

ALISTER KONEZEGEL'S FIELD GUIDE

VOL. I: MONSTROUS ARTHROPODS

*10 New Monsters from
Zeke Gonzalez*



ALISTER KONZEGEL'S FIELD GUIDE VOL. I

MONSTROUS ARTHROPODS

Crack open this field guide to find ten terrifying creatures inspired by the unusual capabilities of animals from our own plane... Survive an ambush by a pair of orchid striker mantids; see the corpses of your friends animate under the fungal spores of the deathshaker; feel your flesh burn before the titanic blister colossus; and much more!

10 New Monsters for Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition.

by **Zeke Gonzalez**

cover art **DMsGuild Creator Resources**



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INTRODUCTION

Good evening, friend! I am so glad to find you thumbing through my field guide. My name is Alister Konzegel and I consider myself the foremost expert on the unusual creatures of the abovewater world. I spent a great deal of my early academic career discovering ancient scientific texts detailing the exotic and unbelievable qualities of strange, air-breathing creatures in a land above the waves. Of course, a reasonable person can only read so many fairy tales about these so-called "dry land" creatures before he has to set out and seek evidence of these monsters for himself! Within these pages, you will find information on ten of the most terrifying arthropods I've come across in my travels throughout the land above the waves which the landstriders call the "Sword Coast." Oh- but I get ahead of myself!

WHAT IS AN "ARTHROPOD?"

As a trained scientist, I must take this opportunity to briefly explain exactly what I mean by "arthropod." An arthropod is a group of animals that are defined by the possession of three traits: a hard exoskeleton, jointed appendages, and a segmented body. One must look no further than the giant, barnacle-encrusted crabs that meander through our city streets to see an arthropod. Other creatures that fall within this category are the red and yellow-striped crayfish that young triton hunt for among the coral, or the gentle, slow-moving trilobites that pull our carts. If this volume ever floats its way to the surface, landstriders would be familiar with arthropods such as spiders, scorpions, and insects.

CITATIONS

As with any scientific work, this volume of my field guide includes numerical references to the work of those who inspired me to seek out and describe these creatures. These references will look like this: (#). The number inside the parenthesis refers to a specific title from the *works cited*, which I provide at the conclusion of this volume. For those of you who find your interest peaked by these monsters, I recommend the entries in this *works cited* section as further reading on the science of arthropods. I hope you find these readings as fascinating as I do!



MONSTROUS ARTHROPODS

BLISTER COLOSSUS

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 198 (12d12 + 120)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., burrow 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	30 (+10)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +11, Con +16

Damage Immunities acid

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities frightened, paralyzed

Senses tremorsense 120 ft., passive perception 10

Languages --

Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

Blistering Aura. At the start of each of the blister colossus's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage, and nonmagical armor and weapons in the aura are partially dissolved, taking a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC they provide or to their damage rolls, respectively. Nonmagical armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10. Nonmagical weapons are destroyed if its penalty drops to -5. A creature that touches the blister colossus or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The blister colossus can make three ranged or four melee attacks, but can use its bite only once.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (3d12 + 5) piercing damage plus 28 (8d6) acid damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d10 + 5) slashing damage.

Acid Spit. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 80 ft./120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (8d6) acid damage. In addition, nonmagical armor worn by the target is partly dissolved and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

BLISTER COLOSSUS

The blister colossus is a enormous beetle that stands more than 20 feet tall and 30 feet long. I estimate the beetle to weigh in at more than 10 tons!

Among landstriders the blister colossus is infamous for the milky substance it secretes from its carapace and the joints of its legs. This substance is one of the most caustic liquids found in the natural world! But woe to those who attempt to find and slay a specimen to harvest the acid...

I can share from experience that the mere presence of a blister colossus is enough to peel the skin from your flesh and corrode the very weapons and armor with which you attempt to strike it! In the archives of the Glassbright University, I found descriptions of a similar creature that I suspect to be a smaller relative of the colossus. Due to hypotheses I have formed since, I suspect that the acid spit of the blister colossus is likely an aggressive use of the acidic gift that the males give to the females in order to court them (2). However, nobody knows who or what is responsible for the creation of these terrible creatures, though there are whispers of a medusa lich that wanders the Verdant Phrontistery...

