

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #27:
Metamorphosis II



By Derek Holland and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

Once again we bow to the wisdom of the Ancient philosophers, who recognized the only constant in life (aside from death and taxes) was change, change, change. In issue #25 of *Wisdom from the Wastelands*, we introduced the idea of creatures altering form over their life cycles, and provided critters with more traditional, two-part transformations. But, a metamorphosis can also take *very* strange twists — and even have multiple stages. The six creature sets below show how very dissimilar creatures can be the same species, just young or mature forms. Each entry uses either the *animate seeds* plant mutation; a new version for animals called *larval form* (described below); or the idea of *forced metamorphosis*. The last is a version of the mutation modifier *environmental dependence*, one that permanently changes one creature into another when the original is exposed to certain stimuli (see *Wisdom from the Wastelands Issue #20: Mutation Modifiers* for more information). Some of the creature entries also use several new mutations, included at the end.

Reptophant

No. Enc.: 0 (d8)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 120' (40')
Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 8
Attacks: 2 or 1 (tusks or trample)
Damage: 2d4/2d4 or 4d8
Save: L5
Morale: 8
Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *special, immunity to poison.*



Elzard

No. Enc.: d4 (d8)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 90' (30')
Armor Class: 7

Hit Dice: 3
Attacks: 1 (bite)
Damage: d6
Save: L2
Morale: 5
Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *larval form.*

A lab accident before the cataclysm created the elzards, large monitor lizards found in temperate and tropical areas. Other than being foul-tempered, 8' long carnivores, the elzards are most remarkable for their very unusual “eggs.” Scholars named them reptophants, because they look and act like elephants with grey scales and lizard-level intelligence.

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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).

Elzards give birth to clutches of these 6" long creatures, which immediately move away from the mother to avoid being eaten. Over the next five years the herbivorous creatures feast on almost any available plant — no matter how toxic — and grow to the size of Asian elephants. Within each reptophant are 3d4 embryos that also develop over those five years. When almost completely grown, the elzards “hatch,” killing the reptophant as they eat their way out. The young elzards live off the carcass for more than a month while they grow to adult size. Then the elzards stake out watering holes, where they ambush faster prey. Should a reptophant be killed before the elzard young hatch, the embryos will die within the egg. Some carnivores hunt reptophants for food, as do some tribes — who see a dead reptophant as several elzards that will not be a future threat.

Gut Worm

No. Enc.: 0 (d4)
 Alignment: Nseutral
 Movement: Swim 60' (20')
 Armor Class: 8
 Hit Dice: 2
 Attacks: 1 (bite)
 Damage: d6
 Save: L1
 Morale: 12
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *aberrant form, gigantism.*

Wing Worm

No. Enc.: d4 (d4)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 30' (10')
 Fly 180' (60')
 Armor Class: 7
 Hit Dice: 3+
 Attacks: 1 (bite)
 Damage: d8
 Save: L2+
 Morale: 12
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *aberrant form (natural weapon), complete wing development.*

Megapede

No. Enc.: 0 (1)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 300' (100')
 Armor Class: 3
 Hit Dice: 16
 Attacks: 1 (trample)
 Damage: 4d6
 Save: L8
 Morale: 8
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *aberrant form, gigantism.*

Horned Beetle

No. Enc.: 1 (3d6)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 90' (30')
 Fly 150' (50')
 Armor Class: 3
 Hit Dice: 6
 Attacks: 1 (bite)
 Damage: d8
 Save: L3
 Morale: 8
 Hoard Class: VII

Mutations: *gigantism, larval form.*

At 8' long, with a enormous set of horns, these giant beetles appear fearsome. But the great horns are solely a sexual attractant, and adult beetles attack only to defend their food. The beetles are really very useful omnivores, cleaning up temperate forests and plains by scavenging carcasses and eating fungus on rotting plant material. No, it is the other segments of their complex life cycle that are the true threats.

After mating, the female horned beetle lays acorn-sized eggs in shallow water, where they can be swallowed by a herbivorous host of sufficient size — only elephants, kaiju, and the like are large enough. Carnivores have the wrong chemical make up in their digestive tracts, and smaller creatures destroy the eggs while ingesting them (some humanoids even search them out as a delicacy). For the next three months the growing larva feeds as a tapeworm, occasionally taking a chunk out of the host's intestine for protein. The 6'-18' long gut worm then passes out of the host, grows wings, and takes on the predatory lifestyle of a wing worm.

