discerning palates. Phoenixes that dwell in more populous regions are sometimes given gifts by grateful humanoids, but the firebirds would usually rather deliver such presents to those in need (much like the serpentine couatls, phoenixes' weaker comrades in righteousness). When battling particularly ignoble creatures, phoenixes are not opposed to eating villains' remains, fueling their battles even as they wage them.

Phoenixes live for up to 500 years before being reborn as completely new individuals, and reproduce once every century after their first. Phoenixes mate for life, though they only come together for a brief mating period before parting once again. During this mating period, the female produces an egg the size of a small wine cask, and for the next 6 months both parents alternately incubate the egg. When the egg finally hatches, it reveals a young phoenix the size of an eagle, and within days the newly hatched phoenix possesses intelligence equal to that of a human.

As impressive physiologically as the phoenix is, the bird's legendary reputation truly stems from its association with magic and fire. At will, a phoenix can wreath its body in a halo of searing fire whose flames scorch the flesh of any who dare near it. This incendiary shroud obscures all but the creature's basic shape and the light of its eyes. The overwhelming sight of a phoenix aflame is so mesmerizing to allies and foes alike that the mere spectacle has been known to end battles before they even begin.

Even a phoenix's healing magic is linked to the creature's flame, for those who have had their wounds healed by the creature tell of waves of fire that burn away gashes and leave healed and unblemished skin, or of warm radiance that drives out the numbing cold of poison and disease. Yet the greatest by far of the phoenix's legendary powers is its self-resurrection ability. Once per

year, a slain phoenix can return to life within seconds of its death. Particularly skilled foes can prevent such an occurrence by quickly eradicating the remains, but many enemies have spent their last reserves battling a phoenix to the death, only to find the creature renewed instantly and ready to fight once more. Those who have seen a phoenix rise claim that the bird's corpse initially becomes brittle and blackened, like the wrinkled form of a charred log. Moments later, crimson light begins to seep from the cracked remains before the rejuvenated phoenix bursts forth aflame, reducing the husk to ashes. If the magical firebird should be slain again before its legendary power has regenerated, however, it can only be raised via powerful magic from an outside source. Few sights are more disheartening than the true death of a noble phoenix.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Phoenixes form strong bonds with their mates, though because of their solitary natures they do not spend much time in each other's company. A pair of phoenixes comes together to mate only at great intervals, and the parents of a young phoenix then care for their offspring for the first few years of its life. After this span of time, the firebirds leave each other, casting themselves far and wide in order to spread their benevolent influence and words of wisdom. Each century, however, the original couple will come back together once more to rear another fledgling, rekindle their affections, and share their knowledge.

Young phoenixes rarely ever see their parents again, and must instead seek the company of mates if they wish to interact with their own kind once more. Phoenixes do not often seek allies among one another besides their mates, only gathering as a group in times when a dire evil has overcome the land and requires the might of several phoenixes to combat it. Phoenixes' innately solitary nature makes them difficult allies to acquire, as most such creatures dwell in secluded areas in desolate hilly regions or valleys. While they do isolate themselves in this manner, phoenixes do not mind the company of visiting humanoids or other creatures, especially if such a friendship could be beneficial to both parties. Phoenixes thrive on scholarly knowledge, and revel in gifts of tomes

and lore. While phoenixes appreciate presents of gold and nonmagical luxuries from travelers, they tend to give these gifts away to deserving peasants, spreading wealth rather than hoarding it. Just as many scholars seek out phoenixes to acquire greater understanding from such wise beings, phoenixes likewise glean whatever knowledge they can from these visitors. They have been known to visit the greater libraries of the world in order to absorb the knowledge of their rarest tomes, and it is said that their lairs often contain many rare scrolls and books, carefully protected against the obvious risk of fire. A phoenix is often more than happy to give such rare documents to gracious and good-intentioned mortals, though it will occasionally make a copy of the text to keep if the information it contains is particularly important.

Given their long lifespans and appreciation for knowledge, it is no wonder phoenixes get along so well with metallic dragons.

Good-intentioned dragons acknowledge phoenixes' power and impressive intellects, and when the two species exist in close proximity, they sometimes forge lifelong friendships, sharing their resources and words of wisdom and keeping each other updated on regional news. While outsiders such as archons, angels, and agathions possess some of the same ideals as phoenixes, the massive firebirds rarely have many dealings with extraplanar beings save in passing, as such immortals' worldviews are

often too distant and vast in scope for the more grounded, task-oriented phoenixes.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Because of their high CR and good alignment, phoenixes are rarely opponents in typical campaigns, but can act as powerful distant helpers and mysterious benefactors for PCs in need. Phoenixes are solitary creatures, and though they seek to do acts of good in the world, they often opt for a more ancillary role, recruiting virtuous adventurers to accomplish important tasks when their attention is required elsewhere. When a phoenix desires an audience with those it deems worthy of aiding it, it seeks such beings out, either directly or via a trusted proxy. In cases when a phoenix entrusts low- and mid-level PCs with important tasks, the firebird can act as a mentor and



informer, providing them with information or clues they might need in order to complete their objectives.

In other instances, adventurers might actively seek the advice of a phoenix in order to solve a mystery of their own. The search for and journey to a phoenix's lair can make for an exciting and eventful adventure, as the legendary birds hardly make themselves readily accessible, often requiring visitors seeking them to cross challenging terrain such as vast deserts, sheer rock faces, and complex mountain passes. Even when a party discovers the den of a phoenix, the great beast may require some show of honor or strength before providing its aid, perhaps constructing an elaborate trial for the PCs in order to prove their mettle—inevitably one that involves spreading goodwill or conquering evil.

In high-level campaigns, a phoenix can more readily act as an ally, as a source of obscure knowledge, or as a resource for rare items to be bought or bargained for. Additionally, a phoenix's willingness to battle evil at all costs often puts the creature in great danger, and good-aligned PCs might need to rescue a phoenix from powerful fiends or an evil dragon if the creature should find itself outmatched. Since phoenixes often possess important knowledge, such quests take on extra urgency if the captive phoenix's incredible secrets are at risk of being stolen as well.

In an evil campaign, few creatures make as challenging a final adversary as a phoenix. Confrontation with the firebird could be the consequence of the PCs' escalating nefarious deeds, and can set up the phoenix as a recurring antagonist. All phoenixes are uniquely fit for this role since they can literally come back from the dead again and again, especially in a longer campaign arc. Additionally, evil characters could effectively have to fight the phoenix twice in one encounter to truly defeat it, although PCs who caused a phoenix's true death would likely find their victory bought at great cost; the enmity they would earn among other powerful servants of good could easily fuel several subsequent adventures.