BLISTER COLOSSUS ACID

Wondrous item, very rare

This acid can only be held by a magical container immune to the caustic nature of the acid. As an action, you can throw a closed container of this acid up to 20 feet, shattering it on impact. Make a ranged attack against a creature or object, treating the blister colossus acid as an improvised weapon. On a hit, the target takes 6d6 acid damage at the start of its next turn.

DEATHSHAKER

The deathshaker is a unique example of symbiosis between an animal and a fungus: an enormous cicada completely wreathed in beautiful fungi. The cicada itself towers over the average landstrider at approximately 8 feet tall and 16 feet long, with grand transparent wings that trail mushroom spores wherever the creature flies.

The fungus ranges in color from reds and yellows to cool greens and blues, but the effect is always the same: these fungi and their spores seem to have the ability to animate those who fall in combat with the deathshaker as well as being able to enchant the living to draw closer to the beast.

In my research, I have uncovered evidence that indicates this mutually beneficial relationship may once have been a parasitic one. In my reading, it seems that the fungus would manipulate the behavior of the host cicada in order to spread its spores (3). However, the deathshaker seems quite content to benefit from their fungal passengers!

My first encounter with a deathshaker was when I stumbled upon cultists of Zugtmoy attempting to breed them as mounts for their nefarious plots. However, I also have heard rumours that a colony of myconids (mushroom people, but that's a story for another volume) breed them to fly through underground caverns in search of bioluminescent fungi. Now that's something I'd like to see!



DEATHSHAKER

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 110 (13d10 + 39)

Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages ---

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Wing Flick. As a bonus action, the deathshaker cicada flicks its wings together, creating an alluring noise. All creatures the deathshaker cicada chooses within 60 feet must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw against this magic, using their reaction to move 15 feet closer to the deathshaker cicada on a failed save.

Actions

Multiattack. The deathshaker cicada makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its wing attack. While flying, it can use its tarsal claws in place of one other attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage.

Tarsal Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Wing Attack. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If damage from this reduces a creature to 0 hit points, the corpse rises as a spore servant (see **Monster Manual** p. 230) 1d6 hours later.

GIANT APHID

Farmers from the abovewater world curse the name of many pests, but none are as strange as the giant aphid. The typical, average-sized aphid is the size of a grain of sand and uses its piercing and sucking mouthparts (called stylets by the landstrider scientists who study them) in order to suck sap from plants. However, it is clear that some mad druid (or perhaps wayward evolution) led to the creation of the giant aphid: a tremendous, manatee-sized aphid that can wander into an farmer's field and destroy it in less than a day. And should the farmer attempt to disturb the giant aphid, they are liable to get a faceful of burning acid to show for it!

While these giant aphids are far more aggressive than their minute counterparts, some landstriders have been able to tame these enormous insects and milk them for the sticky, sweet, and very nutritious honeydew that specimens of both sizes produce under nurturing conditions (9). But be careful: if a giant aphid feels threatened, it can propel even the delicious honeydew with enough force to cause significant harm!

RIDE 'EM COWBOY!

Some particularly brave farmers take part in contests at local fairs where folks are challenged to see how long they can ride a feral giant aphid. One certainly wouldn't catch me participating in such a dangerous game!



GIANT APHID

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 46 (8d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +4

Skills Athletics +4, Stealth +2, Perception +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Standing Leap. The giant aphid's long jump is up to 30 feet and its high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Pounce. If the giant aphid moves or jumps at least 30 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a tarsal claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the giant aphid can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Actions

Piercing Stylet. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 13 (2d10 + 2) piercing damage.

Tarsal Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 11 (2d8 + 2) slashing damage.

Honeydew Spray (Recharge 5-6). The giant aphid sprays honeydew in a 15-foot cone from its abdomen. The giant aphid chooses whether the honeydew is caustic or sticky.

