

Wisdom from the Wastelands

Issue #45:
Mutant
Dinosaurs



By Derek Holland and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

Using their expertise in biotechnology, the Ancients created or recreated many new species for use as pets or livestock. Ever-popular dinosaurs were among the first large, complex creatures brought back in the lab. This was not cloning or “de-extinction” in the strictest sense, but rather a combination of genetic archaeology and reinterpretation, and the Ancients designed the animals for their own reasons and pleasures as though sculpting with DNA putty.

The largest of these giants were even more massive than those from the fossil record, surviving only because of technological assistance (i.e., cybernetic implants). Because of this fragility, none of those magnificent creatures survived the cataclysm. But many other dinosaurs did.

Their Ancient creators gifted these animals the same biotech that long prevented pure humans from mutating. As happened with other species, this technology occasionally failed. However, the dinosaurs tended to develop only a few mutations — and these were often warped from the usual presentation. In game terms, this means many dinosaurs have mutation modifiers. *Wisdom from the Wastelands* issue #20 has the rules and an extensive list of modifiers, but that issue is not required to use this article. For those who have already discovered the mutation modifiers, the creatures below are excellent examples of putting those ideas into practice.

Bloody Jaws

No. Enc.: 1 (1d4)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 240' (80')
Armor Class: 6
Hit Dice: 25
Attacks: 1 (bite)

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Damage: 6d6+12
Save: L15
Morale: 11
Hoard Class: XII

Not all pets were designed as companion animals; some were bred vicious. Originally, bloody jaws were miniature *Tyrannosaurs*, shrunk to 2' tall, and used for death sports. In the Ancient world, they were often dumped into pits with other animals, set for contests having only one survivor.

This publication is dedicated to providing useful information, game content, and ideas to players of modern, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic table-top and role-playing games in general and to fans of Goblinoid Games' *Mutant Future* RPG in particular. The material contained herein are compatible with it and any others that use the “Basic” system introduced in the most popular role-playing games of the early 1970s and are easily adaptable to many other games (especially successor systems, to include those covered by the Open Game License).

Those surviving the apocalypse were hearty beasts, gaining the ability to heal 10 points of damage per day. But they also mutated in more dramatic ways: bloody jaws now grow larger than the animal that inspired them (up to 60' long and 25' tall) and developed a horrible, congenital condition that modified their skin. This looks like a writhing, squirming mass of worms and bug parts so nasty it can disturb even hardened warriors. Anyone within 100' looking at a blood jaws must save versus poison every turn or become nauseated, unable to act for 1d4+1 rounds.

Bloody jaws tend to inhabit light forests and plains in temperate and tropical areas. They may occasionally enter cities, but scarce hunting cannot support the huge predators for very long. Fortunately for those living near the bloody jaws' territory, the animals' skin reacts to salt. In places where ship spears (see below) and bloody jaws are found together, the spears keep the carnivores at bay by regurgitating a thick salt slurry over their roosts, which hardens into a protective crust. Sentient tribes use a similar tactic to ward their communities, and some have also figured out how to "salt" their weapons. By coating the damage-inflicting ends with a strong glue and crystals, the weapons do an additional point of damage per hit against the jaws. Quantities of pure salt are even more effective: every pound of crushed salt thrown on the dinosaurs inflicts 1d8 points of damage.

Mutations: *gigantism, regenerative capacity, epidermal susceptibility (disgusting).*

Fire Eater

No. Enc.:	1d6 (1d6)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	180' (60') (and see below)
Armor Class:	5 (and see below)
Hit Dice:	15 (and see below)
Attacks:	1 (bite)
Damage:	3d6
Save:	L10
Morale:	9
Hoard Class:	Special



These weird creatures, apparently based on *Theropods*, are 35' long, weigh over 4 tons, and roam the light forests and plains of temperate and tropical zones. Eaters have metallic mouths and teeth, and each has between two and 10 walking legs. The predators occasionally also scavenge, but fire really grabs their attention; when they see it, eaters run at the flame and try to inhale all the heat.

This behavior might seem odd, but the creatures have a symbiotic relationship with a strain of inherited nanites; when eaters consume thermal energy, the nanite-produced cybernetic implants lacing their bodies grow and spread. The heat source must be relatively significant: a bonfire or larger source will do (torches and the like are just snacks), or fire- and heat-based weapons/attacks.