TREASURE

Phoenixes regard knowledge of any kind as the greatest treasure anyone can possess. While their lairs often contain modest stockpiles of coins and precious gems gifted by grateful visitors, the majority of a phoenix's treasure takes the form of scrolls, books, tablets, and other repositories of information. Many of the most costly mundane items in a phoenix's hoard are rare manuscripts of forgotten lore. Phoenixes keep such fragile items warded by magic or locked safely away in large chests of stone so that they are not burned in combat if the creature's home is attacked. When possible, phoenixes stock their lairs with powerful

THE PHOENIX IN MYTHOLOGY

The phoenix appears in the mythology of the Mediterranean world as early as the fifth century BCE. Although elements differ among historical records of the time, most myths describe the phoenix as a firebird with resplendent colors and a noble bearing. Although chronicled by both Greek and Roman scholars, the phoenix was a creature in Egyptian, Persian, and Indian myths as well, capable of long, graceful flights and perpetuating life through self-immolation. In some legends, this immolation was a means of reproduction for the phoenix, rather than resurrection—the phoenix's immolation created an egg composed of frankincense or similar precious spices, from which a new phoenix would emerge. The Egyptian phoenix became popular in early Catholic art, literature, and theology, where the firebird's resurrection and eternal life was symbolic of Christ. In Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cultures, the phoenix is a mythological being known by many different names and characteristics, although it is always a symbol of eternal life. Regardless of specifics, all cultures that celebrate the phoenix depict it as a benevolent being whose presence signifies good fortune.

magical books such as *manuals of bodily health* and *tomes of understanding*, holding such items for times of dire need or when a particularly worthy adventurer makes her presence known.

In addition to their libraries and stores of knowledge, phoenixes have also been known to collect powerful evil artifacts, items that the giant birds have confiscated from villains and vile beasts alike. A phoenix retains such treacherous works in its private lair so as to keep the things out of the wrong hands, while often optimistically hoping for some creature to prove that such an item can in fact be put to good use. While a phoenix would never dream of using such foul items for its own purposes, upon occasion a cursed relic takes hold of a well-meaning phoenix's mind; such mesmerized beasts can prove to be terrible blights on nearby settlements. A phoenix makes sure to destroy the relic at fault if ever released from its hold—such enchanted individuals are exceedingly thankful to their saviors, and often allow the heroes in question to claim any item from their lair of treasures as a reward.

PHOENIXES ON GOLARION

Apart from its role in combating those who seek to do evil, the phoenix has great cultural significance across Golarion. In Tian Xia, phoenixes seen in the company of

EVIL PHOENIXES

While phoenixes almost always start out benevolent, they are not infallible. Whether through demonic taint, magical influence, or some other corruption, a phoenix can become a creature of destruction. These cruel individuals retain their strong appetites for knowledge, but hoard information instead of spreading it, and often assault universities and libraries in their pursuit of power and wisdom—not just to gain new information for themselves, but to set fire to those texts they've studied in order to prevent others from learning their secrets.

Evil phoenixes typically have additional Hit Dice, and forfeit their healing spell-like abilities for spell-like abilities of equal level that deal damage or inflict detrimental effects upon creatures. Their regeneration and damage reduction effects are bypassed by good instead of evil, and they typically deal more energy damage with their natural attacks. In addition, all evil phoenixes gain the following special quality.

Corrupted Flames (Su): In addition to the normal effects of a phoenix's shroud of flame, an evil phoenix's fire corrupts those it touches. Whenever a creature begins its turn within the area affected by the shroud of flame, it must succeed at a Will save (DC 25 for most evil phoenixes) or gain 1d4 temporary negative levels as per the *enervation* spell. Whether or not the save is successful, an affected creature is immune to this effect for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

imperial dragons are a sign of good luck, and many feast days and celebrations feature food inspired by the natural characteristics of both creatures. In the eastern parts of Qadira, where phoenixes are particularly prevalent, followers of Sarenrae sometimes claim that the goddess visits the Material Plane on the back of a phoenix or in the creature's guise. Such devout individuals point to specific passages in Sarenrae's holy text, *The Birth of Light and Truth*, which can be read in a way that suggests the first phoenixes were created when the Dawnflower used her magic to awaken a flight of rocs, subsequently blessing them with her fire when they pledged their service to her.

Within the vast Underdunes of Osirion, a powerful and ancient phoenix known as the Firesong makes his lair on the side of a towering sandstone cliff, behind a perpetually flowing cascade of sand the flaming hawk calls the River of Time. While it is known that phoenixes live for 500 years and then turn to ash to be reborn as new phoenixes, local Garundi legends say that the Firesong has lived far longer than that in his current state, and the tribal scholars theorize that he is a regular bidder for the

immortalizing *sun orchid elixir* from Thuvia, and that he leaves his lair only to pick up his shipment personally. Why a creature who rebirths upon death would seek immortality, however, is a question none have been able to answer. The Firesong—his unusually sunken eyes, wrinkled features, and violet tail feathers seeming to verify his age—replies to questions regarding his longevity only in cryptic half-answers, but for all other inquiries he happily aids those who have braved the desert wastes to meet him, referring often to the tomes within his extensive library of Osirian texts.

Near the Occularium, Rahadoum's esteemed wizard college in the city of Manaket, a phoenix by the name of Embriax makes his lair somewhere near the Path of Salt along the shores of the Inner Sea. He has been known to visit the university, helping researchers there find a way to make the desert lands surrounding the city more hospitable. His contributions to the project have been invaluable to the Occularium's scholars, though in recent times Embriax's visits have become fewer and farther between, and the phoenix seems harried despite his usually calm demeanor. When asked, Embriax told the researchers he feared that not everyone in Rahadoum supported the idea of controlling the desert's sands. That was over a year ago, and the great bird of fire has not been seen since, leading many to worry that he may have been captured by someone or something out in the desert—or worse.

SAMPLE PHOENIX

This giant ebon bird is streaked in lines of fiery embers and red lightning, clouds of black smoke billowing behind it.

PYRALISIA, THE RAIN OF EMBERS

CR 18

XP 153,600

Female unique phoenix (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 227)

NE Gargantuan magical beast (fire)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect good*, *detect magic*, low-light vision, *see invisibility*; Perception +39**Aura** shroud of flame (20 ft., DC 28)

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 13, flat-footed 26 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +20 natural, -4 size)**hp** 287 (23d10+161); regeneration 10 (cold or good)**Fort** +20, **Ref** +19, **Will** +14**Defensive Abilities** self-resurrection; **DR** 15/good; **Immune** fire; **SR** 29**Weaknesses** vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 90 ft. (good)**Melee** bite +28 (2d8+9 plus 4d6 fire and 4d6 electricity), 2 talons +28 (2d6+9/19-20 plus 4d6 fire)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +27)

Constant—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *see invisibility*
 At will—*bestow curse* (DC 21), *chain lightning* (DC 23),
continual flame, *greater dispel magic*, *wall of fire*
 3/day—*fire storm* (DC 25), *mass inflict critical wounds* (DC 25),
quicken wall of fire
 1/day—*destruction* (DC 24), *meteor swarm* (DC 26)

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 23, **Con** 24, **Int** 23, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +23; **CMB** +36; **CMD** 53

Feats Blinding Critical, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus,
 Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (talon), Improved
 Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-
 Like Ability (*wall of fire*), Vital Strike

Skills Bluff +30, Fly +30, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (arcana) +29,
 Knowledge (nature) +29, Perception +39, Sense
 Motive +28, Stealth +20; **Racial Modifiers**
 +8 Perception

Languages Auran, Celestial, Common, Ignan

SQ corrupted flames (DC 28)

Pyralisia, often called “the Rain of Embers,” was considered one the strongest and most benevolent phoenixes of Avistan in the early years of the Age of Lost Omens. She rose to prominence during the First Mendevian Crusade by leading the charge against a marilith general and her legion of minions. During the Second Crusade, Pyralisia oversaw the erection of several of the wardstones that kept the Worldwound’s demonic hordes contained near the crusader citadel of Drezon. But when an Abyssal rift opened near the wardstone line before the final menhirs were in place, the entire crusade stood on the brink of failure. Without hesitation, Pyralisia threw her body into the yawning chasm, blocking the demons’ escape and using her body to absorb the torrents of tainted fire bursting forth.