Caustic Honeydew. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Sticky Honeydew. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Strength saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage and becoming restrained on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LOU CARCOHL

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 247 (17d12 + 136)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	26 (+8)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Con +12, Wis +4

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.

Languages ---

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Antimagic Shell. The lou carcohl has advantage on saving throws against spells, and any creature making a spell attack against the lou carcohl has disadvantage on the attack roll. If the snail succeeds on its saving throw against a spell or a spell attack misses it, an additional effect might occur, as determined by rolling a d6:

1-2. If the spell affects an area or has multiple targets, it fails and has no effect. If the spell targets only the lou carcohl, it has no effect on the lou carcohl and is reflected back at the caster, using the spell slot level, spell save DC, attack bonus, and spellcasting ability of the caster.

3-4. No additional effect.

5-6. The lou carcohl's shell converts some of the spell's energy into a burst of destructive force. Each creature within 30 feet of the lou carcohl must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 1d6 force damage per level of the spell on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Actions

Multiattack. The lou carcohl makes three tentacle attacks, each of which it can replace with one use of Fling.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (2d12 + 6) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) acid damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature grappled by the lou carcohl, that creature is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the lou carcohl, and it takes 24 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the lou carcohl's turns. If the lou carcohl takes 50 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the lou carcohl must succeed on a DC 25 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the lou carcohl. If the lou carcohl dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 17). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. The lou carcohl has ten tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.

Fling. One Large or smaller object held or creature grappled by the lou carcohl is thrown up to 30 feet in a random direction and knocked prone. If a thrown target strikes a solid surface, the target takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it was thrown. If the target is thrown at another creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take the same damage and be knocked prone.

Reactions

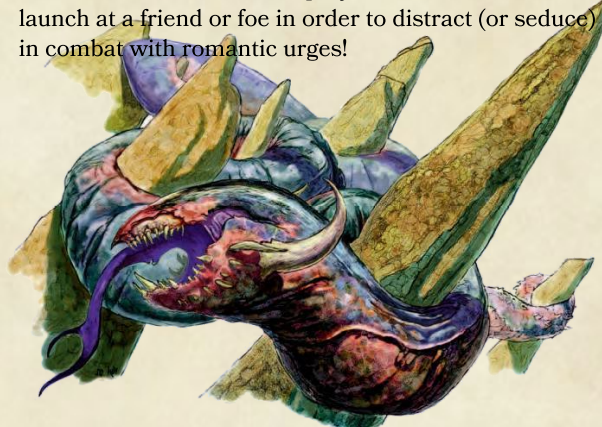
Love Dart. When a creature leaves the lou carcohl's reach, the lou carcohl fires a seminal dart at that creature. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Charisma saving throw or become charmed by the lou carcohl as if they drank a *philter of love* for 1 hour. At the end of each of its turns, and each time it takes damage, the target can make another Charisma saving throw. The target has advantage on the saving throw if it's triggered by damage. On a success, the effect ends.

LOU CARCOHL

Lou carcohl are vast, snail-like monsters: the specimen I encountered was more than 20 feet long from end to end, and its shell reached the ceiling of a 30 foot tall cave. Snails are not arthropods, but I didn't come across enough monstrous molluscs to justify a separate field guide devoted to them!

Lou carcohl carve out labyrinths of underground caverns beneath rocky tidal zones over the course of their 200-year lifespan. Their gaping mouths are surrounded by several long, slime-coated tentacles which they use to capture any prey which falls into their lair, pulling their hapless victims into their gaping maw of vicious, slime-coated teeth.

In addition, the lou carcohl possesses a unique adaptation that it shares with some of its snail brethren: the love dart (6). This love dart is a calcified projectile that the lou carcohl can launch at a friend or foe in order to distract (or seduce) them in combat with romantic urges!



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NIGHTSHIVER

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 195 (17d12 + 85)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	13 (+1)	21 (+5)	5 (-3)	11 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Stealth +5

Damage Immunities poison, necrotic

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages ---

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Poisonous Blood. A creature that touches the nightshiver or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned this way, a creature has disadvantage on Dexterity checks and saving throws and takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage at the start of their turn. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (6d10 + 7) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 17). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the nightshiver can't bite another target.