Mechanically, the symbiosis functions like a variant of the *light to mass* mutation, in which absorbed heat turns into metal and flesh, and the energy conversion produces three different effects, in a specific sequence. First, the animal grows, gaining one permanent hit point for every 10 points of thermal damage it would have taken otherwise. Eight additional hit points gives the eater a new hit die. After gaining two hit dice the second stage begins, making the creature's skin stronger: 50 points of heat consumed improves the eater's AC by one point. Once this is complete, the creature grows again, as above. Two hit dice larger, the eater begins phase three, sprouting one new leg for every 50 points of fire damage absorbed. A pair of limbs increases movement by 30' (10') and finishes the sequence. The animal can repeat this cycle several times, growing up to four pairs of new legs.

The animals' predatory behavior keeps it from being tamed, but some people ranch the eaters anyway; they provide a lot of meat and spare parts for all kinds of technology. This is a risky venture to begin with, but problems (and the animals) can really get out of hand if a wild fire or forest fire breaks out nearby.

Mutations: *aberrant form (extra limbs, xenomorphism, tech), light to mass (new, variant; see WftW #37).*

King Bat

No. Enc.:	1d4 (3d6)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	10' (3') Fly 180' (60')
Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	4
Attacks:	1 or 1 (energy ray or bite)
Damage:	4d6 or 2d4
Save:	L2
Morale:	10
Hoard Class:	VII

Legend has it the king bats were born from the imagination of one wealthy, slightly mad Ancient who was obsessed with making flying dinosaurs. But she did not want her creations based on birds, so she drew inspiration and genetic material from much older species. Despite her large numbers of

projects and created species, king bats are one of the few experimental successes to survive the final wars.

Unlike mammalian bats, these creatures are reptilian and derived from the *Coelophysids*, bipedal carnososaurs similar to velociraptors. They roost near fresh or salt water, often in the upper stories of ruined buildings, hunting both fish and land animals. Adults grow up to 12' long, with a 26' wingspan. They have six limbs: wings, stronger hind legs, and small forelimbs too small for combat — an arrangement reminiscent of gargoyles or demons described in Ancients' tales.

Besides its nasty bite, the animal can attack with two warped versions of the *energy ray* mutation. The heat variant generates a small planar rift around the target (or the end of the ray), and there is a 20% chance of some extra-planar monster coming through (the specifics are left up to the ML). Although not controlled by the bat, some of these monsters do seem to venerate it, which is how the king bat was named. The lightning variant has the new *chaos* modifier (see below); whenever the bat fires this ray, weird things happen. Despite the defects, king bats favor using their rays to hunt, though occasionally some are killed by summoned monsters or revived robots.

Anarchists and nutters sometimes use the bats as their insignia. The craziest actually try capturing the dinosaurs to use as mounts or weapons. These people usually get turned into goo or planar monster chow.

Mutations: *energy ray* (*heat, unstable*), *energy ray* (*electricity, chaos [new]*).

Ship Spear

No. Enc.: 1d4 (1d8)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 90' (30')
 Fly 120' (40')
 Swim 60' (20')
 Armor Class: 3
 Hit Dice: 8
 Attacks: 1 (horns)
 Damage: 3d6
 Save: L4
 Morale: 10
 Hoard Class: None

Seeing an airborne ship spear for the first time can beggar the imagination; realizing it's mad at you can trigger a "brown trouser" moment. The massive creatures are flying, swimming *Ceratopsians*, herbivores related to the *Triceratops*. Adults reach up to 18' long, weigh three tons, and have hides thick enough to turn daggers and spears. Like their ancient cousins, the spears have a set of very long horns and a bony, frilled collar protruding from their skulls.

Unlike their genetic predecessors, ship spears do not have forelegs — these limbs were modified into broad, leathery wings. This gives them an ungainly, turtle-like motion on land, which is not helped by their unaltered hind legs. Because of this, the creatures nest close to the water on river



banks, beaches, or even among the rocks, collecting shattered trees and driftwood root bundles, piling them like abatis to keep out large carnivores.

Spears are not very fast fliers, but they are fairly adept at avoiding predators. Once they hit water the wings distort, changing into floppy fins. Between these and the mass of their armored skin, the creatures are very poor swimmers. To compensate, a spear flies into position and then hurls its bulk into the water like a gigantic dart, gaining a +4 to-hit bonus on its first attack. Getting a first-strike kill is vital as the ship spears feed mostly on large, dangerous, aquatic vegetation in lakes and large rivers.