Pyralisia’s heroic act was not enough, however, and the dark energy pouring from the rift slew her quickly. When she resurrected from her ashes, the Abyssal flames bonded with Pyralisia and corrupted her, instilling her body with dark, negative energy and trapping the Rain of Embers in a body utterly consumed by evil.

Now, Pyralisia prowls the Worldwound, hunting crusaders and demons alike in her vengeful anger. Phoenixes contend that if she could be killed, Pyralisia’s self-resurrection would cleanse her of this malignancy and restore her true goodness. But so far, few have faced Pyralisia and lived to tell the tale. Those phoenixes that have tried to defeat her found themselves outmatched by the new power of Pyralisia’s black fire, their own flames as

useless against her as against any other of their kind. The phoenix Garidor—Pyralisia’s mate prior to her corruption— anxiously watches the roads leading into Mendev, seeking powerful crusaders or adventurers to aid him in destroying his beloved before her perversion becomes permanent.





SPHINX

I'VE ONLY EVER MET THREE SPHINXES IN MY TRAVELS, AND WHILE NONE OF THEM TRIED TO DEVOUR ME WHOLE, ONE DID TRAP ME FOR A WHOLE MONTH WORKING ON SOME PROBLEM INVOLVING THE BIOELECTRICAL PROPERTIES OF A CERTAIN BREED OF LIZARD. IT WAS ALL THEORETICAL—SHE'D NEVER SEEN ONE OF THE LIZARDS BEFORE, AND HAD NO INTEREST IN GOING AND FINDING ONE. SO I WAS TO SERVE AS THE EXPERT. FOR A MONTH. THEN ONE DAY HER EYE HAPPENED TO FIX ON AN OLD SCHEMATIC FOR A SCREW-FED WATER PUMP. I ASSURED HER I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT PUMPS, AND SHE FINALLY LET ME GO! MY PACK MULE, SADLY, WAS NOT AS FORTUNATE.

—DYSO VADRASETHI, *JOURNEYS ON A FLOATING DISC*

The creatures that other races collectively refer to as sphinxes are actually four very different races of magical beasts, all of which are intelligent creatures with the bodies of lions, the wings of birds of prey, and the heads of some other species. Though separate and often resentful of the other types, these strange and single-gendered species exist in a strange form of symbiosis, requiring one another to mate and propagate their line.

The most common and intelligent breeds of sphinxes are the gynosphinxes and the androsphinxes—designations the sphinxes themselves find rude and demeaning, yet which nevertheless remain useful labels for other non-sphinx creatures. Both of these creatures are easily distinguished from their lesser brethren by their heads, which resemble those of female and male humans, respectively.

Androsphinxes are the most powerful of sphinxes, and take this role seriously, seeing themselves as paragons of nobility committed to upholding justice and truth, so that the rest of the world may follow their shining example. Though gruff and curmudgeonly, making no effort to hide their disdain for those of lesser ability or tarnished morality, they prefer to give plenty of warning before attacking those who enter their territories, and may even be convinced to ensure safe passage for travelers in exchange for valuable information. They have a particular fondness for philosophy, ethics, and other high-minded, intellectual topics of debate.

Gynosphinxes, though slightly less powerful than their male counterparts—and decidedly less committed to the path of justice and righteousness—are equally impressive creatures, with intellects that dwarf those of most human scholars (and even those of the androsphinxes). Gynosphinxes are beautiful even by human standards, with perfect heads above breasts covered in tawny fur, which quickly give way to slender leonine bodies. While androsphinxes love philosophy, gynosphinxes are more concerned with logic and inference, particularly when it comes to puzzles and riddles. A fiercely territorial gynosphinx may allow travelers to survive a visit to her domain—or even barter her own precious stores of information—in exchange for insight into a particular conundrum or subject of interest. Such obsessions are the cornerstone of gynosphinxes' personalities, and the fervor with which a gynosphinx pursues a particular puzzle is often completely out of proportion to its utility or significance.

The ram-headed criosphinx is no more evil than the temperamental gynosphinx, yet its lesser intelligence—still equal to a bright humanoid's—makes it an object of general scorn or paternalistic condescension to its human-headed counterparts. Always male, criosphinxes are similarly lessened in their fellows' eyes by their

excessive lust, both for gynosphinxes (when available) and for material wealth. Rather than hoarding knowledge or solving intellectual problems, a criosphinx obsessively accumulates wealth, relinquishing its treasure only when doing so might bring it some new puzzle capable of overcoming a gynosphinx's disdain long enough to allow mating. When engaged in conversation, criosphinxes prefer to talk of worldly matters, or simply accept copious amounts of fawning praise.

Finally, the hieracosphinx is a falcon-headed terror, universally despised by its kindred. Brutish and wrathful, the exclusively male hieracosphinxes have all the territorial urges of their fellows with none of the mitigating qualities, and actively go out of their way to avenge the persecution they face from other types of sphinxes by savaging anyone who crosses their paths, rarely bothering to speak.

All sphinxes are powerful fighters, and except for the hieracosphinx, generally forgo aerial combat in favor of fighting on the ground. The good and neutral breeds generally prefer to avoid fighting entirely, and if they can frighten off intruders through intimidation, so much the better. A sphinx who has a duty to fulfill, however, will frequently fight to the death to discharge it.

Sphinxes of all breeds are known in stories and legends as guardians of great treasures, secrets, and sacred places, and there's much truth to these claims, though each of the races guards such things for its own reasons—whether altruism, greed, entertainment, or fear of a more powerful master. As a result, many places hiding treasures or secrets that don't have an actual sphinx guarding them use sphinxes in their decorations. Keeping a sphinx on guard duty is often expensive, either in treasure or in inventiveness—a gynosphinx without something mentally challenging to work on rapidly becomes bored, and bored sphinxes are dangerous. Despite sphinxes' relative rarity, especially outside of their chosen deserts and arid hills, stories of their exploits are common enough that most folk who encounter one know at least the basics of how to act around them: polite, pleasant, and perceptive.

ECOLOGY

Sphinxes originated in desert climes and prefer dry environments; they are generally found living in warm deserts, plains, and hills. Though carnivores, nonevil sphinxes never kill sentient creatures solely for food (like most people of the desert, however, they see little reason for waste; sphinxes may thus snack on a foe killed for legitimate and unrelated reasons). They tend to hunt large game animals, which they then fly back to their lairs so as not to have to share with scavengers. Sphinxes love raw meat and the thrill of the kill, even though it is sometimes at odds with their basically civilized instincts and natures.