Swallow. The nightshiver makes one bite attack against a medium or smaller creature it is grappling. If the attack hits, that creature takes the bite's damage and is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the nightshiver, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the nightshiver's turns. If the nightshiver takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the nightshiver must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the nightshiver. If the nightshiver dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 15 feet of Movement, exiting prone.

NIGHTSHIVER

One of the most terrifying nights of my life was the night I encountered my first nightshiver. I wandered from the campfire of my companions while we traveled through Memorial Mire. Foolishly, I strayed too far and was sketching a night-blooming orchid in my journal when I heard a faint skittering noise. But when I looked up, all my eye caught was a red flash disappearing into the canopy. The creature stalked me as I ran terrified back to camp, surrounding by the sounds of rustling leaves and those horrible legs. Just when I thought I had escaped, a humanoid visage dropped out the trees ahead of me. Attached to the head was the body of a vast, midnight-blue centipede with bright red legs. Emerging from the face of this terrifying creature was a pair of deadly forcipules dripping with poison. After narrowly surviving this encounter with my wit, guile, and the assistance of the party ranger who was (thankfully) keeping an eye on me from the distance, I resolved to learn as much about these terrifying creatures as I could.

I discovered two intriguing facts upon my research: firstly, that the nightshiver is believed to be an arcane experiment derived by the injection of tarrasque blood into a small poisonous centipede. This origin myth clarified why my body rapidly swelled under the effects of the nightshiver's poison, as the venom of many centipedes can cause a variety of symptoms that range from inflammation & ongoing pain to necrosis (1). Secondly, I learned that I was in fact lucky in my close call: the nightshiver usually hunts in pairs with its mate. Needless to say, I implemented the buddy system in my traveling group after this particular encounter!



ORCHID STRIKER MANTIS

This specimen is one of the most dangerous creatures within these pages. Although it isn't as hardy as some of the other creatures detailed in this field guide, the orchid striker mantis wields razor-sharp claws and a vicious set of mandibles capable of tearing a person limb from limb. If an orchid striker mantis successfully makes its ambush, it can quickly devastate any but the most hearty adventuring party with an arabesque and terrifying flurry of blows so graceful as to resemble a dance of carnage.

These creatures dwell in jungles and swamps amidst beautiful flora. The mantis blends into the flowers in order to snatch up any creature foolish enough to approach the gorgeous blooms (7). Each specimen is suited to the color palette of the flowers within which it resides and it seems capable of changing colors as it changes locales. As such, the color palette of the orchid striker mantis ranges from exquisite reds to deep greens to breathtaking lavenders. The specimens I encountered in my travels were approximately 5 feet tall and incredibly fleet-footed, making it difficult to land a significant blow.

While these creatures can be found anywhere there are flora large enough to house them (and subsequently pollinators large enough to make a meal for them). Their origin is shrouded in misery, especially due to the fact that they possess a suite of anti-magic defenses as well as magical offensive abilities. I hypothesize that they were original bred and created by a powerful arcanist as hidden guardians-a role to which their patience as predators makes them perfectly suited. I certainly would not want to encounter more than one of these creatures at once: such an ambush would be utterly devastating.



ORCHID STRIKER MANTIS

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 34)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	26 (+8)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +10, Dex +13

Damage Immunities fire, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive perception 10

Languages --

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Assassinate. During its first turn, the orchid striker mantis has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the orchid striker mantis scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Magic Resistance. The orchid striker mantis has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The orchid striker mantis's weapon attacks are magical.

Floral Camouflage. The orchid striker mantis has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide amongst colorful flowers.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The orchid striker mantis deals an extra 13 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 ft. of an ally of the tarrasque-blood mantis that isn't incapacitated and the tarrasque-blood mantis doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. The orchid striker mantis makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage. When the orchid striker mantis roll a 20 on this attack roll, the target takes an extra 22 (4d10) piercing damage. Then roll another d20. If the orchid striker mantis rolls another 20, it bites off one of the target's limbs, with the effect of such loss determined by the GM. If the creature has no limb to sever, the orchid striker mantis lops off a portion of its body instead.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d8 + 8) slashing damage.