Other than for hunting, the dinosaur uses its horns to drive off predators — including sailors. As they flounder to the surface for breath, ship spears occasionally slam into ships above them, which is how they earned their name. Some people hunt them for flesh and hide, but usually not in open water; instead hunters find it safer to take the animals in their nests. For those with *empathy* or some form of mind control mutation, it is possible to train ship spears as mounts, coastal guard animals, and occasionally fishing animals. This latter use often entails a single spear hauling a net or diving on large fish from above; others have a net hanging between a pair of the creatures, like flying trawlers. This can be a risky endeavor, though: "domesticated" ship spears have been known to go berserk and start attacking anyone nearby.

Mutations: *complete wing development* (*environmental distortion*), *natural armor*.

Scaly Worm

No. Enc.: 1d8+4 (1d8+4)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 60' (30')
 Charge 180' (60')
 Armor Class: 5
 Hit Dice: 18
 Attacks: 1 or 1 (tail or slam)
 Damage: 2d6 or 5d6
 Save: L9
 Morale: 5
 Hoard Class: None

The Ancients often created things from a sense of whimsy; they brought back these small *Sauropods* as a cheap form of travel for the unhurried — four-story tour mounts and dinosaur rides for the kiddies. Those animals lucky enough to survive the final wars soon mutated, their eyelids fusing, which made seeing very difficult. This helped give the creatures their name, but also became a sort of mixed blessing, as the worms' grazing lands are haunted by carnivorous birds with a fondness for eyes. These predators drove off or killed most of the animal and many eye-bearing plants; now the only remaining beings are the scaly worms and others with protected or absent eyes. The birds still attack, but without a prominent weak point to target, they have to get through the reptiles' thick hides.

Although "small sauropod" might seem an oxymoron, it is accurate relative to the worms' larger ancestors: these creatures are only 50' long. They wander temperate plains and enjoying wallowing in lakes and rivers; trees give them problems, hills are near-insurmountable barriers, and the water's neutral buoyancy helps them take a load off. Scaly worms cluster in small herds, using their long necks to browse vegetation from deeper water or taller plants. With a highly-developed sense of smell they identify one another and maintain a hierarchy formation of the largest first and the smallest last, with the herd spread out in a V-shape.

When attacked, a scaly worm uses its tail for defense, hoping to drive off its attackers. If reduced to less than one-half hit points, a worm runs, usually drawing the rest of the herd with it. The group members keep running until they hit something, causing 5d6 damage to the creature or obstacle struck — and 2d6 points to each dinosaur, which is usually enough to bring it up short. A stampede can be a surprising (and terrifying) sight, given how slowly the spears walk normally. If their sight were better, the creatures might move much faster more often.

Mutations: *vision impairment (hidden).*

Sand Shark

No. Enc.: 2d4 (4d4)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 90' (30')
 Burrow 60' (20')
 Armor Class: 1
 Hit Dice: 8
 Attacks: 1 or 1 (bite or tail)
 Damage: 3d4+4 or 3d6
 Save: L4
 Morale: 7
 Hoard Class: XII

The coming of night is a frequent theme in horror stories and legends; sand sharks provide another reason to fear the dark. With adults growing 25' to 40' long from their armored crowns to their massive mace-tipped tails, and weighing between three and five tons, these mutant *Ankylosaurs* appear fearsome. But during the day they graze peacefully, bothering no one who leaves them be.

When the sun sets, however, they transform. Their legs flatten into digging spades, their eyelids turn transparent, and their teeth become sabers. Change complete, the sharks dive into the ground and begin to hunt. The creatures are not inconspicuous, methodically ripping through the earth with raw strength, causing minor tremors as they move. To compensate, the sharks are pack hunters, with outliers and scouts driving quarry toward the main body. When in position, they erupt from below, blinding victims with a spray of soil and gaining a +2 to-hit bonus with their first bite. They quickly finish the kill using their tails and fangs. If any herd member gets killed in the fight, the rest try to burrow away.