Sphinxes are much larger than the lions they resemble, and with their wings look bigger still. They live for a very long time, and in fact it's believed by some that unless a sphinx is slain through accident, violence, or other means, the only way for a sphinx to die is for it to grow bored with life and actively will its own death. Even more interesting is the fact that the longer a sphinx lives, the less it needs to consume, with the oldest sphinxes eating perhaps no more than once per century—another trait that makes them uniquely well suited as guardians of hidden places.

Perhaps the strangest aspect of sphinx life is their mating habits. Deadly serious in their insistence that the various types are separate races rather than merely aspects of the same creature, sphinxes nevertheless require each other to mate—or rather, the three male variants all require gynosphinxes in order to procreate. Gynosphinxes, for their part, seek solely the companionship of androsphinxes, who despite their own desires often try to hold themselves above such worldly concerns as procreation. Those criosphinxes who manage to mate with a gynosphinx inevitably do so by offering some knowledge or puzzle the gynosphinx desires, or by agreeing to help raise the offspring (a duty even the high-minded androsphinx ignores). A hieracosphinx mates only on those rare occasions when he can capture and disable a gynosphinx long enough to force himself upon her.

From these unions, a gynosphinx gives birth to two to four sphinxes, whose types depend on the circumstances of their conception. Matings of love and respect produce androsphinxes and gynosphinxes, while lust or selfish urges produce criosphinxes. Hieracosphinxes come from acts of hate and violence, and gynosphinxes who carry these abominations quickly abandon them, lest the wrathful progeny attack their own mothers.

While many other creatures, from lammasus and shedus to griffins and manticores, have forms similar to those of sphinxes, the mere mention of such similarities—let alone the insinuation that sphinxes might be related to other beasts—is viewed by the sphinxes as insulting in the highest degree.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

In the wild, sphinxes lair in warm, dry caves or intact rooms in ruins. Unless there is something worth guarding, sphinxes prefer to stay close to the outside, especially along cliffs and near other wide open spaces that allow them room to fly. The older a sphinx gets, the more sedentary it becomes, until the oldest sphinxes barely move at all except when necessary. Many legends have arisen around this fact, and hint that some of the oldest statues of sphinxes may in fact be truly ancient specimens who calcified through magical means.

Sphinxes' lairs tend to be cluttered affairs. Often a gynosphinx or androsphinx lair will be full of books, papers, and the detritus of various academic pursuits, while a criosphinx's will be a hoard of anything even mildly valuable, and a hieracosphinx lair will be full of bones and grisly trophies.

Most sphinxes have a mixed relationship with visitors, including those of their own kind. While their fierce territoriality makes them solitary by nature, their need to fuel their obsessions—for wealth, information, and entertainment—

makes them far less likely to pounce and kill out of hand, and instead visitors often find themselves milked for any useful knowledge or trinkets they may bring with them. Should a petitioner lack anything of interest, a disappointed sphinx may forget itself long enough to slaughter and devour him. If the visitor brings gifts or can share something interesting, however, the basic fairness of the sphinx often overcomes its territoriality, making the visitor relatively safe. Like the cats they resemble, all breeds of sphinxes can be quick to lose interest or take umbrage, and those who bore or rile a sphinx may have little warning before they reap the unfortunate consequences.

Sphinxes rarely coexist with other monsters and tribes of monstrous humanoids, the exceptions being those occasions when either the group is so interesting as to overcome the sphinx's natural inclinations, or the group is an inextricable part of whatever location or treasure the sphinx seeks to study or guard. Even in these cases, however, the other creatures quickly learn to give the sphinx its space, staying out of its territory unless absolutely necessary.



Except for the barbaric hieracosphinxes, when two sphinxes cross paths, the exchange is generally polite but tense, with both sides attempting to gain new and useful information while simultaneously engaging in games of intellectual one-upmanship. Brief alliances and collegial relationships may arise, especially when mating is involved, but the sphinxes' solitary natures inevitably lead them to drift apart before long. More commonly, if two sphinxes seek to work together, it's via magical correspondence, or messages carried between them by lesser creatures in exchange for scraps of the sphinxes' vast wealth of knowledge.

Though the common portrayal of sphinxes as lovers of riddles and puzzles of all types applies primarily to gynosphinxes, all civilized sphinxes tend to be polymaths, versed in a variety of subjects but masters of none. This is a direct result of sphinxes' intense but fickle focus, which can lead them to dwell obsessively on a single problem or issue for days or centuries before promptly shifting their attention and ignoring the previous interest almost completely. It's this scholastic leapfrogging that makes sphinxes repositories of rare and valuable bits of trivia and lore, even given that their various fields of expertise are rarely related or organized in any sensible fashion.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Sphinxes excel as NPCs who dispense advice or information to the party. A sphinx might give the party necessary information in exchange for other knowledge, either because the party's goals align with its own, or in exchange for a stated task or favor. Sphinxes rarely give something for nothing, however, and earning the key information PCs need to continue their campaign might well send them on a whole new adventure. Alternatively, a sphinx might be the patron of a low-level party, whose early adventures might have to do with fetching the sphinx useful items and intelligence.

An adversarial encounter with a sphinx on the road or guarding the entrance to a dungeon is also a timeless classic, and can require the members of a party to solve a puzzle or prove themselves so as to avoid being devoured. (Admittedly, an androsphinx might deeply regret the necessity of such violence, but might well regard it as the honorable thing to do depending on the oaths it has sworn and its understanding of the greater good.) For more information on potential sphinx riddles, see the sidebar on page 56.

Sphinxes as enemies present an interesting moral conundrum, as most sphinxes themselves aren't evil, yet may be guarding something the PCs need (and may find even the most convincing humanitarian pleas less compelling than their own research). PCs who need to get past a sphinx and are unable to persuade it or sneak

SPHINXES IN MYTHOLOGY

In Greek mythology, the sphinx was a unique monster who stood at a mountain pass or at the gates of Thebes and asked each passerby her riddle. The riddle was not specified originally, but later became the standard riddle presented in the sidebar on page 56. If the travelers didn't get her riddle right, the sphinx would devour them. Oedipus answered correctly, and the defeated sphinx killed herself.

The Egyptians had sphinxes as well, but these were generally seen as male and were guardian figures. It was the Egyptians who sculpted sphinxes around their tombs, pyramids, and holy sites, including criosphinxes with the heads of rams and hieracosphinxes with the heads of falcons. In Egypt, the animal heads often symbolized the god who shared that head. It was the Egyptian view of the sphinx that spread through Europe in later times, but with the Greek riddle trait attached. Sphinxlike creatures also existed in many forms in various southeast Asian mythologies—though these have no known connection to the Greek and Egyptian sphinxes. They were later revived in European art during the fifteenth century, and even made their way into Masonic architecture.

past it may face the unappealing prospect of laying low a magnificent, intelligent creature that's only doing its job. The thing the sphinx is guarding could be anything from a secret never meant to be discovered to the lair or weakness of a major villain, and the sphinx may be either a guard of convenience or deeply ideologically committed to its charge. Furthermore, whatever the PCs need may not just be the thing the sphinx is guarding, but the object of its obsession, making the possibility of the sphinx voluntarily relinquishing it totally unthinkable. Either way, negotiations with a sphinx are high-stakes affairs because of the irrevocability of insults (intentional or otherwise) with the prickly creatures.