This airborne scourge eats any and every form of meat, from giant grasshoppers to kaiju pandas, consuming up to 200 pounds a day. They need this staggering amount to reach full size, up to 65' long — a process that can take several years or a decade, depending on food availability. When mature, the wing worm spends six weeks changing into a megapede, a 60' long living bulldozer that eats whole trees.



After growing for a year in this stage, the megapede dies and 20-50 adult-sized horn beetles emerge from the carcass. These eat their dead megapede before setting off to continue the cycle.

A dead kaiju can create a dangerous area, as the corpse will draw dozens of horned beetles and wing worms. Some sapient hunt some of the stages, taking pieces of megapede carapace to fashioning armor and shields. Others have tried and failed to use horned beetle skin for the same purpose. But, while too soft for armor, it does make good waterproof containers and capes if properly treated.

Green Jellyfish

No. Enc.: Swarm
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: Swim 10' (3')
Armor Class: 9
Hit Dice: 1 hit point
Attacks: Poison
Damage: Poison
Save: L0
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *epidermal photosynthesis, regenerative capacity (special).*

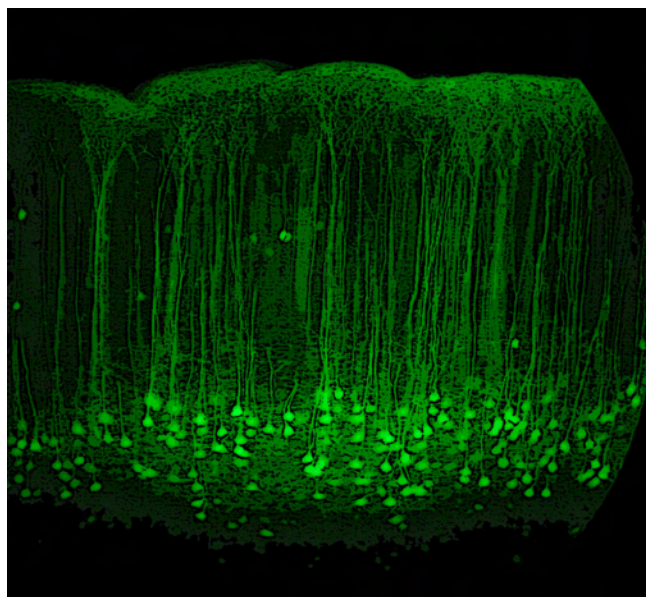
Desert Dart

No. Enc.: 0 (d8)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 30' (10')
Fly 240' (80')
Armor Class: 6
Hit Dice: 14
Attacks: 1 or 1 (bite or spine)
Damage: 2d6 or d8
Save: L7
Morale: 9
Hoard Class: VII

Mutations: *aberrant form (extra body parts), gigantism, larval form, regenerative capacity (special), spiny growth.*

The desert dart is a 30' long carnivorous dragonfly that has six wings and a spine-covered abdomen. The large spines give the insect its name, as it uses them in an airborne attack — spearing prey up to 50' away. A fully-equipped dart can throw 30 spines, and it takes four hours to regrow one. Unless ambushed, darts never attack while on the ground, and then only bite if they can not escape to the air.

They breed in salty lakes and spawn larvae that resemble green jellyfish. These are found in schools of thousands, and every spring groups of a few hundred will merge together and pupate into full-sized darts. But each jellyfish leaves behind a small section of its bell, which allows it to completely regenerate. Newly hatched jellies are 1/2" in diameter; over time they grow up to 3' across. Although they appear harmless, the larvae produce a toxin that weakens anything drinking the water. Victims must make a save versus poison



or be reduced to half speed for 1d4 days. Some fish and tortoise mutants are immune to the toxin and feed on the jellyfish.

Episcar

No. Enc.: 0 (1)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 10' (3')
Armor Class: 9
Hit Dice: 1 hit point
Attacks: 1 (special)
Damage: Special
Save: L0
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *bud sport (xenomorphism), toxic weapon.*

Scar (Shrub)

No. Enc.: 0 (2d8)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 0'
Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 4
Attacks: 4 (branches)
Damage: 2d4/2d4/2d4/2d4
Save: L2
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *animate seed, natural vegetal weapons.*

The scar is a 4' tall mutant dogwood found in temperate forests and plains. Beside traditional branches with leaves, the shrub has four specialized spear limbs that it uses to drives seedlings into unsuspecting human-sized or larger victims. Scars can produce 40-120 seedlings every spring and inject 10 of them per hit.