Sand sharks tend to avoid forested areas because the tree roots slow them down, so they are normally found across the temperate plains and deserts. Some peoples love the creatures and seek them out — not for their meat or hides, but their hunting prowess: they steal the sharks' kills or take exhausted prey that managed to elude the pack. Other races use sand sharks to dig, feeding the dinosaurs and treating them as working beasts. This is hazardous, of course, but there are some who believe the thousands of man-hours of digging avoided by the sharks' labors is worth a few dead workers. Then there are those who hunt sand sharks for adulthood rites. The hides can become armor, but the fangs are especially prized: they react to darkness just as the living animal did, giving the hunter a weapon that can be hidden in plain sight. During the day, the tooth is the length of a dagger and does the same damage; at night it grows into a short sword.

Mutations: *aberrant form (natural weapon, xenomorphism, surreal), metamorph (environmental dependance).*

Twig Swarm

No. Enc.: Swarm
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 120' (40')
 Climb 90' (30')
 Armor Class: 6
 Hit Dice: 16
 Attacks: Contact (bites)
 Damage: 3d6
 Save: L2
 Morale: 5
 Hoard Class: VII

These arboreal hunters were modified from *Composognathus* — agile, long-tailed, bipedal carnivores about the size of a turkey. They swarm throughout temperate forests in herds of thousands and can match their skin colors to their surroundings, often becoming green with brown or grey stripes to resemble sticks and leaves.

When suitable prey (anything not hidden in armor and weighing less than a ton) passes beneath them, the reptiles leap from the branches and attack. They are so numerous that everyone within the swarm automatically takes 3d6 points of damage per round and must save versus the

dinosaurs' poison at -4. This save only happens once per encounter, but those who fail lose 1d6 points of Strength for 1d4 hours.

During the fall, twig swarms become masses of tumultuous mating, with pregnant females digging nests in which to bury their eggs. One swarm of thousands can lay hundreds of thousands of eggs. The dinosaurs then die off during the winter, leaving their eggs hidden in the soil. Because of their numbers, twig swarms make a great (though dangerous) source of food; people hunt them for their meat and eggs, but also harvest their hides and venom. For those immune to the reptiles' poison, or who never need physical contact with their animal companions (similar to fish owners), the twigs can make unusual pets. A few warlords even have their own swarms to eat traitors and deter invaders.

Mutations: *chameleon epidermis*, *toxic weapon (surfactant)*, *special (climbing ability)*.



NEW MODIFIER

Chaos applies only to non-passive mutations, the result of mental energies going wild and warping reality. When the mutant activates the modified power, he can save versus stun to stop the chaos effect. If the save fails, roll 1d6 to see what happens:

Roll	Effect
1	A random object within 10' of the mutant gains intelligence and the ability to speak.
2	A random creature within 30' of the mutant loses a mutation.
3	A random object within 30' of the mutant explodes, doing 1d6 points of damage per 100 pounds to everything within 30' of the object. Save versus energy attacks for half damage.
4	All the seeds and spores within 100' of the mutant germinate and grow to full size within 2 rounds.
5	A machine within 30' of the mutant is repaired of all damage and gains 1d4 mutations and/or drawbacks.
6	ML's decision.

It is strongly suggested that MLs using this modifier create their own table or tables. Different kinds of creatures may have very different results for their versions of chaos.

NEW MUTATION

Loss of Trait (D)

Physical

Frequency: Very Common

Recommended Type: All

The mutant has lost a mutation or species trait that is not vital to survival. Consult the following chart for the type of characteristic lost:

Roll	Type	Effect
1	Mutation	The mutant loses one randomly determined non-drawback mutation.
2	Drawback	The mutant loses one randomly determined drawback. If the mutant has no drawbacks, then it loses one regular mutation.
3	Species Trait	The mutant loses a trait common to its species. This characteristic could be anything, such as a lizard losing its scales, or a fish losing its swim bladder. The ML and player must work together to decide what is lost.
4	Missing Organ	The mutant loses an organ. This could be any type of structure, from a sense organ to reproductive to digestive (the loss some organs could be fatal if it happens during play). The ML and the player must work together to decide what is lost.
5	Physical Statistic	The mutant loses 1d4 from a randomly determined physical statistic.
6	Mental Statistic	The mutant loses 1d4 from a randomly determined mental statistic.

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Authors: Derek Holland, Chris Van Deelen

Editor: Greg Chapin

Editor-in-Chief: Michael O. Varhola

Technical Editor: William T. Thrasher

PDF Publications Manager:

Richard T. Balsley

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Skirmisher Publishing LLC

499 Mystic Parkway
Spring Branch, TX 78070



<http://skirmisher.com>
<http://d-infinity.net>
d20@skirmisher.com

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