Finally, it's possible that the sphinx itself could be the villain of a campaign. Perhaps the sphinx, rather than slipping fully into evil, has instead simply decided that nothing should stand in the way of her research—not even the lives of kidnapped test subjects, or the residents of the town she's slowly destroying through magical experimentation. Even an evil sphinx—with the exception of the bestial hieracosphinx—is likely to be driven primarily by a desire for knowledge and intellectual challenge. Sphinxes are naturally talkative and charismatic, so conversationally gifted characters might find sphinxes particularly susceptible to being drawn out and tricked into revealing more than they intended.

THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX

The tradition of riddle-loving sphinxes stems from ancient Greece, where the original riddle asked of Oedipus by the sphinx was, “Which creature in the morning goes on four legs, at mid-day on two, and in the evening upon three, and the more legs it has, the weaker it be?”

The answer, which Oedipus correctly guesses, is “Man—who goes on all fours as a baby, walks upright as an adult, and uses a cane as an old man.”

Another, less common riddle attributed to this same sphinx is, “There are two sisters: one gives birth to the other and she, in turn, gives birth to the first.” In this case, the sphinx is alluding to day and night (both of which are feminine words in Greek).

While both of these riddles are already well known, listed below are a few more classic riddles sphinxes might employ in your game.

“Here there is no north, nor west nor east, and weather unfit for man or beast.” (The North Pole.)

“Each morning I lie at your feet, all day I follow no matter how fast you run, yet I nearly perish in the midday sun.” (Your shadow.)

“There are four brothers. The first runs and never wearies. The second eats and is never full. The third drinks and is always thirsty. The fourth sings a song that is never good.” (Water, fire, earth, and wind.)

TREASURE

Human-headed sphinxes’ treasure hoards predominantly consist of magic items and rare books of lore, along with other items related to knowledge. A gynosphinx or androsphinx lair usually has at least one bookshelf, and chests, shelves, and furniture are piled with folios, scrolls and manuscripts. Such lairs may also contain a fair amount of coinage, gems, and art objects as well, but these sphinxes tend to trade these things for new intellectual or magical curios as soon as they can. Criosphinxes, on the other hand, hoard anything that might possibly be of value, which makes their lairs a combination of treasure trove and refuse heap—there may be priceless gems and sacks of coins within a criosphinx’s hoard, but adventurers may find themselves sifting through pounds of cheap silver cutlery and mountains of copper coins in order to find them.

A sphinx’s library usually contains works on an eclectic mix of subjects, and it is a rare sphinx who has fewer than 10 subjects represented. The sphinx’s current project is likely to dominate, with relevant texts and diagrams played across walls, floors, and furnishings. Because of their long lifespans, most sphinxes acquire a fair bit of

wealth over the years, and their obsessions make them eager to buy anything related to their current pursuits at vastly inflated prices—a habit that may prove useful to adventuring PCs. It should be noted, however, that despite most sphinxes’ relative disregard for gold, any sphinx who comes to believe he or she has been cheated is likely to come looking for vengeance.

SPHINXES ON GOLARION

On Golarion, the ancestral home of sphinxes is Osirion. They have lived in the deserts of northeastern Garund since long before the rise of even Ancient Osirion, and the Osirians have adopted the symbol of the sphinx into their cultural identity. Sphinx statues abound, especially flanking the doors to important civic buildings and tombs. The sphinx is seen as a symbol of guardianship and inscrutability. The phrase “silent as a sphinx” is used to describe someone who is not only quiet but observant and dangerous as well. Sphinxes in turn value Osirian culture for its emphasis on long-term planning and intellectualism—not to mention its vast stores of knowledge and ancient secrets—though most sphinxes still find the actual presence of human communities distracting or outright stifling. It’s rumored that the Ruby Prince even employs several sphinxes as scholars and guardians of his most important and secret knowledge—a throwback to the days of the ancient pharaohs, when such arrangements were more common. Indeed, many long-forgotten tombs and libraries believed to have been swallowed by the sands in ages past still wait, their ancient sphinx guardians patiently musing on their own pet projects and waiting for the arrival of scholar-adventurers who will prove worthy to relieve them of their burdens.

Outside of Osirion, sphinxes are most common in the northern Garundi deserts of Rahadoum and Thuvia, as well as in Qadira and the various distant lands to the east. It’s rumored that the ancient islands of Iblydos, themselves composing a region at least as old as Osirion, had a similarly high level of interaction with the magical beasts, with well-regarded scholars and sphinxes frequently consulting each other as colleagues and participating in public debates and lessons. Certainly some of the stranger sphinx statues around the Inner Sea are believed to originally hail from that culture. Much of Avistan is viewed as too cold (and too heavily populated) for the average sphinx to be interested in anything north of the World’s Edge Mountains in Taldor, yet the passion that drives sphinxes toward their various obsessions can easily drag them beyond the borders of their chosen territories, and thus the beasts may be found anywhere, usually in out-of-the-way locations where ancient secrets or forgotten tombs lie waiting for exhumation.

SAMPLE SPHINX

This beautiful female sphinx appears both wise and thoughtful.

AKILEP, LADY OF STONE

CR 13

XP 25,600

Female unique gynosphinx (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 257)

N Gargantuan magical beast

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +30

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 5, flat-footed 28 (–1 Dex, +23 natural, –4 size)

hp 207 (18d10+108)

Fort +17, **Ref** +10, **Will** +13

DR 10/magic

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor)

Melee 2 claws +26 (4d6+12/19–20 plus grab)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks pounce, rake (4d6+12), trample (4d6+18, DC 31)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th; concentration +23)

Constant—*comprehend languages*, *detect magic*, *read magic*, *see invisibility*

At will—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *statue*

1/day—*commune*, *contact other plane*, *dispel magic*, *legend lore*, *locate object*, *remove curse*

1/week—Any three of the following: *symbol of fear* (DC 21), *symbol of pain* (DC 20), *symbol of persuasion* (DC 21), *symbol of sleep* (DC 20), *symbol of stunning* (DC 22); all symbols last for 1 week maximum

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 8, **Con** 22, **Int** 27, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +34 (+38 grapple); **CMD** 43 (47 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Combat Casting, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Diplomacy +23, Fly +10, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (engineering) +17, Knowledge (history) +26, Knowledge (local) +26, Knowledge (religion) +15, Linguistics +10, Perception +30, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +26, Use Magic Device +14

Languages Aklo, Ancient Osiriani, Celestial, Common, Cyclops, Draconic, Elven, Infernal, Osiriani, Kelish, Polyglot, Sphinx

Gear *chime of opening* (7 uses left), *goggles of minute seeing*, *marvelous pigments*, 2,000 gp in assorted gems.