Mantis Dance (Recharge 5-6). The orchid striker mantis makes a claw attack against up to 6 creatures of its choice within its reach.

PALPARTIDON

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 94 (9d10 + 45)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	21 (+5)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages ---

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Chameleon Carapace. The palpartidon can change the color of its carapace to match the color and texture of its surroundings. As a result, it has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide.

Sit-and-Wait Predator. During a short rest, the palpartidon can dig a 10 by 10 ft. pitfall trap and hide beneath it. The trap is disguised as disturbed earth. A creature must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot the trap. Any creature that steps onto the trap's surface falls down 20 feet, taking 7 (d26) bludgeoning damage and landing prone. A falling creature must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot the hidden palpartidon or they are surprised when the palpartidon attacks.

Digestive Enzyme Injection (1/turn). When the palpartidon hits a creature with its mandible attack, the target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4 + 1. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

Actions

Multiattack. The palpartidon makes two mandible attacks.

Mandible. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 30 (4d12 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

PALPARTIDON

Imagine this scene: walking along your favorite trail, enjoying the scenery, taking in the sights and smells... When suddenly the ground gives way from underneath you and you fall into a hidden pit. You fall, perhaps noticing a glint of something moving in the darkness, and collide with the ground below. You get up, dust yourself off, and look for a way to escape. You begin to climb out of the pit when suddenly an enormous creature bursts out of the soil below you and grabs your leg in its vicious pincers! As it pulls you back down, you feel a pulse as the creature's mandibles inject you with some terrible fluid. Your body locks up and you cannot move. You begin to feel weaker and weaker and are dragged downwards into the dark hole...

That is exactly what many people experience when they encounter a palpartidon in the wild. Palpartidon are an enormous subspecies of antlion, made famous by their habit of digging through the earth and up to (but not breaking) the surface above in order to create a clever pitfall trap to catch their prey. Recent studies by Lauren Guilette, an entomologist at Blackstaff Tower, and her colleagues have even discovered that these creatures are capable of learning from their successes in order to become more adept at picking up on the vibrational cues of potential prey (5).

In my scientific opinion, what makes the palpartidon particularly deadly is its ability to inject its prey with digestive enzymes: a protein compound that breaks down the internal organs and musculature of their prey and weakens them for a short period of time. By weakening their prey, palpartidons can pull their prey into the earth below and make an easy meal of them.



SCUTTling SPY

I know not why anybody other than the deranged would want this particularly disturbing-looking creature as a familiar, but it was as a familiar that I first encountered one of these monstrosities. Scuttling spies can apparently be created through arcane means by including the eyeball of a still-living humanoid creature as a component while casting the *find familiar* spell as a ritual (I have not tested this assertion, and do not plan to). Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately, depending on your perspective) the eyeball is not consumed by this spellcasting, so as long as one doesn't lose track of the eyeball, they are always able to shape their familiar into this particularly gruesome form.

I learned of this horrible permutation of the spell when I encountered Relonor Tanor'Thal, a displaced drow mage who was banished from the Underdark. They had constructed a small hut in the Memorial Mire and used their scuttling spy to do just that: investigate travelers who ventured too close to their home. Its ability to make itself invisible; levitate itself for short distances; and create aural distractions with its illusory capabilities (not to mention all those legs) makes its naming convention quite clear.

After deciding that I was a harmless old triton, Relonor approached me and offered me food & shelter from a coming storm. They were a considerably kind & gracious host, despite their unsettling choice of familiar, and shared a great deal of wisdom about the unusual and dangerous inhabitants of the swamp and the ruins within. In return for the food, shelter, and tall tales I opted not to ask where Relonor got the eyeball required to create their scuttling spy, which they named "Chamomile," after the creature's favorite home-brewed tea.