Once implanted, the 1/8" long seedlings fight within the host's body until only one is left. The survivor travels to



the host's back and grows just under the skin until it resembles a massive scar. This process does not inflict damage, but does weaken the host (see below). Removing the seedlings involves surgery that will kill most people, since the parasites can hide anywhere in the body, outside the gut.

The episcar feeds on the host's blood for a year (-2 to hit for the duration due to weakness). Then it erupts from the back (doing 3d6 points of damage), and releases a 20' diameter cloud of paralyzing gas. All within range must save versus poison at -4 or become paralyzed for 1d4 minutes. The seedling uses this to cover its escape, running off to find somewhere it can root.

Shade Seeker, Seedling

No. Enc.: 2d20 (d4)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 120' (40')
 Armor Class: 6
 Hit Dice: 4
 Attacks: 1 (leaves)
 Damage: d6+1
 Save: L2
 Morale: 6
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *abnormal size, frailty, free movement, natural vegetal weapon.*

CHECK OUT WFTW ONLINE!

Skirmisher Publishing LLC has got a section of its website dedicated to material for *Mutant Future* and other post-apocalyptic games in general and content tying in with this publication in particular. This gives readers the opportunity to obtain free bonus content, post their own material, and comment on this publication and Skirmisher's support for the genres it covers overall. Just go to:

<http://skirmisher.com/forum/38>

Shade Seeker, Scorched

No. Enc.: d8 (d8)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 120' (40')
 Armor Class: 6
 Hit Dice: 4
 Attacks: 1 (leaves)
 Damage: d4
 Save: L1
 Morale: 12
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *abnormal size, bud sport (xenomorphism), free movement, natural vegetal weapon, pain insensitivity.*

An example of *forced metamorphosis*, the shade seeker is mutant chufa grass fed upon by the yot beetle. Normally, chufa is a type of 20'-50' tall fountain grass found in temperate and taiga forests, but a chemical in the beetle saliva causes the plant's seedlings to change, becoming 4'-6' tall mobile clumps with serrated leaves. The seedlings initially find direct sunlight very painful, taking 1d8 points of damage per hour of exposure. Should a clump survive 24 cumulative hours of sunlight, it changes into a sterile form called the scorched shade seeker. The plant becomes very aggressive and attacks anything coming near. It also loses the ability to feel pain, and its serrated leaves turn red and weaken. If a shade seeker can avoid the sun until it goes to seed, its seedlings revert to the form of the plant's parents. Unless, of course, the plant was also chewed upon by the yot. Mutant cows and other herbivores enjoy the grass, while humanoids eat the seeds or use them for carp bait.



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Soaring Stone

No. Enc.: 0 (d4)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 60' (20')
 Fly 180' (60')
 Armor Class: 8
 Hit Dice: 2
 Attacks: 1 (bite)
 Damage: d4
 Save: L1
 Morale: 4
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *unique sense.*

Wandering Boulder

No. Enc.: 0 (d4)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 60' (20')
 Charge 240' (80')
 Armor Class: 1
 Hit Dice: 8
 Attacks: 1 (charge)
 Damage: 5d6
 Save: L5
 Morale: 9
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *gigantism, larval form, special.*

Wandering boulders are 15' tall tortoises found on beaches

and tropical islands. Normally they are very slow and peaceful creatures; if left undisturbed people can walk right by them. But if something edible is covered with a shell or a predator is persistent, boulders can make an amazing charge and slam a target for 5d6 points of damage. Like sea turtles, boulders lay clutches of eggs in sandy soil. The young soaring stones are 3'-4' diameter flying turtles with razor-sharp beaks. They are omnivores like their elders, scavenging very much like turkey vultures: using thermals to fly, and locating food with sight and smell. After 50 years, the stones finally shed their wings and take up existence as an adult boulder. Seaside tribes and predators hunt both boulders and stones for meat, and raid the turtles' nests for the large eggs. Sapients will often make use of the huge shells, turning them into homes, outbuildings, or hurricane shelters.

NEW MUTATIONS

Bud Sport

This is the plant version of *aberrant form*.

Larval Form

Offspring have a different complement of mutations from their parents. It may even be radically different from the adult.

Webbing

The mutant produces silk as a caterpillar does (i.e., from the mouth). A 25' length of silk or enough webbing to trap one small creature can be produced in one day. The webbing decays in three months.

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