Obsessed with the unearthing information about Aucturn—the mysterious thirteenth planet in Golarion's solar system, whose very existence may be the greatest riddle of them all—the elder gynosphinx known as Akilep, Lady of Stone, was legendary even among the sphinxes. And then one day, more than 300 years ago, Akilep came across a hidden tomb in the stony wastes of southeastern Thuvia. Markings on the tomb's surface suggested that

she had just stumbled upon the final resting place of a heretofore unknown pharaoh from the height of Ancient Osirion, and furthermore that this pharaoh was believed to have made contact with beings from the stars. At last, Akilep had found the mother lode—and yet the tomb was warded with magic more powerful than anything at her disposal, the lock an inhumanly complex affair of twisted levers and strange, sealed cylinders that even her *chime of opening* couldn't budge. For decades, Akilep worked studiously at the mechanism, quietly seeking out those who might be able to assist her. At last, with no other recourse, Akilep settled down in front of the tomb to await a time when circumstances might change, sleeping away the years as a statue. Of late, however, rumors of the tomb's existence have surfaced in caravan waystations across the desert, and it may be that Akilep's centuries of solitude are drawing to a close.





WENDIGO

FERGUS WAS THE FIRST TO NOTICE THE ODOR CARRIED ON THE NIGHT WINDS, AND THEN WE HEARD THE HOWLING ECHOES FROM THE MIDNIGHT SKY. THE NEXT THREE DAYS WERE A CAT-AND-MOUSE HUNT AS WE DASHED BETWEEN POSITIONS OF COVER TO ESCAPE THESE BLASTED PEAKS. EACH NIGHT OUR PARTY—ALWAYS SHORT A FEW MEMBERS GONE MISSING DURING THE DAY—HUDDLED TOGETHER, EYES OUTWARD TO WATCH AGAINST THE HIDDEN ENEMY IN THE DARKNESS. IT WAS ONLY WHEN WE SAW THE BLOOD DRIPPING FROM FERGUS'S TEETH THAT WE REALIZED OUR ENEMY WAS AMONG US ALL ALONG.

—HUNTER'S JOURNAL DISCOVERED IN THE TUSK MOUNTAINS

The warmth of a campfire and shelter from the cutting wind are little protection against some of the things that lurk in the dark, isolated places of the world, where sustenance is scarce and hospitality nonexistent. High passes, forlorn tundra, trackless primeval woodlands—it is within these desolate places that one is most likely to encounter a wendigo, an evil spirit that preys on explorers and hunters when resources are running low and true desperation is setting in. While the flesh-eating beasts of nature might simply assault unwary victims head-on, the wendigo is a horror that turns the hunter into the hunted, plaguing its prey with bone-chilling nightmares at night and hazy visions of cannibalism during the day. The horrid images brought on by a wendigo's curse cause the victim to slowly lose its grasp on what is right and wrong, ultimately inspiring the cursed individual to succumb to its terrible hunger pangs and feast upon its own allies in a gory act of shameful cannibalism.

Wendigos are little known outside the myths of certain indigenous tribes of particularly isolated regions, far from the security and hospitality of cities. The lands of the wendigo are where folk struggle to survive on a daily basis with already meager supplies stretched thin, where a single turn of bad luck can mean the difference between survival and starvation. It is under these circumstances, when fortune has turned against a lone hunter, isolated homestead, or lost wagon train, that wendigo psychosis—the insanity-inducing curse that forces innocents to indulge in the basest acts in order to survive—most often rears its vile head and draws otherwise normal people into acts of horrific desperation in which they must feed upon their own kind in order to survive.

The cannibalistic act brought on by wendigo psychosis is the last stage of the curse, at which point the victim flees straight into the sky at an unearthly speed—its legs burning away into jagged stubs—and becomes fully inhabited by a wendigo spirit, the body now only a shell for the hungry beast. A wendigo's curse is not the only means of this transformation, however, as in some cases individuals who dwell in highly civilized lands but still partake in eating their own kind's flesh also find themselves making the metamorphosis into wendigos. In societies where cannibalism is not seen as a taboo, individuals rarely if ever become wendigos, and these cultures generally have no history of encounters with such monsters. Scholars speculate that wendigo spirits require the perpetrators of the cannibalistic acts to be as shocked and shamed by their own actions as their victims are.

ECOLOGY

While wendigos are widely believed to come from somewhere outside the Material Plane, none can say where exactly these horrors originate. Their unworldly

powers and animalistic appearances inspire some to believe that wendigos are actually fallen agathions from Nirvana; such claims are quickly dismissed by scholars, though they themselves can offer only a few alternative origin theories. Most regard wendigos as spirits from the darkest reaches of the multiverse, much like devourers and other monsters of mysterious purpose. What appearance these disembodied spirits may possess while within this nether region is a mystery to most, as no one has ever documented seeing a wendigo spirit not already residing in a material host. Because of this elusiveness, many folk on the outskirts of civilization regard wendigos simply as manifestations of mortal corruption, disembodied ideas rather than actual creatures.

A wendigo spirit only possesses a living host after the creature has been afflicted with wendigo psychosis. This curse is typically brought about by another wendigo who has touched a victim's dreams or has dragged the creature into the sky with it. Occasionally, a particularly unlucky individual may contract wendigo psychosis simply through unfortunate circumstance, when it must perform gruesome acts of cannibalism in order to survive. When a creature has been afflicted with wendigo psychosis, the spirit of a wendigo is attracted to the creature to await its final act of desperation: devouring the flesh of one of its own kind, usually a close friend or loved one. Once the victim falls to this level of madness, it makes its aerial sojourn through the sky, during which time its feet are burnt away into charred stumps from the speed of its passage, and the victim undergoes the full transformation into a wendigo; the original victim ceases to exist, its body mutilated and its soul sent to the Great Beyond, and the wendigo spirit inherits the body as a new husk with which it can interact with the material world. A victim who dies of wendigo psychosis can only be brought back to life with powerful restorative spells such as *miracle*, *true resurrection*, and *wish*. Bringing a victim back to life in this way may restore the original creature, but the wendigo who exploited the psychotic individual yet remains in its weathered shell, which is only a pale reflection of the mortal body it once was.

When a wendigo assumes the body of a mortal, it warps the tattered corpse into an image representative of its own twisted desires and horrid imaginings. The hands turn into bloodstained claws, the flesh grows a layer of matted fur, and the head transforms into that of a grotesque, rabid animal, typically a wild creature native to the area where the mortal died. Thus a wendigo only barely resembles the original mortal creature whose body it now inhabits, the beast having shed all of its personal relics and clothing in exchange for its feral, nightmarish visage.

Once a wendigo has manifested in physical form, it begins to stalk all who enter its territory, either consuming

its prey to sate its own endless appetite or inflicting its transformative psychosis upon victims to spawn more of its kind. While wendigo spirits are definitely not of this world, in their material forms they are native to the Material Plane and thus must eat in order to survive. When intelligent prey is scarce, a wendigo will indulge in its bestial desires and hunt weaker animals to feed upon. A wendigo is constantly wracked with intense hunger pangs, manifestations of its ravenous greed that are only temporarily relieved by feasting on such creatures that know fear. It is for this reason that wendigos prefer to feed upon humanoids, magical beasts, and any other creatures that know to be afraid of the dark and shudder at the sound of howling winds.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Because wendigos must eat to survive, it is curious that the monsters ever use their victims to create new wendigos rather than feeding upon them. Scholars disagree on why wendigos perform these base rituals, though it is speculated that it may simply be due to some animal instinct to reproduce. The method by which a wendigo chooses which victims to eat and which to transform is seemingly either random or incredibly complex, but some evidence suggests they prefer to inflict their psychosis on individuals who would feel the most shame after having eaten their comrades. Whatever the reason, when a wendigo chooses to transform a victim rather than devour it, the newly formed wendigo invariably retreats from the territory of its progenitor in order to claim its own hunting grounds. Wendigos are well aware of the dearth of food resources available to them in the desolate places of the world, and as a result are loath to share their hunting grounds with powerful predators of any kind.