Since then, I have encountered more of these strange beings during one of my forays into the Underdark, where my party stumbled upon a spiderweb-wreathed cavern filled with the creatures. We attempted to slash and burn our way through the webs and were shocked when the creatures telepathically asked us to leave their homes alone and find a new path to our destination. Shocked into silence, we did as they asked. While I have a greater appreciation for them in retrospect, they still give me the heebie-jeebies!

SCUTTling SPY

Tiny monstrosity, neutral good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 7 (3d4)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The skittering spy's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 10). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

1/day each: *invisibility* (self only), *levitate* (self only), *minor illusion*

Spider Climb. The scuttling spy can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Variant: Familiar. The scuttling spy can serve another creature as a familiar, forming a telepathic bond with its willing master. While the two are bonded, the master can sense what the scuttling spy senses as long as they are within 1 mile of each other. While the scuttling spy is within 10 feet of its master, the master shares the scuttling spy's Spider Climb trait. At any time and for any reason, the scuttling spy can end its service as a familiar, ending the telepathic bond.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1 piercing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 9 Constitution saving throw or take 2 (1d4) poison damage.



THRI-KEEN HUNTER

Medium humanoid (thri-keen), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 143 (22d8 + 44)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +9, Con +6, Wis +8
Skills Athletics +9, Intimidation +5, Perception +6
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Thri-keen, telepathy 60 ft.
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Chameleon Carapace. The thri-keen hunter can change the color of its carapace to match the color and texture of its surroundings. As a result, it has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide.

Extended Reach. The thri-keen hunter's reach with its gythka is 10 feet.

Indomitable. The thri-keen hunter rerolls a failed saving throw.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The thri-keen hunter's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom. The thri-keen hunter can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *mage hand* (the hand is invisible)

3/day: *misty step*, *nondetection*

2/day: *blur*, *magic weapon*

1/day: *invisibility* (self only), *telekinesis*

Second Wind (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the thri-keen hunter can regain 20 hit points.

Standing Leap. The thri-keen hunter's long jump is up to 30 feet and its high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Terrible Blows. When the thri-keen hunter hits a target with a weapon attack, it deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage of that weapon's type (included in the attack).

Actions

Multiattack. The thri-keen hunter makes three attacks with its gythka or its chatkcha.

Gythka. Melee Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit* 8 (1d8 + 4) plus 14 (4d6) slashing damage.

Chatkcha. Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit* 6 (1d6 + 3) plus 14 (4d6) slashing damage.

Autothysis (1/day). The thri-keen hunter triggers an explosive chemical reaction in its body to defend the rest of its hive. The thri-keen hunter is reduced to 0 hit points and every creature within 30 foot of it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Gythka Storm (Recharge 5-6). The thri-keen hunter makes a gythka attack against up to 6 creatures of its choice within its reach.

THRI-KEEN

During my only foray into Eastern Shaar, I happened across a clutch of the nomadic thri-keen: arthropod humanoid creatures with culture and sentience that I admittedly do not fully understand. The group I encountered, the Ptekwe tribe, were extremely efficient and well-disciplined hunters. I could not understand their language, which was a series of clicking sounds made with their mouthparts and particular bending of the antennae. However, some of the individuals proved to be psionics capable of telepathic communication; the leader of the tribe, referred to as the shepard, could speak Common quite well.

I spent some time with the Ptekwe tribe and found them to be a tightly knit group deeply devoted to one another. They were incredibly self-sufficient and needed very limited contact with other societies or cultures. They had no religion that I could discern, but seemed to greatly value pragmatism over a need for the material or the spiritual.

THRI-KEEN HUNTER

A small handful of individuals in the tribe were the most experienced at capturing quarry and bringing food back to the group: the hunters. These hunters were extremely well-trained in their close combat weapons (the gythka) as well as the ranged weapons (chakcha) that they create from the metal they forage from the land. They're powerful warriors with some small psionic ability as well as a great deal of cool consideration and strategy in combat.

Additionally, these hunters take their devotion to their clutch-mates quite seriously. If the clutch is at serious risk and the situation is dire, these hunters are capable of triggering a chemical reaction in their body that causes them to erupt into an acidic explosion. This last resort grants the rest of the clutch an opportunity to escape from the threat. This example of autothysis is demonstrative of their commitment to group survival. In fact, similar hive-defense mechanisms are known to exist in less sentient creatures such as ants (8), though I must admit that seeing this occur in front of me was deeply moving sacrifice.

THRI-KEEN SHEPARD

Medium humanoid (thri-keen), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 88 (16d8 + 13)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +8, Wis +8

Skills Athletics +5, Stealth +7, Survival +8, Nature +8, Medicine +8

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Thri-keen, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Aphid Shepard. The thri-keen shepard is highly familiar with giant aphids. When it uses *conjure animals* to summon giant aphids, it may summon 2 instead of 1.

Chameleon Carapace. The thri-keen shepard can change the color of its carapace to match the color and texture of its surroundings. As a result, it has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The thri-keen shepard's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16). The thri-keen shepard can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *mage hand* (the hand is invisible)

2/day: *blur*, *detect thoughts*, *magic weapon*

1/day: *dominate monster*, *invisibility* (self only), *mirror image*, *telekinesis*

Standing Leap. The thri-keen shepard's long jump is up to 30 feet and its high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Spellcasting. The thri-keen shepard is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). The thri-keen shepard has the following ranger spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *ensnaring strike*, *cure wounds*, *hail of thorns*, *zephyr strike*

2nd level (3 slots): *cordon of arrows*, *spike growth*, *pass without trace*, *silence*

3rd level (2 slots): *conjure animals*, *lightning arrow*

True Aim. When the thri-keen shepard hits a target with a weapon attack, it deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage of that weapon's type (included in the attack).

Actions

Multiattack. The thri-keen shepard makes two gythka attacks or two ranged attacks.

Gythka. Melee Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 8 (1d8 + 4) plus 7 (2d6) slashing damage.

Chatkcha. Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit* 13 (3d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Mind Burst. Ranged Spell Attack: +8 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit* 10 (3d6) psychic damage. If the target is a creature other than a thri-keen, it must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Psionic Blast (Recharge 5-6). The thri-keen shepard magically emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or take 22 (4d8 + 4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

THRI-KEEN SHEPARD

The Thri-Keen Shepard of the Ptekwe tribe was named Chit'al and she was responsible for a great deal within the clutch. Chit'al assisted the other females in finding appropriate places to lay their eggs; she led communication efforts with any outsiders; she milked, fed, and maintained the flock of tame giant aphids that the tribe kept as a source of honeydew; she was the greatest healer; knew the medicinal properties of the local flora & fauna; and she was the most formidable tracker.

Chit'al also possessed the most pronounced psionic powers of the Ptekwe tribe, capable of stunning creatures or bending adversaries to her will. It was unclear to me whether the title of shepard was one that was bestowed upon her due to her innate psionic abilities, or if her title within the group allowed her to draw on and channel the psychic energy of her clutch-mates. Regardless, I am grateful for Chit'al's wisdom and traveling with the Ptekwe tribe was one of the most eye-opening experiences of my abovewater adventures.



Alister Konezege's Field Guide Vol. I

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LOOKING FOR LICHES?

Are you curious about the Green Hand, the mysterious trio of lichens responsible for creating several of these monstrous arthropods? Do you wish to explore the Memorial Mire and the ruins of the Verdant Phrontistery within? If you seek this information or more, keep an eye out for *Pretty Little Liches*, coming out on the DMs Guild in Fall 2019.

Pretty Little Liches contains the background information and stat blocks for three unique lichens as well as maps of their respective lairs. Each lair will include traps, puzzles, monsters, treasure, and NPCs appropriate for Tier 3 & 4 characters in 5th Edition Dungeons & Dragons!

MONSTERS BY CR

CR 0

Scuttling Spy

CR 2

Giant Aphid

CR 6

Deathshaker

Thri-keen Shepard

CR 7

Palpartidon

CR 9

Thri-keen Hunter

CR 11

Lou Carcohl

Nightshiver

CR 12

Orchid Striker Mantis

CR 19

Blister Colossus