Considering the selfish atrocities wendigos represent, it is unsurprising that these horrors are not particularly social creatures. Once a living creature has died from wendigo psychosis and its shell has been taken over by a wendigo spirit, the newly formed wendigo seeks out a distant hunting ground to prowl for food. A wendigo typically claims a territory in the unforgiving wilderness that can encompass hundreds of square miles, usually near a caravan route or far-off destination for bullheaded hunters and treasure hunters. In these desolate lands, wendigos set up numerous traps for travelers, creating labyrinthine trails to get lost in or blocking trade routes and creating false detours that lure the unwary into treacherous realms.

While most wendigos take on purely predatory roles, a rare few have been known to instead take on something very similar to custodial roles, guarding their self-claimed territories against the perversions

of civilization. While this may seem a noble act at first glance, such wendigos retain their gruesome appearances and murderous behaviors, and are far from druidic crusaders. Speculations vary on why exactly wendigos might protect certain lands in this way, as they have no special connection to nature nor do they require a pristine wilderness in which to dwell. The most common belief is that custodial wendigos simply possess a territorial instinct to prevent others from despoiling what is theirs, if only so that they can despoil it themselves in their own time and fashion.

CAMPAIGN

Wendigos are powerful creatures that can be used to inspire terror in PCs throughout their entire adventuring careers. The myths surrounding such horrid creatures are usually only told in whispers, and commoners' inordinate fears of such creatures can create great foreshadowing opportunities for later in the campaign. The wendigo hunts of particularly superstitious settlements (in which a small town or village might gather enough gold to recruit brave adventurers to perform the task for them) often turn out to be driven by more mundane causes of local mayhem, such as gnolls. Yet there is truth to the rumors of the animal-headed beasts, and mid-level PCs might encounter the remains of a campsite attacked by a wendigo, or perhaps an isolated outpost where one of the inhabitants finally succumbed to wendigo psychosis, cannibalizing her comrades in order to survive a particularly harsh winter. In cases such as this, confronting the cannibalistic victim of wendigo psychosis can be just as powerful an encounter as facing the wendigo itself, as such a victim makes for either a terrific roleplaying encounter or perhaps a formidable opponent on the edge of a complete mental breakdown. Such a character might tell the PCs of the voice on the wind that spoke to her, or of her dreams of flying high above the snow-laden forest with her feet ablaze. Inspection might show severe burns and charring about her otherwise unshod (albeit frostbitten) feet. Having already committed the act of cannibalism, this individual may be on the verge of fully succumbing to wendigo psychosis, confronting the PCs with the decision to either kill her (something she perhaps begs them to do), cure her with powerful and quickly distributed magic, or watch her complete the transformation and race away into the night sky.

At high levels, the PCs are better equipped to deal with the threat of a wendigo head-on. A wendigo with the young creature template can prove to be a suitable challenge for PCs from levels 14–15 crossing a hazardous mountain pass, especially if the nightmare-inducing monster has stalked and taxed them for several days beforehand, while

higher-level PCs might be able to take on a dust wendigo in arid desert lands. The effects of wendigo psychosis can be dramatic to a party without the proper means of dispelling the curse, and such tension will often be more than enough incentive for PCs to hunt down the perpetrator of the psychosis in order to slay it and rid themselves of the plague's source. If an allied NPC is stranded in the wilderness, the threat of her transformation into a wendigo can prove a dire circumstance to urge PCs forward. Regardless of the exact circumstances, the final encounter with a wendigo should be a dramatic climax to either a campaign or a lengthy adventure, the monster's influence proving a thorn in the PCs' sides for some time and inspiring countless acts of cannibalistic betrayal, leading up to the final confrontation.

TREASURE

Wendigos do not ordinarily keep treasure, and regard anything other than a feast of mortal flesh as holding little value. To a wendigo, the only worthwhile possessions are those that might aid them in their eternal hunt, such as lures of powerful artifacts or relics. More often, however, wendigos simply leave the fortunes of their prey alongside the victims' scraped bones. Nonmagical personal items are usually damaged or destroyed in the violence of a wendigo attack, as the beasts have been known to delight in destroying small buildings or conveyances to swiftly terrify and murder the creatures within; any items that survive such onslaughts are generally utterly ignored by the wendigo without a second thought. Particularly keen-minded wendigos may think to take coins or gems and use them to create winding trails of fortune for foolish prey, and more than one treasure hunter has met his death thanks to such traps.

In the rare instance when a wendigo still wears some valuable personal item from before its transformation (such as a necklace, ring, or amulet), it is only because the buffeting winds and erratic speeds of wendigo flight have yet to knock it loose. On more than one occasion, though, the former identity of a slain wendigo has been gleaned from just such a grim memento.

VARIANTS

Though wendigos are most often encountered in the northern climes of the world, these horrors of

desperation and hunger can be found in virtually any area of desolation where starvation leads folk to partake in the taboo act of cannibalism.

Bucca Wendigo (+2 CR): The wilds of the surface are not the only places where travelers can become trapped and resort to their bestial natures to survive. Legends tell of the spirits of lost explorers or trapped miners who haunt deep mine shafts and Darklands tunnels and tap the walls to herald collapses and other catastrophes. These wendigos keep their cold subtype and gain the earth subtype as well. Their damage reduction is changed to 15/adamantine and magic, they gain a burrow speed of 20 feet and tremorsense 60 feet, their rend ability does Dexterity damage instead of Charisma damage, and they gain the use of the following spell-like abilities: 3/day—*transmute rock to mud*, *transmute mud to rock*; 1/day—*earthquake*.

Dust Wendigo (+1 CR): In the desert, where water is as rare as food, unwary or unfortunate travelers may find themselves raking the hot sands for anything that can pass for edible. It is during these scorching days and freezing nights in the vast desert that dust wendigos inhabit creatures that succumb to wendigo psychosis. These foolhardy, jackal-headed beasts combine the ravenous savagery of wendigos with the

stinging, wind-blown sand of desert wastelands, and plague the dreams of desert nomads and even resident jann or other genie-kin. These creatures lose their cold subtype, instead gaining the fire and air subtypes. In addition, their regeneration is halted by cold damage instead of fire damage, they deal fire damage with their bite and claw attacks instead of cold damage, and they gain the use of *sirocco* (see page 244 of the *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*) as a spell-like ability 3/day.

Void Wendigo (+1 CR): In the vast expanses of inky blackness between the stars, the area known as the Dark Tapestry, there wait immeasurably patient wendigos of dark origins, inhabiting the bodies of cannibalistic victims of interstellar travel gone awry. Void wendigos float in a stony stasis awaiting the rare traveler to happen upon them and inspire them to wake from their frozen sleep to once again feed and spread madness. Void wendigos possess lifesense 60 feet and can use the following spell-like abilities: 3/day—*greater teleport*; at will—*statue*.



THE LEGEND OF THE WENDIGO

In real life, the wendigo is a cannibalistic, sometimes gigantic, spirit creature from the myths of the Algonquian peoples of the northeastern United States and Canada, a sinister counterpoint to the benevolent aspects of Gitche Manitou, the Great Spirit. It has appeared in fiction writings in many forms, most famously in the 1910 Algernon Blackwood short story, "The Wendigo." In Cthulhu Mythos, the wendigo was introduced by August Derleth as Ithaqua, a Great Old One, and the mythological monster has also been featured as a supernatural beast in Marvel Comics. The wendigo even makes an appearance in Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* as a guardian spirit near an ancient Micmac burial ground.

The wendigo has been traditionally associated with winter, famine, and desperation or mental illness leading to cannibalism, and has also been seen as a vengeful guardian of nature, protecting the wilds from the destructive incursions of humans. These aspects are portrayed in films such as *Ravenous* and *The Last Winter*.

So powerful was the wendigo mythology among its adherents that wendigo psychosis has been recognized by some psychologists as a culture-bound syndrome affecting people who suffer from an intense craving to consume human flesh and a fear that they will literally turn into wendigos from doing so, with some rare cases even ending in the voluntary execution of the afflicted to prevent the anticipated transformation. Reported cases have declined substantially since the turn of the twentieth century, and there is some question among researchers as to the validity of diagnosis in the earlier documented cases. Regardless of the outcome of such studies, the pervasive belief that something in the northern wilds once caused cannibalism and atrocities among numerous peoples of that region cannot be entirely dismissed.

WENDIGOS ON GOLARION

In the Inner Sea region, wendigos are most often encountered in the northern reaches of the Kodar Mountains as well as the Crown of the World, where the barren expanses of icy tundra dramatically increase the chance of starvation among inexperienced travelers. In the Kodar Mountains, wendigos have been known to plague avaricious miners seeking the vast stores of gold buried therein. The Ulfen know of wendigos from their own legends passed down through countless generations, and are thus sure to pack plenty of meat and mead on their voyages across the frozen seas so as to stave off any temptation to succumb to the "night

wind's call." Such beliefs sometimes drive particularly superstitious Ulfen captains to cast overboard any crewmember who acts oddly in times of strain; they would rather sacrifice a pair of hands rather than risk allowing the sailor to feed upon her comrades and flee to the sky.

The seminomadic Varki of Icemark are perhaps the most familiar with wendigos, having withstood a number of attacks at the hands of potent foes. The Varki refer to one particular wendigo of legend as Greinar the Hungerer, a stag-headed outsider with royal blue flesh that has plagued the plains of Icemark for decades. While the shamans of the Varki possess powerful spells to ward off the beast of hunger, Greinar is an insightful predator, and knows that the Varki rely on the roaming reindeer herds for food during much of the winter season. With this in mind, the blue-skinned wendigo slays reindeer mercilessly and wastefully, spurring famine within some of the tribes and fostering situations of dire strain among otherwise peaceful people.

While most wendigos are found in the colder climes of Golarion, legends abound of the ravenous monsters in other regions as well, particularly in the expansive dunes of northern Garund as well as on the savage plains of northeastern Avistan. In Numeria, where alien technological mysteries dot the otherwise barren lands, food can be scarce for particularly unwary pilgrims on their way to war-torn Mendev, and more than one caravan of would-be holy warriors has succumbed to the taint of the resident wendigo, a bison-headed behemoth thought to be infused with demonic power from the nearby Worldwound, known by the Kellid residents as Kalek, Corruptor of Hearts.

SAMPLE WENDIGO

This hunched-over, vaguely humanoid creature has gauntly muscled biceps beneath a sandy hide and coarse fur. Its head is that of a jagged-toothed antelope, the face spotted with rot and sand slowly sifting out from between the fibers of its hair, and its legs end at the shin in stumps of charred flesh.

ARIDUS, THE DESERT'S HOWL

CR 19
XP 204,800

 Male dust wendigo (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 281)

CE Huge outsider (air, fire, native)

Init +12; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +29

DEFENSE
AC 34, touch 17, flat-footed 25 (+8 Dex, +1 dodge, +17 natural, –2 size)

hp 350 (20d10+240); **regeneration** 15 (cold)

Fort +18, **Ref** +20, **Will** +20

DR 15/cold iron and magic; **Immune** fire, fear; **SR** 30

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 120 ft. (perfect)

Melee bite +29 (4d6+11 plus 4d6 fire), 2 claws +29 (2d8+11/19–20 plus 4d6 fire)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks dream haunting, howl, rend (2 claws, 2d8+16 plus 4d6 fire and 1d4 Cha damage), wendigo psychosis

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +28)

At will—*wind walk* (DC 25)

3/day—empowered *sirocco** (DC 24)

1/day—*control weather* (as druid), *nightmare* (DC 24)

STATISTICS

Str 33, **Dex** 27, **Con** 35, **Int** 24, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 26

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +33 (+37 grapple); **CMD** 52

Feats Ability Focus (howl), Critical Focus, Dodge, Empower Spell-Like Ability (*sirocco**), Exhausting Critical, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (claws), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Tiring Critical

Skills Bluff +31, Disguise +31, Fly +35, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (geography) +27, Knowledge (nature) +27, Knowledge (religion) +27, Perception +29, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +30, Stealth +23, Survival +29

Languages Aklo, Common, Giant; telepathy 1 mile

SQ no breath

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

Over 3,000 years ago in the southern parts of the vast Thuvian desert, the great alchemist Artokus Kirran was able to harness the power of the rare and beautiful sun orchard and create an elixir that temporarily halted the process of aging in whoever consumed it. While this monumental discovery ultimately united the city-states of the vast desert nation, its creation also inspired many people of baser intentions to entertain their own selfish thoughts of eternal life, spurring them to do whatever they must in order to obtain some of the legendary *sun orchid elixir*.

It was under this banner of greed that the infamous rogue Jalari Zafikiri assembled a team of fellow bandits. Their mission was to infiltrate the famed Citadel of the Alchemist, and Jalari promised the members of his crew that they would be able to coerce the alchemist to provide them all with enough *sun orchard elixir* to last until the end of days. But when the bandits passed too closely to the House of Oblivion on their way from Merab to the Citadel, however, they were besieged by divs, and most of their food stocks were destroyed in the ensuing battle. Desperate to complete his quest, Jalari continued on with his remaining allies, but the desert was too vast. The once-powerful rogue began to go mad in the desert heat,

and in the dead of night he slaughtered his fellow thieves for food. His own shame completed his insanity, and when Jalari ran at a dead sprint across the dunes, he took flight and died in midair, the spirit of a wendigo taking over the husk of his withered body in his stead.

Now, certain isolated Thuvian tribes raise goat-headed totems to the beast that stalks the nearby sandstone cliffs and massive dunes. Its forlorn howl echoes on the evening winds, and villagers disappear only to turn up later as withered, half-eaten husks when they fail to maintain their monthly sacrifices on lonely, windswept altars.



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